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Author and Title

Notes on the Psalms

by

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THE PSALMS

IN the Psalms, we look into the heart of all the saints, and, we seem to gaze into fair pleasure-gardens ; into heaven itself, indeed ; where bloom the sweet, refreshing, gladdening flowers of holy and happy thoughts about God and all His benefits. On the other hand, where will you find deeper, sadder, more piteous words of mourning than in the Psalms ? In these again, we look into the heart of the saints, and we seem to be looking into death, yea, into hell itself. How gloomy, how dark it is there, because of the many sad visions of the wrath of God!

MARTIN LUTHER.

WHAT various and resplendent riches are contained in this treasury, it were difficult to find words to describe. . . . I am in the habit of calling this book, not inappropriately, “ The Anatomy of all Parts of the Soul,” for not an affection will any one find in himself, an image of which is not reflected in this mirror. Nay, all the griefs, sorrows, fears, misgivings, hopes, cares, anxieties ; in short, all the disquieting emotions with which the minds of men are wont to be agitated, the Holy Spirit hath here pictured to the life.

CALVIN, Preface to Commentary on the
Psalms of David.

PSALMS-THE BOOK OF WORSHIP.

BOOK.	PSALMS .	DOXOLOGY .	DOMINANT NOTES OF WORSHIP .	DIVINE TITLES .			
				Jehovah.	Elohim.	Adonahy.	Jah.
I.	i to xli.	xli. 13	Jehovah-The Becoming One, The Helper. Adoring Worship.	275	68	'4	—
II.	xlii to lxxii.	lxxii. 18, 19.	Elohim — The Wonder-working God. Wondering Worship.	32	234	19	1
III.	lxxiii to lxxxix.	lxxxix. 52.	Elohim- Jehovah. The Mighty Helper. Ceaseless Worship.	44	80	'5	—
IV.	xc to cvi.	cvi. 48.	Jehovah-The Governing King. Submissive Worship.	103	72	2	7
V.	cvii to cl.	cl.	Jehovah-The Redeemer. Perfected Worship.	236	40	12	32

PSALMS

INTRODUCTORY

THE word "Psalms" is the Anglicized form of a Greek word, which really means a poem set to music. The Hebrew title of the book was simply Praises, or Book of Praises. It is pre-eminently the worship-book of the Hebrew people, and consists of a collection of songs which express the attitude of the soul in the presence of God, when contemplating past history, existing conditions, or prophetic hopes. The whole collection consists, in the Hebrew Bible, of five books. In the English and American Revisions this sub-division is shown.

We have no definite proof who the editor was. His method becomes evident by an examination of the grouping of the psalms. It is perfectly clear that neither authorship nor chronology was in his view. Eusebius declares that "The psalms are disposed according to a law of inward affinity"; and Dr. Anderson says, "It must be remembered that every attempt to classify and arrange the psalms apart from the division of the whole Psalter into the five books as found in our Hebrew Bible, in the Septuagint, Syriac, and Vulgate Versions-every such attempt is confessedly imperfect, and more or less arbitrary."

The key to the method of the editor is to be found in the doxologies with which the books close. Each of the five has such a doxology, and an examination of these will reveal a certain conception of God, and an attitude of the soul in worship resulting from such conception. They may be grouped thus :—

- | | | |
|-----------|----------------------|--|
| Book I. | Psalm xli. 13. | Worship of Jehovah as the Becoming One, Who is the Helper. |
| Book II. | Psalm lxxii. 18, 19. | Worship of Jehovah as the Wonder-working God. |
| Book III. | Psalm lxxxix. 52. | Worship of Jehovah ceaseless. |
| Book IV. | Psalm cvi. 48. | Worship of Jehovah rendered. |
| Book V. | Psalm cl. 1-6. | Worship of Jehovah consummated. |

The individual psalms are natural expressions by many authors, at various times, under differing circumstances, of the consciousness of God. The editing gathers these individual songs around the notes of truth dominant in each.

These notes are indicated in each book by the particular title of Jehovah which predominates. The subject of the Divine titles is too great a one to be discussed at length now ; but as an introduction to the study of the Psalter, recognition of difference is necessary. The proportion in which the four titles are used in the book of Psalms, as indicated in the diagram, is a somewhat rough one. Under Elohim are included El and Eloah, because while there is a minor difference of suggestion between the singular and the plural, the underlying thought is the same. So also with reference to Adonahy and Adon.

JEHOVAH. In the ancient Hebrew Scriptures this particular title was always written in the form of a tetragrammaton-YHVH -and there are differences of opinion as to what the actual form of the word should be. Without entering into any discussion of the varied interpretations, I adopt that of Mr. Joseph Rotherham in the EMPHASIZED BIBLE, both as to spelling and significance. He claims that the word thus abbreviated is Yahweh, and interprets it as meaning "the Becoming One." In his Bible, he says, "Yahweh is almost always regarded as the third person singular, masculine, imperfect tense, from the root Hawah, an old form of the root Hayah. The one meaning of Hawah is 'become.' So that the force of Yahweh, thus derived as a verb, would be, 'He will become,' or, as expressive of use and wont as a noun, it is, 'He who becometh,' 'the Becoming One.'"

In a letter written to me in the course of correspondence on the subject, referring to this meaning, Mr. Rotherham said :-

" 'He becometh,' that is, 'He who becometh,' 'the Becoming One'; becoming to His people whatever in His rich favour He pleases, in order to meet their need, and at last becoming Man."

The truth, therefore, suggested by the use of this word is always that, first of the essential Being of God which enables Him to become ; and by deduction, that God in infinite grace does become whatever man needs.

ELOHIM. This is a plural noun, but it is plural in a sense peculiar to the Hebrew language. Canon Girdlestone says :-

"It **is well** known that the Hebrews often expressed a word in the plural, so as to give it a special or technical meaning, as in

the case of the words, blood, water, wisdom, salvation, righteousness, life. ... It is implied that the word in the singular number is not large enough to set forth all that is intended ; and so, in the case of the Divine Name, the plural form expresses the truth that the finite word conveys an inadequate idea of the Being Whom it represents. Other names of God will be found to be plural also, and it is worthy of notice that in the well-known passage in Ecclesiastes (xii. 1) the Hebrew runs thus, ' Remember now thy Creators in the days of thy youth.' "

The root idea is that of strength or might, and the thought of God suggested by it is that of His strength as revealed in creation, and in all the operations of His power.

ADONAHY. This is again plural in form. Its simple signification is " Master " or " Lord "; and the thought it suggests is that of sovereign supremacy.

JAH. This is the shorter form of the name Jehovah, and is only found in Scripture ; twice in Exodus, a few times in Isaiah, and in thirty-five passages in the book of Psalms.

These names reveal the doctrine of God, which creates man's worship. Recognizing that Jehovah and Jah have the same essential significance, there are three lines of thought suggested. First, the essential Being of God, and the fact that He becomes in grace what man needs. Second, the essential Might of God, and the fact that it operates in power. Third, the essential Lordship of God, and His consequent sovereignty over man.

The analyses are intended to help in the study of the collection, as to the conceptions impelling to worship.

BOOK I.-PSALMS I-XLI.

DOXOLOGY

“Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel,
From everlasting and to everlasting. Amen, and Amen.” Ps. xli. 13.

A. THE TITLE.	B. THE RELATION.	C. THE QUANTITY.	D. THE QUALITY.
<p>“Jehovah.” The mysterious name, suggestive of essential Being, becoming whatever is needed by men, and therefore uniformly used as indicating God’s relation to His people as Helper.</p>	<p>“The God of Israel.” “God.” Elohii. The idea of Supremacy. “Of Israel.” The chosen People.</p>	<p>“From everlasting to everlasting.” “The word ‘everlasting’ means the concealed or vanishing point ; and suggests the mysterious past, and the unknown future. In its use here it reminds the heart of the eternity of God.”</p>	<p>“Blessed.” The root idea is that of prostration in the attitude of adoration. “Amen, and Amen.” The consent of all to such adoration.</p>

The Divine Name.

The prevailing Name in this book is Jehovah. It occurs in every psalm at least twice, and in one (xxix), as many as 18 times. “God” is found 18 times in the singular, 50 times in the plural ; in all 68 times. From 13 psalms it is absent altogether. The general title “Lord” (Adonahy) only occurs 14 times in all, and these occasions are all in 8 psalms.

The Dominant Thought.

The dominant thought in this book is that of God as Jehovah, the Helper of His people. The psalms are songs of varying emotion, and differing condition, but all express themselves in harmony with this note.

ANALYSIS

A. AUTHORITY ESTABLISHED . i-viii.	B. AUTHORITY DEFENDED. ix-xv.	C. AUTHORITY ADMINISTERED. xvi-xli.
I. The Foundations. i, ii. i. Obedience and Disobedience. i. ii. The enthroned King. ii. II. The Experiences. iii-vii. (See Titles.)	I. The Need. ix, x. i. The Throne and the Enemy. ix. ii. Appeal for Action. x. II. The Activity. xi-xv. (See Titles.)	I. The Person. xvi-xxiv. (See Titles.) II. The Process. xxv-xxxix i. Songs of Assurance. xxv-xxix. (See Titles.) ii. Songs of Appropriation. xxx- (See Titles.) xxxiv. iii. Songs of Aspiration. xxxv-xxxix. (See Titles.) III. The Person. xl, xli.
III. The ultimate Purpose. viii.		

PSALM I

JEHOVAH'S LAW, A CONTRAST; OBEDIENCE AND DISOBEDIENCE

THE master thought of this psalm is that of the law of Jehovah. The obedient and disobedient are placed in sharp contrast. This contrast is vividly seen by bringing together the first and last words of the psalm—"blessed," "perish." The former word describes the issue of obedience; the latter, the result of disobedience. The conditions of blessedness are stated negatively and positively. Negatively there must be complete separation from fellowship with such as are disobedient. The graduation in description must not be omitted; "walketh," "standeth," "sitteth," "counsel," "way," "seat"; "wicked," "sinners," "scornful." The positive condition is twofold; delight, and meditation in the law. This, moreover, must be continuous, "day and night." The experience of blessedness is described under the figure of a tree planted, bearing fruit, with evergreen leaf. Moreover, such a man prospers in all he does.

Then comes the contrast. Let the statement, "The wicked are not so" be considered in the light of all that has been said; that is, in the former part of the psalm cancel the negations where they stand, and insert them where they are not. The condition of the wicked is then summarized, and the contrast is perfected. Instead of the tree planted, they are chaff driven away. They will be unable to stand the test of judgment, and therefore are excluded from the assembly of the righteous. The psalm ends with a summary. "The way of the righteous" is known to Jehovah. "The way of the wicked" perishes, that is, runs out, and is lost in the wood.

PSALM II

JEHOVAH'S KING. FOLLY OF REBELLION. WISDOM OF SUBMISSION

THIS is the psalm of Jehovah's King. It is impossible to fix the event for which it was written and to which it first referred. The wider application is perfectly patent. To whatsoever king the words first applied, the singer was looking to the ideal King, and his song has found fulfilment in Christ.

It is very interesting to notice how this psalm is interwoven with the thinking of the New Testament. To study it carefully, first of all we must discover the speakers in each case. The psalmist opens with a description of the nations in opposition to Jehovah and His King. This is given in the form of a question as to why they are in such attitude. He then proceeds to declare the contempt of the Lord for them, and in verse 6 Jehovah is the Speaker, announcing that notwithstanding all their opposition, He has appointed His King.

The next section (vers. 7-g) gives us the words of the anointed King, Who declares the decree, of His Kingship. The Son of Jehovah is to receive dominion from His Father, and exercise it for the subjugation of all these opposing forces. The order of procedure is indicated ;“ inheritance,” “ possession,” “ administration.” The psalm ends with an appeal to the kings and judges to manifest their wisdom by submitting themselves to Jehovah’s King.

PSALM III

JEHOVAH’S SALVATION. CONFIDENCE IN PERIL

THIS is a morning psalm. It is the song of a soul whose circumstances are those of grave peril as a new day dawns.

The consciousness of difficulty is first uttered. Adversaries are increased, and the bitterest part of the pain is that these mock him, declaring “ There is no help for him in God.”

Immediately succeeding are the words which tell of the sufferer’s confidence, and its reason. Jehovah is at once “ Shield ” and “ Glory,” and “ Lifter up.” Between this man and Jehovah there is established communion-“ I cry,” and “ He answereth.”

Then follows the language of courage. He has “ slept ” and “ awaked,” because Jehovah sustained him. **I**n this assurance he will not be afraid of the increased adversaries. Then out of these circumstances of peril and conviction of safety, the prayer arises for salvation, and is accompanied by the assertion that Jehovah has already heard and answered. A consciousness of the constancy of the Divine love has always been the strength of a trusting soul amid circumstances of the greatest peril. If that is lost, all is lost. If that be maintained no great waters can overwhelm.

PSALM IV

JEHOVAH'S COUNTENANCE THE CAUSE OF CONFIDENCE

THIS is a song of the evening. The general circumstances out of which it rises are the same as those of the previous psalm.

Now, however, the day into which the singer marched with confidence, is over. The evidences of strain are manifest, and yet the dominant thought is that of victory won, and confidence increased.

The opening words constitute a petition in the midst of which the singer declares that God has delivered him. He appeals to the "sons of men," to those who, according to his morning psalm declared, "There is no help for him in God." He now asks them how long they will turn His glory into dishonour, "love vanity," and "seek after falsehood." The experiences of another day enable him to declare that Jehovah is great. He warns them to "stand in awe," to think of it, and "be still."

The testimony merges into an appeal to those who do not know Jehovah. They are pessimists, dissatisfied in the midst of life, and asking, "Who will show us any good?" Out of his experience of Jehovah's goodness he affirms that he has found gladness more than the men who have been in circumstances of material prosperity. The song ends with words that breathe his deep content, "In peace will I both lay me down and sleep"; and the reason is that though he is alone, or in solitude, Jehovah makes him dwell safely.

PSALM V

JEHOVAH'S LEADING IN TIME OF PERSECUTION

THIS is another song of the morning. It opens with language which reveals the reason of the soul's assurance as it faces another day. First are petitions asking the attention of Jehovah. These are followed by words which reveal at once the singer's conception of personal responsibility, and the reason of his confidence in God.

As to the former, the day is to be begun in prayer, "O Jehovah, in the morning shalt Thou hear my voice." It is, moreover, to be arranged as in the sight of God, "In the morning will I order unto Thee, and will keep watch." The attitude of

God toward wickedness and evil men is then declared. This attitude at once makes the singer sure of his safety as against the opposition of evil men, and causes his care concerning his own condition before God. Turning his eyes towards the enemies that wait for him whom he describes, he seeks the Divine guidance, desiring most of all to see plainly before his face the way of Jehovah. As he goes forth to meet these enemies he does so with a prayer that God will defeat their counsels, and vindicate those who put their trust in Him. There is no doubt or uncertainty in his heart. The things he asked for he is assured he will receive, and with an affirmation of this confidence the song ends.

PSALM VI

Jehovah's Deliverance in Time of Chastisement

THIS is known as the first of the seven great penitential psalms. It is somewhat weak in its note of true penitence, and is not to be compared with some which follow in this respect. It is rather a cry for deliverance from the pain and the sorrow and chastisement, than from the sin which causes it.

The first seven verses are full of the misery of the man. He is perfectly conscious of the meaning of his suffering. He knows that it is chastisement, and under the pressure of it he sobs for deliverance. The light breaks upon the darkness in his confident consciousness of Jehovah's attention and willingness to help him.

If this be considered a psalm of penitence it is remarkable rather as a revelation of the tender compassion of Jehovah, than of the true note of repentance. There is not a single sentence which reveals any profound consciousness of the sinfulness of sin. The saving grace of it, so far as the sinner is concerned, is that it recognizes Jehovah's rebuke and chastening. The desire pre-eminently manifest is that of escape from the suffering and the sorrow. Notwithstanding the shallowness of the sense of sin, the fact of the recognition of the hand of Jehovah seems to be enough, and in answering pity and power the deliverance and the comfort sought are granted.

PSALM VII

JEHOVAH'S DELIVERANCE CONFIDENTLY HOPED IN

THIS is a song of confidence and appeal in circumstances of the most trying description. He is persecuted by enemies, some one among them being violent and cruel. The basis of their attack would seem to be some charge they make against him of wrong-doing. He vehemently denies the charge, and cries to Jehovah for vindication, which he firmly believes the God Who tries the hearts of men will surely grant.

In the first part of the psalm the story of personal need is told. The ruthlessness of the foe is the reason for his appeal. The declaration of personal innocence follows. If the charges were true, then would the heaviest judgments be just. They are untrue, as God is witness. Then let Jehovah appear on behalf of the innocent, against the guilty. Then follows the general affirmation of the equity of God upon which the singer builds his confidence. God is righteous. The way of wickedness cannot prosper. It creates its own destruction. The pit digged is the grave of the man who digs it. The mischief and violence meditated return as retribution upon the evil-doer.

The psalm is a song of confidence in the reign of God in equity over all men, and the consequent certainty that innocence will be vindicated in this particular case. Thanksgiving is according to Jehovah's righteousness.

PSALM VIII

JEHOVAH'S EXCELLENCE MANIFEST IN NATURE AND MAN

THIS is a great song of worship. It opens and closes with the same words. These words enclose the psalm, and create its burden. The matters lying between are the proofs of the opening and closing statements. They are two. The manifestation of Jehovah's excellencies in nature and man. These are first briefly stated (vers. 1b, 2) and then more particularly described (vers. 3-8).

The principal manifestation is in man, and this is revealed in both sections. The outlook on nature is toward the encompassing heaven, all the glory of which is expressed in one inclusive

thought-Jehovah has set His glory there. From this he turns to the little children of the human race, and in them he **finds** a perfection of praise absent from the glorious heaven. It is such as “to still the enemy and the avenger.”

These two facts are then more particularly considered. The first impression suggests the littleness of man. In the presence of the glorious heaven man seems beneath consideration. Yet it is not so. Man is greater than all. He is but little lower than God. His place is that of dominion. The contemplation of the heaven leads to the consideration of man. This creates first a wonder at Jehovah's consideration of him. This consideration issues in investigation, and man is found nearer to God than the heavens. The issue is worship. It is the true order of creation. Through man's sin it has been lost. Through Jesus it is being restored.

PSALM IX

JEHOVAH'S RIGHTEOUS RULE REJOICED IN

THE burden of this psalm is that of thanksgiving for Jehovah's righteous rule by which He has overcome the enemies of the chosen people. It is almost exclusively a song of thanksgiving. There are a few brief petitions, but they are intimately related to the measures of praise. These songs of praise move from the personal to the general. First, deliverances wrought for the singer are celebrated (vers. 1-4) ; then the government of the enthroned Jehovah among the nations, a government based upon righteousness, is sung (vers. 5-8) ; and next the tenderness of Jehovah toward the oppressed, and His unfailing succour of the needy, is declared (vers. 9, 10). The song of the singer then becomes a cry to others to join in the chorus (vers. 11, 12). Then follows a cry for mercy which immediately merges into praise, and the thanksgiving moves out in the same order from personal (vers. 13, 14) to general (vers. 15, 16).

The whole ends with a declaration of the certainty of the Divine government, and a final prayer for its clear manifestation. The psalm is a great pattern of praise on a far too much neglected level in our day. We praise God much for His mercy. This is right, but it is a good thing to recognize His righteous rule, and to praise Him for that.

PSALM X

JEHOVAH'S JUDGMENT BESOUGHT

IN the Septuagint and other versions, probably the ancient Hebrew, psalms ix and x appear as one. There is a clear connection between them, but it is that of contrast. In the former the singer has rejoiced in the exercise of Jehovah's rule in the whole earth. In this he mourns what seems to be the abandonment of His own people.

There is first the protesting cry of the heart against what seems to be Divine indifference to the injustice being wrought by the wicked against the poor (vers. 1, 2). This injustice is then described in detail. It is a graphic description of the brutality of earthly rule when it has forgotten God, or says in its ignorance that God has forgotten it. The picture would fit many times of misrule on the pages of human history. There is a heart *cry* to Jehovah ; to God to interfere. If the psalm opens in complaint, it closes in confidence. The wicked man is wrong about God. He does see and know. The cry of the oppressed He hears. Deliverance must come, for Jehovah is King. Not once nor twice, but often the man of faith has been driven to cry out in complaint in presence of the oppression of man by man. Happy is the man whose faith causes him to utter **his complaint directly** to Jehovah. The issue of such action is ever a renewed consciousness of the certainty of the Divine government, and the necessary rightness of the ultimate issue.

PSALM XI.

JEHOVAH'S THRONE THE FOUNDATION

THIS psalm is the answer of faith to the advice of fear. Both are alike conscious of immediate peril. Fear sees only the things that are near. Faith takes in the larger distances. If the things fear sees are indeed all, its advice is excellent. When the things which faith sees are realized, its determination is vindicated. The advice of fear is found in the words beginning, "Flee as a bird," and ending, "What can the righteous do?" The name and thought of God are absent. The peril is seen vividly and accurately. It is wicked in its nature; imminent,

the bow is bent ; subtle, they “ shoot in darkness.” The very foundations are destroyed. There is nothing for it now but to flee !

The rest of the psalm is the answer of faith. The first vision of faith is that of Jehovah enthroned. That is the supreme foundation. Then He also sees the peril. Do the wicked watch the righteous ? Jehovah watches the wicked ! Are the righteous tried in the process ? Jehovah presides over the trial ! Are the wicked going to shoot ? So is Jehovah-snares and brimstone !

Perhaps among all the psalms none reveals more perfectly the strenuous hold of faith. It is the man who measures things by the circumstances of the hour who is filled with fear, and counsels and practises flight ! The man who sees Jehovah enthroned and governing has no panic.

PSALM XII

J E H O V A H ' S R U L E I N T H E M I D S T O F U N G O D L I N E S S

OUT of a consciousness of the terrible evil of his times the worshipper cries to Jehovah for help. The failure of godly men and faithful souls is always the gravest peril which can threaten a nation or an age. There is no trouble which more heavily afflicts the heart of the trusting. The note here is more characterized by faith than that of psalm x. Here is a cry for help, but no suggestion that God is indifferent. Indeed there is an immediate affirmation of confidence in the interest and interference of God.

It is very beautiful to notice how in answer to the cry and the affirmation of confidence, Jehovah speaks, so that the singer hears Him, and is able to announce His declaration in response ere the song ceases. This answer of Jehovah is most precious. It promises the preservation of the trusting. The psalmist breaks out into praise of the purity of His words, and declares that Jehovah will “ keep them,” and “ preserve them.” The “ them ” here refers to the words. There is no promise made of widespread revival or renewal. It is the salvation of a remnant and the preservation of His own words which Jehovah promises.

Thus the psalm ends with a description of the same condition which it at first describes. It is the cry of a godly soul amid prevailing ungodliness for help ; and it is answered.

PSALM XIII

JEHOVAH'S Succour SOUGHT BY THE AFFLICTED

THIS little psalm is very full of beauty as it traces the way by which many a tried and tempest-tossed soul has found consolation and strength. There is first of **all** the cry of despair. Foes are oppressing the man of faith. There seems to be no **succour** even from Jehovah. Yet carefully note that his faith in Jehovah Who is his God, abides. He is able to help. To Him then he cries.

This is a lesson of profound value. If the heart be overburdened and Jehovah seems to hide His face, let the story of woe be told to Him. It is a holy exercise. Men may not understand it. They may even charge us with failing faith, when as a matter of fact in the sweeping of the storm as all other anchorage crumbles and passes, faith is fastening itself more surely upon the Rock.

How does the psalm end? With a song of triumph. Yet it is a song of faith, for deliverance is not yet realized. How then does the song emerge from the wail? Carefully examine the words :—

“ But I have trusted in Thy mercy ;
My heart shall rejoice in Thy salvation.”

That backward look has served to remind the troubled heart of deliverances wrought, and a new confidence is born of the memory which utters itself in a song. It is good to “ forget the things behind ” if the memory of them would hinder present consecration. It is also good to remember all the way Jehovah has led us when the day is dark with fear.

PSALM XIV

JEHOVAH'S KNOWLEDGE OF THE GODLESS

HERE the psalmist utters his own consciousness of the meaning of godlessness. In its essence it is folly. The word “ fool ” here stands for moral perversity rather than intellectual blindness. This is repeated in the declaration, “ They are corrupt,” and in the statement **that their** works are abominable. To his own testimony he adds the statement of the Divine

outlook upon humanity. It is the same. Men do not recognize Him, and their doings are therefore evil.

The psalmist then looks at certain occasions without naming them. "There" refers to some occasion of deliverance wrought by God for His people. The thought is that when God was recognized by His people their enemies were filled with fear. Then there is a contrasting picture of the oppressed people of God put to shame, "because Jehovah is his refuge"; the thought being that the refuge was neglected, and the chosen therefore rejected (see Ps. liii. 5). The thought of the whole psalm is that of the safety of godliness, and the peril of ungodliness. Jehovah cannot be deceived. He knows, and this, events always prove. The psalm ends with a sigh for the coming of the day of deliverance.

PSALM XV

JEHOVAH'S FRIEND DESCRIBED

THIS psalm declares the terms of friendship between man and Jehovah. The opening questions describe the privileges of friendship. To sojourn does not necessarily mean to stay for a brief time. Length of stay is not suggested by the word, but rather the position of one who receives hospitality, a guest. To dwell is to reside permanently. The picture is that of a resident of the City of God, who has free and welcome access to His presence. To whom are such high privileges granted? The answer is first stated in general terms, and then illustrations are given.

In general terms the friend of God is one whose general deportment is perfect, whose activity is right, whose inner thoughts are pure. The test of all this is in a man's attitude to his fellow-man, which is described. The man fulfilling these conditions is never moved from his residence in the holy hill, nor excluded from the hospitality of Jehovah's tent. The outcome of true friendship with Jehovah is friendship for man. Therefore, the condition for continued friendship with Jehovah is loyal friendship to man.

PSALM XVI

JEHOVAH THE PORTION OF THE TRUSTING

THIS is a song of satisfaction. The singer is not one who is unfamiliar with peril. The opening sentence is a sigh revealing the consciousness thereof, and towards the close, the shadows of Sheol and the terror of corruption are recognized. Yet these things only find a place here that they may be cancelled by the facts which create a sense of triumph over all peril. Jehovah is the one and all sufficient good, and the saints are the friends of the singer because they are also the friends of Jehovah. With those who exchange Jehovah for another god, the psalmist will have no fellowship. The fact that Jehovah is the supreme Good is developed in descriptive measures. He is a sent Good, and the Hope of all the future ; a present Possession, creating pleasant places, and perpetual power. As to the future, the last enemies are not to overcome the trusting, and beyond victory over them is the presence of the King, and the place of His right hand, with fullness of joy, and pleasures for evermore.

The hope of this singer found its perfect fulfilment only in the Man of perfect trust, and through Him in all who share His life, through the mystery of that death, from which He came triumphantly to enter into the eternal joys.

PSALM XVII

JEHOVAH APPEALED TO, TO EXERCISE JUDGMENT.

THIS psalm is generally conceded to be closely linked with the preceding one. There is an evident similarity of outlook. In each case the singer declares his abstention from complicity with ungodly men. In both psalms God is appealed to, and the final hope of the soul is that of fuller communion with Him. Yet, of **course**, the chief impression of comparison is that of contrast. In the former, peril is referred to incidentally. Here, it is described, and is the occasion of the outpouring of the soul. The two exercises of priesthood are exemplified in these psalms. In the first the sacrifices of praise are offered. In this the petitions of need are presented.

First, the ground of appeal is that of the singer's uprightness of heart, and speech, and action. It then moves into another and higher realm, that of the singer's confidence in God. He is known to be the One Who saves the trusting. The consciousness of His tenderness is manifest in the expressions used :-

" Keep me as the apple of the eye,
Hide me under the shadow of Thy wings."

After a description of the immediate peril the singer again appeals for help, and the song ends with the expression of assured blessing, and the declaration of the one and only full satisfaction.

PSALM XVIII

JEHOVAH WORSHIPPED

THIS is one of the most majestic and beautiful of the worship psalms. It is at once a perfect pattern of praise, and therefore a great revelation of the method and might and mercy of God. So clear and simple is it in its movement and language that nothing need be said of it save perhaps to suggest an analysis to aid in its study.

PROLOGUE OF PRAISE (vers. 1-3). Here the psalmist pours out the gladness and gratitude of his heart which thrills with the highest spirit of adoration.

THE PERIL AND DELIVERANCE (vers. 4-19). The terrible nature of the peril is first made clear, and then the story of the might and majesty of Jehovah's process is told, and the fact of deliverance declared.

THE PRINCIPLE (vers. 20-29). The reason of the Divine deliverance is declared, and the truth of perpetual importance, that God is to man what man is to God, is affirmed.

THE RESULTANT CONFIDENCE (vers. 30-45). Again the song breaks forth in almost tumultuous joy. Absolute confidence in God, and assurance of continued triumph are based upon experiences already gained of His goodness.

EPILOGUE OF PRAISE (vers. 46-50). The anthem ends with further sentences which group the benefits conferred upon the king by his God, and attest his determination to praise Him among the nations.

PSALM XIX

JEHOVAH REVEALED IN NATURE AND LA W

THE burden of this psalm is that of the twofold revelation of Jehovah. He is revealed in nature and in law. Yet in nature Jehovah is revealed as God, and not by those especial qualities suggested by the great name Jehovah. Moreover, in the law God is revealed as Jehovah, rather than by the facts of His wonder-working power. This differentiation is justified by the names as used.

In the first six verses, which deal with the nature revelation, the name God appears once, and Jehovah not at all. In the last eight verses, which speak of the law revelation, the name Jehovah appears seven times, and God not at all. It is one Sovereign Ruler Who is revealed, and He is referred to by name eight times in all. Nature speaks to nature. Day has its message to itself, and night to itself. Without articulation the message is constantly delivered in the circuit of the sun. To man, higher than all nature (see Ps. viii), an articulate message is given. A word is spoken. It is the great law of Jehovah—"perfect," "sure," "right," "pure," "clean," "true," "righteous." Mark well the sevenfold description, and how perfectly all the needs of man are met. Great and wondrous, God is known in nature by nature through the speech of a great silence; and revealed to man in messages which answer all his questionings, and govern all his ways.

PSALM XX

JEHOVAH APPEALED TO FOR HELP ON BEHALF OF THE KING

THIS and the next psalms are certainly closely connected. The first is the prayer of the people on behalf of the king as he goes forth to battle. The first five verses were sung in chorus, and express the consciousness of the supreme need in this day of trouble. The foes are gathered, the battle must be fought. Help must come from the sanctuary, and strength from Zion. In the name of God the banners must be set up.

The next verse is a solo. The voice of the king is heard announcing his confidence in Jehovah. Immediately the chorus takes up the music, and contrasts the confidence of the foe in chariots and horses, with that of those who follow the king, in

the name of Jehovah Who is their God. Following the contrast of confidence is that of issue : “ They are bowed down and fallen,” “ We are risen, and stand upright.”

The whole ends with a prayer in such form as recognizes the kingship of Jehovah. To-day the weapons of our warfare are no longer carnal, but we have a conflict to wage, and the secrets of strength for us are revealed as clearly here, as for those of olden times.

PSALM XXI

JEHOVAH PRAISED AS THE STRENGTH OF THE KING

THE battle is over ; the victory is won, and the assembled people sing the song of the victory. This song while it celebrates one victory, runs beyond it, and praises Jehovah for all He has done for the King. They had prayed, “ Grant thee thy heart’s desire ” (xx. 4). The prayer is answered, and now they sing, “ Thou hast given him his heart’s desire ” (xxi. 2). They had sung of victory because their trust was in the name of Jehovah (xx. 7, 8). Victory has been won, and now they celebrate it (xxi. 7-12).

The contrast is very vivid between the king trusting in Jehovah, and therefore sustained, supplied, and led in triumph ; and the enemies who intended evil against Jehovah, and who are swallowed up, and destroyed, and utterly overcome. From the experience of the king the whole nation learns its lesson. The opening declaration, “ The king shall joy in Thy strength,” issues in the final prayer :-

“ Be Thou exalted, O Jehovah, in Thy strength ;
So will we sing and praise Thy power.”

Again let us remember our conflict is spiritual, and still the ancient hymn is ours, for our King also triumphed through the strength of Jehovah, and to our final victories we follow in His train.

PSALM XXII

JEHOVAH THE SUCCOURER OF THE AFFLICTED ONE

WHATEVER may have been the local conditions creating this psalm, it has become so perfectly and properly associated with the One Son of God, that it is almost impossible to read it in any other way. This and the two following

psalms constitute a triptych of tablets upon which are written the story of the Christ in His work as Saviour, Shepherd, and Sovereign.

As to this first, seeing that in the supreme mystery of the Passion Jesus quoted the first words, we are justified in reading it in the light of that Cross. It has two great movements. The first admits us, so far as that can be, to the lonely suffering of the Victim on the altar of sacrifice (vers. 1-21). The second brings us into the presence of that joy of the Victor, as through the travail He saw the triumph (vers. 22-31).

In reverently reading the first, we must understand that all the desolation was the experience of One Who had entered the sinner's place. In rejoicingly reading the second, we must recognize that the height of joy is that of ability to proclaim an evangel to those in need. And this is enough to write. For the rest let the Spirit, Who is the one Interpreter of the Christ of God, speak to our hearts, and let us in amazement worship and obey.

PSALM XXIII

JEHOVAH THE SHEPHERD OF HIS OWN

IN the Messianic application this psalm properly follows **that in** which the **work** of the Christ as Saviour is portrayed. It is to those whom He has won through His passion that He becomes known as the Shepherd. Of course this psalm as written is even more wonderful for the fact that its author did not live in the light of Jehovah which has come to us through the Incarnation. It shows us how very clearly faith saw through the mists of those preparatory days to some of the most precious things about God. We still read the wonderful words, and understand them of Jehovah, but the revelation of Him in Jesus is our interpretation, and the psalm becomes richer for that fact. It is an unruffled song of rest. All the circumstances of the pilgrimage, want, weariness, journeyings, wanderings, perplexities, the shadowed mysteries of the valleys, the thronging enemies, and the infinite beyond, are present ; and the singer knows them. They are, however, only mentioned to sing of their negation by the graciousness of the Shepherd. Want is cancelled. For weariness He has green pastures of rest. On journeys He leads by

pleasant ways. From wanderings He restores. Through perplexities He guides, and that by right ways. In the valleys of death's shadow His presence cancels fear. In the presence of enemies He makes a feast, and is a Host royal in bounty. And finally the path runs on, not into a tangled wilderness, but to the King's own palace.

PSALM XXIV

JEHOVAH CONQUERING THROUGH THE KING

THIS is the final psalm of the three, and as in Psalm xxii, the words so far exceed the possibility of exhaustion by any circumstances originating them as to create an opinion unanimously in favour of their Messianic application. In this song the Saviour Who through suffering triumphed ; the Shepherd Who through pilgrimage leads His own, is seen ascending to the place of power and authority.

The first movement recognizes the sovereignty of Jehovah over the created world and its inhabitants (vers. 1, 2). There is then a question asked which recognizes a need. The hill of the Lord, which *is* the place of authority (see Ps. ii. 6) is vacant, and the question is asked, "Who shall ascend into it?" The answer declares the need for purity of conduct and character.

Suddenly there breaks forth the antiphonal chanting of angels. Some are accompanying the King as He approaches the place of power. Others wait, guarding the entrance. The first company claims entrance for Him. The second assembly challenges His right. The answer tells of might inherent, and of victory in battle ; and through the lifted portals we see Him pass, and know Him for "Jehovah of hosts." He has passed through psalm xxii, and is exercising the office of psalm xxiii ; and after, He is seen claiming the authority of psalm xxiv.

PSALM XXV

JEHOVAH BESOUGHT FOR DELIVERANCE

THE sob of a great sorrow sounds throughout this psalm. The circumstances of its writing were those of desolation, affliction, distress, travail, as the latter part especially shows. Yet the main content is one full of help to all who are in

sorrow. It is far more than a wail saddening all who read it. It is the voice of hope and confidence, and tells of *succour* and of strength.

There are three movements in it. The first (vers. 1-7), and last (vers. 16-22) are prayers uttered out of great need. The central (vers. 8-15) is contemplation and declaration of the goodness of God. Thus structurally the psalm is beautiful. Its central glory is a revelation of God's goodness and patience (vers. 8-10). Then a sob at the heart of everything (ver. 11). Immediately an account of the blessedness of the man who trusts. The opening verses contain the prayer of a distressed soul, whose thought of God is revealed in the central portion. The closing verses are the earnest *cry* of that soul to such a God, and in such confidence the details of the experience of suffering are named.

PSALM XXVI

JEHOVAH WORSHIPPED. CONDITIONS

THE central word of the song may be said to be, "So will I compass Thine altar, O Jehovah" (ver. 6). On either side conditions of worship are described. First the conditions of personal life necessary to **worship (vers. 1-6)**. Afterwards the true exercise of worship is described (vers. 7, 8). Then the psalm becomes a prayer for preparation (vers. 9-11); and ends with the declaration of assurance (ver. 12).

As to conditions of personal life fitting for worship, they may be described as complete separation from evil ways and evil persons. Fellowship with Jehovah is only possible when there is no fellowship with the wicked. Moreover, the Judge must be Jehovah Himself. To Him the singer makes his appeal. In this fact there is great solemnity and great comfort. Jehovah's standards are high, but they are ever far more reasonable than those of men. The exercise of worship at its highest *is* that of praise, issuing from delight in the dwelling-place and glory of God. The prayer for preparation explains the opening words. In its light they are seen to be of the nature of appeal to Jehovah's decision rather than boasting in His presence. The final prayer for preparation is, "Redeem me and be merciful unto me." Such a prayer is immediately answered, and this the last verse makes plain.

PSALM XXVII

JEHOVAH WORSHIPPED. EXPERIENCE

THE real significance of this psalm is that of the experience of worship. It is somewhat strange that the remarkable contrast between the first (vers. 1-6) and second (vers. 7-14) parts has given rise to the view that two men have written the psalm, or if one person is the author, he must have written them at different times. The psalm reveals the true attitude and exercise of the worshipping soul. Praise and prayer follow each other in their true order. First the offering of praise due to the consciousness of Jehovah. Then pouring out of the heart's need to the One worshipped. The conception of God revealed in the first half makes possible the abandon of the petitions in the second half. The God Who is light, and salvation and strength, Who hides in His pavilion, and lifts the soul on to the rock is the very One Whose face a man, forsaken of father and mother, pursued by adversaries, and slandered by enemies, will most easily appeal to. This is the meaning of the injunction of the final verse. When hosannas languish on our tongues it is because we do not begin with Jehovah. To see Him first in the hour of communion, and to praise Him, is to be able without reserve to pour out all the story of our sorrow in His ear, and to know that when the soul beseeches Him not to cast off, it may affirm in confidence, "Jehovah will take me up."

PSALM XXVIII

JEHOVAH APPEALED TO AND WORSHIPPED

THE affinity between this psalm and the previous one is evident, and its placing by the editor here was in all likelihood due to that fact. In psalm xxvii in true order, praise prepares for, and issues in prayer, the whole ending in an appeal to "wait on Jehovah." The next psalm opens, "Unto Thee, O Jehovah, will I call." This is not to suggest that the song was written by the same person, or immediately. It rather affords an illustration of a song written by one who acted upon the principle enjoined.

The cry of need is a very urgent one. The peril is so great that death threatens. Unless Jehovah help, there is no help.

That the danger arose from enemies is evident from his cry to Jehovah for justice. Suddenly the prayer becomes a song of praise, an act of adoration. The prayer is heard, help is granted, the song begins. That this psalm, with its inverted order of prayer and praise, follows closely upon that in which the order is that of praise and prayer, is encouraging. The true order is praise and prayer. If the heart is not strong enough for this, let it learn how to praise by speaking first in prayer of its sorrow. The one thing impossible in the matter of worship is to compress it within the narrow limits of stated formulae.

PSALM XXIX

JEHOVAH IN THE MAJESTY OF THE STORM

THIS is a wonderful picture of a storm, viewed from the standpoint of one who is supremely conscious of Jehovah.

The great name occurs oftener in this psalm than in any other in this first book, being found no less than eighteen times. Therein is discovered the key to the whole movement. Once the name suggestive of wonder-working might is used, "The God of glory thundereth." For the rest this God is seen to be Jehovah of the trusting soul. From this outlook all the sublimity and majesty are seen under the control of love, and the singer finds occasion for the highest form of praise in the presence of a storm which otherwise might have filled the heart with terror.

The storm is described in the central part of the song (vers. 3-g). To the description there is a prelude calling upon "the sons of God" to praise (vers. 1, 2). In the epilogue (vers. 10, 11), the storm seems to have subsided, and the psalmist sings of the one supreme impression produced. Over all the flood Jehovah sat as King. The deductions are simple and yet full of beauty. Jehovah always sits as King. During the storm He will give strength to His people. Following it He shall give them peace.

PSALM XXX

JEHOVAH DELIVERING FROM AFFLICTION

THIS is a song of praise for deliverance (vers. 1-5) and a meditation on the deliverance and its lessons (vers. 6-12 a); with a final note of praise (ver. 12 b). The phrases descriptive of the trouble are such as to leave little room for doubt that

the singer had been sick, and nigh unto death :“ Thou hast raised me up,”“ Thou hast healed me,” “ Thou hast brought up my soul from Sheol.” Moreover, he believed that the sickness was a Divine chastisement, and through it and his deliverance he had found the method of Jehovah :-

“ His anger is but for a moment.”

“ Weeping may tarry for a night.”

The issue of such experience is of the highest, “ life,” “ joy in the morning.” The review is full of suggestiveness. Days of prosperity had issued in self-satisfaction. Jehovah hid His face. That was the moment of His anger, and that the night of weeping! There was the return to Jehovah in the cry of anguish. The answer was immediate ; mourning became dancing, sackcloth was exchanged for gladness. What was all this for? “ To the end that my glory may sing praise to Thee, and not be silent.” Self-satisfaction cannot praise Jehovah Therefore, it must be corrected by discipline. The final note of praise shows that through affliction and by deliverance the lesson has been learned.

PSALM XXXI

Jehovah the Refuge of the Afflicted

IN this great song of trust struggling through tears to triumph, we have a fine example of an experience often repeated in the history of the children of faith. There are three divisions. In the first (vers. 1-8) the double sense of trust and trial is clearly manifest. In the second (vers. 9-18) for a time the trial seems almost to have overcome the trust, so keen is the consciousness thereof. In the last (vers. 19-24), trust has completely triumphed, and the sense of the singer is that of perfect safety in the pavilion of Jehovah. In the first, in the midst of a sense of sobs, the soul of the singer valiantly affirms its confidence, and pleads for help. In the second, the affirmation of trust is in a past tense, and the present is one of trial and tears. In the last, trust is a condition which needs no formal declaration, but sings itself out in victory and gladness.

In this song we find the seasons of the soul as we all know them sooner or later. First autumn with its winds and gathering clouds, yet having sunlight, and a golden fruitage, even though

the breath of death is everywhere (vers. 1-8). Then follows winter, chill and lifeless, full of sobs and sighing (vers. 9-13). After that the spring, with its hope and expectation, its sweeping rains, and bursting sun-gleams (vers. 14-18). At last the glad and golden summer (vers. 19-24). We need them all to complete our year!

PSALM XXXII

JEHOVAH AND THE BACKSLIDING SOUL

THIS is known as the second of the penitential psalms. It is the song of a man who is rejoicing in 'the assurance of restoration. Opening with an outburst of praise, which reveals the experimental knowledge of the happiness of, forgiveness (vers. 1, 2), it proceeds to describe the bitterness of the soul's experience while sin is unconfessed (vers. 3, 4). Then the way of restoration by confession, and the readiness of Jehovah to forgive, are declared (ver. 5). On the basis of such restoration the soul has access to God, and the assurance of His succour in trouble (vers. 6, 7). The message of Jehovah to His child is then sung, in which the promise of guidance is made, and the condition of submission is stated (vers. 8, 9). All ends with an affirmation of the safety of such as trust in Jehovah, and a call to men to praise Him.

Among all the psalms there is none which touches deeper things in the life of the soul, or more perfectly reveals the methods of Jehovah in the matters of sin, sorrow and guidance. He is ready to pardon, able to deliver, and willing to guide.

PSALM XXXIII

JEHOVAH THE MIGHTY DELIVERER

THIS is a triumphant song of praise, opening with a call to vocal and instrumental music. "Rejoice," "praise," "give thanks," "sing praises," "sing," "play" -thus all modes of expression are appealed to. The praise proceeds, and the

greatness and goodness of Jehovah are sung in general terms (vers. 4-11). The whole of the facts are summarized, His word is right, His work is faithful (ver. 4). His character is perfect, combining light-“ righteousness and judgment ”: and love-“ lovingkindness ” (ver. 5). He is the Creator, full of power so that men should worship (vers. 6-g). He is the active King, overruling all the affairs of men (vers. 10, 11).

The song then praises Jehovah as the God of the chosen people (vers. 12-19). He chose them, and in their interest watches all the sons of men (vers. 12-15). His watchfulness of His own is a greater security than armies or horses (vers. 16-19). The song ends with an affirmation of trust, an assurance of joy, and a prayer for mercy (vers. 20-22). There is a lilt and a lift about this psalm which is of the very essence of gladness. It is indeed a song of deliverance (xxxii. 7).

PSALM XXXIV

Jehovah the constant Succourer

IN this psalm praise is personal. After the chorus of the last we have a solo full of feeling. It tells of the goodness of Jehovah, and that in order that others may know and be helped. The opening declares this. The song is to be perpetual, and the meek are to be made glad thereby. Then there is the desire to draw others into the same attitude of praise. It is good to go through simply to find the things Jehovah has done. “ He answered me.” “ Delivered me from all my fears.” “ They ... were irradiated.” “ Jehovah heard him and saved him.” “ His eyes are toward ... His ears are open.” “ Jehovah heard ... and delivered them.” “ Jehovah is nigh.” “ Jehovah delivereth.” “ He keepeth.” “ Jehovah redeemeth.” This is not an exhaustive list, for on the side of human reception many more things are said. It is a song which tells of the nearness, the tender sensitiveness, the ready help, the mighty power of Jehovah on behalf of all such as trust Him. It is, moreover, rich in its lack of selfishness. The singer is eager for others to hear, to test, to praise, and he takes **time to** sing to the children, that they also may know the secret of life.

PSALM XXXV

JEHOVAH BESOUGHT FOR HELP AGAINST ENEMIES

THERE is a sob and an agony in this song. The singer is sore beset with enemies. They are striving with him, fighting against him. They are plotting against him, treacherously spreading a net for his feet. He cries out to Jehovah for help, vowing that he will offer praise for deliverance (vers. 1-10). The sob touches deeper depths. The cruelty and oppression are being shown by those whom he has in the past befriended. In their time of trouble he had mourned with them. In the day of his halting they have taken advantage of weakness still further to wound.

Again he cries for rescue by the Lord, and promises to praise Him publicly (vers. 11-18). And again the same prayer is offered. The foes are not only cruel and treacherous; they are full of bitterness, and taunt and mock the suffering man, and in his agony he cries out for help, for the third time promising to praise Him (vers. 19-28). Before we criticize the singer for his attitude towards his foes, let us imagine ourselves in his place. In no sense is the level of spiritual realization in this psalm equal to that in many others. One of the greatest values of the collection is its revelation of how under all circumstances the soul may turn to God.

PSALM XXXVI

JEHOVAH FORGOTTEN AND RECOGNIZED. A CONTRAST

THE antithetical nature of this psalm is self-evident. In the first part (vers. 1-4) the wickedness of the wicked is described as to its reason and expression. The one and only reason of transgression is that the fear of God is lost. All evil results therefrom. In contrast to this, the advantages of the remembrance of Jehovah are set forth first by a description of certain facts concerning Him.

One can easily imagine that the psalm was written on some natural height from which the singer looked out upon a **far-stretching** scene in the outstanding features of which he saw

symbols of truth concerning his God. Note the sweep of vision. The heavens, the skies or clouds, the mountains, the great deep, the river, and over all, the light. There is a fine fitness in the interpretation of suggestiveness. The encompassing blue speaks of lovingkindness ; the passing clouds in the mystery of their orderliness, of His faithfulness ; the mountains suggest His righteousness from which rivers of pleasure flow to mingle in the deep of His judgments. Of all the abundant and varying life He is the Source or Fountain ; and the sunshine of His face is the light on everything. All ends with a prayer for the continued safety of the Divine care and protection.

PSALM XXXVII

JEHOVAH THE CONFIDENCE OF HIS PEOPLE

THIS psalm stands in striking contrast to Psalm xxxv. While it is perfectly true that Jehovah patiently bears with, and ministers consolation to the fretful souls who pour out their complaint in His ear ; it is nevertheless a low level on which to live for the man of faith. The other psalm was full of fretfulness. This has as its keynote, " Fret not."

The underlying problem is that of the prosperity of evil men. It *is* an astonishment and a perplexity still, troubling many a tried and trusting heart. The psalmist first declares that all such prosperity is short-lived, and then tells the secrets of quietness, in spite of the problem. There are first positive injunctions. They may be grouped thus : " Trust in Jehovah " ; " Delight in Jehovah " ; " Commit thy way unto Jehovah " ; " Rest in Jehovah."

Then again the fundamental injunction is twice repeated, " Fret not." It is wrong ; it is harmful ; it is needless. Let the trusting wait. Events will justify the action. The prosperity of wickedness cannot last. It is the meek and trusting soul who finally possesses the land, and enters into peace.

Continuing, the psalmist works out his contrast into greater detail. The prosperity of the wicked has within it the elements of its own destruction, and cannot last (vers. 12-20). This is all stated by way of contrast. The little of the righteous is better than the abundance of many wicked. This is by no means out of

date. It is only necessary to wait long enough, and to watch, to know that the principle is abiding. Ill-gotten gains, and the triumph of wickedness are alike doomed by inherent evil to sure and certain destruction. Then the other side is stated in great fullness (vers. 21-31). The way established by Jehovah is sure. There may be failure, but there is restoration. With the more complex civilization in the midst of which we live, perhaps sometimes the righteous have been driven to beg ; but even now such cases are surely rare, and after some varied experience I should want to subject the begging one to somewhat severe cross-examination before accepting his testimony as against that of the psalmist. Even if it be granted, the underlying principle remains, that the bread of charity is to be chosen in preference to the wealth of wickedness.

In verses 32-40 we have the final contrast of this psalm. The first statement is that of the safety of the righteous against the machinations of the wicked. Jehovah never abandons His own to the malice of evil men. It is true that the wicked may flourish for a time, but suddenly he passes out of sight, and without leaving any trace. Look on to the issues if you would see the true meaning of things ! The upright come into peace at last, because Jehovah helps them, rescues them, saves them. The way in which this psalm has appealed to men, and continues to do so, is a proof of how prone the heart is to rebel against the seeming prosperity of the wicked, and also a demonstration of the conviction of men that it is better to trust in Jehovah than to achieve any kind of success by other means. Faith does falter and demand some explanation. It finds all it asks when resolutely it obeys the injunctions to trust, delight, commit, rest, wait!

PSALM XXXVIII

J E H O V A H A P P E A L E D T O I N P E N I T E N C E

THIS is the third of what are known as the penitential psalms. The circumstances of the singer were most distressing. He was suffering from some terrible physical malady ; was deserted by his friends, and persecuted by his enemies. The deepest bitterness of his soul was caused by his overwhelming sense of his moral pollution. He recognizes that all his sufferings were the rebukes and chastisements of Jehovah for his sin. This

sense of sin crushed him, and in his distress he cried out to Jehovah. The use of the Divine names and titles in this psalm is interesting. The first cry for help is to Jehovah, When he would utter his complaint concerning the desertion of friends, and persecution of foes, he addresses himself to the Lord, as the supreme Being. In his final appeal he both begins and closes with Jehovah, Lord and God. All the foundations seem to have given way beneath his feet, and with deep contrition and desperate endeavour he strives to take hold of God in all the facts of His Being. In this he was right, for so desperate a case demands the help, the government, the might of God. Blessed be His name for ever, all are at our disposal.

PSALM XXXIX

J E H O V A H T H E H O P E O F T H E A F F L I C T E D

A GAIN the circumstances are those of sorrow and affliction. The attitude of the sufferer is one of true dignity. If the psalm be taken in connection with the preceding one, it marks an advance, perhaps a gain out of that experience. Then we saw a man crying out for Jehovah and His help. Here is a man still in circumstances of trial, and acutely conscious of them, but he has found the secret place of communion, and this conditions his attitudes. Towards his foes there is maintained a great silence, the secret of which he presently declares, "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth because Thou didst it." Yet the things he sees strangely stir him, and at last he breaks the silence.

Here again the result of his knowledge of Jehovah is seen in that he speaks of Him, and not to his enemies. Thus he sets the strange prosperity of the wicked in relation to God. All the apparent success is seen to be nothing worth, and this sorrowful man makes his personal appeal to Jehovah for help and succour.

PSALM XL

J E H O V A H W O R S H I P P E D I N P R A I S E A N D P R A Y E R

A GAIN we find in this psalm the perfect structure manifest in Psalm xxxvii. Praise prepares for prayer. The experience has mounted higher than in the preceding song (xxxix). The circumstances are still those of affliction, but a new consciousness

of Jehovah, resulted from having "waited patiently" for Him, inspires a lofty song of praise (vers. **I-IO**). This gives the soul a great freedom to pour out its complaint (vers. **II-16**), after which, in conclusion, there follows an affirmation of faith, and a final prayer (ver. 17).

The patient waiting resulted in the singer's sense that Jehovah was bending over him, and listening to his cry. The result is a new song which is rightly interpreted at its deepest in the words of the hymn :-

" Glory to Thee for all the grace
I have not tasted yet."

This is expressed in recognition of the activity of Jehovah God, and the certainty that His one purpose for His people is that they should delight in His will, and proclaim Him to others.

Then follows the prayer. Sorrow and sin have oppressed the heart beyond the power of its endurance. In distress, and yet in confidence, appeal is made to Jehovah. The final word of confidence is very full of beauty, "The Lord thinketh upon me."

PSALM XLI

J E H O V A H R E C O G N I Z E D A S R E W A R D I N G C O M P A S S I O N

THIS whole song depends for interpretation upon its opening beatitude. The man who is considerate towards the weak, that is compassionate, is blessed. His blessings are then described. Let emphasis be placed in reading upon "him" and "he," and "his," in verses 1-3. It will then be seen that all these things come to the man at first described, namely, the compassionate man.

Then the psalmist confesses his sin. In the light of the beatitude the sin is seen to have been that of lack of compassion, and this is the secret of the bitter hatred of his enemies which he proceeds to describe. Returning to his cry for mercy, his words are to be carefully noted (ver. 10). What is the meaning of "requite"? Almost all expositors agree in treating it as a word indicating revenge, and then attempt to explain it away. The word may certainly be translated recompense, and is far oftener used to indicate a kind action than a vindictive one. If that be

so here, the consistency of the argument is apparent. He has failed in compassion, therefore his enemies and even his friend are against him. He asks for Jehovah's mercy, that being raised up he may treat his enemies differently. The Messianic reference is not destroyed. The wrong of those who harmed the Christ is greater because they acted without cause. Even then His prayer, "Father, forgive," harmonizes with this interpretation. His raising up by God was for blessing on men.

BOOK II. PSALMS XLII-LXXII

DOXOLOGY

“ Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel,
Who only doeth wondrous things ;
And blessed be His glorious Name for ever ;
And let the whole earth be filled with His glory. Amen, and Amen.” Ps. **lxxii. 18, 19.**

A. THE TITLE .	B. THE RELATION .	C. THE QUALITY .	D. THE QUANTITY .	E. THE EXTENT .
“ Jehovah Elohim.” The Essential. Helper Supreme.	“ The God of Israel.” “ Who only doeth wondrous things. ”	“ Blessed.” The Person. His Name. “ Amen, and Amen.”	“ For ever.”	“ The whole earth filled with His Glory.”

The Divine Name.

The dominant name in this book is “ God.” It occurs in every psalm at least twice, and in one as many as 26 times.

It is written in the singular (El) **16** times, and in the plural (Elohim) **198 times.**

“ Jehovah ” is found 32 times. From 15 psalms it is absent altogether.

The general title “ Lord ” (Adonahy) occurs **19** times scattered through **12** of the psalms.

In addition, the title “ Jah,” is used once.

The Dominant Thought.

In the second book the dominant thought is that of the might of God realized by His people, and manifest through them. The worship is that of Jehovah, as the wonder-working God.

ANALYSIS

A. MIGHTY DELIVERANCE. xlii-li.	B. MIGHTY DEFENCE. Iii-lx.	C. MIGHTY DOMINION. lxi-lxxii.
I. Exile. xlii-xliv. i. The Desire. xlii. ii. The Prayer. xliii. iii. The Despair. xliv. II. Hope. xlv-xlix. i. The King. xlv. ii. The Refuge. xlvi. iii. The Victor. xlvii. iv. The Defender. xlviii. v. The Life-Giver. xlix. III. Restoration. 1, li. i. The Act of God 1. ii. The Attitude of Man. Ii.	I. The Enemy. lii-lv. i. The godless One. Iii, liii. ii. The Cry of Distress. liv, Iv. II. The Defender. lvi-lx. i. Hope. lvi, lvii. ii. Prayer. lviii-lx. III. The Process. lxix-lxxii. i. The Suffering Witness. lxix. ii. The Cry for Help. lxx. iii. The Cry for Confidence. lxxi. iv. The King and the Kingdom. lxxii.	I. The Need. lxi-lxiv. i. Assurance. lxi. ii. Patience. lxiii. iii. Confidence. lxiii. iv. Certainty. liv. II. The Answer. lxv-lxviii. i. Praise for Might. lxv. ii. Praise for Deliverance. lxvi. iii. Universal Praise. lxvii. iv. The Arising of God. lxviii. III. The Process. lxix-lxxii. i. The Suffering Witness. lxix. ii. The Cry for Help. lxx. iii. The Cry for Confidence. lxxi. iv. The King and the Kingdom. lxxii.

PSALM XLII

GOD REMEMBERED IN EXILE

THIS is the song of an exile, and moreover, of an exile among enemies who have no sympathy with his religious convictions. He cries out after God with all the intensity of one who knows God, and cares supremely for the honour of His name. His greatest grief is their mocking enquiry after his God. By contrast he remembers being in the midst of worshipping multitudes, their leader and companion. In the midst of his grief he appeals to his own soul in the language of hope and confidence. A great conflict goes on within, for he affirms, "My soul is cast down."

Notice carefully the heroism of the man. He makes his trouble and disquietude the occasion of remembering God. Out of the place of his exile he turns his thoughts to God. The result is not a deadening of his sense of sorrow, but rather a setting of it in right relationship to God. Trouble has come in cataracts and waves and billows, but they are all God's own. "Thy cataracts ... Thy waves ... Thy billows." When sorrow is set in this relationship, there is a consciousness of love in the day time ; there is in the night a song and a prayer. The trouble is still there, the oppression and reproach of the enemy, but courage and hope continue also, and the conviction of coming deliverance. It is a wonderful psalm, and has been the song of many an afflicted yet trusting soul.

PSALM XLIII

GOD LEADING THE EXILE HOME

THIS psalm is either a part of the previous one, or is closely connected with it. It breathes the same note of confidence, ending with practically the same words as the two parts of the former. It reaches a higher plane in that it only refers to sorrow and mourning in order to protest against them in the light of the certainty of God's deliverance.

From prayer for that deliverance, which he has twice in the previous psalm declared to be certain, he passes to affirmation of how, following the leading of God's light and truth, he will go up to worship. Notice the procession to praise as he describes it.

To the hill ; to the tabernacles ; to the altar ; and then the act of praise. Not yet has the answer come. The darkness and the mystery are still about him, but the shining way is seen ; and again the soul is forbidden to despair, and hope is encouraged in God.

PSALM XLIV

G O D T H E A U T H O R O F G O O D A N D E V I L

THE final meaning of this psalm is discovered in its last four verses. It is a prayer for deliverance from circumstances of defeat. Its strength of appeal lies in its recognition of the government of God. He is the Author of good and evil. Of course evil is used here in the sense of disaster and calamity. He sings of the God of good first (vers. 1-8). There is a double recognition of this. History attests it. The testimony of the fathers affirms it. They had originally come into possession of the land by the act of God (vers. 1-3). Then there is personal recognition of it. Trust is to be reposed in nothing save God (vers. 4-8). The word "But" indicates a change. The day is one of disaster, and this is recognized as the act of God. "Thou hast cast us off." "Thou makest us to turn back," and so on (vers. 9-16).

Yet there has not been apostasy. Nay, rather it had been a pathway of suffering for the sake of God and His name (vers. 17-22). Light is thrown upon this by Paul's use of the words in Romans viii. 36. Then follows the plea for help and deliverance. It is a perfectly honest and reasonable plea, yet the wonderful advance of Christian experience upon the highest in the old economy is nowhere more plainly shown than here. The apostle of the new covenant makes no appeal for deliverance, but rather declares that in all these things we are more than conquerors, and affirms that nothing can separate us from **the** love of God.

PSALM XLV

G O D G L A D D E N I N G T H E K I N G A N D H I S B R I D E

WHETHER this psalm has, or had a local application, or is wholly idealistic, cannot be certainly determined. It matters very little, for it is one of the songs which inevitably is Messianic in its deepest and fullest meaning. After an

introduction which speaks of the fullness of his heart, the singer addresses the king, telling of the glory of his person, the perfection of his rule, and the beauty of his bride (vers. 1-9).

He then turns to the bride, and in view of her high calling counsels her to forget her own people, and surrender herself wholly to her husband (vers. 10-12). If the king in mind was Solomon, and the bride the daughter of Pharaoh, the suggestiveness of the song becomes the more remarkable. He then describes the queen gloriously arrayed for her marriage (vers. 13-15), and ends by words of promised blessing to the king.

If the inclusive truth of this psalm be larger than we are able to grasp, there is a personal application full of value and full of beauty. It is as we see the glory of the Lord that we become ready to renounce all our own people and possessions, that we may be wholly to His praise, and so become the instruments through whom the royal race is propagated, and the glory of the King made known among the generations and the peoples.

PSALM XLVI

GOD THE REFUGE OF HIS PEOPLE

COMMENT on this great song of confidence seems almost unnecessary, so powerfully has it taken hold upon the heart of humanity, and so perfectly does it set forth the experience of trusting souls in all ages, in circumstances of tempest shock.

The system of the song is worth noting. It is divided into three parts. The first (vers. 1-3) is the challenge of confidence. The second (vers. 4-7) tells the secret of confidence. The third (vers. 8-11) declares the vindication of confidence.

The challenge announces confidence in God as refuge and strength, and very present help, and defies fear even in the midst of the wildest upheavals. In days when tempests shake loose all solid things, and the restless waters roar and surge till mountains shake, the soul is confident.

The secret of the confidence is the consciousness of the nearness of God. He is a river of gladness in the midst of **the** city. What matters the tumult around?

The vindication of confidence is to be found in observing His activity in all surrounding things, from this place of safety and

strength within the city. The twice repeated refrain (vers. 7, 11) is full of beauty as it reveals the twofold conception of God which is the deepest note in the music. He is the King of all hosts. He is the God of the individual. Scholars believe, and with every reason, that the refrain should also occur between verses 3 and 4. This certainly perfects the literary form, and adds to the beauty of the psalm.

PSALM XLVII

G O D R E I G N I N G O V E R T H E N A T I O N S

THIS is a song of the sovereignty of God. In the Hebrew ceremonial it was pre-eminently the song of the New Year, being repeated seven times ere the sounding of the trumpets which announced the feast.

It opens with an appeal to the peoples to unite in His adoration as the one supreme Ruler. The singer has a true sense of the real mission of the chosen as the appointed rulers of the peoples. Their song is called for, and therefore it is plain that their subjugation is looked upon as beneficent to them as well as to Israel. The appeal is renewed to praise the uplifted and enthroned King.

A prophetic vision of the ultimate recognition of the throne of God concludes the psalm. It has a wide outlook. Not the one nation only, but all the princes are seen submissive to His rule, and so become the people of the God of Abraham. This is the true note of rejoicing. Not merely is the safety of the one city the cause of gladness, but the gathering together under the one all-beneficent reign of God, of all the peoples. This is rejoicing in hope of the glory of God, far more spacious and perfect than any satisfaction in personal deliverance or safety. If our joy is to be all it ought to be, we must have this larger outlook upon the purposes of God.

PSALM XLVIII

G O D R E I G N I N G O V E R H I S O W N

IN Psalm xlvi the dominant note was of confidence because of the government of God in the midst of His people. This is a song describing the experience resulting from such government. It is the anthem of a deliverance wrought for the city against an

alliance of hostile kings. The beauty and glory of the city remain, notwithstanding the attack of the foes. The intervention of God was of such a nature that the attack failed ere it positively began. "The kings assembled themselves, they passed by together." They were seized with weakness and fear, and fled. So God had delivered, and the deliverance is a reason for new confidence that the city will be established for ever.

The singer urges the inhabitants to examine well the city that the wonder of its preservation may fill the heart with praise, and be the foundation for faith in all the years to come. We may seem to have lost something in the reading of this psalm, because we cannot place it historically with any certainty. Yet it is so true to a constantly recurring experience of the saints that it has become a song of constant use. Threatening perils massed against us suddenly waver and pass away smitten by unseen hands, and deliverance is wrought when we had seen nothing but destruction. Verily great is Jehovah, and greatly to be praised as the God of deliverance.

PSALM XLIX

GOD THE SOURCE OF IMMORTALITY

THIS is the song of a principle, and the psalmist commences by calling peoples of all castes and classes to give attention.

It denies the power of material wealth, and affirms that of uprightness. There are two things which wealth cannot do. It can neither help a man to escape death, nor can it ensure the life of the one possessing it. The passion of the heart for immortality is manifest in the building of houses and the naming of the land. It is all useless. They are no more able to secure personal immortality thus than are the beasts which perish.

Yet there is a mastery over Sheol and death. It is to be found in uprightness. The declaration :-

"The upright shall have dominion over them in the morning," is very difficult to explain if it does not contain the light of hope beyond the grave. The morning is certainly something beyond Sheol and death, and the hope of the upright is in God's deliverance from Sheol. The teaching of the song is simple and sublime, present and perpetual. Right is mightier than wealth. It reaches farther, and accomplishes more. Wealth passes away **empty-handed**. Righteousness sings, even in death, of redemption, and a morning of dominion.

PSALM L

G O D M A N I F E S T I N G H I M S E L F T H R O U G H **H I S P E O P L E**

THE singer addresses himself in the name of God to the whole earth that it may hear and learn a lesson of importance.

The call is made in the first verse. The final appeal is in verses 22 and 23. The lesson is that forgetfulness of God issues in gravest peril, while the remembrance which worships ensures the blessing of salvation.

Between the call to attention and the final appeal the psalmist sings of the relation between God and His own (vers. 2-15) ; and then of the attitude of God to the wicked. As to the former they are to be the medium of His praise. God shined forth out of Zion. In order to this the saints are to be gathered to Him that through them He may be manifested in power and righteousness. Their gathering is to be not on the ground of any sacrifice they can bring of things already belonging to God, but wholly on the basis of praise and trust. The wicked' can have no part in such manifestation of God, and therein lies their chief sin and failure. This is a thought of most searching power. Our most heinous sin is not the act of wrong done, but the fact that such wrong incapacitates us from fulfilling our highest function of glorifying God, and showing forth His praise.

PSALM LI

G O D T H E S A V I O U R O F T H E S I N F U L

THIS is the first of a number of psalms (eighteen) to which titles are prefaced, which connect them with David, eight out of the number having historic references. There is a remarkable fitness in every case between the incident thus indicated and the psalm following ; but whether the placing is accurate or not, is open to question.

This is indeed one of the great penitential psalms, being the fourth in the seven which are usually so described. It opens with a general cry for pardon, which comes out of a deep sense of sin,

and an equally profound desire for forgiveness. In the first three verses sin is described as “ transgression,” “ iniquity,” “ sin ”; and the mercy sought as to “blot out,” “wash,” “ cleanse”. The penitent soul cries for forgiveness upon the basis of having confessed. Suddenly the intensity of conviction deepens, as the act of sin is traced back to its reason in the pollution of the nature. This leads to a deeper cry. As the first was for pardon, the second is for purity, for cleansing of heart, and renewal of spirit.

The prayer passes on to seek for the things which follow such cleansing, the maintenance of fellowship, and the consciousness of joy. Looking on in hope, the song anticipates that service of thanksgiving and praise which will issue from such pardon and purity.

PSALM LII

GOD THE DESTROYER OF THE SINFUL

IN this song the attitude of God toward the wicked man who is a tyrant is manifest. The mighty man who boasts himself in mischief is first put in striking contrast to God Whose mercy endureth continually.

There follows a description of the mischief in which such a man makes his boast. One is reminded of James' description of the tongue, and its fearful power, as the psalmist describes the mischief of evil speech, growing out of an evil nature. The God of mercy destroys the mischief-maker, and thus demonstrates His mercifulness. God's dealings with such a man are to be seen by the righteous, and they are to understand that the reason thereof is to be discovered in the fact that this man was godless.

Suddenly the singer puts his position into contrast with the end of the man, because he is in contrast with the attitude of the man. Instead of being rooted up, he is like a tree in the house of God. Instead of trusting in the abundance of riches, he trusts in the mercy of God. The contrast of the same reveals the abiding truth of the unchangeableness of God. All that seems to be different in His dealing with man is due to difference existing in man's attitude towards Him.

PSALM LIII

G O D D I S A P P O I N T E D I N M A N

THIS psalm, with slight variations, is found in Book I (Ps. xiv). Its introduction a second time necessarily leads us to notice the differences. In all probability the editor incorporated it into this book because of these very changes. They are first the substitution of " God " for " Jehovah " four times. Perhaps for liturgical use in some special circumstances in which the desire was to express the praise of God as the wonder-working God, the change was made. All that was true of Jehovah's knowledge of men (see Ps. xiv), is true also of God's attitude toward men as the Wonder-Worker. Not only as Helper, but as the supreme One, He looks upon men. Not only do the workers of iniquity fail to discover Him as the Helper, they do not call upon Him as the mighty One. The other main change is to be found in verse 5, for the exposition of which see note on Psalm xiv.

PSALM LIV

G O D T H E H E L P E R O F T H E O P P R E S S E D

THE burden of the psalm is expressed in the first two verses. Its reason is described in verse 3, which assurance is the song of what remains. Taking the second and third sections first, they deal with the sorrow of the soul, and the succour which comes from God.

The sorrow is that of opposition and persecution by those who are godless. The description of this is preceded by the prayer which cries for salvation by the name of God, and judgment in His might. There is no touch of despair manifest. Over against the strangers risen up against him he sets God Who is his Helper. Over against the violent men who seek after his soul he sets the Lord Who upholds the soul. The issue is perfect confidence that God will requite the evil and destroy the enemy. Already, though perhaps yet in the midst of the peril, he sings the song of deliverance, as though it were already realized. The central sentence of the song is " God is mine helper." Wherever man is conscious of this fact, he *is* superior to all the opposition of his enemies, and so is able in the midst of the most difficult circumstances to sing the song of deliverance.

PSALM LV

GOD THE DELIVERER OF THE BETRAYED

THIS is the outcry of a man of faith in sore peril. The emotional nature is moved to its very centre, and tides of deep feeling surge through his soul. He has been cruelly betrayed by his familiar friend, who would seem to have been at the head of a conspiracy against him.

It is really a revelation of how fellowship with God leads ultimately to the victory of faith. There **are** three movements manifest. The first is that of fear. Appeal is made to God out of a consciousness of fearfulness, trembling, horror. So terrible is this fear that he would fain fly away and escape it all (vers. 1-8). The troubled heart then breaks forth into fury. So mean is the method of the foe that the anger of the man is aroused, and he cries for vengeance against the oppressor (vers. 9-15). He then appeals to God, and at once declares that he is delivered. The wrong of the wicked is no less, but calmly stated in the light of God it is a burden to be cast upon Him, and the conviction of His deliverance is created. Fear only leads to desire for flight. Fury only emphasizes the consciousness of wrong. Faith alone creates courage.

PSALM LVI

GOD THE TENDER FRIEND OF THE OPPRESSED

THE keynote of this psalm is the concluding declaration of the previous one, "I will trust in Thee." Here again are evident the same circumstances of oppression (vers. 5-7).

The song opens and closes with praise. The opening (vers. 1-4) is a prayer for deliverance which culminates in a note of praise. Notice how it ascends. First the singer declares that in the hour of fear he will trust. Then he declares he will trust and not be afraid. The closing movement is wholly one of praise. The tenderness of God is exquisitely stated. To Him wanderings are known, and by Him tears are preserved. Against all adversaries God is for him. Then again the high note of **trust** cancelling

fear, is struck, and the psalm ends with a sacrifice of praise. It is a gracious thing to know God well enough to be able resolutely to trust Him when fear possesses **the** heart. It is a much finer thing to trust Him so completely as to have no fear. Both ways lead homeward, but the former is low level travelling, while the latter is high level.

PSALM LVII

GOD THE REFUGE IN CALAMITY

YET again the theme is the same, but the triumph of trust is even more conspicuous. Compare the opening here with that of the previous song. The cry is the same, but the reason is different. There it was a cry born of the consciousness of the enemy. Here it is born of the vision of God, and of trust in Him. Compare also the wish of Psalm lv. 6 with the experience in this case. There the desire was for the inefficient wings of a dove for flight. Here the sense is of the sufficient wings of God for refuge until calamities are past. Now the cry is one of real need, for the opposition is stated in terms as pointed as ever, but it is a song of confidence all the while. In the psalm that speaks of fear and flight the heart is "sore pained." Now in trust it is "fixed," and a rush of praise is the issue.

Faith does not free us from trial, but it does enable us to triumph over it. Moreover, faith lifts us high above the purely personal sense of pain, and creates a passion for the exaltation of God among the nations. The heart at leisure from itself is always the heart fixed in God.

PSALM LVIII

GOD THE GOD OF VENGEANCE

THIS *is* a fine setting forth of the certainty of the judgment of God against wickedness. The psalmist declares its reason (vers. 1-5), its process (vers. 6-9), and its effect (vers. 10, 11). The whole psalm will be misunderstood save as we carefully

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note its opening questions. The reason of the judgment is not personal wrong. It is rather the failure of the rulers to administer justice. They are silent when they should speak. Their judgments are not upright. Evil in heart, they lie in word, and poison like serpents, and no charming wins them. The process of judgment is described in the form of prayer, which fact shows the sympathy of the singer with the God Who is for ever against the oppressor. The terms are fierce and terrible, but not more so than is the wrath and stroke of God against such evil men. The effect of the Divine judgment is to be the rejoicing of the righteous, the destruction of the wicked, and His vindication among men. It is a sickly sentimentality and a wicked weakness that has more sympathy with the corrupt oppressors than with the anger of God.

PSALM LIX

GOD THE HIGH TOWER OF THE OPPRESSED

AGAIN we have a song from the midst of circumstances of peril. The singer is the object of determined, stealthy, and malignant opposition. It is divided into two parts, both ending with the same declaration, "God is my high tower."

The first (vers. 1-9) describes the danger. Without any reason, and with the most relentless determination, his enemies are attempting to encompass his destruction. He announces his determination to wait on his Strength, and declares that God is his high Tower.

The second part is a prayer that God will deal with these foes. Not that they may be slain, but rather that they may be consumed in their own sinning. He then announces his determination to sing praises to his Strength, and the note of the praise is that of prayer. God is his high Tower! There is perhaps no more beautiful description of what God is to His tried people. The phrase suggests at once strength and peace. A tower against which all the might of the foe hurls itself in vain. A high tower so that the soul taking refuge therein is lifted far above the turmoil and the strife, and enabled to view from a vantage ground of perfect safety the violence which is futile, and the victory of God.

PSALM LX

GOD THE HOPE OF HIS PEOPLE

THIS is a song out of the midst of defeat. It may be divided into three parts. The first is a recognition of the cause of such defeat, ending with a prayer (vers. 1-5). The second expresses the answer of God in the soul of the singer (vers. 6-8). In the third there is a note of helplessness, a cry of need and a cry of confidence. In the midst of an evidently disastrous defeat the singer recognizes the government of God. His appeal for help is based upon his recognition of the true vocation of the people. They bear a banner for the display of truth. Note the "Selah" at this point, suggesting especial attention to this fact. For the sake of that banner the cry is raised for deliverance.

Then he tells of the answer, but the supreme note is "God hath spoken in His holiness." All the fine imagery which describes triumph follows that declaration. Victory is only possible in holiness. Defeat is ever the issue of sin. All human aid is helpless when God has abandoned the people. The song ends with a cry for help and the declaration of personal assurance.

PSALM LXI

GOD THE HOPE OF MAN

IN this song there is the same undertone of confidence as in the last. Here, however, it is rather the voice of one man than that of the people. The reference to the king in verse 6, although in the third person, makes it likely that it was written by David, under the stress of some circumstances of trial, most probably at some period of exile from his city.

His longing is for restoration to God rather than to circumstances. All through there seems to breathe a sense of perfect confidence in God, together with a consciousness of present need, and a longing desire for a return to past experience. There is no uncertainty in his mind concerning God's help of him in days that are gone. The very height of the psalm as a prayer is reached when he cries, "O prepare lovingkindness and truth, that they may preserve him." There has been some difficulty as to the word "prepare." Perhaps it ought not to be there. In that case

we have an affirmation rather than a petition, which may read, "lovingkindness and truth shall continually guard him." The one impression made by the reading of the psalm is that of the singer's sense that in the midst of trouble his hope is still in God.

PSALM LXII

G O D T H E O N L Y H O P E O F M A N

IN this psalm the principle of the last is yet more emphatically expressed. It opens with the declaration, "My soul waiteth only upon God," and then proceeds in three stanzas to set forth this fact.

The first opens with the words we have already quoted, and is an affirmation of confidence made in the presence of enemies. Indeed it is addressed to them, declaring the relation of defence which God bears to him ; and appealing to them against their malicious onslaught. The sense of his enemies is with him as is evidenced in his words, "I shall not be greatly moved."

In the second stanza he addresses first his own soul, and then appeals to the people, most probably those over whom he rules. To himself he repeats what he has said to his enemies, as to the relation of God to him ; and this time, with his eye fixed upon God, he reaches a higher level of confidence, and says, "I shall not be moved."

Finally, he puts the false helps upon which men depend into contrast with the only Help of man, Who is God Himself. The false helps are "men of low degree," "men of high degree," "oppression," "robbery," "riches," and the weakness and uselessness of all are declared.

PSALM LXIII

G O D T H E P E R F E C T H O P E O F M A N

HERE the conviction which has been the inspiration of the two previous psalms reaches a consummation of expression.

The song can hardly be divided, for it runs on in a continuous outpouring of praise. The surrounding circumstances are still those of difficulty and sadness, and yet the statement of these things at the beginning and at the close constitutes a background,

throwing up into clearer relief the sure confidence of the soul in God.

Beginning with the affirmation, "O God, Thou art my God," the singer declares his thirst in a dry land for the same visions of God which in former days he had seen in the sanctuary. Immediately the song ascends to higher levels. The past is the inspiration of the present. Over all diverse and difficult circumstances it rises in triumph because it knows God. Happy indeed is the soul who is able to make sorrow the occasion of a song, and darkness the opportunity for shining. Two things are necessary for such triumph as this. These are indicated in the opening words of the psalm. First, there must be the consciousness of personal relationship, "O God, Thou art my God"; and secondly, there must be earnest seeking after God, "Early will I seek Thee." Relationship must be established. Fellowship must be cultivated.

PSALM LXIV

GOD THE DEFENCE OF THE PERSECUTED

THIS is a cry of distress, and yet not of despair. The singer is beset by wily enemies who plan and plot against him with malicious and persistent determination. In great detail he describes their method. It is that of secret counsel and studied cruelty. They have one object, that of harming the righteous by shooting at him from secret places. They strengthen themselves by declaring that none can see them. This is his distress. The warfare is unequal. His foes are not in the open but under cover.

At verse 7 we have the beginning of his account of the reason why his distress is not despair. Over against their evil determination to shoot at the righteous is the fact that God shall shoot at them. That is the security of the trusting soul. In New Testament times the truth is expressed differently, but the principle abides, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" The practical application of this to the righteous is that there is no need for them to attempt to take vengeance on their enemies. Their one care is to trust in God. Such trust will issue in gladness, and the inevitable vindication of their faith. In order to this we ever need to pray as the psalmist does, not so much for deliverance from enemies as for deliverance from fear of them.

PSALM LXV

GOD THE GOD OF HARVEST

THIS is a great song of worship. The occasion would seem to be that of a harvest festival. The people are assembled for praise (vers. 1-4). God's particular goodness in the harvest is celebrated (vers. 5-8).

With reference to the assembling of the people the marginal reading is full of beauty. "There shall be silence before Thee and praise." The same thought is present, though obscure in the text, "Praise *waiteth* for Thee." It is the true attitude of worship. Reverent silence preparing for, and issuing in, adoring praise. There is always a difficulty in the way of worship, "Iniquities prevail" Yet these are not final hindrances, for God purges away transgressions. The way into the silence of praise is described. God chooses, and causes to approach. The man so conducted dwells in the courts of God, and is satisfied with the goodness of His house.

That is a fine description of worship in its expression, its method, its experience. The greatness of the power of God is the subject of the worshipper's song, and that power is at the disposal of those who worship. Then, finally, is sung the song of harvest. This is beautiful as a description of God's part therein. Man's toil is not described. It is taken for granted, and is his prayer. God's answer is that of co-operation by which harvest comes in joy and singing.

PSALM LXVI

GOD THE OBJECT OF WORSHIP

THIS is one of the most beautiful of the songs of worship. It is divided into two parts by a change from the use of the plural pronoun (vers. 1-12) to the use of the singular (vers. 13-20).

In the first part appeal is made to all the earth to worship God because of what He has shown Himself to be on behalf of His people. This is a recognition of the true function of the

people of God, that of revealing God to the outside nations in such a way as to constrain them to worship.

In the second half the worship becomes individual and personal, and yet the same purpose is manifest in the appeal to others to hear. In this case those called upon to hear are such as fear God. Thus the testimony of the individual is for the strengthening of the faith of God's own, in order that they may be more perfectly equipped for their testimony to those without.

In the story of God's dealing with His people there is a recognition of His government through all the differing experiences of their history. By deliverance and by distress, by triumph and trial, He has conducted them to a wealthy place. Very full of comfort is the individual realization, following as it does this larger experience. In the economy of God the lonely man is not lost in the multitude, and the solo of his praise is as precious as is the chorus of their worship.

PSALM LXVII

GOD THE GOVERNOR OF THE NATIONS

IN this psalm there is a fine merging of prayer and praise. Its dominant note is that of prayer. It is prayer, moreover, on the highest level. It asks for personal blessing, but its deepest passion is that all peoples may be blessed, and led to praise. If it was a harvest festival song, as the first part of verse 6 would indicate, then the local occasion is graciously submerged in a far wider outlook. The singer, even more remarkably than in the preceding psalm, recognizes the true function of the holy nation. The word "that" with which verse 2 opens, is of the utmost importance—that God's "way may be known upon earth," and His "saving health among all nations," is the ultimate purpose of His heart, and the mission of His people.

In order to this the singer prays for blessing on and through them; *on* them, "God be merciful unto us and bless us"; through them, "Cause His face to shine with us." The central desire of the prayer is uttered at its centre (vers. 3-5); and the method is again indicated at its close (vers. 6, 7). This is not asking in order to consume gifts upon personal lusts. It is rather a passion which is self-emptied and therefore pure. Such praying hastens the Kingdom.

PSALM LXVIII

G O D T H E S T R E N G T H O F H I S P E O P L E

IF appeal may be made to the consciousness of the saints, there is no doubt that this is one of the grandest of the psalms.

There is a sweep and majesty about it which takes hold upon heart and mind and will. It sings the praise of the God of deliverances. It opens with a song of pure praise (vers. 1-6). This is then justified by a review of His past dealings with His people (vers. 7-18). Finally, it affirms the present activity of God, and declares confidence in His future succour (vers. 19-35).

In the first six verses there is a wonderful description of God in His majesty and meekness, in His might and mercy. The contrasts are remarkable. He scatters His enemies. He is a Father of the fatherless. The wicked perish at His presence. He sets the solitary in families. There is no sense of contradiction. Rather the unity of the apparently dissimilar things is at once felt. His righteousness is the strength of His mercy. His might is the ability of His help. The righteous need have no fear of His strength, but rather rejoice in it, trust in it, and co-operate with it by casting up a highway for Him.

The next section of the psalm (vers. 7-18) is a description of God's dealing with His people Israel from their deliverance from Egypt to their establishment in the land, and the founding of their city. The might of His going forth is referred to, and the effect it produced is described. The giving of the constitution and law at Sinai is remembered.

Then His preparation of the land for His people and their settlement therein is spoken of, together with the song of the women who thus have found their homes. And still the song moves on to describe how God scattered kings before His people, and moved right onward until in majesty He had entered and possessed the hill of His city, the centre of His earthly government. It is a fine setting of history in its relation to the activity of God. It is this view of God enthroned and governing which gives courage to the heart, and inspires the songs of victory. The same twofold fact of the Divine method is apparent here as in the first part of the psalm. His might causes kings to flee, but the issue is the comfort and sustenance of the men. He goes forth in all the resistless majesty of His great hosts, referred to as chariots

numbering thousands upon thousands, and the result is captivity of captivity, and the provision of gifts even among the rebellious.

Yet the song does not wholly depend upon past history for its strength. The last section (vers. 19-35) deals with the present activity of God. He is a present God, and in the days of the singer gives evidence of His power and pity. There is a great force in the emphasis on present consciousness in the opening of the third part of the psalm :-

“ Blessed be the Lord, Who daily beareth our burden,
Even the God Who is our salvation, Selah.
God is unto us a God of deliverances.”

The Selah calls a halt in the presence of present facts, and prepares for the confident affirmation which immediately succeeds.

This opens the way for a prophecy of coming deliverance uttered as an anthem of faith. The appeal of the song to the people of God in all ages in their hours of difficulty is easily understood. It expresses the one and only consciousness which is equal to making a day of darkness and difficulty the occasion of illumination and song. A history seen in the light of God's throne and an experience of His present **succour** combine to flash a light upon the darkest day and the most difficult circumstances, which will compel confidence and create thanksgiving.

PSALM LXIX

GOD THE SUCCOURER OF THE SORROWFUL

THERE is perhaps no psalm in the whole psalter in which the sense of sorrow is profounder or more intense. The soul of the singer pours itself out in unrestrained abandonment to the overwhelming and terrible grief which consumes it. The first half is occupied wholly with a statement of the terrible consciousness. There is first a cry of distress, piercing and passionate (vers. 1-6). The circumstances described are those of helpless whelming in waters and in mire. Yet the chief agony is that God seems to be neglectful of the cry, and a fear fills the heart lest others should be harmed through what they see of the hopelessness and helplessness of his suffering.

In the next movement the singer declares that this suffering has come in the path of loyalty to God (vers. 7-12). Whatever the circumstances giving rise to the song it is evident that the singer had been brought into them because of his zeal for God. Following this declaration the cry for *succour* is repeated with new emphasis and passion (vers. 13-18). This part of the psalm affords a revelation of the condition into which the men of faith are sometimes brought. Yet it contains suggestion of a sorrow profounder than any experienced save by One. Nothing can be conceived more overwhelming than the strange and inexplicable suffering resulting from loyalty to God and zeal for His honour. Undeserved reproach is the most stupendous grief possible to the sensitive soul. Yet even throughout this whole movement expressive of such intense grief there is an undertone of confidence in God.

In the presence of that God Whose lovingkindness the singer has declared to be good, he continues to pour out his complaint. He knows that God is acquainted with it, and therefore with the greater freedom describes it. In detail he speaks of the brutality of his enemies, and wails *over* his poverty of comforters and helps. The only reply that men made to his appeal to them for help was to give him such things as would aggravate his suffering.

Suddenly the song becomes a passionate cry for vengeance. It is a false view of things which criticizes this cry as being unworthy of a man familiar with God. It is really the expression of a righteous desire for judgment against essential wrong. The method which he has described as being used by his adversaries, violated the essential and fundamental order of the Divine Kingdom. For the sake of that order and the vindication of God there must be a place for retribution and vengeance. The passion passes, and a prayer follows which merges into praise, and culminates in a great affirmation of confidence in God.

The whole psalm expresses depths which few of us can fathom. It can only be appreciated as an unveiling of sorrow and suffering at its very profoundest depths, and therefore is rightly considered to be prophetic and Messianic. As far as we can enter into its teaching it suggests to us that a cry to God in sorrow which is honest in its expression invariably merges in the economy of His grace into a song of praise.

PSALM LXX

GOD THE HOPE OF THE DESPAIRING

THIS short psalm is a rushing sob of anxious solicitude. There is little of restfulness in it. Enemies are engaged in cruel persecution and mockery. It seems as though the singer felt that the strain was becoming too much for him, and in fear lest he should be overcome he cries aloud for God to hasten to his deliverance. The faith of the singer is evident in that he cries to God, and evidently has no room in his heart for question as to God's ability to keep him. The only question is as to whether help will arrive in time.

It is not the highest type of faith which is revealed, but we are profoundly thankful to find such a song in this great book of religious poetry. Rightly or wrongly, we often come to such places of doubt. No doubt exists either as to God's ability or as to His interest in love for us, but is He not trying us beyond the power of our endurance? He is not, but for moments of terrible tension it seems as though He were. Then here is a psalm for such days or hours. Let us take it and use it, knowing that He would far rather have in our song an expression of an honest questioning than any affectation of a confidence not possessed. Moreover, He would rather have from us such a song than silence.

PSALM LXXI

GOD THE CONFIDENCE OF OLD AGE

THIS is pre-eminently a song of the aged, and like old age it is reminiscent. The singer passes from memory to hope, and from experience to praise. No very definite division is possible. Generally speaking, it may be noticed that the first part expresses need, and is principally prayer; while the second half affirms confidence, and is principally praise.

The song opens with a prayer for deliverance (vers. 1-8). This is not so much a cry out of present distress as a prayer that in the event of trouble he may be able to resort to God. The old

man is discovered *in* that the first three verses are almost a direct quotation from a previous psalm (xxxix), perhaps one of his own. His experience of God from birth is his confidence that he will be heard now. This leads the song on in prayer that he may still be helped in age, for he still has adversaries (vers. g-13). Here again are quotations from earlier psalms which the marginal references will aid the reader in discovering. The singer then rises to higher levels as he tells of his confidence in God, and asks that he may be helped to declare God to the succeeding generation. The psalm is a song of sunset, and it is full of beauty. There are storm clouds on the western sky. Some are spent, and some still threaten ; but on all is a light which transfigures them.

PSALM LXXII

GOD THE KING OF THE KING

THIS is a great psalm of the Theocracy. Incidentally the whole perfect order is revealed. God high over all, enthroned and in all actively governing. The king, appointed by God and gaining his guidance from Him, so reigning over his own people as to succour the needy, spoil the oppressor, and secure the prosperity of the righteous ; and so reigning that the beneficial influence of the kingship and kingdom are felt over all the earth. Submission to him is followed by the deliverance of the poor and helpless, and universal peace and prosperity.

This is the Kingdom for which the world still waits. It is a perfect order which has never yet been recognized and obeyed. This was surely all in the view of Jesus when He taught us to pray for the coming of the Kingdom. The one King has come, and men would not have Him to reign. Therefore, notwithstanding all the best and highest efforts of man without Him, the needy are still oppressed, and peace and prosperity are postponed. The song of this psalm is to us a prophecy of hope. We have seen the King, and we know the perfect Kingdom must come, for God cannot be defeated. The psalm and the second book end with the doxology which we have already considered.

BOOK III. PSALMS LXXIII-LXXXIX

DOXOLOGY

“Blessed be the Lord for evermore. Amen, and Amen.” Ps. lxxxix. 52.

A. THE TITLE.	B. THE QUALITY.	C. THE QUANTITY.
“Jehovah.” The essential Helper. (See first Doxology.)	“Blessed.” “Amen, and Amen.”	“For evermore.”

The Divine Name.

The dominant name in this book is still “God.” It occurs once at least in every psalm, and in one as many as 15 times. It is written in the singular (El) 20 times, and in the plural (Elohim) 60 times.

“Jehovah” is found in the book 44 times. It is only absent from two psalms, and occurs in one 10 times.

The Dominant Thought.

In the third book the dominant thought is that of the worship Of God under all circumstances. Both names are used throughout, although that of God predominates. While this is so, the final doxology speaks of Jehovah, showing that the thought is that of worship rendered to God because He is the essential Helper.

ANALYSIS

<p style="text-align: center;">A. MIGHTY HELP-THE FACT. lxxiii-lxxvii.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">B. MIGHTY HELP-THE EXPERIENCE . lxxviii-lxxxiii.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">C. MIGHTY HELP-THE HOPE. lxxxiv-lxxxix.</p>
<p>I. The View Point. lxxiii. The Sanctuary. The Problem of the Prosperity of the Wicked. The Solution.</p> <p>II. The Revelation. lxxiv-lxxvi. i. The Hope. lxxiv. ii. The Certainty. lxxv. iii. The Activity. lxxvi.</p> <p>III. The Vision. lxxvii. The Years of the Right Hand.</p>	<p>I. History. lxxviii. Egypt to David. i. The Institution for Children. ii. The Patience of God.</p> <p>II. Special Manifestation. lxxix-lxxx. i. The Devastation. lxxx. ii. The Appeal. lxxx. iii. The Deliverance. lxxx.</p> <p>III. Administration. lxxxii-lxxxiii. i. Home. lxxxii. ii. Foreign. lxxxiii.</p>	<p>I. Confidence. lxxxiv-lxxxv. i. The Pilgrimage contemplated. lxxxiv. ii. Salvation Sought. lxxxv.</p> <p>II. The Attitude. lxxxvi, lxxxvii. i. Personal Submission. lxxxvi. ii. Relative Government. lxxxvii.</p> <p>III. The Summary. lxxxviii-lxxxix. i. Human Need. lxxxviii. ii. Divine Resource. lxxxix.</p>

PSALM LXXIII

G O D T H E G O O D O F H I S P E O P L E

THE marginal reading, "Only good is God to Israel" indicates the real value of this song. Israel has no other good, and needs no other. Yet it is not always easy to realize this, and the psalmist tells how he nearly stumbled in view of the prosperity of the wicked, and how he was restored. The first half describes the perplexing vision of the prosperity of the wicked. The whole psalm was written in the light of the conviction expressed in the last half, but it describes first the things which startled and perplexed the soul. The wicked prosper in life, and death itself seems to have no terror for them. They are satisfied and more than satisfied, and because of these things men deny the knowledge of God, and turn their feet into the way of wickedness, affirming the uselessness of right doing to procure benefits.

This is all very true to human life as we know it. Evil often appears both pleasant and prosperous, and the struggling saint is tempted to think it is hardly worth while. That was the temptation of the singer. His feet were almost gone; his feet had well-nigh slipped. The psalmist then tells the story of how he was delivered. He attempted to unravel the mystery, and find out why men succeeded, and were satisfied without God. It was too painful, that is, too difficult for him. He could not solve the riddle. At last he found the true viewpoint. He went into the sanctuary of God. Then everything changed. He ceased to look at the present only. He saw the end of the wicked.

A more spacious outlook, taking in the whole issue of things, corrected all the false seeming of the near vision. Yet the sanctuary was also the place where the nearest things were seen most accurately, because seen in relation to the large things.

Again he remembered and recognized his own wrong done, in misjudging God; but was able to affirm God's presence and care; and out of the consciousness the song of praise is born. There is only one viewpoint to be trusted, and that is the sanctuary of God. From the secret place of the Most High we see things as God sees them. This corrects the finite vision and opinion by the infinite facts. To see the issue of the near is to understand the real meaning of the near, and this is ever to bring to the heart of the trusting a thanksgiving and a song.

PSALM LXX IV

G O D A S S I L E N T A N D I N A C T I V E

THIS is a great complaint, but it is a complaint of faith. Hardly a gleam of light is to be found throughout. The singer sits in the midst of national desolation and pours out his soul to God in passionate appeal for His help, and protest against His silence and inactivity. This is not the song of an atheist, but the wail of a believer. He has a past experience of God's power and a present conviction thereof. The signs of that power are in day and night, in summer and winter. The one place from which He seems to be absent is the place of his people's distress.

The ground of the singer's plea is not the distress of these people finally. It is rather that the enemy reproaches the name of Jehovah, and blasphemes it. In that central complaint the name Jehovah, which is ever suggestive of the essential Helper, emerges, and there only, in the psalm. The master consciousness of the moment is that of God the mighty One, but there is that deeper knowledge of Him as the Helper of the needy. Again we are thankful that such a psalm has a place here, for it is so true to much human experience. When the heart is hot and restless, and it seems as though God had forsaken His own, he is a wise man who turns to Him in song, even though the song be only a complaint.

PSALM LXXV

G O D S P E A K I N G A N D A C T I V E

IF this, and the former psalm were written by different men and at different periods, then the spiritual sense of the editor is most clearly revealed in their juxtaposition in this book. This is a complete and remarkable answer to that.

In form the song is dramatic. It opens with a chorus which is an ascription of praise (ver. 1). This is answered directly by God Himself. He declares that in the set time He judges. All the appearances of the hour may be perplexing, but the heart may know that He knows, and only waits the right moment to act. Chaos may characterize the outlook, but order enwraps it all, for He has set up the pillars (vers. 2,3).

Then the solo of the confident soul breaks forth, and addressing the wicked, charges them not to be confident, because God is the Judge. He holds in His hand the cup of judgment. Ultimately He abases the wicked, and lifts up the righteous. Therefore the singer's song is ceaseless. In experience, such a song as this always succeeds an honest declaration of perplexity made directly to God by a tried but trusting soul. The prophecy of Habakkuk is another perfect illustration of the fact.

PSALM LXXVI

GOD THE GOD OF VICTORY

THE singer celebrates a great victory, recognizing it as the work of God. The song has three movements. In the first God is seen as the defence of the people (vers. 1-3). In the second His victory over their enemies is declared (vers. 4-9). In the third the truth is summarized, and appeal is made to His people and the surrounding nations as to their proper attitude toward Him (vers. 10-12). The national life gathers around Him. He is known by the nation ; His dwelling place is in their city. The attack made upon them has been broken by the One Who dwells in the midst of them.

The issue of His judgment is manifest in the blotting out of the enemy. They have ceased to be, having been put to the sleep of death. God's judgments are purposeful, He arose to save the meek, and they are resistless ; the enemies are no more. So perfect is His government that by judgment He compels evil to serve His purpose, making the wrath of men to praise Him.

To such a God there should be allegiance sworn and rendered by His people, and the surrounding peoples should submit with gifts. While the weapons of our warfare are spiritual, God is the same in might, and while He is in the midst, our defence is sure. No weapon formed against the trusting people can prosper.

PSALM LXXVII

GOD THE HEALER OF SORROWS

THIS is a song of the healing of sorrow. It opens with the declaration of determination to cry to God, and then proceeds to explain the reason of this determination. Verse 10 is the pivot upon which the whole psalm turns, from a description

of an experience of darkness and sorrow, to one of gladness and praise.

The first part tells the story of sorrow overwhelming the soul. The second gives a song which is the outcome of a vision which has robbed sorrow of its sting. In the first part, a great infirmity overshadows the sky, and there is no song. In the second, a great song pours itself out, and sorrow is forgotten. The difference is that between a man brooding over trouble, and a man seeing high above it the enthroned God. In the first half, self is predominant. In the second, God is seen in His glory. A very simple method with the psalm makes this perfectly clear. In verses 1 to 9 there are twenty-two occurrences of the personal pronoun in the first person, and eleven references to God by name, title, and pronoun. In the second there are only three personal references and four and twenty mentions of God. The message of the psalm is that to brood upon sorrow is to be broken and disheartened, while to see God is to sing on the darkest day. Once come to know that our years are of His right hand, and there is light everywhere, and the song ascends.

PSALM LXXVIII

GOD THE GOD OF PATIENCE

THIS title indicates the supreme quantity of this psalm. Throughout all its measures, over against the repeated failure of His people, the persistent patience of God is set forth in bold relief. The purpose of the psalm however, is that of warning the people of God against unfaithfulness, by the story of past failure.

The first eight verses declare the purpose of the singer, after announcing his determination. The things of the past are to be recounted for the sake of the children. Notice **very** carefully the statement of the latter part of this introduction. It declares the institution in Israel of a method for dealing with the children. The words "testimony" and "law" (ver. 5), do not here refer to the Mosaic economy, but to a specific arrangement for the transmission of that law. This arrangement was that of instructing the children. The value of such instruction was that the new generation should be safeguarded in its hope, its memory, its conduct. There is nothing in which the Christian family life

to-day is in graver peril than in its neglect on the part of the parents to give children systematic instruction in the things of faith. The stories of God's dealings in the past, and of the principles of relationship to Him, are at once the most wonderful and most valuable we can tell our children.

The singer then proceeded with the work of "telling ... the praises of the Lord." Verses 9-31 recites the disloyalty of the people in spite of the goodness of God, and thus explains the reason of the Divine chastisement. The prophetic writings (especially Hosea) show that Ephraim became the leader in the rebellion and disloyalty which cursed the nation ; and so, figuratively, and as standing for the rest, Ephraim is here addressed.

The description is figurative. The people armed and equipped, were guilty of cowardice. They turned back because they forgot God. Then follows a poetic description of the way in which God delivered them from Egypt, and led them in the wilderness. These facts of the guidance of God make their cowardice sinful. This goodness is further traced in His dealing with them step by step. The reading of it shows the waywardness and wickedness of the persistent unbelief of the people, but more remarkable is the fact of God's methods with them. Provision and punishment are alike evidences of His love and faithfulness.

Still the same story runs on in verses 32-55. Here however the fickleness of their obedience is specially set forth. "They believed not, .. He slew them ... They enquired after Him ... They lied to Him." This is typical of the whole movement. Yet God's patience was always manifest. With infinite tenderness He bore with them, and waited for them ; forgave them, and pitied them. In spite of all, they continued to rebel, and the reason was that they did not remember His hand.

The singer then sang anew of the things they had forgotten, of God's signs in Egypt, of His leading them out, and of His bringing them into possession. It would seem almost past belief to us as we read that a people so led could forget. Yet is not this sin of forgetfulness with us perpetually ? In some day of danger and perplexity we become so occupied with the immediate peril as to utterly fail to think of past deliverances. Such forgetfulness is of the nature of unbelief in its worst form. It wrongs God, and paralyses our own power. It is even more evil for us to fail to interpret to our children the Divine activity in past history, and in our own lives, for the men and women who face life lacking

such instruction are without one of the most valuable forces in its battle.

Even when, in spite of their infidelity, God brought them into possession, they tempted and provoked God. Then came His seven dealings with them, which are described. These dealings are also systematic, and as He refused and chose, it was ever with purposes of blessing in His heart. It is indeed a great song of God's patience, and there is no story more fruitful if man will but learn it. It is questionable whether any of us could escape the charges made here against the people of God ; and it is certain that we might all survey our lives, and sing just such a song of determined patience and persistence on the part of God. We need to be very careful however, lest we dwell upon this story of patience in such a way as to translate it into an excuse for continuity in unfaithfulness on our part. This is the most deadly of all heresies ; and if we are tempted to trespass upon the loving methods of God, let us not forget that the psalm is also the story of severe punishment ; and moreover, God was compelled ultimately to cast away from all privilege the people who failed to respond to the methods of His gentleness and patience.

PSALM LXXIX

GOD THE HOPE OF **THE** DISTRESSED

THIS is a cry of distress. The conditions described are those of overwhelming national calamity. The country and the city of God are overrun and spoiled by ruthless enemies. The people have been slain and left without burial. Out of the midst of these circumstances the psalmist prays to God for pardon, help, **and** deliverance.

There is no present note of praise in the psalm, but there is an undertone of confidence in God. This is the quality of these old songs of the men of faith which makes them living and powerful in an age utterly different from the one in which they were written. A careful perusal of this song will show three things as most evidently forming the deepest conviction of the singer's hope. First there *is* the sense that all the calamity which has overtaken them is the result of their own sin. Behind this is a great idea of the power and goodness of God. These things need not have been

had they been faithful, for God is strong and tender. Again there is the passion for the glory of the Divine Name,

“ Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of Thy name ;
And deliver us, and purge away our sins, for Thy name’s sake.
“ Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is their God ?”

Finally, the very fact of the song is a revelation of the underlying confidence in God. In distress the heart seeks its way back to some hiding-place, and finds it in the Name of God, Who, by suffering is dealing with them.

PSALM LXXX

GOD THE RESTORER OF HIS PEOPLE

A GAIN we have a song out of the midst of distress. There is far more light and colour about it than in the previous one. The circumstances do not seem to be any more favourable than those described before. There is this difference however, between the two psalms. The first is mainly occupied with the disastrous conditions ; this one begins with a prayer which is a recognition of the past relationship of God to His people.

This is therefore a great song of God as Shepherd. The aspects of the shepherd nature dealt with are those of His guidance and care and protection. The Shepherd of glory, Who by the shining of His face reveals the way, and by the stirring up of His might saves from danger, is appealed to. Then the figure is changed, and God is the Husbandman. His vine, which He planted and which flourished so perfectly has become a prey to the ravages of wild beasts and fire. Suddenly the figure ceases, and its meaning is revealed in the words,

“ Let Thy hand be upon the man of Thy right hand,
Upon the son of man whom Thou madest strong for Thyself.”

The burden of the psalm is expressed in the thrice repeated prayer (vers. 3, 7, 19). The suffering of the people is due to their own sin in turning away from God as Shepherd, Husbandman, and King. Their restoration can only come as He turns them back to Himself. Notice the ascent in these verses in the names which the singer uses for God. “ God,” “ God of hosts,” “ Jehovah God of hosts.”

PSALM LXXXI

GOD THE STRENGTH OF THE LOYAL

THIS is a psalm for the Feast of Trumpets. In the calendar of the Hebrews this feast prepared the way for the Day of Atonement and the Feast of Tabernacles. The first day of the seventh month was the Feast of Trumpets. The tenth day of the seventh month was Atonement. The fifteenth day of the seventh month was Tabernacles (Lev. xxiii).

The psalm opens with a call to the Feast of Trumpets, and a declaration of its Divine appointment (vers. 1-5). Then the singer expresses the attitude of God to His people, and the song proceeds as in the words of Jehovah (vers. 6-10). First He tells of His deliverance of them from bondage, and His answer to them at Sinai (vers. 6, 7). Then He reminds them of the terms of the covenant with them. He would speak and they should *harken*. They were to have no God but Himself, and He would be to them Jehovah God. They were to open the mouth and He would fill it (vers. 8-10). They failed in refusing to hearken and obey, and therefore He abandoned them to their choice (vers. 11, 12). Finally He expresses His desire that they should return, and declares His ability still to deliver them (vers. 13-16). It is still the same burden of the faithfulness of God, and the unfaithfulness of His people. Panic and defeat on the part of the people of God are always due to their departure from Him. The enemies who overcome us are without strength in the conflict against Him. When they overcome us it is because we have departed from Him.

PSALM LXXXII

GOD THE JUDGE OF THE JUDGES

THIS psalm is a cry for justice, born of a sense of the maladministration of those in authority. It first announces the fact that God is the supreme Judge. This is a recognition of the perfect equity of the standard of justice. The judges in mind have erred in that they have shown respect for the persons of the wicked, and thus departed from that strict justice which ever characterizes the dealings of the God to Whom they are all responsible.

The singer then sets forth what are the essential functions of the judges. They are specially to care for all those who are in circumstances of difficulty and danger. This had not been done, for such people were without knowledge or guidance. The judges have had the name of authority, and its position, but through their failure they are to be degraded.

The song ends with an appeal to God to arise and judge the earth. This is ever the cry of the man of faith when he stands in the presence of the wrongs and oppressions obtaining among the poor and afflicted. There is nothing the world needs to-day more than the administration of strict and impartial justice, and there is no greater comfort to the heart than the conviction that the prayer of the psalmist, multiplied ten thousand fold in the passing centuries by all who have been and still are, conscious of prevailing injustice, will yet be answered. God's day of judgment will be a day of mercy in the largest sense.

PSALM LXXXIII

GOD VINDICATED AS MOST HIGH

THE psalmist has a vision of the confederacy of all the enemies of the people of God. This he describes as to its process, its constitution, and its purpose. They have taken counsel together with the avowed purpose of the annihilation of the very name of Israel. The combining peoples are named, and the first part of the psalm ends (vers. 1-8).

The song then becomes a prayer definitely for the destruction of this confederacy, and the confusion of its purpose. Past victories are referred to, and in a strong and overwhelming sense of peril the cry for the Divine activity is poured forth. Here again, as constantly, this attitude of the singer must be accounted for according to his own declaration. In describing the confederacy he declared,

“ For they have consulted together with one consent ;
Against Thee do they make a covenant.”

At the close of the prayer he says,

“ That they may know that Thou alone, Whose name is Jehovah
Art the Most High over all the earth.”

These singers of the ancient people were all inspired supremely with a passion for the honour of God. With them, as with the

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prophets, selfish motives were unknown. Selfishness sings no songs, and sees no visions. On the other hand, a passion for the glory of God is capable of great sternness, as well as of great tenderness.

PSALM LXXXIV

GOD THE STRENGTH OF THE PILGRIM

THIS is a pilgrim psalm. It falls into three strophes divided by Selahs. The first describes the pilgrim's hope (vers. 1-4); the second, the pilgrim's experience (vers. 5-8); the third, pilgrim's prayer (vers. 9-12).

The hope of the pilgrim is centred in the dwelling-place of God. The earthly temple suggests the heavenly home. It is a place of rest and of worship. The light of it shines upon the pathway, and is the inspiration of the pilgrimage.

The experience of the pilgrim is then described. Faith has an anchorage; it is found in God when the heart is set upon the consummation. Faith has an activity; it passes through dry valleys, and fills them with springs of refreshment. Faith has an assurance; it goes from strength to strength, confident of finally appearing before God.

The pilgrim finally pours out his prayer, and it is full of praise and confidence. Its desire is for the vision of God, which by comparison is infinitely to be preferred, even though it be the distant view of a doorkeeper, to all the world has to offer. The lessons of the psalm for all the pilgrims of hope are first, that the heart should be set upon the upper things; secondly, that faith may dig wells in driest places and find the living Water; and finally, that pilgrimage develops strength, rather than produces weakness, as these conditions are fulfilled.

PSALM LXXXV

JEHOVAH THE RESTORER OF THE WANDERER

THIS psalm would seem to have been written in a day when some Divine deliverance had been wrought for the people of God. Yet the singer is conscious that in the heart of the people there remain dispositions not in harmony with the will of

God ; and therefore, there abides with them a deadness and a lack of joy. And yet further he is confident that God, Jehovah, has purposes of the highest and best for His own ; and moreover, that He will accomplish these purposes.

These three matters are evident in the threefold movement of thanksgiving offered (vers. 1-3), of petition presented (vers. 4-7), and of confidence affirmed (vers. 8-13). In the thanksgiving the relation between captivity and sin is remembered, and the ending of the first by the putting away of the second is declared. Yet the imperfection of their loyalty creates the long discipline of sorrow and shame, and the prayer is that God will turn the people to Himself. And this is surely His will, for when he pauses to hear what Jehovah will say, he hears tender and gracious words which tell of salvation, first in the spiritual realm, and then in the material. In this psalm which breathes the spirit of the tender compassion of God, the name Jehovah is the predominant one.

PSALM LXXXVI

THE LORD THE MIGHTY HELPER OF THE NEEDY

THIS psalm is peculiar in many ways. Its first peculiarity is that the name of God which dominates is Adonahy, or Lord, which indicates absolute Lordship, and by the use of which the singer shows his sense of submission and loyalty. The name Jehovah is used four times, thus revealing the singer's sense of God as Helper ; and the name God five times, thus revealing his consciousness of the Divine might. The supreme sense however, is that of the Divine authority.

The next matter of special note is that while the psalm is a beautiful and consecutive song, it is largely composed of quotations from other psalms, thus revealing the singer's familiarity with them. The references in the Revised Version will enable the reader to trace these quotations.

Finally, the psalm is unique in its method of urging a petition upon the ground of some known fact. This is clearly seen if the use of the word "for" is noticed (vers. 1-5, 7, 10, 13). In the first four verses the facts are those which indicate his attitude toward God. In the last four the facts are those revealing God's attitude toward him. The revelation for us is that of true

approach to God in times of need. This must be based upon our relation of absolute submission to Him. It must be expressed in harmony with spiritual desires as expressed by the fellowship of the faithful. It must be urged in consecration and courage.

PSALM LXXVII

JEHOVAH, HIS CITY AND HIS PEOPLE

THIS is a prophecy. The singer is looking on. The order of the earthly realization of the Kingdom of God is seen as established. First, the city is contemplated at the centre of everything, with Jehovah as its God. Then the peoples of the earth are seen in their true relation to that city.

It is a most remarkable utterance. Though brief, it is as comprehensive and full of beauty as any of the inspired predictions. Without specific statement, the sovereignty of God is taken for granted. There is no argument given for this. It is a fact beyond dispute and needing no proof. Thus God has the city of His chosen people as the centre and foundation of His administration. His love is set upon the city, and her fame is wide-spread ; glorious things are spoken of her. The outcome is seen in the effect produced upon the surrounding peoples. Her ancient enemies are finally to be born, that is, realize their true life, through this governing city of God.

This is the highest function of the chosen people according to the purpose of God. Under His government they are to bring the other nations to Him, so that they also shall find their highest in His Kingdom. This is not a story of Israel conquering by force of arms, but of that higher victory not yet won, when by manifestation and administration of the Divine government, the peoples shall dance and sing in the finding of their fountains and fulness in God.

PSALM LXXXVIII

JEHOVAH THE ONLY HOPE OF THE SORROWING

THIS is a song sobbing with sadness from beginning to end. It seems to have no gleam of light or of hope. Commencing with an appeal to Jehovah to hear, it proceeds to describe the terrible sorrows through which the singer is passing. He is

whelmed with trouble, and nigh unto death. Moreover he is alone ; his acquaintances are put away from him. Death is a terrible outlook, for the singer sees no light in it. Therein God Himself will be unknown, and unable to succour.

Again the song sings in yet profounder notes of sadness, which are like the breaking of great waves over the soul ; which seem as though they must silence it utterly. The last declaration is a most terrible one of utter loneliness, "lover and friend" are put away from him, and the final word is "darkness." One cannot help the consciousness that this psalm was a foreshadowing of sorrow which, being national, yet only reached its fulfilment of realization in the Messiah. The note of present value however, is that while, as we said at the beginning, there seems to be no light, there is light everywhere. The singer is in great sorrow, but he comes to Jehovah. He is afraid of going into death because there Jehovah cannot help him ; but he has come there, and therefore still cries out for God. While the sense of God abides, darkness has not triumphed.

PSALM LXXXIX

J E H O V A H T H E G O D O F D I S C I P L I N E

TAKEN as a whole, this song is one of the finest in the collection as a revelation of how the man of faith is compelled to view circumstances of calamity. In a poem of great beauty he first sets forth the praises of God (**vers. 1-37**). Then he surveys the present condition of His people, and so creates a contrast (**vers. 38-52**). No present defeat can dim the glory of past history as it reveals the facts of the Divine majesty. Yet these past facts and confidences may be the reason of present enquiry and approach to God.

In the first part, which is a song of praise, the singer tells of the covenant made with David, and then breaks out into adoration. The heavens and the angels witness to His greatness (**vers. 5-7**). The earth and men also. All nature, the sea and the mountains, the north and the south, are conscious of His power. In His government the foundations are unshakable, and the method full of tenderness (**vers. 8-14**).

It follows naturally that the people who are peculiarly His own are indeed blessed (**vers. 15-18**). This is not theory only ; it

is experience. For them Jehovah had found a king, and had made him and the people under him invincible in the days of their obedience. Such facts issue in confidence that the future must be one of victory and blessing.

“ But ”, and the word suggests a change, and a great change it is. Instead of the glowing picture of the former verses is a dark one of present experience. The people are scattered, their defences broken down, their enemies triumphant, and their king is robbed of glory, and covered with shame (vers. 38-45).

Yet most carefully notice that all this is spoken of as the work of Jehovah. The key phrase to this portion is “ Thou hast.” The mighty One Who had found the king and blessed the nation is the One Who has broken the nation and cast out the king. Upon the basis of that conviction the final prayer rises, “ How long, Jehovah.” This is the true attitude of the interceding soul in the day of calamity. First, a sense of the greatness and goodness of God, as revealed in the first part of the song. Then the conviction that this same One is visiting the people in discipline. To know the faithfulness of God is to know that when He afflicts there is meaning of mercy in it. When that is recognized, prayer for deliverance is proper, for it must inevitably be accompanied by a turning back to Jehovah from those things which have been the reason of His punishments.

The psalm ends with the doxology which closes the book, and expresses the worship of Jehovah as the essential Helper of His people.

BOOK IV. PSALMS XC-CVI

DOXOLOGY

“ Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel,
From everlasting even to everlasting,
And let all the people say, Amen,
Praise ye the Lord.”-Ps. cvi. 48.

A. THE TITLE.	B. THE RELATION.	C. THE QUALITY.	D. THE QUANTITY.	E. THE EXTENT.
“ Jehovah.” The essential Helper. (See first Doxology.)	“ The God of Israel.”	“ Blessed.” “ Hallelujah.”	“ From everlasting to everlasting.”	“ And let all the people say, Amen.”

The Divine Name.

The dominant name in this book is again “ Jehovah.” It occurs more than once in every psalm, and in two as many as 11 times. The name “ God ” is absent altogether from five, and occurs only 27 times, 9 of them being singular (El), and 18 plural (Elohim). The general title “ Lord ” (Adonahy) only occurs twice. “ Jah ” is found 7 times.

The Dominant Thought.

In this book the worship of Jehovah is rendered by all people. They are songs of His government and administration, for which the heart is lifted in adoration.

PSALM XC

JEHOVAH THE ETERNAL REFUGE OF MAN

THE main purpose of this psalm is revealed in the prayer with which it concludes (vers. 13-17). This prayer is prefaced by a meditation on the frailty of man (vers. 3-12), in the light of the eternity of God (vers. 1, 2). By this backward method of analysis we gain a conception of the general scheme of the psalm which now enables us to take the three movements in their orderly sequence.

The eternity of God is described in three stages. First, as measured by the history of His people, He has ever been their dwelling-place. Secondly, as measured by creation, He was before all. Finally, whether the mind travel backward or forward to the vanishing point, He is still God. In this light man is seen in the frailty of his being. To God a thousand years are comparatively nothing, and in every millennium men appear and pass in a sequence as orderly as that of the grass, but in a life as transitory. This frailty is the more feeble because man is a sinner ; and therefore out of harmony with God. Yet this very eternity of God is the hope of man in his frailty and sin, and the heart is lifted to Jehovah in a prayer that the mornings, the days, the years of brief life may all be set in true relation to Him. Satisfaction, gladness, success in work must all come from the right relation of man in his frailty to the eternal Lord.

PSALM XCI

JEHOVAH THE SANCTUARY OF THE SOUL

THIS psalm is one of the greatest possessions of the saints. It is a great song of the safety of such as put their trust in Jehovah, and contains the Divine assurance of such faith as fruitful. Very little of exposition is necessary. There is a change in the use of pronouns from first to second person twice over, and from third to first at the beginning, and from second to third at the close ; which, although it has created some sense of difficulty, is yet a key to the psalm for purposes of analysis.

Let us set out the scheme of the psalm round these changes, leaving its familiar words to speak for themselves.

Ver. 1. The statement of truth.

- Ver. 2. Personal affirmation of realization.
- Vers. 3-8. The address of the singer, either to his own soul, or to some other person, or to the nation, in which he affirms the convictions resulting from personal realization of the truth.
- Ver. 9a. Repetition of personal realization.
- Vers. 9 b-13. Same as verses 3-8.
- Vers. 14, 15. Conclusion of psalm, in which the singer with holy boldness expresses as in the words of Jehovah, the safety of the trusting soul, and thus gives the testimony of God as well as that of man to the truth.

PSALM XCII

JEHOVAH PRAISED FOR HIS RIGHTEOUS DEALING

THIS is a song of praise. The seemliness of praise is first declared (vers. 1-3) ; and then reasons for it are given (vers. 4-15). Praise is good as the first exercise of the day and also as the last. *Lovingkindness* in the morning, the sense of all the provision made for us as we face the responsibilities and conflicts of the day. *Faithfulness* at night, the conviction that Jehovah has been true to His covenant, through all the hours of need.

The song proceeds to rejoice first in that general and wholly beneficent government of God, whereby the wicked are dealt with in judgment. That is a weak and perilous tenderness which permits evil to continue its work of destruction. That is a strong and tender pity which without relenting, smites evil, and destroys it.

The song ends with a gracious description of the growth and perennial freshness of the righteous, Such, planted in the courts of God will flourish and grow, and yet know no senility-age with all its wealth of experience and fruitage, but with no failing or weakness.

PSALM XCIII

JEHOVAH THE KING. THE FACT

THERE is a great majesty about this song. It celebrates Jehovah's assumption of the throne and government. The form in which the preliminary statements are made conveys the impression, not so much of the eternal sovereignty of the King,

as that He has taken up His position, and acted upon it. The result is that the stability of all things is assured. This assumption of authority is but the enforcement of a perpetual fact, for

“ Thy throne is established of old ;
Thou art from everlasting.”

Moreover, this assumption has not been without opposition, and the figure of the storm-tossed sea is made use of to indicate the strength of this opposition, “ The floods have lifted up against him.”

All this has been of no avail. The King is high above, and therefore Lord of them. This psalm was written in all likelihood after some deliverance Jehovah wrought for His people, but through the open window the singer, consciously or unconsciously, saw the far distant light of another day in which the Kingdom of God will be set up in His might, and the song of an established order shall be the anthem of His praise.

PSALM XCIV

JEHOVAH THE KING. FAITH'S AFFIRMATION

THE placing of this song immediately after the one which sets forth the fact of the enthronement of Jehovah is remarkable.

It creates a contrast, while it suggests a continuity of ideas. The contrast is seen in the fact that while the previous psalm celebrates the victory of Jehovah over all opposition, this one is an appeal to Him out of circumstances in which His enemies seem to triumph. The continuity of ideas is however, equally apparent. To whom should His own turn in times of such distress, save to the One Who sits high above the force and fury of the flood ?

The psalm has three main movements. First, an appeal to Jehovah the Mighty, in the presence of the triumph of the wicked (vers. 1-7). This is followed by an address to such as are doubting because of the apparent inactivity of God. They are reminded that God hears, sees, and must act (vers. 8-11). Finally, the song again becomes a prayer in which faith makes its great affirmations. The period of waiting is one of blessed chastening. Jehovah cannot ultimately cast off His people. Past experience testifies to this. The wrong of those apparently victorious enemies makes it impossible to believe that they can have fellowship with God. Therefore, the final words tell of the psalmist's confidence.

PSALM XCV

JEHOVAH THE KING. A WARNING

WE pause here to note a connection between a group of psalms, viz., xciii-c. These eight constitute the songs of the King, arranged in conformity with the needs of the people. The first (xciii) affirms His enthronement and government. The next (xciv) expresses the hope of His people even in the midst of circumstances of trial. Then follow six, dealing with the fact of His Kingship in varied ways.

The present one declares His supremacy, and utters a note of warning against that which must inevitably hinder His people from realizing the Rest of His reign. Calling first for praise to the King, the singer celebrates His supremacy. He is above all other authority, and *is* the God of all nature. He is, moreover, the God of His people ; and therefore they should worship in submission and reverence before Him (vers. 1-7a). Then the warning note follows reminding them of the sins of their fathers which, as to their cause, consisted in failure of faith, which expressed itself in refusal to bow in submission to His will. That sin excluded them from rest, and the children are warned to profit by the ancient story. Such a King demands loyalty, and it must be more than that of a song ; it must express itself in submission to His government.

PSALM XCVI

JEHOVAH THE KING. WORSHIP

THERE is a beauty about this song which irresistibly appeals to the submissive soul. The previous warning must be heeded in order to sing it. When the personal life is loyal to His throne, the song of God's wide and beneficent dominion thrills with exultation.

It moves out in widening circles. The first is that of His own people, and sets forth His supremacy over all the gods of the peoples. They are " things of nought " ; He is the Creator, and all things high and beautiful are His (vers. 1-6). The second calls upon the nations to recognize His Kingship, and to give Him His due, submitting themselves also in worship and reverence (vers. 7-g). The third sweeps the whole earth into its circumference and rejoices in the equity of His reign.

No study of the devotional literature of these people is possible without an ever-recurring consciousness of this far-reaching purpose of God. If the song of the Lord begin in the heart it always grows into the chorus in which others are included in its music. To know the gracious glory of His reign in personal life, is to reveal it to those beyond, and to desire its victories in the uttermost reaches.

PSALM XCV II

JEHOVAH THE KING. HIS JUDGMENTS

THE reign of Jehovah, while wholly beneficent in purpose and in ultimate issue, is yet full of terror and of judgment in its process toward the issue. This is also cause for rejoicing.

The method of God's judgments is described. They are mysterious, "Clouds and darkness are round about Him." They are founded upon strictest justice, "Righteousness and judgment are the foundation of His throne." They are forceful, "A fire goeth before Him."

The effects of His judgments are declared. His adversaries are destroyed, His glory is revealed, His people are filled with joy. The vision of the certainty, method, and victory of the judgments of the King gives rise to a sense of their underlying reason. He is the Holy One, and all wickedness is hateful to Him because of the harm it works among His people, for the fierceness of God's holiness is ever His love. Therefore let His saints learn the lesson and "hate evil." The promise to those who obey is very full of beauty. "Light is sown ... and gladness." It is a figure of the dawn, shedding its light everywhere. To hate evil is to walk in light. To walk in light is to be able to discover the true pathway leading toward the desired consummation. To walk in that pathway is to have gladness in the heart indeed.

PSALM XCVIII

JEHOVAH THE KING. WORSHIP

ANOTHER song of worship on the pattern of psalm xcvi. It opens and closes in the same way. A new song and its ultimate reason, the judging of the earth by Jehovah with righteousness and with truth. Here also the circles widen.

Beginning with Israel (vers. 1-3), the whole earth is included (vers. 4-6) ; and finally all nature (vers. 7, 8).

As the singer rejoices over the salvation of God manifested on behalf of Israel, he emphasizes the fact that it has been wrought by Jehovah alone. " His right hand, and *His* holy arm "; these were the only instruments available for, or capable of working deliverance. In proportion as the vision is filled with the glory of the Lord, the heart is filled with gladness, and the lips with song. This is as true to-day as ever. It sometimes seems as though all singing were out of place save as faith keeps its eye fixed on the occupied throne of Jehovah. The days are dark and mysterious as ever, and the outlook as full of gloom. Yet " He hath done marvellous things," and " He cometh to judge." This vision of God in the past and the future creates the song of the present.

PSALM XCIX

JEHOVAH THE KING. HIS REIGN

THIS is a song of the Kingdom of Jehovah as founded upon and administered in holiness. There are three distinct parts, each ending with practically the same refrain. The first acclaims the King as enthroned (vers. 1-3). The second affirms the absolute integrity of His administration (vers. 4, 5). The third declares the constant and faithful guidance of His own representatives (vers. 6-g).

In each there is a call to the attitude of response to the fact declared. The enthroned King is to be praised. The governing King is to be exalted and worshipped in submission at His footstool. The guiding King is to be exalted and worshipped in fellowship in His holy hill. Finally, in each case, the underlying reason of the King's position and activity, and also therefore, of the response, is that of His holiness. The throne is established in holiness. The guidance is motivated in holiness.

In the fuller light of the Christian revelation we see the three-fold fact in the life of God suggested. The Father enthroned ; the Son administering His Kingdom ; the Spirit interpreting His will through leaders and circumstances, through pity and through punishment.

PSALM C

JEHOVAH THE KING. WORSHIP

THIS is the last song of the series, and forms a fitting conclusion to the movement which commenced in psalm xciii.

There the Divine assumption of the throne and government was the subject. Here it is that of the benefits resulting to the whole earth. All lands are called upon to sing the song of His reign. The strength of their song is to be their service rendered with gladness. Israel is viewed as the witness to the Divine power and goodness. The peoples are supposed to see the position of the chosen people in all its desirableness, and they are reminded that their well-being is the result of the government of God.

Then the great invitation is given to the outlying people to enter His gates, to yield to Him, and share in His benefits. This is the true position and witness of God's chosen people according to His purpose for them, and through them, for others. It is a glimpse of a glory not realized by the ancient people. They never learned how to invite the outsider into the place of privilege. Because of their failure to do this, Israel as an earthly people is scattered and peeled. The Church, the spiritual Israel, fulfills, or ought to fulfil this function.

PSALM CI

JEHOVAH RECOGNIZED IN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE LIFE

AFINE sense of the fitness of things is exhibited by the editor of the psalter in placing this psalm here. Following immediately upon the songs of the enthroned Jehovah, in which there has been perpetually recurrent the recognition of the holiness of His reign, it describes the true attitude of the earthly ruler who recognizes the sovereignty of God, and how that ought to affect his own life and rule. It is a clear testimony moreover, to the fact that private and public life are very closely allied.

It has two movements. The key note of the first is "within my house" (ver. 2). That of the second is "the city of God." Between these there is the closest relation. No man is able to make the city in which he dwells anything like the city of God who does not know how to behave himself in his own house. This is the true order also. The first thing for every public man to do who would serve his city for God, is to see to it that his private

life is ordered aright before Him. The private life which answers the enthroned Jehovah is described first (vers. 1-4). It is a life cautious and watchful, refusing to countenance anything contrary to the holiness of Jehovah. The public life is one which respects the same holiness in all matters of administration. Evil workers are to be destroyed, and the counsellors of the ruler are to be sought among the faithful of the land.

PSALM CII

JEHOVAH THE ETERNAL GOD

THIS is a song of faith triumphing over affliction. Beginning with a prayer for deliverance, and a statement of the circumstances of suffering in which he then was, together with a recognition of those sufferings as the chastisements of Jehovah (vers. 1-11), it rises to a great song of hope in the consciousness of the eternity of God, and the consequent conviction of the restoration of His own people to favour and blessing (vers. 12-22). Finally it returns to his own suffering, yet recognizes that suffering again, as part of the Divine process, and gains confidence in setting that also in the light of the eternity of God (vers. 23-28).

While there are great beauties in the details of the song, it is this general atmosphere which creates its greatest value for us. There is nothing more calculated to strengthen the heart in suffering, or inspire the spirit with courage in days of danger and difficulty, than the sense of the eternity of God. In it is to be found the certainty that the purpose defeated to-day will yet be completed. In the vision of the eternity of God there is revealed the continuity of humanity, and a great sense of the solidarity of the race is created. Let us set our limitations always in the light of His limitlessness.

PSALM CIII

JEHOVAH THE LOVING FATHER

IT seems almost a work of supererogation to write anything about this psalm. It is perhaps the most perfect song of pure praise to be found in the Bible. It has become the common inheritance of all who through suffering and deliverance have

learned the goodness of Jehovah. Through centuries it has been sung by glad hearts, and to-day is as fresh and full of beauty as ever. It is praise intensive and extensive.

As to its intensity, notice how the entire personality of the singer is recognized. The spirit of the man speaks. He addresses his soul, or mind, and calls it to praise first for spiritual benefits, and then for physical. And again notice how in the sweep of the song, things so small as the frame of the physical and its constituent dust are recognized, while yet the immeasurable reaches of east and west are included.

The extensive mercy of Jehovah, as evident in the same system, is seen in other psalms, but perhaps never so majestically as here. It begins with individual consciousness (vers. 1-5) ; proceeds in recognition of national blessings (vers. 6-18) ; and ends with the inclusion of all the angels, and hosts, and works in the vast dominion of Jehovah. The "my" of personal experience merges into the "our" of social fellowship, and thus culminates in the "all" of universal consciousness. Yet all ends with the personal word, and the perfect music of the psalm is revealed in the fact that it opens and closes on the same note.

PSALM CIV

J E H O V A H T H E C R E A T O R A N D S U S T A I N E R

A GAIN we have a great song of praise commencing and closing with the same note of personal praise. While in the former the dominant note is that of the mercy of Jehovah, here it is that of His majesty. The former is the song of love to Love. This is the song of loyalty to Royalty.

The psalm opens with a declaration of the essential greatness of God, and then proceeds in poetic language to describe the manifestations of His greatness in creation. All through, beneficent purpose is recognized. The springs among the valleys are for the quenching of the thirst of birds and beasts. Grass and herbs are for service, and so on throughout.

Then in a burst of praise the singer recognizes the dependence of all upon Jehovah. The hiding of His face is trouble, and if He withdraw breath, death ensues. Finally, he cries out for the continuity of the realization of Divine purpose everywhere, in order that Jehovah may rejoice in His works. To this end he declares

he will make the contribution of his personal worship. The conception is full of beauty. The widespread revelation of the power and glory of God makes its appeal to the individual responsibility of the one man.

PSALM CV

JEHOVAH THE **TRUE** AND MIGHTY ONE

THIS and the following psalm are companions. They reveal the two sides of the relation between God and His people during a long period. This one sings the song of His faithfulness and power ; while the next tells the sad story of repeated failure and rebellion on the part of His people.

In singing His praise the psalmist opens with an appeal which recognizes the responsibility of those who have been recipients of blessing. The words, " Make known His doings among the peoples " reveal this. The leaders and singers of these people repeated this message of responsibility with almost monotonous reiteration, and yet it was not obeyed. In order that the doings of God may be proclaimed, he calls upon men to " remember," and he proceeds to trace the Divine hand in their history. First, he goes back to the ancient covenant, and sings of how God cared for them while they were few in number in the land, rebuking kings for their sakes.

Then follows a recognition of the government of God as overruling even what appeared so disastrous a matter as the famine. Through that, Joseph was given his opportunity, and the people were brought into Egypt, for the time being a place of quietness and increase.

The master word in the psalm is the pronoun " He." In constant repetition it shows the one thought uppermost in the mind of the singer. It is that of the perpetual activity of God in all those experiences through which His people have passed. Verse 25 commences with a statement which is almost startling—" He turned their heart to hate His people." Yet this is a recognition of the fact that circumstances which appeared to be most disastrous, were nevertheless all under His government. It was through the oppression of the Egyptians that Israel passed through a baptism of suffering which toughened the fibre of the national life, and prepared for all that lay ahead.

Then the singer passes in review God's wonderful deliverance of them from Egypt, until in a graphic sentence he writes, "Egypt was glad when they departed." Finally the song speaks of the bringing of them into possession of the land. It is a noble song of the might of God, and of His fidelity to His people. With unswerving loyalty to His covenant, in spite of all difficulties, and by means of suffering as well as joy, He moved in their history ever onward. Such a song is prophecy, in its **fuction** of interpreting history, and revealing the orderliness in the economy of God, of days and events which seem to be the most calamitous.

PSALM CVI

JEHOVAH 'THE FAITHFUL AND PATIENT ONE

THE previous psalm called the people to talk of the "marvelous works" of Jehovah. This one calls to praise, and the reason is that "His mercy endureth for ever." This fact is then illustrated by a declaration of how the people of God have persistently sinned against Him, and how He has patiently borne with them, restoring them constantly to Himself.

The first section (vers. 1-31) deals with the history of the people from Egypt, and in the wilderness. The description of what happened immediately after the crossing of the Red Sea is graphic :-

" Then believed they His words ;
They sang His praise.
They soon forgot His works ;
They waited not for His counsel."

That is the explanation of all the story. In the hour of deliverance faith aided by sight is strong, and it is easy to sing. But directly strain and stress return, the past of God's might is forgotten, and His counsel is not sought. And so the story runs on through Dathan and Abiram, by way of Horeb and to Baal Peor. Over against all the unutterable folly of the people, the faithfulness and matchless patience of Jehovah is seen.

Continuing the same sad story, the psalmist then turned to the unfaithfulness of the people in the land (vers. 32-48). This he begins by referring to Moses' exclusion. This reference seems to be a remarkable recognition of the strength of the man. The

fair deduction from the setting of the story seems to be that if he had entered with them, some of the things might have been different.

The story of their failure in the land is tragic, but there is evident a recognition on the part of the singer of a poetic justice in their calamity. Moses was excluded because of his failure to represent God to His people, but that failure was provoked by their sin ; and they, passing into the land without him, were from the beginning in greater or less degree corrupted. Their initial sin was that of disobedience, either on the ground of pity, or for purpose of compromise. The result was that they descended to all the abominations of which the peoples were guilty. Very beautiful is the revelation of God which occurs in the statement. " He made them also to be pitied of all those that carried them captives.' While their peristent and terrible sin made His wrath burn and His judgment inevitable, yet the love of His heart never ceased toward the people of His choice.

BOOK V. PSALMS CVII-CL

DOXOLOGY

"Praise ye the Lord. Praise God in His sanctuary. Praise Him in the firmament of His power.
 Praise Him for His mighty acts : Praise Him according to His excellent greatness.
 Praise Him with the sound of the trumpet : Praise Him with the psaltery and harp.
 Praise Him with the timbre1 and dance : Praise Him with stringed instruments and the pipe.
 Praise Him upon the loud cymbals ; Praise Him upon the high sounding cymbals.
 Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord. Praise ye the Lord." Ps. cl.

A. THE TITLE.	B. THE QUALITY.	C. THE PLACE.	D. THE REASON.	E. THE MEASURE.	F. THE MEANS.	G. THE CONDITIONS.
In this Doxology, which occupies the whole psalm, the name of God only appears ; 1. As " Jah " in the perfect note of Praise. " Hallelujah " twice repeated. " Jah " being in such case a contraction of " Jehovah." 2. As " God " in the singular form " El," which is always significant of His might.	"Praise Him."	" In " " Sanctuary " Centre. " Firmament ." Circumference.	" For " " His mighty Acts."	" According to " " His excellent greatness."	" With " " Instruments of Music."	" Everything that hath breath."

The Divine Name.

Again in the final book "Jehovah" is the predominant name. It occurs in every psalm but 2, in some of them many times-236 in all. The name "God" is absent from 22 of these psalms. It occurs 40 times, 10 in the singular, and 30 in the plural. The general title "Lord" (Adonahy) is found 12 times, "Jah" 32 times.

The Dominant Thought.

In this book, as an examination of the doxology will show, the worship of Jehovah is consummated. It rises in volume and beauty until in the closing words of the doxology ultimate purpose is declared. "Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord. Hallelujah."

Still the songs are those arising out of various experiences. A large section is devoted to Songs of Ascent, which are those of the pilgrims as they gathered by many ways and along different paths to the place of the Divine glory.

A. SONGS OF THE HOPE. cvii-cxii.	B. SONGS OF THE PROCESS. CXIII-CXVIII.	C. SONGS OF THE REVEALED WILL. CXIX.
<p>I. The Hope. cvii-cix.</p> <p>i. Assurance of Faith. cvii.</p> <p>ii. Fixity of Faith. cviii.</p> <p>iii. Triumph of Faith. cx.</p> <p>II. The Reason. cx-cxii.</p> <p>i. The coming One. cx.</p> <p>ii. The Greatness and Grace of Jehovah. cxl.</p> <p>iii. The Blessedness of the trusting Man. cxii.</p>	<p>I. Jehovah's Activity. cxiii, cxiv</p> <p>i. His Humility. cxiii</p> <p>ii. His Accomplishment. cxiv</p> <p>II. Jehovah's Servant. cxv, cxvi</p> <p>i. The Passion. The Glory of His Name. cxv</p> <p>ii. The Experience. Darkness and Deliverance. cxvi</p> <p>III. Jehovah's Praise. cxvii, cxviii</p> <p>i. The Call of the ideal Servant. cxvii.</p> <p>ii. The Song of the Redeemed. cxviii.</p>	<p>Aleph. 1-8. The perfect Law.</p> <p>Beth. g-16. The Way of Cleansing.</p> <p>Gimel. 17-24. The Fountain of Joy.</p> <p>Daleth. 25-32. The Strength of Trial.</p> <p>He. 33-40. The Medium of Guidance.</p> <p>Vau. 41-48. The Inspiration of Testimony.</p> <p>Zain. 49-56. The Comfort of Sorrow.</p> <p>Cheth. 57-64. The Medium of Fellowship.</p> <p>Teth. 65-72. The Key of Affliction.</p> <p>Jod. 73-80. The Depths of Desire.</p> <p>Cawh. 81-88. The Confidence of Darkness.</p> <p>Lamed. 89-96. The Foundation of Faith.</p> <p>Mem. 97-104. The Delight of Life.</p> <p>Nun. 105-112. The Light of Pilgrimage.</p> <p>Samech. 113-120. The Line of Rectitude.</p> <p>Ain. 121-128. The Hope of Distress.</p> <p>Pe. 129-136. The Light of Life.</p> <p>Tzade. 137-144. The Knowledge of God.</p> <p>Koph. 145-152. The Inspiration of Devotion.</p> <p>Resh. 153-160. The Principle of Life.</p> <p>Shin. 161-168. The true Wealth.</p> <p>Tau. 169-176. The Perfect Law.</p>

D. SONGS OF THE PILGRIMAGE . CXX-CXXXIV.	E. SONGS OF THE EXPERIENCE . CXXXV-CXLIV.	F. SONGS OF THE PERFECTED PRAISE. CXLV-CL.
<p>I. The far country. CXX-CXXI. i. Desire. CXX. ii. Assurance. CXXI.</p> <p>II. The Start. CXXII, CXXIII. i. Anticipation. CXXII. ii. Confidence. CXXIII.</p> <p>III. The Journey. CXXIV-CXXXI. i. Escape. CXXIV. ii. First Glimpse of the City. CXXV. iii. Approach. CXXVI-CXXXI. (a) Laughter and Peni- tence. CXXVI. (b) The Family Strength. CXXVII. (c) The Family Responsi- bility. CXXVIII. (d) A Backward Look. CXXIX. (e) Penitence and Con- fidence. CXXX. (f) Rest in the Will of God. CXXXI.</p> <p>IV. The Entrance. CXXXII.</p> <p>V. The City and Worship. CXXXIII, CXXXIV. i. By Day. CXXXIII. ii. By Night. CXXXIV.</p>	<p>I. Sufficiency of Jehovah. CXXXV-CXXXIX.</p> <p>II. Helplessness of Man. CXL-CXLIII.</p> <p>III. Sufficiency answering Help- lessness. CXLIV.</p>	<p>I. Introductory. CXLV.</p> <p>II. Jehovah. CXLVI, CXLVII. i. Grace. CXLVI. ii. Government. CXLVII.</p> <p>III. The Worship. CXLVIII, CXLIX. i. Creation. CXLVIII. ii. The Saints. CXLIX.</p> <p>IV. The Doxology. CL.</p>

PSALM CVII

JEHOVAH THE REDEEMER

WE now begin the fifth and last book of the Psalter. In this book the music is richest and fullest. It begins in this psalm on the fundamental notes, and rises through major and minor, by the way of the songs of ascents, to the final measures of perfect praise contained in the doxology.

The first thirty-two verses contain a wonderful story of redemption, using that word in its sense of deliverance from positions and circumstances of peril. In a prologue the theme of the songs is stated. A people redeemed and gathered by Jehovah is called upon to declare the fact.

Then follow four strophes in which the redemption is illustrated in four ways. Each of these ends with the same appeal for praise, varied by description suitable to the previous illustration. The first illustration is that of homelessness. The second is that of bondage. The third is that of affliction. The last is that of a storm. The homeless, Jehovah led to a city of habitation ; the enslaved, He led into liberty ; the afflicted, He healed ; the storm-tossed, He led to calm and a haven. All through, the connection between sorrow and sin is clearly seen. The method of Jehovah is described as **that of dealing with sin in order to the healing of sorrow, Such** deliverances demand worship, and the song is a psalm of praise interspersed with sighings after more perfect praise.

At verse 33 the psalm changes its tone, and becomes meditative. With the facts of Divine deliverances still in mind, the underlying principles of Divine activity are stated. Things which appear contradictory are seen to be evidences of consistency. Jehovah turns fruitful places into a wilderness ; He turns the wilderness into a fruitful place. His activities are destructive and constructive. He blesses and multiplies a people. Again they are abased and afflicted. He is the Author of good as prosperity, and evil as adversity. He dethrones the high, and exalts the lowly. Everything results from the attitude of the men with whom He deals. Upright men are made to rejoice. Men of iniquity are silenced.

The concluding words draw attention to the importance of understanding these matters. The wise will give heed to them.

The mercies of Jehovah are to be considered. This means much more than they are to be remembered. The Authorized "understand," and the Revised "consider" are both partial interpretations of the Hebrew word. It very literally means to distinguish. That is to say, God's "mercies" or "lovingkindnesses" are to be considered in their method and meaning, that they may be understood and not misinterpreted. They are not capricious, but proceed ever in harmony with fixed principles.

PSALM CVIII

JEHOVAH THE ANCHORAGE OF HOPE

THIS psalm is composed of two quotations from former songs. The first part (vers. 1-5) is taken from psalm Ivii, of which the theme is "God the Refuge in calamity" (vers. 7-11). The second part is found in psalm lx, of which the theme is "God the Hope of His people" (vers. 5-12). That with which this psalm opens was the culmination of the earlier psalm, in which, out of calamity, the singer finds refuge in fixity of heart in God. Here in this book of perfected praise it is the opening declaration in a song of triumph over circumstances of difficulty and danger.

The latter part of this psalm was also the close of psalm lx, and there, was preceded by a detailed description of affliction. The point of interest then in this song is that of the attitude of mind indicated by this selection. The circumstances of the writer would seem to be very similar to those obtaining in the earlier psalms. They are only hinted at in passing. The soul's fixity of heart enables the singer to rejoice from beginning to end. Relation to God affects all the relationships. To be homed in His will, and submissive to His throne, is to be triumphant under all circumstances. Triumph in the very hour of defeat is the finest, but it is only possible when the heart is fixed in God.

PSALM CIX

JEHOVAH THE VINDICATOR OF THE PERSECUTED

THIS is a psalm full of interest. The singer is in a place of terrible suffering due to the implacable hostility of his foes. The passage containing the imprecations (vers. 6-19) contains the singer's quotation of what his enemies say about him,

rather than what he says about them. In a translation published by the Jewish Publication Society of America, that fact is clearly shown. They render vers. 5 and 20 thus :-

“ They repay me evil for good,
And hatred for my love (saying)-”
“ This it is which mine enemies seek to obtain of the Lord,
And those that speak evil against my life.”

This is extremely probable in view of the fact that the opening complaint is, “ The mouth of the wicked and the mouth of deceit have they opened against me.” The singer complains, “ For my love they are my adversaries ” (which the translation already referred to gives as, “ In return for my love they persecute me.”)

Taking this view of the psalm it is a sob, which is also a song. The circumstances are terrible. Perhaps there is nothing harder to bear than accusations which are untrue, and these were terrible things which they said, and horrible things they desired for him. But the heart pours out its complaint to God, and ends with a note of praise.

PSALM CX

JEHOVAH AND HIS MESSIAH

THIS psalm is purely Messianic, and was always considered to be so. When Jesus quoted it in His conversation with the rulers, it is perfectly evident that they looked upon it in that light. It is equally certain that He made use of it in that sense. While we believe the authorship of many of these psalms to be uncertain, we claim that the words of Jesus put the question of authorship in this case beyond dispute. Then the beauty of the song is seen in all its fulness. David the king, sings of Another as Lord, and therefore superior to himself.

In the first half of the song (vers. 1-4) he sings of the relation of the coming King to Jehovah. The second half (vers. 5-7) tells of the might and victory of the appointed King. This division is clearly marked by the names of the psalm. “ Jehovah said unto Adonahy, ” “ Jehovah shall send forth,” “ Jehovah hath sworn, and will not repent,” “ Adonahy at Thy right hand.” Both these names or titles are used often of God. Here Jehovah is used of God, and Adonahy of the coming King. This King is appointed by Jehovah. He is strengthened by Jehovah. He is a King to

Whom His people will gather in loyalty, and with the perpetual freshness of youth. He is moreover, by the will of Jehovah, to be Priest as well as King. In the might of this Divine appointment He is to go forth to conquest. The fulfilment of its every word is realized in Christ.

PSALM CXI

JEHOVAH THE GREAT AND GRACIOUS

THIS psalm is closely connected with the one which follows it. In this the subject is the greatness and graciousness of Jehovah. *In* the Hebrew there are ten verses, the first eight having two lines in each, and the last two three lines in each. That makes a total of twenty-two lines. The first letters of these lines constitute the alphabet. Thus it is a song of praise constructed as an alphabetical acrostic.

Another division is that of taking the first seven lines which tell of His greatness ; the next twelve which proclaim His graciousness ; and the last three which declare the wisdom of such as fear Him and act accordingly. This last division prepares the way for the next psalm. The greatness of Jehovah is manifest in His works, the supreme characteristics of which are honour, majesty, and righteousness. The graciousness is evident in all His dealings with His people. These are characterized by compassion and constancy ; by uprightness and redemption. In view of such greatness and graciousness, how true it is that to fear Him is wisdom, and to do His will is evidence of good understanding.

PSALM CXII

JEHOVAH THE BLESSEDNESS OF THE TRUSTING

THIS song follows immediately upon the last as to meaning. While that has set forth the praises of Jehovah as great and gracious, this declares the blessedness of the man who lives in true relation with Jehovah. The connection is clearly seen in the relation of the closing verse of the former to the opening verse of this. "The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of wisdom." "Blessed is the man that feareth Jehovah." The remarkable thing about this psalm is the way in which, in describing the blessed condition of the man who fears Jehovah, it makes use of

words which the previous psalm made use of in describing Jehovah. Of Jehovah the psalmist said, " His righteousness endureth for ever." Of the man who fears he says, " His righteousness endureth for ever." Jehovah is declared to be " gracious and full of compassion." So also is the upright man.

The relation of these psalms sets forth truth which is of perpetual application. A man becomes like his God. When a man's God is blessed, the man is blessed also. To have a great God is to become a great man. True wisdom consists in the maintenance of right relationships with the one God. True happiness consists in becoming like Him Who is at once great and gracious.

PSALM CXIII

JEHOVAH THE HIGH AND LOWLY

THIS is the first of six psalms which constitute the Hallel or Hymn of Praise, which the Hebrews sang at Passover, Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles. This group is necessarily of special interest to us because in all probability, these psalms were sung by our Lord and His disciples on that dark night in which He was betrayed. While we shall read them and think of them as the songs of the ancient people, we cannot help thinking of them as uttered by that Voice which was and is the perfect music.

The first psalm celebrates the name of Jehovah on two accounts. He is high, yet He is lowly ; above the nations and above the heavens, yet humbling Himself to behold the heavens and the earth. This is a startling way of stating the fact. The thing which exalts man, the contemplation and consideration of creation and its glories, humbles God, so far is He above creation in the awful majesty of His essential life. Yet how He humbles Himself ! Think of these words passing the lips of Him Who " humbled Himself," and became " obedient unto death." Then notice the evidences of God's humility and height. He stoops to lift, for He raiseth the poor, lifteth up the needy, and turns barrenness into the joy of motherhood. Again, think how amid the deepening shadows the Incarnate Word sang with a little band of men of the purpose of His humbling, and try and imagine the joy set before Him, and so approach to an understanding of how He endured.

PSALM CXIV

GOD THE MIGHTY PRESENCE LEADING HIS PEOPLE'S EXODUS

THIS is the second psalm in the Hallel. The first set forth the might and mercy of Jehovah. This is pre-eminently a song of His might, and so the name of God is used. If however it sings of His might, it sings of it as manifested in mercy. It is the song of the Exodus, and is full of beauty.

The first movement declares that the people passing out of Egypt, did so as the result of the presence of God. Among them was His sanctuary, and they were His dominion. Nature recognized His presence and obeyed His will. The sea fled, Jordan was driven back, mountains and little hills were moved. The singer asks the reason of this commotion, and without waiting for answer charges the earth to tremble at His presence.

Notice that this song includes the whole deliverance, the going out under Moses through the sea, and the going in under Joshua through Jordan. Again we imagine the great Leader about to accomplish His Exodus singing these words. Ere long all Nature would be convulsed as He passed out, and in breaking the way through for the oncoming hosts. It is possible in imagination to hear the thrill of triumph as the stately words so full of spiritual significance, sounded forth in that upper room.

PSALM CXV

JEHOVAH AND THE GLORY OF HIS NAME

THIS third psalm in the Hallel is born of passion for the glory of the name of Jehovah. That is its opening note, and all that follows must be explained thereby. The singer's distress is heard in the cry :-

” Wherefore should the nations say,
Where is now their God ? ”

Not first for the welfare of the people does he care, but for the vindication of his God. This is a deep note, and all too rare in our music. We are ever in danger of putting the welfare of man before the glory of God,

The song having uttered its keynote proceeds in a passage of fine scorn for idols and idol worshippers. These idols have form without power, appearance without life, and the effect of worshipping them is that the worshippers become insensate as they are.

Following this there is a fine appeal to the people of God to trust in Him, with a confident assurance that He will help. There then pass before the mind of the singer the heavens, God's own habitation ; the earth, entrusted to men ; and Sheol, the place of silence. All ends with a declaration that sounds the note of triumph even over death, for the praise of His people is to continue for evermore. And again the thought reverts to the upper room, and the Singer Whose deepest passion was ever the will of God and the glory of His name ; to the One Who was soon going into the silence where no note of praise would be heard ; and yet to the One Who would turn the silence into song for evermore.

PSALM CXVI

JEHOVAH THE DELIVERER FROM DEATH

THIS is the fourth song of the Hallel. In it the note of triumph over death, with which the last one closed, is elaborated.

The singer had evidently been in some grave peril in which he had practically despaired of life. From the peril he has been delivered by Jehovah, and now he sings His praise. It has two movements. The first tells of his love, and declares its reason and its issue (vers. 1-9). The second tells of his resulting faith, breaks forth into new exultation, and affirms his determination to praise (vers. 10-19).

His love is the outcome of Jehovah's love manifested on his behalf when in the very bonds of death he cried to Him. The issue is that he will walk before Jehovah. His faith thus confirmed, he breaks into new song, and dedicates himself afresh to the high service of thanksgiving.

Whatever the local circumstances which gave rise to this song, it is evident that all its rich meaning was fulfilled, when in the midst of that little company of perplexed souls, the shadows of the One Death already on Him, Jesus sang this song of prophetic triumph over the sharpness of the hour of passion to which He was passing. He has made it *over to all* His own as their triumph song over death.

PSALM CXVII

JEHOVAH THE CENTRE OF EARTH'S WORSHIP

THE fifth song of the Hallel is the shortest in the Psalter. In it in a very deep sense, is fulfilled the saying so common that "Brevity is the soul of wit." It lives indeed with the wisdom of perfect realization. It is the pure song of the people of Jehovah. It is the song of Israel, the ideal servant of Jehovah.

It is addressed to all peoples. They are called upon to praise and laud Jehovah because of the greatness of His grace toward His own, and because His truth endureth for ever. In the long processes of the centuries Israel never fully realized this ideal. At last the purpose was consummated in a Person. All the ancient prophecies found in Him their potential fulfilment. In that upper room the song was a solo as to actual experience. By the union of grace and truth, in and through Jesus, the call to praise went out to all nations and peoples. Those who joined Him in the song that night were made able to sing in following days with meaning and with force ; and that is the song with which the Church has gone forth ever since to woo and win the peoples to Jehovah. Ere the work of Jesus be finally completed, the Israel of God herself will sing that song perfectly, and the nations and peoples will respond.

PSALM CXVIII

JEHOVAH AND HIS ENDURING MERCY

THIS is the sixth and last of the psalms of the Hallel. It is the song of perfect victory, and was undoubtedly arranged to be sung by a triumphal procession as it made its way to the Temple for thanksgiving and worship. It is almost impossible however to trace its divisions in that way. As to its subject-matter it may be thus divided :—

Introduction. The Call to Praise (vers. 1-4).

The threefold Song of Israel, of Aaron, of the People (vers. 5-27).

Conclusion (vers. 28, 29).

The call is to praise specifically for Jehovah's enduring mercy. It is addressed to Israel as the ideal servant ; to the house of Aaron as the priesthood ; to all that fear the Lord. To this call Israel personified first replies in a song which sets forth the story

of distress and deliverance which had characterized the history of the long years (vers. 5-18). Then Aaron as the priest, who had the right to enter through all the gates, takes up the song, and challenges them to admit him, rejoicing in Jehovah's exaltation of him (vers. 19-22). Then the people sing of the marvel of the Lord's doings, and devote themselves to Him (vers. 23-27). Finally the psalmist strikes the note of personal thanksgiving, ending with a call to praise. This is pre-eminently the triumph song of the Christ, He the ideal Servant, He the perfect Priest, He the Leader of the people. How much all these words meant to Him as He sang them on that night in the upper room.

PSALM CXIX

THE PERFECTION OF THE REVEALED WILL

ALEPH. 1-8. *The perfect Law*

THIS first division sets forth the perfection of God's law by declaring the blessedness of such as observe it, and expressing the desire of the psalmist for perfect conformity thereto. The revelation of the will of God is described in this division by seven different words. If we notice them now we shall be able to understand them as they recur in subsequent divisions.

"The law" indicates the whole method of guidance and direction. "His testimonies" refers to special and direct revelations of His will. "His ways" indicates the pathway of His appointment. "Thy precepts" is a poetical expression indicating definite injunctions. "Thy statutes" refers to the written words of law. "Thy commandments" is the phrase which describes positive and particular orders of God. "Thy judgments" refers to the decisions of God in places of doubt or perplexity. In the use of these varied phrases, and others yet to follow, there is revealed the perfection of the will of God in its methods as well as in its intention. In every possible way needed by man, God reveals His will to meet the need. Human responsibility is marked by the words "walk," "keep," "observe," "respect," "learn." Such obedience to such a will must indeed issue in blessedness.

BETH. 9-16. *The Way of Cleansing*

The cry of the young man is heard and answered. The deepest and highest aspiration of the soul of youth is that for

purity. The thought is not that of cleansing from contracted defilement, but rather that of keeping clean as in the presence of the possibility of such defilement. The answer is clear and concise. The path of purity is that of caution conditioned by the Word of God. This caution is further manifested in the distrust of self, and earnest seeking to be kept in the way of God's commandments.

The closing words breathe the spirit of intense devotion to that will in its varied aspects or methods. Three new descriptions are introduced in this division. "Thy word" in verses 9 and 16, is the most inclusive term of all, as descriptive of the entire method of the Divine manifestation to man. "Thy word" in verse 11 is a poetical word literally meaning "sayings," but standing for the same idea, as the former word. "Thy ways" is also a poetical term having the same value as the word translated "thy ways" in verse 3. In these first two divisions all the descriptions are found. They will recur often through the remaining divisions, but always with the same significance.

GIMEL. 17-24. *The Fountain of Joy* ,

The fitness of this title may not be at first manifest. There seems to be a note of sorrow and of strong desire running through all the prayer. Yet a careful examination will show that all this is in the doing of the will of God.

The opening verse reveals his conception of the delight there is in the doing of the will of God. Life he desires and asks, but not in order that he may please himself, but in order that he may keep His word. The earth is meaningless save as he is able to discover the law of God. That *is* the secret key to all its treasures. The singer is *in* circumstances of suffering, for the proud and the princes are against him. He rises superior *to* these sorrowful circumstances by keeping the testimonies, meditating on the statutes, and so finding delight therein. Thus this division reminds us that peace and joy are never created by prosperous circumstances, neither can they be destroyed by circumstances of difficulty. The soul desiring, discovering, doing the will of God, is the soul finding true delight in life.

DALETH. 25-32. *The Strength of Trial* ✓

In this division we have a new revelation of the perfection of the Divine will. As to circumstances this is wholly a sob. Two

sentences are pregnant with pain—" My soul cleaveth unto the dust," " My soul melteth for heaviness." The singer is bowed down, overwhelmed. He sorely needs succour and strength. How does he seek it? Not by asking for pity, but by a determined application to the law of his God. Carefully notice the earnestness of his desire for a quickening according to the word, which is the revealed will of God. We are not usually accustomed to turn to law for comfort, and therein lies our mistake. The truest comforters are the statutes, the precepts, the judgments, the testimonies, the commandments of God. To find these, and to obey them is to pursue a pathway which leads ever toward light and liberty. There can be no circumstances of trial out of which the will of God has made no way of deliverance. To find that way is the highest wisdom. His sternest requirements are His tenderest methods. In the dark days let us " understand " and " choose " and " cleave unto " the will of God.

HE. 33-40. *The Medium of Guidance* ✓

The general desire expressed in this division is that for guidance. It is not an appeal for direction in some special case of difficulty, but rather for the clear manifestation of the meaning of the will of God. How often to-day the question is asked as to how we may know what the will of God is. This would seem to be the thought in the mind of the psalmist here. Every sentence breathes conviction of the perfection of the Divine will as revealed. The only fear of his heart is that he may not understand the revelation. This fear drives him to prayer that he may understand.

Notice the advance of the petitions themselves. " Teach me," " give me understanding," " make me to go," " incline my heart." Then two perils are recognized. The first is that of the allurements which may hinder the singleness of his devotion, and he prays, " Turn away my reproach." Thus taken as a whole we have a valuable teaching that when we fear that we may not know the meaning of God's will, we had better turn to Himself for clear guidance and safe keeping.

Vau. 41-48. *The Inspiration of Testimony* ✓

In this section the psalmist recognizes his responsibility as a witness. He desires to have an answer to the man who reproaches

him. He desires to be able to speak of the testimonies of Jehovah before kings without being ashamed. He recognizes that such power consists in true familiarity with the law of his God.

This is all expressed in the first place in a prayer in general terms (vers. 41, 42). He desires the mercies of Jehovah, but very carefully notice that he says "according to Thy word"; that is to say he recognizes that the mercies of the Lord, even His salvation, result from His will.

This general prayer then passes into a more particular description, which reveals the accuracy of this view. It is in the word of truth abiding with him, and in the judgments of God that he hopes; and consequently it is for these things that he prays. If the prayer is answered he will be able to bear testimony. Notice the progress he suggests; "So shall I observe Thy law. . . I will walk at liberty . . . I will also speak." The issue of this will be the delight of his own soul, and continued devotion to the law of his God. Thus the inspiration of testimony for God is created in His will known, obeyed, proved.

ZAIN. 49-56. The Comfort of Sorrow ✓

In a previous division the revealed will of God as the strength of trial was dealt with (Daleth 25-32). Therein it will be remembered that he prayed, "Quicken Thou me according to Thy word." In this division he sings of the comfort which fills his soul because he has been quickened by that word.

The experience of this comfort is described. It would seem as though this section expressed the feelings of one in the midst of affliction. It does not sing the song of deliverance therefrom. The word is distinctly, "This is my comfort in my affliction." Quickened by the word of his God he has a threefold consciousness. The first phase is that of loyalty in the presence of reproach. Though he has been held in derision, he has not swerved from the law. The second is that of hot indignation. He has seen others forsaking the law of God, and there has been born within him this sense of anger. The third phase is that of songs. Very beautiful are the words, "Thy statutes have been my songs." He is not referring to songs of sentiment. The statutes are the songs. He has heard the music of the Divine severity. In loyalty to the will of God he has discovered its poetry. He closes by declaring :-

" This I have had,
Because I kept Thy precepts,"

which is his final affirmation that his comfort in the midst of trial and affliction has been the outcome of the fact of his abiding in the will of God. If the marginal reading here :-

“ This I have had,
That I have kept Thy precepts,”

is to be accepted, then the psalmist puts the keeping of the precepts of God as a rare possession, notwithstanding all the limitation of his life of affliction. There is no comfort equal to that of the certainty of the soul obedient to the revealed Will of God. Such an one is ever able to sing :-

“ Ill that He blesses is our good,
And unblest good is ill ;
And all is right that seems most wrong,
If it be His sweet will.”

CHETH. 57-64. *The Medium of Fellowship*

The first words tell the whole burden of this section, “ Jehovah is my portion.” This opening is singularly fitting if the marginal reading of the last verse of the previous division be accepted. In that case the psalmist, having made his boast supremely in the fact that he has kept the precepts of God, immediately declares that the outcome of that is that Jehovah Himself is his possession, and this would indeed seem to be so from the fact that having affirmed Jehovah to be his portion, he links the affirmation with the declaration, “ I have said that I would observe Thy words.”

Thus, loyalty to the will of God is not only comfort in sorrow, it is the medium of fellowship. One is almost of necessity reminded of the words of Jesus ;“ He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me ; and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself unto him.”

He then explains the whole process in his own experience. This process is clearly seen if we take the simple declarations of the next few verses : “ I entreated Thy favour ... I thought on my ways ... I turned my feet ... I made haste ... I have not forgotten ... I will rise to give thanks.” There is first of all the desire for the favour of Jehovah. Then follows thought upon the ways, and the turning of the feet unto the testimonies of God. This is done with consecration, without delay. This is done in spite of opposition, and finally this issues in the singing of praise

at midnight, that is, at the very centre of darkness. The cause of the song is again the righteous judgments of God. This fellowship with God means fellowship with all such as fear Him, so that indeed the loyal soul is brought into the richest of companionships. The consequent consciousness **is** that the earth is seen to be full of the mercy of Jehovah. The division ends with the brief prayer, "Teach me Thy statutes."

TETH. 65-72. ***The Key of Affliction***

Again there is an advance of thought manifest in this division. The soul who has entered into fellowship with God through loyalty to His will is now able to make the affirmation, "Thou hast dealt well with Thy servant." All the after part of the division shows that that statement refers to the very affliction which the singer has experienced.

This affliction is described in **verses 69 and 70**. Yet be it noted that when mentioning this, he sets it in the light of his loyalty to the will of God. A specific trouble is that men have forged a lie against him, and he makes this the occasion for declaring his whole-hearted obedience. These people are incapable of spiritual illumination. The words, "Their heart is as fat as grease," indicate sensuality ; but he dwells in the light of Jehovah.

Having confirmed his conviction that God has dealt well with him, he explains it. Before he was afflicted he went astray. Therefore it is indeed good to have been afflicted. The decision at which he arrives after the process is that the law of the mouth of Jehovah is better than all material wealth. Affliction to the trusting and obedient soul is invariably beneficent. The rebellious are broken and embittered by it. The obedient are healed and ennobled.

JOD. 73-80. ***The Depths of Desire***

The great petition of this section is, "Give me understanding that I may learn Thy commandments," This is introduced by the psalmist's recognition of the fact that he is the workmanship of God. "Thy hands have made me and fashioned me." This is a very profound word, and one we all do well to learn. One of the deepest reasons for the abandonment of the life to the government of God is the fact that He Who has made and fashioned, knows perfectly what are the laws, obedience to which will ensure the final realization of all highest purposes.

And yet the psalmist has a wider vision than that of mere personal perfecting. He desires understanding in order that through his own realization of the will of God others may see and profit. The rest of this section expresses this aspiration in greater detail. Affirmation is evidence that the judgments of Jehovah are righteous, and that affliction is part of His faithfulness. He makes his requests. There are five distinct petitions in the last five verses, each one of which opens in our translation with the word "Let." The first is for comfort, but it is to be "according to Thy word." The second is for tender mercies, but these are in order that he may live, and the reason urged is that "Thy law is my delight." The third is for vindication that "the proud may be ashamed." The fourth is for the power of witness, in order that he may strengthen the faith of others. The last is for perfection, but it is that he may be "perfect in Thy statutes."

CAPH. 81-88. ***The Confidence of Darkness***

This division is again a sob. The circumstances are all of darkness, and the most terrible consciousness is that of the apparent abandonment of the trusting soul by God Himself. His "soul fainteth for salvation." His "eyes fail for Thy word." He is like a bottle in the smoke, that is, a wine-skin shrivelling, tending to destruction.

To this there is to be added the persecution of foes. Men have digged pits for him, have persecuted him wrongfully, have almost consumed him. Yet all through notice carefully the gleams of light: "I hope. . . I do not forget . . . Thy commandments are faithful. . . I forsook not thy precepts." Thus in the very darkest hour, when God appears to be inactive as a helper, and the activities of foes seem to be successful, the trusting soul clings to the will of God. The whole ends with the prayer, "Quicken me," and the heart affirms even here its **unshaken** confidence in the Divine lovingkindness. Moreover, the reason for the prayer is that there may be continued loyalty to the will of God. It is almost certain that this division could never have been written save by one who had entered into the experiences described in the former parts of this wonderful song.

LAMED. 89-96. ***The Foundation of Faith***

In the previous division we have had a most remarkable manifestation of faith triumphing over circumstances of the

greatest darkness and difficulty. Now the song proceeds to reveal to us the foundation of such faith. The opening affirmation (vers. 89-91) declares the consciousness which created the strength of the soul in the day of darkness. The word of Jehovah is settled. His faithfulness is continuous through the generations. The evidences of these things are to be found in all Nature. All things serve Jehovah.

He then distinctly affirms how it came about that in the midst of darkness he was still able to trust.

“ Unless Thy law had been my delight,
I should then have perished in mine affliction,”

and affirms his new determination, “ I will never forget Thy precepts ”; and the reason for this determination is that the prayer he offered in the midst of the darkness has been answered, “ With them Thou hast quickened me.” Upon the basis therefore of victory won, he prays again, for he *is* evidently still in a place of trial.

The division ends with this wonderful word :-

“ I have seen an end of all perfection ;
But Thy commandment is exceeding broad.”

That is to say he has considered all the perfections of things other than Jehovah Himself, that is, of created things ; and he has discovered their limits ; but the heart is firm and steady because he has found that stretching out beyond them, and enwrapping them all is the commandment of God. This is but another way of saying that the whole universe is conditioned within the spacious will of God.

MEM. 97-104. *The Delight of Life*

This is a pure song of praise. It contains no single petition, but is just one glad outpouring of the heart. It commences with an outburst :-

” Oh, how love I Thy law !
It is my meditation all the day.”

The connection of this with what has immediately preceded must not be forgotten ; the trusting soul in the midst of the darkness ; **the reason of** this trust in the absolute certainty of the Divine authority and government. And now the song that tells of the heart's gladness. It is not a song of thankfulness for pity or for

deliverance. It is a song of delight in law. After the opening exclamation the psalmist speaks of the advantage of his experience when homed in the will of God.

This he sets forth in a threefold comparison. He is wiser than his enemies. He has more understanding than his teachers. He understands better than the aged. That is to say that the men who plot and plan against him are foolish in comparison with him, because the commandments of God are ever with him. There are no contingencies for which provision is not made in the law of his God, He has more understanding than his teachers, that is to say that in his personal relation to the testimonies of God he is independent of human interpretation. He understands more than the aged, that is, the direct keeping of the Divine precepts is of more value than the advice of others, even though they have had long experience. He then describes the habit of his life, which has become the occasion of his song (vers. 101, 102) and ends with another declaration of the delight of his heart.

NUN. 105-112. *The Light of Pilgrimage*

Again the division opens with an affirmation. It is one in which the psalmist is thinking of himself as a pilgrim passing through a world of darkness in which it would be easy for him to miss his way. On such a pilgrimage the revealed will of his God is a lamp and a light. Thus he recognizes at once the sacredness of the actual commandment, and the value of the spiritual illumination which shines through it.

He next makes his attestation. His attitude is that of one who has sworn to observe the righteous judgments of God ; and moreover, it is that of one who has confirmed his decision. Experience has vindicated his choice. The darkness of circumstances, which was evidently the background of the opening affirmation, is then referred to in detail. He is afflicted very much. His life is in his hand. He walks amid sinners. Because of his confidence in the illumination of his life by the will of God, he prays for quickening and for teaching, and declares his continued loyalty.

The whole movement ends with a declaration which must be read in the light of the opening affirmation, and the following experience and need. It is that of complete abandonment to the will of God, His testimonies being taken as a heritage ; and the heart of the trusting soul being bent toward the statutes for ever, even unto the end.

SAMECH. 113-120. ***The Line Of Rectitude***

All through this division of the psalm it is evident that the singer is contemplating the course and curse of wickedness. He first declares his hatred for such as are of a double mind, that is, those who are not loyal, the undecided, such as lack singleness of purpose. Later, he calls upon all evildoers to depart from him. Finally, he declares that God sets at naught and causes to cease all such evil men. In presence of the double-minded he affirms his own loyalty to the law, and his consequent confidence in God. He declares that his reason for calling upon evil-doers to leave him is that he may keep the commandments of God. In view of God's judgments of the wicked, he is filled with trembling. This is the utterance of a quick and sensitive conscience.

It is good to have such exercise of fear in the presence of the holiness of God, and in view of the certainty of His judgments against evil men. This very trembling is evidence of his profound conviction of the perfection of the Divine will ; and over against the fear, the hope of the heart is declared to be in the word of God.

AIN. 121-128. ***The Hope of Distress***

The circumstances of distress manifest here are those of a man true to God in the midst of those who seem to be in power, notwithstanding the fact that they make void the law of Jehovah. There is manifest in the movement the victory of faith.

The song opens with a note of despondency. He is in the hands of oppressors, who are actively oppressing. His eyes fail for salvation, that is, it seems as though it would not come. This sense of his distress expresses itself next in prayer. That prayer is the supreme evidence of faith. He asks for the mercy of teaching and understanding. There is no question of the rectitude of the Divine method. What is needful for him is that he should understand. Yet his passion for the law of his God is such that in view of the way in which men are making it void, he declares his conviction that it is time for Jehovah to work.

Then everything ends with a declaration of certainty that the precepts of Jehovah are right. The three movements are full of suggestion for all the men of faith. They are (i) a test of faith, (ii) an activity of faith, (iii) a victory of faith. Such a song is only possible to a man who can honestly make the opening declaration, "I have done judgment and justice."

PE. 129-136. *The Light of Life*

In a previous division he has declared that the will of God is light upon the pathway of the pilgrim (Nun. 105-112). In this one the thought is deeper. It is that of the illumination of the inner life of the soul rather than that of the external pathway.

He first declares his conviction of the wonder of the testimonies of Jehovah. The word "wonderful" is equivalent to our use of the word miraculous. These testimonies are supernatural, superhuman. These words received, and then opened, that is, having their meaning unfolded, give light. In intense language he describes his desire for them, and urges his plea as something which he has a right to claim, for the words, "as Thou usest to do" mean, according to Thy accustomed method. His petition is based upon his desire for freedom from the foe within, his own iniquity; and the hindrance without, the oppression of man. The light of the opened words of God is indeed the shining of the face of God, and for this he prays. As in previous divisions we have seen his anger with the wickedness of those who make void the law of God, here we see his pity for them in the rivers of his tears. These two things are not contradictory. Both are the common experience of obedient souls, and both were supremely manifest in Jesus when He wept over the city whose doom He uttered.

TZADE. 137-144. *The Knowledge of God*

In this division the psalmist reveals his conception of Jehovah. It is a consciousness of the character of God resulting from his acquaintance with His law, and his experience of its perfections.

He first makes his affirmation (vers. 137, 138); and then describes the experiences through which he has come to this decision (vers. 139-144); ending with a prayer for still further understanding. The affirmation is of the essential rightness of Jehovah in character and in government. The proof is reflexive. The God Who is right must govern righteously. The God Who governs righteously must be righteous. When consumed with zeal for the honour of the words of Jehovah, that inclusive word or will has been tried, and therefore he loves it. Despised by men, he has remembered the precepts of Jehovah, and has been conscious of their abiding nature and essential truth. *In* the midst of trouble and anguish he has found delight in the commandments.

He cries for understanding that he may live. Jehovah is ever known through obedience, and in such obedience the heart finds rest and life. There is a very close connection between this division and its closing prayer, and the words of Jesus concerning His Father, " Whom to know is life eternal."

KOPH. 145-152. *The Inspiration of Devotion*

This division opens with memories of how in times past he had cried to Jehovah, and what he had said. In each case the words, " I have called," indicate the habit of the past, rather than refer to any one particular occasion. This habit of the past was never a careless or indifferent one. He had prevented the dawning of the morning and the night watches ; that is, in his eagerness of devotion he had anticipated all set times and seasons.

Then suddenly the song becomes a prayer of present need. It is also an old prayer, " Quicken me." Immediately the song merges into a great affirmation of faith. Of his enemies he says, " They draw nigh." Of Jehovah he says, " Thou art nigh." The last statement harmonizes with, and explains the beginning of the division, " Of old I have known." Thus the inspiration of present devotion to the will of God is the experience won out of past devotion, wherein the faithfulness of Jehovah has been proved. In the dark days it is good to strengthen the heart by remembering. It is good moreover, to remember that all present fidelity is lighting a candle for some dark night yet to be.

RESH. 153-160. *The Principle of Life*

This is again a song of the will of God, sung amid circumstances of great affliction. The surroundings are evident in the use of the possessive pronouns of the first person-" mine afflictions "; " my cause " (as of a suit at law) ; " my persecutors "; " mine adversaries." The consciousness of need is revealed in the thrice repeated, " Quicken me." He feels the weakening of his very life under the pressure of circumstances.

The confidence of his soul is seen in his use of the possessive pronoun in the second person, " Thy law," " Thy word," " Thy statutes," " Thy tender mercies," " Thy judgments," " Thy testimonies," " Thy precepts," " Thy lovingkindness," " Thy righteous ordinances." It is this supreme consciousness of the breadth and beneficence of the will of God which turns even a

song of sorrow into a prayer of faith. Weakened is he, but he knows there is quickening for him within the provision of Jehovah's will. The principle of life is declared in the appeal made in each case as he asks for quickening, "according to Thy word," "according to Thine ordinances," "according to Thy lovingkindness." The first is inclusive, the second tells the method, the third reveals the underlying impulse.

SHIN. 161-168. *The true Wealth*

This division is remarkable in that it is one of the only two which contain no petition (the other was Mem. 97-104). That fact is the more remarkable because its opening sentence shows that the singer is still conscious of the circumstances of trial out of the midst of which the song of the last division was uttered.

This is a pure psalm of thanksgiving, and the opening declaration creates a background which throws up all the rainbow tints of gladness into brighter relief. The first note of the praise is one of awe. That is always so when joy is deep and profound. Merriment without foundation in reverence is always hollow and transient. When awe fills the soul, rejoicing immediately follows.

Again a note is struck which is unknown in the laughter of frivolity. "I hate and abhor falsehood" is the prelude to all the gladness which follows. Then the song runs on in full measure, and speaks of praise, and peace, and triumph over all stones of stumbling. Yet all the wealth which makes the heart glad is the relation of the singer's life to the judgments, the law, the testimonies, the precepts, which had ever kept the heart firm and steady in the midst of circumstances of trial. The greatest possession any life can hold is that of being able to sing, "All my ways are before Thee."

TAU. 169-176. *The Perfect Law*

The great psalm closes with a division which sets forth anew the singer's consciousness of the perfections of the law of Jehovah. Unlike the last division this one is a series of petitions. They all breathe the same spirit of earnest desire to know and do the will of God. It is a most human cry, and appeals irresistibly to all such as are following hard after God, and desiring to walk in the way of His commandments, because from first to last it breathes a twofold consciousness common to all such.

The consciousness of need is revealed in each successive petition. Yet the song is never a wail of despair, because side by side with the sense of need, there is evident throughout a profound conviction of the sufficiency of the will of God. The final declaration, "I have gone astray like a lost sheep," has caused some difficulty. It may be that the psalmist is simply describing his circumstances of trial and affliction. It is far more likely that it is a confession of his sense of failure. The more perfectly acquainted a soul is with the good and acceptable and perfect will of God the more acute is the sense of personal unworthiness. Yet the final word is not that of confession of failure. It is rather the affirmation of loyalty of intention and purpose. "I do not forget Thy commandments." Happy indeed is the soul who wills to do the will of God!

PSALM CXX

JEHOVAH THE HOPE OF THE PILGRIM

THE next fifteen psalms appear to have formed a book of themselves bearing that title, The Songs of Ascents. That collection is incorporated by the editor at this point, not without purpose.

The title appearing at the head of each has been variously translated, "A *Song* of Degrees," "A Song of Ascents," "A Song for the Goings Up." In the Hebrew translation to which we have already referred, it appears as "A song of the ascents," and in the title index in each case the psalm is called "Pilgrim's Song."

The meaning of this title has been variously interpreted also. Without referring to the different suggestions made, we shall consider them as songs of which those pilgrims who went up to Jerusalem to worship, made use.

The placing of the collection immediately after the great psalm dealing with the perfection of the will of God is significant. Those who know that Will, turn their faces toward the temple of worship. These songs of desire and hope and approach, are fitted for their use as they go up to worship.

The first of these songs is wholly a cry of the soul acquainted with the perfection of the will of God. The first declaration is one of experience gained. He looks back and remembers how he has been heard and answered. His present circumstances are those

of absence from the house of his God. He is dwelling among a people whose motives and activities are contrary to his deepest convictions and desires. Mesech and the tents of Kedar figuratively describe the distance of his abode from the home and centre of peace. He is surrounded by lying and deceitful people, such as hate peace, and are all for war. His heart turns toward Jehovah and the dwelling of His glory, the holy house of worship. He cries to Jehovah for deliverance, and in the midst of these circumstances of adversity declares his confidence that the judgments of God will operate against the evildoers.

Taken as the first of these songs of ascents the psalm reveals that keen dual consciousness of the atmosphere of ungodliness, and the experience of Jehovah which creates the desire for worship. How well we all know it. The stress and strain of living in the midst of ungodly surroundings creates a longing for the sacred place, and the ascent into the house of God.

PSALM CXXI

Jehovah the Help of the Pilgrim

THIS song, so full of beauty, marks another stage in the approach of the worshipper, in that it sets forth his assurance of the present help of Jehovah. The singer is still far away from the appointed place of worship, lifting his eyes toward the distant mountains. He is not far away from Jehovah however. In His keeping, even though far away from the centre of external worship, the pilgrim realizes his safety. He lifts his longing eyes towards the mountains of Zion where stands the house of his God, and asks "From whence shall my help come?" Not from those mountains, precious as they are, but from Jehovah, Who is with him **even** in the valley of distance.

He then addresses his heart in words of comfort and assurance. Jehovah keeps His children safe, never slumbering or sleeping in the faithfulness of His tender vigil. The stately sentences which describe the keeping care of Jehovah need no exposition. They are the common language of all who know Jehovah. These two psalms, revealing as they do the consciousness of the difficulty of the circumstances of exile, and the heart's confidence in Jehovah prepare for the outburst of the next song as the day dawns for approach to the place of worship.

PSALM CXXII

JEHOVAH THE GLORY OF THE PILGRIM

THIS is the song of the pilgrims in anticipation of Jerusalem, and the house of worship. It sets forth the glory of the stablished and compacted city where the tribes gather to give thanks to Jehovah. Yet through it all it is evident that the glory of city and temple consists in the fact that they are the city and house of Jehovah. It is not a song of buildings, or of material magnificence. It is rather the song of assembly, of testimony, of judgment, of peace, of prosperity.

These all issue from the supreme fact of Jehovah's presence. To Him the tribes are gathered. Their testimony is of His name. The judgment, peace and prosperity are all the outcome of Jehovah's relation to His people. The tenses of the song have caused some bewilderment as they seem to indicate the presence of the worshippers in the city, while yet they suggest the attitude of absence. The affirmation, "Our feet are standing within thy gates," is that of the confidence of faith. It is the claim of citizenship even though the citizen has not yet actually reached the city. The call has come to ascend to the house of the Lord ; and with songs of praise and prayers for the city, the pilgrim prepares to respond, while the hope becomes a present consciousness of the joy of assembly.

PSALM CXXIV

JEHOVAH THE DELIVERER OF THE PILGRIM

THE journey from the place of exile to the city and temple of Jehovah has now commenced. The heart of the song is in the words, "Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers." Escape brings a sense of the dangers left behind ; and therefore, a keen appreciation of the fact that Jehovah has been acting as Deliverer. "If it had not been the Lord !" What a tone of joy is in that sigh. We often speak of a sigh of relief, and here is one indeed. The thunder of the threatening flood is heard behind. It was a strong tide against which these pilgrims could have had no might. Oh, if Jehovah had not helped, how great would have been the calamity ! But He has helped, and the sigh which trembles with the consciousness of past peril merges *into* the glad song, "Blessed be Jehovah."

This first experience of escape is ever one of great delight.. There stretches before the pilgrim a long road yet, and there will be much searching of heart before the final rest is won ; but “ The snare is broken and we are escaped ” is a song full of rapture, and one which prepares the heart for all that waits for it. upon the way.

PSALM CXXV

JEHOVAH THE PROTECTOR OF THE PILGRIM

THE pilgrims catch the first glimpse of the city toward which their faces are set. The journey is not ended, but from some vantage ground there in the distance is seen the home of the heart. It is founded upon rock, and stands out in all the majesty and strength of its assured position. Round about it are the mountains, guarding it against its foes. Over it is the throne of God, ensuring a government which gives the righteous their opportunity. It is an ideal picture, but a true one as to Divine intention.

Yet it is not of the material fact that the pilgrims sing. All that is but a symbol of the safety and protection and government of the trusting people. Jehovah is their rock foundation, their encompassing protection, their enthroned King. In Him is all their strength and confidence, and on the pathway, with the city seen afar, of Him they sing..

The song merges into a prayer that He will exercise on their behalf all that guidance and deliverance in which they make their boast. As in the previous song they looked back to that from which they had escaped, in this they look forward to that to which they go ; and in each case their song is of Jehovah. This is true retrospect and prospect, and both minister to the strength of pilgrimage.

PSALM CXXVI

JEHOVAH THE RESTORER OF THE PILGRIM

THE general movement of these songs of Ascents is preserved in this case by the marginal reading of the first verse, better than by the text as it stands in the R.V. “ When Jehovah brought back those that returned to Zion.” The pilgrims have

looked back and praised Jehovah for escape. They have looked on, and praised Him for their hope and present sense of security. Now they break forth into an expression of their glad experience.

It is all so wonderful this restoration by Jehovah, that it is hardly believable, it is as though they dreamed. Laughter and singing are the only fitting expressions of their rejoicing hearts. Even the nations are oompelled to recognize the doings of Jehovah on their behalf. Yet in the consciousness of the wonders wrought by Jehovah is created a keen sense of their own imperfection. The deliverance is not yet complete, and the prayer is offered, "Turn again our captivity," or as Dr. Kirkpatrick translates, "Restore our fortunes." The restoration already in progress is the inspiration of the prayer for its fulfilment. The song ends with a declaration of confidence that the sorrowful experiences of the past must issue in the **realization** of all that they so earnestly desire.

PSALM CXXVII

J E H O V A H T H E H O M E - M A K E R O F T H E P I L G R I M

THE thought of the pilgrim centres upon the city toward which his face is turned as the place of home. The strength of the Hebrew people in the past, and all that remains of it to-day, largely results from the keen sense which they ever cherished of the importance of the home and the family. The house, the city, **labour**, are all important to the conserving of the strength of the family. Towards these the pilgrims look, but as they hope, they recognize that, as in the settlement which will make these possible Jehovah is the one Worker, so in these also He is the one and only Strength of His people. He must build the house and guard the city. He must be the Partner in toil, giving to His beloved even when they rest in sleep, after toil is over.

That last is a thought full of comfort to the toiler. Jehovah is never weary, and carries on the enterprise while His trusting child gains new strength in sleep. Children, the glory of the house, are His gift, and they become the support and **defence** of their parents. Thus the pilgrims look forward to the rest which follows exile, in the city of God ; and recognize that this also in all its details, will result from His power and working.

PSALM CXXVIII

JEHOVAH THE HOME-KEEPER OF THE PILGRIM

THIS song naturally follows the one in which Jehovah's relation to the home, as building and establishing it, is recognized. It is chiefly interesting as it reveals the singer's conception of the relation between the prosperity of the family and that of the city.

As to the home, the condition of its prosperity is declared to be fear of the Lord, walking in His ways. Then the resulting blessings are promised. This blessedness of home life issues in the good of Jerusalem. The line of development is most important ; the God-fearing man, the God-fearing family, the God-fearing city.

This song of the **worshippers** ascending toward the city and temple is one the application of which is of perpetual importance. The strength of any city lies in its strong family life. The true strength of the family issues from its ordering in the fear of the Lord. It is of real significance that these songs of home and of true civic consciousness are found among those which are sung on the way that leads to worship. It is ever good to carry into the place of our communion with God the interests of home and city. It is only by doing so that we can influence these for their lasting good.

PSALM CXXIX

JEHOVAH THE CONFIDENCE OF THE PILGRIM

THIS song is that of one who ascending toward the much desired place of rest and worship, looks back and sees how in the past Jehovah has delivered from sore perils. The backward look would seem to be inspired by consciousness of present peril, for immediately the song expresses desire for the judgment of Jehovah against those who are described as hating Zion.

On the way to the city and temple those who hate the pilgrims of faith plot and scheme for their overthrow, and it is in the consciousness of this that the song celebrates past deliverances and seeks a continuance of them. While there is evidently a sense of danger in the mind of the singer, there is an utter absence of

despair. It is the true attitude of those who have a rich experience of the faithfulness of God. In times of peril it is a good thing for the pilgrim to strengthen the heart by looking back and remembering past deliverances. Such an exercise will invariably create a present confidence.

“ His love in time past forbids me to think
He'll leave me at last in trouble to sink ;
Each sweet Ebenezer I have in review
Confirms His good pleasure to help me quite through.”

PSALM CXXX

J E H O V A H T H E R E D E E M E R O F T H E P I L G R I M

AFTER the backward look there would fittingly be an inward look as the worshipper approached the place of worship.

This is always a disquieting look. There is no confession here of specific sins, but the cry is “ out of the depths,” and the figure suggests the singer's sense of deep need.

What the cause is may certainly be gathered from the apprehensive sigh, “ If Thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand ?” If the sense is of the nation's distress, it is distinctly conscious of the connection of that distress with sin. **A**ll this is background which flings into bright relief the confidence of the soul in Jehovah as a pardoning and redeeming Lord. Some of the most beautiful things in the Psalter, or indeed in the Bible, are here. It was a Welshman in the midst of the wonderful revival of 1905 who rendered verse 4, “ There is forgiveness with Thee—enough to frighten us !” which if not accurate translation is fine exposition. The deepest note in all true worship is this sense of “ plenteous redemption,” and the perfection of Jehovah's love as thus manifested. To mark iniquities would be to fill us with despair. To redeem from all iniquities is to inspire us with hope.

PSALM CXXXI

J E H O V A H T H E S A T I S F A C T I O N O F T H E P I L G R I M

THIS is a brief psalm, but it is very full of beauty, as it sets forth the contentment of a restless soul in the will of God.

It follows the last as an advance of experience, and as a sequence. Its peculiar note is not that of a natural contentment,

but of a satisfaction won in spite of all contrary tendencies. The thought of weaning is the dominant one. That for which a child craves it at last comes to be content without. So the soul of the singer, which once was ambitious and restlessly attempted to walk in ways for which it was not fitted, is with Him in quietness and contentment. The secret of victory over feverish ambition is divulged in the psalmist's appeal to Israel to hope in the Lord. That, interpreted in the light of the previous psalm, means that in the gracious sense of His forgiving love is the secret of a content which puts an end to all false ambition. Redemption truly apprehended, is more than forgiveness. It is restoration to the quiet peace of being in harmony with all the forces of the universe, because governed by the will of God.

PSALM CXXXII

JEHOVAH THE ASSURANCE OF THE PILGRIM

THE pilgrims stand at the very entrance of the Holy City, and their song is one of strong desire, and equally strong confidence.

In the first part the desire is expressed (vers. 1-10). It is for the fulfilment of the God-inspired purpose of David when, through affliction and at cost, he prepared for the building of the sanctuary. The idea of the Theocracy is in mind as they pray, "Arise, O Lord, into Thy resting-place." Jehovah is to be the Centre of gathering, while around Him are priests and saints, and before Him the anointed King.

The desire is answered by the assurance of the fidelity of Jehovah to His word (vers. 11-18). He has sworn to David, and He will not turn from it. The order is then set forth. The faithful Jehovah, the anointed King, the chosen city, the clothed priests, the rejoicing people, the established kingdom. Whatever were the circumstances of the writing of this song, its placing here is significant. The worshipping people are to be conscious of the true order of their life, and the true meaning of their approach. A spacious conception of the purpose of God is ever necessary to a true worship. Lacking this, the exercises of worship may easily degenerate into selfish formalism. Where it is present, every individual is enabled to contribute to the whole, that which makes for the complete realization of the ideal.

PSALM CXXXIII

JEHOVAH THE GATHERER OF THE PILGRIM

AT last the pilgrims are within the city. After the long and toilsome march their feet actually stand within the city of God. The common impulse of all has been the desire to reach the dwelling-place of Jehovah, and to worship before His face. This desire has brought them together, and in this nearness of souls gathered by a common purpose there is a new blessing, and of that they sing. In finding Jehovah they have found each other, and as a result of common loyalty to Him, a new social order has been created.

Under two figures the singer describes the blessedness of this order. It is like the holy anointing oil. It is like the dew of Hermon. The former suggests joy and richness of experience. The latter describes the freshness of renewal of all life. The source of the new joy is recognized, "Jehovah commanded the blessing." The first matter of importance in individual life is ever that of seeking fellowship with God. When this is sought and found, there always follows the realization of the fellowship of the saints. All lack of union among ourselves is due to failure to realize our union with God.

PSALM CXXXIV

JEHOVAH THE REST OF THE PILGRIM

THIS is the last of the Songs of Ascents, and breathes the spirit of rest. As in the previous one, the joy of the fellowship of faithful souls was the burden, here it is that of the sense of peace and rest flowing from fellowship with Jehovah. The atmosphere of the song is that of rest. The sun has sunk in the west. The activity of the day is over. Quietness pervades the city. The pilgrims have found the hour of peace. At the centre of the people is the temple. There priests still keep their vigil. They "by night stand in the house of Jehovah." The last thought of the pilgrim is of the goodness of Jehovah, and the song calls to the temple watchers to bless His name.

In the stillness there comes back the answer of the priests. It is one of blessing upon the worshipper. Thus in the silence of night, ere sleep comes, the worshipper blesses Jehovah, and is blessed by Him. It is the fellowship of rest.

By faith the pilgrims of to-day have access to this fellowship every night. There is one Watcher in the Holiest, Who never slumbers, and through Him our worship is perpetual. His voice speaks the word of benediction to us in response to our adoration. This is rest indeed.

PSALM CXXXV

JEHOVAH THE OBJECT OF HIS PEOPLE'S PRAISE

AFTER the general movement of this book of the Psalter which has brought us in thought to the ultimate realization of worship, and before the final psalms of perfected praise, we now have a section (cxxxv-cxliv) in which are contained songs of experience, the inspiration of which is in the conceptions of Jehovah and the way of approach to Him, which the former songs have set forth.

This first of the series is a pure song of praise. It opens with a call to the priests as the representatives of the people to praise (vers. 1, 2). It proceeds to set forth the reasons for this praise (vers. 3-18). The first is that of what He is in Himself, and the fact that He has chosen His people (vers. 3-5). The second is that of His creative might (vers. 6, 7). The third is that of His deliverance of His people from bondage (vers. 8, 9). The fourth is that of His giving them a land (vers. 10-12). The fifth is that of His faithfulness (ver. 13). The sixth is that of His sure judgment and consequent return to His servants (ver. 14). The seventh is that of His superiority as the Living One over all the false and dead idols of the nations (vers. 15-18). Finally the song is an appeal to nation, priests, and Levites to unite in His praise.

PSALM CXXXVI

JEHOVAH THE GOD OF MERCY

THIS is a song of the age-abiding mercy of Jehovah. It opens and closes with a call to praise, and in its main movements sets forth the reason for such praise. In the opening call the three great names or titles of God are made use of, viz., Jehovah, Elohim, Adonahy. The first is mentioned in its lonely

splendour, as it always is. There is no attempt at qualification or comparison. The second is used in comparison. He is the God of gods, All other mighty beings, false or true, are less than He ; **and** subservient to Him. In the same way He is Lord of lords.

The reasons for praise are found in the manifestations of His power and interest in His people. His power as seen in creation is first sung (vers. r-g). Then His delivering power manifest on behalf of His people (vers. 10-15). This naturally merges into the song of His guidance and government of them, as He brought them into possession (vers. 16-m). And finally His goodness in restoring His people after declension and wandering (vers. 23-25). The dominant note is mercy as manifest in **all** the activities of God. To see the love and compassion of God in creation, in deliverance, in government, in restoration, is ever to be constrained to praise.

PSALM CXXXVI I

J E H O V A H T H E G O D O F J U D G M E N T

THIS is a song of memory. From the midst of the circumstances of restoration the singer looks back to days of captivity and sorrow. The picture is graphic. Babylon was far from their own land, and far removed in every way from the city of God and the temple of Jehovah. All its material splendour was nothing to the captive souls who were yet faithful to Jehovah. There they sat, with harps hung, silent, upon the willows, and wept.

Their taunting captors asked them to sing. They sought to be amused by these people of a strange religion, and the request was in itself an insult to their faith. It was impossible, and they refused to sing the song of Jehovah. To have done so would have been to play traitor to their own lost city, and to all that their citizenship stood for. The prayer for vengeance must be interpreted by the first part of the song, with its revelation of the treatment they received. It must of course also be interpreted by the times in which they lived. Our times are different. We have more light. And yet it is well to remember that the deepest sense of justice still makes punishment a necessary thing in the economy of God. That conception of God which denies the equity of retribution is weak and false.

PSALM CXXXVIII

JEHOVAH THE PERFECTER

THE final personal note of this song is reached in the words, "Jehovah will perfect that which concerneth me." It opens with consecration to the sacred duty of praise. This consecration has a threefold aspect. It is personal, and thus is expressed in terms of completeness. "With the whole heart" leaves no room for mixed motives or divided devotion. It has in view the surrounding authorities, "before the gods."

As a testimony to the supreme God the singer will praise. It is directed "towards the holy temple," and so is conscious of the true order of worship as ordained. The reason of praise is next declared to be that of lovingkindness and truth as already proved. The effect of praise is to be that of the revelation of God to others, who if they come to know Him, will also praise Him.

The final movement tells of the singer's confidence as to the future. This is based on His knowledge. He sees the lowly, and the haughty cannot escape Him by distance. Therefore, the deliverance of the trusting soul from all coming trouble is assured, and his final perfecting also. The song closes with the affirmation of the enduring mercy of Jehovah, and a petition which reveals the singer's need of the continual help of God.

PSALM CXXXIX

JEHOVAH THE OMNISCIENT

THE conception of intimate personal relation between God and man is perhaps more remarkably and forcefully dealt with in this song than in any other in the whole collection.

The great facts are first stated. Jehovah's knowledge of personal life is declared. He is familiar with every motion even to the simplest of downsitting and uprising. He knows thought afar off, that is, in the strange and mystic processes of its making. All ways and words are intimately known to the God Who is the nearest environment of human life. And from all this there can be no escape, for the Omniscient is also the Omnipresent. He is in heaven, but Sheol also is full of His presence. Distance is a human term only, and the uttermost parts of the trackless sea are also in the Presence. Darkness is light to Him, and has no hiding

place from Him. The deep mysteries of being are not involved to Jehovah, for He presided in wisdom over all the mystic processes of the beginnings of human life. All this does not affright the singer, for he knows the love of Jehovah, and exclaims in glad praise for the preciousness of the unnumbered thoughts of God concerning him.

In view of all this it is hopeless for the wicked to attempt to escape from God, and the singer's desire for separation from all such is the final word of the psalm. The way of separation is that of personal choice. He must and will separate himself. Yet he is also dependent upon God in this matter, and prays for His examination and leading.

PSALM CXL

JEHOVAH THE DEFENDER OF THE DEFENCELESS

THE previous five psalms have dealt with the absolute sufficiency of Jehovah. Their titles will indicate this, "Jehovah the Object of His people's praise, Jehovah the God of mercy, Jehovah the God of Judgment, Jehovah the Perfecter, Jehovah Omniscient and Omnipresent."

In the four which follow a different note is struck. They reveal the need of man, and his utter helplessness. Yet they stand over against the former five. The appeal of all of them is made out of dire necessity to absolute sufficiency. They lead up to another which thrills with thanksgiving as it expresses the consciousness of how perfectly the resources of Jehovah meet the need of man.

The present psalm deals with the subject of foes without. The singer is conscious that he is surrounded by enemies. The song begins on a low level, and rises as it proceeds. The first movement (vers. 1-5) describes the malice of the enemies, and ends with prayer for preservation. The second (vers. 6-10) commences with earnest prayer, the confidence of which is based upon past experiences of deliverance; and it ends with a definite request for the discomfiture of his foes. The final movement (vers. 11-13) is an affirmation of faith. The singer is confident that in the government of Jehovah evil men cannot continue. The afflicted will be delivered, and the righteous and upright will be perfectly vindicated.

PSALM CXLI

JEHOVAH THE KEEPER OF THE TREMBLING

IN this song the influence of the external troubles upon the inner life of the singer is revealed. Throughout it breathes the spirit of fear lest the soul should be seduced from the attitude of whole-hearted loyalty to God. The peril most evidently threatening arises from the enticements of the ungodly ; and the psalmist earnestly prays that he may be protected by Jehovah in speech and thought and action.

Without in so many words declaring so, the song clearly reveals the fact that the singer has been sorely tempted to turn aside to ways of ungodly men, to share their hospitality, and so escape their hostility. This peril is more subtle than that of the active opposition of these men, and in this distress he turns to God. This is his safety. That he is able to say, " Mine eyes are unto Thee, O God the Lord," is a revelation of the fact that his anchor still holds, not only against the fierce onslaught of enemies, but also against the insidious temptation to turn aside from the path of rectitude in order to escape the vindictive opposition of his enemies. If the former psalm reveals the perils of foes without, this no less clearly deals with the danger of fears within.

PSALM CXLII

JEHOVAH THE REFUGE OF THE OVERWHELMED

IN this psalm human need is yet more vividly set forth. Here is seen the consciousness resulting from the difficulties described in the previous psalm. Here there is a combination of fighting and fears within and without.

The onslaught of the foe and the trembling heart constitute an experience which can only be described as that of a spirit overwhelmed. There are two notes running side by side throughout the song. The first is that of this terrible sense of helplessness and hopelessness so far as man is concerned. The other is that of the determined application of the helpless soul to Jehovah. There is the utmost urgency in this method. " I cry with my voice ... I pour out my complaint ... I show before Him my trouble." The whole need is gathered up into the tremendous statement, " Refuge hath failed me ; no man careth for my soul." This is

answered by triumphing faith in the words, "O Jehovah ... Thou art my refuge." The song ends with an earnest cry for deliverance, and an affirmation of confidence that the cry will be heard and answered.

PSALM CXLIII

JEHOVAH THE CONFIDENCE OF THE DESOLATE

THIS is the last of the four psalms, and both in respect of the sense of helplessness and of assurance in God, it is more vivid and striking than either of them. So far as human situation is concerned, it is a cry of despair, and a terrible one indeed. The life is smitten, the spirit is overwhelmed, and the whole complaint ends with a statement, "My heart within me is desolate." That final word "desolate" has in it the sob of an unilluminated sea. Yet the psalm opens with an earnest cry to Jehovah, and after the declaration of need, is to the end a determined act of faith.

In the situation of complete helplessness the soul prepares for its prayer, and the words which indicate the method of preparation are interesting. "I remember ... I meditate ... I muse." The issue of this is immediately declared, "I spread forth my hands unto Thee." The earnestness of the soul is manifested in the urgent petitions which follow. "Make haste. .. hide not Thy face ... cause me to hear ... cause me to know ... deliver me ... teach me ... quicken me." Personal consecration in this endeavour to lay hold upon the infinite resource is manifest in the affirmations. "In Thee do I trust ... I lift up my soul unto Thee ... I flee unto Thee to hide me," and finally, "I am Thy servant." Through all the urgency and the earnestness there is also manifest an unshaken confidence. "Thou art my God" is the central word around which all the others gather.

PSALM CXLIV

JEHOVAH THE ROCK OF STRENGTH

THIS is a song of triumphant assurance. Its placing at this point in the book suggests the invincible experience of trusting souls. In order to appreciate all its value, the nine psalms immediately preceding must be borne in mind. Five of

them celebrate the sufficiency of God. These are followed by four which declare the utter helplessness of man. The present one immediately follows, and in it the two facts are present ; but the Divine sufficiency is seen encompassing the human helplessness until it is so lost sight of as hardly to be discoverable.

The opening affirmations thrill with the singer's confidence of ability in the might of Jehovah. There is a conflict, but fear is banished, because Jehovah teaches the hands to war and the fingers to fight ; and He is all that the soul in conflict needs. This affirmation is followed by an exclamation of surprise that Jehovah so high, should take any account of man, who by comparison, is vanity. There is no shadow of doubt in the exclamation, for the song immediately becomes a prayer for the operation of Jehovah's might, for the rescue of the trusting soul. It then climbs to the higher level of praise in the new song of confidence which ends in a repetition of the prayer for rescue. Finally the singer describes the peace and prosperity of the people whose God is Jehovah.

PSALM CXLV

JEHOVAH THE OBJECT OF PERFECT PRAISE

THIS is a great psalm of praise standing alone, and serving as an introduction to the last five, which constitute the final anthem of thanksgiving, the expression of perfected praise. It is a solo, but the singer is singing not for himself alone, but for others. The peoples are in mind.

It has three movements ; an introduction (vers. 1-4) ; a statement of theme (vers. 5-9) ; and the full exercise of thanksgiving (vers. 10-21). The introduction speaks of determination to praise (ver. 1), of continuity in praise (ver. 2), of reason for praise (ver. 3), and of fellowship in praise (ver. 4). The theme is a threefold one ; first, the majesty of the Divine honour and works (ver. 5). Second, the might of the acts of God (vers. 6, 7). Third and supremely, the mercy of God (vers. 8, 9). Then follows the exercise. First, the chorus of the works of Jehovah, and of His saints. This chorus celebrates His glory, His power, His mighty acts, and the majesty of His kingdom.

The rest of the psalm is a song carrying out the thoughts suggested in the statement of theme. The majesty of Jehovah is celebrated (ver. 13). His might as operating in the uplifting of

the fallen is declared (ver. 14). Finally, the activity of His mercy is delighted in (vers. 15-20). Everything concludes with the re-affirmation of personal determination to praise, and the expression of desire that all flesh should join in the anthem.

PSALM CXLVI

JEHOVAH PRAISED AS THE HELPER OF HIS PEOPLE

WE now come to the final psalms of adoration, each one of which opens and closes with the great call to praise. "Hallelujah, praise the Lord."

The theme of this first is that of the sufficiency of God as the Helper of His people. It opens with the personal note of determination to praise (vers. 1, 2). As a background the inability of man to help is declared. He is not to be trusted, for "his breath goeth forth." In contrast with this helplessness the strength of Jehovah is celebrated as manifested in creation, and the maintenance of order (ver. 6), as exercised on behalf of the needy and the oppressed (vers. 7-g). Notice the descriptions of the people whom Jehovah helps. "The oppressed ... the hungry ... the prisoners ... the blind ... they that are bowed down ... the righteous ... the strangers . . . the fatherless and widow."

Then notice how the Divine activity exactly meets the need. "Executeth judgment ... giveth food ... looseth ... openeth the eyes ... raiseth up ... loveth ... preserveth ... upholdeth." In contrast with the vanishing life of princes and sons of men, Jehovah reigns for ever, and is the God of Zion to all generations.

PSALM CXLVII

JEHOVAH PRAISED AS THE GOVERNOR OF HIS PEOPLE

IN this psalm, beginning with a call which declares the pleasantness and comeliness of praise (ver. 1), the singer first celebrates the Divine activity in restoring His people (vers. 2-6). He then proceeds to declare how God provides for all human needs (vers. 7-11); and finally rejoices in the perfection of His government (vers. 12-20).

In the first movement dealing with the restoration of Israel, there is a very beautiful suggestion of the inter-relation of the

pitying power of God. "He healeth the broken-hearted ... He telleth the number of the stars." In this activity of restoration there is manifest power and wisdom, and strict discrimination in the upholding of the meek, and the abasing of the wicked. In His providence God provides for all material needs, and yet His purpose in so doing is that of creating the spiritual attitudes towards Himself in which He supremely delights, His delight being finally not in animal strength, but in the fear and hope which constitute spiritual strength.

In the last movement there is a fine recognition of His provision of material supply, which is however, all the way through made parabolic of His sustenance of spiritual strength. Literally He gives His people "the finest of the wheat," and actually gives snow, and hoar frost, and ice ; and yet all these things are intended to be revelations of the methods by which He sends His commandment and His word, His statutes and His judgments, for the perfect ordering of life.

PSALM CXLVIII

J E H O V A H P R A I S E D B Y T H E W H O L E C R E A T I O N

THIS is the psalm of the whole creation, It has two movements indicated by the words "From the heavens" (ver. 1), and "From the earth" (ver. 7). In the first the scale is a descending one. "In the heights" to "His angels," "Sun and moon." Of all of them it is true that He created and established them. In the second the scale is an ascending one, from the deeps and the dragons, through the elements and Nature, to the sentient life, and onward through kings and princes and all human beings. From the heights and depths and all that lies between, praise is to be offered to Jehovah, for "His glory is above the earth and heaven."

This praise however, in the mind of the singer is to be perfectly expressed through Israel, a people near unto Him. This is an all-encompassing note of adoration, which one of our more recent singers has perfectly expressed in the lines :-

" The whole creation joins in one
To bless the sacred Name
Of Him Who sits upon the Throne,
And to adore the Lamb."

PSALM CXLIX

JEHOVAH PRAISED BY HIS SAINTS

AS the last song ended by the recognition of the place of the saints in expressing the universal praise of Jehovah, this one enlarges the thought by confining itself wholly to the anthem of the saints. "His praise in the assembly of the saints" (ver. 1); "Let the saints exult in glory" (ver. 5); "This honour have all His saints" (ver. 9). The saints are to praise Him as Creator and King. They are to do this with all the abandon of the dance and of music; because He has taken pleasure in them, and beautified them with salvation.

This praise is to be the perpetual attitude of their lives. They are to "exult in glory," and to "sing for joy upon their beds." Their praise is not merely to be that of the chanting of words. It is also to be in the doing of His will. While the high praises of God are in their mouth, a two-edged sword is to be in their hand, with which they carry out His purposes among the peoples, the kings, and the nobles. The privilege of praise in word and work is an honour, specially conferred upon His saints.

PSALM CL

JEHOVAH PRAISED IN PERFECTION

THIS psalm which concludes the book, and all the Psalter as final doxology, is the most comprehensive, and illuminative illustration of perfect praise in the whole Psalter. In our analysis of it as doxology at the beginning of the book, its essential values are stated. The central place of prayer is the sanctuary, that is, the place of Divine manifestation, whether the earthly temple or the heavenly, matters nothing. The circumference is the firmament of His power which is the outer confine of human consciousness. The reason for praise is that of His mighty acts, whether in creation, redemption, or government. The measure of praise is His excellent greatness, so that it can never end until all the story be exhausted. The method is set forth by a description of the instruments of music constituting a perfect orchestra.

Finally, the one condition of praise is the possession of breath, that is to say, life received from Him must return *in* praise to Him. The function of life is praise, and the force of praise is life. The note of responsibility and the dignity of choice are alike indicated in the fact that the final psalm is not merely an expression of praise, but a call to its exercise. Thus it is seen that the worship which perfectly glorifies God is not mechanical, but volitional.