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IN THE
PSALMS

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STUDIES
IN THE
PSALMS

Volume Two (73-150)

JOSEPH BRYANT
ROTHERHAM

(Translator of "The Emphasized Bible")

Paraphrase by
KENNETH N. TAYLOR
from the *Living Psalms And Proverbs*

Questions for Discussion by
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TABLES.

TABLE I.

TRANSLITERATION OF HEBREW CHARACTERS INTO ENGLISH.

No.	Name.	Form.	Sign.	Form.	Sign.		No.	Name.	Form.	Sign.	Form.	Sign.	
1	aleph	א	,	...	...		13	mem	מ	m	final ם	m	
2	beth	ב	b	soft ב	bh, v		14	nun	נ	n	final ן	n	
3	gimel	ג	g	soft ג	gh		15	samech	ס	s	...	...
4	daleth	ד	d	soft ד	dh	like th in "then"	16	ayin	ע	'	...	...
5	he	ה	h	...	...		17	pe	פ	p	soft פ	ph	
6	waw	ו	w	...	u	when a vowel	18	zadhe	צ	z	...	...
7	zayin	ז	z	...	...		19	koph	כ	k	...	...
8	heth	ח	h	...	...		20	resh	ר	r	...	...
9	tét	ט	t	...	...		21	sin or shin	ש	s	...	...
10	yodh	י	y	...	i	when a vowel	22	tau	ת	t	soft ת	th	as th in "thin"
11	kaph	כ	k	soft כ	kh								
12	lamed	ל	l	...	...						

The above Table may be put to an interesting special use. It will enable the merely English reader to trace the similarity of certain Hebrew letters, as the well-known cause of errors of transcription. For example, he can perceive how minute is the difference in form between *daleth* and *resh*, and so how easily "silenced" might creep in where "uplifted" should have stood, or *vice-versa*, in 131² (see note there); and similarly how readily *kaph* should have usurped the place *beth* in 150².

N.B.—The vowel *é* may be pronounced as *a* in father; and *é* as *e* in there.

TABLE II.

DIVINE NAMES, AS USED IN THE PSALMS, AND GENERALLY REGARDED AS INDICATING THE FORMATION OF SUCCESSIVE COLLECTIONS OF PSALMS.

	JEHOVAH ^a	YAH ^b	ELOHIM ^c (God)	ELOAH ^d (God)	EL ^e (God)	ADONAI ^f (Sov. Lord)	ELYON ^g (Most High)
Bk. I. (1-41)	272	—	15	1	17	12	4
Bk. II. (42-72)	30	2	164	1	15	18	4
Bk. III. (73-89)	44	2	43	—	24	15	9
Bk. IV. (90-106)	103	6	—	—	9	1	4
Bk. V. (107-150)	236	26	7	2	10	7	1

Obs. 1. The choice of one or other of these Divine Names seems generally to have been determined by intrinsic fitness. (See 91⁷, 191⁷, 831⁸, 1191¹³).

Obs. 2. But occasionally shows an overruling adaptation to time, place, or purpose, by author or editor. (Cp. 14 w. 53; 401²⁻¹⁷ w. 70; and note all Book II.)

Obs. 3. Book I. is prevalently Jehovistic; Book II., Elohist; Book III., about equally balanced; Book IV., wholly Jehovistic; and Book V., mainly Jehovistic and Liturgical.

^a Prop. "Yahweh." ^b Abbrev. of "Yahweh." ^c Pl. of excellence, when absolutely used.

^d Sing. of Elohim. ^e Or "Mighty One." ^f Conventional pron. for Divine name.

^g Once used of Davidic King.

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TABLE IV.—ABBREVIATIONS

Aram. : Aramean.

A.V. : Authorized version.

Br. : Briggs.

CMm. : Chief Musician's mark.

Cod. : Codex = written copy.

cp. : Compare.

Del. : Delitzsch.

Dr. : Driver.

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

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

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

God = Elohim.

GOD = El.

God = Eloah.

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

Intro. : Introduction to this work.

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

Kp. : Kirkpatrick.

Lm. : Librarian's mark.

mf. : More freely.

ml. : More literally.

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

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

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

TABLES

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

P.B.V.: Prayer Book version.

Per.: Perowne.

perh.: Perhaps.

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

prob.: Probably.

Read: In margin of M.T.

R.V.: Revised version.

Sep.: Septuagint (early Greek version).

shd.: Should.

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

Syr.: Syriac.

T.G.: Tregelles' Gesenius.

U.: Usually.

Vul.: Vulgate (Latin).

w.: with.

Written: In text of M.T.

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

THE PSALMS

BOOK THE THIRD

PSALM 73

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Temptation, arising from the Prosperity of the Lawless,
Triumphantly Overcome.

ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-5, Under Protest, the Psalmist Confesses how Nearly he had Fallen, by Observing the Prosperity of the Lawless. Stanza II., vers. 6-9, The Evil Wrought in the Lawless Themselves by their Prosperity. Stanza III., vers. 10-14, The Evil Wrought in Others, breeding Sceptical Discontent. Stanza IV., vers. 15-17, The Psalmist's Recoil from the Natural Effect of such a Frank but Incomplete Statement, leads him to Seek More Light. Stanza V., vers., 18-20, The Startling Picture which More Light Reveals. Stanzas VI, VII, VIII, vers. 21, 22; 23, 24; 25, 26, The Psalmist Shames Away his Temptation in three stanzas of great power. Stanza IX., vers. 27, 28, A Final Contrast, Culminating in Public Song.

(Lm.) Psalm—By Asaph.

- 1 After all God is good to Israel
to the pure in heart.
- 2 But as for me
my feet had well-nigh stumbled,
my steps had almost slipped;
- 3 For I was envious of the boasters,
at the prosperity of the lawless I kept looking.
- 4 For unfettered they are,
sound¹ and fat is their body:

1. So *Gt.*—*Gn.* Cp. O.G. 359a.

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- 5 Of the travail of common men have they none,
nor with the earth-born are they wont to be smitten.
- 6 Therefore a necklace for them is haughtiness,
violence doth envelope them as their garment:
- 7 Their iniquity² hath proceeded from fatness,
the imaginations of the heart have overflowed:
- 8 They mock and wickedly speak oppression,
from on high they speak:
- 9 They have set in the heavens their mouth,
and their tongue marcheth through the earth.
- 10 Therefore his people turn back hither,
and waters of abundance are discovered³ by them;
- 11 And they say—"How doth GOD know?
and is there knowledge in the Most High?
- 12 Lo! these are lawless men;
and yet secure for an age they have attained wealth!
- 13 After all in vain have I cleansed my heart,
and bathed in pureness my palms;⁴
- 14 And been smitten all the day,
and been rebuked morning by morning!"
- 15 "If" thought I "I must recount such things as these⁵
lo! the circle of thy sons shall I have betrayed."
- 16 So I began to think in order to understand this,—
a travail was that in mine eyes:—
- 17 Until I could enter the great sanctuary⁶ of GOD,
could give heed to their future.⁷
- 18 After all in slippery places dost thou set them,
thou hast let them fall into ruins:
- 19 How have they become a desolation in a moment,
come to an end been consumed in consequence of terrors!
- 20 As a dream by one who awakeneth
Sovereign Lord! when thou bestirrest thyself their image
wilt thou despise.

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

3. So some cod. (w. Sep., Syr., Vul.)—Gn. M.T.: "drained out"—Dr. "Supped up"—Del.

4. With special allusion to bribery. "Here evidently referring to the keeping of the palms clean from bribery, robbery and just those forms of violence (ver. 6b) and oppression (ver. 8b) by which the wicked had to a great extent gained their wealth and prosperity"—Br.

5. So, conjecturally, O.G. 456a.

6. Ml.: "holy places," or (possibly) "holy things."

7. Cp. on 37:37, 38.

STUDIES IN PSALMS

- 21 If my heart should become embittered,
and in my feelings⁸ I should be wounded
22 Then should I be brutish and without knowledge,
a stupid beast⁹ should I have become with thee.
23 And yet I am continually with thee,
thou hast grasped my right hand:
24 By thy counsel wilt thou guide me,
and afterwards gloriously take me.
25 Who (is there) for me in the heavens?
and with thee¹⁰ I have no delight on the earth.
26 When have failed my flesh and my heart
the rock of my heart and my portion is God to the ages.
27 For lo! they who have gone far from thee shall perish,
thou wilt have exterminated every unchaste wanderer from
thee.
28 But as for me approach to God for me is blessedness.
I have fixed in Adonai Jehovah my refuge,
to tell of all thy praises
in the gates of the daughter of Zion.¹¹

(Nm.)

PARAPHRASE

PSALM 73

How good God is to Israel—to those whose hearts are pure.

2 But as for me, I came *so* close to the edge of the cliff!
My feet were slipping and I was almost gone.

3 For I was envious of the prosperity of the proud and
wicked.

4 Yes, all through life their road is smooth!¹ They grow
sleek and fat.

5 They aren't always in trouble and plagued with problems
like everyone else,

6 So their pride sparkles like a jeweled necklace, and their
clothing is woven of cruelty!

7 These fat cats have everything their hearts could ever
wish for!

8. U.: "reins."

9. Ml.: "A hippopotamus"—"a plump colossus of flesh . . . emblem of
colossal stupidity"—Del.

10. "Having thee"—Dr.

11. Thus found in Sep. and Vul., as in 9:14.

1. Or, "they never have any pains."

STUDIES IN PSALMS

8 They scoff at God and threaten His people. How proudly they speak!

9 They boast against the very heavens, and their words strut through the earth.

10 And so God's people are dismayed and confused, and drink it all in.

11 "Does God realize what is going on?" they ask.

12 "Look at these men of arrogance; they never have to lift a finger—theirs is a life of ease; and all the time their riches multiply."

13 Have I been wasting my time? Why take the trouble to be pure?

14 All I get out of it is trouble and woe—every day and all day long!

15 If I had really said that, I would have been a traitor to Your people.

16 Yet it is so hard to explain it—this prosperity of those who hate the Lord.

17 Then one day I went into God's sanctuary to meditate, and thought about the future of these evil men.

18 What a slippery path they are on—suddenly God will send them sliding over the edge of the cliff and down to their destruction:

19 An instant end to all their happiness, and eternity of terror.

20 Their present life is only a dream! They will awaken to the truth as one awakens from a dream of things that never really were!

21 When I saw this, what turmoil filled my heart!

22 I saw myself so stupid and so ignorant; I must seem like an animal to You, O God.

23 But even so, You love me! You are holding my right hand!

24 You will keep on guiding me all my life with Your wisdom and counsel; and afterwards receive me into the glories of heaven!²

25 Whom have I in heaven but You? And I desire no one on earth as much as You!

26 My health fails; my spirits droop, yet God remains! He is the strength of my heart; He is mine forever!

2. Or, "You will bring me unto honor."

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27 But those refusing to worship God will perish, for He destroys those serving other gods.

28 But as for me, I get as close to Him as I can! I have chosen Him and I will tell everyone about the wonderful ways He rescues me.

EXPOSITION

It is fortunate that the uniform rendering of the expressive particle *ak*, in vers. 1, 13, and 18 of this psalm, has led to such a striking commencement of a poem which embraces a precious mental history; since, by the combination, in that little word, of an affirmative with a restrictive meaning, it so happily opens the whole case, as to suggest to Perowne the following amplification: "Yes, it is so; after all, God is good, notwithstanding all my doubts." This entitles him to say of the psalmist: "That the result of the conflict is stated before the conflict itself is described. There is no parade of doubt merely as doubt. He states *first*, and in the most natural way, the *final* conviction of his heart."

The next point of importance is suggested by a comparison of 81:26 ("To the pure thou didst shew thyself pure") with the final clause of the psalmist's first statement—to the pure in heart. Only a pure mind can vindicate a pure God. In confessing how nearly he had lost his confidence in God's goodness, the psalmist admits that his thoughts had, in a measure, become defiled: he had looked, he had lusted—without taking moral quality into account. Happily, he looked again: until he saw something more than prosperity; and that later look helped to clarify his thoughts. But at first he lingeringly viewed the glitter and the show, until he felt his feet slipping from under him. His attention had clearly been arrested by fascinating examples of godless prosperity: examples shewing the absence of fettering restrictions, sound health, freedom from common troubles, immunity from providential inflictions. It should here be noted how a premature and disturbing notice of the "death" of those well-to-do godless men is avoided, by a critical revision of the Hebrew text, which after all amounts to no more than a re-grouping of the Hebrew letters. Premature such an allusion would certainly be; "for surely," says Delitzsch, "the poet cannot begin the description of the prosperity of the ungodly with the painlessness of their death, and only then come to speak of their healthfulness." Moreover, when afterwards, in vers. 18, 19, the psalmist does

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undoubtedly confront the death of the lawless, it is very doubtful whether he intends to imply that it is painless. At all events, in his first stanza he confines himself to the fascination of the godless lives to which his attention had been repeatedly drawn.

In the second stanza, however, while the fascination still lingers, certain repulsive features begin to obtrude themselves. A *necklace* and a *flowing robe* are, no doubt, signs of opulence and social importance; but, when the former of these is *haughtiness* and the latter is *violence*, then, alas! for those who have to suffer from them. *Fatness* generates *iniquity*: perverse *imaginations overflow* in speech. *Mocking* at things sacred and divine, such assuming and insolent men *speaking oppression*, as their appropriate dialect. With open profanity, their *mouth* sets divine law at defiance, and *their tongue* presumes to propose laws concerning all men and things in the *earth* to please themselves—in their unmitigated selfishness. Such is the purport of the second stanza. It is the result of a second look at the prosperous ungodly. It is proof of a determination to look even worldly fascinations full in the face. The discovery is already being made that it is not all gold that glitters; and, as the result, the snare is already nearly broken.

But, as stanza three shews, there is another source of danger to be considered: "WHAT OTHER PEOPLE SAY" sometimes perverts our own judgment. What, then, *do* they say? let us not fear to examine it. That these prosperous lawless ones wield a great influence, is, indeed, too apparent. Not only do they influence their own *clan*—each wealthy prince *his own people*,—as some expositors take ver. 10a to intimate; but even among *His people* that is, God's,—some there may be who are seduced into the expectation of discovering *waters of abundance* where these enviable wealthy men have already found them: And so these admirers reason themselves into scepticism. It is shallow reasoning, but it is taking. "*Look you*," say these misguided on-lookers, "*these* are such as good people call '*lawless men*'; and yet see how they *get on*: see how, *for a life-time*, they have been *secure* from providential visitation, and to what *wealth* they have attained! Talk of Providence—where is it? Does God—if there be one—know anything about it?" So much for vers. 10-12 of this stanza.

It is probably best to take vers. 13, 14 as still continuing to describe "what other people say" who are unduly under the influence of the prosperous lawless ones: only, now, another class

PSALM 73

of them comes into view—namely the hitherto punctilious people, more alive to their religious “profit and loss account” than to abstract reasonings about the Divine Government. We need not deny that, by voicing the precise difficulty felt by these whining and selfish religionists, the psalmist, at the same time, provides that his own transient doubts of the like kind shall find expression. Suffice it, that the pernicious influence of the ungodly rich has been amply described.

But it is time that the tables were turned, and a decisive solution of the problem were given; and so, here, at ver. 15, we come to the second part of the psalm. It is observable, that the psalmist resumes where he left off; namely, with the consideration of what others would say—only now the “others” are a very different class from those just described. He now brings before him those whom, in their collective capacity, he terms *the circle of God’s sons*, amongst whom, therefore, a sense of the Divine Fatherhood is still preserved. “What will these say,” he seems to ask, “if I frankly tell them of these admirations of the godless rich, and these shallow reasonings about their example; if, at least, I tell the story as though *I for myself* seriously felt its spell? Will they not be shocked that I have so betrayed the honour of our Divine Fatherhood?” Happy the reasoner who has a circle of brethren from whom such a counteracting and healing influence may be counted upon; so that, to think of frankly telling *them* of his mental difficulties, is to feel those difficulties more than half solved by anticipation. Thrice happy was Asaph, that he was one of such a companionship of *pure hearted* Israelites—the more so, because he was both a *thinker* and a *prophet*: as a thinker, able to appreciate the mental *travail* involved in working out a difficult problem (ver. 16); and, as a prophet, knowing by experience how a sudden flash of light from the Spirit of God could at once remove difficulties which no mere thinking could solve (ver. 17). Hence, as he here intimates, although he at once *began to think*, he was not sanguine of the results to be expected from that process alone: he counted much more for success upon such a REVELATION as he felt would be more likely to be vouchsafed amidst the congenial influences of the *great sanctuary of God* than elsewhere: *the great sanctuary*, with its leisure and quiet, with its sacred associations, with its solemn sacrifices, with its inspiring music, and especially with its songs old and new, some of which, like 37 and 49, might be found to have anticipated his present difficulties, or at least to

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favour the making of fresh discoveries by his own mind. It should be noted, however, that the psalmist's late experience and present ponderings are already putting him on the right track for search; that, in fact, he knows the precise point on which he needs illumination: namely the *future* of these ungodly prosperous men: *until I could consider their future*. We do wisely to be thus careful to observe precisely where this stanza breaks off—the exact point to which it leads up; and there can be no mistake that now the language of the psalm leads over from reflection and resolve to that of discovery. In ver. 17 it is resolve: in ver. 18 it is discovery. The discovery is introduced by the significant term *after all*, to which reference has already been made; and the disclosure is thenceforward continued in the form of direct address to Deity. Note the wording: *thou dost set them—thou hast let them fall—when thou bestirrest thyself—their image wilt thou despise*. Plainly it is now the confident language of direct address to Deity. But the language is changed, because the scene has changed: the psalmist is now in *the great sanctuary*, and feels himself to be in the very presence of God, and by the confident directness and assurance of his words shews that he has now *received the further light* which he was resolved to seek concerning *the future* of these ungodly prosperous men. Thus, then, every word of the ensuing stanza demands our most careful attention—and our utmost confidence.

“*After all*,”—he exclaims, in the very language of discovery: “after all the wealth and all the power and show; after all the admiration and envy and the vain reasoning; after all the appearance of thine indifference, as though thou knewest not how thou wast being set at nought: *after all*, thou hast been very much in this very thing, carrying forward thy holy designs. For thou hast been *setting* these very men whom their fellows have so much envied, *in slippery places of uttermost peril*.” We naturally and rightly supply, in undertone, from our other and it may be fuller knowledge of the fairness and equity of God's ways, the important qualification: “Thus—for sins already committed—hast thou been punishing them for their presumption in wilfully persisting in doing without thee.” And it was well, therefore, that we detected, in the first lines sketching the *image* of these men, the note of previous self-determination to evil: they had already become *unfettered*, having brushed aside Divine law and silenced the voice of conscience. “As a punishment for this previous course of sin and self-hardening; and (should we not

PSALM 73

add?) as a last Divine resort to convince them of their folly: *thou dost set them in slippery places.*" Alas! in the actual circumstances revealed to the psalmist, this punishment avails nothing for reformation, but takes effect as punishment with destructive effect. With startling fulness and vigour is this disclosure made: "*Thou hast let them fall into ruins—like a bowing wall which comes down of its own weight with a crash, its ruin being sudden and complete.*" With this revelation the psalmist's mind is deeply impressed—as its exclamatory form shows: "*How have they become a desolation in a moment—so complete! so sudden!*" The final catastrophe is further described by terms piled up for effect: *They have come to an end, have been consumed,*—how could complete destruction be more strongly expressed? But, to this, the significant addition is made: *in consequence of terrors*—who shall venture to say what these terrors are? As in Job 18:11, 14, 24:17, 27:20, 30:15, they may be terrors within the bounds of this life, and closing it; or, as in Ezekiel 26:21, 27:36, 28:19, they may be terrors connected with the Hadean continuation of existence, and ending it. That they do *terminate* the *being* of these erewhile *boasters*, is the one thing which the disclosure makes plain. We have not yet done with this description. Let us complete our notice of it, before we turn back to ask what it all means. With a simple oriental audacity which has in it no particle of irreverence, the psalmist represents the *Sovereign Lord* as having been *asleep* while these godless rich have been indulging their lust of wealth and pomp and power—and cruelty: by all which we understand no more than that Adonai had *interfered* as little as *though* he had been asleep. But, working out this figurative vein, he says: "*as a dream* (is despised) *by one who awakeneth, Sovereign Lord! when thou bestirrest thyself* (to deal with their case as it demands and deserves) *their image wilt thou despise.*" Here, undoubtedly, much depends upon a right appreciation of the word *image*; since, whatever it is, it is something which Adonai *despises*, and it becomes us to be careful how we define an object of avowed Divine *aversion*! Scholars are not quite agreed in their renderings of this instance of the Hebrew *zelem*. The R.V., Perowne and Leeser follow the A.V. in translating it "image"; but Carter and Delitzsch represent it by "shadow," Driver by "semblance," Briggs and Wellhausen (in P.B.) by "phantom." Now, undoubtedly, there is one passage, namely 39:6, in which—by reason of the context—some such rendering

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is required; and it is further undeniable that the notion of "shadow" lies at the root of the original word; for which very reason, however, it is submitted that "image" is the better translation in the present instance; not only as connecting his passage with the account of man's creation in Genesis (1:26, 27, 9:6), and usefully reminding us in passing that even there man's likeness to his Maker—consisting in his capacity to rule (cp. Exposition on Ps. 8) was after all little more than a "shadow" of the Divine capacity and power to govern; but more particularly and most vitally that the very word "image" is *the* term which takes us to the heart of this most weighty passage. "*Their image*—as a mere caricature of thine own, it is, O Sovereign Lord, which *thou wilt despise!*" Assuredly, it is not the mere frailty of man's ordinary mortal condition, which God despises; nor is it the attenuated semblance of man's former self which alone can penetrate hades "as far as the circle of his fathers" (49:19), which God despises. Out of the former, by transformation, he can raise up new men, mighty as angels and immortal as his own Son; and unto the latter, as still "the work of his own hands," he may come to have a "longing," as Job faintly hoped (14:15). Therefore it is neither of these semblances, as such, that Adonai despises; for *despises* is a strong word, and in neither of the above cases is it consistent with the known condescension of "a faithful Creator" (1 P. 4:19). No! far other than merely these, is the object which here starts forth from the canvas as, so to speak, exciting the contempt of an awakened and affronted God. It is the primary image of God, wickedly, wantonly disfigured. Even we, under Asaph's sympathetic guidance, have, already—within the compass of this psalm—looked on that "image" and loathed it: the *unfettered* free-thinker and free-liver; the fat, sleek pamperer of his precious self; the so-called pet of Providence, stranger alike to ordinary and extraordinary trouble; deeming it an adornment to be *haughty*, and a becoming robe to be *violent*; whose gross mind concocts evil schemes; whose vile mouth propounds and promotes and defends unblushing villainies; whose tongue talks as if all the earth had been made for his convenience—a man therefore who practically deems himself to be his own God! *alas turned devil!* Have we by this time learned to detest him? How great a wonder, then, that a holy God should have left him to himself so long!

Such then, in full, is the description given by Asaph of the revelation which he had received in *the great sanctuary of God*,

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concerning *the future* of the lawless rich bearing this debased *image* of God.

And now what does it all mean? Does it merely mean *sudden* death; or does it rather mean *total* death; an utter destruction of personal being? If any elect to say, "Merely sudden death"; may we not turn upon them with the question, how mere sudden death meets the case? Suppose we could (as we cannot, for want of evidence) accept it as an observed fact, that such presumptuous men do uniformly die sudden deaths; how would that alone solve this mystery of providence? Is there, after all, any such broad distinction to be drawn between slow death and sudden death? What does it signify so much, whether a man is struck down in a moment, or whether he slowly wastes and wears away? It is not at all plain that there is anything material in the difference. Besides, it may with confidence be affirmed, that this is not the direction in which the text points. Certainly, suddenness is there—at least relative suddenness (*in a moment*). But the point emphasized by the accumulated terms of the passage is rather the completeness of the destruction, than the suddenness of the death. Indeed, it looks as though the word "death" had been carefully avoided; but while the common word "death" is avoided, the word *terrors* is emphatically brought in, and some scope must naturally be given in which those terrors may be supposed to effect the terrible overthrow intended: an overthrow so terrible and complete that before the psalm is ended, it is termed both a *perishing* and an *extermination*. In fine, the impression made by the whole passage is, that it is not what is understood as an ordinary sudden death that is meant; but an awful infliction of the utter destruction of the whole being by some unendurable manifestation of Divine wrath: as a Christian, availing himself of New Testament language, might say,—the first and second deaths being blended in one, and the terrors including the wrath of the Lamb (Rev. 6:16, 17). These may be regarded as here foreshortened for the practical purpose of summary statement, and because the then current knowledge of the future could not bear the introduction of details. Reverting to what the O.T. itself does teach, we may usefully remind ourselves of that great passage in Isaiah (57:16) which plainly intimates that there is possible such a protracted manifestation of Divine anger, as no man could sustain; and though, there, the intention seems to be, to let in a hope of mercy, yet here the intention is equally visible of excluding such hope.

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Of course, if death were ordinarily to be taken as equivalent to total extinction of personal being, all this would amount to nothing; and our exposition would have to remain unfinished. But, assuredly, we may, with the general consent of Bible readers, dismiss that devastating conception of death as extravagantly unwarrantable; and therefore may reaffirm our present contention that the utter desolation and final extinction of personal being is the true meaning of this passage: first, because it completely fills up the terms employed, and, second, because it solves the providential mystery it was given to explain. After such a revelation, who dare pray to be rich, who can desire to be set in such slippery places? The temptation is gone; and therefore it follows that the answer is complete. In further confirmation of all which, as thus far advanced, suffice it to call attention to the broad, fundamental harmony which this exposition of the Psalms unfolds. In the first of this series of psalms, 37, 49, 73, it was submitted that for the righteous man *there is a future*: for transgressors there is *not*! The confident assurance of the truth of that conclusion has helped us so far through this psalm and nothing else could. That conclusion stands as an immovable principle. Details are yet needed, but some particulars are already being supplied. Here we see not only the principle confirmed; but the detailed and penetrating lesson taught, that *even in this life the Divine image may be so defaced and caricatured as to become an offence to the Almighty and ripe for destruction, as a consequence of unknown terrors!*

In at length advancing to Stanza VI. of this psalm (vers. 21-22), we have to express immeasurable obligation to Delitzsch for suggesting and defending the hypothetic colouring thrown upon it. How disconcerting it would have been to find the psalmist still floundering in (or, if not floundering in, at least lingering over) the doubts, from which the vision in the great sanctuary was given to deliver him! How delightful, by contrast and by helpfulness onward, to perceive that he is now merely shaming his former doubts into perpetual silence. "How unmanly!" he is now heard saying, "to cherish such feelings any longer! How unworthy of the name of a *man*, to harbour such thoughts any more!" He had modestly assumed to be a *thinker*, before he could find opportunity to go into the great sanctuary of God. But now that he has been thither—or is still perhaps remaining there, since his address to God is as yet unbroken—he thinks again, and to some purpose; and his thought is, what

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"a colossus of stupidity" he would be, not now to be satisfied: "I, a man, who can converse with thee, and receive such counsel as thou hast now been giving me!" Furthermore, this merely hypothetic repetition of the old temptation enables us to advance at once, at the close of this stanza, to the natural rending of the preposition (*with thee*—Gk. rough breathing '*immaka*') which has to do such important service in the very next line, namely the first of Stanza VII. The old doubt only hypothetically put, enables us to anticipate by saying "with thee," here at the close of ver. 22: "Being, as I am, *with thee*, how stupid such a doubt would now appear." And then he can follow on in ver. 23 by saying, *And yet I am continually with thee* ('*immaka*'). In contrast with the smoothness of which, how awkward and even suspicious to have to render the same preposition first "before thee" (ver. 22) and then "with thee" (ver. 23). We are thus particular down to a particle, because of the extreme value of Delitzsch's hypothetical translation of vers. 21 and 22: which, thus defended, may now be dismissed.

Stanza VII. thus at once bears us along into the midstream of near fellowship with God and of consequent victorious confidence in Him. "*Thou hast grasped my right hand*, by thus disclosing to me that which for ever shames into silence my doubts. *By Thy counsel wilt thou* (continue to do as thou hast now done) *guide me, And afterwards* (leaving us easily to supply the thought, 'after life's journey') *gloriously take me.*" He knows not precisely *how* it will be done, but *glorious in the manner of it* will it assuredly be; and the decisive *act* done, he says, will be to *take me*, even as Enoch was taken to be with God; or, as Ps. 49:15—if just sung in "the great sanctuary"—may have suggested, "*wilt take me* (out of the hand of hades, whether by transformation preventing death, or by resurrection reversing death)" The point of this revelation clearly cannot lie in details, which are confessedly not supplied; but in the broad and simple fact announced, of being *taken* by God. Obviously all turns on the character of him who takes. He who, as an enemy whom I hate, captures me, makes of me a slave, and excites my utmost fears; but he who, as a friend whom I admire and love, captures me, at the same time enraptures me, delights me, and excites my highest hopes. All, then, here turns on the character of God, and of his relation to me. And of this, the next stanza sings.

In language of extreme simplicity and brevity—like the

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lispings of a babe that has not yet learned to speak—and yet of extreme beauty, because everything is suggested that is not expressed, the psalmist (Stanza VII.) says, *Who—for me—in the heavens? And—with thee: having thee—*(whether there or here) *I have no delight on the earth* (where are, or have been, all I have known and loved). Of course, the language is comparative, even while it shrinks from comparison; but the one clear thing which it reveals is the delight in his God now felt, as never before, by this pure-hearted Israelite. It is on the tide of this delight in God himself that he is carried over into the unknown, and is moved to express a conception to convey which no exact words had yet been coined; and the approximate words to express which amount to a contradiction in terms: *When have failed my flesh and my heart—*(in other words, my body and my mind)—*the rock of my heart and my portion* (then and on and ever) *is God age-abidingly*. The mind that rests on that rock cannot sink. The essential Ego will somehow survive the wreck; if it have nothing else in which to inhere, it will inhere in God, or else a sorry *portion* would he be! But, indeed, we have gone too far, in saying that for this conception no language had yet been coined—although, it is true, Asaph may not have been familiar with it: “Into thy hands I commit my spirit” (31:5) probably is a prayer which exactly meets the case, and at all events was honoured by being used by Jesus and by his first martyr Stephen. Nevertheless, in any case, love finds out how to make itself understood; and absolute triumph over death is here radiant as the rising sun. Perfect love to a perfect God gives the victory: the nearest possible *approach* to that God (Stanza IX.) constitutes the highest attainable *blessedness*, and must ever prompt the most joyful *songs of Zion* whether earthly or heavenly.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Read verse one and discuss whether or not the conclusion to the problem is here stated.
2. There are several Psalms which discuss the problem of the prosperity of the wicked. (Cf. Ps. 27 and 49) If it was solved before, why raise the issue again? Are there different facets of the problem in each Psalm? Discuss.
3. If all we know about heaven was that which is contained in the Old Testament, how easy would it be for us to endure the arrogant prosperity of the wicked? Discuss.

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4. Into which "sanctuary" did the Psalmist go? Into what sanctuary can we go? Is the church building a sanctuary? Is there a better one?
5. Please be honest with yourself and give a personal answer to the several questions asked in the text: (1) "Does God realize what is going on?"; (2) "Have I been wasting my time?"; (3) "Why take the trouble to be pure?"; (4) "Whom have I in heaven but You?"; (5) "Whom do I desire on earth but Thee?"
6. A large part of the problem is in what others will see and say about the believer—Discuss.
7. Is the problem of this Psalm larger in America or in Asia or Africa or Europe? Discuss.

P S A L M 7 4

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Ruthless Injuries to the Sanctuary and Oppression in the Land
by an Enemy, call forth Expostulation with God
for his quiescence.

ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-3a, In Expostulation for Present Rejection, the Psalmist Reminds God how he had Acquired, Redeemed, and Exalted His Inheritance. Stanza II., vers. 3b-7, Profanation of the Sanctuary Described. Stanza III., vers. 8, 9, Extent of the Desolation. Stanza IV., vers. 10, 11, Renewed Expostulation with God. Stanzas V., VI., VII., vers. 12, 13; 14, 15; 16, 17, Divine Activities Aforetime in History and in Creation. Stanzas VIII., IX., X., vers. 18, 19; 20, 21; 22, 23, Earnest Pleadings for Divine Interposition.

(Lm.) An Instructive Psalm—By Asaph.

- 1 Wherefore O God hast thou cast off utterly?
wherefore smoketh thine anger against the flock of thy
shepherding?
- 2 Remember thy congregation (which) thou acquiredst
aforetime?
(which) thou redeemest to be the tribe of thine
inheritance,—
Mount Zion wherein thou didst make thy habitation,

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- 3 which thy footsteps exalted to perpetual dignity.¹
Everything hath the enemy marred in the sanctuary:
- 4 roared have thine adversaries in the midst of thy place of
meeting,
they have set up their signs for signs.
- 5 A man used to become known as one who had wielded on
high
in a thicket of trees axes!²
- 6 But now the doors³ thereof all at once
with hatchets and hammers they smite!
- 7 They have thrust into the fire thy holy things,⁴
to the ground have they profaned the habitation of thy name.
- 8 They have said in their heart—"We will force them down
altogether!"⁵
they have caused to cease all the festivals of God in the
land:⁶
- 9 Our signs we see not,
there is no longer a prophet;
nor is there with us one who knoweth how long.
- 10 How long O God shall an adversary reproach?
shall an enemy blaspheme thy name perpetually?
- 11 Wherefore shouldst thou draw back thy hand?
and thy right hand in the midst of thy bosom retain'?
- 12 And yet God was my king from aforetime,
working victories⁸ in the midst of the earth.
- 13 Thou didst divide in thy strength the sea,
didst shatter the heads of (river) monsters⁹ upon the waters:
- 14 Thou didst crush the heads of the crocodile,
didst give him as food to the creatures¹⁰ that dwell in the
deserts.

1. So Br., who says: "Requires no change in the unpointed text."

2. Supply, perhaps, in thought: "when the sanctuary was built."

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

4. So in some cod. (w. 3 ear. pr. edns.)—Gn.

5. So Del.

6. So Sep. M.T.: "They have burned up all the meeting-places of God in the land."

7. So Br. "From the midst of thy bosom (pluck it forth) and consume." So Driver and others, following M.T. and supplying "pluck forth." Ginsburg says that *kalleh*, "consume," shd. be *selah* (? "lift up," as in 68:4).

8. Or: "a great salvation" (pl. intensive).

9. So Dr.

10. Ml.: "people." Dr.: "folk" as in Prov. 30:25, 26.

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- 15 Thou didst cleave open fountain and torrent,
thou didst dry up rivers of steady flow.
- 16 Thine is the day yea thine the night,
thou didst establish light-bearer¹¹ and sun:¹²
- 17 Thou didst set up all the bounds of the earth,
summer and autumn thou didst fashion them.
- 18 Remember this! an enemy hath reproached Jehovah,
yea the people of a vile¹³ person have blasphemed thy name.
- 19 Do not give up to a wild beast the life¹⁴ of thy turtle-dove,¹⁵
the living host of thy humbled ones do not forget perpetually.
- 20 Look well to thy¹⁶ covenant,
for filled are the dark places of the land¹⁷ with the
habitations of violence.
- 21 May the crushed one not turn back confounded!
the humbled and the needy let them praise thy name.
- 22 Arise! O God O plead thine own plea,
remember the reproach of thee from the vile¹⁸ person all the
day:
- 23 Do not forget the voice of thine adversaries,—
the noise of them who rise up against thee ascending
continually.
- (Lm.) To the Chief Musician. (CMm.) "Do not destroy."

PARAPHRASE

PSALM 74

O God, why have You cast us away forever? Why is your anger hot against us—the sheep of Your own pasture?

2 Remember that we are Your people—the ones You chose in ancient times from slavery and made the choicest of Your possessions. You chose Jerusalem¹ as Your home on earth!

3 Walk through the awful ruins of the city, and see what the enemy has done to Your sanctuary.

4 There they shouted their battle cry and erected their idols to flaunt their victory.

11. Prob.: "moon."

12. Sep.: "sun and moon."

13. Or: "senseless." Cp. on Ps. 14.

14. U.: "soul."

15. Sep.: "a soul giving thanks unto thee."

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

17. Or: "earth." Cp. Intro., Chap. III., "Earth."

1. Literally, "Mount Zion."

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5, 6 Everything lies in shambles like a forest chopped to the ground. They came with their axes and sledgehammers and smashed and chopped the carved paneling,

7 And set the sanctuary on fire, and razed it to the ground—Your sanctuary, Lord.

8 "Let's wipe out every trace of God," they said, and went through the entire country burning down the assembly places where we worshiped You.

9, 10 There is nothing left to show that we are Your people. The prophets are gone, and who can say when it all will end? How long, O God, will You allow our enemies to dishonor Your name? Will You let them get away with this forever?

11 Why do You delay? Why hold back Your power? Unleash Your fist and give them a final blow.

12 God is my King from ages past; You have been actively helping me everywhere throughout the land.

13, 14 You divided the Red Sea with Your strength; You crushed the sea-god's heads! You gave him to the desert tribes to eat!

15 At Your command the springs burst forth to give Your people water; and then You dried a path for them across the everflowing Jordan.

16 Day and night alike belong to You; You made the starlight and the sun.

17 All nature is within Your hands; You make the summer and the winter too.

18 Lord, see how these enemies scoff at You. O Jehovah, an arrogant nation has blasphemed Your name.

19 O Lord, save me! Protect Your turtle-dove from the hawks.² Save Your beloved people from these beasts.

20 Remember Your promise! For the land is full of darkness and cruel men.

21 O Lord, don't let Your downtrodden people be constantly insulted. Give cause for these poor and needy ones to praise Your name!

22 Arise, O God, and state Your case against our enemies. Remember the insults these rebels have hurled against You all day long.

23 Don't overlook the cursing of these enemies of Yours; it grows louder and louder.

2. Literally, "the wild beasts."

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EXPOSITION

It is clear that the composition of this psalm was occasioned by the desecration of the Temple and the oppression of the Land by some foreign invader; but precisely which event of this kind is here intended, is uncertain. Some have confidently pointed to the time of the Maccabees, when the temple was desecrated under Antiochus: against which may be urged the standing unlikelihood that any psalm had so late an origin, and yet found its way as did this, and the rest, into the ancient Septuagint version of the Old Testament; and the particular objection that the very line in the psalm which might otherwise have seemed to point to a Maccabean origin, viz. ver. 8, "*And they have burned up all the meeting-places of God in the land,*" appears in the Sep. in the milder form, *And they have caused to cease all the festivals of God in the land.* It may be true, that the erection of synagogues cannot be traced further back than to the time of the Maccabees; but it is inconceivable that the Greek translators should have obliterated such an allusion, had it existed in their Hebrew exemplars, though quite possible that later Sopherim should have adapted the Hebrew of the old psalm, so as to conform it to later and more startling events. Others again, have advocated the time of the Chaldean invasion under Nebuchadnezzar, as having probably given birth to this psalm. And that is a possible date; although the lament over the want of a *prophet* or one who *knew how long* but ill agrees with the presence of Jeremiah and Ezekiel in those days. Even if, to avoid this awkwardness, the origin of the psalm be thrown further down the Exile, and in favour of that time the words be cited, "*Lift up thy footsteps to the perpetual desolations,*" as showing that now the desolation of Jerusalem had lasted a long time,—then it is at least disconcerting to note, what Briggs says, that the same consonants, otherwise vowel-pointed, may be read (surely more in harmony with the immediate context) *Which thy footsteps exalted to perpetual dignity.* Under these circumstances, it may be questioned whether the "Speaker's Commentary" has not more nearly hit the mark in suggesting as the probable time and occasion of origin, the invasion of the Egyptian monarch Shishak in the days of Rehoboam. In favour of this comparatively early date, may be mentioned: the care which the psalmist observes to express rather a desecration than a demolition of the temple; and the aptness of his language in vers. 5, 6 to apply to a time when the *building* of the temple

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was yet a comparatively recent event. While yet the honour of having lifted an *axe* in the Lebanon to supply cedar for the erection of the temple was well remembered, here are profane *hatchets and hammers* engaged in ruthlessly tearing off the plates of gold which covered *the doors*. It seems as though the psalm was written while this profanation was going on; and not merely concerning a conflagration viewed from afar! Given, a psalmist well remembering the glory of the erection of the temple; given also, the instinctive horror felt by such a man on occasion of the first intrusion of foreign feet within the sacred precincts;—and you have probably a more fitting psychological condition to suit the origin of this psalm than any other that can be imagined with due regard to known facts. It is difficult to say why the psalm does not contain a confession of *sin*; as the true reason why such a foreign invasion was permitted, especially as this is made so prominent in the history; but we may perhaps surmise that this element lay, for the moment, comparatively dormant in the psalmist's mind, because of his ignorance of the lengths to which the invader might be permitted to go, and the vividness with which he saw in those broader views of God's gracious purposes in calling Israel to be his people and in making Mount Zion his dwelling-place, such weighty pleas against the destruction which at the time appeared imminent. Whatever the cause of this absence of confession from the psalm, it should be remembered that the fact of its omission bears as much upon one foreign invasion as another: any such invasion—whether Egyptian, Chaldean or Syrian—must have in reality seemed permissible only because of grievous national sin committed.

The course of thought which the psalm actually pursues is noteworthy, especially in respect of the broad collateral facts in history and in nature by which the psalmist strengthens his pleading with God.

After reminding God of the wonderful way in which he had made the Hebrew *congregation* peculiarly his own (vers. 1-3a); and then vividly depicting the present devastation of the sanctuary (vers. 3b-7), and the forlorn condition of the land, especially as regards religious privileges (vers. 8, 9); and after pleading with God no longer to delay his silencing of the profanity of the invader (vers. 10, 11);—the psalmist then enlarges on the almighty deeds of Israel's King. He introduces the great facts clustering around the deliverance from Egypt and the ad-

PSALM 74

mission into the promised land (vers. 12-15)—facts which constituted an almighty handling of the powers of nature and pressing them into the service of creating and redeeming a Nation. At this point, in a stanza of great simplicity and beauty (vers. 16-17) the poet passes on to a notice of the Divine relation to *day* and *night*, *moon* and *sun*, *earth* and *seas*, *summer* as presupposing *spring* and *autumn* as bringing after it *winter*. These allusions are not only beautiful in themselves, and a poetic relief to the mind of the reader but they are true aids to devotion, and give pleasing force to the petitions which they introduce. They suggest more than they formally articulate. They seem to say: "Such, O God, are the praises, which habitually ascend to thee from this holy place; but now, only hear the reproaches and the defiance which are from this very spot directed against thy Holy Name! Canst thou be the Divine *King* whom we thus adore, and not be able and willing to hearken to our prayers?" And then follows a volley of petitions: *remember—do not give up—do not forget—look well—arise—remember—do not forget*. The very close of the prayer is intercessionally dramatic. Instead of a final benediction, we hear the gentle but undaunted voice of this petitioner making a last effort to turn the sustained *din* and *roar* of the *adversary* in the sanctuary into so much prayer for speedy Divine Intervention. Noting these things, even Christian intercessors may learn valuable lessons from this psalm, as to the reality, boldness and scope of prayer. Moreover, it would be upardonable to forget what we owe to Dr. Thirtle for the collateral warrant he affords for moving the inscription *Do not destroy*, from the beginning of the next psalm, where its applicability is not very evident, to the foot of this, where its appropriateness must strike every unprejudiced mind: *that* has really been the prayer of this psalm—*Do not destroy!*

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. The Temple is desecrated—but when? By whom? Give and defend your opinion.
2. List the descriptive terms for the nation of Israel. Remember "we are the Israel of God" (Gal. 6:16).
3. List the great works of Jehovah which prove He could overcome these profainers of His holy Temple.
4. To what three attributes of God does the psalmist appeal as reasons for the restoration of worship in the Temple?

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5. Give at least two possible explanations as to why God sometimes delays His blessings.
6. Notice the petitions addressed to God—which also could be addressed to ourselves in relation to God.

PSALM 75

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

A Song, Enshrining an Oracular Assurance of Equitable
Judgment by the Judge of the Earth.

ANALYSIS

Stanza I., ver. 1, Congregational Thanksgiving, Promising a Rehearsal of Divine Wonders. Stanza II., vers. 2-4, A Divine Oracle: Declaring that, at the Right Time, Justice shall be Done; and Admonishing that Moral Preparations for Judgment be Made. Stanza III., vers. 5-7, Prophetic Exhortation Enforcing the Oracle. Stanza IV., ver. 8, A Prophetic Warning of Coming Wrath. Stanza V., vers. 9, 10, With Prophetic Exultation, the Psalmist, in the Name of the Nation, Counts on being Employed in the Judicial Adjustment.

(Lm.) Psalm—By Asaph—Song.

- 1 We give thanks to thee O God we give thanks to thee;
and they who call on thy name¹ tell of all thy wondrous
works.
- 2 "Yea! I will seize a right time,
I with equity will judge:
- 3 Dissolving may be the earth and all the dwellers therein,
I have adjusted the pillars thereof:
- 4 have said to boasters—"Do not boast!"
and to lawless ones—"Do not lift up a horn!" "
- 5 Do not lift up on high your horn,
nor speak against a Rock² with arrogance.

1. So "read probably"—Dr. And so (?)—Gn.

2. So it shd. be (w. Sep.)—Gn.

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- 6 For neither from the east nor from the west,
nor from the wilderness³ (cometh) lifting up;⁴
7 For God is judge,
this one he putteth down and that one he lifteth up.
8 For a cup is in the hand of Jehovah with wine which
foameth,
it is full of spiced-wine which he poureth out—from one to
another,⁵
surely the dregs thereof shall all the lawless of the earth
drain out and drink.
9 But I will exult⁶ to the ages,
let me make melody unto the God of Jacob!
10 And all the horns of lawless ones will I hew off,
lifted up shall be the horns of the righteous.

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician.

(CMm.) With stringed instruments.⁷

PARAPHRASE

PSALM 75

How we thank You Lord! Your mighty miracles give proof
that You care.

2 "Yes," the Lord replies, "And when I am ready, I will
punish the wicked!

3 Though the earth shakes and all its people live in turmoil,
yet its pillars are firm, for I have set them in place!"

4 I warned the proud to cease their arrogance! I told the
wicked to lower their insolent gaze,¹

5 And to stop being stubborn and proud.

6, 7 For promotion and power come from nowhere on earth,
but only from God. He promotes one and deposes another.

8 In Jehovah's hand there is a cup of pale and sparkling
wine. It is His judgment, poured out upon the wicked of the
earth. They must drain that cup to the dregs.

3. Prob.= "south." "North" perh. omitted as quarter whence the enemy
was coming.

4. Heb.: *Harim*, generally="mountains"; but, according to a Heb. tradi-
tion, exceptionally here="lifting up" (as derived from *rum*, to be high):
which seems to strike the key-note of the psalm, for which cp. vers. 4, 5, 7,
10.

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

6. So it shd. be (w. Sep.)—Gn.

7. And therefore with all the choirs in the temple.

1. Literally, "lift not up the horn."

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9 But as for me, I shall forever declare the praises of the God of Jacob.

10 "I will cut off the strength of evil men," says the Lord,² "and increase the power of good men in their place."

EXPOSITION

Standing where it does, this psalm requires but a moderate exercise of the historical imagination, to bring out its practical effectiveness. It follows well the outcry of the previous psalm. "How long?" by declaring that, *at the right time*, Divine Interposition shall come. With equal fitness, it anticipates the exulting outburst of the psalm which follows it, already claiming the souls of those who are yet waiting, to the sore trial of their faith. It may thus be placed historically anywhere between the invasion of Shishak and the overthrow of Sennacherib the Assyrian, and could, with fine effect, be used in temple worship either during the days of trial which befell Jehoshaphat or during those which came upon Hezekiah.

When the dramatic structure of the psalm is perceived, its dignity and force rise to the sublime. The opening stanza reveals the congregation giving thanks as for an answer received, and as if in anticipation of Divine Wonders to follow.

Then, with an effective change of measure, Jehovah is represented as giving, in the first person, his assurance that in due time he will effectively interpose. Society—and perhaps especially the society of nations—may appear to be *falling to pieces—dissolving*—for lack of the effective grip of the bonds of *equity*; but already Jehovah prophetically declares he has *adjusted the pillars* of the social structure. That those "pillars" are to be understood as fundamental *moral principles*, is at once intimated by the two Divine behests—*Do not boast, Do not lift up the horn*, which two proclamations may perhaps be distributively applied: the former to Israel and the latter to the nations ready to oppress them; though, indeed, both may well be heeded by all concerned, seeing that *boasting* and *oppression* so often go hand in hand.

It is not quite certain at what point the direct Divine address ends; but, having regard to the propriety of letting an oracle appear brief, and to the difficulty of carrying on the direct address to the close of ver. 7, it is probably best to close the quotation at the end of ver. 4. This naturally leads us to take

2. Implied.

PSALM 75

vers. 5-7 as a continuing prophetic address, by the psalmist himself, in enforcement of the Divine Oracle. It seems to be fittingly left to the *psalmist* to emphasize, in amplified hortatory words (ver. 5a), the previous briefer oracular words (ver. 4b); and then that he, *the psalmist*, should go on (ver. 5b) to speak of Jehovah as a *Rock*, in the third person; just as, also, (in ver. 7) he naturally refers to God, in the third person. These niceties may not appear very important, inasmuch as they respect the mere *form* of what must all, in substance, be regarded as a Divine utterance; but an approximately correct settlement of them, sensibly contributes to the impressiveness of the psalm.

The psalmist now, in Stanza IV., gives a highly figurative but effective reason for the urgency of his exhortations to prepare for judgment. Equitable as is the Divine Rule, in the long run, in dealing with both individuals and nations, it nevertheless is framed upon the pattern of "times and seasons,"—"times" of delay, in which God as judge is silent and seemingly inactive, as though he were taking no notice of the moral quality of human conduct; and then, "seasons" of activity, involving the principle of bringing up arrears, and dealing all at once with long series of actions; and implying, where wicked conduct has been in the ascendant, an accumulation of punishment, corresponding with the accumulation of unvisited sin. But an accumulation of punishment implies an accumulation of Divine displeasure, *so far as its manifestation is concerned*. And so we arrive at the conception of stored-up wrath: arrears of displeasure: intensified punishment, involving stroke upon stroke, when it does come. This is the revealed principle of Divine resentment of sin. No doubt this principle could be philosophically defended: as necessitated, not by infirmity in God, but by the limitation of man. But whether or not we can account for such a method of divine government, and successfully defend it, as probably we may; it suffices to maintain, that such in fact is God's governmental method of dealing with the moral quality of the actions of men and of nations. This being so, that very fact lies at the root of such representations as that which here confronts us in this psalm: accumulated wrath breaking forth in accumulated punishment, being figuratively represented as a *cup* in the hand of Jehovah, a cup *foaming* in the activity of its contents, *mixed* as with *stimulating spices* in the intensity of its action, and held forth to the individuals who are to drink, and to be compelled to drain their cup to its *dregs*. Such is the figure. We may

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call it oriental. But, instead of therefore under-estimating it, our wisdom is to accept it as a common, and, in the East, most natural as well as effective style of speech; and at once seek to translate it into our own methods of thought. The following list of passages, alluding to the *wine-cup of wrath*, will shew how familiar the figure is in the Old Testament, and will suggest the deeper principles to which our thoughts are thereby conducted: Job 21:20, Ps. 60:3, Isa. 51:17, Jer. 25:15, 27, 49:12, 51:7, Ob. 16.

Glancing, finally, at Stanza V. (vers. 9, 10), and connecting it with Stanza I., as together constituting the devotional framework of the psalm, we recognise the appropriateness of the observations of Delitzsch: "The prophetic picture stands upon a lyric background of gold; it rises up out of the depths of emotion and is withdrawn again into these same depths . . . The psalm closes as subjectively as it began. The prophetic picture is set in a lyric frame." This is well said. But when the same expositor, in calling attention to the obvious fact that the psalmist in ver. 10 ascribes to himself what he in ver. 7 sets forth as God's own doing, associates this human fellowship in the judicial rectification with the reigning "Church," we respectfully withhold our consent; preferring to connect the *hewing off of the horns of the lawless* with the triumphant *nation* of Israel than with the triumphant *ecclesia*. The callings of the two communities are distinct, and as such should be carefully preserved

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. This psalm is "a revelation of the principle of God's government of the world, of His action in human history". Please follow this line of reasoning and outline the principles suggested.
2. This psalm balances well between the two psalms of before and after—explain how.
3. There seems to be a dialogue in this psalm. Who speaks? What is said? Discuss.
4. "Jesus who died shall be justified, God is the ruler yet"—so wrote the song writer. There are at present millions and millions who have never heard—now reconcile this with the rule of God?
5. America and Israel stand together in God's Judgment. Explain and discuss.

PSALM 76

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

A Song of Triumph over a Divinely-smitten Foe.

ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-3, By reason of a Recent Interposition in behalf of Jerusalem, God has Anew Made Himself Known there, as a Lion Dwelling in his Lair. Stanza II., vers. 4-6, The Majesty of God and the Impotence of the Smitten Enemy contrasted. Stanza III., vers. 7-9, God, Terrible when Arising to Judgment. Stanza IV., vers. 10-12, The Wrath of Mankind turning to Give Thanks and Keep Festival. Counsels to Worshipers.

(Lm.) Psalm—By Asaph—Song.

- 1 God hath made himself known in Judah,
in Israel great is his name:
- 2 And his covert hath come to be in Salem,
and his lair in Zion hath been placed:¹
- 3 He hath shivered the flames of the bow,²
shield and sword and battle.³
- 4 Enveloped in light art thou majestic—from the mountains
of prey:
- 5 They let themselves be spoiled did the valiant of heart—
they slumbered their sleep,
And none of the men of might could find⁴ their hands:
- 6 At the rebuke O God of Jacob—stunned were the horsemen.⁵
- 7 As for thee fear-inspiring thou art:
who then shall stand before thee because of the power⁶ of
thine anger?
- 8 Out of the heavens proclaimedst thou sentence:
earth feared and was still

1. So Br. revocalises, *sh-m-h*, and brings back to end of this line.

2. A poetic description of arrows.

3. Comprehensively, for all other weapons of war.

4. Far less use them, to arise and grasp their weapons.

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

6. So G. Intro. 144, correcting orthography.

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- 9 When God arose to vindication,⁷
to save all the humble of the land.⁸
10 Surely the wrath of mankind will thank⁹ thee,
the residue of intense¹⁰ wrath will keep festival to thee¹¹
11 Vow and pay to Jehovah your God,
all ye around him bear along a gift to the inspirer of fear,
12 He taketh away¹² the spirit of nobles,
is fear-inspiring to the kings of the earth.
(Lm.) To the Chief Musician. (CMm.) Jor Jeduthun.¹³

PARAPHRASE

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- God's reputation is very great in Judah and in Israel!
2 His home is in Jerusalem! He lives upon Mount Zion.
3 There He breaks the weapons of our enemies.
4 The everlasting mountains cannot compare with You in
glory!
5 The mightiest of our enemies are conquered; they lie before
us in the sleep of death; not one can lift a hand against us.
6 When You rebuked them, God of Jacob, steeds and riders
fell.
7 No wonder You are greatly feared! Who can stand
before an angry God?
8 You pronounce sentence on them from heaven; the earth
trembles and stands silent before You;
9 You stand up to punish the evil-doers and to defend the
meek of the earth.
10 Man's futile wrath will bring You glory! You will use
it as an ornament!

* * * * *

- 11 Fulfill all your vows that you have made to Jehovah your
God. Let everyone bring Him presents. He should be revered
and feared,
12 For He cuts down princes and does awesome things to
the kings of the earth.

7. Intro., Chap. III., "Righteousness."

8. Or "earth."

9. Cp. 6:5 n.

10. "The word WRATH is in the plural, denoting either wrath of every
kind, or wrath in its intensity."—Per.

11. So Sep., implying a difference, in Heb. exemplar, of a single letter.

12. So O.G. ("cut off=take away"); and so Br. (w. Sep., Vul., Jerome).

13. Cp. 38 n.

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EXPOSITION

The reference of this psalm to the overthrow of Sennacherib is so obvious as to explain the unanimity with which expositors find in it that allusion. Doubtless there are some minor points in the psalm which invite discussion, and as to which a difference of final opinion may be expected. But these are of little moment as compared with the remarkable statement regarding *the wrath of man* which occupies the 10th verse, as to which a perplexing amount of diversity exists. This verse stands as follows in the A.V.:—

Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee,
The remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.

The assurance thus conveyed may be said to meet with general devout acceptance, as is evident from the frequent acquiescent use of the words in public worship. The only difficulty they present is that scholars are unable to find the word "restrain" in the original of the second line. Accordingly, in the R.V., the following innovation appears:—

The residue of wrath shalt thou gird upon thee;

and with this rendering Dr., Per., Del., and others in the main agree. But it is distinctly unacceptable, apparently far-fetched, and gives rise to endless diversities when exposition is attempted. Whose wrath does God gird about him, whether by way of ornament, or for use? If his own, then why with only a "residue"? to say nothing of the awkwardness of taking the wrath to be human in one line and divine in the next. In short, there can be little doubt that the Sep. has here preserved the true reading, by the use of a word differing only by one letter from the M.T. (*h-h-g-k*) instead of (*h-h-g-r*) *will keep festival to thee*. A renewed study of the passage—giving to it a more literal turn and bringing it into closer touch with the context—brings out the force and beauty of this ancient variation. Note then (1) that *mankind*, instead of "man" (for *a-d-m*) in the first line, widens the outlook, and prepares us to discover that it is the excusable wrath of the down-trodden nations directed against the down-treading world-power, represented by Assyria, which, when Divine interposition effects deliverance, turns to give God *thanks*—"thanks" itself being more literal than "praise"—willing thanks rather than unwilling and merely enforced and constructive praise. (2) That *keep festival* in line 2, makes a good

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parallel with *thank* in line 1. (3) That the *intense wrath* of line 2 prepares for the strong verb *keep festival* which follows it; so that the stronger motive power produces the stronger result, implying that there are some among the lately down-trodden nations whose "wrath" was so intense that mere "thanks" will not serve for its outlet—it moves to nothing less than the keeping of a *holy festival of praise*. Note (4) how strongly this construction works out of the foregoing context and into the succeeding: *Earth feared and was still when God arose to vindication* (vers. 8, 9)—so deep was its emotion, and so potent to turn its wrath of resentment into thanksgiving for deliverance. Will ye, then, *keep festival*? Then, mind ye *pay your vows* (ver. 11). *All ye around him* (*ibid*)—ye smaller neighboring nations, who, having shared in Israel's peril, now share in her deliverance, *bear along*, in procession, *a gift to the Inspirer of fear*, even Israel's God who has just smitten the Assyrians. It is distinctly pleasant thus to get a glimpse of *mankind* lying outside the dominant world-power, sharing in Israel's deliverance, and fulfilling a more hopeful part than merely contributing unwitting and unwilling praise to the God of all the earth. Moreover, the student of unfulfilled prophecy will not fail to observe how, by exchanging *earth* for *land* in ver. 9, he obtains a most significant adumbration of time yet to come when God will arise to the vindication of the humble through all the earth.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. The historical circumstances of this psalm is the destruction of Sennacherib's army in the reign of Hezekiah. Read Isaiah, chapters 36 and 37. Why is there such a unanimity of opinion as to what incident is here described?
2. Refer again to the three psalms of 74, 75 and 76 and show how they fit together.
3. The poet has so well described the destruction of Sennacherib's host—
"Like the leaves of the forest when summer is green,
That host with their banners at sunset were seen:
Like the leaves of the forest when autumn hath blown,
That host on the morrow lay wither'd and strown."
What encouragement is this to us?
4. Rotherham sees a real exegetical problem with verse 10—how is it solved? Does Taylor agree with him in the phrase? Do you agree? Discuss.

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5. When and where and how will God defend "the meek of the earth"? (vs. 9)

P S A L M 77

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Comfort in Distress Obtained by the Study of a Song.

ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-3, Introductory—shewing, by quotation of Language and Statement of Fact, that the Psalmist has been Inconsolable. Stanza II., 4-9, In like manner, the Psalmist pursues his Study, rising to an Intense Spirit-Search (indented). Stanza III., vers. 10-15, A second study, conducting to a Satisfying Conclusion (indented): God is Holy, Incomparable, Redeeming. Stanza IV., vers. 16-19, The "String-Song" itself, on which the "Study" has been based (divisible into four sub-stanzas—tristichs). Stanza V., ver. 20, Conclusion: The Flock is under the Care of a Divine Shepherd (implied).

(Lm.) By Asaph—Psalm.

- 1 "With my voice unto God let me cry:
with my voice unto God, and he will give ear to me."
- 2 In my day of distress after Adonai I sought,
mine eye poured out and became not slack:¹
my soul refused to be consoled:—
- 3 "Let me remember God though I moan,
let me soliloquise though my spirit swoon."
- 4 I anticipated the night-watches with mine eyes,²
I was disturbed and could not speak:
- 5 I pondered on days out of aforetime:—
"The years of by-gone ages let me recall,—
- 6 My string-song in the night is near my heart,—³
let me soliloquise that my spirit may make diligent search.⁴
- 7 To the ages will Adonai reject?
and not again grant acceptance any more?

1. As in Lam. 3:49; and so Dr. deems probable. M.T.: "my hand by night was outstretched, and grew not numb."

2. So, nearly, Br. (w. Vul. and some cod. of Sep.).

3. Or: "mind"—so that I can easily recall it.

4 N.B.: this "spirit-search" begins with the next line.

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- 8 Hath his kindness perpetually ceased?
is speech ended to generation and generation?
- 9 Hath GOD forgotten to be gracious?
or shut up in anger his compassions?"
- 10 And I said⁵—"Now have I made a beginning:—
this changing of the right-hand of the Most High!⁶
- 11 I will commemorate the doings of Yah,—
yea let me recall out of aforetime thy wonders;'
- 12 And talk to myself of all thy works,
and of thy deeds let me soliloquise:—
- 13 O God! in holiness is thy way⁸
who is a great GOD like unto Elohim?
- 14 Thou art the GOD that did a wonderful thing,
thou madest known among the peoples thy might:
- 15 Thou redeemedst with thine own arm⁹ thy people;
the sons of Jacob and Joseph."¹⁰
- 16 Waters saw thee¹¹ O God!
waters saw thee they were in birth-throes,¹²
yea perturbed were the deeps.
- 17 Clouds poured down waters,
skies uttered a voice;
yea thine arrows flew hither and thither.
- 18 The voice of thy thunder was in the whirlwind,
thy¹³ lightnings illumined the world,
perturbed and in commotion was the earth.
- 19 In the sea was thy way,¹⁴
and thy path¹⁵ in the mighty waters;
and thy footprints could not be known.

(Nm.)

5. Renewing his "soliloquy."

6. So after Sep. Other renderings: "This is my sickness"—"sorrow"—
"cross." Also: "The years of thy r-h," instead of "changing."

7. So (pl.) (w. Aram., Sep., Syr., Vul.)—Gn.

8. Anticipating ver. 19 a.

9. So Sep. M.T.: "w, an arm."

10. So far, appar., the "spirit-searching soliloquy." Now comes the
"string-song"—confident, joyous: in tristichs which mark it off as a song in
itself. "The whole stanza [vers. 10-15] is an overture to the following hymn
of praise of God the Redeemer out of Egypt"—Del.

11. In the cloud, as thou camest up to the sea.

12. About to bring forth a nation of freed-men.

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

14. "In the sea thou didst tread with thy horses"—Br., after Hab. 3:15.

15. So to be *read*. Some cod. (w. 5 ear, pr. edns.) both *write* and *read*:
"path" (Sing.)—Gn.

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20 Thou didst lead like a flock thy people,
by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

PARAPHRASE

PSALM 77

I cry to the Lord; I call and call on Him. Oh, that He would listen.

2 I am in deep trouble and I need His help so badly. All night long I pray, lifting my hands to heaven, pleading. There can be no joy for me until He acts.

3 I think of God and moan, overwhelmed with longing for His help.

4 I cannot sleep until You act. I am too distressed even to pray!

5 I keep thinking of the good old days of the past, long since ended.

6 Then my nights were filled with joyous songs. I search my soul and meditate upon the difference now.

7 Has the Lord rejected me forever? Will He never again be favorable?

8 Is His lovingkindness gone forever? Has His promise failed?

9 Has He forgotten to be kind to one so undeserving? Has He slammed the door in anger on His love?

10 And I said: This is my fate; that the blessings of God have changed to hate.¹

11 I recall the many miracles He did for me so long ago.

12 Those wonderful deeds are constantly in my thoughts. I cannot stop thinking about them.

* * * * *

13 O God, Your ways are holy. Where is there any other as mighty as You?

14 You are the God of miracles and wonders? You still demonstrate Your awesome power.

* * * * *

15 You have redeemed us who are the sons of Jacob and of Joseph by Your might.

16 When the Red Sea saw You, how it feared! It trembled to its depths!

17 The clouds poured down their rain, the thunder rolled and crackled in the sky. Your lightning flashed.

1. Literally, "that the right hand of the Most High has changed."

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18 There was thunder in the whirlwind; the lightning lighted up the world! The earth trembled and shook.

19 Your road led by a pathway through the sea—a pathway no one knew was there.

20 You led Your people along that road like a flock of sheep, with Moses and Aaron as their shepherds.

EXPOSITION

This is emphatically a psalm of moods and tenses, so delicately expressed in the Hebrew that only clumsily and by the aid of quotation-marks can they be represented in English, and then not without risk of overdoing. The key to the psalm lies in this: That memories which ultimately yield consolation, when first recalled aggravate present sorrow. *The right hand of the Most High*: this is what, after *diligent search*, stays and consoles the psalmist's mind—a hand put forth with redeeming efficacy in the doings that gave the nation birth. But the first apprehension concerning it is, the contrast between its former activity and its present supineness: a contrast so painful that the psalmist, though resolved on the contemplation, anticipates that it will cause him to *moan* in anguish, even to the extent of causing his spirit to *swoon*—to be enshrouded in mental darkness, to be able to think no more.

A day of anguish seems to have culminated in a night of agony. The outspoken petitions with which his prayers had been begun, not without hope of being heard, falter on his lips, and he can no longer pray—he can only *ponder*; but those apparently long-lost *days culled out of aforetime* are his theme, and he is determined, at whatever cost, to *recall* them. Fortunately, there comes back to his mind a *string-song* of his, embalming memories of those ancient redeeming days. He does not start *singing* that song forthwith. No! he is too gloomily critical for that; but he will recall it—he will study it—he will soliloquise on that as a text, talking aloud to himself as the manner of study then was. He can at least ask questions—his *spirit* shall make *diligent search*. And then the questions follow. They are so framed as to indicate that the psalmist's mind is in process of recovering its balance. The answer suggested, without being expressed, is—"Surely not!" He cannot have *rejected* for ever! His *kindness* cannot have *perpetually ceased*! He may have changed his dealings; but surely He himself remains unchanged!

He takes breath. He feels he has made a *beginning*. En-

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couraged, he follows it up. He looks in the face the conception which like a spectre had projected itself before him. "*This changing of the right hand of the Most High!*" he seems to say, "let me examine it more closely!" And this he does, by thinking of its *doings*, its *wonders*, its *works*, its *deeds*. He is fortified to think out these topics, because he already sees that a change of *dealings* by God, does not necessitate the admission of a *changed God!* It is true (we may admit in passing) that the Hebrew word *sh'noth* may be rendered by the word "years" as well as by the word *changing*; but since the recalling of the "*years* of the right hand of the Most High" seems to bring with it, as an undertone, the change made between those ancient days of activity and the present days of inactivity, we may continue to let our thoughts run on the thread of the Septuagint rendering.

To resume, then. The study of the *string-song* is renewed to such good effect, that, whereas the previous stanza culminated in questions, this one rises to conclusions, confidently addressed to God himself, conclusions indicating a rest of spirit in them on the part of the psalmist. The very first word set after the Divine name in these conclusions is reassuring: *O God in holiness is thy way*—whether in manifest mercy or not. Again, it is what God *is* which leads on to what he has *done*; and what he *is* remains for renewed manifestation. Moreover, what *was* it that God *did*? Was it not to reveal himself to the nations around, and that, as redeeming for Himself a people—the people for whom the present petitioner is pleading? Clearly, this is logically the conclusion of the soliloquy—of the study! It is all reflective thus far. And it is a great gain to recognise this conclusiveness here, inasmuch as the apparent abruptness of the formal conclusion is thereby explained.

In fact, the four tristichs which now follow, so far from being out of place or a mere afterthought, are the very forethought of the whole psalm: at least from the moment when the favourite old *string-song* came up to the surface of the poet's memory. Happy is it for men in a storm, to recall the charm of the still sunlit waters through which they have passed; who have something better than "dead selves" to help them to survive the stress of present trouble. This psalmist Asaph had improved an earlier and more auspicious time for song-making and song-singing and song-memorising; and now his song comes back to him in his night of agony, and he knows it well enough to hold

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it before his mind's eye while he ponders and reasons and questions and summarises and concludes. And then he gives the string-song itself—altogether and compact, and of a sufficiently peculiar formal structure, as—without the aid of quotation marks or altered type, of which, of course, he was innocent—to make it recognisable by us after a long lapse of ages.

The *Song* speaks for itself. It is too boldly and elementally poetical to need detailed comment. Only in its final triplet (ver. 19) does it betray as much subjectivity as to amount to a symbolical undertone. *In the sea was thy way*—as how often it is! *And thy path in the mighty waters*—too mighty for us to control! *And thy footprints could not be known*—and so it ever is, something withheld, something unknown. The work remains: the Worker disappears. When—where—how will he next reveal his right-hand! O Asaph! wait: wait until the Assyrian draws nearer, and thou shalt see!

After the four triplets of the *string-song*, comes a couplet—only—in conclusion. How little it says, and yet how much: it seems to say everything needing to be added. Under the Divine Shepherd's care, it starts the flock on its journey to its home. That flock is in itself a moving appeal to its Divine Redeemer.

With respect to the origin of this psalm, it may be added: That while, so far as direct evidence is concerned—"it remains obscure what kind of national affliction it is which impels him [the singer] to betake himself in flight from the God who is at present hidden to the God who was made manifest in olden times" (Del.); yet the earlier period of the Assyrian invasion probably afforded more than one conjuncture during which prophecy was silent, and it appeared to the strained hearts of the faithful that *an end* had come to prophetic *speech*, and *God had forgotten to show favour*. It is certainly "shown by the comfort sought in the revelations of power and grace made in connection with the earlier history of his people," that it was "an affliction shared in common with the whole of the nation." The place of this psalm, and the indications afforded by several of its companions, point in this direction.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. It is always a help to attempt to understand the historical circumstances of the psalm—what is it here?

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2. In the many prayers for help, do you feel the petitioner had a specific type of help in mind? Was it physical or spiritual?
3. Where is this man's faith? Read verses 3 and 4. Isn't this an admission of defeat?—Discuss.
4. Discuss the best use of past pleasant memories.
5. Should we ever think—feel—believe—that God has rejected us? Discuss.
6. Under two or three circumstances we can almost expect a negative, discouraged, exaggerated response. Name at least two and discuss.
7. What possible miracles were in the mind of the psalmist?
8. The holiness of God is such a basic belief—why?
9. The deliverance from bondage is an oft recurring theme. Should not this be also true of us? Discuss.
10. God leads through men. Read verse 20. Is this true now? Discuss.

PSALM 78

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

A Didactic Poem, Counselling the Re-union of the Tribes.

ANALYSIS

Part I.—THE PRELUDE

(1) An Invitation to Attend to a Series of Problems Drawn from Antiquity—vers. 1, 2.

(2) An Appeal to the history-reciting instinct: sustained by the claim that Jehovah's Might and Wonders are to be Seen in This History—vers. 3, 4.

(3) Divine Authority pleaded for such Historical Recitations—ver. 5.

(4) Their Utility for the purposes of Knowing, Believing, Observing and Avoiding: Grave Ancestral Faults Implied—vers. 6-8.

Part II.—THE COMPLAINT

Specially lodged against Ephraim, first named with Honour, but charged with Disappointing Expectation—with being Unfaithful, Disobedient, and Forgetful—vers. 9-11.

Part III.—SUGGESTIVE HISTORICAL REMINISCENCES

(1) Divine Wonder-Working in Egypt: Deliverance—the Exodus: Guidance: Provision of Water—vers. 12-16.

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- (2) Sinful Doubts about Food, Provokingly Expressed—vers. 17-20.
(3) Divine Displeasure, yet Provision of Manna—vers. 21-25.
(4) Provision of Flesh, followed by Outburst of Divine Anger—vers. 26-31.
(5) Further Sin brings Further Punishment, with Speedy but Superficial Reformation—vers. 32-37.
(6) Divine Compassion and Forbearance; followed by People's Sin, causing Divine Pain—vers. 38-41.
(7) Forgetfulness, writ large: concerning the Plagues of Egypt, and the Exodus (probably extracted from an older document)—vers. 42-53.
(8) The Home-bringing into Canaan: followed by Provoking Disobedience in the form of Idolatry (? suggesting without naming the Ephraimites as Chief-Offenders)—vers. 54-58.
(9) In Divine Anger, Israel is Largely Rejected, the Tent of Shiloh Abandoned, the Ark Suffered to go into Captivity, and Priests and People are Slain—vers. 59-64.

Summary of above details as suggesting "problems": *Time*—from Moses to the Judges; *Place*—Egypt, the desert, Canaan; *Freedom of Divine Action*—alternations of Anger, Punishment, Mercy, Deliverance.

PART IV.—CLOSING INDIRECT APPEALS

New Divine Activity as to Enemies—vers. 65, 66; Tribe—vers. 67-68a; Sanctuary—vers. 68b, 69; and King—vers. 70-72.

(Lm.) An Instructive Psalm—By Asaph.

(PART I.—THE PRELUDE)

- 1 Oh give ear my people to mine instruction,¹
incline your ear to the sayings of my mouth:
- 2 Let me open in a poem² my mouth,
let me pour forth problems³ out of antiquity.
- 3 What we have heard and come to know,
and our fathers have told us
- 4 We will not hide from their sons,
to an after generation telling the praises of Jehovah,
both his might and his wondrous works which he wrought;

1. U.: "law."

2. "After the manner of an epic. The individual historical statements have a gnome-like finish, and a gem-like elegance"—Del.

3. So Sep. "Riddles"—Del., Dr., Leaser. "Similitudes"—Carter. "Weighty lessons"—P.B.

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- 5 So he raised up a testimony⁴ in Jacob,
and an instruction⁵ set he in Israel;
Which he commanded our fathers,
to make them known to their children.
- 6 To the end an after generation might know,
children who should be born might raise up and tell their
children;
- 7 That they might set in Elohim their confidence,
and not forget the doings of El;
but his commandments might observe;
- 8 And not become like their fathers
a generation rebellious and insulting,⁶
a generation that set not aright its heart,
nor faithful with God was its spirit.

(PART II.—THE COMPLAINT.)

- 9 The sons of Ephraim armed and shooting with the bow
turned in the day of battle:
- 10 Kept not the covenant of God,
and in his instruction refused to walk;
- 11 But forgot his doings,
and his wondrous works which he caused them to see.

(PART III.—HISTORICAL PARALLELS.)

- 12 Before their fathers⁷ wrought he wonderfully⁸
in the land of Egypt the country of Zoan⁹:
- 13 He clave open the sea and let them pass through
and reared up the waters as a mound;
- 14 And led them with a cloud by day,
and all the night with a light of fire.
- 15 He used to cleave open rocks¹⁰ in the desert,
and let them drink as of the deeps abundantly;
- 16 And brought forth streams out of a cliff,
and caused waters to flow down like rivers.

4. Cp. 81:5, 122:4.

5. U.: "law."

6. Cp. Deu. 21:20.

7. A compliment to Ephraim.

8. Or: "he did wonders."

9. "The district of which Zoan, ancient name for *Tanis* was the capital, situated on the east bank of the Tanitic arm of the Nile"—Br.

10. Exo. 17:6. Tense (cp. ver. 29) and number (pl.) prob. a poetic generalisation.

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- 17 Yet went they on still to sin against him,
to disobey¹¹ the Most High in a thirsty land;
18 And put GOD to the proof in their heart,
by asking food to their liking¹²
19 And they spake against God they said,—
“Will God be able to lay out a table in a desert?
20 lo! he hath smitten a rock
and there have gushed out waters,
and torrents roll along,—
Bread also will he be able to give?
or provide flesh for his people?”
21 Therefore Jehovah heard and was indignant,
and a fire¹³ was kindled against Jacob,—
yea even anger mounted up against Israel:
22 Because they believed not in God,
nor trusted in his salvation.
23 Yet commanded he the skies above,
and the doors of the heavens he opened;
24 And rained on them manna to eat,
and the grain of the heavens gave he unto them;
25 And the bread of the mighty¹⁴ did they eat every one,
a supply of food¹⁵ sent he them to the full.
26 He put forth¹⁶ an east-wind in the heavens,
and drave on¹⁶ by his might a south-wind;
27 And rained on them flesh like dust,
and like the sand of the sea winged fowl;
28 Which he let fall in the midst of his camp,
round about his habitations;
29 So they did eat and were filled to abundance,
since their desire he would bring to them:¹⁷
30 They were not estranged from their desire,
yet was their food in their mouth

11. “Defy”—Dr.

12. Dr.: “appetite.” U.: “soul.” Cp. Intro., Chap. III., “Soul.”

13. Cp. Num. 11:1ff.

14. “Angels’ food” (Sep., Vul., Syr.) is probably a right paraphrase of the words *the bread of the mighty*, though the term is nowhere applied to the angels. But cp. 103:20—Kp.

15. Cp. Exo. 12:39.

16. As though the elements were flocks under Divine direction.

17. Or: “he brought to them.” But, strictly, the Heb. verb is so used here as to denote either *repetition* or *modality*, that is, to express the feeling of those concerned; as if to imply that the expected the supply of quails would be repeated.

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- 31 When the anger of God mounted up against them
and he slew of their vigorous ones,
yea the young men of Israel bowed he down.
- 32 For all this they sinned still,
and did not believe in his wondrous works:
- 33 So he ended with a breath their days,
and their years in dismay.¹⁸
- 34 If he slew them then they inquired after him,
yea they turned and early sought GOD;
- 35 And remembered that Elohim was their Rock,
yea El Most High their Redeemer:
- 36 So they spake him fair with their mouth,
and with their tongue were ready to lie unto him;¹⁹
- 37 But their heart was not steadfast with him,
nor were they trusty in his covenant.
- 38 But he *full of compassion*²⁰
would²¹ cover²² iniquity and not destroy;
Yea many a time turned he back his anger,
and would not stir up all his wrath;
- 39 But remembered that flesh they were,
breath²³ departing which could not return.
- 40 How often used they to disobey²⁴ him in the desert,
to grieve him in the wilderness!
- 41 Yea they again put GOD to the proof,
and to the Holy One of Israel caused pain.²⁵
- 42 They remembered not his hand,
the day when he ransomed them from the adversary:
- 43 When he set forth in Egypt his signs,
and his wonders in the country of Zoan:—²⁶
- 44 When he turned into blood their Nile-streams,
and their own rivers could they not drink:

18. So Dr. "Made to haste away in suddenness"—Br. "in sudden haste"
—Del. Cp. Num. 14.

19. See note on ver. 29.

20. Cp. Exo. 34:6, 7.

21. Again see note on ver. 29. Driver and others prefer to regard the verb as expressing a standing truth: "cancelleth." The context, however, rather favours conception of *habit at that period*.

22. See 65:3 (note).

23. Or: "wind."

24. "Defy"—Dr.

25. So O.G., w. Sep. A.V.: "limited." Tregelles (in T.G.): "*to set marks* or *limits* gives a good sense in the passage." Thrupp: "crossed."

26. Cp. ver. 12.

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- 45 He would send²⁷ among them the gad-fly and it devoured them,
and the frog and it despoiled them;
- 46 And he gave to the corn-locust their produce,
and their toil to the swarming-locust:
- 47 He would kill²⁷ with hail their vine,
and their sycamores with frost.
- 48 And delivered up to hailstones their beasts,
and their cattle to pointed flames:
- 49 He would send among them the glow of his anger,—
wrath and indignation and distress,
a mission of messengers of misfortune!
- 50 He would level a path for his anger,
withheld not from death their soul,
but their life to the pestilence delivered;
- 51 And smote every first-born in Egypt,
the beginning of their strength in the tents of Ham.
- 52 And he put forth²⁸ like sheep his own people,
and led them on like a flock in the desert;
- 53 Yea he guided them securely and they dreaded not,
and their enemies the sea covered.
- 54 So he brought them into his own holy bounds,
the mountain-range which his right-hand acquired;
- 55 And drove out from before them nations,
and allotted them by line an inheritance,
and caused to dwell in their homes²⁹ the tribes of Israel.
- 56 But they put to the proof and disobeyed³⁰ God Most High,
and his testimonies did not observe;
- 57 But drew back and proved treacherous like their fathers,
they turned aside like a deceitful bow;
- 58 And provoked him to anger with their high-places,
and with their images used to move him to jealousy.³¹
- 59 God heard and was indignant,
and largely³² rejected Israel;
- 60 And abandoned the habitation of Shiloh,
the tent he had set up among men;

27. See note on ver. 29.

28. "Moved forth by stages"—Dr.

29. *ML.*: "tents."

30. "Defied"—Dr.

31. *Cp.* note on ver. 29.

32. *ML.*: "with muchness," *gen.*="greatly."

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- 61 And gave to captivity his strength,⁸³
 yea his glory⁸⁴ into the hand of the foe;
 62 And delivered up to the sword his people,
 and with his own inheritance was indignant:
 63 A fire devoured his young men,
 and his virgins were not praised in song:
 64 His priests by the sword did fall,
 and his widows could⁸⁵ not bewail.

(PART IV.—CLOSING INDIRECT APPEALS.)

- 65 Then awoke as one sleeping the Sovereign Lord,
 as a hero that shouteth from wine;
 66 And smote his adversaries behind,⁸⁶
 the reproach of ages laid on them;
 67 But rejected the tent of Joseph,
 and of the tribe of Ephraim made not choice;
 68 But chose the tribe of Judah,
 the mountain of Zion which he loved;
 69 And built like the heights his sanctuary,
 in⁸⁷ the earth founded it to the ages:—
 70 And made choice of David his servant,
 and took him from the folds of the sheep;
 71 From after suckling ewes brought him in,
 to be shepherd over Jacob his people,
 and over Israel his inheritance;
 72 And he tended them according to the blamelessness⁸⁸ of his
 heart,
 and with the discernment of his hands he guided them.

(Nm.)

PARAPHRASE

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O my people, listen to my teaching. Open your ears to what I am saying.

83. Cp. 132:8.

84. Or: "beauty." Cp. 89:17, 96:6.

85. Cp. note on ver. 29.

86. "Backward"—Dr. "God smote the Philistines most literally *in posteriora* (LXX., Vulg., Luther). Still ver. 66 embraces all the victories gained by Israel in the time of Samuel, Saul and David, from 1 Sam. 5 onwards and still later"—Del.

87. So some cod. (w. 2 ear. pr. edns., Sep., Syr., Vul.)—Gn. M.T.: "Like."

88. Or: "devotion," "singleness," (ml.) "wholeness."

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2, 3 For I will show you lessons from our history, stories handed down to us from former generations.

4 I will reveal these truths to you so that you can describe these glorious deeds of Jehovah to your children, and tell them about the mighty miracles He did.

5 For He gave His laws to Israel, and commanded our fathers to teach them to their children.

6 So that they in turn could teach their children too. Thus His laws pass down from generation to generation.

7 In this way each generation has been able to obey His laws and to set its hope anew on God and not forget His glorious miracles.

8 Thus they did not need to be as their fathers were—stubborn, rebellious, unfaithful, refusing to give their hearts to God.

9 The people of Ephraim, though fully armed, were defeated in battle.

10 Because they didn't obey His laws. They refused to follow His ways.

11, 12 And they forgot about the wonderful miracles God had done for them, and for their fathers back in Egypt.

13 For He divided the sea before them and led them through! The water stood banked up along both sides of them!

14 In the daytime He led them by a cloud, and at night by a pillar of fire.

15 He split open the rocks in the wilderness to give them plenty of water, as though gushing from a spring.

16 Streams poured from the rock, flowing like a river!

17 Yet they kept on with their rebellion, sinning against God who is above all gods.

18 They murmured and complained, demanding other food than God was giving them.

19, 20 They even spoke against God Himself. "Why can't He give us decent food as well as water?" they grumbled.

21 Jehovah heard them and was angry; the fire of His wrath burned against Israel,

22 Because they didn't believe in God or trust in Him to care for them.

23 Even though He commanded the skies to open—He opened the windows of heaven—

24 And rained down manna for their food. He gave them bread from heaven!

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25 They ate angels food! He gave them all that they could hold.

26 And He led forth the east wind and guided the south wind by His mighty power.

27 He rained down birds as thick as dust, clouds of them like sands along the shore!

28 He caused the birds to fall to the ground among the tents!

29 The people ate their fill. He gave them what they asked for.

30 But they had hardly finished eating, and the meat was yet in their mouths,

31 When the anger of the Lord rose against them and killed the finest of Israel's young men.

32 Yet even so the people kept on sinning and refused to believe in miracles.

33 So He cut their lives short and gave them years of terror and disaster.

34 Then at last, when He had ruined them, they walked awhile behind Him; how earnestly they turned around and followed Him!

35 Then they remembered that God was their Rock—that their Savior was the God above all gods.

36 But it was only with their words they followed Him, not with their hearts;

37 Their hearts were far away. They did not keep their promises.

38 Yet He was merciful and forgave their sins and didn't destroy them all. Many and many a time He held back His anger.

39 For He remembered that they were merely mortal men, gone in a moment like a breath of wind.

40 Oh, how often they rebelled against Him in those desert years and grieved His heart.

41 Again and again they turned away and tempted God to kill them, and limited the Holy One of Israel from giving them His blessings.

42 They forgot His power and love, and how He had rescued them from their enemies;

43 They forgot the plagues He sent upon the Egyptians in Tanis¹—

1. Literally, "the plains of Zoan."

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44 How He turned their rivers into blood, so that no one could drink;

45 And how He sent vast swarms of flies to fill the land, and how the frogs had covered all of Egypt!

46 He gave their crops to caterpillars. Their harvest was consumed by locusts.

47 He destroyed their grapevines and their sycamores with hail.

48 Their cattle died in the fields, mortally wounded by ice-balls from heaven. Their sheep were killed by lightning.

49 He loosed on them the fierceness of His anger, sending sorrow and trouble. He dispatched against them a band of destroying angels.

50 He gave free course to His anger and did not spare the Egyptians' lives, but handed them over to plagues and sickness.

51 Then He killed the eldest son² in each Egyptian family—he who was the beginning of its strength and joy.

52 But He led forth His own people like a flock, guiding them safely through the wilderness.

53 He kept them safe, so they were not afraid. But the Sea closed in upon their enemies and overwhelmed them.

54 He brought them to the border of His land of blessing, to this land of hills He made for them.

55 He drove out the nations occupying the land, and gave each tribe of Israel its apportioned place as its home.

56 Yet though He did all this for them, they still rebelled against the God above all gods, and refused to follow His commands.

57 They turned back from entering the Promised Land and disobeyed as their fathers had. Like a crooked arrow, they missed the target of God's will.

58 They made Him angry by erecting idols and altars to other gods.

59 When God saw their deeds, His wrath was strong and He despised His people.

60 Then He abandoned His tabernacle at Shiloh, where He had lived among mankind,

61 And allowed His ark to be captured; He surrendered His glory into enemy hands.

62 He caused His people to be butchered because His anger was intense.

2. Literally, "all the first-born."

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63 Their young men were killed by fire and their girls died before they were old enough to sing their wedding songs.

64 The priests were slaughtered and their widows died before they could even begin their lament.

65 Then the Lord rose up as though awakening from sleep, and like a mighty man aroused by wine

66 He routed His enemies and drove them back and sent them to eternal shame.

67 But He rejected Joseph's family, the tribe of Ephraim,

68 And chose the tribe of Judah—and Mount Zion which He loved.

69 There He built His towering temple, solid and enduring as the heavens and the earth.

70 He chose His servant David, taking him from feeding sheep,

71, 72 And from following the ewes and lambs; God presented David to His people as their shepherd and he cared for them with a true heart and skillful hands.

EXPOSITION

To judge aright of the design of this psalm, it is important to notice both what it includes and what it omits; as well as to observe the special adaptation of its several parts to secure its main purpose. The psalm was most probably composed to promote the efforts of the Good King Hezekiah to secure the reunion of the Twelve Tribes. As Thrupp has well said, the king himself sought to bring the Northerners to worship at Jerusalem, modestly saying nothing of himself as their rightful monarch (2 Ch. 30:6, 9). The psalmist goes further: claiming not only the Divine preference of Judah over Ephraim (the leading tribe of the north), and of Jerusalem over Shiloh (the first resting-place of the ark); but of David as the appointed Shepherd-King over all Israel.

It is observable that, though the psalmist goes back to the time of Moses, he comes no further forward than to the time of the Judges: an excellent stroke of policy, since the period thus spanned was abundantly sufficient to afford the historical parallels of which he desired to make use, while he could nevertheless avoid irritating references to later events, of which the Northerners had no need to be reminded. Again, the omission of Saul and Solomon on either side of David—to whom so much prominence is given at the close of the psalm—justifies itself

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in each case as a wise omission: of Saul, because the kingship was taken from him and his heirs, and because the opposition which had for a time lingered in the tribe of Benjamin (the tribe of Saul) against the Davidic Royalty had now died away; and of Solomon, because any allusion to him might have revived inconvenient memories of those oppressions of his which clearly paved the way for the great disruption. It was enough, for the end in view, to set David high on the pedestal of Divine approval and appointment: all hearers of the psalm could in a moment pass from David to David's loyal and worthy son, Hezekiah—and that was enough. But though Solomon is not named, yet the Temple he built is brought into prominence: thus supporting the invitation to renewed worship there—in a shrine so magnificent and to all appearance so abiding.

Then if we pass on to notice the manner in which the assumed design of the psalm is sought to be obtained, we shall be able to detect many tokens of exquisite adaptation. Not only is there, in the psalm, all the winsomeness of poetic form and beauty; but a skilful appeal is at once made to the patriotic sentiment which loves to hear the story of one's ancestors, especially as entwined around the formation of a unique nationality; which appeal is made the more telling when the poet avows that he is about to bring forth from the venerated past *problems* of present-day application.

It is true that the psalmist's serious purpose compels him to lodge a grave complaint against one of the most powerful of the Northern Tribes—that of *Ephraim*; but both the way in which he leads up to this complaint and the terms in which he expresses it, are well fitted to secure for it attention. He breathes not a word against any single tribe, until he has first made against the nation's ancestors as a body an indictment expressed in the startling terms in which parents were authorized by Moses to bring their refractory sons as *rebellious and insulting* before the elders of their city for condign punishment in the event of continued obstinacy. Then, although he does level his charge against the tribe of *Ephraim* thus early in the psalm (vers. 9-11),—without which specification it is not easy to see how he could have quickened the apprehension of the Ephraimites to see their own likeness in the mirror which he was about to hold up to their gaze,—yet it is not difficult to detect in his allusion to their proficiency with the *bow*, a compliment, and a reminiscence of their father Joseph which were not likely

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to be lost upon them (Gen. 49:23, 24). If their *bow* was no longer "abiding in strength," was that not due to moral defection? If they had *turned in the day of battle* (which, in the absence of specification, one may perhaps refer broadly to the day of entrance into the land under Joshua, followed by sinful compromise with idolatry), were they not the more chargeable with blame by reason of their high national aspirations?

There is no need here to dwell in detail on the historical reminiscences to which attention has been called by our "Analysis." The one obvious thing to do, if we would use the "mirror" of history to profit, or at least perceive how the Northerners might be expected so to use it,—is to go back to the "prelude" and fetch up therefrom the significant term *problems* (ver. 2) as applied to the history here in Part III. recited. In what way does this application of the word *problems* to the history furnish a suitable appeal to the Ten Tribes? This has already been suggested by the aforesaid Analysis. High above the limitations of "Time" and "Place" there sufficiently alluded to, stands the great question of the "Freedom of Divine Action." Let us assume—as we reasonably may—that, at the time this psalm is composed and sent forth on its mission, the North has been overrun by Assyria, and that Samaria is already in siege, or if we would make the picture still blacker, that that city has already capitulated,—how and where do the *problems* find application? Look back over those historical details with this especial feature in view: How did God *act* in those sinful and perilous times of old? and note especially this: That the Divine action is various: always doubtless holy, always right; yet, in its springs, far above, out of our sight; in its activities and modifications, many a time taking us by surprise. Sometimes he is angry, and yet grants the blessing; sometimes his rising displeasure is checked—he will not *stir up all his wrath*; sometimes, pent-up wrath suddenly breaks forth as if to bring up arrears of displeasure, and make a clean sweep of the rebels whose insults can no longer be endured. Behind all these adjustments and adaptations, lies the great primal fact of Divine Redemption out of Egypt; and high above all is descried the Divine fountain-head of *compassion* and the Divine remembrance of human frailty. This, God never forgets. So that, as applied to Ephraim, the lesson briefly is this: It is yet *problematical* how Jehovah may deal with you: he may smite and yet spare; may carry away and yet bring back. Do not *despair*: Jehovah of old brought out of Egypt; and even now he

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can deliver from Assyria. Do not *presume*: beware of pent-up wrath; do not provoke once too often. Humble yourselves AND RETURN (2 Ch. 30:6, 9). And, in your thoughts of return, forget not, that some forfeited honours may never be restored, some past provisions may never be renewed. Your leadership in Israel has been forfeited for ever. Shiloh has been abandoned for ever. You have lost the ark, and to you it may never return. The Shepherd of Israel may be now leading his flock to fresh pastures." But this brings us up to Part IV., on which a few words will suffice.

If we wisely avoid resenting the anthropomorphism which likens Jehovah to a waking hero, and honestly endeavour to enter into the spirit of the teaching thereby conveyed, we shall not fail to perceive the new tone which now makes itself manifest. We have done with *problems*, so far as the poetic development of them is concerned; and are now brought face to face with facts—facts calculated to urge on a settlement of the great practical problem of the then immediate future: *to return or not to return*. It was time that the old enemies, the Philistines, were decisively dealt with; and so *reproach* was cast upon them when they were ignominiously smitten before the very ark they had taken captive; and later on (as we may supply) when they were finally subjugated at the hands of a shepherd stripling that *reproach* has been made notorious and *age-abiding*. But it was also time that the historic claims of Joseph and his son Ephraim were disposed of for ever by the choice of Judah, by the erection of the temple in Jerusalem, and by the selection of David as King for all Israel; and so the psalm comes to a powerful conclusion. It was left to silence, and other psalms, and other agencies, to do the rest.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Graham Scroggie has well observed: "Some think it was written in David's reign, or early in Solomon's, because the record does not go further than David (70-72). Others think it was written after the disruption of the Tribes, because of the references to Ephraim and Shiloh. (9, 67, 60). Others, again, place the Psalm in the time of Hezekiah and Isaiah". What is Rotherham's preference? Why? How supported?
2. Why not go any further forward in the history than the time of the Judges?

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3. Why is Saul and Solomon omitted?
4. How is "patriotic sentiment" appealed to? For what purpose?
5. Ephraim is both rebuked and complimented at the same time—explain.
6. This psalm teaches "that the action of God is conditioned on the conduct of men; that the divine promises were not, and are not, inalienable gifts to either Israel or the church, but that His blessings are granted to those who willingly cooperate with God in His moral government of the world". (Scroggie) Give examples of this truth and discuss.
7. Notice the words describing Israel's reaction to God's law: (1) stubborn, (2) rebellious, (3) forgetful, (4) not steadfast, (5) rebelled, (6) tempted, (7) spoke against. Give the seven responses of God to these seven attitudes of Israel.
8. Discuss this provocative thought: "There is an immorality of forgetfulness".

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DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Invasion, Desecration, Demolition, Massacre and Derision call forth Lamentation, Expostulation, Petition and Pleading; and the Hope of Deliverance evokes a Promise of Perpetual Praise.

ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-4, Lamentation; Stanza II., vers. 5-8, Expostulation and Petition; Stanza III., vers. 9-12, Pleading; Stanza IV., ver. 13, Promise of Perpetual Praise.

(Lm.) Psalm—By Asaph.

- 1 O God! nations¹ have entered into thine inheritance,
have made unclean thy holy temple;²
have made Jerusalem heaps of ruins:³
- 2 have given the dead bodies of thy servants⁴ as food to the
bird of the heavens,

1. Or: "Gentiles."

2. Cp. 74:4-8, Lam. 1:10.

3. Mi. 3:12, Jer. 26:18.

4. Deu. 28:26, Jer. 7:33, 16:4, 19:7, 34:20.

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- the flesh of thy men of kindness⁵ to the wild beast of the earth;
- 3 have poured out their blood like water
round about Jerusalem with none to bury.⁶
 - 4 We have become a reproach to our neighbors,
a mockery and derision to them who are round about us.⁷
 - 5 How long Jehovah wilt thou be angry utterly?
how long shall thy jealousy burn like fire?
 - 6 Pour out thy wrath on the nations that have not known thee,
and on the kingdoms which on thy name have not called;⁸
 - 7 For they have⁹ devoured Jacob,
and his homestead¹⁰ have laid waste.
 - 8 Do not remember against us the iniquity of former times!¹¹
haste thee! let thine acts of compassion come to meet us;
for we have been brought very low.
 - 9 Help us O God of our salvation, on account of the honour¹²
of thy name
and rescue us and put a propitiatory covering over¹³ our sins,
for the sake of thy name.
 - 10 Why should the nations¹⁴ say—"Where is their God?"
let the avenging of the blood of thy servants which hath been
poured out
be made known among the nations before our eyes.¹⁵
 - 11 Let the groaning of the prisoner come in before thee,

5. Heb. *hasidim*. "In the age of the Macabees (B.C. 168 and following years) the term was adopted as the title of the patriotic party in Israel, who were faithful to the national religion, and resisted the attempts that were made to overthrow it—see 1 Macc. 2:12, 7:13, 2 Macc. 14:6 (where '*Hasidaeans*' is the Heb. *hasidim*, the plural of this word. It is possible that 'godly' is already used in this sense in Ps. 149:1, 5, 9, if not in 116:18 as well"—Dr.

6. Jer. 14:16, 16:4.

7. Ps. 44:13, 137:7.

8. Cp. Jer. 10:25.

9. M.T. ml.: "he hath." But some cod. (w. Aram., Sep., Syr., Vul.): "they have." Cp. Jer. 10:25—Gn.

10. So Dr.; "cp. Jer. 10:25."

11. So O.G. But Dr.: "(our) forefathers."

12. Or: "glory."

13. (Simply) "cover"—Per.; "expiate"—Del.; "pardon"—Carter; "atone for"—Leeser; "purge away"—Kp.; "cancel"—Dr., cp. 65:3 (note).

14. Or: "the Gentiles," cp. ver. 1.

15. Deu. 32:43.

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according to the greatness of thine arm set thou free¹⁶ the sons of death.¹⁷

12 And return to our neighbors—sevenfold into their bosom—their reproach wherewith they have reproached thee
Sovereign Lord!

13 So we, thy people and the flock of thy shepherding¹⁸ will give thanks¹⁹ unto thee to the ages,
to generation after generation will tell of thy praise.

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician.

(CMm.) For "Lilies of Testimony"—the Feast of Weeks.

PARAPHRASE

PSALM 79

O God, Your land has been conquered by the heathen nations. Your Temple is defiled and Jerusalem is a heap of ruins.

2 The bodies of Your people lie exposed—food for birds and animals.

3 The enemy has butchered the entire population of Jerusalem; blood has flowed like water; no one is left even to bury them.

4 The nations all around us scoff. They heap contempt on us.

5 O Jehovah, how long will You be angry with us? Forever? Will Your jealousy burn till every hope is gone?

6 Pour out Your wrath upon the godless nations, not on us! And on kingdoms that refuse to pray, that will not call upon Your name!

7 For they have destroyed Your people Israel, invading every home.

8 Oh, do not hold us guilty for our former sins! Let Your tenderhearted mercies meet our needs, for we are brought low to the dust.

9 Help us, God of our salvation! Help us for the honor of Your name! Oh, save us and forgive our sins.

10 Why should the heathen nations be allowed to scoff,

16. So it shd. be (w. Aram., Syr.). Cp. 105:20, 146:7.—Gn. M.T.: "leave remaining." "Reprieve"—Dr.

17. Cp. 102:20 (2 Sam. 12:5).

18. As in 74:1; cp. 77:20, 78:52, 70. "The favourite Asaphic way of looking at Israel as a flock"—Del.

19. Cp. 6:5 n.

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"Where is their God?" Publicly avenge this slaughter of Your people!

11 Listen to the sighing of the prisoners and those condemned to die. Demonstrate the greatness of Your power by saving them.

12 O Lord, take sevenfold vengeance on these nations scorning You.

13 Then we Your people the sheep of Your pasture, will thank You forever and forever, praising Your greatness from generation to generation.

EXPOSITION

If this psalm now appears as it was first composed, its date must be assigned to the time of the Maccabees; since the time of the Chaldean invasion under Nebuchadnezzar does not suit all its leading features, whereas the persecutions and profanations of Antiochus Epiphanes, against which the Maccabean resistance was directed, serve to supply in counterpart the finishing-touches to this picture of Israel's troubles. Such a late time of origin does, indeed, leave little space for translation into the Septuagint; but, as the date usually assigned to the execution of this Greek Bible does not necessarily apply to all the sacred books, and some of them, including the Psalms, may well have been added at a somewhat later time, candour must admit the practical possibility of a Maccabean origin of this psalm consistently with its appearance, in the Septuagint where it now stands, in close conformity with its Hebrew original. The alternative theory—that it was originally composed soon after the Chaldean invasion and subsequently freely adapted to the later time—is not wildly improbable, as the known free action of the Sopherim on the Sacred Text sufficiently shews; but, on the other hand, the unity and symmetry of the psalm as we have it, make strongly for one spirit working at one time in its production. In either case, an extract or two from the first book of Maccabees will be acceptable to the general reader. "And there came forth out of [‘them the servants of Alexander the Great, who bare rule in his place’] a sinful root, Antiochus Epiphanes, son of Antiochus the king, who had been a hostage in Rome, and he reigned in the hundred and thirty and seventh year of the kingdom of [the Greeks, *circa* B.C. 176] . . . And Antiochus, after that he had smitten Egypt, returned in the hundred and forty and third year [*circa* B.C. 170] and went up against Israel and Jerusalem with a great

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multitude, and entered presumptuously into the sanctuary, and took the golden altar, and the candlestick of the light, and all that pertained thereto, and the table of the shew-bread, and the cups to pour withal, and the bowls, and the golden censers, and the veil, and the crowns, and the adorning of gold which was on the face of the temple, and he scaled it all off. And he took the silver and the gold and the precious vessels; and he took the hidden treasures which he found. And when he had taken all, he went away into his own land, and he made a great slaughter and spake very presumptuously . . . And the land was moved for the inhabitants thereof, and all the house of Jacob was clothed with shame . . . And after two full years the king sent a chief collector of tribute unto the cities of Judah, and he came unto Jerusalem with a great multitude. And he spake words of peace unto them in subtilty, and they gave him credence; and he fell upon the city suddenly, and smote it very sore, and destroyed much people out of Israel. And he took the spoils of the city, and set it on fire, and pulled down the houses thereof and the walls thereof on every side . . . And they shed innocent blood on every side of the sanctuary, and defiled the sanctuary. And the inhabitants of Jerusalem fled because of them . . . And on the fifteenth day of Chislev, in the hundred and forty and fifth year [*circa* B.C. 168], they builded an abomination of desolation upon the altar, and in the cities of Judah on every side they builded idol altars. And at the doors of the houses and in the streets they burnt incense. And they rent in pieces the books of the law which they found, and set them on fire . . . On the five and twentieth day of the month they sacrificed on the idol altar, which was upon the altar of God" (1 Mac. 1:10, 20-24, 29-31, 37, 38, 54-56) . . . "And Jerusalem was without inhabitant as a wilderness, there was none of her offspring that went in or went out; and the sanctuary was trodden down, and the sons of strangers were in the citadel, the Gentiles lodged therein; and joy was taken away from Jacob, and the pipe and the harp ceased" (3:45).

The structure of the psalm, according to Del., followed above, is interesting; as revealing three stanzas of nine lines each, closed by a stimple tristich.

The course of thought running through the whole is natural and easy to follow.

The first stanza is filled with lamentation, which takes the obvious course of describing, step by step, Israel's deep humilia-

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tion; the invasion of the *land*, the defiling of the *temple*, the demolition of *city*, the massacre of *inhabitants*—especially of the *godly*, the contemptuous treatment of the *slain*, the disregard of the heavy responsibility of shedding *blood*. This last might have seemed the fitting climax; but, as in Ps. 40 there was to be added "Many shall see, &c." though in a totally different strain to that found here; so here there fell to be added a couplet describing the effect of Jerusalem's humiliation upon the onlooking neighbouring nationalities, as to the renewed reference to whom in ver. 12, Delitzsch well says: "That the prayer comes back in ver. 12 to the neighboring peoples, is explained by the fact that these, seeing they might the soonest have attained to the knowledge of the God of Israel as the one true and living God, bear the greatest guilt on account of their reviling of Him."

Naturally, a stanza follows, taken up with expostulation (*How long?* ver. 5), and petitions (*Pour out—Do not remember—Haste thee*, vers. 6-8), sustained, no doubt, by *reasons*, expressed and implied; among which may be singled out the prayer against heathen nations, for the purpose of interposing the caution to be careful not to exaggerate these imprecations, seeing that the simplicity of poetically expressed Eastern thought clearly allows us to understand *positives* as amounting to *comparatives*: "If thy wrath must be outpoured, let it be rather on the nations," &c.

But these reasoned petitions, are, in the third stanza, followed by yet more urgent pleadings; which may usefully remind us how much of this element is to be found in the prayers of the faithful throughout the Holy Scriptures; as witness, especially, the prayers of Abraham (Gen. 18), (Daniel 9) and the writer of Ps. 119; and though, at first sight, it might appear to have been discountenanced by our Lord (Mt. 6:7-13), yet both his own teaching (Lu. 11:8, 18:1) and example (Jn. 17, Mk. 14:22-39) caution us to bear in mind that all repetition need not be "vain." Indeed it may safely be said: That he who has not learned to plead in prayer, has not yet learned to pray at all—especially by way of intercession (1 Tim. 2:1-8). It will not be lost labour, if the devout reader look through this third stanza afresh, in order to note in how many directions there is an outgoing of sympathy to his suffering brethren, on the part of the psalmist, prompting to a holy boldness in drawing near to his God.

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QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Do you accept the late date for the composition of this psalm—i.e., during the period of the Maccabees?
2. We *must* associate this psalm with a desecration and destruction of the Temple—which one? Discuss the reasons for your choice.
3. War has not changed. We could use the description given here to describe a thousand wars. Who has won by wars?
4. The writer of the psalm feels that jealousy is the cause for the calamity. Discuss.
5. Are we to assume that God acts on nations—tribes and families as well as individuals? i.e. the sins of nations—tribes and families accumulate over a period of time until God brings punishment? If not this, what?
6. The personal pronoun appears very prominently: (a) *your* land, (b) *your* Temple, (c) *your* people, (d) *your* name—why? Did it help?
7. There is both strength and weakness in the promises of the afflicted. Discuss.

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DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Prayer for the Flock and Vine of Israel.

ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-3, By Three Significant Titles, Jehovah is besought to interpose for Salvation, before Three Significantly Selected Tribes. Stanza II., vers. 4-7, Remonstrance with God for the length of His Manifestation of Displeasure. Stanza III., vers. 8-11, The Vine—Transplanted out of Egypt and Prosperous in Canaan. Stanza IV., vers. 12-15, The Vine—Endangered and Damaged: Prayer that it be Inspected and Protected. Stanza V., vers. 16-18, In order that the Destruction of the Vine may be Averted, Representation and Restoration are Besought.

(Lm.) By Asaph—Psalm.

- 1 Shepherd of Israel oh give ear!
leader of Joseph as a flock,
throned on the cherubim oh shine forth!

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- 2 Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh
oh stir up thy heroic strength,
and oh come to our salvation!
- 3 *Oh God! restore us,
And light up thy face,
And we shall be saved.*
- 4 Jehovah God of hosts!
how long hast thou been angry¹ in spite of² the prayer of
thy people?
- 5 [How long] hast thou fed them with the bread of tears,
given them to drink of tears in large measure?³
- 6 [How long] wilt thou make us a strife to our neighbours,
or shall our foes laugh at us?⁴
- 7 *O God of hosts! restore us,
And light up thy face,—
And we shall be saved.*
- 8 A vine out of Egypt thou didst lift,
didst drive out nations and plant it:
- 9 Didst clear a space before it,
so it rooted its roots and filled the land:
- 10 Covered were the mountains with its shade,
and with its boughs the cedars of GOD:
- 11 It thrust forth its branches as far as the sea,
and unto the River its shoots.⁵
- 12 Wherefore hast thou broken down its fences,⁶
so that all who pass along the way have plucked of its fruit?
- 13 The boar out of the forest⁷ gnaweth it,
and the roaming beast of the field browseth on it.
- 14 O God of hosts! return we pray thee,
look around out of the heavens and see,—
and inspect this vine;

1. *ML.*: "snorted" or "fumed."

2. *Or.*: "during."

3. *ML.*: "by the tierce." "The third part of some larger measure, perhaps the bath (*Ez.* 45:11), and if so equivalent to nearly three gallons,—a large measure for tears, though a small one for the earth, *Is.* 40:12 ('measure')—*Dr.*

4. So some *cod.* (*w.* *Sep.*, *Syr.*, *Vul.*)—*Gn. M.T.*: "laugh to themselves" ("mock as they please"—*Dr.*).

5. *Or.*: "suckers."

6. *Or.*: "walls."

7. That is=symbol of Rome. *Or.*: "river: (=symbol of Egypt). See *G. Intro.*, 338-340.

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- 15 And be thou the protection⁸ of that which thy right-hand
hath planted,
and over the bough⁹ thou hast secured for thyself.
- 16 It is to be burned with fire it is to be cut down,
at the rebuke of thy face¹⁰ they will perish!
- 17 Let thy hand be over the man of thy right hand,
over the son of mankind¹¹ thou hast secured for thyself:
- 18 So shall we not draw back from thee,
thou wilt restore us to life¹² and on thy name will we call.
- 19 *Jehovah God of hosts restore us,
Light up thy face,—
And we shall be saved.*

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician.

(CMm.) For the Wine-presses=Feast of Tabernacles.

PARAPHRASE

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O Shepherd of Israel who leads Israel like a flock; O God enthroned above the cherubim, bend down Your ear and listen as I plead. Display Your power and radiant glory.

2 Let Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasseh see You rouse Yourself and use Your mighty power to rescue us.

3 Turn us again to Yourself, O God. Look down on us in joy and love;¹ only then shall we be saved.

4 O Jehovah, God of heaven's armies, how long will You be angry and reject our prayers?

5 You have fed us with sorrow and tears,

6 And have made us the scorn of the neighboring nations. They laugh among themselves.

7 Turn us again to Yourself, O God of Hosts. Look down on us in joy and love;¹ only then shall we be saved.

8 You brought us from Egypt as though we were a tender vine and drove away the heathen from Your land and planted us.

9 You cleared the ground and tilled the soil and we took root and filled the land.

8. So Del. and others.

9. Ml.: "son." Some cod. (w. Sep., Syr., Vul.) "son of man (*adam*)"—Gn.

10. Gt.: "mouth"—Gn.

11. Heb.: *Adam*.

12. Or: "quicken us."

1. Literally, "cause Your face to shine upon us."

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10 The mountains were covered with our shadow; we were like the mighty cedar trees,²

11 Covering the entire land from the Mediterranean Sea to the Euphrates River.

12 But now You have broken down our walls leaving us without protection.

13 The boar from the forest roots around us, and the wild animals feed on us.

14 Come back, we beg of You, O God of the armies of heaven, and bless us. Look down from heaven and see our plight and care for this Your vine!

15 Protect what You Yourself have planted, this son You have raised for Yourself.

16 For we are chopped and burned by our enemies. May they perish at Your frown.

17 Strengthen the man You love,³ the son of Your choice,⁴

18 And we will never forsake You again. Revive us to trust in You.

19 Turn us again to Yourself, O God of the armies of heaven. Look down on us, Your face aglow with joy and love—only then shall we be saved.

EXPOSITION

The exceeding beauty of this psalm is obvious at a glance,—with its striking invocation, its threefold refrain, and its exquisite allegory of the Vine. Its power, however, cannot be felt to the full until its scope is observed and its spirit perceived. Its scope is, to reconcile all the tribes of Israel to each other and to their God; its spirit is, on the one hand, one of absolute loyalty to Jehovah, in his preference for Judah as the leading tribe, and to the house of David as the divinely appointed reigning dynasty; and, on the other hand, one of tender regard for the susceptibilities of the northern tribes. Whether *Asaph*, the author of this psalm, be Asaph the Second or Asaph the Seventh matters little, so long as we take him to have been the prophet compeer of King Hezekiah. While the King was *inviting* the tribes to come to Jerusalem, the psalmist was *singing* them in to Jehovah's royal seat.

Viewed from this standpoint, what address is discovered in

2. Literally, "the cedars of God."

3. Literally, "the man of Your right hand."

4. Literally, "the son of man You made strong for Yourself."

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the opening invocation. When the term "Israel" did not mean the whole nation, it specially meant the Ten Tribes; and of "Joseph" the same may be said, with the especial consideration added, that as both Ephraim and Manasseh were integral members of the northern kingdom, "Joseph" would more emphatically point "North." So far, then, the invocation counts two for the "North"; but when the third Divine Title is added, "Throned on the cherubim," then, as the holy cherubic Throne was now located in Jerusalem, that was emphatically one for the South. So that, while this invocation, in the order of mention, yields the leading place to the North, and then weightily gravitates to the South, it may be truthfully described as a tribe-uniting Invocation.

In the same spirit the psalm proceeds, with the tact of a Divine winsomeness: "Thou who art throned in the South, before the North shew forth thy glorious presence!" "Before the North": more in detail, *Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh*,—Ephraim and Manasseh being, of course, the two sons of Joseph; with little Benjamin placed between them, with exquisite good taste and with striking historical reminiscences clustering about the arrangement; first, as all being the descendants of the two sons of Rachel; and second, as having been placed in the rear of the Ark in the appointed order of march through the wilderness: "Thou who are throned in the Ark before them, before them shine forth, as thou leadest them on to victory and glory." Nor was this association of Benjamin with Ephraim and Manasseh without historical propriety or hortatory necessity. "At first sight," says Kirkpatrick, "it may seem strange that Benjamin is reckoned among the northern tribes, for partially at any rate it sided with Rehoboam (1 Kings 12:21, 2 Chr. 11:3, 23, 15:8, 9); but the one tribe remaining to David was Judah (1 Kings 11:13, 32, 36), and Benjamin must be reckoned to the Northern Kingdom to make up Ten tribes, for Simeon had become merged in Judah and is not counted. The principal Benjamite towns of Bethel, Gilgal, and Jericho belonged to the Northern Kingdom." To which we may add a sentence from Delitzsch as to these three cities: "But, like Ramah (1 Kings 15:21f), not without being contested (cf. 2 Chr. 13:19); the boundaries were therefore fluctuating."

Thus wooed into united supplication, the twelve-tribed nation is led forward in impassioned pleading, as the repeated use of the "*h*-paragoric" shews: *Oh give ear! Oh shine forth! Oh stir up! "O come!"*

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The refrain too is worthy of its place as the triple crown of the psalm. *O God! restore us: or, bring us back*—which would especially suit those who were in banishment;—or, *bring us back* to our former estate, *Restore us*—which would suit all who lamented their degeneracy and disunion. *And light up thy face*—with that smile which so gladdens all such as love thee. *And*, thus gladdened—united—guided, *we shall be saved* from foes and dangers and sins.

To this stanza of invocation and petition, succeeds a stanza of invocation and remonstrance. Only, now, the invocation is shorter: *Jehovah*—the Becoming One; *God of Hosts*, with saints and angels and elements at thy command, waiting to do thy will.—Invocations are useful, as the natural outcome of earnestness; as apt reminders, to the petitioner and his fellow-worshippers, of the nature of the weighty business in hand—that we are neither dreaming nor soliloquising, nor aimlessly wandering: we are in the court of the Divine Presence, speaking to the Almighty—that is our one present business. Moreover, Invocations are turned into pleadings by the choice of epithets to suit our need, and by the accumulation of them as so many avenues of approach to him whom we worship.—*How long?* is the key-note of the remonstrance, the spirit of which should undoubtedly be carried through the remainder of the stanza: up to and preparing for the supplicatory refrain. *How long* hast thou been thus angry and wilt thou continue to be? *How long* hast thou fed us with the bread of tears—so that our hungry lips open in vain for food, only to taste the salt tears that fall upon them? *How long* art thou going still further to make us a strife to our smaller neighbours, who are quarreling among themselves as to who first and who most shall insult us in our humiliation? *How long* are our more formidable foes to be permitted to turn on us with a scornful laugh when we groan under their unchecked atrocities?—Thus are we permitted to interweave the element of time with our prayers: *How long?* The longest may seem but “a small moment” to Him who sees the end from the beginning; but, to us, creatures of a day, it is a serious aggravation to our troubles that they are so long continued. And what we are here taught by Asaph is, that we may dare to remonstrate with God over the almost unbearable protraction of our trials. Thus, as least, shall we find an intensified refrain of petition welcome, as a relief to the burden which weighs down our spirits: *O God of Hosts, restore us, And light up thy face, And we shall be saved.*

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And now comes the Vine—the parable, the allegory of the Vine—and let us remember that we are still, in prayer, speaking to Him whose vine it is: its Owner, its Planter and Transplanter, its Waterer and Fencer, its Devastator, its seeming Neglecter, its severe Inspector, its true and only Protector, its Redeemer and Restorer.

It is thus that this Vine comes before us:—1. Transplanted and Prosperous, 2. Endangered and Damaged, 3. Inspected and Protected, 4. Represented and Restored. Although these headings are not exactly conformed to the stanzical divisions of the psalm, they may be helpful as a basis of study. While paying a passing regard to the framework of the Allegory, let us chiefly endeavour to get at its true meaning.

1. The Vine—Israel: *Transplanted and Prosperous*. It began its growth in Egypt. But in Egypt there was neither room for its growth, nor an atmosphere to make it fruitful. Egypt was peopled by an oppressing nationality, unfavourable to the growth within it of a free nation; and Egypt was poisoned with idolatry, unfitted for the development of a pure nation. Jehovah desired a nation both free and pure: fitted to be a channel of blessing to all the other nations of the earth. Therefore he transplanted his Vine—*lifted it*, as a vine is lifted with its roots, or a vine-layer is lifted, and laid in its ample bed.

But it must have a *cleared space* to receive it. The Owner of this Vine foresaw this need and provided for it. Hence the psalmist says: *Didst clear a space before it*. And the Divine directions were, that the space should be cleared. The iniquity of the Amorites was now full; and therefore, being mindful that the space they occupied should be filled to better purpose, the Disposer of Nations commanded them to be extirpated—a severe but needful mandate; “severe,” because it involved the destruction of the innocent with the guilty; “needful,” because the seven nations of Canaan had become a pest and a peril to the world. Unmerciful? Verily: it would have been more merciful, if the terrible Divine Behest of Destruction had been sternly executed. It would have saved the lives as well as the morals of generations yet unborn.

Nevertheless, space was made; so that this Vine, transplanted from Egypt, grew rapidly: in the picturesque language of the psalm, *it rooted its roots, and filled the land*. As if on purpose to recall and amplify the blessings on Joseph which fell from his father Jacob’s lips (Gen. 49), the psalmist proceeds:

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Covered were the mountains with its shade—the mountains of the South, *And with its boughs the cedars of God*—on the Lebanon to the North, a feat which the Vine, as a climbing plant, is able to accomplish; *It thrust forth its branches*, with the true thrusting power of growth, *as far as the sea*—the Mediterranean, to the West; *and unto the River (Nahar=the Euphrates) its shoots (or suckers)*. Great (outward) prosperity, nearly if not quite realised in the days of Solomon. Is it strange that such prosperity should not have endured? Alas! there was a worm at the root of this Vine. Idolatry—the very thing that the God of Israel would not tolerate—had entered and was making rapid advances even in the days of Solomon.

2. *Endangered and Damaged*.—Inwardly, the danger was Sin—flagrant national Sin. The outward danger followed. The Owner of the Vine himself *broke down its fences*. His own character was involved: his purposes were being thwarted: there was a needs-be that he should interpose. Self-consistency and truth demanded it; all this had been threatened by Moses, and it must come. *All who passed along the way*—Egypt to meet Assyria, Assyria to meet Egypt—*plucked of its fruit*; and verily the fruit of this Vine was luscious and tempting; as, for example, the golden treasures of the Temple! Pity the defenceless Vine! when the *boar out of the forest*—the wild-boar of Assyria, Babylon, Greece or Rome, came that way (the Boar was anciently the symbol of Rome). The Vine, that is the Nation, more frequently pitied itself, than turned in true repentance to its offended God. True to the life it is, that Jewish scholars have punned on the very word which describes their punishment. The essential letters of the Hebrew word for *forest* are Y, R: if pronounced *yaar*, then it means *forest*; but if pronounced *ye-or* then it signifies *river*, and particularly the Nile. Now, they did not fear the Boar of the Nile so much as they stood in awe of the Boar of the forest east or west. The roaming beast of *the field*, in the next line, may mean—either any marauding power, or the smaller neighboring monarchs ever ready to browse on Israel's most tender and promising *shoots*.

3. *Inspected and Protected*.—No wonder that the psalmist should again and more earnestly than ever betake himself to prayer. And, first, he prays for inspection: *O God of hosts! return, we pray thee look around out of the heavens*—on the

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various nations; *and see*—whether there is any other nation that interests and concerns thee like this; *and inspect this vine*—look narrowly into its condition, and see what, in thy clemency and wisdom, can be done in its behalf. So far, we Gentiles hearken with complacency: it is doubtless right, we are ready to say, that *this vine*, on which so much culture has been lavished should be *inspected*! But are we equally prepared to follow Asaph in the next step which he takes? *And be thou the protection of that which thy right-hand hath planted*. Perhaps we are utterly and genuinely unable to say “what more” the Divine Husbandman “could have done for his vineyard which he has not done for it” (Isa. 5). But how can he protect a nation which cannot and will not protect itself—cannot and will not come under his protection? And so we are straitened, not in God, but in ourselves, and in our own poverty of conception. We think we have reached the end of HIS ways which are “past finding out”! Is there never a *bough* in this Vine, which as a fresh layer can again be transplanted; and so a New Vine be produced therefrom? Perhaps, even to this length, the utmost stretch of our Gentile imaginations may extend. “Yes!” we say; “even that may be. ‘Salvation is of the Jews.’ The Messiah ‘comes of the seed of David.’ And, only give to the Messiah a new people; then he and his new people shall form a new Vine; and in that new Vine the old shall live again and so be perpetuated.” Good as far as it goes; only it does not go so far as the Apostle Paul would conduct us; for he exclaims, in a passage wherein Israel cannot mean the Church, “And so all Israel shall be saved.” Therefore we must yet stand firm to the text of this Asaphic Psalm.

4. *Represented and Restored*.—It was something that at the close of the previous stanza (ver. 15) we saw a *bough* that was not likely to be destroyed, seeing that Jehovah had *secured it for himself*. The Psalmist sets the peril of Israel’s national destruction clearly before him. The natural doom of such a Vine is *to be burned with fire*; and, with a view to such a burning, *to be cut down*: there is reason, in Israel’s persistent sin, for Divine Rebuke stern enough to leave Israel to *perish*. But this apprehension on the part of the psalmist prompts to renewed and more explicit prayer. *Let thy hand be protectingly over the man of thy right hand*. Is this man an individual or a nation? There is something to be said for the opinion of some that it may be the whole nation of Israel; even as, in ver. 15,

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that which thy right hand hath planted is clearly the nation. Still, we have already had brought before us the separating conception of a single *bough*, or *son*, of the Vine; and Jehovah's first care is clearly to protect and preserve that *bough*; and this is the idea which is now, in supplication, brought forward anew—brought forward anew and amplified,—and, in the process of repetition and amplification, more fully described and more accurately defined. Even the phrase, *the man of thy right hand* seems irresistibly to carry us forward to the Messiah. But when the duplicate phrase follows, *The son of Mankind—the Son of Adam*; and the striking description is repeated, *whom thou hast secured for thyself* that conclusion is undoubtedly confirmed; so that we are relieved to find that even the Aramaean Targum giving scholarly Jewish opinion in the early Christian centuries is borne along in the same direction with its paraphrase: "And upon Messiah the king, whom thou hast made strong for thyself." Still the question recurs—Does this gravitation of the psalm to the Messiah include or exclude the Nation? If we still follow the psalmist's lead,—to say nothing more now of concurrent Scripture,—we shall undoubtedly answer in the affirmative—It will include and not exclude the Nation. For who are these who now join in the pleading—*So shall we not draw back from thee*, fully and finally. On the contrary, however dead we are at present, yea even generations of our people in Hades (Eze. 37), *Thou wilt restore us to life*, and as the priestly nation we were originally intended to be (Exo. 19) and which prophecy clearly foretells we yet shall be (Isa. 61:6, 66:20) *And on thy name will we call. Jehovah, God of hosts, restore us*—us, the nation, inheriting the name and honour of the Vine thou didst lift out of Egypt, *Light up thy face, and we, the Vine, the Nation, shall be saved.*

Recurring to the opening of the psalm, a weighty lesson may be drawn therefrom for the guidance of such as would seek the reunion of Christendom. There is in this realm also the unfaithfulness which fears to tell Ephraim his sin. For these the 78th psalm furnishes instruction: showing the possibility of faithfully admonishing Ephraim, that he has "turned back in the day of battle," and yet so administering the lesson as to commend it to his attention. The present psalm furnishes the hint that, besides warning Ephraim, efforts to win him may be alternated with sterner remonstrances. Set the Ark of the Divine Presence before him, and entreat him to follow its lead;

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at the same time endeavouring to convince him that there are privileges to be enjoyed in Judah which Ephraim has forfeited. Let us hold fast the honour of having first denounced Divisionalism in Christendom; at the same time wooing back wanderers in a generous and winsome spirit.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. There are some very meaningful figures of speech in this psalm. List them and make application.
2. There seems to be a national purpose in the structure of the psalm. Discuss.
3. Is it ever proper to argue with God? Is this being done in verse 1 through 7? Discuss.
4. The comparison of Israel to a vine is fully and beautifully described. List the divisions of the text as given by Rotherham.
5. God accomplished two purposes in defeating the Amorites and giving their land to Israel. What were they?
6. Note the extent of the conquered land. Were not the promises of God fulfilled as to giving Israel the land? Discuss.
7. Who is "the boar of the forest"?; or is it "the boar of the river"?
8. Did God ever answer the prayer of verses 14, 15?
9. Perhaps when we fulfill the promise of verse 18, God will answer the prayers of verses 14, 15, 17, 19.
10. An English poet named Mant has done such a beautiful job poetically we wish to share his poem with you.
Thy hands from Egypt brought a goodly vine,
And planted fair in fertile Palestine;
Clear'd for its grasping roots th'unpeopled land,
And gave it high to rise, and firm to stand.
Far o'er the eternal hills her shadow spread,
Her tendrils wreath'd the cedar's towering head;
And, as the centre of the land she stood,
Her branches reach'd the sea, her boughs the eastern flood.
Why hast Thou now her hedges rent away,
And left her bare, the passing traveler's prey?
The field-fed beast devours each tender shoot,
Fierce from the wood the boar assails her root.
Return, O God; from heaven Thine eyes incline;
Behold, and visit this neglected vine:

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Regard the plant, Thou once didst love so well,
And chief Thy pleasant branch, the hope of Israel.
Burnt though she be and rent, her haughty foe
The deathful terrors of Thy wrath shall know.
But on the man, by Thee with strength array'd,
The Son of Man by Thee for conquest made,
Thy hand shall rest; till we Thy triumphs see,
Resound Thy praise, and still remember Thee.
Turn us again, Thou God of heav'n's high powers,
Beam with Thy radiance forth, and peace shall still be ours.

PSALM 81

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

A Mission-Song, to be Sung to the Northern Tribes.

ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-5, A Festive Celebration Invoked; in which People, Levites, and Priests can Recall the Early History of the Nation. Stanza II., vers. 6-10, The Voice of the Divine Redeemer of the Nation is Heard; Recounting the Deeds by which He made the Nation His Own, and Summarising the Covenant into which He Entered with it. Stanza III., vers. 11-16, Divine Lamentation over the Nation's Past Failures, with Renewed Invitations and Promises designed to Win the People back to their Allegiance.

(Lm.) By Asaph.

- 1 Ring out your joy unto God our strength,
give a sacred shout to the God of Jacob:
- 2 Raise ye a melody and hold forth¹ the timbrel,
the lyre so sweet with the lute:
- 3 Blow at the new moon the horn,
at the full moon for the day of our feast.
- 4 Because a statute for Israel it is,
a regulation by the God of Jacob:
- 5 A testimony in Joseph he appointed it,
when he went forth over the land of Egypt:

1. Or: "bring hither"—Leeser, Dr., Per.; "strike"—Carter; "sound"—Del., Kp.

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the language² of One I have not known I now hear:—³

- 6 "I have removed from the burden his shoulder,
his hands⁴ from the basket⁵ are set free:°
- 7 In distress thou didst cry and I rescued thee,
I answered thee in the hiding-place of thunder,⁷
I tried thee at the waters of Meribah
- 8 'Hear O my people and I will adjure thee,
O Israel If thou wilt hearken to me
- 9 There must not be within thee a strange GOD,
nor mayest thou bow down to the GOD of an alien:
- 10 I Jehovah am thy God,
who brought thee up out of the land of Egypt:
Open wide thy mouth and I will fill⁸ it.' "
- 11 But my people hearkened not to my voice,
and Israel consented not unto me:
- 12 So I gave them over to the stubbornness of their heart,
they might walk in their own counsels;
- 13 Oh that my people were hearkening unto me,
that Israel in my ways would walk.
- 14 Right soon their foes would I subdue,
and against their adversaries would I turn my hand:
- 15 The haters of Jehovah would come cringing unto him,⁹
so let their own time be to the ages:
- 16 I would feed thee with the choicest¹⁰ of the wheat,
and out of the rock with honey would I satisfy thee.¹¹

(Nm.)

2. Ml.: "lip."

3. "The Psalmist, speaking in the name of the nation, says that at the Exodus Israel first learnt to know the voice of its Deliverer"—Dr.

4. Ml.: "palms."

5. "Hod"—Thrupp.

6. Ml.: "passed."

7. "That is, in the pillar of cloud; cp. 18:11, Exo. 14:19, 24"—Dr. "The thunder-cloud, in which he at once revealed and concealed Himself, thundering down Israel's foes (which is to be understood more especially of the passage through the Red Sea; *vid.* 77:19)"—Del.

8. "A believing yearning, which is hungering for grace and eager for salvation (119:131)!"—Del.

9. "Should offer flattery unto him"—Leeser; "crouch to him"—Carter; "Their haters would have to fawn on them"—P.B.

10. Ml.: "marrow-fat."

11. Cp. Deu. 32:13.

STUDIES IN PSALMS

PARAPHRASE

PSALM 81

The Lord makes us strong! Sing praises! Sing to Israel's God!

2 Sing, accompanied by drums; pluck the sweet lyre and harp.

3 Sound the trumpet! Come to the joyous celebrations at full moon, new moon and all the other holidays!

4 For God has given us these times of joy; they are scheduled in the laws of Israel.

5 He gave them as reminders of His war against Egypt where we were slaves on foreign soil. I heard an unknown voice that said,

6 "Now I will relieve your shoulder of its burden; I will free your hands from their heavy tasks."

7 He said, "You cried to Me in trouble and I saved you; I answered from Mount Sinai¹ where the thunder hides. I tested your faith at Meribah, when you complained there was no water.

8 Listen to Me, O My people, while I give you stern warnings. O Israel, if you will only listen!

9 *You must never worship any other god, nor ever have an idol in your home.*²

10 For it was I, Jehovah your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt. Only test Me!³ Open your mouth wide and see if I won't fill it! You will receive every blessing you can use!

11 But no, My people won't listen. Israel doesn't want Me around.

12 So I am letting them go their blind and stubborn way, living according to their own desires.

13 But oh, that My people would listen to Me! Oh, that Israel would follow Me, walking in My paths!

14 How quickly then I would subdue her enemies! How soon My hands would be upon her foes!

15 Those who hate the Lord would cringe before Him; their desolation would last forever.

16 But He would feed you with the choicest foods. He would satisfy you with honey for the taking.⁴

1. Implied. Literally, "in the hiding place of thunder."

2. Literally, "There shall no foreign god be in you."

3. Implied.

4. Literally, "honey out of the rock."

PSALM 81

EXPOSITION

The best introduction to this psalm is the series of Asaphic psalms which leads up to it; yet, when thus reached, this psalm will be found to have features all its own, which immensely add to its interest and to its instructiveness for other times. Its adaptation to the Northern tribes is seen, in part, in the Divine and National titles which it employs—*God of Jacob* (vers. 1, 4); *Israel* (vers. 4, 8, 11, 13), *Joseph* (ver. 5), *My people* (vers. 8, 11, 13): in part also in its omission of any direct allusions to Judah, Jerusalem or the Temple: perhaps, moreover, in the probability that the Feast of Trumpets would be the last to fall out of observance among any of the tribes. It has often been remarked how lively an interest in the Northern tribes Asaph everywhere displays; nor is it difficult to account for this, when we call to mind the non-localisation of the tribe of Levi, and the distribution of the Levitical cities throughout all the land—North as well as South. It may thus quite easily have happened that this Asaph of Hezekiah's days was, by domicile, a Northerner, while yet loyal to the Divine preference for the South. There needs but one touch further to make the picture live before us; and that is, the conception of a missionary Levite traversing the North, harp in hand, and trying to win back the wanderers by singing to them this song. Other songs of the series there were which he may have sung at other times, or in alternation with this. His was a harp of many strings. At one time he would gently remind Ephraim how he had "turned in the day of battle," and how Joseph had irrevocably lost the honour of having the Sacred Tent within his bounds (78). At another time he would boldly claim for Judah the supreme honour of having the Cherubic Throne in his midst (80). But, even before he could win attention to those messages, here was one which would strike a winsome herald note, impinging on no susceptibilities save of aspostates wholly given to idolatry: containing no allusion to the South, no mention of David. Radical reform, it is true, would demand the declaration of fuller truth in these regards; but all cannot be done at once—it is worth an effort, costing self-restraint, to win the ear of the rebellious, even for a moment, provided some essential thing can be successfully lodged therein. And truly the most essential thing of all, for Israelites wandering away into idolatry, is here: their covenant-relation to Jehovah, and his inexorable claim that their obligations under that covenant be fulfilled. From this point of view, how

STUDIES IN PSALMS

skilfully the story is told: with all the charms of music, introduced; with all the fascinations of ancient history, the famous and irreversible past, commenced; barbed with pointed reminiscences of old-time refractoriness; merged into the pathos of direct appeal; ascending to the height of positive mandate; coming down again to the attraction of bountiful and all-comprehensive promise; sobered by tones of Divine lament; invigorated by rapid transition from the irredeemable past to present lingering possibilities—*Oh that my people were even now hearkening! hearkening to counsels which must still be maintained, walking in ways of obedience that must still be trodden: oh that they were! oh that they would! Right soon would I subdue their foes:* these Syrians those Assyrians, yonder Greeks and Romans. Is there nothing here to give point to appeal and make it victorious? Only let Israel RETURN (2 Ch. 30:6-9), and all shall yet be well. No real blessing should then be too rich, too good to be bestowed on obedient Israel: *fattest wheat, freshest honey*—nothing too good!

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Why does Rotherham feel this psalm is addressed to the northern tribes?
2. Who is Asaph? Discuss.
3. There seems to be a large number of musical instruments used in Israel's worship—why?
4. What feast is here celebrated?
5. The very worst thing that can happen to a man is described in verse 12. What is it? Discuss.
6. God has promised "honey in the rock" for His people—but upon what conditions?

PSALM 82

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

The Judgment of Unjust Judges.

ANALYSIS

Stanza I., ver. 1, Introductory Vision. Stanza II., vers. 2-7, Reprimand of the Judges by the Judge of Judges. Stanza III., ver. 8, Closing Prayer.

PSALM 82

(Lm.) Psalm—By Asaph.

- 1 Elohim hath stationed himself in the congregation of GOD,¹ in the midst of Divine messengers² he judgeth.—
- 2 "How long will ye judge perversely, and the countenances of lawless ones uplift?
- 3 "Vindicate ye the weak and the fatherless, the humbled and the poor see ye righted:
- 4 "Deliver the weak and the needy, out of the hand of lawless ones make ye rescue!
- 5 "They know not neither can they understand, in darkness they wander,—all the foundations of the earth do shake.
- 6 "I myself have said 'Divine messengers are ye³! yea sons of the most high are ye all'!
- 7 But indeed as mankind shall ye die, and as one of the princes shall ye fall."
- 8 Oh arise Elohim! oh judge the earth! surely thou thyself wilt inherit all nations.

(Nm.)

PARAPHRASE

PSALM 82

God stands up to open heaven's court. He pronounces judgment on the judges.¹

2 How long will you judges refuse to listen to the evidence? How long will you shower special favors on the wicked?

3 Give fair judgment to the poor man, the afflicted, the fatherless, the destitute.

4 Rescue the poor and needy from the grasp of evil men.

5 But you are so foolish and so ignorant! Because you are in darkness, all the foundations of society² are shaken to the core.

6 I have called you all "gods" and "sons of the Most High."

7 But in death you are mere men. You will fall as any prince—for all must die.

8 Stand up, O God, and judge the earth. For all of it belongs to You. All nations are in Your hands.

1. Heb.: 'El.

2. Heb.: 'elohim—as in 8:5, 97:7.

3. Cp. Jn. 10:34.

1. Implied from verses 2-4 and 6. Literally, "He judges among the gods."

2. Literally, "of the earth."

STUDIES IN PSALMS

EXPOSITION

The introductory vision of this psalm serves the important practical purpose of teaching the Divine authority and heavy responsibility of the office of Judge among men. Judges are here (vers. 1, 6) designated by one of the names of Deity (*elohim*) in accordance with Exo. 21:6, 22:9, for the purpose of teaching—that it is from God their authority is derived; that it is his justice they are appointed to maintain; and that the wrongs of men, in being referred to them to be righted, are supposed to be referred to Divine arbitrament, and therefore should be adjusted with inflexible impartiality (Cp. Deu. 1:16, 17, 16:18-20, 1 S. 8:3, 2 Ch. 19:5-7, Amos 5:12, 15, Mi. 7:3, Isa. 1:17, 3:13-15, Jer. 21:12). At the same time, Judges are hereby reminded, that they themselves are under law, and are liable to be called to an account for the manner in which they discharge the duties of their high office. Hence the Supreme Judge here, in state, appears in their midst, and arraigns them at his bar.

The psalm, being designed for a time of corruption, deals exclusively with Judges who have long been negligent in their office. The words placed in the Divine mouth are weighty in the extreme, and worthy of being prophetically attributed to the Most High. After two lines of expostulation, asking these corrupt Judges how long their perversion of justice is to continue (ver. 2), the Divine Speech, in four strong mandatory lines, charges them to do their duty; which is made to consist in caring for such as are unable to care for themselves (vers. 3, 4). The intention of the next three lines, forming ver. 5, has been variously deciphered; able expositors being of opinion that they form a kind of Divine “aside,” in which the corrupt Judges are given up as hopeless, and, with aversion, spoken of in the third person. *They know not*, &c.; nor can it be denied, that to some extent the language applies to them. Nevertheless, a divergent opinion of this verse may perhaps with good reason be maintained; since, on the one hand, it is not certain that these corrupt Judges are quite unaware of the suffering they are inflicting or of the wickedness of their partial and iniquitous decisions; and, on the other hand, an appeal to their compassion, rather than a giving them up as hopeless, seems to constitute a more telling climax to the Divine Expostulation. And when ver. 5 is looked at in this light, it will be seen that every word enhances the weight and pathos of it as a portrayal of the wrong done and the suffering caused by unjust judicial sentences. *They* (the

PSALM 82

sufferers) *know not, neither can they understand*—how it is that justice has failed them, who it is that is their enemy in court, what are the bribes that have been tendered and accepted to rob them of their rights. *They wander* from the Gate of Justice *in the darkness* of despair, not knowing whither to turn for redress. In fact, *all the foundations of the earth*—of civilised society—seem to be *trembling beneath their feet*:—a circumstance of which their flippant judges, though causing it, may be almost wholly oblivious, and about which, if they have knowledge, they certainly have no solicitude. This exposition of the verse has the further merit, that, without any such break as must otherwise be admitted to occur between the fifth and the sixth verse, this crowning touch of Divine Pity for the wronged and suffering, most naturally leads on, without any change of persons addressed, to the indignant protest which closes the Divine Judge's charge: "*I myself said*—by the mouth of my psalmist—*Divine messengers are ye, Yea sons of the Most High all of you;* nor do I withdraw the distinction which I designed to confer upon you; save as I now denounce you as utterly unworthy of it. *As common mortals shall ye die, yea as princes* whom I have overthrown in their rebellion *shall ye ignominiously fall.*" Some think that the very next psalm supplies the needed examples.

We seem to be carried forward on the wave of a Messianic flood as we read in the concluding couplet: As if to say, *Oh arise, Elohim, oh judge the earth*—thyself, in a clearer and nearer Divine Manifestation than at present; no longer permitting Justice to be perverted as now; and do this the rather that *all nations* are thine by right, thine by the claim of thy birth as earth's King, into the full possession of which wilt thou be pleased soon to enter.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. This is indeed a strange court—why?
2. Who is holding the court, i.e. who is the judge? What is the charge?
3. Why should the advice here given be heeded?
4. When justice is perverted a serious problem is faced. Read verse 5 and tell what it is.
5. The position of judge is one of great honor and responsibility, but also one that will not last forever. What should be their attitude?

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PSALM 83

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

An Appeal to God for Deliverance from an Impending Invasion.

ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-4, Israel's Enemies described as the Enemies of God—their Destructive Designs. Stanza II., vers. 5-8, The Parties to the Conspiracy Enumerated. Stanza III., vers. 9-12, Examples of the Overthrow desired, taken from the Book of Judges. Stanza IV., vers. 13-16, Petitions urged for a Complete Overthrow, for High Religious Ends. Stanza V., vers. 17, 18, Re-urged for the Sake of Revealing the Supremacy of Jehovah over all the Earth.

(Lm.) Song—Psalm—By Asaph.

- 1 Oh God! let there be no quiet to thee,
do not be silent neither be still O GOD!
- 2 For lo! thy foes are tumultuous,
and they who hate thee have lifted up the head.
- 3 Against thy people make they crafty their counsel,
and conspire together against thy treasured ones.
- 4 They have said—"Come! and let us wipe them out from
being a nation,
and let not the name of Israel be remembered any more."
- 5 They have taken counsel with one heart,
Against thee a covenant would they solemnise;
- 6 the tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites¹
[the land] of Moab and the Hagrites,²
- 7 [the lords] of Ammon and Amalek,
the Philistines with the dwellers in Tyre:
- 8 even Assyria hath joined herself with them,
they have become an arm to the sons of Lot.³
- 9 Do to them as to Sisera,⁴
as to Jabin⁴ at the brook Kishon:

1. Gen. 25:12-16.

2. 1 Ch. 5:10.

3. "The Moabites and Ammonites, who seem to be singled out as the leaders of the confederacy. Cp. 2 Ch. 20:1."—Kp.

4. Jdg. 4:22, 23.

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- 10 Let them be destroyed as Midian at En (Harod),⁵
let them become as manure for the soil:
- 11 Make them [even] their nobles as Oreb and as Zeeb,⁶
and as Zebah and Zalmunna⁷ all their princes:
- 12 Who said—"Let us take it to ourselves for a possession,
let us enjoy the pastures of God!"
- 13 O my God! make them as whirling dust,
as chaff before the wind;
- 14 As fire that burneth up a forest,
and as a flame that setteth ablaze mountains:
- 15 So mayest thou pursue them with thy tempest,
and with thy storm-wind⁸ dismay them:
- 16 Fill thou their faces with dishonour
that men may seek thy name O Jehovah.
- 17 Let them be put to shame and dismayed unto futurity,
and let them be abashed and perish:
- 18 That men may know that thou whose name is Jehovah—
thou—alone,—
art Most High⁹ over all the earth.

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician.

(CMm.) For the Wine-presses=The Feast of Tabernacles.

For the sons of korah.

PARAPHRASE

PSALM 83

O God, don't sit idly by, silent and inactive when we pray.
Answer us! Deliver us!

2 Don't You hear the tumult and commotion of Your
enemies? Don't You see what they are doing, these proud men
who hate the Lord?

3 They are full of craftiness and plot against Your people,
laying plans to slay Your precious ones.

4 Come, they say, and let us wipe out Israel as a nation—
we will destroy the very memory of her existence.

5 This was their unanimous decision at their summit con-

5. Thus the text shd. be re-constructed in accordance w. Jdg. 7. M.T.:
"En-dor"—Josh. 17:11.

6. Jdg. 7:25.

7. Jdg. 8:21.

8. Amos 1:14.

9. So, in effect: R.V. (text), Kp., Dr., Carter, Leeser.

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ference—they signed a treaty to ally themselves against Almighty God—

6 These Ishmaelites and Edomites and Moabites and Hagrites;

7 People from the lands of Gebal, Ammon, Amalek, Philistia and Tyre;

8 Assyria has joined them too, and is allied with the descendants of Lot.¹

9 Do to them as once You did to Midian, or as You did to Sisera and Jabin at the river Kishon.

10 And as You did to Your enemies at Endor, whose decaying corpses fertilized the soil.

11 Make their mighty nobles die as Oreb did,² and Zeeb;² let all their princes die like Zebah³ and Zalmunna,³

12 Who said, "Let us seize for our own use these pasture-lands of God!"

13 O my God, blow them away like dust; like chaff before the wind—

14 As a forest fire that roars across a mountain.

15 Chase them with Your fiery storms, tempests and tornados.

16 Utterly disgrace them until they recognize Your power and name, O Lord.

17 Make them failures in everything they do; let them be ashamed and terrified

18 Until they learn that You alone, Jehovah, are the God above all gods in supreme charge of all the earth.

EXPOSITION

Of the various dates proposed as suiting the origin of this psalm, the two more probable are the time of Jehoshaphat, and that of Jeroboam II.: the former as represented by the narrative in 2 Ch. 20, the latter not being formally recorded at all, but probably conjectured from various data when brought into historical combination. Delitzsch inclines to the days of Jehoshaphat, in preference to those of the Maccabees. But Thrupp, with considerable plausibility, suggests rather the time of Jeroboam II.: arguing that the *Assyrians* could not yet have reached the zenith of their power under Pul and Tiglathpileser; that

1. The Moabites and Ammonites were among Lot's descendants.

2. Judges 7:25.

3. Judges 8:21.

PSALM 83

Amalek could not yet have been destroyed by the Simeonites in the days of Hezekiah (1 Ch. 4:39-43); and that "only at this one period have we any indication of the Phoenicians of Tyre being in league with the eastern enemies of the Israelites." He further thinks that "it was probably the contemporaneous victories of Uzziah and Jeroboam that the confederacy against which the psalmist prayed was finally broken up." The especial feature in Thrupp's view which interests us is his conclusion "that the psalm was composed in reference to a danger which especially threatened the kingdom of the ten tribes," and which he bases on the appeal in prayer being made to events in which the northern tribes were specially interested, coupled with the absence of any allusion to the successes of David. It is true, of course, that Jehoshaphat's prophetic helper was one of the sons of Asaph (2 Ch. 20:14), and *he* may have been the author of this psalm; but, at all events, the more interested in the Northern Tribes the composer of this psalm was, the more this song is thrown into line with several which have preceded it, particularly the 78th and 81st.

There is little that needs to be said with reference to the general course and spirit of this psalm. It is obviously the barest justice to those who thus prayed for the destruction of their enemies to remember: That they were a miraculously redeemed and constituted nation; that they were the people of Jehovah, the appointed witnesses of his holiness, power and grace; that his honour was bound up with his people's preservation and well-being; that the haters of Israel were the haters of Jehovah; and that the effacement of this nation meant the silencing of the only national testimony to Monotheism, and the extinction of the race through whom the World's Redeemer was to come. More than this, the psalm contemplates the seeking of Jehovah's face on the part of other nations, as a chief result of the overthrow of those now in conspiracy. Besides all which, there is the ever-present possibility,—mostly unspoken, but always involved in Jehovah's readiness to shew mercy to the penitent,—that even these rebels on whom vengeance is invoked may by prompt repentance turn away Jehovah's wrath.

It may be added, as a matter of translating interest, that the close of this psalm is one of the few instanced in which both A.V. and R.V. have felt constrained to unveil for the English reader the occurrence in the original of the oft recurring but mostly suppressed sacred name JEHOVAH.

STUDIES IN PSALMS

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Of the various dates proposed as suiting the origin of this psalm which two are the more probable?
2. Read II Chron. 20:1-14 and find possible connections to this psalm.
3. Was there any good reason or reasons for God to answer the prayers of this psalm? If so discuss.
4. Someone suggested the thought of the defense of honor is different than the seeking of vengeance. Which is it here? Discuss.

PSALM 84

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

The Longing of a Levite for the Habitations of Jehovah in Zion,
with Inspiring Memories of a Past Pilgrimage
and Exultant Joy in Renewed Service.

ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-4, In the Intense Longing of his soul, the Psalmist Draws a Picture from Memory of the Joyous Scene in the Temple Courts, where Birds and Men Evermore Offer Praise. Stanza II., vers. 5-9, He traces a Pilgrim Journey Zionwards; recalling the Cheer by the Way, the Growing Enthusiasm, the Final Hope, and the Impassioned Prayer for the King. Stanza III., vers. 10-12, Renewed Experience of his Levitical Duties, leads him to Contrast his Present Privileges with his Past Detention in the Tents of the Lawless; and moves him to Admire the Character and Gifts of the God whom he Serves. A Three-fold *Refrain* Adapts the psalm to the Levites, to the King, and to Every Believer in Israel.

(Lm.) Psalm.

- 1 How greatly to be loved are thy habitations Jehovah of hosts!
- 2 My soul longeth yea even languisheth for the courts of
Jehovah,
my heart and my flesh ring out their joy unto the God of
my life.
- 3 Even the bird hath found her a house,
and the swallow a nest for herself where she hath laid her
young:

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- 4 At thine altars is praise evermore offered thee¹ my King
and my God.
*Jehovah of hosts! how happy are they who abide in thy
courts!*²
- 5 Highways are in their hearts as they pass through the valley
of Baca:³
- 6 A place of springs they make it⁴ yea with blessings the early
rain doth enrobe it.
- 7 They go from strength to strength⁵—"The God of gods will
be seen in Zion!"⁶
- 8 Jehovah God of hosts! oh hear my prayer,
oh give ear thou God of Jacob!
- 9 Our shield behold thou O God, and look well on the face of
thine Anointed!
*Jehovah of hosts! how happy the man whose stronghold is
in thee!*⁷
- 10 Surely better is one⁸ day in thy courts than a thousand,
I choose to be on guard at the threshold in the house of my
God,⁹
rather than to be dwelling in the tents of the lawless.¹⁰
- 11 For a sun and shield is Jehovah my God,
kindness and faithfulness he loveth,¹¹
grace¹² and glory he giveth;
Jehovah withholdeth no good thing from them who walk
without blame.
- 12 *Jehovah of hosts, how happy the man who trusteth in thee!*

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician.

(CMm.) For the sons of korah=The venerables of song.¹³

1. Two words transposed from next verse: thus avoiding too close an association of the birds with the altars.

2. As it is the happiness of a Levite to abide.

3. Or: "balsam-tree"; or, "weeping."

4. Or (by changing a vowel): "he maketh it."

5. Or: "from battlement to battlement."

6. So in Sep. Cp. G. Intro. 457-459; and Ps. 17:15, 42:2.

7. Transposed, w. Br., from beginning of stanza; so yielding a three-fold refrain to the psalm.

8. Found in Sep.

9. Eminently suited to a Levite.

10. Sometimes="foreigner."

11. Found in Sep.: apparently original.

12. "Graciousness"—Dr.

13. See Intro., Chapter II., 3.

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PARAPHRASE

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How lovely is Your Temple, O Lord of the armies of heaven.

2 I long, yes, pant with longing to be able to enter Your courtyard and come near to the Living God.

3 Even the sparrows and swallows are welcome to come and nest among Your altars and there have their young, O Lord of heaven's armies, my King and my God!

4 How happy are Your priests who can always be in Your Temple, singing Your praises.

5 Happy are those who are strong in the Lord, who want above all else to follow Your steps.

6 When they walk through the Valley of Weeping it will become a place of springs where pools of blessing and refreshment collect after rains!

7 They will grow constantly in strength and each of them is invited to meet with the Lord in Zion!

8 O Jehovah, God of the heavenly armies, hear my prayer! Listen, God of Israel!

9 O God, our Defender and our Shield, have mercy on the one You have anointed as Your king.¹

10 A single day spent in Your Temple is better than a thousand anywhere else! I would rather be a doorman of the Temple of my God than live in palaces² of wickedness.

11 For Jehovah God is our Light and our Protector. He gives us grace and glory. No good thing will He withhold from those who walk along His paths.³

12 O Lord of the armies of heaven, blessed are those who trust in You.

EXPOSITION

Probably no circumstances better suit the origin of this psalm than those with which the Asaphic psalms have already made us familiar. Given—a time when the Assyrians, after long devastating the North, are in abeyance, and pilgrim-bands are again frequenting the ways to Zion; and given—a Levite singer and door-keeper who has for weary years been prevented from going up to Jerusalem to discharge his duties, but is now fondly

1. Literally, "Your anointed."

2. Literally, "tents."

3. Literally, "walk uprightly."

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counting on a return to his place in the Temple courts; and conditions are provided well fitted to the composition of this beautiful pilgrim-song.

After an outburst of intense love and desire for the holy place where he has aforetime experienced so much blessing (vers. 1, 2), the writer shows his near intimacy with the courts of Jehovah, by one of those touches of memory which only a resident in the Temple-chambers would have had at his command. He had many a time of old watched the little birds building their nests in the nooks and crannies of the Temple courts; and perchance had little by little come to observe that the music of the choirs and congregation was accustomed to provoke the feathered songsters in their own way to join in the strains. Memory brings back the whole scene: Birds, nestling close by—and singing; priests and Levites, officiating—and singing; visiting worshippers, bringing their offerings—and singing: all in delightful unison. His reminiscence includes in it no awkward juxtaposition of the birds, rather than of the men, with the altar; but simply and naturally reproduces the harmonious whole; and excites his intense desire to share in such joy once more (vers. 3, 4).

But he is not there yet, and his mind is drawn to incidents likely to occur in the journey thither. Many a time has he traversed the roads leading to Zion; and he is able to clothe the ascent with probable incidents, such as he had aforetime known, or such as recent events would easily suggest. The *highways* are in the *minds* of pilgrims long before they start, as they think of the re-unions oft occurring as they go along; or, it may be, they wonder whether the *highways* will now be safe, or whether prudence may not suggest the preference of by-ways through secluded valleys, one such coming to his mind as his song is evolved—the memorable *Valley of Baca*, or *Balsam-vale*, or *Vale of Weeping*, entered with misgiving overnight in weariness and thirst, only to find that by morning the *early rain* has filled the pools and covered the sterile valley with a carpet of blessing. And, whereas, commonly, travellers become the more wearied the farther they go, he has often noticed that as they near their goal on *this* journey, enthusiasm rises, and *at every step their strength increases*. The alternative rendering of this clause is suggestive: *they go from battlement to battlement*—from one entrenched halting-place to another: which might be very prudent if any of the enemy were still lurking in the land.

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But the all-animating thought is: *The God of gods will be seen in Zion!*—some reflection of his shekinah glory; and therewith, it may be, some new prophetic discovery of his ways with Israel, and of his gracious purpose for the future (vers. 5-7).

But this Levite thinks of his earthly king as well as of his heavenly; and calling to mind how much all Israel in general and the Levites in particular are indebted to the good King Hezekiah who is shielding them from foreign foes and home neglect, the psalmist waxes importunate in his prayers for him: *Jehovah God of hosts! oh hear my prayer, Oh give ear, thou God of Jacob; and do this for us—Our shield behold thou, and shield him in mercy to us, O God, And look well, look intently, and with love as thou lookest, on the face of thine Anointed. Jehovah of hosts! how happy the man—who is like the good king whom thou hast now given to us—who, in presence of Sennacherib and all his hosts, has found that his stronghold is in thee.*

But events move on. Our Levite has been once more in his office, and spent a happy day in Jehovah's service. And he seems to say: "How much better this than the life I have lived of late!" Prevented from going up to Jerusalem, owning no possessions among the tribes, and compelled, it may be, to do menial work for a piece of bread in the tents of the invading foreigners, he has felt all the humiliation of it, all the bitterness. Better this—better thus—a thousand times better! And then in the ecstasy of his joy, his soul rises up to his God, and dwells upon the fruitful theme of his perfections. *For a sun*—giving heat and light, knowledge and love; *and shield*—affording protection from foes without and foes within, is *Jehovah my God. Kindness and faithfulness he loveth*, because they exist in himself, and he would have them exist also in me; *kindness*, first, without which he would not have created and redeemed, *faithfulness* also, by virtue of which he fulfils his promises and keeps his covenant. *Grace and glory he giveth*: *grace*, now, to enable me to resist the enticements of sinners and the clamourings of selfishness, and so become *kind and faithful* like himself; and *glory*, hereafter, when he has completed and perfected my character. For, truly, character he seeks, and hence would teach me to *walk uprightly, perfectly, wholeheartedly, without blame*; and from such he *withholdeth no good thing*: least of all the *glory* of a perpetual, perfected, personal existence. And this is Biblical Immortality. To produce this, is the end of Divine

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Revelation; and the subjective instrument of its production being faith in a Perfect God, therefore, *O Jehovah of hosts,—thyself that Perfect One—how happy the man who trusteth in thee!*

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Rotherham describes the circumstances behind this psalm in a most effective way. Retell them in your own words.
2. What particular desire of the heart is satisfied in the worship of God?
3. The sparrows were no distraction to the psalmist. Would they be to others? Should they be?
4. How could we apply verse 4 to our situation?
5. Who do you know who has claimed the promise of verse 11?

PSALM 85

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Praise, Prayer and Prophecy lead up to the
Reconciliation of Earth and Heaven.

ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-3, Praise to Jehovah for what he has Already Done.
Stanza II., vers. 4-7, Prayer for what Remains to be Done. Stanza III., vers. 8, 9, A Divine Word Sought by the Prophet. Stanza IV., vers. 10-13, The Final Reconciliation Announced.

(Lm.) Psalm.

- 1 Thou hast shewn favour Jehovah to thy land,
thou hast restored the fortunes¹ of Jacob,
- 2 Thou hast forgiven² the iniquity of thy people,
thou hast covered all their sin,
- 3 Thou hast withdrawn all thine indignation,
thou hast turned thee from the glow of thine anger.
- 4 Restore us O God of our salvation,
and break off thy vexation with us:
- 5 To the ages wilt thou be angry with us?
wilt thou prolong thine anger to generation and generation?

1. Or: "turned the captivity."

2. Or: "taken away."

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- 6 Wilt not thou thyself again give us life,
that thy people may rejoice in thee?
7 Shew us Jehovah thy kindness,
and thy salvation wilt thou give to us?
8 Let me hear what the Mighty One³ Jehovah will speak:
surely he will speak peace
unto his people
and unto his men of kindness
and unto such as turn their hearts unto him.⁴
9 Assuredly near unto such as revere him is his salvation,
so shall glory abide in our land.
10 Kindness and truth have met together,
Righteousness and Peace have kissed each other:
11 Truth out of the earth doth spring forth,
and Righteousness out of the heavens hath looked down:
12 Yea Jehovah giveth that which is good,
and our land yieldeth her increase:
13 Righteousness before him marcheth along,
and Peace hath made a path of his steps.

(Nm.)

PARAPHRASE

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Lord, You have poured out amazing blessings on this land!
You have restored the fortunes¹ of Israel,

2 And forgiven the sins of Your people—yes, covered over
each one,

3 So that all Your wrath, Your blazing anger, is now ended.

4 Now bring us back to loving You,² O Lord, so that Your
anger will never need rise against us again.

5 (Or will You be always angry—on and on to distant
generations?)

6 Oh, revive us! Then Your people can rejoice in You
again.

7 Pour out Your love and kindness on us, Lord, and grant
us Your salvation.

8 I am listening carefully to all the Lord is saying—for He

3. Heb: *ha el*.

4. So it shd. be (w. Sep. and Vul.)—Gn.

1. Literally, "brought back the captivity."

2. Or, "Turn to us."

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speaks peace to His people, His saints, if they will only stop their sinning.

9 Surely His salvation is near to those who reverence Him; our land will be filled with His glory!

10 Mercy and truth have met together. Grim justice³ and peace have kissed!

11 Truth rises from the earth and righteousness smiles down from heaven.

12 Yes, the Lord pours down His blessings on the land and it yields its bountiful crops.

13 Justice goes before Him to make a pathway for His steps.⁴

EXPOSITION

There is a marked difference between the Praise with which this psalm opens and the Prayer which follows thereon. The Praise says—*Thou hast withdrawn all thine indignation*: the Prayer says—*How long shall thine anger continue?* How is this apparent contradiction to be removed? Some critics have proposed a *time* solution, by rendering—*Thou hadst withdrawn it*; but (as it has returned again)—*How long shall it continue?* And this is a possible reconciliation; since a season of Divine favour may be followed by one of Divine displeasure, and under the displeasure the former favour may be pleaded as a reason for its restoration. But perhaps a *dramatic* solution may be more commended, by supposing two parties to be successively represented: first those who are elated with what has already been done by restoring mercy, and who simply give thanks; and, second, those who are oppressed with the burden of what yet remains to be done, and who, in view of that, can scarcely believe that Jehovah's displeasure has yet been turned away. To the successive representation of these two classes—the optimists and the pessimists—the well-known antiphonal character of the Temple-worship would easily lend itself; and, after one Choir had offered the Praise, another might give expression to the Prayer, and thus both classes be assisted to address Jehovah in the language which lay nearest their hearts. Perhaps what chiefly commends this *dramatic* solution of the difficulty is, that it thus gives occasion for a prophetic soloist to intervene with a proposal to seek a new Divine word which shall meet the whole present situation—*Let me hear what the Mighty One, Jehovah,*

3. Literally, "righteousness."

4. Or, "set us in the way of His steps."

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will speak; and then, in turn, this solo, in form as well as effect, furnishes a strong lead up to what in any case must be regarded as the climax of the psalm. The soloist says in effect—"Let me hear a new Divine word to meet our present need, about which we so greatly differ"; and then, in yer. 10, the Divine Pronouncement begins—perhaps voiced by the united choirs—*Kindness and Faithfulness have met together*.

It is submitted that such a setting as this sends us back to what we have called the *prophetic solo* with new zest, to admire its comprehensive fulness: *Surely he will speak peace, well-being, prosperity, (shalom)*; and that, with a graciously manifold inclusiveness, *unto his people, Israel*, as a whole; *And unto his men of kindness*, the Levites, in particular, in the centre of his people, to, whom many promises await fulfilment (cp. Intro., Chap III., "Kindness"); *And*—thanks to Dr. Ginsburg for the regrouping of the Hebrew letters whereby we are enriched with this new clause—*unto such as turn their hearts unto him*; including, not only the Ten Tribes, but all in any nation who seek him, especially as the concluding description, *such as revere him*, is in the New Testament the favourite phrase for denoting the reverers of Israel's God lying on the outside of Israel. There is still another hint included in this significant solo which mightily helps us upwards to the high level of the coming climax; and it is found in the words—*So shall Glory abide in our land*; as to which, we could imagine how it would quiver on the lips of Hezekiah, Asaph, Micah and Isaiah in those days of intense excitement, when as yet the *Glory* of the Divine Presence had not departed! Right clearly then follows the climax at last, which assuredly lacks nothing of sublime beauty to render it worthy of being so regarded; namely, as the Divine Response to the Soloist's appeal. We seem to have reached a land of Beulah, in which Angels are hovering around. *Kindness and Faithfulness have met together*—as if after fulfilling divergent missions, or serving opposing interests—have met for friendly parlance at last. *Yea righteousness*—if anything, sterner than "Faithfulness," and *Peace* if anything more serene and practical than "Kindness," have fallen into each other's embrace, *and kissed each other*. The harmony of divergencies, the reconciling of opposites, is the clear note struck, and far resounding. Full many a time when *Kindness* has cried, "Forgive!" *Faithfulness* has had to protest, "Punish! Thou hast threatened!" When *Righteousness* reminds that there can be no peace

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while wrongs continue, *Peace* meekly pleads that the wrongs be stayed, that evil be overcome of good. And here, see, these heavenly messengers embracing and kissing each other! There can be no mistaking the significance of the representation. But it may be thought: "Yea, as Divine Attributes these are all harmonisable in God." As if to check such a relinquishment of the human and practical, the figure is broken, and the personification of *Faithfulness* is dropped, for the express purpose of conveying the conception of the impartation of the Divine Quality of faithfulness to the hearts and lives of men. Divine faithfulness therefore now becomes a seed for earthly sowing and human growth—rapid, vigorous growth: *Faithfulness out of the earth doth spring forth*. No wonder that when this point is reached *Righteousness*, the sterner brother of Faithfulness, retaining his personality, the better to suit his intelligent survey of the fruitful earth, *looks down from heaven*, with satisfied and delighted gaze on the fair prospect. Nor is all this mere poetic sentimentality: it is spoken to a nation which for the sins of their souls were being punished by the overthrow of their houses and the trampling down of their soil by the hands and feet of invading hosts. And therefore, not to mock such a nation, in whose history the heavenly and the earthly have ever gone hand-in-hand, the advancing promise condescends upon temporalities, first in general terms, seeing that the words *that which is good* will include earthly blessings as well as heavenly, political as well as social; and seeing further that this inclusion of temporalities is further made certain by the specific promise. *And our land shall yield her increase*. The great Reconciling Promise then runs onward in the further proviso, *Righteousness before him*—our heavenly King—*marcheth along*, seeing that nothing less can please him, nothing less durst meet his face; *And Peace*—if so, with Briggs, we should respell the words—*And Peace hath made a path of his steps*: so that as in this inspection of his inheritance he shews himself to be, so all his servants must be also: they must become imitators of Him.

A splendid climax—a worthy ideal—a practical standard—an inspiring prophecy! Yet, alas! largely unfulfilled! "Glory" once essayed to dwell in the land; but there was no room for it: it was veiled, and by the majority it was mistaken for Shame! Such of us as have caught a glimpse of him, as the glory of the Father, feel that all holy Reconciliation lies embosomed in Him. His life and teaching, his Death and Resurrection, and

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Spirit-ministry from Heaven, have in them the potent charm of the embrace and kissing of Angels. And for the rest we are content to work and wait.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. "There is a marked difference between the Praise with which this psalm opens and the Prayer which follows thereon." What is it? How can we reconcile the thoughts?
2. Discuss "the prophetic solo" as here used.
3. Graham Scroggie says of this psalm: "The psalm reflects the feelings of Judah shortly after the return from Babylonian captivity, and with it we should read *Haggai* and the early part of *Zechariah*. The people had expected much from their deliverance, but the harsh realities of their enterprise had stripped off its imaginative charm". Discuss this possibility.
4. Rotherham considers verses 8 through 13 as "the Divine Response to the Soloist's appeal"—is this reasonable? Discuss.
5. Verse six of this psalm is a request of perennial need: "Wilt thou not revive us again; that thy people may rejoice in Thee?" How can this prayer be answered today?

P S A L M 86

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Prayer of a Tried and Faithful Servant of Jehovah.

ANALYSIS

The Psalmist prays to be Heard and Answered and for his Life to be Preserved because of his Need (ver. 1), his Devotion and Trust (ver. 2), his Pleading (vers. 3, 4), Adonai's Goodness (vers. 5, 6), and Incomparable Character and Doings (ver. 8); which are So Great that All Nations will Come and Worship (vers. 9, 10). Pleading for Guidance, he Promises Praise (vers. 11, 12) and Bethinks him of a Past Rescue of His Life (ver. 13), which (life) seems to be Again in Danger from Insolent Foes (ver. 14): in view of whom he Pleads the Character of Jehovah as set forth in "THE REFRAIN of the Bible" (ver. 15). He prays for Favour, Strength and Salvation, in view of his own Devotion and that of his Mother (ver. 16); asking for Such a Token as shall Shame his Enemies (ver. 17).

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(Lm.) Prayer—By David.

- 1 Incline Jehovah thine ear, answer me;
for humbled and needy am I.¹
- 2 Oh guard thou my life,² for a man of kindness³ am I,
save thy servant thou my God—who turneth his trust unto
thee.
- 3 Shew me favour Sovereign Lord,⁴
for unto thee do I cry all the day:
- 4 Rejoice the soul of thy servant,
for unto thee Sovereign Lord my soul do I lift.
- 5 For thou Sovereign Lord⁵ art good and ready to pardon,
and *abundant in kindness* to all who cry unto thee.
- 6 O give ear Jehovah unto my prayer,
and oh attend unto the voice of my supplications.
- 7 In my day of distress I cry unto thee,
surely thou wilt answer me.
- 8 There is none like unto thee among messengers divine⁶
Sovereign Lord,
and there are none like thy works.⁷
- 9 All nations which thou hast made
will come in and bow down before thee Sovereign Lord,⁸
and give glory to thy name;
- 10 For great art thou and a doer of wondrous things,
thou art God alone.
- 11 Shew me Jehovah thy way, I would walk in thy truth:
let my heart rejoice⁹ to revere thy name:
- 12 I would thank thee Sovereign Lord my God with all my heart,
and would fain glorify thy name to the ages.

1. Cp. 40:17, 70:5, 109:22: all ascribed, "To David."

2. U.: "soul."

3. Heb. *hasidh*=receiving and reflecting kindness. "One whom thou lovest"—Kp., Per.; "Godly"—Dr., Del.; "Pious"—Br., Leeser, P.B.; "Devoted to thee"—Carter. N.B., no psalmist elsewhere makes this claim. Cp. Intro, Chap. III., "Kindness."

4. Heb. *adonai*; and so—rendered "Sovereign Lord"—seven times in this psalm; "Jehovah" occurs four times. But here some cod. (w. 5 ear. pr. edns.): "thee Jehovah"—Gn.

5. Some cod.: "thou Jehovah"—Gn.

6. Or: "gods." But see Ps. 8:5. Heb. *'elohim*.

7. Or: "doings."

8. Cp. 22:27.

9. So it shd. be (w. Sep., Syr., Vul.)—Gn. Cp. O.G. 402. M.T.: "Unite my heart": i.e., concentrate its energies. But Sep., Syr., with other vowels, have, "Let my heart rejoice"—Dr.

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- 13 For thy kindness is great over me,
and thou hast rescued my soul from the lower hades.¹⁰
- 14 O God, insolent men have risen up against me,
and a congregation of ruthless men¹¹ have sought my soul,¹²
and have not set thee before them.
- 15 But thou Sovereign Lord art a *God compassionate and
gracious,
slow to anger and abundant in kindness and truth.*¹³
- 16 Turn thou unto me and be gracious unto me:
oh give thy strength unto thy servant,
and oh bring salvation to the son of thy handmaid.¹⁴
- 17 Work with me a token¹⁵ for good,
that they who hate me may see and be put to shame,—
in that thou Jehovah hast helped me and consoled me.
- (CMm.) For the sons of korah.¹⁶

PARAPHRASE

PSALM 86

Bend down and hear my prayer, O Lord, and answer me,
for I am deep in trouble.

2 Protect me from death, for I try to follow all Your laws.
Save me, for I am serving You and trusting You.

3 Be merciful, O Lord; for I am looking up to You in
constant hope.

4 Give me happiness, O Lord, for I worship only You.

5 O Lord, You are so good and kind, so ready to forgive;
so full of mercy for all who ask Your aid.

6 Listen closely to my prayer, O God. Hear my urgent cry.

7 I will call to You whenever trouble strikes, and You will
help me.

8 Where among the heathen gods is there a God like You?
Where are their miracles?

9 All the nations—and You made each one—will come and
bow before You, Lord, and praise Your great and holy name.

10. "The lowest part of the interior of the earth"—Del. "The nether
Sheol"—Dr. "The nethermost Sheol"—Kp.

11. Cp. 54:3.

12. Or: "life"; but the word is *nephesh*, as in ver. 13.

13. Cp. Exo. 34:6, 7. "The Refrain of the Bible"—Emp. Bible.

14. Cp. 116:16.

15. Or: "sign."

16. Intro., Chap. II., 3.

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10 For You are great, and do great miracles. You alone are God.

11 Tell me where You want me to go and I will go there. May every fiber of my being unite in reverence to Your name.

12 With all my heart I will praise You. I will give glory to Your name forever,

13 For You love me so much! And You are constantly so kind! And You have rescued me from deepest hell.

14 O God, proud and insolent men defy me; violent, godless men are trying to kill me.

15 But You are merciful and gentle, Lord, slow in getting angry, full of constant lovingkindness and of truth;

16 So look down in pity and grant strength to Your servant and save me.

17 Send me a sign of Your favor. When those who hate me see it they will lose face because You help and comfort me.

EXPOSITION

By the general consent of critics, this psalm is composite to such a degree as nearly to resolve itself into a mosaic, consisting of extracts from other scriptures; yet "even this psalm is not without a significance and beauty of its own"—Del. The psalmist is in a situation bearing considerable resemblance to that of David when persecuted by Saul. In other respects his position is like that of Hezekiah. The psalm is peculiar in having in it no fewer than seven occurrences of the Divine name *Adonai*, here rendered "Sovereign Lord" (as in 8:1, 9). It is notably distinguished by containing a prophecy of the gathering of all nations to worship. Although it takes note of mortal perils past and to come, there is a complete absence from it of pleadings for vengeance: the worst thing this wronged saint desires for his enemies is that they may be put to shame.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Please notice the number of references to other psalms: twenty psalms "are laid under contribution" in the formation of this psalm—also references from Exodus, Deuteronomy, Isaiah, and Jeremiah. This is a prayer. What does it teach us as to the wording of our prayers?
2. Consider this prayer as divided into four parts; (1) 1-5; (2) 6-10; (3) 11-13; (4) 15-17. Each is a petition: fol-

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lowing the petition is a reason for answer based on a tribute of God. Find them and incorporate them into life and prayer.

3. This prayer is "full of the Lord"; He is mentioned 16 times. It is also full of the psalmist or David—he mentions himself 35 times. How shall we reconcile this thought?
4. "Unite my heart to fear thy name"—(vs. 116). What a tragic loss is a divided heart. The heart is: will, conscience, emotions and intellect.

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DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

The Glorious Destiny of Zion as the Metropolis of the Nations.

ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-3, Jehovah's Preferential Love for Zion Declared.
Stanza II., vers. 4-6, The Glorious Things Spoken of Zion. A Chorus of Exultation.

(Lm.) Psalm—Song.

- 1 (2) His foundation, on the Holy Mountains 2 Jehovah loveth,¹
the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob.
- 3 Glorious things are spoken of thee O city of God!
- 4 "I will mention Rahab² and Babylon as of them who know³ me,
lo! Philistia and Tyre with Ethiopia—"This one was born there!" "
- 5 And of Zion it shall be said—"One after another was born in her!"
and he himself will establish her as highest.⁴
- 6 Jehovah will record when enrolling peoples "This one was born there."

1. Or: (taking previous words as an abrupt heading) carry forward "Jehovah loveth" to next line.

2. That is "Egypt," as in 89:11, Isa. 30:7, 51:9.

3. Or: "acknowledge," as in 1:6 and elsewhere.

4. Cp. Deu. 26:19, 28:1.

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7 As well singing as dancing—"All my fountains are in thee!"

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician.

(CMm.) For dancings to responsive songs.

PARAPHRASE

PSALM 87

High on His holy mountain stands Jerusalem,¹ the city of God, the city He loves more than any other!

3 O City of God, what wondrous tales are told of you!

4 Nowadays when I mention among my friends the names of Egypt and Babylonia, Philistia and Tyre, or even distant Ethiopia, someone boasts that he was born in one or another of those countries.

5 But someday the highest honor will be to be a native of Jerusalem! For the God above all gods will personally bless this city.

6 When He registers her citizens He will place a checkmark beside the names of those who were born here!

7 And in the festivals they'll sing, "All my heart is in Jerusalem."

EXPOSITION

Two chief questions here present themselves: First, *what city* is this of which *glorious things* are said to be spoken? And, second, what is the *sum* of the glorious things affirmed of her?

I. The answer to the first question is easy, to the candid mind: The historical Jerusalem is the city meant,—whether regard be had to the name she bears, to the description given of her, to the countries with which she is here associated, or to the book in which the psalm is found. She is called *Zion*—one of the most familiar names of Jerusalem; she sits on *holy mountains*—a description of the hills of Palestine on which Jerusalem was built, and to no others; she is called *the city of God*, because Jehovah there took up his symbolical abode, and made her the seat of his Messianic King; she is brought into comparison with *the dwellings of Jacob*, as more loved than they,—*Jacob* being a favourite name borne by the nation of Israel; she is related here in the psalm to *Rahab* (Egypt), *Babylon*, *Philistia*, *Tyre*,

1. Literally, "Zion."

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and *Ethiopia*: nations known to have existed in the day of Jerusalem's ancient story and to have had dealings with the Hebrew nation. Add the fact, that this psalm is found in a collection of Israelitish songs, and the evidence is as complete as the most exacting could wish: That Jerusalem is the city engemmed in this psalm.—No objection can be raised against this conclusion, by merely alleging that the *glorious things* spoken of this *city of God* are *too glorious* ever to be made good of the earthly Jerusalem, unless we are quite sure that the *glorious things* are altogether beyond Jehovah's power and will to make her own. In fine, this psalm, if never yet fulfilled, itself implies that Jerusalem *has a future*;—and why should she not? Numerous concurrent prophecies plainly teach the same thing: implies that Jerusalem will be made *more glorious* in the future than in the past,—and why should she not? again, many prophecies point to the same conclusion.

II. What then is the *sum* of the *glorious things* spoken of Jerusalem?

1. Let us remember that we have here a word for Jehovah, the Living God, the God of all the earth: of whom we have lately read: "All nations which thou hast made will come in and bow down before thee O Lord, and give glory to thy name; for great art thou, and a doer of wonders, Thou art God alone." It may be, then, that here we have an intimation of some of the "wonders" which he purposes to do for and with the nations of the earth.

2. A hint is here given, at the outset of this psalm, to expect something *fundamental* in Jehovah's dealings with Israel and the earth: *His foundation on the holy mountains Jehovah loveth*. "Foundation"—of *what*? Not of his Church; for that has no earthly foundation, and is not an earthly structure—its home is in the heavens. But of his *Kingdom*—yes; seeing that "the kingdom of the world" is to become "the Kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ" (Rev. 11:15). The *foundation*—of his kingdom—*Jehovah loveth*; and that foundation is *Zion, the city of God*.

3. It is clear that pre-eminence of some kind is here reserved for *Zion*. Other places are mentioned as well as "Zion"; but there is a manifest intention to place "Zion" higher than the rest. *Egypt and Babylon* are described as *knowing* or even *acknowledging* Jehovah, and that is much. Nevertheless, it is not regarded as a special privilege to have been *born* in *Egypt, Baby-*

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lon, Philistia, Tyre or Ethiopia. It is quite the contrary with Zion. For, although Jehovah is represented as taking a census of the *peoples* in general, and thereby shewing an interest in them all, yet it is only when he comes to the names of certain individuals among the rest, that he exclaims—as if with the joy of a proprietor discovering his own property, or of a father detecting the names of his own children—*This one was born there*. That is, not “here” in Egypt (or, as the case may be); but *there*—in Zion. When, however, Zion herself is passed in review, the language is intentionally different: it is no longer “This one”; but, more sweepingly, (lit.) *Man and man=man after man=one after another—was born in her*. The multiplication of Zion’s children is the least that can be intended: their *indefinite* multiplication, as in a series ever running on, may very well be meant, as many critics suppose. In this concrete and dramatic way the preference of “Zion” to all other cities is plainly shewn.

4. But we are not left to inference in concluding this intention to be dominant: the second half of ver. 5 appears to have been expressly intended to put this beyond doubt. If, with most critics, we render that clause, *He himself, the Most High, will establish her*,—it is still obvious that this is said of no other city or nation. Even then—taking the clause at its minimum value—it seems expressly designed to guard against the fear of Zion’s supremacy being endangered by her very prosperity, by the very multiplication of her children: a natural fear, surely,—if such children are *adopted* children, that is, Gentile converts counted as citizens of Zion; in which case, it might be feared that, with so *many* adopted children scattered throughout the nations of the earth, Zion herself would be de-Zionised, and made nearly as much Gentile as any avowed Gentile city. No! says this clause: *the Most High himself* will guard against that danger—will see to it that she does not lose the pre-eminence he designs her to have: He will *establish her* in it. So much, *at the least*, this clause means. But it is now submitted with confidence that, rightly rendered, it says more: it says—*And he himself will set her up (or establish her) as highest*. This point could scarcely have been missed if it had been observed that the same word (*‘elyon*) is not only employed of the Messianic King in David’s line “Highest (*‘elyon*) of (or to) the kings of the earth” (89:27) but is actually twice used of Israel *as a nation* in Deu. 26:19, 28:1—“Jehovah (hath avowed) that he will set thee (*‘elyon*) on

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high, above all the nations of the earth." There can therefore be no reasonable doubt, especially if the order of the words here in the psalm is considered—that this clause should be rendered: *And he himself will establish her as highest*: namely, he will do that which the psalm as a whole attests to be his purpose; and so he will guard against the danger of Zion's being lowered by the very multiplication of her citizen-converts. Jehovah intends her to be *highest*; and will take care that his intention in this respect is not frustrated.

5. But the more clearly this leading point in the psalm is discriminated, the more urgent does it become to grasp with firmness and tenacity a position already taken in passing: namely, that this psalm fully and directly, in its length and breadth, relates, not to the Church of Jesus, but more broadly to the Kingdom of God. For, let it be well observed, there is neither Jew nor Gentile in the Church; and, in the Church, certainly no such pre-eminence can be assigned to the *literal Zion* as is here assigned to her. Let us make up our minds. Does membership in the Church of Christ constitute us citizens of the earthly Jerusalem? So few will dare to say "Yes" to this question, that they may safely be disregarded. Practically, all Christians, with one voice, admit and proclaim that *our* "new birth" makes us citizens, not of the earthly Jerusalem, but of the heavenly. To abide by that conclusion, is no doubt to cut ourselves logically free from this psalm, since, as we have seen, *IT* unmistakably refers to the earthly Jerusalem. To be firm here, is to lose nothing of value, forasmuch as we can still use the psalm *by analogy* as a suggestion of things in the heavens. But, while we shall lose nothing of value, we shall lose much that is an encumbrance, apt to lead us continually into contradicting our heavenly standing and privileges. On the other hand, our gain will be immense: the Church of Christ being safe in her own New Testament rights, as based upon her peculiar promises, we can look beyond the completion of the present Church into the Kingdom which is to follow; and see a large territory of blessing in those regions beyond; and humbly claim a general right to those blessings in the name of our Heavenly Lord, who owns earth as well as heaven; and is the Redeemer of Israel and Jerusalem's King-elect, as well as Head of his Ecclesia.

6. With the ground thus cleared of misconception, we can rejoice exceedingly in the prospect of blessings, in the coming Kingdom, which thus opens out before us. Jerusalem, restored—

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to her God, to her Messiah, to her Land—thus becomes the spiritual Metropolis of the peoples that are spared to enter into this latter-day comity of nations. Citizens of the honoured city Jerusalem will be found scattered through the nations. Jerusalem will be their spiritual home: frequently will these citizen converts go up to Jerusalem to worship: the mountain of the Lord's House—the Temple restored—will be lifted up above the hills, and all nations will flow unto it. The Messiah will reign there: his will—his law—his instructions for the guidance of the nations—will be made known there, and propagated from thence. To fill out the picture would require the transcription of the prophecies in Isaiah and elsewhere. See especially Isa. 2:2-4, 4:2-6, 19:21-24, 25:6-9, 54, 60, 66:7-22, Zeph. 3:14-20: with respect to which it should be observed—that they have only to be taken in their natural and obvious sense to suit them for being set in the frame-work which this psalm affords:—"their natural and obvious sense"—as opposed on the one hand to the purely allegorical and prematurely spiritualised interpretation, from which nothing comes out as it goes in, nothing really means what it appears to mean; and, on the other hand, as opposed to the *slavishly* literal, which, for example, insists that this enumeration of nations (in Ps. 87) must be pressed just as it stands, although it had of necessity to be fitted to the time when the psalm was composed, and be intelligible then, and that it may not be taken as indicating generally the larger and smaller nations by whom Zion is surrounded in the latter day. Holding thus to "the natural and obvious sense" of this psalm, and of the prophecies which properly go with it and explain it,—we can enter with appreciation into the concluding verse of the psalm.

7. Though other interpretations have been put upon ver. 7, the following appears to be its meaning. We are allowed to catch a glimpse of a procession of Zion's citizens—if of such as ordinarily dwell in foreign lands so much the better—drawing near to enter into her *gates*. They are full of joy: they *sing* and *play* and *dance* as they move along. And, looking to the city before them, they exclaim in their song, each speaking for himself: "All my fountains are in thee"—"all my sources of privilege, all my springs of delight *are in thee, O city of God.*" "Better than *the dwellings of Jacob*, better than our homes in *Egypt, Babylon, Philistia, Tyre, Ethiopia*, where we commonly

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live and labour,—better far than all these, art thou, *O Zion*, object of Jehovah's especial love!"

Logically, we thus close the psalm: analogically we still, for a moment, linger over it. This earthly Jerusalem reminds us of the heavenly; and it is the heavenly that is "our mother" (Gal. 4:26). Just as the earthly Jerusalem is constituted the Metropolis of the earth, so the heavenly Jerusalem is constituted the Metropolis of earth and heaven, brought into a higher unity, including angels and men. We who are now being born from above, are enrolled in Heaven (Heb. 12:23); we are called to become the Bride of the Lamb: all the rights and possessions of our espoused Lord are to be made our own. He is the Son of God as well as the Son of David; and therefore *we* are to "inherit all things." The earthly enrolment lingers: the heavenly is proceeding. Earth, for the present, has refused her King; but Heaven has given him welcome (Acts 3:21); and now, for the present, the heavenly advance has taken the precedence of the earthly. Instead of looking forward into the future to discover *our* Mother-city, *we* look straight up into the skies, and there by faith we behold her, with open arms waiting to receive us. And, as we look up, we exclaim with ecstasy—*All my fountains*—God, Christ, the Spirit, angels, the heirship of the Universe—*all my fountains are in thee*.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Is the reference to Jerusalem to be understood only as it means the physical city. Discuss.
2. There seems to be some strong objections to relating the name Jerusalem (as here used) to the church—why? Discuss.
3. Read Isa. 2:2-4; 4:2-6; 19:21-24; 25:6-9; Chapters 54; 60: 66:7-22; Zeph. 3:14-20 and discuss their meaning for us and the future.
4. Is there some "Commonwealth of nations" suggested in verses 4 through 7? Discuss.
5. Do you agree with Rotherham's interpretation? Discuss.

PSALM 88

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

The Anguished Cry of one Smitten and Forsaken.

ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1, 2, Urgent Prayer to be Heard. Stanzas II., III., IV., V., vers. 3, 4; 5; 6, 7; 8, 9, The Sufferer Pleads his Pitiabie Case. Stanza VI., vers. 10-12, The Incapacity of the Dead to know God's Mercies and Praise Him. Stanzas VII., VIII., vers. 13-15; 16-18, Prayer Renewed and Continued, with Further Pleadings urged.

(Lm.) An Instructive Psalm—By Herman the Ezrahite.

- 1 Jehovah God of my salvation!
by day¹ I make outcry—[yea] in the night in thy presence ²
- 2 Let my prayer come in before thee,
Incline thine ear to my piercing³ cry.
- 3 For sated with misfortune is my soul,
and my life at hades hath arrived:
- 4 I am reckoned with them who are going down to the pit,
I have become like a man without help.⁴
- 5 Among the dead am I free,⁵
like the slain who are lying in the grave,—
whom thou rememberest no longer,
since they away from thy hand are cut off.
- 6 Thou hast laid me in the lower pit,
in dark places in the gulfs:⁶
- 7 Upon me hath pressed down thy wrath,
and with all thy breakers hast thou caused humiliation.
- 8 Thou hast far removed my familiar friends from me,
thou hast made me an abomination unto them,—
shut up and I cannot come forth.

1. M.T. (prob. by losing a letter): "When."

2. "Read probably with very slight changes,—'Jehovah, my God, I cry for help by day, (and) in the night my calling is before thee'"—Dr.

3. Ml.: "ringing." "Yell"—Br.

4. "Without God"—Br.

5. "That is, adrift, cut off from Jehovah's remembrance"—O.G. Some read: "is my soul."

6. Or: "deeps." "Dense darkness" (transp. letters)—Br.

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- 9 Mine eye hath languished by reason of humiliation,
I have cried unto thee through every day;
I have spread out unto thee my palms:—
- 10 "For the dead wilt thou do a wonder,
or shall the shades arise give thee thanks?"
- 11 Shall thy kindness be told in the grave,
thy faithfulness in destruction!⁸
- 12 Shall a wonder of thine be made known in the dark,
and thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?"
- 13 But I unto thee Jehovah have cried for help,
and in the morning my prayer cometh to meet thee.
- 14 Why Jehovah rejectest thou my soul,
hidest thy face from me?
- 15 Humbled have I been and ready to breathe my last from my
youth up,
I have borne the terror of thee and am benumbed.⁹
- 16 Over me have passed thy bursts of burning anger,¹⁰
Thine alarms have exterminated me:
- 17 They have surrounded me like waters all the day,
they have come circling against me together.
- 18 Thou hast put far from me lover and companion,
my familiar friends are—darkness!¹¹

(CMm.) For the sons of korah.¹²

PARAPHRASE

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O Jehovah, God of my salvation, I have wept before You
day and night.

2 Now hear my prayers; oh, listen to my cry,

3 For my life is full of troubles, and death draws near.

4 They say my life is ebbing out—a hopeless case.

5 They have left me here to die, like those slain on battle-
fields, from whom Your mercies are removed.

6 You have thrust me down to the darkest depths.

7. Cp. 6:5 n.

8. Heb. *'abaddon*; only in Job 26:6, 28:22, 31:12; Ps. 88:11; Prov. 15:11, 27:20; "Place of ruin in Sheol for lost or ruined dead"—O.G.

9. "I must be distracted"—Del. "I endure, I am brought low, I am turned backward"—Br.

10. "Thy fires of wrath"—Del.

11. Some Cod. (w. Syr.): "restraint"—Gn.

12. See Intro, Chapter II., 3.

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7 Your wrath lies heavy on me; wave after wave engulfs me.

8 You have made my friends to loathe me, and they have gone away. I am in a trap with no way out.

9 My eyes grow dim with weeping. Each day I beg Your help; O Lord, I reach my pleading hands to You for mercy.

10 Soon it will be too late! Of what use are Your miracles when I am in the grave? How can I praise You then?

11 Can those in the grave declare Your lovingkindness? Can they proclaim Your faithfulness?

12 Can the darkness speak of Your miracles? Can anyone in the Land of Forgetfulness talk about Your help?

13 O Lord, I plead for my life and shall keep on pleading day by day.

14 O Jehovah, why have You thrown my life away? Why are You turning Your face from me, and looking the other way?

15 From my youth I have been sickly and ready to die. I stand helpless before Your terrors.

16 Your fierce wrath has overwhelmed me. Your terrors have cut me off.

17 They flow around me all day long.

18 Lover, friend, acquaintance—all are gone. There is only darkness everywhere.

EXPOSITION

This is the gloomiest psalm in the book, and one of the most touching; if not, also, one of the most encouraging—when all things are considered. It is an elaborate description of almost hopeless sorrow; but its spirit is peculiarly gentle and patient. It contains no reproaches of men, and no upbraidings of God. The sufferings portrayed are not traced to man's infliction, but exclusively to the Divine hand; and yet the psalmist does not speak against God, far less does he turn away from him. He still clings to him,—it may be with a slender hope, but with evident tenacity. His hope is inarticulate; for he does not once say what it is he hopes for. Evidently he wishes not to die; and yet the life he has been living appears, from his own description of it, to have been little better than a living death—from which he might not unnaturally have desired to be freed once for all. But no! he unmistakably clings to life; and,—on the principle that, while there is life there is hope, we may

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fairly infer that restoration to health is tacitly included in his longing.

What is his affliction? Almost certainly, it is leprosy. With this agrees his separation from his *friends*, which he most bitterly feels; and his assertion that he has become to them *an abomination*. His separation from his friends involves confinement: he is *shut up*, and *cannot, must not, go forth*. This separation moreover is complete. They treat him *as dead*—are every day expecting to hear of his decease. They hold no communication with him. His leprosy is of long standing: it has plagued him *from his youth up*. Yet it seems to have fluctuated in intensity; coming back on him like surging *fire*, like returning *breakers*, by their violence ready to dash him in pieces. Connecting—as he does and as was commonly done in his day, especially in this disease—his affliction with the punitive hand of God, he terms the renewed onsets of his trouble *bursts of Divine anger*. They are alarming, from them there is no escape. Full many a time he has given himself up for lost—has, to his feeling, been *exterminated*. He is at *death's door* now: he has anticipated being dead—being in *hades*—nay being in the *lower hades*: among those cast off and down into the *lower pit of hades*, among the especial objects of Divine *indignation*.

And yet he prays. He has been accustomed to pray every day; and especially of a morning: *in the morning my prayer regularly cometh to meet thee*—on thine approach in the daylight. And though, as regularly as he prays, he is rejected, still he prays.

And truly he has prayed to some purpose—to better purpose than he knows. This we have already seen in his restraining himself from reproaching either man or God; but we have yet to see it in the tenor of his prayer as he stands before Jehovah with uplifted palms (vers. 10-12). He prays against Death: but why? What is the predominating motive pervading these six sustained interrogatories? *Why* does he pray against death? Self may run through all—this was inevitable; but self never once comes to the surface: it is Jehovah, his perfections and works; the fear that Jehovah should lack his due praise; these are the sentiments which animate these questions. They take for granted that such grounds for praise exist: that Jehovah is a *doer of wonders*, one who deserves *thanks*; a God of *kindness* and *faithfulness* and *righteousness*, manifested in such acts as can be enumerated and remembered. The psalmist clearly craves to take part in such thanks and praise. He may even

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be credited with a hope of adding to the sum of reasons for such praise by his own improved and brightened history. At all events, this is the sustained feeling which inspires this series of interrogations. He may be right, or he may be wrong, in assuming that such praise cannot be given by *the dead*—by *the shades*—*in the grave, in destruction, in the dark, in the land of forgetfulness*. At least, that is the view he entertains,—the groundwork of his conclusions; and he is anxious that his God should not be robbed of the praise due to him. And, therefore, on all grounds—because he incriminates neither man nor God for his lifelong sufferings, and also because he desires God to be praised—we conclude that he has not prayed in vain.

Probably he was not wholly wrong in assuming that God can gather no harvest of praise from the dead; that is, from the dead so long as they continue dead. What he needed was, to have “life and incorruption brought to light”—to have the prospect of Resurrection introduced into his thoughts, and therewith the conception of a revival of memory and a resumption of praise. Whether, to us who live after “life and incorruption” have been disclosed in Christ, there comes a double relief,—not only the prospect of an end to the hadæan state and light at the end, but a decided lessening of the intermediate gloom, is an interesting question. It is hard to think that those ancient saints, so favourably commended to our respect as this great sufferer, were wholly wrong. They may have been nearly right as far as they were able to go. Right: if they thought of death only as a suspense of active memory and of public praise; the which, combined, do not amount to a final cessation of being,—an extreme view which few if any saints of old entertained, certainly as regards such as revered God. But always deficient: so long as they failed to grasp the prospect of a complete restoration to life, and therewith the revival of active memory and the resumption of the delightful duty of public praise. It is suggested that, along lines such as these, a complete harmonisation of Old Testament and New may, after the vacillation and oscillation of centuries, be reasonably expected to come. Meantime it is permitted us to hope, that this ancient psalmist, who suffered so much and knew so little, has already become conscious of Messiah’s triumph over death, and has the prospect—if not yet the realisation—of sharing therein. So chastened a sufferer as Heman the Ezrahite will assuredly “stand in his lot at the end of the days.”

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QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. "This is one of the gloomiest psalms in the book, and one of the most touching; if not, also, one of the most encouraging"—how can this be?
2. Why is it thought the affliction of the writer is leprosy?
3. *Why* does the psalmist pray against death?
4. Is it not true that the dead cannot or do not praise God? How is it that such is stated here?
5. What hope was there for this sufferer?

PSALM 89

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

The Covenant with David Contrasted with the
Present Dishonour of David's Heir.

ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1, 2, The Keynotes of the psalm—Jehovah's Kindness and Faithfulness. Stanza II., vers. 3, 4, Brief Summary of Jehovah's Covenant with David. Stanzas III.-VII., vers. 5-14, The Character, Court Works and Dominion of the Covenant God. Stanza VIII., IX., vers. 15-18, The Happy Estate of the Covenant People. Stanzas X.-XIX., vers. 19-37, The Provisions of the Covenant, Poetically and Prophetically Amplified. Stanzas XX.-XXIII., vers. 38-45, The Dishonour Permitted to David's Heir Pathetically Described. Stanzas XXIV., XXV., vers. 46-51, Remonstrance against the Continuance of this Dishonour, urged by the Shortness and Vanity of Life, the Certainty of Death, the Memory of Former Kindnesses, and the Unanswerable Insults heaped on David's Heir—Jehovah's Anointed.

(Lm.) An Instructive Psalm—By Ethan the Ezrahite.

- 1 The kindness of Jehovah to the ages let me sing,
to generation after generation let me make known thy
faithfulness with my mouth.
- 2 For I have said¹ "To the ages shall kindness be built up,
the heavens—thou wilt establish thy faithfulness therein."
- 3 "I have solemnised a covenant for my chosen one,
I have sworn to David my servant:

1. Some cod. (w. Sep., Vul.): "thou saidst"—Gn. Following this reading, some begin the Divine speech here, with the necessary changes.

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- 4 'Unto the ages will I establish thy seed,
and will build up to generation after generation thy throne.'"
- 5 And the heavens will confess² thy wonder O Jehovah,
yea thy faithfulness in the assembly of thy holy ones.
- 6 For whom in the skies can one compare to Jehovah?
can liken to Jehovah among the sons of the mighty?³
- 7 A GOD inspiring awe⁴ in the great circle of the holy ones,
and to be feared above all who are round about him.
- 8 Jehovah God of hosts! who like thee is potent O Yah?
with thy tokens of faithfulness surrounding thee?
- 9 Thou rulest the proud swelling of the sea,⁵
when its waves rise high thou stillest them.
- 10 Thou didst crush—as one deadly wounded—Rahab,
with thy strong arm thou didst scatter thy foes.
- 11 Thine are the heavens yea thine the earth,
the world and its fulness thou didst found them:
- 12 North and south thou didst create them,
Tabor and Hermon in⁶ thy name ring out their joy.
- 13 Thine is an arm [endued] with might,
thou strengthenest thy hand exaltest thy right hand:
- 14 Righteousness and justice are the foundation of thy throne,
kindness and truth come to meet thy face.
- 15 How happy the people who know the sacred shout!
Jehovah! in the light of thy face they firmly march along,⁷
- 16 In thy name they exult all the day,
and in thy righteousness are they exalted.⁸
- 17 For the beauty of their strength⁹ art thou,
and by thy favour thou exaltest our horns;¹⁰
- 18 For to Jehovah belongeth our shield,
and to the Holy One of Israel our king.
- 19 Then spakest thou in vision to thy men¹¹ of kindness and
didst say:—

2. Or: "celebrate" (so Dr.).

3. Or: "God." Heb.: 'elim.

4. Or: "fear-inspiring."

5. "It is Thou that tamest the insolence of the sea"—Del.

6. "At"—Dr., Del.

7. "Said of walking along in a self-assured, solemn manner"—Del.

8. Gt.: "they ring out their joy."

9. "Their strength, which turns out, proves, to be their ornament"—Del.

10. So (pl.) in many MSS., and in 4 ear. pr. edns.; but "horn" (sing.) in 7 ear. pr. edns.—Gn.

11. So (pl.) in many MSS., 3 ear. pr. edns., Aram., Vul.; but "man" (sing.) in some cod., w. 7 ear. pr. edns.—Gn.

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- "I have laid help¹² on a hero,
I have exalted one chosen from the people.
- 20 "I have found David my servant,
with my holy oil have I anointed him:
- 21 With whom my hand shall be established,
yea mine own arm shall strengthen him.
- 22 "An enemy shall not make exactions of him,
nor a son of perversity humiliate him:
- 23 But I will shatter from before him his adversaries,
and them who hate him will I smite.
- 24 "And my faithfulness and my kindness shall be with him,
and through my name shall his horn be exalted;
- 25 And I will set on the sea his hand,
and on the rivers¹³ his right-hand.
- 26 "He shall cry out to me—"My father art thou,
my GOD and my rock of salvation,"
- 27 I also will grant him to be first-born,
most high¹⁴ to the kings of the earth.
- 28 "To the ages will I keep for him my kindness,
and my covenant is made sure to him;
- 29 And I will appoint to futurity his seed,
and his throne as the days of the heavens.
- 30 "If his sons forsake my law,
and in my regulations do not walk:
- 31 If my statutes they profane,
and my commandments do not keep
- 32 "Then will I visit with a rod their transgression,
and with strokes¹⁵ their iniquity;
- 33 But my kindness will I not break off¹⁶ from him,
nor falsify my faithfulness.
- 34 "I will not violate my covenant,
nor that which hath issued out of my lips will I change.
- 35 One thing have I sworn by my holiness,
surely unto David will I not be false:—
- 36 "His seed to the ages shall remain,
and his throne be as the sun before me:

12. *Gt.*: "a crown" (cp. 132:18); or "strength"—Gn.

13. "A poetic generalisation of the 'River' (i.e., the Euphrates); cp. Exo. 33:31 and Ps. 72:8"—Dr.

14. Cp. 87:5.

15. "Scourges"—Del. N.B., the word associated with leprosy: Lev. 13, 14; 2 Sam. 7:14, Pss. 38:11 (note), 39:10.

16. Some cod. (w. Aram., Syr.): "take away." Cp. 2 Sam. 7:15—Gn.

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- 37 As the moon be established to the ages,
and the witness in the skies is faithful."
- 38 Yet thou thyself hast cast off and rejected,
thou has been indignant with thine Anointed:
- 39 Thou hast spurned the covenant of thy servant,
thou hast profaned to the ground his crown.
- 40 Thou hast broken down all his fences,
thou hast laid all his fortresses in ruins:
- 41 All the passers by the way have plundered him,
he hath become a reproach to his neighbours.
- 42 Thou hast exalted the right hand of his adversaries,
hast gladdened all his enemies:
- 43 Yea thou turnest back the edge of his sword,
and hast not made him stand in the battle.
- 44 Thou hast made him lose his lustre,¹⁷
and his throne to the ground hast thou hurled:
- 45 Thou hast shortened the days of his youth,
thou hast wrapped him about with shame.
- 46 How long Jehovah wilt thou hide thyself utterly?
[how long] shall thy wrath burn like fire?
- 47 Remember Sovereign Lord¹⁸ what duration is,
for what unreality hast thou created all the sons of men!¹⁹
- 48 Who is the man that shall live and not see death,
that shall deliver his soul from the hand of hades?
- 49 Where are thy former kindnesses Sovereign Lord,
which thou didst swear to David in thy faithfulness?
- 50 Remember Sovereign Lord the reproach of thy servants,²⁰
I have put in my bosom the insult²¹ of the peoples:
- 51 Wherewith thine enemies have reproached O Jehovah,
wherewith they have reproached the footsteps²² of thine
Anointed!

17. By emendation: "Thou hast taken away the sceptre of majesty"—Br.

18. So several critics, by supplying a letter. "O remember how short my time is"—Dr. "Remember I—how short my time is!"—Del. "Of what duration I am"—O.G.

19. Or: "Adam."

20. Some cod. (w. Syr.): "servant" (sing.)—Gn.

21. So it shd. be (w. Aram.). Cp. Eze. 36:15—Gn.

22. "Pursue and persecute him, wherever he goes and whatever he does"—Del.

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Blessed be Jehovah to the ages!²³
Amen and Amen!

(Nm.)

PARAPHRASE

PSALM 89

Forever and ever I will sing about the tender kindness of the Lord! Young and old shall hear about Your blessings.

2 Your love and kindness are forever; Your truth is as enduring as the heavens.

3, 4 The Lord God says,¹ "I have made a solemn agreement with My chosen servant David. I have taken an oath to establish his descendants as kings forever on his throne, from now until eternity!"

5 All heavens shall praise Your miracles, O Lord; myriads of angels² will praise You for Your faithfulness.

6 For who in all of heaven can be compared with God? What mightiest angel³ is anything like Him?

7 The highest of angelic powers² stand in dread and awe of Him. Who is as revered as He by those surrounding Him?

8 O Jehovah, commander of the heavenly armies, where is there any other Mighty One like You? Faithfulness is Your very character.

9 You rule the oceans when their waves arise in fearful storms; You speak, and they lie still.

10 You have cut haughty Egypt⁴ to pieces. Your enemies are scattered by Your awesome power.

11 The heavens are Yours, the world, everything—for You created them all.

12 You created north and south! Mount Tabor and Mount Hermon rejoice to be signed by Your name as their maker!

13 Strong is Your arm! Strong is Your hand! Your right hand is lifted high in glorious strength.

14, 15 Your throne is founded on two strong pillars—the one is Justice and the other Righteousness. Mercy and Truth walk before You as Your attendants. Blessed are those who

23. MI.: "to concealed duration."

1. Implied.

2. Literally, "the assembly of the holy ones."

3. Literally, "the sons of the mighty."

4. Literally, "Rahab."

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hear the joyful blast of the trumpet, for they shall walk in the light of Your presence.

16 They rejoice all day long in Your wonderful reputation and in Your perfect righteousness.

17 You are their strength! What glory! Our power is based on Your favor!

18 Yes, our protection is from the Lord Himself and He, the Holy One of Israel has given us our king.

19 In a vision You spoke to Your prophet⁵ and said, "I have chosen a splendid young man from the common people to be the king—

20 He is My servant David! I have anointed him with My holy oil.

21 I will steady him and make him strong.

22 His enemies shall not outwit him, nor shall the wicked overpower him.

23 I will beat down his adversaries before him, and destroy those who hate him.

24 I will protect and bless him constantly and surround him with my love; he will be great because of Me.

25 He will hold sway from the Euphrates River to the Mediterranean Sea.

26 And he will cry to Me, 'You are my Father, my God, and my Rock of Salvation.'

27 I will treat him as My firstborn son, and make him the mightiest king in all the earth.

28 I will love him forever, and be kind to him always; My covenant with him will never end.

29 He will always have an heir; his throne will be as endless as the days of heaven.

30, 31, 32 If his children forsake My laws and don't obey them, then I will punish them.

33 But I will never completely take away My lovingkindness from them, nor let My promise fail.

34 No, I will not break My covenant; I will not take back one word of what I said.

35, 36 For I have sworn to David, (and a holy God can never lie), that his dynasty will go on forever, and his throne will continue to the end of time.⁶

5. Literally, "Your saint;" apparently a reference to Samuel, who was sent to anoint David as king.

6. Literally, "his throne as the sun before me."

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37 It shall be eternal as the moon, My faithful witness in the sky!"

* * * * *

38 Then why cast me off, rejected? Why be so angry with the one You chose as king?

39 Have You renounced Your covenant with him? For You have thrown his crown in the dust.

40 You have broken down the walls protecting him and laid to ruins every fort defending him.

41 Everyone who comes along has robbed him while his neighbors mock.

42 You have strengthened his enemies against him and made them rejoice.

43 You have struck down his sword and refused to help him in battle.

44 You have ended his splendor and overturned his throne.

45 You have made him old before his time and publicly disgraced him.

* * * * *

46 O Jehovah, how long will this go on? Will You hide Yourself from me forever? How long will Your wrath burn like fire?

47 Oh, remember how short You have made man's lifespan. Is it an empty, futile life You give the sons of men?

48 No man can live forever. All will die. Who can rescue his life from the power of the grave?

49 Lord, where is the love You used to have for me? Where is Your kindness that You promised to David with a faithful pledge?

50 Lord, see how all the people are despising me.

51 Your enemies joke about me, the one You anointed as their king.

52 And yet—blessed be the Lord forever! Amen and Amen!

EXPOSITION

It is not difficult for the patient and thorough reader to grasp the scope of this psalm; but very easy for anyone perusing it in haste to miss its great argument, owing to the length of the psalm, and to the extraordinary development given to the Covenant made with David—a development so enthusiastic and long sustained as scarcely to suggest that a companion picture is to follow towards the close of the psalm, one of deep gloom,

to which all the previous dazzling brightness is intended to serve as a mere foil. At the lowest estimate, this long delay to reveal the true object of the poem, springs from the consummate art of the poet: at the higher estimate of Divine intention, it suggests that there is more of the Plan of Redemption wrapped up in the Davidic Covenant than Gentile Christians are apt to suppose. Be that as it may, under patient observation this psalm discloses not only its high poetic merit, but the power of its pleading viewed as an Intercession, in behalf of the now Dishonored Heir of David's Throne.

After striking the Keynotes of the psalm—Jehovah's Kindness and Faithfulness (vers. 1, 2)—around which all the psalmist's pleadings revolve, and to the express mention of which a return is made as far on as ver. 49; and after, in vers. 3, 4, briefly summing up the Davidic covenant as made known through Nathan the prophet (2 Sam. 7),—the psalmist then (vers. 5-14) eloquently enlarges on the incomparable excellences of the Covenant God, as known in heaven and on earth, as shewn in Israel's history and displayed in Palestine, bringing this description to a climax by presenting as a bright constellation the four fundamental Divine attributes of *righteousness, justice, kindness and faithfulness*. He then (vers. 15-18) by a natural transition passes to the enviable *happiness* of a people having such a God as their God; inferring their joy in worship, the strength of their national movements, and their sense of security under their *king*, who is to them Jehovah's *shield*. From this second climax, the poet moves forward into an elaborate amplification of the Davidic Covenant (vers. 19-37), taking especial care to emphasise its perpetual and unalterable character, by detailing the Divine provision made for punishing unworthy heirs to the Davidic Throne without abrogating the Covenant which secures it to David's seed in perpetuity. From the past and the normal, the psalmist now (vers. 38-45) passes to the abnormal and perplexing present. It is true he does not charge God with folly, nor at any point assert that Jehovah was shewing himself unfaithful to his covenant; but he goes as far in this direction as reverence permitted leaving no feature of the pitiable condition of David's present son unnamed. Indeed the picture given of the existing heir is very pathetic: especially if, with many, we think of him as being the young king Jehoiakim, who, after reigning only three months in Jerusalem, was carried away to Babylon. And if, in addition to his youth, he was apparently

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virtuous and promising, and had already drawn forth the affections of his people, the pathos of this description becomes unspeakably touching.

It is natural enough that such a description of present calamity should issue in expostulation and entreaty that such an anomalous state of things should be ended; but we are scarcely prepared to find the shortness and vanity of life and the inevitableness of death brought into the pleading. In truth, there seems something flickering and uncertain in many O.T. references to this subject, as we realised when studying Pss. 39, 49, and others; and we can never be thankful enough for the clearer light which we now enjoy. We have forgotten, or have never realised, what it is to be shut up, as these ancient saints seem to have been, to the apprehension that *now or never* must the great promises of God be fulfilled.

A final word as to the extraordinary importance which this psalm attaches to the Covenant made with David. How best can we bring ourselves into sympathy with the undeniable fact, that such importance is attached to it? Is it enough to say that Jesus of Nazareth, whom we recognize as Son and Heir of David, has redeemed these lapsed promises? Or must we not go a step further, and discover in the Davidic Covenant provisions which, though now in abeyance, are awaiting a plenary fulfilment in the very region to which they appear to belong;—in a kingdom not of this world but nevertheless *in it and for it*, in which the Messiah shall in undeniable fact be *Most High to the kings of the earth?*

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What is the predominate purpose of this psalm?
2. What is meant by Rotherham's statement: ". . . there is more of the Plan of Redemption wrapped up in the Davidic Covenant than Gentile Christians are apt to suppose". Discuss.
3. We have a great deal in this psalm of the following attributes of God: (1) Kindness; (2) Faithfulness; (3) Righteousness; (4) Justice;—To what purpose?
4. God's agreement with David is here plainly said to be eternal—what shall we say to its present fulfillment?
5. The psalmist goes as near to "charging God with folly" as he can go—why? Was it true?

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6. To whom does this psalm specifically apply?
7. The brevity of life and the certainty of death are here used. The psalmist would make good present-day humanists. Discuss.

THE PSALMS

BOOK THE FOURTH¹

PSALM 90

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

A Prayer Against the Dominion of Death.

ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1, 2, A Foundation for Prayer, sought in the Proved Kindness and Abiding Might of the Sovereign Lord. Stanza II., vers. 3, 4, The Theme of the Psalm: a Two-fold Return. Stanza III., vers. 5-12, The Dominion of Death; described mainly in its Divine Appointment, and its Origin in Human Sin and Divine Displeasure; and calling forth a Transitional Prayer for Divine Guidance, How to Number our Days. Stanza IV., vers. 13-17, A Plea for the Overthrow of Death's Dominion.

(Lm.) Prayer—By Moses, the Man of God.

- 1 Sovereign Lord!
a dwelling place² hast thou thyself become to us
in generation after generation.
- 2 Before mountains were born,
or ever were brought forth the earth and the world—
yea, from age even unto age
Thou art the MIGHTY ONE.
- 3 Thou causest man to return even unto atoms,³
and (then) sayest—"Return! ye sons of men."⁴

1. See Table II., *ante*.

2. So M.T. (*ma'on*), as in 91:9. Some cod. (w. Sep., Vul.): "refuge" (*ma'oz*), as in 27:1, 28:8, 31:3, 4, Isa. 25:4, Joel 3:16, Na. 1:7.

3. So Driver. "Dust (as pulverised)"—O.G.

4. "Again thou sayest, Come again, ye children of men."—P.B.V.

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- 4 For a thousand years in thine eyes
are like yesterday when about to pass away,
or a watch in the night.
- 5 Thou didst flood them away with a rain-storm—a sleep they
become,
In the morning they are like grass which sprouteth again,—
- 6 In the morning it blossometh—and hath sprouted again,
by the evening it is cut down—and hath withered!
- 7 For we waste away in thine anger,
and in thy wrath are we dismayed:
- 8 Thou dost set our iniquities before thee,
our secret near the lamp⁵ of thy face.
- 9 For all our days decline,
in thy wrath we end our years;
- 10 Like a murmured meditation are the days of our years:⁶
in them are seventy years,
or if in full strength eighty years;
Yet their extent⁷ is travail and trouble,—
for it passeth quickly and we have flown away.
- 11 Who can know the strength of thine anger,
or whether like the fear of thee is thy wrath?
- 12 How to number our days so make thou known,
that we may get⁸ a mind that hath wisdom.
- 13 Oh return thou Jehovah!—how long?
and have compassion concerning thy servants:
- 14 Satisfy us in the morning⁹ with thy kindness,
that we may ring out our joy and be glad all our days.
- 15 Make us glad according to the days thou hast humbled us,
the years we have seen misfortune:
- 16 Shew unto thy servants thy work,¹⁰
and thy majesty¹¹ upon their children.¹²
- 17 And let the delightfulness of the Sovereign Lord our God
be upon us,

5. Or: "luminary."

6. The words of these three lines are redistributed for better balance.

7. M.T.: "pride." More probably (reading *rhb* instead *rhb*): "width, extent"—O.G.

8. Ml.: "bring in" (i.e. from the field of our study).

9. Or: "early."

10. Some cod. (w. Aram., Sep., Syr., Vul.): "works"—Gn.

11. Or: "state."

12. Cp. Isa. 4:4-6.

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and the work of our hands oh establish thou upon us,—
yea the work of our hands establish thou it.

(Nm.)

PARAPHRASE

PSALM 90

A Prayer of Moses, the Man of God

Lord, through all the generations you have been our home!

2 Before the mountains were created, before the earth was formed, You are God without beginning or end.

3 You speak, and man turns back to dust.

4 A thousand years are but as yesterday to You! They are like a single hour!¹

5, 6 We glide along the tides of time as swiftly as a racing river, and vanish as quickly as a dream. We are like grass that is green in the morning but mowed down and withered before the evening shadows fall.

7 We die beneath Your anger; we are overwhelmed by Your wrath.

8 You spread out our sins before You—our secret sins—and see them all.

9 No wonder the years are long and heavy here beneath Your wrath. All our days are filled with sighing.

10 Seventy years are given us! And some may even live to 80. But even the best of these years are often emptiness and pain; soon they disappear, and we are gone.

11 Who can realize the terrors of Your anger? Which of us can fear You as he should?

12 Teach us to number our days and recognize how few they are; help us to spend them as we should.

13 O Jehovah, come and bless us! How long will You delay? Turn away Your anger from us.

14. Satisfy us in our earliest youth² with Your lovingkindness, giving us constant joy to the end of our lives.

15 Give us gladness in proportion to our former misery! Replace the evil years with good.

16 Let us see Your miracles again; let our children see glorious things, the kind You used to do.

17 And let the Lord our God favor us and give us success.

1. Literally, "as a watch in the night."

2. Literally, "early."

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EXPOSITION

That *Moses the Man of God*, the Leader of Israel out of Egypt, did write this psalm according to the inscriptional headline, is strongly confirmed by internal evidence, especially by the lonely sublimity and strong originality of the psalm; and nearly all the objections against such authorship are met by carrying back the time of its composition to the close of Moses' sojourn in Midian, instead of assuming that he wrote it at the end of the forty years' wandering in the wilderness. This modification of the opinion which adheres to the Mosaic authorship, not only removes the difficulty of supposing that Moses wrote of *seventy* or *eighty* years as the common length of human life when he himself was *nearly a hundred and twenty*, but fully accounts for the absence of any allusion to the Exodus and the marvellous incidents of the journey through the desert. Not only so, but this slight shifting back of the presumed time of authorship intensifies the cry of the writer, *How long?* (ver. 13), by placing behind it, not merely *forty years'* seeming delay, but nearly *four hundred*. It is not likely that, in sight of Canaan, Moses would have said, "How long?" when he very well knew that the crossing of the Jordan could not be much longer delayed; whereas, at the close of nearly forty years' waiting in Midian, and still no commission received *to go and deliver Israel*,—nothing could have been more natural than so to express himself respecting the threatening flight of years. *Let thy work appear!* would come with a hundred-fold more force from his pen when the first step in that "work" had not as yet been taken by the Divine Deliverer, than it would when a substantial and irreversible portion of that "work" like that of the Exodus had already been accomplished.

A FOUNDATION LAID FOR PRAYER (Stanza I., vers. 1, 2).—Most appropriately does the Divine governmental name "*Adonai, Sovereign Lord*," stand as the first word in a psalm which touches some of the weightiest problems in the Divine government of mankind. A *dwelling-place* comes with peculiar pathos from a homeless sojourner belonging to a homeless race. A sense of being at home with God, impresses the writer with the Divine kindness in drawing so near to him; and at the same time brings him into conscious fellowship with the men of the past to whom the Sovereign Lord had in like manner drawn near: hence, most comprehensively, he says: *A dwelling-place hast thou thyself become to us in generation after generation*. This is

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indeed a broad stepping-stone to prayer, which plants Moses, the Exile, beside Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and other men spiritually akin, and comprehended under the uniting pronoun *our*: *our dwelling-place*. A sojourner among the *mountains* of Arabia, who, guided by the sacred books in his possession, had many times pondered on the birth of the world, finds it natural to go back—behind the race of believing servants of the Sovereign Lord to which he belongs—to the contemplation of the *Mighty One* Himself whose existence antedates both men and mountains: *Before Mountains were born, Or ever were brought forth the earth and the world* (THEN Thou wast, as Thou art still) *the Mighty One*. But, instead of taking two sentences to say the two things (*wast—art*), the writer,—taking advantage of the Hebrew custom of merely implying the verb “to be”,—crowds into one sentence what might have made two: *Thou wast—Thou art*. Before the mountains were born, &c., thou wast 'El, the Mighty One. Yea, from 'olam to 'olam—from æon to æon—from concealed time in the past to concealed time in the future—or (more simply) from age to age, thou art 'El, the Mighty One: the father of all existing things, yea also the father of all coming times. Thus broad and firm is a foundation here laid for prayer.

THE THEME OF THE PSALM (Stanza II., vers. 3, 4.)—*Thou causest man to return even unto atoms, And (then) sayest—“Return ye sons of men”* (ver. 3). Are there here two *returns*, or is there only one? Is there first a “return” to dust, and then a “return” from dust? In other words, are the two clauses of which the verse is composed to be regarded as synonymous, both saying substantially the same thing; or as consecutive? With some confidence we reply, “consecutive.” There are two “returns.” The first clause expresses a “return” to dust; and the second, a “return” from dust. But the difference in result is so great as to lead us to ask how we may be sure which construction to prefer. Now there are two leading indications to guide us: first, the relation of these two clauses to each other, and then the connection between this verse and the next. First, as to the relation between the two clauses to each other: notice that the former clause expresses a fact, or states a Divine act, simply something done—*Thou causest*, &c.; whereas the latter tells, not of something done, but of something said, a Divine word or decree: *Thou sayest—Return*. Mark this well: first a Divine act, then a Divine decree. Now, is it likely that they would

stand in this order, if they both referred to the same thing? Is it not more probable that they would have stood in the reverse order,—first the decree, and then the act carrying out the decree? Would it not seem very awkward to represent God as first doing the act—inflicting death, and then passing the decree calling for the infliction. The very order of the clauses, therefore, already makes for the conclusion that there are two “returns” in the verse—one return executed, and then another decreed. But there is a second indication to help us; and that is, the connection between this third verse and the one which immediately follows it—the fourth. Evidently, there is a connection between the two, and that a logical connection; seeing that ver. 4 opens with the important logical link *For*, thus shewing that the fourth verse gives a *reason* for the third. Hence, if we can seize upon the nature of this connection, we may hope to obtain further guidance as to how the point before us should be decided: namely, whether ver. 3 speaks of two “returns” or of only one. What then, let us ask, is the general sense of ver. 4 when put into simple language? That general sense is plainly this: *That a long time in God’s sight is like a very short time in ours.* Such being the case, Does that sense of ver. 4 make for two “returns,” or for only one, in ver. 3? Let us try these issues one by one. Assume that there is but one “return” in ver. 3—that it speaks of the return to dust and nothing more; and then how does our “For” carry us forward: “Thou hast inflicted death on man, Because ‘a long time in thy sight is as a short time in ours’”? What reason is there in that? There is none, that we can discover. What has length of time—longer or shorter—to do with the one fact or process of inflicting death? It has no relation, that we can see. The infliction of death is going steadily on, occasioning no such sense of *delay* as to call for any explanation. Therefore, if *only* the infliction of death is comprehended in ver. 3, ver. 4 is wholly irrelevant. Now let us try the second issue, by asking: If there are two “returns” intended in ver. 3, will that create a sufficient sense of delay, as to make welcome the soothing consideration supplied by ver. 4? Obviously it will; seeing that, by including two great Divine processes, the second of which has scarcely if at all been begun, it instinctively calls forth the reflection: “Yes! but *what a long time* such a double process bids fair to demand: a first process of causing man to return to dust is itself filling ages; but the second process—bringing mankind back from the dust—

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why, it has not yet commenced. *How long* will it be ere it is begun? How much longer, before it is finished? Just the very feeling to which the consideration in ver. 4 is fitted to be addressed; because its purport is: "A long time—perhaps thousands of years. Yea; but no length of time involved affects the Divine Worker: no amount of delay can either disable him or cause him to forget!" On these sure grounds may we regard as settled the grave point at issue: concluding with confidence, both from the order and nature of the clauses in ver. 3, and from the logical connection between vers. 3 and 4, That it is even so; that the worthy theme of Moses' mighty prayer is nothing less than a pleading protest against the prolonged and unbroken dominion of death. We have thus discovered the poles on which the whole psalm turns, and are prepared to see all the remainder of the psalm naturally resolve itself, as it does, into—The Dominion of Death described; and, A Plea for the Overthrow of that dominion.

THE DOMINION OF DEATH DESCRIBED (Stanza III., vers. 5-12).—And, first, it is *Divinely caused*. The "theme" itself has already stated this: *Thou causest man to return to atoms*. And now, at the very entrance on this description of death's dominion, the same thing is reasserted: *Thou didst flood them away with a rain-storm*. It matters not at all whether this is an allusion to the Flood: the point is, that this "flooding away" is executed by the Sovereign Lord addressed, even by him to whom a thousand years are as yesterday. It will not do to try to break the force of these statements by reminding us that "every creature of God is good." True? but death is not a CREATURE: it is neither person, place nor thing—it is essentially a negation, a negation in the sense of a withdrawal of life. It is therefore unwarranted, and indeed reckless, to assert that God cannot withdraw life when once he had bestowed it. It may be good for him to give it; and yet be both good and wise for him to withdraw it, after a time, longer or shorter. It may be good to withdraw it; either because it has served its purpose, or because it has been abused and forfeited. It may be just and wise and merciful, yea even necessary, to withdraw life as a Divine protest against sin already committed, and as a Divine prevention of further sin. It is, therefore, as unwise as it is unwarranted to allege that *God cannot inflict death*. It is taught here, and in endless other places of Holy Writ, that, in point of fact, God *does* inflict death.

Still, not without reason does he inflict it. In the case of

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other creatures, God may have other reasons for withdrawing life—that is, inflicting death; but, in the case of *man*, there is a revealed reason, and that reason is—*SIN*: *Thou dost set our iniquities before thee, Our secret near the lamp of thy face.* The “iniquities” here intended are the iniquities of the race; since individual iniquities do not count, as witness the death of infants and of the forgiven. In like manner, in all probability, “our secret” is the secret of our race; which, when “Genesis” was barely written and certainly not published, was in all likelihood in the keeping of Moses alone. This may seem a great and indeed startling thing to say; but let any man, with some strength of historical imagination, give a more likely application to this remarkable phrase, of which, be it observed, the plural word “sins” forms no part. This psalm, then, itself guides us to find the special reason for man’s death in man’s sin.

Nor is this all. Man’s sin is the occasion of God’s displeasure. With surprising strength is this taught in the present psalm. Five times is this explicitly asserted during the course of this single stanza dealing with Death’s Dominion: *anger, wrath; wrath, anger; wrath* (vers. 7, 9, 11). It really appears as though the writer gave up all attempts to measure the intensity of God’s anger against man’s sin—the sin of the race—by taking refuge in a question: *Who can know the strength of thine anger?* And, if we rightly decipher the force of the duplicate question, it abundantly confirms the first member of the interrogatory: *Or whether like (—or according—to) the fear of thee is thy wrath.* Of “the fear” which unlimited power revealing itself by the infliction of death inspires, we all have some knowledge; and we can easily increase our apprehension thereof, either by studying ordinary histories of mankind or by noting this feature as seen for instance in such a classic as the Book of Job. Suffice it to claim that, according to this psalm, it is very unlikely that any of us can over-estimate the intensity of the Divine Displeasure with the sin of our race. We may make a one-sided study of it; we may omit to pass on to view the other side of the great complex question; we may amiably, but quite needlessly, plead man’s frailty—which assuredly God never forgets;—but we cannot be too deeply penetrated with the impressively taught truth that *the reason for man’s death as a race, is man’s sin as a race.* The more vividly you portray the ravages of death, the more cogently do you demonstrate God’s anger against our racial sin: comprehending, as that racial sin

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does, alike the *secret* offence of our first father and the resulting *iniquities* of his descendants.

We might here look back, for the purpose of observing what a peculiar flickering of lights and shadows is cast over vers. 5-11 by what we might call the variations seen in the incidence of Death: the sweeping away of masses of men, as in the flood; the silent falling asleep of individuals who unobservedly fall out of the living race of men; and especially the remarkable way in which generations succeed each other. Also: we might point out how the *travail* and *trouble* of life enhance the impressiveness of its brevity. Life is slow and bright in coming, but swift in departing, and shadowed in retrospect. *Seventy* or *eighty* years seem long to the young; but to the aged they appear but as a few days. Many besides Jacob when brought before Pharaoh (Gen. 47:9) have, in the time of retrospect, been ready to exclaim: "Few and evil have been the days of the years of my life!"

But, instead of lingering over these details of the Stanza before us, it is more important to give good heed to the pivot prayer which forms the transition to the great prayer of the psalm. This pivot prayer is the outcry of the careful scholar, that he be not suffered to miss the main lesson for which he came into the Divine school: *How to number our days, so make thou known, That we may get a mind that hath wisdom.* The first point to note here is that there is an apprehended *difficulty* in making the desired calculation; and the next is, that Divine *illumination* is sought in order to overcome the difficulty. Let us carefully consider these two points in succession.

The words of this transitional little prayer do properly suppose a difficulty; nor does it seem legitimate to tone down and modify its point. The psalmist does not ask to be guided to apply his mind to a wise object: in other words, he does not say: "Having numbered my days, and easily discovered how frail and shortlived I am, teach me to regulate my life accordingly." It is the wise mind itself which he covets; and he seeks it in a definite way, namely by numbering, and not by means of reflection. It is the *numbering itself* which occasions his difficulty. He wishes to know how to make the successful calculation—how to do the necessary sum. What is it? Is it to find out what is the average duration of human life? But he knows that already. Is it to discover what point he has reached in the scale of possibility? But he can find that out, if he has lost count, by domestic repute or an appeal to the family register. Is it to know, whether he

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personally shall reach the average outside limit? But no amount of *counting* can inform him of that. No man, starting from the known average, can say: "Therefore I have ten or twenty more years to live." And though God could reveal it to him, that is not at all the point of the prayer.

And yet it is true, that it is a revelation—or at least instruction or information—which the psalmist seeks; for he says *Make known*. He clearly, then, wishes to know how to do the successful *numbering*. For this he feels he needs Divine guidance, and hopes for such guidance to be vouchsafed by way of *making known* to him something which at present he does not know, or as to which he feels uncertain.

Put these simple things together, and then see whether the solution will not appear. The psalmist desires a *wise mind*: he hopes to gain it by a process of *numbering*; he humbly seeks *information* that he may do the numbering aright. *What, then, is the information he seeks? What does he need to know?*

The whole psalm is eloquent with the answer. And, first, it is very plain that the psalmist gets his answer: the way in which his tone at once changes and deepens, and he forthwith opens up and boldly carries forward his great prayer against the continued dominion of Death, shews this. The informal way in which the result discloses itself, naturally suggests, that he obtains his answer by immediate—though perhaps unconscious—revelation. The materials for his answer already lie within the area of his mind. He is guided to put them together correctly; and the result is—a REVELATION: the thing he wished to *know* has been made *clear*!

Yes! he may and should take both "returns" into account: the little figures of this life and the large figures of the life to come. His survey must take in, not only the possible *seventy or eighty years*, with the uncertainties and humiliations and sorrows attendant on them, which are occupied in returning to dust, but the *thousands*, the thousands upon thousands, the illimitable *ages of ages* to be entered upon after returning from dust. *Then* and so he will indeed get a *wise mind*. The man who gets no further than the *seventy or eighty years* of this life, may, by thinking and moralising, discover a few stars of prudence twinkling in his midnight sky; but the man who by faith leaps forward into the *renewed life* that is to be, is greeted at once with the effulgence of a sun of Divine Wisdom which illumines all the heaven of his soul, and which will never set.

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A PLEA FOR THE OVERTHROW OF DEATH'S DOMINION (Stanza IV., vers. 13-17). *Oh return thou, Jehovah! how long?* It only needs that this outcry should be interpreted in the light of the context, to perceive its amazing breadth and boldness. It is then seen to mean no less than this: "Return from the anger with which, during generation after generation, thou hast been inflicting death: Reverse thy procedure. Thou hast long been turning frail man to atoms: wilt thou not now, with effect, say—*Come again, ye sons of men?* Thou hast been *flooding them away*: wilt thou not bring them back as a great army? Thou hast been putting them to *sleep*: wilt thou not awaken them? Shall the *iniquities* of our race never be adequately covered? Shall its *secret* shame and wrong never be expiated, by the morning of glory enough to redound to thy praise?"

"*And have compassion on thy servants*, who have all along through these dark ages been serving thee. Pity them for their ill requital—for their unfinished tasks—for the obloquy they have endured. *Satisfy us*: we are hungry for fulfilment. We are longing for the turn of *the morning*. We are looking for the morning of a new day. We are expecting a day in which *thy kindness* shall be as publicly demonstrated as thy *wrath* has been during the long reign of death. Infants have been taken captive by premature removal: shall they never come back from the land of the enemy? Thy servants have been publicly dishonoured: they have fallen asleep unrewarded: shall they never be owned and crowned: We are looking for the morning that shall usher in that new day that shall make us feel we are *but beginning our existence*; being ushered into which, we shall give one long *ringing shout for joy*, and then go forward with *gladness unto length of days*."

Granted, that this is, to some extent, necessarily, imaginary paraphrase: the only serious question is whether, in a form we can understand, it gives embodiment to the *spirit* of this prayer. But let us humbly endeavour to be more logical.

Make us glad, according to the days thou hast humbled us, The years we have seen misfortune. There is here a principle involved, as the ground of petition: it is the principle of proportion. Lest we should lose ourselves if we go so far afield as to keep the ancients in view, such as Noah and Abraham, although we ought to do that,—let us confine ourselves to the outlook of Moses himself. When *he* uses this language, what does he naturally mean? *The days thou hast humbled us*: how

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many have they been? *The years we have seen misfortune:* how long have they now lasted? Let us say, in round numbers: Four hundred years. Well, then, his petition cannot signify less than this: "Make us glad, for four hundred years, in the good land into which thou dost intend to bring us according to the promises made to our fathers." But, after all, is this the rule of proportion between the gracious Jehovah and his loyal servants? Is it simply so much reward for so much suffering? Who can think it, of Him who in the natural world gives to some kernels, cast into the earth, thirty, to some sixty, and to some a hundred fold. Will he who takes four hundred years to form the sons of Israel into an organized nation, be content to give them a four hundred years' run of national prosperity? No such conclusion can commend itself.

Shew unto thy servants thy work. What work has Jehovah in hand in forming this people? Is it not to make of them "a kingdom of priests, a holy nation"? (Exo. 19). And is this work never to be finished? *And thy majesty upon their children.* And will the promised cloud of glory (Isa. 4) never rest upon them? And when it does, will the fathers and founders of the nation not be given to behold the ravishing sight?

And let the delightfulness—surely not for ever, the *anger*, the *wrath*; not merely the *kindness*, though that is bounded only by righteousness and is age-abiding; not alone the majesty, though that is awe-inspiring; but the *delightfulness*, comprehending all the beauty of form that can please the eye, all the sweetness of taste that can suggest entire mental satisfaction. "The delightfulness" of the *Sovereign Lord*—whose governmental designs are receiving satisfying accomplishment: "the Sovereign Lord" *our God*—approving himself to the nations of the earth, as the God of Israel. Let this *be upon us*: not merely "on them." *And the work of our hands.* When the delightfully kind and gloriously majestic Jehovah shews *his* work unto his servants, his servants will be permitted to discover *their own* humble share therein—Moses his leadership and laws, Joshua his victories, David his songs and the like. This work of ours, which thou art pleased to accept as thine own: let it be *established upon us*, both on our children and on ourselves. This is the solidarity—this the fellowship—this the fruition in this abiding kingdom, for which we pray.

In submitting the foregoing as a fair exposition of the 90th psalm, it is deemed proper to guard against extravagant ex-

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pectations, which can only yield disappointment. It should be remembered: That this psalm is poetry, and not didactic teaching, and therefore must be handled with such lightness of touch as allows for figures of speech and dramatic changes of points of view; That this is but a single, very early psalm, which may naturally have left in doubt what subsequent psalms and prophecies have made clear; and especially That it was penned centuries before "light and incorruption were illumined by the Gospel," and hence cannot be expected to have formulated a consecutive account of that great process of Bringing Back from the dust of death the race of mankind which even now is only just begun. It is, however, claimed—and it is for the candid student to judge whether the claim has been made good—that here, thus early in the history of Divine Revelation, the theme of a General Resurrection is effectively broached; and that the Initial Stages of that Resurrection are clearly implied—if, at least, the recall of Jehovah's *Servants* from the dust of death bears any pledging and causal relation to the Bringing Back of the remainders of men. That the uplifting of the Nation of Israel to the high level of their national calling, is to issue in the Birth from the Grave of the nations of the world, is now seen by independent students to be really taught in Isaiah 26 (cp. Ps. 48 end). *Why* Israel has not yet been able to respond to her call; and *why*, therefore, she has not yet wrought such "deliverance in the earth" as awaits her accomplishment, are questions most vitally at issue between Jews and Christians. When Israel finds her Leader in *the Great Return—the Coming Again*—of this psalm, she will further find that He is not only by appointment a sufferer, but that He is also the First, the Chief, the Leader of an illuminating Resurrection from the dead, who proclaims Light to both the people of Israel and to the remaining Nations of the earth. So, at least, we have been taught by a Jew who was also a Christian (in Acts 26:23).

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. The heading of this psalm attributes it to Moses—at what period in his life was it written?
2. Scroggie well says "The psalm falls naturally into three parts, and each of these into two: Part one—1-6; God's Eternity and Man's Frailty. Part two—7-12; Man's sin and God's wrath. Part three—13-17; Frail and Sinful Man's

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appeal to the Eternal God." Compare this with Rotherham's divisions. A great deal of discussion is given to the two uses of the term "return" in vs. 3. Scroggie says: "*Return ye*, may be a parallel thought, *return to dust*, or it may refer to the rise of a new generation, answering to *generations* in verse." How does this compare with Rotherham? Discuss.

3. Does God inflict death? If so why?
4. What is "our secret" which is set up near the lamp of God's face?
5. God hates sin—why?
6. What is "the pivotal prayer" of this psalm?
7. What is "the wisdom" obtained in numbering our day?
8. Read carefully verses 13-17 and relate them to Moses, i.e. as they were written. Discuss.
9. There are some tremendous lessons for living in this psalm. List two or three for discussion.

PSALM 91

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

A Personal Application of the Foregoing Psalm.

ANALYSIS

Prelude, Commending the Initial Sentiment of Moses' Prayer. Stanza I., vers. 2-8, Exhortation to Make this Sentiment One's Own: sustained by Expanding its Implied Promises. Stanza II., vers. 9-13, To One who has Obeyed the Exhortation, a Further Expansion of the Promises is made. Stanza III., vers. 14-16, Jehovah, in Love, Responds to the Love Set Upon Him.

(Lm.—None.)¹

- 1 *How happy² is he that abideth in the hiding-place of the Most High,
in the shadow of the Almighty he tarrieth!—*
- 2 Say thou³ to Jehovah—"My refuge and my fastness,
my God in whom I trust."

1. N.B. according to rule this psalm should immediately follow the foregoing, without break.

2. So *Gt.*—*Gn.*

3. According to change of vowel points advised by Dr., thereby preparing for second person in ver. 3.

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- 3 For he will rescue thee from the trap of the fowler,
from the pestilence that engulfeth :
- 4 With his pinion will he cover thee,
and under his wings shalt thou take refuge,—
a large shield and buckler is his truth.
- 5 Thou shalt not be afraid of the dread of the night,
of the arrow that flieth by day.
- 6 Of the pestilence that in darkness doth walk,
of the destruction that despoileth at noon.
- 7 There may fall at thy side a thousand,
Yea a myriad at thy right hand,—
Unto thee shall it not draw near:
- 8 Only with thine own eyes shalt thou look on,
and the recompense of lawless ones shalt thou see.
- 9 Because thou hast said⁴—"Jehovah is my refuge,"
hast made the Most High thy dwelling-place⁵
- 10 There shall not be suffered to meet thee misfortune,
and plague⁶ shall not draw near in thy tent.⁷
- 11 For his messengers will he charge concerning thee,
to keep thee in all thy ways:
- 12 On their palms will they bear thee up,
lest thou strike against a stone thy foot:
- 13 On reptile⁸ and cobra shalt thou tread,
shalt trample on young lion and serpent.⁹
- 14 "Because on me he hath set his love¹⁰ I will deliver him,
I will set him on high because he hath come to know my
name:
- 15 He shall cry unto me and I will answer him,
with him will I myself be in distress:
I will rescue him and will glorify him.
- 16 With length of days will I satisfy him,
and will content¹¹ him with my salvation."

(Nm.)

4. So *Gt.*

5. As in 90:1.

6. Or: "stroke." Heb. *nega'*. Cp. 38:11 note.

7. Some cod. (w. 1 ear. pr. ed., and Aram.): "tents" (pl.)—Gn.

8. So Br., reading *z-h-l* for *sh-h-l*. M.T.: "lion."

9. Or: "dragon (as devourer), or (sea)- or (river)-monster"—O.G.

10. Or: "to me hath become attached." Cp. 18:1 and Expn.

11. Or (ml.) "saturate." So (*r-w-h*) *Gt.* M.T.: "let him gaze upon
my s."

PSALM 91
PARAPHRASE

PSALM 91

We live within the shadow of the Almighty, sheltered by the God who is above all gods.

2 This I declare, that He alone is my refuge, my place of safety; He is my God, and I am trusting Him.

3 For He rescues you from every trap, and protects you from the fatal plague.

4 He will shield you with His wings! They will shelter you. His faithful promises are your armor.

5 Now you don't need to be afraid of the dark any more, nor fear the dangers of the day;

6 Nor dread the plagues of darkness, nor disasters in the morning.¹

* * * * *

7 Though a thousand fall at my side, though ten thousand are dying around me, the evil will not touch me.

8 I will see how the wicked are punished but I will not share it.

9 For Jehovah is my refuge! I choose the God above all gods to shelter me.

10 How then can evil overtake me or any plague come near?

* * * * *

11 For He orders His angels to protect you wherever you go.

12 They will steady you with their hands to keep you from stumbling against the rocks on the trail.

13 You can safely meet a lion or step on poisonous snakes; yes, even trample them beneath your feet!

14 For the Lord says, "Because he loves Me, I will rescue him; I will make him great because he trusts in My name."

15 When he calls on Me I will answer; I will be with him in trouble, and rescue him and honor him.

16 I will satisfy him with a full life² and give him My salvation."

EXPOSITION

Two things are clear. This psalm is no part of the Prayer of Moses; and yet it was occasioned thereby. All the evidence

1. Literally, "at noonday."

2. Literally, "with long life."

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that confirms the Mosaic authorship of Ps. 90, turns round and rebuts the assumption that Ps. 91 also was written by him. The lonely grandeur is gone. The large outlook has closed. The sweeping comprehensiveness is at an end. And yet a very close *relationship* is evident. The first verse of this psalm might have been written as a label on the previous one; and for a time left in that form; tautological,—probably because incomplete; a mere suggestion to be expanded at a more convenient season. It is as though Samuel, or David, or Hezekiah had just perused afresh his precious treasure, handed down from the great Law-giver; and, impressed with its sublime beauty and power and its fitness to be turned to practical use, had penned on it just the two lines which now open it: which lines, by himself or some other prophetic singer, were afterwards taken up, in *hortatory* mood, not improbably addressed to the fortunate royal possessor himself: Say thou ("O my master"; or, *Say thou, O my soul*)! We thus reach the idea that Ps. 91 is strictly an Appendix to Ps. 90: which hypothesis at once accounts for the fact that it has no inscription above or below. It is quite easy, and not altogether vain, to think—how aptly Nathan may have addressed Stanza I. (vers. 2-8) to his royal master David, or how readily David himself may thus have addressed his own soul—in either case naturally introducing *large shield and* (smaller) *buckler*. It is equally feasible to think of some such poet as Isaiah adding another stanza or two to this Appendix; and, if we could imagine *him* as striking in at ver. 9 with Hezekiah in view,—that would quite well account for the otherwise unaccountable emphasis on the pronoun *thou*! As much as to say: "My royal Master! thine ancestor David full well knew what it was to be preserved from *dread and arrow and pestilence and destruction*—to be saved alone while *thousands were falling by his side*; and he did indeed live to see *recompense falling upon lawless ones*. But *thou*, too, even as he did, hast said, 'Jehovah is my refuge.' Nor shalt THOU be disappointed." Not necessarily vain, are such imaginings, if they hover over the realm of actuality, and rebuke the dry dogmatism that is so very sure that things hinted at could never have happened.

There is probably a further and deeper reason why it cannot be vain to seek to actualise such poetic writings as these; and that is, to check the easy assumption that there can be no fulfilment at all of such promises as these, unless, without break, fulfilment runs steadily on and up to the climax of complete ac-

PSALM 91

complishment. A moment ago, we suddenly pulled up in sight of the word *plague*, remembering that, literally, and for the time, the *plague* did *draw near in the tent* of Hezekiah. Was this Appendix-writer—therefore—dishonored? Surely we have need to follow our Lord's own example, by saying "It is written again!" Yea, it is written again, *in this same Appendix, He shall cry unto me*; and truly Hezekiah *did cry* (2 K. 20:3, Isa. 38:2); *and I will answer him*; and truly Jehovah *did answer* (2 K. 20:5, 6, Isa. 38:4-8): in short, was *with him in distress*—*did rescue*—*did glorify*. Whether the restored monarch was actually *satisfied* with 'his fifteen additional years and *content* with the remainder of his life, history informeth us not. Possibly he was *not*; because nearly all such promises as these have in them an element of extension and expansion ever ready to require more than this life to fill to the full their accomplishment. In other words, *the length of days* of these ancient Hebrew songs is ever crying out—dumbly but really—for Resurrection and Incorruption!

In now taking a retrospect of this psalm, it is extremely important to remark—that its promises are essentially *conditional*: they all depend on actually making the Most High a *refuge*—a *habitation*. The opening inscription of ver. 1 calls for this. So does the injunction of ver. 2. So also does the emphatic and extended reason given in ver. 9. And this condition, be it carefully noted, consists of a living experience: of an intention, carried out; of a believing recognition of the all-encompassing and protecting *presence of the Most High*. And this goes far beyond the heathenish employment of this psalm, or any other formula of words, as a protection from evil. It is not: He that carries in his pocket a piece of paper or parchment containing these words, or any such words. It is not: He that carries these words in his memory: which may be nothing more than a clever feat of formalism. But: He that does the thing described; which cannot mean less than an habitual and believing walk with God. Moreover: He who is walking with God, can neither knowingly step aside from the path of duty; nor, uninvited, make experiments with God. If God really commands his servants to prove him, then doubtless they may obediently respond. Otherwise, they cannot go along that path; because, in the absence of any such Divine challenge, the *prohibition* comes in:—"Thou shalt not put the Lord thy God to the proof." Neither Satan nor the Scientific Doubter has authority to suspend this Divine Prohibition. The

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Almighty does not put his power into commission, to be used at any creature's pleasure. It is well he does not. This is not to deny that there is a charm in the promises of God, but it is to protest that their true charm comes from treating them not as mere charms, but as the living words of a living God.

But this psalm furnishes another lesson: it puts before us, with all the vividness of an object-lesson, the importance of setting the various commands and promises of Scripture side by side, that we may gather their true sense and make of them a legitimate application. The final stanza of this psalm comes before us with an especial appealing force, because it purports to give us Jehovah's own direct words, revealing the response of his love to his servant's love: *Because on me he hath set his love.* Being at the same time the close of the psalm, it is in every way fitting that this stanza should be invested with any explaining and harmonising power needed for practical guidance. From this point of view, note especially, that Jehovah himself prepares his loving servants for the possibility that—after all the promises which have gone before—they may yet come into *distress*. for such a temporary non-fulfilment of his promises, Jehovah holds himself responsible—*with him will I myself be, in distress*. He makes our distresses his own. He bears the burden of his unfulfilled promises. He says: "Wait! and I will more than fulfil them all." And then to Grace he adds *Glory!*

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. "Two things are clear". What are they?
2. Who is the possible author or writer?
3. Why say psalms 91 is an appendix to 90?
4. How was verse 7 made to apply to David? Who applied it?
5. The verses Satan applied to our Lord (Matthew 4:5-7) Rotherham applies to someone else. Who? Why?
6. Rotherham has some good words on the superstitious use of this psalm. What is said? Discuss.

PSALMS 92 to 97

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

A Service of Song for a Sabbath Day.

PSALMS 92 TO 97

ANALYSIS

Psalm 92: Personal Song—Probably by a King.

Psalm 93: Jehovah Proclaimed King.

Psalm 94: Prayer for Vengeance on the Lawless.

Psalm 95: Invitation—"O Come!" "Come in!" Warning: "Harden not your Hearts!"

Psalm 96: The Land called upon to Sing to Jehovah, and to Proclaim his Kingship to the Nations.

Psalm 97: Third Proclamation—Decisive Results, by way of Joy, Fear. Conviction, Shame, Homage, Thanks, Exhortation and Triumph.

PSALM 92

(Lm.) Psalm—Song—For the Sabbath-day.

- 1 It is good to give thanks to Jehovah,
and to make melody¹ unto thy name O Most High!
- 2 To declare in the morning thy kindness,
and thy faithfulness in the nights:²
- 3 With an instrument of ten strings and with a lute,³
with murmuring music⁴ on a lyre.
- 4 For thou hast made me glad Jehovah by thy doings,
in the works of thy hands will I ring out my joy.
- 5 How great have grown thy works Jehovah!
how very deep have been laid thy plans!
- 6 A man that is brutish cannot get to know,
and a dullard cannot understand this:—
- 7 When the lawless bud like herbage,
and all the workers of iniquity have blossomed
It leadeth to their being destroyed for ever.
- 8 But thou art on high⁵ to the ages O Jehovah!
- 9 For lo! thine enemies Jehovah,
For lo! thine enemies shall perish,
scattered abroad shall be all the workers of iniquity.⁶

1. Or: "to sweep the strings."

2. So Dr.; "night-seasons"—Del.; "dark night"—(plural of intensification)—Br.

3. ML.: "with ten and with a lute."

4. "with murmuring sound"—Dr.; "with skilful music"—Del.

5. ML.: "a height." "Exaltedness"—Del.

6. Or: "mischief" ("naughtiness"—Dr.). Cp. 94:4, 16, 23.

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- 10 But thou wilt uplift like those of a wild ox my horn,
I am anointed' with fresh oil;
- 11 And mine eye shall gaze on my watchful foes,
of them that rise up against me as evil-doers mine ears
shall hear,
- 12 The righteous like the palm-tree shall bud,
like a cedar in Lebanon become great.
- 13 Transplanted into the house of Jehovah
in the courts of our God shall they shew buds.
- 14 Still shall they bear fruit in old age,
full of sap and of bloom shall they be:
- 15 To declare that upright is Jehovah,
my Rock with no injustice in him.

(Nm.)

P S A L M 93

(Nm.)

- 1 *Jehovah hath become king*^a—in majesty hath he clothed
himself,
Jehovah hath clothed himself—with strength hath he girded
himself:
surely he hath adjusted^b the world—it shall not be shaken.
- 2 Established is thy throne from of old,¹⁰
from age-past time art thou.
- 3 The streams have lifted up O Jehovah,
the streams have lifted up their voice,
the streams lift up their crashing:
- 4 Beyond the voices of many waters,
more majestic than the breakers of the sea¹¹
Majestic on high is Jehovah.
- 5 Thy testimonies are confirmed with might,
to thy house befitting is holiness,—
O Jehovah! to length of days.

(Nm.)

7. "The passage is doubtful"—O.G.

8. "Is now king"—Del. "Hath proclaimed himself king"—Kp. The same

1 Ch. 16:31; Pss. 47:8, 96:10, 97:1, 99:1; Isa. 24:23, 52:7.

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

10. Ml.: "from then."

11. So Gt.

PSALM 94

(Nm.)

- 1 O GOD of avengings¹² Jehovah!
O GOD of avengings¹² shine forth!
- 2 Lift up thyself thou judge of the earth:
bring back a recompense on the proud.
- 3 How long shall lawless ones Jehovah,
how long shall lawless ones exult?
- 4 They pour forth they speak arrogancy,
vain-glorious are all the workers of iniquity.¹³
- 5 Thy people O Jehovah they crush,
and thine inheritance they humble;
- 6 The widow and the sojourner they slay,
and the fatherless they murder;
- 7 And say—"Yah seeth not,"
and "The God of Jacob perceiveth not."
- 8 Understand ye brutish among the people,
and ye dullards when will ye comprehend?
- 9 He that planteth the ear shall he not hear?
or that fashioneth the eye not look on?¹⁴
- 10 He that correcteth nations not shew what is right,—
he that teacheth men knowledge?
- 11 Jehovah knoweth the devices of men,
for they themselves are a breath!¹⁵
- 12 How happy the man whom thou correctest O Yah,
and out of thy law dost instruct:
- 13 That thou mayest give him rest from the days of misfortune,
till there be digged for the lawless one a pit.
- 14 For Jehovah abandoneth not his people,
and his inheritance doth he not forsake;
- 15 For unto righteousness shall judgment¹⁶ return,
and be following it all the upright in heart.
- 16 Who will rise up for me against evil-doers?

12. Or: "dire vengeance."

13. Or: "mischief." ("Naughtiness"—Dr.), and cp. 92:9 and vers. 16, 23.

14. "Have power of sight"—O.G.

15. Or: "are vapour."

16. Or: "sentence."

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who will make a stand for me against the workers-of iniquity?¹⁷

- 17 Unless Jehovah had been a help to me
soon had sunk into silence my soul!
- 18 If I say—"Slipped hath my foot!"
thy kindness Jehovah! stayeth me.
- 19 In the multitude of my disquieting thoughts¹⁸ within me
thy consolations delight my soul.
- 20 Can the throne of engulfing ruin be allied to thee,
which frameth mischief by statute?¹⁹
- 21 They make a raid on²⁰ the life²¹ of the righteous one,
and innocent blood they condemn.
- 22 Nay! Jehovah hath become for me a lofty retreat,
and my God my rock of refuge.
- 23 Nay! he hath brought back on themselves their iniquity,²²
and through their own evil will he exterminate them,—
exterminate them will Jehovah our God.

(Nm.)

P S A L M 95

(Nm.)

- 1 O Come! let us ring out our joy to Jehovah,
let us shout to the rock of our salvation;²³
- 2 Let us come to meet his face with thanksgiving,
with psalms let us shout unto him.
- 3 For a great GOD is Jehovah,
and a great king above all messengers divine:²⁴
- 4 In whose hand are the recesses²⁵ of the earth,
and the summits of the mountains belong to him:
- 5 Whose is the sea and he made it,
and the dry land his hands formed.

17. Or: "mischief." ("Naughtiness"—Dr.). Cp. ver. 23.

18. As in 139:23.

19. "Under the pretext of right"—Del.

20. "They gather themselves in bands against"—Dr. "They rush in upon"—Del.

21. U.: "soul."

22. Or: "mischief." ("Naughtiness"—Dr.). Cp. ver. 16

23. Dr: "our rock of safety."

24. See 8:5. Heb.: 'elohim.

25. "Lit. places to be explored; cf. Job 38:16"—Dr. Gt.: "distant parts"—Gn.

PSALMS 92 TO 97

- 6 Come in! oh let us bow down and bend low,
oh let us kneel before Jehovah our maker;
- 7 For he is our God,
and we are the people of his hand and the flock of his
shepherding.²⁶
- Today if to his voice ye would but hearken!
- 8 "Do not harden your heart as at Meribah,
as in the day of Massah in the desert:
- 9 When your fathers put me to the proof
tested me although they had seen my work.
- 10 For forty years loathed I that²⁷ generation,
and said—'A people going astray in heart are they,
even they have not known my ways:'
- 11 So that I swear in mine anger,
'Surely they shall not enter into my place of rest!'"
- (Nm.)

P S A L M 96

(Nm.)

- 1 Sing ye to Jehovah a song that is new,
sing to Jehovah all the land:
- 2 Sing to Jehovah bless ye his name,
proclaim the glad-tidings from day to day of his victory:²⁸
- 3 Tell among the nations his glory,
among all the peoples his wondrous works.
- 4 For great is Jehovah and to be highly praised,
Fear inspiring is he above all messengers divine;²⁹
- 5 For all the gods³⁰ of the peoples are nothings,³¹
But Jehovah made the heavens.
- 6 Majesty and state³² are before him,

26. So *Gt. Cp.* 79:13, 100:3. *M.T.*: "people of his shepherding and flock of his hand."

27. So it shd. be (*w. Sep. and Vul.*)—*Gn.*

28. Or: "salvation."

29. *Heb.*: 'elohim. *Cp.* 8:5. Clearly some 'elohim are more than "nothings."

30. *Heb.*: 'elohim. The addition "of all the peoples" is deemed enough to turn the scale in translating.

31. "Nothingnesses"—*Dr.* "Idols"—*Del.* (who thus comments: "nothings and good-for-nothings, without being and of no use.")

32. "Glory and grandeur"—*Del.*

STUDIES IN PSALMS

Strength and beauty³³ are in his sanctuary.

- 7 Ascribe unto Jehovah ye families of the peoples,
ascribe unto Jehovah glory and strength:
- 8 Ascribe unto Jehovah the glory of his name,
bring ye a present³⁴ and come into his courts:³⁵
- 9 Bow down unto Jehovah in the adornment of holiness.³⁶
be in birth-throes³⁷ at his presence all the earth.
- 10 Say among the nations—"Jehovah hath become king:³⁸
Surely he hath adjusted the world, it shall not be shaken,
He will minister judgment unto the peoples with equity."
- 11 Let the heavens be glad and the earth rejoice,
let the sea thunder and the fulness thereof:
- 12 Let the plain exult and all that is therein,
Yea³⁹ let all the trees of the forest ring out their joy:—
- 13 Before Jehovah for he is coming,⁴⁰
for he is coming⁴¹ to judge the earth:
He will judge the world with righteousness,
And peoples with his faithfulness.

(Nm.)

P S A L M 97

(Nm.)

- 1 *Jehovah hath become king*⁴²—let the earth exult,
let the multitude of coastlands rejoice.
- 2 Clouds and darkness are round about him,
righteousness and justice⁴³ are the foundations of his throne:
- 3 Fire before him proceedeth,
and setteth ablaze round about his adversaries.
- 4 His lightings illumined the world,

33. "The word used here denotes glory which is also a decoration or ornament (Is. 60:7, 19)"—Dr.

34. Heb.: *minhak*. "Viz, to secure admission to His presence. Cf. 2 Sam. 8:2, 6, Judg. 3:18 end"—Dr.

35. Some cod. (w. Aram.): "come in before him"—Gn.

36. Cp. 29:2.

37. Cp. 77:16.

38. See 93:1, 97:1, 99:1.

39. So *Gt*.

40. So (participle) Del. "Is come"—Dr. and others.

41. In some cod. this clause is not repeated. Cp. 1 Ch. 16:33—Gn.

42. As in 93:1, 96:10, 99:1.

43. Or: "judgment."