

NOTES AND REFLECTIONS

ON

THE PSALMS.

BY

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“LET THE WORD OF CHRIST DWELL IN YOU RICHLY IN ALL KNOWLEDGE.”

Colossians iii. 16.

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P R E F A C E .

As the title of the following work conveys no very definite idea of its nature, while the portion of Scripture which it is meant to illustrate has been variously treated by expositors, according to the aspect under which they have severally regarded it, the Christian reader seems entitled to some explanation of the scope and objects of the book which he is here invited to peruse.

It is essentially a *practical* work. In its preparation I have had continually before my mind the twofold aim of ministering to the refreshment of those who already are established in the grace of God, and of affording assistance and encouragement to the inexperienced but godly inquirer after truth. With this desire an attempt has been made to present a faithful though general outline of the Book of Psalms,¹ both as it respects the true *prophetic* intention of each Psalm, and also its immediate application to the Christian as a partaker of the heavenly calling.

That our knowledge is at present but "in part," is an

¹ Many readers are aware that in the best editions of the Hebrew Bible the Psalms are distributed into five books. I am unable to explain the origin, or the motive, of this distinction. Nor can I undertake with confidence to define the characteristic peculiarities of the several books: the attempt has been made from time to time by others, but with little profit in the general result. The above division has, however, been observed in the arrangement of the present volume.

admonition that has addressed itself forcibly (and not, I trust, without some salutary effect) to my remembrance, at every stage of my progress in the present work. How meagre and imperfect the several articles must appear, to those whose happy privilege it may have been to search more wisely and more thoroughly the wealthy mine of blessing which the Spirit of Christ lays open to us in the Psalms, I felt at the original publication of this book; and the repeated and anxious revision which it has since undergone has done little to weaken that impression. But the favour which the Lord has given to my labour in the sight of some of those who love Him, and a knowledge that since these Notes have been out of print enquiries have many times been made for them, has encouraged me to venture on a new edition; for it is the comfort of the feeblest labourer in God's vineyard to remember that no honest exposition of sound doctrine is entirely in vain. Truth never palls upon the spiritual taste. The growing, ripening believer shares with the latest babe in Christ the Bread which is the life and only nourishment of the whole family of God.

As it respects the principles of prophetic interpretation which have been applied throughout this work, some explanation will be given in the Introduction. It is enough to say here, that the cramping effect of artificial system is too sincerely dreaded by the writer to be wittingly adopted as his guide.² God has a system of

² The interval which has elapsed since the original publication of this work has not been unproductive of examples of the evil here noticed. Perhaps the most dangerous of these is the notion, lately put forth with much confidence of tone, that the latter-day remnant of Israel and their fortunes form *the* subject of the Psalms, and that consequently even those which most evidently relate to the Lord Jesus Himself should be interpreted in subjection to this principle. That a theory so glaringly unsound

revelation which, like all His other works, is perfect, though the dimness of our spiritual sight may often fail to compass all the fair proportions of its unity of beauty and of truth. There is a symmetry in truth which, being of the Spirit, is discerned and appreciated only by the mind of Christ.³ Systematic *theology*, as it is commonly understood, is a very different thing. The latter is easily within the reach of a patient effort of the human understanding, and needs no faith for its attainment. But to the children of promise CHRIST is truth, and truth is Christ. To learn of God is to advance in the knowledge of Him in whom all fulness dwells. Because they have *tasted* that the Lord is gracious, the new-born children of the Father must desire the sincere milk of the word of grace, that they may grow thereby.

There is a rich variety of topic in the Psalms. In the following Notes, the leading features of each have been presented, in the order which the Spirit has observed⁴ in His dictation and arrangement of this portion of the word. The longest articles are devoted to those Psalms which relate immediately to the person and work of our blessed Lord, or in which some great doctrinal principles are

should have led among its practical results to heterodox teaching of the gravest kind respecting the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ will not astonish any Christian who thoughtfully considers it; but the fact that it has done so, and that dishonour has thus been cast upon the names of men once justly as well as highly esteemed for their work's sake as true witnesses of Christ, should not be disregarded by us as a salutary warning in these sad and evil times.

³ 1 Cor. ii. 6-16.

⁴ Much critical ingenuity may be expended vainly in inquiries as to the instrumental means by which the Old Testament acquired its present structure, as it is presented in the Hebrew Bible. To the simple Christian it is enough that the blessed Lord spoke of "the Psalms" as we do at the present day, thus sanctioning their existing order.

affirmed. Psalms xxii. and xxxii. are respectively examples in point. Those which illustrate the dispensational government of God have in general been treated more or less fully; *e.g.*, Psalms ii. viii. xlv. lxxii. cx. cxviii. and many others. *All* have been examined under the liveliest and most thankful consciousness of the thoroughly practical bearing of these varied utterances of the Spirit of Christ upon the experiences of His people in their day of wearying yet hopeful conflict.

The reader is recommended to peruse the Notes in their regular sequence. It is not, however, absolutely necessary that he should do so, since it has not been attempted to treat the Psalms as one unbroken and continuous revelation. Still, it is well to follow steadily, in our study of the word of God, the order which the Spirit has observed. With one earnest request I conclude these prefatory remarks: that no reader will content himself with a mere perusal of these Notes, but that he will in every instance give God's word its honour by keeping constantly before his eye the very truth which is the subject of the scanty exposition now submitted to his view.⁵ One word seems called for in explanation of the rather frequent quotation in the footnotes of *untranslated* foreign versions. The class of readers for whom they are intended will thank me for my forbearance, while the less critical student of these Notes will, I trust, accept my assurance that his ignorance of other languages involves him in no spiritual loss. All that is practically edifying is presented to him in his mother tongue.

⁵ 1 Thess. v. 21.

INTRODUCTION.

THE value of the Psalms has been acknowledged by the Church of God in every age. That their full *prophetic* meaning has not always been perceived, even by those who gathered largely from them of those endless consolations that are given us in Christ, may easily be allowed. But the genuine believer has not failed at all times to appreciate, in some degree, their wondrous adaptation to the varied spiritual necessities of the generation of God's children, while accomplishing their day of faith and patience here below.

It is well known to all, that very many of the Psalms were written by the pen, and are to a certain extent expressive of the actual experiences, of the son of Jesse.¹ By using thus the personal emotions of His chosen instrument, as the vehicle of His own Divine utterance, the Spirit of Christ has shaped His gracious speech in perfect

¹ It is a popular but inaccurate phrase to speak of "the Psalms of David" as a descriptive title of the entire collection. Several among them are ascribed expressly to a different hand. Others again are destitute of any titular inscription. With respect, however, to the latter they may, I suppose, be safely attributed to David, on the authority of Acts iv. 25. It is the joy of the believer to refer them *all* to an authorship essentially *Divine*, whatever human heart and hand the Spirit, in His sovereign wisdom, may have deigned to use.

sympathy with all varieties of spiritual feeling in His people. Whether in heaviness through manifold temptations, or moving, in tranquil peace and settlement of soul, along the smoother passages of pilgrim life; while watching, circumspectly and with prayer, against insidious snares of evil in a world which lieth in the wicked one; or, when filled with gladness and a more abundant flow of thanksgiving and praise, because of some worthier perception of the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, the partaker of the heavenly calling cannot look vainly in the Psalms for fitting language to express the secret of his soul.

That the strong personal tone which distinguishes in general the songs of David (as well as some others not attributed to him) should have endeared that class of Psalms in a peculiar manner to the Christian, is both natural and just. For in widely different states of spiritual growth and experience, as well as of personal relation to external circumstances, many of God's children have discovered there a grateful and exact response to the existing spirit of their minds.

But full as they are of comfort and refreshment to the Christian, when pondered thus with an immediate reference to his own estate, it was not for this purpose only that the Holy Ghost composed the Psalms. Like all the rest of Scripture, they were written, not for consolation only, but also for *instruction*. We must, therefore, regard them in this, their higher character and far wider scope, as a portion of declared prophetic testimony, if we would gather from them all the blessing which, by the gracious and all-wise provision of the Father of lights, they were intended to convey to our souls.

Nor should these things be ever separated in our minds

as things distinct essentially, or mutually incompatible. For true knowledge is the very source of life and peace.² And if we confess that Jesus is THE TRUTH, and that all Scripture is "the word of Christ," we may assure ourselves that every progressive step which, by the grace of God, we are allowed to make, in searching what the Spirit wrote of *Him*, will be a positive addition to our joy. For He is the one Object of the Holy Ghost, who is not the Author only, but the sole effectual Expounder also, of the word of God. The spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus.³ As it respects the Psalms, the Lord's own words command our expectation of peculiar blessing, when we read them with a wise desire to discern Him there.⁴ The testimony of the apostles, to the same effect, is well known to the Christian reader.⁵

For the profitable study of prophetic Scripture, it is needful that the inquirer be personally established in the grace of God; and assuredly to know the Shepherd of their souls is the calling and distinctive blessing of the sheep which are His own. It is the Comforter, who is the Holy Ghost, who makes them thus acquainted with their portion and their joy. But His gracious office does not *end* in the establishment of individual faith upon the Rock of life; *He is the Teacher also of the children in the mysteries of God*. It is, indeed, a mournful fact, that partly through the evil working of the heart of unbelief, and not a little by means of time-honoured but erroneous traditional teaching, it happens often that the confidence and joy which should belong to the believer, from his birth in Christ, is but faintly apprehended even by fathers in the faith.

² John xvii. 3. ³ Rev. xix. 10. ⁴ Matt. xxii. 43; Luke xxiv. 44.

⁵ Acts ii. 25-34, xiii. 33; Heb. i. 8-12, &c.

ing Notes. It is time now to state explicitly the light in which the Psalms are there contemplated, with reference more especially to their prophetic interpretation.

The Spirit of truth, who is the alone revealer of Jesus, declares to us the fulness of His glory, according to the *manifold* titles which are given Him as the supreme Object of Divine counsel. As the Teacher of the children, He not only, therefore, addresses them through the ministry of the apostles and prophets of the New Testament, but unlocks for them besides the ancient treasures of prophetic testimony, which spake before both of the sufferings of Christ, and of the glories which should follow. The scribes of the kingdom are instructed in things new and old.⁸ That the Psalms contain an important part of the Messianic prophecies has been recognized at all times in the Church. David, the "found" and "chosen" of Jehovah, is an acknowledged type of Christ. What he spake in song he uttered as a *prophet*.⁹ His language therefore, which, in the wisdom of God, was moulded according to the changeful experience of his own eventful life, both as a persecuted outcast and as the possessor of the throne of Israel, bore always, as its ultimate burden, the Spirit's testimony to Messiah.¹

But while He who is the Root as well as Offspring of David has ever been of more account with the discerning reader of such Psalms than their immediate subject, and they who love the Saviour have many times found increase of their joy when tracing there the passage of the King of glory, through the dark course of His appointed travail to His triumphant entrance at the everlasting gates, much more than this remains. For the sure word of prophecy

⁸ Matt. xiii. 52.

⁹ Acts ii. 30.

¹ Compare his own expressions in 2 Sam. xxiii. 2, with Ps. xlv. 1.

not only comprehends within its compass the humiliation of the Son of God, and His resumption *in heaven* of the glory which for a season He had laid aside; the results of His finished work, both as they respect the present calling of the Church and the yet future dispensation of the fulness of times, in its effects upon *the earth and its inhabitants*, are both clearly predicted and copiously described in the ancient testimonies of the Spirit, and with much distinctness in the Psalms.

It is a mercy of God, second only in its magnitude to the recovery and general diffusion of saving doctrine by means of the Reformation, that in our later times there has been restored in some measure to the Church of God a sounder understanding respecting the "things to come," which form so large and important a branch of the Comforter's instruction to the saints.² The doctrine of the second advent of the Lord, not for the *final* judgment, but for the accomplishment both of the promises and threatenings which attach peculiarly to the existing dispensation of Divine long-suffering, though only partially acknowledged yet, is daily forcing itself more convincingly on the attention of believers. But, as was to be anticipated, the revival of long-neglected truth has been watched with hatred and alarm by the Deceiver, who well knows the burden of destruction which it bears towards himself. By every means he seeks to discredit a doctrine of such practical importance to the Church, and to degrade it in the minds of Christians to the level of a speculative question—a doubtful disputation, where *opinion* may range widely, but with which real faith has small concern. Nor has any thing more powerfully conduced to this than the readiness with which rash minds have

² John xvi. 13.

ventured on predictions wholly unauthorized by Scripture,³ and instead of *rightly dividing* the word of truth, have confounded together things which differ from each other in a wide and very marked degree.⁴

But God, who is greater than His adversary, will prevail, not only to accomplish all His counsel in its season, but likewise to secure, to those who stick unto His testimonies, a lamp of guidance through the darkest intricacies of the evil day. By recalling to His children's minds His own unshaken and irrevocable purposes concerning *Israel*, He gives them a clue to guide their faith unerringly past all the fallacious plausibilities of human policy into the prospective glory of that "world to come" of which the Spirit speaks. It is now to very many Christians no longer a forgotten truth, that Jesus died, not only for the ransom of His heavenly bride, that the once hidden mystery of God might be made known,⁵ but likewise for the *nation* whose He is according to the flesh.⁶ It is further acknowledged, that the several titles of "Son of Adam," "Son of David," and "King of Israel," were

³ As, for instance, when three at least of the more active writers on this subject concurred in naming the year 1847 as the time of the Lord's return; and since the first appearance of these Notes the same unauthorized precision has again and again had its futility exposed by the event. May He come earlier than their nearest date! I am aware of nothing but the secret pleasure of the Father that defers from day to day the promised hope of the believer. (John xiv. 3.) But it is a grief of heart to find some, who sincerely love the truth, amusing the souls of men with doubtful calculations, which only tend to neutralize the warnings and exhortations of the Holy Ghost. (1 Thess. v. 1-11.)

⁴ One of the most injurious examples of this is the tendency, which has sometimes shown itself in writings of this description, to set the *earth's* millennium before the Christian as the specific object of his desire, instead of the distinctive glory of the heavenly inheritance.

⁵ Eph. iii.; Col. i. 26, 27.

⁶ John xi. 51.

bestowed on the Incarnate WORD, not only to be humbled and disallowed, because the Scripture must be so fulfilled, but likewise, by the testimony of the same Spirit, to be hereafter glorified and universally confessed, in the very world which was the scene and instrument of His dishonour. To many of those who joy to see Jesus crowned with glory and honour on the Father's throne, it is an additional anticipation of delight that presently He will be manifested on His *own* throne also, to vindicate incontrovertibly His rights as "Governor among the nations," and "Prince of the kings of the earth." His "brethren," whose calling is to share the throne of that dominion, are surely interested in these things.⁷

When once these truths (the proofs of which are easily to be collected from the New Testament)⁸ are apprehended in the Christian's mind, the earlier prophetic testimony, and indeed the ancient Scripture generally, assumes for his mind another and far fairer aspect. Instead of devoting mental ingenuity to the worse than unprofitable task of trying to reconcile the testimonies and predictions, of which Israel and the nations are the subjects, to the *Church*, which is distinct from both, the hearts of those who note the order of God's testimonies become enlarged by meditating on the depth of the riches of His wisdom and knowledge, who has preserved in Scripture a sure record of His purpose towards the natural objects of His promise;⁹ while, in the present interval of Israel's dispersion, He gathers at His will another people, who shall

⁷ Psalm xii. 28; Rev. i. 5, iii. 21; John xx. 17.

⁸ These will appear abundantly in the course of the following work, where reference also is occasionally made to my Notes on the Epistles, for fuller illustration of some special points.

⁹ Romans ix.—xi.

praise Him, not in the quiet resting-places of Immanuel's *land*, but in the mansions of the Father's house in heaven.

No reader of the Psalms is unaware that, in addition to their richly varied reflection of individual emotion, they contain an abundant expression of the *collective* desires and experiences of the people of Jehovah. The faithful are contemplated in their fellowship both of sorrow and of joy. Common hopes are uttered, and there is a frequent deprecation of common danger and distress. But it is apparent that, both in the tone and spirit of thanksgiving and prayer, as well as in the local and national references which everywhere abound, we have before us something materially unlike the characteristic language of the Spirit of adoption. It is, in fact, to the voice not of Christian but of Jewish faith that we seem to listen in the class of Psalms just mentioned.¹ Under the varied circumstances of persecution, for the truth's sake, in their native land; of judicial dispersion, through the countries, for the national transgression; and, finally, of triumphant re-settlement, in full enjoyment of blessings both spiritual and temporal, in the heritage of Jacob, the natural children of Jehovah's Covenant are presented to us in the Psalms. It is a common feature, in many of the Messianic Psalms, that a change of number from singular to plural, and *vice versâ*, is observed. The gracious identity of Messiah with His people, who stand in their Redeemer only before God, may account for this. Frequently too, as will be noticed in the following pages, particular ex-

¹ In the remarks on Psalm xiii. the reader will find some of the distinctive peculiarities of Jewish and Christian faith exhibited in mutual contrast. See likewise the Notes on Psalms xcvi., cxliii., cxlv., and cxlviii.

pressions, which apply in truth to Jesus only, occur in Psalms the general subject of which is widely different.²

That at the close of this present dispensation of long-suffering, a Jewish remnant will be found, who, with remembrance of the ancient and as yet unrealized promises of national blessing, will turn with urgent supplication to Jehovah, is plain from several passages in the other prophets.³ That this remnant are frequently contemplated in the sympathetic language of the Spirit in the Psalms has been assumed in the following Notes; and my endeavour has been to open faithfully the meaning of the numerous Psalms in which their fortunes seem prophetically portrayed. In a word, national Jewish prophecies have been interpreted with a primary and especial reference to their proper subjects. It is, indeed, but seldom that practical application has been entirely omitted; generally speaking, *that* has been with me a leading and unceasing aim. But I have felt throughout the progress of my labour, that the object of supreme importance in such a work as the present should be to endeavour truly to convey to an inquiring reader the genuine meaning of the Holy Ghost. "And who is sufficient for these things?" May He who searches the hearts acquit the writer of arrogancy and vain conceit. I will not extend further these preliminary remarks; but subjoin merely what may be regarded as a general statement of the contents of this remarkable portion of God's word. I consider that the Psalms contain,

I. A full and varied expression of the grace of the Lord Jesus, in their prophetic description of the spotless Person and sufferings of the Man of Sorrows.

² See, as to this, the note on Psalm cxix.

³ Compare Isa. lxiii. 15-lxiv. *passim*.

II. An unfolding of His special relation to Israel as the rejected Messiah of Jehovah.

III. A rich and varied celebration of His glories, whether in the majesty of original Divinity, or as the appointed receiver of all headship and power both in heaven and on earth. In particular, the glory of His coming kingdom, as the God of the whole earth, is very fully and strikingly described.

IV. In connexion with the specific titles of Messiah as King of Israel and Ruler of the nations, there are descriptive testimonies, partly historical and partly prophetic, with respect both to Israel and the world at large. Especially the remnant which, preserved through all the vicissitudes of the national history, will form the nucleus of Jacob's promised increase in the land of his inheritance, seems very constantly before the eye of the Spirit in these prophecies.

Lastly, and as it respects their practical application, the Psalms are to the believer whose desires are towards the will of God a source inexhaustible of counsel, of comfort, and of blessing. The voice of the true Leader of the children⁴ speaks wisdom in them all, for the attentive ear.

⁴ Rom. viii. 14.

NOTES AND REFLECTIONS

ON

THE PSALMS.



Book I.

PSALM I.

THAT this and the following Psalm are without any prefatory title is perhaps to be accounted for by a reference to the nature of their respective subjects. They differ from most of those which follow in this respect, that the things of which the Spirit here treats had had no earlier typical shadow or historical prefigurement.

This opening Psalm presents to us an estimate of perfect human character, when tried in the furnace of an evil world, and determinately ascertained in the pure light of the Divine presence. It describes the blessedness of the righteous Man; of one who is *absolutely* such, and therefore worthy of Divine honour and commendation, as having himself honoured in his place the righteous God.

The outline which this Psalm displays is such as can be filled up adequately by the Person of the Christ alone. It is a sketch, if one may so speak, delineated by the Holy Ghost, as the Spirit of prophecy, of Jesus under His

especial character of Jehovah's perfect servant.¹ The Just One, found in fashion as a man,² is before us in this portrait. Let us notice some of its more prominent features.

Verses 1, 2. There is a twofold praise awarded in the blessing here pronounced upon the righteous Man. First, that of negative righteousness and purity of way: "that walketh not,"³ &c.; and, secondly that of positive obedience and entire devotedness to God: "his delight is in the law of Jehovah; and in His law doth he meditate day and night." This description is true of Jesus in both its parts, and of Him *alone*. It is indeed true of every be-

¹ Isaiah xlii.

² Phil. ii. 7, 8.

³ The structure of this verse is remarkable. The Spirit of God seems to indicate, by the terms employed, and the order of their sequence, the cumulative progression of human evil. Ungodly counsel is followed by sinful act, and results in the evil attainment of the heart's desire,—the hardened impenitency of self-satisfied impiety. The tree is rooted firmly in its own deep soil, and bears ripe fruits of judgment. Impunity, long extended, forms, as it were, a seat of scorn for the man who still hardens himself in his evil way against the persuasive patience of Divine wisdom.

Regarding this subject *dispensationally*, we may trace the three leading stages of progressive human iniquity here specified as follows: I. Antediluvian corruption was the result of the unrestrained license of the human will—"the counsel of the ungodly." II. The imposition of the law gave to the working of man's will the definite forms of transgression and rebellion—"the way of sinners." Lastly, the fountains of pure mercy are opened to a world convinced of sin, in the precious blood of the Lamb of God. But the preaching of the Gospel is the opportunity of man's highest contempt of God, in despising the riches of His goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering (Rom. ii.)—"the seat of the scorner." The last type of evil comprises in it both the former. The scorner of Christ is an ungodly rebel in his deeds and in his thoughts. Thus, at the close of the Psalm, it is "the way of the *ungodly*" which shall perish (comp. Jude 14, 15). The constitutional ungodliness (Rom. iv. 5; v. 6) of fallen nature is the source of every special form and demonstration of particular sin.

liever, that because he is himself "of God," he delights in the law of God in his *inward* man. But in every instance this principle of holiness is held, in afflictive and distressful bondage, in a body of sin and death. It is a thing not only foreign to his old nature, but directly opposed to it in every way. It is the result of his union with Him, who is made of God the Sanctification of every believer.⁴ Being such, it is practically maintainable only by the faith of Him.⁵ While, therefore, it is the privilege of every divinely-taught soul to rejoice with thanksgiving to God, who already gives us victory in Christ, the believer's experimental condition is one of necessary conflict. For there is a perpetually opposing principle of indwelling evil, which will cease to act only with the mortal pulse of this body of humiliation, in which we groan, as burdened, until the long-promised time of our change be come.⁶

Apart from the knowledge of completed deliverance in Christ, the desire of holiness in an awakened soul becomes an augmentation of personal wretchedness. For by the law is the knowledge of *sin*. The seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans is deeply instructive as to this. Let us, however, carefully remark that such experience as is there described, though not unfrequently for a time the bitter bread of an afflicted Christian's soul, is never *rightly* so. Christ is the *life*, and peace with God the settled portion, of the sinner once justified by faith. What he is in himself has come to its perpetual end in the cross of the Son of God. It is the law of the Spirit of life *in Christ Jesus*, and not the law of sin and death in himself, which is now the true index of the believer's condition in the sight of God.⁷

⁴ 1 Cor. i. 30.

⁵ Eph. iii. 12.

⁶ Rom. viii. 23; 2 Cor. v. 4; Phil. iii. 20, 21.

⁷ Rom. viii. 2.

The law works death to ruined nature. But to the Holy One it was the delight of His life while a stranger here below. He wrought its perfect righteousness in full, unqualified devotedness to the Father. Loving Him entirely, He delighted wholly in His will. This was His perpetual relation to Jehovah, as the born son of a woman. And now, having carried for oursakes His gracious obedience to the cross, He is become, by His resurrection from the dead, the *end* of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. It is in the power of redemption, and by virtue only of his union with his risen Saviour, that the believer finds morally and by imputation his own place in this Psalm.⁸

Verse 3 expresses the result of this perfect righteousness, according to the just award of God. Already we see Jesus crowned with glory and honour.⁹ The Psalm which follows will open this more fully. We have here the indefinite, because *absolute*, promise of perpetual peace and blessing. Quietness and assurance for ever, with all prosperity, and comely and abundant praise, are the portion of sustained obedience. Blessing and being blessed is the abiding estate of the just Man, whom God honours with a worthy recompence. But,

Verses 4, 5 contrast with this a different scene. The crowning of the righteous is an act of the same judgment which likewise determines the portion of the ungodly. The solemn counterpart of the foregoing picture of righteous blessedness is now presented in general terms. "The ungodly are *not so*." The absolute negation of all that constitutes human happiness in the Divine presence, is the recorded lot of those whom Jehovah will punish, in the day of visitation, with everlasting destruction from

⁸ Rom. viii. 4.

⁹ Heb. ii. 9.

His presence. *They have no place in the assembly of the righteous.* It is a solemn word, fitted to render yet more precious to the Christian the love of Him who is his Deliverer from this coming wrath. It may strike, on the other hand, as a note of warning on the ear of one who has yet to learn what it means to be at peace with God, that he may hasten, while yet the door of hope remains unclosed, to escape the fearful judgment of that day.

The concluding verse addresses itself comfortably to the hearts of all who bear in any measure the reproach of Christ. While proving the afflictions of the Gospel in any wise, they are cheered in the exercise of faith and patience by the sweet remembrance that the Lord has knowledge of His people's ways. His eyes, which scrutinize the hearts of men, are on *them* for good, and not for evil. Their path of trial will be found to lead to the brightness of eternal glory, when the end of the ungodly is as the smoke of a perpetual flame.¹

With respect to the full prophetic scope of this Psalm, it seems to extend to post-millennial times; to the time of the new heaven and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.² Both the conduct and the rewards here reviewed are based upon those eternal principles which will have their complete, and tranquil, and permanently undisturbed results, only when *God shall be all in all*. There is a limit beyond which the dispensational mutations of Divine government do not extend. The Son, when He shall have accomplished His millennial reign, to the glory of the Father, will render back the kingdom, in order that a changeless eternity may succeed, in which He will rejoice to confess subjection to the Father, that God may be all in all.³ The new earth, which is to appear

¹ Rev. xiv. 11. ² Rev. xxi. 1; 2 Peter iii. 13. ³ 1 Cor. xv. 28.

upon the vanishing of the old, will be the acceptable abode of God. His tabernacle will then be in continuance among men.⁴ Their ways, searched thoroughly, and altogether open to the Holy One, will be found to be only *righteousness*. Judgment will have clean gone by; and no offending thing will any more remain to pollute the presence and defile the rest of God. He will take a perpetual pleasure in His new and faultless work—a work which will await no time of change, but is the end and full perfection of His way.⁵

In the Millennium there will doubtless be a large and triumphant illustration of the doctrine of this Psalm. Israel will then be known and honoured as the righteous nation of Jehovah—His elect.⁶ *Their* work will prosper, because they will themselves be standing in the full results of that which God had wrought for them, through the gracious obedience of the Just One unto death.⁷ This subject will be amply opened as we advance further in the Psalms. Meanwhile, in the expression, “whatsoever he doeth shall prosper,” the Church already finds her blessed place as the first-fruits of the travail of Him who seemed to spend His strength for nought. Earthly rather than heavenly results are, however, here presented. The proper interest of the Church in these things, as the anointed

⁴ Rev. xxi. 3. Notes on 2 Cor. v. *ad fin.*

⁵ The word of Divine revelation closes with the announcement of this grand result of the manifold wisdom of God. To speak of the *end* of God's way in any other sense would be folly. There is one passage of Scripture (Eph. ii. 7) in which *ages* to come are spoken of. All we know of these is the blessed certainty that their revolution will be in perpetual witness to the exhaustless kindness of God in Christ towards His Church. The first of the series is the Millennial age, when they who suffer now with Christ will share His throne.

⁶ Isaiah lxx. 21–23.

⁷ Isaiah xlv. 25.

bride of the Lamb, will appear more distinctly in the sequel.

It may be remarked, in conclusion, that in the creature, righteousness is obedience; just as sin is lawlessness.⁸ Jesus *naturally* delighted in the law of God. God was His exceeding joy. It is, on the other hand, the saving *grace* which, by the redeeming blood of Jesus, brings us nigh to God, and makes us personally acceptable in the Worthy One, that *teaches* the believer to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts.⁹

PSALM II.

THIS Psalm contains a solemn record, by the Spirit of prophecy, of the Divine counsels with respect to this earth and its inhabitants, as they stand related to the Person and manifested dominion of Messiah, the Son of God.

Its scope is limited. For although, as we shall presently see, the heavens are made mention of as the seat of Divine majesty in its excellent glory, the true sphere within which the action of the Psalm confines itself is exclusively the present earth.

It opens with a statement of the confederacy of human wickedness in rebellious counsel against Jehovah and His Christ (verses 1—3). The will of God and His commandments are evermore a grievance to corrupted nature. They are as *bands* and *cords*.

The quotation which is made elsewhere¹ of the first two verses of this Psalm assures us plainly, that by the

⁸ Ἡ ἀμαρτία ἐστὶν ἡ ἀνομία. (1 John iii. 4.)

⁹ Titus ii. 11, 12.

¹ Acts iv. 25, 26.

rejection of the holy child Jesus at His first advent, these words have been, in principle at least, fulfilled. This was manifested more especially in the resistance which was offered in Jerusalem to the Holy Ghost when, as the Spirit of *grace*, He first delivered there His testimony to them who had been the betrayers and murderers of that Jesus whom they then heard preached to them as an exalted Prince and Saviour. There was, in truth, a strange and strong confederacy of sinners against their own souls at that time joined, in vain though hostile counsel, against Jehovah and His Christ. For "both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together." But although the passage has evidently received a partial accomplishment in those events, it is quite apparent, from subsequent testimonies of the same Spirit, that a fulfilment of these words, more awful and decisive still, has yet to take effect. There is a time at hand, when not a part only, but the whole of this remarkable Psalm will have its complete exhaustion, as a prophecy of the Messianic kingdom and the glory of the Son of God.

If we compare the verses now before us with the language of the prayer of the church in the passage already referred to, we find immediately an important variation. In the latter passage, "the people of Israel" are distinguished expressly from the Gentiles as parties in the same confederacy; but in the first verse of the present Psalm we meet with no such distinction. The word by which the nation of Israel is almost invariably described in the Old Testament is not used at all.² The perfect

² The words used are **יִשְׂרָאֵל** and **יִשְׂרָאֵלִים** terms, neither of which is ever used to indicate Israel separately. That they comprehend the nation under its aspect of degradation, while disowned of God is easily admitted.

wisdom of God is very discernible in the structure and verbal expression of the Spirit's testimonies. Numerous passages occur (especially in the prophetic scripture) which are so constructed as to be easily capable of being adduced in proof of historical events, to which, as predictions, they immediately apply, while remaining still in their original and unaltered relation to the general prophetic strain of which they form a part, and which, as a whole, may remain still unfulfilled. The Spirit of God has frequently thus used, in the New Testament, detached portions of His more ancient testimonies, while a reference to the context shows immediately that the entire scope of the prophecy respects a state of things materially different from that to which it has, in the meantime, been thus partially applied.³ The present passage affords a striking example of the principle just stated. The scope of this Psalm is most clearly Messianic. We have seen it quoted by the Holy Ghost with immediate application to the times of the *reproach* of Christ; but it is manifestly to the kingdom and power of the *reigning* Christ that our thoughts are directed in the Psalm itself. *Ruling power and apparent judicial action* are its leading topics, which put it in plainest contrast with the existing dispensation of long-suffering and

(Hosea i. 9; Amos ix. 7.) The word וְ is the only one which is generally used in the singular number to distinguish Israel, as the people which Jehovah owned, from the rest of the nations. The former of the two terms above quoted is, indeed, often used in the singular for Israel; but *always* with some qualifying adjunct. The latter is found twice only in that meaning; once with a pronominal affix, which settles its determinate sense (Isaiah li. 4), and once without it (Isaiah lv. 4), where the context seems to require that it should be referred to Israel.

³ A comparison of Luke iv. 18 with Isaiah lxi. 1-7, and of Matthew iv. 16 with Isaiah ix. 1-7, will illustrate this. This subject will frequently recur in the progress of these Notes.

much abused grace. But this will become more evident on a closer examination of its language.

The first two verses have, as we have seen, received their primary fulfilment in the conspiracy of human wickedness, which blindly wrought for the accomplishing of the perfect counsel of the blessed and all-wise God of grace. But the Scriptures speak distinctly of a day when, in the valley of decision, there shall be gathered together another and more multitudinous league.⁴

The objects of this last confederacy will be identical with the former. It will be against Jehovah and His Christ that the heathen will again rage, and the people imagine a vain thing, when, under the guidance of the lawless one—the beast, the wilful king, as he is variously described in the testimony of prophecy⁵—the armies of the nations shall have formed their rendezvous of preparation in the place which, in the Hebrew tongue, is called Armageddon.⁶

A very important difference must, however, be remarked, which widely distinguishes the circumstances respectively of these two great crises in the history of human madness. In the former case, the rejection and crucifixion of the Lord of glory by the princes of this world was the preparation for the dispensation of that perfect grace which, in the gospel of Christ, has been preached to every creature under heaven.⁷ The immediate cause which turned the full stream of gracious promise towards the nations of the world was, in the wisdom of God, the enmity of Israel; who, after desiring a murderer instead of the Son of the Blessed, whom they slew and hanged upon a tree, had

⁴ Joel iii. 11–16.

⁵ Compare Isa. xiv. 4; 2 Thess. ii. 8; Rev. xiii.; and Dan. xi. 36.

⁶ Rev. xvi. 16.

⁷ Col. i. 6, 23.

filled the measure of their sins by the persecution of those who preached remission through the blood which they had shed.⁸

But the latter crisis will arrive at the expiration of that unknown term of gracious long-suffering, during which the damnation of the apostate lingers not, though grace still tarries in the city of destruction until the full work of appointed mercy be complete.⁹ Moreover, on the former of these two occasions, the *Jews* were the real oppressors, the Gentiles acting only at their instigation, and consenting slowly to participate in a sin, the heavier guilt of which remains on those whose lie against the Divine glory deceived the rulers of the world. But when this last association of iniquity is formed, the immediate object of the oppressor's fury will be the city which, after long treading under Gentile feet,—in fulfilment of the burden of desolation once pronounced, not without tears of gracious sorrow by the Lord, whose prophets she had slain, and whose own Divine Person she was blindly bent upon refusing,—shall then be come to the bottom of that cup of trembling, whose dregs of judgment are ordained for other lips than hers.¹

Verse 3 reveals the true aim of this counsel of wickedness. It is the self-declared emancipation of the natural will from all Divine control that will deliver up the banded nations to destruction. Firmly bound in the cords of their own iniquity, and held fast in the snare of the devil who deceives them, they will become the subjects of the righteous judgment of the Lord, for whose footstool His enemies must be prepared.²

Verse 4 contrasts the still security of Omnipotent

⁸ Rom. xi. 11, 12; 1 Thess. ii. 15, 16.

⁹ 2 Pet. ii. iii.; Jude.

¹ Isa. li. 17, 22, 23.

² Psalm cx. 1.

Majesty in the heavens—hastening or retarding at His will the march of human events, which all concur to work His pleasure—with the futile purposes of infatuated human wickedness. The position which Christ now occupies is the right hand of the Majesty on high.³ He is sitting on a throne which, as it is the throne of God, was the proper resting-place of the Eternal Son from everlasting. But relatively to His mediatorial place and titles, it is not upon His own throne, but on that of the *Father* that He is now set. His own words⁴ of gracious promise to the suffering confessors of His name, distinguish explicitly between His own throne and that whereon as yet He *waits*, until His enemies be made His footstool.

This verse describes therefore the actual *position* of the exalted Christ, while it indicates prospectively an *action* yet to come.⁵ Already the brightness of that glory, with which He is there crowned, is the perfect expression of Divine scorn at the impotent madness of the sinners who rejected Him.⁶ It is, moreover, a solemn earnest of that coming day when every eye shall see Him. As yet, however, His presence with the Father is in gracious intercession for His people, as the great High Priest of their profession, and in still protracted long-suffering towards the world.

But the day is at hand when the fear of the wicked will indeed overtake them. Then He, who now entreats with fervent importunity poor self-destroying sinners to be reconciled to God, will mock in righteous derision at their calamity who would none of Him or His through the long day of patience and of grace.⁷ *Then*⁸ (verse 5)

³ Heb. i. 3.

⁴ Rev. iii. 21.

⁵ As to this, see further the remarks on Psalm cx.

⁶ Acts ii. 36.

⁷ Prov. i. 24 *ad fin.*

⁸ ¶

shall He do what now, in mercy, He refrains from doing. He will speak to them in His *wrath*, and vex them in His sore displeasure. Not thus is the power of Christ now exercised. The appeal of the first suffering witnesses for His name, already noticed, brought indeed, as its answer, a token of that power which is in readiness to shake, in a very little while, both earth and heaven.⁹ But the glory of that strength was then put forth to confirm their fainting hearts, and to fit them for a bold and patient testimony in the Gospel of the *grace of God*. The wrath of God is revealed, meanwhile, from heaven, and is declared in the same Gospel to be ready to descend upon the children of disobedience.¹ But *now* His ministry is that of *reconciliation*; *then*, on the contrary, the ministry of vengeance will have its course. It will be the time of the *Lamb's wrath*. Divine displeasure and perfect hatred of sin will find then their fearful scope in the judgment of those vessels of wrath, which have been fitted to destruction by the perversion of their own ungodly will.²

Verse 6 declares the glory of Jehovah in the establishment of Jesus as *His King* upon Zion, the mountain of His holiness. The transition in this verse to the first person is strikingly solemn and impressive.

It was as God's earthly King that Jesus was disallowed and rejected in the days of His flesh.³ "This is the King of the Jews" was the title of accusation placed over the

⁹ Acts iv. 31; Heb. xii. 26-29.

¹ Rom. i. 18; Eph. v. 6.

² Rom. ix. 22.

³ Much more than this, undoubtedly. They saw and hated both Him and His Father. He was dishonoured and disowned in *all* His titles, as well as in His most blessed Person. But it was more emphatically as the promised Messiah, the Heir of David's throne, that He was rejected of men. "If He be the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him," &c.

head of the crucified Son of God. But they knew not that the Judge of Israel must be smitten first,⁴ and die *by the grace of God*, before He could, in the saving health of His own accomplished Redemption, be known in Zion as the reigning King of righteousness and peace.

Zion is in this passage, as elsewhere *universally* in Jewish Scripture, regarded as the centre of God's earthly purposes. His controversy with man—with Satan, will have its eventual issue *there*. Now Messiah is God's King. It is His purpose to set up a kingdom *under* the whole heaven.⁵ Things in earth, as well as things in heaven, are to be gathered under the headship and dominion of the reigning Christ.⁶ With respect to the former of these, the centre of the unremovable earthly dominion of God's Anointed is the city of His choice, the earthly Jerusalem. She is the place where Jehovah's name has been irrevocably set. As the city of acceptable solemnities, she will be known and delighted in by the nations in that day as the joy of the whole earth, when the presence of the Great King shall have again sanctified the place of His feet with the brightness of a glory which shall not again depart.⁷ This subject will further unfold itself as we proceed. Let us now confine our attention to the Psalm before us.⁸

⁴ Micah v. 1. ⁵ Dan. vii. ⁶ Eph. i. 10. ⁷ Psalm xlviii.

⁸ The Church by faith sees Jesus crowned with glory and honour; and, as herself come to Mount Zion, finds Him there in all the fulness of mediatorial blessing and glory which the blood of the New Covenant has secured. But, although the Spirit of God uses the term "Zion" in a figurative sense in the passage just referred to, the figure thus used with a heavenly application is borrowed from the *earthly reality*, the hour of whose blessing attends the entrance of Israel with unveiled heart within the bond of the New Covenant. (2 Cor. iii. 16.) This Covenant, it should be remembered, is *theirs*. It is made in Christ "with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah." Although they are, because of unbelief, still nationally aliens from their own blessings, they will not always thus

Verse 7. The voice of the Spirit of Christ declares now the decree. In this publication of Messiah's title the believer finds the proper sanction of the countless blessings wherewith he is already blessed in Christ. For his life is the ascended Son of God.⁹ The Holy Ghost is now sent down from heaven to claim the allegiance of men to God, as the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, and to *Him* as the anointed Heir of all things. Jesus has been declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead,¹ and the words of the present verse refer to that event. "*This day* have I begotten thee," is the solemn recognition by the Spirit of truth that the Man Jesus, whom God raised from the dead, is in very deed the Son of God. It is not the doctrine of Messiah's eternal Sonship that is here expressed. Were that the meaning of the passage, the words "this day" could have no place. It is rather the justification in the Spirit, according to the mystery of godliness,² of *Him* whose title of Sonship had first been disallowed and dishonoured in the flesh.

Verses 8, 9 present the ever-blessed Lord as the receiver of the inheritance. In the present Psalm this is limited to earth, no mention being made of the heavenly remain. *Israel* is to be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation. The era of this national deliverance will be the time when those large and full blessings which form the subject-matter of so much of the Old Testament prophecy will be fulfilled in them; and, *through them*, to the nations of the world. The relation in which the Church stands to these things will appear more fully in the sequel. Meanwhile, it may be remarked generally, that as *all* earthly conditions of blessing are but figures of more exalted and heavenly originals, the adaptation of the name of that mountain which is the future earthly seat of reigning grace, to the actual sphere of that *same* grace which now in its eternal results is revealed to faith in heavenly places, is both clear and simple.

⁹ Col. iii. 4.

¹ Rom. i. 4.

² 1 Tim. iii. 16.

portion. With reference to the Lord Jesus as the object of conferred blessing, it may be remarked that He owns in Scripture a two-fold subjection. First, He is, as the Son, in a natural subjection to the Father.³ Again, as God's anointed King, He honours Him who has exalted Him.⁴ Heavenly as well as earthly dominion is His, for He is appointed Heir of *all things*. But, speaking generally, the Psalms treat only of His earthly glory. The ninth verse has a peculiar importance from its bearing upon the relation in which the Christian stands towards the general subject of this Psalm. It is expressly quoted by the Lord to John,⁵ in special promise to those who, while their calling is to suffer with Him, are sustained in "the patience of Christ" by the hope of the kingdom which they are so soon to share. This consideration alone is quite sufficient to show conclusively that the action of the Psalm must in the main be referred to a future dispensation. As to the special import of the language of this verse, we shall have it more fully before us in some of the later Psalms.

Verses 10, 11. "Be wise, therefore," &c. The doctrine here expressed applies, in principle, at all times, and therefore in the present dispensation. But the full meaning of this exhortation will be known and exemplified only when the King is set upon His own throne; when Christ, that is, is manifestly revealed as the "Prince of the kings of the earth."⁶ *Now*, kings and judges are not addressed in the Gospel message as such,⁷ but as ruined

³ 1 Cor. xv. 58; John v. 19.

⁴ 2 Sam. xxiii. 3.

⁵ Rev. ii. 26, 27.

⁶ Rev. i. 6.

⁷ I am not forgetful of the apostle's word, "King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets?" I remember also that his bonds in Christ were at Rome made manifest in Cæsar's palace. What is meant in the text is, that

sinner; to whom, as to others, is preached the free Gospel of the grace of God. The benefits of the one mediation are open to them as *men*.⁸ They are called, as others, out of the world, into the Church,—to go without the camp, bearing the reproach of Christ. *Then* there will be rendered the homage of earthly principalities and powers to the Person and sceptre of the true Solomon. Kings of nations will then be called on to hold their thrones as vassals of Jehovah's Christ, who will in that day be known and honoured as the God of all the earth.⁹ He will be owned, not only as the true Son and Heir of David, but likewise as the Son of God. As it is elsewhere written: "He shall be *my Son*."¹

We have in the last verse a striking expression of the vigour and reality of the reign of Righteousness,² coupled with a full declaration of the blessedness of all who find their refuge in the Person of Him who will thus reign.³ It is the *Son* who must receive this honour. Such is the

the preaching of Christ in the present dispensation is not to kings and judges with a view to their ordering their government aright, but for the saving of their own souls. A crowned head who should endeavour to rule his kingdom according to the principles of Christ, would soon become practically aware of the incompatibility of the hope of the heavenly calling with the course of the present world. Flesh will not obey Spirit. Nor would a nation, not itself regenerate, accept the government of one who knew no man after the flesh. Yet this hinders not a monarch from being personally an object of saving mercy. He may, by the grace of God, be one of the few of this world's mighties who are called. (1 Cor. i. 26-29.)

⁸ 1 Tim. ii. 1-6. ⁹ Zech. xiv. 9; Isaiah liv. 5. ¹ 2 Sam. vii. 14.

² קִי־יִבְרַח כְּמַעַט אָפוֹ "Denn bald entglüheth sein Zorn."—DE WETTE. Expressive, as it appears to me, of the peremptory decision with which the sceptre of righteousness will abase everything which in that day shall lift itself against the title of Divine majesty with which the Anointed of Jehovah will then be openly invested.

³ Isaiah xxxii. *passim*.

sure counsel of the Father.⁴ The believer, who has tasted that the Lord is gracious, now honours Him, in the spirit of a grateful and rejoicing confidence, without dread or suspicion of His wrath. For the shed blood of the Lamb is the eternal pledge of a perfected love, which neither the weakness of the creature nor Satanic malice can disturb.⁵

The concluding words of this verse find a present daily fulfilment in the fleeing of believing sinners to the Name of Jesus, the Son of God. A blessing is pronounced on every one who puts his trust in Him.⁶ The Psalm must, however, be regarded, on the whole, as a prophecy whose fulfilment is incomplete *in fact*, although faith deseries, in the glorified Person of the exalted Christ, the living completion of all the promises of God.⁷

PSALM III.

AN appeal addressed to Jehovah, in the hour of secret peril and distress, by the man after His own heart. The *name* of Jehovah is the ground of this appeal; for David understood the mystery of the grace of God.

Accepting as authentic the title of this Psalm, it may be well to consider for a moment the circumstances under which it was composed. David was an outcast from the throne and city of his royalty, a fugitive from the face of his own son, who sought his life. Such was his position. But in this he was but realizing the effect of his own earlier sin. Absalom's rebellion had been predicted by the

⁴ John v. 23.

⁵ Rom. viii. 39; 1 John iv. 17.

⁶ הָיָה *Infra*, on Psalm lxxiv. 1, 2.

⁷ 2 Cor. i. 20.

same messenger of God who had charged upon the conscience of the king the iniquity of his transgression. Yet the same mouth that in faithful testimony had brought his sins to mind, bore witness also to the grace which already had obliterated them from God's remembrance. "The Lord also hath put away thy sin," was the prophet's ready word of re-assurance to the conscience-stricken king.¹ There had, therefore, been a complete restoring of his soul to God. His conscience had been clean purged from the defilement of his sin.² Meanwhile, though many years had since passed tranquilly away, he had to keep in memory the recorded chastisement which the Lord had purposed, and which He would accomplish surely in its time. How far he *did* remember this is known to God alone. But when at length the stroke of this most sharp affliction came, we find him meeting it in the hopeful steadfastness of a heart that knew the secret of the Lord. Many might rise against him. Many might say of his soul, "There is no help for *him* in God" (verse 2). His present calamity might easily appear to those who only looked to facts to be a tardy yet surely retributive stroke of Divine judgment on the man of blood. But Jehovah was the trusted buckler of his soul (verse 3). He understood the blessedness of the man to whom the *Lord* will not impute transgression, though man might loudly and unsparingly condemn.³ The arrival of the trial served only to call yet more distinctly to David's soul a remembrance of the secret and pure ways of Him who had met him, at the hour of his deepest need, in the rich fulness of restoring mercy; though for His name's sake, and for the furtherance of His servant's

¹ 2 Sam. xii.

² The personal experience of David as to this may be further learned from Psalm li.

³ Psalm xxxii.

profit, He would not spare the rod of necessary discipline. In very mercy God would chasten whom He loved.⁴

Viewed thus, in its first intention, the Psalm is full of deep and precious instruction of the most practical kind for the believer. Its great moral burden is the sufficiency and faithfulness of God as a Saviour. Circumstances and events of no kind or order can frustrate the counsels of the God of all grace.⁵ His blessing is upon His people *always*. It does not remove from them, because it has been *freely* bestowed. Never having been attracted to them by their own intrinsic worthiness, it will never be withdrawn from them on account of their transgressions, although sore chastisements may remind a delinquent partaker of His mercy, that the God with whom he has to do is *holy*. But the continuance of His people's blessing is conditional upon nothing in themselves. It stands in God. And God is of single mind, and stable in His ways; not revoking nor repenting the gifts and callings of His own free choice. Christ, as the living fulness of the grace of God, is the lesson which is being taught to every disciple of the Comforter,⁶ through the varied experiences of his earthly course. Personal failure, or even sin, in the unworthy vessel of this grace, does not and cannot falsify God's covenant of life and peace.

God has often suffered, as in David's case, the soul of a Christian to taste, in a very painful way, the fruit of his own disobedience. For He is not mocked. A sowing to the flesh must produce inevitably a harvest of corruption in some shape.⁷ An erring saint will surely find a verification of this principle in his own experience. But the *end* of a believer is the God who has accepted him in

⁴ Heb. xii.

⁶ John xvi. 14.

⁵ 1 Peter v. 10.

⁷ Gal. vi. 7, 8, 9.

Christ. It is salvation, therefore, and eternal blessing. To inherit a blessing is his calling.⁸ Intermediate sorrows, which he may too often have to refer to his own folly, act on him in the way of gracious discipline, that God's own gift of "precious faith" may have its fruitful exercise in the ways of righteousness. They are among the necessary means which the Father of spirits uses to make us partakers of His holiness.

Full of profit as this Psalm is, when thus considered, it has a yet higher meaning and interest as a prophetic expression of the experience of the Holy One of God, when, amid the enemies who sought his life, He trusted in God as in One near both to justify and to deliver.⁹

Jesus was God's King—His Anointed; yet was He as an outcast and an alien in the midst of His own. The nation disallowed Him; its rulers abhorred Him.¹ The hearts of the men of Israel had been stolen away by a lying phantom of their own invention. They desired a Messiah, but it was not the Anointed of Jehovah that was the object of their search. Themselves without the love of God,² they could not recognize or honour God's elect. When the marred visage of the Man of sorrows presented itself to their view, and forced them to reflection on the cause of that close fellowship with grief which had graven such lines of care upon His face, they charged it altogether to His shame. The last ignominy of His dishonoured death was imputed by them to His personal worthiness to be numbered with transgressors. They esteemed Him smitten of God and afflicted. The troubles of Jesus were indeed enlarged! There were *many* that arose against the

⁸ 1 Peter iii. 9.

⁹ Isa. 1. 8, 9; Heb. ii. 13.

¹ Zech. xi. 8; Luke xix. 14; John ix. 22.

² 1 John v. 42.

lonely Man of sorrows: Scribes, Pharisees, Herodians, Saducees, Lawyers; the men of Nazareth, his reputed birthplace; priests and people alike: all set themselves in a discordant harmony of wickedness against the blessed Person and title of the Son of God. They disowned Him as Jehovah's Christ, the messenger of the Covenant, for whose arrival they professed to wait. Meanwhile, the Son of man, who had among His own no place of shelter for His head, found sweet repose in Him whose name He came to glorify, and for whose sake he endured reproach. He was not left alone.³ He lay down thus and slept in peace, behind the shield of His excellency whom He trusted; none making Him afraid, until the time of that fear came, to meet which, and by meeting to destroy it for ever for His people's sake, He had come into the world.

It is in His connexion with the nation of God's choice that the Lord is more especially discovered in this Psalm, and in the Psalms generally. Hence, in the latter verses, there appears to be a reference to that great deliverance wherein the ungodly aggressors upon Immanuel's title, and upon the suffering remnant of His love, will suddenly be broken in pieces at the advent of His power. The blessing of Jehovah will be upon His earthly people in the day when, having completed the separation of the silver from the dross, by the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning,⁴ He shall bring near His righteousness to the remnant of His chosen, and shall place salvation in Zion for Israel His glory.⁵

³ John viii. 29.

⁴ Isa. iv. 4; Zech. xiii. 9.

⁵ Isa. xlvi. 13.

PSALM IV.

WE may at once pass by the son of Jesse in our consideration of this Psalm, in order to contemplate, through its medium, his Divine Antitype.

In its opening verse we hear the voice of Messiah's supplication to Jehovah as the God of *His righteousness*.¹ Jesus stood ever, in a natural acceptance, before the righteous God. Because He was holy, harmless, and separate from sinners, He had always an immediate appeal to Him. His own words, "Righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee, but I *have* known Thee,"² mark the essential separateness of the Just and Holy One from the surrounding evil of a world which still lies in the wicked one. In His poverty, and under the reproach of men, He found Jehovah evermore His refuge, and that because of righteousness. "He committed Himself unto Him that judgeth *righteously*."³

Verse 2. In the full consciousness of His own perfect title as the Holy One⁴ of God, to the homage both of Israel and of all mankind, He now apostrophizes the

¹ Fully and richly, indeed, is this same appeal fitted by the Spirit of truth to the lips of the child of God, who knows, in the God of the Lord Jesus Christ, the God of his righteousness. But while large entrance is thus opened into the Psalm as a vehicle for the true expression of Christian experience, the believer's ability to draw full comfort from this and similar Psalms will always be enhanced proportionately to the clearness with which he discerns in them the Person of Jesus, the author and finisher of faith. (Heb. xii. 2.)

² John xvii. 25.

³ 1 Peter ii. 23.

⁴ תָּקִיד

blindness and infatuated wickedness of those who turned His glory into shame. "O ye sons of men," &c. He was despised and rejected *of men*. His own would none of Him. For their hearts were gone far astray from the truth of God. They loved vanity. They sought a lie. Their beloved was not God's beloved. They looked for a Messiah according to the lusts of their own hearts, and did the deeds of their father, the devil, in shaming and repudiating the name and title of Jehovah's Christ.⁵ Going about to establish their own righteousness, they stumbled at God's choice—at His elect and precious Stone—at JEHOVAH Himself, whom they falsely claimed to know, while HE passed before their face continually, and they discerned Him not.⁶

How must the soul of Jesus, knowing as God His own deep thoughts, while as man He entered perfectly into the gracious realities of the Father's love towards the world, have yearned and sickened at the spectacle of laborious and methodical madness which met His view on every side! They sought a sign, and demanded credentials from Him who was daily causing the goodness of Jehovah, the Shepherd and Healer of Israel, to pass before their eyes. But the *whole* heart was sick. The madness which had always lived, though latent, in the heart of man, and which had already testified its presence there by varied outward proofs,⁷ was now about to come forth in its full display, and to set up its imperishable monument in the cross of the rejected Son of God.

Verse 3. "But know," &c. The rejection of Jesus by

⁵ John viii.

⁶ Isaiah viii. 13, 14.

⁷ More especially in the form of idolatry. As when *Israel*, forgetting God their Saviour, had changed their glory into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass. (Ps. cvi. 20, 21.)

His own shut Him up more emphatically into those deeper counsels which were by these means to be brought to pass, and made ready the way of Him whose footsteps are not known, to attain the end of His eternal purpose. He had purposed in Himself to lay the burden of *all* glory on His Christ—to shed *all* blessings on the head of Him who was forsaken of His brethren and rejected by the princes of this world. Messianic honour might be refused Him; and Israel, instead of being gathered under the promised blessings of the covenant, might have to be scattered to the four winds of heaven, because of their rejection of the Son of David. Still, this was all to work in furtherance of that deeper scheme of all-comprising blessing and glory, whereby, in the risen and ascended Son of God, there should be gathered together things in heaven as well as things on earth.⁸

Meanwhile, Jehovah sets apart His Holy One.⁹ The glory of the now exalted Christ declares this truth already to the Church. He is known through the Spirit, who reveals Him thus to faith, as “holy, harmless, separate from sinners, and *made higher than the heavens.*”¹ Presented thus to faith, He is the joy of those who know, through grace, their union with Himself; and who, while awaiting the manifestation of this blessed mystery in the day of His appearing, rest trustingly upon His ever-saving intercession as the sustaining power of an unbroken fellowship with God. The shame of the Cross, once borne for our sakes, has now been changed to joy and endless honour in

⁸ Eph. i. 10.

⁹ הַפְּלֵה יְהוָה חֲסִיד לֹו 'Εθαυμάστωσε Κύριος τὸν ὅσιον αὐτοῦ.—LXX.
 “*Mirabilem reddidit Dominus Sanctum suum.*”—HIERON. “*Erkennet doch, dass Jehova seinen Frommen auserkoren.*”—DE WETTE.

¹ Heb. vii. 26.

the Father's presence. He hath raised Him up and given Him glory; and (blessed and most wondrous truth!) *that* joy is even *now* shed abroad in the hearts of poor believing sinners by the power of the Holy Ghost. *We* joy in *God* through our Lord Jesus Christ.²

The remaining verses of this truly precious Psalm are full of value and comfort to an open ear, but cannot now be dwelt on in detail. They address themselves to the believer's heart and conscience, on the ground of his personal sanctification in the Lord. Fruits of that sanctifying by the Father which is through the truth³ are found to abound in the man of Jehovah's separation. Godly fear, self-judgment, spiritual worship; confidence and rejoicing in God in the hour of natural distress; patient waiting for Him, resting in hope, quietness, and abiding assurance;—attach themselves as ornaments of grace to the expectant heir of God's salvation. Godliness, with contentment, is found to yield a richer revenue of gladness to the believer than corn and wine can furnish to the flesh. These things shine brightly for the counsel and comfort of the soul that turns to this Psalm for personal profit and refreshment. The apostle, by his quotation⁴ in Eph. iv. 26, has led the way in this practical application.

Yet I do not doubt that the Jewish remnant⁵ of the last times are prophetically contemplated also in this Psalm. The change from singular to plural at verse 6 is not unconstructive as to this; we shall very frequently find similar

² Rom. v. 5-11; John xvii. 22.

³ John xvii. 17.

⁴ Quoting, as is generally known, and as was his frequent custom, from the Septuagint version.

⁵ For an account of this remnant, and of the points of variance between their spiritual experience and that of a Christian walking in the light, see the remarks on Psalm xiii.

transitions. Messiah in one part of a Psalm appears to speak in person; while in another part we have the expression of His Spirit, as in the sympathy of grace He appropriates the condition or circumstances of His earthly people.

PSALM V.

THE tone and general character of this Psalm are easily perceived. It is a prayer of faith, sent up from a heart in which the discernment of God as the shield and rewarder of them that seek Him, is found in union with a very deep sense of the prevailing evil and ungodliness which daily present themselves to the contemplation of the faithful man. Vexing of soul because of the abundance of iniquity¹ is thus a leading feature in its general expression. This is accompanied by a strong tone of righteous testimony against the evil, rising, in the latter verses, into a direct imprecation of Divine vengeance upon the workers of iniquity. A steady view is maintained throughout of *God* in the paramount and unchanging majesty of His truth and power. He shines cheerily upon the soul of faith through the mists of present evil and distress. Large entrance is enjoyed, moreover, into His counsels which respect the end. Hence, patience is wrought in tribulation, and joy abounds in the sure hope of a deliverance, which is deferred only by the counsels of unerring love. The soul is stayed on God; it is, therefore, full of His peace. The *holiness* of God is found to be the security both of ultimate and enduring blessing to the believer, and of eventual destruction to the evil-doer.

¹ 2 Peter ii. 8.

That this Psalm expresses prophetically the pleadings of the Spirit of Christ in the Jewish remnant of the latter day, I do not doubt. Jehovah seems to sleep; but faith, holding fast the sure word of promise, waits still in hopeful patience through the dark watches of the night of sorrow. The revelation of Him who is at once their God and their King² is the true aim of the hope here expressed (verse 2). The manifestation of Messiah is a Jewish expectation, as well as the blessed hope of the Church; but there is a wide difference between these things. By the remnant of Israel He will be looked for as the promised King, the Branch of Jehovah, beneath whose shade the united families of Judah and Ephraim may lie down and be at lasting rest. The Church, on the other hand, awaits the coming of the promised hour when, taken as in a moment to be for ever with the Lord, she shall receive investment of that heavenly glory, in which she will be then arrayed, as the anointed bride and fellow-heir of Christ. In that brightness she will shine forth in the day when Israel's earthly hope, together with the general emancipa-

² The kingly title of Christ is never a prominent one in the revelations of the Comforter to the Church; nor is He ever presented expressly to the Church as her *King*, although her Lord and Head is assuredly such in His infinitely full and gracious Person. It is hers rather to be the bride, the Lamb's wife; the Eve of the second Adam. He *is*, indeed, and is by the Church alone confessed to be both "King of kings, and Lord of lords." Moreover, a characteristic blessing of the Christian is that he is already "translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son." (Col. i. 13.) In worshipping Him, it is the believer's joy to think of Him as "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named" (Eph. i. 21); to see Him crowned, not with one only, but with *many* crowns. (Rev. xix. 12.) But it is a part of the Church's expectation to reign with Him when the time of His kingdom shall have come. At His manifestation as the Prince of the kings of the earth, there will likewise be displayed the glory of the Church as His anointed partner in that throne. (Rom. viii. 29, 30; Rev. iii. 21.)

tion of the now groaning creature, shall be realized in the manifesting of the *sons of God*.³

The reader can hardly be too frequently reminded that the Psalms are a part of Scripture primarily *Jewish*. They are, indeed, like all the other Scriptures, a portion of the *word of Christ*; ⁴ but it is in relation to Jewish, and therefore earthly, circumstances, and as the object of national hope, that He is usually there presented. On the other hand, as might have been expected, the testimony of the Spirit to the glory of His Person is often found to transcend the normal limits of proper Israelitish promise. There are general principles continually stated in this and in all the Psalms, which address themselves to the soul as direct expressions of the mind of God, with a force and distinctness quite independent of any specialties of circumstance in which they may, notwithstanding, be intended to receive their final illustration.

Verses 4–6 are instances of this. The general application of these expressions is most obvious. But there is an especial crisis of human evil, towards which the prophetic testimonies of the Spirit are found constantly to point. That the foolish (or the proud)⁵ shall not be established in the sight of God, is a standing maxim of His government, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. But the grand fulfilment of this truth awaits the advent of the day of Christ.⁶ The awakening of Jehovah's arm will be the discomfiture of the proud in the imaginations of their heart. The King, who then will have His seat upon the throne of judgment, will scatter away all evil with His

³ 1 Thess. iv. 15, 17; Rom. viii. 19. ⁴ Col. iii. 16; Luke xxiv. 44.

⁵ הַיִּלְלִים הַפָּאָנֹמוֹת.—LXX. *Uebermüthige*.—DE WETTE. This last appears to me the preferable version.

⁶ Isaiah ii. 10–22.

eyes.⁷ The epiphany of Christ in power will be the destruction of the Wicked one, and of all who, through the judicial delusion which is poured upon them by the God whose saving truth they had despised, become partakers both of his iniquity and of his doom.⁸

The cry of God's elect goes up, meanwhile, to Him.⁹ He bears long, and for a season makes as if He heard them not. Yet is the set time near at hand, for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.¹ Until then, the patient possession of their souls in well-doing is the appointed lot of all who, as companions of the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ,² are called to suffer till their blessed Hope be come.³ But the experience of suffering faith, which the language of this Psalm describes, belongs rather to such as are said by the Spirit of prophecy to "walk in darkness, and have no light."⁴ This, though often circumstantially true of Christians, is not a just description of those who are characteristically the children of the light and of the day.⁵ But from numerous passages of Scripture it appears that such will be the moral position of that believing remnant of Israel, who, in the closing days of antichristian wickedness, will cleave with undivided heart to the covenant God of their salvation; and will cry the louder as the darkness thickens, until He rends the heavens and comes down.⁶ They will seek Jehovah, and David His anointed king; appealing in the day of Jacob's trouble to the ancient and sure mercies of the God of Abraham.

In verse 7, we find mention of the house and temple of

⁷ Prov. xx. 8.

⁸ 2 Thess. ii. 8-12.

⁹ Luke xviii. 7; Rev. vi. 10.

¹ James v. 8.

² Rev. i. 9.

³ Titus ii. 13.

⁴ Isaiah l. 10.

⁵ 1 Thess. iv. 6; 1 John ii. 8; 1 Peter ii. 9.

⁶ Isaiah lix. 10; lxiii. 15; lxiv. 1.

Jehovah. The desire of God's Israel⁷ tends always to that place, and it is a desire which will surely have its realization in due time. The same faithful Witness who teaches the worshippers of the Father that local sanctity exists for them no longer upon earth,⁸ because their access is into the *heavenly* realities of which the visible ordinances were the figure and the shade, has spoken also of a day when the same Jerusalem which, by rejecting Him, has hid His presence from her sight, shall again behold Him, and shall welcome Him with blessings, as the One that cometh in Jehovah's name.⁹ Then shall his feet again stand on the mount of Olives, not as a patient outcast, but as the mighty One of Jacob, the wished-for Deliverer of Zion.¹ Then, too, will the sweet fruits of Jehovah's kindness be tasted by her converts in the temple of His holiness, which shall be known among the nations as the place where His honour dwelleth, who is to be had in worship among the families of the Gentiles as the God

⁷ I do not mean, by this expression, the Church of God. Nor do I believe that the Spirit of God has ever applied, in Scripture, at least in an appropriate sense, the name of Israel to the Church. In Gal. vi. 16, the apostle, after having relaid the shaken foundations of the faith, and invoked upon those who gloried in the cross of Christ a benediction of peace and mercy, adds likewise, "*and upon the Israel of God.*" God has an Israel, as He has a Church. His Israel is ordained to peace and glory in His time. (Isa. xlv. 17, 25.) For Jehovah will yet choose Israel, and have mercy upon Jacob, and will set them in their own *land*. (Isa. xiv.) Aptly, then, might Paul, in writing to those whose ignorance of their true calling (iii. 27, 28) had exposed them to an error fraught with ruin to their souls (v. 2-4), refer to that which really held, in the mystery of the Divine counsel, the place which in their foolishness they had sought to attain, to the overlooking of their own peculiar and far higher portion. The reader is requested to peruse, in connection with this note, another on the same subject appended to the opening remarks on Ps. ciii.

⁸ John iv. 21.

⁹ Matt. xxiii. 39.

¹ Zech. xiv.

of the whole earth, the Redeemer, and the Holy One of Israel.²

Verse 8 contains a prayer which finds a ready echo in the heart of every godly man. It is the true pleading of the Spirit of godly fear, which, while it dreads the danger of the way, puts simple trust in Him who is alone the Shepherd and the Leader of His saints.

It is well for us to remember that the description given in the following verses (9, 10) of the moral condition of sinners when iniquity shall have come to its head and be ripe for judgment, is quoted in the New Testament,³ together with other similar passages, in order to characterize apostate nature *generally*, according to the verdict of the law. "They have rebelled against Thee," is the witness of the Spirit of truth and holiness, when calling for judgment to proceed against the workers of iniquity. And this describes the state, not of a part only, but of *all* whose personal condition is tested by the commandment.⁴ For the law entered that the offence might abound; by the law, therefore, is the knowledge, not of righteousness, but *sin*. Ordained to life, it is the minister of death; because the law through its transgression worketh wrath.⁵

It is apostate human character that is here depicted, the terms of description being according to the nature of the test employed. The principles of evil which will ultimately attain the appointed limit of their progress, work now, and have been working from the first. The tenth verse appears to point distinctly to the apostate nation in the last days, when the like counsel to that which led their fathers to accuse the Truth and kill the Prince of life, will persuade them to accept a lie instead of truth,

² Isa. liv. 5; Micah iv. 1, 2; Zech. xiv. 16.

³ Rom. iii. 13.

⁴ Rom. vii.

⁵ Rom. iv. 15.

and to persecute those who yet remain steadfast and unmoved in Israel's Hope.⁶

From verse 11 we have a happy contrast to the foregoing picture, in the celebration of Jehovah's name according to the blessed manifestations of His grace. He covers and defends. His name is the joyful boast of His saints, whose sanctification is Himself. His favour is about them for ever, as a shield of sure deliverance. The Christian knows the meaning, and tastes in Jesus the sweet blessings of this confidence. Joy in the Holy Ghost is the portion of those who are washed, who are sanctified, and who are justified, in the *name* of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.⁷ As it is again said, with especial reference to Israel's suffering remnant, "I will strengthen them in the Lord, and they shall walk up and down in *His name*."⁸

It will have been remarked by the attentive reader, that there is in this Psalm a tone of imprecatory judgment which is quite at variance with the general language of the Holy Ghost in the New Testament. This will be found to be a marked feature in the Psalms as a whole, though it is by no means peculiar to that part of Scripture. The Christian is called to suffer the reproach of Christ; he is to recompense evil with good. *Grace* is both the source of his own blessing as a child of mercy, and the measure of his walk as a follower of the Lamb. But in the Psalms we have the utterance of the Spirit of truth according to the righteous judgment of God in His estimate of human conduct. We shall find as we proceed a varied expression of this; according as the immediate subject of description is the ungodliness of the nation of Israel, or that of the Gentiles, who are viewed in diverse lights, with a closer

⁶ John v. 43; Isa. lxvi. 2-5. ⁷ 1 Cor. vi. 11. ⁸ Zech. x. 12.

or more remote relation to the chosen people of His name. In connection with this, we should remember that the cry of the oppressed is often uttered in the Psalms on the part of those who stand associated, as the earthly people of Jehovah, with His recorded purposes of judgment as the Ruler of the nations. To be Jehovah's battle-axe and implements of war was, from the beginning, a part of Israel's vocation. Earthly supremacy has been the declared destiny of Jacob, from the time that heaven opened on him as a wanderer from his father's house, and Jehovah stood, to bless the dreaming vessel of His choice, above the ladder which connected earth with heaven.⁹ Moreover, He has marked out and allotted a land of inheritance for His people. The oppression, therefore, of that land, has always been a provocation of Jehovah's jealousy, albeit He might use the malice of the enemy as a rod for the correction of His people.¹ The faith of a true Israelite would, of course, discern this. Accordingly, expressions are abundant in the Psalms, which seem suited in their full intention to no other experience than that of suffering Jewish hope.

These general remarks, together with others of a similar description in the foregoing pages, have been made thus early in the work, in order to avoid superfluous digression in the course of our examination of the Psalms which follow.

⁹ Gen. xxviii. 14.

¹ Isaiah x.

PSALM VI.

THIS Psalm is the first of a rather numerous class of Messianic prophecies, in which the experience of the Lord Jesus is treated in especial connection with His relation to God as the appointed Captain of our salvation. I do not, indeed, believe this to be *exclusively* the subject of this remarkable Psalm. For it is capable of application, in another sense, to the afflicted people with whose afflictions the sympathies of Immanuel are ever present, and who, in the latter day, will make a like call upon the name of Jehovah for mercy and for vengeance, while appealing from His judicial visitations, because of their then acknowledged sins, to the ancient and unrepented mercies of His covenant.¹

But it is the personal experience of the Man of sorrows, in prospective contemplation of the hour for the which He was born into the world, that seems to constitute the proper subject of the Psalm.

Verses 1-7. The strong crying and tears of Him who, though He was a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which He suffered, are surely here audible to our hearts.² The opening sentence of the Psalm suggests immediately *the cross*, as the point to which all these sufferings tended, and the anticipation of which could alone call forth from the soul of such a Sufferer such prayers as these. In the fifth verse, we have plain confirmation of this, in the mention which is there made of *death* as the object of dread to the soul of Him who offers up this supplication. Hence,

¹ Isa. lxiii. 15-19; xliv. 9-12.

² Heb. v. 7, 8.

although no reference is expressly made to *sin*, as that which brought the gracious Sufferer into the place where, as His people's substitute, He could take its fearful weight upon Himself, yet it is manifestly in immediate connection with the work of substitutional atonement that the experience here recorded must be viewed.

Wonderful, indeed, is the position in which the Son of God is presented to our faith, when He stands revealed in Scripture as a suppliant for deliverance from death. Nothing so strikingly exhibits the reality of His self-chosen and entire dependence upon God. It forms, perhaps, the profoundest topic in the mystery of godliness. Well is His name declared to be "Wonderful," in the prophetic testimonies of the Holy Ghost,³ of whom the same Spirit witnesses, in the passage above referred to, that "in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto Him that was *able to save Him from death*," He "was heard," &c. I cannot doubt that the Psalm now before us expresses this character of the Son's experience.

The language used by the Spirit with reference to this mystery is very wide. "In the days of His flesh."⁴ It is not the decisive act by which He terminated that obedience which was "unto death, even the death of the

³ Isaiah ix. 6.

⁴ Gethsemane was the great crisis of this anticipative sorrow and dread, but the blessed Lord's language in Luke xii. 50 is sufficient to indicate how continually the purpose for which he had come into the world was present to His mind. The night-long prayers of Jesus are attested but not recited in God's record of His Son. It is enough for us to know that all the varied shades of sorrow through which He passed, until the cup of bitterness was finally commended to His lips, became His portion through the love which for our sakes chose poverty and grief, that the riches of eternal life and joy might fill our cup of blessing as the fruit of the travail of His soul. (2 Cor. viii. 9.)

cross," that is described, but the marvellous preparation through which the Son of God, in the lowliness of His perfect grace, *Son as He was*,⁵ consented first to pass, in order that, when the hour should have fully come, He might put the finishing stroke to that work of salvation for the doing of which He had assumed the fashion of a man. No more should then be left to do, but that the ever-blessed God, whose will had seen its full accomplishment in the death of Jesus, should now, in raising Him from the dead and giving Him glory, proclaim, and set Him forth to believing sinners, as the *perfected*⁶ Captain of their salvation. He has thus, to all them that obey Him, become the author of an *eternal*⁷ salvation.

It is, then, a portion of the sore amazement and distress of soul which, because of the baptism with which He was to be baptized, pertained to the only Just One, from the nature of that special relation to the Father which He had assumed when He took on Him a servant's form for our sakes, that is opened to us in the present Psalm.

But we must call to mind a little more distinctly the circumstances, from the midst of which these tearful supplications were sent up to God. We obtain a glimpse of these in the seventh verse. "Mine eye is consumed be-

⁵ Καίπερ ὦν υἱός.

⁶ The Lord is said to be *made perfect* through suffering, with reference to His name and appointment as the efficient Captain of our salvation. (Heb. ii. 10.) Until the completion of the work which the Father had given Him to do, He could not become the subject of the Spirit's testimony, who preaches peace in His name. It is with a similar meaning that the Lord uses the same word when, with allusion to His coming decease, He says, "on the third day I shall be perfected." (Luke xiii. 32.) The expression has no sort of reference to the *Person* of the Holy One. It relates exclusively to His *work*, and to the titles which attach to Him as the doer of that work. (Compare Heb. vii 28.)

⁷ Heb. v. 9. Αἴτιος σωτηρίας αἰωνίου.

cause of grief, it waxeth old because of *all mine enemies.*" The daily contradiction of sinners against Himself was a part only of the patience of the Son of God. He stood as a mark for the reproach of the ungodly day by day, because, in perfect obedience, He bore *as man* continual testimony to the God whom, with outward seeming, they professed to know. The reproaches of them that reproached God fell on Him. Thus—hated in requital for His love; walking, in His devoted obedience to the Father's will, in a path where human companionship was impossible; perfectly susceptible of the comfort of love, and of the joys of pure and holy fellowship, yet finding none capable of sharing with Him any portion of the burden which He bare; weeping alone in Divine sorrow over the cureless breach of the daughter of His people; bearing about in Himself the pre-ordained sentence of death, which in due time He should accomplish at Jerusalem, amidst the last indignities which man could offer, and under the weight of that wrathful stroke which human sin alone could merit, and Divine holiness could alone inflict—He was, indeed, "a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." The relief and solace of His spirit, under the pressure of that blameless burden of affliction, was thus to give Himself to prayer to Him who was able righteously to save Him from His fear.

To penetrate the mystery of godliness is not among the things as yet conferred upon us by the grace of God. To trace, on the other hand, the testimony to the sufferings of Christ, which the Spirit has recorded in the word of truth, is one of the chief blessings of the child of God who knows his dear and holy interest in all these things. Richly, indeed, do many of these Psalms instruct us in this precious mystery, when pondered in the clear and steady

light which is afforded by the Gospels. May they who seek, in reliance on the Comforter, to learn more of Jesus from the things written concerning Him in this portion of His word,⁸ be kept in their meditations within the limits where their *faith* can freely act.⁹

Verses 8–10 express the triumphant results of the acceptance of Messiah's prayers, who was heard "in that He feared." The resurrection of Jesus by the exceeding greatness of the power of God (Eph. i. 20) was the answer of Jehovah to the cry of Him who had been "crucified in weakness."¹ Ever separate, in the sanctity of His Person, from sinners, even when in grace He bore the reproach of receiving such, and eating with them, He is now in another sense separate. Having gone into death that He might glorify the Father in obedience, He has become the subject of a power which has sanctified Him in glory above every name. God hath highly exalted Him. He has raised Him up, and given Him glory. Angels, and principalities, and powers, are placed under Him. The enemies who so sorely vexed His righteous soul will have their recompence of sore vexation in due time.² The

⁸ Luke xxiv. 44.

⁹ As the godly discernment, in faith, of the doctrine of the Lord's gracious sufferings is one of the richest and deepest springs of Divine communion, and consequently of practical profit to the soul, so, on the other hand, mere intellectual inquiry into such topics is one of the most injurious and soul-hardening exercises in which the human mind can possibly be engaged. The history of the Church, from the earliest times to the present moment, is but too rich in instances which prove the truth of this general assertion.

¹ *Notes on Second Corinthians*, chap. xiii. 4.

² Already the retributive visitation has fallen heavily upon the nation which rejected Him. (1 Thess. ii. 15, 16.) But the language of the text is much more comprehensive: "*All mine enemies.*" The scornful rejecter of His present embassy of love (2 Cor. v. 20) must meet Him as an adversary in the coming day.

general application of these latter verses is very plain. They seem, however, to refer more especially to the time and circumstances of the vindication of Messiah's name and glory in the same character in which He was rejected and disowned at His first appearing; in connection, that is to say, with the earthly nation of His choice.

PSALM VII.

IF we accept the title of this Psalm, we must refer its composition to a particular event. It was sung to Jehovah by the afflicted and outcast king of Israel, concerning the words of Cush the Benjamite.¹ It is from David's heart, indeed, that the strain is sent forth, but the Spirit which spake by him had One mightier than he in view, while singing thus, in clear prophetic notes, concerning things of which the personal experience of the son of Jesse could furnish but the feeblest type.

Let us not, however, lose sight of David while meditating on this Psalm, for of great price is the lesson which his conduct, as a tried vessel of the grace of God, in the circumstances to which allusion is here made, affords to the Christian, whose holy calling is to walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing.²

The story of David and Shimei presents a lovely instance of the way in which the patience of faith, when working through the medium of a completely awakened conscience, finds in the bitterest circumstances of trial the means of personal blessing and more effectual stablishing

¹ Probably identical with Shimei, the son of Gera. (2 Sam. xvi.) Verses 5-14 of this chapter should be carefully read in connection with the remarks in the text.

² Col. i. 10.

of soul. Shimei curses David; not without a fleshly justification. But what urged him thus hotly against the Lord's anointed was the wrath of man, which worketh not the righteousness of God. His judgment was according to the seeing of his eyes, and his thoughts according to the cognizance of a heart that knew not, nor desired, the secret of Jehovah. That the unction of the God of Israel was upon the outcast king, was a fact of small interest to the son of Gera; he had no eye to see, nor heart to reverence, the Lord's anointed; being destitute of faith, he saw only in David that which stimulated the natural lusting of fleshly envy against Jehovah's choice.

On the other hand, David, while thoroughly conscious of his own deep guilt, which lay he well knew at the bottom of this grievous trouble, yet felt that in the matter of Shimei he could blamelessly lift up his face to God. He had been no oppressor of him or of his house; but had favoured rather them that without cause were his adversaries. The same spirit of godly fear which so strikingly revives in David's conscience the remembrance of the past, so as to lead him to discern and acknowledge the hand of God in what he then suffered from the malicious anger of his enemy, enables him, at the same time, to interpose the God of his salvation as a shield of defence between his adversary and himself. With contrite spirit, but thoroughly confiding heart, he can commit himself to Him. He knew that grace had met already, in restoring power, the deep transgression of his soul. And now, with the unction of the Holy One still resting on him, while he hears the rod and who hath appointed it,³ he endures with patience what he recognizes as an effect of his long-forgiven sin, but now administered in wise and gracious

³ Micah vi. 9.

discipline by the hand of Him who was the refuge of his soul. This is always the way of the Spirit. Self-justification never meets the mind of God. The exercised believer knows this well; for no sinner saved by grace is ignorant that, although in the particular instance he may be calumniated, yet the harshest judgment that the world can pronounce upon him is far short of that estimate of perfect vileness which, in the secrecy of godly self-judgment, he has learned to place upon himself.

This subject, which is one of high practical value, can only now be thus briefly noticed. Let us rather turn to view this Psalm a little as the prophetic language of the Spirit of Christ. Verses 1-5 seem to express a personal prayer of Messiah to Jehovah, against the violent and deceitful man. The life of Jesus was ever in His hand.⁴ His persecutors were on every side. They watched for His words; they sought to take Him; they took up stones to cast at Him. The discovery of Divine power, working in the way of perfect truth and grace, and with apparent and irrefragable effect, in the person of one whom, as a *man*, they despised, drew out the latent madness of their hearts, and made manifest the native enmity of man to

⁴ So far, that is, as the will of man was concerned. But until His hour came, the shadow of the Almighty was His defence as a man, while His blessed Person as the very Son of God was, of Divine necessity, secure from harmful contact as He passed in and out among those whose madness sought its gratification in the shedding of His blood. (Luke iv. 30; John viii 59.) The perfect union into which His entire dependence upon God—(which kept Him always wide of Satan's snare (Matt. iv. 4-10), and which at the same time induced Him to avoid known danger (John vii. 1), save where the Father's needed work exposed Him to it)—is brought with the intrinsic majesty of His Divine Person, is one of the most striking as well as most practically instructive features which the Spirit of truth unfolds to our view, in the living portrait of Jesus which the gospel narratives present.

God. The Pharisees and their fellows *envied* Jesus. Power, arrayed with meekness and exercised in the perfection of obedient humility, was with Him; vain and impotent pretension, words and outward seeming, were with them. They sought to shelter themselves beneath the shadow of traditional authority and of self-imputed sanctity. Jesus, Himself the Truth and the Light of life, dissipated by His presence the darkness of Satanic counsel and the vanity of human doctrine, and laid men's consciences abruptly open in the sight of God. But it is this that ruined nature chiefly dreads and most bitterly resents; and so, the closing testimony of Him who went about doing good was, "they have both *seen* and *hated* both me and my Father."⁵

There is in these verses, and in those which follow, a willing and perfect laying open before God of the spotless heart and conscience of the Holy One. It is according to His righteousness and to the integrity which is in Him (verse 8), that He appeals to the judgment of the righteous God.⁶

In verses 6, 7, and 9, the personal utterance of Messiah seems less distinctly marked than in those which precede. They appear rather to express the desires of His Spirit on behalf of the suffering people of Immanuel, whose ultimate blessing can only result from the arising of Jehovah to shake terribly the earth. Messiah is now at the right hand of God, expecting until His enemies be made His footstool.⁷ No truth is of more importance than this to the right understanding of the Psalms. Allusion is made in verse 6, first to these enemies, and secondly to the judgment which has been commanded on Immanuel's behalf. The aspect under which the judgment which the Father has committed to the Son of man⁸ is here viewed

⁵ John xv. 24.⁶ John xvii. 25.⁷ Heb. x. 13.⁸ John v.

is exclusively *earthly*, and is immediately connected with the future destinies of the nations.⁹ The result of the judgment, in the universality of the world's submission to Jehovah and His Christ, is declared in verse 7,¹ the language of which is susceptible also of a very rich and obvious evangelical application.² The two verses immediately following may likewise be regarded, besides their primary application to Messiah, as an intercession according to God on behalf of those who, though still in darkness, are beloved for the fathers' sakes, and will know the light and glory of Jehovah's righteousness in their appointed time.³

In verses 10–13, there is a transition from the tone of supplication to an affirmative anticipation of believing confidence in God. The known and unalterable character of Jehovah, as the God of truth and righteousness, assures to the soul that tarries patiently His leisure, an ultimate triumph over the wicked one. Judgment is prepared according to truth against the evil doer.⁴ God's arrow is ordained to reach its mark, though the bow, long ready, be yet slowly drawn, because His long-suffering is great. In the meanwhile He judgeth *now* the righteous, according to the truth and holiness of His eternal Name.⁵

Verses 14–17 appear to relate more immediately to the

⁹ Isa. xxvi. 9. Israel is not mentioned by name; but it is, I believe, to the voice of the afflicted Jewish remnant that we are listening here. The words עֲרֵב לְאֶמְתֵּי־יִשְׂרָאֵל wrongly translated "the congregation of the people," are of widest meaning; they may comprise Israel inclusively with others, but I doubt this. Nothing in the English Version is more to be regretted than the strange custom of the translators in using the word "people" in the singular number, without the least regard to the diversities both of word and number presented in the Hebrew text.

¹ See, in connection with this, the remarks on Psalm cxiii. 5.

² Compare John xii. 32, and xvi. 7–11. ³ Rom. xi. 28; Isa. xlv. 25.

⁴ Rom. ii. 2.

⁵ 1 Peter i. 17; iv. 17–19.

Antichrist, and to the deliverance whereby the remnant of Israel will be rescued from his grasp, when Jehovah shall, by the blood of His Covenant, send His prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water.⁶ But although the actual crisis is to be viewed in this connection, the passage itself sounds as a note of warning throughout the present dispensation. The revelation of *the* Antichrist—for already there are many⁷—is the result of the apostasy; while the apostasy itself is but the development, in its last form, of the mystery of iniquity, which has long been working, and which does not cease to work until its evil climax is attained.⁸ But the long-suffering goodness of God is calling still on all men to repent and turn to Him. Judgments, of partial extent and limited effect, have come from time to time, in aid of the gracious testimony of the Holy Ghost. God has not left Himself without witness, either to His grace or to His holiness. He will be clear, therefore, in the day which is at hand.⁹ He will be justified in His sayings, and will overcome when He is judged. It will be clearly seen in that day, that it is the cord of his own wickedness which binds the sinner for the pit, and that the wrathful indignation which will descend on the ungodly is the hard-earned fruit of their own laborious iniquity and steadfast hatred against God.

In the last verse, we seem to hear the voice of Jesus as Melchisedec, the King of righteousness and peace, and Priest of the Most High God.¹ The coming dispensation, which is to be introduced by the destruction of the Antichristian confederacy and the binding of Satan for a thousand years,² is the appointed sphere for the display of that peculiar character of Messiah's mediatorial glory, in

⁶ Zech. ix. 11.⁷ 1 John ii. 18.⁸ 2 Thess. ii.⁹ Rom. iii. 4.¹ Heb. vii. 2.² Rev. xix. xx.

which He will stand in manifested relation, on the one hand to the Most High Possessor of heaven and earth, and on the other to man, as the royal Minister of priestly mediation and blessing.³ The type of this is shown to us in Gen. xiv. 18-20. This subject will come before us more distinctly in some of the later Psalms.

PSALM VIII.

WITHOUT spending words on the disputed meaning of its title,¹ we may prepare ourselves for the study of this Psalm by a solemn remembrance of its theme. It is Jehovah, in the excellency of His majesty and the mystery of redeeming love, as now made manifest in Christ—and that in an especial reference to this earth and its inhabitants—of whom the song of the sweet singer of Israel is here indited by the Spirit.

³ Israel being the more immediate subject of this ministration of blessing, which will visit the nation for which Christ died when the times of refreshing and of restitution shall have come. (John xi. 51; Acts iii. 19-21.) Meanwhile, to the Church, the full glory of the Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec is declared by the Holy Ghost. He ever liveth, as the Minister of the heavenly tabernacle, to make intercession for us. We *have* such an High Priest. (Heb. viii. 1.)

¹ תַּנְּתִיךָ *may* point, as some think, to an unknown species of musical instrument; but I prefer, on a general view of the subject, the opinion of the LXX and Jerome, who translate it “winefats,” and regard the Psalm in its primary intention as a vintage song. As such, it seems well suited to the lips of those who in their own land shall possess the double, and when their vine is no longer as the vine of Sodom in the eyes of Him on whom they call, shall eat its fruit and drink its rich juices as “common things.” For things common shall in that day be also “holiness to the Lord;” when the earth and its inhabitants shall be alike acknowledged as His own, and His glory shall rest for ever in Immanuel’s land.

Verse 1. "Jehovah *our* Lord," &c. Premising that for Christian faith the full glory of this very lovely strain is opened as a subject of present communion by the Comforter, who now reveals to it the person of the exalted Saviour, I recognize especially in these words the voice of Israel, when with unveiled heart they shall have been led, according to the sure promise of the New Covenant,² into the full intelligence of the mystery of godliness.³ Themselves brought under the power of the blood of sprinkling, and the promised unction of the Spirit, they will celebrate thus the glory of Jesus in its rich display, as it will then be manifested to them in the complete unfolding of the covenant Name of Jehovah. But while earth and earthly things—its fulness and its worship—are the more prominent objects of the Spirit's contemplation in the present Psalm, it is in the light of a glory which is set *above* the heavens that the fair scene of terrestrial blessedness is reviewed.

The name of JEHOVAH has become excellent in *all the earth*. This is the prime thesis of the Psalm. The undisputed sway of Divine government in the earth, as it will be held and administered in the hands of the Son of man, is its more immediate subject, but in its ultimate intention it compasses a much more extended range. *Creation*, in its unity and completeness, is the divinely-allotted sphere of the acceptable Man's dominion. *All things* are put under His feet. The apostle's quotation from this Psalm will presently be noticed. In the meanwhile, let us remark that it is in the latter clause of this verse that place is to be sought and found for the Church of the first-born ones, whose present calling is to suffer for the name of Christ. Glory is their expectation, even the

² Jer. xxxi. 34.

³ 2 Cor. iii. 16.

eternal glory of the God of all grace.⁴ As the chosen bride of the Lamb, His portion is her own. His glory is her ornament, as His love is her eternal joy. Already she is led within the heavens by the Spirit, to view her blessings there. Far above all principality and power—above all heavens—is the Lord of her affections, and the faithful preparer of her destined place of rest; who now nourishes His Church, and cares for her as for His very flesh.⁵ She will share, moreover, as the second Eve—God's fitting partner for the second Man—the honour and blessing which belong to the appointed Heir of all things.⁶

Verse 2. We have now a lovely and most significant expression of the Divine secret of all true creature happiness and blessing. Strength is founded,⁷ praise is perfected, out of the mouths of *babes and sucklings*. Grace, producing in Divine power its new-born vessel of mercy, prepares pure strains of perfect praise, wherein the Lord alone is exalted, in the low abasement of all that would exalt itself. This is the truth which is yet to be taught to Israel's blinded heart for blessing in His time. It was opened once by night to Nicodemus,⁸ when Jesus, speaking things hard to know, though spoken to a master in Israel, shed beforehand upon his darkened heart a ray of that pure Sun of righteousness⁹ which will presently arise

⁴ 1 Peter v. 10.

⁵ Eph. v. 29.

⁶ Compare 1 Cor. iii. 21-23: "All things are yours," &c.

⁷ ἰν ἡῖψῃ! Κατηρτίσω αἶνον.—LXX. (Compare Matthew xxi. 16.) Similarly, DE WETTE renders, "Hast du [dir] Lob gegründet."

⁸ John iii.

⁹ In the song of Zacharias (Luke i. 78, 79), there is, perhaps, a reference to the prophecy of Malachi. The ἀνατολή ἐξ ὕψους is none other than He of whom it is said in the passage referred to in the text, καὶ ἀνατελεῖ . . . ἡλιος δικαιοσύνης. But more directly, I think, the Holy Ghost refers in Luke's Gospel to Jer. xxiii. 5, and Zech. iii. 8, and vi. 12, where the *Branch* is the subject of prophetic promise. I do not

upon the blinded nation with healing in His wings.¹ It is this truth which, being ministered through the Gospel by the quickening Spirit of God, creates the living Church of Christ. From the lips of His believing people, one of whose characteristic descriptions is that they are "new-born babes," the fruit of perfect praise is now offered acceptably unto God.² The Church gives thanks, through Jesus Christ, to God, who giveth us the victory in Him.³ The enemy and the avenger are stilled effectually to the faith of those who joy in God through Jesus Christ, and know their present seat to be in heavenly places *in Him*.⁴ The Christian stands, by the grace of God, in living union with Him who, in His first manifestation, and by means of death, destroyed both the devil and his works;⁵ and who, by His victory, has abolished death, and brought life and incorruptibility to light through the Gospel.⁶ Already,

now detain the reader by any reasoning in proof of the futurity of all these testimonies of the Spirit of prophecy, as it respects their complete fulfilment. This will, it is hoped, become sufficiently clear as we proceed.

¹ Mal. iv. 2; Rom. xi. 7, 25, 26.

² 1 Peter ii. 2; Heb. xiii. 15.

³ 1 Cor. xv. 57.

⁴ This blessed truth, however, instead of exempting the believer from present conflict, is itself the occasion of it. It is the ability which pertains to faith to sing the joyful song of full deliverance in Christ, that excites the wrath of the adversary, and provokes his fierce attack. External tribulation and persecution, as well as inward oppositions of the flesh, array themselves in varying measure, but with ceaseless perseverance, against the Christian as an anointed heir of salvation. Patient conflict is the habitual experience of those whose calling it is *through much tribulation* to enter the kingdom of God. But the victory is doubly theirs. Already they are more than conquerors in Christ; while, as it respects their experimental history, they overcome the adversary through their testimony and the precious blood of the Lamb. They love not their own lives unto the death. For the life which even now they live, they live by the faith of the Son of God, who gave His life in saving love for theirs. (Rom. viii. 37; Rev. xii. 11; Gal. ii. 20; iii. 27; v. 24.)

⁵ Heb. ii. 14; 1 John iii. 8.

⁶ 2 Tim. i. 10.

therefore, can the small and feeble things of this world—things base, and things despised of men,⁷ yet called of God, and precious in the eyes of Him who has redeemed them—give utterance to this praise in ascribing salvation to the Lamb, and strength and wisdom to the God of the Rock of their salvation.

But it is not the Church of the first-born that seems principally in the Spirit's contemplation here, but rather a generation which will yet be born.⁸ The appointed time is almost come at which the scene described by Matthew as having taken place in Jerusalem, when, at the first entrance of the King of Zion into the city of solemnities, the children cried, "Hosannah to the Son of David!" shall have its perfect and enduring counterpart. Fleshly excitement, echoed by the lisping ignorance of childhood, produced a momentary welcome of dutious homage, when, in fulfilment of the word of truth, the Son of God rode lowly amid joyful acclamations, and made His royal visit to Jerusalem as the Judge of Israel.⁹ Yet through the gate of that same city was He presently to pass, dishonoured and condemned of men, to ignominious death. He must go forth to suffer, by the grace of God, without the gate, that He might sanctify, by His own blood, the people by whose suffrage He was numbered with transgressors.¹ For He died for that same nation, though they wist it not, nor even yet does Israel know.²

But there is an hour coming when the praise, which now waits in silent expectation for Jehovah in the deserted but not forgotten city of His choice,³ shall break

⁷ 1 Cor. i. 27, 28. ⁸ Ps. xxii. 31; Isa. lxvi. 8. ⁹ Matt. xxi. 15, 16.

¹ Heb. xiii. 12; John xi. 51.

² Isa. i. 3; 2 Cor. iii. 15.

³ Ps. lxxv. 1, margin. The remarks on that Psalm may be read with advantage in immediate connection with the above paragraph.

forth in pure and grateful melody from lips whose uncleanness shall have then been purged away, and from hearts wherein the finger of God shall have written indelibly the everlasting law of His own righteousness.⁴ The newborn nation shall then be, though in a somewhat different acceptation, an "epistle of Christ," like the Church in the present dispensation, which though torn, alas! and mutilated and defiled, yet, blessed be God, bears still the inseparable seal of His most holy Spirit of promise. Violence and destruction shall thenceforth be heard no more within the city of the Lord. For her promised bulwarks are salvation, and her gates shall be called praise.⁵

Nor is it in Jerusalem or in Immanuel's land alone that the voice of joy will then be heard. The breasts of Zion's consolations shall give suck to other children than her own.⁶ Gentiles shall freely rejoice in the fellowship of that grace with which Jehovah waits to visit in that day the people of His mercy.⁷ For from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, the name of Jehovah shall be great among the Gentiles,⁸ and in every place shall incense and a pure offering be offered to His name.

Verses 3, 4 express the solemn heart-musings of the child of God, when, in the contemplation of the beauty and unmeasured vastness of the firmament above him, and

⁴ Ezek. xxxvi. 25; Jer. xxxi. 33.

⁵ Isa. xxvi. 1; lx. 14-18.

⁶ Isa. lxvi. 10, 11.

⁷ Isa. xix. 23-25. Let not the reader to whom, perhaps, the doctrine of the personal reign of Christ and its concomitant truths may hitherto have been a doubtful disputation suppose that I forget the apostle's quotations in Rom. xv. 9-12. A patient perusal of the present work will unfold much of the evidence on which, from its commencement, millennial doctrines have been treated as a part of the clearly revealed truth of God. The general order of God's dispensational government has been more fully exhibited in the *Notes on the Epistle to the Romans*, to which the inquiring reader is referred.

⁸ Mal. i. 11.

of the lustrous witnesses of Jehovah's power and Godhead which shine there, his thoughts flow back upon himself, and he appreciates, by an overwhelming force of contrast, the reality of his native insignificance. There are compared together in this passage, the *power* of God as the Creator, and the riches of His perfect *wisdom* in setting man, as the vessel of His own pleasure, in the place of sovereign supremacy over all the varied workmanship of His hands. *Thy* heavens, the moon and the stars which *Thou* hast ordained, are measured in Divine comparison against another species of His handiwork. "What is *man*?" The ready answer of the Spirit to this question is "vanity!" when man in his fallen and mortal state is considered simply as he is. But it is the object of this Psalm to unfold the riches of the glory of the human name and destiny, according to man's proper title as the "image and glory of God,"⁹ a title which finds its perfect justification in the Person of the second Adam alone.

This subject is fully taken up in the verses which follow (5-8). The descriptive language here employed, while it is capable of a retrospective application to the first Adam and his blessings, is true in its full meaning of the Lord Jesus Christ alone.¹ It is thus, accordingly, that the apostle applies it in the Epistle to the Hebrews. The world to come² is to be put in subjection, not to angels, but to man. The First-begotten is in due time to be again brought

⁹ 1 Cor. xi. 7.

¹ He was made a little lower than the angels. (Heb. ii. 9.) What was the crown of the first Adam's pride was the wonder of the Son's humiliation. Man's first condition, as the chief of God's terrestrial creatures, was not much less than angelic. God's fellow,—the Omnipotent Redeemer, assumes a place below the creatures of His hands (Col. i. 16), to become in Person, and not by deputy, the effectual Surety of His people.

² Ἡ οἰκουμένη ἢ μέλλουσα.

into the world.³ God's angels will then openly yield worship to Him whom, though known and adored of old as their Creator, they now recognize and honour as the Son of man. The Church confesses and rejoices in the exaltation, meanwhile, and the crowning with glory and honour, of the once-rejected Jesus. We see *Him* crowned. But we see *not* yet all things put under Him.⁴ The discernment of His Person in heavenly glory is the vision of delight which now draws forth the renewed affections and desires of the child of God, whose portion is *in Him*. Fulness of joy results already to the Christian, from his personal interest, through grace, in the Firstborn of those "many brethren" whom God is bringing unto glory.

But the several titles which the Spirit of revelation has applied to Christ are more than an unmeaning sound. Adamic title is to have in Him its perfect justification in the putting of all earthly things beneath His feet, to whom already the angels and authorities in heavenly places are content to bow.⁵ The Church now waits for this. Desiring to see and to have her destined share in the fulfilment of the promises, she looks for and hastens the advent of that day which is to display them in their manifested accomplishment at the revelation of the Lord from heaven.

The Scripture does not, I believe, in any single passage, present the Adamic Antitype in its simple and perfect form; for truth in its perfection must become its own exponent. The crowning feature in the picture of the first man's blessedness is his relation, not to the things placed under him, but to that which was above him—to God, in

³ "Ὅταν δὲ πάλιν εἰσαγάγῃ τὸν πρωτότοκον εἰς τὴν οἰκουμένην κ. λ. The true force of this and the preceding quotations has been discussed at length in *Notes on the Hebrews*, chap. i. 6.

⁴ Heb. ii. 8.

⁵ 1 Peter iii. 22; Eph. i. 21.

whose image he was made.⁶ The full vessel of Divine goodness, set with a meet companion of his joys in the midst of God's earthly paradise, is caused to appear for a moment to our view in the perfection of sublunary happiness, before the work of the Destroyer is allowed to take effect.⁷ There is thus shown forth in beauteous type the yet more rich and abiding blessedness of that second Man, of whom the first man was but the figure and the shade. Nor will the joys of God's true image be locked incommunicably within His own breast. They are to be shared to the full with that spouse of His Divine affections, to obtain whom He consented to the deep and strange sleep of judicial death; that at His awaking He might find the finished image and reflection of Himself in the faultless and unspotted beauty of the Church, which He owns for ever as His bone and flesh.⁸

But in the several quotations which are made from this Psalm in the New Testament, the manifest object of the Spirit's doctrine is to demonstrate the relation of the exalted Christ to the *present earth* and its fulness in the coming day of His dominion. Now the period to which reference is here made is called in Scripture a *dispensation*.⁹ It is, therefore, a limited thing. Accordingly, in another chapter,¹ in which the true Adamic name and rights of Jesus as the first-fruits of resurrection are asserted, there is a passage in which mention is expressly made of the determined *end* of the kingdom of promise

⁶ But in this position, Adam is a *silent* witness only to the just relationship of man to his Creator. We have no recorded hymn, no purpose nor resolve, as coming from the first man's lips. He was the passive workmanship of Him that made him, but was not made to be the *doer* of His will; that place and glory were for the *last* Adam, not the first.

⁷ Gen. ii. 21-25. ⁸ Eph. v. 25-32. ⁹ Eph. i. 10. ¹ 1 Cor. xv.

which is there assigned to Him.² But that kingdom has likewise the time of its *beginning* most distinctly indicated in the same chapter. He, who is gone far away to receive His kingdom, begins it at His second coming.³ It is at the commencement of the reign of Christ that the resurrection of His sleeping saints, and the change from mortality to incorruption of those who are alive and remain, will take place as in the twinkling of an eye. It closes with the subjugation of the last enemy.⁴ For He must reign until all His enemies are subdued, when once that kingdom is begun; even as now He expects, while absent at the right hand of the Father, the putting of His enemies as a footstool for His feet, that in the power of His kingdom He may come forth to reign at the appointed time.⁵ It is at the coming of the Lord, too, for His Church, that the marriage of the Lamb will have its celebration. For His wife will have made herself ready at that time.⁶ The reign of Jesus jointly with His bride over the restored creation will follow; for it is in the manifestation of the *sons* of God that the groaning creature will forget its toil.⁷

² 1 Cor. xv. 24.

³ Verse 23, compare Luke xix. 12.

⁴ See further as to this, *Notes on First Corinthians*, chap. xv.

⁵ *Infra*, Ps. cx. The *coming* of Christ is the necessary preliminary to His reign. For His kingdom is a manifested thing. At present He is hidden in God. But He will shortly come, and every eye shall see Him. He will rule the nations, not unaccompanied by those to whom the throne of His kingdom is a promised and assured reward. Meanwhile, He is on the throne of Divine majesty in the heavens. In that sense, therefore, He reigns; angels and authorities being made subject to Him. But this clearly is a different thing from His taking His great power to reign over the kingdoms of the world. When the Son of man shall sit on the throne of His kingdom, He will be both seen and heard of men. (Matt. xxv. 31, 32.)

⁶ Rev. xix. 7.

⁷ Rom viii. 19.

In all the leading testimonies of the Spirit respecting things to come, so far as they relate to the power and coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, we find the present earth to be a prominent object of regard. There are, indeed, far higher things; heaven and things heavenly are the direct and immediate expectation of the Church. The believer, because he is united to the Lord of all, knows hopefully a destiny which makes even the rule of angels no incredible promise to those who are assured already that *all things* are theirs.⁸

The New Earth, which is not the subject of the present Psalm,⁹ but which stands prophetically revealed as a proposed creation of God in the day when He will again make all things new, may be rightly, perhaps, regarded as the sphere in which the typical scene of Eden's blessedness will receive eventually its perfect realization. But the Scripture has not disclosed to us the secrets of a world which as yet has no existence but in the declared counsel of its Maker. It is enough for the believer that he is able to speak of the untold blessings of an undiscovered future as entirely *his own*, because they as well as he pertain alike to Christ. Meanwhile, we are exhorted to look for and to hasten on¹ that day when nothing shall remain of the old creation, but those who, having once been, as part and parcel of the first Adam, the guilty cause and wretched sharers of its ruin, shall survive, in everlasting newness of redemption-life, the dissolution of the former

⁸ 1 Cor. iii. 21; vi. 3.

⁹ For in the new earth it is expressly said, that there is no more sea. I merely notice the expression, without offering any interpretation of the words, as strikingly in contrast with the language of this Psalm, in which the familiar features of the actual creation are so distinctly as well as beautifully sketched.

¹ 2 Peter iii. 12, 13.

things, and be the pure inhabitants of a creation which shall be the acceptable and enduring rest of God.²

The subject of this Psalm is presented to the faith of the believer as a part of the mystery of that will of God which it is the especial privilege of the children of His love to know.³ The soul that truly enters into the groaning of the still travailing creation, and suffers daily in this mortal flesh, not only because of personal infirmities, but from witnessing and suffering from the effects of the Destroyer's work, must needs desire that the day of man should cease. Never, since the Holy Ghost indited this sweet strain, has its opening verse been any other than a still deferred prophetic hope. Jehovah's name is not yet excellent in all the earth. He has His people whom He knows, and who both know and love His name. But the name of Jesus, instead of being excellent, is universally despised, save in those hearts wherein the quickening power of God has made that name manifest as the truth and saving power of the God of grace. But that which He instructed His disciples to pray for will be effected in due time. The will of God will be obeyed on earth, as now and evermore it is in heaven. When the judgments of the Lord are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness,⁴ and not till then.

Verse 9 is a responsive echo to the strain with which the Psalm begins. May He who is thus lauded on the harp of prophecy, both multiply the joy and peace of those who by faith are emboldened to anticipate all promise in their thanksgivings to the Father,⁵ and hasten the time when in very deed His glory shall cover visibly the heavens, and the earth be full of His praise.⁶

² Rev. xxi. 1-5.

³ Eph. i. 9, 10.

⁴ Isaiah xxvi. 9.

⁵ Col. i. 12, 13; Rom. xv. 13.

⁶ Hab. iii. 3.

PSALM IX.

WE may trace easily a moral connection between this remarkable Psalm and the seventh. In the latter, the Most High is invoked in the prayer of Messiah to arise in judgment, as the righteous avenger of His wrong upon the head of the wicked. We have now a prophetic celebration of the faithfulness and power of Jehovah, under the same descriptive title, according to their manifest display in the judgment of the ungodly nations, and the deliverance, in saving mercy, of the city and people of His love. It is a song of mercy and of judgment, full of deep moral profit to one who wisely reads, as well as of direct prophetic teaching.

Verses 1-5. The Spirit of Immanuel recounts in these verses the faithfulness of Jehovah, who has maintained His cause in judgment by the blotting out of the Wicked One¹ and his hosts for ever and ever. The scene of this destructive judgment is elsewhere stated to be the valley

¹ רָשָׁע Frequent mention is made of the Wicked One in the singular number, both in the Old Testament and in the New. (Compare Isa. xi. 4; 2 Thess. ii. 8.) It is not the devil, but his human representative and chief instrument, who is usually thus described. Not *all* the nations will be assembled round his banner; the range of his dominion is limited, but within its limits it is absolute, and to be resisted only by such as love not their lives unto the death. The bounds of his dominion have nowhere been defined in Scripture. It is, however, most clearly the fourth beast of Daniel that produces the Lawless One. The name which in Dan. vii. is given to the system out of which the horn of destruction is to arise is, in the book of Revelation, applied eventually to the individual in whose person the united powers of human and Satanic wickedness eventually meet. (Rev. xvii. 13.)

of Jehoshaphat.² The immediate provocation of Divine wrath is the assembling of the nations, under the wilful King, against the city of Jerusalem.

Jesus, who became a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the fathers,³ is the security of Jacob's deliverance from the last day of his trouble; for He died for that nation. Israel is *His own*; and although rejected ignominiously, when He came among them in the strange guise of a servant, yet the bowels of His unrepentant mercy are toward them still. He is afflicted with the mourners in Zion, and will be a swift messenger of help and sure deliverance, when the rage of the enemy shall have stirred him to his last proud effort against the city of Messiah's love.⁴

Justice is the line of decision which destroys the heathen, while it saves Israel *in the Lord*. The smiting of the adversaries is the long-deferred vindication of Immanuel's claim. But He will be known in that day to the remnant of Jacob as the Lord *their righteousness*. It is the turning of Zion to Jehovah that calls up His indignation against the nations that oppress her, for in opposing her they declare themselves His adversaries. He is the help and the shield of the remnant of His people. Grace will then reign through righteousness over the people of His mercy, while justice takes its course in vengeance against the gainsayers of the Lord.

Verse 6 apostrophizes the vanquished Oppressor, now laid in the low deep of perdition, while the quieted and rejoicing land, whose cities had been wasted by the children of wickedness, now rests secure from all affliction beneath the enduring shelter of Jehovah's name.⁵

² Joel iii. ³ Rom. xv. 8. ⁴ Isa. viii. 9, 10; lxvi. 6, 16, 16.

⁵ 2 Sam. vii. 10; compare also Isaiah xiv. 16, 17.

Verses 7–10, which treat the same subject in a wider scope, set in contrast with the now abased and dishonoured throne of wickedness the righteous and almighty sceptre of Jehovah. He will judge *the world* with equity; governing in righteousness the remnant of the heathen, who shall hear the rumour of His fame and listen to the recital of His mighty acts by those who then go forth from Zion to make His glory known among the nations of the earth.⁶ The immediate subjects of the ninth and tenth verses are, I doubt not, the believing remnant of Israel, who cleave still to Jehovah's name through the dark and cloudy day of Jacob's trouble. He is their refuge, not forsaking, but in grace preserving, the poor and tried confessors of His name.

Verses 11, 12. Praise now arises to the Lord *who dwelleth* in Zion. His doings are to be declared among the nations. The name of the city will in that day be "The Lord is there."⁷ It will be thus owned among the families of the earth, who will remember and turn unto the Lord. But the seat of Jehovah's government will be set upon the ruins of the throne of iniquity. Retributive judgment for the avenging of the blood of His saints will mark His promised return with mercies to Jerusalem. This is clearly intimated in the present passage. Although the language of verse 12 embodies a general principle,⁸ yet its application in this place is less to Christians generally, whose calling is to suffer, than to those who in the last days of antichristian blasphemy will be slain in Judea for the name's sake of Jehovah, when all the world besides shall be doing worship to the beast and to his image.⁹

Verses 13, 14 express the cry of the beloved out of the

⁶ Isaiah lxvi. 19.

⁷ Ezek. xlviii. 35.

⁸ Rev. vi. 10.

⁹ Compare Psalms xlv. lxxix.

low dungeon of death. Israel must be brought to an acknowledgment of their condition as self-destroyed and appointed unto death, before their cry can enter into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.¹ But that cry will surely arise, and will be heard of Him who waiteth to be gracious, and in whom is their covenanted help. More precisely, it is the remnant of *Judah* that is here contemplated. Israel, as distinguished from Judah, is separately dealt with. But inclusively, it is the nation for which Christ died, whose suffering condition is thus taken up in the pleadings of His own Divine and perfect sympathy. The spirit of praise will clothe the resuscitated nation in the day of the Lord's deliverance; for they will be Jehovah's people, and He will own them and will be their God.² It is in Zion, the chosen city of solemnities, that will then be heard the glad notes of His perfect and enduring praise.

Verses 15, 16. In these verses the tone of triumph again succeeds to that of supplication. The heathen have sunk into the pit which they had made. They meditated the destruction of Jehovah's sanctuary; their thought had been, "Let her be defiled, and let our eye look upon Zion." But the shame over which they trusted to exult had suddenly become their own abiding portion. The glory of Jehovah had declared itself in the visitation of His judgments—the Wicked was a captive in the snare of his own work.³

In verses 17, 18, we have a more general expression of

¹ Hos. xiii. 9; xiv. 1.

² Ezek. xxxvii. 23.

³ The prophets everywhere abound in descriptive passages which relate to this crisis. See especially Micah iv. 11–13; Zech. xii. *passim*; Isa. xxv. 4, 5; xxix. 7, 8. The testimony of the Lord Jesus in the Gospels to the same event shall be given farther on.

the moral order of God's government. The judge of all the earth will do right.⁴ He will avenge His own name in holiness upon the gainsayers. He will glorify it in the rich fulfilment of His people's hope. It is, however, with immediate reference to what precedes it that this principle is now stated. The antinomian tendencies which are operating with a constantly increasing energy will reach their end, and God will be willingly forgotten by the nations which once had outwardly professed His worship, in their wonder after the beast.⁵ Unsparring destruction is the recorded portion of such.⁶ Meanwhile, the poor and needy, who think upon Jehovah's name, are written in the book of His remembrance, who is no careless listener to the speech of such as comfort one another in His fear, until the tyranny of wickedness be overpast.⁷

Verses 19, 20. The controversy is here reviewed in its prime elements: it is between Jehovah, the God to whom power belongeth, and feeble yet presumptuous man.⁸ The will of man, whose breath is in his nostrils, is at perpetual strife against the will and pleasure of his Maker. But God must be the winner in this contest. The principle of intrinsic variance which opposes flesh to Spirit is known to every Christian. Here, however, the question is with nations arrayed in anger against the few remaining confessors of the truth of God, when the world, which once professed that knowledge, will mistake a lie for truth. The work of Satan is to oppose things natural to things spiritual. *To make man excellent*, whom God has *judged*, is his unceasing effort. And the world is willingly his

⁴ Gen. xviii. 25.

⁵ Rev. xiii. 3.

⁶ Rev. xiv. 10, 11; xix. 21.

⁷ Isaiah xxvi. 20; Mal. iii. 16, 17.

⁸ אָנֹכִי The force of this word in the present context is peculiarly emphatic.

dupe, for nature loves itself, and seeks its own. Every step in the advancing progress of the age is a growth and furtherance of that lie against the glory of Christ, which by and by will terminate in the revelation of him who claims to be as God. But man may not prevail. The solemn invocation here expressed will be answered, with fearful demonstration of the creature's vanity, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, for vengeance upon them that know not God. The closing verse seems to indicate the effects of the judgment in making the surviving nations acquainted with themselves, that as suppliants they may learn His fear, who in that day shall be acknowledged as the God of the whole earth.⁹

⁹ Isa. xxvi. 9-11; Zech. viii. 21-23. Little has been said in the text as to the present spiritual application of this Psalm to believers. Although full explanation on this point has been afforded in the Introduction to these Notes, I think it right to repeat here, that while it may often happen in the review of particular Psalms that a similar deficiency is noticeable, in every such instance the omission is an *intentional* one. Psalms which have a decidedly prophetic tone, I have always endeavoured to interpret according to what seems to be their proper meaning. But there has at no time been absent from my remembrance, while attempting to exhibit more directly the first and simple purport of any part of Scripture, the blessed truth that to the Christian *all* Scripture is the word of Christ. It belongs to the believer in all its fulness, by virtue of his union with Him who, whether in His earthly or His heavenly relations, is the final Object of it all. *Jewish* Scripture pertains to Him therefore as much, and in one sense *a great deal more*, for all the gracious purposes for which the word of God was written (2 Tim. iii. 16), than if He were a Jew. This is so obvious a truth, that I hesitate to repeat it. But it is well to exclude the possibility of misapprehension on a point of such pre-eminent importance.

PSALM X.

THIS Psalm, while of the widest moral bearing, has a definiteness, when considered as a prophetic testimony, which gives it a new and peculiar interest. The mention made of the *Lord's land* (verse 16) presents us with a key to the more precise meaning of the general language employed. A very plain affinity of subject, moreover, exists between this Psalm and the one immediately preceding.

Verses 1–11. The counsel and acts of prosperous human wickedness are recited with graphic solemnity in these verses. The hidden springs of ungodly action are laid open, and are found to have their common rise in that heart-atheism which soothes and countenances, in its desperate and suicidal course, the madness of a rebellious will. But under general expressions of the most extended practical application, the Spirit of God is evidently tracing in this Psalm the moral features and positive action of the Wicked *One*, as they discover themselves in his treatment of the faithful remnant of Israel, whose urgent cry it is that is heard in the opening verse.

If we examine the language of this passage a little more attentively, we shall find it in many ways remarkable. Opening with an expostulative appeal to Him who seems to hide His eyes from the afflictions of His people, there is then (verse 2) a general statement of the pride of wickedness; and how its devices are to be frustrated in due time. Thus, while the word¹ rendered "Wicked" is

¹ רשע as in the former Psalm; and, I doubt not, indicating in each instance the Man of sin—the Lawless one, or Antichrist.

in the singular number, the subject is immediately afterwards presented in the plural: "let *them* be taken," &c. To this succeeds a particular description of him who is by pre-eminence "the Wicked One." Accordingly, in the verses which follow, the same word is twice repeated with declarative additions, which vividly present an individual portrait to our view. Let us notice its leading features.

The third verse describes his covetousness, his blasphemy, and his boastful self-confidence. His atheistic pride is next noted (verse 4). "All his thoughts are, there is no God" (*margin*). The crookedness and defilement of his way, his arrogance and pride of place, are the subject of the next two verses (5, 6). Filled with the strong wine of Satanic delusion, he anticipates a perpetuity of life and power. He has founded for himself, in the imagination of his heart, a glory which shall not remove. In the remainder of the passage (verses 7-11), we have a further amplification of this description of the Wicked and his ways. In his proud pretensions, he is the ambitious rival of Jehovah's Christ, even as in the moral features of his character he presents the most revolting contrast to the spotless and perfect doer of the will of God. The prophets elsewhere describe the great Adversary of Jehovah's name and people in similar terms. Thus Daniel: "The king shall do according to *his own will*; and he shall *exalt himself*, and magnify himself *above every God*, and shall speak marvellous things *against the God of gods*, and shall *prosper*, until the indignation be accomplished."²

The quotation which is made by the apostle from this passage³ in support of his special conviction of the Jew as under law, coupling withal, as he does, both Jew and

² Dan. xi. 36; compare Dan. viii. 9-12, 24, 25; Isa. xiv. 13, 14, &c.

³ Rom. iii. 14.

Gentile in the same category, conveys a practical lesson of high value. For our minds are often in danger, while considering objectively the great phenomena of human wickedness which are revealed in Scripture, of forgetting that what is presented to our contemplation when the Holy Ghost marks out the moral lineaments of Christ's chief adversary among men, is but the ripe development of what is in the *human heart* of every one of us. It is fallen and corrupted nature, matured to full grown wickedness under the allowed fostering of the devil, that produces "the Man of sin."

The general language of this Psalm, compared with some other passages of prophetic Scripture, and especially with our Lord's words, "If another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive," suggests, as an obvious inference, that the Wicked One, when he appears, will be personally of Jewish origin.⁴ Certainty, however, on this point can hardly be affirmed. The remaining verses, to the eleventh inclusive, describe the combination of fraud and violence which, with prosperous result, will build the house of pride until it culminates for its destruction at the hand of the Avenger.

Verses 12-16. The work of the liar and the murderer

⁴ From the eleventh verse of this Psalm, compared with verse 13, it would seem that conscience is not wholly extinct in the subject of this description. The existence of God is recognized, but His power and His holiness are willingly overlooked. Satanic power will work *on* Antichrist as well as *by* him. He will be, in his own person, an apostate before he magnifies his title as wilful King. He will work as a man the will of the devil, through the lusts of his own nature, for some time before he becomes *filled* with Satan so as to deny God openly and to usurp His place. The case of Judas is an example of this. He was a thief; Satan, acting on his lusts, puts it in his heart to betray his Master; finally, the devil *enters* and becomes the effective possessor and wielder of the passive instrument of his will. (John xiii. 27.)

having reached its height, the solemn call is now addressed to Jehovah to avenge His own cause in the deliverance of His afflicted people. He had seen all, though the proud heart of the Wicked had told him flatteringly that God had forgotten. This is the crowning misery of man, who, unless rescued by elective mercy, is in his boasted wisdom merely Satan's fool. He dreams of independent action while his will is absolutely swayed by the deceiver. But both the deceived and the deceiver are His, who directs the course of human evil through the channels of His own appointment, accomplishing the counsel of His praise by the blind instrumentality of the wrath and wickedness of man. Meanwhile, His ear is open to the cry of His distressed. He tries the faith He gives them for awhile, that patience may have her perfect work, and that His promises may be the more intelligently prized by those who cleave to them in the presence of the lying seductions and appalling threats of the Destroyer. But it is in his heart to deliver, and to avenge the cause of His elect. The land in which the Oppressor will practise finally his evil work is none other than Immanuel's inheritance. His controversy, therefore, is with God and not with man.

Poverty and affliction will be indeed the condition of Jehovah's remnant in that day; horses and chariots will have ceased. Jerusalem is under the heel of the enemy. Her children are brought very low, and speak as from the dust in the day of their distress. The thought, meanwhile, of the Wicked One is to establish himself as God, both in His temple and upon His earthly throne. He will think to plant enduringly the ensign of his power on the holy hill of Zion;⁵ but the counsel of Jehovah is not so.

⁵ Dan. xi. 45.

Verses 16–18 express the bold anticipations of prophetic faith, which realizes beforehand the answer of righteous judgment to the cry sent up. Jehovah is king for ever and ever.⁶ The heathen might arise and take strong counsel, yet He did not change. With Him is continuance,⁷ and salvation will be found there by the tried yet faithful remnant of His love, whose hearts He has prepared to trust in Him. *His* land shall yield its increase to the satisfying of His poor with bread. The foot of pride may haughtily invade its border, but as a wall of fire He will be about His own inheritance in the day of His arising. The Oppressor shall be broken in His time. The God of heaven will replace, in the full beneficence of His gracious sovereignty, the “Man of the earth”⁸ who has made the nations tremble. The fear of His people, whose covert and protection are the outspread wings of Israel’s God and King, must pass away as a forgotten dream.

PSALM XI.

To the tried believer, when allowed of God to suffer in any degree the afflictions of the Gospel,—to bear the reproach of Christ,—this most beautiful little Psalm is of richest practical value. It is the calm expression of one who had faith in God.¹ Patience and quiet confidence are found in the steadfast spirit of the believer, who, because he has intelligence of the right ways of Jehovah, is in the secret of Him who trieth the righteous for their profit by the very things which are hastening on the destruction

⁶ Compare Jer. x. 10.

⁷ Isaiah lxiv. 5.

⁸ אֱנוֹשׁ מִן־הָאָרֶץ A distinctive description, I believe, of Antichrist, as the rival of Him who is “the Lord from *heaven*.”

¹ Mark xi. 22.

of the ungodly. Thus the principle illustrated is very broad.

Its *perfect* exemplification is to be found only in the Person of the obedient One, who trusted in God as none else trusted.² His walk as a child of wisdom was under the unction and in the power of the Spirit of God. As one quick of understanding in the fear of Jehovah, He met and defeated all the methods of the devil. Acting and speaking as He heard from Him who opened every day the willing ear of His Beloved,³ He wrought righteousness with patient and long-suffering endurance, until the doctrine of the God of truth was perfectly adorned by His doing to the uttermost the Father's will. Yet His labour seemed to be in vain. The devotedness with which He still fulfilled the numbered hours of His day of toil⁴ exposed Him only to the fiercer contradiction of those who hated Him, because their deeds were evil. That day of gracious patience was ordained to have its setting in the black darkness of judicial death. Jesus became obedient unto death, the death of the *cross*; but the dawn of an everlasting day was presently to break that night. For the joy that was set before Him, He endured the cross.⁵ The study of the gospels opens to us wondrous traits of this hopeful devotedness of obedience in the self-emptied Son of God. Satan's aim was always to withstand Him in this—to deter or divert Him from the doing of the Father's will. "The Pharisees" (apt pupils of the arch-deceiver) "came saying, Get thee out and depart hence; for Herod will kill thee. And He said unto them, Go ye and tell that fox, Behold I cast out devils and do cures to-day and to-morrow, and the third

² Heb. ii. 13.

³ Isaiah xi. 2, 3; 1. 4.

⁴ John ix. 4.

⁵ Heb. xii. 2.

day I shall be perfected.”⁶ We have here an echo of the first verse of this Psalm.

The faithful remnant of the nation will, I doubt not, illustrate remarkably in their experience its principle; a more practical and immediate application of it, however, seems rather to claim our present attention.

The apparent indifference of God to the actual course of human events gives occasion for wickedness to thrive and prosper, and for the depression, meanwhile, of the truth of God, and of those who faithfully confess it. It is thus that the faith of God’s elect is often tried. There is a heaviness which arises, not from inward, personal temptation, but from the pressure from without, which the believer has to experience while living through the evil day. The same word of grace that nourishes the child of God with Christ, as with the bread of heaven, has warned him not to count it strange if such a trial of his faith should come.⁷ It is a part of his present calling thus to suffer; the offence of the cross will never cease while man is as he is.⁸ But especially it is to those whose time of pilgrimage has been assigned them at the close of God’s long day of patience, that such exhortations are most forcibly addressed. To stand fast in the evil day is the calling and glory of all whose conversation in the world is by the grace of God.⁹ To win Christ is the one purpose of the soul that truly knows Him. The security of this attainment is the faithfulness and power of Him who has apprehended for glory the prepared vessels of His mercy.¹ Meanwhile, it fares now with the faithful follower of Jesus as it did with the Master in His day of gracious patience here below.²

⁶ Luke xiii. 31, 32. ⁷ 1 Pet. iv. 12; v. 10. ⁸ 1 John iii. 13; Rev. ii. 10.

⁹ Eph. vi. 13.

¹ Phil. iii.

² John xv. 20.

The constant effort of the prince of this world is to counteract the power of Divine truth in a believer; to divert him, by presenting false attractions, from his proper aim; to keep him, if possible, below the full appreciation of his calling; to hinder thus his present enjoyment of that righteous blessing which, as a child of *grace*, pertains to him in Christ; to deaden, consequently, if he cannot wholly frustrate, his testimony as a child of *light* amid the darkness of the world. Close walking with God, not only discloses to the watchful saint the enemy's devices, but defeats them also, through the power of His might whose grace is proved by such to be the staff and shelter of their souls.³

The progress of evil is a fearful spectacle, when watched with sober-minded earnestness in the light of Divine truth. A Christian at the present day may feel, and, indeed, cannot but feel, if truly alive to the calling of the Church on the one hand, and its existing condition in the world on the other, that the foundations⁴ are in very deed removed (verse 3). What once stood conspicuous in its diversified unity, as the pillar and ground of the truth, has long ceased to exist in that character. Divine mercy has, indeed, gleamed brightly among the fragments of the ruined building. The members of Christ's body, though maimed and scattered, have not ceased to *live*. Nor will they cease; because He lives, they too shall live. *Eternal* life is theirs in Him. They cannot die, though

³ 2 Tim. ii. 1; 1 John iii. 3, 21.

⁴ הִנֵּחֻם "Die Pfeiler."—DE WETTE. See, also, GESEN. *Lex. sub voc.* LUTHER has "Denn sie reissen den Grund um," which gives the general sense, but is not literal. DIODATI's version is preferable, "*Quando i fundamenti sono ruinati.*" HIERON translates "*Leges,*" a good metaphorical meaning. "Pillars," or "foundations," is, undoubtedly, the signification of the word. Compare 1 Tim. iii. 15. Στόλος καὶ ἑδραῖωμα τῆς ἀληθείας.

they may languish here in low and feeble plight; for they are preserved in Christ, and kept, until the hour come when they shall be manifested in the glorious fulness of that one body which will display the stature of the perfect Man, when the Lord shall be glorified in His saints, and marvelled at in all who now believe.⁴

The soul, then, that with a godly sorrow bemoans the evil of a day in which earthly things instead of heavenly are, as a general rule, the things most eagerly pursued by such as name the name of Christ, may find in the succeeding verse (4) a sweet yet solemn word of comfort. Jehovah is in His temple. And there too, in the tabernacle which no human hands have pitched, is Jesus, the faithful and merciful High Priest of our profession.⁵ God, then, remains to faith, in undiminished fulness of grace, of mercy, and of peace, although the visible foundations may be clean dissolved. Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, abides continually as the sure foundation, the tried stone of God's election and the believing sinner's trust. And well He knows how, by the blessed Spirit, who reveals Him in us as the Hope of glory, to act with kindly power on the wearied heart, making His joy to be the strength of those who are content to fight on still the fight of faith, that they may know the joy of being crowned of Him whose coming draweth nigh.⁶

But reverence and godly fear are natural associates of true spiritual confidence. The latter verses of this Psalm are instructive in this respect. Judgment is found to have its beginning at the house of God. The Lord *trieth* the righteous (verse 5), while the portion of the ungodly is

⁴ Eph. iv. 13; 2 Thess. i. 10.

⁵ Heb. ii. 17, 18; viii. 1, 2.

⁶ 2 Tim. iv. 8.

wrath and fiery indignation.⁷ A foot shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace can walk *safely*, and will assuredly walk *softly*, in contemplation of the solemn future which awaits the world, out of which the dying love of Jesus has alone delivered those whom He is not ashamed to call His brethren. May our joy and strength be sought in Him whose pleasure is in righteousness, and whose countenance shines brightly in unclouded favour upon those whose hearts are set upon His ways.

PSALM XII.

THE abundance of iniquity which immediately precedes the coming of the Son of man appears to be the subject of this Psalm. It is an appeal sent up into the ears of Jehovah from hearts ready to sink because of over-much affliction.¹ But for the elect's sake those days of tribulation shall be shortened.²

Verses 1-4. A mournful view is here presented of fast ripening ungodliness, according to its active prevalence among the "children of men." As it is elsewhere written, "*men*³ shall be lovers of their own selves," &c.⁴ It is not natural apostasy merely (as in Rom. i.), but the deliberate abandonment of God once confessed in revelation, that is to characterize the evil of the last days. Grace and truth, tried, tasted, loathed, and finally abandoned by mankind, are God's witnesses against ungodly sinners in the day of their perdition. They will be convinced of their ungodly deeds,⁵ when the gainsayers of the Holy

⁷ 1 Peter iv. 17, 18.

¹ Isaiah lix. 15.

² Matt. xxiv. 22.

³ Οἱ ἀνθρώποι.

⁴ 2 Tim. iii. 2.

⁵ Jude 14, 15.

Ghost are stripped for ever of that mantle of convenient hypocrisy which is furnished by the outward form of godliness.

Insincerity is the leading moral feature of a Christless world. Self-interest is the bond of corruption which holds together the evil confederacy of man when in a state of alienation from God. Love is of God. *Man's* love is either for advantage' sake, or else is an imperious instinct of his nature which he obeys, as being natural. Sinners and publicans give love for love.⁶ The Spirit of Christ, marking these features of apostasy, and expressing them through the medium of His suffering people's experience, records against it the visitation of a wrath which slumbereth not.

There is a striking contrast presented in verse 4 to the saving confession of Christian faith. When rebellious nature shapes into utterance the folly of its secret thought, it thus delivers itself:—"Our lips are our own; who is lord over us?" closing thus haughtily the gates of righteousness against itself.⁷ It is a fearful thing to read such language in the recorded testimony of the Spirit of prophecy. Yet thus it must be; and that Christian must be blind indeed who does not recognize in the boastful humanitarianism of our day an incipient fulfilment of this word. The fruit of those lips which was offered for a while in lying homage to the Lord, who never had their hearts, will be finally given by apostate sinners to the idol of their pride. Antichristian blasphemy is the tone of the passage just quoted. The distinct assertion of human independence of the Creator, who formed man as the work of His own hands, is that which seals the destruc-

⁶ Matt. v. 46; Luke vi. 32.

⁷ Compare Joel ii. 32; Rom x. 13.

tion of the lawless one and his associates in the day of wrath.⁸

The present Psalm, while pointedly applicable to the closing days of our own dispensation, and furnishing a just expression of afflicted Christian faith, appears to relate rather, in its ultimate intention, to the sufferings of the godly remnant of Israel, which in the last times they endure at the hands of their unbelieving countrymen.⁹ The expression, "this generation" (verse 7), would describe the national apostasy rather than Gentile power generally. But it is often difficult to assign definitely the time and action of such Psalms, while their general drift is very clear.

Verses 5-8. The answer of God to the cry of His elect is now heard. They were needy and oppressed. The heel of pride had been raised against them. Their affliction was of man, not of God. Their consolations are of Him who comforteth them that are cast down. They did not resist the hand of the Oppressor, but committed themselves unto God who judgeth righteously. Such has always been the fare of godliness in a world of sin. Contempt or oppression, or both, are the allotted portion of all who will walk godly in Christ Jesus.¹ But in a

⁸ But although there is a destined crisis in the progress of human evil, and the climax of all ungodliness will be reached in the days and in the person of the Antichrist, yet the epistle of Jude distinctly notes the then existing prevalence of those evils of the tongue which are eventually to ripen into the general voice of atheistic blasphemy and the avowed worship of the Beast. (Compare also 2 Peter *passim*.)

⁹ Micah vii. 2, 5, 6, and Isaiah lix. 14, 15, seem to refer to the same period. The prophets, when describing a state of things yet to come, commonly make the existing evil of their own days their descriptive medium of representation. This is an obvious principle, the moral features of human evil being alike at all times.

¹ 2 Tim. iii. 12; James v. 7, 8, 10, 11.

more emphatic sense will the remnant of the latter day know, I believe, that experience both of sorrow and of joy which filled the cup once tasted by the prophets, who spake before of the coming of the Just One. Much of what the Lord spake on the mount to the disciples in the audience of the multitude, while it pertained to those who were immediately addressed (and who, being Jews, were listening to one who, as a minister of the circumcision, spoke still of earthly things, while opening gradually to their view things heavenly and eternal), seems to have an especial application to the state of those suffering confessors of Messiah upon whom the tribulation of the last times is ordained to fall.² That these last are also Jews is manifest from the Lord's words elsewhere spoken.³ They are in Judea. They keep the sabbath. They regard the holy place.⁴ The book of Revelation opens to us a view of the interior of Jerusalem in the days immediately

² Matt. v.—vii.

³ Matt. xxiv. 15, 16, 20.

⁴ That the prophecy of the Lord contained in the chapter above quoted has yet to receive its complete accomplishment is now acknowledged by very many Christians, who by the mercy of God have been freed from the error of supposing the national existence of Israel to be at an entire end. Many, however, still continue to regard the Roman destruction of Jerusalem as the fulfilment of these predictions. But the language of verses 29, 30, 31, imperatively forbids such a construction. Did the Son of man come with clouds immediately after the destruction of the city by Titus? The planting, moreover, of the abomination of desolation is to be the immediate precursor of the destruction of the Oppressor himself. (Dan. ix. 27; xi. 45.) The difficulty presented to many by the language of verse 34, "this generation," &c., cannot justly be opposed to the plain meaning of the context. Moreover, an examination of the uses of this term, both in the Old Testament and the New, will convince the reader that it is constantly employed to designate the uncircumcised in heart—the fleshly nation—as distinguished from the generation which should be born when Zion should have brought forth her children unto liberty, according to the blessing of the New Covenant. More will be found on this subject further on.

preceding the coming of the Son of man,⁵ at which time the city appears to be in willing subjection to the Man of sin. The circumstances which eventually alter his relation to Jerusalem so entirely as to bring him and his power to beleaguer the city to their own destruction⁶ are not recorded in Scripture. But that he comes in at first by flatteries is expressly stated.⁷ Since his coming is after the working of Satan, with signs and lying wonders, there is no difficulty in our understanding that he will act like his master in his double character of deceiver and destroyer. But there is One that regardeth it, whose judgments remain far above out of his sight, until the moment when they will descend upon him as with the swoop of an eagle on its prey.⁸

Meanwhile faith's confidence is in the immutable counsel of Jehovah. His words are pure. Each several crisis in the trial of faith brings out in greater brightness and distinctness the fair promises of truth for the comfort of the afflicted soul. Brightest of all will they shine in the day of their fulfilment, in the light and glory of the revelation of Jesus Christ. The trial of His people's faith is *precious*. It has been variously tried, and will be tried yet more severely. The long delay of vengeance on the evil work is augmenting daily the strength of that fierce flame of human wilfulness and Satanic effort, which seems in the hastening progress of events to be fast obliterating from the minds of men the remembrance of God's promises and threatenings alike.⁹ And thus the man of nature triumphs,

⁵ Rev. xi.

⁶ Zech. xii.

⁷ Dan. xi. 21, 32.

⁸ Luke xvii. 37; Zeph. iii. 8.

⁹ The earnestness with which Jews are striving, in the present day, to acquire and to exercise the rights of Gentile citizenship is a striking instance of this. Neology, which is the modern successor of the "know-

sporting himself with his own deceivings, while he dreams of that peace and safety which can never be their portion who confess no ruler but their own hearts' lusts. Faithful assertion of a better hope becomes less than ever tolerable in the ears of the world, when it is exulting, as it now is more than ever, in the progressive achievement of its aims. The way of Cain¹ leads always to the slaughter of God's saints. The dragon and the beast make war on such.² But the sight of evil serves only to bind the promises more closely to the hearts of those who truly trust in God. He will keep them for ever from the hurtful generation; He will cause them to shine in the accomplished glory of His promise. The moral desolation produced by the supremacy of avowed ungodliness is strongly expressed in the concluding verse.

PSALM XIII.

THIS is a sweet and full outpouring of the secret soul of faith, while still under the cloud which hides from view the perfect light of the Lord. It is a very interesting Psalm in a practical point of view. As the peculiarity of its language cannot fail to strike the reader, it seems desirable to inquire, in the present article, how far the particular character of personal experience described, both

ledge falsely so called" against which Paul so emphatically warns the man of God, by questioning or denying the inspiration of the Scriptures, endeavours to supplant God's truth by the lying sophistries of men. Under its influence the distinctive hope and profession of Jew and Christian alike is fast changing (save in the hearts of God's elect) to an empty form of words, which may be held or relinquished with about the same amount of moral effect upon the soul.

¹ Jude 11.

² Rev. xiii. 7.

here and in many other Psalms, differs from *Christian* experience in the just sense of that expression.

Verses 1-4. No Christian who knew the grace of God in truth could ever rightly utter the complaint with which this Psalm begins. For the standing of a Christian is a conscious acceptance in the Beloved. He is no more a stranger, but an heir of God. He is acknowledged by the Spirit as a *saint*, while his sins are forgotten of God through the one effectual atonement which has purged them all.¹ He is kept in Christ before the Father's face for ever.² The knowledge which believers have of God is through the Holy Ghost; but that blessed Spirit is the witness of their exaltation in Christ into heavenly places, far above harm from every hostile power.³ They have slept through their sleep of death in Him who died for them and rose again. They live now by the faith of Him; their life is hid with Christ in God.⁴ If, therefore, they are called to suffer, it is by virtue of that grace which has already anointed them in Christ for the kingdom and glory of God.⁵ Peace with God is the true condition of every believer in the Son of God; it is known and practically enjoyed by all who are walking in the light.⁶ The Light of life is in them as the Hope of glory.⁷ The excellency of the *knowledge* of Christ Jesus the Lord enables the simple believer, who tastes the sweetness of the love of Christ, to renounce willingly the pursuit of earthly things, and to glory even in tribulation, because he knows that such afflictions are a portion of that cup of gracious favour which, for Jesus' sake, it has been given him to drink, as it is ministered in wisdom by the Father's

¹ Heb. x. 14-17.

² Eph. i. 6, ii. 6.

³ Rom. viii. 35-39.

⁴ Rom. vi.; Col. iii.

⁵ Phil. i. 29, 30; 1 Pet. v. 10; 2 Cor. i. 21, 22.

⁶ Rom. v. 1.

⁷ Col. i. 27; Rom. viii. 10.

hand.⁸ For a Christian, then, to speak of God's forgetting him, would be to betray his own forgetfulness or ignorance of the grace in which he stands; for surely they whom He has brought nigh to Himself by the blood of His own Son are never out of the remembrance of His love. To think of God as hiding His face from him, would be to overlook the Mediator and great High Priest whom God has consecrated for the children's sakes, that by His ever-living intercession they might abide in an unchanged acceptance with Himself. It would be to mistake utterly the ground and principle on which alone God deals with those whom He has reconciled to Himself by the death of His own Son.

On the other hand, the Scripture contemplates a class of believers whose condition is to be seeking righteousness and waiting for light, but who are not in the possession of spiritual liberty and joy. Now as to this, it is certain that Christians, although they *have* assuredly in Christ, the righteousness, the sanctification, and the redemption, which establish them in Him before the face of God, in blameless meetness for the fellowship of the saints in light, are often, in their actual experience, far short of the enjoyment of their proper blessings. But this so sad an effect proceeds from a cause more evil than itself; for where God's children are not rejoicing in Christ Jesus, it is because the *conditions* of spiritual joy are not at the time existing in their souls. Unbelief, or ignorance, or a defiled conscience because of some allowed evil, or possibly *all these combined* (for low indeed may a believer fall whose vigilance is laid asleep, to the neglect of those additions to his faith on which all real enjoyment of spiritual things depends⁹), must be regarded as the true occasion of dark-

⁸ Phil. i. 29; 1 Peter iv. 12, 13.

ness in a Christian's soul. For God is light. And faith, receiving this pure message, as from the Father of lights, according to its perfect exposition in the face of Jesus Christ, finds the fulness of its blessing to be there. We joy in God through Jesus Christ.¹ The Psalm before us, with many others, contains expressions quite adapted to the state of one who, from a state of distance, is returning in spirit to the Lord. But while comfort in conflict may be drawn from it by such, a right division of the word of truth is heedfully to be observed, that misapplied expressions of the Holy Ghost may not be used to *justify* a state of soul which is itself a contradiction of the finished grace of God.

But an experimental condition, which in a Christian is contrary to the very terms of his confession, may be quite consistent in the case of one not brought as yet within that marvellous light. A Jew, so long as he remained in ignorance of the finished deliverance of the cross, and the blessings of the heavenly calling, would have rightly and of necessity, if quickened of God, an experience resembling that which finds expression in this Psalm. That Jehovah should hide His face from His people under the old covenant was strictly in keeping with the terms of the covenant itself. Their disobedience would be a provocation of His anger. The effect of this would be a disciplinary course of dealing, the very edge of which was the withdrawal from them of that manifested favour without which they were as a defenceless prey before their adversaries. So that they should say when suffering thus: "Are not these evils come upon us because our God is not among us?"² The prophets who bore their testimony in

¹ 2 Peter i. ¹ 1 John i.; Rom v. 11. ² Deut. xxxi. 17, 18.

the midst of Israel's declension continually recognize this moral position of the nation. "I will wait upon the Lord who hideth His face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for Him,"³ is language which expresses the personal attitude of the faithful servant of the truth in the midst of general apostacy, while it intimates at the same time both the object and nature of that hope which sustained, meanwhile, the heart of the prophet of good things to come, as himself also a child of promise. It was to Jehovah as the personal Security of national blessing through the fulfilment of the covenanted promises once made to the fathers, that the suffering witnesses of God at all times looked. The Spirit of Christ was in the Jewish prophets. That Spirit spake beforehand of the sufferings of Christ, and of the glories⁴ which should follow.⁵ But although to some readers of this book the assertion will appear both new and questionable, yet I do not hesitate to express my firm belief, that the heavenly glory of Christ as the Son upon the Father's throne, and the wondrous blessedness now revealed by the Spirit of promise to the church, as the anointed co-heir with the First-born of the Father's house, its glory and delights, never came within the field of any Jewish prophet's view.⁶

³ Isaiah viii. 17.

⁴ Προμαρτυρόμενον και τας μετὰ ταῦτα δόξας.

⁵ 1 Peter i. 11.

⁶ That the fathers, who obtained a good report through faith, looked for a heavenly city is most sure. That Abraham saw the day of Christ is equally so. The covenant, of which Messiah was the true object, was all David's salvation, as well as all his desire. But with respect to that which now forms the subject of the Spirit's testimony in the Church of God, it is described as a mystery "which in other ages *was not made known to the sons of men.*" (Eph. iii. 5.) The mystery of the Church as the body of Christ is one "which from the beginning of the world had been *hid in God*" (verse 9). God has magnified the riches of His wisdom, as well as

The prophetic Scripture has been so constructed, in the wisdom of its Author, as to contain essential truths from which the Holy Ghost has subsequently demonstrated the things which are now ministered, as her seasonable portion, to the Church.⁷ But the glories which filled the eye of Jewish faith in connexion with its Messianic expectation, were such as pertained primarily and especially to Jesus under His distinctive titles of Seed of Abraham, and Son of David,⁸ the long-promised messenger of the covenant

of His grace and glory, by educing from the apparent frustration of Messianic promise in the unbelief of the nation, the new and previously unrevealed manifestation of the Church as the object of direct heavenly calling and promise, altogether apart from those specialties of covenant promise—save that in Christ *all* the promises of God are hers (2 Cor. i. 20)—which directed the burden of Divine blessing primarily to the nation of Israel, and mediately through them to the Gentiles at large. The Church is the offspring and the bride of *Christ, as dishonoured and dis-owned of men*. Her confession is of Him whom the world has rejected, and does reject. The vitality and constituent power which distinguishes her from the world is the Spirit whom the world neither sees nor knows. Persecution and dishonour are, therefore, a part of the Christian's appointed portion until He come, who as yet is hidden in God. The passage above referred to in Peter i. goes no farther than to show, first, that the Jewish prophets were aware that the sufferings and after-glories of Christ were the subject of their testimonies; and secondly, that all that of which they prophesied was future—not unto themselves, but unto us. Many prophets and kings (Luke x. 24) had desired to see and hear as the disciples saw and heard. But what occupied the thoughts of the disciples in the days of the Lord's flesh was a *Jewish Christ*. The glory of His Person might be declared to them (Matt. xvi. 16), and a prefigurement of His power and coming might be disclosed (Matt. xviii.); but it was as the *Hope of Israel* only that He filled their minds. (Acts i. 6.) The Holy Ghost, sent forth from the Father in the name of the ascended Son of man, could alone declare that testimony to the crucified but now exalted Saviour, the reception of which gives to the Church of God its true character as the forechosen vessel of Divine grace and power, called forth from Jew and Gentile alike.

⁷ Rom. xvi. 26.

⁸ It is a peculiar blessing of the Church to know Him, and be known of Him, as the Son of God. The mystery of His Person is largely dis-

of faithful promise. As Israel's King, His seat of dominion should be the throne of David, and His royal diadem of beauty the long afflicted and once desolate city of Jerusalem. The long and richly-varied strain of Jewish prophecy tends always to the establishment of Immanuel's earthly kingdom as its term and ultimate accomplishment.⁹

It has already been shown from Scripture in earlier pages of this work, and will, it is hoped, appear yet more manifestly as we proceed, that the present economy of Gentile mercy, during which the nation of Israel is disowned of God, is destined to give place to another dispensation which is yet to come. One leading feature of this future age is the complete national restoration of Israel according to the terms of the new covenant. With respect to the mode in which the now existing dispensation is to terminate, and the prospective one to begin, the testimony of Scripture is abundant and precise. The assumption of the elect Church of God into its promised glory;¹ the judgment of the once professing but apostate Gentile body, upon proof of its utter departure from the ground of saving faith;² the gathering of the

coverable to the eye of Christian faith in the Old Testament. There are even passages in which the Son is nominally mentioned. (Ps. ii. 12; Dan. iii. 25; Prov. xxx. 4.) But the filial title of Jesus, as the ever-blessed correlative of the FATHER'S name, could not be truly known until the Comforter was sent. (John xvi. 7; 1 Cor. viii. 6; 2 John iii.)

⁹ It is by no means denied that passages exist in the Old Testament which a Christian might justly regard as extending, in their ultimate intention, beyond the millennial dispensation. Undoubtedly there are such. Still less is it forgotten or disputed that heavenly and eternal things have always been the remoter limit of the view of faith. *God* is the reward of the believing soul. (Gen. xv. 1.) I speak only to the general subject of Jewish prophecy in its characteristic variance from the present calling and hope of the Church.

¹ 1 Thess. iv. 15-18.

² Rom. xi. 22; Rev. xiv. 19, 20.

powers of the wicked one into their last confederacy of atheistic madness;³ the revival of the Jewish name and nation in the very land of Judah, so that the city of Jerusalem becomes, eventually, the direct object of hostility to the wilful king;⁴—these, and many other events, are expressly revealed in the word of God as having their place previously to, or at the very moment of the opening of the coming dispensation by the manifested advent of the Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.⁵ The order and mutual relation of these different events are not now in question. The single truth which claims our present attention is the scriptural certainty that a Divine deliverance is to be granted to the remnant of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, who survive that fearful siege which is to be laid against the city of God's choice by the assembled armies of her foes.⁶

It is the spiritual condition of this remnant that appears to find such frequent expression in the prophets generally, but particularly in the Psalms. There are certain charac-

³ Rev. xvi. 16; Zeph. iii. 8.

⁴ Zech. xii.

⁵ 1 Thess. iii. 13.

⁶ Zech. xiii. 8, 9; xiv. 1–11. I add here a few further proofs to those already stated in a former note, that the Roman siege of Jerusalem is not the last of which the Scripture speaks. 1. *All* nations are represented as associated against it, instead of one. (Zech. xii. 2, 3.) 2. The horrors of the siege are terminated by a sudden and triumphant deliverance. 3. The armies which afflicted Jerusalem are supernaturally and totally destroyed. (Zech. xiv. 12.) 4. The delivered remnant of the city turn immediately to the Lord. (Zech. xiii. 9.) Did the wretched survivors of Roman severity do this? 5. The remnant of the Gentiles, whose armies had gone against Jerusalem, are constrained to become proselytes to His worship, who will then be known *in that place* as the King, the Lord of hosts. (Zech. xiv. 16, 17.) These evidences, drawn as they are from a single book of Scripture, are so clear and palpable, as to render superfluous a further examination in this place. Proofs to the same effect will, however, continually multiply in our progress through the Psalms.

teristic features which distinguish widely the tone of their experience from that of a believer now standing in the light and liberty of Christ. The sense of desertion, mixed with a clear and strong expression of hope in the faithfulness of Jehovah, the covenant God and Deliverer of His people, is continually expressed. The invocation also of vengeance upon the oppressor has already been noticed as another distinctive trait. To state with precision the measure of their knowledge of truth is not attempted or desired by the writer of these Notes. But it seemed needful to present the more important and striking points of contrast which exist between the often dark-minded and always limited views and aspirations of the beloved though afflicted prisoners of hope, on the one hand,⁷ and that full and cloudless light of the Lord, which is the proper portion and joy of those who, while their temporal expectation is suffering and affliction, are able to glory in tribulations and to count themselves more than conquerors through Him whose love is already the assured possession of their souls.⁸

The verses, then, now under consideration may be regarded as the Spirit's utterance of an experience which, as it pertained to David personally in the day of his affliction, has likewise ever been the portion of oppressed Jewish faith, whose object of desire is the budding of the Branch of promise, and whose actual condition is that of distance from God because of national transgression. The Psalm is capable, in some degree, of a personal application to Messiah; but its general tone seems much more suited to His suffering brethren after the flesh, who bear His reproach as they await, in the closing darkness of this age, the long-promised rising of the Sun of righteousness.

⁷ Isaiah lix. 9-15; lxiii. 15-19.

⁸ Rom. v. 3; viii. 37.

Verses, 5, 6. The prayer of faith here turns to the anticipative celebration of triumph in the Lord's deliverance. The faith which trusts Jehovah's mercy will surely rejoice in His salvation. The Christian understands this, and already has the earnest of this joy. He can sing the Lord's song while still in a strange land, because of the abundance of grace with which in Christ Jesus he is blessed of God. Such an one may find, therefore, in these verses a happy expression of his heart's best joys. It is, however, the triumph of Immanuel in His earthly people—the bounteous blessing with which He will comfort her who was for a little forsaken—that seems here more especially in view.⁹

PSALM XIV.

IN the opening verse of this remarkable Psalm, the Spirit of God declares His moral estimate of the ripe and perfect growth of human iniquity.¹ As we have in earlier Psalms seen the Man of sin and his associates reviewed in the work and counsel which declare them as the adversaries of Jehovah and His people, so now we have a contemptuous defacement of the crown of pride, through the demonstrated folly of those whose way of unrighteousness had been governed by the bridle of error, which is placed by

⁹ Isaiah xii. liv.

¹ I do not at all doubt that we have presented to us in this Psalm the same individualization of human sin, under the name of נָבֵל, as has been already exhibited under a different aspect as רָשָׁע. Antichrist will combine in his person the fulness of wickedness with the excess of folly. Folly and sin are, in the language of the Holy Ghost, almost convertible terms. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." Consummated iniquity is, on the contrary, the perfection of foolishness.

the only wise God in the jaws of the nations who willingly forget His name.²

It is plain from the language of verses 4 and 7, that the folly which is here reviewed will reach its crisis in the day when Jehovah will arise for the deliverance of His people. The day of the Lord's decision will adjust the respective claims of Divine wisdom and of human madness, as these principles are severally represented, on the one hand by Jehovah's Christ, the anointed King of righteousness, whose rule is for the Most High God and in His fear,³ and on the other by the lawless one, who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped, and whose heart, fostered and flattered by the lie of Satan, is uplifted to the imagined occupation of that seat of dominion which pertains by right to Him alone by the breath of whose lips the opposer is to be destroyed.⁴

But, though the wicked *one* himself is thus anew presented for our contemplation, it is important to remember that the judgment of the Spirit of God is pronounced in this Psalm, not upon an isolated specimen of human wickedness or some rare prodigy of atheistic folly, but on the moral value of human conduct *generally*, when its results are taken for examination into God's immediate view. The eye which looks down from heaven, in vain quest of goodness upon earth, regards as its objects the children of men⁵ at large, and not some limited number or peculiar instances. Hence, while there is plain evidence upon the face of the Psalm, that the demonstration of the master folly of the wicked one is reserved for the day of

² Isaiah xxx. 28; 2 Thess. ii. 11, 12.

³ 2 Sam. xxiii. 3. ⁴ 2 Thess. ii.; Isaiah xiv. 13; xi. 4.

⁵ בְּנֵי אָדָם

Jacob's final trouble, when the full measure of Gentile pride and blasphemy shall have been attained, yet the testimony here given to the depravity and ungodliness of fallen human nature is universal in its aspect, and of perpetual force.

There is no new thing beneath the sun. The root of *all* evil is in the heart of every man. Unhallowed combination brings it to its ripe results. The first great demonstration of this, since the drying up of the waters of judgment left the earth to be again the stage of human action, was the building of the tower of Babel.⁶ The next was the union of Jew and Gentile, in order to crucify the Lord of glory.⁷ Another, for which the human and Satanic energies already operating are constructing its appropriate stage, will be the assembling of the nations and their kings in hostile confederacy against the name and power of Jehovah, in preparation for the great day of decision.⁸ The time and scene of the *last* and greatest of these demonstrations are placed *beyond* the millennial reign of Christ.⁹ That era of triumphant righteousness, which will display the glory and disperse the lavish treasures of Divine goodness, to the abundant satisfying of the desire of every living thing, will prove as ineffectual to subdue the intrinsic badness of man's fallen nature, as is the present witness which is borne by the Spirit to the riches of God's grace and mercy in the preaching of the Gospel of His Son. Christ is now *despised*, where quickening power has not formed the soul anew. He will be *feared* and *obeyed* when the just sceptre of His power is wielded in the coming age. But neither grace nor fear persuades the natural man to goodness. The solemn truth of the

⁶ Gen. xi.

⁷ Acts iv. 27, 28; 1 Cor. ii. 8.

⁸ Rev. xvi. 14.

⁹ Rev. xx. 7, 10.

utter depravity of fallen nature, of the intrinsic enmity of the human will against God, will be allowed its last and most decisive exemplification when the nations who had paid their homage to Messiah, while as the Prince of the kings of the earth He ruled the kingdoms of the world in the manifested glory of Divine dominion, will be seen once more in sudden and unanimous revolt against His people and His name.¹

The cause of this last phenomenon of human madness will be the reascending of Satan from the limited durance of his millennial bondage, and his being once more suffered to act as the tempter upon the natural will of man. The ways of those who had yielded a reluctant obedience to the constraint of righteous government, and who had fed to the full upon God's bounties while still their hearts remained unaffected by His grace, will then be suddenly and fatally reversed. As it was in the beginning, when Satan's lie found readier acceptance than the truth of God, to the undoing of the first transgressor, who willingly learned sin amid the paradise of God,² so will it be at the last close of this earth's most strange and solemn history. A dispensation of all-pervading temporal prosperity, and in palpable manifestation of Divine truth and glory,³ will leave the unchanged heart of the natural man, at the close of its appointed course, as accessible to the seductions of the devil as before its commencement. When loosed from the pit, he will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth. He will deceive them, for they will consent without reluctance to his counsel. In number as the sand of the sea, they will be found in last array against Jehovah and His Christ. They will compass the

¹ Rev. xx. 9.

² Gen. iii.

³ Hab. ii. 14.

camp of the saints, and the beloved city; and fire will come down from God out of heaven, and consume them all! Such is the closing event of the counsel and action of "the children of men,"—the last display of the working of that *flesh* which every Christian both knows from the word of truth, and feels in his own experience, to be in an essential and unceasing opposition to the Spirit.⁴

The use which the Holy Ghost has made of this Psalm, when summing up the leading evidences of human ruin as the effect of sin, is familiar to every attentive reader of the New Testament.⁵ It is there alleged more especially for the conviction of them that are under the law. But the Jew was Adam's flesh brought under particular responsibility, as the result of covenanted nearness to God. The failure therefore of the Jew is conclusive evidence, not only of his personal sin, but likewise of the moral condition of the *species* to which he belongs. It is a dreadful as well as a most humiliating truth, that the nearer fallen Adamic nature is brought to God, whether by means of ordinances, or by the positive action of Divine mercy in external deliverances, the more fearfully its corruption is displayed. Both these instances have been exemplified in Israel's national history. Grace brought them, by Divine power, out of Egypt. But murmurings and gainsayings marked their way, until the giving of the law.⁶ The acceptance of the covenant of works set the people on a new basis of conditional blessing, and gave them new and special opportunity of testifying in obedience that devotedness to the God of their salvation which they so readily and unanimously professed. But while the tables of the covenant were being committed to the hands of Moses in

⁴ Gal. v. 17; Rom. viii. 7, 8; John iii. 5, 6.

⁵ Rom. iii. 19.

⁶ Exodus xiv. xix.

the mount, the people had already changed their glory into the likeness of an ox that eateth grass.⁷ Still more awfully has the former of these aspects of human evil been presented in the history of the professing Church. The mystery of iniquity, out of which the Man of sin must soon arise, had its beginning in the abuse and corruption of the doctrines of the *grace of God*.⁸

But, as it respects the nation of Israel, there is hope in their latter end. Jehovah is the God of Jacob. The day has been appointed, and is recorded in the sure word of prophecy, when the remnant of Jacob shall return unto the mighty God.⁹ Good things have been spoken concerning Israel, to the fulfilment of which the name of Israel's God stands surely pledged; nor will He utterly forsake the people of His covenant until His thoughts of peace toward them have attained their end.¹

Perhaps the latter verses of this Psalm (4-7) apply more directly to the ungodly of the nation, who, as the receivers of the Antichrist, will oppress the faithful remnant of their brethren. That they "call not upon the name of *Jehovah*," is a charge which seems to imply an apostasy from their previous confession of that name. There is in this respect a difference between the language of this passage and that of Psalm liii. which, in its general expression, so closely resembles the one now before us. This difference, with some other points not now adverted to, will be noticed in our examination of the latter Psalm.

⁷ Exodus xxxii. ; Psalm cvi. 20.

⁸ Jude iv.

⁹ Isaiah x. 21. The twofold application of this and similar passages, first, to the remnant according to the election of grace, who received the Gospel at the first; and, secondly, to the Jewish confessors who bear the reproach of Christ in the midst of the last apostasy, has been noticed in the "Notes on the Epistle to the Romans," to which reference has been already made. ¹ Gen. xxviii. 14, 15; Isaiah xliv. 21; Jer. xxix. 11.

PSALM XV.

THIS Psalm presents a complete contrast to the last. As the ripened folly of God-denying wickedness was there reviewed in its principles, and summed up in the person of the lawless one, so there is now presented to us a moral portraiture of the Perfect One,¹ whose way was the delight of Jehovah whom He only lived on earth to serve.

The Psalm consists of two parts. The question is proposed in the opening verse, as to the qualification for human fellowship with Jehovah. His tabernacle and His holy hill are to be inhabited; but who shall ascend thither, and abide? The residue of the Psalm recites descriptively the moral traits of personal character and conduct which attach to the pure candidate for that reward.

It is a Psalm of David, but its subject is manifestly Christ. In Jesus, and in Him alone, were found the qualities which prove man's fitness for his Maker's presence. He wrought righteousness because He was the Just One. Walking in the perfectness of His own spotless nature, He chose continually the way of obedience to the Father's will. The master-thought in the fool's heart is "there is no God;" the delight of Jesus was to do the will of God. He was the true Child of wisdom. The Spirit that rested on Him was the welcome guide of all His steps.² The law was within His heart. Truth was uttered only by His lips who is Himself the Truth. It was, indeed, a very Man, whose words and ways were daily seen and judged

¹ Isaiah xlii. 19.

² Isaiah xi. 2, 3.

of men ; but the deep and pure springs of eternal life, the proper glory of the Godhead, were hid beneath that outward veil of flesh. The glory of the only-begotten of the Father radiated from the Person of Jesus, as He fulfilled a course and wrought a work which nothing not Divine could compass or effect. Perfect holiness was the intrinsic moral quality which perpetually separated the Lord from those among whom, nevertheless, in perfect *grace* He went about doing good. He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, while speaking seasonable words of gracious tenderness in the ears of those weary souls whose moisture sin had dried. His thoughts were not as men's thoughts, either in measure or in kind. *God* was in all His thoughts.

The grace to usward which drew forth from the Father's bosom the only-begotten Son, and led Him into a world which denied Him a shelter for His head, found its expression and effected its mighty works in the form of Nazaritic devotedness and obedience.³ He came forth in our likeness under the willing obligation of the vows of our redemption. By the grace of God He was sent into the world *to die*. By a voluntary duty of entire love He took the hurtful burden of human sin and sorrow, to bear it to the grave and hide it there for ever. By His own self-sacrifice He has abolished sin.⁴ It lies far hidden from His people's sight, who, seeing it by faith thus laid on Him in death, search vainly for it in the brightness of that Light of life which the risen Son of God is to the poor believing sinner, who knows both for what He died, and why He rose again.⁵

To the thoughtful reader of the Gospels, abundant illustration will present itself, from the very life, of the

³ Numb. vi.

⁴ Heb. ix. 26.

⁵ Rom. iv. 24, 25.

moral principles enumerated in this Psalm. "Behold an Israelite indeed,"⁶ was not only an expression of Divine omniscience which graciously recognized the faith which had been given by Himself. It was the honourable mention by the perfect Servant of Jehovah,—the Man wholly after His heart,—of one who in his measure was like-minded with Himself,—of one, that is, who feared the Lord (verse 4). His treatment of the hypocritical sinners, who vexed His righteous soul with their heartless and vain pretensions to godliness, expressed the contempt of the vile, which is in the same verse imputed to the Man whom God accepts.⁷

The practical bearing of this Psalm upon the Christian conscience is too clear to require separate notice in this place.⁸ It has, moreover, an obvious application to the faithful Jewish remnant, who walk wisely, as Jehovah's prisoners of hope, amid the moral darkness of the latter day.⁹

PSALM XVI.

WE listen in this most beautiful Psalm to the voice of Jesus, the author and finisher of faith. As Jehovah's Holy One¹ He rejoices in the God in whom He trusted for the restoration, with eternal joy and honour, of the life which in the obedient devotedness of love He laid down at the good pleasure of the Father's will.² It was as a corroborative testimony to the resurrection of the Lord, that a quotation from the present Psalm was furnished to Peter by the Holy Ghost, when first the ministry of

⁶ John i. ⁷ Matt. xxiii. ⁸ Rom. ii. 28, 29. ⁹ Mal. iv. 4.

¹ קִיֵּר "Οστος.

² Luke xxiii. 46.

reconciliation began its operation in Jerusalem.³ David had spoken such things. But he spake *as a prophet*, in whom the spirit of prophecy was the testimony of Jesus.⁴ It is a Psalm therefore full of precious matter for the soul that has tasted that the Lord is gracious. Let us trace briefly its leading topics.

Verses 1–3. Two great principles find their expression in these verses. First, perfect reliance upon God; and secondly, entire devotedness in love to them that are owned of Him. These two principles were found, each in its own perfection, and both in harmonious combination, in Jesus, and in Him alone. Rich in Himself, He had become poor, in grace and love to our souls. Being thus found in fashion as a man, He would honour the only true God in His place. He trusted in God. He would honour, moreover, and beautify the *form* which He had taken, by perfectly accomplishing that which alone glorifies man, viz., entire subjection, in willing obedience, to God. Man shines in beauty, as the image and glory of God, only while his ways are a pure reflection of the *will* of God. For dependence upon the Creator is the only true position of the creature. The Son of God, having by the mystery of incarnation become in outward form and fashion as a Son of man—being, in Divine and ever-blessed truth, the *woman's seed*, by the overshadowing of the power of the Highest,—could take and did take this place of perfect dependence. But accompanying this, there was in Him the abiding consciousness of being the full vessel of goodness and blessing to the saints⁵ and to the excellent, in whom was *all* His delight. The love of Jesus rested in undivided perfectness upon those whom the Father's grace

³ Acts ii. 25, &c.

⁴ Rev. xix. 10.

⁵ לְקַדְוָשִׁים *Toiς ἀγίοις.*

and power drew to Him, in the confession of His blessed Person. *All* who came to Him He received into His love, as the welcome gift of the Father, casting such out in no wise, since His own descent from heaven was to do His will.⁶ Whom He thus received He loved as His own, loving them to the end; even to the death which closed the weary season of His earthly days. He loved them *in* that death which was tasted by Him for their sakes; and now that He has been declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead, He holds them everlastingly in the endless affection of One who does not change.⁷ Christ loved, and loves, and will for ever love His *Church*.⁸ All His delight is in the Father's gift.⁹ Thus the believer finds his rich portion in feeding on that goodness which, as a branch of Divine fruitfulness and soul-satisfying favour, extends itself to all that are sanctified by faith in the risen Son of God.¹

The fourth verse, while capable of far wider application, appears to relate more emphatically to the blinded and apostate nation of Israel. In rejecting Jesus they refuse Jehovah. The Lord Himself was the rock of their offence.² For Israel, so long as they remain in unbelief, Christ cannot act. He is no High Priest for an unbelieving generation, unpurged as yet in conscience by the precious

⁶ John vi. 37, 38.

⁷ Heb. xiii. 8.

⁸ Eph. v. 25, *seq.*

⁹ John xvii. 6, *seq.*

¹ Acts xxvi. 18; Cant. ii. 3. There is probably an especial reference in verse 3 to those who, amidst the ungodly nation, have borne, and will hereafter bear, the reproach of Christ. They are the excellent, as contrasted with the vile ones of the last Psalm. It is worth noticing, in connexion with this, that the LXX. render יְהוָה by ἐν τῇ γῆ αὐτοῦ. This is, of course, not literal, as the text now stands. "In the *land*" is however, as exact a translation as "in the earth."
² Isaiah viii. 14.

blood of the cross. He will not take their names in intercession on His lips, whose hearts continue strangers to the righteousness of God. Meanwhile they hasten, though with staggering footsteps, in another path.³ Multiplied sorrows have befallen the peeled and scattered tribes; more still remain. The long-predicted wrath has come upon them; nor will its heavy visitation be removed, until the appointed measure of its fulness shall have been attained.⁴ The measure of that nation's guilt was filled when, under the guidance of that strange god who directed all their counsel, and whom, while they professed the knowledge of Jehovah, they were blindly serving through the lusts of their own hearts,⁵ they slew with wicked hands the Prince of Life. From the times of His prophetic messengers, the drink-offerings of Israel had been mixed with righteous blood.⁶ But now a blood-guiltiness of deeper and more awful dye is charged from heaven on the unrepentant nation. Jewish worship bears the stain of Jesus' blood, as an unremoved token of hopeless national guilt and defilement, until the hour shall have come for the veil to be taken from their hearts. Then shall they see out of their obscurity in the pure light of their Redeemer's presence, which will disclose to their astonished view that once despised blood as the opened fountain in which the iniquity of their sin must be for ever purged away.⁷

³ אָהַר הַמָּוֶת "Die anders wohin eilen."—DE WETTE.

⁴ 1 Thess. ii. 16. "Ἐφθασε δὲ ἐπ' αὐτοὺς ἡ ὀργὴ εἰς τέλος—to the end. But there is an end, and beyond that end a fair and sunny hope. And when the time of mercy shall have come, the ended indignation will seem to have been but for a little while. (Isaiah liv. 8.)

⁵ John viii. 44-47.

⁶ Isaiah i. 13-15; Acts vii. 52.

⁷ Zech. xiii. "In that day shall there be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for un-

Verses 5, 6. Although Israel be not gathered, yet is Messiah glorious in Jehovah's eyes, and His God is His strength.⁸ Jehovah is the portion of His inheritance and of His cup. The God of the Lord Jesus Christ hath raised Him from the dead, and given Him glory.⁹ Exalted now and crowned, He is declared to be the appointed Heir of all things, even as He had been the eternal Possessor, in the fellowship of filial love, of the glory which was His with the Father before the world began. There was set before the suffering Saviour a joy, for the sake of which He endured the cross; and the verses now before us relate, I believe, in the first instance, to that joy. Jesus, as the winner of God's reward, is satisfied. Raised from His self-chosen poverty by the glory of the Father, He now rejoices in the wealth of that inheritance which, by His gracious humiliation, He had become enabled to receive. But the goodness of the heritage, which is the proper portion of the First-born from the dead, is opened by the Holy Ghost to the believer as his *own*, because of his living union with the Heir—his complete acceptance in the Beloved.¹ For we are heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.² Faith, therefore, now takes up the language of these verses, as a just expression of the confidence and rejoicing which pertain to the believer as a partaker of Christ.³ The Lord is become his portion. His cup of refreshment and of joy, while on his pilgrim way, is that

cleanness." And again, "For I will cleanse their blood which I have not cleansed." (Joel iii. 21.) These and similar passages are applied to Judah and Jerusalem, not only as representing the entire nation, but with an especial reference to the peculiar guilt of that tribe and city. Jehovah is a stumbling-block to *both* the houses of Israel; but it is upon Jerusalem and on the tribe of Judah that the blood of the Just One pre-eminently rests.

¹ Eph. i. 6.

⁸ Isaiah xlix. 5.

⁹ Eph. i. 19-22.

² Rom. viii. 17.

³ Heb. iii. 14.

precious blood of Jesus which is drink indeed. Passing in spirit into heavenly places, whither the Forerunner is for us in person entered, and where the settled place of his eternal rest is already secured for him in Christ, the Christian has even now, in part, a knowledge of those things unspeakable which constitute the riches of that blessing which, as an heir of salvation, he is called to inherit. The work of the Spirit, as the Comforter, is to take the things of Jesus, and to show them to the saints. The sum of the believer's expectation, as an heir of promise, is not less than *all*. "All things are yours, and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's."⁴ And again it is written for the sake of those who fight on still the fight of faith, "He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son."⁵ This is an expectation which feeds no natural ambition; but it solaces and nerves with strength the tried spirit of the child of God, whose way lies through the wilderness of tribulation towards the rest into which they will surely enter who are kept of God. Our ability to enjoy, and therefore to speak worthily of this goodly heritage of hope, is by the present energy of the Holy Ghost, who breaks in pieces the obdurate heart of unbelief, that He may fill the humbled and contrite spirit with the true joy of the Lord. The soul that is resting in the love of Christ will need no prompting to enable it to use, with happy confidence, the language of those pleasant words.⁶

The seventh verse expresses that kind of experience,—so marvellous when recorded of Jesus; so needed, yet often, alas! so little valued on our parts,—which the soul that has to do with God acquires, as a learner whose

⁴ 1 Cor. iii. 21–23.

⁵ Rev. xxi. 7.

⁶ Eph. iii. 19.

lessons God Himself is pleased to set. Jesus knew this experience perfectly. He *learned* obedience.⁷ His ear was wakened morning by morning to hear as one taught.⁸ It was His glory as the obedient One to say, "I can of mine own self do nothing; as I hear I judge."⁹ The practical application of this verse to the Christian, as a child of the Father of spirits, is evident. In its latter clause we are taught the *manner* in which Jehovah is used to impart His counsel to those whom He instructs. Reading and meditating on the word of God are not themselves effectual for the believer's growth, unless both heart and conscience are engaged with God. Obedience is His law of progress, and faith works by *love*. We must have to do with *Him*. Jesus was never alone. The Father was with as well as in Him. He lived—a Man among men—simply and wholly and naturally *to God*. In our case, continual vigilance is requisite to keep the soul in its only true and safe position. Distance of heart and conscience from God may, unhappily, be quite consistent with an habitual use of the word of God. Hence the need often of nocturnal visitations of a painful kind. God's chastening is a necessary safeguard of His children in this world. The reins of Jesus furnished nothing bitter to His thoughts, save as He might meditate the soon-coming hour of suffering and death; but how different with us!

Verses 8–11. Words which are here assigned prophetically to the Captain of salvation, now find an echo in the hearts of His believing people, to whom the Comforter reveals Him in His risen and ascended glory. Rejoicing in the completed joy of Jesus,¹ we speak His language, in the power of a faith which makes us one with Him. The triumphant knowledge of "the Resurrection and the Life"

⁷ Heb. v. 8.⁸ Isaiah i. 4.⁹ John v. 20.¹ John xiv. 28.

makes glad the heart, and frees the tongue of the believing sinner to magnify His praise, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.²

In the tenth verse, the Holy One remains alone. Only HE in death saw no corruption,³ because personally incorruptible. It was not possible that Jesus could be held of death, nor could the grave detain as lawful prey the body of the incarnate WORD. For by dying He abolished death, destroying him who, by the righteous judgment of God, had held till then its power in his hands.⁴ But what is here celebrated by the Spirit of prophecy is the greater marvel of the resurrection of Jesus as the *act of God*.⁵ That He who called Lazarus from corruption into life—evincing thus His glory as the Son of God, the resurrection and the life—should *rise* again, resuming at His will the life which He laid down, is less amazing than that, in the mystery of godliness, He who is eternally⁶ the quickening Spirit should Himself be *quickened* from the death to which He had willingly consented by the grace of God.⁷ Yet thus it was. He died for the love He bore the Father, all whose precious thoughts of grace and mercy to lost sinners hung suspended on the consenting obedience of the Lamb. Being slain, He lay, until again revived by the power of Him into whose hands He had commended His

² 1 Cor. xv. 57.

³ Enoch and Elijah are no exceptions to this general statement. They saw no death. . . Corruption, therefore, is not in question in their case.

⁴ Heb. ii. 14.

⁵ On this point see further in *Notes on the Ephesians*, chap. i. 20.

⁶ The title "quicken Spirit" is expressly applied to Christ only after resurrection. (1 Cor. xv. 45.) But it is a title which relates to His *Person*, not His work. It is, therefore, eternally true; although its ever-blessed and triumphant vindication will be under the likeness in which He had first in grace become acquainted for our sakes with death.

⁷ 1 Peter iii. 18.

Spirit, alone and silent in the grave.⁸ It was at the Father's bidding that He resumed as well as gave His life.⁹ Having now become, in resurrection, the first-fruits of them that slept,¹ He is, moreover, to the believer, the living Way, which already conducts him in spirit to that blessed presence, where soon, in bodies bright with His own glory, the many sons of God shall shine.²

PSALM XVII.

THIS Psalm is entitled "A prayer of David." It is truly the utterance of a man after God's heart, but far transcending in its expression the proper experience of the son of Jesse.

Verses 1-5. While there is that in the inner man of every child of God, which in principle and desire consents to the language of these verses, yet they could be taken, in their strict and full intention, into the mouth of Christ alone. The knowledge of imputed righteousness enables the believer, who through grace is conscious of his true standing in Christ, to use the first two verses of this passage in the sweet yet solemn assurance of justification by faith; while as an afflicted "servant of righteousness"³ he can look hopefully, for the decision of all controversies,

⁸ There lay the dead Christ. For He was buried as well as slain. (1 Cor. xv. 4.) Meanwhile, the Paradise of God contained both Him and the first-fruits of His everlasting conquest over sin and death. (Luke xxiii. 43.) The path of life had opened to Himself through the dread portals of that death, and the joy for the sake of which He endured the cross was already His possessed reward.

⁹ John x. 18.

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 20.

² On the personal blessedness of the ascended Christ, see further Psalm xxi.

³ Rom. vi. 18.

to the day of God. The tone also of holy confidence, while under the pure heart-seeing eye of God, which finds expression in verse 3, may also, and surely *does*, find its response in more or less distinctness from the soul whose conversation is in simplicity and godly sincerity.² It is what is looked for by the Father of spirits on the part of those who are exhorted to walk as children of the light and of the day. But to the Just One alone, it either did or could pertain to urge *originally* the righteous pleas of this remarkable and very precious Psalm.

The verses now under our immediate view present a portion of that inward communion of Jesus with the Father which belonged to, and arose out of, the position which He took in grace as the obedient fulfiller of all righteousness. The heart into which Satan vainly sought, in quest of that God-refusing will which made each other man a ready captive to his snare, was willingly opened to the survey of the Father of lights. The Son of God, in taking His place in a ruined world under the proper form and fashion of a man, had assumed a relation to the Father which placed Him ostensibly *below* the adversary; for the mastery of Adamic nature had been obtained already by the devil, who is for that reason called in Scripture, the prince and god of this world.³ Now it was in the likeness of sinful flesh, that the only-begotten

² For it is not the scrutiny of the natural heart that is properly the object of a child of God, who knows already, having learned it in the cross, the utter badness of the flesh. It is the watchful jealousy of self-judgment, on the part of one whose affections are renewed to Godward, and who fears, because he hates, the indwelling principle of sin, and has learned *with purpose of heart* to cleave to the Lord—that has in some sort its representation in the language of this verse. There is therefore an obvious moral connection between it and verse 7 of the preceding Psalm.

³ John xiv. 30; 2 Cor. iv. 4.

of the Father has been sent and came,⁴ and this it was that inspired the tempter with his evil hope. He knew what was in fallen man; He looked to find the same in Him who, though just before proclaimed from heaven to be the Son of God, had been manifested as a Man indeed, when, to fulfil *all* righteousness in the perfection of Divine grace, He had accepted baptism from His own forerunner, in the company of sinners fleeing from the wrath to come.⁵ Accordingly, in the scene which followed, the point of Satan's temptation was addressed to that principle of self-dependence which he well knew to be the perpetual witness of his own work in the heart of every other human being, since first he had been suffered to corrupt God's primal earthy image of Himself.⁶

But the heart of Jesus contained nothing which the wicked one might call his own. The second Adam⁷ was no offspring of the first, save that in the mystery of godliness the holy Child of God was woman-born. But as it was by the overshadowing power of the Highest that the Eternal Son became incarnate, so the will of Him who *thus* became "the Son of man," was as alien from that of fallen Adamic nature, as the latter is from the pure will of God. The manner in which the absolute dependence of Jesus upon God brings out into brightest moral display the glory of His Person, is strikingly shown in the Spirit's record of the temptation, but can only be thus briefly

⁴ Rom. viii. 3. ⁵ Matt. iii. 13, 17; Luke iii. 21, 22. ⁶ 1 Cor. xv. 47.

⁷ It is in the light of the resurrection that the glory of this name, as a distinctive title of Christ, is fully asserted. He is declared to be this by the Holy Ghost, subsequently to the completion of the work which definitively set aside the first Adam. The Cross is God's judgment, not upon sin only, but upon that in which sin dwells—upon the Adamic nature. The title is here applied anticipatively to Jesus, while fulfilling His obedience on earth. *Ante*, p. 114, Note.

noticed in this place. It was the word of truth alone that the Perfect One would use for the effectual foiling of the destroyer.

The way of the Holy One is the pattern also for the steps of His redeemed.⁸ The passage, therefore, which we are examining bears immediately upon the Christian in his walk. Nor can too careful heed be given to the estimate which is here presented of the intrinsic value of the *word of God*. "By the word of thy lips," &c. The destroyer can be overcome by two means alone: by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of faithful testimony.⁹ But it is "concerning the works of men" that this reference to the word is made. The commandments of God are the counsellors of His elect. To walk "as men" is, in the case of Christians, a reproach to them, and a grievance to that Holy Spirit of God, whereby they are sealed unto the day of redemption.¹ For men walk, not in dependent subjection to the will of God, but according to the dictates of their own wills, which are wholly alien from His. But the calling of a Christian, as a child of hope, is to purify himself, even as Christ who is his hope is pure.² The knowledge, in obedience, of the will of God³ is the end of his practical attainment as a saint, even as the perception of the same blessed will, in its Divinely-perfect accomplishment through the dying love of Jesus, is the beginning and lasting continuance of his joyful confidence, and pure unspotted conscience in the Father's sight.⁴

The wiles of Satan are evermore about the path of those whom Jesus loves. His way is to corrupt and to destroy by lies. God saves by truth. Jesus, the Saviour, is the

⁸ 1 Peter ii. 21-24.

⁹ Rev. xii. 11.

¹ 1 Cor. iii. 3.

² 1 John iii. 3.

³ Rom. xii. 2.

⁴ Heb. iii. 3-16; x. 10.

Truth to guide His people, as well as the Way of their salvation and their Life. Moreover, the believer's practical sanctifying is by the word of God. Nothing can secure a Christian from the devices of the enemy but habitual subjection to the Scriptures. Perfection in the man of God is attached, as a conditional result, to his faithful observance of the inspired word.⁵ But the least step in this progress of practical sanctification discovers to the soul thus exercised, far more distinctly than before, its own intrinsic weakness. Hence the language of verse 5: "Hold up my goings in thy paths," &c. The grace of the Son of God brought Him into so real a position of dependence, that His characteristic description in the word of prophecy is, "Behold my servant, *whom I uphold*," &c.⁶ To Him who knew no sin, the alternative of slipping in the ways of Jehovah was impossible; the path of *His* obedience led Him in a way which was His natural delight. Yet would He *learn* obedience.⁷ By keeping the commandments of His Father, He would so continue in His love.⁸

On the other hand, in our case the sad but sure alternative of God's preventing grace is sinful failure. If spiritual energy does not prevail, its antagonist is flesh; and the carnal will is sin. *Weakness*, however, is the natural quality which is chiefly noticed here. This is often found in the believer, apart from error of the will. Yet our weakness, though not sin itself, is born of sin; and thus it is in the *grace* of Jesus Christ alone that the fainting spirit finds the renovation of its strength.⁹ The power of His might, who, after having been crucified in weakness for our sakes, now lives by the power of God, and lives *for us* for whom He tasted death, is the arm of ever-ready

⁵ 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.⁶ Isaiah xlii. 1.⁷ Isaiah i.⁸ John xv. 10.⁹ 2 Tim. ii. 1.

succour, and abidingly-sustaining strength, to the soul whose desire is to keep his way.¹

Verses 6-15. The circumstances of affliction and distress which affect experimentally the man of God, because he is such, are here presented by the righteous Suppliant. Jesus made supplication to Jehovah as one who was oppressed, committing Himself in well-doing to Him that judgeth righteously.² The general application of these verses to the Lord is plain. But in verse 11 we have a change to the plural number, the effect of which is to bring into more prominent distinctness the suffering *people* of Christ as its subject.³ Their calling is to suffer. Their blessing is to know the delivering power of God's right hand from every form of evil, though the adversary seem to triumph for a while.⁴ It is a God of salvations⁵ who is revealed to us in Christ. By His gracious obedience unto death, the Son of God commends to our souls the truth and power of Jehovah as a Saviour. He had prayed, while in the days of His flesh, to Him who could deliver Him from death. He prayed thus when about to taste of death—to suffer the infliction of his power, who had received indeed a right to exercise authority of death on sin-corrupted man, but who held no claim against the Holy One of God. Thus, in the mystery of godliness, He who must presently be manifested as Himself the great God and the Saviour, was first the subject of Divine salvation. God loosed the pains of death for Jesus.⁶ God

¹ Eph. v. 10.

² 1 Peter ii. 23.

³ I do not doubt that the sufferers here contemplated are properly the Jewish remnant. The language of verse 8 is a counterpart of that in which the faithfulness of Jehovah to His earthly people is prophetically pledged. (Zech. ii. 8; Deut. xxxii. 10.) I have preferred, however, in the text a more practical application of the general principle.

⁴ 2 Cor. i. 10.

⁵ *Infra*, Psalm lxxviii. 20.

⁶ Acts ii. 24.

saved His own Anointed—*justly*, because He knew no sin. The same blessed God is the Saviour, in a special sense, of those who now believe⁷—*justly* also, because of the atonement for their sins in His most precious blood. Perfect in His work, as well as person, the risen Son of God is now the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey Him. Meanwhile, the condition of the heir of salvation, while in the present world, is danger and distress. But faith endures, as seeing Him who, though invisible to sight, is known as a preserver in the faithfulness of death-tried love. “Beware of men” was His word to the messengers whom He sent forth in person to preach the Gospel of the kingdom of God. “Fear not them which kill the body,” and “Be faithful unto death, and I will give to thee a crown of life,”⁸ are His warning and encouragement to those who, for His name’s sake, were to go in jeopardy of life, although no longer under bondage through the fear of death.

The men of the world (verse 14),⁹ whose portion is in this life, are in spirit and in principle opposed to such as dwell among them in the enjoyment of a hope and title of blessing which is founded upon a world-rejected Christ. The prince of this world is not Christ, but Belial. A Christian, therefore, is to reckon it no marvel if he is hated of the world; for the world hates Christ. The demonstration of this hatred is exceedingly various, but as a sentiment it is as lasting as the sin that is its source. In close connexion with this, there is a very important principle to be observed. Faith, which sees God in every thing, will have to do with Him alone. Hence the wicked is here called His “sword,” and men are ac-

⁷ 1 Tim. iv. 10.

⁸ Luke xii. 4, 5; Rev. ii. 10.

⁹ מְתֵיבִים מִן הָאָדָם *Rerum terrestrium amantes.*—GEBEN.

knowledged as His "hand." The history of Jehovah's dealings with Israel after the flesh is a large commentary upon this expression. But it has its application likewise to the Church of God.¹ Persecution may be directed as an instrumental means of Divine chastisement, a process of judgment on the house of God; but the exercised believer, while discerning this, and bowing in submission to the rod of His appointment, abides in the sure fortress of His name, and hopes on with patience to the end. The deliverance expected by the spirit of faith is a *final* and complete deliverance (verse 15). Intermediate experiences of joy or sorrow vary the way of pilgrimage, but nothing will *satisfy* the new-born soul but that which is already the portion of Jesus, the forerunner of its hope. The once marred likeness of sinful flesh now shines in glory as the image of the invisible God. But the glorified Person of the first-begotten from the dead is the pattern, unto which must be conformed the *many* sons whom God is bringing unto glory. We know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is.²

PSALM XVIII.

A SONG of victory, having for its main burden the celebration of Jehovah's faithfulness and glory, according to the exceeding greatness of His power, as displayed in the just deliverance of His Anointed, when He raised up Jesus from the dead. Connected with this there is a recital of the mighty acts of Messiah, according to the mercy of the everlasting covenant, now grown to

¹ 1 Peter iv. 16, 17.

² Rom. viii. 29; 1 John iii. 2.

its ripe and full results of promised blessing towards the people of His mercy. It is a truly wonderful and magnificent Psalm, abounding in richest matter for godly meditation and comfort to the Christian. To expound it at length would be impracticable in this place; all that shall be attempted is to trace what seems to be its general *historical* outline as a Messianic Psalm.

Verses 1-6. The voice of Jesus is here heard showing forth the praises of Jehovah, the God of His salvation, when, as the seed of David, He had become capable of receiving in His own blessed Person the promised mercy of the covenant. There is a memorial of His passion (4, 5), of the hour of His trouble, when the sorrows of death compassed Him, and the overflowings of ungodliness¹ made Him afraid. It is plainly the Cross that here appears, but under one of its aspects alone. God is seen only as the deliverer, in faithfulness and with power, of the righteous Sufferer. His own judicial infliction of the wrathful stroke upon the Bearer of our sins is not the Spirit's subject here; the powers of darkness are alone arrayed against the Holy One. His cry goes up in His distress with acceptance into the ears of Him that was able to deliver Him from death.

Verses 7-19. A sublime celebration is here made of the glory and omnipotent majesty of the God of the Lord Jesus Christ, as it was manifested in His resurrection from

¹ נְחָלֵי בְּלִיעַל "Torrentes diaboli," as Hieron renders. The LXX. have χεῖμαρροι ἀνομίας. The former I believe to be the juster version. The word Belial occurs but once in the New Testament. It is in that instance exactly opposed to Christ: "What concord hath Christ with Belial?" (2 Cor. vi. 15.) The expression in that text conveys faithfully the terrible reality of that scene. It was by the insurrection of human wickedness, as the fatal agency of him that had the power of death, that the crucifixion of the Lord of glory was effected.

the dead in answer to His cry.² "He sent from above," &c. But it is to be remarked, that we are presented in this Psalm with a prophetic description, not only of the personal triumph of Jesus in the fact of His resurrection, but also of the ultimate results of that great assertion of Jehovah's power, so far as they are compassed by the terms of proper Messianic promise. An earnest and specimen of what is here described was given, when at the descent of the angel of Jehovah the earth quaked, and the keepers of the grave, which had held till then the body of the now awakened Christ, shook and were as dead with fear.³ An antecedent token of the same mighty power had been felt in the rending of the rocks, and the opening of the graves, when Jesus, after uttering His last loud cry, had yielded up the ghost.⁴ But beyond these there has as yet been made no further demonstration, that the eye of nature can perceive, of the terrible majesty of Messiah's God.⁵ Jesus is now *hidden* (and with Him there is hidden also the life of those who live only by the faith of Him) in God, who raised Him from the dead.⁶ He is preached in the world as the wisdom and power of God unto salvation; He is perceived and delighted in by the faith of His elect; but the shaking of both earth and heaven, of which this passage speaks, is a thing not yet

² Eph. i. 17, 19, 20.

³ Matt. xxviii.

⁴ Matt. xxvii.

⁵ The mighty power of God was indeed displayed by the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost, and by the miraculous works which demonstrated to the unbeliever the authenticity of the Gospel testimony. But it was to Jesus, hidden in the heavens *until* the times of restitution, that that Spirit gave His witness. (Acts iii. 21.) The power and coming of the Lord Jesus Christ was a part of the testimony everywhere delivered by those who preached the Gospel, though it might seem to the scoffer no better than a fable of ingenious device. (2 Pet. i. 16.)

⁶ Col. iii. 3.

fulfilled.⁷ When it comes it will be accompanied by resistless and inevitable judgment on the adversaries of Jehovah's Christ (verse 14). But as yet the gainsayer may mock unmolested the sure testimonies of God, and despise the riches of His goodness, who endures with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath which are fitted to destruction. The resurrection of the Lord is viewed in this Psalm in its relation to the earthly people of Messiah—the *nation* for which He died,⁸ and which in due time will receive the once-rejected Jesus as the Anointed of Jehovah their King, confessed then as the *root* as well as offspring of David. This necessarily connects the subject with the coming day of Jacob's trouble, out of which he is to be delivered;⁹ with the raging, therefore, like the angry waters, of the many nations who will hem in, to their own undoing, the burdensome stone of Jehovah's indignation.¹ But it is representatively only, in the person of Immanuel—the elect and well-beloved of Jehovah—that the nation whose name He bears² can be regarded in this place.

Verses 20–26. The special grounds of Messiah's deliverance and exaltation are now stated. It was the righteous meed of an obedience which had wrought its final act in death. Jehovah had recompensed Him *according* to His righteousness, and *according* to the cleanness of His hands. He had been tried, and found faithful. Jesus, in obedience, was the object of God's full delight: "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life," &c.³ Holy, harmless, and separate from sinners, He had consummated all devotedness by dying as the fore-ordained Lamb. Glory and honour thus became the *equal*

⁷ Heb. xii. 26, 27.

¹ Zech. xii. 3.

⁸ John xi. 51.

² Isa. xlix. 3.

⁹ Jer. xxx. 7.

³ John x. 17.

recompence⁴ with which Jehovah, whom He served so truly, had now graced Him in His sight. The title of Jesus in righteousness measures and is answered by the glory of God. Perfect obedience receives a recompence of perfect honour. And this is the title in which the poor believing sinner now stands in Christ, unblamable and unreprouable and holy, in the sight of God.⁵

Verses 27-42. The rich abundance which these verses contain of experimental expression, well beseeming the lips of those who now rejoice in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh, cannot be too much pondered by the soul that desires the sincere milk of the word. Continuing, however, our general outline, we seem to find in them a more distinct memorial of the faithfulness of Israel's covenant God, in His perfect accomplishment of the mercy promised to *the fathers*. Mention is first made of the "afflicted people,"⁶ as the immediate object of His saving deliverance; while the lofty looks are to be brought down (27). *Light* is thus found to be in God, who is proved to be the faithful accomplisher of His promise by those who now, after the dark night of their affliction, find victory and strength beneath the Divine buckler of their trust (28-30).⁷ "Our God" is celebrated as the incomparable Rock of salvation, with immediate reference to a judgment upon external enemies, which is effected by the might of those whom God had girded for the battle.⁸

⁴ Col. iv. 1.

⁵ Rom. v. 15-21; Col. i. 22.

⁶ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ

⁷ Psalm cxviii. *passim*.

⁸ Let not the reader forget, that the capability which these verses possess of a spiritual application is not at all in question in this outline. How the blessed Lord fought and triumphed as the Captain of salvation, destroying the enemy, overleaping and breaking down the middle wall of partition, and nailing all oppositions to His cross; how too He now leads in the Church the song of victory, which already is placed by the Holy

There is a cry sent up to heaven by the terror-stricken hosts of wickedness, but there is none to answer. He who alone could save them is now urging His messengers of wrath to their destruction.⁹

It is the bringing in of the day of the Lord, by the second advent of Messiah, that is here presented. That day will indeed be ushered in after a fearful sort. But its dark dawn of judgment will open, for the remnant of His mercy, into the clear shining of the Sun of righteousness, when the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning shall have done their appointed work of purification.¹ The people, then fully owned of the Lord, will be used by Him as His battle-axe and weapons of war,² to smite down to the ground the crown of proud and ungodly oppression; the wicked being as ashes under the soles of their feet in that great day.³

The forty-third verse applies exclusively to Messiah Himself, and recites, first, His deliverance from the contradiction of sinners, the strivings of that people⁴ who, though called by His name, had sold themselves to work the iniquity of His rejection, when they smote the Judge of Israel on the cheek. His resurrection was the accomplishment of this. Secondly, His exaltation is declared as Head of the nations and Lord of all.⁵ He is thus

Ghost in the mouths of those who are more than conquerors through Him that loved them—are things well known to the believer. Such an one may often find, in meditating on this passage, a fresh remembrance of those blessed truths, whereby his own feeble spirit may find itself girded anew, as with the strength of God, for spiritual conflict.

⁹ Prov. i. 25–28; xxix. 1.

¹ Isaiah iv. 4; Rom. xi. 28, 29.

² Jer. li. 20.

³ Micah iv. 13; Mal. iv. 3.

⁴ רִיבֵי עַם That Israel in unbelief is here intended, I do not doubt. In 2 Sam. xxii. 44, it is “my people.”

⁵ Οὗτός ἐστι πάντων Κύριος.—Acts x. 36. The Gospel attests this truth. The coming reign of Christ will establish it in power.

announced in the present testimony of the Gospel.⁶ The creatures of His power are now addressed in the message of His grace.⁷ But, thirdly, there seems to be indicated in the final clause of this verse, the returning obedience of Israel. "A people whom I have not known⁸ shall serve me." Long disowned of Him who hides still His face from the house of Jacob,⁹ they will then find salvation by calling on His name.

Verses 44, 45 describe the dominion and fear which, in that day, will be before Him¹ who is to be brought with angel-worship a second time into the world.² All will fear Him. Everything which once had independent growth and power will decrease, and take a subject place in His apparent exaltation as the King of kings. The contrast which these verses present to the actual position of the ascended Christ, who now upon the Father's throne expects until His enemies be made His footstool, is quite clear. One expression deserves particular attention. It is said: "the strangers shall lie (*margin*) unto me."³ This implies that Christ's millennial rule, though sovereign and undisputed (or if disputed, vindicated straightway in the destruction of the gainsayer,⁴) will not be owned in the hearts and affections of all. Many, indeed, will flow to

⁶ Rom. x. 12.

⁷ Col. i. 16, 23.

⁸ עַם לֹא יָדָעְתִּי I do not think that this expression refers to the Gentiles. The existing position of Israel is one of Divine repudiation. They are disowned as Jehovah's people. This is plain from Scripture. (Rom. xi.) Moreover, I feel persuaded (though it is difficult, perhaps impossible, to demonstrate the point indisputably) that עַם in the singular is never used in Scripture, where עַמִּים or עַמְּיָאֵל is in the context, except to represent the nation of Israel.

⁹ Isaiah viii. 17.

¹ Job xxv. 2.

² Heb. i. 6.

³ יְבָרְכֻנִי: "Schmeicheln mir."—DE WETTE. "Filiis alieni mentientur mihi."—HIERON. *et sic*. LXX.

⁴ Zech. xiv. 17, 18.

Jerusalem as to the throne of the Lord, with thirsting desire to hear the living word of salvation. But grace, though widely-spreading, will not prevail to subdue the universal heart of man, until the total sum of allowed human evil shall have been accomplished in that last rebellion of the nations which marks the close of the millennial age.⁵

Verses 46-48. The glory of the kingdom is to be displayed in the person of Messiah, but He will hold it in the confession of the Most High God. The enemies for whose subjection as His footstool the ascended Christ yet waits, will have been bowed before Him by the power of God (47). In the brightness of the glory which every eye shall see, there will be discerned the Person of the *Son of man*. Messiah is God's King, and will exercise dominion in His fear.⁶ It is the Child of the nation, the Seed of Abraham, as well as the Mighty God, the everlasting Father, and the Prince of peace,⁷ who has His seat of earthly rule prepared upon the throne of David. Praise, therefore, in this passage is ascribed to *God*, as the avenger of Immanuel's title (47). He had subdued the nations under Him according to the decree which had aforetime been declared.⁸ "The violent man"⁹ describes the last Antichrist, the great opponent of the Prince of peace; the Oppressor, whose strength is in the golden city, but who will melt as wax before the presence of the Lord.¹

The forty-ninth verse is well known in its application by the apostle to the existing dispensation of Gentile

⁵ Rev. xx. 7-9. ⁶ 2 Sam. xxiii. 3. ⁷ Isaiah ix. 6, 7. ⁸ Psalm ii. 7, 8.

⁹ אִישׁ הַקָּדֵם Looking at the deliverance of the Lord's resurrection, this expression would relate rather to Satan himself, "the murderer from the beginning," whose self-destroying blow had slain the Lamb of God, the Captain of salvation. (Heb. ii. 14.)

¹ Isaiah xiv.

mercy.² Jesus, now exalted at the right hand of God, is disclosed to Gentile faith in answer to that inquiry which would see Him even in the days of His flesh.³ He is preached to the Gentiles and believed on in the world.⁴ But in the present passage it is not the manifestation of Jesus to the faith of the elect Gentile church that is the subject, but the setting forth of the praises of Jehovah among the nations, through the medium of the full Messianic blessing of *Israel*. For it is they who in that day are to be His messengers, and the glad dispensers of His blessing to the Gentiles, whose call is to rejoice *with* the nation for which Jesus died, when He shall have avenged the blood of His servants, and returned with everlasting mercies to His own.⁵

In the concluding verse there is separate mention made of David and of David's seed. The original subject of the Psalm has been passed by in silence in the foregoing outline. Not because it is not full of profit in its place, but because the proper Messianic features of this most noble strain seemed chiefly to demand attention. To the Christian, as a fellow of the kingdom and patience of Christ, *all* the richness and blessing of this and other kindred Psalms is freely opened as his own. He is interested in it all. For the things of Christ already are his own in promise, and will presently be realized as such in fact. Meanwhile, his happy calling is to prove experimentally, by the faithful teaching of the Comforter, God's fulness in His Son, as the rich portion of his soul—to speak well of Him who is worthy to be praised, praising with lips made clean

Rom. xv. 9.

John xii. 21. Compare the remarkable passage: Εἰς πρῶτος ἐξ ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν φῶς μέλλει καταγγέλλειν κ.λ. (Acts xxvi. 23.)

⁴ 1 Tim. iii. 16.

⁵ Deut. xxxii. 43; Zech. viii. 11-23.

by the confession of the name of Jesus, and finding Him to be indeed the *Rock*, the Fortress, and the Tower of His people's strength.

PSALM XIX.

WE have, in this very beautiful Psalm, the meditation of one who entered with deep spiritual intelligence into the understanding of Jehovah's works and ways. *Grace* is the pure and solid ground which is occupied by the soul whose inusings find here an expression so noble and so rich. Jehovah is his Rock and his Redeemer (verse 14). A sense of personal weakness and intrinsic sinfulness is ever present to the self-searching heart (verses 12, 13); but Jehovah is trusted and looked to with confidence, for protection and deliverance from the evil which is felt and feared. "Keep back thy servant," &c. Hence reverence and godly fear, the constant associates of a true heart-enjoyment of grace, form the prevailing tone of this wisely meditative strain; which celebrates as its double burden, first the power, and secondly the truth of God.

Verses 1, 6. The power and Godhead of Jehovah are displayed in the visible heavens. An all-pervading witness of His Divine majesty is present, and addresses itself to the eye and conscience equally, wherever human speech is heard. He is excellent in working; creation is the operation of His hands. Glory shines thus for the eye of the spiritual man, from the mute witnesses of God's eternal power. They are *His* creatures. Light and darkness alike reveal *Him*. His constant praise is uttered in the ceaseless regularity of the ordinances of the heavens. But the works of Jehovah are evermore the admiration and delight of the

man after His own heart. The sun, which is the light and strength and joy of natural existence, shines for the believer with a splendour not its own. For *by faith* he understands creation; seeing and tasting the Saviour in the works of the Creator, and reading gospel even in the face of nature.¹ The Father causeth *His* sun to arise upon the evil and the good, that the man of God may discover, in the fair though passing beauty of the flowers of the field, fresh testimony to the goodness and glory of Him who upholdeth all things by the word of His power; while the thankless seeker of himself—the lover of pleasure rather than of God—finds opportunity, while the season of long-suffering endures, for the abuse of that goodness which meanwhile daily fills his hardened heart with food and natural gladness.²

DIVINE LOVE shines for the believer in God's visible creation. For in all its parts it speaks of Him who, having originally made it, has likewise paid the price of its redemption in His precious blood. A Christian's power, therefore, of appreciating and enjoying external nature will always be according to his soul's intelligence of *grace*. It is remembered by the heart that wisely meditates God's works, that His hand, who hung in heaven the greater and the lesser lights, and who fashioned for Himself that wide and varied scene which the returning sun fills daily with its gladdening beams, and who clothes the heavens with sackcloth at His will, has been pierced in the reality of atoning death for his transgressions.³ The Lord of creation is the Redeemer of his soul. Redemption must be known before creation can be rightly understood. Science concerns itself with facts and laws, but faith only sees truth in its beauty. Order and harmony are things discernible

¹ Heb. xi. 3.

² Acts xiv. 17.

³ Isaiah i.

by the natural intelligence; not to perceive these in the face of nature is to be blind indeed. But they alone who know the FATHER, as the Only-begotten has revealed Him,—themselves begotten as children of light by the effectual word of grace and truth,—are able, while passing through the present scene as through a wilderness, to use without abusing the abounding mercies of His hand, and to behold in each morning of the natural light, which makes the last night's darkness a forgotten thing, an earnest of that nightless and enduring day, whose living Sun of joy shall not go down. Jesus, when He looked upon the lilies thought upon the Father; and because His grace has put us in the place of sons, by accomplishing in dying love the Father's will, we now, because we have the mind of Christ, can look as He looked on the creature. One lasting and essential difference, indeed, remains. As vessels of pure mercy, we see in the creation the ever-present memorial of the Father, whose love in Christ is our refuge and eternal rest; while Jesus viewed and used the creature in the perfect and ineffable consciousness that what He thus beheld, and in gracious humiliation shared with men, He had Himself originally made.

Verses 7–11. Things visible declare the glory of God, and manifest His handiwork; but it is the word of His truth that alone reveals *Himself*. “The law of Jehovah,” which to the regenerate man is known to be *spiritual*, and therefore imperishable,³ comes thus to be the delight of the soul that has tasted that He is gracious—of him, that is, whose heart has been purified by faith. The law, the testimonies, the statutes, and the judgments of the Lord, are acceptable alike to the heart that is athirst for God as the true fountain of its joy. Jesus consented naturally

³ Rom. vii. 14.

to the law; His heart was the true ark of God's election, wherein it was laid up in its completeness. But that which was hidden in the heart of the obedient One is now made manifest (no longer as an impassable barrier, or a threatening avenger, but as the smiling messenger of peace) in the person of the risen and ascended Christ, who is declared to be the *end* of the law for righteousness to every believer.⁴ The Christian now delights in the perfection of the law,⁵ because he rests in Jesus as the living and eternal righteousness of God. The sure testimonies of the Lord (verse 7) make wise unto salvation the heart of simple faith. Pureness and knowledge accompany the way of him whose walk is in Jehovah's fear. The light of the seeing eye are the commandments of the Lord, whom the heart of the believer has begun to love in truth.⁶

Full assurance of hope, grounded on a clear discernment of the one atonement in its lasting efficacy,⁷ is necessary to enable a believer to find a savour of sweetness in the righteous judgments of Jehovah. Every quickened soul perceives, indeed, the godness and perfection of the

⁴ Rom. x.

⁵ The law is never the standard of Christian conduct, but Christ. The believer is not under the law, but under grace. (Rom. vi.) A dead man is past the jurisdiction of law; a risen man knows God as the *Saviour* of his person, and the *Judge* only of his works. *In Christ*, the fulness of all righteousness abounds before God, to the account of every believer. Meanwhile, as it respects the flesh, which lusts against the Spirit, the law is evermore the witness of God against all unrighteousness. It still has thus its lawful use. (1 Tim. i. 7-11.) But to bind it again to the conscience of a justified believer is *not* its lawful use. For such an one is Christ's freed man, whose calling is to serve in newness of the spirit, not in the oldness of the letter. He is under law to Christ (ἐννομος Χριστοῦ, 1 Cor. ix. 21).

⁶ Verses 8, 9; 1 John v. 3.

⁷ Heb. x.

law. Personal wretchedness is, however, the only result of this discovery to one whose knowledge of God is below the measure of pure gospel truth. It is not until the heart has been established with *grace*, not with meats,⁸ that joyful progress can be made in the knowledge of God, in the way of willing devotedness.⁹ And well it is to bear always in our remembrance, that God is truly known and enjoyed by those only whose walk is that of *obedient children*. Abstract ideas of Divine perfection are dreams which fill the mind and exercise the imagination, but do not feed the soul. There is no honeycomb there (verse 10). For God can be *tasted* only in Jesus, as the Holy Ghost distils, from the pure word of grace, His sweetness on the hungering and thirsting soul.¹ The way of wisdom is the way of pleasantness to those who believe that God is a rewarder of them that *diligently seek Him*.² It is association, through redemption, with the Source of truth and holiness, that makes the light which God is a grateful instead of a terrible contemplation to the heart of man. The remedy of conscious failure can then be sought in the very quarter from whence its discovery has been made.³ The word of holiness is the word also of *grace*. Meanwhile, Jehovah's sayings act, with a searching yet welcome efficacy of warning, on the man who, knowing well the Master whom he serves, has respect to the recompence of the reward.⁴

“The great transgression” (verse 13) is, undoubtedly, rebellion of the will. It is this that the believer, who is growing in the way of the Lord, learns most of all to dread. Man's capital sin has always been the endeavour to act and prosper independently of God. This is the

⁸ Heb. xiii. 9.

⁹ Gal. v. 6.

¹ Matt. v. 6; John vi. 35.

² Heb. xi. 6.

³ 1 John i. 5-7.

⁴ John xii. 26.

very root and essence of all the varied forms of personal transgression. Jesus alone found joy unqualified in doing perfectly the will of God ; and on them whose desire is to walk as He walked, keeping themselves in His name in the love of God, the tempter has no power. That wicked one toucheth them not, while all others are his prey.⁵ But the language of the soul that wisely judges itself in the sanctuary, will be found continually to resemble the expression of this and the preceding verse. An exercised conscience hates sin ; yet a divinely-taught mind knows that what is its chief dread is its inseparable companion. Indwelling sin is a solemn thing to reflect on ; but the believer knows his Maker as the faithful Preserver also of his soul. He is kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation. The sweet sense of security which flows from the knowledge of the finished grace of God in Christ, though capable of fleshly abuse, produces as its just effect a sensitive tenderness of heart and conscience, because the presence of the Holy One is a thing practically realized and enjoyed.⁶

The well-known quotation which is made in the New Testament from the present Psalm is worth attention.⁷ It is a beautiful adaptation of language, descriptive originally of the palpable and pervading evidences of Jehovah's power and Godhead, in order to set forth the boundless riches of a mercy which addresses itself, in the gospel of the grace of God, to every creature which is under heaven. Christ is now openly declared, by the testimony of the Spirit, to be the wisdom and the power of God. The brightness of the glory of the eternal and invisible God

⁵ 1 John ii. 5, 6 ; v. 18.

⁶ Some further remarks on this subject will be found in the Notes on Psalm cxxxix.

⁷ Rom. x. 18.

shines forth in the person of the Lamb once slain, and thus discovers Him to the believer as the God of *all grace*. But Israel stumbled at the revelation of grace, just as uncircumcised nature had slighted and dishonoured the visible glory of the incorruptible God.⁸ The wisdom of their counsel gave sentence of death against the Prince of life. But this wisdom was the consummated foolishness of men who knew not what they did. They thus remain "a foolish nation and unwise," seeking still the living among the dead; and going about to establish their own righteousness, while they despise the testimony of Him who is gone to the Father.⁹ Israel has stumbled, and is fallen; until the same Jehovah who has been Himself, in His marvellous humiliation, their rock of offence,¹ shall be recognized as the Deliverer, the stone of Israel, the head-stone of the corner. He will be so acknowledged when the veil shall have been taken from the nation's heart.

The tone of this Psalm is primarily Jewish; but, as we have seen, its basis is *grace* discerned by faith, while in its moral scope it leaves behind all dispensational distinctions. It is a Psalm of David, the man after Jehovah's heart. It does not seem to bear a distinctly prophetic character, though doubtless it will be sung, with a fuller and richer appreciation of its meaning, by those whose portion of earthly blessing will be enjoyed in the day when the glory of Jehovah shall overspread the heavens, and the whole earth be filled with His praise. The law, then written on the heart of Israel, will flow through their testimony to the utmost nations of the world.²

⁸ Rom. i. 20-23.

⁹ John xvi. 10.

¹ Isaiah viii. 14.

² Micah iv. 2; Hab. ii. 14.

PSALM XX.

THERE is a close moral connection between this Psalm and that which immediately follows. *The King* is the subject of them both. The one now before us is a prayer for Messiah, the messenger of Israel's covenant, and the royal branch of promise; the desired hope therefore of the faithful remnant of His kindred after the flesh;¹ whose rising, as the Star of Jacob, is to shed victory and cloudless peace upon His chosen heritage. The Spirit gives expression in this Psalm to that longing desire after Christ, the salvation of Jehovah, which ever has been found in the hearts of those who, like Jacob, wait for the fulfilment of the promise in the midst of evil days²—weary and sore troubled, but strong in hope—holding fast the sure word of promise until the day of the Lord's power shall have come, when He will still the enemy and the avenger, and bless His people with abiding peace. It is the *God of Jacob* whose blessing is here invoked on His Anointed.

Messiah is viewed in the present Psalm, not in the majesty of His kingdom and glory, but as the dependent Servant of Jehovah. Mention is made of offerings and sacrifice, in connection with the sanctuary and the hill of promise (verses 2, 3). Desires and recorded petitions of the King are commended to the God of His defence, by those whose banners are set up in the name of *their* God, because of the joy of salvation with which the King of

¹ *Conf.* Isaiah ix. 6: "Unto us a child is born," &c. &c.

² Gen. xlvii. 9; xlix. 18.

their desire is to be anointed (verses 4, 5).³ The defence of Messiah's title, as the Seed of promise, is the faithfulness of Jacob's God. Both the sufferings of Christ and the glories which were to follow, so far as they relate to earthly things, appear to be within the contemplation of the faith which finds so sweet and remarkable an utterance in this Psalm. "*Ought not Christ to have suffered?*" was the reproachful inquiry of the risen Lord, addressed to those who looked indeed for Israel's redemption, but whose faith came short of what was written in their scriptures concerning Himself.⁴ As a prophecy, this prayer seems suited to the lips of repentant Israel in the latter day, when, graciously received and freely forgiven, they shall once again erect their banner in the name (then truly learned and known) of Him who is their God. When with unveiled hearts they acknowledge Jesus as the Christ, they will glory in the God of Jacob as the strength of their salvation. "Jehovah-nissi" will be then their lasting watchword,⁵ and they will praise Him with understanding, as the God of His Anointed; whom their eyes will see, and their hearts then fully own as *their* King, and all their confidence and joy.

It is a commendatory prayer put by the Spirit of Christ into David's heart as the representative of all who waited for redemption, and conceived in terms strongly anticipa-

³ I do not pause to insist particularly on the present bearing of these things upon the Church. The believer knows what manner of interest he has in the offerings and in the prayers of Jesus; what manner of sacrifice He has offered for us once for all, and how He has prayed (John xvii.) for those who put their trust in Him, while hidden from their sight. Available, however, as the language of this Psalm is for the furtherance of true Christian communion, it is in its proper drift and intention most plainly Jewish.

⁴ Luke xxiv. 26.

⁵ Exod. xvii. 15.

tive of triumphant results ; those results being the hard-earned fruits of the travail of Jesus. The counsel of His heart, which was to do Jehovah's will, and which led Him to the acceptable sacrifice of Himself, in the devotedness of obedient love, forms the ground on which the pleading of this prayer is based (4). He was *worthy* whom Jehovah should thus honour. Meanwhile, horses and chariots are trusted no longer, but the name of their God is had in remembrance by His waiting people.⁶ They whose trust was in the creature had fallen, while the once prostrate suppliants of Jehovah had been lifted up and made to stand by the saving might of His power. The true King is now in Jeshurun, and the worship of salvation is prepared to greet Jehovah and His Christ in the land and sanctuary of His choice.⁷

PSALM XXI.

WE have now the counterpart of the foregoing strain. The full triumph and personal blessedness of Messiah, whose royal title has been affirmed and glorified effectually in Jehovah's strength, are the subjects of this most beautiful Psalm, which consists of two parts.

Verses 1-7 declare the consummation of His joy as the receiver of salvation in answer to His trust in God. Jehovah's praises are extolled according to the majesty of that mighty power which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in heavenly places.¹ Jesus had asked life in the days of His flesh, and the resurrection was the answer to

⁶ Hosea xiv. 3.

⁷ Compare Exodus xiv. 31; Deut. xxxiii. 5.

the request of His lips. Length of days for ever and ever is the awarded portion of Him who commended His spirit in dying obedience to the Father's hands. It is not the intrinsic glory of the Son of God—Himself the Life, the true God and eternal Life²—that is here presented. It is a manifestation rather of that Messianic honour with which the guiltless Sufferer of death has been invested as the *appointed* Heir of all things.³ Especially, in the present case, this glory is viewed under the limited, earthly aspect of Jewish promise.⁴ But while we do well to note the true prophetic character of this Psalm, yet, inasmuch as its subject is Christ glorified, the eye of Christian faith finds forth in these verses a rich and full pasture of immediate grace.

Jesus has now His heart's desire. For the joy that was set before Him He endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. The joy of the Father's presence, and the brightness of that glory which He has received from Him, are now the recompence and solace of the world-rejected Christ. He is made most blessed for ever. The blessings of goodness prevent with perfect favour the acceptable Man who rests upon the Father's throne. The grief which once filled until it broke the heart of the Man of sorrows, whose affliction was for our sakes, is now forgotten in the exceeding gladness of Jehovah's countenance. To know these things is the believer's chief delight. For it is his Saviour and forerunner whom he sees thus crowned.

The prayer of Jesus to the Father, when His hour had

¹ Eph. i.

² 1 John v. 20.

³ Heb. i. 2.

⁴ For, as has been already shown, the Davidical kingship of Christ relates immediately to the nation whose capital is to be known in that day as "the city of the great King." See also the remarks on Ps. xlvi.

arrived, was "Glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify Thee."⁵ In a former Psalm⁶ we have had presented to us the anticipative triumph of the leader of our faith, in the immediate prospect of the cross. In the passage we are now reviewing, the *results* of His gracious passion are expressed: "His glory is great in Thy salvation." Already this is perceptible to the faith of the spiritual man. "We see Jesus crowned with glory and honour."⁷ *Great* glory is His, whom God has made higher than the heavens. Angels and authorities, principalities and powers, are made subject to Him whose name is now and for ever above every name. And while Jesus sits exalted in majesty and throned in joy (still waiting for the hour to arrive when He who already is worshipped on the Father's throne shall assume His own royal seat of manifested dominion),⁸ His thoughts are with the expectant heirs of salvation, who are to share with Him the glory of that reign. For them are now sent forth, at His instance and intercession, the angels, whose life and service are to do His will.⁹

Nor is this all. The place of the exalted Jesus is now also by the Spirit "*the midst of the Church.*" Where two or three of those whom He is not ashamed to call His brethren are assembled in His name, *there* is the place where, as the teacher as well as object of Divine praises, He declares to His own that name which is the witness and secret of His own delight. "I will declare thy name unto my brethren; in the midst of the Church will I sing praise unto thee."¹ The *joy* of Jesus stands prominent among those "things" of His which the Comforter—Himself the unction of Divine gladness to the soul—delights

⁵ John xvii. 1.⁶ Psalm xvi.⁷ Heb. ii. 9.⁸ Psalm cx. 1; Rev. iii. 21.⁹ Heb. i. 14.¹ Heb. ii. 12.

to reveal to His disciples. For in all that joy the Church has her own most rich and blessed share. The requests of Jesus were not for Himself alone. The heart that loves the Lord may indeed well mourn with shame, while pondering the wretched answer to His heart's desire² that the sin of man has furnished, in the general failure of the Church to glorify Him worthily whilst here below. Still the Spirit, whose gracious presence has been grieved by the corruption of the holy temple of God's light and truth,³ remains in the believer the abiding witness and most sure earnest of the eventual realization *in power* of those pure desires.⁴ They are *granted*. The Holy Ghost is the present assurance to the believer of that which will, in a very little while, be openly verified by the appearing in glory of the Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.

The Christian's portion is indeed a rich one. God is for him. Christ is his. We *have Him*, whether as the Apostle or the High Priest of our profession.⁵ It is to meet the personal necessities of the soul that the blessed Lord has clothed Himself with the gracious offices which are the present expression of His love. His priestly intercession, His righteous advocacy, His perfect grace and unwearied patience as the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls, are declared to us by the Spirit, for the maintenance and increase of our confidence and rejoicing as once-purged worshippers of God. But there is a yet fuller and more tender blessing—the crown and fruit of all the rest—which consists in the fellowship which is possessed by the believer in the Lord's own joys. Jesus declares the *Father's* name to *His brethren*. The sense of mediation, though never for a moment lost, is half forgotten in that blissful conscious-

² John xvii. 21.

³ 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17.

⁴ John xvii. 23, 24.

⁵ Heb. viii. 1.

ness of union and companionship with the Mediator, which brings the vessels of redeeming grace so very near to God. For they are brought nigh *in* Him as well as by His precious blood.⁵ Known or unknown in the Christian's actual experience, his standing is that of filial acceptance with God. His *level* in the Divine presence is companionship with Christ!⁶ The mission of the Holy Ghost, as the Spirit of adoption, is to witness *to* him and *in* him this ineffable truth. It is because we *are* sons that God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father.⁷ The following Psalm will open to us more fully the mighty sources of this joy, in the discovery of the travailings of Divine love for our sakes, when death in its unqualified bitterness became the portion of Messiah's cup.

In the meanwhile, it is a rich view that here is opened to us of the rejoicing and triumphant King. "He liveth unto God."⁸ He is the Man of God's delight. Jesus enjoys God according to the capacities which pertain to His most real humanity, as well as in the incommunicable blessedness of His eternal Sonship. The fulness of the Godhead is indeed contained in His most blessed Person; it dwells bodily in Him who is the Head of all principality and power;⁹ yet Jesus knows Jehovah as the God of His *mercy*, the giver of His portion, the arbiter of His honour and reward, the object of His homage as He leads the adoring praises of His people. He wears a crown of Divine bestowment. He *receives* a kingdom, which He

⁵ Eph. ii. 13.

⁶ We are *μέτοχοι* "sharers" or "interested associates" of Christ, by grace partaking with Him of that which is His own delight. (Heb. iii. 14; John xvi. 27; xvii. 22.)

⁷ Gal. iv. 6.

⁸ Rom. vi.

⁹ Col. ii. 9, 10.

will again restore, when the full cycle of its blessed and holy administration shall have been accomplished.¹ Having fulfilled all righteousness in the days of His flesh, He still delights to own, and will presently again make open demonstration of subjection to Jehovah as the Most High God, when, as *His Anointed*, He shall bear upon His shoulder the government of the kingdoms of this world.²

Verses 8–13 describe some of the effects of Messiah's second advent in the majesty of that power and coming which, though now esteemed no better than a cunning fable by the world, will be presently revealed to sight. Having received the kingdom He will return.³ His enemies will be found in that dread day by the strong right hand of His most holy vengeance. Commencing His reign by the sudden destruction of the multitudes who gather themselves together as the armies of the Beast, He will hold the kingdom until He shall have subdued *all* enemies beneath His feet.⁴ In the present Psalm it is to the pre-millennial confederacy of those whose eyes will be set for evil on Immanuel's land that reference is immediately made. Retributive judgments must precede the revival of the Lord's song in the land of promise. Meanwhile, what Jewish faith might thus express, while joyfully

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 24.

² Already the Lord Jesus is known to the believer in His royal as well as sacerdotal character. He is a Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec. (Heb. vii.) The functions of His priesthood are, however, conducted for His people in the present dispensation, according to the Aaronic type. (Heb. viii. ix. x.) The Priest is not yet seated upon the throne of royal administration as the King of nations. But the throne of His Father David is reserved for Him whose right it is to wear the long-profaned diadem of Israel (Ezek. xii. 26, 27), as the chosen Shepherd, who shall stand and feed the flock of Israel in the strength of Jehovah, in the majesty of the *name* of Jehovah His God. (Micah v. 4; 2 Sam. xxiii. 3, 5.)

³ Luke xix. 12.

⁴ 1 Cor. xv. 25.

anticipating the Messianic blessing which should fulfil with antitypical and enduring glory the Davidical pattern of Israel's kingdom, speaks plainly to the Christian of yet better things. For he views the coming blessings of Messiah's earthly reign, according to the interests and with the desire of one whose hope is laid up for him in *heaven*, and whose promised portion is to *reign* with Jesus when He comes to reign.⁵

PSALM XXII.

THE cross and its results, both heavenly and earthly (but especially the latter), is the general argument of this wonderful Psalm.

It is exceedingly full. For it opens with the crisis which brings together the two largest of all subjects; the grace of God and the wickedness of man find their point of contact here. Both have their full expression in the passion and death of the Son of God. More particularly this Psalm respects the sufferings of Christ and His after-glories, in their relation to Israel and the nations of the world. Millennial promise closes the scene, which opens with the fearful cry of Messiah's extremity, when realizing the bitterness of sacrificial death. Let us draw a little closer to this solemnly affecting subject.

Verses 1, 2. The consummation of the sufferings of Christ is expressed in the opening words. These sufferings were threefold. He was first despised of *men*. Secondly, He was rejected of the *people*.¹ Thirdly, and especially, He was at the crisis of His sorrow, forsaken of *God*. It

⁵ Rev. iii. 21; Rom. viii.

¹ כֹּזֵב בְּיָדָיו Israel, that is, who received Him not, although they were His own. (John i. 11.)

pleased Jehovah to bruise Him; *He* hath put Him to grief.² It was in the acceptance by the Man of sorrows of *that* cup at the Father's hands, that Jehovah, as the God of holiness and truth, was perfectly glorified upon the earth. "I am not alone" had been the glad experience, as well as the good confession of the blessed Sufferer, while learning as a Son His life-long lesson of obedience to the Father's will.³ But an hour must arrive in which He would be left alone. While that hour was as yet but a prospective thing, the dread of it drew forth strong crying and tears from the afflicted yet steadfast Victim, for whom its unknown travail was ordained. The second verse applies more generally to this anticipative grief, which made bitter all the earthly days of the appointed Lamb of God. But it was out of the deep darkness of that hour itself, when the terrors of the Almighty had fallen in wrathful infliction on the pure and spotless Substitute for human guilt, that the heart-broken cry of utter desolation came. Jesus was left alone to bear the wrath of God. A cruel messenger was sent against the blameless and only righteous One—against God's own; for it was *His own Son* whom the Father did not spare.⁴ Hence the peculiar force of the appeal: "*My* God, why hast *Thou* forsaken me?" But the sentence had proceeded from of old; it had been written in the volume of the Book. And now, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, the ready Victim offers Himself without spot to God.

But it is not the sacrificial aspect of the cross that is most conspicuously presented in this Psalm. It discloses rather the matchless grace of the rejected and dishonoured Christ amid the unspeakable circumstances of His humiliation. The *faith* with which He trusted in God⁵ shines

² Isaiah liii. 10. ³ Heb. v. 8. ⁴ Rom. viii. 32. ⁵ Heb. ii. 13; xii. 2.

but the more brightly by reason of the horror of great darkness which surrounded Him on every side. "*My God.*" Even while enduring the cross, and finding His strange visitation to be death, and not life, because of the imputation of transgression to the appointed Lamb, the heart of the sufferer was yet with *God*. *Man* alone was visible and audible. *Satan* was perceptible in all the circumstances of the tremendous wickedness of which he was the instigator. Moreover and especially, it was in his hated hand that the power of death continued, until, by dying once, He who is personally "the Prince of life" should have made Himself the Lord likewise and owner both of death and of the dead.⁶ But while such was the apparent agency which wrought in that dread hour, it was *God* who still filled the thoughts of Jesus. For it was at the bidding of the Father that He undertook to die. Nor, though the decease which He should accomplish must come upon Him in the fearful form of the curse of the very law wherein His heart delighted, and which he held in that sanctuary of all holy affections,⁷ would He be deterred from thus fulfilling the good pleasure of the Father. His flesh shrank indeed, and His whole soul recoiled at the contemplation of that death. "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me," was an utterance of the intense distress of soul which brought from the depth of His grief-laden heart that strong cry of agony; while great drops of blood rolled from a brow which rightly knew no sweat of labour, because untainted by the first man's sin. But for that hour had He come into the world. To do the will of God was the purpose of His gracious incarnation. That will He was content to do, even though the doing of it should extinguish for a season all the

⁶ Rom. xiv. 9; Rev. i. 18.

⁷ Psalm xl. 8.

light and gladness of His life, by placing the veil of human sin between the Father and the Son.

Verses 3-5. The Lord here wonderfully identifies Himself, as a faithful Israelite—the only Israelite in whose mouth no guile in very deed was found⁸—with the nation from which He sprang, as touching the flesh, and for which He died, to fulfil the covenanted truth of God. There is an indescribable beauty in the third verse, expressing as it does the perfect love of Messiah for His own, who rejected Him; a love which, while undergoing at their hands the extremity of ignominious suffering, yet pleaded for them as for men that knew not what they did.⁹ Jesus, while passively satisfying the claims of Divine holiness, could enter in spirit into those precious thoughts which were the active sympathies of an everlasting love.¹ He knew (for who should better know them than Himself?) Jehovah's thoughts of final peace towards the rebellious yet beloved people of His choice. And now, while consciously abolishing in His flesh the enmity, and removing far away the veil of darkness (though for a space that veil must yet continue on the heart of Israel) which had shrouded hitherto the glory of the God of grace, He thus anticipatively enthrones Jehovah amid Israel's praises. For praise will again be heard in Zion, which shall stand in blessed contrast to the execrations of maddened wickedness which filled the wearied ears of the expiring Lamb of God.² The blinded eyes of Jacob will open in that day with astonishment and shame, but with yet more abundant

⁸ Nathanael was a guileless Israelite, by the Lord's own testimony. Such too were all whose hearts were settled in the faith of Divine promise. (Psalm xxxii. 2.) But the Just One alone, who *did no sin*, was intrinsically pure. (1 Peter ii. 22.)

⁹ Luke xxiii. 34.

¹ Jer. xxxi. 3.

² Isaiah xii. xxvi.

joy, upon the brightness of His glory, who had once been hated of His brethren. It is most profitable, whilst meditating generally upon the subject of the Lord's passion, to notice thus the distinct Jewish traits, which are sufficiently apparent in the Gospels, but discover themselves far more abundantly and emphatically in the Psalms. "*Our fathers* trusted in thee," &c. The sufferings of Jesus were endured by Him under a Jewish character and relations. He was not only made of a woman, but made *under the law*;³ the Divine and ever-gracious endurer, meanwhile, of the contradiction of sinners against *Himself*.⁴

The sixth verse declares the sum of Messiah's ignominy: "I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men and despised of the people." He was despised of them whose fathers had received with contumely and dishonour the prophetic messengers of mercy, who spake before of the coming of the Just One; whose ancestors, in a yet earlier generation of that evil family, had changed their glory to the shameful image of Egyptian abomination. But He was, moreover, a reproach of *men*. The title of Jesus was disowned contemptuously by the ruling powers of this world. They crucified the Lord of glory, because God's wisdom was to them an unknown thing.⁵ He was mocked and set at nought by Herod and his men of war.⁶ The soldiers of Pilate robed Him in purple, in derision of His royal title, and placed in mockery upon His head the thorny semblance of the crown of David.⁷ "I will chastise Him and let Him go," was the conciliatory expression of Gentile contempt for the alleged rival of Cæsar's throne, addressed to those who clamoured for His blood, when

³ Gal. iv. 4.

⁴ Heb. xii. 3.

⁵ 1 Cor. ii. 8.

⁶ Luke xxiii.

⁷ Matt. xxvii.

Pilate, ill at ease within his own dark mind because of those unwonted words of living truth which made him fear before the presence of his prisoner, yet saw on Him no outward sign which seemed to justify His good confession as the Lord's anointed King. The pretensions of the Man of Nazareth to the title of Messiah appeared to the eye of natural sense entirely ridiculous. He was indeed a worm, and no man, in the esteem of those who would willingly have granted Him a scornful exemption from the pains of treason, because of the plain and palpable absurdity of such an arraignment against such a man!

Nor should the deep and sad meaning of this expression be lost sight of, in its reference to the sacrificial work of Jesus. His estimate among men here below was a shadow of truth's estimate of man in the judgment of the sanctuary. "A worm, and no man," is a just description of a sinner; for God gave the name of "man" to the upright creature of His hands: sin puts its victims in a lower place. In these words, therefore, of our ever-blessed Substitute, we discover something of the feeling which withered and oppressed His soul, when for our sakes He consented to be numbered with transgressors. Despising the *shame* of the cross, as only perfect righteousness could do, He tastes the full truth of its bitterness as the gratuitous confessor of all human sin.

It is when at the lowest pitch of human degradation, that the perfect moral glory of the Only-begotten of the Father shines most brightly forth. It was the Christ, the Son of the blessed, whose judgment was then taken away, that the Scriptures might be thus fulfilled. But the good confession which the captive and fettered Jesus witnessed before Pontius Pilate, He witnessed as the prisoner of *God*.

The truth which filled His blessed Person found its last expression out of the piteous (but there was none to pity) condition of lonely and unaided sorrow, into which His willing love had led Him as the doer of the Father's will. He had come into the world with forethought of His way and for a firmly purposed end. He came in order that the sheep which were His own, though numbered to the slaughter and as it were within the hungry reach of the destroyer, might live, and be borne safely upon the faithful shoulder of His love within the fold of everlasting peace. Therefore was His face set as a flint; though filled with shame He yet despised the shame. He knew Him near who was to justify Him. The Lord His God should help Him in due time.⁸ There was indeed no succour for the guiltless Sufferer at the hands of man. The children of those fathers who once rescued Jonathan from Saul's perverse decree, because they owned his work to be of God,⁹ were willingly persuaded to demand the blood of One whom just before they had welcomed to the city as none other than the promised Hope of Israel.¹ The scriptures of the prophets must be so fulfilled. But the voice of Jesus, which had uttered supplication to the Father for deliverance from death, would have its answer in His time. The resurrection was to be the full requital of those prayers. God would save His Beloved, not *from* His enemies, but by their means. He would make the malice and the cruel power of the evil one the instrumental means of loosing for ever the burden of sin and death which His own hand had laid upon His Son.² That weighty load was willingly received by Him who alone of all men could regard those things as alien to Himself, until in

⁸ Isaiah l. 7, 8.

⁹ 1 Sam. xiv. 45.

¹ Matt. xxi. ; xxvii. 20, 25.

² Isaiah liii. 6.

grace He took them on Himself *for us*. For Jesus knew no sin. The sins He bare were ours. The death which He instinctively abhorred, yet willingly endured, was also ours. But He made them both His own. *Himself* bare *our sins* in His own body on the tree. Himself also died; dying by His own power, who alone possessed a life to give, to which none other could lay claim;³ dying, moreover, *by the grace of God*, whose commandment of eternal life⁴ could be accomplished only by the shedding of the blood of His eternal Son.⁵

And thus would God—the Father of mercies, the blessed God—dissolve, through the death of His appointed Lamb, the curse which had turned the heaven where mercy has its secret dwelling place from the beginning⁶ into the hard brass of unsatisfied justice; and would make the very blackness of darkness to become the dawn and rising of the morning Star of life. And it was *Man* who thus should rise. The form and fashion under which the Son of God had tasted death, He would not cease to bear when risen from the dead. He died a Man; as Man He lives again, though the fulness of the Godhead be within that flesh. The First-begotten from the dead was to become, as the second Adam, the accomplished reality of that eternal purpose, of whose excellency, as the image and glory of God, the former man was but the figure and the shade.⁷ That shadow was to flee away, to lose itself amid the deeper shades of death, that out of death the living and Divine perfection of Jehovah's likeness might arise. The resurrection would declare Him who, in His day of weakness, was as a worm, and no man, to be the Son of God with power. And in this His Divine and paramount title

³ John x. 18.⁴ John xii. 50.⁵ Heb. ix. 22.⁶ Psalm cxxxvi. 5.⁷ Rom. v. 14.

would be included and maintained those lesser names of promise which—whether “Son of man,” or “Seed of Abraham,” or “Branch of David”—pertained alone to Him who is now revealed to our faith as “the beginning, the first-born from the dead.”⁸

Verses 7–10. The bitterest mockery with which the dying Saviour was assailed was uttered, not by Gentile soldiers, but by those whose lips professed to keep wisdom and to dispense the knowledge of Jehovah. The language of verse 8 is a prophetic expression of almost the very words of the chief priests, the scribes, and elders of Israel, as they looked with pleasure on their fearful handiwork; and thought to bless themselves in their iniquity, by taunting the expiring Son of God with words which bore true witness to Him as the perfect servant whom Jehovah had upheld.⁹ “He trusted in God.” And yet He hung before their eyes, the victim of their unresisted malice. “Let Him deliver Him, seeing [or, if] He delighted in Him.” Such was the triumphant self-justification of the murderers of the Just One. But they knew not the manner and reason of Jehovah’s delight in His Elect, though haply they had listened to the saying which He spake when, in riddles of judgment, He was uttering in their ears the new words of Gospel promise: “*Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life for the sheep.*” Thus it always is. *Religion*, if it be not *in the faith of God*, is ever found to be the bitterest antagonist of truth. It was because the Pharisees justified themselves in the sight of men, that they so hated and withstood both the doctrine and Person of the Lord. Loathing Him, as darkness shrinks from light, they were loathed of Him according to the purity of His own Divine

⁸ Col. i. 18.

⁹ Matt. xxvii. 43.

holiness, because He understood and judged the deep hypocrisy which lay within their hearts.¹

In all these things Jehovah was pursuing His perfect, but to man His hidden way. He thought to bring rebellious sinners to Himself in love. His mind was to deliver those who had destroyed themselves. And thus it became Him (for that He is *holy*) to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. God's purpose for His many sons was glory.² But never might the weight of glory rest in His most holy presence on anything but perfect righteousness. That Jesus then might be the author of salvation, He must needs fulfil all righteousness. Not only was the spotless purity of His *Person* needed, that a Lamb might be provided worthy of God's altar of atonement; His *work* must also be a perfect work. He must perform the total sum of human obedience, that He might present Himself on man's behalf to God, with a righteousness which was *of* Himself, *in* Himself, and *through* Himself,—a righteousness, not graciously imputed to His faith (as theirs had been whose works received the approving witness of the Holy Ghost,)³ but wrought in perfectness, through the devoted zeal of *Man* for God. A faithful and complete reflection of the mind and will of God must first be found in man, that glory might become man's just reward. These things were found in Jesus; He glorified the Father on the earth.⁴ And then, for the impartation of His own most blessed title of righteousness to those on whose behalf He wrought, He must needs taste once for all of death. Jesus has thus not only presented *in Himself a Divine* title of righteousness for man and in man,—seeing that it was the Only-begotten of the Father

¹ Zech. xi.

² Heb. ii. 10.

³ Heb. xi. *passim*, specially 33.

⁴ John xvii. 4.

who thus obeyed,—but also *by Himself* He has put away sin through the precious blood of His cross. Sin is triumphantly displaced, for the believer, by the sacrifice of the Son of God. The two things co-exist no longer in the mind of faith; the second must supplant the first. *Sin* is destroyed as being Satan's work, for the destruction of which the Son of God was manifested in the flesh.⁵ *Righteousness* abides for ever as the work of God,—of Jesus the Son of God, Himself the true God and eternal Life,—Jehovah, the righteousness and endless peace of all who put their trust in Him.⁶

But all this wondrous process of Divine wisdom and mercy was hidden from the dull and fattened hearts of Israel after the flesh, before whose eyes the work of the Father and the Son was being carried on.⁷ The visible demonstration of the grace and truth of God was fruitless of conviction to the natural man; for the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.⁸ And that Spirit had not yet been given.⁹ The revealer of the true Light could not act, until the work had been completed which was to remove for ever the thick screen of darkness, which as yet kept hidden from the sight and thoughts of men alike the truth and glory of God's perfect love.¹ Hence, even His disciples, though true children of the Father, were incapable of understanding, until the Comforter should come, the truth which, nevertheless, they daily heard and saw and touched and handled. They believed, indeed, with dim yet true discernment of His Person, that Jesus had come forth from God, and that it was the Father who had sent Him into the world. Yet

⁵ 1 John iii. 8.

⁷ John v. 1, 17.

⁹ John vii. 39.

⁶ 1 John v. 20; Jer. xxiii. 6; Eph. ii. 14.

⁸ 1 Cor. ii. 11.

¹ 1 John ii. 8; Rom. v. 8.

even *they* were fools and slow of heart to believe the written testimonies of the Holy Ghost, until the Son of God—now manifestly such in His resurrection from the dead—became Himself the opener of their understandings, to perceive and understand the words of God.² But that Comforter has now been sent, and light as well as perfect peace is thus become the present portion of His saints. Meanwhile, the natural Jew seeks on in fruitless quest of Israel's hope. Nor shall he find, until the Spirit be poured upon the nation from on high, and their eyes, no longer blind, shall see that great and shining Light which, once despised, when only its *moral* glory and beauty were displayed, shall be openly revealed to sight in that soon-coming day, when Jehovah shall *appear* as Zion's builder, in the manifested brightness of His glory.³

Lest these notes should seem to grow beyond just limit, the many practical considerations which suggest themselves in connexion with these verses must remain unnoticed, that we may hasten to the sequel of this very comprehensive Psalm.

Verses 11–18. Jehovah was the sole resort of Jesus, when, in the day of His distress, He found none near to help. It was He who had taken Him from His mother's womb (verse 9). He had made Him hope while on His mother's breasts. Terror and strife were around Him as He walked, on every side; but God was thought of as *above* the darkness which daily drew more closely round the solitary light of life. God, too, was still *within* that circle of distress with which His Well-beloved was environed. He was His shield and stay, the solace and support of one who leaned upon Him as His strength, and lived only to fulfil the counsel of His will. It was thus

² Luke xxiv. 25–27, 44, 45.

³ Psalm cii. 16.

with Jesus, till the hour came when God must cease to know Him as His own, and the sword of judgment must awake against the fellow of the Lord of hosts. It is as standing in the actual place of our substitute, that the Lamb of God is contemplated in the verses now before us. Human thought is incapable of compassing, even when most enlightened by the Spirit of God, more than a scanty knowledge of this deepest of God's depths.⁴ The love of Jesus far excels the measure of all possible knowledge. But its *proof* is here. And in this His people find the sustaining strength of their salvation. His flesh and blood are meat and drink indeed. In vain shall we think to learn, *with mastery of the subject*, the doctrine of the cross. It is the earliest lesson of the poor believing sinner, in the true knowledge of God; it is the necessary meat which keeps the Christian's soul in health from day to day; but it contains also for the ripest and the wisest saint the still unfathomed deep of God's most holy love, a wealth which eternity alone will perfectly disclose.

It is hardly necessary to remind the reader of the exact fulfilment in detail of the prophetic language of this passage. In verse 16 the expressions "dogs" and "the assembly of the wicked," seem to indicate the union, for the doing of the deadly work of wickedness, of the Gentile and the Jew.⁵ Man was the agent in the bruising of God's Branch of righteousness. The circumstances of outward suffering and ignominy were of his device. The apparatus of death was in his hands. The desire for innocent blood was in his heart. But the work itself was

⁴ 1 Cor. ii. 10.

⁵ עֲרֵת מְרִעִים appears to refer to the nation and its counsellors of unrighteousness. For the use of the term "dogs" as a designation of Gentile ungodliness, see Mark vii. 27, and, perhaps, Phil. iii. 2.

of God; the pleasure of Jehovah was accomplished in the smiting of the slaughtered Lamb. This is remarkably expressed in verse 15. It was *they* indeed who compassed Him; *they* pierced His hands and His feet; but it is added, "THOU hast brought me into the dust of death." No human hand, nor human will, nor might of Satan could have bowed Him thus. Many a time men's hands were filled with stones to stone Him; once had the men of His own city led Him forth as if to certain death; but He still passed safely by, unharmed of all. Until His destined hour came He occupied securely for the Father. But now that hour had arrived, and the strength of Him who is the mighty God;⁶ of Him who fainteth not and knows no weariness; who quickeneth whom He will; of Him who just before had changed corruption into life, by waking buried Lazarus from death, that the glory of the Son of God might manifestly shine; that strength which Jesus, though His own, had never exercised save at the bidding of the Father's will—now seemed to leave Him quite. In perfect weakness He would undergo the sentence which He brought with Him into the world, when, born for death as God's appointed Lamb,⁷ the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth.

Verses 19–21. "O my strength, haste thee to help me," &c. Truly may the believer say, "This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes." He was crucified in weakness⁸—*for us*. Our iniquities dissolved the strength

⁶ Isaiah ix. 6.

⁷ The birth of Jesus conferred on Him the means of accomplishing the will of God. Death is to fallen man the natural sequel of his birth. Death was to Jesus an act of obedience to the will of God. That will was for Him the cause of which death was the effect. In no other way could the holy Child Jesus be liable to death, or in any other way connected with it than as its *Destroyer*.

⁸ *Notes on Second Corinthians*, xii. 4.

of Jesus. Attracting to themselves the stroke of righteous judgment, the weight of that infliction fell on Him who bare them in His own pure body on the tree. Jesus received in His own Person the wages due to our sin. He has spoken from "the dust of death," with the faint cry of one whose strength was dried up as a potsherd. The feeling which predominates in the mind of a believer, while pondering these things, is that of an utter inability to realize them adequately, much less to set them forth worthily to others.⁹

A remarkable expression occurs in the 20th verse, "my darling, or my only one [*margin*],¹ from the power of the dog." I hesitate as to the true interpretation of these words. We may refer them to the Sufferer Himself. On the other hand, the application of such an expression to the Church, as bound up in the dying thoughts of Jesus, who gave Himself for her, is simple and very precious. Nor does it seem unreasonable, in view of the general tenor of this Psalm, and the strong Jewish features which distinguish it throughout, to assign to the word in question a particular application to Israel and Jerusalem below—the nation for which He died, and the city over which her God will yet rejoice as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride. The verse which follows expresses a transition, on the Holy Sufferer's part, from the last extreme of apprehended danger, to the consciousness of enjoyed deliverance. "Thou hast heard me," &c. He was heard in that He

⁹ Distance from God was the climax of the Lamb's dying sorrow. It is a fearfully solemn thought that the world, while with heedless self-confidence it still pursues its way, is no nearer now to God than Jesus was when, under the burden of the world's iniquity, He cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou *forsaken* me?"

¹ חַיִּי! "*Mein Leben.*"—DE WETTE. "*Mein Einsame.*"—LUTH. Τῆς μονογενῆ μου.—LXX. The English margin renders the word exactly.

feared. And now, deliverance being found, His thoughts are straightway with the objects of His love, for whose sakes He had thus been brought within the lion's mouth.

Verse 22. The joy which fills the heart of Jesus as the first-born from the dead is imparted freely to the brethren of His love. It is in the midst of the Church that He sings, and will for ever sing, Jehovah's praise. This subject has been already treated in the remarks on the foregoing Psalm. The quotation of this verse in the epistle to the Hebrews and its immediate application to the Church, are well known to every Christian reader. Viewing the sufferings of the Messiah in their *national* connexion, these words, like those which follow, have also an especial reference to Israel when again restored.²

Verses 23–25. The results of Messiah's deliverance now fill the mouths of the seed of Him who is both Jacob and Israel with the praises of their God. The prophetic bearing of these verses on the times of promised restitution³ is apparent. With verse 24 compare Isaiah liii. 10, 11. The *great* congregation,⁴ in the midst of which this acceptable worship is to be rendered by the Spirit of Christ, refers, I believe, to the assembly of saved nations in the millennial day, whom the Lord of hosts shall bless, saying, "Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance."⁵

² The act of Solomon, in blessing the people at the dedication of the temple, may be typical of this. (1 Kings viii.)

³ Acts iii. 19–21.

⁴ קהל רב as distinguished from קהל in verse 22, which last the apostle applies to the Church. "The great congregation" might, as a simple expression, describe the ultimate fruit of redemption, when dispensations shall have ceased to be. The context appears, however, to oppose such an interpretation in the present case.

⁵ Isaiah xix. 23–25.

Verses 26–31. A fair and soul-refreshing view is here presented of the effect of righteousness⁶ as it is yet to be experienced in the wasted and sin-defiled earth, when revived and blessed beneath the sceptre of Messiah. The promises are as definite as they are full: “All the ends of the earth shall remember, and shall return,” &c. In verse 29 there is shown a striking moral contrast of the Lord’s day with the day of man, the last sands of which are soon to run out and be at a perpetual end. *Now* the men of this world prosper, whose belly is their god. *Then* the fat ones of the earth shall thrive under the appreciated blessing of the Most High God, repaying with grateful worship the rich abundance of the blessings of His goodness whose praise will then fill all the earth. Messiah’s power as Lord of the dead as well as of the living is strikingly put in the last clause of this verse. All that go down to the dust shall bow before Him, “although He kept not His own soul alive.”⁷ He did not do so, but rather died that He might *thus* become Lord of the living and the dead.⁸ A seed shall serve Him (verse 30). The Church seems here to be intended separately from Israel. It shall be accounted to the Lord⁹ for a generation. Compare with this the apostle’s quotation in Heb. ii. 13: “Behold I and the children which God hath given me.” It is this seed which shall come, and shall declare to the *nation* yet to be born the righteousness and glory of Jehovah’s acts (verse 31). It is the manifestation of the *sons of God* that the creation, whose earthly head is the nation of Israel, will be freed from bondage. The King whom Jeru-

⁶ Isaiah xxxii. 17.

⁷ וְנִפְשׁוּ לֹא הָיָה This excellent and, when once perceived, most *natural* version of these words, is due, I believe, originally to Mr. Boys.

⁸ Rom. xiv. 9.

לְאֵלֵינוּ⁹

salem will welcome with blessings in that day will not return alone, but accompanied by those who, having endured for a moment a light affliction for His name, will bear with Him the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, when the hour of His kingdom shall have come.

PSALM XXIII.

THIS sweet and very lovely strain presents a perfect expression of the confidence and rejoicing which belong abidingly to the family of faith. We may view it in two ways. First, as it relates to Jesus, whose secret experiences of joy and refreshment, in the days of His weary pilgrimage for our sakes, were tasted by Him in communion with the Father, who upheld and cheered Him as the beloved servant of His choice.¹ Jesus knew the Father as the absolute guide and disposer of His way. When declaring Himself to be the good shepherd, whose faithfulness was presently to be witnessed by His dying for the sheep, the blessed Lord appears to make immediate allusion to this Psalm in its relation to Himself. "I am the good shepherd; and I know my sheep and am known of mine, even as the Father knoweth me and I know the Father."² When earthly refuge failed Him, and no man cared for His soul, He found a shepherd in Jehovah; rejoicing in spirit amid the most heart-sickening evidences of the apparent futility of all that He had wrought,³ and finding meat and drink where only weariness and ex-

¹ Isaiah xlii. 1.

² John x. 14, 15. That the above is the just translation of this passage is now generally admitted.

³ Isaiah xlix. 4; Matt. xi. 25.

haustion seemed to be His portion.⁴ Regarded thus, the Psalm presents abundant matter for the Christian's happy meditation on the grace of Him whose self-chosen poverty was for our sakes.⁵ But, secondly, and more practically, it is the blessedness of the believer as a sheep of Christ that forms the rich and fruitful subject of this invaluable Psalm. Looked at in this latter sense it stands in an obvious relation to the one immediately preceding, the meek of the earth already tasting, through the revealing power of the Comforter, the satisfying portion of "the bread of God."⁶

The springs of the spiritual man are in God. But the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ is the unstopping of those springs for their perennial flow of blessing to the thirsting spirit. The strength of the believer, while fulfilling here below his pilgrim days, is the knowledge of Jesus, the shepherd and bishop of his soul. He knows Him thus according to the full glory of His person now justified divinely in the Spirit;⁷ brought from the dead through the blood of the everlasting covenant, and crowned with honour and dominion in the heavenly places. Jesus alive from the dead is the effectual minister of the peace of

⁴ John iv.

⁵ 2 Cor. viii. 9. Notice will presently be taken of the expression, "He restoreth my soul," which in its ordinary acceptation forbids the application of the verse in which it stands to Jesus.

⁶ Compare Psalm xxii. 26 with John vi. 50, 51 and 1 John i. 4.

⁷ The resurrection was the demonstrative justification of the Divine nature and title of the Son of God. "This is my beloved Son" was indeed declared from heaven concerning Him on whom the Spirit rested and abode. Faith may discern the glory of the Only-begotten in the despised Jesus of Nazareth. But it was by the resurrection from the dead that His title was vindicated effectively and in power. The testimony of the Spirit is according to the *glory* as well as grace of the crucified Son of God.

God. He is Himself our peace. In Him the God of peace is known, who preaches peace by Jesus Christ when speaking by His Son from heaven in the gospel of His grace.⁸ To be able to say by faith, "The Lord is my shepherd," is to be assured of everlasting immunity from spiritual want. The path of light and safety is made plain and even through the wilderness of life to the poor and feeble saint, who, needing all the grace and power of *Divine* sufficiency for his guidance and comfort here below, finds God's full treasures opened in all their richness, and ministered with ever ready application to his own peculiar need by the sympathizing tenderness of a Saviour who claims the *friendship* of the saved. Jesus loves His own, and serves them in His love; governing and leading them meanwhile as their Master and their Lord—the ruler of his own house—the keeper of His purchased flock.

The soul turns instinctively to Jesus as its rest when once His love is known. *Confidence*, deep seated in the heart whose secret grief has been disclosed to Him who gives rest to the weary, in the revelation of His finished work of grace, is the sentiment with which the believer as a sheep of Christ regards Him as the Shepherd. "I know my sheep, and *am known* of mine." He is known in this gracious character—known therefore to be trusted and relied upon. *All* the blessedness which finds such bold expression in this Psalm belongs by God's free gift to every saint; for they are the experimental development to faith of what Christ personally is, and He is the Shepherd of the sheep—of *all* the flock. But a just appreciation of the blessings to which believers have this common title must be the effect of vigilant obedience to His voice who goes before His sheep, to lead them and to keep them in

⁸ Acts x. 36; Heb. i. 2.

the way of peace. We have then in the present Psalm the rich utterance of a faith matured in all true godly experience, while learning through faith and patience the deep and divinely taught knowledge of the grace of God. The words are David's; but as the Spirit of the Lord spake by him, his experimental utterances have a meaning in them far beyond the limits of his personal communion. It is for those in whom Christ dwells by the spirit of adoption to enjoy to the full the language of this Psalm. Let us briefly analyze its general contents as they show themselves in the full light of gospel truth.

Verse 1. Confident assurance of unfailing blessing, grounded upon the known name and character of Jehovah as He is now made manifest in "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

Verse 2. Experienced joy and peace in believing. The soul finds its perfect rest, through the Holy Ghost, in the love of God; being stablished in Christ, who is Himself our peace, and drinking into the love of the Spirit.

Verse 3. Unfailing grace is found to meet *all* discovered need, whether arising from their weakness or their failure, in the sheep whom Jesus tends.⁹ Rising continually in its

⁹ נָפְשִׁי יִשׁוּבָהּ The word here used means "restore" or "bring back." It is not used in this form [*Polel*] in the sense of "refresh," unless the present passage be regarded as an instance. Such a meaning is, however, clearly admissible. JEROME took it in this sense when he rendered the above words by "*animam meam refecit.*" DE WETTE gives a similar interpretation, "*meine Seele erquicket er.*" Jesus knew what it was to receive refreshment from above. But never could the Perfect One experience *restoration* of soul. We, alas! often know the latter rather than the former. Refreshing meets the saint who is proving in singleness of heart and eye the dreary wilderness of the present world. Restoratives of Divine mercy, on the other hand, are in never ceasing flow towards the exercised soul, whose personal experience discloses to it daily more of its actual condition of poverty and need. Recovery from sin is fully involved in the above expression, although the more prominent idea appears to be that of gracious comfort and refreshment of spiritual weakness.

abundance above the conscious requirement of the believer in the time of his distress, the same blessed grace becomes the practical instructor of the soul in the pure ways of holiness.¹ The Lord becomes the measure of His people's walk, as well as the restorer of their souls.²

Verse 4. Calm discernment of the realities of sin and death in the light and power of the resurrection, as already known and tasted in its effects upon the inner man through the witnessing Spirit of adoption.³ Liberty and triumph take the place of fear. *Christ* being already *in* us the hope of glory, joyful confidence of victory becomes the believer in the presence of the enemy. Meanwhile the *ways* of Jehovah are traced quite through the vale of darkness. In the midst of death the Christian walks in life. Guidance is found in God, and gratefully accepted by the soul. His rod and staff give comfort; chastenings, no less than direct and heart-cheering mercies, being fruitful tokens of His faithful love who brings His people on their way to glory. God's presence banishes the fear of evil from the soul.

Verse 5. Rejoicing as a favoured guest of God with joy unspeakable and full of glory. The Lord is Himself His people's meat, and a true discerning of His body makes for the pilgrim of faith a plenteous feast of fatness in the wilderness. God spreads His children's table in the presence of their enemies. Warfare is not at an end, but Divine refreshment is richly furnished. The unction of the Holy One opens to the parched and wearied spirit the exhaustless riches of the love of God in Christ.

Verse 6. Repetition of the former strain of confidence. Its beginning is held steadfast to the end.⁴ We are saved by *hope*. Goodness and mercy are the constant attendants

¹ Titus ii. 11, 12. ² Col. ii. 6. ³ Rom. viii. ⁴ Heb. iii. 14.

of the believer's pilgrimage. The house of Jehovah is kept evermore in view as the sure goal of his race of patience. The eye of faith looks thither for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.⁵ Rest *remains* to be eternally enjoyed, while joy and peace accompany, and are continually experienced in the soul whose present occupation is with things unseen.⁶

I do not doubt that this Psalm expresses also prophetically what will be the latter-day experience of the earthly nation, when brought finally under the sure staff of the Shepherd—the stone of Israel.⁷ Jehovah will be known as He that brought them up out of the sea with the shepherd of His flock,⁸ when, with a mightier deliverance and a yet dearer ransom, He shall have effectually accomplished the salvation of His chosen.⁹ Then too shall the true David—David's Lord as well as David's seed—be set over them; and He shall feed them and be their shepherd.¹ He shall stand and feed in the majesty of Jehovah,² both staves being then resumed into His hands, both Bands and Beauty.³ The flock itself shall then be united, to be no more again divided or dispersed. They shall be a beautiful flock, when they come up white and clean from the washing of the fountain which in that day shall be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem.⁴ Jesus will then be acknowledged as Jehovah's shepherd—His fellow—when the veil shall have been taken from the heart of the nation for whose sake the sword had once awaked in judgment against the guiltless sufferer, whose stroke was in the house of His own friends.⁵

⁵ Phil. iii. 14. ⁶ 2 Cor. iv. 18. ⁷ Gen. xlix. 24. ⁸ Isaiah lxiii.

⁹ Psa. lxxvii. 20. ¹ Ezek. xxxiv. ² Micah v. 4. ³ Zech. xi.

⁴ Ezek. xxxvi. 16–27; Zech. xiii. 1. ⁵ John xi. 51; Zech. xiii. 6.

PSALM XXIV.

THE fifteenth Psalm has displayed the moral glory of Messiah's person as the upright lover of God—the pure-hearted, holy candidate for Divine acceptance. We have now a celebration of His majesty and praise as the King of glory, the only Lord of all power and might. The blending (verse 4) of the moral features of the perfect Man with the majesty of Divine glory, which shines in Him who had the right of entrance at the everlasting gates, is strikingly presented in this Psalm.

It is an ode full of beauty and power; its leading strain being the assertion of Jehovah's lordship over all terrestrial things. "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof," &c. Then follows a declaration of the title on which this dominion is claimed, which here, and universally in the Old Testament, is affirmed to be creation: "For He hath founded it upon the seas," &c. The believer enters on the full enjoyment of this Psalm through the knowledge of Him who, to His ancient title of creation,¹ has superadded that of *redemption*. It is from the risen and ascended Christ that the true light shines, in which the beauties of this song of triumph may be seen and worthily enjoyed. For it was through the suffering of death that it behoved the King of glory to enter openly upon His rights.² Jesus, having descended in self-emptied lowliness of perfect grace, has now ascended far above all heavens. The holy hill was His, by right and virtue of

¹ Col. iv. 16.² Luke xxiv. 26.

His own perfection as the Holy One of God; but for our sakes He would have His entrance into the heavenly courts through the blood-shedding of eternal redemption.³ By faith, therefore, God's chosen have already passed, in their Forerunner, within the everlasting gates.⁴ The doors of heaven are thrown freely open to the entering worshipper, whose access into the holiest is with confidence by the faith of Him.⁵ *By* Him he may in spirit continually draw nigh, while *in* Him he abides unceasingly in the cloudless presence of the Father of lights. Henceforth his home is *there*. He is, *therefore*, a stranger and a pilgrim here below. Christ's sheep go in and out, and find their pasture in His name.⁶

But the natural aspect of this Psalm is Jewish rather than Christian; the name of *Jacob* is found emblazoned in the light of Messiah's glory. His face is now no longer pale, but ruddy with the saving health of God.⁷ The true singers of this prophetic strain are surely they whose hearts shall be attuned to a wise utterance of Jehovah's praise, when the long-lost but unforgotten seed of Jacob shall return, and shall seek and find their God, and David their king; and shall fear Jehovah and His goodness in the latter day.⁸ Pure water shall then be poured upon them, even the laver of regeneration. That blessed Spirit, whom their fathers had grieved and successfully resisted to the undoing of their souls, shall yet resume His gracious mastery over the remnant of Jacob which shall return unto the mighty God. In that day shall He unstop the deaf ears, and unloose the silent tongue, and the mouth of Jacob shall be filled with laughter and with praise, when he recognizes his own flesh⁹ in the person of the

³ Heb. ix. 12.⁴ Eph. ii. 6.⁵ Heb. x. 19-22; Eph. iii. 12.⁶ John x. 9.⁷ Isaiah xxix. 22.⁸ Hosea iii. 5.⁹ Rom. ix. 5.

Lord of glory, and bows himself before the high God as the happy possessor of a righteousness which he then shall joyfully confess to be of God, and not of man.¹

The sixth verse seems to contrast the generation of promise, the children who are the work of Jehovah's hands,² who seek and find in that day the light of life in Jesus, with those who had not sought the Lord but had gone about to establish their own righteousness. In the preceding verse the righteous award of Jehovah had been expressed, whereby the Just One shall be manifestly exalted in blessing. Mention is now made of the generation of them that seek *Him*. The name Jacob appears to be applied here, as that of Israel is in Isaiah xlix., to Jesus, as the object and security of the promises made to the fathers.³ The vision which Isaiah saw of the King, the Lord of hosts, when the posts of the doors were moved at the majesty of His presence, had its scene in the temple at Jerusalem.⁴ We know how in far different guise the King of Zion revisited that temple in the days of His flesh. In the present Psalm we seem to have a prophetic anticipation of His future enthronement in the place of His shame, when the Lord of hosts (then known to Israel as He is now revealed by faith to the Church, in the glory of His victory as the destroyer of the adversary and his work) shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before His ancients gloriously.⁵

¹ Rom. x. 3; Isaiah xlv. 24, 25.

² Isaiah xxix. 23; xlv. 11.

³ *Conf.* Gal. iii. 16.

⁴ Isaiah vi.

⁵ Isaiah xxiv. 23.

PSALM XXV.

THE practical bearing of this Psalm upon the exercised heart of faith is obvious, and its value to the believer is proportionately great. This shall be considered somewhat further presently. Let us first contemplate it for a moment in its prophetic character.

With respect to this, the last verse furnishes a key to the general meaning of the Psalm. It is an intercessory utterance of the Spirit of Christ on behalf of *Israel*, and it is in the broken remnant of the nation that the Spirit of Immanuel seems here to speak. One important feature found in connexion with their actual condition is, that while they are brought low by the affliction of the enemy, there is a discerning and very full acknowledgment of national *sin* as the cause of their distress. Hence in the land of their captivity they think upon the Lord. Faith is heard inquiring for the old paths, the ways from which their fathers' hearts had widely erred, although in ancient days those paths had dropped fatness when Jehovah led them by His chosen shepherd through the desert like a flock. Israel has fallen by his iniquity, yet he is to return with words to Jehovah.¹ Such words must needs be words of confession; but the source of all true confession is faith in Divine mercy. This last principle is strikingly exemplified in the structure of the present Psalm.

A full expression of trust in God (verses 1-6) precedes the more detailed confession of sin which follows. "*Thou art the God of my salvation*" is the language of a faith

¹ Hosea xiv.

which, while profoundly feeling the circumstances of shame and sorrow amid which its present lot is cast, because fully alive to the sin which has produced them, yet sees a lower depth than that of evil. God is found in grace *below*, even as He is perceived in demonstrated power to be *above*, the causes of human wretchedness and woe. Israel will know this when God shall have given them another heart. The Spirit of Christ seems meanwhile to be here expressing prophetically some of the bemoanings of Ephraim in the day when he shall be turned in godly sorrow to a fruitful repentance, and the shame of his youth shall be no longer borne because the times of plenteous forgiveness shall have come.²

They had gone with a stiff neck in the way of their own frowardness. Walking by the light of the sparks which their own hands had kindled, they had found a bed of sorrows as the result.³ They now feel that their sin has been their ruin; that their iniquities are the wall of their separation from the God of their strength. Yet is He remembered as *their God*. *His* name is considered; *His* mercy is thought on, who is not overcome of evil, by the prostrate victims of their own undoing. *His* ways, *His* paths, *His* truth are now inquired for. To *Himself* alone they look for light as well as for deliverance. No longer saying in the pride of an uncircumcised heart, "We be Abraham's children, and never were in bondage to any man," they rather own, amid the circumstances of their affliction, the righteous visitations of Jehovah's hand (verse 7). As it is elsewhere said by the same Spirit of prophecy, "We lie down in our shame, and our confusion covereth us; for we have sinned against Jehovah our God, we and our fathers, *from our youth* even unto this day."⁴

² Jer. xxxi. 18, 20.

³ Isaiah l. 11.

⁴ Jer. iii. 25.

While owning thus their sin as transgressors from the womb, in the shame and confusion of faces which the sense of abused mercy fails not to bring, seeing that it was the rock of their salvation, their Father, whom they had forgotten thus and lightly esteemed; they are nevertheless emboldened to prefer their appeal to the grace and justice of Jehovah. This is expressed in verse 8: "*Good and upright* is Jehovah; therefore will He teach sinners in the way." The covenant is the ground of this appeal (verse 10). Faith, viewing the filthy rags of human righteousness in the light of a quickened conscience, regards them with a feeling of self-abasement indeed, but not of despondency, because of the *secret* of that everlasting righteousness which is declared in promise to such as cleave still to God's early and unchanging words (verse 14). This covenant will be the desire of such as turn to the Lord from among His ancient people in the latter day. Nor will their desire be in vain; the bemoanings of Ephraim will kindle together the repentings of Jehovah. There shall come forth out of Zion the Deliverer, and He that shall turn away ungodliness from *Jacob*.⁵ In the revelation of Jesus as Jehovah's Christ, they shall see in its living realization the sure and ordered covenant,⁶ within whose bond of life the afflicted people shall find rest. The prayer of their distress shall then be answered to the full. The Lord *will* consider their enemies (verse 19), and will perceive them to be His own; and vengeance belongeth unto Him. Meanwhile, the deep and earnest cry for the forgiveness of their great iniquity (verse 11) shall have its answer in the sprinkling of a better blood than that of bulls and goats, even the blood of Christ, which in that day shall be known through the Spirit in its full and divine efficacy to purge clean

⁵ Rom. xi. 26.

⁶ 2 Samuel xxiii. 5.

away the iniquity and uncleanness of the nation for which He died.

The principles just illustrated in the national history of Israel apply themselves perfectly to the individualities of Christian experience. Trouble of soul because of sin is not, indeed, the experience which properly belongs to one who is walking in the Spirit. Redemption has brought the believer as a child into the Father's house, not to defile it, but to adorn it as a vessel of sanctification. God has called us not to uncleanness, but to holiness.⁷ To adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour is the opportunity of the believer's day of pilgrimage.⁸ Sanctification of body, soul, and spirit, is the aim and desire of the Holy Ghost on behalf of those whose conversation is in heaven, and not on earth, because they are the anointed children of the God of peace.⁹

But the exhortation, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall," is not a needless caution to the most advanced believer. The capabilities of sin remain unchanged and undiminished in the flesh of all God's saints. Failure of deeper or of less degree is continually reported in the soul's secret, when the conscience is in its full exercise as a judge of personal conduct in the sight of God.¹ This is a large subject. At present I notice one point alone; the case of conscious departure from God, of some wilful declension whereby defilement has been brought upon the soul.

A believer may awake, or perhaps be rudely awakened by some open fall, to a sense of personal guiltiness, such as must constrain him to write bitter things against himself. The exercise of soul which ensues is profitable, or other-

⁷ 1 Thess. iv. 7.

⁸ Titus ii. 10.

⁹ 1 Thess. v. 23.

¹ James iii. 2.

wise, according to the clearness with which the immutability of the counsel of the God of peace is discerned and still held fast on the delinquent's part. The *natural* effect of such experiences is to shock and consequently to enfeeble, if it cannot destroy, the feeling of confidence towards God. The heart condemns. God, who is greater than our heart, knoweth all things. Does not He also condemn? The *evil*, of what kind soever it may be, He most surely does, but not the self-abased confessor of it. The blood of the everlasting covenant has marked the believing sinner's person for eternal acceptance with Him who, because He is the God of *all* grace, is likewise to the receivers of His Spirit's testimony the God of *peace*. He has assumed these titles as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. They express to us distinctly what He *is*. And being such He so *remains*, with whom is no variableness or shadow of change.

The discovery therefore of personal sin, or the troubled retrospect of a life of much abused grace, though well fitted to bring low the spirit and to abase the soul in the very dust in confession of its vileness, can never of itself produce a genuine and abiding repentance not to be repented of. It is when these things are pondered by the heart of *faith* that godly sorrow finds its place. A remembrance of the object of our sin as the God of our *mercy*, whom already we have known according to the riches of His grace—a grace which in Christ Jesus still excels the utmost measure of human depravity, remaining unaltered and undiminished after all the false requital of our treacherous hearts—is alone effectual in truly breaking and subduing natural self-complacency, and making contrition a *permanent* condition of the restored but self-loathing spirit. Blessing can only arise from truth. God blesses

His chosen in faithfulness to *Himself*, as the producer of blessing in the way of grace. The Holy Ghost therefore, while acting as the Spirit of *truth* upon the conscience of a self-judging sinner, clothes the soul with mourning as the witness of personal corruption. The same blessed Spirit turns this heaviness to joy and peace, when, as the revealer of the changeless compassions of the Father of mercies, He unfolds Christ to the abased and contrite spirit as the eternal covenant of peace and truth. The lesser truth may not annul the greater. A just apprehension of personal failure cannot vitiate in the eye of faith the finished perfectness of that Divine and everlasting righteousness which, in Christ, is the beginning of the believer's confidence, and which, because it knows no change, remains abidingly the unremoved foundation of his soul. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. For the once-shed blood of Jesus has a power evermore commensurate with the rising exigencies of His people's need. The holiness of the Father's presence, into which faith finds itself already brought, is tolerable only under the assurance that the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from *all sin*.²

PSALM XXVI.

A MORAL portrait of Jesus, in His priestly character and relations, appears to be presented to us in this beautiful Psalm.

Verses 1, 2 express the purity and spotlessness of the Man who could thus appeal to the judge of all, upon the ground of personal integrity, while Jehovah was evermore

² 1 John i. 5-10; ii. 1, 2.

His stay and confidence as He walked with a whole heart in His fear. Jesus only could make this appeal. Every thing in the Just One was willingly naked and open to the eye of Divine holiness. He knew the Father, and was known of Him. As the solitary well-doer among men He put His trust in God. He knew with perfect knowledge the wisdom of the just man,—that *God*, that is, is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him;¹ and in the power of righteous anticipation He despised the shame through which the path of His obedience lay, and viewed in clear and bright perspective the joy which was set before Him in the resurrection.²

Verses 3–6 contain the account rendered by the approved and perfect servant to Jehovah as the Judge. It is a record, in brief, of that moral purity and harmless life which, as Man, the Son of God exhibited here below, and which formed the preparatory process through which according to the Divine counsels He must needs pass in the days of His patience, that He might take His place for ever as the Priest and King in the presence of the Most High God.³ The fifth verse appears to refer to the ungodly generation against whom the fearful testimony of Jesus was borne in the days of His flesh.⁴ In the sixth, His intrinsic fitness for the pure ministration of the priestly office is declared:—"I will wash my hands in innocency," &c. He needed no laver of purification to fit Him to approach Jehovah's altar. Aaron and his sons could enter on their ministry only by a process which marked at every step the *personal* unfitness of the priest for his office. It stood *wholly* in carnal ordinances and

¹ Isaiah xlix. 5; Heb. xi. 6.

² Heb. xii.

³ The subject of the priesthood of Christ has been treated fully in the *Notes on the Epistle to the Hebrews*.

⁴ Matt xxiii. 33.

ritual observances. To fail in these was destruction to the priest, whose presence in the holy place was sufferable only by virtue of the sanction which God was pleased to attach to His own prescribed observances. But Jesus was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, intrinsically and according to the proper realities of His own Person. In the mystery of godliness, the Divine nature is not presented to the view of faith as an object distinct from the proper humanity of the Lord. Found in inseparable union in the one blessed Person of the Christ, the Son of God, *both* natures are and live in perpetual harmony of self-same holiness. Pure and spotless manhood becomes in Jesus the visible, appreciable manifestation of the God which He essentially ever was and is. The moral glory of the only-begotten of the Father shines from the person of the *Word made flesh*.⁵ Hence, in contemplating the palpable humanities of our Lord's life and conduct here

⁵ Vainly does human ingenuity seek, by extra-scriptural statements, to render more distinctly comprehensible the mystery of His person whom no man knoweth but the Father. The Holy Ghost reveals to us plainly the ever-blessed realities of the Lord's person and work; demonstrating to the eye and heart of faith both one and the other in all their precious fulness, as objective revelations of the invisible God. *Positive testimony* is the limit divinely set to our advance in this knowledge. Speculative disquisition transgresses that limit, and is among the number of *presumptuous* transgressions from which the man who feareth God will watchfully desire to keep free. (Psalm xix. 13.) To be wise above what is written is really to be a fool. And a distinguishing mischief of this folly is, that it corrupts and defiles others as well as the fool himself. It is a contagious evil, to be very watchfully eschewed. (Rom. xvi. 17.) We are never in a condition to talk wisely of these things, except when our hearts are tasting, through the Spirit's word, communion with the Lord Himself. Faith cannot rest upon abstractions; it must have to do with *God*. While drawing its nourishment from Scripture, the soul will be able immediately to detect and to resent any mere human handling of the *WORD* of life.

below, the believer never (if in the Spirit) loses sight of the Divine presence. It is, on the contrary, in an adoring remembrance that it is the *Lord of Glory* who thus speaks and acts, that the wondrous portraiture which the Holy Ghost presents to us in Scripture of the Son of God in the days of His flesh, produces its just effects on our minds.

In the seventh verse the Divine glory is declared and extolled in the praises of the anointed Priest and minister of all blessing. "Glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee,"⁶ was one of the last requests addressed, while on earth, to the Father by the lips of Jesus. His exaltation at the right hand of the throne of heavenly majesty is "to the glory of God the Father."⁷ The Church already knows this, learning by the Spirit the true note of Divine praise from the lips of the first-begotten from the dead.⁸ The High Priest of our profession is now made higher than the heavens. But this publication of Jehovah's praise is not confined to the Church. She learns indeed and utters even now, though feebly, that sweet strain, but in a language which the world has not yet learnt. Jesus is not now the world's High Priest. The sanctuary of which He is the minister is accessible only to the faith of God's elect, who, by the gospel of effectual salvation, have been delivered from this present evil world, according to the will and power of the Father.

But the praise which now waits silently for God in Zion⁹ will again be vocal in due time. It will arise, with loud and merry sound of timbrel and of harp, in the day when the messenger of the covenant shall be again revealed; when there shall arrive — sent straight from

⁶ John xvii.

⁸ Heb. ii. 12.

⁷ Phil. ii. 11.

⁹ Psalm lxxv. 1, *margin*.

heaven—One who shall bring good tidings to Zion, speaking with comfortable speech to Jerusalem, in convincing demonstration that her iniquity is pardoned, and her warfare at an end. For in that day shall the counsel of peace, which the Christian already knows and delights in who sees in the blood of Jesus the witness of the everlasting covenant, be perceived by the eyes of Israel to be between the King and Priest, whose united honour and blessing shall be found in the Man whose name is the Branch. Jesus shall then sit openly upon His throne, in the glory of Melchisedec priesthood, as well as the full power of Messianic dominion. “He shall be a priest upon His throne, and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.”¹

Verse 8, while having its earlier exemplification in the recorded zeal of Jesus in the days of His flesh,² and capable of richest application to His present relation to the Church,³ seems rather to refer to Messiah’s joy in the coming time of restitution, when, as the manifested Hope of Israel, “He shall build the temple of Jehovah, even He shall build the temple of Jehovah,” and shall bear the glory of that house whose latter glory shall excel the first.⁴

Verses 9, 10 describe the moral features of the generation of wickedness, from which the Holy One stood separate. “Ye do the deeds of your father the devil,”⁵ was the estimate which perfect truth and holiness formed of the works of those whose prayers and sacrifices were but bribes of wickedness. “Thou thoughtest I was altogether such an one as thyself,” is the reproof elsewhere addressed to such by the Searcher of all hearts, who is not mocked.⁶

¹ Zech. vi. 12, 13.

² John ii. 16.

³ Eph. ii. 21.

⁴ Zech. vi. ; Hag. ii. 9.

⁵ John viii.

⁶ Psalm l. 21.

They thought so when, with hands full of righteous blood, they compassed the altar of Jehovah, and stood as suppliants in His courts, keeping with unwashed hearts and blinded eyes the vain memorials of things whose only profit was as hopeful figures to the eye of faith of the better and abiding truth which they denied.⁷

Verses 11, 12 respect the redeemed rather than the Redeemer, and may be viewed as the language of the Spirit of Christ speaking in sympathy with the faithful remnant, who in their appointed season will return to the mighty God of Jacob and become known among the nations as the seed whom He hath blessed. The prayer of faith anticipates the time of Israel's manifested position among the congregations⁸ of the earth, when with feet firm set upon that truth which once had been their stumbling stone and rock of offence, they shall be called the priests of Jehovah, and men shall name them the ministers of their God.⁹

PSALM XXVII.

A RICH and truly blessed utterance of the spirit of faith, which, while estimating to the full the power of the enemy, finds boldness and triumphant assurance in the name of Jehovah, as the pledged security to the believer of the blessings of goodness in the land of the living.

⁷ Isaiah i. ; John xviii. 28.

⁸ מְקַלְלִים This word (which occurs here only) does not, I think, refer to Israel. If taken with such reference it would, I suppose, indicate the tribal division of the nation. But it seems rather to mean the Gentiles. The LXX. render: 'Εν ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις. LUTHER and DE WETTE: "In den Versammlungen." "Nella raunanza."—DIOD. *Infra*, Psalm lxxviii. 26.

⁹ Isaiah lxi. 6.

Resurrection shines brightly and distinctly throughout this Psalm. The soul takes and keeps its stand *in God*, who owns as His people not the dead but the living.¹ Jehovah is known and rejoiced in by His believing worshipper as his light, his salvation, and his life (verse 1). Upon this knowledge is based a confidence which derides the power of all adversaries. The soul, once joined by faith to the living God, is evermore above the enemy.² God is trusted. His name is the bond of His eternal faithfulness and truth. Hence the presence of danger only stimulates faith to a more energetic defiance of things contrary, because the battle is felt to be the Lord's.

It is an experimental Psalm of very ample range. David, whose tongue first spake it, entered doubtless much into its spirit. Still more so may the Christian; who now, a stranger in this populous world of evil because of the unction of Divine adoption, finds conflict his inevitable portion, while yet as saved by hope he has on his side in all such conflict a more than victor's might. For already the believer in the Son of God has overcome the world.³ Verse 4 contains an expression of that one desire which rules all hearts that really are alive to God: "One thing have I desired of the Lord," &c. The same spirit of faith in the true lover of Jesus echoes still the same desire: "To me to live is Christ." "This one thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind," &c. The thirsty longing of the renewed soul is for *God*. Its proper and delighted conception of rest and happiness is the Divine presence and glory. Faith, therefore, as to this speaks always the same language. But with what a richness and power of superior blessing does the Spirit, who indited these sweet strains, and ministered to the hearts of them of old some portion of the

¹ Matt. xxii. 32.

² Rom. viii. 31-39.

³ 1 John v. 4.

Lord's own joy, now pour upon the opened eyes of a believer's heart the cloudless light and beauty of the God of his salvation, as the Father of glory, the God of our Lord Jesus Christ!⁴ What was remotely seen, yet firmly embraced, by those who held the promises of old, is now shed abroad in the conscious hearts of God's beloved children by the indwelling Spirit of the Son, the Divine witness and earnest of the heavenly inheritance.⁵

Yet trouble and affliction are the portion of the children here below. Weakness is the Christian's personal condition. Sin and Satan are his near and active enemies. Hence, the truly exercised spirit will find, as the very result of the perfect confidence which it has in God, a movement of desire towards Him as its *strength*. The pursuit of holiness, now felt to be no longer a matter of cold duty, but the instinctive craving of the inner man, which thirsts continually for a full conformity to its blessed prototype and source, becomes the jealous aim and exercise of the believer's heart. All that impedes or opposes this is dreaded and avoided as a thing that threatens him with loss no less than danger. One object only occupies and satisfies the Spirit of God: He glorifies *Christ*. A believer who is walking in the Spirit will have a single eye, because he has a single heart. Light, and joy, and peace, and every fruitful spiritual blessing is the satisfying portion of them that are thus led. They walk through the present world as sons of God.⁶

I do not dwell now upon the application to the blessed Lord, as the leader and exemplar, as well as the object of our faith, of which the present Psalm is susceptible. It is the Spirit of Immanuel animating and sustaining the tried

⁴ Heb. xi. 40; Eph. i. 18.

⁵ Rom. v. 5.

⁶ Phil. ii. 15; Rom. viii. 14.

hearts of Israel's remnant that seems rather to speak, though many verses are perhaps at first sight more obviously applicable to the Lord Himself.

Verses 7-12 bear, in their general expression, a close resemblance to the utterance of the sore-pressed heart of Jewish faith, as it is presented elsewhere in the prophets.⁷ Stricken and brought low because of Jehovah's indignation, they yet remember in their low estate His ancient counsels of faithfulness and truth.⁸ The veil, as yet but partly lifted from their heart, admits sufficient light to sustain their drooping spirits while awaiting, as prisoners of hope, the manifest revisiting of the Lord's inheritance according to the surely ordered mercies of His covenant. The 8th verse,⁹ viewed in this connexion, would show the contrast which the humbled and contrite heart of the believing remnant will present to the face-worship and lip-service which God hates, and which so abounded in the stiff-necked and unbelieving nation, producing only reprobation and destruction as its fruits. Besides the manifest application of verse 12 to the oppressed and afflicted Man of sorrows, there may be in it a reference to the condition of the same remnant, as the subjects of especial persecution, more particularly at the hands of their unbelieving countrymen when the time of their deliverance is at hand.¹

The concluding verses are full of the sweet consolations of Christ for the soul of the child of patience. By faith

⁷ Isaiah lxiii. 15, 16.

⁸ Isaiah xxv.

⁹ לֵךְ אָמַר לִבִּי בִקְשֵׁנִי פָנַי אֶת-פְּנֵיךְ יְהוָה אֲבַקֵּשׁ This verse is not easy of translation. Perhaps DE WETTE has given most exactly both its meaning and its force: "*Von dir spricht mein Herz: suchet mein Angesicht! Dein Angesicht, Jehovah, such ich.*" The English Version yields as good a meaning, but is not quite so literal.

¹ Isaiah lxv. lxvi.

and patience we must enter on the promises of God. Both these qualities have had an exemplification in the ways of the elders who obtained a good report. For our sakes God bears approving witness to those ways, which pleased Him well.² But in Jesus only have they had their *perfect work*. May we find in these words the living voice of the shepherd and bishop of our souls. Looking to Him alone, whose burden of shame and sorrow, once borne for our sakes, has given place to the everlasting joy of the Father's presence, may we find His joy to be by faith the strength and sure stability of our souls.³

PSALM XXVIII.

THERE are many expressions in this Psalm which apply to the common experience of all who suffer for righteousness' sake, while their hearts are sustained in hope because kept by the power of God, through faith, for a salvation which is to them of no uncertain attainment. David, whose name it bears, felt this as thus he sang. Jesus, who as the anointed of Jehovah is the true subject of this Psalm, knew, because of His perfectness, a realization of that entire dependence upon God, in the midst of mighty and prevailing wickedness, which finds frequent expression in the Psalms, such as could be known by no other. The Christian, because called to walk as Jesus walked, will act and think and speak, as did his Master, so long as he watchfully abides in Him. Traits and utterances occur in this Psalm such as, in certain circumstances, might aptly represent the character and conduct of a partaker of the

² Heb. vi. 12; xi. *passim*.

³ Heb. xii. 2.

heavenly calling. Thus Paul, suffering as a servant of the truth, when he referred the judgment of his wrong to the Lord who judgeth righteously, uses language quite in keeping with the sentiment expressed in verse 4.¹ Speaking generally, however, the scope of this Psalm is both *narrower* and *lower* than the just range of Christian sympathy and desire, as it is excited and regulated by the indwelling Spirit of adoption. It is not a *silent* God who now sheds His love abroad in the hearts of His children by the power of the Holy Ghost. The perpetuation of Jewish blessing, under the grace and power of Messianic rule, is the limit of the language which are here expressed.

If regard be had to the historical order of its interpretation, it seems to belong to the times and to express the experience of Jehovah's prisoners of hope in the later stages of their trial. Amid the afflictions and under the reproach of Christ, which will rest in that day upon the small and feeble few of them that fear the Lord, they prayerfully await the time when He shall arise to plead their cause.² The eye of hope still fastens on Jehovah's oracle. The heart of Jewish faith is ever toward that *place* on which are set continually the eyes and heart of Israel's God. If Daniel prayed in the house of his far captivity, it was with his window open toward Jerusalem.³ So will it be again when Jehovah's suppliants make vehement and ceaseless prayer in the ending of the troublous days, upon the eve of the sounding of His voice from the temple, which had been the derision of the desolator, whose ensigns of abomination it must for a moment bear.⁴ There shall issue thence the voice of the Lord's commandment for the destruction of His enemies. Amid the shaking of

¹ 2 Tim. iv. 14.² Micah vii. 7, 9.³ Dan. vi. 10.⁴ Dan. ix. 27; Matt. xxiv. 15; Isaiah lxvi. 6.

the heavens and the earth, the Lord will be the hope of His people, and the strength of the children of Israel.⁵ Then they who refused to regard for their salvation the works of Jehovah and the operation of His hands⁶ (verse 5), shall find, by a fearful token, that power to destroy as well as to redeem belongeth unto Him alone.

The latter verses (6–9) are a sweet expression of that confidence which faith, divinely skilled in the ways of the God of promise, knows how to feel when at the lowest pitch of circumstantial distress. The Christian knows the secret of that otherwise most strange command: “In *every thing* give thanks.⁷ For such is now the will of Him, in the secure possession of whose love in Christ the child of God already sees himself, in the power of anticipative faith, invested with all that exceeding and eternal weight of glory which shall presently obliterate the memory of the afflictions which draw forth now the frequent cry of sorrow and distress. Meanwhile the Lord of peace Himself is the helper and sustainer of His saints. This we may *boldly* say.⁸ For well we know that though long silence still be kept—so long, that scoffers, who once spake softly and with secret fear, now cast off shame and utter, with a daily-growing boldness, the madness of their hearts—yet He who still refrains will surely speak. He will surely come, and will not tarry, though yet His suffering be long for our sakes.⁹

⁵ Joel iii. 16.

⁶ The bearing of this verse, as a prophetic denunciation of the Anti-christian scepticism which distinguishes the closing days of the present dispensation of unupbraiding mercy is very clear.

⁷ 1 Thess. v. 18.

⁸ Heb. xiii. 6.

⁹ 2 Peter iii. 15.

PSALM XXIX.

A MAGNIFICENT celebration of the displayed glory and power of Christ, when in royal dominion He will sit as King for ever, while His name shall be known as the God of the whole earth, which shall then be filled throughout its circuit with His praise.¹

What the apostle mentions² as accompanying the bringing a second time of the First-begotten into the world, may perhaps be referred to in verse 1;³ but strictly, I believe, the present Psalm is altogether earthly in its character. It is a sublime description of the majesty of that power which, long despised by those whose hearts were haughty and whose power and dignity proceeded from themselves, is now established for the abasement of every lofty look and the bringing low of every high thing, that Jehovah only may be exalted in that day.⁴

It is as the giver of strength and peace to *His people* that Jehovah is thus to be revealed (verse 11). The terribleness of that majesty which shakes both earth and heaven at its rising, pertains to Him who is the born child of Israel's hope—to Messiah the prince of peace. Government and peace will grow with constant increase for Him who is ordained to sit upon the throne of David.⁵ The

¹ Isaiah liv. 5; Hab. ii. 14; iii. 3.

² Heb. i. 6.

³ The first clause of this verse is of doubtful meaning. JEROME renders it "*Afferte Domino filios arietum.*" The marginal translation of the English Version is to be preferred. DE WETTE and DIOD. agree with this.

⁴ Isaiah ii. 12, *seq.*

⁵ Isaiah ix. 6, 7.

glory of that coming day is anticipated by the Church which sees her Saviour on the *Father's* throne. He *is* our peace, who has made peace for us through the blood of His cross. For us the Breaker is gone up;⁶ and into the heavenly places, whither their Forerunner is now entered, the Spirit leads His people by the faith of Him. For in Christ they are accepted in perpetual peace, and blessed already with all spiritual blessings. Moreover, they have received, as a part of their portion, that kingdom whose KING (verse 10) is the subject of this mighty and majestic strain.⁷ The voice of Him whose words are as the sound of many waters, and who utters thunders from His throne, has been heard rehearsing, in tones which moved no fear in them that listened to what they then but little understood, the coming glory of this kingdom. The appointment of His love has made the glory which He would Himself receive as the awarded recompence of perfected obedience, the sure portion of those who always were the Father's, in the appropriative counsels of His mercy, but whom now the Son delights in as His own,⁸ *given* to be His, and to partake His blessedness whose perfect joy is in the Father's love. The Church will reign with Jesus when He reigns. The world is hers, even as she is the ransomed bride of the world's Lord.⁹ In the day of the loud thunder she will be far above the scene which will be illumined by the fatal lightnings of His vengeance. The mover of all things else is the eternal stability of the chosen partners of His glory, the anointed fellows of His joy.¹

The scene of what this Psalm describes is laid *below* the heavens. The voice of Jehovah is heard in its effect upon

⁶ Micah ii. 13; Heb. vi. 20.

⁷ Heb. xii. 28.

⁸ John xvii. 6.

⁹ 1 Cor. iii. 21-23.

¹ Psalm xlv. 7; Heb. xii. 26, 27.

created things² within that sphere in which man's voice had first been suffered to speak forth great words against the Most High God. Satan's deceitful promise will have had its seeming vindication in their eyes, a part of whose sentence as obdurate disbelievers of the truth is that they shall believe a lie.³ "Ye shall be as gods" was the lying persuasion that seduced the creature to his own undoing. "I will be like the Most High"⁴ is the thought which for a moment will seem to have attained its realization, when the wicked one shall set his seat as God in the temple of the Most High. But it shall not be so. The Lord will cause His glorious voice to be heard; He will show the lighting down of His arm with the indignation of His anger; for through the voice of Jehovah shall the Assyrian⁵ be broken down which smote with a rod. With battles of shaking will He fight against those who shall be gathered, in the pride of their own imaginations, only to be broken in pieces in the day of the fierce anger of the Lord.⁶

The excellency of Jehovah's power as the deliverer of His people, according to the judgment written, is the leading topic of this Psalm. His temple is already the purged and hallowed house of His glory. It is in the beauty of holiness that men are called to worship Him (verse 2). The imagery used is Jewish throughout. The cedars and the great waters seem to denote respectively the princes and peoples whose strength shall be broken, and their multitude made few, in the day which shall burn

² Creation itself is but the visible echo of that voice. But the present Psalm does not reach thus far.

³ 2 Thess. ii.

⁴ Isaiah xiv. 14.

⁵ That Sennacherib is a type of one mightier than himself will, I suppose, hardly be doubted among Christians at the present day. Whether the Assyrian is identical with the Antichrist has been a question with many. The point cannot be discussed here. ⁶ Isaiah xxx. 30-32.

as an oven.⁷ "The voice of Jehovah," which is the great burden of the Psalm, is an expression which often indicates in Scripture the administrative power of Christ, whose name is the Word of God.⁸

The voice of the Lord is *in power* (verse 4). That voice which shakes the wilderness of Kadesh, and bows the everlasting hills, exerted a yet mightier force when, in the days of the despised Messiah's patience, the devils, uttering loud cries of dread, came forth unwilling at the bidding of the gracious healer of His people, though He spake no louder than another man. The grave of Lazarus gave back its rotting inmate at the voice of Jesus, although just before that voice was only audible in sobs, because of the realities of the destroyer's power upon those whom He could love as no man ever loved. The raging tempests fell submissive to a peaceful calm, when Jesus spake to them His will. But mightier far than all these things was the power of that voice to speak into the souls of wretched sinners the Divine assurance of forgiveness and of life. It was blasphemy, His enemies declared, that He who seemed to them no more than man, should handle thus the chief prerogative of God.⁹ They crucified the Lord of glory for the good confession of the only truth by which a sinful man may stand in security before his Judge.¹

Jesus has ceased to speak on earth; but from heaven is His voice still heard by faith. In the gracious testimony of the Comforter, the believer can distinguish to his joy the welcome tones of the good Shepherd's voice. A little while, and once again that voice will audibly resound in the

⁷ Figurative language of similar kind abounds in the prophets. (Compare Ezek. xxxi. *passim*; Isaiah viii. 7; Rev. xvii. 15, &c.)

⁸ Isaiah xxx. 30, 31; Psalm ii. 5; Joel iii. 16, &c.; comp. Rev. xix. 13.

⁹ Luke v. 21.

¹ John xix. 7; 1 John iv. 15.

expectant Church's ears. The Lord shall Himself descend from heaven with a shout. Before the shaking of this earth begins the quiet slumber of His saints, who sleep through Him, shall be sweetly broken by the only voice that ever spoke unmingled gladness to their hearts.²

PSALM XXX.

THE title of this Psalm explains its subject. It is the solemn yet joyful memorial of Divine deliverance, uttered in strains full of the sweetness of heart-rendered praise, because of rest attained and enjoyed in the house which Jehovah had built for His Anointed.

David's house was not so with God. Mourning and death soon turned to heaviness the joy of his first prosperity. The heavy judgment of the Lord had made the fruit of his own loins to be the instrument of his chief affliction. Confusion and every evil work had arisen in his house to vex the quiet of his soul. But the Lord had spoken of a house for David which David's hands were not to build, but in which the servant of Jehovah's choice should dwell for ever in the safe and pleasant chambers of His rest.³ The ordered covenant of promise was the sure foundation of this house not made with hands. All his *salvation* as well as all his desire centered there.⁴ Moved by the Spirit, who spake by him and led the musings of his mind, he is empowered to utter this song of anticipative commemoration in strains which, while truly representing the experiences of his soul, yet reach a measure far above himself, and give forth a steady brightness of

² 1 Thess. iv. 16, 17.

³ 2 Sam. vii. 11.

⁴ 2 Sam. xxiii. 5.

prophetic light to cheer God's prisoners of hope, until the dark night of toil and sorrow cease and flee away before the clear shining of the morning without clouds.

As an experimental Psalm this is one of high value. It abounds in expressions of readiest practical application to the exercised believer; for it is the utterance of a heart which had been instructed deeply in the true secret of faith. Prosperity had been tasted and had gendered fleshly confidence. Jehovah's favour, when used to strengthen the creature on its own base, is sure to be misused and is never truly understood. The believer has to learn the *resurrection* as a preparation for his right use even of the present life. "God which raiseth the dead" is to be known and walked in by His people *now*.³ The foundation and living spring of present peace and joy is Christ, now known no more after the flesh,⁴ but according to the power of the resurrection from the dead. The hope which lives amid the shades of death is there.⁵ That perennial flow of pure and joyful confidence, which should not cease within the heart in which God dwells, can only be maintained where first the strength of nature has been withered, and the sufficing riches of the love of Christ are drawn forth from the wells of salvation by the active energy of faith. The cloudless favour of the God of all grace shines forth on the believing sinner in the person of the risen Saviour. In that favour is life—eternal life.⁶ Perfect and abiding

³ 2 Cor. i. 9.

⁴ 2 Cor. v. 16. For a full statement of the sense of this expression see *Notes on Second Corinthians, in loc.* ⁵ 1 Peter i. 3.

⁶ (Verse 5.) כִּי הִנֵּעַ בְּאַפּוֹ חַיִּים בְּרִצּוֹנוֹ "Quoniam ad momentum est ira ejus, vita in reprobatione ejus."—HIERON. "Denn einen Augenblick wähet sein Zorn, Lebens-lang seine Huld."—DE WETTE. For the spirit of this contrast, but not for the sentiment expressed, compare 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18. As to the latter, *vide supra*, remarks on Psalm xiii.

peace and blessedness are the never-fading portion of the soul that has learned to render thanks to God for His unspeakable gift.

The true bearing of this Psalm is, I believe, upon Israel's latter-day experience, first of sorrow and death and then of quickening life and joy, when the long-protracted days of mourning (though then they will seem but a moment)⁷ shall be changed for the gladsome times of Divine refreshing, when stones of fair colours shall become the sure foundation of the city that the Lord shall build.⁸ His people shall be brought up out of their graves. His prisoners shall go forth, through the blood of His covenant, from the pit which hath no water.⁹ Resurrection is figuratively used in Scripture to indicate the resuscitation of the regenerate nation, as well as in its literal sense.¹ The concluding verses are an echo of prophetic witness elsewhere borne to the blessedness of Israel when, reposing under the shadow of the righteous Branch and firmly resting on the sure mercies of David, they shall know their King and be known of Him, according to the fullest measure of the blessings of the new and everlasting covenant of peace.²

PSALM XXXI.

LIKE other Psalms which bear the name of David in their titles, the one before us—while pointing distinctly to Messiah—was probably to its inspired author not only a sure word of prophecy, into which his searching spirit might inquire, but a heart-felt expression also both of the

⁷ Verse 5; Isaiah liv. 7, 8.

⁸ Isaiah liv. 11. ⁹ Zech. ix. 11.

¹ Ezek. xxxvii.

² Isaiah lxi. 3; Jer. xxxi. 1-4.

sorrows and the joys which his own soul had tasted during the chequered experience of His pilgrim days. Passages in the recorded history of the son of Jesse easily suggest themselves to the mind while pondering such Psalms. But the marrow of Divine nourishment is received most richly into the believer's soul when, passing by the shadow, he meditates upon the perfect Truth Himself.

The present Psalm enters very deeply into the secret experience of Jesus, as He walked in the yet unfulfilled way of His obedience until the works of God should be complete.¹ The exact repetition by the dying Saviour of the first clause of verse 5,² and the striking correspondence which other verses present to the historical testimony of the Gospels, when recounting the sufferings and reproach of the rejected Son of God, enable us at once to perceive that He is personally the main subject of this Psalm. On the other hand there are expressions which seem rather to belong to those for whom He suffered than to Himself. This last point I leave at present without further examination.

The compass which the Spirit here takes of our blessed Lord's experience is very wide. He appears before us not only as the patient servant of Jehovah, the doer of all righteousness amid the contradiction of sinners, but likewise as the confessor, in its vicarious appropriation, of sin itself (verse 10). It was this gracious assumption of His people's sin which furnished the deep cause of that matchless sorrow which He alone could know, because on Him

¹ John ix.-xi.

² Luke xxiii. 46. The remainder of the verse could not be uttered in its primary intention by the Lord. Himself the worker of redemption for His people, His resurrection was His open justification, according to the verity of His good confession; but in no true sense can He be said to be *redeemed*. His own blood was shed for others, not Himself.

only it could come as a thing which attached to Him by no right of sinful birth,³ but because for sinners' sakes He had come forth from God to do for His enemies the undesired work of their redemption. Perfect confidence—such as became Him whom Jehovah upheld while He leaned, in conscious feebleness and brokenness of heart, as a despised and solitary Man, upon the sustaining presence of the Father who left Him not alone—is found combined with a weight of sorrow and distress which seemed to press without relief upon His spirit, while the deadly counsels of wickedness were plotting against His life, and fear was about His steps on every side (verses 9–18).

There is constantly found in the Psalms a twofold expression of confidence in God. First, an appeal to His *righteousness* is made absolutely, on the ground of conscious purity and faithfulness in service; and secondly, Divine *mercy* is celebrated as the rest and security of the afflicted soul. Both these things are found in the personal experience of Jesus. As the spotless and holy One, who did always the things which pleased the Father, He could evermore appeal to Jehovah upon the ground of righteousness. "Righteous Father, the world hath not known thee; but I have known thee."⁴ He stood alone in this. The prince of this world had nothing of his own in Him. But the Son of God was born into the world to bear witness to *the truth*. He was made a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the fathers.⁵ Jesus was the *object* of all gracious promise, even as He was the sole mediator of human blessing, through and in whom alone the righteous God could bless with favour any child of Adam. Grace, fulfilling promise in a just redemption, is the sole ground of bless-

³ Job xiv.⁴ John xvii. 25.⁵ Rom. xv. 8.

ing to man once fallen. Hence from the beginning "good things to come" had fed the souls of God's elect with an imperishable hope, though the promised blessings were to them as far-off objects of desire. It was God, as the rewarder in mercy of such as sought Him with heart-persuasion of His goodness, who was the stay and present object of the fathers' faith and hope.⁶ Jesus, Himself the seed of promise, the first partaker of those fruits which should mellow into ripeness for His people through the patient travail of His soul, fully recognized this. While bearing about in His own Divine person the secret which could alone in due time give effect to the promises by means of death—Himself being thus the *root* of David—He takes His place as the chosen vessel of Jehovah's favour, the appointed Heir, as David's offspring, of the mercy promised to the fathers.⁷

Besides the sufferings of Messiah, the joy also which was set before Him is contemplated in the present Psalm. In the latter verses the Spirit changes the language of hopeful patience to a triumphant declaration of the results of that patience in the realized delights of the blessings of goodness.⁸ Jesus has entered into His rest; and now His voice is heard from heaven speaking by the Spirit of the things laid up with God for them that fear Him, and who, because they fear Him, do not fear nor are ashamed to own their trust in Him before the sons of men (verse 19). To the believer who rightly estimates the nature of his calling

⁶ Heb. xi. 6.

⁷ Luke i. 72. The covenant between the Father and the Son is at the base of this. All blessings are rewards of debt on God's part to the faithful doer of His will. But as it is the *Man* Christ Jesus who receives them, they are accepted as the fulfilment of Jehovah's promise, as the mercy of the Most High.

⁸ Psalm xxi. 3.

as a companion of Christ's patience, the concluding verses of this Psalm will speak richly as a word of consolation. The Comforter exhorts and cheers the Christian as one called to follow in his Master's steps. For it is the servant's privilege to share his Lord's experience in this world, so far as it is communicable by One who must needs both feel and be as none else ever feel or are. If true disciples of the Master, we shall fare as He did in this present world.⁹ Moreover, it is because the believer *is dead* by the body of Christ that his present calling is to know the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings,¹ being made conformable to His death. If the life of Jesus is to manifest itself in our mortal flesh, it must be by bearing in our bodies the dying of the Lord.²

In verses 14, 15 we have declared to us the secret of unswerving steadfastness of soul, and true stability in all godly service. It is the undivided confidence of the heart in God. "Thou *art my God.*" Where faith can thus appropriate God as its portion a surrender of all circumstantial anxieties become the just sequel and effect. "My *times* are in Thy hand," is then the calm and happy expression of most rich contentment. It was thus with Jesus, the author and finisher of faith. He suffered at the will of God, whom He both knew and loved. The cup of bitterness was mingled by the Father's hand. He drank it thus in pure committal of His soul to Him. In like manner it is that the believer, who walks humbly in the grace and power of Christ, is fulfilling in his generation the good pleasure of the Lord, being "strengthened with *all* might, according to His glorious power, unto *all* patience and long-suffering with joyfulness."³

⁹ John xv. 19, 20.

¹ Gal. ii. 20; Phil. iii. 10.

² 2 Cor. iv. 10, 11.

³ Col. i. 11.

We have an expression of this joy in verse 19. The Christian knows that not only are things prepared for him which God hath wrought, and which pass the compass of man's understanding to conceive, but that he himself is wrought of God in fitness for those selfsame things.⁴ He has been fashioned and prepared of God, in Christ, for a participation in *His* joys. The joy of his Lord is his daily strength in hope. He is presently to enter on its fulness, when the time of gracious reckoning is come.⁵ The Spirit is, meanwhile, the abiding witness of these things. Searching the deep things of God, He brings within the view of faith fair scenes of joy unspeakable and full of glory. To dwell on all the details of this rich Psalm is impracticable here. Very precious are its closing words to those who know what it is to be maintaining, amid the scoffing of this latter time, the attitude of patient waiting for the Lord. He will strengthen the hearts of them that look for Him; He will surely come and will not tarry. The blessed hope and glorious appearing of Him who is the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, is the proper expectation of all who have already bidden an eternal farewell to the world and its pretensions in the cross of God's rejected Son.⁶

PSALM XXXII.

THIS is the first Psalm that has the term "Maschil"¹

⁴ 2 Cor. v. 5.

⁵ Matt. xxv. 21.

⁶ Titus ii. 13.

¹ מִשְׁכִּיל The LXX. are perhaps right in rendering this word by σύνεσις. To determine the original intent of this addition is now impossible. If, as is probable, it implied some especial teaching of Divine wisdom in the Psalms to which it is prefixed, its appropriateness in the present instance will be questioned by none who know anything of the riches of

appended to its title. It is David's description of the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works.² Sin, met in confession by Divine grace, and turned to everlasting righteousness, is the leading subject of this song of wisdom. Many points are touched, some of which we may briefly examine in their order.

Verses 1, 2 describe the happiness of a forgiven sinner, together with the moral effect of the discernment of pure grace in cleansing the spirit from all guile. True repentance is an awakened longing for Divine favour, and is therefore inseparable in its nature from the faith of God.³ This is its broad distinction from remorse. Sin is loathed, and its burden found intolerable by the quickened spirit, because of its contrariety to that which is the real desire of the heart. Dread of Divine wrath may be more or less painfully felt at the same time; but the true bitterness of sin is that it renders the sinner miserable in his own conscience, while it excludes him, by its very nature, from the only presence in which peace and gladness can be truly known. It separates the dependent creature from the ever-blessed Creator, who is the alone source of life and contentment to the soul that He has made. The discovery by Divine conviction of what sin really is, brings therefore the savour of death into the spirit. It is felt that, spite of all godly wishes and efforts to the contrary, the master principle of human life—the power which

God's wisdom in the gospel of His grace. There are remarkable features, as a careful reader will not fail to observe, in some at least of the remaining Maschil Psalms. But I notice the word here once for all. The following eleven Psalms are thus distinguished in their titles; Psalms xxxii. xlii. xlv. xlv. lii. liii. liv. lxxiv. lxxxviii. lxxxix. and cxlii.

² Rom. iv. 6.

³ Heb. xi.

wields and governs the entire man—is an active instinct of opposition to the will of God. The awakened soul thinks, and feels, and fears, as a *sinner*, and that in the presence of the righteous Judge.⁴

It is this condition of soul that is met and perfectly cured by the grace of God in Christ. *Atonement* is the perceptible fact which, in the cross of the Son of God, assures to faith the present validity of the gospel of salvation. Forgiveness of transgression, and hiding of sin, are things Divinely impossible, until the pure and equal demands of justice have been met. The way of God is upright. He is essentially the *just God*. This truth is recognized, with a poignant feeling of its necessity, by the quickened conscience. No one attribute of God can conflict with or overrule another. In the truthful language of the word of grace, mercy may rejoice against *judgment*; against *justice* it never will. Hence the unspeakable value to the believing sinner of the blood of Jesus. For it is by that alone that peace is made. The breaking of Christ's sinless body on account of sin is a demonstrative assurance to the faith of God's elect that the wages of sin have been unduly paid, unless the Just One, who received them, received them in the sinner's stead. And this it is that He has done.⁵ God now reveals Himself in the light of this accomplished truth. He preaches peace by Jesus Christ. Promises of mercy and acceptance become intelligible to the gladdened heart of faith, through the testimonies of the Holy Ghost, as the messenger and witness of the glorified Redeemer. God has indeed been always seen and rested in as the speaker of the word of life. From the beginning of the world, types—which spake to the wise-hearted of an effectual atonement to be

⁴ Rom. vii.

⁵ 1 Peter iii. 18.

one day made—were present to the eye of faith as boding shadows of good things to come, until the very Lamb of God should come, who had been fore-ordained to die before the world began.

What David's *understanding* and that of other holy men of old could perceive but dimly, and celebrated only by prophetic anticipation, David's heart and conscience knew in power as a vessel of the grace of God. "The Lord hath put away thy sin," was the word of restoring mercy which revived his spirit, when, amid the plenteous blessings of Jehovah's goodness, he had learned a lesson of his own inherent baseness and depravity, which perhaps he could only have completely learned upon those royal summits of prosperity to which the gracious bounty of the only wise God had freely raised him at His will.⁶ That God could be just, and yet the justifier of believing sinners, was known hopefully to every saint of old. The proof and explication of this mighty truth are now plainly set before the eye of Christian faith in the record which, in the gospel of His grace, God now witnesses openly concerning His own Son.

In the language of that gospel, which declares the value of the Saviour's work according to the Spirit's estimate of His *person*, non-imputation of sin is equivalent to positive justification. What Christ has *suffered* in our stead is the ground upon which perfect remission becomes the answer of Divine justice to a believer's faith. What Christ *is*, and what He has *wrought* in His obedience unto death, are the acceptable righteousness in which the forgiven sinner stands before God in the new and perfect title of sonship, according to the unblamable holiness of the Beloved in whom he is accepted of the Father. The effect of a full and

⁶ 2 Sam. xii. 13.

simple perception of grace is to expel all guile from the believer's spirit; for the whole secret of what is in him, and of what he is, has already been laid open before God. In the cross of Jesus, in the rich abundance of His grace, God has met him as a sinner in the completeness of his ruin. Truth having penetrated to his inward parts remains there; a perpetual witness of his personal unprofitableness, and the Divine assurance of unqualified and triumphant mercy. The love of God in Christ becomes now the satisfying portion of the soul that has emerged from its own dark wretchedness to live for ever in His marvellous light. Pure desires, fed and quickened by the Spirit of truth, flow now to Godward as their end. The unchanged evil of the heart indeed remains. But the power of God is *in* the children, who are born of Him, as a victorious energy, which will surely prevail in the conflict which must still be waged between the irreconcilable principles of flesh and spirit. Grace is the enemy of sin, but the sure protection of the believing and self-judging sinner. Held fast by faith, grace is the perpetual justifier of conscience and the animating motive of all practical holiness. The effect of faith must always be to purify the heart. For faith not only separates us from our sins, but brings us nigh in Christ to *God*.⁷

Verses 3, 4 are touchingly descriptive of that wasting misery which is the natural effect upon the spirit, where sin is known without the ability to confess it to God in the simple confidence of faith. Keeping thus its evil treasure pent in and hoarded painfully in the heart's secret, the sinner's conscience groans beneath its weary load, while God is thought of only to the increase of the soul's distress, because the full disclosure has not yet been made on

⁷ Heb. xii. 28, 29; Eph. ii. 13.

which alone He can declare Himself in perfect grace. How often has this been the experience of an awakening soul, before the sense of personal sinfulness has penetrated to the necessary depth of thorough conviction. While this remains, an unequal contest is carried on within the troubled spirit. Prayerful purpose, resulting continually in conscious defeat, at length wears out the energy of nature and brings the exhausted sufferer to a practical acknowledgment of perfect impotency for all good. The seal is thus set to all God's faithful sayings which He has spoken concerning human sin. The need is felt of *a new foundation*. Righteousness is longed for as a thing quite *foreign* to degraded nature. God, who has convinced the withered heart of its own vanity, must minister in grace to its relief. The soul is become capable of Christ when once its true condition as sin's bondman is perceived. The wretchedness of guilt must, in greater or less measure, be felt before the blessedness of forgiveness can be truly known. But in most instances a Christian's understanding of sin is far deeper *after* he has known the grace of God that meets it than before. It is the very discernment of grace, under the teaching of the Holy Ghost, that enables the believer to estimate sin according to the perfections of God, as He learns them in their full display in the cross of His most blessed Son.

Verse 5. The heart, once thoroughly unburdened by confession, finds relief and entire rest in God; for truth, spoken honestly on our part, receives an answer of immediate peace from Him. Christ is the truth and power of God as a Saviour. If we confess our sins, He is *faithful* and *just* to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. The only truth that we can testify of ourselves as men is, that we are ruined sinners; and

until this humiliating acknowledgment has been heartily made, what God intrinsically is remains unknown. "The glorious gospel of the blessed God" is but an empty sound to one who stands in his own eyes as something better than a merely lost and naturally hopeless man. To taste the love of God in Christ, which brings us nigh to Him, we first must know subjectively the nature and extent of that dread distance to which Jesus went, when for our sakes He became as an accursed thing.⁸

"For this shall every one that is godly," &c. (verse 6). The Spirit here opens the blessed principle of grace in all its breadth of application to the varied need of sinners. The special instance is but a sample of encouragement, recorded for the sake of others who might thus be more emboldened to believe.⁹ The godly man is the sinner who knows God in grace. Finding Him in the acceptable day of salvation, he prays, not vaguely but with calm assurance of being heard, to One who has provoked that prayer by already revealing Himself as the Saviour and Justifier of the ungodly in his direst hour of need.¹ *Mercy received* is the proper groundwork of true Christian prayer. A believer prays—if his prayer is truly in the Spirit—*upon the basis of a federal relationship of peace with God, which stands eternally established in the blood of Christ.*² The cry of distress which goes up from a heart in which peace is as yet unknown, is not to be confounded with true prayer. God's ready and most gracious answer to such a cry is His full and ever-blessed testimony of peace and forgiveness in the gospel of His Son. He is Himself the winner and enticer of sinners to the Saviour. But what is here contemplated is the prayer of *faith*, which is

⁸ Gal. iii. 13.

¹ Rom. iv. 5.

⁹ Compare 1 Tim. i. 16.

² Heb. xiii. 20.

addressed to God with reference to things which in themselves are objects of dread to the believer, but from which deliverance is sought for and reckoned on in Him who is already known and trusted as the soul's deliverer and rest. Christian supplication assumes, as its first principle, that GOD IS FOR US. It is in the light of this most precious truth that Satan is distinctly seen to be our *adversary*. We are exhorted to pray *in the Holy Ghost*.³ But that blessed Spirit is Himself the indwelling witness of our full acceptance with the Father. Confidence in God is thus the motive of prayer, whether its object be the deprecation of evil or the attainment of good. The floods then of great waters may rise fast, and seem to utter threats of ruin in their roar; but they cannot reach the safe abode of one whose dwelling is on high, and whose munition of defence is the God of his salvation.⁴ Boldness in the day of judgment belongs to the vessels of God's saving mercy, into whose hearts the Judge of all has already sent the witness of eternal peace. The hand of the destroyer can reach no particle of his rich treasure whose trusted wealth is hid with Christ in God.⁵

The seventh verse is very full. It is a sweet expression of the confidence and rejoicing of hope which result to the reconciled sinner from a discernment of what God is to the vessels of His mercy. Perfect love having cast out fear, the justified believer hides himself in God; his home of joy is there. "We joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the reconciliation."⁶ Trouble is now a distant fear; for God, who forsaketh not His saints, is the preserver of the soul. As a shield He stands, in Christ, between His people and their woes. Tri-

³ Jude 20; Eph. vi. 18.

⁴ Isaiah xxxiii. 16.

⁵ Col. iii. 3; 2 Tim. i. 12.

⁶ Rom. v. 11.

umph and rest are already in clear view. The Lord's song is evermore about the ransomed children of His love, while dwelling in the tabernacles of their pilgrimage. The melody of thanksgiving comes forth as a freely flowing utterance of joy from the hearts of those whose ceaseless conflict with an ever-present foe is waged in a full assurance of His faithfulness and power, through whose death-tried love they are already more than conquerors.⁷

In verse 8 we have the gracious response of Jehovah to the confidence with which the abundance of His mercy had inspired the man of blessing. Three things are comprised in this verse. First, the promise of wisdom:⁸ "I will instruct thee." The believer is renewed in Christ for the knowledge of God.⁹ Divine wisdom unfolds its treasures to their faith who already are made perfect in Christ, through the effectual knowledge of the grace of God in truth.¹ But it is well to distinguish between progress in the wisdom of God and the mere acquisition of scriptural knowledge. The Spirit of truth is the alone effectual instructor of the children, who are themselves begotten by the word of truth. A Christian is not always receiving Divine instruction when he is reading the word of God. If the heart be not at the time in communion with the Lord, the knowledge thus acquired will not profit; it may puff up, but will not really enrich the soul. God must blow on it, as on every other vanity, before any solid blessing can result. Every lesson Divinely taught brings the learner nearer in the spirit of his mind to God. In-

⁷ Eph. v. 19, 20; Rom. viii. 37.

⁸ אֶשְׂכִּילֶנּוּ Συνομιῶ σε.—LXX. "Erudiam te."—HIERON. "Ich will dich unterweisen."—DE WETTE. "Intellectum tibi dabo."—VULG. "Io voglio ammaestrati."—DIOD.

⁹ Col. i. 9; iii. 10.

¹ 1 Cor. ii. 6, seq.

creased conformity to Christ becomes the necessary result. The soul, rising in its estimate of heavenly things, is daily less under the power of its own natural tendencies. Its proper nothingness is understood because of its nearness to the living God. Christ alone is valued and desired, because in Him alone it is that we can bear and enjoy the holiness of our God, who is always a consuming fire.²

There is, secondly, a pledge given of guidance in service: "I will teach thee in the way which thou shalt go." There are two ways in which a Christian finds guidance in his service. First, the word of God is the lamp of his feet, ever ready to shed its holy light upon the circumstances of the day and its evil. *This is the standing medium of intelligence by which the will of God is known.* It is, moreover, the sole test of reference by which all private purpose and intention must be proved. Nothing that *varies* in its drift and tendency from Scripture is really of God. It is some subtle instigation of the enemy (which never fails to show itself in its true character when tested thus), however specious it may be. But, secondly, a believer who walks habitually with God may acquire a sort of intuitive discernment of the right in the most perplexed and misty passages of actual life, upon which no written precept may seem immediately to bear. The Holy Ghost, who dwells in the believer, confers on him an ability to *understand the fear of the Lord.*³ While walking in that fear his way is sure. The eye when really single sees Christ alone before it. "He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked."⁴ But Jesus *pleased not Himself.* His meat and drink were to do the will of Him that sent Him. He walked and wrought beneath the guidance of the Father. He was led of the

² Heb. xii. 29.³ Isaiah xi. 2, 3.⁴ 1 John ii. 6.

Spirit which anointed Him; whether into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil, or into the temple of Jehovah to purge it of the defilers of His house, or along the path of His daily and perfect obedience, or, lastly, to the slaughter, for the which as the appointed Lamb of God He had been predestined from eternity. The sustaining power of His obedience was His knowledge of the Father's love. He trusted in God while running the way of His commandments. Even thus is it also with the truly spiritual man. As a sheep of Christ he is no longer at his own discretion, but under the absolute direction of another. "*I lead in the way of righteousness,*" is the word of Him who is the shepherd and bishop of our souls. Where Christ is really the motive of our steps we need not fear that we shall greatly err. The most important principle which we have to bear in mind in connexion with this subject is, that true Christian service never loses its distinctive quality of *obedience*. A faithful observance of this principle is our sole preservative against the many and dangerous plausibilities of will-worship. Whatever is done in the Spirit is done in fulfilment of *His* will. We are sanctified unto the obedience of Christ.⁵ We are no longer our own. We are His to govern and direct, as our only *Lord*, even as we are His own in love to bless for ever through the purchase of His precious blood.⁶

Thirdly, there is, in close connexion with the subject of service, the promise of counsel: "I will counsel thee; mine eyes shall be upon thee."⁷ Every believer knows the value of that standing promise of covenant grace, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Continual protection, and the gracious supply of our present need are thus secured. But here we have the additional assurance

⁵ 1 Peter i. 2.

⁶ Titus ii. 14.

⁷ Margin.

of God's ever-present and active sympathy throughout the way. It is not only the faithfulness of God as the sure deliverer in the hour of danger that is intended by these words, but a pledge rather of the gracious *companionship* of the Divine presence; whereby the servant is enabled to fulfil his day, not merely as a hireling whose appointed task must be discharged, but as a fellow-worker with the Master whom he serves.⁷ It is not exclusively an apostolic privilege to be a worker together with God.⁸ To know and to perform His perfect and acceptable will is the proper calling of every child of mercy.⁹ In this again the disciple shares the privilege of the Master. As the opened ear of Jesus received daily from the Father the direction of His way,¹ so was it in the *power* of the Father that the works were wrought.² The Christian's calling is to walk as Jesus walked. The Spirit's prayer for such is, that the same God of peace, who has stablished their souls before Himself in the everlasting covenant, may make them perfect in every good work to do His will, working in them that which is well pleasing in His sight—fulfilling thus the good pleasure of His goodness, and the work of faith with power.³ "I will counsel thee." It is in the word of God that the believer finds positive counsel and direction. Jesus understood this perfectly. "It is written," was the weapon of His conflict with the father of lies. Our ability to use this weapon will always be according to the degree in which our souls are in willing subjection to the Lord. For Scripture is the word of *God*. It is the sword of the Spirit. It is not ours, but His. Unless it has first done its work *upon* us, by sifting and discovering every secret thought, making thus the inmost heart to be

⁷ Phil. ii. 13. ⁸ 2 Cor. vi. 1. ⁹ Rom. xii. 1, 2. ¹ Isaiah 1.
² John xiv. 10. ³ Heb. xiii. 21; 2 Thess. i. 11.

thoroughly the Lord's⁴ in the spirit of self-judgment, it cannot be used safely and efficiently *by* us. Nearness to God, habitual abiding in Christ, is the alone condition of spiritual prosperity and fruitfulness.

But there are resisting forces in the way of every saint. Hence the word of warning follows closely on the promise (verse 9). The purpose of God, the Father of our spirits, is to make us partakers of His own holiness.⁵ Exceeding great and precious promises are given, whereby the justified believer in the righteousness of God may himself become a partaker of the Divine nature.⁶ The effect of practical sanctification, where the Spirit is not hindered in His gracious work, is to assimilate, by a constant moral approximation, the child of God to the Father who begat him. "Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect," is the exceeding broad commandment of redeeming love. Believers are called to a behaviour suitable to their description as "elect of God, holy and beloved;"⁷ to be "imitators of God as dear children."⁸ This is morally to take the place of Jesus, who did what things He saw the Father do.⁹ But we cannot act as God's children out of His own presence. "Walk before me, and be thou perfect," is the recorded counsel of Abraham's Friend. "Abide in me and I in you," was the yet nearer and more dear persuasion of Divine love, when, in His palpable humanity, the same blessed God spoke in familiar counsel to those whom He had made His friends, by that new and wondrous way of kindness which first stooped to their estate, that for the love He bare them He might give His life for theirs.¹ But alas! too well the Christian knows his faint requital

⁴ 2 Cor. x. 5. ⁵ Heb. xii. 10. ⁶ 2 Peter i. 4. ⁷ Col. iii. 12.

⁸ Eph. v. 1. ⁹ John v. 19. ¹ John xv.

of this gracious love. "Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you," are words which may unravel to many an unhappy Christian the secret of his spiritual feebleness. Simple devotedness to Christ alone discovers to the soul the full sweetness of the Saviour's friendship. We must be not in calling only as He *is*, but in spirit also as He *was*, in order to understand or relish the joy of One who lived not for Himself, but for the Father; who came, not to be ministered unto, but in grace and patience to become the willing servant of His own.²

Nearness to God is the secret of true happiness, but the believer is not left to discover this secret by himself. God never loses sight of our profit in accomplishing the mystery of His will. He *counsels* us to abide in Him. If we are inattentive to His voice, He knows how to devise a way to enforce on us, with firm yet gracious hand, that which alone can further our blessing or His perfect praise. Divine discipline comes when needed, in aid of Divine counsel, and is a fruit and token of the self-same love. "Be ye not as the horse," &c. The believer, because born of God, has an understanding to know Him that is true. It is, however, needful that by reason of use in the Divine presence, his spiritual senses be kept in exercise. But flesh opposes this; for in the presence of God the natural will can never have its way. Hence the peculiar force of the comparison in the present verse,³ in which the

² 1 John iv. 17; Phil. ii. 6.

³ בְּמַתְגַּוְרְסֵן עָדָיו לְבָלוֹם בַּל קָרוֹב אֵלָיךְ The authorized rendering of these words is by no means satisfactory. The following are to be preferred: 'Εν χαλινῷ καὶ κημῶ τὰς σιαγόνας αὐτῶν ἀγχαί τῶν μὴ ἐγγιζόντων πρὸς σέ.—LXX. "Die mit Zaum und Gebiss, ihrem Geschirr, Zu bändigen, weil sie nicht Zu dir nahen."—DE WETTE. "La cui bocca

will of nature is likened to the native instincts of the animals described, whose range of liberty is far from the abodes of men. That which is natural in the believer is continually striving to remove itself from God, that it may regain the freedom it alone enjoys—the liberty of doing its own will. No self-judging Christian can be ignorant of this. Abundantly, then, have we to adore the faithfulness of the Father of spirits, who has made chastening in some shape to be an universal token of true sonship to His saints.⁴

In verse 10 there is, perhaps, besides the statement of a general principle of Divine government, a particular reference to the two heads respectively of righteousness and unrighteousness. The verse which follows fitly closes this delightful Psalm by a general summons to the righteous to rejoice in Jehovah; an appeal to which the true “circumcision” can alone respond. Only the Church *now* answers to that description.⁵ But a day is coming when the preserved of Israel will enter into the fellowship of the blessedness which this Psalm describes. They will sing it in their latter day of hope, when the stony heart shall have been changed for them into a heart of flesh. The bridle of Divine judgment will then be permanently taken from the nation’s jaws.⁶ The Schoolmaster’s long and painful lesson will have wrought its full effect and be for ever at an end, and the children of the covenant will know the rich blessings of the heritage of their adoption.⁷

conviene frenar con morso e con freno [altrimente] non s'accosterebbero a te.—ДИОД. “*Welchen man Zaum und Gebiss muss ins Maul legen, wenn sie nicht zu dir wollen.*”—ЛУТН. It is evident that the real point of the comparison has been overlooked by our translators. The statement as it stands is contrary to natural fact.

⁴ Heb. xii. 8.

⁵ Phil. iii. 3.

⁶ Hosea xi. 4.

⁷ Gal. iii. 24; Rom. ix. 4.

Jehovah's Branch will then be beautiful and glorious, as the fruitful bough of promises, then tasted in their fruits, under whose shelter there shall assemble, no more to be dispersed, the peeled and scattered remnant of the nation for the which Messiah died. The cloudy day of Jacob's trouble shall be changed to the bright meridian of the Sun of righteousness, in the fulfilling of the long deferred counsels of Him whose gifts and calling are without repentance.

PSALM XXXIII.

THE dying close of the preceding Psalm is re-echoed in the opening verse of the one on which we are now entering, which has no distinctive title, and stands evidently in a close moral relation to the last.

In its primary intention it is a celebration of the glory and majesty of Jehovah, on the part of the people of His choice, the *nation* of His name (verse 12), now settled on the sure and lasting foundation of finished truth and mercy. It is a latter-day song of Israel, when the veil shall have been removed from the nation's heart, and their eye shall behold the Lord their righteousness in the person of the once rejected Jesus. It is a *new* song. Jehovah's covenant of promise had indeed been established with their fathers from of old, even as that covenant itself had its earlier and deeper root in the eternal counsels of God in Christ. But the effects are new. The performance of the mercy will call forth from the heart of the new-born nation the high and comely praises of their God and Saviour.

It is an earthly people whose praise thus ascends; but

the strain rises to the heavens, whose Creator's name is now extolled by the true worshippers, as the God of their mercy (verse 6). Grace strikes the chord which so sweetly vibrates with Jehovah's praise (verse 18). Israel, wearied and broken in the vain endeavour to establish their own righteousness, will in that day discover in the revealed glory of Jesus the unity and completeness of Divine counsel and power. They will attest Jehovah's truth in the light of His salvation (verse 4). There are precious things in this Psalm for the meditation of God's saints. The glory and power of Christ shine richly through its words. The peculiar force of verse 6, in which the distinct names of Jehovah, His Word and His Spirit, are united in the ascription of creative glory, will not have escaped the careful reader, who knows His salvation to be in Him who, through the eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot to God.¹

But the praises of this Psalm do not begin in those heavenly places which are the proper sphere of Christian worship. It expresses, rather, the homage of a people whose dispensational blessings are on earth. They are Jehovah's witnesses *there*. His *nation* is compared with other nations. Their counsel had failed, although the craft of Satan might direct the godless energies of the human will. The Lord has now arisen to free the groaning creature from the bonds of wickedness, by smiting the crown of the oppressor and binding up the breach of the sore afflicted people of His love. The order in which the earlier verses (4-11) follow each other is striking, when we attentively consider the force of each, and their common moral connexion. The Creator of the heavens is the counsellor of Israel's peace.²

¹ Heb. ix. 14. *Infra*, Psalm cxlix. 2.

² Compare Isaiah ix. 6.

Verses 12-22 express the wise-hearted musings of the once foolish people, but who now, as grafted again into their own olive tree, bear grateful fruits of praise, celebrating with understanding hearts the grace which reigns through righteousness by the one Man, Jesus Christ. A retrospect is taken in this Psalm both of the ways of human vanity and of the course of Divine wisdom, in their relation to the progress of the world's evil. Jehovah had endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath. Meanwhile the counsels of the heathen had been framing proud desires, according to the craft and power of the prince of this world. Their imaginations had been lofty against the Lord and against His Christ. But the time had come for God to arise in power that the inhabitants of the world might stand in awe of Him.

If I ventured to assign a particular time and action to this Psalm, it would be in the interval between the smiting of Antichrist and the permanent settlement of Israel in their own land. Thus in the latter verses (18-22) we have a perfect expression of confidence in Jehovah, and a joyful anticipation of the fruits of the mercy which already had begun to act for their sakes in the destruction of the oppressor. The full results, however, are yet in prospect. The overflowing scourge had left too recently its fearful traces for the saved remnant to feel as yet at home in the newly purged land of their inheritance. The operation of the Spirit of judgment and of burning had meanwhile produced its effect.³ The pride of the nation is completely broken down, and mercy is *understood* in their now contrite hearts. Jehovah is glorified in their complete cessation from man. Jesus, known now as their deliverer,⁴ is waited on as the end of

³ Isaiah iv.

⁴ Rom. xi. 26.

their confidence and the rewarder of their trust. But this is a suggestion merely as to the possible prophetic bearing of the Psalm. Meanwhile let those who love the Lord remember that it is all their own; the practical value of such strains to the believer is not dependent upon the exactness of their dispensational interpretation; while Israel lies unawakened in the sleep of spiritual death, the Church may sing the songs of Zion as a part of her full sacrifice of praise.

PSALM XXXIV.

THE title of this most beautiful Psalm is suggestive of very deep and precious instruction to those whose present calling is to walk by faith and not by sight. If we compare the historical record of David's conduct, which the Spirit of God has elsewhere afforded,¹ with the language here ascribed to him, we find a striking contrast. In the former are portrayed the degrading effects which the fear of man, when met by the subtleties of the heart's natural policy, never fails to bring upon the man of God. In the latter, there is the sweet and rich memorial of Jehovah as the refuge and deliverer of His servant, who proves Him to be such upon the frustration of all previous endeavour to find another shelter in the hour of distress.

David, as the anointed of the Lord, could rightly occupy one of two positions. He might be upon the throne of Israel in the full and willing recognition by the people of his divinely-sanctioned title as their king, or he might because of that title be a homeless exile, a proscribed wanderer, sustained alone by the light and comfort of

¹ 1 Sam. xxi. 10-15.

Jehovah's favour. In either situation he could sing; for the springs of Divine melody are in the secret of Divine communion. Where God sets and maintains the witness of His truth, there He is Himself in the favour of His countenance, which is better than life to them that trust in Him. David could sing of Jehovah in the cave of Adullam; for there he was cast solely upon God, who could meet and bless the slighted vessel of His pleasure, when dismissed with reproaches from the place of man's regard. But at the court of Ahimelech there was no song of joyful confidence, but rather piteous degradation and faint-hearted self-abasement in the sight of men. God was not there. Faith had not drawn him, but fear had driven him to that ill-chosen place of refuge. A hasty flight from a danger which he had incurred for Jehovah's sake, and against which God was his proper shield and most secure defence, hurried David into a still deeper snare, to fill him with a yet more deadly and more shameful fear. The very ornament of his praise, which marked him among friends and foes alike as the anointed champion of the Lord, becomes the chief dread of his spirit in the presence of the uncircumcised aliens, who seemed to eye him as their lawful prey.² It is only in the place of faithful obedience that boldness can be exhibited in our confession of the truth. But David had forsaken that place at the treacherous counsel of his fears.

Thus is it always. The heart of a believer, if it be not habitually cleaving to the Lord, is naturally prone to seek a refuge at any trying crisis in the shifts of human policy. Often a Christian is relying upon himself, or upon man in some other shape, for immediate succour, while God is not forgotten as the final refuge of his soul. Many a one is

² 1 Sam. xxi. 11, 12.

truly *alive*, through faith in the Son of God, who does not live his daily life, and run his daily course, in the simple and steady exercise of trust in God. The true honour and happiness of a Christian is to be able to refer his circumstances to his faith. Divine grace sets the believer in a position from whence he may regard events and experiences under an entirely new aspect, even as he stands himself towards them in a new relation. He suffers many things which are indeed common to himself with other men; but his privilege is to connect them *all* with the truth in which he stands—with *Christ*. Things happen to him as a *Christian*, not as a man merely. He is to meet, therefore, and to endure all things *according to the power of God*. Neither safety nor honour can accompany a compromise of truth. A Christian in disguise is as poor and piteous a spectacle as the fear-stricken king of Israel, when he shamed his royal person with feigned show of madness. A believer can never rightly or safely be where the unction of Christ may not stand plainly confessed, whether for honour or reproach. Our Lord, as the rejected One, is the pattern of those who are called to the companionship of His kingdom and patience. Another king had usurped the throne which Jehovah had given in title to the Son of David. Refused by Israel's builders, He lived, because of the very truth and glory of His blessed person, as a homeless wanderer amidst His own. Men might wish to make Him a king,³ having respect to His person because of advantage, when they saw and tasted the substantial blessings which were proved to be at His command; but He was the anointed choice, not of man, but of *God*. Until, therefore, the nation's heart turns finally to Him from whom it has so deeply revolted, such outward recog-

³ John vi. 14-26.

nition of the Christ could be in His eyes no purer or more acceptable a thing than the false-hearted worship which their fathers offered vainly in Jehovah's courts.⁴ Jesus did not commit Himself to such. The Son of Man thus had not where to lay His head, because, Himself the truth and bearing witness to the God of truth, He sojourned in the place where truth was disallowed. But though an outcast He was not alone. The Father was the strength and the rejoicing of His patient Son. The secret of His name and title was kept, meanwhile, among the chosen few whom in gracious love He acknowledged as His friends; to be presently displayed and glorified according to the exceeding greatness of that mighty power which, by raising the rejected Seed of David from the dead, should justify what men had disallowed, by proving Him to be indeed the Son of God.

The true test of a spiritual state is the ability of the believer to praise the Lord *at all times*. Jesus rejoiced in spirit when in the lowest depths of circumstantial distress.⁵ For He trusted in God, whose will was both His joy and His reward. The spiritual man finds in his crucified and risen Lord an argument of unbroken and perpetual praise. Affliction cannot quench it; temporal welfare does not augment it; it is paramount to the circumstances of time and change. The Holy Ghost is Himself the divine spring and power of the believer's joy. As the revealer of Jesus He presents to faith that which, simply contemplated, cannot fail to gladden and to bless the heart in which He dwells. And thanksgiving is the pleasant fruit to Godward of the satisfied believer's joy in Him.⁶

Considered quite apart from its reference to David, this Psalm is a remarkable utterance of the Spirit of Christ.

⁴ Isaiah i. 10, *seq.*

⁵ Matt. xi. 25.

⁶ Heb. xiii. 15.

We seem to hear the blessed Lord immediately addressing the children whom God hath given Him,⁷ and expounding to them, by the gracious illustration of His own experience, the name and ways of Jehovah (verse 11). Jesus is the teacher of His people's praise (verse 3). The fourth verse presents Him as the holy sufferer, who proved in trustful patience the faithful deliverance of Jehovah. He was heard in that He feared.

The effect of looking to Jesus by faith is stated in verse 5.⁸ Shame fills the face of the self-conscious sinner as he lifts his eyes to look upon his Saviour. But one view of that all-gracious Presence turns his shame to confidence and joy. For God's light shines forth in peace upon him from that face. The pure intensity of perfect love is there. Divine glory—the glory of the God of all grace—is in Him both looked upon and loved.⁹ Peace and joy and perfect liberty of conscience are the sweet and present fruits of that obedient faith which looks to Jesus at the hearing of the word of grace, and looking sees in a crucified Redeemer the fulness of the truth of God. Another shame may afterwards result from this. Sorrow may accompany and seem to be the natural effect of spiritual joy. For it is through much tribulation that the pilgrim of salvation finds his entrance into the kingdom of God.¹ But the *heart* is now at ease. God is known *there* in Christ, as

⁷ Heb. ii. 13.

⁸ נִהְיֶה אֵלָיו הַבִּיטוֹ נִהְיֶה The true sense of these words is doubtful. The following translations may be compared:—Προσέλθατε πρὸς αὐτὸν καὶ φωτισθήτε.—LXX. “*Respicite ad eum et confluite.*”—HIERON. “*Welche ihn ansehen und anlaufen, u. s. w.*”—LUTH. “*Quelli c’hanno riguardato a lui sono stati illuminati.*”—DIOD. “*Die auf ihn blicken, werden erheitert.*”—DE WETTE.—Either reading states a precious truth. To my own mind Luther's version, which corresponds with our margin, is to be preferred.

⁹ 2 Cor. iv. 16.

¹ Acts xiv. 22.

the sunlight of the day of hope. With respect to the exact force of the present verse, while its value to the believer at all times, as a presentation of the attractive power of the cross, is clear, it probably contains also an especial prophetic reference to the believing remnant of the nation in the latter day.

Verse 6 is full of divinest comfort for the afflicted and distressed believer. It is the cry of a poorer man than David to which the Spirit here refers. The poverty of Jesus, who was poor for our sakes, is kept constantly before our hearts, that in the contemplation of His grace who thus abased Himself to make the dregs of our cup His own, the Christian might in his day of trial rise out of weakness into strength. In this remembrance temptation may be counted even joy,² because the Lord, who holds the crown of life in readiness to give to those who because they love Him are not ashamed of His reproach, has proved already to the full both the trial and deliverance which now, on His behalf, are the allotted portion of His saints.³ Feebly indeed do our minds now compass (though we *know* it) the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.⁴ But it is a part of that exhaustless wealth of knowledge unto which we are renewed, and which we shall only then perceive in full, when ourselves brought past the present hour of affliction into the cloudless and eternal day of God.

The latter verses contain principles of divine administration which already have received large illustration in Israel's history, and which are of immediate practical application to the ways of God's saints.⁵ The final and permanent vindication of these principles involves how-

² James i. 2.

³ Phil. i. 29.

⁴ 2 Cor. viii. 9.

⁵ Compare 1 Peter iii.

ever an inversion of the existing course and manner of God's dispensational dealings. For the continuance of the time of longsuffering⁶ is the holiday of natural wickedness, and the time when the heart of the righteous is made sad. The crisis at which the cup of trembling will at last change hands, and the unrepented promises of Israel's mercy be fulfilled, has already been noticed, and will be more distinctly treated in the sequel. It is enough to have alluded to it in this place.

Verse 20 contains a literal prophecy, which received its exact fulfilment at the cross of the Son of God.⁷ The same verse is also interesting in another sense. It intimates to the believer the limitation within which the power of the oppressor is confined, with whom he is in ceaseless conflict. As the same scripture which contains the record of Messiah's sufferings provided also that no bone of the Divine Sufferer should be broken,⁸—preserving thus, in most significant type, the infrangible unity of the Lord's body,—so is it with the saint, whose calling and appointment are to be as a sheep for the slaughter in this present world. Death may seize upon his mortal flesh, but the very hairs of his head are numbered in the faithful memory of God who raiseth the dead. He is the purchased possession of the Lord that bought him. His troubles may be many. They *will* be so, in proportion as his walk resembles that of Him who was the Man of sorrows. On the other hand, alas! it is but too possible that affliction may befall him from the wholly opposite cause of personal unfaithfulness to Christ. Yet the Lord delivereth him out of them ALL. According to the gracious title of that righteousness which rests for ever on the chosen vessels of His grace, He will present to His eternal

⁶ 2 Peter iii. 9, 15.

⁷ John xix. 36.

⁸ Exodus xii. 46.

glory those who are viewed by the Spirit as already *glorified* (as well as justified and sanctified) according to the good pleasure of His will.⁹

That the last two verses of the Psalm refer especially to the latter-day dealings of Jehovah with His earthly people, cannot I think be reasonably doubted.

PSALM XXXV.

A SOLEMN appeal of the rejected and dishonoured Messiah, from the unrighteous judgment of men to the just award of Him who sanctified and sent Him into the world.¹ The place maintained by the sufferer throughout the Psalm is that of Jehovah's *Servant*. It is under this title that the Spirit of Jesus invokes the righteous judgment of God upon those who had outraged and derided *His* name, in their rejection of His Elect in whom His soul delighted.

Eventual triumph is contemplated as the sure result of the arising of Jehovah to judgment in His Servant's cause. Praise is to flow from the lips of the expectant petitioner of righteousness when the Lord shall have vindicated His true claim (verse 18). Meanwhile, the strong and tender sympathies of the Man approved of God, but despised and rejected of men, is with them that share His reproach in the confession of His righteousness (verse 27).² The believer, whose calling is to be a par-

⁹ Rom. viii. 30.

¹ John x. 36.

² יְקִיץ יִצְחָק! Οἱ θέλοντες τὴν δικαιοσύνην μου. "*Qui volunt justitiam meam.*"—HIERON. "*Die mein Recht lieben.*"—DE WETTE. I think it likely that there is in this expression an especial reference to the faithful Jewish remnant, whose loyalty to Immanuel will draw on them the angry persecution of those who will have received him who comes in

taker of the sufferings as well as of the glory of Christ, finds thus a rich portion of blessing in such words.

In opening, which it does, the condition and experiences of Jesus, as the solitary vessel of Divine truth and holiness in the midst of an ungodly nation, this Psalm presents to our view a fearful picture of the moral darkness and ruin of that generation whose fruitless boast it was to be the seed of Abraham and sons of God.³ "They will reverence my Son," was the righteous expectation of Jehovah, when estimating the people according to their profession of covenanted worship and obedience. But the thought of their hearts was not so. "This is the Heir; let us kill Him, and the inheritance shall be ours," was the counsel of hopeless revolt which filled the minds of those who—duped meanwhile by their own deep hypocrisy—thought it good to do the deeds of Satan in the name of the Holy One of Israel.⁴

Jesus stood amid the world of sinners as a poor and needy man (verse 10), although beneath that outward poverty there lay concealed the exhaustless wealth of God. The power to afflict was on the side of darkness; the power of gracious endurance was in the obedient Fulfiller of all righteousness. They thought Him smitten of God, when in the zeal of wickedness they compassed with causeless hatred the life of Him who did no sin.

It is an awful display of human character that is exposed by the Divine light of life and truth. Satan, who had nothing in the Son of God, is in full possession of the world. It is he who stirs men's hearts to lift rebellious tongues and hands against all truth; for he is the prince and director of this world, whose authorities

his own *name*, though not in his own power. (Compare John v. 43; 2 Thess. ii. 9.)

³ John viii. 39-42.

⁴ Matt. xxvi. 63.

combined to crucify the Lord of glory. The course and effects of human evil are varied and tremendous, but its principle is simple. If man be not in willing *subjection* to God, he must (in imagination and desire) be *above* Him. The lusts of their father filled the hearts of the enemies of Jesus;⁵ but he first taught sin to man by tempting him to rise, by inspiring him with the desire to *have* and to *enjoy*, in independence and despite of God. If human conduct has another source or motive than the Divine will, it is virtually atheism. It is that deep revolt of heart for which no cure exists in nature, and which grace alone can quell and turn to perfect and abiding peace, through the once made reconciliation of the cross.

Verses 11–16 contrast the pure sympathy of Jesus—entering in all the gracious reality of perfect love into the circumstances of human sorrow and distress; Himself taking our sorrows and bearing our griefs, in the sufficiency of Divine endurance—with the rooted selfishness and perfidy of corrupted nature. The ineffable baseness of the flesh shows itself marvellously here. It could not be won to the love of goodness even by the presence of Goodness itself. Beholding the grace of Jesus in His works, it hated Him because He witnessed of the Father. Feeding eagerly upon the bounties which grew at the Lord's bidding, for the satisfying of their bodily wants, they turned, swinelike, to rend the gracious hand that dispensed so lavishly its blessings for their sakes.

They sought His life. They desired His hurt. They spread secret snares of entanglement for His feet. They brought lying accusations against Him. They requited Him evil for good. To the scum of the rabble, as well as to the pastors of the people, He was an object of hateful

⁵ John viii. 44.

contempt in the day of His adversity. They tore Him, and ceased not. Yet in His mouth were no reproofs. He bare them, indeed, sad witness of the madness of their way. "Many good works have I shown you from my Father; for which of these works do ye stone me?"⁶ But they hated Him without a cause. Yet in acting thus they were but filling up the measure of their fathers' sins. He, whom now their eyes beheld in fleshly presence, only to abhor and to reject, in earlier times had pleaded with their fathers in like strain: "What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain?"⁷ "O my people, wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me," &c.⁸ Such had been the language which Jehovah held by His prophets, when rising early He had sent them forth as messengers of peace, before the set time had arrived for the final visitation of His patience by the mission of His Son. But it was in vain. The whole heart was sick. They were governed by the instincts of a nature which, ever since its first corruption, has been essentially a "hater of God."⁹ Their eyes, moreover, were judicially blinded. Yet their hearts were privy to the wickedness of their way. "Ye both know me, and ye know whence I am," is a word which seems to imply that the real source of that Light, which shamed their darkness and reproved their deeds, could not be hidden from the conscience even of those who were willingly ignorant of the blessed *Person* against whom they spake.¹

The prayer of Jesus (verses 17, *et seq.*) has been heard, and in part has been fulfilled. Having been put to death in the flesh, He has been quickened and justified in the

⁶ John x. 32.

⁷ Jer. ii. 5.

⁸ Micah vi. 3.

⁹ Rom. i. 30.

¹ John vii. 28; compare John xv. 24.

Spirit. The heavens have received Him whom the world cast out, and already gladness fills the hearts of the believing confessors of His name; to whom the witnessing Spirit of adoption is become as the oil of gladness and of praise—the living unction from the Holy One. Meanwhile, the nation that would none of Him lies broken on the stone of stumbling. The outstretched arm of righteous judgment is against them still. Yet for them, too, is there a portion of prospective blessing, to be realized in due time through the once-despised righteousness of the rejected Man. The “much” or “mighty”² people mentioned in verse 18 are, I doubt not, the restored nation of Israel. “The quiet in the *land*” (verse 20), if taken in any other than a moral sense, would mean the persecuted confessors of Immanuel, as Israel’s Messiah, in the last hours of the present evil day.

PSALM XXXVI.

THIS solemn yet exquisitely beautiful Psalm is full of meaning for the believer who is learning, as a spiritual man,¹ to estimate all things according to God.

It is a meditation, by the Spirit of Christ, on the wondrous phenomena of sin and grace respectively, as these things are known in the renewed minds of the children of light. For by such alone can either sin or grace be either wisely considered or rightly understood.

Verses 1–4 present in striking language the result of the heart-communings of the believer while pondering silently the progress of the mystery of iniquity. The self-knowledge which belongs to God’s children, under the

² Margin.

¹ 1 Cor. ii. iii.

effectual teaching of the Spirit, enables them to judge aright the mainspring of the complex movement of this world's evil. *The fear of God is not there.* A watchful and far-extended observation of the progress of human society will assuredly bring this sorrowful conclusion to the heart of one who walks in that fear as a sojourner with the Father.²

It is a truly wonderful place in which the quickening truth of God thus sets the Christian. With a thorough and more or less painfully searching sense of his own intrinsic vileness as a sinner, he is called to holiness, according to the enabling power of that grace in which he already stands unblamable in Christ, before the face of God. A believer is "light in the Lord."³ Christ is the "mirror" of his conscience, as well as the salvation of his soul. The effect of this is twofold. First, self-judgment becomes the inseparable accompaniment of Divine communion; and, secondly, there is an estimate, according to the fear of the Lord and the truth of His holiness, of the things through the midst of which the way of pilgrimage is found practically to lead. The spiritual man judgeth all things. He is not *innocent*, but *holy*. Innocence implies an ignorance of sin and of its cause. Holiness understands both, and abhors them with a perfect and unchanging hatred. Jesus knew no sin; but He judged human conduct according to His own pure and holy brightness as the Light. He knew what was in man. A Christian is called to exercise his spiritual senses in the discernment of good from evil. He knows what is in himself, that is, in his flesh. Viewed in Christ, he is set for eternity on the side of good—of God, who has joined him to the Son of His love; but he has to watch with soberness, lest by any

² 1 Peter i. 17.

³ Eph. v. 8.

means (and how many are the means to this sad end!) he walk unworthily as a confessor of that blessed hope.

Looking at these verses with reference to their prophetic meaning, we seem to have a presentation of the great Apostate,⁴ in the wicked one whose unrestrained lawlessness suggests this meditation of the man of God. But already the energy of that evil, which is to culminate in such a crowning prodigy of sin, is at work within the limits of that which still does outward reverence to the names both of the Father and the Son. Religious apostacy ("he hath *left off* to be wise and to do good," verse 3) is an effect of the human will, as it works in *known* opposition to the will of God. The ripe result of this is atheism. But the denier of God is the son of perdition.

The disciple, whose heart is kept duly open to the warnings of the Spirit, will find abundant food for sad yet hopeful reflection in the condition of the world around him. *Progress* is the watch-word of the leaders of the age. Progress is likewise the anticipative testimony of the Spirit of truth, when marking with sure words of prophecy the course of human events.⁵ But it is a progress outward and away from God; a progress wherein evil men and seducers wax worse and worse, complicating and augmenting the ever-growing work of evil, until the only rectifier of human crookedness shall be revealed in power. He will come. In the meanwhile the unrepentant sinner, couching softly upon the credulous fatuity of his own deceived heart, which evermore imagines God to be a liar in His words of warning, devises mischiefs till the hour has arrived when his iniquity shall come into remembrance with the God of judgment, and the adversaries of the Lord shall know the power of His wrath.

⁴ 2 Thess. ii.

⁵ 2 Tim. iii. 13.

But other and happier things than these are also spoken of in this remarkable Psalm. Verses 5-9 most sweetly celebrate the boundless riches of the Divine mercy and faithfulness. The judgments of God are, indeed, a mighty and unfathomable deep. But the exercised spirit of the believer already tastes in Christ the active loving-kindness which is the result of those eternal counsels, and which has lifted him, as a helpless burden, from the deep abyss of ruin, to set him on the great mountain of that righteousness from whence full survey may be taken of the fair and unfading inheritance of the saints in light.

The passage now before us is capable of very rich and happy application to the Christian in his actual experiences as an heir of grace. But, intermingled with expressions of paramount and abiding truth, there are others which must be viewed as prophetic anticipations of millennial peace. The confidence expressed seems to belong to those whose full cup of covenanted blessing is to be enjoyed *below* the heavens, not above them. The church, while hasting as a pilgrim through the present scene, finds sweetness and refreshment in the creatures of God's hand; but as yet creation groans.⁶ The scene presented here is, on the contrary, a scene of full terrestrial joy. Man and beast find, both alike in their respective spheres, the satisfying favour of Him whose name is to be honoured as the God of the whole earth, and whose tender mercies are over all His works.

Verse 9 expresses a desire which is already realized by the established believer in Jesus.⁷ God dwells in the children which He has begotten by His word. The Holy Ghost is the earnest of their inheritance. They not only hope for the eventual possession of the promise of life,

⁶ Rom. viii. 21, 22.

⁷ John iv. 10-14.

but already are quickened and enthroned in Christ. He is our life. We therefore *know* that we shall resemble Him at His appearing, being already fellows of His name and of His joy—rejoicing, on the ground of His acceptable worthiness, in hope of the glory of God. The language of the present verse suits rather those who elsewhere are described as walking in the darkness, and having no light.⁸ It is a prayer of hopeful anticipation, reflecting faithfully what is often felt by Christians, but in its terms below the just expression of true Christian standing.⁹

The remainder of the Psalm calls for no particular remark. In verse 10 we have a sweet utterance of the Spirit of intercession, who draws the hearts of God's afflicted people to desire His right ways. They know Him, and their trust is in His righteousness. In light or darkness faith cleaves still to God. He is His children's confidence, while men and their ways are objects of apprehension and alarm. His people put no trust in their own strength; their defence is of Him whose mercy is in the heavens, and whose faithfulness reaches to the clouds. The righteous judgments of God against the workers of iniquity are recorded for the warning and comfort of those who wait, as children of patience, in the midst of the evil day. It is to the faithful expectants of the consolation of Israel, under the outstretched rod of Anti-Christian pride, that this Psalm appears to belong as a prophecy. They will look for deliverance; waiting for the unstopping of the fountain of life, and the appearing of the light of salvation in the manifestation of the nation's hope. Jesus when thus revealed will also be as a destroying flame of vengeance, to consume the glory of the forest of wicked-

⁸ Isaiah I. 10.

⁹ Col. i. 12, 13.

ness. He will lop with terror the full bough of human arrogancy, while to the remnant of His mercy He is the staff and crown of their unending joy.¹

PSALM XXXVII.

AN exhortation of the God of patience and of hope, addressed to those who are daily reminded by the Spirit that it is by faith and patience that we are called to inherit the promises. It is a Psalm of very wide practical application to the tried believer in the varied exercises of his spirit as a sufferer for righteousness' sake, while learning as a disciple of God's saving grace to adorn His doctrine, till the promised advent of that blessed hope for which He looks.²

The abundance of evil in the present world bears hard upon the spirits of God's saints. To contemplate the prosperous growth of ungodliness must always be a painful thing to any who love God. To witness the afflictions of the righteous is a thing more trying still. But the believer, whose heart is disciplined of God in the faith of His most blessed Son, knows well that experiences of this description are inseparable from the standing and position of a child of God in Satan's world. We are called to suffer with Christ as a direct consequence of our union with Him. But what caused His suffering experience (not to speak now of the specialty of His atoning grace) was *His being what He was* in such a world. The natural course of human conduct was the contradiction of sinners against the Holy One. It is his possession of "the mind of Christ" that renders the believer capable of participation in these sufferings of Christ. It is to such no marvel to be hated of the

¹ Isaiah x. 17-21.

² Titus ii. 10-14.

world, and disallowed by them that know not Him. We confess a *crucified* Saviour; not only finding repose of conscience in a Divinely-provided Lamb of atonement, but worshipping and glorying in a world-rejected Lord. For the sound-minded believer, therefore, the nature of his relation to the world is definitely ascertained.²

The sweet and gracious tones in which the comfort of God is ministered in the opening verses of this Psalm are full of reassuring encouragement for the tried spirits of any who are proving the truth of the apostolic maxim, that persecution must in this world be the sure accompaniment of godly living in Christ Jesus.³ Like Psalm xxxiv., it seems to form a part of the instruction ministered by the Lord to the children whom God hath given Him. But while in both instances the personal experience of the One obedient sufferer is the ground on which the instruction proceeds, there is a difference in the manner of its exhibition. In the former Psalm the voice of Jesus is heard immediately addressing His elect: "Come, ye children, hearken unto me," &c. Here, on the other hand, we have rather the Spirit of Christ exhibiting to faith the Divine estimate of the ways respectively of the righteous and the wicked ones, and recording the just decision of Jehovah upon either case. Christ thus becomes to the believer the substance and colour of the moral outline of righteousness, which is traced so distinctly in the present Psalm. For He alone exemplifies perfectly the principles of an acceptable walk before God; and the rewards of righteousness are His.

Verses 30-33 are full of interest. They present in brief a summary of the character and experience of Jesus as the servant of righteousness. The law of His God was

² Gal. vi. 14; 1 John iii. 1, 13.

³ 2 Tim. iii. 12.

in His heart, who received not honour from men. Deep springs of wisdom were in the mouth of Him who spake as none had ever spoken, whether while uttering in parables the mysteries of the kingdom of God, or speaking words of life and health to the weary ears of heavy-laden sinners. But the eye of the wicked one was set on Him for evil. "The wicked watcheth the righteous, and seeketh to slay him." He sought, and at the time appointed, found that righteous blood. For our sakes, and at the Father's will, was Jesus given to the hands of His betrayers and His murderers. But Jehovah, who upheld His servant, did not leave Him in their power. Another hand was in the work that seemed to crown the wishes and reward the cunning of the prince of this world, and those in whom he wrought. *Man*, as Satan's servant, *judged Christ*: "He is worthy of death." *God*, who hates sin, condemned it in love unspeakable to sinners in the cross of Jesus. Sin was seen and judged and punished there. Death thus passed upon the spotless One, who His own self bare His people's sins in His own body on the tree. But Jehovah's Holy One could not be left a trophy in the hands of the wicked one (verse 33). By condemning sin, through the dying obedience of Jesus, God would presently assert with more abundant glory the title which had been disowned of men. It was against His fellow that the sword of judgment had awaked. The "ministration of death" fulfilled itself upon the person of the blameless Lamb of God. The curse of the law broke to its full exhaustion upon the head of His anointed Son. Jesus died in grace unspeakable beneath the hated power of the prince of darkness. But by means of death He *destroyed* him that had the power of death. In the resurrection from the dead He has been openly justified, according to the perfect

glory and majesty of that truth which seemed but blasphemy to the uncircumcised ears of them that heard Him speak.⁴

The resurrection is the crisis which determines the victory of righteousness over sin. Sin produced death. Righteousness, submitting to death under the imputation of sin, annuls death by enduring it, while its own proper title to life remains. Thus Jesus in the cross abolished death. By rising from the dead, He has brought both life and incorruptibility to light.⁵ The Gospel is the witness of these things. The *sinner*, who through grace believes that witness, finds in the person of the risen Lamb of God his everlasting justification in the Father's sight. For the Lamb once slain is now declared to be the Lord of life and glory. The *justified believer again*, knowing that the ascended Christ is Himself His righteousness, awaits as an heir of salvation the *hope* of righteousness by faith.⁶ That hope is glory—is Christ Himself, in the promised manifestation of His glory. Of this hope the blessed Spirit is the power whose dwelling is in the heart of the blood-cleansed vessels of mercy. There remains therefore for such no condemnation.⁷ The accuser may be loud, the conscience may fully ratify in self-judgment the severest sentence of the adversary; but the God of truth has spoken otherwise. The advocacy of Jesus Christ the righteous turns all blame to praise for such as penitently trust their cause with Him. The Lord will not leave His children in the hand of the destroyer, nor condemn them whom He has already justified and glorified in the captain of their salvation. He will uphold them before the face of the accuser with the right hand of His righteousness.

⁴ Matt. xxvi. 65; Rom. i. 4.

⁵ 2 Tim. i. 10.

⁶ Gal. v. 5.

⁷ Rom. viii.

That Christ is risen is to the truth-cleansed sinner the answer of a good conscience before God.⁸ Believers live and joy in Him alone.

A strong practical tone pervades this Psalm. Delighting in the Lord is connected with the attainment of the heart's desire (verse 4). No blameless wish is alien from the tone and spirit of true worship. Grace sanctions with the holiness of Jesus' name all natural objects for the eye of faith.⁹ Our calling is to liberty. But the law of Christian liberty is Christ *the Lord*. We are to walk in Him. *Sin* was the bondage out of which we have been brought. *Holiness* is the liberty into which we have been called. The desires of a heart that enjoys redemption cannot but flow to Godward as their home and rest.

The more attentively we consider the present Psalm, the more manifestly will it, I believe, appear that its main features are Jewish. Divine principles of eternal application to the family of faith, without respect to dispensational peculiarities, are found in conjunction with specific hopes and promises of an earthly kind. The earth is doubtless included in that rich possession which the love of Christ has already given promise to in the Church, which is to share His throne; but it is to the partakers of a calling, the character of which is distinctively earthly,¹ and not heavenly, that the general language of this Psalm is more immediately addressed.²

The suffering witnesses of truth in the days of Anti-

⁸ 1 Peter i. 21; iii. 21.

⁹ Col. iii. 17; Titus i. 15.

¹ For a fuller exposition of the dispensational contrast here stated, the reader is referred to the remarks on Psalm xiii. It need hardly, I trust, be repeated in this place, that *all* faith, Jewish or Gentile, rests ultimately in God; and that resurrection is the eventual hope of believers in all dispensations.

² Compare verses 3, 11, 22, 29, and 34.

christian pride and violence, seem to be especially contemplated in the comforting exhortations which here so richly abound. The prosperity of the lawless one and his sudden destruction are noted (verses 35, 36), though the language is too general to be confined to any special instance. As a prophecy, however, I do not doubt that the events of the latter times—the trials, the hopes, and the deliverance of the righteous remnant—are distinctly regarded by the Spirit in this strain.

The careful reader will not fail to notice expressions which bring to remembrance the words of Jesus to His disciples on the Mount. The patience of a faith whose near object is the consolation of Israel—the reigning King of righteousness—seems in either case to be contemplated. The disciples looked, as the kings and prophets who preceded them had looked, for *earthly* Messianic blessings. The Lord's words frequently recognize this expectation, and in a certain sense feed and encourage it; while He continually seeks to open to their view yet higher and richer truths. Meanwhile, His words apply *morally* to all who suffer His reproach, whether partaking dispensationally of the heavenly or the earthly calling.

PSALM XXXVIII.

A PSALM of David to bring to remembrance.¹ Such is the title of this very remarkable Psalm, which is a wondrous memorial of the perfect sorrow of Jesus, as the bearer of *our* griefs and the sustainer of our ~~woes~~. The Son of man appears in it, not only as the persecuted object of men's

¹ לְהִזְכִּיר The same expression is added to the title of Psalm lxx. I have nothing to suggest as to the probable reason of this distinction.

hatred, but as shut up for our sakes within the strong bars of Divine judgment, which only His atoning death could loose.

It is a copious expression of grief which, while it filled the bosom of a human sufferer, was such as man alone could neither know nor bear. The perfect character of the Lord's sorrow, in its entire freedom from mistrust or repining, is wonderfully displayed in this Psalm. It is the unshaken confidence of Him who alone knew the Father, that forms the ground on which the varied shades of the gracious devotedness of the Just One are presented by the Spirit of truth: "Lord, all my desire is before thee." "In thee, O Lord, do I hope: *thou wilt hear*, O Lord, my God" (verses 9, 15).

The bitterness of the cup is shown with strong and vivid distinctness of description. But in the very recital of its terrors we learn the intrinsic separateness of the gracious Sufferer from that which had produced these sorrows as its natural effect. He knew no sin. He was manifested to take away our sin, but in Him was no sin.² Yet wrath became His portion. Divine grace to sinners prepared the arrows of God's holy vengeance against the person of the only blameless One, who stood before Him in their place. He came into the world to die. The first man, Adam, took in willing ignorance the cup of perdition from the hands of her whom Satan's lie had first deceived. Loving himself above the God that made and blessed him, and choosing the creature as his rest, he went with open eye but blinded heart into the way of death.³ Jesus, the Son of man, with full discernment and appreciation of its contents, and against the holy loathings of a nature which knew no evil—in which the prince of this world had no

² 1 John iii. 5.

³ 1 Tim. ii. 14.

part—received, with perfectly consenting will, the cup which righteousness had mixed for sin; for He knew the hand which ministered that cup.⁴

I do not discover any historical crisis in this Psalm. In this respect, as well as in many other points, it differs from Psalm xxii. What is here disclosed is rather the anticipative distress of the blessed Sin-bearer, at the prospect of the hour when the power of darkness must indeed prevail. The Father's wrath was the consummation of the sorrows of the Lamb. But towards this lowest deep of dread the steps of Jesus daily led Him, through the weary course of thankless labour, of despised and unrequited love, and amid the snares laid thickly for His feet by those who sought, by guileful stratagem, to take away His life before the time (verses 10–12).

None but He who alone knoweth the Son⁵ can duly estimate the grief of soul, the sore amazement to which the Spirit has given utterance in this Psalm. But the full and more than compensating harvest of eternal joy was being sown amid those bitter tears.

Unspeakably precious is this sorrow to the heart of the exercised believer. The sorrow of Christ for my sin! The grief and mourning of the Son of God, who, as the gracious bearer of His people's iniquities, discloses to the Searcher of hearts the root of bitterness as His own. "*My sin*"—" *Mine iniquities*"—" *My foolishness*"—" I will confess *mine* iniquity, and be sorry for my sin" (verses 3, 4, 5, 18). The personal contrition of David for his own deep guilt is made to furnish language for the lips of his Divine Son, when, as his substitute and ours, He had come into the world to die. But in closest connexion with

⁴ John xviii. 11.

⁵ Matt. xi. 27.

these strangest but most blessed words we find (verse 20) the appeal of perfect goodness and unspotted righteousness preferred by the Sufferer to the God of judgment. "They also that render evil for good are mine enemies, *because I follow that which good is.*" He endured the contradiction of sinners *against Himself*. "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" was His vain appeal to the conscience of those who hated Him without cause. Yet was the mouth of Jesus empty of reproof. He did not strive nor cry, though right was on His side alone. He committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously. His God would hear Him in due time.

The dark cloud of dreaded judgment covers the whole of this Psalm. But the eye of the Sufferer is toward Him who was able to save Him from death. Judicial wrath must indeed be the immediate answer to His cry for help; but a worthy joy lay bright and glorious beyond that grief. It was in the knowledge that all things were given of the Father into His hands⁶ that the Son of God went forth to meet and conquer, in the strife of our salvation, the destroying enemy of the sheep which were His own.

The Lord Himself, and His personal experience as our substitute, form the proper subject of this Psalm; while its language is in part expressive of true penitential emotions wherever these exist in the hearts of His awakened people. Of its primary application to David it is needless to say more.

⁶ John xiii. 3.

PSALM XXXIX.

THIS Psalm appears to bear a certain moral relation to the last. It may be viewed as an unfolding of the experience of Jesus, considered with reference to His subjective acquaintance with vanity, as the universal condition of man in the flesh. But this position of One who was personally "separate from sinners," is recognized as a direct result of the will of God, submitted to in perfect obedience by Him who would be tempted in all points like as we are, but apart from sin. "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; *because thou didst it*" (verse 9). Many obvious reflections of a practical kind will suggest themselves to every thoughtful reader of this Psalm. These may be now passed by, that it may be examined in its assumed prophetic relation to the Son of man.

Verses 1-3 seem forcibly to express the pure sorrow and righteous vexing of soul which belonged to the Holy One, because constrained to see and hear the filthy conversation of the wicked; as well as the perfect surrender of Himself to the moving energy of the Holy Ghost, as the Spirit of Him whom Jesus came to glorify in perfect obedience. The gospels largely unfold this. We read there of Jesus withdrawing Himself to the mountain, to be alone with God; of how He sometimes held His peace, while other men were free to utter the vanity of their hearts. We read too of the stirring of His sorrow, when He turned with amazement from the unbelief and hardness of heart which seemed to mock the gracious labour of His love. He knew, moreover, the counsel of

wickedness, which forged persuasive lies in the vain purpose of ensnaring His feet, or used reviling in the hope that His grieved and bruised spirit might be roused to angry strife. No happy ignorance of human character, and of sin its basis, served in His case to mitigate the weariness of hopeless labour. For Jesus was not only innocent. He was the *Holy One* of God. He fully understood the heart of man,¹ although He knew Himself no sin. The natural flow of all His pure affections was toward the Father; escape therefore from the contrarieties of human wickedness was an instinctive desire of His soul. But His presence among men was by the grace of God. He had willingly been born into the world, for from of old His delights were with the sons of men. Sore requital of hatred for His love might cause indeed His heart to groan; yet deeper and mightier than His vulnerable human sympathies lay that Divine and unrepentant love which had put off outward majesty and honour to do the perfect work of grace and truth, according to its own eternal counsel of salvation.

Because He was the faithful witness of the truth, the heart of Jesus burned to speak the words of God (verse 3). The spectacle of God-dishonouring hypocrisy, which met Him in the very place where truth and righteousness had their reputed dwelling, compelled forth the testimony of holy indignation and of warning judgment against that way of evil in which destruction and misery were only to be found. "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers," &c., was language that expressed terrifically what manner of estimate is formed in heaven concerning the self-commended counsels of men's hearts.

Meanwhile, that heart divinely fraught with goodness

¹ John ii. 25.

and compassion found its delight in pouring its rich abundance into the desolate bosoms of weary and heavy-laden sinners, whom Jesus welcomed and gratefully nurtured as the given children of the Father's love—led of Him to the despised yet full fountain of eternal life, to find there the abiding refuge of their souls.²

Every day's experience of human vanity and sin opened new sources of suffering to the Son of man. He stood Himself (most marvellous truth!) in the place of weakness and temptation; for He was *Man*, with perfect human sympathies and affections, though nothing less than God was in that form. Coming in the likeness of sinful flesh, He would taste in grace the vanity to which the creature was and is in groaning subjection. Weariness of body and of spirit were well known to Him. "His visage was so marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men." He was *acquainted* with grief. To die—to *taste of death*—He had come into the world. The sixth verse of this Psalm is full of deep and mournful power. Jesus, knowing the rest of the Father's bosom, having come forth to reveal Him, and presenting Himself as the open door of access to that rest, might well marvel to behold the vain disquiet of the men of this world. He saw them laboriously heaping up what they could not hope to enjoy. They were working hard for *death*, deriding still amid that toil of vanity the words and the presence of Eternal Life. "Ye will not come unto me, that ye may have life," was His complaint, who stood ready to bestow the gift of God³ on all whose hearts assured them of their need of such a gift.

The remaining verses are wonderfully expressive of the patient agony of the blessed One, as He bowed to the

² Matt. xi. 28-30; John vi. 44; Heb. ii. 13.

³ John iv.

Father's will in the contemplation of that from which His soul recoiled. There is a perfect identification of Himself in grace with those for whose sakes He suffered, and whose sins He acknowledged as His own. This is especially noticeable in the twelfth verse, where He takes His place as the prisoner of hope, albeit Himself the end and fulfilment of all the promises of God. It was for the truth of God, and to fulfil the promises made to the fathers, that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision. The Psalm thus connects itself more emphatically with Israel's prospects of blessing, which are made dependent for their fulfilment upon the national recognition of the truth that all flesh is grass.⁴

Practically, this solemn and most touching strain is full of warning and counsel for the Christian, who is left for a season *in* the world, although no longer *of* it, to be as Jesus was,⁵ through the sanctifying power of the truth, while waiting in hope amid the days of evil. The seventh verse seems more particularly to address itself to such. The Christian has no just expectation from the world, but a daily varying succession of tribulation. We are saved *by hope*. Meanwhile, provocations to strife abound on every side. But the servant of the Lord must *not* strive. His calling is to *endure*, as a companion of the patience and kingdom of Jesus Christ. Discerning in the cross of the Son of God the solemn witness of human vanity and sin, he finds there also the sweet assurance of emancipation with eternal joy and honour, because of Him who now is risen from the dead; instead, therefore, of the deprecatory language of verse 13, the desire of the saint is rather to depart and be with Christ.⁶ In con-

⁴ Isaiah xl.

⁵ John xvii. 14-18.

⁶ Phil. i. 23. Compare *Notes on Second Corinthians*, v. 6-8.

scious possession of the victory which has already overcome the world,⁷ the “stranger and pilgrim”⁸ of the gospel is to tarry patiently until the victor shall assert at His appearing the truth and glory of that blessed hope, which in His absence is derided by the world.⁹

PSALM XL.

WITH respect to the general drift of this most interesting Psalm there is but little difficulty. I am inclined to view it in connexion, as to its main subject, with both of the two which immediately precede it. As we have there beheld Messiah in suffering patience waiting upon Jehovah until deliverance should arrive, according to the good pleasure of His righteous will, so in the opening verses of the present Psalm we have a declaration, by the risen Christ, of the faithfulness and power of the God of His mercy.

There are at least two distinct subjects. First, the commemoration of Jehovah’s dealings with Messiah personally as His righteous servant, now vindicated as such with everlasting honour; and, secondly, the wide and blessed effects of the Divine counsel and working are celebrated in their relationship to those who, through grace, partake the precious fruits of God’s mighty and innumerable thoughts of love (verse 5).

Connected with both these, and in necessary illustration of the mystery of Divine mercy, is the recital of the Lamb’s acceptable self-devotion as the “better sacrifice” of the eternal covenant.¹

⁷ 1 John v. 4.

⁸ 1 Peter ii. 11.

⁹ 1 Thess. i. 10; Heb. x. 36, 37.

¹ Heb. ix. 23.

Verses 1-3 contain sweet strains of Messiah's resurrection song. Christian faith bears, by the Spirit, its part in this song. For after mention made of the horrible pit of the Saviour's gracious passion, and of His firm establishment in resurrection on the rock of God's eternal counsel (now perfected by means of His sacrificial death), there is an immediate association of His brethren in the new song of praise. It is praise unto "OUR God."² The sufferings of Christ were for the people;³ the people, therefore, (now owned as such according to the abundant mercy which has chosen them,)⁴ are partakers of the triumph which results. This, as a general principle, is quite clear. Especially is it now known and enjoyed by the fore-trusting⁵ partakers of Messiah's joy, while the nation for the which He died lies buried still in the low grave of darkness and unbelief. "I ascend unto my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." The Church is already risen, and presented in heavenly places in her Head.

Three things are stated in verse 2. First, resurrection as the act of God.⁶ "He brought me up," &c. Secondly, the justification of the name and title of the Sufferer; "and set my feet upon a rock." Jesus is set up, as alive from the dead, upon the basis of accomplished truth. He is the beginning, the first-born from the dead. Divine counsel had willed the abolition of both sin and death;

² Heb. ii. 12.

³ Heb. xiii. 12.

⁴ 1 Peter ii. 10.

⁵ Προηλπικότες ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ is a distinctive title of the Church as believing in a hidden and absent Lord, while the general results of His work, as they are celebrated by the Jewish prophets, are in abeyance. (Eph. i. 12. Comp. Heb. xii. 23; James i. 18.)

⁶ *Rising* from the dead, as distinguished from being raised, is unknown in the Old Testament. The manifestation of the *Person* of Him who is the Resurrection and the Life, must needs precede the statement of such a truth. (Comp. John ii. 19-22.)

and by the cross this counsel is become a fact, since by means of death He destroyed him that had the power of death. The first-fruits of victory is the second Adam, even as He had in His own most blessed person been privy to the counsel, and effected the work of eternal redemption. Thirdly, there is His ascension. "He established my goings." The Son of God having trodden, in gracious and self-renouncing obedience, the passage to the grave, now enters finally as Man the path of life. "He is gone into heaven," says the Spirit.⁷ And again, "He ascended on high, and led captivity captive."⁸

In the third verse Messiah sings the new song of triumph and redemption—of mercy glorified in holiness. Jehovah is the subject of His song.⁹ The Church, which is joint-heir with Him of God's full blessing, is learning now that song. But the birth of the believer's joy is the Spirit's demonstration of the truth. This is expressed in the latter clause of the verse. "Many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in Jehovah." It is the voice of Jesus, heard by faith in the gospel, that quickens the dead soul, and enables it to look in His light on the wondrous work of God. The exceeding greatness of Divine power is exemplified in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.¹ The fear of Jehovah fills the man whose eyes are opened to perceive in truth the operation of His hands. But God's power in this its pre-eminent display is the power of a *Saviour*. And so that fear, which is the beginning of wisdom, leads to the establishment in perfect peace and confidence of him who thus beholds in Christ the wisdom and power of Divine salvation.

Verse 4, while describing generally the blessedness of

⁷ 1 Peter iii. 22; Isaiah xvi. 10, 11.

⁸ Eph. iv. 8.

⁹ Compare Isaiah xxii. 22.

¹ Eph. i.

the man of faith, relates especially, I believe, to Jesus, Himself the author and exemplar of our faith. "He trusted in God," was the contemptuous reproach of imputed hypocrisy, which the lying lips of pride were not afraid to fling in the teeth of the dying Lamb of God. A true witness indeed, though uttered from hearts which loved not truth, and knew not what they spake.

The note of praise is resumed in verse 5. It is to *usward* that Jehovah's thoughts are turned. The Church is in spirit already invested, because of her union with the Beloved, with all the mighty results of Divine counsel. But while, as a commemorative celebration of the triumph of redemption, the language of the present passage is of the widest reach and meaning, the Spirit of prophecy seems to be contemplating in this Psalm, as a more immediate object, the fruits of Messiah's passion in their sure (though for an appointed season intercepted) enjoyment by the nation of Israel.*

This verse is, however, chiefly to be prized as an expression of Christ's own interest and delight in the counsels and the works of God. He has fulfilled them in grace; in grace, too, He enjoys them. Bearing everlastingly the *form* in which He suffered, He now lives in joy as the object of the promises,—the first partaker of the incorruptible fruits of that harvest which was sown amid the tearful labour of His patience in the days of His flesh. "They are more than can be numbered." Such is the multitude of the thoughts and works of the ever-blessed God! Exhaustless in their fulness, they will give endless occupation to the lips of Jesus, and to the hearts of the

* The great congregation קהל רב (verse 10), if it does not signify the aggregate of the redeemed, refers to the nation for which Christ died. I prefer the latter supposition.

delighted audience of His love. *Their* lips shall also speak. They shall utter without weariness or pause the perfect praises of God and of the Lamb. Rich and ever-blessed prospect of that hope which maketh not ashamed! And though the many sons whom God is bringing to His glory are weary now, because the way of pilgrimage seems long, yet can they enter already (though but in feeble measure yet, because the hindrances are great and many) into the enjoyment of the things not seen. For to them the living Spirit is Himself the foretaste of those joys which will presently be apprehended in the full fruition of their blessedness. May that day of lasting blessedness draw quickly to its rise!

Verses 6–10. On these verses I say but little now.³ The devotedness of the Lamb's love in consenting to the bored ear⁴ of everlasting service for the love He bore His Master, the wife and children of the Master's gift,⁵ has often been noticed, and is of great price to the believing soul. The Spirit elsewhere states more fully the blessed meaning of the contrast here expressed.⁶ The shadowy ordinance fulfilled its purpose and remained its time. Peace of conscience and personal acceptance stood not in the shedding of the blood of beasts. They could come only by the doing of God's will; and Jesus wrought this for His people to the full. He here appeals to Him who alone could prove His work. "Thou knowest" (verse 9). Jesus refrained not His lips from testimony while on earth.⁷ He

³ The doctrine of the better sacrifice I have already treated at large in commenting upon the *Epistle to the Hebrews*.

⁴ אָנְנִים קָרִית לִי The LXX. render, with an accurate perception of the metaphor, but with remarkable disregard to the letter of the text: Σῶμα δὲ καθηρίσω μοι.

⁵ Exod. xxi. 1–6.

⁶ Heb. x.

⁷ John xviii. 20.

was sent to preach the kingdom of God, as well as to be lifted up by the grace of God for sin. He was obedient *unto* death, fulfilling first, in loving duty to His Maker, and in loving grace for man, all righteousness, and terminating all obedience by the sacrifice of Himself. The tenth verse appears in its full intention to go beyond the preaching of the Son of God in the days of His flesh. It refers, I think, likewise, to the testimony now and hereafter to be given by the Spirit to the finished work of Jesus. As it is elsewhere said of Him after His resurrection, "He came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them which were near."⁸

Verses 11-17. The structure of this Psalm is peculiar, setting out with an anticipative celebration of deliverance in victory, its closing strains are in a tone of deep and grief-laden supplication. With confessional language such as suited the gracious lips of our Substitute, there is mingled intercessional entreaty on behalf of those who seek salvation from the Lord, together with the appeal of judgment so often heard in these prophetic utterances of the Spirit. The language of these latter verses will be found, perhaps, in the last times upon the lips of those whose hearts will then be filled with the spirit of supplication, when their righteousness shall, in their own eyes, be as filthy rags; and when, in the midst of the city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, they will urge their strong cry of distress in the ears of Him who in all their sorrow bears His gracious part, for the fathers' sakes, and for His own great name.⁹

⁸ Eph. ii. 17.

⁹ Isaiah lxiv.

PSALM XLI.

THE practical bearing of the earlier verses of this Psalm upon the believer's conscience is very obvious. Like-mindedness to Him who went about doing good, is the calling of such as are joined to the Lord in spiritual unity.¹ The rich rewards of Divine favour are evermore their portion who seek not their own but the things of Jesus Christ. The Lord is Himself their wealth and their security. The breasts of Divine consolation are an open and exhaustless supply in the hour of drought and distress, to all who learn sorrow and are made acquainted with affliction in the ways of single-eyed devotedness, with hearts exercised in practices of faith and love.

But the "poor man," in the truest, fullest sense, was Jesus. When He spake of the sure reward which awaits in heaven the gift, for His sake, of a cup of cold water, He understood the nature both of the need and of the love which should meet it in His name. Himself the only spring of life, He yet knew, in His own gracious person, the necessity which such a kindness might relieve;² but the love which should minister it was denied to Him. No man cared for Jesus.³ The only interest which He

¹ 1 Cor. vi. 17.

² John iv. 7.

³ They alone ministered to Him, of whose hearts He had first possessed Himself as the effectual minister of life and peace. (Luke viii. 2, 3.) Nor is it different now. None but they who themselves have tasted that the Lord is gracious, and still come to Him, can care for Jesus or His things. The love of Christ constrains such. His saints are precious in the eyes of those whose souls are nourished on His love. "Ourselves your servants, for Jesus' sake," was the mind of him who seemed to tread the closest on the Master's steps. (Compare John xv. 12.)

excited, of a permanent kind, was experienced in the bosom of His enemies, who hated Him without a cause. Care and patience, watchfulness and diligence, were all employed *against* Him; but among men's busy sympathies He stood alone. The world bestows its love upon its own; and He was none of this world's sons. Yet was He man; capable of comfort, and perfectly susceptible of love. But because He was "of God," the hearts of men could nourish only hatred, where love was more than ever due.

The quotation which is made from the present Psalm in John xiii. enables us to apply its contents generally to the Lord Jesus in the days of His flesh. Solemnly instructive, indeed, is that most touching quotation as to the fearful depravity of the flesh. Judas exemplifies unregenerate nature in its instincts and conduct under opportunities of grace. Judas is not the only son of perdition. The second of that name⁴ will be, as was the first, the fitted vessel and willing instrument of Satan. But both alike are led to their perdition by their lusts *as men*. Nature sees nothing in Jesus that is preferable to itself. The homage which the unrenewed mind may pay to Him, as a faultless ideal of goodness and virtue, is of no more value than the kiss of Judas. For men are but worshipping themselves when thus they idolize the Man Jesus, in willing ignorance of the perfect glory of His person and His work. It is when the *cross* of the Son of God is preached that the unregenerate mind revolts. Jesus is *then* a poor man, and despised. The unspeakable mystery of Divine love is a troublesome impertinency, or a loathsome offence, to the still unbroken heart of nature. The world remains the enemy of God.

⁴ 2 Thess. ii. 3.

Verses 4-9 are full of profoundly touching power, when referred to the desolateness and unbefriended grief which Jesus took on Him for our sakes. The spotless Sufferer justifies (verse 4), amid the sorrow with which He had in grace become so well acquainted, the name of Jehovah, according to the changeless holiness of that name. God sent forth His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin; and in this mournful estimate of the ways of the ungodly His Spirit is morally connecting cause and effect. With the cross continually in view, as the goal of His voluntary race of patience, He could refer the experimental bitternesses of His earthly sojourn to the proper root of all human wretchedness and woe.

In the twelfth verse we have the pure contrast, which is offered by His own intrinsic perfectness, to the position which He had assumed in grace as the confessor of His people's sin.

There is, moreover, in this Psalm an especial identification of Immanuel with the people of His birth.⁵ They had sinned. And in gracious recognition of His oneness with them that were His flesh, He adopts their sin as His. He would die, in due time, *for that nation*. But Israel had enemies, who hated them with cruel and unrighteous hatred. With the nation, as thus causelessly oppressed, the sympathies of Immanuel are ever found. The children

⁵ How constantly this is recognized in the Gospels must be known to every careful reader. The Law, which condemned the nation, was magnified in the obedience of Jesus. Yet from the time of His manifestation to Israel at the baptism of John, we find Him ever ready to associate Himself in grace with the actual condition of the nation. "Render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's," &c. While utterly estranged from their way, and delighting Himself in the God whom they dishonoured, He yet was as one of themselves. "Salvation is *of the Jews*." (John iv.)

of wickedness should not continue always to afflict. For He is the sure covenant of Israel's peace.⁶

Verses 10–13 appear to contemplate this ultimate avenging and glorifying of the people of Jehovah's promise, while they have also a primary reference to the retributive inflictions of Divine judgment, under which the broken and scattered despisers of Jesus still remain. These very distinct, yet morally kindred subjects, are often intermingled in the Psalms. The concluding verse, which likewise closes the first of the five books into which the Psalms are distributed, clearly intimates the point towards which the mind of the Spirit, in this richly-instructive part of Scripture, continually tends. The sufferings of Christ are the central doctrine around which every other truth revolves. But the glories thence resulting are characteristically those in which He stands related to *Israel* and the nations, as the Seed of earthly promise.

⁶ 2 Sam. vii.

Book II.

PSALMS XLII. XLIII.

THESE Psalms may be considered as one continuous strain. They exhibit different branches of one general subject, and are not therefore to be confounded, but their close connexion is apparent. The acceptable groaning of the burdened man of God, whose relief is sought in trustful prayer to the known Rock of his salvation, is articulated in these deeply experimental utterances.

They apply themselves, therefore, with more or less distinctness, to the proper experience of the believer as a spiritual man. A Christian groans *because* he knows God.¹ The very presence of the Spirit of adoption produces, in the expectant heirs of salvation, a sense of present deficiency and distress, which turns to Godward for its only and sure relief. Such is the expression of these Psalms. The wearied spirit pours forth the sorrows of a heart whose affections are wholly God's. No word of mistrust or repining is heard, although His hand is owned as well as felt, in weighty visitation on the spirit. Deep communings of heart are had. But the heart is one in which the Lord of hosts has been sanctified;² and so these musings

¹ Rom. viii. 23, 24.

² Isaiah viii. 13.

turn to joy and strength, because of the assured stability of that trusted name of promise and of hope.

Regarded as prophecies, the first of them seems to disclose some of the secret communings of the soul of Jesus, under the profound depression which His Spirit knew, because of the godless vanity and darkness amid which He shone solitary as the light of life. It was the utter exclusion of God from the hearts of men, while the power of Satan displayed itself in the words and ways of those who made their boast of God, that caused the Blessed One to sigh deeply in spirit,³ as He turned in Divine sorrow from a generation whom He would have blessed, but could not because of the hardness of their hearts. In proportion to the devotedness of Jesus to the Father must have been the sorrowful amazement which He experienced when, in the very temple of Jehovah, He saw only the idolatry of covetousness, instead of the worship of the God of truth. Man had occupied the chambers of the house of God with the family of his own degraded lusts. Yet the existing order of things was quite seemly in their eyes. The power by which the Lord demonstrated and sustained His title to do the works of Him that sent Him might constrain their attention to His words, as He sat and taught in the temple; but the hard and dark stupidity of sin possessed their souls, and shut out from their understandings the true perception of His sayings. "Where is thy Father?"⁴ was the question which they put, who, had they known Him, should have known His Father also. But they knew Him not. They were willingly ignorant of His blessed Person, while their eyes and consciences concurred to witness that He was indeed the Christ. Irrefragable evidences forced conviction on their

³ Mark viii. 12.

⁴ John viii. 19.

minds, while their hearts refused to Him their love; they saw no beauty that they should *desire* Him. Jehovah's delight was the abhorrence of their souls.

Jesus was an outcast. The hill Mizar, the land of Jordan, were the places of His resort, rather than the city of solemnities, though the unction of royal title was upon Him as the true Seed of David. "He would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill Him."

Man was the instrument of Messiah's sufferings; but the will of the Father was the source whence all proceeded. "The Son of man *must* suffer many things," &c. We have this recognition of the Father's hand expressed in verse 7: "All *thy* waves and *thy* billows are gone over me."⁵ But joy was before Him: "Jehovah will command His lovingkindness," &c. For that joy He would endure the cross, despising the shame, although the reproach of His enemies were as a sword in His bones, while daily the taunt of their unbelief rang in His ears: "Where is thy God?" The sharpness of that infliction was not so much His own rejection and dishonour, as that in rejecting Him they disowned and disallowed the Father: "The reproaches of them that reproached *thee* fell on me;" "Now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father," &c. God was His joy. He knew Him. He had proceeded forth from Him to be the messenger and minister of His love to the world. But His own received Him not. The blessed Son of God found man deliberately choosing Satan rather than the Father. Light came into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.⁶ Who can enter into the sorrow of Him who

⁵ These words, together with the language of verse 9, "Why hast thou forgotten me?" &c., in their application to the Lord, would of course refer more immediately to the cross.

⁶ John iii. 19.

knew the gift of God—Himself that gift,—but found on every side hearts closed by suspicion, or blunted by indifference, or fenced by determinate hatred against the gracious overtures of such a love!

But truth as well as grace came by Jesus Christ. Hence, in Psalm xliii., we have His appeal, as the Elect of Jehovah, against the ungodly nation.⁷ I believe that while the God of judgment is avouched here by the Spirit of prophecy in the first instance against Israel, because of their rejection of Messiah, there is a further object contemplated in this Psalm. As it respects the nation, that appeal has already had its awful reply in part, and will eventually draw down from the Ancient of days upon that evil generation the residue of the cup of trembling, when the madness of their iniquity shall have come to its perfect height in their reception of Him who is to come in His own name. But the destinies of Israel are held fast for eventual salvation in the sure hands of the God of promise. They will be forgiven their iniquity through the intercession of Him whom with wicked hands their fathers crucified and slew. For the death of Jesus was for that nation, though not for them alone. What these Psalms then seem principally to express is, the sympathy of the Spirit of Jesus with some who will long, in the last evil days, for the joys of Jehovah's sanctuary, and will seem to long in vain; while the satellites of the dragon and the beast prevail, with cruelties and taunting words, against the servants of the Most High God. Jehovah is invoked to send forth the light which is to lead them to the safe altars of His praise, to the holy hill

⁷ מְגוֹי לֹא־חֶסֶד “*Gegen ein liebloses Volk.*”—DR WETTE. The English margin has “unmerciful.” But the translation in the text, which is also that of the LXX. and HIERON, appears preferable.

which their faith still recognizes as the chosen place of His tabernacles, though for a season it may be defiled by those of the arch-rebel in his pride.⁸ "The deceitful and unjust man" refers, I doubt not, to the wilful king; whose coming is after the power of Satan, as well as with all deceivableness of unrighteousness. But the Lord will destroy him with the brightness of His appearing. "Send out thy light and thy truth" is the supplication of them who walk in darkness, and have no light,⁹ while staying themselves in hope upon the God of their salvation. The coming of Jesus will be the reply to this desire in due time. "He shall send Jesus," said Peter, when, preaching to the Jews, he declared the fulfilment of the national promises to be dependent on the manifestation in glory of Him whom the heavens had meanwhile received.¹ At the appointed hour of the Father's counsel the Light of Israel shall arise.²

Meanwhile, to the afflicted and much-buffed Christian there is plenteous consolation in these Psalms. "Why art thou cast down, O my soul?" Such words suit well the spirit of reviving faith, amid the stress and heavy sadness of the day of conflict. One believing look at Christ regains, for the prostrate and desponding saint, the firm and assured position of acceptance and of peace. For His presence is the full salvation of the soul.³ And

⁸ Daniel xi. 45. ⁹ Isaiah l. 10. ¹ Acts iii. 20, 21. ² Acts i. 7.

³ Psalm xlii. 5 (*margin*). I prefer the marginal translation of the words, ישועות פָּקִי, Compare DIODATI, "*Il suo aspetto è compiuta salvezza.*" At verse 11 we have a different expression. Nor is the change without meaning. The countenance of God is the believer's salvation. (2 Cor. iv. 6.) God presents Himself in Jesus as a Saviour. On the other hand, God in Christ is the lightening of the believing sinner's face. Both liberty and joy are in His presence for the justified receivers of His grace.

He is present always. In the triumphant power of redemption He fills all things. Confidence, therefore, and patience of hope, are to be held fast amidst all the opposing evils of the day of strife. The Holy Ghost is already, as the Comforter, the power of praise and thanksgiving, through Jesus Christ, for the victory which is even now our own in Him; while the remembrance of GOD, in His immutability of eternal favour to usward in His Son, fills all the future with the unclouded brightness of a hope which maketh not ashamed.

PSALM XLIV.

THAT this remarkable Psalm is the language of the faithful dispersion is quite evident. It may be regarded as the intercessory pleading of the Spirit of Christ in the hearts of such, while as yet they remain scattered through the countries under the outstretched hand of Jehovah. It is a highly instructive as well as interesting Psalm, opening deep views of the wisdom of God's disciplinary dealing with the vessels of faith and mercy, whom He thus causes to cleave the more closely to Himself under a pressure which is perceived to be the appointment of His will, whose name is pledged from ancient times as the eventual deliverer of His people. Divine principles, such as render the world unworthy of them that obey them, and which have ever characterized suffering faith and patience, receive their illustration here. The quotation of verse 22 by the apostle¹ is an instance of this familiar to the Christian reader. The reproach borne, though connected with national sin, and a result of Divine chastisement, is yet

¹ Rom. viii. 36.

the reproach of *Christ* to those whose hearts are loyal to the Hope of Israel, and who by faith are able to call out of the low place of affliction upon the name of Jehovah as the redeemer of His own. Thus the matter for fruitful meditation which this Psalm affords to the Christian who enters at all in spirit into the existing condition of the Church, in its broken and dishonoured state, is abundant. But it deserves attention on its own account, as a remarkable utterance of oppressed Jewish faith.

One striking feature in it is the absence of any confession of national sin. The ground taken is that of pure faith, appealing to the name of Jehovah as Jacob's God—the angel of the everlasting covenant. Ancient deliverances are recited as they had been committed to the memories of the children in whose fathers God would see no iniquity, when, with the shout of a King, He brought them forth out of Egypt.² The circumstances of Israel's past history are not introduced. Only the actual condition of the nation is pleaded as that which seems to contradict the counsel of Jehovah. "Thou art my King," is the keynote of the strain. "Command deliverances for Jacob," is the echo given back by the believer's heart upon the sounding there of Jehovah's name as Jacob's King. He must *act* as such. According to the power of His might He will vindicate in righteousness His covenanted words.

Another trait to be noticed is the strong tone in which

² Numbers xxiii. 21, 22. The spirit of faith, reasoning always *à priori* from Divine purpose and promise, holds firmly fast the terms of original covenant. God had spoken of a *people*, and of that people, as the object of covenant promise, He would not be ashamed—justifying in due time the wisdom of His choice in the manifestation of *Himself* as their righteousness. Meanwhile, the specialty of His dealings dispensationally with the people of His name is always according to the holiness of that name. Hence chastisement results. (Amos iii. 2.)

the remnant assert their own faithfulness to the covenant. God had scattered the people for their iniquity, so that they were become a by-word among the heathen. But the heart of the believing remnant was sound. "Our heart is not turned back, neither have our steps declined from thy way" (verse 18). Faith in God, producing as its invariable result practical holiness, will be found in those whose cause the Spirit of Christ seems here to be advocating with truthful intercession to Him that trieth the hearts. It is the Abrahamic covenant of promise that is here in point. They cleave in heart to *Jacob's* God. Redemption for His mercies' sake is the desire of their afflicted yet steadfast faith (verse 26). They were His witnesses, not only to exemplify the power of His anger, when He taught among them terrible things in righteousness, but also as the flock of His choice, whom He would surely lead (though now they seemed but destined to the slaughter), at the set time of His appointment, into the prepared pastures of that rest which is secured for them in His own land and theirs.³

Verses 15, 16 speak the true language of faith at all times. The Lord's name is involved in the dishonour of His people. Thus David elsewhere: "Who is this uncircumcised, that He should defy the armies of the living God?" The blasphemous vauntings of the enemy have to be met by the majesty of Jehovah's name. They are His people. The oppressor is acting against *Him* in afflicting them; yet was he but a scourge for their correction in Jehovah's all-wise hand.

No mention is made of Moses, nor is there allusion of any kind to the law, except it be found in the emphatic disclaimer of their own strength as a means of deliverance and blessing. They turn to the fathers' God, the God

³ Ezek. xxxiv. xxxvi.

of *grace*. Helplessness is owned as their condition, and oppression is complained of as the unrighteous work of the enemy; but God is kept in faithful remembrance as a Saviour. He would deliver *at His pleasure*, as had ever been His way (verse 3). Sword and bow are of no account. They will push down the enemy when Jehovah shall Himself arise and hasten to their help.

The plea of the righteous remnant is not that they had kept the commandment, but that they had abode in the covenant of promise.⁴ For this cause also they suffered persecution, for they dwelt amongst those who had stretched forth their hands to another god—who trusted in themselves, and regarded lying vanities. Meanwhile, their hearts are open to His view who knows their secret, and who is the witness that for His sake they are killed all the day long (verse 22). The persecutions under Antichrist I suppose to be intended more especially in this last verse. The entire distinctness of that branch of the Divine counsels which respects the destinies of Jacob, from that which secures its blessing to the Church, is clearly seen in this Psalm. Viewed as a dispensation, the latter, if it fails, fails without hope of restoration. Its latter end is to be cut out of the tree of promise, that the natural branches may again be grafted in;⁵ a consideration which gives a peculiar solemnity of interest to the remarkable language of this Psalm.

⁴ Though, as it respects the fashion of their practical obedience, it is to the law of Moses which was commanded in Horeb for *all Israel*, with the statutes and judgments, that they will have regard, while waiting for the Sun of righteousness to arise. (Mal. iv. 4.)

⁵ Rom. xi. 20-26.

PSALM XLV.

A SONG of loves¹ is the title borne by this most beautiful Psalm. It is the delighted celebration by the Spirit (animating the heart and opening the lips of faith) of the Person of Jesus, as the manifested consummation of the precious thoughts of Jehovah toward the people of His covenant. *The King* is the subject which brings forth so rich a gush of Divine song. It is not, properly speaking, Christ's heavenly glory that is here described, nor His spousal relation to the bride, the Lamb's wife. The subject of the Psalm is rather the intrinsic glory and Divine comeliness of His Person, according to His future revelation in power and majesty as *Messiah*, in immediate connexion with the destinies of His earthly people. Two main points are treated. First, the personal glory of Messiah; and secondly, the resulting effects of His manifestation, whether in the destruction of His enemies (then made His footstool), or in the blessing of the new-married people of His love.²

With respect to the former of these we have the twofold display of His glory, both Divine and human. He is glorified as the God whose throne is for ever and ever (verse 6). It is from this Psalm, accordingly, that one of the decisive quotations is made by the same Spirit in the New Testament, in proof of the essential divinity of Jesus.³ But the chief topic of praise and wonder is the setting forth, in the fulness of power and glory, of MAN as

¹ שִׁיר יְהוָה 'Ωδὴ ὑπὲρ τοῦ ἀγαπητοῦ.—LXX. "Ein Lied der Lieblichkeit."—DE WETTE.

² Isaiah lxii. 4, 5.

³ Heb. i. 8, 9.

the supreme object of Jehovah's interest and delight. The second verse declares the Spirit's estimate of the acceptable Man. He is "fairer than the sons of men," though no beauty was discoverable there to the dull eye of self-seeking nature. There was another comeliness in Jesus from that which the children of men either value or possess. The pure and living beauty of holiness and truth and love abode in that temple which man might sacrilegiously destroy, but within which no evil thing could enter or be known. The glory as of the only-begotten of the Father displayed itself palpably to the eye of faith in the Man Christ Jesus. Grace is poured upon His lips. The lips of Jesus are the echo and everlasting witness of the Divine counsels of faithfulness and truth. Men wondered at the gracious words that flowed from those lips, when once they opened as the pure interpreters of God's deep thoughts of love to favoured though self-ruined sinners; but execration and the threat of violence⁴ were the fruits which the thankless soil of human selfishness returned to the Sower of the seed of life. For the grace of those lips which witnessed a good confession before Pontius Pilate, God hath blessed for ever the faithful doer of the truth. The believer knows the precious force of the expressions in this verse. In the eyes of them that know Him, Jesus is, indeed, the chiefest among ten thousand and altogether lovely. For them the lips of the great High Priest of their profession keep a knowledge better far than life; for by Him God now speaks,⁵ declaring the long-hidden counsels of His wisdom, and by the revealing power of the Comforter fulfilling even now their joy.⁶

Viewing the first two verses as the expression of right-minded Jewish faith at the second advent of the Lord,

⁴ Luke iv. 17-29.

⁵ Malachi ii. 7; Heb. i. 2.

⁶ 1 John i. 4.

they present a striking and happy contrast to the former state of the nation, when, instead of "inditing a good matter," their hearts boiled over with the bitter gall of wickedness. *Then* they were conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood and of hate. "Away with Him!" "He hath a devil, and is mad." "Not this man, but Barabbas." "We have no king but Cæsar." "What think ye? He is worthy of death," &c. Thus they judged when through the veil of a willing blindness they looked in vain for the Messiah whom they sought in the despised person of the Lamb of God. Not such will be their language when, with unvailed hearts, they look on Him whom they have pierced with a sorrow whose sharp compunction shall be turned to more abundant joy, when the full light of the day which the Lord hath made shines with unclouded brightness of salvation in their hearts.⁷ The heart of the rash shall in that day understand knowledge, and shall move the once stammering tongue to skilful praise.⁸

Verses 3-5 describe the sending forth of judgment unto victory by the Lord of all power and might. The day of the Lamb's wrath will usher in the undisputed dominion of the Governor of the nations. He will ride prosperously, because of truth and meekness of righteousness.⁹ The moral government of God is to be set up in power by the victory, in manifested judgment, of the WORD of God.¹ "Faithful" and "true" are the descriptive praise of Him who bears that name, and in righteousness He will judge and make war. His arrows will be sharp in the heart of the King's enemies. Fenced with iron and with the staff of a spear,² He will touch with destruction the sons of

⁷ Psalm cxviii. 24.

⁸ Isaiah xxxii. 4.

⁹ מְנוּחָה עָרֶךְ "Mansuetudinem justitiæ," Hieron.

¹ Rev. xix.

² 2 Sam. xxiii. 7.

Belial. The nations³ shall fall under Him who shall be known in that day as King of kings and Lord of lords. The prosperous majesty of the once rejected King is because of truth and meekness of righteousness. The displayed glory of Jesus in that day will be the worthy answer of God to the confidence with which He committed Himself, in the days of His long-suffering patience, to Him that judgeth righteously.⁴ God will bring forth His righteousness as the light, and His judgment as the noon-day.

And in the brightness of that high noon of glory will be seen the Church, which is called to be the fellow of His patience in the world of Satan and the day of man. Marvellous thought! that they, whose hearts now fill with grateful wonder at the remembrance of the grace which has plucked them as brands from the everlasting burning, should be taught to weigh against their present light affliction for the gospel's sake the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, which is to reward their patience in the coming day.⁵

Verses 6, 7 assign to Jesus eternal supremacy in glory. In all things He will have the pre-eminence.⁶ Essentially Divine, and upholding by the word of His power all

³ עַמִּים The well known evangelical application of these verses to the present quickening power of Christ, whereby His natural enemies are effectually subdued to grateful homage, through the sharp convictions of the Spirit, &c., is so violent a metaphor as to amount to a perversion of truth. For, 1st, nations do *not* fall before Christ in truthful homage. The effect of the gospel is to gather forth *from* the nations a people for His name. 2nd. The terrors of the Lord, the day of Christ, the display of His majesty, are all future, and utterly distinct from the present day of long-suffering grace. 3rd. The only present sphere of Christ's acknowledged dominion is the Church of God. The world still lieth in the wicked one.

⁴ 1 Peter ii. 23.

⁵ *Notes on Second Corinthians*, iv. 17, 18.

⁶ Col. i. 18.

existing things as the work of His own hands, He takes, as the first-born from the dead, a new pre-eminence. But the ancient glory of the only-begotten of the Father is not hidden, but rather the more brightly revealed, in the new manifestation of *appointed* heirship. It is the believer's joy to know that, while the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ⁷ has wrought a work of love which sets the pardoned sinner before the Father's face in co-equal acceptance with the beloved One, the Redeemer can never be confounded with the redeemed. The incommunicable divinity of the Son of God is something eternally distinct and separate from that nature which He shares, and in which He delights before the Father as the first-born of many brethren. The Church, whose bridal endowment is the glory which the Son has received as the righteous Father's gift,⁸ will find the completion of her joy in the worship of the Christ she loves. She will *behold* His glory, because she will be with Him where He is.⁹ Moreover, in His manifestation, though as yet what we shall be remains a hidden thing, we know that we shall be *like* Him, for we shall see Him as He is.¹ To feel thus the eternal consciousness of rest and assurance, because of the overshadowing of Divine glory, while realizing in delighted experience the perfection of fellowship in His joys—to be capable at once of loving Him freely and entirely, and of adoring Him in the perfect and undiminished reverence of godly fear—will be the ripened fulfilment of that joy unspeakable and full of glory of which the Holy Ghost is already the earnest and effective power in the hearts of God's elect.

But if our hearts are incapable while here below of

⁷ 2 Cor. viii. 9.

⁸ John xvii. 22, 25.

⁹ John xvii. 24.

¹ 1 John iii. 2.

estimating perfectly the portion of the fellow-heirs of Christ, how far less able are our tongues to tell that joy which is the worthy portion of the beloved One Himself? With more abundant unction of the oil of gladness, He stands revealed supreme in joy as in glory and in praise. "God hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." Jesus crowned with joy! Joying in God—(*thy God* hath anointed thee). Joying, also, in His fellows. Joying, too, in the love and blessedness of His *earthly* portion, His now reconciled and re-married people here below. Joying, moreover, in the consciousness of being the holder of that sceptre of effectual righteousness, under whose sway the rod of violence may no more afflict, while the freed and quieted creation breaks forth into a full song of happiness and praise—welcome sounds, which will find swift entrance into the heart of Him whose delights were ever with the sons of men. No thought is dearer to the mind of the Spirit than that of the finished joy of Jesus over the full results of His redemption-toil. And we believers, poor, weak, and worthless as we know ourselves to be, and unprofitable servants at the very best, are yet to be His fellows in this joy, according to the capacity of perfect creature blessedness which is the possession of the new-created vessels of Divine good pleasure.²

Verses 8, 9 celebrate the specialty of His dominion as "the Prince of the kings of the earth,"³ the possessor of the wealth of the world and the forces of the Gentiles.⁴ And here as the true Solomon He is seen accompanied by His queen. That the restored *earthly* Jerusalem is intended in these words I have no doubt. Prophetic promise is varied

² Eph. ii. 10; 2 Cor. v. 5.

³ Rev. i. 5.

⁴ Psalm lxxii. opens this more fully.

and express as to the future regal splendour of the once forsaken city, when brought effectually within the blessing of the better covenant. The filthy rags of her own iniquities, once blindly boasted in as righteousness, but then seen and abhorred in the clear brightness of the Lord of life, shall be changed in that day for the fine gold of Divine justification.

Verses 10, 11 seem to apostrophize the new-born city. Her natural generation, as born in and gendering to bondage,⁵ is to be forgotten in the remembrance of the better covenant, now brought fully to light with all its long-hoarded promise and blessing, and seen to be secured in the person of Immanuel. The King will have pleasure in her beauty. The King of Israel, even the Lord, will be in the midst of her in that day. He will save; He will rejoice over her with joy; He will rest in His love, He will joy over her with singing.⁶ For as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall her God rejoice over Zion in that day.⁷ And she on her part shall both know and worship Him; calling Him no more Baali, but Ishi, in the day when, in righteousness and in judgment, in loving-kindness and in mercies, He shall have betrothed His people to Himself in faithfulness, and they shall know the Lord.⁸

Verse 12 exalts the city of solemnities, now become again the favoured abode of Jehovah, to receive the homage of the nations.⁹ Jerusalem, not Rome, is the true metropolis of the earth.¹ In verse 13 the moral purity of the

⁵ Gal. iv. 21-27.

⁶ Zeph. iii. 15, 17.

⁷ Isaiah lxii. 5.

⁸ Hosea ii. 16-23.

⁹ Isaiah lx. *passim*.

¹ The rich among the people, $\text{דָּבַר הַרְבֵּי עַם}$ *Oi plouíoi tou laou tēs gēs.* —LXX. "*Die reichen des Volkes.*"—DE WETTE. This expression may refer to the assembling of the tribes at the feasts, when they should come not empty to the place of the Lord's name. (Psalm cxxii.; Deut. xvi. 16, 17.) As to the proper metropolitan dignity of Jerusalem, see Psalm xlvi.

new-born nation, as "all righteous,"² and all "taught of God,"³ is indicated. The virgin companions of the queen are, I suppose, the cities of Immanuel's land.⁴ For unto them, too, as well as to Jerusalem, shall the message of glad tidings come.⁵

Verses 16, 17. The King is here again addressed. The reference seems to be to the humiliation of Messiah, when, as Son of David and Seed of Abraham, He was disallowed and cut off out of the land of the living. The city which for a moment was moved to receive Him with cries of "Hosanna to the Son of David!" had presently condemned Him with transgressors, and sent Him forth to suffer shameful death without the gate. The titles which were allowed then only in derision are justified and glorified in resurrection. But with the fulfilment of the promise made to the fathers in the death and resurrection of Christ, begins the new and paramount order of blessing which, while retaining all preceding titles of promise, and including them in itself, yet stands above them all. The resurrection has demonstrated the Divine title of Jesus to be Heir of *all things* whether heavenly or earthly.⁶ He is declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.⁷ He is *now* to be known no longer after the flesh.⁸ He is the *beginning*, the first-born from the dead.⁹ As such He will see His seed. This is opened fully in 1 Cor. xv., where the second Adam and His children are the subject. The Church

² Isaiah liv. 13; lx. 21.

³ John vi. 45.

⁴ Possibly the adjacent lands, which are to be brought within the great confederacy of blessing, may be intended (Isaiah xix. 23-25); but I prefer the view given in the text.

⁵ Isaiah xl. 9.

⁶ Heb. i. 2.

⁷ Rom. i. 4.

⁸ On the just sense of this expression some remarks may be found in *Notes on Second Corinthians*, v. 16.

⁹ Col. i. 18.

is given as a family to Jesus.¹ The words which follow—"whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth"—are naturally applicable to the Church as ordained to share the throne of Jesus. "Know ye not that the saints shall judge the world?" &c.² When the King shall reign in righteousness, princes also shall rule in judgment.³ If, instead of "all the earth," we render "all the *land*," the special promise to the twelve will occur at once to our recollection.⁴ I take it, however, in a wider sense. The last verse is a *resumé* of the opening strain of praise and homage to the King of God's anointing. The Gentiles⁵ learn and perpetuate the song of grateful worship, which is begun by the chosen people of His covenant.

PSALM XLVI.

A STRAIN of grandest power, and of most abundant blessing to the soul whose refuge is the living God. Its very full practical bearing upon the proper experiences of Christian patience need not be pointed out; but it is most clearly a millennial Psalm.¹ The works of Jehovah, and their decisive results in the desolation of human pride, and the quelling of the anger of the nations by the majesty of His power, are joyfully commemorated (verses 8, 9). The singers of this noble ode are evidently inhabitants of the city of God. But that this city is not the heavenly

¹ Heb. ii. 13.

² 1 Cor. vi. 2.

³ Isaiah xxxii. 1.

⁴ Matt. xix. 28.

⁵ עַמִּים

¹ Together with the two following Psalms, it appears to connect itself morally with Psalm xlv. The throne of God had been set up, and now His people utter their true boast of righteous exultation in His name. (Isaiah xii. 6.)

Jerusalem is quite apparent from the whole drift of the Psalm. The heathen do not rage against *that*. But they have raged, and will yet again be found assembled in dreadful yet impotent fury against the earthly city of God's name.² Nothing can exceed the sublimity and energy of the language in which the catastrophe is described (verse 6). The results of the judgment, opening the new era of peace and blessing upon the earth, are stated in expressions not unlike what are elsewhere used by the Spirit in other prophetic testimonies of the same events.³ The exaltation of Christ, as God of the whole earth, is the theme of the Psalm (verse 10). There is nothing heavenly in its first intention.⁴ God is exalted among the heathen; He is exalted *in the earth*. The tabernacles of the Most High are re-established abidingly in the city of His name. All these things are celebrated by the people, whose cup of joy flows over in the exulting declaration, that "the Lord of hosts is with us, the God of *Jacob* is our refuge."

Christian faith, while knowing and delighting in the gracious meaning which the junction of God's name with that of the worm Jacob conveys to the child of grace, beholds and tastes in Christ a richer wisdom than is opened in this Psalm. "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ."⁵ The power of this communion is the One blessed Spirit of truth. God is for us, if believers. He is also with us. But more than all, He is *in* us, and we in Him.⁶ As He will be in the midst of Jerusalem in the day when He shall have returned thither

² Zech. xii.; Zeph. iii. 8. ³ Isaiah ii. 4; Zech. ix. 10; Hosea ii. 18.

⁴ I speak with reference to its strict and proper prophetic interpretation. That it is capable of richest application to Christian experience and hope is most clear.

⁵ 1 John i. 3.

⁶ Eph. iv. 6; 1 John iv. 15.

with mercies, so is He now inhabiting, by the Spirit, the Church of His election, as the temple of His presence. As He was *not* to His ancient people, He is to the believing children of His love, in whom now the Spirit of adoption individually dwells, crying, Abba, Father. That Spirit, the witness of accomplished redemption, could not be given until Jesus was glorified.⁷

The language of the fourth verse, though figurative, is clearly intelligible, and rich in meaning to the believer, who knows by what figure the living power of grace and truth is ever indicated in scripture. The glorious Lord will be to Israel in that day, as He is to the Christian now, a place of broad rivers and streams.⁸ The water of life, first gladdening the city of solemnities, shall issue thence to renovate the thirsty wilderness of Gentile lands.⁹

PSALM XLVII.

IN close connexion with the subject of the preceding Psalm, we have now the glad summons, addressed by the restored and exalted nation to the Gentiles, to own with wise and willing homage the King whose dominion is over all the earth. The exalting of Israel above the nations, as the chosen inheritance of the Most High, possessor as He is of heaven and earth, is a leading topic in this Psalm. Israel is the rod of His inheritance, who created Jacob and formed Israel to be a people for His praise.¹

But the portion of Jacob is also the governor of the nations. The ancient covenant of Abrahamic promise

⁷ John vii. 39.

⁸ Isaiah xxxiii. 21.

⁹ Isaiah ii. 3.

¹ Jer. x. 16; Deut. xxxii. 9; Isaiah xliii.

comprehended, in its terms of blessing, not only the natural offspring of Jehovah's friend (whose blessing as a nation is as yet deferred until the veil be taken from the heart of Israel), and the believing first-fruits of electing mercy, who, whether circumcised or uncircumcised, are blessed with faithful Abraham,² but likewise *all the families of the earth.*³ The nations of the earth are included in the inheritance of Him who, as the one seed of promise, was to hold the heirship of earthly dominion and blessing, as well as the heavenly glory of the Father's house:⁴ "All things that the Father hath are mine."⁵ The possessions of the Most High, possessor of heaven and earth, are the heritage of the exalted Christ. The present Psalm deals exclusively with His earthly portion. As to this He has loved the excellency of Jacob. The Gentiles are to rejoice *with* His people.⁶ It is as subject vassals to the acknowledged throne of God in Jerusalem, that the nations of the earth will alone prosper in that day.⁷

² Rom. iv.; Gal. iii.

³ Gen. xii. 3.

⁴ Gen. xviii. 18.

⁵ John xvi. 15.

⁶ Deut. xxxii. 43. I have elsewhere remarked on the apostle's application of this verse, (Rom. xv. 10,) by an accommodation of its principle, to the Christian dispensation; although, as he tells us (Rom. xi.), the Gentiles are in fact rejoicing now *without* His people. For as concerning the Gospel they are enemies for the Gentiles' sake.—*Notes on the Romans, loc. cit.*

⁷ The prophetic testimonies to the national supremacy are far too numerous to be quoted. See, however, Isaiah xlix. 13–26; lx. *passim*, especially verses 10, 12, 14, 15; lxi. 4, 6, 7, 9, &c. Christians may accommodate, and, as it is sometimes termed, *spiritualize* such passages; but a careful meditation of the solemn testimonies of the Spirit, as to the character and event of the present dispensation, would tend to sober much of the exuberance of fallacious expectation which in the present day prevails as to the proper destinies of the Church of God. The gross darkness of Anti-christian blasphemy and idolatry will surely bring upon the nations a thicker covering than that of their first apostasy from the Creator.

The frequency with which the name of *God* occurs in this Psalm is remarkable. It derives its emphasis from a consideration of the times which immediately precede the setting up of Divine sovereignty in power on the earth. The climax of Anti-Christian wickedness is the total denial of God. The beast usurps His place, dealing with the earth and its inhabitants at the lawless bidding of his own will, corrupting and destroying, for his appointed season, in the unchecked energy of Satanic craft and power. But the kingdom is the Lord's. The power of His Christ will be asserted in the day when He arises to shake terribly the earth.

The last verse presents a lovely picture of the general and willing gathering of the nations of the saved to Shiloh. The greatness of His majesty will be accepted as the refuge and peaceful shelter of those princes of the earth whose predecessors had once crucified the Lord of glory. They will worship at His footstool both *with* and *as* the people of the God of Abraham.⁸ For in the King of nations they will then acknowledge and do homage to Abraham's exalted seed.⁹ For His glory shall cover the heavens, and the earth be filled with His praise.¹ Instead of the lip-worship of a lifeless profession, the dwellers upon earth shall sing *with understanding* in that day. The kings of the earth shall praise Him. They shall sing in the ways of the Lord, because of the greatness of His glory in that day.²

(Rev. xiii.) The revelation of Jesus Christ in power will alone destroy that covering, and bring to pass the clear shining of the day of light. (Isaiah xxv.)

⁸ The context and general drift of the Psalm seem to disallow the word "even" with which the ellipsis of the original is supplied in the Authorised Version. The English Liturgical Version, though not quite literal, has, I think, faithfully expressed the sense.

⁹ Gal. iii. 16.

¹ Hab. iii. 3.

² Psalm cxxxviii. 4, 5.

PSALM XLVIII.

THE celebration of Jehovah's name and glory as the God and King of all the earth, which has been the subject of the three foregoing Psalms, receives its consummation in this magnificent song, which has for its immediate subject the earthly Zion, the city of the great King.¹ To Jerusalem alone belongs this title. Nor is it a vain distinction. True it is that the great King Himself, the Judge of Israel, was there smitten on the cheek, and nailed to the cross. The Scripture must be so fulfilled. But that same city, which for its sin had been a hissing and an execration among the nations, is to be known as the joy of the whole earth, because of the majesty of the presence of the self-same Messiah, whose glory once was turned to shame, when over the head of the crucified Son of God there was written, in cruel and derisive mockery, "Jesus of Nazareth, the king of the Jews."

The only place of God's name on earth is Zion. Sovereign dignity belongs to Jerusalem as the divinely-appointed centre of all earthly dominion. What she was for a moment in the palmy days of Solomon, she will be permanently, even until the end of all present ordinances of earth or heaven, under the sceptre of Messiah's rule, whose heritage as David's seed is the throne and people of His Father: for "the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David, and He shall reign over *the house of Jacob* for ever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end."²

¹ Matt. v. 35.

² Luke i. 32, 33. A promise which, though the birthright of the Son of David, has never been fulfilled. Instead of sitting on David's throne, He

The promises of God are without repentance. The earth, over which man and the devil have ruled to its corruption and ruin, is to be revived under the blessed sway of the sceptre of righteousness. It is a solemn thought, that of all the mighty kingdoms of Gentile power, not one finds favourable notice in the word of promise apart from the now despised land of Immanuel.³ The eyes and the heart of Jehovah are at Jerusalem continually.⁴ She may be forgotten for a season as the punishment of her sins; but neither the wrath nor the counsel of man can frustrate the purposes of God. And His recorded purpose is to beautify with His praise the earthly house of His glory—to make the place of His feet glorious.⁵

The present Psalm records the peace and prosperity of Jerusalem as she will be known in the millennium, when her name shall be, "The Lord is there." He is great, and greatly to be praised *there*, "in the city of our God, in the mountain of His holiness." The believer now is come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the *heavenly* Jerusalem.⁶ Faith finds localities of blessing which are still invisible to the natural eye. But the heavenly Jeru-

suffered without the gate. Jesus is passed into the heavens; but the Father's throne on which He rests is not the throne of David. Nor is the Father's house the house of Jacob. He is gone to receive a kingdom, and to return. (Luke xix. 12.) The Church follows Him in spirit into the heavens, where her true seat is. See further on these economic differences, *Notes on the Ephesians*, i. 10.

³ God in the present dispensation dwells in the Church. He bears with the world in long-suffering grace, still preaching peace and escape from the wrath to come. But the name of Jesus, in which peace is preached, is utterly separate from all earthly kingdoms and institutions. He owns none as they are now administered, but claims them all by a title which will presently be vindicated in power at His appearing.

⁴ 2 Chron. vii. 16.

⁵ Isaiah lx. 13.

⁶ *Ante*, p. 26; *Notes on the Hebrews*, chap. xii.

salem is not, alas! the joy of the whole earth. I will not pause to show by additional proof that the earthly and not the heavenly Zion is here meant. The entire language of the Psalm forbids any other interpretation.

The third verse contains the secret of the blessing described. "*God is known* in her palaces for a refuge." The present condition of the nation is darkness. God is utterly unknown among them, save as the inflicter of the judgment written against their stiffness of neck and blindness of heart. The palaces of Jerusalem are the lodging of the worst of the heathen still. But yet more bitter sorrows await that city, when, in the last dire stress of Gentile enmity, Jerusalem shall be girded in to what may seem a hopeless ruin and destruction.⁷

Verses 4-7 relate the catastrophe of the drama of human wickedness and Divine faithfulness and truth in language worthy of the event. The eighth verse is full of sweet and solemn power. It is the utterance of those whose faith had held fast amid the desolations of the day of rebuke the sure word of promise. Their hearts had indeed sickened at long-deferred hope. They had fainted for the salvation of Jehovah, while they clave still unto His testimonies. And now their delighted eyes behold indeed the realization of their fond and truth-fed expectation. "As we have *heard*, so have we *seen*," &c. The rehearsal of the mighty acts of the Ancient of days⁸ had kept their souls in constant though long-tried faith and patience until He should arise. Waiting for deliverance, they had possessed their souls in patience amid the mockings of triumphant wickedness, which, springing up with rapid and consistent growth, like a rooted plant in its own soil, had now reached

⁷ Zech. xii.

⁸ Psalm xliv. 1.

its height of pride, and had been lopped with terror in the day of the Lord's decision.⁹

In the tenth verse we have the universal acknowledgment of the name of God as the praise of the nations,¹ when the oaths of the tribes shall have become the world's confession, in the day when the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea. They will praise Him according to His *name*. The full and blessed meaning of that name, instead of being as it is now revealed to a chosen few, into whose hearts, as vessels of mercy, the treasures of Divine grace are poured,² will then be disclosed to multitudes. For all the ends of the earth shall *remember* and turn unto the Lord; and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before His Christ.³

The daughters of Judah rejoice because of the judgments of God (verse 11). This is an eternal principle, and as such equally applicable to the Church and to the nation. Unrepentant wickedness must be destroyed before the permanent rest of God's saints can be attained. "To you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed," &c.⁴ The believer now awaits in hope the dissolution of all that which lifts itself up in rivalry to the name of Jesus. We look for a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

Verses 12, 13 describe the unalterable stability and security of Jerusalem and her children when freed into the liberty of the new covenant. "It shall not be plucked up, nor thrown down any more for ever."⁵ Her walls shall be called Salvation, and her gates Praise. Her people, too,

⁹ Isaiah x. 33.

² Exodus xxxiv. 5-7; John i. 12.

⁴ 2 Thess. i.; comp. Isaiah xxvi. 8-11.

¹ Mal. i. 11.

³ Psalm xxii. 27.

⁵ Jer. xxxi. 38-40.

shall be *all* righteous; they shall inherit the *land* for ever. The Lord will hasten it in His time.⁶

In the last verse mention is made of death. It is contemplated as the natural portion of fallen man, even while under grace, so long as he is in an unchanged body. Hence, as is evident from other passages, death will be known in the millennium. The *last* enemy that shall be destroyed is death.⁷ Meanwhile God is known, who raiseth the dead. "This God is our God for ever and ever: He will be our guide, even unto death." Death thus becomes (as now to a Christian, until Jesus come) a stage in the progress by which the successive generations of God's people are led, as by a door of welcome exit, from the lesser joys of earthly blessing to the everlasting and perfect rest which remaineth for the people of Abraham's God—to God Himself, both His and their exceeding great reward.

PSALM XLIX.

THE Spirit of God brings in this Psalm the dark shadow of death over the world of human vanity, in order to open in the way of parable the Divine secret of redemption. The truth of the resurrection, which was present always to the faith of God's elect, was but a "dark saying," until the descent of the Holy Ghost as the Divine unfolders of the finished truth of God. The fathers trusted in God, who raiseth the dead. To faith His words of promise were testimonies of resurrection; and the hope which stayed itself on Him expressed itself at times in the bold dis-

⁶ Isaiah lx. 18-22.

⁷ 1 Cor. xv. 26.

tinctness of declarative anticipation.¹ The God whom they trusted, and who bare them witness, is not the God of the dead, but of the living. But the *demonstration* of the perfect truth, which discloses to the heart of the believer, and to the conscience (though his heart disown it) of the unbeliever, the person of Jesus as the resurrection and the life, could only follow the accomplishment of the ever blessed work to which it referred. In the days of His flesh He had both revealed His name and justified His declaration by an act of death-revoking power, when He called forth Lazarus from the grave; but by His own dying once for all to sin, and rising up again, He has dispelled for His chosen both the darkness and the fear of death. He has *abolished* death, and brought to light life and incorruption² through the gospel.

From the beginning, however, of man's sinful life, the hearts of those who bowed submissively to death, as the accepted wages of sin, were sustained by promise in the hope of immortality, and resurrection was the means by which this hope was to be realized. As the power of God first formed His own image out of the earth's dust, and after filling it with life had bowed that living soul again to dust, because it was His own to punish as well as to create; so when the word of gracious promise entered the believing sinner's heart, it spoke of a Divine reparation of the breach which sin had made. The soul, in abstraction from the body, is no *man* of God's creation. If Divine power wrought in grace for human deliverance, it would compass the deliverance of the entire man. This lay at the bottom of all true and proper hope in prospective redemption, though dimly seen, perhaps, for the most part,

¹ Job xix. 23-27.

² Ἀφθαρσία, 2 Tim. i. 10.

by the ancient holders of the word of promise. The object of their faith and hope was God. The mode of His blessed operation, whereby that hope should be eventually justified, was but darkly intimated, though to the quick sense of one really born of Him, the dark sayings and symbolic actions of the God of grace were full of precious meaning. The knowledge of Him as the *living* God was and is the only wisdom which delivers to the believing sinner the crown of life and glory.³

Two things are prominently treated in this Psalm. First, the universality of death's dominion over rich and poor alike—a fact of all-pervading testimony to the utter vanity of mortal life; and secondly, the fruitlessness of all hope of deliverance from life's great grievance, save by the wisdom of justifying faith.⁴

The state of the world is that of reckless acquiescence in its actual condition of vanity, while haughtily ignoring *sin*, its only cause.⁵ This is the fulness and the wonder of human folly. Generations succeed each other in the worn ways of hopeless labour, hastening to their common grave while vainly snatching at the perishable things within their reach, as if the large possession of this world's goods could reverse or intercept the divinely-appointed destiny of man (verse 13).

But this way of folly is the clearest practical evidence of man's utter alienation from God. *He* is willingly forgotten in the busy calculations of our selfishness. His will is of no account as the guide and reason of men's ways. He is left out of their thoughts, save where, perforce and

³ Prov. iv. 9.

⁴ James i. 11; iv. 14.

⁵ Philosophy acknowledges the existence of moral evil, and reasons on its nature and effects. Confession of *sin*, on the other hand, implies faith in God who is thus dishonoured.

⁶ Heb. ix. 27.

with reluctance, He is owned in His resistless power as the Almighty. He is dreaded, but not feared. His interference with their aims and purposes is ever suspected, and in heart deprecated, by those who think of Him rather as the destroyer of natural happiness, than as the proper and only source of all true blessedness and joy. Such is the effect of sin, its wasting destructive misery, which eats up with hopeless vanity the fleeting generations of mankind. "Like sheep they are laid in the grave." Levelled by the hand of death to the common dust of corruption, the haughtiness of man conducts him only to the low and dishonoured darkness of the tomb.

The human understanding is quite alive to the portentous and degrading phenomenon of death. But the perishable thoughts of men can devise no remedy against their own destruction. Yet is the God of life not far away.⁷ That man acquiesces in his wretchedness is because of the darkness of his understanding; but that darkness is itself the witness and effect of a willing exclusion of Divine light.⁸ The pride of life exalts man in the days of his vanity above all else. The stroke of death mingles him indistinguishably with the beasts that perish (verse 20). By dying he becomes a sure though reluctant witness to the truth of God, which while living at his own discretion he practically falsifies; for he dies by the recorded sentence of the Judge of sin. But until quickened by the Holy Ghost he is incapable of turning his *expectation* towards God as a Saviour and a rest. Man's natural thought is permanency; his sentence is corruption. The wise man and the fool go alike to one place. Philosophy can furnish no light strong enough to dissipate the mists of death. But there is a light of life which enables the happy possessor

⁷ Acts xvii. 27.

⁸ Rom. i. 28.

of it to sing the morning song of deathless hope amid the blackest shades of vanity and death. The voice of faith sounds loudly in this solemn Psalm. The upright are to have dominion in the *morning* (verse 14). Life and death, things present or things to come, are theirs who stand in Christ in everlasting uprightness before God.

The mystery of Divine redemption is darkly yet sweetly opened in this Psalm upon the harp of prophecy⁹ (verses 5-9). In the fifteenth verse it is boldly asserted as the confidence and rejoicing of the soul: "God will redeem," &c. The whole Psalm is the utterance of the Spirit of Jesus groaning in gracious sympathy with that of which, as born of a woman, He took part (though by the spotlessness of His humanity exempt from any *natural* necessity of dying); and revealing in the ears of the children whom God hath given Him the secret of hope and joy. How the blessed Lord sought, and vainly sought, to bring the souls of the disciples within the power of the resurrection while yet in the days of His flesh, the Gospels teach us. They understood not that saying. The mist of spiritual darkness was over their minds, until the living brightness of the risen Christ broke through and dissolved that darkness for ever, even for ever and ever. All is now changed, and "children

⁹ Verse 5 may be variously rendered so as to express spiritual confidence on the part of one who knows the secret of justification by faith, or more generally as a confident expression of eventual deliverance, and without special reference to personal sin. DE WETTE renders the latter clause of the verse: "*Wenn meiner Untertreter Missethat mich umgiebt.*" Similarly GESENIUS renders יִקְרֶינִי "Insidiatores mei." But the English version, with which agree the LXX. and Hieron., is certainly the more literal. The context shows clearly what manner of deliverance is intended. It is a question of giving *God* a ransom. The condition universally of man is recognized as that of judicial forfeiture. But the costly price of redemption is not within the resources of perishable man. It ceaseth for ever. God alone can pay that price.

of light" is a distinctive appellation of those who ground their confidence and rejoicing on the blessed certainty that Jesus, who was delivered for our offences, has been raised again for our justification. God's mighty power, who raised the Saviour from the dead, is now become the guarantee of certain triumph to His trusting children. That power now acts to *usward who believe*.¹ Meanwhile, in the world the true and only God—the living God—is preached as a Saviour to all who will hearken and believe. God in Christ; God therefore as the author of reconciliation and of peace. Not as the threatener of vengeance, but as the pardoner in grace of all transgression; the giver of righteousness and life in the Son of His love. The *living* God—the fulfiller of the promise of life made to Jesus—to Man in Christ—to Himself in man—saving man for His own good pleasure in the accomplishment of His eternal and ever blessed thoughts of peace—for the satisfying of the high and holy desires of Divine love and truth. The gospel is preached. Yet its light shines still upon the ceaseless vanity of a Christ-rejecting world. But the thoughts of God's counsel shall stand. He will fill to the full the pages of that book of life which is the Lamb's record of the Father's gift to Him.²

PSALM L.

THE majesty of the God of judgment, as it will be displayed in the revelation of the day of Christ, is the leading subject of this magnificent and very comprehensive Psalm. Its action is very wide, for heavenly as well as earthly things are included in its scope. But the truth

¹ Eph. i. 19.

² John vi. 37.

which determines its special character, and by reference to which its details are rightly discerned and understood, is in the second verse. God shines forth out of *Zion*. It is *there* that the throne is set for judgment. The summons is of mighty and all-pervading force. The earth is called from the rising to the setting of the sun (verse 1). Moreover, the heavens are to hear that voice which is presently to judge the people of His name. But it is *Israel* that is especially addressed (verse 7). It is a Psalm of judgment, whose moral burden is "The Judge of all the world will do right." It embraces in its scope the blessedness of the remnant, according to the election of grace, as well as the destruction of the ungodly and the sinner from Jehovah's presence.

In verses 5, 6 we have, I doubt not, a reference to the glorified saints who shall shine in the day of the Lord, in the glory whose light shall make the earth and its inhabitants afraid.¹ They had made a covenant with God by sacrifice. The Lamb is the Lord their Righteousness, and the heavens will convincingly reveal that righteousness. Its annunciation to the earth will be from thence. For from heaven the bright glory of that light shall be revealed, in which they alone shall shine whose filthiness has been changed to the pure white of Divine holiness in the day of their patience, when they fought and conquered in the good fight of faith, through the blood of the Lamb, and the word of their testimony.²

Verses 7-15 state the Lord's case as Himself the witness against His people. Judgment is affirmed against ungodliness, while the "people" are still held fast in the steadfast grasp of an unrepentant mercy. "Hear, O *my people!*" "I am God, *thy* God," &c. *Israel*, as a nation, is an in-

¹ 1 Thess. iii. 13; Jude 14; 2 Thess. i. 7. ² Rev. xii. 11.

destructible reality. Divine holiness will be asserted in judgment—the Lord will judge His people ;³ but mercy is His last as well as first counsel concerning the people of His name. It was *for that nation* that Christ died.

The practical power of what follows is very great, and is directly applicable in its principle to the Church. Israel's folly had been the diminishing of God ; unmindful of the rock that begat them, they did not cease to think of themselves as the *people* of God. Hence sacrifice abounded, while mercy perished from the land. They drew nigh in His courts ; they said, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord," &c. But the incense that their hands brought thither was *grudged* by hearts that knew not the secret of His praise. They gave, in the vain hope of receiving in return ; because they knew not the manner of His way who giveth liberally, and upbraideth not.

Spiritual declension usually discovers itself thus in its earlier stages. Methodical formalism takes the place of heart-devotion. Love waxes cold ; because the exciting cause of love in the heart is becoming daily more and more remote. Love is of God ; God *is* love. Out of His presence it cannot subsist, and faith alone maintains us *there*. But Israel after the flesh was a nation of unbelievers. God had among them the numbered thousands of His chosen ; but the nation itself was a faithless generation. Their eye and their heart were alike blind to Godward ; they stayed their hearts, not on grace, but on meats. Thus they vainly went about to establish their own righteousness, in willing igno-

³ The principle which is here specially illustrated in the case of Israel is applicable, of course, to the Church of Christ, considered dispensationally. The burden of judgment is against an *apostate people*. The only difference is, that in Israel's case there is hope in the latter end, while the end of apostate Christianity is the beast and his destruction.

rance of the righteousness of God. Yet grace was the cradle of the nation. God had found His beloved in her blood,⁴ and drawn her thence, before the young love of her espousals had turned her heart to Him.⁵ But that first love was now clean gone. "I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you,"⁶ said He, whose altars, nevertheless, they diligently dressed with costly victims day by day.

Verses 16-22, though in close connexion with what precedes, are of a more general interpretation. Wickedness is apostrophized under an individual impersonation, which renders the direct appeal to conscience more distinct and forcible. The moral drift and bearing of the passage is quite clear. It is the warning voice of the Spirit of Jesus—the Spirit of prophecy—testifying with the pleadings of Divine wisdom in the midst of the streets of Sodom and Egypt. I do not pause to search for the exact and ultimate object of this testimony. Its immediate application to apostate Christianity is apparent. It is the truly solemn warning of the Spirit of grace, taking up the main features of human wickedness, and, as a faithful watchman, giving notice of the passing away of the season of long-suffering patience, and of the advent of God in judgment. It becomes thus a word of searching power to the conscience. The combination of a form of godliness, with the excess of selfish wickedness, is a fatal symptom that the closing days are come of the long-protracted dispensation of grace.⁷ Satan's craft, as the corrupter of the Church, has triumphed chiefly in making the doctrines of grace in some shape a warranty for minding earthly things. But the rudimental truth of Christianity is *the cross*. God is

⁴ Ezek. xvi.⁵ Jer. ii. 2.⁶ John v. 42.⁷ 2 Tim. iii.

denied where that is denied. Now the true discernment of the cross leads the soul of necessity into *heavenly* things; for the Lord who died there is in heaven. Our citizenship, if believers, is there also.⁸ It is there, because *He* is there. Thither, then, must the affections of that heart turn whose treasure and inheritance is Christ. To turn the doctrine which *condemns* the world, while opening in heaven the door of salvation and eternal life, into a charter of temporal increase and worldly pleasure, is the last stage but one of Christian apostasy. Antichrist is already owned in the heart that disowns the cross. If any man love the world, the love of the Father *is not in him*.⁹

What God looks for in His saints is conformity to Himself. The ground and reason as well as the means of this is *grace*: "Whoso offereth praise," &c. (verse 23.) Holiness of walk and diligence in service are natural results of the soul's perception of mercy: "As we have received mercy, we faint not," &c. A believer whose heart is established with grace, not with meats, is strong *for* God, because he is strong *in* God. He lives and labours for Christ. Not for himself,¹ for he has no longer any need, seeing that his Keeper is the Lord, the faithful Shepherd and Bishop of our souls. Meanwhile, the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him. To hold with faith a blameless conscience is the great business of Christian life.² All practical blessing depends on this; for Divine communion is ever bound, as a result, to devotedness of heart: "To him that ordereth his way will I *show* the salvation of God."³

⁸ Phil. iii. 20.

⁹ 1 John iv. 15.

¹ He is to work that he may eat—to provide things honest in the sight of all. But all that he does is to be done in character—to be done, that is, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. (Col. iii. 17.)

² 1 Tim. i. 19.

³ Compare John xiv. 23.

PSALM LI.

THE occasion of this solemn and deeply-searching, yet most precious Psalm, is plainly indicated by its title. It is a memorial of grace abused and turned to lasciviousness, in the base and thankless folly of human selfishness. It is a confession of sin by one who had pre-eminently enjoyed Divine favour. Moreover, the transgressor was one who had obtained a good report, through faith and patience long and sorely tried. It is a very pregnant and instructive Psalm. Particular transgression gave rise to it; but, as the utterance of the Spirit of God, through the experience of a thoroughly bruised and contrite heart, it goes deep down into the *sources* of both sin and grace. The perfect justification of the God of *all* grace both in His sayings of judgment and in His pure ways of faithful mercy,—whereby, as the Healer and Restorer, as well as the Justifier and Avenger, of His saints for His own name, He brings the vessels of His mercy through all the varied passages of their earthly experience,—is the proper subject of this Psalm. Unrepented sin in a believer gives occasion to the faithful dealing of God in the judgment of transgression, where found in the ways of His saints. The bones and sinews of carnal confidence are thus broken. The soul, learning thoroughly its own just estimate, according to the holiness and power of God's immediate presence, is prepared for yet deeper lessons of Divine wisdom and knowledge. Praise flows from the lips of the confessed sinner at the bidding of the gracious Restorer of His people's souls (verse 15).

The unspeakable badness of corrupted nature is nowhere so strikingly exemplified as in the case of an erring saint. For the dark colours of human iniquity are most clearly discerned, and most perfectly appreciated, in the light of Divine truth. The end and idol of nature is self. As a natural consequence, the ways of a man who walks after the flesh tend constantly away from God, who is the only centre of holiness, and may lead into any and every kind of sinful result. This is a truth as applicable to a devoted servant of God, as it is to the most abandoned sinner. For it is only while watchfully abiding in Christ that we are kept in practical security from the power of the wicked one.¹ If a Christian is not walking in the Spirit, he is walking in the flesh, and will certainly fulfil its lusts. It then becomes purely a question of degree as to the distance to which he may wander or be driven from the ways of holiness and peace. In such circumstances, an act of glaring wickedness has sometimes become the term and limit to a long course of careless evil; during which the heart has been too drowsy, or too much absorbed in its own selfish pursuits, to perceive the increasing variance of its path from the secret of God's presence. David, alas! is no solitary instance, in the confessed experience of God's saints, of human weakness and depravity,—of nature fulfilling its darkest evil in the very midst of Divine favour and blessing. Nor, blessed be God, is he alone in his testimony to the still abounding riches of exhaustless mercy, whereby, through the onceshed blood of Jesus Christ His Son, *all* iniquity may be forgiven by the righteous God, the Saviour.

If the blessings which grace confers are borne out of God's presence for their enjoyment, instead of being used

¹ John v. 18.

in communion with Himself, corruption in greater or less measure will be the result. The flesh can use nothing for God. It lavishes His gifts upon its idols; for it loves its idols, but is enmity against God. In those instances in which some frightful outbreak of sin has occurred, the condition of the soul previously to the catastrophe has perhaps been quite as displeasing to God as in the very crisis of its wickedness. A habit of heart-aversion, or of self-seeking indifference, is as evil a thing as the particular act of enormity which may, by giving a ruder shock to the conscience (and that possibly, as in the present case, not without some direct intervention of God, who sent His prophet to the king), become the means of arousing the soul to a just sense of its distance from God. Often He moves on His way, while we stand lingering over past experiences. If this continue, the soul is always endangered and often wounded to its hurt. For the place of safety and of strength is the Divine presence alone. Thus it was with David. God had given him rest from his enemies, and he makes the goodness of God the occasion of self-gratification. He consults his own ease, seeking contentment in his palace of cedar rather than in God. Fruits, which the patience of faith had brought into his possession, are held and enjoyed in careless self-confidence. But as long as the heart thinks of pleasure, or happiness, or ease, apart from communion with God, Satan has an open approach to those lusts of the flesh which, being eternally opposed to holiness, are in readiness at any time to break from a restraint which the remembrance of God's nearness can alone effectually maintain.²

Satan tempts God's children in a variety of ways. Speaking generally, the natural love of ease is to a Chris-

² Gal. v. 16-25.

tian, whose soul has once been established in grace, the most immediate snare against which he has to guard. "*Love not the world*"³ is the word addressed to them who knew the fruits of victory in Christ. But nature rests only in the world and its delights. On the other hand, there is no feeling more directly at variance with the bias and yearning of the Spirit of Christ than the love of present ease. That Spirit finds no rest in present things. The Son of God, whose Spirit is the unction of filial liberty to the believer, knew no rest on earth. He *desired* none; for His presence in the world was to do the will of Him that sent Him, and to finish His work. The *conditions of rest were not found* in a world whose ruler and whose god was then and still is SATAN. So is it with the Christian who truly knows his calling, and estimates aright the separating power of the resurrection as a truth of *present reality* to the heart of faith. Girded loins become those whose vocation is to serve the Lord until He come—serving in *newness of spirit*, according to the Divine assurance of that perfect liberty of which the Spirit of the Lord is the witness and the power. Rest is in prospect. God prepares it for them who now run the way of patient obedience, in joyful expectation of the day of promise. Meanwhile, in spirit, the believer already rests in the blessed object of his faith. Christ is the rest both of God and man. God rests in Him because of the perfection of all His counsels in His finished work. Believing man rests in Him because that work thus finished is the work of his redemption. The first ripe fruits of Jesus' husbandry of travail already refresh the weary lips of faith. But it is *from heaven* that this refreshment comes; and the soul whose eye is thus enlightened by the more

³ 1 John ii. 14-16.

than honey sweetness which distils from the lips of the ascended Christ—now speaking peace and teaching praise in the midst of the brethren of His love—looks upward to the place whence those refreshings come, and often finds it hard, while groaning still beneath its fleshly burden, to count the time of patience *short* until the hour of the Father's secret counsel be arrived.

A Christian may be sure that he is in a carnal state whenever he is desiring a permanency of temporal enjoyment. God gives us richly all things to enjoy; and godliness has promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come. But the power of right and godly enjoyment is the Spirit of adoption, whereby we know and love the Giver above His gifts, perceiving and tasting the spring of all mercies in His kindness towards us in Christ Jesus. We are blessed as pilgrims by the way, as well as in rest at the end; but the spiritual man does not confound one with the other. God journeys with us as our shield and sun, walking in the shifting tabernacle of our flesh until He reach for us, and with us, and in us the eternal habitation of His holiness. Upon our faithful recognition of this blessed truth depends the speed and prosperity of our pilgrim way. We are called to the fellowship of the Father and the Son. If we live *below* the truth of our calling, our walk cannot be worthy of that calling. We shall be surely minding earthly things if we do not keep in our habitual remembrance that our life and heritage are where our Saviour is.⁴

To return more immediately to the Psalm before us. The first essential to the restoration of a soul that has fallen into sin is an unshaken faith in God who does not change. "According to thy lovingkindness; according to

⁴ Phil. iii. 20; 2 Cor. vi. 16; Col. iii. 1-3.

the multitude of thy tender mercies," &c. The godly sorrow, which is the parent of repentance unto salvation not to be repented of, is wrought by the Holy Ghost in the believer's heart, not so much by representing the intrinsic enormity of an evil act, as by recalling the mind to a sense of its baseness in having thus wrought against the perfect goodness of the God of all grace. "Against thee, thee only," &c. To have to appeal to former mercies under a sense of personal delinquency enhances exceedingly the severity of self-judgment in the exercised spirit of the sinner, while it opens to the heart a view of the Divine nature in its infiniteness both of purity and love, which more than any other thing tends to render contrite and *keep* low the humbled yet confiding soul.

There are measures and degrees in the liveliness of a believer's sense of guilt, when self-convicted of departure from the Lord. Nothing but perfect grace can vanquish sin. The *manner* of that grace, as it is opened in the gospel of God's blessed Son, alone truly humbles the sinner in self-loathing for his ways. The CROSS is the truth which sets and preserves the tone of *all* true spiritual feeling. Sin judged *there* is perfectly abhorred. Joyful and happy emotions, on the other hand, are cleared of all fleshly tincture, and sobered, yet raised withal, to still higher elevation of pure blessedness, by reference to that wondrous truth in which the God of grace and holiness comes nearest to the soul.

Sin in a Christian is the quintessence of moral depravity. In David it was hideously evil; in a Christian it is many degrees worse; for in proportion to the nearness of our actual relationship to God is the aggravation and intensity of positive sin. The Spirit of adoption, which dwells in a believer now, dwelt not in David. He was indeed a

blessed vessel of Divine grace and favour. He was taken from the sheep-cotes to be the anointed of the Lord. He was the receiver of promise—the father, as touching the flesh, of the hope of Israel and the nations. Richly endowed and divinely gifted, whether to lead the armies or to set the praises of the Lord of hosts, he was, moreover, a largely favoured prophet of good things to come. But no such appeal lay to his conscience as that which the Spirit makes now to a believer in Jesus. He who sins in the latter case is joined to the Lord in spiritual unity, is a member of Christ, a temple of the Holy Ghost, an accepted child of God through the redemption which is only in the blood of His eternal Son. He must grieve the Holy Spirit of God if he sins, for he is thereby sealed unto the day of redemption.⁵ He defiles and dishonours not his own members, but those of Christ; for he is not his own, being bought with a price. Christ paid that price. Christ died amid shame and torture, and under Divine wrath, to redeem the soul that thus turns away from the fountain of all purity, to dishonour and defile again his blood-washed conscience in natural uncleanness; forgetting spiritual joy—the precious fruits of heavenly grace—the spiritual blessings wherewith in heavenly

⁵ In verses 11, 12 we find expressions which, while their general spirit may suit Christian experience in certain cases, are not justly representative of *Christian relation to God*. God never can be rightly regarded by Christian faith as capable of casting away the once accepted soul from His presence, nor of taking away His Holy Spirit from an heir of grace once sealed. Sonship is the reason of this sealing—"Because ye are sons," &c.—but the title of sonship is *Christ*: "Not *I*, but Christ." David knew the Spirit by *visitation*, but not as indwelling. He received not the Spirit of adoption; but that Spirit dwells now in the believer as the eternal witness of completed acceptance in the Beloved—the pledge, moreover, of the resurrection of that mortal body which is already the place of His abode. (Rom. viii. 11.)

places he is blessed in Christ—to go down again at the enticement of some selfish lust, to drag the grieved Spirit of Christ into the mire of pollution, doing again the deeds of the devil under the name and in the garments of an heir of God.

Tongue cannot utter the enormity of wilful sin in a believer. But even more wretched than any striking and sudden surprise of the enemy, in the case of one generally zealous and watchful, is that lethargy of spirit, that habitual self-contentment and practical forgetfulness of heavenly things, which leaves but little inducement to the adversary to provoke any special act of iniquity, so inert and deadened has the action both of conscience and of heart become. A vehement outbreak of positive evil is a fearful thing in a saint of God. But it is preferable to spiritual apathy, where Christ is almost spued out of the mouth of the self-seeking soul, that loathes the light food of God's providing, and thinks no higher and no dearer thought of JESUS than as a convenience of eventual escape from wrath. Love must be at a low ebb where this is so. Yet, alas! for the Church, because of its shame; and alas! again for the world, because of offences whereby its willing alienation from Christ is plausibly excused,—*such* is the temper of much of the Christianity of our own day. Earthly-mindedness is the very stamp and character of the general profession of our times.⁶

⁶ It is a solemn thing to testify of spiritual declension. God, who is greater than our hearts, knows that I am writing, not an accusation, but a confession. Nor do I mean by the above remarks to imply that there is no zeal manifested at the present time for winning souls to Christ. Amid the multiplied activities of the day, the blessed Spirit of grace has done, and will continue to do His work, until the full stature of Christ's body be attained. What is meant is, that even where Christ is truly known and built on as the foundation of God, the soul stops there. Redemption

Once more to return. David's sensations, as they are here expressed, were those of a man of God. God never loses His true place in his mind, while judging and acknowledging his sin. His peace, indeed, was gone; the joy once known, of salvation in His presence, is interrupted. This is the necessary effect of a defiled conscience. True peace of soul cannot consist with practical unrighteousness. Nor when the evil is confessed, and the soul is again recovering its right position before God, is peace, generally speaking, immediately restored. It *may* be so, for in reality no obstacle to peace continues on God's side. "If we confess—He is faithful and just to forgive." Still when the Spirit of God is working deeply upon the heart and conscience, full recovery of the joy of salvation is usually a gradual process. The soul is at bottom sustained by a sense of the unalterable character of God, and of the perfect sufficiency which exists in Christ to meet *all* sin; but the direct appropriation of this is not usually immediate. Indeed, it is a suspicious symptom when it is so. For this indicates an imperfect apprehension of the evil

is half, and only half, enjoyed. The negative blessing of forgiveness, and thus deliverance from fear of judgment, may be known, and yet the estimate of Christian calling be utterly defective. For the believer is not only dead with Christ, but also *risen*. It is *out of the world* that we have been delivered through the cross, as well as from the multitude of our sins. Our calling is a new and *heavenly* calling. By far the majority of Christians act as if the reformation of the age were their vocation, instead of testifying, in separateness from the world, to the coming judgment which is presently to fall upon it. The true posture of the Church—to be waiting for the Son of God from heaven—is held only by individuals here and there. The realization of death and resurrection by the power of faith, and of strangership here *because* of union with Christ in heaven, is the rare exception to that general prevalence of spiritual inertness which seems to regard the lowest standard of attainment, which is consistent with life at all, as the goal of the Spirit's desires while in this mortal body.

which had interrupted conscious fellowship with God. But, longer or shorter as the process of restoration may be, its means are found in the simple recognition of the *truth*, both as it respects the evil, and the grace which on God's part is to meet it. So David felt. He is here cast upon God, *because* he is as he is. The necessity of sin is the opportunity of grace. Faith, knowing this, lives through all, though fearful billows of cumulative evil may well threaten to bury all hope, until the heart of the self-condemned sinner is turned to the remembrance of Him who is overcome of no evil, and whose glory is to rescue and deliver, *for His own name's sake*, the self-ruined vessels of His mercy. David's part is to declare the truth; to justify his Maker in His sayings. God had of old spoken evil of the heart of man, and the son of Jesse had by his own example fully verified His words.

But (verse 5) the strong exercise of conscience leads to a profounder searching into the root and fountain of human wretchedness. *Sinful conception* is an evil anterior to personal transgression: the latter comes of the former as its fatal fruit. Grace, then, if it deal remedially with a sinner, must meet the evil in its source. God is accordingly invoked no longer as a helper in the sinner's work of self-recovery: the work is purely and exclusively His own. What He *requires* in holiness He must *effect* in grace (verse 6). This primal, yet often imperfectly learned truth of Christian doctrine, if once divinely taught in the cross of Jesus, secures the tried believer from despair in the darkest hour, how much soever he may have to loathe himself meanwhile on account of his experienced vileness. Satan cannot work a work of evil in a believer which God has not already counteracted and excelled in measure in the finished work of grace. "Where sin abounded, grace

has superabounded." Atonement once complete is of an eternal validity. In justice therefore, and in faithfulness to Jesus, God forgives continually the confessing sinner. "The Lord hath put away thy sin" was the immediate response of Nathan to David, when the simple confession of his sin was made. God is Himself the healer and restorer of the soul. The broken spirit can be bound up effectually only by His gracious hands. The plenteousness of forgiving mercy re-opens in the heart of the believer the springs of pure desire toward God. Fruitful works of love flow also from the soul that has been thus restored (verse 13). There is no true restoration where this result is not perceived.

I cannot doubt the prophetic bearing of this Psalm upon the nation of Israel. In the latter day they shall consider their ways: repentance and self-loathing will be the result. Blood-guiltiness heavier than that of David has to be removed from that nation. They will become the teachers of the Gentiles, when first the iniquity of their own transgression has been purged away. An unbroken heart, a brow of brass, and a neck of iron have been hitherto the characteristics of unrepentant Israel. But a time of weeping and contrition will arrive. They will turn to the Lord and say, "Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips." Then shall the Lord do good to Zion; He will build again the walls of Jerusalem; and from the place of His name shall the welcome offering be presented and accepted, as in the olden time.⁷

⁷ Perhaps the prophetic bearing of the present Psalm may by some be considered to respect Judah and Jerusalem, exclusively of the other tribes. I think, however, that the unity of the nation is preserved in the mind of the Spirit, when treating thus the subjects of moral responsibility and grace.

PSALM LII.

A SONG of defiant faith in the presence of successful wickedness. God, in His enduring goodness and mercy, is found to be an argument of sure eventual triumph in the midst of the adverse sea of trouble and distress.

The historical circumstances to which the title of this Psalm refers are full of instructive interest.¹ David's conduct was far from blameless. The catastrophe of the priests had arisen from his reception by Ahimelech in the hour of his need. The tale-bearer of blood found his occasion of wickedness from this fact. But this place of refuge had been opened to the fugitive only by a sacrifice of truth. David *lied* to Ahimelech, because he believed that the name of Saul was of weightier authority with him than that of God. In *going* to Ahimelech David acted in faith, according to the liberty of the Divine unction, which made God's ordinances and God's house the natural asylum of the man of His own choice in the hour of his sore distress. But his conduct in the presence of Jehovah's priest was regulated by policy, and not at all by faith.² It is thus that the faith of God's saints has

¹ 1 Sam. xxi. xxii.

² The whole scene, which led in its tragical results to the fulfilment, by the unrighteous decree of Saul, of the Lord's counsel of judgment against the house of Eli, is full of instruction. *God* has no place in it at all. The actors, first and last, are governed by simply human motives. The priest acts as a courtier of Saul, and falls into the snare of destruction which the fear of man spreads for such as postpone God's claims to those of men. There was no inquiry of the Lord. It was far from him to do so in the case of the king's son-in-law. The king's commandment was

often failed. Rightly judging that no reliance may be safely placed on *man*, they have accommodated their conduct to the circumstances of the time. But this is to forget God—to lose sight of Him as the shield and light of our present way. The behaviour of Abraham at the court of Abimelech is an earlier example of this.³ Because he thought the fear of God was not in that place, he chose a lie for his confidence instead of the God of truth and faithfulness. Shuffling and falsehood are the natural expedients of spiritual timidity. God is the believer's strength. If He is forgotten in the presence of difficulties, crookedness is inevitably the result. But the failure of a saint is an *exceptional* thing. It is a violence to the proper bias and direction of the soul. The habitual *purpose* of such is obedience and godly fear. The knowledge which faith has of God as a Saviour and reward is the determinate principle which governs the true believer in his ways.

David's position as an outcast was a result of the Lord's anointing: he was suffering for the truth's sake according to the will of God. In the consciousness, therefore, of being on God's side, he is bold to connect that great name with his actual circumstances. His very failures are those of a man of God. God judges evil in His saints; but the judgment of their evil does not alter their relation to Himself as the chosen vessels of His grace. The personal

his servant's law. Doeg, on the other hand, appears as a stranger in the house of God. He was *detained* there. His interest lay far away from that place. His hope was not in God, but man—in Saul the king, whose person he held in admiration because of advantage. Saul and David are alike indifferent to his heart. He lives only for himself: covetousness is the idolatry of his wickedness. David's person is hateful to him, because his existence was a barrier to his own prospects as a servant of the king, whose title to the throne he felt to be insecure while David lived.

³ Gen. xx. 11.

history of the elders, who obtained through faith a good report, is full of value as an extended illustration of the principle here stated.

Doeg is an apt instance of the subtle activity of the spirit of wickedness as it works under the seared conscience of apostate profession. Lying and malice were his choice, not his necessity. He is willingly against the truth. He lies against men's lives, and freely dips his hand in their blood, in ready subservience to the commandment of unrighteousness. He follows Saul for vineyards and oliveyards, betraying the innocent for the wages of iniquity. God is not his strength, yet he is a mighty man (verses 1, 7). But the end of human selfishness is Divine retribution. God will righteously avenge His name in His own time.

The crafty plottings of the Antichrist against the faithful remnant of Judah may be contemplated in this Psalm. Verse 8 encourages this thought. The destroyer had set himself in the very house of God, driving far away the poor of the flock, whose trust is in Jehovah. But faith, perceiving the signs of near redemption in the ripening triumph of appointed wickedness, can rejoice and sing the song of anticipative deliverance, because of the enduring mercy of God. Power will wither from the rod of wickedness, and the sceptre of dominion shall flourish in the hand of Him who loveth righteousness, and hateth iniquity.

PSALM LIII.

THIS Psalm seems to connect more pointedly the general testimony of the Holy Ghost to the folly of human wickedness, with that especial display of its madness when the very name of *God* shall be denied, and the atheistic confederates of the Wicked One shall be found in the last act of their iniquity by the hand of Divine judgment.

The name of Jehovah does not occur. In this it differs from Psalm xiv. The actual denial of every thing that is called God seems to be already come, and God arises to avenge His name against him who usurps that name, and who counterfeits the attributes of the Divine Majesty through the energy of Satanic power.¹ The remnant of Israel are not only witnesses to the name of Jehovah, as their covenanted refuge, but they confess Him also as the one Creator, in His power and Godhead,² when "the man of the earth" shall be claiming the creature as his own.

Another point of difference to be noticed is that here we have (verse 5) direct mention made of the manner of the crisis. "God hath scattered the bones of him that encampeth against thee: *thou* hast put them to shame, because God hath despised them." Jerusalem, I suppose to be here apostrophized, as the place which bears Immanuel's name.

The fact of the almost verbal repetition of the Spirit's earlier testimony is in itself an impressive one, and when regard is had to the leading topic of both these Psalms, it acquires a mournful and emphatic force. Without pre-

¹ 2 Thess. ii. ; Rev. xiii.

² Rev. xiv. 7.

suming to speak positively in a doubtful point, I may readily avow my assent to the view of those who would refer the former to the Jewish apostasy at the era of the first advent of the Lord, and the latter to the state of Christendom at the second. Great fear was on the multitude at Jerusalem, when by tokens undeniable it was perceived that God is in the generation of the righteous ;³ but a mightier and irremediable dread will visit those assembled hosts who, after proudly beleaguering Jerusalem, will utterly perish at the Lord's rebuke. But with these not unimportant differences, it is evident that the final action of both Psalms exhausts itself in the long-deferred accomplishment of Israel's hope.

PSALM LIV.

THERE is exceeding force as well as beauty in this little Psalm. It displays the proper effect of tribulation in calling forth into exercise the full energies of that faith whose only staff is God. There is an appeal to the righteousness, as well as to the power, of God. His name is felt to be the shield of safety by the soul whose affliction is because of His truth. Faith can never take a personal ground of appeal to God, but as a vessel of mercy the believer can abide the righteous award of Divine judgment. God will then act for His own name, and full deliverance and triumph result to the believer from His faithfulness. God, indeed, is not unrighteous to forget the patience of His saints ; a cloudless conscience may well increase the joy of a man of faith, when drawing nigh the goal of his earthly

³ Comp. Psalm xiv. 5 with Acts ii. 43, and v. 11-13.

race, but it is the *grace of God* on which the soul has leaned throughout its entire weight.¹ It has done and suffered, feared and hoped, with present reference to a Saviour. As having *received mercy*,² it did not faint.

Jesus alone could appeal to God directly, and in His own name. The unspotted purity of His Person gave Him this just claim. But even *He* trusted in God. He would await the Father's pleasure for His own deliverance and justification. God would display Himself in due time as the avenger of His own Elect.

Read in connexion with the historical narrative to which the title refers,³ the present Psalm is full of practical value to the Christian, as a companion of the affliction and patience of Christ, while awaiting the arrival of the promised kingdom. The great point in the moral lesson here presented is, that no change of circumstances can *in itself* afford protection or security to faith. The Ziphim were as little to be trusted as the Gittites. Moreover, the wilderness of Ziph might harbour David's enemies as well as himself. Faith cleaves to God *only*, since He alone is the competent preserver of His saints. They are kept by the power of God through faith. His people are continually under the gracious management of the Father of their spirits, in order to teach them thoroughly this truth. The soul must be raised completely out of creature hope and confidence, in order to know its true stability as Divinely upheld. The truth of God is the girdle of strength to His children in the hour of trial. And when His changeless character as the God of all grace is rested on, according to its manifested revelation in the face of Jesus Christ, no cloud of present adversity can blot out from the believer's view the joy of his eternal portion in his God. For He is

¹ 2 Cor. i. 12.

² 2 Cor. iv. 1.

³ 1 Sam. xxiii. 19; xxvi. 1.

the *Reward* of His people, not less than their present and effective Shield. Hence supplication for deliverance is always accompanied by thanksgiving, where the grace of the Gospel is held fast by faith.⁴ We are in *all* afflictions more than conquerors through Him that loved us.⁵

As in so many other Psalms ascribed to David, the personal experience of the writer becomes a qualification for the Spirit's use of him as the prophetic shadow of the Lord's true King. It is a Messianic Psalm, though its features as such are less distinctly marked than in some other instances.

PSALM LV.

THIS Psalm has a varied subject. In the earlier verses (1-8) we seem to have the voice of God's Elect,¹ when, as a persecuted sufferer for the truth's sake, He opened His complaint to God. Jesus found only hatred where He might have looked for love. He stood as a mark daily aimed at, and often sore wounded by the archers of iniquity, whose tongues of malice and deceit were as bended bows made ready against the patient Witness of the Father. "They cast iniquity upon me, and in wrath they hate me."²

⁴ Phil. iv. 6.

⁵ Rom. viii. 37.

¹ Isaiah xlii. 1.

² There is probably in these verses an allusion to David's own experience when cursed by Shimei. This is valuable in its practical bearing on the possible experience of the believer. David could appeal to God, while profoundly sensible of what it was that had put it in the power of the enemy to speak reproachfully. Failure in a believer, while it seals the lips towards man, leaves them open to Godward, whose mercy and truth are the buckler of His saints. But the general language of this Psalm is far too ample to be the record merely of what David felt and did.

It was thus that Messiah fared among His brethren after the flesh. The very mention of His proper title justified to their minds an imputation of blasphemy.³ They pronounced Him to be a sinner upon the evidence of His Divinest acts of mercy. They willingly gave to Satan the glory of Jehovah their Healer, because of the hatred their hearts bore towards the gracious doer of the works of God: "Say we not well that thou hast a devil?" &c. It was the contrariety of holiness to sin, of light to darkness, of God to man, that produced these results of pain and bitterness to Him who went about doing only good.

The world could not love Jesus. The world will love its own; for like loves like: but He was from above while they were from beneath. Though among them on the Father's business, He was none of theirs. Their thoughts, their lusts, their counsels and imaginations had no place in Him. He lived for God, while all their thought was for themselves. They would none of Him. Yet He came unto *His own*—the creatures of His hand, the nation of His election, and now, as touching His flesh, the very brethren of Him who is the Seed of Abraham—they were thrice His own. But they received Him not. How must the earthly days of the Son of God have been embittered by His finding Himself everywhere the object of suspicion or aversion on the part of those whom He had come to bless! He had left the Father's bosom in order to become, in love, the bearer of their sickness, and to charge Himself with their infirmities. In grace He had come as the Lamb of God into the world. The words which He spoke were spirit and were life; and if He spoke, it was for their sakes, that they might be saved.⁴ Grace and truth in all their fulness dwelt in Him. Sin, covered with a

³ John viii. ix.

⁴ John v. 34.

lying and unavailing shelter of hypocrisy, was in them. They esteemed themselves, and therefore He was despicable in their eyes. The very sinners whose desperate wretchedness had moved His Divine compassion to be the minister of their need, to work the work of their salvation, were they who sat in judgment on Him as an evil-doer, and esteemed Him well worthy of a shameful death. It must needs thus be.

A touching insight is afforded by verses 4-8 into the reality and tenderness of the Divine Sufferer's sensibilities, as they were excited by the circumstances through the midst of which His path of daily human experience led Him, as the doer of the Father's will. He would fain have quitted the scene of vanity and wickedness. The deep subtlety of human hypocrisy, and the complicated maze of human selfishness, continually vexed His righteous soul. No one circumstance of merely human growth which accompanied His progress along the ways which led Him to the goal of His self-devotion could cheer the spirit of the Son of God. He found and trod the path of obedience unto death, in the loneliness of One whose very nature isolated Him in a world which knew not God. All His refreshments were from above. In communion with the Father, whose deep purposes of mercy He had come to serve, He could rejoice in spirit when most removed from every human source of solace or of strength. But with desires which could find their rest only in the place which for a season He had left, the Man of sorrows patiently remained a willing sojourner with men, until the works of Him that sent Him should be fully wrought. And the disciple is invited to partake his Master's cup. How does the tried spirit of Christian faith echo the wish expressed in verse 6, when, wearied with a conflict which

often seems almost a hopeless one, it longs for that rest which remaineth for the people of God! A right desire, yet not to be indulged to a forgetting of the purposes of our present calling. God regards such desires as of His own Spirit, and sends an exhortation of patience still for the remainder of the "little while."⁵

Verses 9–15 change the tone of complaint and supplication into an invocation of righteous judgment upon the treacherous dealers of iniquity. He had visited the city where Jehovah's name was held in outward honour—the city of solemnities, but had found violence and deceit in the midst of the habitation of justice. There seems to be in verses 12–14 a particular allusion to the treason of Judas, but it is exhibited in close connection with the moral character of the nation as a treacherous dealer from the womb.

Verses 16–18 express the faith and patience of Him who trusted in God. They are of obvious application also to those who, as partakers of Christ, are called to continue in prayer, while fulfilling in tribulation the will of Him who called them.⁶ The power of God is the stay of the saint's endurance; but it is *through faith* that he is kept.⁷

Verse 19 is of general application. Judgment is ordained from of old. Long-suffering mercy defers its execution. But the goodness of God, instead of leading men to repentance, is turned into a shield of unbelief, to resist the testimony given to the coming wrath. Prolonged impunity extinguishes at length all fear of judgment in the hearts of men.⁸

Verses 20, 21 point, I conceive, to the Antichrist. This gives a specific distinctness to many general expressions in the Psalm; and seems to identify, morally, the position

⁵ Heb. x. 36, 37. ⁶ Heb. ii. 13. ⁷ 1 Peter i. 5. ⁸ Eccles. viii. 11.

of the lonely Son of God, in the days of His flesh, with that of the remnant, who shall bear amid the same people His last reproach at the closing of the evil day.

Full of precious meaning is the verse which follows: "Cast thy burden⁹ upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee."¹ The believer knows what manner of burden he has cast upon the Saviour of his soul. Coming, in the sore grief of a sin-burdened conscience, the soul finds peace in Jesus. He enters, and fills with His satisfying presence, the heart that by faith is open to receive His love. Burdens of circumstance lose their weight whenever the name of Christ can be connected with them in the heart of faith; and there is *no* burden which a contrite spirit feels, that he is not ready to receive at our hands. There is sustaining power in Him, who nourishes His chosen with His flesh and blood.² Yet too often it happens, that those who rest the burden of their soul's salvation upon Jesus, find it hard to trust Him with some paltry care. More especially this verse relates to any who may be called to bear the active hostility of the enemy as suffering confessors of His name. It is a word of cheer addressed to such.³

The Psalm concludes with the recorded judgment of God against bloody and deceitful men—the diligent doers of their father's work⁴—whose opportunity of wickedness shall be abruptly closed. Their sun shall suddenly go down in the very noonday of their strength.

⁹ יְהַבֶּהּ: "*Id quod tibi dedit s. imposuit; i. e., sortem tuam.*"—GESEN. This version, which is followed by DE WETTE, "*Wirf auf Jehovah dein Geschick,*" seems most faithfully to represent the original.

¹ יְבִלְבֶּלְךָ: A truly expressive term, well rendered by the LXX. Αὐτός σε διαθρέψει.

² John vi. 54-57.

³ Compare John xvi. 33.

⁴ John viii. 44.

PSALM LVI.

DREAD of his too mighty enemies, mixed with and surmounted by unshaken confidence in God, brings out of David's heart this very beautiful Psalm. But the Spirit of God spake by him. Expressions, therefore, are found in it of a wider bearing than his own experience. As an experimental Psalm, it is one of high interest and value; but if respect be had to its prophetic character, it seems to relate rather to the afflictions of Christ, which are to be endured in the last time by the suffering remnant of His earthly people, than to the personal experience of the Lord Himself.

Gentile tyranny is appealed from to God as the Avenger of His own truth. "In anger cast down the peoples, O God" (verse 7). Man¹ is the oppressor (verse 1). The nations are the objects of the Spirit's denunciation; but their enmity is against one whose shield is the only God. He is invoked with threefold emphasis—as God, as Jehovah, and as Most High.² Atheistic wickedness and full-blown human pride are in array against the confessor of the only God.

¹ עוֹשֵׂי Compare Psalm x. 18.

² Though, with respect to this last expression, some doubt may be entertained. The usual word עֲלִיּוֹת is not here found, but מְרוֹם a word properly signifying "exaltation," and used in a variety of senses in Scripture, but never (unless the present passage be an example) applied immediately to God. Of the old translators, HIERON. alone agrees with our English version, rendering the word in the vocative, "*Altissime.*" DE WETTE has: "*Viele befehlen mich in Uebermuth.*" LUTHER translates the word adverbially by "*Stolzighlich.*"

The tried Christian may find precious counsel of strength and comfort in this Psalm; for it is the utterance of a heart animated by the sure conviction of Divine faithfulness and sufficiency, while, at the same time, acutely sensible of its own weakness and danger. "What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee." There is a rich tone of strong and confident assurance throughout. The loins of the mind are girt with strength, through faith in the word of promise.

Verses 4 and 10 are especially to be noted as containing the key-note of true spiritual praise: "*In God* I will praise *His word*," &c. The promises of God are, to the believer, pledges of His faithfulness and power. He is able to perform.³ A *living* man lives only by the word which proceedeth from His mouth. All the Divine knowledge which the children have is by that word. Faith never thinks of God apart from the revelation of His truth. Natural idealism does, and, mounting on the wings of high-thoughted vanity, is borne to and fro amid the windy eddies of an ever-shifting fancy. Cloudy speculations and mystic abstractions may occupy and mislead the natural mind, when constitutionally of a religious temperament; for religious sentiment is quite consistent with the absence of all vital power. Faith, on the contrary, is a recipient from a source without and above itself, living still on that which first produced it.⁴ The word of God is the authentic witness to the heart which He has quickened of the purpose and ability of God to bless. Specialties of promise are to the child of God but clauses in that deed of universal gift, whereby in Christ *all* promise is affirmed and everlastingly secured to the believing soul. The exercised disciple knows well the value of the word. For he knows

³ Rom. iv. 21.

⁴ Rom. x. 17.

that from thence has been derived to his own soul all that he knows and rests on of salvation and of hope. It is to him the *word of life*. In the mind of such, creation stands by that same word. It is by the word of God, moreover, that the dissolution of what is now shall take place. Especially, it is by this means that faith learns the manner and measure of the love of God. Joy and peace come of believing, and faith is by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. The wisdom which is unto salvation is in that word. The believer finds, in every sentence of recorded truth, a fragment of Christ who is the total fulness of all truth. The promises, which in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, are now unto the Divine glory by those who honour God by trusting in His word.⁵ They are to His dishonour on the part of others, who, despising the word, yet dream religiously, and speak of God according to the folly of their own sin-darkened minds. But God will justify His sayings in due time. Meanwhile, the Spirit, who beareth witness, is Himself the truth. He is the Divine realization to the believer of the certainty of that hope which maketh not ashamed.

An interesting distinction may be noticed in the latter of these verses: there is a change in the Divine name. In the former, *God* is opposed to man, from whom the fear comes, as having spoken in the truth of His holiness and power. His name of eternal majesty is put in contrast with perishable flesh. He is thus the fortress of His trusting people, who may set up their banners in His name. *Jehovah*, in the latter, is cited as the eternal witness of His own special covenant, whose letter contains the promise of the Deliverer, the hope of Israel.

Verse 8 is full of comfort to the man whose sorrow is

⁵ *Notes on Second Corinthians, i. 20.*

according to God, and whose wanderings are willingly discovered to his eye. He will exalt and stablish in the light of His own countenance the self-abased expectants of His mercy whose desire is toward His way.

The last verse is of the highest practical value in seasons of spiritual conflict. It is exactly the language which the Spirit of Christ often brings from the lips of a Christian who, with clear discernment of the cross as God's work of deliverance, is filled with despondency and faintings of heart from his past and present experience of himself. Desires of holiness are checked and discouraged in the soul that ponders mournfully its past discomfitures, until God is remembered as its present and abiding strength. For by His one work of effectual deliverance He is become the everlasting refuge of His people.⁶ His servant shall be holden up, for He is able to make him to stand.⁷ While thus mistrusting himself, the believer may boldly say, "The Lord is my helper." Satan may watch him, enemies may be around him, but the defence of his head is the Redeemer of his soul. Christ is in him the hope of salvation. The Filler of *all things* fills with the saving presence of Divine power all the circumstances of evil through which His people have to pass. He careth for the sheep.

PSALM LVII.

A KINDRED strain to the last. It is a very lovely and triumphant expression of confidence and rejoicing in God. He is celebrated in His majesty as the most High,¹ but in

⁶ 1 Peter i. 21.

⁷ Rom. xiv. 4.

¹ Here it is עֶלְיוֹן the usual word.

the power of a faith that knows Him as the performer of all things for the dependent vessel of His praise. It is in an evil crisis that this trust is felt, but the stress of evil is the furnace in which faith is proved. Dens and caves of the earth have resounded many times with acceptable praise, through the faith of them that are kept by the power of God.² In the royal palace was Saul, companioned by an evil spirit from God. In the cave of Adullam was the outcast upon whom rested the true unction of the kingdom. And God was there. His presence, and the outspread shelter of His faithfulness and power, made David glad with an exceeding joy. His heart is fixed. For the quiet assurance of Divine acceptance has stilled all fear, though danger lurked on every side.

The practical value of this most beautiful Psalm to the believer cannot but be felt by such as have begun to learn what rejoicing in tribulation really means.³ But its chief beauty appears when we regard it in its prophetic aspect. The desires which fill the heart of David as he sings are loftier than could be satisfied by his own accession to the throne of Israel. "Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens; let thy glory be above all *the earth*," is his prayer (verse 5). Nations and peoples are to be the audience, in whose presence the praises of the God of Israel must be sung (verse 9).

The occasion of this praise was to be the riddance of the adversaries of the Lord, and the exaltation of the throne of His anointed (verses 2, 3). "God shall send forth His mercy and His truth." The expectant heir of salvation, and the desponding outcast of Israel alike await this. He shall send Jesus, when the times of refreshing shall have

² 1 Peter v. 9; Heb. xi. 38.

³ Rom. v. 3.

fully come, which shall cause Israel again to blossom and bud, and to fill the face of the world with fruit.⁴ Meanwhile the Christian, living amid the ripening evils of the latter day, is kept in expectation of the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. Till then his calling is to suffer, but with joy, rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation—enduring it according to the power of God—keeping himself in the love of God, praying in the Holy Ghost,⁵ looking for and hasting the coming of the day of God.⁶

Full of blessed meaning is the tenth verse. We know Him who with His saving presence now pervades all space in the fulness of the finished mercy of redemption.⁷ Singing and making heart-melody to the Lord ought now to be the constant habit of every one whose heart is fixed in the stability of perfect grace. His soul is among lions, but his salvation is ready to be revealed.⁸

PSALM LVIII.

A SOLEMN judgment expressed by the Spirit of the heart-searching God, upon the thoughts and ways of the natural man, together with a prophetic warning of the sure arising of the God to whom vengeance belongeth, who will show Himself to be God by His judgments in the earth (verse 11).¹

It is a Psalm of very wide as well as practical application. The general world of sinful and unreal profession is passed morally in review, the subject contemplated being

⁴ Acts iii. 20, 21; Isaiah xxvii. 6. ⁵ Jude 20, 21.

⁶ 2 Peter iii. 12. ⁷ Eph. iv. 9, 10. ⁸ 1 Peter i. 5. ¹ Isaiah xxvi.

“the sons of men.”² The leading features of religious apostasy are always the same; what describes Jewish wickedness applies equally, only with augmented force, to the corruption of Christianity. The men of the world, whatever their nominal profession, walk in the path which seems good in their own eyes. The character of that way of wilfulness, together with its fearful end, are powerfully depicted in the present Psalm.

Verse 2, applicable at any stage in the progress of apostasy, seems to respect especially the time when evil, having long grown and ripened under the opportunity of Divine long-suffering, is at last openly established and systematized in the earth.

Verses 3–5, while describing the malignant features of human corruption, trace the evil to its source. “As soon as they are *born*,” &c. Falsehood is the natural language of a sin-corrupted nature, because *God* is denied. The highest conceptions of the natural man are misrepresentations of the truth. The rudiments of the world can teach no right knowledge, either of God or of man. Human communications, where not morally corrupt, are at their best essentially vain. It is the mouth of God alone that opens with the word of life. But men naturally have no ear for this; faith alone hearkens to a word which withers into vanity every human pretention, that salvation and strength may be perceived and rested on in God alone.

² The opening clause of the first verse has been variously rendered. It stands thus: *הַאִמְנָם אֱלֹהִים צָרָק הַתְּבַרְוֹן* *Ei álēthōs āra dikaiosýnēn* *λαλεῖτε.*—LXX. And so *HIERON.* *GESENIUS* has “*Num revera silentium justitiæ proloquimini?*” i.e. *Num revera justitiā, quæ tamdiu siluit et obmutuisse videtur, utimini in decretis vestris?* *DE WETTE*, as usual, follows him: “*Sprecht ihr wirklich verstummtes Recht?*” It seems difficult to justify the translation of *אֱלֹהִים* into “congregation,” as in the Authorized Version. That of *GESENIUS* appears to me the best.

Through all the successive dispensations of God, nature's evil consistency with itself has been preserved. Men have been deaf to the voice of Divine wisdom, and attentive only to the persuasion of their own lusts. First willingly ignorant of God, and then alienated from the life of God because of that ignorance, they are fitly described by the Spirit of truth³ "as by nature children of wrath."⁴ Wise in their own esteem, they are in reality "foolish, disobedient, deceived;"⁵ settled upon the lees of natural corruption, and abhorring still the truth which alone can free them from their bondage. The world has no ear for God when speaking in the Gospel of His Son, for it is filled and satisfied by the lie of the devil, which deceives the whole world. God sets forth the claims of Jesus as the only Lord. Men's hearts refuse that homage to the just God and the Saviour, because they are naturally the willing slaves of sin. "Serving divers lusts and pleasures."⁶ "Lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God."⁷ Divine wisdom essays indeed to charm by new and marvellous words. God has become a suitor to His creature—speaking persuasively of excellent things—alluring self-ruined sinners to the untried blessedness of free forgiveness.⁸ Peace of conscience is His ready offer to those who know no peace, through the propitiation which is in the blood of His own Son. Eternal life is pressed as a free gift upon their acceptance, whose natural condition is to be under death, with prospect of eternal judgment after death. Glory, honour, and immortality, a kingdom of perpetual blessedness, an inheritance incorruptible, unfading, undefiled, are brought within the easy reach of those who are *willing* to be blessed of God in Christ. But alas for man! it is the will that is the one

³ Rom. i. 28; Eph. iv. 18.⁴ Eph. ii. 3.⁵ Titus iii. 3.⁶ Titus iii. 3.⁷ 2 Tim. iii. 4.⁸ 2 Cor. v. 20.

thing lacking. Men know that God is no liar in the word of His grace. Conscience within them, misery and death around them, and the heavy hand of the consuming vanity which rests upon them with a daily increasing pressure, till it bows them to the grave, confirm, with a distinctness not to be mistaken or avoided, the truth of God's testimony to the ruin of His creature. Men know, moreover, that the demands of Divine justice are not unequal, and that the sentence of Holiness upon sin is according to *truth*.⁹ But the lie which first made man an exile from God's garden of delights, by teaching him to cease from his Creator and build his hopes upon himself, still holds its power as a spell of destruction over all the world.

But God is not mocked, nor are His purposes of doubtful issue. He has given all to Jesus. Man and his works are to be judged by *Him*. That which now flourishes in "man's day" and as the fruit of human effort, for the exaltation of the sinful creature in his own esteem, will be as lighted tow in the day when the breath of the Lord shall kindle into the flame of a perpetual destruction both the maker and his work.

The latter verses have, I think, a clear reference to Israel in the day when Jehovah shall avenge His people. The language of verses 6-9, compared with that found in Zech. xiv. 12, 13, is not unimportant, as a means of enabling us to assign a definite intention to this Psalm as a prophetic testimony. With respect to the general principle stated in the concluding verses, it is familiar to the Christian as a confessor of the righteous God.² The Spirit of prophecy, detailing thus the growth and ripeness of human evil, calls upon God to arise. Nothing can meet the desires of the

⁹ Rom. ii. 2.¹ Isaiah i. 31; xxx. 33.² 2 Thess. i.

Spirit but the introduction of the appointed Heir into the manifested possession of His inheritance. Hitherto the testimony to the coming judgment has been as little regarded as the overtures of saving mercy. But the time is at hand when the derided hope and testimony of believers will be vindicated in power as the true sayings of God. "So that a man shall say, "Verily, there is a reward for the righteous; verily, He is a God that judgeth *in the earth.*"⁸

PSALM LIX.

ASSUMING the authenticity of its title, this Psalm affords a remarkable example of the power of the Spirit of Christ to expand a personal incident in the life of His afflicted servant into a wide and comprehensive prophecy of national mercy and deliverance in the latter day. Instances of this kind have already been frequently before us. None have, however, occurred in which the type and the reality have had a closer circumstantial agreement.

The opening verses (1-4) are a just expression of what David might well have felt when appealing to the righteous Judge amid the unprovoked aggression of iniquity. But David was the anointed of Jehovah. As such he was the hope of Israel. The nation and its destinies were bound up in him; the name of the God of Israel was upon him. In fighting against him Saul was contending with God. To quench the light of Israel, to turn the hearts of the people from the true champion of the Lord's deliverance, that his own name might be had in honour, and his own house be established, was the counsel of Saul. It was the attempt of unsanctified nature to obstruct the counsels of

⁸ John xvii. 23; James iii. 18; Isaiah ii. 10-22.

Jehovah, and to perpetuate in wilfulness a title which had attached to him conditionally only by the grace of God.¹

In a still more emphatic manner will this proud infatuation be exemplified when the wilful King, whose lofty imaginations and defiant words are against the most high God, shall stand up against the Prince of princes, and speak marvellous things against the God of gods, and shall plant the tabernacles of his palaces between the seas in the glorious holy mountain.² The remnant of them that fear Jehovah's name, and wait for the rising of the Star of Jacob, will urge in that day their appeal to the God of Israel. The Spirit of prophecy, looking onward to that time, gives utterance in the next verse to the righteous intercession of Immanuel against the far-extended conspiracy of wickedness. "Awake to visit *all the nations*." Such is the call of the Spirit addressed to Jehovah, the God of hosts, the God of Israel. The language of verse 6, repeated at verse 14, seems to describe the unhallowed eagerness of the armies of the beast, when, in the evening of man's day, they shall be found beleaguering the city of Jehovah's name.³

Verses 7-10 contrast the moral features of the conflict-

¹ Saul was the acceptable choice of the people after they had rejected the Lord. They looked upon his stature, and judged him to be without peer in Israel. (1 Sam. x. 23, 24.) But he proved no better than a gin and a snare to them that trusted in his shadow. The nation, ruined by his wickedness, is delivered by David. In like manner, the people that rejected the soft-flowing waters of Shiloah shall be overwhelmed by the flood to which they will voluntarily open their land when, deceived by flatteries, they receive him whose coming is in his own name. That the bulk of the nation is for a time willingly subject to Antichrist is, I think, clear from Scripture. (Dan. ix. 27, and xi. 32; Isaiah xxviii. 15; John x. 43.)

² Dan. xi. 45.

³ Isaiah xxix. 2-8, and Zech. xii. should be examined in connexion with these verses.

ing parties. Carnal self-confidence and atheistic hardness of heart are arrayed, with all the appalling accompaniments of overwhelming physical force, against the small remainder of the house of Jacob. But there is confidence and hopeful rejoicing on their side.⁴ God will act. His name is committed in this controversy. The rights of His anointed are to be asserted, and the truth of His Covenant to be maintained. "The God of *my* mercy shall prevent me." There is a mercy which remains in sure reserve for those who, though long reckoned as enemies, because they refused the gracious message of the Gospel, are still beloved for the fathers' sakes, and to be remembered with an everlasting kindness when the days of their warfare shall come to their appointed end. The Lord will have His enemies and theirs in derision in that day.⁵

With respect to the following verses (11-15) the language presents some difficulties. In the fifth verse he had said, "Awake to visit *all* the heathen; be not merciful to any wicked transgressors." Like many other Psalms of kindred tone, the one before us seems to present a twofold view of the actings of God. First, as the Judge of all the world, He visits the transgressions of the nations generally—avenging *Himself* as the Holy One upon sinners and their ways.⁶ Secondly, He acts in fulfilment of covenant promise, as the Deliverer and Avenger of the people which He calls *His own*.

⁴ The beginning of the ninth verse is of doubtful interpretation. עָזוֹ אֱלֹהֵיךָ אֲשַׁמְרָה Of the varied translations given, DE WETTE's seems to me the best: "*Ihre Stärke—ich flüchte zu dir.*" LUTHER's is similar: "*Vor ihrer Macht halte ich mich zu dir.*" There is, I think, an allusion to the Satanic power through which the workings of man's depraved will seek their ultimate accomplishment. Opposed to this is God, the high place of safety for His people.

⁵ Psalm ii. 4, 5.

⁶ Isaiah xxiv. 21; xxvi. 21.

The *manner* of visitation seems to be referred to in the present passage. There is the actual destruction of all who are found in hostile array against the citadel of Zion. There is, moreover, the total abasement of Gentile pride, the complete subduing to vassalage under Jacob of those who had lorded it over them, in the wanton insolence of power, while they lay under the Lord's rebuke.⁷ As the herdmen and vinedressers of the restored nation, they will be a perpetual memorial to the people of Immanuel of what strength it was that had humbled them beneath their feet (verse 11).⁸ The broken and dispersed remainder of the nations, on the other hand, will thus learn and witness to the ends of the earth that God in very deed is King in Jacob (verse 13).⁹

The Psalm closes with a sweet strain of anticipative gladness—the joy of the morning when, in unclouded brightness, the Sun of righteousness shall shine with renovating power upon the ancient desolations of Jacob. The God of his mercy will be the staff of Israel's confidence in that day. He will be known in the palaces of Jerusalem as a refuge and an everlasting praise.

PSLAM LX.

THE title of this Psalm relates to an incident of which there is no distinct historical notice in the Bible. It may, therefore, be disregarded, and we may consider the Psalm in its purely prophetic character.

Its general drift is very clear. There is a recognition on the part of the afflicted people of the hand of God in all the national calamities. He is confessed in His dealings.

⁷ Isaiah xiv. 1, 2. ⁸ Isaiah lx. lxi. ⁹ Micah vii. 16, 17.

They humble themselves under His mighty hand (verses 1-3). We do not find any express mention of sin as the moving cause of the breaches in the Lord's inheritance. It is to be remarked, in reference to this, that the covenant name of Jehovah does not occur; nor even have we the expression "our God," though it is the cry of His people that goes up. God, whose name had been set upon Israel, had been displeased. He had broken the land and showed His people hard things. The heathen saw it, and their strength revived. In the prostration of Israel there seemed to pass away as a cloud their former dread, and their very remembrance of Jehovah. They were bold to invade again His land, and to vaunt themselves in the strength of their own power, when the people who bore that name upon their banners proved palpably inferior in might to the nations whose boast was of their idols and themselves. God's name was had in contempt by the uncircumcised through the diminishing and discomfiture of His people. Faith recognizes this. The nation is broken; the power of the enemy is round about them, and the waters seem ready to overflow even to the neck.

But the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him. A banner is held fast in the hands of the believing remnant whose trust is in God. His name who is the God of promise will be openly displayed by such as continue in His fear (verse 4). Of old that banner was set up, when in the wilderness Jehovah vowed a conflict of extermination against the haters of His own;¹ and with Him there is no change. Nor will He abandon finally the name of His holiness to the derision of the heathen. What He had done in Israel He had done because of that name—because He *knew* His people, and by His very discipline would bring

¹ Exodus xvii. 14-16.

them more effectually to a knowledge of Himself.² The vision of mercy might seem to linger in its fulfilment, but His counsels from of old are faithfulness and truth. In those is continuance, and they shall be saved. He will arise for His own name and show Himself to be their God.

In the fifth verse the ground of the ancient mercy is stated. "That *thy beloved,*" &c. "He *loved* the people."³ From Israel's childhood He had loved him, and had called His son out of Egypt.⁴ "Jacob have I loved,"⁵ is the unrepented acknowledgment of the Rock that begat him. It is thus that the Spirit of Christ here takes up the claim of the nation as the destined vessel of God's praise among the families of the earth. He will save them with His own *right hand*.

Verses 6-10. God had spoken in His holiness. Faith praises magnificently the word of God in what follows.⁶ As He had said, so would it surely be. The inheritance which God had sworn to give should surely be divided by Him to whom the promises were made. The Heir of promise is Jehovah's Christ,⁷ who will assert His dominion in the appointed time. The once dried root of Ephraim shall send forth shoots of freshness and of strength.⁸ The God who has cast him away to be a wanderer among the nations shall gather him again. The land of Joseph shall be blessed. The ten thousands of Ephraim and the thousands of Manasseh⁹ shall cover the fair land of their inheritance, whose glorious beauty shall no more be as a fading flower, because the dew of Jehovah's blessing shall no more be withheld. The fruit of the fruitful will then be found to be in God, and not in

² Amos iii. 2.

³ Deut. xxxiii. 3.

⁴ Hosea xi. 1.

⁵ Mal. i. 2.

⁶ Compare Psalm lvi. 4, 10.

Gal. iii. 16.

⁸ Hosea ix. 16; xiv. 5.

⁹ Deut. xxxiii. 17.

man.¹ The Maker of the blessing will be rejoiced in by the wise-hearted receivers of His favour: for the long-enduring hardness of the stony heart shall then have been taken away, and a new heart, full written by the finger of the God of truth and grace, will be worthily inditing in the children of the covenant the praises of their God and of their King. Ephraim is yet to be the strength of His head, who will crown Himself with the chosen nation of His praise.² The Lawgiver, whose word will be heard and obeyed to the utmost coasts of the earth, finding everywhere obedience, whether willing or constrained,³ shall have His seat in Judah. Christian faith already rejoices in Him who numbers among His titles that of "the Lion of the tribe of Judah."⁴ In that day the earth shall know Him as her only Governor and God. It will be full then of His praise. The hands of Judah will be sufficient for Him in that day.⁵ Moab shall be smitten, and Edom be for a possession, when the Star of Jacob shall arise, for whom dominion is ordained.⁶

The actual conquests of the son of Jesse, which paved the way for the peaceful accession of the mighty and undisputed sceptre of Solomon, doubtless warmed the heart of the sweet singer of Israel with joyous exultation in the God of his own deliverance.⁷ But being a prophet,

¹ Hosea xiv. 8.

² Isaiah lxii. 3; Zech. ix. 16.

³ Gen. xlix. 10. "Unto Him shall the gathering of the people be." This is a very unhappy translation. The words are וְלוֹ יִקְרָה עַמִּים literally "and His shall be the obedience of nations. The word יִקְרָה occurs twice only in Scripture. In Prov. xxx. 17 it is rightly rendered "to obey," the verb instead of the substantive being idiomatically preferred by the authorized translators. The LXX. render: *Kai avros προσδοκία ἐθνῶν*. DE WETTE, following GESSENIUS, has: "Und ihm Gehorchen die Völker." DIODATI translates it exactly: "*Ed inverso lui sarà l'ubbidienza de' popoli.*"

⁴ Rev. v. 5.

⁵ Deut. xxxiii. 7. ⁶ Num. xxiv. 17-19; Isaiah xi. 14. ⁷ 2 Sam. viii.

he had not only a tongue of utterance to speak of things to come, but probably, as one deeply versed in God, he perceived the future bearing of this noble strain.⁸ He knew that firm dominion could rest with Him alone who is intrinsically just.

In verse 11 we have the recognition, on the part of the nation, of the lesson which they had found it hard to learn. But it will be thoroughly understood by them in that day. They will *feel* and know, as well as confess, that flesh is indeed grass, and of no profit. They will cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils. The shout of a king will then once more be heard among them. According to the ancient deliverances, so will the arm of the Lord be bared for their defence. It is He that shall tread down the enemies of His name, and exalt the humbled people to inherit His own land.

PSALM LXI.

A TRULY blessed Psalm, full of richest comfort to the tried spirit of Christian faith, as well as deeply interesting in its prophetic bearing. In the latter point of view it seems to stand related to the two Psalms immediately following.

It is a cry of faith, seeking to God, not as to one unknown, but as a shelter and defence already known and proved in former trials (verse 3); confided in, therefore, and waited on for sure deliverance, while the heart's heaviness is great because of manifold temptations (verse 2).

I recognize in the second verse the voice of the Spirit of Immanuel, uttering, in the broken-hearted remnant,

⁸ 2 Sam. xxiii. 3.

the prayer of remembrance, when from the dark and distant places of the earth into which the nation had been scattered for its iniquity¹ they shall turn again to the Rock of their strength.² Calling to mind the ancient deliverances, they shall turn as prisoners of hope to the stronghold³—to the name of the mighty God.⁴

The latter verses connect the expected deliverance with the glory of Jesus as the anointed King, under whose sceptre alone the united tribes of the Lord's inheritance will be settled, in the quiet resting-places reserved for them, in the day when the reproach of their widowhood shall be taken away. That King's life shall be prolonged indeed; for Christ, being risen from the dead, dieth no more. Mercy and truth, promised of old to the fathers, and eternally fulfilled in Jesus, shall keep abidingly upon the throne of His dominion the anointed Minister of Israel's peace.

Looking at the Psalm more practically, we find its keynote in the second verse—"Lead me to the Rock that is higher than I." Christian faith may find itself severely tried. God tries it purposely; Satan, again, tempts it: but the heaviness with which the soul of a believer may become acquainted in the secret exercise of his spirit before God tends in its results to more abundant joy in Him. The end of God, in dealing with those who are not bastards but sons,⁵ is to acquaint them more perfectly with His

¹ I think it not unlikely that there may be in this Psalm a reference to those who are described in Rev. xii. 14-17 under the figure of a woman and her seed, as the special objects of the devil's last rage, but who keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus—this last expression being, perhaps, equivalent to the Messianic prophecy generally (Rev. xix. 10), or more strictly relating, possibly, to the words spoken prophetically in Matt. xxiv. by the Lord Himself.

² Deut. xxx. ³ Zech. ix. 12. ⁴ Isaiah x. 21. ⁵ Heb. xii. 8.

own way—to render them more wisely conversant with Him as a Saviour God. While any lurking root of pride, or any unwithered growth of self-righteousness remains unjudged in the soul, God cannot fully manifest Himself in Christ. The heart, when brought truly to a sense of its own helplessness, ceases from itself. The mist which surrounded it then rises, and the glory of Christ as the Rock of its salvation becomes distinctly manifest. God in Christ is found to be a present refuge. Out of weakness is the soul of the believer made strong, when simply given up through Christ into the hands of God. “*Lead me.*” And what the Church now finds will Israel also find, when, taking words of needy yet faithful prayer upon his lips, he turns again to seek the Lord.⁶ *He* will then be known as the fruitful dew which shall clothe with the beauty of Lebanon the once dry and sapless branch. Often a believer has to learn the lesson of practical dependence in a painful way. The private aims of the heart are not easily extinguished. Steps are taken and plans are formed which, if allowed to grow to their issue, would remove the soul farther than ever from the presence of God. But the Father of mercies knows how to wither these flowers of our painting, and by reducing the soul to a sense of its intrinsic poverty and weakness, to draw it with renewed earnestness of desire to the Rock which is higher than itself, to find therein its everlasting strength and joy.

A Christian is never really in a spiritual state who does not daily feel his need of coming to Jesus, who is not conscious of being daily drawn there by the Spirit of truth, as to the necessary supply of his soul’s hunger, as well as the desired object of his delight. “He that eateth me shall live by me.” “Without me, ye can do *nothing*,” &c.

⁶ Hosea xiv.

Hard sayings to the natural ear, but the very light and joy of the believer's inner man.

The tabernacle of God is the dwelling of His saints (verse 4). The covert of His wings is the natural refuge of His children from the presence of the enemy. Both these things are opened, in the person of Jesus, to the believer now. In the remotest dreariness of earthly circumstance, or the darkest hour of spiritual conflict, he is still *a son*; as such he suffers, and as such he hopes. Nor shall that hope ever make ashamed. As a King shall He dwell for ever before God, through the grace which has already made Him to be accepted in the Beloved.⁷ The Spirit who now witnesses these things shall ere long change his bodily condition from mortality to life.⁸

PSALM LXII.

THE cry of suffering faith, which found its utterance in the foregoing Psalm, now rises to a calm and sober assertion of the experienced sufficiency of God. Silently awaiting (verse 1) the hour of His salvation, the sufferer for His name is able meanwhile to stand as a watchman on the high place of his defence, and to speak, with the lips of the wise-hearted and in faithful testimony, words, whether of warning (verse 10), or of comfort (verse 8), or of solemn denunciation (verses 3, 4), as a witness for God in the midst of human wickedness and unbelief.

It is a beautiful and very precious Psalm. To the Christian, under his character of a "man of God," it is of

⁷ Rom. v. 17; Rev. i. 6.

⁸ Rom. viii. 11; Phil. iii. 21.

exceeding value and most abundant comfort. For it speaks the genuine language of that confidence and rejoicing of hope which is the proper portion of the man in whose heart the word of Jesus has been mixed with faith. The Rock, which in the foregoing Psalm was the object of the fainting soul's desire, is now felt to be the firm supporter of the foot of faith (verses 2, 6).

This is both the beginning and the measure of true spiritual strength. The soul that has ceased from self-trust in every shape, and terminated its wanderings in quest of peace at the cross of the Son of God, is fixed for eternity upon the Rock of salvation. The true believer *knows* the God on whom he waits. The dangers and conflicts which threaten him are viewed in juxtaposition to the Divine security of his defence (verses 3, 4). Craft and power, animated by relentless and perpetual hate, are evermore about the path of them that love the Lord.¹ They have been set upon an excellency in Christ, to cast them down from which the world, the devil, and the flesh are banded in continual league. The heart that is truly being taught of God is well aware of this, and, with an ever-present consciousness of personal impotency for all good, finds watchfulness and godly fear to be the necessary companions of his daily course.² Yet this wholesome dread of self and of Satan, instead of weakening his confidence in God, serves but to drive him closer to the only arm of his salvation and his strength. "I shall not be *greatly* moved," is the measured utterance of incipient spiritual experience, which seems to acquire a firmer and more unqualified expression (verse 6) as the soul attains, through heavy but successful conflict, the firm maturity and manhood of its faith.³

¹ 1 Peter v. 8. ² 1 Peter i. 17; Heb. iv. 1. ³ 1 John ii. 14.

But full of practical value as this Psalm appears to be to the Christian, it is plainly Jewish in its ultimate interpretation. The Spirit of Christ, who will fill the chosen witnesses of truth in the closing days of evil, seems to speak in this Psalm with more especial reference to the internal condition of the Jewish people. They will be, as it respects the mass of the nation and their rulers, in covenant with death and at agreement with hell.⁴ There is, however, a remnant left of them that fear the Lord. The Spirit addresses, apparently, this remnant in verse 8. "Trust in Him at all times, *ye people*;"⁵ pour out your heart before Him. God is a refuge *for us*." The believing remnant alone carries the sympathies of Messiah; and is regarded by Him as the nucleus of the nation which is to be wholly righteous in the day of the Lord.⁶ The rest are but as dross and tin, to be purged away by the spirit of judgment and by the spirit of burning.⁷ The hypocrisy and wickedness of the ungodly nation seem to be referred to in verses 3, 4. The sharp sword of the Spirit rips open unsparingly the refuge of lies, while ministering words of strong consolation to the believing prisoners of hope.⁸

The remaining verses (9-12) are full of solemn power. Flesh is laid, both root and flower, in the balance of truth, and found to be vanity. A heartfelt confession of this truth is the necessary preliminary to spiritual blessing.⁹ Power belongeth unto God. Faith learns that truth concurrently with the lesson of human impotency. But God's power is to a believer His ability to bless. The mighty power which raised Christ from the dead is the demonstration to the Christian of eternal peace.¹ Salvation and

⁴ Isaiah xxviii. 15. ⁵ **וְ** in the singular number. ⁶ Isaiah lx. 21, 22.

⁷ Isaiah i. 25; vi. 13; Micah iv. 7. ⁸ Isaiah lxx. 8-16.

⁹ Isaiah xl. ¹ Eph. i. 20; Rom. v. 1; Heb. xiii. 20.

glory, refuge and strength (verse 7) are found and enjoyed in the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. Faith's expectation is from Him. "God hath spoken *once*; *twice* have I heard," &c. (verse 11.) Creation was the first effect of Divine power.² Its second proof is resurrection. Faith knows God ever as the living God, the producer of life out of death. The fathers knew Him thus in hope and promise. The believer in Jesus knows Him in the active demonstration of His power;³ but with Him also is *mercy*, though⁴ He render to every man according to his work (verse 2). The Christian sees no contradiction in this statement. Standing through grace in full acceptance with the Father, he knows God as the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. The work of a believer is the work of faith and love.⁵ His present life is to be passed in reverence and godly fear, because of Him who justly estimates that work.⁶ Already righteous in the Lord his Righteousness, he looks, as an heir of salvation, for a hope worthy of *that* righteousness. But he has, in addition, a promise of reward as a *servant* of Christ and of God. The joy of the Lord will be entered by the servant who has wrought his Master's will.⁷ The tenor of a Christian's mortal life will be for praise or blame at the appointed day of recompences, even as his temporal happiness is made dependent on his personal devotedness.⁸

² Heb. xi. 3.

³ Eph. i. 20.

⁴ כִּי It is remarkable with what unanimity translators, ancient and modern, have here rendered this particle "for," or, "because." In my judgment such a translation greatly impedes the sense of the passage. It surely is adversative. "But" (a common meaning) is preferable to "for." That כִּי may fairly be rendered "although" is clear. (*Vide* Ex. xiii. 17; Deut. xxix. 19; 1 Sam. xv. 35.) As to the general drift of the passage, see Ex. xxxiv. 6, 7.

⁵ Gal. v. 5, 6.

⁶ 1 Peter i. 17.

⁷ Matt. xxv. 14-23.

⁸ John xiii. 17; 2 Cor. v. 10; Rom. xiv. 12; 1 Cor. iv. 3-5.

What seemed once to be precious may in that day be found vile, and burn as stubble before the searching presence of Him who is a consuming fire. But He, who will thus judge in holiness every man's work of what sort it is,⁹ is Himself the sure Keeper in Christ of the children of His love.¹ They have boldness in the day of judgment, because of that love which already is made perfect and which casts out fear, that confidence and rejoicing may alone remain.² How the distinct yet harmonious principles of grace and righteousness receive their illustration in Israel's history need not here be shown.³

PSALM LXIII.

A PSALM of richest value, experimentally, to the Christian whose walk is with God. Its title should be noticed. The wilderness of Judah was the scene in which those experiences were known which enabled the sweet psalmist of Israel thus to write. David was never more with God, and God with him, than in that wilderness. It was there that, while an outcast from the face of Israel, he could do valiantly for God. Jehovah's prophet had assigned him that retreat; he went there in obedience to *Him*. Deeply-searching trials, indeed, befell him there; but they were precious trials of a faith, which grew but the more vigorously under the healthful discipline through which it passed. Realized dependence upon God turned, on each occasion, his weakness into strength. God kept him from the hand of Saul, and led him and used him as Israel's

⁹ 1 Cor. iii. 13-15. ¹ 1 Peter i. 5; Jude 1. ² 1 John iv. 16-18.

³ On the subject of the saint's responsibilities, see further in *Notes on First Corinthians*, chapters iii. and ix.

true deliverer from the spoilers of the Philistines.¹ Tasting thus, in the dry and weary land, the realities of Divine lovingkindness, his soul, sustained in its trial by proofs of an ever watchful mercy, and growing in the knowledge of *God*, is thirsting more intensely for Him.

Considered in its practical bearing on Christian experience it is evident that this Psalm applies only to those who are realizing in some degree what is expressed in the opening verse. Believers may be divided with reference to their spiritual condition into three classes. There are Christians in a decidedly careless state; there are those who, while in the main walking wisely as to their practice, are yet indifferent to the solid growth and progress of their souls in Christ; there are, lastly, some who truly walk *in Him*, with desire only to be well-pleasing to Him in all things, and to increase in the knowledge of God—to be sincere and without offence *until the day of Christ*.²

It is to the last of these that the language of this Psalm applies. The world may be practically found a wilderness in more ways than one, and by other means than through the faith of heavenly things. It is the Spirit of Christ alone that finds it *always* such. A spiritual man having tasted Christ has tasted Divine love, and beheld in spirit the brightness of a glory which casts all perishable things into the deep shadow of death. *God* is desired because known. The recognition only of His saving mercy in the cross is compatible with an indifference to that knowledge of God which the Holy Ghost imparts increasingly to the partakers of the heavenly calling, as He opens in Christ the deep treasures of spiritual blessedness to the thirsty and inquiring soul.³ If Christians are satisfied

¹ 1 Sam. xxii. 5-23; xxiii. 1-15. ² Col. i. 10; Phil. i. 10.

³ 1 Cor. ii. 9-16.

with getting such a view of Divine redemption as puts them in safety from the coming wrath, they are as yet incapable of thoroughly enjoying this Psalm; for it is an expression of healthy spiritual growth, of ardent desire to Godward. Calm and sober confidence, and quiet assurance of hope are the ground of support for the livelier and more positive energies of the inner man, and from whence arise, impeded as they may be by the counter working of the will of nature,⁴ the ever-growing desires of the Spirit.

God is desired. Not the knowledge merely of truth by which the mind may be interested, but that which fills the heart while it stimulates the conscience. Such knowledge is of impossible attainment apart from habitual obedience and devotedness to Christ. He will not reveal Himself to hearts that are not truly thirsting for His love.⁵ To bring the soul to that condition, and to keep it there, is the perpetual striving of the blessed Comforter in the saints. Joy unspeakable and full of glory is the present experience of the soul that waits with patience upon God (verses 3-5). Christ is to such the marrow and fatness of heavenly blessing. The watches of the night of earthly trial, now far spent, pass lightly for the man whose heart has learned the secret of true strength (verse 6).⁶ Past mercies are reviewed in proof of the faithfulness and power of God. Former experiences, both of trial and deliverance, are called to remembrance (verse 7), and found to be of active power as arguments of joy and peace. Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, is the needed and appreciated stay and support of the really growing Christian. Hopeful patience fails not to result and to abound, with present joy, from looking immediately to Him.⁷ Divine mercy, tasted here below with the keen appetite of

⁴ Gal. v. 17. ⁵ John xiv. 21-23. ⁶ Col. i. 11. ⁷ Heb. xii. 1, 2.

personal need, and traced upward to its ever-living spring, is found to be better far than life. It comes from Him who *is* our life, savouring of Him with a reviving freshness in the soul. The lips thus fed open willingly in acceptable praises, making glad confession to the name of Jesus (verse 5).⁸ Praise, joined with prayer, is the constant occupation of a soul that is abidingly in the presence of God. Jesus found solitary places long before the dawn,⁹ to seek this solace in the thirsty wilderness of a world which knew not God. And such is now the Christian's calling; to joy in God through Jesus Christ.¹ Finding tribulation in the world for Jesus' sake, to rejoice evermore in Him, rejoicing in Christ Jesus, and having *no* confidence in the flesh; watching, meanwhile, with thanksgiving in continual prayer;² recognizing willingly the contrariety between the Father and the world, and wholly choosing *Him*. Kept thus of Him—preserved in Christ—kept by Divine power through a faith that already sees Jesus crowned with glory and honour, and looks even now for the hour of His appearing. The world is a thirsty land to such; but godliness with contentment makes rich their souls with an exceeding gain. Meanwhile the Lord knoweth them that seek Him. Jesus is not indifferent to that which is done and suffered for His sake. He is capable of sympathy with every heart whose desire is to find and follow the footsteps of His way. He is a merciful and faithful High Priest to every believer at his need; but His *friendship*,³ in the condescending nearness of His love, is appreciable only as we are likeminded to Himself.⁴

The Psalm has, I conceive, a prophetic reference to the suffering remnant of Jewish faith, whose hope and expect-

⁸ Heb. xiii. 15.

⁹ Mark i. 35.

¹ Rom. v. 11.

² Col. iv. 2.

³ John xv.

⁴ Phil. ii. 5.

tation is Messiah their King. They will suffer for His sake. In verses 9, 10 the judgment of the oppressors is described. The last verse makes mention of the King. He shall rejoice in God. The unction of superior gladness will rest on Him for ever. "Every one that sweareth by Him shall glory." In principle this is now realized by those who rejoice in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh.⁵ But it is properly anticipative of millennial days.⁶ The latter part of the verse has no fulfilment in the present dispensation. The mouth of falsehood is still open to blaspheme the truth; nor will it be closed until the earth be brought under the effectual sway of the King, whose girdle of majesty is righteousness and truth, and who will in that day still the voice of evil with the iron sceptre of His rule.⁷

PSALM LXIV.

A CRY of God's elect, when persecuted for righteousness' sake, to their Deliverer and sure Avenger. The general principle stated is perfectly clear. The Psalm will adjust itself, as an experimental utterance, to the lips of Christian faith whenever brought into contact with the evil forces of the prince of this world, so as to suffer affliction for the gospel's sake; for it expresses the condition and the hope of one actually imperilled for the truth. How aptly a portion of this Psalm applies to the suffering Truth Himself in the days of His affliction, when, pierced

⁵ Compare for the force of the expression itself Isaiah xlv. 23. For its complete realization in the person of Jesus, and for its consequent application to Christian faith now, see Phil. ii. 10; Rom. xiv. 11.

⁶ Isaiah lxx. 16.

⁷ Psalm ii. 9.

in His spirit by lying words, He endured the contradiction of sinners against Himself, need not be pointed out.

But there is a definiteness of prophetic meaning in it which we do well to observe. Judgment and its results are stated, but in relation to this earth alone and its inhabitants (verses 7–10). It is to the remnant of righteousness, brought in the last times into close view and actual experience of the terrors of Antichrist, that the Psalm seems directly to apply. Secret chambers of Divine security are provided for such by Him who is in readiness to avenge, and who will then call upon the earth also to disclose her blood.¹

In verses 3–8 we have contrasted in their operation and result the guile and wickedness of man, and the truth and power of the righteous God. Man's arrow and God's arrow are compared. The tongue of man, speaking only vanity and deceit, digs in its evil diligence its owner's grave in the sure vengeance of God, when the day shall have come for the word of His holiness to be as a stream of brimstone to kindle into everlasting burnings the chaff and stubble of iniquity.² The throat of the natural man is his own sepulchre, as well as that of his neighbour. By his own words shall he be judged. Human policy is deep (verse 6), but its depths are of Satan, and will close over the devoted heads of all whose trust is in themselves. God's thoughts are also deep; great depths are in Him, far hidden from the search of man, but disclosed in Christ to the believer by His ever-blessed Spirit.³ The soul that is delighting itself in the riches of God's hidden treasure has no desire to fathom the profundities of natural iniquity. The exercised child of God knows in himself enough and to spare of the stuff that fallen humanity is made of.

¹ Isaiah xxvi. 20, 21.

² Isaiah xxx. 33.

³ 1 Cor. ii. 10.

His joy is to know and magnify the gracious counsels of the God of his salvation.

Meanwhile, as evil runs on in its foreseen and destined course, the arrow of God is fully prepared against the day of His great battle. All power and all judgment are committed to the hands of Jesus. He is kept as a polished shaft in the secret place of the Most High. As yet hidden in God, He is ready to come forth. He is ready also to *judge*. He will be as the Arrow of the Lord's deliverance to His suffering saints. He will descend as the lightning of destruction upon those whose thought is to triumph in the ways of rebellion and of sin. They have uttered marvellous words against the God of gods. They have used their tongues in hard speeches against the blessed and only Potentate, the God moreover of all grace.⁴ But their tongue will recoil upon themselves.⁵ The bitterness of its unbelieving blasphemy will turn to the condemning sentence of their own destruction from the presence of the Lord. God will shoot. Suddenly, and amid their fairest expectations of peace and safety,⁶ will the children of disobedience learn, to their fearful cost, that truth and wisdom, and power and life are only God's; that sin, and death, and judgment are their only patrimony whose father first sinned from the beginning, and that what they seemed to have, while yet the forbearance of their Judge maintained them in long patience, amid the bounties of His goodness and within the hearing of His word of grace, was never really theirs, but His. He and all His would have been theirs for ever, but they received not in the love of it the

⁴ Jude 15.

⁵ For illustrations of the general principle of Divine retribution, compare Gen. xi.; Prov. xviii. 7; Gen. xviii. 21; 2 Thess. i. 6; Rev. xi. 18; xviii. 6, 7.

⁶ 1 Thess. v. 3.

truth which told them of the riches of His love in Jesus. By nature children of wrath, they will come to their fearful inheritance through the eager madness of a will whose wisdom ever was to seek *its own*.⁷

The ninth verse describes the effect of the judgment upon the residue of men. It is quite clear that the *last* judgment is not here meant. When His judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.⁸ The Son of man will send, and will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them that do iniquity.⁹ The righteous shall then shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Not heavenly, but earthly results, however, are regarded in this Psalm. The upright in heart, who are mentioned in the last verse, intend, I doubt not, "the righteous nation that keepeth the truth,"¹ the proud and happy title of Israel in the day when the Lord shall have turned away their ungodliness, and revealed Himself as their abiding righteousness and glory.²

PSALM LXV.

THIS very beautiful Psalm opens with a remarkable expression: "Praise waiteth" (or, as the margin more exactly renders, "is silent")³ "for thee in Zion." Zion is the chosen place of earthly worship, when God recognizes an

⁷ Prov. i. 24-31. ⁸ Isa. xxvi. 9. ⁹ Matt. xiii. 41-43. ¹ Isa. xxvi. 2.

² Jer. l. 28, and especially li. 10, are instructive and important in their bearing on the last verse of this Psalm.

³ לְךָ דְמִיָּה תְהִלָּה Σοὶ πρόπει ὕμνος.—LXX. This is a justifiable translation, but remote and metaphorical in its meaning. The same may be said of those of Gesenius and De Wette. Luther's is beautiful in expression: "*Man lobet dich in der Stille zu Zion;*" but he evidently

earthly people. The Church of God is *not* an earthly people, but a heavenly. Their place of worship is, by faith, in the tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man. Jerusalem is to an intelligent Christian of no more *present* religious value than Mecca or Medina. The Lord is *not* there. His name is no longer the ornament and strength of the city of solemnities. It is not the habitation of justice, for the just Lord has left it desolate. He has bared it of its beauty, and given it to be a treading of the Gentiles. Zion has been ploughed as a field, because of the wickedness of those who, while they leaned upon the Lord and said, "Is He not among us? none evil can come upon us,"² were filling up their sin to its fulness by the utter rejection of His truth and love in the Person of His Son. They sought to build up Zion with the blood of God's Anointed,³ and to establish Jerusalem by the iniquity of their own apostasy.⁴

Yet is there for Zion an expected end of blessing and of peace. The glory of those names with which Jehovah has clothed Himself, as the covenant God of Israel, will be displayed in perfect brightness in the latter day. The stone which the foolish builders once refused, to the ruin of their building, and to their own perpetual discomfiture, will be yet known in Jacob as the tried foundation of the only wise God. He will build up Zion, even as He has missed the true meaning of the verse, which DIODATI alone, of the modern translators (except the English version), seems to have seen: "*O Dio, lode t'aspetta in Zion.*" JEROME has: "*Tibi silet laus.*"

² Micah iii. 9-12

³ "If we let him thus alone the Romans will come, and take away both our place and nation." (John xi. 48.)

⁴ "We have *no king* but Cæsar!" said the children of the prophets, whose word was: "The Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our Lawgiver, the Lord is our King; He will save us." (Isaiah xxxiii. 22; compare Psalm xliv. 4.)

pulled her down. But *until* that day arrive, Jerusalem is disowned. No acceptable praise arises thence, nor will arise until they shall say, in the open vision of Christ's returning glory, "Blessed is He that cometh in Jehovah's name."⁵

The two facts, first of the Lord's utter displeasure with His people for *their* sakes; and secondly of the sure remembrance of His covenanted promise for *His own* sake, are always prominent in the mind of faith in the time of apostasy. For faith's wisdom is the truth of God. The judgment of the believer, therefore, upon existing things, is always remote from the appearances, whether of good or evil, which suggest to men, in their natural state, inferences of hope or of despondency. Faith never desponds. It cannot do so, because its habitation and defence is God. Its ruling character is hope for the same reason. Meanwhile it speaks in a language which varies in its tone, according to the topic of its immediate meditation. If thinking of man, what man is in his ways will be expressed without reserve, and in a tone of thorough self-judgment and sorrowful self-abasement. If God be simply before the view, joy and triumph will abound. Sin, when it comes before the spiritual mind, is always seen and judged in its relation *to God*. The song of faith is of mercy and judgment; because these are the qualities of the Divine nature which exemplify themselves in connexion with human evil. What is thus generally true of faith will have a special illustration in the Jewish remnant in the latter day.

The Psalm before us is a most beautiful instance of this. There is a full recognition of iniquity, as yet unpurged (verse 3), and the effect of this in the actual depression of

⁵ Matt. xxiii. 39.

the nation. There is, moreover, a clear expression on the suppliant's part of personal impotency. "Iniquities prevail against *me*." But grace is discerned in God. "As for our transgressions, *thou* shalt purge them away." Such is the expectation of Israel's remnant when, with hearts made contrite by the Spirit of grace, they look for Jehovah as their deliverer. He will come, and at His second advent He will purge their sin, and so remove their shame.⁶ The known stability of Divine promise enables the heart of faith to exalt God *according to the tenor* of His promise, and thus to celebrate, with sweet and full notes of anticipative praise, the God of their hope according to the *manner* of the blessing with which they surely shall be blessed.

Praise waits silently for God in Zion. It was not so when David the king prepared to set to skilful melody this admirable Psalm. It is a prophecy, first and last, and has no other than a prophetic interpretation. The fourth verse finds its echo wherever the Holy Ghost has shed the savour of the love of Christ. It is the nation, however, who will be thus satisfied. The judgments which are to exhaust the cup of chastisement, and place its dregs in the hands of the nations as a potion of judicial death⁶ seem referred to in verse 5. But God, who will arise thus to shake terribly the earth, is yet its confidence. Messiah is "the desire of *all nations*." Shaking must precede His manifestation in that character;⁸ for it is *in righteousness* that He will judge the nations of the earth.

The latter half of the Psalm (verses 6–13) is a majestic yet lovely description of the glory of Christ, in His manifestation as the God of the whole earth, and its effects of pervading blessing upon the creature. Already the true

⁶ Rom. xi. 17–26.

⁷ Isaiah li. 22, 23.

⁸ Haggai ii. 6, 7.

Christian's heart experiences more or less of the fertilizing power of the droppings of Divine mercy and love. The Holy Ghost, as the revealer of Jesus, is as the dew of blessing, the springing well of refreshment to the believing soul. But what is now realized morally in the inner man, will be externally and physically displayed also⁹ in the day when the Lord shall gladden by His presence the waste places of His earthly inheritance, and shall cause Israel to blossom and bud, and to fill the face of the world with fruit.¹ God's tokens will then be regarded in the remotest corners of the earth. *All flesh* shall come to Him who heareth prayer. They shall flow by nations² toward the mountain of His holiness, the appointed place of His eternal Name.³

PSALM LXVI.

THIS Psalm appears to follow the last in historic succession. The events which were there celebrated by anticipation have now been actually accomplished, and their results are here announced. It is a glad yet solemn summons, addressed on the part of the preserved of Israel to the nations of the earth. They stand as the competent expounders of the right ways of Jehovah, in that they have subjectively experienced them in His wondrous dealings with themselves (verses 8-16).

It is a Psalm of comprehensive power. The main topic is the faithfulness of God in the deliverance and establishing of His earthly people, according to the power of His

⁹ And tasted inwardly as well by the multitudes who will truly know the Lord. I am merely noting the dispensational contrast in the text.

¹ Isaiah xxvii. 6. ² Micah iv. ³ Exod. iii. 15; Ezek. xlvi. 35.

own righteousness.¹ In close and necessary connection with this there is opened a wide view of His dealings both in judgment and in mercy. The experience of the remnant of the nation for which Christ died, anterior to their deliverance, is reviewed, not in relation ostensibly to the sin which had produced it, but for the exaltation of the unsearchable ways of the only wise God the Saviour, in whose light the facts of the national history are now discerned, to the praise of His faithfulness and grace. While, therefore, sin is implied in the recital of the Divine dealings (verses 10-12), yet it is not dwelt upon; for it is as the righteous nation, whose righteousness is Jehovah Himself, that Israel will thus appeal to the nations of the earth in that day.

Judgment is celebrated as already established in victory by the display of the power of God² (verses 1-5).³ The day of Christ is come. His power has been made manifest, and the isles now wait for His law. In the sixth verse we have a retrospective commemoration of ancient national deliverance in its two grand crises—the redemption out of Egypt, and the entrance into Canaan. The sea and the flood⁴ (Jordan) are both mentioned. It was after the manner of the ancient deliverances that God now wrought, according to His mercies, and according to the multitude of His lovingkindnesses. As His rod had been

¹ Isaiah li.

² Isaiah xlii. 4.

³ The *time* of this Psalm seems to be the interval between the smiting of the adversaries with the sword of Messiah's mouth, and the subsequent extension of His kingdom in power over all the nations of the earth.

⁴ הַפָּקֶר "Il fiume."—Diod. "Der Strom."—DE WETTE. Usually this word, with the definite prefix, signifies the Euphrates. In the present instance it must mean either the Red Sea or the Jordan; the latter, I doubt not, is its true meaning. I do not think it is ever used in the singular number in any other sense than "river." The LXX. and JEROME render it thus.

upon the sea, so it had again been lifted up, after the manner of Egypt, in the day of His exaltation in judgment.⁵

Unlimited power and sovereignty are ascribed to Him who is now known and boasted in as Israel's God (verses 7, 8). The nations are called to sing His praise, with warning of the danger of rebellion; for judgment is now no longer a remote and feebly-sounding threat, which men might (as in the present day of longsuffering) treat derisively and yet remain unpunished, but God is terrible in His *doing* toward the children of men. He ruleth by His power. The sceptre of righteousness is placed for effective administration in the hand of His Anointed.

All will sing His praise (verse 4), but not all will desire His worship in their hearts. Through the greatness of His power His enemies will submit, but with a lying homage of extorted praise. They will own no love in their hearts to Him or to His people, though kept still as a stone from any movement of revolt by the overshadowing power of His majesty.⁶ Dominion and fear will be the manifest attendants of that throne.

Verses 8-12 make mention of the great goodness of Him who is not ashamed to be called their God. The past experiences of the nation, while under His sifting and chastening hand, are remembered to His praise who had brought them out in faithfulness into the wealthy place of covenanted promise. They had stumbled, but not to a perpetual fall.⁷ God had loved Jacob. He had remembered Ephraim amid all his wanderings and backslidings. For His own name was committed in the controversy of His people.

⁵ Isaiah xliiii.; x. 16; xi. 15.

⁶ יִבְתְּשׁוּ לֵהּ (Compare Psalm xviii. 44.) They are quiet until the loosing of the devil from his millennial bondage enables him to fill them with heart for their last act of rebellion. They will exalt themselves yet once again. (Rev. xx. 8. 9.)

⁷ Rom. xi. *passim*.

Their sin might have determined the special character of God's dealings with them in past times; but it is His glory, as the faithful accomplisher in righteousness of elective mercy, that is the subject of this remarkable Psalm.

Verses 13–15 discover Israel in his attitude of true worship. Brought into the knowledge of the God of grace, he is thus fitted to enter into His courts with an acceptable offering. And now, satisfied with favour, and full of the blessing of the Lord, they become His witnesses of salvation to the nations who enquire for the God of Jacob. The language of the concluding verses is especially noticeable: "If I regard iniquity,"⁸ &c. It is as justified and glorying in Jehovah that the seed of Israel will be known in blessing and for blessing to the nations of the earth.⁹ Zion will be redeemed with judgment, and her remnant with righteousness. It is to Jerusalem, as the habitation of justice, the mountain of holiness, that the nations will flow. The Lord, who exalted the people of old when He led them forth out of Egypt, will lift them to a yet higher eminence of blessing. They shall be known as the *righteous* nation. Glory will dwell in their land because of the purging of its iniquity. Thus the Spirit of Christ, regarding prophetically the people as they are contemplated in the counsel of Jehovah's peace, claims for them a moral standing according to the perfectness of that which in Christ will constitute the blameless righteousness of Israel in the coming day, even as it is now the boast and glory of the Church.

⁸ אִם יִרְאֶה אִיְקָוָה "Hätt' ich auf Unrecht gedacht."—DE WETTE. The translation in the present tense, as our version gives it, is not literal and lames the general sense. God *had* heard, which proved their complete justification from all the former evil of their way. DIONATI., "*Se io avessi mirato ad alcuna iniquità . . . non m' avrebbe ascoltato,*" &c.

⁹ Isaiah xlv. 25; lxi. *passim*.

PSALM LXVII.

A SWEET anticipative ode of millennial blessedness, the theme of which is the return of God in gracious power to His people as the condition of the earth's effectual settlement and joy. It is fragrant with Christ as the desire of all nations. Israel, filled with a zeal which is according to knowledge, desires to spread abroad the name and the salvation of God, that the ends of the earth may fear Him.

The new heart being given, they are no longer haughty because of the holy mountain, but eagerly desirous of the earth-pervading worship of the blessed God, that His *way* may be known upon earth,¹ His *salvation* among all nations (verse 2). Praise then would go up to the only God from the divers peoples of the world (verse 3). The earth, made glad by the establishment of truth and righteousness in the place of dominion, should be filled with the knowledge of His glory who is the "King of *nations*," though His throne be set for judgment in Jerusalem, the city of His choice.

The Psalm most beautifully illustrates the apostle's argument² where, having shown that the *fall* of Israel was in the mystery of God's grace the riches of the world, he foretells a yet more abundant result in Gentile blessing from their *restoration*. The sullen unbelief, the proud, contemptuous hatred, with which while the veil is on their hearts they still refuse the testimony of Gentile mercy in the gospel, will be changed to the ready and persuasive

¹ Contrast with this their spirit in the present dispensation as exhibited in Acts xiii. 45; 1 Thess. ii. 16.

² Rom. xi. 12-28.

declaration of His praise among the remotest inhabitants of earth, in the day when with their own eyes they shall behold, and with unveiled hearts shall worship and confess the once-rejected Jesus as their Redeemer and their God. Their seed shall then be known among the Gentiles. As priests and ministers of the Lord of peace, they will be the welcome and honoured visitors of the nations, whose happiness and security will be then felt to be dependent upon the sceptre of the Son of David.³

No longer a foolish nation and unwise—stiff-necked and perverse, wise in their own conceits, wise to do evil, but incapable of good, boasting themselves in the law of the Lord, while their hearts revolted from His commandments—they shall then remember their ways, loathing themselves for doings which were not good.⁴ Because of the grace which has made their sin the opportunity of its mighty triumph, their hearts will be then turned wholly to the Lord. They will thus be fitted to declare glad tidings to the nations. The rich abundance of the Spirit will fill their mouths with a convincing utterance. The palpable evidence, moreover, of their physical prosperity will confirm to the incredulous the reality of their testimony that the times of refreshing have indeed arrived, and that God ruleth in Zion and to the ends of the earth. The withered staff of Jacob, reviving through the scent of living water, shall again put forth its leaf. He shall be as a fruitful tree of blessing, filling all nations with the fragrance of His increase.⁵ Deeply rooted downward in the rock of covenanted truth and grace,⁶ he shall bear sweet and apparent fruits of righteousness, to the praise and glory of Him who shall again be pleased with worship

³ Isaiah lxi.

⁴ Ezek. xxxvi. 31.

⁵ Hosea xiv.

⁶ Isaiah xxvii. 6.

which addresses Him as *Jacob's* God. The receiving of them again shall be as life from the dead.⁷

There is a striking expression in verse 4: "Thou shalt lead (*margin*) the nations." God now *overrules* the nations in their ways, but surely they are *led* by another guide. There is a bridle in their jaws causing them to err. They are held and shaken in the sieve of vanity, until He come to whom the government pertains.

Verse 6 is full of deepest tenderness and sweetness. "The land shall bring forth her increase; and God, even our *own* God, shall bless us." It is thus that the Holy Ghost anticipates, as the spirit of prophecy, the delighted recognition, on the part of the once rebellious but now contrite nation, of that "Immanuel" whom their fathers in their blinded ignorance had crucified and slain. He is indeed in a peculiar sense their own God,⁸ and will be so acknowledged in that day.

The last verse is pointedly expressive of the dependence of the earth's full blessing upon the restoration of Israel. To force a Psalm of this kind into an application to the present dispensation of elective grace and of expected judgment, seems little less than an act of violence to the testimony of the Holy Ghost.

PSALM LXVIII.

THE argument of this magnificent Psalm is contained in the first three verses. It is a grand and lofty celebration of the majesty of God, on the part of the people who are instructed in His praise, as the sanctified vessels of His

⁷ Rom. xi. 15.

⁸ "Unto *us* a child is born," &c. (Isaiah ix. 6.)

mercy. The discomfiture, in righteous judgment, of the enemies of God is according to the same mighty power of holiness and truth which establishes in His presence the acceptable people of His choice with an exceeding joy (verses 1-3).

It is superfluous to insist here on the Christian's right to take such praise upon his lips; but what is before us is clearly a song of redeemed *Israel*, extolling the Rock of their salvation in a full recognition of the Divine glory of His person, and in the conscious enjoyment of strength and power (verse 35) through the grace which has exalted them from their low estate, bringing them out of darkness into His marvellous light, to utter His eternal praise.

The true basis of all this blessedness, and consequently the key-note of the nation's praise, is to be found in verse 18. It is the discovery that He who had hidden His face from Jacob, and who seemed to have forsaken His heritage for ever, had met and conquered the enemy of their peace in His own strength—working out their salvation and glory by means of their very rebellion against Himself, when they knew Him not, and turned His glory into shame.

This Psalm is not free from difficulties of interpretation, both verbally and in other respects, but it is very full of precious matter, which is appreciable by every true lover of the Lord.

Verses 4-6. The hearts of God's people are here awakened for His praise by the mention of His name of covenant blessing, and a declaration of His acts of faithfulness and truth. Believers are now exhorted by the Spirit to let the word of Christ dwell in them richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace

in their hearts to the Lord¹—making sweet melody to His name in hearts which understand His praise.² And in the coming day of restitution, when Israel's silent harp is once more tuned, that praise will find its just expression in such words as these. They will answer each other, as in days of old, with timbrels and sweet utterances of triumphant thanksgiving, when the name of Jehovah is again exalted in holiness as the Deliverer of His people, whom He has brought *again* (verse 22) from Bashan, from the depths of the sea. They will extol Him who rideth with chariots of salvation through the wilderness,³ to make Himself a lasting name.⁴ There seems to be a reference here, not only to the ancient deliverance, but also to the advent—first, in gracious humiliation, when He came only to be rejected of His own; and secondly, in a power and ostensive glory which all flesh will see⁵—of Immanuel, the Hope of Israel. The following verse contains, besides the general ascription of mercy and tender lovingkindness which the words import, an especial allusion to the condition of the nation in the weary days of its widowhood

¹ Col. iii. 16.

² Eph. v. 19.

³ Hab. iii. 8.

⁴ סִלְוֵי לְרִיבֵי בְּעֵרְבוֹת (verse 4). "*Præparate viam ascendenti per deserta.*"—HIERON. "*Machet ihm Bahn, der einherfährt durch die Ebenen.*"—DE WETTE. "*Rilevate le strade a colui che cavalea per luoghi diserti.*"—

DIODATI. There can be little doubt that the English version is wrong in its translation of this passage. "Plain," "champaign," "desert," or "wilderness," are the only meanings by which the word עֵרְבָה is elsewhere rendered in the English Bible, though it occurs upwards of sixty times. It is in the prophets, more frequently than in the pentateuch, that it is rendered "desert," though it may be doubted whether in several instances this would not have been a preferable rendering to "plain," where the latter term is employed. The LXX. have Ἐπι δυσμῶν, evidently taking the word for the plural form of עֵרֶב

⁵ Isaiah xl. 3. We have here the same word (עֵרְבָה) rendered "desert."

and orphanage. He was doubtless their Father, though Abraham were ignorant of them. They had been as fatherless and destitute, and their inheritance was turned to strangers,⁶ but tender mercy had been found for them in God;⁷ for Ephraim was still a dear son, a pleasant child, in the bowels of Divine compassion, though the God of truth might have to speak against him while he went on frowardly in the way of his heart.⁸ Jerusalem had long borne the reproach of her widowhood. A barren womb and dry breasts had marked the term of Jehovah's divorcement of His people, when for their iniquity they became strangers to the God of their fathers. But He, who judges in righteousness, has now proved Himself mighty to save in grace. For a small moment He had forsaken, but with everlasting kindness has He turned again to revisit with abounding mercies the former desolations,⁹ and to turn the shame of barrenness to the song of fruitful blessing in His land.

"God setteth the solitary in a house: He bringeth forth the captives into prosperity:¹ but the rebellious dwell in a dry land" (verse 6). The bearing of this verse upon the fortunes of Israel is clear. Its general application to the Divine dealings with man, both in grace and judgment, is equally so.

⁶ Lam. v. 2, 3.

⁷ Hosea xiv. 3.

⁸ Jer. xxxi. 20.

⁹ Isaiah liv.; xlix. 13-21.

¹ It is difficult to determine the exact translation of this verse. I have rendered עָבְדוּת אֲשֶׁר בְּיָמֵינוּ after GESENIUS, who has "*in prosperitatem.*" With him also DE WETTE is in agreement. LUTHER seems to have been guided by a Rabbinical version (BUXTORF, quoting R. SOLOMON, has "*Recto, opportuno tempore*") in translating the expression, "*Zu rechter Zeit.*" This is certainly a very satisfactory meaning as to the moral interpretation of the passage. That of GESENIUS is, however, more etymologically true. The LXX. have: Ἐξάγων πεπεδημένους ἐν ἀνδρεία. Similarly, HIERON, "*Educet vincetos in fortitudine.*"

Verses 7-16. We have now a condensed recital, in language of surpassing power, of the mighty acts of Jehovah, the God of Israel, as the God of His people's mercy.² The Egyptian deliverance, the first conquest of Canaan, the subsequent judicial degradation of the nation, and its ultimate restoration in grace, seem all to be comprehended in this very beautiful yet difficult passage,³ which concludes with the glorification of the hill of God as the chosen and lasting sanctuary of His name.

Verses 17, 18. The contrasted displays of the Divine glory, first in the array of majesty and terror on Mount Sinai; and secondly, in the triumphant ascension of God, who had been manifested in flesh, are presented in these verses. The identity of Him who, from the low place of His self-chosen humiliation, ascended on high and received gifts for men,⁴ with the Lord⁵ of all power and might, who had descended to the summits of Sinai among the many thousands of His angels, is clearly seen. God had surrounded Himself with countless hosts of angelic beings.

² Compare Psalm cxxxvi.

³ I shall not examine its difficulties at length. Verse 14, I think, refers to the judgment of the banded nations, whose confederacy will be dissolved in their destruction at the rising of the Lord as the Deliverer of His people. The expression אֵלֵינוּ יְהוָה seems to be used descriptively of the nation, as it appears without spot in the eyes of Him who saw no iniquity in Israel, because He beheld them in the Covenant of righteousness and peace. LUTHER'S translation of the verse, though not strictly literal, is to me the most satisfactory. R. KIMCHI, quoted by GESENIUS, has "*Nivis instar lucet in tenebris.*"

⁴ Or as the margin has it, "in the man." LXX.: Ἐν ἀνθρώπῳ. The marginal rendering is the most strictly literal, though perhaps the sense is better expressed in the text. (Compare Eph. iv. 8.) The apostle, it will be observed, does not quote the passage strictly. Nor does he by any means fully interpret it. It is there used (with a certain accommodation of expression to the actual subject) by the Spirit in order to authenticate the source of Christian ministry.

⁵ אֵלֵינוּ

Himself a consuming fire, He had made for His pleasure, and to be the instrumental agency and just expression of His holiness and power, the angels who excel in strength. "He maketh His angels spirits, His ministers a flame of fire." They are the swift messengers, the apt and ready ministers of His commands. They hearken to His word, obeying that which has created, and which still upholds them. But power and majesty are not the only attributes of God. Truth and grace are the two great constituent principles which form the Divine character, whose name is Love.⁶ The angels are no strangers to the love of God. His own elective will has kept their myriads in their place unfallen.⁷ He takes pleasure in the strength and glory with which, in sovereign goodness, He has clothed them for His praise—for they are His ministers, rays of the great Light of His omnipotency; and what He is, as the Almighty, is reflected by these ready servants of His will.

But the love of God has set itself supremely, not on angels, but on man. The incarnation of the Son was the astonishing but ill-requited evidence of this. His death on the cross was the mighty and convincing proof of its reality. God thus *commends* to us His love.⁸ The blessed result of this finishing of love is the sending forth into the justified vessels of His mercy the Spirit of holiness and truth, the Spirit of the Son, crying, Abba, Father. God has prepared Himself a dwelling. The once rebellious children of wrath become, by the power of His effectual calling, living stones in His building. "The rebellious," in the present passage, mean, I doubt not, the nation. The words will, of course, apply far more widely; but the characteristic title of Israel, as under the law, is here

⁶ John iv. 8.

⁷ 1 Tim. v. 21.

⁸ Rom. v.

placed in contrast to the grace which, in its blessed effect, will enable the just Lord to return with mercies to the long-deserted seat of His earthly kingdom. The word of holiness, which has denounced woe to the rebellious children,⁹ and laid Jerusalem in the dust of desolation for her iniquity, has also spoken good things in promise concerning the nation of His unrepented choice: "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him,"¹ is a promise which will have its sure fulfilment in due time. Jerusalem shall again be called the city of righteousness, the faithful city,² when all her children shall be taught of the Lord;³ when they who once were "a seed of evil doers" shall be "all righteous;"⁴ when "they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."⁵ The Lord, who shall establish them in righteousness, will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel for ever, in the place, never more to be polluted, of His throne.⁶

Verses 19–23. Praise is here sung with understanding to Him who is now known among them as *their* God—the God of salvations.⁷ To Him belong the issues from death.⁸

⁹ Isaiah xxx. 1. ¹ Hosea xiv. 4. ² Isaiah i. 26. ³ Isaiah liv. 13.

⁴ Isaiah i. 4; lx. 21.

⁵ Jer. xxxi. 34. ⁶ Ezek. xliii. 7.

⁷ אֵל לְמוֹשָׁעוֹת With respect to the former clause of verse 19 there is some difficulty. The E. V. appears to me at least as good as any other. DIODATI and the LXX. agree substantially with this. LUTHER renders: "*Gott leget uns eine Last auf, aber er hilft uns auch.*" DE WETTE's translation is spirited and plausible: "*Leget man uns Last auf, Gott ist unsere Hilfe.*" The clause might be rendered thus: "Blessed be Adonai: daily shall He bear for us (*sc.* our burdens), who is the God of our salvation."

⁸ There may be a direct allusion in this expression to the resurrection of Jesus, whom the cords of death could not hold. (Compare Rev. i. 18.)

Fully will the remnant of Israel appreciate this last truth, when they sing the praise of the Deliverer who shall have recovered them as it were out of the jaws of the lion.⁹ The Christian tastes the sweetness of both these precious truths. His God is verily a God of salvations. His life is a continuous proof of the faithfulness and sufficiency of the God of all grace, the Father of mercies—of the ever-saving power of Christ. Christian life is a witness of deliverances past, present, and to come.¹ It is, however, Israel's national deliverances which are properly in question here.

Verses 24–27 describe the glory of His rest who is the King of Jacob, reigning before His ancients gloriously. The people are called upon to bless Him in their festal congregations. Some of the tribes are named by a synecdoche for the nation. Adonai is to be blessed from the fountain of Israel.² The land which is called by the name of the Lord will be filled with His praises in that day.

Verses 28–31. We have now the importunate expression of prophetic faith which gives no rest to the God of Israel until He establish and make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.³ God had commanded strength for Zion. He had founded it in His unrepented purpose, and the time was come for the fair colours of these foundations to be seen and admired of all nations. But the day of decision must first establish the fame of His glory as the God of judgment to whom power belongeth.⁴ It will be out of Zion

Jesus arose from the dead. In quitting the grave He leads forth—Himself being the living Way—the children of faith from the bondage of mortal fear into the liberty of life eternal.

⁹ Zech. xiii.; Dan. xii. 1.

¹ 2 Cor. i. 10.

² A poetic metaphor of the nation itself. (Compare Isaiah xlvi. 1; Dent. xxxiii. 28.)

³ Isaiah lxii. 7.

⁴ Joel iii.

that His terrible voice will be uttered in that day. For it will be the time of the Lord's vengeance—the vengeance of His temple, wherein the abomination of desolation had been suffered for a moment to appear. That temple will be again purged and restored, and the latter glory of the house will be greater than the former. Because of that temple kings of many nations will bring costly gifts of homage to the Lord of all the earth. Egypt and Ethiopia will promptly own the right of that dominion, whose seat will be the re-erected city of the King of kings.⁵

Verses 32–35. The kingdoms of the earth will sing unto God; they will ascribe strength unto Him. In verse 34 the heavenly glory of Christ, according to its manifestation in and with the Church, appears to be involved. "His excellency is over Israel, and His strength is in the clouds" (*margin*, heavens). Assuredly His glory shall cover the heavens, when the earth is filled with His praise.⁶ Creation waits with groaning for the manifestation of the *sons* of God.⁷

It is, however, the glory of Jesus as the mighty One of Jacob that is the true subject of this Psalm. He is to be known as the God of Israel. His terrible majesty will be feared from thence, when His fame is spread over the face of the world. He is *their* God—the God of their salvations. He will dwell among the nation for whose sake He died, for whose sake also He ascended on high,⁸ after having gotten for them the everlasting victory. He had

⁵ Isaiah xix. 21–25; xlv. 14; Zeph. iii. 9, 10.

⁶ Hab. iii. 3. ⁷ Rom. viii. 19.

⁸ I need not say that it was not for them alone, or for them principally that Jesus either died or lives. He did both that He might be the Lord both of the dead and the living. (Rom. xiv. 9.) More especially He loved the Church, and gave Himself for it (Eph. v. 25); but He died likewise *for that nation*. (John xi. 51.)

wrought thus the work of their peace, all unprofitable and rebellious as they had been to Him, who had borne them from the womb, and carried them from the belly, in the faithful compassions of His truth; for He remembered that His name was their covenant of life, and that their name was to be to Him as a chief ornament of praise.

The end of this beautiful Psalm is worthy of its beginning. Happy they who, even now, because they know Him, in whom all the promises of God are yea and Amen, can enter anticipatively into the triumph of that day. It is His; it is therefore ours who believe; for all that the Father hath given unto Him as Heir of all, He hath given unto us. It is the manner of the Father's love in Him to know us, and in Him to bless us, and with Him to entitle us as sons and heirs of God.⁹ To Him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.¹

PSALM LXIX.

A STRIKING contrast is presented in this Psalm to the one immediately preceding. It is a deeply touching portraiture of the suffering Son of God in the midst of the blinded seed of Abraham who hated Him without a cause.² But it contains much more than this. It is not only a record of the matchless personal grief of Jesus, and a memorial of judgment in righteousness upon the nation of His adversaries; it has a clear prophetic bearing also on the lowly and sore-broken remnant of that people, whom the Lord has ordained for deliverance as His prisoners (verse 33), when He will both loose the bonds of their iniquity, and

⁹ 1 John iii. 1; Rom. viii. 17.

¹ Eph. iii. 21.

² John viii. 37.

change the cup of trembling from their hands to those of their pitiless oppressors. The salvation of Zion, and the safe inheritance of the cities of Judah (verses 35, 36) by the restored earthly people of God, is the limit of prophetic vision in this Psalm. But as its main subject is the suffering and dishonoured Christ, its scope to the believer is wide and full indeed, as well as infinitely precious.

The Psalm opens at the hour of the sore amazement and overwhelming distress of Jesus, when, in the solitude of his unpitied grief, He waited still for God, who seemed to tarry long in appearing to His help.

Verses 1-4 express the pure sorrow of Him "who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth."³ They were His enemies *wrongfully*; but His cry was unto God. He suffered at *His* will. The truth and holiness of God were the reasons of necessity which led the obedient Sufferer into the place of affliction. It was at the hands of man that He endured His grief; but it was without cause as it respected Him. They requited Him evil for good, and hatred for His love. Thus, while appealing from the wrong judgment of men to Him who knew the pure depths of His perfect heart, and delighted in the spotless holiness of His way, He lifts up no voice of contention in the street. "Then I restored that which I took not away." Man's robbery of God must be compensated by the gracious self-devotion of the Just One. His cause was committed to Him that judgeth righteously.

Verses 5-9 connect the sufferings of Jesus with the mystery of Divine mercy, which is in due time to accomplish thereby the ends of deliverance and blessing towards those whose distinctive hope is in the *God of Israel*, not

³ 1 Peter ii. 22.

less than for the Church, which is the present remnant according to the election of grace. There is, first, the direct appropriation of the sin and folly of His people as His own. It is confessed as such on the part of the Sufferer. What He realized on the cross as the Substitute of His people, He is here anticipatively contemplating as His own. Enemies were about Him, more in number than the hairs of His head, but His thoughts were on the hour for which He had come into the world, and His desire is toward them that seek the name of *His* God. There is a wonderful tenderness and beauty in the order of these verses, where intercession for His own is so intimately blended with the pouring out of His wearied yet willing spirit. *He* had suffered reproach for the name of God: so would they also in their time and measure, and He thinks of them in His intercessory pleading with Jehovah: "Let not them . . . be ashamed nor confounded for my sake" (verse 6).⁴ Meanwhile His heart is rudely bruised. No sweet taste of natural charity came unalloyed to His enjoyment. He was a stranger to His brethren, and an alien to His mother's children. The consuming zeal of His Father's house estranged Him from the men whose thought was not for God, but for themselves.

Verses 10-21 disclose yet further the dark passages of pain and sorrow through which the blessed One held on His way in patience, till the full measure of the Father's will should be attained. Himself overflowing with perfect grace and patient mercy towards His people, He was surrounded on every side by those whose hearts gathered the more mischief and envy in proportion to the abun-

⁴ וְאֵיךְ More exactly, "*in me.*" In these words the voice of the Sponsor of His people's peace is clearly audible. The prayer of the Sufferer has its answer in the declarative testimony which now forms the basis of the gospel. (1 Peter ii. 6.)

dance of that light of life and healing which shone on them from the person of the Sun of righteousness and truth. Men and Satan searched and tried Him. They watched for His halting; but they found, instead of sin, the clear shining of Divine holiness, which drove them back confounded and abashed.

Yet before God He took upon Himself the iniquity of us all.⁵ This confession of sin was the secret of Divine love, hidden and undiscovered until made manifest by the preaching of the Gospel of the God of peace. Jesus had come into the world to undertake for His people, to be the Captain of their salvation. It was for the children's sake that He had taken flesh.⁶ But He wrought, and suffered, and overcame, in the strength and according to the will of the Father. He lived and died in obedient dependence upon Him. Hence He *prayed*, committing Himself and His work unto Him whom He honoured as *His God*.⁷ He was the Servant of Jehovah, to bring Jacob again unto Him. And Jacob will yet be brought, though His work seemed frustrate and His labour vain, when they, for whose sakes He was born into the world, refused and thrust Him far away, making haste to shed wickedly His precious blood.

But His prayer was upon God in an acceptable time (verse 13). Amid the maze of ever-growing sorrow and affliction, He turns to Jehovah as to the God of His *mercy*. The

⁵ Isaiah liii. 6. While this wonderful chapter belongs to every believing sinner, and is the very fountain of the Spirit's testimony to Jesus, in preaching the glad tidings of forgiveness to Jew and Gentile alike, it manifestly belongs, in its complete acceptation, to the repentant nation for whom Christ died. "We did esteem Him stricken," &c., will they say in the day when they shall look on Him who they have pierced, and shall mourn for Him, as one mourneth for his only son. (Zech. xii. 10; John xix. 37.)

⁶ Heb. ii. 14.

⁷ Isaiah xlix. 4.

author and exemplar of His people's faith, He puts His trust in the promise of the faithful God. His hope of deliverance was the "truth of Jehovah's salvation."⁸ The keys of Divine mercy to usward were hidden in Jesus; He died to place them in the Father's hands, to enable Him to manifest Himself as the God of all grace. The mercy which He claimed in the day of His distress should be shewn to Him in righteousness, when His obedience had been ended at the cross. God, who raised Him from the dead, and gave Him glory, is the eternal witness of His truth.⁹

The climax of His suffering is stated in verses 19–21. His heart was broken by reproach. He had been sent, and had come as the willing Messenger of Divine love, to heal the broken-hearted. The Lord God, who opened His ear morning by morning to hear as *His* disciple, had given Him a tongue which flowed with pure words of grace and quickening power into the wearied ear.¹ But He was as a proverb of derision to them that sat at ease. He was the song of the drunkards, who had no care for the affliction of Joseph; whose inward parts were extortion and excess, while they chose chief places at their feasts of iniquity.² With deep and mournful power do these verses testify the reality of the blessed Sufferer's tender sensibilities as the *Man* of sorrows. "I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none." Even where the spirit was willing, the flesh was all too weak to bear one hour's watching with His grief.³

Verses 23–28 have, I think, a double application; first, to the nation in its rejection of the Son of God in the flesh,⁴

⁸ Thus have we heard Him praying in the hour of His extremity: "Our fathers trusted in thee," &c. (Ps. xxii. 4.) ⁹ Heb. v. 7–10.

¹ Isaiah l. 4. ² Amos v. 21–23; vi. 4–6; Matt. xxiii. 6, 14, 25.

³ Matt. xxvi. 40, 41.

⁴ Rom. xi. 9.

and secondly, to the antichristian oppressors (perhaps the nation in its reception of the beast may more especially be contemplated) who in the end shall persecute and abhor the faithful remnant which will be found cleaving to the Lord amid the general apostasy. The expression "thy wounded"⁵ seems to apply to the latter. The quotation of verse 25 of this Psalm in connection with Psalm cix. 8, where application is made by Peter of both passages to the case of Judas,⁶ does not affect the general interpretation of the context. Judas was himself a type and specimen of the ungodly nation.⁷ As, in the treachery of their hearts, the people whom Jehovah had fed with the multitude of His loving-kindnesses—bringing them near to Himself, and making His goodness to pass in abundance before their eyes, had betrayed His name, and sacrificed His truth to the idols of their vanity—so in a yet more fearful manner had the son of perdition acted in selling for a bribe of covetousness the Lord of truth and grace. The unspeakable vileness of sinful flesh is presented in its quintessence in the person of Judas. The nation and its rulers saw and hated both Jesus and the Father; Judas also saw, and seemed to love. He heard and followed Jesus. He was His companion, and a ministering instrument of the grace and truth which flowed from Him. He was in the secret of His person, and was the trusted steward of God's little flock. He kept the bag; but in

⁵ תִּלְלִיךָ

⁶ Acts i. 10.

⁷ Though with a yet more faithful and more fearful distinctness he personifies Christian apostasy. Twin-named with the last Antichrist, "the son of perdition" (John xvii. 12; 2 Thess. ii. 3), he exemplified the covetous iniquity—the irreclaimable baseness—of corrupted nature; even as its opposite qualities of boastful self-dependence and atheistic pride will form the most conspicuous features of the last dire offspring of corrupted Christian truth.

heart he was a thief. The covetousness which formed the root of his character bore as its fearful fruit destructive treason against the Lord of life. For a very little sum he sold God's Christ to death, although he knew full well the manner of his sin. That he was deceived by Satan is true; but the entrance of the deceiver into his heart was by the avenue of his ruling *natural* lust. Nor is fallen nature *ever* intrinsically better. The believer learns this truth partly in his own experience and personal conflict. He learns it *fully* only in the cross of Christ.

With verse 25 may be compared the Lord's address to Jerusalem.⁸ The latter verses of the Psalm are full of the expression of proper Jewish hope. The joy of the risen Christ is contemplated (verses 29, 30), but in connection chiefly with the glorification of the God of Israel, the builder of Zion. Still, *heaven* as well as earth shall praise Him (verse 34). The Church has her rich portion in the world's great jubilee of millennial blessedness. But it is the city of David that is the prominent object in the present scene, "They that love His name shall dwell therein." But the city shall itself be known by His memorial in that day of joy.⁹

PSALM LXX.

A PSALM of kindred tone to the last. If compared with the latter part of Psalm xl., a great similarity of expression will be apparent. It is a prayer of faith to the God of known deliverance (verse 5). Its application to the suffering Messiah is obvious; but, perhaps, it is to the afflicted people of His name that it more fully refers. It is a Psalm

⁸ Matt. xxiii. 37-39.

⁹ Ezek. xlvi. 35.

“to bring to remembrance.” As such, it will suit appropriately the lips of those whose hearts will be full of sore mourning and of earnest supplication in the day of their distress.¹ Intercession (verse 4) as well as prayer abounds. There is a full expression of confidence in God, while the severity of present suffering moves an urgent appeal to His faithfulness. That His name should be magnified by the saved and satisfied vessels of His mercy, is all the desire of the poor and needy, yet hopeful suppliant.

Tried Christian faith, which looks for the promise of the God of peace,² enduring meanwhile with patience of hope, may find a sweetly sympathetic and encouraging response in this short but interesting Psalm.

PSALM LXXI.

THERE is no title to this Psalm. In its first intention it may have expressed the experience of David, under the acute afflictions which befell him in old age, in connexion with Absalom’s rebellion.³ Its value to the Christian, as a just expression of personal experience and desire, will be according to the circumstances of his actual position while a partaker of the afflictions of the Gospel.

The Psalm is one of great beauty and power in whatever light it is regarded. But it is especially so when viewed (which is, I believe, its true prophetic meaning) as a descriptive testimony by the Spirit of Christ of the condition, the prospects, the distresses, and the hopes of Israel, the people of Immanuel’s kindred as concerning the flesh.⁴ A strong resemblance will be remarked by the attentive

¹ Isaiah lix. 9–15.

² Rom. xvi. 20.

³ Compare, as to this more especially, verses 9–16, with Psalm iii.

⁴ Rom. ix. 5.

reader between much of the language of this Psalm and that of Psalm xxii. While, however, this is so, there are many expressions which forbid an exclusive appropriation of the Psalm before us to Messiah. On the other hand, its language is everywhere capable of the most direct application to the *nation*, as the subject of God's varied dealings in His faithfulness and truth. I believe it to be a prophetic expression of the heart's desire of Israel, when, in the old age of his varied and eventful life of vanity, he shall turn finally, with true desire, to the Lord. There is a crying to God for deliverance, the righteousness of Jehovah being urged as the sure ground of appeal (verse 2). This is always the language of faith. There is, moreover, a remembrance of His covenant of mercy—His commandment of salvation⁵ (verse 3). But the cry appears to be sent up by those whose appointment it is to taste for a season the hardest rod of Divine chastisement, in the person of the Wicked One himself (verse 4). This verse seems to connect the Psalm generally with the particular experience of the faithful remnant of the circumcision in the day of Jacob's trouble.

The verses which follow are very full of meaning. Verses 5–8 are surely applicable to Jesus in His earthly days. Their present bearing is, however, not on Immanuel Himself, but on His kinsmen after the flesh.⁶ The day-spring of Israel's youth was lovely with Divine favour.⁷ The nation was wonderful from its beginning,⁸ when God

⁵ The Christian knows and rejoices in the realization of this expression in the Person of Jesus. (Compare John xii. 49, 50.)

⁶ Rom. ix. 5.

⁷ Hosea xi. 1.

⁸ The application in principle of verse 7 to the Church, when in the energy of the Spirit it stood conspicuous amid surrounding darkness, as the candlestick from whence the living light of Christ shone forth, is equally clear. (Compare Acts ii. 43–47, and v. 12, 13.)

brought them out of Egypt to be the people of His praise. But Israel had forgotten the Lord, and had provoked His Holy One to jealousy. The chastisements which came upon that people *because* they bore His name, had made them a wonder among the Gentiles after another sort.⁹ But faith looked through the darkness of Jacob's trouble, to the sure mercy which would in due time rejoice for their sakes against judgment. In verse 11 we have the grounds upon which the persecutors justify their oppression: "God hath forsaken Him." But it is not so. They who thus express the evil desire of their hearts know not that God has established *them* for the judgment, and ordained them for the correction of His own.¹ His people shall not die; for His covenant is with them both of life and peace. He will break and cast finally away the rod of His anger, when He has remembered for them His promise of the sure mercies of David.

Verses 14–19. The song of Moses had been sung by the people who fell afterwards by judgment in the wilderness. God regarded not the generation in whom there was no faith to know His ways, and who abode not in His covenant. But a mightier deliverance remains to be accomplished for the children of the covenant, upon whom the elective love of God rests steadfast for the fathers' sakes. It will be celebrated in another, a *new* song—the song of Moses indeed, but likewise of the Lamb.² That nation's end will be yet more wonderful than its beginning. Light and glory will fill and beautify the quiet evening of Jacob's troublous day. Salvation and rest are ordained to be the close, in peace and honour, of the many centuries

⁹ Deut. xxviii. 37.

¹ Isaiah x. *passim*; Hab. i. 12.

² Rev. xv. 3, 4.

of wandering and shame which have been the sorrowful meat of the rebellious house.* From the dust of weakness and affliction Zion will be bidden to arise, and put on strength and beauty, when the time shall have come for the Sun of her righteousness to shine forth. Whereas they have endured the long and heavy burden of Jehovah's indignation, because of the hardness of their hearts, they shall find in that day another heart within their breasts. They shall no more go about to establish their own righteousness and justify their ways. They shall see the living truth in Jesus when the veil is taken from their hearts: with contrite spirits they shall submit themselves to the righteousness of God, and delight their souls in the rich abundance of His grace. Their tongues will then be loosed to speak His praise, and to show forth the perfection of His way. Israel had ever been Jehovah's witnesses. In their triumph and in their after dispersions they had alike exemplified His truth. Even in despite of their own folly and perverseness God had glorified His name through them, while they were but an occasion of His dishonour in their ways. And now yet once again, and that for ever, they will be reinstated in their place of honour, as worthy expounders of the ways of God to men. They have been a foolish nation and unwise. Their strength of manhood has been withered for their sins; but the grey hairs of Jacob will keep, and his lips will utter, the true sayings of wisdom. The beautiful garments of Christ will be upon those who shall have been brought by the sore stress of famine and misery within the better covenant of grace, and who will rest under the manifested sceptre of Him whom God has

* Isaiah xlv. 13.

exalted⁴ to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance unto *Israel*, and remission of sins.⁵

Verses 20–24. These verses are a very sweet expression of the wise-hearted joy of the restored people, when in the safe enjoyment of the fair fruits of promise, they will survey with wonder and delight the incomparable ways of Divine mercy and truth. As yet the nation is spiritually in its tomb. But it is not always to be there. God will open the graves of His people, and will bring them up into the light of life. *His* mountain shall bear men, and His cities shall be inhabited. An exceeding great army will arise from Jacob's dust. Dispersion and variance shall be no more remembered, when Judah and Ephraim are again united as one nation, in the *land* which Jehovah has destined to become a praise for His name's sake among the countries of the earth.⁶ One heart and one way will then be theirs who had turned every one to his own way.⁷ For they will know the Lord. Increase and comfort will be on every side about the city and the people of the Lord's inheritance (verse 21). For they shall be as the stones of a crown lifted up for an ensign upon His land, when their face is enlightened with the light of life. The virgin of *Israel* will then again go forth with dance, and psaltery, and song,⁸ when the mirth of

⁴ Acts v. 31; Rom. xi. 26.

⁵ In verse 19 there seems to be a prophetic intimation of the display of the Divine righteousness in the revelation of Jesus Christ. "Thy righteousness is עֲדֵי־קְדוּשָׁה" Christ is the righteousness of God. The Spirit now convinces the world of righteousness by testifying to the ascension of Jesus to the Father. It will be rained down upon the land and people of the Lord's inheritance when the times of refreshing are come; and He sends Jesus as the repairer of the breach, to settle the walls of Jerusalem upon the everlasting foundations of His truth.

⁶ Ezek. xxxvi. xxxvii.

⁷ Jer. xxxii. 39.

⁸ Jer. xxxi. 4.

their gladness shall be acceptable to the Holy One, as the grateful offering of those whose righteousness and comeliness are the fair and lasting memorials of His own abounding grace. He will find fragrance in the branch of His planting. He will be glorified in the work of His own hands.⁹

PSALM LXXII.

A PSALM for Solomon. For the figure in part—for the Divine reality in its full intent. It is a very lovely celebration of the glory as it will be manifested in “the world to come”¹ of the reigning Christ, the great King,² whose dominion is the earth and its entire fulness.

Verse 1 declares His title, and sets Him before God as the minister of His judgment, the acceptable holder of His government in righteousness. As to His title, it is twofold. He is first *King* absolutely; He is also the King's *Son*. Dominion and fear pertain to Him who is Lord of all.³ He is in His Divine person the living God, and an everlasting King.⁴ He is King of kings, and Lord of lords.⁵ But He is, as the incarnate fulfiller of Divine counsel, the King's Son. He is, moreover, the anointed heir of promise according to the sure covenant with David.⁶ It is with especial reference to this last title that He is regarded in this Psalm. He who is the subject of it is the Judge of Jehovah's people. “He shall judge *thy* people with righteousness, and *thy* poor with judgment” (verse 2).

Two principal points have to be considered. First, the moral glory and proper majesty of Christ, the King of

⁹ Isaiah lx. 21.

¹ Heb. ii. 5. *Notes on Hebrews in loc.*

² Psalm xlvii.; Mal. i. 14.

³ Acts x. 36.

⁴ Jer. x. 10.

⁵ Rev. xix. 16.

⁶ 2 Sam. vii. xxiii.

righteousness;⁷ and secondly, the effects of His power upon that which is the immediate subject of His sway.

I. He is *God's King*. He will bear the government upon His shoulder in the name and in the fear of God.⁸ As in the days of His flesh He wrought out in gracious suffering the Father's will, so will it be to the praise of His glory that the fulness of dominion will be held and wielded by the appointed Heir of all. He is in this, as in all else, a perfect contrast to the wilful king, whose throne of iniquity is to be destroyed at the brightness of His appearing. He will come to break in pieces the oppressor (verse 4), and to save the children of the needy. But it is as the binder-up of the breach of His earthly people—the fulfiller to Israel of the mercy sworn to the fathers—that He is chiefly celebrated in the present Psalm. The remnant of the nation is called collectively God's poor (verse 2.) There will be such a residue found in the land after the removal in judgment of the haughty and the despisers.⁹ Upon such He will descend as showers of revival upon the new-mown grass (verse 6).¹ He will visit with overflowing grace and blessing the nation which shall then have attained the end of its humiliation. God's final and enduring thoughts of peace shall thus perfect and fulfil the beginnings of His mercy. David the son of Jesse looked in spirit onward to that day. It was not so with his house. But the hope of Israel was to come of his loins as touching the flesh.

⁷ The full title of Melchisedec is King of righteousness and King of peace. Priestly honour is not, indeed, the subject of this Psalm, but regal administration in righteousness and power. But the blessing, both of Israel and of the nations who rejoice with them, will stand in that day only through the priestly intercession of the Son of God. His kingdom will be a kingdom of mediatorial and intercessional grace, as well as of effectual administrative power.

⁸ 2 Sam. xxiii. 3.

⁹ Zeph. iii. 11, 12.

¹ Hosea vi. 1-3.

This was all his *salvation*, as well as all his desire. With this joyful assurance in his heart he was gathered to his fathers, when, having served his generation, by the will of God he fell on sleep.²

With respect to the kingdom, it is here limited to earth alone. The present Psalm is, therefore, of much less extensive scope than Psalm viii., where the subject is the Adamic dominion of Christ. Jesus is Son of David, Son of Abraham, and Son of Man. Of these three human titles, the first is the smallest, if strictly construed, though in another sense the Abrahamic and Davidical titles may be regarded as co-extensive. But neither David's throne nor Abraham's inheritance looked beyond an earthly limit.³ Christ's title, therefore, as David's Son, confers in itself no claim to heavenly rule. But He takes possession of the throne of David by virtue of His larger and permanent title as the appointed Heir of *all* things—according to the majesty of His Person, who *is* Lord of all—Possessor of *heaven*, as well as earth. The Son of Man will enter on the occupation of delegated human government in the sufficiency of a name and title perfectly Divine. The born Child of Israel's hope is *Immanuel*.⁴ The Son of Judah, who is to bear the government upon the throne of David, is describable as to His Person only by such names as

² Acts xiii. 36.

³ The reader who has read thus far attentively will hardly need to be assured that the above expression relates exclusively to Abraham and to David, as receivers of positive temporal promise. Abraham's inheritance in this respect was "the world" (Rom. iv. 13); and the power of David's throne was to be from sea to sea. But the distinctness of earthly dispensational promise has no disturbing effect upon the more permanent as well as higher blessings to which the heirs of promise are evermore entitled as children of the resurrection. The fathers sought a *heavenly* country as the goal of their souls' desire. They knew God as their end and their reward, no less than as their present shield.

⁴ Isaiah vii. 14.

“Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.”⁶ Divine fulness will be the known and visible supply of Israel’s blessing in the great and lasting day of Jezreel. The shout of a King will be among them in that day.

It is an earthly kingdom, but a perpetual one; that is, it knows no successor in its place. With the termination of that kingdom there will arrive also the close of measured time. The earth will then itself have reached its destined end. It will have served the purposes of its creation, and will be removed by the same word that called it into being. It will disappear completely that another may be seen. *All things* will be made new,⁸ when God has compassed in the now existing creation the purposed glory and kingdom of His Christ. Perpetual endurance, unaffected by disturbing forces from within or from without, is here affirmed of the kingdom which the Most High shall set up under heaven. Yet the very symbols of endurance are also the tokens of intended limitation. While *sun* and *moon* endure, this reign, once entered on, will last (verses 7, 17). But neither sun nor moon abides for ever. The heavens that now are will hereafter cease to be.⁷ They will depart where none can follow, at the bidding of Him whose they are, whether to garnish with beauty, or to hang with sackcloth, or finally to change them as a man puts off his garment, dwelling no longer in the curtains of that tent, because His will has chosen a newer and yet fairer habitation for His name. As touching this present creation, God has set His lights in the heavens—the lesser and the greater—for the creature’s sake below.⁸ But when God’s tabernacle is indeed with men, they will see Him by another light. The heavens which now declare His glory, and

⁵ Isaiah ix. 6, 7. ⁶ Rev. xxi. 1–5. ⁷ 2 Peter iii. 10. ⁸ Gen. i.

the firmament which is the present witness of His handiwork, will be forgotten, with all former things, when, in the ultimate accomplishment of the written word of promise, man's full and changeless blessedness shall be attained, and God in Christ shall be his only Light.⁹

Nothing is more expressly stated in Scripture than, first, that the Son *has* a kingdom; and secondly, that this kingdom has an *end*.¹ Further, it is in the clearest manner declared that earthly as well as heavenly things are to be brought under His dominion.² He is the Prince of the kings of the earth.³ Again, a time is set and limited for this kingdom. Before He enters on it He will bind the present prince of this world. A millennial bondage is assigned to Satan,⁴ during which his power over the nations of the world will be in suspense. It is while he lies deep beneath the feet of those whom now he seeks to devour⁵ that the kingdom of God's Christ on earth will bear its blessed sway.⁶

Never has Christ yet acted openly as King of nations. Sitting on the Father's throne in parity of Divine glory, He yet expects a time when a kingdom and throne will be manifestly conferred on Him as the anointed *Son of man*.⁷ That throne, and the high fellowship of its dominion, are the promised gift of Jesus' love to those who now are content awhile to suffer in the confession of His

⁹ Rev. xxi. 3-5. "The tabernacle of God is with men," &c. The perfected results of human redemption, according to the utmost measure of Divine purpose, will then be known and realized. As it respects the Church, the time of her entrance upon her complete and changeless blessing will be the second coming of the Lord from heaven.

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 24.

² Eph. i. 10.

³ Rev. i. 5.

⁴ Some Christians appear to think that the millennium has already begun. Do they really believe that Satan is no longer deceiving the nations?

⁵ Rom. xvi. 20.

⁶ Rev. xx.

⁷ Dan. vii. 13, 14.

name.⁸ The nations, before whom His people have acknowledged a hope and confessed a title which the world still disallows, are to be subjected to the rule of those on whom there rests now, by the Spirit of promise, the unction of the kingdom and glory of God. The first kingly act of the returning Christ will be to clear His kingdom of offence.⁹ He will be as the lightning of God upon the assembled hosts of wickedness.¹ But His coming is not only to redress with power the long outraged claims of holiness against sin; He will come as the *Restorer* of the earth. He will begin a reign of righteousness wherein creation shall rejoice. Let us now more briefly notice the second of the two points above stated.

II. The effects of the Messiah's earthly reign are largely and most beautifully described in this Psalm. Without dwelling now at length on these, some of the more important results may here be stated. There is, first, a full deliverance of the afflicted people in the destruction of the oppressor. The reign of blessedness thus inaugurated in judicial righteousness flows on in still increasing peace. The manner of this is intimated in verses 4, 12, 14. The multitudinous prosperity of Israel follows as a consequence of this (verse 16). The full effect of righteousness is felt in quietness and perfect assurance,² with inward and outward peace (verses 3, 7). The nation, being established in Jehovah their righteousness, shall hear no more the alarm of war. The mountains and the hills shall bring peace. If looked to, they shall be found to bear no longer beacons of terror and tokens of approaching foes. Clothed to their summits with harvests of plenty, they shall drop sweet wine and melt with purest oil,³ running down in

⁸ Rev. iii. 21; 2 Tim. ii. 12; Rev. ii. 26, 27. ⁹ Matt. xiii. 41.

¹ Matt. xxiv. 27. ² Isaiah xxxii. 17. ³ Amos ix. 13, 14; Jer. xxxi. 5.

streams of increase, because of the overflowing fulness of the blessing poured forth from God's open windows on His chosen.⁴ Violence shall be no more heard within the borders of Immanuel's land. There will be, moreover, the full and universal subjection of the nations of the earth to the sceptre of David's Son (verses 8-11). "*All* kings shall fall down before Him: *all* nations shall serve Him." Willingly or unwillingly all must bow. Blessing will be known or thought of only in His name (verse 17). The whole earth will be filled with His glory and His fame (verse 19).⁵ Future Psalms will describe with richer fulness of detail the blessings of the day for which creation groans. I will now only add a remark on one or two passages which seem to demand particular notice with reference to their just interpretation.

In the eighth verse we have, I believe, an allusion to the original Abrahamic promise of the land, and its subsequent temporary accomplishment in the days of Solomon.⁶ That the expressions are capable of a wider and more general intention is clear, but the distinct and permanent fulfilment of the specific promise seems more immediately to be imported by the language of this verse. The meaning of verse 16 is not easily determined.⁷ On the whole, the English version seems correct. The passage

⁴ Mal. iii. 10-12.

⁵ Isaiah lxvi. 19.

⁶ Gen. xv. 18; Ex. xxiii. 31; 1 Kings iv. 21.

⁷ Hieron renders: "*Erit memorabile triticum in terrâ . . . et florebut de civitate sicut fœnum terræ.*" "*Es ist Ueberfluss an Korn im Lande, auf der Berge Haupt . . . und Städten entblühet Volk wie Gras des Landes.*"—DE WETTE. "*Essendo seminata in terra . . . pure una menata di frumento, &c. . . . e gli abitanti della città fioriranno come l'erba della terra.*"—DIOD. "*Auf erden wird das Getreide dick stehen,*" u. s. w.—LUTHER. GEBENIUS hesitates, as to the translation of מַנְיָוּס, between "*diffusio*" and "*manipulus.*"

may refer to the multitude of Israel's physical blessings—blessings of the basket and the store—or, as I rather think, more directly to the growth of the nation itself, when, after having been brought low and made few in number, they shall again be known among the Gentiles as the seed which the Lord hath blessed.

The concluding verse is important. That purpose of God, of which the *Church* is the object, was no part of Divine revelation to David.⁸ A glorified Christ, reigning over Israel and the nations of the world, filled the compass of his hope as a receiver of promise and a prophet of God. His prayers were *ended* in the utterance of that desire. Of *heavenly* things, as they are now revealed in the Church by the Spirit, he had no knowledge.⁹ As a master and prophet in Israel, he spake of earthly things,¹ and his soul entered into them as the proper objects of his hope and desire. It is interesting, and of very great practical importance, to observe and to keep constantly in view this essential difference between the callings respectively of Israel and the Church. In all this full and lovely picture of Christ's power and blessedness, heaven is the silent and unnoticed witness only of the joys of earth. It is the kingdom *under* the whole heaven² that is here described. It is an *exclusively* earthly scene. He who fills and lightens it is indeed the Lord from heaven, and from thence will His glory be revealed; but the place of His pleasure is earth, and the receivers of His favour and the subjects of His power are nations and peoples upon earth. In the ancient house of vanity, whose rule held all beneath the sun, shall the power of truth and righteousness be set, with pervading results of happiness and

⁸ Eph. iii. 5.

⁹ See note at page 94.

¹ John iii. 10-12.

² Dan. vii. 27.

peace. The tongue of wisdom, which had striven in vain to tell the sum of human toil and sorrow,³ will then have happier employ in celebrating the abundant blessings of the creature's rest.

³ Eccles. i. 8.

Book III.

PSALM LXXIII.

THIS Psalm, while presenting some difficulties in its detailed interpretation, is full of instructive meaning and value to the exercised believer, who is realizing in his measure the practical experiences of a man of God in the midst of the world's pervading evil.

It is the recital of one who has come forth from the sanctuary of God to declare the wisdom which he has learned there, and which can be acquired nowhere else, concerning the right ways of God, in the mystery of His long-suffering patience with the world and its iniquity.

The secret of God, in the knowledge of which faith finds a solution of the perplexing and distressful riddle of human affairs, is not to be unravelled by a study of facts, nor evolved from an extended experience of God's apparent dealings as the Governor of the world. He is, indeed, the Judge and Ruler of all. But although power is His alone, and He is the only and the righteous God, yet to the mind of one who judges the progress of events, and estimates the actual condition of human society by the light of Divine truth, nothing is more abidingly manifest than the apparent inversion of the known and eternal principles of

Divine government which the world everywhere presents. "The tabernacles of robbers prosper, and they that provoke God are secure."¹ The present impunity of evil-doers, and the continual depression and frequent persecution of truth in the persons of its servants, have at all times served to exercise the faith and patience of God's saints.²

The Psalm before us discloses some of the secret conflict of a heart thus exercised. But it has a very definite character of its own, besides its general application in principle to the circumstances of individual faith. This is indicated in the opening verse, which contains the proper subject of the Psalm. It is the celebration of the name of Jehovah as the God of faithful mercy to *Israel*—as the God moreover of judgment, requiring (and in the mystery of His own grace providing) truth and holiness in the hearts of His people. He is good to Israel, even to such as are clean of heart (verse 1).

The action of the Psalm commences with the second verse. It seems to describe prophetically the exercise of soul which the faithful remnant of Israel will know, and which in varying degrees has been always the experience of such in the time of national apostasy, when the day of man draws towards its fearful close, and the long-deferred hope of God's afflicted people seems more than ever to be mocked by the secure prosperity of the ungodly (verse 12). But the prisoners of hope have a sure stronghold in God. He becomes to such the "little sanctuary," wherein are found, not only security from the rage of the enemy, but also light and truth, whereby, in the clear discernment of the long-expected end, they may still endure, sustaining their souls in patience of hope until His time arrive. It is found to be a good thing to draw nigh to God. He becomes

¹ Job xii. 6.

² Jer. xii. 1; Hab. i. 1-4.

known in the hour of natural despondency as the strength of the believer's heart, and quietness and assurance are the experienced results (verses 26-28).

Considering more closely its practical application, we find in verses 4-12 a solemn portraiture of the world as the enemy of God. Men corrupt themselves under His mercies. Nourishing their hearts as in a day of slaughter, they heap up treasure for the last days.³ The progress which man is enabled to make in the march of secular improvement and prosperity never fails to harden his heart against God. It is impossible to be rich in one's own esteem, and rich toward God at the same time.⁴ That which nature regards as wealth and increase, is poverty, and nakedness, and blindness, and wretchedness, in the eyes of Christ.⁵ The love of money is opposed perpetually to the love of Jesus. It is called in Scripture a root of *all* evils,⁶ because of its incompatibility with the faith which alone produces fruits of righteousness by Jesus Christ,⁷ and because it is the most commanding and enduring of all human lusts. Characteristically the godly and the ungodly are frequently contrasted in Scripture as the poor and the rich; for faith never deems itself rich in its own temporal possessions, its wealth is God. Silver and gold may abound, but if so, they are held by the believer in trust for God. Nature values money in proportion to its estimate of the things which money can accomplish or procure; for wealth is man's omnipotency within the death-drawn circle of this present life.⁸ Hence the native aversion of the heart to God expands into increased boldness of expression, as the self-discovered

³ James v. 3, 5.

⁴ Luke xii. 21.

⁵ Rev. iii. 17.

⁶ ῥίζα πάντων τῶν κακῶν. (1 Tim. vi. 10, 11.)

⁷ Phil. i. 11.

⁸ Eccles. x. 19.

and self-wrought appliances of man's natural will become multiplied in his hands.⁹

Men naturally act upon the principle of referring everything to themselves, denying meanwhile, or evading, God's testimony that they are themselves intrinsically corrupt. The endeavour to accommodate the word of Divine truth to the desires of the human will, and so to obtain a sanction, such as conscience needs, for ends and courses which are purely selfish, has often been the fond attempt of nature in a certain stage of religious apostasy. But this is not its *final* form. The goal of unbelief is atheism. Faith comes to God because it believes that *He is*, and that He is a *rewarder* of them that diligently seek Him.¹ Unbelief, never contemplating the rewards of blessedness

⁹ No thoughtful Christian, who marks the present colour of the times, can fail to perceive in the existing state of professing Christendom a fearful exemplification of the connexion which always subsists between physical progress and spiritual decline. While flesh and Spirit continue to be contraries (Gal. v. 17), it must be so. Never have human pretensions soared so highly, or been so firmly sustained by positive acquisition, as in the present day. Man evidently feels growing upon him a consciousness of almightiness within his own domain. The very lightnings of God are constrained by modern science to lend their winged speed to the transmission of his thoughts. Nor, in the general advance of science, has religious knowledge lagged behind. At no time probably of the world's history has the word of God been so widely diffused, and so extensively read and commented on, both by the lovers and the haters of the living Truth. Religious pretension is the natural result of scriptural information; but no Christian needs to be informed that the *power of godliness* is a far different thing. Never has practical infidelity (under every variety of outward disguise) been more rife than in these days. And it increases. Already is human science looked to as the interpreter of Divine truth, instead of the Holy Spirit of God. This is a thing of every-day occurrence even among those who have not given up Christ. But if the times are evil, they should not be called *strange*. God has given faithful warning to His children of the final days. (2 Peter iii.)

¹ Heb. xi. 6.

as the *gift* of God, whose aspect towards His ruined creature is that of gracious promise, ceases to think of Him *at all* when the fruits of natural desire are found to be attainable by human means. The unrestrained license of the human will is always found to coincide with a complete denial of God. "They are corrupt, and speak wickedly concerning oppression: they speak loftily. They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth" (verses 8, 9). Such is the estimate which the Spirit of Christ forms of the character and conduct of the ungodly, who prosper in the world and increase in riches.²

The effect upon the mind of a believer, of constantly witnessing the impunity of evil, is fretfulness, unless the soul is kept habitually stayed upon God. This feeling not unfrequently generates, as its result, a disposition to conform, more or less, for ease and personal advantage' sake, to that which is, nevertheless, judged in the conscience as contrary to God. The abundance of evil causes love to wax cold even in a saint, while his heart is occupied with the evil, rather than with Him who is above it and in the midst of it, for the most sure deliverance of His elect. Hence the caution which warns us not to think it strange if fiery trial come.³ We are to let patience have her *perfect* work. But the end and finisher of that work is the Lord Himself. And so it is said: "Be patient, therefore, brethren, *until the coming of the*

² I feel some difficulty as to the true interpretation of verse 10. On the whole, I think that the former clause refers to the suffering remnant, and that in the word לְיְהוָה is to be understood the Lord Himself, as the Sanctuary and Refuge of His people. DIODATI seems to take this view: "*Perciò, il popolo di Dio riviene a questo,*" &c. The latter clause seems to refer to the putting of the dregs of God's cup of indignation into the hands of the oppressors.

³ 1 Peter iv. 12; 1 John iii. '13.

Lord." Change of time or circumstance is not the hope of faith, but the Lord Himself, who will be manifested in a little while as the only deliverer of His people, and as the rectifier of the confusions in the midst of which they are called to sojourn, and to suffer for a season, by the will of God.

We have an expression of this feeling of fretfulness in verses 13, 14. The eye affects the heart, naturally, for joy or grief. But the result of the heart's counsel concerning the sight of the eyes is ever profitless and vain. There is nothing *there* that is capable of affording relief and compensation to the afflicted spirit under the pressure of the evil day. Light is to be found in God alone. Where He is dealing with the soul this discovery is always attained, though often at the expense of much previous trial, as in the present case (verses 15-17).⁴ God alone can set crooked things straight, and will do so in His time. But the place where His purposes are learned, and where, therefore, the tried heart of the believer finds its rest and re-assurance, is the *sanctuary*. The Christian is often thus exercised. It is only when all things are referred immediately to Christ, and are weighed with reference to the declared counsels of

⁴ Verse 15 is most interesting. The sufferer seems there to reach the climax of his conflict. Amazed at the sight of his eyes—drawn vehemently in the direction to which nature always tends—he is checked and rebuked by a remembrance of the past experience of the children of God. (Compare Heb. xi. *passim*.) Reflection and searching of heart follow (verse 16), which issue in a turning to the sanctuary, to learn *there*, in the secret of God, the solution of that which is too hard to be compassed by his thought. As to the exact meaning of verse 15, it depends on the sense in which מִן is taken. DE WETTE and LUTHER render מִן as a pronominal affix. Our own translation agrees with the SEPT. (οὐτως) and the majority of modern interpreters, in treating the word as an adverb. GESENIUS also prefers this view. The difference involves nothing of maternal importance.

the Divine will, of which Jesus is the centre and the object, that steadiness of soul can be maintained. Fixedness of heart, combined with diligence in service, is the result of clear and positive knowledge of the end to which all things are working in the sure purposes of God.⁵

Verses 18–20 rehearse the solemn record of God's righteous judgment in the day of visitation. The foot of human pride will find the boasted ground of its confidence a slippery place, when the Lord arises to judge. When they shall say, peace and safety, then sudden and complete destruction comes.⁶

On the practical value of the remaining verses I need not remark at length. With verses 25, 26, let the Christian reader compare Phil. iii. 8; Gal. ii. 20; and 2 Cor. iv. 16–18, for his exhortation and comfort. The entire passage, however, appears to have a prophetic meaning, like the rest of the Psalm.⁷ The last verse, besides its present bearing on the believer, will receive a conspicuous fulfilment in the day

⁵ 1 Cor. xv. 58.

⁶ I have no doubt that the catastrophe of Antichrist is contemplated in these verses. In verse 20 I am disposed to follow the LXX. in their translation of קָצַף . The verse, as they give it, is as follows: 'Ὅσοι ἐνύπνιον ἐξεγειρομένον, Κύριε ἐν τῇ πόλει σου τὴν εἰκόνα αὐτῶν ἐξουδενώσεις. With this agree, besides the VULGATE, HIERON. and LUTHER. Compare, in support of the interpretation here contended for, Isaiah xxix. 7; Zech. xii.–xiv.

⁷ Verse 24 should not be overlooked. Its practical force is both obvious and beautiful for the believer. Prophetically, it probably relates first to the secret mercy of God to the remnant of the nation all through; and secondly to the Lord's open reception of the people in the day of His return as their Deliverer. The words $\text{אַחַר כְּבוֹד תִּקְחֵנִי}$ may, I think, be rendered: "After the glory thou wilt receive me," as has been suggested by some, though such a translation cannot be insisted on as exclusively right. The same words are so translated in Zech. ii. 8, a chapter which may be read with profit in connexion with this subject. (Compare Haggai ii. *passim*; and Psalm cii. 16.)

when Israel shall have returned to Him from whom they have so deeply revolted.⁸ Nearness to God⁹ will be found then to be good. The Christian knows this, in whose heart there is a response to the Spirit's witness, that it is a good thing for the heart to be established with grace, not with meats.¹ Israel will know the same truth when the veil is taken from their heart, and they know Him through whose precious blood alone the rebellious outcasts are brought nigh, with perfect and eternal acceptance, to the God of peace.²

PSALM LXXIV.

A SOLEMN pleading of Jewish faith in the land of Immanuel, when, in the last hours of man's evil day, the overspreading of abominations shall have filled the breadth of the land, and the ensigns of Antichrist already are displayed upon the citadel of Zion.³ The people of God appeal from the cruelty and blasphemy of lawless wickedness to Him who had surnamed Himself from of old with the name of Israel. He had dwelt at Zion. He had purchased the people, and redeemed the land to be His own. The covenant of His promise remained in the hearts

⁸ Hosea xiv. *passim*.

⁹ קָרַבְתָּ אֱלֹהִים *Tò prokollāsthai τῷ Θεῷ*.—LXX. Not to *draw* nigh only, but there to *abide*, continuing in His goodness, set up and established for ever, through the realized power of redemption, in the satisfying fullness of His grace. ¹ Heb. xiii. 9. ² Ezek. xxxvii. 26.

³ Verse 4 seems to imply this. The word אִתָּן is rendered by LUTHER, "*Götzen*:" by DE WETTE, "*Bräuchen*." Its general meaning is "signs." So LXX., HIERON. and VULGATE. It points, I think, distinctly to the lying wonders of Antichrist, which cannot deceive the elect, and which are contrasted with *their own* signs, which they no longer saw (verse 9); the word of patience being now their sole resource.

of the believing remnant of His servants, as the sure witness of these things. Thus His *Name* is made the sole ground of this appeal.

The last days of Gentile dominion, when, after having passed through the various stages and gradations of religious corruption, the open apostasy of the professing world under Antichrist, who is here (verse 22), as in Psalm xiv., called the *fool*, will have brought the nations nigh to the God of judgment, is evidently the time of the final action of this Psalm.² But it is restricted to Immanuel's land. For there it is that the enemies of the Lord attain the full measure of their sin; and there that they will know the terrible certainty of His recorded judgments. The perfection of blasphemy must be reached in the land and in the city where the Lord was crucified. God will be dishonoured, as He has often been before, in His *sanctuary* with a final provocation. The Man of Sin will set his seat there in the wisdom of his power, and will be proved a fool in the catastrophe of Divine judgment, which shall hurl him from his place of pride into the long-prepared pit of perdition.

It is the voice of jealousy that is heard in this Psalm. The foolish nation and the foolish man (verses 18, 22) are seen to prosper, to the utter desolation of the land and city which are specially distinguished by Jehovah's name. All

² Frequent crises have happened in Israel's history, to each of which much of the descriptive language of this Psalm would apply:—*e.g.*, the destruction of the temple, and the complete conquest of the land by Nebuchadnezzar; the ravages and pollutions of Antiochus; and, lastly, the Roman capture of Jerusalem, and its results. But in the present Psalm there is no reference to particular visitations. "Lift up thy feet to the *perpetual* desolations," &c. The very first words in verse 1 indicate that it is at the last end of the indignation that the Spirit moves his cry, "Why hast thou cast us off *for ever*?" &c.

the synagogues of *God* are burned up (verse 8); for in that day there will be one whose will it is to take the place of God, and who will not brook that men's petitions shall be asked of any but himself. Darius is a type of this.³ But the antitypical king shall do according to his *own* will, and not at the counsel of others. He will exalt himself above every god, and speak marvellous things against the God of gods.⁴ But there is a remnant who will return to the mighty God of Jacob. Having been moved to jealousy by a foolish nation, they will remember Jehovah in their low estate. They will return, with confession mixed with faith, to the unchanging covenant of God.

Verse 18 is peculiarly striking. It expresses, in the mouth of Jewish faith, the very term of reproach with which the Spirit of God had prophetically despised the aggressive Gentiles in Deut. xxxii. 21. This indicates a complete recognition on the part of the repentant people of their position as having been under the chastening hand of God, although in its distinctive tone this is not a penitential Psalm. They justify Him in His past dealings with themselves. It was *He* who had heaped mischiefs on them. They had been pierced through with *His* arrows.⁵ They are thus enabled to appeal to His name against the wrath of the enemy, who was magnifying himself against that name in thus oppressing the poor of His covenant. The enemy would fain serve himself of them for his own pleasure; but God had other thoughts. He had ordained the oppressors as a staff of correction to His own people, and established them that they might be the witnesses of His mighty Name when the power of His anger should be shown in their destruction.⁶

³ Dan. vi.

⁵ Deut. xxxii. 23.

⁴ Dan. xi. 36; 2 Thess. ii. 4.

⁶ Hab. i. 12; Isaiah xxx. 26-33.

It is a very beautiful as well as very solemn Psalm. The clear light of Divine deliverance is beheld in retrospect (verses 12-17), and faith, remembering the source of ancient mercies in the first covenant of promise, draws thence sustaining auguries of hope in the midst of the prevailing desolations. For the secret of God is known and treasured in the hearts of them that fear His name. He forsaketh not His saints, and will be jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy.⁷ His sore displeasure will be upon the heathen, whose lawless lust of aggression had helped forward the affliction which should recoil with violence upon themselves.

Verse 11 clearly, I think, refers to Messiah the Deliverer—the hand of God which is to be taken from His bosom to smite with terror and a perpetual reproach the enemies of His name. In verse 16 there seems to be an allusion to the then state of the foolish nation, who are crowning their folly by the ascription of creative attributes and original divinity to the beast, whose dominion is by the energy of Satan. Faith, meanwhile, confesses God, the blessed and only Potentate, while tarrying until the promised deliverance be come.⁸

The Psalm closes with a memorial of the fulness of atheistic blasphemy. The fool sits in the scorner's seat. God's enemies daily rise against Him. Their tumult⁹ increases continually. Yet God was of old the King and Saviour of His people. He would work salvation for them according to His name (verse 12).

⁷ Jer. xxxiii. 24-26; Zech. i. 14.

⁸ Rev. xiv. 7-12.

⁹ מְרִיבָה 'Υπερηφανία.—LXX. "Sonitus."—HIERON. "Lärm."—DE WETTE.

PSALM LXXV.

THE opening verse of this remarkable Psalm seems to express the anticipative thanksgiving of those who lift up their heads in the midst of the stupendous events of the last times, because, in the manifest interference of the God of judgment, they perceive that their own redemption draweth nigh.¹ It thus connects itself with the closing verses of the preceding Psalm, where solemn invocation was made of the God of judgment to arise and plead His own cause.

In the second verse the voice of Messiah is heard answering, as the Desire of all nations, to the groaning of the long-corrupted and afflicted earth—of the creature which travails in bondage until now²—but especially of the persecuted sufferers for His name's sake—the elect, for whose sakes the days of that dread tribulation shall be shortened.³

The meaning of the sublime language which follows (verse 3) is already understood by the believer who, through faith, has received into his soul the testimony of the Spirit,⁴ in whose heart the *cross* has been fully revealed in power. But it expresses a truth which will have its

¹ Rom. ix. 28; Luke xxi. 28.

² Rom. viii. 19–22.

³ Matt. xxiv. 21, 22. מְשֻׁבָּר is rightly rendered, I think, in the margin by "set time." This is the more usual translation of the passage: e.g., "Ὁραν λάβω καιρόν.—LXX. "Cum accepero tempus."—HIERON. (So VULGATE.) "Wenn ich den Zeitpunkt ergreife."—DE WETTE. "Denn zu seiner Zeit so werde ich Recht richten."—LUTH. The time of the Father's appointment, when the kingdom of the Son of man shall be visibly assumed and administered, is I doubt not intended.

⁴ John xvi. 8–11.

manifest fulfilment when the promised time of shaking shall have come.⁵ It will be thus when Jesus, who, as Jehovah, shall shake all things—even things in heaven as well as things on earth—shall Himself be known as the quieter and conservator of the troubled earth, which shall presently break forth into singing because of the setting up of His throne of righteousness and peace. The government shall then be manifestly on His shoulder,⁶ whose ability to bear and to administer it is according to the power and wisdom of the living God. For He is God. Though manhood be the form of His appearance, and though in the truth of His person He be the once-rejected Son of David, yet is He “the mighty God.” The God of the whole earth will He be called in that day.⁷

The remainder of the Psalm reviews the testimony of the Spirit of Christ during the prolonged period of Divine long-suffering, while the cup of trembling remained in the hand of the Lord, and He had continued still to speak persuasively and with faithful warning, being slow to anger and of great kindness. But Jacob’s God is the God to whom vengeance belongeth. He will avenge in due time both His people and His name—setting up the throne of His anointed, and abasing the proud sceptre of the wilful king. In the last two verses we seem to have again the voice of Messiah Himself. The characteristic features both of His priestly and regal administration are expressed. He will be a priest upon His throne in that bright and much-desired day.⁸

⁵ Heb. xii. 26.

⁶ Even as it is already to the faith of the Church, which knows Jesus as the possessor of all power in heaven and in earth.

⁷ Isaiah ix. 6; liv. 5.

⁸ Zech. vi. 13.

PSALM LXXVI.

A SONG of exceeding beauty; to be taken up in commemoration of the mighty acts of Israel's God by the earthly people of His covenant, when again planted by His own right hand in the land from whence they shall no more remove.¹ The full accomplishment of national blessing is declared (verse 1). The name of God is great in ISRAEL, as well as known in *Judah*. He is now received and boasted in by those whose fathers had thrust Him far from them, piercing the hand and the heart which had borne with them and fed them from of old. His tabernacle is now in Salem—no more a city of stirs, but the habitation of perpetual peace—the place of Shiloh's royal seat—of Him who is the lion of the tribe of Judah, and the shepherd, the stone of Israel.² At His roar their enemies shall fade away, and melt out of their land; and under His kingly sceptre of righteousness and peace His people shall dwell safely as the ransomed flock of His pasture—His beautiful flock, whose beauty and whose multitude are of Him who will be as the dew of increase, not less than the fountain of cleansing, to the people of His name.³

The total destruction of the confederate enemies of Immanuel, and the locality of their defeat, are emphatically stated (verses 3–6). “*There brake He,*” &c.⁴

Verse 4 may be an apostrophe of Mount Zion, now

¹ 2 Sam. vii. 10.

² Gen. xlix. 24.

³ Hos. xiv. 5; Zech. xiii. 1.

⁴ Zech. xii.

owned and blessed as the dwelling-place of the great King—the chosen seat of the mighty One of Jacob—in contrast to the lawless reign of Gentile dominion, a power which had thought only of destruction and self-aggrandizement; whose head had sought to gather the whole earth in the insatiable breadth of his desire, ruling the nations in anger and glorying in an honour and a dignity which proceeded from himself.⁵

The deliverance beheld in near view in the preceding Psalm is now the subject of triumphant celebration as an accomplished fact. In both Psalms it is the God of Jacob who is the subject of His people's praise. It is thus that He will be known, when—not for their sakes, but for His own *name's* sake (their name being bound in covenant to His)—He will rebuke the faces of the proud, and will found Zion as the abiding resting-place of His glory who is the Lord of all the earth.

Verses 7-9, which are descriptive of the source and effects of the judgments which are to shake terribly the earth, may be compared with Isaiah ii. and xi. 4. It is entirely an earthly Psalm. It is to save the meek of the earth that God arises in judgment. The concluding verses state summarily the crisis and its results. Princes and kings will fear before Him whose name is dreadful among the heathen in that day.⁶ The forces of the Gentiles will flow to the place of His footstool, in token of a homage which will then be rendered universally because of the apparent majesty of Christ. To Him whom the Church now confesses to be the only Lord, while Israel and the world refuse their worship to that name, will every knee

⁵ Isaiah x. xiv.; Hab. i. 7. "Mountains" in the plural may represent the several kingdoms whose united power is given to the beast. (Rev. xvii. 12, 13.)

⁶ Mal. i. 14.

bow and every tongue confess, in the day when His power is made known.⁷

PSALM LXXVII.

THE exercised heart of a Christian, spiritually distressed, may well find comfort in this very beautiful Psalm, expressing as it does the experience of sore-tried yet triumphant faith. On the other hand, it has a very manifest prophetic reference to the vicissitudes and the eventual hope of Israel. The faith whose conflicts are recited, is specifically *Jewish* faith. It seems, in its ultimate intention, to express the struggling of their faith-sustained hope against the apparently hopeless affliction and distress into which Jehovah's suffering elect will be made to enter in the latter days. With everything visibly against them, and under the profoundest sense of national sin as the acknowledged cause of their suffering (verses 1-9), the remnant who tremble at the name of Jacob's God, will find in that name the sanctuary of their soul's defence (verses 10-12), and will raise undismayed the standard which has been given them to display in the day of battle, because of the truth of the everlasting covenant (verses 13-20). They will remember the days of old. Made strong out of weakness by a recollection of the pledged and unfailing mercies of the unchanging God of their fathers,¹ they will await,

⁷ Isaiah xlv. 23. I do not think that verse 10 is rightly rendered in the English Version. תִּתְּקַן hardly means "thou wilt restrain." DE WETTE has: "Wenn mit dem letzten Grimm du dich gürtest." And DIODATI: "Tu ti cingerai del rimanente dell' ira." Hieron.: "Reliquiis irarum accingeris." These translations are certainly more literal, and afford a sense more in harmony with the context, though the English Version is full of beauty, when regarded simply as the expression of an undoubted truth.

¹ Mal. iii. 6.

in hopeful patience, the yet fuller and decisive manifestation of His power as the doer of wonders for His people, when the year of His redeemed shall come.

Let us now consider rather its practical bearing on the believer's personal experience.

In the earlier verses (2-9) we have the language of a soul humbled under the mighty hand of God, and there learning, with deep and thorough apprehension of its meaning, the bitter lesson of the creature's vanity and wretchedness as under sin. Yet the groundwork of this soul-exercise is faith: "*I sought the Lord.*" But the process of self-judgment through which one who has wandered from the presence of God has to pass, as the necessary effect of a return thither, is such as to overshadow, and as it were to paralyze for a while, faith's proper action in the heart. There is an absence of all comfort in the present case, because God is remembered only as a witness, in holiness, of His creature's guilt and impotency. *Sin* is the absorbing subject which occupies the thoughts; and thus God, when remembered, instead of its light and confidence, becomes the *disturber* of the soul, because He is beheld through the medium of a burdened conscience. Power is indeed felt to belong to Him. But the sense of this does but complete the sufferer's prostration of heart. Thorough overwhelming of spirit is the natural result of searching and effectual self-judgment, when conducted under the eye of Divine holiness, and in ignorance or present forgetfulness of the living covenant of peace.

The experience recounted in this Psalm is that of one who had already known God, not only in power, but in grace. Hence there is a recurring of the troubled spirit in its distress to the works of old; the abiding tokens of that mercy, which has established its earlier acts as pledges of

the assured fulfilment in due time of promises not yet received. The true nature of faith, and its wide distinction from all other means of Divine knowledge, are here most strikingly brought out. At verse 3 it is: "I remembered God, *and was troubled.*" God, that is, when thought of by the self-judging spirit apart from the word of His grace, is not, and cannot be, the object of hopeful faith, but is the end of the conscience *in fear*. Nothing casts forth fear from the heart of a regenerate man but the realized enjoyment of grace; but grace can never be inferred from the inward experience of a heart that judges itself according to truth. The fountains of grace are in God; they flow to meet the sinner in the *word* of His grace. What the tried soul wants for its relief is "*contained in Scripture.*" The buffeted Christian knows this well. It is only when the heart is diverted from self-dissection, to consider Him in whom the brightness of the Father's glory shines in loving mercy on us as the effect of His atoning work, that light and joy revisit the sin-burdened spirit of the self-condemned believer.

Thus we find it in the case before us. No sooner are the former works of God recalled to mind (verse 10, &c.) than faith, resuming its proper function in the soul, is enabled to re-discover, as it were, its true object in the God of promise and of hope. And so the spirit of the contrite one, which just now thought of God only to the completion of its own confusion, revives at the fresh remembrance of His ancient ways of truth and mercy, and finds heart and speech to trust Him and to speak His praise in talking of His wondrous works. All turns to peace and hope when God is remembered according to the demonstrated truth of His own righteous and triumphant grace.

This is a principle never to be lost sight of by the

Christian. Real strength and comfort must have their springs in God Himself. It is the immediate reference of faith to the grace of God that alone establishes the heart. The cross, as the perpetual memorial of that grace, becomes thus the necessary stay of the exercised believer at every stage of His experience while in conflict with the powers of darkness. Christ is the living and ever-blessed exponent of the perfect way of Him who, while He judges as the Father according to every man's work, is eternally to the believer both the God of *all grace* and the God of *peace*. It is in looking to Jesus that faith finds its unflinching and triumphant reply to all that Satan can bring to bear as the accuser upon the sensitive conscience of a child of God, when brought, as in the present case, into the dust of self-abasement, because of some clearer and deeper perception which may have been acquired of the exceeding vileness and sinfulness of self.

It is the *infirmity* of a believer (verse 10) to be thinking of himself, and drawing false inferences (for *all* such inferences are necessarily erroneous), from what he sees or feels, as to the light in which he is beheld and estimated on the part of God. It is his *strength*, on the other hand, to remember the right hand of the Most High²—to meditate upon the changeless truth and mercy of that God who has committed Himself in holiness to the believing

² Verse 10 has been variously translated. The words שְׁנוֹת יָמַינִי עֲלֵיוֹן rendered in E. V. by "[I will remember] the years of the Most High," are susceptible of a different and perhaps preferable translation, by construing שְׁנוֹת as a verb, and not as a substantive. This has been done by LXX., HIERON. and VULG. Among modern translators, DIODATI, LUTHER, and DE WETTE concur in treating as a verb the above-mentioned word, though their respective translations differ in other respects. The last (who, I think, has best expressed the sense of the clause) has, "*Aenderung in der Rechten des Höchsten!*"

sinner's sure salvation, by causing the Son of His love to suffer in our stead the dread reality of penal death.

Verses 11, 12 describe the renovating effect upon the tried spirit of turning thus from self to God. Meditation on His work, filling first the heart with joyful assurance and a full persuasion of conscious blessedness, constrains the lips to open in the utterance of His praise: "I will talk of *thy doings*."

Verse 13 speaks practically to us all. "Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary." God's ways are *in Christ*. Whether they relate to the salvation in glory of the Church of His election, to the fulfilment of the promised mercy to Israel and the nations of the earth, or to His righteous severity in judgment upon human corruption, it is in Christ that He acts. It is with reference to the glory of Christ that all Jehovah's purposes will have, each in its appointed order of accomplishment, their eventual and perfected results. To have, therefore, a true knowledge of His way is the portion only of those who, in the spirit of their minds, "abide in Him."³

On the magnificent close of this Psalm I do not dwell. Its peculiar force and beauty, in connexion with the general prophetic features already noted at the commencement of these remarks, are easily perceived. God is the redeemer of His people. Retrospective celebration is the natural beginning of true praise. God's acts of grace and power acquaint the believer with the manner of the God with whom he has to do, whose promise fills the future with the fair colours of a hope which maketh not ashamed. Praise thus justifies and strengthens *trust* in Him, who is the desired object of the heart's true worship. This is a principle paramount to any peculiarities of dispensation;

³ John xv.

although, in its practical exemplification, the latter have a mighty influence. *Continual* praise is the just employment of the "holy brethren," whose knowledge of God is in the gospel of His blessed Son.⁴

PSALM LXXVIII.

A SOLEMN memorial of Jehovah's praise, as the faithful deliverer, for His name's sake, of His ancient people. It forms thus a part of that "Law" which, in the latter day, shall be graven on the fleshy tables of believing Israel's heart.¹

This Psalm, which from its first utterance by the Spirit of Christ has remained a testimony against the national apostasy, will receive its full appreciation in the hearts of the saved remnant of the sifted and judgment-stricken people, who will stand in the lot of Divine mercy when the day of Jacob's trouble has its end. With unveiled hearts they will behold the glory of the Lord, and with purged lips will utter the memorial of His name, "showing to the generation to come the praises of Jehovah, and His strength and His wonderful works that He hath done" (verse 4).

As a testimony, it received in principle its fulfilment when Jesus, after having vainly spent His strength as the patient minister of the grace and power² of the kingdom of God³—enduring the last reproaches and the bitterest contradiction at the hands of the blinded and evil genera-

⁴ Heb. iii. 1; xiii. 15.

¹ 2 Cor. iii.; Ezek. xxxvi. 26.

² Its *moral* power, that is, as distinguished from the future administration in righteous judgment of the same power. Anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power, Jesus went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil. (Acts x. 38.)

³ Isaiah xlix. 4.

tion, whom He had visited as His own to bless⁴—opened His mouth in the audience of the multitude to declare *in parables* the mysteries of that kingdom, from which Israel had already excluded themselves by their rejection of Him who was the Messenger of the covenant.⁵ The sin of the “stubborn and rebellious generation” reached its height when they gave to Satan the glory of the work of God. But there is another generation to be born, whose natural lineage indeed will be derived from Abraham, but who, as true children of the covenant, will own another parentage in their participation of that new birth, without which none can either see or have entrance into the kingdom of God. Of them it is written, that their eyes shall see their teachers, and their ears shall hear that word of grace, for lack of which the truth-famished nation now lies fruitless and dishonoured, as the withered vine-shoots which no man reaches forth his hand to gather.⁶

⁴ Matt. xi. 19; xii. 24.

⁵ Matt. xiii. 1–34. The seven parables contained in Matt. xiii. relate to the kingdom of heaven. The limits within which the mysteries of the kingdom are comprised, in their historical development, are the commencement of the Lord’s personal ministry and the completion of the age (*συντέλεια τοῦ αἰῶνος*), when the results of the present dispensation of evangelic testimony will be openly declared at the appearing of the Son of man. But when He comes thus again, it will be to return with mercies to Jerusalem. (Matt. xxiii. 39.) The fearful climax of the national sin had been already foretold by Him. (Matt. xii. 45.) He speaks then, when uttering the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, of something quite independent of the nation, although the things spoken of had their beginning in Israel’s rejection of His love. That a dispensation of general mercy to the world should intervene between the casting away of Israel and their final restoration, was something which had been kept secret from the world’s foundation. (Matt. xiii. 35; Rom. xi.) I must again refer the enquiring reader to my *Notes on the Romans*, chaps. ix.–xi., for a fuller exposition of the nature and results of the present dispensation.

⁶ Isaiah xxx. 20, 21; Amos viii. 11, 12; Ezek. xv.

It is by the restored nation that the force and meaning of this Psalm will be most perfectly appreciated. Beneath the shadow of the firm-set throne of the true David,⁷ the once foolish, but then wise-hearted, nation will, in the perfected unity both of natural and spiritual brotherhood, make mention of the marvellous ways of their covenant God. Jehovah will again inhabit Israel's praises in that day.⁸

Its structure also deserves attention. There is, from verse 12, a recital in historic order of the principal events which happened to the nation, from their deliverance out of Egypt to the accession of David the king. The lesson which is enforced throughout, by the moral contrasts here exhibited, is the abounding and eventually triumphant grace of *Israel's* God. Jacob is His people, and Israel His inheritance (verse 71), though their provocations may have caused Him to abhor, with a yet deeper loathing than He felt for Shiloh, that den of thieves which passed with men for the true temple of Jehovah, when He came in person to visit the place and people of His name. Wrath has truly come upon the recusants of national mercy to the end.⁹ But there *is* an end. And that end is peace and glory—is Christ. Immanuel must yet be honoured in Immanuel's *land*. As in the days of old, the cry of the uncircumcised captors of the Ark of God went up to heaven at the grievousness of their intolerable stroke, and golden memorial^s of their plague remained, as a perpetual witness of their shame,¹ so, with a yet more fatal, with an irremediable stroke, will Jehovah's arm descend in judgment on the marshalled army of the Man of Sin. With the coveted prize of their bold wickedness already in their

⁷ Ezek. xxxvii.⁸ Psalm xxii. 3; cxxxiii.⁹ 1 Thess. ii. 16. εἰς τέλος. ¹ Sam. v. vi.

grasp, there shall be pronounced against them an effective sentence of destruction. From the long-forsaken city and temple of His name, Jehovah's voice shall declare a judgment of meet recompence against the adversaries of His truth.² Jerusalem will, in that day, be a more grievous burden to her beleaguering foes than was the captured and dishonoured Ark to the discomfited Philistines.³

The ancient kindness, which added one deliverance to another, and made each fresh declension an occasion to yet richer mercy, stands thus as the recorded type of Israel's future hope, when, founded securely on the sure mercies of David, they shall rest, unremoved and unmolested, in their own appointed place.⁴

Independently of its prophetic interest, this Psalm possesses for the Christian a high practical value, as a most instructive chapter of the *word of grace*. Warning, and comfort, and instruction alike abound in the moral lesson which is here presented. Its burden is the praise of God, called forth from the hearts of those who, having traced His ways through all the long and varied story of His dealings with His chosen, find that the aggregation of their failure has only served to draw out, and establish in an abiding supremacy, the dominion of His own almighty power, in the fulness of sovereign grace. The royalty of David's throne, which to the rejected nation is a type and promise of prospective blessing, is realized already to the Christian in a higher and far ampler sense through the exaltation of Jesus to the Father's throne. We who believe *are come to mount Zion*⁵—to the perfected results, that is, of effectual and victorious grace. In spirit, the partaker of the heavenly calling finds in Jesus the consummation

² Isaiah lxvi. 6; Joel iii. 16.

⁴ 2 Sam. vii. 10.

³ Zech. xii.—xiv.

⁵ Heb. xii. 22.

of all promise and all hope. His varied sorrows, and the windings of his ways, while walking as a pilgrim here below, have for their end the deeper knowledge of the God of all grace, who is Himself the bringer of His many sons to glory.⁶

Next to the knowledge of the grace of God, the truth of most difficult attainment to the Christian is a just estimate of the exceeding worthlessness of the flesh. Grace and sin are correlative things. A soul that is not taught profoundly in the self-abasing knowledge of personal unworthiness, cannot possibly possess a deep and solid understanding of the grace of God. But genuine holiness of walk is always conditional upon a true subjection of the heart to God; and grace alone effects this. It is because historical details, such as are found in this Psalm, bring out and present vividly to the conscience the characteristic qualities of man's nature at all times, that they are so precious to the man who seeks in the sure testimonies of God the faithful counsellors of His pilgrimage.⁷ For it is far better to receive thus the gracious instruction of the Father of lights respecting what is in us, and so to find the solemn lesson sweetened by the pure communion of that love which already has translated us into the kingdom of His Son, than to have to confess with overwhelming shame, through our personal failures, the truth of those warnings which were uttered to preserve the feet of God's saints from the paths of the destroyer. Blessed, indeed, it is to remember, that if His people often walk as fools, He remains unchangeably "*the only wise God our Saviour.*" He will visit with correction the sons whom He receives. But in bringing Jesus from the dead, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, He has brought back in triumph,

⁶ Heb. ii. 10; 1 Peter v. 10.

⁷ Rom. xv. 4; Psalm cix. *passim.*

through the complete destruction of the wolf, the Shepherd whose glory is to preserve in faithfulness the flock for which He died in love.

What nature really is may be learned for our profit from the specimen afforded in the present Psalm of Ephraim's goodness and its effects.⁸ A thorough rottenness of heart is found in all their ways. They kept not the covenant of God. They saw and presently forgot His works. They were fed miraculously every day, yet constantly they tempted God through unbelief. They disbelieved both His salvation and His wonders. They kept not His testimonies. They limited the Holy One of Israel, who led them in the wilderness; while in the land of their inheritance they provoked the Most High with their high places, and moved Him to jealousy with their graven images. The root of all this evil is disclosed in verse 22: "They believed not God." And again (verse 37): "Their *heart* was not right with Him." It was an unregenerate nation that provoked God thus. No heart is right with Him that is not *born* of Him—that is not by faith established in His saving grace. Meanwhile, the Church receives her needed admonition through the Spirit's record of what happened to the faithless generation.⁹

A practical remark suggests itself in connexion with verse 42. The rallying point of faith in time of trial is *the primary manifestation of grace*. To an Israelite a remembrance of the deliverance from Egypt is the test of active faith. In like manner, to the tried believer now it is the CROSS that furnishes the outlet of deliverance from the misty darkness with which Satan sometimes is permitted to envelope our conscience, when the Lord has not been kept watchfully before our face. Because Israel for-

⁸ Compare Hosea vi. 4. ⁹ *Notes on First Corinthians*, chap. x.

got that first deliverance, they went on frowardly in the way of evil. Because a Christian sometimes stops short of the cross in his spiritual conflicts, he fails to defeat the enemy and remains unfruitful and unhappy, until by some special intervention of the great Restorer he is again brought, in spirit, to that place where God first met him, and welcomed him in Jesus in the fulness of forgiveness and of peace. No intermediate experience, how truthful soever in its character, will meet his case. It is at the cross alone that we regain a thorough right-mindedness about ourselves as well as about God. If we would glorify Him, we must hold fast the *beginning* of our confidence steadfast unto the end.¹

There is a diversity in the order and form of the national sin which is not unimportant in a practical point of view. The first generation believed not the *works* that they saw. Their descendants kept not the *testimonies* delivered to them. Even thus has it been in the external history of the Church. Before the apostles died, whose testimony placed the Church on its foundation, some of the eye-witnesses of miraculous power fell away. *Now*, it is for the faith once delivered to the saints that we have to contend, giving mindful heed to the words before spoken by the holy prophets, and to the commandments of the apostles of the Lord and Saviour.² We who live in this latter day inherit the sins as well as the hope of our fathers. In the progress of apostasy, alas! the former have well nigh extinguished and destroyed the latter. The promise of the quick return of Jesus is generally disbelieved, and the faithful witness of the Holy Ghost is

¹ Heb. iii. 14. The believer, because he is "in Christ," is a *saint* by calling and position, but in necessity remains a *sinner* still. If we forget this we deny the truth. (1 John i. 8.)

² 2 Peter iii. 2.

disregarded, in favour of plausible delusions. Meanwhile, to be building themselves up in their most holy faith, to be keeping themselves in the love of God, to be praying in the Holy Ghost, and looking for the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life, is the blessed calling of those who look upon the power and coming of the Saviour as something better than a fable cunningly devised.³

PSALM LXXIX.

A STRONG appeal of the Spirit of Christ to the faithfulness of the God of Jacob, coupled with a full recognition of the national transgression which had kindled the fire of His jealousy in the midst of the palaces of Jerusalem.⁴ Sin is freely acknowledged by the faithful remnant, whose cry is so distinctly audible in the present Psalm.⁵ The direful circumstances, therefore, in the midst of which they find themselves, are fully *understood*. But the covenant name of Jehovah is held fast as the pledge of eventual mercy and deliverance. It is *His* inheritance that the heathen have defiled by their presence. The blood which has flowed like water round about Jerusalem is the blood of *His saints*. He might have a controversy with His people, to reprove them for their iniquities—judging them because they *are* His people—but sevenfold vengeance will descend upon the uncircumcised spoilers who help forward their affliction, spoiling securely for themselves, as if God had indeed forgotten the abiding memorial of His name.⁶

³ Jude 20, 21; 2 Peter i. 16.

⁴ Amos ii. 4, *seq.*

⁵ A feature which distinguishes it from Psalm lxxiv., to which in most other respects it bears a close resemblance.

⁶ Exodus iii. 15.

In its general outline, this Psalm is applicable to more than one historical crisis. Its true fulfilment is reserved, I doubt not, for the times of the last Antichrist, when the idolatrous hosts of the Gentiles (worshipping then the beast and his image) will be suffered to lay their hands for the last time upon the dwelling-place of Jacob,⁷ when the predicted time of unmatched trouble shall have come.⁸ From that day of fear the remnant shall be saved by the effectual might of the Deliverer, who will stand up for the children of His people at that time.

The manner in which the hopeful confidence of faith is blended, in the utterance of the remnant, with deep personal confession and solemn intercession against the enemy, is strikingly characteristic of their true Jewish position as witnesses of the righteous God, the ruler of the nations of the earth. Jehovah's ways towards His people in the literal accomplishment of His ancient prophetic threatenings are fully justified; but the very acts of judgment which assert His terribleness in righteousness are used as an argument of confidence by the suppliant confessors of His name. They do not forget that He has spoken of a remainder of mercy and forgiveness, for them that shall accept His chastenings and turn again to Him. The question therefore is, "*How long?*" Deliverance eventually was a faithful promise. Thus Jehovah's name becomes a buckler to the remnant who remember and speak of Him aright, while their souls are stayed upon the ancient counsels of His truth. While, therefore, they are broken before God to the lowest pitch of contrition, they are able to invoke unhesitatingly the advent of the avenger who is to destroy their adversaries; for in afflicting His people they had exalted themselves against the Lord. They had

⁷ Zech. xiv. 2.

⁸ Dan. xii. 1; Matt. xxiv. 21.

reproached *Him*, numbering to the slaughter sheep whom He had destined to lie down in quiet pastures, none making them afraid. But His counsel would prevail. His people and the sheep of His pasture should give Him thanks for ever: to all generations they should show His praise (verse 13).

PSALM LXXX.

IN its general subject this most beautiful Psalm is connected with the one immediately preceding. There is in each the same earnest cry for deliverance addressed to Jehovah as the Shepherd of Israel. There are, however, some peculiar traits in the present Psalm which distinguish it widely from the former.

A deeper and more solemn tone pervades it. There is less of the agony of direct appeal, as from beneath the actual pressure of affliction, but it is the utterance of a more thorough and profound contrition of spirit. Such language gives expression to a state of feeling which has its place in hearts, not only keenly alive to the unparalleled vicissitudes of the national history, but deeply conscious also of their source, and which feel, therefore, the long hiding of Jehovah's face to be a deeper grief than the heavy strokes which have been dealt so ruthlessly against them by the hands of men.

There is a repetition of the cry of remembrance uttered in the foregoing Psalm: "How long?" But here it is not the duration of the enemy's power to afflict, that is the occasion of their hope's suspense, but the lingering of the Divine mercy towards themselves (verse 4). It is a sample of that sustained and unremitting prayer which the Spirit

of Immanuel puts into the hearts of those who, as the elect of His nation, will surely be heard and answered by His appearing to their joy, although He bear long with them, seeming as if He heard them not.¹

One very marked feature of the present Psalm is the distinct and complete manner in which the need of *personal regeneration* is recognized. *National* salvation is the general burden of their desire. But the necessary means of this is felt to be their own conversion of heart to the Lord. Nor do they underrate the measure of their spiritual need. Their speech is as the cry of them that have no strength.² The desire of their hearts can be effected only by the power of God. "*Turn us again,*" &c.—"*Quicken us,* and we will call upon thy name," are utterances which strikingly express this feeling. As in the bemoanings of Ephraim, elsewhere recorded,³ there is here also a casting of themselves, in the confession of entire helplessness and personal unworthiness, upon the grace and power of Him whose dwelling is upon the mercy-seat⁴ (verse 1):

They call upon the Shepherd of Israel *to come* and save them⁵ (verse 2). He had many a time *sent* saviours in the day of their distress. But the partial help thus rendered, while it exemplified the faithful adherence of Jehovah to His covenant of mercy, yet, because it left undestroyed the root of the nation's bitterness, was ever followed by

¹ Luke xviii.; Isaiah lxiii. lxiv.

² Rom. v. 6.

³ Jer. xxxi. 18–20.

⁴ Exod. xxv. 20–22.

⁵ "Before Ephraim," &c. The reference here made to the ancient order of the tribes, when Jehovah marched with His people through the desert (Num. ii. 18–22), is full of force and beauty. The land which their forefathers had entered has cast forth their children for their iniquities, and they are again wanderers in the wilderness of the Gentiles. Let Him, then, who brought them up of old from Egypt, again array His chosen for a final and triumphant entrance to their rest!

some new distress, which the very necessity of Divine holiness must cause them to experience by reason of the evil of their ways. But now the presence of Jehovah Himself, in the chosen Man of His strength, is looked to by the remnant, whose hearts, made wise by strong contrition under the mighty hand of God, have learned effectually the lesson of self-renunciation, and look for *life*, as well as outward favour, from the Lord alone. The presence of Jesus, in the plenitude of grace and majesty, is the alone security against the relapse of the restored nation to their fathers' sin of unbelief (verses 17, 18).

All the desires expressed in this Psalm have been anticipated in the covenant of promise, and will be realized when the sure word of prophecy shall have had its blessed vindication in the appearing and glory of Jesus. As it is elsewhere said with reference to this: "The Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee."⁶

In the preceding Psalm the wrongs of *Jerusalem* were the immediate subject. We have in this one an explicit and amplified mention of the entire nation. The subject of prayer being the restoration of Divine favour, the Spirit of supplication frames the desires of the trustful remnant according to the completeness of Divine counsel and promise. God had brought *Israel* out of Egypt. Sin had afterwards separated Ephraim from Judah. The divided house of Jacob had been severally minished and brought low, because of their separate provocations. But now that grace is invoked, upon the ground of covenant promise, to act for the healing of the ruin which their sin had wrought, it is *national* mercy that is contemplated. Jesus is the Shepherd, the stone of ISRAEL.

Verses 8-13 contain a touching recital of God's past

⁶ Zech. xiv. 5.

dealings with the vine of His own planting. The prosperity of the nation is ascribed to Him who brought them out of Egypt. Their distress is likewise referred to the same hand: "Why hast *thou* broken down her hedges?" &c. This is a remarkable specimen of the bold urgency of faith's pleadings, when its true object is distinctly within view.

The mention of *the vine* suggests immediately a remembrance of Him whose name is THE BRANCH⁷ (verse 15). In wasting Israel, Jehovah had dishonoured the title of Immanuel (for so it must needs seem to Jewish faith, until the light of Jesus' glory is revealed). Hence the expostulatory tone which comes from the same lips that had made before such large acknowledgment of helplessness and sin.

With respect to the imagery employed in this Psalm, it is familiar in Scripture. It is well for the Christian to remember, that it is as a ravenous wild beast that Gentile dominion is figured by the Holy Ghost during the judicial prostration of Israel. This applies to Christianized Gentilism (as distinguished from the living Church of God) with no less force than to the former idolatrous heathenism.⁸ Moreover, as Christ is the true Vine, so there

⁷ בֶּן More literally, therefore, "the Son." With respect to the word בֶּן at the beginning of the same verse, the preponderance of critical authority seems to be decidedly against its being taken as a substantive. The LXX. (who are as usual followed by the VULGATE) render it: Κατάρτισαι αὐτήν [*sc. τὴν ἄμπελον* in the preceding verse]. GESSENIUS, deriving it from בָּנָה, and taking it as an imperative with paragogic ה gives "Protege." LUTHER and DE WETTE both treat it as a verb. The latter well translates the whole verse: "*Beschütze, was deine Hand gepflanzt, und den Sohn den du dir erkoren.*"

⁸ In one sense, more so; for it is from the former of these that the Beast of the whole world's admiration, whose destruction is at the epiphany of Christ in power, is eventually to arise.

is another plant, which, professing the same name, bears on its branches only fruits of provocation, which will fill the winepress of the wrath of God.⁹

PSALM LXXXI.

THERE is a peculiar beauty in this Psalm.¹ It is easy to perceive its moral connexion with the last. The shining forth of the Deliverer in power awakens the glad song of triumph to the God of Jacob. The desolating judgment, under which the vineyard of the Lord of hosts had so long drooped and withered, has now passed by for ever. The frequent fasts, which marked the dreary days of mourning, have now been turned to joy and gladness and cheerful feasts, because of the return of Jehovah with mercies to the ancient habitation of His name.²

The summons to the feasts of the Lord's gladness is followed by a memorial of the ancient mercy which had framed for Israel a statute of perpetual remembrance, when He went forth as Jehovah's freedman from the strange country of his bondage. The Saviour's praises are the occupation and the glory of His ransomed people (verses 4, 5).

⁹ Rev. xiv. 18-20.

¹ On the probable import of its title, and that of Psalm lxxxiv., see the opening note on Psalm viii.

² Zech. viii. 19. I am not sure that there is any special reference in verse 3 to Lev. xxiii. The feast of trumpets was an important one—standing as it did in near connexion with the great annual day of atonement, which in its turn was presently succeeded by the most joyful festival in the year—the feast of tabernacles. As such it has, probably, an antitypical fulfilment awaiting it in the future history of Israel. Looking, however, at the general language of the Psalm, especially the varied expressions in verse 2, I take the words “new moon” as a synecdoche for Israel's festal solemnities in general. (Compare Isaiah i. 13.)

As a counterpart to the intercessional pleading of the Spirit in the latter part of the foregoing Psalm (verses 8-13), we have now a review of the past history of Israel after the flesh, whose course had been a continual provocation to the Holy One from the time that He took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt. The Lord seems to make answer in these verses (6-16) to the complaint already uttered by His suffering people. The tone of commiserating sympathy in which the record of the nation's self-procured dishonour is here expressed is worthy of Him who, when He beheld the city which had ripened in its iniquity for a judgment which holiness needs must inflict, yet wept over it, because the covenant of her first espousals had been in faithfulness on His part, although she had so soon and so willingly gone far away from Him.³

Restoring grace will have replaced the peeled and scattered nation in Immanuel's land before the present Psalm can have its full expression. When settled thus within their quiet resting-places, the festal mirth of their many days of gladness will be tempered by the sad but profitable retrospect of those earlier days of shame and sorrow which shall then have come to a perpetual end in their joyful fruition of the long deferred national hope.⁴

On the practical application of this Psalm it is superfluous to dwell at length. It speaks hopefully, yet with needful warning, to the believer whose desire is to labour with a lawful striving to enter into the rest of God.⁵ Verse 10 is more especially rich as a perfect expression of the unvarying way of the God of *all* grace. He undertakes to fill out of His riches in glory, by Christ Jesus, the largest desires which His own blessed Spirit can create in the souls of His believing children. In temporal things as

³ Jer. ii.⁴ Ezek. xvi. 63.⁵ Heb. iii. iv.

well as in things spiritual, He will establish the truth of this gracious saying to the heart of simple faith. To be the unupbraiding Giver of good things is the changeless character of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. To be the conscious receiver of His favour who, in Jesus and for His name's sake, bestows upon us all things richly to enjoy, is the opulent endowment which, even in this present life, attaches to the heirs of His salvation.⁶

Verse 12 is pregnant with solemn warning to that profession, the standing of which is only by faith and in the goodness of God. When God gives up professing Christendom to walk in its own counsels, its decisive judgment is already nigh.⁷ As it respects the nation of Israel, the blessings here spoken of—once forfeited because conditional on their obedience—are reserved for their assured enjoyment in the day of promised restitution.

PSALM LXXXII.

WHILE the moral application of this Psalm is very wide, comprehending as it does human authority under every form as the responsible ordinance of God,¹ its more immediate subject seems rather to be the shepherds and rulers of Israel. Thus regarded, it presents the solemn verdict of the Spirit of holiness upon the character and ways of those who, as God's immediate delegates, should have reflected the purity and truth of Him in whose name they sat as rulers among men.

The judges of Israel are in Scripture sometimes invested with the name of God, as a closer and more emphatic

⁶ 1 Tim. iv. 8; vi. 17.

⁷ Rom. xi. 22.

¹ Rom. xiii. 1.

indication of the source of their authority as the guides and directors of His people.² The word of God came unto them.³ They sat to administer justice in the name, and according to the declared mind, of Jehovah. The award which they pronounced was not their own but His.

This solemn trust was, however, soon betrayed. Instead of judgment flowing down as waters, and righteousness like a mighty stream,⁴ the land mourned because of the iniquity of its rulers. The shepherds, who should have tended the Lord's flock, thought only of feeding themselves. With force and with cruelty they ruled over the poor of Immanuel's land.⁵ The princes of the people, instead of exhibiting the Divine attributes of justice and mercy, had become rebellious and companions of thieves. Loving gifts and hating uprightness, they had polluted utterly Jehovah's holy name by their deeds of selfish wickedness. God's truth and love were found no longer in them, nor His fear before their eyes, although His name might still be used to sanction their unrighteous and oppressive acts. All Jewish prophecy abounds with the strong denunciations of the Spirit against the deep and thorough corruption of the visible sources (in profession at least) of purity and right.⁶

The presence of the Son of God at Jerusalem was a moral fulfilment of this Psalm in its principle. Although He judged no man—having come not to judge but to save—yet, because He was the Light of Divine holiness, His presence made manifest the varied character of that dark evil in the midst of which He stood.⁷ Speaking in faith-

² *Vide* Exodus xxii. 8, 9, 28. ORIG.

³ John x. 35.

⁴ Amos v. 24.

⁵ Ezekiel xxxiv.

⁶ Jer. v. 30, 31; Isa. i. 23, iii. 15; Micah vii. 3, &c. &c.

⁷ Compare Eph. v. 13.

fulness the words of God, He utters His solemn though unheeded verdict upon that which had, while wholly corrupt, exalted itself into the seat of judgment, and arrayed itself in the outward semblance of sanctity and truth.⁸

The remarkable passage⁹ in which the Lord appeals to this Psalm in His controversy with the unbelieving Jews is full of interest. Jesus had just before announced Himself as Israel's true Shepherd in the audience of those who falsely claimed that place. The opposition with which the Pharisees received this declaration is met on the Lord's part by the more explicit assertion of His title, and of the proper glory of His person as the Son of God (verses 22-30). This statement of the perfect truth raises the enmity of His adversaries to its height (verse 31). They take up stones to stone Him. Then is it that Jesus, citing this Psalm to bring to their remembrance God's former ways, who put the sanction of His name on men, when they received an office which was meant to indicate His presence with His people, appeals to the *works* which He had wrought in proof of the reality of His claim. He justifies the good confession of His own true name and title by the irrefragable witness of those acts of grace and power which none could do save He whom *the Father* had sanctified and sent into the world. He thus presents Himself as the sole rightful bearer, as man, of the name and authority of God. He compares the delegation, both of title and authority (the former commending the latter), which was made to them of old, with the intrinsic truth of His own person, who was come indeed into the world as One sent, but who, in order to receive His mission, must first stand in such a relation to the sender as no man else could know. "Say ye of Him

⁸ Matt. xxiii.; Luke xi.

⁹ John x. 34-38.

whom the Father hath sent," &c. It was the true "child of the Most High" who came. Being come, He spake of Him who had sent Him, submitting to be the perfect servant of His will. It is thus that He arrays the Divine validity of His perfect righteousness against the pretensions of men who were blindly sinning against their own souls, while they disowned Him whom Jehovah had anointed as the leader and commander of His people.

The voice of the Spirit, pronouncing the total failure of man under his highest responsibilities and in his most favoured position, calls here upon GOD to arise. The earth's foundations are out of course.¹ No hand but His can again restore them. This He will surely do² in the promised day of restitution, when He shall have purged away the dross from the yet loved city of His name. Meanwhile the nations which are His inheritance, who is the God of the whole earth, are moved to and fro in the restless agitation of the sieve of vanity. Creation groans until He come, whose throne of earthly as well as heavenly rule is founded in righteousness and truth.

PSALM LXXXIII.

THE entire corruption of the only system in the earth, to which God had formally attached the sanction of His name, is the evidence upon which, in the preceding Psalm, the earth's foundations are declared to be out of course.

¹ מוֹנִי: Σαλευθήσονται.—LXX. "*Movebuntur.*"—HIERON. While I fully believe that the moral meaning conveyed by the English translation is the true one, the original expression seems to suggest a comparison of the present passage and its context with Hag. ii. 6, 7; Heb. xii. 26. As to the general subject of the present Psalm, see the remarks on Psalm lviii.

² Isaiah li. 16.

In the Psalm before us there is a similar invocation of God. He is called on *to arise*. Its general subject is, however, materially different. The direct object of the Spirit's present desire is the manifestation in power of the name of JEHOVAH, as the Most High God over all the earth (verse 18). This is the leading characteristic of the Psalm, and one which gives it a peculiar interest and value.

In the existing dispensation, the testimony of the Holy Ghost in the Gospel is to the Father and the Son. The covenant title of God, to the believer in Jesus, is not Jehovah, but the Father: "To us there is one God, the Father,"¹ &c. Doubtless He who is the Father is Jehovah likewise.² But it is certainly not under that specific name that He reveals Himself in Christ. The true worshippers are now sought and discovered by the FATHER.³

"*Jehovah*" is peculiarly the covenant name of Israel's God.⁴ But the covenant by which He has bound Himself in promise to His nation contains within it the general administration of the earth's government in blessing and in power. It is mediately through the national blessing of Israel, that the Gentiles are to know and to adore the name and glory of the God of the whole earth.⁵

Israel are God's earthly witnesses throughout all time.⁶ In their calamitous dispersions, as well as in their united happiness and national glory, the fortunes of that people

¹ *Notes on First Corinthians*, chap. viii.

² Compare 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18. Nor, of course, is this title less fully predicable, in the unity of the Godhead, both of the Son and of the Spirit. That Jesus is Jehovah is the saving confession of true Christian faith. (Joel ii. 32; Rom. x.)

³ John iv.

⁴ Exod. vi. 3.

⁵ Isaiah lxi. 6.

⁶ The Church is a witness on earth to the *heavenly* glory of a rejected Christ; the witness, therefore, of impending judgment—the herald and minister, meanwhile, to all who have an ear to hear, of sovereign grace.

attest Jehovah's righteousness and truth. At present Israel lies broken on the stumbling-stone.⁷ Jehovah is Himself the Rock of their offence.⁸ But there is a time at hand when He who loves the children for the fathers' sakes will prepare again to take her by the hand, whom for a little moment (for so will it then seem) He had forsaken in His wrath, because of her transgression.

Ere long there will again be witnesses of Jewish blood and Jewish hope in the city of Jerusalem. A hidden remnant yet remains to Israel, who will be remembered in due time. It is plain that the present Psalm relates to such. It is the voice of the Spirit of Christ making intercession for His earthly people against the ripened purposes of the ungodly, who are found united as one man for the attempted frustration of Jehovah's counsel.

God had long held His peace. The period of sufferance had been improved by man, at Satan's suggestion, to the furtherance of his own aggrandizement, independently of God. The arch sinner, when he appears,⁹ will bend his chief strength against the only rival he has any cause to dread. For the very name of Israel is a denial of all his pretensions, whose power and dignity proceed from himself. Dominion and the general obedience of the nations have been claimed of old for Judah's royal tribe.¹ The self-anointed ruler and god of the whole earth will strive, as did his predecessor and his type, to quench the light of Israel's hope.² The attempt to root out the name and obliterate all memory of Israel, and to enter on a permanent possession of Immanuel's land, will be the culmination of the bold but infatuated treason of the Man of Sin.³

A remarkable resemblance exists between the descriptive

⁷ Rom. ix.

⁸ Isaiah viii. 14.

⁹ 2 Thess. ii.

¹ Gen. xlix. 10. ² Matt. ii. 16.

³ Dan. xi. 45.

enumeration of Israel's foes in the present Psalm, and the record furnished in 2 Chron. xx. of the deliverance of the diminished kingdom of Judah in the reign of Jehoshaphat. That deliverance was, doubtless, a type of the yet greater and decisive victory of judgment which shall still God's enemies to stone-like silence at the unlooked-for revelation of His arm.

In Isaiah xlii. 13, 14, we have a responsive promise to the opening verse of this Psalm. Yet I feel it to be very difficult to fix an exact time for the action here described. Expressions occur which have sometimes disposed me to see in it a reference to the attempt to dislodge Israel again subsequently to their having been re-established in the land.⁴ The historical allusions appear to favour this view. All the instances quoted from the book of Judges have a common character. It was the attempt, that is, of the heathen to dispute with Israel the possession of Jehovah's land, *after* He had brought them in and bestowed it on them as their own possession.

In the union of pure heathenism with the spurious offspring of the heirs of promise (Moab, Ammon), and the natural but rejected claimants of their title (Ishmael, Edom), we may discern a moral prefigurement, at least, of that fusion of national interests and distinctions, whether political or religious, which will blend apostate Christianity with creeds originally hostile to its own under the general dominion of the Man of Sin.⁵ But that the nations here

⁴ Compare Ezekiel xxxviii.

⁵ Jew, Turk, and infidel already find a common level of false worship with earthly-minded Christians in the humanitarian displays which mark so notably our days; and what is now indulged in the spirit of a spurious liberty will be accepted eventually as a yoke of general bondage, when the hour of the beast's supremacy is fully come. (Rev. xiii.)

expressed by name will become in an especial manner the subjects of Divine visitation in judgment, is clear from other prophecies of Scripture.⁶

PSALM LXXXIV.

IN its literal acceptance the tone of this delightful Psalm is manifestly Jewish. It contains language which might well express the longing desires of David while in exile, or of any captive Israelite whose heart might turn, with prayerful constancy of faith and hope, towards the well-remembered dwelling-place of Jacob's God.¹

If we regard it in its prophetic character, we may, without venturing to assign definitely its time and action, refer it generally to the confluence of Jacob's new-born offspring—then named anew the sons and daughters of Jehovah,² to the holy place of His memorial. For the time is coming when "the children of Israel shall come, they and the children of Judah together, going and weeping; they shall go and seek Jehovah their God. They shall ask the way to Zion, with their faces thitherward, saying, Come, and let us join ourselves to Jehovah by a perpetual covenant, which shall not be forgotten."³ Viewed in this light, its remarkable language is full of interest as well as beauty.

It is not, however, on account of its prophetic interest that the Christian will chiefly prize this Psalm. As a rich and varied expression of experimental faith, its practical value is not to be surpassed. A momentary glance, with

⁶ Isaiah xxv. 10; lxiii. 1-5; Jer. xxv.

¹ 1 Kings viii. 44, 45; Dan. vi. 10.

² Isaiah xliii. 5, 6. ³ Jer. 1. 4, 5.

no attempt at detailed exposition, may be directed at some of its leading features.

It is in the concluding verse that the condition of soul is stated, out of which arise the utterances of hope and desire, which form the general contents of this Psalm. Its true subject may be said to be the blessedness of the man whose confidence⁴ is in God. The voice that is heard extolling the loveliness of Jehovah's tabernacles is not that of a stranger (verses 1, 2). The wishes here expressed proceed from one who, having tasted that the Lord is gracious, is faint with hopeful longing, until the fulness of his heart's desires be attained in the realized presence of the living God.

Verse 3 possesses a peculiar beauty and expressiveness. As its fundamental idea, we find a clear discernment of redemption (*thine altars*) as the divinely-settled basis of the creature's rest and blessing. The sparrow, true figure of uncared for and friendless desolation, is no longer on the housetop in its loneliness,⁵ but sheltered in His sanctuary, who cares for all His works. The swallow's oft-repeated wanderings have ended in the sacrificial rest of God.⁶ In its more literal acceptance, this verse offers a

⁴ בָּטָח is distinguishable from הִסְתַּחֵס * The Christian reader can well appreciate the difference between fleeing for refuge to Jesus, as the believing sinner's Hope, and the strong consolation which pertains to those who *have* thus fled. (Heb. vi. 18-20.) God in Christ becomes to such their abiding confidence—the pure source of ever-growing blessedness and peace. Founded eternally on finished grace, according to the truth of Divine righteousness in Christ, they rest in God. Their peace and joy are in the full assurance of His love. ⁵ Psalm cii. 7.

⁶ If these birds are to be accepted as emblems of humanity, the former will aptly represent the sinner in his cheerless and unfruitful state of natural ignorance and independency of God; the latter points rather to the awakened spirit, as it tries all changes (while ignorant of Christ) in its restless and unsatisfying quest of good.

* *Conf.* Note on Psalm ii. *ad fin.*

very lovely picture of the full sabbatic blessing which the now groaning creation will enjoy, in the day when the earth and its fulness shall be manifestly established in the full results of the once-offered sacrifice of the Lamb. Its immediate moral application is to the heart of the believer, who has found his present rest in the bosom of the God of peace, through the blood of the everlasting covenant. "*My King, and my God,*" is the confident appeal of faith to Him who is not ashamed to be so invoked by the willing pilgrims of His grace.⁷

The Psalm divides itself into two parts. The former of these, which opened with the praises of Jehovah's tabernacles, concludes by celebrating the blessedness of the dwellers in His house (verse 4). They go no more out. Evermore praising, they thus express their delighted fruition of an endless joy. "Faith" and "hope" and "patience" find their end in consummated knowledge and unhindered love.⁸

The verses which follow (5-7) contain the Spirit's benediction on God's pilgrim, while yet upon his way. They are full of richest meaning for those who have begun to run with patience the race set before them as the effect of their heavenly calling in Christ.⁹ The minding of heavenly things in a single-hearted love of Jesus, while it makes the present world no better than a vale of tears,¹ yet turns the driest weariness of this life's toil and sorrow to gladness and refreshment, through the presence of the living Rock, which follows the true pilgrim through each passage of his way. The strength of the spiritual man is in God.

⁷ Heb. xi. 13-16; xiii. 6.

⁸ 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

⁹ Phil. iii.; Heb. xii.

¹ Rom. viii. 23. כָּאֵשׁ בְּתֵּן קִיָּוָה Κοιλὰς κλαυθμῶνος.—LXX. "*Das Jammerthal.*"—GESEN. "*Das Thränen-Thal.*"—DE WETTE.

In his heart, instead of vain and anxious counsel, there is truthful expectation and desire. Under the burdens of the way his mind is bent upon the *end* of his high calling. God blesses such. They *taste* His comfort richly by the way. Christians of weak faith and small devotedness are often made to water their footsteps through the wilderness with bitter and abundant tears. A strong and simple faith, because it leans on God at every step, finds often, to its grateful surprise not less than to its joy, that where it looked only for distress and danger, it has found rich and peculiar blessing. If in the slightest measure our expectations are from the world or from the flesh, we sow a future harvest of vanity and disappointment. If in the spirit of our minds we are *passing through* the world, as through the place of death and sin, in trustful contentment, though with keen desire for the rest of God, we shall find our pilgrim way both easily endurable and short. To be "sorrowful, yet *alway* rejoicing," is the characteristic experience of the soul that, with a believing appreciation of their blessed meaning, can use the apostle's words, "To me to live is Christ;" and again, "The life that *I now live* in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me."² True godliness has promise of the life that now is as well as of that which is to come.³

Verse 7 should be noticed. The Spirit of God having individualized in verse 5 the moral likeness of Jehovah's pilgrim, closes His description of the journey by a general assurance of unfailing attainment to *all* who are once fairly entered on the way which leads to God. That way is Christ. But to be in Christ is to be accepted of the Father. It is God who brings His many sons to glory.

² Phil. i. 21; Gal. ii. 20.

³ 1 Tim. iv. 8.

Already it is announced to the believer that He *is come* to mount Zion.⁴ By faith and in spirit we are there. As to our fare while yet upon the way, our happiness is dependent on our practical obedience.⁵ All appear before God; not one sheep straying to perdition from the watchful eye and faithful hand of the great Shepherd, who is of power to preserve His own.⁶

Jacob's God is the God of perfect grace—of a truthful mercy, which, reckoning nothing on the worthiness of its object, flows in its full stream of unqualified blessedness over every obstacle which human perverseness or any other evil can oppose to it; and fills its destined vessel to the fulness of a measure which has been prescribed by perfect love. The junction in the present verse of the two titles, "Lord God of Hosts," and "God of Jacob," is an emphasis of peculiar blessing to the child of truth. It is the just union of Divine grace and power to usward in the person of Jesus that opens to the believer an access of confidence in prayer to God. By that better hope we now draw nigh.

Verse 9 reveals to faith the abiding pledge and security of all its blessings and its hopes. The Father loveth the Son. God, looking upon Jesus in the fulness of an entire delight, becomes to the believing children of His grace the Shield of their perpetual defence. They are His own—to shelter and to keep them in the strong affection of Almighty love. In the Beloved they have been accepted, and with Him their life is hidden safe in God.⁷

The residue of this very precious Psalm is in a kindred strain of blessing and of power. God and *His* joys are magnified and extolled. A day of spiritual enjoyment is

⁴ Heb. xii. 22.

⁵ John xiii. 17; 2 Peter i. 3-12.

⁶ John x. 28, 29.

⁷ Eph. i. 6; Col. iii. 3.

more to the believer than many years of natural vicissitude. It is the strong and pure aspiration of faith in God. The meanest place in *His* abode of blessedness is better than the chiefest tents of wickedness.⁸ Egypt's treasures are as dross, when weighed in faith's balance with the unsearchable riches of Christ, though now reproach and trial must accompany the true confession of that name.

God is a Sun and Shield (verse 11). But the plenary enjoyment of His countenance can only be tasted by the single-eyed believer. From them that *walk uprightly* He withholds no good. Unreserved and obedient dependence upon God brings the believer immediately under the open hand of the Father of mercies. The remembrance of His first great gift⁹ excludes the idea, from the heart of simple faith, of any possible reservation of the blessings of His goodness in His dealings with the children of His love. The Spirit who now sheds abroad that love in our hearts, enabling us to know in Christ the true God and eternal life, moves still the lips of faith to say, "O Lord God of Hosts, blessed is the man who rests with confidence in thee."¹

PSALM LXXXV.

THIS Psalm appears to stand in a very distinct relation to Psalm lxxx. The prayer of the Spirit in the latter Psalm finds here its response of thanksgiving, because of

⁸ Observe the force of these contrasted expressions. The *house* is the Lord's; the *tents* are of the wicked. The pleasures of sin are for a season only; the world passeth away, and the lusts thereof. (Heb. xi. 25;

1 John ii. 17.)

⁹ Rom. viii. 32.

¹ 1 John v. 20.

the apparent nearness of the long-desired salvation, for which Jacob waits (verse 9).²

Like the Psalm just mentioned, it is distinguished by a clear recognition of regenerative power in grace, as the essential preliminary to the national blessing (verses 4-6). In the immediate anticipation of complete deliverance and entire oblivion of the former transgression, there is a fervent inquiry, and joyful discernment of the root and stability of all their blessing in Jehovah Himself, their righteousness. The union of mercy and truth and righteousness, in the person of Jesus as He will then be known, when, after the day of Jacob's trouble, He shines forth as the Sun of righteousness with healing in His wings, is the chief theme of this sweet and touching, though solemn, strain.

With respect to the *time* of this Psalm, it seems to belong to the season of expectant suspense, which the Scripture elsewhere indicates as intervening between the revelation of the Lord in judgment and the perfect settlement of the delivered remnant of the nation in the land of their inheritance.³

Verses 4-8 are deeply interesting as an expression of the moral effects of grace upon the contrite hearts of the long-afflicted, but now remembered, people. The transition of feeling, from solemn awe at the manifested power of the God of judgment, to the tranquil confidence of assured rest in Him as the God of their mercy,—speaking peace in righteousness to His people,—is well worthy of note.⁴

Christian faith, which stands already on the Rock of

² Compare Genesis xlix. 18.

³ Isaiah iv. 4; Zech. xii. 16-14; xiii. 1.

⁴ Compare Habak. *passim*, especially chap. iii.

Jacob's hope, will find in this Psalm abundant nourishment and comfort; more especially verse 8 is pregnant with impressive warning to the true child of God, as well as to that which only lives in name;⁵ but it is most clearly and completely Jewish in its proper intention. Jehovah has been favourable to *His land*. He has brought back the captivity of Jacob (verse 1). In verse 9 the land is again mentioned; but it is now described as "*our land*." The restored people will know it as their own, according to the sure tenure of accomplished mercy, in the bond of the better covenant. Glory will dwell in that land; for there will the name and presence of Immanuel be found, when the glory of His royal majesty shall shine in Zion before the faces of His ancient people.⁶ The glory which in olden time appeared for a season, but presently withdrew, hiding itself from the view of a sinful nation, will abide perpetually in its undimmed brightness upon the chosen heritage and people of Jehovah's love. Truth will spring out of the earth. For Christ will be known in that day as "the Branch of the Lord, beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth, excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel."⁷ Instead of the mutterings of perverseness which came from those who filled the ears of Israel's Holy One with protestations of self-righteousness, while they erred alway in their hearts, until they crowned their error by the murder of the living Truth, there shall be found pure speech upon the lips of the forgiven people whose honourable fame, as "the nation that keepeth the truth," will in the coming day spread widely among men.⁸

Righteousness will look down from heaven; for it is from thence that the perfect beauty of Divine righteous-

⁵ 2 Peter ii. 20-22.

⁶ Isaiah xxiv. 23.

⁷ Isaiah iv. 2-6.

⁸ Isaiah xxvi. 2.

ness will shine in its pre-eminent display. Things heavenly as well as earthly will be joined in one bond of blessing beneath the apparent and confessed supremacy of Jesus; while, in full participation of His glory and His joy, will be revealed the married Church for which He gave Himself, that He might win it for His own peculiar delight.⁹ The Church, as the chosen vessel of omnipotent good-pleasure, is the masterpiece of Divine grace and wisdom; the firstfruits and chief trophy of a righteousness which, amid the derision of an unbelieving world, she discerns and confesses, through the Spirit, in the risen and ascended Christ.¹

Physical blessings will abound in all their rich variety of kind. With an overflowing increase God will bless His land (verse 12). Heaven's windows will be opened on the favoured place of His inheritance: "It shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, saith Jehovah, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth; and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil; and they shall hear Jezreel."²

The closing verse declares the *principle* of the public administration of Messiah's kingdom: "Righteousness shall go before Him, and shall direct His footsteps in the way."³ He is King of righteousness. He will thus

⁹ Eph. v. 25-32.

¹ "Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more." (John xvi. 10.) There is but one righteousness, whether for Israel or the Church, and that is Christ. But while Israel in due time will see and will believe, it is given to the Church to know, and by faith to rejoice in, a hidden and world-rejected Saviour. Heavenly glory is the immediate hope and calling of such (1 Peter i. 8), a hope to be realized at the advent of its blessed object, the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.

² Hosea ii. 21, 22.

³ וַיֵּשֶׁם לְרֵגְלָהּ פְּעֻמָּיו The Authorized Version is here, I think, at fault. The LXX. (with whose translation both HIERON. and VULG. agree) render

reign, walking before God and man in the excellency of His own perfection, and swaying the sceptre of upright dominion to the far-extended bounds of His appointed realm.⁴

PSALM LXXXVI.

A PRAYER of David.⁵ Of one, therefore, after God's own heart. While the distinct Jewish character of this very beautiful Psalm is maintained throughout, it abounds in expressions which adjust themselves to the experience of all who are spiritual, and who, therefore, are conversant with a species of affliction and inward conflict to which the natural man remains entirely a stranger.

It is a prayer of faith, founded on a clear and deep knowledge of the character of God. He is discerned in the nearness of His covenant grace and power. But the occasion of this supplication is the deeply felt personal necessity of Jehovah's sore-tried but confiding suppliant. It is the language of one who had acquired a right knowledge both of himself and of his circumstances. Resting unfeignedly upon the God of his salvation, he yet feels searchingly the pressure on his spirit of much conscious delinquency. Meanwhile, both dangers and adversaries, against which the immediate power of God in deliverance can alone avail, are seen in their impending nearness by the soul that is seeking thus its succour from on high.

the verse: *Δικαιοσύνη ἐναντίον αὐτοῦ προπορεύεται, καὶ θήσει εἰς ὁδὸν τὰ διαβήματα αὐτοῦ.* DIODATI has: *Egli farà camminar davanti a se la giustizia, e la metterà nella via de' suoi passi.* LUTH. and DE WETTE express more loosely the same idea.

⁴ Psalm ii. 8; Isaiah xxxii. 1; 2 Samuel xxiii. 3; Heb. i. 2.

⁵ Psalms xvii. and cxlii. alone bear the same title.

The aspirations after holiness which are found in this Psalm, coupled with its earnest invocation of mercy from the God with whom there is forgiveness, render it peculiarly applicable to those whose daily access is to a throne of needed grace. Christians know that while their *standing* is the blameless perfection of the Lord their righteousness, they are in many things offenders still.⁶ Nor do we ever fully prove the preciousness of Jesus as our portion, except as we are drawn to Him by that Spirit which reveals to us a nakedness and poverty within ourselves, which His blessed fulness can alone redress.⁷

There is a consciousness of personal sanctification through faith (verse 2) associated with an acutely sensitive perception of intrinsic worthlessness, such as only finds relief in the remembrance of unaltered grace (verse 5), which, to the exercised spirit of one really growing in the knowledge of God, will address itself with an especial acceptance.

Verse 11 expresses a chief desire in the soul of every advancing saint. It is a faithful reflection of the feeling of one who, with strong and earnest spiritual yearnings, is keenly alive to the infinite distractions, both within him and without, which practically baffle his best aims. To be quick of understanding in the fear of the Lord, is to be as He was, who, having Himself borne our sins in His own body on the tree, has left us, in His pure unsullied path of earthly obedience, an example for His people's imitation.⁸ That this desire will be in the hearts of the godly Jewish remnant, while other men are wondering after the Beast, I do not doubt. But the application of this verse is as wide as the existence of spiritual life.

The power of God as the Deliverer, by means of the resurrection, of the oppressed victims of sin and Satan, is

⁶ James iii. 6. ⁷ Rev. iii. 17, 18. ⁸ Isa. xi. 2; 1 Peter ii. 21-24.

hopefully contemplated in verse 13. Faith claims this as the ground and reason of the praise which it addresses to Jehovah as the God of salvation. In a double sense the Christian tastes the marrow of this verse. Already united to Him who is the Resurrection and the Life, he stands in the power of a faith which sets him above every ill which may assail him while a sojourner on earth. The riches of Divine mercy become thus the lasting theme of the believer's worship. But as he goes his way of pilgrimage from day to day, and learns with deeper and more wise experience the nature of the conflict in which he is engaged, and the manner of the mercy to which he owes his constant preservation; when, too, in true self-judgment, he reviews his way, and seeks to estimate the measure of that patience and that still restoring grace which, through the ever-saving intercession of the great High Priest, has met the countless failings and shortcomings of his soul, the *magnitude* of God's abundant mercy becomes, to the really growing Christian, a more familiar and intelligible thought. In a worthier appreciation of its rich and exhaustless fulness, it is to him a welcome and unceasing topic of believing praise.

I do not think that any specific time or action can be assigned with certainty to this Psalm in its prophetic character. Nor should I class it distinctly as a Messianic Psalm, although much of its language is applicable to the gracious bearer of His people's griefs. It seems rather to express the cry of the afflicted sufferers of antichristian violence, who, as the mourning confessors of the national iniquity, are led by the Spirit of grace to make earnest and importunate appeal to the God of their deliverance.⁸

⁸ Compare verses 5, 11 with Isaiah lxiv. 9; lxiii. 17.

In verse 9 there is an anticipative assertion of the surely coming triumph of the blessed and only Potentate.¹ All nations shall be gathered beneath His manifested sceptre. They will confess His name to be alone worthy of their homage, and His works to be without compare (verse 8). The closing verses (14–17) are more strongly marked by proper Jewish colouring than the general language of the Psalm.

PSALM LXXXVII.

THAT the earthly Zion is the subject of this remarkable Psalm is quite plain. The true time of its fulfilment as a prophecy will, I doubt not, be after the complete settlement of restored Israel in their land, and the adoption of Egypt and Assyria into the fellowship of covenanted blessing with the people of the Lord's inheritance.² Jehovah will have *founded* Zion.³ It is this that appears to give their peculiar emphasis to the opening words of the Psalm. *His* foundations are upon the holy mountain. Human counsel had settled the foundations of other cities. Tyre and Babel had risen through the wisdom and the might of man. But God had chosen Him a place for His own name in the earth, even as He had formed a people for His own peculiar praise.

It is the pre-eminence of Zion, the royal seat of the true David, that is here asserted by the Spirit of prophecy. The dwellings of Jacob are noticed as again inhabited (verse 2); but Jehovah's eye and heart are on *Jerusalem*.⁴ He loves the gates of Zion *more* than all the dwellings of

¹ אֱלֹהֵינוּ

² Isaiah xix. 24, 25.

³ Isaiah xiv. 32; Jer. xxx. 18–40.

⁴ 2 Chron. vii. 16.

Jacob. It is the city of God (verse 3). The city also of the great King.⁵ Glorious things are spoken of her. God, who had spoken them, will be the sure fulfiller of His word. She shall be the light and joy of the whole earth.⁶

Verses 4, 5, which are of difficult interpretation, appear to contrast the faded glories of unblessed human greatness with the supremacy (then willingly acknowledged by the nations) and fruitfulness of the city of Immanuel's praise. Rabab and Tyre had passed away. As for Zion, the Highest Himself shall establish her.⁷

I cannot speak with confidence of verse 6. It is susceptible of more than one explanation, but I know of none that satisfies my own mind.

In the last verse⁸ we seem to have the response poured forth unfeignedly, as from the very heart of the joyous city. Her rich fruition of Jehovah's goodness brings forth the glad and grateful recognition expressed in the concluding words. "All my springs are in *thee*" will be the cordial utterance of the people, whose praise shall in that day be with understanding. The melody of viols, once hateful, as an ornament of deep and unabashed hypocrisy,⁹ shall be

⁵ Matt. v. 35.

⁶ Psalm xlviii.; Isaiah lxii.

⁷ I add, with reference to the interpretation of these verses, the following suggestion of one who saw and kindly criticised the original manuscript of these "Notes:" "Is it not the comparison drawn by the citizen of Zion with the great men of the earth? Egypt, Babylon, Philistia, and Tyre have had their great men. But the time is coming when birth in the city of royal grace will confer true greatness; as we know now, having come already to Mount Zion. Jerusalem above is the mother of us all."

⁸ Of the various translations of this verse, that of Hieron. strikes me as the best: "*Et cantores quasi in choris; omnes fontes mei in te.*" The original words are: וְשָׂרִים בְּהַלְלִים כָּל־מַעְיָנֵי בָּךְ. The Authorized Version is perfectly good, if, for the italics, "*shall be there,*" we substitute "*shall say.*"

⁹ Amos v. 23.

pleasant in Jehovah's ears, when Israel's heart is truly turned to Him.¹

But while Judah's praise is silent till the veil be taken from the nation's heart, God's children may utter in His ears an acceptable melody of thanksgiving, in the blessed consciousness that in Jesus they have found the ever-living and exhaustless springs of joy. God's fulness flows for the refreshment of our weary souls through Him.

PSALM LXXXVIII.

A PROFOUND and peculiar view is opened to us here of the personal experience of Jesus as divinely appointed to the baptism of suffering and death.² Resembling in its general character Psalm xxxviii., it differs from it in one important feature. *Men* and their ways are but little noticed in the present Psalm. It is not an appeal of the righteous Servant, revealing His cause to Jehovah, while undergoing in gracious patience the contradiction of sinners against Himself, that is here presented by the Spirit, but rather the deep utterance of His soul who, *though He was a Son*, yet learned obedience by the things which He suffered. It thus expresses the same experience as the former Psalm, but presents it under another aspect. Jehovah, the God of His salvation (verse 1), is here regarded as the immediate dispenser of that sorrow which stirred and penetrated the very depths of the grief-laden heart of Jesus.³

The Son of God accepted willingly the cup which the Father gave to Him, with a full perception of its bitterness. The unsullied purity of His conscience as a Man was

¹ Hosea xiv. *passim*. ² Luke xii. 50. ³ Compare Heb. v. 7.

united in Him with the intrinsic holiness of the Divine nature, in its amazement and unparelled distress at being made to know subjectively the wrathful effects of Jehovah's judgment upon sin, which, while He knew it not, He bore, *by the grace of God*, in death for us.

The Father can alone know thoroughly the mind of the Spirit of Jesus in this and similar Psalms. Always in one sense alone,—none being found capable, even among the chosen disciples whom He called His friends, either of appreciating worthily the glory of His person, or of requiting a love the manner and quality of which they could not yet perceive,—there were seasons, doubtless, when the anticipative shadow of the cross cast with peculiar distinctness the cold darkness of His God's desertion,⁴ and of ignominious death, upon the tried spirit of the patient Son of man. The present Psalm is a striking expression of His experience at such seasons.⁵ In verse 5 we find what really constituted the bitterness of death to Jesus. It was the prospect of separation from the Father: "Free among the dead, like the slain that lie in the grave, and whom *thou rememberest no more,*" &c.

Nothing expresses the fulness of His blameless sorrow more completely or more touchingly than the latter clause of verse 8: "I am shut up, and I cannot come forth." The actual pressure which bore upon the soul of Jesus was enhanced far beyond our thought by the consciousness of His own entire love to them for whose sakes He thus suffered, and whose faces He saw hidden from Him in the hour of His chief distress. With a heart supremely capable of receiving as well as of conferring love, He must be alone; the hand of God dividing Him from every charity

⁴ Matt. xxvii. 46.

⁵ It has thus a near affinity to Psalm vi. *Ante*, p. 48, *seq.*

of man : “ *Thou* hast put away mine acquaintance far from me,” &c. ; “ Lover and friend hast *thou* put far from me,” &c. (verses 8, 18). While His enemies were about Him as a flood, He was without a solitary comforter. The desertion of His friends was a portion of the cup which was prepared for Him, in the mystery of that wisdom which consulted thus eternal pre-eminence in glory for the Lamb, who should *alone* accomplish all the work of God.

But He had stretched out His hands to One who both heard and was able to deliver. In verse 10 we have an expression of His hope breaking, as it were, faintly through the dark and all but impenetrable cloud of sorrow and distress—“ Shall the dead arise and praise thee ? ” &c. Such enquiries have their sure reply in the very nature of Him who is the God, not of the dead, but of the living, and whom His self-devoted Son addresses as the God of His *salvation*.⁶

It is a wonderful Psalm ; very full of sweet and heart-filling blessing to the soul that has learned in some measure the true value and meaning of the cross of Christ ; very needful likewise for the effectual deepening in our hearts of the right understanding both of sin and grace. The clear and holy brightness of that Light which God is, pervades this profoundly mournful yet confiding strain. That we might be rendered capable of fellowship with that Light, that it might enter and dwell within our hearts, the Saviour of our souls thus felt and spake in spirit, as the bearer of our burden. Because the world is what it is, Jesus thus suffered to redeem us out of it, and bring us to the Father. We learn from such Psalms to judge correctly of the world, in its still unaltered character of contrariety to God. May we be enabled wisely to medi-

⁶ Hebrews v. 7.

tate these things. If we are not feeding on our Passover, with a believing discernment of what we are redeemed *from* now, as well as of our prospective hope, we are incapable of conscious fellowship with the Father and the Son.

PSALM LXXXIX.

A PSALM peculiar in its structure, but of singular and richly-varied beauty and power. It is essentially a Messianic Psalm, and in its prophetic character is of far-extended range.

It may be regarded as a reflection of the desires of the Spirit of Christ in the heart of some true Israelite to whom, in the midst of apostate darkness, the secret of the Lord has been disclosed. Out of such a heart, divinely taught the stability of covenanted promise, while keenly sensible of the dispensational severity of God in His dealings with His people,¹ there comes forth the inspired utterance of a song. Its pure key-note is *mercy*. But as it rehearses in its flow the actual vicissitudes of David's crown, it wanders, in alternate strains of triumph and of woe, until it finds its sweet close of ascriptive blessing to His name, whose changeless truth and goodness are the nation's undecaying hope (verse 52).

The theme of the Spirit in this song is stated in its opening verse. It is of the mercy and faithfulness of Jehovah that perpetual mention shall be made. While the general tenor of the Psalm is earthly, yet because the sure mercies of David form its leading topic, the heavens, above which Jehovah's glory has been set in the Person of His risen and ascended Christ, are coupled with the

¹ Amos iii. 2; Rom. xi. 22.

earth in the celebration of His praise. For the elective mercy, which is the basis of Israel's promised blessing, is secured in Him whom the Church already worships and glories in as her exalted Head: "Jesus Christ, *of the seed of David*,"² is at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens. Faithfulness and mercy are built up and established in Him who is Himself the covenant of His people's endless peace.³

Verses 3, 4 are a brief summary of the Davidical covenant of promise, which is afterwards stated with an amplified specification of detail (verses 19–37).

At verse 5 there commences an anticipative strain of rest and triumph, which extends to verse 18. This part of the Psalm is full of especial interest. Verses 5–7 extol the faithfulness of Jehovah, according to the perfection of His worship, as it is and will be presented in the heavenly places.⁴ His faithfulness will be celebrated there in long enduring strains by those who are to be presented faultless

² 2 Tim. ii. 8.

³ It is of much importance that the present covenant-standing of the Church should not be overlooked, while we rightly and distinctly assert the unrevoked title of Israel to the second covenant, as well as the first. In chapter viii. of my *Notes on the Hebrews*, I have endeavoured to set this distinction in its true light.

⁴ בְּקִרְבָּן קְדָשִׁים 'Εν ἐκκλησίᾳ ἁγίων.—LXX. This language might be descriptive, if it stood alone, either of the ἀγγέλων πανηγύρις or of the ἐκκλησία πρωτοτόκων. (Heb. xii. 23.) As, however, it is the *faithfulness* of God that is celebrated, I do not hesitate to apply it more emphatically to the latter, although saints and angels unite in lauding the majesty of the heavens. In verse 7 we have a different expression: "God is greatly to be feared." בְּסוֹד־קְדָשִׁים 'Εν βουλή ἁγίων.—LXX. "*Nel Consiglio dei Santi*."—Diod. But DE WETTE: "*Im grossen Kreise der Heiligen*." For a general illustration of this, see Rev. iv. *passim*. It should be remembered, in connexion with this subject, that in Luke xx. 36, the children of the resurrection are termed generically ἰσαγγελοὶ. They are equal to the angels, both as partakers of immortality, and because the distinc-

before the throne of God, because of His ability in faithfulness to save. For He it is who brings the heirs of His salvation safely to His rest, despite the opposition of the adversary and the strong reluctance of the flesh. Our feeble and failing steps are guided to His holy habitation, through the faithfulness of One who will not deny Himself as our Captain of salvation.

But it is Jehovah's character, as the God of *Israel's* covenant, that is mainly dwelt on in this song. Accordingly in the verses which follow, the recital of His mighty acts, and the praise of His glorious power, are delivered in a connexion purely national (verses 8-10). It was in remembrance of His promise to Abram that He had broken Rahab in pieces.⁵ The same faithfulness would, in due time, break finally the rod of pride, when he of whom Pharaoh was a figure, as the wilful opposer of Jehovah's power, should set himself in haughty guise and with a multitudinous array, against the name and heritage of God.⁶ Because of the might of His power, and under the favour of His sure mercy, who is Possessor both of earth

tions of sex are unremembered in the life to come. On the other hand, the believer, as a fellow-heir with Christ, is set far above angels. (1 Cor. vi. 3; Rev. v. *passim*.)

⁵ Gen. xv. 14-16.

⁶ Verse 10 seems to have a prophetic, not less than an historic force. **גָּבַר** is here rendered by the LXX. *ὑπερήφανος*, and by HIERON. "*superbus*." Although frequently in Scripture applied metonymically to Egypt, it is itself a simple substantive, signifying "pride." Its appropriateness, as a poetical appellative (it is found in this sense only in the Psalms, and once in Isaiah) of the country which, at the time to which reference is made, was the citadel of human strength and wisdom, is sufficiently apparent. But the renown of Jehovah's power, through the destruction of the host of Egypt in the Red Sea, will be surpassed in extent, and altogether eclipsed in its effects, by the manifestation of the fame of Him whose name shall be published with a message of acceptance to the remotest corners of the

and heaven (verse 11), the mountains of Israel⁷ should again rejoice in His name (verse 12). The founding of the earth and the planting of the heavens are celebrated in connexion with the manifesting of Jehovah in the reigning glory of His Christ.⁸

In verses 15–18 we have a description of the blessedness of the people who know the joyful sound. This note of gladness is the gracious announcement on Jehovah's part of His appropriation of His people. Prophetically, this comprises with restored Israel, both Egypt and Assyria.⁹ Israel will indeed be the centre of the blessing—"a blessing in the midst of the land." The obvious and very precious application of these verses to the calling and portion of the Church as the *now* "circumcision," I need not stay to point out. The language of verse 18 is important. The marginal translation is decidedly to be preferred: "For our shield is of the Lord,¹ and our King is of the Holy One of Israel." It distinguishes, according to the accuracy of the Spirit of truth, between the invisible God and the apparent (though equally Divine) delegate and holder of His name and power.²

Verses 19–37 are full of Messianic promise, and as such they fall richly into the lap of the Church as a part of her inheritance in Christ. The passage cannot now be examined in detail. Let not, however, the weak-hearted believer fail to notice, for his comfort, not only that the

earth by the saved remnant of His nation, when the vaunt of the Oppressor shall be heard no more in the earth which he had so long corrupted at his will. (Isaiah lxvi. 19.)

⁷ Tabor and Hermon I suppose to be used by synecdoche for the mountains of Israel generally. As to these, see Ezek. xxxvi.

⁸ Compare Isaiah li. 16.

⁹ Isaiah xix. 24, 25.

¹ לַיהוָה "From Jehova."—DE WETTE.

² 2 Sam. xxiii. 3.

immutability of the counsel of salvation is secured for him eternally, in the changeless character of God, but that a specific article of the covenant of blessing is the gracious *chastening*, by the Father of spirits, of every son whom He thus brings nigh in Jesus to Himself.³ God modifies His dealings with His children according to the exigencies of their practical condition, as they are estimated unerringly in His perfect judgment of their ways. He chastens whom He loves. He has engaged to bless us; and, in very faithfulness, He exercises such a manner of discipline as He sees to be conducive to our more abundant joy in Him. He will make us thus to be partakers *experimentally* of that holiness by which He has already sanctified us in His Son.

The object prominently before the mind of the Spirit in these verses is Christ, as the "One chosen out of the people."⁴ The security of Israel's covenant was in Jehovah, who was not a man that He should lie. He had spoken, making mention in His speech of marvellous things. He would not call back His words, but, in due time, would fulfil them to their utmost tittle. This time of joyful accomplishment might seem to linger, and the visitations of the God of judgment might, in the meanwhile, lie heavily upon the stricken people, yet would the fruit of national promise ripen in its appointed season. In verse 27 there is applied to Messiah the title of "First-born." This expression is not found in either of the two passages⁵ in which the Davidical covenant had been previously declared. Its occurrence in the present Psalm, in which

³ Compare Heb. xii. 5-11.

⁴ מְעַם בְּרִחֵיךָ 'Εκ τοῦ λαοῦ μου.—LXX. That people of whom as touching the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. (Rom. ix. 5.)

⁵ 2 Sam. vii; 1 Chron. xvii.

the apparent frustration of the promise is deplored, and resurrection power is looked to as the condition of its eventual realization, is a characteristic trait.⁶ With the latter words of this verse compare the prophecy of Balaam in Numbers xxiv. 7.

From verse 38 we seem to listen to the immediate pleading of the Spirit of Immanuel. The desolation of His land and the profaning of His crown are declared, not with reference to the national sin, which had broken down the wall of their security, but in reproachful contrast to the recorded promise of the covenant. The word had gone out of Jehovah's lips; but the fact was in pointed contradiction to the promise. How long should this be? (verse 46.) In what follows (verses 47, 48), the fundamental condition of Israel's blessedness is found to be an acknowledgment of the total unprofitableness of the flesh. Resurrection is the basis upon which the sure mercies of David rest available for faith.⁷ This is rather implied than directly stated in the present Psalm.

Verse 50 may possibly be intended as a strong expression of the suffering faith and patience of the sorely afflicted remnant, who, as prisoners of hope, will await, with hearts firm fixed upon the sure word of that Spirit of prophecy which is the testimony of Jesus, the fulfilment of the promise of the Lord. But, from the strong *intercessory* tone of verses 49-51, we ought, perhaps, rather to ascribe them to Immanuel Himself.

⁶ For "First-born" is a title which belongs in an especial manner to Christ, as alive from the dead. (Compare Col. i. 18.) This point has been discussed in the *Notes on the Hebrews*, pages 22-24, second edition. To chaps. i. ii. of that work, and to the remarks on Ps. lxxii., the reader is referred for a fuller exposition of the general doctrine of Messianic promise in its relation to earthly things.

⁷ Acts xiii. 34.

With the closing doxology we may compare, for the sake of their moral resemblance, the apostle's equally abrupt outbreak of thanksgiving in Rom. vii. 25. In both passages the same elements are found; the proved and entire impotency of the creature, throwing itself in each case upon the strong and faithful bosom of almighty grace, as it reveals itself to the believer, whether Jewish or Christian, in the covenanted *Name*.

Book IV.

PSALM XC.

A PRAYER of Moses the man of God ; being the only Psalm for which this authorship is claimed. It is a strain well worthy of a man who stood in the secret of Jehovah ;¹ whose singular and happy distinction it was to listen, in the nearness of the Divine presence, to the revelation of the ways of God, as a man hearkens to the counsels of his own familiar friend.²

It is an intercessory address of the Spirit to the Eternal God, whose counsels of mercy had contained from everlasting the people of His choice. A full discernment of elective grace is the basis of this wonderful supplication, which, while it has for its definite aim the lasting establishment of *Israel's* peace, presents as its two characterizing topics, the glory and omnipotence of the only God, and the intrinsic vanity and helplessness of *man*.

To the Christian who knows the grace of God in truth,³ and who, therefore, can rejoice in the knowledge of his election of God in love,⁴ this Psalm addresses itself with a peculiar power and blessing. Established in Christ as the

¹ Exod. xxxiv.

² Exod. xxxiii. 11.

³ Col. i. 6.

⁴ Eph. i. 4 ; 2 Thess. ii. 13.

sure and everlasting habitation of his rest, he can ponder the contrasted verities of human vanity and Divine glory with an ever-growing intelligence, and more abundant enjoyment, of that boundless mercy which has changed for him the dim anguish of a ruined conscience into the marvellous light of the Lord his righteousness. The true subject, however, of this prayer is Israel; who are contemplated by the Spirit of prophecy as still under the covenant of bondage, but awaiting, with earnest expectation, the advent of the day of their redemption. Hence it enters deeply into the moral history and experience of the nation as under law. But although Israel and their vicissitudes form the immediate subject of the Psalm, the ground and moving necessity of this prayer of the man of God is the experienced vanity of *man* as such. The story of human life is closed up in the dark mists of ever-present and restless death. The power of God is evinced in judgment, not in grace.⁵ The light of His countenance is set full upon His mortal image only to discover, in its holy brightness, the secret realities of sin (verses 5-10).

The law had wrought wrath.⁶ They knew what it was to suffer affliction at Jehovah's hands, according to the tenor of the covenant under which ostensibly the nation stood. But wrath was not the *end* of Jacob's God. He had chosen Israel to be the people of His heritage; and His gifts and calling are without repentance. Faith always finds its rest in the known character of God. The man of God, whose judgment of present things is according to

⁵ I do not feel sure that there is an allusion to the Flood in verse 5, though the use of the term **תַּבְּחִי** leaves room for such a supposition. This is rendered by GESENIUS: "*Inundasti eos.*" DE WETTE has: "*Diraffest sie weg.*" DIODATI: "*Tu porti via gli uomini come per una piena d'acqua.*"

⁶ Rom. iv. 15.

the Spirit's testimony in the word, looks evermore towards *His* end in hope. It is the importunity of this faith which finds expression in the expostulatory appeal at verse 13. Jehovah had long known His people afar off because of their iniquities, against which the law of His holiness pleaded as a relentless witness of condemnation. But the heart of the man of God is athirst for the mercy (verse 14) which he knew well to be the sole remedy of human wretchedness, and which stood pledged eventually to the seed of Jacob in the sure covenant of promise. The *work of God* (verse 16) is the desired object of expectant faith. He would make His people glad according to the long and evil days of their affliction, but with a more abundant joy. When He turned again to bless them it should be for ever.⁷

The revelation of Jesus in glory will be the answer to the nation of this prophetic intercession. Isaiah lxiii. and lxiv may be studied profitably in connexion with the latter verses of this Psalm, which they illustrate in a striking manner. They had rebelled and vexed His Holy Spirit, and He had therefore turned to be their enemy. Yet had He earnestly remembered them still, in the unchanged purpose of His love; and the expression of true spiritual desire is always according to the secret intent of Divine goodness. While therefore, for a season, drooping mournfully beneath the dull burden of the spirit of heaviness, because of present affliction, the heart of faith arrays itself, by hopeful anticipation, in the fair garment of salvation. Grace with glory—its necessary and abiding crown—must needs be the desire of the man whose prayer was in the Holy Ghost, and therefore according to the mind of God (verses 15–17).

The closing verses, as indeed the whole Psalm, are of

⁷ Isaiah liv.

strongest national import. But the soul that is advancing in the knowledge of the only wise God will find, in the sublime language of this Psalm, rich matter of fruitful meditation on some of the deepest topics of Divine knowledge.

PSALM XCI.

A PSALM of exquisite beauty, setting forth the blessedness of the true lover of God (14). Its proper subject is Jesus in the days of His flesh. The devil quotes it thus, when endeavouring, by means of the truth of God, to ensnare the feet of the Holy One, and to divert Him from the pure path of obedience.¹ Of Jesus alone could the language of the opening verse be characteristically and descriptively used in its primary sense. "He that dwelleth," &c. He dwelt there from eternity as the only-begotten of the Father, when in co-equal glory He abode in the brightness of undiscovered light. The same "secret" was His place of habitation when, self-humbled and self-emptied, He looked from the low place of His earthly sojourn *upwards* as a worshipper of the Most High God. Under the shadow of the Almighty He had His lodging² when, less sure of

¹ Matt. iv. 6.

² The language of verse 1 is full of significance in its application to the believer. "He that *dwelleth* in the secret place of the Most High shall lodge תלויק under the shadow of the Almighty." It is the knowledge by faith of his completeness in Christ, as already brought *in Him* into the Father's house, that enables the believer to understand his present position here below as a sojourner with God. The cross, rightly learned, annihilates *all* creature strength and confidence, and replaces both by the power of God in love. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" The realization of this will be according to the simplicity of the heart's desires in Christ. Single-minded devotedness in love brings the shadow of God perceptibly over the Christian's pilgrim way. He is to such "a little sanctuary," an ever-present tabernacle of safety and of peace.

earthly refuge than the beasts that perish,³ He entered for our sakes upon that course of suffering obedience which should merit the full and eternal acceptance of the Father, whose good pleasure He had come to do.⁴

To the believer, who is now brought nigh through the blood of Jesus and *in Him*,⁵ the rich blessings of Divine promise with which this Psalm abounds are laid most freely open. Union with the ascended Saviour makes the Christian capable of entering, according to the measure of his faith, into the proper enjoyment of the love of the Father to the Son. Because we are accepted in the beloved, the position of Jesus in the world becomes the pattern of that in which the Christian is now placed. The Son of God was sanctified of the Father, and sent into the world to work His work. In like manner is the disciple of Jesus sent into the world, as into a strange place, according to the power of that unction from the Holy One which gives to the believing soul a knowledge of God's perfect love, and grounds him in all acceptable blessedness in the Father's sight, according to the full title of filial acceptance.⁶ It is in the spirit of subject and devoted obedience in love⁷ that the children are exhorted now to glorify the Father. Every promise, which in the days of His flesh sustained and cheered the weary spirit of the Son of God, applies itself, with more or less directness and effect, to that believer who, with a true appreciation of the *heavenly* calling, finds himself indeed a stranger in the present evil world. The more simple his faith, the more abundant will be his enjoyment, and the more ready and distinct his appropriation of such a Psalm as this.

Its general language appears to bear prophetically upon

³ Matt. viii. 20.

⁴ John x. 17; xiii. 31, 32.

⁵ Eph. ii. 13.

⁶ Gal. iv. 6; John xvii. 18, 20.

⁷ John xv.

the promise of earthly Messianic blessing. Christ in the flesh being its subject, His exaltation as the anointed Priest and King of the Most High God is promised (verse 16), as the result of His devotedness in self-humbled obedience. There is thus room for a moral identification of Israel with Him who Himself bare that name⁸ as the chosen Seed of promise—the true Heir of blessing—and consequently the natural object of all the hatred of the enemy. The promises of this Psalm seem thus to have a prospective application to Israel, when the nation shall at length find its lasting rest under the shadow of the mighty Rock of their salvation, and shall deride in safety the anger of the enemy from beneath the covert of Jehovah's wings. That shelter which had been forsaken and despised, when with blinded hearts they chose a lie before the living Truth, will then be known and enjoyed by those who, in the recognition of Jehovah-Jesus as the God of their deliverance, shall lie down in quiet resting-places, none making them afraid.

The more obvious and important bearing of this precious Psalm, however, is upon the Christian now, as a companion of the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ. The principle illustrated is most simple. God, being loved and trusted, appears on behalf of *His own*.⁹ The creature, which arrays itself against the sufferer, obeys the will of the Almighty Lover of his soul. All thus turns to confidence and security. God is not tempted of evil. The soul, therefore, that dwells in His secret is safe. No plague can reach that dwelling. With verse 11 compare Heb. i. 14. For the practical application of verse 13, see Eph. vi. 10, &c.

⁸ Isaiah xlix. 3.

⁹ Rom. viii. 28.

PSALM XCII.

A SABBATH SONG.¹

It is hardly necessary to point out to the Christian reader the rich and full spiritual application of this Psalm to those who, being now saved by hope, are awaiting in their day of patience the advent of the promised rest.²

In its prophetic character, it possesses a solemn and peculiar interest, and is worthy of careful attention. It is plain that in its full expression there is here contemplated by the Spirit a class of worshippers, who not only have their hearts established with grace, but who also taste abundantly of *temporal* prosperity, as the effect and accompaniment of the favour of Jehovah. *Such has never been the calling of the Church of God.*³ But it will be thus with Israel, when the unrepented promises of God shall have received their fulfilment in the latter day.

We have then in the present Psalm a rich strain of prophetic anticipation, expressive of Israel's sabbatic⁴ joy, in the day when, in the knowledge of the name and finished work of Jesus, the restored nation shall have received the end of their faith, even the salvation of their

¹ The only Psalm that bears this title.

² 2 Thess. i. 7; Heb. iv. 9; Titus ii. 13.

³ 1 Peter iv. 13, 14.

⁴ Christ is to the Christian the substance of sabbatic shadow. (Col. ii. 17.) The several hebdomadal types in Leviticus are thus susceptible of an application purely Christian. Their true fulfilment however (except, perhaps, the weekly sabbath, which I suppose will find its antitype only in post-millennial rest, when God shall be all in all), appears to be in the dispensation of the fulness of times. I need not say that in their realized fulfilment to the nation, it is Christ Himself who will be the substance of His people's joy.

souls. Gladness and triumph will fill the hearts and lips of that richly favoured seed of blessing whose song is of the work of God.⁵

Two names are distinctly celebrated in this song. First, that of *Jehovah*, who is extolled as the faithful fulfiller in gracious power of His own eternal thoughts of peace towards His people,—the God of Israel's covenant—as He will then be known through the removal of the veil of darkness from the nation's heart;⁶ and secondly, the *Most High* is glorified as the possessor of heaven and of earth. The earth will then be filled with His praise as the manifested and undisputed holder and governor of the nations. The voice of the regenerate people, whose praises He will again inhabit, will in that day of joy be echoed in pure worship by the kings and peoples of the Gentiles,⁷ who will learn the language of acceptable homage from the purged lips of Israel, who are ordained to be Jehovah's ministers and priests.⁸

It is the sabbath of millennial promise that is here prophetically anticipated. Jehovah will then have brought to its close the mystery of His long-protracted patience of human evil. The depth of His counsel will be made apparent in that day, through the marvellous accomplishment of His mighty works (verse 5). Rom. xi. 25 *ad fin.* should be studied, for the general elucidation of the Psalm in its prophetic bearing.

The cutting down of the self-planted tree of iniquity, and the restoration, in the fulness of gracious power, of the long-despised branch of promise, is the work in which Jehovah will rest in that day. He will rest in the fulfilment of His love toward the once afflicted nation of His

⁵ Numb. xxiii. 23.

⁷ Psalm cxxxviii. 4, 5.

⁶ 2 Cor. iii. 16.

⁸ Isaiah lxi.

choice,⁹ when He shall have poured finally the indignation of His jealousy upon the apostate professors of His name. Meanwhile, the brutish man knoweth not.¹ The self-confident boasting of godless profession² draws, for the unbelieving heart of nature, a veil of darkness over the clearest testimonies of the Spirit of God. The mystery of iniquity already works. It will be upon the crown of human pride, the matured flower of natural presumption (verse 7), that the stroke of destruction will suddenly descend.

Verses 9–11 describe, first, the judgment of the enemies of the Lord *generally*; secondly, the exaltation of Messiah's horn, which involves as its immediate effect the consummation of Israel's national prosperity; and thirdly, the retributive vengeance ordained against the oppressors who had trodden under foot the city and land of Immanuel in the pride of their unrighteous rule.

Verses 12 *ad fin.* are beautifully descriptive of Israel's millennial blessing when, founded upon the sure foundation, they shall be "satisfied with favour and full of the blessing of the Lord."³ It is plainly an earthly scene that is here described. Old age (verse 14), whether of nations or of individuals, has no place in heaven. Verse 15 is very important. It connects the name of Jehovah with the national promises of millennial blessing for the vindication in their fulfilment of His name and character as the *righteous God*. "To declare that Jehovah is upright," &c.⁴ The ultimate fulness of national happiness is secured in the fidelity of the unchangeable God. The promises which, having been fulfilled in Christ,⁵ are kept hidden in Him until the veil is taken from the heart of Jacob, will

⁹ Zeph. iii. ¹ Com. Jude 10. ² Titus i. 16. ³ Deut. xxxiii. 23.

⁴ לְהַגִּיד "Um zu verkunden."—DE WETTE. ⁵ 2 Cor. i. 20.

bear their full harvest of appointed blessing, when Israel, in the knowledge of Him whom their fathers had rejected, shall again blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit.⁶

PSALM XCIII.

A STRAIN full of sublimity and power, short as it is. Its subject is the majesty of the reigning Christ. Once crucified in weakness, He lives by the power of God,¹ and will presently² reign in His own apparent glory as the God of the whole earth. He will come forth girded with power to exercise the authority of universal dominion.

The supremacy of Jehovah is here celebrated as the result of the decisive settlement of the long disputed question, "Who is the Lord?" From of old it had been testified that power belonged to Him. But truth had fallen in the street, and the claims of His holiness had been disowned in the mad ravings of those who foamed out their own shame, while asserting their natural rights as men.³ But now the reign of God is come. The brightness of His appearing has dispelled the foul mists of wickedness, and stilled the impotent raging of the ungodly nations; con-

⁶ Isaiah xxvii. 6.

¹ 2 Cor. xiii. 4.

² That all power, in heaven and on earth, is already His, is the joyful trust of those who still wait on, in patience and tribulation, until the *time* of the kingdom be arrived. The seven eyes and the seven horns pertain already to the Lamb once slain. (Rev. v. 6.) The knowledge of the full supremacy of Jesus is the sustaining power of all true Christian service. (Matt. xxviii. 18, 19; 2 Cor. xii. 9.) But this is a truth which is as yet acknowledged only by the elect members of His body, the Church. He is thus discerned now spiritually only, and by faith. The revelation of His kingdom, on the contrary, will be disclosed to *every eye*. Rev. i. 7; Matt. xxvi. 64.)

³ Jude 13.

firming thus (verse 5) the sure testimonies of the Spirit of truth, to which the faint and wearied souls of His afflicted people had stuck during the long night of darkness and rebuke.⁴

They discover (verse 2) in the revelation of Messiah, the One whose throne had been established of old,⁵ whose goings forth had been from everlasting. The living God and an everlasting King.⁶ His coming, long deferred, had been the sustaining promise of His people's hope. And now He is come; and being come, He restores, in the fulness of His righteous power, the broken and disorganized foundations. The earth, which He had first swept clean from its pollutions with the besom of destruction, with which He had destroyed the corrupter and his work, is now set fast, to be no more shaken terribly at His arising.⁷

The Psalm concludes (verse 5) with a solemn attestation of the work and glory of Jehovah, as the Holy One, on the part of those who, having learned the secret of their sure salvation as of Him, rejoice with trembling in that marvellous light. This is the proper language even now of Christian faith. The believer, being of the household of the Son, enters by the Spirit into the fellowship of that glory which is *ready* to be revealed. In the meanwhile, the doctrine of filial liberty is to be exemplified in all holy conversation and godliness. For *He* is holy, who is His people's trust and present portion, and their desired glory in that coming day.

⁴ Psalm cxix. 31.

⁵ **אין** "from *then*" (*margin*). From when? From that "beginning" when "the Word was with God, and the Word was God." (John i. 1.) The reigning Christ will be the seasonable outshining, in its living fulfilment, of *eternal truth*.

⁶ Jer. x. 10.

⁷ Isaiah ii.

PSALM XCIV.

THIS very remarkable Psalm appears to describe the moral condition and hopes of the faithful remnant of Israel in the latter day, when, in the midst of the ripe ungodliness and utter recklessness of the nation at large, the Spirit of Christ impels them to this urgent and solemn appeal to Jehovah, the God of revenges to shine forth.

It is not in its general expression, as in some other Psalms, a pleading of Jewish faith and patience against *Gentile* iniquity and oppression. The throne of iniquity is indeed mentioned (verse 20) as a thing set up. But the unrighteousness appealed from has its seat among the nominal people of Jehovah. What is here expressed is rather the cry of those whose departure from evil has made them a prey to their ungodly brethren. They call upon the righteous God to appear as the Judge of all the earth—to judge wickedness, as such—to cut down the rod of pride, which, having budded in its strength, was then affording the shelter of falsehood to every thing but that which clave still to the name and promises of Jehovah, who is unchangeably the God of Israel, the Saviour.

Two distinct points are thus included in the subject of this Psalm. First, there is the prevalence of human wickedness in general. Under the guidance of the wicked one himself, they seek to establish his throne upon the broken ruins of Divine testimony, digging thus unconsciously the pit of their own destruction (verses 13, 20). Secondly, and principally, there is presented the special case of Jewish apostasy, as it will be found in confederacy

with Gentile wickedness, when the deceivableness of unrighteousness shall have subjected the bulk of the unbelieving nation to the dominion of the beast, as the willing worshippers of a lie.¹ Chapters lxxv. and lxxvi. of Isaiah throw much light upon this Psalm. The workers of iniquity, who boast themselves of an evil work, and who utter hard speeches against the true people² and inheritance of Jehovah, are not ignorant of the name and witness of the God of Jacob (verses 3-7).³

Verses 8-11 contain a striking apostrophe, applicable to the deluded votaries of idolatrous worship under any circumstances, but directed especially, I believe, to those apostate worshippers of the beast and his image⁴ who naturally are of Abraham's seed.⁵ Israel had known.⁶ If they swerved, it was from truth which their fathers had confessed. Hence the peculiar force of the appeal in verse 10, "He that chastiseth the heathen," &c. Pharaoh and the hosts of Egypt—the nations whom Jehovah had thrust out for their sakes—the catastrophe of Sennacherib—the discomfited armies of the aliens, so often turned to flight through the prayer of faith—all these national memories of Divine deliverance would remain indelibly graven on the people's mind, to give increased pungency to such an appeal. If they were ignorant of these things,

¹ 2 Thess. ii. 10; John v. 43.

² Rom. ix. 6.

³ For the expressions **גַּר אֵלֵמֶנָה** and **יְתוּמִים** (verse 6), as descriptive of the state of those who are grieved for the affliction of Joseph, see Isaiah li. and lxxiii. 16, 17.

⁴ Rev. xiii.

⁵ **בְּעַרְיִים בָּעַם** "Ἀφρονες ἐν τῷ λαῷ,"—LXX., is the descriptive appellation of those here addressed. That Israel is meant is quite evident. For the general principle which identifies apostasy with folly, see Jude *passim*. They are fools by their own deliberate choice, when they forsake the right way of obedience, wherein safety and blessing may alone be found.

⁶ Rom. x. 19.

it was because they had willingly dismissed them from their *hearts*. The language of these verses seems to suggest the inference that the time of this Psalm's fulfilment may fall in with the era of the two witnesses, who prophesy unharmed until their appointed service be accomplished in the midst of Jerusalem, albeit the power of the beast be then acknowledged in that place.⁷

Verses 12–15 describe the blessedness of the man who, humbling himself under the mighty hand of God, and accepting the appointed rod of chastening, finds in it a pledge of Divine faithfulness for the sure fulfilment in His time of the unrepented promise. “For Jehovah will not cast off His people,” &c. This is the language of suffering faith at all times. It will be especially characteristic of those who, in the solemn and immediate expectation of the God of judgment, will seek to establish their hearts in the sure testimonies of the Spirit of prophecy.⁸

Verses 16–19 are full of sweetest power and significance to the tried believer at all times. They savour richly of Christ to one who has already tasted that the Lord is gracious. In their proper interpretation, however, these verses harmonize entirely with the general subject of the

⁷ Rev. xi.

⁸ Compare James v. 8; Mal. iii. 16–18. Mal. iv. 4, compared with verse 12 of the present Psalm, throws increased light upon the moral standing of the expectant Jewish remnant at the close of the present dispensation. Walking in true Mosaic discipleship, they will be filled with longings for Him who is the hope both of Israel and the nations. We must not confound the remnant here spoken of with those Jewish Christians whose calling is to suffer death for the witness of Jesus, in the closing days of the present dispensation, and who will live and reign with Christ a thousand years. (Rev. xx. 4.) There is a remnant which is ordained to salvation and to *earthly* millennial blessings. Until the light of the Deliverer's presence shines on them, these last are *Jews*, not Christians. (Zech. xiii. 8, 9.)

Psalm. They express, that is, the trials and the confidence of Jewish rather than of Christian faith. The distressful yet not despairing inquiry of verse 16 will be met by the advent in power of Messiah. As it is elsewhere written: "At that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince, which standeth for the children of thy people,"⁹ &c. The comfortable words of promise,¹ which have nourished and sustained the long-deferred hope of the faithful remnant, will be verified in gracious power in the day of His appearing.

Verses 20–23 place the throne of Antichrist in contrast with the name of Jehovah, whose name is the defence² of His prisoners of hope. The wilful king had thought to change times and laws—to establish the ordinances of unrighteousness, and to make his mark the sole sanction of life and liberty in the very land of Immanuel. But he will come to his end—he and his deluded myriads—at the arising of Jehovah. Their own iniquity, recoiling with the weight of eternal judgment upon the heads of the evil-doers, must sink them low and for ever into the appointed place of their perdition. The gathering of the nations will be by the imperious counsel of self-confident strength. But their proud array will be as a dead ripe sheaf in the presence of devouring flame, when the Lord looks forth on them in anger from the place which He has hallowed by His name. The purpose of the adversary is to obliterate the very memory of Jerusalem, that the earth and its fulness may be the undisputed possession of the king of pride, whose desire of dominion enlarges itself above the stars of heaven.³ But the wrath of man will redound to the praise of Him who has set the throne of His judgment,

⁹ Dan. xii. 1.

¹ Isaiah xl.

² מִשְׁעָבֵךְ

³ Isaiah xiv.

as the Just Ruler of the world, in the place which He has chosen for His name, the city of the great King.⁴

PSALM XCV.

A CALL of the Spirit of Christ, addressed to Israel as the redeemed people of Jehovah, to celebrate in joyful thanksgiving the kingdom (now come) for which they had so long waited in hope. Praise had been silent in Zion while the power of ungodliness had held prevailing sway. But now, in the apparent manifestation of the *Great King* (verse 3), the Stone of Israel is discovered, and owned as the gathering point of proper national worship.

The *greatness* of Jehovah is the subject of this Psalm. They will wisely sing it who will have felt subjectively the might of His power as their Saviour.¹ He had made them—creating them anew to be the sheep of His hand. They were not their own. Grace had made them to be the people of His pasture, but Israel after the flesh could never learn this truth. Going about in their ignorance of it to establish their own righteousness, they had fallen and been broken on the rock of *offence*. But now the voice of Him who quickeneth the dead had been heard speaking comfortably to His people, and they are ready to rejoice in the conscious blessing of the Rock of their *salvation*.

⁴ Matt. v. 35; Isaiah xxxi. 9.

¹ And therefore this Psalm, although strongly Jewish in its whole tone and bearing, is capable of a right spiritual application to the true circumcision. (Phil. iii. 3.) How falsely it has been applied to the purposes of what is falsely called *national* Christian worship will be perceived by those who listen heedfully to the written warnings of the Spirit. (Rom. xi. 25.) See further on the subject of "the churches," *Notes on Second Corinthians*, pp. 268-277.

What we have in this Psalm is a prophetic exhortation. It is addressed to Israel as no longer under law, but under grace. They stand, indeed, before God and in one another's presence, as the children of the fathers who had of old provoked Him in the wilderness; but their hearts being turned in truth to the Lord, they are ready to enter into that rest which their fathers lost through unbelief.

A pointed application has been elsewhere made by the Spirit of God of a portion of this Psalm to the believer now, while as a partaker of the *heavenly* calling he is accomplishing his pilgrimage of hope.² The warning, which the Christian knows to be so needful to his own soul's health while on his way to God,³ will not be superfluous to Israel when in the actual enjoyment of millennial rest, since they will be still in their natural bodies. The pledged faithfulness and sustaining power of Christ will keep them surely to the end; for they shall *all* be taught of God, and shall *all* be justified and shall glory in Jesus, as the Rock of their salvation;⁴ yet will they need, and doubtless then receive with willing ears, those reproofs of instruction which are the way of life.⁵ Moreover there is a probable reference in this Psalm to the last pleadings of Jehovah with His ancient people Israel in the wilderness, when with gracious purposes of love He shall have allured them thither,⁶ previously to their final establishment in the land.

But the time of praise was come. And being come, there would be mingled in their hearts, with the sense of present exultation, a pervading softness and brokenness of spirit at the remembrance of their former ways.⁷ For they

² Heb. iii. iv.

³ As to the nature and scope of this exhortation, see the *Notes on the Hebrews*, chaps. iii. iv.

⁴ Isaiah xlv. 25; liv. 13.

⁵ Prov. vi. 23.

⁶ Hosea ii. 14, *sq.*

⁷ Ezek. xvi. 63.

that have erred in spirit will then have come to understanding, and they that murmured will be willing disciples of true doctrine in the day when Jacob shall behold his children in the midst of him, and shall know them to be indeed the work and glory of his Holy One.⁸

PSALM XCVI.

THE subject of the preceding Psalm—the greatness of Jehovah—is here continued. But it is with reference to the Gentiles and the earth at large, rather than to Israel as His peculium, that that Name is magnified in the beautiful Psalm before us.¹ Israel, as the acceptable ministers of the Lord,² are stirred up not only to worship with blessing the name of their Deliverer, but also to publish the testimony of His saving grace and power among all the nations of the earth (verses 2, 3).

The varied imagery of idolatrous worship under which Satan, while his sway over the minds of men, as the god of this world, remained undestroyed, had caused the nations to serve in evil bondage the powers of darkness, is contrasted with the manifested presence and glory of the *Maker* of the heavens (verses 4, 5). The secret of His power has been disclosed by the advent of Him whose coming is with righteous judgment as the Avenger of His own name, and in faithful mercy as the Deliverer

⁸ Isaiah xxix. 23, 24; xlvi. 13.

¹ In 1 Chron. xvi. 23–33, we have nearly the exact language of the present Psalm. It there forms a part of the extended service of praise with which David celebrated the bringing of the Ark of the Covenant to Zion. The typical relation of that event to the advent of Jehovah in delivering power, and in the fulness of permanent mercy, is easily seen. (Zech. i. 16, 17.)

² Isaiah lxi. 6.

of His people. He who had thus come was sitting on the throne of general dominion as the reigning Lord of all the earth—the equitable Administrator of Divine government over all the nations of the world (10): and proclamation must be made of this to all the kindreds of mankind.

The ambassadors of this new Gospel of Jehovah's glory, in the manifestation of the Son of man with power,³ will be the escaped remnant of Jacob.⁴ The sanctuary of His name will have been again established in Jerusalem when the time of this prophecy arrives (verses 8, 9).⁵ The long-delayed promise, uttered by the last of God's earlier witnesses,⁶ will receive its true accomplishment,⁷ when the appointed channels of the whole world's blessing shall have been reopened by the restoring to Israel of the sure mercies of their covenant. It is from the earthly Jerusalem that the streams of life and blessing will take their course, through the wilderness of Gentile ignorance and death, in that great day of restitution.⁸

Verses 11–13 are full of comprehensive beauty and power. They present the gathering together⁹ of everything under the confessed dominion of the reigning Christ. Things in heaven, as well as things on earth, rejoice together in the acknowledged blessing of the Lord of peace. The Psalm is throughout a very sweet strain of millennial prophecy.¹

³ Matt. xxvi. 64. ⁴ Isa. lxvi. 19. ⁵ Zech. xiv. 16. ⁶ Mal. i. 11, 14.

⁷ Its *false* accomplishment, according to the lie of Papal pretension, is well known to Protestants. But it is well for the latter to acquaint themselves carefully with the counsel of God concerning the mystery of His dispensational dealings, lest that come upon them which is written, not in the figurative language of prophecy, but in the earnest and sober plainness of apostolic warning. (Rom. xi. 17–25.)

⁸ Isaiah ii. 3.

⁹ Ἀνακεφαλαίωσις, Eph. i. 10.

¹ In the concluding verse, the verb **ἦ** should rather, I think, be rendered by the perfect tense than the present. "He is come" suits the

PSALM XCVII.

THE opening verse of this sublime Psalm comes like a greeting of the Spirit of Jesus to the now freed and quieted creation,¹ which is called on to rejoice with gladness at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth (verse 5). "Jehovah reigneth" is the declaration which serves the ready mind of the Spirit as a base whereon to build the varied harmonies of this admirable strain.

The power and coming of the Lord of glory² are first described (verses 2-5). Judgment must be administered where the title of dominion is the sceptre of Divine righteousness.³ As to the Judge, He is perfect Light, and in Him is no darkness at all. But about His throne there are clouds of darkness, fraught heavily with vengeance against the recusants of mercy in the long day of His patience.⁴ The immediate effects of the arising of the God of judgment are described in verses 4 and 5. But the terrible shaking of the earth is a preparation for the abiding settlement of the throne of peace and blessing, when, in the fulness of His own just title as the Heir of all things, Jesus takes the kingdom and dominion *beneath* those heavens, which He does not cease meanwhile to fill with the bright glory of His presence.⁵

general tone of the Psalm, in which Jehovah is represented as already reigning, better than "He cometh." That it may be so rendered is plain. Such is, indeed, its literal translation. In Ps. xcvi. the same word is translated ἦκεν by the LXX. In the present passage they have ἐρχεται.

¹ Isaiah xiv. 7.

² 2 Peter i. 16.

³ 2 Sam. xxiii. 3, 7.

⁴ 2 Thess. i. ; Luke xix. 27.

⁵ Dan. vii. 14 ; Rev. xi. 15.

Verse 6 seems to contemplate the glorified Church as the heavenly witness of the righteous love of God, in the day when He will be justified in the marvellous sayings of His now despised testimonies,⁶ and when the liberated creature will rejoice in the manifestation of the sons of God.⁷ The nations shall see the light of that glory, which has its abiding resting-place in the holy Jerusalem,⁸ which descendeth out of heaven from God. The kings of the nations shall then see that which had not been told them.⁹ The manifestation, that is, of Messiah's glory is set in contrast with the present dispensation of Gospel testimony to a *hidden* though exalted Christ, whose power is a reality to those alone who are begotten of the word of truth.

Verse 7 appears to refer more immediately to the catastrophe of the beast and his idolatrous worshippers, whose final discomfiture is by the judgment of the WORD of God¹—His name alone being exalted in that day.²

Verses 8, 9 set Zion in her true place as the city of righteousness—now honoured and made glad as the accepted habitation of the King—redeemed in grace, but founded in judgment, by the God to whom vengeance belongeth. The daughters of Judah also share her joy.

Verses 10–12, full as they are of pointed application, both in comfort and in warning, to the Christian on his pilgrim way, are, in their proper interpretation, quite in keeping with the rest of the Psalm. We may regard them

⁶ John xvii. 23.

⁷ Rom. viii. 19–21.

⁸ Rom. xxi. 11.

⁹ Isaiah lii. 15.

¹ Rev. xix.

² The apostle's reference to this verse in Heb. i. 6, where the version of the LXX. is given in substance (although the actual words are extant only in the Septuagint translation of Deut. xxxii. 43), is a decisive proof—even if the general tenor of the Psalm did not demand such a conclusion—that this description belongs to the *second* advent of the Lord Jesus Christ. See *Notes on the Hebrews, in. loc.*

as a sample of the testimony which Zion's converts will bear among the Gentiles when, as the witnesses and partakers of accomplished grace, they will really be, in love and spiritual power, that which their fathers vainly claimed to be while in the flesh, and under law.³ The language of verse 11, so full of beauty for the Christian as a prophecy of hope, to be presently realized at the appearing of the Lord, is susceptible of a further meaning, which renders it quite consistent with its context, as a portion of Israel's testimony of actual Messianic blessedness to the distant nations of the earth.⁴

PSALM XCVIII.

RESTORED Israel now calls upon all below the heavens to sing the new song of redemption. The scope of this Psalm is more confined than that of the one immediately preceding. No mention is here made of the heavens.¹ The faithful mercy and perfect righteousness of Jehovah as the Saviour of Israel, have been openly made manifest in the

³ Rom. ii. 17-20.

⁴ אֹרֶךְ יָרַע לְצַדִּיק The Authorized Version, "Light is *sown* for the righteous," is literally correct, but those translations which substitute "sprung up," or "arisen" for "sown," appear to give a better sense; e.g., Φῶς ἀνέτειλε τῷ δίκαιῳ.—LXX. "*Lux orta est justo.*"—HIERON. "*Licht geht auf dem Gerichten.*"—DE WETTE. The difference is that which exists between an assured hope and an accomplished fact. The latter seems more appropriate in the present case.

¹ None, that is, expressly. In verse 2 there is an implication of the heavenly revelation of the Lord and His saints. In Isaiah xlv. 23, we have a yet richer and more comprehensive apostrophe, in which the heavens as well as the lower parts of the earth are called to celebrate Jehovah's praises as the Redeemer of Jacob.

sight of the nations (verses 2, 3). The ends of the earth, which had beheld His power, are now invited, by the rejoicing subjects of His mercy, to partake their joy, and to swell the volume of their new and grateful song.

The veil of darkness, which lay so long upon the nations, has been dissolved; and the feast of fatness is now spread in Zion. The importunate biddings of persuasive mercy are sounded far and wide among the tribes of the earth, to gather in the multitudinous guests of Jehovah's goodness.² A richer and more wide-spread blessing will flow, through Israel's fulness, to the nations of the world, than now reaches them because of their diminishing and fall.³

The present Psalm describes the shedding abroad over the physical creation of the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, which now shines only through the revealing power of the Spirit in the hearts of His believing people. Some of the characteristic points of diversity between the present dispensation and that which is to come (the millennium) may be easily gathered from the Psalm before us, and though it involve some repetition of what has been already said, it may be useful to notice them in order.

I. There is the open revelation of Jehovah's righteousness,⁴ of Christ, that is, in the *sight* of the nations; whereas the Church is set as a witness in the present world through her confession of an unseen Christ. The death of the Lord is now shown, *until He come*, in the assemblies of His saints.⁵ Believers are exhorted to hold forth the word of life for the

² Isaiah xxv. *passim*.

³ Rom. xi. 12. The reader will observe that I am merely contrasting the respective degrees of positive dispensational blessing now and in the millennium. The language of the text would be quite inappropriate, were I comparing the *value* of the blessing now bestowed on the elect Church with that of the millennial nations.

⁴ 1 Cor. i. 30.

⁵ 1 Cor. xi. 26.

obedience of *faith*. Their own joy is, in the meanwhile, full in their discernment of Jesus, through the power of that Spirit whom the world neither sees nor knows.

II. There is the declared fulfilment of Divine promise in blessing to *Israel*, whose description during the present dispensation is, that they are enemies, as concerning the Gospel, for the Gentiles' sake.⁶

III. The display of God's salvation is made to the ends of the earth; the world and its inhabitants being summoned to rejoice in it (verse 7). But the word of the Spirit now is: "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in the wicked one."⁷ Until that wicked one be bruised under the feet of the Church, according to the promise of the God of peace,⁸ God's general gospel quickens none but His elect, whose calling is to suffer for His name. Hence the exhortation addressed to such to be patient, stablishing their hearts in hope of the coming of the Lord.⁹

But IV., the creature, which now groaneth and travaileth in pain,¹ is here called on to rejoice and utter praise, because that for which it now waits longingly is really come.

Lastly, the cause of the joy here mentioned is not the presence of the Christ with the Father (as it now is to the Church),² but His visible epiphany, in manifested power, as the Judge of all the world.

With verse 3 may be compared Mary's prophetic note of anticipative national joy and triumph at the birth of Jesus as the Royal Seed—the Righteous Branch.³ What she then sang was of the Holy Ghost, whose power had filled her virgin womb with the Lord's incarnate Christ. Those joyful anticipations will be realized in their appointed time. For the blessings contemplated in her song are all secured

⁶ Rom. xi. 28. ⁷ 1 John v. 19. ⁸ Rom. xvi. 20. ⁹ James v. 8.

¹ Rom. viii. 22. ² Compare John xiv. 28; xvi. 7. ³ Luke i. 54, 55.

in Him who was raised from the dead to be the living and manifested covenant of the sure mercies of David.⁴

Most fully does this beautiful Psalm offer itself to the enjoyment of the Christian. For to him the Son of God is already come, and has given him an understanding whereby the mighty results of redemption, whether in the heavenly calling of the Church, or in the future accomplishment of prophetic earthly blessing, are capable of a present realization in spirit by his faith. And joy and praise are the fruits of that Spirit which sets free the soul of the believer into the liberty of Divine adoption. Happy is it to be enabled thus to dwell, amid the actual scene of darkness and vanity, upon the bright and hopeful picture which the Spirit of Jesus has traced with unerring hand in the fair and indelible colours of prophetic truth. It is in the light of such clear and joyous notes of promise that we are emboldened to speak positively of that "world to come," into which presently the now hidden First-born is to be ushered in the glory of His majesty, attended by the angels and companioned by His saints. A present Christ will make a happy world. The peace of the nations will be through the sceptre of His righteousness. The Church, which is His bride and fellow-heir, will know her better portion in the general jubilee of the emancipated creature in that wished-for day.

PSALM XCIX.

IN this Psalm the majesty of Jehovah, as the *Holy One* of Israel, is celebrated; while the preceding one has delivered, as its happy burden, the praise of the glory of His *grace*.

⁴ Acts xiii. 34.

Israel, as a nation of unshod worshippers, made through the blood of the covenant partakers of the holiness which they praise, are here heard extolling the name of Him that dwelleth between the cherubim.¹

The nations are summoned to fear the majesty of Israel's God. For He whose greatness is in Zion (verse 2) is high above all the peoples—a name to be dreaded among the heathen (verse 3).²

In the manifestation of Messiah's glory, the full rays of the Divine holiness, which dwelt secretly of old in Israel's tabernacle—veiled from every eye, even of the tribes of His own inheritance,—will shine forth upon the utmost families of the heathen. For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea.³ But the praises of *Israel* will in that day be the chosen habitation of His love. The sanctity of Jerusalem, as the footstool of Jehovah, and the appointed place of Gentile confluence for the worship of His name, is distinctly asserted in verse 5.⁴

Verses 6–8 review the former dealings, in grace and faithfulness of Israel's God. The union of perfect holiness with faithful mercy, which had characterized the ways of Jehovah through the eventful course of the national history, will be fully understood by the generation who will then be known among the nations as the righteous people that keepeth the truth.⁵ Wise-hearted Israel, with eyes

¹ Isaiah vi.

² Mal. i. 14.

³ Hab. ii. 14.

⁴ That the words **קֹדֶשׁ הוּא** refer to the footstool, and that the marginal version in the English Bible, "it is holy," is correct, is clear to my own mind. (Compare 1 Chron. xxviii. 2; Isaiah lx. 13, 14; liii. 1.) In the concluding verse of the Psalm, the expression is varied as well as amplified. They are called to worship at the holy hill of Jehovah, because of His holiness who has named that place as the sanctuary of His presence.

⁵ Isaiah xxvi. 2.

now opened to see out of obscurity into the marvellous light of Jesus, will thus rear up a tabernacle of holy praise, in which He who loved Jacob while as yet unborn will long delight to dwell.

We may note that in this and the preceding Psalm the two leading principles of Messiah's royal government are prominently displayed. First, grace reigning through righteousness; and secondly, the power of holiness in judgment. The knowledge of His glory, as the omnipotent God, will compel a universal obedience of the nations to the sceptre of His rule.⁶

PSALM C.

ANOTHER and most sweet millennial song. Its action is much more limited than that of most of those we have lately been examining. It is a Psalm for Israel in their own land,¹ and seems to be addressed exclusively to the tribes of the Lord, who, as the sheep His pasture, will obey with willing heart the summons to enter into His courts with praise.

Their fathers had trodden those courts with other sacrifices.² But now the children of the new covenant are called on to assemble there with thanksgivings, because of

⁶ Compare Psalms ii. and xviii.

¹ It is clearly a mistranslation to render the words **כְּלֵהָאָרֶץ** by "all ye lands." Nor do I think that even the margin (which gives "all the earth") is, in the present instance, correct. We should translate, I doubt not, "all the *land*." The word "land" may be taken as a metonymy for its inhabitants. But there is no need of this. The land which had spued out the former generation for their wickedness, and had mourned in desolation beneath the judgments of the Lord, will be filled with gladness and with rest when the glory of Jehovah shall have returned thither, to be no more removed.

² Isaiah i.

mercy, of goodness and of truth (verse 5). These things will then be known and delighted in by the new-born nation, whose boast will no longer be in the law of works, but in that mighty workmanship of grace, which has made them what they are as the satisfied possessors of Jehovah's blessing.³

It is not a declaration of His name to those who know it not that is expressed in verse 3, but the glad rehearsal rather of that name on the part of His own people, who, in the tasted enjoyment of Divine mercy, will answer one another in songs of thanksgiving to Jehovah's praise.⁴ The nations of the world will know the glory of the Lord, and many will flow with thirsting hearts to the place of His name to taste the sweetness of His grace in truth. But not *all* the offered Gentile homage will be the true sacrifice of praise. Power will constrain an acknowledgment of fealty to the Prince of the kings of the earth, even where the love of Christ is a stranger to men's hearts.⁵ But the language of this Psalm is such as becomes those only whose hearts are full of the marrow and fatness of appreciated grace—who bless God because themselves blessed of Him. There may be implied in verse 1 an invitation to the Gentiles to partake the fatness of the nation's blessing; but the land and people of Immanuel are, undoubtedly, the true subjects of the Psalm.

Surely they whose marvellous portion it is, as believing vessels of the grace of God, to be blessed with all spiritual blessings in *heavenly* places in Christ, and who have access

³ The marginal reading, "His we are," in verse 3, is, I think, to be preferred to the text of the A. V. The Hebrew קרי is לו, and is followed by HIERON., who has "*ipsius sumus.*" DE WETTE likewise renders, "*sein sind wir.*"

⁴ Compare Exod. xv.

⁵ Zech. xiv. 17-19.

through Him, by one Spirit, unto the Father—knowing the pure liberty of spiritual worship, according to the life and power of the everlasting Minister of the true sanctuary⁶—may find full communion of heart with this sweet melody of Israel's praise. True spiritual discrimination⁷ never confounds what God has distinguished in His word. Jehovah's people and Immanuel's land are not the Church of God and the Father's house. Yet no well taught Christian finds his power of enjoying Jewish Scripture diminished, but rather greatly enhanced, by a discovery which opens to his view "the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God."⁸

PSALM CI.

THIS Psalm is doubly interesting. First, when considered with reference to its author; and secondly, in its prophetic character as a Messianic Psalm.

Under the former of these aspects it is, when read in the light of David's personal history, of high practical value to the believer who is learning to have his conversation in this world *by the grace of God*.¹ We find in David's earlier career a wonderful example of trustful devotedness and personal holiness of walk. While watched by the evil eye of Saul, he behaved himself wisely in all his ways.² When persecuted because the unction of Jehovah's choice was on him, we everywhere meet with the fairest traits of spiritual loveliness in the record which the Scripture affords us of his ways. Doubtless his heart, profoundly versed during his day of affliction, both in the goodness of

⁶ Heb. vii. viii.

⁷ Phil. i. 9, 10.

⁸ Rom. xi. 33.

¹ 2 Cor. i. 12.

² 1 Sam. xviii.

God and the hatefulness of sin, framed many a pure resolve with righteous purpose of accomplishment, when once the government of Israel should be entrusted to his hands. He fully knew, as taught of God, that "he that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God"—that the toleration of iniquity in the Lord's inheritance was an abomination, and a sure provoking of angry judgment, in the eyes of the Holy One of Israel.

The present Psalm may be accepted primarily as an utterance of David's aspirations after an opportunity of righteous rule, to which his own experience of the reign of wickedness, when misery wasted everywhere the Lord's inheritance, and he was himself beset by perils upon every side, because of the godless wilfulness of Saul, must have added a daily growing earnestness. The Spirit indeed was willing in the man of God's election. But he had yet to learn, in a more bitter and appalling sort than he had known it by observation of the ways of others, the utter weakness and unprofitableness of the flesh. He was to make in his own person the most convincing discovery of the hopeless evil and vanity of the creature. There was found no vigour, to rid Jehovah's city and land from the power of evil, in the hand of one who, in the very noontide of his kingly glory, was to become the chief example of transgression in his realm. Deeply interesting, indeed, in all its parts, is the personal history of the son of Jesse to one who, as a child of electing mercy, is being daily taught what it means to be "kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation."⁸ The dying strains of the sweet Psalmist of Israel are full of richest instruction in connection with this subject. "Not so with my house," is the truthful acknowledgment which, while it abases the

⁸ 1 Peter i. 5.

creature as a worthless and unprofitable thing, makes way for the mention of that other house which, because established in righteousness upon the sure foundation, abides for ever in the light and favour of the God of truth.⁴

Let us now for a moment regard this Psalm in its second and principal sense, as a song of Messiah, the true David; set up from everlasting as the Branch of promise, the covenant King and Shepherd of His people.⁵ Thus considered it presents us with a speaking portrait of the true Anointed of the God of Israel. Himself the Root as well as offspring of David, He is also the royal Dispenser of perfect equity as the appointed Governor of the nations. Mercy and judgment form unitedly the burden of Messiah's song. For it is to Jehovah that He sings (verse 1), whose ways will be purely and faithfully reflected in the administration of His King.

Two principal attributes of Messiah's dominion are here displayed. First, His faithful rule as the Anointed of Jehovah—cutting off evil-doers from the *city of the Lord* (verse 8)—exercising kingly power, not in His own name, but as the Messenger of Jehovah's covenant. He appears, secondly (verse 2), as the Director in holiness of *His own house* (now His in possession, the enemy having been thrust out) according to the will of God⁶—ruling that house for Him—glorying in God, as His anointed King, in the exercise of His royal dominion, even as He had glorified Him in suffering obedience in the days of His flesh. His eyes will be upon the faithful in the *land*, that despised remnant, hated for His name's sake, to whose joy

⁴ 2 Sam. xxiii.

⁵ Jer. xxiii. 3, 6; Isaiah xi. 1-7.

⁶ With respect to the Church, as the Son's house in the present dispensation, see *Notes on the Hebrews*, chaps. iii. iv.

He will appear, and whom He will take to be His people, surrounding Himself with them in the day of His power.⁷

The expression in verse 2, "O when wilt Thou come unto me," I feel to be of difficult interpretation. It may refer to the yet future expectation of Jesus, as the holder of a limited term of royal dominion, a kingdom which is to be rendered up at its appointed close to the Father;⁸ for millennial glory does not fill to the full the measure of Messiah's joy. When that has ceased, there will remain the post-dispensational and eternal display of the Divine fulness, to be ministered and enjoyed in the *new* heavens and the *new* earth, through the never-ending mediatorial glory of Christ. But with respect to the above expression, I do not feel that I have any sure apprehension of its meaning.⁹

PSALM CII.

THE title of this wonderful Psalm should not be disregarded. Messiah's affliction is its main burden. But in none of the varied presentations of the Man of sorrows and His voluntary afflictions, with which the Psalms abound, does the Holy Ghost unfold more distinctly, and with more perfect sublimity of expression, the Divine majesty of His

⁷ There is room for an application of verse 6 to the Church generally (John xii. 26), as the waiting companion of the Lord's patience, and the assured sharer of His kingdom (2 Tim. ii. 12; Rev. i. 9); or more especially to the promise of Jesus to the twelve. (Matt. xix. 28.) It seems, however, to point more naturally to those whose faithfulness will have been so severely tested during the matchless tribulation of the last hour of the Beast's dominion. (Matt. xxiv. 21, 22.)

⁸ 1 Cor. xv. 24.

⁹ Possibly, it may merely indicate the time of the entire Psalm, as an anticipative utterance of the Spirit of prophecy, while Jesus yet remains at God's right hand, the long expectant Heir of a dominion, the time of whose manifestation has not yet come. (Ps. cx.; Dan. vii. 13, 14.)

Person, who tasted thus for our sakes the low extreme of human sorrow and distress.

It is the Ancient of days—the eternal God—the Layer of the old foundations of the earth (verses 24, 25), whose grief finds utterance in the earlier verses of this Psalm. It is a truly wonderful disclosure of the mystery of godliness that is here made. A *perfect* appreciation of the doctrine of this Psalm is impossible to those whose knowledge is as yet but in part; while it is the very marrow of Divine nurture to the growing soul. For it is by means of such testimonies that the child of God is enabled to draw into his heart's secret the gracious sweetness of that full joy¹ which is ministered by the Holy Ghost to those who by faith behold the manner and greatness of the love of God in Christ.

If we look at the Psalm before us with a general reference to its contents, we perceive immediately that it is of manifestly Jewish cast. In this consists its characteristic beauty and power. For it is in the intercessory cry of the rejected Son of God for Jerusalem—still making mention of Zion as the object of His heart's desire, though it was there that His enemies had hated Him to madness with a causeless enmity, and had laid deep counsel to destroy His life (verse 8),—that we learn to estimate aright the nature of that grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ.

Zion would none of Him in the day when, as the messenger of the covenant, He called, but there was none to answer,—when He came as to His own, but there was none to receive Him save they to whom, not flesh and blood, but the power of the Father had revealed the secret of His person.² Yet, though Israel were not gathered, the

¹ 1 John i. 4.

² Isaiah l.; John i.

love of Messiah for His own fainted not, although His labour seemed to be in vain. There is a *set time* (verse 13) for Zion's mercy to arrive. Although by reason of her wickedness the once honoured city of solemnities must know the bitter desolateness of Divine repudiation, yet He who has smitten her in a little wrath will restore to her in her latter end both health and cure.³ Mercy will prevail, and will rejoice against judgment, when the victory of faithful promise brings back, in the strong and never-turning flood of Divine righteousness, the full tide of Jehovah's favour upon the people and city of His choice.

It is not, then, the personal experience of Jesus in the flesh that forms the exclusive subject of this Psalm, although in this surely consists its deepest interest for the believer; it may be regarded as expressing likewise the intercessory action of the Spirit of Christ on behalf of the believing remnant of Israel, when, on the eve of the Deliverer's advent,⁴ they will pour out, under the overwhelming pressure of their affliction, their deep yet hopeful complaint before the presence of Jehovah.⁵ Verses 13-17 appear more especially to respect this remnant.

In the earlier verses (1-11) we have a recital of the matchless sorrow of Jesus Himself, as the gracious and patient sustainer of the allotted burden of His affliction for His people's sake.⁶ Suffering according to the will of God, He pours out His supplication to Him who alone could understand His grief, whose counsel and whose word had both lifted Him up and cast Him down (verse 10). The Father had uplifted Jesus. He had placed on Him in whom men saw only one of themselves the acknowledgment of Divine Sonship,⁷ after having announced Him before His

³ Isaiah liv. 8.

⁴ Isaiah lix. 20; Rom. xi. 26.

⁵ Comp. the title of the Psalm.

⁶ Luke xxiv. 26.

⁷ Matt. iii. 17.

human birth, and in the cradle of His infancy, to be the Messiah of glory—the royal Seed of promise. But He had cast Him down as the obedient vessel of His will into the low depths of suffering and shame, permitting thus the partner of His glory to sit in the lonely vigil (verse 7) of an incommunicable sorrow, while fear and hatred compassed Him on every side (verse 8). The light of life must needs be quenched (for ever as they hoped who thought *their* hand alone had smitten Him, who said He was the Son of God)⁸ in the grave of the rejected of men, that in Him and upon Him might be perfectly fulfilled the counsel of Divine judgment upon sin. Indignation and wrath (verse 10) must be the tasted portion of Messiah's cup, when as His people's substitute He undertook the fearful burden of their guilt.⁹

Verses 11, 12 set in striking and affecting contrast the personal experience of Christ, made willingly subject to vanity,—fast ripening in His daily sufferance for the appointed hour for which He had come into the world,—to the enduring and changeless majesty of Him, with whom the unrequited work of Messiah's patience was laid up, to be openly rewarded in due time.¹

⁸ Matt. xxvi. 66; xxviii. 62-64.

⁹ The tenth verse is capable, together with its context, of application to the afflicted nation. Israel had known the extremes, both of exaltation and of depression, at the hand of Jehovah, in the vicissitudes of the national history. I prefer, however, to regard the whole of this passage as an immediate expression of Messiah's suffering experience, whilst enduring the contradiction of sinners against Himself, and in present anticipation of the cross. I hope that it is not necessary to add that I reject as utterly unsound the inference drawn by some from this and other kindred expressions in the Psalm, that God's hand was laid "in governmental wrath" upon His Christ anterior to, and irrespective of, the great work of atonement for which He had come into the world.

¹ Isaiah xlix. 4, 5.

At verse 13, the Spirit of prophecy turns more immediately to speak of Zion as the object of the unrepented promises of God. The longing desire of the faithful remnant—when, in the latter day, the hearts of those who fear Jehovah's name will yearn towards the holy places where their fathers praised, and where, in the spirit of faith, they surely know that thanksgiving and melody will again resound to the glory of that name—is touchingly expressed (verse 14).²

It was time for Him to arise. For it was through Zion's mercy alone that His name could be known and feared by the kings and nations of the earth (verses 13-15). The promise of deliverance had been made of old. And faith found in the word of promise material for prayer which God would not despise (verse 17), though it might come forth from suppliant who spake low as from the very dust. The answer to their cry should be His epiphany in glory (verse 16). He would thus appear as the builder of Zion—the repairer of her cureless breach,—when, in the person of the once despised and dishonoured Jesus, they would recognize the Divine Redeemer of His people,³ the Holy One of Israel their King.⁴

The eighteenth verse is remarkable, and has an obvious application to the Church of God.⁵ Its proper interpretation, however, respects, I doubt not, Israel in the times of restitution, when the nation shall be regenerate to a man;⁶ their iniquities being turned to everlasting righteousness through their confession of the Lamb of God.

Verse 22, if read in immediate connexion with those

² Compare Isaiah lxiv.

³ John xi. 51.

⁴ The concluding chapters of Isaiah (lxii.-lxvi.) are worthy of attentive study in connexion with the prophetic language of this Psalm.

⁵ Compare Matt. xi. 43.

⁶ Isaiah liv. 13; lx. 21.

which precede, would seem to refer to the destruction of the hostile powers of wickedness by which Jerusalem will be found beleaguered when the Lord shall go forth to the battle, for His name's sake, as the deliverer of Israel.⁷ It may, however, be construed in a larger sense, with reference to the season of millennial blessing, when the nations shall flow together with gladness to the mountain of Jehovah's house.⁸

In verses 23, 24, the voice of Messiah is again heard, as He addresses Himself, with perfect self-surrender to His will, in mournful supplication to the God of His life.⁹ It was He who weakened the strength of Jesus in the way. His counsel it was that made the short span of His earthly days to be a fearful looking for of that dread hour which was to close the term of His appointed sorrow. But, instantly, the Spirit's note is changed.¹ The answer of the Father is returned while yet the sufferer speaks, asserting endless perpetuity of days for Him who had just preferred His prayer to God as one void of all strength—a prisoner of death according to the good pleasure of His will. On this wonderful passage, in which the Divine pre-eminence² of the self-devoted victim of death is so strikingly affirmed, I have elsewhere written more at length,³ and will not further dwell at present.

The closing verse applies, in its moral force, both to the Church and to the regenerate nation. All who are

⁷ Zech. xiv.

⁸ Micah iv. 1, 2; Psalm cxxxviii. 4, 5.

⁹ Compare Heb. v. 7.

¹ The response from the excellent glory (2 Peter i. 17) appears to begin at the latter clause of verse 24: "Thy years are throughout all generations," &c. It is noticeable that the apostle, in writing to Hebrews, renders the next verse (after the LXX.): *Σὺ κατ' ἀρχὰς Κύριε. κ. λ.*, although no equivalent for the last word is found in the Hebrew text.

² Col. i. 15-18.

³ *Notes on the Hebrews*, chap. i.

partakers at any time of saving grace, through the knowledge of the Son of God, are pictured here; but it is to ransomed Israel that these words seem chiefly to relate.⁴

PSALM CIII.

A SONG of the once-wearied soul, when satiated¹ and replenished with the fulness of effectual grace. It is truly a Christian song, for its burden is Christ. Very precious to the heart that has needed and has found in Jesus the deep realities of Divine mercy, is the language of this beautiful Psalm.

Specifically, it is the memorial, not of the Church, but of the Israel of God;² who will thus ascribe, in the day

⁴ Compare Psalm lxi. 36.

¹ Jer. xxxi. 25.

² On this expression I would add a remark. By the majority of Christians it is supposed to refer, in the only passage in which it is found (Gal. vi. 16) to the *Church*,—inaccurately as I judge. In the body of his Epistle, he had been labouring to deliver the Galatian saints from the deadly snare of legal pretension, which threatened the destruction of their faith. At the close of his exhortation, he again returns in strong and pointed language to the same subject. (vi. 12-15.) Having defined in his own person the proper lineaments of a believer as a man *in Christ*, he adds the benediction: “and as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy.” And then, with reference to that error which had, by confounding Israel with the Church, exposed them in their ignorance to the devices of the deceiver, he continues: “and upon the Israel of God.” God has an Israel, whose destined portion, though long delayed, is peace and mercy. How real an object of the apostle’s interest this Israel was, we learn from his language in another Epistle. (Rom. ix.-xi.) Whilst, therefore, he defends, with watchful jealousy, the simplicity of Christ, he can rest with prophetic anticipation in the reserved but most sure mercy of the nation for which Christ died.

I would not have the reader suppose that I am objecting, in this note, to a figurative use of the expression “Israel of God,” and its consequent application to the Church. As the leading events in the history of the

of light and of Divine pacification,³ the glory of their redemption to the covenant God of their mercy. Praise will flow freely from those inward parts where only vanity and wickedness had once been found;⁴ but in which Jesus, the living truth, will then be known.⁵

Verses 3-5 involve, not only the spiritual enjoyment of forgiveness, but also the fullest realization of all the outward blessings of Divine goodness. The conditional statute which the Lord appointed⁶ when He brought their fathers out of Egypt, will have been superseded by the abiding ordinance of life and righteousness in Christ. The varied forms of sore disease, which had stamped upon the unregenerate nation the memorial of their unfaithfulness, will be removed from the people whose acceptable standing will be in the new covenant of the blood of Christ. Israel will be blessed in Immanuel with all *temporal* as well as spiritual blessings, in the *land* whose iniquity shall be removed in one day.⁷ The faded flower of Ephraim's beauty will be as a lily of fragrant purity beneath the lasting dew of grace.⁸ The grey hairs of dishonour, which were upon him when he stooped beneath the shameful burden of his sins,⁹ shall be forgotten at the coming hour in which the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found.¹

natural Israel are plainly typical of things now realized by the believer (1 Cor. x.), so the descriptive name of one may be, and sometimes is, applied to the other. (Compare 1 Peter ii. 9, with Exodus xix. 6.) The Church is now the true "circumcision." (Phil. iii. 3.) All I desire is, that we should escape the danger of forgetting that God *has* a nation whose destinies of blessing are broadly distinguished in His word from those of the Church. To confound these things would be to become wise in our own conceits. (Rom. xi. 25.)

³ Ezek. xvi. 63.

⁴ Isaiah lix. 7.

⁵ Psalm li. 6.

⁶ Exod. xv. 25, 26.

⁷ Zech. iii. 9, 10.

⁸ Hosea xiv.

⁹ Hosea vii. 9.

¹ Jer. l. 20.

For the virgin of Israel shall again be adorned with her timbrels, and shall go forth in the dance with them that make merry,² in the day when Ephraim's watchman shall cry, "Arise ye, and let us go up to *Zion*, unto Jehovah our God!"

Verses 6-13 set forth the perfectness of the Divine character as it had exemplified itself in the general dealings of Jehovah with His people. His *acts* had been done before the eyes of the fathers; but to Moses only had the secret of His *ways* been shown³ (verse 7). And now the regenerate nation, standing in the accomplished results of those ways, are quick to discern, and eager to celebrate with heartfelt praise, those counsels of wisdom and mercy which had reached their end in the effectual saving of the chosen people of His name.⁴ In verse 10 we find a climax of touching power, well understood by the soul that has been taught Divinely the meaning of the cross as the true exponent of the grace of God. "He hath not dealt *with us* after our sins," &c. In verse 8 the general statement had been made: "Jehovah is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and great of mercy."⁵ One of the mightiest monuments of this great mercy will be reared in the restitution of the self-destroyed nation to more than its pristine blessing, through the blood of the everlasting covenant. He had not dealt with them after their sins, for in requital of their hatred, He had commended to them His priceless love. In Him, whom the nation abhorred, He had found the effectual bearer of the nation's guilt.⁶ This will be seen and acknowledged by the no longer blinded Israel, when they learn at once the true nature and extent of their sin, and the excelling measure of Jehovah's grace, in the

² Jer. xxxi. 4.

³ Compare Num. xii. 7, 8.

⁴ Rom. xi. 26.

⁵ Margin.

⁶ Isaiah liii. *passim*.

manifestation of the once rejected Jesus as the living truth of their salvation.

Verses 14–18 bring into contrast the vanity of the creature and the enduring glory of Jehovah. But it is His mercy and His righteousness that thus endure. And they who mark this contrast already stand securely based in Christ on that abiding Rock of ages. The *everlasting* mercies of Jehovah are firmly bound to them and to their heirs by the perpetual covenant of grace. Hence the diminishing of the creature does but exalt and magnify the true security and blessedness of them whose knowledge of God is according to the faith of His elect. It is, indeed, a specification of Israel's covenanted hope that the people of Jehovah's choice shall long enjoy on earth the work of their own hands—that their days shall be as the age of a tree in the times of the Lord's refreshing, when He will rejoice over them, to bless them and to do them good, in the allotted land of their inheritance.⁷ But the Spirit of God, while exciting in a believer expectations according to the specialties of declared promise, always leads the soul for its ultimate rest to *God as the raiser of the dead*. Hence, resurrection, even where not expressed, is always implied in this and similar strains of new covenant praise. For the ETERNAL GOD is the refuge of His saints. He is their shield, and their exceeding great reward.⁸

The concluding verses indicate that heavenly rule⁹ in the manifestation of which the blessing of Israel and the joy of creation can alone be eventually realized. The pervading dominion of Jehovah will be held, in the tenure of the new title of redemption, by the Lord of peace Himself. JESUS will reign. The hearts of His people,

⁷ Isaiah lxxv. 21–23; Jer. xxxii. 41. ⁸ Deut. xxxiii. 27; Gen. xv. 1.

⁹ Dan. vii. 9–14; Heb. i. 6.

touched effectually by the quickening Spirit of grace, desire an acclamation of universal praise. For He is worthy. But, as the believer well knows, the beginning and the strength of *perfect* praise are evermore in the heart of the conscious receiver of *grace*. Angels may praise, and so may all the multitudinous creatures of Divine power. They *will* praise to the utmost limit of their being. Now worship is rendered adequately, according to the intelligent nearness in which the creature stands to God as the known fountain of blessing, and with reference to the kind and measure of the favour thus enjoyed. But what manner of blessing can compare with that which grace bestows on the redeemed? God's richest and unending praises can be sung only in the glory of His presence by the vessels of His own electing love. And again, which of those who have washed their garments in the blood of the Lamb, when pondering his hope as an heir of salvation, would fail to claim for himself a title of pre-eminence in uttering the praises of One who had not dealt with *him* according to his sins? And so this lovely Psalm concludes as it began, with "Bless Jehovah, O *my* soul!"

PSALM CIV.

THE strain of blessing is continued¹ in this truly magnificent Psalm; in which the glory of Jehovah, as the creator and possessor of heaven and earth, is celebrated by one whose ability to estimate and adore the displayed wonders

¹ There is no title to this Psalm. Opening as it does with a repetition of the closing words of the one preceding, it is evidently to be regarded in close connexion with it. The grace and power of Christ, in reigning majesty, form the continuous subject of both Psalms.

of the Divine majesty consists in his heart-knowledge of the God of His praise (verses 33, 34). Gladness in the *Lord Himself* alone qualifies a believer for the true enjoyment of His *works*. It is the proper majesty and glory of Christ² that the Spirit of promise is declaring in this Psalm, which is a most beautiful description of the harmonious blessing of creation, as sustained in power by the God of the whole earth. It presents a view of millennial peace and order, so far as it respects the outward material creation. "The earth is satisfied with the fruit of thy works" (verse 13). A very obvious relation thus subsists between this and the preceding Psalm.

Man, instigated by Satan, has hitherto corrupted the earth. The creature has been worshipped more than the Creator. Not until Satan is bound will men consent to view the works of their own hands (verse 26), as well as the great lineaments of external nature, and the accessible secrets of her wealth, with willing reference to the alone Possessor of wisdom and power. The natural tendency of merely intellectual progress is precisely opposite to this. Meanwhile the child of God, who is walking in the Spirit, sees outward objects with the eyes of Him who saw the Father in His outward works,³ and who alone fulfilled His chosen place and calling as *Man*, by perfectly glorifying God in an absolute subjection to His will.

It is needless to dwell in detail upon the varied beauties with which this Psalm abounds. They will commend themselves to every thoughtful reader. With respect to verse 35, it does not appear to refer to any particular catastrophe,—such as the destruction of Messiah's enemies, who are found embattled against His name and title at His

² Col. i. 16.

³ Matt. vi. 28, 29.

second advent,—but rather to the eventual eradication of every evil thing from the wide sphere of His dominion. “For He must reign until He hath put *all* enemies under His feet.”⁴

PSALM CV.

THIS is most plainly a millennial Psalm. The judgments of Jehovah, of which the waiting spirit of prophetic desire had so long testified,¹ as the solemn preparative for the world's instruction in righteousness, have been fulfilled (verse 7). He has made Himself manifest as the God of Israel's mercy. The people, therefore, are summoned as the elect seed of blessing² (verse 6), first to render the calves of their own lips to Jehovah—glorying with understanding in His holy name (verse 3),—and secondly, to publish His deeds among the nations, who then will be in readiness to share the gladness of His chosen.³

Jehovah, as the fulfiller in sovereign power and in faithful mercy of the recorded covenant of promise, is the subject of this Psalm. The face of Jacob, now shining in the light of the Lord's joy, is turned towards the Gentiles to declare to them Jehovah's wondrous acts; that at the hearing of this report they might themselves draw nigh and put their trust beneath the shadow of that strength which had carried Israel safely from the cradle of Abrahamic promise, through all the strange vicissitudes of intervening circumstance, into the full blessings of accomplished promise in Immanuel's land.⁴ With thirsting ears the tribes of the wide earth will listen to the joyful sound.

⁴ 1 Cor. xv. 25.

¹ Isaiah xxvi. 9.

² Isaiah lxi. 9.

³ Deut. xxxii. 43.

⁴ Isaiah lxi. 7.

Nations will flow with willing haste, in that day, to the mountain of Jehovah's holiness and grace.⁵

It will be remarked that the recital of the national history which this Psalm contains is not extended beyond the original entrance of the people into Canaan. Moreover, there is no allusion made to national failure of any kind. The ancient judgments upon Egypt are rehearsed. For it is the action of God for *His own name*, and for the people of that name, that is here celebrated by the Spirit. On the other hand, no mention is made of the patriarchal envy which made Joseph a bondman in a foreign land. The overruling sovereignty of God is alone kept in view: "*He sent a man before them, even Joseph,*" &c. (verse 17.) The subject of the Psalm is not the people and their ways, but the triumphant victory of mercy, according to the truth and omnipotent ability of Israel's covenant God. The gift of Canaan had been from of old the promised recompence of patriarchal faith (verse 11). By Joshua's hand, the hereditary claimants of that promise assumed possession of the inheritance, from whence their descendants were again to be expelled by reason of the evil of their ways. But Israel's tenure of that land was by an *everlasting* covenant (verse 10). Legal condition might frustrate for a season the enjoyment of the promised blessing, but it could not extinguish hope in the heart of faith. And that hope has now been realized. As Jehovah once had wrought, when with strength of hand He set the seed of Abraham free from their oppressors, and planted them in Canaan (though He strewed, in righteous judgment, the carcasses of the unbelieving generation in the wilderness), according to His word, so had He a second time put forth His hand to gather, with a yet mightier

⁵ Zech. viii. 20-23; Micah iv. 1, 2.

deliverance, the outcasts of His people into the appointed dwelling-places of their rest.⁶ The will of God prevailed to bring the tribes of provocation into the promised land, though only to be again ejected from it by a righteous retribution on their sins. The same will had now effected, in entire holiness while in perfect grace, the permanent settlement of Jacob in the lot of his inheritance (verse 11).

The present Psalm possesses thus, not only a wonderful beauty, when considered in its direct bearing upon Israel, as its primary subject, but is of rich practical comfort to the believer now, as an exemplification of the perfect way of the God with whom he has to do. God is at the bottom of everything. *He works*, and the fruit of His labour is the blessing of His own. If evil must be mentioned in the truthful record of their ways, yet it is He who is around, and above, and beneath it *all*. He saves *by power* the people whom He has created for Himself *in grace*. Egypt is but a fitted vessel and implement of His designs towards *His own name*, as the portion of His chosen people.⁷

We have, moreover, in this Psalm a full expression of the highest order of *worship*. It is an unqualified memorial of the prosperity of Jehovah's way, as the God who worketh all things according to the good pleasure of His will. It is a song "to the praise of His *glory*," absolutely. Grace is indeed the medium through which that glory shines, as it respects the delighted ministers of His praise; but the prominent theme of the Spirit's celebration is the exceeding greatness of His *power* whose counsels from of old are faithfulness and truth.⁸ It is a worship offered by a seed who will be able to review with joyful and wise-

⁶ Isaiah xliii. 3-6; Jer. xxxi. 10-12.

⁷ Rom. ix.

⁸ Isaiah xxv.

hearted wonder and admiration the perfection of that way which their fathers knew not, but which their feet will have entered as the way of peace, in the knowledge of Jesus as the covenant of the people, as well as the light of the Gentiles.⁹

The moral bearing of this memorial of Jehovah's faithfulness upon the Church is as important as it is clear; for it brings to the believer the full power of that comfort which is secured to him in his covenant knowledge of the God of *peace*.¹ He whom we call on as the Father² is the bringer of His people to their rest. Faith draws within the circle of her actual experience the fidelity of God in the discharge of His own covenanted promises in Christ. The believer's conscious impotency is sheltered in the Fortress of his trust. The force of the concluding verse should not be overlooked. The end of grace is *holiness*; we are redeemed to *God*, to be the keepers of His way for ever.³ Israel will acknowledge this in the day when the law shall have been graven indelibly upon their hearts by the power of the Holy Ghost.⁴ It is the blessing and honour of the Christian to confess it now.

PSALM CVI.

THE present Psalm offers in some of its characteristic features a striking contrast to the last. They stand, however, in a very close moral relation to each other. Both are alike the utterance of the Spirit of prophecy, whose

⁹ Isaiah xlii. 6; xlix. 8. וְאַתְּנָה לְבְרִית עִם לְאוּר נְוִים where the distinction between the fulfilment of covenanted truth to Israel, and the gracious illumination of Gentile darkness is clearly maintained. (Compare Rom. xv. 8, 9.)

¹ Heb. xiii. 20.

² 1 Cor. viii. 6; 1 Peter i. 17.

³ Rom. vi. *passim*.

⁴ Jer. xxxi. 33, 34.

constant theme of celebration is Jehovah's praise (verse 1); but with an ever-varying expression, according to the point of observation from whence the excellency of His work is presented to His people's view.

There are two points in which the Psalm before us principally differs from the last. First, the people are regarded as still *in a state of dispersion* (verse 47). Secondly, it is a memorial, not of power absolutely, as in the former Psalm, but of *grace* and *judgment*, as they had alternated in the past history of the nation, according to the recorded process of Jehovah's dealings as the just Saviour of His people. This process, while it left not their iniquities unpunished, yet tended always to the ultimate establishment of the *mercy* whereby the good of His chosen would be surely effected in His time¹ (verses 4, 5).

We listen here anticipatively to that wise and hopeful confession to which the Spirit of grace will move Israel's remnant in the latter day. They recount as their own sin the past failure of the nation. But they discern distinctly, amid their confusion of faces, the coming joy and triumph of that final deliverance, in the accomplishing of which the Lord God of Israel will find His perfect and enduring praise (verse 48); when all Israel shall have been brought within the covenant of grace.²

The abiding character of Jehovah, as the God that delighteth in mercy,³ is the ground upon which are displayed the riches of the Divine wisdom in His dealings with the rebellious and stiffnecked people. All their sin had but commended His righteousness and the faithfulness of His truth, as the gracious and all-wise framer of the covenant of national mercy. That He is good, and that His mercy endureth for ever, is the lasting burden of ransomed Israel's

¹ Isaiah lx. 21, 22.

² Isaiah xlv. 17.

³ Micah vii. 18.

worship. Mercy had dictated all those mighty acts which passed the utterance of human praise (verses 1, 2). But the national retrospect was of grace and goodness perpetually *abused*, under all their varied manifestations, by the people who never *understood* Jehovah's wonders, from Egypt to the last dispersion of His wrath.⁴ Yet the blessing of the nation was founded in promise upon the *name* of God.⁵ He would act, therefore, in the eventual accomplishment of Israel's destiny, with a paramount reference to Himself and His own counsel. Meanwhile His judgments intervened, and often fell with heavy stroke upon a generation which *waited not* for His counsel. Fleshly impatience, the natural associate of unbelief, was ready always to assert itself, and had a counsel of its own which Israel followed willingly in unworthy forgetfulness and contradiction of the Rock who had begotten them. And so, because the nation was *economically* under law and not under grace, judgment prevailed in righteous visitation of their sin. God *acted* against them for the time present, though a sure end of unrepentant mercy remained settled in the tranquil depths of His unaltered mind. He knew the thoughts that He thought towards them,⁶ and His word should be established in His time.

It is to be noticed that the order in which the national transgressions are here recited is not chronological. It is not an historical detail of the evil that is presented, but a general summary, in which particular instances are so placed as to set in clear and striking view the unity and fatal consistency of the national conduct, as contrasted with the right ways of the Lord. They had sinned with their fathers—they had committed iniquity—they had done wickedly (verse 6). Such had been the mournful

⁴ 1 Thess. ii. 16.⁵ Exod. vi. 3, 4.⁶ Jer. xxix. 11.

uniformity of the nation's way. In Egypt and at the Red Sea, in the wilderness and in the land, while in captivity and when visited again with delivering mercies, the story of Israel had been a memorial of ceaseless and inexcusable offence.

All these things will be fully recognized in the hearts of those who set themselves in the latter day to seek Jehovah's face. Truth will be found upon their lips. Instead of going about to establish their own righteousness, perversely boasting in the very law of their condemnation,⁷ saying within themselves, "We have Abraham to our father,"⁸ and vainly confiding in the name and outward standing of Jehovah's people, they will own that name in suppliant confession of their sin. They will call upon the Lord their God to gather them again (verse 47), in the thorough acknowledgment of His hand in their dispersion. They will await in hope, as prisoners of hope, the fulfilment of that covenanted mercy which should set them before His presence in true, and happy, and enduring praise and worship. Nor will He on whom they call be heedless of their prayer. He will be *very gracious* at the voice of that cry; when He shall hear it, He will surely answer it.⁹ And thus the closing verse of this remarkable Psalm is an anticipative melody of the liberated nation's praise: "Blessed be Jehovah, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting; and let *all the people*¹ say, Amen!"

It is well to remember, while pondering this and similar passages of Scripture, in which the ways of Israel after the flesh are traced by the Spirit of God, that it is for *our* instruction that these things have been written. Very searching, and very full of comfort also, is the memorial of

⁷ Rom. ii.

⁸ Luke iii. 8.

⁹ Isaiah xxx. 19.

¹ כָּל־הָעַם Not the Gentiles, but all *Israel*. (Compare Rom. xi. 26.)

grace and judgment which this Psalm contains to the wise-hearted believer. Such testimonies are profitable in a high degree as practical aids to self-judgment before God. But fearfully solemn is the consideration, that the picture of human evil which is here presented is to have (and, alas ! has long had in principle, though the measure of its fulness be not yet attained) its moral counterpart of yet more exceeding pravity in that system of iniquity which has for so long been growing onward to its measured term ;² which, beginning in the early corruption of the Gospel of God, produces, as its resulting effects on human conduct, the way of Cain, the error of Balaam, and the gainsaying of Core ;³ in whose latter end there is found no hope, and the catastrophe of whose judgment is the divinely-shown condition of Israel's returning mercy.⁴

² 2 Thess. ii.

³ Jude 11.

⁴ Rom. xi. 22-25.

Book V.

PSALM CVII.

THE subject of this beautiful and solemn Psalm is the order of God's moral government with reference to His redeemed people. That government is perceived to have as its basis, and to be directed in its administration, by the immutable holiness of God, while it conducts the objects of His gracious choice along the prepared ways of effectual mercy, through processes of disciplinary trial which never alter, though they may seem to retard in their ultimate development, the perfect counsels of omnipotent and faithful grace.

It possesses, therefore, for the Christian a peculiar value in its practical application to his ways as a pilgrim of redemption, whose days of temporal sojourn should be passed in learning more perfectly the manner of the God with whom he has to do. To such its closing verse addresses itself with richly persuasive meaning and encouragement.

But in its natural interpretation it refers undoubtedly to Israel, when finally gathered from the lands of their dispersion (verses 2, 3), and taught to judge wisely (because then the Spirit of wisdom will have superseded in their hearts the spirit of delusion) the right ways of

Jehovah,¹ and to speak His praise who has redeemed them permanently from the hand of the enemy.² It stands thus as a counterpart and prophetic response to the preceding Psalm. The cry there sent up (verse 47) for the deliverance and re-assembling of the nation has now been heard and answered.

To ransomed Israel it will belong, not only to celebrate the special manifestations of Divine grace and power, which have been unfolded historically in Jehovah's dealings with that nation, but also to become the world's instructors in the ways of Him whose goodness, though so easily despised,³ and whose wonders are towards the *sons of men*—towards man, that is, as such. As priests of knowledge, Israel's lips will both keep and freely dispense the doctrines of sound wisdom among the then willing nations of the earth.⁴ The reign of Jesus will be a partial fulfilment of that time of earthly blessedness, in delighted anticipation of which the heavenly multitude uttered their loud praises at the incarnation of the Son of God. "Peace *on earth* and satisfaction (or complacency) *in men*,"⁵ was the greeting then vouchsafed from heaven at the birth of Him whose title was to sit on David's throne, and to wield the sceptre of righteousness over the ends of the earth. "Think not that I am come to send peace on the earth; I am not come to send peace but a sword,"⁶ is the warning of the *rejected* Son of man, addressed to those who looked for an immediate advent of earth's promised time

¹ Hosea xiv. 9.

² Jer. xxix. 14; Isaiah xliii. 5, 6.

³ Rom. ii.

⁴ Isaiah lxi. 6.

⁵ *ἐν ἀνθρώποις εὐδοκία*, Luke ii. 14. I have called the millennial reign a *partial* fulfilment of the angelic anticipation, because its terms will be completely satisfied only in the new creation, when God's tabernacle will be everlastingly *with men*. (Rev. xxi. 1-3; 2 Peter iii. 10-13.)

⁶ Matt. x. 34.

of rest. "Through much tribulation we must enter the kingdom of God;" "We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter," &c., are testimonies of the Comforter who leads, as the Spirit of truth, the partakers of the *heavenly* calling into the bright pastures of their portion in the hidden Christ.⁷ The riches of Divine goodness, which now in the gospel are discerned and accepted only by the willing few whom God has quickened out of spiritual death, as a kind of first-fruits of His creatures,⁸ will be the object of the eager search of many *nations* in the day when the height of Zion is again acknowledged as the dwelling of Jehovah, and the mountain of His house is desired among men as the open fountain of light and blessing to the world.⁹ And thus will Israel be found to be the capable expounder of Jehovah's way. The nation, whose strange beginning and eventful course has been crowned with a yet more wondrous end, will be able, with ripe experience of the ways of God, to rehearse the rich memorial of His goodness in all its marvellous variety of praise.

The structure of the Psalm is peculiar and highly interesting. From verse 4 there commences a recital which, with few historial details, seems to take morally a retrospective survey of Jehovah's dealings with the nation from the days of Egypt. This recital is four times interrupted by a brief refrain of praise, expressed in two verses,¹ the second of which contains some new and special argument of worship derived from the preceding division of the song. Varied features of the wisdom and goodness of the Lord are thus successively extolled.

Without insisting on an exclusive application of this Psalm to Israel, there may be traced, I think, not indis-

⁷ Col. iii. 1, 2. ⁸ James i. 18. ⁹ Micah iv. 1, 2; Zech. viii. 21-23.

¹ *Viz.*, verses 8, 9, 15, 16, 21, 22, and 31, 32.

tinctly the leading incidents of the nation's changeful experience in the descriptive language of the narrative part.

In verses 4-7, the story of the wilderness is briefly told, to the praise of the glory of His grace who satisfieth the longing soul and filleth the hungry soul with goodness.

The strong discipline of national affliction which visited the rebellious house, until the turning again of their captivity, when the appointed term of Babylonish exile was accomplished, appears to form the historical groundwork of verses 10-16; but in its prophetic intention this passage would demand a far wider interpretation. The resuscitation of Israel, both spiritually and politically, would alone adequately fulfil these words.²

The sufferings of the "foolish nation"³ when, filled with Jehovah's indignation, they find a snare in that which should have fed them,⁴ and pine beneath the pressure of a more grievous famine than that of bread,⁵ until, in answer to their cry of sorrow, the word of saving health is sent them from above,⁶ seem to be indicated in the next division (verses 17-20). The language of verse 22 is in agreement with this. They who had vainly gone about to establish their own righteousness are called on now to offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving,⁷ and to declare *His* works with singing.

Besides the obvious force and beauty of the following verses (23-30) in their simple meaning and their general application, we have, I believe, a figure of Jacob's restless

² Ezek. xxxvii.; Isaiah. xxvi. 19. In the song of Zecharias, where the immediate fulfilment of the nation's Messianic hope is the subject, we find language applied to Israel very similar to what is contained in verses 10-14 of the present Psalm. (Luke i. 79.)

³ Deut. xxxii. 6.

⁴ Rom. xi 9, 10.

⁵ Amos viii. 11-13.

⁶ Deut. xxx.; compare Rom. x.

⁷ Heb. xiii. 15.

trouble when, like a vexed and frightened mariner, he wandered up and down the wide sea⁸ of nations without ease,⁹ a friendless pilgrim of the Lord's displeasure, until the long-desired rest was gained at last, under the faithful guidance of Him who seeks His people in the dark and cloudy day.¹ Accordingly we find in the hortatory remembrancer of praise which follows (verse 32), a mention of the gathered people² and their elders, who are now called on to celebrate, in the quiet resting-places of Immanuel's land, His faithful goodness and His might who had turned their long-endured tempest of affliction to the calm sunshine of perpetual peace.³

The remainder of this Psalm is of a more general import; though it is in Israel, nevertheless, that the most instructive exemplification of the aphorisms of Divine economy which the Spirit here recounts has been and will again be found. In verses 40, 41 we seem to have a contrast of the self-righteous boasting of those who magnified themselves, and were haughty because of the holy mountain—feasting on beds of ivory, but wholly strangers to the grief of Joseph⁴—with the poor of the flock, whom Israel's Shepherd would feed in secret places until the time should come for openly assembling them, with fruitful increase, as the beautiful flock of His abiding praise.⁵

“The righteous shall see this and rejoice, and all iniquity shall stop her mouth” (verse 42). Such is the sweet yet solemn note with which the Spirit of prophecy brings to

⁸ For examples of this metaphorical use of the word “sea,” which is not rare in Scripture, see Dan. vii. 2; Zech. x. 11; Rev. xiii. 1.

⁹ Deut. xxviii. 65.

¹ Ezek. xxxiv. 12.

² יִירוּשָׁמֵינָהּ בְּקִהְלָ עָם The restored integrity of the nation is clearly conveyed by the language of this verse.

³ Isaiah liv. 11–13.

⁴ Amos vi. 1–6.

⁵ Micah vii. 14.

its close this anticipative rehearsal of His ways, who presently will be known and worshipped everywhere as the Governor of the nations. At the lifting up of His poor the righteous will rejoice, because with such there is an eye to see and a heart to love the right ways of the God of Jacob. At the revelation of that arm of strength which is to bring low the lofty, and to raise the humble whose sole hope is in His word, the mouth of all iniquity will be stopped. All will not taste, indeed, the joy and peace which none but the regenerate can know; but all will bow before the power of Jehovah's Christ. The song of Israel will in that day be the song of redemption. Large multitudes of Gentile worshippers will share that song, singing with understanding the loud praises of the God of peace, and rejoicing with His people in the mercy of the new and everlasting covenant. But *outward homage* will be rendered by the entire family of man. Even they who disregard His goodness, and fail to understand His lovingkindness, will perceive and bow beneath the sceptre of His power. For the earth's confession must be given entire, with all beneath it and with all above it, to the anointed *Man* who carries yet a little while invisible at God's right hand.⁶

PSALM CVIII.

THIS Psalm bears close resemblance to Psalm lx.¹ There is however, a noticeable difference of much interest between them.

In the former Psalm we hear the voice of faith first

⁶ Phil. ii. 10; Isaiah xlv. 23.; Heb. ii. 5, 6.

¹ It is in fact identical in its language, partly with that Psalm, and partly with Psalm lvii.

dwelling on the circumstances of the nation while lying under the angry visitations of Jehovah, and then, in fresh remembrance of the immutability of Divine counsel and promise, rising gradually to a strain of anticipative joy and triumph, because of the fulfilment in His time of the sure covenant of mercy. Here, on the other hand, Jehovah's name is first extolled and glorified because of His abiding truth and mercy. The heart of the worshipper is fixed *there*—settled upon God—uttering, therefore, stirring notes of lofty praise to Him whose counsels equally embrace both heaven and earth.

God being thus exalted according to the majesty of His truth, the special plea of the Spirit of Jesus, founded on the mercy which has throned itself above the heavens, is next urged (verse 6) on behalf of the nation of His ancient love. "That thy beloved [ones]² may be delivered, save with thy right hand and answer *Me*." It is the Spirit of Immanuel that thus makes intercession for His well-remembered people³ according to God. His land should be rid in due time of those who had burdened it with wickedness. For *God* had spoken in His holiness concerning the portion of His Anointed. It might be wasted for a season, because the people's ways provoked the Holy One of Israel to pollute His inheritance for their sakes,⁴ but it should surely revert to Immanuel, the true David; and by Him, and through the blessing of His name, become the enjoyed possession of the nation for whose sakes⁵ He had been born of Abraham's seed.⁶

² יְרֵיָהּ

³ Isaiah xlv. 21.

⁴ Isaiah xlvii. 6.

⁵ For their sakes truly. For He lived and died for Israel. (John xi. 51.) But no reader of these Notes will I trust suppose me to mean that Christ, as the true seed of Abraham, stands related only to the regenerate nation of Israel. (Rom. iv.; Gal. iii.)

⁶ Rom. xv. 8.

The confidence of rightful Messianic title is thus triumphantly expressed in verses 7-9. But the heart of Israel must be broken and turned with supplication to Jehovah, before the set time of deliverance can arise. Hence the concluding verses (in which the subject changes from singular to plural) bring the expectant remnant into view. Their pleadings are heard as of those who, with full avowal of the vanity of creature help, return with words of confession yet of confidence to the God of Israel's hope.⁷ The history of the nation, while walking in the flesh, while conversant with *man*, had ended in shame and dissolution; but the promise still remained entire and unimpaired. The wreath of ultimate victory and praise is woven for the seed of blessing in God's unfailing word of holiness and truth⁸ (verse 13).

PSALM CIX.

IN its general subject this Psalm resembles several of those which have already been examined. For it is the rejection of Jesus by the unrighteous nation, which hated Him without cause, that forms the main topic of the very remarkable and fearfully solemn utterances of the Spirit which are here presented to us.

The particular application of a portion of this Psalm to Judas, the betrayer of the Lord, is to be distinguished from its wider and more permanent bearing upon the nation at large.

In the earlier verses (1-5) we have the voice of the rejected holy One, addressing Himself in righteous testimony

⁷ Hosea xiv. *passim*.

⁸ Compare Zech. xii.; Isaiah lx. 10-14.

to the God of His *praise*. The life of Jesus in the flesh was a continual praise of Him whose will was, in the doing of it, the meat of the devoted servant of His choice. But the mouth of deceit and wickedness was open to defame and to condemn the only righteous One, in the very place and among the people where alone pretension was advanced to the knowledge and worship of the God of truth. The presence of Jesus was as the overflowing blessing of Jehovah in the midst of the heavily afflicted land. That "God had visited His people," was the spontaneous admission of those who viewed with admiration and amaze the wondrous tokens of that potent love which spread abroad on every hand such multitudinous evidences of its gracious energy before the eyes of men.¹ They saw His works; they heard His words as He spake, not as men speak, but in the effective power of the truth of God. Yet lying in opposition to His doctrine and hatred in requital of His love, were the resulting fruits of bitterness which filled the bosom of the Son of God, whose labour seemed to be indeed in vain.²

Verses 6-19, while they have Judas Iscariot as their proper and immediate object,³ appear to involve also in their ultimate intention the instigators of his treason as well as the arch traitor himself. It was the nation's council that desired and rewarded the special act of Judas' sin. The rooted hatred of Jesus was characteristic rather of those who bargained with the betrayer of his Lord, than of the son of perdition himself. *His* governing lust of gain might lead him, as it did when Satan's power was allowed to act fully upon it, to sell God's Christ for a mere pecuniary trifle. But the thirst for Jesus' blood was in

¹ Luke vii. 16; John xxi. 25.

² Isaiah xlix. 4. ³ Acts i. 1-16.

their hearts who found in Judas an unhoped for⁴ guide to their desired prey. The sin of Judas stood indeed alone in its unparalleled enormity. The immediate and especial action of the devil could alone bring such a sin to pass;⁵ for it excelled in its nature and antecedent circumstances the ordinary measures of human wickedness. As an act, then, it must remain in the solitary distinctness of super-eminent guilt.⁶ But the hatred and treachery against which appeal is here made are ascribed not to one, but to many. "*They* have rewarded me evil for good" (verse 5). And so, after denouncing in such fearful terms the individual case, it is immediately added (verse 20), "Let this be the reward of mine *adversaries* from the Lord, and of *them* that speak evil against my soul."

I believe, therefore, that we are to seek for the complete fulfilment of this judicial commination in the history of the natural Israel, upon whom the wrath has come to the full, until the turning away of that indignation in the promised remembrance, on Jehovah's part, of covenanted mercy.⁷

⁴ It is not well to deal in conjecture upon subjects which the Holy Ghost has but partially revealed. But my own mind seems to find a practical solution of the circumstance (scarcely credible on ordinary principles) of so petty a sum being tendered as the price of Jesus' blood, in the characteristic cunning of the counsellors of wickedness. They put small faith, I doubt not, in the sincerity of Judas' offer. Moreover, they were not ignorant that the life they sought so eagerly had more than once escaped, they knew not how, from the angry hands of those who seemed to have it in their grasp. Thus, prudent in their guilt, they unconsciously fulfilled the words of mournful irony in which the Spirit had so long before described this deep and strange extreme of national iniquity. (Zech. xi. 13.)

⁵ John xiii.

⁶ For some further remarks on the sin of Judas, see the remarks on Psalm lxix. *Ante*, p. 369.

⁷ With the strong language of verse 18 may be compared Deut. xxviii. 19, and generally the contents of that chapter from verse 15, when viewed in connexion with 1 Thess. ii. 16, appear to illustrate the present passage.

The appeal of His righteous Servant (verse 28) to the God of Judgment has already been answered with fearful effect, both upon the son of perdition personally and on the evil generation who rejoiced in his iniquity. Meanwhile the exaltation of the poor, and needy, and heart-broken sufferer from the grave, which His enemies vainly hoped would be His lasting rest, to the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, is the just and blest requital of Him who for the Father's sake had endured the contradiction of sinners against Himself.

The day of manifested glory will alone complete effectually the desires expressed in the latter verses of this Psalm. Men will then *know*, when they look on the returning majesty of the Son of man, that the real designer⁸ of that work, which found its accomplishment at the hands of human wickedness, was none other than Jehovah Himself (verse 27). It is the believer's privilege to know this now, and in that knowledge to find his soul's salvation and most certain hope. The careless world does not as yet reject it as a *fact*, but has no care to know it as a *saving truth*. But all will know it in that day.⁹ There are adversaries who now glory in their shame,¹ whose present boasting will be hidden with a perpetual reproach at His appearing (verse 29). The language of verse 30 is of wide interpretation,² and will apply to the present manifestation of Jesus by the Spirit, as the leader of His people's praise, but more fully to the latter day. The closing verse is full

⁸ "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." (Acts ii. 23.) ⁹ John xvii. 23. ¹ Phil. iii. 18, 19.

² The expression כְּרִיבֵימֵי רַבִּינָהּ is quite indefinite. 'Εν μέσῳ πολλῶν.—LXX. "Im Vieler Mitte."—DE WETTE. It seems to point, in its indefiniteness, to the general results of redemption—the ultimate harvest of the travail of Messiah's soul.

of precious meaning for the self-judging believer, whose trust is not in himself but in God, who is able to make him to stand.³ That the blessed principle here expressed will also have its triumphant exemplification in the eventual justification of the broken and impoverished nation is most sure.⁴

PSALM CX.

THE immediate answer to the suffering Christ's appeal in the foregoing Psalm may be read in the opening sentence of the one now before us, which though brief has peculiar claims on our attention. As a testimony to the Melchisedec priesthood of Jesus, it is dear to every one who loves that name. On the other hand, it is on an attentive consideration of the numerous references which are made to this little Psalm in the New Testament that the justness and accuracy of our general estimate, both of the existing dispensation and of the prophetic future, in a great degree depend. Let us notice carefully its structure and contents.

The Psalm appears to divide itself into two parts. The direct address of the Spirit to the risen and ascended Son of David,¹ with which it begins, is continued to the end of the fourth verse. From that point we seem to have a predictive description of the action of the reigning Christ in power, when the time for His manifest dominion shall have come.

Verse 1. The Spirit here greets to the throne of the Majesty in the heavens the world-rejected Son of God,² there to remain until His enemies be made His footstool.

³ Rom. xiv. 4.

⁴ Compare as to this Zech. iii.

¹ 2 Tim. ii. 8; Rom. i. 4.

² Heb. i. 3; x. 12.

This is the present position of Jesus "who is gone into heaven, and is at the right hand of God; angels, and authorities, and powers, being made subject unto Him."³ The value of this passage, as a testimony both to the glory of Messiah's person and to the truth of His ascension, is well understood by the careful reader of Scripture. It was by a reference to this verse that the blessed Lord Himself awed into shameful silence the venomous tongues of those who questioned Him with guile, in envious disavowal of His person and His name.⁴ The Holy Ghost, in His earliest testimony to the title and glory of the exalted Christ, turns to this same passage for prophetic corroboration of the mighty fact of the resurrection from the dead of Jesus of Nazareth, the fruit of David's loins according to the flesh.⁵ Again, the same Spirit, with an immediate reference to the latter clause of this verse, speaks⁶ of the ascended Messiah as now "expecting till His enemies be made His footstool." The power which is to do this is the same that raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory. It is not said: "until they *are* made," but, "until *I* make." Three things are thus found to be contained in this opening verse. 1. The title of the risen and ascended Jesus, who is hailed as "LORD." 2. His session at the right hand of the Father. And 3. His expectance of a particular dominion which is yet to be received.⁷

Verse 2 reveals the centre from whence (as it respects the earth) this expected sovereignty is to be displayed. The rod of Messiah's *power* is to issue, with an undisputed sway, from the same Zion⁸ in which His broken body had

³ 1 Peter iii. 22.

⁴ Matt. xxii. 41-46.

⁵ Acts ii. 22-36.

⁶ Heb. x. 13.

⁷ Acts i. 7; Rev. iii. 21.

⁸ I do not pause to substantiate by a general scriptural induction what is here assumed as a truth. Any reader who may heretofore have taken

been laid, as a stumbling-stone and rock of offence, when He was crucified in weakness in the mystery of the grace of God. Zion is His. Already He has redeemed it as His inheritance. He will presently appear as its Deliverer⁹ for the avenging of His own title on the enemies who will have brought the beloved city low into the dust of bitterest affliction before the rising of the light of her salvation.¹ Moreover, it is not the doing of a single act of power only that is expressed in this verse, there is a delegation to Messiah of victorious and abiding rule.² The strangers shall fade away, and be afraid out of their close places in that day.³ The city which no man inquired after in the time of her desolation will be the resort of suppliant foreigners, who will hasten to do lowly homage *at that place* which shall then be called the city of Jehovah, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel.⁴

The succeeding verse (3) associates with the regnant and triumphant Christ the willing people of His power: "Thy people⁵ shall be willing in the day of thy power," &c. There was a time when Israel would none of Him; when,

Zion metaphorically in this place, is requested to consider whether *scriptural proof* can be advanced to show that another Zion is here meant than the city where David dwelt.

⁹ Rom. xi. 26.

¹ Isaiah xxix. 4-8; Zech. xii.; Matt. xxiv. 21, 22.

² Compare 1 Cor. xv. 24, 25.

³ Psalm xviii. 45.

⁴ Isaiah lx. 14, 15; Zech. xiv. 16-21.

⁵ That the people here mentioned are Israel I have no doubt. Assuredly the Church that loves and lives upon an unseen Christ will gladly witness the advent of His power. The companions of His patience will follow willingly their Captain of salvation when He rides forth in majesty to take possession of His kingdom. (Rev. xix. 11-14.) But the language of the text is inapplicable to those whose willingness begins in the day of His *reproach*. Christian faith loves not its life unto the death for Jesus' sake. Its very calling and chief praise, while here below, is to be counted worthy to suffer for that Name. We are now exhorted to go forth to Him without the camp, bearing His reproach. (Acts v. 41; 1 Peter iv. 14; Heb. xiii. 13.)

though He came unto His own, His own received Him not; when the people's choice was, "Not this man, but Barabbas." That was the day not of His power, but of His gracious weakness and humiliation. It was His day of self-imposed travail, as the ready servant of the Father's will—a day wherein He would *endure*, in grace to sinners, the burden of Divine vengeance, instead of *inflicting* it, as the appointed Judge of all, on the blasphemers of His name.⁶

With respect to the expression itself, "the day of thy power," it stands in a double contrast; first, to His day of humiliation just referred to; and secondly, to His expectant session at the right hand of God. The day of the Lord's patience and long-suffering⁷ is widely to be distinguished from the looked-for day of His power and coming.⁸ Neither at the time of His humiliation, nor during the season of absence at the right hand of the Father, are the nation of Messiah's fleshly kin the willing confessors of His title. But the day is not far distant when Jerusalem, which once refused His love and took Him for an enemy, shall say at the brightness of His second advent, "Blessed is He that cometh in Jehovah's name."⁹ They will be as the chariots of Amminadab at the shining forth of that Sun of righteousness which shall dissolve for ever the veil of darkness and unbelief, which must cover until then the nation's heart.

The latter words of this verse refer, I believe, to the

⁶ For faith, the day of Christ's power is already come. *All* power in heaven and in earth is His. I cannot, therefore, disallow an application of this verse to the present action of His electing mercy and constraining love in subduing the obdurate will of sinners to Himself. But this surely is not its just *interpretation*.

⁷ 2 Peter iii. 9-15.

⁸ 2 Peter i. 16.

⁹ In the Note on Psalm cxviii. this point is more fully treated.

glory of Messiah's discovery of Himself to Israel, when, as the recognized seed of promise, He will be the apparent realization of the long-cherished prophecy of national hope: "Unto us a child is born,"¹ &c. What the eye of faith beheld in the infant Messiah, when born of David's house according to the Scripture,² will then be openly perceived and known in the glorious epiphany of the First-born from the dead, when with more than morning brightness (*margin*) He shall dissipate the darkness of Zion's long and dreary night of sorrow, and become the beginning of their lasting day of joy.

Verse 4 confers the new and everlasting title of royal priesthood upon the now exalted Christ. He glorified not Himself. But He who raised Him from the dead, the same said unto Him, "Thou art a priest for ever," &c. That this title attaches to the Lord only in resurrection is quite evident from Heb. v. 5, and still more so from Heb. viii. 4: "For if He were on earth, He should not be a priest," &c. The Epistle to the Hebrews treats at large the subject of Christ's Melchisedec Priesthood in its present relation to the Church of God. It is in the power of an endless life that Jesus now exercises His unailing ministry of intercession for the believing partakers of His grace.³ But in the title which is here addressed to Him there is involved, not only perpetuity of life, but the full exercise of a mediatorial *kingdom* as well as priesthood. He is King of righteousness and King of peace. To the Christian He is known as such while seated now at the right hand of the throne of the majesty in the heavens.⁴ But, as has been shown already, He is there awaiting the reduction of His foes. He tarries for a season, but will presently again return, as

¹ Isaiah ix. 6, 7.

² Luke ii.

³ Heb. vii. *passim*.

⁴ Heb. viii.

is witnessed in the same Epistle: "For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry."⁵

While thus awaiting the arrival of the time appointed of the Father, His gracious occupation is the ministry of priestly intercession for the saints. But the priestly title of Jesus is according to the order of one who was priest of the Most High God, possessor of heaven *and of earth*; who was the receiver of earthly tribute from Abraham, the holder of God's earthly⁶ promises, and who spake the word of Divine blessing and congratulation to him whose warfare God had blessed in righteousness, as the accomplishment of His good pleasure, who is to be honoured as the God of judgment.⁷ Full judicial victory and triumph, as well as the undisturbed administration, in the plenitude of Divine power, of peace and righteousness, belongs to Him who is to sit and rule upon His throne, and to be a priest upon His throne, in the day when He shall grow up manifestly in His place as *the Branch*, who shall build again the temple of Jehovah.⁸ The power of His intercession (already uttered for that nation, while fulfilling its ultimate redemption on the cross, which turned His glory into shame) will be made apparent when the iniquity of the land of His dishonour shall be removed in one day, at the advent of the Deliverer, who shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob. David and Levi will find alike in Jesus

⁵ Heb. x. 37.

⁶ And heavenly also, as has been sufficiently insisted upon in the earlier pages of this work.

⁷ Gen. xiv. 18-20; Heb. vii. 1-4.

⁸ Zech. vi. 12, 13. That this passage is capable in part of a spiritual application to the Church, and the actual priestly ministry of Jesus in the heavens, is allowed. But it applies in part only. For the Lord's own words are that He is set upon His Father's throne, and in expectation only of His *own*. (Rev. iii. 21.) The prophecy, on the other hand, is descriptive not of an expectant but a reigning Christ.

the Divine and lasting substance of their transient and shadowy functions, when the sure covenant of Jacob's mercy is visibly established in the *land*.⁹ I have elsewhere¹ treated this subject more at large, and will not therefore pursue it further in this place.

At the fifth verse the action in power of the Lord, whose seat has hitherto been at the right hand of the Father, begins to be described. It is the day of the Lamb's wrath. The judgment which the Father hath committed to the Son of man² will visit the mighty ones of the earth in that dread day. The confederacy of kingdoms in the league of Antichrist seems more especially contemplated in this verse.³

The same subject is continued generally in what remains. It may, however, be remarked, that the language of verse 6, "He shall judge among the heathen," while it relates, I believe, principally to the catastrophe at the valley of Jehoshaphat,⁴ may respect, in a wider sense, the permanent administration of Messiah's rule as the governor of the nations.⁵

The closing verses describe the untiring strength and complete sufficiency of Him who is thus to send forth judgment unto victory. It is He who fainteth not, neither

⁹ Jer. xxxiii. 15-18.

¹ In my Notes on the Hebrews and Romans already mentioned.

² John v. 22-27.

³ Rev. xvi. 13, 14.

⁴ Joel iii. 9-16.

⁵ The latter clause of verse 6 is of doubtful interpretation. It is in the original: *קִמַּחַן רֹאשׁ עַל-אַרְצֵי רָבָה*. It is thought by some that *רֹאשׁ*, being in the singular number, indicates the Wilful King himself. DIODATI's translation seems to recognize this (though, doubtless, in his mind it had respect to the Papal power): "*Egli trafiggera il capo [che regna] sopra molti paesi.*" I rather prefer this view. But it is a point which cannot, I think, be ascertained. The remarks on Psalm ii. may be again examined with reference to the general drift of these latter verses.

is weary,⁶ of whom the Spirit here speaks. He will ride prosperously on His way,⁷ because of truth, and meekness, and righteousness. No counsel or device may stay His progress. Being the trusted possessor of all power in heaven and in earth, He will take the spoil of human pride and Satanic power as the true Captain of Jehovah's hosts.⁸

PSALM CXI.

A TRULY beautiful and wise-hearted expression of that praise which can be rendered only by the lips and hearts of those whom Jesus has redeemed. It is evidently a latter-day song of Israel's commemorative worship, when Jehovah will again inhabit the praises of that people who now, as concerning the gospel, are enemies for us Gentiles' sake.¹ The accomplishment of covenanted national redemption (verse 9), and the resulting supremacy of His earthly people over the Gentiles (verse 6), are leading topics in this melody of praise. Its full expression of perfected grace and power makes the present Psalm most acceptable to the spirit of expectant Christian faith, which sees in the ascended Christ the pledge and first-fruits of the salvation and glory which are ready to be fulfilled *in power* at His coming.

Verse 1 makes mention of the congregation as the

⁶ Isaiah xl. 28.

⁷ Psalm xlv.

⁸ Already He is known to the believer as the mighty divider of the spoil in the accomplished victory which has laid the powers of darkness low beneath the feet of those who stand by faith complete in Him. (Col. ii. 15; Isaiah liii. 12.) It is not, however, the secret joy of faith, but rather the manifested power of the kingdom of God, that is the subject of these verses.

¹ Rom. xi. 28.

assembly of *the upright*.² It is in the assembly of the once purged worshippers alone that the Spirit can give true utterance to praise.

Verse 2. The works of the Lord had been always great. But the foolish generation had disregarded them, slighting the chiefest operations of His hands.³ Those works are now sought out with fervent desire by the people, who with unveiled heart behold the glory of their Saviour and their God.

They confess His work (verse 3), glorying in that which once they had reviled. In the eyes of the preserved of Israel that work will be honourable and glorious; for Jehovah's righteousness shall then be an apparent thing. His glory will be their defence when—the filth of Zion's daughters having first been washed away, and the blood of Jerusalem purged from the midst thereof by the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning—the ripened fruit of covenanted mercy shall be enjoyed by the remnant of salvation in Immanuel's land.⁴ Grace will then visibly reign in brightest lustre of completed righteousness. Fully and richly does the Christian know these things by the Spirit in a yet higher degree of anticipative blessing, even a heavenly one. But it is with earthly rather than with heavenly things that the Psalm before us is concerned.⁵

Verse 4 is full of sweetest power. He has not only wrought the work; He has also established its *memorial*. And what is this memorial? Rather may it be asked,

² Compare Isaiah lx. 21; John v. 12.

³ Isaiah v. 12. Pre-eminently so when the work of mightiest power, whereby God raised from the dead the slain Captain of salvation, was dishonoured and denied, in spite of the abundance of miraculous testimony to its truth. The clumsy and altogether improbable fiction of the nocturnal theft of Jesus' body being willingly received among them until now. (Matt. xxviii. 13-15.)

⁴ Isaiah iv.

⁵ John iii. 12.

What single member of redeemed creation, whether in heaven or on earth, will not be such in that day of joy? There is, indeed, a memorial of another sort. The power of His anger will be had in everlasting remembrance.⁶ Judgment as well as mercy will abide in their results for ever, to the praise of His glory who is both a Saviour and a Judge. In the present passage, however, it is the power of redeeming mercy that is more distinctly celebrated. And so the latter clause of the verse is an applausive echo of the gospel: "The Lord is gracious, and full of compassion."

Verses 5, 6 recite the fulfilment in power of the unrepented promises made of old to the fathers.

Verses 7, 8 contain a precious meaning for the soul whose rest is in the finished work of Christ. Jehovah has commanded, giving it in trust to Jesus to make sure, in perfect obedience, the word of truth and holiness. The commandment therefore has been *done*. It has been done in truth and uprightness by Him whose meat it was to do it; who willingly received it with a knowledge of its end, and in whose accomplishment of it the believing sinner finds his assurance of eternal peace.⁷ Jesus held the law within His heart, to keep it there for ever. As the fulfiller in truth of the commandment, He has become its end for righteousness to every believer in His name.⁸ Legal testimony is thus confirmed and established for ever in the person of the living Truth, who speaks in righteousness the gracious message of entire love.⁹

With verse 9 compare Luke i. 49-55. The praise is according to the tenor of the blessing. They who are now no people, because of their rejection of the Lord of glory,

⁶ Rev. xiv. 11; xix. 3.

⁷ John xii. 50.

⁸ Rom. x. 4.

⁹ Rom. iii. 31.

will yet be assembled as His acceptable worshippers within the bond of that covenant which is *their own*.¹ Their hearts will be a sanctuary for His name.²

The Psalm concludes by laying again the long forgotten foundation of Jehovah's fear. That fear which had been taught in vain by the commandments of men will then be settled deeply in their contrite hearts by the quickening power of the Holy Ghost. Israel will be a wise and understanding nation in that day.³ They will become the willing people of Jehovah's praise, when the stony heart of nature has been changed for the ready table of the covenant of peace.⁴

PSALM CXII.

As the last Psalm ended with a disclosure of the source and beginning of all true wisdom, so we have now a description of the blessedness of the really wise man—of him that feareth the Lord.

With some special characteristics, which give a distinctly Jewish cast to this Psalm (compare verses 2, 3, and 8), it offers itself to our contemplation as a lovely portraiture of the moral and actual happiness of the man of faith. It is an extended exemplification of the apostle's maxim: "Godliness with contentment is great gain."⁵ The effects, both present and final, of single-eyed devotedness to God in love are alluringly displayed, to win the servant with a readier assent to practical imitation of the Master's ways. It is thus that the Psalm is quoted from in 2 Cor. ix.⁶ Jesus alone could fill the outline of the

¹ Rom. ix. 4. ² Isa. viii. 13. ³ Deut. iv. 6. ⁴ Ezek. xxxvi. 26-32.

⁵ 1 Tim. vi. 6.

⁶ *Notes on Second Corinthians* in loc.

picture here presented. Like every other delineation of truth and moral beauty, of holiness or faith, or of aught else lovely and of good report with God, it has its *perfect* exhibition in the righteous One alone. Meanwhile, as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. The Christian's calling is to walk *in Him* and as He walked, who counted it more blessed to give than to receive. The root and living source of all practical righteousness in the believer's way is Christ, as the enjoyed expression of Divine and perfect love.

That the present Psalm relates in its prophetic intention to the prosperity of Jacob in the day of promised blessing, when, with Christ-fed heart and bountiful eye to minister the blessings of his own fat portion to the poor and needy, He will be known among the nations as the seed that Jehovah hath blessed,⁷ is, I think, quite plain.

PSALM CXIII.

A VERY lovely song of praise. Its subject is the covenant God of the earthly people (verse 5) who rejoice beneath His blessing in the full realization of temporal happiness, and spiritual confidence and peace, as the children of His own most faithful promise. As a prophetic utterance of the Spirit, it anticipates the dated era of their joy. "From this time forth and for evermore," is an expression which, while it finds an echo in every heart that by the quickening word of grace is turned from idols to the living God in Christ, yet points distinctly to some definite though future time, when a universal recognition shall be had by

⁷ Isaiah lxi. 9.

all beneath the heavens of the kingdom of Jehovah, and the power of His Christ (verse 3).¹

Verse 4 establishes Jehovah's name in confessed supremacy above all the nations of the earth. Its latter clause makes mention of that more excellent glory which will crown the scene of Messiah's universal realm. The Church finds here her true place. Sharing the joy of Him whose praises are evermore her chief employ, she has her seat amid that glory which, though its light be shed upon the nations upon earth, is from above the heavens in its source, and quits its native place only to follow and accompany the presence of the Lord of glory, whose delights were ever with the sons of men.²

In the fifth verse we seem to have an answer to Psalm vii. 7. The congregation of the peoples had groaned beneath the pressure of the bonds of vanity and death, while Satan held firm sway as the prince and ruler of the present world. But now Jehovah had ascended into the seat of power, and shown Himself openly to be the only God, the Saviour, binding with an enduring chain the deceiver of the nations,³ and shining forth, in the revealed majesty of His Christ, as the rightful possessor of heaven and earth. There was none like Him. None were left who might compare with Him of all the vanities of the Gentiles. For at the lifting up of Himself the powers of darkness had fled and disappeared; and now His name alone would be both the dread and the confidence of nations from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same.⁴ Things in earth and things in heaven (verse 6) fall alike within the ken of Him whose throne of majesty is over all.⁵

¹ Compare Mal. i. 11.

² Rev. xxi. 10; Prov. viii. 31.

³ Rev. xx.

⁴ Mal. i. 14; Ps. lxxv. 4.

⁵ Eph. i. 10.

Verses 7, 8 declare the ways of Jehovah to be those of perfect grace and mercy. The believer knows and rejoices in this now, and will celebrate it in a yet higher strain of heavenly praise, when the times to which this Psalm refers shall come. It is primarily to the restoration of Israel, and secondarily to the calling of Assyria and Egypt into the fellowship of His earthly people's blessing that these verses seem prophetically to relate.⁶ They have, however, a far wider moral bearing.

The allusion in the closing verse is plainly to the once rejected city of Jehovah's covenant, whose widowhood is but for an appointed time, until the ancient kindness be again renewed.⁷

PSALM CXIV.

THERE is a rare power and sublimity in this brief but most expressive strain, which connects, in discerning celebration of Jehovah's praise, the latter-day glory of Israel with the former deliverance, when God exalted the people who dwelt as sojourners in Egypt, and led them forth from the house of bondage with a mighty hand.

The key of the Psalm is in the seventh verse, which calls upon the earth to tremble at the presence of the God of Jacob. The mountains had skipped like rams at the presence of Jehovah's majesty, when He marched through the wilderness to seek a rest for His people in the olden time. But the promises of the God of Jacob were not thus exhausted. Joshua gave no enduring rest to Israel. The covenant by which they entered Canaan could not maintain them permanently there. By another and better covenant the ancient promise must be perfectly fulfilled.

⁶ Isaiah xix.

⁷ Isaiah liv. *passim*.

His hand should be put *a second time* to the work of their deliverance. It was *Jacob's God* who now was to appear in the excellency of His power as the God of the whole earth. His sanctuary had been Judah from the first, though while the former covenant endured this had existed only under type and promise. The Lion of that tribe could alone erect the abiding tabernacle of His praise.

And now He was at hand to come. His appearing would be as the faithful Redeemer of promise to His people, but also as the righteous Judge of all the world, whose coming is with power and great glory.¹ At His arising He would shake terribly the earth.² He had been once on earth among His own, but they had smitten the Judge of Israel upon the cheek. In the day of His humiliation, the world's authorities agreed together to disallow His title and His name;³ yet the mountains and the sea had known Him even then.⁴ The earth had quaked and trembled at the presence of that mighty sufferer of death. But now the former acts of His delivering power, when He led His people through the river and the sea, would be excelled by that eternal work of His redeeming love, whereby the fear of death should loose its bondage from their souls, whose standing under the new covenant of grace should be in righteousness and everlasting peace. It is a sweet song of ransomed Israel's praise—a memorial of the former deliverances as they will in that day be *understood* in the new heart of Jacob, when all his sorrows shall be but a remembrance whereby the riches of the glory of the God of his salvation may be more perfectly appreciated and more abundantly extolled.

¹ Luke xxi. 27.

² Isaiah ii.

³ 1 Cor. ii.

⁴ John vi. 19; Matt. xxvii. 51.

PSALM CXV.

WE have in this Psalm a striking and emphatic, as well as very sweet expression of Israel's latter-day praise, when, in their effective realization of the everlasting covenant, they will have become worshippers in spirit and in truth.

Its opening verse contains the touching response of the delivered and accepted nation—whose heart will then perceive and magnify those ways from which their fathers ignorantly erred—to the former testimonies of prophetic promise,¹ which were to them who heard them spoken no better than the transient sweetness of a pleasant song. The Lord had now wrought in effectual power for their sakes, according to His remembered covenant of mercy and of truth.

They had been brought very low. The heathen, who had willingly forgotten their own professed subjection to the truth, and had again relapsed into idolatry of direst form, had taunted the small remnant of Jehovah, who seemed to them to speak vain words, because they chose *their* God before the mighty and fearful objects of the world's deluded homage (verse 2).² But now He had arisen to their help. From the heavens where He dwelt on high, He had caused the glory of His power to be seen and felt. He had done according to His pleasure (verse 3), and that pleasure was the deliverance of His people. He had been mindful (verse 12) of those whom He had seemed to have forgotten, while awaiting with long patience, the ripe completion of that thankless evil which had closed the long

¹ Ezek. xxxvi. 22–32.

² Compare Rev. xiii.

day of Gentile mercy in the mist of atheistic darkness, and filled to the brim the cup of human wickedness and folly.³

Victory and its fruits are theirs. For the day of the Lord's decision has arrived, and has made clean riddance of the banded adversaries of His name. But not unto themselves do they ascribe the praise, for the stony heart is no longer in their breasts. Instead of the lying flattery of self-deceived hypocrisy, or the presumptuous indifference of natural self-confidence, there is now within their inward parts the wisdom which is only taught of God.⁴

³ Although it is true that the present Psalm might have served (and probably did so) as a memorial of Israel's praise during any one of the occasional revivals, which show like lucid intervals of brief continuance in the protracted season of the nation's madness, yet it is quite plain that in its prophetic intention it respects the ultimate deliverance of the people of the covenant, and the *final* abolition of idolatrous worship in the earth. (Compare Isaiah ii.) But this will not take place until the general apostasy (2 Thess. ii.) has reached its climax in the monstrous worship of the image of the Beast. (Rev. xiii.) With respect to this last expression, I would remark that although the language of the passage referred to is such as almost to preclude any other than a literal interpretation, this is after all but a minor consideration. Idolatry is the worship of SATAN in some form, visible or ideal. Names and imagery are but adjunctive semblances and indications of the unseen and unsuspected reality. What the heathen sacrifice, they sacrifice *to devils*. (1 Cor. x. 20.) Visible appearances, or aught besides that can be brought to act directly upon human sense, are powerful appliances by which the willing victims of delusion are bound more surely to the fatal covenant of death. But palpable imagery is not an *essential* of idol worship. Thus covetousness is idolatry. Idolatry is simply homage rendered to a shadow instead of a reality—to a lie instead of truth. Reliance, therefore, upon *any* thing that is not God is idolatry in principle. The convincing and decisive token of the vanity of idols will be afforded when, at the appearing of the Lord, that mighty power of Satanic energy, which will have wielded at will the diverse interests of men, and whose last great effort will have been to set the harnessed forces of the nations for the battle of Almighty God, will become the fuel of an inextinguishable flame. (Rev. xix. 20.)

⁴ John vi. 45.

And so it is of Him that they now make their boast; contrasting, with impressive minuteness of detail, the objects of the Gentiles' fatuous homage, with Him who is the helper and the shield of Jacob (verses 4-11).

In verses 12, 13, we find a gradation of blessing. The special mention of the house of Aaron is significant. In the day of Israel's apostasy, the priests, whose lips should have still kept knowledge, had led the people in the ways of error and of sin. As their father Aaron, before the time of his anointing came, had built an altar to the people's sin,⁵ evincing thus his *personal* unworthiness to be the minister of Jehovah's sanctuary, and the two eldest of his sons were consumed by the fire of God's jealousy at the very inauguration of the tabernacle worship,⁶ so, while the nation ripened in its evil growth, had both priest and prophet erred alike.⁷ But the grace which will restore the nation on the ground of covenanted promise, will re-establish it according to the appointed order of its tribes. The latter chapters of the prophet Ezekiel are full of descriptive detail as to the ordering of Israel's worship, in the day when the name of the earthly Jerusalem will be "The Lord is there." Priest and people will alike be blessed in that fair day of joy. The more general expression which follows (verse 13) may perhaps refer to the believing Gentiles, as distinguished from the natural heirs of blessing.

Verses 14, 15 seem to express the benediction of Immanuel,—then known, in the full revelation of His Melchisedec glory, as Priest of the Most High God, as well as King of righteousness and King of peace,—pronounced upon the favoured people of His heritage.

The sixteenth verse is very emphatic and conclusive as

⁵ Exod. xxxii. 5.

⁶ Lev. x.

⁷ Isaiah xxviii. 7; Jer v. 31.

to the strictly *terrestrial* scope of the action of the present Psalm; it is also full of beauty, when read in connexion with what follows, as a descriptive declaration of the effect of "the Regeneration"⁸ on this lower scene. For until then, man has rather been given to the earth than the earth to the sons of men. It is but a place of graves, and the day of death seems better than the day of birth, so long as men walk in no brighter light than that of the sun.⁹ But now all is changed; "the Resurrection and the Life" is the accepted ruler of the world, and they who walk in His light will look through the long day of terrestrial peace, not to the cold shadows of the night of death, but to the yet brighter glory of the life to come.¹

PSALM CXVI.

As this Psalm (unlike in this respect the greater number of those which bear a strongly experimental cast) is without a title, we cannot know either its instrumental authorship or the particular occasion of its composition. That its true prophetic object is Jesus, as alive from the dead, is very generally recognized among well-taught Christians. But because the risen Saviour is His people's life,² and because therefore it is the distinctive privilege of faith, while yet in the present world, to confess the standing and acceptance of the Beloved as its own,³ the language of this most sweet and deeply touching song of deliverance is a fit as well as rich expression of the believer's conscious blessedness as an expectant heir of salvation. We may remark,

⁸ Matt. xix. 28.

⁹ Eccles. *passim*.

¹ With verses 17, 18, we may compare also Isaiah lxxv. 18-25; 1 Cor. xv. 24.

² Col. iii. 3, 4.

³ 1 John iv. 17.

however, that features characteristically Jewish are discernible, more especially in its closing verse. There seems indeed to be an especial reference throughout to the earthly city and people of Messiah's love. But in its complete sense the Psalm has a very much wider scope.

The opening verses (1-4) are full of rich and peculiar significance in their direct application to Messiah. Jesus had plainly proved His love to Him that sent Him by accepting and fulfilling the commandment that ordained the Lamb of God to die.⁴ He had not put away the cup of bitterness when the hour of the Father's will arrived, although strong crying and tears accompanied the supplications which He offered for His soul's deliverance (verse 4).⁵ And now that that deliverance is come, and Jesus—receiving life, as He had consented to the pains of death, at the just good pleasure of the Father—has been brought back from the dead by the glory of His power, He binds Himself anew to be the Minister of God in everlasting praise, even as He had already served Him in loving obedience unto death. "He liveth unto God." The words which He uttered, with His eyes upraised to heaven, when, just before He left the world, He said, "Glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee,"⁶ seem to find their prophetic realization in the second verse of the present Psalm. Jesus lived and died to glorify the Father. He lives again, according to the power of an endless life, for the same glory. Having been "raised from the dead by the glory of the Father," He celebrates for ever, as the first-fruits of resurrection,⁷ the praises of Him who answered thus in righteousness the dying appeal of His obedient Son.

But it was not for His own sake that Jesus sanctified

⁴ John xiv. 31.

⁶ John xvii. 1, 4.

⁵ Compare Heb. v. 7.

⁷ Rom. vi. 4; 1 Cor. xv. 23.

Himself and went on high,⁸ but that they who here confess His name might be separated even now, by virtue of His finished work of redemption, to offer acceptable sacrifices in His name.⁹ And so it is as the leader of His people's worship that He comes before us in the following verse: "Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; yea, *our* God is merciful" (verse 5). It is thus that Jesus, having entered on the rich reward of His accepted work, associates with Himself, in ever blessed participation of His joys, the believing receivers of that abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, whose most sure hope it is to reign in life by Him.¹

In the verses immediately following (6-11) we have an amplification, full of richest blessing, of the general thesis of the Psalm. It was as one of the "simple"² that Jesus owned the faithful preservation of Jehovah, who helped Him when brought low (verse 6). He might be truly thus described, when, in self-emptied humiliation, He entered on the course of human obedience at its natural beginning. As He rose in stature from infancy to manhood, so He grew in wisdom upon that which maketh wise the simple.³ He stood and walked among the guileful men who watched His steps, as the self-revealing and apparent light of purity and truth. He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, though in perfect grace His very holiness became the shelter of the broken and contrite sinner in

⁸ John xvii. 19.

⁹ Heb. xiii. 15.

¹ Rom. v. 17.

² פְּרִימִיּוֹת *Tà vñπια*.—LXX. "*Parvuli*."—HIERON. "*Die Einfältigen*."—DE WETTE. This word, in its application to Jesus, seems to combine the two distinct ideas, first, of guileless dependence upon God; and, secondly, of the contemptuous disregard whereby the living wisdom of God was slighted and derided by those who saw and hated both the Father and the Son.

³ Psalm xix. 7; Luke ii. 52.

his time of need.⁴ For His presence in the world was not to judge, but to deliver, as the messenger and personal reality of love. Yet Jesus was brought low. He willingly descended to become Himself the subject of delivering power. He who alone knew the Father was capable (because so truly Man) of tasting and enjoying mercy as an attribute of God, differing from His people in this only, that He *merited* what He enjoyed. The baptism of mortal suffering was willingly endured by Jesus, that the loosing of the cords of death might redound to His eternal praise who would not suffer His Holy One to see corruption. The return of Jesus to His rest⁵ should be as the receiver of the blessings of Divine reward (verse 7). He would enter on the universal inheritance by a new and special title of appointment.⁶ His name must be exalted above every name, to the *glory of God the Father*.⁷

And now all this was done. Jehovah, whose delight He always was, and who upheld Him as His servant, had brought Him now triumphantly past all His sorrow (verse 8). The latter clause of this verse is most interesting as an expression of the complete dependence with which Jesus leaned on Him whom He had come to serve. It was not in the Perfect One to fall. Yet as He went about doing good, He walked beneath the unction and in the power of the Holy Ghost.⁸ It was His delight to own the Father as the doer of the works.⁹ Thus too it was, that whether in the presence of the tempter in the wilderness, or at the closing scene of His last agony, His words and acts were straitly fashioned to the written pattern of the will of God. By that word also had His deliverance been wrought, when,

⁴ John viii. 2-11; Luke vii. 36-50.

⁶ Heb. i. 2.

⁸ Acts x. 38.

⁵ John xvii. 5.

⁷ Phil. ii. 11.

⁹ John xiv. 10.

after man and Satan had accomplished all their part, the buried Son of God revived and left the grave.¹

As Jesus once had walked before Jehovah in the land of vanity—Himself the only living One (save as in grace He imparted of His own to the chosen vessels of His love) amid a world of death—so would He walk, as the anointed Head of Redemption, in the land of the living (verse 9). He will be known in the new and fully blest creation as the upholding power, the centre and the crown of everything which, either in the heavens or on earth, rejoices in the glad dominion of the Resurrection and the Life.

Verses 10, 11 seem strikingly to express the deep emotions of the soul of Jesus when, from the midst of His "great affliction," He lifted up His heart in unabated trust to God, though disappointment and dismay were about His lonely path on every side.² The experience which He gathered for Himself (although He was no stranger, as the Maker of His creatures, to the true condition of His now corrupted work) of what was in the heart of man, pressed sorely and with weary weight upon a heart whose chief desire was to bless, but which could only bless with *truth*. But none were found to welcome love in truth. The hearts of those who would have worshipped for gain's sake,³

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 4. To the believing sinner there is given full participation in this grateful strain of triumph. For it is to God who hath *stablished* us in Christ, that we address our praise. (2 Cor. i. 21.) Our feet are planted on that Rock of life no more to be removed. For He who has set us there in grace will keep us there in *faithfulness*, and with *sufficing* power. Tears may flow still, by reason of the manifold distresses of the way. But endless consolations are secured to us in Christ (2 Thess. ii. 16), and He who is the Spirit both of truth and glory, performs His blessed task of comfort to the soul, by teaching us to say even now, in this our day of conflict: "Thanks be unto God, which giveth us the victory, through Jesus Christ our Lord!"

² Matt. xi. 16-26; Mark vi. 6.

³ John vi. 26; Jude 16.

the visible power which wrought miraculously works of goodness in their sight, were hardened into stone against the voice of Jesus, when He spake the words of God.⁴ All men were liars when, by contact with the only truth, the secrets of their hearts were brought to light.⁵

The remaining verses contain much that is of the highest practical value to the Christian. Looking thus at verses 12, 13, we find that the most grateful recompence which the vessel of God's mercy can render to the Creator of his joy is *praise*. "I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord." The Spirit leads continually the souls which once have tasted that the Lord is gracious to drink still deeper of the love of Christ. Praise thus abounds, with strength for true and acceptable service; for faith can only work by love.

Verse 15 should not be unnoticed. The death of His saints is precious in Jehovah's sight. This is universally true; for He is ever glorified in those who, in the hour of nature's dissolution, can assert a sober claim to endless life and blessedness, because their trust is in the living God. He is not ashamed of such. But more especially He is glorified in those to whom it is given, on the behalf of Christ, to suffer for His name's sake to the death. Nor should the moral meaning of this verse be overlooked. To

⁴ John iii. 34; vi. 26, 52, 60.

⁵ With respect to the expression יְהוָה the LXX. give what seems the best translation. They have: 'Εν τῇ ἐκστάσει μου. We shall try in vain to harmonize to our intelligence the union of Divine omniscience with a mind accessible to visitations of surprise. Yet such was found in Jesus. (Compare Matt. viii. 10; Mark vi. 6.) With the eleventh verse of this Psalm we may perhaps compare, for its fuller illustration, John viii. 41-55. It may be remarked also, with reference to the tenth verse, that the manner of its quotation in 2 Cor. iv. 13, 14, seems plainly to intimate that the Apostle understood the passage to relate to Christ. *Notes on Second Corinthians, in loc.*

bear about in a body yet alive, the dying of the Lord; to die a daily death, and willingly to hate one's present life for the better knowledge of the power of the resurrection; to walk according to his rule who said, "Not I, but Christ," such things are grateful in the Father's sight. But to do this is only to confess the truth in act; since death here is the recorded state of those whose life is their ascended Lord.⁶

On the residue of the Psalm no lengthened observations seem at present needful, very full of matter as they are. With verse 16 compare Luke i. 38.⁷ It is in the closing verse that the distinctly Jewish colouring is most clearly apparent.

PSALM CXVII.

THE position of this little Psalm is remarkable. It stands almost like an intended preface to the one which follows. For while in the latter we have one of the fullest and most emphatic celebrations of Israel's deliverance and final triumph, the particular rehearsal of national blessing is here preceded by a general summons, addressed to the nations of the world. They are provoked to Jehovah's praises, as the God of truth, on the part of those who then will be the standing witnesses, in full accomplished favour, of His faithfulness whose gifts and promises are without repentance, and in whose restored mercy to His once rejected people is contained the pledge of more abundant blessing to the families of earth.⁸

⁶ Rom. vi. ; Col. iii. 6.

⁷ May not the $\pi\alpha\delta\iota\sigma\kappa\eta$ ($\pi\alpha\delta\iota\sigma\kappa\eta$.—LXX.) of the one passage, be the $\delta\omicron\upsilon\lambda\eta$ of the other?

⁸ Rom. xi. 12.

PSALM CXVIII.

NOTHING can surpass the force and majesty, as well as the richly varied beauty, of this Psalm. Its general burden is quite manifest. It is the prophetic expression, by the Spirit of Christ, of that exultant strain of anticipative triumph, wherein the virgin daughter of Zion will laugh to scorn, in the immediate prospect of her Deliverer's advent,¹ the congregated armies of the Man of Sin (verses 10-13.)

The subject is presented in a marvellous fulness and richness of detail. There is (1) the general celebration of *mercy* as the now apparent rest and stability of the nation, through the manifestation of the Rock of Israel in the person of the once rejected stone (verses 1-4, 22). There is (2) a memorial of the past dealings of Jehovah with His people, until, from the low place of their last distress, they cried to Him and had been heard (verses 5-7). (3) The full and grateful expression of confidence and rejoicing in Him is put in contrast with their former vain and fruitless reliance on the creature (verses 8, 9). All now redounds to the praise of the glory of His grace who had showed them *light*. There is moreover a clear and strong assertion of *righteousness* as their assured and settled standing (verses 19, 20). No longer a sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity,² they claim the right of entrance at the gates of righteousness, as the nation which Jehovah has both justified and saved.³ He had saved them in the faithfulness of cove-

¹ Isaiah xxxvii. 22; Zech. xii.

² Isaiah i. 4.

³ Isaiah xlv. 25.

nanted mercy, though they had known His hand in heavy chastenings, because of their transgressions (verse 18).

The leading strains of the songs, both of Moses and of the Lamb, are found in the present Psalm. Realized redemption, that is, and confident rejoicing in the imputed righteousness of God, are laid as the basis of that triumphant earthly prosperity which was to result from their deliverance out of the hand of the enemy (as in the days of Egypt), by the manifestation of Divine power in judgment.

But the essence and sustaining spring of all this joy is Christ, now known as the marvellous Light, into which they who had long groped, though at noon-day,⁴ in thickest darkness, have been effectually brought. The Right Hand of Jehovah was exalted. And in the lifting up of Himself in judgment, for His own name's sake, He had become the salvation of the sorely pressed remnant of His nation (verse 14).⁵

The seventeenth verse expresses, with much power and sweetness, the unshaken stability of their faith when, girt with fear on every side, His people think upon the covenanted faithfulness and power of God,⁶ and joyfully anticipate the rehearsal of His mighty acts.

⁴ Isaiah lix. 10.

⁵ Verses 10-13 describe with a peculiar emphasis both the destruction of the banded hosts of the great Gentile confederacy, and the instrumentality of their defeat: "In the name of Jehovah will I destroy them." The governors of Judah will be as a torch of fire in a sheaf, to devour all the nations round about Jerusalem in that day. Zechariah xii. should be carefully read in illustration of these verses. In verse 13 there seems to be an apostrophe addressed immediately to the wilful king himself.

⁶ Compare Hab. i. 12. The first chapter, both of Habakkuk and of Nahum, may be read with great advantage in connexion with the earlier verses. Under different aspects we have there presented, not only the same great moral principles, but also, I believe, in their ultimate intention, the same prophetic *facts* which are the subject of the present Psalm.

The latter verses of this Psalm demand especial attention. For it is from thence that two of the most remarkable and emphatic quotations at any time made by our Lord in the days of His flesh were taken. The general drift of the former of these references⁷ is easily perceived; and in its bearing upon what is called the Church dispensation has been accepted universally by those who love the truth. Jesus, whom the nation and its rulers crucified, and whom God raised from the dead, is revealed from heaven as the head stone of the corner,⁸ the alone Rock of salvation, to the believing sinner. Upon that Rock the Church now rests, and will remain for ever.⁹ But although the confession of that name, which should have been the nation's glory, is now distinctive of the Gentile rather than the Jew,¹ and wrath has long since set in fiercely on the blinded rejecters of their own mercies;² yet it is not to be always thus. The stone which the fathers threw aside, because it could not strengthen *their* foundation of self-righteousness, will yet be brought forth to view, and owned with joyful acclamation, when the veil of Israel's darkness is removed at the appearing of the Lord.

Accordingly, in the second of the two quotations referred to, the Lord, at the conclusion of His solemn denunciation of the unregenerate circumcision, assigns definitely the prophetic limits within which the period of Jerusalem's judicial blindness should have its full effect. They had seen Him, and rejected Him. They should desire and not see Him: "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, ye shall not *see* me henceforth, *until* ye shall say, Blessed is He that *cometh* in the name of the Lord."³ Such is the remarkable

⁷ Matt. xxi. 42.

⁸ Acts iv. 10-12.

⁹ Eph. ii. 20-22.

¹ Rom. ix. 30-33.

² 1 Thess. ii. 15, 16.

³ Matt. xxiii. 38, 39.

language in which the Wisdom of God⁴ expressed Himself, when about to retire to His place until the set time of national repentance should arrive.⁵

It is plainly evident from these words that the same Jerusalem, that once rejected her Redeemer, is hereafter to receive Him. Israel, that is, will be converted *as a nation* to the Lord. But by what means, and under what circumstances will this take place? I need not recapitulate what has been alleged in the progress of these Notes as scriptural evidence on this point. Our question now is rather with the present Psalm, to which there attaches so peculiar an importance from its having been thus quoted by the Lord. Now an attentive perusal of its general contents can scarcely fail to convince a simple mind of the following facts: 1. That the subject of this Psalm is Israel rather than the Church.⁶ 2. That it relates to a mighty national deliverance of a *temporal* kind (verses 10–13). 3. That this deliverance is connected, in the Spirit's view, with the yet greater blessing of emancipation from spiritual bondage—an emergence from natural darkness into spiritual light and life (verses 22–27). 4. That this double grace is effected by the *advent* of the Deliverer in person (verse 26);⁷ and lastly, that by the necessary meaning of the Lord's words above quoted, the messenger of covenanted mercy, who thus revisits with effectual salva-

⁴ Luke xi. 49.

⁵ Hosea v. 15; Isaiah xviii. 4.

⁶ It is well to bear always in remembrance that mankind are classified by God's Spirit in a threefold division, *viz.*, the Jew, the Gentile, and the Church of God. In the millennial age the two former of these distinctions will still continue to exist. The Church will then have (a truth already recognized by faith) no place among the families of earth.

⁷ Together with His saints, as seems indicated by the change from singular to plural in the latter clause of this verse: we have blessed *you*

tion the long forsaken place of His name, is none other than the once rejected stone of Israel's offence.

That nation which once knew Jehovah at Mount Sinai by a sight and contact of judicial dread, and has since beheld the cloudy witness of His presence as it filled the pattern of the heavenly things,⁸ will know Him in the apparent brightness of His majesty when, as the God of truth and love, He openly reveals Himself in Jesus to the well-remembered people of His covenant.

It is the prophetic anticipation of that day that finds its expression in this noble strain. Man's day had run its course of evil, and Jehovah's day was come: a day of terror to His adversaries, but of joyful triumph to the people who had waited patiently for Him. They had waited, though still dark within,⁹ until the dawning of the day in which the Sun of righteousness should shine with healing in His wings. And now the morning of their hope was come (verse 24). They knew Jehovah as their God indeed, in the light of His apparent Christ. For thus had He revealed Himself as their salvation and their strength (verse 27). At this discovery of joy, their praises—long silent while Jerusalem remained a scornful treading of the Gentiles¹—now break freshly forth. The habitation which Moses had desired to prepare,² when he taught their fathers to extol the God who had redeemed them out of Egypt, shall become Jehovah's grateful and abiding rest. He will regard His earthly heritage in the complacency of enduring favour, by virtue of the Lamb's atoning blood.

The ancient formula of praise (verse 29), but little understood by the multitudes who sung it, in dark ignorance of their own heart's cureless evil, will then become

⁸ Exod. xl. 35; 1 Kings viii. 10; Heb. viii. 5.

⁹ Isaiah l. 10; Mal. iv. 4.

¹ Psalm lxxv. 1.

² Exod. xv. 2.

the just expression of far deeper emotions than any outward dispensation of Jehovah's goodness could excite. *The grace of God*, profoundly understood, because received by a conscience made thoroughly alive to the fearful measure of the nation's guilt, will animate with joy unspeakable the hearts of those whose voices will make glad and tuneful melody to the God of their salvation in that day.

The Christian reader will hardly need to be assured, that to him pertains, in a sense yet higher than its primary one, the full enjoyment of this magnificent Psalm. By how much heavenly things excel earthly, by so much does the believer, who rightly estimates his calling, find the volume of his song of deliverance enlarged. Rest with Christ in heavenly places, without hope or desire of earthly prosperity, is the portion of those who now glory in Him who has spoiled principalities and powers.³ Meanwhile, to the heart that groans because of the long deferring of the creature's hope, and that finds all its interests and desires to be alone in Him whose dying love is its redemption from the present world, no utterance of the Spirit of Jesus which revives our too languid expectation of the time of His appearing can ever fail to bring an increase both of patience and of hope.

Nor is it only thus that we are interested in such Psalms. As has been more than once remarked, the things to come are *ours*. We have our part in ransomed Israel's joy, because united evermore to Him who is the Maker and the Fountain of that joy. It is with the holy myriads of His glorified saints that the light of Israel will come.⁴ He will be marvelled at and glorified in them that now believe.⁵

³ Col. ii.

⁴ Zech. xiv. 5.

⁵ 2 Thess. i. 10.

PSALM CXIX.

ON the value of this very remarkable Psalm to the lover of God's testimonies, it is needless to insist. Nothing like a detailed exposition of it can be ventured on in the present work; but a cursory notice of its general contents, with a view to an estimate of its own peculiar character, may not be out of place.

Its tone is in a high degree experimental. Purity of *heart* is not so much in question as purity of *walk*. That is, there is everywhere present the evidence of a faith which, when the grace of God is known in truth, purifies the heart of the believer; but the soul has not yet had revealed to it an object to which it can look in peaceful forgetfulness of itself. The darkness still continues, and the true light is wished for rather than enjoyed.

It is very manifestly the expression of one who discerned in his inner man the excellent perfection of the law,¹ and whose whole heart, therefore, was set on its attempted fulfilment. The zeal of Jehovah, as that which marks distinctively the spiritual man, is plainly visible through every expression of human weakness and distress with which the Psalm abounds. A deep and still increasing consciousness of personal insufficiency—of the vanity of the creature under all circumstances,—finds its relief and compensation in the remembrance of the enduring and unchanging truth of Jehovah as a Saviour in *His* righteousness (verse 40).

But this salvation is an object of desire rather than an

¹ Rom. vii. 12.

enjoyed possession (verse 123). The soul, profoundly versed in the intricacies of human evil, and heavy at the spectacle of prosperous ungodliness, finds hope and refuge in the testimonies of promise; while, under the painful tuition of the law (painful rather because of intrinsic weakness than of proved evil), the prevailing tone of its experience is sadness more than joy. There is a striking union of full integrity of purpose with a pervading sense of failure and distress. The secret workings of a mind whose pureness is of God,² while undergoing the process of actual conflict,³ plainly discover themselves in every part.

Hope is the prevailing element all through. Clouds, fraught heavily with darkness and with sorrow, intervene. But the master principle of the Psalm is confidence in God. *Sin*, in the form of transgression, takes no prominent place. Jehovah's chastenings are owned, indeed, with grateful recognition of their need and their effect; but in general it is the weakness and unprofitableness of the flesh—the experienced inability of the creature to stand without God—that is here displayed, rather than the agony of a self-upbraiding conscience.

One leading feature of this Psalm is its emphatic recognition of the *word of God* in all its breadth and fulness. Commandments, statutes, precepts, and testimonies, are severally specified, and receive like honour in the heart of the true servant of Jehovah. Patient continuance in well-doing is the practical tenor of a walk thus governed. Shrinking from contact with the world of ungodliness is not less strongly marked than are the heart-flowings of pure sympathy towards those who fear the Lord. There is an abiding sense of near temptation and danger; but the testimonies of the Lord, held fast by faith, are as a

² 2 Peter iii.; Rom. vii. *passim*.

³ Gal. v. 17.

continual deliverance—an ever-springing confidence and joy which rises still above the felt measure of trial and distress.

The complete identification of *life* with *obedience* is strikingly put (verses 17, 117). To live and to serve the living God are, in the estimation of the man of God, the self-same thing. Strangership is experienced as the necessary result of practical faithfulness in a world of sin. Darkness and imperfect knowledge of the truth are frequently complained of, while the heart continues fixed with fullest trust on God, awaiting patiently His time.

His truth and acts alone interest the soul. All else is as darkness and death. Evil is hated with an intense abhorrence, because the Lord is loved entirely. Hence sinners are disowned, and the judgments of Jehovah in righteousness make for the refreshment of the believer's hope. Suffering for righteousness' sake is endured. But the Lord is known in comfort, seeing that it is against *Him* that the reproach is levelled which thus lights upon the servant of His name. The proud oppressors are appealed from to Jehovah, to whom, as the faithful Creator, alone pertained the right of ownership and government of the creature. His rights were denied by the wicked, who willingly forgot Him. Persecution thus becomes the necessary accompaniment of faithfulness. But the word of Jehovah is settled in heaven. The earth also is His.

Still, hope is deferred. Hence fainting of heart ensues, with sore trial of faith and patience, while wickedness exalts itself in power against Jehovah's name. But faithful endurance continues to the end, through the sustaining power of God.

The entire Psalm affords a moral portraiture of "an

Israelite indeed"⁴—an inward Jew.⁵ There are in it many passages which are applicable in their full extent to the JUST ONE⁶ alone. But in its prophetic aspect it relates, I believe, to the suffering remnant of the nation as its true subject. Its contrarieties of expression are on this supposition quite intelligible. The same Spirit of Christ who notes in confession the wanderings of the people, can also vindicate the devotedness of the holy seed, who stick to the testimonies and do not wander from the precepts which they love. The Psalm may, therefore, be regarded as His voice pleading in the latter-day remnant of them that fear the Lord, on the ground of the everlasting promises. The traditions of men are given up, and their heart is turned in truth to seek Jehovah and His goodness in the latter day.⁷

As a companion to the believer now, in his standing character, as a man of God,—desiring thus to shape his walk in practical holiness in the day of evil, and consoling

⁴ John i. 47.

⁵ Rom. ii. 29.

⁶ There are others which, in my judgment, forbid decisively our regarding the Lord Jesus as the proper subject of this Psalm. Some have been so struck by the suitableness of much of its language as an expression of Messiah's experience in the days of His flesh as to endeavour, by means of new translations, to remove the obvious difficulties which are presented in verses 67, 71, 176 to this scheme of interpretation. As to these attempts, such of them as have fallen under my own inspection, are to me utterly unsatisfactory. Without discussing here at large these proposed alterations, as it respects their critical soundness, I may convey to the simple reader an idea of the hazardous nature of such hypotheses, by acquainting or reminding him (as the case may be) that the language in the original of verse 176, "I have gone astray," &c., is similar exactly to that of Isaiah liii. 6. What straying means in the latter passage will hardly be disputed. Nor will any one, I think, who notes the large use which the Spirit elsewhere makes of the same word הָלַךְ to express "wandering" in a moral sense, adventure lightly on a departure in this passage from its usual meaning.

⁷ Hosea iii. 5.

himself while in the house of his pilgrimage with the melody of God's fixed purposes in Christ (verse 54),—the value of this Psalm cannot be overrated, though its prevailing tone is plainly diverse from that of Christian confidence and rejoicing, as the realized effects of finished grace.

PSALM CXX.

A SONG of degrees.¹ He who sings it has been heard in his distress. The Psalm is thus a memorial of Jehovah's faithfulness to His prisoners of hope, and seems in its general language to rehearse the special topics of that supplication to which answer has been made.

The voice of this cry, heard often doubtless from God's suffering elect, comes finally, I think, from Jehovah's remnant while yet in the wilderness of the nations. It is touchingly descriptive of the sorrows felt and painfully endured by the heart of a stranger, detained reluctantly (until the hour of deliverance should come) among those whose ways and words were a daily vexing of soul to such as feared the Lord. Mesech and Kedar may be accepted in a general sense for the alien enemies of Israel.

¹ שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת This title is borne by the present Psalm and those which follow, to Psalm cxxiv. inclusive. As to the true meaning of this inscription, it seems impossible at the present day to determine it conclusively. Viewing the general drift and connexion of the fifteen Psalms which are thus entitled, the judgment expressed by some that they belong more especially to the period of Israel's *ascent* out of the wilderness of the nations, to re-occupy in peace the land and city of their fathers, appears at least as good as any other conjecture. Authentic explanation is not to be obtained. With respect to the authorship of the Songs of degrees, ten are anonymous, four bear the name of David, and one (Psalm cxxvii.) is ascribed to Solomon.

The Psalm presents difficulties in its construction.² Nor is it easy to assign to it a definite prophetic action. Its moral application to such as now, by patient continuance in well-doing, endure the reproach of Christ, is sufficiently clear. Many a calumniated follower of Jesus may have found in the last three verses the comfort of the Spirit's sympathy with his distress. Still, the proper character of the Psalm is evidently Jewish.

PSALM CXXI.

THIS most exquisite Psalm divides itself into two unequal parts. In the first two verses there is the confident expression of a trustful assurance,³ which calls forth, as its Divine response, the rich and varied benediction which fills the remainder of the Psalm.

The mountains⁴ had been once the trust of Israel; when, in their day of pride, they had leaned upon the creature more than the Creator. But that help had only been to them a pitfall of destruction. They had stumbled and fallen, and been snared and broken. And now, awaking from the long and dishonoured slumber of their night of blindness, they turn to seek for Israel's Saviour in the alone Maker of heaven and of earth.⁵

Nor do they turn to Him in vain. A more than

² The marginal translation of verses 3, 4, is perhaps to be preferred.

³ The first verse has not, I think, been happily rendered in our Authorised Version. The marginal translation is decidedly superior. Still better, because more exact, is the version of DE WETTE: "*Ich hebe mein Auge zu den Bergen; woher wird mir Hülfe Kommen?*"

⁴ I take the word *הַהָרִים* in a sense not exclusively literal. It seems rather to stand here as a metaphor of human grandeur and power.

⁵ Compare Jer. iii. 23; Hosea xiv.

gracious answer is ready on His part who waited to be gracious, and whose affliction had been also in their grief, although in righteous judgment He had hidden from them the shining of His countenance in their day of unrepented sin.⁶ Because of their renunciation of creature confidence, He is now enabled to declare Himself again as Israel's keeper. He had been this through the long night of national apostasy, suffering no grain to fall to the ground of that wheat which He was sifting for Himself.⁷ And now He who had watched over them in displeasure, for their hurt, was turned to be the vigilant securer of His people's rest. Temporal and spiritual blessings are pledged to them alike. The seventh verse contains the climax. In the last verse, a reference is made to the set time⁸ at which this most sweet prophecy of peace and blessing shall take effect upon its destined and well-remembered object.

Meanwhile, let the believer, whose light of salvation is in the face of Jesus Christ, delight himself abundantly in meditating on the manner of that custody with which his soul is kept secure from every ill, by the faithful vigilance and power of a sleepless Saviour. Faith must be in active operation, or this Psalm will not be truly enjoyed. But one look of faith, directed in simplicity to Jesus, discovers Him to be the faithful Shepherd of the sheep.⁹ He *is* this. He will *act* in character. Happy are we if, with simple trust, we do its best honour to His love by unreservedly reposing on it. His Spirit elsewhere says, "I would have you without care." We find the reason of this exhortation in such a view as He has here presented to us of the Divine Shepherd and Bishop of our souls.

⁶ Isaiah lxiii.; Jer. xxx. 20.

⁸ Acts i. 7.

⁷ Amos ix. 9.

⁹ John x.

PSALM CXXII.

A VERY striking as well as lovely view is here prophetically given of the fulness of terrestrial happiness, which is to be Israel's portion in the latter day. It is a song of peace and rest, of quietness and assurance, the sanction and sustaining power of which is the name of Jehovah, whose presence in His own house is the gracious evidence of His having returned with mercies to Jerusalem. That the *earthly* Jerusalem, and not the heavenly, is the subject of this Psalm is very evident; for the tribes do not go up to the latter to give thanks, nor are the thrones of David's house set there;¹ nor, lastly, is any house or temple of God discernible in that abiding city of His rest.²

Verses 3, 4 express the perfect union in blessing of the entire nation. Ephraim no longer envies Judah, nor does Judah vex Ephraim. They flow together as a testimony to Israel.³

Verse 5 records the royal pre-eminence of Jerusalem.

¹ The throne of God and of the Lamb is there. (Rev. xxii. 1.) The thrones of *David* are the seats of Israel's dominion, which is a thing not of heaven but of earth.

² Rev. xxi. 22.

³ עֲרִיט לְיִשְׂרָאֵל These words refer, I believe, to the confluence of Israel's tribes to their ordered assemblies thrice in the year, and not to the *place* of their assembly. The word "unto" is a gratuitous interpolation, which mars the sense. Μαρτύριον τῷ Ἰσραήλ.—LXX., is an exact translation. (Compare HIERON. et VULG.) DE WETTE'S version, "*Nach Israel's Brauch,*" is loose, but conveys the meaning more correctly than our own. It is the perpetually recurring memorial to Jehovah, the God of Israel's mercy, that seems to be intended, rather than the appointed place of His worship. The latter is emphatically specified in the Psalm at large, especially verses 1, 9.

The seat of judgment is there. The King of righteousness and King of peace will hold His court of earthly dominion in the place which witnessed once His shame. *Thrones* more than one are there. For there are chosen assessors of that judgment, for whom especial grace has set apart that seat.⁴ Nothing can be clearer than the language of this Psalm as a prophetic testimony of the very plainest description to the future restoration of the kingdom to Israel.⁵

With verse 6 we may compare Isaiah lx. 12; lxvi. 10, 11; Psalm xlviii. 2. Prosperity is never made to depend upon men's loving the heavenly Jerusalem. *That* is not preached in the world, but Christ. There is a sense in which such a Psalm as this may be applied to heavenly things. But it is safer, and infinitely more profitable, to endeavour to mark the riches of our portion in Christ according to the sure lines of blessedness with which the Spirit of revelation has described them, than to be seeking in Scriptures of palpably Jewish intention for the ornaments of the Lamb's heavenly bride. God is jealous for His *own name*. If we do not give Him glory as the God of Israel, we are surely in danger of that snare from which the chosen expounder of God's dispensational wisdom so earnestly endeavoured to preserve the Church.⁶

PSALM CXXIII.

A PRAYER truly applicable, as far as it is an expression of hopeful patience, to the Church when in her honoured place of wrongful suffering for Jesus' sake. But in the leading tone of its complaint it *differs materially* from that

⁴ Luke xii. 29, 30; Isaiah xxxii. 1. ⁵ Acts i. 6, 7. ⁶ Rom. xi. 25.

which the Spirit of adoption now puts into the hearts of God's saints. That Christians should be exceedingly filled with contempt is their very highest honour and chief joy, so long as it is the Master's reproach that they endure;⁷ for it belongs to their calling by the grace of God that they should drink a portion of their Master's cup.⁸ With a Jew it was precisely the opposite of this; so far, that is, as the respective dispensations are concerned. But the sufferings of godliness at the hands of ungodliness, have a standing moral resemblance in every dispensation and at all times. Hence the latter-day Christian, whose attitude, in the midst of general defection from the truth, is prayerful waiting for the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ,⁹ and whose heaviness of heart is very far more because of the estrangement which truth makes within the professing household of faith, than on account of the direct hostility of that which denies without compromise the name of Christ,¹ may find a sweet yet solemn consolation in this Psalm.

Its true subject is, I doubt not, the despised remnant of Judah, who, immediately before the Lord arises from His place, are brought more low than ever beneath the feet of the scornful men who dwell at ease in Jerusalem. They will be despised exceedingly by those who will think scorn of the hope of them that wait truly for Jehovah, while their own hearts are fattened on the lying delusion of the covenant with death, on which their momentary prosperity is founded.² But the Lord is the avenger of such as suffer for His name. He will have respect unto the lowly, and will hear their cry.

⁷ Acts v. 41; 1 Peter iv. 14.

⁸ Phil. i. 29; Rom. viii. 36.

⁹ Jude, *passim*.

¹ 2 Tim. ii. 19-21.

² Isaiah xxviii. 14, 15.

PSALM CXXIV.

A SONG for the escaped of Israel,³ to be sung in the day of the Lord's deliverance. It was from the wrath of man that they had been delivered. Men had oppressed them. Their conflict had been with flesh and blood, though Satanic power had stirred up and directed the rage of the oppressor. But the Name in which they put their trust had been their effectual deliverance.

A Christian's conflict, so far as it attaches to him characteristically as a partaker of the heavenly calling, is not with flesh and blood.⁴ He is indeed to beware of men; he is to reckon on persecution, if his purpose be a godly walk in Christ. He may have to suffer outward injury as an immediate infliction of the wrath of man. Nay, until Jesus comes to assert in power His rights as Lord of all, the believer's outward sufferings in Satan's world must be proportioned to his faith. For the disciple's honour is to taste the Master's cup.⁵ But his conflicts *as a man in Christ* are with spiritual wickedness in heavenly places. He has to fight for Christ against the world, the devil, and the flesh. In the van of this last enemy he finds *himself*—his old and cureless nature of corruption. The whole armour of God is furnished for a species of contest which supposes for the soldier of Christ a standing materially different from what is commonly indicated in the Psalms. On the other hand, under the actual pressure of persecution, the experience of the sufferers in *any* dispensation is prac-

³ Isaiah iv. 2; x. 20.⁴ Eph. vi. 12.⁵ John xv. 20.

tically alike. Both suffer for truth and righteousness' sake; while the help of each is in the alone faithful Creator and Deliverer of His saints.

To resume. Man had set himself against God. But as the Maker of heaven and earth He had avenged His name (verse 8). The nations were angry;⁶ but there sat One in the heavens who laughed that wrath to scorn.⁷ Israel's folly had forged for his neck the weighty chain of Gentile oppression, but covenanted grace had abounded over his transgression. Jehovah was found to be on Israel's side, because it was with that name that He had clothed Himself in ancient promise, as with a garment of majesty and praise. The God of all the earth is *Israel's* Holy One while earth and heaven last.⁸

PSALM CXXV.

THE starting point in the action of this Psalm, regarded prophetically, is the settlement of Israel safely in Immanuel's land. Faith's eye had always rested on Jehovah as the eternal refuge of His people.⁹ But the faithful promises have now been turned to facts. *From henceforth* He will be about His once-forgotten people, as the ancient mountains round about Jerusalem.¹

But the people are to dwell alone.² As the righteous nation, keeping the truth, the lot of their inheritance is separate from Gentile participation. The land is Im-

⁶ Rev. xi. ⁷ Psalm ii. ⁸ Jer. xxxi. 35-37; Isaiah liv. 5.

⁹ Psalm xc.; Deut. xxxiii. 27. ¹ Hosea ii. 23.

² Numbers xxiii. 9. Israel will never lose its distinctive peculiarity as the nation of earthly pre-eminence, even when in the wide extension of millennial blessing God will bind in the same bond of mercy other nations with His own. (Compare Isaiah xix. 23-25.)

manuel's, and they, as His people, are called to be holy (verse 3).

Uprightness of heart will be the practical test of citizenship in Israel in the millennial age.³ The flesh will not be changed, but Satan will be bound. Instead of the active influence of His temptations on the old nature, there will be the ever present and abundant power of the Spirit. The visible effulgence also of Divine glory will be there, to shame and abash every motion of natural sin, and to draw out and invigorate all gracious affections. The just Lord, in the midst of the city of His choice,⁴ will be their light and covering of defence. The case of sin is, however, provided for; but in judgment, not in mercy. For it is the reign of *righteousness*, though mercy be the sure foundation of Jehovah's dealings with His people.

Verse 5 appears to contemplate the discovery of treachery and backsliding as a thing possible even in the land.⁵ But assuredly the nation in general will be a righteous nation. Nothing is clearer from Scripture than this. Still there may be (analogously to what takes place in the Church) a disciplinary chastisement needed at times by men who, though so richly blessed, remain as yet in a body of unchanged flesh. But after the purgation of Zion's filth by the Spirit of burning,⁶ the root and branches of Israel will be alike holy. As a nation they will be willingly subject to the sceptre of righteousness. For the law of Jehovah will be written on their hearts, and those hearts will themselves be *new*. Peace will abide on such.⁷

This is plainly a millennial Psalm. In the meanwhile the Christian knows full well the force and blessing of the

³ Isaiah lxx. 20; lx. 21; lxi. 3.

⁴ Zeph. iii. 5, 15, 17.

⁵ Compare Isaiah lxx. 20.

⁶ Isaiah i. 28; iv. 4; Zech. xiii. 8, 9.

⁷ Compare Gal. vi. 16.

first two verses. The Lord is ever about the people of His love. With an eternal stability the blood-cleansed vessels of Divine mercy abide unremovably upon the tried Foundation of their hope.

PSALM CXXVI.

A MOST beautiful little Psalm. The bold flight of prophetic anticipation here gathers in, for the refreshment of them that wait still with tearful patience as prisoners of hope, the sweet fruits of accomplished deliverance and victory.

Its language can with no propriety be applied to the return from Babylon. There was nothing in the circumstances of that return or in its results, as they are detailed in Scripture, which may worthily be regarded as a fulfilment of verse 2. There was little to remind the heathen of the mighty working of the God of Jacob, in the permissive return of such of Cyrus' Jewish subjects as might be so disposed, to the wasted land of their fathers, without prejudice to the still acknowledged rights of the sceptre of Gentile supremacy.⁸

In the latter verses we have, I believe, a reference to the time of Israel's repentance, when they will sow the seed of future joy in the fallow ground of a repentant heart, which Jehovah will have given them in the latter days.⁹ But there is probably a more particular allusion to the suffering remnant who will have to bear in *Zion itself* their weeping testimony in the midst of blasphemy and persecution. They will sigh and cry for the abominations of that city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt. And those

⁸ Ezra; Nehem.

⁹ Jer. xxxi. *passim*, especially verse 9; Jer. l. 4; Hosea iii. 5.

tears will fall into the Lord's bottle as a precious memorial, to be acknowledged in due time.

But in a fuller, deeper sense, the sower in tears is the Man of sorrows Himself. Believers know Him thus. He has accomplished, in the sore travail of His soul, the seed time of affliction which is to bear its satisfying harvest when He shall again appear as the reaper of His own reward. He will fill His bosom with sheaves in that day of joy. The garner of His gladness will be filled to overflowing. By how much His affliction surpassed the natural measure of human grief, when He underwent for our sakes the dread realities of death and judgment; by so much shall the fulness of His pure delight as the eternal blesser of His people excel their joy (yet what a measure, too, is theirs!) whose sum of blessedness is to be for ever with the Lord.

Specifically, however, the subject of this Psalm is Israel rather than the Church. The Bridegroom of the Church is also the Shepherd of Israel; to be manifested in both these characters in a little while. The lambs of His ancient fold will be gathered to His bosom, who will seek His flock upon the mountains in the dark and cloudy day.¹ He will turn the shame of His afflicted people, who yet cleave to Him, to glory. Like rivers in the south shall be the replenishing of the waste places of Immanuel's land with the rich fatness of Jehovah's blessing.

In their moral application to the believer, as a partaker of the afflictions of the gospel, the last two verses are full of sweetest comfort and encouragement. Sowing in hope is characteristically descriptive of true spiritual service. The harvest surely awaits the labourer who does not faint.² There is much in every godly man's experience to induce

¹ Isaiah xl. ; Ezek. xxxiv. 11-15.

² Gal. vi. 9.

faintness, but the God of patience and of hope is the sustainer of faith's husbandry. Bread must be cast in the sowing of the word of grace, as if to waste, upon the thankless bosom of the sea of nations;³ but it is not lost. Its return will be with increase at the time appointed. Long patience must, indeed, be had; yet the morning of the Lord is drawing nigh. In that day it will be manifested in a wondrous sort, that they whose labour has not been to please themselves, but for His sake who died for them, and rose again, have not bestowed their little strength in vain.⁴

PSALM CXXVII.

WITH one exception⁵ this is the only Psalm which bears on its title the name of Solomon.

It is a very lovely expression of wise-hearted peace and contentment,⁶ wherein the entire vanity of the creature is recognized by those who are delighting themselves in the overflowing blessings of Divine goodness. It is under the sceptre of Jesus, the true Solomon, that the sweet security of unmolested peace shall be tasted by the people, who will need no more the refuge of defenced cities in a land whose living bulwark is the Lord of hosts.⁷

The former generation will have passed away, and the fountain of Israel will send forth fresh streams of life and happiness, when its waters shall have been healed by the effectual virtue of regenerating grace.

The house and the city are the Lord's. He will be trusted as the builder and the keeper of His people's rest.

³ Eccles. xi. 1.

⁴ 1 Cor. iv. 5; xv. 58.

⁵ Psalm lxxii.

⁶ Isaiah xxxii. 17, 18.

⁷ Zech. ii. 4; Ezek. xxxiv. 25; xxxvi. 10, 11.

Beneath the covert of His wings sweet sleep will visit His beloved ones. In the second verse there is an allusion, I believe, to the dropping of the manna around the sleeping hosts of Israel in the wilderness.⁸ His people's portion shall be fat. With royal dainties He will satisfy the household of His care.⁹

The latter-day happiness and prosperity of the earthly Zion appear to be especially prefigured in the beautiful language of the concluding verses. Known again as a wife of youth, in the covenant of a wedlock which shall never more be broken, her children will be worthy of Him who is both her Maker and her Spouse.¹ They will be no more a shame and a reproach on account of their degeneracy. Everywhere they shall be acknowledged among the nations as the seed which the Lord hath blessed.² With the last verse we may compare Zech. ix. 13, 14.

To the Christian who, as a child of redemption, sees nothing in the wide sphere of natural things that is not Christ's, and toils contentedly beneath the appointed burden of his days of vanity, until He come who is to change for him dishonour and mortality to deathless glory and delight, the earlier verses of this Psalm are full of sweetness and comfort. To be careful for *nothing*, in the

⁸ כֵּן יִתֵּן לְיָדָיו שְׁנָא "Dasselbe (sc. Brodt) giebt er seinem Geliebten im Schlafe."—DE WETTE. Similarly LUTHER: "Denn seinen Freunden giebt ers schlafend." I prefer this to our version. It is not sleep, but *bread*, that is the common object of human anxiety and toil in our days of natural vanity. (Prov. xvi. 26; Eccles. vi. 7.) But for the people whom Jehovah takes in hand to bless, His lands shall give her increase with a bounteous profusion unextorted by laborious toil. The plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth the seed. The corn and the wine, which had been smitten in the day of controversy and rebuke, shall be multiplied with plenteous increase in the day when Israel's captivity is turned. (Amos ix. 13-15; Joel ii. 18, 19.)

⁹ Gen. xlix. 20.

¹ Isaiah liv. 5.

² Isaiah lxi. 4-9.

calm and holy assurance that God is for our sakes caring for *everything*, is the perfection of that confidence which is well-pleasing in the Father's sight.³

PSALM CXXVIII.

WE have now an individualized presentation of the same general blessings which form the subject of the foregoing Psalm. The true Israelite is here contemplated in the light of his own particular portion of Jehovah's favour. Beneath the vine and the fig-tree of realized domestic peace, the man whom God enriches with His blessing, and satisfies with His bounteous goodness, is here shown to us in the tranquil enjoyment of a sanctified earthly rest.

The cause of his contentment is revealed in the opening verse of the Psalm. The blessedness described is that of the man that feareth Jehovah and that walketh in His ways. And Israel will walk both willingly and prosperously in those ways of blessing when, on the fleshy tables of their hearts, there has been engraven by the Spirit of the living God the perfect testimony of His truth, according to the tenor of new covenant promise. The inward Jew⁴ will bear on him abundantly the outward tokens of the praise of God. There is nothing of heaven in either of these Psalms. The blessings specified are distinctly and exclusively of earth. Heavenly things stand connected with them beyond all doubt; for heaven shall be opened in that day, and angels shall ascend and descend upon the Son of man;⁵ but the centre of the scene presented here is Jerusalem on earth. The joys enumerated have no place in the incorruptible inheritance above.⁶

³ Phil. iv. 6; 1 Peter v. 7.

⁴ Rom. ii. 29.

⁵ John i. 51.

⁶ Luke xx. 34-36.

Quite as clearly the present Psalm fails of direct application to the Christian in his pilgrim state. Neither fulness of days,⁷ nor numerous offspring, nor temporal influence is attached as a covenanted result to faithful walking in Christ Jesus. The reason is simple. The believer, as a partaker of the heavenly calling, is a pilgrim while *on earth*. He is not such in a particular locality, or under special circumstances merely, but by virtue of the truth which joins him in heavenly places to the ascended Christ, and teaches him to glory in His cross while here below. To be earthly-minded now is as much to God's dishonour as it will be to His praise, when the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ. The gracious blessings of the Father of mercies are upon His children ever. But the Spirit's warning now is, that "The time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it;⁸ for the fashion of this world passeth away."⁹

⁷ Life and good days are lawful objects of Christian desire. For godliness hath promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come. (1 Peter iii. 10-12; 1 Tim. iv. 8.) The living God, who is worshipped in the Spirit by His children, "giveth us richly all things to enjoy." But what is the measure of contentment to the Spirit of adoption? We find it in 1 Tim. vi. 6-8. The moral application of the quotation in 1 Peter iii. is very broad and clear. But nothing can be plainer than that the characteristic accompaniment of Christian faithfulness is persecution and dishonour, rather than outward prosperity and the praise of men (2 Tim. iii. 12; Gal. vi. 12; 1 Peter iv. 12-14), &c.

⁸ Ὅς μὴ καταχρώμενοι. I do not think that "abusing" is an appropriate translation of this word in the passage above quoted, though it may be difficult to express (without a periphrasis) the meaning more exactly. It is evident from the context that the caution is directed against

Such Psalms as these are really void of meaning on any other supposition than that of a coming dispensation of terrestrial blessedness, the crown and flower of which will be Immanuel's land. They are, in other words, important and emphatic, as well as most interesting, testimonies to the millennial age and its effects.

PSALM CXXIX.

THE subject of this Psalm is the righteousness of Jehovah as the avenger of His own name and the word of His truth, on behalf of the poor and oppressed people whose trust, amid the darkness of affliction, had been in the faithfulness of His covenanted mercy.

The intrinsic condition of those who are the subjects of deliverance is not here in question. It is the celebration, rather, of the holy award of judgment against that which had exalted itself, both in purpose and in act, against the counsels of the Lord. Hence the retrospect of Israel's history (verses 1-3) is not taken with reference to the nation's conduct as the professed people of God, although it was their own way which had procured to them these afflictions at the hand of the enemy. What is reviewed is the long-standing and aggravated injury and reproach which had been cast on them by their godless enemies, who, while they served unwittingly Jehovah's purpose, who used them as the rod of His displeasure in chastening

the using of present things (by a misconception of Christian liberty) for themselves, and not to the Lord; exercising, as it were, an absolute ownership over that which they really hold in trust for Him, and mistaking the time of patience for the time of rest.—*Notes on First Corinthians, in loc.*

⁹ 1 Cor. vii. 29-31.

His own, thought loftily of their own power, and ascribed their greatness to themselves. Meanwhile, their eye was evil towards Zion, because they deemed that Israel's prosperity was the diminishing of themselves.

But in lifting up their horn as Israel's oppressors, they had trampled on the rights and despised the name of Jehovah. For, from the youth-time of Israel, when He loosed for him the bands of Egypt, God had known the people as His own, and had openly proclaimed their name as His memorial before the nations of the earth. In devising cruelties against the seed of Jacob, the haters of Zion had consulted shame and ruin to themselves. For now their cords had been for ever cut asunder, while themselves remained a withering memorial of His truth and power, whose judgments while afar off they had slighted and despised.

The Psalm does not appear to point prophetically to any especial crisis. Its general terms would suit the catastrophe of Gog,¹ as well as that of the confederate armies of the premillennial beast.

PSALM CXXX.

A VERY precious Psalm. It is the truthful and gracious utterance to which the Holy Ghost, as the Spirit of grace and supplication, will move the humbled and contrite hearts of Israel's remnant in the latter day. They wait for redemption. And therefore to Jehovah, as the Redeemer of Israel (verse 7), they pour forth the desires of their hopeful though afflicted hearts.

In principle we find in the present Psalm what has been

¹ Ezek. xxxviii.

many a time expressed to Godward by those who have held the position of a waiting remnant in the day of rebuke. Such language, doubtless, found an utterance from Anna's lips, and from the lips of those who then were joined with her in prayerful waiting for the Hope of Israel.² Thus also had the earlier prophets felt and spoken when, amid distresses and afflictions, they had borne their witness to the coming day of promise. But its complete realization will only be when, in the closing hour of Israel's night of blindness, the fore-ordained vessels of Jehovah's mercy shall be brought, with contrite spirit, to discern their need of a Divine redemption from their sins. They will cling, as the children to whose fathers God had spoken in His truth, to the sure promises of a mercy (verse 5) which (long fulfilled in heaven in the living covenant of peace) will then be ripe for its effectual manifestation to the nation for which Jesus died.

The point of chief interest in the Psalm is the deep consciousness which the suppliants express of the simple helplessness of their condition as *sinner*s before God. They cleave to Him in a believing discernment of His covenant name of mercy, while profoundly feeling their entire personal unfitness for His presence. Hence the promise is their stay. The declared character of Jehovah, according to the ancient revelation of His goodness, is the ground of all their hope.³ Forgiveness belongs to God, and they feel that forgiveness is their need. Iniquities encompass them; and in the privacy of their hearts to the past error of their way, they feel and acknowledge that enquiries of judgment on Jehovah's part would shut out hope from all. They find themselves in the depths; nor can they lift themselves from thence. Their own iniquity has placed

² Luke ii. 38.

³ Exod. xxxiv. 6.

them there, and now another hand than theirs must put forth strength to save them from the fruit of their own way. They had struggled long against the God of truth. Their fathers had gone zealously about to establish their own righteousness; but the result had been to deepen still more hopelessly the pit of their perdition. These things they now perceive and acknowledge with understanding hearts. Instead of work, their cry is now for *mercy*. *Plenteous redemption* may alone relieve them from the confessed abundance of their sin.

Such is always the crisis of God's work of salvation, whether in a nation or an individual. That He may act effectually as a Saviour, He must bring to pass within the soul a complete and self-renouncing confession of His name, according to the glory of that name, as the pledge and witness both of grace and righteousness—of pure, unalterable holiness, yet of omnipotent mercy and forgiveness in the absoluteness and perfection of Divine sovereignty. The smitten sinner thus learns to bow in truth before the High God—justifying Him in His sayings, while cleaving, with unshaken confidence, to that covenanted grace which forms the necessary basis of all God's dealings with His ruined creature in the way of blessing. It is thus that the Holy Ghost will work, as the Spirit of convincing truth, upon the hearts of the preserved of Israel, when their time of repentance has arrived.

The Christian, who has tasted grace in Jesus, stands now upon another and widely different ground. It is not for forgiveness that he waits. For in the precious blood of Jesus, that is assured already to His faith.⁴ He stands in finished peace, because He stands *in Christ*. His hope is not *to be* redeemed from His iniquities; but that the work

⁴ Eph. i. 7.

of redemption, whose completeness is Divinely witnessed to his spirit by the Holy Ghost, may be brought to its appointed crown and triumph in the transformation of his mortal body to the likeness of the Son of God.⁵ His "blessed hope" is Jesus, whose glorious appearing only tarries yet a little while; and whom, meanwhile, he knows as his Redeemer from *all* iniquity—as his eternal righteousness and sanctification in the sight of God.⁶

A Christian's true and natural place is not in the depths here spoken of, but in the sunshine of the hill of God.⁷ For lower than all depths of mortal experience has Jesus once descended, self-laden with our sins. He has arisen thence again. He has ascended, as the witness of effectual redemption, to a height above the heavens. And thither has He borne that Church for which He gave Himself to death. We are lifted therefore from these deeps, by faith in Him who is the Resurrection and the Life. As justified heirs of salvation, we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

But while such is the believer's *true position* as a partaker of redemption, his *practical experience* may at times be such as to render the general language of this Psalm of exactest application to his case. Hope may have faded; and that peace, which should abidingly possess the once purged conscience, may have been disturbed by conscious failure in the path of obedience. A soul thus painfully in conflict may find sweet consolation in a Psalm which so aptly expresses the feelings of a heart that seeks again, by a recurrence to the changeless covenant of peace, the renewed enjoyment of its portion in the love of Christ. Verse 4 is more especially to be noted in this practical relation. It is only when the weight of Divine mercy in

⁵ Rom. viii. 29; Phil. iii. 21. ⁶ Titus ii. 14; 1 Cor. i. 30.

⁷ Heb. xii. 22.

Christ is felt consciously in the spirit of the saint—abounding absolutely over all the measures and degrees of human sin—that the fear of Jehovah's name is effectually learned. As God is known, so sin is understood. It is then hated with a hatred and a dread proportioned to the admiration and deep heart-filling peace and joy with which the thoroughly restored believer regards the manner of the Father's love.

With verses 5, 6, the Christian, whose calling is to wait for the Son of God from heaven, may compare Rom. xiii. 11–14; Heb. x. 37–39; Rev. xxii. 20, 21. For before the hope of Israel can be realized, the hope of the Church must be fulfilled. Jesus is gone into heaven. He will presently return from thence, to claim the Bride which He has chosen for Himself, and to perform His faithful sayings to the patient keepers of that word which faileth not.³

PSALM CXXXI.

ALTHOUGH the mind turns, as it were, instinctively towards the meek and lowly One,¹ on reading this brief but sweet expression of humble trust and patient waiting upon God, its true subject seems rather to be Israel under the power of the Spirit of grace. Thus regarded, it affords a blessed contrast to a former state of the same Israel, when his pride testified to his face, and with a heart untamed by repeated visitations of sore judgment, he refused to turn and seek the God of his salvation.²

Morally, this Psalm presents the qualifications for an entrance into the kingdom of God.³ We have to *submit*

¹ John xiv. 3; Rev. iii. 10.

¹ Matt. xi. 29; Phil. ii. 7.

² Hosea v. 11; vii. 10.

³ Matt. xviii. 3.

ourselves to the righteousness of God.⁴ Israel has hitherto refused to do this. In going about to establish his own righteousness, he has haughtily exercised himself in a thing that is above him. In the pride of his stout-heartedness, he has despised the precious things of his salvation. Walking in a fancied competence of strength, he has stumbled, and is fallen upon the Stone of his offence. The very God of salvations has become a gin and snare to the perverse and disobedient people who falsely claim to know Jehovah still.⁵ But here the nation seems to be presented to us in its humbled state; made contrite, and so capable of blessing from the Lord;⁶ prepared thus for entrance into the kingdom of God, which, whether in its heavenly or earthly sphere, can be seen and entered only by the new-born children of the Spirit.⁷ The closing verse appears to refer to the decisive point of time ("from henceforth," &c.) when Ephraim, sitting in sound mind at Messiah's feet, will say, "What have I to do any more with idols?" because of the tasted sweetness of Jehovah's grace.⁸

PSALM CXXXII.

THE afflictions of David are here made the occasion of an appeal to Jehovah's faithfulness for the performance of His sworn promise of blessing and prosperity to the throne of His Anointed. The promise had seemed to fail; instead of prosperity there had come affliction. Zion was a place of desolations rather than a city of solemnities. Still the covenant remained; Jehovah had sworn *in truth* unto David (verse 11). Nor would He turn from the word that

⁴ Rom. x.

⁵ Isaiah viii. 14, 15.

⁶ Isaiah lvii. 15.

⁷ John iii. 3-5.

⁸ Hosea xiv. 8.

He had spoken, for He is not a man that He should repent. The faith of Israel's believing remnant will hold fast this word. They will stick unto His testimonies who cannot lie. The latter-day pleadings with Jehovah will be upon no other ground.

The two principles of law and grace have each its illustration in this Psalm. There is the building of David and the building of God. Hence we have (verse 12) a recital of conditional promise to the natural seed; while the elective will of Jehovah, who chooses Zion for a perpetual habitation (verses 13, 14), is declared as the security of a Divine fulfilment of the *condition* not less than the promises of the covenant, in the Person of the Lord Christ. The horn of David is to bud *there* (verse 17). Jehovah has ordained for His servant a lamp of everlasting brightness in the manifested glory of Him whose look of majesty is as when the sun shineth in his strength.¹ The crown of earthly promise will flourish upon the true seed of David, while His enemies shall be withered with a perpetual reproach at His appearing who will order His dominion with a sceptre of righteousness and truth (verse 18).²

It is interesting to compare verse 9 with 16. Their desire is: "Let *thy* priests be clothed with *righteousness*." The answer of God is: "I will deck *her* priests with *salvation*." In the language of the new covenant, "salvation" and "righteousness" are almost convertible terms.³ But there seems a peculiar significancy in the above adjustment of the terms. Righteousness becometh the priests of Him who is the righteous God; while, as to the *manner* of that righteousness, it is by the saving grace of His own mercy to His people and toward the place of His own name.

¹ Rev. i. 16.

² Isaiah ix. 6, 7.

³ Isaiah xli. 10; see also 2 Chron. vi. 41.

The present Psalm is closely related, as to its general drift, to Psalm lxxxix. Here, however, the ostensive centre of the subject is rather Zion than David. Jehovah has loved *Zion*. In *her* king He will exalt the horn of David. Joy and salvation are to be known there by His saints; while the source of the blessing, as well as its unfailling security, is Jesus, the anointed and glorified seed of David—the fulfilment of Jehovah's unrepented oath.

Much of this Psalm is both obviously and richly applicable to the new covenant blessing of the Church, as come already to Mount Zion.⁴ But most clearly it is, in the main, a prophecy of earthly things. David's throne is not in heaven, nor ever will be, though He who is to sit on it be there. We are come in spirit to Mount Zion, as the gracious contrast to that former mount which might be touched. But it is to the *heavenly* Jerusalem that we are come; Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant, is *there*. For those who have received the Lord, the wish of David has been gained already in the revelation of his seed. The temple of Christ's body, once destroyed by wicked hands, He has Himself raised up,⁵ and in its mystic expansion it is to abide for ever as the acceptable dwelling of Jehovah.⁶ Meanwhile the anxieties of David are in spirit and principle repeated in every right-hearted saint, whose desire, as a follower of Christ, must be to toil and suffer patiently until God's building be complete.⁷

⁴ Heb. xii. 22.

⁵ John ii. 19.

⁶ Eph. ii. 21.

⁷ Col. i. 24; 1 Cor. xi. 1.

PSALM CXXXIII.

THIS exquisite little Psalm appears to express prophetically the lasting blessedness of the united tribes of Israel, when the envy of Ephraim shall have departed, and Judah shall vex Ephraim no more; but both shall delight themselves together in the rich abundance of Jehovah's goodness in the latter day.

Consummate social harmony, reposing for its basis on their *vital* oneness (verse 3), through their common knowledge of Him who is the propitiation of His people's sins, is the subject of this meditative strain. A new and secure stage is thus prepared, upon which to exhibit the spectacle of enduring pleasantness and beauty. Israel after the flesh has had his beauty turned to burning, because of the evil of his way. Human selfishness and iniquity corrupted the portion of Jehovah, and laid waste His pleasant plant. They had used, as men and for themselves, privileges and blessings which were the gifts of God. They had not stood in His goodness, because their heart was of stone and not of flesh. Every one had turned to his own way, and disunion and mutual strife had naturally followed. Walking in the counsel of their own hearts, the people who held still the outward distinction of Jehovah's name, had exhibited all the features of corrupted nature in their most repulsive aspect and in an exaggerated measure. They were brethren, indeed; but, hateful and hating one another, they still dishonoured equally their common ancestry, while they mutually devoured and destroyed each other. For when the reality of

a common relation to Jehovah was forgotten, the sympathies of nature were too weak a bond to hold together those who, as men, were capable of separate interests, and whose only true centre of unity was the name and acknowledged presence of their God.

But the dispersions which have been the effect, and in part the punishment of the nation's apostasy, will yet again be followed by Israel's lasting union within the bonds of the new and better covenant of life. In the hands of the great Shepherd of Israel, the sticks of Judah and of Joseph will again unite.¹ Israel shall dwell safely, and in full harmonious peace, after having been saved, not only from their outward foes, but from the multitude of their own iniquities, through the knowledge of Jesus as the righteous Branch.

In verse 2 there is revealed the instrumental power of the unity which the Spirit counts so pleasant and so good. It is not to be found in natural relationship simply. *That* had been tried, and had ended in dispersion and reproach. It is only when born of the Spirit that the tribes of Jacob will exemplify the blessings of perfect and unbroken unity. The precious ointment of the Aaronic consecration is used symbolically to express the blessing and power of that Divine unction which is already the believer's portion, and which will rest on Israel also in the day when the Spirit shall be poured upon them from on high.² The pure joy of Him who, after so long separation from His brethren, who sold Him in their envy, shall again discover Himself to them as the Lord of all grace and power,—the rich possessor for their sakes of the exhaustless treasures of Divine goodness,—will descend to the least among the

¹ Ezek. xxxvii. 19.

² Isaiah xxxii.

seed of blessing in that day. They will *understand* their blessings when the time of their rejoicing is arrived.

What Balaam saw, when, in the vision of the Almighty, he beheld the tents of Jacob, and looked upon the tabernacles of Israel as on a garden of the Lord's delight, will be realized by the happy subjects of the blessing here described. Its springs are in His changeless love, whose first deliverance of His own from Egypt shall be forgotten, when a new oath of remembrance shall have been put into the mouth of the tribes, because of the second and yet mightier victory of Jehovah's arm.³ The Lord will array Himself with His people, and display them as the chief glory of His manifested comeliness, as the God of the whole earth. As a girdle of majesty shall the tribes of His inheritance be to Him in the day when the thoughts of His heart respecting them are accomplished.⁴ The pride of Judah shall no more be the snare of his destruction. As a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation, the united family of Israel shall abide in the unity of acceptable worship; a praise and a peculiar treasure to the Lord.

Verse 3 defines the locality of the promised blessing. It is *Zion*. On this subject, enough has been said in the remarks on the foregoing Psalm.

A word may now be added on the application of this most beautiful Psalm to things *Christian*. Richly as well as obviously does it thus apply. Yet with what mournful and condemnatory power, when the actual condition of the Church is contemplated! That Christ's body is really *one*, though to confess this is one of the distinctive tokens of true spiritual life, seems virtually forgotten as a present reality—as a truth of vital power and effect. The very

³ Jer. xvi. 14, 15.

⁴ Jer. xiii. 11.

grounds on which brethren, who are one spirit in the Lord, and members severally of His living and infrangible body, should dwell together in unity, are at the present day but half perceived; and even where doctrinally admitted, are, for the most part, abandoned willingly in favour of some sectarian base of human device, which from its very nature is for ever incapable of attesting practically the oneness of the Church of God.

Still, it is blessed to remember that the Church stands nearer to the consecrated Son of God than even his anointed garments did to Aaron. "We are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones."⁵ And if, for the needful proof of His own work, the outward union of the body be disturbed;⁶ and if the believer, whose lot is cast for him in days when little is left of the doctrine of the Spirit in the professing Church but the title of the Holy One, and a traditional remembrance that He *once did* act, instead of the faithful, and happy, and solemn recognition of His presence, as the Lord of life and power—the animating energy of all true ministry, and of every gracious work which should distinguish the one living body of Christ from the world's unity of death by which it is surrounded,—still He is, as ever, the sweet unction of undying freshness to the souls that cleave to Him. He is the present and sufficing Comforter of such as, even in very solitariness, can lift pure thoughts and holy hands to Godward, with a right discernment of their hope and calling, and in the simple recognition and the unabashed confession of the one Lord, one faith, one baptism, which the children of the one God and Father of all are taught to make.⁷ We are come indeed, in spirit, to mount Zion, and to the Church of the first-born, whose

⁵ Eph. v. 30.

⁶ 1 Cor. xi. 19.

⁷ Eph. iv.

names are written in heaven. Would that our feet stood so habitually in that clear and open shining of Christ's blessedness, and realized so experimentally the love of the Father who begat us, as to find our hearts thirsting for and bent on seeking the common joy of all who are truly born of Him.⁸

Meanwhile, let us remember that the work of the corrupter and destroyer is limited in its effects. The day of gladness is at hand. The pleasant sight now vainly desired here below, amid the darkening shades of growing evil, will be presently enjoyed. The full blessing of the Father's house awaits the children whom He has begotten for that inheritance which fadeth not away. The unity of life and holiness and never-ending joy will be known, with full fruition and responsive praise, within that heavenly Jerusalem whose light and gladness is the presence of God and of the Lamb.⁹

PSALM CXXXIV.

THE last of the Songs of degrees. It leaves the accepted worshippers in the house of Jehovah. They stand, as His acknowledged servants, in the place of His name. Lifting up holy hands, they bless that name by night as well as day. And they are blessed. From the chosen city of solemnities the blessing of the Maker of heaven and of earth goes forth upon His people.

Looking at the structure of this little Psalm, the last verse seems like a response to the two former ones. If this be so, it beautifully expresses the entire sympathy existing between the appointed ministrants of the temple

⁸ John v. 1.

⁹ Rev. xxi.

worship, as they fulfil, in their ordered courses, the continual praises of Jehovah, and their brethren whom they thus represent within the hallowed chambers of His house.

However this may be, the Psalm presents to us a lovely prophetic glimpse of the ordering of that house, which is ordained to be a house of prayer for all nations.¹ It will be known thus more especially by those who, with no compulsion save the drawings of the love of Christ, will fill continually courts, no more to be defiled in the manner of the former pollutions, by which their fathers had provoked the Holy One of Israel to jealousy.

The heavenly Antitype of this is to be found in Rev. xxii. 3-5. Meanwhile the Christian's calling is to lift up holy hands in prayer unceasing, and with constant praise, until the fast waning night of toil and patience shall cease for ever in the fulfilment of his blessed hope.² Jesus is still a little sanctuary for such—a tabernacle of rest and blessing for the soul grown weary with what seems a lengthening way. Happy they who, when His presence puts an end to the long-protracted time of darkness, shall be found still wakefully accomplishing, as the children of the day, the ministry of acceptable worship in His name.³

PSALM CXXXV.

ANOTHER temple song of very manifest millennial promise. Jehovah is extolled as in His earthly dwelling-place at Jerusalem (verse 21). He is compassed by the praises of the nation which He has chosen for Himself (verse 4). He had made that choice from of old, exalting the people in

¹ Isaiah lvi. 7. ² Titus ii. 13. ³ Heb. xiii. 15; 1 Thess. v. 5, 6.

His own name when He stilled the enemy for their sakes as He led them forth from Egypt. Again He had afflicted them and brought them low. He had hewn them by His prophets, and had disowned them as His people, because of the multiplied transgression of their sin. Nevertheless, His name, which He had taken as their God,⁵ endures for ever (verse 13), and His memorial throughout all generations. His far-dated purpose is the pledge of their permanent establishment, under the sure and unfading blessings of the new covenant, in the place which He has chosen for Himself.

Although Jehovah judged His people, He would yet repent Himself concerning His servants (verse 14).⁶ His election of Jacob had been at the good pleasure of His own goodness, and not for any righteousness or strength in the poor vessel of His choice. It was a worm on which He might have just trampled in the loathings of His holiness that God was pleased to beautify with salvation, and to exalt to princely place as the chief bearer of His praise among the nations of the earth.⁷ And now the light which, while yet invisible, had cheered the hearts of those who, in the midst of national darkness, still hoped in God, had broken from its cloudy mantle, and was risen, never more to set, upon the city and the people of His name.

The Spirit of prophecy clearly contemplates the times of the kingdom in this Psalm. Jesus reigning before His ancients gloriously may be said to be its subject. It has, however, but a limited scope. The Gentiles as worshippers do not appear in the scene. They are remembered only with reference to their ancient discomfiture (verses 8-12), and to the climax of their idolatrous folly, which provokes

⁵ Exod. iii. 15. ⁶ Compare Deut. xxxii. 36. ⁷ Isaiah xli. 14-16.

the vengeance of the God of judgment⁸ (verses 15–18). It is rather an utterance of true national worship on the part of the people which is the Lord's peculiar treasure. In many respects it closely resembles Psalm cxv. It relates to the times of restitution.⁹ The prophets had spoken of these things; and once the things themselves had been brought within the nation's reach, and proffered by the Spirit of grace for their acceptance.¹ But they had turned to rend the hand that would have fed them, that the perfect mystery of Jehovah's wisdom might be accomplished in its time.²

But now, brought back in peace within the borders of Immanuel's land, and with hearts made wise unto eternal salvation through the knowledge of the Lamb of God, they recount, with thanksgiving and comely praises, the story of His ancient works and ways. With verse 20 we may compare Malachi iii. 3, 4. In verses 6, 7, and also 15–18, we have reference to the crisis at which Jehovah's kingdom is set up in power in the hands of His Anointed.³ The power which produced creation⁴ is displayed in the destruction of the idols which held captive the creatures of His hand; that where the will of Satan had hitherto prevailed the Father's pleasure might be known and done. It is in the millennium only that the prayer which Jesus taught to His disciples will receive its full response.

⁸ Compare in connexion with these verses the remarks on Psalm cxv., especially the note there added on the corresponding passages in that Psalm. ⁹ Acts iii. 21. ¹ Acts iii. 19–26. ² Rom. xi. 25.

³ Compare Hag. ii. and Heb. xii. 26, 27.

⁴ Col. i. 16.

PSALM CXXXVI.

A SEQUEL and counterpart to the preceding Psalm. In the former we have seen Jesus glorified as Jehovah, whose dwelling is at Jerusalem. In the present Psalm His praise is celebrated as the God of gods. As such He is extolled and magnified as the source in pure Divine mercy, first, of the blessing of the creature universally; and secondly, of that of Israel as the servant (verse 22) and witness of His name.

It is as the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords,⁵ that Jehovah here appears, in the sovereign majesty of His power, and in the plenitude of His goodness, as the creature's hope. But He is thus manifested in immediate connexion with His earthly people as the God of their *mercy*. It is this characteristic feature which gives to this remarkable Psalm so rich an interest and value in the Christian's eyes. For it is an ever blessed privilege of faith that the believer, because he is himself a vessel of absolute grace,⁶ may associate thoughts of mercy with every department of Divine knowledge. He is entitled, that is, to connect in his mind every act of Divine power with the known realities of perfect love and grace, as they stand revealed to him in Jesus. Mercy thus becomes to God's true people the great exponent of all His mighty attributes. "All things are *for your sakes*"⁷ is a revelation of the Spirit, only excelled in its wondrous depth and blessedness by His yet mightier declaration, whereby the sum of all things is put even now

⁵ 1 Tim. vi. 15; Deut. x. 17, ⁶ Rom. ix. ⁷ 2 Cor. iv. 15.

within the grasp of the believer, as a co-heir of the Lord of glory.⁸

The work of God is for His people's sakes. The varied riches of His wisdom and glory are manifested through the effectual operation of those counsels which have for their objects the appointed vessels of His praise. This is a truth quite independent of all dispensational arrangement. Mercy in Scripture is, as it respects its blessed recipients, the Divine correlative of sovereignty and power. God gives according to the ability and at the good pleasure of His own unbiassed will. Sin is always presupposed in the receiver, as well as holiness, its eternal antagonist, in the Bestower of mercy. Hence *atonement*, as a free provision of pure grace, must be an apprehended reality to the mind of faith before the song of mercy can be intelligently raised. Such is the Christian's happy portion now; and such will be Israel's case when, in the latter day, this solemn strain of recapitulative thanksgiving shall be addressed by the ransomed nation, with unveiled heart and circumcised lips, to the faithful God of their mercy.

This and the foregoing Psalm, taken together, comprise the descriptive elements and titles of Christ's full dominion in the coming dispensation of the kingdom of God. Things in heaven as well as things on earth are comprehended in the wide range of the Spirit's meditation, when teaching thus to ransomed Israel the perfect celebration of Divine mercy.⁹ It is, however, with an especial reference to His dealings in faithfulness, as the God of Israel's covenant, that Jehovah's name is thus extolled. The recital here presented of the nation's former history, if compared with what is given in the preceding Psalm, is found to be quite illustrative of the characteristic difference

⁸ 1 Cor. iii. 21, 22: "All things are *yours*." ⁹ Compare Eph. i. 10.

which distinguishes these kindred melodies from each other.

Power, working its own end in the absoluteness of the Divine will, and abasing every rival which erects itself against the *majesty of God*, draws forth, in the former instance, the praises of those who magnify the God of Jacob. In the present Psalm, each separate act of God is dwelt upon, and severally held up to the view of Israel as a token of Jehovah's mercy to *themselves*. The same acts are recited in both Psalms. But they are here seen in connexion rather with their objects than with Him who wrought them by His power. And this extends far back, to the beginning of all time (verse 5). For the wisdom which designed the heavens wrought their creation with reference to the mercy which, in due time, would reconcile those heavens (contaminated, meanwhile, by the entrance of sin into the creature), when that precious blood should have been shed whereby the all-pervading taint of evil should be effectually removed.¹ That mercy is the very basis of creation is a truth well known to the believer, whose joy is to remember, that by *Jesus* and for Him were all things made. The same truth, now hidden in Him, with all other saving and enlightening knowledge, from the blinded vision of the unbelieving nation, will be a moving topic of sweet praise to Israel when, by the advent of the Deliverer, the iniquity of Jacob shall have been purged away. The Church, which tastes in Christ the end of every promise,² can sing with understanding these and all other utterances of inspired praise when making melody to her Lord; but has no descriptive place in these Psalms, except as she will be united in the joy of Him who is the centre of the worship here rehearsed. The

¹ Col. i. 20; Heb. ix. 23.

² 2 Cor. i. 20.

sons of God are in their manifestation to be both the signal and the reason of the ransomed creature's joy.³

It may be remarked, that the outline of Israel's history contained in this Psalm is very ample. Verses 10–15 bring them from Egypt and through the Red Sea. In verse 16 we have a remembrance of the patience of the wilderness. Verses 17–22 describe the conquest of Canaan, and their settlement in the land. In verse 23 they are regarded in their self-procured ruin—the low estate in which they again become the objects of Jehovah's compassionate faithfulness. Verse 24 recounts their ultimate redemption from their enemies by the accomplishment of the sure mercies of the Covenant. Verse 25 extends the blessing of Divine goodness over all flesh—a truth of perpetual application under the Noachic covenant,⁴ but to receive a far richer and more abundant exemplification in the millennial times, when the full tide of the world's blessing shall set in through the open gates of Zion's finished mercy.

The Psalm closes by referring back to heaven and the God who has His dwelling there, as the source and sustaining power of the creature's blessing. To Him alone pertains the kingdom, and the glory, and the power.⁵ For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things. This truth, which faith delights to own, and which has now and then been forcibly extorted from the lips of humbled human pride,⁶ will shortly form the universal homage of the kingdoms of this world.⁷

³ Rom. viii. 19. ⁴ Gen. ix. 12; compare Matt. v. 45; Acts xiv. 17.

⁵ Dan. ii. 44; 1 Chron. xxix. 11. ⁶ Dan. iv. 37. ⁷ Rev. xi. 15.

PSALM CXXXVII.

A LAMENT of Zion's mourners—captives for their sin, yet prisoners of hope. Passing by the primary interpretation of this remarkable Psalm, in its literal application to the times of the Babylonish captivity, it presents, both in its moral application to the Church in her affliction, and still more in its direct prophetic bearing upon Israel in the latter day, much that is of touching and peculiar interest.

It will be remarked immediately by an attentive reader that no reference is made in it to the national transgression. The Spirit, who elsewhere indites such full confession of their sin, acts here in gracious sympathy with the sorrows of His people, and in righteous advocacy of their cause against the proud and reckless oppressors, whose tauntings of Zion's captives were in God's remembrance as hard speeches spoken against Himself. His jealousy is for His people, because His name and His memorial are there.¹ The hearts of such as clave believingly to His testimonies, while sadly pining in a foreign land, remember still the place of their once-enjoyed solemnities, and hopefully defer the sound of melody until they stand again within the walls of Zion, and raise the Lord's song in the place of His appointed praise.

It was indeed through the judgments of the Lord that they had been estranged from their desire. Yet faith, cleaving always to the *end* of God in promise, lays by, but does not break, its harp of praise. Meanwhile the nations whom He had ordained for their correction, but who had

¹ Jer. xxxiii. 24; Zech. viii.

sought to gratify their lusts of envious pride in the perpetual abasement of Jehovah's people, become the objects of the fearful burden of prophetic denunciation as the appointed victims of His wrath.

Edom and Babylon are the especial subjects of the judgments of Israel's avenger. Already have the prophecies directed against those nations received a large measure of their fulfilment. But the dregs of the cup of trembling will not become their portion until that cup has been for ever taken out of Zion's hand. In the day when the kingdom is shown to be the Lord's, the mount of Esau will be judged with an award of perpetual desolation.² When the whole earth rejoices, the land of Edom will lie waste. For there is a day to come of Jehovah's vengeance, and a year of recompences for the controversy of Zion.³ The house of Jacob will possess their possessions in that day, while Joseph will be as a consuming flame to waste the last remainder of the house of Esau.⁴

This Psalm has also an application to any who in a time of general apostasy still keep, through grace, the word of Christ's patience.⁵ When the church (considered as a dispensation) is a captive at the will of Satan, in the bonds of the world, the heart of the spiritual believer must lament and mourn. For the contrast which exists between the spiritual desolation in which the church now lies and her true standing, and her destined glory as the spotless

² Obad. 21.

³ Isaiah xxxiv. 8.

⁴ Obad. 17, 18. The burden of Babylon may be found in Isaiah xiii. xiv.; Jer. l.; Rev. xviii.; &c. The point of real importance for the reader to keep before him in the study of these prophecies is, not whether their eventual fulfilment may relate to a city or a system, but that the judgment denounced is inseparably connected by the Spirit of prophecy with the permanent restoration of *Israel*, and their exaltation in their own *land*.

⁵ Rev. iii. 7-12.

vessel of pure truth and blessedness, must make sorrow a familiar thing to every heart in which the true hope of her calling is perceived. Yet is there joy for such. *Their* harps never hang upon the willows. For to the feeblest remnant, and also to the single Christian, JESUS remains the full unceasing argument of praise. The Spirit is their comforter. They have joy in God through Jesus Christ, rejoicing amid their sorrow in the certain hope of His appearing. Rest in that day will be their portion, while vengeance falls relentlessly on those whose anger burned against them for the love they bore the Master's name, while keeping His word of patience to the end.⁶

Edom's hatred to Jerusalem was just the same in principle⁷ as the feeling which secretly is entertained by a lifeless and worldly "profession" towards that which is really of the Father. But God is just. The despiser of the birthright will receive the judgment of the profane. Rev. vi. 9-11 and xviii. apply as general illustrations, but with peculiar reference to the times of Christian patience. The catastrophe of Edom in its immediate connexion with the return of the Deliverer to Zion is presented in Isaiah lxiii. 1-6.

⁶ 2 Thess. i. 5, *seq.*; Rev. iii. 10.

⁷ It was the hatred, that is, with which the carnal mind in its natural enmity against God always regards whatever is the elect object of His favour. Jerusalem was the city of *God*. "Rase it, rase it even to the ground," is the mischievous desire of every unregenerate mind against every building that rests on the elect Stone of Divine foundation. For God's election never pleases man until, through grace, his own heart has become an adoring receiver of that mercy which while in his natural state he angrily resented and refused to own in its effects on other men. From Cain to Antichrist this solemn truth holds always good.

PSALM CXXXVIII.

A PSALM of David. It is one very full of comfort for the soul that in a patient experience of the evil day is kept in humble and heart-satisfied dependence on the living God. Most plainly it is in its prophetic character a millennial song. In this respect it contains, with some expressions common to other Psalms, others of marked force and beauty which are peculiar to itself.

First, we have in verse 2 a remarkable ascription of praise to Jehovah as the Magnifier of His *word*. "Thou hast magnified Thy word above all Thy name."¹ The Christian, who dates the commencement of his acceptable worship from the moment when he first discerned, through grace, the finished work of Jesus, and beheld in His glorified Person the consummation of the promises of God, finds a ready solution of this enigmatic verse. Standing, as a child of day and heir of resurrection-hope,² in the full light of the Divine glory, as it beams forth on him from the face of Jesus Christ, he estimates the mighty measure in which the work of the incarnate WORD has excelled those former acts whereby in earlier days Jehovah's fame had spread among the nations.

But while to the eye of Christian faith the Person of the exalted Christ becomes the culminating point of all Divine promise, in its complete and glorious fulfilment, yet

¹ כִּי־הַגְדַּלְתָּ עַל־כָּל־שֵׁמֶךָ אֶמְרֹתֶיךָ "Verherrlicht hast du über all deinen Ruhm deine Verheissung."—DE WETTE. "Perciòchè tu hai magnificata la tua parola sopra ogni tua fama."—DIOD. ² 1 Thess. v. 5; 1 Pet. i. 3, 4.

it is not as the heavenly object of spiritual vision alone that the Word of God is to be revealed in His magnificence. He will appear with a glory manifest to outward sight, which *must* be seen by all whose dwelling is on earth. In the light of that glory kings shall see and shall arise. Things before hidden from their sight will then be suddenly disclosed.³ Jehovah's ways, which never yet have willingly been trodden in the march of human politics, will open on the view of earthly monarchs, as the avenues of peace and safety, when the great light of Messiah's glory has arisen in commanding power to the zenith of supremest earthly rule.

Perhaps there is no promise relating to this habitable earth more wonderful than verse 5 of this Psalm. What manner of glory must that be that produces such effects! In what age of this world's wretchedness have such things been? What solitary page of human history can present to the keenest search of the most sanguine inquirer an instance of a willing and unanimous conformity of earth's ruling powers to the right ways of the Lord? Was it ever seen in Christendom? It will be seen; but not until the second advent of the Son of man with power shall have placed the kingdoms of this world under the apparent sovereignty of Jehovah and His Christ.⁴ Grace, unaccompanied by effectual administrative power, has not and will not produce the effects here described. It is when the *judgments* of Jehovah are in the earth that the inhabitants

³ Isaiah xl. 5; xlix. 7; lii. 15.

⁴ Rev. xi. 15. It is hardly necessary to apprise the reader that the individual salvation of king or governor is not at all in question here. By the grace of God, if not *many* such are called, some are. But never has Christ been the acknowledged Director of this world's policy, nor will be till He take it into His own hand with power, as His long-disputed right.

of the world will learn righteousness.⁵ Divine power in its manifested action will finally convince the world of the majesty and truth of the alone Governor among the nations. Grace, too, will act, and act with rich and marvellous result; but judgment must prepare the way.

The concluding verses seem to express the intercession of the Spirit of Immanuel in the patient expectants of covenanted national promise. The wrath of their enemies might still rage fiercely. But the right hand of Jehovah was ready to quit His bosom for the deliverance of His elect. His enduring mercy was, in the meantime, the song as well as the security of such as trusted still in Him. He would not abandon the work of His own hands.

PSALM CXXXIX.

THIS wonderful Psalm lays open the solemn yet most blessed character which belongs to the dependent creature's true communion with the Creator. Man is here seen under a deeply searching and thorough sense of the Divine presence. But he is *willingly* conscious of the infinitude of the wisdom and power by which he is penetrated and encompassed, because he knows himself to be the object of the precious thoughts of God. He feels that gracious protection and full entire favour are his portion, as a vessel of Divine good pleasure.

Taken in its first and fullest sense, the sublime language of this Psalm belongs only to the Son of God, when found in fashion as a man. And it is by meditating it in this its original connexion that the believer finds his richest blessing from the Spirit's words. For its application to

⁵ Isaiah xxvi. 9.

himself is according to the grace of his present standing in the Perfect One. It relates to him as to one who, having been brought nigh to God by effectual redemption, from thenceforth has to do with *Him* and not with man.⁶

Taking it now in this its secondary intention, it expresses the experience of one who, at what stage soever of his career as a believer, has been by the power of the Holy Ghost effectually discovered to himself, in the presence of a Saviour-God. This, in its *full* extent, is no necessary preliminary to the knowledge and possession of true Gospel peace. The sifting process often, *very* often, goes on and reaches its appointed measure long after the soul's first awakening, and the attainment of a purged conscience through a just discernment of the blood of Jesus. On the other hand, the truth here taught us must be known in a certain measure, in order to the necessity of redemption being appreciated in a sufficient degree to draw the awakened sinner to the Saviour.

The experience, however, which is expressed in this Psalm is emphatically that of a spiritual man—of one who not only feels *habitually* the searching presence of God, but while filled with the solemn fear and reverence which that presence inspires, rejoices to be there. Meanwhile his prayer is to be still more thoroughly searched, that a full and unhindered participation of God's holiness⁷ may become the conscious possession of his inner man (verses 23, 24).

The last two verses, when compared with the earlier ones (1-5), are of deeply instructive force. A profound sense of the sifting and penetrating power of the Divine presence may for a time take possession of the human soul. But this feeling, if only transient, is wholly insufficient to

⁶ Heb. iv. 12, 13.

⁷ Heb. xii. 10.

prevent the secret chambers of the heart, which has thus for a season been visited with the pure light of holiness and truth, from becoming again the fastnesses of all hidden evil. Practical sanctification in a believer is the result of the unceasing operation of the Spirit in keeping a constant and steady play of Divine truth both upon the conscience and the heart's affections.

Looking more closely at the general contents of the Psalm, we have in its earlier part (verses 1-12) an expression, in rare sublimity of language, of the subjective consciousness which belongs to the believer of being known of God. The completest sense of self-winnowing⁸—the most intimate sifting of all that the heart contains—is found in union with the fullest enjoyment of assured peace and confidence in God. *His* right hand holds firmly (verse 10), in the grasp of sure salvation, the soul on which His precious thoughts of peace are set, through all the possible experiences of its pilgrim way.

There is no terror in this remembrance of God's all-pervading presence. For He who thus fills all things is the Saviour of His own.⁹ The Searcher of His people's hearts is likewise the Redeemer of their souls. But although the peace of God may thoroughly possess the spirits of His children, the knowledge of it, and of Him whose peace it is, is too wonderful to be fully comprehended. We cannot find out God (verse 6). We know now in part. But if any man love God he is *known of Him*.¹ Yet it is for knowledge that we are renewed in Christ. To the believer the Holy Ghost is given as the living power of Divine communion, in order that we may know and not be ignorant of the God with whom we have

⁸ תְּרִיתָ "Thou winnowest," as the English margin correctly renders.

⁹ Eph. iv. 10.

¹ 1 Cor. viii. 3.

to do. An essential condition of our true growth in the knowledge of God is our being brought consciously under His eye, as in the present Psalm. But this scrutiny our flesh instinctively avoids. Nothing is so undesirable to the natural heart as proximity to God. The shadow of the Almighty extinguishes the light of natural joy; for the will of nature may not act where God is truly felt. The wise believer knows this well, and seeks, by vigilant and prayerful waiting upon God, to perpetuate experimentally within his soul the truth of the Divine presence. Deep and unremitting self-judgment is the invariable accompaniment of real nearness to God. If *His* hand be leading us we cannot follow with a careless step.

This spirit of reverence and godly fear (itself a fruit of the heart's true knowledge of God and firm establishment in *grace*²) is the regulating spring of all acceptable service. It acts as a steadying ballast of the soul in its voyage over the restless surface of the sea of vanity. Meanwhile the sweet and ever present remembrance of Him who has filled in human form all parts successively of that creation which, as the Eternal WORD, He fashioned and sustains, —holding now, in the new title of Redemption, the ownership of things in heaven and things on earth—makes every place within the universe of His dominion a place of safety and contentment to the soul that trusts His love.

Verses 14–16 if read in immediate connexion with verse 13, will refer, in their primary intention, to the mystery of natural generation as the work of God's astonishing wisdom and power. But, as nature is everywhere a parable of grace, they may be mystically interpreted of Christ and His body, the Church, and this I presume to be their final meaning. Less obviously, they

² Heb. xii. 28–29.

are capable of application to the new birth of the individual saint.

The appropriation of verse 17 to Jesus, as its true subject, will receive the ready assent of every spiritual mind. For it is *He* who from eternity supremely filled the thoughts of God. It is as *in* Him that the Church, or any other creature, becomes the object of Jehovah's thoughts. Nor can those thoughts be numbered by the tongue of man. Their full expression is in Christ, and they are *precious*. We who believe, not only hear with joy this testimony of the Spirit, but already, in our feeble measure, we have found it so. We have learned the difference between natural darkness and God's marvellous light. We shall sum up in eternity the measure of those precious thoughts, even when, in the perfect realization of their blessedness, we know as we are known.

In verse 18, we may discern a plain reference to the resurrection of the body.³

Verses 19–22. The believer, because he is of God,⁴ sympathizes *in his inner man* with the judgment of Divine holiness upon human evil. *All* the thoughts of God are precious to His people. Hence the solemn threatenings of the vengeance which will fall on the ungodly are announced to the believer as promises of comfort.⁵ The end of God's children is the glory of God. They joy in *Him* through Jesus Christ. The prospect, therefore, of the time when evil shall be effectually subdued, by the manifestation of Christ in power, is continually presented by the Spirit as an object of desire to the saints. "Yet now hath He *promised*, saying, Yet once more I shake," &c.⁶ A believer hates sin. *He* hates it whether in himself or in

³ Compare Psalm xvii. 15.

⁴ 1 John v. 19.

⁵ 2 Thess. i. 7; Jude 14.

⁶ Heb. xii. 26.

the world. And because his flesh, instead of hating it, delights in it, there is in all God's children an unceasing conflict between flesh and Spirit. But that which is born of God sinneth not. Nor does the wicked one attain to touch that hidden life which is the gift of God.⁷ Sin is the only thing that a believer, walking in the Spirit, either dreads or hates. For that alone can intercept his soul's communion with God, who is the proper and appreciated source of all his joy. Hence the peculiar earnestness of the prayer which is expressed in the concluding verses of this Psalm. The exercised Christian knows well that the chief danger to his peace is always from within. He knows, moreover, that to be his own preserver is to fall. He looks thus from himself to God. He needs a keeper, and he finds one in the Shepherd and Bishop of his soul.⁸ The only safeguard against the hardening influence of "the deceitfulness of sin" is a watchful abiding, by faith, in the presence of the living God.⁹

PSALM CXL.

THIS Psalm is evidently an intercession of the Spirit of Christ in the afflicted remnant of His people against the counsel of wickedness and violence, whose desire is to blot out the memory of those who still cleave to Israel's covenant hope. Three special forms of Satanic energy are individualized. The evil or wicked man, the violent man, and the man of tongue¹ are severally appealed from by the suppliant speaker of this prayer of faith. Secret evil, and devices cast cunningly for the furtherance of

⁷ 1 John v. 18. ⁸ 1 Peter ii. 25. ⁹ Heb. iii. 12, 13.

¹ יִשְׁׁרָאֵל שִׁינָא 'Ανήρ γλωσσώδης.—LXX. (verse 11.)

unrighteous power, distinctly characterize the times when the confession of Jehovah's name will be all but drowned in the loud and, for a season, unrestrained utterance of all that is in man's proud but utterly degraded heart.

In its general drift this Psalm appears to relate to the time of the two Beasts.² Poison will then be found beneath their tongues, who, having long refused the saving truth of God, will have been delivered over, through their divinely-inflicted delusions, to believe and serve a lie.³ The quotation of verse 3 by the apostle⁴ seems to demand that the language generally of the present Psalm should be referred to the apostates of Israel, rather than the Gentile supporters of the Beast.⁵ The Antichrist himself appears to be indicated in the frequent and emphatic repetition, in the singular number, of terms descriptive of personal character (verses 1, 4, 8, 11).

But God the Lord is the strength of His people's salvation, and the shelter of their head in the day of battle. He will ride in the majesty of almighty power to the battle which is His own.⁶ The desires of wickedness will suddenly be met and answered by the decisive judgment of the avenger of His own name. Verses 10, 11 seem plainly to refer to the particular catastrophe of the Man of Sin.⁷

The concluding verses, while they are applicable (as is the Psalm generally) to the experience of suffering faith at all times when standing fast in the day of evil, sustained by the sure hope of speedy deliverance,⁸ seem in their prophetic intention to bear more emphatically upon the earthly nation and its hopes.

² Rev. xiii.³ 2 Thess. ii. 10, 11.⁴ Rom. iii. 13.⁵ Compare Rom. iii. 19.⁶ Rev. xvi. 14; xix. 11-21.⁷ Rev. xix. 20.⁸ Rom. xvi. 20.

PSALM CXLI.

SELF-JUDGMENT and a thirsting after practical holiness are the leading features of this Psalm, which, though in altered tone, sustains, like its predecessor, the appeal of suffering righteousness against the lawlessness of man. There are difficulties in its detailed interpretation, although its general outline seems not indistinctly drawn. The seventh verse furnishes a clue to its prophetic meaning as an expression of afflicted Jewish faith.

A very touching portraiture is presented in verses 7-10 of the moral condition of the sorely tried sufferers, whose bones become a memorial of the ruthless rage and power of the adversary. Thoroughly sifted and contrite in heart by the gracious workings of the Spirit of God, they walk softly before Him as those who are poor and broken in spirit, while they yet cleave in unshaken faith to Jehovah with a confident expectation of His help.

It is a beautiful exemplification (its beauty being heightened by the solemnity of its adjuncts) of the path of the just in the hour of sore and apparently hopeless trial. Keenly alive both to the danger and the power of temptation, and made to tremble at the near view of the fear which on every side surrounds them, they are driven by the stress of their affliction more deeply into the secret places of Divine communion. They turn to their stronghold as prisoners of hope. It is most interesting to note the tone of godly sensitiveness and dread of evil, coupled with the deepest heart-searching and mistrust of self, which distinguishes the earlier verses of this Psalm.

In verse 5 there is presented a striking contrast to the portrait of the proud and evil doer in the preceding Psalm. Taught truly the lesson of self-knowledge,¹ the heart of faith has a ready and unfeigned welcome for the words of just reproof. The verse is in this respect a bright monitory mirror for "the man of God" in every age.

Verse 6 refers, I suppose, to the breaking in pieces of the nation of Israel and its heads, as a needful preliminary to their ears being unstopped to hear the words of Jesus. The moral force of these expressions is striking and apparent. A seeker of righteousness in the way of law is rather a judge than a suppliant² confessor of sin. It is only when the spiritual power of the law is felt in the awakened conscience—so that what was once vainly boasted as a spring of life becomes a rocky desolation and a wilderness of death—that the words of saving grace become precious to the ear of faith.³ More generally this verse may apply also to the effect upon the inhabitants of the world at large of the introduction of Jehovah's judgments into the earth.⁴

With verse 7 we may compare Rom. viii. 36; 2 Cor. i. 9; and Rev. ii. 10, with a view to the practical bearing of this Psalm on the Christian, whose calling it is to be a partaker of the sufferings as well as the glory of Christ. The death of such is precious in the sight of the Lord. The true prophetic application of the passage is probably to the war of the dragon with the believing Jewish remnant, after he has been dispossessed of the place which, until the time of the ascension of the church is come, he holds in heaven as the accuser of the brethren.⁵

¹ Rom. xv. 14; 2 Tim. iii. 16.

² Compare Rom. ii; James ii. 10 and iv. 11.

³ Rom. vii. 7-25. ⁴ Isaiah xxvi. 9. ⁵ Rev. xii. 17; xiii. 7.

PSALM CXLII.

THE title of this Psalm declares its subject. It was a prayer of Israel's royal exile while an outcast from the face of men, because of His anointing as Jehovah's chosen king. But David was a figure as well as a prophet of Him that was to come. His own experiences, in so far as by the grace of God he suffered the reproach of Christ, are faithfully portrayed in this plaintive yet hopeful strain. But the language is too deep and strong for the commemoration only of David's griefs or hopes. Our attention is presently attracted to Jesus as the true subject of the emotions here described.

It was to the Father only that His path was truly known. His eye was evermore the welcome guide which Jesus followed in the dimness of that anguish through which, as the dishonoured and rejected of men, His path of suffering obedience lay. He showed His trouble before *Him*. Men could not sympathize with Jesus. For their sakes He was burdened, but it was not for sinners to share or understand the just One's grief. When His spirit was overwhelmed within Him, at the hour of His sore amazement, during which the soul of Jesus was exceeding sorrowful even unto death, the Father's eye alone beheld the pure path of His devoted love.⁶ His disciples, who should have watched with Him, were sunk in sleep, unconscious of the Master's agony on their behalf. His enemies, meanwhile, directed by the treacherous betrayer of His love, were preparing secretly their snares against His life.

⁶ Mark xiv. 34, 35.

The daughters of Jerusalem might weep for Jesus when they saw Him uplifted on the cross of shameful death.⁷ Those tears flowed partly at the bidding of natural sympathy towards the blameless Sufferer, and more because of the apparent extinguishing of Israel's Light. But *His* sorrow none might feel or know but God. No man knew Him whom all forsook, that the Scriptures might be thus fulfilled. None but His destroyers sought after His soul; refuge failed the victim who was fore-ordained of God to die (verse 4).

Verse 5 expresses the unshaken trust of Jesus when within the immediate reach of the power of darkness. Jehovah was His refuge: "*Thou* art my portion in the land of the living." Death might intervene. But it was a death by undergoing which He would make both life and death for evermore His own. It was of *God* that death became the bitter portion of His Son. And glory waited but the accomplishment of that decease, to rest for ever on the risen Lord of life. He died indeed to sin, but at the Father's pleasure—His death was for the creature, *by the grace of God*. He liveth unto God. The will of God was His delight until He finished it in death. And now it is His everlasting joy to be the delighted receiver of the honours which the righteous Father has awarded to His Son.⁸

The closing verse connects with the cry for deliverance a bold anticipation of His coming joy.⁹ The results of His travail are diffused in blessing among the righteous (made such in Him alone), who shall surround Him for ever, as the fellows of His blessedness, in an endless enjoyment of the Father's love. The Church stands now in this relation to the Captain of her salvation. It is perhaps

⁷ Luke xxiii. 27, 28.

⁸ John xiv. 28; Phil. ii. 9.

⁹ Heb. xii. 2.

rather to the coming time, when the redeemed nation shall adoringly surround Messiah, that this verse refers. He whom they sold and imprisoned in the grave shall be known, in the majesty of His presence, as their Prince and Saviour, when He comes forth from His hiding-place to reign before His *ancients* gloriously.¹

To the Christian, as having the first-fruits of the Spirit,² this Psalm is of a peculiar value. The force and extent of its application will vary according to the nature of the secret communion of his soul with God, which his special circumstances, or the measure of his positive spiritual growth, may produce. There are groanings which cannot be uttered; but God, who searcheth the hearts, knoweth the mind of the Spirit. Meanwhile deliverance from the body of death is at hand. Its redemption in transforming power is near. And while groaning in this body of humiliation, we may joy in the remembered pledge of its most sure accession, both to incorruption and eternal glory, which is presented to our faith in the Person of our Forerunner and our Hope. The powers of darkness may *seem* ready to devour. But it is a semblance rather than the reality of terror. Satan *seeks* his prey with open mouth. But the life of the believer is safe hidden in the Saviour. The risen shepherd is the faithful keeper, in the presence of the God of peace, of the sheep which He has died to purchase for Himself by His most precious blood.

¹ Jesus is, as it respects that nation, still an outcast, forgotten as a dead man, out of mind. They will look on Him and recognize Him when the brightness of His glory is revealed. The story of Joseph and his brethren, so beautiful as a typical foreshadowing of these things, may naturally suggest itself to the reader in connexion with this verse.

² Rom. viii. 23.

PSALM CXLIII.

THERE are few Psalms, perhaps, if any, to which the Christian when, either by reason of the imperfection of his faith or through practical carelessness, his soul has been dislodged from its own steadfastness, more frequently turns, in the hour of conflict, than the one now before us. It is, indeed, most suitable as an expression of the deep and earnest desires of a soul which, while compassed by the sore besetments of sin and Satan, is experimentally below the firm and established footing of finished grace in Christ;¹ but it does not justly express, in any part of it, the characteristic language of Christian liberty. It is a prayer of faith unfeigned, and of godly and acceptable desire; but it is the heart of a servant, not that of a son, which speaks.² Distance, not nearness, is the conscious position of the soul thus exercised. Judgment is deprecated. But there is no present discernment of remission and gracious acceptance. The soul is, in its experiences, under *law*, while hopefully anticipating *grace*. There is a confidence of ultimate deliverance. For it is to God, in *His* faithfulness and *His* righteousness, that the requests of the believer are addressed (verse 1). Darkness is the actual condition of the suppliant, but hope shines brightly in the distance. The wrath of the enemy is appealed from, while sin, as the real strength of the enmity, is owned in deep confession and self-judgment. The strength of sin is felt to be the law, and as yet the victory is but in prospect, not enjoyed.

¹ Rom. viii. 1-3.² Gal. iv. 7.

David's own conflicts, when with godly sorrow he reviewed in secret his own ways, and found in God the refuge and desire of his humbled soul, are, doubtless, faithfully presented in this Psalm.

In common with several others of similar tenor, its ultimate object is, I doubt not, the believing remnant of Jewish faith, who await in suppliant patience, and amid severest trials, the advent of effectual deliverance in the latter day. It seems to be the last intercessional cry of the Spirit of Immanuel in and for them, being presently succeeded in the following Psalms by strains of final and triumphant praise. The point of view under which they are here contemplated is deeply interesting. There is a thorough conversion of their hearts to God; a thirsting, therefore, after the manifestation of His righteousness and glory—after *Christ*. Being as yet under law, their souls, with full appreciation of the unprofitableness of the flesh, bend still toward the will of Jehovah as His servants,³ recognizing thus the eternal connexion between blessing and obedience.

In verse 10 there is an expression which gives its character to the entire Psalm. The truth over which the nation stumbled to its ruin⁴ is here found on the lips of those who are yet beloved for the fathers' sakes, and all whose expectation in their day of sore distress is in the faithfulness of the God of their covenant. It is no longer the flesh but the Spirit that is their reliance. The will of God is their desire, but the performance of that will is no more felt to be in their own power. They call upon God to quicken them, and to lead them into the land of uprightness,⁵ the attainment of which they now perceive

³ Mal. iv. 4.

⁴ Rom. vi. 23.

⁵ Perhaps the liturgical version of this clause is to be preferred: "Let

to be only by the new and living way which God would show. His loving-kindness will shine brightly in the morning. The Deliverer is near at hand. The power which fulfils the promised mercy to His afflicted people, must likewise make an end, in judgment, of those who had oppressed them in their day of pride.

The practical value of this Psalm is very great. For it contains expressions which echo the continual desire of the believer, who remembers that he is anointed in Christ to do the will of God,⁶ and who lives his days of earthly pilgrimage and conflict in patient expectation of the light of promise. The enemy, who now afflicts, will presently be bruised beneath the feet of those whom he ceases not to harass, while his hour remains. The desires of one whose secret grief is heavy, because of conscious unfaithfulness, may often find themselves embodied in the language of this Psalm. But it is well for the believer to remember, that the ground of all true Christian prayer is *Christ*. God will never enter into judgment with the believing sinner on the score of his natural responsibilities, because already He has judged him in the cross of Jesus. God has condemned sin *there*. Through the victory which God has given us in His Son, the law, which is naturally the strength of sin, is become an approving witness of our justification. Jesus has been brought back from the dead by the *God of peace*, through the blood of the everlasting covenant. Peace, therefore, with God, is the rightful experience of every child of truth. Sin may break this

Thy loving Spirit lead me forth into the land of uprightness." This agrees with LXX. and Hieron. LUTHER, DE WETTE, and DIODATI, also treat רַוּי as the nominative to תְּהַלֵּלֵנִי. The Bible version is not to be censured as a faulty translation of the words; but the other view seems, on the whole, to yield a juster sense to a passage which is equivocal in its original form.

⁶ Col. i. 9, 10.

peace, but cannot destroy the foundation on which it rested, and which cannot be removed. For it is *Christ Himself* who is our peace. It is even He who acts, not as the upbraiding accuser of our unfaithfulness, but as our Advocate in righteousness with the Father. He is thus the refuge and restorer of the contrite spirit that turns with confession, in its hour of bitterness, to the changeless lover of His own.

PSALM CXLIV.

THE careful reader recognizes immediately the general similarity which this Psalm presents in its earlier verses to corresponding expressions in Psalm xviii. In both, as Messianic prophecies, we hear Immanuel's voice. But here it is with immediate reference to the deliverance and prosperity of Zion that the kingly title of Jesus, as the true David, is asserted.

It has an obvious moral connexion with the foregoing Psalm. The vanity of the creature had there been fully owned. Jehovah is now called on not only as the fortress, but also the *goodness*,¹ of His people, and their king. As the Son of man, Jesus refused to be called "good."² For He had come into the world to glorify the Father—to be the servant of Jehovah in obedient dependence. He would take thus His honours and His blessings under the name and by the sanction of Jehovah's covenant with *David*. Himself the offspring, as well as the root of David, He yet awaits at God's right hand the setting up of the earthly kingdom in the *mercy* of the Most High God.

¹ חֶסֶד "My mercy" (*margin*). This expression is full of interest when compared with Isaiah xl. 6.

² Mark x. 18.

In verses 3, 4, there is an emphatic and reiterative acknowledgment of human vanity.³ The way is thus prepared for the manifestation of God in power as described in the verses which follow (5-11). The twofold glory of the person of Jesus is displayed. As the Seed of David, and Heir of covenanted mercy, He and His kingdom are the subjects of Divine deliverance. Yet is He Himself the Deliverer. He is the God whose thunder is heard in heaven; who cometh forth from His place to avenge the blood of His saints, and to glorify His name by accomplishing the faithful covenant of promise.

Verses 12-15. Destruction having passed upon the strange children, who loved leasing rather than the truth,⁴ praise is in readiness to break forth from Zion, where it long had waited silently, until the day of triumph and of binding up the breach was come.

The closing verses describe the happiness of Israel when, being brought at length within the bond of everlasting righteousness, they shall become the honoured and richly replenished vessel of Jehovah's goodness in the earth. He will be their God. It is needless to insist upon the sublunary character of the blessedness here described. But it is the fruit and abiding effect of a righteousness which is from above. *Divine* righteousness in Christ is the sole basis of the kingdom of God, which then will be set up triumphantly upon earth. *Christendom*, in its just and proper sense, will then exist as a recognized reality of blessing, when the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of Jehovah and of His Christ. The introduction of the kingdom in this Psalm renders it a fitting precursor to the noble and perfect strain which follows.

³ Compare Psalm viii.

⁴ 2 Thess. ii.

PSALM CXLV.

DAVID'S Psalm of praise. Such is the expressive title of this incomparable Psalm. In a pre-eminent sense it is the song of *the kingdom*. The praises of Jehovah are uttered to the full by the Spirit of Immanuel, whom as His anointed He will have set in undisputed establishment of royal dominion upon the throne of His abiding rule.

The kingdom is *God's* kingdom. Jesus will take it at His hands, receiving investiture of universal authority from Him, whom He will not cease to honour in His place as the supreme possessor of heaven and of earth.

David, the son of Jesse, as he gave forth by the Spirit this rich utterance of praise, could extol, in the anticipative realization of covenanted blessing, the name of Jehovah and the glorious majesty of His kingdom. JESUS, the Priest as well as King, will lead the praises of His people, and through them, of the sons of men, towards the one true God, as the then acknowledged object of His creature's worship. It is because He is the *Son of man* that Jesus is to occupy the throne of all dominion.¹ He will represent, when crowned with honour and majesty as the governor of men, Him whose enduring title is, "the King eternal, invisible, the only wise God" (verse 1).² Yet is it GOD who will reign before His ancients in His glory. The King of Israel is the Son of God.³ The mystery of godliness pervades in its greatness all the manifestations

¹ John v. ² Compare 1 Tim. i. 17. ³ John i. 49.

of Divine power, because it fills the secret fountain of all Divine counsel.

The present Psalm seems to stand, as a general celebration of Jehovah's kingdom, at the head of a series of commemorative hymns on the same subject. The last five Psalms open into fuller and diversified detail the divine argument, which is here more comprehensively set forth.

There is a rich variety of topic in this outpouring of Jehovah's praise. His name, His mighty acts; the glory of His grace, and the sovereignty of His power; His bounteous goodness over all His creatures, and the pervading majesty of His kingdom, are severally noted as the strain proceeds. Especially, it is the memory of His "great goodness" toward the people of His name that fills the hearts and mouths of those whose song is of His *righteousness* (verse 7). His judgments will have been in the earth, and He will have made a short work in righteousness⁴—making thus visible His glory in the sight of all flesh. But it is the portion of *His saints*⁵ to bless Him (verse 10)—of those whose sanctification, and whose righteousness, are alike in Him.⁶ They shall speak of His kingdom, and talk of His power. As the chosen vessels of His favour and His pleasure, they will make known to the sons of men⁷ Jehovah's mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of His kingdom (verse 12). Filled

⁴ Rom. ix. 28.

⁵ תְּסִיִּיִם Meaning, I believe, more immediately, the redeemed nation of Israel. (Compare 2 Chron. vi. 41.) In a still more abundant measure does this term apply to the Church of the First-born, who, knowing then as they are known, will be the delighted ministrants of Jehovah's praises, as the glorified companions of Him, who will bear confessedly the government upon His shoulder in that day.

⁶ 1 Cor. i. 30.

⁷ For an instance of the distinction here observed, in which Israel, as God's holy nation, is contrasted with *men* as such, see Jer. xxxii. 19, 20.

themselves with light and truth, through the removal of the veil of blindness from their hearts, they become the ready instructors of the residue of the nations. Fair blossoms will then grow on Jacob's withered staff. The face of the world will be replenished by the fruit of Israel. The light of the *knowledge* of Jehovah's glory shall cover the face of the nations, and fill their hearts, where now, and until that day, the gross darkness of ignorance and unbelief is spread. Deeply will the heart of ransomed Israel enter into the sweet expressions by which the leading features of Jehovah's character, as the covenant God of His people, are here portrayed (verse 8).⁸ The full enjoyment of the Divine character, in all its infiniteness of gracious perfection, is meanwhile their happy portion who now, by the Spirit, taste the manner of the Father's love in Christ.

Terrestrial things are not exclusively the subject of this Psalm. *All* Jehovah's works shall praise Him (verse 10). Celestial glories, not less than earthly dominion, are comprehended in the kingdom of His Christ. His glory will cover the heavens when the earth is filled with His praise.⁹ Still, it is the earthly sphere of the universal kingdom that principally occupies the mind of the Spirit in this song.

It is a celebration of *continuance* (verse 2); for the kingdom which is to be set up is an everlasting kingdom (verse 13). As long as human generations shall succeed each other upon earth, the sceptre of the world's dominion will remain unbroken in Messiah's hands. This kingdom has its measured limits in the declared counsel of God. It will have an *end*, but yield to no successor in its place.¹

⁸ Compare Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7.

⁹ Hab. iii.

¹ Dan. ii. 44; Luke i. 32, 33. For a fuller description of Messiah's earthly kingdom see the remarks on Psalm lxxii.

What God is will be known and enjoyed by the creature in that day. That which is as yet the secret portion only of the believing and forgiven vessels of elective mercy, in the midst of a world still lying in willing ignorance of God, will then be recognized and gloried in by all the families of the earth.² Whereas it is now the witness of the Spirit that "there is none that understandeth, that seeketh after God,"³ the eyes of all will wait upon Him, when the glorious majesty of His kingdom is become a manifested truth (verse 15). His sun indeed now shines alike upon the just and the unjust. For that God is *good*, and that His tender mercies are over all His works, is a principle, the blessing of which results continually to the creature (though interrupted from time to time by special visitations of judgment) by virtue of His covenant with Noah and the earth.⁴ But men will then *know* their Keeper and their Blessor. They will stay themselves upon their Maker. The living God will be the satisfying portion of every living thing (verse 16).

But holiness and righteousness are evermore the method of God's way (verse 17). The administration of His kingdom by the presence and power of Messiah will gloriously prove this truth. Verses 18–20 refer immediately to the moral order of that administration. He that is higher than the highest will not then be, as now, a remote spectator, in much long-suffering, of human folly and misrule.⁵ He will be a present Saviour and a swift avenger of all whose cry of unjust suffering is addressed to Him. The Christian, whose present appointment is

² Speaking, that is, generally. For, as has frequently been stated in the progress of these "Notes," the world is not universally converted to God in the millennium.

³ Rom. iii. 11.

⁴ Gen. ix. 9–17.

⁵ Eccles. v. 8.

as a sheep to the slaughter, lives, as one saved by hope, upon these words as words of promise, and waits patiently until the revelation of the righteous judge.

The closing verse communicates the chorus of Jehovah's praise, from the lips of Him who leads it, to the whole family of man upon the earth: "Let all flesh bless His holy name, for ever and ever." May that day soon come!

PSALM CXLVI.

THE kingdom having been established over all, praise is now set free to flow from *Zion*. Jacob's God is here extolled with an especial reference to His covenant faithfulness, "He keepeth truth for ever" (verse 6). The face of Jacob is now no longer pale, as in the day of trouble, but shining in the light of that pure joy and gladness which rests abidingly upon the heads of all Jehovah's ransomed people, when He brings them back with full acceptance to the city of solemnities.¹

It is a very beautiful Psalm, and full of most precious matter for the believer's meditation at all times. Specifically, it is the voice of Jacob recounting the fruits of His experience in Jehovah's ways. Truth having prevailed unto victory in the revealed person of Messiah,—the living covenant of the God of Israel's promise,—the satisfied possessors of His favour cast back their thoughts in retrospective survey of the ways of man. They find that all the times and fashions of natural experience are stamped with the common seal of vanity and dissolution; that the thoughts of man, though lofty, are destined to oblivion; that rank and power were but a delusive lie, so

¹ Isaiah xxxv. 10.

long as they pertained to man, whose breath was in his nostrils, and who spent his days of changeful vicissitude as the expectant victim of inevitable death (verses 3, 4).

But Jacob's way had long been in the flesh. From the first, he had been prone to swerve aside from God. His immediate trust had always been in man, while he forgot His Maker, though he lied towards Him still with flattering lips.² And in the bitter harvest of his own perverseness, he had been made to prove the truth of what he here avows. The cup of trembling, which had been once commended by the righteous God to Israel's lips, when, abhorred for their transgressions, although still beloved in unrepented purpose, they had been smitten and dispersed towards the four winds of heaven, had taught them a true estimate of human things. They had learned thereby, moreover, to think righteously of God.

But now the season of this discipline is passed. As the creatures of the Lord omnipotent, and the full vessels of His favour, they abound to overflowing with the joy which brings forth singing. And *He* is their song. His truth, kept always, though long hidden from their blinded eyes, now shines in Zion as the chosen habitation of His name; for Christ is there. The light of Israel, once quenched by wicked ignorance, now again shines forth in cloudless brightness of entire peace. Jacob is blessed of God, and the measure of His blessing is the title of the Seed to whom the promises were made.

Verses 7-9 present in a richly varied light the name and glory of Jehovah as the covenant God of Israel. They had had to do with Him under each and all of the characters here enumerated. He had saved them and had judged them. He had punished them for their iniquities, and He

² Isaiah lviii.; lix. 13.

had broken again the yoke of the oppressor for their sakes. He had blinded their eyes when He hid Himself in wrath, and suffered Jacob to go on perversely in his ways.³ Again, He had unsealed those blinded eyes, and poured on them the rich and wondrous light of His salvation. Both the widow's desolation and the renewing of her bridal joy had been tasted in succession by Jerusalem. The God of Jacob had found him when a wanderer, and led him to a peaceful habitation. In righteousness He had both raised the prostrate people of His covenant, and confounded in a common ruin the despisers of His truth.

The result is *praise*. Most blessed thought! The knowledge of what God really is becomes, to those whose eyes are opened in His light, an argument of ceaseless praise.

The God of Jacob is the God of *grace*. The Christian's praise of God is due to Him, according to the name with which He clothes Himself in the special revelation of His truth. Now He who hath called us in the Son of His love is the God of *all grace*. This title announces to the believer the perfect adjustment, in entire mercy, of the holiness of God in Christ to the existing need of those whom He has called by Him to His eternal glory. Jacob's God is ours, in the full emphasis of all His gracious name. We need Him thus. And having, in the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the pronouncer and fulfiller of all promise, we may boldly say, "Jehovah *is* my helper," in our day of trial,⁴ and thus respond, with full intelligence of their sweet meaning, to the gratulations of the Spirit in this wise and lovely song of Zion.

³ Isaiah lvii. 17.

⁴ Heb. xiii. 6.

PSALM CXLVII.

ANOTHER and most comely strain of praise addressed to Jacob's God. It is more exclusively national in its tone than the last. No other nation had been so dealt with; but to Jacob He had shown His word—His statutes and His judgments unto Israel (verses 19, 20). The Gentiles, if they would learn the knowledge of Jehovah, must receive it from the wise and understanding people whom He had decked with everlasting favour as His chosen priests, the keepers and dispensers of His truth.¹

We listen, in this Psalm, as to the pleasant melody of the Lord's song in His own land. The time of singing has now come. For Jehovah has built up Jerusalem, and gathered together the outcasts of Israel (verse 2).² He is known in Zion as her God. For by His power He has stilled the adversaries, and established a border of perpetual peace around the loved inheritance of His choice. He has blessed the children of Jerusalem within her, while her gates are made sure from violence in the abiding strength of His salvation (verses 13, 14).³

Verses 3-6 declare the glories and ever blessed perfections of His character, whom they now know and make their boast in as *their* Lord, and whose discovery of Himself, in the marvellous riches of His goodness, has filled their harps with new strains of thanksgiving and praise (verse 7). And here it is that the believing citizen of the heavenly Jerusalem finds fit expression of his own heart-

¹ Zech. viii. 23; Isaiah lxi. 6. ² Compare Isaiah xi. 12.

³ Compare Isaiah lx., *passim*.

homage to the God of His salvation. What Israel will taste in their Messiah in the coming day, the Christian finds in Jesus now. In Him he sees and understands, experimentally, the association of Almighty power with the gracious tenderness of perfect love. It is He who telleth the number of the stars. By the greatness of His might, He has brought them severally forth to be the silent but irrefragable witnesses of His exceeding majesty who upholds them by the word of His own power.⁴ But He is likewise the watchful reckoner of the sheep of His blood-bought flock. The very hairs that grow upon His people's heads are numbered in the jealous minuteness of His care.

There is, in verse 4, an apparent allusion to Gen. xv. 5. God only knows the number of His people. As no star fails of its appointed lustre, but renders, as it brightly shines, its tribute to His glory who created it, so no living vessel of His grace and power shall fail of its allotted place, or bear a less than full resemblance to the image of that glory of the First-begotten, unto which God's many sons must be conformed.⁵

Christ, as the wisdom and power of God, shines brightly forth from verse 5, but rather in connexion with the mystery of the Divine dealings with the earthly people.⁶ With verse 6, compare Matt. v. 5; Isaiah xi. 4.

The once foolish nation speaks in the spirit of a sound mind of the true foundation of all blessing, in verses 10, 11: "Not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy," will be the lowly but delighted acknowledgment of regenerate Israel in that day, even as now it is the key-note of all true Christian praise. The pervading goodness and power of Jehovah,

⁴ Isaiah xl. 26; Heb. i. 3. ⁵ Rom. viii. 29. ⁶ Rom. xi. 33-36.

the alone ruler and possessor of the earth and its fulness, are finely described in this Psalm. But all is done with reference to *Jerusalem*, as the then recognized centre of all earthly blessing. It is plain that the Church is in no way represented here, though involved in a paramount degree in all the blessing contemplated, as the inseparable associate of Him who is presently to be worshipped at Jerusalem as her Lord, the God and governor of all the earth.

PSALM CXLVIII.

THE note of praise swells louder and with a more widely comprehensive range, in this magnificent Psalm, than in the one immediately preceding. It is a glorious celebration of Him who filleth all things, and who, as over all, blessed for ever, will have worship from His creatures, whether heavenly or earthly, or in those profounder deeps which human thought may not explore. Waters above the heavens, whose limits and the ordained purpose of whose creation are things not yet revealed to man, lift up their hands to praise the only Lord (verse 4).¹

It is the sublime and perfect harmony of the freed creation's praise that greets us in this lofty and most beautiful ode, whose subject is the once-rejected Lord of glory. It is a worthy strain for anticipative Christian faith to utter, while still enduring the reproach of a world to which the mystery of a hidden and exalted Christ is little better than a cunning fable. But it is most plainly *Israel's* song (verse 14). He whose glory will be thus extolled, as over earth and heaven, receives, as the climax of terrestrial praise, the grateful celebration of the children of Israel,

¹ Compare Genesis i. 7.

whom He has exalted to be a praise and a peculiar ornament of His majesty who is the God of the whole earth. Be it ours to remember, that it will be in the manifestation of the *sons of God* that the ennobled nation of His choice will pitch thus loftily their grateful and triumphant strains.

The double glory of Jesus—the Creator and Redeemer of all things—is sublimely indicated in this Psalm. Especially, He is extolled as the Redeemer and exalter of His saints. That title seems, however, to be appropriated *exclusively* to Israel in the present Psalm. For, as has been already remarked, the Church has her portion with Him who is the glorified object of this worship. He will come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them whose happy calling it now is to believe on, and to suffer for, a world-rejected Christ.² And if this earthly song be sweet and worthy, there is a strain of yet surpassing richness and power, which, having its beginning in heaven before the throne of God, spreads no further among men on earth than to be echoed by that chosen multitude to whom it is given, just before the King of glory shines forth in apparent majesty, to know Him and to praise Him as the Lamb.³

There is an expression of peculiar and touching interest in the concluding verse. The children of Israel are described as “a people *near* unto Him.” Always near, in covenanted purpose, to His gracious affection, who had loved them with an everlasting love,⁴ the people had been once *brought* nigh.⁵ Jehovah had borne them upon eagles’ wings, and brought them to Himself. But then it was to receive a covenant which presently removed them into

² 2 Thess. i. 10.

³ Rev. xiv. 1-3

⁴ Jer. xxxi. 3.

⁵ Exod. xix. 4.

hopeless distance. From that far distance they had been again brought nigh. And now He who is the living covenant of grace and truth, sole mediator of blessing between God and man, had joined the people to their God for ever. In *that* nearness they will glory with a praise which shall not cease.

PSALM CXLIX.

ALTHOUGH there are passages¹ in this Psalm which are manifestly applicable to the Church, and which at first sight might seem to pertain, in strict interpretation, to the partakers of the heavenly calling as their proper object, yet in its prophetic bearing it belongs, I believe, like the foregoing Psalms, to the redeemed nation of Israel.

It is a new song; to be raised only by the ransomed of Jehovah. It tells of the gladness which Zion's children have in their anointed King (verse 2). They will make such melody within her walls of salvation in the day when He who, when He once rode meekly, sitting on an ass, and entered in this guise, as Israel's Judge and Zion's King, within the city of solemnities, had been rejected and despised, shall be recognized and worshipped as the Maker² of His new-created people. The new song of

¹ Especially verses 1, 5-9. As to the phrase, קהל קהלים 'Εκκλησία ὁσίων.—LXX., it would apply, in its indefiniteness, with equal propriety to the Church or to the nation. But the strong Jewish context leaves no doubt upon my own mind that the latter are here intended.

² Let Israel rejoice בְּעֲשׂוֹי The plural form here employed will not be regarded as an accidental peculiarity by the reader, who, in the grateful enjoyment of the now unfolded mystery of godliness, delights to note its adumbrations in the ancient oracles of God, before the time had fully come for the epiphany of the true and perfect Light. (Compare in *original*, Gen. i. 26; Isa. liv. 5; &c. &c.)

redemption-praise will be comely in the lips of Zion's new-born sons. They will say of Him whom their fathers disallowed, "He is our God." And He will own them, and have pleasure in them, as His people. With dance and timbrel they will crown the vine-clad mountains of Samaria, in the happy exultation of an acceptable mirth, when, having been drawn by Jehovah's loving-kindness within the covenant of endless peace, they keep their feasts of gladness in the beauteous garments of salvation (verse 4).³

At verse 5, the subject changes from the blessedness of Israel, as a vessel of Divine goodness, to the yet higher and more solemn topic of the nation's honour as the associate and chosen instrument of God's judicial holiness. This had always been a part of Israel's calling. They were as Jehovah's sword, to visit on the ripe iniquity of the Canaanite the righteous vengeance of the God of judgment. This honour had indeed been turned, through the weakness and unprofitableness of the flesh, to shame and reprobation in their after history. They had *howled* upon their beds beneath the load of anguish which Jehovah's just displeasure had inflicted on them, when, although He was their Saviour, they had spoken only mischief and revolt against His name.⁴ But now they sing. They *rest* upon their beds,⁵ every one settled and grounded in the Lord his righteousness.

Nothing is more obvious than the application of verses 6-9 to the armies of heaven, which follow the Lord of judgment in His advent of righteous visitation on the corrupters of the earth.⁶ But ancient prophecy is full of testimony to the part which reconciled Israel is to sustain

³ Jer. xxxi. 4, 5.

⁴ Hosea vii. 13-15.

⁵ Isaiah lvii. 2.

⁶ Rev. xix. 11-14.

in the solemn scenes of the latter day. Jehovah will surely bend Judah for Him, and fill His bow with Ephraim.⁷ Israel shall yet take them captives whose captives they were, and shall rule over their oppressors,⁸ when the kingdom is restored according to the sure word of promise. That word is faithful. It has been made to them who have as yet possessed their portion but a little while.⁹ But a promise of eternal excellency remains to be fulfilled to Zion by the changeless Holy One of Israel.¹

PSALM CL.

HEAVEN and earth again unite in this final chorus of the creation's joyful worship: God is to be praised in His sanctuary;² He is to be lauded also in the firmament of His power. His mighty acts are the occasion of His power; its measure is His excellent greatness (verse 2). The ministers of this acceptable incense are the breathing creatures of His hand (verse 6). His breath is in their nostrils that His praise may fill their lips.

The detail given in verses 3-5 of the instrumental demonstration of human worship is full of interest. The musical inventions of man's device—originating as they did in the unblessed house of Cain, who was of that wicked one and slew his brother—had long been used for the furtherance of the unhallowed joys of men—as appliances of revelry for them who were lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. If not thus used their sound had been

⁷ Zech. ix. 13.

⁸ Isaiah xiv. 2.

⁹ Isaiah lxiii. 18.

¹ Isaiah lx. 14, 15.

² That the *earthly* sanctuary is here meant is evident, not only from the sequel of the Psalm, but more conclusively from Rev. xxi. 22.

even less welcome in the ears of holiness, when the studied strains of artificial melody provoked a fresh remembrance of their deep hypocrisy, who outwardly professed to love the places of God's honour, while their hearts were alike destitute of His fear and of His love.³

But now those once dishonoured instruments are in the hands of worshippers who have been taught experimentally that the inventor of true melody is the living Spirit of grace. Pure and delicious harmony will flow freely forth at their wise touch. Brought themselves within the light of the knowledge of God in the face of Jesus Christ, they will regard and use the works of their own hands only as welcome appliances of His pure worship, for whose glory themselves had been created and redeemed according to the riches of His grace.

May that day be hastened in His time! Meanwhile, for the expectant heirs of salvation, whose unction as the sons of God is of the Holy One, there are harps of purer tone, and of a different invention—the harps of GOD. Already, though in feeble and ungraceful numbers, there ascends to God an acceptable offering of praise from the voluntary exiles who, for Jesus' sake, go forth without the camp.⁴ May that offering be rich and plenteous, through the power of the Holy Ghost, in a growing discernment, and still deepening enjoyment, of the unsearchable riches of Christ, until His presence crowns their hope.⁵

³ Amos v. 23; John v. 42.

⁴ Heb. xiii. 13-15.

⁵ Heb. x. 37.

ERRATA.

- Page 16, line 7, for "oursakes" read *our sakes*.
,, 49, note 7, for *ἀιωρίον* read *αἰωρίον*.
,, 94, note 4, for *χαί* read *καί*.
,, 162, line 3 from bottom, after "It is" insert *at*.
,, 208, note 8, for "*ammaestrati*" read *ammaestrarti*.
,, 255, line 18, for "indentification" read *identification*.
,, 261, note 3, for פִּקְיוֹ read פִּקְיֹ
,, 350, note 4, for הַקְּהָר read הַקְּהָר
,, 357, note 4, for סְלֵי read סְלֵי
,, 390, line 1 from bottom of note, for "maternal" read *material*.
,, 417, note 7, for בָּן read בָּן; *and*.
,, 428, note 4, for בְּטָח read בְּטָח

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