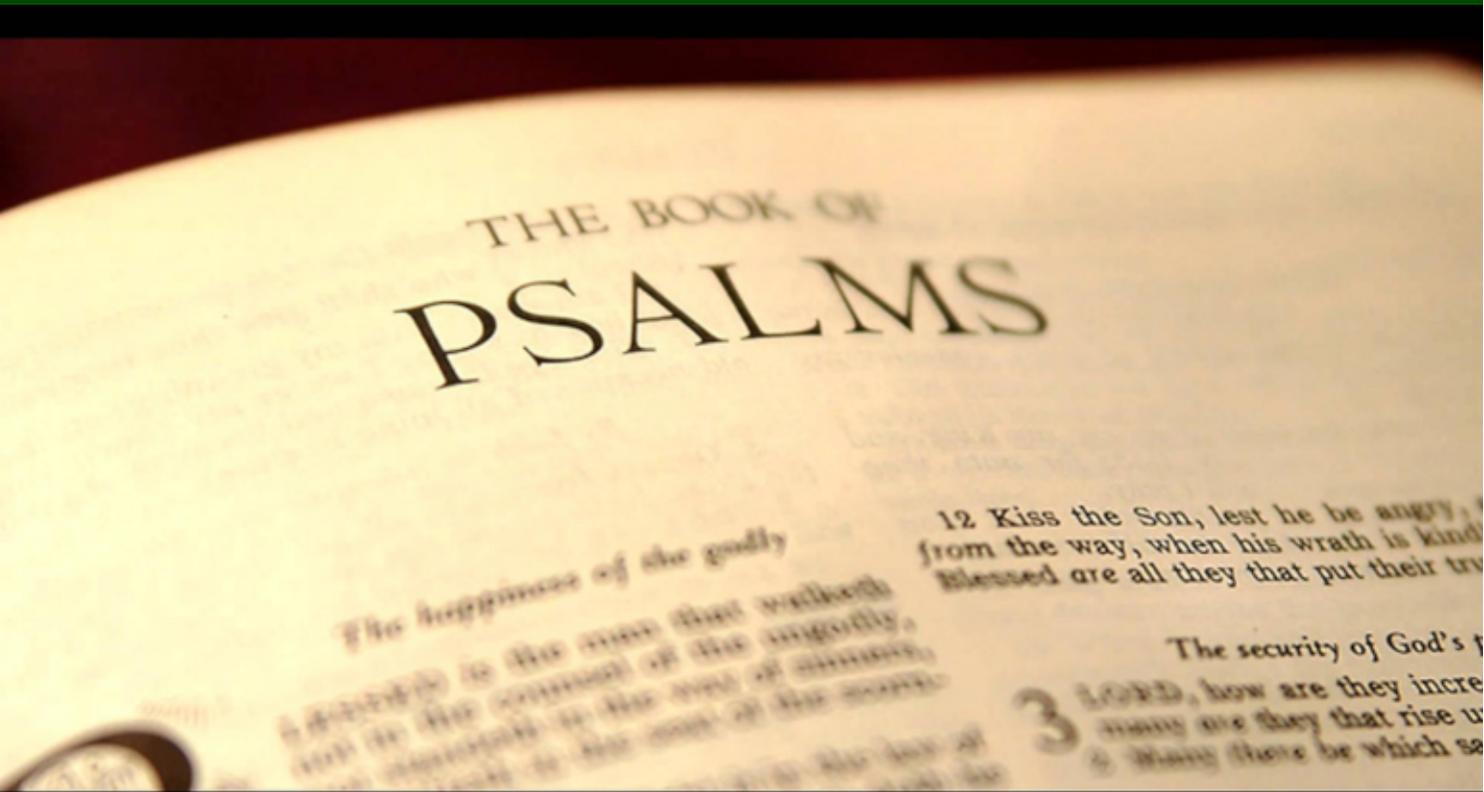


William Fraser

A Plain Commentary on the Psalms



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"The history of the Church confirms and illustrates the teachings of the Bible, that yielding little by little leads to yielding more and more, until all is in danger; and the tempter is never satisfied until all is lost. – Matthias Loy, *The Story of My Life*

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PLAIN COMMENTARY
=

ON THE

BOOK OF PSALMS,

(The Prayer-Book Version,)

CHIEFLY FOUNDED ON THE FATHERS.

VOLUME I.,
CONTAINING PSALMS I.—LXXII.

PHILADELPHIA:
HENRY HOOKER, AND CO.

M DCCO LVII.

TO THE FAITHFUL LAITY OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND,

AND, AMONG THEM, ESPECIALLY TO

HENRY HOARE, Esq., M.A.,

CHAIRMAN OF THE SOCIETY FOR THE REVIVAL OF CONVOCATION, &C.,

WHOSE EARNEST PERSEVERANCE IN THE BEHALF OF CHURCH

EFFICIENCY, AND WHOSE READINESS IN ALL CHARITABLE

WORKS, ARE AN EXAMPLE TO ENGLISH CHURCHMEN,

This Plain Commentary on the Psalms

IS INSCRIBED, WITH THE WISH AND THE PRAYER

THAT IT MAY BE FOUND USEFUL.

P R E F A C E.

It has appeared to me for some time past, that a Commentary of a plain and simple, and yet spiritual, character, upon the Book of Psalms, was really needed in our Church. There seemed to be many persons to whom such a Commentary would be very useful.

The young deacon, or curate, for instance, when he first begins his parochial visiting, and has to read portions of Scripture to the aged and infirm, will naturally, next to the Gospels, take the Psalms for his continuous readings. Their character, which is at once so deeply evangelical, practical, and devotional, puts them forward as the most profitable for systematic reading. But unless he has made the Psalms a subject of especial study, he will certainly come upon verses which he will find it hard to give the meaning of to a poor and unlearned parishioner, in an easy and yet edifying way. Such verses, experience has shewn me, will generally be passed over, as being likely to interrupt the current of devotional feelings, and to turn the conversation of the minister and the

parishioner from spiritual things to mere explanations of difficulties. A Plain Commentary, therefore,—which might be readily used by themselves, and be left with their aged parishioners for reading after they had left them,—would be an advantage, and often no small one, to clergymen in their parish work.

And it would be a still more obvious advantage and assistance to those Churchmen and Churchwomen who, under the guidance and advice of their parish priest, devote themselves, wholly or partially, as district visitors, to looking after the wants of the poor; and who are entrusted by their clergyman with the privilege of reading to them the Scriptures, or the writings of holy and religious men, under his superintendence. A simple exposition of the Psalms, in their spiritual character, and a setting out of the Christian doctrine contained in them, could not but be a great help to such persons in their work of charity.

But there are other and much larger classes of Church-people, to whom a Plain Commentary on the Psalms would be highly useful;—I mean those who, in conformity with the Church's rule, read every day the Psalms for the day, or a portion of them, at their family prayers, or in their

own private devotions. When the Psalms for the day are read at family prayers, certain verses, and even entire Psalms, are constantly recurring,—as, for instance, Psalm cix.,—to the full meaning of which, those who join in them have no direct spiritual clue, and which, therefore, jar upon their feelings, and make the reciting them—unless they are, on individual responsibility, systematically omitted—an act of some difficulty, or at least not an act of devotion. The case is the same, sometimes in a greater, sometimes a less degree, with Christians in their private devotions. Here a guide to the true meaning of those parts of the Psalms which they do not perfectly understand, would be a very great gain. And it would also be so to all who join regularly in the morning and evening public Services of the Church. The Psalter occupies a large place in our Matins and Evensong; and they who would obtain the full blessing given to those who unite with their fellow-Christians in the Services of God's Church, must not be content merely with feeling a devotional spirit; but must take every care that, in saying the prayers and spiritual songs which the Psalter puts into their mouths, they may fulfil the Apostle's injunction to those who assemble together in the

Sanctuary,—‘I will pray with the Spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the Spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also ^a.’

And it is especially to be desired that those younger members of the Church who, as choristers, are called to take a particular share in the public worship of God, whose work of chanting praise is peculiarly ‘angels’ work,’—it is especially to be desired that choristers should be taught early the full meaning and importance of those hallowed songs which they repeat so often. Care is taken to instruct the choristers of our churches in the other parts of Scripture, and certainly it should be particularly bestowed, that they may understand the meaning of the Psalms which they sing so constantly in the House and in the immediate presence of the Lord. ‘Understandest thou what thou singest?’ is for them, at least, a question as needful to be rightly answered as—‘Understandest thou what thou readest?’ For them a Plain Commentary—which should teach them to see their Lord Who loves them, in the Psalms no less than in the Gospels—seems also much required.

Having for some time borne these wants in

^a 1 Cor. xiv. 15.

mind, and having waited for some one better prepared for the work to undertake it, I at last determined to do what I could to supply them ; and the result has been the publication of the present Plain Commentary on the Psalms.

In writing this Commentary, I found that my great difficulty lay, not in the scarcity, but in the abundance of materials. The Psalms themselves are so full of deep and holy meanings, and they have suggested so many divine thoughts and heavenly musings to good men in all ages of the Church, that the labour was not one of collection, but of selection. I soon saw that if my Commentary was to be of much use, I must quite lay aside the larger plan upon which I had at first begun to work, and must bring it into as small a compass as might be. I have therefore omitted all critical dissertations upon the meanings of disputed passages, and have merely given that sense which, upon due comparison, appeared to be the best ;—I have omitted the references to the works of the Fathers, which would have been but of little use to those for whom the Commentary was intended ; and in many cases, where two or three different lines of spiritual interpretation have been given by the earlier commentators, I have

confined myself to the one which seemed most edifying, or most in accordance with the general tone of the whole. In doing this, I am no doubt open to many very just criticisms. It may be said, perhaps, that on Psalms which are in themselves very plain, more has been said than was needed; while in the case of others which are harder to understand, clearer and more probable explanations might have been given than those which are given. It is probable that it may be so; for the object I have always had in view was not to produce a work of literary perfection, which might stand the criticism of accomplished theologians, but only to bring before my reader, who might be poor, young, and unlearned, in plain, and even homely, language, some of the deep and mighty thoughts which the Psalms had suggested to St. Athanasius, to St. Chrysostom, to St. Augustine, to St. Jerome, and the holy men who followed in their track; and to leave these thoughts to work their own way by their own grandeur, their own power, their own truth, and their own beauty.

As this Commentary is professedly founded on the Fathers, a question may also arise in the minds of those who are acquainted only with the English translation of the Scriptures, as to why selected

passages of the Fathers could not in all cases have been given, without any additions or alterations, and thus a Catena have been formed which would have been a running Commentary in the very words of the Fathers. Those, however, who are acquainted with the writings of the Fathers, know that they followed always either the Greek version of the Seventy or the Latin Vulgate, both of which differ in very many places from the Hebrew, and from our translation, which is made directly from it; and that, therefore, if the words of the Fathers only had been taken, a very large proportion of the verses of the Psalms in our translation must have been left without any comment whatever. This is the difficulty which the writer of a Commentary on the Psalms has always to contend with—that while on plain passages there is a richness and copiousness of teaching which embarrasses him to select from, in those places of real difficulty where he is truly in need of an interpreter and helper, the Fathers cannot help him, because they comment always on the Greek and Latin versions, and not on the original Hebrew.

I have therefore, in this Commentary, followed in the footsteps of the earlier interpreters. I have taken their very words, wherever it was possible to do so;—in fact, a half of this Commentary at least is in the very words of the Fathers. But

where they left me to find my way alone, I naturally looked for help to the teachers of our own Church, particularly to the divines of the reigns of Charles I. and Charles II.; and whenever, in them or in other religious writers, I found an apt illustration or a pious thought which threw light upon a Psalm, I set it where it seemed best to stand. Still, all through, St. Augustine has been my chief guide: his Commentary, which is made up of his sermons on the Psalms, has been my constant model; and if at any time this Plain Commentary seem to be too like a sermon,—if I have sometimes preached as well as explained,—I can only say that St. Augustine has done the same, and that in many cases the words of exhortation and of warning are his.

The attempt, then, has been, not to make a perfect Commentary which should supersede all other Commentaries, but to write, or to gather from the best and holiest sources, such plain explanations, spiritual improvements, and interpretations, as should form a running Commentary upon the Psalms throughout,—a Commentary which any member of the Church of England, however young or unlearned, might take up, and after he had read it might feel that he knew somewhat more of the meaning and entered somewhat more into the spirit of any Psalm before him in his

Prayer-book, than he had been able to do before. It is for such readers to judge how far this has been accomplished in this Plain Commentary.

The Prayer-book version of the Psalms was obviously the best for the text of the Commentary, both on account of its own intrinsic majesty and beauty, and because the use of it is so familiar to Church-people in their devotions. Where it differs much from the Hebrew, a literal rendering of the original has been generally given, and translations from the Septuagint have also been added, wherever they were likely to give assistance in understanding the meaning of difficult passages.

I am indebted to the ability and the patient kindness of a very dear friend and brother in the priesthood for many striking thoughts and apt Scriptural illustrations, as well as for a careful correction of the whole work throughout.

I end what I have said and done with an expression of hearty thanksgiving to Him through Whose assisting grace I have brought this work to its completion. He has blessed it to me in the writing it: may He in like manner bless it to others in the reading it! Amen.

FOR the use of those who wish to study the Psalms more thoroughly, the following list is given of some of the authors used in writing the "Plain Commentary :"—

Corderius, *Expositio Patrum Græcorum in Psalmos.*

St. Jerome, *Commentarius in Psalmos.*

St. Augustine, *Expositions on the Book of Psalms.*

Lorinus, *Commentarii in Psalmos.*

Titelmannus, *Elucidatio in omnes Psalmos.*

Bellarminus, *Explanatio in Psalmos.*

Molerus, *Enarratio Psalmorum.*

Calvin, *Commentarius in Librum Psalmorum.*

Luther, *Complete Commentary on the twenty-two first Psalms.*

De Sacy, *Les Pseaumes de David avec une Explication.*

Dr. Hammond, *Paraphrase of the Psalms.*

Bp. Horsley, *Translation of the Book of Psalms.*

Bp. Horne, *Commentary on the Book of Psalms.*

Dr. Tholuck, *A Translation and Commentary of the Book of Psalms.*

Dr. Hengstenberg, *Commentary on the Psalms.*

Rev. J. Jebb, *Translation and Dissertation on the Psalms.*

Revs. French and Skinner, *Translation of the Psalms.*

Rev. F. H. Dunwell, *Parochial Lectures on the Psalms.*

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INTRODUCTION I.

§ 1. THE INSPIRATION OF THE PSALMS.

IN the Book of Psalms we have the Prayer-book of the Universal Church, written and set in order for us by the Holy Spirit of God Himself. The Psalms are the praises and the prayers for all men, of every time, and under all circumstances; and every feeling of every heart which turns to the God of all flesh, and to the Saviour of all souls, can most surely find in them the words in which it may best send forth its cries of sorrow or of gladness, of heart-felt repentance or of heart-felt thanksgiving.

The Psalms are the inheritance both of the Israelitish and of the Christian Church; and they descend from the one to the other unchanged, and not needing any change. The Law of Moses required the Gospel to make it complete; the proclamations and warnings of the Prophets are imperfect without the teachings and the revelations of the Apostles; the Old Testament without the New is but a part of the whole counsel of God respecting man;—but the Psalms alone seem to need nothing to complete them or to make them perfect. They

are the response to all the rest of Holy Scripture ; as if the Holy Spirit, by giving to us the other portions of the Bible, had bid us know that *thus* and *thus* hath God spoken to man, and by giving us the Book of Psalms had taught us that *thus* and *thus* must man reply to God. By the very operation of the Divine wisdom, by which these holy hymns were prepared for man's use, they are in a wonderful way fitted for all who make use of them. They belong to all mankind, because they are the outpourings of human hearts, conscious of weakness, of sorrow, of sin, but yet purified and hallowed by the Holy Spirit of Truth. This marvellous power of theirs, by which they adapt themselves to every soul, and through which every child of man, from the Lord of Glory Himself down to the poorest, the frailest, the most erring finds in them that form of prayer in which he can best cry to God, seems to arise from this union in them of what is truly human with what is truly divine. Thus they are not for one generation only, but for all mankind. Time and place are nothing to the Spirit of God ; they make no difference in His workings ; and therefore the sorrow of David, mourning for his sin, is all one with the sorrow of the repenting sinner now ; and the gladness of David, strong in his faith, is all one with the holy gladness of the believer now. Man's needs, and sins, and troubles are the same in all ages ; God's love, and holiness, and mercy are the same in all ages ; and so the Church now, and each soul within the Church, can unite in the very same cry of prayer, or voice of

praise, not only with 'the glorious company of the Apostles,' but with 'the goodly fellowship of the Prophets' too. The words of David and of the other Psalmists were their own, because they came from their own souls; and yet they were not their own, because they were moved to utter them by the Holy Ghost, Which rested on them and dwelt within them. The Psalms, though full of acknowledgment of human infirmity and of confessions of sin, are a portion of inspired Scripture. They are cited as such by the Apostles in the New Testament more than any other portion of the older Scriptures; they are declared to be a part of the Scripture 'which cannot be broken' by the Son of God Himself. David knew that his thoughts and words were those of the Holy Ghost, when he gave them utterance; for he said of himself,—'The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and His word was in my tongue^a.' And the Saviour confirms his declaration by saying in the temple, before the scribes, 'For David himself said by the Holy Ghost, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit Thou on My right hand^b.' And St. Peter uses the very same words, declaring before the Apostles that 'the Scripture must needs be fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas^c.' The Psalmist, therefore, did not only then speak by the Spirit when he prophesied things to be hereafter, when he knew that Christ should not be left in Hades, but that He should sit upon the right hand of God; he was not merely inspired when he

^a 2 Sam. xxiii. 2.

^b St. Mark xii. 36.

^c Acts i. 16.

spake what man could not, in the course of nature, possibly speak; but he was inspired by the very same Spirit when he spake the things which man, when touched by grace, can speak, ought to speak, must speak. The Holy Ghost is first and before all the Author of the Psalms; and they who cry to their God and Father from the footstool of this lower world in the words of the Psalms, are uttering the very words of the Holy Spirit; and so do they cry in union with Him Who in the highest heaven 'maketh intercession for the elect with groanings which cannot be uttered.'

§ 2. THE WRITERS OF THE PSALMS.

THE Psalms are called in the Hebrew 'the Book of Praises.' This term of 'Praises or Praise-songs,' the Greek interpreters rendered by the word 'Psalms,' meaning by a Psalm, a hymn recited to music; and they called the whole book 'the Psalter,' as if it were itself the Psalter or instrument to which praises were to be sung. They are often called the 'Psalms of David,' because an impression prevailed in the minds of some of the Fathers of the early Church, that all of these hymns of praise and prayer were composed by David. This was the opinion both of St. Chrysostom and St. Augustine, among earlier writers, and has been asserted by Calvin in later times: but there is no ground for it, and the fact that many of the Psalms refer to the captivity in Babylon, and the return, sets it aside. Other

writers, including the best modern biblical critics, follow St. Hilary, St. Athanasius, and St. Jerome, in considering that David composed those Psalms which the titles declare to be his, and in assigning the other Psalms to such authors as are named in the titles, or can be supposed to have been inspired to write them from indications furnished by the Psalms themselves. The ancient Rabbis and the learned men among the Jews seem also to be agreed that the titles are of an historical character.

These titles or superscriptions of the Psalms are certain short sentences which are set before several, though not all, of these sacred songs; and they sometimes express the character of the hymn, as 'a Praise-song,' 'a Prayer,' 'a joyful Song,' 'an Instruction,' 'an Inscription,' 'a Song of the goings-up;' sometimes they declare that the Psalm was intended for the service of the temple, by prefixing the words 'for the Chief Musician,' adding, in some cases, the season when it was to be used, as in the words, 'for the Sabbath-day;' and sometimes they mention the tune to which the Psalm was to be chanted, or the musical instrument which was to accompany it; and sometimes they assign some historical event for the occasion of the Psalm being written, as 'the Philistines taking David in Gath,' or 'the prophet Nathan coming to him, after his sin with Bathsheba.' The most important service, however, which the titles perform, is that they point out certain kings and prophets as the authors of particular Psalms; and in doing so they not only gratify our curiosity,

by informing us who wrote this or that Psalm, and under what circumstances he wrote it; but they also considerably help us, in very many instances, to understand the meaning and the object of the Psalm itself. The question, therefore, of the degree of authority which is to be allowed to these superscriptions, is one which requires to be considered. Some writers have argued that they are but of late date, and therefore that they can have little authority; but the contrary opinion is a far more probable one. We know that these superscriptions existed in the time of the Seventy Interpreters, for they always give translations of them: judging from the scrupulous care with which the Jews preserved the text of their holy books from changes or additions, we may safely conclude that the titles had stood before the Psalms, just as they now stand, from the times of Ezra or of the Great Synagogue; and a careful comparison of them with corresponding passages in the Books of Samuel, will make it nearly certain that they were affixed to the Psalms which bear them at their first composition, by their inspired writers; and, in fact, are each of them a portion—generally a first verse—of the original Psalm. If the titles, therefore, are authentic, as there is every reason for believing them to be, we shall find in them much very useful information respecting the authors of the Psalms, and the occasions on which they were composed; and also in many cases we shall see that the title throws much light upon the Psalm itself. There are, however, many Psalms

which have no titles, and these are supposed by the Jewish Rabbis, and also by St. Jerome, to be written by the author of the Psalm which precedes them; but arguments arising from this supposition must be received in each case with considerable caution.

The inspired writers of the Psalms lived during a period of about a thousand years. The earliest of the Psalms is supposed by Dr. Lightfoot to be the 88th, and to have been written by Heman, the son of Zerah, during the captivity in Egypt; and this opinion seems strongly confirmed by the internal evidence, though it cannot be considered as certain. The 90th Psalm, which is inscribed 'a Prayer of Moses, the man of God,' is almost universally acknowledged to have been written by Moses in the wilderness, about B.C. 1489; and the Psalm which follows it was very probably also the work of the great Lawgiver. Some few of the Psalms which contain no reference to Mount Zion or to Jerusalem, might have been written during the time of the Judges and of Samuel. But by far the larger half of the whole the Church owes to David, the Prophet-King of Judah and of Israel, 'the sweet Psalmist of Israel.' Seventy-four of the Psalms are inscribed with his name in the Hebrew, and a still greater number in the LXX.; and nearly all of these bear the plain impress of the spirit of 'the man after God's own heart.' His troubles, sorrows, fears; his affection, courage, faith; his intense penitence and self-abasement; his boundless joy and exultation have but one end and object—God, Whom he knew to be his

Saviour and Defender. All the things of nature,—its loveliness, its still repose, its storms and awfulness; all the chances and changes of human life,—and the experience of David in these was wide indeed; all that music and poetry can touch the feelings and excite the spirit by;—all these were to David but mere means to lead his soul to God on Whose love and righteousness he reposed, and to make the love and righteousness of God more real to himself. His Psalms give the inner history of his soul as truly and faithfully as the historical books record the outer history of his life and of his kingdom: they contain his personal experience set forth without disguise; and therefore they have become in all ages the expression of the trust and love of the Church, and of all holy souls within her. Two Psalms, the 72nd and the 127th, are written by Solomon, and, with the Book of Canticles, are all that remain of the thousand and five songs which he wrote. The tone of these Psalms is calm and majestic, but they lack the passionate, earnest emotions of David his father. Twelve Psalms have in their titles the name of Asaph for their author. It seems clear that there were two Psalmists, at least, who bore this name. The elder Asaph appears to have lived in the time of David, and is mentioned with him in the narrative of Nehemiah^d: ‘For in the days of David and Asaph of old there were chief of the singers, and songs of praise and thanksgiving unto God.’ The younger Asaph is supposed to have

^d Nehem. xii. 46.

lived during the reign of Hezekiah and his predecessors, and to be spoken of in Scripture as Asaph the Seer. We find in the history of the reformation of religion made by Hezekiah^e,—‘Moreover Hezekiah the king and the princes commanded the Levites to sing praise unto the Lord with the words of David, and of Asaph the Seer.’ The Psalms which are inscribed with the name of Asaph are, for the most part, of a solemn and thoughtful, and somewhat stern, character, like the words of a prophet that would lead a people back to righteousness. They have little or no reference to the Psalmist’s own hopes or sorrows, but are generally taken up with the thoughts of his Church and nation, and the dealings of their God with them. Eleven more of the Psalms are assigned by their superscriptions to the sons of Korah. These were the Levites who were descended from that Korah who perished in the wilderness; they appear to have devoted themselves to psalmody and music, and among them, and under the instruction of Samuel, who was one of them, it is likely that David obtained that love for sacred poesy, and that knowledge of sacred music, for which he was distinguished from his very youth: and this early connection and friendship between David and the family of Korah was not without its fruits; for in the time of his adversity several of the Korhites came to Ziklag as his soldiers and allies^f. The Psalms of the sons of Korah were composed at various periods, from the reign of David to the cap-

• 2 Chron. xxix. 30.

^f 1 Chron. xii. 6.

tivity; but perhaps the greater number during the reign of Jehoshaphat, and during the desolation of the temple, and the banishment of the priests and Levites in the time of Ahaz. These Psalms have all the tenderness and longing piety of those of David, with more of poetic beauty and melody of language, but less of personal feeling and personal faith. None of the children of Korah returned from the captivity. The Psalm of Heman has already been spoken of, and but little can be known of Ethan the Ezrahite, or 'the sojourner,' who was the author of Psalm lxxxix.

The other Psalms have no names prefixed to them in the Hebrew, and their writers can only be gathered from conjecture. It is extremely probable that Ezra was the writer of Psalm cxix., and also of the first Psalm, which stands as an introduction to the whole book; and it is not unlikely that Josiah composed Psalm cii. Jeremiah, Haggai, and Zechariah are given by the Seventy Interpreters as writers of certain Psalms; but we can assign but little weight to the titles of the LXX. where they differ from the Hebrew.

The Psalms were at an early period divided into five books;—the result, probably, of the order in which they were originally composed. The first of these books consists of the Psalms of David himself, which were probably collected and arranged by him in the order in which they now stand. The second and third books were collected and arranged, there is reason for believing, at different periods in the

reign of Hezekiah, and they contain the Psalms of Asaph and the Korhites, with the addition of some written by David, which are chiefly found in the second book. The fourth book has been supposed to have been collected in the reign of Josiah, and contains the Psalm of Moses, and others probably of high antiquity, but chiefly without titles. The fifth and last book was compiled, probably, by Ezra, and contains the Psalms composed during and after the captivity, with the addition of those Psalms of David which still remained known, but had not been before collected.

§ 3. THE POETRY OF THE PSALMS.

IF by poetry we mean that power of expression or quality of language which stirs up exalted feelings in our minds, and sets before them thoughts of wonder, of joy, of sorrow, of terror, in which they are compelled to sympathize; and by so doing purifies them, and raises up above their usual level to what is more beautiful and true,—then there is no doubt but that the Psalms are full of poetry. There is scarcely any one image of what is grand, or lovely, or terrible in nature; or any one feeling of what is joyful, or sorrowful, or longing, or fearing, or hoping, or trusting in the human heart, that does not rise before us as we go through those holy and ancient hymns. The risings and settings of the sun, the clear brightness of the moon, the unfathomableness of the heaven above, the countless multitude of the

stars, the vivid blaze of lightnings, the terrible voice of thunders, the horror of earthquakes, the swiftness of winds, the cheerfulness of showers of rain, the tender freshness of dews,—all these appeal to our sympathies with nature, and have new force given to their appeal by the clear-shewn consciousness in the poet's own soul, that they are the loving work and mighty operation of the Father of all. Again: all that there is in the order of human society that is striking, or impressive, or pity-moving; the authority of kings, the prowess of warriors, the glory of crowns, the glitter of swords, the renown of courage, the pomp of victory, the quietness of the sheepfold, the gentle care of the shepherd, the sorrow of the captive, the bitterness of oppression, the fearfulness of death, the gloom of the grave;—and again, all the holiness and grandeur of religious worship, the awfulness of the Priesthood, the sanctity of the temple of God, the cry of prayer, the expiation of sacrifices, the joy of music, the chant of psalms, the tears of repentance, the rapture of inspiration, the hope of life immortal;—with all these, and many more such-like images, the Psalms are most richly stored. They are, in this respect, poetical in the highest degree.

But the Psalms are also poetical in the other sense of the word *Poetry*. Not only are they full of the spirit of poetry, but their form and language is also strictly poetical. They are written in the regular metre of ancient Hebrew poetry,—a metre wonderfully and indeed providentially fitted for the purpose which it has fulfilled. This metre is that which is

now generally known by the name of Parallelism : it is a metre or regular arrangement, not of words merely, but of thoughts also ; which is formed by a responding or answering to one another, not of syllables, as in modern English rhymes, but of thoughts and things. We may explain this by taking at random the modern translation of verses 8 and 9 of the 72nd Psalm :—

His uncontrolled dominion shall from sea to sea extend ;
 Begin at proud Euphrates' streams, at nature's limits end.
 To him the savage nations round shall bow their servile heads ;
 His vanquished foes shall lick the dust, where He His conquest
 spreads.

Now let these lines, which are rendered into modern metre, be compared with the same lines, translated tolerably closely from the original Hebrew, in our Prayer-book version :—

His dominion shall be also from the one sea to the other,
 And from the flood unto the world's end.
 They that dwell in the wilderness shall kneel before Him ;
 His enemies shall lick the dust.

The modern metre, it is plain at once, is formed by the number of syllables being defined, and by the rhyming of certain words ending with similar sounds, as 'crowned,' and 'abound,' 'extend' and 'end ;' but the ancient metre rhymes, if we may so use the term, with words, not of a similar sound, but of a similar meaning : 'from-the-one-sea-to-the-other' is placed to match with 'unto-the-world's-end ;' and again, 'shall-kneel-before-him,' in one line, is made to correspond with 'shall-lick-the-dust' in the one that follows it. Again, another law of this an-

cient poetry is, that it does not require, like modern poetry, a certain number of syllables,—as ten or eight,—but rather a certain definite number of thoughts, ideas, or things. There are generally three in each line, as in the following verses of Psalm cxxxvii. :—

But-the-meeK-spirited shall-possess the-earth,
 And-shall-be-refreshed in-the-multitude of-peace.
 The-ungodly seeketh-counsel against-the-just,
 And-gnasheth upon-him with-his-teeth.
 The-Lord shall-laugh him-to-scorn ;
 For-He-hath-seen that-his-day is-coming.

But these thoughts or words are sometimes more in number than three; and they are occasionally less: the case generally being, that the lines in the older Hebrew poems are more clearly marked with the threefold division, while the poems of later times admit of changes in the order of the lines, which are of greater or less lengths; and when they are of equal lengths, they contain a greater number of ideas, or distinct thoughts, in each line; of which we have examples in the Lamentations of the Prophet Jeremiah.

The form, then, of the poetry of the Psalms, is that which is usual in all Hebrew poetry, and is called Parallelism; and the simplest kind of it is an arrangement of two lines, consisting generally of three thoughts each, in correspondence with each other. The original form of this peculiar kind of metre was, perhaps, derived from that parallelism, or correspondence, which a devout soul perceives to exist in all the creation of God, between the things

seen and unseen, and which Jesus, the son of Sirach, describes in the Book of Ecclesiasticus xxxiii. 15,—

So look upon all the works of the Most High :

And there are two and two, one against another ;—

and which is at the bottom of the teaching of all of our Lord's parables. The two things, the thing expressing and the thing expressed, exist together side by side in fact ; and so they fall, by a natural process, side by side, in the poetry that describes them. Psalm ciii., verses 11—13, will furnish an example of this :—

For look how high the heaven is in comparison of the earth,

So great is His mercy also toward them that fear Him.

Look how wide also the east is from the west,

So far hath He set our sins from us.

Yea, like as a Father pitieth his own children,

Even so is the Lord merciful unto them that fear Him.

This thought-metre, or parallelism, is of several kinds, more or less complicated and skilfully arranged. The simplest is that which is called 'Synonymous, or Cognate parallelism,' where there are two lines corresponding to each other, expressing nearly the same sentiment, but in different words ; as, for instance, Psalm xxvi. 4, 5 :—

I have not dwelt with vain persons,

Neither will I have fellowship with the deceitful :

I have hated the congregation of the wicked,

And will not sit among the ungodly.

Or, again, Psalm l. 10, 11 :—

For all the beasts of the forest are Mine,

And so are the cattle upon a thousand hills.

I know all the fowls upon the mountains,

And the wild beasts of the field are in My sight.

In 'Constructive parallelism' the same form of lines answering to each other in the number of the verse-members is preserved, but the meaning of them is not the same, as in Psalm cxlviii. 7—12:—

Praise the Lord upon earth :
 Ye dragons, and all deeps ;
 Fire and hail, snow and vapours :
 Wind and storm, fulfilling His word ;
 Mountains and all hills :
 Fruitful trees and all cedars ;
 Beasts and all cattle :
 Worms and feathered fowls ;
 Kings of the earth and all people :
 Princes and all judges of the world ;
 Young men and maidens,
 Old men and children,
 Praise the Name of the Lord :
 For His Name only is excellent,
 And His praise above heaven and earth.

Another kind of parallelism is 'Antithetic parallelism,' in which the two lines are opposed to each other in meaning, as in Psalm xx. 7, 8:—

Some put their trust in chariots, and some in horses :
 But we will remember the Name of the Lord our God.
 They are brought down, and fallen :
 But we are risen, and stand upright.

These various parallelisms admit of many arrangements of the most various and beautiful description. Lines that are parallel to one another are often separated by other lines that are also parallels, and are placed in different situations, so as to increase the poetical power of the expression, and the beauty of

the arrangement of the verse. In fact, there is no limit to the complicated variety of which Hebrew poetry is capable, and of many of the most musical and striking of which we have examples in the Psalms. Psalm lxiii., arranged so as to shew the parallelism of the lines, will offer an example of this ancient kind of poetry :—

O God, Thou art my God : early will I seek Thee.

My soul thirsteth for Thee,

My flesh also longeth after Thee :

In a barren and dry land where no water is.

Thus have I looked for Thee in holiness :

That I might behold Thy power and glory.

For Thy loving-kindness is better than the life itself :

My lips shall praise Thee.

As long as I live will I magnify Thee on this manner :

And lift up my hands in Thy Name.

My soul shall be satisfied,

Even as it were with marrow and fatness :

When my mouth praiseth Thee with joyful lips.

Have I not remembered Thee in my bed :

And thought upon Thee when I was waking ?

Because Thou hast been my Helper :

Therefore under the shadow of Thy wings will I rejoice.

My soul hangeth upon Thee : .

Thy right hand hath upholden me.

These also that seek the hurt of my soul :

They shall go under the earth.

Let them fall upon the edge of the sword :

That they may be a portion for foxes.

But the King shall rejoice in God ;

All they also that swear by Him shall be commended :

For the mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped.

The most wonderful feature in this parallelistic metre is that the poetry written in it can be trans-

lated into any language, without the slightest injury to its poetic structure. We know how much English poetry loses by being translated into a foreign language, and how much all poetry—whether the verse of the ancient Greeks and Romans, or of the metrical writers of modern times—loses by being translated into English. If it be done literally, the poetical form and the beauty of the language is entirely lost, and only the poetical sentiment or flow of thought remains. But this is not at all the case with the poetry of the Bible; for as it consists altogether in the arrangement and order of the thoughts, and does not depend upon the mere words, its poetry is inseparable from itself, and it may be translated into any language without losing any of its peculiar beauty; and the more literally and strictly it is translated, the more perfectly is the original melody and beauty of its arrangement preserved. Thus the Holy Spirit seems to have chosen for His inspirations a true and real poetry, of which all poetry that depends on words and languages is but the imitation and the shadow; and so the Holy Scriptures would appear to be providentially adapted for translation into all tongues and languages, among all nations, without losing anything of their original poetic and metrical beauty.

The Hebrew word which is translated ‘a Psalm’ signifies, literally, a poem ‘cut into lengths, and pruned into due order,’ or in other words, one in which the verse-members are nicely balanced and regularly arranged according to the laws of Paral-

leistic poetry. This is often marked in addition by each line beginning with a letter of the alphabet in order, of which several of the Psalms, including Psalm cxix., afford examples. And when the poem was completed the writer affixed to it a title, expressing either some peculiar characteristic of the poem itself, or else the tune to which it was to be chanted. Thus certain of the Psalms have the titles of 'The lily of the covenant,' 'The hind of the morning,' 'Destroy not;' and in direct imitation of this, we find the Rabbans of the middle ages calling their works 'The Fountain of Life,' 'The Book of Pomegranates,' 'The Garden of Nuts,' or 'The Silver Vase.'

Another feature of the poetry of the Hebrews, especially of the sacred poetry, was its depth of meaning: the inspired poets, and indeed all who wrote poetry, strove to wrap up as many and as full meanings as were possible in the words they used, and therefore the words 'parable,' or 'dark saying,' are often used to express poetic language.

This requires to be borne in mind, in studying the writings of the Psalmists and Prophets of Israel,—that the meaning which seems the plain one, and which first presents itself, was not the only one intended by the poet, but that other deeper meanings are almost always to be sought for, which are wrapped up, as it were, in the first and outer meaning.

§ 4. THE WORD 'SELAH.'

THERE is a word in the Psalms which has given rise to a great deal of conjecture among the Rabbis and the Fathers, as well as modern critics, and which ought not to be altogether passed over; because it is a part of Holy Scripture; and this is the word 'Selah.' It occurs very frequently in the Psalms, and three times in the prayer of Habakkuk, but nowhere else. The Vulgate, Syriac and Arabic translations, as well as that of our Prayer-book, take no notice of it; but the LXX. always render it by the word 'Diapsalma,' meaning 'the division of a Psalm;' and our authorized Bible version inserts it without translating it.

Rabbi Jarchi explains it to mean 'for ever,' and Rabbi Abenezra considers it the same as 'Amen,' and in this sense the modern Jews add it to the inscriptions on their tomb-stones. But these senses are very doubtful. The Hebrew root appears to mean 'to raise up,' and therefore it has been supposed to resemble the word 'Hallelujah,' and to signify 'Exalt ye Jehovah;' but it has also been explained to be 'a flourish of loud trumpets,' alternating with the singers in the temple^s; or to mean a raising the chant an octave higher, or changing it altogether into one in a higher key. Other meanings are those of 'a pause in singing,' and 'a cessation of inspiration.' Whatever the word

^s See 2 Chron. xxix. 26—28.

'Selah' means, it seems used to divide the Psalm in which it occurs into separate poems, and thus to be of use in guiding the reader to the relation of these portions to one another, and so to the true intention and meaning of the Psalm. It is a mark of division.

A PLAIN COMMENTARY

ON

The Book of Psalms.

THE FIRST DIVISION.

PSALMS I.—XLI.

THE Book of Psalms has been from very ancient times looked upon as made up of five Divisions, or smaller books. In this the Jewish Rabbis saw a likeness to the five books which form the Law of Moses. Each of these divisions is clearly marked by a verse, which concludes it, and which ascribes praise and blessing to Jehovah, the God of Israel, in a set form; and also by the word ‘Amen,’ which inspired men seem often to have placed at the ending of their writings: the fifth alone omits the Amen, and concludes with a Hallelujah. The first Division contains forty-one Psalms, and is closed by the words,—

“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel
From everlasting, and to everlasting. Amen, and Amen.”

The Psalms in this division were, it seems likely, collected and disposed in their present order by David himself, with the exception of the first Psalm, which was probably written as an introduction to the whole Book of Psalms, by the prophet who, under

Divine guidance, finally arranged them in their present form in the canon of holy Scripture. This is generally considered to have been done by Ezra, after the Captivity; and therefore the first Psalm, though it has been sometimes given to Josiah, may be with great probability assigned to him.

The other Psalms which make up this portion, except the 2nd, 10th, and 33rd, bear the name of David in their titles, and these also seem to have been written by him. Indeed, all in this first book shew, in a greater or less degree, the marks of the same writer. They are all eminently what is called 'subjective' in their character; that is, they display the workings of an individual soul, and are the outpourings of an individual heart. They do not, as many of the succeeding Psalms do, enlarge upon the mercy and wisdom of the Almighty, in His dealings with Israel, or in His general providence; but they are of a strictly personal nature. Whether they speak of the glory of the reign of the coming King, or implore pardon for past guiltiness, or ask for defence against cruel and wicked foes, or plead with the All-merciful in instant prayer, they each and all are intensely earnest and vividly real. They bear the plain impress of the warm and quick, and yet tender, spirit of him who was 'the man after God's own heart.' The prayer or the prophecy he was indeed moved to utter by the Holy Ghost, but the words in which it was clothed bear still the traces of the heart which framed and the mouth which spake it.

The Psalms of David.

THE FIRST DAY.

Morning Prayer.

PSALM i. *Beatus vir, qui non abiit, &c.*

I. BLESSED is the man that hath not walked in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stood in the way of sinners: and hath not sat in the seat of the scornful.

The first word of the first Psalm is a blessing. The first word which God spake to man in the day in which He created him was a blessing; when Christ the Saviour opened His mouth to teach the multitudes, it was with many blessings; and He Himself has told us that the last words which the redeemed shall hear before entering into His eternal joy shall be 'Come ye blessed:' and this first Psalm, and all other Scripture, is written for us and for our learning, that we may know that 'we are hereunto called, that we should inherit a blessing.' Blessed indeed is he who has never been tempted, even for a little while, to indulge in evil thoughts and to listen to the suggestions of the ungodly; who has not lingered at all in the broad road in which sinners hasten to de-

struction; who has not joined himself to the doctrine of the mocking and unbelieving, and made his resting-place with them. Blessed is he who is kept from sin in will, word, and deed; and who has grace to follow Him Who is the pattern man, and to be one with Him Who in an evil world was 'holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.'

2. But his delight is in the law of the Lord: and in His law will he exercise himself day and night.

But he only can attain to this blessing, and he only can escape from evil, who has set his choice upon that which is holy, and upon Him that is holy; who hath loved his eternal Lord, and therefore keeps His commandments; and that not coldly and carelessly, but in earnestness, and faithfulness, and truth. And on Him, Whose acts and words are the perfect expression of God's law and will, he will always meditate, that he may follow the pattern which He has set, not only in the day of ease and quietness, but in the night of sorrow and of trial too,—not in life only, but even unto death.

3. And he shall be like a tree planted by the water-side: that will bring forth his fruit in due season.

He shall be made like unto a green and fruitful tree in that mystical garden which is the Church of God. The grace of the All-holy shall be with him, even from the time when in the water of holy Bap-

tism he was joined as a branch unto Him Who has called Himself the Eternal Vine, until he stand at the last by that pure river of the water of life that proceedeth from the throne of God and of the Lamb : and by that refreshing grace he will bring forth in this mortal life the fruit of a good conscience and of faith unfeigned, and the fruit of unending glory in that season when the number of God's elect shall be accomplished, and His kingdom shall have come.

4. His leaf also shall not wither : and look, whatsoever he doeth, it shall prosper.

By this grace he shall stand continually ; for he hath drunk of the water of which whoso drinketh shall never thirst. Neither the words of his lips nor the works of his hands shall fail ; his memory shall not be forgotten, nor his name be lost ; and all that he doeth and all that he suffereth shall turn to his salvation, through the overruling influence of God the Holy Ghost. He shall share in his Saviour's power, even as he shares in his Saviour's grace.

5. As for the ungodly, it is not so with them : but they are like the chaff, which the wind scattereth away from the face of the earth.

They that have cut themselves off from Christ, and have forgotten God, can have neither grace, nor holiness, nor joy. They are unstable in all their ways, they are empty and false in all their works. Each blast of vain doctrine carries them away, and

each impulse of temptation hurries them into sin. There is no fruit in them ; they are but chaff, which He, Whose fan is in His hand, will purge away from His floor, and which the storm of the wrath of God shall at the last day sweep from the earth they have trusted in so long, unto the fire which is not quenched.

6. Therefore the ungodly shall not be able to stand in the judgment : neither the sinners in the congregation of the righteous.

Therefore, when the day of trial comes, the ungodly will not be able to stand ; they will have no confidence and no hope, when Christ is set upon His throne ; they will be convinced out of their own mouths, and condemned by their own works. There will be then a separation made between those who have served God, and those who have served Him not ; ‘for judgment,’ it is written, ‘must begin at the house of God ; and if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?’

7. But the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous : and the way of the ungodly shall perish.

Yea, the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous, for He hath walked in it Himself ! He knoweth it, for He is Himself the way ! And He will guide him who walketh in it with His grace and counsel here, and after this life ended receive him into His own

eternal glory. But that other way, the end of which is death, shall perish; and they, many though they be, who have walked therein, shall receive that which they have prepared for themselves, even everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord.

The first Psalm bears no title; its author may have been Ezra. It describes the blessedness of the righteous man, and the instability and punishment of the wicked. The writers of the Church have differed in their opinion of the person spoken of as the righteous man. Some have somewhat fancifully thought that the opening of the Psalm contained a prophecy of Joseph of Arimathea, who had not "consented to the counsel and deed of them" who plotted against the Saviour. Others have considered that the Saviour Himself, Who came into the world to fulfil all righteousness, was the subject of it. But it would seem to be best interpreted of each one of God's elect, who by His grace walks in His faith and fear; and in such an one the promises of the Psalm will find their fulfilment;—for they are not limited, but are for all times. (See Josh. i. 8; Jer. xvii. 7, 8.) Justin Martyr, an early Christian writer, quotes this Psalm and the one which follows it as if they formed but one Psalm; but they differ so strongly in style and subject, that it is almost impossible to suppose that they ever were one continuous composition, though it is probable that in some copies they were so joined.

FOR EASTER-DAY.

PSALM ii. *Quare fremuerunt gentes?*

1. Why do the heathen so furiously rage together: and why do the people imagine a vain thing?

What can be more full of marvels than the passion of the Son of God! He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. He was in very deed a

Light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of His people Israel; and yet the heathen who knew not God, and the chosen people to whom His coming had been foretold, joined together, the one in blind fury, the other with contriving malice, to slay the Prince of Life. They rejected the counsel of God against themselves, and desired a murderer to be granted unto them, instead of Him Who was alone their King. This was their imagination when the beloved Son of the Eternal Father was sent unto them:—‘They reasoned among themselves, saying, This is the heir: come, let us kill Him, that the inheritance may be ours.’

2. The kings of the earth stand up, and the rulers take counsel together: against the Lord and against His Anointed.

That indeed was the hour of the powers of darkness; and the Prince of this world seemed for a season to have his will. But it was then as it always must be when man sets himself against God and Christ; and even upon their seeming triumph the Church could not but confess to God:—‘For of a truth against Thy Holy Child Jesus, Whom Thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel determined before to be done.’

3. Let us break their bonds asunder: and cast away their cords from us.

They said in their malicious and rebellious hearts, even as the hard of heart say now,—‘ We will not have this man to reign over us ;’ ‘ We have no king but Cæsar ;’ and so they broke the bonds of the covenant which God had made of old with their father Abraham, and cast away the cords of love by which the Son of Man had striven to draw them to Himself, and knew not that all the while they closed around themselves the bonds of death, and drew tighter and firmer the cords which bound them in misery and sin.

4. He that dwelleth in heaven shall laugh them to scorn : the Lord shall have them in derision.

What is man that he should strive with God ? Their blind rage and crafty malice did but work out His righteous and almighty plan. He Whose throne is heaven hath made the earth His footstool, and ‘ the things which He before had shewed by the mouth of all His prophets, that Christ should suffer, He hath so fulfilled.’ The Christ is indeed crucified and slain ; they have laid Him in the sepulchre ; and have gone their way, sealing the stone and setting a watch, and making it as sure as they can ; but now the morning of the third day is come, and ‘ He is not here : for He is risen.’

5. Then shall He speak unto them in His wrath : and vex them in His sore displeasure.

The stubborn and the unbelieving must meet with punishment : they treasure up for themselves wrath. God at length must speak unto them in His anger, and with Him to speak is to do, for His words are deeds. They abuse the long-suffering of the Almighty to their own judgment and condemnation, as the Pharisees abused the Saviour's love and grace ; and thus the very Gospel of life becomes to them a savour of death unto death. So always does evil work out its ends,—first shame, and next sorrow.

6. Yet have I set My King : upon My holy hill of Sion.

Thus does the Eternal Father bear witness to the Son ; He hath declared His will from heaven : 'This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased.' He hath appointed Him the Judge of quick and dead ; He hath given to Him all power in earth and heaven ; He hath made Him to be King and Head over the Church, that new Jerusalem, which is the mother of us all : and they who strive against His kingship will but vex their own souls by their rebellion, and fall before the sore displeasure of the Almighty.

7. I will preach the law, whereof the Lord hath said unto Me : Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee.

'The Son spake to the world the things which He had heard of the Father ;' He preached that royal law which is the Gospel,—nay, rather He Himself was

the Gospel. He Who was neither made, nor created, but begotten, the Almighty Word, Who is, hath been, and shall be, co-eternal, co-equal, co-essential with the Father in that unending now which is eternity, being by inheritance higher than the highest angels, yet took upon Himself a nature lower than theirs; and the Son of God became the Son of Man. He died for our sins, and rose again for our justification; conquering sin and death and the grave in the Manhood which He had taken into Himself; and by His rising again on the first Easter-day, He was declared with power to be the only-begotten Son of the Father, the Incarnate Christ, and Lord of all.

8. Desire of Me, and I will give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance: and the utmost parts of the earth for Thy possession.

He hath asked and received, not of man, nor by man, but of God. He is raised on high as a Saviour and a Prince; and more and ever more are they whom He has redeemed, being drawn unto Him from the east and the west, the north and the south; and with greater and ever greater fulness is the number being made up of those whom He hath purchased with His blood out of every kindred, and people, and nation, and language.

9. Thou shalt bruise them with a rod of iron: and break them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

Christ indeed rules the world with the sceptre of His kingdom, but this sceptre is the Cross. In the power of this sceptre would He restrain man's pride, and stubbornness, and subdue his malice and carnal will; with this would He mortify and kill all vices in us, and break our hard and heavy hearts, even as the vessels are broken, that have been marred upon the potter's wheel. But to the unregenerate the Cross is hard, and that which is the very sceptre of Jesus' righteousness, must ever seem to them stern and heavy as an iron rod.

10. Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be learned, ye that are judges of the earth.

And now, since Jesus alone is the King of whose kingdom there shall be no end,—the King, not only of words and actions, but of spirits and of souls,—the King whose judgment is always right, whose power is always mighty,—would that they who have rule over others, and who by their authority and example can influence their fellows, would learn the wisdom of submitting themselves to the one eternal King, and would seek to make His laws their laws, governing themselves by His will, as becometh members of His Church! And would that they who are judges of others, and decide for and upon others, might ever do so as they who must give an account at last before His unerring judgment-seat!

11. Serve the Lord in fear: and rejoice unto Him with reverence.

They who would indeed be free must serve Him whose service is perfect freedom, and serve Him only. They who would put off slavish terror must fear God, and fear Him only, and they need have no other fear. They who would taste of true joy must rejoice in the Lord always, and in Him only; and as they increase in reverent obedience and in reverent fear, so will they in the fulness of reverent joy.

12. Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and so ye perish from the right way: if His wrath be kindled, (yea, but a little,) blessed are all they that put their trust in Him.

LXX. Embrace discipline, lest the Lord be wroth,
And ye perish from the right way.

We kiss another's feet from humility and submission; we kiss his hand in loyalty and respect; we kiss his face in friendship and in love: in each of these ways, in humility, in reverence, in love, let us adore the Son of Man. Let us strive to be like her who loved much because she had much forgiven her; and so fall down and embrace Him, and hold Him fast. If we love Him, His love is sufficient for us. If we embrace Him, we embrace His Cross, His discipline, His law. If we love Him not, He will turn away from us, and with Him all light, all truth, all love, must needs be turned from us too. He who loves Him, and is with Him, is in the right way; and he who is apart from Him, and from His Cross, is lost. When He comes at last to take possession

of His kingdom, it will be His wrath, even the wrath of the Lamb, which shall utterly confound the unholy and the reprobate; and they only who have loved Him, and whom He hath accepted for His own, shall enter into the blessing of His perfect peace.

The second Psalm, though, like the first, it has no title, we know from the New Testament to have been written by David. The first verses are expressly said, in Acts iv. 25, to have been spoken by God, "by the mouth of David." Many have endeavoured to point out a time in David's reign when the expressions of this Psalm might have been applied to him,—when he had conquered the nations and kingdoms round him, and they were unable to throw off his empire. But the Psalm is not only too exalted in its language to be spoken of any earthly sovereign, but we have a divine interpretation given of it, in the inspired hymn of the infant Church, which limits its application to that one anointed King, "against whom Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together." It therefore, beyond all doubt, prophesies the opposition which was to be made to the Son of Man, His passion, His resurrection, His eternal generation and union with the Father, and His Kingship over the whole world. It is therefore selected by the Church for Easter-day, because, by raising up His Son from the dead, the Father glorified Him, (Heb. v. 5,) and declared Him to be His Son with power. (Rom. i. 4.) On that day Christ conquered death and hell, the two great enemies of man, and began His reign over and within His Church. This Psalm was always considered by the older Jewish Rabbis to be a prophecy of the Messiah, and from it He derived, even before His manifestation, the titles of "the Son of God" and "the King of Israel." (St. John i. 49.)

PSALM iii. *Domine, quid multiplicati?*

1. LORD, how are they increased that trouble me: many are they that rise against me.

It was the prophecy of the Lord to the Church,—‘In the world ye shall have tribulation;’ and again and again it is accomplished. And to each individual soul within the Church, the same words are being fulfilled. The Head of the Church suffered, though He sinned not; and much more must each member that sins, suffer too. He endured the contradiction of sinners against Himself; and how is the Church better than He, that she should escape it? He saw the blasphemy of the multitude around His Cross; and she, as she looks abroad, sees ever the truth failing, and earnestness dying out, and love growing cold, while the enemies of the Gospel and the opposers of the faith, and the troublers of peace, are increasing and rising up on every side.

2. Many one there be that say of my soul: There is no help for him in his God.

All these things are against those who, within the Church, are longing to repent and to do the first works. The unbelieving and scornful without seem to join with their own weaknesses and lusts and fears within, to confirm their hopelessness, and to discourage their sorrow and their prayers. There is a suggestion of the foe of souls which the sin-struck and despairing conscience is too often ready

to echo and confirm,—‘There is no help for thee even in God, for against Him thou hast sinned.’ This is a heavy cross, and hard to bear; yet they who have sinned must bear it.

3. But Thou, O Lord, art my defender: Thou art my worship, and the lifter up of my head.

The great trial that is sent to them that would repent, is the thought, ‘there is no help;’ this they have to struggle with, to break down and to destroy. It is the prison-bar which keeps the soul from God. Our God is our Father Which is in heaven, and with Him, Who loves us, for that He Himself is Love, we have an eternal Advocate, Jesus Christ the Righteous. He will be, yea, He is, ready to receive and most willing to pardon us. In His mercy is forgiveness for the past and grace for the future. He can dispel our doubtings; He can rule our spirits; He can change our vileness into penitence, and our fearfulness into hope; He can raise us from the depth of despair into the fulness of the comfort of His presence.

4. I did call upon the Lord with my voice: and He heard me out of His holy hill.

He can: this we do not doubt. Why then should we doubt that He will? If we ask, will He not give? If we call—yea, before we call—will He not answer? Let us, like the sorrowing father, cry out with tears, ‘Lord, I believe: help Thou mine unbelief! Lord, I repent: help Thou mine unrepentance!’ and He

Who is ever with His elect, and Who abideth in the midst of His Church, will hear in His mercy, and answer in His love, and restore in His Sacraments and means of grace.

5. I laid me down and slept, and rose up again : for the Lord sustained me.

And so with quiet faith in Him Who died and rose again, he who was once a sinner but now is pardoned, may resign himself unto the sleep of death, as calmly and as hopefully as he would lie down to sleep at night. There need be no more fearfulness around our grave, than there need be around our bed. He will call us to our rest when He would have us come ; and, if we sleep in Him, we shall in truth ‘do well.’ And again, in His own good time, He will call us to rise again. In life, and in death, and in resurrection, His promise is sufficient for His own,—‘I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.’

6. I will not be afraid for ten thousands of the people : that have set themselves against me round about.

If, then, this be so ; if neither the consciousness of sin, nor despondency, nor death, can separate us from the love of Christ ; if His mercy can overcome them and beat them down, why need we take thought for men ? Be they ever so many, or ever so strong, or ever so violent, yet over them, and over their tempting or threatening words, and over their ill example, we shall be more than conquerors, through Him that loved us.

7. Up, Lord, and help me, O my God : for Thou smitest all mine enemies upon the cheek bone ; Thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly.

LXX. Thou hast smitten all those who hate me without a cause.

The repenting sinner has found his own strength, which is not his own. 'Help me, O my God,' is that with which he can conquer everything that can assail him. It was falsely said, 'There is no help for him in his God;' he proves its falseness by his appealing cry, 'Help me, O my God.' With that his enemies are put to confusion, and covered with shame ; and their cutting words and reviling taunts are silenced, and wrung from their mouths for ever.

8. Salvation belongeth unto the Lord : and Thy blessing is upon Thy people.

If despair can thus be changed for hope, if the terrors of conscience can be swallowed up in faith and love, and he who was helpless and weak can be made strong to resist and to overcome all that is against his soul, it can only be through One Who is mightier than he. It is not from himself that his deliverance comes, it is not to himself that salvation belongs, but only to Him Who is 'mighty to save.' To God only, and to the Lamb, can salvation be ascribed ; and from Them only shall blessings descend upon Their elect,—the blessing of perfect peace upon them who are obedient and upright, and the bless-

ing of perfect pardon upon them who repent them of their sins.

The title of this psalm declares it to have been written by David "when he fled from Absalom his son." He was then in great danger of losing not only his kingdom, but his life. All Israel had turned after Absalom, and the subtle Ahithophel had advised that they should pursue after David "while he was weary and weak-handed;" and that thus his followers, who were few, would be put to flight, and he would be easily killed. (2 Sam. xvii. 1, 2.) David, therefore, in this the first night of his escape, was in most imminent peril from his rebellious son and his treacherous counsellor, and could have no ground of trust except in the mercy and providence of God. The reproaches of Shimei, which he had felt on his way, must have found an echo in his own conscience; but yet through penitence and faith he was enabled to repose on Him, and thus to wait patiently either for deliverance or for death. The trustfulness and patience of David in this Psalm seems plainly typical of His meekness and endurance Who suffered treachery and violence, and lay down in death, that He might gain salvation for His people, not for Himself.

PSALM IV. *Cum invocarem.*

1. HEAR me when I call, O God of my righteousness: Thou hast set me at liberty when I was in trouble; have mercy upon me, and hearken unto my prayer.

The unjust judge at length heard the widow, when by her continual entreaty she had wearied him; and shall not the God of all righteousness hear the Church of His elect, when she calleth unto Him? In persecutions, in heresies, in lukewarmness, in bondage, He hath delivered her again and again; and the orderings of His providence in the

past are an earnest of His mercy for the time to come. And in that firm belief her children are taught to pray that 'they, being hurt by no persecutions, may evermore give thanks unto Him in His holy Church.'

2. O ye sons of men, how long will ye blaspheme mine honour : and have such pleasure in vanity, and seek after leasing.

The Church has the office of a prophet to discharge as well as that of a priest. She has in the power of the Holy Ghost to fulfil those same duties which her Lord undertook in His sojourn upon earth,—to warn, to rebuke, and to exhort the sons of men, as well as to supplicate for her own, and to intercede for the unheeding world. The commission which she has received is not soon accomplished,—to go into all the earth and preach the Gospel to every creature,—to charge men no longer by their words and lives to blaspheme and dishonour Him Who is her Spouse and Lord,—to bid them to turn from vanities, to serve the living God,—to teach them, by both word and example, that the falsehoods of the world and the pleasures of sin, after which so many seek, are but for a moment.

3. Know this also, that the Lord hath chosen to Himself the man that is godly : when I call upon the Lord, He will hear me.

This, too, she has to teach as a certain and un-failing fact,—that they who do what is right are

chosen by God for His own, and the upright are His delight. To them that have His grace He gives more; they who grow in His knowledge and His fear are preserved from evil, and sanctified in His truth. They become His children by adoption and grace, 'heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ.' Of such is His Church, which is one and holy, made up; and when they pray, He hearkens: for if the effectual fervent prayer of one righteous man availeth much, how much more the prayer of the whole body of the redeemed with Christ their Head!

4. Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart, and in your chamber, and be still.

LXX. Be ye angry and sin not. [So also Eph. iv. 26.]

Awe is the only feeling which becomes the sons of men, when they reflect upon their privileges and the account which they must give of their use or neglect of them. Passion, clamour, anger, disputings, should cease among them, for all these bring sin in their train. Their one duty, as far as in them lies, is not to sin; to get, if they possibly can, sin away from them, and out of them altogether; to be holy, as Christ is holy. And for this, they need often and strict self-examination: 'Let a man examine himself.' They must commune with their own heart and conscience in quietness and solitude; passing in review each night the actions, words, and thoughts of the day; and, wherever they see themselves to have offended, confessing their fault, and asking pardon of

the All-merciful. This quiet communing with the conscience will become the stepping-stone to innocence and calmness here, and to immortal peace hereafter.

5. Offer the sacrifice of righteousness : and put your trust in the Lord.

Not only has the Church to preach against sin, and to exhort men to holiness, and to self-examination and confession, she has also to lead them continually to that one great Sacrifice which was once offered for the sins of all, by faith in which alone we can be saved. In the power of that sacrifice they are to offer up themselves, their whole being, unto God. They are to crucify their lusts, and so do sacrifice ; they are to cease from wrath, and so do sacrifice ; they are to keep themselves from covetousness, and so do sacrifice ; and to this end they must put trust in that last command of their dying Lord, 'This do in remembrance of Me,' when in that Sacrament which He ordained, He Himself is evidently set forth crucified among us, and His Body is spiritually broken, and His Blood is spiritually poured forth.

6. There be many that say : Who will shew us any good ?

This is ever the yearning cry of man's heart. It is not satisfied with this world's good, and it cannot be. In youth and in age, in wisdom and in ignorance, in riches and in poverty, the want for something

happier, truer, better than we have, is ever haunting us. To this cry it is the Church's part to answer. She has the treasure, which had long been hidden, with which man's longings can alone be satisfied; it is hers to give, but not hers to withhold. She is bidden to go into all the world, and to preach the Gospel to every creature, to carry to all that message which alone is an answer to their cry,—'Who will shew us any good?'

7. Lord, lift Thou up : the light of Thy countenance upon us.

And what is this message? It is the love of God. This is the good which we long for so blindly, not knowing what we crave. This is the good which alone can satisfy, and which, if we want, we want all. 'God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself,'—this is the Gospel which is committed to the Church to preach, the good news she is to shew to all: and they who receive it are no longer left in sorrow and in darkness; they see the light of the countenance of God in the face of Jesus Christ, and seeing Him in the fulness of His love, they receive that perfect blessing which perfectly 'sufficeth us.'

8. Thou hast put gladness in my heart : since the time that their corn, and wine, and oil, increased.

Heb. Thou hast given gladness to my heart,

More than in the time that their corn and wine increased.

[See Deut. xvi. 13.]

As a kind-hearted man takes pleasure in the well-doing of his neighbours as in his own, so does the Church rejoice when she sees the grace given to the sons of men. There is joy among the angels of heaven, and there is joy among the saints on earth, when those who once had pleasure in vanity are enlightened with the light of God. Yes, what can put greater gladness into the Christian's heart, than to see more frequent communions in the Church,—to see that heavenly Bread and spiritual Cup offered more frequently to the soul, and many, in a still increasing number, desiring to join with himself in feasting thereon! What can be a cause of greater joy than to see the ordinances of grace being multiplied, and the anointing of the Holy Ghost being shed abundantly on those whom God in holy Baptism hath called, and whom He will confirm and sanctify in His Church! No Feast of Tabernacles kept of old, can thus compare in holy gladness with the Christian's Eucharistic feast.

9. I will lay me down in peace, and take my rest : for it is Thou, Lord, only, that maketh me dwell in safety.

Strengthened with this grace, and refreshed with this Sacrament, the Church reposes in confidence upon the faithfulness of God. Her prayer is heard and granted; and each of her true members being by it incorporated into the mystical body of the Son of God, from thenceforth, whether he lives or dies, is Christ's, and His alone. She can therefore commit

them to the earth with thanks to Him Who hath taken them from the miseries of this sinful world into His own unending rest; for she knows that they are of the true Israel, and that in them, whether in life or in death, the saying shall be fulfilled, —‘ The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by Him.’

This Psalm might have been written at a later period of the rebellion, when the purpose of God to restore David to his throne was beginning to be manifested, and the prophet felt himself called upon to testify to His goodness and faithfulness. It is full of both warnings and exhortations. It is inscribed to “the chief Musician on Neginoth.” This was the name of some instrument with strings, resembling a kind of harp or psaltery, such as those which we see represented on ancient Eastern sculptures.

PSALM V. *Verba mea auribus.*

1. PONDER my words, O Lord : consider my meditation.

2. O hearken Thou unto the voice of my calling, my King, and my God : for unto Thee will I make my prayer.

In every state of our souls we must come to God ; to Him must we make known all the longings of our hearts, praying that He will grant those things only that are expedient for us. He, Who is the King of spirits, and the All-seeing God, marks the unspoken utterings of the heart, the groanings of the soul within itself, and hearkens to those silent petitions no less than to the open prayer of him who calls upon Him.

3. My voice shalt Thou hear betimes, O Lord : early in the morning will I direct my prayer unto Thee, and will look up.

The morning is the time of sacrifice ; the morning is the time of prayer. He who would find God must seek Him early. In the bright light of grace, in the clear shining of the Sun of Righteousness, only can we set in order the sacrifice of a pure and true-hearted prayer, and look up for an answer to the mercy-seat of that heaven from which nothing false and untrue can come.

4. For Thou art the God that hast no pleasure in wickedness : neither shall any evil dwell with Thee.

On earth there is much to tempt and to lead astray. Evil, and enticements to evil, are ever in the way of those who make their home in this world. They are drawn to take pleasure in what is wicked. But with God is perfect holiness ; and he who would come near to Him, and be received as a dweller in the habitation of His glory and His joy, must put off from him all that is evil.

5. Such as be foolish shall not stand in Thy sight : for Thou hatest all them that work vanity.

6. Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing : the Lord will abhor both the blood-thirsty and deceitful man.

Much as they may strive to withdraw from His presence now, the hour is coming that the careless and profane must be confounded at God's presence, when they meet Him in judgment. They will be unable to stand before Him, because of their evil consciences; and He will not bear them before Him, because of His own holiness. He, Whose eye is ever upon the truth, by one single glance will utterly condemn and quell all who have taken pleasure in falsehood and in misleading others; who have indulged their own selfishness, and their love of tyranny and oppression. They will receive the reward of their works. The vengeance which they have wrought for will overtake them, even the abhorrence of the All-merciful God.

7. But as for me, I will come into Thine house, even upon the multitude of Thy mercy: and in Thy fear will I worship toward Thy holy temple.

But he who loves truth and mercy will find them even here on earth. If he comes where the congregation of God's saints assembles, 'not trusting in his own righteousness, but in the manifold and great mercies' of his Lord, he will meet with Him Who is ever present where His Church is gathered in His Name. And to Him, as revealed within His Church, will his heart and prayer be always turned; even as Daniel in the far-off land turned his face, when he prayed, toward the holy temple of his God.

8. Lead me, O Lord, in Thy righteousness, because of mine enemies : make Thy way plain before my face.

‘Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, that leadeth unto life,’ and many are the enemies that would turn us from it. Our earnest prayer should be, that He Who is Himself the way would ever lead us safely in it, and shew us of Himself; for as He reveals Himself to those who follow Him more and more, the easier and the plainer does their path of duty and of obedience become.

9. For there is no faithfulness in his mouth : their inward parts are very wickedness.

10. Their throat is an open sepulchre : they flatter with their tongue.

By a sad but yet unalterable necessity, ‘evil men and seducers will wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.’ The words of an unfaithful mouth come from the inner treasury of a wicked soul. Surely, all that we mortal men can do for each other here, is to speak what is true to each other; and they who will despise this duty to their neighbour, and choose rather to deceive, to pervert truth and to be false, are like an open grave which infects the air around with death.

11. Destroy Thou them, O God; let them perish through their own imaginations : cast them out in the multitude of their ungodliness; for they have rebelled against Thee.

The eternal purpose of Almighty God concerning us is, our election to holiness and blamelessness; and every thing in us, or in others, that contradicts His purpose is an act of rebellion against His predestinating will. Every thought that is evil, every word that is false, every deed that is vile, opposes God's decree, and therefore it is called, and is, 'ungodliness.' The effect of His everlasting law is, that what is right and true shall be; and that what is unright and untrue shall not be, shall perish and be destroyed. And they that think such thoughts and do such deeds, and speak such words, will and must, by the law of the universe, perish with them. The liar must share the fate of his lie, and the ungodly man that of his ungodliness.

12. And let all them that put their trust in Thee rejoice : they shall ever be giving of thanks, because Thou defendest them ; they that love Thy Name shall be joyful in Thee ;

13. For Thou, Lord, wilt give Thy blessing unto the righteous : and with Thy favourable kindness wilt Thou defend him as with a shield.

And by this same law and order of the universe, they who believe in a righteous King and a holy God, and make His will their rule of life, ever draw nearer to Him, as they become more like that for which He made them. The thought that they are willing to do what He would have them do, fills them

with comfort unspeakable. His blessings call forth their love, and their love to Him again wins blessings in return. They are strong in His grace; they are protected by His power as by an unseen shield. No one man or thing, in time or eternity, can 'harm them that are followers of that which is right,' who are striving to be that which God has pre-ordained that they should be.

It is not easy to fix upon the part of David's life to which this Psalm should be assigned. It is not written against his own personal enemies, but is rather a solemn warning to those who are enemies of holiness, and truthfulness, and God. It appears to be a morning hymn, as the two preceding Psalms were perhaps used as evening hymns. It is inscribed "to the chief Musician upon Nehiloth." This may mean that it was to be sung to flutes, or to such an arrangement of wind instruments as might form a rude kind of organ. Another explanation of the word is, that it was to be sung antiphonally,—one choir chanting the portions of the Psalm relating to the righteous, and another taking up, or "inheriting" those relating to the wicked. The structure of the Psalm rather confirms this view. The LXX. translate it, "for her who obtaineth the inheritance;" which is explained by the Fathers to mean the Church of Christ.

Evening Prayer.

FOR ASH-WEDNESDAY, BEING THE FIRST PENITENTIAL PSALM.

PSALM vi. *Domine, ne in furore.*

1. O LORD, rebuke me not in Thine indignation : neither chasten me in Thy displeasure.

If there is one thought which brings greater fearfulness to the soul of him who has sinned, than any other, it is this,—that he has sinned, not only

against an Almighty God, but also against an all-loving Father. He has drawn down upon himself, not only the rebuke of Him Who is just, but the indignation of Him Who is long-suffering and very merciful. It is the immensity of the love of God which makes His displeasure so dreadful.

2. Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am weak : O Lord, heal me, for my bones are vexed.

This must ever be the cry of man, blind and weak, and full of sin and sorrow,—Lord, have mercy upon me : it is the unceasing litany which the Church would have ever on the sinner's lips ; the one strong cry which tells of the inner craving of the soul for that which, if it fails of gaining, it will be lost indeed. The child cries for food, the wounded man for help, the sinner cries for mercy. He has no plea to urge but his own utter need ; he can ask for mercy only because he is weak ; his only plea for health and salvation is, that in himself there is no strength, no fortitude, no self-reliance.

3. My soul also is sore troubled : but, Lord, how long wilt Thou punish me ?

Heb. My soul also is greatly terrified :

But Thou, O Lord, how long ?

There is no real pleasure in sin ; its enjoyment is but for a moment : sorrow and trouble are joined close with it, and death is not far away. By the very law and righteous order of the universe, there must be indignation and wrath, tribulation and an-

guish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil. There is the expectation of punishment, the doubt of mercy, the delay of pardon, bound up in the very nature of sin. There is in it, and must be ever, loneliness and despair, and that sickening sense of waiting for what may be long delayed, which is a foretaste of the unending waiting of eternity.

4. Turn Thee, O Lord, and deliver my soul :
O save me for Thy mercy's sake.

He only, against Whom we have sinned, can save us. In the Father Whom we have disobeyed and left, Whose words we have forgotten and despised, and Whose anger we most justly fear,—in Him only, and in the endurance of His love, have we any hope. In the very depth of the sinner's anguish and dismay there is an instinctive recollection that He ceases not to be a Father, though we have cast ourselves off from being His sons ; there is a hope which rises in his soul, that for His own sake, though not for ours, He may help those who cry to Him for mercy and for grace,—may save them from their sins,—may deliver them from their selfishness and from themselves, and by so delivering them, make them His.

5. For in death no man remembereth Thee :
and who will give Thee thanks in the pit ?

It is this remembrance alone which is the one spark of life within the sinner's soul, as he lies wounded and half-dead by the wayside of the world. The trembling hope that God is still a Father, can

only save him from despair and death. For this is life eternal,—to know Him the true God, and Jesus Christ Whom He hath sent. And this is death eternal,—to be cut off from the knowledge, and the thought, and the remembrance of Him and of His long-redeeming love. And as the tongue of him who is laid within the grave is motionless and dumb, and cannot speak God's praise, so the hardened sinner, who denies God to be his Father, and will not ask for His mercy, and dares not trust in the death and sacrifice of His Son, is cut off from grace, and gains for himself a portion in that outer darkness, where comfort is not, and love is not, and Christ is not.

6. I am weary of my groaning ; every night wash I my bed : and water my couch with my tears.

X Repentance is not easy, as some think ; it is a hard and bitter task. As deeply as we have sinned, so deeply must we repent ; for a grievous wound, a long course of cure is needed. It is not the struggle of one hour, or one day, that will undo the evil work of sin ; but day by day, and night by night, must we, as it were, baptize ourselves anew with tears of sorrow ; gazing upon the wounded hands which were nailed for us, and the bleeding feet which our sins pierced through, until we are cut to the very heart with the anguish of holy love. He spared not His blood for us ; should we spare our tears for Him ? She who was forgiven much, wept much, because she loved much. X

7. My beauty is gone for very trouble : and worn away because of all mine enemies.

By our sins we have destroyed our innocence ; we have become vile and loathsome, not only in God's sight, but even in our own. In the trouble that sins must ever bring with them, our beauty goes with our holiness ; and nothing is left but that we should abhor ourselves. Our lusts, and evil imaginings, and hateful thoughts, stain and pollute our baptismal garment, and wear it away with their defilements, until what once was our righteousness becomes as filthy rags.

8. Away from me, all ye that work vanity : for the Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping.

Sorrow is not the whole of repentance ; it is not enough to weep for our sins, and to confess what we have done amiss : this is but the beginning. Repentance must have her perfect work in forsaking evil and doing well. We must give up sin, and forsake the company of sinners, if we would indeed arise and return to our Father and our God. He who would be a member of Christ must renounce, not once only, but always, the devil and his works, the vanity of the world, and his own carnal lusts. Then, when he has so done, will he know that God his Father has heard his prayer, that He was watching his groans, was counting his tears, that He might forgive his sins ; then will he know that when he was nearest to death, he was indeed nearest to life ;

that it is only through agony and bitter grief that the soul can arise from the death which sin has wrought.

9. The Lord hath heard my petition : the Lord will receive my prayer.

Blessed is he whose sin is forgiven! his sorrow is tenfold repaid by the liberty which his soul has gained. Blessed are they that mourn with a true repentance; for they shall be comforted with a full and perfect pardon! They may ask but to be as servants, but they will be received as sons. They long but to say, 'Father, I have sinned,' and preventing love meets them and receives them to their Father's house again. There is no more fear, and no more doubt. He Who has heard the cry for mercy in the past, will grant the prayer for grace in the time to come. His promise fails not,—'Ask, and ye shall have.'

10. All mine enemies shall be confounded, and sore vexed : they shall be turned back, and put to shame suddenly.

As there is joy among the angels of heaven over every sinner that repenteth, so there is confusion and vexation among the powers of darkness. Each time that the love of Christ is magnified, and the power of His Cross displayed, does Satan fall like lightning from heaven. With every cry of the repenting soul, 'Lord, have mercy upon me!' is the accuser of mankind rebuked, and silenced, and put to shame.

This Psalm is said to be “on Neginoth, or the harps, upon Sheminith.” This second word, which occurs again in the title to Psalm xii., has been variously explained. Some have thought it to be a tune in which the octave of the first note was predominant; others, with more appearance of correctness, to mean harps with eight strings. The LXX. translate Sheminith “upon the eighth,” *day* being perhaps understood; and St. Augustine supposes it to refer either to the day of our Lord’s resurrection, or to the last day, which shall begin when the seven periods of the world are over. The Psalm itself was most probably written by David after his great sin in the matter of Uriah. It breathes the very spirit of his confession before Nathan,—“I have sinned against the Lord;” while the concluding verses express his faith in the promise that “God had put away his sin from him.” (2 Sam. xii. 13.) Some have considered it to be a prayer in sickness; but it certainly speaks rather of a disease of the soul than of the body. It is the first of those which are called the Seven Penitential Psalms, and is, with the other six, appointed by the Church for the services of Ash-Wednesday.

PSALM vii. *Domine, Deus meus.*

1. O LORD my God, in Thee have I put my trust : save me from all them that persecute me, and deliver me.

There are times in almost every Christian’s life, when the dealings of God with him are hard to understand, and the course of His providence seems dark and hidden. Evil seems to be better off than good; and bad men seem to gain their own ends; while they who are struggling to do right are despised and hindered, and sometimes made to suffer undeservedly. It was so with David when Saul sought his life so unrelentingly. It has been so with Christ’s Church in different ages; and again and again it comes to pass, that ‘they who would

live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution.' This is a sore trial both to patience and to faith. The only safety for the soul when under it, is steadfast, unyielding trust in the Almighty righteousness of God. The conviction that He orders all, and that what He orders is ever just and true, is our only sure deliverance.

2. Lest He devour my soul, like a lion, and tear it in pieces : while there is none to help.

Without this trust, the soul under trial is but as a wandering sheep before the lion's mouth. It must despair in every danger. The great adversary of souls, who is ever, like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour, will find it an easy prey. He who has distrusted the eternal righteousness of God is helpless and lost indeed; there is no man or thing that can help him.

3. O Lord my God, if I have done any such thing : or if there be any wickedness in my hands ;

Even as David, when some grievous charge had been laid against him before Saul by his enemy, was anxious to declare his innocence, and to clear himself from the false accusation,—to ask, 'What have I done, or what is in mine hand?' so the soul that suffers without seeing the reason for which it is afflicted, is compelled, as it were, to plead its cause with its Maker, and to search into the hidden reason of His dealings.

4. If I have rewarded evil unto him that dealt friendly with me : yea, I have delivered him that without any cause is mine enemy ;

LXX. If I have returned evil to those that returned me evil,
May I fall away empty from mine enemies!

If David had indeed dealt treacherously with Saul, and done him wrong, then he could have understood why he suffered and was punished. But so far from that, Saul had become his enemy without any cause : He had twice spared his life when he was altogether in his power ; and yet he continued to return him hatred for his friendly dealings. So oftentimes all the Christian's strivings after meekness, and charity, and patience, seem useless and of no avail ; his prayers seem wasted, his efforts to do rightly seem lost, and he is tempted mournfully to wonder at the mystery of the ways of God.

5. Then let mine enemy persecute my soul, and take me : yea, let him tread my life down upon the earth, and lay mine honour in the dust.

It is only in the deepest humility and fear that the Christian can thus appeal to God, and cast himself in his despondency upon His faithfulness and upon His promises. He must not assert his own guiltlessness or integrity in haste or pride, but come to God in faith and meekness. He may, as far as the dispensation by which he is tried goes, know nothing against himself yet is he not thereby justified. It is God alone Who can decide ; but if

his heart condemn him not, then has he confidence towards God.

6. Stand up, O Lord, in Thy wrath, and lift up Thyself, because of the indignation of mine enemies : arise up for me in the judgment that Thou hast commanded.

It is not by his own frail judgment that the Christian must be judged; still less by the malice, or passion, or contempt, of those who despise and persecute him. It is God alone, the Lord of spirits, Who will finally decide between those who strive to do right, and those who are eager in doing wrong. The wicked may account His patience, slackness; but His righteous judgment is not the less sure, because it tarries. He has commanded men to execute justice upon the earth, and if they despise His command, He will at length arise and execute it Himself.

7. And so shall the congregation of the people come about Thee : for their sakes therefore lift up Thyself again.

The Christian desires to see the righteousness of God's government vindicated, not for his own sake merely, but for that of others also. The Church at large takes comfort and rejoices when wrong is punished, and right prevails. Her faith is strengthened and the number of her children increased, when it is seen that God is with those who live holily; and that they who unjustly persecute the good are condemned by Him.

8. The Lord shall judge the people; give sentence with me, O Lord : according to my righteousness, and according to the innocency that is in me.

There has been but One Who could in their fullness utter these words before God,—‘ He, Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; Who, when He suffered, threatened not, but committed Himself unto Him that judgeth righteously.’ But in Him, and with Him, His members can speak them too. ‘The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin;’ and they who are forgiven can appeal unto Almighty justice, and plead before its bar, that their iniquities are forgiven, and their sins are pardoned.

9. O let the wickedness of the ungodly come to an end : but guide Thou the just.

10. For the righteous God : trieth the very hearts and reins.

This must be the ground of the believer’s patience in affliction, and this the burden of his prayers,—that a time is coming when sin will be altogether at an end; when all shall be holy, and true, and pure; when God’s kingdom shall be set up in righteousness, and His will shall be done on earth, as it is in heaven. In the meanwhile He is proving and trying His people, and leading them on to fitness for His kingdom; judging them, not as man judges, by their outward conduct, but watching with an all-seeing eye every thought of their hearts, and every emotion and impulse of their souls.

11. My help cometh of God : Who preserveth them that are true of heart.

If we after our finite measure will be faithful, He will be faithful according to His own infinity. He Who is the Truth will ever help them that are true, His grace and comfort will never be wanting to those whose hearts are ruled according to His will.

12. God is a righteous Judge, strong, and patient : and God is provoked every day.

13. If a man will not turn, He will whet His sword : He hath bent His bow, and made it ready.

14. He hath prepared for him the instruments of death : He ordaineth His arrows against the persecutors.

Heb. And He fitteth to it the weapons of death ;
He maketh His arrows into flaming ones.

Righteousness, strength, patience,—these are the attributes of our Eternal Judge. Patient He indeed is seen to be ; for each day that passes brings forth new breakings of His law, despisings of His holiness, provokings of His justice. He is strong ; for who can doubt that He can punish if He will ? Though His long-suffering is set at nought, though He has long waited for sinners to repent, and they will not, He ceases not to set before them the ‘quick and powerful’ keenness of His word, ‘which is sharper than any two-edged sword,’ and the fearfulness of that coming judgment which will pierce them through

with eternal sorrows. He is righteous ; for He will ever render unto sin that which it has deserved. They who have wilfully and boldly refused life shall die. They who in their life here have inflamed themselves with lusts, and burnt with malice and with hatred, shall be filled hereafter with the ever-burning anguish of unbearable despair.

15. Behold, he travaileth with mischief : he hath conceived sorrow, and brought forth ungodliness.

For they who have long meditated on and brooded over wrong to others, find at last that it was a wrong to themselves too. No evil thing dies childless. 'When lust is conceived, it bringeth forth sin ; and sin when it is finished bringeth forth death.' Most woeful and terrible genealogy !

16. He hath graven and digged up a pit : and is fallen himself into the destruction that he made for other.

17. For his travail shall come upon his own head : and his wickedness shall fall on his own pate.

Malice and wrong-doing is ever digging its own grave. He that thought to betray the Saviour betrayed his own soul. They that nailed Him to the cross were, to their power, working out their own perdition. They went — and they who do in our day such-like deeds, will follow them—to their own place, to that abode in the abyss of misery which

they had prepared, had laboured with aforethought to make ready for themselves. Yes, every despicable sin done in the face of God is but like an arrow shot against the face of heaven; it will swiftly return upon the shooter's head, and strike him through.

18. I will give thanks unto the Lord, according to His righteousness: and I will praise the Name of the Lord most High.

Thinking thus on the eternal justice of our Almighty Lord, our smaller fears and poorer troubles are swallowed up in the immensity of His righteousness. All that we need be careful for is, to thank Him for His patient love, and to strive to glorify His name with our thoughts, and lips, and lives.

The title of this Psalm is "Shiggaion of David, which he sang concerning the words of Cush the Benjamite," or, as the LXX. give it, "of Cushi the son of Jemini." Shiggaion has the meaning of "wandering." It has been translated "the ignorance," or "the errors," of David; but it should rather be "a Psalm of a wandering or irregular metre." We have no notice in Scripture of Cush the Benjamite; but he was probably one of those who calumniated David before Saul, and incited him to persecute him. Of such David complains to Saul,—“Wherefore hearest thou men's words, saying, Behold, David seeketh thy hurt?” (1 Sam. xxiv. 9). The name Cush signifies an Ethiopian, and this calumniator was probably so called from the malignity of his disposition. Others suppose that Saul himself was the person spoken of, with an allusion to the name of Kish, his father. And again, with much less probability, Hushai the Archite, or Shimei, have been said to be called Cush, and the writing of the Psalm has been ascribed to the time of the rebellion of Absalom. It was certainly written when David was suffering great distress and danger, and that too undeservedly, and without any fault of his own; and therefore, most probably during his persecution by Saul.

PSALM viii. *Domine, Dominus noster.*

1. O LORD our Governour, how excellent is Thy Name in all the world : Thou that hast set Thy glory above the heavens !

How surpassing great is the glory of that Almighty Lord Who has made heaven and earth, and rules over and governs the things which He has made. His Name, as the Creator of the universe, is unceasingly magnified by all His works, which He has disposed in their order, according to His own all-wise will. 'O let the heavens and the earth bless the Lord : praise Him and magnify Him for ever.' But it is not only in the material creation that His wonders are displayed ; the marvels of His grace in redemption are mightier than the marvels of His wisdom in creation. Here we see only a portion of His glory ; its perfection is above our sight. The excellence of His love is greater than the excellence of His providence and His power. His glory which is manifested in Christ, Who hath ascended into heaven, is loftier than the firmament, and shines more brightly than the stars.

2. Out of the mouth of very babes and sucklings hast Thou ordained strength, because of Thine enemies : that Thou mightest still the enemy, and the avenger.

LXX. Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings

Thou hast perfected praise. [Also St. Matth. xxi. 16.]

And this is one of the marvels of His glory, that He has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the wise. When the Son of God was first manifested to the world, the holy Innocents of Bethlehem bore witness to Him by their deaths, although they knew Him not; while Herod, who might have known Him, sought His life. And again, when the Son of man came in His triumph of humility to His own city of Jerusalem, the little children cried around Him, 'Hosanna to the Son of David,' while the Pharisees and rulers were silent, in enmity and rage. They confessed Him with their lips, though they could but understand in part the words they said; and He was pleased to accept their witness, and by it to confound those His enemies, who, thinking themselves wise, had become both fools and sinners. Thus, in the defenceless weakness of the Innocents of Bethlehem, was God's strength established, and by the unconscious tongues of the children in the temple was God's praise perfected; and thus are Christians taught that by simplicity, and innocence, and meekness, can only the enemy of souls be quelled.

3. For I will consider Thy heavens, even the works of Thy fingers : the moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained.

With the same feelings with which David of old, keeping his father's sheep by night upon the plains of Bethlehem, looked upon the firmament of stars above his head, aye, and with still deeper

feelings of awe and wonder, may we look upon the heavens now. Their beauty, their immensity, their unerring regularity, make us feel and know that there is but one hand which could have planned their order, but one finger which could have pointed to them the paths in which they should go. And yet this visible universe is but a small part of His created works; there lies within it and beyond it another universe,—invisible, spiritual, eternal. And this inner and spiritual universe is so set over against the outer world, that the visible heavens are to the mind of faith but a suggestion of the angels and archangels who surround the throne of God; the moon walking through the night in brightness is but a reflection of the Church of Christ in this world; and the stars which are scattered in the skies, like dust beneath the feet of God, are but shadows of those degrees of immortal shining in which the saints and the elect shall be arrayed before the throne of Christ.

4. What is man, that 'Thou art mindful of him : and the son of man, that 'Thou visitest him ?

Compared with the starry immensity of heaven, how insignificant we seem; compared with its cycles of ages, how minute is our term of years! What is man, whose strength is weakness, and whose end is death, that amid the complication of unnumbered worlds, God should think of him? What is the fallen child of Adam, sunk in selfishness and bound in sin, that He should leave the angels and the powers

above, and come down to dwell with him,—yea more, to suffer and to die with him?

5. Thou madest him lower than the angels : to crown him with glory and worship.

Heb. Thou hast made him less for a little while than the Elohim,
i. e. the gods : [See Gen. iii. 5.]

Thou hast crowned him with joy and honour.

What the first Adam lost for us, the second Adam won back for us, and greater glories too. The first was indeed placed but a little lower than the angels, he was formed in the image of God, and made a living soul; but from that state he fell, he covered himself with shame and sin, and became subject unto death. It was to that fallen race that the second Adam came; He Who was the Lord of angels became the Son of man. God took man's nature; God became man; and 'Jesus, having been made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, is crowned with glory and honour, that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man.' It was through impatience at being less than the spiritual powers, that man disobeyed and fell: 'Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.' It was through patience and suffering that he was redeemed by Him Who said,—I will be as man, to know good and evil.

6. Thou madest him to have dominion of the works of Thy hands : and Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet ;

The second Adam was made a quickening spirit. 'The Lord from heaven' died, and rose again, He ascended into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. He covered our sinfulness with His righteousness; He overcame death by life; He raised our earthliness into heaven, and in Him the lowest nature of all was placed above all. What man lost, Christ regained. All created things are again put in subjection to the second man. Both this world and that which is to come, both things seen and unseen, all life, all power, all glory, are His. He must reign until He has put all things under His feet; until His foes and ours,—sin, and hell, and death, the last enemy that shall be destroyed,—are subdued and trampled down by Him, and by us in Him.

7. All sheep and oxen : yea, and the beasts of the field ;

8. The fowls of the air, and the fishes of the sea : and whatsoever walketh through the paths of the seas.

To man before his fall was given 'dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing which moveth upon the earth.' So in the same way Christ, the Son of man, Who is risen and ascended, is Lord of all. Above all, He is the head of His Church, and all her 'differences of administrations' are His and come from Him. His are the souls of those who

believe, who are the sheep that He has sought and saved; His are the ministers of His word who labour in His Church; His are they who once were fierce and wild, who once were careless and indifferent, wandering only at their own evil will, who once were given up wholly to the world, and knew no more and sought no more than worldly things, but who all now, by the power of His Cross and the drawing of His grace, have become His servants and confess Him as their Lord.

9. O Lord our Governour : how excellent is Thy Name in all the world !

And now that Christ is ascended, and hath sat down at the right hand of God, the glory of the Father is displayed in fuller measure than it was before. The humanity of Christ has been exalted on high, and He has gained a Name which is above every name, because, being God, He died and rose again for man. Behold the change,—before the Son of God descended, His Name was only known in Israel; since the Son of Man hath ascended, it is known in all the world ! Oh may that Name be magnified and hallowed and exalted evermore, through which death has been destroyed, the gates of paradise have been opened, and men have become equal to the angels, yea, greater than the angels, for man has become God !

This Psalm was probably written by David, at the time when he kept his father's flock, and when he must often have been led, in the calm and grandeur of an Eastern night, to contrast the glory and im-

ments of the starry firmament with man's seeming insignificance. It is inscribed, as those before it, to the Chief Musician, with the addition "upon Gittith." This some explain to mean upon a musical instrument brought from Gath, or invented by the Philistines there. Others take it as having some reference to Goliath of Gath. The LXX. translate it "for the wine-presses," as if it were a Psalm to be sung at vintage-time; or in a more mystical meaning, as if it referred to the wine-press of Christ's passion, which He trod alone. But St. Augustine interprets it of the Church, which God has set as a wine-press in the midst of the world. The verses four to eight are, as the Epistle to the Hebrews teaches us, to be referred to Christ. (Heb. ii. 6—10.) In Him are joined the two whole and perfect natures of God and man, so that the two extremes of weakness and dominion, of lowliness and glory, meet and are reconciled in one. For this reason, this Psalm is very fitly appointed by the Church for the service of Ascension-day.

Morning Prayer.

PSALM ix. *Confitebor tibi.*

1. I WILL give thanks unto Thee, O Lord, with my whole heart : I will speak of all Thy marvellous works.

2. I will be glad and rejoice in Thee : yea, my songs will I make of Thy Name, O Thou most Highest.

The dealings of God with us are always wonderful, and are always calling for our thanks and praise. His providence often goes on for a long time in a quiet, calm course; and because there is nothing striking or startling in it, we think that there is nothing marvellous. Yet the thanksgiving of our whole heart is as deeply due to our Father in

heaven, for His daily giving us our daily bread, for His daily delivering us from daily evil, as for greater and more special instances of His mightiness and love. But when by some clear and striking providence of deliverance either from danger, or sorrow, or perplexity, the feeling of His eternal Kingship is more strongly than usual impressed upon our souls, then should we rise to a higher tone than usual of holy joy and spiritual gladness, and shew forth by our lips, as well as by our lives, our trust in Him Who is most infinite in His goodness as in His power.

3. While mine enemies are driven back : they shall fall and perish at Thy presence.

Thus did David feel when God, by his hands, had destroyed the champion Goliath, who had defied his countrymen: and when the Philistines after his death had been put to flight, and they who had insulted and oppressed Israel were subdued and slain. And thus does the Christian feel when his trials are removed, and his temptations overcome, and his doubts and fears are chased away and brought to nothing by faith in Christ's abiding presence with His faithful people.

4. For Thou hast maintained my right and my cause : Thou art set in the throne that judgest right.

As it was with David the shepherd-boy in his conflict with the giant of Gath, so will it be with the Christian in his fight against the enemies of his soul,

the world, the flesh, and the devil; so will it be with the Church in her final conflict with that manifestation of evil in the person of Antichrist, which David's fight with Goliath typifies and prefigures. He Who is righteous maintains the righteous cause; He Who sitteth upon the throne of eternal justice decides that what is true and right shall and must prevail, and that what is false and wrong shall and must be destroyed.

5. Thou hast rebuked the heathen, and destroyed the ungodly : Thou hast put out their name for ever and ever.

He has rebuked the heathen by the preaching of His word. For falsehood and idolatry fall before the word of truth, as Goliath fell before the sling of David. He shall destroy the ungodly by the brightness of His coming: and in the kingdom which He shall establish for His triumphant Church, there shall be no more sin,—nothing vile, or false, or ungodly, shall enter there; their very names shall be forgotten, and shall be mentioned no more throughout eternity.

6. O thou enemy, destructions are come to a perpetual end : even as the cities which thou hast destroyed ; their memorial is perished with them.

Heb. O thou enemy, thy swords are come to an end for ever :

And cities thou hast extirpated :

Their memorial is destroyed with them.

LXX. Their memorial is perished with a sound.

By the first advent of the Son of God evil is in part destroyed, and by His second advent it shall be so in entirety. By the one, the enemy of souls has been cast down like lightning from heaven; by the second, he shall be cast bound for ever into the abyss of fire. Through the power of the cross has he been crushed and conquered; his weapons of destruction wherein he trusted have been wrested from his grasp, as his sword was taken from the Philistine; the sting of death has been broken, and the dominion of the grave destroyed. Those nations which had lain under the power of Satan have been set free, and made subject unto grace; or, if they continued firm in their impenitence and unbelief, they have been destroyed like the cities of the plain; and the memory of those sinners who dwelt in them has perished with themselves, has vanished like the sound of their dying cry.

7. But the Lord shall endure for ever : He hath also prepared His seat for judgment.

They are ended, but there is One Who abideth, even the Lord Who is Judge and King; and His righteous judgment is not merely a future judgment, but is eternal, for it is inseparable from God Himself. It has been begun of old; it is now still going on, not the less surely because we take little note of it; it is preparing the universe for that last consummation, when the throne shall be openly set, and the final decision shall be made, and good and evil shall be separated from each other for ever.

8. For He shall judge the world in righteousness : and minister true judgment unto the people.

In this is His righteousness displayed, that He hath committed all judgment unto the Son ; and He, Who has known our trials, and borne our burdens, and conquered our temptations, judges us according to what we are, and not according to what we are not. His judgment is righteous, for He is the Son of Man, who suffered, and was dead ; His judgment is true, for that He ascended into heaven and sat down upon the throne of God.

9. The Lord also will be a defence for the oppressed : even a refuge in due time of trouble.

Thus marvellous are the works of God in His righteousness, His judgment, and His power ; but still more marvellous in His patience, His pity, and His love. ‘Blessed are the poor, Blessed are the meek, Blessed are they who suffer for righteousness’ sake,—these, and such-like, are the sentences of His all-righteous judgment, by which He comforts and sustains those who suffer. And He Himself is the Consoler, when the time of pain or of trial comes ; He Himself is the one Deliverer ‘in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment.’

10. And they that know Thy name will put their trust in Thee : for Thou, Lord, hast never failed them that seek Thee.

‘This is His name, whereby He shall be called, The Lord our Righteousness;’ and they who know Him by this name will, in spite of their own fears, and in spite of their own sins, trust in Him. They are ‘persuaded that He is able to keep that which they have committed unto Him, against that day.’ Heaven and earth will shrink and fade, but His mercy towards those that have come to Him, and are His, stands fast for ever.

11. O praise the Lord Which dwelleth in Sion : shew the people of His doings.

It is the glory of Christ, as shewn in and towards His Church, that calls for our devoutest praise! It is the thought that He is not merely in heaven upon the seat of Almighty power, but that He is with us upon earth, and manifests Himself to human hearts in the ministrations of His Word and in the Sacraments of His grace, that should excite our wondering thankfulness. These higher marvels we shall forget or hide at our own peril; our joy should be to tell others of their healing power, and to bring them too to ‘taste and see’ His graciousness.

12. For, when He maketh inquisition for blood, He remembereth them : and forgetteth not the complaint of the poor.

No one good thought, no one loving word, no one trustful feeling, is forgotten by the King of all. They who have suffered for Him shall also reign with Him; they who have died for His truth shall

live with Him in His joy. In that last great day when He shall search out every hidden thing, He will remember them who have borne witness to Him even to death, and they shall be confessed by Him before the angels of God. Then the poor in spirit shall possess the kingdom, and the mourners here be consoled with eternal consolation.

13. Have mercy upon me, O Lord; consider the trouble which I suffer of them that hate me : Thou that liftest me up from the gates of death.

14. That I may shew all Thy praises within the ports of the daughter of Sion : I will rejoice in Thy salvation.

Suffering is good for us, nay, often temptation is good for us, for it makes us see our own feebleness, and our constant danger. When men in their malice would force us into sin, or in their guile would entice us, there is but one means of escape,—‘ Lord, have mercy upon me.’ This cry He is never slow to hear and to answer, Who only can set us in the upward way unto the eternal Sion, Who only can turn us from that much-trod road of folly, and carelessness, and sin, which leads to eternal death, whose ending is before the gates of hell. They who are safe within the gates of the Church of God are secure indeed; they can rejoice evermore in His saving grace, for He hath built His Church upon that rock which is Himself, and against her, and against those that are

within her portals of salvation, the gates of hell—yawn widely as they may—shall never, even for a time, prevail.

15. The heathen are sunk down in the pit that they made : in the same net which they hid privily, is their foot taken.

16. The Lord is known to execute judgment : the ungodly is trapped in the work of his own hands.

It is the wicked who bring confusion upon themselves. Their own sin it is that destroys them. Each time men indulge a malicious wish, they wound and injure their own souls. Each time they seek to allure others into sin, they entangle themselves more inextricably than ever in its deadly meshes. We see this even now, but it will be still more clearly known at the last day. Then it will be out of their own mouths that the ungodly will be judged, and it will be their own works which pronounce their doom ; even as Goliath was slain by his own sword. Surely this is a mysterious fact, upon which we may well pause awhile and meditate !

17. The wicked shall be turned into hell : and all the people that forget God.

For there is a state of darkness, and hopelessness, and unending woe, which they will purchase to themselves for their own inheritance, who despise God's holiness and neglect His truth. There sorrow is

eternal, and remorse of no avail, for they who have forgotten God are forgotten by Him. There shall they who have made themselves reprobate be left alone with their misery, and face to face with their sins, in a despair whose hours are ages !

18. For the poor shall not alway be forgotten : the patient abiding of the meek shall not perish for ever.

But they who remember God shall never be forgotten of Him. They may have to endure poverty and sorrow, but in patience they will possess their souls. No earnest hope is ever lost, no patient waiting shall ever fail of its reward, no act of humility or wish for meekness will pass unnoticed by Him Who seeth all and ruleth all. In Him shall the meek have their inheritance, which shall abide with them, imperishable and eternal.

19. Up, Lord, and let not man have the upper hand : let the heathen be judged in Thy sight.

20. Put them in fear, O Lord : that the heathen may know themselves to be but men.

It is in mercy often that God manifests His judgments. Sorely are the unthinking tried when they see, to all appearance, man having the upper hand, and ordering things at his will. They begin to forget that there is another Lord of Whom are all things, and by Whom are all things. But when He

does arise, and by a plain and visible act of His providence punishes the wrong-doers, then are even the careless impressed with fear; they see that they are but frail and feeble things, made from the dust by His power, and turned again to the dust at His will. They are thus made to reflect, and fear, and know.

The title of this Psalm shews it to be by David, "upon Muthlabben." These words have been very variously explained. The LXX. render them, "For the hidden mysteries of the Son;" and the Fathers accordingly have explained it of the Incarnation, and the Second Advent of the Saviour. Another translation is, "upon the virginals for Ben," the Levite (1 Chron. xv. 18). Some commentators would transpose the letters of the second word, and so interpret it, "Upon the death of Nabal, or of the fool." But the best rendering appears to be, "upon the death of the Champion," that is, of Goliath of Gath. This would shew that the Psalm was originally written by David as a thank-offering for his marvellous victory over him who had for a long time successfully defied the armies of Israel. From the mention of Sion, however, in verses 11 and 14, it would seem likely that the Psalm, as first composed by him, was added to and corrected in his after life; while the title was retained in remembrance of the signal occasion which had called it forth, (1 Sam. xvii.) At verse 16 the words "Higgaion, Selah" occur, which seem to be a direction to pause awhile for meditation.

PSALM X. *Ut quid, Domine?*

1. WHY standest Thou so far off, O Lord : and hidest Thy face in the needful time of trouble ?

This is the supplication of Christ's holy Church in all time of temptation, doubt, and persecution. It is the absence of the Saviour that is ever her sorest

trial; and this may be so more especially in those last days, when the perilous times for hope and faith shall come. Christ withdraws Himself for the trial of our love: in our prosperity we miss Him not; it is not till the time of trouble comes that we feel how needful His abiding presence is.

2. The ungodly for his own lust doth persecute the poor: let them be taken in the crafty wiliness that they have imagined.

3. For the ungodly hath made boast of his own heart's desire: and speaketh good of the covetous, whom God abhorreth.

All wanton injustice, and mockery, and persecution, are forerunnings and types of what the last fearful trial and persecution of the Church will be. It will combine intense cunning,—so as to deceive, if it were possible, the very elect,—with unbounded power; and, though it will at last be utterly brought to nought, yet it will seem for a time to prevail. But even now there are many antichrists; for each one who is against Christ is an antichrist, and every spirit that is opposed to Him is the spirit of Antichrist. Especially so is that spirit of frantic pride which boasts of its own power and ability to do whatever it chooses, and that other more subtle spirit which gives honour to mere money, and to those who have money, however they may have gained it. This is one of the special forms of Antichrist at the present day—the speaking good of the covetous, whom God abhorreth.

4. The ungodly is so proud, that he careth not for God : neither is God in all his thoughts.

Heb. The wicked one in the pride of his face will not enquire :
“There is no God,” is all his thought.

Atheistic pride will be one of the characteristics of Antichrist. Wherever there is pride, it is opposed to Christ and to His Holy Spirit. He who looks to himself, and not to God, who seeks for his own gain, and judges for himself without reference to right and truth, and acts in defiance of God's will,—he has the spirit of Antichrist, and is not far from utter atheism and reprobation. His projects will be such, that in their very nature they will be a denial of God.

5. His ways are alway grievous : Thy judgments are far above out of his sight, and therefore defieth he all his enemies.

6. For he hath said in his heart, Tush, I shall never be cast down : there shall no harm happen unto me.

It is because he cannot see the hand of a righteous King in the government of the world, that he will act so proudly and despitefully. The evil-doer never discerns that what is right, and good, and true, and fair, in their own nature, must always prevail; and that what is base, and false, and unjust, and wicked, must of their own nature perish and come to nothing. He will not learn that the

Almighty God is even now carrying on an unceasing and ever-present judgment in the world, always saying to all that is right and true, Prosper ye blessed; always saying to what is wrong and false, Perish ye cursed. And because he will not see nor understand this, he defies his enemies—his own lust, and covetousness, and falsehood, and pride—to hurt him or to cast him down; and his secret idea is that he will always be the same; that nothing will ever change with him, nor any judgment overtake him; and that in spite of all the harm he causes, no harm can or will happen to him.

7. His mouth is full of cursing, deceit, and fraud : under his tongue is ungodliness and vanity.

Therefore he will allow himself in every evil communication. With the tongue formed to bless God will he curse men made in His image. The utterings of his tongue will be from the very inspiration of the spirit of lies. His mouth will be stored with all words that are miserable and hurtful, as a serpent's mouth is stored with venom.

8. He sitteth lurking in the thievish corners of the streets : and privily in his lurking dens doth he murder the innocent ; his eyes are set against the poor.

9. For he lieth waiting secretly, even as a lion lurketh he in his den : that he may ravish the poor.

10. He doth ravish the poor : when he getteth him into his net.

11. He falleth down, and humbleth himself : that the congregation of the poor may fall into the hands of his captains.

He who acts thus is even as a highway murderer : he is a robber and murderer of souls. And this shall be the character of Antichrist, and of his times. Not merely by open persecution and tyrannous violence, but by every form of hypocrisy, and speaking of lies, and fraud, will that last grand and terrible attack upon the poor of Christ be made. The poison of the serpent, the treachery of the murderer, the crouching rage of the lion, and the ambush of the hunter, each and all will be put in use by that 'man of sin,' who shall in the last days arise to devastate the Church. Thus shall he 'speak great words against the Most High, and wear out the saints of the Most High, and think to change times and laws ; and they shall be given into his hand until a time, and times, and the dividing of times.'

12. He hath said in his heart, Tush, God hath forgotten : He hideth away His face, and He will never see it.

That which is the sorrow of them that are striving to do well, is the glory and hope of the sinner,—God hath forgotten me. While the one mournfully asks why the Lord hideth His face, the other rejoices

and is bold in the thought that His face is hidden, and that He does not see. His blasphemous trust and comfort are in the *unrighteous* government of God,—and vain indeed they are.

13. Arise, O Lord God, and lift up Thine hand : forget not the poor.

14. Wherefore should the wicked blaspheme God : while he doth say in his heart, Tush, Thou God carest not for it.

The one refuge in temptation and in persecution is prayer. The wicked lies unto his own heart, for God hath not forgotten. It may be that He is waiting, but He is judging too. There is no more dreadful speech, no deeper insult to the majesty of God, than to impute to Him that He cares not for the right-doing or the wrong-doing of the creatures He has made.

15. Surely Thou hast seen it : for Thou beholdest ungodliness and wrong.

16. That Thou mayest take the matter into Thine hand : the poor committeth himself unto Thee ; for Thou art the helper of the friendless.

17. Break Thou the power of the ungodly and malicious : take away his ungodliness, and Thou shalt find none.

He has beheld all the cruelty and falsehood of the wicked, and all the sorrows and sufferings of the

poor; for He is ever beholding all that is. He saw the affliction of His people in Egypt, and the cruelty of their taskmasters; so will He see the sufferings of His elect in the latter days. So does He see all the suffering of them that are oppressed now. We may safely, if we can only gain sufficient faith, leave all things in the hand of God; for 'He knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished.' He Who is the Father of the fatherless, and the God of all comfort, will at length cut short the career of the oppressor. He will come to search out his sin, and to take away his power, and at His coming he will be struck down like one whose arm is broken with a blow. He will utterly perish and come to nothing before the revelation of the presence of God.

18. The Lord is King for ever and ever: and the heathen are perished out of the land.

He is, hath been, and shall be, an all-righteous King, 'of Whose kingdom there shall be no end;' but then shall His righteousness shine forth in brighter majesty, when all that is wrong and vile is crushed and quelled, and perfect holiness and perfect truth are the visible and mighty pillars of His unending throne. And all that are unbelieving, and cruel, and impure, and liars against His truth, shall be driven by their own goading consciences from His kingdom unto their own place.

19. Lord, Thou hast heard the desire of the

poor : Thou preparest their heart, and Thine ear hearkeneth thereto ;

20. To help the fatherless and poor unto their right : that the man of the earth be no more exalted against them.

He heareth always. He hath taught us how to pray, and He hearkens to the prayer which He Himself hath taught us. He giveth grace to pray, that in our prayer we may pray for grace. He is an everlasting Father, Who ever loveth those children who obey Him, and keepeth them for His own, that He alone may be their Helper and their Trust ; and that no mortal being, formed from the clay of earth, may challenge to himself that reverence, and that obedience and worship, which the children of God can pay only to their heavenly Father and their eternal and immortal King.

This Psalm in the Hebrew has no title. In the LXX. and the Vulgate it forms a part of the preceding Psalm, and therefore in those translations from this point to the 147th the Psalms are numbered as one behind the Hebrew original and the English translations. Both from its style, and its close connection with the subject of the preceding Psalm, it may be considered to have been written by David. The Syriac version bears the title, “ of the enemy’s attack upon Adam and his race, and how Christ will quell his arrogance ;” and in accordance with this the earlier interpreters have seen in it a reference, not merely to oppressors and ungodly men in general, but to “ that wicked one whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming : even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power, and signs, and lying wonders,” (2 Thess. ii. 8, 9). The Psalms from the 9th to the 14th, being six in number, form a group connected among themselves and having one common subject—the oppressions, wrongs, and seductions

which the right-doers suffer from the treacherous malice and deceitfulness of the wicked. They are a warning and a preparation for the Church, against that last great persecution of Antichrist foretold by the Spirit, which will unite both the violence of tyranny and the seductions of heresy in itself; and of which all spiritual wickedness and cruelty, and abuse of power, whether in Churches, in nations, or in individuals, are foreshadowings and types.

PSALM xi. *In Domino confido.*

1. IN the Lord put I my trust : how say ye then to my soul, that she should flee as a bird unto the hill ?

2. For lo, the ungodly bend their bow, and make ready their arrows within the quiver : that they may privily shoot at them which are true of heart.

The strength of the believer is in his faith. When the time of darkness, of danger, and of trial draws near, our timid spirits are only too ready to echo the suggestion that it would be well if we could flee away, and leave this scene of daily strife and daily weariness. Who, however firm in his own convictions, has not, in the midst of whispered doubts of what is true, and loud assertions of what is false, and the mockeries and sneers of the unbelieving and the wicked, been tempted to a hasty prayer, that he might be taken from it all, and be allowed to flee away, like a bird startled from the open field to her hiding-place among the distant hills? So, doubtless, was David tempted to feel while hunted 'like a partridge

in the mountains' by those who sought his life. The remedy must be to bide God's time, and to trust in Him,—this is that 'shield of faith, wherewith we shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.'

3. For the foundations will be cast down : and what hath the righteous done ?

Heb. For the foundations are overturned.

What can the righteous do ?

A little trouble makes us despond. The faith even of those who strive to be true of heart is equal but to a very slight assault ; and as it fails, it seems to us as if all truth and holiness were failing too. A persecution comes, and the very foundations of the Church seem to totter, and the wavering Christian loses heart and hope, and knows not what to do. A transitory denial of the doctrines he has believed, a short-lived withdrawal of the Sacraments which have been his comfort, become to his imperfect faith a very overturning of the foundations of belief, and a motive to despair in what seems to him his unmerited perplexity. But He Who is the One perfectly righteous hath by His own death and passion laid them sure ; He is Himself the foundation, which nothing can ever overturn.

4. The Lord is in His holy temple : the Lord's seat is in heaven.

5. His eyes consider the poor : and His eyelids try the children of men.

The holiness and the mightiness of God are not measured by our poor faith. Christ is at the right hand of the Father, interceding for ever as an eternal Priest for the members of His Church on earth. He is marking all their trials, and watching all their struggles; and the feebleness of our human nature, and its utter defencelessness, are well known to Him Who once on earth shared in it Himself.

6. The Lord alloweth the righteous : but the ungodly and him that delighteth in wickedness doth His soul abhor.

LXX. The Lord assigneth a place to the just and to the impious ;

And he who loveth injustice hateth his own soul.

They who are desirous of doing what is right are acting after their degree in the same way that God acts ; and he approves their wishes and attempts, however feeble they may be. He tries all by His patient providence, and by the offer of His Spirit, and they who are in the right are approved by Him ; and from them who are found wanting by their own stubborn refusal of His grace, and by the pleasure which they have taught themselves to take in evil, He turns away in condemnation. They who have loved sin do not only provoke God, but they prove the deepest and bitterest enemies of themselves, and their own souls.

7. Upon the ungodly He shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, storm and tempest : this shall be their portion to drink.

All that we can taste of pain, and misery, and torment is the portion of the ungodly. But the eternal God is especially wroth with those who hinder the salvation of others. They who make ready their quiver, that they may do harm privily, shall find a torrent of burning agony and shame presently poured down upon themselves. They shall be caught in that storm, and shall not escape, as the sinners of Sodom and of Gomorrah perished in the rain of fire and sulphur from above. Their lot which they will have chosen for themselves, the cup which they will have mingled for themselves, will be utter misery, bitter and parching and deadly as the fierce hot blast of the southern desert.

8. For the righteous Lord loveth righteousness : His countenance will behold the thing that is just.

For God, Who is right-doing Himself, loves right-doing and the right-doers. And as He turns away from the wilful doers of wrong in anger, so does He Who is our heavenly Father look with an eye of mercy and with an ever-watchful providence upon them who are striving to be conformed in will and deed to His all-holy law. They who have loved righteousness and hated evil shall see His face, looking on His second creation as on His first, and pronouncing it very good.

This Psalm was evidently written by David, while persecuted by Saul. He had been told, by his friends more probably, that Judæa was no longer a safe abode for him, and he must flee, as he had been

compelled to do before, to some mountain or stronghold, perhaps in the wilderness of Ziph, (1 Sam. xxiii. 14,) where he might shelter himself, and escape the hatred and the treachery of his cruel and unjust master. In the perplexity and grief that such advice would cause, he turns to God and to His unvarying righteousness and retributive providence, as that which alone could strengthen his faith, in his sufferings and danger.

Ebening Prayer.

PSALM xii. *Salvum me fac.*

1. **HELP** me, Lord, for there is not one godly man left : for the faithful are minished from among the children of men.

Heb. Help, Lord, for the godly ceases :
Truths fail among the sons of men.

2. They talk of vanity every one with his neighbour : they do but flatter with their lips, and dissemble in their double heart.

God is an everlasting help, whatever else may fail. Sometimes the believer seems almost left alone ; there seems to be no religion left. Faith and truth seem to be quite lost and forgotten, and no one cares for them. Then comes the temptation to cry like Elijah when persecuted by Ahab and Jezebel, ' I, even I only am left.' The precept of the apostle, ' Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour, for we are members one of another,' seems utterly reversed ; and men seem rather, putting away truth, to speak lyings one with another. The thought of communion in a

common Church, under a common Father, is quite neglected and despised; and words of brotherhood are but false, and not believed by them who speak them; and double-dealings and dissemblings are all that are found in their place.

3. The Lord shall root out all deceitful lips : and the tongue that speaketh proud things ;

4. Which have said, With our tongue will we prevail : we are they that ought to speak, who is lord over us ?

For every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account in the day of judgment. Whatever has been said to the deceiving and misleading of others; whatever has been said to establish man's will and carnal pride, in opposition to the law and revelation of God, shall be then convicted of falsehood, and be a source of confusion and shame to them who have spoken it. By his words shall each faithful man be justified, and by his words shall each sinner be condemned. Many may exalt themselves, and set up themselves, their own views and their own authority, by specious and high-sounding words, who shall at last be found, for all their pride, to know nothing, and shall 'perish in the gain-saying of Core.'

5. Now for the comfortless troubles' sake of the needy : and because of the deep sighing of the poor,

6. I will up, saith the Lord : and will help

every one from him that swelleth against him, and will set him at rest.

None who cry to God for help shall cry in vain. Because of those whose faith is injured, and whose consciences are wounded, by the false and yet proudly spoken assertions of men puffed up in their own self-esteem, God will at length take the matter into His own hands. He will speak Himself, and His words, strange as they may appear to blinded hearts, shall set those who are disquieted at rest. 'Blessed are ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of God,' has filled with comfort many a troubled soul, and consoled many a sigh.

7. The words of the Lord are pure words : even as the silver, which from the earth is tried, and purified seven times in the fire.

Heb. Silver refined in a crucible from the earth ;
Purified seven times.

The words of God in Christ are not as man's words, spoken at random, light and vain ; they are pure, precious, weighty. They are as a treasure hid in a field, which whoso findeth must give up all that he has to gain, and take unto himself, and then will he be rich indeed. There is no alloy of this world, no dross of earthly feeling in the words of Christ ; they are purified by that sevenfold Spirit of God which He that spake them to us possessed without measure.

8. Thou shalt keep them, O Lord : Thou

shalt preserve him from this generation for ever.

They who receive and value those words of seven-fold purity shall be preserved from that deadness of faith and misery of doubt into which those around them fall. To the pure all things shall be pure; so to the true all things shall be true; while to the false and deceitful, even the very words of truth itself become doubtful and unsure. They who believe the truth here by faith shall through preventing grace be so guided through the deceitfulness of temporal things, that they lose not the attainment of the eternal things, which neither deceive nor change.

9. The ungodly walk on every side : when they are exalted, the children of men are put to rebuke.

Heb. The wicked walk round about :

As a raising up are the dejections of the sons of men.

(Or otherwise) :—

The wicked shall get them away,

When He Who *was* the scorn of the sons of men is exalted.

LXX. The ungodly walk in a circle round about.

According to Thy height, Thou hast multiplied the sons of men.

When deceivers and seducers abound, and are wandering at their own will in all their various ways of error, the love of many waxes cold. There comes a season of dejection, and sorrow, and rebuke, for the Church of God; and yet even that time of humiliation and trial is a time of mercy, and will turn

to her future exaltation. The trial of faith worketh patience; and the proving the faithfulness of the Church, through the providence of the Most High, becomes often the multiplication of her children. Christ the Lord of all was once the ‘despised and rejected’ of men; it was through humility and suffering that He entered into His glory; yet they who once compassed Him about with unrighteous hatred shall hereafter flee before His face, when He is set down upon His judgment-throne.

This Psalm is, as the sixth, “upon Sheminitb.” The design of David in writing it was to warn those who are tempted in their minds to unbelief by the general falsehood and deceit around them, to remember that God’s words are undeceivable, and true for time and for eternity; while they who are wilful liars and hypocrites shall certainly meet the reward of their false words. The object of the Psalm is to guard the Church against being driven from the truth, not by open violence of action, but by arrogant, and specious, and untruthful arguments and expressions of opinion. The translation of the last verse is, as will be seen, a matter of much difficulty.

PSALM xiii. *Usque quo, Domine?*

1. How long wilt Thou forget me, O Lord, for ever : how long wilt Thou hide Thy face from me ?

There are times in the spiritual life of every earnest soul in which it is utterly oppressed with darkness, and dreariness, and misery. It has to sojourn in the valley of the shadow of death. It feels, indeed, a want of God, but cannot find Him; it feels its infinite need of a Saviour, but it cannot see Him. It is waiting and longing for God to

look upon its pain, and to aid it in its conflict; and He does not. He seems to have forgotten. His delay seems to lengthen time into eternity. He seems to have turned away His face, and to have left the struggling spirit to itself.

2. How long shall I seek counsel in my soul, and be so vexed in my heart : how long shall mine enemies triumph over me ?

The soul asks of itself, and can give no answer. It has no help in itself, no wisdom, no truth, no holiness; and it is the sense of its want of these which is the very source of its hopelessness and anguish. 'The heart knoweth its own bitterness' and its own sin; but does not know its own hope and life. Then comes on a state of deeper dejection, of utter prostration and abasement, a sense of being conquered by sin and yet hating sin, from which there seems no outlet and no escape, but only the four-times repeated cry—How long? How long?

3. Consider, and hear me, O Lord my God : lighten mine eyes, that I sleep not in death.

He 'ought always to pray, and not to faint,' who wishes to be heard. God is not a God Who cares not for the creatures He has made; each struggling soul must say, He is *my* Father and *my* God, He will therefore consider my helplessness and woe, and will hear me. Hungry, weary, blind, the soul sits waiting, like the poor man begging at the gates

of Jericho with one cry ever upon his lips,—‘ Lord, that my eyes may be opened.’ His prayer was granted, and he saw the ‘ Light of Light,’ Whom David had desired to see, and had not seen. If the soul which is fainting in the agony of spiritual death cry like him, it will be heard too. The eyes of faith will be opened and it will see Him Who is our Light, our Comforter, our Health, our Life; ‘ for He that believeth in Him shall never die.’

4. Lest mine enemy say, I have prevailed against him : for if I be cast down, they that trouble me will rejoice at it.

When the eyes of the soul are lightened, it can see the cause of its desolation : ‘ an enemy hath done this.’ It is not that God forgets us, but that we forget Him. The truth, which was darkened before, shines out then clear and plain. The accuser had bidden us believe that our God was an austere task-master, whereas He ever is an all-loving Father. He had drawn the darkness of our sins like a veil before our eyes, so that we could not see the face of Him Who is all-holy and all-true ; and we thought that He had hidden His face from us, while we were hiding ours from Him. While we know not that it is so, the foe prevails against us. If we are troubled with doubt of God’s mercy, and are cast down in our darkness and tribulation of heart, then so far he rejoices that his end is gained.

5. But my trust is in Thy mercy : and my heart is joyful in Thy salvation.

As soon as the Christian knows that it is the enemy who has been tempting him, and that God has not forgotten him, the victory is gained. His soul has found the trust it sought, not in itself, but in the mercy of his God. His heart casts away its self-torture and vexation, and exults, not in its own victory, but in its Redeemer's salvation. He looks no longer back upon the darkness and anguish of the past, but rather looks gladly onward to the present mercies which are ready for him, and to the salvation which is shining in the future.

6. I will sing of the Lord, because He hath dealt so lovingly with me : yea, I will praise the Name of the Lord most Highest.

Heb. I will sing unto the Lord,

Because He hath dealt bountifully with me.

The last line of the Psalm is only found in the LXX., and seems added from Psalm vii. 18.

So in the light of the Saviour's countenance all things are changed, all things—except the eternal love of God ! For doubt comes trust ; for vexation comes holy joy ; the cry ' How long ? ' becomes a song of praise ; the suspicion of the hiding of God's face becomes the certainty of His loving dealings. It is not the enemy of souls and the accuser of God to us who has prevailed. But we have been delivered with Him and through Him Who has drunk deep of the cup of all our trials, and felt

all our desolation; Whose soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death, that we might feel sure of His Father's mercy, and confide in His salvation. He Who is the Lord most Highest suffered and overcame, that we in Him might suffer, and in Him conquer too.

This Psalm of David bears the usual title "to the Chief Musician." It was, no doubt, written by David in some deep perplexity and danger, spiritual rather than temporal; most probably in his early life, while he was under persecution from Saul. But we must remember that it was a peculiar feature of the first covenant, that temporal blessings were made conditional on obedience and righteous conduct; and misfortunes and unhappinesses were expressly the consequences of disobedience and wrong-doing: and so to an Israelite the thoughts of misery, and loneliness, and pain were immediately suggestive of wickedness and unholiness. The temporal dealings of God with him were always significant of His spiritual government. In the case of David, therefore, the sorrows and distresses of his early life must often have made him examine his own conduct, and repent of his sins; and have led him on, as his years increased, to see that earthly troubles are not always the burdens they seem to be, and that the sorrow that sin brings is far less bearable than the sorrow that misfortune brings. By some this Psalm has been looked upon as the complaint of the Israelitish Church in her bondage and darkness, praying for the coming of the true Light—the Messiah; and the fourfold cry of "How long?" has seemed to have reference to the fourfold captivity of the Jewish people—the Egyptian, the Babylonian, the Grecian, and the Roman.

PSALM XIV. *Dixit insipiens.*

1. THE fool hath said in his heart: There is no God.

The one eternal fact that God is, and that He is a righteous King, which is the ground of all hope to the repenting sinner, and of all trust and comfort to

him who is striving to obey Him, is, on the other hand, a source of confusion and constant perplexity to the careless and unbelieving. The thought of a righteous King always over them and close to them, judging their conduct, and condemning their folly and self-will, is unbearable to them. In their own secret souls they will prefer anything to such a thought. They will not, indeed, in words maintain that there is no such God; but in their lives and deeds they plainly shew what the secret wish and impression of their hearts is. 'In works they deny Him.' Yet 'I am the Lord thy God: thou shalt have none other gods but Me,' is the root of all truth, the spring of all knowledge, and the foundation of all law. For there is no wisdom like the belief in God, and no folly like the unbelief in Him.

2. They are corrupt, and become abominable in their doings : there is none that doeth good, no not one.

Heb. They are corrupt, they are abominable in their doings :
There is none that doeth good.

Where there is no belief in a righteous God, there can only be one result—the loss of all that is righteous and all that is good. It ever has been so where the law of all laws, There is a God, has been forgotten or denied. It was so with the sinners before the flood, when 'all flesh had corrupted His way upon the earth.' It was so in those evil days when Israel rebelled against David,

and followed Absalom. It was so in a still higher degree when the Prince of Life came into the world, and was 'by wicked hands crucified and slain.' And it will be so in those latter times, of which the Spirit speaketh, when 'that man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.'

3. The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men : to see if there were any that would understand, and seek after God.

It is at those very seasons when the fools are trusting in their hearts, that there is no righteous King of the world; when men generally are becoming corrupt in their principles and abominable in their doings; when there seems nothing right or true left anywhere,—it is then that God manifests Himself. He is not unmindful, though He is long-suffering. It is in times like those that He searches, as it were, the world, and then, if there be any that understand His all-continuing holiness, and seek after Him and His ways, they are manifested before Him. So it was at Christ's first coming, when He came down from heaven to seek and to save a fast-perishing world. So it will be, we seem to learn from prophecy, before He comes again: there will be a falling away from truth and right; there will be a searching time of trial for His Church.

4. But they are all gone out of the way, they are altogether become abominable : there is none that doeth good, no not one.

This is the punishment of unbelief. They who have 'an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God,' go on to more ungodliness. There is a law which prevails in evil-doing, as in right-doing, that they who have begun must, unless grace stop them, go on. Sin draws on sin; each step they take is one step more away from the living God, until they become reprobate and altogether lost,—for who can save them who will not be saved by God?—and that sentence of most fearful judgment goes forth against them, 'He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still.'

5. Their throat is an open sepulchre, with their tongues have they deceived : the poison of asps is under their lips.

This verse, and the two following, are not in the Hebrew, but are found only in the LXX., and in Romans iii. 13—18. But the first portion of this verse is from Ps. v. 10.

6. Their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness : their feet are swift to shed blood.

7. Destruction and unhappiness is in their ways, and the way of peace have they not known : there is no fear of God before their eyes.

This is the history of men apart from grace. They are utterly lost to truth, and love, and peace, and reverence. The unbelief in which they are sunk is death and corruption to their soul, even as the grave is to the body. Their words and thoughts are more fatal to each other than the speediest and most subtle poison. They make themselves to be the adopted children of the evil one, 'a generation of vipers;' and their mouth is filled with revilings and with malice, even as the serpent's with the dust on which he feeds. They become murderers in hatred and malice, if not in deed; and they join themselves in spirit to them who crucified the Son of God, and pierce Him with their sins afresh. Their ways of sin are ways of misery, and their ending is perdition. The repose of an untroubled conscience and a quiet mind is utterly unknown to them; and why? Because they are void of that wisdom, whose paths are peace, and the beginning of which is the fear of the all-righteous God.

8. Have they no knowledge, that they are all such workers of mischief : eating up my people as it were bread, and call not upon the Lord?

It is not that they cannot know, but that they will not know: their eyes are blinded and their hearts are darkened by the multitude of their sins. Their pleasure is in leading others, not to good, but to evil; and the perversion of souls is as it

were their daily food. They can have no hope of grace, because they take no heed of prayer: they have forgotten how to pray.

9. There were they brought in great fear, even where no fear was: for God is in the generation of the righteous.

They have no fear of God, but they will not therefore be free from fear. Fright, and terror of conscience, and trembling of heart, are the natural fruit of their deeds. They shall be stricken with intense dread at that which should be only a cause of joy and hope,—the manifestation of God in His holiness. This fear the right-doers shall never feel, for their Saviour shall be ever with them. He Who is present where two or three are gathered in His name, shall much more be with the whole Church of His faithful people.

10. As for you, ye have made a mock at the counsel of the poor: because he putteth his trust in the Lord.

Yea, even they who boasted that they had Abraham to their father, and looked upon themselves as the peculiar people of God, fell from grace into darkness and sin, even as others. They stood around the cross of Him Who, being rich, for our sakes became poor, and mocked and scorned at His humiliation. 'He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him,' was the salutation of Israel after the flesh to their thorn-crowned King.

There is no difference : they were no better than the heathen with whom they joined ; for both Jews and Gentiles have by their works proved of all, ‘ that they are all under sin,’ apart from grace.

11. Who shall give salvation unto Israel out of Sion ? When the Lord turneth the captivity of His people : then shall Jacob rejoice, and Israel shall be glad.

All have sinned ; all require mercy ; all need a Saviour. The one great want of man is a Redeemer to pardon him, and a King to govern him. Who can give this but God Himself, and who can be this but God Himself ? This He was : He turned Himself to the captivity of His people, and redeemed them from the bondage in which they groaned. He became to them the Way, from destruction and unhappiness,—the Truth, amid the deceitfulness of their own hearts and tongues,—the Life, in their blood-guiltiness and corruption. In Him shall the Church of them whom He has redeemed be consoled with an everlasting comfort, and rejoice with an everlasting joy.

This Psalm describes the natural state of man when he is exposed to the temptations of the evil one, and unrestrained by grace. It is brought forward by St. Paul (Rom. iii. 10—12,) in proof of the universal corruption of all, both Jews and Gentiles. It was written by David in the patient expectation of a salvation that God would provide to deliver man from the state of sin and death to which of himself he was ever tending. The same thoughts are repeated again with some few variations in the fifty-third Psalm.

Morning Prayer.

FOR ASCENSION-DAY.

PSALM XV. *Domine, quis habitabit ?*

1. LORD, who shall dwell in Thy tabernacle : or who shall rest upon Thy holy hill ?

This is the question of questions, which we must ask, not of ourselves nor of other men, but only of the Lord,—Who are they that are the elect? Who are the true members of His Church while it is visible and militant here on earth, shifting like the tabernacle of old from one region to another of the wilderness of this world? And who are they who shall abide in unending rest, when their labours are finished, among that unseen but yet triumphant band who make up the Church of the redeemed in heaven?

2. Even he, that leadeth an uncorrupt life : and doeth the thing which is right, and speaketh the truth from his heart.

3. He that hath used no deceit in his tongue, nor done evil to his neighbour : and hath not slandered his neighbour.

The Lord Himself will answer it,—‘By their fruits ye shall know them.’ God’s elect have ever His mark upon them, ‘holiness and blamelessness.’ He that hath nought to do with the devil and his works, who hath set on one side the pomps and vanity of the world, whose life is uncorrupt from the

sinful lusts of the flesh, and who is walking in the way of God's commandments,—he is a true member of the Church on earth, a citizen of Sion. He that not only has a will to do what is right, but also is determined to be sincere in what he says; who is both true and just in all his dealings; who has borne no malice in his heart, nor allowed evil speaking or slandering on his tongue,—in him can we see the evident signs of the grace which sanctifies the elect.

4. He that setteth not by himself, but is lowly in his own eyes : and maketh much of them that fear the Lord.

Heb. In his eyes the reprobate is not esteemed ;
But he honours them that fear the Lord.

Such an one will not rely upon his own wisdom, nor plume himself upon his own knowledge, nor walk by his own carnal will. Christ will be to him all in all; and his own fancies and human judgments will be as nothing. He will not say to another member of the mystical Body of the Lord, whether his place be higher or lower than his own, 'I have no need of thee.' The love of Christ within him will form at once a bond of communion with all who love Him too; and will be a gulf of separation between him and those in whom Christ is not.

5. He that sweareth unto his neighbour, and disappointeth him not : though it were to his own hindrance.

Heb. He swears to his own harm, and changes not

6. He that hath not given his money upon usury : nor taken reward against the innocent.

There is ever before his eyes in all his dealings the thought of Him Who covenanted to redeem our souls, and disappointed not them who trusted in Him; though to keep His promise, made in the beginning, cost Him agony, and blood-shedding, and death. He will not let the desire of money quench love within him. He knows that ‘covetousness, which is idolatry,’ may lead him on, even as it led the false Apostle, to say—‘What will ye give me, and I will deliver Him unto you?’

7. Whoso doeth these things : shall never fall.

Whoso thus, through grace, strives to copy in his deeds and words Him Who is the perfect pattern of righteousness and truth, shall indeed dwell in the tabernacle of God in this life, and rest upon His holy hill throughout eternity. Some have begun, and have not continued. Demas entered into the tabernacle, but would not dwell therein, loving better this present world. Judas fell from before the very gates of heaven. Satan was in heaven, yet he kept not his first estate. But he who lives as if a life of holiness were to do all, and prays as if prayer were to do all, and believes as if faith were to do all, he shall be strengthened in his Master’s strength, and shall finally sit down with

the elect in that high abode where there is no more falling and no more fear.

The six preceding Psalms have been describing the character and fate of the wicked; this Psalm describes the character of the righteous. It appears to have been written by David after the Ark had been brought to Mount Sion, (2 Sam. vi. 12,) in order that he might put the people of Jerusalem, and specially the Priests and the Levites who served in the sanctuary, in remembrance of how much righteousness of life was required in them who were brought so near to God. It is very properly appointed for Holy Thursday; for He Who on that day entered as our Great High Priest into the tabernacle not made with hands, alone perfectly fulfilled those duties towards God and towards man which the Ten Commandments of the Law, which are paraphrased in this Psalm, declare.

PSALM XVI. *Conserva me, Domine.*

1. PRESERVE me, O God : for in Thee have I put my trust.

Thus did the Saviour pray in that nature of ours which for us He took from us. He cast Himself upon Him Who preserveth the suffering, and consoleth the sorrowing, and giveth life to the dead. In Him had He ever trusted, not only in life, but also in death : yea, Christ the Lord and the Head of all, the pattern of perfect righteousness, and the source of perfect holiness, trusted not in Himself, but in the Father Who sent Him.

2. O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord : Thou art my God, my goods are nothing unto Thee.

Heb. Thou hast said unto the Lord,
Thou art my Lord.
My goodness is not without Thee.

LXX. I have said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord ;
For Thou hast no need of my good things.

3. All my delight is upon the saints, that are in the earth : and upon such as excel in virtue.

He Who was the eternal Son yet came not into the world for God's sake, but for man's sake, that He might reconcile the world unto the Father. His death and passion, His patience and His truth, were indeed not without God, but they were for the good of fallen man. It was for the elect that He suffered and endured, 'that He might purify unto Himself a peculiar people zealous of good works;' in them hath He rejoiced, and them hath He loved with an everlasting love, and 'for their sakes sanctified He Himself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.' They shall be priests and kings in that nobility which our nature gained through Christ.

4. But they that run after another god : shall have great trouble.

5. Their drink-offerings of blood will I not offer : neither make mention of their names within my lips.

They who put their trust in anything else than God, and who look to somewhat else as a Saviour and Preserver, will be very woefully and bitterly deceived. Their unhappiness will be great. It is impossible to serve two masters. We are not able

to divide either our duty or our faith. 'We cannot drink the Cup of the Lord and the cup of devils; we cannot be partakers of the Lord's Table and of the table of devils.' They who become idolaters either in act or in spirit, have refused Christ for their High Priest, and His atonement and intercession can be no longer offered up for them.

6. The Lord Himself is the portion of mine inheritance, and of my cup : Thou shalt maintain my lot.

7. The lot is fallen unto me in a fair ground : yea, I have a goodly heritage.

He Who is the One High Priest hath not an earthly inheritance, but God Himself and the infinity of God is His portion; 'All Mine are Thine, and Thine are Mine; and I am glorified in them.' The inheritance of the world which His Father had prepared for Him He received, for that He refused not to drink of that cup which His Father had given Him to drink. Therefore is He ever able to save His people, and to bless His heritage.

8. I will thank the Lord for giving me warning : my reins also chasten me in the night-season.

He Who was as God the fountain of all wisdom, yea, wisdom itself, as man was endued by God with wisdom; and in that wisdom His steadfast prayer was, 'Preserve Me, O God.' And still in that double darkness of night and agony, when the

warning of His passion made His soul exceeding sorrowful unto death, He did not go back, but delivered all His cause into His Father's hand,—‘Nevertheless not My will, but Thine, be done.’

9. I have set God always before me : for He is on my right hand, therefore I shall not fall.

The only-begotten Son coming into that world where all things pass away, removed not His eyes from Him Who alone abideth unmoved for ever. In all His poverty and humiliation here the Father was ever with Him on His right hand, as a succour and defence, even as in His glory and exaltation He is upon the right hand of the Father as a King and Judge. Therefore did He overcome the world.

10. Wherefore my heart was glad, and my glory rejoiced : my flesh also shall rest in hope.

Therefore, too, in the mightiness of that victory did He cast away at once the punishment of the whole race of man,—‘Unto dust shalt thou return.’ He triumphed even in the coldness of death, and His glory shone amid the shadows of the grave; for His flesh did not return to dust. It rested there for a little while, not to be touched by corruption, or to become the prey of the worm, but in the speedy hope of being raised again, and clothed with incorruption and immortality.

11. For why? Thou shalt not leave my

soul in hell : neither shalt Thou suffer Thy Holy One to see corruption.

The souls indeed of all the righteous dead are in the hands of God ; but it was only the sacred Body of Him Whom even the demons owned to be the Holy One of God, that was not suffered to see decay. The Patriarch David indeed 'is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, He would raise up Christ to sit on his throne ; he seeing this before, spake of the resurrection of Christ, that His soul was not left in hell, neither His flesh did see corruption.' Yea, He Whom God raised saw the grave indeed, but saw it not to be holden of it. 'He descended into hell,' but His soul was not left nor abandoned there. Death could not destroy Him Who was to be the Destroyer of death ; corruption durst not come nigh that 'last Adam, Who was made a quickening Spirit.'

12. Thou shalt shew me the path of life ; in Thy presence is the fulness of joy : and at Thy right hand there is pleasure for evermore.

The Incarnate Word, therefore, rose again from the dead, shewing us by His deeds and teaching us by His words, that way which leadeth unto life, and by which life comes, which the Father had made known to Him. He opened, once for all, the path which leads from the grave to heaven. Man, once

driven forth from the presence of God through the unrighteousness of Adam, now enters it again in the righteousness of Christ. The joy of innocence once lost is more than made up by the glory gained by grace. In Christ we enter heaven. The pleasures of time which tempt us are there seen set on God's left hand; but at His right hand, and in Him Who is at His right hand, are the pleasures of eternity, the fulness of heavenly joy, and of love unchangeable.

The title of this Psalm is "Michtam of David." The word "Michtam" is rendered by the LXX., "an engraving on a pillar or monument;" others have translated it "golden," and have supposed that the Psalms called by that name were engraved in letters of gold on the walls of the temple or some other conspicuous place; other translations of the word are "a secret, or a song of mysteries," or otherwise, "a beautiful and very lovely song." St. Peter, in his sermon on the Day of Pentecost, plainly teaches us that David in this Psalm speaks of Christ, and of His descent into hell, and resurrection from the dead, (Acts ii. 25—31;) and St. Paul also, preaching in the synagogue of Antioch of Pisidia, brings forward the same verses of this Psalm in proof of the same truth, (Acts xiii. 34—37). It was probably written, as were the other Psalms called Michtam, (see Psalm lvi.), during his persecution by Saul, when he was in constant danger, and could only preserve his life by taking refuge in secret hiding-places, or among the heathen nations.

PSALM xvii. *Exaudi, Domine.*

1. HEAR the right, O Lord, consider my complaint : and hearken unto my prayer, that goeth not out of feigned lips.

2. Let my sentence come forth from Thy presence : and let Thine eyes look upon the thing that is equal.

Man cannot be sinless ; he can be sincere. Our prayers must be truthful, as well as earnest, if we would have God hear and answer. ' All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with Whom we have to do.' We must, therefore, in all we ask, as in all we do, know and feel that we are in His presence, and that He tries and judges each word we speak to Him, whether it be true and unfeigned, or whether it be deceitful and spoken in hypocrisy.

3. Thou hast proved and visited mine heart in the night-season ; Thou hast tried me, and shalt find no wickedness in me : for I am utterly purposed that my mouth shall not offend.

' We know that God heareth not sinners ; but if any man be a worshipper of Him and doeth His will, him He heareth.' The Almighty Judge, Who seeth in the darkness as in the day, can alone decide whether our evening prayer be an acceptable sacrifice, or a false and polluted offering. If our heart be true, and our words be pure, and our resolutions high and holy, and free from earthly dross, He Who heard and answered the Son of Man in His night-prayer in Gethsemane, will hear and answer us in our night-season of sadness or of sin, and cleanse our souls through Him.

4. Because of men's works, that are done against the words of Thy lips : I have kept me from the ways of the destroyer.

Heb. As for the doings of man :
 By the words of Thy lips
 I observe the ways of the violent.

5. O hold Thou up my goings in Thy paths : that my footsteps slip not.

Man's ways, when he follows his own disobedient and headstrong will, ever lead unto destruction. They must be searched out by the light of the Word of God and prayer; and so shall he that would observe the law and revealed will of his Maker, be kept from that self-confusion and ruin which must always follow the transgression of God's commandments. He must ever hold fast the spirit of the Redeemer's prayer,—'Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.'

6. I have called upon Thee, O God, for Thou shalt hear me : incline Thine ear to me, and hearken unto my words.

7. Shew Thy marvellous loving-kindness, Thou that art the Saviour of them which put their trust in Thee : from such as resist Thy right hand.

8. Keep me as the apple of an eye : hide me under the shadow of Thy wings,

9. From the ungodly that trouble me : mine enemies compass me round about to take away my soul.

Experience only can give us confidence in prayer. We know that God will hear, because He has heard.

He that has prayed fervently and sincerely cannot but have learnt how God does, as it were, single and choose out the most wonderful tokens of His mercy, the richest gifts of His grace, and bestow them in answer to the cravings of a pure and faithful soul. In the fulness of that love which passeth all understanding, and which was manifested in the coming of Christ the Saviour, not only does He defend from all dangers ghostly and bodily, and save us from our spiritual foes when they seek our soul, and from everlasting death; but He will make us His own peculiar care, as the elect members of His beloved Son, and will hide us under the shadow of that Cross upon which the extended hands of the Lord of life were nailed.

10. They are inclosed in their own fat : and their mouth speaketh proud things.

11. They lie waiting in our way on every side : turning their eyes down to the ground ;

12. Like as a lion that is greedy of his prey : and as it were a lion's whelp, lurking in secret places.

Selfishness, pride, treachery, and cruelty are the marks of the enemies of God and of man. 'Behold,' saith the prophet, 'this was the iniquity of Sodom,—pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness; neither did they strengthen the hand of the poor and the needy.' Such both do evil, and cause evil; they set snares for others' souls; they are like hunters watching for their prey, and taking caution that

it does not escape them. They are filled with the spirit of their father the devil, who is like a lion, ever raging and yet ever treacherous; 'and the lusts of their father they will do.'

13. Up, Lord, disappoint him, and cast him down : deliver my soul from the ungodly, which is a sword of Thine ;

14. From the men of Thy hand, O Lord, from the men, I say, and from the evil world : which have their portion in this life, whose bellies Thou fillest with Thy hid treasure.

15. They have children at their desire : and leave the rest of their substance for their babes.

Heb. Arise, O Lord, go before his face, cast him down :

Deliver my soul from the wicked, Thy sword.

From the men who are instruments in Thy hand,
O Lord,

From the men of this world, whose portion is in
this life,

For whom Thou fillest their body with Thy treasure.

They have sons in fulness,

And leave the residue to their children.

LXX. Up, Lord, surprise them, and bring them on their
knees :

Deliver my soul, which is Thy sword, from the impious,
From the enemies of Thy hand :

O Lord, Who dismisest from the earth,

Divide them in their life,

For their belly has been filled with Thy hidden things :

They have been satiated with unclean meat,

And have given the remainder to their little ones.

These will God finally deprive of the things they

set their heart on. Their prosperity is but for a time ; it is no token of His lasting favour. They are instruments in the hand of the Almighty, for the trial of the obedient and the proving of those whom He is seeking to draw from the world unto Himself. They blindly accomplish the task He sets them to ; and think only that they are doing their own will. They lay up treasures on earth, and know not that they shall become sources of cankering misery to them, and ‘a witness against them that shall eat their flesh as it were fire.’ They will to receive their good things in this life, and to leave them to their children after them, forgetting that ‘to live in pleasure upon the earth and to be wanton,’ is to live a life which is not life, but is rather a spiritual death.

16. But as for me, I will behold Thy presence in righteousness : and when I awake up after Thy likeness, I shall be satisfied with it.

This is the blessing of continual prayer—that it makes us abide, and makes us feel that we are abiding, in the continual presence of God. It weans us from the wish for a portion in this life, and from the longing to be satisfied with this world’s treasure, and makes us trust in the unseen guidance and ever-present righteousness of God, which is here seen but dimly, but which the future shall fully satisfy us with. They who pray are taught by the very act of prayer that their life is not bounded by this life : for they believe in the resurrection of

the dead when the Lord cometh in judgment ; and ‘ they know that, when He shall appear, they shall be like Him ; for they shall see Him as He is.’

This Psalm is entitled “ a Prayer of David ;” it sets out most clearly the true spirit and tone of mind with which we should offer prayer to God. Sincerity, truthfulness, and right intention, are spoken of as the requisites for acceptable prayer. It was probably written by David during his persecution by Saul ; and the character he gives of his enemies corresponds to that of those who then misrepresented his actions and plotted his death. From the appeal to God in the second and third verses, some have considered that this prayer could only properly be uttered by Christ Himself ; and that it is so far prophetic of Him ; and the Jews have repeated a tradition that David was allowed to fall into sin on account of his presumption in so appealing to God. But it is clear that the Psalm speaks, not of perfect righteousness and purity, but of that sincerity and uprightness of word and deed which man can reach to, and without which no prayer is heard. Verses 8 and 10 have an obvious reference to the song of Moses in Deut. xxxii. 10, 11, 15 ; and verses 13, 14, 15, though their general meaning is clear, yet present great difficulties to the translator in some of their expressions.

EVENING PRAYER.

PSALM xviii. *Diligam Te, Domine.*

1. I WILL love Thee, O Lord, my strength ; the Lord is my stony rock, and my defence : my Saviour, my God, and my might, in Whom I will trust, my buckler, the horn also of my salvation, and my refuge.

2. I will call upon the Lord, Which is worthy to be praised : so shall I be safe from mine enemies.

Since from God all that man is and all that

he has comes, to God should all that he is and all that he has be given. There is but one thing of value that we have, and that is our love; let us give that to Him Who is everything to us. Without Him and His strength we are but weakness; without His support we are most helpless; without Him, as a Saviour, we are but lost; without His Godhead for a ground of confidence, we could have no faith; without Him as a constant protector and defender, we must be exposed to every attack; and He only is our refuge from our sins and from ourselves. In trial and sorrow we have but to praise God,—not crying to Him merely, but coming to Him as most kind and worthy to be praised in all He does; and in that very moment the evil will abate, and the temptation to despair will be overcome. So, too, shall we be joined in closer union to Him Who said, in the days of His flesh, even as we say, ‘I will put my trust in Him.’

3. The sorrows of death compassed me :
and the overflowings of ungodliness made me
afraid.

Heb. The cords of death entangled me :
The torrents of Belial terrified me.

4. The pains of hell came about me : the
snares of death overtook me.

And we may thus praise God with full hope, and even assurance, of deliverance from Him, in the most mournful hours of misery and distress, and even in the times when death seems to be close to us, and the

memories of those sins we have done, or have been led into, come rushing upon us like an overwhelming flood. It may be that then the gloom of the unseen world will hang fearfully about us, and there will be no escape from the hand of death; but there will still be aid and consolation in the knowledge that not only did the Son of David pass through the same sorrow, pain, and fear, but ‘that God raised Him up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be holden of it;’ and that in Him all who believe in Him shall be raised up and delivered too.

5. In my trouble I will call upon the Lord : and complain unto my God.

6. So shall He hear my voice out of His holy temple : and my complaint shall come before Him, it shall enter even into His ears.

David called upon God in all the trouble that came upon him, and his prayer was heard. The Lord of David also ‘offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared.’ So shall each faithful heart, that in the time of tribulation and in the hour of death cries for deliverance unto Him Who dwelleth in the temple not made with hands, be heard and answered. Every single cry of sorrow or prayer of penitence that comes before the Father in the name of Jesus Christ shall find most sure acceptance.

7. The earth trembled and quaked : the very foundations also of the hills shook, and were removed, because He was wroth.

8. There went a smoke out in His presence : and a consuming fire out of His mouth, so that coals were kindled at it.

For He Who dwelleth in that high abode changeth not : His power is ever the same ; His judgments are ever the same ; His love is ever the same. The proclamation of His eternal will is ever being made, that He is God ; and, that right shall be, and that wrong shall not be. When that will was audibly declared of old, 'there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the Mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud ; and Mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire ; and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole Mount quaked greatly.' Shall then the earth tremble, and the foundations of the mountains shake at the revelation of His will, and we things of clay be careless and unmoved ? Shall the rocks glow like coals in the intensity of His power, and our hearts not burn within us as He speaks, but be cold and hard as ever ? Let us 'see that we refuse not Him that speaketh.'

9. He bowed the heavens also, and came down : and it was dark under His feet.

10. He rode upon the cherubims, and did

fly : He came flying upon the wings of the wind.

11. He made darkness His secret place : His pavilion round about Him with dark water, and thick clouds to cover Him.

Thus did heaven come down to earth, and God revealed His law to man. He did not reveal Himself: awe and mystery still surrounded Him. The mightiest and loftiest of created beings were but beneath His feet; the angels, and the elements they rule, were but the passive instruments of His will. He continued to abide in that unapproachable light, which to human eyes is utter darkness; His majesty was shrouded in the shadows of the elder covenant. He spake in that past time by the prophets, in parables and dark sayings, and solemn types.

12. At the brightness of His presence His clouds removed : hail-stones, and coals of fire.

13. The Lord also thundered out of heaven, and the Highest gave His thunder : hail-stones, and coals of fire.

14. He sent out His arrows, and scattered them : He cast forth lightnings, and destroyed them.

At length God revealed Himself. In the last days He spake unto us by His Son, Who is 'the brightness of His glory and the express image of His

Person.' With Him came despair to the hardened sinner, and grace to the repenting. In Him prophecies were accomplished, and the law fulfilled. But the marvels at the fulfilling were not less than those at the giving of the Law; rather they were greater and more glorious. The darkness around the Cross from the sixth hour unto the ninth was not less fearful than that on Sinai; the earthquake which rent the rocks and opened the graves was not less awful than that which shook the Mount; the cry of the angel who rolled back the stone from the sepulchre, 'whose countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow,' was not less startling than the voices from amid the darkness and the cloud,—'He is not here, for He is risen.' The rushing mighty wind and the descending tongues of fire were more wondrous in their effect, and intenser in their influence, than the 'thunders and lightnings' of the proclaiming the Law. God's voice of old shook the earth; but then was His promise fulfilled which said, 'Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven.'

15. The springs of waters were seen, and the foundations of the round world were discovered, at 'Thy chiding, O Lord : at the blasting of the breath of Thy displeasure.

Then was wrought a mightier sign than the parting of the Red Sea at the deliverance from Egypt, or the dividing the waters of Jordan at the entering into the promised land. The eternal Son of God

passed through the waters of death, He descended into the lower parts of the earth. He rebuked death, and was the destruction of the power of the grave: however mighty their obscurity and gloom might be, the Lord from on high was mightier.

16. He shall send down from on high to fetch me : and shall take me out of many waters.

17. He shall deliver me from my strongest enemy, and from them which hate me : for they are too mighty for me.

In Him, Who hath so wonderfully and so awfully shewn forth His purpose concerning man, Who hath thus given him both knowledge of His holy will and grace to keep and do it, we may most safely and entirely trust. He Who hath come down, not once only, for man's sake, will ever be ready to save those who ask Him for His aid from the tossing of 'the waves of this troublesome world,' from the dark and deep waters of sin and death, which, many though they be, cannot quench His love. He will lift up a standard for us, even His love, against that 'enemy which comes in like a flood' upon our souls; for though he be stronger than us, there is One stronger than he.

18. They prevented me in the day of my trouble : but the Lord was my upholder.

19. He brought me forth also into a place of liberty : He brought me forth, even because He had a favour unto me.

In the time of weakness and in the hour of death do those unseen foes most crowd around us: He only Who is our most worthy Judge eternal can uphold us, that for no pains of death we fall from Him. He Who raised up Jesus from the dead will raise up also the members of His Church; He will bring them to those heavenly mansions which He hath prepared for them; He will lead His own through all that can hurt or terrify them, safe even to the end, for He hath loved them with an everlasting love.

20. The Lord shall reward me after my righteous dealing : according to the cleanness of my hands shall He recompense me.

21. Because I have kept the ways of the Lord : and have not forsaken my God, as the wicked doth.

22. For I have an eye unto all His laws : and will not cast out His commandments from me.

23. I was also uncorrupt before Him : and eschewed mine own wickedness.

This is the result of the experience of God's saints,—that the way of obedience is the way of salvation; that purity of heart is immortal peace. There was One Who kept all the ways of God, and fully obeyed all His laws, and in Whom He was well pleased; and to follow His steps is to share in His salvation. The way not to depart from God,

as the wicked do, is to watch His revealed will, and to hold fast by His commandments; so shall we in no violent degree fall from grace, and so we shall be saved from the natural evil of our hearts.

24. Therefore shall the Lord reward me after my righteous dealing : and according unto the cleanness of my hands in His eyesight.

Yea, this is a certain and eternal fact, that they who have done right shall not be as they who have done wrong. Doing right will meet with God's favour and love, will meet with His approval, as shewn in the course of His providence. They who have kept from sin, so far as they have kept from sin shall be able to taste and see the loving-kindness of God. Not to do wrong will ever be its own exceeding great reward in the sight of Him, Whose everlasting will it is, that wrong should not be done.

25. With the holy Thou shalt be holy : and with a perfect man Thou shalt be perfect.

26. With the clean Thou shalt be clean : and with the froward Thou shalt learn frowardness.

27. For Thou shalt save the people that are in adversity : and shalt bring down the high looks of the proud.

Thus do we best gain the knowledge of the Ruler of all. They who in their degree and to their power

seek after holiness, and integrity, and purity, in what they do, and say, and think, shall see more plainly, and love more deeply, Him Who is perfect holiness, and goodness, and purity. They are of Him and in Him, Whose all-perfect Spirit is in them; and no earthly sorrow can sully their trust and peace. While with the disobedient and profane God is, as it were, in a continual struggle; He seems to be in truth an austere Master; and the remembrance of Him comes to their minds only to annoy, to humiliate, and to crush them.

28. Thou also shalt light my candle : the Lord my God shall make my darkness to be light.

Thus does God give us light—by drawing us nearer to the Fount of light, to Him Who is ‘Light of Light.’ None but He can make our darkness to be light; as none but ourselves can make His light darkness. He kindles a spark of His uncreated and immortal light within our dark and dying hearts; and in its clearness all things change: the shadows of earth vanish, the things eternal become more plain; and the saying is fulfilled in us,—‘Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.’

29. For in Thee I shall discomfit an host of men : and with the help of my God I shall leap over the wall.

As Christ is our Light, so is He our Strength.

He will conquer in us, as we have conquered in Him. We shall be victors over the multitude of our own sins and ignorances, even as David discomfited his enemies in battle array; we shall despise and overcome the stony wall of the tomb, which our sins built up and made so strong,—even as David ascended into the ramparts and subdued the citadel of the Jebusites,—in and through Him Who once defeated the malice of His murderers by His patient love, and Who scaled the battlements of the grave by the glory of the Father.

30. The way of God is an undefiled way : the word of the Lord also is tried in the fire ; He is the defender of all them that put their trust in Him.

31. For who is God, but the Lord : or who hath any strength, except our God ?

These things are needful for us, that we may come unto that One Almighty Father and eternal God Who hath made heaven and earth,—obedience to the commandments which He has given, faith in the truths which He has revealed, use of the means of grace which He has appointed. Thus only can we arrive at the true knowledge of Him Whom truly to know is everlasting life, Whose way is holiness, Whose word is more precious than refined gold, Whose aid and defence is never failing.

32. It is God, that girdeth me with strength of war : and maketh my way perfect.

33. He maketh my feet like hart's feet : and setteth me up on high.

34. He teacheth mine hands to fight : and mine arms shall break even a bow of steel.

It is only in Him that the Christian can manfully fight against his foes ; He only can make him perfect in that way of love in which no fear can linger. In Him only can we pass safely and swiftly, like a hart, among the thorny brakes and through the entangling thickets of this world's wilderness ; and by Him only can we indeed fulfil the precept— 'Set your affection on things above.' He only giveth that mouth and wisdom which no adversaries are able to gainsay or resist, and that power by which we 'can do all things through Christ Which strengtheneth us.'

35. Thou hast given me the defence of Thy salvation : Thy right hand also shall hold me up, and Thy loving correction shall make me great.

36. Thou shalt make room enough under me for to go : that my footsteps shall not slide.

37. I will follow upon mine enemies, and overtake them : neither will I turn again till I have destroyed them.

38. I will smite them, that they shall not be able to stand : but fall under my feet.

He Who once fought for us, and overcame in us,

is our ever-present salvation and constant support and guide. The light afflictions and chastenings which He lays upon us, work out for us by their loving discipline a higher degree of victory and glory. In that one holy Church into which He has called us, there is a way opened for us to Himself which is most secure and plain, if our feet slide not from it. There in obedience and self-denial we can struggle with our unworthy desires and carnal lusts, and take no rest till we have utterly beaten them down and cast them out, and made them give place to purity and heavenly love.

39. Thou hast girded me with strength unto the battle : Thou shalt throw down mine enemies under me.

40. Thou hast made mine enemies also to turn their backs upon me : and I shall destroy them that hate me.

41. They shall cry, but there shall be none to help them : yea, even unto the Lord shall they cry, but He shall not hear them.

42. I will beat them as small as the dust before the wind : I will cast them out as the clay in the streets.

We may contend, but it is Christ Who achieves the conquest. Man may wage the fight against sin, but it is grace that wins it. It is only in the armour with which He girds us, and by the weapons which He gives us, that we can stand

in the evil day of temptation. All that offends God in us must be destroyed; for who would save what He will not save? The enemies of our souls must be made to perish, like the Amalekites and Agag their king, without help or hope. They are of the earth, earthy: the flesh in which is their strength and dwelling-place shall return to the dust from which it was taken, and in that day shall all fleshly thoughts and earthly plans perish.

43. Thou shalt deliver me from the strivings of the people : and Thou shalt make me the head of the heathen.

44. A people whom I have not known : shall serve me.

45. As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me : but the strange children shall dissemble with me.

46. The strange children shall fail : and be afraid out of their prisons.

They who are Christ's shall share in all He has and all He is. They are members of His Body; and as they struggle and suffer with Him, so also shall they reign with Him. In Him they are delivered from the unrest and unending strife which is their portion who have not His peace, and would not have Him to reign over them. In the power of His holiness, and endued with the riches of His grace, they partake His glory, Who is not only the Head of the Church which He has redeemed, but is also the King of the world.

They see how, in His good time, one people after another are gathered into His one fold; how the fulness of the nations is being brought to know Him and to serve Him, 'Whose service is perfect freedom.' They learn how 'faith cometh by hearing;' and how the very message that Christ was crucified, is in truth the proclamation of His Almighty sovereignty. It may be that some may make a show of reverence without keeping the law of obedience, but their work will come to nothing. Hypocrisy must wither; sin must be afraid; they who are not, and will not be, children of the kingdom, shall find that the stubbornness of heart which they had fancied their fortress and stronghold, is really a prison to which they have condemned themselves.

47. The Lord liveth, and blessed be my strong helper : and praised be the God of my salvation.

48. Even the God that seeth that I be avenged : and subdueth the people unto me.

49. It is He that delivereth me from my cruel enemies, and setteth me up above mine adversaries : Thou shalt rid me from the wicked man.

Thus then the Church on earth must join in praises with the Church in heaven, before Him Who hath life, and Who hath given to them that true knowledge of Himself which is eternal life. If they are weak, He is strong; if they are sinful,

He is a Saviour; He watches over His own with never-ceasing love; He will raise them from poverty, and deliver them from persecution; He will keep them safe from the evil world, and 'finally beat down Satan under their feet.'

50. For this cause will I give thanks unto Thee, O Lord, among the Gentiles : and sing praises unto Thy Name. .

And not the Body merely, 'which is the Church' of the believing, shall glorify God, but their Head shall join with them too; to the finiteness of their thanksgivings He adds the infiniteness of His own praise, Who became the manifesting of God's love to man, and the perfecting of man's coming near to God. In Him shall both Jew and Gentile glorify God for His mercy, and He shall glorify the Father for His mercy in them; 'as it is written, For this cause I will confess to Thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto Thy Name.'

51. Great prosperity giveth He unto His King : and sheweth loving-kindness unto David His Anointed, and unto his seed for evermore.

The magnificence of David, and the glory of his kingdom, were but a shadow cast from that coming kingdom which the Son of David would establish for ever. The power of that Anointed King was to reach as widely as the mercy of God, and the law of His kingdom was to be unending righteousness. Then was the fulness of Almighty loving-

kindness shewn, when He came Whose name was called Jesus, of Whom the message was brought,— ‘He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David: and He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end.’

This Psalm, which is found also, with some few variations, in 2 Samuel xxii., is said in its title to be by “David, the servant of the Lord, who spake unto the Lord the words of this song in the day that the Lord delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul.” It is an ascribing of praise to God, Who preserved him in very many dangers and trials, and had set him upon his throne, and had given him by Nathan a promise, that “He would raise up his seed after him, which should be of his sons, and would establish his kingdom; and that he should build Him a house, and that He would stablish his throne for ever,” (1 Chron. xvii. 11, 12). In the beginning of the Psalm David describes the mightiness of God under the figure of a fearful storm. It is possible that a storm, or some convulsion of nature, may at some time have deterred Saul from falling upon David and killing him; but if this did give occasion to this part of the Psalm, it also recalled to the singer’s mind all those instances in which God, through the powers of nature, had revealed His will to man,—when He divided the Red Sea and the Jordan, when He gave the law on Sinai, when He discomfited the Philistines at Mizpeh, (1 Sam. vii. 10). Two of the passages of this Psalm are applied by the writers of the New Testament to that promised Seed Who should reign over not only the Jew, but the Gentile, and of Whose kingdom there should be no end. The first verse is quoted in Heb. ii. 13, and the fiftieth in Rom. xv. 9; and there is also a reference to the fourth in Acts ii. 24. This is one of the most grand and regular of the Psalms, while at the same time it is difficult to trace out thoroughly the whole of the mystical meaning which was in the mind of the prophet-king.

Morning Prayer.

FOR CHRISTMAS-DAY.

PSALM XIX. *Cœli enarrant.*

1. THE heavens declare the glory of God :
and the firmament sheweth His handy-work.

The universe is a mighty temple filled with the glory of God, and each portion of it is ever shining with the reflection of that with which the whole is filled. The heavens, in their mid-day radiance dazzling mortal eyes with their sublime beauty and solemn purity, that high serene expanse of skies, which seems bent above the earth like a crystal vaulting, whose depths, infinite as they are, are full of light and clearness,—these speak not of themselves, but of One mightier, purer, brighter even than they are. The glory of the creation declares the glory of the Creator. That wonderful and lofty work is a world-wide confession, made not in word, but in deed, of that ‘God the Father Almighty, Who is Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.’

2. One day telleth another : and one night certifieth another.

3. There is neither speech nor language :
but their voices are heard among them.

Heb. Day unto day pours forth speech :

And night unto night shews knowledge.

There is not speech, and there are not words .

Their voice is not heard.

Not for one short day, nor in one fixed place, is that mysterious display made of the mightiness of God. His glory has not been once proclaimed and then been hidden; but day following after day in unerring order brings ever the same message; and each night becomes the herald to the next of His creating power and His unvarying law. They are silent, and yet they speak unceasingly; from one region of the world unto another they are ever uttering their proclamation; and men's hearts, whatever the language of their tongues may be, can hear their voice, and men's eyes can read their tidings, which tell, and ever have told from the beginning, of Him Who made them:—for 'the invisible things of God from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead.'

4. Their sound is gone out into all lands :
and their words into the ends of the world.

Heb. Their line goeth through the earth ;
And their words to the bounds of the world.

But power and glory is not all that they have to tell of. The eternal Spirit, Who 'garnished the heavens' with their loveliness, impressed upon them yet a deeper meaning, which they only whose eyes He openeth can read. The will of God as revealed in His Gospel, the mysteries of grace made known in Christ, these marvels of His redeeming love were to be made no less fully known than the marvels of

His creating power. His apostles declaring His mercy were to be like the heavens declaring His glory. They were to measure out and divide the world, as fully as did the movements of the heavens and the courses of the stars. Wherever light shone, in every nation under heaven, there too was love to shine. The beams of rising day were not to go farther than the beams of grace and truth. So that of every land, even to the ends of the world, it should be said concerning those whom Christ had appointed as His messengers, — ‘Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.’

5. In them hath He set a tabernacle for the sun : which cometh forth as a bridegroom out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a giant to run his course.

6. It goeth forth from the uttermost part of the heaven, and runneth about unto the end of it again : and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.

The brightest of created lights is but a shadow of the presence of God. The sun, the most glorious to our eyes of all the glories of the heavens, coming, as he seems to do, from the east, glad and strong, and performing his allotted journey through the sky, until he returns to the quarter from whence he rose, and pouring down in his course his cheerful influence of light, and warmth, and life, upon the earth,—this daily and yet always joyful sight, will

come to us with tenfold joy, if it brings with it the thought of that Sun of Righteousness Who once tabernacled in human flesh, Who is the true Bridegroom of His spouse the Church, Who is the Lord mighty to save, the Light of Light, Who ‘for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven,’ and was born in Bethlehem on the first Christmas-day. He Himself said of Himself,—‘I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again I leave the world, and go to the Father.’ His grace rests upon all of ‘His elect from the one end of heaven to the other;’ and from His love none are hidden. It shineth on the evil and the good.

7. The law of the Lord is an undefiled law, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, and giveth wisdom unto the simple.

We are told that the visible heavens declare the glory of God, we are not told that they declare His will. To admire God in His outward works is not enough; we must obey Him in His law, we must be led by His Spirit. The heavens, indeed, are high and stainless, but it needs more than the contemplation of them to convert the soul; this is the work of the Holy Ghost. Their motions are regular and sure, but the knowledge of them is not that true wisdom which makes wise even the ignorant and untaught; this is the gift of the Holy Ghost.

8. The statutes of the Lord are right, and

rejoice the heart : the commandment of the Lord is pure, and giveth light unto the eyes.

9. The fear of the Lord is clean, and endureth for ever : the judgments of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether.

The souls for which Christ died are of more worth than the material worlds which God has made ; and therefore the law and the commandments by which the soul is taught in righteousness, are higher and nobler, and outweigh in God's sight the laws which the heavens obey. His will is ever right, and therefore to follow it is ever the most true pleasure. His commandments are the very law and type of purity ; and therefore they who keep them best have the clearest insight into spiritual things. The fear of Him is holy and clean, and preserves them who feel it in holiness ; and therefore there is a blessing upon it for ever. His judgments are not as men's are—partial, but are true and perfect ; and therefore they will stand, because they cannot be other than they are. Thus has the law of God, through the power of the Holy Ghost, twelve glories, even as the tree of life bears twelve manner of fruits.

10. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold : sweeter also than honey, and the honeycomb.

Not wealth, nor the gaining the dearest of this world's treasures,—not pleasure, nor the choicest of this world's joys, are to be chosen in comparison with the law and will of God. The gifts of grace

are the highest of all gifts. They only can save the soul; and 'what shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?' The least of the commandments of God, the smallest of the blessings of Christ, is more to be desired than all riches and all self-gratification; for the one last for a while, the other endure for ever.

11. Moreover, by them is Thy servant taught : and in keeping of them there is great reward.

For they teach what we could never learn of ourselves, what even the heavens and the firmament cannot teach us—the way to God. His works proclaim to us that He is a God mighty and wonderful; His revealed will alone teaches us how we may become His, and He Himself may be to us 'our exceeding great reward.' Nature teaches us awe and fear; grace teaches us obedience and love.

12. Who can tell how oft he offendeth : O cleanse Thou me from my secret faults.

13. Keep Thy servant also from presumptuous sins, lest they get the dominion over me : so shall I be undefiled, and innocent from the great offence.

As the feeling of our own littleness increases as we gaze upon the immensity of the heavens, so does the sense of our sins deepen as we look into the holiness of God's law. While we compare our thoughts and lives with that all-pure rule of righteousness, our sins

which we had forgotten, our negligences and ignorances which we had never thought of, come before us in an ever-increasing number, till they seem more than the hairs of our heads, and we cannot reckon them. But that Holy Spirit which brings them before our memory can also cleanse us from them; yea, the bringing them to light is His way to cleanse us from them. If we ask to be delivered from hidden and secret faults, in that very prayer there lies deliverance from sins of presumption. If we strive through grace to guard against the crafty approaches of evil, we shall be preserved pure from the tyranny of those terrible and most deadly sins that forerun that sin against the Holy Ghost, which never hath forgiveness.

14. Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart : be alway acceptable in Thy sight,

15. O Lord : my strength, and my Redeemer.

‘O God, make clean our hearts within us,’ is the Church’s daily cry: not merely the words of our lips must be holy and faithful, but the inner motions of the heart must go with them, like a strain of pure and chastened melody, if they are to come as an accepted sacrifice before the face of God. Yes, purity of heart is the end to which all things, seen and unseen, temporal and eternal, must bring the children of God. The eye of flesh can see the glory of the Creator proclaimed in the firma-

ment of heaven; and a glad and glorious sight it ever is! But there is a deeper blessing given to the pure in heart, even that they shall see God not in His works only, but in Himself; that they shall know Him and shall love Him, not only as the Almighty Maker of this glorious Universe, but in His higher glory still, as the Almighty Redeemer of man's offending soul.

This Psalm, which is appointed for Christmas-day, has much in common with the eighth Psalm, and was probably written by David at the same period of his life. The eighth Psalm, however, contemplates the glory of the skies as manifested in the night, when the sun is absent, while the present one rather dwells upon the beauty and clearness of day, and the power and brightness of that greater light which God appointed to rule the day. Hence it is fitly chosen for the Nativity of Him Who was 'a Light to lighten the nations.' The root of the Hebrew word in Gen. i. 16 which is rendered "to rule" the day and the night, has likewise the meaning of "to chant a mystical song for;" and from this double meaning of the word, the thoughts which the first verses of the Psalm contain perhaps first took their rise. But the heathens also used to speak of the harmonies of the heavens and the music of the spheres, which only the purified soul could hear. The opening of the Psalm appears to describe the glory of God in the material world, while in the latter half the prophet seems to be led on to His glory in the spiritual world as revealed by His Law: but the apostle St. Paul, by his applying the fourth verse of the Psalm to the preaching of the Gospel throughout the world by the apostles, (Rom. x. 18,) very plainly teaches us that the glory of God in creation cannot be disconnected from His glory in redemption; that the worlds of nature and of grace are not things to be divided and disunited, but that their laws and glories are woven into and connected the one with the other. From this the Christian Church may learn the lesson, that science, as it is called, and religion, are not to be separated; but that natural and revealed truth are to be taken as joined most closely by Him from Whom they both proceed. There is no salvation in the mere knowledge of God's laws in the universe of matter, unless they guide us on to the higher knowledge of those laws of the universe of spirits, whose eternal effect is purity of heart.

PSALM XX. *Exaudiat te Dominus.*

1. THE Lord hear thee in the day of trouble : the Name of the God of Jacob defend thee ;

2. Send thee help from the sanctuary : and strengthen thee out of Sion ;

We are all soldiers. Every baptized man is sworn to fight manfully under Christ's banner. Day by day he has to go out to battle with his enemies, who are the enemies of his Master too. This, then, is the prayer of the Church for each one of us, and her blessing for each one of us—that in the day of conflict and of trial, He may hear us and may help us, Who Himself went forth to combat with 'the strong man armed,' and overcame him. His name, by which we are known, will be a surer defence than any other arms. He watches us from His eternal throne, and succours us with His grace, if our foes—that is, our own sins—press too hard upon us ; and when our resolution wavers, and our hearts grow weary, and the time seems long, He cheers us again with a share of His own Almighty strength, by the Sacrament from His altar, and the means of grace that are within His Church.

3. Remember all thy offerings : and accept thy burnt-sacrifice ;

4. Grant thee thy heart's desire : and fulfil all thy mind.

It was an old custom that they who fought should

offer a sacrifice before they began the battle ; and we, if we would conquer, must do so too—must ‘offer ourselves, our souls and bodies,’ as a living sacrifice to Him Who offered Himself for us. So may we rely upon His grace with confidence. He will not forget our prayers ; He will not despise our penitence. Let the desire of our hearts be for ‘the things belonging to the Spirit,’ and He will not fail to grant it ; let our minds be set upon righteousness, and He will fulfil their longings.

5. We will rejoice in Thy salvation, and triumph in the Name of the Lord our God : the Lord perform all thy petitions.

The petition which the Church makes for the soldier of Christ at his baptism is, ‘that he may have power and strength to have victory, and to triumph against the devil, the world, and the flesh.’ But the fight is not over in a day. It is not by one blow that he can conquer. Only as time goes on, and he sees how his eternal Lord is ready to answer all his prayers, is he able to indulge in thoughts of hope. It is not till the fight is fought and won, that he can fully see how all his shoutings of triumph can have but his Lord’s salvation for their theme, and that His Name alone can be inscribed on his flag of victory.

6. Now know I, that the Lord helpeth His Anointed, and will hear him from His holy heaven : even with the wholesome strength of His right hand.

There was a time when Christ, the Captain of our salvation, fought and endured, not for His own sake, but for ours; and dark and fearful was the conflict He went through. Not till we ourselves have experienced what the power of the tempter is, and have resisted and overcome him, can we enter into the awfulness of the Saviour's struggle in Gethsemane, when 'being in an agony He prayed more earnestly,' and the angel 'appeared unto Him from heaven strengthening Him.' In Him Who conquered then, we conquer now; and He Who heard and helped His Anointed then, will hear and help us now.

7. Some put their trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the Name of the Lord our God.

8. They are brought down, and fallen: but we are risen, and stand upright.

Some trust in themselves, in their own power, their own pride, their own passion, when they are called to contend with the enemy of souls. But these ever have failed, and ever will fail, when the hour of temptation comes. Sin is far stronger than man unaided by grace: he quickly falls before it; his pride is soon brought down, and he is tied and bound with its bitter chain. But faith hath surer wheels than pride; and prayer will carry us where power must fall. The memory of the Cross, and of Him Who died thereon, will put to flight the hosts of the evil one, and in the mightiness of our risen Lord we shall rise conquerors over both sin and death,

and shall see at last Satan trampled beneath the feet of God's elect.

9. Save, Lord, and hear us, O King of heaven : when we call upon Thee.

LXX. O Lord save the king :

And hear us when we call upon Thee.

Meanwhile we must pray without ceasing. We have a King eternal in the heavens, Whose power to save is greater even than our need of salvation, and Whose willingness to hear far outruns our wish to pray. Ask we of Him, and we shall always most surely have, both succour and safety and victory.

This too bears the title of a Psalm of David. It has been sometimes considered to be a prophetic anticipation of Sennacherib's invasion of Jerusalem, and of the prayer of Hezekiah and of his people for deliverance. It is more probably, in its literal sense, a devout and holy battle-song composed by David to be chanted by his armies when they marched with their king to war against their foes, especially, perhaps, against the Ammonites and Syrians, (2 Sam. chap. x.). It may well be considered to refer to the spiritual David, and to the soldiers of His army, who form the Church Militant on earth.

FOR ASCENSION-DAY.

PSALM XXI. *Domine, in virtute Tua.*

1. THE King shall rejoice in Thy strength, O Lord : exceeding glad shall he be of Thy salvation.

2. Thou hast given him his heart's desire : and hast not denied him the request of his lips.

If the men of Galilee, who stood upon the mount

from whence the Son of David ascended into heaven to sit down as an everlasting King on the right hand of God, rejoiced with 'great joy' when the work of their Lord was done, and He had entered into His glory,—if they felt thus, He too, Who was very Man, Who had felt all that man can feel of suffering, must have felt, too, all that man can feel of joy and exceeding gladness, in the hour when the power and the holiness of God was vindicated, and salvation was won for man. He had gained what He had sought. Eternal charity to man, whose brother He had made Himself, had been the principle and the law of His life on earth. His heart was only love—'love stronger than death;' for that love had triumphed now over death and sin. In the days of His passion He had prayed, 'O Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine own Self, with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was,' and now His prayer was granted.

3. For Thou shalt prevent him with the blessings of goodness : and shalt set a crown of pure gold upon his head.

He Who was from the beginning the source of all blessings to man, is now blessed for evermore as man: and upon that Head which was once bruised and crowned with thorns, is set the crown of an unending kingdom, round which shine in infinite array those pearls of mighty price, even the souls of the redeemed, which He gave up all to win. Yea, He is crowned with a double crown,—the crown of grace

for the Son of God, and the crown of glory for the Son of Man !

4. He asked life of Thee, and Thou gavest him a long life : even for ever and ever.

He had tasted death that we might have life, and that we might have it more abundantly. And He rose again from the dead that we might rise and live with Him for ever and ever. The Father gave unto Him to have life in Himself, that we might have eternal life in Him.

5. His honour is great in Thy salvation : glory and great worship shalt Thou lay upon him.

6. For Thou shalt give him everlasting felicity : and make him glad with the joy of Thy countenance.

If, when the Son of Man was lifted up in agony upon the Cross, He could draw all men unto Himself, how much more shall He draw them now that He is exalted in glory upon His throne ! He is become the King of life and the Lord of grace ; and before His glory all earthly splendour fades, and before His power all human power dwindles. All that is holy and all that is bright, and all that is pure, is gathered round His Mediatorial throne, and He is holier, brighter, purer than all. 'The glory of the Father and of the Son is equal, and their majesty co-eternal.'

7. And why ? because the King putteth his

trust in the Lord : and in the mercy of the Most Highest he shall not miscarry.

He obeyed before He reigned. He entered not into His glory before He suffered. It is the renouncing of self, and the giving up of all, even the very life and soul, to God, that is the safe and appointed entrance into His mercy and rest. It was the Redeemer's dying prayer—'Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit'—that unlocked the gates of Heaven to all believers.

8. All Thine enemies shall feel Thy hand : Thy right hand shall find out them that hate Thee.

9. Thou shalt make them like a fiery oven in time of Thy wrath : the Lord shall destroy them in His displeasure, and the fire shall consume them.

Beneath the footstool of His feet all flesh shall fall; they who love Him kneeling there in adoring gratitude, and they who hate Him crouching down in terror and despair. They who knew Him not in His humility shall know Him in His power; and His hand, which was pierced for them, shall find them out, how far off soever they may be. Those hearts which will not glow with holy gratitude shall burn with shame and infinite remorse when the manifestation of His justice draweth near; and His awful sentence, 'Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire,' shall be but the echo of their own self-abhorring consciences.

10. Their fruit shalt Thou root out of the earth : and their seed from among the children of men.

11. For they intended mischief against Thee : and imagined such a device as they are not able to perform.

12. Therefore shalt Thou put them to flight : and the strings of Thy bow shalt Thou make ready against the face of them.

Heb. Truly Thou shalt set them for a mark ;

Thou shalt fit upon Thy bow-string against their faces.

LXX. In that which Thou hast remaining shalt Thou prepare their face.

Into Christ's eternal kingdom sin cannot come, and no sinner can enter there. It is prepared for the redeemed alone. From that regenerated world each tree that bringeth forth evil fruit is rooted out, and cast into the fire. So it must be. Each one who commits a wilful sin takes his place among the enemies of Christ : ' He crucifies to himself the Son of God afresh, and puts Him to an open shame.' He would, if it were possible, bury Him again within the rock of his hardened heart, and seal the stone, that He might never rise. It is but a vain device. The King of all spirits, and the Searcher of all hearts, has risen and ascended into Heaven, and sat down upon His almighty throne ; and they who will be His people, and will obey Him, and will love Him, shall be His both in time and in eternity ; and they who refuse to love Him, and will not be His, by

that very act drive themselves away from Him ; by that very act pierce themselves through with many and immortal sorrows ; by that very act are ‘ punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord.’

13. Be Thou exalted, Lord, in Thine own strength : so will we sing, and praise Thy power.

The humiliation of the Son of God was the ground of His exaltation ; and His own strength was the strength of His infinite love. Through this He came down to earth and died ; through this He rose again and ascended into heaven ; for ‘ He That descended is the same also That ascended.’ Thus His Church in this, and such-like hymns, shall ever magnify Him Who by the mightiness of meekness and the power of mercy conquered death and sin, and gained for Himself both in heaven and earth a kingdom which shall endure through all ages.

This Psalm of David has been considered to be prophetic of the Messiah by the earlier Rabbis, as well as by St. Athanasius, St. Augustine, and the Fathers generally. It is true that it might be occasioned by some of the events in David’s reign ; and verses 3 and 9, compared with 2 Sam. xii. 30, 31, seem to refer to his victory over the Ammonites in particular. But a mere earthly triumph cannot be the chief subject of such high and glowing language ; and the fact that the King, who is bidden to rejoice in the strength of God in the first verse, is in the last addressed as Jehovah exalted in His own strength, is sufficient to point out Him Who was both God and Man, as the One Whom the inspired Psalmist was led to glorify. Its subject being the triumph of Christ, it is fitly chosen by the Church for Ascension-Day.

Evening Prayer.

FOR GOOD-FRIDAY.

PSALM xxii. *Deus, Deus meus.*

1. My God, my God, look upon me; why hast Thou forsaken me: and art so far from my health, and from the words of my complaint?

We are brought into the very midst of the Passion; we are standing on Calvary, with the Cross full before us; it is the ninth hour, and 'Jesus cries with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?' Surely these words should be written, not with ink, but with tears! He Who was from eternity with the Father is left in the solitude of the sinner; He Who is the fount of life is tasting of pain and death; He Who is immortal love is bowed down with sorrow and dismay. The Son of God has entered into the deep loneliness and utter weakness of human nature, left to die. It was not possible for the cup to pass away, unless He drank it; and even the abiding presence of the Father of all comfort is withdrawn from Him, while He drains it to its dregs of suffering.

2. O my God, I cry in the day-time, but Thou hearest not: and in the night-season also I take no rest.

3. And Thou continuest holy : O Thou worship of Israel.

He had taken both the nature of sinful man and the burden of his sins upon Himself; and under the sense of its overwhelming weight He could not but cry unto His Father on the Cross, as He had cried in the night before in His sleepless agony in the garden. As He saw then in its nearness the immensity of the work He had to do, and how foul and wretched sin was before the unchanging holiness of the all-righteous God, 'He began to be sorrowful and very heavy.' Three times, while others were weary and slept, He rested not, but prayed, 'If this cup may not pass away from Me except I drink it, Thy will be done;' three times He cried in the garden unto His Father and His God, that He might atone for that threefold temptation of curiosity, desire, and pride, by which man in the garden fell. He cried in the day-time, that by His Cross and passion,—and He rested not in the night-season, that by His agony and bloody sweat,—He might deliver us.

4. Our fathers hoped in Thee : they trusted in Thee, and Thou didst deliver them.

5. They called upon Thee, and were holpen : they put their trust in Thee, and were not confounded.

It was not that God could not deliver those who trusted in Him : He had done it for a long time of old. He Who could deliver the sinful when they

came to Him with faith, could much more deliver the Sinless Who came to Him in innocence. Rather it was, that He was not delivered that we might find deliverance; He was not helped, that we might ask for help and have it; He was put to confusion, that we might never be confounded.

6. But as for me, I am a worm, and no man : a very scorn of men, and the outcast of the people.

But the Holy One of God had taken to Himself the nature of him who was made from the dust of the earth. He was in all things as 'man, which is a worm;' yea, He had made Himself even less than man, for, though without man's sin, He bore man's punishment. His beauty was gone for sorrow; His face was marred with buffetings. He was 'set at nought and mocked,' and when He was offered to the world, 'Behold the man,' He was despised as a Saviour and rejected as a King. They for whom He died had made their choice,—'Not this man, but Barabbas;' and Barabbas was a robber.

7. All they that see me laugh me to scorn : they shoot out their lips, and shake their heads, saying,

8. He trusted in God, that He would deliver him : let Him deliver him, if He will have him.

'They that passed by reviled Him, wagging their heads, and saying, Thou that destroyest the temple,

and buildest it in three days, save Thyself. If Thou be the Son of God, come down from the Cross. Likewise also the chief priests mocking Him, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He be the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him. He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him: for He said, I am the Son of God.' For comfort, all He had was insult. His face was worn with agony; and they who saw Him distorted theirs with scoffing. They laid to His reproach, not His unbelief, but His faith; they scornfully blasphemed and derided His patient trust in God. Yet He was silent: 'When He was reviled, He reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not.'

9. But Thou art He that took me out of my mother's womb: Thou wast my hope, when I hanged yet upon my mother's breasts.

10. I have been left unto Thee ever since I was born: Thou art my God even from my mother's womb.

'When He took upon Him to deliver man, He did not abhor the Virgin's womb.' He was not born as man is born, in sin and corruption; but 'He was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary.' The angels had rejoiced over His birth; the star of the Epiphany had shone over Him while yet lying upon the bosom of His ever-blessed mother. He had trusted in God. His Father had been with Him,

and He had been with His Father, all through His sojourning as Man in this sinful world. From before the beginning of the worlds He had been His Father; from His mother's breasts He had been His God.

11. O go not from me, for trouble is hard at hand : and there is none to help me.

He was scourged, and there was none to help; He was defiled with spitting, and there was none to help; He was smitten with buffetings, and there was none to help; He was crowned with thorns, and there was none to help; He was nailed upon the tree, and there was none to help; He cried, My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me, and there was none to help. Yea, trouble is ever near when God is far off, and only departs when God draws nigh : He only can help. The blessed Virgin, the mother of the Lord, and Mary Magdalene, and St. John the beloved apostle, may indeed be near the Cross; but they can but weep and suffer with Him; they can but bear the piercings of their own souls with the sword of sorrow, and cannot lessen His.

12. Many oxen are come about me : fat bulls of Basan close me in on every side.

13. They gape upon me with their mouths : as it were a ramping and a roaring lion.

God seemed to have departed from Him; seen and unseen' enemies had come around His cross. All the malice both of earth and hell was gathered there. The multitude of the people crying, 'Crucify Him;' the chief priests and Pharisees swollen with

pride and wanton with cruelty, who stirred them up to new scoffings and revilings; and the powers of darkness, who were triumphing in the scene where the Son of Man was being conquered by death, and was about to be a captive to the grave,—all were collected round the sharp and cruel bed of the dying Saviour of the world.

14. I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint : my heart also in the midst of my body is even like melting wax.

15. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaveth to my gums : and Thou shalt bring me into the dust of death.

His sacred blood fell drop by drop upon the ground, from His pierced-through and stretched-out hands, 'even as the drops that water the earth.' His life ebbed gradually away, 'as water spilt upon the ground.' The agony of the cross wrenched His bones apart, and strained each nerve and fibre of His body in anguish. His heart, which had so long glowed with love and tenderness, fainted and dissolved in that fierce torture, as wax within a burning flame. His misery and fevered pain dried up His endurance and His strength, like a vessel of clay is dried and burnt within a furnace. The sorrow of His soul and the pangs of His body parched His tongue within His gums; and, 'that the Scripture might be fulfilled, He said, I thirst,' Who is the giver of living water. So, and by such terrible steps,

did He descend that road by which sinning man returns unto the dust.

16. For many dogs are come about me : and the council of the wicked layeth siege against me.

Both the heathens and the Jews had surrounded Him in their madness and fury, like dogs surround a hunted hind. The wicked-hearted had joined themselves together to hurry Him to condemnation and to death, as hunters encompass and drive on their prey. 'They had gathered unto Him the whole band of soldiers,' to mock Him before they slew Him.

17. They pierced my hands and my feet ; I may tell all my bones : they stand staring and looking upon me.

'And when they were come to the place which is called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left. Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.' They pierced His hands with nails, that our souls might not be pierced with judgments. They stripped His raiment from Him, that we might be covered with His righteousness. 'And sitting down they watched Him there :' they gazed idly upon Him, not that they might believe and live, but that they might fulfil the Scripture which saith, 'They shall look on Him Whom they pierced.'

18. They part my garments among them : and cast lots upon my vesture.

‘Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part ; and also His coat : now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be ; that the Scripture might be fulfilled which saith, They parted My raiment among them, and for My vesture they did cast lots. These things, therefore, the soldiers did.’ And thus He Who had given up His cloak did not refuse to give His coat also.

19. But be not Thou far from me, O Lord : Thou art my succour, haste Thee to help me.

20. Deliver my soul from the sword : my darling from the power of the dog.

21. Save me from the lion’s mouth : Thou hast heard me also from among the horns of the unicorns.

Thus was waged that fearful and mysterious struggle between the power of death and the human soul of Christ, on which the redeeming of the world depended. He conquered death, yet not by shunning it, but by yielding to it. ‘Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit,’ was the token that the last enemy was vanquished ; and then the Son of God bowed His head and gave up the ghost. His soul had prevailed over human

fear; it had determined as an unchanging fact that the Father of all souls was near; that He was, and always must be, an everlasting Succour and a sure Refuge; and that in His creating hands, and not in the destroying hands of death, abode all power and might. Thus, through most perfect faith, was the manhood of the Son of God delivered from the sharpness of death: His human soul, which was inseparably united with His Divinity, descended indeed into hell, but was not holden there. The dreadful abode of the evil one indeed opened its devouring mouth, but the soul of the Beloved of the Father had overcome its power. His prayer, uttered with a dying mouth, in the midst of mortal and immortal hatred and spite, was heard; He died, and man was saved.

22. I will declare Thy Name unto my brethren : in the midst of the congregation will I praise Thee.

‘It is finished.’ The Cross has done its work; but it is a work not of death, but of life, and life immortal. It abides for ever, an enduring monument of the love of God to man. He, Whose love was stronger than death, became in all things even as we are, and ‘by the grace of God He tasted death,’ not only as man, but ‘for every man.’ He purchased to Himself an universal Church with the costly shedding of His blood, with which, and in the midst of which, He should dwell for ever, in the union of holiness which none can break: ‘For both

He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one : for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare Thy Name unto My brethren, in the midst of the Church will I sing praise unto Thee.'

23. O praise the Lord, ye that fear Him : magnify Him, all ye of the seed of Jacob, and fear Him all ye seed of Israel ;

24. For He hath not despised, nor abhorred, the low estate of the poor : He hath not hid His face from him, but when he called unto Him He heard him.

Surely this amazing shewing forth of the love of Christ should call forth the love of His Church in return. They whom He has redeemed, and has chosen as a spiritual Israel, must ever rejoice with trembling in Him Who despised not our nature for its misery, nor abhorred it for its sinfulness, but came into our fallen world and took it into Himself, that our hearts might be no longer turned from God, and that our prayers might be heard, and gain forgiveness.

25. My praise is of Thee in the great congregation : my vows will I perform in the sight of them that fear Him.

26. The poor shall eat and be satisfied : they that seek after the Lord shall praise Him ; your heart shall live for ever.

For this cause shall the whole Church throughout

the world ever praise God, and return Him thanks for His 'inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ.' He Who is 'our Passover hath been sacrificed for us, therefore must we keep the feast.' Under His cross must we renew in faith and penitence the vows made for us as His children; and then may all, even the weakest and poorest, who seek to be one with Him, and that He should be one with them, be strengthened and refreshed by the food of immortality. The fast of Good-Friday brings us to the feast of Easter-day; and both are full of the same message of life and immortality brought to light through the Gospel.

27. All the ends of the world shall remember themselves, and be turned unto the Lord: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before Him.

28. For the kingdom is the Lord's: and He is the Governour among the people.

He in that lifting up of Himself upon the cross shall draw all men unto Him. The patience of His death shall turn those to Him whom the innocence of His life had not turned: 'The weakness of God is stronger than man.' The reign of the King of the earth shall be proclaimed in every corner of the earth; and they who hear the proclamation shall remember themselves, and own their true and rightful Ruler, the Lord and King, not only of their bodies, but of their consciences and souls.

29. All such as be fat upon earth : have eaten, and worshipped.

30. All they that go down into the dust shall kneel before Him : and no man hath quickened his own soul.

LXX. My soul shall live unto Him.

Of the heavenly banquet to which He shall call us all may eat, and worship, both the sorrowing sinner and the rejoicing saint ; they who are satisfied there shall yet be hungry, for He said, ‘ Whoso eateth My Flesh, and drinketh My Blood, hath eternal life ; and I will raise him up at the last day.’ The hour is coming when every mortal man shall kneel before Him, both the living and the dead. He is ‘ the Resurrection and the Life,’ and none can rise again from the dust of death, except He, Who once descended thereto, raise him by His quickening Spirit.

31. My seed shall serve Him : they shall be counted unto the Lord for a generation.

32. They shall come, and the heavens shall declare His righteousness : unto a people that shall be born, whom the Lord hath made.

He Who saved not Himself shall save His people. They shall be His, and He shall be theirs ; they shall be ‘ a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, that they may shew forth the praises of Him Who hath called them out of darkness into His marvellous light.’

A people shall be born: ‘but who is their father?’ ‘It is He that hath made them, and not they themselves.’ Born again of water and of the Spirit, and being made the people of God, they shall be living witnesses of the love and righteousness of Christ, both to the Church visible on earth, and also in the Church of the saved in heaven, when ‘by His Cross and Passion they shall have been brought unto the glory of His Resurrection.’

This Psalm is inscribed “to the chief Musician upon Aijeleth Shahar.” These words are rendered by the LXX. “for the morning help, or raising up,” and by the Chaldee paraphrase “for the morning oblation.” The true translation is, “for the hind of the morning.” This title may be explained to be a poetical expression for the rising sun or the early twilight, or it may be considered as the name of a tone or chant to which this Psalm, and perhaps also the forty-second, was to be recited, as we now say that a hymn is to be sung to the tune of “Adeste Fideles ;” or a song to that of “God save the Queen.” In all these senses the words may mystically be referred to Christ, the Sacrifice for the world, (See Canticles ii. 9, viii. 14 ; Isa. lviii. 8 ; St. Mark xvi. 2). The whole Psalm, which is appointed by the Church for Good-Friday, is a revelation to David of the Gospel of the Passion: the Evangelists can hardly narrate the sufferings and death of the Lord with greater clearness and fulness. In order to lessen the evidence of this prophecy, the Jews have endeavoured, on the alteration of one letter in some of the copies, to translate verse 17, “like lions on my hands and my feet ;” but the translation of the LXX., which is the same as that of our versions, shews that the ancient Hebrew copies read the verse as we do.

PSALM xxiii. *Dominus regit me.*

1. THE Lord is my shepherd : therefore can I lack nothing.

Christ our Lord hath told us that He is the Good Shepherd. He knows His own sheep and is known by them. The Church is His sheep-fold, and we

are His flock 'and the sheep of His pasture.' While we are away from Him, we are weak, and wandering, and lost; we lack everything. It is not till He becomes our Shepherd, and we know His voice, and follow Him, that we can feel that we want no other guide. Having His care, we need nothing; having His love, we have everything; for He knoweth of what each sheep of His flock hath need. He feedeth each; He carrieth the lambs in His arms and in His bosom; He gently leadeth those that are weary and heavy-laden; He seeketh after the lost until He find them; and then beareth them home rejoicing. Oh may we indeed be His, and He be ours, Who is the true Pastor and the Good Shepherd!

2. He shall feed me in a green pasture : and lead me forth beside the waters of comfort.

The world is but a desert land, with bare and rugged hills, and dry and scorching valleys. It is from the world into the Church that Christ would lead His sheep. There He has for them the refreshing dew of holy baptism, and the sweet pastures of His holy Word. There there are green and quiet resting-places for them that are tired with their wanderings. There there are neither storms nor torrents, but still and tranquil streams, at whose living waters the parched soul may quench its thirst. There there is pardon and comfort for the past, and grace for the time to come; and there too

there is the foretaste of the 'pure river of the water of life, which proceedeth out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.'

3. He shall convert my soul : and bring me forth in the paths of righteousness, for His Name's sake.

His love shall bring back our souls when they stray from Him, and cheer them when they droop with heaviness. He will go before His own, and lead them in the way in which they should go ; and in the consolation of His abiding presence, the way of righteousness, narrow though it be, shall become a way of pleasantness and a path of peace. And this will He do, not for our merits, but His own mercy, not for our deservings, but for His own Name's sake.

4. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil : for Thou art with me ; Thy rod and Thy staff comfort me.

Yea, and though our road in this mortal life become dark and low ;—though trouble, and sorrow, and trial, aye, and even death itself, come around us and overshadow us, yet need we have no real fear. They to whom the substance brings no fear, need not be frightened by the shadow. He Who has led us into trial will lead us out of it again, and will deliver us from all evil. Gloomy though the view may be, and sad, yet if we can

but see Him, and know that He is with us, we have light enough. His loving rod is near to correct us when we stray, His shepherd's crook to raise us when we fall, and their touch assures us of the comfort of His help.

5. Thou shalt prepare a table before me against them that trouble me : Thou hast anointed my head with oil, and my cup shall be full.

He hath long ago, on the night before He suffered, prepared a table for those that continue with Him. And there His own hands offer to us that Eucharistic food by which our souls are strengthened in all temptations and refreshed in all troubles. He pours down upon our heads the anointing of His eternal Spirit, the manifold richness of His gifts of grace. He freely bestows all, and our part is only to receive ; and yet all the blessings that He bestows here are but an earnest of that which He has in store, are but drop after drop from that cup of the fulness of joy which shall more than satisfy the longings of every soul in heaven.

6. But Thy loving-kindness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life : and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

'I will never leave thee nor forsake thee,' is the voice of that Good Shepherd which His sheep shall learn to know. New tokens of His pity and His love shall shine upon us, before us, and behind

us, on our right hand and on our left, all our lives long in our journeying here; until we follow Him from this wilderness of things temporal, to that better country where the one fold shall be gathered under the one Shepherd in perfect and unending rest.

This Psalm was written by David, who had been himself a shepherd, and knew full well the nature of a shepherd's work, and the need the flock have of a shepherd's care. It seems more probable that it was written in his younger and more innocent days, when his chief enemies were the lion and the bear, and his greatest danger was, lest night should overtake his flock and him in some dark and precipitous ravine of the wilderness. It is not unlikely that this may have been one of the holy songs which he sang upon his harp before Saul, when the evil spirit troubled him, (1 Sam. xvi. 23). Its gentle, quiet, trustful tone, and the calm feeling of peace which pervades it, would make it peculiarly fit to soothe the self-tormenting king, and to clear away the gloom and unhappiness of his mind.

Morning Prayer.

FOR ASCENSION-DAY.

PSALM xxiv. *Domini est terra.*

1. THE earth is the Lord's, and all that therein is : the compass of the world, and they that dwell therein.

2. For He hath founded it upon the seas : and prepared it upon the floods.

This earth of ours is God's world. It is not for man to do as he will in, and to abuse; still less is it something for the prince of evil to claim as being at his own disposal. In the beginning

God created it by His Almighty word. He called each thing that is upon it into being; and last of all He made man in His own image to replenish and subdue it. But He not only formed it once for all, and established its order and the laws of its nature; but He still by His providence governs it, and ordains all that is in it. From that time when God said, 'Let the waters be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear,' He has watched over it with an unceasing sovereignty, all-just as it is all-wise, all-holy as it is all-mighty. He is the God and Father of all, not of one age only, or of one nation only.

3. Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord : or who shall rise up in His holy place ?

But who of the sons of men shall approach to this Almighty and all-righteous God? Into His holy place only the holy can come. Moses indeed for a little while ascended into the hill of Sinai; but His holy place is 'the Mount Sion, the city of the living God,' into which nothing unholy, impure, defiled, can enter. There His purity and truth, of which we see the dim reflection in this lower world, shine in their perfect brightness. One only shall thither ascend, Who can claim a right to enter there, even that second Man Who is the Lord from heaven.

4. Even he that hath clean hands, and a pure heart : and that hath not lift up

his mind unto vanity, nor sworn to deceive his neighbour.

5. He shall receive the blessing from the Lord : and righteousness from the God of his salvation.

He only was holy in deed, and will, and word; yet in Him we, who are His, are holy too. Our nature, yea, the nature of all who dwell in the world, was hallowed by the Son of God taking it upon Himself; and of His fulness have all we received. Our sinful hands are made clean by the sprinkling of His blood; our evil thoughts are purged by His indwelling Spirit. If we strive that our hearts may not be fixed on this life, which to most is but vanity of vanities; if in all things we speak that which is true before Him that is true; then in Him we are accepted, and our imperfect penitence is covered by His perfect innocence. So shall we in Him, not of ourselves, go on from grace to grace, and from righteousness to righteousness, until we arrive at the eternal Sion; so shall we attain the fulness of that blessing which He Himself proclaimed,—‘Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God.’

6. This is the generation of them that seek Him : even of them that seek Thy face, O Jacob.

They who have been baptized with Him into His death, and are risen indeed with Him to newness of

life, shall ascend with Him into glory. These are they who seek God, even the members of His visible Church on earth. In this world we can only seek Him; but if we seek Him faithfully, in the world to come we shall most surely find Him Who is the true Jacob, the Inheritor of the rightful blessing, and be found in Him Israelites indeed, no longer tainted with worldliness or guile. These are they, who shall follow Him Who hath ascended into the highest heaven and entered within the veil of the holiest of holies.

7. Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors : and the King of Glory shall come in.

LXX. Lift up your gates, ye princes.

8. Who is the King of Glory : It is the Lord strong and mighty, even the Lord mighty in battle.

What words can worthily describe the grandeur of that closing scene of man's redemption, when our human nature went up to God, and our flesh and blood for the first time inherited heaven? What human pomp, even of the ark of God entering into Sion, could be likened unto that? On the hill of Olivet He was parted from men, and ascended from their sight unto His own seat on God's right hand. Round Him were gathered, as witnesses of His triumph, angels and archangels in many a band; they who had announced His birth,

and ministered to Him in the desert, and strengthened Him in the garden, and rolled away the stone. And as they drew near to the gates of the unseen city, whose names are Faith and Hope, and approached its everlasting doors of mercy and of love, they bade them, in shouts of ringing joy, to lift themselves up and open wide, that the King of Glory might come in. Well might the immortal keepers of those gates not made with hands wonder at the sight, when one born of a woman, and clothed still with the raiment of the flesh, claimed an entrance into the very abode of God! And well might they, who had seen both the conflict and the victory, who had seen the sun darkened and the rocks rent, reply, — that He was a warrior, strong as God Himself; that He was One Who had been wounded, but Whose scars were healed; He was One Who had been dead, but was alive again; One Whose soul had been once exceeding sorrowful even unto death, but Who had conquered sorrow and sin, and the grave, and was entering into the joy which He had won.

9. Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors : and the King of Glory shall come in.

10. Who is the King of Glory : even the Lord of hosts, He is the King of Glory.

Yet bright and glad as was this triumph of the ascension of the Lord to heaven, there is yet reserved in the decrees of God a more glorious

triumph far. Then the Son of Man ascended alone ; but the hour is coming when in louder and more rapturous strains, the gates of heaven shall be bidden to enlarge themselves, and the portals of eternity to unfold, and Angels, and Principalities, and Powers shall stand in amaze to see the Lord of Life, no longer alone, but followed by the hosts of the redeemed, which none can number, enter there. Neither He nor they shall struggle more. The 'King of Saints' has conquered, and they in Him ; and therefore, they shall share in His kingdom, in His glory, in His eternity. Amen.

According to the Jewish tradition, this Psalm was written by David for Solomon, that it might be sung in alternate chorus by the Priests and Levites, when the ark was carried into the temple. It was certainly written for some occasion when the ark was brought to Jerusalem,—possibly, when it was brought from the house of Obed-edom, the account of which we find in 1 Chron. xiii. and xv. The LXX. prefix the title, "On the first day of the week," which may mean that it was used on that day ; but which is understood by Theodotion and other Fathers to have a reference to our Lord's Resurrection. It is plain that, though the occasion on which this Psalm was composed was the carrying the ark into Sion, yet its meaning cannot be limited to that ; but that it must be taken to celebrate a greater triumph, even the lifting up the ark of the second covenant, the human nature of the Son of God, to His throne in heaven. Verses 3—6 of this Psalm much resemble Psalm xv., which is also appointed for Ascension-day.

PSALM XXV. *Ad Te, Domine, levavi.*

1. UNTO Thee, O Lord, will I lift up my soul ; my God, I have put my trust in Thee : O let me not be confounded, neither let mine enemies triumph over me.

2. For all they that hope in Thee shall not be ashamed : but such as transgress without a cause shall be put to confusion.

Prayer is an ascent of the soul to its Maker. Each time that by prayer or meditation we draw near to God, we raise up our whole being. If then by prayer we come near to God, by faith we rest upon Him. To him who prays and believes all things are possible; he can never be put to confusion, who seeks humbly for the guidance of God's grace; and nothing can overcome his faith who has made His righteousness his stay. There can be no shame to them that would be His, and their hope shall never be disappointed; but all who trust in their own craftiness, and act with wilful dishonesty and perfidiousness, shall be disappointed of what they grasped at, and shall be covered with everlasting shame.

3. Shew me Thy ways, O Lord : and teach me Thy paths.

4. Lead me forth in Thy truth, and learn me : for Thou art the God of my salvation ; in Thee hath been my hope all the day long.

This is the petition of the believing soul, that it may see the way of God's commandments, and may keep within it, turning neither to the right hand nor to the left; that it may be ever kept in that narrow path which leadeth upward unto eternal life. It is not in man to find this way

of life; and therefore God Himself hath become our Saviour; He hath come to us and met us, that He may Himself lead us and be our guide, that we may not only learn His truth revealed from heaven, but may also follow His unerring footsteps here on earth. In Him and in His guidance can be our only hope, through this weary day of our mortal life, in which we have but the feeble light of this world to walk by. In Him there is hope all the day long; in Him 'there is hope in the end.'

5. Call to remembrance, O Lord, Thy tender mercies : and Thy loving-kindnesses which have been ever of old.

6. O remember not the sins and offences of my youth : but according to Thy mercy think Thou upon me, O Lord, for Thy goodness.

But it is not enough to do well for the time to come, we must also implore pardon for the past. How many are the sins of our younger days, of our unsanctified wills and unchastened hearts! How many are there of them which we can ourselves remember; and alas! how many more which are now unknown to ourselves, and forgotten by all but God. The mercies and love of God are indeed infinite and everlasting; but it needs infinite mercy and everlasting love to pardon our uncounted sins. This must always be the petition of the repenting soul, when it casts itself upon God's pity and goodness—O Lord, remember not my sins, but remember me.

7. Gracious and righteous is the Lord : therefore will He teach sinners in the way.

8. Them that are meek shall He guide in judgment : and such as are gentle, them shall He learn His way.

9. All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth : unto such as keep His covenant, and His testimonies.

He is gracious, and willing to receive all who come to Him, because He is righteous ; for His righteousness is not like the righteousness of man. Though we have sinned in time past, yet will He pardon us when we ask for pardon ; and teach us the way of truth, and shew us the path of life. Not the proud, but the meek, not the self-willed, but the humble and lowly, are they whom He will accept. ' Lord, I am not worthy,' is the confession which best fits us to receive the spirit of His wisdom and of holy fear. They who thus wait for Him by ' patient continuance in well-doing,' shall at length most surely know that His providences, however dark and trying they may for a time appear, are instinct with mercy, and full of grace and truth.

10. For Thy Name's sake, O Lord : be merciful unto my sin, for it is great.

God is indeed both gracious and righteous. What must be the depth of our misery and height of His mercy, when our plea before Him is the magnitude of

our sin! Yet, when we have faith in Him, we can plead even the greatness and the number of our sins in our cry for forgiveness. Yea, the greater our sins appear, and the more intolerable their burden is, the more ready is He to absolve us from them. When the servant owed his Lord ten thousand talents, and had nothing wherewith to pay, He forgave him all that debt, because he desired Him.

11. What man is he that feareth the Lord : him shall He teach in the way that He shall choose.

12. His soul shall dwell at ease : and his seed shall inherit the land.

‘The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,’—not the fear of a slave, but the obedient reverence of a son. And obedience shall bring with it knowledge of what is true, and security and peace of mind, and blessings which shall endure for many generations. It ‘shall inherit the land for ever.’

13. The secret of the Lord is among them that fear Him : and He will shew them His covenant.

And holy obedience not only gains these blessings, which are its natural and proper fruits, but is also rewarded with a more hidden and precious token of the favour of Him Who revealeth Himself as the Unsearchable, and Who is known as passing knowledge. To them that overcome by obedience is given a pledge of assurance, that ‘white stone’ in which

is 'a new name written, which no man knoweth, saving he that receiveth it.'

14. Mine eyes are ever looking unto the Lord : for He shall pluck my feet out of the net.

If this be so, our eyes and hearts ought ever to be raised to God in fervent prayer that He would make us His, not only in name, but in deed ; that He would set free our affections by His Spirit, and disentangle them from those earthly and fleshly snares in which they have been so long imprisoned.

15. Turn Thee unto me, and have mercy upon me : for I am desolate, and in misery.

16. The sorrows of my heart are enlarged : O bring Thou me out of my troubles.

17. Look upon my adversity and misery : and forgive me all my sin.

18. Consider mine enemies, how many they are : and they bear a tyrannous hate against me.

No sorrowing heart hath ever cried to Him in vain. The feeling of our own loneliness, and utter helpless wretchedness, is oftentimes a sign that He is near. As the grace of penitence is given to us in greater fulness, our sorrow and misery of soul becomes still more hard to bear. Our spirit is most deeply troubled, our anguish is the keenest, our self-reproach most bitter, even then, when He, from Whom we have turned, is about to turn to us. It

is then that the enemies of our salvation, the world, the flesh, and the devil, that accursed three, put forth all their hateful strength, and, like struggling tyrants, are most cruel when they are nearest to their fall.

19. O keep my soul, and deliver me : let me not be confounded, for I have put my trust in Thee.

20. Let perfectness and righteous dealing wait upon me : for my hope hath been in Thee.

LXX. The innocent and upright clave unto me.

But as the night is darkest before the dawn, so out of the desolation of penitence arises the holy confidence of faith. The hope that is founded upon the certainty of God's righteousness may be encompassed with floods and beaten with storms, but it will stand, for it is founded on a rock. There is ever a shelter within His Church, and our souls are safe in His hand. We know in Whom we have trusted, and may be persuaded that He is able and willing to keep that which we have committed to Him against the great Day.

21. Deliver Israel, O God : out of all his troubles.

They who have thus warred with their own doubts and sins, and by God's grace have conquered them, must ever feel that they have an interest in the conflicts of the Church militant on earth. They who have prayed for themselves will have been taught to

pray for others ; they will often and yet again commend their struggling brethren of the true Israel, to that Almighty Father and all-gracious God Who hath given to themselves deliverance from all their troubles.

There is no particular part of David's life to which we can with certainty ascribe this Psalm. It is in the Hebrew an alphabetic Psalm, that is, each verse begins with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet in succession. This plan was probably adopted to assist the memory of those who recited such Psalms, which are generally, as this is, of a serious and instructive character, and repeat often some one plain and elemental truth, "precept upon precept, line upon line."

PSALM xxvi. *Judica me, Domine.*

1. BE Thou my Judge, O Lord, for I have walked innocently : my trust hath been also in the Lord, therefore shall I not fall.

2. Examine me, O Lord, and prove me : try out my reins and my heart.

Happy indeed are they who have never defiled the purity of their baptismal robe by any foul and deadly sin, who have never wilfully fallen from grace ! They can appeal to their Lord, not only as their Saviour, but as their Judge, in all the chances of their mortal life. Surely there is no greater gift which the Holy Ghost can give out of His infinite store of gifts, than the grace of perseverance. They who trust in God shall have grace to stand ; they who trust in themselves have fallen already. It is only the Spirit of God which can make us God's, examining and chastening our affections, and searching and sanctifying our thoughts.

3. For Thy loving-kindness is ever before mine eyes : and I will walk in Thy truth.

They who have known and seen the love of God in Christ will need no other love. That will suffice them both in time and in eternity. They cannot but obey Him Who has so loved them. Righteousness of life must ever flow from holiness of heart; and the Spirit of Truth will ever guide them who follow Him 'into all truth.'

4. I have not dwelt with vain persons : neither will I have fellowship with the deceitful.

5. I have hated the congregation of the wicked : and will not sit among the ungodly.

They who have grace to walk in God's truth are alike removed from folly and from falsehood. Their lot may be cast among the trifling and the vain, and they may be forced to converse with the untruthful and deceitful, but they will be among them, and yet not of them. They will shrink back both in sorrow and in fear from the profane and impious; for there can be no bond of intercourse between them whose trust is in God, and them who despise and scorn Him and His laws.

6. I will wash my hands in innocency, O Lord : and so will I go to Thine altar ;

7. That I may shew the voice of thanksgiving : and tell of all Thy wondrous works.

The nearer the child of God has attained to sinlessness and purity, with the higher joy does he come near to the presence of his Lord. Consolation and pardon is indeed promised to the repentant; but for the unfallen there is reserved the rapture of saintly fearlessness and of perfect love. They who have washed their hands in innocency, and have prayed that 'the thoughts of their hearts may be cleansed by the inspiration of God's Holy Spirit,' can best lift up their hearts in that act of highest thanksgiving, when 'with angels, and archangels, and with all the company of heaven, they laud and magnify God's glorious Name,' and praise Him evermore. They best shall understand the wonders of that Mystery in which Christ's saints are made 'one with Him, and He with them.'

8. Lord, I have loved the habitation of Thy house : and the place where Thine honour dwelleth.

Yes, they who love God love His house; they have pleasure in those earthly temples which are consecrated to His honour, and in which He manifests Himself to the believing spirit. But their love does not rest in the material house of God, but goes on rather to that temple into which all who trust in Him are 'builded together for an habitation of God, through the Spirit,' even Christ's holy Church, with which He has promised to abide until the end of the world.

9. O shut not up my soul with sinners :
nor my life with the blood-thirsty ;

10. In whose hands is wickedness : and
their right hand is full of gifts.

It is one of the sorest temptations to a soul that is striving to flee from sin, to be kept close in the company of sinners. To be among those who have no regard for right and for wrong, who are careless of others' sufferings, and tyrants over others' souls, who are not only themselves examples of fraud and dishonesty, but are ready both by evil counsel and bribery to destroy the conscientiousness of others,—this is a trial that is likely to eat away the piety even of the most earnest Christian, or, at least, to fill him with a most grievous fear lest he should become like those who surround him, and share their portion, should 'gain harm and loss' incalculable.

11. But as for me, I will walk innocently :
O deliver me, and be merciful unto me.

But even in this trial, a firm will not to do wrong, and an earnest prayer to be delivered from the temptation through the mercy of an all-merciful God, will be the Christian's safety and defence. He, Who alloweth us to be led into temptation, will always open a way of deliverance to them who wait and pray.

12. My foot standeth right : I will praise
the Lord in the congregations.

He whose affections are fixed on things eternal will stand unwavering, whatever happen. Where the

heart is fixed on heaven, the foot standeth firm on earth. The Lord of the Church will ever send to each tottering member special grace proportioned to his need; and to Him, they who have past unscathed through trials, and have stood amid temptations, must ever ascribe honour, and worship, and power, praising Him for His grace in His Church here, until they praise Him for His glory in the Church hereafter.

This Psalm was doubtless written by David in his youth, when he was exposed to temptation, and in much danger, but had not fallen into those grievous acts of sin which embittered his after life.

Evening Prayer.

PSALM xxvii. *Dominus illuminatio.*

1. THE Lord is my light, and my salvation; whom then shall I fear: the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom then shall I be afraid?

The child of God need not fear, whatever dangers may seem to lie before him in the road of his pilgrimage. The Fount of all light has enlightened him, and he has seen his salvation; the Saviour of all souls has saved him, and his sin is pardoned. He may be weak, but his strength cannot be of himself, nor from himself, but from that Holy One Who is stronger than all, Whose name is the Almighty Comforter; He is the Lord and Giver of his spiritual life, and to the spirit of His holy fear all other fears give place.

2. When the wicked, even mine enemies, and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh : they stumbled and fell.

3. Though an host of men were laid against me, yet shall not my heart be afraid : and though there rose up war against me, yet will I put my trust in Him.

In the light of faith, in the hope of salvation, in the strength of love, the young soldier of Christ is called to that warfare of both watchfulness and boldness, to which his place beneath the banner of the Cross has pledged him. He is suffered to lack nothing that is needed for the waging of the war against the foes whose slavery he has renounced. The grace given in holy Baptism must receive its completion in holy Confirmation ; the gift of strength must be added to the gift of life. It is in youth that the carnal desires of the flesh come around us and upon us, like evil and devouring beasts ; and it is only by the graces of purity and chastity that they can be driven back and destroyed. Then the world, with its hosts of evil examples, and its crowds of temptations, strives hard to draw us under its power,—at one time by allurings and enticements, at another by the persecutions of open violence or sneering threats. It is only through the anointing of the sevenfold grace of the Holy Ghost that we can hope to reign over our rebellious wills and unruly thoughts.

4. One thing have I desired of the Lord,

which I will require : even that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the fair beauty of the Lord, and to visit His temple.

5. For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His tabernacle : yea, in the secret place of His dwelling shall He hide me, and set me up upon a rock of stone.

6. And now shall He lift up mine head : above mine enemies round about me.

How many a heart in the freshness of God's grace has had this one longing!—has made this the burden of its prayer—that, having once seen the calm loveliness of the Church of God, having once felt the holy repose His house affords, and that in very truth it is good for it to be there, it might never again lose that sense of comfort and of peace, and never have to turn to the turmoil and trouble of the world again! So to have longed and to have prayed is in itself a most blessed thing, even though on earth our prayer be not wholly granted. In the season of our youth Christ draws us nearer to Himself, because Satan is drawing nearer to us. Holy Confirmation makes us rich with grace and strength, that we may contend against our enemies with a firmer spirit and a bolder faith. Glimpses of 'the King in His beauty' are there opened to us, that we may with the more perseverance struggle that we hereafter attain unto His perfect sight. They are given to us at God's will, not continually, but when

we need them. When unholy passions are troubling us, let us go to the Church for refuge; her prayers will soothe us, her songs of praise will cheer us, and we shall find a hiding-place from our temptations and from ourselves in the hallowing stillness of God's sanctuary. Amid the winds and storms which shake the trembling soul, we shall there learn to lean on that one Rock and most sure Foundation, which is Christ Himself. In Him, Who is our Head, even now and here shall we be raised above the strivings of the world and the fierceness of our enemies; and through Him shall we pass from the refreshment of the tabernacle pitched in the wilderness, even the Church on earth, to dwell unceasingly amid the immortal fairness of His house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

7. Therefore will I offer in His dwelling an oblation with great gladness : I will sing, and speak praises unto the Lord.

Unworthy as we are to offer unto the All-Maker any sacrifice, yet there are two offerings which He will not at any time refuse—the sacrifice of a broken spirit, and the oblation of a thankful heart. Let us offer within His Church and before His altar that which we have to give—ourselves; ever praising that ever-blessed Trinity Who is our Light, our Salvation, and our Strength, Who makes manifest to us in a threefold channel the unity of redeeming grace.

† 8. Hearken unto my voice, O Lord, when I

cry unto Thee : have mercy upon me, and hear me.

Yet to them whom God loves, and to whom He gives most largely of His assisting grace, there come times when the words of praise seem unsuited to them, and their spirits fall, and their exultation flags. They have to learn that humility and prayer must never be forgotten or laid aside; that 'Lord have mercy upon me,' is equally as much needed by the young soldier of Christ fresh from the anointing of the Spirit of strength, and putting on his armour for the battle, as by the pilgrim, weary and way-worn, and struggling to his journey's end. Spiritual joy wants humble prayer, no less than repenting sorrow.

9. My heart hath talked of Thee, Seek ye My face : Thy face, Lord, will I seek.

Heb. From Thee my heart saith, "Seek ye My face."

Thy face, O Lord, I do seek.

10. O hide not Thou 'Thy face from me : nor cast 'Thy servant away in displeasure.

It is God Himself Who giveth us the love of Himself. From Him only comes the wish to go to Him. The voice of our hearts calleth unto the All-holy; they ever say, like the Grecian strangers, 'We would see Jesus;' and that very longing is the work of grace. All that ever is going on within us and around us, creation, nature, providence, calling, regeneration, grace, sanctification, all are ordained to lead us on to the one great end of our being—

the vision of God. That only is true life ; and the falling short of that is utter loss and death. Sin dims our sight of God : His displeasure at sin is nothing else than the hiding of His face. But He will never hide it from them who seek it.

11. Thou hast been my succour : leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation.

12. When my father and my mother forsake me : the Lord taketh me up.

There is one grace for which we need most especially to pray,—the grace of perseverance. ‘Take not Thy Holy Spirit from us,’ should be the desire and prayer of all whom He has received into His love, and confirmed with His strength. The best and purest of earthly affections fade : the love of parents, be it never so strong, is at last subdued by death, and their watchfulness and care is made to cease. But there is One Whose love never faileth, Whose care never ceaseth, Who has promised, and will perform His promise—‘I will never leave thee nor forsake thee ;’ Who, when we sink down into the grave, even from thence will take us up ; He is that immortal Bridegroom Who left His eternal Father and His Virgin mother to espouse a spotless Church, and in her each human soul, unto Himself.

13. Teach me Thy way, O Lord : and lead me in the right way, because of mine enemies.

14. Deliver me not over into the will of mine adversaries : for there are false witnesses risen up against me, and such as speak wrong.

He will not merely receive us to tarry in His tabernacle in this our mortal pilgrimage, but He will be our guide and defender in the way in which we journey. He will teach us His way; for there are many ways of going wrong, and but one way of going right. That road through things temporal unto things eternal is beset with enemies: false witnesses of God, 'speaking lies in hypocrisy,' are ready to seduce us from the path of truth; and there are other more open foes, incited by 'the accuser of the brethren.' But if the Holy Spirit lead us we shall not err, and if the Holy Spirit deliver us we shall indeed be safe.

15. I should utterly have fainted : but that I believe verily to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.

And one mighty grace of holy Baptism and holy Confirmation is that they are full of this assurance of hope; they are effectual pledges that He Who hath begun His work in us will continue it unto the end. The runner in a race, when he is panting wearily, is cheered with the prospect of the prize. There is also a reward to him that runs the Christian course with perseverance. He 'that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved.' There is await-

ing him the goodness of the Lord, sweet, incomparable, immortal, unchangeable, stored up for him not in this earth of the dying, but in that land of the living and of life, where all His saints live unto Him.

16. O tarry thou the Lord's leisure : be strong, and He shall comfort thine heart ; and put thou thy trust in the Lord.

Let us hear the voice of the Lord exhorting the soldier of the Cross—His voice, Who knows our longings, Who hath heard that one petition which we require, Who is keeping for us what He hath promised until our warfare is accomplished. He saith, Be patient, and be strong. He would not have us faint, for He is the God of comfort ; He would not have us fear, for He is the giver of strength. We must trust in Him, for He has promised, Who is Almighty, Who is sure, Who is true. If there be aught else more full of mightiness, of goodness, of comfort, let us wait for that ; but if not, let us wait on the Lord ; let us tarry His leisure, in Whose hands the times and the seasons are ; and by waiting on Him we shall at length possess Him on Whom we wait.

In the Hebrew the title of this Psalm is only "by David ;" but in the LXX. it is, "by David, before he was anointed." David was anointed three times : by Samuel, when he was young, (1 Sam. xvi. 13) ; at Hebron, when he began to reign over Judah, (2 Sam. ii. 4) ; and again at Hebron, when he reigned over all Israel, (2 Sam. v. 3). It applies, probably, to his second anointing. St. Augustine comments on this Psalm with reference especially to "that anointing which perfects Christians spiritually in the life which is promised them ;"

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and applies its language to the young soldier of Christ, when about to receive the grace of the Holy Spirit in holy Confirmation. It appeared to tend to edification to fall in with this spiritual application; and therefore St. Augustine has been followed in commenting on the whole Psalm, and on the last two verses almost his very words have been used. With regard to the words, "Seek ye My face," in verse 9, it may be useful to compare Deut. iv. 29, and Hosea v. 15. The first half of verse 15 is neither in the Hebrew nor in the LXX., but is added in our translation to complete the sense.

PSALM xxviii. *Ad Te, Domine.*

1. UNTO Thee will I cry, O Lord my Strength : think no scorn of me ; lest, if Thou make as though Thou hearest not, I become like them that go down into the pit.

2. Hear the voice of my humble petitions, when I cry unto Thee : when I hold up my hands towards the mercy-seat of Thy holy temple.

True prayer is never without an answer. Our Father Which is in heaven scorns no child who cries to Him for grace. He speaks to us, when we come to Him, by the motions of the Holy Ghost within us, by the inspiration of holy thoughts which arise within us, and reply to the cravings of our souls. To have no answer to our prayers is to be in the agonies of spiritual death. His not replying is a silent judgment that we are asking amiss; for all true prayer comes not to God's ears alone; it is, as it were, made one with the unceasing intercession of that great Priest Who all day long stretched out His hands, that we through Him

might at all times come unto the Father. Before Him, Whose human body is the true temple, and Whose human soul is the true mercy-seat, let us ever lift up not our hands only, but our hearts, and not our hearts only, but our lives, in a never-ending supplication of thought, and speech, and act.

3. O pluck me not away, neither destroy me with the ungodly and wicked doers : which speak friendly to their neighbours, but imagine mischief in their hearts.

4. Reward them according to their deeds : and according to the wickedness of their own inventions.

5. Recompense them after the work of their hands : pay them that they have deserved.

There is a holy indignation against them who are hypocritical and treacherous, that is a copy and shadow of the indignation of God. For them who are tempted and fall, we must pray, even as Christ prayed, that God will raise them up : but against hypocrisy, and against that which pretends to arise from right motives and kind feelings, while really it aims at wickedness, or covetousness, or malice, nature itself teaches us to utter a woe, which is an echo of that everlasting Woe which was uttered against lyings and hypocrisies before the foundations of the world were laid, and which was repeated by the lips of Love itself. Our own indignation at what is so vile and false must teach how infinitely and how perfectly the All-true God ab-

hors it. For such there can only be the reward of their deeds, the recompense of their work, the payment of the wages they have deserved; for they themselves have settled that it must be so. What can mercy do for them who have disowned and scorned at truth? We have much need to pray that He, 'Who cannot lie,' will ever deliver us from that evil.

6. For they regard not in their mind the works of the Lord, nor the operation of His hands : therefore shall He break them down, and not build them up.

This utter depraving not only of divine grace, but of human instincts, with regard to truth and honesty in speech and deed, happens not to any man at once. It is the result of long and systematic carelessness, and of practical unbelief in the moral providence of the Almighty. By this hypocrites come to trust in their own hypocrisy, and not in God. They look to the works of their own hands, which are lyings, and not to the work of God's hands, which is truth. They learn to rely upon a falsehood, to build their hopes upon a thing which really is not; and therefore they needs must fall,—and they do fall, miserably, deeply, and to where they cannot rise up again.

7. Praised be the Lord : for He hath heard the voice of my humble petitions.

The very sense of the miserableness of hypocrisy is given by the Holy Ghost as an answer to prayer. The knowing thoroughly and for a certainty that God will and must confound it, is a gift for which

we must petition Him, and for which we must praise Him when He has granted it to us. To have that knowledge is to have a share in life, and to be ignorant of that is to be near unto death.

8. The Lord is my strength, and my shield ; my heart hath trusted in Him, and I am helped : therefore my heart danceth for joy, and in my song will I praise Him.

9. The Lord is my strength : and He is the wholesome defence of His Anointed.

This is the unfailing result of rightful prayer,—‘ My heart hath trusted in Him, and I am helped.’ It cannot be otherwise. If we rely faithfully on Him, Who is perfect strength, we shall be defended by Him Who is a sure protection ; and then our patience shall be changed into exultation, and the song of praise will be put into our mouths instead of the cry of prayer. He Who heard His Anointed One in the garden, and raised Him from the pit, will be ever with them who are in Him, and who are His.

10. O save Thy people, and give Thy blessing unto Thine inheritance : feed them, and set them up for ever.

In Him Who is the Head of the Church, is the Church saved ; in Him Whose inheritance we are, do we receive an immortal blessing. He, Who is our Shepherd, our Bishop, and our King, is set for ever at the right hand of God, and in Him are we—His flock, His Church, His people—exalted evermore to where He is.

This Psalm has been sometimes assigned to the time of Saul, but the third verse seems so clearly to refer to the plottings of Absalom and his counsellors for the throne, which ended in his rebellion, (2 Sam. xv. 1—12), that it may be well assigned to that time. The address of Absalom to those who came to Jerusalem for justice,—“Oh that I were made judge in the land, that every man which hath any suit or cause might come unto me, and I would do him justice,”—while he was contriving his treason, is so plain an instance of one “speaking friendly to his neighbours, but imagining mischief in his heart;” that the Psalm may be well supposed to have been written by the Royal Prophet both to strengthen his own confidence, and to warn his people of God’s hatred of falsehood. The last verse contains a reference to Deut. ix. 29, which would remind the Israelites that God alone was their lawful King and only help.

PSALM xxix. *Afferte Domino.*

1. BRING unto the Lord, O ye mighty, bring young rams unto the Lord : ascribe unto the Lord worship and strength.

2. Give the Lord the honour due unto His Name : worship the Lord with holy worship.

Heb. Ascribe unto the Lord, ye sons of God,
Ascribe unto the Lord glory and strength.
Give unto the Lord the glory of His Name :
Adore the Lord in the vestments of holiness.

‘Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory,’ is the awful song of the seraphim in the eternal temple; and as the angels praise Him in heaven, so must the baptized members of His Church, ‘strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power,’ bring unto Him their continual sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving on earth. The prayer of His saints, that His Name may be hallowed, offered before Him day by day, will be

more acceptable in His sight than the sacrifices of lambs which were offered every morning and evening continually under the elder covenant: and they only who have washed the garments of their priesthood white in the fountain of Calvary, can fitly confess before Him,—‘Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever.’

3. It is the Lord, that commandeth the waters : it is the glorious God, that maketh the thunder.

4. It is the Lord, that ruleth the sea ; the voice of the Lord is mighty in operation : the voice of the Lord is a glorious voice.

He is the glorious God Who commandeth all the things of nature, and they obey Him. Each one of the elements does His bidding. He spake to the waters in the beginning, and they heard and were gathered together, and the dry land appeared. He said thenceforth to the sea, So far shalt thou come, and no farther. His voice, which is mightier than all deed, is the cause and origin of all that is, from the creation, when He spake and the universe obeyed, unto that final hour when the ‘seven thunders shall utter their voices,’ whose words are not to be written, but are sealed until the end. He Who is the ever-glorious and the all-powerful spake too with a yet more glorious voice over the waters of Jordan,—‘This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased.’ His voice of grace, which is the Gospel,

‘comes not unto us in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance.’

5. The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedar-trees : yea, the Lord breaketh the cedars of Libanus.

6. He maketh them also to skip like a calf : Libanus also, and Sirion, like a young unicorn.

And not only the water, but the air, hears and obeys His command. The tempests execute His bidding ; they tear from their roots the mighty cedars which grow on Lebanon, and seem to make the very mountains themselves on which they grow, even Lebanon and Hermon, quiver like a startled animal. So by the power of that ‘rushing mighty wind’ which came at Pentecost, were the lofty and the proud humbled and brought down to the meekness of the Gospel, and the ancient empires were made to totter to their base, and to give way unto the kingdom of the Lord and of His Christ.

7. The voice of the Lord divideth the flames of fire ; the voice of the Lord shaketh the wilderness : yea, the Lord shaketh the wilderness of Cades.

Heb. The voice of the Lord heweth asunder with flashes of fire.

The fire too hears His bidding and becomes His minister. Not the mountains only, but the plains, are compelled to confess His might. From one end of the land to the other, from the heights of Lebanon on the north to the southern desert of Zin, which is

Kadesh, all hear His voice, and quake at His lightnings and the fearful brightness of His presence, when He displays Himself as the Lord of nature. So too when the tongues of fire were divided among the apostles, and the fishermen of Galilee were made 'Sons of thunder,' 'the great and terrible wilderness' of this careless world was shaken with the voice which they had to utter, even the message of Christ crucified.

8. The voice of the Lord maketh the hinds to bring forth young, and discovereth the thick bushes : in His temple doth every man speak of His honour.

[The Hebrew may also be translated]

The voice of the Lord maketh the oaks to shake,
And strippeth bare the forests.

But in His dwelling-place doth everything therein proclaim
His glory.

And last, the solid earth itself is forced to tremble at His voice ; and every created thing, from the least to the greatest, is made to fear before Him. Timorousness shall be no better an escape than boldness shall be a defence. Even as an earthquake ploughs its furrows through the dark thickets of a forest, so will His almighty voice at last 'bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts ;' and then shall all in the new heavens and the new earth, both angels and men, rejoice in the salvation of the Son of God, and praise Him for the mightiness of His redeeming love.

9. The Lord sitteth above the water-flood : and the Lord remaineth a King for ever.

That one Eternal and Almighty Spirit Whose throne in heaven is above 'the sea of glass like unto crystal,' Who in the beginning moved upon the face of the waters of the unformed world, Who ceased to strive with man when the flood was sent to take away the world of sinners, Who descended in bodily form upon the Saviour when He was baptized in Jordan, and Who ever abideth upon the sacramental waters of Baptism,—He ceaseth not to govern and to teach the Church, until the earth be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea,—He with the Father and the Son liveth and reigneth, ever One God, world without end.

10. The Lord shall give strength unto His people : the Lord shall give His people the blessing of peace.

That He possesses strength, heaven and earth and all created things that hear His voice confess ; He is able, therefore, to give it to His people ; His power is an argument for His grace ; 'for as His majesty is, so is His mercy.' But, as in the revelation to Elijah in Horeb, it is not in the torrent,—not in the 'great and strong wind that rent the mountains and brake in pieces the rocks,'—not in the fire, nor in the earthquake, that comes the ineffable mightiness of the Almighty, but in His still small voice of blessing and of peace. No voice of God in thunder

uttered never so terribly can be mighty in operation like the voice of Him Who said, 'Peace I leave with you; My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you.'

This Psalm was probably occasioned by some memorable convulsion of nature which dwelt long in the minds of the people, and by which David sought to lead them to worship God in His mercy and loving-kindness, as being still more marvellous than His power and strength. The storm may also have been described with a mystical allusion to the conflict between the Spirit of God and the spirit of the world; and the repeating of the words "the voice of Jehovah," in the meaning of thunder, seven times in this Psalm, has suggested to many the passage in Rev. x. 3, 4. With respect to the places mentioned in this Psalm:—Sirion, we learn from Deut. iii. 9, was the name by which the Sidonians called Mount Hermon, one of the many peaks of which was also called Sion, (Psalm cxxxiii. 3,) and the wilderness of Kadesh, which was also called Zin, (Numb. xxxiii. 36,) was a part of the Arabian desert which bounded Judæa on the south, as Lebanon did on the north. "The blessing of peace" seems to be that solemn threefold blessing which was given by the high-priest, (Numb. vi. 23—27,) who, when he pronounced it, we are told by Bechai, one of the Rabbis, so arranged his fingers, while he extended his hands towards the people, as to indicate a Trinity.—The LXX. adds to the title of this Psalm, "of the going out of the tabernacle," but it is difficult to fix upon any event recorded in Scripture to which allusion can be supposed to be made.

Morning Prayer.

PSALM XXX. *Exaltabo Te, Domine.*

1. I WILL magnify Thee, O Lord, for Thou hast set me up : and not made my foes to triumph over me.

As David, when all his enemies were conquered, and he was delivered from the rebellion of Absalom,

and pardoned for his sin in numbering the people, rejoiced to prepare the gold and silver for the building the House of God; so with a far more triumphant joy shall the Son of David, Whose kingdom is eternal, rejoice when the number of His elect is accomplished, and the Church of the redeemed no longer in warfare on earth, but, spotless and perfected with immortal brightness, joins her triumphant praises with His, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, before the Majesty of the Almighty Father.

2. O Lord my God, I cried unto Thee : and Thou hast healed me.

3. Thou, Lord, hast brought my soul out of hell : Thou hast kept my life from them that go down to the pit.

Then at last shall His Church discern the mightiness of the glory of His passion; then shall she see how the love of her Lord and Spouse was made perfect through suffering. Then shall the saints learn how He has ever pleaded before His Father the sacrifice of Himself,—how all their prayers have ever been one with His cry upon the Cross, and therefore they were heard,—how all sorrows have ever been one with His bleeding wounds, and therefore they have been healed,—how all death with them that are His has been one with His death, and all therefore was but an entrance into life,—how all sinlessness and all salvation has ever come of the grace which He earned for man.

4. Sing praises unto the Lord, O ye saints of His : and give thanks unto Him for a remembrance of His holiness.

5. For His wrath endureth but the twinkling of an eye, and in His pleasure is life : heaviness may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.

LXX. For there is vehemence in His wrath ; and life in His will.

Then surely the recollection and the full understanding of the love of their Lord on earth will give power and joy to their chants of praise in heaven ; and the remembrance of His holiness and patient charity will inspire His elect with thanksgivings for which ages will be all too short ! True it was that He was wroth with sin, and that He accomplished in them that sentence which He had pronounced,—‘The soul that sinneth it shall die ;’ but in His wrath He quickly remembered mercy ; and His love fulfilled His eternal pleasure, that life should conquer death. He Himself yielded Himself unto death, and the sun set upon His body lying in the grave, while all His chosen ones sorrowed and were heavy-hearted at His loss ; yet it was but ‘a little while’ before He became the first-fruits of the resurrection in the brightness of Easter morning ; and they saw Him again, and their hearts were filled with joy which no man could take from them. So, too, the night of death has fallen upon the servants as it fell upon the Lord ; but on them, as

on Him, rises the morning of the resurrection, the breaking of that Day whose joy shall never set.

6. And in my prosperity I said, I shall never be removed : Thou, Lord, of Thy goodness hast made my hill so strong.

7. Thou didst turn Thy face from me : and I was troubled.

Then shall the Church understand how her prosperity was always her trial. She will plainly see that confidence in her privileges, in her creeds, in her mysteries and sacraments, was a snare, when she did not duly use and humbly minister them ; that it was not her own rock that was so strong, but Christ only, on Whom she was built ; that when she looked to herself, and forgot her Lord, His face was turned from her, and she was troubled with strifes and divisions, and separations, which are the fruits of carnal self-assertion, and arise in the want of one-mindedness and of spiritual meekness.

8. Then cried I unto Thee, O Lord : and gat me to my Lord right humbly.

She will then see that prayer and humility have ever been the only remedy for the troublings of divisions and the want of unity ; that by them only can the breaches of pride and strife be built up ; that when Christ seemed divided, and one portion of the Church strove against another portion, the going in utter meekness and charity to Him, Who ever was the Head and Lord of all the members,

only joined that which was divided, and fulfilled His prayer, that His Church might be one, even as God was One.

9. What profit is there in my blood : when I go down to the pit ?

10. Shall the dust give thanks unto Thee : or shall it declare Thy truth ?

11. Hear, O Lord, and have mercy upon me : Lord, be Thou my helper.

In prayer and humility only can the Church beseech to be delivered from spiritual death and ruin, and from that lost and fallen state in which her office of declaring God's truth should be taken away from her. In prayer and humility only can she be saved by that all-prevailing sacrifice which profits for the sins of all,—can she plead before the throne that He died to save us, and that if we be not saved He died in vain,—that He went down to the pit that we might rise to life, and that if our dust rises not His truth will never be declared. So has the Church been taught that in herself she is most deceivable and weak, but that in the mercy and in the help of her Lord she is most truthful and strong; that prayer ever was her mightiest arm, and Christ her only helper.

12. Thou hast turned my heaviness into joy : Thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness.

13. Therefore shall every good man sing

of Thy praise without ceasing : O my God,
I will give thanks unto Thee for ever.

LXX. Therefore my glory shall sing unto Thee, and I shall have no compunction.

O Lord my God for ever will I confess to Thee.

In that dedication-day of the heavenly temple, when the morning of heavenly joy has followed the night of earthly heaviness; when the saints in Christ shall have put off the sackcloth of mortality, and shall be clad with immortality and girded with incorruption; then shall all that now is dark be clear, and all that now is wrong be righted. Then shall the Church, which now has to confess her sins only, have to confess her gladness. Where humiliation once sighed, there shall glory sing. There will be no interruption either of sin or of time to her songs of immortal praise. The saints made perfect shall render thanks throughout eternity to God for Christ their Saviour, and He too in turn shall, as of old on earth, thank His Father for those whom He hath given Him, of whom He 'has lost not one.'

The title of this Psalm is, "A Psalm of a Song, at the dedication of the House, by David." The first part of this title shews that it was a poem which was to be sung to music; but the dedication of the House is more difficult to explain. It may refer to the dedication of David's own palace, the building of which is mentioned in 1 Chron. xiv. 1; but it seems most likely that the dedication of the piece of ground on which the temple was afterwards to be built by Solomon, (1 Chron. xxii. 1,) is the event referred to. In this view, verse 6 would refer to his sin in numbering the people, (1 Chron. xxi. 1,) 8 to his prayer, (xxi. 17,) 5 to God's anger and mercy, (xxi. 15,) and 12 to his peace-offering, (28). It cannot, however, be certainly shewn

that this is the dedication which the Psalm was written to celebrate. The Fathers consider the Psalm to have a twofold meaning,—both literal and spiritual,—and St. Augustine declares it to be “a Psalm concerning the joy of the resurrection, and the renewing of the body to an immortal state, not only of the Lord, but of the whole Church.”

PSALM XXXI. *In Te, Domine, speravi.*

1. IN Thee, O Lord, have I put my trust : let me never be put to confusion, deliver me in Thy righteousness.

It is hard for one who has sinned to trust in God, for every act of sin destroys trust ; yet unless we are to become utterly ruined, and to be covered with shame, we must trust in God. Yes, we must have full trust in Him and in His righteousness, if we would be delivered from our own selfishness and sinfulness,—not merely in that first righteousness of God which condemns the sinner, but in that second and higher righteousness of His which delivers the sinner from his sin.

2. Bow down Thine ear to me : make haste to deliver me.

3. And be Thou my strong rock, and house of defence : that Thou mayest save me.

4. For Thou art my strong rock, and my castle : be Thou also my guide, and lead me for Thy Name's sake.

When we see what sin has made us, and pray to be delivered from its power and guilt, the time seems long until we are heard. The way seemed long to

him who was fleeing with the avenger of blood behind him, until he came to the city of refuge, and got himself within its battlements, and was safe. With the same eagerness and haste must we turn to that God Whose righteousness and mercy are like the defence of a castle on a mighty rock. 'The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it and is safe.' Nor is it enough to turn to Him, we must also turn after Him. Our cry must be not only for deliverance, but for guidance too.

5. Draw me out of the net, that they have laid privily for me : for Thou art my strength.

The lusts and sins with which our souls are ensnared seem to us in their beginnings to be but small things, and slight as a spider's web, but in their end they are found to be as strong as cart-ropes, and they bind us in a most grievous and heavy coil, which no power of ours can burst through or unloose. He only, Who became weak that we might be strong, can draw us from that evil net which the enemy has made ready that we might be caught therein.

6. Into Thy hands I commend my spirit : for Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord, Thou God of truth.

How freely and fully should the redeemed give up their life and soul into the hands of the God of truth, when the Redeemer Himself did no otherwise upon

the cross of pain! 'When Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said, Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit: and having said thus He gave up the ghost.' Truly these words, which were the dying words of the Lord of life, will well become our mouths—as they did that of His martyr Stephen—not only when we come to die, but through all our lives, and ways, and doings. To know that we are not our own, but our Father's, Who has purchased us, is the highest and truest knowledge.

7. I have hated them that hold of superstitious vanities : and my trust hath been in the Lord.

LXX. Thou hast hated them that regard vanities to no end :
But I have trusted in the Lord.

8. I will be glad, and rejoice in Thy mercy : for Thou hast considered my trouble, and hast known my soul in adversities.

9. Thou hast not shut me up in the hand of the enemy : but hast set my feet in a large room.

He who knows God to be a God of truth will despise all vanities and deceits which call away the true affections of his heart from his eternal Father. To turn to any help but God is a sure sign of want of faith : so Saul in his trouble turned to the witch of Endor, when through his stubbornness and sin he had ceased to trust in God. If our Father is caring for us in our trouble, if in our adversity He still watches over us, that we blot not out our name from

the book of life, then may we even in trouble rejoice, and exult in Him Who in judgment ever remembers mercy, and Who 'punishes us less than our iniquities deserve.' He keeps ever what we have committed to Him; and they who in death or in life have commended their soul into His hands, shall both in death and in life be kept safe from the hand of the enemy of souls. He will lead us into that way of His commandments wherein our hearts shall run with speed to Him, which is narrow to them that toil therein, but broad to them that love it.

10. Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am in trouble : and mine eye is consumed for very heaviness ; yea, my soul and my body.

11. For my life is waxen old with heaviness : and my years with mourning.

12. My strength faileth me, because of mine iniquity : and my bones are consumed.

Again and again we must cry for mercy, for again and again we need it. Faithlessness and sin, like some fearful disease, gain a firm grasp upon us, unless we are ever going to the Divine Physician. Our natural wisdom and strength is found utterly wanting to discern that peace for which our eyes long. Our soul and body alike groan under the burden of unpardoned guilt. Without faith in God and without the love of Christ, our years would only be numbered by our troubles, and our life would be but one long groan. Our strength would be destroyed by

our evil doings, and we should be worn away with vain strivings and vainer regrets.

13. I became a reproof among all mine enemies, but especially among my neighbours : and they of mine acquaintance were afraid of me ; and they that did see me without conveyed themselves from me.

But that which man in his sinfulness deserved, the Son of Man endured undeservingly. He Who did no sin was accused as a sinner, that we, when we are accused as sinners, might be counted sinless. When He was sent to Herod, 'the Chief Priests and Scribes stood and vehemently accused Him,' and when He returned before Pilate, His own people, the seed of Abraham, 'were instant with loud voices, requiring that He might be crucified. And the voices of them and of the chief priests prevailed ;' while the Apostle who had declared that he would never be offended in Him, denied even with an oath that he knew Him, and all the other disciples, whom for so long time He had known and loved, 'forsook Him and fled.'

14. I am clean forgotten, as a dead man out of mind : I am become like a broken vessel.

15. For I have heard the blasphemy of the multitude : and fear is on every side, while they conspire together against me, and take their counsel to take away my life.

What trouble and dismay that we have suffered for our wrong-doings could be like His Who was left

to die for us? And yet how often do we forget the Lord Who died, and let the sorrows and pains which He bore for us in His human nature, which He took for us, pass from our minds as though they concerned us not! He was made a vessel of dishonour, cast aside and broken, that we might become vessels of honour meet for the Master's use. The reproaches that were our due fell upon Him, while the multitude blasphemed Him and reviled Him. He came forth crowned with thorns, and in the purple robe of mockery, and the cry that hailed the Lord of life was, 'He ought to die.'

16. But my hope hath been in Thee, O Lord : I have said, Thou art my God.

17. My time is in Thy hand ; deliver me from the hand of mine enemies : and from them that persecute me.

18. Shew Thy servant the light of Thy countenance : and save me for Thy mercy's sake.

But Christ the Son of God in His suffering and pain must be ever before us in our suffering and pain. If we teach ourselves to bear with Him, we shall be able to bear through Him. He is our immortal hope, for He has known man's trials ; and He is the end of our most living faith, for He is our unchanging God. We must make confession not merely with the mouth, saying 'I believe ;' but with the whole will and being, giving up our nothingness into the hands of His almightiness, and so resting secure and safe

that no evil hands can 'pluck out of His hand' them whom He has accepted for His own. Thus will hope and faith make way for love; and grace will open to us that deepest of all blessings, the sight of the Saviour's face, so crowned with mercy that its brightness hides the thorns.

19. Let me not be confounded, O Lord, for I have called upon Thee : let the ungodly be put to confusion, and be put to silence in the grave.

20. Let the lying lips be put to silence : which cruelly, disdainfully, and despitefully, speak against the righteous.

They who call upon God shall live in the strength of Him on Whom they call; but they who will not call upon Him are hurrying fast to that utter darkness and deep dead silence in which none can call upon Him, even though they would. The doom of them who have 'said unto God, Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways,' shall be that their request shall not be denied to them. Where now are Pilate, and Herod, and the Pharisees, who slew 'Jesus Christ the righteous?' They are gone, and their lips are silent. Yet all the cruelty of Pilate, the disdainfulness of Herod, and the despitefulness of the Pharisees, fall short of theirs, who, being named by the name of Christ, and called to His righteousness, live evil lives, in opposition to His word and will. The lowest deep of sin is to hold the truth in unrighteousness.

21. O how plentiful is Thy goodness, which Thou hast laid up for them that fear Thee : and that Thou hast prepared for them that put their trust in Thee, even before the sons of men !

22. Thou shalt hide them privily by Thine own presence from the provoking of all men : Thou shalt keep them secretly in Thy tabernacle from the strife of tongues.

But what a mighty and abounding store of goodness and of love has the all-loving Lord laid up for His servants and His sons ! He has from eternity been making ready for them that infinite reward, which is measured, not by their service, but by His own bounty ; and which He, Who can do what He will with His own, will bestow upon them freely, richly, openly. Here too, on earth, they shall have a fore-taste of His goodness ; for He will be with and in them, though the world will not know it, and the strifes of men and the turmoil of the world will pass by them unheeded and unheard. What will be the contradictings of opinions and the noise of controversies to them whose ‘lives are hid with Christ in God ?’ They shall dwell in the Church on earth, in peace and trust, ‘with one mind and with one mouth glorifying God ;’ until they enter into the perfect enjoyment of His surpassing goodness, when we change the tabernacle on earth for the eternal home.

23. Thanks be to the Lord : for He hath

shewed me marvellous great kindness in a strong city.

24. And when I made haste, I said : I am cast out of the sight of Thine eyes.

25. Nevertheless, Thou heardest the voice of my prayer : when I cried unto Thee.

David had learned, and we too must learn, where our most sure defence lies : his 'house of defence' was not in Hebron nor in Jerusalem, but only in God Himself. He bowed down His ear unto his prayer, and not only saved him, but made him marvel at His love. In his haste and fear, when his trial came, he had thought that he was cast off by God and driven away from His presence. He had hurried, and he deemed that his God lingered. He prayed earnestly and humbly, and the hour of doubt went by, and he knew that his Father Which is in heaven was near to him as ever, and merciful to him as ever.

26. O love the Lord all ye His saints : for the Lord preserveth them that are faithful, and plenteously rewardeth the proud doer.

27. Be strong, and He shall establish your heart : all ye that put your trust in the Lord.

This is the reason why we should love God—that He is righteous. He preserves them who trust in Him : He is faithful to them who confide in Him : He pays back their arrogance to the arrogant. We

may most fully and thoroughly be sure that God will have right and will not have wrong, and in that confidence we may be both strong and bold. Yes, let His saints be strong—strong in truthfulness, strong in righteousness, strong in love, and they shall evermore be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

The LXX. gives the title of this Psalm, “The Ecstasy of David,” but this is not in the Hebrew, and is merely a reference to verse 24, where the words “my hastening,” might be rendered “my departure or ecstasy,” but more properly “my flight.” It was, perhaps, written by David on his looking back and recalling all the troubles of Absalom’s rebellion, and weighing the difficulties that still remained to be overcome. Verse 24 would then refer to his despondency on quitting the “strong city” of Jerusalem and the house of God in it. The first part of verse 6 was uttered by our Lord upon the cross as His dying prayer, (St. Luke xxiii. 46.) but yet the Fathers generally do not take the whole Psalm to be prophetic of Christ. In reading this Psalm, and others of a similar character, in which prayer, and prophecy, and rebuke, and thanksgiving, follow closely upon one another, and are sometimes intermingled, we must bear in mind the directions of St. Augustine, which apply to all the Psalms :—
“If the Psalm pray, do ye pray ; and if it lament, do ye lament ; and if it joy, do ye rejoice ; and if it hope, do ye hope ; and if it fear, do ye fear ; for what is here written is a mirror for us.”

Evening Prayer.

FOR ASH-WEDNESDAY, THE SECOND PENITENTIAL PSALM.

PSALM xxxii. *Beati, quorum.*

1. BLESSED is he whose unrighteousness is forgiven : and whose sin is covered.

2. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth no sin : and in whose spirit there is no guile.

What can be a dearer blessing to the weary than rest, what to the dying than life, what to the sinner than pardon? When we have once seen what unrighteousness is and what sin is, there can be no rest, no comfort, till that intolerable burden is taken from the soul, and the conscience is made whole again. How must there have sprung up a rapture of unutterable comfort in the weeping sinner's heart, when the Lord said to her, 'Thy sins are forgiven thee: go in peace!' There is only one higher blessing in the storehouse of God's gifts than the gift of forgiveness, and that is the blessing of innocence. Blessed indeed is he who has never wilfully departed from grace, and who, like Nathanael, is free from guile!—not only from the guile which deceives others, but from the more subtle guile which deceives the sinner's own heart and conscience.

3. For while I held my tongue : my bones consumed away through my daily complaining.

4. For Thy hand is heavy upon me day and night : and my moisture is like the drought in summer.

Heb. My heart was changed as through the heat of summer.

LXX. I have been turned to wretchedness,
Whilst a thorn was fixed within me.

To hide a disease is not to heal it. To hide our sin from others, from ourselves, from God, will never take its guiltiness away. It is there always, eating into the soul and polluting the conscience, destroy-

ing the moral strength, and giving rise to continual restlessness and daily anxiety and distress. Sorrow must be the fruit of sin ; and secret sorrow must be the fruit of hidden sin. And this is God's work ; it is the effect of His righteous providence, which determines that sin shall not be happy. Guilt dries up the sources of grace and peace within the heart, as the parching drought of summer dries up the moisture from the fields. Guilt makes our whole moral being wretched, as a thorn fixed within the flesh spreads pain and festerings around it.

5. I will acknowledge my sin unto Thee : and mine unrighteousness have I not hid.

6. I said, I will confess my sins unto the Lord : and so Thou forgavest the wickedness of my sin.

Their sins only shall be covered who have not covered them. It is the acknowledging our wrong to be wrong, not only with the mouth before men, but with the whole spirit before God, that brings us to forgiveness. An obstinate persistence, when we have sinned, that we are not sinners ; an obstinate distrust of God's willingness to pardon if we will repent and amend, these are the walls which separate sinning and unbelieving man from his holy and faithful God. Man, who built them up, could never break them down ; therefore God in Christ has done this for him, and reconciled the world unto Himself. ' If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us : but if we con-

fess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' Yea, in all our distress and sinfulness let us open our wounds, and Christ will heal them ; let us own our poverty, and He will make us rich ; let us confess our sins, and He will forgive their wickedness !

7. For this shall every one that is godly make his prayer unto Thee, in a time when Thou mayest be found : but in the great water-floods they shall not come nigh Him.

Heb. Truly when great water-floods come,
They shall not reach unto Him.

LXX. But in the deluge of many waters,
They shall not draw nigh to Him.

Because ' He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins,' should they that hope in Him confess their sins before Him ' Who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin.' Our duty is to confess ; His attribute is to forgive. If we delay, we both increase our own guilt and our own punishment, and despise His ever-present mercy. We must come to Him when He may be found. We are sure to find Him to-day ; to-morrow He may not be to be found by us. ' Behold now is the accepted time ; behold now is the day of salvation.' But when trial and punishment, and misery come, like the rushing of waters from the opened windows of the heavens and the broken up deeps of the abyss upon the sinners before the flood, then they who have sought to God ' when He might be found,' find in Him, like righteous Noah, shelter and safety from them ; and

they that have not sought Him shall seek Him then too late, in a time when He will not be found of them.

8. Thou art a place to hide me in, Thou shalt preserve me from trouble : Thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance.

LXX. Thou art my refuge from the affliction around me.

O Thou that art my joy, deliver me from them that encompass me.

If we would be saved from everlasting trouble we must hide in Christ, and not from Christ; He will cover our sins from us if we cover them not from Him. He Who is the love of them whom He has loved, will save them from the encompassing waters of temptation and trouble, and will encompass them with overflowing joy and songs of heavenly praise, 'as the voice of many waters.'

9. I will inform thee, and teach thee in the way wherein thou shalt go : and I will guide thee with Mine eye.

10. Be ye not like to horse and mule, which have no understanding : whose mouths must be held with bit and bridle, lest they fall upon thee.

After sorrow comes confession, and after confession comes pardon, and after pardon comes grace for amendment. We have found that we cannot teach ourselves the way, and that we cannot guide ourselves in it. That same all-holy Spirit which has brought us out of sin will lead us into holiness, if we patiently and willingly follow His gentle and

consoling guidance. Our own headstrong wills and evil passions would make us 'like brute beasts which have no understanding,' but the eye of the All-seeing fixed upon us directs our souls if we will have faith in Him. There is an eternal necessity that 'His Will be done;' if we will not do it with our wills, we shall be made to do it against our wills. The sinners will be driven like unruly steeds, with the sharp discipline of scourge and curb; the righteous will be ever guided by the warning or loving glance of their Master's eye.

11. Great plagues remain for the ungodly : but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord, mercy embraceth him on every side.

12. Be glad, O ye righteous, and rejoice in the Lord : and be joyful, all ye that are true of heart.

'That servant which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to His will, shall be beaten with many stripes.' There is woe for such; but for them who will do God's will, mercy is round them and close to them like the air, and love is the very atmosphere they breathe. They shall rejoice, not in themselves,—for in us there is nothing in which we can rejoice, but everything to fill us with sorrow,—but in their Lord and in His grace,—for in Him there is nothing which can make us grieve, but everything which can give us joy. Yes, the true of heart, who see that all things are ruled by the most righteous and perfect will of God,

will rejoice in all things except their own unrighteousness; above all, they will rejoice in that redeeming love which has forgiven their unrighteousness and covered their sin.

This Psalm, which is entitled "Maschil," or "a Psalm of pious instruction," was certainly written by David after his great sin in the matter of Uriah, (2 Sam. xii.) It is one of those called penitential, and is appointed by the Church to be used on the first day of Lent. The third verse clearly refers to his sufferings during that long time which he had passed in unrepentance, before God sent the prophet to him to rouse him from his self-deceiving and guilty state. There can be no truer or deeper commentary upon the words, "Blessed is the man in whose spirit there is no guile," than will be found in the tenth sermon of Bp. Butler, "Upon Self-deceit."

PSALM xxxiii. *Exultate, justi.*

1. REJOICE in the Lord, O ye righteous : for it becometh well the just to be thankful.

They who are earnest in doing what is right, can best rejoice in the Lord of perfect righteousness. The wrong doers can never rejoice, the repenting can only pray for mercy; but they who strive to do right, as far as they do that which they seek to do, can fulfil the charge, 'Rejoice evermore.' For they know that it is not from themselves that what they are and what they do comes, but from His grace Who gives to them that have, that they may have more abundantly; and therefore it is with them both a privilege and a duty to indulge in thanks and praise.

2. Praise the Lord with harp : sing praises

unto Him with the lute, and instrument of ten strings.

3. Sing unto the Lord a new song : sing praises lustily unto Him with a good courage.

Every faculty, therefore, of their souls and of their body, should join in gratitude to Him Who has done all in them and for them. Holy thoughts should be moved within them by holy affections and holy hope, and should come from their mouths in holy words and songs of praise. Every new gift of grace and act of mercy call for a new offering of thanksgiving and hallowed gladness to be brought, not with coldness or doubt, but in faith and joy, with singing and melody of heart unto the Lord of love.

4. For the word of the Lord is true : and all His works are faithful.

5. He loveth righteousness and judgement : the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord.

It is He Who is 'called Faithful and True that in righteousness doth judge,' and His name is the Word of God : that which He speaks, whether in commandment, in covenant, or in promise, is eternally true and undeceivable. 'He for His part will most surely keep and perform' all that He has said He will. And in the whole course of His providence we see that His works are according to His words. That which He has said that He loveth, His providence shews that He does love, even the doing what is right. It is not hard to trace in anything the plain workings

of His righteous government; and that He is good, not only does His word declare, but all created things, with life and without, with reason and without, by their very creation and preservation do most clearly and fully shew. 'He saw everything that He had made, and behold it was very good;' and still 'He doeth all things well.'

6. By the word of the Lord were the heavens made : and all the hosts of them by the breath of His mouth.

7. He gathereth the waters of the sea together, as it were upon an heap : and layeth up the deep, as in a treasure-house.

Do we doubt His goodness, or distrust His righteousness,—at least we cannot doubt His power. 'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.' Yea, 'in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made.' When all things had a beginning the Word already was, and was their beginning. And all the hosts of heaven, the stars that shine in their courses, and those other brighter and more glorious beings whose paths through the sky our eyes cannot see,—the angels, and powers, and thrones,—these too owe their being to that one Almighty Lord. 'By His Spirit He hath garnished the heavens.' His power extends not above only,

but beneath that world we call ours. 'God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear.' The earth and the sea are His possession, which He preserves for His own almighty use.

8. Let all the earth fear the Lord : stand in awe of Him, all ye that dwell in the world.

9. For He spake, and it was done : He commanded, and it stood fast.

'I am the Lord thy God : thou shalt have none other gods but Me,' is the first law which all created things proclaim, and to which all created things must yield obedience or must perish. They are only by His word; He said of each, 'Let there be : and there was.' He spake of each and all what His will was concerning it ; 'and it was so.'

10. The Lord bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought : and maketh the devices of the people to be of none effect, and casteth out the counsels of princes.

11. The counsel of the Lord shall endure for ever : and the thoughts of His heart from generation to generation.

Can we then confess His power, and deny His righteousness? His providence declares the second as perfectly as His creation proclaims the first. The plans and hopes of the evil come to nothing, because they are evil. No nation by its united voice can

make a wrong thing right, or a false thing true; no king, however wise or mighty, can establish evil as if it were good, nor can any power, seen or unseen. He sees all the kingdoms of the world as in a moment of time, so for a moment of time, if their counsels are not conformed to His counsel. The counsel of His kingdom only can abide, which is the working out of His most gracious law, that 'His will be done on earth as it is in heaven.'

12. Blessed are the people, whose God is the Lord Jehovah : and blessed are the folk, that He hath chosen to Him to be His inheritance.

Happy and blessed are they who are willing to be the servants of the one eternal God; who desire that He should be the Lord and King, not only of their lives, but of their hearts; who worship in faith and truth the Father Who is their Creator, the Son Who is their Redeemer, the Holy Ghost Who is their Sanctifier. Yea, thrice blessed are they who make Him theirs, for He will make them His; He will bring them ever more and more into obedience to that kingdom which from generation to generation He is establishing, and which joins together both earth and heaven under one common law.

13. The Lord looked down from heaven, and beheld all the children of men : from the habitation of His dwelling He considereth all them that dwell on the earth.

14. He fashioneth all the hearts of them : and understandeth all their works.

‘The Lord seeth not as man seeth,’ for He is in heaven and we upon earth. He marks the thoughts of them that dwell in the world, as He does their works. He knows as well all the workings of that inner world of the human soul, as He knows the workings of the outer world in which we live, for He has created and fashioned both.

15. There is no king that can be saved by the multitude of an host : neither is any mighty man delivered by much strength.

16. A horse is counted but a vain thing to save a man : neither shall he deliver any man by his great strength.

He not only sees all, but rules all. He is the great and only Potentate. Before Him and from Him power cannot save, multitude cannot save, pride cannot save, strength cannot save ; neither the multitude of Saul’s host, nor the much strength of Goliath, nor the seven hundred chariots and forty thousand horsemen of the Syrians, could avail against His will. ‘The horse is prepared against the day of battle, but safety is of the Lord.’

17. Behold, the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear Him : and upon them that put their trust in His mercy ;

18. To deliver their soul from death : and to feed them in the time of dearth.

What then can save us from an all-powerful and all-just King? Truly what we want is not to be saved from Him, but to be saved in Him. We see His power; we confess His justice; our need is that we should trust in His goodness. He is all-good, as He is all-mighty and all-righteous. Our doubt must be, not of His mercy, but of the realness of our trust in His mercy. His eye is indeed upon us, but in love, not in sternness. The death we dread was not of His counsel, but of ours; the curse of barrenness upon the earth we dwell in was not of His sending, but of our fetching,—‘Cursed is the ground for thy sake,’ who didst the wrong. And He delivers us, not from Himself, but from ourselves and our own deservings, ‘yea, and will deliver.’ Our souls are afraid of death, and faint with the lack of grace, and He, for their comfort and their stay, sends to us His only-begotten Son with that most gladsome message—‘I am the Bread of life: he that cometh to Me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst.’ So doth He turn our earthly scarcity into heavenly fulness.

19. Our soul hath patiently tarried for the Lord : for He is our help, and our shield.

20. For our heart shall rejoice in Him : because we have hoped in His holy Name.

Let us then in faith be patient and wait. Our faith cannot fail in our patience, because He is our ever-watchful helper and defender. Let us not only be patient, but ‘rejoice in hope;’ for in Him is trea-

sured our most joyful hope. It is the holy Name of 'our Lord Jesus Christ which is our hope.'

21. Let Thy merciful kindness, O Lord, be upon us : like as we do put our trust in Thee.

And last of all, and first of all, let us love Him Who first loved us, that our love may gain His love to us again. Rather let our finiteness only bind our love to Him Who is infinite; and may His love be upon us according to the measure of His infiniteness !

This Psalm has no title, yet there is little reason for doubting that it was written by David. It was probably intended for the public service of God in the temple, and was so used in the Israelitish Church. The history of the Creation in the first chapter of Genesis seems to have been vividly present to the writer's mind while he was composing this trustful and gladsome Psalm.

PSALM XXXIV. *Benedicam Domino.*

1. I WILL alway give thanks unto the Lord : His praise shall ever be in my mouth.

2. My soul shall make her boast in the Lord : the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad.

3. O praise the Lord with me : and let us magnify His Name together.

Continual thanks are owing to Him Who giveth us continual blessings. A sense of His goodness must be ever in our hearts, and then words of His praise will never be wanting in our mouths. In Him may we boast without sin, and glory without

pride; and our own humbleness of spirit and self-denying shall increase our gladness in our loving Lord Who hath done so great things for us. Humility is the companion of love, for he that is proud cannot love; and therefore they that are truly humble will not stand apart and be separated, but will join with their brothers in unity of spirit and unity of voice. 'My soul doth magnify the Lord' is the Church's song of daily gratitude and joy; and he who cannot worthily take its high words into his mouth alone, may yet chant them worthily in union with the Saviour's Church.

4. I sought the Lord, and He heard me : yea, He delivered me out of all my fear.

5. They had an eye unto Him, and were lightened : and their faces were not ashamed.

They who seek for God shall find Him; 'while they are yet speaking, He will hear.' Difficulties grow smaller and fear departs away, as we draw nearer to our Lord in prayer. As we gaze upon the brightness of His truth and kindness, no longer hiding ourselves and our sins, like Adam, our faces shine with His reflected light, even as the face of Moses shone as he came down from the mount. 'He is the true Light, Which lighteth every man that cometh into the world,' and they who abide in His light shall never stumble or be brought to shame. 'A man shall look to his Maker, and his eyes shall have respect to the Holy One of Israel.' Their own darkness may cover for awhile the shame

of the wicked, but the light of Christ giveth confidence to the righteous.

6. Lo, the poor crieth, and the Lord heareth him : yea, and saveth him out of all his troubles.

7. The angel of the Lord tarrieth round about them that fear Him : and delivereth them.

It is not the rich only or the wise that the Lord will hear ; the poor crieth, and He is ready to save him, and will make him rich with His grace and wise with His salvation. He Who was poor is the Saviour of the poor ; He Whose soul was troubled will 'exalt the humble and meek' from their troubles. It may be that man despises the poor, but God cares for them. Around each one earnest soul, whatever its earthly portion may be, there are angels tarrying ; and the hosts of God, 'which alway do Him service in heaven,' are often watching 'to succour and defend on earth' the humble heart which thinks itself forgotten and alone.

8. O taste, and see, how gracious the Lord is : blessed is the man that trusteth in Him.

9. O fear the Lord, ye that are His saints : for they that fear Him lack nothing.

10. The lions do lack, and suffer hunger : but they who seek the Lord shall want no manner of thing that is good.

‡ LXX. The rich have become beggars, and have hungered.

O let them that hunger turn to Him Who is calling them to His marriage-feast, and they shall be filled: let them who mourn their sin turn to Him Who is waiting to be gracious, and they shall find pardon and rest. Trust in His own word and promise, taste and see, and know His graciousness. Unless we know Him, the knowledge of ourselves will fill us with despair; therefore must we trust in Him. Unless we know ourselves and our own sinfulness, the knowledge of Him and of His mercy would lead us to presumption; therefore must we fear Him. His saints will have His faith and fear on the right hand and on the left, and in their Lord they will need nothing. The children of the wicked one, however strong in their power and riches, shall 'be sent empty away,' for that they have turned from Him from Whom all that is good comes; but they who seek Him in humility and faith shall both possess Him and be possessed by Him Who is perfect goodness.

11. Come, ye children, and hearken unto me : I will teach you the fear of the Lord.

12. What man is he that lusteth to live : and would fain see good days ?

13. Keep thy tongue from evil : and thy lips, that they speak no guile.

14. Eschew evil, and do good : seek peace, and ensue it.

To such the voice of the uncreated Wisdom ever

cries, 'Unto you, O men, I call; and My voice is unto the sons of man. Now, therefore, hearken unto Me, O ye children: for blessed are they that keep My ways.' Surely there are none that hate life, and none would have the days of their pilgrimage to be few and evil! Life and happiness are the great ends of our being, and all our strivings are but efforts after them; and He Who gave us our being, and set those ends before us, can best teach how we may attain unto them. First, our tongue must be tamed, and kept from malice and from falsehood; and that the lips may be right, the heart must be so too, for 'out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.' Next, we must 'cease to do evil and learn to do well;' for if we would enter into life we must 'keep the commandments.' And last, we must go to Him Who is able to give us peace from that law in our members which warreth against the law of our mind, Who only can set us free from our evil passions and ourselves, Who only can loose us 'from the bands of those sins which by our frailty we have committed,' and Who has purchased for us quietness of conscience and the fulness of peace. We must seek Him until we have found Him, and when we have found Him we must follow after Him. Thus, then, do both covenants declare that the fear of God is the true wisdom, and that obedience to His laws is the way of peace; and by the mouth of two witnesses, the prophet David and the apostle St. Peter, is this most true word established.

15. The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous : and His ears are open unto their prayers.

16. The countenance of the Lord is against them that do evil : to root out the remembrance of them from the earth.

Peace is upon all them who live according to this rule. The Lord of all watches their works, and hears their prayers, and accepts their faith, and guides them to Himself. He watches, too, them who break His laws, who eschew good and do evil, but it is in anger and in judgment. He gives them up to themselves ; for they are lusting for death, and would fain see evil days ; they are seeking to perish, they are storing up eternal sorrows ; they are ' twice dead, plucked up by the roots ' on earth, and ' without fruit ' in heaven.

17. The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth them : and delivereth them out of all their troubles.

18. The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a contrite heart : and will save such as be of an humble spirit.

' And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good ? But and if ye suffer for righteousness ' sake, happy are ye ; and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled ; but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts.'

19. Great are the troubles of the right-

eous : but the Lord delivereth him out of all.

20. He keepeth all his bones : so that not one of them is broken.

‘For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well-doing, than for evil doing. For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.’ Even the Son of God was hung between the thieves upon the cross for sins; and the soldiers brake the legs of them that were crucified with Him; ‘but when they came to Jesus, and saw that He was dead already, they brake not His legs, for these things were done that the Scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of Him shall not be broken.’ If, then, the watchful care of the Father was over the true Paschal Lamb as He was stretched dead upon the cross, so also will it be over each one of the members of His living body, who suffers like his suffering Lord. He will keep them all, so that not one of them be lost.

21. But misfortune shall slay the ungodly : and they that hate the righteous shall be desolate.

LXX. The death of sinners is wretched.

22. The Lord delivereth the souls of His servants : and all they that put their trust in Him shall not be destitute.

There are two paths through this world, one used by them who trust in themselves, the other by them who trust in God. For awhile they seem to run together. Sometimes the path of the ungodly seems the pleasantest. But we must look to the end of both of them. The one ends in misery, loneliness, and death. They who are selfish will be left unto themselves. A life without God ends naturally with a death without God. The end of the other is deliverance and comfort. The God Whom the believer has not left will not leave him. The darkness of death is but somewhat that hides the light of life from his sight; it passes over him for a moment and is cleared away: his soul is delivered from it for evermore.

The title of this Psalm is, "Of David, when he changed his behaviour before Abimelech; who drove him away, and he departed." The LXX. translate it, "when he changed his countenance," but it may be rendered, "when he concealed his intellect." The event in David's life which occasioned it will be found related in 1 Sam. xxi. 10—15. Psalm lvi. also refers to the same occasion. We are told that David fled to Achish, king of Gath, for fear of Saul. Now it would seem that Abimelech was the usual title of the Philistine princes, (compare Gen. xx. and xxvi.,) as Pharaoh was that of the Egyptian kings, and Agag that of the princes of the Amalekite tribes. It appears that suspicions were awakened in the mind of Achish by his courtiers, who put him in remembrance of the triumph which David had achieved over the Philistine champion, and the fame he had acquired by it; and that David, in order to save his life, was compelled to feign himself mad, and thereupon was driven away by Achish, and obliged to return into Judæa, and to take refuge in the cave of Adullam. The troubles which he thus unjustly and undeservingly endured only increased his faith in the truth and righteousness of God, which he accordingly declares in this Psalm. The Psalm is alphabetic, and is marked by the general character of such Psalms. Verses 12—16 are quoted by St. Peter, (1 Peter iii. 10—13,) in his exhortation to

the Christians who were then under persecution and suffering unjustly, as David suffered; and it cannot be doubted that verse 20 contains a prophetic allusion to the crucifixion of the Son of God, of Whom, as of the Paschal Lamb, not a bone was to be broken. (St. John xix. 31—37).

Morning Prayer.

PSALM XXXV. *Judica, Domine.*

1. PLEAD Thou my cause, O Lord, with them that strive with me : and fight Thou against them that fight against me.

2. Lay hand upon the shield and buckler : and stand up to help me.

3. Bring forth the spear, and stop the way against them that persecute me : say unto my soul, I am thy salvation.

God has engaged ever to be with His own, and to help them. His own promise is, 'I will contend with him that contendeth with thee;' therefore they may ever appeal from the injustice of man to the justice of God, and from the violence of man to the help of God. They can surely trust in His loving-kindness and goodness, as in a shield of defence; and His judgments upon the unjust and unmerciful will be like a spear brandished in their way, when 'He whets His glittering sword, and His hand takes hold on judgment.' But He will not only aid them, but will make them know that He aids them. If, therefore, His voice come to their soul in their distress, saying, 'I am thy salvation,'

and He Who speaks it opens the ears of their soul that they may hear it plainly, what can the strife of enemies or the confusion of the world do to daunt or stop them? 'If God be for us, who can be against us?'

4. Let them be confounded, and put to shame, that seek after my soul : let them be turned back, and brought to confusion, that imagine mischief for me.

5. Let them be as the dust before the wind : and the angel of the Lord scattering them.

6. Let their way be dark and slippery : and let the angel of the Lord persecute them.

They who injure others' souls, and indulge malice and evil wishes against them, can have nothing better happen to them than that they should be made ashamed and should be turned back, and that their plans should be confounded. But if they still persist against the warnings both of God's law and of His providence, then, by a special act of judgment, which He will commission His appointed messenger to perform, He will scatter their devices like dust before the wind ; and He will hurry them away from the scene of their evil deeds, by a path dark with horror and slippery with danger, with the avenging minister of His wrath hard behind them.

7. For they have privily laid their net to destroy me without a cause : yea, even with-

out a cause have they made a pit for my soul.

8. Let a sudden destruction come upon him unawares, and his net, that he hath laid privily, catch himself : that he may fall into his own mischief.

For the righteous indignation of men, when they see one joining treachery to cruelty and injustice in his actions, and their eager exultation when the treacherous dealer himself is caught in the snare which he intended for another, and is punished by his own acts, this feeling is but an instinctive acknowledgement of the eternal law of providence, that no evil shall go uncorrected, and that no deceit shall be unconfounded. The Lord is God ; and ‘the deceived and the deceiver are His.’

9. And, my soul, be joyful in the Lord : it shall rejoice in His salvation.

10. All my bones shall say, Lord, who is like unto Thee, who deliverest the poor from him that is too strong for him : yea, the poor, and him that is in misery, from him that spoileth him ?

In the destruction of wrong we see God’s righteousness, no less than in the preserving of right : from both His justice and His mercy does that voice sound plainly forth in the ears of the believer’s soul — ‘I am Thy salvation.’ With what joy did the holy men of old listen to those words ! how must they

have exulted in their inmost soul, with all their life and strength, in that righteous God Who took the part of the despised and the oppressed against the proud and the tyrannical; Whose dearest attribute is that He forgets not the poor and the suffering, but sets them free from those who trample on them and care not for them, and wrong His law of love; 'for He that is higher than the highest regardeth; and there be higher than they.'

11. False witnesses did rise up : they laid to my charge things that I knew not.

12. They rewarded me evil for good : to the great discomfort of my soul.

13. Nevertheless, when they were sick, I put on sackcloth, and humbled my soul with fasting : and my prayer shall turn into mine own bosom.

14. I behaved myself as though it had been my friend, or my brother : I went heavily, as one that mourneth for his mother.

But how did God confound the scornful and the unloving, and cause the treacherous to perish by their own deceit? By coming Himself among them as innocent, and poor, and sorrowing. Their Judge came to them, and they did not know Him; they treated Him as they had been used to treat the helpless and the poor. They sat in judgment upon their Lord. They laid sin to the charge of Him 'Who knew no sin.' He was most innocent of all things

blameful, and there was no fault found in Him, and they 'sought for witness against Him to put Him to death; and found none. For many bare false witness against Him, but their witness agreed not together.' Against Him Who 'was daily in the temple teaching' them the words of truth, they came out as against a thief: and yet it was for the cure of their sickness and corruption that He had clothed Himself with mortal flesh, that He had humbled Himself to our want and need; yea, that He had prayed upon the bitter tree, 'Father forgive them, for they know not what they do,' before He bowed His head and died. And this for the transgression of 'the mother of all living,' and for the sin of 'His own familiar friends,' even of them whom 'He is not ashamed to call brethren.' All His life through, in sorrow and in shame, had He been yearning to bring them to the obedience of the children of God, for He said, 'Whosoever shall do the will of My Father Which is in heaven, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother.' Surely, then, they who suffer and are hardly treated may be patient, and pray even for them who care not for them, seeing that their Saviour suffered and was patient, Who was Lord of all.

15. But in mine adversity they rejoiced, and gathered themselves together: yea, the very abjects came together against me unawares, making mouths at me, and ceased not.

16. With the flatterers were busy mockers :
who gnashed upon me with their teeth.

LXX. And they rejoiced against me and came together :

The scourges came together upon me, and I knew
it not.

They were scattered, and had no compunction.

They tempted me ; they sneered at me with a sneer :

They gnashed their teeth upon me.

The mockeries and insults which the faithful sometimes have to endure for acting holily, the sneers with which the truth is often received, must neither discourage us from doing right, nor deter us from asserting the truth when the time calls for it. It may be met with contempt, and may call forth hatred and dislike among them who have thrown aside all rectitude and self-respect, but still it must be spoken in love. It is ever a type of Him Who was Himself the Truth : for Christ was foreshadowed by every suffering which any righteous man suffered because of his righteousness. On Him did 'they begin to spit, and to cover His face, and to buffet Him, and to say to Him, Prophecy : and the servants did strike Him with the palms of their hands.'

17. Lord, how long wilt Thou look upon this : O deliver my soul from the calamities which they bring on me, and my darling from the lions.

18. So will I give Thee thanks in the great congregation : I will praise Thee among much people.

Yes, and every deliverance which a righteous man waited for in patience, and at length obtained, because of his righteousness, foreshadowed also the Son of God. Noah in his preaching, Job in his patience, Joseph in the pit, David in his persecution, each shewed forth the coming of that pattern Man Who was most perfect in His patience, as in His righteousness. He waited, and He was delivered from both death and hell; and so by His patient love He preserved the Church of His redeemed, and brought the peoples of the world to the knowledge and the praise of the Father.

19. O let not them that are mine enemies triumph over me ungodly : neither let them wink with their eyes that hate me without a cause.

20. And why ? their communing is not for peace : but they imagine deceitful words against them that are quiet in the land.

LXX. For they spoke to me indeed peacefully ;
And in their wrath they planned deceits.

It was not for the harm that He did to them that they hated Him, but for the love He bore towards them. He said, 'If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin : but now have they both seen and hated both Me and My Father. But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated Me without a cause.' And His enemies gave free course to their ungodli-

ness ; they ‘went and took counsel how they might entangle Him in His talk!’ They came to Him with crafty hypocrisy, looking meekly with their eyes, but hiding hatred and malice in their hearts ; and they falsely, and yet at the same time truly, said, ‘Master, we know that Thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest Thou for any man : for Thou regardest not the person of men.’ But He ‘perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye Me, ye hypocrites?’ Shall the Master thus be tried, and the disciple escape? Yea, He was tried that His followers might escape.

21. They gaped upon me with their mouths, and said : Fie on thee, fie on thee, we saw it with our eyes.

22. This Thou hast seen, O Lord : hold not Thy tongue then, go not far from me, O Lord.

23. Awake, and stand up to judge my quarrel : avenge Thou my cause, my God, and my Lord.

The lions who sought to devour His soul fawned on Him at first in treachery, but within a little they opened their jaws against Him in open rage. They asked of Him and He answered them, that He was indeed the Son of Man, the Lord of power ; and ‘then the high-priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy ; what further need have we of witnesses? Behold, now ye have heard His blas-

phemy. What think ye? They answered and said, He is guilty of death.' And so when the holy martyr Stephen spoke to them of their treachery and murder, 'they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed upon him with their teeth;' while he committed all his cause into the hands of the Lord, Who had suffered unjustly too, and 'saw the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.' For man may be a judge, but he is not the Judge; they may say that they have seen, but God has seen too.

24. Judge me, O Lord my God, according to Thy righteousness : and let them not triumph over me.

25. Let them not say in their hearts, There, there, so would we have it : neither let them say, We have devoured him.

26. Let them be put to confusion and shame together, that rejoice at my trouble : let them be clothed with rebuke and dishonour, that boast themselves against me.

27. Let them be glad and rejoice, that favour my righteous dealing : yea, let them say alway, Blessed be the Lord, who hath pleasure in the prosperity of His servant.

God is and must be the Judge; and with Him right will and must prevail. For a little while the violent may carry things their own way, the wicked for a little while may think that he has swallowed

up the righteous. There is a time of trial marked out both to the evil and to the good, the evil are tried by their own way being given to them; the good are tried by their liberty being taken from them. But when the time of trial is ended, the due course of God's holy government will again go on, and they who are confirmed in evil-doing, the oppressors and the mockers, will be brought to misery and ruin: malice will be turned upon itself; while patience and love for holiness and obedience will be made perfect, and will prosper in the pleasure of the All-just. They who have endured will bless Him Who tried them for their trial. So the Jewish Church which scorned at and slew the Lord of Glory, was sent as a mourner and a wanderer throughout the earth; while the Christian Church through persecutions and trials hath prospered, even to 'dwelling in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting-places.'

28. And as for my tongue, it shall be talking of Thy righteousness: and of Thy praise all the day long.

The firm knowledge of this, founded both on experience and on faith, will lead us to make our Almighty Father's righteousness the constant subject of our thoughts and words; and thus to praise Him continually. Yea, the highest praise we can offer to Him is to do His righteous will; for he that does no wrong praises God continually, and he that does right hallows His Name for evermore.

The opening verses of this Psalm seem so plainly to express David's wish to Saul,—“The Lord therefore judge between me and thee, and see, and plead my cause, and deliver me out of thine hand,” (1 Sam. xxiv. 15,)—that it must be referred with the other Psalms of the same character to that part of David's life. Verse 19 is applied by our blessed Lord to Himself, (St. John xv. 25); and there are other verses which, if not directly prophetic of events in our Lord's life, yet present an obvious reference to them to the mind of the Christian. The indignation of David, “speaking by the Holy Ghost,” against the wicked and treacherous, is so strongly and vividly expressed in certain passages of this Psalm, that it may be well for the reader to bear in mind, in regard to such Psalms as resemble it, as, for instance, Psalms v., x., xxviii., xl., lii., lv., lviii., lix., lxix., cix., the following rules for their interpretation. Expressions of this kind which occur in Holy Scripture may be understood in three ways. 1. as the pronouncing a prophecy, not as the expression of a wish; as in verse 6 of this Psalm we may read, “Their way shall be dark and slippery, and the angel of the Lord shall persecute them.” Or, 2. as an expression of desire, but so expressed as to refer, not to the punishment of the guilty, but to the righteousness of the punisher; as in Psalm lviii. 9,—“The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance;” for God Himself has no pleasure in the punishment of the ungodly, but only in His own righteousness,—“for the righteous Lord loveth righteousness.” Or, 3. the expression of a wish for punishment may be referred to the guilt itself, and not to the guilty person, so that the sin should be destroyed, but the sinner be preserved. The fathers generally adopt the last of these modes of interpretation; while modern critics advocate the adoption of the first, on the ground that in Hebrew the imperative mood and the future tense are often used the one for the other.

PSALM XXXVI. *Dixit injustus.*

1. My heart sheweth me the wickedness of the ungodly : that there is no fear of God before his eyes.

2. For he flattereth himself in his own sight : until his abominable sin be found out.

Heb. The oracle of the Evil one to the wicked is within my heart.

There is no fear of God before his eyes.

For he flatters himself in his own eyes,

As to the finding out of his sin of hatred.

They who cease to listen to the Spirit of holiness open their hearts to the inspiration of the spirit of darkness. There is no more dreadful subject of contemplation, than the state of those who have utterly cast away the fear of God, and who act and live only by the suggestions of the Evil one. They are led captive by him at his evil will, and they do not know it. They flatter themselves that they have gained a sort of liberty and freedom, because they have rejected the law of God; they cannot see, for the evil spirit will not let them see, how deeply their souls are lost, and how at last their evil doings must come to an evil end. They desire to stifle the conviction that their hatred and rebellion must at length exhaust God's love and patience.

3. The words of his mouth are unrighteous, and full of deceit : he hath left off to behave himself wisely, and to do good.

4. He imagineth mischief upon his bed, and hath set himself in no good way : neither doth he abhor any thing that is evil.

At the prompting of the father of lies they become altogether false in both their hearts and words; instead of leaving off to behave wickedly and to do wrong, they leave off behaving wisely and doing right. Their repentance is of their good

deeds, not of their evil ones ; their shame is of their better feelings, not of their viler ones. ‘They sleep not, except they have done mischief.’ In the restlessness and wakefulness of an evil conscience, they look forward to going on in their recklessness. They make up their minds not to change or alter, for they have got at last to see nothing wrong in sin.

5. Thy mercy, O Lord, reacheth unto the heavens : and Thy faithfulness unto the clouds.

6. Thy righteousness standeth like the strong mountains : Thy judgements are like the great deep.

It is a trial and temptation to see men living in the world and acting thus ; but let the temptation be never so great or deep, the mercy and faithfulness of God are higher and deeper far. There is a wondrous distance between heaven, where all is holy, and earth, whereon the servants of the wicked one are allowed to live ; and yet God’s love will span it. Like the pillar of cloud and fire separated between the Israelites and the Egyptians, so do His mercy and truth separate between His children and the children of wrath. Whatever the wicked may think or do, the eternal righteousness of God remains obvious, strong, unmoved, as a mighty mountain ; and His judgments come forth from time to time like the rushing of a flood of waters, sweeping away into the deep of destruction all that is corrupt, unclean, and vile. They are high, and to be seen by

all; deep, and to be fathomed by none. Yea, we are placed in the midst of the mercies and the judgments of our God, even as the earth is between the heavens and the deep.

7. Thou, Lord, shalt save both man and beast; How excellent is Thy mercy, O God: and the children of men shall put their trust under the shadow of Thy wings.

He Who watched over the Church and the creatures in the ark will ever preserve His own. Not one of His creatures is beyond His providence and His care. Five sparrows are sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God: how much more will He, Who remembers the sparrows, remember His elect! His mercy is past all human thought to understand, which yet extendeth over all His works. And beneath the shadow of the hands which He stretches out for us shall we find unceasingly both hope and peace.

8. They shall be satisfied with the plenteousness of Thy house: and Thou shalt give them drink of Thy pleasures, as out of the river.

9. For with Thee is the well of life: and in Thy light shall we see light.

In His house, which is His Church, there is not only a refuge for the harassed and a resting-place for the weary, but an ever-ready banquet spread for all. The Bread of heaven is there offered to the

hungry; the Cup of life is waiting for the thirsty; the way to the fourfold river, once closed by cherubim and barred with fire, is now again made open by Him Who never ceases calling, 'Come unto Me all ye that are weary, and I will refresh you.' In Him and in His wounded side is the fountain of eternal life, for He Himself is life, 'and the life is the light of men,' and in Him and through Him shall we who are His see light.

10. O continue forth Thy loving-kindness unto them that know Thee : and Thy righteousness unto them that are true of heart.

If we forsake not Him, He will never forsake us. They that know Him will know His love, and they who have once known it shall know it for evermore. Our ignorance and negligence it is that makes us doubt; but they who are true of heart themselves can never for a moment distrust the truth and righteousness of God.

11. O let not the foot of pride come against me : and let not the hand of the ungodly cast me down.

In Him Who humbled Himself for us is our safeguard against the approach of pride, either in ourselves or in others; above all, against the approach of him who through his pride fell, and who is ever seeking to draw down others too. It is the power of our King which only can restrain the hand of the Evil one, that he touch us not to make us fall.

12. There are they fallen, all that work wickedness : they are cast down, and shall not be able to stand.

From the watch-tower of faith, from the battlements of the House of God, the believer sees the wicked afar off stumble and perish. Where they exalted themselves, there shall they fall; ‘and their casting-down shall be in the midst of them.’ They follow their works, and their master, whose work they chose, to that ruin which is their doom. The right shall stand, The wrong shall perish,—these are the everlasting decrees of God, standing firm as the mountains, and though they be executed slowly, yet are they most certain. The wickedness and self-deceit of the ungodly are nothing: the righteousness and mercifulness of God are everything.

This Psalm, which is inscribed “to the chief Musician, by the servant of God, David,” is of a similar character to the fourteenth; but in it the trustfulness and confidence of the prophet in the truth and justice of God come out more clear and plain. David is called in the title the “servant of God,” as if the thoughts which he dwells on had so wrought within his mind that he was determined to trample down the doubts and temptations which the evil days brought to him, and to give himself up to be the servant of God, and of Him only. The word in the first verse which has been rendered *oracle* is the word used for *prophetic inspiration* and its use warns us that there is an inspiration from the evil spirit for them who resist the Holy Spirit.

Ebening Prayer.

PSALM xxxvii. *Noli æmulari.*

1. FRET not thyself because of the ungodly : neither be thou envious against the evil doers.

2. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass : and be withered even as the green herb.

All, even the God-seeking, feel too deeply the influence of this fretful life. They are in a hurry that what is wrong should be made right. They would have all things at once made perfect, and nothing bad or inconsistent left even for a moment. They are inclined to repine even at the long-suffering of God which gives the ungodly time to repent and the evil-doers time to leave off doing evil. Yet though He is long-suffering, He is also just : He gives the wicked time ; but in that time either their sins or themselves will be destroyed. They are on their trial. The good and the bad alike grow together in the field, they have the sun shining on both alike, the rain falling on both alike ; there is time for both, and grace for both, until the harvest. Then the reapers cut them down, and the distinction at last is made : the one are for the garner, the other for destruction. There will be no cause to envy the bad then ; therefore there is none now.

3. Put thou thy trust in the Lord, and be doing good : dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.

4. Delight thou in the Lord : and He shall give thee thy heart's desire.

Look we to ourselves, to correct ourselves ; and to God, to trust in Him. If we will do our work,—that

which He has given us to do,—we need have no fear but that He will do His. Let us dwell in the world, as in His world, not our own; as using it, and not abusing it; and He will feed us, Who calls Himself the Good Shepherd. Yea, He will give us each day our daily bread. In Him must we rejoice, Whose we are. If Christ be ours, what need we of other pleasures? Let ‘the Desire of all nations’ be to each one of us our heart’s desire, and He shall be given unto us, as we have been given unto Him.

5. Commit thy way unto the Lord, and put thy trust in Him : and He shall bring it to pass.

6. He shall make thy righteousness as clear as the light : and thy just dealing as the noon-day.

This is a world of confusion : here things are not as they should be. God’s will is not yet done on earth, as it is in heaven. If it had been so, there would not have needed the toil and suffering, the agony and bloody sweat of the Son of God, to set right what man had set wrong. But He, Who can remedy it, is remedying. ‘His Father worketh hitherto, and He worketh.’ ‘Commit we the keeping of our souls to Him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator,’ and He will at length make right most plainly right, and wrong most plainly wrong; and in Him and through Him shall ‘they that be wise shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they

that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.'

7. Hold thee still in the Lord, and abide patiently upon Him : but grieve not thyself at him, whose way doth prosper, against the man that doeth after evil counsels.

God is patient, though He is strong. Let us be patient, like Him. He bears with the wicked ; He even allows him to do prosperously, not indeed through his bad intentions, but in spite of his bad intentions. It may be that He is trying to soften him by love, to wean him from his sins by mercy. What know we of His Almighty plans of salvation, that we should repine, when He is patient still ?

8. Leave off from wrath, and let go displeasure : fret not thyself, else shalt thou be moved to do evil.

9. Wicked doers shall be rooted out : and they that patiently abide the Lord, those shall inherit the land.

They who have this trust in God will not let their own anger or jealousy overcome them. Impatience and repining are not far off from sin. They who let their feelings, at the riches or power of the wicked, get the mastery over them, will come into the same temptation to which those whom they envy have yielded. How often, in them who seemed to be righteous, has prosperity destroyed what sorrow and trouble might have preserved,—humility, and trust-

fulness, and kindness to others. None could tell us this better than David, who had been so sorely tempted 'to avenge himself with his own hand upon Nabal,' who had returned him evil for good, and yet at last could say, 'Blessed be the Lord, that hath pleaded the cause of my reproach from the hand of Nabal, and hath kept His servant from evil; for the Lord hath returned the wickedness of Nabal upon his own head.' But they who do right shall inherit not earth only, but also heaven.

10. Yet a little while, and the ungodly shall be clean gone : thou shalt look after his place, and he shall be away.

11. But the meek-spirited shall possess the earth : and shall be refreshed in the multitude of peace.

Yet a little while,—for the longest time is but a little while in the working of the Almighty's plans,—and the persevering sinner will be away. He will have followed his works. Sin destroys itself. His place on the earth will be empty; he will have gone 'to his own place.' But the blessing of the Lord shall stand unalterable for ever,—'Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth.' The quiet of spirit shall have in fulness that which their spirit longs for—peace which none shall trouble, comfort which nought can mar.

12. The ungodly seeketh counsel against the just : and gnasheth upon him with his teeth.

13. The Lord shall laugh him to scorn : for He hath seen that his day is coming.

But the wicked may not only be prosperous and powerful, he may also be cruel and persecuting. If it be so, trust in God will conquer him even then. He beholdeth both his iniquity and his doom, Who under the covenant of works is set forth to us as scorning at sin, but not as weeping for it ; while under the covenant of grace He is shewn to us as weeping, but never is recorded to have laughed.

14. The ungodly have drawn out the sword, and have bent their bow : to cast down the poor and needy, and to slay such as are of a right conversation.

15. Their sword shall go through their own heart : and their bow shall be broken.

They may draw the sword of cruelty, and make ready their artillery of blasphemous and unbelieving speeches. They may trust by their ungodly arguments to pervert the ignorant and the poor, and by their threatenings and tyranny to destroy those whose faith and life are right: the King of truth mocks at their efforts. Their unbelief casts down themselves by a most deadly fall; their tyranny slays their own soul, and cuts them off from love and life.

16. A small thing that the righteous hath : is better than great riches of the ungodly.

17. For the arms of the ungodly shall be

broken : and the Lord upholdeth the righteous.

Therefore it is better to fear God and to be contented, than to have great riches without His fear. Our daily bread, and our Father's daily blessing upon it, is all that we need : it may seem to us but a small thing, yet is it that which our Saviour bids us ask for. If we could but have 'faith as a grain of mustard-seed,' we should stay ourselves in confidence upon that everlasting arm, which shall strike down the power and the schemes of the wicked, and shall uphold the righteous in life and in death.

18. The Lord knoweth the days of the godly : and their inheritance shall endure for ever.

19. They shall not be confounded in the perilous time : and in the days of dearth they shall have enough.

They may have but a little here ; but they shall have all hereafter. 'They shall have a better and an enduring substance.' Their inheritance is of an unending possession. Their life is in the hands of Him, Who will deliver them 'in all time of their tribulation, and in all time of their wealth ;' in that perilous time when all things go well with them, and in the days of trouble, of poverty, and of despondency.

20. As for the ungodly, they shall perish ; and the enemies of the Lord shall consume as the fat of lambs : yea, even as the smoke, shall they consume away.

Heb. Truly the wicked shall perish ;
 Even the enemies of the Lord, as the excellence of
 lambs,
 They vanish, like smoke they vanish.

LXX. Because the sinners shall be destroyed,
 And the enemies of the Lord in their glorying and
 exaltation ;
 Vanishing, they have vanished like smoke.

With the righteous all is abiding ; with the wicked
 all is perishing. Like the green pasture, in which
 the lambs rejoice in the spring, withers and dis-
 appears before the scorching heat ; like the smoke
 which curls high into the air from a burning sacri-
 fice, and then utterly vanishes and is lost ; so is the
 wrath and pride of them who are without God. It
 goes away none can tell whither.

21. The ungodly borroweth, and payeth
 not again : but the righteous is merciful, and
 liberal.

22. Such as are blessed of God shall pos-
 sess the land : and they that are cursed of
 Him shall be rooted out.

LXX. They who bless Him shall inherit the land.
 And they who blaspheme Him shall utterly perish.

So swiftly does the doom he has made his own
 come upon the ungodly, that he has not time even
 to restore that which he has borrowed. He who has
 paid nothing back for the time and opportunities
 which have been lent unto him, shall not long be
 allowed to defraud eternal justice ; the last farthing
 of eternity shall be for ever being paid by him, and
 still for ever due. While upon them that fulfil the

will of God, His blessing shall be in turn fulfilled : — ‘Thou shalt lend unto many nations, and thou shalt not borrow :’ for they who bless God shall receive a blessing from Him, and He shall reserve them their portion both in earth and heaven ; and they who insult His holiness shall perish as an accursed thing ; for ‘cursed is he that putteth his trust in man, and in his heart goeth from the Lord.’

23. The Lord ordereth a good man’s going : and maketh his way acceptable to Himself.

24. Though he fall, he shall not be cast away : for the Lord upholdeth him with His hand.

He sets the way before us, and sets us in the way, Who is Himself the way. They who are found in Him are in the way. He calls us, and gives us grace to obey His calling ; He teaches us, and gives us grace to fulfil His teaching. If we fall, He gives us grace to rise again ; and none can fall finally unless they fall wilfully. His hand is always ready to aid them who are trusting to His aid. ‘If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous ; and He is the propitiation for our sins.’

25. I have been young, and now am old : and yet saw I never the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging their bread.

26. The righteous is ever merciful, and lendeth : and his seed is blessed.

This is the testimony of a holy man of God, of one who had seen much of the ways of the Almighty, both when he was young, as a shepherd-boy, and when he was old, as a king. He had seen the end of Samuel the man of peace and Saul the man of war, of Jonathan the humble-minded and Absalom the beautiful, of Goliath the strong and Barzillai the aged: and his experience made him say, that he had never seen the righteous forsaken; and that not only did the watchful care of God guard over His own, but it went on to the second and third generation too. There is a blessing in obedience which is not quickly forfeited, but which extends to children and to children's children. And surely they who trust to Him for grace may trust to Him for bread. Yea, they who obey Him have enough in this present life not only for themselves, but for charity and mercy too; and both to them and to theirs shall the blessing be spoken, 'Come, ye blessed of My Father, receive'—what? the same that they have given? What they gave was earthly: they lent to their Lord the things that perish; but they are in return to receive 'the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world.'

27. Flee from evil, and do the thing that is good: and dwell for evermore.

28. For the Lord loveth the thing that is right: He forsaketh not His that be godly, but they are preserved for ever.

29. The unrighteous shall be punished:

as for the seed of the ungodly, it shall be rooted out.

Heb. The Lord loves judgment ;
He forsakes not His saints ;
They are preserved for ever ;
But the seed of the wicked shall be cut off.

30. The righteous shall inherit the land :
and dwell therein for ever.

Do right, and leave wrong undone, for this is God's will ; and ' he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.' That which is right God loves,—it is His attribute ; He would not be God if He did not ; and they who love it also share so far with Him in His attribute. ' Let no man deceive you : he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil ; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.' ' He that hath the Son hath life ; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.'

31. The mouth of the righteous is exercised in wisdom : and his tongue will be talking of judgement.

32. The law of his God is in his heart :
and his goings shall not slide.

Men may be known by their words as well as by their actions. They who are holy will speak holily. They will talk of the righteous judgment which God is ever exercising in the world, and

which He will one day accomplish and fulfil—of that righteous law by which He governs and orders all things in earth and heaven, and which He will finally magnify before all His creatures. He who has this law fixed in his heart will walk surely, because he will walk uprightly.

33. The ungodly seeth the righteous : and seeketh occasion to slay him.

34. The Lord will not leave him in his hand : nor condemn him when he is judged.

It may be that the bad will try to get rid of the good; for their very existence, when they see it, is a reproach to themselves. But the Lord Whom they serve will help them; their judgment is in His hand, not in the hand of man. If they are condemned by man, yet they are absolved by God.

35. Hope thou in the Lord, and keep His way, and He shall promote thee, that thou shalt possess the land : when the ungodly shall perish, thou shalt see it.

As yet we have not the things we wait for; but we hope for them. Hope we in God, and keep we His way, so shall we have them. Keep we His way, not our own ways; for what are our own ways but our sins? So shall we arrive at the eternal Canaan, and shall see when all that is vile, wrong, and false comes to nothing, and is destroyed at the revelation of Almighty righteousness.

36. I myself have seen the ungodly in great

power : and flourishing like a green bay-tree.

Heb. I saw a wicked man, who was tyrannical,
And spreading himself forth like a deep-rooted one,
a green one.

37. I went by, and lo, he was gone : I sought him, but his place could no where be found.

We have heard the testimony of David respecting the obedient and the faithful; let us now hear his experience concerning the wicked. He had often seen them that are ungodly flourishing, and strong, and prosperous, doing as they would with what they considered their own, and defying any to hinder them. This was a trial to his faith, and he felt it so. But before long a most strange change came over the object of his perplexity. He was gone: he had broken those rules which God will not have broken; and he had had to take the consequences of his act. He had passed away, deep-rooted though he seemed, and had left no mark behind him. The strong tree with its many branches was gone, even like the verdure of the grass that is withered. How many a tree is there covered with leaves, and making a show from a great distance off, which, for its lack of fruit, shall be 'dried up from the roots;' and they who see it, like the disciples going to Jerusalem, shall 'marvel, saying, How soon is the fig-tree withered away!'

38. Keep innocency, and take heed unto

the thing that is right : for that shall bring a man peace at the last.

39. As for the transgressors, they shall perish together : and the end of the ungodly is, they shall be rooted out at the last.

To keep our innocence, which was given to us as members of Christ—this is the blessing of blessings ! And if this be denied us, ‘through the fraud and malice of the devil, or our own carnal will and frailness,’ then to repent of the wrong we have done, and to follow with new earnestness that which is right, this is the way to peace,—peace in the hour of death, and pardon in the day of judgment. But they who take no heed to what is right, who wantonly break the laws of right, shall perish, be they many or few, together and altogether. The accomplishing of God’s providence, the end of the universe, will be the utter ceasing of sin and of sinners, and the firm establishing of unceasing holiness and peace.

40. But the salvation of the righteous cometh of the Lord : who is also their strength in the time of trouble.

41. And the Lord shall stand by them, and save them : He shall deliver them from the ungodly, and shall save them, because they put their trust in Him.

But all is from God. The ceasing of the wicked, the salvation of the righteous is His doing, Who doeth all things well. They that are faithful will not make

haste—they will be patient, and wait for God. He will strengthen them in trouble, and will save them by it; He will deliver them from the ungodly and will save them from them; for He is eternally faithful and true to His word, if we be only faithful and true to Him.

That this Psalm was written by David when he was old is clear from verse 25. In it he gives the whole experience of his life with regard to the course of God's providence; and on that subject few could have a better right to speak with authority than David. He had been humble and unknown, he had obtained glory, he had suffered from calumny, from open violence, from secret plots; he had been pursued by his enemies, he had been betrayed by his friends, nay, even by his own children; he had gained a throne, had been driven from it, and had been restored to it again; he had contended with enemies in war, and had ruled over a large nation in peace; he was a poet, a prophet, a lawgiver, a warrior, and a king; he seemed to have borne in himself well-nigh all the chances of human life, and in this Psalm he sums up what he had learned. He sums up all his teaching in the one truth, that faith in God's dealings, as being ever righteous in spite of appearances, and resignation to His providence, as being ever just and right, will support any man in any trials. Through almost all the Psalms from the first, and especially in those of David, there is to be found a constant reference to trouble, persecution, sinners, ungodly and blasphemous men or powers; there are traces of a world of sorrow and perverseness even in their most exalted and joyous strains: it will be well for the spiritual reader to keep these traces always in view, as hints for his own consolation and instruction in days of rebuke and trial. In the present Psalm this contrast of good and bad, holiness and sin, which had been an under-current in other Psalms, is brought out plainly and definitely. Right must be right, and wrong must be wrong, before God, and with Him, whatever men may think, say, or do. The Psalm in the original is alphabetical, but so composed that every other verse generally begins with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet in succession. It is not without some ground that these alphabetical Psalms have been said to teach the elements and first principles of the knowledge of God.

Morning Prayer.

FOR ASH-WEDNESDAY, THE THIRD PENITENTIAL PSALM.

PSALM xxxviii. *Domine, ne in furore.*

1. PUT me not to rebuke, O Lord, in Thine anger : neither chasten me in Thy heavy displeasure.

2. For Thine arrows stick fast in me : and Thy hand presseth me sore.

The soul which has seen its sins can for awhile only groan at the wretchedness of the sight. It feels that rebuke and chastisement are its proper lot; it can only cry to the Lord, against Whom it has rebelled, that His rebuke may not be the rebuke of wrath, nor His chastisement that of severe anger. The higher the grace from which it has fallen, and the more effectual the grace which raises it up, the deeper do the memories pierce of the things it has done, and the heavier does the thought weigh upon it of its ungratefulness and vileness. With what sharpness of both shame and fear must those words have struck to David's heart, when God sent to him by the prophet Nathan the message—
'Thou art the man. Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul; and I gave thee thy master's house, and the house of Israel and Judah; and if that had been too little, I

would moreover have given unto thee such and such things. Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in His sight? Thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon.'

3. There is no health in my flesh, because of Thy displeasure : neither is there any rest in my bones, by reason of my sin.

4. For my wickednesses are gone over my head : and are like a sore burden, too heavy for me to bear.

Self-distrust and self-contempt have the perfect mastery over him who has thus sinned in despite of God. He feels that there is no counsel, no comfort in himself, that his reliance on himself is less than nothing. His sin and his wickedness is all that is his own. The ever-increasing mass of guilt which his conscience heaps up in witness against him makes him despair; the burden is one which he can never carry home.

5. My wounds stink, and are corrupt : through my foolishness.

6. I am brought into so great trouble and misery : that I go mourning all the day long.

They are not fresh wounds only with which his 'heart is wounded within him,' and his conscience

bleeds, but old, long-forgotten, unrepented crimes come forth again, which have long been festering in the soul and polluting the moral being. How often does a sin done perhaps long ago in youth, and yet never repented of or atoned for, remain hidden in the soul, like an ulcer, poisoning the very springs of the spiritual life, and bringing upon the sinner at the last trouble and misery unspeakable! Not days of mourning, nor nights of tears, can remedy the loss which the folly of unrepentance and carelessness has too often caused.

7. For my loins are filled with a sore disease : and there is no whole part in my body.

8. I am feeble, and sore smitten : I have roared for the very disquietness of my heart.

For neglected wilful sins are not merely an outward witness against the sinner, nor even scars and wounds upon his moral nature, but at last they seem to enter into his very being, to get possession of his whole existence. Looking at all that is vile and impure in his doings, in his sayings, in his thinkings, tracing out with self-abhorring truthfulness, how all that he is and all that he does tends to sin, he feels as if he were indeed sin-full, as if he were sin itself. He loathes himself with a most deep loathing. The whole head becomes sick, and the whole heart faint, at the sight of what he has become. He cries out with the Apostle, 'O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the

body of this death?' For to feel sin in its own utter sinfulness, to see it rightly as it really is, is the torture of all tortures and the terror of all terrors.

9. Lord, Thou knowest all my desire : and my groaning is not hid from Thee.

God and the heart alone know all that fearful struggle, that intense longing to escape from sin and from ourselves, and to gain some better resting-place, some less poor and treacherous stay. The groans of him who hates his sin, and is yearning for forgiveness, are never lost nor hidden; they may be wrung from a feeble and a broken heart, but they are the very promptings, and even the echoes, of that Eternal Spirit, Which 'Itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.'

10. My heart panteth, my strength hath failed me : and the sight of mine eyes is gone from me.

He sees then how near sin is to death, and then, too, most when death comes near to him. The shadow of the second death falls over him. His heart throbs but feebly, his strength becomes powerless, like that of a dying man, and the things of life grow dim and small before his dying eyes. The death of the soul is the withdrawal of grace, even as the death of the body is the failing of the breath.

11. My lovers and my neighbours did stand looking upon my trouble : and my kinsmen stood afar off.

12. They also that sought after my life laid snares for me : and they that went about to do me evil talked of wickedness, and imagined deceit all the day long.

In that foretaste of the wrath to come human help and sympathy avail nothing. He that has sinned by himself must suffer by himself. 'The heart knoweth its own bitterness,' and neither neighbour nor kinsman can come near with comfort or with cure. We must die alone, and man's kindness or love cannot save us from death ; so we must repent alone, and man's companionship or pity cannot save us from the grasp of sin ; for that they are sinners too. But though friends are then unable to give aid, our enemies, both seen and unseen, become stronger and fiercer. As the sinner faints, they double their attacks ; as he despairs, they multiply their snares. Sin, whom he has served, gives him no respite, for that it is loath to lose a slave over whom it has long had power.

13. As for me, I was like a deaf man, and heard not : and as one that is dumb, who doth not open his mouth.

14. I became even as a man that heareth not : and in whose mouth are no reproofs.

What are charges of wickedness and rebukes for sin to him before whom has been revealed his own guilty state? He hears them not. He knows far more against himself than any reproach that an

enemy can bring against him, or than any rebuke that a friend may give. He is, he feels in the very depths of his being, without plea, without defence, self-condemned. He cares not to hear, for he knows it too well; he cares not to justify himself, for his sins are viler in his own eyes even than in the eyes of others. He must suffer and be quiet. He who is so guilty may surely well endure in silence, when the Sinless endured for him and opened not His mouth.

15. For in Thee, O Lord, have I put my trust : Thou shalt answer for me, O Lord my God.

He cannot answer for himself: but shall there be no answer? That agony in the deathliness of sin, wrestled with alone and in silence, is not given to him for nothing. At last, in the very depth of the gloom he finds his foot upon the rock. Another shall answer for him. The Lord only, Whom he had distrusted, he feels at length, can be mightier than his own evil nature; God only can set right that which he has for all the time past been setting wrong. He will trust in Him to do it; he will trust in Him to answer for him—this is the lesson his depth of woe-fulness and his silence have taught; and though it has come in misery and bitterness, its end is trust and comfort.

16. I have required that they, even mine enemies, should not triumph over me : for when my foot slipped, they rejoiced greatly against me.

Then can the soul pray for comfort, which it could not do before. It may ask now of the Saviour it has found, that its enemies triumph not over it again, that though it may still totter in its feebleness, it may not fall so as never to arise, so as to give joy to the enemies of God.

17. And I, truly, am set in the plague : and my heaviness is ever in my sight.

Heb. I am ready to fall down ;
And my pain is before me continually.

18. For I will confess my wickedness : and be sorry for my sin.

The more we long for mercy, the viler our sins appear ; and it is not until we have been freely pardoned that we know fully how deadly and vile sin is. The more it comes into the light, the blacker it shews, the deeper we are cut by the sight of it ; until at last, in the brightness of God's holiness and the clearness of His pardoning love, the whole foulness of our sinful life stands out before us in one dark and startling view. Then do we feel astonished and ready to fall ; but that pain is from grace, which probes our wounds, and not from sin, which causes them. We no longer hide from God or from ourselves the misery we have brought upon ourselves ; we open our wounds to the great Physician, our wickedness to the Giver of salvation, in sorrow but yet in trust that He may say, Go in peace.

19. But mine enemies live, and are mighty :

and they that hate me wrongfully are many in number.

20. They also that reward evil for good are against me : because I follow the thing that good is.

But repentance, however deep, brings not peace at once. We have many and mighty enemies, not only of flesh and blood, but unseen authors of spiritual wickedness, who are enraged to see the captive freed, and to find one, who once followed evil under their will, now following good under another master. They gnash their teeth in hatred and rage each time a sinner leaves off his sin, and turns to ‘walk humbly with his God.’

21. Forsake me not, O Lord my God : be not Thou far from me.

22. Haste Thee to help me : O Lord God of my salvation.

God forsakes not them who forsake sin : He draws nigh to them that draw nigh to Him ; He makes haste to help them who distrust their own weakness ; He gives salvation—yea, rather He is salvation—to them who repent and pray. Let then the forgiven penitent ever dwell in His presence,—live before His face,—wait continually for His loving look and pardoning word ; and he shall know that his ‘sickness has not been unto death.’

This Psalm, which is the third Penitential Psalm, is entitled, like Psalm lxx., “A Psalm of David, to bring to remembrance ;” that is, both to bring his sin to his own remembrance, and to bring

his suffering and sorrow to remembrance before God. For when God seems to have forgotten us, then must we remember Him. Its deep confession of unworthiness and guilt shew how utterly David had repented of his crying sins of murder and adultery, "what indignation and what revenge" the remembrance of them wrought in him against himself. It is fitly appointed for the First Day of Lent. With verses 3—10 it is worth while for the Christian reader to compare the following passage from a parable of the heathen philosopher, Socrates, of the trial of the dead, contained in the *Gorgias* of Plato:—

"When therefore they come before the Judge, he, making them stand before him, examines each one's soul, not knowing whose soul it is, but often meeting with the soul of some great king; and he sees nothing sound in the soul, but finds it scarred all over with scourges and full of sores, through falsehoods and unrighteousnesses, which the evil actions of each one have imprinted on his soul. He finds it all wried through lying and pride, and nothing upright, because it has been brought up without truth; he sees too the soul full of uncomeliness and baseness, through power, luxury, wantonness, and self-indulgence. On seeing it thus he straightway sends it with disgrace to prison,—where arriving, it suffers the punishment it deserves."

FOR THE BURIAL SERVICE.

PSALM XXXIX. *Dixi, custodiam.*

1. I SAID, I will take heed to my ways : that I offend not in my tongue.

2. I will keep my mouth as it were with a bridle : while the ungodly is in my sight.

3. I held my tongue, and spake nothing : I kept silence, yea, even from good words ; but it was pain and grief to me.

There is no thought that comes more cheerlessly to the natural soul of man than the thought of death. The thought of leaving the things among which we have lived, and which we have grown used to, and of

going into another land of which we have known nothing, and have seen nothing, must ever fill us with deep and mournful feelings. ‘O Death, how bitter is the remembrance of thee to a man that liveth at rest in his possessions, to the man that hath nothing to vex him, and that hath prosperity in all things!’ We think of death, as timid children think of going into the dark. The remembrance of the grave, and still more the sight of the grave, chills us in our enjoyments, and dulls our earnestness and hopefulness in our plannings. It seems to warn us of the vanities we are, and the vanities we desire. It seems to swallow up trial and temptation, and trouble, and even sin, in its own darkness and awfulness. It shuts the mouth, and makes us say nothing. We care not to justify ourselves, or to speak either bad or good, with that chilling gloom abiding on the soul. What need to be angry even with the wicked, what need of speaking even good words, with the prospect of that silence full before us? Very heavy with mournfulness and pain is the oppression of that feeling, as it settles down upon the soul.

4. My heart was hot within me, and while I was thus musing the fire kindled : and at the last I spake with my tongue ;

But dark and cold as is death, there is that within man which is not subject to its power ; which even in the natural man cannot but rebel against its influence. Fear and despondency would teach us not to speak ; but there is a fire within

the soul which He placed there Who made the soul, and in its power the dull and heavy spirit, like metal placed within the furnace, glows, and melts, and burns. The spirit ceases to be dark, the tongue is no longer cold, and both kindle together and rise to Him Who is the very Life, Who in the beginning breathed into our nostrils the breath of life, and made man to be a living soul.

5. Lord, let me know mine end, and the number of my days : that I may be certified how long I have to live.

6. Behold, Thou hast made my days as it were a span long : and mine age is even as nothing in respect of Thee ; and verily every man living is altogether vanity.

The soul cries to God with an almost passionate appealing,—What and where am I? Whither am I going? I see death; I am compelled to believe in death. Oh let me know, is death the end? My life here is but very short,—is this life all that I have to live? There is darkness behind and darkness before, and this mortal life is but a little space between. By the side of the ages in which God works out His doings, and by the side of the eternity which He is, and in which He is, my term of days shews like nothing, it is lost as if it were not. Is then the preaching true, ‘Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die?’ Can God have made man for nothing? Is every one of the beings whom He has created and endued with life, whom He has

both blessed and chastened, altogether and utterly nothingness, and made in vain?

7. For man walketh in a vain shadow, and disquieteth himself in vain : he heapeth up riches, and cannot tell who shall gather them.

It is man's sin that he will look upon himself as made in vain, when the Almighty Father made him not in vain. He takes up with the empty shows of earth, he walks among the shadows of the world, he is careful and anxious, and takes thought about them. He sets himself to get money, to store up wealth, as if that was a reality and a truth ; and when he has disquieted himself to gain it, he goes to the grave and leaves it, and his eye cannot see who takes what he has gained, his ear cannot hear how that is scattered which he with toil had heaped together.

8. And now, Lord, what is my hope : truly my hope is even in Thee.

9. Deliver me from all mine offences : and make me not a rebuke unto the foolish.

This surely could not be the end which He, Who doeth all things well, devised for man,—to have trust in a shadow, to fix his hope upon riches. If in this life only man had hope, he were of all creatures most miserable ; and when in this life only he has hope, then is he of all creatures most miserable. His hope is in God. He may well trust and be confident that He Who made him, made him not for destruc-

tion, but for Himself and for His glory. Therefore his prayer must ever be that the object of his Maker may be accomplished in him, and that he may be delivered from all those things which mar his Maker's work, and render His purpose vain and void, so that the foolish cannot discern it—even his own offences and self-deceivings.

10. I became dumb, and opened not my mouth : for it was Thy doing.

11. Take Thy plague away from me : I am even consumed by the means of Thy heavy hand.

It is man's vain self-disquietings and his offences that make his days seem hopeless and helpless. It is the heaping up riches that makes death terrible. It is man himself who makes his life a dream, because he will live among the shadows and forget the realities ; he will fix his hope in the things that pass and fade, and will doubt the things which alone endure. 'Man that is born of a woman hath but a short time to live,' and he himself makes himself 'full of misery.' Therefore he who dreads the grave has nothing to say before God ; his mouth is closed ; the shortness of his life is of God's doing, but the emptiness of it is his own. Our affliction or our fear is not a doom which we cannot shun, it is a chastisement bestowed upon us for wrong-doing by a righteous God. He may lay His hand heavily upon us, but it is not more heavily than we need ; it is not so heavy as our sins ; and however heavily

it be laid, by bringing death near to us, it is so laid to draw us unto Him Who willeth not our death, and not to thrust us from Him.

12. When Thou with rebukes dost chasten man for sin, Thou makest his beauty to consume away, like as it were a moth fretting a garment : every man therefore is but vanity.

He rebukes men with fear, He chastens them with death, for their sin, and for that only. It is sin that ruins the soul, that causes the death of the body. It is sin that eats away and mars innocence and holiness, like a moth frets a garment, and makes it valucless. He that sinneth therefore—he that lays up riches where moth and rust corrupt and thieves break through and steal—is working vanity, and is but vanity. It is not the living soul that God made man that is vanity, but the sinful and degraded thing that man has made himself.

13. Hear my prayer, O Lord, and with Thine ears consider my calling : hold not Thy peace at my tears.

14. For I am a stranger with Thee : and a sojourner, as all my fathers were.

Our time, then, is short, but our hope is eternal. If our days be few, let our prayers be many. Life indeed is even as nothing, but grace is more than everything. It may be that 'in the midst of life we

are in death,' but therefore let us 'seek for succour' from none else but that 'Lord Who for our sins is justly displeased.' The tears of penitence can drown sin, even as the fire of faith can conquer death; and for them that truly sorrow for their misdoings, there is one Who saith, 'Weep not,' as He said to the mother who wept over her dead child at Nain. We all have to die; we are no better than our fathers; we must say with Abraham, 'a stranger and a sojourner am I with you; give me a possession of a burying-place:' yet may we know, with Abraham, that we are strangers here because we are citizens of another country. 'For they that say such things declare plainly that they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He hath prepared for them a city.'

15. O spare me a little, that I may recover my strength : before I go hence, and be no more seen.

To Him then, in the day of weakness and in the fear of death, let us most humbly turn, beseeching Him for others and for ourselves, that He would 'give us unfeigned repentance for all the errors of our life past, and steadfast faith in His Son Jesus; that our sins may be done away by His mercy, and our pardon sealed in heaven, before we go hence, and be no more seen.' So may we trust that we shall be heard again when we pray 'that we, with all those that are departed in the true

faith of His holy Name, may have our perfect consummation and bliss, both in body and soul, in His eternal and everlasting glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord.'

This Psalm is inscribed by David "to the chief musician Jeduthun." Jeduthun, or Jedithun, is mentioned as one of the leaders of sacred music in 1 Chron. xvi. 41; 2 Chron. v. 12. His children were porters at the gates of the temple. The Psalm is an enlargement of David's confession (1 Chron. xxix. 15), when he blessed the Lord before all the congregation before he died. It is a meditation upon the frailty of man and the uncertainty of his condition in this world, leading the thoughts, under the guidance of the Spirit, from man's misery and shortness of life to God, Who is our hope, and His everlasting mercy. It is most fitly placed by the Church in the Office for the Burial of the Dead.

FOR GOOD FRIDAY.

PSALM xl. *Expectans expectavi.*

1. I WAITED patiently for the Lord : and He inclined unto me, and heard my calling.

2. He brought me also out of the horrible pit, out of the mire and clay : and set my feet upon the rock, and ordered my goings.

Man had long been waiting for Him Who was to redeem mankind. The promise had been made, that our nature should again be raised from the depth to which it had fallen, but the fulfilling of it was delayed. Through the long years of violence before the deluge, through the sojourning in Canaan and the affliction in Egypt, through the wanderings in the wilderness, through the teachings of the first law, through the types of sacrifices, through the

warnings of prophets, through captivity and deliverance, through dim-seen light and utter blindness, had the children of men been waiting, until their Saviour came;—waiting, a nation for their king, a Church for their priest, yea, worshippers for their God. Man was calling to God throughout that long waiting-time ever and anon; at one time, with the prayer of living faith expecting His answer, but more often with the dumb longing of misery and want. At length, ‘in the fulness of the time,’ He heard and answered. He brought up our fallen souls from the depth of misery in which they lay, from the darkness, and confusion, and woe, into which they had cast themselves. He raised them from the clay of earth and the mire of sin, to be no more ‘of the earth, earthy,’ and set their hopes and wishes upon a sure resting-place, upon ‘that rock which is Christ.’ He opened to them the way unto Himself, and bade them walk therein.

3. And He hath put a new song in my mouth : even a thanksgiving unto our God.

4. Many shall see it, and fear : and shall put their trust in the Lord.

Then did man’s heart and mouth learn a new office—the work of thanksgiving. Before he had cried for mercy, now was he taught to render thanks for grace. God’s love was revealed most freely, fully, perfectly; and man’s waiting was far more than over-paid. All Adam’s seed should see it, for grace was to prevail further even than sin; and holy fear

and loving faith was to be man's return for the redemption which had been wrought for him.

5. Blessed is the man that hath set his hope in the Lord : and turned not unto the proud, and to such as go about with lies.

6. O Lord my God, great are the wondrous works which Thou hast done, like as be also Thy thoughts which are to us-ward : and yet there is no man that ordereth them unto Thee.

7. If I should declare them, and speak of them : they should be more than I am able to express.

Cursed is he who trusteth in man, and blessed is he who trusteth in God. They who, from the horrible pit of their misery and sin, look to the creature to deliver them, shall find themselves sinking deeper in their despair. Their trust, which is placed upon a lie, shall perish with themselves. Our own pride and our own plans are falsehoods that cannot help ; it is the wonderful love of God, and His most marvellous scheme of grace, that only can be our deliverance. Wondrous works indeed hath He done Who hath been among us, and with us, and in us, and one with us. Wondrous works, which man could not contrive, for he could not conceive them ; which came only from infinite love, and were devised by infinite wisdom : ' For who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been His counsellor ? ' The wonderfulness of our redemption in God made man

is beyond all words and beyond all thought. ‘Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness.’

8. Sacrifice, and meat-offering, Thou wouldest not : but mine ears hast Thou opened.

Heb. Ears hast Thou dug through to me.

LXX. But a body hast Thou prepared me [and Heb. x. 5.]

9. Burnt-offerings, and sacrifice for sin, hast Thou not required : then said I, Lo, I come,

10. In the volume of the book it is written of Me, that I should fulfil Thy will, O My God : I am content to do it ; yea, Thy law is within My heart.

The law was but a shadow of the wondrous things of God ; and its sacrifices which were offered year by year continually could never make the comers thereunto perfect. ‘For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. Wherefore, when He cometh into the world, He saith, ‘Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not, but a body hast Thou prepared Me : in burnt-offerings and sacrifices for sin Thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come—in the volume of the book it is written of Me—to do Thy will, O God.’ It was not death, but obedience, that God willed to have. The blood of calves or goats could not sanctify the conscience. Therefore the Son of God undertook to offer the sacrifice which man could not offer, the sacrifice of perfect obedience to the will of His Father, the sacrifice of Himself. ‘God provided

Himself a Lamb,' when He Who was equal with God took upon Him the form of a servant, and shewed Himself willing to be obedient even unto death. He Who was a Son was content to take our flesh and our nature, even the nature of servants, that He might perfectly fulfil His Father's perfect will, not in the letter only, but in the spirit, not with the hands only, but with the heart. This was what the law required; this was what the prophets had foretold should be; this was what the eternal decrees of the Almighty had purposed from everlasting should be done. 'Above, when He said, Sacrifice and offering, and burnt-offerings and offering for sin, Thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law; then said He, Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that He may establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.'

11. I have declared Thy righteousness in the great congregation : lo, I will not refrain my lips, O Lord, and that Thou knowest.

12. I have not hid Thy righteousness within my heart : my talk hath been of Thy truth, and of Thy salvation.

13. I have not kept back Thy loving mercy and truth : from the great congregation.

He Who was the Priest of His Church was their Prophet too. He declared by His parables, His prophecies, His teachings, that way of righteousness

which leads to God. He did not hide the things of truth and salvation; He taught them daily; He preached the Gospel in authority and in unweariedness; words of grace and truth were ever proceeding from His mouth. 'He spake openly to the world; He ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resorted, and in secret He said nothing.' But still more by His life than by His lips did He declare the righteousness of God. His baptism, fasting, and temptation, His agony, and cross, and death, spoke of old and still speak unto the end of time, of Him Who fulfilled the Father's will, and purchased to Him an universal Church. 'Heaven and earth shall pass away; but His words shall not pass away.'

14. Withdraw not Thou Thy mercy from me, O Lord : let Thy loving-kindness and Thy truth always preserve me.

15. For innumerable troubles are come about me; my sins have taken such hold upon me that I am not able to look up : yea, they are more in number than the hairs of my head, and my heart hath failed me.

He Who taught His Church to pray, prayed Himself. He bore our nature, and in man He prayed for man; for in praying for Himself He prayed for them also that were His. He became as one of them who need mercy, that He might ask for abiding mercy for them that need; and that through Him the loving-kindness and truth of God might

preserve them that apart from Him would perish. And He bore not only our nature, but our sorrows, and not only our sorrows, but our sins. He was innocent, and yet was He sorrowful; He had done no sin at any time, yet was He 'sore amazed and very heavy' when the sight of our sins came before Him, and the burden of our guilt was laid upon His sinless head. Who can enter into the mystery of that agony in Gethsemane, when there came around Him and before Him, like a hideous cloud, all sins done or to be done by man, all foul, vile, miserable deeds, in their naked foulness, vileness, and misery. He Who was very love was bearing the guilt of all cruelty, and tyranny, and selfishness; He Who was very purity was bearing all lust, and shame, and recklessness; He Who was very meekness, all anger, pride, and malice; He Who was very holiness, all unbelief, and blasphemy, and lies. None but He could number them, and yet alone He bore them all; but His sweat was as blood, and He fell on His face in the agony of entreaty beneath their terrible oppression. Only the infinite love of God could struggle with the infinite sin of man; and in that struggle the soul of Him Who was infinite love was 'exceeding sorrowful even unto death.'

16. O Lord, let it be Thy pleasure to deliver me : make haste, O Lord, to help me.

17. Let them be ashamed, and confounded together, that seek after my soul to destroy it :

let them be driven backward, and put to rebuke, that wish me evil.

18. Let them be desolate, and rewarded with shame : that say unto me, Fie upon thee, fie upon thee.

As He prayed for His Church, so must His Church pray with Him. Day by day should our petition come before Him Who heareth prayer,—‘O God, make speed to save us! O Lord, make haste to help us!’ and in the power of that prayer shall our enemies, who are also His, be driven away, and the destroyer of souls be rebuked and baffled. ‘As righteousness tendeth to life, so he that pursueth evil pursueth it to his own death.’ They who deride and despise him who trusts in God for deliverance shall have shame and desolation for their reward.

19. Let all those that seek Thee be joyful and glad in Thee : and let such as love Thy salvation say alway, The Lord be praised.

‘Hitherto ye have asked nothing in My Name,’ the Lord said to the apostles : ‘ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.’ For Jesus’ sorrow was made our joy ; His agony was made our victory ; His death was our salvation. The depth of His anguish revealed to us the mightiness of His love to man. The cross is the ensign of His glory, for that it is the token of His mercy ; and unending praise and honour is most justly due to Him Who hung thereon, from us who are saved thereby. Praise we

Him for His love on Calvary, and we shall praise Him for His majesty in the new Jerusalem.

20. As for me, I am poor and needy : but the Lord careth for me.

21. Thou art my helper and redeemer : make no long tarrying, O my God.

He Who now reigns was once as we are, poor and needy. 'He had not where to lay His head,' yet was He ever the Beloved of the Father. There are none truly poor but they who have not Christ, there are none truly needy but they who lack His grace. Let the poor and the sorrowing be ever sure that the Lord careth for them, Who is an Almighty Helper and most compassionate Redeemer; and knowing this, let them wait patiently for His redemption. Their waiting will not be long: to the apostle who tarried the longest He said at last, 'Surely I come quickly. Amen.' Oh! keep we our eyes fixed with loving longing upon the home where our Lord is tarrying; and may our soul and being say in answer to His voice, 'Even so, come, Lord Jesus.'

This Psalm of David, which is appointed by the Church for Good Friday, is shewn by the words of Hebrews x. 5—9 to be prophetic of the Saviour. In verse 8 the original reads, "Mine ears hast Thou opened," with a manifest reference,—such as is also found in Isa. v. 5, "The Lord God hath opened Mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back,"—to that particular command of the Mosaic Law which ordained that liberty should be given to every slave in the seventh year of his servitude, and the command to the master that if at the end of that time the servant should say unto him, "I will not go away from thee; because he loveth thee and thine

house, because he is well with thee ; then thou shalt take an awl, and thrust it through his ear unto the door, and he shall be thy servant for ever," (Deut. xv. 16, 17). This the LXX. and the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews render, "a body hast Thou prepared Me;" possibly by some slight change in the reading, but more probably in reference to that human body, "the form of a servant," which the Redeemer took upon Himself. He, through love to the house of God, though He was a son, determined to pay a perfect and lasting obedience to the law of God, as a servant ; and therefore a body was prepared for Him, in which He might suffer and obey, even as the faithful servant endured to have his ears pierced through, in order that he might dwell always with his master. This was, as it were, a circumcision of the ear and of the heart. Though many verses are prophetic of Christ, the Fathers understand others of the members of His body : verse 15, for instance, literally is true of all who see their sins and are longing to repent, while yet prophetically it is true of Him "on Whom the Lord hath laid the iniquities of us all," (Isa. liii. 6).

Ebening Prayer.

PSALM xli. *Beatus qui intelligit.*

1. BLESSED is he that considereth the poor and needy : the Lord shall deliver him in the time of trouble.

There must come to most a time of sickness and feebleness while they are waiting for death ; and during that time our thoughts of what is real wealth and true advantage pass through a very great change. Then we see how he is the richest man who has given most ; and how he is the poorest who has laid up most for himself. In that time of trouble, they only can look to the infinite mercy of God, who after their own finite power have shewn mercy to their fellow-men. Then he that hath

considered the poor and needy is indeed blessed, for there opens before him the vision of Him in Whom alone is deliverance, Who was once poor, Who still is poor in the poor members of His Church, and Who reckons ever that which is done to His poor as done unto Himself; Who shall say upon the throne of His glory, 'I was an hungred, and ye gave Me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink. Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me.'

2. The Lord preserve him, and keep him alive, that he may be blessed upon earth : and deliver not Thou him into the will of his enemies.

3. The Lord comfort him, when he lieth sick upon his bed : make Thou all his bed in his sickness.

He that considereth the poor shall be considered himself when he is in want. He shall share in the blessing while he is still alive; for the faith which worketh by love hath promise both of the life that now is, and also of that which is to come. His prayer shall be fulfilled, and he shall be 'delivered from evil' even when trouble seems nearest to him. Christ Himself, the eternal Consoler, will console him; and in Him, when he is weak and in sickness, shall he be strong, and on the bed of death, shall he be nearest unto life. There will be One by his pillow Who knows his trials and has borne his sickness; and His absolving presence shall drive

away the enemies of his soul. He Who bade the palsied man to arise, and take up his bed, and walk, will speak to the stricken and feeble spirit in the same words of power and love.

4. I said, Lord, be merciful unto me : heal my soul, for I have sinned against Thee.

5. Mine enemies speak evil of me : When shall he die, and his name perish ?

6. And if he come to see me, he speaketh vanity : and his heart conceiveth falsehood within himself, and when he cometh forth he telleth it.

Thus did David suffer distress and anguish of mind in the weakness and infirmity which came upon him when he 'was old and stricken in years.' Not only did his sins come back to his recollection, and force him to crave again and again for mercy to that Great Physician Who only can heal the wounded soul, but other troubles which arose from his sins came fresh upon him. Adonijah, his own son, whom he had never displeased, was conspiring against him, and plotting with his former friends and servants to obtain his kingdom. All those who had conspired against him must have been most anxious and impatient for his death, that they might carry out their plans. Their visits of pretended friendliness were but to watch how near he was to death ; and their words of mock kindness and sympathy no doubt, on their departure from his presence, they would exchange for messages of exultation at his

hopeless state: the knowledge of this must have cut the dying king to the heart, and made him cry for mercy to that God Who had thus brought his sin to his remembrance.

7. All mine enemies whisper together against me : even against me do they imagine this evil.

8. Let the sentence of guiltiness proceed against him : and now that he lieth, let him rise up no more.

Aye, and a greater than David hath suffered the same. Against Him, Who, though He was rich yet for our sakes became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich, 'the chief Priests and the Pharisees gathered a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles;' and one of them, Caiaphas the High-Priest, 'said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.' And 'from that day forth they took counsel together to put Him to death.'

9. Yea, even mine own familiar friend, whom I trusted : who did also eat of my bread, hath laid great wait for me.

Heb. Also the man of my peace, whom I trusted,
Who also eats of my bread,
Lifts his heel against me.

LXX. Hath magnified his treachery over me.

The treachery of Adonijah, of Abiathar, and of Joab must indeed have deeply wounded David. But that which was done to him was a type of that which was to be done to his Lord. 'Have I not chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil,' was the sorrowing rebuke of Him Who had loved them, and fed them with angels' food. Judas Iscariot, who 'was numbered with the apostles, and had obtained part of their ministry,' who knew the places where his Lord was wont to resort for prayer, to whom He gave powers and opened parables, who ate with Him at His table at His last supper, he 'communed with the Chief Priests and Captains how he might betray Him unto them, and they were glad, and covenanted to give him money.' He led the enemies of Christ to take Him in the garden; and that he might be a traitor to the uttermost he 'had given them a token, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is He; take Him, and lead Him away safely. And as soon as he was come, he goeth straightway to Him, and saith, Master, Master; and kissed Him.' And this was so done 'that the Scripture might be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with Me hath lifted up his heel against Me.'

10. But be Thou merciful unto me, O Lord : raise Thou me up again, and I shall reward them.

11. By this I know Thou favourest me :

that mine enemy doth not triumph against me.

They who trust in the mercy of God, even in weakness and poverty, shall yet escape the devices of those who would injure them. They who 'forsake their own mercy' are their own enemies. The plottings of Adonijah came to nothing, and only brought at last death to himself and to his companions in rebellion. The counsels of the Pharisees against Christ were really counsels against themselves. He died indeed by their malice, but He rose again; while they who slew Him to save their place and nation, by that very deed lost their place and destroyed their nation. The tree of the Church is planted where the thorns of the synagogue are rooted up. And the triumph of Judas in his treachery was but for a moment, for 'when he saw that He was condemned, he repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the Chief Priests and Elders, saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself.'

12. And when I am in my health, Thou upholdest me : and shalt set me before Thy face for ever.

In sickness and in health, in weakness and in

strength, in life and in death, in this world and in that which is to come, we have but one upholder, even the Lord, Who hath gone before us in all that we have to pass through. He hath gone up and entered into the glory of God; and we, following Him here in mercy and in charity, shall follow Him hereafter where He, Who for a time has made us weak, shall make us strong for ever.

13. Blessed be the Lord God of Israel : world without end. Amen.

To Him Who hath given to His Church not only the instruction of the Law and the warnings of Prophets, but also the holy melody of Psalms—to Him Who is the God of the true Israel in whom the promises made to Abraham are accomplished—to Him Whose name I AM by which the fathers knew Him, is expanded in the Christian Church into the threefold name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost—to Him be ascribed for His manifold gifts to man, all blessing and praise in time and in eternity. Amen.

The language of this Psalm would lead us to refer its writing to that period of David's life when he was old and infirm, and Adonijah his son conspired with Joab and Abiathar to get possession of his kingdom, (1 Kings i. 1, 5, 6, 7). Their plot was however defeated, and according to David's determination, Solomon was proclaimed king and made his successor. We find, when the king's servants came to bless David and Solomon, that "the king bowed himself upon the bed." (47). Verse 9 has, however, a distinct prophetic reference to Judas the traitor among the apostles, and the very words of

the Hebrew, "the man of my peace, or of my salutation," in themselves recall him who made the salutation of a friend the signal of his perfidy, and pointed Him out to His enemies by the words, "Hail Rabbi," and by a kiss. Our blessed Lord Himself applies the words of David to the false apostle, (St. John xiii. 18). The last verse is not any portion of the Psalm, but is an ascription of glory to God, making the close of the first book or division of the Psalms. The second book begins with the succeeding Psalm.

*THE SECOND DIVISION OF THE BOOK
OF PSALMS.*

PSALMS XLII.—LXXII.

IN this book are contained the Psalms from the forty-second to the seventy-second; and it is closed by the doxology:—

Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel,
Which only doeth wondrous things;
And blessed be the name of His Majesty for ever:
And let the whole earth be filled with His Majesty.
Amen, and Amen.

The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended.

The Psalms of this book, as well as those of the third book, were in all likelihood collected by King Hezekiah, during that great revival of religious feeling which marked his reign. He seems to have made a search after those parts of the writings of God's prophets and psalmists which had been forgotten or neglected, and to have caused them to be copied out with care and preserved for the good of his people. The latter portion of the Book of Proverbs was thus compiled by his directions, and added to the former part; for chapter xxv. commences, 'These are also proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied out.' It is very probable that Isaiah the prophet might be among these transcribers, and have the superintendence of their work. In the history of Hezekiah's restoration of the temple and its services which is

given in 2 Chronicles, ch. xxix., we find that particular attention was paid to the subject of psalms; and it can hardly be doubted that the sons of Korah were among the Levites to whom it was given in charge: 'Moreover Hezekiah the king and the princes commanded the Levites to sing praise unto the Lord with the words of David, and of Asaph the seer. And they sang praises with gladness, and they bowed their heads and worshipped.'

This second book consists of thirty Psalms, of which seven or eight are by the sons of Korah, written generally in the reign of Jehoshaphat, or during the desolation and neglect of the temple-worship under Ahaz: one is by Asaph, and the remainder are, with the exception of the last one, by David. These Psalms of David had not, it would seem, up to that time been regularly collected, or they had been forgotten during the carelessness and idolatries of the kings preceding Hezekiah, and therefore they were then first placed together in one volume, and adapted to the service of the sanctuary. Those Psalms whose titles ascribe them to David bear the marks of his spirit in their personal and fervent character; while those of the sons of Korah, except the forty-first, and those of Asaph, are more national than personal; and look to God rather as the Almighty God of the world and the ruler of the Jewish people, than as the personal Lord of the individual soul which prayed before Him. They appear written rather for public worship than for private devotion.

THE SECOND DIVISION.

PSALM xlii. *Quemadmodum.*

1. LIKE as the hart desireth the water-brooks : so longeth my soul after Thee, O God.

2. My soul is athirst for God, yea, even for the living God : when shall I come to appear before the presence of God ?

Like the hart in the drought of summer pants with the heat, and hastens swiftly through the burning desert to the valleys, where there are brooks of water flowing, that it may quench its thirst with drinking, and may bathe and cool its weary limbs, so does the loving soul long and call and hasten unto Him Who is the Fount of love. In the wilderness of this mortal life, while the spirit is away from grace and from the Giver of grace, it thirsts and wearies for Him Who is its life and stay, for Him Whose are the living waters of Holy Baptism, and the refreshing cup of Holy Communion. Even as the hart scents the spring in the burned-up plains, so do they who love Him hear His call of love, 'Come unto Me,' and their whole soul turns with longing eagerness to come whither He calls it, to 'depart and to be with Christ, which is far better' than to travail here.

3. My tears have been my meat day and night : while they daily say unto me, Where is now thy God ?

There are tears of bright love, as well as tears of dark penitence : love and sorrow may well weep together in them whose sins are pardoned. There are inward tears, giving inward refreshment. A single sigh for holiness and faith, will strengthen the life of grace within the soul more than meat will stay the weary body. But they who make their tears their food will but thirst the more for those living waters beside which all tears shall be wiped from all faces. This the world understands not in anywise ; it knows not Christ, how then can it know the love of Christ ? Holy love is ever to it a marvel and a mystery ; and it knows not what or where that Lord can be Whose love alone can fill the longing soul.

4. Now when I think thereupon, I pour out my heart by myself : for I went with the multitude, and brought them forth into the House of God ;

5. In the voice of praise and thanksgiving : among such as keep holy-day.

Heb. On these things I think,
 And I pour out my desire by myself—
 When shall I pass over with the throng ?
 When shall I lead them in procession to the House
 of God,
 With the voice of joy and praise,
 The multitude keeping the holiday ?

But they who love Christ love all that pertains to

Him; above all do they love the House in which they meet Him among His people, and the days on which they find Him there. The gathering with the multitude of the faithful is a foreshadowing of the multitude which none can number: the going forth to the House of God is a type to the thoughts of faith of the ascending to the unearthly temple; the songs of praise of the Church visible are echoes from the Church invisible; the holy days we keep on earth are foretastes of that heavenly festival which hath neither opening nor close.

6. Why art thou so full of heaviness, O my soul : and why art thou so disquieted within me ?

7. Put thy trust in God : for I will yet give Him thanks for the help of His countenance.

It is strange that the gift of present grace and the hope of glory should not suffice for peace; but the temptations of earth and the unceasing sinkings even of the believing mar their confidence and disquiet the soul. We are not yet with Christ; He consoles us in our heaviness, and frees us from our disquietings; we learn that we may safely trust in Him; He gives us glimpses of His presence, filling us with thankfulness; but the fulness of joy which none can move and peace which none can trouble, can only be when we are entered into the presence of His glory.

8. My God, my soul is vexed within me : therefore will I remember Thee concerning the land of Jordan, and the little hill of Hermon.

Heb. Therefore do I call Thee to remembrance,
From the land of Jordan and of the Hermons,
From the hill Mitzar.

Yea, in the anxiousness and disquieting which needs must come to us in this weary life, we must remember the things to come. We are pilgrims here, we shall be dwellers there. The Jordan of our earthly sojourning shall give place to the river of God in the eternal kingdom, and the hills of earth shall be exchanged for the holy mountain of our God in the heavenly and better Canaan.

9. One deep calleth another, because of the noise of the water-pipes : all Thy waves and storms are gone over me.

In the confusion and strife and sin of this our lower world there is ever one deep calling to another—the deep of our misery calling to the deep of His mercy. The waters of heaven are, as it were, contending with the floods of earth. In this life we are often overwhelmed by the billows of temptation and the storms of passion, and scarcely have these passed away when they are followed by the waves of God's judgments and the mighty outbursts of His justice.

10. The Lord hath granted His loving-kindness in the day-time : and in the night-season did I sing of Him, and made my prayer unto the God of my life.

Yet in all this restlessness and whirl of trial God is ever love. In the daytime of our prosperity we see His love, and cannot doubt it; but in the night of

trouble, though we are unable to discern His love, it still is there. By trust in Him we may rejoice in tribulations also. He is our Maker 'Who giveth songs in the night;' for even in darkness there are grounds for thankfulness. If the sun has its setting, the stars have their rising. The sun-set is their rise. He is ever ready to accept our praise, and willing to hearken to our prayers; and His love and care which each day makes us see, should, as each night passes, call forth our worship and our thanks.

11. I will say unto the God of my strength,
Why hast Thou forgotten me : why go I thus
heavily, while the enemy oppresseth me ?

12. My bones are smitten asunder as with
a sword : while mine enemies that trouble
me cast me in the teeth ;

13. Namely, while they say daily unto me :
Where is now thy God ?

The soul may be terrified and may tremble when the fountains of the great deep seem, as it were, broken up, but not until then is the ark lifted from the earth. He Who 'remembered Noah' will never forget them who have walked with Him. It may be that the distrust of His love may for a moment pierce the very soul, like a sword-blow rives the bones; that the continued suggestions of the wicked, that God's love has failed, may for a little space trouble and confound it. Yet the temptation brings with it in itself the way to escape. 'Let God deliver Him if He will have Him' was cast in the teeth of Him

Who was holier, purer, meeker than we are; and He passed through the darkness and the sorrow and was delivered: and in Him are we delivered, and can reply to the enemies of our souls with boldness, Where and when is our God and Saviour not?

14. Why art thou so vexed, O my soul : and why art thou so disquieted within me ?

15. O put thy trust in God : for I will yet thank Him, Which is the help of my countenance, and my God.

Why then should the soul be vexed, though troubles and doubts come round it? The love of Him Who is love shines above them and through them and in them. The soul that is His, that is thirsting for His grace, panting to enter into His glory, longing for His presence, cannot but pass fleetly and lightly through the disquietings of earth. ‘Hope that is seen is not hope;’ we do not yet see His glory, yet do we trust in Him to bring us unto it: but we do see His love; that is ours even now and here. It is only our imperfection that makes us see it but imperfectly; and when we are made perfect, then shall we see it perfectly.

The title of this Psalm, besides the usual inscription “to the chief Musician,” states it to be “a Maschil by the sons of Korah.” Maschil is, as has been said, an instruction. It may be assigned to the desolation and apostacy in the reign of Ahaz, (2 Chron. xxviii.). Korah, the grandson of Kohath the Levite, perished in his rebellion against Moses and Aaron, (Num. xvi.); but his children did not perish with their father, (Num. xxvi. 11). The Korhites therefore became in after time one of the great families of the tribe of Levi. Samuel the prophet was of the sons of Korah, and indeed the head of the family;

and by his influence those schools of the prophets were first founded, in which music and the singing of Psalms, and no doubt the composing of Psalms also, were taught to those whose duty it would be to serve God, either in the tabernacle or in the prophetic offices. His mother, Hannah, the wife of Elkanah, whose song of thanksgiving is recorded in 1 Sam. ii. 1—10, was of the children of Korah. Several also of those who are called Seers in the books of Kings and Chronicles appear on enquiry into their genealogies to have been of the tribe of Levi. It was doubtless among the sons of Korah in the house of Samuel, in Naioth and in Ramah, (1 Sam. xix. 18, 20,) that David perfected himself in that practice of composing hymns to God, which gained for him the name of “the sweet singer of Israel.” This institution, by which religion was associated with melody and poetry, seems to have done much towards preserving the law from being quite forgotten after the division of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah; and in the time of Jehoshaphat, the Levites, and among them the sons of Korah, seem especially to have aided in the work of reformation, (2 Chron. xix. 8). The whole of the Psalms composed by the family of Korah were written before the captivity; for they did not return from Babylon, (Ezra ii. 40, 41).

PSALM xliii. *Judica me, Deus.*

1. GIVE sentence with me, O God, and defend my cause against the ungodly people : O deliver me from the deceitful and wicked man.

2. For Thou art the God of my strength, why hast Thou put me from Thee : and why go I so heavily, while the enemy oppresseth me ?

In this world the wicked are ever mingled with the good : and they who love God have to abide His time, until they are set free from the scorn and deceit of them who love Him not. They are under trial ; and the time seems long and their hearts grow

heavy until their trial-time is over. And a part of their trial is, that at times God seems to leave them ; and then the powers that oppress them and injure their salvation appear to increase tenfold. Thus do they learn that all that they have and are is from God ; and that, while in Him they can do all things, without Him they can do nothing and are nothing.

3. O send out Thy light and Thy truth, that they may lead me : and bring me unto Thy holy hill, and to Thy dwelling.

These are but two names for one and the same thing, for what is light but truth, and what is truth but light ; and what are they both but Christ the Lord ? He came from the Father to bring us to the Father. He will lead us if we will follow Him ; and whither will He lead us but unto life ? He will bring us safely unto those many mansions of eternity of which the Church on earth is the earnest and the type.

4. And that I may go unto the altar of God, even unto the God of my joy and gladness : and upon the harp will I give thanks unto Thee, O God, my God.

LXX. And I will enter in unto the altar of God ;
Unto God Who maketh glad my youth.

He will bring us, if we will follow His calling, to the altar of God ; there will He accept our oblation of the frankincense of fervent prayer, and the sacrifice which we can offer, even that of a contrite heart, and in return He will give us the costly gift of Him-

self; and in the giving of Himself will fill us with peace and hallowed gladness. We have then the pledge of what we shall have in fulness in His own time, for they who kneel before His altar shall hereafter sit beneath His throne. Surely then the affections of our heart will vibrate to words of grateful joy, when we thus feel and know the Saviour's love; we shall repeat again and again the Name of Him Who loved us, and the oftener we repeat it the sweeter melody will it make within our souls.

5. Why art thou so heavy, O my soul : and why art thou so disquieted within me ?

6. O put thy trust in God : for I will yet give Him thanks, Which is the help of my countenance, and my God.

What heaviness or disquietude can come upon our soul thus made secure of our Redeemer's love and filled with His Eucharistic joy ? In the brightness of that hope, the overcasting clouds of doubt and dread must vanish. We may thank Him with a trusting heart, for He Who has given thus much will most surely give us all. He will give Himself to us, for that He has already given Himself to us. He will give Himself in His immortality to us then immortal, even because He gave Himself in His mortality to us when mortal.

This Psalm has no title in the Hebrew, and therefore has been sometimes supposed to have once formed a portion of the preceding one. It was undoubtedly written by the same writer as the forty-second; and three of the verses are repeated almost word for word from it. It may be assigned to the reign of Hezekiah (2 Chron. xxix., xxx.) It should be mentioned, however, that the LXX. assign it to David.

9/11
Morning Prayer.

PSALM xliv. *Deus, auribus.*

1. WE have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us : what Thou hast done in their time of old ;

2. How Thou hast driven out the heathen with Thy hand, and planted them in : how Thou hast destroyed the nations, and cast them out.

‘ O God, we have heard with our ears, and our fathers have declared unto us, the noble works that Thou didst in their days, and in the old time before them.’ The love and power of God are things of experience ; if any in the Church now have not sufficient faith to bear witness to them and to rest securely upon them, the Church in times past had. We have heard of, though we cannot through our weakness see, the work of Christ in the world. Our fathers in the faith can tell us, as the Israelite fathers of old taught their children, of the deliverance from Egypt and the entering into Canaan, how the heathen have been driven out from their strongholds by the faith of God, and the Church has been built in their room ; how idolatries, and slaveries, and trustings in lies have been destroyed in the light of truth, and cast out before the armies of the Captain of our salvation.

3. For they gat not the land in possession

through their own sword : neither was it their own arm that helped them ;

4. But Thy right hand, and Thine arm, and the light of Thy countenance : because Thou hadst a favour unto them.

The promise stands as sure to the Christian Church, and to Christ her Lord, as to the Israelites under Joshua their captain :—‘ Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you.’ And yet it is not her strength, nor her wisdom, nor her power that takes the world as a possession for the Lord, but the mighty though not carnal weapons with which her God has armed her. ‘ The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,’ is her sword. It is the right hand of God, and He Who is on His right hand, the sending forth of His grace, and His electing love, that bring the nations into that kingdom which is not of this world.

5. Thou art my King, O God : send help unto Jacob.

6. Through Thee will we overthrow our enemies : and in Thy Name will we tread them under, that rise up against us.

They who own God for their King, and Christ for their Saviour, as ‘ His faithful soldiers and servants,’ the true Israel, ever do, may ever ask for His assisting grace to overthrow that which is evil, to ‘ mortify and kill all vices’ in themselves, and cast down unbelief and doubtings in others ; and through Jesus

Christ their Saviour they shall receive more than what they ask, even to the trampling down the powers of darkness beneath their feet.

7. For I will not trust in my bow : it is not my sword that shall help me ;

8. But it is Thou that savest us from our enemies : and putttest them to confusion that hate us.

9. We make our boast of God all day long : and will praise 'Thy Name for ever.

Joshua, the leader of Israel, bade the Israelites remember that the kings of the Amorites were driven out before them, 'but not with their sword, nor with their bow.' And in like manner all things teach us that it is not in ourselves that we can trust, but in Him Who saveth us. The Church has no strength of her own,—her strength must ever be that of her Leader and Lord. To glory in ourselves is utterly false and vain: 'He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.' All grace must be ascribed to Him here, and then shall be ascribed all glory to Him in eternity.

10. But now Thou art far off, and putttest us to confusion : and goest not forth with our armies.

11. Thou makest us to turn our backs upon our enemies : so that they which hate us spoil our goods.

12. Thou lettest us be eaten up like sheep : and hast scattered us among the heathen.

It is to teach His Church that He is the only Saviour, that He from time to time withdraws Himself; or rather He withdraws not, but He hides the Lord of glory behind the presence of the Man of sorrows. Then the power of the Church fails her, her victories and conquests cease; her enemies stop her progress and spoil her goods. Often her members are scattered and devoured like sheep in the midst of wolves. The truth is persecuted; they who believe are slain, like Stephen was slain, for witnesses to the truth, or 'they are all scattered abroad,' and yet by that very scattering 'preach the Word.'

13. Thou sellest Thy people for nought : and takest no money for them.

14. Thou makest us to be rebuked of our neighbours : to be laughed to scorn, and had in derision of them that are round about us.

15. Thou makest us to be a by-word among the heathen : and that the people shake their heads at us.

16. My confusion is daily before me : and the shame of my face hath covered me ;

17. For the voice of the slanderer and blasphemer : for the enemy and avenger.

The Jewish Church seemed for a while given up, and none taken into its place. And in after-times, when the nations were taken in, they whom He

loved best, and who loved Him best, suffered, in their degree, as He suffered. The cross was laid upon them, and they were 'compelled' to bear it. The apostle St. Paul, who was chosen and called to the work of the Church by the Lord of the Church Himself, sets out in no doubtful words the things which the rulers of the Church endured in their ministry. He declares that they were but like slaves, too vile to be sold, and only used to be exposed like malefactors, to be killed by wild beasts as a sight and amusement for the people. 'For I think that God has set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed unto death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels and to men.' Being weak and despised, 'even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place; and labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it: being defamed, we intreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are as the offscouring of all things unto this day.'

18. And though all this be come upon us, yet do we not forget Thee: nor behave ourselves frowardly in Thy covenant.

19. Our heart is not turned back: neither our steps gone out of Thy way;

20. No, not when Thou hast smitten us into the place of dragons: and covered us with the shadow of death.

Heb. Although Thou hast crushed us into the abode of jackals.

In persecution, in sorrow, in bondage, the Church loses not grace ; rather in her trials does she gain that in which she was wanting before,—patience, earnestness, faith. Grievous though it is to bear the cross, yet the bearing it works not loss, but gain. The very touch will hinder the believer from forgetting God, and few, while they are under it, behave forwardly in His covenant. It is not then that the heart turns back ; it is less then, than in the time of ease and softness, that the steps of His chosen ones go out of His narrow way. He, the Christ, was alone with the wild beasts in His temptation, and they who will be as He is, and will conquer as He conquered, must be ready in faith to ‘wander in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.’ They must be content to have the shadow of death near them and over them, if they would have within them the light of life eternal.

21. If we have forgotten the Name of our God, and holden up our hands to any strange god : shall not God search it out ? for He knoweth the very secrets of the heart.

22. For Thy sake also are we killed all the day long : and are counted as sheep appointed to be slain.

Trial searches those who fail in faith and love ; but trial makes love strong. It reveals the hearts of saints both to God and to themselves. They may seem to be as sheep for the shambles, not for the altar ; but it is not so. The sacrifice of their suffer-

ings is to the glory both of their Lord and of themselves. They only who have suffered can join in the triumphal cry—‘Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For Thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay! in all these things we are more than conquerors, through Him Who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.’

23. Up, Lord, why sleepest Thou : awake, and be not absent from us for ever.

24. Wherefore hidest Thou Thy face : and forgettest our misery and trouble?

25. For our soul is brought low, even unto the dust : our belly cleaveth unto the ground.

26. Arise, and help us : and deliver us for Thy mercy’s sake.

God may seem to forget His people in their trial, but He is regarding them all the while. ‘He despiseth not the sighing of a contrite heart, nor the desire of such as be sorrowful;’ and therefore we may cry to Him ‘mercifully to assist our prayers that we make before Him in all our troubles and adversities, whensoever they oppress us;’ and to grant that ‘His servants, being hurt by no per-

secutions, may evermore give thanks unto Him in His holy Church, through Jesus Christ our Lord, Well may we respond to this the Church's humble prayer,—‘O Lord, arise, help us, and deliver us for Thy Name's sake.’

This Psalm is “a Maschil by the sons of Korah for the chief Musician.” It may well be assigned to the time of the invasion of Judæa by Sennacherib the king of Assyria, when Hezekiah and his people were in expectation of Jerusalem being taken, and the nation being destroyed, (2 Kings xviii. 19). The Psalm breathes a sorrowful tone of prayer to God for deliverance, not doubting, yet not confident. Verses 18 and 21 would refer to that restoration of true religion which had been brought about in Hezekiah's reign; and there are several expressions in this Psalm, as in verses 15, 22, which recall similar words in the prophecies of Isaiah, who lived at that time, (Isai. xxxvi. xxxvii., liii. 7). Some have on this ground ascribed the Psalm to Isaiah. Verse 22 is applied by St. Paul (Rom. viii. 36,) to the persecutions of the Christian Church. It is perhaps notice-worthy, that while this supplication of the Church of Israel begins with words of confidence and ends in despondency, that part of the Litany of our own Church which recalls it, begins in earnest and even mournful prayer, and goes on from that to the assurance of faith which the recollection of God's recorded marvels cannot fail to bring forth.

FOR CHRISTMAS-DAY.

PSALM XLV. *Eructavit cor meum.*

1. My heart is inditing of a good matter :
I speak of the things which I have made unto
the King.

2. My tongue is the pen : of a ready
writer.

Heb. My heart is overflowing with a good word :

I will speak my makings upon the King.

May my tongue be as the pen of a skilful scribe !

The heavens overflowed with joy on that night when 'the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.' The angels sang of glory to God, and of peace and good-will to men, when the King of all came unto His own into the city of David, and He was born a Saviour Who is Christ the Lord. Can those glad tidings of great joy fill the messengers who bring them with transport, and wake up the harmonies of heaven, and shall they to whom they are brought receive them in dark and thankless silence, with cold and niggard hearts? If ever there is a time to rejoice, that time is now; if ever there is a time to sing, that time is on the birthday of the Christ. The loving and the hallowing thoughts which the sight of incarnate Love awakens, must be their own music and their own melody. The tongue will give them eager utterance, as the swift pen of a writer tries to set down the things that arise in his mind; yet the thoughts are swifter than the pen, and the 'utterance of the Spirit' will get before the utterings of the lips.

3. Thou art fairer than the children of men : full of grace are Thy lips, because God hath blessed Thee for ever.

He is fair Who is eternal love; He is fair Who hath come now to us with the sweetness of mercy, with the brightness of truth, with the loveliness of meekness, with the glory of power, with the gentleness of innocence, with the beauty of self-sacrifice. He is fair upon the Virgin's bosom—He is fair in the

manger of humility—He is fair in His manifestation to the wise men—He is fair in His obedience to His parents—He is fair in His wonders of healing and of mercy—fair when standing before His enemies—fair when crowned with thorns—fair when pierced upon the Cross—fair when lying in the tomb—fair when risen from the dead—fair when sitting on the right hand of God. He is fairer than the children of men, though He be the Son of Man, for He is perfect in His fairness, because He is perfect in His sinlessness. To each of His saints has been given a measure of grace, but to Him grace without measure. He has spoken to us, and what can His people do, but all bear Him witness and wonder at the gracious words which proceed from His mouth? Who has ever said, as He said—‘Thy sins are forgiven thee, go in peace;’ ‘Suffer little children to come unto Me;’ ‘Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do;’ ‘Feed My Lambs?’ Oh! love we not ourselves, so vile and sin-stained as we are, but love we Him Whom God hath blessed for ever, full of grace and truth; and so in Him and in His love shall we be blessed too.

4. Gird Thee with Thy sword upon Thy thigh, O Thou most Mighty : according to Thy worship and renown.

5. Good luck have Thou with Thine honour : ride on, because of the word of truth, of meekness, and righteousness ; and Thy right hand shall teach Thee terrible things.

6. Thy arrows are very sharp, and the people shall be subdued unto Thee : even in the midst among the King's enemies.

For He came fair as a little child, and gracious as a little child, Whom the apostle of love saw when heaven was opened before him,—‘ And behold a white horse, and He that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns, and He had a name written that no man knew but He Himself. And He was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood : and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of His mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it He should smite the nations : and He shall rule them with a rod of iron ; and He treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He hath on His vesture and on His thigh a name written, King of Kings and Lord of Lords.’ His sword will be the keenness of the Holy Spirit ; His honour will be the perfection of goodness ; the terrible things which His right hand will do will be truth, and meekness, and righteousness ; for what can be more terrible than truth to liars—what more terrible than meekness to oppressors—what more terrible than righteousness to the selfish and unjust ? His words will indeed pierce to the very inmost spirit ; they will destroy the sin while they

spare the sinner; and the careless and unbelieving, who have been His enemies, shall be subdued to His grace and truth, and own Him for their righteous King.

7. Thy seat, O God, endureth for ever : the sceptre of Thy kingdom is a right sceptre.

8. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity : wherefore God, even Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows.

9. All Thy garments smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia : out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made Thee glad.

Heb. All thy garments are myrrh, aloes and cassia,
Out of palaces of ivory, by which they gladden thee !

This is the declaration of God the eternal Father unto God the eternal Son; and such are the powers and offices allotted to Him. 'But unto the Son He saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever : a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of Thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity; therefore God, even Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows.' The throne of God the Son is everlasting; He reigns for ever. When the number of God's elect is accomplished, and all things are placed beneath His feet, and death, the last enemy, shall be destroyed, then His mediatorial reign will be ended, and the Son also Himself shall be subject unto Him that puts all things under Him, that God

may be all in all. It will be by His subjection that He will reign, even as by His subjection He conquered and was exalted. As the Lamb slain, and as the Mediator between earth and heaven, He will give up the kingdom to God and the Father, when sin shall be no more, and man shall be made perfect in heaven: but though His mediatorial reign, in which He was 'inferior to the Father as touching His manhood' shall cease; though the hour shall come in which mercy shall no more be asked for, and grace against sin no more be needed,—His reign of glory, as the Son of God and the King of saints, shall never cease. The first must be accomplished and pass away, that the second may be established in its almighty fulness. The law of right is an eternal law, the throne of holiness is an everlasting throne. The Son of God came through wrong to establish righteousness, and through death to give eternal life; and therefore was He the beloved Son in Whom the Father was well pleased; therefore did the Holy Ghost descend like a dove and light upon Him; therefore was He anointed with the Spirit without measure. His body was anointed for burial for His fellows, for He became mortal to give them immortality, and therefore was the Messiah of the world anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows. And that unction of unmeasured grace which is poured upon His head flows down over all His garments. The members share in that which their Head has gained. The sweetness of His humility, the perfume of His

holiness, the richness of His wisdom, will be imparted unto them, like the ointment of myrrh, aloes, and of cassia gives fragrance to the garments it is sprinkled on. They shall be stored in the consciences of God's elect, like costly perfumes in kings' palaces of ivory; and when their odour is spread abroad, He Who gave them shall be glad in them; for He is the ornament and joy of His chosen ones, even as they are His.

10. King's daughters were among Thy honourable women : upon Thy right hand did stand the queen in a vesture of gold, wrought about with divers colours.

To each loving soul who thus contemplates 'the King, in His beauty,' there comes the same voice which talked with St. John,—'Come hither, I will shew thee the Lamb's wife.' Around Him all the nations of the earth shall be gathered, to honour Him and to have honour from Him; and at His right hand is His bride, the Church, spotless, unwrinkled, glorious, betrothed to her eternal Lord in the mighty mystery of that union by which He and His redeemed are one flesh,—by which He became one flesh with them, that they might be one flesh in Him. She is arrayed in garments precious with the gold of wisdom, and wrought about with righteousness and salvation,—salvation preached to divers nations, each in their own tongue, but joining all tongues, divers though they be, in the seamless unity of the undivided faith.

11. Hearken, O daughter, and consider, incline thine ear : forget also thine own people, and thy father's house.

12. So shall the King have pleasure in thy beauty : for He is thy Lord God, and worship thou Him.

13. And the daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift : like as the rich also among the people shall make their supplication before thee.

She who was once the child of other parents is become the daughter of the everlasting God: for 'we are all children of Him by faith which is in Christ Jesus.' She who was once not beloved is now the beloved of the Beloved. By newness of life and holy obedience, by the hearing of the Word and meditation upon it, shall she pass from the realm of nature to the realm of grace; and the child of time shall become the daughter of eternity. This is one of the works of the Church in those who are born again—to forget, and to teach her members to forget, their old passions, their old temptations, their old desires; for them 'the old things are passed away, and all things are become new.' Thus shall all the redeemed be joined together in and with the one eternal Bridegroom, loving Him with perfect love, because He first loved them, and worshipping Him with holy fear, because He is their Lord and God. All the honour of the Church lies in her love and reverence for her Lord; when He has pleasure in

her faith and holiness, and she reverences Him in obedience and sincerity, it is well with her. Then the nations of the world honour her, and make her the channel of their offerings to God; 'the kings of the earth do bring their honour and glory' unto her; and they who have knowledge, and they who have authority, and they who have wealth, hasten to consecrate their gifts and powers by using them for her advancement and to her adornment.

14. The King's daughter is all glorious within : her clothing is of wrought gold.

15. She shall be brought unto the King in raiment of needle-work : the virgins that be her fellows shall bear her company, and shall be brought unto Thee.

16. With joy and gladness shall they be brought : and shall enter into the King's palace.

But whatever may be the outward ornaments of the Church, her brightest beauty, her highest glory, is that grace which dwells within her through the glory of her eternal King. In this she is the image of each holy soul, which like her may be called the daughter of God, that she is the temple of the Holy Ghost. That through her prayers, through her teachings, through her ministerings, through her holy rites, through her sacraments, grace is given to each one of her members—this is her surpassing diadem and most shining vestment. If any of her other offices be grand and

glorious, 'shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather glorious?' The full brightness of this hidden and mysterious adorning is seen only by Him Who seeth in secret; He Who gives the grace only knows the mightiness of this highest glory: but she has other raiment woven for her in the wisdom of the All-wise, which all may see, the fair adornings of 'love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.' Clad with these without and full of grace within, shall she be brought like a bride unto the eternal Bridegroom; and with her and in her shall the Churches of the nations be adorned, for the same King and Lord of all. And joy shall follow joy, and praise shall strive with praise, as that glad band shall pass on into the many mansions of eternity, into that high abiding-place where the virgin souls 'which follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth,' are found 'without fault before the throne of God.'

17. Instead of thy fathers thou shalt have children: whom thou mayest make princes in all lands.

In Him and through Him Who is the Almighty Bridegroom, Who hath betrothed us to Himself in the mystery of His incarnation, shall we each one 'be kings and priests unto God.' In Him and through Him shall the twelve apostles of the new covenant be added to the twelve patriarchs of the old covenant, to make up that number of which the beloved disciple speaks:—'Round about the throne

were four-and-twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four-and-twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold.'

18. I will remember Thy Name from one generation to another: therefore shall the people give thanks unto Thee, world without end.

Of Him Who was incarnate and was born for us, Who has conquered and will conquer the kingdoms of the world, Who left His eternal Father and His Virgin mother to join the Church, the assembly of all believing souls, in unending union to Himself; of Him shall each one saved by Him ever be mindful; to Him shall the world which was redeemed by Him ascribe unceasing praise and return unceasing thanks both now and here, and when time shall be no more.

The title of this Psalm is "to the chief Musician, upon Shoshannim, or lilies, a Maschil by the sons of Korah, a song of loves, or for the beloved." It was written by the Korahite Levites for the public service of the temple, as containing a deep lesson for them who heard it: this much is clear. "The lilies" the LXX. render, "for those who shall be changed," and is applied by the Fathers to the baptized: it may either be a tune so called, or may refer to the king's daughters and virgin attendants which the Psalm celebrates. (Cant. ii. 1, 2.) "The beloved" was the person for whose nuptials the Psalm was written, (Isa. v. 1); the occasion which called it forth was perhaps the marriage of one of the kings of Judah, possibly Solomon, but that the king is described as a warrior; but the true intention of the Psalm is to celebrate "the spiritual marriage and unity of Christ and His Church." (Compare the Canticles throughout, and Isa. liv. 5, lxii. 5; St. John iii. 29; 2 Cor. xi. 2; Eph. v. 27, 32; Rev. xxi. 2, xxii. 17.) In fact, this type of marriage is mystically used in holy

Scripture to signify the joining not only of each soul, but of the whole Church, to the Son of God, from the second chapter of Genesis to the last of Revelations. That it is a clear and plain prophecy of Christ the Lord, Heb. i. 8, 9 very plainly shew us, for in that Epistle the Psalm is said to be a speech of the Holy Spirit to the Son of God. The Psalm follows the observances of an Eastern marriage, in which the bridegroom goes first to the bride in the house of her father. The bride is exhorted to forget her own people and relations in the love of her spouse, in order that he may love her in return. The procession then sets out for the bridegroom's palace, and the bride is brought in rich raiment, and accompanied with many virgin attendants, to her husband's home, where she receives a nuptial blessing. (Compare Gen. xxiv. 60.) It needs but a little knowledge of the New Testament to trace out how each of these circumstances was fulfilled in our redemption. Poems of this kind, and such as the Song of Solomon, are still popular among Eastern nations, which under the appearance of a love-poem or a marriage-song conceal truths of philosophy or doctrines of theology; and the better instructed value themselves much on understanding these poems in their mystical sense.

PSALM xlvi. *Deus noster refugium.*

1. GOD is our hope and strength : a very present help in trouble.

2. Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be moved : and though the hills be carried into the midst of the sea.

3. Though the waters thereof rage and swell : and though the mountains shake at the tempest of the same.

There is One in Whom we may store up our hope, One in Whom we may be strong when trouble and distress come,—even He to Whom the disciples came when they were storm-tost on the sea, saying, 'Lord, save us; we perish.' In Him, if we have faith, may we abide secure and undismayed,

though earth and heaven pass away. For if faith can herself bid the mountains be removed and placed in the midst of the sea, and they shall obey; surely faith need not be astonished or be troubled, when the mountains are removed and carried into the midst of the sea! No change can trouble him who trusts in the Unchangeable. The earth must ever be in movement and in storm. 'The waves of this troublesome world' needs must rise and fall; and we, as we be faithful or doubting, may either be carried onward by them to our refuge,—for they will bear us the more speedily as they swell more roughly,—or else be swallowed up amid their roarings, and sink into their depths. All earthly powers, however for awhile they may be strong and high, must pass away and come to wreck; and ever and anon they are shaken and made to totter amid the ceaseless whirl and storm of mortal things.

4. The rivers of the flood thereof shall make glad the city of God : the holy place of the tabernacle of the most Highest.

LXX. The Highest hath sanctified His tabernacle.

5. God is in the midst of her, therefore shall she not be removed : God shall help her, and that right early.

Heb. God helps her in the break of morning.

Earthly powers shall shake when the winds are strong and the floods rage; but that city which is built upon the rock of unwavering faith and unchanging truth is above and beyond their power.

Without and away from the Church of God there are tempests and tossings of the waves; within her and beside her walls flows quietly the river of immortal grace,—not any longer like the scanty brook of Shiloah flowing past the old Jerusalem, but in a full and ceaseless stream, refreshing, cleansing, gladdening, hallowing those who dwell beneath the shadows of the House of God. Within her are opened again the sources of that fourfold river so long kept closed, which flowed in the beginning through paradise. The world is moved, the Church shall not be moved, because her God is not only above her, but within her. Where His own are gathered in His Name, there is He in the midst of them. He shall rise early to help His Church. They who put their trust in Him shall be delivered, as Hezekiah and his people from the Assyrians, suddenly and early. ‘Behold at eventide trouble: before the morning comes it is no more!’

6. The heathen make much ado, and the kingdoms are moved : but God hath shewed His voice, and the earth shall melt away.

Heb. The peoples roar, kingdoms shake :

He utters with His voice, the earth melts.

They who have no trust are terrified and confounded when trouble comes; they cry and there is none to help them : the kingdoms of the world are changed and moved; ‘the mighty are put down from their seat, the rich are sent empty away.’ But when He speaks in judgment, when He calls the

race of men before His throne, earthly hopes shall vanish, earthly schemes fall into nothing, earthly power shall fail; yea, the very fabric, earth itself, shall be dissolved and depart away.

7. The Lord of hosts is with us : the God of Jacob is our refuge.

Not the might of men, nor of angels, nor of powers, nor of any creatures earthly or heavenly, but the Lord of hosts is with His own; the God of Jacob is their refuge. What are hosts, without the Lord of hosts? He Who sent angels came after angels,—came that angels might serve Him,—came that He might make men equal to angels. Mighty grace! ‘If God be for us, who can be against us?’

8. O come hither, and behold the works of the Lord : what destruction He hath brought upon the earth.

9. He maketh wars to cease in all the world : He breaketh the bow, and knappeth the spear in sunder, and burneth the chariots in the fire.

Strange must have been the exultation and the wonder of the people of Jerusalem when they were marvellously delivered from the hand of Sennacherib,—when ‘the angel of the Lord went forth and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred and fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses.’ Their armies were spoiled; their weapons of war were made useless; their chariots

were given up to be destroyed to them against whom they had prepared them; and this was the doing of God, not of man, the act of the justice of the Almighty, not of mortal power. Much more marvellous will be His doings in that time which He has reserved, when He shall establish His Church in perfect peace, when the enemies of righteousness shall be utterly taken away, and there shall be no more strife and no more war for ever.

10. Be still then, and know that I am God : I will be exalted among the heathen, and I will be exalted in the earth.

11. The Lord of hosts is with us : the God of Jacob is our refuge.

As for God's people, 'their strength is to sit still.' Rabshakeh, the ambassador of the king of Assyria, had scorned at the thought that God would deliver His people; and in faith Hezekiah had prayed to the Lord his God to be saved,—'that all the kingdoms of the earth might know that He was the Lord, even He only.' And thus was he answered, and thus were the Assyrians answered: 'Hast thou not heard long ago how I have done it, and of ancient times that I have formed it? Now have I brought it to pass that thou shouldest be,' to do My bidding. And so in all danger and in all distress, He Who is the Lord of nature is also the Lord of man. He Who 'arose and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still; and the wind ceased and there was a great calm,' can order

the nations of the world at His Almighty will, and will make them fall down before Him, and own Him for their Lord, when He has determined that it shall be so in the counsels of His providence and His grace. In the meanwhile He is with His Church always, even to the end. His name is 'Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.' And His elect, however weak in themselves, are strong in Him; and the less they seek in selfishness to provide for their own safety, the surer refuge shall they find in His love and protecting grace.

This Psalm is "to the chief Musician, by the Sons of Korah, a song of joy for the Virgins;" but the LXX. translate this last word "upon mysteries." It was therefore composed to be sung either in the service of the temple, or in a thanksgiving procession, by a choir of the maidens of Jerusalem. The internal evidence of the Psalm itself leads to the conclusion that it was written after the deliverance of Jerusalem from the invasion of Sennacherib and the Assyrians in the reign of Hezekiah, and was an expression of thanksgiving. (Isa. xxxvi., xxxvii.) If it were the case that it was chanted in public by a choir of virgins, it would fulfil to the letter Isaiah's saying,—

"The virgin the daughter of Sion hath despised thee and laughed thee to scorn;

The daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at thee." (Isa. xxxvii. 22.)

A comparison of verses 2, 3, 4, with Isa. viii. 6, 7, 8, will confirm the impression that it was written while Isaiah's prophecies were familiar to the people; the mention of the river of water gladdening the city would be natural, when the supply of water which had been stopped, was again restored. (2 Chron. xxxii. 3, 4.) The address of Hezekiah to the people is in the very same spirit of confidence which fills the Psalm, (Ibid. 7, 8); and the peace and repose which it celebrates in verses 7, 8, 9, is that which the miraculous destruction of his enemies brought to Hezekiah. (Ibid. xxii. 23.) The describing the invasion of the Assyrians as a mighty and tempestuous flood roaring outside the walls of Jerusalem, while the city was in safety, is in accordance with the general tone of Eastern poetry.

Evening Prayer.

FOR ASCENSION-DAY.

PSALM xlvii. *Omnes gentes, plaudite.*

1. O CLAP your hands together, all ye people : O sing unto God with the voice of melody.

2. For the Lord is high, and to be feared : He is the great King upon all the earth.

The coming of Christ's kingdom in its fulness is a sight of most deep and perfect joy. All peoples can rejoice in it, because He has subdued all peoples to Himself. His victories are not victories which make the conquered slaves, but victories which make the conquered free. Therefore must we 'lift up holy hands' with our hearts and voices in celebrating the triumphs of our ascended Lord. We must shew forth His praise 'not only with our lips, but in our lives.' He Who was once humble and of no reputation is now exalted. He Who once was mocked is become most terrible in glory. Earthly powers no longer bear rule over us, whom He has set at liberty from earth : but He is become the Lord of our hands, and lips, and souls, Who is the only Potentate and the only King.

3. He shall subdue the people under us : and the nations under our feet.

4. He shall choose out an heritage for us : even the worship of Jacob, whom He loved.

In His victory shall the Church have victory, for all her victories are but the fillings up of His one victory. It is His grace that shall bring the world under the influence and the guidance of the Church. He shall bring the nations from far to sit at the feet of His ministers and pastors. They win their way not by the weapons of the world, but by His word, which is mightier than all man's deed. By calling on His name Who once was crucified, but now is exalted, the evil one is put to silence, and the powers of death are driven back. He hath chosen an heritage for us, and He hath chosen us for His heritage, even as He chose Jacob, and that which was excellent in Jacob, for Himself, at His own loving will.

5. God is gone up with a merry noise : and the Lord with the sound of the trump.

He Who from eternity hath filled both earth and heaven, yet in His own appointed time ascended from earth to heaven. He went up from the Mount of Olives, even as Enoch and Elijah had gone up before ; yet not borne up, as they were, by the aid of angels, but by His own almighty power. He broke the bands of earth as a spider's web, He triumphed over the powers of the air ; and entered, amid the adoring mirth of angels and the wondering joy of men, into His own exceeding glory. And the proclamation of the heavenly messenger, ' Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven,' waxes, ever as the years roll on, ' louder and louder,'

like the trumpet-blast on Sinai, until 'the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised' at the Advent summons.

6. O sing praises, sing praises unto our God : O sing praises, sing praises unto our King.

7. For God is the King of all the earth : sing ye praises with understanding.

The true worship of God is praise. Prayer is for our need; praise is for His glory. He Who was God before all ages is now King over us; therefore we praise God Who created us, and we praise God Who redeemed us. We must honour the Son even as we honour the Father; we must honour Him Who became a servant, even as we honour Him as a King. 'He is our praise, and He is our God.' Yea, all our hymns of praise must be sung before Him with the understanding as well as with the spirit, knowing Him and confessing Him, no less than praising Him, Who was God before the flesh, and yet for our sake became God with the flesh and in the flesh.

8. God reigneth over the heathen : God sitteth upon His holy seat.

9. The princes of the people are joined unto the people of the God of Abraham : for God, Which is very high exalted, doth defend the earth as it were with a shield.

God has ever been reigning over the world; but

His kingdom has now been clearly manifested; He has openly taken possession of it. Christ has sat down in glory; His holy seat is upon the right hand of the Father; yet if we by holiness prepare a place for Him within our-hearts, He will descend again and take His seat therein. Thus in the risen and ascended Lord are fulfilled the promises made to Abraham,—‘In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed;’ ‘They which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.’ For He Who now reigneth on the throne of glory once hung upon the Cross in shame,—‘that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.’ He is exalted on high above the earth, yet doth He still watch over and defend the earth, on which once He dwelt in weakness, by the mightiness of His providence and of His grace.

This Psalm, “by the sons of Korah,” is appointed for Holy Thursday. There is no period in the history of Israel to which it can be definitely assigned, unless there is a reference in verse 5 to “David and all the house of Israel bringing up the ark of the Lord with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet,” (2 Sam. vi. 15); which may lead us to suppose that it was used on that occasion. It has also been assigned to the time of Jehoshaphat, (see 2 Chron. xx. 19). It was doubtless a Psalm commonly used in the temple service on festival occasions.

FOR WHIT-SUNDAY.

PSALM *xlvi*. *Magnus Dominus.*

1. GREAT is the Lord, and highly to be praised : in the city of our God, even upon His holy hill.

A King is best honoured by His own people, and the Lord is best praised by His Church. His honour is hers, and her honour is His; all the glory that she has is given unto her by Him, and therefore should she render to Him again that which she first received. He has laid her foundations; He has raised up her walls: and the rock on which He has built her up is Himself; therefore is she bound to praise Him.

2. The hill of Sion is a fair place, and the joy of the whole earth: upon the north-side lieth the city of the great King; God is well known in her palaces as a sure refuge.

Heb. Beautiful in extension,

The joy of the whole earth is Mount Sion:

In the northern side is the city of the great King.

That which makes the Church strong makes her fair; but it is holiness and unity that make her strong, therefore holiness and unity will make her fair. In her, and in that Saviour Who is with her, all the nations of the earth shall find a blessing. Beneath the shadow of her towers lie in safety and repose the dwellings of the redeemed of God. They are the defence and ornament of that world-wide city which has owned the true King for her king, and has placed itself beneath that law of His which bids that 'His will be done on earth as it is in heaven.' Within her walls, by prayers, by litanies, by psalms, by creeds, by thanksgivings, by hearing His holy Word and partaking His holy Sacraments, do

God's faithful people make known their needs to Him, and is He made known in His truth and grace to them.

3. For lo, the kings of the earth : are gathered, and gone by together.

4. They marvelled to see such things : they were astonished, and suddenly cast down.

5. Fear came there upon them, and sorrow : as upon a woman in her travail.

Against the Church of Christ kings of the earth and their people have arisen from time to time. They put forth their power ; they tried the faith and the patience of Christ's people ; and they passed away. Tyrants and persecutors have raged against her, and have gone, like the Ammonites and the Moabites within sight of Jerusalem, in the wilderness of Tekoa. They wrought guilt and woe to themselves ; but their violence only added to the glory and the salvation of the saints whom they persecuted. 'The despisers beheld, and wondered, and perished.' They were astonished to see that the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the Church : the grace and power of Christ shewed forth in His saints perplexed and confused their plans. They had to learn, that if their power was not to end in fear, and their triumph in sharp and unexpected sorrow, it could only be by gathering themselves together, not against Him, but in Him Who is the one great King. So shall the Church ever conquer her enemies by bringing them into

subjection to her Lord through her patience and firm trust in His salvation.

6. Thou shalt break the ships of the sea : through the east-wind.

Heb. By the east wind Thou breakest the ships of Tarshish.

But it is only by her Lord that the Church gains 'the true riches : ' when she enters into traffick with the world, she takes the means of the world for her resources ; and when she trusts in her wealth, in her political power, in earthly cunning, to make merchandise, the instruments she adopts come to nothing in her hands, and leave her helpless and poor. It is then with her spiritual rulers as it was with Jehoshaphat the king of Jerusalem, when 'he joined himself with Ahaziah king of Israel, who did very wickedly ; and joined himself with him to make ships to go to Tarshish : and they made the ships in Ezion-gaber : then Eliezer the son of Dodavah of Mareshah prophesied against Jehoshaphat, saying, Because thou hast joined thyself with Ahaziah, the Lord hath broken thy works. And the ships were broken, that they were not able to go to Tarshish.'

7. Like as we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the Lord of hosts, in the city of our God : God upholdeth the same for ever.

8. We wait for Thy loving-kindness, O God : in the midst of Thy temple.

In Christ's Church we hear the prophecies of His coming kingdom ; in His Church we see them

fulfilled. We hear that 'all the ends of the earth shall remember themselves, and be turned to the Lord, and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before Him, and day by day we see the work being day by day wrought out. Prophets and apostles are joined together as citizens of the city of God—the one speaking, the other doing. And that Church He hath established for ever, Who said unto her people, 'Behold I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.' In her courts, in her sacraments, in her means of grace, are we brought near to the Lord, and do we gain His mercy. We wait for Him in the place in which He has appointed that He will meet us, and will be in the midst of us.

9. O God, according to Thy Name, so is Thy praise unto the world's end : Thy right hand is full of righteousness.

10. Let the mount Sion rejoice, and the daughter of Judah be glad : because of Thy judgements.

As the power of Christ is over all the world, and His redemption was for all the world, so shall His Name be known in all the world ; and where His Name is known, there it must be praised : the Church shall praise her Lord, 'according to His excellent greatness.' He is the great High Priest consecrated with His own most righteous blood : and His right hand, which the nails once pierced through, shall recompense to each human soul according to his works, 'to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile'—

shall give grace and peace to the righteous, and pain and restlessness to the unrighteous. And in His righteous judgment His holy Church shall rejoice: for they who truly are in the communion of His saints shall be on His right hand and shall enter into His joy on the great day, when His sentence of all-righteous judgment shall be pronounced for ever.

11. Walk about Sion, and go round about her : and tell the towers thereof.

12. Mark well her bulwarks, set up her houses : that ye may tell them that come after.

13. For this God is our God for ever and ever : He shall be our guide unto death.

Therefore is the Church not merely a visible body, to be judged of by worldly experience. She is a union of the seen and of the unseen; a means by which the Holy Ghost joins earth and heaven in a common link; a bringing into one communion the living and the departed, angels and mortal men. Let the children of men walk round about her, count her towers of faith, mark her bulwarks of salvation, and her houses of praise, and then not idly forget what they have seen, but store up the history of what she has done in time past, and the traditions of her holiness and her meekness, that they may be a model for the years to come to copy and to abide in. It may be that the Church may undergo changes and sorrows. Her trust may in many things be turned to

herself, not to her Lord; her glory may be lessened, her towers be made to fall through lust of worldly treasure, the unity of her bounding-wall may be broken and marred, the fairness of her houses may depart, and in her time of humiliation and of perplexity mockers may say of her, 'Is this the city that men call the perfection of beauty, the joy of the whole earth?' But though her outward condition may change, though she may be humbled and be raised again, her King and God changes not. His mightiness is everlasting. He will rule her, and guide her and all her members through trials and persecutions, and strifes, and divisions, and sorrows, unto death, and through and beyond death, even into immortal life.

This is "a joyful song by the children of Korah," sung by the Levites, as verse 8 shews, in the temple. The occasion on which it was written was clearly the invasion of Judæa by the Moabites, Ammonites, and Edomites, in the reign of Jehoshaphat, (2 Chron. xx.). They advanced within sight of Jerusalem. Jehoshaphat, on the sight of the danger of the city, proclaimed a fast and prayed; a prophetic message was brought to him from God by Jahaziel, a Levite, to encourage him, upon which the Kohathites and the Korhites "stood up to praise God." On his going out to battle he set singers before his army, and when they began their hymn of praise, the swords of the enemies were turned one against the other, and Jehoshaphat took the spoil of their armies without a battle. And on their return Jehoshaphat and his soldiers "came to Jerusalem with psalteries, and harps, and trumpets, unto the house of the Lord;" and doubtless then sung this Psalm to the praise of the God Who had delivered them. Verse 6, with the mention of the ships of Tarshish, would be a warning to them in their joy against presumption, (2 Chron. xx. 35—37). With verse 9 compare Exodus xxix. 9, with the marginal rendering. "To fill the hand" is the Hebrew phrase for "to consecrate." Tarshish is considered to be either Carthage in Africa, or Tartessus in Spain. The Psalm, which mystically dwells on the reality and the order and the beauty of the Church, is appointed for Whit-Sunday.

PSALM xlix. *Audite hæc, omnes.*

1. O hear ye this, all ye people : ponder it with your ears, all ye that dwell in the world ;

2. High and low, rich and poor : one with another.

Of all the questions that call for man's attention, by far the most important is that of his own life and his own being. Is this life all, or is there another life after it? Are the pleasure and the power of this world the greatest things we can desire, or are there any higher and nobler aims beyond and after them? This is the question of questions, which all the children of Adam, high and low, rich and poor, must be ever asking themselves ; and therefore all living men, all that dwell in the world, may well be called upon to listen to the answer—and not merely to listen to it, but to ponder it well ; for upon it, and upon their receiving it, does their true life and all their right doing and happiness depend.

3. My mouth shall speak of wisdom : and my heart shall muse of understanding.

4. I will incline mine ear to the parable : and shew my dark speech upon the harp.

He before whom the Spirit of God has opened the nature of his own being and the destiny of his soul, will love to lead his brother men, whether rich or poor, to that same solemn knowledge. He will think over long and well those awful facts which

encompass us around,—birth and the grave, life and death, power and weakness, joy and sorrow, holiness and sin, the spirit and the flesh ; he will muse upon their mysterious influence upon us, at once the creatures of dust and the children of God, until at last his soul discerns their proper and appointed order, and his mouth is able to speak of the things his heart has mused on, as each and all displaying the eternal wisdom and love of Him Who devised them and arranged them, and placed among them man, the last-made of His creatures. He will listen reverently and meekly to the mighty parable of the universe : one by one the hidden reasons of God's providence will unfold themselves before him. He will lay his ear down close to the chords of that mighty instrument of God's dealings ; and will strive to attune his own heart to His truth and holiness. He will see that there is a harmony and an order in all His ways and works ; and that sight will call forth within his soul those true and high and holy thoughts which are their own music, which cheer us in our doubt and dulness, as the harp cheers him who is sorrowful.

5. Wherefore should I fear in the days of wickedness : and when the wickedness of my heels compasseth me round about ?

Heb. Why should I fear in the days of calamity,

When the wickedness of my supplanters hemmeth me in ?

Or otherwise :—

Why should I fear in the evil days,

When the evil of my latter end comes upon me ?

There was one who deceived man and caused his fall; who brought both sin and misery upon him; who 'bruised his heel' by making him subject unto death. Through that sin, into which the first man through the craft of the Evil one fell, the days of our mortal life have become few and evil, we are surrounded with temptations and with tempters; and whatever we may do, however we may struggle to escape, Death, with his messenger Pain before him, and his attendant the Grave following him close, is waiting for us as his own. We do fear death,—that is certain. But why should we fear him? And how can we escape the fear of him? This is a dark and difficult question, which man needs both wisdom and grace to answer.

6. There be some that put their trust in their goods : and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches.

7. But no man may deliver his brother : nor make agreement unto God for him ;

8. For it cost more to redeem their souls : so that he must let that alone for ever ;

9. Yea, though he live long : and see not the grave.

Heb. There are those who rely upon their wealth,
 And glory in the abundance of their riches :
 But no man of them can by any redemption redeem his
 brother,
 Nor give unto God his atonement—
 For precious is the ransom of their souls,
 And he must leave it alone for ever—

So that he should live continually,
And never see the grave.

Some will not try to answer it. They prefer to be getting riches ; and they gradually come to take it for granted that a man's life does consist in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. Their thought is—Let us have much, and we shall do well. But riches will not purchase life. A man, however rich, cannot purchase life for another ; still less can he for himself. The atonement which human souls require is not of corruptible things, such as silver and gold ; it is something purer, holier, dearer far. Immortal spirits cannot be redeemed with mortal treasures. Eternal life cannot be bought with the things of time. They who trust in their goods will ever find that their trust fails them in the hour when they need it most—the hour of death. They who boast in their riches, and think that in them is life and peace, will be made to know that their ‘ money shall perish with them ; because they have thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money.’

10. For he seeth that wise men also die,
and perish together : as well as the ignorant
and foolish, and leave their riches for other.

Heb. Truly it is seen that wise men die :
‘ Even as the simple and ignorant do they perish,
And leave their substance to others.

11. And yet they think that their houses
shall continue for ever : and that their dwell-

ing-places shall endure from one generation to another ; and call the lands after their own names.

12. Nevertheless, man will not abide in honour : seeing he may be compared unto the beasts that perish ; this is the way of them.

Heb. For man, though he be in honour, doth not abide ;
He may be compared to the beasts that perish.

There are others who see the helplessness of riches, and trust rather to their knowledge or their reputation. They make it the object of their life to know more than others, to be above the rest of the world in their intelligence and their wisdom. But yet this wisdom, though the aim of the less groveling, is no better a help than riches against the power of death. The man who has knowledge dies, even as he dies who has it not. The stores they have got together are not for themselves, but for others after them ; they must give them up, and go equally with the simple and the uninstructed, to the place of common doom. And if riches and knowledge are no safeguards against death, neither is earthly honour and fame. Men may be the founders of houses and families which they think will last ; they may have cities and territories, or even continents, called after their names : but their reputation and honour cannot secure them from death. And then he who thought himself above others is not even ranked among men, but is compared to the beasts

that perish. What men call immortal fame is but a mockery to him who has to return to the dust with other created things. It is immortal life that the soul really needs. It may be the way of man to desire these things, but it can only lead him to nothingness and gloom.

13. This is their foolishness : and their posterity praise their saying.

Yet men say that riches are life, or that knowledge is life, or that fame is life ; and they act upon what they say, and others hear them with pleasure, and see them, and commend them for so doing. They lay up their maxims and examples as things to be praised and imitated, when they are in truth stumbling-blocks to their souls, and utter folly. Men praise them ; but what saith God to such?—‘Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee ; then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?’

14. They lie in the hell like sheep, death gnaweth upon them, and the righteous shall have domination over them in the morning : their beauty shall consume in the sepulchre out of their dwelling.

Heb. They are appointed for the grave like sheep ;

Death is the shepherd over them :

And the righteous have dominion over them in the morning.

Their form passes away in the grave their dwelling.

15. But God hath delivered my soul from the place of hell : for He shall receive me.

They who have thus misplaced their trust cannot escape from the grave. They follow one another, even as a flock of sheep follow one another to the slaughter, into that unseen world of gloom and fear. Death is their shepherd; he shall lead them to the pastures of darkness and by the waters of sorrow; he 'feeds the flock for the slaughter,' for their own desolation and ruin. How then shall man overcome the fear of death, which he fain must feel? That awful riddle still remains unopened. The prophets and holy men of old by the Spirit of God were able to guess at the answer; but to us has the truth been revealed in its entirety by Him Who said,—'I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die.' He hath said of man, 'Deliver him from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom.' In the Son of God, Who died for us, shall we live; in Him Who rose shall we rise; and He shall give to His apostles who followed Him on earth, that 'in the regeneration, when the Son of Man shall sit on the throne of His glory, they also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel;'—while they who know Him not, and love Him not, lie down in death without hope, and become the spoil of corruption. Through Him we can conquer death, and the fear of death; through Him we are delivered from the grave and its power; through Him we are received into that high dwelling where the parable of God's providence is fully opened, and

the sayings and dealings of His government are no longer dark.

16. Be not thou afraid, though one be made rich : or if the glory of his house be increased ;

17. For he shall carry nothing away with him when he dieth : neither shall his pomp follow him.

18. For while he lived, he counted himself an happy man : and so long as thou doest well unto thyself, men will speak good of thee.

They who fear God, and wait in life and in death for His deliverance, need feel no emotion of fear or wonder, or trouble, at seeing a mortal exalted above themselves, either in wealth, or in honour and power. It makes no real distinction ; it does not raise him above the common lot of the sons of men. He must die and leave it. 'He brought nothing into this world, and it is certain he can carry nothing out.' All his pomp and power deserts him at the grave. While he was still alive, and had his good things in his own power, he thought himself happy. 'Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years. Take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry,' is the too natural speech of the worldly man to himself ; and, strange as it may seem, men do not rebuke such selfishness ; they rather applaud and speak well of it.

19. He shall follow the generation of his fathers : and shall never see light.

But every one must go where his fathers have gone ; he must go where it will be enquired of him, not what good he has had, but what good he has done ; not what he has boasted in, but what he has prayed for. There, where 'high and low, rich and poor, one with another,' are all gathered, the only noble will be the elect, the only vile the lost, the only rich the righteous, the only poor the unbelieving. There he who has trusted in his possessions will find, too late, that they have become things which possess him, and sink him down into the everlasting darkness, 'where is wailing and gnashing of teeth.'

20. Man being in honour hath no understanding : but is compared unto the beasts that perish.

Heb. Man in honour, but without understanding,

May be compared unto the beasts,—they shall perish.

Surely, then, all should hear and ponder these things, for they concern all. To know how to submit to death, but to escape his terror, is the highest knowledge for man who has to die. The whole life of the wise should be a making ready for death. The first man brought death into the world, the second Man brought life and immortality : by nature we are heirs of the first, by faith we become co-heirs with the second. No earthly honour, no worldly fame, can deliver us in the hour of death : they who have made

such things their trust shall depart helpless and hopeless, as the beast that perishes. ‘Madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead.’ The understanding His will Who only can redeem our souls is man’s truest honour and his deepest wisdom.

Some one of the sons of Korah was the author of this Psalm, which is an ancient poem, written probably before the time of David. It resembles in some points the book of Job; and sets out the vanity of mortal life and the certainty of death as warnings to men against placing their trust in riches, knowledge, or fame. Faith in God is pointed out as the only sure hope in death. The word here translated in different places “hell” and “the grave” is in the original “*Sheol*,” which signifies generally “the unseen world, or the place of departed spirits.” It conveys the idea of mournfulness and gloom, but not necessarily of torment. The LXX. vary considerably from our versions in translating the latter verses of this mysterious and solemn Psalm.

Morning Prayer.

PSALM I. *Deus deorum.*

1. The Lord, even the most mighty God, hath spoken : and called the world, from the rising up of the sun, unto the going down thereof.

The eternal God, the ‘Lord of all power and might,’ Who spake in the times past by His angels and by His prophets, hath also spoken, and shall yet speak again, by His Son, by Whom He made the world, and to Whom He hath given the judgment of the world. On that final day whose coming is hidden yet in His secret counsels, ‘at the voice of

the archangel and the trump of God,' each child of Adam shall be called before His throne. From one end of the world to the other, and from the first sun of the creation to the last which shall rise, all, both the living and the dead, shall be summoned to stand before Him, and shall obey.

2. Out of Sion hath God appeared : in perfect beauty.

Heb. From Sion, the perfection of beauty,
God shines forth.

3. Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence : there shall go before Him a consuming fire, and a mighty tempest shall be stirred up round about Him.

God the Father spake of old on Sinai in thunder, but He shrouded Himself in terror and darkness. But God the Son hath Himself appeared in human form in Sion, the crowning glory of whose temple He Himself became. Our God came, for the majesty of the Father was present in the Son. He came and spake there, as never man spake, words of truth, and life, and love. 'He taught as one having authority.' And the tongues of fire and the rushing mighty wind of Pentecost were sent by Him, that His word might be fulfilled—'That repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His Name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.'

4. He shall call the heaven from above : and the earth, that He may judge His people.

5. Gather My saints together unto Me : those that have made a covenant with Me with sacrifice.

6. And the heaven shall declare His righteousness : for God is Judge Himself.

He Who hath spoken hitherto shall in the end speak yet once again, when He shall call to the heavens and to the earth, and the whole universe of angels and of men shall be assembled in His presence, in the mighty day of doom. The spirits of the saints made perfect, and they that are still alive upon the earth, shall all be there. 'For He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.' 'The Lord knoweth them that are His.' His elect shall be caught up to meet Him, they who have been joined with Him by holy baptism, and have been preserved as His by His assisting grace, in that new and better covenant which He established by the sacrifice of Himself. The heavens and all the powers therein shall bear witness to His righteousness; for not one grain of His wheat shall be lost in that mighty tempest, not one sin or act of wrong shall escape His eye. God Himself, the all-seeing, the all-knowing, is the Judge, making all due allowances, but no undue ones, rewarding to every man according to what he has been and what he has done.

7. Hear, O My people, and I will speak :

I Myself will testify against thee, O Israel ; for I am God, even thy God.

And until that dread Assize, though He is no longer manifest, yet is He ever speaking to the world. By the ministrations of His Church, by the teachings of His word, by the whisperings of His Holy Spirit, is He ever bearing witness to the truth unto them who will be the true Israel and will hearken. Though He be now unseen, and has not yet the second time appeared, yet He is not the less the Almighty God, the Ruler, and Lord, and Judge of all people. His first law must still be heard with as deep fear and reverence as on the day on which it first was spoken : — ‘I am the Lord thy God : thou shalt have none other gods but Me.’

8. I will not reprove thee because of thy sacrifices, or for thy burnt-offerings : because they were not alway before Me.

Heb. Not for thy sacrifices will I reprove thee,
For thy burnt-offerings are continually before Me.

9. I will take no bullock out of thine house : nor he-goat out of thy folds.

10. For all the beasts of the forest are Mine : and so are the cattle upon a thousand hills.

11. I know all the fowls upon the mountains : and the wild beasts of the field are in My sight.

12. If I be hungry, I will not tell thee : for

the whole world is Mine, and all that is therein.

13. Thinkest thou that I will eat bulls' flesh : and drink the blood of goats ?

The offering of sacrifices under the law was not all that the eternal God required. What needed He that man should give to Him, Who had created all things, and Whose were all things? Nor is outward obedience all that He requires now. He desires not the offering of beasts, but the offering of man. He requires the sacrifice of the heart and spirit, the offering up of the life and being, which alone He will accept, and will render holy and perfect by that one perfect sacrifice which the Great High Priest presented before Him on the altar of the Cross. 'For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, could never with those sacrifices, which they offered year by year continually, make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? Because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.'

14. Offer unto God thanksgiving : and pay thy vows unto the most Highest.

15. And call upon Me in the time of trou-

ble : so will I hear thee, and thou shalt praise Me.

His own Son 'by one offering hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.' Therefore can they present an acceptable oblation, not of other creatures, but of themselves. He bids us offer that which we all have, the sacrifice of thanksgiving, the performing of our vows. We do not need frankincense; we need not lambs or bulls; we have the gift in our own hearts; we have the altar in our own conscience; the free-will sacrifice is given to us by the grace of Him Who deigns to ask us for it. Should we not give thanks unto His love Whose mercy hath forgiven us our sins! Should we not perform that which we have promised unto Him Who has established His better covenant with us, and hath sanctified us to be His children in it! But He requires not an offering from us that He may receive it, but only that He may more richly bestow upon us again the givings of His love and grace. He bids us call upon Him in our trouble, in the long trouble of this our mortal life, and He will hear and help us; and out of our trouble shall spring forth again thanksgiving, and our prayers shall yet once more be turned to praises.

16. But unto the ungodly said God : Why dost thou preach My laws, and takest My covenant in thy mouth ;

17. Whereas thou hatest to be reformed : and hast cast My words behind thee ?

And to the ungodly there is an unceasing rebuke of their misdeeds, ever being pronounced by God, which is the beginning of that sentence which shall close the judgment-day. Christ is speaking ever to each one's spirit; the Holy Ghost is silent in no conscience. The careless talk of God's laws; they boast themselves to be Christians in covenant and name, but they will not conform their lives to that covenant, they despise that eternal rule of right which God has ordained.

18. When thou sawest a thief, thou consentedst unto him : and hast been partaker with the adulterers.

19. Thou hast let thy mouth speak wickedness : and with thy tongue thou hast set forth deceit.

20. Thou satest, and spakest against thy brother : yea, and hast slandered thine own mother's son.

They give in to the fashion of the world and the evil customs of men. Dishonesty and uncleanness, blasphemy and fraud, lyings and slanderings, they judge of by the rule of the world, and not by the rule of God's commandments. They forget that by His voice on Sinai, and by the second table of His law, He has utterly forbidden and condemned such sins. They think not of God, and upon the enticements of the flesh and the world they not only do such things, but they have pleasure in them who do

them. And so they come to bear false witness against their own Divine Brother in the flesh, and to slander the Son of Man.

21. These things hast thou done, and I held My tongue, and thou thoughtest wickedly, that I am even such a one as thyself : but I will reprove thee, and set before thee the things that thou hast done.

Because judgments do not instantly follow upon sins, because for awhile punishment is delayed, the sinner must not indulge the blasphemous suggestion that God cares not for the breaking of His laws, that He is like men, short of sight and weak of hand. The long-suffering of God is a call to repentance, not to recklessness. But God is watching though He be waiting ; He has appointed a day in which He shall judge the world in righteousness, and then shall every falsehood and slander, every vile and unclean deed, be brought to light. Both what the wicked have done, and what they have made themselves, shall be set plainly before them. Nothing shall remain uncovered or unpunished, but there shall light upon both sin and sinners that reproof of unutterable woe—‘Depart, ye cursed.’

22. O consider this, ye that forget God : lest I pluck you away, and there be none to deliver you.

Oh that men would be wise while there is yet time ! that they would receive that word which is

established by the testimony of two witnesses,—the Apostles of the circumcision and of the uncircumcision,—‘that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation!’ But they who forget God shall be reminded of Him at last by His sentence of judgment; and who is he that shall acquit when God condemns? ‘It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.’ Who can tell the terrors of that hour, when hardened sin shall be brought face to face with perfect righteousness!

23. Whoso offereth Me thanks and praise, he honoureth Me : and to him that ordereth his conversation right will I shew the salvation of God.

Heb. Whosoever offers praise shall glorify Me.

And whosoever prepares his way,

To him will I shew the salvation of God.

LXX. The sacrifice of praise shall glorify Me,

And there is the way in which I will shew him the salvation of God.

We were created for God’s glory; and His glory is our being made perfect. Therefore if we give Him praise, He will give us that which He has stored up for us. He will give us Himself, and ‘He is our praise.’ For our praise is accepted before Him because we offer it not of ourselves, but it is Christ Who offers in us. He Who once offered Himself a sacrifice for us, now offers Himself in us. We must praise Him Who giveth us all with all we have received, not only with the words which grace puts into our mouths, but with the life which grace en-

ables us to live. Holy thoughts, holy words, holy works, these are the accepted sacrifices of Him Who hath made us holy! For in them and through them is the way unto that higher life, where all things are true, are holy, are everlasting; where our bread is righteousness, our drink is wisdom, our garment is immortality, our being is salvation; where there is no more weariness, no more strife, no more death, but the elect are with their Lord, and the Lord is with His elect for ever.

This Psalm, the title declares to be written by Asaph. Asaph, the son of Berechiah, lived in the time of David, (1 Chron. xv. 17, 19; xxv. 1,) and was a Levite engaged in the service of the sanctuary. It seems likely that this Psalm was written by him, and from its being placed immediately before the fifty-first Psalm, it may be supposed to have been composed a little before that Psalm, and to have been indited by the Holy Spirit as a rebuke for David's sin. The tone and spirit of Asaph's Psalms differ entirely from those of David. In the present one there is no hint or trace of the personal feeling of the singer. It is altogether objective. God, and His holiness and judgments, are the only things that are seen or thought of by him. It is highly probable that this Psalm, from its impressive and evangelic character, was one of those employed by Hezekiah to stir up the people to his work of reformation, (2 Chron. xxix. 30); and that therefore it is found, where it now stands, in that collection of Psalms which has been supposed to have been made by him.

PSALM li. *Miserere mei, Deus.*

FOR THE COMMINATION SERVICE, THE FOURTH
PENITENTIAL PSALM.

1. HAVE mercy upon me, O God, after Thy great goodness : according to the multitude of Thy mercies do away mine offences.

2. Wash me thoroughly from my wickedness : and cleanse me from my sin.

The goodness of our God must indeed be great, or our sins which are so great could never gain His mercy. Many and great as our offences are, yet the multitude of His mercies is even greater. To Him can the offender therefore look, on Him can the sinner call, in trust that He Who alone can will wash him from his wickedness of heart, and make him clean from the pollutions of the sins he has done. He may weep, but grace alone can cleanse him ; he may repent, but almighty love alone can pardon.

3. For I acknowledge my faults : and my sin is ever before me.

When his sin is before the sinner as sin, naked and unveiled, he cannot bear it : its fearful and miserable truth compels him, as it were, to confession before his God. He must needs acknowledge his faults, when his sin comes thus before him. The justice of God and His holiness terrifies him less than the sight of the evil things he has done. Sad is it to need such sharp and bitter penitence ; but sadder far to need it and not to have it !

4. Against Thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight : that Thou mightest be justified in Thy saying, and clear when Thou art judged.

It is God, our Father, and our Lord, and our King, Whom we have sinned against and despised. 'Sin is the transgression of the law,'—of His law. The laws, 'Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery,' and each other of the commandments, are but parts and branches of the first, 'I am the Lord thy God.' Our sins against right, our breaches of charity toward our neighbour, are also despisings of the holiness and righteousness of God. Wherever we have transgressed His law and opposed His will, there we are, and must be, deeply, utterly wrong; for His law and His will is utterly and eternally right. 'Yea, let God be true but every man a liar; as it is written, That Thou mightest be justified in Thy sayings, and mightest overcome when Thou art judged.'

5. Behold, I was shapen in wickedness : and in sin hath my mōther conceived me.

6. But lo, Thou requirest truth in the inward parts : and shalt make me to understand wisdom secretly.

We are, albeit God's adopted, sinners, the children of sinners, born by nature into a world of sin. This is only too plain. There yet remains in each one of even the regenerated offspring of Adam a 'fault and corruption of nature,' which leads us from righteousness and inclines us to evil; and in each act of sin that we commit, can we see as in a mirror the whole foulness and corruption of the unregenerate heart. But if we be this, it is no less plain

on the other hand that our God is all-holy and all-true, and requires holiness and truth in us, and that not merely outwardly, but in the very soul and spirit. This does He make us understand by the grace of repentance, and so He teaches us a deeper knowledge of Himself as the true Lord not only of power and might, but of mercy and of goodness.

7. Thou shalt purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean : Thou shalt wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

8. Thou shalt make me hear of joy and gladness : that the bones which Thou hast broken may rejoice.

Under the law, when one had touched a dead body he became unclean; and the law was that 'a clean person shall take hyssop, and dip it in the water of separation, and sprinkle it upon him that touched a bone, or one slain, or one dead, or a grave; and on the seventh day he shall purify himself, and wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and shall be clean at even. But the man that shall be unclean, and shall not purify himself, that soul shall be cut off from among the congregation, because he hath defiled the sanctuary of the Lord.' If he was unclean who touched a dead body, how far more unclean must he be who has defiled his soul with sin? what need must he not have of that all-holy One to 'purge his conscience' from works of death, by the hyssop of His passion and humiliation, and the sprinkling of His most pre-

scious blood? In that fountain there is cleansing for all who repent them of their sins, however vile and guilty they may be. In it, 'though their sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow;' yea, whiter, for no created whiteness can be compared with the purity and brightness of a soul pardoned by Christ, and sanctified through the sprinkling of His blood. There lie memories of love, and hopes of pardon, and promises of grace; there are raisings from falls, restorings from backslidings, supplyings for shortcomings, comfortings for broken spirits.

9. Turn Thy face from my sins : and put out all my misdeeds.

To feel sin keenly is a thing of good hope; for where there is a sense of pain, there there is a spark of life. With what life and grace we have still left us, must we implore our Father to turn His face from our sins, while He yet turns it not from us. We must implore Him again and again to put away our sins, so that not only may their wounds be healed, but that not even a scar be left. We are still to lay our guilt to heart, even though He gives us promises and earnestings of pardon, in order that fear and dislike of sin may penetrate our souls, and our repentance may be deep and true; for our sin only then is quite blotted out when we no longer sin.

10. Make me a clean heart, O God : and renew a right spirit within me.

11. Cast me not away from Thy presence : and take not Thy holy Spirit from me.

12. O give me the comfort of Thy help again : and stablish me with Thy free Spirit.

First the grace of repentance, then the grace of pardon, then the grace of holiness,—this is the order in which our merciful Father gives His mercies to the sinner. A clean heart is one of His highest graces, but it is not to be gained without an effort. If the garment which is but slightly stained is soon made white again, but that which has been deeply defiled and is become utterly foul, needs long care and many and continued cleansings to bring it back to its first purity ; no otherwise is it with the heart. He only Who made it can cleanse it. He Who breathed into our nostrils the breath of life, and made man a living soul, only can renew the spirit He has made when it has become perverse and evil. To ask for pardon, and to ask not to be cast out of God's presence, are the same ; for each sin we do would cast us out from Him, as his disobedience cast Adam out of Paradise. To ask for pardon, and to ask that the Holy Spirit, Which once sanctified us among the elect, be not taken from us, are the same ; for each time we listen to the unclean spirit, we grieve and vex the Holy One. Well, therefore, does the Church teach us daily to cry, ' O God, make clean our hearts within us, And take not Thy Holy Spirit from us,' for as we sin daily, so have we need of daily pardon and grace. Very often should we pray to that Holy Ghost, the Cleanser of the unclean, the Comforter of the sorrowing, to come unto us, that we go not

from Him—to keep us, that we lose not Him. And to them who thus pray in earnestness and penitence He will restore the grace they have lost, and give the comfort that they want through the working of that mighty, and gracious, and bountiful Spirit, Who ‘strengtheneth such as do stand, and comforteth and helpeth the weak-hearted, and raiseth up them that fall.’

13. Then shall I teach Thy ways unto the wicked : and sinners shall be converted unto Thee.

As David by his sins ‘had given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme,’ so was he by his repentance to convert them to His ways. He was to teach them to others, when he had learned himself their solemn, humbling lesson. As the fall of David has warned many a saint, so has his penitence converted many a sinner. And each one who has fallen through his own evil, and has been raised by God’s grace, should seek to teach others the way of truth which has been shewn to him. ‘When thou art converted strengthen thy brethren,’ is a charge not merely to St. Peter, but to every one on whom the name of Christ is named.

14. Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, Thou that art the God of my health : and my tongue shall sing of Thy righteousness.

15. Thou shalt open my lips, O Lord : and my mouth shall shew Thy praise.

If David besought God, when he was again able to approach Him as a pardoning God, that he would take from him the guilt of the slaughter of Uriah, so must we beseech Him to forgive us those wilful sins of ours which crucified the Lord. It was our guilt which nailed Him to the tree, and the Jews were but the instruments of our sins, as the Ammonites were the instruments of David's treachery and cruelty to his valiant men. But when our sins are put away, then can we sing thanksgivings for His righteous mercy. God shuts the mouth of the guilty, but opens that of the forgiven. After confession, and absolution, and prayer, can we fitly make us ready for praise, and draw near to our God with the words, 'O Lord, open Thou our lips; And our mouth shall shew forth Thy praise.' When He opens the sinner's mouth to speak His praise, it is a sure token that He has pardoned him.

16. For Thou desirest no sacrifice, else would I give it Thee : but Thou delightest not in burnt-offerings.

17. The sacrifice of God is a troubled spirit : a broken and contrite heart, O God, shalt Thou not despise.

David's sin was far beyond any sin-offering which could be offered by the law. No sacrifice of bulls or goats could be availing for its atonement. Then,

as now, a spirit troubled with its sins, a heart broken with the memory of its own vileness, and contrite with the sense of its disobedience and unholiness, was the sacrifice which He would accept in virtue of that one great Sacrifice which was offered on the Cross. 'He despiseth not the sighing of a contrite heart, nor the desire of such as be sorrowful;' nay, rather 'with such sacrifices God is well pleased.'

18. O be favourable and gracious unto Sion : build Thou the walls of Jerusalem.

19. Then shalt Thou be pleased with the sacrifice of righteousness, with the burnt-offerings and oblations : then shall they offer young bullocks upon Thine altar.

How many bright and holy fancyings and good resolutions will a single deadly sin cast down ! David had hoped to adorn Sion and to build up the walls of the temple in Jerusalem ; but when his own guilt and vileness came plain before him, he could only, groaning, give up the doing of the work to God : I am not worthy to do it, but do not Thou let it go undone ! Oh, build Thou the walls, Who canst do all things ! There should that spotless sacrifice be presented, 'the Lamb of God Who taketh away the sin of the world;' and without those walls was He to be offered up 'a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction' for all the sins of all ; that within the walls of that better Jerusalem, of which the older city was the type, there might be brought continually before the Father

of mercy His own accepted sacrifices, even contrite hearts, and His chosen burnt-offerings, souls glowing with holy love, sanctified by that same altar on which His Son was laid, even the Cross.

The title of this Psalm gives the occasion on which David wrote it, "When Nathan the prophet came unto him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba," (2 Sam. xi., xii.) Verse 4 evidently refers to 2 Sam. xii. 9, and 13 to xii. 14. This Psalm of penitence appears to have been made by David after the thirty-eighth, and before the thirty-second. It holds a middle place between these, expressing neither the desolation and misery of the thirty-eighth, nor the assurance of pardon contained in the thirty-second. It was most probably adapted to the temple-service by Hezekiah; and, with the Psalm which precedes it, would be most applicable to the revival of religion which took place in his time, (2 Chron. xxix. xxx). It is one of the Psalms called penitential, and is appointed for the Communion Service on the First Day of Lent. Verses 10, 11, and 15, are used as versicles in the daily service of the Church.

PSALM lii. *Quid gloriaris ?*

1. WHY boastest thou thyself, thou tyrant :
that thou canst do mischief ;

2. Whereas the goodness of God : endureth
yet daily ?

To have power is one of the greatest trials of our nature, though all seek after it; to be able to do as we will is a most fearful thing; for we are so much more likely to do what is wrong, and unjust, and tyrannical, than what is right. To exult in power to do wrong,—as Doeg the Edomite did, and Saul his master, when they slew Ahimelech, the son of Ahitub the priest, and fourscore and five of his brethren the priests, with their wives and their little children,—this is the very spirit of the prince of

darkness. Yet in spite of man's tyranny and cruelty God's goodness stands unchanged; the one is for the day, the other for unending days.

3. Thy tongue imagineth wickedness : and with lies thou cuttest like a sharp razor.

4. Thou hast loved unrighteousness more than goodness : and to talk of lies more than righteousness.

5. Thou hast loved to speak all words that may do hurt : O thou false tongue.

In Doeg we see the set deliberate intention to act with treachery and cruelty. He not only gave Saul the information of David's visit to Ahimelech, and omitted in his false witness to say, how that Ahimelech was both ignorant of Saul's anger, and innocent of any act which could give him cause for revenging himself; but he also, when the other 'servants of the king would not' put forth their hand to fall upon the priests of the Lord, himself executed the miserable and unrighteous order of the blinded and furious king. He slew the priests of God first with his tongue, and after with his sword: and this he seems to have done readily and even wantonly, 'carrying tales to shed blood,' and having, doubtless, freed himself from restraint in his false witness and murder, by the thought that he was an Edomite and not of the seed of Israel. Herein is Doeg's crime a type of Judas, the treacherous and murderous apostle, and of all treachery and murder.

6. Therefore shall God destroy thee for

ever : He shall take thee, and pluck thee out of thy dwelling, and root thee out of the land of the living.

Such may for a while be above man's power : they may be able to boast that they can do what they will. But the Almighty God is able to deal with them after their deeds. He will take them, and bid them depart away from the scene of their crimes and sins unto the land of immortal despair and of eternal death. They shall be doomed to that burning dwelling where they shall cry in vain for a drop of water to cool the tongue which in life has imagined wickedness and loved to speak words of hurt.

7. The righteous also shall see this, and fear : and shall laugh him to scorn ;

8. Lo, this is the man that took not God for his strength : but trusted unto the multitude of his riches, and strengthened himself in his wickedness.

The judgments of God upon the false witnesses and the murderers shall fill the faithful, when they are opened before them, with holy fear at the righteousness of their Judge, and with holy scorn at the vain boasting of the wicked. They that have not strength in God are but wickedness and weakness. In the dying, despairing sinner, in the lost soul tortured in hopeless agony, they will scarce distinguish the proud and cruel being who was confident in his riches and in his power, and strong in his determined wickedness.

9. As for me, I am like a green olive-tree in the house of God : my trust is in the tender mercy of God for ever and ever.

Far better and far safer is it for the servant of God to be without much power and without great riches, if only he may dwell in peace within the walls of the Church of Christ, and may bring fruit to perfection, beneath the continual dew of his Saviour's blessing. Better is it, 'being a wild olive-tree, to be grafted in and partake of the root and fatness of the olive-tree' of Israel here, in lowliness of mind and fear, and then in God's time to be transplanted to that higher temple which is filled with the mercy and the glory of our God for ever and ever.

10. I will always give thanks unto Thee for that Thou hast done : and I will hope in Thy Name, for Thy saints like it well.

For all that God does may we ever return Him thanks; for all His works are true. To them that do mischief He returns their own mischief and the fruits of it: to them that trust in His mercy He returns His mercy and the fruits of it. Therefore His redeemed on earth shall hope in His name while they abide here, and His saints in glory shall love it everlastingly and perfectly.

The occasion on which this Psalm was written is shewn by the title, "To the chief musician, a Maschil of David, when Doeg the Edomite came and told Saul, and said unto him, 'David is come to the house of Ahimelech.'" The narrative of Doeg's officious treachery and cruelty is given in 1 Sam. xxii. 9—19. Doeg was an Edomite, and the chief of Saul's herdsmen, (1 Sam. xxi. 7). It was pro-

bably written when David received the information from Abiathar, (20—22), who alone escaped from the slaughter of the priests at Nob. This slaughter of the priests, although they were certainly innocent of the alliance with David against Saul; which was imputed to them as their crime, was yet a fulfilment of that prophecy of punishment which had been pronounced against the house of Eli for the sins of Hophni and Phinehas, (1 Sam. ii. 27—36; iii. 11, 14).

Ebening Prayer.

PSALM liii. *Dixit insipiens.*

1. THE foolish body hath said in his heart :
There is no God.

2. Corrupt are they, and become abominable in their wickedness : there is none that doeth good.

3. God looked down from heaven upon the children of men : to see if there were any, that would understand, and seek after God.

4. But they are all gone out of the way, they are altogether become abominable : there is also none that doeth good, no not one.

5. Are not they without understanding that work wickedness : eating up my people as if they would eat bread? they have not called upon God.

6. They were afraid where no fear was : for God hath broken the bones of him that besieged thee ; thou hast put them to confusion, because God hath despised them.

Evil as men are, vile as they may have become,

they who trust in God need not fear them. On the side of the faithful there need be nothing but trust and hope; on the side of the perverse and the unbelievers, of those who, having been abominable in their evil doings have formed within themselves a habit of complete and perfect wickedness, there must be always fear and terror. The Almighty God is against them! His force, which establishes the universe, will crush them, and their strength, and their efforts, into utter nothingness and destruction. The least of God's saints shall put them to confusion at last, because the God Whom they have despised, and Whose being they have denied, has despised them and left them to themselves.

7. Oh, that the salvation were given unto Israel out of Sion : Oh, that the Lord would deliver His people out of captivity !

8. Then should Jacob rejoice : and Israel should be right glad.

To wait and to pray, this is the means by which salvation is gained; patience here worketh joy by-and-by; prayer will soon attain unto deliverance and be paid with gladness.

This, which is almost identical with Psalm xiv., is entitled, a Psalm of instruction "upon Mahalath." This is a hard word to explain. It has been said to mean "with a chorus." Another and more likely interpretation is "upon sickness," with allusion to the corruption and disease of man's nature which it describes. It has been sometimes supposed that Psalm xiv. was composed by David on the rebellion of Absalom, and again was corrected and slightly altered by him on the revolt of Sheba, the son of Bichri, (2 Sam. xx). The change of the word Lord for that of God in four cases, would indicate that this was

the form which had been adopted for the temple-worship, and which was restored to the public service under the direction of Hezekiah.

PSALM liv. *Deus, in nomine.*

FOR GOOD-FRIDAY.

1. SAVE me, O God, for Thy Name's sake : and avenge me in Thy strength.

2. Hear my prayer, O God : and hearken unto the words of my mouth.

3. For strangers are risen up against me : and tyrants, which have not God before their eyes, seek after my soul.

Not once only or twice have we to know and be sure that God is our help and safety. We have to be taught it again and again ; we have to turn to Him in prayer again and again, that He may save us for His own sake, not for ours, and that He may defend our cause in His own almightiness. The experience of David is but the experience of every faithful soul ; as the trials of David will too, in some degree, be the trials of every faithful soul. And all human experience, and all human trials, are summed up in the passion and the patience of the Crucified. David was resting for a little while 'in a mountain in the wilderness of Ziph. And Saul sought him every day, but God delivered him not into his hand. Then came up the Ziphites to Saul to Gibeah, saying, Doth not David hide himself with us in strongholds in the wood, in the hill of Hachilah, which is on the south of Jeshimon? Now therefore, O

king, come down according to all the desire of thy soul to come down ; and our part shall be to deliver him into the king's hand.' So when the strangers, the Ziphites, were betraying him, and Saul, who was following his own tyrannical and darkened spirit, was seeking his life, prayer became his sole refuge, and the strength and justice of God was all the power he had.

4. Behold, God is my helper : the Lord is with them that uphold my soul.

5. He shall reward evil unto mine enemies : destroy Thou them in Thy truth.

But that was enough, and more than enough. They who seek God will find that He is with them. He is a most sure and faithful upholder of the soul which is committed to His mercy. 'Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit,' was the cry of the Son of God Himself. And this too David found, when 'Saul went on this side of the mountain, and David and his men on that side of the mountain, and David made haste to get away for fear of Saul; for Saul and his men compassed David and his men round about to take them. But there came a messenger unto Saul, saying, Haste thee, and come, for the Philistines have invaded the land; wherefore Saul returned from pursuing after David, and went against the Philistines.' The tyrant who was hunting after David's soul, had to haste and return lest his own throne and family should be destroyed; it was shewn to him that the righteous

providence of God was not asleep, though his eyes had been blinded so as not to see it.

6. An offering of a free heart will I give Thee, and praise Thy Name, O Lord : because it is so comfortable.

7. For He hath delivered me out of all my trouble : and mine eye hath seen his desire upon mine enemies.

And in many a deliverance from trouble, not unlike this, can the believer rejoice, as David rejoiced, giving his heart as a free-will offering to Him Who hath freely given to him both life and grace, and praising Him Who is not only the God of all consolation, but Whose Name is The Comforter. He has delivered them who trust in Him, and He will deliver ; He has executed justice upon the unjust, and He will do it yet again.

The title of the Psalm shews when it was composed. It is "to the chief musician on Neginoth, or the harps and instruments with strings, an instruction of David, when the Ziphim came and said to Saul, 'Doth not David hide himself with us?'" The inhabitants of Ziph twice betrayed David when he took refuge in the strongholds and the wilderness which was part of their territory, (1 Sam. xxiii. 19, and xxvi. 1). But it seems clear that the first occasion of their so doing was the one which called forth this Psalm ; for David's deliverance from his great danger, for which the last two verses express his gratitude, was due solely to the merciful providence of God in stopping Saul, his enemy, in his pursuit of him by an invasion of the Philistines, (xxiii. 27, 28). While on the second occasion Saul and David were reconciled, and parted with words of friendship which were for the time sincere, (1 Sam. xxvi). The wilderness of Ziph is on the south-east of Judæa, near the Dead Sea, and to the north of the wilderness of Maon. The danger and deliverance of David,

and his trust in God, are types of the passion and deliverance and trust of the Son of David; and therefore this Psalm is fitly chose for Good-Friday.

PSALM lv. *Exaudi, Deus.*

1. HEAR my prayer, O God : and hide not Thyself from my petition.

2. Take heed unto me, and hear me : how I mourn in my prayer, and am vexed.

3. The enemy crieth so, and the ungodly cometh on so fast : for they are minded to do me some mischief; so maliciously are they set against me.

At one time the believer can pray in full assurance of faith; at another time he craves of his Father in heaven to hear him in his deep distress and perplexity. Like the apostle, he 'beseeches the Lord thrice' in the anguish of his heart; he comes before his God mourning and yet praying. The world seems to him only a scene of unending trials, life but a long temptation. The enemy of souls roars against him; the powers of evil seem joining their cunning and their might to cast him down. They are strong in malice, while he is but weak in faith

4. My heart is disquieted within me : and the fear of death is fallen upon me.

5. Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me : and an horrible dread hath overwhelmed me.

The most miserable of perils is the being 'in perils among false brethren.' In disquiet and terror, as the love of a friend is a great and wonderful comfort, so is the treachery of a friend a most bitter and dreadful blow. Among all the fearful thoughts and horrible visions that came upon the Saviour in His sore amazement and agony in the garden, the knowledge of the treachery of Judas was one of the most dark and deadly, adding horror to the fear of death itself.

6. And I said, O that I had wings like a dove : for then would I flee away, and be at rest.

7. Lo, then would I get me away far off : and remain in the wilderness.

8. I would make haste to escape : because of the stormy wind and tempest.

LXX. I was waiting for God Who maketh me safe
From my weakness of mind, and from the tempest.

In this misery and doubt, when life is all dark with the shadow of death, and the best founded hopes of earth prove frail and treacherous, there will come a deep longing to flee away from here and to be at rest, to be borne aloft to the abode of peace and calm by the gentle power of the eternal and all-loving Spirit, as a dove that spreads her wings and flies swiftly from danger to her own safe nest. To get away from this scene of strife and sin, and to be far off from it, to be alone with Christ even though in the desert, to escape from the

noise and confusion, the evil stir of the world, the storms of temptation and the tempests of human passion, like the dove that maketh her nest in the clefts of the rock,—this is a wish we are tempted to indulge in our haste and fear. But if He Who is our Lord wills us to stay, if He has work for us to do, then must we await His time and His will, and trust in Him to deliver us from our own poor weakness and impatience, and from the danger that seems near.

9. Destroy their tongues, O Lord, and divide them : for I have spied unrighteousness and strife in the city.

10. Day and night they go about within the walls thereof : mischief also and sorrow are in the midst of it.

11. Wickedness is therein : deceit and guile go not out of their streets.

And so what must have been the depth of David's sorrow, when he knew of a certainty that Absalom his beloved son, and Ahithophel his trusted counsellor, had conspired not only to dethrone him, but to disgrace him and to kill him ! He could only turn to that God, Who of old had scattered the sinners who built upon the plain of Shinar, and Who had ' confounded their language that they might not understand one another's speech.' ' And one told David, saying, Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom. And David said, O Lord, I pray Thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness.'

This he might ask, not for his own sake only, but for his people's. Jerusalem, which had been once the peaceful seat of his government, was now changed to a place of wickedness and treachery, of rebellion and of crime. The watchmen on her battlements were violence and strife; mischief and sorrow had made it their abode; deceit and fraud paced through her streets, like constant dwellers; the Sion of God had become a Babel of confusion and sin.

12. For it is not an open enemy, that hath done me this dishonour : for then I could have borne it.

13. Neither was it mine adversary, that did magnify himself against me : for then peradventure I would have hid myself from him.

14. But it was even thou, my companion : my guide, and mine own familiar friend.

15. We took sweet counsel together : and walked in the house of God as friends.

It was not the Philistines or the Ammonites who had brought this shame and suffering upon him; that would have been bearable; for it was what he might expect from them. Nor was it Saul, his former persecutor, and the followers of his house, who had recovered their ancient power and had again attacked him; for in that case he would have hoped to baffle their violence as he had done before. Shimei of the house of Saul might indeed cast stones

and curse, but it was Absalom, the son for whom he had 'mourned every day,' whom he had received with a kiss of pardon, and whom he most deeply loved, and Ahithophel, whom he had honoured as a counsellor and guide, that had wrought that bitter disgrace and sudden ruin against him. And so in the betrayal and suffering of the Son of Man, it was not one of the Pharisees who hated Him, nor Pilate who despised Him, who was guide to them that took Jesus. It was an apostle of His own, it was one whom He had chosen, who 'knew the place' whither He resorted to pray, who had heard often His words of grace and truth, that 'betrayed the innocent blood' of the Lord of Life.

16. Let death come hastily upon them, and let them go down quick into hell : for wickedness is in their dwellings, and among them.

Such as betray their Lord and King, as Ahithophel betrayed David, and Judas betrayed Christ, become utterly evil. Their feet leave traces as it were of wickedness, wherever they set them down. They are past ordinary chastisements ; they are beyond being visited with the visitation of all men ; death has a speedy claim upon them ; they are fit only for that sudden judgment of hasty and awful vengeance, which came upon the rebel Korah and his company in the desert, when 'the ground clave asunder that was under them, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up. They, and all that appertained unto them, went down alive into

the pit, and the earth closed upon them ; and they perished from among the congregation.'

17. As for me, I will call upon God : and the Lord shall save me.

18. In the evening, and morning, and at noon-day will I pray, and that instantly : and He shall hear my voice.

19. It is He that hath delivered my soul in peace from the battle that was against me : for there were many with me.

They who suffer like David must pray like David. Yea, rather, they who suffer in Christ and with Christ must pray in and with Him, and they shall be saved in Him and with Him, Who for us men and for our salvation died in the evening on the cross, and rose again in the morning of the third day, and ascended into heaven in the noon-day from the Mount of Olives. Three times in each day should each one who confesses Him 'pray and that instantly' unto that eternal Trinity, unto Whom the Son of God has brought us nigh by His passion, and resurrection, and ascension. That Sun of righteousness, Whose glory for a little while was darkened, but sprung forth again, and at last shone intense and mighty as the noon-day beams, will give the light of salvation to them that call to Him. He, like a mighty warrior who has conquered his own foes, will deliver the soul that seeks Him from the battles of this world of trials into His own abiding peace.

His grace, if it be with the believer, is like many and strong defenders on his side; it is sufficient and more than sufficient for him.

20. Yea, even God, that endureth for ever, shall hear me, and bring them down : for they will not turn, nor fear God.

The same righteous and eternal God Who dispersed the builders of Babel and executed vengeance upon Korah, governs the world now : He hears the cry of them who call upon Him, and repays the unrepenting and the hardened.

21. He laid his hands upon such as be at peace with him : and he brake his covenant.

22. The words of his mouth were softer than butter, having war in his heart : his words were smoother than oil, and yet be they very swords.

The treacherous dealer may for a moment gain his ends. He may injure them who have not injured him ; he may break the promise he has made both to God and to man ; he may disguise his malice with an appearance of friendship, like him who betrayed his Lord with a kiss ; he may use flattery as a weapon for temptation and for ruining souls ; but he cannot do so for long.

23. O cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall nourish thee : and shall not suffer the righteous to fall for ever.

The burden of fear and dread lies sore and weighty upon them who have suffered from the treachery of those whom they have trusted in, but let them cast it upon their righteous God, and He will make it light. He Who gives us each day our daily bread, will comfort each daily with our daily comfort, and sustain us each day with our daily grace.

24. And as for them : Thou, O God, shalt bring them into the pit of destruction.

25. The blood-thirsty and deceitful men shall not live out half their days : nevertheless, my trust shall be in Thee, O Lord.

He will not suffer them to fall who trust in Him ; but He Himself brings to the pit of destruction them who wilfully and without repentance despise His law. The blood-thirsty and deceitful have their days made short. Absalom perished by the hand of Joab in the wood of Ephraim. ‘When Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed, he arose, and gat him home to his house, and hanged himself, and died.’ Judas ‘falling headlong, burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out.’ All things, both providence and grace, teach us that hardened sin must perish, and that our safety lies in trusting in the will and in the love of God.

This Psalm was appointed for the temple-service. Its title is “to the chief Musician, on Neginoth or the harps, a Maschil of David.” It was doubtless called forth by the cutting treachery and cruelty of Absalom and Ahithophel, (2 Sam. xv.) In the treachery used to David the Christian sees a type of the treachery used to the Saviour.

Morning Prayer.

PSALM lvi. *Miserere mei, Deus.*

1. BE merciful unto me, O God, for man goeth about to devour me : he is daily fighting, and troubling me.

2. Mine enemies are daily in hand to swallow me up : for they be many that fight against me, O Thou most Highest.

As David in the midst of the Philistines in Gath, when they watched him and endeavoured to accuse him before Achish their king, felt utterly desolate and alone, persecuted and driven from his own country by Saul and his fellow-countrymen, and allowed no rest or safety by the strangers to whom he had fled; so was the Lord of Glory silent when both the people of Israel and the heathen were gathered together against Him, as many birds of prey around a timid dove. He appealed to God for mercy, for there was no mercy in man.

3. Nevertheless, though I am sometime afraid : yet put I my trust in Thee.

LXX. The many who war against me shall be made afraid :
But I will hope in Thee.

4. I will praise God, because of His word : I have put my trust in God, and will not fear what flesh can do unto me.

When fear comes to the believing soul then comes

trust: we must fear danger before we can have trust in a deliverer. When we have known and trusted in our Deliverer, then can we confess His love and mercy, then can we declare the firm truth of His promises; and having full confidence in His Almighty love we need no longer be concerned as to what any arm of flesh can do against us. Nay, if we have firm faith in His grace and truth, we need not fear even what we do against ourselves.

5. They daily mistake my words : all that they imagine is to do me evil.

6. They hold all together, and keep themselves close : and mark my steps, when they lay wait for my soul.

7. Shall they escape for their wickedness : Thou, O God, in Thy displeasure shalt cast them down.

Heb. In wickedness they hope for escape.

In anger cast Thou down the peoples.

The servant shall not be above his master. As the Philistines watched David, so did His enemies, both seen and unseen, watch the Son of God. They strove to entangle Him in His talk; they took counsel against Him to put Him to death; they came out against Him as against a thief. They took Him indeed, but they escaped not themselves: by their craft and cruelty in taking Him they cut off their own escape from the wrath of God, and cast themselves down to where they could not arise. If the Lord thus suffered, the disciple must be patient in

suffering too; there are misrepresentations and false accusings for each citizen of the heavenly country while he is sojourning in the strange land of this world; and under them he must be silent, as the Lamb of God was silent.

8. Thou tellest my fittings; put my tears into Thy bottle : are not these things noted in Thy book ?

LXX. I have related my life to Thee.
Lay up my tears before Thee,
As also in Thy promise.

Our temptations and our escapes, our wanderings and our flights, when like a frightened dove we would flee away and be at rest, He Who made us knows and recollects. He gathers up our tears of repentance and of sorrow as precious and dear unto Himself. The tears of penitents are the wine of the angels. They are quickly dried on earth, but He preserves them in heaven, to be for us as a wine of consolation in that day when all tears shall be wiped from off all faces. Our patience and our prayers, our trials and our good works, are alike recorded in the Book of Life in which the names of the elect are written.

9. Whensoever I call upon Thee, then shall mine enemies be put to flight : this I know ; for God is on my side.

10. In God's word will I rejoice : in the Lord's word will I comfort me.

11. Yea, in God have I put my trust : I will not be afraid what man can do unto me.

By prayer do we put to flight our enemies who are also the enemies of God. That God is love, we know ; that He loves us, we know ; and by appealing to His love do we become conquerors. I know that God is mine,—this is a weapon which will put to flight the Evil One. The word of promise becomes a word of assurance. In that which God has spoken there lie treasures of joy and untold consolation ; the soul becomes not only confident but bold and fearless, as it draws nearer and nearer to Him Who is love. What can evil men or evil angels do to them on whose side is God ?

12. Unto Thee, O God, will I pay my vows : unto Thee will I give thanks.

13. For Thou hast delivered my soul from death, and my feet from falling : that I may walk before God in the light of the living.

Therefore, though sorrowful and silent, and alone among strangers and foes, yet the believing soul can already be always rejoicing before God, paying the vows it vowed in its trouble as being already delivered, thanking Him as having received all that it was craving for in the earnest of His love. A way is opened for its deliverance on earth ; before the face of its Father it is delivered already. His grace, Who is the Light of the world, saves the soul from the death of sin, and comforts the fainting spirit : His

grace strengthens them who stand, and leads our hopes and longings to Himself, Who alone can fill them: His grace sets us in the right way, that we may ever be advancing onward until we enter that high city which has 'no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.'

"To the chief Musician upon Jonath-elem-rechokim, Michtam of David, when the Philistines took him in Gath," (1 Sam. xxi. 14). The first part of this title presents great difficulties to the translator. The LXX render it "concerning the people who are far from the sanctuary, or from the saints." "The oppression of the banished people," and "the dove in the remote woods," are other renderings. The true translation seems to be "the dove silent among strangers." This may be either a figurative description of David himself, silent among the Philistines, and so typical of the Saviour; or it may be an indication of the tone or chant to which the Psalm was to be sung, which would be perhaps that of the preceding Psalm; with this title the reader may compare Ps. lv. 6, 7, and Ps. lxxiv. 19.

FOR EASTER-DAY.

PSALM lvii. *Miserere mei, Deus.*

1. BE merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me, for my soul trusteth in Thee : and under the shadow of Thy wings shall be my refuge, until this tyranny be over-past.

'Lord, have mercy upon us; Christ, have mercy upon us,'—these are the words which we must take into our mouths first and before all. Not once only, but twice must we cry for mercy; for not once only, but many times have we needed and shall yet need it. The rage and fierceness of our enemies

against us increases as our own strength grows faint beneath the fiery heat of temptation; but there is One Who would ever gather us together, as a hen gathereth her chicken under her wings, and to Him and the shelter of His mercy must we flee, until the burning hour of trial be overpast.

2. I will call unto the most high God : even unto the God that shall perform the cause which I have in hand.

3. He shall send from heaven : and save me from the reproof of him that would eat me up.

The whole creation from the beginning had groaned and craved for help; and man too cried for mercy and salvation unto Him Who dwelleth in the heavens. His prayer was not in vain: his Father in heaven heard and answered it. 'The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.' Thus did He deliver man from sin and from him who had the power of tempting him to sin, the prince of evil.

4. God shall send forth His mercy and truth : my soul is among lions.

5. And I lie even among the children of men, that are set on fire : whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword.

When man cried for mercy and longed for truth, He Who knew his need and poverty came unto him from the Father. The Merciful and the True was made like unto them to whom He came. He came

into the dangers among which they dwelt; his soul was exposed to the rage of that lion which devoured them; He was tempted and suffered for them: but as if this was not enough, He was tempted and suffered by them. It was man, inflamed by envy like a firebrand, that reviled Him Who came to teach him truth; it was man, inflamed by cruelty like a firebrand, that slew Him Who came to shew him mercy.

6. Set up Thyself, O God, above the heavens: and Thy glory above all the earth.

7. They have laid a net for my feet, and pressed down my soul: they have digged a pit before me, and are fallen into the midst of it themselves.

But what wonders of the power of the Son of God equal the wonders of His humility! Through pain, He conquered pain; through shame, He conquered shame; through death, He conquered death. He was buried, but He rose again: from the depth of the grave He ascended to the height of heaven; and His glory, Who had suffered on the cross, was made to fill the earth, and rose from earth to heaven, and above all heavens. Thus they who laid a snare to take Him ensnared themselves; and the grave, to which they doomed Him, became their own lot and doom.

8. My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing, and give praise.

9. Awake up, my glory ; awake, lute and harp : I myself will awake right early.

But in Christ, and with Christ, each believing heart is ready and fixed either to do or to suffer that which God shall will, and in both to praise Him. His heart was fixed to obey, to be humbled, to suffer, to bear agony, to die. He was ready to come down to earth and to ascend to heaven, to lie in the grave and to rise from the dead, to hang upon the cross and to sit on the right hand of God, to be the Shepherd of the sheep and the Lord of all. His whole life on earth was an all-perfect harmony. His resurrection, when His glory shone above the shadows of the cave of the tomb, and He came forth 'very early in the morning,' should therefore wake us up to praise and magnify Him with all the powers of our body and all the affections of our soul, with will, and word, and deed. His rising, Who is our glory, should wake us up to rise to newness of life with Him.

10. I will give thanks unto Thee, O Lord, among the people : and I will sing unto Thee among the nations.

11. For the greatness of Thy mercy reacheth unto the heavens : and Thy truth unto the clouds.

Not only the seed of Abraham, but all the nations of the earth were to be gathered together in the risen and ascended Lord. They were to praise God in Him and He in them. They were to teach others

that song of thanksgiving which He had taught them to learn. In Him Who died and rose had the fulness of God's mercy been set forth, reaching from heaven down to earth, and again reaching from earth up to heaven; and His truth had been made manifest to all under the face of heaven. God had sent forth His mercy and truth in the person of Him Who was the Merciful and the True, and they had not returned void to Him again, but had done that for which He had sent them forth, even the redemption of the world.

12. Set up Thyself, O God, above the heavens : and Thy glory above all the earth.

Therefore in heaven is the Son of Man exalted above angels, and archangels, and every name that is named, as King of kings and Lord of lords; and in all the earth is His glory known, the glory of love, the glory of mercy, the glory of salvation and of a Saviour.

“To the chief Musician, Al-taschith, Michtam of David, when he fled from Saul in the cave,” is the title of this Psalm. Al-taschith, which means “Destroy not,” was at this time probably a sort of watchword of David, a saying which he had often in his mouth and in his mind to restrain him from acts of revenge and retaliation. The Chaldee paraphrase is “concerning great troubles, when David said Destroy not.” It was most probably taken from the prayer of Moses to God, “O Lord, destroy not Thy people and Thine inheritance, which Thou hast redeemed,” (Deut. ix. 26). In the case of Saul sleeping in the cave when David cut off the skirt of his mantle, (1 Sam. xxiv.), and when David and Abishai entered by night into Saul's camp, David shewed that he had no wish to destroy Saul, and in the latter instance he used the words ‘Destroy him not: for who can stretch forth his hand against the Lord's anointed, and be guilt-

less?" (1 Sam. xxvi. 9). The cave in which David took refuge was the cave of Adullam, (1 Sam. xxii. 1,) to which he escaped immediately after he had left Gath. The several meanings which have been assigned to the word Michtam have been given in the note to Psalm xvi.: the most general are "a golden psalm," "a secret," and "an inscription." It is very possible that this latter meaning is the true one, and that David and his men, while hiding in deserts and caves, inscribed upon the rocks and cliffs of the places in which they took refuge, histories of their sufferings and wanderings, and also hymns and psalms which their master there composed. This was the custom of early Eastern people, and inscriptions are still continually being discovered written on the rocks. Job says, in allusion to this, "Oh that my words were now graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever!" (Job xix. 23, 24). The numerous and doubtless most important inscriptions which still remain in the Wady Mokatteb, in Arabia, and are traditionally ascribed to the children of Israel during their wanderings in the wilderness, appear to have been stanzas of Hebrew poetry referring to what they had gone through, and might have been called Michtam. These Psalms, thus engraved with iron upon the rock by David, might afterwards possibly have been set up in Jerusalem or in the temple in golden letters, when he ceased to be a wanderer and became a king.

PSALM lviii. *Si vere utique.*

1. ARE your minds set upon righteousness, O ye congregation : and do ye judge the thing that is right, O ye sons of men ?

2. Yea, ye imagine mischief in your heart upon the earth : and your hands deal with wickedness.

In men, apart from grace, and forgetting God, we can find no good thing. It is in vain to seek for righteousness among them, or to appeal to them for right judgment. It was the high-priest and the council of the Jews, the chosen and leading men, that sat in judgment upon the Lord; the same

council sat in judgment upon His martyr St. Stephen, and again upon His apostle St. Paul. Yet the minds of these, the council of the nation, were set, not upon righteousness and truth, but upon blood-guiltiness and cruelty. They sought for false witness against Jesus to put Him to death. If it were so with the chosen people when they acted in spite of grace, still more with the heathen nations of the earth who became persecutors without it. They only thought of malice and mischief; they only dealt with wickedness. Yet they were but the sons of men, and there was One higher than they.

3. The ungodly are froward, even from their mother's womb : as soon as they are born, they go astray, and speak lies.

4. They are as venomous as the poison of a serpent : even like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ears ;

5. Which refuseth to hear the voice of the charmer : charm he never so wisely.

But such come not at once to such a pitch of wickedness. They have given themselves up from their very birth to the corruption that is in them. They follow the evil part of their nature and indulge it, and check and deny all impulses to good. They love lies, and not truth, from their earliest years; and by their love for falsehood and indulgence in malice they mark themselves out early to be the children of the evil one, and of the old dragon's brood. It was the Pharisees and rulers whom the lips of

Truth itself had pronounced to be 'serpents and a generation of vipers' who refused to listen to the patient reasonings and holy rebukes of the martyr Stephen; but when he spoke before them of their resisting the Holy Ghost they 'cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, and cast him out of the city, and stoned him.'

6. Break their teeth, O God, in their mouths; smite the jaw-bones of the lions, O Lord: let them fall away like water that runneth apace; and when they shoot their arrows let them be rooted out.

They are confident in their power, and they seem to themselves able to make wrong right. Like ravenous lions, they are ready to swallow up them who resist them. They must be left to God. He will deal with such. He breaks their insolence and confounds their pride. Before Him and His righteousness their power and malice sink away fast like water poured upon the desert sands. They cannot stand for a moment in contest with Him. They shoot their arrows against Him, they make their feeble attempt to resist Him, and they perish in making it.

7. Let them consume away like a snail, and be like the untimely fruit of a woman: and let them not see the sun.

8. Or ever your pots be made hot with

thorns : so let indignation vex him, even as a thing that is raw.

Heb. Before your pots feel the thorns with their raw or sodden flesh,

He shall carry him off as by a storm.

In His almighty and most righteous providence, to which they had vainly opposed themselves, the wicked, once so fierce and strong, become like all vile and contemptible things, like a snail which wastes away and dies as it crawls in the heat of day, or like an untimely birth which lives not to see the sun. All their schemes and contrivings shall be like the plan of a wayfarer in the wilderness who is preparing to make ready his repast with the lighted thorns which he has collected, when, before the vessel in which he has placed it can feel the heat from their flames, the storm of the desert falls upon him and destroys at once his labour and his life. Thus does the indignation of God confound the schemings of the sinners who oppose Him.

9. The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance : he shall wash his footsteps in the blood of the ungodly.

10. So that a man shall say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous : doubtless there is a God that judgeth the earth.

The righteous cannot but rejoice when he sees the justice of God thus magnified. He may grieve over the wrong-doers, but he cannot but be glad that

right is done. The malicious shall at last be brought down before the patient. They who have suffered innocently shall at last be avenged on the murderers and false-witnesses. Saul, who had long persecuted David, was at length slain on the mountains of Gilboa, and lay dead before him whom he had unjustly treated. Ahab and Jezebel by the most cruel and wicked means condemned the innocent Naboth to death; but at length the vengeance of the outraged righteousness of God made itself clear, and in the place where the dogs licked the blood of Naboth, murdered in his innocence, did the dogs lick the blood of Ahab who guiltily murdered him. These things are lessons to the ungodly. They cannot help but notice them; and when they notice them they cannot help but confess that the right-doing are not and cannot be as the wicked, that there is most certainly and assuredly a righteous and almighty Judge Who governeth the earth.

This Michtam of David bears also the motto of "Destroy not." It was written most probably during his persecution by Saul, perhaps after he had spared his life the second time, and yet was compelled to retire again to Gath, (1 Sam. xxvii. 1). This Psalm was written, as St. Athanasius says, for the confusion of hypocrites and proud dealers.

Ebening Prayer.

PSALM lix. *Eripe me de inimicis.*

1. DELIVER me from mine enemies, O God : defend me from them that rise up against me.

2. O deliver me from the wicked doers : and save me from the blood-thirsty men.

God is the true deliverer, God is the true defender, God is the only Saviour. They who hate the right-doing, and in their wickedness and cruelty attack them, may well fear the just judgment of Him Who is perfect justice. And they who suffer from unjust oppression may most safely commit themselves, and their defence to Him.

3. For lo, they lie waiting for my soul : the mighty men are gathered against me, without any offence or fault of me, O Lord.

4. They run and prepare themselves without my fault : arise 'Thou therefore to help me, and behold.

LXX. I have run and have been upright without iniquity.

Against those who are crafty in their wickedness and strong in their cruelty, the only strength which the righteous can have is innocence. He that has a conscience void of offence can turn to God as a deliverer from the rage of man. Saul's messengers watched round David's house, and he had no help but in God. God is the Judge Who seeth all. Men may make haste to contrive plots and to execute violence against those who have done them no wrong, but the eternal God beholds their doings.

5. Stand up, O Lord God of hosts, Thou

God of Israel, to visit all the heathen : and be not merciful unto them that offend of malicious wickedness.

6. They go to and fro in the evening : they grin like a dog, and run about through the city.

They who have despised God as a most merciful Father, shall find Him a most righteous Judge, Who will in His justice visit all the peoples of the world. He will not be merciful to those that go on wilfully in their offences and are malicious in their wickedness. It may be that they who have gone on long in hardened sin, may at last, when the evening of life and the shadows and terrors of death come upon them, wish to return and repent. They will seek to enter within the gates of the eternal city. It will be then too late ; the night will be upon them, when none can work ; they will go to and fro and cry for grace in vain ; they shall seek for Him Whom they have despised, and shall not find Him. ‘There shall in no wise enter into that city anything that defileth.’ Like dogs shut out from the holy place and famishing with hunger, so shall they wander aimless and hopeless in that outer darkness, where is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

7. Behold, they speak with their mouth, and swords are in their lips : for who doth hear ?

8. But Thou, O Lord, shalt have them in

derision : and Thou shalt laugh all the heathen to scorn.

For awhile they seem to themselves safe. They begin their persecutions with hard speeches, and falsehoods, and blasphemies, which cut the soul of the innocent like a sword; and they feel sure that no one who can chastise them hears or takes note of their evil sayings. But yet for all their wicked confidence God hears and marks them. He sees already their cruelty turned upon themselves, their falsehoods destroying themselves, their mockery of others covering themselves with scorn.

9. My strength will I ascribe unto Thee : for Thou art the God of my refuge.

Weak in himself, the believer is yet strong in God. Trial shews him both his weakness, which is his own, and his strength, which is his Lord's; and so is he taught to give glory to Him with Whom he takes refuge until the tyranny of the ungodly is overpast.

10. God sheweth me His goodness plentifully : and God shall let me see my desire upon my enemies.

11. Slay them not, lest my people forget it : but scatter them abroad among the people, and put them down, O Lord, our defence.

12. For the sin of their mouth, and for the

words of their lips, they shall be taken in their pride : and why? their preaching is of cursing and lies.

13. Consume them in Thy wrath, consume them, that they may perish : and know that it is God that ruleth in Jacob, and unto the ends of the world.

The goodness of the Eternal is equally shewn in His defending the innocent and in punishing the guilty. To them that love Him He gives the fulness of mercy and of grace ; while He makes them that hate Him, who are the enemies of both God and man, a fearful and lasting example of His justice and of His wrath against sin. His justice is slow, but it is very certain. The Jews who rejected the Christ, and asked for a murderer, were not slain at once by the twelve legions of angels, whom the Son of God might have called from heaven to revenge Him on His enemies ; but like him who slew his brother, they became 'fugitives and vagabonds,' and for their sins were 'scattered among all people from the one end of the earth even to the other,' to find no ease and no rest, to have 'a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind.' They deliberately rejected life, they deliberately asked that the blood of the Holy One might be on themselves and their children, and their impious prayer was heard ; and they became 'an astonishment, a proverb, and a byword, among all the nations whither the Lord led them.' Thus 'the kingdom of God

was taken from them, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.'

14. And in the evening they will return : grin like a dog, and will go about the city.

15. They will run here and there for meat : and grudge if they be not satisfied.

Their lot is the lot of all who disbelieve—darkness and gloom, anguish of heart and wandering of spirit, wants and longings which they cannot supply to themselves, and hunger for the food of life, which none but He Whom they have cast off from themselves can satisfy. They have broken loose from a loving Lord, and they are left to prowl in the darkness they have chosen. The hunger of the dog shall be their plague, as the ravenousness had before been their sin.

16. As for me, I will sing of Thy power, and will praise Thy mercy betimes in the morning : for Thou hast been my defence and refuge in the day of my trouble.

17. Unto Thee, O my strength, will I sing : for Thou, O God, art my refuge, and my merciful God.

Sorrow in the evening darkness is the doom of the evil and the faithless. Praise in the morning light is the portion of the servant of God. The grave is for the one, the resurrection for the other, by His eternal decree Who succours and defends His own elect through the long and wearying day of

this mortal life. They who have made their God their strength and their confidence here, shall sing praises of everlasting melody before His eternal throne for the mercy which He has granted to them, and the refuge they have found.

This is a Michtam of David, with the motto, "Destroy not." The title ascribes it to the time "when Saul sent, and they watched the house to kill him," (1 Sam. xix. 11). From this danger he escaped by the aid of Michal his wife, and fled to Samuel at Ramah. Verses 6 and 14, 15, have seemed to some interpreters to contain a reference to the messengers of Saul who watched round David's house, like dogs hungering for food; but the Psalm is rather to be referred to the wicked and unbelieving generally, (compare Phil. iii. 2, Rev. xxii. 15.) Verse 11 has been considered by the Fathers to apply to the Jews, who were dispersed among all nations for their rejection of Christ their king.

PSALM LX. *Deus, repulisti nos.*

1. O GOD, Thou hast cast us out, and scattered us abroad : Thou hast also been displeased ; O turn Thee unto us again.

2. Thou hast moved the land, and divided it : heal the sores thereof, for it shaketh.

3. Thou hast shewed Thy people heavy things : Thou hast given us a drink of deadly wine.

The course of God's dealings varies from time to time with His Church and people. Sometimes He tries them; He leaves them to themselves; and then they become scattered and broken, and they see that their power and union was not in themselves, but in Him. Sometimes He is displeased

with their presumption or their carelessness, and withdraws from them awhile; and then at once dismay and trembling come upon them. He shakes the hopes and trust of earth, as a land is shaken by an earthquake. They whom He rebukes are overwhelmed and stunned, as they who have been visited with heavy misfortunes; they are helpless and perplexed, like men intoxicated with wine. Thus He moves them to repentance, and then turns to them and heals their sins; for they were unworthy to be healed if they had not been moved.

4. Thou hast given a token for such as fear Thee : that they may triumph because of the truth.

Heb. Thou hast given to them who fear Thee a banner
To lift up because of the truth.

LXX. Thou hast given to them who fear Thee a sign
To flee from the face of the bow.

5. Therefore were Thy beloved delivered : help me with Thy right hand, and hear me.

To those that have acknowledged His chastisements and have repented themselves of their faults, and returned to His fear, He gives a most certain sign of help; He spreads a banner over them to which they may rally, and under which they may march to triumph, even the banner of His love. He loves them, therefore are they delivered. They are His chosen, therefore does He help them with His right hand, and hear them when they pray.

For His election of His people, instead of making it impossible for them to sin, makes only their presumption or their disobedience stand out the plainer, and makes too His mercy and patience to shine the clearer.

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

7. Gilead is mine, and Manasses is mine : Ephraim also is the strength of my head ; Judah is my lawgiver ;

God speaks in Christ. The holy One when He came spake not His own words but those of the Father Who sent Him. In Him Whose teaching is truth, and Whose words are love, can His Church rejoicingly undertake the work which she is pledged underneath His banner to fulfil. As David of old formed his territories, on one side of the Jordan and on the other, into different divisions, such as Sichem and Succoth, so does the Church mark out and divide into their allotted stations the people given to her care. As the Israelite could rejoice in those provinces and tribes on the east and on the west, which made up his nation, such as Gilead and Manasseh ; and mentioned with honour those which took the lead in government and in war, Ephraim as the body-guard, but Judah as the sovereign—‘ For Judah prevailed above his brethren, and of him came the chief ruler ; but the birthright was Joseph’s ;’—so does the Church number the nations

and the kingdoms that make up the whole body of the faithful, and glories not in them but in Him Who is her Lawgiver and Chief Ruler, Who has given her to inherit them; and so does she see that it is only when the east and the west, when Gilead and Ephraim, are joined together in perfect unity, under the 'Lion of the tribe of Judah,' that she can hope to go forth in perfect might conquering and to conquer.

8. Moab is my wash-pot; over Edom will I cast out my shoe: Philistia, be thou glad of me.

Heb. Over Philistia give a shout of triumph for me.

LXX. Moab is the chaldron of my hope.

Over Idumea will I stretch out my shoe.

Foreign peoples have been subjected to me.

And there are other nations as yet lying in darkness and ignorance, and not made subject to the true David, the Son of Man; and these the Church has to bring as servants and as captives to the obedience of His word. Like the servants in the land of Judah used to wait upon their lords, one carrying the water to pour upon his hands, and another unloosing his shoes from his feet and bearing them after him, so must the heathen who know not God be brought to the cleansing water of baptism, and to the service and obedient following of that Lord of all, 'Whose service is perfect freedom.'

9. Who will lead me into the strong city: who will bring me into Edom?

10. Hast not Thou cast us out, O God : wilt not Thou, O God, go out with our hosts ?

But who can do this ? who can thus convert the stubborn and hardened nations of the earth, who are strong in their long idolatries and iniquities, who are difficult to approach, and fortified like Petra in the mighty rock of self-will and unbelief ? The efforts of the Church and the means of the Church are of no avail, unless the Almighty Spirit be with them and on them. If Christ be with her, according to His promise, then she is no longer weak, but ‘mighty to the casting down of strongholds.’

11. O be Thou our help in trouble : for vain is the help of man.

12. Through God will we do great acts : for it is He that shall tread down our enemies.

Man’s help is valueless, unless God’s help be with him first. If He be with His people, then whatever labours may lie before them, whatever battles be to be fought, whatever conquests to be made, they ‘can do all things through Christ Which strengtheneth them.’ If their King be indeed at their head, then can they extend His kingdom. In Him ‘Israel shall do valiantly ;’ they have confidence, not in themselves, but in Him Whose they are, for He will subdue those that resist them before them, while they shall seem to have achieved the victory.

This Psalm is "a Michtam of David to teach," that is, perhaps, to be taught to soldiers going to battle as a war song, "upon the lily of the testimony," which may be "something lovely taken from the Law of Moses," or may be the name of a particular tune or chant, or may be a six-stringed instrument used in the tabernacle service; for each of these are conjectures of commentators. The LXX translate it as the xlvth. Psalm, "for them who shall be changed." The remainder of the title is, "when he had conquered the Syrians of Mesopotamia and the Syrians of Zobah, and Joab had returned and had slain twelve thousand men of Edom in the valley of salt." For these battles of David, see 2 Sam. viii. and 1 Chron. xviii. From comparing these two records it would seem that Joab and Abishai were generals under David in this war, in which he subdued Hadadezer, the king of the Syrians, and made them tributary; "and David gat him a name when he returned from smiting the Syrians and Edomites (1 Chron. xviii. 12) in the valley of salt, being eighteen thousand men. And he put garrisons in Edom; throughout all Edom put he garrisons, and all those of Edom became David's servants; and the Lord preserved David whithersoever he went." (2 Sam. viii. 13, 14.) The valley of salt is at the southern part of the Dead Sea, under a remarkable mountain of mineral salt, in some places as high as 150 feet. The latter part of this Psalm is the same with the latter part of Psalm cviii.; but the opening of that Psalm is triumphant and joyous, while this commences with penitence and humility. It may therefore be reasonably supposed that this Psalm formed the battle-song of David's soldiers when they were marching on their expedition, and before they had engaged in battle; while Psalm cviii. was their song of thanksgiving when they returned successful from their campaign.

PSALM lxi. *Exaudi Deus.*

1. HEAR my crying, O God : give ear unto my prayer.

2. From the ends of the earth will I call upon Thee : when my heart is in heaviness.

Again and again do we need to know that prayer is our only sure resource in trouble. All the dullness of our own nature, all the craft of the evil one,

aim at making us forget this most needful help. God wills that He should be prayed to; He loves that He should be entreated, and that not for His sake, but for ours. And therefore from this earth, so far beneath the heaven, from this country, so distant from the throne of God, must we cry aloud, not once only or twice, but unceasingly, unto Him Whose title is, 'He Who heareth prayer.' Especially when the soul is cast down and the heart is sad must we call upon God; for silence then will but increase our misery, and the very coming to Him with prayer will often prove the very relief we are groaning for.

3. O set me up upon the rock that is higher than I : for Thou hast been my hope, and a strong tower for me against the enemy.

He will take us out of the sea of troubles which threatens to swallow us up, and will set us safe upon the eternal Rock to Whom without His grace we could not reach. In Him is the hope of glory; in Him is present safety and defence against all hurtful and destroying foes.

4. I will dwell in Thy tabernacle for ever : and my trust shall be under the covering of Thy wings.

Through His grace shall 'such as should be saved' be led to dwell within the shelter of His Church; they shall find therein comfort and refreshing through all the ages of time; and they shall

pass one by one from the tabernacle of sojourning here to abide in the triumphal courts of His rest above for the ages of eternity. He longeth to gather all, if they will only come to Him, beneath the shadow of His cross, 'even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings.'

5. For Thou, O Lord, hast heard my desires : and hast given an heritage unto those that fear Thy Name.

6. Thou shalt grant the King a long life : that his years may endure throughout all generations.

Let us but call, and He will most surely hear ; let us but pray, and He will not fail to answer, and to give us the things which belong unto our peace. He will confirm them in the inheritance of His heavenly kingdom who fear Him and keep His law. Yea, the subjects of the heavenly King shall share in their Lord's eternity. 'Because He lives they shall live also.' The years of His rule shall be continued when the earth shall have passed away and the heavens shall have faded. He is the 'King eternal and immortal,' and they who are His people shall be like Him when they serve Him in His kingdom of glory.

7. He shall dwell before God for ever : O prepare Thy loving mercy and faithfulness, that they may preserve him.

LXX. He shall abide to eternity before God.

Who shall search out His mercy and truth ?

8. So will I alway sing praise unto Thy Name : that I may daily perform my vows.

They shall dwell before God for ever in Him, when all things shall be subdued unto Him and all enemies are cast beneath His throne. Upon Him infinite mercy and unsearchable truth are waiting as perpetual guards, as never-ceasing attendants; and they who wait upon the King shall also preserve the people from danger and from fear. Therefore in Him are His elect preserved 'to see His face for ever and ever,' and to praise Him for that He hath done for them through all the days of eternity.

This Psalm was "upon Neginah;" that is, it was to be sung to a single harp in the temple-service. It was probably written at Mahanaim, beyond Jordan, during the time of Absalom's rebellion.

Morning Prayer.

PSALM lxii. *Nonne Deo?*

1. My soul truly waiteth still upon God : for of Him cometh my salvation.

Heb. Only to God is my soul silent.

2. He verily is my strength and my salvation : He is my defence, so that I shall not greatly fall.

Faith must grow if it be alive. It feels ever more and more the reality and the certainty of that salvation for which it waits, and it will rest in patience and in silence expecting Him in His own good time. He is to the faithful soul all and every thing; and

His names and attributes are each, as it were, a shield with which it can beat back the fiery darts of trial, and stand unwounded and undismayed. In Him Who now strengthens us with grace, that we fall not into deep and deadly sin, we see with the eye of hope Him Who shall crown us with salvation hereafter.

3. How long will ye imagine mischief against every man : ye shall be slain all the sort of you ; yea, as a tottering wall shall ye be, and like a broken hedge.

Heb. Ye do all act murderously,
As against a tottering wall,
A rampart which is smitten down.

The contrivers of mischief against their brethren cannot fail to meet with their reward. Sin and death, those strong and unseen foes, shall be but for a little while, they shall be destroyed at last ; and can the weaker and feebler enemies of truth and righteousness escape ? Death is the doom of sin ;— ‘the soul that sinneth it shall die.’ Fallen man is of himself without strength and without defence against his murderous foes : his soul is like a besieged city which is ready to be subdued. Sin has made many and wide breaches in it. But they who assault him and contrive his utter ruin shall themselves meet with the doom which they contrived for him.

4. Their device is only how to put him out whom God will exalt : their delight is in lies ; they give good words with their mouth, but curse with their heart.

And what are the instruments of them who seek to destroy the souls which Christ died to save? They are those of their tempter and their master,—lyings and hypocrisy. They have a pleasure in what is false; they willingly deceive and ensnare by speaking good and meaning evil. They bless with their lips, but blaspheme with their lives.

5. Nevertheless, my soul, wait thou still upon God : for my hope is in Him.

Heb. Only to God, my soul, be thou silent.

6. He truly is my strength and my salvation : He is my defence, so that I shall not fall.

7. In God is my health, and my glory : the rock of my might, and in God is my trust.

All that faith has taught that God will be to us, experience shews us that He is. ‘The Lord is a God of judgment; blessed are all they that wait for Him.’ All that He has been He most truly ever will be, and more than all. He gives the healthful Spirit of His grace; He gives the riches of eternal glory. Trust we in Him, and He will be a rock of might which nothing of this world’s power can ever shake.

8. O put your trust in Him alway, ye people : pour out your hearts before Him, for God is our hope.

Each soul can say, He is ‘my health and my glory,’ and yet can at the same time bid others also

to trust in Him as theirs. He is not gracious to one only, merciful to one only, but to all. All hearts may be poured out before Him in confession, in prayer, in love, and the thoughts of each, as they empty themselves of earthly confidences, will be seen and accepted by Him Who poured out His grace upon all flesh. Each one by himself may say, 'God is my hope;' each one may say to them that pour out their hearts unto Him, 'God is your hope;' each one may say in union with the elect of God, 'God is our hope.'

9. As for the children of men, they are but vanity : the children of men are deceitful upon the weights, they are altogether lighter than vanity itself.

Man that is born of a woman is but in himself a vain and feeble thing. Whether his condition be high or low, he is alike emptiness and vanity. His power, his prosperity, his riches, his wisdom, his enjoyments, if they be weighed in the just balance of a thoughtful and considering mind, are altogether false and light in weight; there is *Tekel* written upon them, when they seemed greatest and fairest. Man himself is but vanity, and let the wisdom of the flesh, the earthly hopes and worldly desires with which some are wholly taken up, be weighed against truth, holiness, and eternal life, and they will be found 'as the small dust of the balance,' even lighter than vanity, and emptier than emptiness.

10. O trust not in wrong and robbery, give

not yourselves unto vanity : if riches increase, set not your heart upon them.

All things then call upon each living thinking soul to turn away from the desire of the passing things of time. They often cannot be gotten without sin and wrong; they are not worthy that we should set our hearts upon them; still less are they worthy that we should barter our souls for them. Why should we perish for that which perisheth? Why should we narrow our hearts to set them upon the sordid riches of time, be they never so much increased, when we might enlarge them to receive the infinite treasure of eternity?

11. God spake once, and twice I have also heard the same : that power belongeth unto God ;

12. And that Thou, Lord, art merciful : for Thou rewardest every man according to his work.

But this one thing hath God clearly spoken, proclaiming it by His providence, and revealing it in His word, that the children of men may hear and know its truth,—‘ God is powerful, and God is merciful.’ He is mighty and able to judge, He is merciful and willing to pardon. His Almighty justice and His infinite mercy both are shewn in His judgments, for that He rewards every man according to his works. This one fact has He told us by His Holy Spirit in His holy word, in the old covenant

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and in the new covenant, in the law and in the gospel. To know it is the truest knowledge, to act upon it in our lives is the highest wisdom.

This Psalm is by David, and inscribed "to the Chief Musician over Jeduthun," (compare the title of Ps. xxxix. and 1 Chron. xxv. 3). It was possibly written with the recollection of Absalom's rebellion fresh in the royal prophet's mind.

PSALM lxiii. *Deus, Deus meus.*

1. O GOD, Thou art my God : early will I seek Thee.

The soul that has once found its all in God, that has said once and for ever, 'O God, Thou art my God,' seeks ever for Him in Whom its whole rest and happiness must ever be. Early in the morning of each day its first waking thought rises with a prayer upwards to where its risen Saviour is. Early in youth, in the morning of this mortal life, the soul that is God's will seek Him. Early in the morning of the last great day each one of the redeemed shall rise, no longer to seek, but to find their Lord Whom they have loved.

2. My soul thirsteth for Thee, my flesh also longeth after Thee : in a barren and dry land where no water is.

In Him is all love, all holiness, all wisdom, all innocence; and therefore for Him do all our wishes, and hopes, and feelings long, and in Him only can they be satisfied and rest. In the spiritual man, both the soul and the flesh alike thirst after God,—alike long 'to depart, and to be with Christ, which

is far better,'—alike grow weary, sad, and faint, in the barren pathless parched up wilderness of this present evil world, which of itself has no fountain in itself of the waters of life, and on which the dews of grace fall so often, only to be lost and wasted and dried away.

3. Thus have I looked for Thee in holiness : that I might behold Thy power and glory.

4. For Thy loving-kindness is better than the life itself : my lips shall praise Thee.

It is in holiness and purity only that we can hope to see Him Whom our souls long for. They are the doors into the inner sanctuary, where power and glory, like the two cherubims looking toward the one mercy-seat, abide eternally in His Almighty presence. The soul that truly lives must truly love Him, for His love is life, and more than life; the soul that truly loves Him will be ever with Him, for love will make us dwell where that which we love is. If the heart loves Him truly, the lips will praise Him rightly, 'for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.'

5. As long as I live will I magnify Thee on this manner : and lift up my hands in Thy Name.

6. My soul shall be satisfied, even as it were with marrow and fatness : when my mouth praiseth Thee with joyful lips.

This mortal life is too short for the loving soul to shew forth its love to that God Who is love; the everlasting life after death will only be enough for that transporting confession and unceasing acknowledgement of love. Yet filled with His love now and here, let us ever lift up holy hands before Him, lift them up to put away from us evil works, lift them up to do good works to His glory, and lift them up to praise His holy Name. And so doing shall the soul be refreshed and satisfied, even in the barren land, and the wilderness where no water is. It shall be filled with His fulness, and enriched with His riches; its prayer shall be changed to praise. While we pray we desire and thirst; when thirst ceases and we are satisfied, prayer passes away, and we betake ourselves to words of joy and praise.

7. Have I not remembered Thee in my bed : and thought upon Thee when I was waking ?

Heb. I meditate on Thee in the night-watches.

LXX. In the dawns did I meditate on Thee.

8. Because Thou hast been my helper : therefore under the shadow of Thy wings will I rejoice.

Not only in the morning, but before the morning, do the thoughts of the loving soul rise to God. In the stillness of the night and in the rest from toil, His love shines equally clear and bright, as in the beauty and the freshness of the dawn. In the silence of the night-watches, when the soul wakes to its God

alone, it feels still more His presence helping and sustaining it; it sees still plainer the height of His love above, and the depth of His love beneath. It knows its own weakness and littleness, and therefore does it rejoice to be covered beneath the shadow of His fostering wings.

9. My soul hangeth upon Thee : Thy right hand hath upholden me.

‘Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness leaning upon her beloved?’—This is written not of the Church only, and of Christ, but also of each soul in the Church that loves its Lord, and is longing to stay itself upon His guiding arm, and to come with Him up from this wilderness of earthly things. Trust we to Him, lean we securely upon Him; for surely He Whose right hand upholds earth and heaven can support and bear up such small things of dust as we are!

10. These also that seek the hurt of my soul : they shall go under the earth.

11. Let them fall upon the edge of the sword : that they may be a portion for foxes.

Heb. They are given to the edge of the sword;

They become the prey of the jackals.

The love of God not only consoles, and satisfies, and transports the soul, but it drives away and destroys its enemies. No foul desires or earthly longings can remain where the love of the All-holy has taken up its abode. They are cast out and destroyed by ‘the sword of God’s excellency,’ like

enemies slain by a conqueror, whose souls are consigned to the darkness of the unseen world, while their mangled bodies are left unburied, to be the prey of the wild beasts that prowl by night for food.

12. But the King shall rejoice in God ; all they also that swear by Him shall be commended : for the mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped.

The glory of the Son is one with the glory of the Father ; the love of the Son is one with the love of the Father. The heart that loves will follow its King with willing obedience, and for it Christ in God will be all in all. His Name Who is King of kings shall be ever in the mouths of His people ; in His truth shall they be true. The mouth of him who 'was a liar from the beginning' shall be stopped: the mouth of the insatiable grave shall be stopped. And all opposers of His truth, all rebels against His righteousness, shall be silenced and put to rebuke for ever.

This is "A Psalm of David, when he was in the wilderness of Judæa," or, as the LXX gives it, "of Idumæa." This wilderness of Judæa was on the east of the tribe of Judah, along the side of the Dead Sea. David took refuge in it when he was fleeing from Saul, and also again he passed through it during the rebellion of Absalom. It was probably in his earlier life that this Psalm was written, the thought of which was suggested to him by the parching waste around him, in that "barren and dry land where no water was."

PSALM lxiv. *Exaudi, Deus.*

1. HEAR my voice, O God, in my prayer : preserve my life from fear of the enemy.

God will ever hear the prayer of His elect; but He hears them then most especially when the cross is laid upon them, and they are compelled to bear it with their Lord. He will preserve them, for their enemy is also His.

2. Hide me from the gathering together of the froward : and from the insurrection of wicked doers ;

3. Who have whet their tongue like a sword : and shoot out their arrows, even bitter words ;

LXX. They have bent their bow, a bitter action.

4. That they may privily shoot at him that is perfect : suddenly do they hit him, and fear not.

The desires of the wicked are ever the same, the character of their doings does not change. They join themselves together to frighten or to persecute the believing, even as they joined together and made a tumult that they might crucify the Saviour. They use fierce and violent threatenings to strike down those who resist them, as with a sword; or they employ slanders, and falsehoods, and blasphemies, to injure the unoffending, like a robber hid in ambush who shoots out his arrows without exposing himself.

5. They encourage themselves in mischief : and commune among themselves how they may lay snares, and say, that no man shall see them.

6. They imagine wickedness, and practise it :

that they keep secret among themselves, every man in the deep of his heart.

As David's enemies when they accused him to Saul, as the Pharisees when they brought Him Who was perfect before Pilate, so do the wicked always encourage one another in wrong-doing. They think over what is evil, and then they practise it. They do nothing openly and honestly, not even in gratifying their malice; but they think to hide their wickedness by hypocrisy, and to keep those vile and shameful motives from which they act, hidden from others, and even from themselves.

7. But God shall suddenly shoot at them with a swift arrow : that they shall be wounded.

LXX. And God shall be exalted.

Their blows have been made an infant's weapon.

8. Yea, their own tongues shall make them fall : insomuch that whoso seeth them shall laugh them to scorn.

They have forgotten that they must with God's help slay sin, or sin will slay them. They have prepared their arrows of bitter words and have shot them from their ambush: but God has also prepared His of swift and righteous judgment, and will suddenly shoot it upon them, to their dismay and destruction; and their efforts, compared with His might, shall be but as the weapons of a child. Their own malicious tongues, which they used for the destruction of others, shall turn to their own destruc-

tion, and they shall be condemned and perish by their own words, even as Saul on Gilboa fell on his own sword. So the scorners shall come to be scorned, and they, who mocked at justice and at judgment, shall be given up to shame and everlasting contempt. What self-deceiving misery was theirs, who called for the Redeemer's blood to be upon them and their children, not to save them, but to ruin them; not as an atonement, but as a curse!

9. And all men that see it shall say, This hath God done : for they shall perceive that it is His work.

Every act of sin is a fearful thing when seen by the light of grace; above all, every act of wilful and planned sin. And they who see how sinners are punished, and how their sin, in spite of plannings and cunning, is confounded and comes to nothing, cannot but recognise God's unerring providence and confess His righteous government.

10. The righteous shall rejoice in the Lord, and put his trust in Him : and all they that are true of heart shall be glad.

In that government the righteous rejoices, while the sinner is confounded. In the display of that government lies God's answer to the prayers of His saints under trial. So He confirms their faith. And while the false and deceitful are tortured by the miserable result of their thoughts and doings, the true of heart and the faithful are made glad by the

further shewing forth of that kingdom of God, for the coming of which they offer their daily prayer.

This Psalm was written by David when he was suffering from Saul's enmity, and from the calumnies of those who stirred up Saul against him. St. Augustine interprets it of the Pharisees accusing our Lord before Pilate.

Ebening Prayer.

PSALM lxxv. *Te decet hymnus.*

1. THOU, O God, art praised in Sion : and unto Thee shall the vow be performed in Jerusalem.

Heb. Unto Thee, O God, is the silence of praise in Sion ;
And unto Thee shall the vow be performed.

2. Thou that hearest the prayer : unto Thee shall all flesh come.

They who come before the Most High God to praise Him must come with awe and quiet reverence. Thus the holy soul shews the fulness and intenseness of its love. It was in the hill of Sion that He was praised of old ; but now, wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the hill of Sion. Wherever the Lord is set forth in His Word and in His Sacraments, there is His temple, and there may we pay our vows. There is our home, and there is the foretaste of our fatherland. To Him Who hears our prayers, and through Whom our prayers are heard, shall all flesh come. He Who hath taken man's nature shall draw all men unto Himself in the eternal Sion.

3. My misdeeds prevail against me : O be
'Thou merciful unto our sins.

LXX. The speeches of the wicked have prevailed over us :
And Thou shalt be a propitiation for our iniquity.

It is the misdeeds of the flesh that hinder the flesh from coming to the Redeemer of all flesh. That they might no longer prevail against us, and that God might be merciful unto us, He sent forth an High Priest Who should make a propitiation for us. Our Priest took from us that which He offered for us — His own flesh. He was at once the Priest and the Victim, the Offerer and the Offering; therefore in Him our prayers are heard, and to Him our flesh shall come.

4. Blessed is the man, whom Thou choolest, and receivest unto Thee : he shall dwell in Thy court, and shall be satisfied with the pleasures of Thy house, even of Thy holy temple.

Christ, Whom God chose, and of Whom He said, 'This is My beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased,' is indeed 'over all, God blessed for ever.' But in Him His elect are blessed too. For His sake, not for our own, are we chosen; in Him, not in ourselves, are we received by God, being accepted in the Beloved; and therefore in Him are we blessed; He is our blessing. With that High Priest, Who has ascended into the holy place and entered within the veil, we enter into the house of God; we learn to

dwell therein; we are filled with its spiritual joys, we partake of its holy mysteries and sacraments of grace and love.

5. Thou shalt shew us wonderful things in Thy righteousness, O God of our salvation : Thou that art the hope of all the ends of the earth, and of them that remain in the broad sea.

6. Who in His strength setteth fast the mountains : and is girded about with power.

7. Who stilleth the raging of the sea : and the noise of his waves, and the madness of the people.

There does the God of our salvation, the One mighty to save, reveal to us the wonders of His power and of His grace; and the miracles of His humility are seen to be more marvellous than the miracles of His omnipotence. He is the Saviour of the world—not of Israel only, but of the ends of the earth, and of those who dwell in the islands of the sea. They that are afar off, and they that are nigh, are alike receivers of His grace. He hath set fast the mountains; so hath He appointed the mighty preachers of His Word, His apostles and the ministers who follow them, to be like mountains, humble in themselves, lofty and strong in Him. He is all-powerful, for He is girded with the power of truth and righteousness and faithfulness, towards His erring and deceived creatures. Be it that this lower world is like a sea, salt and bitter, and tost with storms, 'whose

waters are peoples and multitudes, and nations and tongues,' yet He saves them who dwell therein from its tempests and its raging. Fierce as it may be, He says to it, 'Peace, be still;' and the noise of its waves is silenced: and the madness of the peoples of the world, their self-confidence and their self-tormenting fretfulness, are in like manner subject to His constraining grace.

8. They also that dwell in the uttermost parts of the earth shall be afraid at Thy tokens: Thou that makest the outgoings of the morning and evening to praise Thee.

They whom He sent forth went everywhere shewing to the uttermost parts of the earth not only the miracles done by His Name, but the life and immortality brought to light by Him. They saw, and feared, and believed on Him. And so both the east and the west were brought to know Him and to praise Him, and every human soul, whether rejoicing in the morning of prosperity or desolate in the evening of sorrow, has been made to see the only sure hope and refuge and the only true joy. Therefore should we praise Him in our youth, and praise Him in our age, praise Him in our morning prayer, and praise Him in our evening sacrifice. And so the evening and the morning of this mortal life shall be the first day of that everlasting week in which the new creation of God shall praise Him without end.

9. Thou visitest the earth, and blessest it: Thou makest it very plenteous.

Like a bountiful and loving Monarch, He comes not to visit His people without a gift, yea, many gifts, both natural and spiritual. All that we have comes from Him, whatever it may be. His blessings for both our bodies and our souls are so infinite that they cannot be expressed, and yet so excellent that they must not be forgotten.

10. The river of God is full of water : Thou preparest their corn, for so Thou providest for the earth.

11. Thou waterest her furrows, Thou sendest rain into the little valleys thereof : Thou makest it soft with the drops of rain, and blessest the increase of it.

As a river that is full of water makes the fields fruitful through which it flows, so is the human nature of the Saviour made a channel of unceasing grace to man. Of His fulness have we received. He hath said, 'If any man thirst, let him come to Me and drink.' As there are many Churches and yet one Church, and many faithful and yet one Bride of Christ; so there are many rivers, and yet but one River, making fruitful the field of the world, that it may return many-fold to the heavenly Sower. There are many means of grace, like rivulets running through the furrows of the field; there is the gentle influence of the Holy Spirit, like rain dropping into the valleys thereof, softening the clay-clods of our dry and barren hearts, and making them and that

which they bring forth blessed. But all these graces come from that one full and abounding channel of grace, the glorified human nature of the Son of God.

12. Thou crownest the year with Thy goodness : and Thy clouds drop fatness.

Heb. Thy goings forth drop fatness.

LXX. Thy fields shall be filled with plenty.

13. They shall drop upon the dwellings of the wilderness : and the little hills shall rejoice on every side.

14. The folds shall be full of sheep : the valleys also shall stand so thick with corn, that they shall laugh and sing.

As the harvest is, as it were, the crown of the year, placed upon it by the loving and mighty hand of the God of nature ; so the end of the world, which is the harvest for eternity, shall crown and consummate His kingdom of grace with the blessing of infinite glory. As time goes by, and as that last gathering of corn into the eternal garner draws on, and He Who hath 'the golden crown and the sharp sickle' is ever coming nearer, so does His grace fall upon the seed He once went forth to sow in the field of the world, in greater and fuller richness. That which was once a desert is become a smiling land. The ignorant are made wise, the sinful are made obedient. Many sheep are brought within the fold of the Church : fruits of righteousness and godliness shall be found abundant among the lowest as among the highest ; and the

joy with which an earthly harvest is gathered in, and the shouts and songs which its plenteousness calls forth, will be a pattern for the everlasting joy and the unending song of those who shall be present at the eternal harvest which shall crown and end God's dealings of goodness with this created world.

This was a Psalm written by David in praise to God for His goodness in giving His people the prospect of a plenteous harvest. Some have supposed that it was written to be sung in the spring, on the second day of the Passover, when the sheaf of the first-fruits was to be offered, (Lev. xxiii. 10, 11); others have ascribed it to the time of the relief from the three years' famine which came upon Israel for Saul's cruelty to the Gibeonites, (2 Sam. xxi. 1—14,) on which occasion God shewed Himself peculiarly to be "the God that heareth prayer," (2), since David "enquired of the Lord" after the famine had continued three years, "and the Lord answered." The poetry of this is such as well expresses the praise and joy of grateful hearts.

PSALM lxvi. *Jubilate Deo.*

FOR THE THANKSGIVING AFTER A STORM.

1. O BE joyful in God, all ye lands : sing praises unto the honour of His Name, make His praise to be glorious.

It is the office of the saints to bid the world rejoice; not only themselves to rejoice in the mercy and grace of the Most High, but to teach others also the words of that thanksgiving which they have learned. They will sing most worthily before Him, who have received from Him that which they should sing.

2. Say unto God, O how wonderful art

Thou in Thy works : through the greatness of Thy power shall Thine enemies be found liars unto Thee.

Heb. Thine enemies shall feign submission before Thee.

3. For all the world shall worship Thee : sing of Thee, and praise Thy Name.

The works of God are always wonderful both in nature and in grace ; but when He has awed our spirits and stirred our souls by some mighty display of His power in nature, by shewing how the ' wind and storm fulfil His word,' and has made us own to ourselves how real His power is, by making us feel how near it is to us, then can we not help confessing His marvellous dealings and His terrible might, and even the careless and hard of heart for a little while are overcome by feelings of submission and of fear. Then do we need, as it were, that all the world too should own Him with us, and join in our praises to His divine Majesty.

4. O come hither, and behold the works of God : how wonderful He is in His doing toward the children of men.

5. He turned the sea into dry land : so that they went through the water on foot ; there did we rejoice thereof.

In His works of nature, in His works of providence, in His works of grace, if we will come and see, shall we equally behold His wisdom, His power, and His love toward the race of man. In the his-

tory of His dealings with Israel may we see, as in a mirror, His graciousness and mercy to all mankind, and above all, to the Church of His redeemed. For them He turned the deeps of the Red Sea into a high road, so that 'they went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground: and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand and on their left.' And thus did they, who went before us in the knowledge of God and of His law, all go 'under the cloud, and all pass through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea.' And again, He divided the Jordan, that they might pass into the land of rest. And there did not they only, but we too in them, rejoice in God's saving power;—not they only, but we too, for in the communion of saints all are made one from the beginning even to the end of the covenant of grace.

6. He ruleth with His power for ever; His eyes behold the people: and such as will not believe shall not be able to exalt themselves.

He ruled then as He rules now; He rules now as He ruled then. He beholds the ungodly people of the world at this time, and judges them, as He beheld the Canaanites then, and condemned them. Only by faith in Him, and by humility in themselves, can men be raised into nearness to Him. And they who believe not in Him and in His righteousness shall fall without help, and never rise.

7. O praise our God, ye people: and make the voice of His praise to be heard;

8. Who holdeth our soul in life : and suffereth not our feet to slip.

In Him must we rejoice, and Him must we praise for each hour of life we have. He wills us to live, and we do live; He ceases to will that we should live, and we die : and so too with our spiritual being, if His grace join with our will, then the sin and evil of our nature is subdued and cast out; but if our will join with the evil of our nature against His grace, then most sadly do we fall, and the life of our soul is hurled swiftly down into destruction.

9. For Thou, O God, hast proved us : Thou also hast tried us, like as silver is tried.

10. Thou broughtest us into the snare : and laidest trouble upon our loins.

11. Thou sufferedst men to ride over our heads : we went through fire and water, and Thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place.

Thus did God deal with Israel. He tried them in the iron furnace of affliction in Egypt, as silver is purged from its impurity in the fire. He led them by His providence into Egypt. He suffered the Egyptians to 'make their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar, and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field : all their service, wherein they made them serve, was with rigour.' And then He at length delivered them, when He had tried them. He brought them with the pillar of fire by night above them, and the waters of the sea on each side,

a foreshewing of the baptism of the Holy Ghost and of fire, through the wilderness into the land flowing with milk and honey, a land of refreshing and of rest. So He delivered them from the waters of drowning, and led them to the waters of blessing.

12. I will go into Thine house with burnt-offerings : and will pay Thee my vows, which I promised with my lips, and spake with my mouth, when I was in trouble.

13. I will offer unto Thee fat burnt-sacrifices, with the incense of rams : I will offer bullocks and goats.

And for this deliverance and this miracle, and for those higher deliverances and more glorious marvels, of which these were but the foreshadowings and types, must the Church ever be thankful; and not only the Church, but each single soul within the Church. The deliverance, and the grace, and the inheritance are not for one only, but for all; and not only for all, but for each one; and therefore 'I' must alternate with 'we' in the thanksgivings which the faithful pay in God's holy Church for their being saved from their sin and its doom; and above all, when they join in the commemoration of that highest sacrifice of the Lamb without spot, which fulfilled and accomplished in itself all the burnt-offerings and the sacrifices of the race of Aaron.

14. O come hither, and hearken, all ye that

fear God : and I will tell you what He hath done for my soul.

15. I called unto Him with my 'mouth : and gave Him praises with my tongue.

And while each one can recollect His wonderful works towards the Church in all times, he can feel still more keenly and tell still more plainly that which God has done for his own soul. That Christ Jesus died for sinners, is a most high and holy truth ; but deeper still and dearer to the believer's soul is the truth, that Christ Jesus died for him. This makes his heart call aloud to God his Redeemer, and fills his tongue with words of living praise ! All other deliverances from storm and danger are but images of that deliverance which rescued us from everlasting loss in the storm in which the world shall perish.

16. If I incline unto wickedness with mine heart : the Lord will not hear me.

17. But God hath heard me : and considered the voice of my prayer.

And the calling for grace by diligent prayer, and the knowing that we receive it in answer to our prayer, are signs sure and to be trusted in that we are in a state of grace, that we have no hidden, cherished, unrepented sin defiling our soul and rendering our prayers empty and vain. 'We know that God heareth not sinners : but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth His will, him He heareth.'

18. Praised be God Who hath not cast out my prayer : nor turned His mercy from me.

Let us not be faint in prayer, for God will never cast out that which comes from a true and earnest heart. He may put off His granting, but He will not put it away. He will never turn away His mercy from the soul that is in faith turned unto Him.

This Psalm was intended for the temple-service. Its title is "to the chief Musician ; a joyful song or psalm:" to which the LXX adds, "of the Resurrection." The author is left uncertain : it may, perhaps, consist of an ancient song of praise, first written on the entrance of the Israelites into Canaan, and afterwards revised and adapted to the temple-worship by the Levites in the time of Hezekiah. (2 Chron. xxix., xxx.) It is appointed by the Church of England to be said for the thanksgiving after a storm, in the service to be used at sea.

PSALM lxxvii. *Deus misereatur.*

ONE OF THE CANTICLES FOR EVENING PRAYER,
AND FOR THE SOLEMNIZATION OF HOLY
MATRIMONY.

1. God be merciful unto us, and bless us : and shew us the light of His countenance, and be merciful unto us ;

2. That Thy way may be known upon earth : Thy saving health among all nations.

In His mercy our God blesses His people ; and His blessing is the shewing forth of His mercy. His mercy is magnified, not in the looking upon His creatures in love, but in His making them to know that He looks on them with love. This won-

der He wrought in sending Him into the world Whom aged Simeon took into his arms and gazed upon, and then asked that he might 'depart in peace, because his eyes had seen the salvation which God had prepared, to be a light to lighten the Gentiles, and to be the glory of His people Israel.' In the Son of God, 'Who is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His person,' was the way of the All-holy made known upon the earth, and salvation was freely and fully offered to all the nations of the world, who had been long waiting in blindness and sin for the accomplishment of the promise made to Abraham,—'In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.'

3. Let the people praise Thee, O God : yea, let all the people praise Thee.

The love of God should stir up the praise of man. He gives the peoples of the earth blessings without number; what can they return to Him but thanksgiving and praise continually! Not only in the season of their earthly joy, but day by day continually, as day by day His blessings come to them.

4. O let the nations rejoice and be glad : for Thou shalt judge the folk righteously, and govern the nations upon earth.

And this is the cause for the joy and praise of the world, and of the Church in the world,—that they are no longer left to judge for themselves, or to follow a false and vain guide, 'even as they were

led,' but the righteous and loving God has Himself become both their Judge and King. Is it not a joyful thing to know that we shall be judged, not by an unrighteous law, but by a most righteous one; that we are guided and ruled, not by a cruel or self-willed tyrant, but by a most good and loving King? 'Forasmuch as He is righteous Himself, He ordereth all things righteously.' In Christ the Lord have the nations of the world found light instead of darkness, truth instead of ignorance, life instead of death, blessing instead of cursing; therefore in Him, and through Him, and for Him, should they rejoice and be glad unceasingly and unweariedly.

5. Let the people praise Thee, O God : let all the people praise Thee.

6. Then shall the earth bring forth her increase : and God, even our own God, shall give us His blessing.

May He, Who has given us mercy and blessing, give us ever grace to thank Him for His mighty love! May each redeemed soul by itself, and all the multitude of the redeemed in the communion of saints, with one mouth and one heart ever praise Him for His salvation; and may each generation, as it passes away from the shadows of earth into the fulness of the light of His countenance, leave to the generation which follows it an ever-increasing sense of joyfulness, and gratitude! Then shall 'the continual dew of His blessing' and the refreshing streams of His grace make the world fruitful in saints, and

make the elect to abound in the fruit of good works, brought forth from 'honest and good hearts' year after year; until the last great harvest be ready to be gathered in, until the earth bring forth her increase in the resurrection of the dead, and that which has been sown in corruption and in dishonour be reaped in incorruption and in glory, and be ready to receive the blessing of our Saviour, and our Judge, and our God, when He shall say, 'Come, ye blessed.'

7. God shall bless us : and all the ends of the world shall fear Him.

Then the blessings of earth shall be exchanged for the blessings of heaven. The uncreated and eternal Father, the only-begotten Son, and the Holy Ghost proceeding from the Father and the Son, shall be revealed in the perfection of glory before the pure in heart; and all the dwellers in the new heaven and the new earth shall 'fear the Lord and His goodness,' and bend in adoring reverence and love before the throne of God and of the Lamb.

"To the chief Musician on the harp, a joyful song," is the title of this Psalm. It was perhaps of considerable antiquity, and used at the gathering in of the harvest, as well as in the public service of the Temple. The harvest was generally a time of rejoicing, (see Isai. ix. 3.) It is used by the Church of England, not only in the office for the celebration of Holy Matrimony, but also in the daily Evening Prayer, as if to teach us that spiritual joy was not merely to be given utterance to at one particular joyful event in our life, but was to be expressed by every redeemed member of the Christian Church every day.

Morning Prayer.

FOR WHITSUNDAY.

PSALM lxxviii. *Exurgat Deus.*

1. LET God arise, and let His enemies be scattered : let them also that hate Him flee before Him.

As of old 'it came to pass, when the ark set forward, that Moses said, Rise up, Lord, and let Thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate Thee flee before Thee;' so in the exaltation of the ark of the second covenant, the human nature of the Son of God, there is the same,—yea, a far brighter,—shewing forth of glory and of power. Jesus Christ arose from the grave on Easter-day, and the guards who watched the sepulchre were affrighted and fled, and the Pharisees were confounded. He ascended into heaven on Holy Thursday, and death was conquered and hell was spoiled. He sent down the Holy Ghost on Whitsunday, and the world was subdued unto Him, and the dominion of sin was so broken, that all the sins of all shall be finally destroyed either in His mighty wrath or in His mighty love.

2. Like as the smoke vanisheth, so shalt Thou drive them away : and like as wax melteth at the fire, so let the ungodly perish at the presence of God.

3. But let the righteous be glad and rejoice before God : let them also be merry and joyful.

Before the fear of God all that is ungodly must flee. While He reveals Himself not, sinners may harden themselves in hating Him ; but when He is revealed in Almighty holiness, and truth, and love, all that is opposed to Him must utterly perish and come to nothing. They that have made nought of Him shall be brought to nought before Him. Like smoke before the rushing wind, so shall evil vanish before the power of the Holy Ghost ; like wax before the flame, so malice shall perish in the presence of the love of Christ. And not evil men only, but evil angels, are scattered in the presence of God ; for He Who makes His holy angels winds and flame to execute His word, shall make the evil spirits but as fleeting smoke and melting wax before them. As He displays His awful presence, all shall vanish from before Him but they who love Him ; and they shall rejoice before God. They shall no longer, as now, rejoice with trembling, but they shall be merry with perfect and eternal joy.

4. O sing unto God, and sing praises unto His Name : magnify Him that rideth upon the heavens, as it were upon an horse ; praise Him in His Name JAH, and rejoice before Him.

Heb. Cast up a way for Him Who rideth on in the deserts.

LXX. Make a way for Him Who ascendeth above the setting :
For the Lord is His Name.

They sing unto God who live unto God; they sing praises unto His Name that work unto His glory. By so singing His praise, by so doing His will, do we prepare a way for Him Who came into the deserts of this barren world, and from it ascended into the heavens and sat down at the right hand of God. He is the guide of His chosen through the wilderness, and by following close after Him do we acknowledge Him as our King and confess Him as our God. Thus do we but praise Him Whose name and nature is the name and nature of the Godhead, the All-glorious, the All-powerful, the Eternal.

5. He is a Father of the fatherless, and defendeth the cause of the widows : even God in His holy habitation.

6. He is the God that maketh men to be of one mind in an house, and bringeth the prisoners out of captivity : but letteth the runagates continue in scarceness.

Heb. God giveth the solitary a home.

But His love is still the highest of His glories. He is become a father to them who were orphans indeed, for that they knew not their Father Which is in heaven. He is a protector of those souls which were indeed widows, for that they had not for their spouse the eternal Word. He gives us His law of love from His holy throne, as He gave His law of obedience in the holy mount of Sinai. By it He brings the wandering and the lonely into the unity of His Church, giving them a home therein, that

they may dwell in concord and in peace. By His love He looses the bonds of sin, and sets the captives free from its prison and its chain, as He brought Israel out of Egypt; while they who refuse His offers of mercy and of grace are left to themselves and to their own misery. The rebels are banished to the barren habitation they have chosen for themselves. They who provoke Him are left to their own works which are dead, and to their own hopes which are dead.

7. O God, when Thou wentest forth before the people : when Thou wentest through the wilderness,

8. The earth shook, and the heavens dropped at the presence of God : even as Sinai also was moved at the presence of God, Who is the God of Israel.

God Himself was the Captain Who led the hosts of the Lord out of Egypt. He marched at their head in the pillar of cloud and fire. At His will the earth shook; at His will the heavens dropped down manna. It was that same Almighty God, the God of Israel, Who gave to His people the bread from heaven, and Who spake to them in darkness, and storm, and earthquake, from the mount of Sinai. So also Christ the Son of God is with His people, and of the glory of His presence the fiery pillar was but a shadow; and in the accomplishing of His work of love there was the darkness and earthquake

on Calvary, as there was at Sinai; there was the bread of heaven given in the last Supper in the upper room, as it was given in the wilderness.

9. Thou, O God, sentest a gracious rain upon Thine inheritance : and refreshedst it when it was weary.

10. Thy congregation shall dwell therein : for Thou, O God, hast of Thy goodness prepared for the poor.

LXX. Thy living creatures shall dwell therein

And whatever refreshings of dews from heaven and waters from the rock were sent to the Church in the desert, when it thirsted and was weary, a more precious outpouring of His goodness has been made for us, 'because the Love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, Which is given unto us.' And if Canaan was given for His congregation to dwell in, and He of His goodness made it ready for the poor of Jacob to inherit, so Christ also hath a better Canaan in readiness for His own, which He has prepared for the poor in spirit,—not for their goodness, but of His—'when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.'

11. The Lord gave the word : great was the company of the preachers.

12. Kings with their armies did flee, and were discomfited : and they of the household divided the spoil.

Heb. The Lord gives the word :

Of female messengers there is a great band.

Kings with their armies flee,—they flee ;

She who dwells at home divides the spoil.

LXX. The Lord God shall give the word

To them who preach the Gospel in much power

The King of the forces of the Beloved, of the Beloved,

Shall give to divide the spoil to the beauty of the house.

Christ hath given us the promise of victory,—‘ Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.’ And in the unity of the one Church there are many Churches, to whom is assigned the duty of carrying that glorious message ; even as Mary Magdalene and the women spread far and wide the tidings of the resurrection. In the power of that word, emperors and kings were overcome, and brought to the obedience of faith. By the Name of Him Who gave that word, the principalities and powers of the unseen world were utterly routed and discomfited. By it the Church of the living God, which He purchased with His blood, divided the spoil of the world ; and the glory and riches of earth were taken to adorn and make beautiful the house of the Lord of heaven.

13. Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove : that is covered with silver wings, and her feathers like gold.

14. When the Almighty scattered kings for their sake : then were they as white as snow in Salmon.

Heb. When ye rest between the boundaries,
Ye are as a dove's wings covered with silver,
And her feathers with the yellow of gold.
When the Almighty scatters the kings in it,
It is snowy in Zalmon.

LXX. If ye have slept between the lots,
Ye are the wings of a dove bright with silver,
And her back with the burnish of gold.
When the Heavenly One assigns kings over her,
They shall be white with snow in Salmon.

When the Church of God is settled in her appointed place, like Israel delivered from the brick-kilns of Egypt and settled in the boundaries of Canaan,—when she reposes between the Old covenant and the New, the law of obedience and the gospel of love, inheriting both and keeping both, then is she worthy of her Lord's loving word—'My dove, My undefiled is but one.' She is then glorious and beautiful; holiness and charity bear her up, as a dove is borne on her wings; her purity is brighter than silver, her wisdom shines beyond gold. 'To her it is granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white; for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.' When the powers of earth have been scattered away before the face of her Almighty Lord, then the procession of her elders and her holy ones, 'clothed with white robes and with palms in their hands,' following the Lamb into His eternal kingdom from this dark and rugged world, shall be like the gleam of new-fallen snow-drifts lying bright and pure above the gloomy glens and overshadowing thickets of Mount Salmon. Their

sins may once have been as scarlet, but in Him shall they be white as snow.

15. As the hill of Basan, so is God's hill : even an high hill, as the hill of Basan.

16. Why hop ye so, ye high hills ? this is God's hill, in the which it pleaseth Him to dwell : yea, the Lord will abide in it for ever.

Heb. Why are ye envious, ye high mountains,
Against the mountain which the Lord chooses for His
dwelling ?

The kingdoms of the world are strong, but the kingdom of heaven is stronger far. Og the king of Bashan, when he went out to battle against Israel, was smitten, 'and his sons and all his people, and they possessed his land.' The craggy heights of Mount Bashan and its many summits were no safeguard to its king. Its glory was to be as nothing compared with that of Sion. Grace is mightier than nature : it is in vain for the kingdoms of the earth to resist, or to be envious of the kingdom of Christ. God has been pleased to establish it, not as they have been established for a time, but for ever. His presence hallows it eternally. 'It shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills ; and all nations shall flow unto it.'

17. The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels : and the Lord is among them, as in the holy place of Sinai.

LXX. The chariots of God are many myriads :
There are thousands of them rejoicing.
The Lord is in them in Sinai, in the holy place.

The world may boast its many chariots of iron, but the host of God is more in number and more terrible. The chariots of God are the heavenly and spiritual powers. 'They that be with us are more than they which be with them.' Unto our God 'thousand thousands minister, and ten thousand times ten thousand stand before Him.' He made Sinai His holy place,* and from thence He made His seat on Sion. Sinai is the type of the first covenant, Sion of the second covenant. We who are born after the Spirit 'are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and Church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things than that of Abel.'

18. Thou art gone up on high, Thou hast led captivity captive, and received gifts for men : yea, even for Thine enemies, that the Lord God might dwell among them.

Christ the Lord in His ascension, when He went on high unto His everlasting throne, bound those who made us captives, and loosed us who had been made captives by them ; He made sin, and death,

and hell His slaves, He set the souls which they had enslaved free. But He gave to us a nobler gift than liberty, even grace; He hath both made us free and He hath made us rich: He received gifts for men, and He gave gifts to men; He received as man for men what as God He gave to men,—the gift of the Holy Ghost, that God the Holy Ghost should dwell among us. Like a mighty conqueror He bestowed His bounties on all who beheld His triumph. He gave gifts not only to the obedient, but to rebels and sinners. None that will receive are left without a gift, ‘but unto every one of us is given grace, according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore He saith, when He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. Now that He ascended, what is it but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things.’

19. Praised be the Lord daily : even the God Who helpeth us, and poureth His benefits upon us.

To the Father Who loved us, and the Son Who died for us, Who have given us the Holy Ghost, and to the Eternal Spirit Who proceedeth from them, the Lord and Giver of life, is our praise due from day to day, all the days of this our mortal life. He delivers us from the burden of our sins and sorrows, to lay upon us the burden of His love and mercy.

20. He is our God, even the God of Whom cometh salvation : God is the Lord, by Whom we escape death.

Heb. The Lord hath the goings forth of death.

Or otherwise :—

For death are the goings forth of the Lord.

21. God shall wound the head of His enemies : and the hairy scalp of such a one as goeth on still in his wickedness.

Our Saviour is our God. With Him is the power of life and of death. He willed that the outgoing of death should be His, that it might not be ours. When He goes forth in love He delivers His people from death; when He goes forth in anger, death waits upon Him. They that hardily resist Him, and go on in wickedness, bring upon their own heads dismay and death. In one way or the other shall the heads of His enemies be crushed, and their pride be broken, either by their being bowed down with humility, or by their being pierced with destruction.

22. The Lord hath said, I will bring My people again, as I did from Basan : Mine own will I bring again, as I did sometime from the deep of the sea.

23. That thy foot may be dipped in the blood of thine enemies : and that the tongue of thy dogs may be red through the same.

He never forgets His own. He will bring them safe through danger, and sorrow, and death, as He brought the children of Israel from the land of Bashan over Jordan, into the promised land, and as He brought them out of Egypt through the depths of the Red Sea. He will destroy their enemies, and deliver them from their persecutors, even as He destroyed the Canaanites before Joshua, and as He in after-time avenged the innocent blood of Naboth on Ahab, and on Jezebel, whose blood the dogs licked in the same place where they licked that of Naboth.

24. It is well seen, O God, how Thou goest : how Thou, my God and King, goest in the sanctuary.

25. The singers go before, the minstrels follow after : in the midst are the damsels playing with the timbrels.

His goings are seen in the ways of His saints. The mighty procession of the elect shews the love and the power of their Redeemer. The joyful choirs, who followed the ark as it was borne up Mount Sion were an emblem and a type of the triumph of the Church. Like as we have heard in time past, so shall we see it in the world to come. There are they who sing the new song before the throne, there are the harpers harping with their harps, there are the virgins who have subdued the flesh, spiritually tuneful in the praise of God.

26. Give thanks, O Israel, unto God the

Lord in the congregations : from the ground of the heart.

Heb. Bless ye God in the assemblies,
Even the Lord, ye from the fountains of Israel.

LXX. In the Churches bless ye God,
The Lord, from the fountains of Israel.

And this is their song, the ascribing with a loving spirit and a true heart, praise, and glory, and blessing to the eternal God, Who for us was made man. The tribes of Israel must praise Him Who is sprung from the race of Israel, Who took on Him the seed of Abraham.

27. There is little Benjamin their ruler, and the princes of Judah their counsel : the princes of Zabulon, and the princes of Nephthali.

LXX. There is Benjamin the youngest in a trance.

In that mighty band are found all the saved, each one of the tribes of Israel who were among the number of them that were sealed. As in the procession of the ark, there came first Benjamin and Judah, the royal tribes of Saul and David, who were the tribes of the south, and there followed from the north the learned tribes, of Naphtali who 'giveth goodly words,' and of 'Zebulun who handleth the pen of the writer;' so among the multitudes before the throne of God that Apostle is conspicuous with a crown of righteousness who was of the tribe of Benjamin, who once 'ravined as a wo'f,' in the morning of his youth 'devouring the prey' by persecuting the Church, and at the night of his old age 'dividing the spoil' in the conversion of the

world. St. Paul had seen the Lord, not in earth, but from heaven, and though he were 'the least of the Apostles,' yet was his share of labour and of grace larger than that of his brethren. There, too, are seen the sons of Zebedee, and James, and Thaddeus, and Levi, and Simon—counsellors of eternal truth from Judah; and Andrew, and Peter, and Philip, and the others of the chosen twelve, called to be princes and Apostles in the Church from that Zabulon and Naphtali which once 'walked in darkness' but which in God's time 'saw the great light of Incarnate Love.'

28. Thy God hath sent forth strength for thee : stablish the thing, O God, that Thou hast wrought in us,

29. For Thy temple's sake at Jerusalem : so shall kings bring presents unto thee.

It was the Father and the Son Who sent forth the Holy Ghost for the enlightening and guiding of the Church. The prayers, therefore, and intercessions of His faithful people must ever be offered up, that the sevenfold gifts of the Eternal Spirit be not lost by us, but that His sanctifying work, which He has begun, may be established and made perfect in us. And this we ask, not for our own sake, but for His Who chose us and made us His. The kings of the earth brought presents to His sanctuary, not because it was holy of itself, but because it was God's temple, and He had made it holy. 'The temple of God is holy, which temple we are.' He has not chosen

His Church because she was holy, but it is His choice that has made her holy.

30. When the company of the spearmen, and multitude of the mighty are scattered abroad among the beasts of the people, so that they humbly bring pieces of silver : and when He hath scattered the people that delight in war ;

Heb. Rebuke the beasts of the reeds,
The herd of the bulls, with the calves of the people,
Till they submit themselves with bars of silver.
Scatter the people who love war.

Or :—

Rebuke the congregation of the reed, i.e. Egypt,
The assembly who trust in the calf-idols of the people,
Who dance with fragments of silver ; i.e. timbrels.

Or :—

Rebuke the wild beast of the reeds ; i.e. the lion ;
The herd of the strong ones and the calves,
Who delight in the silver waters.

LXX. The assembly of bulls among the heifers of the people.
To shut out them who have not been tried with silver.

31. Then shall the princes come out of Egypt : the Morians' land shall soon stretch out her hands unto God.

God and His grace only can subdue the power of the world. He only could rebuke that mighty Behemoth, which was the emblem of Egypt, 'who lieth under the shady trees, in the covert of the reed and fens.' He only could tame the pride of those princes who ruled their peoples like the bulls rule their herds of calves, to make them submissive to

the law of obedience, and to pay their tribute of silver to their true Lord. He only puts to flight those whose courage and skill else ensure them victory, and whose pleasure is in war. Only the Holy Ghost can bring all to be subject to Himself, whether idolaters worshipping vain gods and idols, or heretics leading others astray by their own headstrong fancies and judgments blinded by the love of gain. But by His marvellous power and holy guidance, they who were once afar off are brought nigh, and nations who were given up to darkness are made by His working full of light and truth. From Egypt, which once worshipped Apis and Isis, under the shape of the beasts of the field, came forth in after times holy doctors, and fathers, and martyrs for God's truth,—Clement, and Athanasius, and Dionysius, who were leaders in the Church and princes indeed. And it shall not be long before the children of Cush, who have long abode in misery and ignorance, shall see the stretching out of their Saviour's hands for them, and shall stretch out their hands to Him in gratitude, and prayer, and praise.

32. Sing unto God, O ye kingdoms of the earth : O sing praises unto the Lord ;

33. Who sitteth in the heavens over all from the beginning : lo, He doth send out His voice, yea, and that a mighty voice.

Christ is ascended, and is the Lord of all. All the kingdoms of the earth are His. Their obedience is His; their praise is His. He is the King from

everlasting to everlasting, and His command is an eternal law. His word is now with power. It rideth on and runneth very swiftly. Once God the Word was dumb as a lamb before her shearers; now He utters His voice and all the ends of the earth can hear it, and when they hear it they are converted and are turned unto their Lord.

34. Ascribe ye the power to God over Israel : His worship, and strength is in the clouds.

35. O God, wonderful art Thou in Thy holy places : even the God of Israel; He will give strength and power unto His people; blessed be God.

Over Israel and through all the world is His power, Who hath ascended within the clouds, and is set down in the highest heaven on the throne of eternity. 'The heavens and the heaven of heavens are the Lord's, the earth and all that is therein.' As the ark was carried in gladness and triumph, and borne within the holy of holies, to be a mystery and a marvel, and at the same time a cause of strength and source of power to Israel, so is our Lord and Saviour ascended above the heavens and passed within the veil, to give strength and power, mercy and pardon, grace and salvation, unto His people,—in Whom and for Whom blessed be God for evermore !

The title of this noble and awful Psalm ascribes it to David. It was probably used by him for the bringing the ark up to Sion,

(2 Sam. vi.). There was, doubtless, as verses 24, 25, 27 imply, a solemn procession of choirs of singers, of virgins with timbrels, and of players on instruments, attending on the ark, together with the heads of various tribes assembled to conduct it with due reverence to Mount Sion; and the Psalm was begun at the first lifting up of the ark, as they brought it from the house of Obed-edom the Kohathite of Gath-rimmon, and ended with the depositing it within the most holy place. The first verse of the Psalm was composed by Moses to be chanted at the moving forward of the ark, (Num. x. 35). Verses 7, 8, again, are taken from the song of Deborah, (Judges v. 4, 5); and it is very possible that other portions of this Psalm also were taken from older religious or triumphal songs, such as perhaps were contained in "The Book of the Wars of the Lord," (Num. xxi. 14). This will account for the obscurity in which many of the verses are still involved, in spite of the efforts made to explain them. Among these passages, verses 11—14 and 30, 31, are the most obscure. The word which our translation renders "pots," is "sheepfolds" in Judges v. 16, and seems to mean "a double boundary;" and the LXX. translate it "lots or inheritances." "It was snowy in Salmon" has been supposed to mean that the bones of the slain lay as thick as snow in Salmon, or Zalmon, a thick-wooded mountain in the north-east of Palestine. (See Judges ix. 48.) It more probably referred to a triumphal procession of Israelites clad in snow-white garments. For an account of Bashan, see Deut. iii. 1—14. Verse 30 is indeed full of difficulty: the words of our translation, "the company of the spearmen," would be more correctly rendered "the beast of the reeds," meaning the lion, or the crocodile, or rather the hippopotamus, as the emblem of the king of Egypt. The "calves" may signify either the inferior people, contrasted with the bulls, their leaders (for the fitness of this Eastern emblem, compare the sculptures from Nineveh,) or may be the calf-idols, such as Apis, which the Egyptians worshipped with dances and the sound of instruments of silver. The Psalm is appointed by the Church for Whitsunday, because the Holy Spirit was the chiefest of the gifts Christ gave to man after His ascension. Verse 18 of this Psalm is quoted by St. Paul, Eph. iv. 8.

FOR GOOD FRIDAY.

PSALM lxi. *Salvum me fac.*

1. SAVE me, O God : for the waters are come in, even unto my soul.

2. I stick fast in the deep mire, where no ground is : I am come into deep waters, so that the floods run over me.

Here Christ is praying: for though this be the cry and the complaint of all who inherit man's nature in their sorrow and distress, yet, as the sorrow and agony of Christ was greater than all other sorrow, so does His cry go upward to the throne of God with the fulness in itself of all the pain that was ever suffered and all the sorrow that was ever borne. He cried to the Father, 'Save me, O God,' for the waters of tribulation came even into His soul. So deeply had we sunk through human pride, that Divine humility could only raise us by coming down to where we had fallen. Therefore Christ was engulfed in the treacherous mire of earth, in which is no stay nor resting-place; the tempest of misery fell upon Him, and the floods of anguish and of terror ran over Him.

3. I am weary of crying; my throat is dry : my sight faileth me for waiting so long upon my God.

He had cried to God for the ways of man; He had cried to man of the ways of God; He had not ceased, from His first beginning to teach, till He

said upon the cross, I thirst. His eyes had grown dim, and His flesh was faint and weary with His sufferings, through the long passion of His life on earth. He had been waiting in poverty, and insult, and treachery, and scourging, and pain, until He cried, 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?'

4. They that hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of my head : they that are mine enemies, and would destroy me guiltless, are mighty.

5. I paid them the things that I never took : God, Thou knowest my simpleness, and my faults are not hid from Thee.

His heart-broken reproach was, 'If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin ; but now have they both seen and hated both Me and My Father.' He had done no sin, yet He suffered the punishment of sin. Adam in disobedience took of the fruit of the tree of knowledge ; but Christ in obedience paid the penalty of death. He Who was very wisdom put on the simplicity of man ; He Who was perfect holiness took on Himself the faults of our erring and sinful race.

6. Let not them that trust in Thee, O Lord God of hosts, be ashamed for my cause : let not those that seek Thee be confounded through me O Lord God of Israel.

7. And why? for Thy sake have I suffered reproof : shame hath covered my face.

He gained for them that trust in Him the mighty grace of boldness in the day of judgment; He won for His own that they should never be confounded, not even by their own sins and faults. But how? By His own shame He gained them boldness; by the mockeries and reproofs which He endured, He won confidence for them. We were set free and comforted; 'but the men that held Jesus mocked Him and smote Him. And when they had blindfolded Him, they struck Him on the face, saying, Prophecy, who is it that smote Thee?' Yet the veil of humiliation which covered the brightness of the Son of God did but testify to His hidden glory.

8. I am become a stranger unto my brethren : even an alien unto my mother's children.

It was His own nation who delivered Him up to the unjust judge. 'He came to His own, and His own received Him not.' It was His countrymen of the seed of Abraham who refused Him and crucified Him. 'Neither did His brethren believe on Him.'

9. For the zeal of Thine house hath even eaten me : and the rebukes of them that rebuked Thee are fallen upon me.

He 'went up to Jerusalem, and found in the temple those that sold oxen, and sheep, and doves, and the changers of money sitting; and when He

had made a scourge of small cords, He drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables; and said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not My Father's house an house of merchandise. And His disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of Thine house hath eaten me up.' He pleased God, He saved man, but He pleased not Himself. He suffered shame and false-witness for His zeal for the house of God. His example is for us, that 'we that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. For even Christ pleased not Himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached Thee fell on Me.'

10. I wept, and chastened myself with fasting : and that was turned to my reproof.

11. I put on sackcloth also : and they jested upon me.

12. They that sit in the gate speak against me : and the drunkards make songs upon me.

It is tears that we lack, not cause for tears; but for Him our sins were cause enough why He should weep, and His love and pity gave Him tears enough to shed. But not only did He weep for us, but 'for us men and for our salvation' He fasted forty days and forty nights in the desert. He was clothed with the sackcloth of humility, and they who were given up to the lusts and vanities of earth knew

Him not, and reviled Him. Both the rulers who sat in the seat of judgment, and the vain and evil-doing of the multitude, joined to revile Him and to mock Him. 'He saved others, Himself He cannot save,' was the reproof which almighty patience and infinite meekness endured from the idle multitudes of those He came to save.

13. But, Lord, I make my prayer unto Thee : in an acceptable time.

14. Hear me, O God, in the multitude of Thy mercy : even in the truth of Thy salvation.

Our High-Priest prayed on the great atonement-day of His death, offering before God the all-prevailing sacrifice of Himself; He prayed for them whom the Father had given Him, and 'not for them alone, but for them also which should believe on Him through their word.' And He could not but be heard. For if God's mercies be most abundant, surely they were so to Him; if God's promises of salvation be ever true, surely they were true unto His Christ!

15. Take me out of the mire, that I sink not : O let me be delivered from them that hate me, and out of the deep waters.

16. Let not the water-flood drown me, neither let the deep swallow me up : and let not the pit shut her mouth upon me.

In His prayer for deliverance lay the prayer of all mankind. Death and sorrow had passed upon all,

and therefore they passed upon Him. Death and sorrow had conquered all, but He conquered them; and thenceforth all His people were to be conquerors in His victory. They were no longer to be engulfed in the mire; they were to be delivered from the deep waters; the deep was no longer to swallow them up; the pit should not shut her mouth upon them. He that has fallen into the deep of sin, if he turn to his Father, saying, I have sinned, forgive me my sin,—upon him the pit shall not shut her mouth.

17. Hear me, O Lord, for Thy loving-kindness is comfortable : turn Thee unto me according to the multitude of Thy mercies.

18. And hide not Thy face from Thy servant, for I am in trouble : O haste Thee, and hear me.

19. Draw nigh unto my soul, and save it : O deliver me, because of mine enemies.

Hear me—though His ears are never closed; turn Thee—though He is ever turning to us; hide Thee not—though He is ever to be found; haste Thee—though He prevents us with His grace; draw nigh—though He is ever with us. Such are the blessed contradictions of the Gospel! Wanting all things we yet have all things, for all that we ask in Christ, and with Christ, and through Christ, whether help, or pardon, or salvation, shall be granted to us through His merits and His prayer, Who before hath asked them in us and for us.

20. Thou hast known my reproof, my shame, and my dishonour : mine adversaries are all in Thy sight.

21. Thy rebuke hath broken my heart ; I am full of heaviness : I looked for some to have pity on me, but there was no man, neither found I any to comfort me.

He had to suffer not only pain and death, but what is harder for a tender heart—shame and disgrace. His enemies not only slew Him, but dishonoured Him. Truly the chastisement of our sins which was upon Him was no light thing to bear. Under it He Who bare the weight of the universe was ‘sore amazed and very heavy.’ No man could comfort Him, and there were none to pity Him ; for even when He came to the chosen three, He ‘found them asleep, and said unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with Me one hour?’ And as His trial deepened, ‘all the disciples forsook Him and fled.’

22. They gave me gall to eat : and when I was thirsty they gave me vinegar to drink.

To mock His weariness and thirst before He was nailed upon the tree, ‘they gave Him vinegar to drink mingled with gall ; and when He had tasted thereof, He would not drink.’ Yet it was our pride and self-will which were His dishonour and shame ; it was our lusts and sins which were the nails and spear that pierced Him ; it was our luxury and self-

indulgence which were that bitter mingling of vinegar and gall.

23. Let their table be made a snare to take themselves withal : and let the things that should have been for their wealth be unto them an occasion of falling.

24. Let their eyes be blinded, that they see not : and ever bow Thou down their backs.

The justice of God ought to fill us with holy fear, for by it the greatest blessings may become instruments of death to the reprobate. The tokens of love may become means of misery to him who receives them not aright. Our Lord at His last supper dipped a sop and 'gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. And after the sop Satan entered into him,' and he betrayed his Lord. It was at the feast of the Passover that the Jews slew their King, Who should have redeemed Israel. It was at the feast of the Passover that the Romans came upon them, and 'took away both their place and their nation.' Thus at the very symbol of their deliverance from Egypt their eyes were blinded, their hearts were veiled; and they were made the captives of ignorance and fear. 'According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear: the rest were blinded unto this day. And David saith, Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumbling-block, and a recompense unto them; let

their eyes be darkened that they may not see, and bow down their back alway.'

25. Pour out Thine indignation upon them : and let Thy wrathful displeasure take hold of them.

26. Let their habitation be void : and no man to dwell in their tents.

27. For they persecute him whom Thou hast smitten : and they talk how they may vex them whom Thou hast wounded.

28. Let them fall from one wickedness to another : and not come into Thy righteousness.

29. Let them be wiped out of the book of the living : and not be written among the righteous.

How fully and fearfully did the anger of God fall upon the betrayers and the crucifiers of the Son of Man! Judas perished miserably, forfeiting his ministry and apostleship, even as St. Peter tells us, as 'it is written in the Book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein;' and to the Jews, of whose sin he was the type, the saying of our Lord was accomplished,—'Behold your house is left unto you desolate.' It was for their cruelty and their treachery against the Lamb of God that all this came upon them. They went on adding sin to sin, and from one wickedness to another, until their guilt found them out, and was turned from

the whip of small cords into the scourge which finally forbad them to come into God's righteousness. So were they blotted from the book of life, and lost that which is the only cause of real rejoicing, that their names should be written in heaven.

30. As for me, when I am poor and in heaviness : Thy help, O God, shall lift me up.

31. I will praise the Name of God with a song : and magnify it with thanksgiving.

32. This also shall please the Lord : better than a bullock that hath horns and hoofs.

But God hath raised up and highly exalted Him Who once was poor and in exceeding heaviness. Therefore He in His Church returns everlasting praise, and magnifies God for His mercy to His people with everlasting thanksgiving. This sacrifice God loves best—the sacrifice of thanksgiving in the memory of the sacrifice of His Christ. No victim led up struggling to His altar so pleaseth Him as cheerful praise from the mouth of His redeemed.

33. The humble shall consider this, and be glad : seek ye after God, and your soul shall live.

34. For the Lord heareth the poor : and despiseth not His prisoners.

Meditating upon His passion and His cross, the humble and penitent shall find comfort. They will see the infinite love of their Lord and be glad. They will seek for Him Whose body was broken and

Whose blood was poured out for them. They seek the bread of earth that their bodies may live, they will seek the Bread of heaven that their souls may never die. He Who was once poor heareth the poor. He Who suffered for sin despiseth not them who are tied and bound with the chain of their sins, from which they groan to be released.

35. Let heaven and earth praise Him : the sea, and all that moveth therein.

36. For God will save Sion, and build the cities of Judah : that men may dwell there, and have it in possession.

37. The posterity also of His servants shall inherit it : and they that love His Name shall dwell therein.

Therefore in His humility as in His almightiness, in His form of a servant as in His glory as a king, let all created things join in His praise and honour, both heaven, and earth, and sea, and all the dwellers therein; for He is worthy to receive all that they can offer Him. He ever watches over and protects that second Sion, His own Church; He builds up her cities, and leads more and more to inherit her blessings and partake her privileges. But He has not forgotten that elder Sion, nor those children of Abraham who were born after the flesh, not after the Spirit: they have stumbled, but not for ever. His prayer, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,' shall at length outweigh the doom their sins pronounced upon them. 'Blindness in

part is happened unto Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, 'There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.' So shall all, both Jew and Gentile, rejoice evermore in His mighty and unchanging love, serving Him with love in the inheritance which by His cross and passion He won for them.

This Psalm was written by David, "upon Shoshannim, or the lilies." (See note to Psalm xlv.) St. Paul also, in his quotation of verses 23, 24, Rom. xi. 10, ascribes it to David. It is a prophecy of the Passion of Jesus Christ, and therefore is appointed by the Church for Good-Friday. Few of the Psalms are more quoted in the New Testament. Part of verse 9 in St. John ii. 17, and the other part Rom. xv. 3; verses 23, 24, in Rom. xi. 10 and 2 Cor. iii. 14; and verse 25 in Acts i. 20, and St. Matth. xxiii. 38. David was doubtless inspired to write this Psalm during his own sufferings, but whether in his youth or in his age there are not sufficient grounds to decide.

PSALM lxx. *Deus in adiutorium.*

1. HASTE Thee, O God, to deliver me :
make haste to help me, O Lord.

2. Let them be ashamed and confounded
that seek after my soul : let them be turned
backward and put to confusion that wish me
evil.

3. Let them for their reward be soon brought
to shame : that cry over me, There, there.

'O God, make speed to save us. O Lord, make
haste to help us.' Thus, in a world of sorrow, and
opposition, and sin, is the Church compelled to cry
to the Lord of all each time she begins her office

of prayer and praise. Thus does she teach her children to begin their morning and evening prayer among those many enemies both of this world and of the pit who are seeking to ruin souls, who wish evil to the righteous, and who would mock at and exult over them when they fall.

4. But let all those that seek Thee be joyful and glad in Thee : and let all such as delight in Thy salvation say alway, The Lord be praised.

There is joy indeed in that work of coming before God to worship Him. For them whose sins have been confessed and absolved, who have owned God to be their Father Which is in heaven, what better delight can there be than, to the Church's bidding, 'Praise ye the Lord,' to answer with a glad and willing heart, 'The Lord's Name be praised.'

5. As for me, I am poor and in misery : haste Thee unto me, O God

6. Thou art my helper, and my redeemer : O Lord, make no long tarrying.

But they who have done what they ought not to have done, and who have left undone what they ought to have done, and who feel that they have no health in themselves, have need too of guidance and of help in coming to their Redeemer and their Lord : and this too the Church supplies to them. If we would confess our poverty and misery, and humbly crave for grace, the Church teaches us the fit words of peni-

tence and humble sorrow, no less readily than she teaches the words of thanksgiving and of praise.

“To the Chief Musician, by David, to bring to remembrance,” is the title of this Psalm in the Hebrew; with which may be compared the title to Psalm xxxviii. To this the LXX. add, “for the Lord to save me,” which are clearly the opening words of the first verse. The Psalm itself is almost identical with the latter part of the fortieth, verses 13—17. It was probably written by David at first as a complete Psalm, and afterwards made the conclusion to Psalm xl. by him, while it was still used in its separate form in the public service. The first verse the Church uses in the Morning and Evening Prayer.

Morning Prayer.

PSALM lxxi. *In Te, Domine, speravi.*

1. IN Thee, O Lord, have I put my trust, let me never be put to confusion: but rid me, and deliver me, in Thy righteousness; incline Thine ear unto me, and save me.

2. Be Thou my stronghold, whereunto I may alway resort: Thou hast promised to help me, for Thou art my house of defence, and my castle.

In age no less than in youth, faith and prayer are the means by which we escape distress and shame. Through them do we gain the aid of Him Who alone can save us from confusion; through them we ask to be delivered from our many dangers in His righteousness, which is eternal—not in our own, which is less than nothing. So do we find that God and His inviting promise, ‘Turn you to the stronghold,’

will be a refuge and defence that fails not when all other defences fail.

3. Deliver me, O my God, out of the hand of the ungodly : out of the hand of the unrighteous and cruel man.

For He Who hath delivered will again deliver all them who in prayer call to Him for deliverance. The righteous and merciful God is a most certain deliverer from all the unrighteousness and cruelty of man, and from our own faithlessness and doubts, which are more evil and cruel than any persecutor or tyrant.

4. For Thou, O Lord God, art the thing that I long for : Thou art my hope, even from my youth.

5. Through Thee have I been holden up ever since I was born : Thou art He that took me out of my mother's womb ; my praise shall be always of Thee.

In him who has set his love on God, and whose longing is for the things of eternity, length of life increases both trust and hope. Hope grows with length of days, and becomes stronger with age, even as the flesh becomes feebler. 'The eternal God is his refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.' Experience, which reaches even from our birth, from our first entrance into the world up to age, teaches the mighty fact of the sustaining care and the never-ceasing love of our Father in heaven. His grace

keeps an equal march with our advance in years ; surely our praise and gratitude should be, if it might be so, even with His grace.

6. I am become as it were a monster unto many : but my sure trust is in Thee.

Heb. I am become a wonder to many.

7. O let my mouth be filled with Thy praise : that I may sing of Thy glory and honour all the day long.

The believer in God often, while he 'is made a spectacle unto the world,' cannot be understood by the world ; his thoughts and ways are a marvel and a wonder to them. 'His life is not like other men's, his ways are of another fashion.' Their rule is, 'Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die ;' his rule is, 'Let us fast and pray, for to-morrow we die.' Their hope is for things earthly ; his for things heavenly. Their request is to have their own praise and honour before them all the day long ; his prayer is that he may have the praise of his Saviour in his mouth all the days of his life here ;—in his prosperity, because then He comforts him ; in his adversity, because then He corrects him ; when he has sinned, because then He forgives him ; when he is converted, because then He helps him ; when he has persevered, because then He will crown him.

8. Cast me not away in the time of age : forsake me not when my strength faileth me.

They who have made their Lord their hope from their youth, may most securely trust that He will not cast them away in the time of their age. It will be then, when their own strength faileth, that His strength will be shewn forth most plainly and perfectly in them. His love will never, in youth or age, forsake them whose faith forsakes not Him.

9. For mine enemies speak against me, and they that lay wait for my soul take their counsel together, saying : God hath forsaken him ; persecute him, and take him, for there is none to deliver him.

10. Go not far from me, O God : my God, haste Thee to help me.

11. Let them be confounded and perish that are against my soul : let them be covered with shame and dishonour that seek to do me evil.

The example of his Master and the history of his Master is a constant source of comfort and encouragement to the Christian in his troubles, and in the persecutions of his enemies. They said of the Lord, ' God hath forsaken Him,' and their words were utterly false and vain ; and so are they false too, when they are said of the disciple. He Who hath suffered from scorners and haters is ever near to console and to help them who suffer for His Name's sake. ' Those sinners against their own souls, who sought to do His soul evil were confounded and

perished in the evil they sought to do, and like them all shall come to shame and destruction who seek to do evil to the souls of others. Ahithophel said, 'I will arise and pursue after David, and I will come upon him while he is weary, and weak-handed, and will smite the king only;' but his evil and cruel counsel took no effect against David, but turned to his own confusion and death.

12. As for me, I will patiently abide always : and will praise Thee more and more.

13. My mouth shall daily speak of Thy righteousness and salvation : for I know no end thereof.

14. I will go forth in the strength of the Lord God : and will make mention of Thy righteousness only.

Patient experience gives us greater knowledge of God's ways, and greater knowledge gives us greater cause for thanksgiving. Each day of our life opens to us new displays of His righteousness and salvation, and requires new acknowledgments of them from us, for they are as endless and unbounded as He is from Whom they come. 'When ye glorify the Lord, exalt Him as much as ye can; for even yet will He far exceed; and when ye exalt Him, put forth all your strength, and be not weary; for ye can never go far enough.' He who in his old age is weak, can yet go forth strong in his God; and if the discourse of the world has become empty

to him, and the things of time have lost their interest, he can with the more boldness talk of the righteousness of God, and make mention only of the things of eternity.

15. Thou, O God, hast taught me from my youth up until now : therefore will I tell of Thy wondrous works.

16. Forsake me not, O God, in mine old age, when I am gray-headed : until I have shewed Thy strength unto this generation, and Thy power to all them that are yet for to come.

In our youth and from our youth has God been teaching us, and grace been guiding us,—how fully, carefully, tenderly, wonderfully, we scarce can think or tell. He Himself had declared, ‘Even to your old age I am He, and even to hoar hairs will I carry you : I have made, and I will bear ; even I will carry and deliver you.’ They to whom this has been fulfilled, must tell others who come after them of His patience and His power, and bid them trust in Him Who saith to each soul, even as He said to His Church, ‘Behold, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world.’

17. Thy righteousness, O God, is very high : and great things are they that Thou hast done ; O God, who is like unto Thee ?

18. O what great troubles and adversities hast Thou shewed me ! and yet didst Thou

turn and refresh me : yea, and broughtest me from the deep of the earth again.

19. Thou hast brought me to great honour : and comforted me on every side.

The life of every one human being on earth is full of the wonders of God's righteousness, Who dwelleth on high. Troubles and sorrows, and again after them deliverances and refreshings,—sickness and feebleness, and nearness to the grave, and then healing and safety, prosperity, and honour, and comfortings,—these are the varying changes and chances of our mortal life; and each one of them is marvellous and strange, and bids the soul ponder on the might and glory of the God Who deals so wonderfully with us creatures of dust, whom yet He has once made in His own image, and is renewing again after the likeness of His Son.

20. Therefore will I praise Thee and Thy faithfulness, O God, playing upon an instrument of musick : unto Thee will I sing upon the harp, O Thou Holy One of Israel.

21. My lips will be fain when I sing unto Thee : and so will my soul whom Thou hast delivered.

22. My tongue also shall talk of Thy righteousness all the day long : for they are confounded and brought unto shame that seek to do me evil.

It is for these mercies, ' for our creation, preserva-

tion, and all the blessings of this life,' that we are bound to praise and glorify with all our powers of heart and voice that Holy One of the true Israel, Who hath made us what we are, and hath given us what we have. Our tongue must be the tuneful instrument of His praises. To Him must we sing and make melody in our hearts and in our lives. 'But above all for His inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ, for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory;'—this calls for the highest praise our mouth can utter, as it was the highest mercy that God could give. Of this mercy, in youth, in manhood, and in age, must we ever talk; on this love must we ever meditate, not only every day, but all the day long. For by that act of love was the righteousness of our God most fully shewn, by those means of grace is our soul delivered, and in that hope of glory are the hinderers of our salvation brought to shame.

This Psalm, which has no title in the Hebrew, in the LXX. has the title, "By David, of the sons of Jonadab, and of those who were first made prisoners." If any authority be allowed to this title, we must suppose that this was a Psalm written by David, which was used, as particularly adapted to the circumstances of their condition, by the Rechabites, who were descended from Jonadab, (Jer. xxxv.) and the Jews who were taken by the Chaldæans as captives to Babylon. However this may be, it seems probable that David was the author of this Psalm, and that he wrote it in his extreme age, and but a little while before he died. The line which follows the next Psalm, and closes the second book, perhaps has a reference to this fact. Some of the Fathers interpret the Psalm mystically of the Church in her old age, and her trials at the end of the world.

PSALM lxxii. *Deus, judicium.*

1. GIVE the King Thy judgements, O God : and Thy righteousness unto the King's son.

2. Then shall he judge Thy people according unto right : and defend the poor.

3. The mountains also shall bring peace : and the little hills righteousness unto the people.

4. He shall keep the simple folk by their right : defend the children of the poor, and punish the wrong doer.

Solomon became the king over Israel, the son of David whom Samuel anointed to be king. To him, at his prayer, God 'gave an understanding heart to judge His people, that he might discern between good and bad.' In his reign there was peace and justice throughout all his land ; upon 'high and low, rich and poor;' the dwellers in the strongholds of the mountains were brought to submission ; the inhabitants of the plains were governed in equity and truth ; his very name is interpreted 'the Prince of peace.' He judged the people, and his people saw that the wisdom of God was in him, to do judgment. But there was to be a more glorious king than Solomon ; a son of David was to sit on his throne, of Whom Solomon and his wisdom, and riches, and power, was but the type and shadow, a Prince of everlasting peace—the Son of God Who was even 'one with the Father,' Whose kingdom should have

no end, to Whom was given all judgment, and all authority and power, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come.

5. They shall fear Thee, as long as the sun and moon endureth : from one generation to another.

6. He shall come down like the rain into a fleece of wool : even as the drops that water the earth.

Heb. He shall come down like rain on the mown grass.

7. In his time shall the righteous flourish : yea, and abundance of peace, so long as the moon endureth.

Behold a greater than Solomon is here ! The reign of Solomon over Israel was for forty years only ; but while heaven and earth should stand, while the sun and moon should endure, He Who was the Sun of righteousness was to be with His Church as King and Lord, even unto the end of the world. She was to fear Him and obey His law ; and His heavenly grace, 'the continual dew of His blessing,' was to descend upon her and her members, giving life and strength and fruitfulness, as the rain cometh down upon the mown grass, or as the dew fell upon the fleece of Gideon. Through Him shall they that are His be accounted righteous ; and in Him shall His people find peace, both in time and when time shall be no more. They shall find that peace which passeth all understanding in His Church on earth, and they

shall pass from His Church here into the unending peace of His Church above.

8. His dominion shall be also from the one sea to the other : and from the flood unto the world's end.

9. They that dwell in the wilderness shall kneel before him : his enemies shall lick the dust.

‘Solomon reigned over all the kingdoms from the river Euphrates unto the land of the Philistines, and unto the border of Egypt: they brought presents and served Solomon all the days of his life.’ But Christ's kingdom shall be wider far. It shall extend from sea to sea, and not be bounded even by the ends of the earth, or by the limits of time, for ‘His kingdom shall have no end.’ They who have dwelt in the parched wilderness of ignorance and sin shall feel the might of His love, and fall down upon their knees and worship Him. They who were once His enemies, and would not so much as bow down their heads in His presence, shall hide their faces in the earth before Him, in adoration of His mercy and His holiness.

10. The kings of Tharsis and of the isles shall give presents : the kings of Arabia and Saba shall bring gifts.

11. All kings shall fall down before him : all nations shall do him service.

‘All the earth sought a sight of Solomon, to hear

his wisdom which God had put in his heart: and they brought every man his present, vessels of silver and vessels of gold.' The Queen of Sheba came from the utmost part of the earth to hear his wisdom, and to see his glory. And so the wise men came from the east to worship the Son of David Who was born King of the Jews, and they went to Bethlehem where He was, 'and when they were come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshipped Him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto Him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.' They presented themselves also unto Him. They were the firstfruits of the Gentiles, the forerunners of the nations, peoples, and languages, who should confess Him as King of kings and Lord of lords, and bring before Him their tribute of obedience, and worship, and praise.

12. For he shall deliver the poor when he crieth: the needy also, and him that hath no helper.

13. He shall be favourable to the simple and needy: and shall preserve the souls of the poor.

14. He shall deliver their souls from falsehood and wrong: and dear shall their blood be in his sight.

He Who was Lord of all came poor to save the poor. He it is in truth Who 'delivereth the poor that crieth, and the fatherless, and him that hath

no helper.' His call was, 'Come unto Me, all that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' His judgment was, 'Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.' His title was, 'The Preserver of men.' So precious were their souls in His sight, that He gave His blood to save them,—to save them from falsehood and sin, and to save them from eternal death.

15. He shall live, and unto him shall be given of the gold of Arabia : prayer shall be made ever unto him, and daily shall he be praised.

His power is eternal as Himself. That which was said in flattery to other kings shall be said in truth to Him—'O King, live for ever.' For He saith, 'I am He that liveth and was dead; and behold I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and death.' Whatever is most precious and most pure shall be offered to Him as a fitting tribute. 'Thy kingdom come' shall be the prayer that shall continually be made before Him. Day by day shall He be magnified, and His Name shall be worshipped world without end.

16. There shall be an heap of corn in the earth, high upon the hills : his fruit shall shake like Libanus, and shall be green in the city like grass upon the earth.

Heb. There shall be abundance of corn in the earth,

Even upon the tops of the mountains:

Its fruit shall shake like Lebanon.

They of the city shall flourish like the grass of the earth.

17. His Name shall endure for ever ; his Name shall remain under the sun among the posterities : which shall be blessed through him ; and all the heathen shall praise him.

In the reign of Solomon, God's grace was shewn in blessing the smallest quantity of seed in the barrenest soil unto a most bounteous harvest. Then 'Judah and Israel were many as the sand which is by the sea, eating and drinking, and making merry.' In the kingdom of Christ, His people, which is the true Israel, shall be very many in number. The seed which He went forth to sow shall bring forth in them the fruit of good works a hundred-fold. The earth shall be covered with the knowledge and fear of the Lord, even to the tops of the mountains. The wheat of the righteous shall grow in His field strong and tall, waving to and fro with its heavy ears, like the cedars upon Lebanon. The inhabitants of the city of God, that is, His Church, shall be countless in their number, like the blades of grass which grow upon the face of the earth. His Name, which is bright with a glory beyond all created light, shall be hallowed for ever, and all the generations of them that believe on it shall be saved. As the Jews of old blessed in the name of Solomon, saying, The Lord make thee like unto Solomon ; so to be called a Christian, 'and to be made like unto Christ,' is a name of still higher blessing which can never be lost. For in Him is fulfilled to the uttermost the promise made to Abraham,—'In thy seed shall all the nations of the world be blessed.' He Who is the salvation

of all, both of Jew and Gentile, shall receive glory, and honour, and praise from all the children of men.

18. Blessed be the Lord God, even the God of Israel : Which only doeth wondrous things ;

19. And blessed be the Name of His Majesty for ever : and all the earth shall be filled with His Majesty. Amen, Amen.

To that eternal and All-wise God, Who sent His only-begotten Son into the world, to redeem the world and bring us to His light and truth, be given praise, and blessing, and glory, both now and for ever. He hath done that which He spake to Moses, saying, 'I have pardoned according to thy word: but as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord.' May His everlasting counsel be ever more and more accomplished, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Heb. The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended.

Thus with the full assurance of a coming Saviour, a King mightier than all the kings of the earth, Who should sit upon his throne and rule in perfect righteousness, does David end his enraptured and inspired prayers. As in the Saviour his prayers were ended, so in the Saviour were they fulfilled. 'Now these be the last words of David, of David the son of Jesse, and the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob and the

sweet psalmist of Israel, by whom the Spirit of the Lord spake, and His word was in his tongue.'

This Psalm, according to the title, was written "by Solomon," and it is full of references to the circumstances of his life and the character of his reign, (compare 1 Kings iii., iv., x.). But it has been acknowledged by the ancient Jewish commentators, as well as taught by the Christian Fathers, that this Psalm in its higher and spiritual meaning is prophetic of the Messiah, and is to be referred to Him. That Solomon was a type of Christ is plain from the Canticles, but he was still further a type in his being the son of David and the king of Israel—in the peace of his reign—in the heathens submitting themselves to him—in his wisdom and justice,—and in his building the Temple. Our Lord Himself seems to teach us this in St. Luke xi. 31. The last line, which declares that the prayers of David are ended, and which in the Hebrew concludes this book, does not imply that no other prayer-psalms of David existed, but that those which are contained in this book had been collected under the directions of Hezekiah, and were to be used according to their original design in the temple-service, and that the psalms which followed these, and are contained in the next book, were not the composition of David. Though this notice is appended to a psalm which, like the hundred and twenty-seventh, was written by Solomon, yet it may well have been looked upon as a psalm of David, both as being written by his son, and as embodying the hopes and assurances of David, which were founded on the promises made to him. The songs of Solomon were a thousand and five, (1 Kings iv. 32), but of them only these two psalms and the book of Canticles have been preserved in the Holy Scriptures.



A

PLAIN COMMENTARY

ON THE

BOOK OF PSALMS,

(The Prayer-Book Version,)

CHIEFLY FOUNDED ON THE FATHERS.

VOLUME II.,

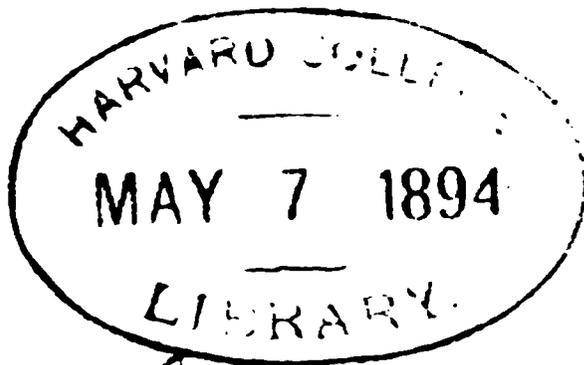
CONTAINING PSALMS LXXIII.—CL.

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INTRODUCTION II.

§ 1. THE INTERPRETATION OF THE PSALMS.

It is, of course, clear that the meaning which all who read the Psalms, as well as other portions of Holy Scriptures, have first to look to, is that of the words taken in their plain and literal sense. We certainly can make no great progress in the study of God's Word until we have understood its Literal meaning. In the historical books this is generally very plain; but in the poetical and prophetic portions of the Bible it is much more difficult to discover it, because the writers intended that it should be so. It was one of the great points of ancient learning, as it is of modern,—

“To understand a proverb and the interpretation,
The words of the wise, and their dark sayings.”

As has been said already, it was one of the beauties of Hebrew and of all Eastern poetry to hide and wrap up its meaning; and this was done occasionally by difficulty of language and obscurity of expression. Therefore it is not always easy to understand the literal meaning of a Psalm,—as, for instance, that of

many verses of Psalm lxxviii. ; and a careful study of it in the original language, and in the Greek and other translations, is required to arrive at even a partial knowledge of what the words which the Psalmist wrote really mean. We must always, therefore, look first to the Literal meaning.

The second meaning which the reader of the Psalms is required carefully to attend to, is the Prophetic meaning. Many of the Psalms contain clear prophecies and distinct revelations made by the Holy Ghost of things that were to come to pass, especially of the Lord Jesus Christ, of Judas, and of the calling of the Gentiles into the Church. The prophecies of the Psalms on these things are several times expressly said to have been fulfilled in the New Testament itself ; and often, as in Psalm xxii., they are so distinct and positive, that it is impossible to mistake them even wilfully. In all cases where the New Testament declares any part of a Psalm to be prophetic, we have an infallible comment on the prophecy which silences all other guesses or explanations. And besides those prophecies which are infallibly pointed out to us, there are also others which are not so directly pointed out, but which yet are distinctly prophetic of the Saviour. He said unto the Apostles when He revealed Himself to them in the upper room, 'These are the words which I spake unto you while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms concerning Me.' And then 'opened He their understanding, that they

might understand the Scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His Name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem^a.' Therefore, wherever passages occur which describe in an evident manner some fact of our Lord's life, either in His humility or His exaltation, and particularly when such a passage occurs in a Psalm which the New Testament has already pointed out to us as containing prophecies of Him, as in Psalm lxix., then we must take these parts of the Psalms to be prophecies, and must understand them in their prophetic meaning.

A third meaning is the Moral meaning. By this we apply to ourselves, to our own consciences, our own conduct, or our own feelings, the devotional or penitential expressions of the Psalms; we draw lessons of holiness, or purity, or love, from the words of the prophets and men of God; or we read the denunciations of rebuke, of indignation, and of coming punishment, which David made against Doeg, or Saul, or Ahithophel, as having an equal reference to the cruel and the tyrannical, to the deceitful and the hypocritical at this time. It is the moral sense of Holy Scripture which furnishes matter to the Church for practical sermons and exhortations on the dealings of God with man both in the outer and the inner life, and which sets before the consciences of Christians the histories and narratives recorded in

^a St. Luke xxiv. 44—47.

the Bible, as 'profitable for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.' The drawing out and dwelling upon the moral meaning in the Psalms must of necessity be in some measure left to each man's own experience and spiritual insight into the righteous ways of God in dealing with the soul, and sustaining by grace the inner life of man.

The last method of interpretation is that of discovering the Mystical or Spiritual meaning of Scripture; and this is the most difficult to lay down rules for. It is very probable that a mystical meaning was almost always in the mind of the writers of the Psalms, and that if it is allowable to spiritualize any portion of the Scripture, it is allowable to do so in interpreting these holy songs. It is likely, too, that it is the duty of the student who regards the Psalms in a mere critical light, to trace out the mystical meanings as a part of his critical work, no less than it is the privilege of the Christian to do so, who reads them in a Christian spirit. Very much of early poetry was mystical: it was doubtless connected in its origin with the hieroglyphic writing, in which each outward sign had an inward meaning, and the birds and beasts, and the members of the human body expressed different qualities, virtues, passions, or other abstract ideas. With those who were used to this painting of conceptions of the mind under the form of visible objects, the objects themselves would come to have but a secondary rank in the scale of meanings: the light of the sun, the rage of the lion, the moisture of the cloud,

would suggest, or rather represent, other things,—wisdom, or violence, or the diffusion of benefits. A language would in this way be formed, founded on the symbolism of nature. And the recollection of the divinely ordered types of the Jewish law, which the soul enlightened by the Holy Spirit knew to be types, and dwelt upon as upon shadows of more perfect forms, would confirm, and indeed would hallow, this peculiar habit of poetic conception and expression. This love of symbolism would harmonize also in a wonderful way with the parallelistic structure of Hebrew poetry, in which one thing was ever being set against the other, and would lead men to see, or to seek for, an inner meaning in everything in heaven above and in earth beneath. This seems clearly indicated by parts of the 103rd Psalm, in which the thing seen is not only used as a type of, but as an argument for, the thing unseen. Be this as it may, it is certain that the Saints and Fathers of the early Church always dwelt much upon the spiritual sense of the Psalms; and if it be true that a poet can best understand a poet, it must be still more true that a saint can best understand a prophet. In reading the Psalms, we cannot but gain great profit to our souls by following reverently in their footsteps.

They seem to have possessed some traditional key to the spiritual meaning of the Psalms, for while some go further than others in spiritualizing them, there is a wonderful agreement among them in the results of their interpretation: but the real secret of

their insight into the spiritual meanings of Scripture, or at least the secret of their drawing from that storehouse such multitudes of holy and beautiful thoughts and images, was their spirit of Divine love. They saw their Lord everywhere. St. Augustine can say of a Psalm in which we can scarcely trace out anything which may be considered as an allusion to the Gospel scheme, — ‘This Psalm breathes wholly of Christ.’ It did so to him: he saw his Lord there, because he could see Him; for his eyes were enlightened by the graces of faith and love.

By this constant reference of the Psalms to Christ, and to the Church as inseparably united to Christ, their words become invested with a new and brighter meaning. The words of David become the words of the Son of David, — speaking either in His own person, or in the person of His Church and people. This, then, is the first rule of spiritual interpretation, — to see Christ everywhere, to find His life, His words, His glory, underlying all the prayers and praises of all the Psalms. In following this rule, we may err on the side of carrying the spiritual interpretation too far; yet surely it is better to err with St. Augustine and St. Bernard, than to be wise with the cold and unspiritual critics of these latter days. There is, however, a mean which we must aim at in this, as in other things; for when a medieval writer would interpret, ‘Then shall the earth bring forth her increase,’ not of the general resurrection, but of the Blessed Virgin bringing forth the Lord, we cannot but think it rather a beautiful fancy than

a correct comment. Probably the safest course for an English Churchman, is to take those Psalms as having a direct reference to the Saviour, which the Church has marked with that sacramental character, by appointing them for those holy days on which she commemorates His Birth, His Passion, His Resurrection, and His Ascension. In these we may seek for our Lord, and trust most surely to find Him, because His Church has told us that He is there. In the other Psalms we may hear Him speaking in His people,—praying, mourning, hoping, rejoicing in them; but in these we can joyfully acknowledge Him as speaking in His own Person.

The second rule of spiritual interpretation consists in attaching a new and inner meaning to certain expressions and images. Thus the feet are mystically interpreted to be the affections with which we run to Christ, the bones are fortitude and strength of resolution, mountains are angels and heavenly powers, the sun is the Lord of glory, the moon is the Church, the stars are the Saints, the heavens are the Scriptures, the clouds are mysteries, sheep are the people of Christ's Church, and oxen her ministers, the singing a Psalm is the leading a holy life, the ten-stringed lute is the decalogue, the lion is the devil, the young ravens the heathen; and so of all the objects and images which occur in the Psalms. In the same way, the history of the Israelitish Church is considered to be allegorical of that of the Christian Church,—the tyranny of Pharaoh is the tyranny of sin, the Red Sea is holy Baptism,

the wilderness is the scene of earthly temptation, the ark is the human nature of Christ, the manna is the Holy Eucharist, the rest of Canaan is the rest of Christ's kingdom, Sion is the Church on earth, and Jerusalem the Church in heaven. This method of interpreting is founded on Scripture. St. Paul uses it in his Epistles, and declares authoritatively that portions of the history of the Old Testament are an allegory^b. And the use of it is not only sanctioned by the inspired writers of the New Testament; but it was also intended to be so used by the writers of the Psalms themselves. One of the Fathers has remarked very rightly on those opening words of Psalm lxxviii.,—

“I will open my mouth in a parable,
I will declare hard sentences of old,”—

that after the prophet had made this declaration, one would think that his discourse would be filled with obscurities and with enigmatic sayings, but that, on the contrary, all through the Psalm there is nothing but what is most simple, and easy to be understood by everyone, — it being a short history of the Israelites before they became a kingdom. The Psalmist, therefore, could only have spoken of these events as being ‘parables and hard sayings,’ because the things which were so easily understood in their historical meaning contained within themselves, in their mystical meaning, truths of mighty and wonderful importance. The light of the Holy Ghost was needed, as the Psalmist saw, to elucidate these

^b Gal. iv. 24.

marvellous obscurities, and to explain how in these holy parables were hid the sacraments of the New Covenant.

Therefore we can only conclude that the spiritual and mystical meanings, which the Fathers dwell so much on, are not to be neglected or treated with indifference, though they may not at once approve themselves to minds which have been trained in another school; but that each Christian man, according to the gift given to him, must follow as he can in this sacred path of interpretation. There is room in the Divine writings for all; like the manna, they miraculously adapt themselves to each one's needs and each one's powers. The spiritual interpretations of the Fathers are not authoritative; they aim but to be edifying: and if in reading the Psalms we do follow closely those who closely followed Christ, we may still feel secure that, while we do so, we shall not stray far from the right and true way.

§ 2. THE TRANSLATIONS OF THE PSALMS.

THE Psalms were, of course, composed and written in Hebrew, the native language of the writers; and their Hebrew text, as we now have it, represents certainly in almost every case the sentiments and words of the inspired poets. It is possible that here and there a line or a word may have dropped out in the long course of transcribing,—as verse 14 in Psalm cxlv. has done,—or may have been erased by the Jews,

as bearing too clear a testimony to the Messiahship of our Lord: as the Fathers asserted that the words of verse 10 of Psalm xcvi. originally were,—

“Announce it to the Gentiles
That the Lord hath reigned from the tree.”

but that the words ‘from the tree’ were intentionally omitted by the Jews from their manuscripts. But even supposing that one or two such omissions may possibly have been made, yet, upon the whole, we are sure the original text of the Psalms is undoubtedly preserved to us; and that the Psalms, as well as the rest of the Canon of Scripture, are in the same state as when they were finally revised by Ezra and his assistants, ‘the men of the Great Synagogue,’ among whom Rabbinical tradition reckons Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, and Nehemiah.

By Ezra and the Great Synagogue, the ancient form of the Hebrew letters, which were the same as those of the Samaritan, were changed for the square and handsome characters which the Jews now use, and which were borrowed from the Assyrian; and in his time the custom began of reading the Scriptures to the people in the synagogues in Hebrew, and afterwards translating it into Chaldee; for the common people after the return from the captivity had lost the use of their ancient language, or at least only understood it very imperfectly, and spoke and understood Chaldee in their ordinary conversation. The Scribes, therefore, in the synagogues ‘read in the book of the law distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading;’ that is

to say, they used to read the Law of Moses, and doubtless also the Prophets and the Psalms, in Hebrew; they then gave the sense of it by translating it orally into Chaldee, and afterwards made them understand it by comments and expositions, generally of a traditional character. These Chaldee translations, or paraphrases, were in later times committed to writing, and are called by the name of Targums. The Hebrew text being in the first instance without the vowel-points, the interpretation of it must have been in many cases traditional; but at some period after the Christian Era the Masorites affixed the vowel-points to the whole Bible, and by doing so determined the sense of such passages in the Psalms and other books as before were doubtful.

About the year 286 B.C., when the number of Jews who had settled in Egypt had become very great, a translation was made of the whole of the Old Testament into Greek. These Jews had lost the knowledge of Hebrew even more completely than the Jews of Palestine, and therefore a translation of Scripture was much required for their use. The history of this translation is involved in obscurity. The account which is usually given is as follows:—that the librarian of Ptolemy Philadelphus, the king of Egypt, called the attention of his sovereign to the importance of the Jewish sacred writings, and to the desirableness of enriching the magnificent library which existed at Alexandria with a translation of the Law and the other Scriptures; that upon this King Ptolemy sent the librarian, whose name was

Aristeas, on a special embassy to Eleazar the high-priest, the brother and successor of Simon the Just, at Jerusalem, — desiring him to send certain of the scribes, learned men of Israel, to translate the Scriptures, that they might be added to his library. Seventy-two scribes, of whom six, according to some accounts, were chosen out of each tribe, were sent into Egypt, and there translated the Law of Moses in the space of seventy-two days. Many marvellous features were added to this story in after-times; one of them being, that each one of the interpreters was shut up in a separate cell, and translated the whole Scripture, and that on their versions being compared at the end of their labours, they were all found to be exactly alike word for word. It appears, however, certain that the Law of Moses was translated into Greek by seventy-two scribes, or Rabbis, in Egypt, during the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphus, from which circumstance this version has always had the name of the Septuagint, the Seventy, or the LXX.; and that the Prophets, Psalms, and historical books were translated by the same scribes, or by others of equal learning, at the same time, or very shortly after, either at the king's request, or for the use of the Jews in Egypt and other foreign countries. The Septuagint translation, though lamented as an evil by the Hebrew Rabbis, soon acquired great popularity. It was received and used in the public service of those synagogues in all parts of the world which were frequented by the Jews who did not understand Chaldee, and who were therefore called Hellenistic,

or Grecizing Jews; and by the time of our Lord it was received and quoted, if we may judge from the example of the Evangelists and Apostles, as of nearly equal authority with the Hebrew original.

After the establishment of the Church of the New Covenant, the translation of the LXX. came into universal use among the Christians who spoke Greek: it was read in the churches, and the comments of all the Greek Fathers are made upon this version; while in the western parts of the world a translation was made from the LXX. at a very early period, which was known by the name of 'the Ancient Italic' Version. This translation was used by the Latin Fathers before the time of St. Jerome: but St. Jerome, having acquired a knowledge of Hebrew, made with great care and industry a new translation of the whole Bible, which, though based in some degree upon 'the Ancient Italic,' yet was far more correct. This, with some few variations, constitutes what is now called 'the Vulgate,' and is the authorized version of the Churches under the obedience of Rome. But of the Psalms, St. Jerome made two translations: the first he prepared at Rome, under the directions of Pope Damasus; it was little more than a correction of the Italic version already existing. This has still the name of the Roman or Italic Psalter. The second translation was made by him afterwards in Palestine, and is that which is contained in the Vulgate. Of these two Psalters, the Roman was very long in use in the western part of the Church, but it gradually gave way to the second version, which, from being

first used in Gaul, was called the Gallican; and at length was only used in that part of Italy which is immediately in the neighbourhood of Rome. At present its use is confined to some few churches in Rome and at Milan: everywhere else in the Latin Church, except perhaps occasionally in Spain, the Gallican version of the Psalms is used.

In the English Church, also, we possess two Psalters: the one being that in the Prayer-book, which is used in the daily Offices of the Church; the other being the one in the authorized translation of the whole Bible. The preface to the Prayer-book tells us 'that the Psalter followeth the division of the Hebrews,'—that is, that the Psalms are numbered as they are in the Hebrew Bible, and not according to the LXX, and the Vulgate,—'and the translation of the great English Bible set forth and used in the time of King Henry VIII. and Edward VI.' This Psalter, which we use in our daily prayers, is taken from the Bible which was printed in London in 1539, under the authority of Archbishop Cranmer and Bishop Coverdale: it was ordered to be used in churches, and from its size was usually called 'the Great Bible.' This translation was made by comparing the Vulgate and the Hebrew, or rather by correcting the Vulgate by the Hebrew; and it is most justly esteemed for its majestic grandeur, its musical flow of style, and its being admirably adapted for chanting. For these reasons, it was always preserved when the other portions of Scripture in the Prayer-book were made to conform to the authorized ver-

sion. Though this version is not rendered quite so accurately from the Hebrew as the Bible version, yet it gives the sense upon the whole with equal correctness; and though it contains a few obsolete words,—for instance, ‘runagates,’ in Psalm lxviii. 6, which is an old form of ‘renegades;’ ‘leasing,’ meaning ‘lies,’ in Psalm v. 6; and ‘wink,’ in Psalm xxxv. 19, which is used in the sense of closing the eyes demurely and hypocritically,—together with some expressions which we now consider homely, yet, upon the whole, it has become so dear to the affections of English Churchmen, that it would be impossible now that it should be changed. It has been truly said that the three noblest versions of the Psalter in existence are St. Jerome’s Latin version, Luther’s German version, and last in order of time, though not in merit or in beauty, the version of our English Prayer-book.

§ 3. THE USE OF THE PSALMS IN DIVINE WORSHIP.

It is clear from the Psalms themselves, as well as from many passages in the books of Kings, of Chronicles, and of Ezra and Nehemiah, that the chanting of the Psalms formed a part of the solemn Service and worship of God in the tabernacle on Mount Sion, and in the temple built by Solomon on Moriah. The titles of many of the Psalms, which describe them to have been composed ‘for the chief musician,’ or ‘the leader of the choir,’ prove that they were from the first intended for the service of the temple. ‘In the days of David and Asaph of old there were

chief of the singers, and songs of praise and thanksgiving unto God^c.' David with great care and judgment, and with the help of the priests, and of the Levites^d, regulated the manner in which the ark was to be brought to Mount Sion, and also gave them the Psalms to be chanted on the occasion, and afterwards fixed the order in which the Services were to be performed in the new Tabernacle. In doing this, he certainly only restored and enlarged upon the original order which he had learned from Samuel^e, and which had remained traditionally from the time of Moses. Solomon in the temple preserved the same order of divine service and of Psalmody which David his father has arranged; and Hezekiah, when he, in his pious reformation of religion, 'commanded the Levites to sing praise unto the Lord with the words of David and Asaph the Seer^f,' did no more than restore the form of festival-worship which had become neglected and disused. Nehemiah and Ezra, after the return from the captivity, followed in the same course. They did not institute any new order of public worship, but set the Levites 'to praise and to give thanks, according to the commandment of David, the man of God^g.' That the Psalter formed the whole, or a great part, of the liturgy of the Church of Israel is very probable, though we have no positive tradition, and indeed but a few scattered notices, as to the mode in which its various portions were used. It is

^c Neh. xii. 46.

^d See 1 Chron. xv., xvi., xxiii.—xxv.

^e 1 Chron. ix. 22.

^f 2 Chron. xxix. 30.

^g Neh. xii. 24.

said, however, that the Jews used constantly and ordinarily Ps. xxiv. on the first day of the week; xlvi. on the second; lxxxii. on the third; xciv. on the fourth; lxxxvi. on the fifth; xcvi. on the sixth; xcvi. on the seventh.

The care with which the Psalter was preserved in the sacred canon, and the reverence with which it was regarded, prove that it was no mere collection of popular or striking poems. The Israelites had such, which contained praises of their heroes, and the histories of their mighty deeds, like the Book of Jasher^b; they had also poems embodying the wisdom of science and the knowledge of nature, as the verses of Solomon on natural history¹, but these have all perished. They served their turn in the education of the people, and were lost: but the Book of Psalms remains, through the will and decree of God, as an inheritance of the Church of the elect for all times.

The Christian Church received this inheritance from the Jewish. The example of the Saviour, Who sang with His disciples the Psalms of 'the Great Hallel,' on the night when the commemorative Passover gave place for ever to the Eucharistic Sacrament, became a law to the whole Church, and His Apostles closely followed the practice of their Lord. Paul and Silas, when they said their form of midnight prayer, sang Psalms to God aloud^k, probably the very Psalms which they had always been used to sing at that time of prayer. The same St. Paul bids the Churches both of Ephesus and of Colosse to use

^b Josh. x. 13; 2 Sam. i. 18. ¹ 1 Kings iv. 32, 33. ^k Acts xvi. 25.

Psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs¹, singing them melodiously and heartily, and, as the original would seem to imply, in alternate verses, unto God. St. James, too, bids the man who is glad of heart to shew his gladness by singing Psalms^m. The use of the Psalter, therefore, as the appointed form of Christian devotion, spread with the spreading of the Church, east and west.

The worship of the Christian Church has from the beginning divided itself into two great branches,—I., the performing that Service which especially is called the Liturgy, the centre and crowning act of which is the Celebration of the Holy Eucharist; and II., the use of hourly or daily prayers, the centre or chief part of which is the recitation of the Psalms. Psalms mixed with readings or lessons from Holy Scripture, and with prayers, have always been the staple of the daily Service of the members of Christ's Church in all ages. They have been differently arranged in different Churches, but the general plan has been always the same.

In Egypt, for instance, in early times, after some variations, the number of the Psalms for the morning and evening was fixed at twelve, which were sung one after the other, without any lessons being read between them. In Armenia, more than ninety Psalms are still said at a single service.

In the Eastern or Greek Church, the Psalms are divided into twenty portions of similar lengths called 'Cathismata,' of which three or more are recited on

¹ Eph. v. 18, 19; Col. iii. 16.

^m St. James v. 13.

each day throughout the year,—two being generally said through at morning prayer, and one at evening; but this number at certain solemn seasons is doubled, and through part of Holy-week and Easter-week, no Psalms are said at all. Each one of these is again divided into three ‘staseis,’ or stations, at the end of each of which the *Gloria Patri* is chanted. But in addition to the ‘Cathismata,’ other Psalms chosen for the purpose are used continually in the offices of the Greek Church.

In the Western Church, an arrangement was made at an early period, by which the Psalms were divided into seven portions for the seven days of the week, and each of them was again divided according to the seven hours of devotion, that is, Nocturns and Lauds, which together were called Matins, Prime, Tierce, Sext, Nones, Vespers, and Compline. The Psalms were thus said through once every week; and this arrangement of them, intermixed with collects, hymns, and short selections from Scripture, and from the Fathers, form what is called the Breviary Service in the Latin Church.

But, practically, these portions of the Psalms, after the fervour of the early Church had passed away, were not duly recited at the seven hours which their names denote; but a few of them were said altogether in the morning and in the evening. The divines who reformed the English Prayer-book complained that ‘notwithstanding that the ancient Fathers divided the Psalms into seven portions, whereof every one was called a Nocturn, now of late times a

few have been daily said, and the rest utterly omitted ;' and therefore the Church of England, when she remodelled her Services, arranged them into two Offices only,—Matins, and Evensong; the services of the Nocturns, Lauds, and Prime being comprehended in Matins, and Vespers and Compline in Evensong. She also diminished the number of the Psalms which were to be said daily, by ordaining that the Psalter should be said through once in each month, in the regular order of the Psalms. For the great festivals she appoints proper Psalms, having a reference to the day. The American Church has followed her example in the morning and evening services, but has deviated in one important point, that is, in allowing that selections from the Psalms may be said at discretion, in the stead of the portion which comes in for the day in the regular order of the Psalms.

§ 4. THE CHANTING THE PSALMS.

It is clear, beyond all dispute, that the Psalms were originally intended by their inspired authors to be sung to music. They declare this themselves again and again; and the titles also often indicate the particular instruments to which they were to be sung. David himself appointed the choirs of Levites, invented new instruments of music, and gave great attention to the proper chanting of the Psalms in the tabernacle:—

“ In all his works he praised the Holy One
The most High with words of glory ;

With his whole heart he sung songs,
And loved Him that made him.
He set singers also before the altar,
That by their voices they might make sweet melody,
And daily sing praises in their songs.
He beautified their feasts,
And set in order the solemn times until the end,
That they might praise His holy Name,
And that the temple might sound from morning."

Ecclus. xlvii. 8—10.

We cannot with positive certainty discover what was the nature of the tunes or chants to which the Psalms in the temple were sung. Some have supposed them to be of an elaborate character, like our modern anthems. It is more probable that they were simple, grand, and solemn, very like, if not identical with, what we now call the Gregorian tones; and that they consisted of but few notes, to which the verses were recited, with a change at the end. The accents affixed by the Masorites to the Psalms seem to indicate some such method of chanting; and the chants, or cantillations, which the Jews still use in their worship, are probably a traditional imitation, though much degenerated, of the ancient temple choral song. The Psalms were probably sung by the choirs of Levites, accompanied by the instrumental music of their brother Levites, the people or the priests occasionally joining, or responding, as the Psalm required. This supposition will account for the change of persons which so often occurs in the Psalms. The Jews most likely used the same kind of chanting in reciting the Psalms in their private or family devotions, as was used in the temple.

As the Christians inherited the Psalms from the Jewish Church, they would probably retain also the tunes to which they were sung. The most ancient method of singing the Psalms in the Christian Church, was for the whole congregation to sing together. But this custom was afterwards departed from. In Egypt, one person sang the Psalm through with a plain and even voice, the rest sitting by in silence, and attending to what was sung; at the end of all, after the antiphone, which was always one of the Alleluia Psalms, the whole assembly joined in chanting the *Gloria Patri*. The practice of singing the Psalms by two choirs, chanting them verse by verse alternately, began at Antioch, about the middle of the fourth century: St. Chrysostom encouraged this method of chanting at Constantinople, where it became exceedingly popular; and St. Ambrose introduced it into the Western Church. St. Basil, speaking of the Eastern custom in his time, says,—‘Dividing ourselves into two bands, or choirs, we sing antiphonally one with another; but sometimes we permit one alone to begin the Psalm, and the rest of the congregation join in at the close of every verse.’ St. Hilary describes ‘the glorious sound of the Christian hymns, and the respondings of the congregation.’ But it was always the aim of the Church to check any tendency to too florid or worldly music, and the old traditional style of simple chanting was as far as possible preserved. St. Augustine tells us in his Confessions, that St. Athanasius took great pains to regulate the music of the Church,

‘and introduced the custom of singing Psalms in plain song, ordering the reader to pronounce them with such inflections, that it was nearer to reading than to singing:’ but this, probably, was when one person chanted them alone to the congregation. In the sixth century, St. Gregory gave great attention to the subject of chanting, and having arranged the ancient melodies which had been used in the Church from the time of St. Ambrose, he added others to them, making up the number of eight, which tones have ever since been in use in the Church, under the name of ‘the Gregorian tones.’ They were retained in our own Church at the Reformation, under the direction of Archbishop Cranmer, and were generally used in our cathedrals, and also in parish churches, until the end of the seventeenth century. Chants, as time went on, were composed in imitation of them, but aiming rather at variety and sweetness than the grandeur and holy severity of the ancient Church music; and these by degrees superseded the early plain song. It is not unlikely that this prevalence of music which seeks rather to be beautiful than to be holy, may have had somewhat to do with the banishment of chanted Psalms from our churches. When music becomes too worldly, it untunes men’s minds from devotion, rather than raises them to it, and sustains them in it. From this cause, however, or from mere negligence, the practice of chanting the Psalms to the ancient tones of the Church was, until of late years, fast becoming obsolete; and the Psalms themselves, which are only rightly used when they

are rightly chanted, were too much disregarded as a means of devotion and prayer.

It is clear that the Psalter should be always sung when it is used for the worship of God. The reading it when it is part of the service, and then singing rhyming translations in addition to the service, are miserable substitutes for the full glory of the inspired Psalms, chanted by Christian mouths to the old melodies of the Christian Church, from the fullness of Christian hearts, glowing with the rapture of praise and the joy of thanksgiving.

Truly the due saying and chanting of the Psalms is a noble and a holy thing!—‘A thing,’ as judicious Hooker has truly saidⁿ, ‘which all Christian Churches in the world have received; a thing which so many ages have held; a thing which the most approved councils and laws have so oftentimes ratified; a thing which was never found to have any inconvenience in it; a thing which, heretofore, the best men and wisest governors of God’s people did think they never could commend enough; a thing which, as Basil was persuaded, did both strengthen the meditation of those holy words which were uttered in that sort, and serve also to make attentive, and to raise up the hearts of men; a thing whereunto God’s people of old did resort with hope and thirst, that thereby especially their souls might be edified; a thing which filleth the mind with comfort and heavenly delight, stirreth up flagrant desires and affections correspondent unto that which the

ⁿ See Ecc. Pel. V. xxxix. 4.

words contain, allayeth all kinds of base and earthly cogitations, banisheth and driveth away those evil and secret suggestions which our invisible enemy is always apt to minister, watereth the heart to the end it may fructify, maketh the virtuous in trouble full of magnanimity and courage, serveth as a much-approved remedy against all doleful and heavy accidents which befall men in this present life; to conclude, so fitly accordeth with the Apostle's own exhortation, "Speak to yourselves in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, making melody, and singing to the Lord in your hearts," that surely there is more cause to fear lest the want thereof be a maim, than the use a blemish, to the Service of God.'

§ 5. THE GLORIA PATRI.

THE Prayer-book in prescribing the order in which the Psalter is to be read, directs that 'at the end of every Psalm, and of every part of the cxixth Psalm, shall be repeated this hymn:—

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son : and to the Holy Ghost ;
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be : world without end. Amen.'

This short ascription of glory to the blessed Trinity is of very great antiquity, and has always been used in the Christian Church in connection with the Psalms. The Church of England has acted with discretion in making it her only antiphone, or anthem. The antiphone was a short sentence, or verse of Scripture, which was chanted in earlier ages after every verse,

but in later times after each Psalm, or portion of the Psalms, and it varied according to the nature of the festival, and assigned a peculiar character to the Psalm appropriate to the time. Thus the antiphone which followed Psalm i. would shew whether its meaning for the time was to refer to a saint, to a martyr, or to our Lord Himself; and so with other Psalms. The use of these antiphones had, in process of time, become confused, and they rendered the services difficult and intricate; and, therefore, at the reforming of the Prayer-book they were all left out, and the *Gloria Patri* alone was retained. This gives to every Psalm a Christian meaning, and makes every Psalm as we sing it a Christian hymn; while it teaches the members of the Church that the praise and glory which was imperfect in the Jewish Church, is made perfect in the Church of Christ, by the full revelation which the Son of God has made to man of the Father, of Himself, and of the Holy Ghost.

**THE THIRD DIVISION OF THE BOOK
OF PSALMS.**

PSALMS LXXIII.—LXXXIX.

THIS third Book of the Psalms may be well supposed to have been compiled, like the preceding one, during the reign of Hezekiah, and under his directions. It comprehends seventeen Psalms or Hymns, of which eleven are the composition of the Psalmists of the name of Asaph, four are by the sons of Korah, one is entitled 'A Prayer of David,' and the last is 'An Instruction of Ethan the Ezrahite.' It is closed by the words—

**'Blessed be the Lord for evermore.
Amen, and Amen.'**

The Psalms in this book differ much in their style and in their subjects. Some—as, for instance, the seventy-fifth and seventy-sixth—refer particularly to the danger which hung over Jerusalem at the time of the Assyrian invasion, or are expressions of hearty thanks for that marvellous deliverance from it which God granted to the prayers of Hezekiah and his people. The seventy-eighth and eighty-first appear to be festival Psalms, appointed, it is probable, to be used in the celebration of the Passover, and the Feast of Trumpets or of Pentecost. The Psalms in this book have generally a national character, and bear the marks of having been composed for the public service of the temple, either in times when

the nation was in peril from its enemies, or in those seasons when the solemn rites of religion, the temple sacrifices, and the due observance of the Law of Moses were interfered with or proscribed by the idolatry and the tyranny of the kings of Judah.

During the reign of Ahaz, the father of Hezekiah, not only was the worship of God in the temple neglected and despised, but altars of idols were erected in every city of Judah, and even within the hallowed precincts of the temple. The sanctuary itself, it would appear, was at that time not only despoiled of its riches and polluted, but it was also wantonly injured by fire and other means of destruction, while they who continued faithful to their God were persecuted. This Isaiah evidently implies, (Isa. lxiii. 8,) where he laments:—

‘The people of Thy holiness have possessed it but a little while:

Our adversaries have trodden down Thy sanctuary.’

And again, (lxiv. 11.)

‘Our holy and our beautiful house,
Where our fathers praised Thee,
Is burned up with fire:

And all our pleasant things are laid waste.’

And this impiety and idolatry was also accompanied by war, and distress, and slaughter; for the speech of Hezekiah to the people, in his first attempt at a reformation and return to the worship of God, shews that they had suffered very severely. He said, ‘For, lo, our fathers have fallen by the sword, and our sons and our daughters and our wives are in captivity for this. (2 Chron. xxix. 9.)

It is therefore to this period that these mournful Psalms, the seventy-fourth, the seventy-ninth, and the eightieth, are to be referred. Some have assigned them to the period of the captivity at Babylon; and other modern commentators, with some show of argument, to the times of the Maccabees and the invasion of Jerusalem by Nicanor: but the desolations made by Ahaz, there is little doubt, gave occasion for their being made, while the Psalmist's mind did not rest merely in the contemplation of the present distress, but was carried by the Spirit of prophecy into futurity to see and to tell of those other desolations both of Nebuchadnezzar and of Antiochus which were coming upon Jerusalem, and of that last fearful and woeful destruction by the armies of Rome, which has left Jerusalem to be trodden down of the Gentiles even until now.

THE THIRD DIVISION.

Ebening Prayer.

PSALM lxxiii. *Quam bonus Israel!*

1. TRULY God is loving unto Israel : even unto such as are of a clean heart.

It is most certain and most true that our God is full of love and goodness to His people,—that is, to them whose spirits are holy, and the thoughts of whose hearts are pure. This is indeed most true.

2. Nevertheless, my feet were almost gone : my treadings had well-nigh slipt.

3. And why? I was grieved at the wicked : I do also see the ungodly in such prosperity.

Yet in us dim-sighted beings faith is needed, even that we may see clearly the lovingness of God to His own. We all are tempted, as Asaph was, to trust to sight; and while we so trust we are in great danger of straying from the truth; we are likely to fall into very fatal error. We see the wicked prospering, and faring, to all appearance, very happily; and that sight stirs up in us envy, and jealousy, and grief.

4. For they are in no peril of death : but are lusty and strong.

5. They come in no misfortune like other folk : neither are they plagued like other men.

6. And this is the cause that they are so holden with pride : and overwhelmed with cruelty.

Heb. Pride decks them as with a collar ;
Violence covers them as a robe.

We have heard that death is the punishment of sin. But there are many whom we see sinning wilfully and openly, who seem very far off from death, who are in the full possession of health and strength, and who seem to 'come to their grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in in his season.' We have heard that there is vengeance for the ungodly. But these men seem to have fewer misfortunes than others, the ordinary sorrows and troubles of life seem to keep away from them ; so that pride seems to them a fit and becoming ornament, and they wrap themselves up in their own arrogance and cruelty.

7. Their eyes swell with fatness : and they do even what they lust.

8. They corrupt other, and speak of wicked blasphemy : their talking is against the most High.

9. For they stretch forth their mouth unto the heaven : and their tongue goeth through the world.

10. Therefore fall the people unto them : and thereout suck they no small advantage.

11. Tush, say they, how should God per-

ceive it : is there knowledge in the most High ?

Greediness and self-indulgence, the coveting eye and the pampered flesh, go together with them. They own no rule of conduct but their own wicked pleasure. Their conversation is utterly vile, corrupting men, and blaspheming God. What they say themselves they wish to have taken as if said from heaven ; and their wicked and unbridled tongue is active in giving vent to their opinions everywhere. And so they get admirers and flatterers. They induce others to leave the right way and to turn after them ; for they seem to have a full draught of good fortune, and to drain it to the very dregs. And as for their evil and unjust doings, they affirm in the intoxication of selfishness, that God will never notice them ; they deny Him to be the Governor of the world, and set Him at defiance altogether.

12. Lo, these are the ungodly, these prosper in the world, and these have riches in possession : and I said, Then have I cleansed my heart in vain, and washed mine hands in innocency.

13. All the day long have I been punished : and chastened every morning.

It is indeed a hard trial to faith to watch the prospering of the wicked. The tempter is ready with the temptation. If the wicked can so en-

joy life, and if the riches and advantages of the world are so thoroughly possessed by them, of what avail is it to keep the heart from evil thoughts and the hands from evil acts? To strive after purity and innocence would be but lost labour: and self-examination, and self-chastisement, and patient submission under the dispensations of Providence, are in that case all of no account, and utterly in vain.

14. Yea, and I had almost said even as they : but lo, then I should have condemned the generation of Thy children.

If we take notice of the present condition only of evil-doers and blasphemers, and look no further, certainly there is no small temptation to think that they are right, and to speak and act as they do. But yet to do so is to condemn all those who are living another and a higher life, of folly. There are always in the world some who walk in piety and holiness, as becomes the children of God; and to follow the wicked and impious is not merely to forsake these, but to cast a reproach upon them. He that is not with Christ and His people is against them.

15. Then thought I to understand this : but it was too hard for me,

16. Until I went into the sanctuary of God : then understood I the end of these men ;

17. Namely, how Thou dost set them in

slippery places : and castest them down, and destroyest them.

It is indeed a difficult question for the natural man to answer—how should it be that the wicked should prosper and succeed, while they who are obedient suffer? It is in the providence of the All-wise that it should be so, or else it would not be: but very much pondering on our part will not make the reason of it clear. It is something beyond us, and requires more than human experience and more than natural wisdom to search it out. We must collect our thoughts, and leaving behind us this world and its doings, we must go into the house of God, into the more immediate presence of the Almighty, and say to Him, ‘That which I see not teach Thou me.’ There, in the solemn quietness of holiness and of prayer, there will come the answer to that question which has so deeply perplexed us; there shall we see the end of these men. Our thoughts will be called off from their enjoyments, and their riches, and their self-will, and their reckless course of life, to consider the end of all these. There we shall enter into the hidden reasons of the dealings of God with His creatures. We, in the light of our own understandings, look but at a part; in the light of God’s grace we see the whole. The very things which grieved us in these men—their prosperity and wealth—were their dangers, and became their punishment. They talk against the Most High, and that very talk is that which in God’s all-wise providence destroys them.

18. Oh, how suddenly do they consume : perish, and come to a fearful end !

19. Yea, even like as a dream when one awaketh : so shalt Thou make their image to vanish out of the city.

Heb. Like the dream of one awakening,

Thus, O Lord, Thou makest their vain show contemptible in the city.

How dreadful will not their awaking be ! how fearful is their end ! Their advantages have but increased their supineness and security, and so made their destruction more terrible when it came. All the things they had trusted in and boasted in must go away from them like a dream, when one is startled from his slumber. They will be left in an instant, miserable, and blind, and naked. They will vanish from this earthly scene, from the sight of the citizens of God's Church, like the fancies of a vision, and be seen here no more ; and they will awake up after their own evil likeness in that eternal ruin and despair which they have by their guilt made ready for themselves.

20. Thus my heart was grieved : and it went even through my reins.

21. So foolish was I, and ignorant : even as it were a beast before Thee.

Contemplated thus in the silence of the sanctuary, and by the light of God's holiness, how miserable and even terrible is the life of the ungodly, and how blind and ignorant, and more reasonless than the

beasts that perish, must he be who would call such men happy, and would envy them their ill-used wealth or power! Such a feeling is a most pitiable yielding to the animal portion of our nature. The stain of such envious grief needs to be washed away in the grief of deep repentance for indulging it, and in tears of shame for the ignorance which gave rise to it.

22. Nevertheless, I am alway by Thee : for Thou hast holden me by my right hand.

23. Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel : and after that receive me with glory.

This thought must indeed pierce us to the heart—that all through our impatience, our envy, and our ignorance, God, in Christ, was with us, holding us up that we might not fall, leading us by the hand that we might not miss our way;—was with us in His birth, that He might make our nature clean; in His passion, that He might save us from our sins; in His death, that He might give us life; in His ascension, as our Forerunner in heaven; in His seat at the right hand, as our Advocate; in His coming again as our immortal King. He Who has left the wicked to themselves in slippery places, guides the pure in heart with His spirit of counsel, and after this life receives them into eternal glory.

24. Whom have I in heaven but Thee : and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of Thee.

25. My flesh and my heart faileth : but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.

What is it to prosper in the world and to have riches in possession, if it be compared with the attaining unto the sight of God in heaven! The pure in heart shall see God, and what is there upon earth to desire in comparison with that infinite blessing! Our flesh may suffer, our heart may fail when sorrow, and trouble, and death, come upon us; but though weak in ourselves, we are strong in the mighty love of God; though poor in ourselves, we are rich in the portion of His everlasting joy.

26. For lo, they that forsake Thee shall perish : Thou hast destroyed all them that commit fornication against Thee.

27. But it is good for me to hold me fast by God, to put my trust in the Lord God : and to speak of all Thy works in the gates of the daughter of Sion.

To forsake God is to perish. To indulge 'an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God,' is to be self-destroyed. Every soul that gives itself to fleshly lusts, and joins itself to earthly idols, divorces itself from its true and only Lord. As the Israelites were destroyed who joined themselves to Baal-peor, and were led into sin by the women of Midian, so shall the unchaste and the corrupt ever be destroyed. But there is but one true good; and

if we attain to that good, we have all good. The one good is God. 'There is none good but One, that is, God.' What more can we have than Him, what better thing can we do than hold Him fast, what wiser thing than trust in Him? And having Him and being His, we shall no longer doubt or fear evil, but shall be talking of His goodness, and grace, and righteousness, within His holy Church.

This Psalm was written by Asaph. The design of it was to prove to the unthinking that God is truly loving to His own people. This truth which the first verse asserts is the key to the whole Psalm. The writer had seen the wicked enjoying earthly prosperity, and it had seemed wrong to him that they who lived evil lives should have the advantages of wealth and power, while the God-fearing were often suffering, and were always under restraint. This reflection had weakened his faith, but by grace he at length arrived at a right understanding of the ways of providence; and to instruct others in what he had been taught himself, he composed this Psalm.

PSALM lxxiv. *Ut quid, Deus.*

1. O GOD, wherefore art Thou absent from us so long : why is Thy wrath so hot against the sheep of Thy pasture ?

2. O think upon Thy congregation : whom Thou hast purchased, and redeemed of old.

3. Think upon the tribe of Thine inheritance : and mount Sion, wherein Thou hast dwelt.

Churches have their trials, even as individual souls have theirs. The Church of Israel had to suffer and to mourn at different times, sometimes through the violence and cruelty of heathen enemies, some-

times through the unbelief and wickedness of Israel themselves. So too the Church of Christ has suffered persecution again and again; at one time from the powers of the earth openly raging against her, at another from them who have been her own children, but have become faithless, and have added open violence to neglect and unbelief. In all these trials the Church must look to God, and not to man; she must implore His pity, and seek to appease His anger, and not look to the compassion or caprice of man. It is because they have displeased Him, because He is angry with His sheep and leaves them, that these things come upon them. They must turn to Him, and so will He turn to them. They must plead before Him the redemption which Christ wrought, and the inheritance which He gained for us, Who once took our nature and dwelt in our world, yea, still abides in His Church and will abide unto the end.

4. Lift up Thy feet, that Thou mayest utterly destroy every enemy : which hath done evil in Thy sanctuary.

Heb. Raise Thy feet unto the places lastingly desolate :

The enemy has destroyed all things in Thy sanctuary.

LXX. Lift up Thy hands upon their haughtiness at the end.

5. Thine adversaries roar in the midst of Thy congregations : and set up their banners for tokens.

His people must humbly pray that He will arise and come to see what evil has been done, what

desolation has been wrought in His Holy Place. The ruin that Ahaz brought upon the Temple by his idolatry, is but a type of the ruin that sin, and false doctrine, and 'covetousness, which is idolatry,' will always bring upon the Church. 'Ahaz gathered together the vessels of the house of God, and cut in pieces the vessels of the house of God, and shut up the doors of the house of the Lord; and he made him altars in every corner of Jerusalem.' He also erected an altar in the very front of the temple of Jerusalem, and there chanted the praises of false gods, and set up the banners of the idols of Damascus, 'according to the abominations of the heathen, whom the Lord cast out before the children of Israel.'

6. He that hewed timber afore out of the thick trees : was known to bring it to an excellent work.

Heb. They are like men bringing up axes
Into a thick forest.

7. But now they break down all the carved work thereof : with axes and hammers.

The wicked are like fellers going into a forest with axes, not to cut down wood for use or ornament, but merely to destroy and to make havoc. They mar the beauty of God's Church, they break down its carved work and take away all its glory. So did Ahaz when 'he took the silver and gold which was found in the house of the Lord, and sent it for a present to the king of Assyria.' Yet this desolation was but a warning and a prophecy to the

nation of Judah, of the greater loss and deeper punishment their sins were preparing for them.

8. They have set fire upon Thy holy places : and have defiled the dwelling-place of Thy Name, even unto the ground.

9. Yea, they said in their hearts, Let us make havock of them altogether : thus have they burnt up all the houses of God in the land.

For by the Chaldæans and Nebuchadnezzar, and again by the Romans under Titus, that was done to the Temple of which all foregoing desolations had been a warning and a prophecy. 'Their beautiful and holy house, where their fathers praised God, was burned with fire,' even to the ground. Beautiful and holy as it was, there was not left one stone upon another which was not thrown down. But the covetousness and idolatry of Israel had defiled the Temple before the flames consumed it. Therefore Nebuchadnezzar carried away Judah captive to Babylon, and the Romans strove utterly to destroy the nation of the Jews; therefore they cast down their altars and burned with fire their holy places. They had 'defiled the temple of God,' and 'God destroyed them.' It is when the Church is polluted with sin, that her enemies are allowed to say, 'Let us make havoc of her altogether.'

10. We see not our tokens, there is not

one prophet more : no, not one is there among us, that understandeth any more.

The tokens of God's presence were at last removed from Judah : the succession of her prophets was cut off. There were prophets in the reign of Ahaz, —Hosea, and Micah, and Isaiah ; there were prophets at the fall of Jerusalem and in the captivity in Babylon,—Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, and Daniel. But in that last and most utter desolation, they had rejected the one great Prophet and His message, and no other prophet was sent to them ; they sought after a sign, but no sign was vouchsafed but the one which they had not heeded, and would not heed. Then indeed 'the law perished from the priest, and counsel from the ancients.'

11. O God, how long shall the adversary do this dishonour : how long shall the enemy blaspheme Thy Name, for ever ?

12. Why withdrawest Thou Thy hand : why pluckest Thou not Thy right hand out of Thy bosom to consume the enemy ?

The delay of God to help them in their former trials had been short, but in their last punishment it was to be long indeed. Then their adversaries dishonoured them, and their enemies blasphemed God ; but in the rejection of the Christ they had dishonoured themselves, and they themselves became the enemies of God, when they blasphemed Him Whom He had sent. Therefore they waited in vain

for God to lift His hand, and to deliver them. For the Son of God, 'the arm of the Lord,' Who now sitteth on His right hand, and Who came forth from the bosom of the Father into the world, they refused to receive for their Deliverer and their Saviour.

13. For God is my King of old : the help that is done upon earth He doeth it Himself.

14. Thou didst divide the sea through Thy power : Thou brakest the heads of the dragons in the waters.

15. Thou smotest the heads of Leviathan in pieces : and gavest him to be meat for the people in the wilderness.

Yet our God, though He has punished and will punish sin, is a merciful and gracious King ; all salvation, and grace, and goodness that is in the earth, is of Him and from Him. He was the Deliverer of Israel when He divided the Red Sea, and led them through on dry land, when He bade the waters return and swallow up Pharaoh and all his captains and his mighty men. He smote down and crushed him, as a hunter smites down the ravening crocodile. And the dead bodies of the Egyptians, once so strong and proud, were cast upon the sea-shore for a prey to the wild beasts that peopled the wilderness of Arabia.

16. Thou broughtest out fountains and waters out of the hard rocks : Thou driedst up mighty waters.

And when the children of Israel thirsted in the wilderness, He bade Moses smite the rock and the waters gushed out for them to drink, and followed them in their journeying. When they came to Jordan the river was divided before them, and their armies marched through its empty bed into the land of Canaan. The water came at His bidding, and disappeared at His command. These things did He of old, and His past goodness is a promise of His future mercy.

17. The day is Thine, and the night is Thine : Thou hast prepared the light and the sun.

18. Thou hast set all the borders of the earth : Thou hast made summer and winter.

Yea, God is the Maker and the Lord of all. The light of day and the darkness of night are alike His, and open before Him. He spake in the beginning, 'Let there be light, and there was light.' He made the sun to rule the day, and to give light upon the earth. He appointed the bounds of the earth, and separated the sea from the dry land ; He gave each portion of the world its climate, and its own peculiar varieties of seasons, the warmth of summer and the cold of winter.

19. Remember this, O Lord, how the enemy hath rebuked : and how the foolish people hath blasphemed Thy Name.

20. O deliver not the soul of Thy turtle-

dove unto the multitude of the enemies : and forget not the congregation of the poor for ever.

21. Look upon the covenant : for all the earth is full of darkness, and cruel habitations.

Therefore may His Church pray to Him Who is the Fount of all goodness, to remember that the blasphemy and stubbornness of her persecutors is a wrong done against His holiness ; and may humbly ask that she, who is among them as a mournful and yet faithful and harmless dove surrounded by fierce birds of prey, may not be given into their talons ; and that the poor and helpless may not be for ever forsaken and forgotten by their Lord. She may implore Him to remember that covenant which is higher and holier than the first covenant, and which was ratified in the blood of Jesus. For while He turns away His face from the rainbow of the second covenant, the earth becomes dark with the clouds of sin, and all her dwellings are filled with a flood of cruelty and violence.

22. O let not the simple go away ashamed : but let the poor and needy give praise unto Thy Name.

Without His grace and help the oppressed and the humble are left defenceless and ashamed ; with His grace the poor and the dejected are made rich and strong in faith ; and they can return praise to Him for His goodness with a thankful heart.

23. Arise, O God, maintain Thine own cause : remember how the foolish man blasphemeth Thee daily.

24. Forget not the voice of Thine enemies : the presumption of them that hate Thee increaseth ever more and more.

The cause of God's people is the cause of God. They cry to Him, therefore, to arise and sit upon His judgment-throne; and in the mightiness of His power to bring all the blasphemies of His enemies which they have so often repeated, and the hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him, to the condemnation which they deserve. His patience but increases the presumption of the wicked; when He has ceased to be patient and has determined to be just, they who have resisted Him will perish before Him.

This Psalm is "a Maschil, or Instruction of Asaph." There are many opinions as to the time in which it was composed, and the events to which it refers. The desolations of the reign of Ahaz, or of that of Manasseh; the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians, and the troubles and persecutions under the Maccabees, have each been supposed by different commentators to have given occasion to this Psalm. It may probably be assigned to the time of Ahaz, when the persecution of the true religion, and the injury and pollution done to the Temple, would come before the inspired prophet's mind as tokens and warnings of that more utter destruction which the sins of his nation would bring in the end upon their country, their Temple, and themselves, (2 Chron. xviii.; Isa. lxiv. 9—12). The Psalmist pleads before God the present misery of Judah, and the mercy which had been shewn to the people in times past, and appeals to His power to deliver them yet once again. The Leviathan, mentioned in verse 15, is generally supposed to be the crocodile, and to be used poetically as an emblem of Pharaoh king of Egypt. The writers of the Talmud have many fables respecting the Leviathan, which they say is re-

served to form a banquet for the elect at the last day, (compare the Apocrypha, 2 Esdras vi. 49—52). The author of this Psalm was Asaph; but there would seem to have been at least two Psalmists of this name, of whom the elder lived in the reign of David, while the younger lived in the reigns of Ahaz and Hezekiah, and was contemporary with Isaiah. The second Asaph wrote this Psalm.

Morning Prayer.

PSALM LXXV. *Confitebimur Tibi.*

1. UNTO Thee, O God, do we give thanks :
yea, unto Thee do we give thanks.

2. Thy Name also is so nigh : and that do
Thy wondrous words declare.

Thanksgivings ever repeated are due to God for His righteous rule over the world. He is ever watchful, ever near; and all that is done is by His ordaining or by His permission. ‘What nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon Him for?’ None can for a moment doubt this or fail to see it, who will consider all His providences, how wonderfully they are made to work out right and truth, and to confound wrong and falsehood.

3. When I receive the congregation : I
shall judge according unto right.

Heb. For I shall fix a time

When I shall judge in righteousness.

Or,

When I hold the solemn assembly,

I give sentence with justice.

4. The earth is weak, and all the inhabitants thereof : I bear up the pillars of it.

God Himself declares that all the justice and righteousness of His government in the world, as it now goes on, is but a preparation for that great and final judgment which shall complete and end His dealings with man in his present state. When the Gospel has been preached to all the world, and the Church of Christ is extended even to the ends of the earth, then the end shall come. 'And now He commandeth men every where to repent; because He hath appointed a day in the which He will judge the world in righteousness, by that Man Whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men in that He raised Him from the dead.' In the meantime, He not only by His sovereign power sustains the universe, which without Him would return to the chaos from which it came; but He compassionates and supports the weakness of men, and by His grace and the ministry of His word and sacraments bears up even the best and wisest, 'who seem to be pillars,' who otherwise would fall, and be unable of themselves to rise again.

5. I said unto the fools, Deal not so madly : and to the ungodly, Set not up your horn.

6. Set not up your horn on high : and speak not with a stiff neck.

7. For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west : nor yet from the south.

Heb. For not from the rising of the sun, nor from the going down,
Nor from the wilderness is our raising up.

8. And why? God is the Judge : He putteth down one, and setteth up another.

In all times and in all places, the mighty righteousness of God has been a rebuke to those who in their folly thought to set up themselves and their own ungodly will. It is now even as it was when the king of Assyria sent Rabshakeh to Hezekiah, 'to reproach the living God,' and as when 'he sent messengers again to Hezekiah, saying, Let not thy God in Whom thou trustest deceive thee, saying, Jerusalem shall not be delivered into the hands of the king of Assyria.' Thus did the king of Assyria madly challenge the almightiness of God; he set up his own strength against that of God, and in his arrogance and haughtiness ventured to oppose his power to that of the Eternal. It was true that the kings of Assyria had destroyed many other nations, and even the kingdom of Israel among them; it was true that Hezekiah could expect no help either from the Chaldæans or Arabians on the east, or from ships that might bring aid from the west, or from the Egyptians marching through the deserts of the south. He had no hope of human aid; he knew that Egypt was but a broken reed: but he knew that God was the Judge and King, and that all power was in His hands. He was told that 'of long ago He had done it, and of ancient times that He

had formed it, and now that He had brought it to pass that the king of Assyria should be to lay waste fenced cities into ruinous heaps.' He Who had raised him up could put him down, and set up, when He would, another in his stead. In this faith 'he spake comfortably to his people, saying, Be strong and courageous, be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him : for there be more with us than with him : with him is an arm of flesh ; but with us is the Lord our God to fight our battles. And the people rested themselves upon the words of Hezekiah king of Judah.' He and they had grace to trust in Him Who 'scatters the proud in the imagination of their hearts ; Who puts down the mighty from their seat, and exalts the humble and meek.'

9. For in the hand of the Lord there is a cup, and the wine is red : it is full mixed, and He poureth out of the same.

Heb. There is a cup in the hand of the Lord,
It is red with wine :
It is full with mingled drink,
And He poureth out of it.

10. As for the dregs thereof : all the ungodly of the earth shall drink them, and suck them out.

There is a portion for the wicked which is given to them as wine is given to a man to drink : it is the vengeance and anger of God, strong and terrible. Like strong wine mingled with drugs overcomes and

stupifies them who drink it, so does the wrath of God make sinners to tremble and stagger under it. They are made 'drunken, but not with wine:' and the impenitent cannot merely sip of that fearful cup, they have to drain it even to the very dregs. Their doom is, to be 'filled with their own devices.' Thus did the sinners of Sodom and Gomorrah, and Pharaoh king of Egypt, and the idolaters of Canaan drink and perish. Of that same deadly cup drank Sennacherib king of Assyria, who had boasted against God and His people. For 'it came to pass that night, that the angel of the Lord went out and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold they were all dead corpses.'

11. But I will talk of the God of Jacob : and praise Him for ever.

12. All the horns of the ungodly also will I break : and the horns of the righteous shall be exalted.

For this deliverance, wonderful and terrible, did Hezekiah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem praise their God Who helped them. Thus also must the Church ever praise Him for all His deliverances, whenever He vouchsafes them. He alone can put down the pride and destroy the power of the wicked. He alone can deprive the horns of brutish force and carnal will of their natural strength, and exalt them to spiritual strength, when they are converted into

the horns of His altar. He alone can raise up the righteous and the meek, and give them an inheritance with Himself. And He Who can do, by His own promise will do it ever.

“To the Chief Musician, Destroy not, a Psalm of Asaph, a Song of Praise,” is the title of this Psalm. It appears to have been written on the invasion of Jerusalem by Sennacherib, but before the destruction of the Assyrian army: (see 2 Kings xviii., 2 Chron. xxxii.). Its author was the younger Asaph, who was contemporary with Hezekiah. It bears the motto which David had used before, “Destroy not,” as if to warn the people that it was their own deliverance they should pray for, and not the mere destruction of their enemies; and in many points it resembles the song of Hannah in 1 Sam. ii.

PSALM lxxvi. *Notus in Judæa.*

1. IN Jewry is God known : His Name is great in Israel.

2. At Salem is His tabernacle : and His dwelling in Sion.

LXX. And His place was in peace ;
And His habitation in Sion.

3. There brake He the arrows of the bow : the shield, the sword, and the battle.

In every nation there was, as it were, an altar ‘to the Unknown God,’ but in Judah was the true God known; it was the seed of Jacob who worshipped Him aright. The gods of other nations were but wood and stone, the work of men’s hands; but the one ever-living and Almighty God had chosen Salem for the place of His tabernacle. In that same Salem which was named

from peace, and in which He had been worshipped by Melchizedeck the priest and king, had He chosen to dwell—upon Sion, the mountain which He had made holy for Himself. Against His power and His truth had the king of Assyria sent the blasphemous message by the hand of Rabshakeh,—‘Who are they among all the gods of the countries that have delivered their country out of mine hand, that the Lord should deliver Jerusalem out of mine hand?’ And the God of Sion, Whom he had thus challenged, answered him not merely by the word which He sent by Isaiah the prophet, but by the deed which He sent the angel of destruction to do:—‘The Lord sent an angel,’ which cut off all the mighty men of valour and the leaders and captains in the camp of the king of Assyria.’ The arrows and the bow, the shield and the sword, and all the might of warlike array were nothing before the God of hosts. One of the least of His heavenly servants raised his arm, and their weapons were struck from their grasp, and their panoply was pierced through. His power was the deliverance of His people who could not deliver themselves. So it ever has been and will be—all the might of God’s enemies against His Church will be at length broken, and will vanish away. The power of the wicked is fleshly, earthly, mortal, but the power of the Church is spiritual, heavenly, immortal. Faith and prayer, weak though they may seem at first, will at last break to pieces sensual weapons, and will crush the mightiest hosts of the wicked and the cruel.

4. Thou art of more honour and might :
than the hills of the robbers.

LXX. Thou givest marvellous light
From the eternal mountains.

5. The proud are robbed, they have slept
their sleep : and all the men whose hands
were mighty have found nothing.

Heb. And all the mighty men have not found their hands.

6. At Thy rebuke, O God of Jacob : both
the chariot and horse are fallen.

Sion, in which dwelt the ark of God, possessed a higher honour and was protected by a mightier arm than even Nineveh, 'the bloody city from which the prey departeth not.' The mountain of God, the type of the one true Church, was exalted far above the fortresses and mountain-towers of Assyria, from which her armies issued forth for devastation and plunder. They who had intended to 'cast a bank against' the holy city, themselves perished before her towers. They had come down like robbers upon Jerusalem, and they themselves and all their warlike pride were made a prey. The spoilers were spoiled. God sent a blast upon them. The deep sleep of pestilence and death fell over them, and they waked not again from that long lasting slumber. Mighty as they were, their stoutness and their skill were in vain ; against the hand of God they could not lift a hand either to assault Jerusalem or to defend themselves. He spoke in His anger, and the chariot and

the driver, the horse and the horseman, sank down into the silence of death, defeated and overcome : 'and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses.' 'As soon as He scattered them, they were even as a sleep.' How different was that sleep from the sleep of those who rest in God !

7. Thou, even Thou art to be feared : and who may stand in Thy sight when Thou art angry ?

8. Thou didst cause Thy judgement to be heard from heaven : the earth trembled, and was still,

9. When God arose to judgement : and to help all the meek upon earth.

The eternal judgment of our God is that one thing which we must truly fear, His anger alone is truly terrible ; and every manifestation of His anger against the evil, and of His might in keeping His people safe, must lead the thoughts of the believer onward to that coming day when the throne shall be set in heaven, and the sentence of eternal justice shall go forth, when the earth and all earthly hopes and powers shall tremble, and its wild uproar shall be silent at the appearing of that unerring and Almighty Judge, Who shall reward both to the proud and cruel, and to the suffering and meek, according to their works.

10. The fierceness of man shall turn to Thy

praise : and the fierceness of them shalt Thou refrain.

The evil passions of the wicked turn to the praise of God in their own confusion. Holiness and goodness glorify the eternal God by their being the shadows of Himself; rage and violence glorify Him by perishing and being consumed before His presence. The rage of the sinner—'howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so,'—is the weapon of God, which He employs to chasten him or to slay him. The wicked in their blinded fierceness work out His righteous judgments and decrees.

11. Promise unto the Lord your God, and keep it, all ye that are round about Him : bring presents unto Him that ought to be feared.

12. He shall refrain the spirit of princes : and is wonderful among the kings of the earth.

The deliverance which Hezekiah obtained was but a faint shadow of the deliverance wrought by Christ, therefore should the joy of Hezekiah be but a faint shadow also of the gratitude and love of the members of the Redeemer's Church. If they have promised to keep His covenant, if they have vowed to offer to Him themselves, then are they bound in life and in death to do His will and to be His. The king of Babylon and the princes of the East brought presents to Hezekiah, when his enemies were discomfited; how much more should the nations of the

world come with their offering to Him Who is the King of the better and heavenly Jerusalem, Who indeed ought to be feared, because the armies of death and hell have fallen before Him! He is the true King of kings, and all authority and all kingship is but a charge given in trust by Him. They who use it rightly, as ministers of authority under Him, shall, like Hezekiah, trust in Him in their dangers and be safe; they who abuse their power and disown Christ as their King and Judge, shall perish like the captains of Assyria; and over them the Church shall exult, like Judah over the fallen king,—‘Thy shepherds slumber, O king of Assyria: thy nobles shall dwell in the dust: thy people is scattered in the mountains, and no man gathereth them!’

There can be very little doubt but that the same Asaph who wrote the seventy-fifth Psalm during the invasion of Sennacherib and the Assyrians, also was inspired to deliver this glorious song of faith and triumph upon the signal destruction of the army of the invading king. The LXX. give as part of the title, “An ode regarding the Assyrian.” Before the sword of the destroying angel, or before the blast of the sudden pestilence, the arrows and the bow, the shield and the sword, the horse and the chariot, and all the power and circumstance of war, were crushed and made utterly in vain. By this terrible act not only was the faith of Israel confirmed in God as their Deliverer and King, but His glory and might were displayed before the heathen nations, and especially before the Assyrians, who had blasphemed His majesty. (2 Kings xviii., xix.; 2 Chron. xxxii.; Nahum iii. 3, 18.)

PSALM lxxvii. *Voce mea ad Dominum.*

1. I WILL cry unto God with my voice :
even unto God will I cry with my voice, and
He shall hearken unto me.

2. In the time of my trouble I sought the Lord : my sore ran, and ceased not in the night-season ; my soul refused comfort.

Heb. My hand in the night is stretched out without ceasing ;
My soul will not be comforted.

LXX. With my hands toward Him in the night,
And I was not deceived.

3. When I am in heaviness, I will think upon God : when my heart is vexed, I will complain.

Prayer is man's real strength ; not careless prayer, which turns to God merely among other helpers, but ardent, ceaseless, unwearying prayer. If sickness be our trouble, we must seek for health ; if hunger be our trouble, we must seek for food ; if the absence of God's Spirit be our trouble, we must seek the Lord. Pain and grief, like a smarting wound, may drive away sleep from us ; but as our pain ceases not, so our prayer must not cease. The soul will not and cannot be comforted, unless by the Holy Ghost, the Comforter. In that heaviness is the time to think upon God ; when the heart is vexed with its own weakness and helplessness, it learns to pour out its complaint to Him.

4. Thou holdest mine eyes waking : am I so feeble, that I cannot speak.

5. I have considered the days of old : and the years that are past.

6. I call to remembrance my song : and in

the night I commune with mine own heart,
and search out my spirits.

Trouble and sorrow at the dealings of God keep the eyes in sleeplessness; and with continual grief the mouth grows silent, and cannot speak aloud even to pray. But though the tongue cannot speak, the heart can meditate—can recall the memory of things long past, and the wonderful dealings of God in the ages that are gone. Such meditation is a silent prayer. To them who so meditate God ‘giveth songs in the night;’ and the soul so communing with itself can turn to Him, like the dove, sighing amid its singing, and yet singing amid its sighing. Then in the darkness and silence, apart from the noise without and the tumult of human things, the spirit can hold converse with itself, and search out its weakness and its strength.

7. Will the Lord absent Himself for ever :
and will He be no more intreated ?

8. Is His mercy clean gone for ever : and
is His promise come utterly to an end for
evermore ?

9. Hath God forgotten to be gracious : and
will He shut up His loving-kindness in dis-
pleasure ?

Its weakness is its want of trust; its doubt, as to whether God will hear prayer and will be entreated; its fear, that His mercy is come to an end, and that His promises have been forfeited beyond recall; its

dread, lest He has ceased to give His gifts of grace to those who have so long misused them, and lest the power of His love is restrained by His anger at unbelief and sin.

10. And I said, It is mine own infirmity : but I will remember the years of the right hand of the most Highest.

11. I will remember the works of the Lord : and call to mind Thy wonders of old time.

12. I will think also of all Thy works : and my talking shall be of Thy doings.

Its strength, on the other hand, is to know that its doubt, and fear, and dread arise from its own weakness and infirmity, and are not in any wise true respecting God. Our distress and trouble make our faith weak, but they do not alter the eternal purposes of God's love and grace. From the very beginning God's right hand has been working out eternal plans of mercy and love to man. With the history of these wonders may we instruct our fears and confirm our trust. He changes not, but is ever the same : therefore must we think not of our own troubles, but of His mighty works ; and talk of His doings, of His endless faithfulness and living truth.

13. Thy way, O God, is holy : who is so great a God as our God ?

14. Thou art the God that doeth wonders : and hast declared Thy power among the people.

15. Thou hast mightily delivered Thy people : even the sons of Jacob and Joseph.

The way of God is eternally holy. He comes to us in holiness; He would lead us to Himself by the way of holiness; and His Holy One came to be Himself the way. Who or what is great as our God in righteousness, in patience, in pity, in love? He hath done wonders from the beginning of the creation; and especially in watching over and protecting them who trust in Him. He has made and will make all the peoples of the earth to know His power and to confess His truth. This He shewed in that strange deliverance by which He brought His people, the seed of Abraham, the twelve tribes who were the children of Jacob and of Joseph, out of the land of Egypt, confounding their oppressors with a mighty arm.

16. The waters saw Thee, O God, the waters saw Thee, and were afraid : the depths also were troubled.

17. The clouds poured out water, the air thundered : and Thine arrows went abroad.

18. The voice of Thy thunder was heard round about : the lightnings shone upon the ground; the earth was moved, and shook withal.

Then the waters of the Red Sea saw the Lord, and retired like a timid slave from before his master; the depths were uncovered to make a way for His

people. Each one of the elements did the bidding of its Lord : the air and the fire, the water and the earth, were ministers to execute His command of destruction upon the proud and hardened tyrant and his hosts. And so too at that mightier deliverance which God wrought by His Son : all the people of the world, when they saw Him, were afraid for their sins, the depths of their consciences were troubled ; the teachings of His Gospel were poured down like water from the clouds, the proclaimings of His righteousness went abroad like thunderings and lightnings, and the earth was shaken by that mighty message which declared that God was made man.

19. Thy way is in the sea, and Thy paths in the great waters : and Thy footsteps are not known.

20. Thou leddest Thy people like sheep : by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

Thus He made ' His people to pass a wonderful way out of the Red Sea, out of the violent stream, as a green field.' In the great waters was a road of safety for them, which was covered again by the waves, and lost when the Egyptians entered upon it. In His way none can follow but those He wills to follow Him. He Who then led His people through the sea, was that same Lord Who afterwards came to His disciples walking upon the sea. He led His people like a flock of sheep by the hand of Moses the prophet and Aaron the priest, Who came in after-time that He might Himself

lead them through the mystic paths of holy Baptism, into the better Canaan, and be at once their Prophet, their Priest, and their King. Let us therefore, His sheep, follow our Shepherd whither He would lead us; let us follow Him suffering, by self-denial; let us follow Him rising, by newness of life; let us follow Him ascending, by setting our affections on things above. In Him is comfort in all trouble; in Him lies an unfailing assurance of eternal mercy.

This Psalm is inscribed "to the Chief Musician Jeduthun, a Psalm of Asaph." Its tone is melancholy, and among the sorrows of the present the poet turns for comfort to the wonders and the glories of the past. It was probably written by the second Asaph during the distresses and troubles of the kingdom of Judah, which were brought upon them for their idolatry and neglect of the laws of Moses.

Ebening Prayer.

PSALM lxxviii. *Attendite, popule.*

1. HEAR my law, O my people : incline your ears unto the words of my mouth.

2. I will open my mouth in a parable : I will declare hard sentences of old ;

All wisdom flows from the Fount of wisdom. All right teachings and all holy knowledge, though they may come through the mouth of man, proceed from the wisdom and Word of God. The discipline of the law and the instructions of prophets were given

by that One great Prophet Who in the fulness of time came forth from the Father into the world. Asaph recounted the parables and the marvels of the history of Israel, but it was Christ Who set them before His people, and opened them to their understanding by their fulfilment in Himself and in His Church. 'These things spake Jesus to the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake He not unto them; that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the beginning of the world.' The Light of the world shone on these dark sayings of old, and, lo, they were all images and pictures of Himself.

3. Which we have heard and known : and such as our fathers have told us ;

4. That we should not hide them from the children of the generations to come : but to shew the honour of the Lord, His mighty and wonderful works that He hath done.

Full of warning and of instruction was the history of the people of Israel. Each mercy that had been shewn them, each glory that had been given them, each judgment that had fallen on them, had its own peculiar lesson, and was a parable full of meaning. These things their fathers had told them, and these things they were to teach their children, that they might honour their eternal God and ever abide in His faith and fear. The wonderful works of God should

be the theme of our meditation on earth, for they will form that of our songs in heaven.

5. He made a covenant with Jacob, and gave Israel a law : which He commanded our forefathers to teach their children ;

6. That their posterity might know it : and the children which were yet unborn ;

7. To the intent that when they came up : they might shew their children the same ;

8. That they might put their trust in God : and not to forget the works of God, but to keep His commandments ;

9. And not to be as their forefathers, a faithless and stubborn generation : a generation that set not their heart aright, and whose spirit cleaveth not stedfastly unto God ;

10. Like as the children of Ephraim : who being harnessed, and carrying bows, turned themselves back in the day of battle.

The Almighty God confirmed His covenant with Israel, and gave them by the hand of Moses His holy law. His command was, 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord ; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words which I command thee shall be in thine heart ; and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children.' His law was to be obeyed from generation to generation : each one who had learned its precepts from

his father was to teach them to his children, that they might fear God and walk in His ways, avoiding the stubbornness and disobedience of their fathers in the wilderness, and their idolatry and crimes under their Judges, striving not to be cowardly soldiers, but to fight manfully under the banner of the Lord of hosts, not as the archers of Ephraim who, though fully armed, fled before the face of the Philistines in that mournful day when the Ark of God was taken, and the sons of Eli, Hophni, and Phinehas were slain.

11. They kept not the covenant of God : and would not walk in His law ;

12. But forgot what He had done : and the wonderful works that He had shewed for them.

But God's most solemn charge to them they disobeyed. The holiness and purity of His law, and the mightiness of the wonders by which He confirmed it, were both lost upon them. They neglected what they had covenanted to do, because they forgot in their self-will and perverseness the things which had been done for them.

13. Marvellous things did He in the sight of our forefathers, in the land of Egypt : even in the field of Zoan.

LXX. In the land of Egypt, in the plain of Tanis.

14. He divided the sea, and let them go through : He made the waters to stand on an heap.

15. In the day-time also He led them with a cloud : and all the night through with a light of fire.

Yet He had done very wonderful deeds in sending upon Pharaoh and his people the ten plagues afflicting all the land of Egypt, and more especially the country round about Pharaoh's royal city of Zoan, or Tanis, which was bordering on the land of Goshen. And while He discomfited the oppressors, He was full of mercy to them. He led them through the very deep of the sea, and made the waters to stand like a wall on the one side of them and the other; He marched before them at their head Himself, and His banner for them was a pillar of cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night. And yet this wonderful deliverance was but the sign or parable of another which was to come after in the sacraments of His second law. For so the apostle teaches, when he says, 'Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea: and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea.'

16. He clave the hard rocks in the wilderness : and gave them drink thereof, as it had been out of the great depth.

17. He brought waters out of the stony rock : so that it gushed out like the rivers.

At Rephidim, and at Kadesh, under the fiery heat of heaven and in the scorching plains of the desert,

He gave them water out of the hard rock in abundant fountains. For them He had made the water like a rock, and for them He made the rock to become water. And this too was a parable; for 'they did all drink,' the apostle tells us, 'the same spiritual drink; for they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them; and that Rock was Christ,'—even Him from Whose stricken side 'came blood and water.'

18. Yet for all this they sinned more against Him : and provoked the most Highest in the wilderness.

19. They tempted God in their hearts : and required meat for their lust.

20. They spake against God also, saying : Shall God prepare a table in the wilderness ?

21. He smote the stony rock indeed, that the water gushed out, and the streams flowed withal : but can He give bread also, or provide flesh for His people ?

22. When the Lord heard this, He was wroth : so the fire was kindled in Jacob, and there came up heavy displeasure against Israel ;

23. Because they believed not in God : and put not their trust in His help.

In their stubbornness and dead-heartedness these things were not enough to rouse up their faith. They sinned yet more. They thought in their hearts to try God, saying, 'Is the Lord among us or

not?' He had given them water, but would He give them bread and flesh also? They provoked Him on Whom they all depended. 'And when the people complained, it displeased the Lord: and the Lord heard it; and His anger was kindled; and the fire of the Lord burnt among them; and consumed them that were in the uttermost parts of the camp. And the people cried unto Moses; and when Moses prayed unto the Lord, the fire was quenched. And he called the name of the place Taberah: because the fire of the Lord burnt among them.'

24. So He commanded the clouds above: and opened the doors of heaven.

25. He rained down manna also upon them for to eat: and gave them food from heaven.

26. So man did eat angels' food: for He sent them meat enough.

Heb. Man did eat the bread of the mighty ones.

But though He was wroth with them, He yet gave them what they cried for. He opened the storehouses of heaven, and sent down the manna for their food: He gave them dainty meat which He had prepared by the ministry of His angels; 'and when the dew fell upon the camp in the night, the manna fell upon it.' And this also was a parable and a dark thing of old: for Jesus the Son of God hath said, 'I am that Bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living Bread

which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.'

27. He caused the east-wind to blow under heaven: and through His power He brought in the south-west-wind.

28. He rained flesh upon them as thick as dust: and feathered fowls like as the sand of the sea.

29. He let it fall among their tents: even round about their habitation.

30. So they did eat, and were well filled; for He gave them their own desire: they were not disappointed of their lust.

31. But while the meat was yet in their mouths, the heavy wrath of God came upon them, and slew the wealthiest of them: yea, and smote down the chosen men that were in Israel.

They grew weary of the bread of heaven, and desired the flesh of earth. 'The mixed multitude that was among them fell a lusting: and the children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat? we remember the fish which we did eat in Egypt freely, the cucumbers and the melons; but now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all, beside this manna, before our eyes.' 'And the Lord said unto Moses, Say thou unto the people,

Sanctify yourselves against to-morrow, and ye shall eat flesh: for ye have wept in the ears of the Lord, saying, Who shall give us flesh to eat? for it was well with us in Egypt: therefore the Lord will give you flesh, and ye shall eat. Ye shall not eat one day, nor two days, nor five days, neither ten days, nor twenty days; but even a whole month, until it come out at your nostrils, and it be loathsome unto you: because that ye have despised the Lord Which is among you, and have wept before Him, saying, Why came we forth out of Egypt?' 'And there went forth a wind from the Lord, and brought quails from the sea, and let them fall by the camp, as it were a day's journey on this side, and as it were a day's journey on the other side, round about the camp, and as it were two cubits high upon the face of the earth. And all the people stood up, all that day and all that night and all the next day, and they gathered the quails. And while the flesh was yet between their teeth, ere it was chewed, the wrath of the Lord was kindled against the people, and the Lord smote the people with a very great plague, and He called the name of that place Kibroth-hattaavah: because there they buried the people that lusted.' This too is written for us as a parable which Christ would open. 'These things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.'

32. But for all this they sinned yet more : and believed not His wondrous works.

33. Therefore their days did He consume in vanity : and their years in trouble.

34. When He slew them, they sought Him : and turned them early, and enquired after God.

35. And they remembered that God was their strength : and that the high God was their redeemer.

36. Nevertheless, they did but flatter Him with their mouth : and dissembled with Him in their tongue.

37. For their heart was not whole with Him : neither continued they stedfast in His covenant.

38. But He was so merciful, that He forgave their misdeeds : and destroyed them not.

39. Yea, many a time turned He His wrath away : and would not suffer His whole displeasure to arise.

40. For He considered that they were but flesh : and that they were even a wind that passeth away, and cometh not again.

To us who have been called into the family of Abraham, do the sins and weaknesses, the half-repentances, and fallings again of Israel in the wilderness, the wondrous wickednesses which kept pace with God's wondrous works, speak very plainly. They teach us by the mouth of St. Paul, 'Be not ye idolaters, as were some of them ; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to

play. Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. Now all these things happened unto them for examples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.'

41. Many a time did they provoke Him in the wilderness : and grieved Him in the desert.

42. They turned back, and tempted God : and moved the Holy One in Israel.

By all their disobediences ten times repeated, they provoked His anger, and they grieved His love, during the forty years they wandered in the desert. His mercy and compassion they set at nought, and at one while determined to return back into Egypt; and at another, murmured against the God Who was bringing them into His promised rest. It is mournful to think how many a Christian soul may, like the Israelites in the desert, have its history written in three words — fall, repentance, relapse.

43. They thought not of His hand : and of the day when He delivered them from the hand of the enemy ;

44. How He had wrought His miracles in Egypt : and His wonders in the field of Zoan.

45. He turned their waters into blood : so that they might not drink of the rivers.

46. He sent lice among them, and devoured them up : and frogs to destroy them.

47. He gave their fruit unto the caterpillar : and their labour unto the grasshopper.

48. He destroyed their vines with hailstones : and their mulberry-trees with the frost.

49. He smote their cattle also with hailstones : and their flocks with hot thunderbolts.

50. He cast upon them the furiousness of His wrath, anger, displeasure, and trouble : and sent evil angels among them.

51. He made a way to His indignation, and spared not their soul from death : but gave their life over to the pestilence ;

LXX. And He consigned their cattle to death.

52. And smote all the firstborn in Egypt : the most principal and mightiest in the dwellings of Ham.

The judgments He had done on their enemies for their deliverance wrought no reverence nor fear in them. On their enemies had been brought ten plagues of destruction, to themselves had been given

ten commandments of holiness and truth. But the miracles which chastised Pharaoh,—the waters of the Nile turned to blood, the lice and the frogs, the locusts, the murrain and the storm, and those other blows which were dealt to the hardened king and his people by the destroying angels who acted as the messengers of God's wrath and anger, even to slaying the firstborn throughout that land of Egypt which was peopled by Misraim the son of Ham,—the recollection of these judgments upon their enemies touched them not, and they thought not of them.

53. But as for His own people, He led them forth like sheep : and carried them in the wilderness like a flock.

54. He brought them out safely, that they should not fear : and overwhelmed their enemies with the sea.

55. And brought them within the borders of His sanctuary : even to His mountain which He purchased with His right hand.

56. He cast out the heathen also before them : caused their land to be divided among them for an heritage, and made the tribes of Israel to dwell in their tents.

Nor did His goodness and mercy move them more deeply. He saved them from danger and fear, and destroyed their ancient enemies in the billows of the Red Sea, even as the sins of the baptized are washed

away in the waters of holy Baptism. He brought them to the land which He had promised to their fathers, and to that mountain in the land of Moriah of which He had told Abraham, and which He had consecrated of old to be the abode of His glory. He drove out the heathen dwellers before them, and divided the land of Canaan by lot to the twelve tribes of Israel, and gave the cities of those conquered nations for habitations to His people.

57. So they tempted, and displeased the most high God : and kept not His testimonies ;

58. But turned their backs, and fell away like their forefathers : starting aside like a broken bow.

59. For they grieved Him with their hill-altars : and provoked Him to displeasure with their images.

60. When God heard this, He was wroth : and took sore displeasure at Israel.

61. So that He forsook the tabernacle in Silo : even the tent that He had pitched among men.

62. He delivered their power into captivity : and their beauty into the enemy's hand.

63. He gave His people over also unto the sword : and was wroth with His inheritance.

64. The fire consumed their young men :

and their maidens were not given to marriage.

Heb. Their maidens were not praised in songs.

65. Their priests were slain with the sword : and there were no widows to make lamentation.

But when they were settled within the borders of the promised land, when all the blessings He had stored up for them were given to them, they were still the same stiffnecked people who had sinned in the wilderness. Adversity had not tamed them, nor had prosperity softened them. They still tempted God with their idolatry, and forsook His covenant. 'The children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord.' They fell away as their fathers had done, like an arrow from a broken bow, which disappoints the archer's aim, and instead of going to the mark glances aside, or falls idle at his feet. 'It came to pass that they returned, and corrupted themselves more than their fathers, in following other gods to serve them, and to bow down unto them; they ceased not from their own doings nor from their stubborn way. And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel.' He gave them up to one enemy after another, until at length, for the sins of Hophni and Phinehas the priests, and for the evil-doings of the people, He allowed the ark of the covenant, the power and the beauty of Israel, to be brought from Shiloh from the tabernacle in which it dwelt, and to be taken by the Philistines in the battle. In that miserable rout

the people of Israel were trampled down and slain. The young men perished, not so much before their foes, as before the consuming fire of God's vengeance. Their joy and happiness ceased; He 'disinherited them' in His indignation. Eli the high-priest fell down dead at the news that the ark was taken. His sons Hophni and Phinehas were slain in the battle. The widow of Phinehas died in childbed, 'and she said, The glory is departed from Israel: for the ark of God is taken.' The mournful chapter of punishment comes ever after the mournful chapter of sin.

66. So the Lord awaked as one out of sleep : and like a giant refreshed with wine.

67. He smote His enemies in the hinder parts : and put them to a perpetual shame.

But that mighty One 'Who neither slumbereth nor sleepeth' never forgets His own goodness: in anger He remembers mercy. He delivered again the ark from the Philistines; and brought it back into the coasts of Israel. He raised up Samuel to judge His people; and when on his exhortation the children of Israel did put away Baalim and Ash-taroath, and served the Lord only, then the Lord heard them; and at Mizpeh, as 'the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel, the Lord thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines, and discomfited them; and they were smitten before Israel.' Thus are the sins of Israel ever warnings to the Church, and the deliverances of

Israel earnestly of deliverance and safety to the Church.

68. He refused the tabernacle of Joseph : and chose not the tribe of Ephraim ;

69. But chose the tribe of Judah : even the hill of Sion which He loved.

70. And there He built His temple on high : and laid the foundation of it like the ground which He hath made continually.

But the ark returned no more to Shiloh in the tribe of Ephraim. The empty tabernacle was, indeed, left them for a while, to shew how the holiest things may be spoiled of their holiness by the sins of men, and to bear witness to the tribes which sprung from Joseph, how the birthright and the privileges which the righteousness and innocence of their ancestor had gained had been forfeited by the guilt and the faithlessness of his descendants. By this God said, ' Go now to My place which was in Shiloh, where I set My name at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of My people Israel.' Shiloh was deserted. From Shiloh the tabernacle was removed to Nob, and again to Gibeon, ' the great high place : ' but the ark never returned to it, nor to the priests of the house of Eli. It abode in Kirjath-jearim, and it tarried for a while in the house of Obed-edom, until it found its resting-place in the tribe of Judah, on the hill of Sion. There was the foundation of the temple laid, in which God was to be worshipped by His people. And thus, too, does

Shiloh seem to be a parable of the Jewish Church, which for its sins was left desolate, while its glory was given to the spiritual Sion, 'that city which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God.'

71. He chose David also His servant : and took him away from the sheep-folds.

72. As he was following the ewes great with young ones He took him : that he might feed Jacob His people, and Israel His inheritance.

73. So he fed them with a faithful and true heart : and ruled them prudently with all his power.

Even as Ephraim lost the privilege of keeping the tabernacle and the ark, so did Benjamin lose the dignity of the royal tribe. God chose the tribe of Judah, but He chose Judah for the sake of David, and David for the sake of Christ. Christ was of the seed of David, therefore was David a parable of Christ. David was called from being a shepherd of sheep to be a shepherd of men. The Lord of hosts said unto him, 'I took thee from the sheep-cote, even from following the sheep, that thou shouldest be ruler over My people Israel.' And Christ also 'feedeth His flock like a shepherd, He gathereth the lambs with His arm, and carrieth them in His bosom, and gently leadeth those that are with young.' David, as a faithful shepherd, governed his people with truth and wisdom, using his sceptre as a shepherd's crook, and not as a tyrant's scourge ; and in this, too, is he the type of that Good Shepherd, Who

began the work of feeding His flock in humiliation, even laying down His life for His sheep, that He might fulfil it in bringing His Church to immortal glory, as the Lord of righteousness and the all-wise King of all.

This Psalm, which is a "Maschil, or Instruction of Asaph," was written in the reign of David. The first object of this poem was, no doubt, to instruct the children at the Feast of the Passover, when, according to the law of Moses and the Jewish custom, the younger children enquired of their parents the reasons for their celebrating that great festival, and were, in answer, taught of the wonderful dealings of God with His people, in memory of which the feast was kept. The word 'Maschil' denotes, probably, a poem to be committed to memory. The second object of the Psalm seems to have been to assign the reasons for the honour of guarding the ark and possessing the tabernacle, being taken from the tribe of Ephraim and transferred to that of Judah. Ephraim was at first the leading tribe in Israel. The birth-right was in Joseph's family, and was given by Jacob to Ephraim, and the children of Rachel, Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh took the lead in war (Ps. lxxx. 2). The name of Ephraim was often given to the whole nation. David, being of the tribe of Judah, at first reigned over his own tribe only in Hebron; but, after an interval of seven years, the other tribes submitted to him, and he became the king of the whole nation. The union was, however, never complete; there was always a spirit of rivalry between the two leading tribes; and the jealousy between Judah and Ephraim, which this Psalm seems intended to dispel, resulted at last in the revolt of the ten tribes, and the establishment at the death of Solomon of the two kingdoms of Judah and Israel. But of this revolt there is no mention in this psalm which was composed previously to it. Asaph shews that while the sanctuary continued at Shiloh in Ephraim, the nation of Israel were punished and defeated in battle, until at last the ark of God was taken from them by the Philistines. Zoan, or Tanis, in verses 13 and 44, was the capital of Lower Egypt, distant about twenty-five miles from the land of Goshen. The village on its site is still called San. The book of Numbers is quoted and referred to throughout this poetical and beautiful Psalm: it is therefore certain that it was well known and studied with care in the reign of David. Verse 2 is applied by St. Matthew (xiii. 35) to the mode of our Saviour's teaching by parables and similitudes.

Morning Prayer.

PSALM lxxix. *Deus, venerunt.*

1. O GOD, the heathen are come into Thine inheritance : Thy holy temple have they defiled, and made Jerusalem an heap of stones.

2. The dead bodies of Thy servants have they given to be meat unto the fowls of the air : and the flesh of Thy saints unto the beasts of the land.

3. Their blood have they shed like water on every side of Jerusalem : and there was no man to bury them.

4. We are become an open shame to our enemies : a very scorn and derision unto them that are round about us.

It is a dark and mournful sight when the heathen enter into the inheritance of God, and defile the temple of His holiness ; dark and mournful, even as the sight of lusts and sins entering into a redeemed soul and polluting what has been made the temple of the Holy Ghost. Misery and destruction must ever follow unrighteousness and double-heartedness ; from this law no race or Church, however high their privileges or great their grace, can hope to escape. The Jewish nation and the Jewish Church could not escape it. Their sins brought woe upon them ; when under Ahaz their king they turned to idols, then

Judah was made naked, and Tiglath-pileser, the king of Assyria, distressed them, and their temple was defiled and spoiled, and 'their fathers fell by the sword, and their sons and their daughters and their wives were in captivity for this' their sin. But the warning of that punishment was not enough, and it was sent again to them with deeper severity, when the wrath of the Lord arose against His people till there was no remedy. 'Therefore He brought upon them the king of the Chaldeans, who slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion upon young man or maiden, old man, or him that stooped for age: He gave them all into his hand. And they burnt the house of God, and brake down the wall of Jerusalem, and burnt all the palaces thereof with fire, and destroyed all the goodly vessels thereof.' And after they had returned from Babylon, and had rebuilt the temple, and restored Jerusalem, still they suffered and were afflicted. In the time of the Maccabees, Demetrius, the son of Seleucus, sent Bacchides to Jerusalem; who slew the scribes, who came to require justice, and the Assideans, the first of the children of Israel who sought peace of them. Bacchides 'took of them threescore men, and slew them in one day, according to the words which he wrote, The flesh of Thy saints have they cast out, and their blood have they shed round about Jerusalem, and there was none to bury them.' And in that last and most fearful destruction, when the eagles of Rome were gathered round the doomed city, and the temple of which God had said,

‘Let us depart hence ;’ when one stone was not to be left upon another, when the fire was to consume the sanctuary, and the foundations of Sion were to be ploughed up ; when Jerusalem was to be filled with slain, and the sons of Judah were to be crucified round her walls in such thick multitudes that no more room was left for death ; when insult and shame and scorn was the lot of the child of Israel, as he wandered an outcast, a fugitive in all lands ; when all these bitter and deadly things came upon Jerusalem, it was as a punishment for many and long-repeated crimes ; it was the accomplishment of a warning which had been often sent in vain. Yea, fiercely did thy foes assault thee, O Jerusalem, but thy sins more fiercely still !

5. Lord, how long wilt Thou be angry : shall Thy jealousy burn like fire for ever ?

6. Pour out Thine indignation upon the heathen that have not known Thee : and upon the kingdoms that have not called upon Thy Name.

7. For they have devoured Jacob : and laid waste his dwelling-place.

Then, like an erring soul groaning under the chastisement of its sins, the people which have fallen from both righteousness and peace can turn only to the God Whom their sins made angry, and plead before Him their misery and their sorrow. The hands of their enemies may have wrought them harm, but it was their own sins which furnished the

instruments of desolation. It was pride and selfishness and lust which made an inroad into the heart which should have been the inheritance of God, and laid waste the conscience which should have been His dwelling-place.

8. O remember not our old sins, but have mercy upon us, and that soon : for we are come to great misery.

9. Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of Thy Name : O deliver us, and be merciful unto our sins, for Thy Name's sake.

10. Wherefore do the heathen say : Where is now their God ?

11. O let the vengeance of Thy servants' blood that is shed : be openly shewed upon the heathen in our sight.

In all suffering and in all sorrow, yes, and in suffering for sin, the soul must turn to God in prayer. 'Remember not, Lord, our offences, nor the offences of our forefathers, neither take Thou vengeance of our sins.' In each one who prays prayer will conquer sin, or sin will silence prayer. In prayer they who wish to be forgiven must bring before the God of mercy every plea that the soul can urge,—His own mercies in time past, the unbelief and mockeries of the wicked, the promises of God, which He will not render vain. Thus did Jerusalem, in her great misery, plead His promise made by Moses,—'Rejoice, O ye nations, with His people, for He will

avenge the blood of His servants, and will render vengeance to His adversaries, and will be merciful unto His land, and to His people.'

12. O let the sorrowful sighing of the prisoners come before Thee : according to the greatness of Thy power, preserve Thou those that are appointed to die.

13. And for the blasphemy wherewith our neighbours have blasphemed Thee : reward Thou them, O Lord, seven-fold into their bosom.

14. So we, that are Thy people, and sheep of Thy pasture, shall give Thee thanks for ever : and will alway be shewing forth Thy praise from generation to generation.

As the saints in Judæa of old time prayed from the depths of an earthly prison, and trusted in their God even under the sentence of this world's death, knowing well that the power of their God could deliver them, and could requite the blasphemies of their enemies in full measure to those who strove to hinder their salvation; so, too, must we turn with groanings from the prison of our hardness of heart and carnal will, and implore to be delivered from that spiritual death which our enemies, that is, our own sins, have brought upon us. We should cry to Him to 'strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die.' And while we, who are, no less than Israel of old, God's people and the sheep of

His pasture, and who, no less than they, need to confess that 'we have erred and strayed from His ways like lost sheep,' acknowledge our sins and implore for pardon and restoration, we must not forget that higher duty of thanksgiving and ceaseless praise which forgiveness calls for, and which only they who are forgiven can perform.

This mournful Psalm, which was written by Asaph, evidently refers to the same period of desolation and idolatry as the seventy-fourth; that is to say, to the reign of Ahaz. Some commentators have endeavoured to assign the composition of these Psalms to the times of the Maccabees, and especially to the time of that cruel war which Bacchides carried on against Jerusalem, in which Judas Maccabæus was slain. It is true that verses 2 and 3 are quoted in 1 Maccabees vii. 17; but this is so far from shewing that this Psalm was composed at that time, that it rather proves, on the other hand, that the book in which it is found was already recognised as a portion of canonical scripture, and was considered to be prophetic of the misery and oppression of Israel. The Syriac translation of 1 Macc. vii. 16, is "according to the words which the prophet wrote," which is the usual way of citing a passage of Holy Scripture. Verses 6, 7 are repeated, word for word, by the prophet Jeremiah (Jer. x. 25); and this would be an additional reason for assigning the Psalm to the earlier devastations of the temple, for it is usual for the prophets to repeat the words of a scripture older than their own, and not of that of their own time.

PSALM lxxx. *Qui regis Israel.*

1. HEAR, O Thou Shepherd of Israel, Thou that leadest Joseph like a sheep : shew Thyself also, Thou that sittest upon the cherubims.

2. Before Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasses : stir up Thy strength, and come, and help us.

3. Turn us again, O God : shew the light of Thy countenance, and we shall be whole.

He Who had once been the Shepherd of Israel, Who had led the children of Joseph and of his brethren into the pleasant pastures of the promised land, had left them. The ark of His covenant and the glory of His presence was still between the cherubim in the sanctuary of His temple, and He still was the Lord of all the powers of heaven and earth, but He no longer went with their armies and led them to battle. Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh, the sons of Rachel, had gone to the war as the vanguard of the hosts of Israel, but the might and power of their Almighty King went no longer with them to help them, and to give them victory. He had given them up to Shalmanezzer, king of the Assyrians, who had led them into a long captivity, for 'the Lord was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of His sight; there was none left but the tribe of Judah only.' Therefore it was indeed needful that they that were left should pray for the grace of repentance, and for the return of the blessing of the light of His countenance which their misdeeds had forfeited, and in which alone they could be safe.

4. O Lord God of hosts : how long wilt Thou be angry with Thy people that prayeth ?

5. Thou feedest them with the bread of tears : and givest them plenteousness of tears to drink.

6. Thou hast made us a very strife unto our

neighbours : and our enemies laugh us to scorn.

7. Turn us again, Thou God of hosts : shew the light of Thy countenance, and we shall be whole.

That eternal God of angels and of men was indeed angry with His people for their idolatries and transgressions, and their prayers had well-nigh ceased to be of avail. 'The Lord rejected all the seed of Israel, and afflicted them, and delivered them into the hand of spoilers, until He had cast them out of His sight.' He Who once gave them the bread of heaven, now filled them with the bread of sorrow ; He Who had given them water from the rock, now gave them only their own tears to drink. Their nearer and smaller enemies, Ammon, and Moab, and Edom, renewed their contentions with them, and treated them with scorn. They only could hope in repentance, and the returning to them again of the God Whose blessing they had lost.

8. Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt : Thou hast cast out the heathen, and planted it.

9. Thou madest room for it : and when it had taken root it filled the land.

10. The hills were covered with the shadow of it : and the boughs thereof were like the goodly cedar-trees.

Heb. The hills were covered with its shadow :
The cedars of God with its branches.

11. She stretched out her branches unto the sea : and her boughs unto the river.

God, like a wise husbandman transplanting a choice vine, had brought the Church of Israel out of Egypt into the rich and fertile land of Canaan. He cast out the heathen dwellers as evil weeds, and planted it within His vineyard. It struck down its roots into the earth, and its branches and tendrils covered the sides of the mountains with their shade, and climbed up even above the lofty cedars of Lebanon. The blessing of Jacob was fulfilled—‘Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall.’ From the mountains on the south to Lebanon on the north, from the river Euphrates to the Mediterranean Sea did the power of Israel extend, while her Church abode in the fear and worship of her God in the days of David and of Solomon.

12. Why hast Thou then broken down her hedge : that all they that go by pluck off her grapes ?

13. The wild boar out of the wood doth root it up : and the wild beasts of the field devour it.

14. Turn Thee again, Thou God of hosts, look down from heaven : behold, and visit this vine ;

15. And the place of the vineyard that Thy

right hand hath planted : and the branch that Thou madest so strong for Thyself.

But the hedge which God had placed around her was broken. Israel and Judah were divided the one from the other ; and both turned to idols, and forgot Him Who was their defence. They despised and transgressed His law. Then the nations round about them laid their country waste ; and the Assyrian king, like a wild boar ravaging in a vineyard, destroyed and uprooted Israel. Their enemies devoured them as savage beasts devour their prey. The few that were left, and they that beheld their desolation, could only trust that God would at length turn Himself to behold their sad and captive state, and visit them in mercy, as He had visited them in wrath, once more to build up the walls of His Church and vineyard, and to raise the broken and withering vine, even the people, which was once His own ; ‘for the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah His pleasant plant.’

16. It is burnt with fire, and cut down : and they shall perish at the rebuke of Thy countenance.

17. Let Thy hand be upon the man of Thy right hand : and upon the son of Man, whom Thou madest so strong for Thine own self.

Now Israel is destroyed, her sons are led captive, and her cities are cast down and burnt with fire ;

but in the mercy and power of her God these chastisements may soon be turned against her destroyers. In the frown of Almighty anger, the wild beasts of the nations and the boar of Assyria will perish and be utterly destroyed. But their hope can only lie in Him Who will come, 'the Man Whose Name is the Branch,' the true Benjamin, the Son of the right hand, even that Son of Man Who, in His own good time and His own mighty grace, shall gather together the dispersed of Israel, and shall bring the outcasts of Judah into the Church of the new covenant, and shall teach them to hear His voice, when He says, 'I am the Vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me ye can do nothing.'

18. And so will not we go back from Thee : O let us live, and we shall call upon Thy Name.

19. Turn us again, O Lord God of hosts : shew the light of Thy countenance, and we shall be whole.

Then shall they repent and not go back; then shall they know and see Him Who is the true Life, and shall say, 'Blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the Lord.' The repentance of Israel when they were led captive was too late, the repentance of Judah under Hezekiah saved them but for a time; but in that last great repentance, when the children of Jacob shall once again be turned unto Christ their God and King, there shall be no more falling.

They shall be blessed for ever with a perfect blessing, by a greater Priest than any of the line of Aaron, a blessing of deed and not of word, the very seeing of the face of God, and the very being saved with His salvation.

This Psalm is "to the chief Musician upon Shoshannim-Eduth, or the lilies of the testimony." Compare the titles of Psalms lx. and lxi. The title as given by the LXX. is, "For those who shall be changed, a testimony of Asaph, a Psalm on the Assyrian." It was undoubtedly written by the younger Asaph, about the time when Samaria was taken and Israel was carried away captive by Shalman-ezer, king of Assyria, (2 Kings xvii.) That the Psalm refers to the affliction of Israel rather than that of Judah, is clear from verses 1, 2, where Joseph and the tribes sprung from Rachel are especially named, while no allusion is made to the temple, or to Sion. The comparison of Israel to a vine or to a vineyard is very frequently used in the Scriptures, as in Isaiah v. 2—7; St. Luke xx. 9—17; and for this reason the emblem of a large golden vine was placed above the gate of the vestibule of the temple. The sight of this emblem has been supposed to have given occasion to our Lord, as He was proceeding with His apostles to the garden of Gethsemane, to address to them that discourse on His being the true Vine, which is found in St. John xv. Verses 3, 7, 14, 19 of this Psalm refer to the solemn blessing which was pronounced by the high-priest, (Num. vi. 23—27,) the fulfilment of which Israel had forfeited by their idolatries.

PSALM lxxxi. *Exultate Deo.*

1. SING we merrily unto God our strength :
make a cheerful noise unto the God of Jacob.

2. Take the psalm, bring hither the tabret :
the merry harp with the lute.

3. Blow up the trumpet in the new-moon :
even in the time appointed, and upon our
solemn feast-day.

Hymns of joy and merry songs well become the mouths of those who have God for their strength. Gladness and cheerfulness spring naturally from earnest faith. God will give us what we should sing, if we will sing it aright. Let us, the members of His Church, bring willing hearts and tuneful voices, and chaste and holy music, and He will give us the psalm of praise which will fit with our days of festival. The tabret and the harp, the lute and the trumpet, are, as it were, our earthly members, which we consecrate to the praise and service of our God; the psalm is that inspired song of spiritual melody which the Holy Spirit bids us take into our mouths. Like the Levites at the feast of trumpets at the beginning of the seventh month, so must we ‘lift up our voice like a trumpet,’ to proclaim the righteousness and faithfulness of our God, ‘rejoicing in the Lord alway,’ Who by His grace and love hath made all our life a festival of joy.

4. For this was made a statute for Israel : and a law of the God of Jacob.

5. This He ordained in Joseph for a testimony : when he came out of the land of Egypt, and had heard a strange language.

Heb. And I heard a language I knew not.

‘And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, In the seventh month, in the first day of the month, shall ye have a Sabbath, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, an holy convocation.’ This was ordained that the chil-

dren of Jacob and of Joseph, who had long dwelt in Egypt, should for ever remember that blast of the trumpet, ever louder and louder, and that proclamation of the law of God on Sinai, which He Himself made unto them, Whose voice man had never heard before. If, then, the feasts of the law were to be kept by Israel with holy joy, and praise, and song, much more should the festivals of Him, Who delivered us from the more dreadful dungeon than Egypt, and the fiercer tyrant than Pharaoh, and taught us the deeper mysteries of the Gospel, be hallowed with melody and solemn gladness!

6. I eased his shoulder from the burden : and his hands were delivered from making the pots.

7. Thou calledst upon Me in troub'es, and I delivered thee : and heard thee what time as the storm fell upon thee.

Heb. I heard thee in the place of thunder.

8. I proved thee also : at the waters of strife.

On the return of each one of these solemn feast-days, God seemed to recal to the memory of His people the mighty deeds He had done for them,—how He had given their shoulders rest from the heavy burdens of clay, and had delivered their hands from the wearying toil of the brick-kiln; how He had saved them from the rage of Pharaoh, when they cried in their distress and fear; how He had

heard them in His dark pavilion of storms on Sinai, and how He proved them at Massah and Meribah, when they tempted Him, and said, 'Is the Lord among us or not?'

9. Hear, O My people, and I will assure thee, O Israel : if thou wilt hearken unto Me,

10. There shall no strange god be in thee : neither shalt thou worship any other god.

11. I am the Lord thy God, Who brought thee out of the land of Egypt : open thy mouth wide, and I shall fill it.

'Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.' It is the confession that God is our God, that keeps us His people. If we hear Him and obey, and have faith in His most true assurance, then can we not worship any other but Him. No created thing, nor idol made with hands, can be aught to them whose hearts are fixed upon the living God. He redeemed Israel from Egypt; He redeemed His people from the slavery of sin and the doom of death; His riches suffice for all our wants; there is no measure to His givings, but the measure of man's necessity. He satisfies His people with good things, even as a parent bird feeds her nestlings when they open their mouths for food. What is the mouth of the inner man but the desire of the heart? And this only God Himself can fill.

12. But My people would not hear My voice : and Israel would not obey Me.

13. So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lusts : and let them follow their own imaginations.

It was not to strangers, but to His own people, that the God of eternal love revealed Himself. They were not strangers, but His own people, that would not hear His voice, nor obey Him. They chose their own will rather than the Divine will, and their punishment was that they were allowed to have it. God let them follow, not His commandments of salvation, but their own imaginations. So He 'gave them statutes that were not good, and judgments whereby they should not live.' Man can be given up to no more deadly enemy, to no more cruel tyrant, than to himself.

14. O that My people would have hearkened unto Me : for if Israel had walked in My ways,

15. I should soon have put down their enemies : and turned My hand against their adversaries.

16. The haters of the Lord should have been found liars : but their time should have endured for ever.

Yet the tenderness of our eternal Father and most loving God is not made void even by man's headstrong self-will. He repeats again the offer of

His gracious care, and calls again the wanderers to their only real rest. Should not the very stones—and hearts even harder than stones—be moved at hearing the complaint of God? He is longing that they should hear Him; He is yearning for their obedience, that they may still be His, that He may put down their enemies and destroy their foes, and, while the hypocrites and false-hearted and ungodly perish, receive them into eternal and unending peace.

17. He should have fed them also with the finest wheat-flour : and with honey out of the stony rock should I have satisfied thee.

Yea, to us unheeding, self-willed, wandering Israelites the Lord of life is ever offering that living bread which came down from heaven, even His own body, which was bruised and broken for the life of the world. A little food can satisfy the cravings of the body, but the whole world cannot fill the longings of the soul; and therefore would He Who made us satisfy us, not with created dainties, but with the richness of the grace and the sweetness of the love of Him on Whom the Church is built, even Christ, the Rock and the Corner-stone. He bids us open not our mouth only, but our heart, and He will feed us and fill us with Himself.

It is clear that this Psalm was written for some one of the festivals of the Jewish Church. It was written by that Asaph who lived in the reign of David, "On Gittith," (for the meaning of this word, compare the title of Ps. viii.) The doubt arises as to which of the great feasts it was intended for. Some commentators consider that it was for the Passover, others for the Feast of Pentecost. It is more probable that

it was composed for the celebration of the Feast of Trumpets, which was held on the new moon, at the beginning of the seventh month, fourteen days before the Feast of Tabernacles, (Levit. xxiii. 24; Num. xxix. 1). It was, and still is, used by the Jews on the occasion of that festival. Theodoret considers that the Feast of Trumpets was intended to commemorate the giving of the Law on Sinai, when the trumpet of God sounded exceeding loud amid the darkness and cloud, (Exod. xix. 16). The mention of the instruments of music in verses 2, 8, the tambour, the harp, and the lute, in addition to the trumpets, which gave the name to the feast, prove how thoroughly choral in its character the worship of God in the tabernacle and temple was, and how all the means which the worshippers could command were employed to heighten the harmony of the music, and to stir up the devotional feelings of those who joined in the service. For the nature and shape of these different instruments of music, the reader is referred to the various paintings and sculptures which have been discovered in Egypt, and also to those which have been lately brought to light from the ruins of Nineveh. An inspection of these will give more information on the subject of the ancient Oriental musical instruments than could be conveyed by pages of description.

Evening Prayer.

PSALM lxxxii. *Deus stetit.*

1. GOD standeth in the congregation of princes : He is a Judge among gods.

All they who have authority and power over others have it only by the allowance of the Almighty Ruler of the world. He is the King over kings, and the Judge over judges; He stands, though unseen, in their councils, and watches their decisions. All authority is by the will and ordinance of God; it is held under Him. There is something divine in all power over others; they who obey it obey God in it; they who despise it despise the ordinance of

God. He it was Who said to Moses, when He invested him with power and sent him to bring Israel out of Egypt,—‘I have made thee a god unto Pharaoh.’ They, therefore, who execute justice are set for the time, as it were, in the place of God, and their grand and lofty calling is to do the same work which God does in the world.

2. How long will ye give wrong judgment : and accept the persons of the ungodly ?

For them, if they misuse the power, if they persist in judging wrongly and perversely, if they destroy the plain landmarks of good and evil, and right and wrong, if they favour the wicked, and allow them to escape the punishment their misdeeds deserve, while the innocent suffer and are oppressed,—for such there will come a time when the patience of the All-righteous will be exhausted, and He will deal with them in His vengeance.

3. Defend the poor and fatherless : see that such as are in need and necessity have right.

4. Deliver the outcast and poor : save them from the hand of the ungodly.

This solemn truth—that they who have authority over others are in the place of God, and that He, though unseen, is standing among them, and very searchingly overlooks their doings, was set before the judges of Judah by Jehoshaphat, when ‘he set judges in the land, throughout all the fenced cities of Judah, city by city, and said to the judges, Take

heed what ye do: for ye judge not for man, but for the Lord, Who is with you in the judgment. Wherefore now let the fear of the Lord be upon you; take heed and do it: for there is no iniquity with the Lord our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts.' Power is given to men not to indulge their pride or their selfishness, but that they may help them who need a helper, that they may take care that the poor and needy are not treated with injustice, that they save the weak and the distressed from those who would act tyrannically and cruelly towards them.

5. They will not be learned nor understand, but walk on still in darkness : all the foundations of the earth are out of course.

There are, and ever have been, too many who would not understand this, who have blinded their own eyes, and would not see how most necessary it is that they who share the divine authority should abide in the divine righteousness. On them the warnings and the precepts of the Almighty are lost. They close their eyes to the light of holiness and truth, and go on following their own lusts and selfish wills, in darkness and bewilderment. They do most serious and fatal mischief by their unholy conduct. They ruin others besides themselves, being, like the Pharisees were, 'blind leaders of the blind;' and by their selfish misuse of that which God has for a time trusted to their care—the administering of His law and His justice—the foundations of right and truth,

on which the world rests, are broken up for a while, and torn asunder. Whether they who act unrighteously be kings and judges in the state, or priests and teachers in the Church, it is all one; they are bound to do God's justice and to speak God's truth in all things.

6. I have said, Ye are gods : and ye are all the children of the most Highest.

7. But ye shall die like men : and fall like one of the princes.

All judges are types of Him Who is the Judge; all authority is a shadow of His power Who is Lord of all. From His crown of righteousness all earthly crowns receive their splendour. If, then, the commands of earthly judges, who are men, be from God, and to be obeyed, how much more must His commandments be obeyed Who was the eternal Son? This the selfish rulers of the Jews could not understand, and in their blind judgment they would have stoned the Son of God, Who Himself stood among them; but 'Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods? If He called them gods, unto whom the Word of God came, and the Scripture cannot be broken; say ye of Him Whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest, because I said, I am the Son of God?' If the Word Himself be the everlasting God, then they who partake in the Word of God are also set for a time in the place of God. Again, if they to whom the truth of God has been revealed be

called to be the children of the most Highest, how much more is He Who is the revelation of the truth and the Truth itself, to be worshipped as the Almighty Son! But power without justice, and gifts without holiness, are of no avail to them that have them only to abuse them. Kings and judges, priests and prophets, will die and be judged for their deeds, even as the poorest and the meanest are. There is a judgment coming which is called the Last, in which all foregoing judgments will be judged. They who are raised the highest here will then fall the lowest, if their actions have been unrighteous and self-willed; even as the Prince of evil fell from his seat in heaven into the abyss of unending ruin.

8. Arise, O God, and judge Thou the earth : for Thou shalt take all heathen to Thine inheritance.

God only lends authority and power; He does not give it. His charge with all His gifts is, 'Occupy till I come.' This world, with its powers and honours, is but a dispensation lasting for a time: the hour is coming when Christ Himself, a visible and unerring Judge, shall put aside all earthly vicegerents, to whom for awhile He has given His Name, though not His attributes, shall take into His own hands all authority and power, and shall assume as His own inheritance a kingdom of righteousness over all the nations of the world.

This Psalm was written by Asaph, upon the occasion of Jehoshaphat instituting judges throughout Judæa, (2 Chron. xix. 5—7). It would

seem from many passages of Scripture, such as Isa. i. 17, 23; Amos ii. 6, 7; Micah vii. 2—4, that the judges in the land of Judah were often most unjust and corrupt. It was therefore needful to set before them the high and holy nature of their office, (Ecclus. x. 2,) which they shared with God Himself. In the Hebrew language, the very name of the Triune God, "*Elohim*," signifies also "judges," so that the expression in verse 6, "I have said, Ye are gods," is the same as if He had said, "I have said, Ye are judges." Our Lord makes use of this verse against the Pharisees, who accused Him of blasphemy because He had declared that He was the Son of God. His argument is, that if they who were made judges by man, and had authority given them under the law to execute justice, bore not only the office, but the very Name, of the God in Whose behalf they acted,—and this by the infallible testimony of Scripture they did,—how could it be blasphemy for Him, Whom the Father had sanctified, and sent into the world to be His own appointed Judge, to claim the same title in its fulness, as He bore the same office in its fulness? (St. John x. 34.) Thus are we taught that, as all earthly goodness is from Christ, and is a shadow of His goodness, so too all earthly power is from Him, and is a shadow of His power. It has been well and forcibly said, that "every prince and judge should have the verses of this Psalm not only painted upon the walls of his house, but inscribed over his bed and above his table, and even embroidered upon his clothes."

PSALM lxxxiii. *Deus, quis similis.*

1. HOLD not Thy tongue, O God, keep not still silence : refrain not Thyself, O God.

LXX. O God, who shall be likened unto Thee ?

Be not silent, refrain not, O God.

There are times in the history of the Church, when the trials and distresses that surround her seem to pass the power of man to escape, or the strength of man to bear. It is written, that it will be so yet again in the last dread trial of the faith of God's people by the craft and violence of Antichrist.

Then will the Church have to raise her prayer, that He, Who once was silent that He might be judged, when He came veiled with humility, will come again in unveiled glory not to be silent, but to pronounce that judgment which can neither be shunned nor turned aside. Then will it be seen that there is none like Him in might, as there is none like Him in mercy.

2. For lo, Thine enemies make a murmuring : and they that hate Thee have lift up their head.

3. They have imagined craftily against Thy people : and taken counsel against Thy secret ones.

4. They have said, Come, and let us root them out, that they be no more a people : and that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance.

They who seek to injure Christ's people, seek to injure Him. They who hate Him, hate His Church. They who would persecute Him, persecute His disciples. So will it be in the latter days, when the murmuring of the tide shall be turned into the roaring of the sea and its waves, and all the enemies of God, gathering themselves from every side, shall openly and boldly attack His kingdom upon earth, and shall seek to destroy and abolish all that is His, and that serves Him, and to annul, if it were possible, that decree of love upon which the election of the Church of His saints has rested from eternity.

5. For they have cast their heads together with one consent : and are confederate against Thee ;

6. The tabernacles of the Edomites, and the Ismaelites : the Moabites, and Hagarens ;

7. Gebal, and Ammon, and Amalek : the Philistines, with them that dwell at Tyre.

8. Assur also is joined with them : and have holpen the children of Lot.

The trials of Israel are ever a type of the trials of the Christian Church ; and the assaults of Satan against her in all their varied forms are prefigured by the attacks of the enemies of Jerusalem. Therefore, in that vast conspiracy into which all the nations round Judæa entered in the days of Jehoshaphat, ‘ to cast Israel out of God’s possession which He had given them to inherit,’ there is a prophecy and a warning for all time. Then the Edomites and the Moabites brought together all their allies, from the south, from the east, and from the north, to enclose the devoted nation of Judah as in a snare. The children of profane Esau, and those of Ishmael the mocker, and of the bond-woman Hagar his mother, whom the Reubenites had dispossessed of their land, the Moabites and Ammonites, the sin-born descendants of Lot, the tribes of the Arabians of the district of Gebal, who were the neighbours of the Edomites, and the Amalekites, the deadly enemies of Israel,— these from the south and east had called to their aid the Philistines of the western coast, and the hirelings

of Tyre, and had joined in their cruel confederacy the Assyrians from the distant north. They had conspired to do to Israel as Israel had done to the Amorites and Canaanites. This was the mighty armament of which 'there came some that told Jehoshaphat, saying, There cometh a great multitude against thee from beyond the sea on this side Syria; and, behold, they be in Hazazon-Tamar, which is En-gedi.'

9. But do Thou to them as unto the Madianites : unto Sisera, and unto Jabin at the brook of Kison ;

10. Who perished at Endor : and became as the dung of the earth.

11. Make them and their princes like Oreb and Zeb : yea, make all their princes like as Zeba and Salmana ;

12. Who say, Let us take to ourselves : the houses of God in possession.

But Jehoshaphat and his people trusted not in man, but in God. He prayed, 'O our God, wilt Thou not judge them? for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon Thee.' And so he went against his enemies not with the weapons of flesh, but the weapons of faith. He appointed before his army singers to praise God for His mercy; 'and when they began to sing and to praise, the Lord set ambushments against the children of

Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, which were come against Judah; and they were smitten.' Their confederacy became their destruction:—'For the children of Ammon and Moab stood up against the inhabitants of Mount Seir, utterly to slay and destroy them: and when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, every one helped to destroy another.' As God had destroyed the adversaries of His people in past times, so did He destroy them again. They were scattered and destroyed, as the Midianites were before Gideon, and the Canaanites before Barak. Deborah and Barak had routed the armies of Jabin the king of Canaan and Sisera his general, so that not a man of them was left. They were swept away by 'that ancient river, the river Kishon,' and their bodies lay perishing on the earth at Endor. And again in that day of great renown for Israel, 'the day of Midian,' Gideon with three hundred men had utterly discomfited the army of 'the Midianites, and the Amalekites, and the children of the east,' and their swords had been turned one against the other. Israel had taken two of their captains, Oreb and Zeeb, and had 'slain Oreb upon the rock Oreb, and Zeeb they slew at the winepress of Zeeb;' and Gideon and his three hundred, 'when Zebah and Zalmunna fled, pursued after them, and took the two kings of Midian, Zebah and Zalmunna, and discomfited all the host;' and he slew the two kings because they had slain his brethren. Thus had ever their plans been brought to ruin, who had thought to invade the

inheritance of God, and to take possession of the dwelling-place of His people.

13. O my God, make them like unto a wheel : and as the stubble before the wind ;

14. Like as the fire that burneth up the wood : and as the flame that consumeth the mountains.

15. Persecute them even so with Thy tempest : and make them afraid with Thy storm.

The wicked must ever rush to destruction, like the wheel of a battle-chariot. Their best-laid plans are but as chaff and stubble before the whirlwind. Their strength before the might of God is but as the strength of the trees of a forest when the flames have seized them, and their pride but as the mountain crag when the lightning has shivered it. Terror can be their only feeling when the storm of God's anger falls upon them.

16. Make their faces ashamed, O Lord : that they may seek Thy Name.

17. Let them be confounded and vexed ever more and more : let them be put to shame, and perish.

18. And they shall know that Thou, Whose Name is Jehovah : art only the most Highest over all the earth.

His power and majesty brings down man's strength and confounds his pride. For it is in her God that

the Church can truly glory; it is in and by themselves that her enemies will be brought to shame. When Jehoshaphat was delivered 'the fear of God was on all the kingdoms of those countries, when they had heard that the Lord fought against the enemies of Israel.' So the deliverance of God's people ever is the correction and instruction of His enemies, and His righteous judgments make His name to be known and feared.

The occasion on which this joyful song or psalm was composed was, undoubtedly, the invasion of Judæa, in the reign of Jehoshaphat, by a large confederation of the nations which bordered upon it. The chiefs of this confederation seem to have been the Moabites and Ammonites, the descendants of Lot; they had drawn into it the Idumæans and the Arabian tribes who were their neighbours. The Amalekites, the old enemies of Israel, and the Philistines, with whom they were constantly at war, doubtless came readily into the league, and it would seem that mercenaries had been hired from Tyre, and that an alliance had been formed with the then distant kingdom of Assyria. In order to surprise Jerusalem, they entered Judæa by marching round the southern extremity of the Dead Sea. 2 Chron. xx. relates the pious confidence of Jehoshaphat in the protection of God, and the assurance that was given him by Jahaziel, a Levite of the sons of Asaph—who was perhaps the author of this Psalm—who by the Spirit of God bid him not to be afraid nor dismayed. In fulfilment of his prediction, the arms of the confederated nations were turned against each other, till they were mutually destroyed, and the army of Jehoshaphat had only to collect the spoil of their camp, which they were three days in doing. This Psalm was probably sung by the singers whom he placed before his army, as they marched against the enemy. In order of time, therefore, it immediately precedes Psalm xlvii. The Hagarites, a tribe of Arabians who took their name from Hagar, the mother of Ishmael, had been defeated and driven from their territory by the Reubenites, in the time of Saul (1 Chron. v. 10, 19, 20); and the Amalekites also, between whom and Israel there was an eternal feud ordained by God Himself, were finally destroyed and dispersed as a nation by the Simeonites, in the reign of Hezekiah (1 Chron. iv. 39-43). The mention, therefore, of the Amalekites proves that this Psalm was written

before the time of Hezekiah, and refers it to the confederacy against Jehoshaphat. The inhabitants of Gebal are mentioned in connection with those of Tyre in Ezekiel xxvii. 9. In verses 13, 14, 15, Hammond considers that there is but one metaphor, viz. that of stubble which is crushed by the wheel to separate the grain, and then winnowed before the wind, and lastly consumed by fire. This is simpler, but the accumulation of metaphors which our translation gives is more awful and impressive.

PSALM lxxxiv. *Quam dilecta!*

1. O how amiable are Thy dwellings : Thou Lord of hosts !

2. My soul hath a desire and longing to enter into the courts of the Lord : my heart and my flesh rejoice in the living God.

3. Yea, the sparrow hath found her an house, and the swallow a nest where she may lay her young : even Thy altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God.

The courts of the earthly temples of the Lord God of hosts and the gathering-places of His congregation are the images and emblems of His dwelling-place above, and of 'the innumerable company of angels and the general assembly of the first-born.' There are gleams of heaven ever resting upon His Churches here. As the Levite, like Elkanah of the sons of Korah, though he dwelt afar off from the tabernacle, yet was ever thinking of its beauty, and recollecting its holy melody and solemn mysteries, with longing and love, and with eager desire to return again to the dwelling of his God ; so should the Christian with still deeper longings and more

fervent soul turn to that high mansion where his Saviour dwells, and which He is busied in making ready for His redeemed. Well may He desire to depart from here and to enter there. Here is longing, there is having; here is sighing, there are rejoicings; here are prayers, there are thanksgivings; here is gloom, and there is glory! There shall the heart and flesh, the whole redeemed soul and body, exult eternally in the presence of the living God. There even now our wandering affections and restless fleeting thoughts can find their rest and home, even as in Shiloh or in Sion the sparrow dwelt within the courts of the sanctuary, and the swallow made her nest and reared her young in the pillars which stood around the altar of burnt-offerings.

4. Blessed are they that dwell in 'Thy house : they will be alway praising Thee.

Blessed are the Saints who have their dwelling there; who have once entered in and depart no more from that abode of unbroken peace! They have finished their pilgrimage, they repose from their weariness; above them, and around them, and in them, is the fulness of their Saviour's love, and their whole duty from henceforth is an Alleluia which shall be chanted on and on for ever.

5. Blessed is the man whose strength is in Thee : in whose heart are Thy ways.

6. Who going through the vale of misery use it for a well : and the pools are filled with water.

Heb. Who passing through the valley of Baca make it springs.

The rain covereth it with blessings.

LXX. The Lawgiver shall give blessings.

7. They will go from strength to strength : and unto the God of gods appeareth every one of them in Sion.

But blessed too are they who are journeying on their way of obedience, though they be not as yet come to their rest. The weary journeys of the Israelites who came up three times in the year to the House of God are a fit image of this mortal life. The wayfarer of this world in himself is weak, but in his Lord is he strong; he will cast from his heart his own ways—that is, his sins,—he will only keep the ways of his Saviour—the ways of wisdom, the ways of love, the ways of peace. In the valley of weeping, in the humiliation of penitence, he will find springs of refreshing and comfort; for our Great Prophet hath long since cast of the salt of grace into the bitter fountains of human tears, and healed them. His sorrows will bring with them blessings; and his sighs, as they go up to heaven, will draw heaven down to him. He will go on from grace to grace, onward and upward through those stages of the Christian pilgrimage, the thirty-fold, the sixty-fold, the hundred-fold; the more deeply he loves, the more speedily will he ascend; each station of that walk with God gives him new strength, until the journey is accomplished, and the wayfarer leaves the vale of tears to mount upward to the hill of Sion, to

abide before the face of God amid beauty which can never fade, in love which can never die.

8. O Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer :
hearken, O God of Jacob.

9. Behold, O God our defender : and look
upon the face of Thine Anointed.

LXX. Look upon the face of Thy Christ.

Until that time our prayers must outrun our steps, our hopes must get before ourselves. We must pray to the God of hosts to be our defender and our keeper through the perils of our road, not for our own sakes, but for His Whose we are. We must implore the God of Jacob to look upon us, not in our own meanness and poverty, but in the person of our Christ and King, Who has anointed His people with that unction of grace which was poured without measure upon Himself.

10. For one day in Thy courts : is better
than a thousand.

11. I had rather be a door-keeper in the
house of my God : than to dwell in the tents
of ungodliness.

Heb. I had rather lie at the threshold in the house of
my God.

One day spent in prayer within the earthly house of God is better than many given up to the restlessness and toil of the world. Far more shall the days of this our earthly life, however many of them there may be, be surpassed and overpaid by the day of heaven—that one day whose sun knows no rising and

no setting, which follows after no yesterday, and after which no to-morrow comes—the one day of eternity. To have but a station there, if it be but as a keeper of the door, to be anywhere there, so it be but within, or even on the threshold of that all-glorious home, is that most blessed lot, beside which the dwelling in the pavilions of sin, and the being surrounded with the curtains of wickedness, however brilliant for a time they may be, is ruin and utter loss. Oh may the All-merciful bring us there, when He will and as He will, only so that we be at the last within His threshold,—only that we be not cast out!

12. For the Lord God is a light and defence : the Lord will give grace and worship, and no good thing shall He withhold from them that live a godly life.

13. O Lord God of hosts : blessed is the man that putteth his trust in Thee.

Here the prayers of them who bear the cross are heard, their longings are supplied ; here the Giver of all goodness enlightens their mind, and defends their soul. His grace is, as it were, a sun to disperse the darkness ; His glory is, as it were, a shield to repel their foes. And if the thoughts of heaven and the messages of God comfort, and refresh, and stay the weary soul—what shall be the effects of the full possession of His joy and the entering into His ineffable presence ! There shall godliness be indeed great gain : for no one thing that is good—not His peace, not His love, not even Himself—shall He withhold

from them that live a godly life. He that hath given us His own Son, 'how shall He not with Him freely give us all things?' Blessed now in time, blessed hereafter in eternity, is he who believeth in Jesus, and longeth after Jesus, and liveth after Jesus.

This Psalm was composed by the sons of Korah, "upon Gittith," (see Psalms viii. and lxxx.) for the public service of the temple. If "Gittith" signifies either a harp or a tune invented at Gath, it is more likely to have a reference to Gath-Rimmon, which was one of the cities of the Levites, (Josb. xxi. 24,) than to Gath of the Philistines. It has been ascribed to the time of David, but it is far more likely that it was written during the reign of Hezekiah, to stir up the holy affections and pious longings of the race of Israel for the temple and the worship of their fathers. In the time of Hezekiah many out of the tribes of "Asher, and Manasseh, and of Zebulun, humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem," (2 Chron. xxx. 11). This Psalm might have been used as a pilgrimage song by the pious observers of the law, when they went up three times a-year from the more distant tribes to the House of God, as those Psalms were used which are called "the Psalms of Degrees." This journeying to the house of God could not but suggest to the thoughtful spirit the journey of man in this mortal life, and the temple of God at the holy city, and the desire to visit it, were but as emblems of the eternal temple, and the glory which is reserved for the faithful in heart. The vale of Baca in verse 7 has been supposed to be so called from a shrub which grew in it, which is still called Baca by the Arabians, and which distilled a gum like the dropping of tears; it may, perhaps, rather be that place which was called Bochim, or weeping, because the Israelites wept tears of repentance there, when they were rebuked for their sins by an angel of the Lord, (Judges ii. 1—5). In its tone of tender and yet rapturous poetry, and its spirit of the holy longing of divine love, this Psalm is much like the forty-second, which is also by the sons of Korah.

FOR CHRISTMAS-DAY.

PSALM LXXXV. *Benedixisti, Domine.*

1. LORD, Thou art become gracious unto

Thy land : Thou hast turned away the captivity of Jacob.

2. Thou hast forgiven the offence of Thy people : and covered all their sins.

3. Thou hast taken away all Thy displeasure : and turned Thyself from Thy wrathful indignation.

In that bright gleam of rest, and holiness, and peace which fell upon the land of Judah in the godly reign of Hezekiah, the spirit of the prophet, while it joyed in the present, saw the future, though distant, advent of immortal grace, and truth, and light. Then God was gracious unto His land; and that graciousness was an earnest of greater grace to come. Then He spared the children of Judah from the captivity which hung over them; and that deliverance was a foreshadowing of His coming, upon Whom was to be the Spirit of the Lord, Whom He should 'anoint to preach the Gospel to the poor.' Whom He would send 'to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.' He was to deliver His people from a more hopeless than Assyrian bondage, even 'the captivity of the law of sin.' But how should He deliver them from this captivity? By forgiving their offence and covering their sin. Pardon would break the chain of sin. He was to 'take away the sin of the world.' The spotlessness of His innocence was to cover the ini-

quity of their guilt. In Him was the Father pleased; and through His intercession was man again brought near to the God Whose commandments He had broken.

4. Turn us then, O God our Saviour : and let Thine anger cease from us.

5. Wilt Thou be displeased at us for ever : and wilt Thou stretch out Thy wrath from one generation to another ?

6. Wilt Thou not turn again, and quicken us : that Thy people may rejoice in Thee ?

Then God our Saviour turned Himself to us, and turned us to Him. His anger was quenched in pity at our lost estate. The weakness of the flesh, the torture of pain, the house of poverty, the chain of death, the snare of temptation—these were the bitter tokens of that captivity into which we fell when we displeased our God. But His displeasure was not for ever, it extended not through all the generations of our existence : one indeed, our first and natural generation, was made mortal by His wrath, but the second was made immortal by His mercy. Yea, God turned Himself to man yet again the second time to give him life, and not only life, but grace, and not only grace, but joy. When man rejoiced in himself, he turned from God; but when God turned to man, then could he rejoice in his Saviour.

7. Shew us Thy mercy, O Lord : and grant us Thy salvation.

Dim-sighted as we are, we must ask our Father to shew us His mercy, which we cannot see of ourselves ; —poor as we are, we must beg Him to grant us His salvation, which we cannot possess of ourselves. But what is both the shewing of His mercy and the granting of His salvation, but the coming to us of Jesus Christ the Saviour, Who was made man for us ! Therefore does the Church keep, as it were, a perpetual advent—therefore is she always on the watch for the appearing of Incarnate Love—therefore would she have the prayer daily on her children's lips, ' O Lord, shew Thy mercy upon us, And grant us Thy salvation.'

8. I will hearken what the Lord God will say concerning me : for He shall speak peace unto His people, and to His saints, that they turn not again.

As when an earthly sovereign makes a proclamation of peace, all to whom it is made listen to it in silence and attention, so on the first Christmas-day all nature was hushed in solemn and perfect stillness to hearken to what God said concerning us by the voice of His angel-heralds, when they proclaimed, ' Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men.' So must we ever hearken, like a prophet waiting for the inspiration of the Spirit, in reverence and awe, to those words of peace and love which He speaks to His own elect, when He would have them forsake their folly and their guilt, and turn not to the sins they had repented of.

9. For His salvation is nigh them that fear Him : that glory may dwell in our land.

Then salvation, even Christ Himself, the Saviour, came nigh to us, even among us. He manifested Himself and His glory to them that believed on Him, even here in this earth of ours. 'The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us; and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.'

10. Mercy and truth are met together : righteousness and peace have kissed each other.

11. Truth shall flourish out of the earth : and righteousness hath looked down from heaven.

Then mercy and peace, and truth and righteousness, which had parted at the fall of man in paradise, met together again at the birth of Christ in Bethlehem. Then divine Mercy brought the gift of pardon for sinning man, and Truth met her, and confessed its fulness and its perfectness. Then Peace offered a full satisfaction for our guilt, and Justice received it at her hands, and was gladly reconciled. Yes, without a parable, in the spotless Child of Mary does all that is merciful, and all that is true, and all that is peaceable, and all that is righteous, meet in the perfect union of perfect God with perfect man. Then did truth spring out of the earth in Him Who was the Word made flesh, and righteousness looked

down from heaven in the eternal Father, Who sent unto us His beloved Son.

12. Yea, the Lord shall shew loving-kindness : and our land shall give her increase.

13. Righteousness shall go before Him : and He shall direct His going in the way.

For it was in His bringing down Himself that message of love which He had to give us,—it was in His coming among us and being with us and one with us,—it was in His taking upon Himself the likeness of sinful flesh and the doom of a sinful nature, while yet He was without all spot of sin,—that ‘the kindness and love of God our Saviour towards man appeared.’ He took the curse from us and was made a curse for us. This earth we live on was cursed for our sake with thorns; it is blessed for His sake Who was crowned with thorns. Like the earth, our hearts were barren, but He has made them fruitful by His grace. Oh, follow we Him!—for righteousness goes before Him, as once the Baptist went before Him to make ready His way; and He in holiness, and patience, and love has measured with His pierced-through feet each step of this toilsome and weary life, even unto death, that He might guide us with His footsteps to where He is. From Bethlehem to Calvary He has ‘directed His going in the way’ of humiliation, that we might follow Him from Olivet to heaven in the way of glory.

The subject and spirit of this Psalm render it a fit hymn of praise to be used on the Nativity of Christ, for which festival the Church has

appointed it. It was intended to be sung in the temple-service, as its title is, "To the Chief Musician, a Psalm by the sons of Korah." It was very probably composed by one of the Levites of the family of Korah, at the period of that happy revival of religious earnestness and obedience to the law which took place in the reign of Hezekiah, and which, following as it did upon the impiety and idolatry of his father, must have filled all true-hearted men with deep gratitude to God, Who had by His providence brought it about. A deep and beautiful commentary on the latter part of this Psalm will be found in the eleventh sermon on the Nativity, of the thoughtful and saint-like Bp. Andrewes.

Morning Prayer.

PSALM lxxxvi. *Inclina, Domine.*

1. Bow down Thine ear, O Lord, and hear me : for I am poor, and in misery.

2. Preserve Thou my soul, for I am holy : my God, save Thy servant that putteth his trust in Thee.

Like one fainting and unable to raise himself begs him who would relieve him to bend down his ear, that he may hear the words which he scarce has strength to speak ; so man in his poverty and misery implores the Father of compassion to hear his prayer. He asks God to keep him, because he belongs to God ; he confesses that he is not his own, but is devoted and offered up to his Lord, and sanctified by His Holy Spirit, therefore he prays for grace and salvation, and trusts only to Him Whose he is, to hear and grant his prayer.

3. Be merciful unto me, O Lord : for I will call daily upon Thee.

4. Comfort the soul of Thy servant : for unto Thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.

5. For Thou, Lord, art good and gracious : and of great mercy unto all them that call upon Thee.

He would ask for daily mercy, as he needs it for daily sin. He lifts up his soul from the want and sorrow of earth for comfort to that Lord of life and love, of goodness and of grace, Who ever is ready to give to all them that call upon Him for mercy.

6. Give ear, Lord, unto my prayer : and ponder the voice of my humble desires.

7. In the time of my trouble I will call upon Thee : for Thou hearest me.

8. Among the gods there is none like unto Thee, O Lord : there is not one that can do as Thou doest.

It is to God only that man must make his prayer, it is to God only that man must seek in trouble; for it is God only that can hear him. There is no creature, be it angel or man, who can comfort us with mercy and grant us salvation, but God only. 'For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, as there be gods many, and lords many, but to us there is but one God, the Father, of Whom are all things, and we in Him ;

and one Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom are all things, and we by Him.'

9. All nations whom Thou hast made shall come and worship Thee, O Lord : and shall glorify Thy Name.

10. For Thou art great, and doest wondrous things : Thou art God alone.

To Him Who hath made all, and to Him Who hath redeemed all, shall all nations come; and he that cometh shall in no wise be cast out. 'His house shall be called a house of prayer for all people.' He Who is the Father of all would have all come to Him, in Him and through Him Who is the beloved Son. In Christ is the greatness of His mercy and the wondrousness of His salvation shewn to the peoples of the world. He with the Father is God alone, for He said, 'I and My Father are One.'

11. Teach me Thy way, O Lord, and I will walk in Thy truth : O knit my heart unto Thee, that I may fear Thy Name.

All ways are indifferent to him who is journeying towards heaven; he only asks for that which will bring him most speedily to his home. He does not seek to walk in the pleasantest, but in the safest and the shortest, and that is the way of the Cross. There is one Who is our guide, Who is Himself the way; One Who is our teacher, Who is Himself the truth: if we 'distrust not the fear of the Lord, and come not unto Him with a double heart;' if our souls be

joined to Him Who first loved us, His grace will bring us into that right way, the way of faith and holy fear.

12. I will thank Thee, O Lord my God, with all my heart : and will praise Thy Name for evermore.

13. For great is Thy mercy toward me : and Thou hast delivered my soul from the nethermost hell.

To God, Who giveth us forgiveness, what can we return but thankfulness—the thankfulness of an undivided heart, and the unending praise of a soul redeemed? For in the greatness of His mercy He has delivered our soul from sin, from death, the fruit of sin, and from hell, the end of sin—from hell, the nethermost and deepest, where men are twice dead, where soul and body are delivered into ‘the bitter pains of eternal death.’

14. O God, the proud are risen against me : and the congregations of naughty men have sought after my soul, and have not set Thee before their eyes.

Poor and miserable as we are, we are surrounded with innumerable dangers, and with hosts of enemies. The evil spirits who fell through pride are risen against us; he is our tempter who was the tempter of our Lord. To these dangers are added the temptations of this present evil world, and the

violence or the influence of the assemblies of the wicked, who look only to their own will, and care not for the will of God.

15. But Thou, O Lord God, art full of compassion and mercy : long-suffering, plentiful in goodness and truth.

16. O turn Thee then unto me, and have mercy upon me : give Thy strength unto Thy servant, and help the son of Thine handmaid.

17. Shew some token upon me for good, that they who hate me may see it, and be ashamed : because Thou, Lord, hast holpen me, and comforted me.

Infinite are the provocations of man against his Maker, and yet infinite are the mercy and patience, the goodness and truth of Almighty God, in bearing with them. We may after all our trespasses implore Him to turn to us in mercy, and to give us strength and succour, because we are His, because we belong to Him as His servants, and have been new-born to do His will in His Church. Therefore may we ask for grace to worthily receive His Sacraments, and humbly come to Him for those 'sure witnesses and effectual signs of grace, and His good-will towards us,' by which the power and craft of our foes may be defeated, and we may be helped in our trials and comforted in our sorrows.

This is "a Prayer of David," written most probably in the latter

part of his life. It contains many expressions which have occurred already in those Psalms which David wrote. Its words of earnest prayer would be found full of comfort by Hezekiah and his people, both in their repentance and in the dangers which came upon them.

PSALM lxxxvii. *Fundamenta ejus.*

1. HER foundations are upon the holy hills : the Lord loveth the gates of Sion more than all the dwellings of Jacob.

Heb. His foundations are in the holy mountains.

The foundations of that city which God has built for Himself; and which He calls His own, are indeed upon the holy mountains. The Lord of heaven chose one country out of all countries, and one city out of all its cities, and one hill out of all its hills, to be holy to Himself; and this as being a shadow and type of His heavenly city. The earthly Jerusalem was built upon Sion and Moriah; the heavenly Jerusalem was 'built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the head corner-stone.' He is the saint of saints, and the foundation of foundations. The foundations of Sion were set upon the mountains, her beauty was seen from afar off; so is the Church exalted to be the light of the world, a 'city set upon a hill which cannot be hid.' There are twelve gates to that eternal city, and yet but one entrance; for the twelve Apostles, and the doctrine which they proclaimed unto the world, are one in Christ. The gates of Sion are the doctrines of the Gospel, the

tabernacles of Jacob are the teachings of the law ; the law was accomplished in the Gospel ; therefore it is said that the Lord loveth the gates of Sion more than the dwellings of Jacob.

2. Very excellent things are spoken of thee : thou city of God.

Glorious things were said of the earthly Jerusalem ; she was called the beautiful city, and the joy of the earth. She was crowned with the temple of her God, and the glory of His presence dwelt within her. But if excellent things were spoken of the shadow and the figure, what shall be said of the reality and the truth ! The earthly city fell, and the shadow passed away. The spiritual city abideth for ever ; its building is begun on earth and completed in heaven, it standeth for the ages of eternity ; and there is 'no temple therein ; for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it ;' and it has 'no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it : for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.'

3. I will think upon Rahab and Babylon : with them that know me.

4. Behold ye the Philistines also : and they of Tyre, with the Morians ; lo, there was He born.

5. And of Sion it shall be reported that He was born in her : and the most High shall stablish her.

Heb. I will announce Rahab and Babylon
 Amongst them who acknowledge Me.
 Behold Philistia, and Tyre, and Cush:
 This one was born there.
 And of Sion it shall be said,
 This man and this man is born in her:
 And He establishes her Who is the most High.

God Himself proclaims her glory, when He declares that Egypt and Babylon shall be among those who confess His Name. For this is the glory of the Church, that into her the fulness of the nations shall enter,—the proud from Egypt, who for her haughtiness is called Rahab,—the worldly from Babylon, the city of confusion,—the wrathful from Philistia, so long the enemies of Israel,—the covetous from Tyre, the rich city of the traders,—and the slaves of ignorance from Cush, and from the land of Ham,—all these shall learn the love of Christ and confess His truth, and shall enter into that all-glorious city, and be admitted and acknowledged as citizens of the celestial Sion. Each one, whatever be his nation, who is born again of water and of the Holy Ghost, is born within the walls of the new Jerusalem, ‘which is the mother of us all.’ Her glory shall not pass away. The eternal God hath established His Church for ever; He will enlarge her gates and multiply her children, and will be with her always, even to the end.

6. The Lord shall rehearse it when He writeth up the people : that He was born there.

Heb. The Lord shall count in the writing down of the nations,

This one was born there.

LXX. The Lord shall declare it in the enrolment of the people and the princes,
Of them who have been born in her.

To be enrolled in the number of her citizens is to be written in the book of life; therefore all the elect of God, 'whose names are written in heaven,' shall be counted to be born in her. 'One shall say, I am the Lord's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel.' And greatest and most glorious of all, He shall be counted among her citizens Who was her Builder and Creator. Unto her a child was born—the Child of Mary; unto her a son was given—the Son of God. Yea, it shall be said even of Him Whose goings forth were from everlasting, 'This Man was born there.'

7. The singers also and trumpeters shall He rehearse : All my fresh springs shall be in thee.

Heb. Singing and dancing. they shall say,
All my fountains of joy are in thee.

As the Church shall glory in the redeemed, so shall the redeemed rejoice in the Church, and in Christ, Who is her Spouse and King. For it is He Who hath written the names of His saints in that book which is the Book of Life. Filled with immortal gladness, they shall own in the songs of heaven, that

the fountains of grace which refreshed their earthly pilgrimage, and the well-spring of glory which is opened to them in eternity, flowed to them from Him through the channel of His body, even His Church.

This is "a joyful Psalm by the sons of Korah," in which, St. Athanasius declares, they foretel the calling of the Gentiles, and the future revealing of the Only-begotten to the Church in the mystery of the Incarnation. The words of the Psalm in itself are somewhat obscure and difficult. It was possibly written in the reign of Hezekiah, when the enemies of Jerusalem were defeated and driven back, and the neighbouring nations heard of the glory of Jerusalem and brought presents. It seems to describe the eagerness with which the various nations of the world would desire to acknowledge the God of Israel, and to have their names enrolled as citizens of Sion. (Compare Isa. iv. 3; xlv. 5; xlv. 14; lx. 4.)

FOR GOOD-FRIDAY.

PSALM lxxxviii. *Domine Deus.*

1. O LORD God of my salvation, I have cried day and night before Thee : O let my prayer enter into Thy presence, incline Thine ear unto my calling.

Christ our Lord in His agony and death prayed to the Almighty Father in that form of man in which He suffered. He cried to Him in the day of His passion upon the Cross of Calvary, and in the night of His bitter agony in the garden of Gethsemane; yea, His whole life was one long passion, and one long prayer. His prayer entered into His Father's presence, and was accepted by Him; He inclined His ear unto the Son of Man, and heard Him in His mercy.

2. For my soul is full of trouble : and my life draweth nigh unto hell.

By prayer He strengthened Himself to bear the Cross, in that dark and terrible hour, when in the garden He was sore amazed and very heavy, and in which He said, 'My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.' He emptied Himself of glory, that He might be full of trouble. His soul, which was free from human sin, was full of human troubles, that we who are full of sin might be free from trouble; His life drew nigh to the terrors of the unseen world, that we might not be its spoil and prey.

3. I am counted as one of them that go down into the pit : and I have been even as a man that hath no strength.

4. Free among the dead, like unto them that are wounded, and lie in the grave : who are out of remembrance, and are cut away from Thy hand.

The Son of God was found in fashion as a man; He humbled Himself and was obedient to death, even the death of the Cross. Sinless in His nature, He was treated as a sinner; eternal in His existence, He was condemned to die; infinite in His power, He was counted as one of them that go down into the pit. 'When we were yet without strength,' He was made as we are, and died for the ungodly. Almighty, He became weak; the Lord of

angels, He was left helpless; the Saviour of the world, it was said of Him, 'He saved others, Himself He cannot save.' Free from the sins of mortality, He yet entered into the prison-house of the dead; wounded even unto death, in the hands, and in the feet, and in the heart, He was taken down from the cross and laid within the sepulchre, even like a sinner whom God has forgotten, like a child of man who dies and returns to the earth, when he is separated from the hand of God which holds us all in life.

5. Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit : in a place of darkness, and in the deep.

Christ our Lord descended into hell. The Son of Man was three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. His body was laid within the sepulchre; His soul descended into those deep abodes of the unseen world which had been hitherto full of gloom and fearfulness, until His glory shone amid their mournful shadows. How He descended, whither He went, and what work He wrought there, we may not dare to guess; but this we know—that wherever He went in His descending into the unseen world, almighty mercy was His guide, and almighty love His companion. He Who was the Redeemer in the manger and on the Cross, could not but be the Redeemer even in the grave.

6. Thine indignation lieth hard upon me : and Thou hast vexed me with all Thy storms.

7. Thou hast put away mine acquaintance far from me : and made me to be abhorred of them.

8. I am so fast in prison : that I cannot get forth.

‘The Lord laid upon Him the iniquity of us all.’ The wrath which our sins called forth fell upon Him : ‘He was made sin for us Who knew no sin.’ The waters of that baptism of death rolled over Him in all their bitterness and depth. And He suffered alone ; ‘His disciples forsook Him and fled :’ Peter, the most zealous of the Apostles, denied Him with an oath,—‘I know not the man.’ While He was dying upon the Cross, ‘all His acquaintance stood afar off.’ His Father and God seemed to have forsaken Him. And when His sacred body was laid within the tomb, His enemies sealed the stone and set a watch, and made it as sure as they could. Yet all these things He suffered by the all-wise and eternal decrees of God. In our feeble lives, we seem to do many things by chance and many by necessity ; but what necessity could force the power of the Son of God, or what could His wisdom do by chance ? All that Christ did, all that He spake, all that He suffered—His prayer, His agony, His death, His burial, His descent into hell—were by His own will and determined by His almighty love.

9. My sight faileth for very trouble : Lord, I have called daily upon Thee, I have stretched forth my hands unto Thee.

His sight grew dim as He drew near to death ; yet though His eyes failed Him, His prayers failed not. Still both in life and in death He stretched out His hands upon the accursed tree, pleading ever for His people, both as a living Sacrifice and as a dying Priest.

10. Dost Thou shew wonders among the dead : or shall the dead rise up again, and praise Thee ?

Heb. Wilt Thou do wonders to the dead ;
Or shall the Rephaim stand up and praise Thee ?

11. Shall Thy loving-kindness be shewed in the grave : or Thy faithfulness in destruction ?

12. Shall Thy wondrous works be known in the dark : and Thy righteousness in the land where all things are forgotten ?

The limits of this world are the bounds of our power, and our vision extends not beyond the light of this world ; but what can bound the mightiness of God or the love of Christ ? His wonders were shewn among the dead : the light of His glory shone ‘in the chambers of souls :’ the spirits who had descended to that dark prison-house of the unseen world, the souls of the giants and the mighty ones who lived before the flood, and who died in their pride and sin, were visited, Holy Scripture seems to tell us, by the soul of Christ. ‘He was put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit : by Which also

He went and preached unto the spirits in prison ; which sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing.' His love went beyond this life : He Who was King of all was King also of the grave, and in the very shadow of death He gave to the repenting thief the merciful assurance, 'To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise.' His soul went to the land of spirits, His body rested in the grave, and yet but for a little space ; He rose again and departed from that dwelling of forgetfulness, and by His marvellous resurrection He gave an earnest and a faithful pledge that all should hereafter rise again ; that His wonders should yet again be displayed in the dark region of Hades, and that His righteousness should summon the bodies of His sleeping saints to stand up and come forth from the graves in which they lie forgotten and unknown by man, but remembered by their God.

13. Unto Thee have I cried, O Lord : and early shall my prayer come before Thee.

And this crowning marvel of the universe will be wrought by the merits of His sacrifice and the virtue of His unceasing intercession Who for us rose again early in the morning of the third day, that we might rise through Him and in Him.

14. Lord, why abhorrest Thou my soul : and hidest Thou Thy face from me ?

15. I am in misery, and like unto him that

is at the point to die : even from my youth up Thy terrors have I suffered with a troubled mind.

16. Thy wrathful displeasure goeth over me : and the fear of Thee hath undone me.

The curse of sin was laid upon the Saviour, though He were sinless; and the face of God was turned from Him at the last, and He was left in darkness Who was the Light of Light. In the last day of His passion Christ bore the Cross upon His shoulders, but all His life long He had borne it in His heart. His life in this world of death had been a living death. Like the children of Israel suffered terror and misery in the brick-kilns and the prisons of Egypt, so had He, even from His youth, when Herod sought to slay Him, been surrounded with hatred and danger; so that the word of the prophet, which was spoken of Israel, was fulfilled in Him—‘Out of Egypt have I called My Son.’ But in the last hours of His life on earth the sense of the displeasure and wrath of God against sin and evil, which had all through His life oppressed His soul, came with doubled weight, and pierced His sinless spirit with sharper agony and suffering.

17. They came round about me daily like water : and compassed me together on every side.

18. My lovers and friends hast Thou put away from me : and hid mine acquaintance out of my sight.

The sins of all mankind came round Him like the waves of a dark and boundless ocean, and on this side and on that there was no escape but through the gate of death. He was left alone in that deep of woe, for none could, if they would, have come near Him to aid Him or to bear His passion with Him; and none would, if they could; for even His disciples, whom He had loved unto the end, forsook Him. We men for whom He was dying, hid, as it were, our faces from Him. All around Him was darkness,—the darkness of the hidden sun before His eyes, and the darkness of sin and the gloom of death before His soul. His body hung on the cross between heaven and earth, as though He were an outcast of both. ‘For us men and for our salvation He suffered and was buried.’ ‘He descended into hell.’

The title of this awful and mournful Psalm is “A Song or Psalm of the sons of Korah, to the chief Musician upon Mahalath Leannoth, a Maschil of Heman the Ezrahite.” There are several persons of the name of Heman mentioned in Holy Scripture. This Psalm has been sometimes ascribed to Heman the Levite, who is called also a Seer, and is spoken of as being the chief musician of a choir with Asaph and Jeduthun in the time of David, (1 Chron. xxv. 5, 6). But the Heman to whom the title ascribes this Psalm was an Ezrahite, or a descendant of Zerah, the son of Judah. “The sons of Zerah were Zimri, and Ethan, and *Heman*, and Calcol, and Dara,” (1 Chron. ii. 6); and these grandsons of Judah appear to have been renowned for their wisdom and mental power, for it is said of Solomon, (1 Kings iv. 31,) “He was wiser than all men; than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, and Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol.” If, therefore, the Heman of this Psalm were Heman the son of Zerah,—and this was the opinion of St. Athanasius and Eusebius among the ancients, and of Lightfoot and other moderns,—it was written by him during the captivity of the Israelites in Egypt. Both the expressions of the Psalm and its general tone, which is full of sorrow and misery of heart, agree with its being written at that time. The words “Maha-

lath Leannoth," though they have been interpreted to signify "singing in alternate choirs," or "to be sung to the flute," yet, as their most probable meaning is "the sickness or misery of the oppressions," fall in with this view. We may suppose, then, that this Instruction of Heman the son of Zerah, the son of Judah, was written in the time of the sufferings of Israel in Egypt, that it was preserved among the hymns of the sons of Korah, and that previous to or during the reign of Hezekiah, it was adapted by them to the public service of the Temple. It is appointed by the Church for Good Friday, and has been generally interpreted as spiritually prophetic of the passion and death and descent into hell of our blessed Redeemer.

The word which in verse 2 is rendered "Hell" in the Prayer-book translation, and "the grave" in the Bible version, and which is usually translated either as Hell or the grave, is in the Hebrew "Sheol," and in the Greek "Hades." *Hades* signifies "the unseen world." The word *Sheol* is literally "the Devouring, or the Insatiable." (Compare Habak. ii. 5, "who enlargeth his desire as hell, and is as death, and cannot be satisfied;" and also Prov. xxx. 15, 16.) Sheol seems to have presented itself to the thoughts of the ancient Hebrews as a gloomy, silent, inevitable, and mysterious abode, situated within the earth, whither the souls of the departed were compelled to repair and to dwell, upon their being separated from the body. (Isa. xiv. 9—20.) They believed that the spirits of all human kind were contained there in a state of waiting, and there especially dwelt the souls of the giants before the flood, (1 Pet. iii. 19, 20,) and of the great ones of old, the *Rephaim*, whom they pictured to themselves as fearful and gigantic spectres. (Compare Prov. ii. 18.) These ideas became modified and developed with the increasing clearness of divine teaching; and they divided the abode of the dead into different states of hope and comfort, which they called Abraham's bosom and Paradise, (St. Luke xvi. 22, 23; xxiii. 43); and of misery and suffering, (Wisdom iii. 1). Life and immortality were brought to light by the Saviour, and also judgment and Hell—the *Gehenna* of everlasting punishment, as distinguished from the Unseen World. (Compare Rev. xx. 13, 14.) From these speculations of Jewish Rabbis respecting *Sheol* the Church of Rome appears to have developed the doctrine of Purgatory. It should be added that it was a received opinion among the followers of Rabbinical teaching, that all of the seed of Abraham, though they would be dwellers in *Sheol* before the general resurrection, would finally escape the *Gehenna* of everlasting fire. The Rich man (St. Luke xvi. 23) is in Hades in torments when he calls to Abraham his father.

Ebening Prayer.

FOR CHRISTMAS-DAY.

PSALM lxxxix. *Misericordias Domini.*

1. My song shall be alway of the loving-kindness of the Lord : with my mouth will I ever be shewing Thy truth from one generation to another.

The love of God in the incarnation of His Son is that which must always call forth our praise and thankfulness. His truth revealed in Christ will be the theme of our songs not only in this world, but in the world hereafter.

2. For I have said, Mercy shall be set up for ever : Thy truth shalt Thou stablish in the heavens.

3. I have made a covenant with My chosen : I have sworn unto David My servant ;

4. Thy seed will I stablish for ever : and set up thy throne from one generation to another.

He has told us, and through faith in Him we know and are sure, that His mercy will never fail : we can plead before Him that His promises are like the heavens which He has built, wide and lofty, but enduring and strong. In this stedfast mercy and eternal truth did He make a covenant with His chosen servant David, and promised that his seed

should sit upon his throne, not merely for a few generations, but for ever, in a kingdom which should never end. His voice of consolation to His people is, 'I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.'

5. O Lord, the very heavens shall praise Thy wondrous works : and Thy truth in the congregation of the saints.

Heb. And the saints Thy faithfulness in the congregation.

6. For who is he among the clouds : that shall be compared unto the Lord ?

7. And what is he among the gods : that shall be like unto the Lord ?

This covenant was fulfilled in Jesus Christ, the son of David, at whose birth the heavens burst into music, and the multitude of the heavenly host praised God for that Christ the Lord was incarnate in Bethlehem, the city of David; while His saints, from Simeon and Anna down unto the time when the number of His elect shall be accomplished, confess their trust in His truth and faithfulness, and repeat on earth the songs of heaven. He came into this lower world veiling the glory of the Godhead in mortal flesh, but yet even in His humiliation above all. None among created beings are to be compared to the Son of God, whether prophets, or apostles, or saints, though they be His 'great cloud of witnesses;' none of the angels, or virtues, or powers of heaven, however bright or high, are like unto Him,

for 'He is made so much better than the angels, as He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.'

8. God is very greatly to be feared in the council of the saints : and to be had in reverence of all them that are round about Him.

9. O Lord God of hosts, who is like unto Thee : Thy truth, most mighty Lord, is on every side.

He shall come with clouds, and all shall see Him ; and His saints, who on earth have 'served Him with reverence and godly fear,' shall be caught up to meet Him in the air : but they who shall be caught up to the clouds shall worship Him Who cometh in the clouds, glorious, and wonderful, and terrible in His power and in His judgments, in that awful day. Then shall He be had in reverence by the assembled universe of angels and of men, Who is Lord of all, both of angels and of men, and His truth shall drive away for ever the darkness of ignorance, or error, and of falsehood, and shall shine, like His glory, round about Him, through all created worlds.

10. Thou rulest the raging of the sea : Thou stillest the waves thereof when they arise.

11. Thou hast subdued Egypt, and destroyed it : Thou hast scattered Thine enemies abroad with Thy mighty arm.

Heb. Thou shalt subdue Rahab as one that is wounded.

12. The heavens are Thine, the earth also is Thine : Thou hast laid the foundation of the round world, and all that therein is.

13. Thou hast made the north and the south : Tabor and Hermon shall rejoice in Thy Name.

He Who came as a little child to the manger of Bethlehem, was that same Who saith to the sea from the beginning, 'So far shalt thou come, and no farther;' and Who spake in after-time to the waves and to the winds on the lake of Galilee, saying, 'Peace, be still!' He it was Who had struck down Pharaoh from his pride, and had scattered the hosts of Egypt in the Red Sea. He had created in the beginning the heavens and the earth; and the world and all that is in it, its vastness, its order, its fertility, its living things, were called into being by His word, and are continued by His care. The north and the south, the snowy cliffs of Lebanon, and the parched deserts of Arabia, the height of Hermon in the east of Jordan, near which He was baptized, and Tabor, the mount of transfiguration, on the west, are His, for He made them, and unto Him they owe whatever of grandeur, or of beauty, or of holiness they have. He hath made all things in His wisdom, and He will fill them with His love.

14. Thou hast a mighty arm : strong is Thy hand, and high is Thy right hand.

15. Righteousness and equity are the habi-

tation of Thy seat : mercy and truth shall go before Thy face.

Yea, mighty is the arm of the Lord, the Eternal Word—strong is ‘the power of His Christ’—whether His hand be forming the worlds in the beginning, or upholding them in their order, or swathed in swaddling bands in the cave of Bethlehem, or stretched out upon the cross of Calvary, or raised to bless His elect as He ascendeth from Olivet. And mighty shall it still be found, when He shall sit upon the throne of justice and of judgment, while mercy and truth shall go before Him, like His angel-messengers, to summon the world into His presence.

16. Blessed is the people, O Lord, that can rejoice in Thee : they shall walk in the light of Thy countenance.

Heb. Blessed are the people that know the sound of joy.

17. Their delight shall be daily in Thy Name : and in Thy righteousness shall they make their boast.

18. For Thou art the glory of their strength : and in Thy loving-kindness Thou shalt lift up our horns.

19. For the Lord is our defence : the Holy One of Israel is our King.

Blessed are they who have heard the proclamation of the coming of the incarnate Word,—‘Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, Which is Christ the Lord;’ and blessed are they who go

even unto Bethlehem, and ‘see this thing which is come to pass.’ In His light they walk through this world of darkness; in His Name do they day by day rejoice even in this world’s sorrow; in His righteousness can they securely rest in this world’s evil. Their Lord is their strength, and in His love, so wondrously shewn forth, is their power and pride. The confession of the Only-begotten of the Father is their defence against the power of the Evil One, and the ground of their confidence will ever be that they are subjects, not of sin or of death, but of the King of the worlds, the Holy One of Israel, Who is the Holy One of God.

20. Thou spakest sometime in visions unto Thy saints, and saidst : I have laid help upon one that is mighty ; I have exalted one chosen out of the people.

21. I have found David My servant : with My holy oil have I anointed him.

22. My hand shall hold him fast : and My arm shall strengthen him.

23. The enemy shall not be able to do him violence : the son of wickedness shall not hurt him.

24. I will smite down his foes before his face : and plague them that hate him.

25. My truth also and My mercy shall be with him : and in My Name shall his horn be exalted.

26. I will set his dominion also in the sea : and his right hand in the floods.

By Samuel the seer was David anointed to be king over Israel; and by Nathan the prophet was the promise confirmed to him that his seed should reign after him: David purposed to build a house for the ark of God; 'and it came to pass that same night that the word of the Lord came to Nathan, Now, therefore, thus shalt thou say unto My servant David, Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, I took thee from the sheepcote, from following the sheep, to be ruler over My people Israel: and I was with thee whithersoever thou wentest, and have cut off all thine enemies out of thy sight, and have made thee a great name, like unto the name of the great men that are in the earth. Also I will appoint a place for My people Israel, and will plant them, and they shall dwell in a place of their own, and move no more; neither shall the children of wickedness afflict them any more, as beforetime, and as since the time that I commanded judges to be over My people Israel. Moreover, I will subdue all their enemies. Furthermore, I tell thee that the Lord will build thee an house. And it shall come to pass, when thy days be expired that thou must go to be with thy fathers, that I will raise up thy seed after thee, which shall be of thy sons; and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build Me an house, and I will stablish his throne for ever. I will be his Father, and he shall be My son; if he commit iniquity, I will chasten him

with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men. And I will not take My mercy away from him, as I took it from him that was before thee : but I will settle him in Mine house and in My kingdom for ever ; and his throne shall be established for evermore. According to all these words, and according to all this vision, so did Nathan speak unto David.'

27. He shall call me, Thou art my Father : my God, and my strong salvation.

28. And I will make him My firstborn : higher than the kings of the earth.

29. My mercy will I keep for him for evermore : and My covenant shall stand fast with him.

30. His seed also will I make to endure for ever : and his throne as the days of heaven.

To David and to his seed were these promises made : but there has been but one Who could unlock them, and take to Himself their inmost fulness, that is, 'He that hath the key of David.' To Whom also hath the unseen and glorious God ever said, 'I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to Me a Son?' Who else hath ever prayed as He prayed—'Now, O Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine own Self, with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was?' He alone was 'the Only-begotten of the Father;' He alone was 'the First begotten from the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth:' with Him had the Father made an everlasting cove-

nant: none could take His elect out of His hand: His kingdom should have no end.

31. But if his children forsake My law : and walk not in My judgments ;

32. If they break My statutes, and keep not My commandments : I will visit their offences with the rod, and their sin with scourges.

33. Nevertheless, My loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him : nor suffer My truth to fail.

If the children of David sinned, as sin they did, forsaking His worship like Solomon, polluting His temple like Ahaz, despising His warnings like Jehoiakim, then were they to be scourged with the rod of men, with afflictions, and desolations, and captivity, to be chastened for their iniquity, and visited for their guilt. Yet in all, He Who punished in His anger could remember mercy, and would not suffer His promise to miss of its fulfilment. And in like manner would it be with the seed of the Son of David, the people of Christ's Church.

34. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of My lips : I have sworn once by My holiness, that I will not fail David.

35. His seed shall endure for ever : and his seat is like as the sun before Me.

36. He shall stand fast for evermore as the moon : and as the faithful witness in heaven.

God hath sworn, Who cannot change or repent, and He hath sworn by that which is unchangeable—His own immortal holiness—that He will not break or change His covenant unto the second David. All things in heaven which are bright and lasting shall be but emblems of that unbroken covenant : the sun, the type of the Lord Himself ; the moon, the picture of His Church ; the rainbow, the sign of peace and rest ; which was a witness once to Noah, and shall be a witness to all eternity, as it spans the Redeemer's throne, of a world reconciled, and pardoned, and blest.

37. But Thou hast abhorred and forsaken Thine anointed : and art displeased at him.

38. Thou hast broken the covenant of Thy servant : and cast his crown to the ground.

39. Thou hast overthrown all his hedges : and broken down his strong holds.

40. All they that go by spoil him : and he is become a reproach to his neighbours.

41. Thou hast set up the right hand of his enemies : and made all his adversaries to rejoice.

42. Thou hast taken away the edge of his sword : and givest him not victory in the battle.

43. Thou hast put out his glory : and cast his throne down to the ground.

44. The days of his youth hast Thou shortened : and covered him with dishonour.

But in David's children, in Judah and her kings, these blessings were not fulfilled. The fulfilment was taken from David, that it might be found in Christ. The priesthood and the kingship of Israel were lost after the law was forsaken, notwithstanding their anointing, for God was displeased at them. They had broken their covenant, and therefore God brake it too. Their crown was cast away. The hedges of the vineyard of Judah were broken down ; their temple was destroyed ; their altars overthrown ; the heathen took their spoils ; their enemies discomfited them in battle ; they were made outcasts from their land ; and scattered abroad. Trouble and defeat, death and shame, became their portion.

45. Lord, how long wilt Thou hide Thyself, for ever : and shall Thy wrath burn like fire ?

46. O remember how short my time is : wherefore hast Thou made all men for nought ?

47. What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death : and shall he deliver his soul from the hand of hell ?

All these things they suffered, and Christ came not. The anger of their God was hot against them, and their Intercessor was still hiding Himself. Man's life is but short, and, apart from the true Life, he

seems but to live in vain. Of himself he has no rescue from the grave; death and the shadowy land of spirits wait for him, and he cannot save his soul from their fearful grasp. He only Who delivered His own soul from the hand of hell, can deliver them who believe in Him.

48. Lord, where are Thy old loving-kindnesses : which Thou swarest unto David in Thy truth ?

49. Remember, Lord, the rebuke that Thy servants have : and how I do bear in my bosom the rebukes of many people ;

50. Wherewith Thine enemies have blasphemed Thee, and slandered the footsteps of Thine anointed :

At length the oath sworn to David was fulfilled : ‘ God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.’ The Anointed came hiding His glory, laying aside His crown, clothed with weakness, and bearing the offences of many. But they who had been waiting for Him knew Him not ; they did to Him, their Friend, as their enemies had done to them : ‘ the days of His youth they shortened, and covered Him with dishonour.’ They defiled His face with spitting ; they wounded His heart with rebukes and scorn ; they blasphemed the Son of God, and slandered Christ their Saviour. They ‘ spake evil of that way’ which

is the following in His steps. Yet through all were the mighty counsels of Almighty mercy wrought out; for the sin of man, though it bring down chastisement upon himself, cannot make void the eternal purpose of God's long-enduring love.

Praised be the Lord for evermore. Amen, and Amen.

Therefore must man, weak and erring as he is, strive to join his voice to that of the angels, who sang praise in the vale of Bethlehem. Let us praise the Son of God, 'the Lord of glory,' for His grace! He saved us for no reward; He heeded not our vileness; He sought us out when we looked not for Him; He redeemed us from the bondage of the Evil one; He drew us near unto Himself. He is 'the Amen, the faithful and true witness.' To Him, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, be ascribed all praise and glory, not in time only, but for evermore. Amen. So be it.

The title of this Psalm is "A Maschil or Instruction of Ethan the Ezrahite." Ethan, the son of Zerah, was the brother of that Herman who has been supposed to be the writer of the preceding Psalm, but while the internal evidence of that Psalm was in favour of that supposition, in the case of this one so early an authorship is altogether out of the question. Ethan was a common name among the Levites, and an Ethan was the head of the choir of Merari (1 Chron. vi. 41). In this case the word Ezrahite must be taken in the sense of a stranger or sojourner, though it may also mean a Levite who dwelt among the Ezrahites of the tribe of Judah. The LXX. read "Israelite" for "Ezrahite." The Psalm was composed, it is supposed by Dr. Kennicott, as a national prayer, during the distress which Judah suffered under the combined invasion of Rezin the king of Syria and

Pekah king of Israel. The literal and historical meaning of this Psalm is sufficiently plain, but the spiritual and prophetic meaning is far more difficult to disentangle. The greater number of the Jewish Rabbis own it to be prophetic of the Messiah; the fathers all agree in the same judgment, and yet it is not easy to shew where the literal meaning is to give way to the spiritual meaning, they are both so blended together. It would appear that the writer was inspired to offer a prophetic prayer for the coming of that Anointed One Who was to be the King of Israel, and that his spirit was awakened, and his intercession was called forth by the troubles and distresses of the time in which he lived; when the promises of God made by Nathan, (compare 2 Sam. vii., and 1 Chron. xvii.,) "the sure mercies of David," seemed to be about to fail. The words "Mercy and Truth" are, as it were, the key-notes to his prayer, and are repeated again and again. St. Augustine has been followed in considering verses 36—46 to apply rather to the humiliation and fall of the Jewish kingdom and Church, than to the Passion of our Lord; yet it might be interpreted of the latter. (Compare Jer. xxxiii. 17—22, and xxii. 28—30.) This Psalm concludes the Third Book of the Psalms.

THE FOURTH DIVISION OF THE BOOK OF PSALMS.

PSALMS XC.—CVI.

THE ascription of glory to God which stands at the end of Psalm cvi., marking the conclusion of this the fourth book of the Psalms, is—

‘Praised be the Lord God of Israel,
From eternity unto eternity :
And let all the people say, Amen. Hallelujah.’

It was probably finally arranged in its present form, and added to the canon, during the reign of Josiah. The seventeen Psalms of which it is made up appear to present some points of difference, which would distinguish this book from the other books. They are generally neither personal, like those of David, nor national, as those of Asaph and the family of Korah ; they are, for the most part, grandly devotional ; rather glorifying the Almighty as the Creator, and Defender, and King of man, than as the personal Lord of the individual prophet, or as the national God of the people of Israel. It has been thought that the majority of these are ancient hymns of the Church of Israel, written at various periods, from the age of Moses to that of David ; that they were collected by David at the beginning of his reign ; and having been forgotten during the reigns of the idolatrous kings, were again collected and restored to the use of the temple by Josiah, when the Book of the Law, which

had been originally deposited by Moses in the sanctuary, was discovered by Hilkiah the priest, and a covenant had been made by the king and the people to observe the Law. The fact that ten of the Psalms in this book are without titles in the Hebrew, while in the LXX. they have titles which assign them to David, tends to confirm this supposition. Psalm xc. is a prayer written by 'Moses, the man of God,' and bears the marks of high antiquity; xci. and xciii. were also, perhaps, the work of the great Lawgiver of Israel. The six Psalms from the ninety-fifth to the hundredth are considered by Bishop Horsley to form one prophetic poem, celebrating the majesty and the righteousness of the kingdom of God, and cited by the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews (i. 6) under the title of 'The bringing the First-begotten into the world.' However this may be, it is very clear that these ancient Psalms form a complete series, and exhibit a connection between themselves, both in the great majesty of their poetical style, and the lofty grandeur of their teaching.

THE FOURTH DIVISION.

Morning Prayer.

FOR THE BURIAL SERVICE.

PSALM XC. *Domine, refugium.*

1. LORD, Thou hast been our refuge : from one generation to another.

2. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever the earth and the world were made : Thou art God from everlasting, and world without end.

For the tribes of the children of Adam, wandering in this wilderness of things temporal, with no certain dwelling-place, there is only one refuge in weariness, in danger, in death,—even that strong and loving God Who hath been, is, and will be, the Helper and the Defender of all who seek to Him. To His mighty mercy only can man securely fly from the dangers of life and of death. With Him only is safety, with Him only is unchangeableness. The race of man is ever failing and being renewed, and the generation of time is ever rolling on into the generation of eternity ; but He is ever true, and ever the same. Before the mountains were bid to stand as a refuge from the overflowing waters ; before the earth, which we fancy to be an abiding-place, was made ; before the angelic hosts were called into being, and before man him-

self, with all his little world of fear and frailty, was formed from the dust, He is Immortal, Unchangeable, Almighty, Whose Name hath ever been, **I AM THAT I AM.**

3. Thou turnest man to destruction : again Thou sayest, Come again, ye children of men.

LXX. Turn not man to humiliation ;
For Thou hast said, Be ye turned, sons of men.

4. For a thousand years in Thy sight are but as yesterday : seeing that is past as a watch in the night.

At the word of the Eternal, man dies. He has said, 'Dust thou art, and to dust shalt thou return.' At His word he rises again from the dust, in that day 'when the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.' Between the day of our birth and the day of our death—between the day of our death and the day of our resurrection—between the first day of creation and the last of judgment—who shall say how short or how long is the interval of time in the eyes of the ever-living God? His Holy Spirit has given us the solemn charge—'Beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.' Yea, time and all its centuries are to Him but as yesterday, as a day which is past and over, and is now as nothing, compared with the to-morrow of eternity. The ages and

the dispensations, the promise to Adam, the engagement with Noah, the oath to Abraham, the covenant with Moses, — these were but watches, through which the children of men had to wait amid the darkness of things created, until the morning should dawn of things uncreated. Now is ‘the night far spent, and the day at hand.’

5. As soon as Thou scatterest them they are even as a sleep : and fade away suddenly like the grass.

Heb. Thou carriest them away as with a flood ;
They are even as a sleep,
They are in the morning as grass that changeth.

LXX. Their years are as things of nought.
In the morning let it depart as the grass.

6. In the morning it is green, and groweth up : but in the evening it is cut down, dried up, and withered.

The mighty rush of time carries away our feeble lives before it, like the flood of Noah once swept away the dwellers on the earth. Our hopes, and plans, and deeds are but like the fancies that come in slumber—scattered and forgotten when the sleep is past. We ourselves are but as the grass growing in the summer field—springing up green and fresh in the morning of life, but cut down by the mower whose name is Death, and laid lifeless and withering on the earth from which it grew, when the evening of age and decay has come. ‘All flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the

field. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth : because the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it : surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, but the Word of our God shall stand for ever.'

7. For we consume away in Thy displeasure : and are afraid at Thy wrathful indignation.

8. Thou hast set our misdeeds before Thee : and our secret sins in the light of Thy countenance.

9. For when Thou art angry all our days are gone : we bring our years to an end, as it were a tale that is told.

LXX. Our years are spent in care like a spider.

Short as life is for man's sin, by multiplying his sins he makes it shorter. As we add day to day, so do we add sin to sin, and provoke most justly God's wrath and indignation against us. The children of Israel in the wilderness made their lives shorter than even the brief time given to man, by their idolatries, and stubbornness, and murmurings. The generation of six hundred thousand passed away in their forty years' wanderings in the sight of Moses. And among them that call on the name of Christ, who can tell how many may be 'weak and sickly,' and how many may sleep, for their own misdeeds, or their misbelief? Our iniquities, however hidden they may be from man, are before our God, and

cannot but call forth His displeasure. He is ‘the Revealer of secrets.’ Our whole lives, with all their sins, lie spread out open and clear before His face. ‘He brings to light the hidden things of darkness, and makes manifest the counsels of our evil hearts.’ They cannot be dissembled before Him, and He doth not dissemble His wrath against them. Therefore we die. Death is the frown of the Almighty. ‘In His pleasure is life.’ In His displeasure our term of days contracts and shortens, and they become few indeed. The end, uncertain to each, but yet most certain to all, slacks not in its onward coming; for our years, though we may strive to spin them out in care and sorrow, as a spider spins out her thread, come to an end; they depart and leave us, like a tale that is finished, like a word that is spoken and not repeated, like a thought which has gone from the memory and cannot be recalled.

10. The days of our age are threescore years and ten; and though men be so strong that they come to fourscore years: yet is their strength then but labour and sorrow; so soon passeth it away, and we are gone.

Seventy years of life is the utmost term we can expect to attain unto. May we not well say with aged Jacob, ‘Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage?’ It may be that some toil wearily on through eighty years,—yet the experience of ‘the

miseries of this sinful world' is but bitter in those evil days, 'when the years come, when we say, I have no pleasure in them.' How short, how dwindling, is even the widest space of fourscore years, beside the eternal ages! Stretch it as we may, the hour is very quickly upon us 'when the dust shall return to the earth as it was; and the spirit shall return to God Who gave it. Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher; all is vanity.'

11. But who regardeth the power of Thy wrath : for even thereafter as a man feareth, so is Thy displeasure.

Heb. Who knoweth the might of Thy wrath,
And Thine anger, which is in proportion to the fear of
Thee ?

How few think aright of the deep importance of living in the fear of God,—of fearing Him with Whom is the power not only of our life in mortality, but of our life in immortality! Even as a man feareth Him, so is His displeasure : if we fear Him little, and obey Him not, then is His displeasure great and terrible ; if we fear Him much, and keep His will, then is His displeasure changed into mercy and goodness. To those who regard aright the power of His wrath, it marvellously becomes the power of His love.

12. So teach us to number our days : that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.

May His grace so teach us to number the days of this our mortal life—the yesterday of the past, the

to-day of the present, the to-morrow of the future—that we may not look in folly to ourselves and our vain and empty devices, but to Him Who has made us, and Whose we are,—Whose dealings with us, whether of mercy or chastisement, are ever wise and holy. Number we our days by our daily prayers—number we them by our daily obedience and daily acts of love—number we them by the memories that they bring of holy men who have entered into their Saviour's peace, and by the hopes which are woven with them of glory and of grace won for us! So best can we win the wisdom of salvation. Life is a lesson, the learning which aright in Christ alone can make us wise. 'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; but fools despise knowledge and instruction.'

13. Turn Thee again, O Lord, at the last : and be gracious unto Thy servants.

14. O satisfy us with Thy mercy, and that soon : so shall we rejoice and be glad all the days of our life.

The spirit of this wisdom will lead us to turn our hearts and hopes up from this sinful, transitory world of chance and change, to that high and unchangeable God Who would bring us to Himself. Turn we to Him at last in prayer, and He will turn to us both now and at the last in grace. Earth and mortality cannot satisfy us, however we may crave to hold them. His mercy is more than satisfying, His grace

is more than sufficient for all our wants, and needs, and longings. In this world of death and of the dying, we can do little but mourn ; in His better world all tears are wiped from all faces ; there is no more death, there is only unfailing joy and immortal gladness for all the days of immortal life.

15. Comfort us again now after the time that Thou hast plagued us : and for the years wherein we have suffered adversity.

16. Shew Thy servants Thy work : and their children Thy glory.

17. And the glorious Majesty of the Lord our God be upon us : prosper Thou the work of our hands upon us, O prosper Thou our handy-work.

Then shall be heard and answered the prayer of the second Moses, the Son of God, for His people. He will give them rest for their labour, comfort for trial, life after death, ages of immortality for years of mortality. Then the fully accomplished work of the Father and of the Son in our redemption is made plain in its completeness and its perfection to them who have served Him. Mercy is seen to be His work, and glory that which He has prepared. The children of men then see that brightness of love and truth which the veil of earthly things had so long hidden from their eyes. Death is swallowed up in life ; the punishment of sin is made by the Almighty Majesty of our God the entrance into holi-

ness and joy. We take refuge from the sadness and poverty of this life, not in the gloom of the grave, but in the light of our God. There He will be over us, with us, in us, in all our works and ways. Let us, therefore, pray that He will be with us here. So whether we live, live we unto Him; whether we die, die we unto Him; that in our life we may work His works; and for our death—‘Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord: even so saith the Spirit; for they rest from their labours: and their works do follow them.’

This Psalm is “A Prayer of Moses, the Man of God.” It was certainly written by the aged lawgiver of Israel, during the latter years of the wanderings of the people in the wilderness. The sight of death carrying off those tribes of Israel who had come out of Egypt, one after another, until they all perished in their weary journeyings of forty years, and the prophetic knowledge that he himself would die, and not be suffered to enter into the land of rest, must have stirred his mind, and carried him for rest and refuge to that eternal God in whose long-enduring purposes our puny lives and doings seem like things of nought. The name of “Man of God” is also given to Moses in Deut. xxxiii. 1: “This is the blessing wherewith Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before his death;” and this Psalm presents many points of resemblance to the thoughts and expressions of the Books of Moses. Its ancientness, its sublimity, and the solemn grandeur of its poetry, have won for it the admiration of all readers of the Book of Psalms. It is appointed by the Church to be used in the Office for the Burial of the Dead.

PSALM xci. *Qui habitat.*

1. WHOSO dwelleth under the defence of the most High: shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

ˆ Heb. He who sitteth in the secret place of the most High.

2. I will say unto the Lord, Thou art my hope, and my strong hold : my God, in Him will I trust.

Like the priest who, ministering in the holy place, sat him down to rest with the glory of the Almighty's presence above him like a sheltering screen ; so he who has in prayer made God his hope and his refuge shall be able to repose securely upon His love and care. Or as in the Holy of Holies the wings of the Cherubim overshadowed the Mercy-seat, so does the fostering providence and grace of God defend His righteous servants. ' We dwell in Him, and He in us.' This all may do by faith in Him ; but He did so above all, Who was the great High Priest, and Whose human nature was the Ark of the better covenant ; Who was always—whether as baptized in Jordan, with the Holy Ghost visibly descending upon Him, or as fasting in the wilderness among the wild beasts,—under the shadow of the Eternal Father.

3. For He shall deliver thee from the snare of the hunter : and from the noisome pestilence.

LXX. For He shall deliver thee from the snare of the hunters,
And from the sharp word.

4. He shall defend thee under His wings, and thou shalt be safe under His feathers : His faithfulness and truth shall be thy shield and buckler.

The righteous may well trust in his God; for He can and will deliver him, both from the snare of the tempter who hunts for souls, and from that infection of sin which is more deadly than any pestilence. Like a hen gathering her chickens under her wings, so will He gather His own, and they shall be eternally safe; or 'like an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings,' so shall the Lord bear aloft His saints: for the Son of Man, Who gathered His people like a hen in the time of His mortality, after His resurrection soared with them to the throne of God like an eagle. 'The shield of faith,' in His faithfulness and truth, shall quench the fiery darts which the wicked one ever is aiming against God's people.

5. Thou shalt not be afraid for any terror by night : nor for the arrow that flieth by day ;

6. For the pestilence that walketh in darkness : nor for the sickness that destroyeth in the noon-day.

LXX. The demon that is in the noontide

7. A thousand shall fall beside thee, and ten thousand at thy right hand : but it shall not come nigh thee.

8. Yea, with thine eyes shalt thou behold : and see the reward of the ungodly.

To him who is ever placing himself in the presence of God, who abideth under the shadow of the Al-

mighty, there can come no fear and no injury. He shall be safe both in body and in soul, both in the light and in darkness, in health and in sickness, in prosperity and adversity. He shall neither perish by those sins of ignorance which, like spectres in the darkness, hover round the unthinking soul; nor shall he be wounded by any wilful and open sins which pierce through the soul like an arrow shot by a foe-man in the broad daylight. The pestilence of concupiscence and fleshly desire, that walketh in darkness and infects the soul with its deadliness unawares, shall not pollute him; nor shall he fall, struck down by the violence of the enemies of righteousness and the malice of the ungodly, when persecution, like the sun, has 'risen with a burning heat.' Covered with the shield of the faithfulness of God, a thousand arrows shall fall harmless by his side, but not one shall come nigh him. The pestilence that walketh in darkness, and the deadly fierceness of the noon-tide blaze, shall each strike down their victims on each side of him by thousands and by tens of thousands; but he stands untouched and unharmed amid it all, like Aaron the priest 'stood between the dead and the living; and the plague was stayed.' In each righteous man is this fulfilled; but above all is it fulfilled in Him Who is the Holy One of God. Sin had wounded and infected all the sons of men, save Him only in Whom was no sin. In Him Who is the Head shall the members find security and health, while the ungodly perish in their sight by the fearful malignity of sin.

9. For Thou, Lord, art my hope : Thou hast set Thine house of defence very high.

Heb. For Thou, O Lord, art my confidence.

Thou hast made the Most High Thy habitation.

10. There shall no evil happen unto thee : neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.

Therefore he who has said in earnest reality, 'Thou, O Lord, art my confidence,' has, as it were, built for himself an abiding-place in heaven itself, even under the very shadow of God's glory. He dwells, as it were, in God. Thenceforth his conversation is in heaven. No evil of this world can happen to him, for he is ever above, and not here; no air of pestilence can breathe around his dwelling, for it is set very high, even there where no evil comes. Therefore he is like his Lord, the Son of Man, Who dwelt on earth not having where to lay His head, and yet 'was in heaven.'

11. For He shall give His angels charge over thee : to keep thee in all thy ways.

12. They shall bear thee in their hands : that thou hurt not thy foot against a stone.

13. Thou shalt go upon the lion and adder : the young lion and the dragon shalt thou tread under thy feet.

This is the marvellous privilege of the heirs of salvation, that the ministering spirits of God are sent forth to watch over them. They have in charge to

guide the children of God in all their ways;—in the ways of their life, which are manifold—in the ways of His commandments, which are manifold—in the ways of their duties, which are manifold. In each and all of these we may stumble, therefore in each and all of these we need a guard. They guard us in all our ways, if all our ways be God's ways; but in our own presumptuous and self-willed ways they have no charge to guard us. Therefore did the tempter hope to ruin the Second Adam, as he had ruined the first, by the temptation of spiritual pride. 'He brought Him to Jerusalem, and set Him on a pinnacle of the temple, and said unto Him, If Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down from hence: for it is written, He shall give His angels charge over Thee, to keep Thee: and in their hands they shall bear Thee up, lest at any time Thou dash Thy foot against a stone. And Jesus answering said unto him, It is said, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.' It is ever the voice of the devil which provoketh man to descend, not to ascend: Cast thyself down, saith Satan; Raise thyself up, saith God. He would have had the Saviour, as he would have us, to follow his suggestions while trusting to the mercy of God. If we fall, He will indeed bear with us, and bear us, and raise us up; but if we cast ourselves down, He will leave us to the destruction we have wilfully sought for. But as the Saviour conquered him, 'the lion who seeks to devour,' and 'the great dragon who deceiveth the nations,' so may we conquer him. We may bruise the serpent's head, even as He

bruised it, by obedience to the word and law of God. We may walk through this world's wilderness trampling upon the tempter and his devices, if we strive in all our ways ever to trust in our God, while never tempting Him. So shall we share in our Master's triumph over the Wicked one; and His promise shall be accomplished in us: 'Behold, I give unto you leave to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing shall by any means hurt you.'

14. Because he hath set his love upon Me, therefore will I deliver him : I will set him up, because he hath known My Name.

15. He shall call upon Me, and I will hear him : yea, I am with him in trouble ; I will deliver him, and bring him to honour.

16. With long life will I satisfy him : and shew him My salvation.

It was in the love of the Father that Christ overcame the snare of the tempter. He would have the words of God rather than earthly bread ;—He would not tempt the Almighty God ;—He would worship Him, and Him only. So did the Well-beloved baffle and confound the enemy. Therefore by following Him may we also be delivered and overcome. Not only our Head, Who now sits in heaven because He hath set His house of defence very high, but we also who are toiling on earth and are still in the wilderness of temptations, whose steps the angels watch

over, lest we stumble at the stones of the law and fall, may hear the voice of the Father—His and ours—promising deliverance and exaltation. He calls, and we in Him; He is heard, and we in Him. Our Father will be with us in trouble, for He was with our Lord; He will deliver us and bring us to His glory, for that our Saviour is gone before us. He will give us both eternity and salvation. Salvation without eternity were but a gift unworthy of His love; eternity without salvation is eternal misery: but Christ has gained an everlasting kingdom, and He is Himself salvation and the Saviour; therefore, because He lives, we in Him shall live also; ‘we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.’

This Psalm has no title; but by the canon of Rabbinical criticism, which decides that a Psalm without a title should, unless there be some reason to the contrary, be assigned to the author of the Psalm which precedes it, it should be also assigned to Moses. With this view St. Jerome agrees. The LXX., the Vulgate, and the Arabic versions ascribe it to David, perhaps because he preserved it and inserted it among the Psalms. It is not improbable that Moses may have been the author of it. Verse 4 is almost identical with the words of Moses in Deut. xxxii. 11, 12, and again xxxiii. 29; and verses 5, 6, 7, 13 are strikingly suggestive of the sufferings and chastisements of the children of Israel in the desert. The change of the persons I and Thou in the verses of this Psalm, have led many to suppose that it was intended to be sung by alternate choruses; but this change is very common in the Psalms, and is rather the expression of an earnest soul communing with its God and with itself, under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Verses 11, 12 were made use of by Satan in his temptation of our Lord, when he would have had Him cast Himself from the high roof of the temple, in order to test the faithfulness of the Almighty's promise, and vindicate His Messiahship by a public sign of Godhead. The tempter omitted the concluding words of verse 11, as if knowing that flying through the air is not one of the ways of man, and that therefore the promise, as made to man, did not apply to it; and he

stopped short of verse 13, as though fearing that he was encountering Him Who was to bruise the serpent's head. The Saviour repelled the temptation by the declaration of the Father, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God," (St. Matt. iv. 6, 7; St. Luke iv. 9—12).

PSALM xcii. *Bonum est confiteri.*

1. It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord : and to sing praises unto Thy Name, O most Highest ;

2. To tell of Thy loving-kindness early in the morning : and of Thy truth in the night-season ;

3. Upon an instrument of ten strings, and upon the lute : upon a loud instrument, and upon the harp.

Everything is good as it shews forth the glory of its Maker. He has made us for His glory, therefore it is good for us to thank Him and to praise Him. 'It is very meet, right, and our bounden duty, that we should at all times, and in all places, give thanks unto Thee, O Lord, Holy Father, Almighty, Everlasting God.' His dealings towards us are ever calling for our thanks. His love to us in the morning of our days, in the time of our prosperity and our salvation,—His truth in the evening of life, in the hour of sorrow and the time of penitence,—these deserve to be acknowledged and confessed with all our heart, and voice, and strength—with the perfect melody of a holy and a spiritual life, in which the praises of the lips keep time with the obedience of

the members to the ten commandments of the law of God, even as the voice keeps time to the hand in playing upon a ten-stringed psaltery.

4. For Thou, Lord, hast made me glad through Thy works : and I will rejoice in giving praise for the operations of Thy hands.

5. O Lord, how glorious are Thy works : Thy thoughts are very deep.

If our own works, and the harmony which our own voice and fingers make, can give us pleasure, how much deeper gladness is there in the harmony of the works of God ! What glory, what beauty, what wisdom is there in that mighty creation which He Himself pronounced to be very good, and from the work of which He rested on that first Sabbath-day which He blessed and hallowed, and the memorial of which He bade His people keep in holiness and rest. But mighty as is the glory of His works, no less mighty is the mystery of His counsels and the righteousness of His providence. His thoughts reach through eternity. 'O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God ! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out. For who hath known the mind of the Lord ? or who hath been His counsellor ?'

6. An unwise man doth not well consider this : and a fool doth not understand it.

7. When the ungodly are green as the grass, and when all the workers of wickedness do

flourish : then shall they be destroyed for ever ; but Thou, Lord, art the most Highest for evermore.

8. For lo, Thine enemies, O Lord, lo, Thine enemies shall perish : and all the workers of wickedness shall be destroyed.

The orderings of His righteous kingdom indeed are deep ; yet to His people they are always grace, even though they seem dark and hidden ; and to the wicked they are always wrath, even though for awhile it be delayed. To know this is wisdom ; to be ignorant of this is senselessness and folly. There are some who pass by carelessly this mighty fact, but they are most unwise ; there are some who cannot understand it, but they are but blinded by their folly. The ungodly may be flourishing like the grass in the fields ; but above them is the eternal and all-righteous God. If they be His enemies, they will speedily fade and fall, like the same grass before the sun's burning heat. He will be evermore the same, unchanged in height and brightness ; but they will consume, and perish, and be destroyed, who do that which He will not have done. He waiteth above in His eternity, until the season of the wicked be past, and that of the righteous come.

9. But mine horn shall be exalted like the horn of an unicorn : for I am anointed with fresh oil.

LXX. And mine age shall be in the fatness of mercy.

10. Mine eye also shall see his lust of mine enemies : and mine ear shall hear his desire of the wicked that arise up against me.

He who trusts in God, and waits for Him, shall at length be more than paid. He shall, though weak in himself, be made strong in his God; he shall share in the honour and the exaltation of his Redeemer. The anointing of holiness and might which was poured upon the Head of the Church shall descend to all the members. He shall have his desire in seeing all the opposition of wickedness perish,—yet perish rather before the glowing love than in the burning wrath of Christ.

11. The righteous shall flourish like a palm-tree : and shall spread abroad like a cedar in Libanus.

12. Such as are planted in the house of the Lord : shall flourish in the courts of the house of our God.

13. They also shall bring forth more fruit in their age : and shall be fat and well-liking.

14. That they may shew how true the Lord my strength is : and that there is no unrighteousness in Him.

The wicked shall wither like the grass parched before the glowing heat; but the righteous shall flourish like a palm-tree, which is alike green and ^{an} dry in the burning drought of summer and in the

chilling storm of winter, and which, as it grows the older, is still the more fruitful. They shall spread abroad like the cedars in Lebanon, which have taken root in the eternal hills, and endure in their lasting grandeur from age to age. The secret of their life and growth is their nearness to God. They are planted in the Church, His temple; they grow up within His courts; they draw their sap from the wells of life which spring thereby. In their age, their fruitfulness shall increase in richness, and sweetness, and abundance. Their fruit of good works shall become more plentiful as the last gathering-in draws nigher. Thus do they, in their joy, in their patience, in their obedience, prove witnesses of the power and the faithfulness of God. They glorify their Father in that they bear much fruit. They learn themselves, and they testify to others, that as all His works are glorious, so all His ways are righteousness,—that as there is no short-coming in His creation, so there is no unrighteousness in His providence,—that ‘His work is perfect, for all His ways are judgments.’

This is “a joyful song for the Sabbath-day.” It was very probably used at the time of the morning and evening sacrifice on that day. There is no evidence to guide us to its author, but it was undoubtedly written before the captivity, and subsequently to the reign of David. Rabbi Kimchi repeats a Rabbinical tradition that this Psalm was composed by Adam, and sung by him immediately after his creation. A Psalm whose internal evidence would more completely discredit this absurd tradition could hardly have been selected. It might, perhaps, have originated in its title. The wonders of God’s creation, which the Sabbath-day suggested, led the mind of the prophet who composed it on to the mysteries of His moral government: the course of this he sees, through faith, to be as perfect and complete as the order of creation.

Evening Prayer.**PSALM xciii. *Dominus regnavit.***

1. THE Lord is King, and hath put on glorious apparel : the Lord hath put on His apparel, and girded Himself with strength.

2. He hath made the round world so sure : that it cannot be moved.

As in the beginning God, the Creator of the world, was by the very act of creation proclaimed an Eternal King, and was invested with the royal apparel of power and might ; so in His resurrection God the Redeemer was proclaimed to be the King of the world ; and He then laid by the sackcloth of human mortality, and clothed Himself with the glorious apparel of incorruption, and was girded with the strength of salvation. He Who had formed the round world, and had established its regular, unvarying order, which nothing can stop or mar, by the same wisdom and goodness built His Church upon that Rock which is Himself, and ordained that the gates of hell should never prevail against her. He has established her as 'a kingdom that cannot be moved.'

3. Ever since the world began hath Thy seat been prepared : Thou art from everlasting.

From all eternity had the divine counsels been tending to that accomplishment which the fulness of time brought forth, when He Who was the Only-

begotten of the Father before all worlds, received as Man that dominion which He held as God ; and, resplendent in the garments of His passion, sat down in heaven on the right hand of the Father, the Eternal Saviour, the Eternal Judge, the Eternal King.

4. The floods are risen, O Lord, the floods have lift up their voice : the floods have lift up their waves.

5. The waves of the sea are mighty, and rage horribly : but yet the Lord, Who dwelleth on high, is mightier.

His power has been ever over the things which He has made. He in the beginning bade the waters retire, and they obeyed and the dry land appeared ; He was reigning in His own eternity when the fountains of the great deep were broken up and the world was drowned ; in the same calm mightiness He rebuked the waves on the lake of Gennesaret, and they were still. Earthly rage, and fierceness, the tumults of the world and the roarings of hell, may rise, and swell, and shake all around with fear and horror, but above them all there abideth the throne of God from eternity unto eternity, in the calm and awful might of holiness and power.

6. Thy testimonies, O Lord, are very sure : holiness becometh Thine house for ever.

Yea, while the world below is raging like a storm-lashed flood, the people of God can fix their hopes upon His most sure promises, and the immoveable-

ness of His all-embracing love. ‘The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His.’ While the betrayers and murderers of the Lord were raging, the apostles of the Ascended ‘lifted up their voice’ and preached unto them Jesus; and they heard and were subdued. And through that preaching did He build His house, and adorn it with the beauty of unfading holiness. ‘Holiness to the Lord’ is the superscription of the ‘Holy Catholic Church.’ He adorned His house with holiness—not a small portion only, but the whole,—throughout that round world which He made, and which cannot be moved save by Him alone. Holiness becometh His house—for a short time only? Nay! but for ever.

It is impossible to fix the author of this Psalm; it has been given to Moses; yet from its likeness to the forty-sixth, it may be assigned to the Assyrian invasion of Sennacherib. It has no title in the Hebrew; but in some copies of the LXX. it has this inscription: “A Psalm of praise of David for the day before the Sabbath, when the earth was established.” This inscription seems to be given to it in imitation of that of the preceding Psalm; but there might have been some custom of using it in the temple-service on the sixth day of the week which gave ground for it. The Fathers, and among them especially St. Augustine, interpret this Psalm to refer to our Lord’s kingdom, and His glory and power in the Church.

PSALM xciv. *Deus ultionum.*

1. O LORD God, to Whom vengeance belongeth: Thou God, to Whom vengeance belongeth, shew Thyself.

2. Arise, Thou Judge of the world: and reward the proud after their deserving.

It is to God that the executing vengeance for wrong is to be left. 'Vengeance is Mine, saith the Lord; I will repay.' In His own good time He will arise to judge the world. His eternal Epiphany is nigh at hand. Then shall all receive according to their works; the meek according to their meekness, and the proud according to their self-will. Wait we for His judgments in faith, in patience, in fear.

3. Lord, how long shall the ungodly : how long shall the ungodly triumph ?

4. How long shall all wicked doers speak so disdainfully : and make such proud boasting ?

5. They smite down Thy people, O Lord : and trouble Thine heritage.

6. They murder the widow, and the stranger : and put the fatherless to death.

7. And yet they say, Tush, the Lord shall not see : neither shall the God of Jacob regard it.

It is not for us to know the times and the seasons which the Father hath put in His own power: we dare not intrude into the counsels of the Almighty, to fix either the time of the last dreadful day, or the seasons for His immediate judgments. We may be inclined to murmur, because the evil-doing are not punished; yet would it be better that we murmured not, lest we ourselves be among them that are punished. The triumphs of the ungodly, the disdainful speakings of the wicked, the injustice, the cruelty,

and the tyranny of the oppressors, are but for a time. They are treasuring up for themselves wrath against the day of wrath: and to their evil deeds they join these blaspheming words,—God sees us not; and if He sees us, He does not regard what we do. Thus, while He is increasing His long-suffering, they increase their iniquity; and they make the very patience of the Eternal to be a minister of His vengeance.

8. Take heed, ye unwise among the people :
O ye fools, when will ye understand ?

9. He that planted the ear, shall He not hear : or He that made the eye, shall He not see ?

10. Or He that nurtureth the heathen : it is He that teacheth men knowledge, shall not He punish ?

11. The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man : that they are but vain.

What blinded folly, what most awful ignorance, to deny the power of the Almighty, or to doubt the righteousness of the All-holy ! Can the Creator be less than the creature ? Do not the very powers of our own bodies and souls make us understand the wisdom and greatness of Him Who gave them to us. He made the ear ; and can He not hear ? He has given us sight ; and is He Himself blind ? He overlooks all, sustains all, nurtures all ; shall He not judge all ? He has given us an understanding heart, and an enlightened conscience, to know what is good and

what is evil; and He Who understands each and every thought, word, and deed of ours, will without failing punish what is evil and against His righteousness, as He will reward what is according to it. He has made men to know the thoughts of God, and shall He not know the thoughts of men? He seeth all their deeds, He heareth all their words, He knoweth all their thoughts, vain and deceiving as they are; and all that in His infinite wisdom He sees and hears, and knows, in His infinite justice He will most surely judge.

12. Blessed is the man whom Thou chastenest, O Lord : and teachest him in Thy law ;

13. That Thou mayest give him patience in time of adversity : until the pit be digged up for the ungodly.

Blessed is the man to whom, by suffering, by trial, and by patience, God teaches that law of perfect righteousness which is perfect love. He would have us learn that which Himself came to teach us—patience in suffering. We must needs be chastened until we know how both to bear and to forbear, to wait for our Father's will, not to seek our own. The wicked may seem to be strong in his malice and prosperous in his cruelty; he may appear to have a firm grasp of life; but notwithstanding his grave is being dug for him. It is being prepared, deep and dark, and when the patience of outraged justice is exhausted, he will be laid within it, passive, and

helpless, and hopeless. There the troublers shall have tribulation, and the troubled rest.

14. For the Lord will not fail His people : neither will He forsake His inheritance ;

15. Until righteousness turn again unto judgement : all such as are true in heart shall follow it.

Heb. For right shall return to righteousness,
And all the upright shall follow it.

The Lord may chasten His people, but He loves them still. The hand of a Father is known by his chastenings as by his caresses. The very sending adversity to His inheritance is but the message of His promise of unfailing love,—‘I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.’ He will not fail His own, until the right, which for a time seemed lost, is brought back again to clear and confessed righteousness—until the law of right be fully executed in the judgment of right, and justice and judgment be one and the same. Then shall God’s judgments be evidently turned to mercies in behalf of His people, and their former sufferings shall become their greatest advantages. Then shall they who have sought to be upright, and loved the right, and hated the wrong, gladly follow and acquiesce in the plain and un mistakeable declaration of God’s eternal righteousness, revealed in His dealings with men.

16. Who will rise up with me against the

wicked : or who will take my part against the evil-doers ?

17. If the Lord had not helped me : it had not failed but my soul had been put to silence.

18. But when I said, My foot hath slipt : Thy mercy, O Lord, held me up.

19. In the multitude of the sorrows that I had in my heart : Thy comforts have refreshed my soul.

Who then will take the part of the sorrowing and oppressed against the malicious and the cruel? Can the soul for an instant hesitate or doubt how to reply to such a question? If there were no righteous God to help us, then should we be shut up in a silence of utter despair; life would be worse than death. But we have an immortal Helper, merciful, loving, true; and when, in impatience and restlessness, we slip from the path of trustfulness,—when our human will creeps on us, saying, Oh that God would slay mine enemy!—He makes us know that we have erred, and holds us, that we fall not so again. When we are tortured by our own crowding and despairing thoughts, and wearied out with our troubles and the anguish of our souls, then He can help us Who was in agony that we might be comforted, and Who put not away from Him the cup of misery, that we might be refreshed with the cup of mercy.

20. Wilt Thou have anything to do with

the stool of wickedness : which imagineth mischief as a law ?

Heb. Shall the tribunal of iniquity be in covenant with Thee,
Which taketh wretchlessness as its law ?

21. They gather them together against the soul of the righteous : and condemn the innocent blood.

22. But the Lord is my refuge : and my God is the strength of my confidence.

23. He shall recompense them their wickedness, and destroy them in their own malice : yea, the Lord our God shall destroy them.

For a time wickedness has power. It makes laws for impiety, as did Nebuchadnezzar, and the counselors of Darius. It seems to possess a throne, and to establish a judgment-seat of its own, and it takes as a law its own violence and reckless self-will. Such was that miserable assembly in which Annas, and Caiaphas, and the blinded Pharisees gathered themselves together against the soul of the righteous Saviour, and condemned the innocent blood which Judas had betrayed into their hands. With such judges, and with such selfish power, the all-righteous Judge is at immortal enmity. He resisted them in the weakness of His humility, much more will He resist such in the mightiness of His glory. In Him Who suffered unjustly can they who suffer unjustly always find a refuge. The soul which flies to Him in adversity wants no longer a refuge in this world's

good, or cares to make earthly passion its confidence. It seeks to God; it waits for Him; it puts all its cause into His hands, knowing that He will establish right and will destroy wrong; and that when He destroys wrong, and makes wickedness to perish, they who have loved malice and trusted in wickedness shall perish utterly and miserably, with the wickedness and the malice which they made their own. Punishment shall then bind those in misery whom guilt now binds from good works.

This Psalm has no title in the Hebrew. In the LXX. and the Vulgate it is inscribed, "A Psalm of David for the fourth day of the week." In this respect it resembles the preceding Psalm. It is not impossible but that it may have been solemnly used on that day.

Morning Prayer.

TO BE SAID DAILY IN THE ORDER FOR MORNING PRAYER.

PSALM XCV. *Venite, exultemus Domino.*

1. O COME let us sing unto the Lord : let us heartily rejoice in the strength of our salvation.

2. Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving : and shew ourselves glad in Him with psalms.

'Let us sing unto the Lord :' this is the Christian soul invited to do unceasingly. The prophets of the older dispensation—the saints of the new covenant

—the choirs of the temple on Mount Moriah—the assembly of the heavenly Sion—the angels above in heaven—the Holy Ghost within us—our brethren in the Church—yea, all the creatures of God, with one accord from the beginning to the end, call us day by day to come, bid us day by day to sing unto the Lord God Almighty. Not with fear, but with joy, let us approach Him Who is the rock of our salvation, Who refreshes us with His streams of grace in the desert of the world. Let us come into His presence not by constraint, but willingly, to thank Him for His benefits;—let our gratitude, if it were possible, outrun and be beforehand with His love. And let us shew our hope, and joy, and gladness, not dully and coldly, but with all the glowing, hallowing words and all the melody of voice our mouths can raise. The Seraphim ‘rest not day nor night’ in their infinite chant of adoration; the Church below should bring at least her part of daily psalms and daily praise.

3. For the Lord is a great God : and a great King above all gods.

LXX. Because God is a great Lord,
And a great King over all the gods ;
Because the Lord will not reject His people.

4. In His hand are all the corners of the earth : and the strength of the hills is His also.

5. The sea is His, and He made it : and His hands prepared the dry land.

And why should we come, and why should we

sing? Because He is great above all. He alone is God, and there is none but Him; He is 'the King eternal, immortal, invisible,' and all other influences, authorities, and powers are but servants unto Him, and exist by His will. The idols of the heathen, the things that men set up for themselves to worship, are emptiness and nothing. It is the Lord Who made the heavens that alone is God. The bounds of the earth are distant, but they are all within His hand; the earth is in the hands of the Father and of the Son. The valleys and the deep places of the earth, like the spirits of the humble and the lowly, are in His safeguard, and are possessed by Him; the mountains are strong, but their strength is His, and they have it from Him; emblems they be, as they tower up into heaven, of the angels and archangels who dwell for ever in His presence. The sea, with its ceaseless ebb and flow, its tempests and its treacherous calms, imaging to us this troublesome world and its waves, is His; He made it, and it is compelled to own His laws. And the dry land, barren and fruitless as the hearts of men, He created, and has prepared to bring forth fruit unto His glory.

6. O come, let us worship and fall down :
and kneel before the Lord our Maker.

Therefore does the invitation ring again through our ears and hearts from all things on earth and from all things in heaven, from things seen and things unseen, not only to sing each day unto our God in praise, but to worship Him each day in reverence

and awe—to fall down and kneel before that mighty God Who made all things, and us children of men among them—to ‘glorify Him in our body and our spirit, which are God’s.’

7. For He is the Lord our God : and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand

And why should we come, and why should we worship and fall down? Because He is not only a great God, but He is our God ; He is not only the Creator of the earth, and of the hills, of the sea, and of the land, but He is the Redeemer of us miserable sinners. He took our flesh and came down to seek and save us, as a good and loving Shepherd, weak and wandering sheep as we ever are. He feeds us, He rules us. We are not only the sheep of His pasture, and the people of His hand, but the people themselves are His sheep ; and His sheep, for whom He laid down His life, are His people. He calleth us His people, which were not His people : He hath brought us wandering sheep into the one fold under the one Shepherd. Well does it become His people, whom He has created, to sing unto their Lord, and to rejoice in this their salvation ;—well does it become His sheep, whom He has sought and saved, to worship, and fall down, and kneel before their incarnate Lord, at once their Maker and their Saviour !

8. To-day if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts : as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness ;

Heb. Harden not your hearts as Meribah,
As the day of Massah in the wilderness.

9. When your fathers tempted Me : proved Me, and saw My works.

But each day brings its daily warning, as it brings its duty of daily praise and daily prayer. Each day, and above all to-day, cries to us, Harden not your heart. He Who to-day promises forgiveness to the penitent, promises no to-morrow to him who puts off his repentance. 'The Holy Ghost saith, To-day if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts : as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness.' He saith to us by the voice of His minister, as He said before by the voice of His Psalmist, 'Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day ; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end ; while it is said, To-day if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation.' The murmuring of Israel in Rephidim, when the water was brought wondrously from the rock, is a lesson for all the days of time. It was for an enduring warning that Moses 'called the name of the place Massah and Meribah because of the chiding of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the Lord, saying, Is the Lord among us, or not ?'

10. Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said : It is a people that do err in their hearts, for they have not known My ways ;

11. Unto whom I swear in My wrath : that they should not enter into My rest.

‘But with whom was He grieved forty years? Was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcases fell in the wilderness? And to whom swear He that they should not enter into His rest, but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief. Let us, therefore, fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of us should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them.’ Their grieving the Holy Spirit for forty years, their erring not only in their deeds, but in their heart, their stiff-necked ignorance of the ways of God, caused the sentence to go forth against them that they should not enter into the rest of Canaan. They were to wander in the wilderness till they all died who came out of Egypt, save only Caleb and Joshua. But the prophet by the Holy Ghost spake not obscurely of another rest than that of Canaan. If Joshua had given the Church of Israel rest, then he would not have spoken of another day. But there is another rest than the rest of Canaan—a rest not merely on earth from earthly labours, but another high and holy rest, an eternal Sabbath of praise and melody which is still to come. ‘There remaineth,

therefore, a rest to the people of God.' Let us, therefore, the redeemed of the Church of Christ, looking onward to that future day, praise daily our Maker, worship daily our Redeemer; and 'let us labour to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief' which was set before us in Israel of old, offending after their example, and being made like them in their punishments.

This Psalm, which is untitled in the Hebrew, is in the LXX. and the Vulgate inscribed "by David." The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews (iv. 7) says, "He limiteth a certain time, saying in David, To-day;" this may either signify that the Psalm was written by David, or the name of David may be taken as expressing the Book of Psalms: "It is written in David" may be used as, "It is written in the Psalms." The writer, however, evidently by his argument considers the Psalm to be later than the time of Moses. Chapters iii. and iv. of this Epistle contain an inspired commentary on the latter verses of this hymn, in which the warning given by the prophet is shewn to be intended for the Church of Christ; and the oath of God, that the hardened in heart should not enter into the rest of Canaan, is shewn to be sworn also concerning the wicked to whom the Gospel is preached, and the Sabbath-keeping of heaven. This Psalm, which begins with the most exulting tones of praise, passes on to exhortation to prayer and ends with a very awful warning, and has been of old used in the Church as a fit preparation for the daily office of praising God by singing Psalms to Him in His courts: from this it has obtained the name of "the Invitatory Psalm." The key-note to its melody seems to be the word "to-day," and therefore it comes most rightly as the commencement of the work of daily praise. It is the first of those six Psalms which Bishop Horsley supposed to form one poem, under the title of "The bringing of the First-begotten into the world." With verses 8, 9, compare Exod. xvii. 1—7, and with verses 10, 11, compare Num. xiv., xxvi. 64, 65, and xxxii. 10—14.

PSALM XCVI. *Cantate Domino.*

1. O SING unto the Lord a new song : sing unto the Lord, all the whole earth.

2. Sing unto the Lord, and praise His Name : be telling of His salvation from day to day.

3. Declare His honour unto the heathen : and His wonders unto all people.

Each shewing forth of God's love to man, each revelation of God, Who is love, to man, claims from man a new confession of gratefulness and joyous praise. If the revealing of God, in the mysteries of the Law, to Israel, awoke in their hearts a strain of gladsome melody, how much more the revealing of God in the person of Jesus Christ to the whole created world! All the whole earth shall sing to Him Whose love redeemeth all the whole earth. Day by day should His Church's praises ascend before Him, as day by day He gives His mercies to His Church. His Church is ever bound to declare the honour of God made Man unto the nations who as yet know Him not, and to preach the wonders of His Gospel, His incarnation, His birth and death, His resurrection and ascension, to every creature, not only by the outward message of sound words, but by the inner and mightier message of obedience, and holiness, and faith.

4. For the Lord is great, and cannot worthily be praised : He is more to be feared than all gods.

5. As for all the gods of the heathen, they are but idols : but it is the Lord that made the heavens.

For He is indeed great, wondrously great in the boundlessness of His love. Words, however high and true, cannot worthily and fully tell His praise; holy thoughts and hallowed lives, goodness seeking to be like His, and self-sacrifice copying His, is the only praise which is worthy indeed of the Fount of all praise. He is to be feared above all things, because His love to man transcends all things. The gods that man had made for himself to worship are but the images of his own miserable fears, and lusts, and powers—perishing images of things that perish. But God in Christ made not man only, but angels—not earth only, but heaven—not the copies only, which we see, but the realities, which are unseen.

6. Glory and worship are before Him : power and honour are in His sanctuary.

Glory and greatness wait before Him like ministering angels to do His bidding. Power and honour are but the Cherubim whereon He sitteth in His unapproachable brightness—near Him, indeed, but yet beneath Him.

7. Ascribe unto the Lord, O ye kindreds of the people : ascribe unto the Lord worship and power.

8. Ascribe unto the Lord the honour due unto His Name : bring presents, and come into His courts.

All greatness is His ; all glory is His ; all beauty is His. In ascribing to Him those feeble efforts

which our hearts can offer, we do but render to Him His own. We give but back to Him His own reflected radiance. All that is fair and good, 'whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise,'—they are but scattered rays from His perfection, and their glory we must ascribe to Him; they are but gifts from His infinite treasury, to be rendered in reverence and loyalty to Him again.

9. O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness : let the whole earth stand in awe of Him.

The adornments of His earthly temples, and their holy services, the fair order and beauty of the spiritual temple of the Church and her riches of grace, are feeble shadowings out of that clear perfection and immortal beauty which shines in the holiness of His presence in heaven. It is this that makes His awfulness. Perfect power may make the sinner stand in terror; but perfect holiness and perfect love can make the whole earth stand in awe.

10. Tell it out among the heathen that the Lord is King : and that it is He Who hath made the round world so fast that it cannot be moved; and how that He shall judge the people righteously.

Let them who obey Him ever point out to others who know Him not, the glory of that King Who once was crowned with thorns, and throned upon the bitter tree. May all be led to know and to worship Him Who has made the world in power, and will judge it in righteousness! Let all be apostles of that one mighty message, let all be prophets of that one mighty fact!

11. Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad : let the sea make a noise, and all that therein is.

12. Let the field be joyful, and all that is in it : then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord.

13. For He cometh, for He cometh to judge the earth : and with righteousness to judge the world, and the people with His truth.

Marvellously as He has revealed Himself, His full revelation is not yet accomplished. He has sent messages to the expecting world, He has, indeed, come Himself, but veiling His glory as He came with the mantle of His humiliation; but He will yet come once again in the last time, in full, unshrouded, ineffable majesty. The Creator will visit His creation, the God of love will come to those whom He has loved; and all shall rejoice before Him save they who loved Him not. The heavens and the earth, the angels above, the living dwellers in the world, the dead beneath, the sea and the land, the

fields and the trees, the whole creation, which for a long time has been groaning for man's transgression, shall then shine out once more bright and good, and rejoice in their Maker's unclouded smile. The time draws on; He is coming—He is most surely coming to judge the earth. The world, which man has made so long unrighteous, shall be judged in righteousness; the people who have so long been deceived by the guile of Satan, and the falseness of their own wills and lusts, shall be judged by the truth of Christ. Nothing can convict, or condemn, or punish unrighteousness, but righteousness; nothing can destroy falsehood, but truth. And He Whose work is righteousness and Whose word is truth is coming to make all wrong right, and all evil good, that His world which He has made may rejoice once more in His sight, and that again He may pronounce all to be, as they were when they came forth from His creating hand, very good.

This Psalm is the latter portion of that Psalm which was sung by the Levites when the Ark was brought into the tent which David had pitched for it on Mount Sion. "Then on that day David delivered first this Psalm to thank the Lord, into the hand of Asaph and his brethren." The Psalm itself will be found, with some few variations, and the addition of portions of Psalms cv. and cvi., in 1 Chron. xvi. 23—33. The LXX. give as the title, "When the house was built after the captivity, a song of David." It might have been solemnly used at the building of the second temple. Justin Martyr, in his dialogue with Tryphon, declares that the first line of verse 10 originally was, "Tell it among the nations that the Lord hath reigned from the tree," and that the Jews had erased the latter words as too clear a testimony to the Crucifixion.

PSALM xcvii. *Dominus regnavit.*

1. THE Lord is King, the earth may be glad thereof : yea, the multitude of the isles may be glad thereof.

‘The Lord is King.’ This is the proclamation which shall hereafter echo from one end of heaven to the other. Now it is preached in the ear, hereafter it shall be proclaimed upon the eternal house-tops. He Who stood before the unrighteous judge, Who received blows, Who was scourged, Who was crowned with thorns, Who was nailed upon the Cross, Who was mocked as He hung dying on the accursed tree, Who died, Whose side was pierced, Who was buried, Who arose from the dead,—He is King, the King of all kingdoms, the Lord of all realms, the Creator of all worlds. In His glory, as in His humility, let the earth rejoice. Well may the world which He has redeemed be glad in Him ! The people of the land and of the far-off islands of the sea, the Churches of His faithful ones who abide surrounded by the waves of the world, like islands in a stormy sea, may indeed be glad in Him, the once despised, Who now is Lord of all, the King Who once was crucified !

2. Clouds and darkness are round about Him : righteousness and judgement are the habitation of His seat.

3. There shall go a fire before Him : and burn up His enemies on every side.

4. His lightnings gave shine unto the world : the earth saw it, and was afraid.

Clouds and darkness—the clouds of prophecies and the darkness of mysteries—are round about Him, now on His throne as heretofore upon the Cross, for the unbelieving who will not see Him, nor understand Him, nor obey Him. But righteousness and judgment are the very throne upon which He sits, for them who believe in Him and obey Him. He was hidden of old in the clouds of types and prophecy; He is hidden now by the clouds of heaven: but He cometh hereafter with clouds of His saints and holy ones, when He shall be no longer invisible, but every eye shall see Him. The fire of judgment shall go before Him to purge the earth from darkness and from sin, to consume ‘the wood, hay, and stubble,’ which men in their vanity have heaped together—to utterly destroy falsehood, injustice, and wrong. The fire which shall burn His enemies is the fire of perfect righteousness and judgment; for ‘His throne is like the fiery flame, and His wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issueth and cometh forth from before Him,’ when the judgment shall be set and ‘the books be opened.’ Bright, sudden, and most terrible shall be that last revelation of the Lord the King. Ever and anon, by the lightnings of His grace hath He given shine unto this sinful world, startling it from its false security into wholesome fear and awe. But at last He Who has sent so many messages shall come

Himself; and 'as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even to the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be.'

5. The hills melted like wax at the presence of the Lord : at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth.

6. The heavens have declared His righteousness : and all the people have seen His glory.

In that day of the Lord 'the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.' The strength of the hills shall melt like wax in the flame at the presence of the Lord and Maker of the world. And if the strong hills be melted, shall aught of human exaltation or mortal pride be left to stand unsubdued or unrepentant? The terrors of His most just judgment, which have been so long preached on earth, shall then be thundered from one end of heaven to the other. The voice of the archangel and the trump of God shall summon the creation to meet Him; the whole world shall behold their righteous Judge; every eye shall see Him clothed with power and crowned with glory, Whom once we hid our faces from, when He came stained with blood and scarred with thorns.

7. Confounded be all they that worship

carved images, and that delight in vain gods :
worship Him, all ye gods.

LXX. And worship Him, all ye His angels.

Heb. i. 6. And let all the angels of God worship Him.

In that mighty revelation of the Only-begotten to the world, all idolaters, and liars, and 'enemies of the Cross of Christ' shall be utterly dismayed and filled with deepest shame. They who have chosen another God instead of the eternal Son, will cry to the melting mountains and the burning rocks to hide them from the wrath of the Lamb. He is God: no being may be worshipped, but God alone. We worship not angels; but let us imitate angels, and worship Him Who is worshipped by angels, even the Co-equal and Almighty Son. 'Him the Father hath appointed Heir of all things, by Whom also He made the worlds, Who is made so much better than the angels, as He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent Name than they. For unto which of the angels said He at any time, Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee? And again, I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to Me a Son? And again, when He bringeth in the First-begotten into the world, He saith, And let all the angels of God worship Him.'

8. Sion heard of it, and rejoiced : and the daughters of Judah were glad, because of Thy judgements, O Lord.

9. For Thou, Lord, art higher than all that

are in the earth : Thou art exalted far above all gods.

But while the wicked shall be confounded at the proclamation of the Advent of the Judge, the Church shall rejoice. The holy and pious souls who dwell within her, the daughters of Judah, shall be glad because of the judgments of their Lord,—they will rejoice and lift up their heads because their redemption has drawn nigh,—they will be glad because their Lord, Who loved them, Who was once lifted up from the earth in shame, is now exalted above all, higher than the highest in Almighty power, King of all kings, Lord of all lords, God of all gods.

10. O ye that love the Lord, see that ye hate the thing which is evil : the Lord preserveth the souls of His saints ; He shall deliver them from the hand of the ungodly.

Then will God shew His fierce hatred of evil by destroying it utterly : and they who would win His love then, must hate it now. To love God and to hate evil are one and the same ; if we love Him, we hate that which He hates ; and we cannot hate that which is evil as we ought, except in and by the love of Him Who is perfect goodness. They who love God need only to hate evil, for they need not to fear it : He will preserve the soul of His saints in the power of His own mighty love. He will daily deliver them, as they ask in their daily prayer, both

from evil and from the Evil one. His love delivers from sin, for He hath pardoned sin; from death, for He hath overcome death; from hell, for 'the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and there shall no torment touch them.'

11. There is sprung up a light for the righteous : and joyful gladness for such as are true-hearted.

Heb. Light is sown for the righteous.

12. Rejoice in the Lord, ye 'righteous : and give thanks for a remembrance of His holiness.

The Sun of righteousness hath even now risen, and scattereth on all sides His beams of grace, like a sower scatters his seeds. He is now shining with the clear brightness of grace and truth, Who shall hereafter shine with the lightning-blaze of judgment and of power. In this light of His love there is no darkness and no fear for them that are His. In Him is not only light, but consolation and joy for them that are true of heart,—for them that hate that first-born of all evil, falsehood and lies. And in Him is joy—joy, the seed whereof is little, but the harvest great—here and for ever; and in the thought of His coming there are causes of unending thanksgivings in the remembrance of His holiness. Heed we Him Who biddeth us rejoice, not in things temporal, but in Himself; and give we thanks to Him for the hope which He giveth us, that when

all things here are passed away, we shall reign with Him in His holiness.

This Psalm is a glorious and awful prophecy of the coming of the kingdom of God. That it is prophetic of the Saviour is proved by the quotation of verse 7 in the Epistle to the Hebrews; and it can hardly be doubted but that it refers to His second Advent. It has no title in the Hebrew. The LXX. give as a title "A Psalm of David, when his land was restored." It may perhaps have been written by David after his restoration to his country and throne; and its resemblance to the former part of Psalm xviii., and the mention of Sion, are in favour of the supposition which assigns it to "the Psalmist of Israel."

Evening Prayer.

ONE OF THE CANTICLES FOR EVENSONG.

PSALM xcviii. *Cantate Domino.*

1. O SING unto the Lord a new song : for He hath done marvellous things.

2. With His own right hand, and with His holy arm : hath He gotten Himself the victory.

A new life wants a new song. Our Saviour Christ hath made us new creatures, and our old penitential lamentation for ourselves and our misdeeds must give way to a new song of joy and exultation in the marvels of His Almighty love. The Lord alone has gotten the victory over the evil of the world; 'His own arm brought salvation.' By His nail-pierced hand and His stretched-out arm hath He overcome the world; and in Him and with Him have

they gotten the victory, who 'stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God, and who sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty, just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints. Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy Name? For Thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before Thee; for Thy judgments are made manifest.'

3. The Lord declared His salvation : His righteousness hath He openly shewed in the sight of the heathen.

4. He hath remembered His mercy and truth toward the house of Israel : and all the ends of the world have seen the salvation of our God.

LXX. He hath remembered His mercy to Jacob :
And His truth to the house of Israel.

In Him 'the mystery which was kept secret since the world began is now made manifest, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, is made known to all nations for the obedience of faith.' In Christ on the Cross is the salvation of God declared; in Christ on the judgment-throne shall His righteousness be openly shewed. He hath shewn Himself, Who is salvation and righteousness, to the heathen who knew Him not, to the Gentiles who were afar off; He has remembered the mercy and truth of the

covenant which He made with Abraham and with Israel, though they forgot it and refused Him. He has redeemed all the ends of the world. Not Israel only, but all the ends of the earth have seen their Lord Who bought them. Wide though they be, they are His. He has paid for them a mighty price, and purchased the whole: and the eyes of all the world at last, though, like aged Simeon, waiting long, have seen His salvation.

5. Shew yourselves joyful unto the Lord, all ye lands : sing, rejoice, and give thanks.

6. Praise the Lord upon the harp : sing to the harp with a psalm of thanksgiving.

7. With trumpets also, and shawms : O shew yourselves joyful before the Lord the King.

Daily looking forward to this marvellous consummation, daily watching for the last appearing of her Lord, the Church in all lands rejoices with daily joy, chants her daily psalms, offers her daily sacrifice of thanks and praise; and in the mystery of the holy Eucharist triumphantly shews forth her Lord's death until He come. She would have her children make melody before their Lord and King with the harp of a holy life and the psalm of a grateful spirit, with the trumpet of confession of a true faith, and the cornets of exhortation and of warning. Joy in the coming of their Lord will be the distinguishing mark of His elect.

8. Let the sea make a noise, and all that therein is : the round world, and they that dwell therein.

9. Let the floods clap their hands, and let the hills be joyful together before the Lord : for He is come to judge the earth.

10. With righteousness shall He judge the world : and the people with equity.

At the revelation of the Son of God the whole creation shall burst out into joy, for that its world-long groaning and its travail are over. The mighty sea shall be glad before its Maker, when it shall 'give up the dead that are in it,' and shall no more be cumbered with man's mortality and the tokens of man's sin; the round world shall rejoice, for that its Maker no longer saith, 'Cursed is the ground for man's sake.' 'There shall be no more curse.' There shall be another message for the creation than that which was preached to man: it will be—not Repent ye, but—Rejoice ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. The floods shall clap their hands, like saints upon whom the Spirit has been poured, in adoration of their King: and the hills, like the chosen ones of Christ, shall be joyful together, because He is come to judge the earth—not with human and imperfect judgment, but with perfect righteousness and perfect equity. He will by His coming bring the world from that bondage of sorrow and sin under which it lies, into the glorious liberty of the children of God. That hour is drawing on; but though as yet it be

delayed, let us not delay to make us ready day by day for its appearing.

This has merely the title of "A Psalm." The LXX., the Syriac, and the Vulgate add, "by David;" and the Chaldee inscribes it "A prophetic Psalm." It breathes a tone of holy exultation and rapture, in which all creation is called to join. Men, both of Israel and of the nations, with all instruments of music and the melody of a new song, and the visible creation, the sea, the floods, and the hills, are brought as it were together in a mighty choir to sing in alternate chant the salvation and the righteousness of the ascended Lord of all. It is very fitly used by the Church as one of the Canticles at Evensong.

PSALM XCIX. *Dominus regnavit.*

1. THE Lord is King, be the people never so impatient : He sitteth between the cherubims, be the earth never so unquiet.

Heb. The Lord is King, the nations tremble :

He Who sitteth between the cherubims,—the earth is shaken.

2. The Lord is great in Sion : and high above all people.

3. They shall give thanks unto Thy Name : which is great, wonderful, and holy.

The prayer which for so long has been going up from the hearts of God's saints will be at last utterly fulfilled,—Christ's kingdom will have come. The peoples of the world will be impatient in anger and in fear,—the earth and its dwellers will be disquieted ; but at length He Who once came will come the second time in power and majesty, visibly to rule over and to judge the world, even as He sat

visibly of old in His brightness in the temple on Sion. Earthly power is ever on the change, but 'His kingdom cannot be moved.' He shall be revealed in His holy Church, the King of all people, and nations, and languages, and the earth shall stand in awe before her King; He shall receive all honour, and thanksgiving, and praise from His adoring people, Whom once the prophet Isaiah saw 'sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphim: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of Hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory.'

4. The King's power loveth judgement; Thou hast prepared equity: Thou hast executed judgement and righteousness in Jacob.

5. O magnify the Lord our God: and fall down before His footstool, for He is holy.

Our King loveth righteousness: He will execute perfect justice, tempered with perfect mercy. He will judge every man according to his works, summing up and completing the unnoticed righteousness of His providence by an open manifestation to the universe of His holiness and equity. 'We believe that He will come to be our Judge,' therefore let us magnify and exalt Him with our lips and hearts: and let us fall down and worship the man Christ Jesus, Who took our nature, even His man-

hood, from the earth which is His footstool, into the eternity of the Godhead, in which He is equal to the Father. As heaven, which is the throne of God, and earth, which is His footstool, form one universe, so is God and man one Christ,—the everlasting Lord, ‘holy and true,’ in Whom we sinners may appeal from the throne of eternal justice to the footstool of eternal mercy.

6. Moses and Aaron among His priests, and Samuel among such as call upon His Name : these called upon the Lord, and He heard them.

7. He spake unto them out of the cloudy pillar : for they kept His testimonies, and the law that He gave them.

8. Thou heardest them, O Lord our God : Thou forgavest them, O God, and punishedst their own inventions.

9. O magnify the Lord our God, and worship Him upon His holy hill : for the Lord our God is holy.

He Who will be in the last days revealed to the whole world as their King, is and ever hath been King of all flesh, and Lord of the world in the eyes of His saints. Moses the lawgiver confessed Him to be King of all, when he held up his hands in intercession in the fight of Israel with Amalek, in Rephidim ; and Aaron the high-priest, when he stood between the living and the dead in the pesti-

lence which the murmuring of Israel had brought upon them; and Samuel the prophet, when he prayed to Him and He discomfited the battle-array of the Philistines at Mizpeh. When they appealed to Him as the Almighty King, He heard them and gave judgment in their cause. Then He even visibly answered their call; for when, after the gainsaying of Korah, 'the congregation was gathered against Moses and against Aaron, they looked toward the tabernacle of the congregation, and behold the cloud covered it, and the glory of the Lord appeared. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Get you up from among this congregation, that I may consume them as in a moment.' He was ever the King of His chosen ones, and they have ever been His people, and have kept 'the law that He gave them.' He ever heard them when they prayed; He ever forgave them when they craved for mercy; He ever punished them—even Moses, the giver of His law, and Aaron, the priest of His sanctuary—when they followed their own will and their self-advised plans, rather than His royal law and word. Yea, from the beginning even unto the end, seen and unseen, among the children of Abraham and among the nations of the world, in the darkness of Sinai, and in the light of Tabor, in the day of His humiliation and His flesh on earth, and on the right hand of God in heaven,—Christ the Son of God hath ever been an Almighty, all-righteous, ever-present King, reigning in the unity of the Father and of the Holy Ghost, very and eternal God. To Him is all wor-

ship due from His Church on earth and from His Church in heaven, from men here below, and from saints, and angels, and cherubim, and seraphim, in the world on high, where 'they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, Which was, and is, and is to come.'

This Psalm, which is untitled in the Hebrew, in the LXX. resembles those which precede it, in being given to David. It was clearly written in the period between the death of Samuel and the captivity. The word "holy," which is three times repeated, at the end of verses 3, 5, 9, seems to divide the Psalm into three parts, and to recal the threefold "Holy, Holy, Holy" in the song of the seraphim in Isa. vi. 1—4, and in the ascription of the four Living Things in Rev. iv. 8. With verse 7 compare also Exod. xxxiii. 7—11.

ONE OF THE CANTICLES AT DAILY MORNING
PRAYER.

PSALM c. *Jubilate Deo.*

1. O BE joyful in the Lord, all ye lands :
serve the Lord with gladness, and come before
His presence with a song.

The Gospel was to be preached to all lands, beginning at Jerusalem—therefore shall all lands be joyful in their Lord. Where there was once the slavery of sin, through Him is proclaimed the freedom of grace. We who once were the bondsmen of corruption and the captives of death, have indeed still a Lord ; but we do Him service, not by constraint, but with gladness,—the gladness of love, for He is the One Who loved us, and died for us, and redeemed us ; and in the fulness of eucharistic joy we come before Him not only with prayers and peni-

tence, but with a song of joy like that of angels,— of ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will towards men.’

2. Be ye sure that the Lord He is God : it is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves ; we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture.

By faith are we saved. Let us be sure that our Lord He is God : we crucified Him, scourged Him, spat upon Him, crowned Him with thorns, clothed Him with mockery, hanged Him upon the Cross, pierced Him with nails, wounded Him with a spear, sealed Him within the tomb ; we made Him vile, and rejected Him in our pride and sin ; yet let us believe, be confident, be sure that He is God. He at Whom we mocked is He Who made us ; He Whom we pierced is the Shepherd Who came to save us wandering sheep. ‘We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.’ We could not make ourselves, neither could we save ourselves ; but He Who loved us hath made us His, and led us back again into His own immortal pastures, both feeding us and being Himself our food.

3. O go your way into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise : be thankful unto Him, and speak good of His Name.

Therefore in all joyfulness and lovingness let us go our way in Him Who is the Way, by His truth,

Who is Himself the truth, unto life—unto Him Who is the Life for ever and ever—Who is the Way without erring, the Truth without deceiving, the Life without fading;—the Way by example, the Truth by promise, the Life by reward. Let us, His people, go within His gates of faith and holiness with thanks for His calling and His electing love; let us enter into His earthly courts, His Church below, with praise to Him for the means of grace He has stored therein. The offering of thankfulness and praise which we bring, He will accept, and will lay up for us in His treasury, until we can offer it again most perfectly in His eternal courts of heaven.

4. For the Lord is gracious, His mercy is everlasting : and His truth endureth from generation to generation.

For our Lord and God is gracious, yea, He is grace itself. His mercy is eternal: He never ceases to be merciful. He hath mercy upon us in our mortality, and His mercy fails not until it bringeth us to immortality. His truth endureth for this world and for that which is to come. His promise cannot fail,—‘Lo I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.’

This is most justly entitled in the Hebrew “A Psalm of praise.” The LXX. render it “A Psalm of confession.” It calls upon the redeemed world to rejoice in its Lord, and assigns as grounds for thankfulness, His grace, His mercy, and His truth. It was anciently appointed to be used at the offering of the peace-offerings for thanksgiving, (Lev. vii. 12). It is very fitly appointed by the Church now to be used as one of the Canticles after the second lesson at Morning Prayer. The following remarks of Bishop Horsley, in his *Trans-*

lation of the Book of Psalms, will throw considerable light upon the six preceding Psalms,—that is, the ninety-fifth to the hundredth. He says—“ These six Psalms form, if I mistake not, one entire prophetic poem, cited by St. Paul in the Epistle to the Hebrews, under the title of ‘ The Introduction of the First-Born into the World.’ Each Psalm has its proper subject, which is some particular branch of the general argument, the establishment of the Messiah’s kingdom. The ninety-fifth Psalm asserts Jehovah’s Godhead, and His power over all nature, and exhorts His people to serve Him. In the ninety-sixth Psalm all nations are exhorted to join in His service, because He cometh to judge all mankind, Jew and Gentile. In the ninety-seventh Psalm, Jehovah reigns over all the world, the idols are deserted, the Just One is glorified. In the ninety-eighth Psalm, Jehovah hath done wonders, and wrought deliverance for Himself. He hath remembered His mercy toward the house of Israel: He comes to judge the whole world. This, I think, clearly alludes to a restoration of the Jewish nation. In the ninety-ninth, Jehovah, seated between the cherubim in Zion, the visible Church, reigns over all the world, to be praised for the justice of His government. This Psalm alludes, I think, to a reign of Jehovah in Zion subsequent to the restoration of the Jewish nation, when Moses, Aaron, and Samuel are to bear a part in the general worship. In the hundredth Psalm, all the world is called upon to praise Jehovah the Creator, Whose mercy and truth are everlasting.” Vol. ii. pp. 85, 86.

PSALM ci. *Misericordiam et iudicium.*

1. My song shall be of mercy and judgment: unto Thee, O Lord, will I sing.

Each member of the Church of Christ, when the preciousness of his birthright as a child of God and the mightiness of his privileges as an inheritor of heaven is set before his mind, cannot but, like David when exalted to be the ruler of Israel, turn unto his Lord in heaven, ‘ Who hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father,’ with thankfulness and earnest longings to keep the commandments which He Whom he loves hath given. The thoughts

of His mercy in His first coming, and of His judgment in His second coming, will wake up his heart to songs of praise. He will rejoice in the loveliness of his Saviour's mercy, because He executes judgment also; he will rejoice even in the awfulness of judgment, for that it will be executed in mercy. He will rejoice now in the day of mercy, that he may rejoice hereafter in the day of judgment. He will know that both now and hereafter 'mercy shall rejoice against judgment.'

2. O let me have understanding : in the way of godliness.

Heb. I will walk wisely in a godly way.

3. When wilt Thou come unto me : I will walk in my house with a perfect heart.

Thinking thus on God's mercy and judgment, the need of grace for holiness of life, and of diligent prayer to gain it, becomes clear and plain. To walk uprightly and surely in the way that leadeth to life, to long to be brought near to the fount of grace and love, even as David longed for the Ark to come to Sion; to resolve to dwell, as far as lieth in us, in blamelessness and innocence of conscience, within that house of God—that is, His Church—which He hath given to us to be our home and shelter in this dreary world,—these are duties bound up with the knowledge of Jesus' mercy and the confidence of Jesus' love.

4. I will take no wicked thing in hand; I

hate the sins of unfaithfulness : there shall no such cleave unto me.

5. A froward heart shall depart from me : I will not know a wicked person.

‘David behaved himself wisely in all his ways; and the Lord was with him.’ And thus must he who looks for mercy to the Son of David do in his life here on earth. He must renounce all wickedness, and do nothing in will, word, or deed, that is against the righteous law of God. He must hate unbelief and misbelief, and all the sins that arise from unfaithfulness and doubt. These too often cling to the soul and eat away its life, like some noisome plant clinging round a tree. ‘But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.’ The ‘evil heart of unbelief’ must be by grace put aside and utterly forsaken; every wicked thing, and the very companionship and acquaintance of the wicked, must be given up and thrust away by him whom the Saviour ‘has called His friend.’

6. Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour : him will I destroy.

7. Whoso hath also a proud look and high stomach : I will not suffer him.

He must hate the slanderer and the bearer of false witness, for such slew his Lord; and he must destroy their evil by his own truth and patience.

The look of pride, and the bosom swelling with haughtiness or burning with anger, and they who have them and indulge them, are no fit allies for the servants of Him Who is 'meek and lowly in heart.' They will do well to shun them in others, and not to suffer them in themselves.

8. Mine eyes look upon such as are faithful in the land : that they may dwell with me.

9. Whoso leadeth a godly life : he shall be my servant.

In all these things he must abide by the example of his Lord, and not by the example of the world. He will choose his friends even as his Lord chooseth His. The Saviour has chosen for His own them that are faithful: His charge to each one is, 'Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life;' His promise to each one is, 'If ye keep My commandments, ye shall abide in My love; even as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love.' In the communion of saints alone is perfect and true friendship, because there is perfect faith and true godliness of life.

10. There shall no deceitful person dwell in my house : he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight.

11. I shall soon destroy all the ungodly that are in the land : that I may root out all wicked doers from the city of the Lord.

Deceitfulness is therefore alien to the child of

God; for the deceitful have no portion in Christ's holy Church. To be without guile is the one thing that the Lord seeks in His people. If 'a righteous man hateth lies,' how much more shall He hate them Who is the righteous God and the very Truth. Thus believing, thus loving, thus obeying, he will be following the footsteps of the true King of the true Israel, Who came into the world to destroy the works of the devil, and to 'purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.' Christ the ascended King, now at this present time, by His mercy is rooting out wicked doers from the city of the Lord, even the Church militant on earth,—'punished in this world that their souls may be saved in the day of the Lord;' or else at the breaking of the eternal morning He will finally root them out for ever when He shall establish the new Jerusalem, the Church everlastingly triumphant in heaven. 'There shall in no wise enter into that city anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie; but they which are written in the Lamb's book of Life.'

This is "A Psalm of David," written, we can hardly doubt, on his first obtaining his kingdom and becoming the guide and ruler of Israel. This Psalm would be exceedingly applicable to the intentions and the conduct of Josiah in his just and conscientious reign. For "he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, and walked in all the way of David his father, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left," (2 Kings xxii. 2). It is to this, very probably, that its present position, among the Psalms which have been supposed to have been collected and arranged by Josiah, is owing. It is one of the Psalms appointed to be used in the consecration service of our Kings and Queens.

Morning Prayer.

THE FIFTH PENITENTIAL PSALM, AND ONE OF
THE PSALMS FOR ASH-WEDNESDAY.

PSALM cii. *Domine, exaudi.*

1. HEAR my prayer, O Lord : and let my crying come unto Thee.

2. Hide not Thy face from me in the time of my trouble : incline Thine ear unto me when I call ; O hear me, and that right soon.

In our seasons of holy joy, and in those of holy sorrow, in ‘all time of our tribulation, and in all time of our wealth,’ the Church puts a word into her children’s mouths which is ever befitting,—‘O Lord, hear our prayer ; And let our cry come unto Thee.’ This is our especial call, standing, poor and sorrowful, and knocking, in the time of our trouble, before the gate of the all-rich God : and what want we by it ? We want the sight of His face to cheer us,—we want the hearkening of His ear to help us ; above all, we want no delay, lest we perish.

3. For my days are consumed away like smoke : and my bones are burnt up as it were a fire-brand.

4. My heart is smitten down, and withered like grass : so that I forget to eat my bread.

5. For the voice of my groaning : my bones will scarce cleave to my flesh.

LXX. My bones have cleaved to my flesh.

The days of our lives, and all the hopes and the thoughts of pride that we have in them, ascend like the wreaths of smoke, and swell into the air and are scattered away. We none of us, however proud to-day, know what shall be on the morrow. 'For what is our life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.' We ourselves and all our strength, in the fiery trial of affliction, are but like brands within the flame: we quickly fall into dust and ashes, unless He, Who alone can, snatch us like 'brands from the burning.' All mortal flesh is but as grass under the scorching noon; our soul and spirit dries up and withers under temptation, so that we forget that daily prayer and that daily trust upon the promises of God, which is more necessary to our life than even daily bread. Turn we to Him with weeping, fasting, and prayer, and we shall be set free. Under the captivity of sin we groan, but cannot pray—we loathe our food, but do not fast—we are despairing, weak and without strength, but we cannot repent.

6. I am become like a pelican in the wilderness: and like an owl that is in the desert.

7. I have watched, and am even as it were a sparrow: that sitteth alone upon the house-top.

8. Mine enemies revile me all the day long: and they that are mad upon me are sworn together against me.

LXX. And they who praise me have conspired against me.

Until our God hears our prayer, and our cry does come before Him, we are as all lonely and melancholy things—as the pelican in the parching desert—as the owl in the gloomy ruins—as the sparrow deprived of its young alone on the house-top; we are far away from the refreshing source of grace, we are surrounded with the ruins of a fallen and perishing world, we are anxious and restless, and yet afraid to return to our Father, like a timorous and watchful bird which sitteth alone upon a roof, and dares not come down to enter into the house. But the soul, mourning and groaning over its sins, has not only its own desolateness and pain to bear; it becomes the scorn of the hardened and the wicked. Nothing so stirs up the mad wrath of our spiritual foes, as the sight of a sorrowing sinner. As the good angels rejoice over a penitent more even than over a righteous man, so do the evil angels rage many-fold more furiously against a sinner that repenteth, than against him that needeth no repentance.

9. For I have eaten ashes as it were bread : and mingled my drink with weeping ;

10. And that because of Thine indignation and wrath : for Thou hast taken me up, and cast me down.

To the sin-tortured, what are the common enjoyments and vulgar pleasures of this life? The bread they eat is bitter as ashes to their taste; their cup is made salt with their tears; the eternal sentence of 'indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish,

upon every soul that doeth evil,' poisons the daintiest banquets. There is no more self-indulgence for the sinner when his sin has found him out. The righteous judgment of God, like a mighty wrestler with whom it is vain to contend, takes him up from his own low hopes and grovelling plans, and casts him down trembling, helpless, and ashamed.

11. My days are gone like a shadow : and I am withered like grass.

12. But, Thou, O Lord, shalt endure for ever : and Thy remembrance throughout all generations.

We are but like a shadow which departs as the sun is setting, the more speedily as it grows the longer. Our days go from us because we go from the true Day. In our disobedience and unbelief we are withered like grass; but that the grass watered by the Saviour's blood will spring afresh. Our days are gone like a vanished shadow; but the Lord of life endureth for ever. May He Who is eternal save us things of time,—may He Who abideth for ever remember us who are passing away both now and hereafter!

13. Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Sion : for it is time that Thou have mercy upon her, yea, the time is come.

14. And why? Thy servants think upon her stones : and it pitieth them to see her in the dust.

Not by ourselves in our own lonely poverty and vileness, can we expect the mercy of the All-holy, but as members of His Church and as being in the number of His people whom He hath redeemed by His precious blood. Thus can we best cry to Him to arise and have mercy upon His spiritual Sion; thus can we plead His own declaration, that 'now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation;' thus do we learn to turn our thoughts away from the crumbling relics of a fallen world, and rather recal the examples of His Apostles and holy ones whom He laid as living stones in the foundation of His heavenly temple; thus do we learn, that as the Church is brought low unto the dust of earth by worldliness, by covetousness, by lack of love, so does each single soul suffer too. The fall of all is the fall of each; the sin of all is the sin of each, even as the sin of each is the sin of all.

15. The heathen shall fear Thy Name, O Lord : and all the kings of the earth Thy Majesty ;

16. When the Lord shall build up Sion : and when His glory shall appear ;

17. When He turneth Him unto the prayer of the poor destitute : and despiseth not their desire.

And the restoration of all is the restoration of each one. Yea, and more; for the heathen shall fear the Name of God, and all the kingdoms of the

world shall worship Him, when He restores His Church to her proper holiness and beauty, building her up again from the one Corner-stone, with the living stones of His own repentant and obedient people. Then shall 'the city of our fathers' sepulchres' become the immortal Sion; then shall the brightness of His glory be seen, when He shall have heard the prayer of them who in meekness and repentance have called to Him, when He shall have turned unto them who have turned unto Him, and shall have granted the petition which day by day His Church hath brought before Him, that 'His Name may be hallowed, and His kingdom come.'

18. This shall be written for those that come after : and the people which shall be born shall praise the Lord.

19. For He hath looked down from His sanctuary : out of the heaven did the Lord behold the earth ;

20. That He might hear the mournings of such as are in captivity : and deliver the children appointed unto death ;

21. That they may declare the Name of the Lord in Sion : and His worship at Jerusalem ;

22. When the people are gathered together : and the kingdoms also, to serve the Lord.

Therefore the sorrowing and repenting soul must be comforted in the consolation of the Church; for that very grace which builds up the Church of God

from the ruins of mortality, converts, pardons, and restores the soul ruined by its sins. 'He is the Saviour of the body' Who is the Saviour of each member thereof; Who was revealed in prophecy to times past, and Who shall be preached in His Gospel in times to come; Who looked down from His holy place in heaven, and saw our wretchedness and slavery, even as of old He looked down and saw the misery of His people in Egypt. But He not only out of heaven beheld the earth, but out of heaven He descended upon earth; He came 'to heal the broken-hearted, and to preach deliverance to the captives;' He came, that the prisoners being set free, and the doomed to death being pardoned, might evermore give thanks unto Him in His holy Church, into which shall be gathered all nations and all kingdoms, to serve Him in the unity of His faith and the obedience of His fear.

23. He brought down my strength in my journey : and shortened my days.

LXX. She hath answered Him in the way of His might :
The fewness of my days announce to me.

24. But I said, O my God, take me not away in the midst of mine age : as for Thy years, they endure throughout all generations.

True it is, that for the sin of man his strength in the journey of this his mortal life has been made weakness, and his days have been shortened. But for help and refuge in this shortness of our earthly time, we must flee unto the Lord of Eternity. He

hath taken our weakness into His might, and hath gathered our few and shortened days into His own everlasting years. We are in Him, and He Himself is in us, 'that God may be all in all.' He taketh us away from our years to take us into His own eternity. For the eternity of God and God Himself are not different, but the same: eternity is the very substance of God, which hath in it nothing changeable. In it nothing is past, as if it were no longer; nothing is future, as if it were not yet come. In it there is nothing but *Is*. There *Was* and *Will be* have no place; because what was, now no longer exists; and what will be, is not yet come: but whatever is in eternity, eternally *Is*.

25. Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of Thy hands.

26. They shall perish, but Thou shalt endure: they all shall wax old as doth a garment.

27. And as a vesture shalt Thou change them, and they shall be changed: but Thou art the same, and Thy years shall not fail.

Yea, He came to us and dwelt among us, Whose Name is the Word—the Word before all ages, through Whom the ages were created; He, Who is the uncreated Wisdom, in the beginning founded the earth and made the heavens. He it was Who spake, and it was done. They are creatures of time; they have

their growth, their perfection, and their old age. They abide their time; they fulfil their purpose; and they are laid aside like a disused garment. In the end of all things, they who in Christ have put off corruption and have put on incorruption, shall behold and see a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth shall have passed away, and 'there shall be no more sea.' These shall perish; but our Christ and Lord, the everlasting and almighty Word, Who was before these, abideth the same, unchanged and unchangeable, when they have passed away;—the same in might, the same in glory, the same in goodness, the same in love. His mercy fails not, even as His years fail not, for they are both eternal and of eternity.

28. The children of Thy servants shall continue : and their seed shall stand fast in Thy sight.

He is that Son of Man in Whom all the children of men shall find immortal life; He is that Seed of David, Whose crown shall never be cast down, Whose throne shall have no end. His subjects shall never be removed from before the face of their King and Saviour. Through Him, Who came in human flesh into things temporal, that He might lead them to those things eternal, shall they attain those everlasting years, in which days are not measured by the revolvings of the sun, but that which is abideth ever as it is, because it alone *Is* truly. 'They shall be for ever with the Lord.'

The title of this Psalm is "The supplication of the afflicted, when he is overwhelmed, and poureth out his complaint before the Lord." It has been assigned by various commentators to different persons and different periods, from David and his time to the captivity. If it were written by David, there appears to be no reason why the title should not have assigned it to him. It is more probably a later Psalm, and belongs to the reign of Josiah. Indeed, the message of God concerning Judah, which was sent to him, notwithstanding his earnest, zealous, heart-felt strivings after repentance and reformation for his people, which must have made him "afflicted" indeed, and "overwhelmed" him, would seem clearly to point out Josiah himself as the writer. "Notwithstanding the Lord turned not from the fierceness of His great wrath, wherewith His anger was kindled against Judah, because of all the provocations that Manasseh had provoked Him withal. And the Lord said, *I will remove Judah also out of My sight*, as I have removed Israel, and will cast off the city Jerusalem which I have chosen, and the house of which I said, My Name shall be there." (2 Kings xxiii. 26, 27.) Overwhelmed by this severe and yet righteous threatening, the pious king would doubtless pour out his complaint before the Lord, pleading before Him his own affliction, the misery and ruin of Zion, the frailness of man, and the majesty and eternity of God Who would work out His own promises in His own time and way, until he attained at last unto the conviction, that "the children of God's servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, should continue, and the seed of David should stand fast in His sight," notwithstanding their sins and His threatenings. This Psalm is one of those seven which are called Penitential, and is appointed by the Church for the first day of Lent. Verses 25, 26, 27 are cited in the Epistle to the Hebrews as declaring the eternal being of God the Son; the Psalm is therefore addressed to Christ our Lord.

PSALM ciii. *Benedic, anima mea.*

1. PRAISE the Lord, O my soul : and all that is within me praise His holy Name.

Whom should we praise but our God? Whom should that which is best and noblest in us, even our soul, with all the hopes, and aspirations, and affections, and yearnings of the inner man—whom should

our soul bless, but Him Who hath loved it with an immortal love, Who hath redeemed it from eternal loss and pain, and Who alone can fill its infinite longings with His infinite joy?

2. Praise the Lord, O my soul : and forget not all His benefits ;

3. Who forgiveth all thy sin : and healeth all thine infirmities ;

4. Who saveth thy life from destruction : and crowneth thee with mercy and loving-kindness ;

5. Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things : making thee young and lusty as an eagle.

LXX. That satisfieth thy desire with good things,
So that thy youth is renewed like an eagle's.

Yea, let our soul, and mind, and strength, our whole life and being, rise with one strong cry of blessing and praise to Him Who is all to us, and hath done all for us! Careless and forgetful we are of many of the good gifts of our God, but let us not forget them all! Some of His benefits let the adoring soul remember,—His forgiveness of our sins as the one Saviour, His healing our infirmities as the great Physician,—His healing, by His forgiveness, the blindness of our ignorance, the lameness of our faithlessness, the leprosy of our carnal lusts, the deafness of our hardened hearts, the dumbness of our unthankful souls. He hath died that He might

save our life from infinite destruction; He hath risen again that He might crown our pardoned nature with the radiance of mercy and the riches of love. He hath full-filled us with His grace, giving us to eat the Bread of heaven, satisfying us here with the good things of His means of grace, that we may rise again from the dead into unearthly glory in the morning of the resurrection, and be caught up with His saints to meet Him in the air, like eagles that have moulted and renewed the beauty of their plumage, and that are winging their way in strength and speed towards the risen sun. Let our souls praise Him unceasingly Who has said,—‘Whoso eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.’

6. The Lord executeth righteousness and judgement : for all them that are oppressed with wrong.

7. He shewed His ways unto Moses : His works unto the children of Israel.

Our God executes most just judgment upon all, and His righteousness is especially a refuge to those that are oppressed, from their oppressors. He gave His law—a transcript of His holiness—to His people Israel on Sinai, by the hand of Moses; and He Himself ‘descended in the cloud, and stood with Moses there, and proclaimed the Name of the Lord.’

8. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy : long-suffering, and of great goodness.

9. He will not alway be chiding : neither keepeth He His anger for ever.

10. He hath not dealt with us after our sins : nor rewarded us according to our wickednesses.

‘And the Lord passed by before Moses, and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin,’ and yet just and righteous to the guilty. These His attributes He proclaims no less clearly by His providence now, than He proclaimed them by His voice on Sinai. He Himself is hidden, but His love is shewn most plainly. His patience and His goodness, His readiness to forgive, if we would only be ready to repentance, His ceasing from His anger, if we would only cease from our evil doing,—all these are made most plain by His dealings with His people. He did not deal with Israel after their sins, He rewarded not them according to their wickedness; and therefore His Church now has boldness to pray, ‘O Lord, deal not with us after our sins : Neither reward us after our iniquities.’

11. For look how high the heaven is in comparison of the earth : so great is His mercy also toward them that fear Him.

12. Look how wide also the east is from the west : so far hath He set our sins from us.

13. Yea, like as a father pitieth his own

children : even so is the Lord merciful unto them that fear Him.

Mighty indeed is the space between the infinite height of heaven above and the earth beneath, yet mighty as that,—or if there be aught higher,—is the mercy of our Lord toward them that humble themselves before Him. Wide indeed is the distance between the east and the west, yet so far,—or if there be anything more distant,—hath He set our sins from us. The measure of His Cross reacheth, like the ladder of Jacob, from earth to heaven, and such was the space that the mercy of the Redeemer spanned. His arms were extended wide to the east and to the west, separating in the vastness of His atoning love our sins from us. Like as a father loves his children, pities them in their sorrows, aids them in their efforts, and supplies them in their wants, so doth He Who is very love, from Whom all fatherhood in heaven and earth is named, look in mercy upon His creatures when they turn to Him in fear and worship. He Who hath taught us to say to Him, ‘Our Father, Which art in heaven,’ will ever be to us the Father which He hath bidden us to call Him. He may one while be angry with us, yet He is our Father; He may chasten us and afflict us, yet He is our Father. Children are we, often profitless and self-willed; yet as a father pitieth his children, so ever doth He pity us.

14. For He knoweth whereof we are made : He remembereth that we are but dust.

15. The days of man are but as grass : for he flourisheth as a flower of the field.

16. For as soon as the wind goeth over it, it is gone : and the place thereof shall know it no more.

He knoweth what we are,—what we were made,—how we have fallen,—by what means we may be again restored. He knoweth from what He made us in the beginning. We are formed of clay: ‘the first man is of the earth, earthy, the second Man is the Lord from heaven.’ He remembereth His sentence upon us, ‘Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.’ Adam our father was the first who brought death upon us, Christ our Redeemer, Who came after him, yet rose before him, and brought life and immortality to them whose days were but as grass, whose beauty and honour beneath the breath of their Maker’s displeasure were but like a flower breathed upon by the scorching wind, and withered, and forgotten.

17. But the merciful goodness of the Lord endureth for ever and ever upon them that fear Him : and His righteousness upon children’s children ;

18. Even upon such as keep His covenant : and think upon His commandments to do them.

‘All flesh is grass ;’ but the Word was made flesh, and became as we are, that we frail things might be

clothed with immortality. His merciful goodness, by which He pitied us, is not merely for the brief summer day of our mortal life, but endureth for ever and ever upon them who abide in His faith and fear. 'He is God, the faithful God, Which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love Him and keep His commandments, to a thousand generations;' therefore all the children of men unto many generations, if they will keep His covenant Who hath saved them, and walk in the way of His commandments Who hath loved them, shall be made righteous before God in Him Who, being the Word Which abideth for evermore, became even one with the grass which goeth in a day.

19. The Lord hath prepared His seat in heaven : and His kingdom ruleth over all.

He Who descended and died, hath lifted up to heaven the nature which He took upon Himself, and there sitteth on the right hand of God, the King of a kingdom boundless and eternal. But He hath also, as it were, another seat and another heaven, even the heart of each one who loveth Him and keepeth His commandments. He Whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain, will yet deign to dwell within a faithful and contrite heart.

20. O praise the Lord, ye angels of His, ye that excel in strength : ye that fulfil His commandment, and hearken unto the voice of His words.

21. O praise the Lord, all ye His hosts : ye servants of His that do His pleasure.

22. Q speak good of the Lord, all ye works of His, in all places of His dominion : praise thou the Lord, O my soul.

Therefore praise we our God. But not alone: the angels, the mighty beings whom He has created to do His pleasure, to see His glory, to hear His voice, are ever praising Him; the hosts of Cherubim and Seraphim cease not their eternal cry of Holy, Holy, Holy. They praise Him with their deeds as with their words—readily, unweariedly, perfectly. All His works, in all the worlds which He has made, bless and praise Him Who made them what they are. Surely those souls which He has redeemed should join in the same ceaseless Alleluia,—surely His praise should be spoken on earth, as it is in heaven!

This Psalm is an alphabetic Psalm; it is in the title ascribed to David. It is full of the most eager and loving feelings of praise and thankfulness to God, the compassionate and forgiving Father of His creatures. With verse 13 compare St. Matth. vii. 9—11.

Ebening Prayer.

FOR WHITSUNDAY.

PSALM CIV. *Benedic, anima mea.*

1. PRAISE the Lord, O my soul : O Lord my God, Thou art become exceeding glorious; Thou art clothed with majesty and honour.

2. Thou deckest Thyself with light as it were with a garment : and spreadest out the heavens like a curtain.

3. Who layeth the beams of His chambers in the waters : and maketh the clouds His chariot, and walketh upon the wings of the wind.

Each created, redeemed, regenerated soul is bound to praise the Lord, the Creator, Redeemer, Sanctifier, for that God the Son, Who in the beginning made the worlds, and Whose grace is ever carrying on His work to its perfect end by the operation of the Holy Ghost, has been revealed before us in His exceeding glory. He, as the eternal High-priest, hath put on the Urim and Thummim of majesty and honour, and hath clothed Himself with light, as a priest clothes himself with his holy vestments: His brightness on the mount of transfiguration was but a passing glimpse of what He is now, ever hath been, and ever shall be. He is the true Light, therefore His angels are the angels of light, His children the children of light, His doctrine the doctrine of light. The universe is His tabernacle; the heavens, visible and invisible, are the curtains which shroud His holy place. He hath laid the beams and foundations of His holy of holies very high, even above the waters which are above the firmament. The clouds and the winds of the lower heaven are His chariot, upon which He stood when He ascended from Olivet, upon which He will sit when He cometh again.

4. He maketh His angels spirits : and His ministers a flaming fire.

His attendants and His ministers are the hosts of heaven, the twelve legions of angels who do His bidding. They rush to execute His command like the swift and viewless winds; they are spirits whose power is felt, but they themselves are unseen. He maketh His ministers like a flaming fire, bright and terrible like a lightning-flash, burning with zeal and burning with love. Mighty and strong as are those spiritual beings, they instantly obey their Master's will, no less than the material elements of this lower earth; they hear and do in heaven, even as the wind that blows, or the fire that burns here below. For 'when the Father bringeth in the First-begotten into the world, He saith, And let all the angels of God worship Him. And of the angels He saith, Who maketh His angels spirits, and His ministers a flame of fire. But unto the Son He saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.'

5. He laid the foundations of the earth : that it never should move at any time.

6. Thou coveredst it with the deep like as with a garment : the waters stand in the hills.

7. At Thy rebuke they flee : at the voice of Thy thunder they are afraid.

8. They go up as high as the hills, and down to the valleys beneath : even unto the place which Thou hast appointed for them.

LXX. The hills go up, the valleys go down.

9. Thou hast set them their bounds which they shall not pass : neither turn again to cover the earth.

His creating power in the beginning founded the earth, that nothing should move it from its appointed order. It was covered with the deep of waters, even above the highest hills; but He said, 'Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so.' And at His Almighty command they hasted like servants fearing a rebuke, or like men fleeing before the thunder of a storm. They left the hills which rose up from the face of the earth, they poured down the valleys in a rapid flood, until they came to their appointed place, 'the gathering together of the waters which is called the sea.' There He appointed their shores and set them their bounds; and gave a promise to His servant Noah that they should never again cover the earth. And as God the Creator hath wrought in the natural universe, so also doth God the Sanctifier work in the spiritual world. He hath established the Church, the kingdom of Christ, bidding it, by the preaching of His gospel and the thunder of the word, to arise from out of the waters of this troublesome world; He hath checked the self-will and the pride of the enemies of the Church; and hath set around her the bounds of the one true faith. The unbelieving are envious and malicious, but their murmurings are but like the sound of the small waves on the shore.

Christ hath promised that the salt and bitter waters of the world shall never rise again to cover His Church which He hath redeemed.

10. He sendeth the springs into the rivers : which run among the hills.

11. All beasts of the field drink thereof : and the wild asses quench their thirst.

12. Beside them shall the fowls of the air have their habitation : and sing among the branches.

LXX. They shall sing from the midst of the rocks.

By His ordinance the springs and the rills feed the water-brooks which run between the hills, at which the beasts which are used for the service of man, and the wild animals also, quench their thirst. The birds of the air, too, resort to them for their dwellings, and thank their Maker after their fashion in their songs. And even thus doth God the Holy Ghost send forth the refreshings of His grace into the Church, which arise from the sacraments and means of grace, at which all the children of men, even they who by nature were born, like the wild ass, headstrong and untamed, can slake the thirst of earthly passion; while the heavenly-minded, like the birds by the margins of the fountains, dwell ever near to the river of the water of life, and are ever praising their Saviour in melody of heart.

13. He watereth the hills from above : the earth is filled with the fruit of Thy works.

14. He bringeth forth grass for the cattle : and green herb for the service of men ;

15. That He may bring food out of the earth, and wine that maketh glad the heart of man : and oil to make him a cheerful countenance, and bread to strengthen man's heart.

The mountains, which are the rulers in His Church, and the preachers of His truth, are themselves watered from above. Their doctrine is not their own, but their Lord's. From them shall the earth—that is, the fields of the Church—be watered, and shall bring forth the fruit of good works abundantly,—fruit which yet is not their own, but is to be rendered as a tribute of obedience to their God. And for those who labour in the word, and for them that hear them, the Lord Himself has promised to provide. He Who feedeth the cattle, and maketh the herbs of the field to grow for man's use, has said, 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.' He Who giveth them the poorer gift, the food of the body—corn, and wine, and oil—will not withhold from them that love Him His richer bounty, even the mystical Bread and the mystical Wine which, through the Holy Spirit, gladden not the body, but the heart,—strengthen not the flesh, but the spirit,—together with that heavenly oil, even the 'unction from the Holy One,' which cheers the penitent and the sorrowing. These are from God the Holy Ghost: He giveth the living bread and

the wine of grace, the Body and Blood of Him Who died and rose, to them that hunger and thirst after righteousness, and maketh them strong by union with Christ, who in themselves are weak.

16. The trees of the Lord also are full of sap : even the cedars of Libanus which He hath planted ;

17. Wherein the birds make their nests : and the fir-trees are a dwelling for the stork.

LXX. The sparrows make their nest there :

The house of the heron is their leader.

18. The high hills are a refuge for the wild goats : and so are the stony rocks for the conies.

Heb. The lofty hills are for the ibex :

The rocks a refuge for the jerboa.

The trees of the Lord are they which are planted by God ; they are emblems of the righteous and the holy, who are 'like trees planted by the water-side.' They are filled with grace, they are nourished with mercy. Each in his turn, the lowly and the lofty, is made green and fruitful by the gifts of the Spirit ; first the trees of the field, next the cedars of Lebanon. There are cedars which shall be rooted up, and there are cedars which our heavenly Father hath planted. These 'trees of righteousness' stand in the mighty garden of God, even the Church in which He hath made room, and hath prepared a place for all who come to Him. In this second Eden dwell all, spiritual souls, whether they be timid and fearful

or whether they be bold and strong, like birds nestling within the safety of a forest. There, too, are heights of mysteries unto which the aspiring soul may strive to ascend, as the chamois or the ibex climbs the mountain-peaks; and there is a Rock, even Christ, within the shadow of Which the feeble may be most secure from all their foes, as the jerboa among the sand-cliffs of the wilderness. For these last are indeed among 'the things which are little upon earth, but are exceeding wise;' 'for though they be but a feeble folk, yet make they their houses in the rocks;' and thereby do they teach us a lesson of wisdom and salvation.

19. He appointed the moon for certain seasons : and the sun knoweth his going down.

20. Thou makest darkness that it may be night : wherein all the beasts of the forest do move.

21. The lions roaring after their prey : do seek their meat from God.

22. The sun ariseth, and they get them away together : and lay them down in their dens.

He Who made the two great lights, and appointed them in the firmament of heaven 'for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and for years,' made also the Church, who 'putteth forth her precious things as the moon,' who hath her wanings and her changes, from the dim light of the Church militant to the full beauty of the Church triumphant. And the Sun of

righteousness, even the eternal Word, is both her Creator and the Giver of her light. He shone forth as the Light of this world, and ran His course, even to His setting. He set in the darkness of Calvary, not by fate or chance, but of His own eternal will. His setting was foreknown and foredoomed from the eternal ages. He said, 'I have power to lay down My life, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of My Father.' When His light is withdrawn, darkness comes over the earth; then do the spirits of evil, the devil and his angels, prowl in fierceness and malice, seeking whom they may devour, like lions roaring after their prey, and seeking their food in the obscurity of night. But the darkness of this world's evil cometh to a close; the Sun ariseth again, having subdued the thick blackness of death and of the grave. The divine light of love shineth upon the nations, and the spirits of evil retire baffled to their own prison-house, to abide their judgment, like wild beasts returning to their dens at the dawn of day.

23. Man goeth forth to his work, and to his labour : until the evening.

In the light of Christ and in the power of the Holy Ghost, man, redeemed and regenerate, goes forth to work the works of God. He is bidden in the early morning of his days to go and work in his Father's vineyard, and by grace he goes,—until the night cometh, when his labours cease, and he lies down to sleep in Jesus, awaiting the morning of the Resurrection.

24. O Lord, how manifold are Thy works : in wisdom hast Thou made them all ; the earth is full of Thy riches.

How great, how glorious are the doings of our God in this universe of beings seen and unseen, of things temporal and things eternal ! They are all full of wisdom and understanding ; and He Who is the eternal Wisdom has accomplished them. In His works which He has done, 'all are double one against another, and He hath made nothing imperfect.' He hath set before us these mortal figures, that by them we might be brought to the knowledge of immortal truth. The earth is full of His riches of goodness, which are a parable of His riches of grace ; and its order and its beauty are a shadow of the immortal brightness and loveliness of heaven.

25. So is the great and wide sea also : wherein are things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts.

26. There go the ships, and there is that Leviathan : whom Thou hast made to take his pastime therein.

LXX. There is the dragon whom Thou hast formed to make sport of him.

But the sea with its marvellous crowd of inhabitants, its fishes both small and great, 'the great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters bring forth abundantly,' calls also for our thought and wonder. And this mighty portion of

the creation pictures to us the world and its temptations. Many are the dwellers therein, who are sunk in the cares and troubles of this earthly life; but through them all and above them all may the Christian be safely carried in that ship which is the ark of Christ's Church, whose pilot is the Saviour, whose haven is eternal life. In that ship alone can we escape the might of that mighty dragon of the waters—our ancient foe, cunning in his wiles, glowing in his rage, who boasteth that he is the prince of this world, and that the glory of the kingdoms of the earth is his, but who yet shall finally be trampled down in scorn by the might of Christ in that new-made world where 'there is no more sea.'

27. These wait all upon Thee : that Thou mayest give them meat in due season.

28. When Thou givest it them they gather it : and when Thou openest Thy hand they are filled with good.

29. When Thou hidest Thy face they are troubled : when Thou takest away their breath they die, and are turned again to their dust.

30. When Thou lettest Thy breath go forth they shall be made : and Thou shalt renew the face of the earth.

Even as all the living creation depend for their life and sustenance upon their Maker,—even as He feeds the birds of the air when they call upon Him, the wild beasts of the desert, and the fishes of the

sea,—even as they have to wait until He opens His hand and satisfies them; so in the same way the spiritual life and growth in grace of each one child of man is from the Holy Ghost, ‘the Lord and Giver of Life.’ We wait upon Him for all we have; and all that we are before the eyes of God is of Him. Or ourselves we die, but He feedeth us with His truth; in ourselves we are nothing, but He openeth His hand, He revealeth to us Christ our Saviour, and we are filled with good. And as the living things of the creation perish and return to the dust when the face of their Maker is turned from them, so we without grace, and apart from Christ, were dead in trespasses and sins. But by the coming of the Holy Ghost, and the pouring of the Spirit of God upon all flesh, man is endued with life again, and the face of the spiritual world is changed, even as the face of the natural world shall be changed at the resurrection-day.

31. The glorious Majesty of the Lord shall endure for ever : the Lord shall rejoice in His works.

32. The earth shall tremble at the look of Him : if He do but touch the hills, they shall smoke.

But in all and through all is the operation of the glorious majesty of the ever-blessed Trinity, ever working goodness to His creatures and glory to His own all-holy Name,—creating, saving, sanctifying,

crowning, until the unending Sabbath dawns, and His work is perfected. Meanwhile before its Maker let the earth, and all the things therein, tremble; let the mountains—types of all that is high and strong—quake and smoulder at His presence, like Sinai of old.

33. I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live : I will praise my God while I have my being.

34. And so shall my words please Him : my joy shall be in the Lord.

Heb. My meditation shall be acceptable to Him.

Before Him, and in the joy of the Holy Ghost, must we rejoice. We are His and in Him for ever and ever, therefore while we have life and being must we sing praises unto Him. With meditations on His works within our hearts, and songs of His praise upon our lips, we can here taste of the joy with which hereafter we shall be filled.

35. As for sinners, they shall be consumed out of the earth, and the ungodly shall come to an end : praise thou the Lord, O my soul, praise the Lord.

When the wicked shall have been consumed from the face of the earth, the ungodly and all their doings shall have come to an end and past away, still shall the joy of the glorified be ever fresh and new, and their Alleluias shall ring more clearly and more rapturously, when the beauty of creation has given place

to the uncreated beauty in the presence of the eternal God.

This Psalm is appointed by the Church for Whitsunday. This very fact should teach us that it is to be understood not merely as a celebration of God's power and goodness in the world of nature, but as also containing hints and parables of His grace in dealing with our souls and spirits through His Holy Spirit. It is a hymn of praise for the creation, and for that which the creation signifies. St. Augustine says, in his Commentary, "This Psalm almost wholly consists of figures and mysteries, and hath need of diligent attention, although what is said may also be taken literally. In all of what is said therein a spiritual meaning must be sought for, to discover which our longings in Christ's name will help us; by which, with invisible hands, we knock at an invisible door, that it may be invisibly opened unto us, and we may enter invisibly, and invisibly be healed." So also in the Commentary ascribed to St. Jerome, each verse has a spiritual interpretation given to it. It has no title in the Hebrew, but in some copies of the LXX. is inscribed "By David, On the ordering of the world." Verse 4 is cited in Hebrews i. 6, to prove that the Son of God is greater than the angels.

Morning Prayer.

PSALM CV. *Confitemini Domino.*

1. O GIVE thanks unto the Lord, and call upon His Name : tell the people what things He hath done.

2. O let your songs be of Him, and praise Him : and let your talking be of all His wondrous works.

3. Rejoice in His holy Name : let the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord.

4. Seek the Lord and His strength : seek His face evermore.

5. Remember the marvellous works that He hath done : His wonders, and the judgments of His mouth,

6. O ye seed of Abraham His servant : ye children of Jacob His chosen.

All thanksgiving, and praise, and outpourings of holy joy, were due from Israel, the seed of Abraham after the flesh, to God Who had dealt wondrously and faithfully with them in bringing them into the promised land, and the possession of Canaan.

7. He is the Lord our God : His judgments are in all the world.

8. He hath been alway mindful of His covenant and promise : that He made to a thousand generations ;

9. Even the covenant that He made with Abraham : and the oath that He sware unto Isaac ;

10. And appointed the same unto Jacob for a law : and to Israel for an everlasting testament ;

11. Saying, Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan : the lot of your inheritance ;

12. When there were yet but a few of them : and they strangers in the land ;

13. What time as they went from one nation to another : from one kingdom to another people ;

14. He suffered no man to do them wrong : but reprov'd even kings for their sakes ;

15. Touch not Mine Anointed : and do My prophets no harm.

He Who is the Almighty disposer of all things, Whose righteous providence ordereth and governeth the whole world, revealed Himself especially to Abraham, the father of the faithful, and called Himself the God of Abraham and of his seed after him. Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness ; and ‘the Lord made a covenant with him, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates.’ And again, God tried him and found him not wanting either in faith or in works, when he was ready to offer up his only son Isaac ; therefore He spake to him from heaven, ‘By Myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son : that in blessing I will bless thee, and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed ; because thou hast obeyed My voice.’ And again God promised unto Isaac in Gerar, saying, ‘I will perform the oath which I sware unto Abraham thy father.’ And yet again to Jacob, sleeping on the plains of Bethel, the Lord said, ‘I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac ; the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed.’ They were then but a few in number, wandering from one country to another,

from Haran to Canaan, and from Canaan to Egypt, without any firm possession, even so much as of a burying-place. He rebuked for Abraham's sake, when he sojourned in their land, Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and Abimelech, king of the Philistines, saying to Abimelech in a dream, 'Now therefore restore the man his wife; for he is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live: and if thou restore her not, know that thou shalt surely die, thou and all that are thine.' And again, He rebuked Laban for the sake of Jacob; for His providence is ever watchful over His elect.

16. Moreover, He called for a dearth upon the land: and destroyed all the provision of bread.

17. But He had sent a man before them: even Joseph, who was sold to be a bond-servant;

18. Whose feet they hurt in the stocks: the iron entered into his soul;

19. Until the time came that his cause was known: the word of the Lord tried him.

20. The king sent, and delivered him: the prince of the people let him go free.

21. He made him lord also of his house: and ruler of all his substance;

22. That he might inform his princes after his will: and teach his senators wisdom.

Yet at the same time that He gave the promise

to Abraham and to his seed, He added a warning of those things by which He would try them, saying, 'Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them: and they shall afflict them four hundred years; and also that nation whom they shall serve will I judge: and afterwards they shall come out with great substance.' And this His decree concerning them His all-ruling providence marvellously brought about,—by the envy of the sons of Jacob against Joseph their brother, by their selling him to the Midianites, by his being wrongfully accused by his wicked mistress, by his imprisonment in the dungeons of Pharaoh, by his interpretation of Pharaoh's dreams, by his being raised to the second place in the kingdom, by his providing sustenance in abundance of corn and bread for the people, while Egypt and Canaan were afflicted with dearth and scarcity. And in all these things was Joseph not only an instrument in bringing about the before-determined course of providence, but he was also a type of Him Whom his brethren betrayed, and slew, and buried, and Who was raised from the dungeon of the grave to be Lord of all, and to teach all the earth the true wisdom. Yea, and shall not we, like the guilty sons of Israel, be ashamed and confounded in that day when Christ, the true Joseph, shall make Himself known unto us, and shall say, I am your Brother, Whom ye sold and crucified?

23. Israel also came into Egypt : and Jacob was a stranger in the land of Ham.

24. And He increased His people exceedingly : and made them stronger than their enemies ;

25. Whose heart turned so, that they hated His people : and dealt untruly with His servants.

First by the desire of buying food, and next by the longing to see Joseph once again, were Jacob and his children, with all their possessions, brought down into the land of Egypt. They dwelt in Goshen, and increased in numbers and strength, until a Pharaoh arose who knew not Joseph, and who had forgot how he had preserved the Egyptians from famine. Then this king oppressed the children of Israel, and made them slaves, slaying their male children, and making their lives bitter in toil and misery. Like man under the captivity of sin, so was Israel in the captivity of Egypt, left without any help or hope, except the working out of the before-ordained decrees of God's salvation.

26. Then sent He Moses His servant : and Aaron whom He had chosen.

27. And these shewed His tokens among them : and wonders in the land of Ham.

28. He sent darkness, and it was dark : and they were not obedient unto His word.

29. He turned their waters into blood : and slew their fish.

30. Their land brought forth frogs : yea, even in their kings' chambers.

31. He spake the word, and there came all manner of flies : and lice in all their quarters.

32. He gave them hailstones for rain : and flames of fire in their land.

33. He smote their vines also and fig-trees : and destroyed the trees that were in their coasts.

34. He spake the word, and the grasshoppers came, and caterpillars innumerable : and did eat up all the grass in their land, and devoured the fruit of their ground.

35. He smote all the firstborn in their land : even the chief of all their strength.

At length the appointed time drew nigh that the people of the covenant should be delivered, and Egypt should be judged ; and God looked down and saw their oppression, and He sent Moses the prophet from the land of Midian, with Aaron the priest, his brother, to deliver them. By the mighty signs and wonders shewn upon Egypt, upon her gods, and upon her river, and her land, at last was the pride of Pharaoh brought down, and his hardness of heart was crushed. The tyrant had to eat of the fruit of his ways ; he who had slain the little ones of Israel, felt the loss of his own first-born by death : as he had done to others, so was it done to him.

36. He brought them forth also with silver

and gold : there was not one feeble person among their tribes.

37. Egypt was glad at their departing : for they were afraid of them.

Thus severely chastised, 'the Egyptians were urgent upon the people, that they might send them out of the land in haste; for they said, We be all dead men.' And when Israel departed, strong in their God, though not in themselves, they exacted a tribute of the Egyptians, jewels of silver and jewels of gold, as conquerors exact a tribute of the conquered, 'and they spoiled the Egyptians.'

38. He spread out a cloud to be a covering : and fire to give light in the night-season.

39. At their desire He brought quails : and He filled them with the bread of heaven.

40. He opened the rock of stone, and the waters flowed out : so that rivers ran in the dry places.

Nor did the love of their God cease with their deliverance. The sign of His presence abode with them continually, in the pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night, which was a guide to them, and a shelter from their enemies. He led them towards the land which He had promised to them, giving them by the way tokens of His love, and foreshadowings and types of the sacraments of His grace; He filled them with the bread of heaven, the foretaste of the true Bread Who was to come as the Life of the

world. He gave them drink in the desert from the smitten rock of stone, 'and that rock was Christ.'

41. For why? He remembered His holy promise : and Abraham His servant.

42. And He brought forth His people with joy : and His chosen with gladness ;

43. And gave them the lands of the heathen : and they took the labours of the people in possession ;

44. That they might keep His statutes : and observe His laws.

And why were all these mercies shewn to Israel, and all these bounties showered upon them? Because they were the children of the promise, the people of the covenant. Because of the oath which God had sworn unto Abraham, did He bring his seed from Egypt, breaking their chains and comforting their sorrow, that He might lead them into the land of Canaan, flowing with milk and honey, and might give them fields which they tilled not, and cities which they had not built. He thus delivered them, He thus had mercy upon them, because He had chosen them to be His own, to know Him and serve Him, to 'keep His statutes and observe His laws.' The end of election is obedience. And we also, the members of the Church of Christ, the people of the second covenant, the true children of Abraham, the Israelites indeed, are delivered from the bondage of sin, and guided by grace, and refreshed by sacra-

ments, because we also are 'elect according to the fore-knowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.'

This Psalm is closely connected with the following one; they form a pair. But the first of the two celebrates the dealings of God with His people, in accents of praise; the second relates the return which Israel made to God, in a tone of penitence. The 105th is a meditation on the covenant as performed on the part of God, the 106th on the covenant as kept by Israel. They both dwell on the predestinating will of God, electing men to holiness and obedience, and the mode in which human sin opposes itself to that will, and yet can not make it void. The short sententious style of the poetry of these Psalms, conveying the facts of the history of the people in the briefest form, and the best adapted for preservation in the memory, much resembles those inscriptions, as far as modern learning has been enabled to decipher them, which are found engraved on the rocks in the deserts of northern Arabia, and especially in the valley near Sinai, called the Wady Mokatteb, which are traditionally supposed to have been written there by the children of Israel in their wanderings. It may be noticed in connection with verse 36, that the word which in Exod. iii. 22, xii. 35, is translated "borrowed," should properly be rendered "exacted as tribute." The first fifteen verses of this Psalm form part of the hymn given by David to the singers of the temple, (1 Chron. xvi.)

Evening Prayer.

PSALM cvi. *Confitemini Domino.*

1. O GIVE thanks unto the Lord, for He is gracious : and His mercy endureth for ever.

2. Who can express the noble acts of the Lord : or shew forth all His praise ?

3. Blessed are they that alway keep judgment : and do righteousness.

4. Remember me, O Lord, according to the

favour that Thou bearest unto Thy people : O visit me with Thy salvation ;

5. That I may see the felicity of Thy chosen : and rejoice in the gladness of Thy people, and give thanks with Thine inheritance.

The continual grace and ever-enduring mercy of our God call forth our heartfelt thanks. We cannot sufficiently celebrate the glories of His goodness, or shew forth the full praise which is His due, for our spirits are too cold, our lives too brief, for that which is the office of angels during the eternal ages. But it is not the hearer, or the speaker, but the doer of God's will that is blessed in his deed ; nor is it enough to do righteousness for a little while : we require the gift of perseverance, 'for he that endureth to the end the same shall be saved.' Trying ourselves by this test, we soon fall from the exaltation of thankfulness to the abasement of prayer ; thinking on our sins and those of our fathers, we put away from us the voice of praise, and turn to confession and repentance, if perchance the God of grace and mercy will remember us, and visit us with His salvation, even the revealing of the Saviour, so that at last we may be among the true Israelites, and may enter into that heritage of rest and peace which He has promised to give unto His own elect.

6. We have sinned with our fathers : we have done amiss, and dealt wickedly.

7. Our fathers regarded not Thy wonders in Egypt, neither kept they Thy great good-

ness in remembrance : but were disobedient at the sea, even at the Red Sea.

8. Nevertheless, He helped them for His Name's sake : that He might make His power to be known.

9. He rebuked the Red Sea also, and it was dried up : so He led them through the deep, as through a wilderness.

10. And He saved them from the adversary's hand : and delivered them from the hand of the enemy.

11. As for those that troubled them, the waters overwhelmed them : there was not one of them left.

12. Then believed they His words : and sang praise unto Him.

As the graces and mercies shewn to Israel are pictures of those shewn to us, so their sins and doubts and disobediences are a lesson to us, and their repentances and confessions are a model to us. They looked back upon a long sad history of ingratitude and disobedience. We, like them, need to acknowledge that we have sinned with our fathers and have done wickedly. They remembered not their mighty Baptism in the waters of the Red Sea, when God in His power led them through its depths. How often do we forget the seal of our election? Yet they, when they were set free, at length believed in His words of love, and praised Him for His power and

goodness—‘Who is like unto Thee, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?’

13. But within a while they forgat His works : and would not abide His counsel.

Heb. They hasted and forgat His works,
And waited not for His counsel.

14. But lust came upon them in the wilderness : and they tempted God in the desert.

15. And He gave them their desire : and sent leanness withal into their soul.

But in a most brief season they forgot the wonders He had done, and they would not wait in patience for the accomplishment of His Divine decree. They wearied of the food of heaven, and lusted for flesh to eat; and He sent the flight of quails, and gave them their desire,—and with it the chastisement of their sin.

16. They angered Moses also in the tents : and Aaron the saint of the Lord.

17. So the earth opened and swallowed up Dathan : and covered the congregation of Abiram.

18. And the fire was kindled in their company : the flame burnt up the ungodly.

Yet again they rebelled against Moses, and Aaron, whom the Lord had consecrated for His priest, and the earth opened and swallowed up the rebels of the

tribe of Reuben, while the fire fell from heaven upon the Levites, who joined in the gainsaying of Korah, and in ungodly resistance to God's appointed priests.

19. They made a calf in Horeb : and worshipped the molten image.

20. Thus they turned their glory : into the similitude of a calf that eateth hay.

21. And they forgot God their Saviour : Who had done so great things in Egypt ;

22. Wondrous works in the land of Ham : and fearful things by the Red Sea.

23. So He said He would have destroyed them, had not Moses His chosen stood before Him in the gap : to turn away His wrathful indignation, lest He should destroy them.

And under the very shadow of the Mount of God they made a calf of gold, and, forgetting their God and Saviour—forgetting the plagues wrought in Egypt for their deliverance, and the dividing of the waters for their escape, they changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image in the likeness of a calf that eateth hay ; ‘ and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.’ Therefore would God have consumed them, had not Moses, like a warrior standing in the breach of his city's wall, striven against the Divine wrath with a mighty intercession,—‘ Yet now, if Thou wilt forgive their sin—; and if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written.’

24. Yea, they thought scorn of that pleasant land : and gave no credence unto His word ;

25. But murmured in their tents : and hearkened not unto the voice of the Lord.

26. Then lift He up His hand against them : to overthrow them in the wilderness ;

27. To cast out their seed among the nations : and to scatter them in the lands.

They disbelieved the report which Joshua and Caleb brought of the promised land ; and therefore were they doomed to die in the wilderness, and never to see its beauty and its fruitfulness ; and therefore did the Amalekites smite them, and Arad king of Canaan took some of them captives.

28. They joined themselves unto Baal-peor : and ate the offerings of the dead.

29. Thus they provoked Him to anger with their own inventions : and the plague was great among them.

30. Then stood up Phinees and prayed : and so the plague ceased.

Heb. Then arose Phinehas, and executed judgment.

31. And that was counted unto Him for righteousness : among all posterities for evermore.

Again, they became partakers in the hidden and impure rites of Baal, which were celebrated on the mountain of Peor, and they feasted on the sacrifices

which were made to the spirits of the dead heroes of Midian, to Chemosh the abomination of the Moabites, and to their infernal gods; and the anger of 'the living God' was kindled against them. Then Phinehas, the grandson of Aaron, after prayer and weeping before the Lord, executed His judgment upon the idolaters and fornicators; and therefore to him was given 'the covenant of an everlasting priesthood, because he was zealous for his God, and made an atonement for the children of Israel.'

32. They angered Him also at the waters of strife : so that He punished Moses for their sakes ;

33. Because they provoked his spirit : so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips.

At Meribah, also, they angered God in their murmuring for want of water; and Moses, on their account, was not suffered to enter into the land of rest, for that he was provoked by their reproaches and their complaints, and said, 'Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?' And he struck the rock with his rod twice, when the command of God had been that he should speak unto it.

34. Neither destroyed they the heathen : as the Lord commanded them ;

35. But were mingled among the heathen : and learned their works.

36. Insomuch that they worshipped their idols, which turned to their own decay :

yea, they offered their sons and their daughters unto devils ;

37. And shed innocent blood, even the blood of their sons and of their daughters : whom they offered unto the idols of Canaan ; and the land was defiled with blood.

38. Thus were they stained with their own works : and went a whoring with their own inventions.

And after Joshua had led them into Canaan they drove not out the seven nations, the types of the seven deadly sins which possess the unregenerate soul : rather they made alliance with them, and worshipped their gods, which were devils and not gods, making their innocent little ones, their sons and their daughters, to pass through the fire to Moloch, in their infernal rites ; and so they defiled the land, which they should have made holy to the Lord, with filthiness, idolatry, and blood. Yea, they stained both their souls and bodies with their fleshly sins, being married to the momentary pleasures of iniquity, and divorced for ever from the love and holiness of God.

39. Therefore was the wrath of the Lord kindled against His people : insomuch that He abhorred His own inheritance.

40. And He gave them over into the hand of the heathen : and they that hated them were lords over them.

41. Their enemies oppressed them : and had them in subjection.

42. Many a time did He deliver them : but they rebelled against Him with their own inventions, and were brought down in their wickedness.

Therefore for their rebellion against the Lord God, Who was their King, He gave them over to tyrants and oppressors; and the Amalekites, the Amorites, and the Canaanites, whom they ought to have destroyed, oppressed them and made them captives and slaves. Their God raised up Judges who delivered them again and again; and yet too often they fell back again into wickedness, and so into its punishment.

43. Nevertheless, when He saw their adversity : He heard their complaint.

44. He thought upon His covenant, and pitied them, according unto the multitude of His mercies : yea, He made all those that led them away captive to pity them.

LXX. He gave them to compassions,
Before all those who took them captive.

Yet though they forgot their duty, He forgot not His own mercy. He ever heard their prayer in their trouble, as He ever hears all prayer: a broken and contrite heart He never will despise. He bore in mind His covenant which He had sworn to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and He righteously kept it in all its fulness, while the seed of Abraham with whom

it was made brake it in all its conditions. Yet His righteousness is not as ours, it is perfect mercy and perfect love; and in that righteousness did He pity them, and made even their conquerors to feel compassion for their misery.

45. Deliver us, O Lord our God, and gather us from among the heathen : that we may give thanks unto Thy holy Name, and make our boast of Thy praise.

Thus step by step in the fortunes of Israel, and the dealings of their God, may we trace the progress of many a Christian soul. Delivered from the slavery of sin, baptized into newness of life, led by the teaching of God's commandments through the wilderness of the world, fed with food from heaven, and refreshed with living water, it yet forsakes its mercies and breaks its covenant; it neglects to destroy those deadly sins which its Lord hath given it in charge to slay; it joins in alliance with them, and learns their works; it becomes again their slave and captive, and can only be made free by bitter penitence and tears. Oh turn we to Him Whose mercy is ever over us; beseech we the Father of everlasting compassion to forsake not us feeble Israelites, whom He has brought so far out of Egypt, but to help our poor and wandering souls that they faint not, neither turn from the right way; that they forget not His covenant, and fall not from His grace! Pray we to Him to deliver all who confess His Name from the power of sin and the chain of ignorance, that they ever give thanks 'with the

remnant of the true Israelites, one fold under one Shepherd.'

46. Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting, and world without end : and let all the people say, Amen.

Heb. And all the people say, Amen. Hallelujah.

Therefore, to that Lord God of Israel, Who keepeth His covenant and mercy for ever, even the covenant of redemption and of salvation which He hath made with His Church, established on earth by the hand of the eternal Mediator, and accomplished in Heaven in the glorifying of His saints,—to Him be ascribed blessing and praise which shall never cease, in which all the peoples of the earth shall join, who have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. They who begin with the Amen of faith and prayer here, shall end with the Hallelujah of immortal joy and praise.

The connection of this Psalm with the preceding one has already been pointed out. This is an exhortation to penitence and confession, as that was to gratitude and obedience. It goes over the history of Israel's disobedience in the wilderness, as the seventy-eighth Psalm does, though with a different object. The spiritual comment on this history is given by St. Paul (1 Cor. x. 1—12). It is difficult to fix the period of the composition of these two Psalms, which have no title; but we notice what clear witness they bear to the narrative of Moses in Numbers and Deuteronomy. It is probable that both of them were written to be used at the solemn celebration of the Passover. In this Psalm compare verses 12, with Ex. xiv. 31; 16, with Numb. xi. 16; 20, with Rom. i. 23; 24, with Numb. xiii. 33; 30, 31, with Numb. xxv. 7, 12; and 32, with Numb. xx. 13. This Psalm concludes the fourth book.

THE FIFTH DIVISION OF THE BOOK

OF PSALMS.

PS. CVII.—CL.

THE last of the five books of the Psalms is not concluded as the other books are, by an ascription of praise to God, unless the whole of Psalm cl. may be considered as standing in the place of such an ascription. It merely ends with the word ‘Hallelujah,’—a word of which the whole Psalter is but the expanding and the commentary.

The fifty-three Psalms of which it is made up are varied in their character. Many of them are by David; and others are Psalms of the captivity and of the restoration. Among them we may notice particularly, I. Psalm cxiii. and the five which follow it, which make up what the Jews call ‘the Greater Hallel,’ and were solemnly sung on the night of the Passover by those who had joined in eating the paschal lamb. These Psalms, no doubt, formed the very hymn which was sung by the Saviour and His apostles at the last Supper, of which the Evangelists speak,—‘And when they had sung an hymn they went out into the mount of Olives,’ (St. Matt. xxvi. 30; St. Mark xiv. 26). II. Psalm cxix., which consists of twenty-two parts, of eight verses each, after the number of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet,—each of the eight verses of the first part beginning with *Aleph*, each of the second part with *Beth*, and so on

in succession; from which this Psalm has received the name of 'the Great Alphabet.' And III. the fifteen short hymns (cxx.—cxxxiv.) which immediately follow Psalm cxix., and which are entitled, in our translation, the 'Psalms of Degrees.' These are, literally, the 'Psalms of the goings up,' and were, it seems probable, those which were chanted by the pilgrims who went up each year to Jerusalem to keep the great festivals, as they journeyed along. And the Psalms in this division are generally, if we allow weight to the opinion of Bp. Horsley, of a liturgical character. The book itself was, there is no doubt, compiled after the return from the captivity, when the whole Book of the Psalms was finally arranged in the canon of Scripture by the great Synagogue, in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah.

THE FIFTH DIVISION.

Morning Prayer.

FOR THE THANKSGIVING AFTER A STORM AT SEA.

PSALM cvii. *Confitemini Domino.*

1. O GIVE thanks unto the Lord, for He is gracious : and His mercy endureth for ever.

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

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

After we are delivered from peril, we are for awhile ready enough to thank the Lord of grace and the Father of everlasting mercy. But each new deliverance should stir up the redeemed soul to remember all that it has been delivered from. Each display of mercy to each one is but a portion of that mercy and loving care which the Lord God has ever had for all our fallen race. Let each soul give thanks whom the Lord hath redeemed, through the blood of the Only-begotten, and hath delivered from the hand of Satan, and the power of its own sinfulness, and bless and praise Him with a glowing heart, like Israel

returning from their dispersion, and their seventy years' captivity in Babylon. Our Shiloh is come, and unto Him is the gathering of the people. Christ our Lord hath redeemed us, and hath brought us from the east and the west, the north and the south, to sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of God; wanderers in the corners of the earth, and dwellers in the isles of the sea, He hath brought us into His Church, into His peace, into His joy, into Himself.

4. They went astray in the wilderness out of the way : and found no city to dwell in ;

5. Hungry and thirsty : their soul fainted in them.

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

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

Like Israel in the pathless desert, wandering with no certain dwelling-place, seeking, for forty long years, a city, but finding none, weary with travel, fainting and spiritless with thirst and hunger, crying at last to their God, for that all human aid had left them, and finding in Him a supply for all their cravings, and a guide to the land He had sworn to give them, and a leader to His holy city, which was to be theirs; just so, in their ignorance and natural blindness, the race of men have gone astray from the

living way—have sought for a home, but found it not,—have hungered after the real good, and thirsted for the true pleasure, which only could satisfy the longings of their immortal soul, and have found only weariness, sorrow, and death, until the dumb cry of their spirit in their trouble found its answer from the God of truth; and He came to lead them in the right way of His Gospel, and to bring them to the city that hath her foundations in eternity. He hath made us free citizens of no mean city, even of the Jerusalem which is above;—and ‘with how great a sum obtained He this freedom’ for us!

8. O that men would therefore praise the Lord for His goodness: and declare the wonders that He doeth for the children of men!

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

Therefore from them who, being in ignorance, He has led, who, being in error, He has guided right, He will have a payment made,—the payment of loving gratitude and thankful acknowledgment of His goodness, and of His wondrous grace. Those who are of themselves empty He filleth with His grace; those that are hungering after good He satisfieth with the true righteousness, even with Himself. He giveth them the true Bread from heaven, and all He would have in return is that they should receive it ‘with gladness and singleness of heart.’

10. Such as sit in darkness, and in the sha-

dow of death : being fast bound in misery and iron ;

11. Because they rebelled against the words of the Lord : and lightly regarded the counsel of the most Highest ;

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

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

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

Like Israel in the dungeons of Babylon, sitting bound in darkness both of body and of spirit, waiting seventy cruel years for death, and fettered with despair no less than with chains of iron ; suffering dire punishment for their rebellion against their God in the worshipping of idols, and for their neglect of His law and their forgetfulness of His covenant ; crushed down to the very earth in heaviness of heart, and helpless and hopeless in their depth of misery, until at last their groaning came up to their Lord, and He brought the years of their captivity to an end, and raised them out of their prison of oppression and dread, and loosed their chains, and set them free ;— just so was man ‘brought into captivity to the law of sin,’ lying in darkness and despair, tied and bound

with the noisome chain of his own lusts and fleshly appetites, in the dungeon of a polluted conscience, with the one weary cry, 'O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' until the God of holiness had compassion upon him, and came down to deliver him from that galling chain by His forgiveness and His grace.

15. O that men would therefore praise the Lord for His goodness : and declare the wonders that He doeth for the children of men.

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

Should not they whom, being bound, He has set free, whom, being guilty, He has absolved, use their freedom to serve their Lord? He wrought marvelously indeed, in rising from the dead, in bursting the grave's gates of brass, and smiting the iron bars of death in sunder! But He doth a marvel calling for no less wonder and no less praise, each time He breaks the chain of sin, saying to a sinner, 'Thy sins be forgiven thee; go in peace.'

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

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

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

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

There are those who, for their wrong-doing and wickedness, ‘that they may know that wherewithal a man sinneth, by the same also shall he be punished,’ are smitten with some grievous disease,—as they were who were bitten by the fiery serpents in the wilderness,—and when their pain is sore upon them the sweetest food becomes distasteful, and they seem drawing nigh to the gates of death; yet even in that sad strait there is a help and a refuge in Him in Whose hand are the issues of life and of death. They pray to Him, and He speaks the word, and they are healed. This, too, was a fit image of the state of fallen man, infected with a deep corruption of his whole nature, weak through the infirmity of the flesh, and near indeed to spiritual death. But the eternal Word was sent from heaven, and healed our corruption, and raised us up from death: ‘Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses;’ yea, the Life Himself came among us, and was one with us; and at His very presence the wounds of our souls are closed up, and the sores of our corrupted consciences are healed. We look to Him and are saved.

21. O that men would therefore praise the Lord for His goodness : and declare the wonders that He doeth for the children of men !

22. That they would offer unto Him the

sacrifice of thanksgiving : and tell out His works with gladness !

For this, therefore,—the giving of health and strength to our weak and corrupted nature—should not our souls praise Him, and proclaim His miracles of healing? Should we not, like the leper made clean again, go unto His courts and offer unto Him the sacrifice of thanksgiving before His holy altar for a testimony of His wonder-working love?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Once more, there are those who sail over the sea in ships,—as did Jonah the prophet, when he fled to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord,—these see the awful mightiness of God unshrouded and set plain before them. He bids the storm to arise, and they and their courage are as nothing before it; they are lifted on high and carried down again; their thoughts are no firmer than their feet; they are filled with terror at their danger and their own sheer helplessness before it. They cry, like the disciples to the Saviour on the sea of Tiberias, ‘Lord, save us; we perish;’ and He hears their calling and silences the storm, and brings them unharmed to the haven where they desire to be. Just thus are our unchastened hearts tost in the storm of passion, and by the waves of this troublesome world. The strife of anger rages and swells within us; ‘without are fightings, within are fears;’ at one while pride carries us up to heaven, and again despair sinks us down into the deep. Fear melts away our very soul; and suspicion, and doubt, and restlessness fill us with their miserable intoxication, until our power of judgment and of self-control is utterly gone, and in the tempest of temptation we are well-nigh cast away. Then He alone Who stills the storm can save us from making shipwreck of faith and peace, and can, by the gentle breathing of the Holy Ghost, bring to that haven of perfect rest whither all our longings and our yearnings tend.

31. O that men would therefore praise

the Lord for His goodness : and declare the wonders that He doeth for the children of men !

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

For this, therefore,—the giving to us peace, the saying to us, ‘Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid;’ the assurance, ‘I will never leave thee nor forsake thee;’ the promise, ‘I will send unto you another Comforter,’—the members of His Church on earth must return Him plenteous praise; telling of His love to all the peoples of the earth, expounding His truth as a faithful teacher, and setting forth the doctrine of His salvation to all who will learn its preciousness. For this the voice of His Church must ‘bless with the Spirit’ in the mighty congregation of all created things, and there shall the nations of the world ‘say Amen, at her giving of thanks.’

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

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

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

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

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

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

It is sin that brings down the chastisements of God, whether upon a single soul, a nation, or a Church. The land of Gomorrah was parched up and consumed, though it was once beautiful as Eden, for the wickedness of its dwellers; the Church of Israel, though delivered from Egypt and brought back from Babylon, yet had her springs of grace dried up and became a thorny wilderness, for her rejection of her true High-priest and King. Again, the Gentiles, whose hearts were once arid and fruitless as the sandy desert, were brought near to the water of life, and being made children of their heavenly Father in the water-springs of holy baptism, were received into the holy city of the Church of Christ; their cravings for life were satisfied,—their work in the vineyard of God was given them to do,—‘the Spirit of God was poured upon them from on high,’ and they were made capable of bringing forth the fruit of good works to the glory and praise of God. Yea, He hath indeed blessed the Church into which He called the Gentiles, and hath multiplied and will multiply her children exceedingly, and will speed the labours of her ministers for the conversion of the world.

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

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

Heb. He poureth contempt upon rulers.

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

Again, though His Church be brought low in chastisement for her cleaving to the powers of the world instead of to the grace of her Redeemer ; though, through her want of love, her unity be broken and her true children become few,—yet, through all, her Lord is over her. He will rebuke her oppressors, however powerful they may be ; He will bring her, when she humbleth herself and repenteth, out of her misery and her want, and will shew Himself ever the good Shepherd, Who layeth down His life for the salvation of His sheep, and gathereth the poor into one fold and one family, ‘in the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace.’

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

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

These mighty doings of our Saviour and our God in delivering His feeble creatures from the trackless wilderness of error,—from the noisome chain of carnal lust,—from the deadly sickness of a corrupt nature,—and from the wild tempest of earthly passion, deserve the thoughtful joy of all who would be faithful servants of their Lord. The mouth of unbelief and the excuses of iniquity are stopped by the sight of the marvels of that mercy which endureth for ever. ‘The accuser of the brethren’ is silenced and cast down. The truly wise will ponder these things, for in the knowledge of them is true wisdom; and so pondering, there shall open before them, ever plainer, fuller, clearer, brighter, the revelation of that mighty love of their eternal Father which surpasses all understanding, and is vaster than all thought.

This is clearly a Psalm of the restoration from the captivity, written on the return from Babylon, before the building of the second temple. It celebrates the love and enduring mercy of God, describing Israel, and under the figure of Israel the whole race of man, under four parables. The first two of these—the perishing in the desert and the mourning in prison—are taken from the history of Israel; the other two, of sickness and shipwreck, are from the general experience of man. To each of these parables there are affixed two verses of exhortation to thanksgiving and gratitude, and these were doubtless sung in response, like an antiphone, by another portion of the choir. This noble and touching Psalm has no title in the Hebrew; it was written by a prophet who had read deeply in the prophecies of Isaiah. The Syriac translation gives as a title, “God collects the Jews out of captivity, and brings them back from Babylon: the Only-begotten Son of God also, Jesus Christ, collects the nations from the four corners of the earth, by calling upon men to be baptized.” This Psalm is appointed by the Church of England to be used in the Thanksgiving after a storm at sea.

Ebening Prayer.

FOR ASCENSION-DAY.

PSALM cviii. *Paratum cor meum.*

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

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

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

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

5. Set up Thyself, O God, above the heavens : and Thy glory above all the earth.

All readiness of heart and voice, of thankfulness and of melody, become that triumphant day when the Son of God, in the glory of mercy and truth, ascended above the heavens, passed beyond the clouds, and sat down, an Almighty King, on the right hand of the throne of God.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

He, the second David, had accomplished His warfare and had crowned Himself with victory. Thenceforth He would apportion the kingdoms of the world, and subdue them unto Himself at His own holy will. Ephraim and Judah, Moab and Philistia, the Jew first and then the Gentile, were to be brought to confess Him as their Lord. He Who came victorious from Edom, and with garments dyed in the blood of His Passion from Bozrah, will henceforth now go forth with the armies of the true Israel,—for what are hosts without the Lord of hosts?—to subdue their enemy. The strong city built in the rock, even man's hardened heart, stronger and more stony than the tomb, He had conquered and overcome ; and in Him and His might are His people to carry on His

warfare, and to cast down all the strongholds of human pride, and human stubbornness, and human unrepentance.

This "Song or Psalm of David," which is appointed for Ascension-day, is made up of portions of two other Psalms. The first five verses form the latter portion of the fifty-seventh Psalm, and the latter eight are taken from the sixteenth. The comments and notes, therefore, on those Psalms are to be consulted. This joyous and triumphant battle-song would well express the exultation of the people after their return from captivity; and it is possible that on that account it occupies the position which it does among the Psalms of the captivity and the return.

PSALM CIX. *Deus laudum.*

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

2. And they have spoken against me with false tongues : they compassed me about also with words of hatred, and fought against me without a cause.

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

Heb. For my love they are my haters ;
And I am prayer.

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

Were not these words, which were the appeal of David unto God when he suffered from the malice of Doeg and of Cush, and the tyranny of Saul, also

the prayer of the Son of Man in that season of trouble and blasphemy through which He passed ere He ended His work of redemption? His prayer was, 'O Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine own Self, with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was!' He appealed to the God of righteousness, and of holiness, from the power of unrighteous and deceitful men. He had come to them in the perfection of good, and they had received Him with the perfection of evil. 'They had sought false witness against Him, to put Him to death.' They had reviled Him,—'Thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil.' 'They sought how they might kill Him ;' and when the son of perdition, Judas Iscariot, communed with them, 'how he might betray Him unto them, they were glad, and covenanted to give him money.' Thus did the seed of Judah pay back the debt they owed to Him Who gave them all : this was their obedience to their King—this their return for the love of Him Who came to save them, Who for them, and for their sins, had made His whole being one act of intercession and of sacrifice, Whose life on earth was one long prayer. They returned Him cursing for His blessing, hatred for His love, scourging and wounds for His healing and His benefits, death upon the cross for the offer of life eternal.

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

6. When sentence is given upon him, let

him be condemned : and let his prayer be turned into sin.

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

They followed after Judas the traitor : ‘ he was the guide to them that took Jesus ;’ and as they followed him in his terrible crime, no less so were they, by the just judgment of God, to follow him in his terrible doom. ‘ Satan entered into Judas, surnamed Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve.’ The devil was the guide of Judas, and Judas was the guide of the Church of Israel. The sentence of blood-guiltiness went forth against him, from the throne of outraged truth and right. He was condemned—yea, self-condemned. He repented too late ; for his repentance was without the Saviour. He prayed in vain, for his prayer was but sin. That which he might have had—the glory of the apostleship, the bishopric of the Church, the crown of the martyr, the throne of glory—all these he had cast away, even as he cast down the thirty pieces of silver, which had been their price. He that falls short of the greatest good falls into the greatest sin. Thus was ‘ this Scripture fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost, by the mouth of David, spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus ; for he was numbered with the apostles, and had obtained part of their ministry. Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity ; and falling headlong he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out.

And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem ; insomuch as that field is called in their proper tongue Aceldama, that is to say, The field of blood. For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein ; and his bishopric let another take.'

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

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

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

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

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

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

14. Let them alway be before the Lord : that He may root out the memorial of them from off the earth ;

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

As there came upon Judas all fearful and awful forms of punishment—remorse, and destruction, and death, both of body and soul, so that it ‘had been better for him that he had never been born,’—so against the Church of Israel, which joined with him in his unbelief and treachery, and took their share in his sin, ‘did the Holy Ghost, by the mouth of David, speak’ these fearful things, forerunners of that last tremendous curse whereby it shall be said to the lost for ever, ‘Depart, ye cursed.’ The curse that came upon them, and which comes upon all unbelief, treachery, malice, falsehood, cruelty, and pride, was the loss of the blessing. For before God, they that are not blessed are cursed, they that are not on the right hand are on the left. The Saviour would have gathered them to Himself, and they would not; He would have given them the true bread from heaven, and they cast it from them; He would have made them rich with the true riches, and they would none of them; He would have pitied them and had mercy on them, but they had made their hearts hard against Him; He would have cleansed all their sin, and the sin of their fathers, and they cried ‘His blood be on us and on our children.’ Therefore they were made the prey of the Roman extortioner; they were scattered abroad by the Roman armies; they were crucified, and slaughtered by the Roman sword; they who had priced their Saviour’s blood at thirty pieces of silver were themselves sold as slaves, thirty for one piece of silver; their city was utterly destroyed,—Jerusalem has been trodden down of the

Roman, the Saracen, and the Turk. Their King, of Whom they became the betrayers and murderers, has come not to them again: but His words have been accomplished in them, that upon them has come the vengeance of 'all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel, to the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom they slew between the temple and the altar.'

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

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

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

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

For they not only rejected Him Who is the truth, but reviled Him. The Jews 'said unto Him, Say we not well that Thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?' 'They said, Behold a Man gluttonous, and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners.' And the blaspheming Pharisees, when they heard of His healing the blind and dumb, said, 'This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils.' They cried, 'Not this man, but Barabbas.'

They loved cursing, and they had what they loved. They counted their King, Who should have been their blessing, a Samaritan, and He became a stranger, and an alien unto them. 'They saw and hated both Him and His Father.' The evil that they had indulged, the malice that they had cherished, closed round them and entered into them; it was within them, like the bitter water of jealousy, 'that causeth the curse;' it penetrated their inmost soul, like the marrow within their bones. It was over them and round them, like their inner and their outer raiment; it was close round their heart, like the girdle with which they were girded. They had made evil their element, and blasphemy their habit, until that most woeful of all words went forth against them, from the lips of Him Who could not lie: 'Wherefore I say unto you, all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men, but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.'

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

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

22. I go hence like the shadow that de-

parteth : and am driven away as the grasshopper.

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

LXX. My flesh is changed for the anointing.

24. I became also a reproach unto them : they that looked upon me shaked their heads.

Yet the malice and the spite of man changed not the Saviour's purpose of eternal mercy. He gave Himself up to His Father's will amid all the hindrances of mortal hatefulness and neglect. His prayer was, 'Now is My soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour.' His holy soul was wounded to its inmost depths by the wickedness of Israel and by the treachery of Judas: at the Last Supper, when He sat with His disciples for the last time on earth, 'He was troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray Me.' Yea, He was betrayed and He was crucified, Who left the bosom of God to become as we are, and to dwell with us, creatures short-lived and vanishing like the shadow at sun-set,—helpless as the locust driven before the strong west wind,—feeble and uncertain in our aspirings to heaven, like the grasshopper that, from its brief leap upwards, falls quickly back to the earth again. He fasted for us, not only in the forty days of the temptation, but through all His life, and yet

was He mocked by us, when they who passed by His cross 'railed on Him, wagging their heads, and saying, Ah, Thou that destroyest the temple and buildest it in three days, save Thyself, and come down from the cross.'

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

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

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

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

'Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, they took, and by wicked hands crucified and slew : ' and yet He, trusting in His Father's love, and doing His Father's will, prayed for them, His murderers—returning blessing for cursing—and said, even as their nails pierced through His flesh, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.' He looked forward, from amid the blasphemous crowd of His most unrighteous judges and accusers, to that day when all evil shall be confounded with immortal shame, and be doomed to everlasting contempt, and patience and goodness shall eternally be glorified. 'When He shall come with clouds ; and every eye shall see

Him, and they also who pierced Him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him. Even so. Amen.'

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

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

Therefore in all reviling and ingratitude, in all evil return for love, and in all persecution for truth and righteousness' sake, must the followers of the Crucified trust in Him, confess Him, and praise Him. They who are evil-intreated are made like their Master: 'if they have called the Master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of His household.' But He who was mocked and spitefully intreated will not leave those who suffer for His cause. He will be with them, to help and to save them, as He was with St. Stephen in the unjust Sanhedrim. Even as Satan stood at the right hand of Judas, and standeth at the right hand of all the ungodly, the covetous, and the malicious, so does Christ stand at the right hand of each one of His afflicted servants, to comfort him in his poverty, and to lead him into glory. He Who said unto Israel of old, 'Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?' said also to His own,

‘Blessed be ye poor; for yours is the kingdom of God.’

This Psalm was written by David, doubtless during his sufferings from the causeless cruelty of Saul and the wanton malice of those who calumniated him. But we are expressly told by St. Peter, that “the Holy Ghost spake it by the mouth of David concerning Judas,” (Acts i. 16). It has been also applied by the fathers and earlier commentators to the Church of Judah, which made itself an accomplice in the sin of Judas; and they have considered it as a denunciation of righteous vengeance, proceeding from the mouth of Christ, in the season of His passion, against the wickedness, and hypocrisy, and blood-guiltiness of His betrayers and murderers. (Compare carefully, St. Matt. xxiii. throughout, and also the fearful denunciations in Deut. xxviii. 15—68.) Its awful words may, however, be extended beyond this, and be considered not only as a prophecy of the retribution which should overtake some particular sinners and hypocrites, but as a plain-spoken declaration of that most just doom which the righteous providence of God is ever working out for all those who take pleasure in wrong and falsehood. It warns us that our God is severe as well as good, (Rom. xi. 22); and that He has determined that it shall not be with the wicked as with the righteous, (Gen. xviii. 25.) Seen in this light, the warnings of this terrible Psalm must have brought unspeakable support to those seven thousand who bowed not the knee to Baal under the impious tyranny of Ahab and Jezebel, and to the captive Jews under Belshazzar, as well as to all who have suffered from the oppression and tyranny of the wilfully wicked. This is the only Psalm in which the spirit of evil is mentioned by name. (Compare verse 5 with Job 1 and Zech. iii. 1.)

Morning Prayer.

FOR CHRISTMAS-DAY.

PSALM CX. *Dixit Dominus.*

1. THE Lord said unto my Lord : Sit Thou on My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool.

2. The Lord shall send the rod of Thy power out of Sion : be Thou ruler, even in the midst among Thine enemies.

The Holy Ghost sheweth unto us by the voices of prophets, and in the message of the Gospel, One from among the sons of men Whose form yet is as the Son of God. David saw in prophetic vision One sprung from himself, and yet far above himself, sitting, not upon an earthly throne, but ‘overcoming and sitting down with His Father on His throne;’—One that was to be born in the city of Bethlehem, of the house and lineage of David, and yet placed upon the right hand of God, the Lord of angels and of men, the Lord of all the earth, the Lord of all that is, that hath been, or that shall be. The seat of Whose kingdom was in a loftier and a holier place than the earthly Sion, and Whose sceptre of dominion cast its shadow across the universe; and yet that shadow was the shadow of the Cross. Mighty marvel and most strange mystery, which He only can make clear concerning Whom it first was spoken! ‘Jesus answered and said, while He taught in the temple, How say the Scribes that Christ is the Son of David? For David himself said by the Holy Ghost, The Lord said to my Lord, Sit Thou on My right hand, till I make Thine enemies Thy footstool. David, therefore, himself calleth Him Lord; and whence is He then his Son?’ To this what shall we say—that He is not then the Son of David? Let the beginning of the Gospel of St. Matthew answer us: it is ‘the book of

the generation of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham.' But is He therefore not the Lord of David? Let the beginning of the Gospel of St. John reply: 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.' In Him, at once the Son of God and the Son of Man, do all wonders join; He hath taken the manhood into God, Who said, 'I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright and morning Star.' Yea, the Firstborn of our nature, at once our brother and our Lord, is on the very throne of God, honoured by the everlasting Father with a seat at His right hand, waiting while, one by one, all things dark, sinful, evil, vile, and deadly are crushed beneath His feet; holding a sceptre which sways all consciences and souls; and bidden,—not to be a conqueror in the midst among His slaughtered foes,—but to be a ruler exercising a merciful dominion over rebels who have repented and obeyed.

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

Heb. Thy people shall offer free-will offerings
 In Thy day of might, in holy beauty.
 More than from the womb of the morning
 Is the dew of Thy offspring.

LXX. With Thee is the dominion in the day of Thy power,
 In the shining brightness of Thy saints.
 From the womb before the morning-star have I be-
 gotten Thee.

In the day of His power, when His kingdom of grace is come, His people, the Church of His redeemed, shall offer before Him the free-will offering of 'themselves, their souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice unto Him.' And with the offering of themselves shall they offer before Him that unbloody sacrifice of which the prophet spake, saying, 'In every place incense shall be offered unto Thy Name, and a pure offering;' and which He Himself hath commanded to be offered, saying, 'Do this in remembrance of Me.' Clad in holy garments, praying with holy worship, they shall be joined in holy communion with each other and with their Lord. The children of God shall be no longer few in number, but shall be many in their multitude as the drops of dew that shine unnumbered upon the grass-blades in the freshness of the early morning. Sprinkled with the dew of holy baptism, born of water and of the Spirit, made heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ the eternally-begotten Son, His elect shall shine, on the morning of the Resurrection-day, in Him and with Him Who is the bright and morning Star, yet Whose birth-cradle at Bethlehem was chilled with the dew-drops of Christmas morning.

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

And our Lord is not only a King over His people, seated upon the throne of God, but is also a High-

priest interceding for ever for them within the veil of the eternal Holy of holies. He is at once a Priest and King even as was Melchisedech of old, who was 'the king of Salem and priest of the Most High God.' He gave to Abraham, the father of the faithful, the gift of bread and wine—prophetic of the future giving of Christ's body and blood; and he blessed him, and to him Abraham gave a tenth part of all his spoils. He, even Melchisedech, was 'by interpretation king of righteousness, and after that also king of Salem, which is, king of peace: who, without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually.' There was established under the first law a priesthood of the seed of Aaron, from the tribe of Levi; but when the first law was fulfilled in the second, another and a more glorious Priest was consecrated, not by man, but by the oath of Almighty God, Whose genealogy was not of earth, but of heaven, and Whose priesthood should be not for a time, but for evermore. God, the Unchangeable and the Undeceiving, sware this unto Him,—yet not for His sake, but for ours, whom He 'hath made kings and priests unto God and His Father,' that we might know and believe that to us, even as to the beloved Son, 'the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.' For this cause, 'This Priest was made with an oath by Him that said unto Him, The Lord sware, and will not repent: Thou art a Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedech.' He offereth ever that one spotless Vic-

tim, even Himself, within the eternal temple; 'for such an High-priest became us, Who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens.'

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

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

To the everlasting Father, Who hath said unto the Son, 'Sit Thou on My right hand,' and Who hath sworn unto Him, and will not repent, 'Thou art a Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedech,' is all praise and worship due, and to the Only-begotten Son, our Priest and King, Who sitteth for ever at His right hand, and 'Whom He hath appointed Heir of all things.' All nations shall bow before the Lord of all; all peoples shall fear the wrath of the Lamb, when His power and His judgment is made fully manifest. It is His to kill and to make alive, for 'He is able to subdue all things unto Himself.' He Who hath bruised the serpent's head shall mortify and kill all vice, and sin, and pride. Antichrist and all his powers shall be struck down before Him; all that is lofty, and strong, and powerful throughout all the countries of the earth, if it will not come under the obedience of Christ, shall be crushed and smitten in sunder by the Conqueror over death and sin. None in the day of His

wrath shall presume to ask Him, Art Thou a King? None shall dare then to say, We have no King.

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

Our King hath reigned because He served; our Priest is heard in that He feared. He took our nature; He became weak and toil-worn as a pilgrim in the way of this mortal life; He sat thirsting by the way-side well of Jacob; He tasted of all that there is of turbid, of bitter, and of disappointing in the torrent of human feelings and human trials, the ceaseless onward flow of man's mortality; He drank deep of the fountain of tears; He stooped down at length to the waters of death,—‘Therefore shall He lift up His head.’ Because He once was poor, He now is rich; because He once lay in a manger, He now sitteth on the throne; because He once was weary, He is now entered into the fulness of rest; because He once prayed with tears, now is He heard with acceptance; because He once sat weary by the well, now from beneath His throne floweth the water of the river of life for ever; because ‘He humbled Himself and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross, therefore God also hath highly exalted Him,’ that His head alone should be lifted up and crowned with all power and might, while all others in all countries of the world should be bowed before Him in reverence or crushed down before Him in judgment.

This Psalm, which was written by David, and which in many re-

spects resembles the second Psalm, was always acknowledged by the Jewish Church to be prophetic of the Messiah. The distinctive glory of Christ foretold in the first and fifth verses, that He should "sit on the right hand of God," is referred to again and again in the New Testament, and is embodied in the Apostles' Creed. This is altogether a Christian Psalm. Our Lord Himself, in the latter days of His ministry, referred to verse 1 of this Psalm; and by the question which He proposed to the Scribes as to how the Christ could be at once the Son and the Lord of David, He gave them that answer to their inquiries, "If Thou be the Christ, tell us plainly," which they had often before requested,—plain to them that would understand, but dark and strange to those whose hearts were hardened. He Himself taught them the mystery of the union of the two natures, the Godhead and the Manhood, in the one Christ. (St. Matt. xxii. 41—45.) After this question no one dared to ask Him any more questions; yet, as Origen says, if their enquiries had been from a desire of learning, He would never have set before them such things that they would not venture to question Him again. St. Peter again refers this verse to our Lord in Acts ii. 32—36. We have also an inspired commentary upon verse 4 in the seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, in which the nature of the royal priesthood of Jesus Christ, which like that of Melchisedech was not reckoned after genealogies, existing before that of Aaron, and continuing after it, is set forth in connection with the second covenant, that is, the Gospel, of which He is the great High-priest. He is the Ruler of His people, and the Bishop over all those who, under Him, are ordained to be His ministers among His Church. Verse 3 presents many difficulties to the translator. This Psalm is appointed for Christmas-day.

FOR EASTER-DAY.

PSALM cxi. *Confitebor Tibi.*

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

When the heart swells with gratitude to God, it must have utterance. The feeling of love seeks expression with and through the heart's best offerings.

It is the heart's earnest desire to empty itself of whatever is choicest, that it may come up as a sweet savour to its Lord. He who thus gives thanks unto the risen Lord, will do it both with his lips and in his life, rising with Him to newness of life, giving up himself to His service, walking before Him holily and righteously. His whole being will be a hallelujah. Whether it be in the quieter and less seen communion of the saints on earth with their Lord, or in the loud joyous anthem in the congregation of the faithful, he will ever be ready to join in saying, 'We praise Thee, O God.'

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

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

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

All things in nature speak the praise of God, 'for He spake the word, and they were made; He commanded, and they were created.' And so the Church in her ancient hymn says, 'O all ye works of the Lord, bless ye the Lord: praise Him, and magnify Him for ever.' A contemplation of the wonderful works of God, both in our creation and in our redemption, is well fitted to draw out our reverence and gratitude; and it is an exercise in which godly

men are not apt soon to weary, for thereby they learn even to see and understand for themselves *why* the Lord's works are worthy to be praised and had in honour. It is because they are founded in righteousness, and so have in themselves the principles of everlasting endurance. God first made the world in beauty and goodness; He redeemed it in mercy and love; He still governs it in moral truth and righteousness. And this, God's righteous government, appealing to all men, did so especially to the Israelites, who were more immediately governed by God, and whose whole history is but a manifesting of the perfect connection between obedience and reward, sin and punishment. From these and from all His dealings, it was meant that men should after their measure learn to make their Maker their example, by ordering their works in righteousness; though as yet they could not do this so fully as in these latter days, when God the Son hath come on earth to be men's visible pattern in His life, as well as their Saviour by His death, and their Justifier by His resurrection.

5. He hath given meat unto them that fear Him : He shall ever be mindful of His covenant.

No part of all God's government and guidance of His chosen people was so marvellous in itself, and made so deep and lasting an impression upon them, as their deliverance from Egyptian slavery and their miraculous preservation in the desert. These always

rushed to their memories when His goodness and His mercies were to be spoken of. He had fed them with manna which they had not known. And from these past experiences the faithful soul takes comfort for the future: 'He shall ever be mindful of His covenant.' And the manna given to Israel, and laid up in the golden pot within the holy of holies, is a sign to the Christian now; it speaks to him of the bread of life, and it is an assurance that this bread, the gift of eternal love, shall never fail, but that God, remembering His covenant, shall feed His Church therewith for ever.

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

7. The works of His hands are verity and judgement : all His commandments are true.

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

However things may appear to men in their blindness, God does govern the world justly and equitably. All He does is in verity and judgment; on these foundations rest His commandments, and whoso hath respect unto them shall prosper. Verily it shall ever be well with the righteous, but with the ungodly it can not be so. The nations lying in moral darkness and death, not following what light they have, at length become ripe for punish-

ment, and are rooted out, and their heritage is given to others, as Canaan was to Israel. This is the work of God's hands, true and just.

9. He sent redemption unto His people : He hath commanded His covenant for ever ; holy and reverend is His Name.

The ancient redemption of Israel from bondage was but the forerunner of that greater redemption of all mankind from the thrall of sin and Satan. Then He sent not redemption only, but the Redeemer—not sanctification only, but the Sanctifier. The covenant assured to Abraham and his seed was the first hint of that universal covenant which is commanded for ever, by which the Name of our Father and our God is hallowed to eternity.

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

‘Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.’ There is no knowledge equal to the fear of God ; he that hath this and doeth after this, is a man of understanding ; for he possesses that true wisdom which is above and before all things, which is worth more than all riches else, for it can never perish, and ‘the praise of it endureth for ever.’

This is in the Hebrew an alphabetical Psalm, with this peculiarity, that the letters of the alphabet begin, not each verse, but each member

or clause of each verse in succession. With verse 10, compare Prov. i. 7; Eccles. xii. 13. It was most probably written upon the return from the captivity, to encourage the people in thanksgiving and the spirit of faith, by recalling to them the covenant which was made with their fathers, and the signs of mercy which had accompanied it. It is appointed by the Church to be used on Easter-day.

PSALM cxii. *Beatus vir.*

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

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

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

Blessed is he who hath his Lord and Saviour ever before him, loving Him, and therefore keeping His commandments; 'and His commandments are not grievous.' The blessing of divine love shall not rest upon him alone, but shall descend unto many generations in them 'that love God and keep His commandments.' It shall be to him and to his seed more and better than the wealth of faithful Abraham, more and better than the prosperity of righteous Joseph. His heart is made a temple of the Holy Ghost and a house of God, and therein are stored riches and plenteousness, not of the things of time, but of the reward of that righteousness which is for ever.

4. Unto the godly there ariseth up light

in the darkness : he is merciful, loving, and righteous.

Where there is darkness to others there is light to him. The Light of the world is above him and before him ; yea, 'the Day-star ariseth in his heart,' even as the Lord arose at midnight on Easter-day. 'God, Who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in his heart; to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.' And so the graces of his Lord shine forth in him,—the grace of compassion, the grace of charity, the grace of right-doing.

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

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

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

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

He will be bountiful with his hands, but sparing with his tongue; for 'if any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man.' Thus will he 'shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom.' He shall never be moved; for what shall separate him from the love of Christ,

of things seen or things unseen, of things present or things to come? His prayers are stored up in the memory of his Lord, his name is written in the Lamb's book of life; no threatening words of earth or hell can give him fear, whose faith is fixed on the eternal promises of Him Who cannot lie. His heart is established; 'the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His. And, Let every one that nameth the Name of Christ depart from iniquity.' His faith will not fail, nor shrink, nor change, while one by one his enemies are brought to the knowledge of the truth and the love of Christ, and he shall see his heart's desire fulfilled upon them, even that they may be saved.

9. He hath dispersed abroad, and given to the poor : and his righteousness remaineth for ever; his horn shall be exalted with honour.

Dispersing abroad, he is yet ever buying; giving, he is still gaining. He purchaseth with this world that which is to come, and so doth he gain both. With how little may we purchase a treasure in heaven, if we bestow our store aright! Zaccheus, indeed, gave the half of his goods to the poor to win a heavenly inheritance; but the poor widow made it secure to herself with but two mites, which make a farthing. The treasure of the righteous is his righteousness, and that shall endure unto him for ever; for He Who made the ages is his Guardian. As he

has shared in his Saviour's might, so shall he share in his Saviour's glory.

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

Most especially at that day which shall end this earthly scene. Then shall his blessing be made perfect before the assembled universe, when his Lord shall call him nearer to Himself, saying, 'Come, thou blessed.' The ungodly shall see too late the grace he set at nought, and the glory he has forfeited. There will in that fearful time be no place for repentance for them who have despised their God here ; they will desire it, but it will be in vain. The Judge 'shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are ; depart from Me, all ye workers of iniquity. Then shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when they shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and they themselves thrust out.'

This Psalm is also an alphabetical Psalm, constructed in the same way as the preceding one. It presents many points of resemblance to Psalm i., and, like it, may be considered as a prophecy of Jesus Christ, the perfect and the pattern Man, while at the same time its primary application is to him who loves God and keeps His commandments. It has no title in the Hebrew or Greek, but the Vulgate has the title, "Of the return of Haggai and Zechariah."

FOR EASTER-DAY.

PSALM cxiii. *Laudate, pueri.*

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

LXX. Praise the Lord, ye children.

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

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

They who are God's servants are also His children : His servants through obedience, His children through love. We praise Him by obedience, we praise Him by love ; our praises begin now, in the time of this mortal life, but they who praise Him truly have no end of their praise. Blessing and honour are His, and shall be given unto Him morning and evening, day by day continually, by them who believe on His Name, throughout all the world, from the rising of the sun in the east to the distant countries of the west. Our constant prayer is also a constant prophecy,—‘Hallowed be Thy Name.’

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

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

The knowledge of His truth, and of His saving love, of His death and of His resurrection from the dead, is ever being made known unto the nations of the world; they who receive it become His servants, and He becomes their Lord. He is made the head of the heathen: the peoples shall bow down before Him, and confess Him to be their King, even as do the Seraphim in the highest heaven. His glory is above the dwellers on earth, but it is above the dwellers in heaven too. The whole universe suffices not for His dwelling-place, and yet hath He His temple in each holy and contrite heart, and makes His heaven there. 'For thus saith the high and lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity, Whose Name is Holy; I dwell in the high and lofty place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.' He Who once humbled Himself to behold the things on earth, will watch over the humble, that He may raise them to that height of heaven which He forsook for them.

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

7. That He may set him with the princes : even with the princes of His people.

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

Heb. He causeth the barren mistress of a house
To dwell as a joyful mother of children.

He doeth all marvellous things,—raising David

from leading his sheep in the desert to the throne of Israel,—bringing back Job from the dung-hill on which he lay in misery and loneliness, to his former high and prosperous estate—giving the blessing of children to the desolate and barren, to Sarah and to Rebecca, to Rachel and to Hannah. These things are wonderful, but He hath done greater things than these, in raising up our poor fallen nature from the dust of corruption and decay, and taking it unto Himself, and thereby placing it above angels and archangels, on the right hand of the eternal Majesty. Praise we the Name of the Lord, for that the Son of Man, the First-born of our brethren from the dead, is seated on the throne of God! Praise we the Name of the Lord, for that His Church, once barren, oppressed, forsaken, hath brought forth children to His glory, children of the seed of Abraham, many as the stars in heaven, in saints on high in the dwellings of light—many as the sand on the sea-shore, in holy and humble men of heart, gathered from the waves of trouble and the bitterness of sin. ‘For it is written, Rejoice thou barren, that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband.’

This Psalm is appointed by the Church for Easter-Day. It was probably, like the two which precede it, and with which it seems to have a connection, written after the return from the captivity. With verse 5 compare Isa. lvii. 15. The last three verses are taken from the song of Hannah, (1 Sam. ii. 5—8). This Psalm begins that series which made up the hymn called by the Rabbis “the greater Hallel,” which was sung by the Jews at the celebration of the Passover, and

also at the other chief festivals. According to Dr. Lightfoot, Psalms cxiii. and cxiv. were sung at the commencement of the Paschal feast, and the Psalms from cxv. to cxviii. after the fourth cup of wine, with which the feast ended. These last, therefore, were especially "the hymn" which our Lord and His disciples sang, (St. Matt. xxvi. 30). The Rabbis, however, differ as to the number of the Psalms which formed "the greater Hallel."

Evening Prayer.

FOR EASTER-DAY.

PSALM CXIV. *In exitu Israel.*

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

2. Judah was his sanctuary : and Israel his dominion.

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

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

When Israel was at length delivered by the hand of Moses from their long bondage in Egypt, where their oppressors had been alike strangers to them in language and in justice, God Himself, Who led them forth, was their King. He chose them to Himself, that His holiness and His power should abide among them. He said unto them, 'Ye shall be to Me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation.' Therefore, when they left Egypt, the Red Sea was cleft in twain before them, and they passed through; and

when they came to Canaan, the river Jordan was divided, that they might enter. Therefore at the giving the law at Sinai, Horeb, and the mountains around, both great and small, shook with a sudden and mighty earthquake, like rams leaping in a grassy plain, with the young sheep frisking round them.

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

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

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

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

It was not before the holiness or the power of Israel that the sea retired ; it was not through the might of the house of Judah that the mountains shook and the hills were rent. It was before Him Who was with and among them, Whose Name is the Lord, the God of Jacob, that the elements trembled and obeyed—before Him Who brought forth springs of water from the stricken rock in the thirsty desert of Rephidim. Yea rather, it was before Him Who is ever with His Church, giving holiness and power unto the true Israelites according to Abraham's seed, that the waters of the world

retired, that the heights of earth's strength and pride were made to tremble, and to become even as sheep of His fold,—even before Him Whose side was pierced upon the cross, 'and forthwith came thereout blood and water.' It was at His presence Who is the Lord our God, that the earth quaked greatly, on the morning of the third day, and the stone was rolled back from the door of the sepulchre, and He came forth from the hard rock of the tomb, making the cold, dark grave in which He had lain to become a very well-spring of salvation and of grace unto the world.

This is apparently a very ancient Psalm, written probably before the age of David, in celebration of the power of God in delivering His people. It was used at the Passover. With verse 2 compare Ex. xix. 5, 6, and 1 St. Peter ii. 9. In the LXX., Vulgate, and Syrian versions this Psalm is joined to the 105th. It is appointed by the Church for Easter-day, probably with especial reference to the last verse.

PSALM CXV. *Non nobis, Domine.*

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

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

To Him, from Whom all praise comes, be all praise from all the earth ascribed, even to His 'incommunicable Name' Who is His only-begotten Son, 'the brightness of His glory, and the express Image of His Person.' Not to us who are nothing, but to Him Who is all in all—to Him be all glory given,

for the sake of His loving mercy in His incarnation, and His truth in our redemption,—His loving mercy shewn to the Gentiles, and His truth made manifest to Israel,—that all the peoples of the world may know, and confess, and adore One God present everywhere and saving all.

3. As for our God, He is in heaven : He hath done whatsoever pleased Him.

Our God is ‘our Father which is in heaven,’ Who doeth ever righteousness and goodness, for that He is ever pleased in what is right and good.

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

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

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

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

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

They despise His mercy and His truth who give to other things the praise that is due to Him ; whether they set their hearts on the mere silver and gold, the unrighteous mammon which calls forth the covetousness of their unregenerate hearts, or whether, in ignorance and folly more than brutish, they bow down to

idols which are images of the outward form of man, without even any likeness of man's inner faculties, which bear the outward organs of the senses, and yet are mere stocks and stones. False religion brings with it, like all false things, a curse: the man who trusts in idols becomes like his god; the worshipper of a soulless thing becomes also soulless himself. 'They that make a graven image are all of them vanity.' But, thanks be to God! the Son of the carpenter hath broken, and is breaking, the idols which the carpenter hath made. 'The idols He shall utterly abolish.' Therefore must the little ones of the Saviour keep themselves from idols—not 'that the idol is anything. But the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and the Holy Ghost would not that we should have fellowship with devils.'

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

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

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

Therefore must the Church of the true Israel, both the people and the priests, and all of them that fear the Lord, trust in Him, the Triune God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, with the threefold confidence of faith, and hope, and love.

12. The Lord hath been mindful of us, and

He shall bless us : even He shall bless the house of Israel, He shall bless the house of Aaron.

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

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

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

For if the Church of the faithful trusteth in her Lord, He will be mindful of her faith. He will bless the seed of the true Israel, He will bless the spiritual house of Aaron, the priesthood of the second covenant. He will lay His hands on the little children and will bless them ; and His Spirit hath said, 'Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord.' Yea, He will bless all that fear Him, in whatever portion of the Church they may be, or in whatever place their lot may be cast, in the order of His loving providence. One may plant, another may water, but He will give the increase. He will give such the blessing of increasing and of multiplying, of becoming more and more in number and in grace, raising up many children unto Abraham, even from the stony hearts of them who know not God. He will give them the blessing of Melchizedech, and of that Priest-King Who is greater than Melchizedech, Who giveth to us, for His blessing, Himself, the Maker of heaven and earth.

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

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

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

For these His blessings must we pay Him back blessings on our part again. The heaven of heavens is where the eternal God unveils His glory, and there the Seraphim who dwell there bless Him evermore. The earth hath He given to us as our portion for a time, therefore while we live on earth let us bless Him for His mercy and His truth, with our lips and in our lives. The dead are departed from this earthly scene; their bodies sleep within the sepulchre, and they have no longer a portion in the things that are done under the sun; they can no longer praise God with a mouth of flesh. But the saints made perfect in His brightness, as well as the believers in His Church on earth, can thank their God. The dead in trespasses and sins have no spirit of life or love within their hearts, and no voice of praise upon their lips; but we who are alive in Christ, citizens of the highest heaven, though sojourning for a while on earth—we will praise our God for all that He hath done for us, from this time forth for evermore.

This Psalm, which is without a title, has sometimes been considered a part of the preceding one: it rather seems suited to the return from

the captivity. It is impossible to fix the date of its composition. The latter portion bears the mark of having been intended to be sung by choirs of priests, Levites, and Israelite worshippers at the temple, responding to one another alternately. In verse 1, the words "mercy and truth" should be compared with Rom. xv. 8, 9; and the opening portion of the Psalm, which is almost identical with the latter part of Psalm cxxxv., with Isa. xlv. 9—20; and also verse 15, with Gen. xiv. 19, 20.

Morning Prayer.

ONE OF THE PSALMS IN THE OFFICE FOR THE
CHURCHING OF WOMEN.

PSALM CXVI. *Dilexi, quoniam.*

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

LXX. I have felt love, for that the Lord will hear the voice of my petition.

2. That He hath inclined His ear unto me : therefore will I call upon Him as long as I live.

All the joy, and trust, and love of the human soul spring from the knowledge of the love of its God. Whether in Hezekiah healed from his deadly sickness, or in the Church of Israel coming back—'she and the children whom the Lord had given her'—from her prison in Babylon, and once more keeping festival before the Lord in Zion,—whether in the Christian mother returning thanksgiving in the house of God for 'preservation in the great danger of child-birth,' or in the pardoned spirit absolved through Jesu's blood from the doom of sin, and de-

livered from eternal death,—wherever there is felt any joy or any love, it is but in answer to the loving-kindness and the goodness of our Father in heaven, Who hath heard us, and will ever hear us when we cry to Him. We can only love Him, because He first loved us; therefore while we live can we call with confidence in all our trouble on Him Who is our life.

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

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

Sin hath come upon us, and pain and death, the close companions of sin. ‘In the day that thou sinnest thou shalt die’ was the warning given to the first man, which he despised; he strayed from God, and so fell into the snares of death. ‘In sorrow shalt thou bring forth children’ was the penalty pronounced upon the first woman. And so death and pain are become the heritage which the sons of Adam and the daughters of Eve have gained from their first parents’ sin. Each one of them has his and her allotted share; each one of them may make a most true prophecy,—‘I shall find trouble and heaviness.’ Yet through that overshadowing cloud of trouble and heaviness the love of our Father is shining still; and each one may add to the prophecy of trouble the resolve which

bears them safe through it,—‘I will call upon the Name of the Lord.’ From amid the very snares of death, and under the oppression of pains of conscience, which are the foretaste of hell, the cry, ‘O Lord, I beseech Thee, deliver my soul,’ will reach the bowed-down ear of the Lord of love.

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

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

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

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

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

Grace, righteousness, and mercy are the three glories of our Lord and God. He is merciful, for He blessed the little ones that were brought unto Him, and ever preserveth them who seek to do His will in simpleness of heart and child-like faith. We may be in misery through our own fault and sin, yet if we be not obstinate in sin, He will seek us, help us, save us. He is righteous, for He chastens us when we deserve chastisement, and rewards us ten thousandfold for our obedience and right-doing. He is gracious, for He hath not only delivered our soul from spiritual death, but hath by His Holy Spirit saved our

eyes from those blinding tears—the tears of too late repentance; and our feet from that most deadly fall—the fall into unforgiven sin. Should not then our souls—which yet we cannot truly call ours, seeing they are His—turn to Him Who hath turned to us, and find their rest in Him? Turn we to Him with the prayer of the soul,—for that is the very soul of prayer,—and entreat we Him with all our mind and strength to guide us, by that path which is Himself, unto that land of life where all live unto Him, where there is no more weeping, because there is no more falling, and where there is no more falling, because there is no more weakness.

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

When faith is joined to love, then are both made perfect; then can we make an acceptable confession before our Lord and Saviour. We believe, and therefore we speak, and He inclines His ear to us: ‘for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.’ Faith and love together will overcome all this world’s troubles, how sore soever they may be. We cannot trust to man; we may lean awhile upon an arm of flesh, but when trouble comes it will be of no help to us, and in our impatience and transport of grief we shall declare that all men are liars and deceivers, and shall feel sure that all men are utter nothingness and vanity. But ‘he that believeth

shall not make haste.' Therefore let us look not to man, but soberly and thoughtfully to God, and then, 'having the spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed and therefore have I spoken, we also shall believe and shall therefore speak; knowing that He Which raised up the Lord Jesus, shall raise up us also by Jesus.'

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

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

What repayment then can we make to Him for all that, in His grace, and righteousness, and mercy, He hath done to us? What can we give to Him Who hath given Himself for us? What can we give to Him Who hath given Himself to us? What return—but the preparing ourselves to accept His benefits, and the asking more of them from Him? We thank Him best by receiving. He hath done unto us many benefits, and He crowns them all by giving to us the Cup of blessing, which we present as a thank-offering to Him, by receiving it as an overflowing of salvation to ourselves. In that receiving do we most truly praise His Name,—no longer liars by our own sins, but being found true in the imparting of His grace. He giveth us freely the Cup of salvation, which when we receive and call upon the Name of the Lord, then do we return a reward unto Him for all that He hath done unto ourselves.

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

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

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

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

Then shall we know how the Cup of salvation which the Saviour gives us, more than overpays the trouble and heaviness which we had found for ourselves. Then sorrow is swallowed up in thankfulness and joy. The Lord hath said Himself, 'A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come : but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. And ye now therefore have sorrow : but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.' Therefore in thankfulness must we pay our vows and perform our service of prayer and thanksgiving to Him Who watches over the lives of His saints, for that their death is too costly

and precious in His sight, that He should suffer any enemy to snatch them from His saving care. Dear unto Him is the death of His saints, for it cost Him dear to make them His; for it was with His own death that He purchased the right to say, 'They shall be Mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels.' We are indeed His; He hath every claim to our obedience and our service. We are the children of His handmaid the Church; we were the servants of sin, 'but now being made free from sin and become servants of God,' our old prison-house is broken down and the chains of our bondage are snapped asunder for ever. Being then healed from sickness, saved from death, set free from slavery, let us thank and praise Him Who is our Healer, our Saviour, our Redeemer, not by ourselves alone, but in the congregation of His people, in the courts of His house, in the communion of His saints, even in the midst of His holy Church. Let our Alleluias be heard where many can hear them, and where many can join in them and chant Alleluia too!

This Psalm in the LXX. and Vulgate is divided at verse 10, and forms two Psalms, which are numbered in those translations cxiv. and cxv. It was most probably written after the return from Babylon, as a thanksgiving to God for His mercies; though some commentators have thought that it might have been composed on the occasion of Hezekiah's sickness and miraculous recovery. St. Basil, St. Chrysostom, St. Jerome, and St. Augustine interpret it spiritually. Verse 10 is cited by St. Paul in 2 Cor. iv. 13. The "cup of salvation" in verse 13, has a reference to the offering of wine which was poured before God at the daily sacrifices (Num. xxviii. 3,) and the peace-offerings; but it also refers to the cup of wine which, at the Passover, the

master of the house took, and blessed God with the words, "Blessed be our God, the Lord of the world, Who hath created the fruit of the vine." This was the cup of which our Lord declared He would not taste until He "drank it with His disciples in the kingdom of God," (St. Luke xxii. 17, 18); and which was followed by that other cup after supper which He consecrated by His own blessing, "saying, This cup is the New Testament in My blood, which is shed for you," (St. Luke xxii. 20). It is for this reason that St. Paul calls that Eucharistic cup which came after, and took the place of the Paschal cup, "the Cup of blessing," (1 Cor. x. 16). It must be borne in mind that this Psalm formed part of the greater Hallel, which was sung at the Passover. It is appointed by the Church as one of the Psalms to be used in the thanksgiving of women after child-birth; and every Christian mother who has experienced the preserving care of God through that suffering which is the chastisement of the first woman's sin, (Gen. iii. 16,) should meditate over it with especial regard to the mercy and the grace which she has especially received, and in connexion with the divine promise in 1 Tim. ii. 14, 15.

PSALM cxvii. *Laudate Dominum.*

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

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

The love of God to man shines forth more and more gloriously as the ages of the world roll on. His merciful kindness is not limited to one race, but extends to all the nations of the earth, and to all the families of mankind, even to them who as yet know Him not. And His truth and faithfulness in keeping the promise which He swore to Abraham is confirmed, in that He hath made it good to all the sons of men. For this must the world praise Him; for

this must all the nations give Him thanks, as one by one they are brought into the covenant of grace. For this is a most true saying, 'that Jesus Christ was a Minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers: and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to Thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto Thy Name. And again he saith, Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with His people. And again, Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles; and laud Him, all ye people. And again, Esaias saith, There shall be a root of Jesse, and He that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in Him shall the Gentiles trust.'

This very brief Psalm is quoted by St. Paul, (Rom. xv. 11,) to prove the universality of the salvation which was given to man in Christ. It has no title.

FOR EASTER-DAY.

PSALM CXVIII. *Confitemini Domino.*

1. O GIVE thanks unto the Lord, for He is gracious : because His mercy endureth for ever.

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

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

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

This was the thankful and exulting chant in which, at the building up again of the second temple, all the returned from the captivity, priests and Levites, Israelites and proselytes, joined with heart and voice, giving thanks unto the Lord, for that He is gracious, because His mercy endureth for ever. 'And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the Lord, they set the priests in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites, the sons of Asaph with cymbals, to praise the Lord, after the ordinance of David king of Israel. And they sang together by course in praising and giving thanks unto the Lord, Because He is good, for His mercy endureth for ever toward Israel. And all the people shouted with a great shout when they praised the Lord, because the foundations of the House of the Lord were laid.' If this were the joy of the Church of Israel on the day of the raising up of the second temple, with how much greater thankfulness will the Church of Christ rejoice at His rising again Whose body is the true temple of the fulness of the Godhead. If the first was a sign of His ever-enduring mercy, yet was the second a far mightier one. He once said, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. But He spake of the temple of His body.' And the Jews did destroy it, as far as in them lay, and He again on the third day raised it from the grave by the power of God, even as Zerubbabel the prince and Jeshua the high-priest raised the second temple from the ruins of Jerusalem.

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

Heb. In straitness I called upon the Lord,
And the Lord answered me in a wide place.

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

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

As Israel in their bondage called upon the Lord and found deliverance, so Christ prayed upon the cross and was heard. His soul was not left in hell, His body was raised from the narrowness of the tomb; and in Him His people were delivered too. The Almighty Father was with Him, and is with them, therefore they can be fearless in and with their Lord. All things both in nature and in grace fight on the side of Christ against sin and evil; therefore at last shall He see His desire of love and mercy wrought out, even with those that resist His loving call.

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

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

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

11. They kept me in on every side, they

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

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

‘There is none good but One, that is, God ;’ therefore is it better to trust in God than to put confidence in man. There is none mighty but One, that is, God ; therefore it is better to trust in Him than to put confidence in princes, or in earthly great ones. ‘Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils ; for wherein is he to be accounted of?’ Christ the Conqueror trusted in the Father, and overcame ; and thus by the like faith doth He in His Church overcome the nations of the world. Like Israel kept in on every side by their enemies in Babylon, so He was sore straitened in His labour of redemption ; but at length He ended it, and conquered. His enemies, like a swarm of bees, came round Him with the honey of flattering words, yet hiding the sting of enmity and malice ; but in a little space they were destroyed and gone, like fire which blazes fiercely for awhile in the parched-up thicket, and then as quickly sinks and dies away, leaving but smouldering firebrands. For so did they who scorned the mercy of Him Who called them, at length feel the truth of Him Who judgeth them..

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

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

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

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

The powers of the world strove hard to cast down our Lord, therefore will they not cease to thrust sore at us, that we may fall. But He Who baffled them is our help. We can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth us ; in Him can we ever rejoice Who is become our salvation. As the captives of Judah rejoiced in keeping the feast of tabernacles again in Jerusalem, the city of their fathers, so do the redeemed of Christ raise their voices to Him with joy in His holy Church. The right hand of God, and He Who sitteth at the right hand, hath raised the meek, made perfect the feeble, glorified the humble, saved the repenting, to shew forth His wonders in the threefold pre-eminence of might, of holiness, and of love.

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

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

The enemies of truth thought that He had died,

but His death was the ensuring of eternal life to His own. He saith, 'I am He that liveth and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen.' He for us bore the chastisement of our sins, that we when we are chastised might have confidence that we should not be given over unto death; because 'we were chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.'

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

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

He was not given over unto death, but death was given over unto Him, that He might trample him down and take away his sting. 'He hath the keys of hell and of death,' yea, and of heaven too. He therefore rose from the dead and opened the gates of heaven to all believers; opening the gates and being Himself the gate by which His people enter into the eternal kingdom.

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

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

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

He was heard when He prayed. By the grave of

Lazarus 'Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me. And I knew that Thou hearest Me always, but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that Thou hast sent Me.' Like that stone at the building of the second temple, of which the tradition goes that it was again and again rejected by the builders, until at length it was placed as the corner-stone of the whole building, so the Son of Man, though He was rejected by men, was accepted and exalted by God. 'Jesus saith unto the Pharisees, Did ye never read in the Scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.' He was indeed 'the stone which was set at nought of the builders of Israel, which is become the head of the corner;' in which the building up both of Jews and Gentiles meet together and are joined in one. For Christ is He 'Who hath made both one.' Whosoever stumbleth at His humility, and confesses Him not aright in His manhood, shall be broken in his faith, but if he turn and repent he shall not perish utterly; but on whomsoever He shall fall, when He comes at last in judgment and in the glory of the eternal God, He will crush him into utter destruction. Thus marvellously hath the Father honoured Him in the sight of men and angels, Who, though once rejected, is become the Corner-stone of the whole Church,

binding together the fabric of the heavenly temple for time and for eternity.

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

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

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

Glad and glorious was the day on which, by the providence of God, the second temple arose from its ruins after the desolation of Sion ; but still brighter and more full of joy was that day on which the Man Christ Jesus, Whose body was the true temple of the true Israel, arose after three days from the prison of the grave ! Then did the day of grace dawn forth with everlasting radiance ; then began the reign of the Son of Man, amid the hosannahs of the Church ; then was the Sabbath changed into ' the Lord's Day,' and the Paschal feast became the Easter festival. He still rideth on in triumph through the world, saluted as the Son of David, blessed as ' the King that cometh in the name of the Lord ;' owned by all —except His own peculiar people, the race of Israel. And unto them the day of His rising brings no joy, for that their eyes are blinded by their want of love and faith. He prophesied unto them too truly, ' Behold your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, ye shall not see Me henceforth, till ye shall

say, Blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the Lord.'

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

LXX. Appoint the feast in thick boughs,
Even to the horns of the altar.

Thus hath God given us light in our darkness—thus hath the day-spring arisen upon us. Therefore do we sing ever on Easter-day, 'Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast.' Therefore do we ever on Easter-day behold 'before our eyes Christ Jesus evidently set forth crucified among us,' in the Sacrament of His Body and Blood; therefore doth 'the love of Christ constrain us' then to bring our own sacrifice, our hearts and consciences, and bind them unto the horns of His altar by the cords of holy longings and obedient love.

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

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

Unto Him risen and alive again, we cry with the apostle who for a space was doubtful, 'My Lord and my God.' We ascribe unto Him all gratitude and love, all praise and honour, Who died and rose again to win grace for man in the fulness of His everlasting mercy. With Christ's grace and mercy our song

of Easter joy began, and we shall still sing of His grace and mercy where our songs shall never end.

This Psalm is the last of those which, beginning from the 113th, compose the greater Hallel. It would seem highly probable that it was composed to be sung at the laying the foundation-stone of the second temple, (see Ezra iii. 10, 11). The whole tenor of the Psalm confirms this view. In it Israel returns thanks to God for deliverance out of trials and great straits. Verses 19, 20, refer, it is likely, to a temporary tabernacle erected immediately after the return, for the performance of worship, (Ezra iii. 1). Verse 22 has a direct reference to the laying the corner-stone of the temple, and this verse is cited both by our Lord Himself (St. Matt. xxi. 42), and by St. Peter (Acts iv. 11), and by St. Paul (Eph. ii. 20), as containing a type of Him on Whom the Church was built. Rabbi Jarchi understands this verse of the Messiah; and Hammond refers to it a tradition, that a certain stone being often rejected by the builders of the temple as useless, at length was found marvellously adapted for the corner, the place of honour. Verse 26 contains one of the titles of Christ,—“He who should come.” (Compare Mal. iii. 1; St. Matt. xi. 3, xxiii. 39.) The feast-day spoken of in verse 24 may be the feast of tabernacles, on which, as on other joyful occasions, it was usual to sing Hosanna; and at the last entering of Christ into Jerusalem the people sang verses of this very hymn, (St. Matth. xxi. 9; St. Luke xix. 38). For this reason, and because it was used by the Jews at the Passover, as well as because the whole Psalm is full of typical references to Christ, it is appointed by the Church for Easter-day.

Ebening Prayer.

PSALM CXIX. *Beati immaculati.*

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

The aim of all aims, the good of all goods, the crown of all crowns, is the blessing of our Father, and Lord, and God. With this we begin, with

this we end: our life without His blessing is but death. We travel onward, and whither are we going? Are we not seeking for a blessing? If we would indeed be blessed, we must be undefiled in the way we go. Unless we keep our faith whole and undefiled, without doubt we perish everlastingly. We must walk onward in that narrow way which is hedged in by the law of God. They who would reach to blessedness must journey by that road of obedience and holiness.

2. Blessed are they that keep His testimonies : and seek Him with their whole heart.

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

Blessed indeed are they who have received, but more blessed are they who preserve, and keep stored up within their mind, the testimonies of His revealed promises; and dwelling on them, press continually forward to seek the God Who gave them, with all their heart and strength. Such are twice blessed; they are blessed in seeking Him, and they are blessed again in finding Him Whom they seek. They are His, for they do no sin, and 'the Wicked one toucheth them not;' they are His, for they continue walking undefiled in His ways.

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

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

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

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

His ways are plain, they cannot easily be missed. He has marked them out by His commandments, and the solemn charge which He gave at Sinai that they should be kept. Would that our ways could be so conformed to His in rectitude and truth, that we might never lose sight of His statutes, His unchangeable decrees of right and wrong which are engraved upon the very soul and conscience! If it were but so with us, no falsehood could ever deceive us, no shame ever come upon us, while we were ruled in all things by the plainly enjoined commandments of God. Then could we thank Him in sincerity and real joy for all that happens to us in our worldly lot, while day by day we more clearly saw and understood how all that He did in His providence was right and fit, how all His judgments with men were very righteousness.

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

The memories of the grandeur of God's law, of the beauty of His testimonies, the truth of His commandments, the holiness of His statutes, cannot but rouse the thoughtful heart to call to Him for grace to keep and to do them. I will keep them, only do

Thou keep me and forsake me not: this is the cry of the child of God to his Father in heaven, and it is a cry which is never raised in vain.

This Psalm is made up of twenty-two portions or stanzas, of eight lines each. The first of these has in the Hebrew every line commencing with the letter *Aleph*, or A. The Law of God is the subject of the whole, and is named in every verse. After each one of these portions the Church directs that the Doxology be sung in her services, as after an entire Psalm.

In quo corriget?

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

But if the blessing cometh upon the undefiled in the way, how is man, especially in the season of youth, amid all the trials of awakening passions and the opening temptations of the world, to make his way clean and unpolluted before the All-seeing? He can only do so through grace strengthening him; then he may rule over his unruly will and affections, and compel them to submit to the restraints of God's holy word. He must act as a good soldier in his Lord's army, as being under authority and yet in authority, ruling well his hopes, and thoughts, and fears, and wishes; saying to one, 'Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh.'

10. **With my whole heart** have I sought Thee : O let me not go wrong out of Thy commandments.

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

So may he aspire to the blessing of them who seek their God, not with a double heart, 'a heart and a heart,' but with a whole and single love, a sincere and perfect longing that he may never go wrong, or transgress the commandments which have been given him. To this end he will keep the sayings of his Lord stored up within his soul, as a safeguard and antidote against the very approach of the corruption of sin ; and so shall he be 'clean through the words which Christ hath spoken unto him.'

12. Blessed art Thou, O Lord : O teach me Thy statutes.

13. With my lips have I been telling : of all the judgements of Thy mouth.

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

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

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

And thus can he bless the Lord Who hath blessed him in teaching him the power and value of His ordinances. In the fulness of holy gratitude, he can relate the distinctly pronounced judgments of Providence towards himself. He will find joy in thus walking in the way of the divine testimonies greater than in any pleasure of possessions or in any pride

of riches. For who or what is the way of the testimonies of God but Christ? And 'He Who spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not also with Him freely give us all things?' Talking and meditating upon the law, the devout spirit will find increasing delight, and increasing profit, and increasing wisdom.

Each line in this portion commences with the letter *Beth*, or B.

Retribuere servo Tuo.

17. O do well unto Thy servant : that I may live, and keep Thy word.

18. Open Thou mine eyes : that I may see the wondrous things of Thy law.

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

20. My soul breaketh out for the very fervent desire : that it hath alway unto Thy judgements.

From God cometh all good: He giveth life, He giveth grace, He giveth wisdom. The law of God cannot be kept with obedience until it be seen with understanding; therefore must we crave with the blind men by the wayside, 'Lord, that our eyes may be opened.' When we have grace to see clearly, the marvels and wonders of the revelation of God become glorious and entrancing indeed. What is more marvellous than that command of Christ, 'I say unto you, Love your enemies?' And who can see

its wonder and its beauty but they, the eyes of whose spirit the Holy Ghost has opened? Strangers we are, and pilgrims, but what is our weariness or solitude, if our path be cheered with the opening before us of the laws and statutes of that better country for which our souls are seeking. The knowledge of them will fill the spirit with an almost passionate yearning for that all-perfect and all-lovely goodness which reigneth there.

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

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

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

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

It is not with the wicked as with the good, or with the proud as with the humble. As there is delight for the meek, so is there rebuke for the proud. As they are blessed who walk in the law of the Lord, so are they cursed who do err from His commandments. Come, ye blessed; Depart, ye cursed,—these are the two mighty laws whose workings make up the history of the world. He who loves God will love His blessing above all things, and will dread His rebuke above all things.

He will keep His testimonies in spite of all fleshly opposition and human power, even as Daniel prayed and was occupied in God's statutes, though the princes of Persia were conspiring together to make a decree of their own to destroy him. The promises of God are ever the righteous man's most pleasant friends, and his wisest counsellors.

The lines in this portion commence with the letter *Gimel*, or G. With verse 23, compare Dan. vi.

Adhæsit pavimento.

25. My soul cleaveth to the dust : O quicken Thou me, according to Thy word.

But the meditation on the perfectness and purity of God's holy law brings out our unworthiness, and sin, and misery. The sight of its brightness makes us bow down our dazzled faces to the earth in humiliation and self-contempt. We cleave by nature to the dust from which we were formed, and which was quickened by the breath of life from God; and we have scarcely raised ourselves from it, when the sight of His righteousness and majesty bows us down to it again. There then let us kneel, and pray that the Lord and Giver of life would give us life and strength to do His will—would quicken us, as He quickened Adam, not according to our deservings, but by His own living word.

26. I have acknowledged my ways, and Thou heardest me : O teach me Thy statutes.

27. Make me to understand the way of

Thy commandments : and so shall I talk of Thy wondrous works.

We cry, and He hears; we have but to confess, and He pardons; we acknowledge our evil ways, and He blots them out. His grace teaches us, His statutes open to us the way of right, and He gives us wisdom to meditate on His wondrous love.

28. My soul melteth away for very heaviness : comfort Thou me according unto Thy word.

And if we fall, He raiseth us again. Our sorrow and repentance, which would make our very soul melt into tears, by His grace Whose name is the Comforter, bring with themselves comfort and help.

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

30. I have chosen the way of truth : and Thy judgements have I laid before me.

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

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

Lying and falsehood is the first hindrance to our obedience. Therefore we implore the God of truth to take it away, that we may know and love His will. Then, when the way of lying is taken away, can we know and choose the way of truth. In that

way do the dealings of God with man lie clear and plain before us, like a spacious prospect before a traveller. The hedges of His testimonies mark out on both sides the path of Life, and he who runneth between them may trust that he will fall into no error or confusion. But we only can so run in the way of His commandments when, by His adoption and grace, He has forgiven us our sins and set us free from the bond of fleshly corruption. So 'it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.'

The letter *Daleth*, or D, is here the initial letter.

Morning Prayer.

Legem pone.

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

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

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

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

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

As he who is parched with thirst, even if a full cup of water be given to him, yet when he has drunk it asks for more; so he who has had grace to begin the course of obedience, yet is ever praying diligently for more grace, that he may persevere in it, that he may keep in it to the end, that he may keep it with his whole heart and strength. He desires to go in the path of righteousness, and he therefore asks to be compelled to go in it; he petitions that no other longing, no other desire for the perishing things of earth, may bear comparison with the longing for the true riches. He begs that his eyes may be closed to the vain gauds and allurements of the world, that he may not even look upon what is evil, and that the life of grace within him may be renewed, where it hath ever been decayed by his own carnal will or frailness.

38. O stablish Thy word in Thy servant : that I may fear Thee.

39. Take away the rebuke that I am afraid of : for Thy judgements are good.

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

Thus will the word of God be made strong and firm within him, filling him both with faith and fear; thus shall he escape the rebuke which, of all things that are, is the one thing truly terrible—the rebuke of the all-righteous God. And fearing only God's rebuke, he will love only God's revealed will;

and the life within him will be a life not only of obedience, but of willing righteousness.

These verses all commence with the letter *He*, or *H*.

Et veniat super me.

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

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

But in asking for mercy, what is it that the servant of God desires? It is not help or relief in temporal things; it is the everlasting salvation which God has promised through Christ the Incarnate Word. It is the being saved from sin, from himself, from doubt, from death, through Divine patience. 'The long-suffering of our God is salvation,' and through this can we make answer to our revilers and tempters, whether in the flesh or the spirit,—God has borne with me, has had patience with me, has pardoned me, has helped me; how, then, is earth or hell to hinder me?

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

44. So shall I always keep Thy law : yea, for ever and ever.

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

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

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

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

To him that has this salvation, the abiding in God's law is a thing of course. It is, as it were, impossible for him to break it. He is at liberty, because he is the servant of Him Whose service is perfect freedom : he can speak of the truth and promises of God before kings, though they may be tyrants and persecutors, and will come forth a victorious martyr through Him Who loveth him. Loving his Lord, he cannot but keep His commandments ; for he that loveth hath fulfilled the law. His hands will go with his heart, ever upward and Godward ; he will ' lift them up unto the Lord, the most high God,' in holy resolutions, in fervent prayers, in grateful blessings, and in active undertakings and duties. His best wisdom and chiefest learning will be the knowledge of the statutes of God.

The Hebrew letter here is *Vau*, or V.

Memor esto servi Tui.

49. O THINK upon Thy servant, as concerning Thy word : wherein Thou hast caused me to put my trust.

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

The servant of God may appeal unto his Lord to think upon him and to remember, while he knows that God never forgetteth or faileth them who trust Him. He may plead God's promises before Him, for by doing so he stirs up his own faith and draws patience and comfort from the very act of pleading. In the Gospel and its promises will be his life; for each word uttered by the eternal Word cannot but be full of eternal Life. He will follow the pattern of his Saviour, Who comforted Himself with God's word in the wilderness, in the temple, on the cross.

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

LXX. The proud dealt exceeding wickedly.

52. For I remembered Thine everlasting judgements, O Lord : and received comfort.

The wicked despise and persecute the righteous, and are reckless in their own wickedness; yet will not the faithful soul shrink back from the task of obedience which has been given unto it to do. The wicked will do wickedly for a season; but above them, and above all, are the eternal judgments of the Divine righteousness; and in the remembrance of these there is comfort to the soul that is tempted, persecuted, and despised.

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

Yes, there is unspeakable comfort as far as his own right doing is concerned, but unspeakable terror on account of the wicked, who mock at obedience and forsake the eternal law, who have stripped themselves of all hope, and so of all fear of God. For them will the servant of God fear and be dismayed; for them will he strive in earnest, trembling prayer; for with him the measure of God's grace and mercy to himself will be the measure of his charity and care for others.

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

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

56. This I had : because I kept Thy commandments.

He who departed from paradise and the Jerusalem above, and going down to Jericho fell among robbers, but being saved by the mercy of the good Samaritan, hath been brought to the house of his pilgrimage, will make the statutes of Him Who saved him his song while he abideth there. The holy law so dreadful to the wicked is a comfort to the obedient, and becomes in his mouth a consoling song, which he cons over to himself through the long night-season of mortality, while he waits 'until the Lord come and bring to

light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the hearts,' and then shall every man have his praise or reproof from God.

The verses of this, the seventh portion, commence with *Zain*, or *Z*.

Portio mea, Domine.

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

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

The Lord is the portion of His saints. His promise to them that serve Him is, 'I am thy exceeding great reward.' Surely His people may well promise, for their parts, to keep His law. Thinking on this exceeding great reward, shall we not come into His presence and cry to Him for mercy, according to His Gospel, with all the longing of our heart and spirit?

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

LXX. I reckoned up Thy ways.

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

Thinking over and reckoning up our ways, with this reward in sight, and comparing them with His, shall we not ask Him fervently to set our accounts right before Him, to pardon our misspendings and

our misreckonings? And shall we not turn our feet with all haste, and make no delay to observe His will, for that the time is short?

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

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

63. I am a companion of all them that fear Thee : and keep Thy commandments.

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

The wicked may deprive us of earthly goods, but they cannot touch our real treasure—the mercy and freely-given grace of our God. And for this must we give thanks unto Him, not only in the light of prosperity, but in the dark midnight of adversity and sorrow; rising early, and thanking Him continually for His righteous dealings with us, in these latter days of evil, when Satan hath possessed the world with a spirit of dumbness and prayerlessness. Thus in the communion of saints shall we be made companions and sharers with all the holy and the obedient of God's redeemed; and not only with them, but with Him Who redeemed them and became their companion, the Immortal with the mortal; Who watered the earth with His blood, that it might be full of His mercy and rich in the fruit of good

works, and gave grace to His people, that they might cry to Him, 'O teach me Thy statutes.'

The initial of these verses is *Cheth*, or Kh.

Bonitatem fecisti.

65. O LORD, Thou hast dealt graciously with Thy servant : according unto Thy word.

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

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

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

All His dealings are grace and goodness to His servants. As He has said, so will He do. By His dealings He teaches, warns us, chastens us, corrects us, and manifests His fatherly tenderness towards us. Before we are chastened we too often go wrong in pride, in ignorance, in wilfulness. He sends us trouble, He makes us grieve; and yet from that very grief He causes to joy. Godly sorrow worketh repentance, and repentance beginneth obedience, so good and gracious is He! Shall we not therefore yet again pray to learn His statutes?

69. The proud have imagined a lie against me : but I will keep Thy commandments with my whole heart.

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

LXX. Their heart has been curdled like milk.

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

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

The wicked do not see this, therefore they go on in falsehood and wickedness. Their heart becomes proud, and dull, and fleshly: they cannot discern the hand of God even when it is laid upon them. Far different is it with the righteous: his perception is quickened by his experience. He sees how trouble has kept off sin, and has turned him into the narrow way; and therefore he readily and thankfully confesses that it is good for him to have been in trouble, that he may lay to heart the statutes of his Lord. He sees how the world promiseth pleasures, and they turn out very torments; and how Christ promiseth tribulations, and they prove very joys. He sees that men desire gold and silver, and that it leads them to forget the law of God's mouth; and he knows that there is good reason why he whose portion is the Lord Himself, should despise thousands of gold and silver in comparison of the riches of His grace and goodness. What are the gifts in comparison of the Giver?

These lines all begin with *Teth*, or *Th*.

Evening Prayer.

Manus Tuæ fecerunt me.

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

In the beginning God made man from the dust of the earth. We are the clay and He is the potter ; and when His hands had made us in the image of Himself, our own hands unmade us. Pray we Him once more to remake us in His image, and to fashion us anew after His likeness, by giving us not only the breath of life, but the quickening spirit of wisdom, and holiness, and obedience.

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

They who are filled with the divine light of this godly wisdom and this living faith, are a help and a joy to others their fellow-servants in the law of righteousness. They save not only themselves, but those who hear them and behold their works, and glorify God therefore.

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

76. O let Thy merciful kindness be my

comfort : according to Thy word unto Thy servant.

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

In the fulness of that wisdom faith grows not only grateful, but also bold. The believer can discern plainly, and feel confident, that his troubles not only may be overruled to be a means of good to him, but do actually proceed from the very faithfulness of his all-just God. When the Just One smites, it is in very love. The Redeemer saith, Sit ye here in Gethsemane, even to them whom He will hereafter bid to sit on His right hand and on His left in His kingdom. In this confidence, the love of his Saviour, as displayed in His Gospel, becomes a deeper and more perfect comfort, and His mercies, which flow from His love, bring with them the fulness of spiritual joy, which is the pledge and earnest of eternal life.

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

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

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

Before the trust and love of such an one the schemes of the wicked who may strive to overthrow his hope, and to ruin his faith, are confounded and

brought to nothing; while the affections and goodwill of the God-fearing and righteous are drawn towards him in the mystery of the communion of saints. His heart, by nature weak and foul, becomes strong and healthy in the doing of his Lord's will, through the laver of regeneration, whereby his past sins are blotted out; through the help of the Holy Ghost, by which he overcomes the flesh; through the power of the Lord's Prayer, in which he says, 'Forgive us our trespasses.' So when the heart is made sound and undefiled, with no sin spared and still remaining in it, the servant of God cannot be made ashamed either before earth or heaven.

Jod, or *I*, is the commencing letter of this, the tenth portion.

Defecit anima mea.

81. My soul hath longed for Thy salvation :
and I have a good hope because of Thy word.

82. Mine eyes long sore for Thy word :
saying, O when wilt Thou comfort me ?

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

LXX. I am become like a bottle in the frost.

Thus believing, hoping, loving, the regenerate soul looks beyond the conflicts and struggles of this present time, with patient longing to the Saviour's throne, not yet having salvation, but possessed of a good hope of winning it through the Word made Flesh. The eyes of devotion are looking ever upward

to Him Who leaves not His chosen comfortless, but sends to them that Spirit Whose name is Comforter. Yea, though the outward man perisheth, and the comeliness of the flesh is marred by sorrow and by pain, like a leathern bottle placed in the heat of a burning fire and discoloured by its smoke, yet the inward man is renewed day by day in meditation on God's ways and will.

84. How many are the days of Thy servant : when wilt Thou be avenged of them that persecute me ?

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

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

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

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

Though the time of trial may be long, though the believer may have, in his conflict with the wicked, to cry with the souls beneath the altar, ' How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth ? ' Though they in whose hearts pride hath cast out God may lay snares for his soul, may persecute him for a false pretence, may seem ready almost to make an end of

him, and of all God's people upon earth, yet in holding fast by God's commandments there is a sure defence even against them who can kill the body. The just will live the life of faith, and therefore the just shall live by faith.

The letter of the alphabet for these lines is *Caph*, or K.

In æternum, Domine.

89. O LORD, Thy word : endureth for ever in heaven.

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

91. They continue this day according to Thine ordinance : for all things serve Thee.

LXX. By Thy ordinance the day continues.

Each word that proceedeth from the mouth of God endureth unto eternity. The angels that stand near Him hear it, and obey it without failing in the smallest point. The firmament of heaven, and its orbs and planets, each after their generation follow on in the appointed course which their Maker has willed that they fulfil. The whole universe of heaven above and earth beneath came into being by His word, and exists according to His laws; and not only so, but when heaven and earth shall pass away, His words shall not pass away. His truth ever abideth the same—holy, perfect, good, to all generations of men,—to the generations that were

under the Law, and to the generations under the Gospel,—to the generations of those kept by grace from sin, and to the generations of the saints crowned with glory. His truth remaineth, for in Him Who is the Truth hath He laid the foundation of the earth, and in Him alone it abideth; for ‘other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Christ Jesus.’ In Him, and through Him only, do all things appear orderly and good before the eye of God, so that He should not destroy them; in Him, and through Him only, can the creatures of earth serve their God, and do their part in fulfilling His eternal law.

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

93. I will never forget Thy commandments : for with them Thou hast quickened me.

94. I am Thine, O save me : for I have sought Thy commandments.

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

In loving Him Whose word is truth, do we gain grace, and strength, and comfort, to save us from perishing in the sins and troubles of mortality. In His commandments, and in that Holy Spirit which bringeth them to our remembrance, is life indeed; for unless He quickeneth us, we perish. No man quickeneth his own soul,—though we can all destroy our own souls. Therefore should we long to be, not

our own, but His. In the quickening of His Spirit, our cry must be, 'I am Thine, O save me,' for I have sought not my own lusts, by which I was my own, but Thy commandments, that I might be now and for ever Thine! In vain will the ungodly and the spirits of evil seek to injure him whose mind and soul are thus given up to the testimonies and promises of Almighty Love.

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

LXX. I have seen an end of all perfection.

Watching and waiting thus in the patience of the Holy Ghost, the saint of God sees how all earthly knowledge, skill, beauty, power, design and working, come to an end. Human art is long, but it comes to an end; yea, even some of the things of the spirit—endurance and prayer, faith and hope, will come to an end. All our strivings and all our aims, of whatever sort they be, come to their end and cease. They are of time and for a time: all that is of man, and from man, is and must be finite; the way and work of God alone is infinite. His commandment is exceeding broad, reaching from that which is without beginning to that which hath no end, extending from eternity to eternity. His commandment is love,—love endless and boundless; for what can be vaster than that on which hang all the Law and the Prophets? Pray we, then, that all our ends may have no end but Him; strive we that

all our strivings may be lost in His all-embracing love!

The letter which begins the verses of this portion is *Lamed*, or L.

Quomodo dilexi!

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

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

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

100. I am wiser than the aged : because I keep Thy commandments.

The breadth of God's commandment is love,— 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God.' If, then, we love that which His law biddeth us to love, we cannot but love the law likewise which biddeth us. Truly we may spend both the passing day of this mortal life and the unending day of eternity in the study of this one law. And what better study is there than that wherein Christ is the Teacher, and His Church the school; where they who learn are teachers, and that which is learned is holiness and love; and the end of the learning is life eternal, even the knowledge of God and His Son Whom He hath sent? Such a scholar is wiser than his enemies—that is, than the wicked who have cast off the love of Christ; he is wiser than his teachers—than

the prophets, who saw but dimly and afar off the coming of Incarnate Love; he is wiser than the aged—than the patriarchs and holy men of old time, Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, to whom the promises were made, but who received not as yet the fulfilment of them. The child of God who loves his Father, may sit among the prophets, and psalmists, and teachers of elder days, as his Lord sat among the Rabbis in the temple, hearing and questioning; learning, indeed, from them, and yet, through higher grace, wiser even than they.

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

102. I have not shrunk from Thy judgments : for Thou teachest me.

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

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

By doing what is right we come both to know right and to be better able to do it. Such an one will shrink and turn from all evil, but will not shrink from the fear of God's righteousness,—will continue in his Saviour's word, and so will be His disciple indeed. To him will the words of God become sweet indeed, above all earthly sweetness, enlightening the eyes of his soul, as Jonathan found his eyes enlightened by tasting of the honeycomb.

They will bestow the humility of obedience and the exaltation of wisdom; they will give the love of what God loves, and the hatred of what He hates, even all evil ways.

Each of the verses in this portion begins with the letter *Mem*, or *M*. With verses 97, 100, compare St. Peter i. 8—12.

Morning Prayer.

Lucerna pedibus meis.

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

‘The Word was God;’ yet was He made flesh, that we might behold His glory. ‘He was the true Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world.’ We are as travellers journeying through the night of this mortal life, with weak and stumbling feet along the dark and difficult ways of human duty: Christ alone, the ‘Light of Light,’ can save us from falling, and guide us from erring. Only those lights shine truly that are made bright with that one Light; only those words can make our path clear to us, which were spoken of or by that one Word. Thus is the sure word of Scripture full of light to us, ‘whereunto we shall do well that we take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn and the day-star arise in our hearts.’

106. I have sworn, and am stedfastly purposed : to keep Thy righteous judgements.

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

108. Let the free-will offerings of my mouth please Thee, O Lord : and teach me Thy judgements.

109. My soul is alway in my hand : yet do I not forget Thy law.

LXX. My soul is always in Thy hand.

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

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

112. I have applied my heart to fulfil Thy statutes alway : even unto the end.

As one walking by the lantern of the word of Christ, and bound by the sacraments of Christ the Word, the redeemed soul can steadfastly determine to abide in the way of its righteous Lord. It may be distressed, yet is the Lord and Giver of life always abiding with it. The servant of God is ever offering before Him 'the calves of the lips,' the free-will offerings of prayer, and the sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving; yea, he has his very soul in his hand, that he may present it to Him Who will keep it for ever for him safe in His own Almighty hand. The suggestions of sin, which the Evil one lays like

snare in the path of the obedient, will be passed by and escaped by him, because he will not swerve either to the right or to the left from the straight way of the commandments. Thus does the righteousness of God shine forth before him, an everlasting heritage, an everlasting joy, an everlasting duty. His heart is eager to fulfil the righteousness of God, that by loving Him for ever he may attain for ever unto Him Whom he loveth.

The initial of the verses of the fifteenth portion is *Nun*, or N.

Iniquos odio habui.

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

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

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

The love of God is the hatred of wickedness. The follower of Christ will hate the evil things which the unbelieving dwell on in their thoughts, while yet he will seek that sinners may be brought to the knowledge of the truth. The thoughts of his Lord, and faith in His word, will be a defence and shield against their seductions and their evil example : yet at last, if he find that intercourse with them brings himself down to their worldliness and unbelief, he must separate himself from them, rather than fail in his duty to God. We may not make

ourselves worse, even in attempting to make others better.

116. O stablish me according to Thy word, that I may live : and let me not be disappointed of my hope.

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

For we are but weak at best, and we need a Stronger than ourselves, and a Wiser than ourselves, to preserve us in the true life, and to save us from that bitterest of disappointments—the loss of the hope which we have in Christ. Therefore, like a soldier wounded and fainting in the battle, we cry to our Champion to stand by us and to hold us up a little while, until the enemy be past; knowing that if He hold us up Whose hand holds up the universe, we cannot fall, but shall indeed be safe.

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

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

LXX. I have counted all the sinners of the earth transgressors,
Therefore have I loved Thy testimonies.

120. My flesh trembleth for fear of Thee : and I am afraid of Thy judgements.

All those that transgress the law of righteousness have fallen, are cast down; they are found enemies of God, their thoughts become untrue, their trust is in falsehood; and, unless they repent and be raised by Him, they will be trampled with all other enemies beneath the footstool of Christ. Their doom is the doom of dross, of 'reprobate silver.' He will put away the ungodly of the earth like the dross of the earth. 'Thus saith the Lord, Because ye are all become dross, behold, as they gather silver, and brass, and iron, and lead, and tin, into the midst of the furnace, to blow the fire upon it to melt it; even so will I gather you in Mine anger and in My fury, and I will leave you there and melt you.' Well may mortal flesh tremble for fear of Him Whose justice is so searching and Whose judgments are so terrible!

The initial letter of this portion is *Samech*, or S. With verse 119 compare Ezek. xxii. 18—22; Jer. vi. 28—30; Wis. ii. 16.

Feci judicium.

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

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

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

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

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

They who do what is right and good may be oppressed, but will never be given over to their oppressors. The grace that is with them is stronger than the world which is against them. The joy which arises from our doing that which is good, which is the same as the keeping the Law of God, will be a safeguard against all the wrong and harm which the proud and the wicked may think to do our souls. The time may indeed seem long while we are being tempted by them ; our eyes may waste and grow dim with watching and looking upward to the Source of salvation, but our waiting will be overpaid. He for Whom we wait will deal with us in His wondrous mercy ; He will teach us to obey Him as His servants, that we may come to know His will, and when we know His will we shall be reckoned as His friends.

126. It is time for Thee, Lord, to lay to Thine hand : for they have destroyed Thy law.

It is time for Him to begin His work of regeneration in us now in the time of this mortal life, in which the tables of our nature, on which once the law of God was written by His own finger, have

been broken by Adam in his disobedience, even as Moses brake the tables of the Law in his anger on Sinai. Alas! man has made the word of God concerning him of none effect, by his own traditions of self-will, and disobedience, and pride!

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

128. Therefore hold I straight all Thy commandments : and all false ways I utterly abhor.

But the man of God esteems the commandments of Him Who hath called him, as a treasure far above all the precious things of earth. He keeps unto all the commandments of God, not choosing one and neglecting another at his own pleasure, but 'rightly dividing the word of truth;' not going and looking on them and then passing by on the other side, but abiding in all of them; and shunning all self-deceit, and half-truths which are but falsehoods.

The verses of this division commence with *Ain*, a letter for which Western languages have no equivalent. Verse 122 is said by the Rabbis to be the only verse in which the Law is not spoken of by name.

Mirabilia.

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

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

131. I opened my mouth, and drew in my

breath : for my delight was in Thy commandments.

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

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

Strange are the mercies of our Father which are revealed to us ; wonderful is His power. With Him Who said in the beginning, ' Let there be light, and there was light,' speaking is doing ; His words are deeds. He hath given the highest wisdom to the lowliest of His elect ; He hath hidden the wonders of His testimonies from the wise and prudent, and revealed them unto babes ; He hath spoken, and little ones have understood. Therefore let us, like children wearied with the toil and heat of this world, and panting with open mouth for the refreshings of His grace, cry to Him with longing hearts for His favouring smile and for His mercy, which He never refuses to them that love His Name. He will ever give guidance in goodness, and deliverance from wickedness to them who crave it of Him.

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

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

Oftentimes the wrongful dealings of men, of others and of ourselves, like a cloud of smoke arising from the earth and obscuring the face of the sun, hide from us for awhile the light of the countenance of God: but He soon clears it all away, and looks down upon us in loving mercy as before, lighting for us the path of obedience, and brightening our way unto Himself.

136. Mine eyes gush out with water : because men keep not Thy law.

For these, the transgressions of others and of ourselves, there is great cause that our eyes should weep. The Man of sorrows wept over Jerusalem when He beheld her in her beauty, which was so soon to fade. The beloved disciple ‘wept much because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book’ in the right hand of Him that sat on the throne. Should not we, too, weep, looking upon a perishing world, in which the law of its Maker is continually broken, and in which so few look to Him Who alone was worthy to ‘open the book and to loose the seals thereof?’

The initial letter of these verses is *Pe*, or *P*.

Justus es, Domine.

137. RIGHTEOUS art Thou, O Lord : and true is Thy judgement.

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

139. My zeal hath even consumed me :

because mine enemies have forgotten Thy words.

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

LXX. Thy wrath is fiery exceedingly.

Righteous and true are the judgments of our God, righteous and true are His promises ; yea, all the ways of the King of Saints are just and true : will not, then, the servant of Christ burn with indignation—like his Lord in the temple, which the buyers and sellers had profaned—when he beholds the enemies of the cross of Christ forgetting, setting at nought, despising the words of righteousness and truth, which are all in all to our ruined world ? The ungodly are as dross ; but there is no dross in the Gospel of God. It is refined and made pure to the uttermost in the fire of the Holy Spirit ; therefore will the servant who hears his Lord's sayings accept it, and keep it, and love it.

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

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

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

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

As David among his brethren in the house of his father Jesse; as Judah led captive in the presence of the Assyrians and the Babylonians; as the Church of Christ in her beginning, surrounded by the rage and might of the Jews and heathens; so is the child of God who bears in mind his Lord's words in the midst of those who forget them. He may be in himself small and of no reputation, but on his side is the everlasting righteousness of God, with him is the truth. Therefore in that trouble and heaviness which come to every son of Adam, he will have a secret store of joy in doing his Saviour's will. He will love Him and keep His commandments; he will win for himself a righteousness which no time can fade, through Him Who died for his sins and rose for his justification; he will become wise with the knowledge of Him Whom truly to know is everlasting life.

The initial letter here is the Hebrew letter *Tsaddi*, or *Ts*. St. Augustine, in his Commentary on verse 139, says that some copies read, "The zeal of Thine house hath eaten me up," (St. John ii. 17).

Ebening Prayer.

Clamavi in toto corde meo.

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

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

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

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

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

The solemn, earnest cry of the heart to God will never fail of being heard by Him. We call with our whole heart when we pray without wandering thoughts. Such prayers are rare,—they only can pray them who have determined to keep God's statutes, and in that determination cry again and yet again for assisting grace to aid them. Early in the morning, and through the watches of the night, in the dawn of life and in the night-watches of mortality, must we be earnest in meditating upon the Gospel of our heavenly Father, in purifying our affections, in awakening our love, and then lifting up the accents of our soul in the cry, first for mercy, and then for life-giving grace. For God, first, according to His loving-kindness, takes away punishment from sinners, and, after, gives them life when they are made righteous in His sight.

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

151. Be Thou nigh at hand, O Lord : for all Thy commandments are true.

152. As concerning Thy testimonies, I have

known long since : that Thou hast grounded them for ever.

It is oftentimes in the moments of our most fervent prayer, that the enemies of our salvation draw nigh to lead us from the law of God ; but then He to Whom we cry draws nigh too. Where two or three are gathered together,—yea, where one is calling with his whole heart, there is Jesus nigh. For His promises are firm and sure for ever, for He that made them is an eternal King ; and He hath said unto His people, ‘Behold, I am with you always.’

The initial letter here is *Koph*, or K.

Vide humilitatem.

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

154. Avenge Thou my cause, and deliver me : quicken me, according to Thy word.

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

156. Great is Thy mercy, O Lord : quicken me, as Thou art wont.

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

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

Sorrows and adversities happen to all ; but when

they come to a servant of God, he has a refuge which the wicked have not. He has the refuge of prayer; he calls to his loving Father to remember him; he appeals to his righteous Advocate to plead his cause, and to deliver him; he looks to Him to sustain his life, from Whom he first received it. It is not so with the wicked: salvation and health of soul are far from them; because they regard not the law of God, He will not regard them. But His mercy is great to the faithful and obedient: it may be that many trouble them, yet does their Lord give them grace to persevere; and they, persecuted though they may be, can yet mourn over the sinners who persecute them, for their transgressions and unrepentance of heart.

159. Consider, O Lord, how I love Thy commandments : O quicken me, according to Thy loving-kindness.

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

They will plead before Him, how they love the commandments of Him Who loved them; and so will rely with firm confidence upon the everlasting truth and the unchanging love of their Saviour and their God. For He hath said, 'Hearken unto Me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is My Law; fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings. For the

moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool: but My righteousness shall be for ever, and My salvation from generation to generation.' All that is true is eternal, and all that is eternal is truth.

Resh, or R, commences the twentieth portion of this Psalm.

Principes persecuti sunt.

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

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

The faithful soul hath always her portion of suffering. They 'who live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.' The powerful of the earth have their threatening or their mocking words, but the heart that stands in awe of God's word will stand in no awe of man's; it will be able to scorn man when he would persecute, and to overcome Satan when he would seduce. Yes, in that word, the everlasting Gospel of the glorious God, we find again those spoils which the strong man armed had once taken from us, but which the Stronger than he hath regained and restored to us again. We find again there innocence, holiness, grace and communion with our God, of which we once were despoiled in Eden.

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

He that loveth that word which is 'true and faithful,' cannot but shrink from and hate all lies, which are in eternal opposition to it. All sin is a lie, because it is contrary to the truth of God. 'The devil was a liar from the beginning.' They who love the truth shall be eternally with Him that is true; 'they shall overcome and inherit all things: but the fearful and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.'

164. Seven times a day do I praise Thee : because of Thy righteous judgements.

He who loveth God will be praising Him all the day long, even the whole day of his whole being. He may fall into sin, as the most righteous will, seven times a day, yet seven times a day will he arise and repent, and be forgiven, and praise Him Who forgiveth him for His righteous judgments, —righteous in condemning sin, and righteous in granting pardon to repentance.

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

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

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

168. I have kept Thy commandments and testimonies : for all my ways are before Thee.

Thus does he dwell in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on the law of his Lord. The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, delivereth him from all stumbling and from all doubting. 'Whoso keepeth His word, in him is the love of God perfected : hereby know we that we are in Him.' From the watch-tower of obedience and of love, he looks forth for the far-off appearing of salvation and of the Saviour, knowing that all his ways and all his doings are plain before the face of God, and that those ways only which are before Him, can be ways of pleasantness and paths of peace.

The letter of this division of the Psalm is *Shin*, or *Sh*.

Appropinquet deprecatio.

169. LET my complaint come before Thee, O Lord : give me understanding, according to Thy word.

170. Let my supplication come before Thee : deliver me, according to Thy word.

The spiritually-minded in this life are 'sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing,'—rejoicing, yet with something of penitential sorrow always mingling with their joy; complaining of themselves, rejoicing in their Lord. They would have their confession and their prayer come nigh to Him Who is ever nigh to them that are of a contrite spirit, Who hath promised

understanding to them that ask, and pardon to them that repent, and deliverance to them that pray.

171. My lips shall speak of Thy praise : when Thou hast taught me Thy statutes.

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

173. Let Thine hand help me : for I have chosen Thy commandments.

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

175. O let my soul live, and it shall praise Thee : and Thy judgements shall help me.

Yet are praises ever intermingled with their prayers. Psalms of melody take their turn with intercessions and with resolvings. Longings for salvation join here with thanksgivings for the hope of life eternal, until the hour come when, for the saints of God, the voice of prayer shall cease, and praise alone shall fill their souls for ever and ever.

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

Yet now and here, notwithstanding the revealing of our Father's will, notwithstanding the purity of His Law, the loveliness of His truth, the holiness of His statutes, the righteousness of His judgments, the straightness of His way, the faithfulness of His

testimonies, the power of His commandments,—notwithstanding these, and our own longings, through His grace, to accept them, to abide in them, to keep them, we have yet need daily to turn to Him and say, ‘I have erred and strayed from Thy ways like a lost sheep.’ Yea, in spite of all should we be lost,—lost for ever, did not He Who is the good Shepherd leave the ninety-nine who sin not in heaven, and come down ever and anon to seek and save our wandering souls. In Him we have the holiness which we have not in ourselves. ‘For Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to every one that believeth.’ ‘He is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption,’ Who is the Word, the letters of Whose Name are written upon us in our baptism, and Whose Name should be the last word our lips should speak on earth; Who is the beginning of all knowledge and the end of all learning,—‘Who said, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end.’

The letter *Tau*, or T, the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet, is the initial letter of the twenty-second portion of this wonderful and complicated Psalm. In the method of its composition, in which each eight verses in succession begin with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet, it resembles the alphabetical Psalms and the Lamentations of Jeremiah, except that its poetical construction is far more intricate. It, on this account, had given to it the name of “the Great Alphabet,” by the Masorites who put the last corrections to the Jewish canon of Scripture. Origen says that it is alphabetical because it contains the elements or principles of all knowledge and wisdom, and that it repeats each letter eight times, because eight is the number of perfection. There is great doubt as to who was its author: many writers have ascribed it to David; others have suggested Daniel, on account of certain of the verses seeming to have a reference to events in the

life of that prophet. It appears, however, more probable that Ezra was the author, and there are very strong reasons for believing it to be his. The style of the poetry is later than the age of David; the Psalm has few points of resemblance to those of David, and there is no title assigning it to him. It was almost certainly written during or after the captivity. The Talmud states that the people of Israel during the captivity had quite forgotten the Law, and that Ezra, by great efforts and care, brought it to their knowledge again. It is highly probable that this Psalm was one of the means which Ezra then used to recall the word of God to their minds, and to stir up in them a love for it; and the nature of its construction would render it peculiarly adapted for being committed to memory. The connection of the thoughts, and the one idea which runs through the whole of this spiritual meditation on the Law of God, is most difficult to discover; yet it must not be doubted that there is such a connecting idea. Some divines, following a suggestion of Rabbi Kimchi, consider it to be a meditation on the Law under its different names of Testimonies, Statutes, Judgments, Word, Commandments, Way and Truth; and in its different aspects,—as innate in the heart, as sacramental, as revealed, as discerned by the conscience, or manifested in providence, or commanded on Sinai. It is very hard to fully trace out this. Or the Psalm may be a history of the inner life of grace in man's soul, displaying itself in praise, prayer, good resolutions, self-consolation, penitence, obedience, humility. Or it may be that the whole Psalm should lead us to meditate on Christ, "the end of the Law," (Rom. x. 4); and so its alphabetical character would refer to Him as "the Alpha and Omega," (Rev. i. 8, 11). St. Augustine, who in his Commentary has left us thirty-two discourses on this Psalm, says of it, "As often as I began to reflect on this Psalm, it always exceeded the utmost grasp of my faculties; for in proportion as it seems more open, so much the more deep does it appear to me, so that I cannot shew how deep it is. For in others which are understood with difficulty, though the sense lie hid in obscurity, yet the obscurity itself is obvious; but in this Psalm, even this is not the case, since on the surface it seems not to require a commentator, but only a reader or listener."

Morning Prayer.

PSALM CXX. *Ad Dominum.*

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

See the wondrous advantage of trouble,—that it makes us call upon our God; and again see the wondrous readiness of mercy, that when we call He heareth us! Very blessed are they that mourn while they are travelling the long upward journey from the Galilee of the Gentiles of this lower world to the heavenly Jerusalem, the high and holy city of the saints of God.

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

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

Heb. Arrows of the mighty man, with burning fuel of broom.

Often the first step which a Christian makes in this his heavenward pilgrimage calleth forth the reproaches of the lying lips of the wicked. As soon as he begins to repent, to desire to ascend from earth and to leave behind him worldly, temporal, and sinful things, to count earthly gain as nothing, and heavenly gain as all, so soon do his enemies speak evil and falsely of him; and pretended counsellors, with the deceitful tongues of false doctrine, strive to draw him astray from salvation. Of

all the dangers that beset the soul that is journeying in the path of life, there are none against which it has need to pray more earnestly than against the deceitful tongue. And there are none who shall be pierced with bitterer anguish, who shall writhe in fiercer agony beneath the burning wrath of divine vengeance, than they who have made their neighbours to go astray by revilings, or by flattery, or by the seductions of false doctrine and of unbelief.

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

LXX. Woe is me, that my sojourning is prolonged.

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

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

But he in whose heart are indeed God's ways—the ways of holy love—will not be easily led astray; he will groan, indeed, for the length of time in which he is compelled to company among strange and heathen men, like the wandering foreigners who sprang from Mesech, the son of Japhet, or to be surrounded with those that are fierce and remorseless, like the Arabian plunderers of the tribe of Kedar; but his groan will go up to God. In this life we dwell among all that is opposed to peace; the love for peace is the love for Christ, the

Giver of peace: but they who seek perfect peace here, will not find it here. The very name of Him Who is our peace is but too often the watchword of battle. But notwithstanding all that hindereth, let us labour for peace, and journey on our way; and at length, when we have passed out of this lower scene of strife and darkness, of tempest and confusion, we shall arrive where all is clear, and pure, and calm, where love is satisfied, and peace made perfect.

This Psalm, and the fourteen which follow it, form a class by themselves. They are full of quiet beauty, and simple, earnest piety; and the time of their composition extends from the reigns of David and Solomon to the return from the captivity. They are entitled in the Hebrew, "Songs of the goings up," which the LXX. render "Psalms of the ascents," the Vulgate, "Step Psalms," and the English version, "Psalms of degrees." The meaning of this title has been much disputed: some of the Rabbis, as Abenezra and Kimchi, conjecture that the word means an elevation of the voice, and that these Psalms were sung in a high treble tone. Rabbi Maimonides supposes that they were sung by the Levites upon an elevated platform, which was situated near the east gate of the temple: with this opinion Luther agrees, who calls them "Songs from the upper choirs." The Talmudists imagine that they were so called from being sung on fifteen steps or stairs, which led from the outer courts of the temple to that of the Levites—one Psalm being sung on each step. St. Athanasius and St. Chrysostom consider that they were used solemnly on the return of the captives from Babylon; and this view is supported by the fact that the same Hebrew word is employed in Ezra vii. 9 to express the "going up" from Babylon. But undoubtedly the best translation of this title is "The Songs of the Pilgrimages," and the most probable explanation of its meaning is, that these Psalms formed the devotions of those who, according to the commands of their law, went up to the great festivals at Jerusalem. The words "going up" are constantly used in this sense in the Scriptures. This custom had never been lost by the Israelites, though they often made only a yearly visit to Jerusalem, (1 Sam. i.

3, 7; St. Luke iii. 41, 42). It will throw great light on the meaning of these Psalms or songs, if we consider them to have been recited at different stages of their journey by the caravans of pilgrims who came up from Galilee and other more distant parts, to keep the Pass-over, or some of the other feasts, at Jerusalem. These fifteen songs would form "The pilgrim-book;" and these very Psalms were probably thus used by our Lord's parents, and by Himself and His disciples, in their "goings up" to Jerusalem. Psalm cxxi. would be adapted to the first setting out of the pious Israelite from the extremities of Canaan to visit the Sanctuary, and imploring protection from God on his journey. Verse 4 speaks of Meshech, who was one of the sons of Japheth, (Gen. x. 2,) perhaps in allusion to the Scythians from the Moschian mountains on the Caspian Sea, for we know from profane history that the Scythians had more than once made incursions into Syria. The Kedarenes were a tribe of wandering Arabs.

PSALM CXXI. *Levavi oculos.*

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

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

From the vale of this earthly life, in which the very Son of God walked when He humbled Himself and suffered, we lift up our eyes to the heights of the true Jerusalem, where He dwells Who is our Help and Strength; even as the travellers from beyond Jordan, as night and its dangers closed round them, looked towards the temple of God, with its pinnacles of gold and marble glistening like snow in the brightness of the setting sun. It was not their own beauty or glory with which Sion and the hills around her shone; but it was the earthly dwelling-place of the Creator of heaven and earth which was their ornament: so the Church and her teachers shine amid

this world's darkness ; but they shine not with their own light, but His ' Who is the true Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world !'

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

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

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

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

His grace is ever sufficient for us. In the rugged ways of our pilgrimage He will keep our foot from stumbling, and our hearts and affections from sin and the desire of what is evil. In the night of ease and forgetfulness, though we may slumber and forsake our watch, He will not forsake his. We cannot keep ourselves who can scarcely watch one hour ; but He is our Keeper Who on earth slumbered not, but continued all night in prayer to God, and Who in heaven, having raised Himself from the sleep of death, now ' ever liveth to make intercession for' His own. He Who is at the right hand of the Father is always at our right hand, by day and by night, a shelter from the burning heat of temptation, and a refuge from the chill, cold influence of sorrow, of desolateness, and of want.

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

8. The Lord shall preserve thy going out, and thy coming in : from this time forth for evermore.

Perfectly and altogether will our Keeper, our Saviour, and God grant our daily prayer, ' Deliver us from evil,' if we but ask Him with a perfect heart. He sees ' that we have no power of ourselves to help ourselves,' and He will keep us from all evil—from the evil we know and see, and from the evil we do not know and cannot see. He will keep us not only outwardly in our bodies, but inwardly in our souls. He will defend us not only from the adversities which may happen to the body, but also from the evil thoughts which assault and hurt the soul. He will keep us in all we do, from our birth to our death,—from our entering into this world of trial until we go out from it again,—from our going out from the power of sin until we enter into the immortality He hath prepared for us. He Who said to Jacob, ' Behold I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest,' has said also to the people of His Church, ' Behold I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.'

This is the second of these " traveller-songs," which appears to be distinctly intended for an evening prayer for protection during the perils of the night. The pilgrim, while chanting it, had before his eyes or his mind the hills of Jerusalem. Verse 6 probably refers to a belief very prevalent in tropical countries, that the beams of the moon are highly injurious to those who sleep exposed to them. The name of Keeper, which is again and again given to God in this Psalm, is founded on the promise made to Jacob while sleeping in the night alone at Bethel, (Gen. xxxviii. 15). With verse 8 compare Deut. xxviii. 6.

PSALM cxxii. *Lætatus sum.*

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

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

Heavenly love is the one feeling which makes us press on in this our pilgrimage. It is love which makes us rejoice when we can say to others, 'We will go into the house of the Lord.' It was love which made the prophets, the apostles, and the martyrs cry aloud, even from a distant age, these words of cheering and of joy to us and to the whole Church. It is love which makes us receive their word with gladness, and fills us with the glorious hope that our feet too shall stand in the gates of the Jerusalem above. It is love which guides us in the way which is Christ Himself. It is love that checks our weariness and our impatience in our journey, and bids us rather dwell on the rest which awaits us in our abiding city, and the union with those who now are citizens there, who once were travellers, like us, from the earthly Galilee to the heavenly Jerusalem.

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

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

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

Our Jerusalem is the Church of the living God ; her builder is Christ, the eternal Son, and she is founded by Him here in earth, and reared up and made perfect unto Him in heaven. She is built with living stones, even each one of His redeemed—stones cut from the hills of earth by the hands which were stretched upon the cross, and squared by the Holy Ghost, that they may be placed in order in that everlasting structure. Those spiritual stones are built into a spiritual city,—changeless like Him Who changeth not, and in unity with itself, like Him Who is ever One. The law of her being, the measure of her walls, the height of her battlements, the beauty of her courts, is oneness, and unity, and self-agreement. To her the tribes of the true Israel, the redeemed of God have ever gone, are ever going, and shall ever go. She does not descend to them, but they ascend to her, bearing witness to their brethren in the world by their guileless walk, and thanking their God continually as wayfarers, until they thank Him perfectly before His throne. In that high city is the throne of God, for heaven is His throne,—the throne of wisdom, the throne of mercy, the throne of judgment ; and there, too, are the twelve thrones, upon which the apostles of the Son of David shall sit when their King shall come at last to judge the world.

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

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

Therefore should the citizens of that city in the fulness of aspiring love call upon each other in turn to pray for the peace of the Jerusalem above, the Church 'which is the mother of us all,'—to ask peace for her whose name is peace. To pray for her is to pray for ourselves; to love her prosperity is to love our own. In her truth are we taught truth; in her grace are we made rich. Therefore must we daily pray that there may be unity and peace, even the peace of God, within her walls; and that there may be ever the assurance of faith and the rich gifts of grace, and the comfortings of sacraments abounding in her houses and palaces of prayer.

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

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

And not for our selves' sake only, but for our brethren's sake in the faith, and for the salvation of the companions of our pilgrimage, should we pray that these blessings may ever abound within the Church. Yea, we must seek her good because she is the Church of the living God, the temple in which Jesus Christ is built and joined together with His elect in an eternal and changeless union. Therefore to Him in His Church do we ascribe all good, because from Him, through His Church, do all good things proceed to us.

This is a "pilgrim-song" by David. Its object, perhaps, was to attract the tribes of Israel to Jerusalem, and to teach them to look upon Jerusalem not only as the seat of civil government (verse 5)

but also as the spiritual and religious capital of the nation, because there the ark of God abode in the tabernacle which David had reared for it on Sion (verse 9). It is probably one of the earliest of this series of pilgrim-songs; as before the time of David the people would have gone to Shiloh, and perhaps, during his reign, many might have kept their feast at Gibeon, where the tabernacle of Moses was, though the ark had long been separated from it. He wished gradually to lead them to visit and love Jerusalem, then newly established as a royal city and a holy place. The spiritual meaning of Jerusalem is obvious. There is in the latter verses in the Hebrew a beautiful allusion to the meaning of the word *Shalom*, i. e. "peace," in the name of Jerusalem, which the Fathers interpret "The vision of peace."

PSALM cxxiii. *Ad Te levavi oculos meos.*

1. UNTO Thee lift I up mine eyes : O Thou that dwellest in the heavens.

This is the sigh of the pilgrim who ascendeth and loveth, and ascendeth because he loveth. He is ascending from earth to heaven, and while he is ascending, unto whom should he lift his eyes, but unto Him that dwelleth in heaven? We ascend to heaven each time we think of God. In that ascent lies all goodness: if we would repent, we must look not on ourselves, but on Him; if we would be humble, we must look not on ourselves, but on Him; if we would truly love, we must look not on ourselves, but on Him Who dwelleth in the heavens. If we would have Him turn His eyes from our sins, we must turn our eyes unto His mercy and truth.

2. Behold, even as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress :

even so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God, until He have mercy upon us.

Like servants depend upon their master, in whose power they are, and like a handmaid depends upon her mistress, both for reward and for punishment, so do we, the servants of the Lord God Almighty, depend upon Him for all we have in this life, and that which is to come. Yea, like a faithful servant watches attentively the slightest motions and pointings out of the wishes of his lord, so do we wait and watch for the indications of our Master's will, hoping through His love and power to gain the full assurance of His mercy. Each holy soul will in its degree share in the humility and the patience of the Blessed among women, who said, 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to Thy word.'

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

4. Our soul is filled with the scornful reproof of the wealthy : and with the despitefulness of the proud.

We must needs look to heaven if we would obtain mercy, for if we look to earth, there is great fear lest we find it not. It is not from those who are puffed with false riches, or that are proud of earthly power, that the meek and the faithful in heart will meet with esteem or reverence. Christ, the first Wayfarer Who ascended from earth to heaven, found but shame, reproof, and spite from the mighty of the

earth; and they who follow in His steps must be ready for the same, and must therefore ever look for their defence, not to the great ones who dwell on earth, but to the greater than all, Who dwelleth in the heavens.

This 'pilgrim-song' has no date contained in its title. It is probably an early one, but would be very appropriate, in later times, to the journey through Samaria, for those who travelled to Jerusalem by that route. It was, however, more usual for those who lived in Galilee to cross the Jordan and journey southward through Peræa, and then to cross the Jordan a second time, and so to arrive at Jerusalem without passing through the hostile country of Samaria. Verse 2 probably alludes to the Eastern custom of masters and mistresses summoning their servants by clapping the hands, and then giving them directions by signs and movements of the hands, without speaking—the effect of which is to make the servant watch attentively every motion of his master's hands. It may, however, merely mean that the hand of a master dispenses both reward and punishment to his servants.

PSALM CXXIV. *Nisi quia Dominus.*

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

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

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

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

Not only each soul, but the whole Church and Israel of God is, during her pilgrimage of this passing life, forced to confess her Lord alone to be her de-

fence in all adversity, and in all persecutions. When evil men, or evil angels, are aroused to harass God's elect, they would soon work their will, unless there were One mightier than they to take His people's part:—they would, as it were, swallow them up alive—they would sift them as wheat—they would, if they might, engulf them in the waters of death, and in those waters deeper and bitterer than death, which drown not the body, but the soul in the depths of perdition.

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

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

But He Who has made us His, and in Whose hand is our eternal life, wills not that His people should become a prey to the teeth of the devourers. He has broken the snare of hell, and hath opened the pit of death, and our souls, once 'tied and bound with the chain of our sins,' may now once again soar up to Him through the open firmament of heaven, like a wild bird set free from a broken snare.

For He hath set the bondsmen free, and made the dead alive, to Whose holy Name be ever ascribed all blessing from Israel sojourning on earth, and from Israel in rest in heaven.

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

Yea, against the Israel of God is arrayed the ma-

lice of wickedness, strong and cunning; while on their side is the help of the Almighty, Whose love made all the worlds: and in the might of that help the wickedness of earth and hell is utterly swallowed up and lost, just as a single drop of water is consumed and vanishes within a mighty fire. He by Whose word alone the heaven and earth were built, and without Whose will not even one single sparrow falls into the snare, is our help; and in that help how can we not be safe?

This "Song of the Pilgrimages" was written "by David," and bears the plain marks of his style. The date of its composition cannot be fixed, but it was, perhaps, written during the war of the Syrians and Ammonites against Israel. (2 Sam. x. 6—19.) It would be well fitted for those who had been so far preserved from the perils of their journey, from robbers and enemies, in their way up to Jerusalem.

| PSALM CXXV. *Qui confidunt.*

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

LXX. He that inhabiteth Jerusalem shall not be moved for ever.

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

'By faith we are saved;' by faith we are made strong. By trusting in our God we share His strength; by cleaving to His Church we become like His Church herself. As the spiritual Sion can never be moved or overthrown, for that her foundations are in eternity; so the elect of God stand

changeless and strong, like the hill of David, among the storms of this world. And like the other hills of Judæa stand round that holy mountain, as walls of rock, or as sentinel angels keeping guard round the Church of God, so does the Almighty God Himself, with all His attributes of wisdom, power, and love, maintain an everlasting watch round each one of His redeemed—a watch which lasts through the ages of this world and that which is to come.

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

Heb. For the sceptre of wickedness shall not rest on the lot of the righteous,

So that the righteous put not forth their hand to unrighteousness.

This is the one mighty watch that God keeps over His people, that they may not fall under the dominion of the wicked. He kept Sion from the Assyrians, that the rod of the heathen should not be stretched over the lot of Israel. He keeps His Church, that the sceptre of the Evil one should never so rule her children that they should be forced to put forth their hands, which are made to do the works of God, to do the works of death and sin. Woe for those who have so fallen under the power of the sceptre of the prince of this world, that they are compelled to do his evil service at his evil pleasure !

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

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

He Who is good and true hath blessed and will bless the good and true ; for whom should He bless but them who are like Himself ? They who go straight on in the narrow way of goodness of life and truth of belief shall come to the heavenly Sion, but they who turn into the crooked paths of their own corrupt doings shall go with the apostates and the traitors unto their 'own place.' Their self-willed wanderings shall end in helpless despair, while the true Israel enjoy the fulness of the blessing of peace, which passeth knowledge and changeth not.

This song was a most appropriate one for the pilgrims when they came within sight of Jerusalem ; and the prospect round the holy city would at once suggest the thoughts in verse 2, of the enduring strength and care of God. All the hills which surround Jerusalem are higher than the city itself : on the east is the Mount of Olives ; on the south the Hill of evil counsel ; on the west the ground rises gently ; while on the north there is a ridge of high land, which joins on to the Mount of Olives. The Christian interpretation of this Psalm is confirmed by Abenezra, who declares that it refers to the days of the Messiah.

Ebening Prayer.

PSALM CXXVI. *In convertendo.*

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

LXX. Then we were like those who are consoled.

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

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

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

Great, indeed, and passing strange, was the joy of Israel when, at the decree of Cyrus, they returned again from their long and sad captivity in Babylon, unto their own land, their birthplace, the country of their love, and the city of their God. Too strange even for full belief was it; like the joy of a dream, when the sleeper knows that he must awake, and that it will be no more. They turned from weeping by the waters of Babylon, to rejoicing over the wall of Sion, once more their own; they turned with hearts and lips rejoicing, with thoughts and words of gratitude and melody, to Him Whom even the heathen who stood by and looked on could not but confess to have done mighty things for them. And we, grafted by holy baptism into the stock of Israel, must not we too rejoice at the turning of our captivity from the power of death and sin, by the decree of a greater than Cyrus, and the bringing us back to the Jerusalem which is free, and the mother of us all? Yea, the Lord Jesus Christ hath done great things for us, whereof we too, His people, called by His name, do rejoice, and will rejoice.

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

And as Israel of old prayed that He would bring, too, all their brethren scattered abroad in captivity back to their own land in one full stream, multitudinous, joyous, mighty, like the waters of Nile or of Euphrates pouring over the parching fields of the south in the hot, dry summer-tide; so now should the members of Christ's Church ever pray 'that all who profess and call themselves Christians may be led into the way of truth, and hold the faith in unity of spirit, in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life.'

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

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

'Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted.' Blessed often are they who sow, like husbandmen in the drought, weeping for that their labour seems thrown away, for the Lord waters with grace what they have moistened with tears, and they bring forth the full sheaves of sixty and a hundred-fold when the time for reaping comes. For as the earth needs rain, so do our souls need tears. Blessed are the tears of repentance, for Israel sowed in them when they went forth unto their captivity and desolation, and therefore did they come again, bringing with them the sheaves of joyous thankfulness and of better works. Thus did Israel

sow and reap; thus did One greater than all sow in the season of His humility, that He might reap in the time of His second advent; and thus should we, His people, go forth with tears of repentance and the seed of good works, that He may, when He comes again with joy, bring us with Him as His sheaves, bound in the bundle of immortal life.

This song was clearly written for the return from the captivity, probably by Ezra. It was, no doubt, retained among the "songs of the Ascents," to remind the Israelites of how they had once lost the city of their joy, and of how they had been restored to it again. St. Augustine, in his commentary on this Psalm, interprets the title "a song of drawing upwards," i. e. of the going upwards to the heavenly Jerusalem.

PSALM FOR THE CHURCHING OF WOMEN.

PSALM CXXVII.. *Nisi Dominus.*

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

The children of men set themselves to build Babel, and their labour was lost, because the Lord did not build it with them. In Him only can we build aright, Who is at once the Temple and the Builder. So only did Solomon, according to God's promise, 'build the house of the Lord;' so only did Zerubbabel rear it again from its ruins when Israel returned from the captivity. Forty and six years, in after-times, were the Jews in building the temple, and because they built it without the Lord, their labour was lost, and one stone was not left upon another.

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

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

Heb. Verily He giveth to His beloved in their sleep.

LXX. Rise after ye have sat down,
Ye who eat the bread of sorrow
While He giveth His beloved sleep.

No human foresight can provide against sorrow, no wisdom or bravery of man can preserve himself or others from calamity, unless he be acting with and in God. If the Lord keep us, if the Lord keep His Church, then both we and she are safe; but if He be not with us, we may watch and labour, even like the builders under Nehemiah, with a weapon in one hand while we toil with the other, and yet it will be all in vain. It is vain to rise up early to a day of toil, vain to go late to a prayerless rest, vain to eat our bitter bread in weariness and pain of heart,—all our work and anxiousness is vain, unless He be with us, and His blessing be upon us and our labour. Why do we take anxious thought for this world's advantages? Our Heavenly Father knoweth we have need of food and raiment; and if we trust in Him, we may rest secure that He Who feeds the birds and clothes the lilies will give what is needful to His elect. He giveth His beloved sleep; He giveth to His beloved in their sleep. To Solomon, whose name was Jedediah, the beloved of the Lord, He gave wisdom in his sleep, more than all the toil of the spirit could have ever gained. He will build for us, if we trust

in Him; He will watch over us Who sleepeth not; He will give us each day our daily bread, free from care and free from anxiety; and each night He will give us sleep sweet and pleasant, as the foretaste of the sleep in Jesus. .

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

Heb. For lo, the gift of the Lord are children,
The fruit of the womb are a reward.

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

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

Yea, the heritage of sons and of daughters, the joys of home and the delight of children, are also from Him from Whom all good things do come. He gives them Who gives also what is better even than they. Yet are holy and loving children among His choicest earthly blessings : like arrows in the hand of a hero as he goes forth with full quiver to combat with the enemies of his country, for his hearth and home, when 'there is war in the gates,' so are holy children to those whom God has blessed with them, a glory, an ornament, and a defence. Happy is the man who hath the quiver of his home full of them! And as children of old accompanied their father to the place of justice in the gates of his city, when he was falsely accused by some envious adversary, so

shall they who have brought up their children in the faith and fear of God have boldness in the day of judgment, and shall not be ashamed—as careless parents shall most deeply be—to speak against the accusations of the enemy of souls.

This “pilgrimage song” is “by Solomon.” It bears the marks of his character : compare verses 1—3 with Prov. x. 22, and again with 1 Kings iii. 5—14. This Psalm, which speaks of building the Lord’s house, would also apply to the building of the second temple by Zerubbabel. Watchmen are still employed in the East, as in verse 3, to cry in the night, to shew their vigilance. Their cry is generally a pious sentiment. A modern traveller mentions that he was peculiarly struck with the cry of the watchman in his quarter of Cairo : “I proclaim the glory of the living King Who sleepeth not, nor dieth.” In verse 6 it is doubtful whether “speaking with enemies in the gate” should be understood of meeting them in battle at the gate of the city, or meeting them in the court of justice, which was usually held there, (Deut. xxv. 7). The Chaldee interpreters give the latter meaning, but the context favours the former. This Psalm is appointed to be used in the Office for the Churching of Women. It is supposed by Bp. Horsley to have been used in the temple-service on parents presenting their first-born in the temple (Exod. xxii. 29).

FOR THE CELEBRATION OF HOLY MATRIMONY.

PSALM CXXVIII. *Beati omnes.*

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

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

The blessedness given by the world is but a poor and fragile thing, possessed by few, hard to gain, easy to lose. But the blessedness given by God is different quite;—all may gain it who fear Him, and

live in His laws. His blessedness is lasting, true, perfect, given alike to the poor and to the rich,—even the portion of contentment and happiness here, and perfect joy in that land of the redeemed where ‘their works do follow them.’ All who fear God and walk in His way—and none can be said to fear Him who walk not in His way—shall see their efforts to do good blest with success, shall find their work prosper, and shall in this be like their Lord, Who ‘saw of the travail of His soul and was satisfied.’

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

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

Such an one will be blessed especially of God in that pure and holy love, in which ‘a man leaves his father and his mother, is joined unto his wife, and they two become one flesh,’ and which ‘signifies the mystical union which is between Christ and His Church.’ To him his wife will be like the vine on the walls of his house, a joy to his eyes, and an ever-present source of refreshment and of comfort; and in her love he will find a shelter and a refuge in the heat and weariness of life; and his children round his table will be like branches of the olive-tree, glad and flourishing pledges of peace and love, and of the plenteous fruit of good works in old age.

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

6. The Lord from out of Sion shall so bless

thee : that thou shalt see Jerusalem in prosperity all thy life long.

7. Yea, that thou shalt see thy children's children : and peace upon Israel.

Yea, thus shall 'the Lord pour the riches of His grace' and of His goodness upon him that feareth Him. The Lord shall from the treasury of grace in His Church dispense unending blessings upon His faithful servants; and in the prosperity of the Church shall make them prosperous. For the well-being of the Church is the well-being of each single soul, and the well-being of each single soul is the well-being of the Church. So shall the servants of God live on in holiness and peace all their lives long, and, like Joseph, shall see their children's children brought up at their knees in God's faith and fear. Thus shall there come the peace of God upon the Israel of God, and upon all His elect for ever.

A commentary upon this "pilgrim-song," in its application to Israel, will be found in Zech. viii. It is a Psalm of blessing, and is therefore fitly used in the Office for the celebration of Holy Matrimony. Bp. Horsley considers it to have been used in the temple on the householder presenting his first-fruits or his tithes. Verses 3, 4, may be referred to the Church, and to her children at the Lord's Table. With verse 7 compare Gen. 1. 23.

PSALM CXXIX. *Sæpe expugnaverunt.*

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

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

From the youth of Israel in Egypt to their age in the captivity of Babylon, they had suffered trouble, and vexation, and tyranny; yet, because God was with them and on their side, in spite of their own sins, they were not utterly oppressed and destroyed. So with the true Israel of those who confess His Name; they are fought against and persecuted, but they are not conquered. Rather are they conquerors, and more than conquerors, through Him Who loveth them.

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

LXX. They hammered upon my back,
And prolonged their ungodliness.

How should the disciples escape, when the Lord was bound and beaten? 'Pilate took Jesus and scourged Him;' the Roman executioners ploughed upon His sacred back, as He stood silent and weary at the pillar, and made long their furrows with their cruel rods. He was scourged that we might escape the doom of many stripes, for 'with His stripes we are healed.'

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

LXX. The righteous Lord hath cut their necks.

But the God Whose name is Righteous delivers His people at last; He breaks the snares and cuts the bonds by which His people were caught and held, and so He sets them free.

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

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

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

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

The mischief that the cruel and wicked have done to the faithful shall return with far deeper bitterness upon themselves. Their plans shall be brought to confusion ; their progress shall be downward and backward. They shall become fruitless and withered, like the grass growing upon the flat house-roof under the southern sky, which springs up only to die. It withers and perishes before one can pluck it up ; sapless and tasteless, it is of no value as hay to the mower ; it cannot even be twisted as bands to be used in binding up the sheaves. It gives occasion for none of the joy of harvest, nor for the mutual salutations and blessings between those who are reaping in the fields and the passers-by who greet them at their work. Even so shall they that have evil will at the Church of God 'fade away in their ways.'

It is difficult to say whether this Psalm belongs to the time of the captivity, or to an earlier period. Verse 3 is generally taken by the

Fathers as a prophecy of our Lord's being scourged, (St. John xix. 1). It may illustrate verse 6, to remark that the roofs of houses in the East are flat, and often made of clay beaten hard, on which grass might spring up, but would soon become too dry and brittle to be of any value either for fodder or hay-bands. (Compare St. Matt. xiii. 5, 6.) With verse 8 compare Ruth ii. 4. The expression of our translation, "We wish you good luck," is still commonly used as a valediction in some of the north-western counties of England.

FOR ASH-WEDNESDAY, BEING THE SIXTH
PENITENTIAL PSALM.

PSALM CXXX. *De profundis.*

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

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

Not merely from the mouth, but from the very depths of the soul, do the righteous cry to God in their trouble. Out of the deepest do we cry loudest unto the Highest. Like Jonah from the bottom of the sea, like the Redeemer from the floods of death, they are ever heard who cry from the deep of contrition and the overwhelmings of repenting shame and sorrow. His ear is ever open to the prayer that comes up from the depths of a troubled spirit.

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

4. For there is mercy with Thee : therefore
shalt Thou be feared.

If God should judge us narrowly and strictly,

being extreme in marking all our shortcomings and transgressions, who of all the sons of Adam could stand before Him? He would be indeed to be dreaded with a deep and terrible fear! But He is most merciful; He judges rather as a Father than a Judge: He hath loved us, and given His Son to be the propitiation for our sins; therefore do His mercy and His love make us fear to offend Him still more as a merciful Father than as an extreme Judge. Perfect love casteth out terror; but love only heightens and purifies the fear that is holy and divine. It is because our God is merciful to us, that we should really fear and reverence Him.

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

6. My soul fleeth unto the Lord: before the morning watch, I say, before the morning watch.

LXX. From the morning watch until night,
Let Israel hope in the Lord.

7. O Israel, trust in the Lord, for with the Lord there is mercy: and with Him is plentiful redemption.

8. And He shall redeem Israel: from all His sins.

So amid all the darkness of our own waywardness and evil, we look out waiting for the mercy of our Lord, like a watchman impatiently watching and longing for the morning, after a night of anxious-

ness. Let us wait for Him from the morning of our birth until the night of death, and still watch through the night of death, unto the morning watch of the everlasting day. Patience is the perfection of faith; we can wait, because we know that with Him is mercy. He knows the time, and if we wait long enough we shall most surely find redemption from Him,—redemption not only from the guilt of sins that are past, but from the power of those that may come upon us. In our patience we possess our souls; if we wait and watch, we at length shall see ‘the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world’—if we seek we shall find Him ‘Whose name should be called Jesus, for that He should save His people from their sins.’

This “pilgrim-song” is evidently a Psalm of the captivity, and was used after the return to put the Israelites in mind of their trouble and punishment, and that patient faith which at length brought them out of their distress. Bp. Horsley thinks it was used on bringing a sin-offering. With verses 7, 8, compare St. Luke ii. 38; Rom. xi. Rabbi Kimchi says that “this last verse was added to the Psalm that Israel might never despair of redemption on account of iniquities, however great the number of them might be. Their God,” he says, “will pardon these, and will give them a new heart, and then a full redemption both of body and soul will follow.” This is the sixth penitential Psalm, and it is appointed for Ash-Wednesday.

PSALM CXXXI. *Domine, non est.*

1. LORD, I am not high-minded : I have no proud looks.

2. I do not exercise myself in great matters : which are too high for me.

They that would be Christ’s will ever seek for the

grace of humility. They will quench within themselves the pride of the heart and the pride of the eye. They will be humble, and will seem humble, who follow Him 'Who humbled Himself even unto death.' They will not strive for honours, or riches, or power, knowing how dangerous these are to the soul; still less will they doubt, or reason, or question, concerning those great matters of faith which God has revealed concerning Himself, but which are too high for us to understand or search into—which are too high even for the angels.

3. But I refrain my soul, and keep it low, like as a child that is weaned from his mother : yea, my soul is even as a weaned child.

LXX. If I was not humble-minded,
But exalted my soul :
As unto a child weaned from his mother,
Thus shalt Thou reward unto my soul.

As David, though anointed to the kingdom, returned back to the care of his father's sheep in the wilderness, in humility and meekness of heart; as the Lord of David took upon Him the form of a servant, and abhorred not the Virgin's womb, but came into this world as a little Child, gentle, mild, and tender, to be borne upon his mother's bosom, and to receive soothing and comfort as a weaned child; even so must we, baptized to be children of God, bear to be weaned from the delights and the enjoyments of earth; even so must we look not to ourselves, but to our Father Who gives us each day our daily bread; and think ever on the words and

ways of Him Who 'called a little child unto Him, and set him in the midst of the Apostles, and said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of Heaven.'

4. O Israel, trust in the Lord : from this time forth for evermore.

Therefore the Israel of God will trust in their God, and not in themselves. They will fulfil the precept, 'All of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time; casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you.'

This Psalm, which is one of "the Pilgrimage songs," was written, as the title shews, by David, probably in his youth, when he had just left the care of his father's sheep, and had come to the court of Saul. Some, however, assign it to the time of the revolt of Absalom, and of the reproaches of Shimei. With the whole of this Psalm compare St. Matt. xviii. 1—10, and 1 St. Peter v. 5, 6.

Morning Prayer.

FOR CHRISTMAS-DAY.

PSALM CXXXII. *Memento, Domine.*

1. LORD, remember David : and all his trouble ;

Heb. Lord, remember unto David all his trouble.

LXX. Lord, remember David and all his meekness.

2. How he sware unto the Lord : and vowed a vow unto the Almighty God of Jacob ;

3. I will not come within the tabernacle of mine house : nor climb up into my bed ;

4. I will not suffer mine eyes to sleep, nor mine eyelids to slumber : neither the temples of my head to take any rest ;

5. Until I find out a place for the temple of the Lord : an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob.

‘David made him houses in the city of David, and prepared a place for the ark of God, and pitched for it a tent.’ Nor was he then satisfied with what he had done. It troubled his meek and loving spirit that he should dwell in ease and splendour, while the Ark of God was left unreverenced and in neglect. ‘It came to pass as David sat in his house, that David said to Nathan the prophet, Lo, I dwell in an house of cedars, but the Ark of the covenant of the Lord remaineth under curtains.’ Therefore did he determine to find a place where the Ark, the visible token of God’s presence with His people, might dwell in beauty and glory. He solemnly engaged with himself, and with God, that he would take no enjoyment of the house he had built, that he would not rest quietly, nor cease from his searching, until he had found a place for the temple of the Lord. And he kept his vow, for it was not until the Ark had been brought in triumph to Mount Sion, that ‘David returned to bless his house, or to dwell in it.

How much more should we take no rest until we have made ready within us a habitation for the Saviour, a place where the Son of Man may lay His head!

6. Lo, we heard of the same at Ephrata : and found it in the wood.

David, and his father, and his brethren, while they dwelt at Bethlehem Ephratah, had heard of the Ark as being in the tabernacle at Shiloh in the tribe of Ephraim, but when the time came for Israel and their king to seek for it again, they found it not at Shiloh, but in the forest near Baalah of Judah, which is called Kirjath-jearim, the city of the wood; and from thence they brought it to Sion, its new abiding-place, from whence it was no more to remove. Even so has the Church heard the glad tidings of the true Ark, the Incarnate Saviour, at Bethlehem, with the shepherds, on Christmas-day, and has found Him on Good-Friday nailed to the wood of the bitter tree; but now knows Him to be abiding in the Jerusalem above, on the throne of eternal glory.

7. We will go into His tabernacle : and fall low on our knees before His footstool.

LXX. We will worship in the place where His feet have stood.

As the Church worshipped of old in Sion, in the tabernacle and before the Ark, so does the Church worship now at the footstool of God, even that Manhood which He has taken into eternal union with

Himself. He has made our nature holy, that we should henceforth worship the Man Christ Jesus, Who is also the eternal God; and 'that at His Name of Jesus every knee should bow.' For we bow not at His Name of the WORD, which is His Name of Godhead, but we bow at His Name of JESUS, which is the Name of His Manhood.

8. Arise, O Lord, into Thy resting-place : Thou, and the ark of Thy strength.

9. Let Thy priests be clothed with righteousness : and let Thy saints sing with joyfulness.

10. For Thy servant David's sake : turn not away the presence of Thine Anointed.

Thus did Solomon pray when the temple of God was dedicated,—'Now therefore arise, O Lord God, into Thy resting-place, Thou and the ark of Thy strength: let Thy priests, O Lord God, be clothed with salvation, and let Thy saints rejoice in goodness. O Lord God, turn not away the face of Thine anointed: remember the mercies of David Thy servant.' And if Solomon could plead thus in the temple of old for the sake of David, surely the Church, praying now, when the face of the Anointed has been turned to her in the fulness of grace and truth, may cry daily with prevailing intercession, 'Endue Thy ministers with righteousness. And make Thy chosen people joyful,' for the sake of Thy Son Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour.

11. The Lord hath made a faithful oath unto David : and He shall not shrink from it ;

12. Of the fruit of thy body : shall I set upon thy seat.

13. If thy children will keep My covenant, and My testimonies that I shall learn them : their children also shall sit upon thy seat for evermore.

The Patriarch David, ' being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins according to the flesh, He would raise up Christ to sit on his throne ; He seeing this before,' set forth his firm belief in the word of God ; and looking onward through many generations of his children, he saw in the Spirit that King Who was to reign for ever, at once his Son and his Lord, his Saviour and his Judge.

14. For the Lord hath chosen Sion to be an habitation for Himself : He hath longed for her.

15. This shall be My rest for ever : here will I dwell, for I have a delight therein.

16. I will bless her victuals with increase : and will satisfy her poor with bread.

LXX. Blessing, I will bless her widows.

17. I will deck her priests with health : and her saints shall rejoice and sing.

This King hath chosen Sion, the Church on earth,

to be His habitation and His rest. He hath loved her in the past, and will love her for all time to come. He will be with her always, even to the end of the world. He hath chosen her for His rest: for God rests when He makes us rest; and then only we rest perfectly, and He in us, when we cease from our journey on earth to repose in the high city of our eternal rest. And His presence is an earnest of all good; by it He giveth meat to the hungry, and comfort to the poor, even the Bread of life to the believing and repenting soul; by it He Himself is the sanctification of His priests, and His righteousness and salvation is their most glorious vesture; and by His presence He maketh His elect ever glad, filling their hearts with joy and their mouths with songs. So doth He fulfil His Church's daily prayer, giving both to her priests and to her children more of holiness and more of joy than they can ask or think, by giving to them Himself, the Giver of salvation.

18. There shall I make the horn of David to flourish: I have ordained a lantern for Mine Anointed.

19. As for his enemies, I shall clothe them with shame: but upon himself shall his crown flourish.

There in the true Church shall the horn of David—the source of David's strength, and the glory of David's might—even the Messiah, the Prince, arise and reign and flourish for ever; and all the powers and the kingdoms of the world shall be cast down

before Him. There shall God kindle the Light of Israel, 'the Light to lighten the Gentiles, and to be the glory of His people;' ordaining Him to arise and shine, Who is the true Light, 'the Light of Light,' which the darkness of evil cannot quench nor comprehend. In His light His enemies shall be ashamed. He shall clothe His foes with shame, even as He clothes His priests with righteousness: for He shall judge in perfect justice, as He shall rule with perfect power; and His crown, which once was sharp with thorns, shall beam with mercy and truth, dimless, measureless, endless.

This Pilgrim Psalm was probably written by Solomon at the placing the ark in the temple; and verses 8, 9, 10, we know, formed the conclusion of his prayer on that occasion, (2 Chron. vi. 41, 42). Verse 9 is also used in the Church's daily service. In verse 6 there is some difficulty, as some commentators understand Ephratah to be used for Ephraim, and would translate, "We used to hear of the ark in Ephraim," i. e. at Shiloh; but the meaning seems to be that Jesse and his family, the dwellers at Bethlehem Ephratah, (Gen. xxxv. 19,) had traditionally heard of the ark as being at Shiloh, but that on inquiry they had found it where it had been placed after it had returned from the Philistines, in the house of Abinadab, in Gibeah, near Kirjath-jearim, (1 Sam. vii. 1, 2,) "the city of forests," otherwise called Baalah of Judah, (Josh. x. 9,) from which David and all the people brought it up, and left it, on the death of Uzzah, at the house of Obed-Edom, the Levite of Gath-Rimmon, (2 Sam. vi. 1—11). Compare with this verse St. Luke ii.; and with verses 11, 12, compare Acts ii. 30; 2 Sam. vii. 12, and Psalm lxxx. 9. On verse 18, Rabbi Kimchi remarks, "The horn of David is the Messias." The word "horn" occurs very often in the Psalms and the other Scriptures, as the emblem of strength and power. It is likely that some ornament in the shape of a horn was used as an ensign of dignity. The women among the Maronites, who dwell near Lebanon, still wear a silver horn as an ornament; and it is used, too, by warriors and commanders in Abyssinia. But perhaps a clearer illustration of the use of the horn as an ensign of dignity, is found in ancient writers, who tell us that

the great king of Persia alone of all the Persians wore the peak of his turban upright, while all his subjects wore theirs bent backward. The coins of Alexander the Great represent him with horns. The Sultan of Turkey wears a similar ensign of power in an upright plume, which may possibly be a relic of the ancient use of the horn in the turban or helmet. Compare Daniel vii.

PSALM CXXXIII. *Ecce, quam bonum.*

1. BEHOLD, how good and joyful a thing it is : brethren, to dwell together in unity !

How good and excellent a thing is unity ! It was the one last and great desire of the Lord of life for us, that we might be one ; even as the Father was in the Son, and the Son in the Father, that we also might be one in the Father and the Son. How glad and joyful a thing is charity ! It is greater than faith, or than hope—it 'is the very bond of peace, and of all virtues.' . Unity and brotherly love among the children of Christ's Church here, are benefits and graces which are indeed heavenly, and come from heaven. There are feelings that are good, but are not joyful, and feelings that are joyful, but that are not good, but unity and brotherly love fill the soul at once with goodness and with joy.

2. It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down unto the beard : even unto Aaron's beard, and went down to the skirts of his clothing.

Like that precious oil, rich with spices, which Moses poured upon the head of Aaron when he was consecrated to be high-priest, and which flowed down his beard, and perfumed at once and hallowed all his

garments, even to the border of his ephod; so is that unction of love which cometh from the Holy One, which was poured without measure upon our great High-Priest at His baptism, and ‘anointed Him for His burial,’ and has descended upon all who are brought into communion with Him, and who become part of that mysterious and seamless robe which is His Church,—making them holy as He is holy, and loving as He is loving.

3. Like as the dew of Hermon : which fell upon the hill of Sion.

Heb. Like as the dew of Hermon,
And as that which descended upon the hill of Sion.

4. For there the Lord promised His blessing : and life for evermore.

Yea, love comes from heaven and enriches and gladdens earth,—free, pure, plenteous, like the dew which fell upon the tops of Hermon, beyond the streams of Jordan in the far-off east, and like that which fell upon the hallowed hill of Sion in the south. It cheers all the people of God, far and wide, in all the borders of His Church. The plenteous dew of its blessing falls richly upon all, from their baptism in the spiritual Jordan beneath the height of Hermon, even to their coming to the spiritual Sion, the city of the living God, and to the full communion of the saints. There hath God promised to give the fulness of His blessing—everlasting life, everlasting unity, everlasting love. Then will He Himself be all in all.

This “Song of Degrees” was perhaps written when all the tribes of

Israel, including both Ephraim and Judah, were united under the government of David; or it might have been composed with a view to the general assembling of the Israelites together, after the return, in the temple, on the occasion of the feast of the Passover. It celebrates the blessing of unity, which is good as the oil of consecration, and joyful as the plenteous dew. With verse 2 compare Exod. xxx. 22—33, xxxvii. 29; Levit. viii. 12. Of this holy oil, which was compounded of myrrh, cinnamon, calamus, and cassia, with olive-oil, the tradition of the Rabbis says, that enough was made by Moses to anoint all the high-priests up to the time of the captivity, and that then it failed, and no more was made. Therefore the high-priests from the time of Aaron till that time, are called “anointed priests,” while those subsequent to the captivity were merely invested in their priestly robes without being anointed. They also relate that this holy oil was poured in great abundance upon the head of the high-priest, but that the other priests were consecrated by their foreheads being merely touched with it. In verse 3, Sion has been considered by some writers to be intended for Sion or Sirion, one of the lower peaks of Mount Hermon, (Deut. iii. 9, iv. 48): thus the dew of Hermon would be the same with that which fell on Sirion, or Shenir. But our Bible version seems to give the best rendering of the meaning of the original.

PSALM CXXXIV. *Ecce nunc.*

1. BEHOLD now, praise the Lord : all ye servants of the Lord ;

2. Ye that by night stand in the house of the Lord : even in the courts of the house of our God.

3. Lift up your hands in the sanctuary : and praise the Lord.

As the worshippers who came up to the yearly feast at the temple, to make their offerings and to pay their vows, when their holy service was done, turned back at evening-tide to return to their own dwellings, leaving the Levites and priests watching

in the holy place, and carrying on still the worship of prayer and praise; even so may the Christian soul, when its own work of intercession and thankfulness is finished, recollect with a glowing spirit how, in the courts of heaven, the angels and the spirits of the just made perfect are still evermore praising the Lord, and how there they neither sleep nor are weary, but rest not day and night in their ceaseless chant of 'Holy, Holy, Holy.' They lift up their hands and their voices before their God in His high eternal sanctuary, and cast their crowns before His throne in infinite adoration. Oh that we, like them, by night and by day, through all our earthly pilgrimage of life and death, might serve Him, and never weary of our service!

4. The Lord that made heaven and earth :
give thee blessing out of Sion.

Yet we join with them in their service. Our faint and weak song of praise is lengthened out by their unearthly melody; and in the mystery of the communion of saints, we, 'with angels and archangels, and all the company of heaven,' praise the Lord of glory; and though still pilgrims of the Church below, we share with the Church above, up to which our journeyings are tending, the blessing of Him Who is the Maker and Father of all.

This Psalm, which appears to be an evening hymn which was sung by the priests and Levites who kept watch within the temple at night, and the people who had ended their devotions, very fitly closes the series of "Pilgrim-songs." This collection of fifteen Psalms which forms the "Pilgrim-book," was probably finally arranged at the time

when the building of the second temple was for a time interrupted, (Ezra iv.) They therefore appear to come properly, in order of time, immediately after the 119th Psalm, supposing it to have been written by Ezra.

PSALM CXXXV. *Laudate Nomen.*

1. O PRAISE the Lord, laud ye the Name of the Lord : praise it, O ye servants of the Lord ;

2. Ye that stand in the house of the Lord : in the courts of the house of our God.

3. O praise the Lord, for the Lord is gracious : O sing praises unto His Name, for it is lovely.

4. For why ? the Lord hath chosen Jacob unto Himself : and Israel for His own possession.

To our God be ascribed unceasingly all blessing and praise, laud and honour, from all whom He hath made, from angels and from men, from priests and from peoples. His service is perfect freedom ; for to be His servant is to be His child. He is the Source of all grace, He is the Author of all beauty. Yet it is not for this that we should praise Him, but because He is love, and hath loved us. He first hath loved and chosen us, therefore do we love Him, and give ourselves unto Him.

5. For I know that the Lord is great : and that our Lord is above all gods.

6. Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did He in heaven, and in earth : and in the sea, and in all deep places.

7. He bringeth forth the clouds from the ends of the world : and sendeth forth lightnings with the rain, bringing the winds out of His treasures.

He is the Lord of nature, the Cause of causes, the Power of powers. His will is the law of the universe ; His righteous will is the law of heaven, and its joys—of earth, and its feebleness—of the sea, and its mysteries—of the depth of hell, and its pains. He Who sent His ministers to preach His Word in His Church, biddeth the clouds, with their droppings of rain, to cover the sky ; He Who maketh His angels winds, and His messengers like a flame, sendeth forth the lightnings to shine unto the world, and bringeth the winds and the storms from His treasure-house, of which none but He can tell whence they come, or whither they go.

8. He smote the first-born of Egypt : both of man and beast.

9. He hath sent tokens and wonders into the midst of thee, O thou land of Egypt : upon Pharaoh, and all his servants :

10. He smote divers nations : and slew mighty kings ;

11. Sehon king of the Amorites, and Og the king of Basan : and all the kingdoms of Canaan ;

12. And gave their land to be an heritage : even an heritage unto Israel His people.

He is the God of providence, the Ruler of all the doings of men, the Guide of His own people. He punished Egypt of old with pestilence, and death, and mighty plagues, and delivered His chosen; and not only did He deliver them from slavery, but He slew Sihon and Og, the emblems of worldly power, and smote the seven kingdoms of Canaan, the types of the seven deadly sins, and gave their land to Israel for an heritage, even as He has given the world for an heritage unto His Church.

13. Thy Name, O Lord, endureth for ever : so doth Thy memorial, O Lord, from one generation to another.

14. For the Lord will avenge His people : and be gracious unto His servants.

Everlasting is the glory of His Name, and the memory of His love is for eternity! His power is ever watching over His people, and His grace is upon all those that serve Him!

15. As for the images of the heathen, they are but silver and gold : the work of men's hands.

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

17. They have ears, and yet they hear not : neither is there any breath in their mouths.

18. They that make them are like unto them : and so are all they that put their trust in them.

What are the vain things that men trust in, their idols of silver and gold, but profitless delusions, and snares, and sins? 'They cannot deliver, but themselves go into captivity.' Covetousness and idolatry degrade man from his proper rank as a free and upright servant of his real Lord, to be a mere senseless, soulless being, believing in a lie, worshipping a lie, and living in a lie.

19. Praise the Lord, ye house of Israel : praise the Lord, ye house of Aaron.

20. Praise the Lord, ye house of Levi : ye that fear the Lord, praise the Lord.

21. Praised be the Lord out of Sion : Who dwelleth at Jerusalem.

Therefore let us leave the things that perish, and their images and copies, and turn to Him in Whom alone is blessing. Let all join in His all-worthy praise—the house of Israel, and the house of Aaron, and the house of Levi, the people, and the priests, and the deacons of His holy Church—yea, let all that fear Him, and reverence Him, and love Him, in the Sion of the Church below, join to praise Him for evermore Who dwells in the Jerusalem of the Church above. Bless we Him now and ever, if we would be now and ever blessed by Him.

The two first verses of this Psalm are taken from the one which immediately precedes it. Verses 15—18 also are taken from Psalm cxv.; in fact, there is a very strong resemblance and connection between this Psalm and the 115th, and they should be carefully compared together; for this gives thanks and grateful praise where that intercedes and promises. The subduing of Sihon and of Og, and the taking

possession of their kingdoms, as it was the first acquisition of territory gained by the Israelites, so it seems to have made a deep impression upon their memory as a nation. (Numbers xxi. 21—35.) This Psalm was probably chanted by a full chorus of the Priests, Levites, and people at some of the great festivals after the return from the Captivity, perhaps at the Feast of Tabernacles, the joyful celebration of which is recorded in Neh. viii. 13—18.

Ebening Prayer.

PSALM CXXXVI. *Confitemini.*

1. O GIVE thanks unto the Lord, for He is gracious : and His mercy endureth for ever.

2. O give thanks unto the God of all gods : for His mercy endureth for ever.

3. O thank the Lord of all lords : for His mercy endureth for ever.

Our God is perfect and eternal goodness, perfect and eternal power, perfect and eternal truth, perfect and eternal wisdom ; but the most glorious and the most wonderful of all His attributes is, that He is perfect and eternal mercy. His mercy never faileth ; of His mercy there is no end : His mercy shines forth for ever upon all His works, both small and great ; His mercy is from eternity unto eternity. He is God of gods, and Lord of lords ; but more than that—He is gracious, and of everlasting mercy !

4. Who only doeth great wonders : for His mercy endureth for ever.

5. Who by His excellent wisdom made the heavens : for His mercy endureth for ever.

6. Who laid out the earth above the waters : for His mercy endureth for ever.

7. Who hath made great lights : for His mercy endureth for ever ;

8. The sun to rule the day : for His mercy endureth for ever ;

9. The moon and the stars to govern the night : for His mercy endureth for ever.

For what were all the marvels of creation which He, with the Only-begotten Son, the Uncreated Wisdom and Eternal Word, and with the Holy Ghost, the Giver of life and light, wrought out when He framed the universe, but distinct evidences and visible signs of His supernal mercy? The created wonders are outward manifestations of the creating glory; the things seen are shadows of the things unseen. He 'by His Spirit hath garnished the heavens,' and by His Spirit hath He given to us the volume of His Scripture; He hath made the earth upon the waters, and hath redeemed the people of the earth by holy baptism; He hath set the sun to rule the day, and hath sent the Sun of righteousness, the Lord of glory, to shine upon us; He hath ordained the moon and the stars to govern the night, and He hath set forth the examples of His saints, and the doctrines of His Church, to guide us in our doubt and ignorance and darkness.

10. Who smote Egypt with their first-born : for His mercy endureth for ever ;

11. And brought out Israel from among them : for His mercy endureth for ever ;

12. With a mighty hand, and stretched out arm : for His mercy endureth for ever.

13. Who divided the Red Sea in two parts : for His mercy endureth for ever ;

14. And made Israel to go through the midst of it : for His mercy endureth for ever.

15. But as for Pharaoh and his host, He overthrew them in the Red Sea : for His mercy endureth for ever.

And in the same mightiness of eternal mercy He delivered the Church of Israel from the power of Pharaoh; and He has ever delivered His universal Church from the captivity of sin, — leading her members through the waters of regeneration, as He led Israel through the Red Sea.

16. Who led His people through the wilderness : for His mercy endureth for ever.

17. Who smote great kings : for His mercy endureth for ever ;

18. Yea, and slew mighty kings : for His mercy endureth for ever ;

19. Schon king of the Amorites : for His mercy endureth for ever ;

20. And Og the king of Basan : for His mercy endureth for ever ;

21. And gave away their land for an heritage : for His mercy endureth for ever ;

22. Even for an heritage unto Israel His servant : for His mercy endureth for ever.

And the mercy which He shewed in His education of Israel in the wilderness, in His destroying mighty kings before them, the monarchs of the Amorites and of Basan, still worketh effectually towards His people, — chastening, warning, guiding them, and driving from their souls the mighty powers of the flesh and of the world, and giving ‘all things,’ even Himself, to be an heritage to His saints.

23. Who remembered us when we were in trouble : for His mercy endureth for ever ;

24. And hath delivered us from our enemies : for His mercy endureth for ever.

25. Who giveth food to all flesh : for His mercy endureth for ever.

26. O give thanks unto the God of heaven : for His mercy endureth for ever.

27. O give thanks unto the Lord of lords : for His mercy endureth for ever.

The same everlasting mercy remembers and comforts us in all our troubles, delivers us from all our foes, supplies us in all our wants. As a loving Father, as a patient Saviour, as an ever-present Comforter, the eternal Trinity is eternally manifesting forth eternal mercy. Therefore let all who

have known His mercy give praise and thanks to Him for that mercy, by which, and in which, they are what they are.

This Psalm was probably written at the end of the captivity, to sustain and keep alive trust in the enduring mercy of God among the returning Jews. In the feature of each verse being followed by an assertion of the eternal mercy of God, in words which do not vary, it presents a strong resemblance to the Canticle of the Three Children, the *Benedicite*, which is used in our morning service, and was also written about the time of the captivity. This repetition of one sentence after each verse of a Psalm probably gave rise to the ancient antiphone of the earlier Christian offices, which was originally chanted after each verse, though it afterwards was confined to the conclusion of the Psalm. This Psalm was, it seems likely, chanted by a full choir of Levites, the congregation of worshippers responding or joining in with the last member of each verse.

PSALM CXXXVII. *Super flumina.*

1. By the waters of Babylon we sat down and wept : when we remembered thee, O Sion.

Like sinners sorrowing over graces lost, and mercies set at nought, and opportunities gone by for ever, so did the Israelites sit down weeping by the Euphrates or the Tigris, by the Chebar or the Ulai, in the land of their captivity, mourning, and swelling with their tears the waters of the rivers of Babel ; while their thoughts and memories, and the whole love and longing of their souls, went wandering back to Jerusalem, the city of their people, and Sion, the dwelling-place of their God.

2. As for our harps, we hanged them up : upon the trees that are therein.

They sat in silence ; they remembered in silence ;

they wept in silence. They hung their harps upon the trees, like penitents who dare not pray. For seventy years of weary grief they dared not cheer their souls with melody ; but they hanged up their harps upon the willows, while their tears ran down like the waters which flowed beside them—streaming, silent, ceaseless. They seemed away from God, and so seemed to have lost all.

3. For they that led us away captive required of us then a song, and melody, in our heaviness : Sing us one of the songs of Sion.

4. How shall we sing the Lord's song : in a strange land ?

But their Babylonian conquerors, who had heard of their skill in music and in song, asked them—like accusing thoughts, when they mock us with the remembrance of forfeited grace—to repeat for their enjoyment the far-famed melodies of Jerusalem. They bade them in all their heaviness and woe-worn state to ‘Sing them one of the songs of Sion,’ to chant again the holy tenderness of the sons of Korah, the solemn majesty of Asaph, the high-souled faith or the utter penitence of the royal Psalmist of Israel. But how could they? How could they sing with unwavering voice, or with unmoistened eyes, ‘Like as the hart desireth the water-brooks?’—How could they again declare, ‘In Jewry is God known : His Name is great in Israel?’—How could they ask, ‘Lord, who shall dwell in Thy tabernacle : or who shall rest upon Thy holy hill?’ with unpierced con-

sciences in that strange land to which their sins had brought them?

5. If I forget thee, O Jerusalem : let my right hand forget her cunning.

6. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth : yea, if I prefer not Jerusalem in my mirth.

They could not—and they durst not—sing the joyful and the loving hymns which had been sung of old in their now ruined sanctuary, either for the curiosity of their enemies and oppressors, or for their own solace and enjoyment. It was better to remember Jerusalem than to enjoy Babylon—better to weep with longing for the hill of Sion, than to be contented or to be merry on the plains of Chaldæa—better to mourn for the softly-flowing brook of Shiloah, than to smile beside the waters of Euphrates. Their memories were all they had ; and if they lost them too,—then it were well that their hands should forget for the time to come, how to call forth music from the harp-strings,—it were well that their tongues should be dumb for ever, be withered and palsied in their mouth. Their one wish and craving, the beginning and the end of all their desire, was to see Jerusalem again ; and that longing they set far above all other enjoying ; and that want they ever felt the first and last in any approach to mirth or gladness. The sound of music and the voice of Psalms brought back clear and plain that one memory of, Jerusalem which had ever added joy to their mirth

and given holiness to their holy songs. Even so is it better to remember heaven than to be surrounded with all earthly pleasure.

7. Remember the children of Edom, O Lord, in the day of Jerusalem : how they said, Down with it, down with it, even to the ground.

Heb. Remember, O Lord, to the sons of Edom the day of Jerusalem.

For the children of Edom, the sons of Esau, who had rejoiced over their brother Israel's ruin and slaughter,—they committed their chastisement to God. They wished not to remember their unkind and cruel triumph, and the evil joy with which they excited the Chaldeans to their work of desolation, and 'rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction ;' but they committed the remembrance of it, and the chastisement of it, to the God of heaven. The Edomites had taken a guilty pleasure in malice ; and His righteous justice would not overlook them or forget them. Israel had sinned, and his punishment had overtaken him ; but Esau had sinned still more, and his punishment, though delayed, was certain still. The prophet of God, who had lamented over Judah, had spoken his Lord's decree when He said 'The punishment of thine iniquity is accomplished, O daughter of Sion ; He will no more carry thee into captivity. But He will visit thine iniquity, O daughter of Edom ; He will discover thy sins.' Yea, it is ever far more bearable to be chastened presently for our evil-doings,

than to have resting over us the fearful expectation of a coming and a certain judgment.

8. O daughter of Babylon, wasted with misery : yea, happy shall he be that rewardeth thee, as thou hast served us.

9. Blessed shall he be that taketh thy children : and throweth them against the stones.

And for Babylon, that city vast and powerful, the emblem of the confusion and the unwieldy strength of earth, as arrayed against the Church of God, there was a righteous doom to be accomplished in the appointed time. She was to be laid waste in her turn. There was one to be raised up, crowned with strength for the work of God, and blessed in doing it, even though it were a work of destruction. Of him, too, had Isaiah the prophet spoken :—‘Thus saith the Lord to His anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him ; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two-leaved gates ; and the gates shall not be shut. For Jacob My servant’s sake, and Israel Mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name, that thou mayest know that I the Lord, which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel.’ He requited to Babylon, as she had done to Sion ; conquering, and slaughtering, and leading into captivity the people of ‘the golden city’ of Babel. Cyrus was blessed in that he was raised up to be the punisher of the sinful city ; but he was still more blessed in that he was the instrument of reversing that ruin which Babylon

had wrought. He was again blessed, for that the Lord, the Redeemer, said 'of Cyrus, He is My shepherd, and shall perform all My pleasure, even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundations shall be laid.' And herein yet again was Cyrus blessed, in that he was a type of that Eternal Shepherd Who performed all the pleasure and the will of God,—of that Saviour Who by His death overthrew the powers of the world, and conquered and slew the lusts of the eye and of the flesh, and the pride of life, the children of that city of confusion;—Who ever dasheth to earth the offspring of the earth, the thoughts, and words, and works of earth;—Who 'mortifies and kills all vices in us,' smiting them to the ground with the stone tables of His holy law, and crushing them upon the blood-stained rocks of Golgotha.

This mournful and passionate song has in the Hebrew no title. In the LXX. it is inscribed, "of Jeremiah, for David," meaning, perhaps, for the family of David. It has many points of likeness to the Lamentations of Jeremiah, and was perhaps written by that prophet, in the early part of the captivity. It is certain that it was written at some time during the captivity at Babylon. The request of the conquerors in verse 3 did not proceed from a spirit of insult, but rather of curiosity, and shews how widely extended, even among heathen nations, was the fame of the beauty of the music and of the psalmody of the temple-service in Jerusalem. With verse 7 compare especially Obadiah 10—14, and Lamentations iv. 21, 22; and with verses 8, 9 compare, as far as regards Cyrus, Isaiah xlv. 24—28, xlv. 1—4, 13, xlvi. 11; and as regards Babylon, and her symbolic meaning, compare large portions of Isaiah and the other prophets, and the Book of Revelations. The prophecy of verse 9 was fulfilled, for Dean Prideaux says that during the siege of Babylon by Cyrus, "The Babylonians, to make their provisions last the longer, agreed to cut off all unnecessary mouths among them, and therefore, drawing together all

the women and children, they strangled them all." See his "Connection," book iii.

PSALM CXXXVIII. *Confitebor Tibi.*

1. I WILL give thanks unto Thee, O Lord, with my whole heart : even before the gods will I sing praise unto Thee.

LXX. And before the angels will I sing unto Thee ;
For Thou hast heard all the words of my mouth.

2. I will worship toward Thy holy temple, and praise Thy Name, because of Thy loving-kindness and truth : for Thou hast magnified Thy Name, and Thy Word, above all things.

3. When I called upon Thee, Thou heardest me : and enduedst my soul with much strength.

The gratitude of the whole and undivided heart, unshared among other objects of fear or liking, is the offering which the believer will desire to bring unto his God. He will shun spending upon any creature, even upon angels, the love which of right is due to his all-loving Father. He will, like David, or like Daniel worshipping toward the temple at Jerusalem, worship with all his soul and spirit turned towards heaven ; praising Him Whose temple is there, for all His goodness and loving-kindness, ' but above all, for His inestimable love in the redemption of the world by the Lord Jesus Christ ;' by which the Word being made flesh, raised our nature to be the highest above all things that are made, whether in earth or heaven. Yes, and he will return thanks, too, ' for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory ;' by which

in His Sacraments and Word our God quickens, comforts, strengthens, our weak and fainting souls, filling them to the full with faith, and hope, and love.

4. All the kings of the earth shall praise Thee, O Lord : for they have heard the words of Thy mouth.

5. Yea, they shall sing in the ways of the Lord : that great is the glory of the Lord.

6. For though the Lord be high, yet hath He respect unto the lowly : as for the proud, He beholdeth them afar off.

In this offering up of the whole heart in gratitude, we shall not be alone. All the nations of the world and their rulers shall be brought to join in it too ; for they shall all at length hear His solemn proclamation,—‘ Yet have I set My king upon My holy hill of Sion,’ and shall all at length confess the real righteousness and the almightiness of Him Whose name is Love. They shall find that ‘ all the ways of the Lord are mercy and truth’ to them that are His ; and, walking in those ways of mercy and truth, they shall sing of Him Whose ways they are, and of His glory—that glory which He sought not for Himself, but which rested upon Him the more mightily for that He sought it not. They shall sing of Him Who was the Highest and yet became the Lowest, stooping from the height of eternity down to our fallen nature, even to the cradle of Bethlehem, and Who by His very lowliness is set far above and

away from the proud and the despisers. For God and pride cannot dwell together, either in the same heaven above, or in the same heart on earth. Pride once fallen from heaven ascends no more to the heaven from which it fell.

7. Though I walk in the midst of trouble, yet shalt Thou refresh me : Thou shalt stretch forth Thy hand upon the furiousness of mine enemies, and Thy right hand shall save me.

8. The Lord shall make good His loving-kindness toward me : yea, Thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever ; despise not then the works of Thine own hands.

In trouble He will ever help His own ; in weariness He will refresh them. He has stretched forth His hand upon the Cross, and has stilled the furiousness of our ghostly foes, and has put away our guilt ; and His right hand will still be ever stretched forth to find and save His people, until at last He shall set them on His right hand for ever in His kingdom of salvation. For He will keep all His promises ; He will lose not one of His sheep ; He will give the fulness of the grace of perseverance unto them that ask it from His infinite mercy. His creating hands formed our souls in the beginning ; His nail-pierced hands redeemed them on Calvary ; His glorified hands will hold our souls fast and not let them go for ever. Unto His hands let us commend our spirits, sure that even though the works of our

hands have made void the works of His hands, yet that His hands will again make perfect all that our hands have unmade.

This Psalm is evidently what the title declares it to be, "a Psalm of David." To this the LXX. add the names of "Haggai and Zechariah;" and it is likely that it was preserved and used by them at the building of the second temple, and the reciting it at that time must have brought much consolation to the race of David and the nation of Judah. The Psalm itself was probably composed by David on the promise being made to him which is recorded in 2 Sam. vii. This commences a series of eight Psalms, written by David, which were added as supplementary to the collections of the former books.

Morning Prayer.

PSALM CXXXIX. *Domine, probasti.*

1. O LORD, Thou hast searched me out, and known me : Thou knowest my down-sitting, and mine up-rising ; Thou understandest my thoughts long before.

2. Thou art about my path, and about my bed : and spiest out all my ways.

3. For lo, there is not a word in my tongue : but Thou, O Lord, knowest it altogether.

4. Thou hast fashioned me behind and before : and laid Thine hand upon me.

LXX. Behold, Lord, Thou knowest all things,
The last things and those of ancient days.

Our eternal Father knoweth us. He made us, and how should He not know the work of His own hands? His eye of wisdom ever and utterly sees us; His eye of love ever and utterly watches us.

His presence is closer round us than the air we breathe ; His presence is more within us than even the life by which we live. ' He is not far from every one of us : for in Him we live, and move, and have our being.' Our path by day, our bed by night, the words of our tongue, the thoughts of our spirit, are all open and plain before Him Who said in the beginning, ' Let us make man,' and Who blessed him when He had made him.

5. Such knowledge is too wonderful and excellent for me : I cannot attain unto it.

How awful is it for a frail, sinning, polluted thing like man to know and to feel that he is ever near to so pure, and wise, and holy a Lord and God. We cannot attain even to a conception of the wisdom of our God. How can we abide the keenness of His knowledge and the purity and righteousness of His judgments ? We fall back abashed ; we long to escape from His presence, like Jonah unto Tarshish ; we shrink from the thought of His unceasing nearness, which flesh and blood cannot bear. For in every world, in every Church, in every heart, Christ is and hath been either crucified or glorified.

6. Whither shall I go then from Thy Spirit : or whither shall I go then from Thy presence ?

7. If I climb up into heaven, Thou art there : if I go down to hell, Thou art there also.

8. If I take the wings of the morning : and remain in the uttermost parts of the sea ;

9. Even there also shall Thy hand lead me : and Thy right hand shall hold me.

10. If I say, Peradventure the darkness shall cover me : then shall my night be turned to day.

11. Yea, the darkness is no darkness with Thee, but the night is as clear as the day : the darkness and light to Thee are both alike.

But whither can man go where the grace of the Holy Spirit cannot reach him?—whither can he go where the Son of God has not been before him? If he ascend to heaven, Christ the Lord is reigning there in the fulness of all power over earth and heaven ; if he go down into the grave, the Saviour hath been there before him ; and in that deeper pit of pain and woe eternal His judgment is supreme, though His mercy stops short before its fearful mouth. If man could take wings swifter than the beams of morning light, and could flee unto that eastward Paradise from which once Adam fell, there have the footsteps of the Redeemer past, Who entered there with the repentant thief ; and if he should go beyond the ocean and its depths, into the unseen and hidden world of spirits, even there too hath Christ descended. Where man hath been or can go, there hath God gone as man,—leading us with His guiding hand, if we will but follow Him,—holding fast our souls with His right hand, that whether in life or death, in Paradise or in the unseen world, His hand may save us which was stretched out for us. No

darkness, not even the darkness of sin, can hide us from Him Who sought us through the darkness from the sixth hour to the ninth on Calvary. That darkness is no darkness with Him Who rose from the grave early, while it was yet dark, for our justification, and filled the whole earth with the bright light of the day of His resurrection. The darkness and the light are to Him both alike, for His love shines alike in both, and His grace works alike in both. Seek we not how to escape from Him, but how to be ever with Him, that in all and through all we lose not the leading of His loving hand.

12 For my reins are Thine : Thou hast covered me in my mother's womb.

13. I will give thanks unto Thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made : marvellous are Thy works, and that my soul knoweth right well.

14. My bones are not hid from Thee : though I be made secretly, and fashioned beneath in the earth.

15. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect : and in Thy book were all my members written ;

16. Which day by day were fashioned : when as yet there was none of them.

For we are His indeed ; our innermost impulses and wishes belong to Him. He made us, and brought us into life. He caused us to be born

again in the laver of regeneration. All that strange and wondrous assemblage of hopes, and fears, and desires, and affections, and memories, and aspirings, and regrets, which we call ourselves,—so strangely fearful in their natural state, so strangely wonderful when sanctified by grace,—are indeed the work of His hands, no less than our fleshly body which He made from the dust of earth. He hath framed us, soul and body. Our bones so strong and aptly set, our nerves and muscles woven together so artfully and well,—the gradual increase day by day of our frame,—the full number and order of the members which make up our body,—all are from Him, and He is the Cause of all. He is the Creator and the Cause, Who became even as one of the created, Who Himself was conceived and born, and grew up to the stature of a man, that into His body, so fearfully and wonderfully made, He might join together all His members, even those whose names are written in the book of Life.

17. How dear are Thy counsels unto me, O God : O how great is the sum of them !

18. If I tell them, they are more in number than the sand : when I wake up I am present with Thee.

How great, how wonderful are the dealings of God with man both in creation and in redemption ! ‘ Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God ! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out ! ’ All

His designs are mercy, all His doings are love Who can number His works of love toward one of His elect? How immense, then, is the sum of all His acts of mercy to all the number of His redeemed! Neither man nor angel can reach their full account, for they are infinite, as His love is infinite. This only do we know, that, as the completion and the end of them all, He will at last raise us up again, soul and body, from the sleep of death, clothed with incorruption, and girded with immortality, and will set us in His presence in the fulness of exceeding joy, to be for ever with our Lord.

19. Wilt Thou not slay the wicked, O God : depart from me, ye blood-thirsty men.

20. For they speak unrighteously against Thee : and Thine enemies take Thy Name in vain.

21. Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate Thee : and am not I grieved with those that rise up against Thee ?

22. Yea, I hate them right sore : even as though they were mine enemies.

This full conviction of the presence of God ever close to us will keep us clear from the assaults of sin. Knowing that our God hates the wickedness of the wicked, we shall not dare to come near to them while He is so near to us. We shall hate the sin which enslaves those that hate Him ; we shall feel sin to be our one, own, real, personal foe, be-

cause it is our Lord's ; and we shall fight against it in ourselves and in others by prayer and faith, until, if it may be, we subdue it both in ourselves and them.

23. Try me, O God, and seek the ground of my heart : prove me, and examine my thoughts.

24. Look well if there be any way of wickedness in me : and lead me in the way everlasting.

Therefore let us give up ourselves to Him ever more and more. He searcheth us,—let us pray to Him to search us ; He understandeth our thoughts, let us ask Him to examine and to purge them. He is about our path and spies our way ;—what can we desire but that He will take from us the way of wickedness, if there be any such within us ? His hand is leading us,—cry we to Him with all our strength that He will lead us in the way everlasting, even in Himself unto Himself.

This Psalm was undoubtedly written, as the title declares, “by David, for the chief Musician,” or the leader of the choir. These words the LXX. translate here, as elsewhere, “for the end,” which St. Augustine always interprets of “Christ, the end of the Law.” It is a sublime and hallowing meditation upon the omniscience and omnipresence of Almighty God, and was well adapted to instruct and comfort the exiles in Babylon during their separation from the sanctuary at Jerusalem. There is nothing to fix the time of David's life to which its composition should be assigned, but it might have been written during the plottings of Absalom.

PSALM cxi. *Eripe me, Domine.*

1. DELIVER me, O Lord, from the evil man : and preserve me from the wicked man.

2. Who imagine mischief in their hearts : and stir up strife all the day long.

3. They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent : adder's poison is under their lips.

4. Keep me, O Lord, from the hands of the ungodly : preserve me from the wicked men, who are purposed to overthrow my goings.

5. The proud have laid a snare for me, and spread a net abroad with cords : yea, and set traps in my way.

As David prayed for deliverance from the mischief and calumny of the Ziphites, of Doeg, and of Saul, so does the child of Christ's holy Church ever pray for deliverance from the power of his ghostly enemy, and the wicked who are the instruments of his malice. Iniquity and strife are ever the contrivance and the object of the ungodly and the hypocrites, who are in this the children of the great dragon, and do the lusts of their father. The ungodly laid a snare for the Truth Himself, 'that they might entangle Him in His talk;' and He 'perceived their wickedness' and craft, and broke through their trap, condemning them with that word which cannot lie, —'Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?' In the same spirit of truth and of holy indignation must His disciple seek to escape both their example and their guile.

6. I said unto the Lord, Thou art my God : hear the voice of my prayers, O Lord.

7. O Lord God, Thou strength of my health: Thou hast covered my head in the day of battle.

This the soldier of Christ can ever do by prayer, —‘Thou art my God’ is the sword of the Spirit with which he can resist and discomfit the Evil one and all his instruments. He will ever conquer in that warfare, even as his Lord conquered, if he will ‘put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for an helmet the hope of salvation.’ The Lord Himself is the salvation of His people, and if we have hope in Him, He will cover us, like a mighty champion spreading his shield over a fallen soldier, from all assaults of the enemy in the hour of temptation and in the day of trouble.

8. Let not the ungodly have his desire, O Lord : let not his mischievous imagination prosper, lest they be too proud.

9. Let the mischief of their own lips fall upon the head of them : that compass me about.

10. Let hot burning coals fall upon them : let them be cast into the fire, and into the pit, that they never rise up again.

11. A man full of words shall not prosper upon the earth : evil shall hunt the wicked person to overthrow him.

God will take care that the wicked and the deceitful do not prosper; He will interfere to prevent

their becoming proud in their own craft and sinfulness. He will judge them here and hereafter out of their own mouths, and will condemn them by their own words. He will appoint them their portion; and when 'the devil that deceived them is cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, to be tormented day and night for ever and ever,' they also 'shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.' Hypocrisy, and falsehood, and lying, the abusings of the gift of speech to wicked ends, shall not prosper even in this life; punishment shall hunt the hypocrite even here, like the hunter tracks out a beast until he overtakes it: he may 'be sure that his sin shall find him out' in this life; and in the life to come he shall meet with the fulness of the Saviour's 'Woe unto you.'

12. Sure I am that the Lord will avenge the poor : and maintain the cause of the helpless.

13. The righteous also shall give thanks unto Thy Name : and the just shall continue in Thy sight.

Faith waits until the righteousness of God is justified, for she can realize that which is not seen. The poor and the helpless have Him for their comfort and their aid, Who once Himself was even as they are; and when He thinks it time, then the faithful and obedient shall be filled with gratefulness for ever, and the right-doers, who have persevered

in this life, shall be 'caught up to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall they ever be with the Lord.' Wherefore, in trial, and calumny, and oppression, let us comfort one another with these words.

This also is "a Psalm of David, for the Chief Musician." It clearly belongs to that period of his life when he was suffering from his enemies, from the Ziphim or from Doeg; and it strongly resembles those prayers which were written under the same circumstances.

PSALM cxli. *Domine, clamavi.*

1. LORD, I call upon Thee, haste Thee unto me: and consider my voice when I cry unto Thee.

2. Let my prayer be set forth in Thy sight as the incense: and let the lifting up of my hands be an evening sacrifice.

The real prevailing power of all prayer, whenever and wherever it is offered before God, lies in its union with the one mighty Sacrifice which was offered upon the Cross. It is that alone which makes the prayers of the saints rise before the throne of God as incense from the golden censer; it is that alone which makes the daily lifting of our hands to be a daily sacrifice,—that it is one with His all-sufficient intercession, Who in the evening of this world's day spread abroad His hands on Calvary, and at the ninth hour, the time of the evening sacrifice, commended His Spirit into the hands of the Father of all spirits, and the Hearer of all prayer.

3. Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth : and keep the door of my lips.

4. O let not mine heart be inclined to any evil thing : let me not be occupied in ungodly works with the men that work wickedness, lest I eat of such things as please them.

As He was silent and spake not, so should His people learn to suffer and be silent too. They must ever cry to Him to guard their lips and rule their tongue, 'Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not.' Out of the mouth and out of the heart proceed those evil words and angry and unkind sayings which defile the man; and grace only can keep the door of the inclinations of the heart, and can stop the way against meditated and spoken sin. Grace only can keep us from companionship with the evil doers in their works and ways, and can restrain us from joining with them 'who serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly,' in their ungodly pleasures and their delights, which bring ruin to the soul. Like the Christian of old who had been feasting at the Table of the Lord, refrained from eating of the meats sacrificed to idols, so must the Christian now carefully shun all enjoyments in which sin claims any share.

5. Let the righteous rather smite me friendly : and reprove me.

6. But let not their precious balms break my head : yea, I will pray yet against their wickedness.

Heb. The righteous smites me in kindness and reproves me.

Balsam for the head my head does not reject.

Still will I pray against their wickedness.

LXX. The righteous will correct me in pity and reprove me.

The oil of the sinner shall not anoint my head.

For my prayer shall still be against the things that please them.

Thus did David's faith guide and direct his prayers and doings. He reposed, as did Christ in the day of His humiliation, with full trust upon the promise of the One Who alone is truly righteous,—'I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to Me a son. If he fails, I will chastise him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the sons of men; but My loving-kindness shall not depart from him.' The correction of the righteous God, like the reproof of righteous men, is often the truest token of His mercy and kindness. It is an anointing which, though at first it may falsely seem to drop from the vial of anger, yet is truly precious and gladdening in the end. It is different far from the anointing of the sinner; it bruises not, but mollifies and heals the bruises of ungodliness and wrong. It cheers the penitent to pray with still more fervent heart against the wickedness of those who go on still in their guilt.

7. Let their judges be overthrown in stony

places : that they may hear my words, for they are sweet.

Heb. Their judges were dismissed in the sides of the rock,
And they heard my words that they were sweet.

LXX. Their strong ones that were joined to the rock have
been swallowed up.

They shall hear my words that they have prevailed.

In the strength of this faith was David enabled to return good for evil to Saul, the judge and king of Israel, who sought his life, when he found him asleep in the sides of the cave of the wilderness of Engedi : and ‘the men of David said unto him, Behold the day of which the Lord said unto thee, Behold, I will deliver thine enemy into thy hand, that thou mayest do to him as it shall seem good to thee ;’ and David would not stretch forth his hand to kill him, but merely cut off the skirt of his royal robe, and so let him depart unhurt. And this act of mercy was not without its reward ; for Saul for a while listened to David’s mild and gentle words, humbly pleading his own uprightness and harmlessness of life : ‘and it came to pass when David had made an end of speaking these words unto Saul, that Saul said, Is this thy voice, my son David ? And Saul lifted up his voice and wept.’

8. Our bones lie scattered before the pit :
like as when one breaketh and heweth wood
upon the earth.

Heb. As when one with a plough tears up the earth,
So do our bones lie scattered at the mouth of Sheol.

LXX. As the heaping of earth hath broken out upon the earth,
So our bones have been scattered before Hades.

Yet, for all this meekness and tenderness on the part of David towards his persecutor, within a little while Saul again sought his life, and was seeking with all his power to destroy him and his followers; just as but a short time before he had slain Ahimelech and all the priests, to the number of fourscore and five, and all the inhabitants of the city of Nob, because they had shewn kindness to David. The recollection of these men, so miserably slaughtered, and of their dead bodies laid in heaps upon the earth, like furrows on the new-ploughed land, or like splinterings of wood where one had been hewing timber,—must have been a sorrow ever present to David's mind. He could only cast it off by looking on to that day when the breath of God shall bring together the dead bones of the dead, and clothe them with flesh, and fill them with life again, and shall recall their souls from the mouth of the unseen world, in the morning of the coming Day.

9. But mine eyes look unto Thee, O Lord God : in Thee is my trust, O cast not out my soul.

Heb. Pour not out my soul.

10. Keep me from the snare that they have laid for me : and from the traps of the wicked doers.

11. Let the ungodly fall into their own nets together : and let me ever escape them.

The saints of God at all times and in all ages, and

not David only, have ever turned their looks to Him with adoring faith, praying Him to deliver them when the hour of death comes—to save them from the craft of the enemy, and from the deceits of the wicked. And they have ever found that that prayer has been granted, that ‘the wickedness of the wicked has ever been upon him, and the righteousness of the righteous has been upon him.’ Through the all-wise and all-just government of their God, the doers of wrong ever fall, the doers of right ever escape.

This “Psalm of David” was, it appears probable, written shortly before the one which follows it. Verse 7 is a difficult one to understand; but the best interpretation seems founded on the occurrences related in 1 Sam. xxiv., when David dismissed Saul, whom he had found sleeping in the cave of Engedi, without injuring him, though his life was in his power, and his men were anxious that he should take it. Another interpretation is, that the possessors of this world’s power were to be dashed to pieces before David. Verse 8 appears to refer to the slaughter of David’s friends at Nob, by Doeg the Edomite. With it may be compared Isa. xxvi. 19; Ezek. xxxvii. 1—14. The translation by the LXX. of these verses is very different; and in consequence, the commentaries on them of the Fathers are very various. This Psalm was probably used in after-times as an evening hymn.

Evening Prayer.

PSALM cxlii. *Voce mea ad Dominum.*

1. I CRIED unto the Lord with my voice :
yea, even unto the Lord did I make my sup-
plication.

2. I poured out my complaints before Him :
and shewed Him of my trouble.

Ever must we turn to the God of consolation with

prayer in all time of our tribulation, as with thanksgiving in all time of our wealth. To cry to Him with our voice and our heart—to pour out before Him our tears and our complaints—to shew to Him our trouble and our submission to His will—this is the only way for the sufferer to gain comfort, rest, and grace. Thus did David, when hiding from his tyrants in the cave of Adullam; thus did He Who was the Son of David, in His descent into the cave of the sepulchre, and into the prison of the unseen world.

3. When my spirit was in heaviness Thou knewest my path : in the way wherein I walked have they privily laid a snare for me.

4. I looked also upon my right hand : and saw there was no man that would know me.

5. I had no place to flee unto : and no man cared for my soul.

‘Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say?’ was the cry of the Son of Man in the time of His humiliation. He was ‘sore amazed and very heavy,’ but He gave Himself into His Father’s hand, saying, ‘Not My will, but Thine be done;’ and so He walked that sharp and weary road in which His enemies had set the cruel snare of the cross, and the bitter pit-fall of the grave. He looked in vain for any to help Him or to comfort Him, for His disciples had fled : there were none to honour or obey Him, for His own people of Israel declared, ‘We have no king but Cæsar.’ He looked upon His right hand, and there was there but the malefactor

that was crucified with Him. He was left alone in His sorrowings, in His patience, in His agony; for there was no way of escape but that He must drink that whole cup of passion to the dregs; and He was utterly desolate, so as to be forced to cry, 'My God, My God, Why hast Thou forsaken Me?'

6. I cried unto Thee, O Lord, and said : Thou art my hope, and my portion in the land of the living.

7. Consider my complaint : for I am brought very low.

8. O deliver me from my persecutors : for they are too strong for me.

9. Bring my soul out of prison, that I may give thanks unto Thy Name : which thing if Thou wilt grant me, then shall the righteous resort unto my company.

Heb. Bring my soul out of prison, that men may praise Thy Name :

The righteous shall compass me about, when Thou art kind unto me.

LXX. Bring my soul out of prison to confess to Thy Name :

The righteous wait for me, until Thou shalt requite me.

He suffered the shame of the Cross; He bore the pains of death; He felt the anguish of desolation; yet still He prayed and cried unto the Eternal Father. 'Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit,'—this was His last and deepest cry, and this was His deliverance and His victory; for 'having said thus, He gave up the ghost.' And in the power

of that mighty sacrifice He ever prays in all His members, and with all His members, in the time of desolation and of grief—even as His Spirit prayed in Joseph in the pit, in David in the cave, in Jonah in the fish's belly, in St. Peter in Herod's dungeon,—‘O Lord, bring my soul out of prison;’ bring my soul out of the prison of sorrow, deliver me from the bonds of unrepented sin, free me from the confinement of this dying body, rescue me from the dungeon of the grave, save me from the pit of hell! Oh Thou Who wast delivered, do Thou deliver me! Thus shall our imprisoned soul, no longer the slave of sin, but being set free to God, leave the wards of this lower prison-house, and shall ascend amid immortal welcomings unto that assembly of the righteous which is waiting, while one by one the number of the elect is being accomplished; and where all join in everlasting gratitude to Him Who heard their cry and saved them.

This Psalm has the title, “A Maschil, or Instruction of David when he was in the cave; a Prayer.” This title resembles that of Psalm lvii., which was also written “when he fled from Saul in the cave.” Compare, therefore, the note on that Psalm. This Psalm was probably written before the fifty-seventh, as it is a fervent and earnest prayer, while that partakes rather of the character of a thanksgiving. And as the Church, by appointing Ps. lvii. for Easter-day, has directly pointed out its prophetic and spiritual application to our Lord, so too the present Psalm, from its evident connection and similarity of title, has always been understood by the Fathers in the same spiritual meaning. The cave of David was a type of the sepulchre of the Son of David. This cave was most probably that of Adullam, into which David had escaped from Saul, (1 Sam. xxii. 1, 2). Compare also 1 Sam. xxiv.

FOR ASH-WEDNESDAY, BEING THE SEVENTH
PENITENTIAL PSALM.PSALM cxliii. *Domine, exaudi.*

1. HEAR my prayer, O Lord, and consider my desire : hearken unto me for Thy truth and righteousness' sake.

2. And enter not into judgment with Thy servant : for in Thy sight shall no man living be justified.

That which we repentant sinners crave most and foremost from the mercy of God is, that He will not enter into judgment with us strictly and extremely. His first righteousness, which is the righteousness of justice, is very terrible ; none can abide it. Flesh and blood cannot stand in His sight : no man living can be justified before God by his own feelings or his own doings ; he must be found guilty of transgression of the law. But the second righteousness of God is the righteousness of perfect mercy, by which He hears our prayer, and accepts our penitence, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. In Him Who is perfect in His just-doing are we found just too ; so that we can boldly ask, ' Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect ? It is God that justifieth.'

3. For the enemy hath persecuted my soul ; he hath smitten my life down to the ground : he hath laid me in the darkness, as the men that have been long dead.

If we look to ourselves, our own works and ways,

we see how often and how sadly we have fallen. The enemy hath hunted our soul by every temptation, and hath again and again overcome us. He hath smitten us down into the abasement of utter self-contempt; He hath brought us well-nigh to the darkness of despair, in which dwell the living dead—the dead in soul and conscience,—whose state of horror and gloomy misery is but faintly shadowed forth by the horror and gloom of the sepulchres of those whose bodies have been long time dead.

4. Therefore is my spirit vexed within me : and my heart within me is desolate.

5. Yet do I remember the time past ; I muse upon all Thy works : yea, I exercise myself in the works of Thy hands.

If we look to ourselves, we can have but vexation of spirit and desolateness of heart; therefore, if we would repent indeed, let us rather look to God—think of His mercies in time past—ponder over His gracious and wonderful dealings in all the world—reflect diligently upon the almightiness of His love, and the power of His salvation.

6. I stretch forth my hands unto Thee : my soul gaspeth unto Thee as a thirsty land. .

7. Hear me, O Lord, and that soon, for my spirit waxeth faint : hide not Thy face from me, lest I be like unto them that go down into the pit.

So will the weary hands be raised yet again in

prayer, through faith in Him Who stretched forth His hands upon the Cross ; so will the fainting soul wait and long for the outpouring of His grace, Who upon the Cross said, ' I thirst,' for our salvation, even as the parched-up fields and dying herbs seem to gasp and pant like living things for the sweet and cheering showers in the fierce heat of summer. So will the soul cry to be heard, and that soon, lest its faith grow faint with delay : and the hiding of God's face, the denying of His smile of pardon, will press on the spirit like sickness, and weigh it down like the heaviness of death.

8. O let me hear Thy loving-kindness be-
times in the morning, for in Thee is my trust :
shew Thou me the way that I should walk in,
for I lift up my soul unto Thee.

9. Deliver me, O Lord, from mine enemies :
for I flee unto Thee to hide me.

10. Teach me to do the thing that pleaseth
Thee, for Thou art my God : let Thy loving
Spirit lead me forth into the land of righteous-
ness.

But as the sight of the divine righteousness of mercy grows clearer—as it will, if we cry for pardon and faint not—the prayer of the penitent becomes more hopeful and more strong. He begs early for the absolving word of pardon and of love, that the morning of peace may follow the night of sorrow. His spirit looks on in faith to the morning of the

Resurrection, and hears the loving words which the Saviour then shall speak unto His own. He asks to be shewn the upward road, and lifts up his soul that it may meet the descending graces of the Holy Ghost. He petitions for deliverance, and he goes at once to the Deliverer, and would hide himself and his sorrow in his Saviour's spear-pierced heart. He desires to know and to do what is well-pleasing in the sight of Him Who is his Redeemer, his God, his all. He longs to be guided by the loving Spirit of his loving Father from this thirsty land of drouth and dread, into the land of holiness, and peace, and life.

11. Quicken me, O Lord, for Thy Name's sake : and for Thy righteousness' sake bring my soul out of trouble.

12. And of Thy goodness slay mine enemies : and destroy all them that vex my soul ; for I am Thy servant.

So through that life-giving Spirit from Whom cometh all that is good and all that is true, doth the penitent find life to his soul and pardon for his sins past. And so by the same Spirit can he pray concerning all his lusts, and evil affections, and unholy thoughts and longings—Slay them, O Saviour of my soul, for they have slain Thee ; and they will slay me, unless by Thy cross and passion Thou wilt deliver me from their assaults and power ! I serve Thee, and no other Lord ; Oh make Thou me Thine own, Whose own I long to be !

This is "a Psalm of David," written, it would seem likely, about the time of the rebellion of Absalom, when the punishment of his sin came heavily upon him, though not unaccompanied by the hope of forgiveness through faith and prayer. It was perhaps used as a morning confession. It is appointed by the Church for Ash-Wednesday, and is the seventh and last of the Penitential Psalms. These seven Penitential Psalms are also sometimes called "the Special Psalms," and have long been used in the Church as the completest and most spiritual acts of repentance which she possesses. They have sometimes been considered as directed against the seven deadly sins; as, for instance, Psalm vi. against Wrath; Ps. xxxii. against Pride; Ps. xxxviii. against Gluttony; Ps. li. against Impurity; Ps. cii. against Covetousness; Ps. cxxx. against Envy, and the present Psalm against Indifference, or Carelessness.

Morning Prayer.

PSALM cxliv. *Benedictus Dominus.*

1. BLESSED be the Lord my strength : Who teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight.

2. My hope and my fortress, my castle and deliverer, my defender in Whom I trust : Who subdueth my people that is under me.

The Lord is our strength. He Who gave the victory to David over Goliath gives the victory to His people in their conflicts with the Evil one. Blessed be He Who placeth in our hands the shield of faith to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked, and Who teacheth us ever how to wield 'the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.' He is our all in all, our hope, our deliverance, and our salvation; and

through Him only can we bring into subjection, and rule and order rightly, our thoughts, and impulses, and desires, which the conscience of the Christian man, enlightened by the Holy Ghost, should ever govern and restrain, as a wise monarch governs and restrains his people.

3. Lord, what is man, that Thou hast such respect unto him : or the son of man, that Thou so regardest him ?

4. Man is like a thing of nought : his time passeth away like a shadow.

Lord, what is man, for whom Thou diedst ? What is there in us, unwise, sinful, selfish that we are, that Thou shouldest love us with Thine Almighty love ? Thou didst become as we are that we might become as Thou art ; Thou didst empty Thyself and become a thing of nought, that we might be filled with glory and immortality ! Oh may we ever be one with Thee Who wast made one with us, that when our time shall pass into nothingness, like a shadow when the sun is setting, we may abide in Thy eternity, which endureth like Thy mercy and Thy truth !

5. Bow Thy heavens, O Lord, and come down : touch the mountains, and they shall smoke.

6. Cast forth Thy lightning, and tear them : shoot out Thine arrows, and consume them.

7. Send down Thine hand from above : de-

liver me, and take me out of the great waters, from the hand of strange children ;

8. Whose mouth talketh of vanity : and their right hand is a right hand of wickedness.

Yea, O Lord of unchanging love, what marvels of Thy world of nature, what darkness of clouds, what fearfulness of earthquakes, what brightness of lightnings,—though all these were attending on Thy work of redemption,—can equal the wonders of Thy grace in the salvation of the world ! God sent not forth His messengers, but He Himself came down ; His own hand was stretched out to save His people from the mighty flood of this world's iniquity : His own right hand delivered them, and ever shall deliver them, from the right hand of evil and profane men, who make their 'confident boasting' of things of nought, and whose chief support and resource is in a lie.

9. I will sing a new song unto Thee, O God : and sing praises unto Thee upon a ten-stringed lute.

10. Thou hast given victory unto kings : and hast delivered David Thy servant from the peril of the sword.

He hath saved us ; and our part is to praise Him for His salvation. He who believeth in the New Testament, he who hath loved the new life, he who hath received the new Bread and the new Wine of the new law,—he singeth a new song unto his God.

The keeping of the ten precepts of His commandments is, in the sight of God, a life-long chant of praise upon a ten-stringed lute. And surely this praise is due unto Him 'Who hath made us kings and priests,' and hath subdued Satan under our feet, Who hath raised up the Son of David to overcome the sharpness of death, and to open the kingdom of heaven to all believers.

11. Save me, and deliver me from the hand of strange children : whose mouth talketh of vanity, and their right hand is a right hand of iniquity.

12. That our sons may grow up as the young plants : and that our daughters may be as the polished corners of the temple.

LXX. Their daughters beautified,
Adorned as the likeness of the temple.

13. That our garners may be full and plentiful with all manner of store : that our sheep may bring forth thousands and ten thousands in our streets.

14. That our oxen may be strong to labour, that there be no decay : no leading into captivity, and no complaining in our streets.

And the more we contemplate the mightiness of this salvation, the wonders of our deliverance from 'the corruption that is in the world through lust,' and from the powers of this vain and evil world, the more shall we love it and the more shall we desire it. It

is through the salvation of Christ alone that our sons can grow up from their youth in the power of baptismal grace, 'like trees planted by the water-side, that will bring forth their fruit in due season.' It is through that salvation that our daughters can be adorned, 'as becometh women professing godliness, with good works,' and so be like the columns in His temple, whose glory is not so much in the beauty of their form or the lustre of their polish, as in the holiness which they have from being portions of the building in which the All-holy dwells. The salvation of our Lord fills His Church with good works, as His goodness fills the garner of the husbandman with corn; He multiplies the pious members of His Church, His sheep who know His voice, His lambs, whom He carries in His bosom, until He shall increase them to that infinite 'multitude which no man can number.' He fills His priests and ministers, who labour in the word like oxen in the threshing-floor, with grace to believe and strength to preach His Gospel. He drives away all foes: He gives to all security and freedom in 'quiet resting-places;' He fills all with comfort, and heals all sorrow.

15. Happy are the people that are in such a case: yea, blessed are the people who have the Lord for their God.

Happy are they on whom these blessings fall; happy are the members of the visible Church of Christ on earth. Yea, blessed are they who feel and know that the Lord their God is still keeping unto

them His most true promise of being with them always, even to the end of the world.

This Psalm has in the Hebrew the title of "by David," which the LXX. render "by David concerning Goliath." Verse 10 seems to give some support to this title of the LXX. But there is no doubt but that this is a Psalm of David. Verses 1, 2 are almost the same as the opening verse of Psalm xviii., and verse 3 is nearly identical with verse 4 of Psalm viii. Verses 7, 8, and 11 were probably sung in chanting by a single voice answering to a full chorus.

FOR WHITSUNDAY.

PSALM cxlv. *Exaltabo Te, Deus.*

1. I WILL magnify Thee, O God, my King :
and I will praise Thy Name for ever and ever.

2. Every day will I give thanks unto Thee :
and praise Thy Name for ever and ever.

To him who saith unto God, Thou art my King, God Himself shall say, Thou art My servant. The same eternal Spirit Which enableth us to say the one maketh us the other. Therefore do we magnify our King, for that He hath poured His Spirit upon all flesh, giving us all good and all truth,—giving us each day our daily bread, for which we return Him daily thanks—giving us everlasting life, for which we return Him everlasting praise.

3. Great is the Lord, and marvellous, worthy to be praised : there is no end of His greatness.

4. One generation shall praise Thy works unto another : and declare Thy power.

Mighty, wonderful, and infinite is the goodness and the holiness of God; none can place their limits; none can understand their fulness. Yet the less they can be comprehended, the more are they to be marvelled at. It is not for one generation only, that He hath stretched out the heavens, and laid in their order the earth, the sea, the air, the fountains and rivers, the trees and herbs, and all their uses and their beauty,—that He hath arranged the courses of nature ceaseless and constant, the changes of seasons, the night, the day, the sun, the stars, the moon, and all things which are, and have been created. These have been signs from generation to generation, of the love of our Father and our God, bearing a long and enduring witness to His Almighty righteousness and truth.

5. As for me, I will be talking of Thy worship : Thy glory, Thy praise, and wondrous works ;

6. So that men shall speak of the might of Thy marvellous acts : and I will also tell of Thy greatness.

7. The memorial of Thine abundant kindness shall be shewed : and men shall sing of Thy righteousness.

The glory and the wonderfulness of His works of creation, the grandeur and majesty of His judgments in chastising the guilty; the strangeness and the abundance of His mercy in pardoning the repenting; the mighty mysteries of the Incarnation of

His Son, the surpassing Sacrifice of the Cross, the infinite love of the Atonement,—all these are marvels for the believing soul to commune of with itself, to talk of with others, to sing praises for in the Church unweariedly.

8. The Lord is gracious, and merciful : long-suffering, and of great goodness.

9. The Lord is loving unto every man : and His mercy is over all His works.

Grace and mercy are indeed the attributes of Him Who gave His Son to die for us, and Who sent the Holy Ghost to comfort and to hallow us. He Himself proclaimed Himself to be ‘the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth.’ He bore with us long, He suffered us and our provokings with infinite patience; yet His goodness conquered and prevailed at last. God is love, and loveth every man; He is ‘our Saviour, Who will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth.’ All that He hath made He watcheth over in mercy.

10. All Thy works praise Thee, O Lord : and Thy saints give thanks unto Thee.

11. They shew the glory of Thy kingdom : and talk of Thy power ;

12. That Thy power, Thy glory, and mightiness of Thy kingdom : might be known unto men.

13. Thy kingdom is an everlasting king-

dom : and Thy dominion endureth throughout all ages.

LXX. Ver. 14. The Lord is faithful in all His words :
And holy in all His works.

And because His mercy is over all His works, therefore do all His works praise Him ; they set forth His glory, each in their order and after their manner, both they that have speech and they that have not. But especially do His faithful people exalt His praise and worship by giving up themselves to be the temples of the Holy Ghost. In Him, and through Him Who alone can sanctify, do the elect of God 'set forth in their own tongues the wonderful works of God' in a continual Pentecost. His people shew forth His glory and preach His power by living according to His will ; so do they make known the mightiness of His kingdom unto men by being themselves His subjects and His servants. His kingdom is not like that of an earthly king, which lasts for a time ; but it is everlasting ; and therefore must His people acknowledge His sovereignty in their heart no less than with their mouths. Their unceasing confession, which, at the bidding of their Lord, when they pray, they ever make is—'For Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.' Yea, His kingdom shall endure through all ages, Whose words are ever truth, and Whose works are ever holiness.

14. The Lord upholdeth all such as fall :
and lifteth up all those that are down.

15. The eyes of all wait upon Thee, O Lord : and Thou givest them their meat in due season.

16. Thou openest Thine hand : and fillest all things living with plenteousness.

And the mightiness of His kingdom is manifested by the power of the Holy Ghost strengthening the weak through the grace of Sacraments, and raising the fallen through the pardon of Absolution. ‘Be of good cheer,’ ‘Thy sins are forgiven thee,’—these are the workings of His power, by which the glory of His kingdom is made known to man. The eyes of all creation wait upon His hand, He openeth it and they are filled with good ; the eyes of the penitent and the believing wait also upon the same loving God ; and to them, too, He openeth His hand,—He revealeth Christ His Son,—and they are filled with the plenteous comfort of the Holy Ghost.

17. The Lord is righteous in all His ways : and holy in all His works.

18. The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon Him : yea, all such as call upon Him faithfully.

19. He will fulfil the desire of them that fear Him : He also will hear their cry, and will help them.

Thus all the dealings of God with His creatures, all His revealings of Himself to man, all His providences and orderings, both in the world and in the

Church, are righteous and full of holiness. He is near to all in His presence everywhere: He is especially near to them who call upon Him faithfully, in the presence of His Only-begotten Son, in the Holy Eucharist. At all times, and then especially, He fulfils the desire of them who fear Him and trust in Him, hearing and answering their prayer, and making His strength perfect in their weakness.

20. The Lord preserveth all them that love Him: but scattereth abroad all the ungodly.

21. My mouth shall speak the praise of the Lord: and let all flesh give thanks unto His holy Name for ever and ever.

He saveth them who love Him, for to love Him is eternal salvation; He destroyeth them who love Him not, for not to love Him is eternal destruction. He is ever gathering His people by His giving them His Holy Spirit; He is ever scattering abroad the disobedient, through their resisting His Holy Spirit. But where the Holy Ghost is,—and He is ever with them who pray the Father for Him,—there is peace, hope, comfort; there is grateful thanksgiving, and a mouth that speaketh praise from the heart; there is a body consecrated to be a habitation of God through the Spirit, a temple of the Holy Ghost, which Christ the Lord shall hereafter raise up in immortality at the resurrection of all flesh, even as He has raised His own, to abide for ever unto the glory and the praise of God.

This is a "Praise-song of David;" so called from the rapture of

thankfulness and wonder in which the Psalmist-king dwells upon the goodness and grace of God. There was a saying among the ancient Jews that "he could not fail of being a child of the world to come, who should recite this Psalm three times every day," that is, at each of his devotions. The Psalm is alphabetical, but the verse after verse 13, which should begin with the letter *Nun*, or N, in the Hebrew, appears to be lost; it however existed in the time of the LXX interpreters, who have preserved it in their translation. With verse 8 compare Exod. xxxiv. 5, 6, 7. This Psalm is fitly chosen by the Church for Whitsunday.

PSALM cxlvi. *Lauda, anima mea.*

1. PRAISE the Lord, O my soul; while I live will I praise the Lord : yea, as long as I have any being, I will sing praises unto my God.

Where we end there must we begin, with praise to our God—with the praise of the soul, for that is the soul of praise; while all our life and all our being, through the time of this mortality and through the ages of immortality, should be justly given to the praise of the ever-blessed Three Persons in One God.

2. O put not your trust in princes, nor in any child of man : for there is no help in them.

3. For when the breath of man goeth forth he shall turn again to his earth : and then all his thoughts perish.

We cannot trust in kings or the great ones of the earth; we pray for them as needing grace like our-

selves. We cannot trust in any child of man, for they are all weak, selfish, and helpless things; they must die, and return to the dust of which they were made. Sinners may trust in the world, which is ever passing, and in the things of earth which are ever passing; but they who cleave to the things that are passing away will pass away with them. Men's thoughts, and plans, and arrangements must perish with the world which perisheth. The whole is passing away, and therefore every part must pass away likewise.

4. Blessed is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help : and whose hope is in the Lord his God ;

5. Who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that therein is : Who keepeth His promise for ever ;

6. Who helpeth them to right that suffer wrong : Who feedeth the hungry.

7. The Lord looseth men out of prison : the Lord giveth sight to the blind.

8. The Lord helpeth them that are fallen : the Lord careth for the righteous.

9. The Lord careth for the strangers ; He defendeth the fatherless and widow : as for the way of the ungodly, He turneth it upside down.

Woe to the man that putteth his trust in man ; but joy to him who putteth his trust in his Lord !

He is the one mighty Help, the one true Hope, Who created earth and heaven, and all things in them seen and unseen, Whose word standeth fast for ever, and Who, in the synagogue of Nazareth, 'opened the book of the prophet Esaias, and found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor; He hath sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord . . . And then He began to say unto them, This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears.' He worked of old and still worketh, giving right to them that suffer wrong, and feeding them that hunger. He still doeth miracles, as He did in Galilee; for when the covetous is made liberal, then is the withered hand restored; when faith and hope are given to the careless, then the blind and dumb in soul are healed; when a sinner is brought from going astray, then the deaf is made to hear; when an ungodly man is converted, then the dead is raised. For these miracles we glorify the Lord, as also for His unceasing love and care for all His redeemed. He receives all who come to Him in faith and penitence; He watches over the poor and the sorrowful, for their comfort and help; and He watches over the ungodly, to turn him, if it may be, from the error of his way, but, at last, if he repent not, to turn his evil way to chastisement and to destruction.

10. The Lord thy God, O Sion, shall be King for evermore : and throughout all generations.

All this He is ever doing in His own good time. For He is King over all. His title was set over His throne on Golgotha, written in three tongues,—‘The King of the Jews.’ It was written in Hebrew, for the Jews, who gloried in the law ; in Greek, for the Greeks, who gloried in their wisdom ; in Latin, for the Romans, who gloried in their dominion : and thus, in the day of His passion, was the Son of God declared to be the King of all holiness—the King of all wisdom—the King of all might. Now in glory He reigns for ever and ever : He is not like earthly princes, who die, and then all their thoughts perish. He can wait His own time ; He needs not to make haste. Let us wait the time of our redemption, trusting in Him, the everlasting King over His Church, and we shall know, at last, that He will keep His promise even for ever. Alleluia.

The writer of this Psalm is not known. The LXX. call it an “Alleluia of Haggai and Zechariah.” It would appear from verses 6—9 that the writer was acquainted with the prophecy of Isaiah (lxi. 1, 2).

Ebening Prayer.

PSALM cxlvii. *Laudate Dominum.*

1. O PRAISE the Lord, for it is a good thing to sing praises unto our God : yea, a joyful and pleasant thing it is to be thankful.

To shew forth our love and thankfulness to the Father of love and mercy in songs of praise is ever good ; it is good for us, and it is acceptable to Him. The true voice of the Church is praise even more than prayer. Praise lifts us up from the wants, and sins, and lowness of earth, and carries us into the joy of heaven, and unites us to the blessed choir of angels and saints, whose work is the expressing of eternal thankfulness, eternal love, eternal praise.

2. The Lord doth build up Jerusalem : and gather together the out-casts of Israel.

With Ezra and Nehemiah God first collected the wanderers of Israel, and then built up the temporal Jerusalem ; but the spiritual Jerusalem God is ever building, and in building He collecteth His chosen ones from the world. ' He addeth to the Church such as shall be saved ;' He hath laid her foundations, and is rearing up her walls ; and unto her He is gathering the children of God that are scattered abroad. The true Israel here are ever scattered, homeless and outcast, in a land which is not theirs. Christ buildeth them a city, even the Jerusalem above.

3. He healeth those that are broken in heart : and giveth medicine to heal their sickness.

He is the Father of all ; He healeth the contrite and the penitent, binding up their wounds who are left half-dead by the way-side of the world, and pouring into them oil and wine. He is the great

Physician, Who healeth the sickness of our dying nature by the costly medicine of His holy Sacraments, the remedies against death and sin, the pledges of eternal health, the unctions of immortality.

4. He telleth the number of the stars : and calleth them all by their names.

And not only is He Lord of the penitents, but He is also the King of saints, the Lord of them whose 'names are written in heaven.' He beholdeth not only the things of earth, but also the things of heaven, where the saints, who now and here are hidden, shine forth, like the stars, in immortal brightness. He Who set the stars in the firmament in their order counteth His elect, and ordaineth to each his calling, and giveth to each his name. 'He knoweth them that are His,' and giveth to each one of them His own gifts and graces, glorifying them with unearthly light. Those stars are all numbered which Abraham saw in heaven, which Isaac received for his seed, which Paul discerned in glory. He calleth those stars by their names, which are the lights of the world, and which comfort the darkness of our night.

5. Great is our Lord, and great is His power : yea, and His wisdom is infinite.

6. The Lord setteth up the meek : and bringeth the ungodly down to the ground.

Almighty in power, infinite in wisdom, the Lord reverses the judgment which the world passes upon itself and its doings. What the world despises He

exalts; and what the world commends He brings down. He setteth the last first; He blesseth the poor in spirit with the inheritance of His kingdom, while 'the lofty city He layeth low.' When the meek shall be raised up to shine with the brightness of stars 'in his right hand,' the ungodly shall be brought down to the dust. He will execute upon these in its fulness His sentence, 'Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.'

7. O sing unto the Lord with thanksgiving :
sing praises upon the harp unto our God ;

8. Who covereth the heaven with clouds,
and prepareth rain for the earth : and maketh
the grass to grow upon the mountains, and
herb for the use of men ;

9. Who giveth fodder unto the cattle : and
feedeth the young ravens that call upon Him.

Let us therefore praise Him, not only with words of thankfulness, but with works of holiness and faith, Who ordereth all nature for our good, Who sendeth the showers and the rain, and prepareth for man and for beast the kindly fruits of the earth. Praise we Him Who hath given us His Holy Scripture, with its types and mysteries, spreading it before us like heaven with its clouds ; Who sends down the dews of His continual grace, and makes the ministers and rulers of His Church to be clothed with good works, like the mountains which are clothed with verdure ; Who tendeth His sheep with everlasting care, and Who, through faith, giveth the food of His grace to

the children of the heathen who were out of the ark of the Church and alien from God, when they call upon Him, even as He feedeth the young ravens, when they hunger and cry to Him for food.

10. He hath no pleasure in the strength of an horse : neither delighteth He in any man's legs.

11. But the Lord's delight is in them that fear Him : and put their trust in His mercy.

His pleasure is not wrought by human means; He doth not covet, like an earthly king, the pride and power of armies, the speed of cavalry, or the marchings of infantry. Neither the horses of Pharaoh, nor the lightness of foot of Asahel, can do anything either for Him or against Him. 'He that is swift of foot shall not deliver himself; neither shall he that rideth the horse deliver himself.' All he requires is the holy fear and reverence of them who seek His mercy—of them who stand in awe of Him, and yet through awe of Him flee unto Him.

12. Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem : praise thy God, O Sion.

13. For He hath made fast the bars of thy gates : and hath blessed thy children within thee.

14. He maketh peace in thy borders : and filleth thee with the flour of wheat.

To Him let the whole Church, seen and unseen, the Sion of earth with the Jerusalem in heaven, join

in one universal Alleluia. He hath established her bars, even the Apostles, through whose preaching we enter within her. He hath strengthened and made fast her gates, that the gates of hell should never prevail against her; He hath filled her with children, 'which is the mother of us all;' and hath filled her children with blessings without number. He maketh peace in her borders, so that they who enter within her borders enter into peace. 'He calleth her walls salvation, and her gates praise.' Thus He doeth to the Church on earth; and with still greater love doth He watch over that land which the meek shall inherit—that everlasting city whose walls and bars shall be made so fast that no adversary can enter there. Now many come into the Church whom we would not,—many enter in to injure and to spoil; there it shall not be so,—there the gates shall be firm with the firmness of eternity, and the dwellers in that high city shall praise their Lord in eternal safety and in eternal peace. Meanwhile he filleth His people, even here, with the Bread of Life, with that choice wheat which for us was bruised and was buried in the earth, and for us sprang up again, bearing the fruit of salvation, and becoming the food of immortality. Christ is the wheat wherewith God satisfieth the people of His Sion, sending Him from heaven, as He sent the manna in the desert.

15. He sendeth forth His commandment upon earth : and His word runneth very swiftly.

Him did the Father send forth upon the earth,
Who is His Word, and Who kept His commandment
and finished His work—running His course from
heaven to earth, and from earth again to heaven,
with the swiftness of infinite compassion for our
dying souls.

16. He giveth snow like wool : and scattereth the hoar-frost like ashes.

17. He casteth forth His ice like morsels :
who is able to abide His frost ?

18. He sendeth out His word, and melteth them :
He bloweth with His wind, and the waters flow.

And when the creatures He has made become cold and hardened for lack of His love within their hearts, when their affections are colder than the snow, and their consciences harder than the morsels of ice, and their souls are dying, like living things in a piercing frost which they cannot bear,—then He sendeth forth His all-loving Son, crucified for their salvation, and loving them unto the end ; and He bloweth upon them with His wind, the soft breathings of His Holy Spirit ; and their frozen heart, hardened like ice in the long cold night of this cheerless world, is melted through the shining of the Sun of righteousness, and their softened soul dissolves into repenting and longing tears with the warmth of the Saviour's love, and under the gentle influence of that Spirit of grace, Which bloweth where He listeth.

19. He sheweth His word unto Jacob : His statutes and ordinances unto Israel.

20. He hath not dealt so with any nation : neither have the heathen knowledge of His laws.

And to this end He hath set before His people the Gospel of salvation, 'speaking unto them in these last days by His Son,' giving unto them who have been baptized into His Name and have been made children of Abraham, both the knowledge of His will, and grace to fulfil the same. Truly, then, are the people of His Church favoured, chosen, elect, beyond all the nations of the world who know not God, for that He is come nigh to them, and hath brought them nigh to Him. Alleluia.

This Psalm is the second of the series of five hymns of praise, which are called the "Hallelujah Psalms," because their only title is "Hallelujah," and which conclude the Psalter. They were probably written by some of the prophets after the captivity; and the LXX. assign them to "Haggai and Zechariah;" but the authority of this title is not sufficient for certainty. The LXX. and the Vulgate translations divide this Psalm into two, after verse 11, calling the former half-Psalm cxlvi., and the latter half, commencing with verse 12, Psalm cxlvii.; thus they fall again into the numbering of the Hebrew, which through a large portion of the Psalter is one in advance of these translations. [Verses 16—18 are interpreted by some of the fathers spiritually of God's sending tribulation and trial, through the hardness of which we must enter His kingdom. Others prefer the interpretation given above.] Bishop Horsley considers this Psalm to have been used at Pentecost, or at the Feast of Trumpets. It ends, as do all the other "Hallelujah Psalms," with the same "Hallelujah" with which it began.

PSALM cxlviii. *Laudate Dominum.*

1. O PRAISE the Lord of heaven : praise Him in the height.

2. Praise Him, all ye angels of His : praise Him, all His host.

To Him—Who made all things, in heaven and earth, visible and invisible, in the fulness of His love and power, let all things in heaven and earth render back their love again. Let all love created ever return again to the Love creating and uncreated, from Which it sprang, and of Which it is a shadow. Let all things made bless that Lord God of Sabaoth Who made them all. Let them praise their God and their Father, Whose throne is heaven and Whose footstool is earth, both around His throne and beneath His feet. ‘Glory to God in the highest’ is the one voice of the universe of created beings,—‘Glory to God,’ sounding clearest, loudest, fullest, as it is highest and nearest to His throne, but still caught up by order after order of worlds, and by rank after rank of angels, and passing through all that infinite universe which yet is filled by the all-Father’s love, until, changing in degree, but still the same in praise, it is uttered by the lowest and the smallest in the mighty system of created things. Praise Him, ye Angels and Archangels of His, for ye can praise Him worthily! Praise Him all ye His spiritual host, ye who rest not day or night in your adoring song,—ye Thrones, Dominions, Principalities, and

Powers, ye Cherubim and Seraphim, and whatever name is named, not only in this world, but in that which is to come,—ye who are highest, praise the Highest in the highest!

3. Praise Him, sun and moon : praise Him, all ye stars and light.

4. Praise Him, all ye heavens : and ye waters that are above the heavens.

Let the sun, the fount of light, and warmth, and gladness, the greater light which rules the day, the visible emblem of the Uncreated Wisdom, the Light Which lighteth every man, the Centre round Whom all our hopes and fears, our wants and prayers, our faith and love, are ever moving,—let the moon, the lesser light which rules the night, the type of the Church, which giveth to the world the light she gains from the Sun of righteousness,—let the stars, so vast in their number, so lovely in their arrangement and their brightness, which God hath appointed in the heavens, even as He hath appointed His elect to shine for ever and ever,—let all the heavens, with all their wonders and their worlds, the depths of space above, and the waters which are above the firmament, the images of God's Holy Scripture and of the glories and the mysteries contained therein,—let these ever praise Him Who made and blessed them in the beginning of the creation.

5. Let them praise the Name of the Lord : for He spake the word, and they were made ; He commanded, and they were created.

6. He hath made them fast for ever and ever : He hath given them a law which shall not be broken.

By His Word He made them, saying, Let them be ; and they were. The Only-begotten Son, the image of His Person, created these worlds in their wise order, after the patterns which existed eternally in the mind of the Father ; and He set them their unchanging laws of motion, which they obey perfectly and unfaillingly. He creates, and He ordains a law for His creation, by one and the same act of wisdom and of power. And by obeying this law of their creating, by continuing in that order in which they all appear beautiful before the eye of God, do they truly praise Him, being herein an example to man, teaching him that the true praise of His God is the due fulfilling of His righteous laws.

7. Praise the Lord upon earth : ye dragons, and all deeps ;

8. Fire and hail, snow and vapours : wind and storm, fulfilling His word ;

9. Mountains and all hills : fruitful trees and all cedars ;

10. Beasts and all cattle : worms and feathered fowls ;

11. Kings of the earth and all people : princes and all judges of the world ;

12. Young men and maidens, old men and

children, praise the Name of the Lord : for His Name only is excellent, and His praise above heaven and earth.

And as He is praised in heaven, so let Him be praised on earth. Let His love be acknowledged, no less than His will be done 'on earth as it is in heaven.' Let the sea, and all that therein is,—the depths of the waters, and the great whales, their wonderful inhabitants, those creatures of the fifth day, who came before man to dwell on this lower globe, and who are types of the dwellers in the many waters of the world,—let the instruments by which He fertilizes the earth, or clears the air, the lightning and the hail, the snow and the clouds, the wind and the storm, which are His ministers and execute His commands in chastising or in gladdening the sons of men, and some of which He has at different times chosen to represent, or to accompany, the manifestations of His Holy Spirit and the movements of His grace,—let the solid earth itself, its mountains and its hills, which rise up towards heaven, standing above the plain like the rulers stand in the Church of God,—let the trees bearing fruit, like faithful and good servants, the cedars of Lebanon, like the sanctified who shall be placed in the building of the eternal temple,—let all the beasts of the forest, the herds and the flocks of the plain, whether they be wild and fierce, like hearts untamed by grace ; or whether they be gentle and peaceful, like the ministers of the Word, and the flock of

Christ,—let the worms which are of the earth, and creep upon the earth, as do the poor in faith,—let the birds which fly in the open firmament of heaven, like spiritual and soaring souls,—let all these join, each after their kind, to praise Him of Whose goodness they are, and for Whose glory they are. And what then? After dragons, and fire, and hail,—after mountains, and trees, and cattle,—shall have uttered their song of praise, and fulfilled the law of their creation, shall man, the last of the things made, formed in the image of the Maker, be silent? Should he not be covered with shame to see all things, seen and unseen, in earth and heaven, praising the Lord, while he alone praises Him not? Oh, let the race of man, created first by the word of God, and then created anew a second time by the death of God, in all stations, in all ranks, in all ages and seasons of life, whether high or low, whether young or old, praise Him both with their words and works! Each one may worthily praise Him Who has given his life and his own place to each one, if each one will but praise with all his life, and power, and soul. Let us, then, copy the cattle by our following Christ—the fruit-bearing trees by our good works—the mountain by our nearness to heaven—the wind by our fulfilling His word—the fire by our ready zeal—the deeps by our unfathomed love. His goodness extends over heaven and earth, praise we Him, therefore, with heaven and earth,—praise we Him upon earth, among the things seen, and we shall hereafter praise Him in heaven among the things unseen.

13. He shall exalt the horn of His people ; all His saints shall praise Him : even the children of Israel, even the people that serveth Him. ,'

He exalteth His people, and, beyond all, Christ, the Saviour and strength of His people ; therefore His saints, whom the Holy Ghost hath made His own, the children of the true Israel, whom He hath chosen, the righteous nation who serve Him with obedience here, shall serve Him with eternal praises above. Alleluia.

This is also a "Hallelujah Psalm," founded upon the first chapter of Genesis, and in this respect resembling the Song of the Three Children. It enumerates all the objects of creation,—the unseen (verses 1, 2,) and the seen ; then of the latter, the things above (verses 3, 4,) and those below ; and again, of these latter, the sea (verse 7), and the air (verse 8), and the land ; and, yet again, of the things of the land—first, the inanimate and the irrational creatures (verses 9, 10), and then the rational, each in their order. The word rendered "dragons" in verse 7 is similar to that translated "whales" in Gen. i. 21, and implies creatures of great length of body. It no doubt signified those mighty creatures of the lizard tribe which came into being at the fourth period of creation, the fossil remains of which excite at the present day our wonder and admiration. This is a noble and glorious Psalm of praise, which Bishop Horsley considers to have been written for use on the Sabbath-day.

PSALM cxlix. *Cantate Domino.*

1. O SING unto the Lord a new song : let the congregation of saints praise Him.

2. Let Israel rejoice in Him that made him : and let the children of Sion be joyful in their King.

All praise and all joy, each chanting of the new song which each one sings who hath 'put off the old man and his deeds,' carries the Church on in the power of the Spirit to that coming time when the Lord Jesus shall reign in majesty over the obedient world, and His saints shall praise Him with one mind and with one mouth, as the Creator of all, and the visible and acknowledged King of all. The elect of Christ shall see their Lord Who loved them, even as He is; and seeing Him they shall 'rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.' They shall 'say Alleluia, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.'

3. Let them praise His Name in the dance : let them sing praises unto Him with tabret and harp.

4. For the Lord hath pleasure in His people : and helpeth the meek-hearted.

They shall yield unto Him then the perfect praise of their lives, no less than of their lips; they shall rejoice, 'with music and dancing,' over the return of the world, once prodigal and afar off, but now returned again unto its Father and its Lord and God. They shall praise Him with the tabret of a body dead indeed, and for ever, unto sin, and with the harp of a spirit full of the Holy Ghost. And this shall stir up and call forth their thankful joy, that the words of Him Who died for them are true for evermore, and fulfilled for every one,—'As the Father hath loved Me, so have I loved you;' and again, 'Fear not, little

flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.' 'And again they say Alleluia.'

5. Let the saints be joyful with glory : let them rejoice in their beds.

Then shall they whose names are in the book of life taste of immortal glory in Him Who hath glorified them. For them the night will be spent; for them the day will have come. They shall awake from their sleep of death, and shall rise in exulting gladness from the graves which have been so long their beds; and they shall live and reign with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead live not again until the thousand years are finished. 'This is the first resurrection,'—an awful mystery, which is indeed revealed now, but shall only be made fully manifest hereafter.

6. Let the praises of God be in their mouth : and a two-edged sword in their hands ;

7. To be avenged of the heathen : and to rebuke the people ;

8. To bind their kings in chains : and their nobles with links of iron.

9. That they may be avenged of them, as it is written : Such honour have all His saints.

Heb. That they may execute upon them the judgment that is written.

This honour have all His saints. Hallelujah.

Then shall their former weakness of mortality be changed for the strength of immortality. Their

mouths shall praise Him unceasingly, Who hath set for them the thrones of judgment. The word of God shall be to them a sword keener, mightier than it had been before; and, as Israel fulfilled the decrees of God, written by the hand of Moses, and subdued the proud and mighty men of Canaan, so by it shall they conquer the unbelieving, and convince the gainsayers, bringing the powers of the earth into the captivity of the grace of Christ, and binding the wise and great with the strong links of holy charity. So shall ever the saints of God avenge themselves of the world which thought not of them, by bringing its people, in penitence and faith, to the footstool of the Saviour's judgment-throne; and so shall they accomplish the eternal and unchangeable decrees of God. For of the Elect there are two bands and two orders: the first are they who shall rise the first, who shall live and reign with Christ, and shall sit on thrones with Him to judge the world; the second are they who shall be judged by Him, and who shall find mercy in the last great Day. 'Blessed and holy is he who hath part in the first resurrection; on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.' Such honour have all His saints.

This Psalm, which is full of the rapture of holy joy and exultation, has no title in the Hebrew but that of "Hallelujah." It seems to express the triumph of the Church and of the elect in the last days, when Christ shall be manifested reigning over the world; and, being the last Psalm but one, it corresponds in a wonderful manner with the second Psalm, of the prophecy of which it celebrates the perfect

accomplishment. With verses 7—9, in a Jewish point of view, we must compare Deut. vii. and Josh. x.; but the key to the spiritual meaning of the Psalm is to be sought in Rev. xix., xx.

PSALM cl. *Laudate Dominum.*

1. O PRAISE God in His holiness : praise Him in the firmament of His power.

‘And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation and glory and honour and power unto the Lord our God: for true and righteous are His judgments. And again they said, Alleluia.’ In heaven is praise made perfect; there the saints of Christ no longer sing the Lord’s song in a strange land, but in their own all-glorious country. There they follow their Lord, and enter into that Holy of holies which Christ hath entered with His own blood, and into which He bringeth His redeemed—that sanctuary, uncreated and eternal, which is hallowed by the presence and the glory of God Himself, and which is filled for evermore with the seraphic cry, ‘Holy, Holy, Holy.’ In that kingdom which is founded for ever above the firmament of heaven, the infinite holiness of the All-holy and the infinite power of the Almighty abide in changeless majesty, and are celebrated with changeless praise from eternity unto eternity.

2. Praise Him in His noble acts : praise Him according to His excellent greatness.

There shall His redeemed praise Him, for that all His enemies have been destroyed, for that love hath

triumphed over all sorrow and all sin, and for that death hath been swallowed up in immortality. They shall praise the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, Who hath conquered and hath overcome, and hath sat down with His Father upon His throne.

3. Praise Him in the sound of the trumpet : praise Him upon the lute and harp.

They shall praise Him when the 'trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and they shall be changed.' They shall praise Him when shall be heard 'the voice of harpers harping with their harps, and the voice of them who sing, as it were, a new song before the throne, and before the four living things, and the elders : and no man can learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand which are redeemed from the earth.'

4. Praise Him in the cymbals and dances : praise Him upon the strings and pipe.

They shall praise Him with their whole soul and spirit, with their whole heart and voice, with a body clothed with incorruption; and with a mouth hallowed with the Holy Ghost. There shall be praise without measure and without bound, for every thought shall be melody, and every movement praise.

5. Praise Him upon the well-tuned cymbals : praise Him upon the loud cymbals.

Above all, they shall praise Him Who loveth them with the unearthly utterings of love made

perfect. This is the music of those well-tuned and solemn-sounding cymbals which swell and complete the voice of praise: for if one could sing praises 'with the tongues of men and of angels, and had not charity, he would become as a mere tinkling cymbal.'

6. Let every thing that hath breath : praise the Lord.

Each one shall praise the Lord with all his spirit and his voice ; and yet each one shall feel himself unequal to sing the fulness of His mighty praise ; and shall therefore summon everything that hath breath, each created being which the Spirit of God hath formed and sanctified, to join in the immortal chant of praise. No tone of thankfulness, no note of melody shall be away : all powers, all faculties, all graces—all shall join. All who have ever lived and died and risen again, who were once created in the image and are now at last conformed unto the perfect likeness of the Son of God, through the love of Him Who ' was made a quickening Spirit,'—all the elect of Christ, saints, martyrs, virgins, confessors, shall change for ever, before the throne of God, the Hosannas of the Church on earth for the ceaseless Alleluias of eternity.

Heb. Hallelujah.

'And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye His servants, and ye that fear Him, both small and great. And I heard as

it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying Alleluia, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice and give honour to Him : for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready. And He saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb.'

This, the last of the five Hallelujah Psalms, which were probably used at the dedication of the second temple, concludes the Book of Psalms. It draws together, as it were, all the faith and hope, all the fears and prayers, all the thankfulness and joy of the Church, and sets it forth in one mighty Hallelujah, realizing the blessing the first Psalm opens with. It enumerates all the instruments used in the choral worship of the Jewish temple, typifying by them all the powers of our intellect and affections, and intimating the melody and joy of that true worshipping of God, the perfection of which will be found hereafter in the music and the praise of heaven. It is very fitting that the Psalms should end, as they do, with "Hallelujah."

**GLORY BE TO THE FATHER, AND TO THE SON :
AND TO THE HOLY GHOST.**

**AS IT WAS IN THE BEGINNING, IS NOW, AND EVER
SHALL BE : WORLD WITHOUT END. AMEN.**

To the Church's bidding, 'Praise ye the Lord,' may our ready response ever be, 'The Lord's Name be praised.' May all our words and all our works, all our lives and all our hopes, ever be to the praise and glory of that most Blessed Trinity, Whose loving word in the beginning, 'Let Us make, Let Us redeem, Let Us sanctify,' is all our life, both temporal

and eternal. May what we say and what we do, who are regenerated in His most holy Name, ever add somewhat to that infinite glory with which heaven and earth—yea, even eternity itself, is full. Amen and Amen. So be it, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

THE END.

E R R A T A.

V O L. I.

Page 24, line 23, *for* maketh, *read* makest.

„ 188, lines 3 and 4: arrange these in parallels.

„ 282, line 10, *for* thirty, *read* thirty-one.

„ — „ 24, *for* forty-first, *read* forty-second.

„ 427, „ 3, *for* the fear of God, *read* the Spirit of God.

„ 457, „ 13, *add*, To be used in the office for the Visitation
of the Sick.

V O L. II.

Page 245, line 11, *for* fifty-three, *read* forty-three.

„ 367, „ 2 from bottom, *for* Gen. xxxviii. 15, *read*
xxviii. 15.

„ 419, „ 2 from bottom, *for* unto *read* into.