

Meditations
from
Psalms

with 53 Psalms set to Music



Timothy Tow

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by

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To

Dr. S. H. Tow

*these Psalms
are
affectionately dedicated*

THE BOOK OF PSALMS

What words can adequately introduce this Book of Psalms to us? Who shall say how much it has meant to godly hearts down the years? Here is poetry which more than vies with that of Milton and Shakespeare, yet it is the poetry of downright reality; and, as “the body is more than the raiment,” so here, the reality is greater than the poetry which expresses it. Here, too, is strong theology - not, however, any merely theoretical theology, but the practical theology of vivid human experience; and, as “the life is more than meat,” so is concrete experience more than abstract doctrine. It is this, fundamentally, which has made the Book of Psalms such a treasure to the godly.

“Hymns to the gods of Greece have been preserved,” says C. J. Ellicott, “but how vast is their difference from the Psalms! Let the reader compare one of those translated by Shelley, with any song out of the Psalter. Pretty compliments and well-turned flatteries intended to propitiate he will find, set, indeed, in melodious verse that celebrates the birth of gods and demi-gods; but no wrestling in prayer with tearful eyes and downcast head, and the full assurance of faith, such as has made the Psalms for all time the expression of the devotional feelings of men.”

This Book of Psalms is a limpid lake which reflects every mood of man’s changeful sky. It is a river of consolation which, though swollen with many tears, never fails to gladden the fainting. It is a garden of flowers which never lose their fragrance, though some of the roses have sharp thorns. It is a stringed instrument which registers every note of praise and prayer, of triumph and trouble, of gladness and sadness, of hope and fear, and unites them all in the full multi-chord of human experience.

Baxter

PSALM 1

ONLY TWO WAYS

In this jet age, it is possible not only to fly from one country to another in a matter of hours, but also by many alternative routes. To fly from Singapore to New York, you can go West or East and have a choice of twenty airlines. There are so many routes. There are so many ways.

In the eyes of God, there are only two ways in man's goings. The Psalmist has discovered this. It is such an important issue in life that he must tell us on the opening page of this Divine poetry book.

The two ways are: 1. The way of the godly that leads to heaven. 2. The way of the ungodly that leads to hell (v. 6). In the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7) Jesus confirms what the Psalmist has said. He says, "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matt. 7:13, 14). Reader, on which way are you?

At the end of life's journey, v. 5 tells of a judgment day when every soul must appear before God. The ungodly will be pronounced guilty and sent downwards. The godly will be happily acquitted and sent upwards. Which verdict will you hear for yourself?

In this earthly life also there is a great difference between the two. The man who follows God and keeps himself from bad company, who reads the Bible and meditates on its teachings, morning and evening, grows sturdy like a tree planted by some waterway. He draws his strength daily from God's Word and leads a prosperous life, luxuriant in good works that glorify God and benefit men. Is that not seen in the life of the Psalmist himself, even King David?

As to the ungodly, the man who plots evil and holds on to his unrighteous gains, we see how he must come to ruin. He is like the husks of grain, blown away by the wind in the winnowing process. The sad ending of David's enemies, for example, Ahithophel and Joab, is like this. There is not only a dead end in the judgment to come, but also a sad end in the way he goes from now.



PSALM 2

CHRIST THE MESSIAH, THE ANOINTED PRINCE

This is a Messianic Psalm, one that foretells the coming Messiah! Messiah is the Hebrew for the Anointed One, translated *Christos* in Greek from which we derive 'Christ' (compare v. 2). Who is better qualified to write about Christ, the Son of David, than David himself? David is called by the sacred historian "the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel" (II Sam. 23:1). Though this Psalm has no title of authorship, Peter in Acts 4:25 names David the inspired prophet behind these stanzas.

This Psalm naturally divides into four parts, not only from the sense, but also from the stanzas, which consist of three verses each. The fourfold division is: I. The Nations Revolting (1-3); II. The LORD Reigning (4-6); III. The Son Proclaimed (7-9); IV. The Nations Reproved (10-12).

As Peter viewed the rebellious events of his day through the lenses of this Psalm, he saw how vain were the machinations of Herod, Pontius Pilate, the Gentiles and the Jews gathered together against the Christ of God. So must the eruptions of wicked men in our day be assessed in this light that we may not be dismayed when the enemies of God persecute the Church of Jesus Christ. Our hearts will be gravely troubled under persecution unless we realise that there is One Supreme Lord who gives rule even to wicked kings and dictators

(Dan. 4:17). He who laughs at the vain rebellions of Christ's enemies laughs last and laughs best. What a consolation is this knowledge of God's sovereignty to the Christian minority living among a hostile people. In times of testing, the faithful will take courage as they hear Christ speak, "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Rev. 2:10).

God the Father Almighty will send His Son to sit on the throne of David in that day to rule over the whole world. "God's anointed is appointed and shall not be disappointed" (Spurgeon). The Anointed Prince declares the decree of God in His own credentials of being the Son of God. He is moreover given rule over His enemies for an inheritance. Jehovah has given His Anointed a rod of iron by which He will break them in pieces like potsherd in the Judgment Day.

A message is given to the rebellious to pay homage to the Prince. To "kiss the Son" is to show subjection in inferiors or religious adoration in worshippers. When we see the Pope, who calls himself "Vicar of Christ," i.e., "representative of Christ on earth and the head of His Church" (Chambers), being kissed by kings and presidents, we see him usurping this honour that is reserved for Jesus alone.

When the Son becomes angry for allegiance not properly pledged to Him, they will "perish from the way."



PSALM 3

"MY SON, MY SON!"

What greater tragedy could you imagine than a son should rebel against his father? And in the course of rebellion the closest friends of the father should side with the son? When such a rebellion involves a king, it

shakes up a whole nation. It precipitates a civil war of more than bloody dimensions.

In the struggle between David and Absalom, every shade of human intrigue is revealed with stark nakedness. The darkest of it all is treachery and the scoundrel in David's case is Ahithophel. As the darkest is treachery, we see also the brightest in loyalty and the hero is Hushai. This loyal friend of David was God's instrument against Ahithophel. (Read II Sam. 15:32-17:23).

While we can study a great deal about human intrigues from this royal drama, from David we must learn the secret of finding that help that comes only from God. But while we implore the Almighty for help, we must be willing to do His bidding. As King George VI rallied the British Empire to a Day of Humiliation and Prayer when attacked by Hitler's Germany, he admonished his subjects, "Let us pray not so much that God be on our side as we be on God's side." David, the man after God's own heart (I Sam. 13:14), has triumphed over every enemy because he is on God's side and God is on his side. Is our heart right with God and man when we pray to Him in time of need?

This Psalm is made up of four stanzas inasmuch as there are four stances of David's seeking before his God.

I. (vv. 1 & 2). David cries out to God for the rising rebellion against him. David complains of the doom heaped upon him that even God seems to be of no avail. How the enemy delights to see God's children down and out! Do we exult over our enemy when he falls? Heed Solomon's admonition: "Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth: lest the LORD see it, and it displease him, and he turn away his wrath from him" (Prov. 24:17, 18).

II. (vv. 3 & 4). David's prayer is answered! David has confidence that though he is driven out of his palace, he will yet return because God is his garrison. So is everyone who prays earnestly and finds peace in his heart.

III. (vv. 5 & 6). One extended result of peace from answered prayer is sound sleep, even when one is checkmated on every side. Physical strength is begotten of spiritual strength (Ps. 127).

IV. (vv. 7 & 8). Having seen how God has silenced the evil-speaking enemy and the devouring enemy by smashing their cheek bone and their teeth, David pleads for further deliverance. David's declaration of help obtained from a sovereign God is the basis of Calvin's doctrine that salvation is of the Lord, not of man. Amen.



PSALM 4

“MY STRENGTH IS AS THE STRENGTH OF TEN, BECAUSE MY HEART IS PURE” - Tennyson

Spurgeon says this Psalm is apparently intended to accompany the 3rd and make a pair with it. If the last may be entitled “The Morning Psalm”, this from its matter is equally deserving of the title “The Evening Hymn”.

What is significant about this Psalm is the title addressed of the Lord that He is “God of my righteousness”. This is the only occasion when He is so addressed. David is not showing a “holier than thou” attitude as if he has no sin at all, as the Pharisee thinks of himself in the temple against the publican. David is confident rather that in a certain matter he is falsely accused of by his enemy, he can claim innocence without compunction. His heart is at ease as he calls upon God to be his Judge. Hence he addresses Him, “O God of my righteousness.” He can say with Sir Galahad in Tennyson, “My strength is as the strength of ten, because my heart is pure.”

Though he stands innocent in the matter concerned, before God he can only beg for mercy and favour. Though we are clean in our individual transactions, we are unworthy and undone at all times before a thrice holy God!

David, who has experienced God's help before this in relieving him from a tight spot, pleads with assurance in the present circumstances. Having been fully assured in his heart that his prayer is heard, he can tell his enemies that the appointed of the Lord will not be disappointed. If the Lord has called you, and you serve Him with all your heart, you need not be afraid either!

A word to those who take sin lightly: "Tremble and sin not!" Let them, instead of plotting mischief while they are awake upon their bed (Ps. 36:4), rather search their own hearts if there be any wicked way in themselves. This exercise of examining one's innermost self is reflected in David's prayer in Ps. 139:23, 24. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jer. 17:9). If we often deceive ourselves, don't we need to search our own hearts, our intentions and motives, if they are for self or for God?

When one has the ten-fold strength from a sense of one's accepted standing before God, then one can rejoice in the Lord despite tauntings hurled from every quarter. "For the joy of the LORD is your strength" (Neh. 8:10). One result of such strength in the Lord is a peaceful sleep, a security in Him who watches over us, not only in daylight but also through the hours of the night.



PSALM 5

DAVID'S SELF EXAMINATION IN HIS MORNING PRAYERS

The word "Nehiloth" in the title of this Psalm is thought by some to mean "heritage." Others say it refers to "wind instruments," inasmuch as "Neginoth" in Psalm 4 means "stringed instruments." Calvin says, "I adopt the opinion of those who hold that it was either a musical instrument or a tune; but of what particular kind I consider it of little importance to ascertain."

Of greater importance is the substance of the Psalm proper wherein David set us the example of praying in the morning. Spurgeon says, "An hour in the morning is worth two in the evening." Another says, "To seek God early is to seek Him earnestly."

*When first thy eyes unveil, give thy soul leave
To do the like; our bodies but forerun
The spirit's duty; true hearts spread and heave
Unto their God, as flowers do the sun;
Give Him thy first thoughts,
Then, so shalt thou keep
Him company all day and in Him sleep.*

- Henry Vaughan 1621-95

Of even greater importance than praying early in the day is our heart-condition. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (Ps. 66:18). Therefore David reminds himself of a God who hates wickedness, especially those who practise lying and deceit and murder. David's prayers in the morning lead him to worship with others in God's House, and should he be afar off, he would pray towards His holy temple. Do we seek God early everyday and do we go to Church every Lord's Day? When in travel away from Church, do we set aside a time to worship Him under different circumstances?

As David is surrounded by enemies of all kinds, from the treacherous to the flattering (Prov. 29:5), he prays for their destruction inasmuch as these who lay wait for him are rebels against the Lord. So David prays for God's leading him in a straight path lest he be sidetracked into their net. He encourages all who trust the Lord like him to rejoice in God their Defender. The God who hates iniquity will conversely bless the upright in heart. He will surround them with His favour and shield them from all harm.

Will God grant us our requests? There are so many obstacles set up against us by our enemies, but with His help we will be delivered. He who seeks God every

morning and every week in His House with godly fear and worship will not be ashamed.



PSALM 6

SWIMMING IN MY BED OF TEARS

This is one of David's seven penitential psalms. In vv. 3 & 4, he is spiritually downcast. In vv. 2 & 5, he seems to be struck down by sickness. In vv. 7 & 10, he talks of confrontation with his enemies. "One woe doth tread upon another's heel, so fast they follow" (Shakespeare). When troubles come, they come not alone.

Those who persist to be "masters of their own fate and captains of their own souls" (William E. Henley) perish in their own strength. This is sterile stoicism, a fatalism to suffering and pain. O how sad and how lonely, and sadder and lonelier still, as one advances in age, without God!

Christians have David for an example. When misfortunes come, David would take them to be chastenings from the Lord. He would quickly run to the Heavenly Father for help. He casts himself before One whom he can trust would do him good. He implores, first of all, His mercies, for there is nothing good in him he could rely upon to offer before God. He keeps on pleading and in the heat of his emotions he bursts into tears. His weeping from mixed strong emotions sends torrents of tears onto his bed, so much so that it almost becomes a swimming pool! This hyperbole vividly describes how strong his tearful pleadings with God are. It is good medicine to let go the pent-up emotions of the heart. To keep them and hem them makes the burden heavier yet heavier. Our strained emotions can harm the mind and body, e.g. causing us to stammer. A Christian in communication with a loving Heavenly Father is like a child of a mother's love. He can run to mother's bosom and sob it out in mother's embrace. "Let us therefore come boldly unto

the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb. 4:16).

When we empty our miserable selves before Him, then He will fill us with gladness. “Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning” (Ps. 30:5). After a night of soaking-wet weeping for Him, David wakes up in the first rays of a new day with a light heart! He feels his oppression is removed, particularly the “workers of iniquity,” his personal enemies. His prayers have been answered.

“Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD” (Ps. 27:14).



PSALM 6

HOW LONG, LORD?

You have been long in coming, love says. So miserly are we of the minutes, so leaden-paced is the beat of the pendulum, when our heart stands on the tiptoe of expectation. Moments lengthen to hours when we suffer and await deliverance, just as hours contract to moments when the heart is young and gay.

HOW LONG, LORD, ERE THE TRIAL CEASE? When we are entering into the furnace, we like to bargain with God that it shall not last beyond a certain hour; but He never tells us, lest patience might miss her perfect work. He says simply, “It is enough to suffer one moment at a time.”

HOW LONG, LORD, ERE DELIVERANCE ARRIVE? Long ago, we sent for reinforcements; and since then the battle has been waxing more fiercely. We have looked eagerly to the horizon to see the relieving column, clear-cut on the skyline; but in vain. We think we can hold out no more. We have strained at the oar to the last degree of strength, and if some deliverance does not come to us,

the fourth watch of night will see us drifting helplessly to destruction. “Where is thy God?” the enemy cries; and we are tempted to think ourselves forsaken and forgotten.

HOW LONG, LORD, ERE THE ADVENT BREAK? He said that He would come quickly – but the weary centuries pass; and, strain our ears as we may, we cannot detect his princely footfall along the corridor of time.

Cease, fond heart, thy complaining. Delay is not denial. He counts a thousand years as a day. He is coming on the wings of every wind; already He is nigh, even at the doors. Never a moment too early – but not a moment too late.



PSALM 7

APPEAL TO GOD AGAINST THE BLACK SLANDERER

“Shiggaion,” which occurs also in Habakkuk 3 in the plural form, has the sense of “wandering.” One interpretation is that this Psalm is to be sung to a “wandering” tune, a tune full of variations of tone. Such a tune seems fitting to the words of this Psalm.

Who is Cush the Benjamite? Some think Cush is a hidden name for Saul, for he was from the house of Benjamin. Others consider the name Cush as symbolical of the dark malice of David’s enemy, inasmuch as a Cushite, an Ethiopian, is black. In Calvin’s opinion, David is here referring simply to a wicked accuser by the name of Cush. With all these thoughts in mind, we may be justified to title this Psalm “Appeal to God Against the Black Slanderer.”

To slander is to falsely accuse another before a third person. This is punishable by law. What aggravates this slandering of David, whether before the king, his ministers, or the people, is that David was at peace

with his accuser and had even delivered the same from trouble (v. 4). Slander is character assassination so often practised by the ungrateful and jealous. So like mad dogs, they bite the hand that feeds them.

When we who are confronted by such a situation in our innocence (v. 3) and are stuck as it were in a hole, with no one to help us, let us remember with David that there is a God to appeal to (v. 1), who will deliver judgment for the righteous against all the forces of evil. David's defence against slander is in God. David believes that the evil perpetrated by his enemy will boomerang against him in the end (v. 15, 16).

*He digs a ditch and delves it deep,
In hope to hurt his brother;
But he shall fall into the pit
That he digged up for other.
Thus wrong returneth to the hurt
Of him in whom it bred;
And all the mischief that he wrought
Shall fall upon his head.*

Steinhold and Hopkins

Divine retribution comes swift and sure, or long delayed, but it will surely come. Let us refrain from speaking guile against our brother. Martin Luther would not listen to anyone who should speak a word against his brother in his absence.



PSALM 8

“HOW GREAT THOU ART!”

In this jet age when man hops from country to country in near-sonic travel, and space-shuttling became routine with the mighty until the “Challenger” disaster, he makes himself the centre of this whirling world. Though he straddles the skies, he rarely looks out of his cabin-window to behold the glories of God's creation. What he sees are hordes of his own kind queuing and rushing

each day in a struggling existence, himself a speck in the surging human tide. How stifled is his soul!

Let him return to his status of an earthworm, let him retreat to some countryside with crawling steps. Let him look up to the night-blue sky above and sing in adoration with David, “O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens” (Ps. 8:1). Let him echo to another nature psalm of David, “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork” (Ps. 19:1).

Let us with David’s child-simple faith praise the Almighty like little children. Their innocent voices are a delight to both God and men, except those who are hardened enemies to the Truth. Our Lord quoted v. 2 to silence the chief priests and Scribes who resented the children’s Hosannas to the Son of David, their Lord and Creator.

It is when we see the wonders of God’s creation, the galaxies of stars, and the moon on a clear autumn night, that we sink back into our smallness. Yet, we are the apex of God’s creation, and the apple of His eye (Ps. 17:8).

Though we are “a little lower than the angels” by our mortality, and Jesus who has taken upon Himself our flesh and blood to die in our stead is also “made a little lower than the angels” (Heb 2:9-18), yet we are to triumph with Him who is our Head, to be crowned with glory and honour. In Jesus Christ we have Paradise regained. We, who are sons by adoption in Him, shall reign together with Him over the whole creation “when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord” (Acts 3:19).

In spite of our rebellion in Adam, the mandate to man to “have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth” remains (Gen. 1:28). Alas, it is when man tries to invade God’s territory, the spheres above our air-region, that such a disaster as the burning up of

seven American astronauts early 1986 must occur to put man in his proper place.

In conclusion, let us echo with David, “like a good composer returning to his keynote, falling back as it were into his first state of wondering adoration” (Spurgeon).



PSALM 9

TRIUMPH OVER THE HEATHEN

The Hebrew term “Muth-labben” means “Death of the Son”. Scofield thinks it is possibly connected with II Samuel 12:20. Certain ancient commentators think the Son in this context refers to the Son of Perdition in Goliath. David wrote this Psalm, a Triumphal Hymn over his enemy, that it might strengthen the church militant on earth till she becomes the church triumphant in heaven. (Remember Christian in Pilgrim’s Progress.)

This Psalm may be divided into two unequal parts paralleling each other as follows:

- | | |
|---|---|
| I. 1. Jubilant thanksgiving
(vv. 1-6) | II. 1. Similar thoughts
(vv. 15, 16) |
| 2. Confidence in the future
(vv. 7-12) | 2. Similar thoughts
(vv. 17, 18) |
| 3. Closing prayer
(vv. 13, 14) | 3. Similar thoughts
(vv. 19, 20) |

Although David had fought hard to vanquish his enemy, pride did not enter his head to make him top-heavy. He gave all glory to God to whom he looked always for help. His strength over his enemy is this lowly attitude that gains God’s favour. For God gives grace to the humble, but resists the proud (I Pet. 5:5). God was so pleased with David’s loving obedience that He called him “a man after his own heart” (I Sam. 13:14). The opposite number to David is king Saul who was rejected for being self-willed and vainglorious. Whereas God readily pardoned David in the matter of Bathsheba because he acknowledged his sins in deepest contrition, Saul the stubborn and self-

exalting found no consolation of forgiveness, which drove him to necromancy and death. “Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD” (Jer. 9:23, 24).

Having experienced God’s mercies and judgment in the past, David can look into the future with confidence. Notice the future tense that prevails in this section, vv. 7-12. The Lord will be judge, refuge and king in that day when the whole world will come before Him for judgment. Again, it is the humble who will be heard when they cry to Him.

This hymn of triumph over the heathen closes with prayer for mercy and a holy determination to praise the Lord before the multitudes of his people.

This threefold thanksgiving, confidence and prayer recurs in the latter part of this Psalm from vv. 15-20 as a sort of sweet refrain.



PSALM 10

PETITION AGAINST OPPRESSORS OF THE POOR AND ORPHANED

Although there is no title to this Psalm, a good many commentators including Calvin consider this to be from “the sweet Psalmist of Israel.” Calvin regards this Psalm as a complaint that “fraud, extortion, cruelty, violence and all kinds of injustice” prevailed everywhere in the world. How true this statement is. We say it this way today, “Big fish eat small fish.”

It is most ironical to see the wicked, mighty and powerful, the bully, while persecuting and eating up the

poor and fatherless (vv. 2, 18), crawl and cringe before the powerful of his own kind, even the covetous (v. 3). As to God, he wilfully dismisses Him from his mind (v. 4), or imagines Him to have forgotten or to be blind to his crimes (v. 11). He uses all kinds of stratagems to catch his prey, the poor and helpless, by lurking in the villages, like a lion in his den (vv. 8, 9). He stoops in humility in order to conquer the unsuspecting.

Plumer says, "There is a consanguinity between all sins." Compare v. 6 with several preceding and succeeding verses. Pride, cruelty, cunning, boasting, lust, covetousness, false peace, want of docility, practical atheism, spiritual blindness, contempt, cursing, deceit, fraud, mischief and vanity are a frightful sisterhood. The Apostle James told us no new thing when he depicted (James 3:2-13) the dreadful evils of a wicked tongue (v. 7). Death and life are in its power. There is no greater wickedness than that which breaks out in words. It is amazing what mean artifices are resorted to by the best of the oppressors of God's truth and people, even by people commonly fair in other matters (vv. 7, 8). The fawning, crouching, sycophantic part often played by the cruel and wicked can deceive none but the simple and inexperienced (v. 10).

When we are poor and fatherless, isolated and discarded, is it not wonderful to know from the Psalmist that we have a free recourse to God, the Judge of all the earth (Gen. 18:25)? He is ever ready to hear the cries of the oppressed and have all their grievances redressed. "What a friend we have in Jesus. . . What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer." Amen!



PSALM 11

FLEE AS A BIRD?

"To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven" (Eccles. 3:1).

And so, the Preacher goes on with “a time to be born, and a time to die. . . a time to keep silence, and a time to speak. . .”

There is a time when one needs to flee from one’s enemy, as advised by our Lord, “But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another” (Matt. 10:23). When David’s life was chased by Saul’s javelin the third time, which missed him but got stuck in the wall, the young courtier resolved at last to flee, and he escaped that night through a window (I Sam. 19:9-12).

However, there is also a time to stay, to stand on one’s ground, and this David did through many trials until he found no other way out but to exit from Saul’s palace. When God’s time for one to leave one’s station has not come, come what may, one must hold on to one’s assignment. Hence the advice given to David to flee as a bird, perhaps as a partridge, to the mountains, must be rejected. The zero hour for our destruction, as planned by our enemy, may be fast approaching, but unless the Lord gives the word to leave, we must stick to the very end! With God promising us help, it is safer to go through a storm than to keep out of it without His permission. May David’s perseverance in the face of grave danger strengthen us in the perilous days ahead.

It is true that the very foundations of justice are destroyed under King Saul, for example, the massacre of the 85 priests of Nob (I Sam. 22:18) so that those who stand for righteousness can do little under such oppression. Nevertheless, David will not lose heart. He appeals to the Judge of heaven, whose throne is His holy temple. By appealing to his Lord, he knows the wicked will be brought to book. He is compensated with the knowledge that God will punish the wicked even with fire and brimstone and a holocaust. They will receive their portion of punishment in due course. The righteous will find favour because the Lord loveth righteousness.



PSALM 12

FLATTERING LIPS AND LYING TONGUE

If you read about the life of King David, you will see him surrounded by more bad people than good. The former are in the king's army and in his court for the sake of their own belly. They jockeyed for position and power and used every stratagem to push themselves forward. Do you not meet with such go-getters everywhere you go?

To jostle up the social ladder, David's ambitious underlings use flatteries. They praise the king in great and small, when they hate him in their heart. Confucius says, "Fine words and an insinuating appearance are seldom associated with virtue" (Analects III). Their true colours are shown during the crisis of Absalom's rebellion. They are like the fox who praises the crow for his beautiful singing in order to get his chunk of meat. As they do not mean what they say, flatterers are exposed as having two hearts (in Hebrew, David says, "he has a heart and a heart"). Flatterers are honey-tongued liars who bring bitterness and destruction. Solomon, who was also surrounded by fawners and sycophants, had plenty to say about flatterers. Here is one of his proverbs: "A lying tongue hateth those that are afflicted by it; and a flattering mouth worketh ruin" (Prov. 26:28). "He that blesseth his friend with a loud voice, rising early in the morning, it shall be counted a curse to him" (Prov. 27:14). Jesus says, "Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets" (Luke 6:26). Here is a case of mutual flattering with double condemnation.

If flatterers are sweet liars, the boastful are pungent ones. While the former flatter others, the latter flatter themselves. Besieged by such perverseness, David cannot help but cry out to God for deliverance. Few are the godly and faithful by his side, but God is always a present help (Ps. 46:1).

As the king pronounces sentence on these perjurers, he hears the judgment that comes from above, upholding him. His rule over the kingdom is unshakeable because he has the mandate from Heaven. The Lord dispenses justice without fear or favour to one and all, relieving the poor and oppressed from the power of the high and mighty. God cannot bless a nation wherein justice can be bought at a price.

In contrast to the dubious words of men which are lighter than vanity, God's Word is like sterling silver, solid and shining. The Word of the Lord is the defence of the meek and weak, though the vile and wicked prowled about them.

If David needed to call out to God for help against traitors in his kingdom, how much more must we, like sheep among wolves?



PSALM 13

“O LORD JESUS, HOW LONG, HOW LONG?”

In “Christ returneth”, that hymn we sing in expectation of His Advent at morn, at midday or at twilight, there is the refrain: “O Lord Jesus, how long, how long?” This we have borrowed for the title of this Psalm, inasmuch as it begins with a fourfold “how long?”

“It betokens a very intense desire for deliverance, and great anguish of heart. And what if there be more impatience mingled therewith. Is not this the more true a portrait of our own experience? It is not easy to prevent desire from degenerating into impatience. “O for grace that while we wait on God, we may be kept from indulging a murmuring spirit” (Spurgeon).

While it is good that we refrain from murmuring, it is our opinion, in the light of Jesus' parable of the widow and the judge (Lk. 18:1-8) that David's importunity be our stimulation to greater intensity in prayer! May

we describe David's "how long" prayer to be one in the super-optative mood, and our prayers often in the indicative mood. Our prayers are not directed vertically but horizontally. Applying the lesson of the parable of the widow and the judge to our situation, our Lord concludes, "And shall not God avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?"

David's four-fold importunate prayer finds an echo in the cries of "the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: and they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" (Rev. 6:9-10).

In times of extreme pressure, an hour seems an age and a day an eternity. It pleased God to put David, especially in his young days, in many a trying situation, like gold in the fire, to purify him. Without the multiple trials and temptations that he had to undergo, he would not have become the greatest king of Israel. "A man after his own heart" (I Sam. 13:14), he passed the tests with flying colours, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite (I Kings 15:5). David became the model for every Judean king after him. "It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth" (Lam. 3:27). When you are young, you must be tested the more, but do you know the way of escape? Through prayer, earnest prayer.

When we plead so strongly with the God of our salvation, will He come speedily to our rescue? In this Psalm, we see Him very shortly on the scene to deliver His beloved. No sooner has David cried out to God than the answer of his deliverance from his enemies comes. This is attested in the concluding two verses. This is his constant hope experienced after a night of sorrowful pleading (Ps. 30:5). Let us learn to pray with David, "How long?"



PSALM 14

DAVID VS. ATHEISM

Though we think of the ancient world's religion as one of polytheism versus Israel's monotheism, this Psalm of David reveals an atheism lurking in monotheistic Israel all the same. The LORD, that is, JEHOVAH, by whose name were the children of Israel saved out of Egypt (Ex. 3:13-16), is mentioned in this Psalm in distinction from the universal GOD in the revised version of Psalm 53 which we titled David versus Atheism II. Whether a nation's religion is polytheistic, henotheistic or monotheistic, there is a hard core of the atheistic in each.

In this Psalm, we are studying the atheistic that thrived in Israel in David's time. The ratio of the atheistic in Israel today is no less, and this we say from personal conversation with the Israelis during our six-month sojourn in Bethlehem, 1969-70. There are the orthodox Jews, very devout, who believe the Old Testament to be God's infallible Word, but more are the modernists, the agnostics, and last but not least, the atheists. Is that not the situation also in the Christian Church today? A person like Dr. Jenkins, the Bishop of Durham, who denies the fundamentals of the Christian Faith such as Christ's virgin birth and bodily resurrection, is worse than an atheist. Some years ago, it was published in The Straits Times that a newly appointed professor to the chair of theology in the University of Manchester was an atheist! This is tantamount to saying the eye surgeon of Manchester University was a blind man.

To deny God's being and power is foolishness or plain stupidity, not only according to David, but also according to Paul (Rom. 1:21, 22).

A person who recognises no God but himself can only produce "abominable works" (v. 1). Israel's God sees this not only in Israel but in all the children of men. When the atheist is cut off vertically in his relation to God, he runs wild in his horizontal relationship with his fellowmen. "Who eat up my people as they eat bread" is

a true picture of the godless strong and mighty over the weak, like big fish eating small fish. If “my people” here refers to Israel (v. 4), we have the modern version of it in Hitler’s killing of six million Jews by the gas chamber. But those who perpetrated such dastardly crimes are cowards themselves. Many went into hiding when God sided with the righteous (v. 5). After World War II, the hunters became the hunted.

The last and concluding verse promises salvation to come out of the God of Israel to His own people. O that our Jewish friends, who are inclined to atheism, will return to their God today. O that the Gentile Church may not forget to pray for Israel to receive Jesus their Messiah, the Son of God whom they crucified.



PSALM 15

FOLLOW PEACE WITH ALL MEN, AND HOLINESS, WITHOUT WHICH NO MAN SHALL SEE THE LORD (Hebrews 12:14)

Although this Psalm of David does not mention the occasion upon which it was written, Spurgeon says, “It is exceedingly probable that, together with the 24th Psalm, to which it bears a striking resemblance, its composition was in some way connected with the removal of the ark to the holy hill of Zion. Who should attend upon the ark was a matter of no small consequence, for because unauthorised persons had intruded into the office, David was unable on the first occasion to complete his purpose of bringing the ark to Zion. On the second attempt, he is more careful, not only to allow the work of carrying the ark to the divinely appointed Levites (I Chron. 15:2), but also to leave it in charge of the man whose house the Lord had blessed, even Obededom, who with his many sons ministered in the house of the Lord (I Chron. 26:8, 12).

Now the matter of bringing back the ark to Jerusalem from its exile (I Sam. 7:1, 2) was of such gravity that

when one of its bearers, Uzza, “put forth his hand to hold the ark” because the ox-cart which carried it stumbled, he died before the Lord. The lesson here is that such an act was ceremonially unclean. Only priests and Levites were appointed to carry the ark of God. Therefore on the second occasion, when David went to transport the ark, he followed closely the Mosaic law of employing priests and Levites (I Chron. 15:14)

Now the spiritual lesson is that when one desires to dwell with God, the inward cleanliness is even more important, for without holiness no man shall see the Lord (Heb 12:14). From Psalm 15, we are required to walk uprightly, be righteous in our work, and forthright in our word. Spurgeon says, “Walking is far more important than talking. He only is right who is upright in walk and downright in honesty. ‘And worketh righteousness.’ His faith shows itself by good works, and therefore is no dead faith. God’s house is a hive for workers and not a nest for drones.”

V. 4. “In whose eyes a vile person is condemned; but he honoureth them that fear the LORD.” Spurgeon says, “To all good men we owe a debt of honour, and we have no right to hand over what is their due to vile persons who happen to be in high places.”

V. 5. As to usury, it is the high interest charged which is hateful both to God and men. Usury here does not refer to Government-approved interest. Deut. 23:20 says, “Unto a stranger thou mayest lend upon usury; but unto thy brother thou shalt not lend upon usury...”

This psalm is like fire that purifies gold and a furnace for silver!



PSALM 16

RESURRECTION OF DAVID’S GREATER SON

“Michtam,” which occurs also in Psalms 56 to 60, is a term unexplained. Spurgeon calls it “the precious sonnet.”

Under some trials, David declares his unwavering trust in the Lord alone. He is not like Saul who wavered, who in desperation went to consult the witch of Endor (I Sam. 28), who transgressed the very decree he had given against “those that have familiar spirits, and the wizards” (I Sam. 28:9). David warns against consulting another god which those weak in faith might take after, as in the case of Saul. Often we hear of Christians who, in moments of desperation, yield to their friends’ suggestion to visit mediums and “bomohs.” The end result is disastrous.

David claims the Lord to be his inheritance, like the Levites (Deut. 10:9), his cup as received by a friend from his host (Ps. 23:5; 116:13). Like him, who is measured a property, a piece of land with a good location, David rejoices in a goodly heritage, both physical and spiritual. But of greater treasure is the spiritual, the wisdom and understanding bestowed upon him even to his innermost being - the deep things of God.

As God revealed the secrets of life to him, he is led into the mystery of the Messiah who should conquer death by rising from the grave. (To whom would God reveal the resurrection of David’s Greater Son than to David himself, the man after God’s own heart?) This is the interpretation of the Apostle Peter in his sermon at Pentecost (Acts 2:25-31). Similarly, Paul quotes from this Psalm in his message to the Jews in the synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia (Acts 13:35). The great message of the Messiah’s Resurrection is “that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses” (Acts 13:38-39). Reader, have you believed in Christ who died for your sins and rose again from the dead?



PSALM 17

GOD THE APPEAL-JUDGE OF THE FALSELY ACCUSED

In the prayer petition of David, we see the man of God deeply wronged by false accusers. There were lots of them, miserable sycophants in the court of king Saul under whom young David served. Doeg the Edomite was chief among them (I Sam. 22:9). In such a situation, where could David find redress? He did not forget Abraham's declaration that God is "the Judge of all the earth" (Gen. 18:25). To David, God is the Appeal-Judge of the falsely accused. He must have recourse quickly to Him. Hence his "cry" and prayer that "goeth not out of feigned lips" (v. 1). Calvin says, "When we present ourselves before God, let us learn that it is not to be done with ornaments of an artificial eloquence, for the finest rhetoric and the best grace which we can have before Him is pure simplicity." Feigned lips are God's abhorrence. When you get into a tight spot like David, when you are left helpless with no one speaking for you, then turn to the Lord for help!

But it must be for a righteous cause (v. 1), or else how can God hear you? He who is right need not try to take advantage. He is subject to God's judgment and is assured of equity given from an equal balance (v. 2).

A blessed privilege is prayer petition. The very rightness of his cause makes him bold in prayer. By corollary, Plumer says, "If we are wrong, we need forgiveness; if we are right, we still need protection. If we are prosperous, we shall beg caution and moderation; if we are afflicted, we should ask for support, sanctification and timely relief."

The whole of the Divine character is approved by the righteous and is a joy to Him. David rejoiced in the Divine Omniscience (v. 3), but this is terror to the wicked.

As for the wicked, he loves sin and evil as the lion flesh and blood. In the circumstances David finds, though his enemy is like a sword, it is still controlled by God's hand.

David is assured of deliverance and of seeing God face to face when he wakes up in His presence.

Rev. Ting Li Mei (1871-1936), the Moody and First Revivalist of China, makes the last verse of this Psalm his farewell message to his family and friends before his death.



PSALM 18

THE LORD-PROTECTOR OF ALL MY LIFE

This Psalm of David is found also in II Sam. 22 with certain variations. It is suggested that it was sung by David at different times when he reviewed his own deep experiences. Hence the variations. It was written in the spirit of the well known hymn “Now Thank We All Our God” by Marlin Rinkart (1586-1649) when God brought peace at the end of the Thirty-Year Wars (1618-48). David was a man of war throughout his life (I Chron. 22:8). Many a time he would have been swallowed in death at the hands of his enemies. Three times Saul’s javelin was thrown at him, “but he slipped away out of Saul’s presence, and he (Saul) smote the javelin into the wall” (I Sam. 19:10). The story of how David fought Goliath is most well known, but there were numerous other battles that he fought, and the Lord delivered him out of them all.

As David looked back through almost seventy years of his life, from the day of his youth to the rebellion of Absalom his own son, etc., he overflowed with gratefulness to the Lord-Protector of his life. Hence Spurgeon has titled this Psalm “The Grateful Retrospect.” From his exploits, going even through the valley of the shadow of death, he reminisces how the Lord had saved him, time after time. He gives glory to the God of his salvation. What a Psalm to remind us not to forget His saving acts in our lives, through many a storm and tempest, through many a path narrow.

The title of this Psalm significantly mentions David, not king of Israel, but a “servant of the Lord.” Yet, when David says, “Then did I beat them small as the dust before the wind: I did cast them out as the dirt in the streets” (v. 42), he is not taking private vengeance, but rather executing justice in his capacity as the anointed King of Israel. The enemies he mentions throughout this Psalm are not private ones either, but are public pests, bitter enemies against the Cause of God.

This Psalm may be outlined thus:

1. Poem or preface, in which the resolve to bless God is declared (vv. 1-3).
2. Poetic extolling of God’s deliverance, His might as manifested in the forces of nature (vv. 4-19).
3. Protestation of God’s righteousness in helping the righteous (vv. 20-28).
4. Anticipation of future victories from past triumphs in the Lord (vv. 29-45).
5. Anticipation of the triumphs of the Messiah, David’s seed and the anointed of the Lord (vv. 46-50).

Amen.



PSALM 19

FROM WORLD-BOOK TO WORD-BOOK (Spurgeon)

How can man know God? From “the great, wide, wonderful world” wherein he lives: “For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead (Deity); so that they are without excuse” (Rom. 1:20). By “natural theology,” man knows there is a God. By reading the World-book, man knows that the universe, the cosmos, cannot come about but by God’s creation. This is called the “cosmological argument.” To say that the world has always been or

is the result of evolution is no logical argument, but fantasy.

How do “the heavens declare the glory of God”? Spurgeon says, “The book of nature has three leaves: heaven, earth, and sea, of which heaven is the first and the most glorious, and by its aid we are able to see the beauties of the other two. Any book without its first page will be sadly imperfect, and especially the great Natural Bible, since its first pages, the sun, moon and stars supply light to the rest of the volume, and are thus the keys, without which the writing which follows would be dark and undiscerned. Man walking erect was evidently made to scan the skies and he who begins to read creation by studying the stars begins the look at the right place.

“The heavens are plural for their variety, comprising the watery heavens with their clouds of countless forms, the aerial heavens with their calms and tempests, the solar heavens with all the glories of the day, and the starry heavens with all the marvels of the night. What the Heaven of heavens must be hath not entered into the heart of man, but there in chief all things are telling the glory of God. Any part of creation has more instruction in it than human mind will ever exhaust, but the celestial realm is peculiarly rich in spiritual lore...”

From v. 1 to v. 6, David describes how nature speaks to our souls, in a state of pastoral seclusion. “It is a contemplation indulged in at noon tide as in the morning, when the sun was travelling over the horizon, and eclipsing all the other heavenly bodies of his glory. On which account it forms a perfect contrast with the eighth Psalm, evidently composed in the evening...” (John Mason Good).

But while natural theology should teach us the existence of Almighty God as the Maker of heaven and earth, it is “revealed theology,” the Word-book, the Written Law of God that can lead us to a saving knowledge of Him as Redeemer. The Bible, which is the ultimate of God’s Law to reveal His salvation to us, is within David’s discussion

from v. 7 to v. 11. Having seen God's power in Creation and learned from the Bible the way of salvation through Jesus Christ, can you say you have found God Himself? Is David's prayer for grace from v. 12 to v. 14 also your prayer?



PSALM 20

“GOD SAVE THE KING.” I

This Psalm may be called by the title which is borrowed from Great Britain's National Anthem. For, David who composed it as a prayer of his subjects for the safety of the Kingdom has set a pattern for every Christian nation that they should seek God's protection than rely on their own might. In this connection, Rudyard Kipling's "Lest We Forget" is devout echo to David's call to allegiance to the Divine and trust in Almighty. How anthems of Christian nations contrast sharply with those outside the pale of Christianity. The heathen nations may pray for longevity of their sovereign, or merely stir up their patriotism to sacrifice for their nation, but God is out of their vocabulary.

Insofar as the British Anthem is concerned, there is no doubt that the true religion is deeply embedded in the lyrics, but do the subjects of a royal nation sing their Anthem in sincerity and in truth? It is good to recall the words of King George VI, father of Queen Elizabeth II. When war broke out between Great Britain and Germany in September 1939, he summoned the Nation and Empire to a Day of Prayer and Humiliation before Almighty God. He said, "Let us pray not that God be on our side but rather we be on God's side." "God Save the King" and now under Queen Elizabeth II, "God Save the Queen" is quite meaningless unless the English people can sing from the depths of their heart.

David's composition of this Anthem for his people to sing as a prayer for the king's salvation and victory over his enemies in battle is for the purpose, no doubt,

of bolstering the faith of future generations, though primarily it is for nation building under his rule. David, the founder of Israel, was a warring king all the days of his life. “His sword might have been hacked, but it never rusted.”

Some commentators think this Psalm of Prayer for the King is prophetic of the Lord Jesus and the cry of the ancient Church on behalf of her King as she sees Him fighting courageously for her cause. The Church militant is seen here pleading for her Head, the Captain of her salvation, that he might prosper in battle against the evil one. Remember that Christ is not only our Prophet and Priest but also King.



PSALM 21

“GOD SAVE THE KING.” II

Psalm 21 is a triumphant anthem for the king and is appropriately placed after Psalm 20. Whereas Psalm 20 anticipates, this Psalm realises the hopes of the king’s men. Though David had written of himself in the third person, no doubt it is intended for his people. Here is a second National Anthem to be sung upon victorious return from battle. It celebrates the glory and majesty of the conquering king, but ascribing both to God, so that the people’s confidence might not rest on the arm of flesh but on the power and might of the Divine. The model king of Israel is a viceroy of God and not a despot.

David is the model king of Israel. Inasmuch as he is “a man after His own heart” (I Sam. 13:14), so “Thou hast given him his heart’s desire, and hast not withholden the request of his lips” (v. 2). What did David ask of God? “He asked life of thee, and thou gavest it him, even length of days for ever and ever” (v. 4). David, while crowned king of Israel, did not govern his people merely as an earthly people. He looked beyond an earthly kingdom to one eternal in the heavens. He longed for life everlasting, not merely living to a ripe old age on earth (which he did

attain unto). While God gave him a long and prosperous reign of forty years (seven and six months in Hebron and thirty-three in Jerusalem), he longed to live with God in His heavenly kingdom, to be saved in Him eternally. This is reflected in the conclusion and climax of such a Psalm as Twenty-three: “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD (heaven) for ever.”

Do you try to build an empire for yourself on earth when you are getting on well in years? Or do you aspire for life everlasting in the heavens? A Christian merchant came to the Lord at 51, because he said he had crossed the hilltop and was now heading downwards!

David’s aspiration for life and not power, position and wealth is reflected also in his desire to build God a House (II Sam. 7:1-17). This so pleased the Lord that He blessed him with a kingdom perpetual: “And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever” (II Sam. 7:16). If God promised him kingdom forever (Christ the Greater Son of David will sit on his throne, Isa. 9:6, 7), life everlasting all the more was promised him.

With God on his side, David’s house “waxed stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul waxed weaker and weaker” (II Sam. 3:1). So did David triumph over all his foes within the kingdom. “If God be for us, who can be against us?” (Rom. 8:31).



PSALM 22

THE CRUCIFIXION OF THE MESSIAH

As to the title of this Psalm, “Ajeleth Shaha” is translated “Hind of the Morning.” Spurgeon says, “Our Lord Jesus is so often compared to a hind, and his cruel huntings are so pathetically described in this most affecting psalm.”

Under most excruciating circumstances, David's soul overflowed with these prophetic words of groaning which most fittingly coincided with the Messiah's groaning in His crucifixion. That David could say "they pierced my hands and my feet" when death by crucifixion was unknown in his time is another evidence of Divine revelation.

"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" - "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" The very introduction to this Psalm was quoted by our Lord on the cross. Our Lord, having read Psalm 22 in His lifetime and seen Himself in each development of the Holy Tragedy, had uttered subconsciously in that extreme moment of suffering!

Let us, with the three Marys and John standing at the foot of the Cross, penitentially trace each N.T. fulfilment of this O.T. prophecy:

v. 7, 8 - where Jesus is reviled is fulfilled in Matthew 27:39, 43; Mark 15:29.

v. 14 - describes the profuse perspiration, the heart is affected.

v. 15 - strength exhausted and extreme thirst (Jn. 19:28).

v. 16 - the hands and feet pierced (Matt. 27:35).

v. 17 - His modesty outraged by the starers (Matt. 27:36).

v. 18 - "They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots" (Matt. 27:35).

O to enter into the Holy of Holies of His sufferings!

But His sufferings were for our sakes; therefore His death brought Him the victory of life regained. Therefore this saddest Psalm soon breaks forth into joy like the morning sun, chasing away the gloom of the night. The triumphant ending of this Psalm, vv. 24-31, is the logical conclusion to the saving work of the Messiah.



PSALM 23

THE PSALM OF PSALMS

What better title can we give to Psalm 23, not only for being the best known and most beloved, but also the most versatile of David's Psalter. Psalm 23 is like the Hebrew word "Shalom" which means peace. As the Jews use Shalom as a word of greeting for all occasions, whether in life or death, in peace or war, in times of happiness or in times of sorrow, so we repeat or sing Psalm 23 under all circumstances. Psalm 23 fits all occasions because this Psalm breathes with every breath we take through every vicissitude of life. As life vibrates with every mood and emotion, so Psalm 23 is chanted to "seven" tunes as if to reflect our seven emotions, according to this order in Chinese psychology, viz., joy, anger, sorrow, fear, love, hatred, desire.

Psalm 23 is a psalm of life-hid-in-God. Whereas the world, of whatever religion or cultural background, is without God and has no hope (Eph. 2:12), the Christian, like David, has fulness of confidence in God, like a Lamb in the Shepherd's arms. This is how David felt when he penned this Psalm, recalling how God had delivered him "out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear" (I Sam. 17:37). Therefore, he could confidently go to battle against Goliath, knowing God would deliver him "out of the hand of the Philistine" (I Sam. 17:37). As he wrote this Psalm, he throbbed to the vivid memory of how God also delivered him from Saul's spear and revived his fainting spirits with Ahimelech's shewbread.

Thus he could testify of his all sufficiency in God, in his every need in a perilous livelihood. Not only of God's emergency supply but also of His tender mercies leading to rest and recreation.

What David treasures most is God's leading him along the spiritual path that keeps his feet from sliding into sin - for His name's sake. Did he not fail God miserably once when he fell flat for Bathsheba; and into the ten-times more heinous crime of murdering Uriah by proxy?

How we must plead with God to keep us on the right track too!

How does “thy rod and thy staff” comfort me? The Shepherd invariably carries a staff or rod with him when he goes forth to feed his flock. It is often bent or hooked on one end, which gives rise to the Shepherd’s crook in the hand of the Christian bishop. With this staff, he rules and guides the flock and defends them from their enemies.

From the rustic scene, we are introduced to a palace setting. Is David speaking from his victory over Goliath and his honours conferred before the king which excited the envy of other servants?

Anointing the head with oil is done as an expression of joy against putting on dust and ashes in sorrow. “Those that have this happiness must let it overflow into their poor brethren’s emptier vessels” (John Trapp).

While David had many enemies following him, he could rest assured in the Lord that He, on the other hand, was attending him with loving kindness. He had no doubt that a place in heaven was reserved for him. Is this your assurance too?



PSALM 24

CLEAN HANDS AND PURE HEART

This Psalm of David was probably composed for bringing the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem from the house of Obbedom. (Read the full story in II Samuel 6.)

The words of jubilation suit well the sacred dance of joy in which David led the congregation on that joyous occasion. As David exulted in the ascent of the Ark to the royal city, he looked beyond to the Lord God Almighty highly exalted on His throne above the earth.

While the words of this Psalm are complementary to Psalm 15, it also forms a trilogy with Psalms 22 and 23. In this trilogy, we see a cross in Psalm 22, a crook in Psalm 23 and a crown in Psalm 24.

Spurgeon divides this Psalm into three parts:

1. The first glorifies the true God, and sings of His universal dominion.
2. The second describes the true Israel, who is able to commune with Him.
3. The third pictures the ascent of the true Redeemer, who has opened heaven's gates for the entrance of His elect.

In Section 1, we see that God is not only the God of the Jews but of the Gentiles also, yea, even of the whole earth. "The meanest of men is a dweller in the world [He has made], and therefore belongs to Jehovah ..."

"There is neither Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all" (Col. 3:11). The fulness of the earth surely includes its harvests and wealth and God is the Possessor of all. The Lord God nourishes all its inhabitants.

In Section 2, we have the true Israel described. The men who are to stand in the palace of the living God are not distinguished by race but by character. Jew or Gentile, they must be a cleansed people. Moreover, it is uphill work for the creature to reach the Creator. It speaks of our ascent to heaven. God has made all, but He will save only a portion who are purified to dwell with Him. Clean hands and pure heart speak of holiness both outward and inward. And a saint is a man of honour, whose word is his only oath. False speaking will shut a man out of heaven. Beware of making a false declaration and slander and a crooked account!

Section 3 reveals to us the great representative Man, who answers to the full character laid down, who by His own right ascends the holy hill of Zion. See our Lord

rising from among the little group upon Olivet and as the cloud receives Him, angels escort Him to the gates of heaven!



PSALM 25

LIGHTS AND SHADOWS FROM DAVID'S HEART-CHAMBER

It is evident from internal evidence that this Psalm was composed in David's old age for he reminisces the sins of his youth (v. 7). And considering his reference to many enemies, this Psalm could have been written amidst rumours of a conspiracy against his rule. The chief plotter was none other than his son, Absalom. How many enemies of David can you count?

In the welter of events swirling round an uneasy throne, David, as usual, looked up to God for help. A broken and contrite heart before Him, he first looked in to examine his innermost being for purification before facing up to his foes. Moral power is the sustenance of physical power. As we peer into his heart-chamber through the windows of this Psalm, we see the lights and shadows of a heart firmly anchored in God though buffeted by conflicts and fears, and haunted by past failures and transgressions. This Psalm is called David's Second Penitential Psalm. "It is the mark of a true spirit that his sorrow for his sin drives him to God" (Spurgeon).

This Psalm is the first to be composed in the pattern of an acrostic. The acrostic is based on the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet, hence it has twenty-two verses. Psalm 119 is composed in the same manner, but at intervals of eight verses, whereby it becomes the longest Psalm with 176 verses. Can you learn the first three Hebrew letters: Aleph, Beth, Gimel in Psalm 119?

An acrostic Psalm can assist the memory. The Holy Spirit in inspiring a writer of the Sacred Scriptures can use the literary art or form of any language to express His

thoughts. Hebrew poetical construction seems to suit His purpose, particularly the pattern set forth by David, progenitor of Hebrew poetry.

According to Chinese psychology, the seven emotions are listed in this order: happiness, anger, sorrow, fear, love, hatred, desire. These stirrings on our heart-strings are translated into the lights and shadows in the innermost room of our being. These are then mirrored on our countenance! As you read this Psalm, can you see what are the expressions on David's face? What are the emotions that sweep your heart in a time of confrontations like David's? Whatever be the troubles you go through, learn this lesson from David's vocabulary: "Never say die. Say, Lord, save me!" Suicide is self-murder that lands one in hell.

From the special structure of this Psalm, it is not easy to discover a clear outline. But though there is a great variation of thought there is no change of subject. Two moods are discovered in this Psalm, however, viz., prayer and meditation. They are seen to alternate as follows:

- A. Prayer vv. 1-7
- B. Meditation vv. 8-10
- A. Prayer v. 11
- B. Meditation vv. 12-15
- A. Prayer vv. 16-22

By prayer and meditation, by meditation and prayer, our heart is cultured to a closer communion with God. Lights and shadows, shadows and lights.



PSALM 26

APPEAL TO PRIVY COUNCIL OF GOD

The legal system of Singapore allows an accused person, when sentenced by a lower court, to appeal to a higher court. If his appeal to the highest court in the State, which is known as the Court of Appeal where three

judges usually sit, fails, he can claim the ultimate step that takes him right up to the Privy Council in England. This is one good tradition inherited from Colonial days because the Privy Council, which was the highest Court of Appeal for all British colonies, is still available to a number of ex-colonies now become independent states. Being highly detached from local influences, they can see things clearer from afar, as the Chinese saying goes.

When a king like David comes under suspicion, he has no recourse but to appeal to the Privy Council of God. So can you and I in the last resort, appeal to God “the Judge of all the earth” (Gen. 18:25), by swearing in His Name (Isa. 45:23). (This does not contradict our Lord who says, “Swear not at all ...” for here He is rebuking forswearing oneself, that is perjury). Insofar as David is concerned, it is hard to pinpoint which event in his life implicates him here in this Psalm. In Joab’s murder of Abner, Saul’s right-hand man, after the disintegration of Saul’s kingdom, David declared his innocence by calling on the Lord (II Sam. 3:28).

An innocent person takes oath before the Judge with boldness and confidence, but a guilty person, who perjures under oath, is afraid in his heart (Eccles. 9:2). David’s innocence is exhibited by such words as judge me or vindicate me and examine me and prove me; try my reins and my heart. He not only can wash his hands ceremonially as further proof of his integrity, but also go before the altar of sacrifice. Not only the burnt-offering sacrifice which would be required of him, but also the thanksgiving offering was ready, because his walk before men was upright. Therefore he was confident God would save him from bloody and mischievous men, even those who used bribes to pervert godly justice. His love for God’s House was one more citation of his innocence. Once there was a man accused by the law for being an unlicensed money lender, exacting exorbitant interest. This was a false accusation wherein I was called upon to testify. When the judge heard that this accused person, this friend of mine, had given a sum of money to the church, he was satisfied he was not a Shylock. One who

attends Church regularly, like David the House of God, cannot go wrong.

“The wicked flee when no man pursueth: but the righteous are bold as a lion” (Prov. 28:1). Moral power is what every Christian leader, like King David, must cherish - and cultivate.



PSALM 27

“BUT DAVID ENCOURAGED HIMSELF IN THE LORD HIS GOD”

This sentence from I Sam. 30:6 describes David’s utter loneliness, being blamed even by his closest comrades. When a Christian is hemmed in on all sides, there is only one way to look for help - upwards. Well, may this description of David in the sack of Ziklag his headquarters (I Sam. 30:1-6) be used as a caption for the conditions under which this Psalm was written. What a contrast with that Stoicism that moans, “I am the master of my fate, I am the captain of my soul” (William Ernest Henley, 1849-1903).

From internal evidence, we see David now on the run from his enemies (vv. 2-3). He was deprived of worship in the Lord’s House (v. 4). He was parted from his father and mother (v. 10). He was being maligned by false accusations (v. 12). From these circumstances, we may conclude that this Psalm was composed during David’s flight from Saul. Was it composed during his brief stay with Achish king of Gath? Or was it the overflow of his heart after he had found temporary shelter in the cave of Adullam? Or, more properly, after he had committed his father and mother to the king of Moab? Those were trying times that stretched his sinews to the limit. If you like to read stories of refugees, of “boat people” escaping out of Vietnam, here’s a thriller from David, a refugee of refugees, that you cannot afford not to read. Study I Sam. 21-24. This Psalm, though penned in the darkest night, glows with the fugitive’s hope and assurance of the

daylight of salvation. Are you in similar circumstances? Let this Psalm shed light on your pathway. Let this Psalm be a balm for your soul.

Scharansky, a Jewish human rights fighter, was imprisoned for a decade by the Soviets. He was able to hold out against his persecutors, year after year, because he was sustained by reading a little book of Psalms (in Hebrew) which his wife had smuggled in for him. When the guard wanted to take away the little book, he held so fast to it that in the struggle for possession between warder and prisoner, he fell onto the snow hugging the little book in his arms. He told the world that it was the Psalms that had saved him from death.

This Psalm may be outlined thus:

1. Self-encouragement in the Lord (vv. 1-3)
2. Communion with the Lord (vv. 4-6)
3. Prayer to the Lord (vv. 7-12)
4. Self-encouragement in the Lord (vv. 13-14)



PSALM 28

IF YOU CRY, CRY TO THE LORD

It is no shame to cry. Jesus wept. The pent-up feelings of sorrow, of anxiety, of fear, etc., are released to our good when we cry. We cry on the shoulders of our friends and loved ones. But it is far better to cry to the Lord, like a little child sobbing in mother's bosom. David knows how to do this. David not only knows how to "encourage himself in the LORD his God" (I Sam. 30:6), but also to pour out his discouragements. He would be the first to heed Peter's words, "Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you" (I Pet. 5:7).

Come ye disconsolate, where'er ye languish,

Come to the mercy seat, fervently kneel:

Here bring your wounded hearts,

here tell your anguish;

Earth has no sorrows that heav'n cannot heal."

- Thomas Moore

It is observed that Psalm 28 is placed after Psalm 27 in logical appendage. Spurgeon says, "It is another of those 'songs in the night' of which the pen of David was so prolific. The thorn at the breast of the nightingale was said by the old naturalists to make it sing; David's griefs made him eloquent in holy psalmody." How true is this observation. It is said that America has become a mediocre society in this age of affluence. It was in times of pain and suffering that she produced greatness. St. Paul says in a paradox, "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong" (II Cor. 12:10). Can you and I cry unto the Lord in sweet submission?

Crying to the Lord is a form of earnest prayer. It does not belong to the charismatics, where crying is emotionally and, in some cases, artfully worked up. For cool as cucumber Presbyterians, when there is good cause to weep, let us weep. "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted" (Matt. 5:4). It has been observed how when the Holy Spirit convicted men and women of their sins in William Burns's revival meetings, crying out aloud was a phenomenon not to be despised. So it was in the revivals in China under Miss Dora Yu and Rev. Ting Li Mei, and in our younger days, under John Sung.

On lifting up our hands as a gesture of prayer, Spurgeon comments, without prejudice, "Uplifted hands have ever been a form of devout posture, and are intended to signify a reaching upward towards God, a readiness, an eagerness to receive the blessing sought after. We stretch out empty hands, for we are beggars; we lift them up, for we seek heavenly supplies. We lift them towards the mercy seat of Jesus, for there our expectation dwells. O that wherever we use devout gestures, we may possess contrite hearts, and so speed well with God."

David was a man after God's own heart because his heart was perfect. He loved righteousness and hated iniquity. Therefore, God listened to his prayer when he took up the holy cause of God. How do we look at wickedness and violence, injustice and cruelty, immorality and unnatural lust in this age of permissiveness?



PSALM 29

ECHO TO PRAISE “THY NAME IN EARTH AND SKY AND SEA”

The immortal hymn “Holy, Holy, Holy” by Reginald Heber (1783-1826), which is based on Revelation 4, brings him into the worship of the Almighty by the whole creation in the final stanza:

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!

All Thy works shall praise

Thy Name in earth and sky and sea.

Psalm 29 is David's reminder that God is the Great Creator and Governor of the whole universe. It calls on the mighty, literally, the sons of God which, no doubt, refers to the angelic hosts, to give obeisance to Jehovah in doxology and worship. It gathers the church below to echo to the same that the blessings of power and peace might descend from the Father of Lights upon us (vv. 9-11).

As all nature and the church of His redeemed children join in worship, the power of His presence is manifested by a celestial audio-visual that stretches from horizon to horizon. This is seen and felt by the Musician-Poet in the presence of a mighty storm rolling in from the Mediterranean (v. 3). The full force of its power is manifested when the winds tear asunder the mighty cedars of Lebanon (v. 5). The Lebanon range and Sirion, which is Mount Hermon, rising ten thousand feet, quake under its tempestuous blasts (v. 6). Amidst lightning (v. 7) and thunder (v. 8) detonating across the wilderness of

Kadesh in Northern Galilee, the deer in the frightened forests, yet under His gentle care, can still bring forth their young!

There is another scene of a storm and an earthquake described in I Kings 19:11-13: “And, behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the LORD; but the LORD was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the LORD was not in the earthquake: and after the earthquake a fire; but the LORD was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice. And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave. And, behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou here, Elijah?”

With outer ear, we cannot hear His voice in the storm nor see Him in the fire. Thus, the world goes by without heeding the voice of God speaking in nature. It is those, like David and Elijah, who have that “still small voice” that can see His wonders “in earth, and sky and sea.” And when you and I respond thus, be careful to note what the Almighty is further speaking - to you!



PSALM 30

FROM WEeping TO SINGING

The house dedication that David is singing about in this Psalm does not refer to the King's palace, but rather to the Temple to be built by his son, Solomon. A chain of events developing from David's haughty desire to take census of all Israel led to his sore chastisement and a three-day plague that took the lives of 70,000 in Israel. When the angel of the Lord was about to destroy Jerusalem, David pleaded mercy for God's people but submitted himself and his house to judgment. The angel of the Lord spoke through Gad the prophet that an altar be erected on the threshing floor of Ornan whereby he would be pardoned through burnt-offerings, offered thereon. This David

did after he had bought Ornan's threshing floor for 600 shekels of gold. When David saw God's wrath appeased thereby, he perceived that the Temple he had desired to build, which he first disclosed to Nathan the prophet (II Sam. 7: 1-17), was now confirmed to be over Ornan's threshing floor. For the dedication of this Temple to be built by Solomon, he wrote this Psalm and song. The pathos of the chain of events leading to the altar sacrifices on Ornan's threshing floor, is reflected in this Psalm. The story of these events is recorded in I Chron. 21:1-30; 22:1-6. Read this historical record and you will understand why weeping is mentioned in v. 5 and the grave in v.3.

Comments Spurgeon: "When God's children prosper one way, they are generally tried another, for few of us can bear unmingled prosperity. Even the joys of hope need to be mixed with the pains of experience, and the more surely so when comfort breeds carnal security and self-confidence. Nevertheless, pardon so followed repentance, and God's mercy was glorified. The Psalm is a song and not a complaint, let it be read in the light of the last days of David ..." What an admonition to us, when the Lord blesses us with increasing prosperity that we walk the more humbly before Him!

Here is Spurgeon's rendering in English verse to bring out the frequent antithesis in the Hebrew:

*I will exalt thee, Lord of hosts
For thou'st exalted me;
Since thou hast silenced Satan's boasts
I'll therefore boast in thee.*

*My sins had brought me near the grave
The grave of black despair;
I looked but there was none to save,
Till I looked up in prayer.*

*In answer to my piteous cries,
From hell's dark brink I'm brought:
My Jesus saw me from the skies,
And swift salvation wrought.*

*All through the night I wept full sore
But morning brought relief;
That hand which broke my bones before
Then broke my bonds of grief.*

*My mourning he to dancing turns,
For sackcloth joy he gives.
A moment, Lord, thine anger burns,
But long thy favour lives.*

*Sing with me then ye favoured men,
Who long have known his grace;
With thanks recall the seasons when
Ye also sought his face.*



PSALM 31

DESERTED BY THE PEOPLE, FORSAKEN BY HIS RELATIVES

This Chinese saying well describes David's plight in this Psalm where he says he is a reproach among all his enemies, "but especially among my neighbours, and a fear to mine acquaintance: they that did see me without fled from me" (v. 11). Some commentators think this situation refers to David's hurried evacuation from the town of Keilah whose inhabitants would deliver David to Saul (1 Sam. 23:1-13). We take the view of those who believe it is connected rather with David's running away from Absalom, his son.

The coup of Absalom struck terror into his father's heart, when it was announced David's counsellor Ahithophel

went over to his side, “and the conspiracy was strong, for the people increased continually with Absalom” (II Sam. 15:12). How many of the King’s men stayed loyal to him? Read II Sam. 15:1-37. They can be numbered on the fingers. At such an hour, when the King and his little band of followers were weak and weary, there came Shimei, a member of Saul’s house from the other side of the Mount of Olives, to taunt the King. What a neighbour, who instead of rendering help, added insult to injury. Although the large-hearted David spared his head, his ignominious end under Solomon is recorded in I Kings 2:36-46. What a lesson to turncoats and traitors! “Whoso mocketh the poor reproacheth his Maker: and he that is glad at calamities shall not be unpunished” (Prov. 17:5).

In the opening prayer to this Psalm, we see David resigned at the outset to his destiny, culminating with “into thine hand I commit my spirit” (v. 5). This sentence was quoted by our Lord in the last of His “seven words” on the cross (Lk. 23:46). David could rest assured in God his Saviour, just as his greater Son had fullest confidence in His Father above. When troubles come, do not panic. Seek help not from friends or experts, horizontally, but from the Almighty, vertically. When you realise that you are in the centre of His care, howsoever fierce the enemy might assail you, you will not be moved. When David says, “My times are in thy hand,” that is another expression of his confidence of deliverance from the Lord according to His good time.

From prayer and assurance, David progresses to testimony. Testimony is sweet sacrifice to God from our lips. Testimony is rendered not to show our goodness but His in delivering us. Testimony, when applied to the hearers, becomes a sermon, a Word from the Lord to those similarly affected. It is given above all to glorify God. “Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God” (Ps. 50:23).



PSALM 32

ACQUITTED!

According to the Oxford Dictionary, *to acquit* means “to declare (person) not guilty (of offence).” *Acquitted* is the sweet Gospel sound to every accused person who is pronounced “not guilty” by the judge. What greater joy is there to you and me, when we are arrested by the Law, to be released because our sin or crime has been paid for. This is David’s exultation in his being forgiven by his Lord. This joy of being pardoned is attested by Paul in Romans 4:6-8. “Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.” Reader, are your sins forgiven? Are you on your way to heaven?

“Maschil” indicates this is a didactic or instructive Psalm. David promises in Psalm 51 to teach transgressors the Lord’s ways, and here he does it most effectually. How can you obtain God’s favour of forgiveness? Never hedge around like Saul when he was confronted for his waywardness and disobedience. Never try to put up a defence when you know in your heart of hearts you have sinned. Follow David, the man after God’s own heart, in making immediate and open confession when convicted by the Holy Spirit. When a boil ripens, the only treatment is to cut it to release the pus within. “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness... And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world” (I John 1:9-2:2).

It is told of Martin Luther that one day, being asked which of all the Psalms was the best, he answered, “Psalmi Paulini” - Psalms 32, 51, 130, 143. For these four Psalms teach that the forgiveness of our sins comes without the law and without works, to the man who believes!

So, they are called “Pauline Psalms.” Thus no man can boast of his own righteousness. Before God, we have no merit at all. Before God, we are guilty. What we need is His forgiveness. And we cannot obtain forgiveness but by open confession of our sins, yea, every specific sin, with a broken heart. “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise” (Ps. 51:17). If we still persist in our own righteousness stoically, David concludes that we are no better than the horse, or worse still, the mule! Amen.



PSALM 33

SING PRAISES TO GOD, OUR CREATOR AND PROVIDER

This Psalm exhorts God’s people to praise Him with the help of musical instruments, such as harp and psaltery, and “an instrument of ten strings.” We are to sing “a new song” to the skilful accompaniment of such instruments, “with a loud noise.” There is definitely a ministry of music in the Church. David himself is the progenitor of psalmody and of choral singing. “A new song” reminds us to choose appropriate hymns for every occasion of worship. Music is next to theology, says Martin Luther. Tailoring our hymns to the message is of utmost importance.

Why should we praise the Lord with such zeal and devotion? Because He is a righteous God, full of goodness and truth. He is our Creator Omnipotent, “for he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast” (v. 9). He created the heavens with all the stars and planets, even the angels among “all the host of them” (v. 6). He created the seas and oceans, that all the inhabitants of the earth should stand in awe of Him (v. 8).

The Lord rules and overrules the thoughts and schemings of heathen nations and blesses the nation that puts her trust in God. He is not unmindful of every individual. All men equally owe the possession of life to the Creator,

and have therefore no reason to boast themselves. “God considereth all their works” (v. 15) means He reads the secret design in their outward behaviour, and resolves the apparent good into its real elements. As Provider and Governor over all mankind, He is the one we should look up to. He is ready to help the poor and needy who fear Him and hope in His mercy (v. 18). To trust in the outward power of kings and mighty men, and not to trust in Him our Provider, is fatal. Therefore, as we praise our God, we are drawn closer to put our trust in Him. That He keeps us alive in times of famine and economic depression, and protects us from all evil, should stir our hearts to praise Him forever more.



PSALM 34

AS ONE SNATCHED FROM THE TIGER’S MOUTH

The background of this Psalm is found in I Sam. 21:10-15. Continuing his flight from Saul after obtaining Goliath’s sword from the priest at Nob, David found shelter with Achish, King of Gath. In the title of this Psalm, “Abimelech” is used for “Achish” because “Abimelech” was a dynastic name for Philistine kings, (see Gen. 20; 21:22-34), as Pharaoh was to the Egyptian kings and Caesar to the Roman emperors. No sooner had David entered the city of Gath than it was reported to him that the officers of the Philistine king were hostile to his coming. Out of the frying pan into the fire! To rescue himself from “the tiger’s mouth” (to borrow a Chinese saying), David feigned madness. He was unceremoniously expelled, for the King chided his officers, “Lo, ye see the man is mad: wherefore then have ye brought him to me? Have I need of mad men, that ye have brought this fellow to play the mad man in my presence? shall this fellow come into my house?” (I Sam. 21:14-15).

Comments Spurgeon on the text of the Psalm, “Although the gratitude of the Psalmist prompted him thankfully to record the goodness of the Lord in vouchsafing an

undeserved deliverance, yet he weaves more of the incidents of the escape into the narrative, but dwells only on the grand fact of his being heard in the hour of peril. We may learn from his example not to parade our sins before others, as certain vainglorious professors are wont to do who seem as proud of their sins as older Greenwich pensioners of their battles and their wounds. David played the fool with singular dexterity, but he was not so real a fool as to sing of his exploits of folly. In the original, the title does not teach us that the Psalmist composed this poem at the time of his escape from Achish the king, or Abimelech, of Gath, but that it was intended to commemorate that event, and was suggested by it. It is well to mark our mercies with well carved memories. God deserves our best handiwork. David, in view of the special peril from which he was rescued, was of great pains with this Psalm, and wrote it with considerable regularity, in almost exact accordance with the letters of the Hebrew alphabet. This is the second alphabetical Psalm, the 25th being the first.”

The Psalm is split into two great divisions at the close of the verse 10, when the Psalmist, having expressed his praise to God, turns in direct address to men. The first ten verses are a hymn, and the last twelve a sermon. For further assistance to the reader, we may subdivide thus: In vv. 1-3, David vows to bless the Lord, and invites the praise of others. From vv. 4-7, he relates his experience, and in vv. 8-10, exhorts the godly to constant faith. In vv. 11-14, he gives direct exhortation, and follows it up by didactic teaching from v. 15 to the close.



PSALM 35

GOD IS MY AVENGER

The historical setting of this Psalm is probably found in I Sam. 24:9-15. Saul the hunter became the quarry! While hunting for David in the wilderness of Engedi, he unwittingly strayed into David's cave to ease himself when he had a piece of his skirt cut off. It was here that

David confronted Saul in his insatiable vindictiveness by his restraint to retaliate. He appealed to God for judgment, “The LORD judge between me and thee, and the LORD avenge me of thee: but mine hand shall not be upon thee” (I Sam. 24:12). This magnanimity on David’s part towards his arch-enemy is another virtue that earned him the title “a man after his own heart” (I Sam. 13:14). So let us also listen to Paul in regard to our enemies: “Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord” (Rom. 12:19).

With this episode stirring his heart, David called upon God to plead his cause “with them that strive with me: fight against them that fight against me” (v. 1). David is pleading for “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth,” not from a Pharisaical spirit for that Shylockian pound of flesh, but for what in our modern age is called “human rights,” in that he is falsely accused (v. 11) and unjustifiably persecuted (v. 7). In contrast, David had done to Saul and other of his enemies nothing but good (v. 12). He had even gone out of his way to attend to his master in his sickness - how he played the harp to keep the evil spirit from possessing him (I Sam. 16:23). How he mourned and prayed for Saul to recover, like one imploring for his mother. Therefore when his enemies had rewarded him evil for good, he has no recourse but to appeal to his God.

David is a type of the Lord Jesus Christ, so that v. 19 is quoted in John 15:25 to show how our Saviour’s enemies have also persecuted Him: “But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause.” And this word is extended to us who are on David’s and our Lord’s side, “The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you... He that hateth me hateth my Father also” (John 15:20-23).

In the judgment to come, David sees them “brought to confusion together that rejoice at mine hurt” (v. 26). But “let them shout for joy, and be glad, that favour

my righteous cause: yea, let them say continually, Let the LORD be magnified, which hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servant”(v. 27). Right is might when God is my Avenger.



PSALM 36

MAN’S PRAVITY VERSUS GOD’S MAGNANIMITY

David, in the title of this Psalm, signs himself as “the servant of the LORD,” as he does in Psalm 18. He glories in his servanthood also in Psalm 116:16. Is this not in the Spirit of the Greater David, the Servant of Jehovah (Isaiah 42:1), a Pattern to all who name the Name of Jesus? And this Psalm is given to the charge of the Chief Musician to be sung in the Temple services.

This Psalm seems to be David’s study of man’s pravity and God’s magnanimity - a study of contrasts.

I. Man’s pravity (vv. 1-4) is sunken to the lowest when he puts himself on such a high pedestal as to defy God. He praises not his Creator but his puny self. He is thoroughly corrupted from doing good and stupefied in his profanity and hypocrisy. He is the atheist of Psalm 14:1 and 53:1.

“He deviseth mischief upon his bed” (v. 4). Matthew Henry comments: “It is bad to do mischief, but it is worse to devise it, to do it deliberately and with resolution, to set the wits on work to continue to do it most effectually, to do it with plot and management, with the subtlety as well as the malice of the old serpent. To devise it upon the bed (Mic. 2:1), where we should be meditating upon God and His Word.” What are your first thoughts when you awake upon your bed every morning?

II. The magnanimity of God (vv. 5-6) consists of His mercy and faithfulness that are high as the heavens, His righteousness and judgments great as the mountains

and deep as the sea. This is a picture of His common grace to His creatures, both “man and beast” (v. 6).

The magnanimity of God in His special grace “unto them that know Thee” is given in vv. 7-10, which culminates with “Thy righteousness to the upright in heart” (v. 10). The magnanimity of God leads His children to “put their trust under the shadow of thy wings.” Other metaphors of God’s magnanimity to His children are “house, river, fountain, light” (vv. 8-9). God takes special care of His children in every vicissitude of life. He saves us everyday! Wherever we go He is with us.

This Psalm concludes with a prayer for deliverance from the wicked, from the pravity of man. So, in the Lord’s Prayer, we are taught to seek God Almighty but to refrain from temptation and be delivered from evil. Man’s pravity vs. God’s magnanimity!



PSALM 37

NOT MIGHT IS RIGHT, BUT RIGHT IS MIGHT

There is a paradox in the affairs of men, and that is that the wicked and lawless seem to prosper, but the good and law-abiding suffer. So, those who are godly, who come under the oppression of the wicked, tend to complain and “fret”, or even become envious of the success of their opponents.

Writing from an old age (v. 25), David discovers time to be the best judge. According to a Chinese proverb, David has eaten more salt than a young man eats rice. From the wealth of his many experiences through a long life of seventy years, he has seen how the wicked might spread his power like a green bay tree (v. 35), but when he dies, his influence is finished overnight.

The righteous may suffer affliction, the very victims of the wicked. But God who sees all this will not allow injustice to flourish. The Lord turns the tables upon the

bullies themselves, so that “their sword shall enter into their own heart, and their bows shall be broken” (v. 15).

What are some of the characteristics of the wicked? In the economic world, they practise cheating. They borrow, but from the start, they have decided not to pay back. The wicked are plotters, schemers, whose aim in life is to enrich themselves at the expense of others. In legal terms, they commit criminal breach of trust. Can you think of notorious tycoons who are sent to jail for manipulation of public funds?

The righteous have the opposite characteristics. Knowing God to be their Provider, Sustainer and Judge, they live a frugal life. Whatever they have to spare, they are willing to share with others, especially the needy, by giving or lending (vv. 21, 26). “He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will he pay him again” (Prov. 19:17). They who live unto God, and with regard to their fellowmen, will receive a good reward, even on earth. While heaven is the ultimate goal of a godly life, there are the blessings of earth that God lavishes on the meek. This observation that the meek shall inherit the earth is confirmed by our Lord in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:5).

In order to keep the godly straight in this path of righteousness, David gives them eight precepts. A precept is a command, so it is given in the imperative mood, as in the opening sentence of this Psalm: “Fret not ...” Can you find the rest of the precepts? “Trust in the LORD...” (v. 3) is the Second Precept. Where are the rest? Obeying these precepts keeps one not only on a straight path but leads the same to prosperity. Thus it is recorded of David the Psalmist himself that his house “waxed stronger and stronger” (II Sam. 3:1).

This Psalm is like a chapter from Proverbs. In the Hebrew, it can be seen as an alphabetical Psalm. This is an ancient poetic pattern of writing which helps one to memorise.



PSALM 38

“SAVIOUR, SAVIOUR, HEAR MY HUMBLE CRY”

Let this first line of the refrain to Fanny J. Crosby's (1820-1915) “Pass Me Not, O Gentle Saviour” serve for a more vivid title to this Psalm. “Saviour, Saviour, hear my humble cry,” which seems to express the pent-up emotions in blind Bartimaeus, surely reflects David's aching heart. The concluding phrase of the title, “to bring to remembrance,” occurs a second time in Psalm 70.

This Psalm cannot be traced to any particular incident in David's life. It could be an urgent appeal for relief from some serious sickness, which was always regarded by David as a rebuke from God. Every other humble and contrite heart would be similarly subdued before the Almighty, even though it may not be due to sin, but rather for God's glory (John 9:3). Sickness, according to Rom. 8:28, is for our good, to bring us round to Him when perhaps we are beginning to stray away. This Psalm is suggested by some commentators to have been composed for the edification of sick and slandered saints, without special reference to David himself. Nevertheless, it is an overflow from a reservoir of experience.

David's misery in sickness is aggravated by the turning away of his friends and by being “forsaken by his relatives.” How true is the saying, “Laugh, and the world laughs with you; cry, and you cry alone.” As if this is not enough, his sickness further becomes an occasion for his enemies to do him harm. Alas for us when, in addition to griefs inside, we are assailed by maligners outside. In Ps. 41:5, David is more explicit, “Mine enemies speak evil of me, When shall he die, and his name perish?” As to the “lovers and friends” that stand aloof from his sore, they come under the category of him whose words were “smoother than butter, but war was in his heart: his words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords” (Ps. 55:21).

At such a time as this, “a sacred indifference to the slanders of malevolence is true courage and wise policy.”

Silence is golden. To be deaf and dumb in the face of verbal assaults by the enemy is a testimony of moral strength. Yea, it is good even to be blind to their visible menace. “Who is blind, but my servant? or deaf, as my messenger that I sent? who is blind as he that is perfect, and blind as the LORD’S servant?” (Isa. 42:19). So, when we are laid low, let us all the more look up to Him who is our God and Redeemer. Remember also this: that the just shall suffer persecutions, but “vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord” (Rom. 12:19). Moreover, God will turn every unjust accusation into blessing. “Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you” (Matt. 5:11, 12).



PSALM 39

SICKNESS SHOWS UP THE VANITY OF LIFE AND MONEY

This Psalm is given to Jeduthun. He was one of those appointed by King David for song in the house of the Lord with cymbals, psalteries and harps (I Chron. 25:1). He is, in our language, a choir master or director. His name appears also in Psalm 62 and 77.

In this Psalm, we see David bowed down with sickness and sorrow (v. 10). In such circumstances of life, one is apt to be discouraged. He seems to be plagued by unholy thoughts from a murmuring heart, but clamps them down lest evil should escape out of his mouth. He is afraid if he utters anything amiss, his enemy would pounce upon it and find cause for mischief. The higher a man goes in life (David is king), the more enemies he makes.

In keeping a bridle on his tongue, he goes to the other extreme of not saying anything good. Not even a word of “Praise the Lord” to God or a word of “Well done” to

men, to those who loyally serve him. While flattery is a deadly sin to be avoided, commendation by a leader of men serving loyally under him is needed to inspire devotion. “A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver” (Prov. 25:11).

When David can hold down the friction of his inward thoughts no more, from a heart-chamber all heated up, he bursts into this Psalm. Spurgeon comments, “Silence is an awful thing for a sufferer, it is the surest method to produce madness. Mourner, tell your sorrow; do it first and most fully to God, but even to pour out before some wise and godly friend is far from being wasted breath.” This is like letting off steam from a safety valve.

While David has many grouses against his enemies, sickness helps him vent his soul to God. He can sing with Elizabeth Prentiss:

“Let sorrow do its work, Send grief and pain.

Sweet are thy messengers, Sweet their refrain.”

Rather than lodge a just complaint against an enemy immediately facing him, David asks God to teach him the vanity of life and money. He compares his lifespan to an handbreadth, the smallest unit of ancient measurement, and the glory of a lifetime’s achievement to vanity. James says it this way, “For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away” (James 4:14). As to his money and property, these are accumulated for others when he leaves this earth. This truth is hard for us to swallow!

Therefore God is the ultimate aspiration of the godly in life or death. Even now David’s hope is in Him who is the One who can relieve him from his sufferings. He counts himself no better than his fellows, and closes with a prayer pleading for recovery from his sickness.

Sickness is God’s messenger to show us the vanity of life and money.



PSALM 40

FROM DEATH TO LIFE

David's description of the ordeal that he went through as "an horrible pit" and "the miry clay" brings to mind one who is caught in a quagmire. Now, we know that one fallen into such a situation is totally helpless. Patience and more patience is needed until outside help comes. That outside help, to David, is God. In response to his cry to God his only Help, he is pulled out of the quicksands to stand on a rock. The quicksands here described may not be literal. A similar situation is described by Isaiah of Judah's predicament in the face of an Assyrian invasion. Isaiah says, "For the Egyptians shall help in vain, and to no purpose: therefore have I cried concerning this, Their strength is to sit still" (Isa. 30:7). Their deliverance is from God. What a lesson to us today who are caught in such a treacherous situation. Let go, and let God!

David is careful not to forget God in sacrifice as an expression of thanksgiving. As Samuel has taught that obedience is better than sacrifice, David here offers up his ears and his heart to do God's will, yea, to treasure God's law in his innermost being. Hebrews 10:5-9 quotes David's holy desire to serve the Lord as applicable to our Lord's desire to do His Father's will, yea, even to the extent of presenting His body a sacrifice, without which all the animal sacrifices in the Old Testament would be useless. "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (II Cor. 5:21).

David goes beyond testifying of God's deliverance. Now he declares he must preach it "in the great congregation," yea, even to all of God's people. He is ever more grateful because he realises his unworthiness in the light of his multiple sins. Are we any better than David? What have we done to show our gratitude to God?



PSALM 41

“CHARITY BRINGS SHOWERS OF BENIGNITY”

Let this Chinese proverb restate the opening verse of Psalm 41: “Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the LORD will deliver him in time of trouble.” Solomon says it this way, “He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will he pay him again” (Prov. 19:17). When a man is tender-hearted to the needy, God, who sees from above, will help him when he in turn is in want. “Remember the poor” was one Apostolic injunction Paul was forward to carry out.

David speaks from experience. When Saul massacred the 85 priests of Nob, there was only one Abiathar who escaped. When Abiathar sought shelter with David, he welcomed him warmly: “Abide thou with me, fear not: for he that seeketh my life seeketh thy life: but with me thou shalt be in safeguard” (I Sam. 22:23). In the course of time when Absalom rebelled against his father, David, it was Abiathar’s son, Jonathan, and another, who relayed Absalom’s plot to the King. One good turn deserves another, but it is God who is David’s Deliverer in time of trouble.

David is disabled not only by rebellion, but also by sickness. At such a time as this, he is not slow to search his own soul. He confesses his sin to God, that he might be cleansed. Unless one is right with God and man, one cannot stand in a day of trial and judgment. Self-examination is a good spiritual exercise at all times.

God defends David against traitors in his own kingdom, these who pretend to seek his recovery outwardly but inwardly wish him to die. Verse 9 might refer to his chief counsellor Ahithophel whose counterpart in the New Testament is Judas Iscariot, and in Roman history, Brutus. Treachery is an “hateful crime which we commonly say can never be expiated, and from which there is no possibility of escape” (Calvin). Never sell your leader!

When David prays for recovery from sickness that he might deal with the traitors (v. 10), he “was not as one of the common people, but a king appointed by God and invested with authority. It was not from an impulse of the flesh, but by virtue of the nature of his office, that he is led to denounce against his enemies the punishment which they had merited” (Calvin). But God’s justice is swifter than that of a human sovereign. Both Ahithophel and Judas Iscariot were speedily dispatched by their own hands. “God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day” (Ps. 7:11). With regard to the wicked, “his mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealing shall come down upon his own pate” (Ps. 7:16).

Another Chinese proverb says, “We cannot judge a man until the coffin lid is sealed,” that is to say, how a man consummates his earthly life is the true criterion for judgment. In all his trials, David ended triumphant over all his enemies. His throne is established forever because by his integrity he is upheld by the Lord God of Israel. Thus he is ever eloquent to give praise to his God and Saviour.



PSALM 42

WHY ART THOU CAST DOWN, O MY SOUL?

Maschil: This is an instructive Psalm. *For the sons of Korah:* Were they the sons of Korah, the surviving descendants of that miserable man who, together with two hundred and fifty of his adherents, who were princes, perished, when “the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up together with Korah”? Korah was the ringleader of the two hundred and fifty “men of renown” against Moses’ leadership soon after they were sentenced to wander forty years in the wilderness.

But in Numbers 26:11, we read, “Notwithstanding the children of Korah died not.” They had taken the warning of Moses of impending judgment, and had fled from

their rebellious father. So should we heed God's warning and flee from the wrath to come. These sons of Korah were spared by the unsearchable grace of God. In the days of David, the sons of Korah were chosen to sing in the choir. This Psalm, most probably penned by David, was given them to sing.

The circumstances under which the Psalmist wrote were his exile for a considerable period from the House of God. If it was David who wrote, it is thought these circumstances refer to his days as a fugitive, running from the spear of Saul. Some modern commentators seem to think this Psalm was written by one taken captive to Syria, as Hermon the high mountain on the Lebanese range overlooks the city of Damascus and Hermonites which are mentioned herein. Be that as it may, here is a Psalm composed by one who loves God and worships in His House but is now separated from it at a distance and for a time. We do not appreciate the freedom of worship today until we come under persecution and perhaps have to go underground to the house churches as in China.

In such circumstances, do our souls pant for God, like the hart for the cooling streams? Especially here is an animal which has been running from the hunter or its predator. Having escaped from danger, it is nevertheless languishing in thirst. If we thirst for God, we will drink of the water of life. St. Augustine says, "O God, Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our souls are restless till they find rest in Thee." And if we believe in God, we will never say, "Die!"

The land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, and the hill Mizar are places far away from Jerusalem, the City of God. In the remote gorges where the River Jordan cascades on its way, the rushing streams and gurgling brooks find a responsive chord in the Psalmist's pensive heart. There is a bittersweetness in affliction, whether it is the lot of a refugee, a fugitive from one's bitterest enemies, or any other trying circumstances of life. Our only way out is God! As the lugubrious thoughts keep chasing through the Psalmist's mind, as we witness

their refrain in this Psalm (vv. 5 and 11), he does not give up, for in his God there is hope.



PSALM 43

O SEND OUT THY LIFE AND THY TRUTH

On account of the similarity of the structure of this Psalm to that of Psalm 42, it has been supposed to be a fragment wrongly separated from the preceding song. We agree rather with Matthew Henry who says this Psalm was penned upon the same occasion as the former, and having no title, may be looked upon as an appendix to it.

It is observed that v. 2 of this Psalm is almost the same as Ps. 42:9 while v. 5 is exactly the same as Ps. 42:11. It is further observed that when Christ prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane the third time, He prayed “saying the same words” (Matt. 26:44). Using two verses of Psalm 42, the author of Psalm 43, in the same mood as he composed the previous Psalm, seeks his God from another angle. The mood he is in, writing Psalm 43, as in Psalm 42, is that he is depressed in spirit because of persecution from his enemy. But as a Christian will never say die, he pulls himself up to seek his God, who is his strength and health of his countenance (v. 5).

In v. 1, the author appeals to God not only as his Judge (judge me), but also as his Advocate (plead my cause) and as his Deliverer (O deliver me). He is let down by “an ungodly nation” (Israel apostatising) and betrayed by “the deceitful and unjust man” (is it Saul, or Absalom his son?) These are the trials of leadership, and David has triumphed over his treacherous subordinates often by encouraging “himself in the LORD his God” (I Sam. 30:6).

“I called upon the LORD in distress: the LORD answered me, and set me in a large place. The LORD is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me? The LORD

taketh my part with them that help me: therefore shall I see my desire upon them that hate me” (Ps. 118:5-7).

The author, in his communion with God, desires most to worship in His Tabernacles on His holy hill, at His altar, praising Him with voice and harp, where he will see His light and truth. When you are cast down in spirit, all the more you should go to Church!



PSALM 44

“THOUGH HE SLAY ME, YET WILL I TRUST IN HIM” (JOB 13:15)

This Psalm is easily divided into (I) Israel’s past victories under God (vv. 1-3); (II) Israel’s trust in God in the present (vv. 4-8); (III) Israel’s seeming abandonment by God (vv. 9-16); (IV) Israel’s trust in God reaffirmed (vv. 17-22); (V) Israel’s supplication to God renewed (vv. 23-26). The words of Job which we have borrowed for the title of this Psalm are appropriate, for the sentiments of the Psalmist amidst Israel’s sufferings are akin to Job’s. Job’s utmost surrender to his God in the words captioned above are further expressed in another famous utterance, “The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD” (Job 1:21).

The Psalmist here remembers how Israel’s past victories over the Canaan tribes were wrought not by their own prowess but by the power of God. “In God we boast all the day long, and praise thy name for ever” (v. 8). In the same vein must we ascribe to God our past achievements, yea, even the good inheritance from our fathers who first became Christians. Whatever we have today comes from His hand.

Now, Israel, instead of conquering, are being conquered! They turn back in battle (v. 10), they are scattered like sheep among the heathen (v. 11). They are sold into slavery for a song, so they are derided by their neighbours. They are a shame to themselves in the face

of those who blaspheme God. Now all these things that have occurred to Israel, as we trace to the roots of the matter, come by God's permissive will. God uses the hands of enemies to chastise His people. As the sin of Israel is not mentioned, these circumstances may be seen in the light of Romans 8:28. All things, whether good or bad, work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose. Thus Job got completely thrown out of gear in his life when God allowed Satan to chastise him, not for his particular sins, but for proving his integrity. Not all troubles and calamities that befall us are on account of our sin, but for God's higher purpose. When our sky is dark with clouds, look for the silver lining and the sun behind with eyes of implicit faith. The devout will say, "All this is come upon us; yet have we not forgotten thee, neither have we dealt falsely in thy covenant" (v. 17). Israel "for thy sake are we killed all the day long. . ." (v. 22) attests to a godly generation under persecution. How these verses describe the true and faithful of the house churches in China under Mao's Cultural Revolution.

In conclusion, we see every true Church of God in every age persevere in hope of God though under persecution. Let us not lose faith in God even under the most trying circumstances. Let us say with Job in fullest surrender to God, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him."



PSALM 45

ROYAL WEDDING SONG

This Psalm to the "Director of Music," perhaps to the tune of "Lilies," is for the sons of Korah, choir appointed by David to sing in the Temple service. These choir members were Levites, descendents of Kohath. *Maskil* refers to "instruction in godliness." The importance of sacred music in worship is no less stressed by Martin Luther who places it second to theology. Leaders in worship are to devote time to the choice of appropriate hymns with equally appropriate tunes to suit the occasion.

If this Psalm is composed for the Ideal King, then it should be offered to none other than David's Greater Son, King Jesus (according to Spurgeon). For this is a King particularly blessed of God (v. 2), a King who rules in truth, meekness and righteousness (v. 4). Indeed, Hebrews 1:8, 9 applies Psalm 45:6, 7 to the Son, the Heavenly Bridegroom who should come to woo us, the Earthly Bride, that we might live with Him in heaven. The Bride, being a foreign princess (v. 10) who is admonished to "forget also thine own people, and thy father's house," is all the more symbolic of our unworthiness, for salvation is offered first to the Jews.

The King's offensive weapons, like the sword and the arrows, are spiritual, even as His Word is called "the sword of the Spirit" (Eph. 6:17). His arrows are arrows of conviction, for under rebuke and chastisement, David says, "Thine arrows stick fast in me" (Ps. 38: 1, 2). The myrrh, aloes and cassia, fragrant spices from desert plants that permeate the Royal Wedding garment, bespeak the sweetness of our Lord so that all regenerated spirits rejoice in Him, for He is made of God unto us, "wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (I Cor. 1:30).

The Royal Bride who represents the Church is attended by princesses, which adds to the grandeur of the Wedding. Nations of the world are represented inasmuch as the Gospel is to the whole world. The gifts brought from Ophir and from Tyre (vv. 9 & 12) represent homage given by Gentile nations. The Royal Bridal Procession attended to by virgin bridesmaids (compare Matt. 25:1) accentuates the purity of the wedding.

"Instead of thy fathers" (v. 16) such as Jesse the father of David, the King would be more pleased with spiritual children to be born who, as princes, will rule the earth. Heading these must be the Apostles to whom Christ has promised, "Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel"

(Matt. 19:28). But the Name of Christ shall be the object of praise by the people to all generations, world without end. Where in Matthew's Gospel is the parable of a Royal Wedding Feast mentioned? Will you be in that Royal Wedding Feast to come?



PSALM 46

LUTHER'S FORTRESS PSALM

This Psalm instructs us to find shelter and protection in God, our instant help, should disaster come suddenly upon us. This reminder is much needed when we are living in peace and prosperity, and we seem to have lost touch with Him. Those who seldom pray may not know how or what to pray when calamity strikes. Solomon says, "When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me" (Prov. 1:27, 28).

The Psalmist, perhaps from experience, mentions first of all the natural disasters - earthquakes, tidal wave, flood, storm and tempest. There was the earthquake in the time of King Uzziah recorded in Amos 1:1. Surely every Israelite knew of the Flood of Noah and more vividly the crossing of the Red Sea. They lived in a land affected also by thunder and tempests (Ps. 29). Have you experienced flood or typhoon or other forms of natural disaster?

From natural disasters, he reminds us of the ravages of war, which had raged across the land of Israel from generation to generation. Those of us who had gone through the terrors of World War II know vividly what war is like. How the atrocities of war are prolonged by a see-saw battle of human wickedness and vengeance! It is God who can bring a war to an end, so that when armistice is arrived at by warring nations, God is to be acknowledged as the Divine Arbitrator. The United Nations is totally helpless to bring warring nations or

even warring factions in a nation to the Peace Conference Table.

What occurs in the physical realms takes place also in the religious. Martin Luther, having been harassed by the powers of the Holy Roman Empire at the behest of the Pope, found shelter in this Psalm. He says, “We sing this Psalm to the praise of God, because God is with us, and powerfully and miraculously preserves and defends his church and his word, against all fanatical spirits, against the gates of hell, against the implacable hatred of the devil, and against all the assaults of the world, the flesh and sin.” Luther would call to his closest companion, Philip Melancthon, to sing the hymn he had composed out of Psalm 46.

If God is our refuge and fortress, the river is the Son of God, the fountain of salvation. “In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness” (Zech. 13:1).



PSALM 47

WORSHIP THE KING OF ALL THE EARTH WITH LOUD PRAISES

Whether this Psalm was written for the removal of the Ark from the house of Obededom to Jerusalem, or for some other auspicious occasion, it is hard to determine. Some commentators think this Psalm is a link between Psalm 46 and Psalm 48.

Now, while in Psalm 46, we see God is the supreme ruler over the earth in troublous times, in this Psalm we see Him King over all the earth in peace times. King over both Jews and Gentiles, over both the Church and the world. God is a terrible God because He, being Ruler of the whole world and over all nations, King of kings and Lord of lords, is most awe-inspiring. So the kings of the earth, or “princes of the people,” must gather about His

throne to give obeisance, and no less the descendants of Abraham. His Majesty is not only to be feared but also to be worshipped with praises, with joyous expressions of clapping of hands and with loud voices. At the Easter Sunrise Service, it is appropriate to shout at the top of our voice, "He is risen!"

This Psalm is therefore suitable for responsive reading in the Church coupled with singing on National Day or on a sovereign's birthday. While the world celebrates to commemorate the founding of a nation or to seek peace and prosperity for a ruler, the Church should look beyond to exalt her King. Since God is Ruler Supreme over the earth at all times, this Psalm is fitting for worship on any Lord's Day. Worship loses its power and benediction from Above when we, children of dust, below neglect to exalt His Name with zeal and devotion. This Psalm, when we sing with fervour from the heart, brings grace and glory in the Church.

It also teaches that the Israelite nation will have a special place among the nations (v. 4). There is no doubt that what the Lord God gave Abraham is perpetuated to his descendents. The regathering of Israel back to their land after two thousand years in exile and their firm establishment prove the invincibility of God's promises. And God will defend what He has decreed, "for the shields of the earth belong unto God" (v. 9). The hatred of Israel's Arab neighbours and the uprisings within Israel itself shall not succeed in the light of this Psalm, though the Jews today must suffer much until Jesus their Messiah returns. His Ascension is seen in v. 5. While the whole world is against Israel, the Church of Jesus Christ must pray for the peace of Jerusalem (Ps. 122:6). Christians are to love both Jews and Arabs when we worship the King of all the Earth.



PSALM 48

ZION, THE BEAUTIFUL CITY OF GOD

Zion is another name for Jerusalem. It is where the palace of David is situated on a hillock within Jerusalem itself. As this is where the King lives, it is the capital city. As the Temple is built here, it is God's House (v. 9), so Jerusalem is the holiest and most beautiful. Yea, God is in the midst of the City. No Jewish poet today can be established until he has written some poem on the Holy City, the Beautiful City.

Jerusalem, or Zion, is the hope of the exiles in every age. So when the exiles take leave of one another, they would say, "Next year in Jerusalem!" Today, the Israelis have retaken Jerusalem, even the Zion City of David their King. They will never relinquish it at any cost.

Mount Zion is the joy of the whole earth; yea, Jerusalem is the world's star, from which has shone the light from heaven, even from the oracles of her prophets. Physically, Jerusalem excels all other cities in Israel by virtue of her location. As one drives up from the coast today, from Tel Aviv and from Lod Airport, one sees Jerusalem perched 2,600 feet above the sea on the mountain ridges, climbing higher and higher as one advances. Jerusalem is situated on the north insofar as Judah the premier tribe is concerned - as you drive up from the Negev (South), from Beersheba and from Hebron.

As it is the City where God dwells, foreign armies coming to invade it (before its destruction because of apostasy in Nebuchadnezzar's time), withdrew of their own accord (v. 5). The following verse (v. 6) surely was fulfilled on the route of the Assyrian King Sennacherib, whereby in one night 185,000 of his troops were slain by the angel of the Lord (Isa. 37:36, 37). The ships of Tarshish refer to naval forces coming from the Western Mediterranean, but God's east wind, which in Judah is noted to be very violent, quickly disposed of them. Tarshish is mentioned in the reign of Jehoshaphat (I Kings 22:48) and in Jonah 1:3.

Now, Zion is beautiful and honourable, not merely because it is the city of Israelite and Judean kings, but because the Great King (v. 2), even God the Lord Omnipotentate, is there ruling over the earthly monarchs. God who rules not by might but rather by Right, with loving kindness (v. 9), with righteousness (v. 10), with judgment (v. 11). He is the God of the godly and their Guide even to death (v. 14).



PSALM 49

SONG OF THE RICH FOOL

This Psalm, with the help of a harp, seems to set the Preacher's Word in Ecclesiastes to poetry and music. Whereas the Preacher sees through and through the vanity of a life lived "under the sun," though it is heaped with riches and pleasures (Eccles. 2), the rich fool in Psalm 49 goes to the grave, like sheep (to the slaughter), his money and face perishing together with him (v. 17). This Psalm fits perfectly another rich fool in Luke 12:16-21. Is a wealthy Christian who spends on himself with not a thought for God a rich fool?

The millionaire, in the old Singapore idiom, sees his silver dollar as a bullock cart wheel. As his value of life is the mighty dollar, he sets his hope entirely on earth. In the words of John Calvin, every mortal man thinks he is going to live on earth forever. So he builds houses that will last for generations to come and perpetuates his name in his properties (v. 11). For example, a philanthropist will give thousands, even millions, on condition that institutions endowed by him are named after him. From money, he goes for fame (v. 16). And as long as he remains popular with the world by going along with it, he will receive their applause (v. 18). As a tycoon, he overawes the man in the street (v. 16).

To put the rich and mighty in their proper perspective, the Psalmist points out they are no better than the poor and lowly (v. 2) because they all face a common foe, which

is death. All the money in the world cannot prolong a man's life one second after his appointed time. A rich man's money can neither save his brother nor comrade, "nor give to God a ransom for him" (v. 7). When death comes, it levels all to one classless society. Rich or poor, they lie at the same level, "six feet under the ground." We can see this especially in wartime as described by Isaiah, "the lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day. ... Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?" (Isa. 2:11-22).

Wisdom and understanding (v. 3) will heed this question, "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Mark 8:36). A rich man without life everlasting is consumed by death, not only physically but spiritually. (The rich man woke up in hell.) A wise man (even poor Lazarus) seeks God in this life first, so that when he dies, his soul is redeemed from the power of the grave (v. 15). Therefore in the days of evil, danger or death, when he is surrounded by every kind of wickedness, he is not afraid. A Christian is not afraid of death (v. 5).



PSALM 50

WHEN GOD EXAMINES EVERY CHURCH-GOER

This Psalm is the first of twelve ascribed to Asaph. This Asaph is most probably the one according to II Chron. 29:30 where he is put side by side with David as a psalmist. Asaph was one of David's three choir leaders (I Chron. 25:1).

This Psalm is easily divided into three parts. I. The Lord comes to judge the earth (vv. 1-6). II. He comes to examine His own people who sacrifice to Him (vv. 7-15). III. He exposes the hypocritical worshippers by showing up their wicked deeds (vv. 16-21). He concludes with a

threat to them that forget Him and with a benediction to the obedient.

Though a Christian is saved from hell and has no need to stand before the great white throne, he must not forget there is a judgment of works. Paul says, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad” (II Cor. 5:10). In this Psalm, God comes to judge His people in the Old Testament and the same judgment must be applied to us.

First, He would like to see whether we fear Him by keeping our vows and love Him with sincere thanksgiving. Not the outward form of bringing sacrifices, of slain oxen and sheep in plenty. Actually, God owns all “the cattle upon a thousand hills” (v. 10) so outward expressions were no fulfilment of true sacrifice. We might give our houses or lands, hundreds and thousands of dollars to the Lord. But what is our motive? To God’s glory or to our glory? Isaiah opens his preaching to the Jews in chapter 1 with an outright denunciation of their sacrifices and feasts because they were still in their sins (Isa. 1:18). Let us examine our hearts each time we give to God, whether our gift is acceptable.

Surely it is not acceptable, as the examination goes on, to find the worshippers not only not right with God but also not right with their fellow beings. These who come to Church to criticise sermons (v. 17), who despise God’s Word. These who are abettors of thieves, who join with those who cheat and defraud in their business dealings. These who go secretly to the brothels with their friends. These who lie and speak to deceive. These who practise character assassination against Church and family members. These who lower God’s level of holiness and purity to that of their own. These who forget God, who dismiss Him out of their mind, “who honoureth me with their lips but their heart is far from me” (Matt. 15:8) are to be torn to pieces (v. 22).

But those who worship God in sincerity and in truth are accepted (v. 23). “And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me” (v. 15). How we worship God determines how He judges us. How do we stand before God when we come to Church?



PSALM 51

“THOU ART THE MAN!”

David, the “man after God’s own heart” (I Sam. 13:14) had fallen into sin with Bathsheba, wife of Uriah the Hittite, 37th and last, but not least, of David’s military officers (II Sam. 23:39). What doubly aggravates the adultery was that, in order to cover up his sin, David sent this loyal officer to the war front to be killed. Uriah, who took the letter from the king to Joab, commander-in-chief, was made bearer of his own death warrant.

Floating with Bathsheba on a rosy cloud of sensuality, David was oblivious to the scarlet nakedness of his crime. As the Chinese saying goes, he who is involved in a situation like this becomes muddled. John Calvin says that while all with objectivity condemn adultery, one who is involved in it will approve of it. For a year, it can be assumed that David wrote no psalms, when he was drifted so far from God.

It was after Nathan the prophet had brought the King to his senses by catching him unawares with the parable of the rich man eating his poor neighbour’s ewe lamb that David was led to sentence himself! But, while David had fallen so deeply into sin, what won back God’s mercy and favour was his childlike docility. When the prophet declared, “Thou art the man,” he did not react like the bad kings after him by throwing the prophet into prison, or stoning him. He certainly fell on his knees immediately before God to plead for mercy. Are we as childlike as David?

Spurgeon says, “The great sin of David is not to be excused, but it is well to remember that his case has an exceptional collection of specialties in it. He was a man of very strong passions, a soldier, and an Oriental monarch having despotic power. No other king of his time would have felt any compunction for having acted as he did. There were not around him those restraints of custom and association which, when broken through, render the offence the more monstrous. He never hints at any form of extenuation, nor do we mention these facts in order to apologise for his sin, which was detestable to the last degree. But for the warning of others, that they may reflect that the like licentiousness in themselves at this day might have even a greater, graver guilt in it than in the erring king of Israel. When we remember his sin, let us dwell most on his penitence, and upon (don’t forget!) the long series of chastisements which rendered the other part of his life such a mournful history.”

This Psalm opens like a book into two parts. Part I, consisting of 12 verses, tells of the penitent’s confession and plea for pardon. Part II, the last 7 verses, his gratitude in anticipation and the way he resolves to show it.



PSALM 52

TALE-BEARING IS A COWARD’S UNDERCOVER SLAYING

Maschil means “an instructive”. So let us learn from the consequences brought about by Doeg’s tale-bearing to Saul which resulted in his slaying of Ahimelech and his house, 85 priests in the city of Nob. The circumstance leading to this ignominious tragedy was David’s fleeing in great haste from Saul to Nob. As he and his young followers fled from Saul empty-handed, Ahimelech gave him shewbread which was taken out of the “temple.” Though it was not lawful for “lay people” to eat this sacred bread, the need to satisfy their hunger, according to our Lord, permitted this (Mk. 2:25, 26). The law of necessity overrides the law of ceremony. As David was

unarmed, Ahimelech gave him Goliath's sword which was kept under his charge. Now, one man who saw all this was Doeg, an Edomite, Saul's chief shepherd.

When Saul charged his officers with conspiracy in David's escape, Doeg the Edomite then disclosed what had transpired at Nob. His tale-bearing led to the merciless execution. Only one son of Ahimelech, Abiathar, escaped to David to tell the story. David said to Abiathar, "I knew it that day, when Doeg the Edomite was there, that he would surely tell Saul: I have occasioned the death of all the persons of thy father's house. Abide thou with me, fear not: for he that seeketh my life seeketh thy life: but with me thou shalt be in safeguard." The whole account of this treacherous episode is recorded in I Sam. 21:1-9; 22:7-23.

The tongue, according to James 3:1-18, is "an unruly evil, full of deadly poison." Though by it we bless God, by it we also curse men, who are "made after the similitude of God" (Jas. 3:9). In the church, leaders are often maligned by careless lips. Paul admonishes, "Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses" (I Tim. 5:19).

David sees in Doeg's tale-bearing a reckless spirit independent of God, a spirit of reliance on one's wealth and prowess (v. 7). Tale-bearing stems also from a boastful craftiness (v. 1). The tale-bearer's tongue is likened to a razor blade that can be used treacherously (v. 2). The barber who shaves you can also cut your throat! Tale-bearing which springs from an evil heart is tantamount to lying (v. 3). Tale-bearing uses devouring words, which are like an arrow released from the bow of a deceitful tongue (v. 4). While it can bring destruction to a whole house of priests, it must be appropriately avenged by God the Judge of all men (v. 5).

The righteous will be awed by what will be meted by God to the talebearer and "laugh at him" (v. 6). "He who laughs last, laughs best."

In his capacity as appointed King of Israel, David can say of himself that he is a green olive tree planted in God's House. The olive tree has longevity. It thrives for hundreds of years. It sucks oil from the rock, as you will see on a visit to the Holy Land. It grows on very strong ground, a picture of the Rock Christ. While the tale-bearer will be punished, the righteous stands forever.



PSALM 53

DAVID VERSUS ATHEISM

This Psalm is a duplicate of Psalm 14 with the substituting of the Hebrew name JEHOVAH by the universal GOD, so that the message here is rather directed to atheists outside Israel. Whether the situation be atheism in a polytheistic culture as in ancient days or atheism in a hedonistic culture in our days, the heart-condition of such a person is the same.

As you read over Psalm 14, the original of this revised version, you would have noticed that atheism is denounced both by David and Paul as unadulterated foolishness. And what are the consequences of the thinking and acts of an atheist when he comes to power? We see here that those who have no fear of God have no regard for their fellowmen. Hence the continuing trampling down of human rights after World War II in atheistic countries, such as those under Marxist and Communist domination. What a contrast with countries founded on trust in God, such as the United States, where the individual today is still protected under "The Fifth Amendment," that is to say, he has a right not to answer questions that might incriminate himself.

Apart from the revision in the Name of God in this Psalm, we notice that the title is enlarged with "upon *Mahalath*," meaning "suffering," indicating that this Psalm is to be used in a time of affliction when the godless mock. *Maschil* means "instruction in godliness."

Verse 5 is where we find the greatest difference between Psalm 14:5,6 and Psalm 53:5, though the basic thought is the same. God overwhelms the godless with fear where there is nothing to fear. God uses psychological warfare many times to defeat Israel's enemies. One such instance is recorded in II Kings 7:6, 7 – "For the Lord had made the host of the Syrians to hear a noise of chariots, and a noise of horses, even the noise of a great host: and they said one to another, Lo, the king of Israel hath hired against us the kings of the Hittites, and the kings of the Egyptians, to come upon us. Wherefore they arose and fled in the twilight, and left their tents, and their horses, and their asses, even the camp as it was, and fled for their life."

Conversely, where the Lord comes to save His people, "Their strength is to sit still" (Isa. 30:7). "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee" (Isa. 26:3). By way of contrast, Solomon says, "The wicked flee when no man pursueth: but the righteous are bold as a lion" (Prov. 28:1).

Finally, God turns the ground that the godless have taken in battle into their cemetery. For example, God sent an angel against the invading Assyrians and in one night slew 185,000 of the enemy. "Behold, they were all dead corpses" (Isa. 37:36).



PSALM 54

BEWARE WHOM YOU INFORM AGAINST!

This Psalm is to be sung on stringed instruments. Variety in tunes refreshes worship. Monotony stifles congregational praise. *Maschil*: We are to learn and to teach what we sing. Edification is part and parcel of psalmody.

This Psalm of David tells of another episode of David's rich and varied life which provides material for our

learning. After David had left Keilah with six hundred men, they literally became vagabonds with no sure place of abode. When they found some strongholds in a mountain in the wilderness of Ziph, we see a drama acted out by two types of people. Jonathan, Saul's son, went to meet David and "strengthened his hand in God," assuring him of his loyalty and support of his acknowledged kingship. While it is said that blood is thicker than water, Jonathan's spiritual tie to David overrode his blood-tie to his father. "And there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother" (Prov. 18:24).

On the other hand, the Ziphites (or Ziphims) with whom David had no quarrel became self-appointed informers. They reported David's whereabouts to Saul in order, evidently, to curry favour with the mighty. To say the least, they were guilty of grave inhospitality. Nay, they were betraying innocent blood to earn the sour monarch's smile.

It is not wrong to be an informer. Every government employs informers and detectives to thwart the wicked purposes of evil men. In Absalom's rebellion against his father, the son of the two priests loyal to David, Ahimaaz, son of Zadok and Jonathan, son of Abiathar, risked their lives to bring latest information of the coup to the King, and they were commended. It all depends whom we inform against. Be sure where your loyalty lies! Don't back the wrong horse! Now when Saul came upon David through the information supplied by the Ziphites, he almost found his quarry. At such a crucial hour, David's only help was from Above. Hence the urgent prayer utterances woven into this Psalm. Did God answer David in the nick of time to deliver him? The sacred historian records, "But there came a messenger unto Saul, saying, Haste thee, and come; for the Philistines have invaded the land. Wherefore Saul returned from pursuing after David, and went against the Philistines: therefore they called that place Selahammahlekoth [i.e., the Cliff of Division]. And David went up from thence, and dwelt in strong holds at Engedi" (I Sam. 23:27-29). John Calvin says David was saved from that tight

situation by the mysterious prompting of the Holy Spirit in the Philistines who invaded Judah at the height of Saul's campaign against David. In the same way were the Protestants of the west saved from Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V's persecution when the Turks had pressed hard against the gates of Vienna in the east - a lesson from Church history.



PSALM 55

ANATHEMA TO THE TRAITOR

This is another song to be accompanied by stringed instruments, for instruction of the hearers.

In Ps. 41:9, David complained of treachery within the palace, "Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me." In this Psalm, from verses 9 to 11, we find him in another urban setting. But instead of policemen patrolling the streets against crime, we are told of plotters prowling around when "deceit and guile" walked the streets. Day and night, traitors were perpetrating mischief "on the walls." This flared up into "violence and strife" in the city.

Evidently, David is describing an advanced stage of the machinations against him when Ahithophel, David's advisor, openly declared his allegiance for Absalom. "And Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counsellor, from his city, even from Giloh, while he offered sacrifices. And the conspiracy was strong; for the people increased continually with Absalom" (II Sam. 15:12). "And the counsel of Ahithophel, which he counselled in those days, was as if a man had inquired at the oracle of God. . ." (II Sam. 16:23).

So, David breaks forth into open complaint in verses 12-15 and verses 19-21. He pinpoints the serpent-head that gives sting to Absalom's rebellion. It is not an outside enemy but an inside one. It is his closest friend, like

Brutus to Caesar. He breaks the covenant of loyalty and trust (v. 20). He butters his speech with soothing words, but in his heart are concealed swords drawn ready to strike. Solomon says, “A man that flattereth his neighbour spreadeth a net for his feet” (Prov. 29:5).

In such dire circumstances, David had no recourse but pray: “Give ear to my prayer, O God . . .” When one came to tell the king as he was escaping barefoot from Jerusalem that “Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom,” David cried on the spot, “O LORD, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness.” No sooner had he uttered this prayer than Hushai met him at the hilltop, God’s agent of counter-espionage whom David sent into Absalom’s headquarters.

Now, Ahithophel had planned a blitzkrieg against David by sending 12,000 men against the fleeing loyalists who would swoop down upon the travelworn king. Once he was smitten, Ahithophel assured Absalom, all Israel would turn to the new king. “And the saying pleased Absalom well, and all the elders of Israel” (II Sam. 17:4).

But as “the king’s heart is in the hand of the LORD” (Prov. 21:1), Absalom suddenly turned to Hushai for a second opinion! Reminding Absalom of his father’s fighting spirit and the champion warriors loyal to him, Hushai counselled a total mobilization of Israel from Dan to Beersheba (north to south) instead. Hushai’s strategy was preferred to Ahithophel’s, “for the LORD had appointed to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel, to the intent that the LORD might bring evil upon Absalom” (II Sam. 17:14). Having lost face before Absalom’s own council, the arch-traitor committed suicide by hanging himself.



PSALM 56

AS ONE SNATCHED FROM THE TIGER'S MOUTH II

To the chief musician, tune of "A Dove on Distant Oaks".
Michtam: A term that stands in the superscription of David's prayers occasioned by great danger.

"When the Philistines took him in Gath" has its narrative background in I Sam. 21:10-15, which event has given birth also to Psalm 34. Now, why two Psalms on the same event? Various reasons can be adduced, as in the case of Psalm 14 and Psalm 53. If we read Psalm 34 and this Psalm for comparison, it seems Psalm 34 is penned to express the gladness of deliverance after the event, while Psalm 56 centred on the anxiety before the deliverance.

This is another of those instances when David, being cornered in a tight spot, surrounded by enemies on every side, has nowhere to turn but the sky. He simply has to look up for help from Above. He could encourage himself only in the Lord.

David, having come to find shelter in Gath from Saul's pursuit, suddenly realised he was enclosed, as it were, in a prison. For the Philistines had practically put him under house arrest. To pluck himself out of the fire, David acted the fool. "And he changed his behaviour before them, and feigned himself mad in their hands, and scabbled on the doors of the gate, and let his spittle fall down upon his beard" (I Sam. 21:13). In his heart, however, there went up a hundred pleas to God Almighty for deliverance.

*"O soul, are you weary and troubled?
No light in the darkness you see?
There's light for a look at the Saviour,
And life more abundant and free.*

*Turn your eyes upon Jesus,
Look full in His wonderful face,
And the fear of men will grow strangely dim
In the light of His glory and grace”.*

- adapted from Helen H. Lemmel (1864-1961)

How did David encourage himself in the Lord while he pitted his wits against his plotters who were waiting to pounce on him any moment (v. 6)? It is by His Word (vv. 4, 10). God’s Word is not only “a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (Ps. 119:105) but also a source of wisdom that helps David to outwit his enemy (Ps. 119:98). His feigning madness was a means whereby God delivered him from the Philistines of Gath, as the Chinese saying goes, “The man of superior wisdom, but he looks like a fool.”

This trial of wits in Gath reminds us of David’s earlier outwitting of Saul by scaling out of danger through a window in the night. To fool his captors, Michal, the wife of David, took a statue and laid it in bed. She added a bolster of goats’ hair and covered the resemblance of her husband asleep in bed with a cloth. “Be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves” (Matt. 10:16).



PSALM 57

MUSINGS FROM THE CAVE

For the background of this Psalm, we have the commentary of Augustus F. Tholuck, 1856, as follows:

“A Psalm composed *when David fled from Saul in the cave*, which is referred to in Psalm 142, and which, because it is without any other distinction called “the cave,” is probably that celebrated cave where David with his six hundred followers lay concealed when Saul entered and David cut off the skirt of his robe. The king, accompanied by three thousand followers, chased him to the loftiest alpine heights - “to the sheep-cotes,” where the cattle

were driven in the hottest summer months only - to hunt him in every hiding place. There was a cave, in the darkened cool of which David and his men were hid. Such caves in Palestine and the East are frequently enlarged by human hands, and so capacious that they accommodate thousands of people. This song of complaint was written during the hours of suspense which David spent there, to wait until the calamity was overpast (verse 2); in which he only gradually gains a stout heart (verse 8). His life was really suspended by a hair if Saul or any of his attendants had espied him!"

As to the thoughts behind the title, we have John Flavel (1627-1691) for our guide:

"This Psalm was composed, as the title notes, by David prayer-wise, when he hid himself from Saul in the cave, and is inscribed with a double title, *Al-taschith*, *Michtam of David*. *Al-taschith* refers to the scope, and *Michtam* to the dignity of the subject matter. The former signified "destroy not," or, let there be no slaughter; and may either refer to Saul, concerning whom he gave charge to his servants not to destroy him; or rather it hath reference to God, to whom in this great exigence he poured out his soul in this pathetic ejaculation; *Al-taschith*, destroy not. The latter title, *Michtam*, signifies a golden ornament, and so is suited to the choice and excellent matter of the Psalm, which much more so deserves such a title than Pythagoras' golden verses did."

Spurgeon says, "This is a song from the bowels of the earth, and, like Jonah's prayer from the bottom of the sea, it has a taste of the place. The poet is in the shadow of the cave at first, but he comes to the cavern's mouth at last, and sings in the sweet fresh air, with his eye on the heavens, watching joyously the clouds floating therein."

Divisions: We have here prayer, vv. 1-6, and praise, vv. 7-11. The hunted one takes a long breath of prayer, and when he is fully inspired, he breathes out his soul in jubilant song.



PSALM 58

DAVID VERSUS UNSCRUPULOUS JUDGES

Where historians record the miscarriage of justice by unscrupulous judges, such as the stoning of Naboth and Ahab's grabbing his vineyard (I Kings 21:1-25), and prophets denounce them in their sermons (Micah 3:11), David speaks against them more effectively by perpetuating their crimes in psalmody. When we talk of criminals we think of robbers and rapists, but if there is made a catalogue of every criminal to determine which among these can earn the title of Public Enemy Number One, we must agree with David that he is the Unscrupulous Judge of Psalm 58, whom he unceremoniously denounces.

Now, the balance - which must weigh scrupulously accurate - is the universal symbol of justice. "Scrupulous" comes from the word "scruple," whose first meaning is a unit of the apothecaries' weight of 20 grains. When a druggist weighs a doctor's prescription of some medicinal powder, he cannot but weigh it exactly - no more, no less - to the last grain. If he is measuring some tincture or other fluid he must give - no more, no less - to the last drop. With the same care and conscientiousness must a judge weigh the evidence and give an unbiased judgment and sentence. When a judge has no scruples, through bribery or other influence, he may condone criminals and wreak havoc in society, yea, even topple a nation. See how a law against nature, and against the foulest of sexual immorality, can be overturned today by judges with a perverse concept of humanity. Now, the Law has legalised homosexuality and called perverts gay. How come AIDS? This pestilence that has erupted as recently as in the early eighties is God's judgment from heaven not only to punish sins but also carry out the sentence of His unbreakable natural law.

We rejoice with David the righteous King in his scathing exposure of wicked judges with the strongest epithets. He compares their wickedness to the poison of serpents and their devouring of justice to the great teeth of young

lions. He roundly curses them to melt like running water and as snails (crawling over a rock under the hot sun) to shrivel, etc., etc. The fiercest of David's imprecations is that the righteous (the innocent, falsely accused) will bathe their feet in the blood of the wicked. When that is executed upon the wicked, the balance of justice is restored, so men can say that God the Supreme Judge of the earth is reigning.

Does this Psalm of David speak to those who have to make judgment (decisions) even in the smallest matters? Remember, justice must be scrupulously dispensed. Hence the balance, fifty-fifty, is the symbol of justice.



PSALM 59

DAVID SAVED FROM “DOGS”

Al-taschith means “Do not destroy.” This is another “Do Not Destroy” Psalm which refers to David being delivered from Saul's ambush. Michtam - a prayer.

Who are these, twice mentioned, as they that “make a noise like a dog” (vv. 6, 14)? The background of this Psalm is found in I Sam. 19:11-17. After failing for the third time to kill David with a javelin (I Sam. 19:10), Saul laid an ambush for him around his house in the night. The trap was to be sprung in the morning. David's wife, Michal, who was Saul's daughter, got wind of the plot. In the stillness of the night, she helped David escape “through a window.” To fool David's enemies who were still keeping watch unawares, she put a life-size statue in David's bed and covered it with a sheet. When Saul's men knocked on David's door the next day, thinking they had their quarry, they found “the bird had flown.” How true the saying, “He taketh the wise in their own craftiness” (Job 5:13).

This story of David's timely escape by night through a window reminds us of a similar escape by the Apostle Paul from the Jews of Damascus. “But their laying await was known of Saul. And they watched the gates day and

night to kill him. Then the disciples took him by night, and let him down by the wall in a basket” (Acts 9:24, 25). What a lesson to us who, like sheep living among wolves, should be wise as serpents before our enemies. “But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another...” (Matt. 10:23). Hence Calvin, before the Paris (Roman Catholic) authorities could take him, also escaped through a window.

David saw no reason why he should be hunted down like a criminal. He protests his innocence (v. 3). Therefore, he had the more confidence in God to save him from Saul’s plot. Therefore, he could utter such imprecations as in verses 12 and 13. “Slay them not” in v. 11 seems paradoxical, but death by stages is greater punishment!

Some commentators, reading verses 5 and 8 where the heathen or nations are mentioned, think these verses were put in by King Hezekiah or Nehemiah to apply to their situation vis-a-vis the Assyrians or the mixed races living around Jerusalem. We agree with Spurgeon that this Psalm comes entirely from David’s pen. Why cannot David, inspired of God, apply this Psalm to the heathen nations with whom he had to contend?

The dog is an unclean animal and this nomenclature is contemptuously used against the heathen. Why could not David use this term against Saul’s underlings? Does an Edomite (a Gentile), his chief enemy, was no better than a dog! And did not our Lord call His enemies vipers and Herod “that fox” (Luke 13:32)? When the Church has left her first love and becomes lukewarm like the Church in Laodicea, neither does she speak up for her Lord nor contend earnestly for the faith that was once delivered unto the saints.



PSALM 60

FROM DEFEAT TO VICTORY

Shushan-eduth means “Lily of the Covenant.” Perhaps this is another music signature. This Psalm “to teach” may be called a didactic Psalm. The battles fought in the various countries involving Joab, David’s Commander-in-chief, are recorded in I Chron. 18, II Samuel 8 & 10. Aram-naharaim is a loose geographical term referring to Syria up to the Euphrates River and beyond to the Tigris in the far north. Aramzobah is Syria which abuts the northern borders of Israel. Edom, the kingdom of Esau, is in the far south, below the Dead Sea.

Under David, Israel was God’s invincible army, when one would chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight (Deut. 32:30). With every heathen nation conquered under David’s leadership, in the north, to lose one battle to Edom in the far south was one devastating psychological blow. Edom had stolen a march on Israel when she was busily occupied in the north. This is like Sadat making a break across the Suez Canal in the Yom Kippur War of October 1973, when Israel was hard pressed, fighting Syria on the northern front. Fortunately, the day was saved when Israel counter-attacked and “smote of Edom in the valley of salt twelve thousand.”

This Psalm is David’s agonising prayer (v. 9) to God to save him from a very embarrassing hour in the midst of victories. The defeat before Edom was like experiencing an earthquake! But since Israel was God’s banner-bearer on earth for the truth (v. 4), he was confident of deliverance. So in World War II, the Allied Cause being righteous, those who trusted in God had no doubt that victory over the Axis powers would come in the very end.

The towns and tribes in the north to neighbouring countries in the south, viz., Moab and Edom, can be traced in a map of Kingdom Israel under David and Solomon. It is the line-up of the regions in the middle

and south of the Empire involved with David's armies, culminating with entrance into Edom. A prayer for God's help for the final assault on Edom closes with confidence in God's help rather than man's. "Self-help with God's help is the best help." Life is a constant struggle on the earthly plane. A victorious Christian can have setbacks. What are we to do?



PSALM 61

SENTIMENTS OF A RESTORED KING

From internal evidence, we can conclude that this Psalm was composed by King David after his son Absalom's rebellion was defeated. There is no jubilation over his enemy. The voice is muted, the tone subdued. The day of victory over his enemy is the day of mourning, because Absalom was killed by Joab, against the wishes of his father. The bitter-sweet experience of this father and son struggle could be tasted by none other than David. David was ordained by God to go through this Valley of Tears that he might understand the deepest depths of human woes in all his subjects. So with our Lord in His earthly life. "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:15, 16).

Though David was king, he treasured "that good part" like Mary did (Luke 10:42) - the spiritual and the heavenly. He preferred the Tabernacle to the throne (v. 4). In fact, it was he, the moment he came to the throne, who brought the Ark in exile back to Jerusalem. It was he who desired to build God a house and was honoured to receive the architectural plans from the Lord (I Chron. 28:12). This zeal for the Lord earned him a good heritage. God promised to preserve his throne for ever, yea, even for his greater Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, when He returns to rule this earth. In power or out of power, in joy or in

sorrow, in peace or in war, David never ceased to look to “the rock that is higher than I” (v. 2). Can we find a modern ruler, president or prime minister like David? There is none that approximates his devotion to a tenth, but if there’s one, I’d vote for Margaret Thatcher. When Christ-blaspheming Dr Jenkins, Bishop of Durham, maligned Thatcher’s economic policy, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* quoted Thatcher’s reply in the words of St. Paul, “If any would not work, neither should he eat” (II Thess. 3:10). A good Methodist, Thatcher further recalled the words of Wesley, “Gain all you can, save all you can, give all you can.” Such principles of livelihood being taken from the Bible reflect on the Lady Prime Minister’s faith in the Word of God.

Finally, we see David’s heart of gratitude that pleases God. To be ungrateful, to forget our benefactor after the ordeal is over, is to commit an almost unpardonable sin. David’s heart is so grateful that he would “daily perform my vows.” The Bible records many vows made to God (e.g., by Samuel’s mother) which are accepted by the Lord. Calvin gives his approval to making vows provided you pay them. When we do that, we will be heard the next time and we can continue to sing praises to our God - the sentiments of a restored king, even David.



PSALM 62

HIGH BROW, LOW BROW

The NIV Study Bible takes a low view of the Psalm titles which are just as inspired as the main text. While it is signatored by David, and the internal evidence of the text confirms it, the commentator says, “The author surely was a king and if it was David. . . .” The author is David, so why question God’s Word? To question God’s Word, as our first parents did, is death!

This Psalm by David seems to be written not in the vortex of a trying experience or sometime after it, but calmly, perhaps after years of meditation. He confidently

declares at the outset that God is his salvation and concludes with assurance that God will judge every man according to his work.

David reviews perhaps his own life. Since he had trusted the Lord his Rock of Salvation all along, he observed that all the fawners and sycophants in his court, who tried to topple him from his throne, were toppled themselves. Those who appoint to throw down God's anointed will be disappointed! Beware which group you join. If you join the wrong group, those who side against God's chosen servant, you will be stung all right!

Having said this, David reiterates his trust in the only Rock of his salvation (v. 6). Three times he uses "only" in reference to his Saviour-God, which reminds us of Peter's just-as-emphatic declaration, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4: 12). Moreover, He is a Saviour not only to those who seek Him in distress, but to everyone at all times. We can seek His help on anything, from an elephant to a pin. We will not be bothering Him if we pray about the loss of a purse or a pen.

The Lord who dwells in the high and holy place dwells also with him that is of a contrite and humble spirit (Isa. 57:15). In the light of this situation, David examines the rich, the high brow (v. 9) who amass their wealth by lying (or fraud), who boast of their high-powered tactics (robbery). David warns them not to set their heart upon them. Often the rich become rich at the expense of the poor. Take, for example, finance companies who get their funds from wage-earning depositors. Suddenly the company is closed for insolvency, but the directors who hold the cash have flown. David examines the poor also, but though they use entreaties (plead for mercy), they steal (Prov. 30:9). Put in the balance, both rich and poor weigh less than vanity. High brow, low brow, in God's sight they are of the same character.

We should take heed, be very attentive, when God speaks as our King and Judge. When God speaks once we are to hear it as spoken twice, i.e., a thing confirmed, without mistake, allowing no change or alteration. We hear it twice because He gives us two ears! High brow, low brow, let us take to heart this yet another Psalm of David.



PSALM 63
**“BENEATH THE CROSS OF JESUS...
WITHIN A WEARY LAND”**

David had many wilderness experiences. According to Psalm 63:11 when he was king, the wilderness of Judah he went through must have been his cross under Absalom’s rebellion (II Sam 15:23–28; 16:2, 14; 17:16, 29). This would be his worst wilderness experience because it was precipitated in his old age by a rebellious son. Oh to be driven from a kingly court with food and music to a desert waste; with not the sound of bird or beast, to be marooned from a palace full of courtiers and servants to a little straggling company of fugitives. We may not be under similar circumstances, but modern travel to distant foreign lands for business or study can also bring such weariness of body and spirit.

In such a desperate hour, David has a sure recourse to His God. God to him is a loving Father who is more concerned for his welfare than himself. When our minds are heavily burdened, and sleep is denied us by cares, what do we do? We should follow David’s example to meditate on God by prayer and retrospection.

*When upon life’s billows you are tempest tossed,
When you are discouraged, thinking all is lost,
Count your many blessings, name them one by one,
And it will surprise you what the Lord hath done.*

When David’s confidence is restored by recollections of past deliverance (v. 6), then he fills this Psalm with praises and jubilation (v. 7). As for his enemies who seek

to kill him, they shall be consigned to hell, they shall be killed by the sword and their carcasses left to the jackals (v. 10). God is not only David's loving Father and Protector, but also Judge against his enemies, not only those who assail him by sword but also with their lying tongues (v. 11). Will God vindicate us as He vindicated David?



PSALM 64

“VENGEANCE IS MINE; I WILL REPAY, SAITH THE LORD”

The higher a man goes, the more enemies he makes. David, being king of all Israel, yea also conqueror of Israel's neighbouring tribes, had more enemies than any other king. A leader of men must expect criticisms, whether constructive or destructive.

Now, when the enemy is without, we must have weapons to defend ourselves when he attacks. In olden days, they used swords and spears, bows and arrows. In modern times, they use rifles and machine guns, tanks and howitzers. To defend against visible attack, we must watch for the direction from which it comes. David not only had defended himself from all these, he had by the physical strength God had given him successfully overpowered his enemies. Yea, he had power even over the lion and the bear.

The enemy he talks about in this Psalm is rather one within his nation, yea in his own palace. These “workers of iniquity” (v. 2) plot for his life and rebel against his rule. Their weapons are not swords and arrows but their tongues. Psalm 41 and Psalm 55 elaborate on their tactics and hypocrisies. “Mine enemies speak evil of me, When shall he die, and his name perish? And if he come to see me, he speaketh vanity: his heart gathereth iniquity to itself; when he goeth abroad, he telleth it. All that hate me whisper together against me: against me do they devise my hurt” (Ps 41:5–7). “The words of

his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart: his words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords” (Ps 55:21). The most deadly of these psychological arrows is flattery (Prov 29:5).

These plotters against David, thinking that their plot is not seen by anyone, leave no stone unturned (v. 6) “to look for some microbe between the hairs,” as the Chinese saying goes. Is this the way to treat your king? Such treachery against a leader can lead only to a just retribution on themselves! (Never betray your superior!) God, who is Judge of the earth (Gen 18), will pay them back in their own coin! (v. 7).



PSALM 65

GOD’S POWER IS MANIFESTED IN SPECIAL AND GENERAL PROVIDENCE

When God’s people turn away from Him, they fall back into heathen darkness. This happened in Isaiah’s time. He challenged backsliding Judah: “And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead?” (Isa 8:19). Today, we see the same thing happening to America, because they have by and large left their God. So, even Mrs Reagan (the ex-President’s wife) consulted a clairvoyant woman and sought good fortune through her astrology.

David in this psalm shows a remarkable perception of the Almighty, who is omnipresent and omniscient. He is the living and true God (I Thess 1:9). By His special providence over the Church, He hears our prayers and accepts our vows and purges our sins. David’s experience of God’s special care upon him helps us to find God through a close personal communion.

“By terrible things in righteousness wilt thou answer us, O God of our salvation” (v. 5). Some will taunt the Lord,

“Will He strike me dead?” When God chooses to answer “by terrible things in righteousness,” He can, and He will. Take the case of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5.

From His special providence and care of His Church, let us look at the world in general. Here we see also His hand in governance. Whereas in Psalm 46, He is supreme over warring nations; in this Psalm, He is “the confidence of all the ends of the earth, and of them that are afar off upon the sea” (v. 5). As one travels over land and sea, one cannot fail to see the mighty power of God over the whole creation.



PSALM 66

“IN GOD WE BOAST ALL THE DAY LONG”

The exaltation of God is the topic of this Psalm. After the first four introductory verses, the Psalmist invites his audience to come and see. Jesus uses this method, “If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe...” (Jn 10:37, 38). In verses 5 to 7, the Psalmist testifies to God’s “terrible works” in the drying up of the Red Sea (or the River Jordan, which at its highest floodtide overflowed the banks, and looked like a sea, Joshua 3:15). The Psalmist recalls also the hard times that God’s children went through: “Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water: but thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place” (v. 12). Through thick or thin, with God we can come out victorious.

But the most effective sermon is the man himself. The Psalmist augments his case with a personal testimony. He tells how when he met with trouble in his innocency and vowed to God to save him; God heard his cry and vow, and saved him.

Vows are the ultimate of earnest prayer made to God, in the hour of great danger, or emergency, and are

regulated by God's Word. "When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed. Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay. Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin; neither say thou before the angel, that it was an error: wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thine hands?" (Eccles. 5:4-6). The Psalmist, having been delivered, did not forget God as many do, but he performed that promise to God that he had uttered in desperation. He paid his vow in full, without discount.

Can you say with the Psalmist, "In God we boast all the day long?"



PSALM 67

THE CHURCH PRAYS FOR FORGIVENESS OF HER SINS, AND FOR SALVATION OF THE WHOLE WORLD

This Psalm may be short, but its scope extends to the whole Church, and from the Church to the whole world. Its scope is as outreaching as the cross, vertically and horizontally.

The cry for mercy (v. 1) "implies the death of all legal hopes or claims of merit ... Forgiveness of sin is always the first link in the chain of mercies experienced by us. Mercy is a foundational attribute in our salvation. The best saints and worst sinners may unite in this petition" (Spurgeon). When Dr John Sung held his revival campaign in Tientsin and called to sinners to come to the front to confess their sins, the aged Ting Li Mei, who was China's Moody in his earlier years, also came up to kneel with the first-timers. This public gesture of the veteran revivalist humbled the younger man to the dust. Whether sinner or saint, we are always at His mercy! "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful

and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (I Jn 1:8, 9).

Next, the Church begs for blessing. The word blessing is all comprehensive and far-reaching when it comes from God. But that blessing from God which we should most desire is not in the gift but in the Giver. If He will look at us favourably and approvingly, that’s enough.

Now the horizontal. As showers which first fall upon the hilltop soon run down into the valley, so the blessing of the Most High God flows to the whole world through the Church. We are blessed not only for our own sakes but also for the sake of the whole world — channels of blessing only! Outside of the Church, Jews or Gentiles, the crowds of every nation are perishing in darkness. These countless millions of every tribe and tongue are without Christ, “having no hope, and without God in the world” (Eph 2:12).



PSALM 68

THE CHURCH MILITANT AND THE CHURCH TRIUMPHANT

After David’s failure in his first attempt to bring the Ark back from exile to Jerusalem, he prepared assiduously the second time according to the Law of Moses to sanctify the Levites to carry it. This Psalm is thought by devout commentators to be David’s composition for the auspicious yet solemn occasion. David led before the Levites and he increased the grandeur of the holy company with a choir singing and shouting joyously to the accompaniment of an orchestra of wind and string instruments.

In this processional liturgy, as it is called, it is natural to recall all the mighty acts of God in the history of the Israelites, beginning with the Exodus. The wilderness journey is mentioned, with high points mentioned all the way — Sinai at the beginning, Bashan at the end

(but leaping across centuries) to Mount Zion, “the hill of God” (vv. 15, 16). At Mt. Zion begins the royal rule of God under David. Hence the mention of Benjamin immediately paying homage, and of Zebulun and Naphtali that come to add strength to the kingdom (I Chron 12:29, 33, 34). The Church might have many denominations like the tribes of Israel. Nevertheless, under God and our Lord Jesus Christ, they are one.

From the Davidic throne in Jerusalem unifying the twelve tribes, the king looks beyond to further conquests, so that the Empire of David and Solomon stretched from Egypt to Assyria. With the martial races subdued, even Egypt now became tributary to Israel, yea, also Ethiopia “shall soon stretch out her hands unto God.”

Now, verse 18 is a description of the king returning in triumph to His throne on Mt. Zion after battle. In the triumphal return, the king, taking his enemies captive, also brings home spoils for his people. The Apostle Paul applies this verse in Ephesians 4:7 to 12 to Christ’s ascension and bestowing spiritual gifts to the Church, his subjects. The Church below continues to fight Christ’s battle, so we are called the Church militant. The Church up above with Christ is the Church triumphant.



PSALM 69

“LEST I FORGET GETHSEMANE... LEAD ME TO CALVARY”

The NIV Study Bible, on the strength of just one verse (v. 35), brushes aside the authorship of David. It “suggests a later son of David who ruled the southern kingdom (see v. 35). That king may have been Hezekiah (see II Kings 18–20; II Chron 29:32).” This is one instance of the audacity of modern commentators and the license NIV translators take against the Sacred Text.

In this Psalm, David describes another of his quagmire experiences, the worst, in fact, if we compare with Psalm

40. His soul is totally overwhelmed with the flood waters of his grief, short of being swallowed up by the mouth of the pit (vv. 1, 2, 14, 15). This miry clay that is swallowing him, gulp by gulp, is the attack upon him by his enemies.

In the circumstances, to make sure that there is no contributory cause from himself, he humbles himself to admit his foolishness and bares his heart for God to examine any unconfessed sin (v. 5). This is a right attitude to adopt whenever we are overtaken by trouble. Though our heart is innocent in the matter, perhaps some sin committed beyond its periphery might have got us involved?

There is, however, a higher purpose in David's sufferings. God has used these sufferings to adumbrate the sufferings of His greater Son and our Lord. No other Psalm apart from Psalm 22 is as much quoted as this Psalm for some part of Christ's suffering before His crucifixion. Scofield comments, "The New Testament quotations from, and references to, this Psalm indicated in what way it adumbrates Christ. It is the Psalm of His humiliation and rejection (vv. 4, 7, 8, 10–12). Verses 14 to 20 may well describe the exercise of His holy soul in Gethsemane (Matt 26:36–45), while verse 21 is a direct reference to the cross (Matt 27:34, 48; Jn 19:28). The imprecatory verses (vv. 22, 28) are connected (Rom 11:9, 10) with the present judicial blindness of Israel, verse 25 having special reference to Judas (Acts 1:20) who is thus made typical of his generation, which shared his guilt."



PSALM 70

"SAVIOUR, SAVIOUR, HEAR MY HUMBLE CRY"

Let this first line of the refrain to Fanny J. Crosby's (1820–1915) "Pass Me Not, O Gentle Saviour" serve for a more vivid title to this Psalm as in Psalm 38. "Saviour, Saviour, hear my humble cry," which seems to express the pent-up emotions in blind Bartimaeus, again reflects

David's aching heart. The opening words, "Make haste, O God, to deliver me; make haste to help me, O LORD," show how urgent David's plea is to His God. It sounds like someone beating hard on "the door" in the face of extreme danger, crying of "chiu ming" ("save life" in Chinese)!

If you compare this psalm with Psalm 40, you will see that it is a duplicate of Psalm 40 verses 13 to 17. Thus, Psalm 70 is extracted from Psalm 40 so that it may be used for an occasion where Psalm 40 is deemed too long. For example, many of John Sung's choruses were not his own but taken from the refrains of long hymns. Moreover, he made variations of these to suit his purpose. Thus, the chorus of "Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross," according to the revivalist, is:

*In the cross, in the cross, be my glory ever,
All my sins are washed away
In the blood of Jesus.*

It is observed that Psalm 70 is a fitting pendant to Psalm 69, and a suitable preface to Psalm 71.

This Psalm differs from Psalm 40 in that its plea is an abrupt and broken cry in an hour of dire distress (Ps 70:1), whereas in Psalm 40 the plea is introduced by "Be pleased" (Ps 40:13), which is more formal. God knows our heart, every aching heart, when we cry to Him. Prayer is readily heard when sent not as a letter but as a telegram.



PSALM 71

SEVENTY YEARS YOUNG

There is no doubt but that this Psalm was composed by David. The Septuagint, which is the ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, annotates this.

The many pleas to God for salvation and safe-keeping from his enemies breathe the spirit of David. What is striking in this Psalm that tells of his struggles is that he mentions his life from the womb to the grave.

In his old age, when his joints begin to creak and his muscles are lax, when his teeth are gone and his eyes are dim, the great king of Israel must go the way of all flesh. What a picture of weariness and dreariness and self-pity. Visit any old folks home (euphemistically called “senior citizens,” and you qualify at 65) and you will dread your own winter coming. Now, David began life not at thirty when he became king. Rather, from fifteen, a boy ruddy of countenance when he became his father’s sheep boy. There in the arena of bears and lions, he had the first taste of adulthood. His life of active service by calculation would be at least fifty-five years. Who among us can claim such long and illustrious service?

Though retirement age in Singapore is being raised to sixty and in the USA it is sixty-five which might be raised to seventy, rarely can we find one with an unbroken record. And life is not to be measured in years but in achievement. Our Lord died at thirty-three, but in the short span, He did what others might take a hundred. As for David, the Lord took him from the sheep cote to be king of all Israel. Another who has served the Lord fully and beyond His age is Caleb: “And now, behold, the LORD hath kept me alive, as he said, these forty and five years, even since the LORD spake this word unto Moses, while the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness: and now, lo, I am this day fourscore and five years old. As yet I am as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me: as my strength was then, even so is my strength now, for war, both to go out, and to come in” (Josh 14:10-11).



PSALM 72

LONG LIVE THE KING!

This Psalm, according to the Hebrew preposition, may be written for Solomon himself. Spurgeon is of the opinion it was written by Solomon. The following is a division of the Psalm by Alexander:

A glowing description of the Messiah's reign as

1. Righteous (vv. 1-7)
2. Universal (vv. 8-11)
3. Beneficent (vv. 12-14)
4. Perpetual (vv. 15-17)

To which are added a Doxology (vv. 18, 19) and a Postscript (v. 20).

This Psalm reflects Solomon's clean and fervent heart desiring to be a wise and just king. The story of Solomon's wise choice of what God would give him in a dream is found in I Kings 3:5 to 15; II Chronicles 1:7 to 12.

Charles Hodge in his Systematic Theology (1871) says: "The seventy-second Psalm contains a description of an exalted king, and of blessings of his reign. These blessings are of such a nature as to prove that the subject of the Psalm must be a divine person.

1. His kingdom is to be everlasting.
2. Universal.
3. It secures perfect peace with God and goodwill among men.
4. All men are to be brought to submit to him through love.
5. In him all nations of the earth are to be blessed. As we are distinctly taught in Galatians 3:16, it is in Him that all the blessings of redemption are to come upon

the world. The subject of this Psalm is, therefore, the Redeemer of the world.”

Behold, a Greater than Solomon is here! “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this” (Isa 9:6, 7).



PSALM 73

THE WICKED PROSPERS, BUT HOW LONG?

Curiously enough, this 73rd Psalm corresponds with the 37th in subject matter. It will help our memory to notice the reversed figures, inasmuch as what is given in Psalm 37 is restated from a different angle. The theme is: the prosperity of the wicked and the sorrow of the godly. This is one stumbling block which Job’s friends could not get over.

The Psalmist declares at the outset how God stands with Israel, with those whose hearts are clean. “My strength is as the strength of ten, because my heart is pure.” This may truly be said of King David.

But the Psalmist here confesses his succumbing to the envy of the foolish and the wicked (v. 3), so that his steps, spiritually speaking, have well nigh slipped. Be that as it may, his description of the outward prosperity and behaviour of the wicked is vividly true (vv. 4–12). In their protruded eyes, swelled by power and pride, they see not God (v. 11) nor men (v. 8).

The Psalmist speaks of his dilemma from verses 13 to 16 as he looks at the prosperity of the wicked by his own

judgment. Surely he is perplexed, and so are we when we try to judge others in our own wisdom.

In verse 17, he sees things in a different light when he enters the Temple to worship. When we come to Church and listen to God's Word expounded to us, we see ourselves measured against God and not alongside our adversaries. We can adopt a "holier than thou" attitude without God, but under His shining light, we become totally undone.

In the eternity of God, man is transient like a dream. All of a sudden, we see the wicked as thrown off a slippery road. Sudden destruction comes upon them. In the light of God's righteous judgment upon the wicked, the Psalmist realises his stupidity like a brute beast (Job 18:3). So, do we fret ourselves because of evildoers (Ps 37:1)? No!



PSALM 74

THE PERSECUTED CHURCH CRIES OUT

Who are Israel's enemies who have attacked God's House with axe and hammer, and even "cast fire" into His sanctuary? Whether the Psalmist refers to the Assyrian King, Sennacherib, or to the Maccabean wars, it is hard to judge. When God's House is destroyed, so are the prophets dispersed, and there is no one to guide the flock. But there's a deadlier and subtler attack when God's House is eaten away as by termites, the introduction of damnable doctrines and heresies into the Church.

What a picture of the Church under fire in every age of war and oppression! This psalm would reflect the sufferings of the Jews under Hitler's genocide. The Church in China, especially during Mao's regime, could identify herself with the description in this Psalm. But this Psalm does not merely record the brutalities of God's enemies. It is penned to lead the oppressed in crying out

to God for judgment. Until judgment is pronounced on the oppressor, the souls of the martyrs in heaven cannot rest from crying, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?” (Rev 6:10).

The Psalmist directs us to meditate on His omnipotence, and omnipresence. He who is the Creator is also the Governor of the whole creation. He had worked miracles to save Israel, such as in the crossing of the Red Sea and the drying up of River Jordan. Indeed, He is the God who had covenanted with Israel’s forefathers to save them. And His Covenant Name is Jehovah or LORD. (Notice the word LORD is spelt with four capital letters.) He is now being reminded to “plead thine own cause” (v. 22). Will He save us? Yes, indeed, “For God is my King of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth” (v. 12).

Should calamity suddenly overtake us through political upheavals, religious persecutions, racial strifes; the Church, though buffeted and shaken, can rest assured that God is on the throne, that He is working out His own purposes to His only glory. He will save us to the end. Amen.



PSALM 75

“JUDGE OF THE NATIONS, SPARE US YET”

In this Psalm, you will notice two parties speaking. These are the words of God’s people and the Words of God Himself. In verse 1, the people give thanks and praise to God for some miracles He has done to save them from some heathen nation or nations (v. 3). Perhaps the Assyrians are in the purview of this hymn of praise. Read Isaiah 36, 37. This passage ends up with 185,000 of Assyrian troops being destroyed by the angel of the Lord in one night.

In verse 2, we hear God declaring He is “Judge of all the earth” (Gen 18:25). Spurgeon says, “When anarchy is

abroad and tyrants are in power, everything is loosed, dissolution threatens all things, and solid mountains of government melt as wax; but even then the Lord upholds and sustains the right.” “I bear up the pillars of it.” Hence there is no real cause for fear. While the pillars stand, and stand they must for God upholds them, the house will brave out the storm. In the days of the Lord’s appearing, a general meeting will take place, but in that day, our covenant God will be the sure support of our confidence.

The Lord bids the boasters to keep silent and commands the mad oppressors to stay their folly. How calm He is, how quiet His words are, yet how divine the rebuke.

In verses 6 to 8, the people respond that things happen not by chance, but by the sovereign hand of God, and in the rising and sinking of thrones and kingdoms (Dan 5:20, 21). When the days of a tyrant are done, then God will make him drink his cup of punishment.

In verse 9, the just will occupy themselves in singing Jehovah’s praises, and in verse 10, restored Israel will execute justice, putting down the haughty horns of the wicked but exalting the humble horns of the just. Judge of the nations, spare us yet, lest we forget.



PSALM 76

HOW DOES GOD DEAL WITH MAN’S WRATH?

The historical background may be traced to II Kings 19 where Jerusalem is under siege in the reign of King Hezekiah. The enemy was Assyrian King Sennacherib who defied the God of Israel. Through Isaiah, God assured Hezekiah that Jerusalem would be delivered. “And it came to pass that night, that the angel of the LORD went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses” (II Kings 19:35).

*For the Angel of Death spread his wings on the blast,
And breathed in the face of the foe as he passed;
And the eyes of the sleepers waxed deadly and chill,
And their hearts but once heaved, and for ever were still!
 And there lay the steed with his nostril all wide,
 But through it there rolled not the breath of his pride:
 And the foam of his grasping lay white on the turf,
 And cold as the spray of the rock-beating surf.
And there lay the rider distorted and pale,
With the dew on his brow and the rust on his mail;
And the tents were all silent, the banners alone,
The lances unlifted, the trump unblown.*

Salem, which means “peace”, is another name for Jerusalem. In victory, God’s people celebrate over “the mountains of prey,” which refers to the heathen enemies, ever on the rampage to kill.

God, who always works good out of men’s evil, is praised through the “wrath of men.” The remainder of man’s mischief, God will withhold.

When we face such overwhelming odds and are delivered, let us not forget to pay the vows we made in the hour of crisis.



PSALM 77

A CHRISTIAN MUST NEVER SAY DIE

In moments of darkest despair, a Christian may be tempted to take his own life. Some have even tried it, but by God’s grace, they are delivered in the nick of time. Have you entertained suicidal thoughts? This is very sinful, a sin committed against your own soul! The Sixth Commandment begins with yourself! In Chinese

philosophy, to hurt your body is to hurt your parents, the givers of your body. This is a breach of filial piety.

This Psalm by Asaph begins on a minor key, nevertheless with strong cryings to God, should help you get out of your blues. How often we lose out by opting out. We are strong in seeking the world but weak in seeking God.

In this Psalm, let us cry out to God with the Psalmist in verses 1 to 3; let us hear him lamenting and arguing with himself in verses 4 to 9. From verses 10 to 15, let us meditate with him Godward. As he meditates on the power and mercy of God, he sees as it were a vision of God delivering His people through the Red Sea by the hand of Moses and Aaron. "At this point, as if lost in ecstasy, he himself closes the Psalm with an abruptness, the effect of which is quite startling. The Spirit of God knows when to cease speaking, which is more than those who do, for the sake of making a methodical conclusion, prolong their words to weariness" (Spurgeon).

Why should not a Christian say die? He foolishly thinks of suicide when he is strayed far away from God. But here is a lesson from Asaph. In our moments of darkest despair, let us cry unto God, our Saviour and Redeemer, yea even our loving Father. As He had delivered the forefathers of the Israelites, so has He saved us, some through several generations since our ancestors believed. As He had saved Israel from Pharaoh and the terrors of the wilderness, so He has saved our fathers from many dangers and strifes. A Christian must never say die!



PSALM 78

THE IMPORTANCE OF KNOWING OUR ROOTS

Verses 1 to 8 is the preface which tells us and our children and the generations to come the importance of knowing our roots. Moses commanded Israel in Deuteronomy, to teach their children their history, particularly their exodus from Egypt (Deut 8:1–5).

There is a flood tide of unbelief, compromise and rebellion in the Church world today known as the Ecumenical Movement. Headed by the World Council of Churches representing most Protestant denominations, it has gathered together the Greek Orthodox Church and is now in close fellowship with the Roman Catholic Church. Prominent Churchmen like Dr Robert Runcie, Archbishop of Canterbury, and Billy Graham are involved in the Ecumenical Movement, not only with the Pope but also with the Communists. Why has the Protestant Church today returned to Rome and is playing ball with Satan in politics? Said Dr Clyde Kennedy, one-time president of Shelton College, "The reason for Protestants today going back to Rome is their ignorance of their past history." Hence this Psalm on the importance of knowing our roots must be read and re-read. The effectiveness of disseminating truth in psalmody is no less emphasized by Moses who wrote the Song of Moses (Deut 32) after denouncing Israel.

The events of Israel's exodus are familiar to the average reader. Verse 58 takes us to the times of the Judges. In verses 60 to 64, we come to the last judge, old Eli, with his two wicked sons. So, the Tabernacle that was pitched at Shiloh under Joshua in Ephraim was muted, the Ark being captured by the Philistines (I Sam 4). No church can boast of a glorious past to cover up her present-day backsliding, but that God will abandon her to destruction.



PSALM 79

JERUSALEM THE FALLEN

As the events that happened to Jerusalem in this Psalm took place at its fall, Asaph's connection with it (who lived in David's time) could only be in his descendents. Spurgeon thinks Jeremiah could have written this Psalm. Whether Jeremiah wrote this Psalm or not, he has plenty of war experiences in Lamentations. We

should thank God for peace and pray for the relief of war victims and refugees.

This Psalm describes briefly the fall of Jerusalem to the heathen. It tells of the defilement of the Temple and destruction of the city. To further desecrate the Holy City, the dead bodies of princes and priests were not allowed to be buried. They provided a feast to the carrion birds and beasts.

Why has Jerusalem the Golden become Jerusalem the Fallen? This is the way of all flesh, as predicted by Moses in Deuteronomy 28:15-19: “But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee: Cursed shalt thou be in the city, and cursed shalt thou be . . . Cursed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and cursed shalt thou be when thou goest out.”

From this Psalm and Moses’ prediction, we can find an explanation to the sad fortunes of the Jews through two thousand years, culminating with Hitler’s pogroms that exterminated six million of them during World War II. It is due to their rejecting Jesus their Messiah and rashly bringing the blood of Christ upon themselves and their children.



PSALM 80

SONG OF THE BURNT VINE

After the glorious reign of Solomon, decay and apostasy set in. As a result, the Kingdom was split in two, ten tribes to Jeroboam in the North, and two tribes to Rehoboam (Solomon’s son) in the South. Ephraim and Manasseh were brothers, sons of Joseph, but Ephraim the younger became the chief Tribe of the North. Judah had Simeon absorbed under her leadership in the

South. Part of Benjamin belonged to the North and part belonged to the South.

Now, the Northern Kingdom was at this time invaded by Assyria, the ancient superpower. In appealing to God for help, the Psalmist composed this Song of the Burnt Vine. The Vine and the Fig Tree are two plants used often to represent Israel. Isaiah uses the same figure in Isaiah 5:1 to 7. In the concluding verse 7, Isaiah says the Vineyard is the Home of Israel and the Vine the men of Judah. It tells of its luxuriance and filling the land with its branches. Then came the breaking down of the hedges and the destruction of it by wild beasts, and it being burned down to the ground. Hence the plea to God for salvation and the raising of a strong man to lead them back to God.

This Song of the Burnt Vine is applicable to every Christian nation. There was a time when Britannica ruled the waves. The four hundred years after the Reformation saw England become Protestant and blessed with the Gospel, with great men of God who thundered the Word of God against the sins of the people. God blessed Great Britain with a host of illustrious faithful men: Wycliffe, Knox, Tyndale, Cranmer, Latimer, Ridley, and Puritans like John Bunyan, Wesley, Whitefield, Spurgeon, William Burns, etc., etc.

With the infiltration of liberal and modernist teachings by a new breed of Higher Critics since the 19th century, the Empire began also to decline. By the end of World War II, the world leadership that was Britain's passed on to the United States.



PSALM 81

A HISTORICAL PSALM

Asaph's footnote seems to be the calling to mind the events of Israel's past history, of God's mighty acts, in order to admonish the present generation that has

departed from their fathers' faith. Without learning the lessons of history, history will repeat itself. Hence the Bible records for us in great detail the deeds of heroes of faith, e.g. Moses, Samuel and Daniel. The study of Old Testament history is one subject much neglected by the Church.

The Psalmist adds his strength to the rulers of Israel to call God's people to a "solemn feast day," perhaps the celebration of the Passover. When we come on such a special occasion, it is good to prepare items of praise with the help of musical instruments. Today, there are two extreme recipients to this injunction. The Charismatics overdo this by bringing in worldly instruments and follow their carnal beat. The Hyper-Reformed forbid any other music than the singing of Psalms without any musical instrument at all.

The first part of this Psalm recalls Joseph's rulership over Egypt. But with the passing of Joseph's generation, Israel came under the yoke of the Egyptians. God saved them out of Egypt by way of the wilderness. The waters of Meribah is the place in the region of Mt. Horeb, near Rephidim, where Moses struck the rock and water flowed out (Ex 17:7; Num 20:13, 24; 27:14).

The mention of Meribah, meaning "strife," is obviously used against the present generation of Israelites.

When we turn a stiff neck to God, what is the result? "So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: and they walked in their own counsels" (v. 12).

But God is always gracious to the repentant. There is a way of return to Israel. What Asaph is saying to Israel, He is saying to the Church today.



PSALM 82

A JUDICIAL PSALM

Confucius says, “He who rules, let him rule with virtue.” David says, “He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God” (II Sam 23:3).

When judges “judge unjustly and accept the persons of the wicked,” it is because they are distorted by bribery.

Asaph saw so much corruption in the courts of law that he wrote this Psalm to rebuke wickedness in high places. He reminded the judges what high position they held. They were called “gods,” the same Hebrew word “Elohim” which term is also used for God Almighty. They were God’s representatives on earth. The Westminster Confession declares God “has ordained civil magistrates to be under Him over the people, for His own glory and public good . . . for the defence and encouragement of them that are good, and for the punishment of evil doers.”

His judgment must be like the balance that shows a fifty-fifty fairness. Especially widows and orphans and the poor and afflicted who are helpless. They need succour in their hour of need. They cannot be rescued from the clutches of the wicked, except by the power of law. Paradoxically, the judges who are to deliver them have lost their sense under the seduction of money, so they who are to give light rather grope in darkness (v.5).

Asaph is corroborated by the prophet Micah, “The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money...” (Micah 3:11). Beware, pastors and preachers, and Church leaders who hold the key of power in the Church. Do we judge righteously among members of the Church?



PSALM 83

A PATRIOTIC PSALM

Every citizen must love his country, the land of his birth. The British call theirs Motherland and the Germans Fatherland. To protect our homeland, we must have national service, and we must be prepared to be called to arms in event of war.

Asaph here writes of patriotism for Israel. God's chosen people Israel is God's testimony to the world, a light to the Gentiles. When all around her are gathered the Gentile nations to destroy her, all the more is there need to stir up the sons of light to action against the forces of darkness.

The background of this Psalm seems to be the times of King Jehoshaphat when he was invaded by Ammon, Moab and Edom (II Chron 20). When Jehoshaphat sought the Lord's help rather than man's, then God came to their help. God sent confusion into the allied armies, so that they began to set upon one another. Does this not reflect the feuds among the Arab forces in Lebanon during the bitter years of civil war in the eighties?

By way of application, the true Church of Jesus Christ is often engulfed by foes in the ecclesiastical world. The Ecumenical Movement of the World Council of Churches with the collusion of Rome is a menace to the true Church. The true Church, however, must continually look to her most high God for help and strength.



PSALM 84

“WE’RE MARCHING TO ZION, BEAUTIFUL, BEAUTIFUL ZION”

This first line of the refrain, added by Robert Lowry (1826–99) to Isaac Watts' "Come, We That Love the Lord," so sweet to churchgoers, is borrowed from the title of this Psalm. The sons of Korah are the Levitical

choir made up of the descendants of Korah appointed by David to sing in the temple.

Though the authorship of this Psalm is not mentioned, it breathes the spirit of David, whose happiest desire was to build God a House.

Pilgrimages to the tabernacle were a great feature of Jewish life. Families journeyed together, making bands that grew at each halting place. They camped in sunny glades, sang in unison along the roads, toiled together over the hill and through the valley, and as they went along, stored up happy memories which would never be forgotten.

In our modern context, this Psalm is surely expressive of a Christian and his family serving overseas in some foreign country where there is no Church to attend. We have been told such a case in some strict Muslim countries. The only chance of joining in worship was at the embassy of a Christian country. How he longed to worship at his home Church and fellowship with brethren and sisters of the same faith, where Jesus Christ is highly exalted.

The House of God is open to everybody, even sparrows and swallows (not in the family of clean birds like the pigeon and dove) are welcome. Any non-Christian is welcome to sit in God's House to hear the Word preached, but more blessed are they who have become God's children, gaining a place to stay in His House.



PSALM 85

PAST DELIVERANCE, PRESENT AFFLICTION, FUTURE GLORIFICATION

Modern commentators would date this Psalm after the Return from the Babylonian exile because the word "captivity" is mentioned (v. 1). Spurgeon argues against it because "captivity" need not refer to exile from one's

country inasmuch as Job's "captivity" did not remove him out of his. Besides the captivity of Jacob (which applies to all Israel) is mentioned and not more properly Judah, for the captivity to Babylon concerned only the Jews (the people of Judah).

Spurgeon thinks the author of this Psalm is David. If David is the author, he can be seen here writing of the past deliverance of Israel from the Philistines. Saul was the first to shake the Philistine yoke from off the neck of Israel. David, who killed Goliath, finally subdued the Philistine. He ascribes it all to God. When you have achieved anything at all, do not pride yourself in your achievement. Give glory to God as David here has done (vv. 1-4).

Affliction is David's experience in some periods of his 40-year reign (vv. 5-9). At any time when trouble comes to us, let us look up to God in supplication. We can be confident that He will hear us. Let us learn a lesson of "not turning to folly." The cause of our troubles is often traced to some sin, some offence against God's Law.

The third portion of this Psalm (vv. 10-13) is David's looking to the future of his kingdom which is the golden age after him in Solomon's reign. But it surely adumbrates what will flourish in the golden rule of a thousand years of David's Greater Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. We who go through the world in the end times beset with many afflictions need very much to pray to God. We who look up to God can rest assured the age of golden rule and peace of a thousand years on earth will come very soon to pass. In our dark afflictions, we can see the silver lining of brighter days to come. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. Amen.



PSALM 86

DAVID'S PRAYER

David has penned two Psalms which he has called his very own. One is Psalm 86, also called "David's Prayer," though many other Psalms are also prayers. The other is Psalm 145, also called "David's Praise." In Hebrew, there is a rhyme for these two compositions. One is a tephilla and the other is a tehilla.

In each of these, he makes a solemn reference to Moses in Exodus 34:6, 7: "The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation."

David hopes in a merciful, gracious and longsuffering God, so he has assurance of his plea being heard. David prays for guidance. He is willing to be taught so he will walk in the truth. David's prayer is full of praise. Praise is a part of prayer. Do you praise the Lord in your prayer and not some big man in the Church?

David is encouraged in his prayer that the proud who are against him, who spurn their God, will not prevail. So let us take care not to be on the side of the proud and mighty.

David asks for a token or sign that God is good to him that his enemy might be ashamed. This is a legitimate request. God will vindicate us before our enemies with some particular blessing, which you can readily recognise to be a timely token. Can you think of instances in David's life when events that worked for his destruction were overturned with God's help? Read I Samuel 26:1 to 25.



PSALM 87

“GLORIOUS THINGS ARE SPOKEN OF THEE, ZION CITY OF OUR GOD”

When Israel entered the Promised Land, they were commanded to pitch the Tabernacle at Shiloh in Ephraim, and there they were to worship. The Tabernacle rested at Shiloh from Joshua to Eli, when the Ark was captured by the Philistines. Though returned to Israel it was kept in the house of Abinadab (I Sam 7:1).

When David became king, he brought the Ark into Jerusalem. In Jerusalem was the Temple to be built as appointed of the Lord. In Zion, which is David's palace in Jerusalem, and its precincts, is God's House to be established. That's the reason why Zion, or Jerusalem, is loved above all other cities of Israel. The centre of worship for all Israel is here. This is the Holy City of all God's people. Returnees to Israel today go first of all to Jerusalem. Christian pilgrims must see Jerusalem also, for here our Lord was crucified and rose again the third day. Even Muslims consider Jerusalem their third holiest city, after Mecca and Medina, on the wrong assumption that Mohammed their prophet ascended to heaven from Jerusalem.

Verse 1 tells us that Jerusalem is built in the holy mountains. As one comes from the coast inland, one beholds from afar how beautiful for situation is the Holy City. Set on a mountain 2,600 feet above the sea, it soars above the land around it. Spiritually, Jerusalem also is above all other cities of Israel, for here is the dwelling house of the Lord.

To be born in Jerusalem where the Lord is is truly blessed, yea, even to be born again in the Church of God. We, who are born of God, are of such nobler birth as not to be compared with those born in such a heathen land as Philistia, Tyre and Ethiopia. O what blessing to be born in a Christian family, where there is the light of salvation imparted in our infancy so as to bring us

into God's family from the beginning of our young life. Whereby our names are written in heaven.



PSALM 88

HEMAN'S LAMENTATIONS

This Psalm, being a "lamentation", is composed by Heman and given to the sons of Korah to be sung "upon Mahalath Leamoth," i.e., with some musical instrument that gives a mournful sound. Surely it is not with a trumpet, but a flute. "Weep with them that weep" (Rom 12:15). Heman, one of the wisest in Israel, was given a deep exercise in suffering by the Lord, like Jeremiah, so he could compose these lamentations to soothe the souls of others overtaken by grief.

Thus we read in Psalm 42, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance. O my God, my soul is cast down within me... Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts: all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me. Yet the LORD will command his lovingkindness in the daytime, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life" (Ps 42:5-8).

As tears well from a sorrowful heart and give relief to the troubled soul, they will clear the eyes to give us a better perspective of a dark situation. What is at one time a matter of mourning to one of God's children may become a matter of joy and singing afterward, both to himself and to others. This sad anguish of spirit in Heman is made a song of joy to God's glory. That is why it is also called a song, a Psalm.

Is your heart burdened by grief? Read this Psalm. It is spiritual medicine to your soul. Here you will find that fellowship of suffering that St Paul talks about. "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable

unto his death” (Phil 3:10). As one commentator has said, “We have in this Psalm the voice of the suffering Redeemer.” The greater flutist is Christ!



PSALM 89

SING A SONG OF DAVID’S THRONE

The background of this Psalm on the establishment of David’s throne is found in II Samuel 7. As soon as David had finished fighting the Lord’s battles, his attention was drawn to building God’s House. He spoke to Nathan the prophet, from whom came the reply, “Go, do all that is in thine heart; for the LORD is with thee” (II Sam 7:3). For his devotion to the Lord, God blessed him. “Shalt thou build me an house for me to dwell in? . . . He will make thee an house. And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee . . . and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever” (II Sam 7:5–13).

Are you zealous for God’s Kingdom? The time, energy and money you have given for its extension will surely be rewarded. God returns to you manifold. “And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work” (II Cor 9:8).

Now the history of the Davidic Kingdom shows how God kept His Word to preserve his throne, although for Solomon’s sin, ten tribes were rent from David to form the Northern Kingdom. Although the latter part of this Psalm laments the evil days that had befallen the descendants of David, the throne of David will rise yet in the last days, when David’s greater Son will reign: “Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever” (Isa 9:7). This is

the Kingdom of Christ during the Gospel age through the Millennial Golden Age to come on earth.

Today, Israel, though regathered to the land of their fathers, is beset with innumerable woes from the Arab nations. But as God's chosen people coming under the Covenant, they will be delivered when Christ returns to earth. The Greater David will sit on His father's throne.



PSALM 90

“ONLY ONE LIFE ’TWILL SOON BE PAST ONLY WHAT’S DONE FOR JESUS WILL LAST”

The title of this Psalm declares Moses to be its author. Moses has written other Psalms, such as Exodus 15:1 to 19 and Deuteronomy 32:1 to 43.

It is Calvin who points out that though man knows his life is short, yet he plans for the things of this life as if he is going to live on earth forever. It is wisdom to make preparations for the next life when we realise, by the average law of life we live to only seventy, and if strong to eighty years. This is the average longevity even in our modern day. Moses, having outlived two generations in his time, also had to go at 120, though “his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated” (Deut 34:7). If modern medicine can increase man's age to one hundred, it is still two decades below Moses' age. Reader, how old are you this year? Have you made preparations for the life beyond?

If a man lives up to eighty years in the presence of the Eternal Father and God Almighty, it is only like the rising and ebbing of a flood, like a dozing off to sleep, like grass that flourishes in the morning but is mowed down at sunset. It is like a watch in the night, like the telling of a story. Even then there is no guarantee that everyone will live to a ripe old age, for living in a world that is cursed by sin, our life may be cut short by sickness, accident, war, famine, crimes, etc., etc. All these things happen

under God's sovereign hand, by His decretive will or permissive will. So Moses observes, "Thou turnest man to destruction; and sayest, Return, ye children of men" (v. 3). In verse 7, he says further, "For we are consumed by thine anger, and by thy wrath are we troubled."

There are those who, because of man's shortness of life, adopt an Epicurean philosophy: "Let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we die" (I Cor 15:32). But is death the end of all things? Hebrews 9:27 says, "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment."



PSALM 91

TOTAL PROTECTION IN PESTILENCE AND WAR

That everything that happens in the world today is governed by God's Providence is a beneficial doctrine that brings us back to God's omnipotence, omniscience and omnipresence. The daily sunshine or rain that the world receives, whether by the good or the evil, is called general providence (Matt 5:45).

When our Lord in the Sermon on the Mount says God takes much more care of His children than birds and flowers (Matt 6:26-30), He teaches a particular providence. Now this particular (special) providence of God over His own in the context refers to peace time care.

In this Psalm, we go one step further. We are assured of a particular providence that extends to troublous times. Here the Psalmist testifies of a total protection to us who are abiding closely in Him as in Psalm 46 which tells us God is an instant Help in trouble. The dangerous and pestilential circumstances cover every danger of disease and war. Whether great or small, God has promised to protect and save us. He will send His angels to keep charge over us. Like a nurse over a little child, she will not let him fall and bruise himself.

Now when Satan tempted Jesus to jump down from a pinnacle of the temple (Matt 4:5) quoting Psalm 91:11, 12, this is a case of using Scripture out of context. So it has become a proverb: “Satan quoting Scripture.” When we jump down a higher tower to show off, angels will not bear us up, but rather Satan will press us down. Angels will take care of those who trust in Him, who obey His Word, who seek His glory. In such a case, if there should be a falling down as in an airflight, the Lord will take good care of us, come what may. To court danger for the sake of sensationalism is to fall into Satan’s trap. To speculate in business, to take great risks for the sake of earning a fast buck is to fall into Satan’s trap.



PSALM 92

SABBATH SONG

The title of this Psalm is thus abbreviated. Now, Sabbath is a Hebrew word which means “rest.” This rest is commanded in the Fourth Commandment.

This rest from servile labour is holy, not only to rest our tired bodies but also to commemorate what the Lord God Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, has done to bring us into being. The creation process is completed, and shall be commemorated.

With the completion of God’s redemptive work in saving us from death to life by our Lord Jesus Christ through His resurrection from the dead, the Day of Rest which falls on the seventh day (Saturday) is since the day of the Apostles incorporated into the Lord’s Day (Sunday). (Read Jn 20:19-20; Acts 20:6, 7; I Cor 16:1, 2; Rev 1:10).

How shall we spend Sunday or what we now call the Lord’s Day or the Christian Sabbath? According to the injunction of this Psalm, we should spend it in:

1. Worship, with thanksgiving and praise.

2. Meditation on the works of God and His justice in the government of men, both good and bad. This is activated through instruction. Hence the preaching of God's Word is the second part of worship, after praise and thanksgiving through prayer.

The above two components of hallowing the Lord's Sabbath are to be found, not privately or individually but corporately, in public worship by the whole Church family. So, Hebrews 10:24-25 exhorts us: "Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another."



PSALM 93

JEHOVAH REIGNS SUPREME OVER HIS WHOLE CREATION

Jehovah, the Hebrew name of God, is translated LORD in the King James Bible. Notice the capital letters L-O-R-D. His might and majesty need no elaboration. So this Psalm is briefly worded.

He is the King of kings. He is buckled, and ready to strike at His enemy and defend His Kingdom. From the Creator-God, we now see His creation, or hear His voice in nature (v. 3).

*God hath a voice that ever is heard
In the peal of thunder, the chirp of the bird;
It comes in the torrent, all rapid and strong,
In the streamlets soft gush, as it ripples along;
In the waves of the ocean, the furrows of land,
In the mountains of granite, the atom of sand;
Turn where you may, from the sky to the sod,
Where can you gaze that ye see not the Lord?*

(Eliza Cook)

Seen in another light (v. 4), the utmost of their power is to Him but a sound, so He calls it a noise by way of contempt.

*Loud the stormy billows spoke,
Loud the billows raise their cry;
Fierce the stormy billows broke
Sounding to the echoing sky
Strong the breakers tossing high,
Stronger is Jehovah's might,
True thy words; and sanctity
Will become thy temples bright*

When the storm raises billows to the sky, the Lord can easily restrain them. So when impious men rage against the Lord, He is able to subdue them and overrule their malice.



PSALM 94

RIGHT IS MIGHT AND NOT MIGHT IS RIGHT

This is an oppressive world. A young Christian who goes out to earn a living immediately finds himself surrounded by evil workers. Those who are stronger than him are big fish ready to eat the small fish. This is what is meant by our Lord's alert to His disciples, "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves" (Matt 10:16).

The Psalmist here has experienced the humiliation of being oppressed by the strong and mighty. He sees others who are weak being gobbled up. "They slay the widow and the stranger, and murder the fatherless" (Ps 94:6). This happens in any age. Jesus exposes the bullies of His day, who were real cowards, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation" (Matt 23:14). Have you suffered oppression like the writer of this Psalm 94?

Praise the Lord, the Psalmist is not left in the lurch. He worships a sovereign God, omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent. He has recourse to his Maker. He calls upon Him to judge against his oppressors. So we have the same God who will make things right for us.

God uses the oppression of man to chastise us. In the meantime, He will judge the oppressor for his wickedness. “Not might is right, but right is might.” Let us run to Him for salvation and deliverance.



PSALM 95

PSALM OF EXHORTATION TO WORSHIP AND WARNING TO A WAYWARD PEOPLE

This Psalm is a Hebrew song exhorting the people to worship and warning the nation from being a wayward people since the days of their forty-year sojourn in the wilderness. It surely exhorts the Church today to worship God likewise, and warns us of backsliding like the Israelites in the desert.

Spurgeon says of this Psalm: “It has about it a ring like that of the church bells, and like the bells it sounds both merrily and solemnly, at first ringing out a lively peal, and then dropping into a funeral knell as if tolling at the funeral of the generation which perished in the wilderness.” The dividing line of the two different sentiments of this Psalm, the first expressed in the bells ringing merrily and the second in the ringing falling to a funeral note is at the end of verse 5. Thus it will form

- (1) an invitation with happy reason, and
- (2) an invitation with grave warnings.

A word to the pastor or pulpit chairman at the Lord’s Day worship: It is exhilarating at the commencement of worship to call the congregation’s attention, to prepare their hearts for worship. The hortatory utterances

in many of the Psalms of praise and thanksgiving are usually used. For example, Psalm 100 is a good one.



PSALM 96
DAVID SEES THE CONVERSION
OF THE GENTILES

This Psalm is evidently taken from that longer Psalm which David composed for the removal of the Ark of God to the tent David had prepared for it. This sacred account is recorded in I Chronicles 15, 16. Psalm 96 is of the latter part of that longer Psalm, the first part referred exclusively to Israel, whereas the latter part is directed to the Gentiles.

Psalm 96 fitly follows Psalm 95 which describes the obstinacy of Israel and the consequent taking of the Gospel from them that it might be preached to Gentile nations who would receive it. This Psalm 96 speaks to the Gentile nations from David's large-heartedness. When David rejoiced and danced before the Ark, he saw in vision all the earth turning from idols to the living and true God.

Had Michal, Saul's daughter, only been able to enter into David's delight, she would not have reproached him, and if the Jews of his day could only be enlarged in heart to feel sympathy with all mankind, they also would sing for joy at the great prophecy of David that all the world shall be filled with the glory of the Lord.

Spurgeon calls Psalm 96 a Missionary Hymn.



PSALM 97

THE FORESHADOWING OF THE WORKING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

As the last Psalm sang the praises of the Lord in connection with the proclamation of the Gospel among the Gentiles, so this appears to foreshadow the mighty working of the Holy Spirit in subduing error and casting down of idol-gods.

Across the sea, a voice cries for
rejoicing of the reign of Jesus (v. 1)

The sacred fire descends (v. 3)

Like lightning the Gospel flames forth (v. 4)

Difficulties vanish (v. 5)

All the nations see the glory of God (v. 6)

The idols are confounded (v. 7)

The Church rejoices (v. 8)

The Lord is exalted (v. 9)

The Psalm closes with an exhortation to holy steadfastness under the persecution which would follow. It further bids the saints rejoice that their path is bright and their rewards certain.

The Psalm divides itself into 4 portions, each containing 3 verses:

1. The coming of the Lord (vv. 1–3)
2. The effect upon the earth (vv. 4–6)
3. The influence on the heathen and God's people (vv. 7–9)
4. Exhortation to holiness and happiness (vv. 10–12)



PSALM 98

A CORONATION HYMN

*Forth to the battle rides our King;
He climbs his conquering car;
He fits his arrows to the string,
And smites his foes afar.*

*Convictions pierce the stoutest hearts,
They bleed, they faint, they die;
Slain by Immanuel's well-aimed darts,
In helpless heaps they lie.*

*Behold, he bares his two-edged sword,
And deals almighty blows,
His all-revealing, killing word
'Twixt joints and marrow goes.*

*Anon arrayed in robes of grace
He rides the trampled plain,
With pity beaming from his face,
And mercy in his train.*

*Mighty to save he now appears,
Mighty to raise the dead,
Mighty to stanch the bleeding wound,
And lift the fallen head.*

*Victor alike in love and arms,
Myriads before him bend;
Such are the Conqueror's matchless charms,
Each foe becomes his friend.*

*They crown him on the battle-field
Of all the nations King;
With trumpets and with cornets loud
They make the welkin ring.*



PSALM 99

THE HOLY, HOLY, HOLY PSALM

This may be called THE SANCTUS, or, THE HOLY, HOLY, HOLY PSALM, for the word “holy” is the conclusion and the refrain of its three main divisions.

Its subject is the holiness of the divine government, the sanctity of the mediatorial reign. It seems to us to declare the holiness of Jehovah Himself in verses 1, 2, 3; it mentions the equity of the king whom the Lord has appointed, as an illustration of the Lord’s love of holiness, or more probably it describes the Lord as Himself the King, in verses 4 and 5, and it then sets forth the severely righteous character of God’s dealings with those favoured persons whom in former times he had selected to approach Him on behalf of the people (vv. 6–9).

It is a hymn fitted for the cherubim who surround the throne, who are mentioned in verse 1; it is a Psalm most fitting for saints who dwell in Zion, the holy city, and especially worthy to be reverently sung by all who, like David the king, Moses the lawgiver, Aaron the priest, or Samuel the seer, are honoured to lead the church of God, and plead for her with her Lord.

If no others adore Him, let His own people render to Him the most ardent worship. Infinite condescension makes Him stoop to be called our God, and truth and faithfulness bind Him to maintain that covenant relationship; and surely we, to whom by grace He so lovingly gives Himself, should exalt Him with all our hearts. He shines upon us from under the veiling wings of cherubim, and above the seat of mercy, therefore let us come and worship at His footstool. It becomes us to unite earnestness and humility, joy and adoration, and prostrate ourselves before Him. Do we need to be thus excited to worship? It ought to be our daily delight to magnify so good and great a God. “For he is holy” (v. 5).

(Spurgeon)



PSALM 100

THE HUNDREDTH PSALM

The title of this Psalm is “A Psalm of Praise.” Praise, I would say, is the highest form of worship. For example, we celebrate Holy Week, Good Friday and Easter Sunday. But we must begin with singing Hosannas, with the children of Jerusalem, to welcome the lowly King in His Triumphal Entry. As the multitudes cut down branches of trees and wave palm fronds to greet their King, so we call that Sunday, Palm Sunday.

In the Holy Land, the re-enactment of the spontaneous outburst of praising God in the Highest cannot be resisted. And who can forbid a local Church from praising God waving palm fronds, marching around their Church grounds? I know of some churches that have done this.

Do you know Psalm 100 is often sung without our realizing it? (Psalm 100 is also often used as a call to worship.)

Verse 5 sums up God’s character and contains a mass of reasons for praise. He is good, gracious, kind, bountiful, loving; yea God is love. He who does not praise the good is not good himself. God is not mere justices, stern and cold; He has bowels of compassion, and wills not the sinner’s death. He has entered into covenant with His people, and He will never revoke it. Our heart leaps for joy as we bow before the One who has never broken His word or changed His purpose.

Dear Reader, if you have Jesus in your heart, you too can sing and praise God like the Psalmist. Praise your Lord daily. Thank Him for who He is and for His every blessing in your life daily.



PSALM 101

NO EVIL-SPEAKING IN DAVID'S PALACE

Like St. Augustine's Table Talk to his students not to speak bad of anyone in his monastery, this Psalm of David warns those who serve in his palace against any kind of backbiting. Those who are faithful and loyal to him, He will bless. A great king like him has many followers, the good and the bad. So are followers of Jesus Christ. Among His twelve disciples, there hid one Judas until he was exposed after the feeding of the five thousand (Jn 6:70).

David himself has suffered the effects of the slandering tongues of his enemies. Therefore, as king, he wants to deal severely with these snakes so that others may be spared.

"To give one's neighbour a stab in the dark is one of the most atrocious of crimes, and cannot be too heartily reprobated, yet such as are guilty of it often find patronage in high places Proud men are generally hard, and therefore very unfit for office; persons of high looks provoke enmity and discontent, and the fewer of such people about a court the better for the stability of a throne."

(Spurgeon)



PSALM 102

A PRAYER OF THE AFFLICTED, AND POURING OUT HIS COMPLAINT BEFORE THE LORD

This Psalm is a prayer far more in spirit than in words. A strong stream of supplication runs from beginning to end. It is a prayer of the afflicted or the "sufferer." It is not a penitential Psalm, for the sorrow of it is rather of one suffering than sinning.

The sufferer is more afflicted for others than for himself. More for Zion and the House of God than for his own

house. He is overwhelmed and sorely troubled. When a cup is overwhelmed and turned bottom over, all that is within is naturally poured out. So is the soul poured out without restraint. But here comes the grace of God to refill it. The afflicted's mourning is turned into consolation.

This Psalm may be called the Patriot's Plaint.

Division:

1. Outpouring of sorrow (vv. 1–11)
2. The gracious Lord and His care for His people (vv. 12–28)

The whole composition may be compared to a day which, opening with wind and rain, clears up at noon and is warm with the sun, continues fine, with intervening showers, and finally, closes with a brilliant sunset.

Are the wind and rain beating on you? Or is the warmth of the sun enveloping your life now? Whatever the day is like, look up to the Lord. He cares for you.



PSALM 103

DAVID REMINDS US OF THANKSGIVING WHICH WE SO EASILY FORGET

So often, we have received so plentifully from God's Hands, and so often, we forget to return thanks.

The greatest gift of life is the forgiving of all our sins. The spiritual is followed by the physical — the healing of our sickness. In the physical realm, we may meet with a severe accident that leads to death. Health is wealth. God gives us radiant health by blessing us with a good appetite.

The reasons why we must give thanks to God are many more than just stated. God is the Judge above all judges to whom He is to be appealed when we are oppressed by

biased judges. God has given us His Law to guide us to a righteous life. God is ever gracious and pardoning our recurring sins. He forgives and He forgets, which shows our sins are removed as far as the east is from the west.

He is a loving Father who pities His children. He the Everlasting Father sees us as children of dust. He sees us as grass and our glory as flowers of grass. But the mercies of God are everlasting to them that worship Him in fear.

The Lord must be thanked and praised simply because He is the Mighty Potentate, King of kings and Lord of lords. Thus all the angels and heavenly hosts and the whole creation are all gathered at His feet, together with us His redeemed children to thank Him and praise His Name.

Are we praising and thanking Him enough? We can never praise and thank Him enough! Our eyes are often focused earthwards. Let us lift them heavenward to our loving, heavenly Father.



PSALM 104

A POET'S VERSION OF GENESIS

This is one of the loftiest and longest inspired poetry on creation and providence. The poem contains a complete cosmos.

Traces of the six days of creation are very evident, and though the creation of man is not mentioned, it is because man is himself the singer. Some have even detected marks of the divine rest upon the seventh day in verse 31. A hint is given of the new earth out of which the sinner shall be consumed (v. 35). The spirit of praise to God runs through the whole poem.

Division: After ascribing blessedness to the Lord, the Psalmist sings of light and the firmament, the works of Days 1 and 2 (vv. 1–6).

By an easy transition, he describes the separation of water from the dry land, the growth of vegetation in Day 3 (vv. 7–18).

Then the appointment of sun, moon and stars as guardians of day and night in Day 4 (vv. 19–23).

The Psalmist sings of the life that fills land, air, sea in Days 5 and 6 (vv. 24–30).

We may regard verses 31 to 35 a sabbath meditation.

While reading of God’s wonderful works of creation, let us render due praise to Him. Amen.



PSALM 105

ANOTHER HISTORICAL PSALM

This historical Psalm is composed by King David, for the first 15 verses were used as a hymn at the carrying up of the Ark from the house of Obed (Edom). This is recorded in I Chronicles 16:7 onwards, “Then on that day David delivered first this psalm to thank the LORD into the hand of Asaph and his brethren.”

Such a Psalm was appropriate for the occasion, for it describes the movements of the Lord’s people and His care for them in every place they went. All these on account of the covenant of which the Ark they were moving was a symbol. Our last Psalm 104 talks of Genesis and this takes up its closing chapter and conducts us into Exodus and Numbers.

Division: The first verses call up the people to praise Jehovah (vv. 1–7)

The earliest days of the infant nation are described (vv. 8–15)

The going into Egypt (vv. 16–23)

The exodus from Egypt (vv. 24–38)

The wilderness journey and entrance into
Canaan (vv. 39–45)

The review of sacred history to the children of Israel is a means of grace to keep them from straying from their God. So let us remember how God has saved us and gathered us into the church that we might keep on serving Him.



PSALM 106

A NATIONAL CONFESSION OF SINS

This Psalm begins and ends with Hallelujah, Praise ye the LORD.

The space between these two words is filled up with mournful details of Israel's sins and the extraordinary patience of God.

This sacred song bespeaks of the historical part of the Old Testament. Israel's history is here written with the view of showing up human sin even as the preceding Psalm 105 was composed to show Divine goodness. It is, in fact, a national confession.

It acknowledges the transgressions of Israel in Egypt, in the wilderness, in Canaan. It has devout petitions for forgiveness. Such a Psalm is suitable for use by succeeding generations and especially in time of national captivity.

While we study this holy Psalm, let us see ourselves in the Lord's ancient people, and bemoan our own provocations of the Most High. At the same time, let us admire His infinite patience and adore Him because of it.

*“Thou blest, for ever blest, be He,
The same throughout eternity,
Our Israel's God adored!*

*Let all the people join the lay
And loudly, Hallelujah, say.
Praise ye the living Lord!"*



PSALM 107

A CHOICE SONG FOR THE REDEEMED OF THE LORD

This is a choice song for the redeemed of the Lord (v. 2). Although it celebrates the various kinds of God's deliverances, and may be sung by any man preserved from danger, it magnifies rather the Lord for His protective care. The theme is thanksgiving and the reason for it. The construction of the Psalm is highly poetical.

Division:

1. The redemption of those in captivity (vv. 1–3)
2. E.g. Travellers in their difficulties (vv. 4–9)
3. Prisoners in iron bondage (vv. 10–16)
4. The sick (vv. 17–22)
5. Sailors tossed in a storm (vv. 23–32)
6. God's judgment on the rebellious and mercies to His own afflicted (vv. 33–42)
7. Conclusion: those who study the works and ways of the Lord shall see His praise and goodness (v. 43)

If we complained less, and praised more, we should be happier, and God would be more glorified. Let us daily praise God for common mercies: common as we frequently call them, and yet so priceless, that when deprived of them, we are ready to perish. The sweetest and the loudest note in our songs of praise should be of redeeming love. God's redeeming acts towards His chosen are for ever the favourite themes of their praise. If we know what redemption means, let us not withhold our sonnets of thanksgiving.

Child of God, canst thou be silent? Awake, awake, ye heritors of glory, and lead your captivity captive, as ye cry with David, "Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name."

(Spurgeon)



PSALM 108

A SONG OR PSALM OF DAVID

This Psalm is to be sung jubilantly as a national hymn.

It is composed by putting together Psalm 57:7 to 11 and Psalm 60:5 to 12. Why did David do this? Because he was lacking in words? No, there must be a divine purpose.

We have before us the Warrior's Morning Song. With this Warrior's Song, he adores his God to strengthen his heart before entering upon the conflicts of the day. David, in appealing to his God, sets up his banner in Jehovah's name.

Division:

1. An utterance dictated by the spirit of praise (vv. 1-5)
2. A second utterance evoked by the spirit of prayer (vv. 6-12)
3. Conclusion: A final word of resolve (v. 13) as he marches with his fellow soldiers to battle

*"Thy right hand shall thy people aid
Thy faithful promise makes me strong
We will Philistine's land invade
And over Edom chant the song.
Through Thee we shall most valiant prove
And tread the foe beneath our feet
Through Thee our faith shall hills remove
And shall as chaft the mountains beat."*



PSALM 109

AN IMPRECATORY PSALM

To imprecate means to curse. And it is from the mouth of King David. Dispensational theologians like Scofield teach that such a Psalm is for the Hebrews of Old Testament times when they can hate their enemies and not for Christians today who are taught in the Sermon on the Mount (in the New Testament) to love their enemies. This is a mistaken idea as if God can contradict Himself.

The Old Testament also teaches love for our enemies. Exodus 23:4 and 5 says, "If thou meet thine enemy's ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again. If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burden, and wouldest forbear to help him, thou shalt surely help with him." The love of enemy in the Old Testament extends even to the animals!

Where the Dispensational teachers have erred is they do not know that Jesus is talking of private enemies in the New Testament. "Vengeance is Mine." We should leave the matter to God.

In this Psalm 109, David is talking of an enemy intent on destroying him when he is doing the Lord's work. Such an enemy is not only against a person but also against the Lord whom he represents. Therefore, such an imprecatory Psalm is right. It can be used whether you are a Hebrew or a Christian.

Proof: "Surely thou wilt slay the wicked, O God: depart from me therefore, ye bloody men. For they speak against thee wickedly, and thine enemies take thy name in vain. Do not I hate them, O LORD, that hate thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies" (Ps 139:19-22).

Let us not mix private and public justice. A murderer is righteously punished with death under public justice.

If someone hates you, one to one, you, whether Hebrew or Christian, are exhorted to forgive and let God judge between you and him. In David's case, it is right for him to hate those who hate God. Amen.



PSALM 110

HOW IS DAVID'S SON HIS LORD?

“The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool” (Ps 110:1). This verse is quoted by our Lord to silence the Pharisees who had badgered Jesus many a time with loaded questions to catch Him.

This is recorded in Matthew 22:41–46, “While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, saying, What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, The Son of David. He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? If David then call him Lord, how is he his son? And no man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions.”

The answer taught us by the Holy Spirit is that the Son of David is God's Son by the virgin birth. So he is called “Lord” by David. If the Jews knew this, they would not say no. If they did, then why didn't they submit to Jesus, the Christ? Instead of catching Jesus, they were caught!

The subject of this Psalm is the Priest-King. Although David performed some acts linked to the priestly, yet he was no priest. He belonged to the kingly tribe of Judah. Moreover, David was far too devout a man to thrust himself into the priestly office uncalled.

The Priest-King here spoken of is David's Lord, who is typified by Melchizedek and looked for by the Jews as

the Messiah. He is none other than Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews. This Psalm describes the Kingly Priest, His followers, His battles and His victories.



PSALM 111
**THE LORD IN CREATION,
PROVIDENCE AND GRACE**

This is an alphabetical Psalm. It teaches the mightiness of God in creation, providence and grace. Such knowledge becomes man's true wisdom as pointed out by Calvin in the opening chapter of his Theology.

Many are ignorant of what their Creator has done and hence they are foolish in heart. They never praise the Lord. A Christian should always praise the Lord through the knowledge he has received of Him as Creator, Provider, Redeemer.

*All my heart shall praise Jehovah,
Before the congregation of the righteous;
Deeds of goodness are the deeds of Jehovah,
Earnestly desired of all them that have pleasure therein;
For his righteousness endureth for ever,
Glorious and honourable is his work;
He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered,
In Jehovah is compassion and goodness;
Jehovah hath given meat to them that fear him,
Keeping his covenant for ever,
Learning his people the power of his works,
Making them to possess the heritage of the heathen;
Nought save truth and equity are the works of his hands,*

*Ordered and sure are his commands,
Planted fast for ever and ever,
Righteous and true are his testimonies;
Salvation hath he sent unto his people,
Their covenant hath he made fast for ever;
Upright and holy is his name,
Verily, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,
Yea, a good understanding have all
they that do thereafter;
Zealously shall he be praised for ever.*



PSALM 112

THE RIGHTEOUS MAN IS BLESSED

This Psalm is companion to its preceding, Psalm 111. It is another alphabetical Psalm. Even in the number of verses, and the clauses of each verse, it coincides with its predecessor. Let the reader carefully compare the two Psalms line by line.

The subject before us is “the blessedness of the righteous man.” It bears the same relation to the preceding which the moon does to the sun. For while the first declares the glory of God, the second reflects the brightness in men that are born of God. God is here praised for the manifestation of glory which is seen in His people, just as in the preceding Psalm, He is magnified for His own personal acts.

Psalm 111 praises the Father. Psalm 112 tells of His children renewed after His own image. Psalm 112, which commences with “Praise ye the LORD”, is intended to give God all the honour which is reflected in the righteous.

“He shall not be afraid of evil tidings” (v. 7). Trust in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him. Your wisest course is to do as Moses did at the Red Sea, “Stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD.” For if you give way to fear when you hear of evil tidings, you will be unable to meet the trouble with that calm composure which nerves for duty, and sustains under adversity. How can you glorify God if you play the coward? Saints have often sung God’s high praises in the fires, but will your doubting and desponding, as if you had none to help you, magnify the Most High? Then take courage, and relying in sure confidence upon the faithfulness of your covenant God, “let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”
(Spurgeon)



PSALM 113

THE BEGINNING OF THE HALLEL PSALM

This Psalm is one of pure praise and requires no explanation. The subject is the greatness and condescending goodness of the God of Israel in lifting up the poor and needy from their low estate.

With this Psalm, begins the Hallel or Hallelujah of the Jews which was sung at their solemn feasts. It commemorates Israel’s deliverance from Egypt. Therefore, the Psalm opens with “Praise ye Jehovah, ye servants of the LORD — and no longer servants of Pharaoh.”

Its allusions to the poor in the dust and the needy on the dunghill are all in keeping with Israel in Egypt. And so also is the reference to the birth of many children where they were least expected.

*Hallelujah, praise the Lord
Praise, ye servants, praise his name!
Be Jehovah’s praise ador’d.
Now and evermore the same!*

*Where the orient sun-beams gleam,
Where they sink in ocean's stream,
Through the circuit of his rays
Be your theme Jehovah's praise*

(Richard Mant)



PSALM 114

SONG OF THE EXODUS

This sublime song of the Exodus has reached its climax. It describes in sublimest language God leading forth His people through the wilderness to Canaan. Here is Isaac Watts' (1712) restatement in his own words.

*When Israel, freed from Pharaoh's hand,
Left the proud tyrant and his land,
The tribes with cheerful homage own
Their King, and Judah was his throne.
Across the deep their journey lay,
The deep divides to make them way;
The streams of Jordan saw, and fled
With backward current to their head.*

*The mountains shook like frightened sheep,
Like lambs the little hillocks leap;
Not Sinai on her base could stand,
Conscious of sovereign power at hand.
What power could make the deep divide?
Make Jordan backward roll his tide?
Why did ye leap, ye little hills?
And whence the fright that Sinai feels?
Let ev'ry mountain, ev'ry flood,
Retire, and know th' approaching God,
The King of Israel! see him here:*

*Tremble, thou earth, adore and fear.
He thunders — and all nature mourns;
The rock to standing pools he turns;
Flints spring with fountains at his word,
And fires and seas confess their Lord,*



PSALM 115

“WHERE IS NOW THEIR GOD?”

In the former Psalm, the past wonders of God were recounted. In the present Psalm, God is entreated to glorify Himself because the heathen were insulting. In the absence of miracles, they asked, “Where is now their God?”

The Psalmist is evidently indignant that the worshippers of the heathen idols should be able to taunt the people who worship the only living and true God. Having spent his indignation in sarcasm upon the images and their makers, he proceeds to exhort the House of Israel to trust God and bless His Name. He closes with an exulting Hallelujah. Should not the living sons of men extol their living God?

Division:

1. Entreaty of God to vindicate His own honour (vv. 1–2)
2. Contemptuous description of false gods and their worshippers (vv. 3–8)
3. Exhortation to the faithful to trust in God (vv. 9–15)
4. Explanation of God’s relationship to their present state
5. Reminder that not the dead (v.16) but the living must praise God (vv. 17–18)

When the prayers and tears of the godly seem to be unregarded, and their miseries are rather increased, then do the wicked multiply their taunts and jeers (v. 2). Our afflictions and depressions of spirit shall not cause

us to suspend our praises (v. 18). The spiritually dead cannot praise God, but the life within us constrains us to do so. Even eternity cannot exhaust the reasons why God should be glorified. Though the dead cannot, and the wicked will not, and the careless do not praise God, yet we will shout “Hallelujah” for ever and ever.

(Spurgeon)



PSALM 116

A PERSONAL SONG SPEAKING WITH GRATITUDE TO THE LORD

A commentator has a threefold division of this Psalm. He says, “This Psalm is a threefold engagement of the Psalmist unto thanksgiving unto God, for His mercy unto him, and in particular for some notable delivery of him from death, both bodily and spiritual. The first engagement is, that he shall out of love have recourse unto God by prayer (v. 1, 2). The reasons and motives whereof are set down, because of his former deliverance (v. 3–8).

The second engagement is to a holy conversation (v. 9) and the reasons are in verses 10 to 13.

The third engagement is to continual praise and service, and specially to pay those vows before the church which he had made in days of sorrow, the reasons are given in verses 14 to 19.”

It is of little use to be harping on the string of man’s imperfection and deceitfulness; it is infinitely better to praise the perfection and faithfulness of God. The Lord has rendered so much mercy to us that we ought to look about us, and look within us, and see what can be done by us to manifest our gratitude. We ought not only do what is plainly before us, but also with holy ingenuity to search out various ways by which we may render fresh praises unto our God.

(Spurgeon)



PSALM 117
THE SHORTEST PSALM IN THE
HEART OF THE BIBLE

This Psalm, which is very little in its letter, is exceedingly large in its spirit; for, bursting beyond all bounds of race or nationality, it calls upon all mankind to praise the name of the Lord. In all probability, it was frequently used as a brief hymn suitable for almost every occasion, and especially when the time for worship was short. Perhaps, it was also sung at the commencement or at the close of other Psalms, just as we now use the doxology. It would have served either to open a service or to conclude it. It is both short and sweet. The same divine Spirit which expatiates in the 19th, here condenses his utterances into two short verses, but yet the same infinite fulness is present and perceptible. It may be worth noting that this is one of the shortest chapter of the Scriptures and the central portion of the whole Bible.

“His merciful kindness is great toward us” (v. 2). The Lord is kind to us as His creatures, and merciful to us as sinners, hence His merciful kindness to us as sinful creatures. This mercy has been very great, or powerful. The mighty grace of God has prevailed even as the waters of the flood prevailed over the earth: breaking over all bounds, it has flowed towards all portions of the multiplied race of man.

In Christ Jesus, God has shown mercy mixed with kindness, and that to the very highest degree. We can all join in this grateful acknowledgement, and in the praise which is therefore due. “And the truth of the LORD endureth for ever.” He has kept his covenant promise that in the seed of Abraham should all nations of the earth be blessed, and He will eternally keep every single promise of that covenant to all those who put their trust in Him. This should be a cause of constant and grateful praise, wherefore the Psalm concludes as it began, with another Hallelujah, “Praise ye the LORD.”

(Spurgeon)



PSALM 118

DAVID AND THE GREATER DAVID

This Psalm seems to describe either David or some other man of God who was appointed to a high honour in Israel. This elect champion found himself rejected by his friends and at the same time opposed by his enemies.

Trusting God, he battles for his appointed place and in due time he obtains it in such a way as to display the power of God in his life. He then goes up to the House of God to offer sacrifices to express gratitude for the divine interposition. All the people blessed him, wishing him abundant prosperity. This person who we think is David typified our Lord.

Division:

1. The faithful are to magnify the everlasting mercy of the Lord (vv. 1–4)
2. The Psalmist tells of his experience and an expression of his faith (vv. 5–18)
3. The Psalmist asks admittance into the house of God (vv. 19–21)
4. The priests and people recognise their ruler and bless him (vv. 22–27)
5. The grateful hero exalts God the ever merciful One (vv. 28–29).

Does today's reading meet the eye of a child of God anxious about temporals? You trust in Jesus, and only in Jesus, for your salvation, then why are you troubled?

Christian, mix not only thy wine with water, do not alloy thy gold of faith with the dross of human confidence. Wait thou only upon God, and let thine expectation be from Him. Let the sandy foundations of terrestrial trust be the choice of fools, but do thou, like one who foresees the storm, build for thyself an abiding place upon the Rock of Ages.

(Spurgeon)



PSALM 119:1-16
THE LONGEST PSALM ON THE
IMPORTANCE OF GOD'S WORD

It is composed after the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet: Aleph (A), Beth (B), and so on. They are cast in eight stanzas after every letter, so they add up to 176 verses. The theme of the importance of knowing and keeping the Word of God, the commandments, statutes and judgments recurs all the time. This is to keep us straight, from wandering into sin and from falling into disaster.

“Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O LORD, according unto thy word. Teach me good judgment and knowledge: for I have believed thy commandments. Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word. Thou art good, and doest good; teach me thy statutes. The proud have forged a lie against me: but I will keep thy precepts with my whole heart. Their heart is as fat as grease; but I delight in thy law. It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes. The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver” (vv. 65–72).

Professor William Lyon Phelps of Yale University says, “A knowledge of the Bible without a college education is better than a college education without the Bible.” How true this is, as reflected in verses 97 to 100:

“O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day. Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts.”

With these introductory words, may you seek to know how you will be blessed in your whole life by studying this Psalm.



PSALM 119:33-40

PRAY, PRAY, PRAY

What a prayer-laden section this is! A sense of dependence and a consciousness of extreme need pervade this prayer-portion, with its succession of pleas.

In verse 33, the Psalmist prays for direction in its more superficial form. There were several paths leading down to death, but one path leads to life. So he besought Jehovah to show him His way, and he vowed that once seeing it, he would follow it to the end. "Teach me" literally means "point out" or "indicate to me" and hence "to show".

The phrase "I shall keep it unto the end" can be rendered, "So that I may attend to it as a reward" implying that the result of Jehovah's teaching is obedience, and this obedience is a reward from Him.

Verse 34 is an enlargement of verse 33. Having been shown the way of truth, the Psalmist seeks the gift of understanding it, in order that he might apply it to every phase of his life. Spiritual discernment is a spiritual endowment. "Understanding" means mental comprehension, different from mere direction. The repeated phrase "whole heart" stresses the importance of undivided obedience and love to all God reveals through His Word. "The heart is never one with God till it is one within itself."

Then in verse 35, having received visual and mental perception of the way, David seeks power to walk in this Divine path. In verse 36, knowing the waywardness of his own heart, David confesses his weakness, rather than defend his own strength.

As it is with the heart, man believeth unto righteousness, it is useless for the eyes to see, the mind to understand, and the feet ready to go the way of truth, if the heart be not inclined thereunto also. What is your own heart condition?

(Herbert Lockyer)



PSALM 119:129–136

THY TESTIMONIES ARE WONDERFUL

“Thy testimonies” (v. 129): Robert, King of Sicily, said, “The Scriptures are dearer to me than my kingdom; and if I must be deprived of one of them, I had rather lose my diadem than the Scriptures.” David declared that he obeyed with his “soul.” Not only with head and hand did he keep the testimonies, but with his soul, his truest and most real self, held fast to them, and they became part and parcel of his life.

“Thy Words” (v. 130): “Entrance” means an opening, unfolding, unveiling. Both “light” and “understanding” come through such an unveiling. We see the sun by its own light. The same is true of Scripture: we see light in its light. Then it gives understanding also, not merely knowledge, but the mental eye to appreciate the light.

The Divine Word, entering the chambers of the heart, is for the “simple”: those who are characterised by simplicity, who have a character opposed to all craftiness, underhandedness, and scheming.

“Thy Commandments” (v. 131): The open mouth implies an attitude of expectancy. “The mouth of the inward man, which in effect is the heart” (Ambrose). David thirsted for the water of the Word. Do we share that kind of expectation, the same burning desire to obey all we read?

Verses 132 to 134 is a triple intercession that comes from an intense soul.

In the two concluding verses (vv. 135, 136), we see two faces: God’s benign, glorious face and the tear-stained face of His servant caused by the wicked’s rejection of God’s law.

Reader, treasure His Word and live out His Word. May grace be ours to keep our hearts free from sin, but our eyes ever wet with tears of compassion over those whose hearts are not right with God!
(Herbert Lockyer)



PSALM 119:169–176

GIVE ME UNDERSTANDING

In verses 169 to 172, David prays for three things: that God would hear his prayer; give him understanding and deliverance. And praise is promised for answered prayers. Lips requesting favours become rejoicing lips. To praise God is the noblest employment of life, and one that glorifies Him.

In verses 173 to 175, David confesses that he could do nothing and is nothing of himself. First, he prays directly: “Let thine hand, or power, help me!” Second, there is the indirect plea: “Let thy judgments help me!” Having chosen God’s precepts to live by, and have them in his daily delight, his soul lives a new life, and his lips praise both God Himself and His Word, the twin sources of assistance in every time of need.

In verse 176, David closes his magnificent Psalm in deepest self-humiliation, begging to be sought out like a lost or perishing sheep. The blessed truth to note is that although a straying sheep, David is still God’s servant, and as such he desires Him to seek him out, and bring him back to the fold. Had he been only a lost sheep, he would not have prayed to be sought. But being also a servant, he had the deep desire to pray for restoration, forgiveness, and taken into service again by his gracious Master.

In spite of his past and present failures, David presents a most forcible argument: “For I do not forget thy commandments.” With a loving memory of them, and a longing to know and obey them better, he knows that he is not utterly lost but is still under the Shepherd’s eye. He has left the King’s Highway for By-path meadow, but yearns to be back in full fellowship with the King.

Reader, are you yearning for the same thing?

(Herbert Lockyer)



PSALM 120

THE LYING TONGUE

Commenting on the language of this Psalm, some scholars think this is written by David against Doeg, who falsely reported on him to Saul. David, who came to remove the Ark, remembered the former days when he received from Ahimelech the priest shewbread from the Tabernacle, for he was hungry. This was noted by Doeg, his Edomite enemy.

Here David pours out the complaints against him to the Arbiter of right and wrong, “from lying lips, and from a deceitful tongue.” If you compare with Psalm 52 where the title states clearly, “A Psalm of David, when Doeg the Edomite came and told Saul, and said unto him, David is come to the house of Ahimelech,” the language is the same, “Thy tongue deviseth mischiefs; like a sharp razor, working deceitfully.”

*Woe's me that I in Mesech am
A sojourner so long;
That I in tabernacles dwell
To Kedar that belong.
My soul with him that hateth peace
Hath long a dweller been;
I am for peace; but when I speak,
For battle they are keen.
My soul distracted mourns and pines
To reach that peaceful shore,
Where all the weary are at rest,
And troublers vex no more.*



PSALM 121

THE TRAVELLER'S PSALM

The context of this Psalm is a vast desert country through which he is travelling. The most trying situation is a

plain full of nothing but burning sand, under a burning sun. A saving feature is the sudden appearance of a hill in the distance. Such a hill is a shelter for the traveller, where there are rock caves and source of flowing water. Engedi is such a place where tourists to the Holy Land visit. It is an oasis.

We are travellers on a spiritual journey. On such a journey, the weary traveller also needs succour. We need first of all to come to Golgotha, the hill where our Saviour was crucified for our sins to give us life. But we have to go to Mt. Sinai even earlier where Moses gave us God's law to show how we cannot keep the law which drives us to Christ.

How many mountains with spiritual significance are there in the Bible that you can count? Scofield gives us a list of 20. What spiritual significance connected with the following selected ten can you find?

Ararat	Olivet
Carmel	Seir
Horeb	Sinai
Moriah	Tabor
Nebo	Zion



PSALM 122

PILGRIMAGE TO JERUSALEM

We have conducted twelve pilgrimages to the Holy Land from 1983 to 2006 and we go in the spirit of Psalm 122: "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD. Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem." Why must we go to Jerusalem? "Because it is the City founded by the Lord Himself. Jerusalem is

Zion, the City of David and Jerusalem is the place God has appointed His temple to be built.”

In spite of the sins of God’s people that had led to the destruction of both Solomon’s Temple and the Second Temple and the dispersion of God’s people to the ends of the earth, God has promised to regather them and build up the City again. God began to bring back the wandering Jews after the end of WWI (1914–18). God gave them their land (partly) again when Israel became an Independent Nation on May 14, 1948. Today, Israel has become a superpower. Her population has risen from 650,000 to 6 million and Jerusalem has 600,000.

This restoration that is recorded in 34 passages in the Old Testament is in preparation for the return of Christ, the Greater Son of David to earth, to usher in the rule of a thousand years of peace.

In contrast to Jerusalem, Samaria, the capital city of the Ten Northern Tribes, was destroyed and according to Micah, it would never be restored (Micah 1:6). Today, if you visit Samaria, you will see it in heaps.

Prior to the Lord’s Return, there are more and more nations, from all over the world to make pilgrimages to the City God has chosen. And you who go and pray for the peace of Jerusalem are blessed.



PSALM 123

“THE PSALM OF THE EYES”

This is a short Psalm, written with singular art, containing one thought and expressing it in a most engaging manner. It is a favourite song among God’s people. It is conjectured this brief Psalm was first heard in the days of Nehemiah. The afflicted ones in all periods after David’s time found it ready to their hand.

*“Prayer is the burden of a sigh,
The falling of a tear
The upward glancing of an eye
When none but God is near.”*

“Unto thee lift I up mine eyes” (v. 1). It is good to have someone to look up to. The Psalmist looked so high that he could look no higher. The uplifted eyes naturally and instinctively represent the state of heart which fixes desire, hope, confidence, and expectation upon the Lord.

When we cannot look to any helper on a level with us, it is greatly wise to look above us; in fact, if we have a thousand helpers, our eyes should still be towards the Lord. The higher the Lord is the better for our faith, since that height represents power, glory, and excellence, and these will be all engaged on our behalf. We ought to be very thankful for spiritual eyes. Yet we must use our eyes with resolution, for they will not go upward to the Lord of themselves, but they incline to look downward, or inward, or anywhere but to the Lord. If we cannot see God, at least we will look towards Him. God is in heaven as a king in His palace; He is there revealed, adored, and glorified: thence He looks down on the world and sends succours to His saints as their needs demand; hence we look up, even when in sorrow.

(Spurgeon)



PSALM 124

BUT THE LORD WAS ON OUR SIDE

This short Psalm contains an acknowledgment of favour received by way of special deliverance (vv. 1–5), then a grateful act of worship in blessing Jehovah (vv. 6–7), and lastly, a declaration of confidence in the Lord for all future time of trial. May our experience lead us to the same conclusion as the saints of David’s time. From all confidence in man, may we be rescued by a holy reliance upon our God. (Spurgeon)

*Had not the Lord, my soul may cry,
Had not the Lord, been on my side;
Had he not brought deliverance nigh,
Then must my helpless soul have died.*

*Had not the Lord been on my side,
My soul had been by Satan slain;
And Tophet, opening large and wide,
Would not have gaped for me in vain.*

*Lo, floods of wrath, and floods of hell,
In fierce impetuous torrents roll;
Had not the Lord defended well,
The waters had o'erwhelm'd my soul.*

*As when the fowler's snare is broke,
The bird escapes on cheerful wings;
My soul, set free from Satan's yoke,
With joy bursts forth, and mounts, and sings.*

*She sings the Lord her Saviour's praise;
Sings forth his praise with joy and mirth;
To him her song in heaven she'll raise,
To him that made both heaven and earth.*



PSALM 125

THEY THAT TRUST IN THE LORD

Faith has praised Jehovah for past deliverances. Here she rises to a confident joy with present and future safety for believers. She asserts that they shall forever be secure who trust themselves with the Lord.

Division:

1. First, we have a song of holy confidence (vv. 1, 2)
2. Then a promise (v. 3)

3. Followed by a prayer (v. 4)

4. And a warning (v. 5)

What a privilege to be allowed to repose in God! How condescending is Jehovah to become the confidence of his people! To trust elsewhere is vanity; and the more implicit such misplaced trust becomes the more bitter will be the ensuing disappointment; but to trust in the living God is sanctified common sense which needs no excuse, its result shall be its best vindication. There is no conceivable reason why we should not trust in Jehovah, and there is every possible argument for so doing; but, apart from all argument, the end will prove the wisdom of the confidence.

The result of faith is not occasional and accidental; its blessing comes, not to some who trust, but to all who trust in the Lord. The trusting worshipper of Jehovah enjoys a restfulness which is the mirror of tranquillity; and this not without cause, for his hope is sure, and of his confidence he can never be ashamed. As the Lord sitteth as King for ever, so do his people sit enthroned in perfect peace when their trust in Him is firm. This is, and is to be our portion. Faith in God is a settling and establishing virtue; He who by His strength setteth fast the mountains, by that same power stays the hearts of them that trust in Him. This steadfastness will endure “for ever”.

(Spurgeon)



PSALM 126

A PSALM ON DELIVERANCE

*When her sons from bonds redeeming,
God to Zion led the way,
We were like to people dreaming
Thoughts of bliss too bright to stay.
Fill'd with laughter, stood we gazing,*

*Loud our tongues in rapture sang;
Quickly with the news amazing
All the startled nations rang.*

*“See Jehovah’s works of glory!
Mark what love for them he had!”
“Yes, FOR US! Go tell the story.
This was done, and we are glad.”*

*Lord! Thy work of grace completing
All our exiled hosts restore,
As in thirsty channels meeting
Southern streams refreshing pour.*

*They that now in sorrow weeping
Tears and seed commingled sow,
Soon, the fruitful harvest reaping,
Shall with joyful bosoms glow.*

*Tho’ the sower’s heart is breaking,
Bearing forth the seed to shed,
He shall come, the echoes waking,
Laden with his sheaves instead*

(from “The Hebrew Psalter”)



PSALM 127

THE BUILDER’S PSALM

This is a Song of degrees to Solomon. From the title of this Psalm, it is thought David is the author who wrote it for his son, builder of the Temple. Or it may be Solomon who was the author himself.

God’s blessing on His people is here spoken of. We are here taught that builders of houses and cities, empires and churches all labour in vain without the Lord. Sons, who are in Hebrew called “builders,” are set forth as

building up families under the same divine blessing, to the honour of their parents. “Every house is builded by some man, but he that built all things is God” (Heb 3:4).

*If God build not the house, and lay
The groundwork sure — whoever build,
It cannot stand one stormy day.
If God be not the city’s shield,
If he be not their bars and wall,
In vain is watch-tower, men, and all.*

*Though then thou wak’st when others rest,
Though rising thou prevent’st the sun,
Though with lean care thou daily feast,
Thy labour’s lost, and thou undone;
But God his child will feed and keep,
And draw the curtains to his sleep*

(Phineas Fletcher)



PSALM 128

“HOME SWEET HOME”

In this Song of degrees, there is an evident ascent from the last Psalm. A house may be built up, but this shows a picture of the house built, and adorned with bliss, through God’s benediction.

There is clearly an advance in age. For here, we go beyond children to children’s children. We also progress in happiness. Children, which in the last Psalm were arrows, are here olive plants. Thus we sing step by step as we ascend.

This is a family hymn: a song for marriage, or a birth or for any day in which a happy household has met to the praise of God. It is a short Psalm but exceedingly full and suggestive. This is a “Home Sweet Home” Psalm.

*“Thy wife shall be in the inner part of thy house
Like a fruitful vine;
Thy children round about thy table
Like the shoots of the olive.”*

The religious life, which God declares to be blessed (v. 1), must be practical as well as emotional. It is idle to talk of fearing the Lord if we act like those who have no care whether there be a God or no. God’s ways will be our ways if we have a sincere reverence for Him: if the heart is joined unto God, the feet will follow hard after Him. A man’s heart will be seen in his walk, and the blessing will come where heart and walk are both with God. God’s ways are blessed ways.

Dear Reader, don’t you want the blessed ways?



PSALM 129

MINGLED SORROW AND STRONG RESOLVE

This Psalm is a hymn of mingled sorrow and strong resolve. Though sorely smitten, the afflicted is of strong heart. He scorns to yield in the least to the enemy.

1. The poet sings the trials of Israel (vv. 1–3)
2. The interposition of the Lord (v. 4)
3. The unblest condition of Israel’s foes (vv. 5–8)

It is a rustic song, full of allusions to husbandry. It reminds us of the book of Ruth and the book of Amos.

Explanation:

“The plowers plowed upon my back.” The scourgers tore the flesh as ploughmen furrow a field. The people were maltreated like a criminal given to the lictors with cruel whips. The back of the nation was scored and furrowed by oppressors.

See how godly men are roughly ploughed by their adversaries, and yet a harvest comes of it which endures and produces blessing; while the ungodly, though they flourish for a while and enjoy a complete immunity, dwelling, as they think, quite above the reach of harm, are found in a short time to have gone their way and to have left no trace behind.

Lord, number me with Thy saints. Let me share their grief if I may also partake of their glory.

(Spurgeon)



PSALM 130

OUT OF THE DEPTHS

This Psalm follows upon the previous one. When we have overcome the trials which arise from men, we are better prepared to meet those sharper sorrows which arise out of our matters towards God. We name this Psalm, “Out of the Depths.” Out of those depths we wait, watch and hope. In this Psalm, we have the pearl of redemption (vv. 7–8)

Division:

1. An intense desire (vv. 1–2)
2. Confession of repentance and faith (vv. 3–4)
3. Waiting watchfulness (vv. 5–6)
4. Joyful expectation for oneself and for Israel (vv. 7–8)

“Let Israel hope in the LORD” (v. 7). Israel of old waited upon Jehovah and wrestled all the night long, and at last he went his way succoured by the Hope of Israel: the like shall happen to all his seed.

God has great things in store for His people; they ought to have large expectations. “For with the LORD there is mercy.” This is in His very nature, and by the light of nature it may be seen. But we have also the light of

grace, and therefore we see still more of His mercy. With us there is sin; but hope is ours, because with the Lord there is mercy. Our comfort lies not in that which is with us but in that which is with our God. Let us look out of self and its poverty to Jehovah and His riches of mercy. "And with him is plenteous redemption." He can and will redeem all His people out of their many and great troubles; nay, their redemption is already wrought out and laid up with Him, so that He can at any time give His waiting ones the full benefit thereof. The attribute of mercy, and the fact of redemption, are two most sufficient reasons for hoping in Jehovah. There is no mercy or deliverance elsewhere.

(Spurgeon)



PSALM 131

A SONG OF DEGREES OF DAVID

This Psalm written by David is based on his own experience. Spurgeon says he is the author and the subject of it. Many incidents in his life may be employed to illustrate it. Comparing all the Psalms to gems, we should liken this to a pearl. How beautifully it adorns the neck of patience.

Although it is one of the shortest Psalms, it is one of the longest to learn. It speaks of a young child, but it contains the experience of a man in Christ. Lowliness and humility are here seen in connection with a sanctified heart, a will subdued to the mind of God, and a hope looking to the Lord alone. Happy is the man who can without falsehood use these words as his own. For he can say with Jesus our Lord, "I am meek and lowly in heart" (Matt 11:29). And lowliness is one of the attainments of divine life. This Psalm is like a short ladder, but the thoughts rise to a great height: from deep humility to fixed confidence. One writer thinks that this is a song of the Jews who returned from Babylon with humbled hearts, weaned from their idols. At any rate, after any spiritual captivity, let it be the expression of our hearts.

The Psalmist had been upon his best behaviour (v. 2), and had smoothed down the roughnesses of his self-will; by holy effort, he had mastered his own spirit, so that towards God he was not rebellious, even as towards man he was not haughty. It is no easy thing to quiet yourself: sooner may a man calm the sea, or rule the wind, or tame a tiger, than quiet himself. We are clamorous, uneasy, petulant; and nothing but grace can make us quiet under afflictions, irritations, and disappointments.

To the weaned child, his mother is his comfort though she has denied him comfort. It is a blessed mark of growth out of spiritual infancy when we can forego the joys which once appeared to be essential, and can find our solace in Him who denies them to us: then we behave manfully, and every childish complaint is hushed.

(Spurgeon)



PSALM 132

A SONG OF DEGREES, OF ASCENT

This is a joyful Psalm. Let all the pilgrims to the New Jerusalem sing it. The degrees or ascents are very visible.

The theme ascends step by step, from “afflictions” to “crown,” from “remember David” to “I will make the horn of David to bud.” The latter half is like the over-arching sky bending alone. “The builders of the word” are found in the prayers of the former portion.

Division:

1. Statement of David’s anxious care to build a house for the Lord (vv. 1–7)
2. A prayer at the removal of the ark (vv. 8–12)
3. A pleading of the divine covenant and its promises (vv. 11–18)

Holiness and happiness go together; where the one is found, the other ought never to be far away. Holy persons have a right to great and demonstrative joy: they may shout because of it (v. 9b). Saints are commanded to rejoice in the Lord. Where righteousness is the clothing, joy may well be the occupation.

(Spurgeon)

Dear Reader, as a child of God, God's presence in your life will make you glad and fill your heart with joy and your mouth with songs.



PSALM 133

A SONG OF BROTHERLY LOVE

This song on brotherly love by David does not refer to his brothers in the flesh. David had three elder brothers serving in Saul's army. They were Eliab the firstborn and after him Abimadab and Shammah. Instead of being kindly affectioned to their youngest brother, Eliab the eldest, especially, spoke roughly to David when he went to watch the battle with the Philistines and with Goliath. So often, brothers in the same family are not as close as they should be.

David is here singing the praises of brotherly love in the spirit. "A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother" (Prov 18:24). The story is told of one of David's closest commanders, "And David was then in an hold, and the garrison of the Philistines was then in Bethlehem. And David longed, and said, Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate! And the three mighty men brake through the host of the Philistines, and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem, that was by the gate, and took it, and brought it to David: nevertheless he would not drink thereof, but poured it out unto the LORD. And he said, Be it far from me, O LORD, that I should do this: is not this the blood of the men that went in jeopardy of their

lives? therefore he would not drink it. These things did these three mighty men” (II Sam 23:14–17).

Such reciprocity of spiritual brotherly love far exceeds the bond of the natural. It is this bond of spiritual brotherly love that binds the lives of David’s followers to their king. It is such bond of Christian love that binds Christ’s followers to their Saviour.

The effect of their service is like the special ointment poured on Aaron the high priest. It is like the dew from Hermon descending on the hills of Zion.



PSALM 134

A SONG OF DEGREES

We have now reached the last of the Gradual Psalms. The Pilgrims are going home, and are singing the last song in their Psalter. They leave early in the morning, before the day has fully commenced, for the journey is long for many of them. While yet the night lingers, they are on the move. As soon as they are outside the gates, they see the guards upon the temple wall, and the lamps shining from the windows of the chambers which surround the sanctuary. Therefore, moved by the sight, they chant a farewell to the perpetual attendants upon the holy shrine. Their parting exhortation arouses the priests to pronounce upon them a blessing out of the holy place. This benediction is contained in the third verse. The priests as good as say, “You have desired us to bless the Lord and now we pray the Lord to bless you.”

The Psalm teaches us to pray for those who are continually ministering before the Lord, and it invites all ministers to pronounce benediction upon their loving and prayerful people.

To this day, the Lord blesses each one of His people through His church, His gospel, and the ordinances of His house. It is in communion with the saints that we receive untold benisons. May each one of us obtain yet

more of the blessing which cometh from the Lord alone.
Do we desire it? Let us then bless the Lord ourselves.

(Spurgeon)



PSALM 135

A MOSAIC OF A PSALM

This Psalm has no title. It is mainly made up of selections from other Scriptures. It is a mosaic.

The whole Psalm is composed of many choice extracts, and yet it has all the continuity and freshness of an original poem.

The first 14 verses are an exhortation to praise Jehovah for:

1. His goodness (v. 3)
2. His electing love (v. 4)
3. His greatness (vv. 5–7)
4. His judgments (vv. 8–12)
5. His unchanging character (v. 13)
6. His love towards his people (v. 14)

This is followed by a destruction of idols (vv. 15–18) and a further exhortation to bless His Name. It is a song full of life, vigour, variety and devotion.

It is not enough for us to praise God ourselves, we are quite unequal to such a work; let us call in all our friends and neighbours, and if they have been slack in such a service, let us stir them up to it with loving exhortations. "Praise ye the name of the Lord." Do not only magnify the Lord because He is God; but study His character and His doings, and thus render intelligent, appreciative praise. We do not praise enough; we cannot praise too much.

(Spurgeon)



PSALM 136

“FOR HIS MERCY ENDURETH FOREVER”

We know not by whom this Psalm was written, but we do know it was sung in Solomon’s Temple (II Chron 7:3, 6). This same Psalm, with the chorus, “for his mercy endureth forever” is also sung by the armies of King Jehoshaphat in the face of their enemies, Ammon, Moab and Mt. Seir in the wilderness of Tekoa. From the form of it, we can infer it was a popular hymn among God’s ancient people. It contains nothing but praise and is sung by those of a devoutly grateful heart.

Andrew A. Bonar outlines this Psalm as follows:

1. Praise Him for what He is (vv. 1–3)
2. Praise Him for He is able to do (v. 4)
3. Praise Him for what He has done in creation (vv. 5–9)
4. Praise Him for what He did in redeeming Israel from bondage (vv. 10–15)
5. Praise Him for what He did in His providence towards them (vv. 16–22)
6. Praise Him for His grace in times of calamity (vv. 23–24)
7. Praise Him for His grace to the world at large (v. 25)
8. Praise Him at the remembrance that this God is the God of heaven (v. 26)



PSALM 137

ANOTHER IMPRECATORY PSALM

To know the word “imprecatory”, turn back to the reading on Psalm 109. This is another such Psalm.

Israel as a nation had many enemies. Though God used the Assyrians to punish Samaria, He will in turn punish

the Assyrians whose immediate motives were to rob a weaker people.

God also used Nebuchadnezzar to punish Judah but they did not know God was using them as His instrument. Their immediate motives were like the Assyrians to rob a weaker people. Therefore, both Assyrians and Babylonians came under God's judgment at the end.

As the Jews had suffered terribly under the iron heel of the Babylonians, they had no one to turn to for justice but God Almighty. They had also another enemy, Edom (Esau) their own brother, who mercilessly killed them.

So they prayed this, another imprecatory prayer.

Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea.

Can they cry out to God for justice? The answer is yours, dear Reader!



PSALM 138

A PSALM OF DAVID

This Psalm is evidently of a Davidic character. It exhibits all the fidelity, courage and decision of Israel's greatest king.

Division

In full confidence, David is prepared to own his God before the gods of the heathen, or before angels or rulers (vv. 1-3).

He declares that he will instruct and convert kings and nations, till on every highway, men shall sing the praises of the Lord (vv. 4-5).

Having thus spoken, he utters his personal confidence in Jehovah, who will help His lowly servant, and preserve him from all the malice of wrathful men.

Spurgeon comments: “For thou has magnified thy word above all thy name ... The word of promise made to David was in his eyes more glorious than all else that he had seen of the Most High. Revelation excels creation in the clearness, definiteness, and fulness of its teaching. The name of the Lord in nature is not so easily read as in the Scriptures, which are a revelation in human language ... Heaven and earth shall pass away, but the divine word will not pass away.”



PSALM 139

UNDER THE HAND OF AN ALL-SAVING GOD

Thus, when God permitted Satan to test Job by bringing great loss to his possessions and death to his children, he could only bow down in humble submission, “The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD” (Job 1:21). Under further testing that miserably affected his body and skin, he abjected himself further, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: but I will maintain mine own ways before him” (Job 13:15). What is your understanding of your God?

David’s understanding of his God may be judged the highest and most sublime as expressed in this Psalm. Let me present you a most beautiful outline given by an American professor in four parts. Through this analysis, you have as clear as crystal a description of His attributes.

1. Genius of God’s Omniscience (vv. 1–6)
2. Grandeur of God’s Omnipresence (vv. 7–12)
3. Greatness of God’s Omnipotence (vv. 13–18)
4. Glory of God’s Omniperfection (vv. 19–24)

Dear Reader, are God's attributes precious to you? Then hold to them. "Never be led astray by those philosophic fools who preach up an impersonal God, and talk of self-existent, self-governing matter. The Lord liveth and thinketh upon us, this is a truth far too precious for us to be lightly robbed of it If the Lord thinketh upon us, all is well, and we rejoice evermore." (Spurgeon)



PSALM 140

DAVID'S CRY IN DISTRESS

The life of David when he comes in contact with Saul and Doeg is the best explanation of this Psalm. David wrote this Psalm in his exile and peril.

The tremendous outburst at the end has in it the warmth which was so natural to David, who was never lukewarm in anything. Yet it is noticed that concerning his enemies he was often hot in language through indignation, and yet he was cool in action, for he was not revengeful. His was no petty malice, but righteous anger. He foresaw, foretold and even desired the just vengeance of God upon the proud and wicked, and yet he would not avail himself of opportunities to revenge himself upon those who had done him wrong. It may be that his appeals to the great King cooled his anger and enabled him to leave his wrongs unredressed by any personal act of violence. "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord" (Rom 12:19). And David, when most wounded by undeserved persecution and wicked falsehood, was glad to leave his matters at the foot of the throne where they would be safe with the King of kings.

All through the Psalm, the writer is bravely confident, and speaks of things about which he had no doubt: in fact, no Psalm can be more grandly positive than this protest against slander. The slandered saint knew Jehovah's care for the afflicted, for he had received actual proofs of it himself (v. 12).

(Spurgeon)



PSALM 141

DAVID LOOKS TO GOD FOR JUDGMENT

This is a Psalm of David. David is under suspicion, half afraid to speak, lest he should speak unadvisedly while trying to clear himself. David is slandered by his enemies. David is censured even by friends and he takes it kindly. David deplores the condition of the godly party of which he is acknowledged head. David waits upon God with confident expectation.

Division:

1. The Psalmist cries for acceptance in prayer (vv. 1-2)
2. He begs to be kept as to his speech. He prefers to be rebuked by the righteous than to be flattered by the wicked (vv. 3-6)
3. He represents the persecuted church and looks for punishment of his oppressors (vv. 7-10)

David looks upward and keeps his eyes fixed there (v. 8). He regarded duty more than circumstances; he considers the promise rather than the external providence; and he expects from God rather than from men. He gives his eyes to his God, and sees nothing to fear. David keeps to his God: in Him he trusted always, only, confidently, and unreservedly.

To be destitute in circumstance is bad, but to be destitute in soul is far worse. The comfort is that God hath said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

(Spurgeon)



PSALM 142

A DIDACTIC (TEACHING) PSALM

This Maschil of David is written for our instruction. It teaches us by example how to order our prayers in times of distress. He who has learned how to pray has been

taught the most useful arts and sciences. David gives us a valuable lesson here by recording his own experience in prayer.

It was a prayer when he was in a cave. He was either at Engedi, or Adullam, or some other lone cavern wherein he could conceal himself from Saul. Caves make good closets for prayer. Their gloom and solitude are helpful to the exercise of devotion.

There can be little doubt that this song dates from the days when Saul was sorely persecuting David. David himself was in soul-trouble, probably produced by that lapse of faith which led him to ally with heathen princes. His fortunes were evidently at their lowest ebb. What was worse was that his repute had fearfully fallen. Yet he displayed a true faith in God, to whom he made known his pressing sorrows.

The gloom of the cave is over this Psalm. Yet, as if standing at the mouth of the cave, David sees a bright light shining a little beyond.

True prayers may differ in their diction, but not in their direction: an impromptu cry and a preconceived supplication must alike ascend towards the one prayer-hearing God, and He will accept each of them with equal readiness. The intense personality of the prayer is noteworthy: no doubt the Psalmist was glad of the prayers of others, but he was not content to be silent himself. See how everything is in the first person: "I cried unto the LORD with my voice; with my voice unto the LORD did I make my supplication." It is good to pray in the plural: "Our Father," but in times of trouble we shall feel forced to change our note into "Let this cup pass from me."

(Spurgeon)



PSALM 143

A PRAISE FOR DELIVERANCE

This Psalm of David has been classified as one of David's seven Penitential Psalms, but Spurgeon does not agree. It is rather a vindication of David's own integrity and an indignant prayer against his slanderers, than a confession of fault.

It is true the second verse shows that he never dreamed of justifying himself before the Lord. But even in it there is scarcely the brokenness of penitence. It is purely supplication for deliverance from trouble, than a weeping acknowledgement of transgressions.

It is an outcry of an overwhelmed spirit, unable to abide in the highest state of spiritual prayer, again and again descending to bewail its deep temporal distress, yet evermore struggling to rise to the best of things.

The singer moans at intervals. His hands are outstretched to heaven, but at his girdle hangs a sharp sword, which rattles in its scabbard as he closes his Psalm.

One historical association of this Psalm is related to Savonarola. He "was executed on May 22, 1498, by the Papal authorities for his fearless preaching of the truth, was the great dominican preacher who for five years held within the hollow of his hand the destinies of Florence and stands out as one of the most fascinating figures in history. That he had a deep affection for the Psalms is proved by his written meditations on many of them. As a hard-featured youth, he often pondered over the sin and misery of the world, praying, as he would tell his father, in the words of Psalm 143, 'Shew Thou me the way that I should walk in, for I lift up my soul unto Thee.' Seeking to escape the stifling atmosphere of wickedness surrounding him, Savonarola fled to the cloister and remained a man of unsullied morality."

(Herbert Lockyer)



PSALM 144

GOD ALMIGHTY IS THY STRENGTH

The title of this Psalm is “Of David.” The language no doubt is David’s. As surely as we can say, this is of Tennyson or of Longfellow, we may say, This is of David.

It is to God the devout warrior sings when he extols Him as his strength and stay (vv. 1–2). Man he holds in small account, and wonders at the Lord’s regard for him (vv. 3–4). But he turns in his hour of conflict to the Lord, who is declared to be “a man of war,” whose triumphant interposition he implores (vv. 5–8). He again extols and entreats in verses 9 to 11 and then closes with a delightful picture of the Lord’s work for His chosen people, who are congratulated upon having such a God to be their God.

When the heart is in a right state, it must praise God, it cannot be restrained; its utterances leap forth as waters forcing their way from a living spring. With all his strength, David blesses the God of his strength. We ought not to receive so great a boon as strength to resist evil, to defend truth, and to conquer error, without knowing who gave it to us, and rendering to Him the glory of it. Not only does Jehovah give strength to His saints, but He is their strength. The strength is made theirs because God is theirs. God is full of power, and He becomes the power of those who trust Him. In Him our great strength lieth, and to Him be blessings more than we are able to utter.

(Spurgeon)



PSALM 145

DAVID’S PSALM OF PRAISE

This is one of the alphabetical Psalms. It is David’s very own. It is altogether praise, and praise pitched to a high

key. David had blessed God many a time in other Psalms but this is regarded as his crown jewel of praise.

We may take David's Psalm as a model. Let each Christian reader present his own praise unto the Lord, and call it by his own name. What a wealth of varied praise will thus be presented through Jesus Christ!

"Every day will I bless thee" (v. 2). Whatever the character of the day, or of my circumstances and conditions during that day, I will continue to glorify God. Were we well to consider the matter, we should see abundant cause in each day for rendering special blessing unto the Lord. All before the day, all in the day, all following the day should constrain us to magnify our God every day, all the year round. Our love to God is not a matter of holy days: every day is alike holy to holy men.

David here comes closer to God than when he said, "I will bless thy name": it is now, "I will bless thee." This is the centre and kernel of true devotion: we do not only admire the Lord's words and works, but Himself. Without realizing the personality of God, praise is well-nigh impossible; you cannot extol an abstraction. "And I will praise thy name for ever and ever." He said he would bless that name, and now he vows to praise it; he will extol the Lord in every sense and way.

Eternal worship shall not be without its variations; it will never become monotonous. Heavenly music is not harping upon one string, but all strings shall be tuned to one praise. Observe the personal pronouns here: four times he says, "I will": praise is not to be discharged by proxy: there must be your very self in it, or there is nothing in it.

(Spurgeon)



PSALM 146

A PSALM OF HIGH PRAISES

As we enter Psalm 146, we are among the Hallelujahs, all praise right up to the close of the Book. The key is high-pitched. The music is upon the high-sounding cymbals. O for a heart full of joyful gratitude, that we may run, and leap, and glorify God, even as this Psalm does.

“Put not your trust in princes.” Shakespeare puts these sentiments into Wolsey’s mouth:

*“O how wretched
Is that poor man that hangs on princes’ favour!
There is, betwixt that smile we would aspire to,
That sweet aspect of princes, and their ruin,
More pangs and fears than wars and women have:
And when he falls, he falls like Lucifer,
Never to hope again.”*

Herbert Lockyer notes that Psalm 146 proclaims Jehovah alone as the unfailing Deliverer and that the ten verses do not lend themselves to marked divisions. They appear without a break — ‘one pearl, a sacred censer of holy incense, pouring forth one sweet perfume.’ Yet, two aspects appear to be discernible:

1. Jehovah alone is to be trusted, and not man. All who trust the Lord are blessed by Him (vv. 1–5).
2. The reason lies in His Divine Perfections. Jehovah is Creator, Judge, Deliverer and King (vv. 6–10).



PSALM 147

THE GREATNESS AND GOODNESS OF GOD

This is a specially remarkable song. It celebrates the greatness and the condescending goodness of the Lord.

It appears to divide itself into three portions. From 1 to 6, Jehovah is extolled for building up Zion, and blessing His mourners. From 7 to 11, the like praise is given because of His provision for the lowly, and His pleasure in them; and then, from 12 to 20, He is magnified for His work on behalf of His people, and the power of His word in nature and in grace. (Spurgeon)

*O Thou who dry'st the mourner's tear,
How dark this world would be,
If, when deceived and wounded here,
We could not fly to Thee!
The friends, who in our sunshine live,
When winter comes are flown;
And he who has but tears to give
Must weep those tears alone.
But Thou wilt heal that broken heart,
Which, like the plants that throw
Their fragrance from the wounded part,
Breathes sweetness out of woe.
When joy no longer soothes or cheers,
And e'en the hope that threw
A moment's sparkle o'er our tears
Is dimmed and vanished too;
Oh! Who would bear life's stormy doom,
Did not thy wing of love
Come, brightly waiting through the gloom
Our peace-branch from above?
Then sorrow, touched by Thee, grows bright
With more than rapture's ray;
As darkness shows us worlds of light
We never saw by day!*

(Thomas Moore)



PSALM 148

A PSALM OF NATURE AND OF GRACE

This song is one and indivisible. It seems almost impossible to expound it in detail, for a living poem is not to be dissected verse by verse. It is a song of nature and of grace. As a flash of lightning flames through space, and enwraps both heaven and earth in one vestment of glory, so doth the adoration of the Lord in this Psalm light up all the universe and cause it to glow with a radiance of praise. The song begins in the heavens, sweeps downward to dungeons and all deeps, and then ascends again, till the people near unto Jehovah take up the strain. For its exposition, the chief requisite is a heart on fire with reverent love to the Lord over all, who is to be blessed for ever. (Spurgeon)

*Praise him, thou golden-tressed sun;
Praise him, thou fair and silver moon,
And ye bright orbs of streaming light;
Ye floods that float above the skies,
Ye heav'ns, that vault o'er vault arise,
Praise him, who sits above all height.* (Richard Mant)

*All creatures of the eternal God but man,
In several sorts do glorify his name;
Each tree doth seem ten thousand tongues to have,
With them to laud the Lord omnipotent;
Each leaf that with wind's gentle breath doth wave,
Seems as a tongue to speak to that intent,
In language admirably excellent,
The sundry sorts of fragrant flowers do seem
Sundry discourses God to glorify,
And sweetest volumes may we them esteem;
For all these creatures in their several sort
Praise God, and man unto the same exhort.* (Peter Pett)



PSALM 149

A NEW SONG

We are almost at the last Psalm, and still among the Hallelujahs. This is “a new song,” evidently intended for the new creation, and the men who are of a new heart. It is such a song as may be sung at the coming of the Lord, when the new dispensation shall bring overthrow to the wicked and honour to all the saints. The tone is exceedingly jubilant and exultant. All through one hears the beat of the feet of dancing maidens, keeping time to the timbrel and harp.

Be glad of heart, O believer, but take care that thy gladness has its spring in the Lord. Rejoice that He sits upon the throne, and ruleth all things! Every attribute of God should become a fresh ray in the sunlight of our gladness. That He is wise, should make us glad, knowing as we do our own foolishness. That He is mighty, should cause us to rejoice who tremble at our weakness. That He is everlasting, should always be a theme of joy when we know that we wither as the grass. That He is unchanging, should perpetually yield us a song, since we change every hour. That He is full of grace, that He is overflowing with it, and that this grace in covenant He has given to us; that it is ours to cleanse us, ours to keep us, ours to sanctify us, ours to perfect us, ours to bring us to glory — all these should tend to make us glad in Him.

This gladness in God is as a deep river; we have only as yet touched its brink, we know a little of its clear sweet, heavenly streams, but onward the depth is greater, and the current more impetuous in its joy. The Christian feels that he may delight himself not only in what God is, but also in all that God has done in the past. So let God’s people now rehearse the deeds of the Lord! Let them tell of His mighty acts, and “sing unto the LORD, for He hath triumphed gloriously.” Nor let them ever cease to sing, for as new mercies flow to them day by day, so should their gladness in the Lord’s loving acts in providence and in grace show itself in continued

thanksgiving. Be glad, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the Lord your God.

(Spurgeon)



PSALM 150

ARE SUCH MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS FOR WORSHIP IN THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH?

In this Psalm, we have a full complement of ancient musical instruments for an orchestra as Israel as a nation celebrates. The Church and the State are bound together, whereas in the New Testament the Church and the State are separate. Hence cymbals that are an accompaniment of cultural dances are never used in our worship.

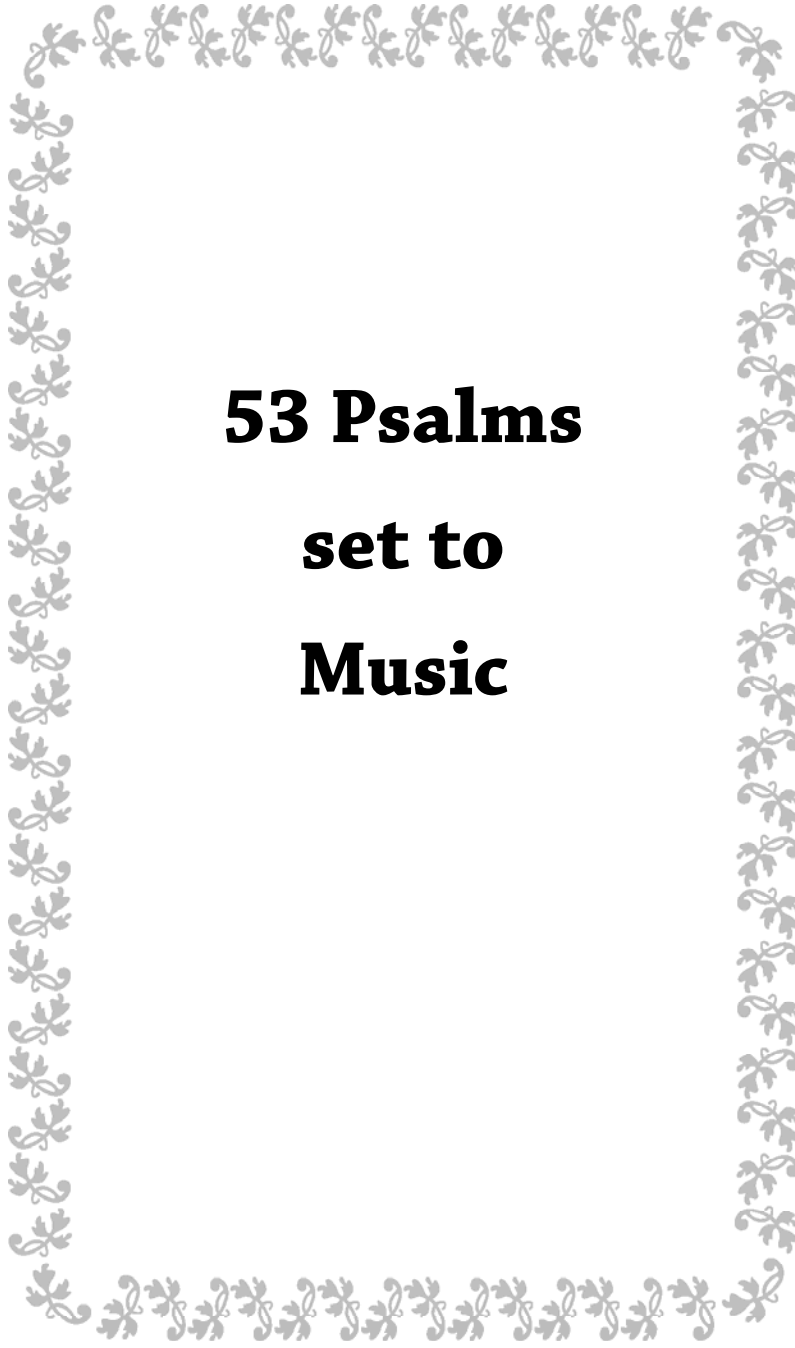
The Charismatic Church, however, claims Psalm 150 as a model for their worship. Whereas we use the organ or piano to enhance our singing, they use every instrument that Israel as a nation uses. They have their drums and cymbals. As to the guitar, we do not object as long as it is played with the right beat with solemnity.

On the other extreme, we have others who totally forbid the use of musical instruments, even the organ. Not the pipe organ that drowns the congregational singing. But the gentle and persuasive strains of the pump organ can add to the spirit of worship and evangelism, as shown by Sankey in his support of Moody in Great Britain. As he played “Softly and Tenderly Jesus is Calling”, many, without Moody speaking a word, yielded in tears to receive the Saviour.

Those who forbid organ also forbid hymns and spiritual songs. They limit you to psalm singing, period. Why do they override the very Word of God?

We refute both Charismatics and Hypercalvinists. We follow the Church Triumphant above who sing with harps, that make melody to the heart.





53 Psalms
set to
Music

The Lord Is My Shepherd

James Montgomery

Thomas Koschat

1. The Lord is my Shep-herd, no want shall I know, I feed in green
 2. Thro' the val-ley and shad-ow of death though I stray, Since Thou art my
 3. In the midst of af-lic-tion my ta-ble is spread, With blessings un-
 4. Let good-ness and mer-cy, my boun-ti-ful God, Still fol-low my

pas-tures, safe-fold-ed I rest; He lead-eth my soul where the
 guard-ian, no e-vil I fear; Thy rod shall de-fend me, Thy
 meas-ured my cup run-neth o'er; With per-fume and oil Thou a-
 steps till I meet Thee a-bove; I seek, by the path which my

still wa-ters flow, Re-stores me when wan-dering, re-deems when op-
 staff be my stay; No harm can be-fall with my Com-fort-er
 noint-est my head; O what shall I ask of Thy prov-i-dence
 fore-fa-thers trod Thro' the land of their so-journ, Thy king-dom of

pressed, Re-stores me when wan-dering, re-deems when op-pressed.
 near, No harm can be-fall with my Com-fort-er near.
 more? O what shall I ask of Thy prov-i-dence more?
 love, Thro' the land of their so-journ, Thy king-dom of love. A-MEN.

The Lord is My Shepherd

PSALM 23
Scottish *Psalter*, 1650

CRIMOND C. M.
Jessie Seymour Irvine, 1836-1887
Har. by T. C. L. Pritchard, 1929; alt.

1. The Lord's my Shep - herd, I'll not want; He makes me down to lie
2. My soul he doth re - store a - gain; And me to walk doth make
3. Yea, though I walk in death's dark vail, Yet will I fear none ill,
4. My ta - ble thou hast fur - nish - ed In pres - ence of my foes;
5. Good - ness and mer - cy all my life Shall sure - ly fol - low me:

In pas - tures green; he lead - eth me The qui - et wa - ters by.
With - in the paths of right - eous - ness, Ev'n for his own Name's sake.
For thou art with me; and thy rod And staff me com - fort still.
My head thou dost with oil a - noint, And my cup o - ver - flows.
And in God's house for ev - er - more My dwell - ing - place shall be. A - MEN.

The musical score consists of two systems. The first system has a vocal line in treble clef and a bass line in bass clef. The second system also has a vocal line in treble clef and a bass line in bass clef. The music is in 3/4 time and G major.

How Blest is He Whose Trespass

PSALM 32

RUTHERFORD 7 6 7 6 D.

Arranged from Chrétien Urhan,
by E. F. Rimbault, 1867

1 How blest is he whose tres - pass Has free - ly been for - given,
2 While I kept guilt - y si - lence My strength was spent with grief,
3 So let the god - ly seek Thee In times when Thou art near;

Whose sin is whol - ly cov - ered Be - fore the sight of heaven.
Thy hand was heav - y on me, My soul found no re - lief;
No whelm - ing floods shall reach them, Nor cause their hearts to fear.

Blest he to whom Je - ho - vah Will not im - pute his sin,
But when I owned my tres - pass, My sin hid not from Thee,
In Thee, O Lord, I hide me, Thou sav - est me from ill,

Who has a guile - less spir - it, Whose heart is true with - in.
When I con - fessed trans - gres - sion, Then Thou for - gav - est me.
And songs of Thy sal - va - tion My heart with rap - ture thrill.

4 I graciously will teach thee
The way that thou shalt go,
And with My eye upon thee
My counsel make thee know.
But be ye not unruly,
Or slow to understand,
Be not perverse, but willing
To heed My wise command.

5 The sorrows of the wicked
In number shall abound,
But those that trust Jehovah,
His mercy shall surround.
Then in the Lord be joyful,
In song lift up your voice;
Be glad in God; ye righteous,
Rejoice, ye saints, rejoice.

God Guards the Good with Watchful Eye

PSALM 34

GERMANY L. M.

From William Gardiner's *Sacred Melodies*, 1815

1 God guards the good with watch - ful eye, His ear at -
2 The right - eous cry, Je - ho - vah hears, And res - cues

ten - tive to their cry; A - gainst the wick - ed
them from all their fears; The Lord draws nigh to

sets His face, From earth their mem - ory to e - raise.
bro - ken hearts, To con - trite spir - its help im - parts.

[Selected Stanzas]

- | | |
|---|---|
| 3 Afflictions on the good must fall,
But God will bring them safe through all;
From harmful stroke He will defend,
And sure and full deliverance send. | 4 By evil are the evil slain,
The hope of sinful men is vain;
The wicked, who the righteous hate,
Their condemnation shall be great. |
|---|---|

5 The Lord redemption will provide
For all who in His grace confide;
From condemnation they are clear
Who trust in Him with holy fear.

Be Thou My Helper in the Strife

PSALM 35

HE LEADETH ME L. M. D.

William B. Bradbury, 1864

1 Be Thou my Help - er in the strife, O Lord, my strong De -
2 A - shamed, con-found-ed let them be Who seek my ru - in

fend - er be; Thy might - y shield pro - tect my life,
and dis - grace; O let Thy an - gel fight for me,

Thy spear con - front the en - e - my. A - mid the con - flict,
And drive my foes be - fore his face. With - out a cause my

O my Lord, Thy pre - cious prom - ise let me hear, The faith - ful,
life they sought, With - out a cause their plots they laid; Them - selves with -

Be Thou My Helper in the Strife

re - as - sur - ing word: I am thy Sav - ior, do not fear.
in their snares be caught, And be my craft - y foes dis-mayed.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>3 My soul is joyful in the Lord,
In His salvation I rejoice;
To Him my heart will praise accord
And bless His Name with thankful
voice.
For who, O Lord, is like to Thee,
Defender of the poor and meek?
The needy Thy salvation see
When mighty foes their ruin seek.</p> | <p>6 My foes with joy my woes survey,
But Thou, O Lord, hast seen it all;
O be no longer far away,
Nor silent when on Thee I call.
O haste to my deliverance now,
O Lord, my righteous cause main-
tain;
My Lord and God alone art Thou;
Awake, and make Thy justice plain.</p> |
| <p>4 Unrighteous witnesses have stood
And told of crimes beyond belief;
Returning evil for my good,
They overwhelm my soul with grief.
When in affliction they were sad,
I wept and made their grief my
own;
But in my trouble they are glad
And strive that I may be o'erthrown.</p> | <p>7 O Lord my God, I look to Thee,
Be Thou my righteous Judge, I pray;
Let not my foes exult o'er me
And laugh with joy at my dismay.
With shame and trouble those requite
Who would my righteous cause de-
stroy;
But those who in the good delight,
Let them be glad and shout for joy.</p> |
| <p>5 O Lord, how long wilt Thou delay?
My soul for Thy salvation waits;
My thankfulness I will display
Amid the crowds that throng Thy
gates.
Let not my enemies rejoice
And wrongfully exult o'er me;
They speak not peace, but lift their voice
To trouble those that peaceful be.</p> | <p>8 Yea, let the Lord be magnified,
Because Thy servants Thou dost bless;
And I, from morn till eventide,
Will daily praise Thy righteousness.
My soul is joyful in the Lord,
In His salvation I rejoice;
To Him my heart will praise accord
And bless His Name with thankful
voice.</p> |

My End, Lord, Make Me Know

PSALM 39

AMBROSE (DULCE DOMUM) S. M.

Robert S. Ambrose, 1876



1 My end, Lord, make me know, My days, how soon they fail;
2 To Thy e - ter - nal thought My days are but a span;



And to my thought-ful spir - it show How weak I am and frail.
To Thee my years ap - pear as nought, A breath at best is man.



[Selected Stanzas]

3 O Lord, regard my fears,
And answer my request;
Turn not in silence from my tears,
But give the mourner rest.

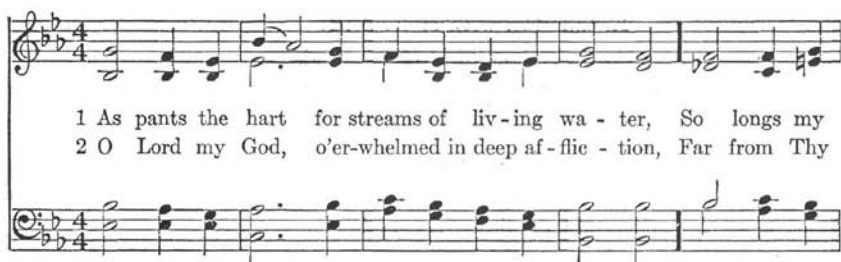
4 I am a stranger here,
Dependent on Thy grace,
A pilgrim, as my fathers were,
With no abiding place.

As Pants the Hart for Streams of Living Water

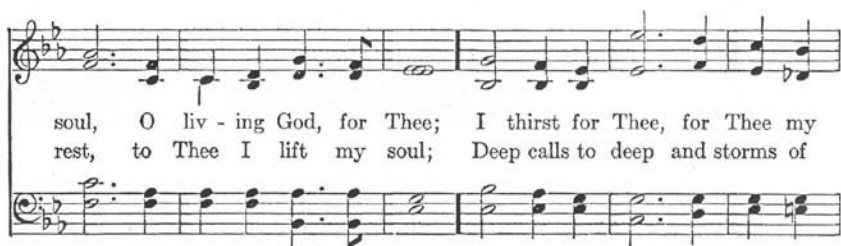
PSALM 42

FELIX (RAYNOLDS) 11 10 11 10

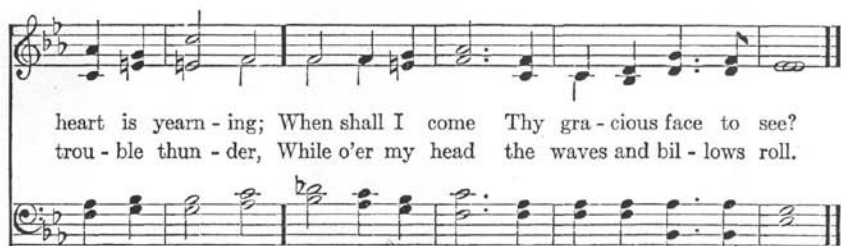
Arranged from Felix Mendelssohn, 1809-1847



1 As pants the hart for streams of liv - ing wa - ter, So longs my
2 O Lord my God, o'er-whelmed in deep af - flic - tion, Far from Thy



soul, O liv - ing God, for Thee; I thirst for Thee, for Thee my
rest, to Thee I lift my soul; Deep calls to deep and storms of



heart is yearn - ing; When shall I come Thy gra - cious face to see?
trou - ble thun - der, While o'er my head the waves and bil - lows roll.

[Selected Stanzas]

3 Thou wilt command Thy servant's consolation,
Thy lovingkindness yet shall cheer my day,
And in the night Thy song shall be my comfort;
God of my life, to Thee I still will pray.

4 Why, O my soul, art thou cast down within me,
Why art thou troubled and oppressed with grief?
Hope thou in God, the God of thy salvation,
Hope, and thy God will surely send relief.

Send Out Thy Light and Thy Truth

PSALM 43

LUX FIAT 11 10 11 10 10 10

Charles F. Gounod, 1818-1893

1 Send out Thy light and Thy truth, let them lead me; O let them
2 Lead me, O Lord, in the way ev - er - last - ing; O lead and

bring me to Thy ho - ly hill. Send out Thy light and Thy
guide me to Thy ho - ly hill. Lead me, O Lord, in the

truth, let them lead me; O let them bring me to Thy ho - ly
way ev - er - last - ing; O lead and guide me to Thy ho - ly

hill. O let them lead me, O let them lead me,
hill. O do Thou lead me, O do Thou guide me,

O let them bring me to Thy ho - ly hill.
O lead and guide me to Thy ho - ly hill.

My Heart Doth Overflow

PSALM 45

LEOMINSTER S. M. D.

George William Martin, 1862,

Harmonized by Sir Arthur S. Sullivan, 1874

1 My heart doth o - ver - flow, A good - ly theme is mine;
 2 Now gird Thee with Thy sword, O strong and might - y One,
 3 Thy strength shall o - ver - come All those that hate the King,

My ea - ger tongue with joy - ful song Doth praise the King di - vine.
 In splen - did maj - es - ty ar - rayed, More glo - rious than the sun.
 And un - der Thy do - min - ion strong The na - tions Thou shalt bring.

Su - pre - ly fair Thou art, Thy lips with grace o'er - flow;
 Tri - um - phant - ly ride foith For meek - ness, truth, and right;
 Thy roy - al throne, O God, For - ev - er - more shall stand;

His rich - est bless - ings ev - er - more Doth God on Thee be - stow.
 Thy arm shall gain the vic - to - ry In won - drous deeds of might.
 E - ter - nal truth and jus - tice wield The scep - tre in Thy hand.

4 Since Thou art sinless found,
 The Lord, Thy God confessed,
 Anointed Thee with perfect joy,
 Thou art supremely blest.
 Thy garments breathe of myrrh
 And spices sweet and rare;
 Glad strains of heavenly music ring
 Throughout Thy palace fair.

5 Amid Thy glorious train
 Kings' daughters waiting stand,
 And fairest gems bedeck Thy bride,
 The queen at Thy right hand.
 O royal brde, give heed,
 And to my words attend;
 For Christ, the King, forsake the world
 And every former friend.

God is Our Refuge and Our Strength

PSALM 46

MATERNA C. M. D.

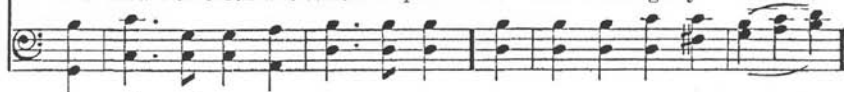
Samuel A. Ward, 1882



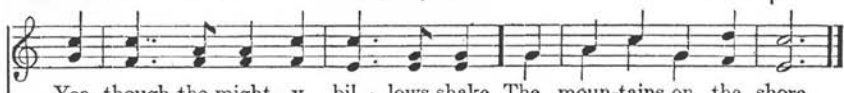
1 God is our ref-uge and our strength, Our ev - er pres - ent aid,
 2 A riv - er flows whose streams make glad The cit - y of our God,
 3 The na-tions raged, the king-doms moved, But when His voice was heard



And, there-fore, though the earth re-move, We will not be a - fraid;..
 The ho - ly place where-in the Lord Most High has His a - bode;..
 The trou-bled earth was stilled to peace Be - fore His might-y word...



Though hills a-midst the seas be cast, Though foam-ing wa - ters roar, ...
 Since God is in the midst of her, Un - moved her walls shall stand, ..
 The Lord of hosts is on our side, Our safe - ty to se - cure; ..



Yea, though the might - y bil - lows shake The moun-tains on the shore.
 For God will be her ear - ly help, When trou - ble is at hand.
 The God of Ja - cob is for us A ref - uge strong and sure.



4 O come, behold what wondrous works
 Jehovah's hand has wrought;
 Come, see what desolation great
 He on the earth has brought.
 To utmost ends of all the earth
 He causes war to cease;
 The weapons of the strong destroyed,
 He makes abiding peace.

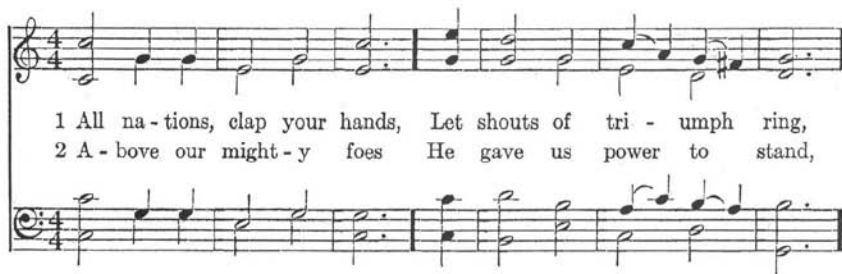
5 Be still and know that I am God,
 O'er all exalted high;
 The subject nations of the earth
 My Name shall magnify.
 The Lord of hosts is on our side,
 Our safety to secure;
 The God of Jacob is for us
 A refuge strong and sure.

All Nations, Clap Your Hands

PSALM 47

SILVER STREET S. M.

Isaac Smith, 1770



1 All na - tions, clap your hands, Let shouts of tri - umph ring,
2 A - bove our might - y foes He gave us power to stand,



For might-y o - ver all the .. lands The Lord .. Most High is King.
And as our her - i - tage He .. chose The good - ly prom-ised land.

3 With shouts ascends our King,
With trumpet's stirring call;
Praise God, praise God, His praises sing,
For God is Lord of all.

4 O sing in joyful strains,
And make His glory known;
God over all the nations reigns,
And holy is His throne.

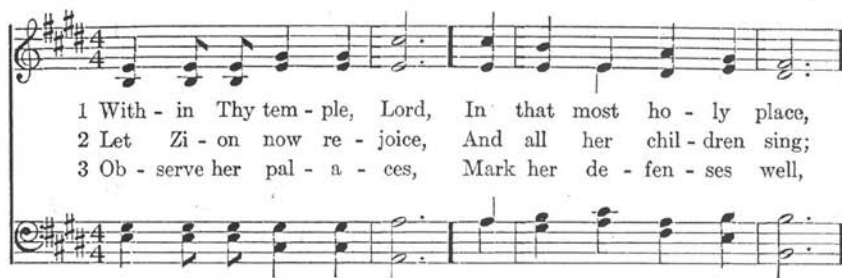
5 Our fathers' God to own
The kings of earth draw nigh,
For none can save but God alone,
He is the Lord Most High.

Within Thy Temple, Lord

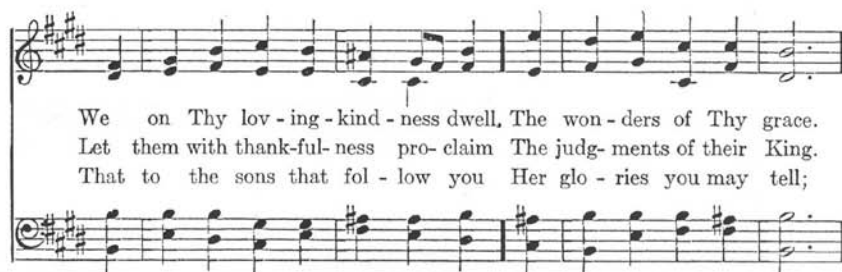
PSALM 48

DIADEMATA S. M. D.

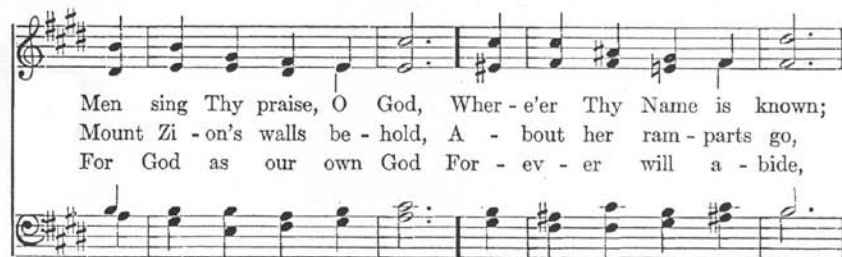
George J. Elvey, 1868



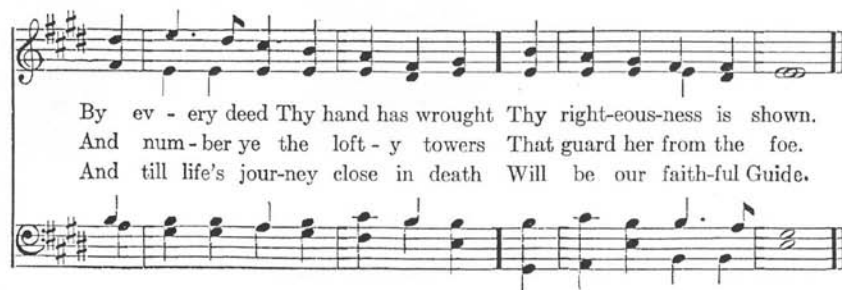
1 With - in Thy tem - ple, Lord, In that most ho - ly place,
2 Let Zi - on now re - joice, And all her chil - dren sing;
3 Ob - serve her pal - a - ces, Mark her de - fen - ses well,



We on Thy lov - ing - kind - ness dwell, The won - ders of Thy grace.
Let them with thank - ful - ness pro - claim The judg - ments of their King.
That to the sons that fol - low you Her glo - ries you may tell;



Men sing Thy praise, O God, Wher - e'er Thy Name is known;
Mount Zi - on's walls be - hold, A - bout her ram - parts go,
For God as our own God For - ev - er will a - bide,



By ev - ery deed Thy hand has wrought Thy right - eous - ness is shown.
And num - ber ye the loft - y towers That guard her from the foe.
And till life's jour - ney close in death Will be our faith - ful Guide.

Dust to Dust, the Mortal Dies

PSALM 49

WATCHMAN 7 7 7 7 D

Lowell Mason, 1830

1 Dust to dust, the mor-tal dies, Both the fool-ish and the wise;
2 To their lands they give their name In the hope of last-ing fame;

None for-ev-er can re-main, Each must leave his hoard-ed gain.
But man's hon-or quick-ly flies, Like the low-ly beast he dies.

Yet with-in their heart they say That their hous-es are for aye,
Though such fol-ly mark their way, Men ap-prove of what they say;

That their dwell-ing-plac-es grand Shall for gen-er-a-tions stand.
Death their shep-herd, they the sheep, He with-in his fold will keep.

[Stanzas 6-13]

3 O'er them soon shall rule the just,
All their beauty turn to dust;
God my waiting soul shall save,
He will raise me from the grave.
Let no fear disturb your peace
Though one's house and wealth increase;
Death shall end his fleeting day,
He shall carry naught away.

4 Though in life he wealth attained,
Though the praise of men he gained,
He shall join those gone before,
Where the light shall shine no more.
Crowned with honor though he be,
Highly gifted, strong and free,
If he be not truly wise,
Man is like the beast that dies.

The Mighty God, Jehovah, Speaks

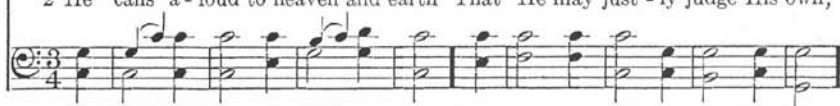
PSALM 50

ST. PETERSBURG L. M., 6 lines

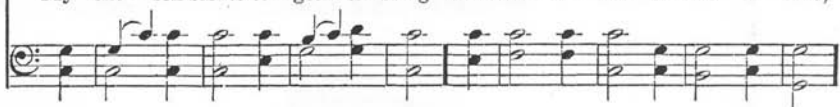
Arranged from Dimitri Bortniansky, 1752-1828



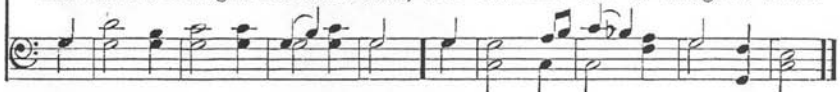
1 The might-y God, Je - ho-vah, speaks And calls the earth from sea to sea;
2 He calls a - loud to heaven and earth That He may just - ly judge His own;



From beau-teous Zi - on God shines forth, He comes and will not si - lent be;
My cho - sen saints to - geth-er bring Who sac - ri - fice to Me a - lone;



De - vour-ing flame be - fore Him goes, And dark the tem-pest round Him grows.
The heavens His righteousness de-clare, For God Him-self as Judge is there.



3 Hear, O my people, I will speak,
Against thee I will testify;
Give ear to Me, O Israel,
For God, thy covenant God, am I;
I do not spurn thy sacrifice,
Thy offerings are before My eyes.

5 Behold, if I should hungry grow,
I would not tell My need to thee,
For all the world itself is Mine,
And all its wealth belongs to Me;
Why should I aught of thee receive,
My thirst or hunger to relieve?

4 I will receive from out thy fold
No offering for My holy shrine;
The cattle on a thousand hills
And all the forest beasts are Mine;
Each mountain bird to Me is known,
Whatever roams the field I own.

6 Bring thou to God the gift of thanks,
And pay thy vows to God Most High;
Call ye upon My holy Name
In days when sore distress is nigh;
Deliverance I will send to thee,
And praises thou shalt give to Me.

God, Be Merciful to Me

PSALM 51

AJALON (GETHSEMANE) 7 7 7 7 7

Richard Redhead, 1853

1 God, be mer - ci - ful to me, On Thy grace I rest my plea;
2 My trans-gres-sions I con - fess, Grief and guilt my soul op - press;

Plen - teous in com - pas - sion Thou, Blot out my trans-gres - sions now;
I have sinned a - gainst Thy grace And pro - voked Thee to Thy face;

Wash me, make me pure with-in, Cleanse, O cleanse me from my sin.
I con - fess Thy judg - ment just, Speech-less, I Thy mer - cy trust.

3 I am evil, born in sin;
Thou desirest truth within.
Thou alone my Savior art,
Teach Thy wisdom to my heart;
Make me pure, Thy grace bestow,
Wash me whiter than the snow.

4 Broken, humbled to the dust
By Thy wrath and judgment just,
Let my contrite heart rejoice
And in gladness hear Thy voice;
From my sins O hide Thy face,
Blot them out in boundless grace.

God, Be Merciful to Me

PSALM 51

REFUGE 7 7 7 7 7

Joseph P. Holbrook, 1862

1 God, be mer - ci - ful to me, . . . On Thy grace I rest my plea;
2 I am e - vil, born in sin; . . . Thou de - sir - est truth with - in.

Plen-teous in . . . com-pas-sion Thou, Blot out my . . . trans-gres-sions now;
Thou a - lone . . . my Sav-ior art, Teach Thy wis - dom to my heart;

Wash me, make me pure with - in, . . . Cleanse, O cleanse me from my sin,
Make me pure, Thy grace be - stow, Wash me whit - er than the snow,

Wash me, make me pure with-in, . . . Cleanse, O cleanse me from my sin.
Make me pure, Thy grace be - stow, Wash me whit - er than the snow.

[Selected Stanzas]

3 Gracious God, my heart renew,
Make my spirit right and true;
Cast me not away from Thee,
Let Thy Spirit dwell in me;
Thy salvation's joy impart,
Stedfast make my willing heart.

4 Sinners then shall learn from me
And return, O God, to Thee;
Savior, all my guilt remove,
And my tongue shall sing Thy love;
Touch my silent lips, O Lord,
And my mouth shall praise accord.

O Mighty Man, Why Wilt Thou Boast

PSALM 52

WALTHAM L. M.

J. Baptiste Calkin, 1872

1 O might - y man, why wilt thou boast Thy - self in
2 Thy tongue de - vis - eth wick - ed - ness, A weap - on

hate - ful cru - el - ty, When God Al - might - y
treach - er - ous and keen; Thou lov - est e - vil

is most kind, And ev - er mer - ci - ful is He?
more than good, And false - hood in thy sight is clean.

3 Since, O thou false, deceitful tongue,
In deadly words thou findest joy,
The Lord shall pluck thee from thy place
And all thy wickedness destroy.

5 I put my trust in God alone,
Forevermore I trust His grace,
And like the trees within His courts
I flourish in a favored place.

4 The good, confirmed in godly fear,
The pride and folly shall confess
Of those who make not God their
strength,
But trust in wealth and wickedness.

6 With endless thanks, O Lord, to Thee,
Thy wondrous works will I pro -
claim,
And in the presence of Thy saints
Will ever hope in Thy good Name.

O Save Me by Thy Name

PSALM 54

BOYLSTON S. M.

Lowell Mason, 1832

1 O save me by Thy Name, And judge me in Thy might;
2 Strong foes a - gainst me rise, Op - pres - sors seek my soul,

O God, now grant my ur - gent claim Ac - cept - ance in Thy sight.
Who set not God be - fore their eyes, Nor own His just con - trol.

- 3 Lo, God my Helper is,
The Lord, my mighty Friend;
He shall requite my enemies,
Their just destruction send.
- 4 My sacrifice of praise
To Thee I freely bring;
My thanks, O Lord, to Thee I raise
And of Thy goodness sing.
- 5 From troubles and from woes
Thou hast delivered me,
The overthrow of all my foes
Hast given me to see.

Jehovah, to My Prayer Give Ear

PSALM 55

VOX DILECTI C. M. D.

Rev. John B. Dykes, 1868

1 Je - ho - vah, to my prayer give ear, Nor hide Thee from my cry;
2 Sore pained in heart I find no ease, Death's ter-rors fill my soul,

At - tend my sad com-plaint, and hear My rest - less moan and sigh.
Great fear and trem-bling on me seize, And hor - rors o'er me roll.

My en - e - mies lift up their voice, The vi - o - lent op - press;
O had I wings, I sigh and say, Like some swift dove to roam,

To do me wrong my foes re - joice, And love my soul's dis - tress.
Then I would hast - en far a - way And find a peace - ful home.

3 Lo, wandering far, my rest should be
In some lone desert waste;
I from the stormy wind would flee,
And to a shelter haste.
O Lord, their malice recompense,
Their wicked tongues confound,
For in the city violence
And bitter strife abound.

4 They walk her walls both night and day,
Within all vices meet;
Oppression, fraud, and crime hold sway,
Nor leave the crowded street.
No foreign foe provokes alarm,
But enemies within;
May God destroy their power to harm
And recompense their sin.

O God, Be Merciful to Me

PSALM 57

SWEET HOUR OF PRAYER L. M. D.

William B. Bradbury, 1859

1 O God, be mer - ci - ful to me, My soul for ref - uge comes to Thee;
2 Great foes and fierce my soul a - larm, Inflamed with rage and strong to harm,

Be - neath Thy wings I safe will stay Un - til these trou - bles pass a - way.
But God, from heaven His dwelling - place, Will res - cue me with truth and grace.

To God Most High shall rise my prayer, To God who makes my wants His care;
Be thou, O God, ex - alt - ed high, Yea, far a - bove the star - ry sky,

From heaven He will sal - va - tion send, And me from ev - ery foe de - fend.
And let Thy glo - ry be dis - played O'er all the earth Thy hands have made.

3 My soul is grieved because my foes
With treacherous plans my way inclose;
But from the snares that they devise
Their own undoing shall arise.
My heart is stedfast, O my King,
My heart is tuned Thy praise to sing;
Awake, my soul, and swell the song,
Let vibrant harp the notes prolong.

4 Yea, I will early wake and sing,
A thankful hymn to Thee will bring,
For unto heaven Thy mercies rise,
Thy truth is lofty as the skies.
Be Thou, O God, exalted high,
Yea, far above the starry sky,
And let Thy glory be displayed
O'er all the earth Thy hands have made.

Do Ye, O Men, Speak Righteousness

PSALM 58

DUNDEE C. M.

Arranged from Christopher Tye, 1553,
In the Scottish Psalter of 1615



1 Do ye, O men, speak right-eous-ness And up-right judg-ment mete?
2 The wick-ed, from their ear-liest days, In sin are gone a-stray,



Nay, in your hearts is wick-ed-ness, And in your hands de- ceit.
With fro-ward heart, in fool-ish pride, From wis-dom turned a-way.



3 The God of vengeance will destroy
The wicked from His sight;
The Lord will bring to nought their power
And scatter all their might.

4 The good shall triumph and rejoice,
And this shall be confessed:
On earth the God of justice reigns,
And righteousness is blessed.

My Soul in Silence Waits for God

PSALM 62

SERAPH C. M. D.

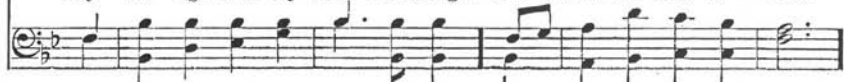
Gottfried Wilhelm Fink, 1842



1 My soul in si-lence waits for God, My Sav-ior He has proved;
 2 My en - e - mies my ru - in seek, They plot with fraud and guile;
 3 My hon - or is se - cure with God, My Sav - ior He is known;



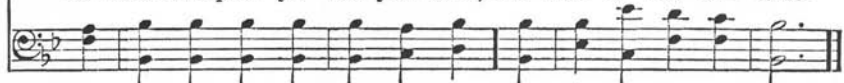
He on - ly is my rock and tower; I nev - er shall be moved.
 De - ceit - ful, they pre - tend to bless, But in - ward - ly re - vile.
 My ref - uge and my rock of strength Are found in God a - lone.



My hon - or is se - cure with God, My Sav - ior He is known;
 My soul, in si - lence waits for God, He is my help ap - proved;
 On Him, ye peo - ple, ev - er - more Re - ly with con - fi - dence;



My ref - uge and my rock of strength Are found in God a - lone.
 He on - ly is my rock and tower, And I shall not be moved.
 Be - fore Him pour ye out your heart, For God is our de - fense.



4 For surely men are helpers vain,
 The high and the abased;
 Yea, lighter than a breath are they
 When in the balance placed.
 Trust not in harsh oppression's power
 Nor in unrighteous gain;
 If wealth increase, yet on your gold
 Ye set your hearts in vain.

5 For God has spoken o'er and o'er,
 And unto me has shown,
 That saving power and lasting strength
 Belong to Him alone.
 Yea, lovingkindness evermore
 Belongs to Thee, O Lord;
 And Thou according to his work
 Dost every man reward.

O Lord, My God, Most Earnestly

PSALM 63

THE GREEN HILL C. M. D.

George C. Stebbins, 1878

1 O Lord, my God, most ear - nest - ly My heart would seek Thy face,
2 The lov - ing - kind - ness of my God Is more than life to me;
3 My Savior, 'neath Thy shel - tering wings My soul de - lights to dwell;

With - in Thy ho - ly house once more To see Thy glo - rious grace.
So I will bless Thee while I live And lift my prayer to Thee.
Still clos - er to Thy side I press, For near Thee all is well.

A - part from Thee I long and thirst, And nought can sat - is - fy;
In Thee my soul is sat - is - fied, My dark - ness turns to light,
My soul shall con - quer ev - ery foe, Up - hold - en by Thy hand;

I wan - der in a des - ert land Where all the streams are dry.
And joy - ful med - i - ta - tions fill The watch - es of the night.
Thy peo - ple shall re - joice in God, Thy saints in glo - ry stand.

O Lord, Thou Hast Ascended

PSALM 68

MISSIONARY HYMN 7 6 7 6 D.

Lowell Mason, 1823

1 O Lord, Thou hast as - cend - ed On high in might to reign;
2 Blest be the Lord who dai - ly Our heav - y bur - den bears,

Cap - tiv - i - ty Thou lead - est A cap - tive in Thy train.
The God of our sal - va - tion Who for His peo - ple cares.

Rich gifts to Thee are of - fered By men who did re - bel,
Our God is near to help us, Our God is strong to save;

Who pray that now Je - ho - vah Their God with them may dwell.
The Lord a - lone is a - ble To ran - som from the grave.

[Selected Stanzas]

3 Sing unto God, ye nations,
Ye kingdoms of the earth;
Sing unto God, all people,
And praise His matchless worth.
He rides in royal triumph
Upon the heavens abroad;
He speaks, the mountains tremble
Before the voice of God.

4 All glory, might, and honor
Ascribe to God on high;
His arm protects His people
Who on His power rely.
Forth from Thy holy dwelling
Thy awful glories shine;
Thou strengthenest Thy people;
Unending praise be Thine.

Though I Am Poor and Sorrowful

PSALM 69

BALERMA C. M.

Arranged by Robert Simpson, 1833

1 Though I am poor and sor-row-ful, Hear Thou, O God, my cry;
2 Then will I praise my God with song, To Him my thanks shall rise,

Let Thy sal - va - tion come to me And lift me up on high.
And this shall please Je - ho - vah more Than of - fered sac - ri - fice.

[Stanzas 19-23]

- 3 The meek shall see it and rejoice;
Ye saints, no more be sad;
For lo, Jehovah hears the poor
And makes His prisoners glad.
- 4 Let heaven and earth and seas rejoice,
Let all therein give praise,
For Zion God will surely save,
Her broken walls will raise.
- 5 In Zion they that love His Name
Shall dwell from age to age;
Yea, there shall be their lasting rest,
Their children's heritage.

From Days of Early Youth, O God

PSALM 71

AVON (MARTYRDOM) C. M.

Hugh Wilson, 1766-1824

1 From days of ear - ly youth, O God, By Thee have I been taught,
2 O gra-cious God, for - sake me not When I am old and gray,

And faith - ful - ly have I de - clared The won - ders Thou hast wrought.
That un - to those that fol - low me I may Thy might dis - play.

[Stanzas 11-17]

- 3 Thy perfect righteousness, O God,
The height of heaven exceeds;
O who is like to Thee, who hast
Performed such mighty deeds?
- 4 Thou who hast sent me many griefs
Wilt yet my soul restore,
And out of sorrow's lowest depths
Wilt bring me forth once more.
- 5 O turn again and comfort me,
My waning strength increase,
And for Thy faithfulness, O God,
My praise shall never cease.
- 6 Thou Holy One of Israel,
To Thee sweet songs I raise;
The soul Thou hast redeemed from death
Shall give Thee joyful praise.
- 7 My enemies that seek my hurt
Thy help has put to shame;
My thankful tongue will ceaselessly
Thy righteousness proclaim.

O God, Be Thy Anointed Son

PSALM 72

HURSLEY L. M.

German Melody,
Arranged by William H. Monk, 1861

1 O God, be Thy a - noint - ed Son With truth and
2 Then o - ver moun - tain side and plain Shall peace spring
3 Then shall Thy fear on earth be known Long as the

right - eous - ness en - dowed, That jus - tice may on
forth from right - eous - ness; The poor man's cause will
sun and moon shall shine; While end - less gen - er -

earth be done, The meek pro - tect - ed from the proud.
He main - tain, And save the weak, that none op - press.
a - tions run, King - dom and glo - ry shall be Thine.

- 4 Like copious rain in time of dearth,
So shall His gracious coming be;
As gentle showers that cheer the earth,
So He shall bring prosperity.
- 5 The just shall flourish in His day,
And evermore shall peace extend;
From sea to sea shall be His sway,
And to the earth's remotest end.
- 6 The desert lands to Him shall bow,
And all the islands of the sea,
And kings with gifts shall pay their vow,
His enemies shall bend the knee.
- 7 In great compassion for the weak
He ever will maintain their right,
Will help the poor and save the meek;
Their lives are precious in His sight.

O God, How Good Thou Art

PSALM 73

OLIVET 6 6 4 6 6 6 4

Lowell Mason, 1832

1 O God, how good Thou art To all the pure of heart,
2 Ev - er, O Lord, with Thee, All shall be well with me,

Though life seems vain; Bur - dened with anx - ious care, I groped in
Held by Thy hand; And Thou wilt guide my feet By Thy own

dark de - spair, Till in Thy house of prayer All was made plain.
coun - sel sweet, Till I, for glo - ry meet, In glo - ry stand.

[Selected Stanzas]

3 In earth or heaven above
Who is there that I love
Compared with Thee?
My heart may faint with fears,
But God my strength appears,
And will to endless years
My portion be.

4 O it is good that I
May still to God draw nigh,
As oft before;
The Lord Jehovah blest,
My refuge and my rest,
Shall be in praise confessed
Forevermore.

To Thee, O God, We Render Thanks

PSALM 75

ST. AGNES C. M.

Rev. John B. Dykes, 1866

1 To Thee, O God, we ren - der thanks, To Thee give thanks sin - cere,
2 Thy right-ous judg-ment, Thou hast said, Shall in due time ap - pear,

Be-cause Thy won-drous works de - clare That Thou art ev - er near.
And Thou who didst es - tab - lish it Wilt fill the earth with fear.

3 Thou teachest meekness to the proud,
And makest sinners know
That none is Judge but God alone,
To honor or bring low.

4 Jehovah holds a cup of wrath,
And holds it not in vain,
For all the wicked of the earth
Its bitter dregs shall drain.

5 The God of Israel I will praise
And all His glory show;
The righteous He will high exalt
And bring the wicked low.

My People, Give Ear, Attend to My Word

PSALM 78

HANOVER (CROFT) 10 10 11 11

William Croft, 1678-1727

The musical score is written in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It consists of four systems, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment line. The lyrics are: 1 My peo - ple, give ear, at - tend to my word, In par - a - bles 2 Un-harmed through the sea, where per-ished their foe, He caused them with new deep truths shall be heard; The won - der - ful sto - ry our ease and safe - ty to go; His ho - ly land gain - ing, in fa - thers made known To chil - dren suc - ceed - ing by us must be shown. peace they were brought To dwell in the moun - tain the Lord's hand had bought.

[Stanzas 16-21]

- 3 He gave them the land, a heritage fair;
The nations that dwelt in wickedness there
He drove out before them with great overthrow,
And gave to His people the tents of the foe.
- 4 Again they rebelled and tempted the Lord,
Unfaithful they turned to idols abhorred,
And God in His anger withdrew from them then,
No longer delighting to dwell among men.
- 5 He gave them to death in battle, although
His glory and strength were scorned by the foe;
Their young men were fallen, their maidens unwed,
Their priests slain in battle, none wept for the dead.
- 6 Then mercy awoke, the Lord in His might
Returned, and the foes were scattered in flight;
Again to His people His favor He showed,
And chose in Mount Zion to fix His abode.
- 7 His servant He called, a shepherd of sheep,
From tending his flock, the people to keep;
So David, their shepherd, with wisdom and might
Protected and fed them and led them aright.

O Come, Ye People, to My Law

PSALM 78

PONTRESINA C. M. D.

Swiss Melody

1 O come, ye peo - ple, to my law At - ten - tive - ly give ear;
2 We will not from their chil - dren hide Je - ho - vah's wor - thy praise,
3 He willed that each suc - ceed - ing race His deeds might learn and know,

With will - ing heart and teach - a - ble The words of wis - dom hear.
But tell the great - ness of His strength, His won - drous works and ways.
That chil - dren's chil - dren to their sons Might all these won - ders show.

My mouth shall speak in par - a - bles Of hid - den truths of old,
A tes - ti - mo - ny and a law The Lord our God de - creed,
Let chil - dren learn God's right - eous ways And on Him stay their heart,

Which, hand - ed down from age to age, To us our fa - thers told.
And bade our fa - thers teach their sons, That they His ways might heed.
That they may not for - get His works Nor from His ways de - part.

Great Shepherd Who Leadest Thy People in Love

PSALM 80

CARITAS 11 11 11 11

Adoniram J. Gordon, 1836-1895

1 Great Shepherd who lead - est Thy peo - ple in love, 'Mid cher - u - bim
2 O haste, Lord, to hear us and pit - y our woes, Af - flic - tion our

dwell - ing, shine Thou from a - bove; In might come and save us, Thy
por - tion, de - spised by our foes. O Lord God Al - might - y, in

peo - ple re - store, And we shall be saved when Thy face shines once more.
mer - cy re - store, And we shall be saved when Thy face shines once more.

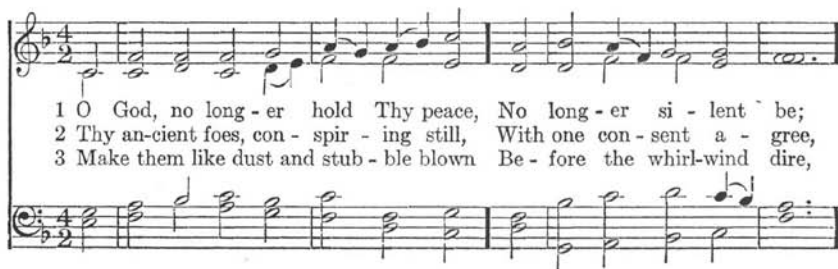
- 3 A place for Thy people Thou, Lord, didst prepare,
Thy vine deeply rooted rewarded Thy care;
Its branches like cedars, majestic and free,
Spread over the mountains from river to sea.
- 4 Thy vineyard no longer Thy tender care knows,
Defenseless, the victim and spoil of her foes;
O turn, we beseech Thee, all glory is Thine,
Look down in Thy mercy and visit Thy vine.
- 5 The branch of Thy planting is burned and cut down,
Brought nigh to destruction because of Thy frown;
The man of Thy right hand with wisdom endue,
The son of man strengthen Thy pleasure to do.
- 6 When Thou shalt revive us Thy Name we will praise,
And nevermore, turning, depart from Thy ways;
O Lord God Almighty, in mercy restore,
And we shall be saved when Thy face shines once more.

O God, No Longer Hold Thy Peace

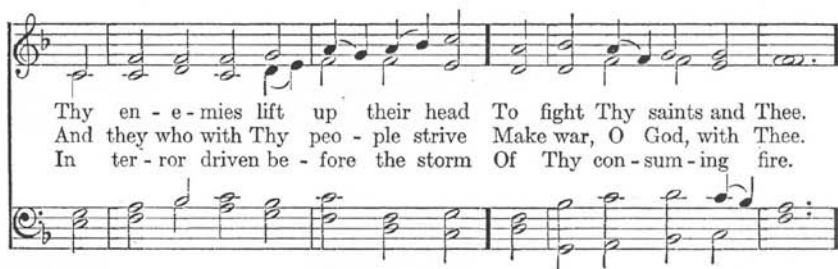
PSALM 83

FOREST GREEN C. M. D.

English traditional melody,
Arranged by R. Vaughan Williams, 1906



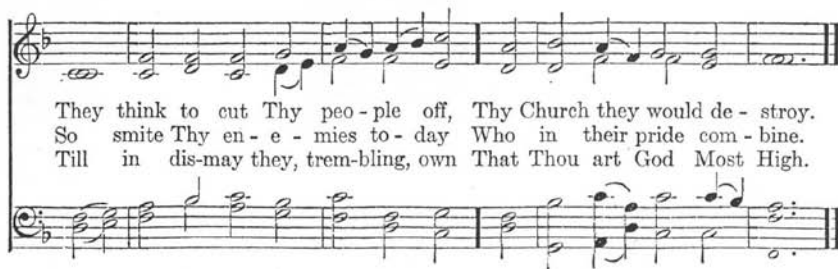
1 O God, no long - er hold Thy peace, No long - er si - lent be;
2 Thy an - cient foes, con - spir - ing still, With one con - sent a - gree,
3 Make them like dust and stub - ble blown Be - fore the whirl - wind dire,



Thy en - e - mies lift up their head To fight Thy saints and Thee.
And they who with Thy peo - ple strive Make war, O God, with Thee.
In ter - ror driven be - fore the storm Of Thy con - sum - ing fire.



A - gainst Thy own, whom Thou dost love, Their craft Thy foes em - ploy;
O God, who in our fa - thers' time Didst smite our foes and Thine,
Con-found them in their sin till they To Thee for par - don fly,



They think to cut Thy peo - ple off, Thy Church they would de - stroy.
So smite Thy en - e - mies to - day Who in their pride com - bine.
Till in dis - may they, trem - bling, own That Thou art God Most High.

O Lord of Hosts, How Lovely

PSALM 84

Justin H. Knecht, 1799, and
Edward Husband, 1871

1 O Lord of hosts, how love - ly Thy tab - er - na - cles are;
2 Be - neath Thy care the spar - row Finds place for peace - ful rest;
3 Blest they who dwell in Zi - on, Whose joy and strength Thou art;

For them my heart is yearn - ing In ban - ish - ment a - far.
To keep her young in safe - ty The swal - low finds a nest;
For - ev - er they will praise Thee, Thy ways are in their heart.

My soul is long - ing, faint - ing, Thy sa - cred courts to see;
Then, Lord, my King Al - might - y, Thy love will shel - ter me;
Though tried, their tears like show - ers Shall fill the springs of peace,

My heart and flesh are cry - ing, O liv - ing God, for Thee.
Be - side Thy ho - ly al - tar My dwell - ing - place shall be.
And all the way to Zi - on Their strength shall still in - crease.

Zion, Founded on the Mountains

PSALM 87

ZION 8 7 8 7 4 7

Thomas Hastings, 1830



1 Zi - on, found-ed on the moun-tains, God, thy Mak-er, loves thee well;
 2 Hea-then lands and hos-tile peo - ples Soon shall come the Lord to know;
 3 When the Lord shall count the na-tions, Sons and daugh-ters He shall see,



He has cho - sen thee, most pre-cious, He de - lights in thee to dwell;
 Na-tions born a - gain in Zi - on Shall the Lord's sal - va - tion show;
 Born to end - less life in Zi - on, And their joy - ful song shall be:



God's own cit - y, Who can all thy glo - ry tell?
 God Al - might - y Shall on Zi - on strength be - stow,
 "Bless - ed Zi - on, All our foun - tains are in thee,"



God's own cit - y, Who can all thy glo - ry tell?
 God Al - might - y Shall on Zi - on strength be - stow.
 "Bless - ed Zi - on, All our foun - tains are in thee."



My Song Forever Shall Record

PSALM 89

MARYTON L. M.

H. Percy Smith, 1874

1 My song for - ev - er shall re - cord The ten - der
 2 I sing of mer - cies that en - dure, For - ev - er
 3 Be - hold God's truth and grace dis - played, For He has

mer - cies of the Lord; Thy faith - ful - ness will
 build - ed firm and sure, Of faith - ful - ness that
 faith - ful cov - enant made, And He has sworn that

I pro - claim, And ev - ery age shall know Thy Name.
 nev - er dies, Es - tab - lished change - less in the skies.
 Da - vid's son Shall ev - er sit up - on his throne.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>4 The heavens shall join in glad accord
 To praise Thy wondrous works, O Lord;
 Thy faithfulness shall praise command
 Where holy ones assembled stand.</p> <p>5 Who in the heavenly dwellings fair
 Can with the Lord Himself compare?
 Or who among the mighty shares
 The likeness that Jehovah bears?</p> <p>6 With fear and reverence at His feet
 God's holy ones in council meet;
 Yea, more than all about His throne
 Must He be feared, and He alone.</p> | <p>7 O Thou Jehovah, God of hosts,
 What mighty one Thy likeness boasts?
 In all Thy works and vast designs
 Thy faithfulness forever shines.</p> <p>8 The swelling sea obeys Thy will,
 Its angry waves Thy voice can still;
 Thy mighty enemies are slain,
 Thy foes resist Thy power in vain.</p> <p>9 The heavens and earth, by right divine,
 The world and all therein, are Thine;
 The whole creation's wondrous frame
 Proclaims its Maker's glorious Name.</p> |
|--|---|

Lord, Thou Hast Been Our Dwelling-Place

PSALM 90

ST. CATHERINE L. M., 6 lines

Henri F. Hemy, 1864,

Arranged by James G. Walton, 1874

1 Lord, Thou hast been our dwell - ing - place Through all the a - ges
2 At Thy com - mand man fades and dies And new - born gen - er -

of our race; Be - fore the moun - tains had their birth,
a - tions rise; A thou - sand years are passed a - way,

Or e - ven Thou hadst formed the earth, From ev - er - last - ing
And all to Thee are but a day; Yea, like the watch - es

Thou art God, To ev - er - last - ing our a - bode.
of the night, With Thee the a - ges wing their flight.

- 3 Man soon yields up his fleeting breath
Before the swelling tide of death;
Like transient sleep his seasons pass,
His life is like the tender grass,
Luxuriant 'neath the morning sun
And withered ere the day is done.
- 4 Man in Thy anger is consumed,
And unto grief and sorrow doomed;
Before Thy clear and searching sight
Our secret sins are brought to light;
Beneath Thy wrath we pine and die,
Our life expiring like a sigh.
- 5 For threescore years and ten we wait,
Or fourscore years if strength be great;
But grief and toil attend life's day,
And soon our spirits fly away;
O who with true and reverent thought
Can fear Thy anger as he ought?
- 6 O teach Thou us to count our days
And set our hearts on wisdom's ways;
Turn, Lord, to us in our distress,
In pity now Thy servants bless;
Let mercy's dawn dispel our night,
And all our day with joy be bright.

Because Thy Trust is God Alone

PSALM 91

UXBRIDGE L. M.

Lowell Mason, 1830

1 Be - cause thy trust is God a - lone, Thy ref - uge
2 An - gel - ic guards at His com - mands Will bear thee

is the High - est One, No e - vil shall up -
safe - ly in their hands, Will keep thee, lest, if

on thee come, Nor plague ap - proach thy guard - ed home.
left a - lone, Thou dash thy foot a - gainst a stone.

[Stanzas 7-12]

3 Though fierce and treacherous foes assail,
Their power and wrath shall not prevail;
Their cruel strength, their venom'd spite,
Thou shalt o'ercome with conquering
might.

5 As oft as he shall call on Me,
Most gracious shall My answer
be;
I will be with him in distress,
And in his trouble I will bless.

4 Because on Me he set his love,
I will his constant Savior prove,
And since to him My Name is known,
I will exalt him as My own.

6 Complete deliverance I will give,
And honor him while he shall live;
Abundant life I will bestow,
To him My full salvation show

It is Good to Sing Thy Praises

PSALM 92

ELLESDIE (DISCIPLE) 8 7 8 7 D.

In Rev. Joshua Leavitt's *Christian Lyre*, 1831



1 It is good to sing Thy prais-es And to thank Thee, O Most High,
2 Thou hast filled my heart with gladness Thro' the works Thy hands have wrought;
3 But the good shall live be - fore Thee, Plant-ed in Thy dwell-ing - place,



Show - ing forth Thy lov - ing-kind-ness When the morn - ing lights the sky.
Thou hast made my life vic-to-rious, Great Thy works and deep Thy thought.
Fruit - ful trees and ev - er ver-dant, Nour-ished by Thy bound-less grace.



It is good when night is fall - ing Of Thy faith-ful-ness to tell,
Thou, O Lord, on high ex - alt - ed, Reign-est ev - er - more in might;
In His good-ness to the right-eous God His right-eous-ness dis-plays;



While with sweet, me-lo-dious prais-es Songs of ad - o - ra - tion swell.
All Thy en - e - mies shall per - ish, Sin be ban-ished from Thy sight.
God my rock, my strength and ref-uge, Just and true are all His ways.



O Come Before the Lord, Our King

PSALM 95

ST. PETERSBURG L. M., 6 lines

Arranged from Dimitri Bortniansky, 1752-1828

1 O come be - fore the Lord, our King, And in His pres-ence let us sing;
2 Al - might - y power the Lord maintains, Ex - alt - ed o - ver all He reigns;
3 O come and let us wor - ship now, Be - fore our Mak - er let us bow;

Let us in glad and joy - ful lays The Rock of our sal - va - tion praise;
He holds the val - leys in His hand, He makes the might - y moun - tains stand;
We are His sheep and He our God, He feeds our souls in pas - tures broad;

Be - fore Him come with thank - ful song, In joy - ful psalms His praise pro - long.
To Him be - long both land and sea, Cre - a - tor of the world is He.
He safe - ly leads us in the way; O come and heed His voice to - day.

4 Take heed and harden not your heart
As did your fathers, nor depart
From God to follow in their ways;
For with complaints instead of praise,
With doubt instead of faith confessed,
They put His mercy to the test.

5 Take heed that ye provoke Him not
As did your fathers, who forgot,
With erring heart, God's holy ways
And grieved Him all their sinful days;
To whom in wrath Jehovah sware,
My promised rest they shall not share.

Sing a New Song to Jehovah

PSALM 98

AUSTRIAN HYMN 8 7 8 7 D.

F. Joseph Haydn, 1797



1 Sing a new song to Je - ho - vah For the won - ders He has wrought,
 2 Truth and mer - cy toward His peo - ple He has ev - er kept in mind,
 3 Seas and all your ful - ness, thun - der, All earth's peo - ples, now re - joice;



His right hand and arm most ho - ly Tri - umph to His cause have brought.
 And His full and free sal - va - tion He has shown to all man - kind.
 Floods and hills, in praise u - nit - ing, To the Lord lift up your voice.



In His love and ten - der mer - cy He has made sal - va - tion known,
 Sing, O earth, sing to Je - ho - vah, Prais - es to Je - ho - vah sing;
 For, be - hold, Je - ho - vah com - eth, Robed in jus - tice and in might;



In the sight of ev - ery na - tion He His right - eous - ness has shown.
 With the swell - ing notes of mu - sic Shout be - fore the Lord, the King.
 He a - lone will judge the na - tions, And His judg - ment shall be right.



Jehovah Reigns in Majesty

PSALM 99

ELLACOMBE C. M. D.

German Melody, about 1830

1 Je - ho - vah reigns in maj - es - ty, Let all the na - tions quake;
 2 The might - y King loves jus - tice well, And eq - ui - ty or - dains;
 3 When priests and proph - ets called on God, He their pe - ti - tions heard;

He dwells be - tween the cher - u - bim, Let earth's foun - da - tions shake.
 He rules His peo - ple right - eous - ly And faith - ful - ness main - tains.
 His cloud - y pil - lar led them on, And they o - beyed His word.

Su - preme in Zi - on is the Lord, Ex - alt - ed glo - rious - ly;
 O mag - ni - fy the Lord our God, Let Him ex - alt - ed be;
 Though sending judg - ments for their sins, He par - doned gra - cious - ly;

Ye na - tions, praise His Name with awe, The Ho - ly One is He.
 In wor - ship at His foot - stool bow, The Ho - ly One is He.
 Ex - alt the Lord and wor - ship Him, The Ho - ly One is He.

O My Soul, Bless Thou Jehovah

PSALM 103

AUTUMN 8 7 8 7 D.

L. Bourgeois, 1551,

Adapted from Psalm 42 in Genevan and Dutch Psalter

1 O my soul, bless thou Je - ho - vah, All with - in me bless His Name;
2 He with ten - der mer - cies crowns thee, Sat - is - fies thy full re - quest,

Bless Je - ho - vah and for - get not All His mer - cies to pro - claim.
So that, like the tire - less ea - gle, Thou with youth re - newed art blessed.

He for - gives all thy trans - gres - sions, Heals thy sick - ness - es and pains;
Right - eous is the Lord in judg - ment Un - to all that are op - pressed;

He re - deems thee from de - struc - tion, And His love thy life sus - tains.
To His peo - ple He has ev - er Made His good - ness man - i - fest.

3 Yea, the Lord is full of mercy
And compassion for distress,
Slow to anger and abundant
In His grace and tenderness.
He will not be angry alway,
Nor will He forever chide;
Though we oft have sinned against Him,
Still His love and grace abide.


4 As the heavens are high above us,
Great His love to us has proved;
Far as east from west is distant,
He has all our sins removed.
As a father loves his children,
Feeling pity for their woes,
So the Lord to those who fear Him
Mercy and compassion shows.

Good is the Lord and Full of Kind Compassion

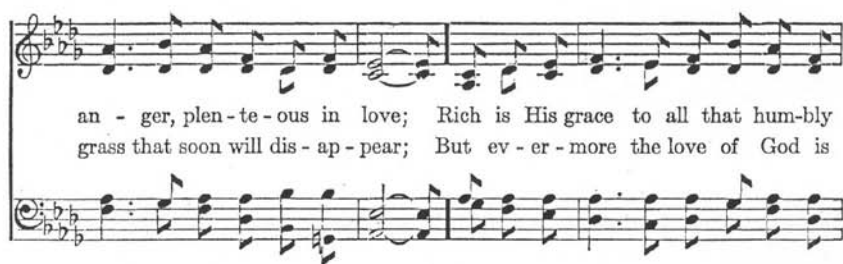
PSALM 103

LONDONDERRY 11 10 11 10 D.

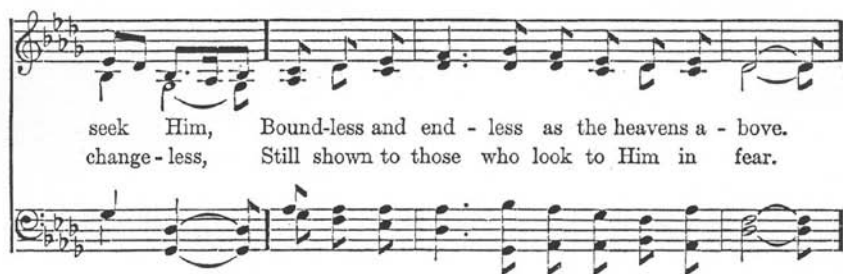
Old Irish Air



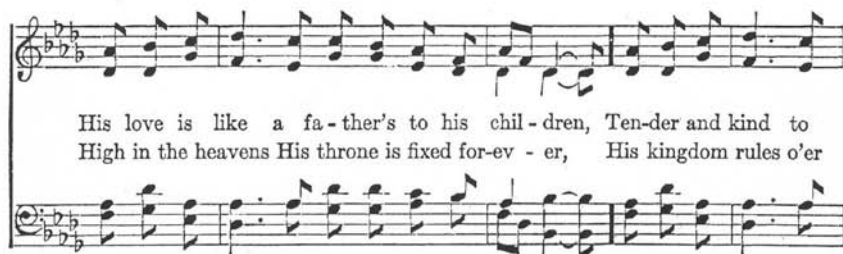
1 Good is the Lord and full of kind com - pas - sion, Most slow to
2 We fade and die like flowers that grow in beau - ty, Like ten - der



an - ger, plen - te - ous in love; Rich is His grace to all that hum - bly
grass that soon will dis - ap - pear; But ev - er - more the love of God is



seek Him, Bound - less and end - less as the heavens a - bove.
change - less, Still shown to those who look to Him in fear.



His love is like a fa - ther's to his chil - dren, Ten - der and kind to
High in the heavens His throne is fixed for - ev - er, His kingdom rules o'er

all who fear His Name, For well He knows our weak-ness and our
all from pole to pole; Bless ye the Lord through all His wide do-

frail - ty, He knows that we are dust, He knows our frame.
min - ion, Bless His most ho - ly Name, O thou my soul.

[Selected Stanzas]

O Praise the Lord, His Deeds Make Known

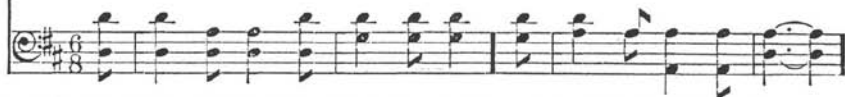
PSALM 105

SPOHR C. M. D.

Louis Spohr, 1835



1 O praise the Lord, His deeds make known, And call up - on His Name;
2 Ye chil - dren of God's cov - e - nant, Who of His grace have heard,



Sing ye to Him, His prais - es sing, His won - drous works pro - claim.
For - get not all His won - drous deeds And judg - ments of His word.



Let hearts re - joice that seek the Lord, His ho - ly Name a - dore;
The Lord our God is God a - lone, All lands His judg - ments know;



Seek ye Je - ho - vah and His strength, Seek Him for - ev - er - more.
His prom - ise He re - mem - bers still, While gen - er - a - tions go.



Rebels, Who Had Dared to Show

PSALM 107

DIX 7 7 7 7 7

Arranged from Conrad Koehler, 1838

1 Reb - els, who had dared to show Proud con - tempt of
 2 To Je - ho - vah then they cried In their trou - ble
 3 Sons of men, a - wake to praise God the Lord who

God Most High, Bound in i - ron and in woe,
 and He saved, Threw the pris - on o - pen wide
 reigns a - bove, Gra - cious in His works and ways,

Shades of death and dark - ness nigh, Hum - bled low with
 Where they lay to death en - slaved, Bade the gloom - y
 Won - drous in re - deem - ing love; I - ron bars He

toil and pain, Fell, and looked for help in vain.
 shad - ows flee, Broke their bonds and set them free.
 breaks like clay, And the bra - zen gates give way.

O Praise the Lord, for He is Good

PSALM 107

GOSHEN C. M. D.

German Melody



1 O praise the Lord, for He is good, His mer-cies still en - dure;
2 They wan-dered in the wil - der-ness, By want and hun-ger pressed;
3 O praise the Lord, ye sons of men, For all His good-ness shown;



Thus let His ran-somed tes - ti - fy, From all their foes se - cure.
In trou - ble then they cried to God, He saved their souls dis - tressed.
O praise Him for the won-drous works To you He has made known.



He has re - deemed His cap - tive saints From ad - ver - sa - ries' hands,
He made the way be - fore them plain, Him - self be - came their Guide;
The long - ing soul that turns to Him He ful - ly sat - is - fies;



Has gath - ered them and brought them back In peace from hos - tile lands.
He brought them to a cit - y strong Where-in they might a - bide.
He fills with good each hun - gering one That for His mer - cy cries.



[Selected Stanzas]

My Heart is Fixed, O God

PSALM 108

ST. THOMAS S. M.

Aaron Williams, 1763

The musical score is written in 2/2 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). It consists of two systems of music. The first system has a vocal line in the treble clef and a bass line in the bass clef. The second system also has a vocal line in the treble clef and a bass line in the bass clef. The lyrics are printed below the vocal lines.

1 My heart is fixed, O God, A grate - ful song I raise;
2 A - mong the na - tions, Lord, To Thee my song shall rise;

A - wake, O harp, in joy - ful strains, A - wake, my soul, to praise.
Thy truth is great a - bove the heavens, Thy mer - cies reach the skies.

3 Above the heavens, O God,
And over all the earth,
Let men exalt Thy glorious Name
And tell Thy matchless worth.

4 Stretch forth Thy mighty hand
In answer to our prayer,
And let Thy own beloved ones
Thy great salvation share.

5 The holy God has said,
All lands shall own My sway;
My people shall My glory share,
The heathen shall obey.

6 O who will lead our hosts
To triumph o'er the foe,
If Thou shalt cast us off, O God,
Nor with our armies go?

7 The help of man is vain,
Be Thou our Helper, Lord;
Through Thee we shall do valiantly
If Thou Thy aid afford.

O God, Whom I Delight to Praise

PSALM 109

PENTECOST L. M.

Rev. William Boyd, 1868

1 O God, whom I de - light to praise, To Thee my
2 A - gainst me slan - derous words are flung From man - y a

cry for help I raise; Be Thou my Friend and
false and ly - ing tongue; With - out a cause men

Ad - vo - cate When foes as - sail with bit - ter hate.
hurl at me The shafts of dead - ly en - mi - ty.

3 My good with evil they repay,
My love turns not their hate away;
The part of vengeance, Lord, is Thine,
To pray, and only pray, is mine.

4 Since love appeals to him in vain,
The slave of sin let him remain;
Against him let his foe be turned,
His sin be judged, his prayer be spurned.

- 5 Let sudden death upon him break,
His office let another take,
His children and his widowed wife
Pursue the homeless beggar's life.
- 6 Let creditors consume his toil
And strangers make his wealth their spoil;
Let none in pity heed his claim;
Cut off his race, blot out his name.
- 7 His parents' sins be not forgot
Till Thou from earth his memory blot,
Since he remembered not to show
Compassion to the sons of woe.
- 8 He cursing loved and blessing loathed;
Unblest, with cursing he is clothed;
For thus the justice of the Lord
My adversaries will reward.
- 9 O God, the Lord, for Thy Name's sake
Let me of Thy good grace partake;
My need is great, and great Thou art
To heal my wounded, stricken heart.
- 10 With failing strength I fast and pine,
Like shadows swift my days decline,
And when my foes my weakness see
They shake the head in scorn at me.
- 11 O Lord my God, Thy help I crave,
In Thy great lovingkindness save;
Before my foes Thy mercy show;
That Thou dost help me make them know.
- 12 What though they curse, if Thou wilt bless?
Then joy shall banish my distress,
And shame shall overwhelm the foes
Who would Thy servant's way oppose.
- 13 Thanksgiving to the Lord I raise,
The multitude shall hear my praise,
For by the needy God will stand
To save them from oppression's hand.

The Lord Unto His Christ Has Said

PSALM 110

ALL SAINTS NEW C. M. D.

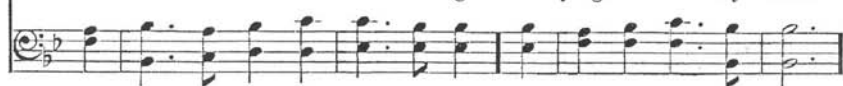
Henry S. Cutler, 1872



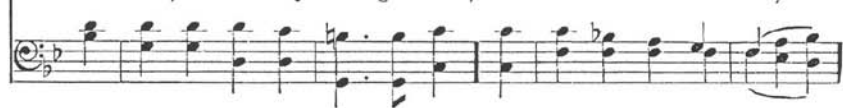
1 The Lord un - to His Christ has said, Sit Thou at My right hand
 2 Thy peo - ple will be glad - ly Thine When Thou shalt come in might,
 3 Thou shalt sub-due the kings of earth With God at Thy right hand;



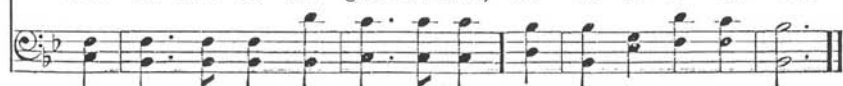
Un - til I make Thy en - e - mies Sub - mit to Thy com - mand.
 Like dawn - ing day, like hope - ful youth, With ho - ly beau - ty bright.
 The na - tions Thou shalt rule in might And judge in ev - ery land.



A scap - ter pros - pered by the Lord Thy might - y hand shall wield;
 A priest - hood that shall nev - er end The Lord has giv - en Thee;
 The Christ, re - freshed by liv - ing streams, Shall nei - ther faint nor fall,



From Zi - on Thou shalt rule the world, And all Thy foes shall yield.
 This He has sworn, and ev - er - more Ful - filled His word shall be.
 And He shall be the glo - rious Head, Ex - alt - ed o - ver all.



O Give the Lord Whole-Hearted Praise

PSALM 111

GERMANY L. M.

From William Gardiner's *Sacred Melodies*, 1815

1 O give the Lord whole - heart - ed praise, To Him thanks -
 2 His saints de - light to search and trace His might - y
 3 The won - drous works that God has wrought His peo - ple

giv - ing I will bring; With all His peo - ple
 works and won - drous ways; Ma - jes - tic glo - ry,
 ev - er keep in mind, His works with grace and

I will raise My voice and of His glo - ry sing.
 bound-less grace, And right - eous - ness His work dis - plays.
 mer - cy fraught, Re - veal - ing that the Lord is kind.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>4 God's promise shall forever stand,
 He cares for those who trust His word;
 Upon His saints His mighty hand
 The wealth of nations has conferred.</p> | <p>6 From Him His saints' redemption came;
 His covenant sure no change can know;
 Let all revere His holy Name
 In heaven above and earth below.</p> |
| <p>5 His works are true and just indeed,
 His precepts are forever sure;
 In truth and righteousness decreed,
 They shall forevermore endure.</p> | <p>7 In reverence and in godly fear
 Man finds the gate to wisdom's ways;
 The wise His holy Name revere;
 Through endless ages sound His praise.</p> |

Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

PSALM 150

WELLESLEY 8 7 8 7

Lizzie S. Tourjee, 1878

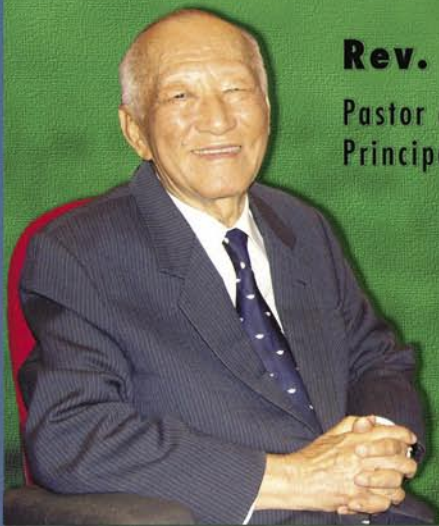
1 Hal - le - lu - jah! Hal - le - lu - jah! In His
 2 Hal - le - lu - jah! Praise Je - ho - vah For His
 3 Hal - le - lu - jah! Praise Je - ho - vah With the

tem - ple God be praised; In the high and heaven - ly
 might - y acts of fame; Ex - cel - lent His might and
 trum - pet's joy - ful sound; Praise with harp and praise with

plac - es Be the sound - ing an - them raised.
 great - ness; Fit - ting prais - es then pro - claim.
 vi - ol, Let His glo - rious praise a - bound.

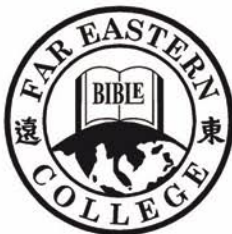
4 Hallelujah! Praise Jehovah,
 With the flute His praises sing;
 Praise Him with the clanging cymbals,
 Let them with His praises ring.

5 Hallelujah! Hallelujah!
 All that breathe, Jehovah praise;
 Let the voices God has given
 Joyful anthems to Him raise.



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