

THE BOOK OF PRAISES

OR

THE PSALMS.

AN ATTEMPT TO TRACE THEIR SEQUENCE.

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PREFACE.

THERE are few books of the sacred Word with which Christians in our land are more familiar than with the book of Psalms. Read or sung right through twelve times in the year in the daily service of the Church of England, and the appointed portions for the day of the month rehearsed in the morning and evening services on the Lord's day, no book of Scripture is so frequently brought thus publicly to the notice of members of that communion. Then the metre Psalms, as they are called—a metrical version of that book which for many a long year formed by far the greater part of the Presbyterian hymnal, if we may be allowed to use the expression—served to familiarise generation after generation of Christians in Scotland with the thoughts of the Hebrew Psalter. But used north and south of the Tweed more as a devotional book for worship, the real plan and special purpose of the collection is in danger, in some measure, of being kept out of sight. The Psalms do express thoughts, feelings, and right desires of saints of God, and express them in the original in words taught the different writers by the Holy Ghost (1 Cor. ii. 13). Hence saints in all ages find language which befits them in certain circumstances,

whether of trial or of gladness. Yet Christians, if they apprehend their vocation, must own that there are expressions in the Psalter foreign to that spirit which they have been taught to exhibit. For whilst all true Christians are saints of God (Rom. i. 7), it should be remembered that there were saints on earth before there were Christians, who lived, as far as regards Israelites, under law; and there will be saints yet to appear on this scene after every true Christian shall have left it—and those of them who will be Israelites will be subject to the law. For these last it is that this book as a whole is especially designed.

For them it will be found to be a Divine provision for the outflow of their hearts and for the suited expression of their lips, living, as they will be, upon earth after the rapture predicted in 1 Thess. iv. 13-18, and before the Second Advent, and when the Holy Ghost will be neither dwelling in Person down here, nor be indwelling saints of God at that time in this world. For such saints God has especially provided in the Psalter, foreknowing, as we may see, their desires, and putting the very words in their mouths which will suitably express their case. For Christians who worship by the Spirit of God (Phil. iii. 3, R.V.) no such provision is made in the New Testament.

This need not surprise us, for examples of a like kind, though in smaller measure, can be found elsewhere. We would instance chapters liii. and lxiv. of the Prophet Isaiah. In the first of these we have the confession prophetically declared of the godly remnant of the Jews in the future consequent on beholding the Lord Jesus, who will at length have returned to deliver them.

Nations and kings will be astonished at His coming (Isa. lii. 14, 15), and that godly remnant will then confess how mistaken had been their thoughts about Him (liii. 4). But ere He reappears, the address to God in chapter lxiv. desiring Divine intervention will have been presented to the Almighty. Hence it is clear that the Spirit of God can and does provide language for saints in yet coming days. Samples of that we may see in Revelation as well as in Isaiah. Full proof of it is detailed in the Psalms.

The book of Psalms, then, is really prophetic—a statement, which, if it startles some, will be found on reflection impossible to gainsay. Prophetic of the Lord it certainly was when compiled; prophetic of Him it still remains, as it predicts His future in connection with earth. Prophetic it also is as regards the godly remnant of Israel, as well as the bringing in of millennial peace, not by preaching of the Word, but by the sword out of Christ's mouth, and by the avenging hand of God's earthly people (Ps. cxlix. 6-9). And this statement as regards the prophetic character of the book will receive further confirmation as we recall to mind the condition of things both political and social contemplated in its pages.

And first as to *political* matters. We would refer to that conflict foretold in the *second* Psalm between the ruling powers on earth and God, who has purposed to set His Son as King in Zion—a conflict begun at the time of the crucifixion (Acts iv. 25-28). Begun then, it is not yet ended, for Rev. xix. 11-21 has foretold that coming battle, which will issue in the final defeat of the then head of the Roman empire, who, with Antichrist and the kings of the earth, will combine to frustrate, if possible, the revealed purpose of the God of heaven. Then of

Jerusalem's future the Psalms treat, as well as the Prophets Isaiah and Zechariah. A capture of the city and the slaughter of its inhabitants we read of in Ps. lxxix., the same event as Zechariah has foretold (xiv. 1, 2). And the Psalmist laments a destruction of the Temple (lxxiv.), which evidently is an event yet future, as remarks on that Psalm we trust will make plain. These sorrows, as we learn elsewhere, will be brought about by the King of the North (Dan. viii., xi.); and his invasion is the subject of Ps. lxxxiii., whilst the following Psalm (lxxxiv.) speaks of the consequent desolation of the altars, the birds able to build their nests on them without molestation because the daily sacrifice will have ceased (Dan. viii. 11, R.V.).

Now remembering that the conflict began at the Cross (Ps. ii.), we should naturally suppose these sorrows (lxxiv., lxxix.) must be viewed as subsequent to that time. No previous misfortunes in Israel's history are here, we make bold to say, contemplated by the Psalmist. Then, whilst the people are regarded by God as *Lo-ammi* (Hos. i. 9), these Psalms to which we have just called attention cannot apply, for their language is that of true saints, conscious, too, that they are thus owned by God. To post-Christian times, then, they must refer. But deliverance will be accorded. Of that Ps. xlvi. and Ps. xlviii. witness, referring, as they do, to the last siege of the city (Zech. xii. 1-4), when, the Lord espousing her cause, the kings arrayed against her will hasten away. Then Ps. xcvi. and xcix. celebrate the one the victory, and the other the abiding presence of God in Zion. That certainly is future.

As regards what may be called the *social* condition of things exhibited in the Psalms, we have proofs in abundance. Two classes, the godly and the ungodly, are

seen existing side by side in Ps. i. The latter, who will have been as thorns in the sides of the righteous, will pass away, whilst the true saints will remain. Of the end of those latter we have many notices (see Ps. i. 4-6; ix. 15-17; xxxvi. 12; xxxvii. 35-38; xlix. 14; lii. 5; lv. 19-23; lxiii. 9, 10; lxxiii. 18, 19, 27; xcii. 7, 9-11; xciv. 23; cxlv. 20). Such is the forecast; and in every one of the books of the Psalter is the final cutting off of the wicked predicted. How God would encourage the righteous when feeling keenly the malice and oppression of the ungodly! God will espouse the cause of His people. So of the future of the godly, whose proper hope is to be preserved alive on earth, frequent mention is made (i. 3; xxxvii. 29; lvi. 13; lxvi. 9; lxxiii. 20; ciii. 4; cxv. 17, 18; cxvi. 8, 9, 15; cxviii. 17; cxxiv.; cxlv. 20)—a picture how different from that to which we have been accustomed! We have referred thus fully to the Psalms in substantiation of that which has been advanced—proofs all must own, in abundance, that the Psalter really looks forward to a time and to a condition of things to which men have been strangers since the Flood. For though the death of some saints is contemplated (xvii. 15; lxxix. 2, 3) between the rapture and the appearing of the Lord Jesus out of heaven, and confirmed by Rev. vi. 9-11; xv. 2-4, the expectation of the righteous will be to remain on earth, surviving the outwardly wicked, witnessing the return of the Lord Jesus to reign, and enjoying to the full earthly blessing under Him. Now such an expectation is, of course, wholly foreign to that of the Christian, as 1 Thess. iv. 17 teaches. In the Psalms it is the godly who remain; in 1 Thess. it is the Christians who go.

Another landmark as to the full bearing of the Psalms

will be found in this, that Jerusalem is viewed as the centre to which the saints of God turn, expecting her walls to be rebuilt and her sanctuary to be restored (see Ps. li. 18, 19 ; lxix. 35 ; cxxxii. 13-18 ; cxlvii. 12-14). At Jerusalem, too, will the invading host of the northern power in a coming day be overthrown (lxxvi. 1-6), and the saints in Israel will be militant in the most literal manner (cxlix. 6-9). But before all that takes place, the renewed fertility of the land of Canaan will be noticed. Ezekiel has predicted it (xxxvi. 8), and Ps. lxvii. 6 views it as accomplished ; for the Psalmist, whoever he was, really wrote, "The earth *has* yielded her increase ; and God, even our own God, shall bless us."

Just one more remark. We have pointed out (p. 13) how unique is this book made up of compositions of different writers, ranging over about a thousand years. Unique it also is for its joyous ending (cxlvi.-cl.). No book in that respect is like it. Prophets as Isaiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Zephaniah, and Zechariah furnish the reader at their close with pictures of millennial blessing ; but the closing Psalms, as is natural, tell of the feelings and gladness of heart of saints when first entering on the enjoyment of it. All will then unite in praising God.

These few general remarks now made, we invite the reader to a consideration of the papers which follow.

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THE PSALMS.

AN ATTEMPT TO TRACE THEIR SEQUENCE.

INTRODUCTION.

THE book of Psalms bears in the Hebrew Bible the name of *T'hillim*, or praises.* In the Vatican copy of the Greek Septuagint it is styled *Psalmoi*, whence our English title Psalms; but in the Alexandrian copy of the Septuagint it is called *Psalterion*. From this probably comes the other term by which it is known as the *Psalter*.

This book evidently stood, and still stands in the Hebrew Bible at the head of the third great division of the Old Testament Scriptures, and so gave its name to it, as appears from the Lord's words summing up that revelation under the three heads of the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms (Luke xxiv. 44). As a book it is unique in character, being made up of compositions by different writers, and ranging over a period of nearly a thousand years ere its contents were all produced, the earliest writer mentioned being Moses (Ps. xc.), and the latest certainly not anterior to the Babylonish captivity (Ps. cxxxvii.).

* One Psalm and one only, the last in the book ascribed to David, cxlv., bears the title of *T'hillah* (i.e. praise). It ends with the declaration, "My mouth shall speak the praise [*t'hillah*] of the Lord." Fitting that his last known composition in the book should be praise.

Faith in times of affliction, conflict, and declension, and the outpouring of the heart to God whether in prayer or praise under such circumstances, characterise the compositions. Fitly then may they begin chronologically with Moses, who, as Heb. xi. 24, 25 would teach us, had to choose whether he would take his part with God's people in affliction, or would enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.

By whom, guided by the Spirit, the whole collection was arranged, each composition brought into its present place, and whether the work of one servant of God or of several, is hidden from us. Enough for us it is to know, and own, that the different authors wrote in words taught of the Spirit, as one of them has expressed it (Ps. xlv. 1), his tongue being the pen of a ready writer. And we may add our belief, that the arrangement of the different Psalms in the order in which they have come down to us is not of human origin, but is the carrying out of a Divine purpose. Hence there is a moral order in the arrangement of this book, as there is in other books of the inspired volume.

Looking into the whole collection, we learn that it is divided into five books—*viz.* i.-xli.; xlii.-lxxii.; lxxiii.-lxxxix.; xc.-cvi.; cvii.-cl. Each of the first four have at their close a doxology, connected with which we meet with the significant word "Amen." "Blessed be Jehovah the God of Israel from everlasting and to everlasting. Amen, and Amen" (Ps. xli. 13). "Blessed be Jehovah, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. And blessed be His glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with His glory. Amen, and Amen" (Ps. lxxii. 18, 19). "Blessed be Jehovah for evermore. Amen, and Amen" (Ps. lxxxix. 52). "Blessed be Jehovah the God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting: and let all the people say Amen, Hallelujah" (Ps. cvi. 48). Then the whole collection terminates with a call on everything that hath breath to praise Jah, the Psalmist striking

the keynote, "Hallelu-Jah"—i.e. praise ye the Lord (cl. 6). What a day that will be! Hallelujah having first resounded throughout the vault of heaven (Rev. xix. 1, 3, 4, 6), that joyful note will be taken up on earth, and everything that hath breath will praise Him.

This book, then, has a prophetic character, telling us, as it does in plain language, of that day—the day which shall dawn upon earth, the like of which has never been seen since man in innocence walked in Eden, and as fallen had given to him and to Eve the hope of the woman's seed, who shall bruise the serpent's head.

But what reason is there for the order in which the different Psalms are introduced? As we have said, there must be a moral order, for manifestly they are not arranged chronologically. This is patent since Ps. cxxxvii., written after the Babylonish captivity commenced,* directly precedes a whole series (cxxxviii.-cxl.) from the pen of the sweet Psalmist of Israel (2 Sam. xxiii. 1). Clear, too, it is that they were not grouped together so as to present each author's compositions apart by themselves. To rationalists the order in the book may seem an inexplicable puzzle, such thinking—and some of them are not afraid to avow the opinion—that the compiler, whoever he was, mistook his vocation, and would have done better had he possessed, and acted in accordance with, the critical acumen characteristic of the present day.

Now it is instructive to remember that, as regards the arrangement of the Psalms, there seems never to have been any manner of doubt. The order of the books of the Old Testament revelation differs considerably in the Greek Septuagint from that in which it appears in the Hebrew Scriptures. In the Peshito Syriac, which in age comes

* We have said *commenced*, because it is questioned, whether the Hebrew word in verse 8 should be translated "Who art to be destroyed," as in A.V. and in R.V. in text, or as in margin of R.V., "that art laid waste."

between the Septuagint and the Vulgate, the order of the books differs at times from that both in the Hebrew and in the Greek Bibles. Again, a large part of the Prophet Jeremiah is arranged in the Septuagint in a very different order from that in which it is found in the Hebrew, to which last modern versions made from the original, as well as those made from the Vulgate, all conform. No such variations of order, however, are found in the Psalms in any of the versions mentioned. Each Psalm appears in them in the place in which it is found in the original, only that in the Septuagint and in the Vulgate Ps. ix. and x. are joined together, as well as Ps. cxiv. and cxv., Ps. cxvi. and cxlvii. being respectively divided into two, to make up the number of one hundred and fifty. Of the apocryphal Psalm in the Septuagint numbered 151, we need here take no account. In the Peshito Syriac the numeration of the inspired compositions agrees with the Hebrew, except that Ps. cxiv. and cxv. are conjoined, and cxlvii. is divided into two. The arrangement, then, of the Psalter, as far as the most ancient versions are concerned, is unquestioned; hence the reason for it must be sought from a study of the different compositions. It is to this that the reader's attention is now sought to be drawn.

The five books of the Psalms mentioned above are arranged in an historical sequence; the character of the different books marking a progress in a history which the Spirit of God has by prophecies foretold. And this progress can be traced in those Psalms which form an introduction to the different books. Ps. i. and ii. stand as the introduction to the *first* book, Ps. i. describing the walk of the saint in Israel, and the respective ends of the ungodly and of the godly who have been called with an earthly calling—*i.e.* to whom life on earth has been conditionally offered as their portion. Then Ps. ii. acquaints us with the conflict between the powers on earth and

God respecting the establishment outwardly of His kingdom, and the need of the acknowledgment by all on earth of His Son as the King in Zion. This conflict, which began at the Cross (Acts iv. 25-28), will only be terminated by the return of the Lord out of heaven (Luke xix. 15-27, Rev. xix. 11-16), previous to which, but subsequent to the rapture, the godly remnant of the Jews will experience the persecuting power of their enemies, notably under Antichrist. Hence the *second* book of Psalms opens with xlii. and xliii. as its introduction, the former describing the godly one driven out of the city, deprived of access to God's altar, and crying to Him from the land of Jordan and of the Hermonites; and the latter asking Him to send out His light and truth, to bring the exiled one back to His holy hill and to His tabernacles. The saint driven out of the city thus looks to be brought back through Jehovah's interposition on his behalf.

In the *third* book the troubles are seen to be increasing, and Ps. lxxiii. and lxxiv. give their character. Apostates openly flourish, whilst the saints are in trouble (lxxiii.), and the temple of God has been laid low (lxxiv.) by the northern confederacy, and, as we learn elsewhere, its last overthrow, ere being rebuilt for God to return to dwell in it, never again to forsake it (Ezek. xliii. 7). A power opposed not only to God's saints in the land, but to their national existence, is viewed as having entered the city and laid low the house: compare Dan viii. 11; ix. 27*; Isa. xxix. 4; Zech. xiv. 2. The godly remnant thus brought low indeed, having no refuge now but in Adonai, their resource, however, as in all previous

* "There shall come one that maketh desolate" (R.V.); not as in A.V., "he shall make it desolate." For the desolator, and the prince that shall come, who will confirm a covenant with the apostate Jews, are two different persons. The prince that shall come is the first beast of Rev. xiii. The one who maketh desolate is the King of the North.

generations, the *fourth* book opens with a direct address to Him (Ps. xc.) and a prayer for His favourable intervention. This, which forms the introduction, is answered in the series of Psalms xciii.-c., describing the kingdom set up in power. The *fifth* and last book commences with Ps. cvii., describing God's ways in power and government with His redeemed, followed by Ps. cviii., in which He is praised for His mercy, and the land, it is remembered, is His; so His saints will yet fully enjoy it, and sing therein the great Hallel of praise. These two Psalms introduce the last book.

To seize the full teaching of the different compositions we must remember the prophetic teaching elsewhere given of the godly remnant of the earthly people in a time yet to come. For, whilst many statements in the Psalms may afford comfort and encouragement to Christians, there is scarcely a Psalm, in which the saint's experience is expressed, that a Christian could intelligently apply throughout to himself. This remark may startle some. Let them put that question to the test. They will find it is sober truth.

Among the authors of the Psalms, David, of course, figures largely; but Moses, Asaph, Heman, and Ethan also appear, and it may be Solomon as the writer of Ps. lxxii. and cxxvii. Then, as to the circumstances which gave rise to many of the compositions, all so described are attributed to the history of David,—Ps. cii. alone excepted. But whether the different headings can be depended upon, that of Ps. xviii. excepted, is a matter on which there is not agreement, though they must have been inserted very early, being found in the Greek Septuagint version. In that version, however, there are headings to other Psalms which have no authority from the Hebrew text. Then of instruments of music we have mention, both wind and stringed instruments being pressed into the service of God. Ps. iv. tells of the latter, and

Ps. v. speaks of the former. And tunes, it would seem, well known in those days, we read of, to which certain Psalms were to be set, such as *Al-taschith*, "destroy not," Ps. lvii., lviii., lix., lxxv. The character also of the different compositions are noticed, as *Psalms*; *songs* also, as Ps. xxx., xlv., xlv., etc.; *prayers*, as Ps. xvii., lxxxvi., xc., cii., cxlii.; and *praise*, as Ps. cxlv. Some, too, are distinguished by the Hebrew term *Michtam*, Ps. xvi., lvi., lvii., lviii., lix., lx., an addition, as we see at times, to the designation of "a song"; others are described as *Maschil* (see Ps. xxxii., xlii., xlv., etc.). Into all this, however, it would be foreign to our purpose here to enter. So closing these prefatory remarks, which remind us of the varied character of the compositions, we invite our readers to examine with us the *order* of the Psalms in detail.

THE FIRST BOOK OF PSALMS.

I.-XLI.

THE FIRST BOOK.

PS. I. and II. form the introduction to the Psalter. In the former we learn of two moral classes viewed as existing on earth—*viz.* a saint on the one hand, and wicked men on the other. An individual saint is described in the midst of ungodly men, sinners, and scorers—not that he is the only righteous one upon earth, for Jehovah, it is said, knoweth the way of the righteous (6); literally, righteous ones. But the saint has to stand his ground individually, it may be, against a crowd of ungodly men, as if he were the only person upon earth governed by God's law. His sure end is described: "He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper" (3). He will abide, whilst the wicked, as chaff driven by the wind, will pass away. "The ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous" (4, 5).

We have here a very different future for saints from that which forms the Christian's hope. He looks to be taken out of this scene, whilst the wicked remain for judgment (2 Thess. i. 7-9). The saint in the Psalms (Ps. xvii. 15 excepted) looks to be preserved alive on earth, having an earthly calling; so his proper expectation is to be kept from death (Ps. lxxviii. 20; cxvi. 8, 9, 15; cxviii. 17), and to see Jehovah, in the Person of His Son, reign in power at Jerusalem, then made the metropolis of the whole earth

(Ps. xcix. 2). For God's counsels about His Son shall certainly be accomplished.

Of this purpose the second Psalm treats, intimating, however, the opposition that would be raised by ruling powers and peoples on earth, if possible to prevent it. The heathen may rage, and peoples, or nations, imagine a vain thing; the kings of the earth setting themselves, and the rulers taking counsel together against Jehovah,* and against His Anointed, saying, "Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us" (Ps. ii. 1-3). But all in vain. God's determination, expressed in this Psalm, written ages ago, will be fulfilled to the letter. Two questions may here arise. Who is God's King? And when was the opposition to begin to display itself? God's King is His Son, and of His birth the Psalm speaks (7). Nor are we to be in doubt about the Person so designated; for the Apostle Paul in the synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia taught his hearers, and teaches us, that to the incarnation of Christ that verse of the Psalm refers (Acts xiii. 33, R.V.). Would any ask, When did the conflict between the powers of earth and Jehovah begin? Acts iv. 25-28 supplies the answer. It began at the Cross. It continues still, and will break out in yet more determined opposition when Rev. xix. 19 receives its fulfilment.

* The reader will often find in the following pages "Jehovah" where the A.V. has "the Lord." There are two Hebrew words translated Lord—*viz.* Jehovah and Adonai, distinguished in the A.V. by the former being printed in small capitals, the latter in ordinary type. To mark the difference more plainly, we have kept the word "Jehovah," following the more general Hebrew punctuation. The value of marking this may be perceived when reading Ps. xviii. 31. "Who is God save the Lord?" so runs the A.V. But put Jehovah in the place of the Lord, and it makes the sense more forcible. "Who is God save Jehovah?" He who is the God of Israel, He and He alone is God. Very many critics have *Jahve* for *Jehovah*. We have followed the Masoretic punctuation in keeping to Jehovah; so R.V. Exod. vi. 3, Ps. lxxxiii. 18, Isa. xii., xxvi. 4.

Meanwhile God would entreat opposers to be wise and submit to the King, kissing the Son in token of submission (Ps. ii. 10-13). But, as we shall see further on, the entreaty is to little purpose.

Now it is indisputable that when this Psalm was written, the King of whom it treats had not appeared. It was *then* prophetic in character; it is in part prophetic still. So placed here at the outset of the Psalter, it evidences the prophetic character of the whole collection. And as we proceed to examine this wonderful book, we shall learn later on of God's King reigning at Jerusalem (xcix. 1, 2), and when reaching its close shall find all on earth engaged in praising Jehovah (cl.). Christians are not, then, those of whom the Psalms even prophetically treat. They have a heavenly calling (Heb. iii. 1). The saints in the Psalms have an earthly calling. But as there are experiences common to saints in all ages, and in which Christians as saints have part, we can often find much comfort for ourselves in this book.

These two Psalms (i.-ii.) form a fitting introduction, the first giving us, as we have said, a *moral* picture; the second, as it may be called, the *political* one. Both, too, speak of the blessedness of the saint, the first beginning with it, the second ending with it. "Blessed is the man," etc. (i. 1). "Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him"—i.e. the King (ii. 12).

Following on from the character of the saint's walk and his hope, and the picture of insubjection to the Divine will concerning God's Son, we have next set forth (iii.-vii.) various trials to which the godly one may be subjected. All on earth not being subject to God, he cannot look for a perfectly smooth path. *First*, then, he is viewed as *suffering persecution* at the hand of his enemies, who are many, and who regard him as without help or salvation from his God (iii. 2). But to Him he cries as his shield, his glory, and the lifter up of his head (3), and who hears

him from His holy hill (4). Hence he has slept in peace, and will not be afraid of myriads of the people that have surrounded him. He cries then in confidence, that what he asks God will grant. "Salvation," he says, "belongeth unto Jehovah: Thy blessing is on Thy people" (8). So in Ps. iv., whilst still crying to God, he evidences that he is a saint, for he appeals to men to turn from their ungodly ways, to offer sacrifices of righteousness, and to trust in Jehovah, in whom his confidence is unabated (8). And, indeed, how could he doubt, when he remembered the character of his God (Ps. v.)? "Thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness; neither shall evil dwell with Thee. The foolish shall not stand in Thy sight: Thou hatest all workers of iniquity. Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing: Jehovah will abhor the bloody and deceitful man" (4-6). Thinking of God's character, the issue, he knows, is not uncertain. "Thou wilt," he adds, "bless the righteous; with favour wilt Thou compass him as with a shield" (12). Interesting it is to learn how confidence can be engendered.

Another trial he experiences—*viz. chastening at the hand of Jehovah through sickness* (vi.). To Him then he turns (2-7), and, assured that Jehovah has heard his prayer, bids the workers of iniquity to depart from him, those perhaps watching for his death, the proof, as they would declare, of his hypocrisy in life. By Christians such a trial as sickness, though it may be from the Lord in government (1 Cor. xi. 30; James v. 14, 15), and perhaps with death as a certainty in prospect, even if an act of special government (1 John v. 16), must be viewed in a different light from that in which a saint in the Psalms will regard it. We go through death to be with Christ, called with an heavenly calling. One calling himself a saint in the future, if apparently dying from Jehovah's hand on his body, *might* evidence that he had been practising hypocrisy. Death, unless for martyrs, we have

reason to think no saint on earth after the rapture will experience (Rev. vi. 9-11, xv. 2, xx. 4). We may understand, then, that it is a special trial for those called with an earthly calling to be chastened in body by Him whom they really serve. And how jubilant the ungodly may be, pointing the finger at the one as he lies sick, somewhat like Job's friends, and worse perhaps even than Zophar, who made the suffering patriarch sit for the portrait of the wicked man, the hypocrite (Job xx.)! Did not Wycliffe experience that? Nor has it been confined to his day.

A *third* trial is that of *slander* (Ps. vii. 3-5). Accused wrongfully, he turns to God, the resource for His people at all times. Had he acted injuriously to others, he might well deserve punishment (5). But clear from all charge that the enemy would bring against him, he cries, "Arise, O Jehovah, in Thine anger; lift up Thyself, because of the rage of mine enemies; and awake for me to the judgment that Thou hast commanded. So shall the congregation of the peoples compass Thee about; for their sakes, therefore, return Thou on high" (*i.e.* take again Thy place on Thy heavenly throne).* "Jehovah shall judge the peoples: judge me, O Jehovah, according to my righteousness, and according to mine integrity that is in me." (What Christian could ask this?) "Oh, let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end; but establish the just: for the righteous God trieth the hearts and reins. My defence is of God, which saveth the upright in heart" (6-10). Such was his cry and such his confidence. So whatever the trial, the resource of the saint in each case is in God, to whom he speaks, and who is not and will not be indifferent to

* "The Psalmist, so to speak, arranges the judgment scene; the assembly of the nations is to form a circle round about Jahve in the midst of which He will sit in judgment, and after the judgment He is to soar away (Gen. xvii. 22) aloft over it, and return to the heights of heaven like a victor after the battle. Ps. lxxviii. 18."—*Delitzsch*.

the sorrows and trials of His people. What a comfort to be able to speak to God!

God having been called on to judge for His saints and to judge the peoples—i.e. the nations (vii. 6-9)—will He remain indifferent to such an appeal? No. He hears the cry of His people, and will help them. “Shall not God avenge His own elect?” (Luke xviii. 7). How this will be accomplished is next set forth in Ps. viii.-x. And first we read of the One to whom this work will be committed (viii.). It is the Son of Man, under whom, we learn, all things will be put, even the second Man, the last Adam, of whom Adam, as head of a race, was a type. Who He is Heb. ii. 6-9 makes plain, and interprets for us the statements in our Psalm about Him (4-6), telling, as it does, that this Divine word, penned by David, yet awaits its fulfilment; whilst 1 Cor. xv. 27 teaches what interpretation we are to put on the words, “Thou hast put all things under His feet.” Connected with this, we learn next (ix.) that Jehovah will take up the cause of His persecuted and, humanly speaking, helpless people, and that He will judge the wicked man, so that the man of the earth, mortal as he is, may no more oppress (x. 18). This necessarily leads on in thought to the millennium. No wonder, then, that in view of this happy consummation for the saints, the Psalmist could say, “I will praise Thee, O Jehovah, with my whole heart; I will shew forth all Thy marvellous works. I will be glad and rejoice in Thee; I will sing praise to Thy name, O Thou Most High” (ix. 1, 2). Here for the first time in the Psalter have we the name *Most High* applied to God, His special title in the millennium, as Ps. lxxxiii. 18 states, “That men may know that Thou, whose name alone is Jehovah, art the Most High over all the earth.” The Gentiles rebuked (5), the wicked man destroyed, the habitable world judged in righteousness, and peoples in uprightness (8),—such statements show us that the events contemplated

have a world-wide importance, the effects described reaching beyond the limits and the national interests only of the people of Israel.

In Ps. ix. the nations are mentioned (5). In the following, the wicked man's ways are described, persecuting the poor, boasting of his heart's desire, blessing the covetous, and lying in wait for his victims. God is not in all his thoughts.* Hence comes a prayer for his destruction (x. 12-15), and the Psalmist here closes with the announcement that Jehovah is King for ever and ever, the heathen (or nations) have perished out of His land. "Thou hast heard, O Jehovah," he adds, "the desire of the humble; Thou wilt prepare [or rather, establish] their heart, Thou wilt cause Thine ear to hear; to judge the fatherless and the oppressed, that the man of the earth may no more oppress" (x. 16-18). Thus the godly are carried on in thought to the establishment on earth of the kingdom in power; for nothing short of this is God's design, and nothing less will meet the need of His tried, persecuted, and earthly people. And we should observe that this happy consummation will be brought about by One who is a man, and could die, and who will demonstrate to all that the wicked one of Ps. x., who in the pride of his heart banishes God from his thoughts, and puffeth at his enemies, is only a man of the earth, who must succumb to the power of the Son of Man, who, though He has died, will return as man to reign.

Following on, we read next of *exercises* of heart through which the godly pass, before the deliverance just described is effected. And *first* we have the answer of faith to the taunt of the unbelieving, "In Jehovah put I my trust: how say ye to my soul, Flee as a bird to your mountain?" (xi. 1). *Next* the cry of faith to God (xii.) for help, "For the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men." Are we not here reminded of the

* Or, "All his thoughts are, There is no God."—R.V.

Lord's words for a time that is^t coming, "Nevertheless when the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?" (Luke xviii. 8). We say a time that is coming, for whilst the Holy Ghost is here, and the Church is here, such a state of things could not be. The cry becomes more urgent in Ps. xiii., and is followed by xiv., which shows both the effect on the ungodly Jews of God's presence amongst His people (5), and also that the deliverance of the saints is contemplated as bound up with the restoration of the nation from captivity (7),—an event this is which is still future (Ezek. xx. 34-38). After this we have in Ps. xv. the description morally of the one who shall abide in Jehovah's tabernacle and dwell in His holy hill. For as xiv. recognises the existence of the two classes amongst God's professing earthly people, the righteous and the fool, the godly remnant of the future are here seen (xv.) distinct from the rest of the nation. Great indeed are their trials, as Ps. iii., vi., vii. have described them. Deep, too, are the exercises of heart (xi.-xiii.), and most earnest the cry to God, as deliverance seems delayed—"Consider and hear me, O Jehovah my God; lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death; lest mine enemy say, I have prevailed against him; and those that trouble me rejoice when I am moved" (xiii. 3, 4).

Has any one ever been in like trials? One, we have to answer, has, who is called elsewhere the Author (or Captain) and Perfecter of the faith (Heb. xii. 2). He has trodden the whole path perfectly, and has been raised from the dead, and is beyond all suffering and trial—so saints can hope for deliverance in their turn. This One is now introduced to the attention of those suffering ones, to encourage them, and, indeed, all saints on their road. So we have a series of Psalms about the Lord Jesus Christ, commencing with Ps. xvi. and ending with Ps. xxiv., but divided into two distinct parts by the interposition of Ps. xix. For Ps. xvi.-xviii. treat of His walk as a man,

and of His final victory over His enemies; whilst Ps. xx.-xxii. have for their theme the troubles He experienced as man, and the sorrows He alone endured on the Cross, when bearing for sinners Divine judgment. One sees here plainly that it must be a moral and not a chronological order in which the Psalms are arranged, else those which speak of His life of humiliation and of His death on the Cross must have preceded in the book any which tell of His power and triumph. But it is not so.

In Ps. xvi. He is presented as walking on earth, and that for God. The company in which He delights, and His confidence in God to be preserved, though with death before Him, all this we learn, as it were, from His own lips. The sorrows, too, of those who turn to another God, and His complete separation from all such, with Jehovah as the portion of His inheritance, and of His cup, and the maintainer of His lot,—all this does He declare. Dependence and obedience characterise Him, and of His resurrection by the power of Jehovah, whom He has always set before Himself, He speaks with confidence. Death then could not rob Him of His portion, for the path of life for Him lay through it (11). Hence, though saints may die, resurrection from the dead they can share in, as He has who is risen, the First-begotten of the dead.

In Ps. xvi. the Lord appears alone. Both Peter (Acts ii. 25-28) and Paul (Acts xiii. 35) attest its special application to Him. From Ps. xvii., though not applying exclusively to Him, we learn what it was that guided Him as the Obedient One in His walk: "Concerning the works of men, by the word of Thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer" (xvii. 4). He judged all by the unerring standard of the Word. How fully the history of the Temptation in the Wilderness illustrates this! But, as remarked, others are also in this Psalm in view: "They have now compassed us in our

steps," we read (11). So the safe and only Guide for saints is declared (4). And resurrection is assured such if they die, as the contrast is drawn between the wicked and the righteous in the closing verses: "Arise, O Jehovah, disappoint him, cast him down: deliver my soul from the wicked, which is Thy sword: from men which are Thy hand, O Jehovah, from men of the world, which have their portion in this life, and whose belly Thou fillest with Thy hid treasure; they are full of [or satisfied with] children, and leave the rest of their substance to their babes. As for me, I will behold Thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness" (13-15). Neither class is here viewed as necessarily always abiding on earth. The wicked will pass away, their portion of good things left behind them. They have been *satisfied*, or filled full of children, passing away, however, ere their descendants emerge from a state of infancy. The saint will be satisfied only as he awakes with Jehovah's likeness. His portion is in front. Let the reader mark the contrast between that which satisfies the wicked now, and that which satisfies the saint in the future. These two Psalms, then, tell us of the walk here of the Messiah, of His death, too, and resurrection, and where the walk of faithfulness to God surely ends. Further, they can furnish principles for the saint's walk, as exhibited in the life of the Lord. "Learn of Me," He said (Matt. xi. 29). Ps. xvii. may in measure illustrate it; and of 1 Cor. xv. 49, Phil. iii. 21, 1 John iii. 2 the reader may also be reminded.

But God's purposes for earth are bound up with the presence here, and the fortunes of the King as victorious over all His enemies. Of this we next read in Ps. xviii. Of God's King we have heard in Ps. ii., with God's unchanging purpose about Him there declared. Here He is presented as finally victorious in a Psalm composed by David, "When delivered from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul." Often had David been in

danger of death, but deliverance out of all his troubles he lived to prove. Yet his history and personal salvation is not all that the Psalm celebrates, for it speaks really of One greater than he, as it looks on to millennial times (44, 45), and to the triumph of the King displayed in its completeness, but only after His resurrection has taken place (xvi. 10). In David's case it was deliverance on earth *before* death. In the Lord's case He will appear triumphant as the risen One. There seems a propriety then in introducing the resurrection (xvi.) before His final triumph over all earthly foes in xviii.; for it is God's deliverance of His anointed. And verses 43-45 were clearly not exhausted in the history of David. Could we say that in his case they were fulfilled? A coming day will witness that not one word of this has fallen to the ground.

What God was to David * is set forth in Ps. xviii., and we next see in xix. how others may learn about Him. He is Jehovah, the self-existing One, who has given a double testimony of Himself, first by *creation* (xix. 1-6) and then by *revelation* (7-14); the practical importance of this last for saints verse 11 states. "By them [*i.e.* Jehovah's judgments] is Thy servant warned; and in keeping of them there is great reward." Others, then, can learn about God, whose mind for His creatures and saints is to be gathered from Divine revelation. And those thus taught will be found to take an interest in Him, who, before He ascended the throne, had to enter into a depth of trouble known only in its fulness to Himself (xx.-xxii.).

* In varied language does the royal Psalmist describe it. God was his Rock (2), literally a cleft in a rock, or a cleft rock. He was also his fortress or watch tower; his strength, too, like a hard mass of rock; his buckler, or shield; and his high tower, or steep height. "All these epithets applied to God are the fruit of the afflictions out of which David's song has sprung—*viz.* his persecution by Saul, when in a country abounding in rugged rocks and deficient in forest, he betook himself to the rocks for safety, and the mountains served him as his fortresses."—*Delitzsch.*

To this we are next directed. In xx. the godly ones state to the King their desires for Him to be heard in the day of trouble, and how they will rejoice in His salvation (1-5), followed by the expression of confidence as to His deliverance, and of theirs also (6-8). "Save, Lord" (*i.e.* Jehovah), is their cry. "Let the King hear us when we call" (9). In xxi. they address Jehovah, who has heard the prayer of His Anointed One, recounting what He has given to Him, and setting forth what the King will do with His enemies, since Jehovah has espoused His cause.

Then in xxii. we have the thoughts and feelings of that same Anointed One when making atonement on the Cross, as well as the wide-reaching results, as far as earth is concerned, consequent on His substitutionary sacrifice. The grace which could allow others to express their interest in the King and their joy at His deliverance, we can understand. But what shall we say of the favour which allows *us* to know by the spirit of prophecy the Lord's feelings, as expressed to God, when He hung on the Cross, and was there made sin for us? What a subject, then, it is of which Ps. xxii. treats—the innermost feelings and thoughts of the Lord Jesus, when on the Cross, expressed by Himself (and who else could have expressed them?), and that in human language as far as it could interpret them!

He suffered from God, and He suffered from man. What He suffered from God in making atonement is expressed in the Psalms, and also in the Gospels, but in a way which shows that no words could really describe it: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" The heart can only bow in worship, as the believer learns, *first*, that there was a depth of sorrow into which He entered beyond words to express, or even for the human mind to understand; and, *secondly*, that none but He, who there died, could have made atonement for our sins. But

what He felt as to men, in their sayings and doings about Him, when on the Cross, the Gospel history passes over. So this Psalm can teach us about *that*. But the Psalm does not end there. And how fitting it is that He who there suffered should have the joy of setting forth the wide-reaching results for God's glory and the blessing to souls of His atoning sacrifice, commencing with the day of His resurrection, and looking on to that of His manifested power and glory (22-31)! And further we may see that nothing but grace flowing out consequent on His death is therein contemplated. Other Psalms speak of judgment on the opposers and wicked ones; this only speaks of grace the result of His sacrifice. Ps. xvi. views His path through life up to His resurrection. Ps. xxii. begins with His death on the Cross, and ends with the kingdom set up in power. But as the purport of these papers is to endeavour to trace out the *moral* order in which the Psalms are presented to us, we must hasten on; and not dwell at length on this solemn but deeply instructive composition.

Christ has died. Christ is risen. Hence saints of God, though born in sin, can count on Jehovah's Shepherd care, and look for preservation from death to enjoy life in millennial blessedness on earth (xxiii. 6); for the One who has made atonement through His death will return here to reign (xxiv.). Thus these two Psalms come in. The former is the language of assurance for the sheep, arising from the knowledge that they have of Jehovah as their Shepherd. And it is what He is to them, and what He will do for them, that is declared, (and all for His name's sake,) with the certainty, as earthly saints, of immunity from death, for they shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever. One knows the common application of verse 4 of this Psalm by Christians. But whilst one can apply the passage *figuratively* to the passing through death, we believe that the remnant of Israel will find its

literal application just suited to them, the word here translated *shadow of death* expressing darkness, or dangers which may threaten death, but *not* temporal death actually. In the same sense we find it elsewhere in the book of Psalms xlv. 19 ; cvii. 10, 14 ; so also Isa. ix. 2 ; Jer. ii. 6. We think it will be clear, that temporal death is not contemplated in xxiii. 4, since the saint goes on to speak of a table spread before him by Jehovah in the presence of his enemies, and then to dwell in the house of the Lord for ever. Earth, not heaven, he contemplates as his portion.

Now this, we think, is supported by Ps. xxiv., which clearly looks for millennial blessing on earth, and not for a heavenly portion above. It answers the question, "Who shall ascend into the hill of Jehovah? or, who shall stand in His holy place?" (xxiv. 3), when He returns to reign. For of the Lord's return to reign, and not of His ascension, does this Psalm really treat. Those practically righteous, whoever they may be, shall ascend thither. For the language of this Psalm, let the reader remark, describing the character of such saints, may well include those from among Gentiles, as well as those from among Jews, in the coming day ; whereas the wording of Ps. xv. seems to point to those rather who have kept the law.

This—*viz.* the opening a door for the introduction of Gentiles into millennial blessing—is quite in keeping with the order of these subjects observed elsewhere. In Isa. xlv. 20-24, the prophet having previously predicted blessing for Israel, the Lord turns to address all the ends of the earth, and offers to them salvation, Gentiles coming in on the tail of the skirt of the Jew. So in Rev. vii. the godly remnant of the twelve tribes are sealed, before they enter into the tribulation ; but the saved Gentiles are only seen after they have come out of it. It seems fitting, therefore, that, since godly Gentiles will stand before the throne and before the Lamb on earth

(Rev. vii. 9), this series of Psalms (xvi.-xxiv.), connected especially with the history of the Lord, and this last one (xxiv.) with His return to Zion (7-10), should not close without a word which admits them to share in the blessings of the day of His glory.

The Lord's return thus predicted, we know how this carries on the intelligent student of the Word in thought to a future day, when there will be seen, what cannot now exist, a godly remnant of His earthly people awaiting Jehovah's intervention on their behalf. Of different *trials* to which they will be exposed we have already read (iii.-vii.); and of their *exercises* of heart in consequence we have also learnt (xi.-xv.). Now we are to be introduced more particularly to their *moral* and *spiritual* condition. This, since the atoning death of the Lord has been viewed as accomplished, can be entered upon. But ere doing that, the Lord's own pathway as a man has been brought before us. Their circumstances and His, they may find, are somewhat similar; but He was holy, harmless, undefiled. It seems fitting, then, that His pathway, so instructive for saints, should be described, ere their moral and spiritual condition should be entered upon, as follows in Ps. xxv.*-xxvi.

In the former Psalm the saint turns to Jehovah his God for forgiveness and deliverance (11-20). His sins, the sins of his youth and his transgressions, are frankly admitted, and Jehovah is entreated, "Remember, O Jehovah, Thy tender mercies and Thy loving-kindnesses; for they have been ever of old. Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions: according to Thy mercy remember Thou me, for Thy goodness' sake, O Jehovah" (6-7). Three times over does he utter the word *remember*—

* This is one of the alphabetical Psalms; the verses begin with different letters of the alphabet, but in alphabetical order. Nine are thus characterised: ix., x., xxv., xxxiv., xxxvii., cxi., cxlii., cxix., cxlv. Few of them are perfect.

"Remember Thy tender mercies, and Thy loving-kindnesses." But this carries him back in thought to the past, so necessarily he cries, "Remember not my sins, nor my transgressions," adding what would sound strange if the character of Jehovah was unknown, "according to Thy mercy remember Thou me for Thy goodness' sake, O Jehovah." He is cast and casts himself wholly on the goodness and kindness of the One against whom he has sinned, and whose ways with sinners, when they are meek, he describes (9, 10). A sinner then though he is, his transgressions, too, of former days acknowledged, he is one who fears Jehovah (12), so can cry to Him for deliverance, a deliverance which he awaits (15), counting on integrity and uprightness to preserve him (21). In this the godly remnant, of whom he is a party, will also share. So he prays, "Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles."

A work of God has gone on in his soul. We have before us evidently one born of God, but who is under law, and rightly so, speaking as he can of his integrity and uprightness, as Zacharias and Elisabeth in Luke i. could have done. So in xxvi. he asks Jehovah to judge him, for he has walked in his integrity, and goes on to enumerate what his ways and desires have been. Now a Christian, it is plain, if he understands the truth, will not plead on such ground with God. We are evidently here on Jewish ground, and Lev. xxvi. 40, as well as Deut. xxx. 2, afford a clue to this state of soul in the future. In the former passage we have confession of sins looked for as in Ps. xxv. In the latter, obedience after failure is contemplated, as in Ps. xxvi.

But as yet the foundations of the earth are out of course. The Lord's return in power can alone remedy that. So, after setting forth the moral condition of the saint as exhibited in owning his transgressions whilst pleading his integrity, his confidence in Jehovah is seen to be unabated.

For His presence to be enjoyed is the desire of the godly one's heart—*viz.* to dwell in Jehovah's house, to inquire in His temple, and to be hidden in His tabernacle (xxvii. 4, 5). However numerous his foes, he cries to God, who is his light and his salvation, believing he will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. So in xxviii. he looks to God, who is his strength and shield, that he should not be confounded with the wicked in the day of judgment (3, 4). And, as we have already seen, the Psalmist expects Israel's deliverance as well as his own (xxv. 21, 22), so here he adds (xxviii. 8, 9), "Jehovah is their strength, and He is the saving strength of His anointed. Save Thy people, and bless Thine inheritance: feed them also, and lift them up for ever."

Having spoken of Jehovah as the strength of His people, it will not be out of course to be introduced to the subject of Ps. xxix., in which the children of the mighty are exhorted to ascribe unto Him glory and strength, whose power as Creator is displayed by His voice when He speaks, and whose glory is the theme of all who are in His temple. But more, "Jehovah sitteth upon the flood *; yea, Jehovah sitteth King for ever." He, too, will give strength unto His people: He will bless His people with peace. How David learnt this experimentally, and was therefore competent to speak of it, another Psalm (xxx.) tells us, describing exercises which God passed him through. In prosperity and confident of its endurance, he learnt by the hiding of God's face from him of his real dependence. God's face hidden, immediately was he troubled. Then, crying to God with death in prospect, he proved Jehovah's deliverance. His mourning was turned into dancing. God put off from His servant his sackcloth, and girded him with gladness. What David then proved, others may prove likewise. So he writes, "Sing unto Jehovah, O ye saints of His, and give thanks at the remembrance of His

* Or as R.V., "sat as King at the flood."

holiness. For His anger endureth but a moment : in His favour is life ; weeping may endure for a night ; but joy cometh in the morning " (4, 5).

Open persecution, God's hand in government on the person of His servant, secret plottings, and slanderous accusations, these, as we have already pointed out, are the great causes of trial to the saint. Of this third source of trouble the Psalmist now again speaks (xxxix.), crying to God for deliverance in His righteousness. In xxvi. he pleads his own integrity. Here he pleads Jehovah's righteousness as a ground for deliverance, and that speedily. "Be Thou my strong rock, for an house of defence to save me"—a rock to stand on, an house to take shelter in. Urgent indeed was his need. "Pull me out of the net that they have laid privily for me ; for Thou art my strength"* (4). Actually, as it were, in the net before he saw it, he could not extricate himself. God alone could rescue him. So he commits himself to Him in words made familiar to us by the Gospel (Luke xxiii. 46), as the resource of the godly in their extremity. Reproach, slander, lying lips, all this he experienced. Were such trials confined to David? No. Into that of which verse 13 speaks Jeremiah entered, and quotes the words of this Psalm, confident of the power and the presence of Jehovah with him (Jer. xx. 10, 11). Others, then, may experience similar treatment, and subsequent deliverance also at the hands of God. Of this the Psalmist writes (19, 20).

What a resource is Jehovah when all may be against the saint (11-13), and his feet actually caught in the net ! What a resource for His people, even though they have sinned (10), and have to suffer for it ! For, as xxxii. teaches us, God can forgive the sinner, and does so, when he has confessed his transgressions unto the Lord. How David learnt this he here puts on record, and exhorts, therefore, all the righteous to rejoice and be glad in Jehovah,

* Or as R.V., "my stronghold."

and all the upright in heart to shout for joy. Thereupon we have next an inspired composition (xxxiii.), written we know not by whom, which, taking up the closing verse of the previous Psalm, exhorts the righteous to rejoice in Jehovah, "praise," it declares, "being comely for the upright." And who is Jehovah? He is the Creator (6-9) whose counsel shall stand (10, 11), and the observer of men (13, 14), and deliverer of His people (18-20), loving righteousness and judgment, and of whose goodness, or loving-kindness, the earth is full (5). For Him, then, the saints are to wait, who is their help and their shield (20). Nor shall they wait in vain, for David in xxxiv. has made known how he sought Jehovah, and He heard him, and delivered him from all his fears (4). What He has been to him, He will be to others (7-10); so even children the royal singer would teach to fear Jehovah, whose ways with the righteous and with the wicked are plainly stated (11-22). Hence Jehovah is asked to plead the cause of the saint against the ungodly (xxxv.), the former being seen to be a child of God, a partaker of the Divine nature, by the spirit which actuated him when his enemies were suffering from sickness (13, 14). "False witnesses," he states, "did rise up, they laid to my charge things that I knew not. They rewarded me evil for good to the spoiling of my soul." Such had been their treatment of him. "But as for me," he writes, "when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth; I humbled my soul with fasting; and my prayer returned into my own bosom. I behaved myself as though he had been my friend or brother, I bowed down heavily as one that mourneth for his mother." How, on the other hand, did they act towards him? He tells us, "In mine adversity they rejoiced, and gathered themselves together; yea, the abjects gathered themselves together against me, and I knew it not; they did tear me, and ceased not; with hypocritical mockers in feasts, they gnashed upon me with their teeth" (11-16).

What could such wickedness deserve? And since full deliverance for Israel cannot be effected without the destruction of their enemies, prayer for that is perfectly right. They will reap that which they have sown. Now hiding their net for the saint in a pit, and that without cause (7), they manifest really their hatred of all which is of God. So the next Psalm (xxxvi.) appropriately contrasts what the wicked man is and does (1-4) with that which Jehovah is and does (5-9). What a contrast it is! The former constantly plotting evil, the restlessness of the unregenerate heart (Isa. lvii. 20) thus manifesting itself; and transgression, iniquity, and deceit characterising the man who makes self his centre, and who works for the carrying out of his own desires. But if man is active, so also is Jehovah. Loving-kindness, or mercy, faithfulness, and righteousness characterise His ways who preserves man and beast, and will abundantly satisfy the children of men with the fatness of His house, and will make them drink of the river of His pleasures. So the Psalm closes with a prayer to Jehovah: "O continue Thy loving-kindness unto them that know Thee, and Thy righteousness to the upright in heart. Let not the foot of pride come against me, and let not the hand of the wicked remove me." After this prayer comes the following expression of confidence as to the issue: "There are the workers of iniquity fallen: they are cast down, and shall not be able to rise" (10-12). God's interposition will, then, certainly take place. But He bears long with the wicked. So must the saint.

Accordingly we have in Ps. xxxvii. an exhortation to the godly to be patient and to be waiting for Jehovah. A beautiful Psalm this is. God knows where the saint is in danger of breaking down, ere the dawn of the day of deliverance appears, so He encourages him to be quiet and to wait. "Fret not thyself because of evil doers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity.

For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb." Meanwhile the godly one is to trust in Jehovah and to do good, to delight himself also in Jehovah, to commit his way unto Him, to rest in Him, to wait patiently for Him. And, as if to emphasize the injunction to be patient under evil, three times in the first eight verses do we meet with the words, "Fret not thyself"—viz. "Fret not thyself because of evil doers" (verse 1). "Fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way" (7). "Fret not thyself in any wise to do evil" (8). In judging of men and things how apt are we to make mistakes! To "rest in Jehovah and wait patiently for Him" (7), what wisdom is there in that? "For the Lord loveth judgment, and forsaketh not His saints. They are preserved for ever, but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off" (28).

Now whilst waiting for this, the history of the past, we are taught, may encourage real saints, and instruct, too, all as to the future. The Psalmist can speak of the way of the wicked, and that of the righteous (9-24), recalling to mind what he has learnt from observation of the Divine procedure in government with the righteous (25, 26) and with the wicked (35, 36). He had never, he here declares, seen the righteous forsaken nor his seed begging bread (25). On the other hand, he had seen the wicked in great power and spreading himself like a green bay tree. Yet he passed away, and he was not; he sought him, but he could not be found (35, 36). These statements of what he had *not* seen, and of what he *had* seen, were to encourage the faint-hearted. The vanity of worldliness and of earthly wealth and power the Psalmist was impressed with. "He passed away, and he was not." "I sought him," he adds, "and he could not be found"—his place knew him no more. So the Psalm closes with a statement as to the end of the righteous and the end of the wicked. "Mark the perfect man, and behold

the upright; for the end of that man is peace. But the transgressors shall be destroyed together; the end of the wicked shall be cut off. But the salvation of the righteous is of Jehovah; He is their strength in the time of trouble. And Jehovah shall help them, and deliver them; He shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them, because they trust in Him' (37-40). Such will be the sure end for the earthly saint. With the heavenly saint it is different. He may have to succumb outwardly to the power of the enemy, even to the surrendering of life here for the truth of God; yet he really overcomes, and by-and-by, when God judges the great whore, He will avenge the blood of His servants at her hand (Rev. xix. 2). Meanwhile the need of assurance in the last verse of our Psalm is exemplified in that one which follows.

For in xxxviii. and xxxix. we see the saint suffering in sickness. In the former he tells out to God what he feels in his sickness, and his trials that are caused by the desertion of friends and by the mischievous speeches of his enemies. Before these last he is as a deaf man that hears not, and as a dumb man that openeth not his mouth, though confessing his sins to God, and hoping in Him. The reproaches and the gibes of men are hard to bear; and when the one thus taunted is suffering under God's hand as well, the trial will be especially heavy—insupportable, indeed, could not such an one unbosom himself to God. This he does, saying, "In Thee, O Jehovah, do I hope: Thou wilt hear, O Lord my God, For I said, Lest they should rejoice over me; when my foot slippeth they magnify themselves against me. For I am ready to halt, and my sorrow is continually before me. For I will declare mine iniquity; I will be sorry for my sin" (15-17). Thus bowing under God's hand, and owning his iniquity, he closes with an earnest supplication, "Forsake me not, O Jehovah: O my God, be

not far from me. Make haste to help me, O Lord my salvation." In xxxix., feeling acutely the trial of God's hand being upon him, dumb though he had been before his enemies (1, 2), he could not keep silence before God; his heart was hot within him; while he mused, the fire burned—so he speaks to Jehovah. The vanity of things here he confesses. Desirous to know his end, he hopes in the Lord, and asks for deliverance from all his transgressions, and that he should not become the reproach of the foolish. Then he closes with the prayer, "O spare me," or rather, "Look away from me, that I may recover strength before I go hence, and be no more." What a comfort that we can turn to Him who chastens us, and fully unburden our heart before Him!

The fleeting character of man's existence comes home to one when suffering in body from the pressure of God's hand. Fully did the Psalmist realise it when he said, "Jehovah, make me to know mine end and the measure of my days what it is; that I may know how frail I am. Behold Thou hast made my days as an handbreadth; and mine age is as nothing before Thee: Verily every man at his best estate is altogether vanity" (xxxix. 4, 5). The sinner can rightly look for nothing but death. He has forfeited all claim to continue in life on earth; and, as far as he is concerned, he can give no answer why death should not seize upon him. The saint can look beyond it, though owning God's hand upon him in government because of his transgression. The full explanation of this must be sought for elsewhere. One has died, the Just for the unjust, to make atonement for those who should believe on Him. Further, He is risen from the dead. So saints will either share in resurrection from the dead, or be preserved alive on earth to enjoy millennial blessing under the sway of the Lord Jesus Christ. In one or other of these two conditions every saint must have part, both the fruit of the Lord's atoning death.

So this first book of Psalms concludes with Ps. xl. and xli., the former telling of resurrection from the dead, exemplified in the personal history of the Lord; the latter speaking of preservation in life on earth. For Christians it will either be to die and to rise from the dead, or to be caught up alive to meet the Lord in the air. For God's earthly saints—*i.e.* those who have an earthly calling—it will be either resurrection from the dead, or to be kept alive upon earth. Hence, as God's earthly saints are before us in the Psalms, the latter alternative is likewise set forth.

In Ps. xl. we have the Lord Jesus especially before us in His life of public testimony for God; in His sacrificial death, and in His resurrection too, as brought up out of an horrible pit and out of the miry clay; having first waited patiently for Jehovah, till He inclined unto Him, and heard His cry. He waited patiently, but did not wait in vain. His people may have to wait, but it cannot be in vain, for He has been heard and delivered; so will they, for by His death He has made atonement for their sins. One sees the importance of a Psalm in this place in the book, which introduces so distinctly the thought of the atonement, since on that ground alone could any one of Adam's fallen race look for resurrection *from* the dead or preservation in life—*i.e.* life for evermore. But since He who has borne our sins is risen, saints who die will certainly be raised.

On the other hand, as we have said, there will be those whom Jehovah will preserve and keep alive; and they shall be blessed upon earth. Such cry to Him in xl. 13-17, and will be heard, those being ashamed and confounded together that seek the saint's soul, or life, to destroy it (14). Now of the preservation of such saints Ps. xli. treats, however much they may have been exposed in the past to the three kinds of trial noticed in the earlier part of this paper. Are they called to endure persecution (2), or sickness at the hand of God (3, 4), or to be tried by the

tongue of slander (5), or to be betrayed by a familiar friend (9)? Whatever the trial may be, out of all will Jehovah deliver the one who shall consider the poor (1), for here we are on the ground of keeping the law, so that one will be upheld in his integrity, and be set by Jehovah before His face for ever. Fittingly, then, a doxology follows, with which this book closes, as we have already seen. What more can the saints on earth enjoy than being before Jehovah's face for ever? With that surely is connected all earthly blessing! And how fully will they be able to say from the heart, "Blessed be Jehovah the God of Israel, from everlasting, and to everlasting. Amen and Amen."

THE SECOND BOOK OF PSALMS.

XLII.—LXXII.

THE SECOND BOOK.

AT the close of the last Psalm the saint's confidence is expressed, that God will set him before His face for ever. Much, however, has to take place ere that is brought about. For this book opens with the saint being far from the place of God's presence, the two Psalms (xlii., xliii.) which form its introduction acquainting us with his sorrowful circumstances, his desires too, and the way he looks to have them fulfilled. In the former (xlii.) he thirsts for God—"As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God?" Here, for the first time in the Psalms, do we meet with the term *the living God*, whose voice Israel heard at Sinai (Deut. v. 26), and whose presence in the midst of His people was proved at the passage of the Jordan (Josh. iii. 10). To appear before Him was the Psalmist's desire. But circumstances were against him, and his enemies cast up to him, Where was his God? The living God, he affirms, is his God. Of His appearance formerly on behalf of His people all were cognisant. His power, then, none could question. But was this outcast, this exile, authorised to call Him his God? Why had He not interfered as of old, causing His voice to be heard, and His power to be displayed? Taunts such as these, of which the saint complains, are hard to bear, whilst waiting for Divine intervention. "This derision," Delitzsch remarks, "in the Psalms and

in the Prophets, is always the keenest ^{stachel} sting of pain. Ps. lxxix. 10; cxv. 2; Joel ii. 17; Micah vii. 10."

But "God will avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them," or "is long-suffering over them" (Luke xviii. 7). On this the afflicted one counts. And as he remembers the daily taunts ^{Spotttreiben} of his foes, he recalls past* seasons of happiness when he went to God's house (4). So he encourages himself as to the future (5). After this he relates more at length what his circumstances are, addressing himself directly to God. Far off from the Divine presence, in the land of the Hermonites, God's waves and God's billows passing over him, his God seemed against him. He confessed it. He viewed all, took all as from Him. But God is Jehovah, that name by which He made Himself known to Israel. On that, therefore, he counts, and declares it, "Jehovah will command His loving-kindness in the daytime, and in the night His song shall be with me, *even* a prayer (R.V.) unto the God of my life. I will say unto God, my rock, Why hast Thou forgotten me? Why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? As with a sword in my bones mine enemies reproach me; while they say daily unto me, Where is thy God?" Then the Psalm ends with a repetition of verse 5 (see note), an address to his soul in the confidence of coming deliverance.

The next (xliii.) begins with an appeal to God for that which he so earnestly desires, and it states how that

* *Past* seasons, we have said. So the Authorised Version and the Revised, with many moderns, have translated the verbs. The Septuagint, Aquila, Symmachus and the Vulgate, with some moderns, render them as in the future, thus making verse 4 the Psalmist's expression of hope; while Ps. xliii. states how it will be fulfilled. Then verse 5 of xlii. seems best ended like verse 11, and xliii. 5, "the health of my countenance, and my God." Verse 6 would then begin, "My soul," etc.

can be brought about: "O send out Thy light and Thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto Thy holy hill, and to Thy Tabernacles. Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy: yea, upon the harp will I praise Thee, O God, my God" (3, 4). Jehovah was in truth his God. Assured of it, keeping fast hold of it as a stay to his soul amid all his wanderings, he was confident that it would be manifested before all. He, now in prayer, would yet on the harp praise his God. With this assurance of God's intervention, he closes this Psalm, and with it ends the introduction to the *second* book of the Psalms, reiterating the exact language of xlii. 5, 11, according to the Septuagint, and Syriac also, which is followed by many moderns. But if we keep to the reading of verse 5 in xlii., as in A.V., the Psalmist's faith appears equally in his address to his soul. Thus faith can count on God. And the man of faith encourages himself (if of human comforters he has none) in the dark hour ere his God acts on his behalf. "God, my God." This speaks of redemption effected, and known, and which can never be undone. For how did He become his God? He redeemed Israel of old at the Red Sea by the arm of His power. From that day forth He became their God, and they became His people (Exod. vi. 7). That, as we have said, never alters. Redemption, whether by power or by blood, brings the redeemed into a condition which nothing can change.

So this leads on in thought to Ps. xliv., for redemption by power the people had known, and consequences of it their fathers had once enjoyed under the leadership of Joshua. This is now recorded in xliv. 1-8, and the present sorrowful condition of the godly remnant (9-16), as well as their faithfulness and constancy (17-22), are set forth before God, for it is an address to Him throughout, the Psalm closing with a most earnest appeal to *Adonai*. "Awake, why sleepest Thou, Adonai? Arise, cast us not

off for ever. Wherefore hidest Thou Thy face, and forgettest our affliction and our oppression? For our soul is bowed down to the dust: our belly cleaveth unto the earth. Arise for our help, and redeem us for Thy mercies' sake" (23-26). Will He disregard such an appeal? Oh no.

So at once the coming King and Victor is introduced upon the scene in a Psalm (xlv.), which the New Testament teaching about it (Heb. i. 8, 9) shows clearly to be Messianic. It speaks of things which the inspired writer has made concerning the King. But who is He? We know. It is neither David nor Solomon, but the One who has died and is risen, and who returns to reign. In it, too, the mystery of His Person is set forth, in that He is both God and man, seeing that He is addressed as God in verse 6, and God is declared to be His God in verse 7.

Who addresses Him in this way? The Psalmist, men might answer. "God Himself," we must say, and that on the authority of the written Word (Heb. i. 8). The Psalmist asserts his own inspiration, claiming for his words that they were taught him by the Spirit of God, as he states, "My tongue is the pen of a ready writer." He was the instrument to put on record the very words of God. And the Holy Ghost, whose words he has recorded with his pen, has told us in the Hebrews that the utterance of verse 6 was God's address to the King, His Son. The King, the coming One, is then before us. His personal appearance, His triumphant progress, His victorious career, are treated of in beautiful language. God and man! His throne, as God, is for ever and ever; the sceptre of His kingdom is a sceptre of equity. Inflexible, but perfect rule. As man He has loved righteousness and hated iniquity, therefore God, His God, has anointed Him with the oil of gladness above His fellows. His companions are just mentioned, and the Psalmist, occupied with the King in person, goes on to speak of His garments perfumed with

myrrh, aloes, and cassia, whilst from the palaces of ivory musical strains, or stringed instruments, will delight Him. He has spoken of the King; he now turns to describe the queen, and to address her (9-15), telling of her robes and retinue in the day of the King's glory, and of her presentation to Him, the whole closing with an address to the King on the part of God, His God (16, 17). How changed are the circumstances of the King and the condition of the queen! He formerly was here in humiliation, despised, rejected, and at last crucified. He will return to the scene and very place of His rejection in power and glory. And the queen, Jerusalem, trodden down as she has been of the Gentiles, will receive the homage of Tyre—*i.e.* of the commercial world—and the rich will appease her with presents. But, better far than all, the King will desire her beauty; whilst His name, now often treated with contempt, God will make to be remembered in all generations, therefore shall peoples praise Him for ever and ever.

The personal glory of the King, by whom deliverance will be wrought, thus set forth, the confidence of the people in their God whilst awaiting that deliverance is next declared (xlv. 5). This Psalm is divided into three parts, 1-3, 4-7, 8-11. In the first they profess that God is their refuge and strength, a present help in trouble; so they will not fear though all nature be convulsed. What are the convulsions which will take place, ere full and settled peace is enjoyed by Israel, Ezek. xxxviii. 19, 20, tells us. What political catastrophes will be experienced, Rev. vi. 12-16 intimates. But in this part of the Psalm it is the convulsions of nature that are referred to, in the presence of which they will not fear, for God the Creator is declared to be their refuge and strength. In the other parts of the Psalm, where the overthrow of hostile powers arrayed against them is celebrated, God is characteristically spoken of as Jehovah of hosts; and we learn how signal will be His intervention!

A river to refresh the city of God, the holy place of the Tabernacles of the Most High, God, we are told, is in the midst of her, and He will help her at the turning (or dawn) of the morning.* His presence with His people assures them of the coming deliverance which the next verse so graphically describes. "Gentiles raged, kingdoms were moved: He uttered His voice, the earth melted" (6). Of old He spake, and it was done. By-and-by He will speak, and His enemies will be confounded. What confidence, what assurance, in the face of hostile powers can the presence of God engender in the hearts of His people! Amid all the tumult of the enemy His voice will, and must, be heard when He speaks. And who can answer Him? "The Lord shall cause His glorious voice to be heard, and shall show the lighting down of His arm, with the indignation of His anger and with the flame of a devouring fire, with scattering, and tempest, and hailstones. For through the voice of the Lord shall the Assyrian be beaten down, which smote with a rod. And in every place where the grounded [rather, appointed] staff shall pass, which the Lord shall lay upon him, it shall be with tabrets and harps; and in battles of shaking will He fight with them" (Isa. xxx. 30-32).

So writes another prophet of that same time, the prelude to the reign of peace of which the closing verses of our Psalm speak. "Come, behold the works of Jehovah, what desolations He hath made in the earth. He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; He breaketh the bow and cutteth the spear in sunder: He burneth the chariot in the fire" (8, 9). Such is His character, and such will be His acts. For Him His people may well wait. Suited, then, is the exhortation at the close, "Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth" (10). Who

* It was at the turning of the morning that the Egyptians of old were overthrown in the Red Sea.—Exod. xiv. 27.

speaks thus? Jehovah of Hosts is the answer. His title suggestive of power; the God of Jacob, too, reminding all that He can act in grace toward one who does not deserve it. He has but to speak, and His enemies are confounded. He speaks, and His people are encouraged. We may remark on the different characters in which, in this most interesting Psalm, God is introduced. He is God. He is Jehovah. He is Most High. As God He is the strong One. As Jehovah He is the self-existing One. As Most High He will be owned when all on earth is brought under His sway: such is the God of Jacob. Such we, too, can say is our God, the New Testament revelation telling us in addition of the *relationship* He has formed by birth between Himself and us, for He is our Father.

But other nations are deeply concerned in all this. Dynasties may rise and fall, and neighbouring nations be little affected thereby. But it is not so, it cannot be so, when God takes to Himself His power and reigns. Absolute in will, He has declared beforehand the establishment of His kingdom (Ps. ii. 6), and announces (xlvi. 10) His exaltation over all powers on earth. All peoples are therefore (xlvii.) called upon to welcome Him with acclamation. "O clap your hands, all ye peoples, shout unto God with the voice of triumph: for Jehovah Most High is terrible, a great King over all the earth." To Israel will He give pre-eminence, subduing the nations under their feet, and choosing out an inheritance for them—even the excellency of Jacob—*i.e.* Jerusalem (Isa lx. 15)—"whom He loved." To it, the place of His earthly throne, He has gone up* with a shout, with the sound of a

* Some view xlvii. 5 as descriptive of God's ascension to His heavenly throne after interposing in power on behalf of Israel. The Psalm, however, speaks of Him as King over all the earth. It will not, then, do violence to the context, if we connect verse 5 with the place mentioned in verse 4, to which in days yet to come

trumpet, for He is Israel's King (6), King over all the earth as well (7), reigning over Gentiles, and sitting upon the throne of His holiness. In the preceding Psalm God is said to be in the midst of Jerusalem, so He will help her. In xlvii. He is set forth as enthroned in her, and as receiving the homage of nations, who own Him as the King, and now acknowledge Israel as His people, the princes of nations gathering to them as the people of the God of Abraham.*

With Ps. xlviii. this little series of millennial Psalms comes to a close. Jerusalem as the queen has been described in Ps. xlv.; God's presence in her midst is declared in xlvii. And seated on His throne in xlvii., we have next the song of a Psalm in xlviii., in prophetic celebration of the victory which God has procured for Israel, when the kings, with their besieging hosts, were gathered together against the beloved city, here described as "beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth," "the city of the great King." How joyous and graphic is the description of this deliverance! "For lo, the kings were assembled, they passed by together. They saw it, and so they marvelled; they were troubled, and hasted away. Fear took hold upon them there, and pain, as of a woman in travail. Thou breakest the ships of Tarshish with an east wind" (4-7). Of God's intervention in power on previous occasions Israel had heard. Now they have witnessed it. So they sing, "As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of Jehovah of Hosts, in the city of

we read in the prophet (Zech. xiv. 16), those that are "left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up year by year to worship the King, the Lord of Hosts, and to keep the feast of Tabernacles."

* Many would translate as R.V., "The princes of the people are gathered together to be the people of the God of Abraham," assuming that all on earth in that day will be converted. Scripture teaches the contrary of this. An iron rule would not be required if that were the case (Rev. ii. 27).

our God : God will establish it for ever. Selah. We have thought of Thy loving-kindness, O God, in the midst of Thy temple. According to Thy name, O God, so is Thy praise unto the ends of the earth : Thy right hand is full of righteousness " (8-10). Then they close, saying, " Let mount Zion rejoice, let the daughters of Judah be glad, because of Thy judgments. Walk about Zion, and go round about her : tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces, that ye may tell it to the generation following. For this God is our God for ever and ever ; He will be our guide unto death " (11-14). The fact of Jerusalem's deliverance at this final siege Isaiah (xxix. 4, 5) more dimly, but Zechariah (xii. 1-9) plainly described. In the Psalm we learn what the feelings of the delivered people will be in that day. The prophets have foretold the event. The Psalm predicts the effect on those delivered.

The power of God on His people's behalf, thus prophetically described, in order to further encourage the saints, for our God is a God of encouragement (Rom. xv. 5), another ground of comfort whilst in trouble is set before them. " Wherefore," asks the Psalmist, " should I fear in the evil days, when the iniquity of my supplanters [rather than heels] compasseth me about ? " (Ps. xlix. 5). The answer to this question is furnished by the remembrance that the ungodly will prove to be but sojourners in this scene, however wealthy and powerful they may be (6-12). Life for evermore is not for such, whether wise, fools, or brutish ; nor can friend or brother redeem them from death. " Man being in honour abideth not : he is like the beasts that perish " (12). Any one, every one can see this (10), yet it is a lesson by many still unlearned (13). Not such, however, is the portion and prospect of the righteous, to whom blessing under Messiah's rule is the proximate and sure hope. God will redeem such from the power of the grave. Death, which feeds on the ungodly,

will never touch them; for the promise of Isa. xxv. 8, "He will swallow up death in victory" (or for ever), will receive its accomplishment. And the upright, who have felt the oppressing power of the ungodly, will have dominion over their persecutors in the morning (14), that morning without clouds, to which, for them, there will follow no night. Hence the Psalm closes with a word of encouragement: but only for the righteous (16-20): "Be not thou afraid when one is made rich, when the glory of his house is increased: for when he dieth he shall carry nothing away; his glory shall not descend after him. Though while he lived he blessed his soul (and men will praise thee when thou doest well to thyself): it [*i.e.* the soul] shall go to the generation of his fathers, they shall never see light. Man that is in honour, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish."

True, solemnly true. God, however, does not desire that. It is not His will that any one of His earthly people should be found in that condition; hence follows Ps. l., acquainting us and them with the Lord's judgment of His people Israel, set forth nowhere else in the Bible as it is here (1-6). He comes to judge them, with all the heavenly saints in His train, for in this way will the heavens declare His righteousness (6). In view of that coming judgment, God here addresses, first the righteous in Israel (7-15), and then the wicked (16-23), encouraging the former to hold on their way confessing Him (14-15), and exhorting the latter to give ear to what He says. "Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver. Whoso offereth thanksgiving [not praise, see verse 14], glorifieth Me; and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God."

A way of escape from judgment thus offered to the undeserving, we next read of that which is absolutely needful, if that salvation is to be known—*viz.* confession

of sin after grievous failure (Ps. li.). Of this David is the example. Of murder and adultery had he been guilty—grievous crimes in the eyes of men. What, indeed, were they in the eyes of God? What, then, was his resource? On what could he count? For himself he could say nothing, but acknowledge his guilt and the taint of corruption derived from his progenitor, Adam (2-5). On God's mercy, however, he could cast himself, the unfailing resource for all who in truthfulness of heart resort to it. "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness; according to the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions" (1). He could do nothing but this. He could offer nothing to meet his case, for the law did not provide a sacrifice for one who had sinned presumptuously, as he had. Death was its only award (Num. xv. 30, 31); and the only sacrifice which God could accept, under such circumstances, for David was that of a broken spirit. But a broken and contrite heart God does not, He will not, despise. Further, if He can act in grace toward an individual sinner amongst His people, He will not forget Jerusalem, with whose fortunes and restoration the hopes of His people are inseparably connected. So with this the Psalm ends, "Do good in Thy good pleasure unto Zion, build thou the walls of Jerusalem. Then shalt Thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering, and whole burnt offering: then shall they offer bullocks upon Thine altar" (18, 19). Not till the Lord comes out of heaven will the godly remnant of His people know the forgiveness of their sins. Hence forgiveness to be enjoyed by them is, and must ever be, associated with the commencement of their time of millennial blessedness. One understands, then, why the rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem will be connected in their minds with Jehovah's ways in grace towards them. We need to understand dispensational actings in order to be able to

trace the connection of their thoughts. Much there is of deep interest in this Psalm (li.), but the limits of our present inquiry forbid us to dwell on it. We must pass on to trace the connection with the Psalms which follow.

We have now four (lii.-lv.) called *Maschil*, and five called *Michtam*. In the previous book one Psalm (xxxii.) is called *Maschil*, and one (xvi.) *Michtam*. Other Psalms, as xlii., xliv., xlv., lxxiv., lxxviii., lxxxviii., lxxxix., and cxlii. have also the former title, but none beside those above mentioned bear the title of *Michtam*. After all that has been said, it seems wisest to acknowledge that a true solution of the meaning of these titles is still to be desired. Another remark may here be made—*viz.* that in this, the second book of Psalms, six of them (lii., liv., lvi., lvii., lix., lxiii.), if the inscriptions can at all be trusted, were occasioned by David's trials when persecuted by Saul, and compelled to be an outcast from his home. Only two others—*viz.* xxxiv. and cxlii.—are stated to have been written during that same time.* Is it not in keeping with the state of things viewed in this book of the Psalms, that so many described as written during that portion of David's life should find their place in it?

Turning now to the four entitled *Maschil*, we see they set before us the special features of the time when the righteous will be driven out from Jerusalem. Of the three chief kinds of trial to which they are exposed—*viz.* persecution, suffering under the hand of God, and calumnious accusation—Ps. iii., vi., vii. have treated. Now, in addition to all that, when driven out of Jerusalem (xlii. 6), they have to speak of the mighty man boasting himself in wickedness, really Antichrist (lii.), of apostates (liii.), of persecution at the hands of others besides those of their own nation (liv.), and of the wickedness going on in the city (lv.)

* To these Ps. vii. may perhaps be added. But who Cush was is not known, beyond that he was a Benjamite.

In lii. we see the saint's confidence in God expressed, whilst as yet the mighty man is going on in his course unchecked. He boasts himself in mischief, the goodness or kindness of God enduring continually. God and the mighty man the saint here contrasts. God's goodness leads to repentance (Rom. ii. 4). The display of it, however, is lost on this one, as verses 2-4 describe. His tongue devises mischief, he loves evil more than good, and lying rather than righteousness. His destruction, then, to faith is sure—God will effect it (5); and the righteous will be preserved alive to witness it. What a change will be brought about! The triumphing of the wicked is short (Job xx. 5). "Lying lips shall be put to silence which speak grievous things proudly and contemptuously against the righteous" (Ps. xxxi. 18). God deals with this man, in principle the Antichrist of the future, and over his destruction the righteous shall laugh. "Lo, this is the man that made not God his strength; but trusted in the abundance of his riches, and strengthened himself in his wickedness. But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God: I trust in the mercy [or goodness of verse 1] of God for ever and ever. I will praise Thee for ever, because Thou hast done it: and I will wait on Thy name; for it is good before Thy saints" (lii. 7-9). The wicked trusted in his riches, the righteous trusted in the kindness or mercy of God. This last is a sure resource. How fully will that be proved when God's loving-kindness (same word as "goodness," verse 1, and "mercy," verse 8), of which they have thought (Ps. xlviii. 9), shall be so gloriously exemplified.*

In Ps. liii. we may recognise the 14th with alterations. The word God is now substituted for Jehovah. And

* Is there not intentional irony in the language of the righteous, yet teaching likewise? "Lo, this is the man [or strong man] that made not God his strength." What is human strength if its possessor is not really dependent on God?

whereas in xiv. 5-6 we read, "There were they in great fear: for God is in the generation of the righteous. Ye have shamed the counsel of the poor; because Jehovah is his refuge," in liii. 5 we have, "There were they in great fear, where no fear was: for God hath scattered the bones of him that encampeth against thee: thou hast put them to shame, because God hath despised them." This alteration marks progress in the events of the last days. In the former Psalm the righteous and wicked among the Jews alone are seen, whilst God, being in the generation of the righteous, makes those who deny His existence afraid. In the latter, besides these two classes, an invading enemy is now viewed as having encamped against them. The apostates were afraid, for they did not trust in God. But there was no reason to fear, as the sequel showed. God could do and did what His people could not. He scattered the bones of the people's opponents, putting the invading army to shame, because God had despised them. A clue to this state of things we have foreshadowed in the Prophet Isaiah (viii. 12), where the remnant are exhorted not to fear like the ungodly amongst them, for Jehovah of Hosts will be for them in the time of their trouble. To make a confederacy will, as in the past, so in that day, be the cry, and with death and hell will the apostates be in agreement, that the overflowing scourge should not pass through them (Isa. xxviii. 15). To wait, however, for God will be the people's wisdom; and this Psalm prophetically declares it. And connected with the events of those days will be the salvation of Israel, full, final, and everlasting.

Foreign foes having been mentioned in liii. 5, the godly know what to do. Weak and defenceless as far as human resources are concerned, the saint, not in terror like the apostates, cries to God. Assured that His hand is not shortened, nor His ear heavy that He should not hear (Isa. lix. 1), he tells his God of the strangers—i.e. those

outside of the land nationally—and of oppressors * which seek after his life; they have not set God before them (liv. 3). Great indeed is his trouble, a power from without, and the mighty man and the apostates within; what hope, humanly speaking, can there be for the righteous one? Not indeed that in that day God's witnesses on earth will be reduced to one solitary person, as Elijah thought was the case when the still small voice reached his ear in the recesses of the cave at Horeb (1 Kings xix. 13, 14). We read in Rev. xiv. of 144,000 who will stand with the Lamb on Mount Zion, the godly and preserved remnant of the Jews. But the remnant are personified by the Psalmist, which of itself tells of Jehovah's graciousness—*viz.* that He will not despise the cry of a single saint on earth. If isolated for the moment from all others, the saint can cry to Him. And He, who responds to common intercession, forgets not the cry of the afflicted one. Jonah could say, "Out of the belly of hell cried I, and Thou heardest my voice" (Jonah ii. 2). Each saint can count on His ear, if he cries in faith. Of this the Psalmist is confident, and about the answer he is intelligent. "Behold, God is my helper, the Lord is with them that uphold my soul. He shall reward evil unto mine enemies: cut them off in Thy truth. I will freely sacrifice unto Thee: I will praise Thy name, O Jehovah, for it is good. For He hath delivered me out of all trouble; and mine eye hath seen *my desire* upon mine enemies" (4-7).

In Ps. lv. the righteous one is outside the city, but cognisant of that which is going on within (9-15). In great affliction he turns to God, "Attend unto me and hear me; I wander [or am restless, R.V.] in my complaint, and make a noise; because of the voice of the enemy, because of the

* Isa. xxv. 5 tells us of the overthrow by God of these two classes of enemies, strangers and oppressors, or terrible ones, employing the same terms as the Psalmist wherewith to describe them.

oppression of the wicked ; for they cast iniquity upon me, and in wrath they hate me " (2, 3). Thus crying earnestly to God (1-8), he asks for the destruction of his enemies (9-15). Being sure of deliverance since he counts on God (16-19), he tells of the treachery of the one who has broken the covenant (20, 21), and counsels other godly ones as to their course in such circumstances (22, 23). " Cast thy burden upon Jehovah, and He shall sustain thee ; He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved. But Thou, O God, shalt bring them down into the pit of destruction : bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days : but I will trust in Thee." Friends, counsellors, companions of years may fail, but Jehovah will sustain His servant, and is ready to relieve him of his burden.*

Coming now to that series (lvi.-lx.) designated *Michtam*, we may see how they illustrate the subjects of the two closing verses of Ps. lv.—*viz.* the sustainment of the righteous one by God, and the destruction of his enemies. Throughout this series there is a vein of confidence in God (see lvi. 4, 9, 11 ; lvii. 3 ; lviii. 10, 11 ; lix. 8-10, 17 ; lx. 6-12). Ps. lvi. and lvii. go together in this, that God is entreated to be merciful or gracious to His servant ; and if the headings of these Psalms may be trusted, the date of their composition is fixed at the time when David's fortunes were at the lowest. He had just fled from fear of Saul to Achish, King of Gath, and then got away from Gath and escaped to the cave of Adullam, from which time men began to rally round him (1 Sam. xxi., xxii.). Low as he was in his circumstances, he was not beyond the reach of Divine mercy, which alone could extricate him from all his difficulties. To God he therefore turns, and casts himself on His mercy, assured that he will not plead in vain.

Both Psalms begin in the same way, " Have mercy on

* This Psalm is supposed by some to refer to Absalom's rebellion and Ahithophel's defection. If that trouble gave rise to it, it does not exhaust it.

me," or "Be gracious to me, O God." But the plea in the former is based upon what men do to him. "Be merciful to me, O God, for man would swallow me up; he fighting daily oppresseth me. Mine enemies would daily swallow me up, for there be many that fight against me proudly" (lvi. 1, 2).^{*} The plea in the latter is grounded on his confidence in God. "Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me; for my soul trusteth in Thee; yea, in the shadow of Thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast" (lvii. 1). Dependence and boldness characterise him. Powerless in himself, he nevertheless views his enemies aright. "I will not fear. What can flesh do unto me?" (lvi. 4). What they did he recounts (5-7), whilst remembering that they were flesh. Now he and they had to do with God.[†] Nor was God indifferent to them. "Put Thou my tears into Thy bottle; are they not in Thy book?" The issue, then, could not be doubtful. So he proceeds, "In God have I put my trust. I will not be afraid. What can man do unto me? Thy vows are upon me, O God: I will render praises unto Thee. For Thou hast delivered my soul from death: *hast Thou* not *delivered* my feet from falling? that I may walk before God in the light of the living" (11-13, R.V.). And yet more in the following Psalm: "I will praise Thee, O Lord, among the people: I will sing unto Thee among the nations. For Thy mercy is great unto the heavens, and Thy truth unto the clouds" (lvii. 9-10).[‡]

What comfort surely will saints in the future draw from these Psalms! What comfort, too, saints in the present can find! And whilst each class can be looking

^{*} "Proudly" or "haughtily" the Hebrew here means, not "Most High."

[†] So what God did he also states (8), "Thou tellest my wanderings." All his trials in his exile were known to God.

[‡] We shall meet again with lvii. 7-11, and with lx. 5-12, forming together Ps. cviii.

for the fulfilment of their proper expectation, both may say of themselves—never too low for God to come in, never so low that despair should take possession of them. A new road to us, it may be, along which we are travelling. Experiences, to which we are strangers, we may meet with by the way. But if God has put us on it, it must be right. And a little word like this, “Thou tellest my wanderings,” can brace up the flagging energies. Or, “Put Thou my tears into Thy bottle,” can revive the drooping spirit. God is not unmindful of His servants’ difficulties. Nor is He indifferent to His children’s tears. He would have them remember that. Nor that only. For past deliverances, and mercies which have been experienced, are to encourage the saint in present difficulties. “Thy vows are upon me, O God, I will render praises [or rather, thanksgivings] to Thee. For Thou hast delivered my soul from death,” as David had learnt in the valley of Elah (1 Sam. xvii.), “*hast Thou not delivered my feet from falling?* that I may walk before God in the light of the living” (lvi. 12, 13).

The deliverance of the righteous necessitates the cutting off of the wicked, where it is the blessing of the earthly people that is in view. Of this, then, Ps. lviii. and lix. specially treat, the former telling of the innate wickedness of the ungodly among the people (lviii. 3), the latter of God’s judicial dealing with the heathen as well (lix. 5, 8). But this, as the reader may understand, is connected with, and dependent on, the establishment of God’s kingdom in power. Hence the King is introduced in lix. 11, “Slay them not, lest my people forget.” For by this designation, “my people,” David speaks of Israel (1 Chron. xxviii. 2, xxix. 14), over whom he had been chosen to reign, and had been anointed by Samuel (1 Sam. xvi.).*

* Whilst the Psalm is the utterance of David, a greater than him is surely referred to. This lxi. 6, 7 would indicate, even One who will abide, which, of course, David did not.

The king in thought thus introduced, we have next a prayer for God's interposition on behalf of His beloved ones,* through the instrumentality of the king (lx. 5), accompanied with an acknowledgment of God's sovereign rights over the land (6-8). Victory, then, must be, and will be, for the king, and for those with him, though they have to confess their rejection by God in the past (1-3). This leads on to further prayer (lxi.), in the confidence of dwelling in God's tabernacle for ever, and finding refuge in the covert of His wings. For God has heard His servant's vows, and has given to him the heritage of those that fear His name (4, 5). Now since all blessing is bound up for the earthly saints with the preservation of the king, we read, "Thou wilt prolong the king's life, and his years as many generations. He shall abide before God for ever: O prepare mercy and truth which may preserve him. So will I sing praise unto Thy name for ever, that I may daily perform my vows" (6-8). How perfectly fitting at this juncture is the introduction of mention of the King!

After this we have the reminder (lxii. 11) "that power belongeth unto God," and, "Unto Thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy; for Thou renderest to every man according to his work." The confidence this can impart the Psalmist openly confesses. "Truly my soul waiteth upon God; from Him cometh my salvation. He only is my rock and my salvation; *He* is my defence; I shall not be greatly moved" (1, 2). So he views the wicked as a bowing wall and a tottering fence, and knows what must be the end of the conflict. His soul, then, he would encourage in waiting

* "Thy beloved ones!" What a plea to urge with God! Faith counts on the unchangeableness of God, whatever the failure of the people. "He loved thee," said Moses (Deut. xxiii. 5), when they did not deserve it. So the Psalmist can write of God's "beloved ones," but who had known what it was to be made by God to drink the wine of staggering (lx. 3).

on God, and the more he does that the greater his confidence. "I shall not be greatly moved" (2) had been the utterance of his mouth; "I shall not be moved" (6) is the assurance of his heart. It is God's battle, so the victory is sure. What a difference confidence as to this can make! How often have human calculations of victory been mistaken! Some circumstances, perhaps, have been forgotten; some factor in the problem overlooked; or causes over which man had no control have conspired to defeat man's purpose. Nothing of this kind can be in question where the battle is the Lord's. So with no faltering tongue the Psalmist can exclaim, "In God is my salvation and my glory; the rock of my strength, and my refuge is in God. Trust in Him at all times, ye people; pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us. Selah. Surely men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree are a lie: to be laid in the balance they are altogether lighter than vanity. Trust not in oppression, and become not vain in robbery: if riches increase, set not your heart upon them. God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this; that power belongeth unto God. Also unto Thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy [or loving-kindness], for Thou renderest to every man according to his work" (7-12).

He has heard that power belongs to God, he next desires that it may be openly displayed as he has seen God in the sanctuary (lxiii. 2). Mercy, or loving-kindness, too, belongs to God, and of that he has tasted, and proved its comfort. His loving-kindness is better than life, therefore his lips shall praise Him (3). Who will he praise? God, who is his God, whom he seeks, earnestly desiring Him in a dry and thirsty land wherein is no water (1, 2). What a portion has he in God! What a prospect lies before him! In the wilderness his soul can be filled as with marrow and fatness, and his mouth praise God with joyful lips, as He remembers Him on his bed, and meditates on Him in the night watches. For it is a known God to

whom he turns, who, having been his help in the past, in the shadow of His wings will he rejoice, though in the wilderness. Many a one who has followed his own will would, if possible, forget the past, and be only too thankful if it could be obliterated from the memory of God and of man. The saint, however, draws encouragement from the past as he remembers God, who has been his help. Lessons indeed have we by the way, and from the way—lessons of our folly, but lessons, too, of God's goodness, who has redeemed us and delivered us out of difficulties, and, it may be, dangers, as they arose. Reviewing our past, we may learn what to avoid and against what we should be on the watch. Reviewing God's past ways with us, we may learn what He is, and what He *can* be to His people from what He *has* been to them. Hence to Him the saint can turn. "My soul followeth hard after Thee; Thy right hand upholdeth me. But those that seek my soul to destroy it shall go into the lower parts of the earth. They shall fall by the sword: they shall be a portion for foxes [or jackals]. But the king shall rejoice in God; every one that sweareth by Him * shall glory, but the mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped." In nothing short of the millennium does the Psalmist in thought stop.

So we are led on to that through Ps. lxiv.-lxvii., the first of these treating of Divine dealing with the enemies, whose end, as we have just read, is to go into the lower parts of the earth. As they sought to do with the saint, God will act toward them. For this the Psalmist prays, describing first, in verses 3-6, their ways and plans; then in verses 7, 8, God's dealing with them in judgment. Do they whet their *tongue* like a sword? God shall make their

* Sweareth by Him. With Deut. vi. 13 for the precept, and Isa. lxv. 16 for the prophetic announcement of the practice in the future, it seems best to refer the pronoun to God. But viewing the Psalms prophetically, the King is God.

own tongue to fall upon them. Do they *suddenly shoot* at the righteous? God shall *shoot* at them with an arrow; *suddenly* shall they be wounded. So there is a comparison, but there is also a contrast. In *secret* they thought to shoot at the perfect, and privily they thought to lay snares, saying, Who shall see them? But *openly*, before all will God deal with such workers of iniquity; then all that see them thus dealt with by Divine power will wag (R.V.) their head (8). "And all men shall fear, and shall declare the work of God; for they shall wisely consider of His doing." So the workers of iniquity shall pass away, but the righteous will abide, and "shall be glad in Jehovah, and trust in Him, and all the upright in heart shall glory."

For this, God's intervention, the saints must, however, wait His time. He does not hurry the development of His plans. Hence faith is the more called into exercise, and confidence in His intervention has to be strengthened in the soul. And here His Word meets us, and Divine wisdom and goodness are manifested in the revelation of His mind, who always points His people onward to the fulfilment of their hope, whether it be the heavenly or the earthly one, not stopping short in His Word of the kingdom being established in power. To that line of things we are now conducted in Ps. lxxv.-lxxvii. We have read of the destruction of the persecutors and workers of iniquity in Ps. lxxiii.; for they must be dealt with in judgment, ere deliverance can be known by the earthly saints. Now we learn in lxxv. how these last will be able in some measure to discern the signs of the times as harbingers of the long-looked-for blessing. So in Ps. lxxv. we have the *prospect*. In Ps. lxxvi. there is the *retrospect*. In Zion shall God be praised; unto Him shall all flesh come.

But the saint has sinned, nor does he forget it. Like Jacob when told to go to Bethel, he is conscious of his unfitness for the Divine presence, an unfitness which we know can only be removed by Divine grace consequent on

the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. Of this unfitness he speaks: "Iniquities prevail against me; as for our transgressions Thou shalt purge them away. Blessed is the man whom Thou choosest, and causest to approach unto Thee, that he may dwell in Thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of Thy house, even of Thy holy temple." This book had opened (Ps. xlii. 6) with the Psalmist far off from the house, yet confident (xliii. 3, 4) that he would again reach it. One learns in lxv. 4 that his confident hope remains unshaken. "We shall be satisfied with the goodness of Thy house, even of Thy holy temple." God's purpose is to gather His earthly people around His dwelling-place. Of old (Exod. xv. 17) was that declared, and subsequently it was fulfilled. Again shall it be made good for His people, who will then never more be driven out of the land of their inheritance (Ezek. xliii. 7), having been restored to it by the arm of Divine power (Ps. lxv. 5). For their God is able to do this, being the Creator, who makes fruitful the earth. Of Him as such they now speak, who has restored fertility to the land (9-13). For the words may be, and probably should be, read in verse 9, "Thou hast visited the earth"—*i.e.* the land of Israel; and again in verse 11, "Thou hast crowned the year with Thy goodness."

The significance of these statements will be understood, as we remember God's promise in Lev. xxvi. 42, "and I will remember the land." The fulfilment of this promise Ezekiel has predicted (xxxvi. 8): "But ye, O mountains of Israel, ye shall shoot forth your branches, and yield your fruit to My people of Israel; for they are at hand to come." Of the time and fact of its accomplishment the Psalm treats, the harbinger, as the remnant will understand, of millennial blessing being on the wing. And in this they will not be mistaken, for Ps. lxvi. 1-12 celebrates the deliverance as accomplished. Of this the prophets Isaiah and Zechariah have sung. For remembering that

this Psalm is a retrospect, we can understand that verses 6, 12, refer, not to the former deliverance out of Egypt, but to that intervention on behalf of the people which God revealed by the prophet, the son of Amoz (xi. 15, 16; xliii. 1, 2), and which is still future. Also that which Zechariah (xiii. 9) predicted, the saints in this Psalm (lxvi. 10) speak of as past. What then remains but to pay their vows (13-20) and to declare what God has done for them? So the House is viewed as rebuilt (13), and the saint will proceed thither with his sacrifices, and will declare to all that fear God the deliverance he has now experienced.

Of old, God brought Israel out of Egypt, and separated them to be a people to Himself, whilst the Gentiles as such remained outside the circle of Divine favour. In the future it will be different. Israel's deliverance will be accompanied by real blessing to Gentiles. Of this we now read in Ps. lxvii.* "God be merciful unto us, and bless us, and cause His face to shine upon us; that Thy way may be known upon earth, Thy saving health [or salvation] among all nations. Let the peoples praise Thee, O God; let all the peoples praise Thee. O let the nations be glad, and sing for joy; for Thou shalt judge the peoples righteously, and govern [or lead] the nations upon earth. Let the peoples praise Thee, O God, let all the peoples praise Thee." This result the faithful know is near at hand. And the reason is stated; for "the earth has yielded her increase" (6), as it should be rendered. Its renewed fertility they have noticed, and understand it. Consequently, then, they can confidently add, "God, even our own God, shall bless us. God shall bless us,

* This Psalm has been viewed as a harvest thanksgiving. Granting that may have been so in the past, it is plain that the introduction of "all the nations," "all peoples," indicates that something else is intended than the harvest of the year in the seventh month.

and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him." Surely the saints in those days will study the Word to profit, and so will interpret aright the sign of the land's renewed fruitfulness! "God shall bless us," they say. Assuredly He will. Now it will be under the reign of their King. To Him attention is now directed, who is God as well as man.

So Ps. lxviii., which follows, commences with words that remind us of the wilderness days when God went forth with His people. "Let God arise, let His enemies be scattered, let them also that hate Him flee before Him"; for it is the same One who is celebrated in this Psalm, well called a song, to whom Moses spoke when the ark set forward on its journeys: "Rise up, Jehovah, and let Thine enemies be scattered, and let them that hate Thee flee before Thee" (Num. x. 35). Moses speaks of the effects to follow Jehovah's rising up; this Psalm views prophetically its consequences being carried out, affecting as they will the righteous and the wicked (1-3). Who and what He is to call forth the praises of His people is then declared. "Sing unto God, sing praises unto His name; cast up a highway for Him who rideth through the deserts [R.V.]; His name is Jah; and rejoice before Him. A Father of the fatherless, and a Judge of the widows is God in His holy habitation. God setteth the solitary in families: He bringeth out the prisoners into prosperity [R.V.], but the rebellious dwell in a dry land." We are taken back in thought to the past, to the days of Israel, and to those of the patriarchs. "As riding through the deserts," for such probably is what the Psalmist meant, we are taken back to the history of Israel in the wilderness, when Jehovah went before them; whilst the exhortation to cast up a highway for Him who is thus described, recalls the language of the prophet, "Make straight in the desert a highway for our God" (Isa. xl. 3); the son of Jesse, and the son of Amoz writing by the Spirit of prophecy of the very same time,—the

day of victory, and of His glory, who once was here in humiliation, crucified, and cast out.*

And what shall be said of the character of this One? Is it altered? is it affected by time? His people well know it is not. His ways and His dealings in the past are for the encouragement and instruction of His people in the present. "God setteth the solitary in families." Could not Abraham bear witness to this when Isaac was given him, the earnest of the promise, that he, who had left his country, kindred, and father's house, should have seed as numerous as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is on the sea-shore? "He bringeth out the prisoners into prosperity." Could not Joseph speak of this, when he was taken straight from the dungeon to be lord over the land of Egypt? "But the rebellious dwell in a dry land." Were not those who came out of Egypt and who never entered the land, but perished at length in the wilderness, solemn illustrations of this? Such is His character who is celebrated in this song as Jah, here for the first time in the book of Psalms being found that name of God, and twice in this Psalm (verses 4, 18), so familiar now to all of us in the compound word Hallelujah—*i.e.* Praise ye Jah. Moses, in his song, first uttered that name (Exod. xv. 2), and after the victory over Amalek (xvii. 16) repeated it. The Psalmists, whether David, or Asaph, or Ethan, make mention of it; and the Prophet Isaiah and Hezekiah re-echo it.

The Psalm celebrates Jah's victorious intervention on behalf of His people in the past and in the future, for He has ascended on high, He has led captivity captive, He has received gifts among men,† yea, among rebellious

* John the Baptist was the voice crying in the wilderness, and his work, as he describes it (John i. 23), was to make straight the way of the Lord. The words of Isaiah in their completeness carry us on to a coming time.

† The reader may remember that to this Scripture the Apostle Paul refers in Eph. iv. 8, which shows that the Psalm is really Messianic in character.

ones, that the Lord (literally Jah) God might dwell among them (18). Hence, praise to God is the result with the announcement of Adonai's determination to bring back into blessing, now to be full and final, His earthly people Israel (19-22). So the Psalm closes, "Sing unto God, ye kingdoms of the earth; O sing praises unto the Lord; Selah: to Him that rideth upon the heavens of heavens which were of old: lo, He doth send out His voice, *and that* a mighty voice. Ascribe ye strength unto God: His excellency is over Israel, and His strength is in the clouds. O God, Thou art terrible out of Thy holy places: the God of Israel is He that giveth strength and power unto His people. Blessed be God" (32-35). Blessed indeed will they say He is when this Psalm receives its fulfilment!

Adonai (lxviii. 11), who is Jah and man also, will bring His suffering people into blessing, having Himself experienced sufferings and rejection by man, and deliverance at the hand of God. To this our attention is next directed by Ps. lxi., which, though it treats of saints (26), "those whom Thou hast wounded," treats also of the faithful and true witness, as verses 9, 21 indicate, referred to respectively in John ii. 17, Rom. xv. 3, and John xix. 28, 29. What encouragement it is to us, and will be also to God's saints in the future, to learn of the circumstances through which He passed, who is the Leader and Perfecter of the faith, and of the spirit manifested by Him when suffering at the hands of man! What man is capable of, the Psalm tells us—all perfectly known beforehand to Him of whom it speaks. *We* may have to make painful discoveries by the way. He knew all that to which He would be exposed, ere He visited this earth. Yet knowing all, and though He was Son, He learned obedience by the things which He suffered (Heb. v. 8). Now if He experienced what this Psalm describes, as surely He did, it need be no matter of surprise if His people experience

similar treatment. "It is enough," He has told us, "for the disciple to be as his Master, and the servant as his Lord. If they have called the Master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of His household?" (Matt. x. 25). Again, "The disciple is not above his Master; but every one that is perfected shall be as his Master" (Luke vi. 40). Called as we are to follow His steps, we may see depicted in this Psalm something of the trials and sorrows of God's saints common in some measure to them and to their Master. But especially does it describe the low condition to which the godly remnant will be brought, through faithfulness to God, before their deliverance can come. And wonderful surely will it be to them to learn, that Adonai Himself has passed through the deep waters before them!

It opens with a cry for salvation (1-3). No depth of trouble, however great, should shake the heart's confidence in God. Here the depth of it is great indeed: "I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing: I am come into deep waters where the floods overflow me." Yet He turns to God, and addresses Him as "My God" (3), for God's relation to His people on the ground of redemption never changes. As well in the darkest as in the brightest day the saint can cry to Him as "My God." From verse 4 to verse 21 the afflicted one tells out what he suffers from men for God. Hated without a cause, in danger of death, a stranger to his brethren, an alien to his mother's children, the reproaches of them that reproached God fallen on him—such was his experience. He wept and fasted, and it was turned to his reproach. He mourned, and became a proverb to his enemies. The chief men talked of him, and he was the song of the drunkards. Now why was all this? What had he done to deserve it? He will tell: "For Thy sake I have borne reproach; shame hath covered my face" (7). "The zeal of Thine house hath eaten me up" (9). So he can turn to Jehovah, preferring his two

requests. The *first*, that none that wait on God should be ashamed for his sake (6). How he thinks of others! The *second*, that Jehovah would turn according to the multitude of His tender mercies, and redeem his soul, because of his enemies (18). God knows his reproach, sees his adversaries and his desolate condition. Alone in the midst of his enemies, even in food and drink he is made to feel the bitter and relentless hatred of his foes. His case is thus laid before God. Then he asks for judgment on those that persecute him, associating other sufferers with himself (22-28); after which he prefers his request for himself—*viz.* for God's salvation to set him up on high, looking forward to the effect his deliverance will have on the meek, and its connection with the accomplishment of God's purposes about Zion (29-36).

What a subject for us to contemplate, as we remember that here are depicted sufferings of the Lord on the Cross (21) at the hands of man! What a thing for the meek to remember—the deliverance of One who has been in such depth of trouble! What comfort, too, for Jerusalem in the future! “Jehovah heareth the needy, and despiseth not His prisoners.” In clouds and darkness the day of the Lord's crucifixion seemed to close. It will prove to be the advent of that day, the like of which has never been known, when “heaven and earth shall praise Jehovah, the seas and everything that moveth therein” (34). When the corner-stone of the earth was laid, “the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy” (Job xxxviii. 6, 7). In the coming day, not heaven only, but earth also will rejoice—and of this John in Patmos witnessed in his prophetic vision (Rev. v. 9-14), “For God will save Zion, and build the cities of Judah; that men may dwell there, and have it in possession. The seed also of His servants shall inherit it; and they that love His name shall dwell therein” (verses 34-36). The deliverance of the Lord in resurrection is the sure presage

of the accomplishment of Zion's and of Israel's fondest and long-cherished hopes.

Hence have we in Ps. lxx. the prayer of the individual saint who is poor and needy, and in Ps. lxxi. a prayer suited for the nation in its old age, for God's intervention in power, followed by Ps. lxxii., which gives the picture of millennial peace and blessing under the reign in person of the Messiah, the Christ of God.

A word on Ps. lxx., which, as the reader may see, is the concluding part of Ps. xl. made into a separate Psalm with a few alterations. That it thus appears as a separate Psalm is of great interest to us, because it shows that language which the Lord could use His saints can have part in; whilst there are sufferings, and therefore expressions connected with them, peculiar to Him alone. Of the Messianic application of Ps. xl. there can be no doubt. It is quoted of Him in the New Testament (Heb. x. 5-9). That part which applies to Him alone is found only in Ps. xl. That part of it which saints can likewise use is here made into a separate Psalm, in perfect keeping with that which we observed in Ps. lxxix. 26—*viz.* the association of other sufferers with the Lord Jesus Christ. The fitness of the introduction of these verses in this place as a distinct Psalm is also apparent. The Lord has spoken in lxxix.; the other sufferers individually speak in Ps. lxx., whilst the nation as such in its old age will find suited language in lxxi. in which to express itself.

This last composition, it will be seen, reminds us of other Psalms, verses 1-3 being almost the same as Ps. xxxi. 1-3; verses 5, 6, being similar to xxii. 9, 10; and verse 12 to xxii. 19; verse 13 to xxxv. 4, 26, and xl. 14; and verse 24 to xxxv. 28. Appeal is made to God not to cast off in the time of old age, nor to forsake when old and grey-headed, the one whom He has upheld from the womb, and taught from his youth (9, 17, 18). "Thou," we read, "which hast shewed

us* many and sore troubles, shall quicken us again, and shalt bring us up again from the depths of the earth" (20). The Psalmist here, if we follow the Hebrew *text*, speaks in the first person plural, instead of, as in the other verses, in the singular, confirming the thought expressed above, that the writer personifies the nation of whom this will be true. "Thou shalt bring us up again from the depths of the earth," when the dry bones will live, and the nation awake up to political existence once more (Ezek. xxxvii.; Dan. xii. 1, 2). For only of the nation as such that will be true. "A wonder unto many" (7), but trusting in Jehovah, the Psalmist can say, "Thou shalt increase my greatness, and comfort me on every side" (21). How fully that will be effected one need not point out. These two Psalms, then, are very interesting, connecting by their language the sufferings of the Lord on the Cross with those of the saints and of the nation, whilst at the same time distinguishing very clearly between Him and them. There could be language in common, but there is language which He alone could use.

The cry of the afflicted saints will not be in vain. Assurance of that is immediately provided in Ps. lxxii., which describes in beautiful language the blessings for those on earth under the reign of God's King, who is also the King's Son. For Him God's judgments and God's righteousness are requested—the former that He may know God's mind under all the varied circumstances that may arise in the kingdom, the latter that He may judge righteously God's people and God's poor. Righteousness and judgment are the foundation of God's throne

* The English reader may thank the revisers for presenting the Hebrew *text* in this verse—*i.e.* "us" instead of "me"; the *ch'thib*, as it is called—*i.e.* what is written—instead of the *k'ri*—*i.e.* what is read. In verse 22 for the first time in the Psalter we meet with the appellation, "Holy One of Israel." Elsewhere in the Psalter we meet with it, in lxxviii. 41, lxxxix. 18.

(Ps. lxxxix. 14). Executing righteousness and judgment characterised David (2 Sam. viii. 15; 1 Chron. xviii. 14) and Solomon (1 Kings x. 9; 2 Chron. ix. 8) and Josiah (Jer. xxii. 15). A king shall yet reign at Jerusalem executing judgment and righteousness. The effect of this the Psalmist goes on to describe in verses 4-17. And as he describes in glowing terms the happiness of that time, he speaks of One reigning at Jerusalem, whose kingdom as such will be from sea to sea and from the Euphrates to the end of the earth, or the land; One who will receive the homage of all kings and be served by all nations, the dwellers in the wilderness bowing before Him, and His enemies licking the dust, whilst the soul or life of the needy He will redeem from violence, and they shall be preserved alive on earth—for precious shall their blood be in His sight. For Him, too, shall prayer be made, and daily shall He be praised: a picture indeed of millennial times and millennial happiness! Fertility will characterise even the mountain-tops, for “abundance [not a handful] of corn shall be in the earth on the top of the mountains; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon; and they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth. His name shall endure for ever; His name shall be continued as long as the sun; and men shall be blessed in Him; all nations shall call Him blessed” (16, 17). His own words will then come true, “I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw *all* men unto Me” (John xii. 32). With all nations calling Him blessed, the picture of millennial happiness here closes. Nothing more could be said, and nothing else could be a fitting conclusion to such a description of the future but the doxology which follows. “Blessed be Jehovah, God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. And blessed be His glorious name for ever; and let the whole earth be filled with His glory; Amen and Amen. The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended” (18-20). He could ask for no more as this picture of millennial blessing

passed before his mental gaze. And saints, whilst waiting for the Second Advent of Messiah, are to be encouraged by the prospect, sorrows great and heavy meanwhile having to be endured. But this carries us on to the *third* book of the Hebrew Psalter.

THE THIRD BOOK OF PSALMS.

LXXIII.-LXXXIX.

THE THIRD BOOK.

TO understand the arrangement of the Psalms, it is important to remember prophetic revelation. We read in Dan. viii. 9-12, "And out of one of them came forth a little horn, which waxed exceeding great, toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the pleasant [or glorious] land. And it waxed great, even to the host of heaven; and it cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them. Yea, it magnified itself even to the Prince of the host, and by [or rather, from] Him the daily sacrifice was taken away, and the place of His sanctuary was cast down. And the host was given over to it together with the continual burnt-offering, through transgression; and it cast down truth to the ground; and it practised [or, did its pleasure], and prospered." Here is described the one that maketh desolate of Dan. ix. 27 (R.V.), and we have followed in part in the quotation the reading of that same version. It is in connection with this state of things, the inroad of the northern and desolating power, that the *third* book of the Psalms will especially treat. Apostasy rife in Jerusalem through the image of the beast set up in the Temple for worship (Rev. xiii. 14, 15), an invading power called in Dan. xi. 40 the King of the North, will overrun like an irresistible flood the land of Israel with his enormous host, capturing the city (Ps. lxxix.), and laying low the Temple (Ps. lxxiv.). For this, the time of Jacob's trouble (Jer. xxx. 7), must precede the coming

of Messiah to set up that kingdom which shall never be destroyed (Dan. vii. 14). Now, as God has foretold that time of trouble (Matt. xxiv. 21), He has also graciously provided guidance and encouragement for His saints throughout it. Of this last certain Psalms treat.

The current of apostasy running strong, and to outward eyes unchecked, we learn from Ps. lxxiii. how it will affect the faithful at that time. So Asaph speaks, who was one of the Levites specially set apart by David as a leader in the service of song, and told off by the king to minister before the ark in the tent pitched for it in the city of David (1 Chron. vi. 39, xvi. 37). To one of this man's compositions we have been already introduced in Ps. l. Now, from lxxiii. to lxxxiii. inclusive, we have others. After these we have no more in the whole collection ascribed to him as their author. In character with Ps. l., which is manifestly prophetic, though in part applicable to Israel at all time, these Psalms, on the consideration of which we now enter, carry the reader on in thought to the circumstances of the latter days.

"Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart" (lxxiii. 1); so wrote Asaph, about to describe the temptations of a saint in times of declension. Kept as the saint had been in the midst of great inducement to him to turn aside, he can put on record the greatness of his own danger, his feet were almost gone, his steps had well nigh slipped (2). What was the snare? He describes it. It was the prosperity of the wicked, and their unabashed arrogance. Things it would seem were flourishing with them, having more than heart could wish (3-9). Direfully was all that acting on others, drawing aside into an apparently easier path those who should have withstood the temptation. The bait which ensnared them and the thoughts of their heart are both described. The bait was waters out of a full cup. Present ease

preferred to faithfulness to God. It is the state of mind which will land many in a coming day in apostasy. God is shut out of their thoughts. "How doth God know?" they say, "and is there knowledge in the Most High?" For a time the ungodly prosper, and increase in riches (10-12).

Many thus ensnared, the godly one expresses what he has felt. "Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency. For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning" (13, 14). How natural this seems to one who knows anything of his own heart! But is it right thus to give way through contrasting one's lot with the flourishing wicked ones? No, says the Psalmist, it is not. He would not thus speak, great as might be the temptation. Were he really to do that, he would offend against the generation of God's children. But whence could light be got as to this perplexing matter—the ungodly prospering, whilst the saint was suffering? In the sanctuary of God he found it. There all was plain. He saw the end of the wicked. Henceforth all is clear to him (17). Those drawn aside looked only at the present. They saw the wicked prospering, and they were ensnared. The Psalmist sees the end of such men, and so is kept from casting in his lot with them.

How needful for all to remember this! Present appearances and circumstances may mislead. The future learnt from God can dispel the delusion (16-22). And whilst the wicked and their dupes may be saying, "Doth God know?" etc., the Psalmist says, He does. He knows me, He holds me, He guides me, and afterward will receive me to glory. How much is God to him! None there is like Him in heaven or on earth. Flesh and heart may fail, but God will be the strength of his heart, and his portion for ever. Nor is this all. Whilst all far from God shall perish, the faithful one draws nigh to Him. He makes Him his

refuge, and has the privilege and joy of telling of all His works (23-28).

Reading this Psalm, we must feel as if transported into the very scene, beholding the wicked in their high-handed ways, surveying, too, the waverers who are leaving the path of faith, and marking the faithful one who keeps at all costs on the road. But this Psalm, like many another, is prophetic in its bearing. How far Asaph's personal history illustrated it we cannot say. But as in Ps. xxii. 1-21, whatever David, its writer, could have felt, we know that it has its full application only in the Lord on the Cross; hence in this, and in other prophetic Psalms, the Spirit of God has indited by the different writers thoughts and language suited to times posterior to those of the individual whose name is affixed. So in lxxiii. we may learn what a time it will be, when the Beast (Rev. xiii.) and the false prophet are running their awful, and apparently victorious, career. And we can understand, with this Psalm before us, why the Lord should say, "When the Son of Man cometh shall He find faith on the earth?" (Luke xviii. 8). How gracious is this warning announcement with reference to those times, since, except "those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved"! What compassion on the part of our God, that for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened (Matt. xxiv. 22)!

Viewing our Psalm as descriptive of the strong current of the apostasy of the future, and of its baneful effects on people, we are carried on in Ps. lxxiv. to hear of penal consequences that will follow it. What Daniel foretold in the passage we have already quoted is now contemplated as having come to pass, "The place of His sanctuary was cast down." For the image of the Beast, that abomination of desolation, having been erected in the holy place (Matt. xxiv. 15-21), the invasion of the land must follow, and the sanctuary be laid low, Jerusalem having been again (Zech. xiv. 2) and for the last time captured. Of

this last mentioned sorrow we shall read in Ps. lxxix. Here in Ps. lxxiv. we learn of the utter desolation of the sanctuary consequent on the apostasy. Thereupon is heard the language of intercession from true saints, "O God, why hast Thou cast us off for ever? Why doth Thine anger smoke against the sheep of Thy pasture? Remember Thy congregation, which Thou hast purchased of old; the rod of Thine inheritance, which Thou hast redeemed: this Mount Zion, wherein Thou hast dwelt. Lift up Thy feet unto the perpetual desolations: even all that the enemy hath done wickedly in the sanctuary" (lxxiv. 1-3).

We have evidently a prayer of saints on Jewish, not on Christian, ground. Christians have no such earthly sanctuary. The whole company of Christians are God's House in this dispensation (Eph. ii. 22; 2 Cor. vi. 16; * 1 Tim. iii. 15); and all Christians locally are together God's Temple in any one place (1 Cor. iii. 16). The language of this Psalm then could not apply to God's House or Temple as now viewed by Him. A saint in Judaism therefore it is who here speaks. Then follows a description of the state of matters (3-11). The sanctuary has been burned, its beautiful carved work having been first destroyed by axes and hammers. The sacred courts, to be trodden only by those engaged in the service of God, have been desecrated by feet of the heathen. All traces, too, of true worship in the land they have tried to efface (8). And the faithful have to say, "We see not our signs; there is no more any prophet; neither is there among us any that knoweth how long" (9). Dark indeed are these days. But this casts them upon God, as verses 10, 11, show.

But it is a known God, the King of His people, working

* The better reading of this passage in 2 Cor. vi. makes this plainer—*viz.* "we," not "ye," "are the Temple of the living God," the Apostle thus classing himself, and indeed all other Christians, with the Corinthian saints.

salvation in the midst of the earth (12). And He is the Creator, who made day and night, and prepared the light and the sun. What idol has done or could do that? Moreover, He has shown His power in past times, a power exercised on behalf of Israel, and for no others. Their deliverance from the power of Egypt, their passage through the Red Sea, the pathway made for them through the Jordan,—all that, when remembered, emboldens the saint in Israel to look to God in this the dire distress (12-17). Hence comes the prayer for the deliverance of God's turtledove, and of His poor, the oppressed, and the needy. Their cause is the cause of God. Their enemies are the enemies of God (22, 23); for those, who are carrying all before them, are rising up against Him. Such is the light in which the saint views them. And the language is really that of the Spirit of God in the suffering one.

Now to what event does this Psalm refer? Till the days of Nebuchadnezzar the Temple, built by Solomon, was in existence. To no event before the capture of Jerusalem by the Chaldæans can reference here have been made. Twice has the Temple been destroyed—first by the Chaldæans, centuries before Christ; and the second time by the Romans, some years after the Crucifixion, but on the same day of the year, it is said,* on which the Chaldæans set fire to it. Between these two epochs the House, though desecrated, was never burnt, for in the days of Antiochus Epiphanes the doors of the Temple only were burnt. The House, however, was not. So 1 Macc. iii. 45 and 2 Macc. i. 8, viii. 33, to which some would refer, cannot really be cited as fulfilling Ps. lxxiv. 7. It was not in the interest of Antiochus to destroy it. His purpose was to profane it.† This he did.

Can, then, the destruction under Titus be quoted as the

* See Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, VI., iv., 5.

† So we read in 1 Macc. iii. 45, that "the sanctuary was trodden down."

fulfilment of the Psalm? We think not. For certainly at that time the real saints of God were the Christians, not the Jews. For them the Temple was no longer connected with their worship. And we cannot suppose that the Spirit of God provided in this Psalm language in which the unbelieving Jews, rejecters of Christianity, should address God and seek His interposition. Did the Psalm receive its accomplishment when Nebuzaradan, the captain of the Chaldean guard, set fire to the House? Such a thought is at once forbidden by verse 9, "We see not our signs: there is no more any prophet, neither is there among us any that knoweth how long." The Prophet Jeremiah was then alive, and in the land, and he had foretold the duration of the Babylonish captivity (Jer. xxv. 11; xxvii. 6, 7; xxix. 10), predictions which many years later Daniel (ix. 2) studied, this showing that they had been carefully treasured up in remembrance. No past vicissitude then in the Temple's history can be successfully adduced as fulfilling the Psalm. So to the future we must turn, believing that to the time of which Daniel (viii. 11) wrote, and to that to which Isaiah (lxiv. 11) refers, we must relegate the fulfilment of the words of Asaph.

These two Psalms (lxxiii., lxxiv.), forming the introduction to the third book, setting forth the circumstances in which the godly will find themselves, the question naturally comes up, Will God hear and answer? Is it really His cause, as the troubled ones have averred? The two following Psalms (lxxv., lxxvi.) give a clear answer to this, so are fitly called *songs* in common with Ps. lxxxiii. In the first of them Messiah is introduced, and speaks: for it is certainly a Divine Person who answers, as we believe, in verses 2-10. Who but One Divine could use the language of verse 3? "He forgetteth not the cry of the humble," we elsewhere read. Here again we have an illustration of it. Then in Ps. lxxvi. God's intervention in power is graphically foretold.

We have said that in lxxv. it is Messiah who speaks from verses 2-10. It is clearly One who, having absolute power in government (10), can yet sing praises to the God of Jacob (9). To Him, who is both God and Man, this can appertain. At the right moment will He intervene, as the Revised Version gives it, "when I shall find the set time I will judge uprightly"* (2). The saints must, therefore, still wait, like those under the altar in Rev. vi. 11. And who but One can restore order, and re-establish authority upon earth, dealing in a day like that which is coming with the apparently overwhelming power of the wicked? Messiah, and He alone, can do it, the One of whom David made mention in his last words (2 Sam. xxiii. 7). We feel driven, then, to the conclusion, that in this Psalm Messiah is prophetically introduced,—the real hope of the godly in Israel, and the restorer of order on earth, where God's authority has been unblushingly disowned. Fittingly does He speak, reminding people that promotion (or, lifting up) cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south,† but only from God, who acts as He will, putting down one and setting up another, and dealing in unsparing judgment with the wicked.

Had some been ensnared by the prospect of "waters of a full cup" (lxxiii. 10)? There is a cup prepared by Jehovah which the finally impenitent must drink to the dregs (lxxv. 8). Judgment will certainly fall on apostates, as well as on the invading power from the north. This is set forth in lxxvi. The cry of the afflicted and persecuted has not gone up in vain. God will arise to save all the meek of the earth (9). He will, the Lord has taught us

* This, in accordance with the marginal reading in A.V., is generally accepted as the right translation.

† Is the north here omitted because the King of the North will have invaded the land, so to other quarters, if mere human help could avail, must men look? God is, however, the only resource.

(Luke xviii. 7, 8), avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him. Are we not in these Psalms introduced to the very circumstances to which the Lord points—*viz.* that awful time for the returned Jews to be followed by deliverance at Jerusalem? In Ps. lxxvi. this last is celebrated (1-6), God having arisen to save His people. When has anything like this had a fulfilment? The meek shall inherit the earth, the Lord Jesus has said (Matt. v. 5). To this consummation prophets looked forward (Ps. xxii. 26; Isa. xi. 4). Jehovah will beautify the meek with salvation, we read (Ps. cxlix. 4), a prospect which is still future, and connected, as David and Isaiah teach us, with the coming of Messiah in greatness and power. Clearly then, as we read this Psalm of Asaph (lxxvi.), we are in spirit in the circumstances of the last days.

Could the overthrow of Sennacherib have been its fulfilment? It may have been in a measure viewed as foreshadowing it. In *measure* only we can say, for Sennacherib's army, let us remember, was not destroyed at Jerusalem. This 2 Kings xix. 32, 33, plainly intimates. For he was not to come into the city. He was not even to invest it. He was not to shoot an arrow there, nor to come before it with shield, nor to cast a bank against it. By the way that he came, by that same should he return. Now that way had evidently been along the low country, the great highway between Syria and Egypt. From Lachish, in the south-west of the land, Sennacherib first sent to demand the submission of Hezekiah and his people. From Libnah, when about to move south to meet Tirhakah, King of Ethiopia, his last insulting message was despatched (2 Kings xix. 8, 9). Then in one night, at a place not mentioned, his army was more than decimated by a sudden pestilence, for 185,000 were cut off by angelic agency. True, indeed, could be the application of the Psalmist's words, "The stout-hearted

are spoiled, they have slept their sleep" (lxxvi. 5), with reference to the crushing blow that Sennacherib experienced; but his soldiers fell we know not where, whilst Asaph foretells a victory to be displayed at Jerusalem, for there God broke the arrows of the bow, the shield, the sword, and the battle (3).*

If then the destruction of Sennacherib's host cannot be the one predicted, what other event in the fortunes of Jerusalem can answer to the description which Asaph has given? Nothing, we believe, in the past can be adduced as fulfilling the Divine Word. We affirm, therefore, that this Psalm must be viewed as distinctly prophetic. Now there are still two sieges to which Jerusalem will be exposed, ere millennial peace can enwrap her and her people. Zechariah has foretold them both, and we believe Isa. xxix. refers to them likewise. The first of these sieges will be successful. This the son of Berechiah teaches us in xiv. 1, 2, and to it Ps. lxxiv. and lxxix. refer. The second, which will be defeated by the presence of the Lord Jesus, is mentioned in xii. 1-9 of that prophet. This deliverance it is that we conclude our Psalm prophetically describes. To it Zech. xiv. 3 also refers.† Then, indeed, will vows be paid to the Lord, and presents be

* Isa. x. 28-32 describes the invasion by Sargon, who came from the north. But that monarch never took Jerusalem. The message of Isaiah to Hezekiah confirms this. Speaking of Sennacherib, Sargon's son, the prophet said, "The *virgin*, the daughter of Jerusalem hath despised thee." No Assyrian power had captured her. We have said, "we know not where"; for Herodotus, giving an Egyptian tradition, says it was near Pelusium, but this lacks proof.

† The word "then" in Zech. xiv. 3 may tend to mislead the English reader as to the time to which it refers. The Hebrew is simply, "And the Lord shall go forth," etc; so the ancient versions, the Septuagint, Vulgate, and Syriac, marking the sequence of events, but not the moment of their fulfilment. This verse is connected in time with xii., which treats of the last siege of the city, and of its final deliverance,

brought by all that are round about Him (Ps. lxxvi. 11); and the last verse of the Psalm will surely have an unmistakable fulfilment.

How graciously, then, as we see, are the saints in a coming day to be encouraged by the certainty of final blessing, depicted prophetically as if actually taking place (lxxvi. 1-9)! For of course the reader will understand, that the circumstances therein described are not such as will ever affect us. But we are now led on to the consideration of the way, and the ground of encouragement for God's saints all along the ages since Asaph's day to the appearing of the Lord Jesus out of heaven, and His coming in delivering power. Here instruction is provided also for us, reminded as we are of the Lord's gracious words in the gospel of Luke, "that men ought always to pray, and not to faint." For in Ps. lxxvii. we have a saint in prayer, but well-nigh disheartened at God's apparent unconcern. Then he learns, and proves from Divine intervention of old on behalf of the nation of Israel, how in his turn to draw encouragement, so as to wait confidently for God's interposition, which he so ardently desires.

Sorely, indeed, had he been tried, as he expresses it. To God he turns, "I will cry unto God with my voice, even unto God with my voice, and He will give ear unto me." * What he had gone through in his trouble he recounts in verse 2. His hand (not his sore) had been stretched out in the night, and slacked not: his soul refused to be comforted. Past seasons of joy he remembered, but only to contrast his present lot with those times when singing in the night was in season. Songs were all banished now. Nothing but prayer, earnest continued prayer, suited him. But prayer seems unanswered. Then comes the dark cloud of unbelief about to enwrap his soul. Let him express his thoughts in his own words. "Will the Lord cast off for ever? and will

* So the Revised Version.

He be favourable no more? Is His mercy clean gone for ever? Doth His promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath He in anger shut up His tender mercies?" (7-9). Six questions thus rise rapidly in his mind. How shall they be answered?

No acts of Divine power are displayed on his behalf. No voice from heaven is heard to quiet all his doubts. The time for the deliverance of the earthly saints has not yet come. Despair, however, is to be banished, and faith to be strengthened. But how? Verses 10-12 teach us. God's intervention of old on behalf of Israel is a lesson to be studied right on to the end. Redemption by power that nation once experienced. Could God drop those whom He has redeemed? Impossible. By redeeming power at the Red Sea, God became their God, and they became His people. Light now breaks in on him in his trouble (13-20), and we hear no more of doubts about his God. A saint, and one of the redeemed nation, how could God forsake him? So deliverance he should expect, though the way of it he might not perceive. God's way of old was "in the sea, His path in the great waters, and His footsteps not known." All, however, became clear in due time, and He led His people "like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron" (lxxvii. 19-20).

Shall *we*, however, read the Psalm as just recording the experience of a saint of other days? Should we not profit by it? For the principle it enunciates is always true—*viz.* that those whom God has once redeemed He will never forsake, however He may have to deal with them governmentally for their ways. So if the dark cloud of unbelief would steal over the soul, and despair begin to benumb its energies, the remembrance of redemption accomplished (and that for Christians is redemption by the blood of Christ, Eph. i. 7) should disperse the deepening gloom, and brace up the person for renewed energy, whilst waiting for deliverance in

God's time and way. "My infirmity" (10), the Psalmist owned, occasioned within him those dark thoughts to which he has given expression. Have not some since his day had to confess that the like has been the case with them? Let Asaph teach any in a similar condition what is a way out of it.

To return. Through the Red Sea Israel was taken of old. Where no way was apparent, a safe way was opened. And in the wilderness journey they were led like sheep by the hand of Moses and Aaron. What the remembrance of that was to the Psalmist, he has now taught us. But the wilderness journey spoken of, the history of Israel in all that naturally comes to mind. So the Psalm which follows, the first of the historical Psalms recounting Israel's history, treats of it, showing with what their deliverance through the sea and their wilderness journey should have impressed them. God's ways in the past may be lessons for the present. Fitly then does Ps. lxxviii. find its place here, in the third book of the Psalter.

Why, too, it was written its composer will now tell us. "I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings of old; which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children; showing to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, and His strength, and His wonderful works that He hath done. For He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers that they should make them known to their children; that the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born, who should arise and declare them to their children; that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments; and might not be as their fathers a stubborn and rebellious generation; a generation that set not their

heart aright, and whose spirit was not steadfast with God" (2-8).

Teaching from the past history of the nation, the Psalmist will now set forth, evidently addressed to an earthly people, since generation after generation is contemplated as needing instruction. With Christians it is different. We look for the Lord Jesus to come and take away His people, and we know not how soon. No prediction is there in the Word, the accomplishment of which must precede it. For the rapture (1 Thess. iv 15-17) will be the first of the revealed acts in connection with the coming kingdom. But for Israel (as the earthly people) the expectation is to be alive in this scene when the appearing of Christ takes place.

And now the Psalmist reviews the history of his nation from Egypt to the establishment of the monarchy in the house of David. Beyond that he does not proceed. Living in the days of David, and perhaps surviving to see Solomon on the throne, we can understand it. He stops the historic record with the commencement of that dynasty in Israel, which never has been, and never will be, superseded. For the Lord Jesus will have given to Him the throne of His father David (Luke i. 32). But what a blotted history was that of Israel in the wilderness, and in the land also up to the appearance of David! With Ephraim's failure the Psalm begins (9-11). That tribe's defection just noticed, the Psalm ends with its rejection, and the selection of Jerusalem for the resting-place of the ark, as well as the selection of David to be king. What caused the defection of Ephraim, though the instance of it is not elsewhere we believe recorded, is plainly stated (10, 11). They kept not the covenant, they forgot God's works, and His wonders which He had shown them. The works then described (12-16), the lessons they could teach, were lost on the people, acting as they did rebelliously against God, in the wilderness tempting Him in their

heart, and speaking against Him (17-19). Yet He provided for their wants in the manna from heaven, and in the quails as flesh to satisfy them (23-29). Governmental dealings had no lasting effect on them (30-37); merciful dealings did not change them (38), oftentimes provoking Him in the desert, and grieving Him in the wilderness (40). Yet He brought them into their land, driving out nations before them (54, 55).

What had He not done for that people? How did they requite Him when in the land? They provoked Him to anger with their high places, and moved Him to jealousy with their graven images (58). Hence Ephraim as a tribe lost its foremost place among the people. Shiloh was deserted. God refused the tabernacle of Joseph, and chose not the tribe of Ephraim; but chose the tribe of Judah, and the Mount Zion which He loved, building there His sanctuary, and inaugurating the dynasty of David's line. The Psalm then closes with the service of David as king, feeding the people according to the integrity of his heart, and guiding them by the skilfulness of his hands (71, 72).

We may read all this as past history, but what will it be to the godly remnant in a coming day? What consolation can it afford the faithful ones in the midst of the sorrow of that time, sorrow which lxxix. and lxxx. will next describe. Most fittingly are these now introduced. Ps. lxxviii., by Asaph, has been historical. Ps. lxxix. and lxxx., also by him, are prophetic,* the former treating of a desolation not yet brought about, the latter lamenting a sorrow which for ages has been in existence. Zion had

* We have said they are prophetic. Would any raise a difficulty as to this because of the tenor of them both? If David, as we have before remarked, was taught of the Spirit to foretell the thoughts, feelings, and language of the Lord Jesus when on the Cross as he plainly did in Ps. xxii., which is undeniably a prophetic Psalm, why could not Asaph have been equally taught to express the feelings and desires of the remnant in the future?

been chosen as God's earthly dwelling-place, and David's dynasty had been established (lxxviii. 68, 70, 71), and neither of these were to be superseded. Jerusalem will ever be the true metropolis of the land; David's offspring, too, will be seated on his throne. But what was to happen in the then future? The two Psalms we have mentioned here declare.* God's inheritance, Jerusalem, is described as captured by the heathen, the Temple has been defiled, and the city laid on heaps. God's servants have been slain, their bodies unburied are meat for the fowls of the air, and the flesh of His saints for the beasts of the earth (lxxix. 1-3). Where can the faithful turn? To whom can they look? Ps. lxxviii. 38 can teach them. And profiting by it, they turn in lxxix. 8-12 to the God of all grace, the God of Israel. For if God could and did deliver in the past, "being full of compassion," they count on Him for deliverance still. And the Psalm, which begins with speaking to Him of the desolation of the beloved city, closes with a hope: "So we Thy people and sheep of Thy pasture will give Thee thanks for ever: we will show forth Thy praise to all generations" (13). The ministry of Asaph in lxxviii. will bear fruit in a coming day.

They appeal to God as the sheep of God's pasture, clearly no longer to be viewed as "Lo-ammi," which they have been since the days of Nebuchadnezzar. But if they are the sheep, God is the Shepherd. He was that in the wilderness of old, when the ark, the symbol of His presence, preceded the camps of Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh (Num. ii. 17, x. 21-24). They cry then to Him as that still, asking for His face to shine on them, and they shall be saved (Ps. lxxx. 1-3). But why this petition? Because the throne has been overturned, and without its

* Ps. lxxix. certainly refers to the same time as that of lxxiv. And as to no previous trouble in Israel would Ps. lxxiv. have reference, so we view lxxix. as alike future in its application.

re-establishment they cannot get national blessing. Of the vine and of the vineyard they speak. The vine is the men of Judah. The branch of it is the royal house of David. The vineyard is the house of Israel. So we read in Isa. v. 7. That vine once so flourishing, and stretching out from the Mediterranean Sea to the river—*i.e.* the Euphrates (8-11), it has been wasted and devoured (12-13). Men have carried out their will in dealing with it. Powers, which Israel could not successfully resist, have trampled on it.

The resource, therefore, is only in God. To Him they turn. "Let Thy hand be upon the man of Thy right hand, upon the Son of Man whom Thou madest strong for Thyself" (17). New Testament teaching makes plain to us to whom reference by the Spirit is here really made, even to Him who sits now at Jehovah's right hand (Ps. cx. 1), and who will again manifest Himself as the arm of Jehovah (Isa. li. 9, liii. 1). But when will He appear? Rejected by the people of old, He has gone away; so they must wait God's time for His return. Hence the Psalm closes with the prayer, uttered now for the third time, and with increased emphasis. "Turn us again, *O God*, and cause Thy face to shine; and we shall be saved" (3), had been a *first* petition. "Turn us again, *O God of Hosts*; and cause Thy face to shine, and we shall be saved" (7); so runs the *second* request. "Turn us again, *O Jehovah God of Hosts*; cause Thy face to shine, and we shall be saved," is the third and last utterance (19). We may here recall the formula of blessing appointed for the use of God's High-Priest in Israel, as stated in Num. vi. 23-27. "Jehovah make His face shine upon thee," Aaron was to say. "Cause Thy face to shine," is the prayer of the godly in this Psalm. They have not, and will not, forget the words in Numbers.

And now, as prayer characterised them in lxxx., singing

to God should not be forgotten, nor the appointed blowing of trumpets be neglected (lxxxi. 1-4). Of this the godly ones can make mention, that all may respond to the invitation, "Blow up the trumpet * in the new moon, at the full moon, on our solemn feast day." So runs the Revised Version. It is the Passover month; to its new moon reference is here made, and to the Paschal feast kept at its full moon. Hope has revived, though the Divine intervention has not yet been effected. We have had the tale of national trouble recounted in lxxix. and lxxx.; now of its cause the Psalmist reminds all, but in language from God addressed to His people. Silent for ages as regards them, He will speak again, and tell them why they have been in trouble (8-16). "The Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear; but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear" (Isa. lix. 1, 2). That was the case in the prophet's day. God in our Psalm confirms the statement. Yet we can say that He desires to help them—else why declare what has hindered His activity on their behalf?

The way of blessing made known, and that is by obedience to God, the following Psalm (lxxxii.) warns the people of the Divine presence in the congregation of God (R.V.), and of His judging among the gods. Israel was, and will again be, owned as His congregation (Num. xxvii. 17); and the judges were called gods (Exod. xxi. 6, xxii. 8).† The iniquity of the judges here exposed (lxxxii. 5), God must deal with them, all the foundations of the earth being out of course. Nor

* Blowing the trumpets would be for a memorial before their God.—Num. x. 10.

† The judges are called gods in the original, in those passages in Exodus. But it was from our Psalm that the Lord quoted in John x. 34.

that only, for He will judge the earth as the godly request, and inherit all nations (5-8). God's final triumph over all that then will oppose is confidently expected, and He is the true resource for His saints.

So the godly remnant, when the great confederacy shall arise (Ps. lxxxiii.), will cry to their God for the complete discomfiture of their foes, intent as those are in wiping out the very name of Israel from the earth (4). It is the great confederacy under the northern power (Isa. xxix., Joel ii. 20, Dan. viii. 9-12, Zech. xii. 2) in league really against God. Of old had Jehovah subdued the Midianites (Judg. viii. 28), and at an earlier date the Lord had subdued also the Canaanites, when gathered together under the leadership of Sisera (Judg. iv. 23, 24). Again, then, do His people in our Psalm (lxxxiii.) look for His intervention to be as effectual as in the days of Barak and in the days of Gideon. And their prayer for it is prophetically set forth (13-18), that the confederacy may know by the Divine interposition, that He whose name alone is Jehovah is the Most High over all the earth.

"The Most High over all the earth!" As such will He be known by the nations of the world in millennial days. Now He who will be thus known must certainly be the true God; and hence the earthly saint thinks of His Tabernacles, desiring the courts of the House of Jehovah, his heart and his flesh crying out to (R.V.) the living God (Ps. lxxxiv. 1, 2). In Ps. xliii. 3, as far from those courts, he has desired to be led to them. In Ps. lxiii. 2 he remembered what formerly he had witnessed in the sanctuary. Now in lxxxiv. he thinks again of the House, made desolate by the northern enemy (Dan. viii., Ps. lxxiv.), and its altars unused for worship, so that the very birds nest on them (3). Is, then, that desolation final? Is the House never to be restored? The confederacy of Ps. lxxxiii. will be finally crushed (9-17); and the House will be again raised up, and blessed will be those

who will then dwell in it—they will be still praising God. Blessed, too, will be the man whose strength is in God, and in whose heart are the highways to Zion. Blessed, too, will be the man who trusteth in Jehovah (lxxxiv. 4, 5, 12). For God will triumph, so His people will be blessed. We see here surely how faith can shine in days of darkness and distress; for the desired consummation awaits the advent of Messiah (9) returning in power to reign.

The Jews brought back by some earthly power (Isa. xviii.), but not owned of God, the faithful among them will be painfully conscious of the troubles, in which they share as part of the people who crucified the Lord their Messiah. We read, then, in Ps. lxxxv. of their desires in consequence, for no abiding peace can they enjoy unless the Lord Jesus is sent to them again, who, as Peter told their fathers (Acts iii. 21), must remain in heaven till the times of restitution of all things. How earnest is the united supplication of the godly remnant here prophetically depicted (lxxxv. 4-7)! Then follows a prayer of David (lxxxvi.), the language of an individual saint, addressing God in the consciousness of that which God is, and can be, in grace—good, and ready to forgive, and plenteous in mercy to all that call upon Him (5). Further, universal worship will be rendered Him, for He is great and does wondrous things, He is God alone (9, 10). Mercy already experienced by the suffering saint in preserving him from death (13), he still looks for mercy, remembering the revelation to Moses of the Divine name (15, 16). What a stay to the saints has that revelation of God (Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7) been age after age, as the Old Testament shows! What a stay it will yet be to the earthly saints in the time of Jacob's trouble, we can from this Psalm understand. And the suppliant, knowing Jehovah as the true God, and himself as His servant, with one more request closes this prayer: "Shew me a

token for good: that they which hate me may see it and be ashamed; because Thou, Jehovah, hast holpen me, and comforted me" (17).

What will be the token? We think, Ps. lxxxvii. tells us. God's "foundation is in the holy mountains. The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God" (1-3). True, indeed! So for the saint to have his name written on the burgess roll of that city will be a manifest token for good. On Christians who will overcome the Lord will write the name of the city of His God, which is New Jerusalem (Rev. iii. 12), showing that they belong thereto. Here the earthly saint will find his name on the burgess roll of the city of God, even Zion, which will arise from the dust of ages, and be arrayed in her beautiful garments (Isa. lii. 1). But as yet that is viewed as future; so the city still laid low, the godly remnant must share governmentally in the sorrows of their people, and, because they are saints, must endure persecution at the hand of those that hate them (Ps. lxxxvi. 17).

Two Psalms then follow. The one (lxxxviii.) depicts the sorrowful state of an individual. The other (lxxxix.) contains the cry for the restoration of the throne in fulfilment of God's promise to David. In the former, that to which the name of Heman * is prefixed, the saint tells out to God his sorrow. In the latter, to which the name of Ethan is prefixed, the Psalm celebrates the mercies of the Lord—an abiding subject of song. The political condition in both Psalms is the same. The King has not appeared. The throne is still cast down. But in the one case the

* Heman and Ethan, the authors of the two last Psalms in this book, were well-known sages (1 Kings iv. 31), descendants of Zerah, son of Judah by Tamar (2 Chron. ii. 46). This Heman, therefore, was of the tribe of Judah, whilst the singer, the grandson of Samuel (1 Chron. vi. 33), was, of course, of the tribe of Levi.

saint is occupied with all that he is feeling; in the other he is occupied with that which God has done, and looking for that which He will do. States of mind, these are very different. But may we not understand them? If our circumstances are before us, how dark things may appear! If God's revealed thoughts occupy us, in what a different light will all be viewed!

In Ps. lxxxviii. the saint, for he is one, freely expresses to God all that he is feeling (3-5), but takes all from the hand of his God (6-18). Surely we get here one walking in darkness, and having no light, yet fearing the Lord (Isa. l. 10). In the other (lxxxix.) the Psalmist would celebrate the mercies of the Lord and His faithfulness, making mention of them to all generations. David's throne must be restored. God has promised, and bound Himself by covenant and by oath, not to lie unto David (3, 4). And God is Almighty. He had taken up the cause of His people in Egypt, then breaking Rahab in pieces. The God of heaven He is, and the God of the earth also. All has been founded by Him (11). North and south, Tabor (*i.e.* the west) and Hermon (*i.e.* the east), shall rejoice in His name (12). And the joyful sound of the trumpet gathering together the people shall yet be heard. To this verse 15 points, we believe. But that cannot be without the presence of the King. Would any question His appearing? God's promise to David will not fail, and that promise is here remembered and recited (19-37).

But how great the contrast from that which things were when David was first made king! "Thou hast cast off and abhorred [or, rejected], Thou hast been wroth with Thine anointed. Thou hast made void [or, abhorred, R.V.] the covenant of Thy servant; Thou hast profaned his crown by casting it to the ground" (38, 39). How long shall that continue? is the Psalmist's cry. Man's life is but short. Will he, then, pass away without seeing the restoration (47, 48)? Now comes a prayer (49-51); and this Psalm,

and the third book of Psalms, ends with a short doxology, "Blessed be Jehovah for evermore. Amen, and Amen."

Earnest has been the cry in this, the third, book for deliverance (lxxiv., lxxix., lxxx., lxxxiii., lxxxv., lxxxviii., lxxxix.). Shall that go up and be unheeded? "He forgetteth not the cry of the humble," wrote David (Ps. ix 12). The remnant of the nation will joyfully experience the truth of that. It will then be fully seen that David had not misrepresented his God. Apostasy rife, and ensnaring many, is the outlook at the beginning of this book. But the saint kept true, and looking for the kingdom in power is the expectation at its close. Who will prevail? God? or the enemy called in the New Testament, "the prince of this world"? The fourth book will tell us. To that we must next proceed.

THE FOURTH BOOK OF PSALMS.

XC.-CVI.

THE FOURTH BOOK.

THE fourth book of the Psalms comprises seventeen compositions, numbered from xc. to cvi. inclusive. Two of these (ci. and ciii.) are ascribed to David, and one (xc.) to Moses. The rest, fourteen in number, bear no author's name, though one (cii.) is described as "The prayer of the afflicted, when he is overwhelmed, and poureth out his complaint before the Lord." And three others, we may boldly say, were in existence in the lifetime of David. We refer to Ps. xcvi., cv., cvi., nearly the whole of the first of these and part of the other two having been sung on the occasion of the entrance of the ark into Jerusalem (1 Chron. xvi. 7-36). Praise is the characteristic of most in this book, only two (xc., cii.) being designated as *prayers*.

Between this book of the Psalms and the fourth book of the Pentateuch (*i.e.* Numbers), an analogy may in measure be traced. In the latter we read both of the end of the wilderness journey, the congregation having crossed the brook, or valley, of Zared (Num. xxi. 12); and of the commencement of the wars, which would issue in the conquest and possession of the land (Deut. ii. 31, iii. 12). Beginning with the extermination of the Amorites east of Jordan under Moses, the war went on west of Jordan under Joshua. Rest for Israel nationally in the past was only reached, as we read, in Josh. xi. 23, years of conflict passing ere that was achieved. In the fourth book of the Psalms the Lord's return to reign is celebrated.

Anticipations of it we have met with (Ps. ii., xlv., lxxii.), but the announcement of His presence once more in Zion is reserved for Ps. xcix. 2. Then, as other Scriptures teach us, millennial rest and peace must await the utter discomfiture of all Israel's foes, a consummation future to the Lord's appearance at Jerusalem.

Hence it need cause no surprise to find, when we come to the fifth book of the Psalms, that the end of the people's trouble will not have been reached at the moment of the Lord's return to reign. Born King of the Jews (Matt. ii. 2), He will return with the emblems of imperial power and sovereignty (Rev. xix. 11-16); but conflict and conquest must go forward ere the earth can know the blessings of peaceful rest. For first the Lord will encounter the Beast and the false prophet, and their armies, engaged in the mad purpose of keeping Him, if possible, out of His kingdom here below (Rev. xix. 19-21). Next He will deal with the King of the North, as both Isaiah (xiv. 25, xxx. 29-32) and Daniel (viii. 25, xi. 45) have predicted.* After that the invasion of Gog will take place, followed by his overthrow, and that of his huge host (Ezek. xxxviii., xxxix.). Beside all this, the conquering campaign of Israel in the land of Nimrod, and foretold by Micah (v. 5-8), must have its place. Peace, therefore, enduring peace for this weary world, will not be brought about at the moment of the Lord's appearing, or Epiphany (2 Tim. iv. 1), like a magician's wand effecting an instantaneous deliverance. But the final victory is certain. As when Solomon reigned there was neither adversary nor evil occurrent

* The reader may remark that in Isa. xiv. the destruction of Babylon is predicted before the overthrow of the Assyrian is declared. The converse was the case in the past. In the future what will answer to the Assyrian will be dealt with after the decisive conflict with the head of the Roman earth, the Beast of Rev. xiii. 1-10, xix. 20.

(1 Kings v. 4), so will it be under the sway of Christ, when that beautiful picture of Ps. lxxii. has its realisation.

To turn now to Ps. xc., entitled "A prayer of Moses, the man of God." In His closing ministry to Israel the lawgiver sketched out the fortunes of the nation till their final blessing, when they shall return to the Lord their God, and obey His voice, their hearts being circumcised, and their captivity then ended (Deut. xxx.). Then, too, the Gentiles will rejoice with Israel (xxxii. 43). Directed of God to foretell all this, we may well understand his being inspired to indite the prayer of Ps. xc. as a prelude to that happy time.

Great and many would be the vicissitudes of the nation. Generation after generation would come and go; but there is One who has been Israel's dwelling-place and their refuge in all generations. That One is here called *Adonai*—i.e. Lord. Who is He? From all eternity He is the everlasting God. In His hands are all men. And their mortality becomes apparent as they die under His hand. But the race does not become extinct. For the word goes forth from the Everlasting One, "Return, ye children of men." So we understand the third verse, bearing in mind the term used for man. In the first clause it is *Enosh*—i.e. mortal man—referring to their dying. In the second clause the Psalmist speaks of them as children of men, Adam—i.e. the race. Men then may pass away, but the Everlasting One remains. Time to Him is nothing. A thousand years (and no man has ever yet lived so long) are in His eyes but as yesterday, when it is past, and as a watch in the night. Such is God—everlasting. Such are men, fleeting mortal creatures.

Fleeting, indeed, is man's temporal existence, like grass, which, flourishing in the morning, is cut down, dried, and withered by nightfall. "Carried away as with a flood," so the Psalmist describes them. Is this just a figure from nature, or is there any prophetic reference to the

troubles the remnant will pass through in the last days? Considering what has passed before us in the *third* book of Psalms, connected as we saw with the invasion of the northern army (Joel ii. 20), and remembering that the Assyrian, or northern power of the last days, is described by Isaiah as overrunning the land like a flood, *Zerem* (Isa. xxv. 4, xxviii. 2), and that the word in our Psalm for "carrying away like a flood" is an unusual one, *Z'ramtam*, the verbal root of the noun, *Zerem*, can it be that the fifth verse of our Psalm has a prophetic reference to that calamity, which in its completeness awaits the returned remnant of the Jews? Could we say that this suggestion is improbable? Would not the statements in the following verses (7, 8) be in character with it? The language of the Psalm is clearly that of *saints* in Israel. Yet they have to say, "We are consumed by Thine anger, and by Thy wrath are we troubled. Thou has set our iniquities before Thee, our secret sins in the light of Thy countenance." How could such language become them? The answer is plain. As part of the nation then in apostasy, they suffer governmentally with it. And the invasion of the land by the northern power of the future will be consequent, as Daniel (ix. 27) has foretold, on the setting up in the Temple at Jerusalem of an idol,—the abomination of desolation (Matt. xxiv. 15), which we learn from Rev. xiii. 14, 15, will be the image of the Beast.

Suffering, then, as the godly will with the rest of the returned remnant, is death to overtake them, ere their long-expected deliverer in the person of the Messiah shall appear? It might seem like it. Brief life their portion, death the certain event (9, 10). God's wrath, too, they keenly feel. But who knows the power of His anger? None on earth have experienced that. Who, indeed, knows that wrath according to the fear that is due to God (11)? Two petitions then ascend. First, to

be taught to number their days, that they may apply their hearts unto wisdom (12); and secondly, they request Jehovah to return repenting Himself concerning His servants (13). Hope, then, is not quite extinguished, so the Psalm closes with prayer: "O satisfy us early with Thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days. Make us glad according to the days wherein Thou hast afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil." A large request indeed! "Let Thy work," they continue, "appear unto Thy servants, and Thy glory unto [or, upon, R.V.] their children. And let the beauty of Jehovah our God be upon us; and establish Thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish Thou it" (14-17).

Studying this Psalm, we come to understand something of the trials and of the feelings of the godly amongst the Jews in that day, ere deliverance dawns upon them. In Ps. lxxxix. 47, 48, the saint reminds God of the brevity of human life, and, as he fears, of the certainty of his death. In this prayer of Moses that feeling and fear are intensified. Will that really come about? Will death overtake them? An answer comes in Ps. xci. In doubt as to that God's earthly saints shall not remain.

"He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." Such is the opening statement (xc. 1). That which David counted on for himself (xxvii. 5), others may share in as well. And under the shadow of Him who is the Almighty, what can harm them? Protection from troubles and from dangers of any kind can such count upon (3-8). In security shall they dwell, and angelic guardian care shall they experience (10-13). Such is the language of this interesting Psalm. Two speakers are introduced. One speaks in verse 2 and again in the first clause of verse 9, translated by the Revised Version, "For Thou, Jehovah, art my refuge." All else to verse 13 inclusive is

the utterance of another. Then God speaks, "Because he hath set his love upon Me," etc., to the end of the Psalm. Abiding security therefore is assured to one so characterised. Length of days, too, shall he enjoy, and God will show him His salvation (14-16). How full an answer is this to the prayer in Ps. xc. 13-17!

An interesting Psalm we have called it. And the reader may remember how Satan quoted from it to turn the Lord Jesus from the path of obedience, but in vain (Matt. iv. 6, 7; Luke iv. 9-12). He omitted in his quotation the second clause of verse 11 of this Psalm, "in all thy ways." How important to be careful in quoting God's Word!

Passing on to Ps. xcii., having looked at the *prayer* in Ps. xc. and noted the *full answer* to it in xci., we shall be prepared for the outflow of *praise* in xcii., "A Psalm, or song, for the sabbath day." So it is entitled. And well will it be suited to the remnant of the future, when they shall enter into that rest of which God has foretold them (Ps. xcv. 7-11). Fittingly, then, may the song for the sabbath day have its place in this connection; for the promise expressed in xci. 8, "Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold, and see the reward of the wicked," is contemplated by the godly one as certain of fulfilment (xcii. 7). Triumph he will in the works of Jehovah's hands (4). Exaltation, too, will he enjoy, whilst the ungodly shall be utterly discomfited. His enemies are God's enemies. And "Jehovah is on high for evermore," as we should translate in verse 8. He has never vacated His throne, whatever the apostates might think. The righteous, therefore, will He bless, for He is upright, and there is no unrighteousness in Him (xcii. 10-15). Faith is in exercise. The end is sure. The godly man will be preserved, and see his desire on his enemies. A righteous thought this is for earthly saints, but not language that should characterise a Christian.

"Jehovah is on high" we have just read. A series now follows (xciii.-c.) telling of the kingdom in power being established through the return of the Lord Jesus Christ, as celebrated in xcix. 2. With Ps. xciii. it begins, which has for its subjects the majesty and might of Jehovah. On His throne He sits, who is from everlasting. He reigns, and reigns in irresistible might. But how does the saint know this, seeing his deliverance has not yet been brought about? May not the answer be, that the judgment of the great whore has already taken place; and the voice which John heard celebrating it (Rev. xix. 1-3, 6) may have sounded, saying, "Alleluia, for the Lord our God omnipotent reigneth." At the sounding of the seventh trumpet, when the mystery of God shall be finished, great voices in heaven will proclaim the advent of the kingdom in power, and the four and twenty elders will give thanks in contemplation of it (Rev. xi. 15-18). Those in heaven understand what is coming. So, when the whore has been judged, saints on earth may perceive that the wished-for consummation is not far off. God, they will see, is manifesting that He reigns. With Revelation then before us we can better apprehend the joyous announcement in Ps. xciii., though the oppressing and persecuting powers have still to be dealt with. "Jehovah reigneth." Who can withstand Him? "The floods have lifted up, O Jehovah, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their waves. Above the voices of many waters, the mighty breakers of the sea, Jehovah on high is mighty" (3, 4, R.V.). Mighty in power is Jehovah. He is steadfast to His word. Holiness becometh His House for ever (5). If this last is the case, as it certainly is, judgment must take place on the enemies of God's earthly people.

So God, in the Psalm which immediately follows, is looked on to display Himself as a God of vengeance, rewarding the proud after their deserts (xciv. 1, 2). Now

the appearance of God in this character Isaiah has predicted (xxxv. 4). And the joyous message in consequence for Zion and the cities of Judah he has also foretold (xl. 9). Joyous will it be, for Divine intervention will have been sorely needed. Breaking in pieces God's people, afflicting His heritage, slaying the widow and the stranger, and murdering the fatherless, such will have been the oppressive acts of the wicked (Ps. xciv. 3-6). Insensate folly and high-handed wickedness will characterise them. In determined apostasy they would shut out all true worship of God, as they will have shut out God from their hearts. The language we have listened to in Ps. lxxiii. 11 is their language still (xciv. 7). Fools, indeed! So the Psalmist proceeds, "Consider, ye brutish among the people; and ye fools, when will ye be wise? He that planted the ear, shall He not hear? He that formed the eye, shall He not see? He that chastiseth the nations, shall not He correct, even He that teacheth man knowledge? Jehovah knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity" (xciv. 8-11, R.V.). How can this evil be dealt with?

Will godliness be utterly stamped out? Unchecked have the oppressors been in their mad and wicked career; helpless, too, the godly appear. Yet as at the beginning of the book of Psalms we saw there were two classes on earth, there will be the two classes still. God will not leave Himself without witnesses here below, and He will not forget His people who serve Him. So now the righteous are mentioned; and judgment, divorced from righteousness when the Lord was condemned, will return to it, and all the upright in heart will follow it (12-15). The end of the wicked is certain (13), for God will undertake the cause of His people, upholding them, when no human defender appears (16-19). Thoughts sad and sorrowful may have crowded in on the heart; but God's comforts will delight the soul,

A question, therefore, is asked, which we need the light of prophecy to understand: "Shall the throne of wickedness have fellowship with Thee, which frameth mischief by statute?" (20, R.V.). What does this mean? It refers to a state of matters in Palestine in the end of the days. Wickedness and fellowship with Jehovah can never go together. The throne of wickedness is that of Antichrist reigning at Jerusalem under the power of the political head of the Roman empire. He will be the ecclesiastical leader in the great apostasy (Rev. xiii. 11-16). Prophecy sheds a light on the termination of Antichrist's reign, as we read what the seer in Patmos beheld (Rev. xix. 19-21). In the prospect, then, of Divine intervention, the saints can say, "Jehovah hath been my high tower; and my God the rock of my refuge. And He hath brought upon them their own iniquity, and shall cut them off in their own evil; Jehovah our God shall cut them off" (22, 23, R.V.)

Near, then, imminent indeed, must be the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ. And in the consciousness of this Ps. xcv. speaks. Familiar with this Psalm have many Christians been, generation after generation repeating it in their worship daily or weekly. Yet may we not confess, often as perhaps we may have joined in it in the past, we did not think of what its language will be to the godly remnant of the Jews, when the full time for its exhortation shall arise? David could say, "His anger is but for a moment; in His favour is life: weeping may tarry for the night, but joy [or, a shout of joy] cometh in the morning" (Ps. xxx. 5, R.V.). Fully will the remnant enter into this experience. And here (xcv.) have we not a shout of joy, as the Psalm commences, "O come, let us sing unto Jehovah; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto Him with Psalms" (1, 2).

King above all gods is Jehovah (3). How applicable will the reminder of that fact be to the special circumstances of the faithful remnant, when the false Christ—the Antichrist—is to be dealt with, and the true King to appear! Moreover, the people are Jehovah's. He made them that at the Red Sea (Exod. vi. 6, 7; xv. 13, 16; Ps. lxxvii. 15); never through all the years of their waywardness and sin has God cancelled that. They are His people still, and will be that for ever. So here, before the Lord's appearance out of heaven, the faithful joyfully remember it (7). But a needful exhortation now comes. They must continue faithful for the little while, ere deliverance is complete (7-11). Of the awful character of those coming days the Lord Jesus spoke to His disciples when sitting on the Mount of Olives confronting the city and the Temple. "Then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened. Then if any man shall say to you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect" (Matt. xxiv. 21-24).

Such is the Lord's forecast, and surely Ps. xciv. gives us an insight into things in the coming day as well as Ps. lxxiii. The exhortation, then, in xcv. is called for. And though, as we see in the Epistle to the Hebrews, it was applied to the professing Christians from Judaism in apostolic times, its full application will be when the remnant of the future are subject to the trials and persecutions set forth in the Psalms. The danger lest they should yield is evident, else why such an exhortation? The temptation will be great, the conflict fierce. But God cares for His own, so has provided beforehand a ministry to meet them. Precious, how precious to Him, are His redeemed ones!

Songs ere deliverance is effected (xcv. 1, 2)! The remembrance of what God is can call them forth. A great God, a great King above all gods, Creator, Maker, and Israel's God (3-7)—singing, then, becomes His people. What a contrast to the feelings (and to the exhibition of them) of the apostates shortly before the Lord appears! Scorched with heat, and gnawing their tongues with pain, they will blaspheme the God of heaven in their impotent rage (Rev. xvi. 8-11). Singing to Jehovah by saints, blaspheming His name by apostates, what a state of things will it be!

And now those who can sing to Jehovah, exhort others to do it likewise. When David was made king at Hebron, and even when he moved to Jerusalem, what kingdom outside the limits of God's grant to Abraham (Gen. xv. 18) was concerned about it? When the Lord was born at Bethlehem, Rome remained undisturbed. But when the Son of David shall return in power to reign, all the earth will learn how that concerns them. For the heathen, too, will hear of it (xcvi. 3, 10), and Isaiah has foretold how they will learn about it (Isa. lxvi. 18, 19). And even nature itself will be moved at the advent of her Maker, coming to judge the world (xcvi. 11-13). This Psalm, we would remind the reader, was sung at the entrance of the ark into Jerusalem (1 Chron. xvi.), and told out what that entrance foreshadowed, which is now viewed as about to be accomplished. We would here again remark that the Psalms, from which other portions were sung that day, are likewise found in this the fourth book (cv. 1-15; cvi. 1, 47, 48). By whom the Psalter was arranged we cannot say; but it is evident that the compiler was guided of the Spirit in placing these in that book, which contemplates the advent of the Lord Jesus Christ as effected.

Of this we are again reminded as we read Ps. xcvii. "Jehovah reigneth," so it begins; "let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad thereof. Cloud and

darkness are round about Him, righteousness and judgment are the habitation [or, foundation] of His throne" (1, 2). It is the prerogative of the king to execute justice (or, righteousness) and judgment. This Solomon did, executing righteousness in dealing with offenders—*i.e.* Adonijah, Joab, and Shimei (1 Kings ii. 13-46)—and ministering judgment to the two women who had sought it (iii. 16-28). The Lord will do both. Righteousness is viewed in this Psalm as now openly displayed (6), since the Lord is contemplated as having come with His heavenly saints, who will be the illustrations of Divine righteousness (2 Cor. v. 21). Coming with them, Zion will be glad, and the daughters of Judah will rejoice, because of His judgments (Ps. xcvi. 8). And now, that of which Isaiah wrote (ii. 18) concerning idols will become true, for confounded will be all their worshippers (Ps. xcvi. 7). The long domination of idolatry will cease, and the Lord alone will be exalted in that day.

Idolaters confounded, the heavenly saints come with the Lord, the angelic host (as Heb. i. 6 teaches us to understand the last clause of Ps. xcvi. 7), worshipping the King, Zion glad, and the daughters of Judah rejoicing, the godly ones can say, Jehovah "preserveth the souls of His saints: He delivereth them out of the hand of the wicked. Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart. Rejoice in Jehovah, ye righteous; and give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness" (10-12). What joy to earthly saints will the Lord's return impart! What a scene will it be!

Hence a fresh call is made to sing a new song (xcviii. 1), a call addressed as in xcvi. to all the earth (4). In the former Psalm the call proceeds on the ground of what Jehovah is, and that He reigns. In xcviii. the call is renewed, for Jehovah is victorious over His enemies. "His holy arm hath gotten Him the victory"; His salvation is made known, "and His righteousness hath He openly

shewed in the sight of the heathen [or rather, nations]" (2). What will the nations behold? The next verse tells us: "He hath remembered His mercy and truth towards the house of Israel; all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God." But why can all the earth, and all nature too, be concerned in the Lord taking up that despised people, so long without a country on earth, and without proper political existence? It is the prelude to millennial and to world-wide blessing.

The victory celebrated in xcvi., we next learn (xcix.) where is the place of Jehovah's earthly throne, where it is that He will reign. "The Lord is great in Zion, and He is high above all the peoples" (2). "Solomon sat on the throne of Jehovah as king instead of David his father,"—so stated the Chronicler (1 Chron. xxix. 23). Jehovah's throne was then at Jerusalem, and never has it been elsewhere on earth. To Zion, therefore, He will come back, for He hath chosen her, He desired her for an habitation (Ps. cxxxii. 13, 14), and there will He receive the homage of His creatures (xcix. 3-5). Can the godly remnant hope for any favour at His hand? His ways with Moses, Aaron, and Samuel are recalled as encouragement (6-8). God forgave them. He can and will act in similar grace towards the faithful remnant of His earthly people.

Cheerily, then, will they call on all the lands to praise Jehovah, making a joyful noise to Him. "Serve Jehovah," will they say, "with gladness, come before His presence with singing" (c. 1, 2). Who thus speak? The third verse explains. God's earthly people, Israel, are the speakers. Who in the present, during the Christian dispensation, could conceive of such a call emanating from them? But when the Lord appears for them, will that call pass unheeded? To His courts must all lands then repair, Jerusalem being owned as the metropolis of the whole earth, and the Temple rebuilt as the universal

House of prayer. Jehovah known to the remnant by His dealing in grace with them, they can confidently invite all lands to praise Him. "The Lord is good," they will say, "His mercy is everlasting; and His truth [or, faithfulness] *endureth* to all generations" (c. 5). Many a one in the present may have echoed these words as expressive of that which is true, yet without much feeling about them. With a depth of feeling more, may we not say, than we can understand, will the godly remnant utter them. "Good." Aye, how good to take up their cause once more! "Mercy everlasting." Age has made no difference in that. It has not grown obsolete, though for centuries their public prayers and praises may have seemed unanswered. "His truth [or, faithfulness] too endureth to all generations." Not one prophetic word will fail of its accomplishment.

Here this series (xciii.-c.) concludes, concerned, as it has been, with the coming of the Lord to reign. Israel's King, He will also be King over all the earth, King of kings, and Lord of lords (Rev. xix. 16). None at that time can afford to be indifferent to this. "There shall be one Jehovah, and His name one," so writes in view of it Zechariah, the son of Berechiah (xiv. 9). "I will turn to the peoples a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of Jehovah, to serve Him with one consent." So predicted Zephaniah (iii. 9). Whilst Malachi (i. 11) has put on record, "For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same, My name shall be [or, is] great among the Gentiles, and in every place incense shall be [or, is] offered unto My name, and a pure offering: for My name shall be [or, is] great among the heathen, saith Jehovah of Hosts." These predictions, long announced, will receive their full accomplishment. "His faithfulness endureth to all generations."

Now follows a short Psalm (ci.), written by David

himself, declaring the character of rule in the kingdom. That David did not come up to its requirements his last words (2 Sam. xxiii. 1-7) attest. That One would answer to them those same words foretold. And this Psalm (ci.) proclaims to all the holiness and righteousness of the rule of the King.

Born King of the Jews, He has never yet sat on His throne, though for a time He lived on earth. So we are taken back, in Ps. cii., to His sojourn here, and to His affliction at that time. We learn thereby what He, who is Jehovah, and who will reign, felt as a man with death in prospect. "My days are like a shadow that declineth; and I am withered like grass" (11). Again, "He weakened my strength in the way; He shortened my days. I said, O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days: Thy years are throughout all generations" (23, 24). Then, reading Heb. i. 10-12, we learn that verses 25-27 of the Psalm are the answer of God to the afflicted One, declaring that He who was a Man on earth, with death in prospect, is Jehovah, the Creator, the Eternal One. His excellency and power have been set before us (xciii.-c.) ere we are here called to contemplate His affliction when in humiliation. The same principle in the arrangement of subjects may be traced in xxi., compared with xxii., and in lxviii. with lxix.

Then our Psalm ending with, "The children of Thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before Thee" (28). Ps. ciii. well strikes in, being the praise from a millennial saint, whose heart is full of the goodness of Jehovah. The Lord's past sorrows recounted, blessings flow to the children of God; and though many and many a child of God has found comfort and encouragement from this Psalm, much of it being applicable to saints in all ages who have proved the mercy of their God, yet it must be admitted, that every word of it could not

really be applied to believers in Christian times. All their diseases are not healed (3). For all now oppressed righteousness and judgment are not executed (6). And whilst Christians look to depart and be with Christ, the saint in this Psalm celebrates the redemption of his life from destruction (4). It is the language, in its fulness, for millennial saints. "The Lord's kingdom ruleth over all," they say (19). Angelic hosts must therefore praise Him, and all His works in all places of His dominion should bless Him (20-22). And as the Psalm begins, so it ends, with, "Bless the Lord, O my soul." The heart is full, and the mouth gives expression to it.

With three more Psalms the fourth book concludes. Set free before the Lord from the question of sins (ciii. 3, 12), and the fear of death, the godly one can be occupied with Jehovah, as manifested in His works (civ.). And that Psalm closes with his desire, that his meditation should be sweet to God (R.V.), and he will, he states, be glad in Jehovah. Moreover, he desires, and that is not a vain wish, that sinners should be rooted out of the earth, and that the wicked should be no more (34, 35). What a change will come over the scene in the expectation of the godly remnant!

Next follows a recapitulation of God's dealings in goodness with the nation, beginning with the mention of the covenant made with Abraham, and God's oath unto Isaac, confirmed as it was unto Jacob for a statute, and to Israel subsequently for an everlasting covenant (cv. 9, 10). The land of Canaan should be theirs, God's grant of old to them. For centuries now they have not possessed it. But they will again (Ps. cviii. 7, 8); and the Jews, viewed as returned to it in the Psalms we have had before us, now recapitulate God's dealings in goodness with their fathers in the past. This is the subject of cv. What, however, have their fathers been? And how have they acted when of old inheriting the land? That must not be forgotten.

So Ps. cvi. well follows, dealing with their past history, telling also as it does of God's ways in mercy after the nation's repeated failures (43-46).

Such then (cvi.) had been the people's failures. Such, too, had been God's ways in mercy. His covenant with Abraham has remained uncanceled. The twelve tribes therefore shall repossess the land. But as yet, we conclude, as far as the Psalms we have noted conduct us, whilst the Jews have been brought back, the ten tribes are not in the land. But they will come back certainly, as Ezekiel teaches, and all be arranged in the land in a new order (xx. 34-38, xlviii.). The Jews are to be brought back in unbelief, and to pass through awful times under Antichrist, the bulk of them becoming by his influence apostates. The ten tribes will return, but only when the ungodly among them have been purged out on the way. For they did not reject the Lord when He was here. The Jews did, and therefore these last must suffer under Antichrist. Considering then that the ten tribes are not yet viewed as back in their land, we can fully understand the language of Ps. cvi. 47, "Save us, O Jehovah our God, and gather us from among the heathen, to give thanks to Thy holy name, and to triumph in Thy praise." For, "all Israel shall be saved" (Rom. xi. 26). Till that is effected, the remnant of the Jews, back in their land, will not be satisfied. Short of that God's purposes for His earthly people will not stop.

And now as with the previous books this also ends with an ascription of praise, "Blessed be Jehovah, the God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting: and let all the people say, Amen. Hallelujah"—*i.e.* Praise ye the Lord. Surely the response will be hearty and full from His people in a coming day, and a loud Amen be the utterance of their lips!

We pass on now to the fifth book.

THE FIFTH BOOK.

PS. CVII.-CL.

THE FIFTH BOOK.

THE fifth and concluding book of the Psalms has in it very much of praise. At the close of the *fourth* book was a prayer to God to gather His people out from the nations (cvi. 47). He must do it; they cannot in their own strength. The fifth book then opens with that prayer answered: "O give thanks unto Jehovah, for He is good; for His mercy endureth for ever. Let the redeemed of Jehovah say so, whom He hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy; and gathered them out of the lands, from the east, and from the west, from the north, and from the south" (cvii. 1-3). May we not assume that the prediction of Ezekiel (xx. 33-38) has been at length fulfilled, and also that the great trumpet of which Isaiah wrote (xxvii. 12, 13) has been heard, and has been responded to? And now, the redeemed of the nation having thus experienced delivering mercy, various ways in which men prove Divine mercy are by the Psalmist put on record. Brought into adverse circumstances, however different in character, they cry to the Lord, and He delivers them out of their distresses; nor does this concern the delivered ones only—"For whoso," writes the Psalmist, "is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the mercies [R.V.] of Jehovah," exemplified as they are in verses 8, 9, 15, 16, 21, 31, 43. No circumstance herein mentioned puts the redeemed beyond the reach of Jehovah's deliverance.

This book beginning then with the theme of Divine mercy or loving-kindness, we have in different Psalms, to the end of cxviii., a great deal about it, this last-mentioned Psalm ending with the words of the first verse of cvii. Then the two Psalms which next follow (cviii., cix.) continue to speak of it. In both of them it is David who speaks. Who more fitted than he to treat of it? The former of these two—*i.e.* cviii.—is made up of the closing verses of Ps. lvii. 7-11 and lx. 5-12. Referring to them, we may see the advance here recognised on the previous condition of the saints. Both lvii. and lx. begin with recounting the low condition of David, which originally called forth the one and the other. Here all that is out of sight. Praise occupies the heart in the first part of cviii., whilst in the after part prayer for help from trouble is still made, but with the certainty of ultimate success. He who hath led David unto Edom (10, R.V.) will give victory and tread down the enemies. Now this prayer coming in here need not surprise us—for much, as we learn elsewhere, must go forward, in which the remnant of the nation will have deep interest, ere full millennial peace can be brought about.

We have briefly noticed this in our remarks on the *fourth* book of the Psalms. We would here, in reminding our readers of this, quote from the prophetic word, beginning with an extract from the Prophet Isaiah concerning Edom. "They [*i.e.* Israel] shall fly on the shoulders of the Philistines toward the west, they shall spoil them of the east together: they shall lay their hand upon Edom and Moab, and the children of Ammon shall obey them" (Isa. xi. 14). Then, too, Idumea will be the scene of the Lord's unsparing judgment (xxxiv., lxiii.). And as Balaam long ago foretold, Edom, that refused in the days of Moses to give Israel a passage through his border (Num. xx. 21), "will be a possession, Seir also will be a possession for his enemies; and Israel shall do

valiantly" (Num. xxiv. 18). Further, Ezekiel can be adduced as a witness concerning Edom in a coming day (xxv. 13, 14). "Therefore thus saith the Lord God, I will also stretch out Mine hand upon Edom, and will cut off man and beast from it, and I will make it desolate from Teman; and they of Dedan shall fall by the sword. And I will lay My vengeance upon Edom, by the hand of My people Israel: and they shall do in Edom according to Mine anger, and according to My fury; and they shall know My vengeance, saith the Lord God." Obadiah, too, has written (verse 18), "And the house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame, and the house of Esau for stubble, and they shall kindle in them, and devour them; and there shall not be any remaining of the house of Esau; for Jehovah hath spoken it." With these predictions before us, need we wonder at the language of Ps. cviii.? David's campaign in Edom was a foreshadowing, may we not say, of its judgment yet to be carried out. Edom was subjugated by David (2 Sam. viii. 14). Edom will be wiped out of existence by Israel, when the two sticks of Ezekiel (xxxvii. 15-22) shall become one, as he has foretold.

Next as regards the Philistines. The prophetic word concerning those persistent and often formidable enemies of Israel is not, as we have previously pointed out, at all reticent. Isaiah (xi. 14, xiv. 29-32), Jeremiah (xlvii.), Ezekiel (xxv. 15-17), as well as Amos, Zechariah, and Zephaniah, treat of it. We will quote from Zephaniah (ii. 4-7): "Gaza shall be forsaken, and Ashkelon a desolation: they shall drive out Ashdod at the noon-day, and Ekron shall be rooted up. Woe unto the inhabitants of the sea coast, the nation of the Cherethites! the word of Jehovah is against you; O Canaan, the land of the Philistines, I will even destroy thee; that there shall be no inhabitant. And the sea coast shall be pastures [R.V.], with cottages for shepherds and folds for flocks.

And the coast shall be for the remnant of the house of Judah; they shall feed thereupon: in the houses of Ashkelon shall they lie down in the evening; for Jehovah their God shall visit them, and turn away their captivity."

Then of Moab and of Ammon, the son of Cush also wrote: "I have heard the reproach of Moab, and the revilings of the children of Ammon, whereby they have reproached My people, and magnified themselves against their border. Therefore as I live, saith Jehovah of Hosts, the God of Israel, Surely Moab shall be as Sodom, and the children of Ammon as Gomorrah, even the breeding of nettles, and saltpits, and a perpetual desolation: the residue of My people shall spoil them, and the remnant of My people shall possess them. This shall they have for their pride, because they have reproached and magnified themselves against the people of Jehovah of Hosts. Jehovah will be terrible unto them: for He will famish all the gods of the earth; and men shall worship Him, every one from his place, even all the isles of the heathen" (Zeph. ii. 8-11). None can say that all this has been fulfilled. Nehemiah must acutely have felt that it was not, when Tobiah the Ammonite showed himself hostile to the rebuilding of the wall of Jerusalem, and when men of the returned remnant had married wives of Ashdod, and of Moab, and of Ammon (Neh. xiii. 23). Zephaniah looks on to the future, the time of Israel's full restoration and triumphant supremacy over the nations. And how gracious was it of God to give by His servant such a forecast of the future, when dark days were about to lower over the little kingdom of Judah!

Another witness would we cite ere proceeding with the Psalms. Micah (v. 5, 6) thus writes: "And this man [*i.e.* Christ] shall be the peace, when the Assyrian shall come into our land; and when he shall tread in our palaces, then shall we raise against him seven shepherds, and eight principal men. And they shall waste the land

of Assyria with the sword, and the land of Nimrod in the entrances thereof: thus shall He deliver us from the Assyrian, when he cometh into our land, and when he treadeth within our borders." Further, the same prophet adds (8, 9), "And the remnant of Jacob shall be among the Gentiles in the midst of many peoples, as a lion among the beasts of the forest, as a young lion among the flocks of sheep; who, if he go through, both treadeth down, and teareth in pieces, and none can deliver. Thine hand shall be lifted up upon thine adversaries, and all thine enemies shall be cut off." What a future have we here of irresistible might in store for the oppressed, despised, and down-trodden people of Israel! So, too, Jeremiah (li. 20-23) writes of Israel under the similitude of the Lord's battle-axe. Much, then, how much! must go on upon this earth ere millennial peace can be enjoyed. Warfare will take place, and Israel will be victorious, and that not as standing merely on the defensive, but taking the place of invaders likewise. In view of all this, may we not understand the repetition of part of Ps. lx., written by David originally when in the midst of conflict, which is here (cviii.) reproduced as ministry for the people of Israel in a coming time? Saints need to embrace hope as to the future. They profit by the remembrance of the past.

Now in all this that we have quoted we have not referred to the invasion of the land by Gog, as described by Ezekiel in chapters xxxviii., xxxix.—an invasion only to be equalled, we believe, by that of another Gog, with whom will be Magog, as predicted in Rev. xx. 8, which, taking place after the millennium, will be Satan's final attempt to thwart the purposes of the Almighty. Of his latest attempt, *before* millennial peace is finally assured, Ezekiel writes. His *last* attempt at the close of that period the Apocalyptic seer has foretold. On both occasions he will be signally defeated.

Here we would remind the reader that some Scripture

students would identify the Gog of Ezekiel with the Assyrian of Isaiah, the King of the North of Daniel. From that conclusion we venture with diffidence to express dissent, judging from the language of Gog foretold by the prophet, the son of Buzi, the priest (Ezek. xxxviii. 11-14). For a sense of security, indulged in by the people of Israel without fear of any invasion, as Gog therein states, could not, we think, be predicated of them under Antichrist, when the King of the North will overrun the land. Hence we view the invasion predicted in Ezekiel as quite distinct from that predicted by Daniel—that by Gog, as we have said, being Satan's *last* attack, ere the blessings of millennial peace will without further interruption be enjoyed by Israel and the nations upon earth. It has been said that the Lord Jesus will reign in the character of David—i.e. subduing His enemies—ere He appears in that of Solomon, during whose rule, we are told, there was neither adversary nor evil occurrent (1 Kings v. 4). Hence the Lord's return in power, set forth, as we have seen, in the *fourth* book of the Psalter, leaves room for the condition of things contemplated in the *fifth* book—viz. that the godly ones already in the land have not entered yet into their final rest, though all will be working for that desired consummation, when everything that hath breath shall praise Jehovah (Ps. cl. 6).

Nor must we forget certain intimations in the Prophet Daniel as to those days. He writes of the King of the North, who will “go forth with great fury to destroy and utterly to make away many” (Dan. xi. 44). But he shall come to his end (45). Now at what exact moment in time the Lord will deal with him seems not to be definitely stated,* though the destruction of his army will take place in the south of the land;

* Of the prayer for his overthrow we have read in Ps. lxxxiii. But of the answer to it, as effected, that book of the Psalms makes no mention.

as Joel writes (ii. 20). *Certain intimations*, we have said. Having spoken of one, we will now mention another. Daniel specifies two dates, the one 1,290 days, the other 1,335 days (xii. 11, 12). On anything that takes place between them he is silent. May the interval between these two have reference to the circumstances of the *fifth* book of the Psalter? At any rate we have quoted enough from other prophets to elucidate the language of the saints in this the last book as being in the land, but not yet at rest.

To return. We have now three compositions ascribed to David (cviii.-cx.). In the *third* book we have just one said to be by him (lxxxvi.). In the *fourth* book we met with *two* attributed to him (ci., ciii.). In the *fifth* book we find *fifteen* reckoned to the king. Another fact this is which witnesses to some arrangement of the Psalter other than just a chronological one. In the first of these three above-mentioned (cviii.), rights over the land on both sides of the Jordan are asserted: "Gilead is Mine; Manasseh is Mine; Ephraim also is the strength of My head," etc. (8). Conquest over Edom, too, is looked for (10), David's victory there being really the earnest of the fuller and final subjugation of that country foretold by Ezekiel (xxv. 13, 14). This Psalm then ends with a prayer for help from trouble (12), and with an expression of confidence as to Divine assistance (13), leading on to the two compositions of David which follow.

Mercy is needed, "for vain is the help of man" (cviii. 12); thereupon we are told in the following Psalm (cix.) of one character of the trouble, and in the succeeding Psalm (cx.) we learn how the Divine interposition can come about. The cry for help is addressed to God, and the reason for it is stated (cix. 1-5). Then follows a description of an individual who showed no mercy to the suffering one (6-19). To whom David, when he penned the words, referred we cannot say. But of Judas Iscariot we know

this Psalm speaks. Peter (Acts i. 20) applied verse 8 directly to the traitor. Yet it is plain that the whole passage does not refer *exclusively* to him. Others are contemplated as well: "*Mine* adversaries, and *them* that speak evil against my soul" (20), show that a number are included from whom deliverance is sought at the hand of the Almighty (21-26).

Now deliverance might come in one of two ways, either by taking the afflicted one out of this scene, or by dealing with his enemies in unsparing judgment. Both of these are illustrated in the next Psalm (cx.). God, espousing the cause of His own Son, called Him to sit down at His right hand, till He should make His enemies His footstool. Then the Son will espouse the cause of His earthly suffering saints, striking through kings in the day of His wrath, judging among the nations, filling the places with dead bodies, and striking through the head in many countries, or over a wide land (5, 6, R. V.). The connection, therefore, between these two Psalms (cix., cx.) is very plain. Jehovah's answer to the treatment meted to His Son is seen in telling Him to sit at His right hand. God's answer to His suffering saints in a coming day will be the exercise of delivering power on their behalf put forth by His Son. But what scenes must yet take place ere peace comes about! What powerful enemies have to be dealt with! May we not then understand the appeal of the saints to their God (cix. 21-29)?

And now remembering the position of Ps. cx. as placed in the fifth book of the Psalter, the Lord's return to Jerusalem to reign being viewed as an event accomplished in the *fourth* book, what a subject for contemplation will it be for the godly remnant, as they recall the betrayal by Judas of Him whom they will see with their very eyes commencing His reign at Jerusalem, and that after His session for upwards of eighteen centuries at the right hand of the Majesty on high! The exercise of the

Melchizedek priesthood, now future, will then be openly displayed, blessing His victorious people, as Melchizedek blessed Abraham when returning from the overthrow of the four kings of the East. Striking through kings in the day of His wrath, they will be able to say is become an accomplished fact. Antichrist and the head of the Roman empire already judicially dealt with, to be followed by the overthrow of the King of the North, who will previously have swept over Palestine with his hosts like an irresistible and overwhelming flood, with what depth of meaning will they be able to take up the language of Balaam, saying, "What hath God wrought!" (Num. xxiii. 23).

And now there follow other three Psalms, each beginning—and how suitably after that which we have seen!—with "Hallelujah." The third (cxiii.) ends with the same two Hebrew words, Hallelu-jah. This marks them off as a little series by themselves. Jehovah espousing the cause of the afflicted one in Ps. cx., it is quite in keeping with that to learn of the character of our God. So to this we are to be turned in Ps. cxi. In Ps. xix. we have learnt how God can be *known*—viz. by His works in creation, and also by His word in revelation. In Ps. xxxvi. we have had the wicked man in his ways contrasted with those of Jehovah. Now in Ps. cxi. we read of Jehovah evidencing what He is.* His character is thus set before us. This is followed by Ps. cxii., which treats of the ways and the character of the saint, illustrating thereby in a very interesting manner what it is to be a partaker of the Divine nature, even that of which Peter makes mention (2 Pet. i. 4). Does Jehovah's righteousness endure

* Ps. cxi., cxii., are, as we have already remarked (p. 37), alphabetical in structure. They are the first really perfect ones in that line in the whole Psalter; but, unlike all others, it is the *clauses*, and not just the *verses*, which exhibit the alphabetical arrangement.

for ever (cxi. 3)? So will that of the godly one (cxii. 3). Is Jehovah gracious, and full of compassion (cxi. 4)? The same is predicated of the saint (cxii. 4). Hath Jehovah sent redemption unto His people (cxi. 9)? The righteous one hath dispersed, having given to the needy (cxii. 9). And so on. What then should follow the declaration of Jehovah's ways but praise in accordance with the prediction by Malachi (i. 11), now at length about to be fulfilled (Ps. cxiii. 3).

In the day of the returned remnant's failure and feebleness, Malachi foretold that the Lord's name would be great among the Gentiles. Little did that then seem likely to take place. Now, Messiah viewed as returned in power, His earthly saints taken up by Him for blessing, and opposing forces scattered by Him to the winds, it will come about, and the despised and persecuted remnant of Israel will echo in Ps. cxiii. the language of Hannah in 1 Sam. ii. 8: "He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the needy from the dunghill, that He may set him with princes" (Ps. cxiii. 7). And Hannah's joy at being no longer barren may be viewed as a foreshadowing of the blessing of women in Israel (9), when the Lord shall turn again the captivity of His people. Fittingly, therefore, does the Psalm end with "Hallelujah." Other Psalms in this book end in the same way—*viz.* cxv. 18, cxvi. 19, cxvii. 2, cxxxv. 21, cxlvi. 10, cxlvii. 20, cxlviii. 14, cxlix. 9, cl. 6. And Psalms cxxxv., cxlvi.-cl. also commence with it. But till the Lord Jesus is viewed as having returned to Zion, this word "Hallelujah" is not found in the Psalter—Psalms civ. 35, cv. 45, cvi. 1, 48, being the only other places where in the whole collection it is found. We may look in vain elsewhere in the Old Testament for that word now so familiar to Christians.

At this point we are to be reminded afresh of the past. A retrospect is often profitable. Israel were never to

forget the wilderness journey, so the different stages of it were carefully recorded, and places that we cannot now recognise are thus embalmed in the Word as of imperishable remembrance (Num. xxxiii.). Nor were com-motions of created things, caused of old by the presence of Jehovah, to pass into oblivion (Ps. cxiv.). Idols could never have made them. The presence of the true God can, and did. Both sea and land have shown it. They will be moved afresh, rejoicing at the Lord's return (xcvi., xcvi.); He who is Jehovah will come back in power, and He is the God of Jacob (cxiv. 7). Hence follow two Psalms (cxv., cxvi.), which tell by the mouth of saints of Jacob's race who is their God, and what He has done for them. Would the nations still ask where is their God?—repeating that taunt hurled at them in past days (xlii. 3, 10; lxxix. 10), a taunt hard to bear, as it must have been, whilst waiting for deliverance, and when the godly one had been driven from his home. But now, as the Lord has returned to Jerusalem, the faithful can reply to it; for there is a time to suffer reproach and a time to repel it, or, as we read in Ecclesiastes, "A time to keep silence, and a time to speak" (iii. 7). The time for silence is regarded as past. Now they can reply. Their God is the true God, the God of heaven, and that is His dwelling-place. The gods of the heathen were visible objects indeed, but senseless, helpless, lifeless things, unable to speak, to see, to hear, to smell, to handle anything, or to walk. Their votaries are like them.

Not such an one is Jehovah. He is the living God. Hence Israel, the house of Aaron, and all that fear Him are exhorted to trust in Him, who is their help and their shield. Of this third class just mentioned—those who fear God—we have read in Ps. xxii. 23. It had been the Divine purpose all along, that from Gentiles a company of faithful souls should be called out (Deut. xxxii. 43, Isa. xlv. 20-24); and now Divine interposition on behalf

of Israel looked at as effected, the assurance of Divine blessing can be expressed in favour of these three classes (Ps. cxv. 12, 13). How full will be their blessing, who can now say (14)? Yet earth, not heaven, will be their home—man's proper place of abode (16).

So far Ps. cxv. Then in cxvi. we have deliverance, which has been wrought, clearly and joyfully expressed. Deliverance had been experienced from death, which had threatened (3-9, 15). Precious in the sight of Jehovah is the death of His saints, so He had kept them from it. That which in Ps. lxxii. 14 had been foretold, they had now found to be true. Thanksgiving, therefore, would they render, and that openly in the courts of the Lord's house, in the midst of Jerusalem (12-19). But not content with that, in Ps. cxvii.—the shortest Psalm in the whole collection—all nations and people are exhorted to praise Jehovah for that which He has done for Israel, for His mercy manifested toward them, and for His truth which endureth for ever. The bright pictures, presented many centuries back by the prophets, are now seen to have been descriptive of realities taking place before their eyes (cxvii. 2).

But as God's truth endureth for ever, so doth His mercy. And this Israel, the house of Aaron, and godly Gentiles are called on to attest, saying, "His mercy endureth for ever" (cxviii. 1-4). This refrain, met with already in Ps. cvi. 1, cvii. 1, we shall meet with again in Ps. cxxxvi. David in his day, and the whole congregation with him, proclaimed it (1 Chron. xvi. 34). Solomon, with the people in unison, years later re-echoed it (2 Chron. v. 13, vii. 3). The returned remnant in all their weakness, when the foundations of the Temple were again laid, gave expression to it (Ezra iii. 11). By and by, in full chorus, will the returned and finally delivered people of Israel confirm it. Suited language near three thousand years ago will be suited language for Israel for ever. Set *then* in a large

place, who can make them afraid (cxviii. 5, 6)? Victory will be for them. And that which Isaiah (xii. 2) had predicted, echoing words from the song of Moses (Exod. xv. 2), will have been fulfilled (Ps. cxviii. 14). That day of which Isaiah wrote will have dawned, the day which Jehovah hath made (24), as the rejoicing people will term it. The Lord come back, as He has said (Matt. xxiii. 39), gladly will the people welcome Him. The stone refused by the builders will be owned as head of the corner. "This is Jehovah's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes" (Ps. cxviii. 22, 23). Thus will they express themselves out of the surprise and fulness of their hearts. And "Jah," the victorious One, will they celebrate in their song (5, 14, 17, 18, 19), never ending praise becoming those delivered ones. What will it be for them to read in this Psalm of the language they are using in that coming time! God, who foreknows, and who alone can search hearts, foretells what will be passing in their minds, to be expressed by their lips.

Here this *Hallel* (i.e. praise), as the Jews designate Ps. cxiii.-cxviii., terminates. These are sung in the family celebration of the Passover night; and they "are divided," writes Delitzsch, "into two parts, the one half (cxiii., cxiv.) being sung before the repast, before the emptying of the second festal cup, and the other half (cxv.-cxviii.) after the repast, after the filling of the fourth cup, to which the words, 'when they had sung an hymn' (Matt. xxvi. 30, Mark xiv. 26), after the institution of the Lord's Supper, which was connected with the fourth festal cup, may refer."

To return, we have read in Ps. cxviii. 19, 20, "Open to me the gates of righteousness: I will go unto them, and I will praise Jah; this is the gate of Jehovah, into which the righteous shall enter." But who are the righteous? This question Ps. cxix. answers, illustrating that which will be true of Israel when the law shall be written on

their hearts (Jer. xxxi. 33). So it begins, "Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of Jehovah. Blessed are they that keep His testimonies, and that seek Him with the whole heart" (cxix. 1, 2). With this same word *blessed* commence Ps. i., xxxii., xli., cxii., cxxviii. In other Psalms this appellation comes in descriptive of the saint in one way or another; for God's estimate of men down here is very different from that of the world. And now in this, the *hundred and nineteenth* Psalm, we are to learn what are some of the characteristics of any really entitled to such a designation. In the *first* Psalm we read of one delighting in the law of Jehovah. Here we see how fully that can be the case.

This Psalm—the longest by far in the whole collection—is likewise alphabetical in construction. But, differing from all others so termed, it is written in stanzas of eight verses, twenty-two stanzas in all, and each stanza begins with a different letter of the alphabet, and in proper alphabetical order. Then, too, each verse of the stanza commences with the same letter. It is one of the few perfect alphabetical Psalms; and the English reader may see that it is complete as regards the stanzas, the letter of the Hebrew alphabet belonging to each stanza being noted for his information at its commencement, following in that the example of the Syriac and of the Vulgate. Into a detailed account of the different stanzas it would be foreign to our present purpose to enter. We can only notice a few points that may help in the consideration of the Psalms which follow.

Commencing with the supposition of a company who are faithful, the writer soon drops into the first person (4, 5), and, continuing in that throughout, details his desires and experiences. With reproach and contempt had he met; princes also had been talking against him (22, 23, 42)—so he desires of Jehovah to be put not to shame (31). Derided, too, as he had been by the proud,

yet he had not swerved from God's law (51). They forged a lie against him (69), and overthrew him wrongfully (78, R.V.). Pits, too, has he to say they had digged for him, and had almost consumed him (85-87). Princes, too, had persecuted him without cause; but his heart stood in awe of God's word (161). The wicked had even waited to destroy him (95). Persecutors and opposers had been numerous (157).*

Such had been his experience. Of trials to which saints might be exposed he had bitter proof. Low indeed had been his condition, yet not so low as that set forth in the *second* book of the Psalter, when the saint, driven far off, could not approach God's altar. Still, his position was very trying. So to Jehovah he turns as his only, but sure, resource (41, 49, 76, 77, 81, 94, 173-175). Then in the series of Psalms which follows (cxx.-cxxxiv.), called *songs of degrees*, or *ascents*, we learn of the saint coming out of the trouble to enjoy millennial peace; for nothing short of that consummation is God's purpose for those of them who are to dwell upon earth.

Why they are called *songs of degrees* has given rise to

* In this Psalm we have several terms employed—*commandments*, *judgments*, *statutes*, *testimonies*, *precepts*, and *law*. "Commandments" (*mitzvot*) have for their subject things enjoined on men, so often used as a word of general import. Abraham kept God's commandments (Gen. xxvi. 5). "Judgments" (*mishpatim*) are judicial decisions, and, where God is concerned, His revealed decisions in matters for men; but not in the Psalms, His acts of judgment. So we read of Solomon's judgment respecting the two children (1 Kings iii. 28). David asked for God's judgments to be given to his son (Ps. lxxii. 1). We read in the Law of the breastplate of judgment (Exod. xxviii. 15), and of the judgment of Urim and Thummim (Num. xxvii. 21). "Statutes" (*chukim*) are decrees. In Ps. ii. 7-9 we have one about the Lord Jesus; and in Lev. vi. 18 we have a statute regarding Aaron and his sons. "Precepts" (*p'koodim*) are orders for men's conduct for the most part. This word occurs only in the Psalms, chiefly in cxix., and elsewhere only in xix. 8, ciii. 18, cxi. 7. "Law" (*torah*) is Divine teaching.

various conjectures. Bearing in mind their subjects, and the gradual progression from trials (cxx.) to millennial enjoyment (cxxviii.), we would view them as descriptive of steps in deliverance leading to and ending in the desired consummation of earthly peace and unclouded happiness here below, but only to be enjoyed when the Lord again dwells in Zion (cxxxii. 14). And writing of saints born in sin, whilst Ps. cxx.-cxxxix. treat of the *political* and *social* condition of the people, Ps. cxxx. and cxxxi. treat of the *spiritual* condition of the saints in Israel at that time. Then as Ps. cxxxii. foretells the Lord's return to Jerusalem never again to forsake it, the two remaining Psalms speak, the one (cxxxiii.) of the pleasantness of brotherly unity, and the other (cxxxiv.) exhorts the Lord's servants, who stand by night in the House of the Lord, to bless Him, and its last words contain a prayer that He would bless them.

A future and not a past application to Israel must these Psalms be viewed as depicting. Till the days of David, God never dwelt in Jerusalem. After the Babylonish captivity He never dwelt in the Temple. Then it must be remembered, that after the death of Solomon, as the Prophet Ahijah had foretold (1 Kings xi. 30-32), the brotherhood of the twelve tribes was broken, to be re-established only in a future day (Ezek. xxxvii. 15-19). It is of this coming event that Ps. cxxxiii. treats.

Now of trials—the lying lips and deceitful tongue have been mentioned (cxx.). The third kind of trial this is, to which the godly will be exposed, as we have already learnt from Ps. vii. To the Lord, then, the saint turns as in cxix. 69, and expresses his confident assurance of help from the Maker of heaven and earth (cxxi.). Thereupon an answer comes confirmatory of his expectation (3-8). To Jehovah's house then will he go, and his feet shall stand in Jerusalem, the central place on earth for Israel (cxxii.). And to Jehovah he still looks, who dwells in heaven, for

as yet in this series of Psalms the Lord's return is not celebrated as accomplished. These earlier ones of the series rehearse what the saint has been passing through. So what we have read in Ps. cxix. 22, 23, 51, the saint is viewed as experiencing—*viz.* the contempt and scorning of the proud. Nor is he alone in this; others are associated with him, but he stands forth as their exponent (cxxiii. 2-4).

Further, great had been their danger, we next learn, when men rose up against them. They would have been swallowed up (cxix. 85-87), had not Jehovah been for them (cxxiv. 1-5). But now deliverance had come (6-8); hence the blessedness of trusting Jehovah is experienced and declared; for such are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, seeing that Jehovah is round about His people from this time forth and for evermore. The issue, therefore, cannot be doubtful (cxxv.). For it they are viewed as waiting. Joy filled their hearts when their captivity was turned, and the very nations took knowledge of it, and spoke of the great things that Jehovah had done for them (cxxvi. 1-3). But all was not accomplished; so they plead for further deliverance. Sowing in tears, they will reap in joy—a full harvest will be the result (4-6).

Counting on God's word, they learn to count on Him for everything, and now express it. For whether it be the building of the house, or the keeping of the city, or the strength and blessing which children of youth can be to their families, all is from Jehovah (cxxvii.). They will have learnt (after their last return to their land) of the vanity of doing anything without the Lord's countenance. They will have proved their powerlessness to keep the invader, the northern power, out of the city. The Temple will have been laid low (Ps. lxxiv.), and the city will have become a prey to the enemy (Ps. lxxix., Isa. xxix. 4, Zech. xiv. 1, 2). Daniel's prediction (viii. 11, 12, ix. 27) will have come true. All extraordinary watchfulness on man's part was in vain. God therefore would have the

people to trust in Him, and to learn this from His bestowal of sleep, or, as some would translate, "in sleep," providing what was needful whilst they slept—"i.e. without restless self-activity, in a state of self-forgotten renunciation, and modest calm surrender to Him."* Besides, when the arm of flesh should be needed, God could provide it (cxxxvii. 3-5).

Next, from the building of the house and the keeping of the city, we are led on to that which will follow—*viz.* the peaceful life of those that will then be fearing the Lord (cxxxviii.). "Blessed is every one that feareth Jehovah; that walketh in His ways. For thou shalt eat the labours of thine hands; happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee" (1, 2). This is a blessing that will be common, we presume, to all the faithful then alive upon earth. And here follows a picture of family happiness in those days not met with elsewhere. Isaiah has predicted (lxii. 8, 9; lxx. 21-23) the saint at that time enjoying the fruit of his labour, whether of his land or of his habitation. But this Psalm (cxxxviii. 3-6) allows us, so to speak, a look inside the house. The wife and the children are all there. No gaps in the family circle, no remembrance of some once there, but there no longer. Death has not invaded its precincts. Not a chair, not a place once filled, but now seen to be empty. For the Lord then dwelling in Zion, the words of Ps. cxxxviii. 5, 6, which now follow, become plain to us. "Jehovah shall bless thee out of Zion; and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life, yea, thou shalt see thy children's children. Peace be upon Israel" (R.V.). Yes, but since the death of Solomon till the days of Titus, could that have been in its fulness the portion of the people?

For how different has been Israel's past between Solomon's death and the present! The brotherhood broken, the interests of Israel and those of Judah became very divergent—the former keeping up the schism and refusing to

* Delitzsch.

bow to the king in Jerusalem as long as the kingdom of Israel was in existence; and since that was overthrown, have not the predictions of Moses (Deut. xxviii. 30-33) been fulfilled to the very letter? Those to whom the land of Canaan belongs are strangers in it to this day. From their youth up, as Ps. cxxix. states, affliction has been the lot of God's earthly people. Sorely, too, will they yet experience that, though not to be consumed (2-3). But in this Psalm all is viewed as changed. The righteous will rejoice and prosper, whilst the haters of Zion shall wither away like grass on the housetops (4-8). Only of the future can we understand this.

But for the nation's blessedness there must be a suited condition of soul evidenced by a real fear of the Lord. Of this we are reminded in the two Psalms which follow (cxxx., cxxxi.). And when that day comes, the twelve tribes will be once more united under one head, and the Lord will have re-entered Jerusalem to dwell there for ever (cxxxii. 14). First entering that city in the reign of David under the symbol of the ark, He will be there again, never more to forsake it. The conditional promise to David's descendants (12) forfeited long ago, God's oath to His servant (11) will yet be made good. The house of David shall flourish, and the lamp ordained for God's anointed will then burn with undimmed brightness, David's Son sitting on His throne, and His enemies clothed with shame: on Him the crown shall flourish (17, 18). May it not be, as has been supposed, that the aged priest Zacharias, in Luke i. 68-70, had this promise in his mind? When that shall be accomplished, David's son and David's Lord reigning at Jerusalem, the theme of Ps. cxxxiii. will be illustrated. For that brotherhood between Israel and Judah, so long broken, will be restored (Ezek. xxxvii. 15-28). What then will remain but to bless their God? So the priests and Levites, who will stand by night in the House of the Lord, are to bless Him, and the Maker of heaven and

earth will bless them out of Zion (cxxxiv.) Praise will be in season by night as well as by day (1 Chron. ix. 33).

Two Psalms now follow (cxxxv., cxxxvi.), which take up the subject of the last of the *Songs of Degrees*, and furnish both the Levitical company and the people with true ground for their praise. Jehovah, the Creator and the Deliverer of His people, is to be praised, for He has chosen Jacob unto Himself, and Israel for His peculiar treasure (cxxxv. 4). As the God of nature He has displayed Himself (6, 7), and as the Deliverer of His people in the past He is ever to be remembered (8-12). His name, too, endures for ever, and His memorial throughout all generations. For that which He declared by Moses in His first message to Israel (Exod. iii. 15) will be found to be unchanged in days yet to come (cxxxv. 13). And what He promised by Moses in the song of Deut. xxxii. 36 will also be found true to the letter when He again takes up Israel (cxxxv. 14). Between the death of Moses and that coming time, what has taken place? Israel, when in their land, turned to idols and forsook the one true God, so captivity and exile were their lot. Idols, what they are, our Psalm now recounts (15-18), and the language is similar to that of Ps. cxv. 4-8. The insensate folly of idolatry thus again emphasized, our Psalm closes with an appeal to the house of Israel, the house of Aaron, the house of Levi, and those who fear the Lord—i.e. the nation, the priests, the Levites, and the proselytes—to bless Jehovah; who then will be dwelling at Jerusalem.

Thereupon, in cxxxvi., comes the response to this appeal, each subject of praise being accompanied by the refrain, "His mercy endureth for ever." Then after recounting God's ways on behalf of Israel in the distant past, we read of that which has been true of them in the past and will be in the future (21, 22). So with what deep feeling surely will they sing, "who remembered us in our low estate, and hath redeemed us from our enemies" (23-24), when restored to

their land never again to be driven out of it ! But pouring out their hearts in thanksgiving, as they will, and remembering their former low estate, it will not be forgotten that there was a time and circumstances when they could not sing to Jehovah. Exiles from their land as they have been, and the nation still is, how should they sing the Lord's song in a strange land ? Well then does Ps. cxxxvii. here come in—a contrast to the preceding ones, speaking as it does of that which is past (1, 2), whilst cxxxv. and cxxxvi. foretell that which is future. For if we suppose that the returned remnant under Zerubbabel found those two Psalms fitted in measure to voice their feeling when the foundations of the Lord's House were again laid (Ezra. iii. 11), the state of things supposed in Ps. cxxxv. 2 had not come about, nor could they have sung of deliverance from their adversaries (cxxxvi. 24), as the sequel to their history of that time proved (Ezra. iv. 1). It is a free people dwelling in the land of their possession who can sing in the languages of cxxxv. 12, cxxxvi. 21-22, and not a company, though in their land, yet subject to the kings of Persia (Neh. ix. 36-37). But although Ps. cxxxvii. speaks of Israel's past when in Babylon, it has likewise a future application, as it asks for judgment on the children of Edom, for that, as we have already noticed, will be finally carried out by the agency of the children of Israel.

Opposition to God's earthly people, by whatever power manifested, will be finally dealt with by the Almighty when the time for His vengeance shall arrive. In the Old Testament, and also in the New, this can be seen. Amalek's conduct to Israel in the wilderness was visited on that people in the days of Saul and Samuel (1 Sam. xv.). In the parable of the sheep and the goats (Matt. xxv. 31-46) the failure of the latter to minister to the Lord's brethren in their distresses will call down on them everlasting punishment. Centuries may pass, as in the case of Amalek,

ere the judgment is carried out. Centuries, how many! have passed since Edom cried against Jerusalem, "Rase it, rase it even to the foundation thereof!" (Ps. cxxxvii. 7). God has not forgotten that. His vengeance will certainly overtake her. Both Ezekiel (xxv. 14), as we have previously noticed, and Obadiah (18, 19) have foretold it. How soon may that prophetic word come true! God's people are precious to Him, though He may have to deal governmentally with them. "For Jehovah's portion is His people; Jacob is the lot of His inheritance" (Deut. xxxii. 9).

Now follow eight Psalms (cxxxviii.-cxlv.), all ascribed to the pen of David, his experiences being fitted to instruct saints, and especially the godly remnant, reminding them of that which he passed through ere full deliverance was accorded him. God had answered his prayer, and strengthened him with strength in his soul (cxxxviii. 3). Depths of trouble had he known (cxlii., cxliii.), but all ended for him in praise. So will it be with true saints. And the godly remnant will reach that end whilst they are on earth, as was the case with David. Praise, then, from their hearts and lips will ascend to God.*

This series begins with thanksgiving and praise to God (cxxxviii. 1), and ends with extolling and blessing His name for ever and ever (cxlv. 1-2). And the thoughts of the son of Jesse, as elsewhere, run on to millennial times; for the prospect of all kings of the earth giving thanks to God (cxxxviii. 4-5) was never realised in his day. Past answers to prayer (3) give confidence as to future salvation. So this Psalm is full of trust in God, who has magnified His word above all His name (2). God, faithful to His word, David called and He answered (3). If David could prove that, other saints may likewise. God's character is unchanging. Suited then is this Psalm to come in near the close of the book. Its tone of

* No difficulty then need there be at the introduction of these Psalms near the close of the Psalter.

confidence may well inspire saints to trust in Jehovah to the end.

Hereupon we have in the Psalm which follows (cxxxix.) how a saint can come to be at home in the Divine presence. The sense of God's omniscience as well as of His omnipresence cannot provide that. Rather the contrary. God's eye on him is no comfort. From under that eye he cannot escape, wherever he goes. To what place soever he might betake himself, that eye would still be on him (1-12). What then can minister relief? The answer to this is very simple and very blessed. God's thoughts as revealed can do it. The Psalmist's thoughts about God have not done it. So up to verse 12 he is uneasy. In verse 13, however, he strikes a different note, and the first thing which ministers relief is the remembrance that God thought of him when in his mother's womb (13-16). That eye which he finds on him wherever he may go, that eye surveyed his frame when made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. "Thine eyes," he proceeds, "did see my substance, being unperfect; and in Thy book all my members were written, which in continuance [or, day by day] were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them." The remembrance of this has quite changed his key. "I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are Thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well" (14). He has got quite away from thinking about himself, and is now occupied with God.

Further, God's thoughts are precious to him; he is free to be thinking on them. Not simply is it the remembrance of God's survey of his frame when in the womb, but God's thoughts about things, and the unfulfilled purposes he can now, as revealed, enter into, as that little adverb "also" intimates: "How precious *also* are Thy thoughts unto me, O God," he says; "how great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number

than the sand: when I awake, I am still with Thee" (17, 18). He would not have it otherwise. Thus free in spirit, who was oppressed before, he takes God's side against God's enemies (19-22), assured of their final discomfiture. Then the Psalm closes, but so differently from the spirit with which it opened. "O Jehovah, Thou hast searched me, and known me," are the opening words. "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (23, 24). Awake, he is consciously with God.

We have dwelt somewhat at length on this Psalm because of the importance of its teaching for all time.

Then cxl., cxli., come as an appendix to the closing verses (19-24) of cxxxix. The former of these is occupied with the ways of the wicked against the righteous (2-5) and supplications for God to deal with them in judgment (6-11), the whole closing with confidence about it (12, 13). The latter Psalm (cxli.) is a prayer for the saint to be kept both watchful over his own heart and lips (3, 4), and to be preserved from the snares and gins laid to entrap him, for he cannot in his own strength keep himself (9, 10). Following is a prayer when David was in the cave (cxlii.), in character with the desires of the two preceding Psalms. We know how that prayer was answered. In the cave of Adullam he had reached his lowest condition (1 Sam. xxii.), and verses 4-7 of the Psalm express that. He emerged, however, from the hold with God's prophet and God's priest on his side, and from that time his fortunes began to rise, till they culminated in his sitting on the throne. "Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise Thy name: the righteous shall compass me about; for Thou shalt deal bountifully with me" (cxlii. 7). Such was his prayer and his expectation, in which we know he was not disappointed, though his trials were not yet ended, as Ps. cxliii. reminds us, in

which the dangers are recounted to which he was exposed by the malice and persistent opposition of his enemy (3, 4). Then follows a prayer for deliverance (7-9), with a request to be taught God's will: "Teach me to do Thy will, for Thou art my God: Thy Spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness" (10). The same spirit we see here displayed as we have noticed in Ps. cxli. Then he can ask boldly for rescue from trouble. "Quicken me, O Jehovah, for Thy name's sake; for Thy righteousness' sake bring my soul out of trouble. And of Thy mercy cut off mine enemies, and destroy all them that afflict my soul: for I am Thy servant" (cxliii. 11, 12).

What follows? To whom has he addressed himself? To God, who is his refuge, his place of defence, and his shelter, "who," says David, "subdueth my people under me" (cxliv. 2). Reading this Psalm, are we not reminded of another, even the *eighteenth*? Compare cxliv. 1, 2, with xviii. 2, 31, 34. But our Psalm, though introduced so late into the Psalter, was anterior in time to the other, as a comparison of verses 5, 6, 7, with xviii. 9, 13, 14-16, plainly intimates. In cxliv. David asks for that Divine intervention which in xviii. he declares has come about. But why this inversion of events, it may be asked? To this we reply that Ps. xviii. is part of a series (xvi.-xxiv.) connected with the Lord, describing the victorious career of the king, and that only; whereas Ps. cxliv. connects millennial blessing for the earthly people (11-14) with the king's deliverance; hence it suitably finds its place in the collection near the close of the Psalms. And whilst the eighteenth Psalm concludes with the thought of everlasting prosperity to David and to his seed, Ps. cxliv. ends with the thought of the nation's happiness. "Happy are the people that are in such a case; yea, happy are the people whose God is Jehovah" (15). Millennial pictures are not infrequent in the Psalms. In this last book we have two striking ones: the first a picture of family and social

happiness (cxxviii.); and the second here, which is one of agricultural prosperity (13, 14).

Now comes—and how fittingly!—David's Psalm of praise (cxlv.). It is the last of the alphabetical Psalms, and the last in the Psalter ascribed to the king. The royal singer's voice, therefore, we shall hear no more in the Psalter; his last utterance therein is one of unmingled praise. Jehovah is the King (1); His name he will bless and praise for ever and ever (2); He is great (3); He is gracious (8); He is good (9); He is righteous (17). Such is His character. Saul died forsaken of God (1 Sam. xxviii. 15, 16). David's last notes in the Psalter are notes of praise. Generation to generation shall praise God's works. Men will speak of His mighty acts; the Psalmist will declare His greatness. What a change will come about in the world when Jehovah the King shall be a common subject of wonder and praise! He is unchanging, and His name revealed to Moses is His name still (8). Homage, too, and worship and praise will yet be rendered Him, all His works giving thanks to Him, His saints blessing Him and speaking to men of the glory of His kingdom and of His power (10-12). What a change indeed will it be when this comes about! "His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and His dominion endureth throughout all generations" (13). Thus sang David. And Daniel (vii. 14-27), some centuries later, bore similar testimony. Nothing can shake that kingdom. None can outlive it. And He of whom all this is said (3-13) ministers as needed to His saints and to every living thing. He hears, too, the cry of those that fear Him, and will help them, preserving all that love Him; but all the wicked will He destroy (14-20). The Almighty, who endures for ever, and whose mighty acts men will declare, stoops to uphold those who fall and to raise up those that are bowed down!

How full was David's heart as he surveyed in spirit a scene on earth when persecution shall have ceased, man's

power for evil be annulled, and the destruction of the wicked be anticipated. Then he closes: "My mouth shall speak the praise of Jehovah, and let all flesh bless His holy name for ever and ever" (cxlv. 21). When in the world's history, since the days of Noah, has such a consummation been known as all flesh blessing God's holy name? The wish we can all understand. Will that ever come about?

David's example of closing with praise is to furnish a precedent for the remnant in the future; and a coming day will witness the fulfilment of that, for the book of Psalms, as we have already remarked, is really prophetic. That day will come, and the five Psalms which now follow (cxlvi.-cl.), the closing compositions of the Psalter, anticipate it. "All flesh," had David said; for all flesh on earth will yet be heard praising God, and in response to the king's last utterance an individual saint leads the way (cxlvi. 1, 2). "Hallelujah, Praise Jehovah, O my soul. While I live will I praise Jehovah; I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being." Brought through fire and water, and landed in a wealthy place, as the godly remnant will have been (Ps. lxvi. 12), the folly of trusting to man demonstrated, and the blessing of trusting the Lord experienced, how cheerily and how pointedly will the saint sing, "Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish. Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in Jehovah his God: which made heaven, and earth, the sea, and all that therein is: which keepeth truth for ever: which executeth judgment for the oppressed: which giveth food to the hungry. Jehovah looseth the prisoners: Jehovah openeth the eyes of the blind: Jehovah raiseth them that are bowed down: Jehovah loveth the righteous: Jehovah preserveth the strangers: He relieveth the fatherless and widow: but the way of the wicked He turneth upside

down. Jehovah shall reign for ever and ever, even thy God, O Zion, unto all generations. Hallelujah" (3-10). What a character of our God!

We have quoted this passage at length. The ways of our God will be fully demonstrated in that coming time. And what the Lord Jesus displayed when on earth in the exercise of His miraculous powers will then be seen, and owned to have been samples of the powers of the world (or age) to come (Heb. vi. 5). And saints in that day will sing, with an emphasis and a deep meaning known to them all, the praises of their God, having been kept throughout the awful time of temptation and persecution to the coming in glory of the Lord Jesus Christ—coming, not just as a brief, a passing spectacle for men to wonder at, but coming to reign in Zion, and that throughout all generations.

Thereupon follows a Psalm (cxlvii. 2) in praise of Him who builds up Jerusalem, taking pleasure in them that fear Him and in those that hope in His mercy (11). But He is Zion's God, so Jerusalem must praise Him (12-20). Yet more: all in heaven, animate and inanimate, must praise Him (cxlviii. 1-6); and all on earth of living creatures, whether on land, or in the sea, as well as all inanimate creation here below, will be called upon to praise Him. Kings of the earth and all peoples; princes, and all judges of the earth: both young men and maidens; old men and children: let them praise the name of Jehovah, for His name alone is excellent; His glory is above the earth and heaven. All must praise Him, who has exalted the horn of His people, the praise of all His saints; even of the children of Israel, a people near unto Him. Hallelujah (7-14).

As Zion, mentioned in cxlvi. 10, is exhorted to praise her God in cxlvii. 12, so Israel, introduced at the close of cxlviii., are called on specially to rejoice in Him (cxlix.), and that in a *new* song. At the Red Sea they had sung a song on the morning of their redemption from the

Egyptians (Exod. xv.). Now, finally delivered from all opposing powers, they are to sing a *new* song in praise to their God. We have met with the *new* song in previous Psalms (xxxiii. 3, xl. 3, xevi. 1, xeviii. 1, cxliv. 9); and, with the exception of Isa. xlii. 10, this term in the Old Testament only appears in the Psalms, and that for Israel. In the congregation of saints is that song to be sung, and surely in full melodious harmony, praising Jehovah their Maker and their King. For He whom Nathaniel saluted as King of Israel (John i. 49) will have come back to dwell at Jerusalem. Praise, then, becomes them (cxlix. 3-6). And the Lord now with them, executioners of judgment will they be, punishing peoples, binding kings with chains and nobles with fetters of iron, thus fulfilling the prophetic word as to Edom (Ezek. xxv. 14), and as to the land of Nimrod (Micah v. 6), and as to the nations (Jer. li. 20). Irresistible will they be, for the Lord of Hosts will be with them. Who just reading the earlier Psalms of the Psalter would have predicated such a future for them?

But the Psalter closes not with that picture, inspiring to Israel as it surely will be. Another Psalm we have to complete the collection (cl.). In it God alone is mentioned as the object before all hearts. In heaven and on earth will this be true. In the sanctuary and in the firmament of His power will God's praise be heard, and that for His mighty acts and according to His excellent greatness. Idols to be utterly abolished was a prospect before the son of Amoz (Isa. ii. 18). To that effected earthly saints will here look back—for but one object will there be for adoration. To no object of worship but one will men then turn, even to the True God, the Living God, the Everlasting God, the Former of all things, the Creator of heaven and of earth, the Redeemer, too, and the Saviour of His people.

What a day will that be! Trumpets, psalteries, harps, timbrels, stringed instruments, pipes, organs, loud cymbals, and high-sounding cymbals, all will be pressed into the

service of praise. And yet more, that most melodious of all instruments—the human voice—will be heard, amid the sounding of trumpets and the clashing of cymbals, lifted up in praise to Jehovah. Shall we stop there? “Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord” (cl. 6); so runs and ends the Psalm. Cannot Rev. v. 13 give breadth to this exhortation, as every creature in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and in the sea, and all that are in them, John in vision heard saying, “Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever”?

With this exhortation to praise, the Psalter closes. Praise to begin we read of, but never hear of its ending. Sighs and groans have often been heard on earth, and will yet make themselves heard. Tears, too, have flowed down many a cheek, and watered many a couch. Sighs and groans will one day cease upon earth. But praise will continually ascend from this (at present) sin-stricken world, when the trials and the sorrows of saints shall be matters of the past, all on earth at length basking in the blessedness of the reign of the Prince of Peace.

In the first Psalm we have seen two classes existing side by side upon earth—the righteous and the wicked. In the second Psalm we read of conflict to keep God's King out of His kingdom. Now at the close of the book conflict has ceased, the meek are inheriting the earth, and they that have mourned are now fully comforted. So with “Praise ye the Lord,” or “Hallelu-jah,” the Psalter ends, the keynote to be struck for saints here below till time shall be no more. God will at length have triumphed over the efforts of the enemy, and the last sounds which fall on the ear are those two Hebrew words which have now become the property of all tongues—“Hallelu-jah.” In heaven they will already have been uttered (Rev. xix. 1-3). On earth will they be taken up, and far and wide will they be heard, for “Jehovah alone shall be exalted in that day” (Isa. ii. 17).

CONCLUDING REMARKS.

CONCLUDING REMARKS.

WE have finished the task that we set before us—*viz.* tracing the sequence or arrangement of the Psalms. That there should be an orderly arrangement is only what might be expected, seeing that Holy Scripture is the Word of God, and was indited by the Holy Spirit of God.

As we have already remarked (p. 15), the arrangement is far from being chronological, for the only Psalm ascribed to Moses (Ps. xc.) appears at the commencement of the *fourth* book of the Psalter; and also, in the *fifth* book, just after Ps. cxxxvii., which refers to the Babylonish captivity under Nebuchadnezzar, we meet with eight Psalms (cxxxviii.-cxl.) all ascribed to the pen of David, who had died upwards of four hundred years previously. Nor are the different compositions so arranged as to class those of each writer by themselves. We find the Psalms of Asaph and those of David intermingled. Is there, then, it may be asked, any orderly arrangement in the book? or are the different compositions thrown together promiscuously? These questions we have in the preceding pages endeavoured to settle, answering the first in the affirmative, and the second by consequence in the negative.

Other questions then arise. What is the object of the book? and for whose profit has it been specially compiled? Having briefly expressed an opinion as to this in the introductory paper (p. 17), we may now more at length give reasons for it. Commencing with a notice of the birth of the Lord Jesus (Ps. ii. 7), the Psalter foretold His history

as a man in walk (xvi.), in service (xl.), in suffering (lxix., cii.), in death (xxii.), in resurrection (xvi., xl.), and in ascension (cx.); all this has been fulfilled. It foretells also His return to reign (xlv.), the blessings of His reign (lxxii.), and the extent of His dominions as Son of Man (viii.). It foretold, too, a conflict between the powers of earth and God; the former desiring to keep the Son out of His earthly kingdom—a conflict begun (as Acts iv. 25-28 informs us) at the time of the crucifixion, which will not end (as Rev. xii., xix., teach) till the return of the Lord Jesus out of heaven to put down in this scene all the powers of evil.

Now between the Lord's resurrection and ascension and the millennial days ushered in by His return out of heaven, Christian times come in, times which began at Pentecost, and to be ended when He comes in the air (1 Thess. iv. 16). A long interval has this already proved, and one, of course, of special interest to Christians, characterised as it has been by the descent at Pentecost of the Holy Ghost to dwell on earth, to indwell every true believer, to form likewise the Church of God, which is His House and His Temple, and to form also the Body of Christ. Now are these and other distinctive Christian truths recognised in the Psalter? To one of these only, as far as we remember, is there any allusion—for once, and once only, is there any reference to the assembly of the Living God (Ps. xxii. 22); all else is outside its scope.

On the other hand, this book certainly contemplates saints of God in trial upon earth for their faithfulness, who, owning the altar and the Temple at Jerusalem as their proper place of worship, have been driven away from them, and from the city likewise (Ps. xlii.), by a power acting in the land which they cannot resist. Then, as animal sacrifices on the altar at Jerusalem form a distinct feature in their proper worship, their prayer to God, whilst afar from His altar, is to return to it (xliii. 3, 4), to offer

thereon burnt sacrifices of fatlings, with incense of rams, and bullocks with goats, and that in payment of their vows made when in trouble (lxvi. 13-15).

But living in a time of open apostasy (lxxiii.), the Temple burnt (lxxiv.) and the city laid low (lxxix.), an invading power, too, heading a confederacy, carrying all before it, and overrunning the land (lxxxiii.), no relief can be obtained, or even expected, till the Lord comes back in power to reign at Jerusalem (xcviii., xcix.). For that the saints in the Psalter look forward, and to be alive upon earth when Messiah returns (lxxxviii. 10-15, lxxxix. 46-51, xc. 14-17). For though some of them may die first (xvii. 15, lxxix. 2, 3), their proper hope at that time is to be preserved alive upon earth (xlix. 15, ciii. 1-4, cxvi. 6-19), walking before Jehovah in the land of the living.

One is aware, of course, that some might reply that they spiritualise the meaning of the Psalms, and so use the words by accommodation. But spiritualising the language of the Psalter is not interpreting the different passages before them; and the very fact of thus dealing with the sacred texts is a confession that the real and the primary meaning of the Psalmist is something quite different. He did not, then, it must be admitted, write for Christians. And any one may surely see at a glance, how different are the hopes and the way of worship of saints depicted therein from those which should characterise Christians!

Our proximate *hope* is to meet the Lord in the air, and subsequently to have the further hope fulfilled in connection with His coming to reign. The coming and the appearing of the Lord Jesus are both subjects of hope for us. We look, too, for the fashioning of our bodies to be conformed to His Body of glory (Phil. iii. 21), remembering that our citizenship is in heaven (Phil. iii. 20), that we are called with an heavenly calling (Heb. iii. 1), that we shall come forth with the Lord out of heaven when He comes

to reign (Rev. xix. 14), that we shall sit with Him on His throne (Rev. iii. 21), and shall then be in glory, and that for ever (John xvii. 22, 23). What is there predicated of saints in the Psalms like this? How distinct are the heavenly saints from God's earthly people! Ps. l. 6, xcvi. 6, both teach this, the heavenly saints, as we have remarked on these Psalms, being referred to as declaring God's righteousness by appearing with Christ in glory.

Then as to *worship*. Christians have no earthly sanctuary in which to worship, nor a ritual which includes animal sacrifices. They have access in spirit into the holiest of all on high, through the veil, the flesh of Christ (Heb. x. 19-22), a sanctuary which can never be destroyed, the floor of which will never be desecrated by the footsteps of enemies of God. And as to their *way* of worship, it is to be in spirit and in truth—*i.e.* spiritual in character, and according to the revelation vouchsafed them (John iv. 24), worshipping by the Spirit of God (Phil. iii. 3, R.V.), and privileged to worship the Father (John iv. 23). What a contrast is all this to the worship of saints as set forth in the Psalter, and there sanctioned evidently by God!

Then as to *animal sacrifices*. For Christians there are none. The sacrifice of Christ once offered has put an end to that for them. By one offering the Lord hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. And their sins and iniquities God will remember no more. So where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin (Heb. x. 14-18). Yet animal sacrifices will again be offered, and that in accordance with the mind of God (Ezek. xlv.-xlv.); since for those who are called with an earthly calling, that has been, and will be, their way of worship. Besides all that we have said, the desire expressed in the Psalms for the destruction of their enemies, we in the present dispensation instinctively feel is contrary to the spirit of our common Christianity. In this we are right, for this is a day of grace. Dispensational teaching

explains the reason of the difference. The Christian gets deliverance from enemies by being taken in person out of this scene; whereas for Israel, the earthly people—*i.e.* who are to dwell on earth throughout the millennial reign of the Lord Jesus Christ—deliverance can only come by the arm of the Lord, sweeping away from off the earth opposers, persecutors, and haters of His people and of His truth.

Again, let us remember that for Christians the middle wall of partition between Jews and Gentiles has been broken down, and all believers in the present dispensation, whatever may have been their nationality, are brethren in Christ, and members of the Body of Christ. And those of them from among Gentiles are fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God (Eph. ii. 14-19). In the Psalms, God's earthly people, Israel and those who fear Him from amongst the nations, are quite distinct, and are never amalgamated into one company (Ps. cxvii).

We trust we have said enough to demonstrate that Christians as such are not the subjects of the Psalms. And since the book begins with a notice of the Lord's birth and of His rejection by ruling powers on earth, it must be other saints that are in view than those who lived in Old Testament times. Hence it is that the Psalter, passing over Christian days, looks onward to a period when saints of Israel living on earth will be again owned of God, but after the rapture of 1 Thess. iv. and before the Lord's personal return to reign. This is really the case.

Nor is the book of Psalms the isolated instance of such a passing over. We read in Lev. ix. 22, 23, of Israel's double blessing on the eighth day of Aaron's consecration. Aaron, whilst still at the altar, blessed the people in connection with the sacrifices he had just offered—a foreshadowing of that full blessing which can be enjoyed on the ground of the accepted sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. Then, disappearing from view with Moses, the two entering the Tabernacle, they reappeared, and together

blessed the people, thus foreshadowing the Lord's return, after entering the sanctuary on high, to bless as King and Priest His people Israel in millennial days. The blessing by Aaron alone prefigured the *ground* of blessing. The blessing by Moses and Aaron together foreshadowed the *time* of Israel's blessing. So between verses 22 and 23 of that chapter Christian times come in, if we could fill up the history aright.

Daniel (ix. 26-27) furnishes another example. Between Messiah's death, predicted in verse 26, and the covenant to be confirmed with Israel by the future head of the Roman earth, foretold in verse 27, the whole Christian dispensation really has its place.

A third instance we would adduce. In Rev. xii. 5 we read of the birth of the man child, the Lord Jesus Christ, and of His being caught up to God and to His throne, this referring to His ascension. Then follows in that chapter the announcement of the great persecution of the woman (*i.e.* Israel) by the dragon. Of that persecution we all know, that nothing like it has yet taken place since the Lord ascended to heaven. So again between verses 5 and 6 of that chapter, to fill up the chronology, we must insert the whole of this dispensation, for nothing occurred of such a persecution of Israel within one thousand two hundred and sixty days after the ascension.

We believe, then, that in order to understand the direct application of the book of Psalms, we must bear in mind that all this time after the Lord's ascension is passed over as not coming within its horizon. The fortunes, the trials, the dangers, and the final deliverance of God's earthly people are the special objects in view—God thus providing for those who will not be indwelt by the Spirit, petitions and desires in full accordance with His mind, to which in His own time He will fully respond.

Living, then, as we do in days subsequent to the first outpouring of the Spirit, and the Psalter having been all

completed many years before the first Advent, we can see that the sacred writers, whoever they were (for the author's name has in several instances been withheld from us), sang not only, as surely they did, to solace their own souls or the souls of their contemporaries, but they sang also for saints in other ages and for saints still unknown. For the prayer of Moses, and the compositions of David, of Asaph, and of others will be found to furnish thoughts, and to express in suited language the feelings of the godly remnant of the earthly people in the time of their greatest trial under the Beast and the Antichrist, as well as during the inroad of the northern confederacy. Thus whilst the prophets have described beforehand the *events* of those days, the Psalms will provide the saints with suited *language* in which to express themselves to God—language true in measure, as we have said, of the different writers, and true in a deeper—aye, in the deepest—sense in places of Him who became a man to die, and who died for that nation (John xi. 51, 52), besides dying also for us.

Thus the godly remnant will find comfort in them, their very circumstances being faithfully delineated and the real expression of their hearts being prophetically recorded. Comfort, too, it surely will be for the wise among them (the *maschilim* of Dan. xii. 3), as they learn that others have been in circumstances similar to theirs, and have been delivered; and also that in distant ages, centuries ere Rome was founded, the head of which empire will be oppressing them in their day, God was looking onward to that great conflict which will usher in the day of the Lord.

But have Christians no concern with the Psalms, would the reader ask? Comfort all can, and do, find in them, however different the circumstances of the various writers were from those in which they may find themselves placed by God. For there are experiences common to Christians and to them as *saints* of God, and special experiences, too,

for us as *Christians* likewise. A distinction this is important to be borne in mind. And the first Epistle of Peter will help any to understand it, as that Apostle writes to encourage those suffering wrongfully (ii. 19), or any suffering for righteousness (iii. 14), as well as any suffering for the name of Christ (iv. 14-16). Now when suffering wrongfully or suffering for righteousness' sake, we suffer as *saints*, and so far may find ourselves in company with those of old. Joseph, for instance, suffered for righteousness when put in prison by Potiphar, having refused to comply with the desire of his master's wife. So David suffered wrongfully when hunted like a partridge by Saul. And Jeremiah suffered, too, as a saint when put into the dungeons, first in the house of Jonathan the scribe, and then in that of Malchiah, the son of Hammelech, which was in the court of the prison (Jer. xxxvii., xxxviii.).

We would also remind the reader of the three kinds of trials to which saints are exposed in the Psalms—*viz.* persecution, sickness, and slander,—trials these are to which in measure we as saints may likewise be exposed. Hence, if suffering in any of these ways, we can have experiences as saints akin to theirs, and find the language of many Psalms suitable so far in which to express our feelings to God. We say *so far* because as Christians, with the love of God shed abroad in our hearts, we are assured of deliverance in God's own time and way. And as we have before remarked, there is scarcely a Psalm in which the saint's experience is so expressed that an intelligent Christian could rightly apply throughout to himself. Yet what suffering one is there who has not at times found some word of the Psalms a ministry to his soul? Are any bowed down with trouble? Confidence in God the Psalms would engender. Crying to Him, as One concerned in all that concerns them, is freely allowed, the saint thus unbosoming and unburdening himself in the presence and into the ear of the Almighty. "I was brought low, and

He helped [or, saved] me," is the experience of one recorded in this book (cxvi. 6.), written surely not simply as a record of personal history, but as a reminder of that which God can do, who preserveth the simple. If God can help (or save) one, He can help others. That Psalm is anonymous. Are we only to rest in the experience of one whose history and name are alike unknown? How comforting is the language of David in Ps. xxxvii. 1-8! How suited to saints still, if smarting because of evil-doers! Does the sense of sins committed weigh upon the conscience? David speaks of the way of deliverance from that burden in Ps. xxxii. 5. "I acknowledged my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said I will confess my transgressions unto Jehovah; and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." "If we confess our sins," writes John, "He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John i. 9). That of which John writes doctrinally, David declares he had found to be true in his case.

Then, too, this book opens up to us prophetically, as we have seen, the heart, feelings, and ways of the Lord Jesus Christ when in humiliation—subjects of deep and abiding interest to all His people, and not of interest only, but of much profit likewise. Does God leave His people without ever interposing on their behalf? Impossible. Yet the deliverance for Christians may only come through death and resurrection. How instructive, then, and consoling are the words in Ps. xl!—"I waited patiently for Jehovah; and He inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And He hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in Jehovah." The Lord Jesus Christ in the days of His flesh offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save

Him from [or out of] death, and was heard for His godly fear (Heb. v. 7). The apostle thus narrates the fact; David provides us with the encouragement saints can draw from that deliverance. Heard He was and answered, but only in resurrection. So He waited patiently, the Psalm declares. How many a martyr has been called to wait patiently, dying under the obloquy of a hostile crowd, to be vindicated on high in the future, whatever may have been men's thoughts of him when on earth. Nor is it martyrs only whom that Psalm would instruct. Many another saint may be called to wait patiently for God to carry out His purposes in His own time and way. And some Christians, at least, have surely proved the ministry of the Spirit to their hearts in special times of need. A few words of a Psalm—it may have been a verse, or only part of one—have been recalled to remembrance, and have encouraged, or guided, them. What should we have lacked had the Psalms never been composed! What will the godly remnant, in their coming day of awful trial, be able to say they would lack, had the book of Psalms never been compiled.

Now, as we look for the coming kingdom, when the Lord shall return in power—a hope this for the earthly people as well—the Psalms which predict the Appearing, and those which describe His Second Advent, are of deep interest to us, and cheer the heart as we look onward to that day, ever remembering that we, in common with all the heavenly saints, will then come *with* Him out of heaven (Rev. xix. 14), not waiting on earth, as the earthly people will, for the Lord's return to reign. And this hope, then, of His return is not confined to one Psalm, nor even to one book of the Psalter. It pervades the whole collection. Ps. ii., viii., xviii., xxi., xxii., xxiv., in the first book, refer to it. Ps. xlv., xlv., xlvii., xlviii., lxvi., lxvii., lxviii., lxxii., in the second book, look on to it. Ps. lxxvi., in the third book; xciii.-c., in the fourth

book ; and ex., cxviii., cxlvi-c., in the fifth book, each and all contemplate it.

Confidence of heart, then, the Psalter affords, since all that is now opposed to God will be subdued,—lawlessness, wickedness, malice, and oppression, under which saints in all ages have groaned, will be associated only with the history of the past. Glad obedience rendered by all saints on earth ; feigned obedience then displayed under the iron rule of the Lord Jesus by those alive, but still unconverted. (Ps. xviii. 44, lxvi. 3, marginal reading) ; outward obedience will characterise that time as it never has done since the days of Cain ; and the picture presented in the first Psalm of the righteous and the openly ungodly existing side by side will give place to that presented in the last Psalm, when God shall be the object of praise for all.

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