

THE FIFTH BOOK OF THE PSALTER.

This Book, undoubtedly compiled at a period subsequent to the Restoration from the Captivity, probably includes both Psalms of the post-Exilian time, and others of older composition, which for some reason had not previously been used in the regular Temple worship. It contains forty-four Psalms (Ps. cvii.—cl.), nearly a third of the whole Psalter. Of these, fifteen Psalms (cviii.—cx., cxxii., cxxiv., cxxxi., cxxxiii., cxxxviii.—cxl.) are ascribed to David; one (cxxvii.) to Solomon; the rest are anonymous. There are in it two remarkable groups (see *Introduction*, sect. III.)—the GREAT HALLEL (Ps. cxiii.—cxviii.), and the SONGS OF DEGREES (Ps. cxx.—cxxxiv.). The last five Psalms—all Hallelujah Psalms—seem also to form a group, possibly by one hand.

PSALM CVII.

In spite of the division between the Fourth and Fifth Books, it is impossible not to connect this most beautiful Psalm in idea with the Psalms cii.—cvi., which precede it. It is the "Psalm of Life," as Ps. civ. is "the Psalm of Creation," and Ps. cv., cvi. the "Psalms of History." While in all probability suggested by the history of Israel—perhaps mainly by the recent history of the return from the Captivity—it presents to us, first, a magnificent series of pictures of various crises of human life, of the distress which throws men at such times on God in prayer, and of His gracious answer of deliverance; and, next, a more thoughtful contemplation of God's government of the world by blessing and chastisement, by exaltation of the meek and humiliation of the proud. If it speaks especially to Israel, it speaks also to man as man, both in its literal sense and as a parable of the higher spiritual experience of humanity.

Its parts, up to v. 32, are marked by the refrain of thanksgiving, varied in each section to suit the subject. After the opening verse, identical with the first verse of Ps. cvi., it draws successive pictures (*a*), in vv. 2—9, of pilgrims in a barren land of thirst and distress; (*b*), in vv. 10—16, of captives languishing in a captivity, which is the punishment of sin; (*c*), in vv. 17—22, of foolish men, smitten by God's hand with sickness, even unto death; (*d*), in vv. 23—32, of sailors in extremity of danger on the sea; and describes in each case their cry of supplication, answered by a blessing of deliverance from God. Then (*e*), in vv. 33—43 (changing its style to a graver and less poetic strain), it bids men trace thoughtfully God's varied Providence of blessing and chastisement, of trouble and deliverance, and to understand that in all these alike there is "the lovingkindness of the Lord."

vv. 2—7. The first section is evidently suggested by the return of the exiles—"redeemed," "delivered," "gathered from all lands"—in weary and dangerous pilgrimage through the great Eastern desert. The Psalmist may well have felt what he so graphically describes. But the words come home to all human experience—often in their

literal sense—oftener still in application to our pilgrimage through the wilderness of life. Like Israel's first journey through the wilderness (1 Cor. x. 11), this return through a similar experience is typical.

v. 3. *The South*. If the Hebrew text be correct, this is properly "the sea." Evidently the general sense must be as in our version. If so,

PSALM 107.

Confitemini Domino.

O GIVE thanks unto the Lord,
for he is gracious : and his
mercy endureth for ever.

2 Let them give thanks whom
the Lord hath redeemed : and
delivered from the hand of the
enemy ;

3 And gathered them out of the
lands, from the east, and from the
west : from the north, and from
the south.

4 They went astray in the wil-
derness out of the way : and found
no city to dwell in ;

5 Hungry and thirsty : their
soul fainted in them.

6 So they cried unto the Lord
in their trouble : and he delivered
them from their distress.

7 He led them forth by the
right way : that they might go to
the city where they dwelt.

8 O that men would therefore
praise the Lord for his goodness :
and declare the wonders that he
doeth for the children of men !

9 For he satisfieth the empty
soul : and filleth the hungry soul
with goodness.

10 Such as sit in darkness, and
in the shadow of death : being fast
bound in misery and iron ;

11 Because they rebelled a-
gainst the words of the Lord : and
lightly regarded the counsel of the
most Highest ;

12 He also brought down their
heart through heaviness : they
fell down, and there was none to
help them.

13 So when they cried unto the Lord in their trouble : he delivered them out of their distress.

14 For he brought them out of darkness, and out of the shadow of death : and brake their bonds in sunder.

15 O that men would therefore praise the Lord for his goodness : and declare the wonders that he doeth for the children of men !

16 For he hath broken the gates of brass : and smitten the bars of iron in sunder.

17 Foolish men are plagued for their offence : and because of their wickedness.

18 Their soul abhorred all manner of meat : and they were even hard at death's door.

19 So when they cried unto the Lord in their trouble : he delivered them out of their distress.

20 He sent his word, and healed them : and they were saved from their destruction.

21 O that men would therefore praise the Lord for his goodness : and declare the wonders that he doeth for the children of men !

22 That they would offer unto him the sacrifice of thanksgiving : and tell out his works with gladness !

23 They that go down to the sea in ships : and occupy their business in great waters ;

24 These men see the works of the Lord : and his wonders in the deep.

25 For at his word the stormy wind ariseth : which lifteth up the waves thereof.

26 They are carried up to the heaven, and down again to the deep : their soul melteth away because of the trouble.

27 They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man : and are at their wit's end.

28 So when they cry unto the Lord in their trouble : he delivereth them out of their distress.

29 For he maketh the storm to cease : so that the waves thereof are still.

30 Then are they glad, because they are at rest : and so he bringeth them unto the haven where they would be.

31 O that men would therefore praise the Lord for his goodness : and declare the wonders that he doeth for the children of men !

32 That they would exalt him also in the congregation of the people : and praise him in the seat of the elders !

33 Who turneth the floods into a wilderness : and drieth up the water-springs.

34 A fruitful land maketh he barren : for the wickedness of them that dwell therein.

35 Again, he maketh the wilderness a standing water : and water-springs of a dry ground.

36 And there he setteth the hungry : that they may build them a city to dwell in ;

37 That they may sow their land, and plant vineyards : to yield them fruits of increase.

38 He blesseth them, so that they multiply exceedingly : and suffereth not their cattle to decrease.

39 And again, when they are minished, and brought low : through oppression, through any plague, or trouble ;

40 Though he suffer them to be evil intreated through tyrants : and let them wander out of the way in the wilderness ;

41 Yet helpeth he the poor out of misery : and maketh him households like a flock of sheep.

42 The righteous will consider this, and rejoice : and the mouth of all wickedness shall be stopped.

43 Whoso is wise will ponder these things : and they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord.

"the sea" cannot be the Mediterranean, which is always the western boundary, but the Red Sea or Persian Gulf, perhaps as viewed from Babylon.

v. 7. *The city where they dwell.* It should be, as in v. 4, a "city of habitation"—any city of men, contrasted with the desolation of the desert.

vv. 8, 9. The refrain of this Psalm (and of this alone) is beautifully varied at each repetition. Its first verse is always a call to thanksgiving to God for His goodness shewn wondrously to man; the second adapts itself to the subject of each section. Here it naturally looks to God as to Him who "satisfieth men with bread in the wilderness"—the Giver to fainting humanity of strength and refreshment, both for body and soul.

vv. 10—16. The second example of God's goodness is equally suggested by the recent history of Israel. The picture is of a captivity of gloom and severity, brought on by "rebellion against God's Words" (of commandment), and neglect of the "counsel" of His teaching. Out of it He gives deliverance, before which the prison doors and bars fall down. Nothing could describe more accurately the return from the great Captivity—all material obstacles at once giving way, when "the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, king of Persia" (Ezra i. 1). Yet again nothing is clearer than that the words come home to such experience of spiritual bondage as that so terribly described by St. Paul (Rom. vii. 14—25).

v. 16, looking to God as emphatically the Deliverer from bondage, is almost literally coincident with Isa. xlv. 2.

vv. 17—22. In the third section the connection with the history of Israel is not obvious, unless we suppose that there had been some visitation of pestilence among the restored exiles. From the distress of want and the gloom of captivity, it passes on to the anguish of positive affliction—sickness of body and soul, such as the Psalms so often describe—bringing men to the brink of the grave. It paints, therefore, literally a third great form of suffering—metaphorically a third aspect of the power of sin, as not only exhausting and enslaving, but poisoning the life of the soul.

v. 20. *His word*—the word of His deliverance, fulfilling itself, and so personified as a living agent of His will. Naturally Christian thought has recognised here a dim foreshadowing of the true "Word of God."

Destruction should be (more strikingly) "their graves" (comp. Ezek. xxxvii. 13).

vv. 23—32 contain a picture—fuller of detail and more graphic than any other, and almost unique in the Old Testament—of the seafaring experience, so rare in Israel that we only know of it (in connection with the famous Tyrian seamanship) in the reigns of Solomon (1 Kings ix. 26, 27; x. 22) and Jehoshaphat (1 Kings xxii. 48, 49). The sea is, as usual, a terror in its stormy and irresistible might; but God's hand is recognised both in the storm and the calm, which follows His command, "Peace, be still." It seems almost impossible to doubt that the Psalmist draws this terribly vivid picture from his own personal experience (comp. Jonah ii. 2—6), yet here also it is not hard to read a parable of the "sea of troubles" encompassing the soul.

v. 29. *He maketh the storm, &c.*—properly, "He husheth the storm to a gentle air."

v. 32. *That they would exalt Him, &c.* The verse seems to imply the return of the saved mariners to the cities of men, and their thankful recital of the story of their deliverance, both to the crowds of the people, and before the seat of authority.

vv. 33—43 exchange the simplicity of the preceding pictures of God's merciful deliverance for the contrasts in His government of chastisement and mercy—the turning fruitfulness into parched desolation (vv. 33, 34), and the change of the wilderness into a place of fruitfulness and plenty (vv. 35—38)—the pulling down of the mighty oppressor (v. 40), and the deliverance of the afflicted out of oppression.

v. 40. Our Prayer Book version is perhaps a gloss, to bring this verse into closer coherence with the preceding. The translation should be as in A.V. and R.V., "He poureth contempt upon princes, and causeth them to wander in the pathless waste." The verse is identical with

Job xii. 21, and appears (by some abruptness in its insertion here) to be a quotation from that passage. The idea is that of 1 Sam. ii. 7, 8; Luke i. 52. The special application of it is to the interchange of fortune between the oppressed people of God, wandering in the wilderness, and the great ones of the earth, who had been their oppressors.

v. 41. *Maketh him, &c.*—properly, "settles them in families, like

flocks of sheep"—gathers them (that is) out of loneliness and isolation into companionship.

v. 43. *Whoso is wise, &c.* As in the Book of Job, to which this Psalm has many resemblances, the signs of God's government are described as clear, but only to the "wise," thoughtfully pondering what the thoughtless pass by. To them it is notable that the predominant revelation is of mercy and loving-kindness.

PSALM CVIII.

This Psalm, called a "Psalm of David," is made up (with slight variations) from two earlier Psalms ascribed to him, viz., Ps. lvii. 8—12; lx. 5—12. Probably it was an adaptation for Liturgical use, in some later crisis corresponding to the occasion of the original Psalms. Being an exultant Psalm of adoration of God's glory, and triumph in His victory, it has been appropriated as a Psalm of ASCENSION DAY.

v. 9. *Upon Philistia will I triumph* ("shout aloud"). This is the most important variation from

Ps. lx. 8, where it runs, "Philistia, cry thou aloud for me" (see note there).

PSALM CIX.

This Psalm, also ascribed to David, is the last and most terrible of the "Imprecatory Psalms" (xxxv., lxix., cix.), on which see *Introduction*, sect. v. It is evidently directed against some individual leader of the enemies of the Psalmist, not merely on the personal ground of that enmity, but on the moral ground of oppression, cruelty, and malignity; and, terrible as its denunciations are, there certainly runs through them a tone of solemn judicial authority, which made St. Chrysostom describe the Psalm as "prophecy under the form of imprecation." In Acts i. 20, v. 7 (with Ps. lxix. 26) is applied by St. Peter to Judas, as the extreme type of that treacherous outrage against the Righteous of which the Psalm speaks; but there is no reason on that account to treat the Psalm as consciously Messianic. On the contrary, the spirit, which breathes in it, is the spirit of Elias rather than the spirit of Christ—differing widely even from the sternest denunciations of Matt. xxiii. 13—33. By us the Psalm can be used only with the reservations which His Gospel has taught us—directed against the sin, not against the sinner, denouncing our enemies only so far as they are manifestly enemies of God and of good, and desiring retribution on them, simply for their chastisement, and for the encouragement of the servants of righteousness.

The Psalm opens (a), in vv. 1—4, with a cry to God under cruel and unrighteous enmity; then (b), in vv. 5—19, it pours out a series of stern denunciations and anticipations of God's righteous vengeance upon those who persecute the innocent and the helpless; next (c), in vv. 20—25, it turns to a pathetic prayer for deliverance out of the depths of affliction; and ends (d), in vv. 26—30, in confident expectation of an answer to that prayer, which shall bless the good and shame the evil.

v. 1. *O God of my praise.* The expression (with which comp. Deut. x. 21; Jer. xvii. 14, "He is thy praise") is unusual, and especially striking in the affliction and perturbation of the Psalmist. In spite of all, God is still the God whom he praises and will praise for ever.

vv. 2—4. Compare the similar de-

scriptions in Ps. xxxv. 11—16; lxix. 4, 5, 10—12, of mingled hatred and falsehood in the enemies, aggravated by ingratitude against one who had done them nothing but good.

v. 5. *Saton*—probably used, not as a proper name, but simply as "an adversary," standing on the right

hand to accuse. In Zech. iii. 1 we have the same idea, but the word is there used with the article, "the Adversary." The curse against the enemy is that he may have "an ungodly (wicked) man" as his judge, and a successful adversary to accuse him; that accordingly he may be condemned in judgment, and his prayer for mercy be counted a fresh offence; (v. 6) that his life be cut short, and his office be given to another (v. 7).

v. 7. This verse (with lxix. 26) is the one applied by St. Peter to the extreme case of Judas (Acts i. 20). The "office" here is the "charge," of oversight under supreme authority; in the Greek the *Episcope*: hence the rendering in the A.V. "his bishopric."

vv. 8—14 extend this curse, so that (as in Ex. xx. 5) his father's sin may be visited on him (v. 13), and his sin on his children, till the doomed race shall starve in misery, and be cut off root and branch. This visitation of the evil (as of the good) of the father upon the children—in its effect, not (see Ezek. xviii.) in its guilt—is, indeed, a necessary law, coming from the very unity which binds a family together. In all ancient law, this solidarity of responsibility in the family was a fundamental principle. In our Christian civilization the individual is always treated, as far as possible, distinctively. Therefore the prayer that the law of solidarity may be fulfilled to the utmost, extending the desire of vengeance from the guilty to the innocent, is peculiarly that from which Christianity would bid us shrink.

v. 15 shews emphatically that the denunciation is not uttered in mere personal enmity, but is the indignant sense of the oppression, the cruelty, and the malignity, of the enemy.

vv. 16, 17. *It shall happen . . . shall it be far . . . it shall come.* All these should be in the past tense, declaring as an actual fact God's righteous retribution on the wicked, before praying (in vv. 18, 19) that it may be exemplified more and more.

PSALM CX.

This glorious Psalm—by all ancient Jewish interpreters accepted as a Messianic Psalm, distinctly quoted as such by Our Lord Himself to the Pharisees (Matt. xxii. 41; Mark xii. 36; Luke xx. 42), and accordingly applied to Him again and again in the New Testament (Acts ii. 34; 1 Cor. xv. 25; Heb. i. 13; x. 12; 1 Pet. iii. 22)—stands out in contrast with the

v. 17. *He clothed himself, &c.*—the graphic picture of what is implied in our word "habit," but going beyond that metaphor in the idea of actual penetration into the very flesh and bones (as in the old legend of the poisoned robe of Nessus). The whole metaphor thus completed is but too true. Evil habit first changes the outward life of action, then pervades and poisons the inner nature.

vv. 20—23, in an exquisite change of tone, turn from fierceness against unrighteous man to pathetic and trustful rest on the unfailing goodness of God—pleading successively helplessness and anguish (v. 21), transitoriness (v. 22), weakness and suffering (v. 23), desertion and contempt of men (v. 24).

v. 22. *Driven away, &c.*—properly, "tossed away like the locust" on the strong wind (see Ex. x. 19).

v. 23. *Weak through fasting*—the fasting perhaps of penitence, more probably of sickness; as in Ps. cii. 4, "My heart is smitten down . . . so that I forget to eat my bread."

vv. 26—30 are a striking conclusion of perfect confidence; for v. 27 may well be rendered—

"They curse, but Thou blessest;
They stood up, and were ashamed
(by failure);
Thy servant rejoices."

As always, the deliverance of God's servant is not for himself alone; it is proclaimed to the multitude, because it witnesses to God's goodness to them as well as to him.

v. 28. There is an evident allusion to v. 17. The garb of his cursing against others becomes the garb of shame and confusion to himself. The curse returns on his own head.

v. 30. Here also is a contrast with v. 5. God is not, as usual, the righteous Judge. He stoops to be our Advocate, identifying Himself with our cause (comp. Zech. iii. 2). In this it is impossible not to trace a foreshadowing of the great future mystery of Mediation.

DAY 22.

Evening Prayer.

PSALM 108.

Paratum cor meum.

O GOD, my heart is ready, my heart is ready: I will sing and give praise with the best member that I have.

2 Awake, thou lute, and harp: I myself will awake right early.

3 I will give thanks unto thee, O Lord, among the people: I will sing praises unto thee among the nations.

4 For thy mercy is greater than the heavens: and thy truth reacheth unto the clouds.

5 Set up thyself, O God, above the heavens: and thy glory above all the earth.

6 That thy beloved may be delivered: let thy right hand save them, and hear thou me.

7 God hath spoken in his holiness: I will rejoice therefore, and divide Sichem, and mete out the valley of Succoth.

8 Gilead is mine, and Manasses is mine: Ephraim also is the strength of my head.

9 Judah is my law-giver, Moab is my wash-pot: over Edom will I cast out my shoe; upon Philistia will I triumph.

10 Who will lead me into the strong city: and who will bring me into Edom?

11 Hast not thou forsaken us, O God: and wilt not thou, O God, go forth with our hosts?

12 O help us against the enemy: for vain is the help of man.

13 Through God we shall do great acts: and it is he that shall tread down our enemies.

PSALM 109.

Deus laudem.

HOLD not thy tongue, O God of my praise: for the mouth of the ungodly, yea, the mouth of the deceitful is opened upon me.

2 And they have spoken against me with false tongues: they com-

passed me about also with words of hatred, and fought against me without a cause.

3 For the love that I had unto them, lo, they take now my contrary part: but I give myself unto prayer.

4 Thus have they rewarded me evil for good: and hatred for my good will.

5 Set thou an ungodly man to be ruler over him: and let Satan stand at his right hand.

6 When sentence is given upon him, let him be condemned: and let his prayer be turned into sin.

7 Let his days be few: and let another take his office.

8 Let his children be fatherless: and his wife a widow.

9 Let his children be vagabonds, and beg their bread: let them seek it also out of desolate places.

10 Let the extortioner consume all that he hath: and let the stranger spoil his labour.

11 Let there be no man to pity him: nor to have compassion upon his fatherless children.

12 Let his posterity be destroyed: and in the next generation let his name be clean put out.

13 Let the wickedness of his fathers be had in remembrance in the sight of the Lord: and let not the sin of his mother be done away.

14 Let them always be before the Lord: that he may root out the memorial of them from off the earth;

15 And that, because his mind was not to do good: but persecuted the poor helpless man, that he might slay him that was vexed at the heart.

16 His delight was in cursing, and it shall happen unto him: he loved not blessing, therefore shall it be far from him.

17 He clothed himself with cursing, like as with a raiment: and it shall come into his bowels

Messianic Psalms generally in this, that it does not realize the Messiah typically from the Psalmist's own experience, but describes Him from without in the language of direct prophecy. "David in the Spirit calleth Him Lord" (Matt. xxii. 43). (Psalms ii. and xlv. may be in this respect classed with it.) That it is a Psalm of David, according to the traditional ascription, even if it were not assumed necessarily in Our Lord's argument upon it, might have been inferred from the style and thought of the Psalm, from the evident reference to the prophecy of Nathan (2 Sam. vii. 12—14), and from the imagery of the warlike triumph and slaughter of the enemy, naturally drawn out of David's own experience. In the strength of the word of the Lord, proclaimed by Himself, David looks forward prophetically to his Son, who should be also his Lord—priest at once and king for ever—associated with Jehovah Himself upon His Throne. Comp. the great vision of Daniel (Dan. vii. 13, 14). No lower interpretation can be thought of which is not forced and unnatural, even if the New Testament authority could be put out of the question. Hence the Psalm is naturally used as a Psalm of CHRISTMAS DAY, in connection with the prophecies of Isaiah (Isa. vii. 14; ix. 6, 7) in the Proper Lessons.

The Psalm falls into two sections: (a), in vv. 1—3, the first oracle of Jehovah to "the Lord," as an exalted King, and the comment of the Psalmist, describing the promised kingdom over unwilling enemies and willing subjects; (b), in vv. 4—7, the second oracle of Jehovah on the Priesthood of the future king, followed by a second description, in more vivid detail, of triumph over all enemies.

v. 1. *The Lord (Jehovah) said unto my Lord (Adonai).* The clear understanding of this verse is obscured to the English reader by the unfortunate use of the word "Lord," both for the supreme name *Jehovah* and the more general title of Lordship, *Adonai*. The word "said" is the word always used of the Divine utterance to the prophets. There seems an obvious allusion to the oracle of the Lord, given through Nathan (2 Sam. vii. 12—16), of the perpetual kingdom of the Son of David, to which the succeeding words of this verse are a virtual equivalent.

On my right hand—the place of honour (as in 1 Kings ii. 19; Ps. xlv. 10)—in this case obviously from the context implying an assumption of the Messiah into the Divine royalty, similar to that described in relation to the "Son of Man" in Dan. vii. 13.

Until I make, &c. The original conception of the Psalmist is clearly of a victorious kingdom, centred (see v. 2) in Zion. St. Paul's explanation of its full Messianic meaning in relation to all humanity is given in 1 Cor. xv. 28, "When all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him, that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all." The Mediatorial kingdom here described is to pass after the Great Day into

some still higher dispensation of God.

v. 3 should probably be rendered—

"In the day of Thy might Thy people offer themselves freely
In the vestments of holiness;
As from the womb of the morning
Is the (copious) dew of Thy youth
(young men).

As verse 2 describes the victory of the "rod (sceptre) of the king's power" over his foes, so this verse describes the glad offering of themselves by His people as warriors, yet clad in the robes of holiness (like the armies of the Apocalypse in Rev. xix. 14; comp. Isa. xiii. 3, 4). They come, innumerable and fresh in inexhaustible strength, as dewdrops from "the womb of the morning."

v. 4 adds a new oracle of the Lord Jehovah—"confirmed (see Heb. vi. 13—20) by an oath," as in the covenant with Abraham (Gen. xxii. 16, 17)—investing the Messiah not only with royalty, but with the royal priesthood, "after the order of Melchizedek," the priestly king of Salem (Gen. xiv. 18—20). David himself, as at the bringing up of the Ark, and Solomon, as at the consecration of the Temple, had some shadow of the priestly office, typical of that priesthood of Melchizedek in the Messiah, on which Heb. vii. is the inspired commentary, bringing out both its mysterious significance of

like water, and like oil into his bones.

18 Let it be unto him as the cloke that he hath upon him : and as the girdle that he is alway girded withal.

19 Let it thus happen from the Lord unto mine enemies : and to those that speak evil against my soul.

20 But deal thou with me, O Lord God, according unto thy Name : for sweet is thy mercy.

21 O deliver me, for I am helpless and poor : and my heart is wounded within me.

22 I go hence like the shadow that departeth : and am driven away as the grasshopper.

23 My knees are weak through fasting : my flesh is dried up for want of fatness.

24 I became also a reproach

unto them : they that looked upon me shaked their heads.

25 Help me, O Lord my God : O save me according to thy mercy ;

26 And they shall know, how that this is thy hand : and that thou, Lord, hast done it.

27 Though they curse, yet bless thou : and let them be confounded that rise up against me ; but let thy servant rejoice.

28 Let mine adversaries be clothed with shame : and let them cover themselves with their own confusion, as with a cloke.

29 As for me, I will give great thanks unto the Lord with my mouth : and praise him among the multitude ;

30 For he shall stand at the right hand of the poor : to save his soul from unrighteous judges.

DAY 23.

Morning Prayer.

PSALM 110.

Dixit Dominus.

THE Lord said unto my Lord : Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.

2 The Lord shall send the rod of thy power out of Skon : be thou ruler, even in the midst among thine enemies.

3 In the day of thy power shall the people offer thee free-will offerings with an holy worship : the dew of thy birth is of the womb of the morning.

4 The Lord swear, and will not repent : Thou art a Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

5 The Lord upon thy right hand : shall wound even kings in the day of his wrath.

6 He shall judge among the heathen ; he shall fill the places with the dead bodies : and smite in sunder the heads over divers countries.

7 He shall drink of the brook in the way : therefore shall he lift up his head.

PSALM 111.

Confitebor tibi.

I WILL give thanks unto the Lord with my whole heart : secretly among the faithful, and in the congregation.

2 The works of the Lord are great : sought out of all them that have pleasure therein.

3 His work is worthy to be praised, and had in honour : and his righteousness endureth for ever.

4 The merciful and gracious Lord hath so done his marvellous works : that they ought to be had in remembrance.

5 He hath given meat unto them that fear him : he shall ever be mindful of his covenant.

6 He hath shewed his people the power of his works : that he may give them the heritage of the heathen.

7 The works of his hands are verity and judgment : all his commandments are true.

8 They stand fast for ever and ever : and are done in truth and equity.

9 He sent redemption unto his

eternal righteousness and peace, and its absolute superiority to the Levitical priesthood. That royal priesthood, which was in degree the privilege of all Israel (Ex. xix. 9; 1 Pet. ii. 9), is concentrated in perfection upon the Messiah.

v. 5. *The Lord (Adonai) upon thy right hand.* It is difficult to say whether this is to be applied (with most authorities) to the Lord Jehovah, according to its general use, or to the exalted Lord (*Adonai*) of v. 1. In favour of the former is the common use of *Adonai* and the preservation of the application of the word "Thy," as in the rest of the Psalms, to the Messiah; in favour of the latter the repetition of the phrase, "on Thy right hand," in the sense in which it is used in v. 1, and the better coherency with v. 6, 7.

In either case vv. 5-7 return to the description of the victorious king-

dom of the Messiah over "kings" and "heads of countries," and the destruction of all who rise against it (comp. Ps. ii. 9, 12). The imagery is naturally suggested by the experience of David as a man of war and blood; for its fulfilment we look not to the First Advent of the Son of David in peace and salvation, but to the Second Advent of Judgment (see Rev. xiv. 19, 20; xix. 11-18), completing the victorious progress, which "puts all things under His feet."

v. 7. *He shall drink, &c.* The obvious idea is of the victorious pursuer, staying only to drink hastily, and then continuing the pursuit. But perhaps there is suggested also the notion of condescension to the wayside brook, of which the humblest might drink, as the means of "lifting up His head" for ever (comp. Phil. ii. 9, 10; Heb. ii. 9; xii. 2, &c.).

PSALM CXI.

This Psalm stands in close connection with Ps. cxii. Both are "Hallelujah Psalms," beginning with a Hallelujah, omitted in our Prayer Book version, and may be considered as introductory to the GREAT HALLEL, cxiii.—cxviii. (see *Introduction*). Both are strictly acrostic, not (as usual) in successive verses, but in successive clauses. Both are of a thoughtful and meditative cast, resembling in tone, and often in expression, the Book of Proverbs. Probably they are of late date and of common authorship. As a thanksgiving for the Eternal Covenant of redemption, this Psalm is made a Proper Psalm for EASTER DAY.

The alphabetical arrangement interferes with sectional division. But after the introductory verse we may trace (a), in vv. 2-6, the adoration of the greatness of God's works, especially shewn in His visible care for His people and His conquest of the land of Canaan for them; (b), in vv. 7-10, of the righteousness of His works in the eternal Law and unfailing Covenant which He has revealed.

v. 1. *Secretly among the faithful*—properly, "in the (private) assembly of the faithful," distinguished, by an unusual distinction, from the congregation as a whole.

v. 2. *Sought out*—that is, "searched into" by serious thought. The natural delight in God's works is in germ the best incentive to such thoughtful search, and in fuller measure its sufficient reward. To it alone their greatness is so revealed, as to call forth praise and honour to the Creator.

v. 3. *His righteousness.* It is on the greatness and wondrousness of God's work that the main stress is laid in this verse and the next; but not even for a moment are these thought of in the Psalms, or in the Old Testament

generally, except in relation to His higher moral attributes of righteousness and compassion.

v. 4, as here rendered, is an explanatory paraphrase of the original—

"He hath made a memorial of His wondrous works;
Gracious and full of compassion
is the Lord."

vv. 5, 6 evidently allude specially to the history of Israel. The word "meat" is properly "prey" or "spoil," but is often used in the general sense of "food." The former verse may therefore probably refer to the miraculous food of the wilderness, as the latter evidently refers to the conquest of Canaan.

vv. 7-9 dwell explicitly on the higher aspect of God's works, al-

ready touched upon in vv. 3, 4. To all men they are "faithful" ("true") and "endure for ever," because "done in truth and equity," being, indeed, the eternal standard of both. To Israel they embody themselves in the promised "redemption" of His people and the covenant "commanded for ever."

v. 10. *The fear of the Lord, &c.*—the motto of the Book of Proverbs (Prov. i. 7; ix. 10). In Job xviii. 28 and Eccles. xii. 13 the fear of the Lord is itself wisdom, and "the whole duty of man." Here more accurately the fear of God, keeping His revealed

commandments, is the key to "wisdom,"—that is, to the knowledge of the true end and purpose of the life which He gives and orders for man.

A good understanding, &c. Comp. John vii. 17, "If any man will do His will, he shall know," &c. By doing His will, so far as we know it, we come to know it, and understand it more and more.

The praise of it—properly, "His praise"—the glory of God, not in itself, but as recognised by man through the growing knowledge here described.

PSALM CXII.

This Psalm, the companion to Ps. cxii., describes—much in the tone of the Book of Job or the Book of Proverbs—the character and fortunes of one who lives in the knowledge and adoration of God, described in that Psalm. It is simply the personal embodiment of the general principle.

As in Ps. cxii. the alphabetical arrangement makes sectional division difficult. But the Psalm seems to dwell (a), in vv. 1-4, on the visible blessing on the godly man of prosperity and light; (b), in vv. 5-7, on the goodness and graciousness of his character, as bringing safety and confidence in trouble; (c), in vv. 8-10, on his triumph over the unavailing enmity of the wicked.

v. 1. *He hath, &c.*, should be, "that hath"; adding to the fear of God the higher spirit which loves and so "delights in His commandments,"—the spirit so largely expressed in Ps. cxix.

vv. 2-4 describe (much as in Job v. 19-27; xi. 13-19; Ps. xxxvii. 23-37, &c.) the temporal happiness, and light even through darkness, shed upon the path of godliness. This is, of course, the natural order; for godliness is obedience to the law of our being. That it is not perfectly carried out is the main teaching of the Book of Job; but the imperfection comes simply from the contradiction of sin, in the godly man himself needing chastisement, in the wicked hating and persecuting godliness. Still, however imperfect in its fulfilment here, the law remains true, and will be in the end perfectly vindicated.

v. 4. *He is merciful, &c.* The words "he is" are not in the original, and the phrase, as interpreted in our version, comes in abruptly. It is not improbable that the words "merciful, loving, and righteous," elsewhere mostly applied to God, should be so applied here—"There ariseth up light in the darkness—He who is

merciful," &c. (comp. Ps. xxvii. 1, "The Lord is my light").

v. 5. *A good man, &c.* This should be, "Happy is he who is merciful," &c. The stress laid here and in v. 9 (as also in Ps. xxxvii. 21, 26; Job xxix. 11-13; xxxi. 16-20) on mercy to the poor—both in lending (without usury, as commanded in Ex. xxii. 25; Deut. xxiii. 19, 20), and in giving—is especially characteristic of the morality of the Old Testament, as afterwards of the New. The recognition of God as a God of mercy necessarily exalts the quality of mercy in the conception of human goodness, as co-ordinate with righteousness, if not a diviner thing still. The principle is that of Eph. iv. 32, "Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

Will guide his words, &c., should be, "He will maintain His cause in judgment." The idea, continued in the next verse, is that he shall emerge successfully from trial, unshaken and established in grateful remembrance of men (comp. James ii. 12), and therefore triumphing over his enemies.

vv. 7, 8. The ground of his con-

fidence, however, is not in man, but in God, though He may work through men's gratitude and reverence. To shew mercy is to fulfil God's Law, and to be like Him; such obedience must maintain righteousness and secure exaltation in glory.

v. 9 is quoted in 2 Cor. ix. 9, in St. Paul's exhortation to Christian liberality, with the same emphatic reference to the blessing of God upon it.

PSALM CXIII.

This Psalm is the first of a group of Hallelujah Psalms (cxiii.—cxviii.), commonly called the GREAT HALLEL—although some Jewish authorities give that name to Ps. cxxxvi.—sung at the three great Festivals, the New Moons, and the Feast of Dedication. All are anonymous, and probably belong to the period of the Restoration from Exile. At the Passover Ps. cxiii., cxiv. were sung before the second festal cup, and Ps. cxv.—cxviii. after the filling of the fourth cup "after supper," as by Our Lord and His Apostles (Matt. xxvi. 30; Mark xiv. 26). It will be seen that, while all are Psalms of Thanksgiving to the God of Israel, each has its own special phase of significance.

This Psalm, after (a) the introduction of praise offered to the Lord everywhere and for ever (vv. 1—3), goes on (b) (in vv. 4—8) to dwell especially on His condescension to the lowly, in a strain remarkably resembling the Song of Hannah (1 Sam. ii. 1—10) and the *Magnificat*, of which that song probably suggested the language. The reference may especially be to Israel, as lowly in itself, yet exalted in spiritual dignity above the proudest nations of the world (see v. 4). But the words are general, applying to humanity as such, both in individual and in corporate life. Hence the use of the Psalm on EASTER DAY, in commemoration of the glorification of Him who had stooped to the great humility.

v. 1 should be (as in A.V. and R.V.), "Praise, O ye servants of the Lord—praise the Name of the Lord."

vv. 2, 3. The emphasis laid on the praise of the Lord, as offered through all ages, and from the rising to the setting of the sun, is an anticipation of the promise running through Prophecy and brightening in its later books (see, for example, Isa. ii. 2—5; xl. 9; Mic. iv. 1—5; Hab. ii. 14; Mal. i. 11, &c.). At the era of the restoration from the Captivity, to which this Psalm probably belongs, the diffusion of the knowledge of the God of Israel to the heathen had already begun.

v. 4. *All heathen* should be, "all nations" of humanity; *the heavens* may therefore be taken (as the parallelism suggests) for the hosts of heaven. The Lord is exalted equally over men and angels.

PSALM CXIV.

This most striking Psalm is simply an adoring reminiscence of the creation of the nation of Israel by the strength of God's miraculous power, in that Exodus which is so constantly paralleled with the return from Captivity. It glances (a), in vv. 1—6, successively at the division of

v. 10. The one jarring note in the music of the Psalm (anticipated in vv. 7, 8) is the enmity of the wicked, gnashing the teeth (comp. Ps. xxxv. 16; xxxvii. 12) in hatred, both of goodness itself and of the favour which it wins. Yet even this discord is to be futile and transitory—perhaps even bringing out more strikingly the harmony which it seeks to break.

v. 5. *Yet humbleth himself, &c.* There is a striking significance in the fact, that heaven and earth are not here contrasted (as usual), but placed on the same level, immeasurably below the majesty of God (comp. Job iv. 18; xv. 15; xxv. 5). The sense of His infinite greatness is the source of adoration; in the sense of His condescension to His creatures lies the secret of love.

vv. 6, 7 are a quotation from the Song of Hannah (1 Sam. ii. 8); v. 8 (not unlike 1 Sam. ii. 5) seems to clench the quotation by allusion to her history. The whole is evidently applied to the "daughter of Israel," exalted out of the dust and mire of her discredited captivity, and fruitful after her desolation in a multitude of children (comp. Isa. xlix. 20—23).

people: he hath commanded his covenant for ever; holy and reverend is his Name.

10 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do thereafter; the praise of it endureth for ever.

PSALM 112.

Beatus vir.

BLESSED is the man that feareth the Lord: he hath great delight in his commandments.

2 Hisseed shall be mighty upon earth: the generation of the faithful shall be blessed.

3 Riches and plenteousness shall be in his house: and his righteousness endureth for ever.

4 Unto the godly there ariseth up light in the darkness: he is merciful, loving, and righteous.

5 A good man is merciful, and lendeth: and will guide his words with discretion.

6 For he shall never be moved: and the righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance.

7 He will not be afraid of any evil tidings: for his heart standeth fast, and believeth in the Lord.

8 His heart is established, and will not shrink: until he see his desire upon his enemies.

9 He hath dispersed abroad, and

given to the poor: and his righteousness remaineth for ever; his horn shall be exalted with honour.

10 The ungodly shall see it, and it shall grieve him: he shall gnash with his teeth, and consume away; the desire of the ungodly shall perish.

PSALM 113.

Laudate, pueri.

PRAISE the Lord, ye servants of the Lord: praise the Name of the Lord.

2 Blessed be the Name of the Lord: from this time forth for evermore.

3 The Lord's Name is praised: from the rising up of the sun unto the going down of the same.

4 The Lord is high above all heathen: and his glory above the heavens.

5 Who is like unto the Lord our God, that hath his dwelling so high: and yet humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven and earth?

6 He taketh up the simple out of the dust: and lifteth the poor out of the mire;

7 That he may set him with the princes: even with the princes of his people.

8 He maketh the barren woman to keep house: and to be a joyful mother of children.

DAY 23.

Evening Prayer.

PSALM 114.

In exitu Israel.

WHEN Israel came out of Egypt: and the house of Jacob from among the strange people,

2 Judah was his sanctuary: and Israel his dominion.

3 The sea saw that, and fled: Jordan was driven back.

4 The mountains skipped like rams: and the little hills like young sheep.

5 What aileth thee, O thou sea, that thou fleddest: and thou Jordan, that thou wast driven back?

6 Ye mountains, that ye skipped like rams: and ye little hills, like young sheep?

7 Tremble, thou earth, at the presence of the Lord: at the presence of the God of Jacob;

8 Who turned the hard rock into a standing water: and the flint-stone into a springing well.

PSALM 115.

Non nobis, Domine.

NOT unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy Name give the praise: for thy loving mercy, and for thy truth's sake.

2 Wherefore shall the heathen say: Where is now their God?

the Red Sea as its beginning, the drying up of the Jordan as its close, the mountains trembling before the presence of the Lord, and the rock riven at His word; and then (b), in *vv.* 7, 8, bids the earth tremble, as of old, before the same God of Jacob.

Applied metaphorically to the deliverance from the bondage of sin to the spiritual life on earth—entered through the waters of Baptism (see 1 Cor. x. 2), closed by the passage through the Jordan of death into the heavenly Canaan—conquering earthly power by the in-dwelling presence of God, and “drinking of the spiritual Rock which is Christ” (1 Cor. x. 4)—it is naturally used as a Psalm of EASTER DAY.

v. 1. *Strange people*—properly (as in A.V.), “people of a strange language.”

v. 2. *His sanctuary*. This is evidently poetic anticipation of the future glory of Judah, already promised as his birthright (Gen. xlix. 10). Israel is simply the kingdom of the Lord; Judah the shrine of His special presence.

v. 3. The allusions to the two great miracles have a vivid exactness. The sea “fled” before the strong wind, which was the breath of the Lord (Exod. xiv. 21; xv. 10); Jordan was dried up by the checking of the upper waters, which “stood and rose up upon an heap” (Josh. iii. 16).

v. 4 alludes probably to the manifestation of God on Mount Sinai (Exod. xix. 18), before which not only the mountain itself, but the lower heights surrounding it are seen to quake. But the figure is common in all references to God’s manifested presence (comp. Ps. xviii. 7; xxix. 6; Amos ix. 5; Mic. i. 4; Nah. i. 5, &c.).

v. 8 refers, of course, to the miracles of Exod. xvii. 6; Num. xx. 11. The call to the earth to tremble still before God, shews that the Psalmist realizes, as still present, the old miraculous gifts of the God of Jacob. What He was of old to His people, He will be again.

PSALM CXV.

This splendid Psalm—the famous *Non nobis Domine*—seems to carry on the idea of the preceding Psalms—the distinction of God’s chosen people, blessed and delivered by Him, from the nations around them. But it emphasizes this by what is characteristic, as it is most natural, in the Psalms of the Restoration—a scornful denunciation of the idolatry of the heathen (comp. Ps. xevi. 5; xvii. 7; cxxxv. 15–18); and contrasts with it the reality of the knowledge and the blessing of the true God.

It falls readily into sections, perhaps taken up alternately by priests and people in Liturgical use: (a), in *vv.* 1–8, a pleading of the whole congregation with God to vindicate His majesty over the nullity of the heathen idolatry; then (b), in *vv.* 9–11, a song of trustful faith from the Levites and the people; answered (c), in *vv.* 12–15, by the promise of blessing to Israel, uttered (probably by the high priest) in the Name of the Lord; and (d), lastly, in *vv.* 16–18, a responsive chorus of thanksgiving and praise.

vv. 1, 2—pleading with God, not for His people’s sake, but for “His Name’s sake” (comp. Ps. xxv. 10; xxxi. 3; lxiv. 10, 18, 21; lxxix. 9; cix. 21, &c.)—quote (in *v.* 2) the very words of earlier Psalm and Prophecy (Ps. xlii. 13; lxxix. 10; Joel ii. 17). The reliance is always not only on God’s mercy, but on His “truth,” as pledged to the covenant with Israel.

v. 3. *He is in heaven* is the answer to the wondering question of those who cannot worship the Invisible. His glory, seen only by faith, is contrasted with the carnal visible presence of the idol. The title “the

God of heaven” is especially applied to Him, both by Israelites and by heathen, in the era of the Captivity (Ezra i. 2; v. 11, 12; vi. 9; vii. 12, 23; Neh. i. 4; ii. 4; Dan. ii. 18, 19, 44).

vv. 4–8 (repeated almost exactly in Ps. cxxxv. 15–18) breathes the very spirit of the later portion of the Book of Isaiah (see especially Isa. xli. 6, 7, 24, 29; xlv. 9–20)—expanding that which is implied in the application of the word “vanities” to the idols of the heathen (Deut. xxxii. 21; 1 Kings xvi. 13, 26; Jer. viii. 19). Idolatry is viewed, not with loathing, but with scorn, as a sense-

3 As for our God, he is in heaven: he hath done whatsoever pleased him.

4 Their idols are silver and gold: even the work of men’s hands.

5 They have mouths, and speak not: eyes have they, and see not.

6 They have ears, and hear not: noses have they, and smell not.

7 They have hands, and handle not; feet have they, and walk not: neither speak they through their throat.

8 They that make them are like unto them: and so are all such as put their trust in them.

9 But thou, house of Israel, trust thou in the Lord: he is their succour and defence.

10 Ye house of Aaron, put your trust in the Lord: he is their helper and defender.

11 Ye that fear the Lord, put your trust in the Lord: he is their helper and defender.

12 The Lord hath been mindful of us, and he shall bless us: even he shall bless the house of Israel, he shall bless the house of Aaron.

13 He shall bless them that fear the Lord: both small and great.

14 The Lord shall increase you more and more: you and your children.

15 Ye are the blessed of the Lord: who made heaven and earth.

16 All the whole heavens are the Lord’s: the earth hath he given to the children of men.

17 The dead praise not thee, O Lord: neither all they that go down into silence.

18 But we will praise the Lord: from this time forth for evermore. Praise the Lord.

DAY 24.

Morning Prayer.

PSALM 116.

Dilexi, quoniam.

I AM well pleased: that the Lord hath heard the voice of my prayer;

2 That he hath inclined his ear unto me: therefore will I call upon him as long as I live.

3 The snares of death compassed me round about: and the pains of hell gat hold upon me.

4 I shall find trouble and heaviness, and I will call upon the Name of the Lord: O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul.

5 Gracious is the Lord, and righteous: yea, our God is merciful.

6 The Lord preserveth the simple: I was in misery, and he helped me.

7 Turn again then unto thy rest, O my soul: for the Lord hath rewarded thee.

8 And why? thou hast delivered my soul from death: mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling.

9 I will walk before the Lord: in the land of the living.

10 I believed, and therefore will I speak; but I was sore troubled: I said in my haste, All men are liars.

11 What reward shall I give unto the Lord: for all the benefits that he hath done unto me?

12 I will receive the cup of salvation: and call upon the Name of the Lord.

13 I will pay my vows now in the presence of all his people: right dear in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.

14 Behold, O Lord, how that I am thy servant: I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid; thou hast broken my bonds in sunder.

15 I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving: and will call upon the Name of the Lord.

16 I will pay my vows unto the Lord, in the sight of all his people: in the courts of the Lord’s house, even in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem. Praise the Lord,

less worshipping of a senseless thing. For even if in the first instance the idol is but a symbol, all experience shews that it becomes to the mass of men substantially an object of worship.

vv. 9, 10 seem to form a responsive anthem, the first clauses of the two verses alternating between priests and people, while the burden, "He is," &c., and the whole of *v.* 11, are sung in full chorus. It is at once a mutual exhortation to trust in the Lord, and a common expression of such trust.

vv. 12—15 form the answer (probably by the high priest) to this utterance of Levites and people.

vv. 12, 13 correspond exactly to *vv.* 9—11, in the confident promise of blessing to "the house of Israel," "the house of Aaron," and to both together, as "those who fear the Lord"; and *vv.* 14, 15 go down to the ground of this confidence, in the promise that the seed of Abraham

shall be "increased" as the stars of heaven (Gen. xv. 5), and the solemn covenant, in which Israel is already "the blessed of the Lord."

v. 17 seems to come in as a discord in the final hymn of praise. The dim and dreary idea of the condition of the dead as of those who (so far as we know) have no scope for the praise and service of God—closely resembling Ps. lxxxviii. 4, 10—12; Isa. xxxviii. 18, 19—belongs to the twilight of the Old Testament, as contrasted with the full light of the New; and even there must be read in contrast with such gleams of bright faith as Ps. xvi. 10—12; xvii. 16. But it is at least probable that the reference here may be metaphorical—contrasting, as in the celebrated passage in Ezekiel (xxxvii. 12—14), the new life of the restoration "calling God's people out of their graves," with the dreary deadness of exile and exclusion from His favour.

PSALM CXVI.

This Psalm, although one of the Hallel group, and ending with the Hallelujah, differs much from those going before; first, in having its rejoicing more chequered by remembrances of past sorrow and danger, and next in exchanging the collective expression of national thanksgiving for a strong individuality of personal experience. It is a thanksgiving of great pathos and beauty, from one who has been brought out of sorrow and pain, and rescued from danger of death. (Hence its use in our Service for the CHURCHING OF WOMEN.) A Jewish tradition refers it to Hezekiah, whose experience it would well suit; and this tradition has been supported by tracing verbal resemblances between it and Isa. xxxvii., xxxviii. Against it, however, is the existence of Aramaisms in the Psalm, indicating a later date, probably referring it, like other Psalms of this group, to the era of the restoration from Captivity.

First (*a*), in *vv.* 1—9, the Psalm dwells on the remembrance of past trouble and danger, and the grateful joy in deliverance; next (*b*), in *vv.* 10—16, it contrasts the vanity of all earthly reliance with the graciousness of God's salvation, and, asking what return can be made to Him, breaks out into the vow of thankfulness and devotion as the only return which man can make or God accept. (In the LXX. translation the two sections (*a*) and (*b*) are made two distinct Psalms.)

v. 1. *I am well pleased, &c.*, should be (as in A.V. and R.V.), "I love (the Lord), for the Lord heareth," &c. On the belief in God's gracious love to the soul, hearing its supplication, and on this alone, can any possibility of love, as distinct from fear or adoration, be based. "Thou that hearest prayer, to Thee shall all flesh come."

vv. 3, 4. Comp. Ps. xviii. 3—5, of which these verses are almost a quotation.

v. 4. *I shall find, &c.*, is a most unfortunate error. The right rendering (as in A.V. and R.V.) is, "I found" . . . "I called," describing the sorrowful past, now exchanged for deliverance and joy, in answer to the prayer uttered, *O Lord, I beseech Thee, deliver my soul.*

v. 7. *Turn again to thy rest.* God Himself is the rest of the believer. He had seemed afar off, and so the soul wandered; now He is revealed

in graciousness, and the soul "returns" to Him in infinite relief.

Rewarded thee should be (as in A.V. and R.V.), "dealt bountifully with thee." The Psalmist pleads no human desert, but simply his own need and God's goodness, delivering him (see *v.* 8) from death, sorrow, and sin.

v. 9. Comp. Ps. xxvii. 15; lvi. 13. The contrast is, as so often, between the land of the living, which we know, and the unknown mystery of Hades. So in Ps. lxxxviii. 10—12; cxv. 17. Compare the words of Hezekiah's thanksgiving (in Isa. xxxviii. 18, 19).

v. 10. *I believed, &c.* This is the version of the LXX. (adopted in 2 Cor. iv. 13). But the true rendering seems to be, "I believed, when I spake," referring apparently to the trustful declaration of *v.* 9. The Psalmist's faith was troubled but not destroyed by the experience of sorrow and faithlessness of man, which follows.

In my haste (comp. Ps. xxxi. 24)—in that sweeping and precipitate generalisation of bitter experience, despairing of humanity, which is a sign of our own human frailty.

vv. 11, 12. There is in these verses an exquisite beauty of idea. The impulse of thankfulness is to desire to make return for what we have

received from God. But the one return is to receive more, and that with deeper thankfulness; only after this leading on to the vow of self-devotion. In relation to man, it is more blessed to give; in relation to God, to receive. In this belief lies the whole conception of "salvation by grace." Out of it grows the glad sacrifice of *v.* 15.

v. 12. *The cup of salvation.* In itself this is only a natural metaphor (comp. Ps. xvi. 5; xxiii. 5, &c.). But in the Paschal use of the Psalm there seems clear allusion to "the cup of blessing" (Matt. xxvi. 27; 1 Cor. x. 16) at the feast.

v. 13. *Right dear, &c.* The words come in somewhat abruptly, but are connected with the verse following, "Behold, Lord," &c., which pleads for a place among His true servants. The death of God's saints is to Him no light thing; only when it is good does He suffer it, and then it is more precious than even the service of life. The verse was sung at funerals in the early Church (Apost. Const. vi. 30).

vv. 15, 16. In these verses (compared with *vv.* 12, 13) there is the natural reiteration of thankful joy. But the Psalmist now goes on to desire his thanksgiving to be a witness of God's goodness to others. Hence the emphasis on the presence of "His people," and the "courts of His house."

PSALM CXVII.

This short Psalm is itself a kind of doxology, beginning and ending with the Hallelujah. Its speciality (on account of which it is evidently quoted in Rom. xv. 11) is the call to all the nations to praise God, for the manifestation of His mercy and truth to Israel; because this, being a revelation of His true Nature, declares His dealing with all His creatures (comp. Ps. cxv. 1). Israel was (so to speak) a trustee of blessing for "all the families of the earth."

PSALM CXVIII.

This magnificent Hosanna Psalm is obviously a Psalm of solemn entrance into the Temple on some great Festival (see *vv.* 19, 20, 24). In the ritual of the Second Temple it was appropriated to the Feast of Tabernacles; the Hosanna of *v.* 25 was then sung on compassing the altar; the seventh day of the feast was expressly named "the great Hosanna," and even the palm branches borne on that day were called "Hosannas." It can hardly, therefore, be doubted that it was originally used at some special celebration of that Feast. Various dates have been assigned to it; but its position in this Fifth Book seems to refer it to the period of the Restoration, and accordingly either on the first sacrifice under Zerubbabel (Ezra iii. 4), or, more probably, as the Temple appears to have been complete, to the great celebration under Nehemiah (Neh. viii. 13—18). The Psalm is vividly dramatic, representing the leader of Israel with his train coming to the Temple.

calling for the gates to be opened to his triumphal entrance, and going in to worship the Lord. The use of *vv.* 25, 26 by the Jews on Our Lord's triumphal entry implies their acceptance of it as typically a Messianic Psalm; and the express application of *v.* 22 to Our Lord by Himself and by His Apostles (Matt. xxi. 42—46; Acts iv. 11; 1 Pet. ii. 7) sanctions this interpretation. Hence it is used as a Psalm of EASTER DAY, as the day of Our Lord's triumph over the "principalities and powers" of evil.

The Psalm is dramatically distributed to different actors. In *vv.* 1—4 we have (a) the opening chorus of thanksgiving from the train of the leader without, and the priests within; then (b), in *vv.* 5—9, the leader thankfully records his deliverance and confidence in the Lord, and his thanksgiving is taken up by a response of like trust from his people; next (c), in *vv.* 10—16, he again exults in his sure victory over the heathen in the Lord's Name, in spite of fierce opposition and danger, and is answered similarly by a chorus of triumph; on this (d), in *vv.* 17—20, follows his summons to open the gates, answered by consent from within; then (e), in *vv.* 21—24, entering the Temple, he pours out his thanksgiving; and all alike, priests and people, glorify the Lord on the "day that He has made"; finally (f), in *vv.* 25—29, he prays, "Save, I beseech Thee" (*Hosanna*), and is "blessed as coming in the Name of the Lord"; and the whole Psalm ends with a chorus of universal praise to God.

vv. 1—4, strongly resembling Ps. cxv. 9—12, seem to form a responsive chorus—*v.* 1 and 4 sung by the whole congregation, *v.* 2 by the priests from within, *v.* 3 by the people without—with that continual refrain (as in Ps. cxxxvi.), "His mercy endureth for ever," which was sung in earlier days at David's bringing up of the Ark, and at the dedication of the First Temple (1 Chr. xvi. 34, 41; 2 Chr. v. 13).

vv. 5—7, the utterance of the leader or king, suit well the experience of Nehemiah (see Neh. iv., vi.), sensible of continual danger, and yet resting on the Lord. So the response in *v.* 9, disclaiming "trust in princes," might well have in view the Persian king and his princes (comp. Ezra viii. 22).

v. 5 should be—

"I called on the Lord in straitness;
The Lord heard, and set me at large."

Comp. xviii. 36; xxxi. 9.

vv. 6, 7 are obviously taken from Ps. lvi. 9, 11; liv. 4, 7.

vv. 8, 9 are the response from the people, or the priests, or from both alternately, taking up his confidence in no arm of man, but in the Name of the Lord—in the same tone which predominates so strikingly in the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah.

vv. 10—12 similarly express, with vividness and reiterated emphasis, the sense of hostility on every side, which appears in the same books, as weighing heavy on the restored exiles (see especially Neh. iv. 1—11; vi. 1—14), though swallowed up in confidence of power to defeat and destroy the enemies in the Name of the Lord.

v. 12. *The fire among the thorns* (comp. Ps. lviii. 8)—proverbial for sudden blaze and sudden extinction.

v. 13 suddenly changes to an evidently personal reference to some special leader of enmity—possibly Sanballat or Tobiah (see Neh. vi. 2—14).

v. 14 is a reminiscence of the first Psalm of Israel (Exod. xv. 2), similarly taken up in Isa. xii. 2.

vv. 15, 16, the response of the people, have clearly the same reference to Exod. xv. 6, 12. Naturally the thoughts of the exiles, restored from the Captivity, go back to the era of the first deliverance from bondage, with which that restoration is so often compared (see Jer. xvi. 14, 15; xxiii. 7, 8).

v. 15. *Health*—that is, salvation. The joy is the joy of the redeemed.

vv. 17—19 are again the utterance of the leader. In the spirit of the frequent confession of the restored exiles he acknowledges past trouble

PSALM 117.

Laudate Dominum.

O PRAISE the Lord, all ye heathen : praise him, all ye nations.

2 For his merciful kindness is ever more and more towards us : and the truth of the Lord endureth for ever. Praise the Lord.

PSALM 118.

Confitemini Domino.

O GIVE thanks unto the Lord, for he is gracious : because his mercy endureth for ever.

2 Let Israel now confess, that he is gracious : and that his mercy endureth for ever.

3 Let the house of Aaron now confess : that his mercy endureth for ever.

4 Yea, let them now that fear the Lord confess : that his mercy endureth for ever.

5 I called upon the Lord in trouble : and the Lord heard me at large.

6 The Lord is on my side : I will not fear what man doeth unto me.

7 The Lord taketh my part with them that help me : therefore shall I see my desire upon mine enemies.

8 It is better to trust in the Lord : than to put any confidence in man.

9 It is better to trust in the Lord : than to put any confidence in princes.

10 All nations compassed me round about : but in the Name of the Lord will I destroy them.

11 They kept me in on every side, they kept me in, I say, on every side : but in the Name of the Lord will I destroy them.

12 They came about me like bees, and are extinct even as the fire among the thorns : for in the Name of the Lord I will destroy them.

13 Thou hast thrust sore at me, that I might fall : but the Lord was my help.

14 The Lord is my strength, and my song : and is become my salvation.

15 The voice of joy and health is in the dwellings of the righteous : the right hand of the Lord bringeth mighty things to pass.

16 The right hand of the Lord hath the pre-eminence : the right hand of the Lord bringeth mighty things to pass.

17 I shall not die, but live : and declare the works of the Lord.

18 The Lord hath chastened and corrected me : but he hath not given me over unto death.

19 Open me the gates of righteousness : that I may go into them, and give thanks unto the Lord.

20 This is the gate of the Lord : the righteous shall enter into it.

21 I will thank thee, for thou hast heard me : and art become my salvation.

22 The same stone which the builders refused : is become the head-stone in the corner.

23 This is the Lord's doing : and it is marvellous in our eyes.

24 This is the day which the Lord hath made : we will rejoice and be glad in it.

25 Help me now, O Lord : O Lord, send us now prosperity.

26 Blessed be he that cometh in the Name of the Lord : we have wished you good luck, ye that are of the house of the Lord.

27 God is the Lord who hath shewed us light : bind the sacrifice with cords, yea, even unto the horns of the altar.

28 Thou art my God, and I will thank thee : thou art my God, and I will praise thee.

29 O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is gracious : and his mercy endureth for ever.

as the Lord's well-deserved chastening—a sorrow, but “not unto death.” Then in the full sense of the righteousness, given by God's grace, he calls on them to open the “gates of righteousness”—that is (see *v.* 20), the gates into which only the righteous shall enter (comp. Isa. xxvi. 2—4).

v. 20 is clearly the answer of the priests from within (comp. Ps. xv. 1—6; xxiv. 3—5), as they throw the gates wide open, that the whole train may sweep in.

vv. 21, 22 are the leader's thanksgiving, as he stands before the altar; taken up in *vv.* 23, 24 by priests and people, in full chorus, both of wonder and gladness.

v. 22. *The same stone, &c.* These words are best explained by Isa. xxviii. 16, “Behold! I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation; he that believeth shall not make haste” (comp. Rom. ix. 33; x. 11; 1 Pet. ii. 6, 7, 8). The corner stone, considered as the uniting stone both of foundation and superstructure (as in Eph. ii. 20), is here the leader of Israel, as the type of the true Messiah (Matt. xxi. 42; Mark xii. 10; Luke xx. 17; Acts iv. 11)—rejected by those who claim to be “the builders” of the world, but chosen by God, and “precious.” “This is the Lord's doing, marvelous in the eyes of men,” as “choosing the weak things of the world to confound the strong.” The clearer vision of the Messiah was the gracious and needful comfort of the troubled

time of the Restoration (see Haggai ii. 6—9; Malachi iii. 1—4).

v. 25. *Help me now, &c.*—properly, “Save, I beseech Thee” (*Hosanna*)—a phrase of prayer (as in Ps. xii. 1; xx. 9; xxviii. 10, &c.), turned, through confidence in the grant of the salvation asked for, into a cry of joy and thanksgiving. Here it is probably the prayer of the leader, to which *v.* 26, “Blessed be he,” &c., is the responsive welcome of the priests (for the latter clause should be (as in A. V. and R. V.), “we have blessed you out of the house of the Lord”). In Matt. xxi. 9 both were taken up by the rejoicing people at the Messiah's triumphant entry.

vv. 27—29 are again the responsive utterance of the leader (*v.* 28) and his train (*vv.* 27, 29), preparing for the sacrifice.

v. 27. *Hath shewed us light.* Compare the formula of blessing in Num. vi. 25, and the fragment of Christian Hymn in Eph. v. 14.

Bind the sacrifice, &c.—that is, “bind the victim (and lead it) even to the horns of the altar,” on which the blood was to be sprinkled. Another rendering (less probable, though supported by some ancient Versions) is, “Deck the feast with boughs even up to the horns of the altar” (alluding to the ceremonial of the Feast of Tabernacles).

v. 28. Comp. Exod. xv. 2; Isa. xxv. 1.

v. 29 takes up again with fresh enthusiasm the opening Thanksgiving, which through all the ages had been the response of God's people in His Temple.

PSALM CXIX.

This Psalm—the greatest of the Acrostic Psalms, arranged in sets of eight verses, each beginning with one of the letters, taken in succession, of the Hebrew alphabet—is the “Psalm of the Law,” shewing how that Law had, indeed, written itself on the hearts of God's faithful people. Perhaps in its largest view “the Law” may (according to a well-known Scriptural usage) include the whole of the Old Testament revelation; but the words used shew that the phrase has chief reference to the Law properly so called—as the clear decisive revelation of God's will in statutes and commandments for the moral and spiritual guidance of His people. It is on this, in all its various aspects, that the Psalmist, obeying to the utmost the injunction of Deut. vi. 3—9, dwells with reverence, and, indeed, with awe, but also with infinite delight, and with the love which, obeying it freely and gladly, is the true fulfilling of the Law. This attitude of soul towards the Law marks the era after the Restoration from the Captivity. Then for the first time was the Law multiplied in written form, so as to be (as in this Psalm) the theme of daily private study; then recited solemnly

DAY 24.

Evening Prayer.

PSALM 119.

Beati immaculati.

BLESSED are those that are undefiled in the way : and walk in the law of the Lord.

2 Blessed are they that keep his testimonies : and seek him with their whole heart.

3 For they who do no wickedness : walk in his ways.

4 Thou hast charged : that we shall diligently keep thy commandments.

5 O that my ways were made so direct : that I might keep thy statutes !

6 So shall I not be confounded : while I have respect unto all thy commandments.

7 I will thank thee with an unfeigned heart : when I shall have learned the judgments of thy righteousness.

8 I will keep thy ceremonies : O forsake me not utterly.

In quo corriget ?

WHEREWITHAL shall a young man cleanse his way : even by ruling himself after thy word.

10 With my whole heart have I sought thee : O let me not go wrong out of thy commandments.

11 Thy words have I hid within my heart : that I should not sin against thee.

12 Blessed art thou, O Lord : O teach me thy statutes.

13 With my lips have I been telling : of all the judgments of thy mouth.

14 I have had as great delight in the way of thy testimonies : as in all manner of riches.

15 I will talk of thy commandments : and have respect unto thy ways.

16 My delight shall be in thy statutes : and I will not forget thy word.

Retribue servo tuo.

ODO well unto thy servant : that I may live, and keep thy word.

18 Open thou mine eyes : that I may see the wondrous things of thy law.

19 I am a stranger upon earth : O hide not thy commandments from me.

20 My soul breaketh out for the very fervent desire : that it hath always unto thy judgments.

21 Thou hast rebuked the proud : and cursed are they that do err from thy commandments.

22 O turn from me shame and rebuke : for I have kept thy testimonies.

23 Princes also did sit and speak against me : but thy servant is occupied in thy statutes.

24 For thy testimonies are my delight : and my counsellors.

Adhæsit pavimento.

MY soul cleaveth to the dust : O quicken thou me, according to thy word.

26 I have acknowledged my ways, and thou heardest me : O teach me thy statutes.

27 Make me to understand the way of thy commandments : and so shall I talk of thy wondrous works.

28 My soul melteth away for very heaviness : comfort thou me according unto thy word.

29 Take from me the way of lying : and cause thou me to make much of thy law.

30 I have chosen the way of truth : and thy judgments have I laid before me.

31 I have stuck unto thy testimonies : O Lord, confound me not.

32 I will run the way of thy commandments : when thou hast set my heart at liberty.

(Neh. viii. 1—12) to the people, and made the basis of an elaborate teaching, covering the whole area of life and thought. In that enthusiastic trust in the Law, simply as Law, lay the germ of the exaggerated Pharisaism of the future, against which in its Christian form St. Paul so earnestly protests, as ignoring the need of salvation and the grace of the Spirit. But in itself it expressed simply the consciousness of the unique power, which in all ages of Jewish history it has exercised, as the great safeguard against idolatry and ungodliness—a safeguard naturally regarded with almost exclusive reverence, now that Prophecy ceased, that the royalty of Judah was under eclipse, and that the Temple was shorn of its ancient glory.

The Law is viewed under various aspects, indicated by the ten different words used again and again to describe it. Its general title, as a complete system, is the "Law" (v. 1); as a witness of God's nature, and of true humanity as accordant to that nature, it is His "testimony" (v. 2); in its didactic and directive power, independent of all enforcement, and accepted freely in the spirit, we learn from it His "ways" (v. 3) and His "precepts" (v. 4); in its sterner aspect, as a code of definite rules guarded by sanctions of reward and punishment, it contains His "statutes" (v. 5), His "commandments" (v. 6), His "judgments" (v. 7); in all these ways it is His "word" (v. 9), the revelation of Himself to the soul, and of this general revelation the "promise" (v. 11) and the "faithfulness" (v. 30) indicate the two attributes of graciousness and constancy. These last titles are less frequently and technically used.

So also in the successive sections, though there is no formal system, we can trace a method; it will be seen that there is a true variety of idea rising above mere repetition. In all the varied experiences of life, even under persecution from without, and temptation from within, the soul, "hungering and thirsting after righteousness," glories in the discovery of it in the stern, clear, authoritative supremacy of God's Law.

ALEPH. *The blessedness of unreserved obedience to the Law of God.*

The whole section is a comment of resolution and prayer on "the first and great Commandment" of Deut. vi. 5, and thus a fit general introduction to the whole Psalm.

vv. 1—3 describe the three elements of obedience to the Law—purity of intention (v. 1), reverence in treasuring up ("keeping") God's word with the whole heart (v. 2), and, as a result, freedom from the power of sin (v. 3).

vv. 4—6 acknowledge, as from God alone, the power to keep what He ordains (v. 4), and the certainty of blessing, in which we cannot be disappointed ("ashamed"). In this acknowledgment all self-righteousness is renounced.

v. 7 goes beyond the promise of obedience to enthusiasm of thankfulness for the knowledge of His righteous judgments—rising thus from godly fear to "the more excellent way" of love.

BETH. *The security in it from error and sin.*

The emphasis here is on guidance in the early choice of life; but it seems an error to suppose from it that the Psalmist was young. The whole tone is of matured experience in the way of God—looking back with special remembrance of the power of youthful temptation and sin, and of the need of guardianship against it.

vv. 9—11 evidently acknowledge from the first opening of life, corruption from which we need to be cleansed (v. 9), blindness in which we go astray (v. 10), and positive sin into which we fall (v. 11). Against all these God's Law written "in the heart" (see Jer. xxxi. 31) is the safeguard. He alone (v. 12) can write it there.

vv. 13, 14 describe what the Psalmist already has done—in bearing constant witness to God's Law without (v. 13), and in unreserved delight over it, as a treasure within (v. 14); vv. 15, 16 express his resolution to advance in the same path, by

thoughtfulness of mind (v. 15) and devotion of heart (v. 16). The emphasis on the joy of obedience, which implies love, is notable throughout.

GIMEL. *Support in it against weakness and persecution.*

In this section there is a deeper sense of struggle—against weakness and transitoriness in ourselves, against persecution from the world without—and accordingly a more pervading tone of prayer.

vv. 17—20 are a fourfold cry of earnest supplication—for sustenance of strength and life (v. 17), for gift of insight into the depths of God's will (v. 18), for comfort in this world's pilgrimage (v. 19), for satisfaction of "hunger and thirst after righteousness" (v. 20). The first and third belong to man's consciousness of weakness; the second and fourth to the instinct of perfection, which marks his higher nature and capacity.

vv. 21—24 contrast the painful sense of persecution from the proud and the princes of the world, with the two great supports under such persecution—a confidence in God's final retribution, and present inward peace in resting on His will—the two implying and strengthening each other.

DALETH. *Rest on it in the dark hour of sorrow.*

This section goes further still into the depths. It is an anticipation of the *De Profundis* (Ps. cxxx.); yet throughout the soul feels firm ground in resting on the true Rock.

v. 25 (comp. Ps. xlv. 25). The dust is the "dust of death" (Ps. xxii. 15); for the prayer is "quicken me" with life (comp. v. 17). The sorrow is one in which "the soul melteth away" (v. 28), and even faith fears lest it should be "confounded" (v. 31). It is the hour of darkness, yet never wholly losing the Light.

v. 26. *I have acknowledged, &c.* Sorrow brings forth confession, laying the whole life before God, with prayer, both for teaching, and for the grace to learn what through sorrow God may teach us.

vv. 29—32, alternate a vow of faithfulness with prayer for greater faithfulness. The Psalmist has chosen "the way of truth," yet prays to have taken from him "the way of lying."

He "cleaves to God's commandments" to lift him up from cleaving to the dust (see v. 21), yet he prays for strength to advance in them, and for enlargement of heart.

HE. *The Law the security of single-hearted steadfastness in life.*

The Psalmist passes here out of the hour of darkness. Conflict there still is, but certain hope of triumph. He feels in himself the love of God's Law; he only prays that he may understand it better, and keep it to the end in a thoughtful steadfastness.

vv. 33—35. "The prayer is for light to the understanding. If only the soul can see God's will as it is, there should follow (v. 1) steadfastness, (v. 2) unreserved devotion, and (v. 3) the delight of obedience. So is it in man, as far as he follows his higher nature; so would it be perfectly, but for the power of sin.

vv. 36, 37 recognise the disturbing forces which mar that happy consummation—the "covetousness," whether of lust or avarice within, and the "vanity," perhaps of the literal idols (as in Deut. xxxii. 21; Ps. xxxi. 6, &c.), perhaps of the idols of the world without. From both God's grace alone can save.

v. 38 should be rendered—

"Stablish to Thy servant Thy promise,

Which is granted to fear of Thee"; or

"Which issues in fear of Thee."

v. 39. *The rebuke or reproach* is here the shame of sin, before the conscience or before men.

vv. 38—40 look on to the end of the conflict between man's higher and lower nature—unshaken steadfastness (v. 38), freedom from the reproach of sin (v. 39), spiritual life in God (v. 40).

VAU. *Witness for God's Law before the world.*

The Psalmist, having now laid firm hold of God's Law for himself, desires to witness for it to others, against the positive antagonism, and in face of the imposing greatness, of the world.

v. 41. *Thy word*—properly, "Thy promise." The prayer suits well the time of restoration from the Captivity. The Psalmist waits for the

promised mercy and salvation of God.

vv. 42—45 contemplate reproach from “his blasphemers” (slanders, *v. 42*), challenge to give an answer in God’s truth (*v. 43*), and straitness of difficulty or persecution (*v. 45*). All these belonged to the experience of the restored exiles; in the knowledge of God they found the secret of victory over reproach, confidence in answer, enlargement from trouble.

v. 46. Before kings (comp. *v. 23*)—evidently the kings or princes of the heathen. Their greatness cannot overawe the servant of the King of kings (see *Neh. ii. 1—4*; and compare *Matt. x. 18—20*).

v. 48. My hands will I lift up—in the attitude, either of prayer or of solemn vow (see *Gen. xiv. 22*). If the former, it is a strong expression of worship of the Law as revealing God; if (as is perhaps more likely) the latter, of solemn vow of observance, publicly made before the world. In either case the spring of action is not fear, but love.

ZAIN. *The conflict of such witness against pride and wickedness.*

The idea of the preceding section is continued, but with deeper sense of the conflict, which witness for God implies, against affliction, pride, and wickedness.

vv. 49, 50 dwell again, with more paths of supplication, on the promise (“word”), which has been hope and comfort in trouble—the promise (that is) that God will look upon His servants and remember them (comp. *Dan. ix. 17—19*).

vv. 51, 52. “The proud” (the “blasphemers” of *v. 42*) deride the trust in a promise which seems to linger as to fulfilment (see *Neh. iv. 1—5*). The servant of God remembers that “His judgments are everlasting”—“a thousand years being to Him as one day”—and so receives comfort (comp. *2 Pet. iii. 3, 4, 8, 9*).

v. 53. I am horribly afraid. This should be, “horror (of indignation) has seized me.” The idea is not of fear, but of righteous indignation.

v. 54. The servant of God is not content to comfort himself silently; but in the face of this abhorred

wickedness he makes the Law of God the public “song” of his daily “pilgrimage” (*v. 54*), as well as the private meditation of the night watches (*v. 55*).

v. 56. This I had, because, &c.—probably, “This I had” (as God’s gift) “that I have kept Thy statutes.” Out of the conflict he emerges by God’s grace victorious.

CHETH. *God Himself the all-sufficient portion of His servant.*

From the sense of conflict the Psalm now passes to the deeper sense of peace, for one who has made the Lord his portion, in all the phases of a godly life—prayer (*v. 58*), meditation (*v. 59*), active obedience (*v. 60*), fortitude under persecution (*v. 61*), thanksgiving (*v. 62*), communion with the saints (*v. 63*), sense of the pervading presence of God (*v. 64*).

v. 57. Thou art, &c.—properly, “Jehovah is my portion” (comp. *Ps. xvi. 5; cxlii. 5*). This is his watchword, the open profession of his life. There is clear allusion to the blessing on the family of Aaron and on the tribe of Levi (*Num. xviii. 20; Josh. xiii. 33*). The servant of God is a priest before God; the portion of the world is nothing to him, to whom God is all in all.

vv. 58—60. The order in these verses is significant. The first step in godliness is prayer for God’s promised blessing (*v. 58*), then come self-examination and conversion to Him (*v. 59*); out of this springs the “haste” of enthusiastic devotion (*v. 60*).

vv. 61, 62. There is an equally instructive contrast in these verses. The wrong and persecution are not only borne, but borne with joy. Like Paul and Silas at Philippi (*Acts xvi. 25*), the sufferer even at midnight sings praises to God, and thanks Him that he is thought worthy to suffer.

vv. 63, 64. Here the Psalmist, victorious over persecution, goes out of himself, first to enjoy the Communion of Saints, then to rest on the larger conception of the presence of God in mercy “filling the whole earth” (comp. *Isa. vi. 3*). Through both he feels that, in the face of trouble, he is not alone.

DAY 25.

Morning Prayer.

Legem pone.

TEACH me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes : and I shall keep it unto the end.

34 Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law : yea, I shall keep it with my whole heart.

35 Make me to go in the path of thy commandments : for therein is my desire.

36 Incline my heart unto thy testimonies : and not to covetousness.

37 O turn away mine eyes, lest they behold vanity : and quicken thou me in thy way.

38 O stablish thy word in thy servant : that I may fear thee.

39 Take away the rebuke that I am afraid of : for thy judgments are good.

40 Behold, my delight is in thy commandments : O quicken me in thy righteousness.

Et veniat super me.

LET thy loving mercy come also unto me, O Lord : even thy salvation, according unto thy word.

42 So shall I make answer unto my blasphemers : for my trust is in thy word.

43 O take not the word of thy truth utterly out of my mouth : for my hope is in thy judgments.

44 So shall I alway keep thy law : yea, for ever and ever.

45 And I will walk at liberty : for I seek thy commandments.

46 I will speak of thy testimonies also, even before kings : and will not be ashamed.

47 And my delight shall be in thy commandments : which I have loved.

48 My hands also will I lift up unto thy commandments, which I have loved : and my study shall be in thy statutes.

Memor esto servi tui.

O THINK upon thy servant, as concerning thy word : where-

in thou hast caused me to put my trust.

50 The same is my comfort in my trouble : for thy word hath quickened me.

51 The proud have had me exceedingly in derision : yet have I not shrunk from thy law.

52 For I remembered thine everlasting judgments, O Lord : and received comfort.

53 I am horribly afraid : for the ungodly that forsake thy law.

54 Thy statutes have been my songs : in the house of my pilgrimage.

55 I have thought upon thy Name, O Lord, in the night-season : and have kept thy law.

56 This I had : because I kept thy commandments.

Portio mea, Domine.

THOU art my portion, O Lord : I have promised to keep thy law.

58 I made my humble petition in thy presence with my whole heart : O be merciful unto me, according to thy word,

59 I called mine own ways to remembrance : and turned my feet unto thy testimonies.

60 I made haste, and prolonged not the time : to keep thy commandments.

61 The congregations of the ungodly have robbed me : but I have not forgotten thy law.

62 At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto thee : because of thy righteous judgments.

63 I am a companion of all them that fear thee : and keep thy commandments.

64 The earth, O Lord, is full of thy mercy : O teach me thy statutes.

Bonitatem fecisti.

O LORD, thou hast dealt graciously with thy servant : according unto thy word.

TETH. *The blessing of suffering accepted as God's will to us.*

To the sense of comfort under suffering succeeds naturally the consciousness of the actual use and blessing of suffering, as a discipline of instruction (comp. Prov. iii. 11, 12; Heb. xii. 5—13). To the faithless the sorrow of life is the "sorrow of the world which worketh death"; for the faithful it worketh "repentance not to be repented of" (2 Cor. vii. 10).

vv. 65, 66. Suffering is felt to be a discipline of God's graciousness: the prayer is that He will teach us by a true insight to see its meaning, and so make use of it to the full.

vv. 67, 68. Here and in *v.* 71 the key to that meaning is found. Prosperity had brought self-will and forgetfulness of God; adversity now taught reverence and knowledge of His will (comp. Ps. xxx. 6—8). In sending His chastisement "He is good and therefore doeth good" (see R.V.). No words could better express the effect on the restored exiles of the suffering of the great Captivity.

vv. 69, 70. By a contrast singularly true to human nature, there comes in here a sudden flash of indignation against the falsehood and sleek self-sufficiency of the enemy. Wickedness is overruled to God's gracious purpose; but it is wickedness, and hateful wickedness, still.

v. 70. *Fat as brawn*—that is, steeped in self-indulgence, so as to be incapable of higher knowledge and love (comp. Ps. xvii. 10; Isa. vi. 10; Matt. xiii. 15).

v. 72 (comp. Ps. xix. 10; Prov. viii. 10, 11, 19; Job xxviii. 15—19). The loss of the "gold and silver" of worldly prosperity only brings out the preciousness of the riches, which the world cannot give or take away.

JOD. *God's Law the law of human nature and life.*

The key to this section is in its opening words. Man is God's creature; God's Law must be the law of his being. Therefore His judgments must be ordained to work out this law; therefore proud resistance to it cannot but be ashamed, and the obedience of godly fear must triumph.

v. 73. The prayer is of great beauty and meaning. The Psalmist pleads with God as being His creature. He

has made man; He will surely teach him the knowledge of His will, since without this it were better for man not to have been born. (Compare a similar plea, though of different tone, in Job x. 8—13.)

v. 74. Here, and in *v.* 79, the Psalmist turns from himself to his fellow-servants in the fear of God; he desires to help them by his trust in God, seen to be justified (*v.* 74); he desires (*v.* 79) their sympathy as a help against his persecutors.

vv. 75—77 breathe the tone of an assured faith, which has found out the secret of God's dealings, seeing that even in chastisement they are not only right but guided by His "very faithfulness" to His covenant. Only it prays for a fuller consciousness of God's loving-kindness and tenderness of mercy.

vv. 78, 79 (like *vv.* 21, 23, 42, 51, 61, 69) shew virulence of persecution by worldly power. The Psalmist trusts in God, and God only, against it; yet he naturally desires the secondary comfort of human sympathy. Even before God "it is not good for man to be alone."

v. 80. *Ashamed.* The word is the same as "confounded" in *v.* 78. Pride will have a fall; firm obedience to God must stand.

CAPH. *The longing for perfect retribution.*

There is here a sudden change to a plaintive tone, not unlike that of the fourth section (*vv.* 25—32). But in this case it is the cry of longing for perfect retribution—salvation to the faithful, vengeance on the persecutors—like the "How long?" of Ps. vi. 3; xiii. 1—4; Rev. vi. 10. The triumph of evil is not only a present sorrow, but a sore trial of faith, under which the soul cries out.

vv. 81, 82. The original is stronger, "My soul faints for Thy salvation" (comp. *v.* 20), "mine eyes fail (in looking) for Thy promise" (comp. *v.* 123). Yet there is still "good hope" and confident prayer for comfort. It must come, but the longing is that it may come speedily.

v. 83. *A bottle in the smoke.* The idea is probably of an old disused wine skin, shrivelled in the smoke of the chimney, where it has hung

66 O learn me true understanding and knowledge : for I have believed thy commandments.

67 Before I was troubled, I went wrong : but now have I kept thy word.

68 Thou art good and gracious : O teach me thy statutes.

69 The proud have imagined a lie against me : but I will keep

thy commandments with my whole heart.

70 Their heart is as fat as brawn : but my delight hath been in thy law.

71 It is good for me that I have been in trouble : that I may learn thy statutes.

72 The law of thy mouth is dearer unto me : than thousands of gold and silver.

DAY 25.

Evening Prayer.

Manus tuce fecerunt me.

THY hands have made me and fashioned me : O give me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments.

74 They that fear thee will be glad when they see me : because I have put my trust in thy word.

75 I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right : and that thou of very faithfulness hast caused me to be troubled.

76 O let thy merciful kindness be my comfort : according to thy word unto thy servant.

77 O let thy loving mercies come unto me, that I may live : for thy law is my delight.

78 Let the proud be confounded, for they go wickedly about to destroy me : but I will be occupied in thy commandments.

79 Let such as fear thee, and have known thy testimonies : be turned unto me.

80 O let my heart be sound in thy statutes : that I be not ashamed.

Defecit anima mea.

MY soul hath longed for thy salvation : and I have a good hope because of thy word.

82 Mine eyes long sore for thy word : saying, O when wilt thou comfort me ?

83 For I am become like a bottle in the smoke : yet do I not forget thy statutes.

84 How many are the days of thy servant : when wilt thou be

avenged of them that persecute me ?

85 The proud have digged pits for me : which are not after thy law.

86 All thy commandments are true : they persecute me falsely ; O be thou my help.

87 They had almost made an end of me upon earth : but I forsook not thy commandments.

88 O quicken me after thy loving-kindness : and so shall I keep the testimonies of thy mouth.

In æternum, Domine.

OLORD, thy word : endureth for ever in heaven.

90 Thy truth also remaineth from one generation to another : thou hast laid the foundation of the earth, and it abideth.

91 They continue this day according to thine ordinance : for all things serve thee.

92 If my delight had not been in thy law : I should have perished in my trouble.

93 I will never forget thy commandments : for with them thou hast quickened me.

94 I am thine, O save me : for I have sought thy commandments.

95 The ungodly laid wait for me to destroy me : but I will consider thy testimonies.

96 I see that all things come to an end : but thy commandment is exceeding broad.

Some interpreters, looking to the custom of mellowing wine by hanging it in the smoke, explain this passage of the ripening effect of trouble upon the soul. The idea is a striking one; but it hardly suits the tone of the whole passage.

vv. 84—87, like other passages in this Psalm, unite the ideas of treacherous enmity (v. 85)—the “pits digged” for the prey—with open persecution—“consuming” as by fire (vv. 84, 86, 87). Nothing could better accord with the condition of things disclosed in Neh. ii., iv., vi.

v. 88. *Quicken me.* The prayer indicates the extremity of trial, before which life itself seems to tremble in the balance (comp. vv. 17, 25, 50).

LAMED. *The eternity and universality of God's Law.*

From the conflict of soul described in the preceding section, the Psalmist finds rest in contemplating God's Law in Nature, as eternal, unchangeable, universal. However present trials and dangers may try faith, they have their appointed limit, and cannot overthrow His universal Law.

vv. 89—91. The idea is exactly that of Ps. cxlviii. 5, 6. The “word” here is the creative word, fulfilling itself unceasingly in heaven and earth; the “truth” is the pledge of fixity (as in Gen. viii. 21, 22), on which all action of man depends; the “ordinance” is the sustaining and ruling Law of God, through which all creation lives. From the confusion of man's frailty and disobedience the Psalmist takes refuge in the unswerving and unceasing obedience of Nature.

vv. 92—95 turn from the stately course of the great stream of Nature to the troubled sea of humanity. There the servant of God finds trouble (v. 92), exhaustion of strength (v. 93), danger (v. 94), persecution even to death (v. 95). Yet God's Law must still prevail, conquering and overruling evil—as truly, though not as simply, as in the realm of Nature. On it he rests for life, salvation, and triumph.

v. 96. *I see that all things, &c.* The literal rendering is (as in A.V. and R.V.), “I have seen an end (or limit) of all perfection.” This may mean that there is a limit either to all

that claims perfection on earth, or (as apparently in our Version) to the whole sum of visible things. In either case the idea of the verse is not of the transitoriness but the finiteness of all that is earthly, in contrast with the infinite scope of God's Law as exceeding broad—not only pervading, but transcending the bounds of His creation.

MEM. *Love of God's Law our wisdom and our joy.*

The tone of this section rises from faith to love, from comfort to enthusiastic delight. The Psalmist turns from God's Law seen without to God's Law written in the heart; in it he finds first wisdom, next righteousness, then sweetness of delight. “The fruit of the Spirit is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.”

vv. 98—100. The emphasis throughout is on the gift of wisdom—that is, the knowledge of the true end of life—through the revelation of the will of God. Those who look into the essence of the Law by the insight of love, rise above the self-reliant wisdom of the proud (“the enemies”) (v. 98), the study of the learned (v. 99), the experience of the aged. The idea is that which pervades the whole Book of Proverbs.

vv. 101, 102 describe this wisdom as a practical wisdom, shewing itself in both negative (v. 101) and positive obedience (v. 102)—an obedience not enforced by fear of punishment or hope of reward, but arising from simple knowledge of and delight in the truth (vv. 102—104).

v. 103 (with which comp. Ps. xix. 10; Prov. viii. 11) forms the climax. God's Law is not only the source of teaching and the spring of obedience, but by its intrinsic righteousness a joy and delight.

NUN. *God's Law a light of guidance and comfort.*

The same idea is here pursued, but with some recognition still of affliction and of persecution from without. God's Law is the light of life; against temptation a light of guidance; in trouble a light of comfort.

v. 105 (comp. Prov. vi. 23). The “lamp” is kindled specially for the hours of darkness; the “light” is

Quomodo dilexi!

LORD, what love have I unto thy law : all the day long is my study in it.

98 Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies : for they are ever with me.

99 I have more understanding than my teachers : for thy testimonies are my study.

100 I am wiser than the aged :

DAY 26.

Morning Prayer.

Lucerna pedibus meis.

THY word is a lantern unto my feet : and a light unto my paths.

106 I have sworn, and am steadfastly purposed : to keep thy righteous judgments.

107 I am troubled above measure : quicken me, O Lord, according to thy word.

108 Let the free-will offerings of my mouth please thee, O Lord : and teach me thy judgments.

109 My soul is always in my hand : yet do I not forget thy law.

110 The ungodly have laid a snare for me : but yet I swerved not from thy commandments.

111 Thy testimonies have I claimed as mine heritage for ever : and why? they are the very joy of my heart.

112 I have applied my heart to fulfil thy statutes always : even unto the end.

Iniquos odio habui.

I HATE them that imagine evil things : but thy law do I love.

114 Thou art my defence and shield : and my trust is in thy word.

115 Away from me, ye wicked : I will keep the commandments of my God.

116 O stablish me according to thy word, that I may live : and

because I keep thy commandments.

101 I have refrained my feet from every evil way : that I may keep thy word.

102 I have not shrunk from thy judgments : for thou teachest me.

103 O how sweet are thy words unto my throat : yea, sweeter than honey unto my mouth.

104 Through thy commandments I get understanding : therefore I hate all evil ways.

let me not be disappointed of my hope.

117 Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe : yea, my delight shall be ever in thy statutes.

118 Thou hast trodden down all them that depart from thy statutes : for they imagine but deceit.

119 Thou puttest away all the ungodly of the earth like dross : therefore I love thy testimonies.

120 My flesh trembleth for fear of thee : and I am afraid of thy judgments.

Feci iudicium.

I DEAL with the thing that is lawful and right : O give me not over unto mine oppressors.

122 Make thou thy servant to delight in that which is good : that the proud do me no wrong.

123 Mine eyes are wasted away with looking for thy health : and for the word of thy righteousness.

124 O deal with thy servant according unto thy loving mercy : and teach me thy statutes.

125 I am thy servant, O grant me understanding : that I may know thy testimonies.

126 It is time for thee, Lord, to lay to thine hand : for they have destroyed thy law.

127 For I love thy commandments : above gold and precious stone.

128 Therefore hold I straight

the natural light for all time (comp. Rev. xxii. 5, "They need no light of lamp or light of the sun; for the Lord God shall give them light"). Yet both need the gaze of "stedfast purpose" (v. 106); otherwise they shine in vain.

v. 107. *Quicken me.* Comp. v. 88. The trouble above measure threatens even the spiritual life; the prayer is, not that the trouble be taken away, but that the life be "quicken" to sustain it.

v. 108. *The free-will offerings of my mouth*—"the calves of my lips" (Hos. xiv. 2). Worship here takes the place of the "free-will" or "thank-offering" (as in Heb. xiii. 15). It is notable that it is this which is offered in the hour of "trouble beyond measure."

v. 109. *Always in my hand* (comp. Judg. xii. 3; 1 Sam. xix. 5; xxviii. 21; Job xiii. 14). In almost all cases the reference is to struggle in war; the original metaphor is therefore probably of the life resting on the prowess of the right hand. In this verse the Psalmist has to strive against violence; in v. 110 to avoid a snare.

v. 111. *My inheritance* (comp. v. 57)—the only portion which is needed, because in it is the "joy of the heart."

SAMECH. *The single-heartedness of true devotion.*

The leading idea is of the impossibility of double-minded service. The servant of God separates himself from sinners (v. 115), rests wholly on God's will (vv. 116, 117), watches the course of His judgment with reverence and godly fear (vv. 118—120).

v. 113. *That imagine evil things.* It should be (as in R.V.), "of a double mind." The word used here is akin to the "two opinions" of 1 Kings xviii. 21.

vv. 114—120 give a vivid picture of struggle and victory. In v. 114 the servant of God enters the battle of good and evil under the shield of faith; in v. 115 he challenges the wicked to give ground; in vv. 116, 117 the battle rages, and he cries out to God to uphold and save him; then in vv. 118, 119 he sees the Divine judgment on vain deceit and open wickedness, and trembles as he gazes upon it (v. 120).

v. 118 describes the discomfiture of the false wisdom wandering from God's statutes; its "deceit is falsehood" (see A.V. and R.V.)—that is, its subtle device is exposed and shown to be false; v. 119 deals with open wickedness, tried in the furnace, and found to be but dross (Jer. vi. 24—30; Ezek. xxii. 18—20; Mal. iii. 3). In both cases the main idea is of the hollowness and certain failure of ungodliness, in contrast with the steadfastness of godly devotion.

v. 120. The transition of thought is striking and unexpected. Instead of triumph at the sight of the fallen enemy, there comes over the Psalmist—over "the flesh" of his frail humanity—a thrill of godly fear, in the sense of the awfulness of God's judgment and of his own liability to fall (comp. Hab. iii. 16).

AIN. *A cry to the Lord to defend His Law and its servants.*

Still in the ardour of conflict against evil, the Psalmist cries out for the speedy interposition of the Lord, not only to ensure the safety of His servant, but to vindicate His outraged Law. It is the cry, not of doubt that He will shew Himself, but of longing that He may "come quickly."

v. 121 carries on the consciousness of singlehearted devotion, expressed in the last section, and prays that it may be saved from oppression.

v. 122. *Make Thou, &c.* This is a mistranslation, marring the sense. It should be (as in A.V. and R.V.), "Be surety to Thy servant for good"—pledge Thy word, which cannot fail, for my salvation. It is for this salvation (as the Psalmist touchingly pleads) that he strains his eyes (v. 123) in earnest expectation (comp. vv. 81, 82).

vv. 124, 125 glide into the habitual prayer for deeper knowledge of God's Law and Dispensation. If our heart fail in its longing for speedy retribution, "it is our own infirmity"; fuller conception of the mind of God would take away perplexity and impatience.

v. 126. The cry is for God's own visible working, not so much for salvation of His servant, as for vindication of God's righteous Law—like the constant plea with God "for His Name's sake" (comp. Isa. lxiv. 1).

vv. 127, 128 (comp. vv. 72, 104). In

all thy commandments : and all false ways I utterly abhor.

Mirabilia.

THY testimonies are wonderful : therefore doth my soul keep them.

130 When thy word goeth forth : it giveth light and understanding unto the simple.

131 I opened my mouth, and drew in my breath : for my delight was in thy commandments.

132 O look thou upon me, and be merciful unto me : as thou usest to do unto those that love thy Name.

133 Order my steps in thy word : and so shall no wickedness have dominion over me.

134 O deliver me from the wrongful dealings of men : and so shall I keep thy commandments.

135 Shew the light of thy countenance upon thy servant : and teach me thy statutes.

136 Mine eyes gush out with

water : because men keep not thy law.

Justus es, Domine.

RIGHTEOUS art thou, O Lord : and true is thy judgment.

138 The testimonies that thou hast commanded : are exceeding righteous and true.

139 My zeal hath even consumed me : because mine enemies have forgotten thy words.

140 Thy word is tried to the uttermost : and thy servant loveth it.

141 I am small, and of no reputation : yet do I not forget thy commandments.

142 Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness : and thy law is the truth.

143 Trouble and heaviness have taken hold upon me : yet is my delight in thy commandments.

144 The righteousness of thy testimonies is everlasting : O grant me understanding, and I shall live.

DAY 26.

Evening Prayer.

Clamavi in toto corde meo.

I CALL with my whole heart : I hear me, O Lord, I will keep thy statutes.

146 Yea, even unto thee do I call : help me, and I shall keep thy testimonies.

147 Early in the morning do I cry unto thee : for in thy word is my trust.

148 Mine eyes prevent the night-watches : that I might be occupied in thy words.

149 Hear my voice, O Lord, according unto thy loving-kindness : quicken me, according as thou art wont.

150 They draw nigh that of malice persecute me : and are far from thy law.

151 Be thou nigh at hand, O Lord : for all thy commandments are true.

152 As concerning thy testimo-

nies, I have known long since : that thou hast grounded them for ever.

Vide humilitatem.

O CONSIDER mine adversity, and deliver me : for I do not forget thy law.

154 Avenge thou my cause, and deliver me : quicken me, according to thy word.

155 Health is far from the ungodly : for they regard not thy statutes.

156 Great is thy mercy, O Lord : quicken me, as thou art wont.

157 Many there are that trouble me, and persecute me : yet do I not swerve from thy testimonies.

158 It grieveth me when I see the transgressors : because they keep not thy law.

159 Consider, O Lord, how I love

the word "therefore" there is a peculiar beauty. The violation of God's Law by the wicked only brings out more intensely in His servants the love of its preciousness and the enthusiasm of devotion to it.

PE. *The wondrousness of God's dispensation.*

The keynote of this meditative section is struck in its first words. God's dispensation is wonderful; "As the heaven is higher than the earth, so are His ways higher than our ways." Therefore His word gives light only to simple faith (v. 130); it satisfies only those who long for it and love it (vv. 131, 132); it saves from oppression only those who rest on His promise and are willing to be taught (vv. 133—135); for those who will not bow their hearts to it, there is no understanding of it; over them we can but weep (v. 136).

v. 130 should be (as in R.V.)—

"The opening (or revelation) of Thy word giveth light;
It giveth understanding to the simple."

The emphasis is on the words "the simple." The revelation is "a light that shineth in a dark place;" but it is "hid from the wisdom of the world" and "revealed unto babes" (comp. Matt. xi. 25; 1 Cor. ii. 6—10).

v. 131. *Drew in my breath*—that is (as in A.V. and R.V.), "panted" in eager search after God (comp. Ps. xlii. 1).

v. 132. *As Thou usest to do*—properly, "as is Thy rule" (or "covenant"). "God is faithful and just" to save those who trust in Him.

vv. 135, 136 are closely connected. It is because "the eyes ran down with rivers of water" (see R.V.), in the infinite sorrow over evil and evil-doers (comp. Jer. ix. 1, 18; xiv. 17) that the Psalmist prays for the cheering light of God's face, lest it should lead to doubt and despondency. In this sorrow, swallowing up indignation, we trace the spirit of the Gospel—an anticipation of the tears shed over Jerusalem.

TSADDI. *The eternal reality of Righteousness.*

The soul takes refuge in the sense of the eternity of righteousness, both against all transitory forgetfulness and denial of it, and against all weakness and changeableness of those

who love it. The Law is "right for evermore"; its righteousness must shine out in the end.

vv. 137, 138. God is Himself eternal righteousness, or He is not God. Hence His "judgments" shewing His government (v. 137), His "testimonies" revealing His nature (v. 138), His "Law" expressing His will (v. 142), must be righteous.

v. 139 (comp. Ps. lxxix. 9; John ii. 17). Zeal burns by its very nature; but it "consumes" the soul, only when that soul is self-reliant and so faithless.

v. 140. *Tried*—that is, in the furnace of conflict; seeking to consume it, but only purging away from its essential truth all dross of human error in the conception and declaration of it (comp. Ps. xii. 6).

v. 141. *I am small*, &c. God's "strength is made perfect in weakness"; His truth shines brighter in "the foolishness" of those who utter it (comp. 1 Cor. i. 26—30).

vv. 142—144. The reiteration in vv. 142 and 144 is significant. In the conflict of trouble and anguish the Psalmist comforts himself with repeating again and again as his watchword, "Thy righteousness is everlasting." "The things that are seen are temporal; the things that are not seen are eternal."

KOPH. *The constancy of true faith in that Eternal reality.*

The conception of this everlasting righteousness leads naturally to unreserved and unwearied devotion of heart. The soul thus catches some reflection of the unchangeable nature of Him whom it worships. To such devotion, through all the battle of life, God's presence is felt to be nigh; His Law to be true and eternal.

vv. 145, 146. The emphasis lies first on the devotion of the whole soul to God, craving simply an answer, to shew that it is accepted; then on its direct access to Him, and Him alone, as its salvation, seeking not His blessings, but Himself.

vv. 147, 148. Comp. Ps. v. 3; lxxiii. 7; lxxxviii. 13; cxxx. 6. The morning is for earnest prayer, the night for calm meditation. Both rest simply on trust in God's promise.

vv. 150, 151 stand in beautiful contrast. The enemy draws near, but God is nearer already. "Alone, yet

not alone, because the Father is with us."

v. 152 returns to the keynote of the last section. But the declaration now is not merely that God's righteousness is grounded for ever, but that His servant has "known this long since" with a perfect assurance.

RESCH. *Such faith unshaken in trouble.*

The same idea continues through this section, which returns (in v. 160) to the delight in the eternal righteousness. But there is throughout a deeper sense of struggle; faith is not only constant against weakness within, but unshaken, even if saddened, by all forces of evil from without.

vv. 153—156. The Psalmist has a threefold experience of trouble—affliction (v. 153), enmity (v. 154), and the horror of ungodliness (vv. 155, 158). It brings him even to the gates of death. Twice he cries (vv. 156, 159) "quicken me"; once in reliance on God's love, next pleading his own unswerving love of God's will. "We love Him, because He first loved us."

v. 158. *Grieveth* (comp. v. 136). The word does not exclude indignation, but its main idea is sorrow. "Why will ye die, O ye house of Israel?"

v. 160. *True from everlasting* is a mistaken rendering. It should be, "the sum" (as in Ps. cxxxix. 17) "of Thy commandments is truth." All in various forms embody the one principle of righteousness, and so "endure for ever."

SCHIN. *The end of conflict in peace and love of God.*

Still the persecution exists; but it is almost forgotten, as the soul, beginning in awe (v. 161), passes on to joy (v. 162), love (v. 163) and devotion (v. 164), and rests at last in peace (v. 165). The Psalmist has watched for God's salvation, and has found it.

v. 161. Comp. vv. 23, 46, 78, 85.

vv. 161—163. The sense of contrast runs through these verses. Against the fear of man he sets the greater awe of God (comp. Matt. x. 28; Acts v. 29; 1 Pet. iii. 14, 15); next, to the delight in the spoils of this world, he opposes the joy of finding out the will of God (comp. v. 127); and finally contrasts the lie, which he

hates, with the truth of God, which he loves. After this the sense of contrast is lost in simple praise and joy.

v. 164. *Seven times a day*. "Seven times" is only the expression of reiteration (as in Ps. xii. 7; Prov. xxiv. 16). But in the attachment of the phrase to prayer there may be reference to seven as the sacred number. In the Christian Church this verse in all probability suggested the use of the seven Canonical hours of prayer.

v. 165. *They are not offended at it*. The words "at it" are an error, obscuring the sense. It should be simply "They have no occasion of stumbling" (comp. 1 John ii. 10) through error, through opposition of evil, or through sin. Hence the "peace," which swallows up all pain and struggle.

vv. 166—168. The emphasis is on the word "kept," i.e. treasured up and grasped firmly through all struggle and difficulty. The servant of God has looked eagerly for Him and His salvation; but the search has been blessed, and now in confidence he lays "all his ways before Him."

TAU. *The conclusion of Prayer and Praise.*

The closing section seems to gather up briefly, in a tone of earnest and yet confident supplication, all the ideas which have already been brought out in detail—prayer for deeper insight into God's Law (vv. 169, 170), praise for the insight already given by His teaching (vv. 171, 172), longing for His salvation (vv. 173, 174), and rest upon Him for life and guidance (vv. 175, 176).

v. 169. *Complaint* should be simply (as in A.V. and R.V.) "cry"—the "supplication" of the next verse, both for light and for deliverance.

vv. 171, 172 pass from prayer to the utterance of praise, called out by the simple knowledge of God through His Law, and by the delight in His word as the essential righteousness.

vv. 173, 174 return once more to prayer—the longing for salvation and the earnest cry for spiritual life, to be given thankfully to God's service.

v. 176. *I have gone astray*, &c. There is something especially strik-

ing and instructive in the humility of this final confession after all the outpouring of faith and love for God and for His Law. It shows that the fullest knowledge and highest spiritual aspiration only bring out most vividly the sense of personal frailty. In themselves the truest servants of God best know that they are but straying sheep; the Good Shepherd "seeks" them, and they yield gladly to His hand.

PSALM CXX.

With this Psalm begins the series of the "Songs of Degrees" (or "Ascents"). On the probable meaning of the title and the general character of the Psalms, see *Introduction*, sect. III.

Ps. cxx., cxxi., cxxii. appear to form a group, rising from sense of trouble and danger to exulting thanksgiving to God.

This Psalm is a cry to God out of the trouble of persecution, at once by treachery and by open violence. It suits well the condition of the restored exiles, as described in the historical books; but in itself it has nothing to mark it distinctively as one of the "Songs of Degrees."

It contains (a), in vv. 1, 2, a prayer for deliverance; (b), in vv. 3, 4, a prophetic denunciation of evil against the false tongue; (c), in vv. 5-7, a complaint of one who loves peace in the midst of savage rapine and war.

v. 3. The verse is difficult, but should probably be rendered—

"What shall be given unto thee,
And what shall be done more
unto thee,
O thou false tongue?
Sharp arrows of the mighty,
And coals of juniper" (or
"broom").

The first two lines have been compared with the phrase, "God do so unto me, and more also." In the last two is conveyed the idea that wickedness shall be returned on the head of the wicked; for the lying tongue is itself a sword or arrow (Ps. lii. 3; lvii. 5), and burns like a fire. Comp. Ps. cxl. 10, 11.

The *coals of broom*, rendered in A. V. "juniper" (see 1 Kings xix. 4; Job xxx. 4), are said to retain heat for an almost indefinite time.

PSALM CXXI.

This Psalm breathes a wholly different spirit of perfect confidence and peace in God. It contains allusions appropriate to the experience of the march of the pilgrims, and it might well be a song of the first arrival in sight of the holy hills of Jerusalem.

The change of persons seems to divide it into two parts: (a), in vv. 1, 2, the lifting up the eyes and looking for help; (b), in vv. 3-7, the answer (by the Psalmist himself, or by some other speaking in the name of God) of trust in the unsleeping guardianship and the unceasing care of the Lord. The sense of His "keeping" of His people is the constantly recurring keynote of the Psalm.

thy commandments: O quicken me, according to thy loving-kindness.

160 Thy word is true from everlasting: all the judgments of thy righteousness endure for evermore.

Principes persecuti sunt.

PRINCES have persecuted me without a cause: but my heart standeth in awe of thy word.

162 I am as glad of thy word: as one that findeth great spoils.

163 As for lies, I hate and abhor them: but thy law do I love.

164 Seven times a day do I praise thee: because of thy righteous judgments.

165 Great is the peace that they have who love thy law: and they are not offended at it.

166 Lord, I have looked for thy saving health: and done after thy commandments.

167 My soul hath kept thy testimonies: and loved them exceedingly.

168 I have kept thy command-

ments and testimonies: for all my ways are before thee.

Appropinquet deprecatio.

LET my complaint come before thee, O Lord: give me understanding, according to thy word.

170 Let my supplication come before thee: deliver me, according to thy word.

171 My lips shall speak of thy praise: when thou hast taught me thy statutes.

172 Yea, my tongue shall sing of thy word: for all thy commandments are righteous.

173 Let thine hand help me: for I have chosen thy commandments.

174 I have longed for thy saving health, O Lord: and in thy law is my delight.

175 O let my soul live, and it shall praise thee: and thy judgments shall help me.

176 I have gone astray like a sheep that is lost: O seek thy servant, for I do not forget thy commandments.

DAY 27.

Morning Prayer.

PSALM 120.

Ad Dominum.

WHEN I was in trouble I called upon the Lord: and he heard me.

2 Deliver my soul, O Lord, from lying lips: and from a deceitful tongue.

3 What reward shall be given or done unto thee, thou false tongue: even mighty and sharp arrows, with hot burning coals.

4 Woe is me, that I am constrained to dwell with Mesech: and to have my habitation among the tents of Kedar.

5 My soul hath long dwelt among them: that are enemies unto peace.

6 I labour for peace, but when I speak unto them thereof: they make them ready to battle.

PSALM 121.

Levavi oculos.

I WILL lift up mine eyes unto the hills: from whence cometh my help.

2 My help cometh even from the Lord: who hath made heaven and earth.

3 He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: and he that keepeth thee will not sleep.

4 Behold, he that keepeth Israel: shall neither slumber nor sleep.

5 The Lord himself is thy keeper: the Lord is thy defence upon thy right hand;

6 So that the sun shall not burn thee by day: neither the moon by night.

7 The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil: yea, it is even he that shall keep thy soul.

8 The Lord shall preserve thy

v. 1. *The hills*—evidently the “holy hills” (Ps. lxxxvii. 1), on which Jerusalem and the Temple are built. The pilgrims look up to them gladly on the eve of their arrival, and hail the deliverance which God’s Presence gives from Zion (comp. Isa. lii. 7). The last clause is perhaps best rendered with R. V. as a question, “From whence shall my help come?” to which v. 2 is the answer,

v. 2. *Who hath made heaven and earth* (comp. Ps. cxv. 15; cxxiv. 7; cxxxiv. 4). The title is emphatic. The Lord’s presence is visibly manifested in the Temple, yet the Psalm acknowledges in it the universal presence of the God of all creation.

v. 3. *To be moved*—to slip or wander.

v. 3, 4 clearly allude to the experience of the pilgrims, in the dan-

ger and hardships of their journey. They had lain down in the desert to rest; their own sentinels may have failed; but over them was the watchful Eye, which neither slumbers nor sleeps. For they are “Israel,” the chosen people of His covenant.

v. 5, 6 similarly recall the wandering through the desert. The Lord is not only their keeper, but also their “shade” (“defence”) against the burning sun, and against the rays of the Eastern moon, traditionally, and with reason, held to be noxious to the sleeper.

v. 7, 8 are more general in tone, acknowledging this protection of their pilgrimage, as simply one exemplification of God’s guardianship of His people in all their ways (see Deut. xxviii. 6).

PSALM CXXII.

This singularly beautiful Psalm is ascribed in the heading to David; but this ascription is wanting in the LXX. and other ancient versions, and is in itself questionable, for the Psalm seems clearly to imply (v. 9) the existence of the Temple. Probably, like the other Psalms, it is best referred to the time of the Restoration, when the old glory of Jerusalem and of the House of David seemed to be revived. In itself it follows naturally on Ps. cxxi.; the pilgrims are now actually entering the Holy City in a transport of rejoicing over its beauty and prayer for its peace.

It contains (a), in vv. 1–5, the outburst of joy at having reached the goal of their pilgrimage at last, and of exultation over the glory and beauty of the Holy City; (b), in vv. 6–9, an utterance of prayer for its prosperity and its peace, and of devotion to the House of the Lord.

v. 2. *Shall stand should be*, “are standing.” The pilgrimage, gladly begun and carried out, is over. It only remains to “go into the House of the Lord.”

v. 3 should be rendered, “O Jerusalem, that art built as a city, that is compact together.” The allusion is evidently to the physical position of the city, closely covering its hills, and shut in on almost every side by deep ravines. But it may well be that this compactness is taken as a type of the higher national unity, described below, of which it was the centre.

v. 4. *To testify unto Israel*. This phrase should be parenthetical—“for a testimony unto Israel.” The reference is to the law of assembly

three times a year (Exod. xxiii. 17; xxxiv. 23; Deut. xvi. 16), which is here spoken of as a testimony to the Divine Covenant with Israel. “The tribes of Israel” is a phrase properly belonging to the old times of Israel’s glory; but, now that the division of the after time was over, and the distinct kingdom of Israel had ceased to be, it was Judah which inherited all the old promises and titles of Israel. See Neh. viii. 17; ix. 1, 2, 3, &c.

v. 5 dwells on the other great secret of unity—the hallowed royalty of David, restored, though shorn of its ancient glory, under Zerubbabel.

v. 6–9. Through the passionate and impressive prayer of these verses runs continual allusion to the name

going out, and thy coming in : from this time forth for evermore.

PSALM 122.

Lætatus sum.

I WAS glad when they said unto me : We will go into the house of the Lord.

2 Our feet shall stand in thy gates : O Jerusalem.

3 Jerusalem is built as a city : that is at unity in itself.

4 For thither the tribes go up, even the tribes of the Lord : to testify unto Israel, to give thanks unto the Name of the Lord.

5 For there is the seat of judgment : even the seat of the house of David.

6 O pray for the peace of Jerusalem : they shall prosper that love thee.

7 Peace be within thy walls : and plenteousness within thy palaces.

8 For my brethren and companions’ sakes : I will wish thee prosperity.

9 Yea, because of the house of the Lord our God : I will seek to do thee good.

PSALM 123.

Ad te levavi oculos meos.

UNTO thee lift I up mine eyes : O thou that dwellest in the heavens.

2 Behold, even as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress : even so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God, until he have mercy upon us.

3 Have mercy upon us, O Lord, have mercy upon us : for we are utterly despised.

4 Our soul is filled with the scornful reproof of the wealthy :

DAY 27.

Evening Prayer.

PSALM 126.

In convertendo.

WHEN the Lord turned again the captivity of Sion : then were we like unto them that dream.

and with the despitefulness of the proud.

PSALM 124.

Nisi quia Dominus.

IF the Lord himself had not been on our side, now may Israel say : if the Lord himself had not been on our side, when men rose up against us ;

2 They had swallowed us up quick : when they were so wrathfully displeased at us.

3 Yea, the waters had drowned us : and the stream had gone over our soul.

4 The deep waters of the proud : had gone even over our soul.

5 But praised be the Lord : who hath not given us over for a prey unto their teeth.

6 Our soul is escaped even as a bird out of the snare of the fowler : the snare is broken, and we are delivered.

7 Our help standeth in the Name of the Lord : who hath made heaven and earth.

PSALM 125.

Qui confidunt.

THEY that put their trust in the Lord shall be even as the mount Sion : which may not be removed, but standeth fast for ever.

2 The hills stand about Jerusalem : even so standeth the Lord round about his people, from this time forth for evermore.

3 For the rod of the ungodly cometh not into the lot of the righteous : lest the righteous put their hand unto wickedness.

4 Do well, O Lord : unto those that are good and true of heart.

5 As for such as turn back unto their own wickedness : the Lord shall lead them forth with the evil-doers ; but peace shall be upon Israel.

2 Then was our mouth filled with laughter : and our tongue with joy.

3 Then said they among the heathen : The Lord hath done great things for them.

Jerusalem (as "the vision of peace"). The prayer is both for temporal plenty and prosperity, and for the higher gift of true peace; the inspiration of that prayer is, first, the love of the brethren, then the deeper

devotion to the House of the Lord. The love of the Psalmist for his country was patriotism, but it was a patriotism consecrated by the consciousness of a special mission and blessing of God.

PSALM CXXIII.

This Psalm seems again to form, with Ps. cxxiv., cxxv., cxxvi., a second group of the "Songs of Degrees," somewhat sadder in tone, but shewing an even deeper sense of confidence and thankfulness for "the turning of the Captivity of Zion."

The Psalm itself is simply a cry of patient humility, waiting confidently for the pity of the Lord towards His despised people. We see in Neh. ii. 19; iv. 4; ix. 36, 37, the description of the depressed condition of the time after the Return.

vv. 1, 2 have given to the Psalm its old name of the *Oculus sperans*. But its hope is tinged with awe and deep humility. In Ps. cxxi. 1 the eye is raised in thankfulness to the holy hills; here to Him "who dwelleth in the heavens" in humble sense of His infinite Majesty, and the utter lowliness of those who are His despised servants on earth. The eye of the slave is fixed humbly on the hand of his master to see what it may give; so the eye of longing waits on the hand of the Lord, till He sends mercy in His own good time.

vv. 3, 4 are even stronger and more closely connected in the original. "Our soul is exceedingly filled with contempt, exceedingly filled with the scorn of those that are at ease" (comp. Zech. i. 12-15), "and the contempt of the proud." The history shews us very strikingly the truth of this sorrowful complaint. The returned exiles were a feeble folk, a despised remnant, in the eyes of the strong heathen nations around them. Their cry was continually to the Lord for His mercy and protection; their strength in the belief that the cry was heard.

PSALM CXXIV.

This Psalm is called a "Psalm of David"; but the ascription is not found in the ancient Versions. The style certainly has much of the vigour and terseness of his earlier Psalms; and it is possible that some Psalms of David may have been incorporated with the later "Songs of Degrees," and adapted to the later experience of the restored exiles. It follows in natural connection on Ps. cxxiii. That Psalm was the cry for God's pity; in this the cry has been answered. There has been (see vv. 1-4) overwhelming trouble, but deliverance out of it (see vv. 5-7) has come, and anxiety is lost in praise to God.

vv. 1-4 may allude either to the overwhelming calamity of the Captivity itself, or—perhaps more probably—to the burst of hatred and jealousy from all sides against Israel after the Restoration—compared in its fury to the devouring fierceness of the wild beast, and in its irresistible power to the torrent in flood.

v. 2. Comp. Ps. lvi. 1, 2; lvii. 3; Prov. i. 12; Lam. ii. 5, 8.

v. 4. *The deep waters of the proud* should be (as in A.V. and R.V.),

"the proud waters," conscious of overwhelming force.

vv. 6, 7 shew the mixture of metaphor, common in all impassioned poetry. The fury of the enemy is that of the wild beast, and the prey is snatched out of the jaws of danger; the craft is like the snare of the hunter, and that snare is broken.

v. 7. *Who hath made, &c.* (comp. Ps. cxxi. 2). The title is emphatic. He is the Almighty; how can the proudest stand against Him?

PSALM CXXV.

This Psalm carries on the sequence of thought from Ps. cxxiii., cxxiv. The first joy of deliverance has passed into calm trustful confidence. The Psalmist is in sight of Jerusalem; he lifts up his eyes to it, and sees in the strength and security of its position a type of safe establishment under the sure guardianship of God, against tyranny from without and backsliding from within. Nothing can better accord with the condition disclosed in Neh. iv.—vi., xiii.

vv. 1, 2. The ideas of these two verses stand in contrast. In v. 1 (as in Ps. lxxviii. 70; lxxxvii. 1) the idea is of the impregnable strength of the Holy City in itself, typical of its establishment on high by the unchangeable covenant of the Lord. In v. 2, on the contrary, the circle of heights round Jerusalem—as seen, for example, from the Mount of Olives—suggests the encompassing care of the lowly by a higher power (comp. Zech. ii. 4, 5). In the one is the secret of confidence, in the other of a trustful humility (comp. Ps. xxx. 6-8).

v. 3. *The rod*—that is, "the sceptre" of ungodly and heathenish

power, tempting the righteous to forsake the Law of God.

vv. 4, 5. The emphasis is on truth of heart and steadfastness, as against the turning back, directly or indirectly, to the old wickedness of idolatry, which had drawn down God's righteous anger (comp. Ezra ix. 6-15; Neh. xiii. 17, 18, 25-27). The backsliders, of whom there were evidently many in Israel, desired to cast in their lot with the ungodly; that desire should be fulfilled to their ruin.

v. 5. *But peace shall be, &c.* This is properly a concluding ejaculation, "Peace be upon Israel."

PSALM CXXVI.

This Psalm seems the last of the second group. The calm sense of present confidence in Ps. cxxv. suggests here thought of the past and of the future. The one yields (vv. 1-4) a burst of wondering thanksgiving over the return of the exiles; the other (vv. 5-7) prayer for a complete restoration, so that the tears of the sowing may be lost in the joy of the harvest. (It must be remembered that the era of the Restoration, from Zerubbabel to Nehemiah, was about a hundred years.)

v. 1. *The captivity*—properly, "the returned" or "restored."

Like unto them that dream. The restoration of Judah after seventy years—in a true national unity, contrasted with the absorption into Assyria of the greater kingdom of Israel—was a fact unique in history. Naturally it was beyond all human hope, and even to faith seemed like the experience of a dream, in which wonderful things are accepted without wonder.

v. 2. *Joy*—properly (as in A.V. and R.V.), "singing."

vv. 3, 4. *The Lord hath done great things* (see Joel ii. 21). The impression made on the whole empire by the character and fortune of the Jews, favoured by the sympathy of the Persians (who were themselves originally Monotheists), is indicated in many ways in the history. It was the beginning of that diffusive influence over heathendom in the fu-

ture, which was to be the preparation for Christ.

v. 5. *Our captivity*—that is, our captives. The word is not the same as in v. 1.

The rivers in the south—the torrents of the desert south of Judæa. The dry bed is turned by sudden rain in a few hours to a full torrent: so let the desolation of Israel be in a moment turned to populousness and prosperity.

vv. 6, 7. The time of sowing in the East is apt to be one of anxiety and dependency (after the exhaustion of the stores of the year), contrasted with the joyful plenteousness of harvest time. Hence the metaphor: the time of affliction is the sowing time of God's seed in the softened heart; the joy, that no man takes from us, belongs to the harvest, in measure here, in perfection hereafter (comp. John xvi. 22; 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18; 1 Pet. i. 6).

This Psalm (noted in the heading as "of" or "for Solomon") and Ps. cxviii. represent an entirely new phase in this series of Psalms. They are both Psalms of a meditative trust and thankfulness, not unlike the tone of the Book of Proverbs; both deal with the blessings of domestic life; in neither can we trace any special characteristic of "the Songs of Degrees."

This Psalm—the famous *Nisi Dominus*—is simply the utterance of the faith, which "takes no thought" or anxiety. In the expressions "build the house" (comp. 2 Sam. vii. 5), in the reference to a gift given in sleep (1 Kings iii. 5-14), in the emphasis on praying as the gift of the Lord, some have traced, not improbably, indications of the connection with Solomon.

v. 1-3. It is, of course, obvious that in these verses human labour and watchfulness are not for a moment deemed superfluous in their right sphere. On the contrary, men are to work and watch, just because God works and watches for them, and then their "labour is not in vain in the Lord" (comp. Phil. ii. 12, 13). It is only when they neglect that higher trust that "their labour is lost."

v. 3. *So he giveth*, &c., should probably be rendered (as in R. V. *marg.*), "So He giveth to His beloved in their sleep," without toil of their own. This verse goes a step beyond the last; the restless over-carefulness is contrasted with that trustful and passive reception of God's blessings, which in so large a sphere of human life is all of which we are capable. When we have worked, as far as our strength goes, we rest peacefully, and leave all else to come to us freely, if it is His Will. This is clearly the sense of Our Lord's own teaching (Matt. vi. 25-34).

PSALM CXXVIII.

This is a beautiful companion Psalm to Ps. cxvii.—a picture of the home of a God-fearing father, blessed with wealth and offspring, and with long life to see God's blessing upon Jerusalem. Its promise (as so often in the Old Testament) is the simple recognition of what should be the natural law, and which (although marred by the existence of evil) is the law of God's dealing still, except when it pleases Him to set it aside, with a view to spiritual discipline and higher spiritual blessing. Most appropriately it is used as the first Psalm of our MARRIAGE SERVICE.

v. 1. Comp. Ps. cxii. 1; cxv. 13; cxix. 1.

v. 2. The first gift of God is the fruit of labour, without plague or hindrance, such as is denounced against the ungodly (Lev. xxvi. 16; Deut. xxviii. 15; Ps. cxvii. 3). Needing man's labour, it is God's gift still.

O well is thee, i.e. "to thee."
v. 3. *On the walls*, &c. The con-

vv. 4-6. It should be (as in R. V.)—"Lo! children are an heritage of the Lord, And the fruit of the womb His reward."

The transition of thought here is somewhat abrupt; unless, indeed, the link be a reference to the common idea that they who have children have "given hostages to fortune," and so have greater need or excuse for anxiety. The Psalmist, on the contrary, declares them to be not only God's gift, but also the strength and armour of earthly life. It is in this connection that the Psalm is used in the CHURCHING OF WOMEN.

v. 5. *The young children* should be "the children of a man's youth," who will be grown men to protect his age, both in war (v. 5) and in peace (v. 6).

v. 6. *In the gate*—that is, at the place of trial (Deut. xxi. 19; Josh. xx. 4; Ruth iv. 1, 2; Job xxix. 7), where a father, supported by stalwart sons, might fare better than the childless (see Job xxxi. 21).

nection of these words is erroneous, for vines in the East are not as a rule trained on the walls. The verse should be—

"Thy wife, in the inner chamber, is like the fruitful vine;
Thy children, round thy table, like the young olive shoots."

The "inner chamber" is the women's quarter of the house—the right sphere of the wife's influence.

4 Yea, the Lord hath done great things for us already : whereof we rejoice.

5 Turn our captivity, O Lord : as the rivers in the south.

6 They that sow in tears : shall reap in joy.

7 He that now goeth on his way weeping, and beareth forth good seed : shall doubtless come again with joy, and bring his sheaves with him.

PSALM 127.

Nisi Dominus.

EXCEPT the Lord build the house : their labour is but lost that build it.

2 Except the Lord keep the city : the watchman waketh but in vain.

3 It is but lost labour that ye haste to rise up early, and so late take rest, and eat the bread of carefulness : for so he giveth his beloved sleep.

4 Lo, children and the fruit of the womb : are an heritage and gift that cometh of the Lord.

5 Like as the arrows in the hand of the giant : even so are the young children.

6 Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them : they shall not be ashamed when they speak with their enemies in the gate.

PSALM 128.

Beati omnes.

BLESSED are all they that fear the Lord : and walk in his ways.

2 For thou shalt eat the labours of thine hands : O well is thee, and happy shalt thou be.

3 Thy wife shall be as the fruitful vine : upon the walls of thine house.

4 Thy children like the olive-branches : round about thy table.

5 Lo, thus shall the man be blessed : that feareth the Lord.

6 The Lord from out of Sion shall so bless thee : that thou shalt see Jerusalem in prosperity all thy life long.

7 Yea, that thou shalt see thy

children's children : and peace upon Israel.

PSALM 129.

Saepe expugnaverunt.

MANY a time have they fought against me from my youth up : may Israel now say.

2 Yea, many a time have they vexed me from my youth up : but they have not prevailed against me.

3 The plowers plowed upon my back : and made long furrows.

4 But the righteous Lord : hath hewn the snares of the ungodly in pieces.

5 Let them be confounded and turned backward : as many as have evil will at Sion.

6 Let them be even as the grass growing upon the house-tops : which withereth afore it be plucked up :

7 Whereof the mower filleth not his hand : neither he that bindeth up the sheaves his bosom.

8 So that they who go by say not so much as, The Lord prosper you : we wish you good luck in the Name of the Lord.

PSALM 130.

De profundis.

OUT of the deep have I called unto thee, O Lord : Lord, hear my voice.

2 O let thine ears consider well : the voice of my complaint.

3 If thou, Lord, wilt be extreme to mark what is done amiss : O Lord, who may abide it ?

4 For there is mercy with thee : therefore shalt thou be feared.

5 I look for the Lord ; my soul doth wait for him : in his word is my trust.

6 My soul fleeth unto the Lord : before the morning watch, I say, before the morning watch.

7 O Israel, trust in the Lord, for with the Lord there is mercy : and with him is plenteous redemption.

8 And he shall redeem Israel : from all his sins.

The "olive shoots" are the young shoots rooting themselves in the ground round the parent tree.

v. 6. There is a peculiar beauty in this recognition of national blessing as the crown of all domestic blessing, lest home love and joy should be (as they may be) only an extended

PSALM CXXIX.

This Psalm, with Ps. cxxx., cxxxi., forms another group of sadder and more penitential tone, expressing the sense of conflict (Ps. cxxix.), the cry out of the depths of trouble (Ps. cxxx.), and the submission of a lowly humility (Ps. cxxxi.). As pilgrim-songs they represent the humbler phase of self-abasement and penitence in access to God.

This Psalm is not unlike Ps. cxxiv. in its general substance, but the tone brings out more emphatically the intensity of the struggle against evil. It is (a), in vv. 1-4, a picture of the fierceness of the enemy; and (b), in vv. 5-8, a prayer for his defeat and confusion.

v. 1. *Many a time.* The retrospect is of the many invasions, conquests, and devastations of the history through all the ages of the decline and fall of the kingdom. But through all there is the consciousness that "they have not prevailed," because God's covenant with Israel remained sure.

v. 3. The image here is not of war, but of the captivity which follows; when the scourge of the cruel master furrows deeply the back of the slave.

v. 4. Comp. Ps. cxxiv. 6.

v. 6. Comp. Isa. xxxvii. 27, "They were . . . as the grass on the housetops, and as corn blasted before it be grown up." The grass grows out of

PSALM CXXX.

This Psalm, the famous *De Profundis*—the sixth of the Penitential Psalms, used on ASH WEDNESDAY—is a cry out of the depth, both of suffering and of the heavy consciousness of sin, like the bitter cry of Rom. vii. 24; but through its darkest sorrow there shines the trust in God's mercy and in His certain blessing of those who wait for Him, eagerly and yet patiently. The attitude of mind is exactly that of 2 Cor. iv. 8-10 ("perplexed but not in despair").

It seems to fall into four equal stanzas: (a), in vv. 1, 2, the cry out of the depth; (b), in vv. 3, 4, the rest on the mercy of God; (c), in vv. 5, 6, the watching eagerly for His deliverance; (d), in vv. 7, 8, the exhortation to trust in the Lord's unfailing mercy.

vv. 1, 2. Comp. Lam. iii. 55; Jon. ii. 2.

v. 3. Comp. Ps. lxxvi. 7; cxliii. 2; Job x. 5-9. The original is here even stronger, "If Thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquity," &c. There is in these words, not only the con-

selfishness. The blessing comes "from Zion," and its sphere is the whole life of Israel. The father is to live long to see it, as well as to "see his children's children."

v. 7. *And peace, &c.* The original is (as in Ps. cxxv. 5) a concluding ejaculation, "Peace upon Israel!"

the crevices, and has no depth of earth.

Afore it be plucked up. This reading may stand with the original, and is supported by some ancient versions; but the reading (followed in A.V. and R.V.) "before it groweth up" is probably more correct, as it is certainly more striking.

vv. 7, 8 are simply an expansion of the idea of fruitlessness, by contrast with a bright picture of the gathering in of the harvest with blessing and thanksgiving.

v. 8 is the harvest blessing itself. Comp. Ruth ii. 4, "Boaz said unto the reapers, The Lord be with you. And they answered him, The Lord bless thee."

profession of inability to stand strict judgment without mercy, but the implied trust that God will not so judge, because "He knoweth whereof we are made; He remembereth that we are but dust."

v. 4. *Therefore shalt Thou be feared,*

or (as in A.V. and R.V.) "That Thou mayest be feared." God's mercy is, with striking truth to nature, made a ground for godly fear. Were there no hope of His forgiveness, man would simply "curse God and die," and the very terror of His Law would (see Rom. vii. 9-13) call out the resistance of sin and so bring death. In the sense of His mercy we know best the exceeding "sinfulness of sin." Therefore, so far as we feel that sin still clinging to us, we must fear with godly fear; while so far as we feel its chains broken, "fear is cast out by love."

v. 5. Comp. Ps. xxvii. 16; xxxiii. 19, 20; xl. 1. The stress is on the word "wait"—the expression at once of patience and of hope—and in this

verse and the next the emphasis is marked by reiteration.

v. 6. *Before the morning watch* should be, "more than watchers wait for the morning"—in the weary longing of sickness or distress, or in the sacred vigils of prayer.

vv. 7, 8. Comp. Ps. cxxxi. 4. The Psalmist turns his own experience into exhortation to God's people, "comforting them with the comfort with which he himself is comforted of the Lord"; and at the same time draws fresh confidence to himself by resting on the covenant with Israel. The true redemption, both of the soul and of the Israel of God, is "from sins"—not from the punishment of sin, but from sin itself (comp. Tit. ii. 14).

PSALM CXXXI.

This Psalm, ascribed to David, has something of the simplicity of his earlier Psalms, and certainly breathes his spirit of absolute humility and faith. It may well have been borrowed by exiles after their restoration to express their own spiritual experience. It forms a natural sequel to Ps. cxxix., cxxx. Out of struggle and agony of prayer comes the weary, but quiet, rest of humility.

v. 2. *I do not exercise myself, &c.* Evidently the Psalmist is weary of the attempts to search out to their depths the reasons of God's dealings, through which perhaps his soul had passed in the hour of trial; he feels now (comp. Ps. cxxxix. 5) that "they are too high" ("wonderful") "for him" (comp. Isa. lv. 8, 9; Eccles. xii. 12, 13). From even reverent speculation on such high things, the soul comes back with relief to the old childlike faith. We must, indeed, thoughtfully inquire

what God's laws are; in measure we may see some of their reasons; but for much we must fall back on faith.

v. 3. *Refrain my soul, and keep it low, &c.,* should be (much as in A.V.), "I have composed and quieted my soul." The image is strikingly simple and true, of natural desire stayed, and of a subdued quietness of rest rather than delight.

v. 4. Comp. Ps. cxxx. 7. The words form a natural burden of these Psalms of the restored captives.

PSALM CXXXII.

This Psalm—the grandest of all the "Songs of Degrees"—appears to have been included in this series at the time of the Restoration, when Israel looked back fondly to the glories of the first Temple; and claimed for their new Temple, in accordance with prophetic promise (Haggai ii. 3-9), all, and more than all, "the glory of the former house." By some it is supposed to have been composed at that time, with special reference to Zerubabel as the representative of David's house. But for many reasons it seems far more likely to be a Psalm of earlier date, applied, perhaps adapted, to the later occasion. By the stress laid on the desire of David to build the House of the Lord, on his actual bringing up of the Ark, and on the great promise given to him—as well as by the absence of all allusion (as in Ps. lxxxix. 37-44) to subsequent times of disaster and apparent failure of that promise—it seems probably to belong to the time of David or of Solomon. Yet the want of any ascription to David, and the reference to him (vv. 1, 10, 11) in the third person, preclude the idea of its being from his hand. The topics of the Psalm, moreover, are prominent in the prayer of

Solomon (1 Kings viii. 15—26) at the dedication of the Temple, and *vv.* 8—10 are actually embodied in that prayer in 2 Chr. vi. 41, 42. Hence it seems best to refer the Psalm to that occasion, and possibly to the authorship of Solomon himself. It might have been sung most appropriately at the solemn bringing up of the Ark from Zion to the new Temple (1 Kings viii. 3—6).

It first (*a*), in *vv.* 1—5, pleads for God's remembrance of the longing of David to find a resting-place for the Lord; then (*b*), in *vv.* 6—10, it introduces the glad cry of the people, rejoicing to bring up the Ark, and praying for God's acceptance; to this succeeds (*c*), in *vv.* 11—14, a solemn memorial before God of the promise to David; answered (*d*), in *vv.* 15—19, by the voice of the Lord in fulness of blessing.

The Psalm is used as a Proper Psalm for CHRISTMAS DAY. For on that day we commemorate the final fulfilment of the great promise to David, and the coming of Him, whose Presence was to make the higher glory of the second Temple.

v. 1. *Lord, remember David, &c.*, should be, "Lord, remember for David all his trouble," accepting it as a sacrifice, and fulfilling the promise which rewarded it. So in 2 Chron. vi. 42, "Remember the mercies of David Thy servant." Comp. Neh. xiii. 14, 22, 31.

vv. 2—5. This vow is evidently connected with the words of David to Nathan, recorded in 2 Sam. vii. 2. In these words the same idea is implied, that it is unseemly for the king to have rest, till he has found a resting-place for the Ark of the Lord.

v. 2. *Almighty God, &c.*—properly, "the mighty One of Jacob" (comp. Gen. xlix. 24).

v. 6. This beginning of the joyful cry of the people involves some difficulty. It is evidently a reminiscence, natural to the occasion, of David's bringing up of the Ark (2 Sam. vi.) to Mount Zion; and the words "in the wood"—properly, "in the fields of the wood"—must refer to *Kirjath-jearim* ("the city of woods"), where the Ark had been twenty years (1 Sam. vii. 2) in the days of Samuel, and whence (2 Sam. vi. 2; Josh. xv. 9, 60) David brought it up. But the clause, "we heard of it at Ephratah," is not so easy to explain. Ephratah is, no doubt, Bethlehem (Gen. xxxv. 16, 19; xlviii. 7; Mic. v. 2); and in the history there is no allusion to Bethlehem in the bringing up of the Ark. But it is possible that David may have made his native city a place of assembly for the starting of the festal procession, so that the people "heard" the summons at

Ephratah, and "found" the Ark at Kirjath-jearim.

vv. 7—10 are the prayer of the people on the solemn bringing of the Ark into the Temple by the priests (1 Kings viii. 3—6); declaring delight in His worship (*v.* 7), inviting Him to accept His "resting place" (*v.* 8; comp. 1 Kings viii. 13), praying for His blessing on priests and people (*v.* 9), and pleading His promise to David (*v.* 10).

v. 9 may be responsive, between the priests and the people ("the saints" of God). The white garment of the priest is the symbol of the clothing of righteousness (see Zech. iii. 3, 4; Rev. xix. 8). The verse forms the third pair of versicles in the Shorter Litany of our Morning Service.

v. 10. *Turn not away the presence* (the face), &c.—that is, "reject not the prayer of Thy Anointed." The same phrase is used in this sense in the Hebrew of 1 Kings ii. 16, 17, 20, and in a somewhat similar sense in 2 Kings xviii. 24. "The Anointed" is clearly Solomon, pleading (see 1 Kings viii. 15—20) the promise to David; though symbolic interpretation sees in the name One greater than Solomon.

vv. 11—13 are a free quotation (as in Ps. lxxxix. 3, 4, 20—34) of the promise through Nathan (2 Sam. vii. 12—15), "confirmed by an oath in which it was impossible for God to lie" (Heb. vi. 17, 18).

v. 14. The choosing of Jerusalem ("Zion") for the resting-place of the Ark is similarly connected in Solomon's prayer with the fixing for

PSALM 131.

Domine, non est.

LORD, I am not high-minded :
I have no proud looks.
2 I do not exercise myself in
great matters : which are too high
for me.

3 But I refrain my soul, and
keep it low, like as a child that is
weaned from his mother : yea, my
soul is even as a weaned child.
4 O Israel, trust in the Lord :
from this time forth for ever-
more.

DAY 28.

Morning Prayer.

PSALM 132.

Memento, Domine.

LORD, remember David : and
all his trouble ;
2 How he sware unto the Lord :
and vowed a vow unto the Al-
mighty God of Jacob ;
3 I will not come within the
tabernacle of mine house : nor
climb up into my bed ;
4 I will not suffer mine eyes to
sleep, nor mine eye-lids to slum-
ber : neither the temples of my
head to take any rest ;
5 Until I find out a place for
the temple of the Lord : an habi-
tation for the mighty God of
Jacob.

15 This shall be my rest for
ever : here will I dwell, for I have
a delight therein.

16 I will bless her victuals with
increase : and will satisfy her poor
with bread.

17 I will deck her priests with
health : and her saints shall re-
joice and sing.

18 There shall I make the
horn of David to flourish : I have
ordained a lantern for mine
Anointed.

19 As for his enemies, I shall
clothe them with shame : but
upon himself shall his crown
flourish.

PSALM 133.

Ecce, quam bonum !

BEHOLD, how good and joy-
ful a thing it is : brethren, to
dwell together in unity !

2 It is like the precious oint-
ment upon the head, that ran
down unto the beard : even unto
Aaron's beard, and went down to
the skirts of his clothing.

3 Like as the dew of Hermon :
which fell upon the hill of Zion.

4 For there the Lord promised
his blessing : and life for ever-
more.

PSALM 134.

Ecce nunc.

BEHOLD now, praise the Lord :
all ye servants of the Lord ;
2 Ye that by night stand in
the house of the Lord : even in
the courts of the house of our
God.

3 Lift up your hands in the
sanctuary : and praise the Lord.

4 The Lord that made heaven
and earth : give thee blessing out
of Zion,

6 Lo, we heard of the same
at Ephrata : and found it in the
wood.

7 We will go into his taberna-
cle : and fall low on our knees be-
fore his footstool.

8 Arise, O Lord, into thy rest-
ing-place : thou, and the ark of
thy strength.

9 Let thy priests be clothed with
righteousness : and let thy saints
sing with joyfulness.

10 For thy servant David's sake :
turn not away the presence of
thine Anointed.

11 The Lord hath made a faith-
ful oath unto David : and he shall
not shrink from it ;

12 Of the fruit of thy body :
shall I set upon thy seat.

13 If thy children will keep my
covenant, and my testimonies that
I shall learn them : their children
also shall sit upon thy seat for
evermore.

14 For the Lord hath chosen
Sion to be an habitation for him-
self : he hath longed for her.

ever of the royalty of David (1 Kings viii. 16—21).

vv. 15—18 are the answer of the Lord, corresponding to each point of the prayer of the people—expressing the “desire” ascribed to Him in *v. 14*, granting the two-fold petition of *v. 6*, adding the blessing of temporal prosperity to Jerusalem (comp. the prayer of Ps. cxxii. 6, 7), and pledging His word once more to the promise to David, pleaded in *vv. 10—13*.

PSALM CXXXIII.

This Psalm, a gem of simplicity and beauty—ascribed to David, and certainly breathing his loving spirit—may have been, like others of the “Songs of Degrees,” adopted in the later era of the Restoration to express the delight in the newly-found unity, binding the scattered exiles together, and obliterating the old lines of division.

v. 1. Brethren, &c., should be, “for brethren to dwell together.” There is emphasis on the word “brethren,” as implying the duty of recognising brotherhood; and in the phrase “dwell together” there may be a reference to the joy of actual reunion, as well as to the spirit of unity.

vv. 2, 3. The characteristic idea of both comparisons is that unity is acknowledged as the gift of God, shed from Heaven upon the earth. In *v. 2* the comparison is to the holy oil of consecration (Ex. xxx. 22—33), which symbolized the outpouring of the grace of God on the priest, as the representative of Israel; in *v. 3* to the dew of fruitfulness, shed from the lofty snow-clad Hermon on the lowly sacredness of Mount Zion.

v. 2. The skirts—properly, the “edge,” and probably (as in Exod. xxviii. 32) the collar or upper open-

PSALM CXXXIV.

This last and brightest of the “Songs of Degrees” is clearly (in *vv. 1—3*) the greeting of the arrived pilgrims to the priests of the Temple, and in *v. 4* the answer of blessing from within. It seems to herald the opening of the gates, and the entrance into the Temple itself.

vv. 1, 2 (comp. Ps. cxiii. 1). *By night.* The service (see 1 Chron. ix. 33) involved watching, both by night and by day. Probably the stress here laid on the night-service implies that the Psalm was sung just when that night-service was over, before the lights were put out, at or before the offering of the morning sacrifice.

v. 3. In the sanctuary—probably “towards the sanctuary” (as in Ps.

v. 18. The horn is the emblem of strength (comp. 1 Sam. ii. 1; Ps. lxxv. 5, 6; Ezek. xxix. 21); the lantern or “lamp” (see 1 Kings xi. 36) the light of God’s favour.

v. 19. As for His enemies, &c. The promise was signally fulfilled in the glory of Solomon’s kingdom; but it has its complete fulfilment in the greater Kingdom of Him, who is to “reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet.”

ing of the Ephod. The fragrant oil touched the priests’ garments—which symbolize (see cxxxii. 9) righteousness—and hallowed all alike.

v. 3. The figure seems to represent the lofty mountains as collecting the moisture, and distilling it on the lower hills. The “dew of Hermon” is naturally a dew of special copiousness. Zion is here contrasted (as in Ps. lxxviii. 16) with the loftier heights, above which it was exalted in sacredness. They gather God’s blessing, but it falls on Zion. The union of Hermon and Zion is the union of natural grandeur and special holiness, under the blessing of God.

v. 4. For there, &c. “There” is emphatic. Zion is the true centre of unity, because of the special blessing of God, which is the undying spiritual life of His covenant “for evermore.”

v. 7; xxviii. 2, &c., in prayer at the offering of incense.

v. 4. In the reply from within, the word “bless” is taken up in the higher sense—not of the adoration of man, but of the answering benediction of God. The Lord is the “Maker of heaven and earth” (as in Ps. cxxiv. 7), yet He gives special blessing out of Zion (comp. the priestly blessing in Num. vi. 24—26).

PSALM CXXXV.

This Psalm—a Hallelujah Psalm—though not one of the “Songs of Degrees,” breathes much of their spirit. (Its opening verses are all but identical with those of Ps. cxxxiv.) It is evidently of late date, borrowing largely from other Psalms and prophetic passages, without, however, impairing its own coherence and beauty of style. It belongs evidently to the worship of the Second Temple; and it has been noted that some of its topics occur in the Levitical Address in Neh. ix. 5—38. It is obviously designed for festal use, perhaps in responsive alternation between priests and people.

It opens (*a*), in *vv. 1—3*, with a call on the priests and Levites to praise the Name of Jehovah; then (*b*), in *vv. 4—14*, follows the song of praise to Him, both as the Creator of the world and as the Deliverer of Israel; this changes (*c*), in *vv. 15—18*, to a scornful denunciation of idolatry; and the whole ends (*d*), in *vv. 19—21*, with a mutual call to worship of priests and people, obeyed in a final chorus of praise.

vv. 1—3. Cp. Ps. cxiii. 1; cxxxiv. 1; cxxxvi. 1; cxlviii. 1.

v. 3. The Lord is gracious. The verse, as repeated with the words, “For His mercy endureth for ever,” in Ps. cxxxvi. 1, is identical with the burden of the festal song at David’s bringing up of the Ark and Solomon’s dedication of the Temple (1 Chron. xvi. 34, 41; 2 Chron. v. 13). To be “good”—that is, to “be true in love”—is the essence of the Divine nature, and therefore the image of Christ in those who are His (Eph. iv. 15). But the main emphasis is laid on His love; for “God is love.” Hence His Name is “lovely”; “we love Him, because He first loved us” (1 John iv. 8, 19).

vv. 4—12 form the song of praise of Israel as the Lord’s people; first, dwelling on the choice of Israel (*vv. 4, 5*), then glancing at His Almighty power over all the earth (*vv. 6, 7*), and returning again (*vv. 8—12*) from this to the exhibition of that power for His people in the deliverance from Egypt and conquest of Canaan.

v. 4. See Ex. xix. 6; Deut. vii. 6; xiv. 2; xxvi. 19, &c.

v. 5. Comp. Ps. xc. 3.

vv. 6, 7. As in all the Psalms of the Restoration, there is an emphatic, though passing, reference to the Almighty hand of God in Nature—in words almost identical with Jer. x. 13, and apparently suggested by Job

xxviii. 24—26; xxxviii. 22—28. It has been already noticed that the “God of heaven” is the name especially given to the Lord in the history of the Captivity and Restoration. In the Exile from His special Presence, the servants of God naturally fell back on His universal and Almighty Presence, as the “Lord of heaven and earth.”

vv. 8—14 pass from this adoration of God’s creative power to the remembrance of ancient mercies in the deliverance from Egypt and conquest of Canaan, using these as an encouragement to the faith that now “God will avenge His people, and repent Himself” (“be gracious”) “concerning His servants”—taking away the judgment that He had laid upon them, and punishing the cruelty of their enemies, which had been overruled to His chastening purpose.

vv. 15—18, by a sudden transition of thought, suggested by the idea of the Divine vengeance on the heathen, pass to a denunciation of the vanity of idols, repeated with slight variation from Ps. cxv. 4—8.

vv. 19, 20, using a phrase which seems to have become almost a liturgical form (see Ps. cxv. 9—13; cxviii. 2—4), invite “the house of Israel,” “the house of Aaron” (and “Levi”), and “those who fear the Lord,” to praise the Lord. The invitations are probably responsive; and the answer of *v. 21* sung in full chorus.

This Psalm—called by some Jewish authorities “the great Hallel”—traverses much the same ground as Ps. cxxxv. 5—14, but with some amplification and with constant repetition of the traditional burden, “For His mercy endureth for ever,” found in Ps. cvi. 1; cvii. 1; cxviii. 1—4, and in the historic records of 1 Chron. xvi. 34; 2 Chron. v. 13; vii. 3, 6; xx. 21. It bears evident marks of arrangement for responsive recitation of the first clauses of the successive verses, with the burden sung in full chorus.

Like the previous Psalm it dwells (a), in vv. 1—4, on the supreme Majesty of God; (b), in vv. 5—9, on His Creative power and wisdom; (c), in vv. 10—22, on His ancient deliverance of Israel; and (d), in vv. 23—26, on His recent mercies. (The 27th verse is an erroneous repetition of v. 3, derived from the Vulgate.)

vv. 2, 3. The title “God of gods and Lord of lords” is found in Deut. x. 17; Josh. xxii. 22, and revived emphatically in Dan. ii. 47; xi. 36. It of course expresses the exaltation of the true God over “the gods many and lords many” of heathenism; possibly it may imply also His supreme dominion over the highest created beings, called “gods,” as in Ps. lxxxii. 1; cxxxviii. 1.

vv. 5—9 follow the record of Creation in Genesis, and vv. 7—9 agree almost verbally with Gen. i. 16.

vv. 10, 15, 18 append the burden, “For His mercy endureth for ever,” to the terrible examples of God’s vengeance on the Egyptians and the Canaanites. This, no doubt, primarily regards these actions of Di-

vine Providence from an Israelitish point of view, as interpositions for the protection of His people. But, nevertheless, it is true absolutely that—the world being what it is—vengeance on oppression and corruption belongs to the “mercy,” as well as the righteousness, of God.

vv. 23—25. The last section of the Psalm evidently refers to the deliverance and restoration from Captivity. Hence v. 25 can hardly be taken in the general sense of Ps. civ. 27, 28; cxlv. 15, 16, without breaking the coherence. Probably there is reference to famine and distress among the restored exiles (see Hag. i. 9—11; ii. 16—19), removed, like other troubles and dangers, by the blessing of the Lord.

PSALM CXXXVII.

This Psalm, which has passed into a proverbial type of infinite pathos and of an intense patriotic and reverent love of Jerusalem, is apparently the work of a returned exile, for whom the bitter remembrance of the past, and perhaps sight of the desolation before his eyes, make the iron of captivity still enter into the soul. (In one MS. of the Septuagint it is attributed, probably by a mere guess, to Jeremiah.) He sees again (in vv. 1—3) the despairing and insulted captivity by the waters of Babylon; he recalls (in vv. 4—6) the answer of pathetic remonstrance to the taunts of the enemy; and then (in vv. 7—9) breaks out into fierce denunciation of the unbrotherly enmity of Edom and the cruelty of Babylon. In all its phases the inspiration of the Psalm is the same love of the Holy City, as holy, which breathes in the joy of Ps. cxxii.

v. 1. *The waters*—the great rivers of the Babylonian plain, the Euphrates and Tigris, which would most forcibly impress the exile from the hill-country of Judæa.

v. 2. *The trees*—properly, the “willows” fringing the stream. The “weeping willow” is the *Salix Babylonica*.

Therein—properly, “in the midst

thereof,” i.e. of Babylon, the great city covering many square miles, famous for its parks and gardens.

v. 3. *And melody in our heaviness* should be (preserving the parallelism), “and they that wasted us (asked us) for mirth.” The demand sounds like a mere taunt, but it may have been an implied exhortation to forget a lost home, and make the

PSALM 135.

Laudate Nomen.

O PRAISE the Lord, laud ye the Name of the Lord : praise it, O ye servants of the Lord ;

2 Ye that stand in the house of the Lord : in the courts of the house of our God.

3 O praise the Lord, for the Lord is gracious : O sing praises unto his Name, for it is lovely.

4 For why ? the Lord hath chosen Jacob unto himself : and Israel for his own possession.

5 For I know that the Lord is great : and that our Lord is above all gods.

6 Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did he in heaven, and in earth : and in the sea, and in all deep places.

7 He bringeth forth the clouds from the ends of the world : and sendeth forth lightnings with the rain, bringing the winds out of his treasures.

8 He smote the first-born of Egypt : both of man and beast.

9 He hath sent tokens and wonders into the midst of thee, O thou land of Egypt : upon Pharaoh, and all his servants.

10 He smote divers nations : and slew mighty kings ;

11 Sehon king of the Amorites, and Og the king of Basan : and all the kingdoms of Canaan ;

12 And gave their land to be an heritage : even an heritage unto Israel his people.

13 Thy Name, O Lord, endureth for ever : so doth thy memorial, O Lord, from one generation to another.

14 For the Lord will avenge his people : and be gracious unto his servants.

15 As for the images of the heathen, they are but silver and gold : the work of men’s hands.

16 They have mouths, and speak not : eyes have they, but they see not.

17 They have ears, and yet they hear not : neither is there any breath in their mouths.

18 They that make them are like unto them : and so are all they that put their trust in them.

19 Praise the Lord, ye house of Israel : praise the Lord, ye house of Aaron.

20 Praise the Lord, ye house of Levi : ye that fear the Lord, praise the Lord.

21 Praised be the Lord out of Sion : who dwelleth at Jerusalem.

DAY 28.

Evening Prayer.

PSALM 136.

Confitemini.

O GIVE thanks unto the Lord, for he is gracious : and his mercy endureth for ever.

2 O give thanks unto the God of all gods : for his mercy endureth for ever.

3 O thank the Lord of all lords : for his mercy endureth for ever.

4 Who only doeth great wonders : for his mercy endureth for ever.

5 Who by his excellent wisdom made the heavens : for his mercy endureth for ever.

6 Who laid out the earth above

the waters : for his mercy endureth for ever.

7 Who hath made great lights : for his mercy endureth for ever ;

8 The sun to rule the day : for his mercy endureth for ever ;

9 The moon and the stars to govern the night : for his mercy endureth for ever.

10 Who smote Egypt with their first-born : for his mercy endureth for ever ;

11 And brought out Israel from among them : for his mercy endureth for ever ;

12 With a mighty hand, and stretched out arm : for his mercy endureth for ever.

13 Who divided the Red sea in

best of a new country; and the answer perhaps suits best with this latter explanation.

v. 4. *The Lord's song.* The title is emphatic; the only true "Songs of Zion" were the Psalms of sacred joy, which it were profanation to sing in a strange heathen land. It is characteristic that here, as always, the love for Jerusalem is mainly not domestic or national, but religious.

v. 5. *Forget her cunning.* The last two words are an insertion; some render simply "Let my right hand forget," i.e. be numbed into deadness.

v. 6. *In my mirth*—properly, "above my chief joy." The remembrance, even in sadness, is sweeter than the joy, which is possible only to an unfeeling forgetfulness. "'Tis better to have loved and lost, than never to have loved at all."

v. 7. See the bitter denunciation of the unnatural exultation and cruelty of Edom which runs through the Book of Obadiah (especially

vv. 10—15), and comp. Ezek. xxv. 12—14; xxxv. 4—15.

v. 8. *Wasted with misery*, if the true reading, may be descriptive of the destruction already coming on Babylon in the Persian conquest, or anticipatory of a doom to come. By a slight variation of text some read, "wasting (others) in misery," to the great improvement of the force of the passage.

v. 9. This terrible imprecation of the worst cruelty, which disgraced the exterminating wars of ancient times (see 2 Kings viii. 12; Isa. xiii. 16; Hos. x. 14; Nah. iii. 10), is wrong from the Psalmist—perhaps by the recollection of the cruelty which he had seen and suffered—perhaps by the sense of the insolence and oppressive wickedness which made Babylon the type of the enemies of God—fit only for absolute extermination, like the Canaanites of old time. Like the "Psalms of Imprecation," it breathes the stern spirit of the Old Testament, not the Divine love of the New.

PSALM CXXXVIII.

This Psalm is the first of a group (cxxxviii.—cxlv.) ascribed traditionally to David, in some cases bearing also other names, probably as having undergone adaptation before insertion in the last book of the Psalter. Thus in this Psalm the LXX. adds to the ascription to David the names of Haggai and Zechariah, apparently supposing that these Prophets of the Restoration period had to do with the Psalm in its present form. Certainly the Psalms themselves, while they bear no indication of date, yet in fulness of meaning, force, and occasional difficulty, resemble the earlier utterances of David far more than the smoother and easier Psalms of later date.

It falls into three sections: (a), in vv. 1—3, the song of praise and thanksgiving; (b), in vv. 4—6, the exaltation of the Lord before the nations; (c), in vv. 7, 8, the expression of confidence for the future.

v. 1. *O Lord.* The words are an insertion from the LXX. In the original the Psalmist, full of the thought of God, needs no name to designate the object of his worship.

Before the gods. The word *Elohim* is used sometimes of the angels (as perhaps in Ps. viii. 5), sometimes of the great men of the earth (as in lxxxii. 1, 6), and constantly of the false gods of the heathen. The first sense is out of place here; either of the others will suit the passage, but perhaps the last is simplest. Even in David's time, and much more in

the later period, the knowledge of Jehovah was declared by worship in the face of heathenism.

v. 2. *Thy Name, and Thy Word, &c.* This rendering, following some ancient versions, is a gloss to soften the unique expression of the original, which is (as in A.V. and R.V.). "Thou hast magnified Thy Word above all Thy Name." Generally the "Name" of God is the whole manifestation of Himself; here the Word (i.e. the promise) of God is described as going beyond all other manifestation of His goodness (comp.

two parts: for his mercy endureth for ever;

14 And made Israel to go through the midst of it: for his mercy endureth for ever.

15 But as for Pharaoh and his host, he overthrew them in the Red sea: for his mercy endureth for ever.

16 Who led his people through the wilderness: for his mercy endureth for ever.

17 Who smote great kings: for his mercy endureth for ever;

18 Yea, and slew mighty kings: for his mercy endureth for ever;

19 Sehon king of the Amorites: for his mercy endureth for ever;

20 And Og the king of Basan: for his mercy endureth for ever;

21 And gave away their land for an heritage: for his mercy endureth for ever;

22 Even for an heritage unto Israel his servant: for his mercy endureth for ever.

23 Who remembered us when we were in trouble: for his mercy endureth for ever;

24 And hath delivered us from our enemies: for his mercy endureth for ever.

25 Who giveth food to all flesh: for his mercy endureth for ever.

26 O give thanks unto the God of heaven: for his mercy endureth for ever.

27 O give thanks unto the Lord of lords: for his mercy endureth for ever.

PSALM 137.

Super flumina.

By the waters of Babylon we sat down and wept: when we remembered thee, O Sion.

2 As for our harps, we hanged them up: upon the trees that are therein.

3 For they that led us away captive required of us then a song, and melody, in our heaviness: Sing us one of the songs of Sion.

4 How shall we sing the Lord's song: in a strange land?

5 If I forget thee, O Jerusalem: let my right hand forget her cunning.

6 If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth: yea, if I prefer not Jerusalem in my mirth.

7 Remember the children of Edom, O Lord, in the day of Jerusalem: how they said, Down with it, down with it, even to the ground.

8 O daughter of Babylon, wasteful with misery: yea, happy shall he be that rewardeth thee, as thou hast served us.

9 Blessed shall he be that taketh thy children: and throweth them against the stones.

PSALM 138.

Confitebor tibi.

I WILL give thanks unto thee, O Lord, with my whole heart: even before the gods will I sing praise unto thee.

2 I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy Name, because of thy loving-kindness and truth: for thou hast magnified thy Name, and thy Word, above all things.

3 When I called upon thee, thou heardest me: and enduedst my soul with much strength.

4 All the kings of the earth shall praise thee, O Lord: for they have heard the words of thy mouth.

5 Yea, they shall sing in the ways of the Lord: that great is the glory of the Lord.

6 For though the Lord be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly: as for the proud, he beholdeth them afar off.

7 Though I walk in the midst of trouble, yet shalt thou refresh me: thou shalt stretch forth thy hand upon the furiousness of mine enemies, and thy right hand shall save me.

8 The Lord shall make good his loving-kindness toward me: yea, thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever; despise not then the works of thine own hands.

v. 8). If the Psalm be David's, the reference must be to the great promise of 2 Sam. vii. 8—16. We cannot but notice that He, who was foretold, was Himself the WORD, magnified above all other manifestations of God.

vv. 4—6. This sense of the witness to Jehovah before the kings of the earth, by the exaltation of the lowly, and the turning away of His face from the proud, is thoroughly in David's spirit. But it would come back with special appropriateness to the restored exiles (see Ps. lxxviii. 29; cii. 15, 16)—knowing, as they did, how striking a witness for Jehovah

was borne before the heathen by the very fact of their restoration.

v. 8. *Make good, &c.*, is properly (as in A.V. and R.V.), "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me"—again a clear expression of faith in some definite and peculiar dispensation of God to Israel (comp. 2 Sam. vii. 25).

The works of Thine own hands. The plea (as in Job x. 3, 8; xiv. 15) is that lowly and frail as man is, He who created him, and, in David's case, made him the heir of a transcendent promise, will not "despise him" (comp. in sense Isa. lxiv. 9—12).

PSALM CXXXIX.

In the whole Psalter there is no utterance which more strikingly embodies the great idea of the Psalm as such—the realization (that is) of God's Presence to the soul, as possessing, encompassing, and inspiring its inner life. The tone of this supreme consciousness is here mainly a tone of wonder and awe; the Psalmist goes so far as to conceive of a vain attempt to flee from it; even when he puts this aside, he is lost in the mystery of the creating and sustaining power, in which alone he lives; and, by an abrupt, yet natural, transition of thought, takes refuge in the moral aspect of life, which he can grasp—in the intense sense of the duty of conflict with evil, and earnest prayer for God's righteous judgment and His guidance. In this last thought he gladly accepts the searching knowledge of God before which he had previously felt himself overawed. The whole Psalm breathes exactly the spirit of Rom. xi. 33, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!"

It is ascribed to David, and in the Alexandrian MS. of the LXX. bears also the name of Zechariah. Some Aramaisms of style may, perhaps, indicate that in its present form it has passed under a later hand. But in substance the whole, and especially the last section (vv. 19—24), harmonize so well with the spirit of David's Psalms, that it is difficult altogether to set aside the traditional ascription.

The Psalm begins (*a*), in vv. 1—5, with a vivid realization of God's Presence; then (*b*), in vv. 6—11, asking whether it could be possible to flee from it, finds it encompassing the soul in all the height and depth, in all the length and breadth, of creation; and (*c*), in vv. 12—18, is led by the sense of this all-enfolding Presence to dwell on the mystery of man's creation, transcending human thought; finally (*d*), in vv. 19—24, it turns to intense hatred of evil, as sinning against the Creative will, and prays for guidance in the "everlasting way" of God.

vv. 1—5 dwell successively on God's knowledge of deed and word and thought, on His searching trial of all human life, on His all-pervading control of human will, and contemplate all these in adoring wonder.

v. 1. *Long before.* The original is simply (as in A.V. and R.V.) "afar off." Our version here is an explanation of the phrase, probable and beautiful, but not absolutely certain.

v. 2. *Art about, &c.*, should be (as in R.V.), "Thou searchest out" or "winnowest" all my ways, distinguishing the good from evil, wisdom from folly.

v. 3. The more probable rendering is, "A word is not yet on my tongue. Lo! Thou knowest it altogether"—that is, before the word is spoken. Thou knowest the yet unuttered thought.

v. 4. *Fashioned me* should be, "surrounded me," or "beset me" (as in Job iii. 23; xiv. 5, 13; xxiii. 8—10) on every side, hedging in my ways, and "laying" a controlling "hand upon me."

v. 5. should be (as in R.V.)—

"Such knowledge is too wonderful for me,
It is high; I cannot attain unto it."

(Comp. Is. lv. 9.)

v. 6. *Thy Spirit* is distinguished from "Thy presence"—the encompassing power (that is) of God's Providence. There is an evident consciousness of a Divine Spirit speaking personally to the spirit of man (comp. vv. 23, 24), as vivid as in the constant prophetic declaration, "The Spirit of the Lord was upon me." In consciousness of the operation of the Holy Ghost the Old Testament differs but in degree from the New; it is in the knowledge of His distinct Personality that the word of Our Lord Himself is our only guide.

v. 7. "Heaven" is opposed to "hell" (*Sheól* or *Hades*), primarily in the sense of height as opposed to depth (comp. Job xi. 8; Isa. xiv. 14, 15; Matt. xi. 23); although perhaps there may also be allusion to the contrast of light and darkness, presence with and absence from God.

Go down, &c., should be, "make my bed in *Sheól*"—the resting-place of the dead (comp. Job xxvi. 6; Prov. xv. 11).

v. 8. *The uttermost parts of the sea* are the extreme West; "the wings of the morning" bear the dawn swiftly thither from the horizon of the East. Over all the length and breadth of the universe God's hand reaches.

vv. 10, 11 should be (as in R.V.)—

"If I say, Darkness shall cover me
And the light about me shall be
night,

Lo! the darkness," &c.

As God's Presence is universal, so His watchful Eye is inevitable (Job xxiv. 22). Darkness is no darkness to Him who is Himself Light.

vv. 12—16 dwell with almost scientific exactness on the mystery of human birth and growth from the embryo to the full manhood—the

formation of the inner structure ("the reins"), "knit together" ("covered") in the womb (v. 12), the growth of the hard bony framework (v. 14), the appointment of the fixed days of growth up to the birth itself (vv. 15, 16).

v. 12 should probably be—

"For Thou hast formed my reins,
Thou hast knit (or woven) me to-
gether in my mother's womb."

"The reins" (as in Ps. xvi. 7, &c.) are the inmost seat of life and feeling.

v. 13. *Fearfully and wonderfully.* The words express the general spirit of the whole contemplation—not merely wonder, but wonder passing into awe, in the sense of the inscrutable mystery of God's working, as in the great universe, so in the human nature—"the microcosm," which includes in it all the various elements of His Creation.

v. 14. *Beneath in the earth*—properly, "in the depths of the earth." The phrase (generally applied to the unseen *Sheól*) is here probably a bold metaphor for the darkness of the womb, although it may be an allusion to the formation of man from the "dust of the earth."

v. 15. *My substance yet being imperfect* is a paraphrase of the single original word, which signifies the embryo "rolled together."

My members written. The words "my members" are supplied, probably by error. The sense seems to be—

"In Thy book were all written,
The days which were numbered,
When as yet none of them was."

In the book of God's foreseeing purpose, the days of growth were appointed. The fixed periods of growth, maturity, and decay are among the chief mysteries of the human nature.

vv. 17, 18 break out into a cry of adoring wonder, now, however, not of fear, but of grave delight; for God's creative thoughts, if transcending the conception of the mind, are "precious" to the heart.

v. 18. *When I wake up, &c.* The phrase seems to indicate the use of the Psalm as a Morning Hymn (as in Ps. lxxiii. 7). The sense of God's Presence rushes back in the first freshness of waking thought.

vv. 19—24 pass from intellectual contemplation, in which the mind is lost, to the moral consciousness, which is within our grasp—first, in hatred of the evil (singularly characteristic of David's Psalms), and then in earnest aspiration for righteousness. The transition seems abrupt, but there is in it an underlying coherency (comp. in Ps. xix. the transition from the wonder of God's creative work in the heavens to His Law, "converting the soul" and "giving light to the eyes").

vv. 21, 22 bring out precisely the point of distinction of the Old Testament morality from the higher

teaching of the Gospel. We may hate evil itself "with a perfect hatred" ("right sore"); we may even make God's enemies our own. But as the Gospel has revealed His love even to sinners, till they be utterly reprobate, so we may not hate either our enemies or His.

vv. 23, 24 accept thankfully the sense of God's searching knowledge of the soul, praying that He will use it to teach us the sin that is in us, and turn us from it to "the way everlasting" of His righteousness. The God, whom the mind cannot comprehend, the conscience delights to recognise.

PSALM CXL.

This Psalm is closely connected in style and expression with Ps. cxli., cxlii. All are ascribed to David, and, except for the occurrence here and there of peculiar words, supposed to be of later date (which may be simply a mark of adaptation), the internal evidence favours the ascription. There is similarity both in style and in idea to the earlier Psalms of David (see especially Ps. lvii. and lxiv.). In style we note the greater difficulty of interpretation, arising from force and compression of meaning; in idea we find the same combination of craft and violence against the Psalmist, and the same union in him of fierceness against the enemy and sure confidence in God. To which of the great crises of his life—the persecution of early days or the rebellion of Absalom—it is to be referred, it is hard to say. The Syriac heading, "when Saul cast the javelin at him," adopts the former.

The Psalm is divided by the *Selah*—so often found in the earlier Psalms—into four parts. There is a cry to the Lord (*a*), in vv. 1—3, against open violence; (*b*), in vv. 4, 5, against treachery; (*c*), in vv. 6—8, a prayer for the continuance of the salvation given in days past; and (*d*), in vv. 9—13, an anticipation of signal vengeance on the wicked, and triumphant safety of the servant of God.

v. 1. *The wicked man*—properly, "the man of violence," who uses, however, not the hand only, but the tongue. Compare the picture of Doeg in Ps. lii.

v. 3. There is a mixture here of the two metaphors, so often used of slander—the cruel sharpening of the tongue like a weapon (see Ps. lii. 3; iv. 22; lxiv. 3), and the deadly serpent-like poison (Ps. lviii. 4).

v. 5. Comp. Ps. xxxv. 7; lvii. 7; cxix. 110; cxli. 10. The expression suits perhaps better the early experience of David, when treachery on every side set snares for the fugitive.

v. 6. *I said*, &c. (comp. Ps. xxxi. 14). In the confident declaration of faith in God, as his God, even when He seems afar off, the Psalmist finds his strength.

v. 7. *Thou hast covered my head*—with the helmet of salvation (Isa. lix. 17; 1 Thess. v. 8; Eph. vi. 17). David's memory goes back to the days of his triumphant war in the armour of God against the enemies of Israel, and inspires hope of present deliverance.

v. 10. *Let hot burning coals*, &c.—that is, let the lightnings of God's wrath (comp. Ps. xviii. 8, 12, 13) strike them down.

Into fire and into the pit. The word "pit" is a rare word, difficult of interpretation. Probably the meaning is the "deep pits" or "floods" (as in R.V. marg.) of waters, and so the idea is of fire and water as the symbols of opposite means of destruction (comp. Ps. lxvi. 11). Some, however, refer the word to the pit of the burning

DAY 29.

Morning Prayer.

PSALM 139.

Domine, probasti.

O LORD, thou hast searched me out, and known me : thou knowest my down-sitting, and mine up-rising; thou understandest my thoughts long before.

2 Thou art about my path, and about my bed : and spiest out all my ways.

3 For lo, there is not a word in my tongue : but thou, O Lord, knowest it altogether.

4 Thou hast fashioned me behind and before : and laid thine hand upon me.

5 Such knowledge is too wonderful and excellent for me : I cannot attain unto it.

6 Whither shall I go then from thy Spirit : or whither shall I go then from thy presence ?

7 If I climb up into heaven, thou art there : if I go down to hell, thou art there also.

8 If I take the wings of the morning : and remain in the uttermost parts of the sea ;

9 Even there also shall thy hand lead me : and thy right hand shall hold me.

10 If I say, Peradventure the darkness shall cover me : then shall my night be turned to day.

11 Yea, the darkness is no darkness with thee, but the night is as clear as the day : the darkness and light to thee are both alike.

12 For my reins are thine : thou hast covered me in my mother's womb.

13 I will give thanks unto thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made : marvellous are thy works, and that my soul knoweth right well.

14 My bones are not hid from thee : though I be made secretly, and fashioned beneath in the earth.

15 Thine eyes did see my sub-

stance, yet being imperfect : and in thy book were all my members written :

16 Which day by day were fashioned : when as yet there was none of them.

17 How dear are thy counsels unto me, O God : O how great is the sum of them !

18 If I tell them, they are more in number than the sand : when I wake up I am present with thee.

19 Wilt thou not slay the wicked, O God : depart from me, ye bald-thirsty men.

20 For they speak unrighteously against thee : and thine enemies take thy Name in vain.

21 Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee : and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee ?

22 Yea, I hate them right sore : even as though they were mine enemies.

23 Try me, O God, and seek the ground of my heart : prove me, and examine my thoughts.

24 Look well if there be any way of wickedness in me : and lead me in the way everlasting.

PSALM 140.

Eripe me, Domine.

DELIVER me, O Lord, from the evil man : and preserve me from the wicked man.

2 Who imagine mischief in their hearts : and stir up strife all the day long.

3 They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent : adder's poison is under their lips.

4 Keep me, O Lord, from the hands of the ungodly : preserve me from the wicked men, who are purposed to overthrow my goings.

5 The proud have laid a snare for me, and spread a net abroad with cords : yea, and set traps in my way.

of refuse, and so make it parallel, and not antithetical, to "fire."

v. 11. *A man full of words*—that is (as in A.V. and R.V.) an evil speaker (comp. Ps. lii. 3—5).

Evil shall hunt, &c. The hunter of Innocence is himself hunted by Evil.

v. 13. *Continue in Thy sight*—pro-

perly, "dwell in Thy presence," under the shadow of Thy wings (comp. Ps. xvii. 8; xxxvi. 7; lxiii. 7, &c.). The description of the sufferer as helpless and afflicted, yet upright and confident in God, suits exactly the tone and circumstances of David's earlier Psalms.

PSALM CXLI.

This Psalm evidently belongs to the same time and hand as Ps. cxl. The position described is the same; many of the expressions are similar (comp. Ps. cxl. 5 with cxli. 10); the general tone and style are the same, except that Ps. cxli. is even more difficult of interpretation through the vigour and rapidity of thought. The ascription to David is strengthened by strong internal evidence, and the most probable reference is to his early days of trial.

The Psalm, after (a), in vv. 1, 2, the introduction of earnest supplication, goes on (b), in vv. 3—6, to pray for grace to turn from the allurements of the wicked, even to the severity of the righteous; and ends (c), in vv. 7—11, with a cry, earnest and yet trustful, for deliverance out of extremest peril, and for signal vengeance on the enemy.

v. 2. Incense, offered after sacrifice, is the symbol of the worship of the soul already reconciled to God (comp. Rev. v. 8; viii. 3, 4). The evening sacrifice (Exod. xxix. 39) is the regular burnt-offering of self-dedication. The Psalm is evidently an Evening Psalm, and the Psalmist, perhaps far from the worship of the Tabernacle, yet not from God's Presence, lays before Him the offering of pure worship (comp. Mal. i. 11).

vv. 3, 4 are a prayer against temptation to join in the words and deeds of the evil. The Psalmist will not "eat of their dainties" (see A.V. and R.V.), delighting in their false delights.

vv. 5, 6 are very difficult of translation. In the first sentence the general sense is clear: "Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful" (Prov. xxvii. 6). Probably the best rendering is (as in R.V.)—

"Let the righteous smite me, it shall be kindness;

Let him reprove me—it shall be oil for the head;

Let not my head refuse it."

The smiting of just severity heals while it seems to wound, and honours while it seems to dishonour.

The second clause, however, "For even in their wickedness shall my prayer continue" (see R.V.), abrupt-

ly turns to the former subject, and prays earnestly against the evil, which threatens the servant of God.

v. 7 seems to mean, "Let their judges be hurled down the sides of the rock" (comp. 2 Chron. xxv. 12); "then shall they hear my words that they are sweet." The word "sweet" is the same as "dainties" in v. 4. In the time of utter overthrow the leaders of wickedness shall know too late the true sweetness from the false.

v. 8 should be—

"As (when) one furrows and cleaves the earth,

So our bones lie scattered at the mouth of the pit (*Sheól*)."

The verse is difficult; but probably the image is of the stones turned up by the plough, to which the bones of the slain are compared. As the text stands, the Psalmist cries to God for help over the whitening bones of his servants. Some, however, of the Ancient Versions read "their bones," and thus carry on to this verse more simply the idea of v. 7—the bones of those hurled from the rock left to strew the earth below.

v. 11. Comp. Ps. vii. 17; xxxv. 8. The close of the Psalm, after all its intensity of complaint and supplication, is in the tone of a tranquil faith looking up with unbroken trust to His protection.

6 I said unto the Lord, Thou art my God : hear the voice of my prayers, O Lord.

7 O Lord God, thou strength of my health : thou hast covered my head in the day of battle.

8 Let not the ungodly have his desire, O Lord : let not his mischievous imagination prosper, lest they be too proud.

9 Let the mischief of their own lips fall upon the head of them : that compass me about.

10 Let hot burning coals fall upon them : let them be cast into the fire, and into the pit, that they never rise up again.

11 A man full of words shall not prosper upon the earth : evil shall hunt the wicked person to overthrow him.

12 Sure I am that the Lord will avenge the poor : and maintain the cause of the helpless.

13 The righteous also shall give thanks unto thy Name : and the just shall continue in thy sight.

PSALM 141.

Domine, clamavi.

LORD, I call upon thee, haste thee unto me : and consider my voice when I cry unto thee.

2 Let my prayer be set forth in

thy sight as the incense : and let the lifting up of my hands be an evening sacrifice.

3 Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth : and keep the door of my lips.

4 O let not mine heart be inclined to any evil thing : let me not be occupied in ungodly works with the men that work wickedness, lest I eat of such things as please them.

5 Let the righteous rather smite me friendly : and reprove me.

6 But let not their precious balms break my head : yea, I will pray yet against their wickedness.

7 Let their judges be overthrown in stony places : that they may hear my words, for they are sweet.

8 Our bones lie scattered before the pit : like as when one breaketh and heweth wood upon the earth.

9 But mine eyes look unto thee, O Lord God : in thee is my trust, O cast not out my soul.

10 Keep me from the snare that they have laid for me : and from the traps of the wicked doers.

11 Let the ungodly fall into their own nets together : and let me ever escape them.

DAY 29.

Evening Prayer.

PSALM 142.

Voce mea ad Dominum.

I CRIED unto the Lord with my voice : yea, even unto the Lord did I make my supplication.

2 I poured out my complaints before him : and shewed him of my trouble.

3 When my spirit was in heaviness thou knewest my path : in the way wherein I walked have they privily laid a snare for me.

4 I looked also upon my right hand : and saw there was no man that would know me.

5 I had no place to flee unto : and no man cared for my soul.

6 I cried unto thee, O Lord, and said : Thou art my hope, and my portion in the land of the living.

7 Consider my complaint : for I am brought very low.

8 O deliver me from my persecutors : for they are too strong for me.

9 Bring my soul out of prison, that I may give thanks unto thy Name : which thing if thou wilt grant me, then shall the righteous resort unto my company.

PSALM 143.

Domine, exaudi.

HEAR my prayer, O Lord, and consider my desire : hearken

This Psalm, again clearly connected with the preceding, is in the heading ascribed to David, "when he was in the cave"—the cave evidently of Adullam (1 Sam. xxii. 1) or Engedi (1 Sam. xxiv. 3), during the persecution of Saul. (Compare the heading to Ps. lvii.) The tenour and style suit well with the ascription; and the Psalm, though simpler and easier of interpretation, describes much the same position as Ps. cxl., cxli.

It is (a), in vv. 1—5, a complaint to the Lord out of trouble and desolation; and (b), in vv. 6—9, a prayer of mingled distress and faith for deliverance.

v. 1. In this verse, as in the following verse, all the verbs should be in the present tense, "I cry," &c. The complaint is of present distress.

v. 3. *Thou knewest my path.* This remembrance of former mercies is a gleam, thrown from above, in the darkness. For the moment it simply enhances the sense of the surrounding troubles; for the future it is the earnest of salvation.

v. 4. *On my right hand*—the place (see Ps. xvi. 9; cix. 30; cxxi. 5) where protectors and friends should stand. The original is more graphic, "Look at my right hand and see! There is none," &c.

v. 5. *My soul* is here clearly "my life," already in prison (see v. 9), and doomed to death.

v. 6. *My hope* should be, "my refuge"—the same word paraphrased

as "place to flee unto" in v. 5. God is a present refuge, a home for the homeless soul; as He is also a "portion" (comp. Ps. xvi. 6; lxxiii. 25, &c.) for the destitute.

In the land of the living (comp. Ps. xxvii. 13)—the brightness of life, seen as all the brighter out of the shadow of death.

v. 9. *Out of prison*—the cave, in which David was shut up by the pursuit of Saul (1 Sam. xxiv. 3), as a prisoner condemned to die. The latter part of the verse should probably be rendered (as in R.V.)—

"The righteous shall compass me about,
For Thou shalt deal bountifully with me."

The deliverance of one servant of God is a rallying point of encouragement to others.

PSALM CXLIII.

This Psalm—the last of the Seven Penitential Psalms, used in our Service on **ASH WEDNESDAY**—belongs in style and tone to the same group as Ps. cxl.—cxlii., and bears, like them, the name of David. In some copies of the LXX. is added, "when he fled from Absalom his son." It has many resemblances to earlier Psalms; and this has been thought to indicate a later date. But, if not David's, it is wonderfully accordant with the spirit of the Psalms of his later life. For we find in it a tone of deeper pathos, a stronger conviction of sin, and a greater calmness than in the preceding Psalms—very characteristic of the utterances of the period to which the ascription refers it.

It is divided by the *Selah* into two parts: (a), in vv. 1—6, the complaint of persecution without, consciousness of sin within, and intense longing after God; (b), in vv. 7—12, the cry out of this distress for God's mercy, both in spiritual light and in temporal deliverance.

v. 1. *Hearken unto me.* The rendering should be (as in R.V.)—

"In Thy faithfulness answer me and in Thy Righteousness."

Here (as in Ps. xxxi. 1; cxv. 1) the appeal is to God's promise to His servant, which He will keep in "faithfulness," because it is accord-

ant with His eternal "righteousness." The appeal is joined in the same breath with confession (in v. 2) of utter inability to stand before His judgment—in words recalling some passages of the Book of Job (iv. 17—19; ix. 2, 3; xv. 14—16; xxv. 4—6). The whole breathes exactly the spirit of 1 John i. 2, "If we confess our

unto me for thy truth and righteousness' sake.

2 And enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.

3 For the enemy hath persecuted my soul; he hath smitten my life down to the ground: he hath laid me in the darkness, as the men that have been long dead.

4 Therefore is my spirit vexed within me: and my heart within me is desolate.

5 Yet do I remember the time past; I muse upon all thy works: yea, I exercise myself in the works of thy hands.

6 I stretch forth my hands unto thee: my soul gaspeth unto thee as a thirsty land.

7 Hear me, O Lord, and that soon, for my spirit waxeth faint:

hide not thy face from me, lest I be like unto them that go down into the pit.

8 O let me hear thy lovingkindness betimes in the morning, for in thee is my trust: shew thou me the way that I should walk in, for I lift up my soul unto thee.

9 Deliver me, O Lord, from mine enemies: for I flee unto thee to hide me.

10 Teach me to do the thing that pleaseth thee, for thou art my God: let thy loving Spirit lead me forth into the land of righteousness.

11 Quicken me, O Lord, for thy Name's sake: and for thy righteousness' sake bring my soul out of trouble.

12 And of thy goodness slay mine enemies: and destroy all them that vex my soul; for I am thy servant.

DAY 30.

Morning Prayer.

PSALM 144.

Benedictus Dominus.

BLESSED be the Lord my strength: who teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight;

2 My hope and my fortress, my castle and deliverer, my defender in whom I trust: who subdueth my people that is under me.

3 Lord, what is man, that thou hast such respect unto him: or the son of man, that thou so regardest him?

4 Man is like a thing of nought: his time passeth away like a shadow.

5 Bow thy heavens, O Lord, and come down: touch the mountains, and they shall smoke.

6 Cast forth thy lightning, and tear them: shoot out thine arrows, and consume them.

7 Send down thine hand from above: deliver me, and take me out of the great waters, from the hand of strange children;

8 Whose mouth talketh of va-

nity: and their right hand is a right hand of wickedness.

9 I will sing a new song unto thee, O God: and sing praises unto thee upon a ten-stringed lute.

10 Thou hast given victory unto kings: and hast delivered David thy servant from the peril of the sword.

11 Save me, and deliver me from the hand of strange children: whose mouth talketh of vanity, and their right hand is a right hand of iniquity.

12 That our sons may grow up as the young plants: and that our daughters may be as the polished corners of the temple.

13 That our garners may be full and plenteous with all manner of store: that our sheep may bring forth thousands and ten thousands in our streets.

14 That our oxen may be strong to labour, that there be no decay: no leading into captivity, and no complaining in our streets.

15 Happy are the people that are in such a case: yea, blessed

sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Enter not into judgment, &c. (comp. cxxx. 3). The prayer is, of course, not to escape God's judgment, which is inevitable, but to find that in judgment He will, according to His promise, remember mercy. Comp. John v. 24.

v. 3. *Darkness*—the darkness of the shadow of death, compared to the *Sheol* of the spirits "long dead" (Ps. lxxxviii. 5).

v. 5. *The time past*—"the days of old" (comp. Ps. lxxvii. 5, 10, 11)—the times of God's blessing in the earlier years of youth and prosperity (comp. Job xxix.). Such remembrance has always a tone of mingled sadness and hope.

v. 6. Comp. Ps. xlii. 2; lxiii. 2. The "hunger and thirst after righteousness" is ultimately a thirst for God. The metaphor may well have been suggested by the flight into the desert.

v. 7. Comp. Ps. xxviii. 1; lxix. 16—18.

v. 8. *Betimes in the morning*. The phrase, of course, only signifies "early"—a speedy dawn upon the night of trouble; but it probably indicates the use of the Psalm as an Evening Psalm.

v. 9. *I flee unto Thee, &c.* The phrase is literally, "Unto Thee have I hidden"—"myself" or "my sorrow." Comp. Ps. cxlvi. 5, 6.

v. 10. *Land of righteousness* should probably be, "a straight" or "level path." The sense may be as in our version, or "in a path of safety, where none can stumble" (as in Ps. xviii. 19; xxvi. 12; xxxi. 8). In either case the guidance is (comp. Ps. cxxxix. 6) not only from the Providence, but from the "good Spirit" of God.

v. 12. See note on Ps. cxxxvi. 15. Whatever of human frailty may attach to the desire of vengeance, yet the fact remains that to smite the oppressor of righteousness is a part of "the goodness" of God.

PSALM CXLIV.

This Psalm, noted in the heading as "David's," appears to bear distinct marks of a composite character. In vv. 1—11 it is clearly made up of earlier Psalms of David; at v. 12 there is an abrupt transition, and the closing verses are of marked beauty and originality. Probably the Psalm is of late date; and the Psalmist first pours out his soul in the well-known words of David, and then adds a prayer—his own, or (as some think) an ancient prayer made his own—for blessing upon Israel.

In vv. 1—4 we have (a) a contrast between the greatness of God's strength and the littleness of man; then (b), in vv. 5—11, a prayer for the visible interposition of His Providence to defend His king against the children of the stranger; lastly (c), in vv. 12—15, a picture of the prosperity desired of God for Israel.

vv. 1, 2 are evidently taken from Ps. xviii. 1, 34, 47, but with two characteristic changes, according with the tone of the preceding Psalms. God is called the Psalmist's "loving-kindness" ("hope"), and his "refuge" ("in whom I trust"). Comp. Ps. cxliii. 1, 2, 8; cxlii. 5. These give a tinge of sadder experience to the exulting confidence of David's great *Te Deum*.

vv. 3, 4 are again taken from Ps. viii. 4; xxxix. 6, 7; Job xiv. 1, 2. But the use of them here in contrast with the eternal strength of God is entirely original. The Psalmist recog-

nises a "strength made perfect in weakness."

vv. 5—8, 11, return to Ps. xviii. 9, 13, 14, 16, 45, 46, only changing its triumphant declarations into prayer, and interspersing occasional references to other Psalms; but, as before, the Psalmist handles the old materials freely, and uses expressions peculiarly his own.

v. 5. Comp. Ps. civ. 32. The allusion is probably to the descent on Mount Sinai.

v. 9. See Ps. xxxiii. 2, 3: xl. 3; xcii. 3, &c.

vv. 9, 10 are an utterance of anticipatory thanksgiving in the midst of prayer, based on recollections of past mercy. The expression of v. 10 is peculiar. God is acknowledged in it as the King of kings; and "David His servant" taken as the highest type of the kings to whom He gives victory. The blessing to David is, of course, extended, in thought and hope, to the children of David.

v. 11 (like v. 7) quotes the earlier Psalm; but the phrase, "the strange children" ("children of the stranger"), must have had a larger sense than of old. To David they were but the hostile nations round; to the later Psalmist not only these, but the greater conquerors and oppressors of God's people.

vv. 12—15 present a simple and singularly beautiful picture of the peace and prosperity of those "who have," and feel that they have, "the Lord for their God." It seems to have about it a tinge of simpler antiquity. It is, perhaps, still free quotation, but of a Psalm which otherwise we do not know. This is made probable by the abruptness and difficulty of the grammatical

connection with the previous verses in the original.

v. 12. *As the young plants* (comp. Ps. cxxviii. 4; Isa. liii. 2)—in continued increase of strength and fruitfulness.

As the polished corners of the Temple—properly (see R.V.), "as corner stones hewn after the fashion of a palace." The word "corners" or "corner pillars" is used in Zech. ix. 15; "hewn" is "sculptured." The allusion is clearly to the graceful ornamental corner-pillars of a palace.

v. 13. *Streets* should be "fields."

v. 14. The translation of this verse is singularly difficult, although the general sense is plain enough. Probably the best rendering is—

"Our cattle laden with produce (or "big with young");
No breaking in (of assault),
No going forth (to captivity), no cry in our streets."

v. 15 is the Psalmist's conclusion of the whole—applying it evidently to the condition of his own people: as happy in temporal prosperity, but as happy far more, in "having the Lord for their God."

PSALM CXLV.

This singularly beautiful Psalm is an acrostic Psalm, in which the 14th letter (*Nun*) is omitted. (The omission is supplied by a variation of v. 17 in the LXX., and in some versions which follow it.) It is headed "David's Psalm of praise"—the word used being the same as in the title of the whole book. The ascription may only indicate its character as a typical song of praise; but it may, perhaps, more probably point (as in other Psalms of this group) to a work originally that of David, which in its present form has passed under other hands. It is used in the Church as the last Psalm of *WHIT SUNDAY*, immediately following Ps. civ., to which it bears many resemblances.

As is the case of all alphabetical Psalms, the sectional division is less marked than usual. But after the introductory verses (vv. 1, 2), it seems to hymn successively (a), in vv. 3—6, God's greatness; (b), in vv. 7—16, His goodness; and (c), in vv. 17—21, His righteousness.

v. 3. Comp. Ps. xlvi. 1; xcvi. 4; Job v. 9; ix. 10.

v. 5. *Of Thy worship, &c.*, should be (much as in R.V.), "the splendour of the glory of Thy majesty." God's "majesty" is His inherent greatness; His "glory" is the manifestation of that majesty; and its "splendour" is the brightness of this manifestation as it is seen by the eyes of men. These (says the Psalmist) are to be seen by those

who meditate upon "His wondrous works."

vv. 5, 6 represent vividly the individual praise of the inspired leader, and the responsive chorus, which it elicits from the mass of men.

v. 7 indicates the passing to the consideration of the moral attributes of God—His goodness and His righteousness—which form the leading ideas of the rest of the Psalm.

v. 8. Comp. Ps. ciii. 8, and the revelation of God to Moses in Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7.

v. 10 sets forth the double hymn of praise always going up to God—the deep inarticulate praise of “All His works” (as in Ps. cxlviii. and in the *Benedicite*), and the clear and conscious adoration of “His saints,” who not only praise, but “bless” Him in thankfulness.

vv. 11—13 go back to the greatness and eternity of God’s kingdom; but now, with peculiar beauty of idea, dwell on it, as shewn forth especially in His graciousness. He “declares His Almighty power most chiefly in showing mercy and pity.” The contemplation of simple majesty breathes merely awe; the sense of graciousness in majesty adds to it the glow of thankfulness.

v. 13. Comp. Dan. iv. 3, 34. What is infinite in greatness must be infinite in duration.

v. 14 turns to dwell on God’s es-

pecial and personal mercy to the fallen and the lowly (comp. Ps. cxlvii. 3, 4); and the thought leads on (in vv. 15, 16) to the dependence of all creatures on His sustaining hand (comp. Ps. civ. 27, 28), which satisfies the special desire and need of each living thing.

v. 17. *Holy* should probably be “gracious” (as in Jer. iii. 12, the only other place where the word is used). The Psalmist dwells finally on God’s relation to those who are His, as a relation both of righteousness and of mercy. They “call upon Him”; they “fear Him”; they “love Him.” He hears, saves, and preserves them. Only in connection with this salvation of those who love Him does the Psalmist glance at the destruction of the ungodly, who war against them and against Him.

v. 21 sums up the idea of the whole. The Psalmist leads the choir of God’s praise; “all flesh” is called to join it.

PSALM CXLVI.

This Psalm opens a group of five Hallelujah Psalms, closing the Psalter with praise—sometimes called a second “Hallel,” in relation to the “Great Hallel” of Ps. cxiii.—cxviii. In the LXX. this Psalm and the next two are ascribed to Haggai and Zechariah. The whole group evidently belongs to the time of the Restoration, and nothing is more likely than that these Psalms were composed as a part of the Liturgy of the restored Temple Service. This Psalm is closely connected in idea with Ps. cxlv., and has many points of resemblance to it, even in detail. Like all the compositions of the era of the Restoration, it is full also of reminiscences of earlier Psalms. It is simply a contrast of the frailty of all earthly trust with the blessedness of faith in the Lord, who (as in Ps. cxlv.) is described as beyond all else a God of mercy to all phases of human suffering and weakness.

v. 1. Comp. Ps. ciii. 1; civ. 33. The being of man is viewed as absolutely dependent on the breath of God; therefore every moment of its existence is to be devoted to Him.

v. 2. *Put not your trust in princes* (comp. Ps. cvii. 40; cxviii. 8, 9; cxix. 23, 161; Isa. ii. 22). These words, which have passed into a proverb (with perhaps some variation from their original meaning) refer evidently in the first instance to the princes of the Persian Empire and its subject kings around, as alternately favouring and persecuting the people of God. We read (Ezra v. 1, 2; vi. 14) of the encouragement needed from the lips of the Prophets. These words of the Psalm

convey just the needful encouragement.

Nor in any child of man should be (as in R.V.)—

“Nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help.”

The “son of man” (as we know by its higher use in the New Testament) is man at his best; even in him, as simply man, there is no help.

v. 3. The true rendering (as in A.V. and R.V.) is more graphic—

“His breath goeth forth;
He returneth to his earth;
In that very day his thoughts
perish.”

vv. 4, 5 dwell, as usual in the Psalms of this date, on God, as at

are the people who have the Lord for their God.

PSALM 145.

Exaltabo te, Deus.

I WILL magnify thee, O God, thy Name for ever and ever.

2 Every day will I give thanks unto thee : and praise thy Name for ever and ever.

3 Great is the Lord, and marvellous worthy to be praised : there is no end of his greatness.

4 One generation shall praise thy works unto another : and declare thy power.

5 As for me, I will be talking of thy worship : thy glory, thy praise, and wondrous works ;

6 So that men shall speak of the might of thy marvellous acts : and I will also tell of thy greatness.

7 The memorial of thine abundant kindness shall be shewed : and men shall sing of thy righteousness.

8 The Lord is gracious, and merciful : long-suffering, and of great goodness.

9 The Lord is loving unto every man : and his mercy is over all his works.

10 All thy works praise thee, O Lord : and thy saints give thanks unto thee.

11 They shew the glory of thy kingdom : and talk of thy power ;

12 That thy power, thy glory, and mightiness of thy kingdom : might be known unto men.

13 Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom : and thy dominion endureth throughout all ages.

14 The Lord upholdeth all such as fall : and lifteth up all those that are down.

15 The eyes of all wait upon thee, O Lord : and thou givest them their meat in due season.

16 Thou openest thine hand : and fillest all things living with plenteousness.

17 The Lord is righteous in

all his ways : and holy in all his works.

18 The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him : yea, all such as call upon him faithfully.

19 He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him : he also will hear their cry, and will help them.

20 The Lord preserveth all them that love him : but scattereth abroad all the ungodly.

21 My mouth shall speak the praise of the Lord : and let all flesh give thanks unto his holy Name for ever and ever.

PSALM 146.

Lauda, anima mee.

PRAISE the Lord, O my soul ; while I live will I praise the Lord : yea, as long as I have any being, I will sing praises unto my God.

2 O put not your trust in princes, nor in any child of man : for there is no help in them.

3 For when the breath of man goeth forth he shall turn again to his earth : and then all his thoughts perish.

4 Blessed is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help : and whose hope is in the Lord his God ;

5 Who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that therein is : who keepeth his promise for ever ;

6 Who helpeth them to right that suffer wrong : who feedeth the hungry.

7 The Lord looseth men out of prison : the Lord giveth sight to the blind.

8 The Lord helpeth them that are fallen : the Lord careth for the righteous.

9 The Lord careth for the strangers ; he defendeth the fatherless and widow : as for the way of the ungodly, he turneth it upside down.

10 The Lord thy God, O Sion, shall be King for evermore : and throughout all generations.

once the "God of Jacob" and "the Creator of heaven and earth" (comp. Ps. cxxi. 2, 4; cxxiv. 7; cxxxiv. 4). In the sense of the nearer relation is the secret of love; in the larger conception the secret of reverence; in both the ground of faith.

vv. 6—9. The Psalmist, after glancing at God's Almighty power, dwells in detail on His mercy to the oppressed, the famished, the captives, the blind, the fallen, and the desolate. But His "love" is to "the righteous." Only in relation to this thought does the Psalmist touch on

His punishment of the ungodly (comp. Ps. cxlv. 15—20). In all these forms of mercy there is clearly reminiscence (literal or metaphorical) of the return and restoration of the exiles; in all (it has been noted) there is unconscious foreshadowing of the work of the Divine Redeemer on earth.

v. 10 naturally ends the whole by dwelling on the eternity of the Lord's kingdom and of His covenant with Israel. Even the fulness of His mercy would not satisfy, if it could pass away (comp. Ps. cxlv. 13).

PSALM CXLVII.

This Psalm, also obviously of the time of the Restoration, has been referred with much probability to the great occasion of thanksgiving after the completion of the walls and gates of Jerusalem (see vv. 2, 3, 13), recorded in Neh. xii. 27—43, "when the joy of Jerusalem was heard even afar off." The leading idea of the Psalm, recurring again and again, is the working out of the same twofold consciousness of God, which is touched on in Ps. cxlv. 10—16; cxlvi. 4, 5. His Almighty rule over the world, and His special and tender providence over Israel, are brought out repeatedly in singularly beautiful contrast. The Psalm is full of reminiscences of earlier Psalms, especially Ps. xxxiii., civ., and of the Book of Job; in one passage (vv. 3—5) it closely follows Isa. xl. 26—29; but yet it has all the force and freedom of originality.

After the introductory verses (1, 2), calling for praise to the Lord, "the builder up of Jerusalem," we have (a), in vv. 3—6, a thanksgiving to Him as at once the Creator of the great Universe and the tender Guardian of His lowest servants; then (b), in vv. 7—11, a description of His beneficence to all the earth, yet especially to those who fear Him; lastly, in vv. 12—20, the praise of Him, who has "made fast the gates" of Jerusalem, and who, besides the revelation of Himself through the creative word, which all Nature obeys, gives the new word of revelation to Israel.

v. 1. Comp. Ps. xxxiii. 1; xcii. 1; cxxxv. 3. The general expressions of praise are, however, here clenched by special reference to the "building up of Jerusalem" and the gathering up of the "outcasts" (Isa. xi. 12; lvi. 8) from captivity.

vv. 3—6. The contrast of these verses brings out with peculiar force and beauty the harmony of the majestic sweep of God's general Providence with the tenderness of His special Providence over the afflicted and the lowly (comp. Isa. xl. 26—29). Each advance in knowledge of the vastness of the universe, represented in the starry sky, forces on us still

more vividly the sense of the contrast. The intellect loses itself in the power and "infinite wisdom" of the Creator (v. 5); the moral nature recognises His righteousness and love to each of us, shewn, as in exaltation of the meek, so also in humiliation of proud ungodliness (v. 6).

vv. 8, 9 obviously recall Job xxxviii. 26, 27, 41 (see also Ps. civ. 13, 14, 27, 28). The words "herb for the use of men," inserted from the LXX., are not in the original, and break the order of thought; which is of the beneficent gift of the dew and rain on the far-off mountain pastures,

DAY 30.

Evening Prayer.

PSALM 147.

Laudate Dominum.

O PRAISE the Lord, for it is a good thing to sing praises unto our God : yea, a joyful and pleasant thing it is to be thankful.

2 The Lord doth build up Jerusalem : and gather together the out-casts of Israel.

3 He healeth those that are broken in heart : and giveth medicine to heal their sickness.

4 He telleth the number of the stars : and calleth them all by their names.

5 Great is our Lord, and great is his power : yea, and his wisdom is infinite.

6 The Lord setteth up the meek : and bringeth the ungodly down to the ground.

7 O sing unto the Lord with thanksgiving : sing praises upon the harp unto our God ;

8 Who covereth the heaven with clouds, and prepareth rain for the earth : and maketh the grass to grow upon the mountains, and herb for the use of men ;

9 Who giveth fodder unto the cattle : and feedeth the young ravens that call upon him.

10 He hath no pleasure in the strength of an horse : neither delighteth he in any man's legs.

11 But the Lord's delight is in them that fear him : and put their trust in his mercy.

12 Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem : praise thy God, O Sion.

13 For he hath made fast the bars of thy gates : and hath blessed thy children within thee.

14 He maketh peace in thy borders : and filleth thee with the flour of wheat.

15 He sendeth forth his commandment upon earth : and his word runneth very swiftly.

16 He giveth snow like wool : and scattereth the hoar-frost like ashes.

17 He casteth forth his ice like morsels : who is able to abide his frost ?

18 He sendeth out his word, and melteth them : he bloweth with his wind, and the waters flow.

19 He sheweth his word unto Jacob : his statutes and ordinances unto Israel.

20 He hath not dealt so with any nation : neither have the heathen knowledge of his laws.

PSALM 148.

Laudate Dominum.

O PRAISE the Lord of heaven : praise him in the height.

2 Praise him, all ye angels of his : praise him, all his host.

3 Praise him, sun and moon : praise him, all ye stars and light.

4 Praise him, all ye heavens : and ye waters that are above the heavens.

5 Let them praise the Name of the Lord : for he spake the word, and they were made ; he commanded, and they were created.

6 He hath made them fast for ever and ever : he hath given them a law which shall not be broken.

7 Praise the Lord upon earth : ye dragons, and all deeps ;

8 Fire and hail, snow and vapours : wind and storm, fulfilling his word ;

9 Mountains and all hills : fruitful trees and all cedars ;

10 Beasts and all cattle : worms and feathered fowls ;

11 Kings of the earth and all people : princes and all judges of the world ;

12 Young men and maidens, old men and children, praise the Name of the Lord : for his Name only is excellent, and his praise above heaven and earth.

13 He shall exalt the horn of his people ; all his saints shall praise him : even the children of Israel, even the people that serveth him.

PSALM 149.

Cantate Domino.

O SING unto the Lord a new song : let the congregation of saints praise him.

"where no man is"—food for the beast grazing, and for the raven crying, in the wilderness (Job xxxviii. 41).

vv. 10, 11 pass from the beneficence of God to all His creatures, to dwell on His special love to them who fear Him. v. 10 is obviously a quotation from Ps. xxxiii. 15—27, which comes in here with some abruptness. The strength of the war horse and the swiftness of the warrior are nothing before the Almighty; the fear of His righteousness and trust in His mercy are everything.

v. 13 contains the clearest reference to the completion of Nehemiah's work (Neh. xii.), protecting from the enmity of man the peace and prosperity which God had given to His restored people.

v. 14. *Maketh peace in thy borders* should be, more strikingly, "maketh thy borders peace."

The flour of wheat is the "fat of wheat" (comp. Ps. lxxxi. 17, and the Song of Moses, Deut. xxxii. 14).

vv. 15—18 once more go back with

abrupt emphasis to the universal power of God's creative and sustaining word, in the mysterious laws of the fleecy snow, the fine covering of hoar-frost, and the "ice-morsels" of the hail—sent in all their inclemency, yet melted into the supply which feeds the streams by the breath of the Lord (comp. Job xxxvii. 6—13: xxxviii. 22—27; Ps. xxxiii. 6, 7). Possibly the striking vividness of description may have been suggested by some remarkable exhibition of this natural phenomenon before the eyes of the Psalmist.

v. 19 contrasts the creative word of Gen. i. 3, &c., with the word of Revelation to Israel. The former phrase marks belief, not only in a Supreme Power, but in a living God, "who spake and it was done" (Ps. xxxiii. 8, 9; cxlviii. 5). The latter goes on to faith in His special manifestation of Himself, by "the word of the Lord"—that is, by direct intelligible revelation—to Israel, as chosen out of the nations. The two beliefs (as all history shews) support and illustrate each other.

PSALM CXLVIII.

In this magnificent Psalm—evidently the original of the *Benedicite*, and of countless hymns of praise in the Church—the idea, running through this group of Psalms, reaches a glorious climax. It is a call for universal praise of the Creator from all beings in heaven and earth; and this natural hymn of thanksgiving is taken up, in deeper knowledge and intensity of feeling, by the chosen people of the Lord.

In vv. 1—6 (a) the hymn of praise is called for from the hosts of heaven; in vv. 7—12 (b) from all the orders of creation on earth; v. 13 (c) is the final thanksgiving of the saints chosen and exalted of God. (Compare with (a) vv. 1—17 of the *Benedicite*, with (b) vv. 13—26, and with (c) vv. 27—32.)

v. 1. The verse should be (as in A.V. and R.V.)—

"Praise the Lord from the heavens,
Praise Him in the heights."

It is a true *Gloria in excelsis Deo*.

v. 2. The angels are dwelt upon in this connection, not merely as the highest order of created being (comp. Ps. ciii. 20, 21), but probably as the ministers of God in the outer sphere, serving Him through the forces of Nature (comp. Ps. civ. 4; Heb. i. 7). How emphatically the idea of angelic

ministry is stamped on the later thought of Israel is shewn plainly in the whole Book of Daniel.

v. 3. The sun, moon, and stars—the gods of all idolatry (see Job xxxi. 26, 27)—were specially the objects of Chaldean worship, with which the Captivity had made the Israelites familiar. Naturally stress is laid on their service to the will of the One true God.

v. 4 obviously refers to Gen. i. 6—8. The original is more striking, "ye heavens of heavens" (comp. Deut.

x. 14; 1 Kings viii. 27; Ps. cxv. 16)—the boundless unknown regions beyond the firmament.

vv. 5, 6, quoting Ps. xxxiii. 6—9, evidently refer to the powers of Nature, as such, bound in their invariable order, not by some unknown law of necessity, but by the creative word of God. The fixity of Nature is described as resting on the "covenant" of God in Gen. viii. 21, 22; ix. 12—16. In the very obedience to this law, the Psalmist seems to recognise a silent hymn of praise of Him who made it.

v. 7. *Dragons* (as in Ps. lxxiv. 14) are the great sea-monsters of "the deeps." They are spoken of separately from the familiar animal creation of v. 10—probably as the unknown and mysterious inhabitants of the great deep.

v. 8. *Fire and hail*—the lightning and hail (see Ps. cv. 32). Comp. Ps. xviii. 12, 13 and Exod. ix. 23, 24.

Snow and vapours. The "vapour" is "smoke," real or apparent, rising from the mountains. It corresponds to the "fire," as the "snow" to the "hail."

Stormy wind fulfilling His word (see Ps. cvii. 25)—by all earthly force irre-

sistible, but by His word raised and stayed.

v. 9. The "cedars" of Lebanon (comp. Ps. civ. 16) were to Hebrew poetry the special type of the majesty of the great forest-tree, as distinguished from the "fruitful trees" of human cultivation.

v. 10. *Worms* should be "creeping things" (as in A.V. and R.V.)—joined with the "fowls" in Gen. i. 20.

vv. 11, 12 describe humanity, in all variety of rank and sex and age, as crowning the hymn of praise, not (as in vv. 5, 6) under invariable law, but in free recognition of the "excellency" of God's Name.

v. 13. *All His saints shall praise Him* is a paraphrase of the original, "the praise of all His saints," which may refer (as here explained) to God Himself, or to "His exaltation of the horn of His people."

That serveth Him should be (as in A.V. and R.V.), "a people near unto Him" (see Deut. iv. 7; Ps. xli. 1; cxlv. 18, &c.). It was this "nearness to God"—now extended to the whole Church (Eph. ii. 13) through the blood of Christ—which gave deeper knowledge of Him and therefore greater power to praise Him.

PSALM CXLIX.

This Psalm, apparently of the same date as the preceding, strikes a far narrower and intenser keynote. It is a praise of God from Israel alone in the day of deliverance; it is an exultation in the hope of renewal of the old victories, and of vengeance on the heathen oppressors. It is not easy to understand how such expectation could belong to the time of the Restoration. It would suit better with an earlier or later date. But it is possible that the reference, as in other passages of the Old Testament, may be to the expected kingdom of the Messiah. In any case its literal sense is of the older Covenant, never reproduced without spiritual anachronism under the New. "Our weapons are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds" (2 Cor. x. 4); our "two edged sword" is the "Word of God" (Eph. vi. 17; Heb. iv. 12); our "chains" bring "into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. x. 5). There will be righteous vengeance (as the Apocalypse abundantly testifies), but it belongs to the Lord alone.

In vv. 1—4 (a) it is simply a hymn of praise; in vv. 5—9 (b) a fierce anticipation of triumph.

v. 1. *A new song* (as in Ps. xxxiii. 3; xcvi. 1; cxliv. 9) is the old song of praise, made new by newness of heart and newness of air.

v. 3. (Comp. Ps. lxxxi. 2; cl. 4). The exultation in the new deliverance breaks out, as of old, on the shores of the Red Sea, in "timbrels

and dances" (Exod. xv. 20), and with the same intermixture of triumph over the enemies of Israel.

v. 4. *Helpeth the meek-hearted* is an inadequate rendering of the original, "He shall beautify the meek with salvation" (as in A.V. and R.V.)—clothing their unworthiness in the

glorious garments of salvation (comp. Ps. cxxxii. 9, 17; Isa. lxi. 3, 10; Zech. iii. 3, 4; Rev. xix. 8).

v. 5. *In their beds* (comp. Job xxxv. 10; Ps. lxxiii. 7)—in the secret thanksgiving, as well as in the public rejoicing of the former clause.

vv. 6—9. The sword, first wielded in defence (as in Neh. iv. 18), was afterwards to be an instrument of triumph and vengeance, as in the old conquest under Joshua, which is evidently alluded to throughout.

The Psalmist perhaps desires to fire with some enthusiasm that broken-spirited despondency, which the history shews to have weighed so heavily on the returned exiles.

v. 9 should probably be rendered—

“To execute on them the judgment written.

It is the honour of His saints.”

It was the thought that vengeance was the righteous retribution, written in the book of God, which made Israel glory in inflicting it.

PSALM CL.

This Psalm is an expansion of the Doxology which closes each book of the Psalter (see Ps. xli. 13; lxxii. 18, 19; lxxxix. 50; cvi. 46), crowning the last book and the whole Psalter itself. It rises once more to the great idea of Ps. cxlviii. While the main body of the Psalm (in vv. 3—5) echoes the music of the earthly sanctuary, it begins and ends with the universal praise of heaven and earth.

v. 1. *In His holiness* should be (as in A.V. and R.V.), “In His sanctuary.” The parallelism with the second clause makes it clear that the sanctuary is the “holy Temple” of Heaven (Hab. ii. 20), *the firmament of His power* (comp. Ps. xix. 1), on which His glory is visibly written.

v. 2. *His noble acts*, seen on earth, manifest *the excellent greatness*, which fills the heaven.

vv. 3—5 refer successively to all the instruments of the sanctuary—the trumpet (or rather curved cornet of ram’s horn, see Josh. vi. 6), giving the signal of worship, the lute (or psaltery) and harp accompanying the voice of song, the timbrel (or tambourine) used for the dance, the “strings” and pipe (or flute), and the clash of the cymbal (comp. Ps. xxxiii. 2; lxxxix. 3; xviii. 6; cxliv. 9; cxlix. 3; 1 Chr. xv. 16, 19, 28, &c.)—each, no doubt, in the liturgical use of the Psalm, chiming in successive-

ly, and all joining in the final burst of praise.

v. 4. *Strings and pipe*. The “strings” must denote some particular instrument, as the lute and harp (both stringed instruments) have already been mentioned. The “pipe” with which, as a wind instrument, it is contrasted, has been thought by some to be a simple anticipation of the “organ” (by which it is rendered in the Vulgate and in our A.V.). But it is more probably a true pipe or flute.

v. 5. *The well-tuned cymbals... the loud cymbals* is properly “cymbals of clear tone and cymbals of loudness”—cymbals smaller and larger, of note high and low.

v. 6. As v. 1 called for the universal worship of heaven, so this verse invites the praise of all—“every thing that hath breath” on earth—both the dumb praise of the lower creatures, and the articulate praise of men. It sums up grandly the whole Psalter as the great “Book of Praises.”

2 Let Israel rejoice in him that made him : and let the children of Sion be joyful in their King.

3 Let them praise his Name in the dance : let them sing praises unto him with tabret and harp.

4 For the Lord hath pleasure in his people : and helpeth the meek-hearted.

5 Let the saints be joyful with glory : let them rejoice in their beds.

6 Let the praises of God be in their mouth : and a two-edged sword in their hands ;

7 To be avenged of the heathen : and to rebuke the people ;

8 To bind their kings in chains : and their nobles with links of iron.

9 That they may be avenged

of them, as it is written : Such honour have all his saints.

PSALM 150.

Laudate Dominum.

O PRAISE God in his holiness : praise him in the firmament of his power.

2 Praise him in his noble acts : praise him according to his excellent greatness.

3 Praise him in the sound of the trumpet : praise him upon the lute and harp.

4 Praise him in the cymbals and dances : praise him upon the strings and pipe.

5 Praise him upon the well-tuned cymbals : praise him upon the loud cymbals.

6 Let every thing that hath breath : praise the Lord.