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WESTMINSTER COMMENTARIES

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# THE PSALMS

**BY THE SAME AUTHOR**  
**EARLY CHRISTIANS AT PRAYER**  
**A.D. 1-400**

# THE PSALMS

WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

BY

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EXAMINING CHAPLAIN TO THE BISHOP OF LEICESTER

VOLUME I

INTRODUCTION: PSALMS i-xli



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## PREFATORY NOTE BY THE GENERAL EDITORS

**T**HE primary object of these Commentaries is to be exegetical, to interpret the meaning of each book of the Bible in the light of modern knowledge to English readers. The Editors will not deal, except subordinately, with questions of textual criticism or philology; but taking the English text in the Revised Version as their basis, they will aim at combining a hearty acceptance of critical principles with loyalty to the Catholic Faith.

The series will be less elementary than the Cambridge Bible for Schools, less critical than the International Critical Commentary, less didactic than the Expositor's Bible; and it is hoped that it may be of use both to theological students and to the clergy, as well as to the growing number of educated laymen and laywomen who wish to read the Bible intelligently and reverently.

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WALTER LOCK  
D. C. SIMPSON

## PREFACE

**T**HE Hebrews, said Matthew Arnold, had a genius for religion : we may extend his saying, and maintain that they had a genius for religious poetry. The Psalter in its combination of religious feeling with poetic power stands unrivalled. Some of the hymns of the Veda go very far, but they do not make so general an appeal to Mankind as the Psalms. Nor on the other hand does the presence in the Psalter of some liturgical compositions like Ps cxxxvi seriously qualify this favourable estimate. Even the dull grammarian feels the touch of poetic genius in the Songs of Ascents (cxxx-cxxxiv), in the Songs of Nature (viii; xix. 1-6; xxiii; xxix; xxxvi. 5-9; *al*), in the Prophetic Oracles (ii; xlvi; xlviii; 1; *al*), in the Songs of personal Appeal (xlii; li; lv; *al*).

If justification is needed for a new book on the Psalms, it is surely to be found in the devastating textual criticism of recent years. The reader who considers the re-writing of Psalms in the *International Critical Commentary* and in the commentary of the late Dr Duhm of Basel may well cry, "O Metre, what violence is committed in thy name!" I have been forced in the present book to give much attention to the proposals of the emendators, and if I am found frequently defending the present text, it is because I am persuaded that it has been too rashly assailed. But the main justification for attempting a new commentary on the Psalms must be the splendid quality of these Sacred Songs. No single editor can bring out all that is in them. For it must be confessed that under language which seems simple to the English reader there remains much that he is far from understanding.

Though the great elements of Religion are constant—God—The Soul—Man's needs—Man's responsibilities, yet the thoughts and desires of Man which play about these elements run into great variety. There is but one God for Hebrew, Greek, and Briton,

but there are many ways of apprehending Him, and the Hebrew Psalmists show us how to find them.

The Psalmists are many, for David is one of a goodly company. That "God's in His heaven," they know, but they do not find that "All's right with the world." Their praises sometimes pass into a pained meditation or an urgent cry for help. Doubt sways them, but faith, though sorely tried, revives, and so the Psalmists form "a great cloud of witnesses" to the reality of religion. For the Psalms questions of date and historical occasion are relatively unimportant. Historical allusion is difficult to detect and to interpret, but the human cry is always clear.

In the arrangement of the material of this book my aim has been to put all that I could into the Introduction of each Psalm, so that the text may be studied as a whole. The Notes are supplementary. My debt to my predecessors is considerable: I have learnt very much even from those from whom I differ profoundly. But *FERRUM FERRO EXACUITUR*. I am grateful even when I am obliged to criticize. To Dr Lock and to Dr Simpson I am deeply indebted for their criticisms and for their encouragement.

In quoting from the text of RV I have restored the proper name *JEHOVAH* in place of the misleading rendering, "the LORD" (in small capitals), which RV took over from the earlier English Versions. In the Notes the use of Hebrew characters has been avoided, and Hebrew words are transliterated. For the sake of convenience no distinction has been made between the letters *He* and *Cheth* (both being represented as in the English Bible by *h*), nor between *Samech* and *Sin* (both appearing as *s*), nor between *Teth* and *Tau* (both being represented by *t*). The guttural *Ain* is indicated by the rough breathing (´), and *Aleph* (except at the beginning of a word) by the smooth breathing (˘). *Zain* and *Tzade* are both represented by *z*. *Caph* (as in EV) appears sometimes as *Ch* and sometimes as *k*. *Koph* is regularly transliterated *k*.

W. EMERY BARNES

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- A.J. *Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews.*
- Altor. *Texte. Altorientalische Texte zum alten Testament* herausgegeben von Hugo Gressmann. Berlin und Leipzig, 1926.
- AV. Authorised Version.
- BDB. Brown, Driver and Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon.* Oxford, 1906.
- B.M. British Museum.
- B.T. Babylonian Talmud.
- Camb. Bible. *Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges.*
- Coverdale. The English Version of 1535.
- Driver. S. R. Driver, *The Parallel Psalter* (i.e. P-B Version with a new Version on the opposite page).
- Duhm. B. Duhm, *Die Psalmen*, 2. Aufl. Tübingen, 1922.
- E.B. *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, edited by T. K. Cheyne and J. Sutherland Black. London, 1899-1903.
- E.T. English Translation.
- E.V. English Versions, where P-B, AV and RV agree.
- Gressmann. See *Altor. Texte.*
- Gunkel. Hermann Gunkel, *Die Psalmen.* Göttingen, 1926.
- H.D.B. Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible.* Edinburgh, 1898-1902.
- Heb. Hebrew.
- HGHL. George Adam Smith, *Historical Geography of the Holy Land* 3rd edition. London, 1895.
- I.C.C. *International Critical Commentary.* Edinburgh, various dates.
- JTS. *Journal of Theological Studies.*
- JV. *The Holy Scriptures*, a new translation. Philadelphia, The Jewish Publication Society of America, 5677-1917.
- LQT. S. R. Driver, *Literature of the Old Testament*, 9th edition. Edinburgh, 1913.
- LXX. The Septuagint, edited by H. B. Swete. Cambridge, 1877-1899.
- MT. The Hebrew Masoretic Text.
- P-B. The Prayer Book Version of the Psalms as printed in the *Parallel Psalter.* Cambridge, 1899.
- PEF. *Palestine Exploration Fund.*
- Psalms, The. The Psalmists*, Essays, edited by D. C. Simpson. Oxford University Press, 1926.
- R (preceded by a Roman numeral). Rawlinson's *Cuneiform Inscriptions*, edited for the British Museum.
- RV. English Revised Version, 1885.
- ZAW. *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft.* Giessen.

## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

### § 1. THE NATURE OF A PSALM

THE Psalter stands by itself: it is like no other book of the Bible. No good substitute for the accepted title PSALMS can be found to describe accurately the nature of its contents. Many commentators have called the Psalms "Poems," but "Songs" would be a better name. Poetry may be written in a book and read in the study, but a Psalm needs a singer and an instrument of music. Other commentators have called the Psalms "Hymns" and the Psalter "the Hymn Book of the Second Temple," but such a title applies (as far as it does apply) only to a later chapter in the history of Psalmody. The first chapter on the contrary shows us a solitary singer extemporising on his psaltery and pouring out his heart by himself to his God (Ps xlii. 4).

The expression "I will sing" when it occurs in the Psalms is not a poetic fiction like Vergil's *Arma virumque cano*; the Psalmist will sing to an instrument of music, and sing aloud. His language is definite:

xlix. 4, "I will open my dark saying *upon the harp*."

lvii. 7, "I will sing and *sing to an instrument*" (Heb. אָזַר); LXX, ᾄσομαι καὶ ψαλῶ.

lix. 16. "I will sing...Yea, I will *sing aloud*" (אָרַן).

lxxi. 22, "I will also praise thee *with the psaltery*."

In the Codex Alexandrinus, one of the oldest MSS of the Greek Bible and commonly assigned to the fifth or sixth century A.D., the book of Psalms receives the title of the *Psalterion*, "the Psaltery." The title calls up the vision of the singer playing his snatches of music (*psalmoi*, as the Greeks called them) and putting words to them to express more clearly his doubts or fears or confidence or thanks or praise.

In these early days the singer did not sing for the congregation, nor compose "hymns" for temple worship. His own needs and experiences drove him to take his psaltery and find words for his playing when he sought secret communion with his God. "O God (O JEHOVAH), thou art my God: early will I seek thee," is a cry which represents right well the general attitude of the early Psalmists. Their spiritual songs sprang forth from their own overcharged heart.

We shall indeed understand the Psalms better, if we think of them as "the words of a song." Then we shall not stumble at repetitions as in xciv. 23, nor at *aposisopsis* as in cxxxvii. 5, "Let my right hand for

get...," nor at some obscurities arising from things said *apodeiktikos* ("with a pointing finger") as in lxxvi. 3, "*There* brake he the arrows of the bow," i.e. *there* on the Mount Zion, beneath which the singer sang. Above all we shall not attempt to force the extemporised words of a singer into a strict metrical scheme such as would suit a finished literary product.

The freshness of the language of many of the Psalms can hardly be described as it deserves. The Psalter is an unbookish book. It breathes Open Air, Action, Urgency. The stringed instrument is in the Psalmist's hand: he exclaims, and leaves his exclamation unfinished, for one or two vivid words have told the tale already. Think how Ps xlii begins:

As the hind panteth after the water brooks,  
So panteth my soul after thee, O JEHOVAH.

The Psalmist is himself climbing the parched hills of Judaea.

Or again Ps xlv:

O JEHOVAH, we have heard with our ears,  
Our fathers have told us...[Not, we have read in a book!]

The words call up the familiar scene of the people assembled "in the gate." The elders tell of the great acts of JEHOVAH, and the young men listen.

Think again of the daring urgency of the opening of Ps lx:

O JEHOVAH, thou hast cast us off,  
Thou hast broken down our defences.  
Thou hast been angry:  
Oh restore unto us...

The Psalmist speaks to God with the direct familiarity of a child speaking to his father. "*Restore unto us*," he prays. "*Restore*" *what?* we ask. But the broken sentence is more eloquent as it stands. Overwhelmed by a sudden reverse, the Psalmist prays just "*Restore*." The sound of psaltery and voice dies away, as he remains stretched out in expectation before his God.

But in time the Psalmist became (like the Prophet) a Pastor. He is a man who has felt deeply the power of God in his life, and that experience he cannot keep to himself. So presently we find a Psalmist saying, "Come, ye children, hearken unto me; I will teach you the fear of JEHOVAH," or again, "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, And I will declare what he hath done for my soul" (xxxiv. 11; cf lxvi. 16).

At a later period still the Psalmist became a leader in praise. He composed simple words and refrains for quires to sing, such as "Praise JEHOVAH, for his mercy endureth for ever" or "Give thanks unto JEHOVAH, for he is good." From such beginnings Psalms like cxxxvi

arose; these might be fitly called "Hymns of the Second Temple." But by calling the Psalter as a whole "the Hymn Book of the Second Temple" we ignore the earlier and more important chapters in the history of the Psalms.

At the same comparatively late period the words of earlier Psalms were collected and delivered for use in the Temple

"to hym that excelleth in Musick upon the instrument of eight stringes" (heading to Ps vi in the Great Bible of 1539), or (as it is more often) "to the chief musician" (see the headings to Pss iv, v, *al.* AV and RV).

## § 2. THE TITLE OF THE BOOK AND CLASSIFICATION OF THE CONTENTS

The title of the book in English is sometimes *Psalter*, a shortened form of *Psaltery*, ψαλτήριον, LXX A; sometimes, *The Psalms*, ψαλμοί, LXX B; *Liber Psalmorum*, Vulgate.

The meaning of *Psalter* is quite clear, for ψαλτήριον is a stringed instrument, a *psaltery* or harp (Aristotle). *Psalms* also is a word which tells us a little about the nature of a Psalm, for ψαλμός is found in a fragment of Aeschylus in the sense of "a strain" or "burst" of music. In Biblical Greek it means the words which accompany music. The corresponding Hebrew word *mizmor* is used in the same way: the cognate verb *zammer* is "to sing to an instrumental accompaniment." *Mizmor* is used only in the singular and only in the titles of some fifty-seven Psalms.

### *Tehillim*

The heading of the book in the Hebrew Bible is "Praises" (*Tehillim*), and this is the title used in post-Biblical Hebrew writings. There is but little in the earlier Psalms to suggest the use of such a name, with the important exception of the term "the Praises" (Heb. *Tehilloth*, another form of *Tehillim*) "of Israel" in Ps xxii. 3. But from Ps civ. 35 onward the phrase *Hallelu-jah*, "Praise ye יהוה", becomes very common. Indeed, Ps cl (of six verses only) begins and ends with *Hallelu-jah* and in addition contains the exhortation "Praise ye" ten times. The name "Praises" is thus well based.

When we look at the headings of separate Psalms we find a variety of names. The first two Psalms (and some others) have no heading. Ps xvi with five others (lvi-lx) is called a *Michtam* (σημειογραφία LXX), i.e. a composition set up in a public place (see below); Ps xvii (with two

others, cii, cxlii) is called *Tēphillah*, "a prayer." Ps xviii is described in the heading as "the Words of this Song"; Ps xli is called simply *Shir*, "a song," and several Psalms bear the double title, "Psalm" and "Song" (e.g. xxx, xlvi, *al.*). The Septuagint gives ὕμνοι (for *Tēphillōth*, *Prayers*) in the colophon to Ps lxxii, "The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended"; cf Mark xiv. 26, "When they had sung a hymn" (ὕμνησαντες), where the reference is to the Hallel, i.e. Pss cxiv-cxviii.

An interesting name for a special kind of Psalm is *Maschil* (or *Maskil*), Pss lxxiv, lxxviii, lxxxviii, lxxxix, *al.* It occurs first in the heading of Ps xxxii, which is rendered in AV margin, "(A Psalm) of David giving instruction," while in v. 8 the cognate verb is used, "I will instruct thee (*askilēkā*) and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go." This Psalm ends on a clear note of instruction (*vv.* 8-11). Further, the description "(a Psalm) of instruction" exactly suits Pss lxxiv (see *vv.* 12-17), lxxviii, and lxxxix, which are indeed of the nature of sermons. It does *not* apply to Ps lxxxviii, which consists of one long unrelieved complaint, but it may be doubted if the words *Maschil of Heman the Ezrahite* really belong to the title of this Psalm; they may have been brought in by error from Ps lxxxix. The title of Ps lxxxviii is certainly overloaded with the double description "for the sons of Korah" and "for (*sic!*) Heman the Ezrahite." Again, it may be that there was once a small collection of Psalms of general character headed by Ps xxxii and the title *Maschil* may have been given to the whole collection because of the emphatic *askilēkā* ("I will instruct thee") of xxxii. 8. When this collection was broken up to be incorporated in the larger book of Psalms the title *Maschil* may have been prefixt to each Psalm to show the collection from which it was derived. Mowinckel (*Psalmenstudien*, iv. 5-7) thinks rather that a *Maschil* means a Psalm in which there is Divine insight (*sēchel*) in the writer, i.e. an inspired Psalm. "In the earlier ages any Psalm might be thought of as *Maschil*, but later the use of the word was artificially restricted to a few Psalms." This view seems far-fetched. There are other suggestions. The most probable explanation is that given above that a *Maschil* is a Psalm which *instructs*. Ethan the Ezrahite of Ps lxxxix was noted for wisdom (1 K iv. 31), and a Psalm of *instruction* is linked appropriately with his name. This Psalm is full of the best Hebrew Theology.

"Songs of degrees," cxx-cxxxiv, have become "of Ascents" in RV. They were sung, it seems, by Jews going up to the Temple mount to worship. They might be called Pilgrim Psalms. See the separate introduction to these Psalms.

To Pss xvi; lvi-lx the title *Michtam* (LXX, *σηλογραφία* or *εις σηλογραφίαν*) is prefixt: they were to be engraved on tablets and set up in public like the edicts of a king. Pss lvi-lix have no special character which would account for their being publicly displayed, but it is otherwise with Ps lx, which according to the title is to be taught as a lesson in faith for a people which suffers a great calamity. So David's Lament over Saul and over Jonathan was to be taught to Israel that they might not forget the deeds of their heroes (2 Sam i. 18).

Lastly must be mentioned the short title "David," which appears in N.T. in Heb iv. 7, "Saying in David," a reference to Ps xcvi (an anonymous Psalm). Several quotations are given in N.T. introduced by the formula, "David saith": Mark xii. 36, *al.* Twice the title the Book OF PSALMS is used: Luke xx. 42; Acts i. 20.

The following is a suggested classification of the Psalms according to the nature of their contents. Most of them might be described as Prayers, and the colophon (*v.* 20) to Ps lxxii shows that one of the smaller collections was actually called, the Prayers of David. But Prayers are of more than one kind, and so may be classified under heads, thus:

(1) Those specially described in their titles as "Prayers," that is, Pss xvii, lxxxvi, xc, cii, cxlii. These are in the main petitions for God's favour or for his protection against enemies.

(2) Next come Praises in accordance with the Hebrew title of the book, *Tēhillim*. Under this title may be included thanksgivings offered for particular mercies. The title *Tēhillim* is taken up in the compound word *Hallelu-jah* ("Praise ye JEHOVAH"), which occurs in civ. 35 and frequently in the rest of the Psalter at the beginning or end of a Psalm. As examples of "Praises" may be cited Nature Psalms like viii, xix, and civ, or a *Te Deum* like lxxviii, or the six triumphant songs with which the Psalter closes. Among these last, Ps cxlviii stands out, for upon it is founded the *Benedicite, Omnia opera* (the Song of the Three Holy Children). But the Psalm excels the Canticle in terseness and vigour; we find six mechanically constructed verses of the *Benedicite* dissipating the nervous force of two verses of the Psalm:

Praise JEHOVAH from the earth,  
Ye sea-monsters, and all deeps:  
Fire and hail, snow and vapour;  
Stormy wind, fulfilling his word. (*vv.* 7, 8.)

(3) Petitions for deliverance. The majority of the Psalms come under this heading. The Psalmist prays usually to be delivered either from sickness or from enemies, sometimes from both. Thus Pss vi, xxxviii,

xxxix, xli, lxxxviii seem to be offered from a sick bed, and a large number of others suggest that the Psalmist is in imminent danger from enemies. The language of these petitions is often painfully urgent, and we get a vivid picture of a faithful one overwhelmed by his trouble. On the other hand the language seems sometimes to be generalised, and it is possible that a private prayer has been adapted by changes of wording for general use. The question whether the "I" of many Psalms represents an individual or Israel the nation personified is discussed below in § 9 (a), page lxix.

(4) Confessions of faith. Many of the Psalms seem to be composed with direct reference to the heathen polytheism by which Israel was hemmed in and to the heathen thought (due to the influence of neighbouring nations) which often manifested itself even in the people of JEHOVAH. Thus in cxxxvi confession is made that JEHOVAH is "God of gods, Lord of lords, the only doer of wonders, the creator of the heavens and the earth—the God of heaven." In Pss viii, xxxiii, civ, *al.* JEHOVAH is specially celebrated as the Creator; and in Pss xcv–xcviii, cxv, *al.* as greater than the gods of the nations and as sole God in the full sense of the word. In Pss xciv, xcvi, *al.*, JEHOVAH is acknowledged as the supreme Judge of men, and in Ps cxlv, *al.* as the Righteous and Merciful Governor of the Universe.

(5) Confessions of sin. Seven Psalms have been recognised and used in the Christian Church as penitential, namely, vi, xxxii, xxxviii, li, cii, cxxx, cxliii. But it should be noted that explicit confession of sin is rarely found in the Psalter. Ps li stands almost alone in its fulness and clearness of confession. Ps xxxviii follows at some distance: "My wounds stink and are corrupt, *Because of my foolishness*" (v. 5); "I will declare mine iniquity; I will be sorry for my sin" (v. 18), but the greater part of the Psalm is devoted to the enumeration of the Psalmist's miseries. Ps cxliii is truly penitential; it contains two great utterances, "Enter not into judgement with thy servant; For in thy sight shall no man living be justified," and "Teach me to do thy will" (vv. 2, 10).

On the other hand, two of the penitential Psalms (vi and cii) contain no mention of sin. Again Ps cxxx, which does mention "iniquities" (v. 3), is not a confession but a plea for forgiveness and restoration, and Ps xxxii is a thanksgiving for forgiveness already granted. Thus confession even in these Psalms is to a large extent indirect. The general tendency in the Psalter is rather to assert innocence, especially of the sin of worshipping other gods.

(6) Intercessions. Such are Pss xx, xxi, lxi for the king; lxvii for

Israel and for the nations; lxxii for a king who is the son of a king; lxxxix for the house of David; cxxi, cxxii, cxxxii, cxliv. 12 ff. for Zion and her rulers.

(7) Deprecations. These are answers to the imprecations of the enemies of Israel. See especially Pss xxxv. 1-8, lix, lxix, cix. These are often called Imprecatory Psalms, but they are defensive in their object: they are meant to be answers to an enemy's attack.

(8) Instructions or Homilies. Such are Pss xxxvii (Warning against impatience caused by the prosperity of the wicked); xlv (Declaration of the glory of Zion and her king); xlix (Discourse on false prosperity); l (Instruction concerning true service of God); lxxviii (Lessons on God's past dealings with Israel); ciii-cvii (God in Nature and in History).

(9) Meditations on moral difficulties. Pss xlix, lxxiii (A future life the reward of the faithful), xciv (the Providence of God).

(10) Other Psalms again are devoted to a confession of the greatness of the *Torah*, the Law of JEHOVAH. Among these stand out Ps cxix and the second half of Ps xix. It is a mistake to regard such passages as conventional. They have reference to a critical situation which occurred and recurred in the history of Israel. The religion of the chosen people isolated them among the nations of the world. A party in Israel felt this isolation keenly, and went as far as to say, "Let us go and make a covenant with the Gentiles that are round about us, for since we were parted from them many evils have befallen us" (1 Macc i. 11). This sentiment thus expressed in the Maccabean age made itself heard no doubt also in earlier times. And then the faithful part of the people would rise up in protest. They would assert their adhesion to the Law, which forbade these covenants with the nations. They confessed that His judgments were more to be desired than gold, and they prayed that He would keep them from the domination of presumptuous men (xix. 10, 13). And they declared again "I hate them that are of a double mind; But thy law do I love" (cxix. 113). If there is monotony in these confessions, it is the monotony of a steadfast resolve to remain faithful to the covenant of the true God.

### § 3. METHODS OF INTERPRETATION

In most modern commentaries the writers aim at interpreting each Psalm by the "historical" method. It is assumed that if the date of its composition be known, the meaning can be easily explained with the help of the references contained in the Psalm to the circumstances of the time. Such a method is theoretically excellent, but it is difficult to apply in

the case of the Psalter. The references to public events or to public conditions are in general faint and vaguely express: they cannot be satisfactorily referred to particular cases. This judgment is confirmed (with very few exceptions) by a comparison of any of the certainly historical poems of the O.T. with the Psalms.

The Blessing of Jacob (Gen xlix), the Song of Miriam (Exod xv), the Vision of Balaam (Num xxiii, xxiv), the Song of Deborah (Judg v), the Lament over Saul and Jonathan (2 Sam i) are great historical poems which at first sight we are inclined to reckon as Psalms. But a moment's consideration reveals a great difference between these poems on the one hand and the Psalms on the other. In the former the historical references are relatively clear. Proper names are introduced. The religious element in them is subordinated to the historical. Of the Psalms perhaps the Eighteenth most resembles them, but the attentive reader probably feels that it is distinguished from them by containing a larger element of personal religious experience.

The comparison in any case shows by contrast how small in truth is the "historical" element in the Psalms. The earlier expositors who believed that David wrote half the Psalter could not point even to a single mention by name of Saul, or Jonathan, or Absalom, or Solomon. Other expositors, who believed that the Assyrian and Chaldean crises had left their mark on the Psalms could not point to the name of Sennacherib or of Nebuchadrezzar in any verse. Modern writers who are convinced that many Psalms are Maccabean cannot find the name of any of the Maccabean heroes in them.<sup>1</sup>

A knowledge of history carries us only a very little way towards understanding a Psalm; thus though Ps xlviii speaks of a wonderful deliverance of Zion, the language is not precise enough from the historical standpoint to show which of the many deliverances is described. In fact, in a Psalm a particular event or historical situation is treated not for its own sake, but as the starting-point for a burst of praise, or of contrition, or as the text of a religious lesson. The student's duty, then, is to study the religion of the Psalms—what a Psalmist believed concerning God, what he hoped for, what he feared, how he endeavoured to please him whom he worshipped. Of these really important matters we shall learn more by comparing one Psalm with another, or by putting a Hebrew Psalm beside a religious poem from Babylonia or from Egypt,

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<sup>1</sup> The supposed acrostic ("Simon") of Ps cx is briefly discussed in the study on that Psalm.

than by studying the external history of Israel. And though we usually feel that the hymns from the Euphrates and the Nile fall below the spiritual level of the Psalter, yet we may acknowledge that they throw light upon it, for they too express man's aspiration towards God.

A careful study of the Psalter as a whole shows conclusively that it is not a collection of National Ballads coloured with religion, but a Hymn Book slightly coloured by generalising references to certain great historical episodes which have a special religious significance.<sup>1</sup> One of the best-attested results of criticism has been to bring the date of the Psalter lower down in Hebrew history. Speaking generally, we may say that the Psalms, in the form in which we have them, have been shown to belong to the ages in which the Jews occupied themselves with deep pondering over their past history and its meaning. Moreover, in the latter half of the Persian period and in the earlier Greek period which followed it (i.e. from circ. 450 to 300 B.C.), when the activity of the Psalmists was perhaps greatest, the individual became more conscious of his place in the world. The Psalms, in short, have been assigned for the most part to the centuries which were most favourable to the development of religious thought concerning the fate both of the nation and of the individual. Religion, therefore, rather than Political History supplies the key to the meaning of the majority of the Psalms.

This interpretation was not essentially affected by the coming of the Christ. It is for Christians what it was for Jews, except that it is somewhat clearer. The Messianic Hope and the Aspiration after the Kingdom of God were parts of the religion of the Old Covenant. The Jew aspired after more than he could see, and he gave voice to this aspiration in many of the Psalms. The Psalmists look upward and forward until their thoughts merge in the thoughts of the Apostles, but they were none the less Jews for that. It was part of the religion of the Jew to hope and to aspire thus. He had been drilled into the habit (if by no earlier events) at least by the discipline of the Babylonian Captivity.

#### § 4. THE GROWTH OF THE PSALTER

Our book of Psalms was composed by putting together the smaller collections which preceded it. Three of these collections may be recognised without difficulty. The first consists of Pss iii-xli, nearly all of which have the name "David" in the heading: this may be called the Davidic collection. Further, it may be characterised as "Jehovistic," for,

<sup>1</sup> E.g. the Exodus and the Sojourn in the Wilderness.

in contrast to the second collection, it uses the name JEHOVAH with freedom.

The second collection consists of Pss xlii-lxxxiii. Here three names appear in the headings: "The sons of Korah," "David," and "Asaph." It may be called "The Mixt Collection." Further, it is "Elohistic," for it avoids the name JEHOVAH, most often substituting ELOHIM ("God") for it, as in l. 7, "I am God, even thy God," for the usual, "I am JEHOVAH thy God" (Exod xx. 2, *al.*); so again lxxxii. 1, "God (Heb. Elohim) standeth in the congregation of God (El); He judgeth among the gods (Elohim)." In a few instances these two collections, the Davidic and the Mixt, have both admitted the same Psalm-passage. Thus xxxi. 1-3 of the Davidic collection reappears in the Mixt as Ps lxxi. 1-3, and xl. 13-17 reappears as Ps lxx. Specially interesting is a third case: Ps xiv reappears as Ps liii with some variants and with ELOHIM substituted on each occurrence of JEHOVAH.

The Korahite, Asaphic and Davidic Psalms may have existed as separate collections before they were taken into the larger collection (Pss xlii-lxxxiii). As separate collections they may have been preserved orally by separate bands of singers, and committed to writing when they were absorbed into the larger collection.

The third collection consists of Pss xc-cl. A few of these bear headings with the name of David, but most have no heading at all. These Psalms might indeed be styled "The Anonymous Collection." It differs from the second by admitting the name JEHOVAH freely, and from both the first and second by containing a number of Psalms probably intended for Temple use, e.g. Pss xc v-c; cxiii-cxviii; cxxxv, cxxxvi; cxlv-cl. It contains within itself yet another smaller collection, the "Songs of Ascents," Pss cxx-cxxxiv. The view that the third collection once existed independently of the second is confirmed partly by the fact that it is Jehovistic (like the first collection) and further by the fact that Ps cviii of the third collection is parallel in *vv.* 1-5 with Ps lvii. 7-11 of the second collection, and in *vv.* 6-13 with Ps lx. 5-12.

Two further steps may be postulated to complete the history of the book of Psalms. A supplement consisting of Ps lxxxiv-lxxxix was added to the second collection. (These six are to be reckoned a supplement, because they are JEHOVISTIC, not ELOHISTIC like Pss xlii-lxxxiii.) Further, Pss i, ii (Jehovistic Psalms) were prefixt to the complete collection, probably by the hand which made the three collections into one. Certainly the fact that they have no headings at all suggests that they did not belong originally to the "Davidic Collection."

The Psalter is divided by Jewish custom into five "Books" (Heb. *sēphārim*). The end of the first four is marked by a doxology, xli. 13, lxxii. 18, 19, lxxxix. 52, cvii. 48. The "Books" are noted in RV. This division is of no particular significance; it seems to be imitated from the division of the *Torah* into five books, the Pentateuch. Moreover, the boundary between Books iv and v, which separates Ps cvii from Ps cvii, is purely arbitrary.

The closing of the Canonical Book of Psalms raises an interesting question: Why were certain Psalm-like compositions not admitted within the Psalter? Perhaps the prevailing feeling of the compilers was that a "Psalm" must be a direct appeal to God, and preferably a *Tēhillāh*, an utterance of the praise of JEHOVAH—a song which might suitably be concluded with a *Hallelu-jah*, "Praise ye the LORD." This feeling may account for the exclusion of the Psalm-like song contained in Eccles xliv. 1–15, which is commonly dated *circ.* 200 B.C., but may be earlier. Like the rest of Ecclesiasticus it was written in the sacred tongue and by a happy rescue from the Cairo Genizah it now lies before us in its original Hebrew text. There it bears the heading, "Praise of the Fathers of Old" (שבח אבות עולם), a title which stamps it as neither a *Tēphillāh* (a Prayer), nor *Tēhillāh* (a Praise of God), and so it was not "received"; but why did it not claim a place "outside the number" of One Hundred and Fifty in the LXX and other versions like the less worthy Ps cli? The Hebrew text may be thus rendered:

### *Praise of the Fathers of Old.*

1. Let me now praise Benefactors (lit. "Men of lovingkindness"),  
Even our fathers in their generations.
2. The Most High apportioned them great glory,  
Yea, they have been great from the days of old.
- 3*a.* Rulers of the land by their royalty,  
Men famous for their might.
- 3*b.* Such as gave counsel by their understanding,  
Who by gift of prophecy saw all things.
- 4*a.* Governors of the Gentiles by their discretion,  
Rulers of deep discernment.
- 4*b.* In their writings wise in meditation,  
And masters of stored-up learning.
5. Such as set a Psalm (Heb. *mizmōr*) to its measure,  
And uttered a Proverb (Heb. *māshāl*), and put it in writing.

6. Valiant men endued with power,  
Unafraid in their habitations.
7. All these were honoured in their generation,  
And had glory in their days.
8. There be of them that have left a name,  
To be establisht in the land of their inheritance;
- 9a. And some there be which have no memorial (Heb. *zēker*),  
And they ceased, as they ceased.
- 9b. They are as if they had not been,  
And their children after them.
10. But these were Benefactors (lit. "Men of lovingkindness"),  
And their hope shall not fail (lit. "cease").
11. Their good (or "Their prosperity") remaineth with their seed,  
And their inheritance is for children's children....
13. Their memorial (Heb. *zēker*) shall stand for ever,  
And their righteousness shall not be blotted out.
14. They were gathered to their fathers in peace,  
And their name liveth for evermore.
15. The congregation learneth (or "repeateth," Heb. חשנה) their  
wisdom,  
And the assembly telleth their praise.

Those who are thus remembered are those who have their names recorded in the Old Testament. It is the praise of these great ones that Ecclesiasticus sings in xliv. 16 beginning with Enoch and ending with Nehemiah in xlix. 13.

Of the so-called "Psalms of Solomon" very little need be said here. Their very ascription to "Solomon" is a renunciation of any claim to be reckoned among the Psalms of David. They are eighteen in number and exist in Greek in a number of MSS dating from the eleventh century downwards. They are not found in the great Greek Biblical MSS, but they are mentioned (*ψαλμοὶ Σολομῶντος ιη*) in the list of books attached to the Codex Alexandrinus. This Solomonic Psalter is no doubt pre-Christian in date: it is probably homogeneous, the product of one generation. The clearest indication of the time of writing is in Ps ii, where the deeds of Pompey in Judaea (63 B.C.) and his miserable death in Egypt (*vs.* 30, 31) are mentioned, as it seems. The standpoint is that of the Pharisaic party, who are designated as the Righteous (*δίκαιοι*).

The doctrine of the Resurrection is plainly stated (iii. 16). A connected line of thought may be traced in the book. Pss i, ii describe the

disaster which has overtaken Jerusalem. Ps viii. 7-26 explains the disaster as the punishment of the sins of its people. Ps xiii tells that in the slaughter of the inhabitants the Lord spared the righteous. Pss xvii, xviii beseech the Lord to send Israel's true king, "the son of David," to destroy the nations, and to gather together a holy people.

These Psalms have been edited by Ryle and James, Cambridge, 1891, in Greek and English under the title of *Psalms of the Pharisees*. They are given in a revised text with various readings in vol. iii of the *Old Testament in Greek* by H. B. Swete, Cambridge, 1899 (and later dates). An English translation with notes is printed in R. H. Charles, *Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha*, vol. ii, pp. 625-652, Oxford, 1913.

The Psalms are reckoned by the Hebrews to be 150 in number, but the boundaries of particular Psalms are not always known and fixt. In some cases ancient editors may have made two Psalms out of one by arbitrary division, and on the other hand they may have joined together into one Psalm pieces which were once independent. Thus Pss i and ii are said once to have formed one Psalm (cf Acts xiii. 33, cod. D). Pss ix, x are treated as one in the LXX. On the other hand it is suggested that xix. 1-6 and xix. 7-14 are independent Psalms, and xxxvi. 1-4 and xxxvi. 5-12, and again cxlvii. 1-11 and cxlvii. 12-20 (so LXX, Vulgate). Ps lxxxiv, according to Duhm, is composed of two shorter Psalms run together: A. vv. 1-7 and 10; B. vv. 8, 9 and 11, 12. A more reasonable suggestion is to treat cxliv. 1-11 and 12-15 as separate compositions. Certainly vv. 12-15 look like the strayed ending of an otherwise lost Psalm. On such points the special Introductions to particular Psalms should be consulted.

## § 5. AUTHORSHIP AND DATE

In the Hebrew text a large number of Psalms have the heading *lš-David*, which is rendered in AV, RV "(a Psalm) of David," but it might equally well be translated "(a Psalm) to (or for) David," or even "after the manner of David." To this simple heading in many cases have been added short statements referring particular Psalms to particular incidents in David's life: see e.g. Pss iii, vii, xviii, xxx, xxxiv, li, lii, etc. These headings (though obviously later in date than the Psalms which follow them) are of sufficient antiquity to appear in the oldest text of the Septuagint. If they are original in the Greek Text, they can hardly be later than the end of the second century B.C., for the Greek version of the Psalms may be dated *circ.* 150 B.C.

The treatment of the headings in the Septuagint is interesting. Usually in LXX B *lš-David* is rendered by τῷ Δαυεῖδ, "to (or for) David," a rendering which does not necessarily assert authorship. The Hebrew title seems however to have been understood of authorship by the Hebrew scribes who added the references to incidents in David's life. But the Greek scribes, as though discontented with the ambiguous title τῷ Δαυεῖδ, sometimes use the form τοῦ Δ. e.g. in Pss iv (cod. R), xxxvii (cod. B), xlvi (cod. A). The Vulgate gives usually (*Psalmus*) *David*, "Psalm of David," but occasionally, *ipsi David* (= τῷ Δ.) as in Pss xvi, lxviii.

The Hebrew term *lš-David* is best understood as meaning "belonging to David"; and "David" in this connexion is to be understood in the sense of a collection of "songs" which bore the brief title "David."

Such a title does not imply, still less prove, that all the pieces contained in the collection come from the hand of David, but it does suggest that the outstanding one among the authors was the great king of Israel. Compositions believed to be of David formed no doubt the kernel of the Psalter.

We have direct evidence that our present Psalter was composed from preceding collections in the colophon attached to Ps lxxii. V. 20 (AV, RV) reads, "The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended." The title "prayers" is unusual, but it may be taken to cover the preceding Psalms, li-lxxii. Ps lxxi (anonymous in MT) is ascribed to David in LXX, and Ps lxxii is described as "referring to" Solomon (εἰς Σ.).

Did David indeed compose Psalms? Was he a man of Prayer and Praise, a leader in devotion? And are his Psalms (if such there were) found in our well-known Psalter? Most modern writers answer, No, to these questions: and in support of their opinion they emphasise the difference between the David of the books of Samuel and Kings and the Psalmist David of popular belief. They do not accept the view that David the ancient warrior was the author of any of those spiritual songs which touch the heart and enrich the devotions of the modern Christian. We must therefore examine the evidence that David had the double character which has been assigned him.

In 1 Sam xvi. 18 f David is described as "cunning in playing" and "skilful in speech" (see RV with margin). This double description suggests one who could both play and improvise words to suit his strains. Here too may be cited another suggestive passage, Amos vi. 5 (a denunciation of the great men of Samaria), "That sing idle songs to the sound of the viol; that devise for themselves instruments of music, like

David" (marg. "like David's"). Here the reference to David is denied by modern critics, who point out (1) that the name of "David" is not reproduced in LXX, and (2) that the second half of the verse is overlong, judged by the "metre" of the passage. But it may be answered (1) that LXX has made general nonsense of the clause, "That devise for themselves instruments of music, like David"; (2) that if "metre" requires a sacrifice, the word *lāhēm* ("for themselves") will suffice as a victim; (3) that the reading *like David* is supported by the parallel historical reference made in the following verse. The complaint raised against the great men of Samaria in *vs.* 5, 6 is that they copy the great historic champion of Israel in a one-sided manner. They copy him for music and for song, but not in active sympathy with their people in their calamities (*imprimis* in the plague referred to in *vs.* 9, 10): "They are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph," whereas on the contrary Israel and Judah loved David, "for he went out and came in before them" adventuring his life in the wars of his people (1 Sam xviii. 16).

Amos' rebuke may be compared with Byron's words to the degenerate Greeks of his time:

"Ye have the Pyrrhic dance as yet;  
Where is the Pyrrhic phalanx gone?  
Of two such lessons why forget  
The nobler and the manlier one?"

Probably the emendators of Amos vi. 5 have been in doubt whether the tradition of David and his "songs" would persist for three centuries and reach the ears of Amos. But Tekoa is a very few miles from Bethlehem, and in the East tradition preserves many trustworthy details of the doings of heroes. So it was remembered at Bethlehem that David, being grieved for the risk his followers ran, refused to drink the water which they brought, and poured it out unto *JEHOVAH* (2 Sam xxiii. 14-17). The proposal to delete the word *kē-David*, "like David," from the text of Amos is indeed hazardous.

We come next to 2 Sam i. 17-27, the lament (Heb. *kīnah*) over Saul and Jonathan. This is a song (be it noted) which was preserved in David's own tribe of Judah (*v.* 18, "He bade them teach the children of Judah the song of the bow" RV). No serious objection has been raised against the ascription of this song to David. Further, it may be mentioned as a small "undesigned coincidence" in favour of David's authorship that the song begins with Jonathan, not with Saul: "The gazelle, O Israel, is slain upon thy high places." Who is "the gazelle"? Surely Jonathan, not Saul; the younger man, not the elder. The gazelle is Jonathan the

young warrior who climbed up the crag at Michmash "upon his hands and upon his feet" and smote the Philistine garrison. So in 2 Sam ii. 18, another young warrior, Asahel, is said to have been "light on his feet as one of the gazelles" (thus the Hebrew).

Scholars do not question the Davidic authorship of the lament, but they point out that it is wholly "secular" in tone. In this judgment they are justified, for the name of God is not mentioned, and there is nothing of the nature of prayer in the passage. But this is only what we expect to find in the days of David, and indeed for long afterwards. Saul and Jonathan were dead, and no prayer could avail for them. This is the conviction of the David of 2 Sam xii. 22 f. We must not argue from a single passage (2 Sam i. 17-27) that David's mind was wholly secular, and that he could not compose a spiritual song.

Next we come to the interesting case of 2 Sam xxii (= Ps xviii). Here (as in 2 Sam i. 17) a definite statement of Davidic authorship is made. But critics warn us that the last four chapters of 2 Samuel are an appendix to the original book and belong to a later date: thus the statement of Davidic authorship comes with somewhat less authority than in the case of David's lament. Further critics find objections to David's authorship on internal grounds. Duhm declares that the Psalm is "very young," and gives several reasons for his view. As marks of late date he cites (1) the "Aramaic colouring" of the language, (2) the "overloaded" diction, (3) the "artificial" theophany, (4) the points of contact with "other late pieces" of Hebrew literature, and (5) the (supposed) fact that the author occupies the legal standpoint.

But the argument from Aramaic colouring is inconclusive. Aramaisms (i.e. Syriacisms) are to be expected in Hebrew of early date—in David's, indeed—as well as in the latest Hebrew. When the king was fighting the Syrians (Arameans) of Damascus and the Syrians (Arameans) of Zobah he was exposing his native language to Syrian (Aramean) influence. Wars and treaties between nations bring about some interchange of words. Israel was fighting or treating with Syria (Aram) from the days of David (2 Sam viii. 5) to the days of Ahaz (2 K xvi. 5), and the officers of Hezekiah declared to Rabshakeh that they understood the Syrian (Aramean) language (2 K xviii. 26). Aramaisms in fact must have been in use in the Hebrew language throughout the whole period of the Kingdom.

When Duhm further urges that the "overloaded diction" and the "artificial theophany" (vv. 7-19) tell in favour of a quite late date, he is offering a subjective argument of little real force. The metaphors used

in *vv.* 4-6 are used also, he tells us, in "the younger poems." He complains that in *vv.* 7-19 we have to wait until *v.* 17 in order to learn that the danger which threatens the Psalmist is a danger from foes. Certainly the diction of these verses is full, but the description is powerful, and prolixity (if this be prolixity) does not necessarily belong to the second century B.C. more than to the tenth. We do not find the brevity and the simplicity of Ps viii urged by Duhm in favour of an early date.

A more serious suggestion is that the author of Ps xviii stands altogether on the ground of the Law, and that he understands it in an external sense, and in a "self-righteous" spirit (*vv.* 20-24). He was in affliction, but **JEHOVAH** rescued him, because he was "perfect with Him." Such a belief, says Duhm, was first inculcated by Deuteronomy, and the ideas expressed by the verb "keep" and by the substantives "judgments" and "statutes" are Deuteronomic.

Here the critic is surely stretching his evidence beyond its reach. "Self-righteousness" is more ancient than Deuteronomy, and the appearance in Ps xviii of three words used in Deuteronomy is insufficient to prove the influence of Deuteronomy on this Psalmist. Israel had "judgments" already when Exod xxi. 1 was written, and the word "statutes" (Heb. *hukkoth*) is *not* specially Deuteronomic. Duhm reads more into the words of the Psalmist than they bear.

Finally Duhm leaves us with a dilemma: "The Psalm suits *either* the situation of David *or* the time which begins with the conquests of the Maccabean princes." "If," he adds, "it was composed with reference to David, then only a legal-minded Jew of late times could have drawn David in so naïve a manner. But it is plainly (*deutlich*) the mirror of the foreign and civil wars of the later Hasmonean time...It corresponds in all particulars to the history of Alexander Jannaeus, who suffered overwhelming defeat in the field, but yet succeeded in capturing castles and cities." Thus Duhm, but is it not strange that a Psalm dating from not earlier than 88 B.C. should be ascribed in the title to David? And if it was written (as *ex hypothesi* Duhm) to support the cause of Jannaeus, why is its appeal nullified by this ascription to a king long dead and not to the king of the present in his straits?

But it is pointed out further that ancient historians were accustomed to provide speeches composed mainly by themselves and to put them into the mouth of their heroes. The prayer of Solomon at the Dedication of the Temple (1 K viii. 15 ff) had probably such an origin. But here (be it remembered) we are in the realm of conjecture. If the historian introduces Psalm xviii as David's, is it not because his source

stated that David had written such an account of his career? And if the source made such a statement, is it not probable that the source quoted the Psalm if not in the form we have it, then at least in some shorter text? The Psalm, as Duhm rightly confesses, suits the case of David, and it is difficult to believe that the name of Jannaëus would have been suggested except by a critic who held an extreme view of the modernity of the Psalms.

Finally the continuator of 2 Samuel assigns to David some "last words" (2 Sam xxiii. 1-7). This passage is of a definitely religious character; it begins with the words: "The spirit of JEHOVAH spake in me, And his word was upon my tongue." If moderns question the ascription of the words to David, it is still an impressive fact that the historian assigns the two passages, 2 Sam xxii and xxiii. 1-7, to the warrior king. But the title, "the sweet Psalmist of Israel," which is given to the king in 2 Sam xxiii. 1, AV, is due to mistranslation. RV margin has "pleasant in the psalms of Israel." David is viewed as the subject (not as the author) of Israel's lyrics in this passage.

Our general conclusion is that there is a strong tradition that David was a composer of songs; it is hardly less strong that he composed one Psalm which on the one side was warlike and on the other devout, and that he left in addition a few verses full of submission to the God of Israel in the true tones of Israelitish piety. We come therefore to the study of the Psalter prepared to find some Davidic compositions there. One caution however remains to be borne in mind, namely, that work as ancient as that of David may have received in the course of time supplementary verses by way of introduction or conclusion, in order to adapt it for the use of later generations. Just this fate has befallen many Christian hymns. Moreover, many single expressions may have been modernised, for such is the usual fate of ancient songs. Certainly the occurrence of a late word does not destroy the case for the Davidic authorship of a Psalm considered as a whole.

Singular views of the date and authorship of Psalms are given in the Commentary of Bernhard Duhm (second edition, 1922). Ps cxxxvii, a "People's Song of the Exile," appears to him to be the oldest Psalm. No Psalm is pre-exilic in the opinion of "an unprejudiced reader." No Psalm by its contents suggests to Duhm the Persian period, but possibly Pss viii and xix. 1-6 belong to the fourth century B.C. On the other hand, Duhm thinks that "many Psalms" belong to the earlier Greek period before the days of Antiochus Epiphanes. The Chronicler (he allows) is an indirect witness to the existence of Psalms, since he

testifies to the importance attached to Temple singing in his own time. Psalms which seem to regard Jerusalem and the Temple as inviolable, such as Pss xlvi, xlviiii, and lxxvi, might have been composed soon after the cessation of the wars of Alexander the Great and his successors. In spite of these concessions to earlier dating the bulk of the Psalter is assigned to dates in the second and first centuries B.C., and the title which would best suit the book on Dr Duhm's theories is *The Hymns of the Sadducees and Pharisees: A Composite Book*. There were Sadducees and Pharisees before the time of our Lord: indeed, the tendencies of Sadduceeism and Pharisaism were at work as early as the second century B.C., though the party names were perhaps invented later. The early Sadducees were the supporters of the Hasmonean kings of Judaea from John Hyrcanus (136 B.C.) to Alexander Jannaeus (76 B.C.) These kings, though they were scions of the heroic Maccabean family, had their interest not so much in religion as in politics. They waged many wars to preserve and to extend their dominions, and their worldliness alienated the nobler spirits among their people. So two parties were developed among the Jews: one Royalist and in sympathy with the political ambitions of their native kings, the other in the first place Religious and even willing to submit to a foreign government, if only it would abstain from interfering with their religion. Roughly the Royalists corresponded to the Sadducees, and the Religious to the Pharisees. Using a modern analogy we might say that the Sadducees were champions of the Temporal Power of the Head of the Jewish State, while the Pharisees were not.

Sadducee and Pharisee according to Duhm carried on their controversy by writing Psalms against one another. Warlike Psalms are Sadducean, while Psalms in which poor men cry out to be saved from oppression are Pharisaic. Among Sadducean Psalms are Ps xviii, "He teacheth my hands to war; So that mine arms do bend a bow of brass"; and Ps lxviii, "That thou mayest dip thy foot in blood, That the tongue of thy dogs may have its portion from thine enemies." Among Pharisaic Psalms on the other hand are Ps xvii,

Keep me as the apple of the eye,  
Hide me under the shadow of thy wings,  
From the wicked that spoil me,  
My deadly enemies, that compass me about:

and Ps xiv,

The fool hath said in his heart,  
There is no God.

The "fool" is Alexander Jannaeus, king of Judaea (104-76 B.C.). Such are Duhm's theories about the origin of the Psalter and his final conjecture is that the important step in the composition of the Psalter was taken in the reign of Salome (or Alexandra), the widow of Jannaeus. On his death-bed the king recommended her to make peace with the Pharisees, as Josephus records (*Antiq* xiii. xv. 5). He had slaughtered thousands of their party in civil war and in addition he had crucified 800 of his prisoners, without gaining any feeling of security for his throne. So he made a virtue of necessity and bade Salome conciliate the Pharisees. One measure of conciliation according to Duhm was that a Temple Hymn Book was composed to which Sadducee and Pharisee alike contributed. Each was allowed his say. So in Ps xvii the Pharisee cried against the Sadducee, "Arise, O JEHOVAH, Confront him, cast him down"; and in xviii the Sadducee answered, "I will pursue mine enemies and overtake them, Neither will I turn again till they are consumed." Surely a theory which supposes such a method of conciliation is ingenious to excess.

But Duhm is probably right in asserting that many of the Psalms do reflect the struggles of contending parties within the Jewish people itself. The Psalmist's enemies are frequently not Gentiles, nor again are they private enemies. They are rather members of the opposite party in a controversy which was partly religious and partly political. But that any of this literature of controversy belongs to time as recent as that of Alexander Jannaeus is extremely unlikely.

The views of Duhm are given prominence in this commentary partly because of their definiteness and partly because they have been accepted in whole or part by a number of later scholars. But it must not be supposed that they dominate the field of scholarship. By way of contrast to Duhm the views of a contemporary scholar are cited below, those of Dr E. Sellin, of the University of Berlin. Sellin, after rejecting the suggestion that the "I" of the Psalms represents not an individual but the whole Jewish community, proceeds thus:

Equally mistaken is the view that because the Psalter was the hymn book of the post-Exilic community, every one of the hymns in it must necessarily be post-Exilic, a view which the analogy of any hymn book one chooses to name would be sufficient to disprove....

A sounder criticism of the Psalms must start from the certainty that the Psalter must in any case contain a nucleus of pre-Exilic psalms. A simple and inexpugnable argument for this is at once furnished by the so-called Royal Psalms, 2, 18, 20, 28, 45, 61, 63, 72, 110, 132... Alongside of the Royal Psalms we ought probably also to place those in which the authors take up, in regard to

the animal sacrifices, the same position as the pre-Exilic prophets, in contrast with the period after Ezra when the Priestly Writing was the dominant influence; thus giving us grounds for regarding them as contemporaries of the prophets.

Speaking generally there is between the pre-Exilic psalms just mentioned and those by which they are surrounded so close a relationship in ideas and language that we are warranted in concluding that the nucleus of the Davidic collection, 3-41, 51-72, belongs to the pre-Exilic period, and was the book of prayers and hymns which Judah took with her into Exile. . . .

But in this connexion two points have to be kept in mind. The first is that just as a psalm from this collection might by a later redactor be detached from its surroundings and inserted in another collection (cf 45, 50, 110?), so a certain number of Exilic or post-Exilic psalms may have found their way in here (22, 69? etc). And the second point is that even the pre-Exilic psalms have a history behind them, they lived prior to their enrolment in collections, "on the lips of men," and this or that detail in them may well be the reflection of a later period (*Introduction to the Old Testament*, English translation, from the third edition, London 1923, pages 199-202).

### § 6(a). THE PIETY OF THE PSALMISTS

It is better to speak of the "Piety of the Psalmists" than of the "Theology (or "Doctrine") of the Psalms." In the Psalms we see Religion at work in everyday life, but of formal Theology hardly a trace. A Psalmist sometimes wrestles with doubt, but not philosophic doubt: his difficulties are of a practical kind. He does not speculate whether God is, but only whether He will hear and answer His petitioner's cry: a Psalmist sometimes fears that his Lord will tarry too long. The Psalms do not come to us from the study, but from the army on the march (xx), from the traveller in danger (xci, cxxxix), from the land of Exile (xlii-xliii, lxxxiv), from the bed of sickness (vi, xxxix, lxxxviii). They were composed by men who through faith triumphed over peril, toil and pain.

The faith of the Psalmists is shown in their unceasing cry to a God Whom they know by name, JEHOVAH. They dwell on the Great Name, indeed we may count eight occurrences of it in a passage of six verses (vi. 1-4, 8, 9). As the writer of Christian hymns loves to repeat the name of *Jesus* ("Jesu...the very name is sweet"), so the Hebrew Psalmist dwells on the name of JEHOVAH as a name conveying a promise of salvation. The meaning of the name JEHOVAH is unknown, but as it is used in the Psalter it conveys the thought that JEHOVAH is a God Whose gracious character is known. He is not capricious like the gods of the heathen: He is righteous, merciful, and faithful. Indeed He is a Saviour.

A Psalmist believes in JEHOVAH as *El Elohim* ("very God," l. 1), as *Elyōn* ("Most High," lxxxiii. 18), as *Zēbāōth* ("Lord of the hosts of heaven," lxxxiv. 1), as "to be feared above all gods" (xcvi. 4), as "exalted far above all gods" (xcvii. 9), as the Creator of heaven and earth and as Lord of the sea (civ. 1-9).

It may be asked, Does this picture of the greatness of JEHOVAH fill the whole field of the Psalmist's view? Are the Psalmists monotheists in the true sense of the word? Or does the use of the phrase "all gods" point to a thought lingering in their minds that other (if inferior) gods have to be reckoned with at special times? In particular, was a Psalmist's faith in JEHOVAH limited by a fear of demonic powers which might be evoked by magic to do harm even to the faithful?

It may be said at once that the epithets which the Psalmists give to JEHOVAH leave no room for belief in any Being or Power which could be considered as a rival to JEHOVAH. The recurring phrase "the gods" is most probably only poetical language, only a concession to a usage of common speech. It would be a different thing if some particular foreign god were mentioned with JEHOVAH. Jephthah (who mentions Chemosh almost in the same breath with the God of Israel, though himself a worshipper of JEHOVAH) doubtless reckoned Chemosh as in some sense a "god" (Jud xi. 23, 24). But the Psalmists do not speak at all like Jephthah.

The Psalmists reveal themselves in their prayers. All their prayers are addressed directly to JEHOVAH. There is no suggestion anywhere of the intervention of a Mediator. The Babylonians in their psalms do in some cases appeal to an inferior god to intercede for them with their Supreme God, but not so the Hebrew Psalmists. See Introduction to Ps li, page 253.

Neither is there any sign that when a Psalmist wrote his Psalm he had any doubt of the active providence of JEHOVAH. Once perhaps he had listened to the insinuating question, "How doth God know? And is there knowledge (of human affairs) in the Most High?" (lxxiii. 11), but in his Psalm he hears such words only to reject them: he turns away from the thoughts of "Gods...careless of mankind," who

Smile in secret looking over wasted lands...

Clanging fights and flaming towns and sinking ships and praying hands.

A Psalmist believes in a Living God, who is alive to all that happens to His people and to His saints. JEHOVAH is very near to Israel and to the individual worshipper. If the Psalmist cries out, "Be not thou far

off, O JEHOVAH," it is because he feels that it is the nature and property of JEHOVAH to be near (xxii. 19).

Indeed, the Piety of the Psalmists was nourished by the greatness of their thoughts of God. If some critics of Hebrew religion have described JEHOVAH as a little angry tribal god, they cannot support their view from any comprehensive study of the Psalms. The God of the Psalmists is the God of Nature, the Ruler of Heaven and Earth and Sea and also of all natural processes, of Rain and Heat and Storm and Earthquake. Such is the teaching of Pss viii, xxix, civ and cxlviii, to name no others. Further, He is specially the Creator of Man; who fashions man's body with watchful care; so viii. 4 ff, cxix. 73, cxxxix. 13 ff. Further, JEHOVAH is the Maker of Israel the nation; Israel has not made himself by his struggles against the nations; but JEHOVAH made him (c. 3), freeing him from slavery and bringing him out of Egypt (lxxx. 8, lxxxii. 5, 6), giving him a land of his own (xliv. 1-3), and protecting him against "the nations" (xlvi, xlviii, lxxvi, lxxxiii).

Here, some will say, is the doctrine of the tribal god; yes, but the doctrine must be read in the light of two considerations. First, this doctrine, as Psalmists held it, was of moral and religious value. It expressed Israel's historic faith that JEHOVAH had earned Israel's devotion by the great things which He had done for the nation. The issue of the doctrine was the fervent spirit of praise and thanksgiving, which dwelt in the hearts of JEHOVAH's true worshippers. The second consideration is that among the Psalmists were men who conceived of Israel not as the foe of the nations, but as having a mission from JEHOVAH to them. These had visions of Gentiles turning to JEHOVAH (xxii. 27, 28, c. 1, 2, cxvii. 1) and of JEHOVAH executing judgment for the whole world (xcvi. 12, 13, xcvi. 8, 9).

Perhaps no thought of JEHOVAH was more firmly fixt in the mind of the Psalmists than that He was a God of judgment and righteousness. They saw with indignation the oppression of the poor, but they comforted themselves by remembering "JEHOVAH, his throne is in heaven; His eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men" (xi. 4). If His judgment tarries, it will certainly come one day: so xxxvii. 34-36, lxxxiii. 16-20, *al.* "The patient abiding of the meek," said the Psalmist (ix. 18), "shall not perish for ever" (P-B; i.e. shall never be lost). Righteousness in one aspect is equivalent to faithfulness: JEHOVAH, unlike the gods of the heathen, is not subject to caprice. So the Psalmists lay emphasis on the "faithfulness" of JEHOVAH (Heb. *šmūnāh*: lxxxix. 1, 2, 5, 8, 24, 33, *al.*) or on His "truth" (Heb. *šmeth*: xxxi. 5, *al.*). Through

all trials the devout Israelite believes that he must ultimately obtain the mercy of his God, because JEHOVAH is "faithful" to His people.

To express the Divine attitude towards man the Hebrews have the very great word *hesed*, which RV renders by the compound word "lovingkindness." It is used of the kindness of man to man, particularly of the fortunate to the unfortunate. It is used very frequently in the Psalms of JEHOVAH'S goodness to men, and is rendered (particularly in AV) by "mercy." This is however an inadequate rendering, for the thought is rather that JEHOVAH has already granted forgiveness, and now shows His lovingkindness by bringing man near to Himself.

This feeling of the nearness of JEHOVAH supplies the explanation of the boldness of the language in which the Psalmists address their God. Sometimes indeed they ask, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him?" (viii. 4), but more often they approach with the confidence of children, ask their own questions, and even remonstrate with JEHOVAH: "Be surety for thy servant for good: Let not the proud oppress me" (cxix. 122); "Awake, why sleepest thou, O Lord?" (xliv. 23); "O remember how short my time is: For what vanity hast thou created all the children of men!" (lxxxix. 47). This confidence is no doubt sometimes the result of the Psalmist's conviction that he is one of the chosen people, but often it arises directly from the Psalmist's own past experience of the lovingkindness of his God.

It should however be noted that a Psalmist's sense of the lovingkindness of JEHOVAH and of the fact that He allows Himself to be approached by His worshipper does not do away with the Psalmist's deep feeling of the mystery which surrounds the Creator and His providences. These are above man's comprehension and fill him with awe: "Thy way was in the sea, . . . And thy footsteps were not known" (lxxvii. 19). JEHOVAH'S works need to be searched out (xcii. 5 ff, cxi. 2) and His words in the *Torah* must be studied (cxix. 18, 125, 129). The Psalmists never use the word "transcendent," but often they confess the truth which is latent in the word: "Who is like unto JEHOVAH our God, That hath his seat on high, That humbleth himself to regard the heavens and the earth?" (cxiii. 5, 6, RV marg.).

In general it must be said that a Psalmist prays as an individual, even if his Psalm contains petitions for Israel. It is only rarely (if ever) that he seems to speak as a chorus leader directly in the name of his people without reference to his own cares and necessities. On this point more is said below in § 9 (a).

The main impression which the Psalms leave upon the mind is of their

directness and reality as prayers. A few Psalms may indeed have been composed for liturgical use, and so may have acquired a formal character. A larger number which were originally private compositions have been applied to public use, and may have had their language generalised. But in far the greatest number we feel the fresh outpouring of an individual human spirit approaching JEHOVAH with the cry, "My God."

The Psalms are, in their broad outlines, model prayers: they contain words of petition, words of praise, and words of communion. The element of petition is no doubt very large, for a Psalmist's needs are many: sickness, famine, pestilence, and the fear of enemies bring him to his knees. But though he prays against present evils, he does not forget past deliverances. Indeed, petition and praise are so closely mingled in a number of Psalms that many modern commentators suspect interpolation and emend freely by omission or otherwise. A striking instance is supplied by Ps xl. Here to petition and praise is added the element of communion: a Psalmist speaks freely before his God of his experiences and of his thoughts about them. Though he never says, "Our Father," yet he prays as to a Father.

The Christian student of the Psalms may be surprised to find in them so small an element of confession of sin. (Compare § 2, page xvi.) On the other hand, a very deep humility towards God is conspicuous in the Psalter: "What is man," one Psalmist asks, "that thou art mindful of him?" (viii. 4), and another confesses, "So brutish was I, and ignorant; I was as a beast before thee" (lxxiii. 22). So we find not seldom that the enemies of the Psalmist are described as "the presumptuous" (Heb. *zādīm*, xix. 13), or "the proud" (Heb. *gē'im*, xciv. 2, cxl. 5). They may be described generally as the people who have no thought of God, who say, "JEHOVAH will not see," who ignore His commandments and oppress the poor.

In contrast with these the Psalmists show themselves humble and yet confident. They look to JEHOVAH, as servants look to the hand of their master (cxxxiii. 2). And they are confident in this attitude. A Psalmist will call himself or his way "perfect" (Heb. *tāmīm*, xviii. 23, cf ci. 2), and again he will declare that JEHOVAH "shall reward me after my righteous dealing" (xviii. 20, P-B). In Ps lxxxvi. 2 the Psalmist speaks of himself as him that is "godly," but the meaning of this is simply "one whom God favoureth" (cf AV marg). Again, when a Psalmist makes such a claim as "I have observed thy law," the claim is to be understood in a relative sense: others (e.g. in Maccabean times: 1 Macc i. 52, 2 Macc iv. 14) forsook the law, but the Psalmist

remained faithful. So when the word "perfect" (Heb. *tām* or *tāmīm*) occurs, the thought is rather of faithfulness in the worship of JEHOVAH than of absolute perfection of moral conduct.

The attitude of the perfect man towards JEHOVAH was marked by faithfulness to Him as the only God to Whom any worship was to be paid, and also by a deep reverence for His law and for His people. The perfect man must do good to the poor of JEHOVAH's people. He must keep the moral law; he must use no slander nor permit it (xv. 3, ci. 5). Towards JEHOVAH he must be *mEEK*, i.e. conscious with awe of His active presence in the World, and observant of His law.

On the other hand, the duty of sacrificing to JEHOVAH which is enforced in the Pentateuch is hardly treated as an obligation in the Psalter. More than this: some Psalmists actually speak of substitutes for sacrifice, which are accepted by JEHOVAH: they offer not bullocks, but the "fruit of the lips"—words of praise—a new song of thanksgiving. In the Pentateuch sacrifices are prescribed in minute detail, and phrases such as "a statute for ever" and "due for ever throughout your generations" are used in reference to them: Lev vi. 22, vii. 34, 36, *al*. The Psalms on the other hand preserve the memory of a non-ritual type of religion, which existed side by side with that of the Pentateuch.

Passages which accept the ordinance of sacrifice are the following:

(a) xx. 3 (addressed to a king going out to war), "(JEHOVAH) remember all thy offerings, And accept thy burnt sacrifice."

(b) li. 19 (surely an addition to the Psalm: cf *vs.* 16, 17): "Then shalt thou delight in the sacrifices of righteousness, in burnt offering and whole burnt offering: Then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar."

(c) lxvi. 13-15, "I will come into thy house with burnt offerings, I will pay thee my vows,...I will offer unto thee burnt offerings of fatlings."

Other passages insist on the necessity that the man who sacrifices must have hands clean from wrong: cf iv. 5, note.

On the other hand there are passages which deny that sacrifice is acceptable to JEHOVAH. Such are (a) xl. 6, "Sacrifice and meal offering thou hast no delight in;...Burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required." (b) l. 9, "I will take no bullock out of thy house, Nor he-goats out of thy folds." (c) li. 16 f, "Thou delightest not in sacrifice that I should give it:...The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit."

Akin to these passages which deprecate sacrifice so strongly are others

which suggest that a substitute may be found for the offering of slain beasts. Psalmists regard their Psalms as sacrificial offerings as in

(a) xix. 14, "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in thy sight." Here the Hebrew word for *acceptable* (*lō-rāzōn*) is that used in Lev xxii. 21 of an animal sacrifice.

(b) civ. 34, "Let my meditation *be sweet* unto him." So of animal sacrifice in the Hebrew of Mal iii. 4 ("be pleasant").

(c) cxli. 2, "Let my prayer be set forth as incense before thee; The lifting up of my hands as the evening oblation."

Praise is the true sacrifice, as the writer confesses in Heb xiii. 15, and so a Psalmist sings in xxix. 1, according to the true text, "Give unto JEHOVAH glory and strength," without the false reading, "Bring young rams." So again in cxix. 108 one prays, "Accept, I beseech thee, the freewill offerings of my mouth, O JEHOVAH."

But we need not assume that the Psalmists who deprecate sacrifices were moving to abolish the sacrificial system. They were most probably quietists, who desired only that some offering of spiritual value should accompany the offering of a slain beast. Men who were so persistent in their praises of the Law (as, for instance, the author of Ps cxix) could hardly have worked for the abolition of the sacrifices which the Law commanded. To suppose that Psalmists (and Prophets!) must have been revolted by the sight of an altar running with blood is to assume that they viewed things in a wholly modern light. After all the majority of the laity on the great festivals saw the altar only at a distance. What their feelings were on such occasions is indicated in Eccclus i. 11-21. There is no suggestion of any repulsion: the note of the narrative is rather of exaltation.

In the Psalter (it should be observed) the individual comes to his own. Not seldom a Psalmist feels himself alone with God: friends and acquaintance stand afar off. Perhaps he is on a sick bed: no man is near to help him; but he realises that JEHOVAH stands beside him. He discovers that JEHOVAH is the saviour of his single life and not only the saviour of the people of Israel: he cries aloud, "O my God!"

With this arousal of self-consciousness comes a mental questioning of the future. When a Psalmist lies on a bed of sickness he naturally prays for recovery. There are several such prayers in the Psalter. But he must be conscious that he will not always recover, however well he prays. What then? The answer given by some Psalmists is, If you are a righteous man, you will survive in a happy posterity: "The children

of thy servants (O JEHOVAH) shall continue, And their seed shall be established before thee" (cii. 28). Such promises we know brought great comfort to some; witness the case of David (2 Sam vii. 12, 13, 19). Still, human nature being what it is, there must have been some hankering after a personal immortality, and the Psalter is just the place in which we should expect it to find utterance. But we should also expect the ancient Song Book of the nation to enshrine the oldest thoughts of Israel on this as on other subjects. And so we find a practical denial of individual survival in several Psalms: "Cast off among the dead,... Whom thou rememberest no more" (lxxxviii. 5); "The dead praise not JAH, Neither any that go down into silence" (cxv. 17). But further experience of JEHOVAH'S way with His people and further reflexion on it aroused a hope of survival which arrived at expression in a few Psalms. If we look for indications of this hope and not for definite statements of belief we shall find the former in xvi. 8-11, xvii. 14, 15, xlix. 15 ("he shall receive me"), lxxiii. 24-28. On the other hand there is no such clearly exprest faith as an Egyptian shows in the following prayer, a prayer in prospect of Death and Judgment, address to the god Thoth or Hermes. Cf *The Psalmists*, pp. 182 f. :

Thoth, take me to Hermopolis, the city where life is pleasant. Thou suppliest my needs with bread and beer: thou keepest my mouth when I speak. Ah! may I have Thoth behind me on the (great) To-morrow. Come to me, when I must enter in before the Judges, and when I go forth from their presence justified....Thou who bringest water to a far place, come and save me, for I observe (keep) the silence of the pious man.

In the Psalms there is a trembling hope, not an assured belief.

Further, when we speak of the "Piety of the Psalmists," we must recollect some of the moral limitations which hampered them. They lived in an age of War and Vendetta, in which the Avenger of blood was one of the recognised instruments of Justice. The Psalmists accepted the principle quoted and repudiated in Matt v. 43, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy." They were unceasingly conscious of the presence of enemies. If we assume that most of the Psalms are of post-exilic date, then the authors lived at a time when many heathen of different nations had pressed into the land of Israel, and straitened the Hebrews in their ancestral homes. The book of Nehemiah (ii. 19, iv. 1, 2, 7, xiii. 1, 2, 23, 24) shows that foreigners, Ammonites, Arabians, Philistines, and half-foreigners (Samaritans) were living in close proximity to the Jews, and causing serious trouble. There must have been many jealousies among a population so variously mixt. Recent dis-

sensions (1929) between Jew and Arab have cost more than two hundred lives within a few weeks.

Moreover there was another line of cleavage in the population. Beside the division between Jew and foreigner there was the old-standing division between rich and poor. The latter are mentioned frequently in the Psalms under various designations. They are the "afflicted" (Heb. *'ānāyīm*), the "needy" (Heb. *ēbyōnīm*), the "meek" (Heb. *'ānāvīm*). They form the unofficial element in the population; they are distinguished by their unworldliness; they are more truly faithful to JEHOVAH; they make no compromise in religion. Their rivals are the wealthy who are the rulers and judges of the nation. They enjoy the good things of the world; they deny JEHOVAH by neglecting His law; they afflict those whom they rule. The cry against their injustice goes up in many Psalms, as in xiv, lxxxii, xciv. Cf xvi. 3, note.

The bitterness of a Psalmist is sometimes to be explained by the fact that it was not an "open enemy" who did him harm. Often the complaint is against the use of the tongue as a weapon. False witness (lii. 1-4) and secret slander (cxx. 2, 3) assail the Psalmist. Moreover when he lies upon a bed of sickness his *morale* is weakened by the consciousness that enemies are whispering joyfully together and asserting that he will not recover (xli. 7, 8).

In addition to this S. Mowinckel has shown the probability that in some cases the Psalmist (when he complains of the "tongue" of his enemies) means that they have brought him to a sick bed by the use of spells. See §9 (b), *Allusions to the Black Art*.

### (b) THE RELIGION OF THE PSALMISTS AND THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION

Christianity was born in Judaea, and its founder was brought up "under the Law." In the first days Christians were regarded as Jews, and in the mind of non-Christians they were distinguished from other Jews only by the fact that they accepted Jesus of Nazareth as Messiah. So for a time Judaism and Christianity seemed to be mother and child.

But Christianity and Judaism began to part company early in the first century, when St Paul made his successful stand against the imposition of the rite of circumcision on Gentiles (Acts xv). Later at Corinth the Apostle removed his small congregation of converts away from the synagogue and its unfriendly Jewish atmosphere to the house of Titus Justus, a Gentile proselyte (Acts xviii. 4-7). So again at Ephesus

St Paul, after first reasoning on behalf of the Kingdom of God for three months in the synagogue, ended by transferring his activities to the Gentile school of Tyrannus (Acts xix. 8, 9). Later still the peculiarly Christian observance of the First Day of the Week began to clash with the Jewish observance of the Seventh Day. Christianity which seemed at first to be only a new Jewish sect went on to reveal itself as a Religion with a standing of its own.

Now there are three types of Hebrew religion which are represented in the O.T. In the middle sections of the Pentateuch the legal and ritual side is presented. Here men are taught the importance of Worship, even in its details, and the necessity of fulfilling the whole law without making any distinction between that which is ceremonial and that which is moral.

In the Prophets we find a second type. They teach the necessity of placing moral duty above the claims of ceremonial and of burnt offering; God is to be served by serving one's neighbour. This type is stamped with Hosea's motto, "I desire mercy, and not sacrifice." It is marked by a righteous indignation against the men who would compound for licence to sin by the offering of "rivers of oil" and a multitude of slain bulls and goats.

In the Psalter a third type of Hebrew religion is represented, akin indeed to its two companions, but also distinct from them. It is related to the "legal" type by the fact that it is deeply concerned with worship: on the other hand it is related to the prophetic type by the prominence it gives to moral character: the Psalmist like the prophet is assured that JEHOVAH demands *hesed*, "lovingkindness," from His worshippers. The Psalmist is as anxious as the "Priestly" writer in the Pentateuch to offer sacrifice to his God, only the Psalmist's favourite offering is a "new song," and not a "male (animal) without blemish." Again the Psalmist ranges himself by the side of the prophet and asks in JEHOVAH's name in the indignant tone of an Amos or Isaiah, "Will I eat the flesh of bulls, Or drink the blood of goats?"

The Psalmist's own type of Hebrew religion may be called the devotional type, in which the individual soul holds communion with God. Among the prophets, Jeremiah sets an example of this communion, and shows it in his book; e.g. in xii. 1 ff, xv. 15-18, *al.* But the prophets are mainly concerned with religion as it bears on public events, as Isaiah with the Assyrian crisis, and Jeremiah himself with the Chaldean threat to the existence of the Jewish kingdom. The Psalmist on the other hand shows us the way of the human soul with God, sometimes in joy

and confidence, as in xvi. 5-11, but more often perhaps in doubt and distress, as in Pss vi and xlii, xliii.

It is this third type of the Hebrew religion which furnishes the strongest and most intimate tie with Christianity. The Christians of the first and second centuries broke with legal Judaism, but they continued to cherish the Psalms which they had learnt as Jews; the character of their devotional life remained unaltered. The early chapters of the Acts show us the Apostles using passages from the Psalms (Acts i. 20; ii. 25 ff, 34, 35; iv. 25, 26) at critical moments for their own encouragement and guidance; and their valuation of the Psalter was accepted down the centuries and in all divisions of the Christian Church. Nestorian and Monophysite in the East, Catholic and Arian in the West, all gave the Psalms an important place in their public worship. The Manichaeans indeed who rejected the O.T. rejected the Psalter with it, and the followers of Marcion did the same. Still no use has a better claim to be called a Catholic custom than the use of the Psalter in Christian worship.

But we cannot explain the great position assigned to the Psalter in the Christian Church by a simple reference to the conservatism of the Apostles and other leaders of the Church. The men who "turned the world upside down" were not mere conservatives (Acts xvii. 6). Only the existence of a truly spiritual continuity between the Psalms and the Gospel can explain the deep affection with which the Christians of every age have clung to the Psalter.

The childlike daring with which the Psalmists reason, expostulate and plead with *JEHOVAH* is just an anticipation of the Christian freedom which is not content to use prayer-formulae, but opens its heart in simplicity to God. The Psalmist appeals to *JEHOVAH* on his sick bed acknowledging that his affliction comes from his God (Pss vi, xxxii, xxxviii), and confessing that such affliction has a purpose merciful towards himself (Ps cxix. 67, 71). So St Paul appeals to the Lord because of his "thorn in the flesh," but he sees in spite of it that the Master is dealing gently and wisely with him (2 Cor xii. 7-10). The Psalmist and St Paul are brothers in devotion: the same spirit of prayer is in them both. The religion of both is indeed theo-centric. The name of "religion" has been given to Buddhism and to some modern moral philosophies from which the notion of "God" is absent. But the religion of the Psalmists and that of the disciples of Christ stand together at the opposite pole from Buddhism and similar philosophies. Both consist in the main of a personal realisation of God. The Psalmist is known

to God before his birth (cxxxix. 15); God has taught him from his youth (lxxi. 17, cf xxvii. 10); God is his dwelling place (xc. 1), his refuge (xci. 2), his companion by the way (xxiii. 4, cxxxix. 9, 10). "I called and He heard me" is the language of the Psalmist. All this Christ summed up for his disciples in the words, "When ye pray, say, Father" (Luke xi. 2). Both in the Psalms and in the Gospels it is an axiom that men may approach God, and that real intercourse can exist between God and man.

But the Psalter represents in part also the second—the prophetic—type of Hebrew religion. There is a prophetic element in the Psalms. This manifests itself not in direct predictions, but rather in ideal pictures in which the coming Messianic Age was presented to the Jews of pre-Christian times. These pictures were recognised for what they were by early Christians, who accordingly felt the Psalms to be a double link for them with the old Hebrew religion. Both in its example of the practice of devotion and also in its Messianic element the Psalter made a successful appeal to the earliest Christians. They continued to learn from it and would not let it go.

### (c) THE MESSIANIC HOPE IN THE PSALTER

Israel the nation remains to this day, though its greater neighbours have perished. Syria, Assyria and Babylon are no more, but Israel was "saved by hope." The nation passed from one foreign yoke to another, and finally suffered Dispersion, but it still survives. In this survival the Messianic hope played a large part: when all the sky was dark the Jew comforted himself with the thought, "The Son of David comes not till the money (*pērūtāh*) be spent from the purse" (B.T. *Sanhedrin*, 97 a).

The Messianic hope may be described as the expectation of the return of Israel's Golden Age. This was the Age of David and Solomon. Then Israel and Judah were united under one king, who for his greatness received tribute from Moab, Edom and Ammon and even from the Syrians of Damascus (2 Sam viii. 6). And moreover there was a "Golden King" of this Golden Age, for David was distinguished as having been selected by JEHOVAH to be anointed.

It is in the light of these facts that such Psalms as ii, lxxii, lxxxv. 9–13 and lxxxix are to be read. In lxxxix the Psalmist, writing at a time of national disaster, looks longingly to JEHOVAH's promises to David and his descendants. He feels that the king of Israel is the beloved of the Holy One of Israel (v. 18), for JEHOVAH Himself has said, "He (the

king) shall cry unto me, Thou art my father" (v. 26). Here is a link with Ps ii where conversely JEHOVAH says to the king, "Thou art my son" (v. 7). Both Psalms (ii and lxxxix) are concerned with the fortunes of the Kingdom of God, though in lxxxix it is the Davidic line rather than the person of a future Davidic king which comes into view.

Ps lxxxv. 8-13 contains a vivid and spiritual picture of the Messianic Age, but without using the word "kingdom" or mentioning the king. Pss lxxxv and lxxxix are appointed for use at Christmastide. Ps lxxii gives a picture of the Messianic Age: the poor and needy receive justice and are cared for by the king.

These expectations of the coming of the Kingdom of God are taken up in the New Testament. The preaching, first, of John the Baptist and afterwards of our Lord was, "The kingdom of heaven (which ye have long expected) is at hand": Matt iii. 2, iv. 17. Jesus taught his disciples to pray, "Thy kingdom come": Matt vi. 10 = Luke xi. 2. So when he made his final public entry into Jerusalem he was greeted with cries of "Blessed is the kingdom that cometh, the kingdom of our father David": Mark xi. 10.

It is important to note that the Messianic element in the Psalms is somewhat different in character from the Messianic element in the Prophets. It could not be otherwise, for the Prophets have a different function from the Psalmists. The Prophets were Preachers, Announcers of God's Will to men; the Psalmists were Worshipers who led men in their devotions. So Prediction, the Announcement of Coming Events or (again) the Warning to prepare for the Future, belongs rather to the Prophets than to the Psalmists. The headings in the AV seem to presuppose this, for when they describe a Psalm as a Prediction, they proceed further to describe the Psalmist as "the Prophet." But it must be remembered that (generally speaking) the Psalmist is a Worshiper, not a Prophet. Contrast for instance Isa liii with Ps xxii. There the Prophet is primarily making a great announcement, whereas the Psalmist in the greater part of the Psalm (v. 1-22) is simply pouring out his suffering soul to God—not to man at all. The sufferings which he experienced are parallel up to a certain point with those of our Lord, and so typical of them, in fact a faint representation of them. But it should be observed that the parallel is not complete. A careful reading of v. 16-25 shows that the Psalmist (unlike our Lord) is delivered from death. He is brought very near but at the last moment he is delivered by JEHOVAH: hence the great outburst of praise with which the Psalm concludes.

The great fact to which Ps xxii testifies, both to Jews of all time and also to Christians, is that great sufferings together with apparent desertion of the Sufferer by God are no proof that the Believer in God is really so deserted. Here the sufferings of a truly Religious Soul give testimony to the fact that the sufferings of a man do not prove that he is rejected of God. The Psalm prepares the way for the doctrine of a Suffering Messiah, the doctrine which was a stumbling-block to the Jews (1 Cor i. 23).

A somewhat similar account may be given of Ps ii. The picture given there is Eastern in character: it does not emphasize the beneficence of Christ's rule: still in some important points it is parallel to the New Testament picture: *first*, the kingdom is the kingdom of God—a truly Divine kingdom; *secondly*, the kingdom is universal—over all the nations; and *thirdly*, the Son is associated with JEHOVAH in rule.

Ps cx gives perhaps too clear a picture of a victor in war to be readily recognised as Messianic. But it has marked Messianic features, and especially that the King is appointed by JEHOVAH and protected by JEHOVAH. Moreover the King is also Priest—Priest for ever, and so distinguisht even above the King of Ps ii.

If we may combine the three pictures given in Pss ii, xxii and cx we get indeed a Messianic figure. We see a king, to whom kings and judges are summoned to pay homage (ii. 12), a sufferer at whose story all the ends of the world shall turn to JEHOVAH (xxii. 27), and a priest whose priesthood has no end (cx. 4).

#### (*d*) USE OF THE PSALMS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The following is a list of the chief quotations made from the Psalter.

Ps ii. 1, 2 = Acts iv. 25, 26. The Apostles were arrested for having preached in Jerusalem the resurrection of Jesus; they were brought before the Sanhedrin, and finally dismissed with threatenings. On their return home they betook themselves to prayer, and confessed that what had befallen them had happened according to the foreknowledge of God. The Holy Spirit had put into the mouth of David the words:

Why did the Gentiles rage,  
And the peoples imagine vain things?  
The kings of the earth set themselves in array,  
And the rulers were gathered together,  
Against the Lord, and against his Anointed. (Acts iv. 25, 26.)

The Apostles and their company found a striking parallel to this scene in the great events which they had themselves witnessed. "Of a truth,"

they said, "in this city against thy holy Servant Jesus, whom thou didst anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, were gathered together" (*ibid.* v. 27).

Ps ii. 7 = Acts xiii. 33 (in St Paul's sermon at Antioch in Pisidia), "As also it is written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." God, says the Apostle, fulfilled this promise in that He raised up Jesus (from the dead). Cf Heb i. 5, "Unto which of the angels said he, Thou art my Son?"

Ps viii. 4-6 = Heb ii. 6-8. Jesus was made a little lower than the angels for the sake of suffering death, but God crowned him with glory and honour. Cf 1 Cor xv. 27 = Ps viii 6*b*, "He put all things in subjection under his feet."

Ps xvi. 8-11 = Acts ii. 25-28 (in St Peter's speech at Pentecost), "Thou wilt not leave my soul in Hades, Neither wilt thou give thy Holy One to see corruption." David foreseeing this spake of the resurrection of the Christ. Cf Acts xiii. 35 (in St Paul's sermon at Antioch in Pisidia) where a similar application of the passage is given. David died and saw corruption, but he whom God raised up saw no corruption.

Ps xxii. 18 = John xix. 24, "They parted my garments among them, And upon my vesture did they cast lots."

Note (a) Our Lord's cry on the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me" (Ps xxii. 1 = Mark xv. 34, cf Matt xxvii. 46) is not chronicled by either Evangelist as a quotation from the Psalms.

(b) Ps xxii. 16*c*, "They pierced my hands and my feet" is not cited in the N.T., but by Justin Martyr, *Dialogus cum Tryphone*, cap 104 (ἄρουξάν, as LXX). The rendering "pierced" depends on an emendation of MT.

Ps xl. 6-8*a* = Heb x. 5-7,

Wherefore when he (Christ) cometh into the world, he saith,  
Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not,  
But a body didst thou prepare for me;  
In whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hadst no pleasure:  
Then said I, Lo, I am come  
(In the roll of the book it is written of me)  
To do thy will, O God.

In this quotation the characteristic rendering of the LXX is preserved, "But a body didst thou prepare for me" (σῶμα δὲ κατηρτίσω μοι). The rendering "body" for "ears" (MT), "Ears thou hast digged for me," is usually explained as a very early corruption of the Greek text, σῶμα, "body," for ὠτία, "ears," but another explanation is possible. The

meaning of MT is "Thou hast given me ears to receive the announcement of thy will." LXX by a Midrashic extension renders, "A body thou hast prepared me, i.e. with which to perform thy will." The quotation introduces Messiah as THE DOER OF THE WILL OF GOD.

Ps xlv. 6, 7 = Heb i. 8, 9,

But of the Son he saith,

Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever;  
 And the sceptre of uprightness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.  
 Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity;  
 Therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee  
 With the oil of gladness above thy fellows.

According to this rendering the writer of Hebrews gives the title of "God" to the Son; there is however much to be said for the alternative rendering, "God is thy throne," both in the Psalm and also in the quotation of the Psalm in the Hebrews. Bold as such an expression is, it is no bolder than "Thou, Lord, hast been our dwelling place In all generations" (Ps xc. 1). The second rendering equally with the first suits the writer's object of drawing a contrast between the Son and the angels. MESSIAH HAS A HIGHER PLACE ASSIGNED HIM THAN THE HIGHEST CREATED BEINGS.

Ps lxix. 9a = John ii. 17, "His disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house shall eat me up" ("hath eaten me up," AV). The disciples understood the word "house" of the Temple, but the corresponding word in the Hebrew is ambiguous. It means "household" in such phrases as "the house of Israel," "house of Judah" (1 K xii. 21), and it probably has the same meaning in the Psalm, for the Psalmist thinks in v. 6 of "those who wait on thee," i.e. of those who might be reckoned as the "household" of God: Ephes ii. 19.

If on the other hand we understand "thine house" of the Temple, we get a reference to the Temple which stands in isolation: even in v. 35 it is the cities of Judah (and not the Temple) which are to be rebuilt.

If the Psalm comes from Nehemiah or his circle we may take the fact that Nehemiah came "to seek the welfare of the children of Israel" (Neh ii. 10) as an illustration of the Psalmist's "zeal for the household of Jehovah." The future tense in John ii. 17, *καταφάγεταί με*, comes from the Septuagint of Ps lxix. 9 (lxviii. 10): MT has a past tense. MESSIAH IS THE SUFFERING CHAMPION OF THE HOUSEHOLD OF GOD.

Ps lxix. 9b = Rom xv. 3, For Christ also pleased not himself; but, as it is written, "The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell upon me."

This is a characteristic instance of St Paul's method of quotation. He uses the words of the O.T. in preference to his own to describe a particular fact or situation, but he does not mean that they are in the proper sense a prediction of something which happened to our Lord. The Psalmist of Ps lxxix was a real person, and the experiences he describes were his own.

Ps lxxviii. 2 = Matt xiii. 35, "I will open my mouth in parables: I will utter things hidden from the foundation of the world."

This quotation belongs to the same class as the preceding (lxxix. 9b). The Evangelist introduces it with a (comparatively) lengthy introduction: he is in fact on the defensive to explain why Jesus should have used in his teaching so many parables, which were not understood. His words are, "All these things spake Jesus in parables unto the multitudes; and without a parable spake he nothing unto them: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet" (Matt xiii. 34). The "prophet" in this case is the Psalmist.

Ps lxxxii. 6 = John x. 34, "Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods?"

Our Lord's main claim in John x as well as in other parts of the Fourth Gospel is that he has an authority which he derives from the Father. He claims this authority for his teaching and for the "signs" which he performs (John v. 19, 20, xvii. 7, 8). He sums up his claim in the words "I and the Father are one." He uses the title "The Son" as a sign that he possesses this authority, and in his appeal to Ps lxxxii. 6 he puts himself beside the men of old time who as administrators of the law of God are there called "gods" and "sons of the Most High." Against the Jewish theory that "Moses" was the only authority, Christ sets his own claim (John ix. 29).

The early Christians used many borrowings from the O.T. to set forth their belief concerning the Christ. So the words of JEHOVAH in lxxxix. 27, "I will make him my firstborn," suggested a title for our Lord which is taken up in Col i. 15, "the firstborn of all creation," and in v. 18, "the firstborn from the dead." In Heb i. 6 the writer describes Jesus as "the firstborn" without qualification, adding from xcvi. 7 the words, "Worship him, all ye gods."

Ps xcvi. 7 = Heb i. 6, "And when he shall have brought in the first-born again into the world he saith, *And let all the angels of God worship him*" (see Westcott, *Hebrews*, pp. 21-23). This is no doubt a reference to Ps xcvi. 7, "Worship him, all ye gods." The Hebrew text, using a rhetorical figure, calls upon the gods of the heathen to submit themselves

to JEHOVAH. The Septuagint on the other hand, followed by the writer of *Hebrews*, calls upon the angels, God's ministers, to worship, i.e. bow down to, one who is Divine. **MESSIAH INCARNATE STILL IS GREATER THAN THE ANGELS.**

Ps cii. 25-27 = Heb i. 10-12, "Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth, And the heavens are the works of thy hands: They shall perish; but thou continuest: And they all shall wax old as doth a garment; And as a mantle shalt thou roll them up, As a garment, and they shall be changed: But thou art the same, And thy years shall not fail." Here the writer follows closely the Septuagintal text of the Psalm. This differs from the MT chiefly in the addition of the title *Lord* in the address to the creating Power, i.e. (according to v. 2) to the Son. The Son is address as *Lord*, and the quality of continuance (v. 11) is ascribed to him. **MESSIAH IS ETERNAL.**

Ps cx. 1 = Matt xxii. 44, "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, Till I put thine enemies underneath thy feet." The comment Jesus makes on this is, "If David (the reputed author of the Psalter) then calleth him Lord, how is he his son?" The conclusion to be drawn is that Messiah is greater than David, as indeed the rest of the Psalm suggests. **MESSIAH TAKES A HIGHER SEAT AND A MORE HIGHLY FAVOURED POSITION THAN DAVID.**

Ps cx. 1 = Heb i. 13, "Sit thou on my right hand, Till I make thine enemies the footstool of thy feet." The quotation is introduced with the words, "But of which of the angels hath he said at any time...?" The point which the writer makes is the same as in his quotation of Ps xcvi. 7—**MESSIAH IS GREATER THAN THE ANGELS.**

Ps cx. 4 = Heb v. 6, "Thou art a priest for ever After the order of Melchizedek." In the MT the words are probably address to some ruler or monarch whose faithfulness to JEHOVAH is rewarded by the grant of the title of *priest* of a special order. The qualifying words "for ever" suggest that it is Messiah who is thus honoured. **MESSIAH HAS A PRIESTHOOD, WHICH IS ETERNAL.**

Ps cxviii. 22, 23 = Mark xii. 10, 11, "The stone which the builders rejected, The same was made the head of the corner: This was from the Lord, And it is marvellous in our eyes." Jesus made this quotation to point the moral of the Parable of the Vineyard, which he had just then set before his hearers. The husbandmen rejected and slew the son of the owner of the vineyard, and similarly the chief priests and scribes, who should have been God's faithful husbandmen, were rejecting Jesus His son and were about to kill him. Jesus tells them that their rejection

of him does not prevent his "election" by God to be the "head of the corner," i.e. the foundation stone of the kingdom. JEHOVAH'S CHOICE OF MESSIAH STANDS.

As we examine these quotations we see that the early Christians were wont to express Christian thoughts in the language of the O.T. and further that they found in the O.T. historical parallels for some of the greatest events recorded in the N.T., for instance in Ps ii. 1, 2 (Acts iv. 25, 26). O.T. history repeats itself in a more spiritual form in the N.T. On the other hand there is little (if anything) in the Psalter which can be called a clear prediction of any event of Christian history. Even the great scene described in xxii. 1-21 is not to be considered as a description in advance of the events of Calvary: see Introduction to Ps xxii. Our Lord was not the first faithful one who when near to death was mockt by a crowd who exulted in his sufferings: he was not the first whose garments were divided with a casting of lots. But the case of the righteous sufferer of Ps xxii was indeed a parallel to that of our Lord on the cross, as we may gather from our Lord's quotation of *v.* 1. The parallel consists in four broad facts: *first*, the sufferer is faithful to JEHOVAH; *secondly*, his sufferings bring him near to death; *thirdly*, human sympathy is withheld from him; *fourthly*, when his story is told, it is the means of turning many to the Lord.

It should be added that if simple prediction is not to be found in xxii it is surely not to be found elsewhere. No other Psalm approaches it in the clear and detailed view which it gives of a particular situation. The Psalter as a whole by its parallels drawn from the spiritual life does indeed throw light on the meaning of the Gospel story, but it does not tell the main features of that story in advance, as some Christians once supposed.

### § 7. POETICAL FORM IN THE PSALMS

In Biblical Hebrew there is no word for "Prose," and no word for "Poetry." The Hebrews were conscious of "Song" and of "Music," but Poetry had as yet no name. The distinction between poetry and prose is difficult to draw, especially in the East. In the far West, Walt Whitman has written down poetic thought in lines which in form are simply prose. In the Semitic East Muhammad wrote the Kuran in rimed prose, sometimes with, but often without, the true poetic note.

The Psalms are no doubt to be accounted as poetry, but in saying this we must not give to the word "poetry" all the associations which belong to it in modern usage. One form which is characteristic of all

Semitic poetry appears at a very early date. Thus we have in Gen iv. 23, 24 the following lines which are printed in RV as poetry:

Adah and Zillah, hear my voice;  
 Ye wives of Lamech, hearken unto my speech:  
 For I have slain a man for wounding me,  
 And a young man for bruising me:  
 If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold,  
 Truly Lamech seventy and sevenfold.

These lines are said to contain a boast over the invention of the sword by Tubal-cain, the son of Lamech, and they are sometimes called "The Song of the Sword," but are they indeed to be reckoned "poetry"? Are they not rather a "proverb" or "parable," in Hebrew, *māshāl*? A *māshāl* is a brief pointed saying, involving a comparison, as of Lamech with Cain, but it stands on the doubtful border-line between poetry and prose: cf Num xxi. 27-30 and the prayer of Jabez in 1 Chr iv. 10, where the comparison is between a beginning in sorrow and a later life of prosperity.

If it be asked why such passages as Gen iv. 23, 24 are reckoned as poetry, the answer is that they are written with parallel members. For the most constant and conspicuous feature of Hebrew poetry is that which is called Parallelism. Usually the verse of a Hebrew Psalm is composed of two members which are "parallel," i.e. the second member repeats the thought of the first, but in different words.

I know all the fowls of the mountains:  
 And the wild beasts of the field are with me. Ps l. 11.

And again,

Will I eat the flesh of bulls,  
 Or drink the blood of goats? Ps l. 13.

And yet again,

Thou givest thy mouth to evil,  
 And thy tongue frameth deceit. Ps l. 19.

Yet another fact is to be noted. The two members of a verse are usually of nearly equal length or "weight." They do not indeed correspond syllable for syllable, but (to take an example) the numbers are seven syllables and six in l. 11, seven and six again in l. 13, and seven and seven in l. 19, reckoned according to the Masoretic text. No doubt the pre-Christian pronunciation of Hebrew differed somewhat from that preserved by the Masoretes, so that the same word might e.g. be disyllabic in one, and trisyllabic in the other pronunciation, but for comparisons made within the Masoretic text, the Masoretic pronunciation

suffices. As a first mark of Hebrew poetry we find in each verse two parallel lines, parallel in sense, and nearly equivalent in weight.

But parallelism is often varied by the introduction of a third member into the verse. This third member is semi-independent: it introduces or supplements the parallel pair, but stands outside the parallelism itself. Thus we find in Ps xxxvii. 25,

*I have been young, and now am old;  
Yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken,  
Nor his seed begging their bread.*

The first member introduces two parallel members.

In Ps ii. 2 the third member, standing outside the parallelism, completes the sense of the verse with singular force,

*The kings of the earth set themselves,  
And the rulers take counsel together,  
Against JEHOVAH, and against his anointed.*

This arrangement of the verse in holding back the important clause till the end serves to emphasise the incredible daring of the conspirators.

Further it must be said that parallelism is found where the two members do not say the same thing. Some cases are of "constructive" parallelism, i.e. the first member serves as the basis on which the second rests. Thus in Ps cxix. 121,

*I have done that which is lawful and right;  
Give me not over unto those that would do me wrong.*

Sometimes again the parallelism expresses not a comparison but a contrast, as in Ps xxxvii. 21,

*The ungodly borroweth and payeth not again;  
But the righteous is gracious and giveth.*

The general impression left by a study of parallelism is that the rules or principles which govern it are free and expansive rather than rigid. Frequently the importance of the matter breaks through the bondage of form, and the parallelism, if it exists, is difficult to detect. If it be urged that such defective cases of parallelism are due to faults in the Masoretic text, it must nevertheless be said that the emendations which are employed to mend the parallelism frequently mutilate the sense, or at least weaken the nervous force of the language. The emendators ask us to believe that careless scribes improved the meaning, while they spoil the metre. It is difficult to believe. It is surely better to confess that in the Psalter Hebrew Prosody is in some respects still in the making.

Further a study of the freedom with which the Psalmists constructed their parallelisms forbids us to suppose that they were rigid in their use of metre. We noticed above that the two members of a parallelism are most frequently of equal length or "weight." But metrical theorists are not content with this approximation to metre. They press the view that a line of Hebrew poetry consists of a fixed number of accented syllables. Feet they measure by the accent: a word of three syllables and a word of two rank equally as one foot, provided that each word contains one accented syllable and no more. Thus *hash-shé-mesh* ("the sun") and *im-mí* ("my mother") are reckoned each as one metrical foot, because, though they differ in the number of syllables, they agree in containing one accented syllable and no more. A line with three accented syllables is called a "trimeter" and one of four such syllables a "tetrameter." As a specimen (in English) of the trimeter, we take Ps xxxvii. 29,

The júst / inhérit / the lánd,  
And abíde / thereín / for éver.

But this metrical system is frequently found to fail if we follow MT. Many couplets escape from its bonds. But the theorists do not hesitate. If the lines of MT do not scan, they seek by emendation to make their scansion possible.

Now the Masoretic text is not perfect, and emendation cannot be excluded from the scholar's task. But the nature and amount of emendation needs to be carefully considered. It may be said at once that the amount of emendation proposed for the sake of "the metre" is very large, and further that the general sense of a passage is often affected for the worse. A conflict between sense and sound arises, and surely sense, particularly when attested by the context, ought to have the preference. It must be remembered that very often we are judging the words of the extemporiser on the harp, not those of the writer with his pen. The singer is less hampered than the writer in his words: he can interpolate a telling word and support it with a strain of music, and again he can break off, and leave a word or even a clause to be only suggested and not expressed. In general the Psalms (as we have them) may be said to take rank between the improvisations of the minstrel and the finished poems of the writer. We may not look upon the Psalms as finished poems bound by strict rules of Prosody. We find in them not metre, but an approximation—in some cases indeed a close approximation—to metre.

Truly it is very hazardous to correct the text of a Psalm in the supposed interest of "the metre." Proposed corrections very often take the form of the omission or addition of a word, or of both omission and addition as in Ps l. 1, 2:

The God of gods, **JEHOVAH**, hath spoken, and called the earth  
From sunrising unto sunseting:  
Out of Zion the perfection of beauty  
God hath shined forth.

In the first member are perhaps six accented syllables: in the second and third we may count three each, but in the fourth there are only two accented syllables. Duhm therefore re-writes the passage as follows,

**JEHOVAH** speaks and earth is afraid  
From sunrising unto sunseting:  
Out of Zion the perfection of beauty  
The God of gods hath shined forth.

(The change of the clause "and called the earth" into "and earth is afraid" is independent of the metre and need not be considered here.) The two verses thus re-written answer well enough to the metre proposed: each member contains three accented syllables. But how does the sense fare? Surely the emphasis with which the name and description of **JEHOVAH** is introduced in the first member belongs to the original text of the Psalm? *Who* has spoken? Not some pitiful familiar spirit muttering out of the dust (cf Isa viii. 19), but **JEHOVAH** the God of gods crying aloud from Mount Zion. Each word of the great title falls solemnly from the Psalmist's lips with its accompanying note of the psaltery: "El, Elohim, **JEHOVAH**—hath spoken."

The evidence of the ancients for the use of "metre," which at first seems definite, becomes strangely indefinite when it is examined. Josephus, annalist and apologist for Judaism to the Gentiles, writes that Exod xv and Deut xxxii are written in hexameters, and that David composed odes and hymns, some in trimeters, others in pentameters. St Jerome writing about 300 years later at Bethlehem says that the book of Job from iii. 3 to xlii. 6 is written in hexameters, with dactyl and spondee. He adds further that the Psalms and other "cantica" of the Scriptures are written in such metres as Horace and Pindar employed.

Dactyls—spondees—metre, that is, measurement of words and syllables—are not these definite terms? Yes, definite for Vergil, polishing verses in his study, definite for Horace anxiously following his Greek

models, Sappho and Alcaeus, but were they definite for the Psalmist, as he sat under the shadow of a great rock harp in hand extemporising his words to fit his music? Surely not. He had something to say and says it, but we may not believe that he always kept his urgent petition or his outburst of praise within the strict limits of dactyl and spondee or any other metre. And this is just what St Jerome confesses. His words on Job are as follows:

The verses are hexameters flowing on with dactyl and spondee, and (on account of the genius of the Hebrew language) frequently admitting other feet also, not equivalent in syllables, but in quantity. At times moreover the rhythm sweet and piercing is borne onward of its own motion free from bondage to number of feet.

If this last statement is true of Job, is it not likely to be equally true of the Psalter? The facts of Hebrew Prosody would have been more accurately stated if all mention of Hexameters, Dactyls, and Spondees had been avoided.

St Jerome has acknowledged the irregularity of Hebrew poetry without suggesting any reason for it. This defect has been well supplied by Sir George Adam Smith. He begins by dwelling on the parallelism which appears throughout Hebrew verse.

The fact is (so he writes) poetry was primitively the art of saying the same beautiful things over and over again in similarly charming ways, which... (the singers) sang back to each other not in sound only but in sense as well. 'Deep calleth unto deep,' tree to tree, bird to bird, all the world over.

Again,

If parallelism be the dominant form of Hebrew verse, if the Hebrew poet be so constantly bent on a rhythm of sense, this must inevitably modify his rhythms of sound... If the governing principle of the poetry requires each line to be a clause or sentence in itself, the lines will frequently tend, of course within limits, to be longer or shorter, to have more or fewer stresses than are normal throughout the poem.

These wise words supply a valuable *caveat* to the inflexible application of metrical theory favoured by many scholars of to-day.

Another illustration of the freedom with which the Psalmists deal with poetical form is supplied by their use of strophes. In a few Psalms a strophical arrangement is to be detected with certainty, though no formal marks of division exist. Thus Ps ii is divided into four strophes, which are clearly indicated by the general sense, thus (*a*) vv. 1-3, the occasion stated; (*b*) vv. 4-6, JEHOVAH utters His oracle; (*c*) vv. 7-9, the king recites the oracle; (*d*) vv. 10-12, the nations are warned to submit. The four strophes are of approximately equal length.

Another similar case is that of Ps xcii which also falls naturally into four strophes: (a) *vv.* 1-3, praise is good; (b) *vv.* 4-8, by the counsel of ЯЕHOVAH the wicked perish; (c) *vv.* 9-11, the contrasted fates of the Psalmist and the evil-doers; (d) *vv.* 12-15, the great prosperity of the righteous.

In a few Psalms again the division into strophes is marked by a refrain; e.g. in Ps cvii; see *vv.* 8, 9-15, 16-21, 22-31, 32, "Oh that men would praise ЯЕHOVAH for his goodness." The arrangement however is not carried out fully in this Psalm, and the length of the strophes is irregular. So too in Ps lxxx we find the following scheme: *vv.* 1-3 (strophe i) with refrain, "Turn us again"; 4-7 (strophe ii) with refrain, "Turn us again"; 8-14 (double strophe) with refrain "Turn again, we beseech thee"; *vv.* 15, 16 outside the poetical scheme; 17-19 a final strophe, ending with the refrain, "Turn us again, O ЯЕHOVAH." Another instance is afforded by Ps xlvi. A refrain is found in *vv.* 7 and 11, and (provided that we supply this refrain by conjecture after *v.* 3) the Psalm falls into three strophes of approximately equal length. Duhm and Gunkel take the risk of adopting the conjecture, but the result is not happy for the sense, for the introduction of the refrain breaks the close connexion between *vv.* 3 and 4. The stormy sea of *v.* 3 which shakes the mountains is stilled and becomes in *v.* 4 a flowing river which divides itself into channels to bring water to the city of God. Here is a case of sense *versus* poetic form: surely consideration for the sense should prevail. The Psalmist is feeling after strophical form, but he does not bind himself to it.

In very many Psalms there is no indication of strophes, and the efforts of some scholars to force the text into strophical form are singularly unhappy. Examples are Ps lxxviii as arranged with many emendations by Duhm, Briggs, and others, and Ps xci as treated by Duhm. (For a criticism of Duhm see Ps xci, Introduction, § 3.) Of Ps lxxviii Gunkel writes, "Regular strophical arrangement does not appear," and of Ps xci he says, "strophical form not quite regular" (*Psalmen*, 341, 406). Alphabetical Psalms again, such as xxv, xxxiv, cxi, cxii, do not lend themselves to strophical arrangement. For a fuller discussion of a special case, that of the great lyric, Ps lxviii, see the Introduction to that Psalm, § 7. See also cxvi, Introduction, § 2; cxxxv, Introduction, § 3. We conclude that it is generally unsafe to emend the text of a Psalm to bring it into a regular strophical form. For the Psalmists strophes are occasional luxuries, not rigid necessities.

## § 8 (a). THE CONDITION OF THE HEBREW TEXT (MT)

The text of the Psalter which is commonly printed in our Hebrew Bibles is that called the Masoretic text. It has been handed down for many centuries guarded by a *Māsōrah*. This Masorah is a careful record of the minutiae of the text. It tells how often peculiar words or peculiar forms occur and it quotes the relevant passages. Where the same passage occurs twice (as in the case of 2 Sam xxii = Ps xviii) the Masorah records the variations between the two texts. Further the Masoretic text is furnished throughout the O. T. with a textual apparatus, i. e. a few variations found presumably in ancient MSS are recorded. Where this happens the reading which stands in the text is called *C'thīb* ("written"), and its fellow in the margin is called *K'ri* ("read'"), because it was "read" aloud in Divine service. Most of these variations affect only the pronunciation of a word, or alter the sense only slightly. As an instance of more importance may be cited Ps ix. 12 (Heb. 13), where the C'thib has "the poor" (*ʾānīyim*), while K'ri gives "the meek" (Heb. *ʾānāvim*). Again in xlix. 14 (Heb. 15), C'thib has "their beauty" or "their form" while K'ri gives "their strength" (AV marg), lit. "their rock."

Further the Masoretic text has been furnished with vowel points which fix not only the pronunciation, but (in many cases) the sense also. Hebrew was written originally (like the Moabite and Phoenician of the monumental inscriptions) with consonants only; the present vowel points are perhaps not earlier than the eighth century A. D. But a word written with its consonants only may be ambiguous in sense, thus in Ps xci. 3 MT agrees with EV, "from the noisome (i. e. harmful) *pestilence*" (Heb. *deber*), but LXX has ἀπὸ λόγον παραώδους, "from the *utterance* (Heb. *dābār*) that bringeth trouble." If *deber* be accepted, the reference is to an epidemic; if *dabar* to a spell pronounced by a sorcerer to harm some man or woman. Here though the difference in sense is so great, the two substantives are spelt with the same consonants.

The care taken among the Jews to preserve the text of the O. T. uncorrupted was evidently very great, at least from the beginning of the Christian era. A tractate called *Sōphērim* ("Scribes," reckoned as a kind of appendix to the Mishnah) lays down careful rules for the writing of Biblical MSS; three mistakes invalidated a copy of the Law (the Pentateuch) for reading in the Synagogue. But evidence is lacking that equal care was exercised in the period before the Christian era, and further a comparison of MT with LXX proves to the satisfaction of most

scholars that many variations from MT existed in the Hebrew text, at the time when LXX was made. No doubt many apparent variations in the Greek are to be explained as simple misunderstandings of the Hebrew text as we have it, but there remain some passages in which it is generally allowed that the Hebrew reading which lay before the LXX translators was different from that of MT. In some of these cases the reading followed by LXX is superior; in many others it is evident that LXX has preferred the easier reading.

What estimate then are we to form of the correctness of the Masoretic text? The question is important on *two* grounds. First, our Revised Version of the O.T. has been made from this Masoretic text, and "the Revisers have generally, though not uniformly, rendered the C'th in the text, and left the K'ri in the margin" (Preface to RV, p. xiii). Secondly, modern scholars have shown great suspicion of the MT, and have proposed a very large number of "emendations" in every book of the O.T. In this they have departed widely from the standpoint of older scholars, many of whom accepted the MT at the old Jewish valuation, i.e. as practically infallible.

This last position however is, as we said above, impossible. The Masoretic text of the Psalms (like the MT of other books) contains some readings (*a*) which are "impossible" as yielding no sense, (*b*) and others which are inferior to rival readings which are represented in the LXX.

Under (*a*) we may reckon the reading of the MT in Ps xxii. 16c, "Like a lion (Heb. *kā'āri*) my hands and my feet." Here a suitable verb is wanted, but it does not occur, and it cannot be supplied from the context. Probably the enigmatic *kā'āri* is a corruption of some verbal form. The versions guess at different verbs, but none of them seems to preserve the original reading.

Under (*b*) we may refer to Ps ii. 9a. Here the AV (= RV) following the MT gives "Thou shalt break them with a rod (or "sceptre") of iron," reading the Hebrew verb as *tērō'ēm*, but the LXX reads the same Hebrew consonants with other vowels, *tir'ēm*, "Thou shalt shepherd them," or (paraphrasing the common metaphor) "Thou shalt govern them." The nations are to become the "possession" of the Son of JEHOVAH, to be sternly controlled indeed, lest they do harm to Israel, but to be dashed in pieces in case they resist; cf Rev xii. 5, "A man child who is to rule (*ποιμαίνειν*, "be shepherd over") all the nations with a rod of iron." The parallels to this promise are to be found in such passages as Isa xiv. 1, 2, lxi. 5, 6. So in xci. 3, quoted above, LXX ("from the *utterance* that

bringeth trouble") is to be preferred to MT ("from the noisome pestilence").

Enough has been said to show that the LXX has a certain value for textual questions, but it must be used with critical caution. It is pre-eminently a popular version made, we may presume, for the large Jewish population of Alexandria, who were forgetting in Egypt their own language. There is little or nothing to suggest that it was the work of scholars: it does not show the painful accuracy of Aquila, nor the finer touch of Symmachus. Rather it was made for the ignorant by those who were just a little less ignorant. It passes muster in an easy book like Genesis, but falls into strange mistakes in the Prophets, Minor and Major, and not least in the Psalter, e.g. in xxix (xxviii). 1, ἐνέγκατε τῷ κυρίῳ υἱὸς κριῶν (so P-B), where there are no "young rams" in the original, or lxxviii (lxxvii). 69, καὶ ὑποκόμησεν ὡς μονοκεράτων τὸ ἄγλασμα αὐτοῦ, where the introduction of the unicorns only darkens the sense of the passage, or civ (ciii). 17, τοῦ ἐρωδιοῦ ἡ οἰκία ἡγέται αὐτῷ (*vel αὐτῶν*), where the translator has missed the sense badly: MT gives, "As for the stork the fir trees are her house."

But even apart from the evidence of the LXX, such as it is, many scholars attempt to detect and correct errors in the MT. Their readiness to do this springs in part from a depreciatory view of the literary quality of the Psalms. Thus Duhm calls the Psalter a "People's Book" and declares that the majority of the people, for whom he supposes the Psalms were written, gave their preference to the commonplace and trivial. Indeed his judgment on the Psalms with the exception of the Psalms of Ascents (cxx-cxxxiv) is quite unfavourable (*Psalmen*, pp. xxvi-xxviii). Of the religious poems, he says many are only versified prose; many only accumulations of current phrases; few poems are by true poets (*von berufenen Dichtern*). It is not surprising that a critic who holds such views should be reckless in emendation, since the Psalmist's poetic genius seems no higher than the Commentator's own.

Other Commentators who do not venture to express themselves in Duhm's depreciatory terms nevertheless emend many passages as freely and as confidently as he. Ps lxix has been especially unfortunate. In v. 10 (Heb. 11) MT reads, "Then I wept with fasting with my very soul, and it became my reproach." The sentence is true to Hebrew idiom, for the *naphshi* ("with my very soul") takes up the first person understood in the Hebrew verbal form, "I wept," and adds to its force; cf Isa xxvi. 9. In three short words the Hebrew text of v. 10a gives the three ideas of weeping, of fasting, and of energy of appeal. But the nervous power of

the sentence does not fit in with a depreciatory estimate of the literary quality of the Psalms, and accordingly the Commentators resort to emendation. Their proposal is to assimilate the text to xxxv. 13, "I afflicted (Heb. *'innēthi*) my soul with fasting," though the Greek of the two passages differs, and though there is no transcriptional probability that a scribe would write *vā-ebkeh*, "and I wept" for an original *vā-ā'anneh*, "and I afflicted."

Another vigorous phrase which has suffered emendation is contained in lxxvi. 10, "Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee." Both Duhm and Gunkel find the words meaningless, and indeed they mean nothing, if they are taken as prose. But the Psalmist is using one of those brief sayings full of insight, which are the distinguishing marks of poetry. The demonstration of the impotence of man's wrath, when this wrath breaks itself against the opposing Will of God—this demonstration is praise of the Divine power to protect Its own. The wrath of Balak against Israel turns to JEHOVAH'S praise, when Balak's instrument, Balaam, is forced to bless the people whom he was called to ban. So the wrath of Naaman against Elisha is turned to praise of the power and beneficence of Elisha's God, when Naaman is cured of his leprosy.

The superficiality of many of the judgments of textual critics on single words and phrases warns us against a ready acceptance of the more daring reconstructions of Psalms which aim at reproducing the original poetic form of these compositions. Very superficial is such a reconstruction as that of Ps lxxii given in *I.C.C.* The Psalm is cut down to about half its length, *vv.* 3 *ab*, 4 *c*, 7, 8, 9 *a*, 10–12 being omitted. Of a different kind but equally unconvincing is Duhm's reconstruction of Ps cxvi. He re-writes the text in four-line strophes, each of which (except the last) is made to end with the refrain, "And on the name of JEHOVAH I call." But the refrain has to be supplied by conjecture in stanzas 1, 3–7, 9, i.e. in seven stanzas out of ten.

### (b) VERSIONS

Chief among these perhaps stands the ancient Greek version, the *Septuagint* (usually cited as "LXX"). Different groups of books were translated at different times and by different hands. The Greek Pentateuch dates from *circ.* 250 B.C., the Greek Psalms later, perhaps *circ.* 150. It is this version from which are derived nearly all the quotations made in N.T. from O.T.; see H. B. Swete, *Introduction to the Old Testament in Greek*, pp. 392–404. For the MSS see p. lxxxii.

The Septuagint has many serious faults, some of which have left their mark on the English versions, particularly on the Psalter of the Prayer Book. Thus the avoidance of the Sacred Name **JEHOVAH** (except in xxxiii. 12; lxxxiii. 18) and the substitution of the title "the LORD" for it, is due to the practice of the Septuagint which uses **Κύριος** (Vulgate, *Dominus*) in the same way. But this loss of the distinctive name of the God of Israel is very serious in many places, e.g. in xcvi. 5, where we should read,

All the gods of the peoples are idols:  
But **JEHOVAH** made the heavens,

and in v. 10a,

Say ye among the nations, **JEHOVAH** reigneth: . . .  
He shall judge the peoples with equity.

In some places again the Septuagint has rendered tenses wrongly and (through the Vulgate) has misled the Prayer Book Psalter, e.g. in xvii. 21 and 25 (= xviii. 20 and 24, EV) the Septuagint gives *ἀναποδώσει* (Vulgate, *retribuet*), where the past tense, "**JEHOVAH** rewarded me," is required. So again the presence of the names of two mythical creatures, "unicorns" in xxii. 21 and "dragons" in cxlviii. 7 in the Prayer Book Psalter, is due to the example of the Septuagint. Other instances of some interest are

xliv. 12 (= xlv. 12, P-B), *αὐτός ἐστιν ὁ κύριός (cod R ὁ θεός) σου*: *Ipse est Dominus Deus tuus*, Vulgate: "He is thy Lord God," P-B.

lxxi. 6 (= lxxii. 6, P-B), *καταβήσεται ὡς ὑετός ἐπὶ πόκον*. *Descendet sicut pluvia in vellus*, Vulgate: "He shall come down like the rain into a fleece of wool," P-B.

lxxxvii. 6 (= lxxxviii. 4, P-B), *ἐν νεκροῖς ἐλεύθερος*: *inter mortuos liber*, Vulgate: "Free among the dead," P-B.

In other cases the variations of the Septuagint from the Hebrew have left no trace in the English versions. Instances are:

ii. 12, "Kiss the son." **LXX**, *δράξασθε παιδείας*, "Lay hold on instruction"; Vulgate, *Apprehendite disciplinam*.

iv. 2, "O ye sons of men, how long shall my glory be turned into dishonour?"

**LXX**, *υἱοὶ ἀνθρώπων, ἕως πότε βαρυσκάρδιοι*;

"Sons of men, how long will ye be slow of understanding?"

ix. 20. "Put them in fear, O **JEHOVAH**."

**LXX**, *κατάστησον, Κύριε, νομοθέτην ἐπ' αὐτούς*,

"Set, O Lord, a lawgiver over them."

xiv. 3. Here follows a long interpolation agreeing with Rom iii. 13-18. It is reproduced in P-B, but not in AV, RV.

xxii. 21. "Save me from the lion's mouth; Yea, from the horns of the wild-oxen thou hast answered me."

LXX, *σωσόν με ἐκ στόματος λέοντος, καὶ ἀπὸ κεράτων μονοκερώτων τὴν ταπείνωσίν μου,*

"Save me from the lion's mouth, and my low estate from the horns of the unicorns."

Further in its present text the Septuagint is marred by a number of doublets, i.e. two different renderings of the same phrase have been allowed to stand side by side without any indication that they are alternatives. A striking instance of this is reproduced in the P-B rendering of xxix. 1, where the words, "Bring young rams unto the Lord" are a doublet of the correct rendering, "Bring unto the Lord, O ye mighty." So in cxxxii. 4 the clause, "Neither the temples of my head to take anyrest" (P-B) is a doublet of the preceding clause, "Nor mine eyelids to slumber," and is derived from the Septuagint. See also cxlviii. 5.

The variations of the Septuagint from our present Hebrew text ("the Masoretic text") are due respectively to three causes: (a) the Greek translators followed a different Hebrew text, not necessarily better than MT; (b) they erred through ignorance of the meaning of the Hebrew; (c) the Greek text has suffered corruption in the 500 or 600 years which intervened between the making of the translation and the writing of the most ancient MSS we now possess.

Variations are due sometimes to a different reading of the vowels, e.g. in xc. 3 (= xci. 3, RV) where RV gives "the noisome (i.e. harmful) pestilence" (Heb. *deber*), but LXX has *λόγου παραώδους* "harmful word" (Heb. *dābār*). So again in lxxxvii. 11b (= lxxxviii. 10b RV) RV gives "Shall they that are deceased (marg. the *Rēphā'im*) arise (Heb. *yākūmu*) and praise thee?" But the LXX has *ἢ ἰατροὶ ἀναστήσουσιν καὶ ἐξομολογήσουναί σοι*; i.e. "Or shall physicians (Heb. *rōphē'im*) raise them up (Heb. *yākūmū*) and praise thee?" In this instance the consonant *Yod*, a *mater lectionis*, was read by the LXX for the consonant *Vav*. In xxxiii. 6 (= xxxiv. 5, RV) the LXX, combining a different reading of the vowels of the verbs with a difference of one consonant (*Caph* for *Hē*, "your faces" for "their faces"), gives a sense more suitable to the context:

Approach him, and be enlightened:  
And your faces shall not be ashamed.  
(*προσέλθατε πρὸς αὐτὸν καὶ φωτίσθητε,*  
*καὶ τὰ πρόσωπα ὑμῶν οὐ μὴ κατασχυνθῇ.)*

*The Latin Versions*

(a) The VULGATE. The version of the Psalms printed in the Vulgate is not an original work of St Jerome, but it is his revision of the Old Latin Version which he found in use. This older version was made not from the Hebrew, but from the Septuagint by unknown hands, and it was marred by many faults. St Jerome did not venture to correct it directly from the original; he worked from the revised Septuagint, which Origen had published in his Hexapla. There was a reason for this caution. The Septuagint was believed by many to be inspired, and its authority was admitted by many who suspected the "Jewish Bible," i.e. the Hebrew text. So St Jerome corrected the notoriously faulty Latin from Origen's Hexapla, and his corrected copy became the authorised ("Vulgate") version of the Psalms in Latin Christendom. Since cod. A of the LXX represents Origen's text better than cod. B, the Vulgate on the whole agrees better with the former than with the latter.

xliv. 6 (xlv. 5, EV) τῷ προσώπῳ cod. B: τὸ πρὸς πρῶι πρῶι cod. A: *mane diluculo*, Vulgate.

xlvii. 5 (= xlviii. 4, EV) οἱ βασιλεῖς cod. B: add τῆς γῆς cod. A: *reges terrae*, Vulgate.

Instances in which the Septuagint has influenced P-B through the Vulgate have been given above, but in some instances the Vulgate has influenced P-B, though unsupported by the Septuagint. Thus in (xxi. 32 = xxii. 32) "the heavens (*coeli*) shall declare his righteousness": and again in civ. 18 (= cv. 18 EV) σίδηρον διήλθεν ἡ ψυχὴ αὐτοῦ ("his soul passed through iron") LXX: *Ferrum pertransiit animam eius* Vulgate: "the iron entered into his soul" P-B, following Coverdale (1535) who has, "the yron pearsed his herte." Again, one whole verse, cxxxv. 27 (cxxxvi. 27 P-B), which is not found in the Septuagint, appears in the P-B on the authority of the Vulgate.

St Jerome followed up his work on the Vulgate with a fresh translation of the Psalter from the Hebrew—*Psalterium iuxta Hebraeos*. (On this see F. C. Burkitt in *J.T.S.* xxiv. 203–208.) He settled at Bethlehem in 386 A.D. and devoted himself there for twenty years to the study of Hebrew and to work on the Old Testament—translations and commentaries—with the help of Bar Anina, a Jew. The translation of the Psalms differs frequently from the Vulgate and has a value of its own. Thus in ii. 12 it gives *Adorate pure* for the *Apprehendite disciplinam* of the Vulgate. In li (l). 12, for *Redde mihi laetitiam salutaris tui* it gives *Redde mihi laetitiam Jesu tui*. In cvi (cv). 30, for *Et stetit Phinees*

SPECIMEN OF LATIN VERSIONS

(a) from LXX, (b) St Jerome from LXX, (c) St Jerome from Hebrew.

SEPTUAGINT (cod. B)	(a) MOZARABIC	(b) VULGATE ("Gallican")	(c) IUXTA HEBRAEOS
Ps xlv (xlv, Heb) 11, 12. ἐπιλάθου τοῦ λαοῦ σου καὶ τοῦ οἴκου τοῦ πατρὸς σου· ὅτι ἐπεθύμησεν ὁ βασιλεὺς τοῦ κάλλους σου.	obliuiscere populum tuum et domum patris tui quoniam concupiuit rex speciem tuam.	obliuiscere populum tuum et domum patris tui. et concupiscet (καὶ ἐπιθυμήσει, cod. A) rex decorem tuum.	obliuiscere populi tui et domus patris tui, et concupiscet rex decorem tuum.
Ps xlv (xlvī, Heb) 6. ὁ θεὸς ἐν μέσῳ αὐτῆς, οὐ σαλευθήσεται· βοηθήσει αὐτῇ ὁ θεὸς τῷ προσώπῳ.	adiuuabit eam Deus aspectu suo.	adiuuabit eam Deus mane diluculo. (τὸ πρὸς πρωὶ πρωί, cod. A).	auxiliabitur ei Deus in ipso ortu matutino.
Ps liv (lv, Heb) 22, 23. ἠπαλύνθησαν οἱ λόγοι αὐτοῦ ὑπὲρ ἔλαιον, . . . ἐπίρριψον ἐπὶ Κύριον τὴν μέριμνά σου.	mollierunt sermones suos super oleum, . . . iacta in Deo cogitatum tuum.	molliti sunt sermones eius super oleum, . . . iacta super Dominum curam tuam.	molliores sermones eius oleo, . . . proice super Dominum caritatem tuam.
Ps lxvii (lxviii, Heb) 19. ἀναβὰς εἰς ὕψος ἠχμαλώτευσας αἰχμαλωσίαν, ἔλαβες δόματα ἐν ἀνθρώπῳ.	ascendit in altum, cepit captiuitatem, dedit dona hominibus (cp Ephes iv. 8).	ascendisti in altum, cepisti captiuitatem, accepisti dona in hominibus.	ascendisti in excelsum, captiuam duxisti captiuitatem, accepisti dona in hominibus.
Ps xciv (xcv, Heb) 10. τεσσαράκοντα ἔτη προσώχθισα τῇ γενεᾷ ἐκείνῃ.	quadraginta annis proximus fui generationi huic.	quadraginta annis offensus fui generationi illi.	quadraginta annis displicuit mihi generatio illa.
Ps ciii (civ, Heb) 16. χορτασθήσεται τὰ ξύλα τοῦ πεδίου αἱ κέδροι τοῦ Λιβάνου ἀς ἐφύτευσεν.	satiabuntur omnia ligna siluarum et cedri Libani quos (quas) plantasti (ἐφύτευσας, cod. A).	saturabuntur ligna campi et cedri Libani quas plantauit.	saturabuntur ligna Domini, cedri Libani quas plantasti.

*et placavit* it gives *Stetit autem Pines et diiudicavit*. The word *Selah* which is left unnoticed in the Vulgate is rendered *Semper* by Jerome following Aquila who gives ἀεί. In three of these instances Jerome approaches nearer to the Hebrew. In the fourth (li. 14) he gives a free interpretation instead of a rendering: the Hebrew יִשׁוּעַ, *yish'ékā*, is "thy salvation" or "thy help." The Hebrew name יֵשׁוּעַ, *Yēshū'a*, "Jesus," could not receive a Hebrew possessive affix: "Thy Jesus" would be a solecism in Hebrew. In general however the translation is good: a Roman Catholic scholar, the Abbé Pérennès, writes, "Cette version faite directement sur l'*hebraica veritas* n'a pas été introduite dans la Vulgate pour des raisons de prudence ecclésiastique. Elle reste très autorisée et est éminemment utile pour la critique du texte" (*Les Psaumes* [1922]). The preceding table illustrates the relation of the chief Latin Versions to the Septuagint and to the Hebrew.

(b) The TARGUM is a rendering of the Hebrew text into Aramaic, the language of Aram (i.e. Syria). It was still in use in our Lord's time, and indeed still later. A similar dialect is found in the parts of the O.T., Daniel ii. 4—vii. 28 and Ezra iv. 8—vii. 26.

For the most part the Targum agrees closely with MT but it sometimes becomes paraphrastic and homiletic. Thus lxviii. 7 (8) begins, "O God, when thou wentest forth *in the pillar of cloud and in the pillar of fire* before thy people": it ends "*when thou gavest the law to thy people.*" See also xci. 2ff, "*David said, I will say of JEHOVAH, He is my confidence, my strong city, my God; I will trust in His word. For he will deliver thee, Solomon my son, from snare and stumbling-block, from death and the multitude.... Thou shalt not be afraid of the terror of the demons who walk at night, of the arrow of the angel of death which he shooteth by day.*"

So again cxxviii. 2, "For thou shalt eat the labour of thy hand: blessed art thou *in this world* and blessed *for the world to come.*" And again cxxxvii. 7, "*Michael prince of Jerusalem said, Remember, O JEHOVAH...*" and v. 8, "*Gabriel the prince of Zion said to the people of Babylon...*" See the article TARGUM by Dr W. Bacher in the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. xii.

It is an interesting fact that our Lord in his cry from the cross, *Why hast thou forsaken me?* (Ps xxii. 1), uses not the original Hebrew verb ('*āzabtāni*) but the verb used in the Targum (*shēbaktāni*, transliterated in Greek σαβασχάθει: Mark xv. 34). This does not of course prove that the Targum existed as a book in his day: the Scriptures were no doubt orally interpreted at first, and the interpretations were not written down till a comparatively late date.

(c) Akin to the TARGUM is the PESHITTA, which is written in the form

of Aramaic usually called "Syriac." Like the Targum it has the verb *shēbaktāni* in Ps xxii. 1. But (unlike the Targum) the Peshitta has a Christian history. It originated probably in Judæo-Christian circles, for Nestle can write, "The [Peshitta] Pentateuch follows closely the Hebrew text and Jewish exegesis," but in history the Peshitta has been an authority in the Church, not in the Synagogue. The date of its composition is not known, but it was probably early, in the first or second century A.D. It has some interesting renderings. In ii. 12, "Kiss the son" stands unchanged, for the two words in the original, though they might be Hebrew, are more probably Aramaic. In ix. 21 (20) it agrees with the Septuagint, "Appoint them a lawgiver," against Aquila and the Targum, and the chief Jewish authorities, "Appoint them terror." In xlv. 7 (6), "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever," three good MSS have, "The throne of God is for ever and ever."

One feature of the translation is that certain terms applied to God in the Hebrew are avoided in the Peshitta apparently as too bold. In the MT God is often called a "shield," but in the Syriac the word is paraphrased, "My *helper*" in xviii. 3(2); "My confidence" in lix. 12(11), and so in lxxxiv. 12(11), "The LORD is a sun and shield" becomes in the Peshitta, "For the Lord is our nurturer and our helper." On the other hand in the Peshitta as well as in the Hebrew and Septuagint Ps xviii opens with the bold cry, "I will *love* thee, O Lord."

(d) ENGLISH. The Prayer Book Version is taken with a few changes from the Great Bible of 1539. The basis of this Version is Coverdale's translation made from the Latin Vulgate; hence the Prayer Book Version retains many additional words and phrases which are found in the Vulgate but not in the Masoretic text. Most of these additions may be traced back to the Septuagint, for the Vulgate itself was not made from the Hebrew, but from the Septuagint, which was the Bible most used in the Christian Church for the first three centuries of our era. Such additions are found in i. 5, "from the face of the earth"; ii. 12, "the *right* way"; vii. 12, "a righteous judge, *strong and patient*"; xiii. 6, "yea, I will praise the Name of the Lord most Highest"; xiv. 5-7 (three whole verses); lxxiii. 27, "in the gates of the daughter of Sion"; cxxxvi. 27 (the whole verse is taken from the Vulgate, but is not found in LXX); cxlviii. 5, "he spake the word, and they were made." The three extra verses which form xiv. 5-7 in the Prayer Book Version were introduced into the MSS of LXX from Rom iii. 13-18. The Apostle in his Epistle put together passages from different parts of O.T. to form his quotation.

The translation from the Vulgate which forms the basis of the Prayer Book Version was freely emended by comparison with the Hebrew text, or with Sebastian Münster's new translation from the Hebrew (1534-5). Thus the sacred name **JEHOVAH** is introduced in two suitable passages (xxxiii. 12, lxxxiii. 18) in agreement with the Hebrew, and the common substitute, "the Lord," *Dominus* in the Vulgate, *Kύριος* in the LXX, is rejected. In ii. 12 "Kiss the Son" follows MT; Vulgate has *Apprehendite disciplinam*. In viii. 2a, "Out of the mouth... hast thou ordained strength" follows MT, while Vulgate (= LXX) has *perfecisti laudem*, "thou hast perfected praise": so too in Matt xxi. 16, *ἐκ στόματος νηπίων καὶ θηλαζόντων κατηγορίσω αἶνον*. Two other among many departures from the Latin Version are found in civ. 17, "the fir trees are a dwelling for the stork"; and cvi. 30, "Then stood up Phinees and prayed." See B. F. Westcott, *History of the English Bible*, Third Edition, pp. 182-185.

On the whole the Prayer Book Version must be pronounced to be an excellent translation, though marked by some serious faults. Some of the changes introduced into the later versions are due to changes in the meaning of English words, as the following table shows.

PRAYER BOOK VERSION (1539)	AUTHORISED VERSION (1611)	REVISED VERSION (1885)
abide (would not, cvi. 13)	waited not for	waited not for
after (li. 1)	according to	according to
alloweth (xi. 6)	trieth	trieth
at (i.e. towards, against)	see cxxix. 5	see cxxix. 5
blasphemeth (lxxiv. 23)	reproacheth	reproacheth
body (The foolish, liii. 1)	The fool ( <i>omitting</i> body)	( <i>omits</i> body)
coasts (cv. 33)	coasts	borders
conversation (l. 23)	conversation	way ( <i>margin</i> )
deck (cxxxii. 17)	clothe	clothe
(Thou) deckest (civ. 2)	coverest	coverest
despitefully (xxxi. 20)	contemptuously	with...contempt
devils (cvi. 36)	devils	demons
discovered (xviii. 15)	discovered	laid bare
ensue (xxxiv. 14)	pursue	pursue
eschew (xxxiv. 14)	depart from	depart from
fain (lxxi. 21 will be fain)	shall greatly rejoice	shall greatly rejoice
flood, the (lxxii. 8)	the river	the River ( <i>Euphrates</i> )
foxes (lxiii. 11)	foxes	jackals ( <i>margin</i> )
froward (xviii. 26)	froward	perverse
giant (i.e. a warrior, lxxviii. 66)	mighty man	mighty man
grass (cv. 34)	herbs	herb
grasshopper (lxxviii. 47)	locust	locust
grin (lix. 6)	make a noise	make a noise
harnessed (lxxviii. 10)	armed	armed
hastily (lv. 16)	( <i>no equivalent</i> )	suddenly
health (lxii. 7)	salvation	salvation
heaviness (xxx. 5)	weeping	weeping

PRAYER BOOK VERSION (1539)	AUTHORISED VERSION (1611)	REVISED VERSION (1885)
heaviness (cxix. 143)	anguish	anguish
hell (lv. 16)	hell ( <i>margin</i> , the grave)	the pit ( <i>margin</i> , Heb. Sheol)
hindrance (xv. 5)	hurt	hurt
inhabiters (lxxv. 4)	inhabitants	inhabitants
inform (xxxii. 9)	instruct	instruct
intreated, be (lxxvii. 7)	be favourable	be favourable
knappeth...in sunder (xlvi. 9)	cutteth...in sunder	cutteth...in sunder
learn (xxv. 4) ("teach" also used)	teach	teach
leasing (iv. 2)	leasing	falsehood
lusteth (xxxiv. 12)	desireth	desireth
monster, a (lxxi. 6)	a wonder	a wonder
moved (lxxviii. 42)	(limited, <i>a different sense</i> )	provoked
nethermost (lxxxvi. 13)	lowest	lowest
nurtureth (xciv. 10)	(chastiseth, <i>a different sense</i> )	instructeth ( <i>margin</i> )
occupy (their business, cvii. 23)	do (business)	do (business)
ordained (cxxxii. 18)	ordained	prepared ( <i>margin</i> )
overflowings (xviii. 3)	floods	floods
persecute (xxxv. 6)	persecute	pursue (pursuing)
plague, thy (xxxix. 11)	(thy) stroke	(thy) stroke
ports (ix. 14)	gates	gates
preach (ii. 7)	declare	tell of
preachers (lxviii. 11)	those that published it	that publish the tidings
prolonged...time (cxix. 60)	delayed	delayed
quick (lv. 16)	quick	alive
ravish (x. 9, 10)	catch	catch
remember themselves (xxii. 27)	remember	remember
require (xxvii. 4)	seek after	seek after
rid (me, lxxi. 1)	deliver (me)	deliver (me)
runagates, the (lxviii. 6)	(the) rebellious	(the) rebellious
seat (xi. 4 <i>al</i> ) (throne, ix. 4 <i>al</i> )	enlightened	lightened
shine ("gave shine unto": xvii. 4)	throne	throne
stomach, high (ci. 7)	proud heart	proud heart
stool (xciv. 20)	throne	throne ( <i>margin</i> , seat)
tabernacle (lxi. 4)	tabernacle	tent ( <i>margin</i> )
tabret (lxxxi. 2)	timbrel	timbrel
tell (cxxxix. 18)	count ( <i>generally</i> tell)	count (tell, xxii. 17)
trumpet (xlvii. 5)	trumpet	trumpet
tush (x. 6, 12, 14; lxxiii. 11; xciv. 7)	<i>does not occur</i>	<i>does not occur</i>
utmost (ii. 8)	afflicted	afflicted
vexed (cxxix. 2)	uttermost	uttermost
(is) waxen old (xxxii. 11)	(is) spent	(is) spent
wealth (lxix. 23)	welfare	peace
weights, upon the (lxii. 9)	in the balance	in the balances
well (cxiv. 8)	fountain	fountain
wholesome (xx. 6)	saving	saving
wiliness (crafty x. 2)	devices	devices
worms (cxlviii. 10)	creeping things	creeping things
worship, my (iii. 3)	my glory	my glory

There are other "archaisms" which are not corrected in the later versions, such as *objects* (xxxv. 15), *cunning* (cxxxvii. 5), *noisome* (xci. 3), *vanity* (iv. 2). For some general remarks on the language see John Earle, *The Psalter of 1539*; S. R. Driver, *The Parallel Psalter*, Glossary II.

Professor Earle mentions some interesting modifications of the Text of 1539 which appear in our present text of the Prayer Book Psalter.

xxxv. 15, "Making *mowes* at me": now "mouths."

lxviii. 18, "Thou art gone up *an hye*": now "on high."

lxxx. 13, "The wild beasts...*devoureth* it": an old form of the plural verb; now "devour."

civ. 21, "The lions...seek their meat *at God*": now "from God."

cvii. 32, "*loave* him": now "praise him"; cf (German) *loben* "to praise."

An interesting reading changed in xxxv. 17 is, "Deliver my soul from the *wycked rumoures* of them": now "from the calamities which they bring on me."

In 1916 appeared a conservative revision of the Psalter executed by a committee appointed by the Archbishop of Canterbury. This revision was further revised in 1920, and in this form it was approved by Convocation. The changes seem to be slight, but the improvement is real. Among the passages improved are iv. 8*b*; lviii. 8, lxii. 9 and many verses of lxviii. This revision was not incorporated in the English Prayer Book of 1928, but it is to be found in the Revised Prayer Book of the Church of Ireland (1927).

The Authorised Version of 1611 is of little independent value. It is neither equal in rhythm to the Prayer Book Version, nor as accurate in its renderings as the Version of 1885.

Among the many improvements found in the Revised Version of 1885 must be reckoned the introduction of the Hebrew word *Sheol*, as in vi. 5, see note; lxxxix. 48. *Sheol* has no English equivalent and its sense must be gathered from the context. Other improvements worthy of mention are found in xxxii. 8, 9; in xc. 11, "Who knoweth the power of thine anger, And thy wrath according to the fear that is due unto thee?" also in xci. 9*a* (an ejaculation); cxvi. 11, "I said in my haste, All men are a lie," i.e. a resource which fails. Moreover the margin contains very important variants and notes: see e.g. v. 9; xxii. 16; xc. 9; cxxxix. 13-21. It is a pity that RV has so rarely (see lxviii. 20) introduced the proper name *JEHOVAH*, where the earlier versions perversely avoided it.

In 1917 the Jewish Publication Society of America issued "The Holy Scriptures according to the Masoretic text. A new translation." It is hardly "new," for generally speaking it agrees with the Revised Version of 1885, but it contains many interesting renderings of its own, for instance xl. 8, "Then said I: Lo, I am come | With the roll of a book which is prescribed for me; I delight to do Thy will, O my God; Yea, Thy law is in my inmost parts." In xxii. 17c (16c), it gives, "*Like a lion* (Heb. *kā'ārī*, כַּאֲרִי) they are at my hands and my feet," where EV has "*They pierced* my hands and my feet," emending a text which seems impossible. This Version agrees with EV in giving "the LORD" where the ineffable name, יהוה, occurs. It is cited as "JV."

## § 9. RECENT THEORIES

### (a) *National or Personal?*

The great majority of the Psalms seem to be personal utterances, and the Psalmist is an individual speaking with his own voice. The ruling pronouns are in the singular number, "I" and "me" and "mine." The Psalmist seems sometimes to be a sick man (vi, xxxix, xli, *al*), sometimes a fugitive or an exile (xlii, cxvi, *al*), sometimes a man deserted by friends (xxxviii, xli, lv, *al*), sometimes an individual afflicted by private enemies (lvi–lix, lxix, cix, *al*). The griefs complained of seem to be private griefs.

Some stir therefore was made by an article contributed by a German scholar, Professor Rudolf Smend, to the *Z.A.W.* for 1888. It was entitled "Ueber das Ich der Psalmen" ("On the 'I' of the Psalms"); it covers ninety-nine pages. Smend examines some eighty Psalms which at first sight seem to be personal utterances, and concludes that they are spoken in the name of the nation: the Psalmist though he uses the pronouns "I" and "me" speaks for Israel and not for himself. Smend reckons among his eighty Pss vi, xxii, xxiii, xl, li, cxix, cxxx, and cxxxix.

Now Ps vi cannot be said to support Smend's theory. The *primā facie* impression which it gives is that an individual lies on a bed of sickness almost at the last gasp. He believes that his sickness is a Divine chastisement, but he pleads that the final penalty of death be not exacted from him. His distress is aggravated by the consciousness that his enemies rejoice over his sick bed, and contemplate his decease with satisfaction. But suddenly he becomes conscious that his prayer has been heard: he recovers his courage, and is confident that his enemies will be disappointed, and that JEHOVAH will restore him to health.

Yet all this, if we follow Smend, is the language of personification. It is the Jewish Church which says (through the Psalmist), "my bones"—"mysoul"—"mysighing"—"my bed"—"my couch"—"mine eye," all in the course of six consecutive verses. Smend appeals to the first person singular used by the leader of the chorus in a Greek play as a parallel instance. But where shall we find so rigorously consistent a passage of personification, as we are told to find in this Psalm? Not once does the Psalmist lapse into the plural pronouns "we" and "our." Not once does he drop any hint that he is speaking in the name of Israel.

Smend urges that in the last three verses the Psalmist ignores his sickness and speaks only of his "enemies." The sickness, the critic concludes, is metaphorical; the enemy and his attack furnish the real cause of complaint, and—the enemies are public ones, the enemies of Israel.

Smend finds further support for his view in *v.* 6 :

In death there is no mention of thy Name;  
In Sheol who will give thee thanks?

This surely, says Smend, is the utterance of the congregation: dare an individual suggest that if he were allowed to die, *JEHOVAH* would feel the loss of his thanksgiving? The congregation on the other hand might well point to the probable cessation of the Temple services, if the enemy should prevail.

But Smend's arguments are of a subjective character, and do not convince modern scholars. The boldness of *vi.* 6 is indeed characteristic of the Psalter: again and again the Psalmists speak to God of their personal experiences with the freedom of a child. Further if with most scholars we accept the later dating of the Psalms we must acknowledge the probability—the great probability—that a Psalmist would realise his own value as a religious unit. The individual began to come to his own in the days of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, if not still earlier, and most of the Psalms are now assigned to the centuries which followed the Captivity.

Probably Smend wrote under the spell of the (then) growing fashion of calling the Psalter "the Hymn Book of the Second Temple." The general idea of a hymn book is that the contents should express the feelings of the congregation which uses it. It was a reasonable conclusion that "the Temple Hymn Book" would contain a large number of Psalms written in the name of the Israelite nation.

So we find Smend arguing that even in *Ps* xxiii the congregation, and not an individual, is the speaker. He objects that if the Psalmist speaks

in his own person, then JEHOVAH is represented as the shepherd of a single sheep, whereas elsewhere JEHOVAH is the shepherd of the whole people of Israel. He objects further that an individual could hardly speak of himself as the guest for whom JEHOVAH provides a table. The "table" spoken of in *v.* 5 must be, he says, the yearly harvest, and the guest must be the Israelite people. Smend's arguments are surely instances of hypercriticism.

Examination of many others of the eighty instances would result in a similar verdict.

The Old Testament contains (it is true) some striking instances of the use of personification, but in these cases some hint or even plain statement is added that a personification is intended: see e.g. Isa i. 21; Lam i. 1, 2. But such indications are wanting in most of the instances cited by Smend from the Psalter. At the present day the general opinion is against his view.

### (b) *Allusions to the Black Art in the Psalter*

The large number of references to enemies in the Psalms is a striking phenomenon, and the question has been frequently asked, Who are these enemies, and specially, Are they personal or national? The latest answer is that given by the Norwegian scholar, Sigmund Mowinckel (*Psalmstudien*, Kristiania, 1921, Part I): The enemies are sorcerers who try to injure the Psalmist with their spells. So it is that a Psalmist on his sick bed prays for the discomfiture of his enemies, for their discomfiture means the healing of his sickness which their spells have brought about (Pss vi. xxxviii, *al*). In some cases (e.g. in lxix. 4) where the Psalmist emphasizes the great number of his enemies, Mowinckel suggests that he means the demons which bring sickness, and not visible foes. So in lix. 3, where the Psalmist speaks of the *power* of his enemies, the critic supposes that the "mighty ones" (not "mighty men," as P-B) are the evil spirits.

The Psalmist's foes are frequently described as "workers of mischief" (Heb. *pō'ālē āven*, פועלי און). Now what, asks Mowinckel, was the mischief that was most feared by the Orientals of old time—was it not magic? He then endeavours to show by quotations that the activities ascribed in the Psalms to the "workers of mischief" are the well-known activities of practisers of the black art. Thus they work with the tongue and with the word of power (Ps x. 7, xli. 6); they communicate sickness (Ps vi. 7, 8, xxviii. 3, 4); they bring about the death of those whom they assail

(Ps xciv. 3-6). Their action in general is both secret and malicious (Ps lvi. 6, lxiv. 4). They puff or blow "mischief" (*āven*) at those whom they assail (Ps x. 5; xii. 5).

At first sight Mowinckel's case looks strong, but it is inconclusive. He starts with the assumption that many of the Hebrew Psalms must be anti-magical because many of the psalms of Babylon and Assyria are such. But this argument from analogy holds only to a partial extent. While in the Babylonian literature magic is mentioned in language which cannot be misunderstood, this is not the case with the Psalms. The term "workers of *āven* ('mischief')" with which Mowinckel makes play may indeed be very well applied to sorcerers, but it is after all a general term, and only a definite context can decide that it means in any particular passage practitioners of the black art. Sorcerers are "workers of *āven*," but men may work *āven* without making use of sorcery.

False witnesses (e.g.) do many of the acts which are ascribed to sorcerers. Thus they work with "the tongue," and bring death on those whom they assail (1 K xxi, Naboth). They also work in secret concocting charges which have some verisimilitude, and (naturally) they are full of malice. *False* (or *Unrighteous*) witnesses are especially mentioned as enemies of the Psalmist in xxvii. 12, xxxv. 11. So too in the book of Proverbs the use of the tongue in false witness is a prominent subject, but clear references to the black art are hardly to be found. Mowinckel appeals to vi. 13 ("He winketh with his eyes") and to vi. 19 ("A false witness that *breatheth out* lies"), but the first instance is inconclusive, and the second should count against Mowinckel. Saul of Tarsus was not using magic when he was "*breathing* threatening and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord" (Acts ix. 1).

Further, Mowinckel is reduced to taking other equally general terms, e.g. "the wicked" (*reshā'im*) as synonyms of "workers of *āven*" and as meaning "sorcerers." He thereby reveals how few decisive terms he can show in the Psalter. And analogy does not help him much. The fears of the polytheists of Babylon would not necessarily communicate themselves to the monotheists who pray in the Psalter. It is in the main the higher faith of Israel which manifests itself there, and the men who believed with Amos (iii. 3-6) and Deutero-Isaiah (Isa xlv. 7) and Job (ii. 10) that both "good" and "evil" come from the one God would hardly be making vehement prayers to be delivered from mere men who professed the power of inflicting sickness with the aid of evil spirits. See also Ps vi. Introduction, § 2.

The anti-magical Psalms, so Mowinckel believes, belonged to the

Temple cultus. Some were intended to protect the nation, others to protect the individual, but both kinds were used at the holy place in the course of the rites by which the priest removed uncleanness from the bewitched and suffering victim. Pss lix, lxix and cix are according to Mowinkel to be reckoned among these counter-spells. The Psalmist's enemies have attacked him with curses having magical power, and his defence takes the form of a counter-attack with curses like their own. This procedure was not new in the ancient Eastern World: curses accompanied by acts of magic were believed to be effective weapons against enemies, whether private or public. In the British Museum there is a series of eight tablets of Assyrian incantations called *Maqlu* "burning," because the recital was accompanied by the burning of certain small figures. The first tablet ends with an invitation to the Fire-God, "O Nusku, thou mighty one, thou offspring of Anu....The magician hath enchanted me; with the spell wherewith he hath bound me; bind thou him. The witch hath enchanted me; with the spell wherewith she hath bound me, bind thou her....And may the Fire-God, the mighty One, make of none effect the incantations, spells, and charms of those who have made figures in my image,...who have caught my spittle, who have plucked out my hair...." While the suppliant recited the above formulas he burnt figures of the demons who (as he supposed) were afflicting him. The Assyrian held the vulgar belief that the possession of the portrait of his enemy or of anything that came from the body of his enemy (as spittle or hair) gave him power to hurt the body of his enemy.

Yet another use of imprecations is found among the Assyrians and Babylonians. Hammu-rabi king of Babylon concludes his code of laws with a series of curses. He wishes to guard against two dangers: *first*, that some later king may efface his great tablets or alter his laws; *secondly*, lest his own name should be removed and another substituted for it. Against the future king who should dare to do any harm to his great monument Hammu-rabi calls down the separate curses of twelve gods. They are given in full by R. W. Rogers, *Cuneiform Parallels*, pp. 461-465. Here three extracts should suffice:

May Ann the father of the gods take from him the glory of royalty, break his staff and curse his fate.

May Nin-karrasha bring upon his members a terrible disease...which may not be healed...till his life go away.

May the great gods cover with irresistible curses him, his seed, his land, his army, his subjects, and his soldiers.

Hammu-rabi's date is given as *circ.* 1950 or 1920 B.C., while the Assyrian *Maqlu* tablets were copied late in the seventh century B.C. Thus we see that such curses were in use for more than 1000 years. Moreover they were used over the whole of the valley of the Tigris and Euphrates, as it seems. The occasions for use were many in number, and curses must have been poured out like water. But a comparison of the language of the Psalms with that of the *Maqlu* tablets or of Hammu-rabi does not suggest that the influence of Babylon on Israel or on the Psalter was great. Influence we may allow, but was it "very great"? Much is to be said for the view that Israel preserved to a large extent its religious independence in spite of the glamour of Babylonian civilization and the prestige of the gods of Babylon.

We see this in the case of the Imprecatory Psalms. We exaggerate the prevalence of curses in the Psalter, because they are so little expected there, among so much that is beautiful in thought, and characteristic of the Higher Religion. But viewing the Psalter as a whole it is to be contrasted (not equated) with the documents of Assyrian or Babylonian religion. In the Psalms Israel has at least begun to tread the road of mercy: imprecations are rarer, and except in two instances (lxix. 22-28, cix. 6-19) they lack the merciless thoroughness with which the Assyrian Imprecator pursues his foes. Often, surely, the Psalmist wishes only to escape: he desires that his enemies may "be confounded," that is, disappointed in their designs against him, but he goes no further in his prayer (cxli. 9, 10).

### (c) *Accession Psalms*

There are a number of Psalms which have been called "Accession Psalms"; such are xlvii, xciii, xcvi-xcix. In these JEHOVAH is called "King" (with emphasis) or "a great King," or again it is said, "JEHOVAH reigneth" or (as some translate) "JEHOVAH hath become king." (The Hebrew perfect tense allows either rendering.) The question has been raised, Are these Psalms, and others (if any) which are akin to them, intended for some particular use? Duhm answers for Ps xlvii that it is intended for use on New Year's Day, and appeals to *v.* 5 which contains a reference to the blowing of the *shophar*, "trumpet," or rather "horn." This custom belonged to the first day of the "seventh" month, i.e. to New Year's Day as reckoned by the Civil Calendar: Num xxix. 1. The ecclesiastical year began six months earlier than the civil year with the month Abib; Deut xvi. 1, of Exod xii. 2 ff.

Mowinckel goes much further than Duhm. He believes that several

other Psalms beside the seven specified above were formally used in the cultus on one day in the year, the Accession Day. He writes: 'The Accession-psalms which are to be interpreted neither of some event of history nor eschatologically, presuppose an Accession Day of *JEHOVAH*, which was kept as a religious festival every year on New Year's Day. Ancient Israel held the Kingdom of God to be a present fact: it was realized as present, and its continual refounding was enjoyed by Israel as an experience in the ritual of the New Year Feast. Each New Year's Day *JEHOVAH* comes again and ascends His throne (*Psalmenstudien*, ii, p. 213). So we might render *xlvi*. 8, "God hath become king (not 'God reigneth') over the nations: God hath sat down (not 'sitteth') upon his holy throne." Similar renderings are possible in *xciii*. 1, *xvii*. 10, *xvii*. 1, *xcix*. 1.

It may be readily conceded that *xlvi*, for example, reads very well on this theory; but on the other hand biblical evidence is wanting of the existence of any Accession festival in Israel. The evidence offered is from the analogy of Babylonian cult. In Babylon once a year the king "took" (or was expected to take) "the hand of Bel" (Merodach, Marduk) and thereby to acknowledge him as his lord from whom he received his kingdom. "We may note," writes L. W. King, "the important part which the actual image of Marduk played in each coronation ceremony and in the renewal of the king's oath at every subsequent Feast of the New Year; the hands of no other image than that in E-sagila (the great temple of Marduk in Babylon) would serve for the king to grasp." (*A History of Babylon*, p. 296.)

But there is no hint of a yearly Accession Feast in Israel. It is true that there are two cases in which a king was confirmed in his kingdom by a special act. In *1 Sam x*. 24 Saul is presented as king by Samuel to Israel at Mizpah, and is received with a shout of recognition by some of the people, but ignored by others. (Samuel had previously anointed him privately; *1 Sam x*. 1.) Then followed Saul's deliverance of Jabesh-gilead (*1 Sam xi*. 4-11) and an outbreak of enthusiasm for the Deliverer. Then Samuel said, "Let us...renew the kingdom," and so Israel made Saul king "before *JEHOVAH*" (i.e. in some high place or other sanctuary) in Gilgal. This renewal however was a special act for a special occasion; it makes no suggestion of a yearly Accession Feast. Neither does the case of David suggest a New Year Feast of Accession. David was made king *first* by Judah over Judah (*2 Sam ii*. 3, 4), and *secondly* after seven years by the tribes of Israel over Israel (*2 Sam v*. 1-3).

To sum up, it may be said that no one of these seven Psalms really needs the hypothesis of an Accession Feast to explain it, nor does any fact conveyed to us in the Historical Books of the O.T. support the hypothesis. Mowinkel's hypothesis remains an interesting and possible view—nothing more.

### § 10. THE USE OF THE PSALMS IN THE JEWISH CHURCH

The description of the Psalter as the "Hymn Book of the Second Temple" is to be rejected as an overstatement, though the Psalter was not simply a book of private devotion. Rubrics remain in MT and in LXX which suggest a public use of certain Psalms on certain fixed occasions. Some of these are confirmed by the direct statements made in cap. vii. 4 of *Tamid*, the tractate of the Mishnah which deals with the daily sacrifice. Thus:

Ps xxiv is inscribed "Of the first day of the week." LXX = *Tamid*.

Ps xxx. "Of the dedication of the House." MT = LXX. The reference may be to the dedication of the Temple, or rather re-dedication, which was carried out by Judas Maccabaeus after its desecration by the officers of Antiochus Epiphanes (1 Macc iv, 54-59; cf i. 37-39, 54).

Ps xlviii. "On the second day of the week." LXX = *Tamid*.

Ps lxxxi. "On the fifth day" (of the week). *Tamid*.

Ps lxxxii. "On the third day" (of the week). *Tamid*.

Ps xcii. "For the sabbath day." MT = LXX = *Tamid*.

Ps xciii. "For the day before the sabbath." LXX = *Tamid*.

Ps xciv. "On the fourth day of the week." LXX = *Tamid*.

Further we learn that a portion of the Psalter was sung at the family table on the occasion of the feast of the Passover. The Passover (be it remembered) was celebrated at home by each family: only the slaying of the lambs took place in the Temple. This use of Psalmody is referred to in Mark xiv. 26 (= Matt xxvi. 30), "When they had sung a hymn, they went out unto the mount of Olives." The "hymn," we learn from Jewish sources, consisted of Pss cxiii-cxviii. It went by the name of the Egyptian *Hallel*. It begins with the Hebrew words, *Hallelu-jah, hallélû*, i.e. "Praise ye JEHOVAH, praise ye!" This *Hallel* was sung also on the two other harvest feasts, the feast of Weeks and the feast of Tabernacles (or "of Booths": Lev xxiii. 39-43).

Further we learn from 1 Chr xvi. 7-36 that Psalms were sung on special occasions of religious rejoicing. The portions cited here are Ps cv. 1-15, xcvi. 1-13, cvi. 1 and 47, 48. Similarly on the occasion of

the cleansing of the Temple by Judas Maccabaeus, it is said that it was dedicated afresh with songs (*ἐν ψαλμοῖς*) and harps and lutes and with cymbals (1 Macc iv. 54). No doubt the "songs" (*ψαλμοί*) were Psalms, for in some thirty Psalm-headings in which a Psalm is called *shār*, "song," the equivalent in the Septuagint is *ψαλμός*.

### § 11. GENTILE PSALMS

We may rightly regard the biblical Psalter as unique in its combination of great qualities, but on the other hand excellences like those of the Hebrew Psalms are to be found scattered through the Hymns or Psalms of the Gentiles. Among much dross some true gems are discovered. Thus some important passages in Ps civ which celebrates the wonders of Creation can be paralleled from the Egyptian hymn, *The Praise of Amon-Rē* as Creator, which dates from *circ.* 1450 B.C. Still more striking are the parallels with the same Psalm, which are to be found in another Egyptian composition, namely, the heretic king Ikhnaton's *Hymn to Aton*. Extracts from these are quoted in the Introduction to Ps civ.

Passages again which celebrate the Omnipresence, or Omniscience, or Omnipotence of *JEHOVAH*, have their parallels in the literature of Egypt, Babylon, India (the *Vedas*), and even in the work of a Greek-speaking Stoic poet. Some illustrative quotations are given in the Introduction to cxxxix. Further there is to be discerned a tendency in Gentile Psalms to exalt one God above the rest, so that their language on the majesty and greatness of their chief God resembles somewhat closely the language used by Hebrew Psalmists of *JEHOVAH*. Thus the Babylonian hymn to Sin the Moon God is composed in terms which suggest that the Babylonians held a doctrine of a chief God which might easily develop into the doctrine of Monotheism. The tablet containing the hymn is bilingual, Sumerian with an interlinear translation into Babylonian: see R. W. Rogers, *Cuneiform Parallels*, pp. 141 ff. The hymn, a prayer, consists of forty-eight long lines.

A few extracts with some changes from Rogers' translation are given here:

O Lord, chief of the gods, who alone is exalted in heaven and on earth;...

Mighty young bull with strong horns, perfect in limbs, with beard of blue, full of glory and perfection;

Fruit which hath created itself, of lofty form, majestic to look upon;...

Mother's womb, bringing forth all things, who hath established a sacred dwelling with the living;

Merciful, gracious Father, who holdeth in his hand the life of all the world;...

Look upon thy temple, look upon thy city.

There is a hint of Monolatry ("Worship of one god only") in this hymn; it surely suggests that the fulness of Deity is found in Sin, and that his worshipper may rightly be satisfied with the worship of this one God. Unfortunately we cannot draw this conclusion. Terms of equal honour are applied in other hymns to other gods, as for instance, to Marduk and to Shamash the Sun god. In the religion of Babylon the worshipper must still be perplexed in his choice of the object of his worship.

The same verdict must be pronounced on the religion of Egypt. The "heretic king," Ikhnaton, did for a time establish the sole worship of Aton, the god of the beneficial rays of the sun, but Egypt fell back quickly into polytheism under his successors.

The hymns of Hinduism, though they exalt one God to a position above the rest, are not Monotheistic. Omniscience and Omnipresence are ascribed to "king Varuna" in the Atharvaveda, but the same honours are given in the Vedas to Indra. In both cases however the underlying thought is pantheistic. Varuna and Indra and the rest are only names given to various manifestations of the force which is in the universe. We cannot speak of Monolatry nor of Monotheism in relation to the hymns of the Veda, though in some respects they remind us of the Psalms.

Pantheistic again is the noble hymn to Zeus of the Stoic Cleanthes (born *circ.* 331 B.C. at Assos). Though some expressions seem to represent Zeus as a Person and the One God, yet the underlying thought is of an impersonal force. If the hymn is cast in the form of a prayer (to a force which can neither hear nor answer) it is only due to the constraining power of a human instinct which insists on being satisfied. It might for most of its contents have been address to the God of Israel or of Christianity. A few lines of it are here transcribed.

O Zeus, of many names, O sovran king  
 Of universal Nature, piloting  
 This world in harmony with Law—all hail!  
 Thee it is meet that mortals should invoke,  
 For we thine offspring are (*ἐκ σοῦ γὰρ γένος ἐσμὲν*) and sole of all  
 The mortal things that live and move on earth  
 Receive from Thee the image of the One,  
 Therefore I praise Thee, and shall hymn Thy power,  
 Unceasingly, . . .  
 No work is wrought apart from Thee, O God,  
 (*οὐδέ τι γίγνεται ἔργον ἐπὶ χθονὶ σοῦ δίχα, δαίμων*)  
 Or in the world, or in the heavens above,  
 Or in the deep, save only what is done  
 By sinners in their folly. . . .  
 O Zeus, most bounteous God that sittest throned

In clouds, the Lord of lightning, save mankind  
 From baleful ignorance (*ἀπειροσύνης ἀπὸ λυγρῆς*),  
 Yea scatter it,  
 O Father, from the soul.

(See E. H. Blakeney, *Hymn of Cleanthes*, London, S.P.C.K. 1921. A few changes have been made in Mr Blakeney's translation.)

Again, some parallels to passages of the Psalms may be found in the Gathas, the ancient hymns of the Zoroastrians. These at times approach the Hebrew Psalms in spiritual feeling, specially as they are address to one God, Ahura Mazda (Ormuzd), who admits his worshippers into true communion with him. Zoroaster speaks to Ahura Mazda ("the Wise Lord") with the childlike frankness of a Hebrew Psalmist approaching JEHOVAH :

This I ask, tell me truly, Ahura—as to prayer, how it should be (made) to one of you. O Mazda, might one like thee teach it to his friend such as I am, and through friendly Right give us support that Good Thought may come unto us. . . .

This I ask Thee, tell me truly, Ahura, Who is by generation the Father of Right, at the first? Who determined the path of sun and stars? Who is it by whom the moon waxes and wanes again? This, O Mazda, and yet more, I am fain to know. Yasna 44. 1 and 3.

To what land shall I go to flee, whither to flee? From nobles and my peers they sever me, nor are the people pleased with me, . . . nor the Liar rulers of the land. How am I to please thee, Mazda Ahura? Yasna 46. 1.

(See J. H. Moulton, *Early Zoroastrianism*, pp. 367–372.)

Finally we cite from the Kur'an for comparison two prayers which may be called Psalms. Here there is no Pantheism: Allah the god of Muhammad stands apart as a transcendent god:

...Praise be to God the Lord of the Worlds, the Compassionate, the Merciful, the King of the Day of Judgment. Thee only do we worship, and of Thee only do we seek for help. Guide us in the right way, the way of those to whom Thou showest favour, not of those with whom Thou art angry, nor of those who go astray. Sura 1

Again,

Allah, there is no God but He, the Living, the Everlasting. Slumber overtaketh Him not, nor sleep. To Him belongeth whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth. Who is he that shall intercede with Him save by His permission? He knoweth what was before, and what cometh after; and none shall comprehend aught of His knowledge, save as He willeth. His throne is a canopy over the heavens and the earth, and the keeping of them is no burden to Him; for He is the Most High, the Almighty. Sura 11. 256.

In our general estimate of Gentile Psalms we shall do well to keep in mind the judgment of R. W. Rogers on those which come from Babylon. He writes:

The parallels to the Hebrew psalter need to be very cautiously drawn. Superficial resemblances are misleading, and the deeper analogies are sometimes not easily discerned. There is no general agreement yet secured among scholars upon these delicate points. It is however quite clear that in spite of much that is beautiful in these hymns, they are as a whole deficient in individual character, having much sameness of phrase and, so far as we are able to judge, of metre, and in these qualities, as well as in pure religious character, stand far below the book of Psalms.

*Cuneiform Parallels*, p. 141.

## § 12. SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

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(1560); Bishops' (1568); "Authorised" (1611); "Revised" (1885). These versions are reproduced (including AV) in the original spelling, and further in the Great Bible (= P-B) words and phrases found in the Vulgate, but absent from the Hebrew, are printed within the brackets assigned them in 1539. (These brackets have disappeared from modern editions of the Prayer Book.)

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P.S. Two MSS of LXX are cited in this book. (1) The codex Vaticanus, LXX B, written in the ivth century A.D., containing the Old and New Testaments. It is the oldest copy in existence of the Bible as a whole—with some gaps. In general it is a better representative of the original LXX than LXX A. It forms the basis of Dr Swete's *O.T. in Greek*. (2) The codex Alexandrinus, LXX A, written in the vth or vith century, containing the Old and New Testaments. The latest edition of the Psalms in Greek is that of A. Rahlfs, Göttingen, 1931. It has a fuller *Apparatus* than Swete. Pss i-lviii (lix). 18a are published (July 1931).

# THE PSALMS

## BOOK I

### PSALM I

#### JEHOVAH SIFTS THE WICKED FROM THE RIGHTEOUS

Most of the Psalms contained in Book I have headings prefixed which have been understood to assert Davidic authorship. Ps i has no heading, and contains no suggestion as to its author, nor as to the date at which it was composed. It has no special "colour": though it speaks of the Law (the *Torah*), it is not legalistic in temper. It is in fact a paean on the eternal righteousness of God.

It is surely no accident that such a Psalm as this stands at the beginning of the Psalter. It forms by the nature of its contents a very suitable Introduction to the whole Book. It is the utterance of a Seer who grasps a truth which some other Psalmists only feel after. Like them he looks out upon the world and sees it peopled with two sorts of men: on the one hand the wicked and the sinners and the scorners "sitting" together and on the other the righteous man who is devoted to the law of his God. Apparently the wicked "prosper," or at least they pursue their evil course without interruption. Some Psalmists are moved to doubt and to agonised utterance at the sight, but the writer of Ps i stands with mind and heart unshaken. He is a Seer who sees that Righteousness is strong, and that Wickedness is weak, or (as he himself puts it in one of the concrete) forms characteristic of the Hebrew mind) that the righteous man is a firmly-planted tree while the wicked are so much chaff, which the wind carries along as it will.

In one respect the outlook of the Psalmist is limited, for he is thinking of the daily scene which meets his eye. He is an Israelite and the trial of his faith is all the more severe from the fact that the wicked seem to prosper in Israel itself. But his faith triumphs. He recalls to mind that Israel is (according to the Divine ideal) a "congregation of the righteous" (v. 5), and that the God of Israel is JEHOVAH the righteous judge. In the approaching judgment the "way" of the wicked, all that they do, and all that they propose, will come to an end. On the other hand JEHOVAH will acknowledge the "way" of the righteous, even all that they have done and all that they have suffered for righteousness' sake.

Described in detail, the Psalm falls into *three* divisions:

(1) In v. 1, 2 a sketch is given of the righteous man. He is described first in negative terms: his conduct is not governed by the counsel of the wicked, he does not even contemplate ("stand in") their way of life; still less does he join the company of the scorners to sit with those who forget God and make a mock of the moral law. On the positive side the righteous man is described as delighting in the *Torah*, "the law," or rather "the teaching," of JEHOVAH; he studies it by day and by night.

The character thus sketched may perhaps remind the reader of the Pharisee of the New Testament, both in its separation from those who are called the "wicked," and also in its attachment to the Law, but it must not be forgotten that the Pharisaism which our Lord condemned was the corruption of a noble enthusiasm. *Corruptio optimi pessima*. The Pharisee, in holding himself aloof from foreigners and from foreign influence, showed himself a successor of the heroic Maccabees, and again in his attachment to the Scriptures he followed in the steps of those ancestors who were put to death by Antiochus for the crime of possessing the book of the Covenant (1 Macc i. 57).

The Psalmist's sketch of the righteous man (for whomsoever intended) may indeed serve as the portrait of one of those faithful ones who were marked out for persecution, when the Syrian king made his vain attempt to suppress all that was characteristic in Judaism in favour of Greek customs and Greek religion.

(2) In *vs.* 3, 4 there is a contrast. The righteous man bears the two distinguishing marks of permanence and productiveness. The wicked, on the other hand, have no sure standing-ground and are unable to produce anything.

(3) In the concluding verses (5, 6) the Psalmist reveals the cause of this great difference. He tells us that a moral government is being carried on in the world. Tried by the unseen working of this government, the wicked fall, they cannot stand, nor can they remain in the company of the righteous. A judgment present, but unseen, works separation.  $\text{J}\bar{\text{E}}\text{H}\text{O}\text{V}\bar{\text{A}}\text{H}$  the judge "knows" the way of the righteous, he acknowledges their manner of life in its abiding value. The way of the wicked, on the contrary, when tried by the same test, "perishes," because it is empty of good.

The Psalm has points of contact with Christian teaching. In the first place, the writer shows a sense of the value of the individual soul. The wicked and the scorners are viewed in the mass, but the righteous man is considered by himself. He is blessed for his solitary faithfulness, and his individual fate is held worthy of contemplation.

In the second place, the Psalmist does not concern himself only with the outward acts of the man whom he pronounces to be blessed, but also with his inward disposition. The righteous man is one whose delight is in the *Torah* of the LORD.

Finally, on the negative side this Psalm is independent of some Judaic limitations. There is no allusion to sacrifice, nor to any particular legal ordinance. The Psalm is "spiritual" in St Paul's sense, i.e. it is not under the Law of Ordinances, but under the Law as a spiritual guide. The name used for the Law here is the spiritual word, *Torah*, "guidance."

On the other hand, we must notice that this Psalm in another aspect is strictly legal and non-evangelical. It announces the deep and apparently permanent gulf of separation which exists between the wicked and the righteous. It gives no hint how that gulf may be crossed, if a man desire to cross it. For further guidance we must turn to the New Testament. We may say of this Psalm as St Paul said generally of the Law, *παιδαγωγὸς ἡμῶν γέγονεν εἰς Χριστόν*, it "hath been our tutor to bring us unto Christ" (Gal iii. 24).

- I. 1** <sup>1</sup>BLESSED is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked,  
 Nor standeth in the way of sinners,  
 Nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.  
**2** But his delight is in the law of the LORD;  
 And in his law doth he meditate day and night.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *Happy*

### THE JUDGMENT OF JEHOVAH

**I. 1.** *Blessed* (Heb. *ashrē*). Marg. *Happy*; Vulgate, *Beatus*. The same Hebrew word is used in cxii. 1, cxvii. 5, "Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them," cxviii. 2, "Happy shalt thou be." It is used as a form of friendly congratulation. *Blessed* should be reserved as a rendering for Hebrew *bārūch*, Vulgate, *benedictus*, a word of deeper significance, implying the possession of the Divine blessing; cxv. 15, "Blessed are ye of JEHOVAH."

*that walketh not...Nor standeth...Nor sitteth.* Better as P-B, *that hath not walked...Nor stood...And hath not sat.* The Psalmist thinks of the man who has kept himself pure, who has proved himself faithful.

*the seat* (rather, *the assembly*) *of the scornful.* The Hebrew word *mōshāb* (= Arabic *mejlis*) denotes a number of men seated together on the ground in Eastern fashion and conferring on matters of business or pleasure. Cf Ruth iv. 1, 2.

*the scornful* (Heb. *lēzīm*). The Hebrew word occurs some dozen times in Proverbs; e.g. i. 22, iii. 34 (LXX, Κύριος ὑπερηφάνους ἀντιτάσσεται; cf James iv. 6; 1 Pet v. 5); it is used in contrast to *‘anāvīm*, the "meek" (ix. 12, note), whose character pleases God, so that they are promised the possession of the land (xxxvii. 11). The "meek" look to God, but the "scornful" are self-sufficient. They are contemptuous of goodness.

**2.** *his delight.* LXX, τὸ θέλημα αὐτοῦ; Vulgate, *voluntas eius*. The Hebrew word *hēphez* here translated "delight" means also "will" or "pleasure" or "purpose," as in Isa liii. 10, "The pleasure of JEHOVAH shall prosper in his hand"; Eccl iii. 1, "There is...a time to every *purpose* under the heaven." The rendering of LXX is good, ἐν νόμῳ Κυρίου τὸ θέλημα αὐτοῦ, i.e. "his will moves within the limits of the law of the LORD."

*the law.* Heb. *Torah*, the word used in the phrase "the law of Moses" (Neh viii. 1; *al*), but the meaning is rather "teaching" or "doctrine" whether delivered by a lawgiver, as Moses, or by a prophet, as Isaiah (Isa i. 10, ii. 3, viii. 20). *Torah* is something given from God.

*day and night.* In Deut vi. 6, 7 Israel is bidden to talk of the words of the Law, "when thou liest down, and when thou risest up."

- 3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the streams of water,  
That bringeth forth its fruit in its season,  
Whose leaf also doth not wither ;  
And <sup>1</sup>whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.
- 4 The wicked are not so ;  
But are like the chaff which the wind driveth away.
- 5 Therefore the wicked shall not stand in the judgement,  
Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.
- 6 For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous :  
But the way of the wicked shall perish.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *in whatsoever he doeth he shall prosper*

3. *like a tree.* A close parallel is found in Jer xvii. 8; the man who trusteth in JEHOVAH "shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out his roots by the river, and shall not fear when heat cometh, but his leaf shall be green." Obedience to the will of God gives life to the soul, just as flowing waters at the root preserve the life of a tree in the heat of an Eastern summer. The *streams of water* are irrigation canals such as are seen in Lower Egypt fed by the Nile.

*whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.* An alternative translation is *whatsoever fruit it (the tree) produceth, shall prosper.*

4. *The wicked are not so.* The wicked are not like a tree well planted; they lie like chaff upon the surface of the ground. It is to be noted that this description can be reconciled with their (present) prosperity, but one day the wind will drive them away.

*driveth away.* Better, *carrieth with it.* The thought is not of the removal of the wicked, but of their instability: they have "no root."

5. *Therefore the wicked shall not stand* (rather, *shall not rise up*) *in the judgement.* Many Psalms betray a fear that the Psalmist (or his friends) will become the victim of a perversion of justice; so common is that danger in the East. The "meek" (*'ānāvim*) fear lest the wicked rise up triumphantly in the judgment and secure their condemnation in spite of their innocence.

6. *For JEHOVAH knoweth* (acknowledgeth) *the way of the righteous.* Justice is safe because JEHOVAH is a righteous judge. The righteous will be approved by his supreme authority, while the purpose and the practices (all "the way") of the wicked will come to nought.

For the rendering JEHOVAH (not "the LORD") see v. 1, note; viii. 1, note.

## PSALM II

## THE KINGDOM OF JEHOVAH

If we try to find a particular historical occasion for the composition of Ps ii, we encounter great difficulties. The situation presupposed in this Psalm is as follows. A king is established on Mount Zion who claims rule over the whole world ("the uttermost parts of the earth," *v.* 8), and looks upon the Gentile nations as rebels if they do not submit to him. We cannot think of any Israelite king whose outlook was just this. It is true that for a short period under David and Solomon there was some basis of fact for a claim to imperial rule on the part of Israel. David not only won victories over the small neighbouring peoples—Edom, Moab, Ammon—but he also pushed his arms into Syria and took tribute from Damascus (2 Sam viii. 6). But this did not give him rule over "the uttermost parts of the earth," on the contrary the great powers on the Euphrates, the Tigris, the Orontes, and the Nile remained masters of their own fate. Israel remembered that once Solomon "had dominion" over all the region from the Euphrates to Gaza (1 K iv. 24), and Israel could boast that the Arab Queen of Sheba had brought "presents" to him; but much more than this was wanted to make his rule world-wide, such as this Psalm supposes.

It is not Israelite history but Israelite prophecy (or apocalyptic) that harbours the thought of a universal dominion which has its seat in Jerusalem. Ps ii is not a page from the annals of Israel, but a fragment of a vision of the kingdom of God. It is written in a form which may be called "dramatic," being arranged in four strophes corresponding with the four scenes into which it is divided. In the First Strophe the nations of the world gather together and cry aloud defiantly in chorus (*vv.* 1-3). In the Second JEHOVAH speaks and rebukes the tumult (*vv.* 4-6). In the Third the Son, the king, takes up the commission which JEHOVAH has given him (*vv.* 7-9). In the Fourth (the "Epilogue") a word of warning to the nations is spoken by the Psalmist himself.

The opening verses (1-3) take the reader *in medias res*. The nations are astir; they declare their resolution not to submit to the yoke appointed them. But the Psalmist believes—in spite of all the disorders of the world—that there is a Dominion established upon earth to restrain mankind in obedience to JEHOVAH. His drama, as it develops its theme, shows us the nature of this Dominion.

First (in *vv.* 4-6) the Psalmist justifies his assertion (*v.* 2) that rebellion against the yoke of the Kingdom is rebellion against JEHOVAH. An oracle from JEHOVAH himself has proclaimed that the king who rules on the Holy Mount is of JEHOVAH's own appointment. The Kingdom is no mere passing human institution, but JEHOVAH's own foundation.

In *vv.* 7-9 the king takes up the word, and carries the description of the Kingdom further. The oracle, he says, has not only certified the Divine origin of the Kingdom, but has also indicated its range. It is no merely Jewish institution but world-wide. The LORD has said to the king, "I will give thee the nations for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession."

In the last three verses (10-12) the Psalmist himself speaks, summoning the nations into the Kingdom. Half unconsciously he shows us that the reign of  $\text{JHONAH}$  and his Anointed is totally unlike any worldly tyranny. The Kingdom of God is not founded on the principle of naked fear. Rather it is a sphere of joy and trembling, of service and safety. It is a safe refuge for all who submit to its rule.

The view that the primary reference of this Psalm must be historical is probably based on a false analogy drawn from the prophetic writings of the Old Testament. It is true that no line of absolute division can be drawn between the Psalmists and the Prophets. Prophets sometimes<sup>1</sup> speak like Psalmists, and on the other hand the Psalter contains a prophetic element. And yet a broad distinction must be drawn between the Prophets and the Psalmists.

Isaiah, Jeremiah, and the rest of their goodly fellowship stand very near indeed to the history of their own time. The Prophets were statesmen who were directly concerned with the national welfare of their people, even when as messengers of  $\text{JHONAH}$  they were obliged to denounce punishment for sin against their contemporaries. With the Psalmists it was not so. Their view of things was more inward. They seem sometimes to allude to the national enemies of Israel, but the allusions are of so general a character that the enemies cannot be certainly identified. We are unable to affirm with certainty that even such great events as the Devastation of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans and the Deliverance from Sennacherib are referred to in the Psalter. If the Psalmists write of the progress of earthly events, they show no inclination to mix in worldly politics. If (to take a comparison from English history) the prophet Isaiah or Jeremiah may be compared with Hampden, the Psalmist in most cases reminds us rather of Nicholas Ferrar or George Herbert.

And thus on general grounds it is reasonable to hold that Ps ii deals not with any episode from national history, but with that which St Paul would call a *mystery* ( $\mu\upsilon\sigma\tau\acute{\eta}\rho\iota\omicron\nu$ , Ephes i. 9), some part, that is, of the counsel of God which is revealed to men. The Psalm itself contains no indication that it is "historical." Though it has been supposed to belong to the reign of Solomon, it contains no clear reference to the empire of Solomon, no definite allusion to the uprising of the Edomite Hadad, or of the Syrian Rezon against the suzerainty of Israel (1 K xi. 14-25). Nor, on the other hand, if we accept a very late date for this Psalm, can we identify the "rising" which some commentators find in *vs.* 1-3 with any event of the Maccabean Age. The Maccabees were victors over the Edomites and Samaritans: they could make no claim (with Rome standing so near!) to have a world-wide dominion.

The language of the Psalm is theocratic throughout; it assumes that the real king is God Himself. In *v.* 2 the phrase is " $\text{JHONAH}$  and his anointed"; in *v.* 6 it is "my king," i.e.  $\text{JHONAH}$ 's deputy as king. In *vs.* 7, 8 the nearness of the earthly king to the heavenly is expressed in the most vivid terms, "Thou art my son; this day have I brought thee to the birth. Ask of me, and I will give thee the nations." Finally, in *v.* 10, 11 the nations are commanded to serve

<sup>1</sup> See e.g. Isa xii; Jer xvii. 5-8.

JEHOVAH, before ever they are bidden to pay homage to the Son. The true position of the Son, the king, is that of representative on earth of him that sitteth in the heavens.

We are, in fact, carried away by the language of this Psalm from Jewish particularism and from political history. The nations are told that it is the Divine will that there should be a Kingdom of God upon earth under the delegated rule of One who is named the Son of God. The Son is established (like one of the old Davidic kings) upon Mount Zion, but nothing is said of the line of David. The king is, in fact, an ideal figure; there is nothing to help us to identify him with any contemporary of the Psalmist. The only trait in the description on which special stress is laid is that the LORD'S Anointed is the LORD'S Son. Such language is most naturally echoed in the New Testament in order to express the relation of Messiah, the Incarnate Christ, to the Father (Acts xiii. 33; Heb i. 5, v. 5); it is, indeed, the language of religion, not of Jewish politics.

There is on earth a Kingdom open to all, in which God may be worshipped and served by those who seek their salvation in him and in his Anointed. Ps ii is a vision of a Holy Catholic Church.

- II. 1 Why do the nations <sup>1</sup>rage,  
 And the peoples <sup>2</sup>imagine a vain thing?  
 2 The kings of the earth set themselves,  
 And the rulers take counsel together,  
 Against the LORD, and against his anointed, *saying*,  
 3 Let us break their bands asunder,  
 And cast away their cords from us.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *tumultuously assemble*

<sup>2</sup> Or, *meditate*

#### STROPHE A. 1-3. THE COUNSEL OF MEN AGAINST GOD

II. 1. *Why do the nations rage...?* Marg. *Why do the nations tumultuously assemble...?* The Hebrew verb (*rāgash*) is perhaps onomatopoeic, representing the noise made by people thronging together. The corresponding substantive is found in lxiv. 2, "*Hide me... from the tumult (marg. throng) of the workers of iniquity.*"

*the peoples* (plural), but in P-B and AV (less correctly) *the people*. The different Gentile nations are meant.

*a vain thing*, i.e. an enterprise beyond their power.

2. *set themselves*, i.e. take their stations in the allied army which threatens Zion.

*Against JEHOVAH, and against his anointed.* The words come in with emphasis; they look back to the *Why* of enquiry with which the Psalm opens: "*Why do the nations dare to assemble... against JEHOVAH?*" Their deed is almost beyond belief.

3. *Let us break their bands asunder*, i.e. the bands imposed by JEHOVAH and his Messiah.

*their cords.* The Hebrew word might also be translated their *reins* or

- 4 He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh :  
 The Lord shall have them in derision.  
 5 Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath,  
 And 'vex them in his sore displeasure :  
 6 Yet I have set my king  
 Upon my holy hill of Zion.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *trouble*

*cart-ropes.* The word is used metaphorically in Hosea xi. 4, "I (JEHOVAH) drew them with *cords* (not *bands*) of love." The idea suggested by the words "bands" and "cords" is perhaps rather that of *guidance* than of *bondage*. Cf Isa lxiii. 13, "that (or "who") led them through the depths, as an horse in the wilderness, that they stumbled not."

#### STROPHE B. 4-6. THE DIVINE ANNOUNCEMENT

4. *He that sitteth in the heavens.* JEHOVAH "sits" in heaven; he has no need to "rise" to meet the insurrection of the nations. He sits as a king judging his subjects; cf ix. 7, "JEHOVAH sitteth as king for ever: He hath prepared his throne for judgment."

*shall have them in derision.* The same metaphor is found in xxxvii. 13. It is called an Anthropopathism, i.e. an expression which ascribes human passion to God. So Repentance is ascribed to God (Gen vi. 6); Hatred (Mal i. 3); Forgetfulness (Hosea iv. 6). Such expressions have to be taken only as approximating to the truth they are intended to teach.

5. *Then shall he speak.* "Then" implies a previous silence of God: it is by this silence that he "has the enemy in derision": they suppose for a time that they will succeed in their enterprise, but "then" (at last) JEHOVAH speaks and all their hopes are dashed.

*And vex them.* Better as marg. *trouble* (better still, *afflict*). Cf Acts xii. 1, AV, RV.

6. *Yet I have set my king.* Rather, *I, even I, have set* (or possibly, *have anointed*) *my king*. How hopeless is the attempt of the enemy! JEHOVAH himself has set the man of His choice to be king in the place which He has chosen. It is this arrangement that the rebels would set aside. The reading of LXX B (so Swete) is different and (as it seems) inferior, ἐγὼ δὲ κατεστάθην ὑπ' αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ Σειῶν ὄρος τὸ ἅγιον αὐτοῦ, "but I (Messiah speaks) was set by him upon Zion his holy mountain." The word "king" is omitted in this text: probably LXX in their Hebrew text read a badly written מלכי ("my king") as ממני ("by him" or "from him").

*my king.* He is JEHOVAH's king as having been appointed by JEHOVAH: cf xviii. 50, "Great deliverance giveth he (JEHOVAH) to his king; And sheweth lovingkindness to his anointed."

7 I will tell of the decree:

The LORD said unto me, Thou art my son;

This day have I begotten thee.

8 Ask of me, and I will give *thee* the nations for thine inheritance,  
And the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.

9 Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron;

Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

#### STROPHE C. 7-9. THE KING'S CREDENTIALS

7. *I will tell of the decree.* The Hebrew word for "tell" (*sappēr*) is used often of making known the works of God.

*Thou art my son.* Cf the promise made to the Davidic king in lxxxix. 26, 27, "He shall cry unto me, Thou art my father... I also will make him (my) firstborn." JEHOVAH adopts his king on Mount Zion as His son. See also 2 Sam vii. 13, 14.

*This day have I begotten thee.* In St Luke's account of our Lord's Baptism the words of the heavenly voice were (according to the Western reading, D abcff\*1), "Thou art my son, this day I have begotten thee" (Luke iii. 22). Westcott and Hort receive this reading into the margin, while printing the usual "non-Western" reading in the text. The "non-Western" reading has much stronger support.

8. *Ask of me.* Cf 1 K iii. 5 (God speaks to Solomon at the beginning of his reign), "Ask what I shall give thee." The king is JEHOVAH's son and it is one of the functions of a son to ask from his father. Note Matt vii. 9-11: and the beginning of the Lord's Prayer.

*the nations... the uttermost parts of the earth....* The former word describes the nature of JEHOVAH's gift, the latter its extent. The king is given rule over non-Israelite peoples, even as far as the ends of the earth. Cf lxxii. 8-11.

9. *Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron.* The Hebrew word *shēbet*, "rod," is used of the stout staff (sometimes shod with iron) with which the Hebrew shepherd defended his flock from wild beasts or evil men (xxiii. 4). Most frequently however, it is used of a staff of authority, a sceptre, the sceptre being originally a weapon. Yet the iron sceptre in this context does not necessarily connote violence or destruction; it may stand as a symbol of rule. Further the Hebrew verb in the consonantal text, read without the points of MT, may signify "Thou shalt *keep* (or *shepherd*) them." And so it is understood in LXX, ποιμανεῖς αὐτούς (Vulgate, *Reges eos*).

On the other hand the second clause of the *v.* is (no doubt) rightly rendered:

"Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."

Very good sense is obtained if we understand *v.* 9 as containing a parallelism of contrasted members, thus:

"Thou shalt be a shepherd for these with a sceptre of iron:

Thou shalt dash those to pieces like a potter's vessel."

10 Now therefore be wise, O ye kings:  
Be instructed, ye judges of the earth.

11 Serve the LORD with fear,  
And rejoice with trembling.

12 <sup>1</sup> Kiss the son, lest he be angry, and ye perish in the way,

<sup>1</sup> Some ancient versions render, *Lay hold of* (or, *Receive*) *instruction*; others, *Worship in purity*.

The meaning is that JEHOVAH's son will be a shepherd to those who submit, but a destroyer of those who resist. So Vergil declares that the duty of the Roman people is:

Parcere subiectis et debellare superbos,  
"Show pity to the humbled soul,  
And crush the sons of pride."

*Aen* VI. 853 (Conington).

A familiar instance of the parallelism of contrasted members is,

"Thou didst drive out the nations with thy hand,  
And plantedst them (Israel) in." Ps xlv. 2.

#### STROPHE D. 10-12. THE SUMMONS TO SUBMIT

10. *be wise*. Or, *pay attention*. Or (possibly), *act wisely*.

*Be instructed*, i.e. receive instruction, take in the lesson which I am just about to give.

11. *rejoice with trembling*. Better as P-B (=LXX, Vulgate), *rejoice unto him* (i.e. unto JEHOVAH) *with trembling*. To "rejoice in (or "before") JEHOVAH" was part of the Hebrew religion: cf xxxii. 11; Deut xii. 12, 18, xxvi. 11. It is used in the sense of keeping the three yearly feasts. In Zech xiv. 16 f. it is said that the nations which were once hostile will one day come to Jerusalem to keep the Feast of tabernacles. If the Psalmist adds the qualifying word "with trembling," he agrees with St Paul, who in Rom xi. 21 cautions his Gentile converts in the words, "Be not highminded, but fear." Yet some modern writers find the mention of rejoicing "unsuitable" here. The words are indeed paradoxical, but some of the greatest truths of our religion have to be expressed by paradox. "Rejoice with trembling" is perhaps the noblest description which could be given of the attitude of the truly religious man. It is in line with the collect for the Second Sunday after Trinity, "Make us to have a perpetual fear and love of thy holy Name." The spiritual man trembles even as he feels the joy of drawing near to God.

12. *Kiss the son*. A great deal of needless difficulty is made over the translation of these words. The verb used in the original means, "Kiss ye," i.e. "pay ye homage to"; the following substantive means either "son" or "pure one." Thus if both words be Aramaic, the clause means, "Pay ye homage to one who is JEHOVAH's son" (cf v. 7), or (if both words are Hebrew),

For his wrath <sup>1</sup>will soon be kindled.

<sup>2</sup>Blessed are all they that <sup>3</sup>put their trust in him.

<sup>1</sup> Or, may

<sup>2</sup> Or, Happy

<sup>3</sup> Or, take refuge

“Pay ye homage to one who is pure” (and therefore chosen of God; cf Ps lxxiii. 1).

With either rendering we have in *vv.* 11, 12 a very natural reference to the contents of *v.* 2, and moreover a strikingly appropriate conclusion to the whole Psalm. According to *v.* 2 the nations were guilty of a twofold rebellion, “Against JEHOVAH, and against his anointed,” and so in *vv.* 11, 12 they are summoned to make a twofold submission, “Serve JEHOVAH with fear, . . . Pay homage to his son.” Moreover the dual reference to JEHOVAH and his Messiah is thus maintained in each of the four divisions of the Psalm: in *v.* 2 JEHOVAH and his anointed, in *v.* 6 JEHOVAH and his king, in *v.* 7 JEHOVAH and his son, in *v.* 12 JEHOVAH and his pure one (his son).

The choice between the translations “son” (as in Pro xxxi. 2) and “pure one” (cf Ps lxxiii. 1) is hard to make. In later Hebrew words borrowed from the kindred language, Aramaic, are not uncommon, and on the supposition that this Psalm is late, the presence of the Aramaic *bar*, “son,” is not at all surprising, even though “my son” in *v.* 7 is represented by the pure Hebrew form *bēnī*. (The case would have been different had the word *ben*, “son,” occurred uninflected, for then *ben* and *bar* would have been used indifferently in one Psalm.) As it is, the use of an ambiguous word, which if it means “son” connotes “pure one,” helps greatly the connexion of thought in the Psalm. It is not a son only, but a pure one, the chosen son indeed, to whom the nations have to make submission. The occurrence of an Aramaic formula in addressing Gentiles need not surprise us. There is a good parallel in Jer x. 11, where the writer uses Aramaic when he announces to the “nations” that their gods are doomed to perish.

Perhaps no difficulty would have been raised, had not the Septuagint (and the versions which follow it) given a different rendering, *δράξαθε παιδείας*, “lay hold on chastening.” The Vulgate similarly has *apprehendite disciplinam*, and the Targum, which (unlike the Vulgate) is independent of the Septuagint, has “Receive instruction.” It has been supposed that these renderings point to a Hebrew reading different from the Masoretic and preferable to it, but the evidence is too slight. The renderings of Aquila (*καταφιλήσατε ἐκλεκτῶς*) and of Symmachus (*προσκυνήσατε καθαρῶς*, whence Jerome took his *adore pure*) show that the Masoretic reading prevailed at least as early as the second century of the Christian era. The Peshitta gives unambiguously, “Kiss the son.”

Both the LXX and the Targumist had reason for avoiding the plain words of the MT. In Ps ii. 12 it is the Greek (not the Hebrew) text which appears not to be original, while the Targum on examination stands convicted of being only a paraphrase.

## ADDITIONAL NOTE ON v. 12 "Kiss the son"

The Septuagint was made in Egypt, and the Egyptian Jews were by no means free from the fear of persecution. C. W. Emmet suggests with good reason that the acts of oppression narrated in 3 Maccabees have a historical foundation, and were not confined to one reign<sup>1</sup>. In Egypt the Jewish translators wrote down the generalising exhortation *δράξασθε παιδείας*, because, we may suppose, so pointed a rendering as *καταφλήσατε τὸν υἱόν* might give an opportunity to the informers employed by the Ptolemies.

If the LXX had one good reason for resorting to paraphrase, the Targumist had another equally valid.

The Targum on the Psalms was certainly redacted some time after the beginning of the Christian era; some elements in it are late; and some scars of the controversy with Christians are to be found in it. Ps ii. 12 is probably a case in point. Jerome (*Commentarioli in Pss*, ed. Morin, 1895) writes: "In hebraeo legitur *NĒSCU BAR*, quod interpretari potest, Adorate filium. Apertissima itaque de Christo prophetia est, et ordo praecepti: Adorate Filium, ne forte irascatur Dominus, hoc est, Pater." Thus did St Jerome make a controversial use of the passage. The Targumist replies with a controversial interpretation from the Jewish side. The form which this interpretation would take was imposed upon him by the tendency of Jewish thought and feeling in the early centuries of the Christian era. The expectation of Messiah was dying out in Judaism, and the Rabboth were putting the Law into his place. So if the Christians explained *bar* ("son") of Jesus the Messiah, the prevalent school of Jewish interpretation replied by explaining *bar* ("the pure one") of the Law. Thus in the Midrash Rabba on Numbers (נשא, ch x. § 4)<sup>2</sup> the expositor commenting on the *מה ברי*, *mah bērī* ("What, my son") of Pro xxxi. 2 with its twice repeated *bar* ("sou") following, says, "These (i.e. *bērī*, *bar* and *bar* repeated) are the commands and prohibitions of the *Torah*, which is called *bar*, even as it saith (Ps ii), *Kiss Bar* ("the pure one"), lest he be angry, etc. for all the words thereof are pure (*bārim*)." So again in B. T. *Sanhedrin*, fol. 92a, the expositor commenting on Pro xi. 26, "He that withholdeth corn (*bar*), the people shall curse him," says, "There is no corn (*bar*) but *Torah*, for it is said (Ps ii), *Kiss Bar*, lest he be angry." These two comments are far-fetched, but they combine to prove that *bar* was explained by early Jewish authorities in the sense of teaching (*Torah*). Consequently we must not suppose that the Jewish Targumist had a different reading before him because he gave the rendering *אוֹלַפְנָא*. This Aramaic word, though sometimes used in a general sense, is at others specifically applied to the Teaching, i.e. to the *Torah*. "Receive the Teaching" is simply the precept, "Kiss the pure one," interpreted according to Jewish exegesis.

<sup>1</sup> *Apocrypha* (ed. R. H. Charles), p. 155.

<sup>2</sup> Vilna edition of the year 638 (short reckoning).

## PSALM III

## WHEN FOES INCREASE, I TRUST IN THEE

## § 1. CONTENTS.

- 1, 2. The Psalmist's Alarm.
- 3-6. His Faith.
7. The Request.
8. The *Gloria* and the *Blessing*.

## § 2. OCCASION.

The occasion of the Psalm according to the heading was David's flight from Absalom. But there is no mention of flight, as in Ps xi, nor of pursuit as in Ps vii, nor is there any suggestion (as there is in Ps lv) that the enemy is one of the Psalmist's former intimates. Moreover the flight from Absalom was marked by several striking incidents (2 Sam xv-xvii), but no reference to any one of them is apparent in Ps iii. The language of the Psalm is of a general character, and we can interpret it without help from our knowledge of the life of David. See pages xxiii-xxviii.

But in one point this Psalm might have been written with reference to Absalom. The Psalmist's enemies are not Gentiles (*goyim*), as in Ps ii, but they belong to his own people. The ten thousands of the people (v. 6: Hebrew *'am*) are native foes. The Psalmist speaks as an individual: he is not to be taken as the spokesman of his people complaining of the attack of foreign foes.

A Psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son.

## III. 1 LORD, how are mine adversaries increased!

Many are they that rise up against me.

2 Many there be which say <sup>1</sup> of my soul,

There is no <sup>2</sup> help for him in God.

[Selah

<sup>1</sup> Or, *to*

<sup>2</sup> Or, *salvation*

## 1, 2. THE PSALMIST'S ALARM

III. 1. *mine adversaries*. Private enemies: cf 1 Sam i. 6, "her adversary" (AV; "her rival" RV) of Peninnah as the rival of Hannah. The Hebrew word is the same.

2. *There is no help* (rather *salvation*) *for him in God*. This hostile assertion is answered with direct denial in v. 8, "Salvation belongeth unto JEHOVAH." The Psalmist's enemies hold Epicurean views. They do not question the existence of God but they deny His providence over the world: they say, "The LORD (JAH: cf lxviii. 4) shall not see, Neither shall the God of Jacob consider" (xciv. 7). Cf x. 11-13.

- 3 But thou, O LORD, art a shield about me;  
My glory, and the lifter up of mine head.
- 4 I cry unto the LORD with my voice,  
And he answereth me out of his holy hill. [Selah
- 5 I laid me down and slept;  
I awaked; for the LORD sustaineth me.
- 6 I will not be afraid of ten thousands of the people,  
That have set themselves against me round about.
- 7 Arise, O LORD; save me, O my God:

### 3-6. THE PSALMIST'S FAITH

3. *a shield about me.* A frequent metaphor: cf lxxxiv. 11, "a sun and a shield"; also v. 12 *b*, xci. 4. In an Assyrian oracle the goddess Ishtar says to Esarhaddon, I am thy gracious shield. (*Altor: Texte*, p. 282).

*My glory.* Cf cvi. 20, "Thus they changed their glory (Him who was their glory, i.e. JEHOVAH) For the likeness of an ox that eateth grass." JEHOVAH is Israel's "glory" because Israel glories in having Him for their God: cf xliv. 8, "In God have we made our boast all the day long." This note of triumphing in God is one of the marks of true religion. It is heard in the Prayer Book in the *Gloria* at the close of the Communion Office, "We praise thee, we bless thee, we worship thee, we glorify thee, we give thanks to thee for thy great glory."

*the lifter up of mine head.* Cf 2 K xxv. 27.

4. *out of his holy hill.* The term *holy hill* occurs five times in the Psalter: ii. 6, iii. 4, xv. 1, xliii. 3, xcix. 9, the reference being in each case to Mount Zion. But it need not be supposed that a Psalmist conceived of JEHOVAH's presence as purely local. On the contrary in xx. 2, 6 the Psalmist prays for help "from the sanctuary" and strength "out of Zion," but he looks for the answer to come from the "holy heaven."

5. *I laid me down and slept*; though surrounded by ten thousand dangers—it was the sleep of faith: *I awaked*,—my sleep did not prove to be the sleep of death, for JEHOVAH was *sustaining me*, as of old.

6. *ten thousands of the people* (Heb. 'am), i.e. ten thousands of the Psalmist's own people, but the number is rhetorically expressed.

*That have set themselves against me round about.* To emphasise the imminence of his danger and the great number of his foes the Psalmist describes them as encompassing him: cf xii. 8, xxii. 12, lvii. 4.

### 7. THE REQUEST

7. *Arise, O JEHOVAH.* This form of appeal is found in vii. 6, ix. 19, x. 12, xvii. 13, xxxv. 2 ("stand up"), xlv. 26 ("Rise up for our help"), lxxiv. 22, lxxxii. 8, cxxxii. 8. It is derived from an ancient signal cry for marching or for going out to battle: see Num x. 35 ("Rise up, O JEHOVAH, and let thine enemies be scattered") and Ps lxviii. 1.

For thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheek bone ;  
Thou hast broken the teeth of the wicked.

8 <sup>1</sup>Salvation belongeth unto the LORD:

Thy blessing be upon thy people.

[Selah

<sup>1</sup> Or, *Victory*

*save me...For thou hast smitten.* Translate, *For thou didst smite.* The Psalmist prays to JEHOVAH, because he has experienced in the past JEHOVAH'S power to save.

*Thou hast broken the teeth of the wicked.* The powerful enemies of the Psalmist are often referred to under the figure of lions; to break their teeth means to destroy their power to harm: cf lviii. 6, "Break out the great teeth of the young lions, O JEHOVAH." See also xxii. 13, xxxiv. 10.

### 8. THE GLORIA AND THE BLESSING

8. *Salvation belongeth unto JEHOVAH.* "Salvation" is frequently used in Hebrew in the sense of "Victory": so RV marg. here. Cf 1 Sam xiv. 6. The words are an answer to the enemy's assertion in v. 2, "There is no help (salvation) for him in God."

*Thy blessing be upon thy people.* Cf cxxxiii. 3, "blessing, even life for evermore"; also Num vi. 23-27 (the formula of priestly blessing).

#### NOTE on *Selah* in vv. 2, 4, 8

No satisfactory explanation has been given of this word. A full discussion of it is given in *J.T.S.* vol. xviii. pp. 263-273 by W. Emery Barnes (*q.v.*). His conclusions are:

(1) *Selah* being embedded in the text of the Hebrew O.T. must belong to the earliest stage of comment or exegesis.

(2) As the product of the first tentative work of Jewish exegetes it has probably a quite general significance.

(3) It often occurs where there is some change or break in the thought of the Psalmist.

(4) Consequently though *Selah* was not specially intended as a musical direction, it would often serve as one.

(5) In many instances it has no reference to music, but it calls attention to some difficulty of text or interpretation.

(6) It was at one time found more frequently than now in the text of the Psalter. To these conclusions should be added the consideration that *Selah* is unevenly distributed in the Psalter: it is found in thirty-nine Psalms only out of a hundred and fifty.

## PSALM IV

IN A TIME OF DEARTH THE PSALMIST'S FAITH  
STANDS FIRM

The heading of this Psalm does not specify any special occasion for it, yet it is natural to suppose from the urgent tone of the Psalmist that some special calamity has befallen or is threatening to befall his country. It can hardly be foreign invasion or oppression, for there is no mention of an enemy. There remain the two calamities of dearth and pestilence, and of these two the reference to "corn and wine" in *v.* 7 makes the former the more probable. *V.* 7 means that the Psalmist's sense of JEHOVAH's favour gives him more gladness than an abundant harvest gives to other men. Further it may be that in *v.* 5 also there is an allusion to scarcity. "Offer the sacrifices that are due," the Psalmist says, possibly because he saw that his fellow-countrymen, fearing heavy losses among their flocks and herds, were beginning to grudge the offerings that were due to JEHOVAH's service; cf Mal iii. 8-10. "Put your trust in JEHOVAH," he adds, as if he meant to assure them that their God would not allow them to lose in His service in the long run. If in addition to their losses by the drought they were making offerings to "new gods," to the Baals who were supposed by the heathen to give fertility to the soil of Canaan, the Psalmist's warning in *v.* 5 is seen to be still more appropriate.

It is true that the Psalmist does not expressly mention drought in his prayer, but it is clear that his prayer is interrupted. In fact something besides a prayer was required of him. In *v.* 2 he turns to vehement expostulation. Why? Because in times of calamity, and perhaps specially in days of dearth, Israel was wont to turn to other gods than JEHOVAH to supply the special help that was needed. "Were not the Baalim," so Israel would ask, "the true gods and lords of the soil of Canaan? Were not the Baalim the givers of fertility?" (Hosea ii. 5). If in Jer xiv. 22 the prophet asks, "Are there any among the vanities (false gods) of the heathen that can cause rain?" no doubt many of his hearers would have asserted that which Jeremiah wished to deny. In time of dearth many would shout, like the prophets on Mount Carmel, "O Baal, answer us" (1 K xviii. 26).

So in Ps iv the Psalmist, feeling himself, like Elijah, to be JEHOVAH's only champion, remonstrates with the leaders of his people: when faced by calamity they dishonour JEHOVAH by turning aside after other gods. In *v.* 3 he testifies to his hearers of the willingness of JEHOVAH to hear prayer: there is no reason (he would teach them) for turning to other gods, idols of the heathen, "vanity" and "falsehood," as he calls them. So in *v.* 4 he bids his countrymen ponder his words in the quiet hours of rest. From pondering go on (he says in *v.* 5) to confession of JEHOVAH as your God: pay the sacrifices ye owe to Him and put your trust in these sad days in no other deity. In *v.* 6 the Psalmist turns again to the communion with his God, which was interrupted at *v.* 2. "Many are saying" (so he tells his Lord), "*Who* (among the gods) *will shew us good?*" He himself turns at once in hope to prayer: "JEHOVAH, lift thou up an ensign over us, even the light of thy countenance."

The Psalmist's prayer is finished, and peace descends into his soul. JEHOVAH has granted him a gladness which is independent of the harvest of corn or wine (v. 7). And so he falls asleep, calm in the conviction that JEHOVAH who is the Only God will keep him in the days of dearth.

A new interpretation of the meaning of the Psalm has been offered with some confidence by Sigmund Mowinckel, a Norwegian scholar (who writes in German), in his *Psalmenstudien* (Kristiania, 1921), i. 45, 48, 156, *al.* He holds that "vanity" (רִיק) and "falsehood" (כֹּזֵב) in v. 2 (also in many other passages of the Psalter) denote the work of the sorcerer. The Psalmist's enemies use spells against him. But when a spell is cast upon a man he becomes sick. Suspecting that his sickness is due to the black art, the sick man desires to be taken to a temple (e.g. to one of the shrines of Asclepius) and to sleep there, that he may have a vision of his god and receive an oracle promising recovery. This Mowinckel believes is the situation represented in this Psalm. The meaning of v. 8 will then be:

*In Frieden werde ich mich jetzt zur Inkubation niederlegen—Ich bin eines "guten Zeichens" gewiss<sup>1</sup>.*

But Mowinckel's interpretation is not sufficiently supported by the language of the Psalm as a whole. In the first place there is nothing to suggest that the Psalmist is (or has been) sick. Nor again does v. 5 look like an answer to sorcerers. Finally be it said that v. 2 b and v. 8, even when read together, are expressed in terms too general to make it even probable that the Psalmist is replying to the special menace of the black art.

For the Chief Musician; on stringed instruments. A Psalm of David.

**IV. 1** Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness;  
Thou hast set me at large *when I was* in distress:

<sup>1</sup>Have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *Be gracious unto me*

### 1. A PRAYER IN PRESENT DISTRESS

**IV. 1.** *Answer me* (not *Hear me* as P-B). This is the cry of Elijah on Mount Carmel, "Answer me, O JEHOVAH, answer me" (1 K xviii. 37, not "Hear me"). It is a more urgent cry than "Hear me." Three times in the Psalter it is expressed still more urgently, "Answer me speedily" or "Make haste to answer me": lxix. 17, cii. 2, cxliii. 7.

*when I call.* Vulgate, *cum invocarem.* The Hebrew word (as used here) suggests a direct appeal to JEHOVAH by name. Indeed this Psalm is coloured by its (almost defiant) iteration of JEHOVAH'S name. The Psalmist will be faithful to his God, whoever else may be false.

*Thou hast set me at large.* This is a faulty rendering. The Psalmist is not yet "at large," for he prays, "Have mercy upon me" in the very

<sup>1</sup> I.e. "I shall now lay me down in peace to await a visit (by dream) from the God of healing: I am sure of receiving a favourable sign."

2 O ye sons of men, how long shall my glory be turned into dishonour?

*How long* will ye love vanity, and seek after falsehood? [Selah

3 But know that the LORD hath set apart <sup>1</sup>him that is godly for himself:

The LORD will hear when I call unto him.

4 <sup>2</sup>Stand in awe, and sin not:

<sup>1</sup> Or, *one that he favoureth*

<sup>2</sup> Or, *Be ye angry*

next clause. The two clauses together contrast the Psalmist's present with his past:

"(Once) didst thou set me at large, when I was in distress:  
Have mercy upon me (now), and hear my prayer."

#### 2-5. A DANGER OF APOSTASY FROM JEHOVAH IN THE FACE OF THIS DISTRESS

2. *O ye sons of men.* Rather, *O ye men of high degree* (Heb. *bēnē ish*). The Psalmist is appealing to the leaders of the people to return to faithfulness towards JEHOVAH. So the prophet in Jer v. 5, "I will get me unto the great men, and will speak unto them; for they know the way of JEHOVAH." The meaning of *bēnē ish* is illustrated by lxii. 9, "Men of low degree (*bēnē adam*) are vanity, and men of high degree (*bēnē ish*) are a lie."

*how long shall my glory be turned into dishonour?* Better, *how long shall my glory be dishonoured?* "My glory" stands for "my God": cf cvi. 20, "Thus they changed *their glory* (i.e. their God JEHOVAH) For the likeness of an ox that eateth grass." The author of Ps iv remonstrates with the heads of his people for seeking after false gods under the stress of famine. Such a resort to other gods is to dishonour JEHOVAH the true God of Israel, for it suggests that he is not powerful enough to send rain and favourable seasons to save Israel.

*vanity...falsehood.* Both these terms mean the same thing, i.e. *false gods*; cf Isa xlv. 20, "He cannot say, Is there not a lie (i.e. an idol) in my right hand?"

3. *JEHOVAH hath set apart him that is godly for himself.* Better, *JEHOVAH hath dealt wondrously with his favoured one*, i.e. not with the Psalmist individually, but with Israel as a people. The Psalmist remembers that JEHOVAH has dealt wondrously with Israel, giving him many a deliverance.

*JEHOVAH will hear when I call unto him.* The Psalmist speaks confidently as a prophet and as the representative of his people.

4. *Stand in awe, and sin not*, i.e. "Stand in awe in the presence of JEHOVAH, and do not rebel against him by going after other gods." The Hebrew verb rendered "stand in awe" occurs also in xcix. 1, "Let the peoples tremble."

Commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still. [Selah]

5 Offer the sacrifices of righteousness,  
And put your trust in the LORD.

6 Many there be that say, Who will shew us *any* good?  
LORD, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.

LXX renders, ὀργίξασθε καὶ μὴ ἀμαρτάνετε, "be ye angry and sin not," and St Paul uses the same words (but without any suggestion that he is making a quotation) in Ephes iv. 26. The warning that anger leads to sin is one which agrees both with Jewish and Christian ethics (cf Matt v. 22, RV), but it is not the meaning of this passage of the Psalms.

*Commune with your own heart.* Rather, *Tell it within your own heart.* Tell—what? The Psalmist's own communication given in v. 3, namely, that JEHOVAH hath dealt wondrously with Israel in the past. So the Psalmist would have his countrymen rest, *be still*, and wait for their God to come to their help once again.

*upon your bed.* This expression does not necessarily connote the night-time: people rested on their beds in the heat of midday (2 Sam iv. 5-7). It connotes rather the perfect stillness with which Israel should continue to rest upon JEHOVAH. So in cxlix. 5 the Saints are to sing for joy *upon their beds*, because of the utter tranquillity which they enjoy under the favour of God.

5. *Offer the sacrifices of righteousness*, i.e. *either*, Offer to JEHOVAH the sacrifices which are rightly due to Him, *or*, Offer sacrifice with hands pure from all stain of acts of injustice. The Psalmists sometimes ignore or condemn the sacrificial system, but the opposite tendency is also found, e.g. it is very clear in lxvi. 13-15.

## 6. THE PSALMIST'S FAITHFULNESS TO JEHOVAH

6. *Who will shew us any good?* Who of gods or men will bring us plenty again? Rather, *good* not *any good*. The enquirers desire simply the removal of the dearth. It is the cry of those who turn their backs on JEHOVAH, and look elsewhere for relief.

JEHOVAH. The Psalmist on the contrary turns to the God of Israel, and invokes the great name—JEHOVAH.

*lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.* Rather, *lift thou up an ensign over us, even the light of thy countenance.* The Hebrew word rendered *lift thou up* (*nēsāh*) is connected with the Heb. *nēs*, "banner, ensign." Accordingly Rashi translates, *lift up over us for an ensign the light of thy countenance.* The suitability of the metaphor is manifest. To the Israelite it would recall the Exodus when the LORD went before the people in the pillar of the cloud and guided them by its light to the further shore of the Red Sea. The ensign was no doubt a pole of shining metal and not a broad piece of coloured stuff. The Roman *signum*, writes E. H. Alton in the *Companion to Latin Studies* (§ 750), "was a

7 Thou hast put gladness in my heart,  
More than *they have* when their corn and their wine are  
increased.

8 In peace will I both lay me down and sleep:  
For thou, LORD, <sup>1</sup>alone makest me dwell in safety.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *in solitude*

silver-plated pole adorned chiefly with metal discs, sometimes also with crowns." The ancient Assyrian armies (as the bas-reliefs suggest) carried similar *signa*. Such ensigns flashing in the sun might seem to the Psalmist emblems of the burning glory of JEHOVAH'S countenance.

### 7, 8. THE PSALMIST SPIRITUALLY SATISFIED

7. *More than they*, etc. Better, *Greater than they had, when their corn and wine increased*. JEHOVAH has granted to the Psalmist a greater joy than the joy of harvest. The rendering, *Since the time that their corn...increased* (P-B), goes contrary to the spiritual elevation of this Psalm. No relief from the dearth has yet been granted, but the Psalmist having made his prayer leaves the result with God and lays himself down in trust to sleep.

*corn and...wine*. P-B adds *and oil*, following LXX Peshitta and Vulgate. Three necessities of Eastern life: cf civ. 15.

8. *In peace will I both lay me down*. Rather, *Altogether at peace I lay me down*.

*For thou, JEHOVAH, alone makest me dwell in safety*. Rather,

*For thou, O JEHOVAH, thou Only One, dost set me free from care*.

The translation *thou, LORD, alone* (RV) or *thou, LORD, only* (P-B) is inadequate. The Hebrew word *lēbādād* (or *bādād*), when it is used with the name JEHOVAH, is used as an epithet, "JEHOVAH the Only One," i.e. the One true God among many false gods. Cf Deut xxxii. 12, "JEHOVAH the Only God did lead him"; Ps li. 4 (Heb 6), "Against thee, the Only God, have I sinned." So again when *lēbādād* (*bādād*) is used in reference to Israel it is to be taken as an epithet: Num xxiii. 9, "Behold as a Unique people he dwelleth, and is not reckoned among the nations"; Deut xxxiii. 28, "The Fountain of Jacob is Unique."

## PSALM V

### THE PSALMIST IN PERILS AMONG FALSE BRETHREN

#### § 1. CONTENTS.

1-3. The Psalmist will pray after due preparation to JEHOVAH and to JEHOVAH only, and will watch in confidence for the result.

4-6. This confidence is based on the fact that JEHOVAH abhors false and bloodthirsty men and such are the Psalmist's foes.

7. The Psalmist will enter the house of God as a true worshipper.

8-11. He prays against his enemies and for the faithful.

12. The Psalmist's confidence that JEHOVAH will preserve a righteous man.

## § 2. CHARACTER AND PURPOSE.

It may be that familiarity with the text of this Psalm prevents the reader from detecting the urgent note of danger which dominates it. But the Psalmist's danger is real and great. Twice he alludes to it in this short prayer. He has enemies, and they are bloodthirsty and deceitful men (v. 6); nay, though their words are smooth, their heart is planning his destruction (v. 9).

These enemies plot against his life because of his faithfulness to JEHOVAH. Yet they are not foreigners, there is no mention in the Psalm of Gentiles (*gōyim*) nor of strangers (*zārim*). The enemies are men of his own people. They, like him, worship JEHOVAH, but with a difference. There were religious parties in Israel from ancient times, and since the Psalmist complains that his enemies have no "faithfulness," it is probable that they were men who, while professing themselves servants of JEHOVAH, paid worship to other gods. Of such double-minded ones the historian writes: "They feared JEHOVAH, and served their own gods" (2 K xvii. 33). They were strangers, but they became absorbed into the old Israelitish population and leavened it with heathen ideas. Naturally their descendants were not "faithful" to the Monotheism which the Psalmist upheld.

How deep the breach and how bitter the strife could be between the "faithful" and "unfaithful" is illustrated by such passages as Ezra iv. 1-6; Neh iv. 1-6; *al*. This Psalm shows that the contest could be "to death." The Psalmist, like Nehemiah, is attacked with the tongue of slander and deceit, with pretended friendship, and deadly hatred: cf Neh vi. 1-11. But the Psalmist, again like Nehemiah, is inspired with triumphant faith (vs. 11, 12) in JEHOVAH.

For the Chief Musician; with the <sup>1</sup>Nehiloth. A Psalm of David.

**V. 1** Give ear to my words, O LORD,  
Consider my meditation.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *wind instruments*

### 1-3. PREPARING FOR THE FIGHT

**V. 1.** *Give ear to my words.* An insistent beginning, naïve in its simplicity, but with the note of true prayer. The Psalmist is not a mere petitioner, eager to carry off some boon from the hand of his God. Rather he desires to enter into communion with Him. He is a seeker after God: his only petition is that JEHOVAH will lead him along a difficult stretch of life's journey (v. 8). It is to be noted that in the first three verses the Psalmist is preparing himself to pray. He will *arrange* his thoughts before he offers them to God (v. 3). So it is written in the Talmud, "The holy men of old used to wait one hour before they prayed that they might first direct their heart to God" (*Bērachoth*, v. 1). "O JEHOVAH" not O LORD. Here again much is lost by the sub-

- 2 Hearken unto the voice of my cry, my King, and my God:  
For unto thee do I pray.
- 3 O LORD, in the morning shalt thou hear my voice;  
In the morning will I order *my prayer* unto thee, and will  
keep watch.

stitution of "the LORD" for the proper name, JEHOVAH. The Psalmist is a faithful worshipper of JEHOVAH and of Him only: very significant is the emphasis which he lays on the pronoun in *v. 2*, "Unto *thee* do I pray." He confesses his faith by using the great Name in *v. 1* and again in *v. 3*, while in *v. 2* he acknowledges Him as "my King" and "my God." We may compare St Thomas's cry, "My Lord and my God" (John xx. 28). The term "God" was lightly used in the ancient world, for many gods were "named" and worshipped in East and West, and so it is well that the Psalmist added "my King" to "my God."

2. *unto thee do I pray.* Prayer is not regarded in the Psalter simply as a form of petition: the idea of communion is never far off. The Psalmists ask for certain boons, but it is always *from JEHOVAH*; they regard the Giver at least as much as the gift. So JEHOVAH is addressed as the "Hearer of prayer" (lxxv. 2), and the Psalmist hopes that his prayer will please his God, like the sweet smell of incense (cxli. 2). To pray is to enter the presence of JEHOVAH (*v. 7*) and to do homage to him: "Let every one that is godly pray unto thee" says the writer of xxxii. 6, while in cix. 4 a Psalmist declares, "For my love they are my adversaries: But I give myself unto prayer," i.e. he turns from men's rejection to God's acceptance; from converse with men to communion with JEHOVAH.

3. *in the morning...In the morning.* This repetition suggests that the Psalmist's meaning is "every morning," i.e. continually. The Psalmist's prayers are purposeful: cf lv. 17, "Evening, and morning, and at noonday, will I complain" (RV).

*will I order my prayer.* The words "my prayer" are not in the Hebrew. The Hebrew verb is used in Exod xl. 4 of arranging the shewbread upon the holy table, and in Lev i. 8 of the orderly placing of the separate portions of the victim upon the altar to be burnt. The Psalmist thinks of his Psalm (which is set to music) as an offering, or even as a sacrificial victim, which must be offered so as to be acceptable to JEHOVAH.

*and will keep watch.* Finally the Psalmist promises that he will keep watch. Herein he reveals himself as a prophet, for it was the function of a prophet to watch: Ezekiel (e.g.) is specially appointed a "watchman" (Ezek iii. 16-21), and Habakkuk says, "I will stand upon my watch... and will look forth to see what (JEHOVAH) will speak with me" (Hab ii. 1). The Psalmist expects (after his prayer) to be answered, and to be entrusted with some message of comfort for his faithful brethren.

- 4 For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness:  
 1 Evil shall not sojourn with thee.
- 5 The arrogant shall not stand in thy sight:  
 Thou hatest all workers of iniquity.
- 6 Thou shalt destroy them that speak lies:  
 The LORD abhorreth the bloodthirsty and deceitful man.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *The evil man*

<sup>2</sup> Or, *Fools*

#### 4-6. THE CHARACTER OF THE FOE

4. *thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness.* This (a truism to Christians) was not a truism to the ancient world. The gods of Greece and Rome were inconstant, or spiteful, or lewd, or implacable, as they appear in the *Iliad*, *Odyssey*, *Aeneid*, and *Homeric Hymns*. Some may say that these contain simply poetic fancies, but where were truer or more decent pictures of the life of the gods to be found? Similarly the gods of the old Babylonian cosmogony warred one with another, and the great goddess Ishtar stooped to a human lover.

*Evil shall not sojourn with thee.* For "Evil" read "The evil man." Translate, *No evil man shall be thy guest.* "Guest" (Heb. *gēr*) is a technical term applied to a stranger who lived in the land of Israel under the protection of some powerful Israelite, as the *metoecus* lived under the protection of an Athenian citizen at Athens. The Psalmist regards Canaan as JEHOVAH'S land and himself as a protected stranger living by his LORD'S permission on the sacred soil.

5. (Heb. 6) *The arrogant shall not stand in thy sight.* "Arrogant" (Heb. הוֹלִלִים), lit. "Shouters" (or "boasters"); cf Ps lxxiii. 3, "the arrogant," lxxv. 5 (4, EV), "I said to the arrogant, Deal not arrogantly." In both cases "arrogant" is parallel to "wicked." Here the "arrogant" are those who shout in triumph over the success of their wickedness. But their triumph is premature; successful for the moment in the sight of men, they shall not be able to "stand" (justify themselves) in the sight of God.

The phrase *workers of iniquity* according to Mowinckel (General Introduction, lxxi f.) has the special sense of "sorcerers who by means of spells inflict injuries (especially dangerous sicknesses) upon others." In Ps xciv the same language is used of the Psalmist's enemies as here: they are "workers of iniquity" (v. 4); they shed blood (v. 6); they boast themselves (vv. 3, 4). But in Ps xciv it is clear that the foes of whom the Psalmist complains are false accusers and the unjust judges who become their accomplices (xciv. 1, 2, 14). No doubt evil men of the same kind are meant here. Unjust judgment is the cause of frequent complaint in the Psalter: lviii. 1, 2, lxxxii. 1-4; *al*.

6. *Thou shalt destroy them that speak lies.* That JEHOVAH will one day execute judgment to redress the ills of the world is a frequent thought in the Psalter; see especially Pss l, lxxvii.

7 But as for me, in the multitude of thy lovingkindness will I come into thy house:

In thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple.

8 Lead me, O LORD, in thy righteousness because of <sup>1</sup>mine enemies;

Make thy way plain before my face.

9 For there is no <sup>2</sup>faithfulness in their mouth;

Their inward part is <sup>3</sup>very wickedness:

<sup>1</sup> Or, *them that lie in wait for me*

<sup>2</sup> Or, *steadfastness*

<sup>3</sup> Or, *a yawning gulf*

### 7. THE CASTLE OF REFUGE

7. *in the multitude of thy lovingkindness will I come into thy house.* The Psalmist being assured of JEHOVAH'S lovingkindness will make public acknowledgment of JEHOVAH as his God.

*thy holy temple.* Lit. "The palace of thy holiness." The Hebrew word *הֵיכָל*, *hēchāl*, Babylonian (Accadian) *e-kal*, means "great house" or "palace"; it is used of the temple, just as the title "king" is applied to JEHOVAH in v. 2. JEHOVAH the "king" has a "palace."

### 8-11. THE PRAYER

8. *Lead me, O JEHOVAH, in thy righteousness.* Cf xxvii. 11, "Lead me in a plain path"; cxxxix. 24, "Lead me in the way everlasting" (rather "the old way," or "the old path," as in Jer vi. 16). The Psalmist asks to be led in "the path of [God's] commandments" (cxix. 35), i.e. in the path of obedience. The Psalmist recognises the need of the help of grace for keeping God's commandments. The words are another form of St Augustine's petition, *Da quod iubes*.

*because of mine enemies.* Rather, as marg. *because of them that lie in wait for me*. The Psalmist's enemies at one time seek to crush him by persecution, at another time they lie in wait for him to seduce him from the path of faithfulness to JEHOVAH.

*Make thy way plain,* i.e. level. In Isa xxxv. 8 the prophet promises very much what the Psalmist asks for here. The idea is of making a "made" road: many of the "roads" in the East are mere boulder-strewn tracks following all the unevennesses of the ground. In the Psalm certainly, and in the Prophet probably, the words are to be understood in a spiritual sense.

9. *inward part* (or "heart")...*throat...tongue.* The three words describe a progress: the *heart* of these persons is destruction, their *throat* is the gate to destruction, and their *tongue* is an instrument of destruction by flattery.

*very wickedness* (Heb. *havvoth*): see note on xxxviii. 12, *mischievous things*.

Their throat is an open sepulchre;

They <sup>1</sup>flatter with their tongue.

10 Hold them guilty, O God;

Let them fall <sup>2</sup>by their own counsels:

Thrust them out in the multitude of their transgressions;

For they have rebelled against thee.

11 <sup>3</sup>But let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice,

Let them ever shout for joy, because thou defendest them:

Let them also that love thy name be joyful in thee.

12 For thou wilt bless the righteous;

O LORD, thou wilt compass him with favour as with a shield.

<sup>1</sup> Heb. *make smooth their tongue.*

<sup>2</sup> Or, *from their counsels*

<sup>3</sup> Or, *So shall all those...rejoice, they shall ever shout...and thou shalt defend them: they also...shall be joyful in thee*

10. *Hold them guilty, O God.* The idea that a trial of the wicked is in progress in the world is found already in *vs.* 4-6.

*by their own counsels.* Better, as marg. *from their counsels.* These "counsels" are intended to pervert Israel from the true worship of JEHOVAH.

*Thrust them out,* i.e. of thy presence (*v.* 4). Cf Matt xxii. 13, xxv. 30. *they have rebelled against thee.* This must be spoken of Israelites who have had JEHOVAH for their king, not of Gentiles. They are the unfaithful persons who, under the threat of persecution (as in the days of Antiochus Epiphanes), forsook the law of JEHOVAH.

11. *thy name.* Cf viii. 1; ix. 10, note.

## 12. CONFIDENCE OF VICTORY

12. *the righteous.* Rather, "the righteous man" (sing.). So lxxxvi. 2, "I am godly." A Psalmist in calling himself "righteous" or "godly" means simply that he is one who is faithful to JEHOVAH and keeps His law.

## PSALM VI

### DEPRECATION OF GOD'S ANGER

#### § 1. CONTENTS.

1-3. The Psalmist's sore sickness.

4-7. His appeal to JEHOVAH.

8-10. His defiance of his enemies in the Name of JEHOVAH.

#### § 2. CHARACTER.

This is the first of the Seven Penitential Psalms, the others being xxxii, xxxviii, li, cii, cxxx, and cxliii. Pss vi and xxxviii begin with the same words:

"O JEHOVAH, rebuke me not in thine anger (wrath),  
Neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure."

(There is a very slight difference in the Hebrew between the two texts.) It is clear that the Psalmist's dangerous illness is the occasion in each case of the Psalm. In both Psalms the illness is ascribed to the will of JEHOVAH, who is chastening the sick man. This point is clear in Ps vi but in Ps xxxviii it is emphasised, for the Psalmist continues:

"For thine arrows stick fast in me,  
And thy hand presseth me sore."

§ 3. IS THE PSALM A COUNTER-SPELL.

Mowinckel holds that Pss vi and xxxviii, in which the Psalmist prays as a sick man, are really deprecations intended to nullify the imprecations by which sorcerers have brought sickness upon him. In arguing for the presence of such deprecations in the Psalter, Mowinckel asks: How on any other theory can we account for the fact that the sick man in his prayer puts the enemy first and the sickness second? This however is not the case with Pss vi and xxxviii. Though in both these Psalms the presence of enemies is insisted on, yet the origin of the sickness is clearly ascribed to JEHOVAH. (General Introduction, lxxi ff.)

For the Chief Musician; on stringed instruments, set to <sup>1</sup>the Sheminith.  
A Psalm of David.

**VI. 1** O LORD, rebuke me not in thine anger,  
Neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure.

2 Have mercy upon me, O LORD; for I am withered away:  
O LORD, heal me; for my bones are vexed.

<sup>1</sup> Or, the eighth

1-3. THE PSALMIST'S SICKNESS

**VI. 1.** O JEHOVAH, rebuke me not. Cf xxxix. 11, "When thou with *rebukes* dost correct man for iniquity, Thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth." JEHOVAH'S rebukes are not verbal: they take the form of the infliction of sickness or of some other ill.

*Neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure.* Cf Jer x. 24, "O JEHOVAH, correct me, but with judgement; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing." See also Heb xii. 11.

2. *I am withered away.* A vivid expression describing the emaciation which usually follows a severe illness.

2, 3. *my bones... My soul.* By his *bones* he means his frame, his body as a whole. The English word *soul* (Heb. *nephesh*) is an inadequate rendering, for it suggests something that is immaterial, not so *nephesh*. In vii. 2 the Psalmist says, "Lest he tear my soul." *Nephesh* might indeed be explained as a "*material* soul." So in Deut xii. 23 it is said that blood is not to be eaten, because "the blood is the *soul* (*nephesh*), and thou shalt not eat the *nephesh* with the flesh." In Gen ii. 7 it is said that JEHOVAH "breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul (*nephesh*)." The *nephesh* is a rarefied sub-

- 3 My soul also is sore vexed:  
And thou, O LORD, how long?
- 4 Return, O LORD, deliver my soul:  
Save me for thy lovingkindness' sake.
- 5 For in death there is no remembrance of thee:  
In 'Sheol who shall give thee thanks?
- 6 I am weary with my groaning;  
Every night make I my bed to swim;  
I water my couch with my tears.

<sup>1</sup> See Gen xxxvii. 35.

stance, which is the life principle. When the *nephesh* departs from the body, death ensues; cf Gen xxxv. 18.

*vexed.* JV, *affrighted*; cf ii. 5, note.

3. *how long?* P-B, *how long wilt thou punish me?* But the aposiopesis of the Hebrew (reproduced in AV and RV) is more forcible.

#### 4-7. THE APPEAL TO JEHOVAH

4. *Return.* For a similar form of petition see lxxx. 14, xc. 13, "Return, O JEHOVAH...And let it repent thee concerning thy servants." The Psalmist's language is naïve: he is not troubled by fear of the modern objection that he is asking in his prayer for a change of God's will. And in truth the Psalmist might rejoice that the matter is not so. He goes on to pray, *Save me for thy lovingkindness' sake*, for he believes that JEHOVAH is favourable to the righteous, though for the moment He is inflicting chastisement. For the Psalmist's frequent repetition of the name JEHOVAH see General Introduction, page xxxi.

5. *in death there is no remembrance of thee.* Cf xxx. 9, "Shall the dust praise thee? shall it declare thy truth?" lxxxviii. 10-12 (see note), cxv. 17, "The dead praise not JAH"; Isa xxxviii. 18, 19 (Hezekiah's Psalm). Though there are traces in the Psalter of a hope of a life with God after death, a larger number of passages reflect the opinion that death means separation from God: the dead "are cut off from thy hand" (lxxxviii. 5). In Sheol the dead exist in a state of coma from which they can be aroused only by some extraordinary experience, if we may understand literally such passages as 1 Sam xxviii. 15; Isa xiv. 9. The dead cannot praise God in the Psalmist's way in the midst of the Congregation.

*Sheol.* The exact meaning of the word is unknown, but it is practically equivalent to Ἅιδης (Hades), which is used some sixty times in LXX to translate it. It means the place in which the dead have a kind of torpid existence. See the last note; cf xxx. 3, note.

- 7 Mine eye wasteth away because of grief;  
It waxeth old because of all mine adversaries.
- 8 Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity;  
For the LORD hath heard the voice of my weeping.
- 9 The LORD hath heard my supplication;  
The LORD will receive my prayer.
- 10 All mine enemies shall be ashamed and sore vexed:  
They shall turn back, they shall be ashamed suddenly.

7. *Mine eye wasteth away because of grief.* The same phrase (very slightly varied) occurs in xxxi. 9, *Mine eye wasteth away with grief.* Cf Job xvi. 20, "My friends scorn me: But mine eye poureth out tears unto God."

#### 8-10. THE ENEMY DEFIED: THE PRAYER ANSWERED

8. *Depart from me.* The Psalmist's enemies came to gloat over his sickness: they may now depart discomfited, for JEHOVAH is about to answer his petition, "Heal me."

*ye workers of iniquity.* It is unnecessary to assume with Mowinckel that the Psalmist describes his enemies thus, because they cast over him the spell which caused his sickness. These *workers of iniquity* are such men as are referred to in v. 5, 6.

10. *shall be ashamed*, i.e. disappointed in their expectation of the Psalmist's death.

## PSALM VII

### AN APPEAL FOR DELIVERANCE

#### § 1. CONTENTS.

1, 2. The Psalmist complains (as one who is in flight before pursuers) that his life is in danger.

3-5. He protests that he is innocent of a fault (unspecified) which is imputed to him.

6-9. He describes JEHOVAH as the judge of peoples and prays that He (the heart-searching Judge) will judge his own case also.

10-13. The Psalmist's confidence in JEHOVAH, as a just judge and avenger.

14-16. The blindness of the enemy, whose projected violence is about to recoil on himself.

17. May JEHOVAH's righteousness be manifested, so that the Psalmist may give thanks.

#### § 2. CHARACTER OF THE PSALM.

Commentators have pronounced this Psalm to be composite, chiefly on the ground that the middle *vv.* (6-9) are eschatological and have a general scope,

while the beginning and the end of the Psalm have a purely personal tone, but the connexion of the various parts is in fact close. When an individual appeals (as here) from earthly judges to the Supreme Judge the transition is easy to the subject of His judgment of the world.

Shigaion of David, which he sang unto the LORD, concerning the words of Cush a Benjamite.

**VII. 1** O LORD my God, in thee do I <sup>1</sup>put my trust:

Save me from all them that pursue me, and deliver me:

2 Lest he tear my soul like a lion,

Rending it in pieces, while there is none to deliver.

3 O LORD my God, if I have done this;

If there be iniquity in my hands;

4 If I have rewarded evil unto him that was at peace with me;

(Yea, I have delivered him that without cause was mine adversary :)

<sup>1</sup> Or, *take refuge*

1, 2. THE PSALMIST'S DANGER

**VII. 1.** *in thee do I put my trust.* Better, *in thee have I taken refuge*; of Ps xviii. 2, "JEHOVAH my rock, my fortress, ... my high tower." The expression in slightly different forms becomes a motto in the Psalms: xi. 1, xvi. 1 (see note), xxv. 20, xxxi. 1; *al.*

*all them that pursue me.* In the next verse the enemy is spoken of in the singular; the Psalmist thinks of the leader of his pursuers. The enemy is again spoken of in the plural in v. 9, and singular in vv. 14-16.

2. *my soul* (Heb. *nephesh*). See vi. 3, note.

*Rending it in pieces* (Heb. *pōrēk*), *while there is none to deliver.* The Heb. text is perhaps faulty: LXX gives, *μη̄ ὄντος λυτρομένου μηδὲ σώζοντος*, i.e. *while there is none to rescue or deliver.* This may be right.

3-5. THE PSALMIST'S INNOCENCE

3. O JEHOVAH my God. This address introduces a solemn asseveration.

*If there be iniquity* (LXX, *ἀδικία*) *in my hands*, i.e. *If I deal out iniquity* (the opposite of "equity") *when I judge.* The Psalmist speaks as one in authority.

4. *If I have rewarded*, etc. Consideration of the parallelism suggests that vv. 4, 5 stood originally as follows:

"If I have rewarded evil unto him that was at peace with me,

Let the enemy pursue my soul, and overtake it;

Yea, let him tread my life down to the earth,

And lay my glory in the dust."

The clause, *Yea, I have delivered him that without cause was mine*

- 5 Let the enemy pursue my soul, and overtake it;  
 Yea, let him tread my life down to the earth,  
 And lay my glory in the dust. [Selah]
- 6 Arise, O LORD, in thine anger,  
 Lift up thyself against the rage of mine adversaries:  
 And awake for me; thou hast commanded judgement.
- 7 <sup>1</sup>And let the congregation of the peoples compass thee about:  
 And over them return thou on high.
- 8 The LORD ministereth judgement to the peoples:  
 Judge me, O LORD, according to my righteousness, and to  
 mine integrity <sup>2</sup>that is in me.
- 9 Oh let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end, but  
 establish thou the righteous:  
 For the righteous God trieth the hearts and reins.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *So shall*<sup>2</sup> Or, *be it unto me*

*adversary*, is probably a note—brought later into the text—written by an early scribe who remembered that David had twice delivered Shimei the Benjamite from the wrath of Abishai (2 Sam xvi. 10, 11, xix. 21-23). Some scholars taking the verb in its Aramaic meaning, render, *And if I made spoil of him who without cause was mine adversary.*

5. *my glory.* Cf xvi. 9; Job xxix. 20, "my glory is fresh in me."

#### 6-9. THE APPEAL TO THE RIGHTEOUS JUDGE

6. *Arise...And awake.* Semi-heathen anthropomorphic language; cf xlv. 23, "Awake, why sleepest thou, O Lord?" But in cxxi. 4, "He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep."

*thou hast commanded judgement*, i.e. thou hast appointed a court in which accused persons can claim to be tried.

7. *let the congregation of the peoples.* Not "people" (P-B and AV). The Psalmist prays that JEHOVAH's judgment may be pronounced in the presence of all the peoples of the world: see the description of judgment given in l. 1-6.

*And over them return thou on high.* Better, *And for their sake, take thy judgment-seat again on high.* Execute judgment for the sake of the nations of the world.

8. *my righteousness...mine integrity.* Cf v. 12, where the Psalmist describes himself as "righteous." He feels himself "righteous" as one who follows after God's law, and worships JEHOVAH as the only God. His attitude is not mere Pharisaism.

9. *let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end.* Vulgate, *consumetur nequitia peccatorum.* "Let the mischievous plotting of the wicked come to an end." I.e. this may be right, but the language is strange,

- 10 My shield is with God,  
Which saveth the upright in heart.  
11 God is a righteous judge,  
Yea, a God that hath indignation every day.

and there may be an error in the text. By the addition of one letter to the Hebrew we should read, *Let the wicked one* (i.e. my enemy) *come to an end like other wicked ones*: cf lxxxii. 7. We thus get a good contrast, "Let my enemy come to an end, but establish thou me (the righteous)." In the Psalter and O.T. generally the prayers are usually levelled against the sinner rather than against the sin.

*the hearts and reins.* The heart, according to the Hebrews, was the seat of the intellectual life, the reins that of the emotional life. God (being righteous) tries (tests) the thoughts and desires of a man: He looks within; cf 1 Sam xvi. 7.

### 10-13. THE PSALMIST'S TRUST

10. *My shield is with God*, i.e. in God's own charge. This Psalmist hesitates to say, "God is my shield," but others are more bold: see xviii. 2, "my God...my shield"; lxxxiv. 11, "JΕΗΟΥΑΗ, God, is a sun and a shield."

11. *God is a righteous judge.* After this first clause the renderings of the English versions differ greatly among themselves, thus:

P-B	RV
God is a righteous judge, strong and patient: (LXX, καὶ ἰσχυρὸς καὶ μακρόθυμος: Vulgate, <i>fortis et patiens</i> ) And God is provoked every day.	God is a righteous judge,  [vacat]  Yea, a God that hath indignation every day.

RV represents MT, which has a stern sound in its brevity: God is righteous, and full of wrath. But the name of God as pronounced on Mount Sinai (Exod xxxiv. 6, 7), while representing Him as righteous, describes Him as "a God full of compassion and gracious, slow to anger." It was therefore not surprising that the LXX translators introduced into v. 11 the qualification "strong and patient." So we have in P-B a rendering which suggests the mercy of JΕΗΟΥΑΗ, while RV represents JΕΗΟΥΑΗ rather as a great Avenger. RV suits the context better, for the Psalmist seeks deliverance from a deadly enemy.

In the rendering "God is provoked every day" P-B is independent of LXX and Vulgate which give respectively *μη ὀργὴν ἐπάγων καθ' ἐκάστην ἡμέραν* and *numquid irascitur per singulos dies?* LXX obtains the negative *μη* by reading in the Hebrew *al*, "not," for *el*, "God." AV has softened the statement of God's daily indignation with a gloss derived from the Targum, *God is angry with the wicked every day*, i.e. with those who daily persecute the Psalmist.

- 12 <sup>1</sup>If a man turn not, he will whet his sword ;  
 He hath bent his bow, and made it ready.
- 13 He hath also prepared for him the instruments of death ;  
 He maketh his arrows fiery *shafts*.
- 14 Behold, he travaileth with iniquity ;  
 Yea, he hath conceived mischief, and brought forth falsehood.
- 15 He hath made a pit, and digged it,  
 And is fallen into the ditch which he made.
- 16 His mischief shall return upon his own head,  
 And his violence shall come down upon his own pate.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *Surely he will again whet*

12. *If a man turn not, he will whet his sword.* The Psalmist continues his tone of severity, and the marginal rendering is to be preferred: *Surely he (God) will again whet his sword.* God has been the Avenger before, He will show Himself as the Avenger again.

13. *He hath also prepared for him the instruments of death.* It is no light chastisement which JEHOVAH will inflict: He prepares a deadly stroke against the Psalmist's enemy. His sword is sharpened to kill, and His arrows are fitted with burning tow to destroy. It is a grim picture; cf lxi. 7: "God shall shoot at them; With an arrow suddenly shall they be wounded."

#### 14-16. THE ENEMY, UNCONSCIOUS OF HIS OWN DANGER, PLOTS AGAINST THE PSALMIST

14. *he travaileth with iniquity.* The enemy's spite is no passing whim: for months he prepares his blow. His action is described as "iniquity" because it is clean against right, as "mischief" because it is full of harm for the Psalmist, and as "falsehood" because it is prepared in secret, perhaps under professions of friendship.

15. *He hath made a pit.* A *pit* is used in the sense of a "plot" in ix. 15, lvii. 6, cxix. 85. The *pit*, being simply the means for catching the victim alive, does not express the whole of the enemy's malignity. The Psalmist fears for his life: cf v. 2.

*into the ditch which he made.* P-B, *into the destruction that he made for other.* The Heb. *shakath*, "ditch, pit," or "destruction," is the word translated in xvi. 10 "corruption" (marg. "the pit"). "Ditch" is hardly a satisfactory rendering; "the grave" would be better. The general sense is excellently given by P-B.

16. *his violence shall come down upon his own pate.* Thus will the Psalmist's appeal be answered: his enemy shall receive "measure for measure."

17 I will give thanks unto the LORD according to his righteousness:

And will sing praise to the name of the LORD Most High.

17. *I will give thanks unto JEHOVAH according to his righteousness: And will sing praise to the name of JEHOVAH Most High.*

It might be said that hitherto nothing has happened to give the Psalmist cause for thankfulness: he has confidence that God will help: that is all. It is probable therefore that this verse also should be rendered as a prayer: read, *Let me give thanks*, i.e. send me the help I need, and so give me cause for thanksgiving, *And let me sing praise*: cf xiii. 5, 6, a similar ending to a Psalm.

## PSALM VIII

### MAN CREATED TO PRAISE GOD AND TO SHARE IN THE DIVINE GLORY

#### § 1. CONTENTS.

1, 2. The contrasts of Creation: the silent majesty of the heavens and the weak cry of the infant child both bear witness to the glory of Him Who created both the heavens and the child.

3-8. The dignity which JEHOVAH has conferred on man.

9. An ascription of praise.

§ 2. The subject of this Psalm is the Making of the Heavens and its sequel the Creation of Man, and in treating it the Psalmist is influenced in thought and language by the Creation myths of Babylonia. These myths spread northward into Assyria and became known in varying forms throughout Western Asia. Their influence on the language of the Bible is to be traced in the first two chapters of Genesis, though in substance the Mosaic account stands nobly apart; the childish Polytheism of the Babylonian Seven Tablets of Creation has not affected the stern Monotheism of Genesis, save perhaps in a single phrase.

The Babylonian story has left its mark on the Eighth Psalm. The Fifth Tablet tells of the making of the Heavens, Marduk (Merodach), the Creator-God, assigned the Moon and the stars their places and duties:

“He appointed the stations for the great gods,

He set in heaven the stars of the Zodiac which are their likenesses...

He gave the God Nannar (the Moon-God) his brightness, and committed the night to his care.”

The Sixth Tablet opens with Marduk's announcement that he will create Man. Accordingly a certain god, Kingu—the champion of Tiāmat the Chaos goddess and so an enemy of Marduk—is brought and slain, and from his blood Man is created. The purpose of this creation was that there should be beings

to perform the service of the gods, i.e. to worship them. The Tablet concludes with a hymn of praise to Marduk sung by the gods.

There are three points of contact between the Tablets and the Psalm. On the Tablets the stars and the moon are established: nothing is said of the Sun. So in the Psalm the words are "The moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained": the greater luminary is not mentioned. Again the Tablets pass on to the Creation of Man as the next great work of Marduk. So in the Psalm the Psalmist passes straight from "the most ancient heavens" to the thought of man—so insignificant in himself, yet so highly honoured by God. And yet again the Tablets make much of the praise which the gods offered to Marduk, when he had finished his work. The Psalmist (if we may accept the LXX rendering of *v. 2 a*) may have this ancient mythological touch in mind, when he declares with some abruptness, *Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise* (Vulgate, *perfecisti laudem*, following LXX). No "gods" stand in the court of JEHOVAH, and yet He does not lack His praise. He has made Man, and out of the mouth of man—even infant-man—comes a volume of unconscious praise for his creation.

Starting from the thought which is prominent in the Babylonian story that God needs the praises of men the Psalmist develops the thought on lines of his own. JEHOVAH, "our Lord," has excelled in Creation. He created moon and stars, and so the bright heavens declare His glory. At the other end of things He has created Man, who even in infancy praises JEHOVAH with his infant cries. For Man is the most wonderful of the works of God. For He who is "our Lord" promotes him in strength and dignity, and makes him His vicegerent in the earth, putting all things under his feet. The crown of JEHOVAH'S work is that Man His creature and His deputy *passes through the paths of the seas*. Even in the realm of Chaos Man can pursue his way under the all-reaching authority of JEHOVAH.

For the Chief Musician; set to the Gittith. A Psalm of David.

### VIII. 1 O LORD, our Lord,

How excellent is thy name in all the earth!

Who <sup>1</sup> hast set thy glory <sup>2</sup> upon the heavens.

<sup>1</sup> So some ancient versions. The Hebrew is obscure.

<sup>2</sup> Or, *above*

#### 1, 2. THE CONTRASTS OF CREATION

**VIII. 1.** *O JEHOVAH our Lord.* The proper name is badly wanted here: it is a fault in the Revisers of 1885 that they passed it over. The name which is said in the next clause to be "excellent" is JEHOVAH. See *v. 1*, note.

*excellent* (Heb. *addir*). The word is rendered "mighty" in Exod xv. 10, "mighty waters"; Ps xciii. 4, "mighty are the breakers of the sea; JEHOVAH on high is mighty." In Exod xv. 6 again, "Thy right hand ... is glorious in power" (Heb. *né'dāri*, cognate with *addir*). Perhaps "glorious" is the best general rendering. When the Psalmist says that

- 2 Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou established strength,  
Because of thine adversaries,  
That thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger.
- 3 When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers,  
The moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained ;
- 4 What is man, that thou art mindful of him?  
And the son of man, that thou visitest him?
- 5 For thou hast made him but little lower than <sup>1</sup> God,

Or, *the angels* Heb. *Elohim*.

*JEHOVAH'S name is glorious in all the earth*, he means no doubt that the sight of the wonders of the heavens must move all nations to glorify the Creator.

*Who hast set thy glory upon the heavens.* This is not a literal translation of MT, which indeed is generally supposed to be corrupt. But the words *thy glory upon the heavens* are well attested, and the rendering of RV cannot be far wrong. The words *thy glory* are expanded in v. 3, "thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, The moon and the stars, which thou hast established" (or "ordained"). It may be taken as an instance of Anacoluthon, *Who—Oh! set thou thy glory above the heavens*, i.e. Be thou glorified. For *above* see cxiii. 4, 6.

2. *Out of the mouth of babes...hast thou established strength,...That thou mightest still the enemy.* JEHOVAH the Creator creates strength out of the unconscious praise of infant mankind.

### 3-8. THE HIGH DIGNITY OF MAN

3. *When I consider thy heavens.* This is an evening meditation: moon and stars are visible to the Psalmist. He recognises them as "ordained," i.e. appointed to their several tasks by God.

4. *What is man...?* The word used here for "man" is *ēnōsh*, which perhaps means "the weak one" in contrast to "God the strong."

*that thou art mindful of him.* Better, "that thou wast mindful of him." At the Creation God thought of man and so man came into being.

*that thou visitest him*, i.e. that after having created him, thou shouldst still exercise providence over him.

5. *thou hast made him but little lower than God.* LXX, *παρ' ἀγγέλους*, "than angels"; and in this form the passage is quoted in Heb. ii. 7-9. Vulgate, *minuisti eum paulo minus ab angelis*, "thou hast made him less, a little less than angels." Targum and Peshitta also give "angels." But St Jerome gives a *Deo*, and takes the verse as a Messianic prophecy: *Minues eum* (i.e. the Son of Man) *paulo minus a Deo*, "thou wilt make him (in the humiliation of the Incarnation) a little less than God."

The original meaning of the passage however refers to Mankind at the Creation, and the rendering of RV, *than God*, is undoubtedly right. The Hebrew word is *Elohim*, which is usually translated "God," while

And crownest him with glory and honour.

6 Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands;

Thou hast put all things under his feet:

7 All sheep and oxen,

Yea, and the beasts of the field;

8 The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea,

Whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas.

9 O LORD, our Lord,

How excellent is thy name in all the earth!

the rendering "angels" is given only in a few (contested) places as Ps xcvi. 7, "Worship him, all ye gods"; so P-B=RV; but LXX (= Peshitta) has, προσκυνήσατε αὐτῷ πάντες οἱ ἄγγελοι αὐτοῦ: Vulgate, *Adorate eum omnes angeli eius*.

It is clear that early translators stumbled over the word *Elohim*, and shrank through reverence from giving it its true meaning. In viii. 5, "little lower than God" sounded in their ears too presumptuous a description of the position of Man, and in xcvi. 7 the address, "Worship him, all ye gods," seemed to acknowledge the real existence of the gods of the heathen. In this latter instance Targum gives, *And let all the peoples that serve idols, worship Him*.

But it must be remembered that while the commentators are theologians, the Psalmists are singers and poets. Their language is that of the heart: "little lower than God" is the fervent language of thanksgiving uttered by men who poured out their hearts without measuring all their words. "Worship him, all ye gods" is the defiant outburst of one who knows for himself only One God. He knows JEHOVAH, and let "whatever gods there be" bow in submission to Him who is Lord of lords. *glory and honour* are attributed to God by Man in other Psalms: cf xxix. 1, xcvi. 6; here God awards them to man.

6. *Thou madest him to have dominion*. So Gen i. 26, 28. Man is made God's vicegerent.

7. *the beasts of the field*. The "field" (Heb. *sādai* or *sādek*) is not "the fields," but the uncultivated land, and "the beasts of the field" (as opposed to the sheep and oxen) are the wild creatures, specially those of the larger kind: 1 Sam xvii. 44. For the meaning of "field" see Gen iv. 8, xxxvii. 15.

8. *Whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas*. There is no "Whatsoever" in the Hebrew.

Render, "He (i.e. Man) passeth through the paths of the seas," as a striking instance of the exercise of the great authority which God has given him. Cf civ. 26, "There go the ships," where man's voyages are taken as a sign of JEHOVAH's rule over the (supposed) realm of Chaos.

9. A DOXOLOGY.

## PSALMS IX, X

These Psalms, which are reckoned as two in MT and in P-B, AV and RV, are reckoned as one in LXX and Vulgate, and also in Coverdale's English Bible of 1535, the first complete Bible printed in English. Coverdale numbers the verses continuously, but just before v. 21 (= x. 1) he inserts the note, "Here the Hebrues begynne the X. psalme." So when he comes to our Ps xi he heads it "The X. A psalme of David."

Are these two Psalms really one, which has been arbitrarily divided into two? Those who answer, Yes, point in the first place to the traces of an alphabetical arrangement which begins in Ps ix, and is (according to them) continued in Ps x. Thus

<i>Aleph</i> begins v. 1	<i>Zain</i> begins v. 11
<i>Beth</i> " v. 3	<i>Cheth</i> " v. 13
<i>Gimel</i> " v. 5	<i>Teth</i> " v. 15
[ <i>Daleth</i> and <i>He</i> ?]	<i>Jod</i> " v. 17
<i>Yau</i> begins v. 7	<i>Caph</i> " v. 18

Vv. 19, 20 stand outside any alphabetical arrangement. In Ps x *Lamed* suggestively begins v. 1, and *Pe* (perhaps) once began v. 7. *Mem*, *Nun*, *Samech*, *Ain* and *Tzade* cannot be traced with any probability. On the other hand the traces of alphabetical arrangement reappear for the last seven verses.

<i>Koph</i> begins v. 12	<i>Shin</i> begins v. 15
<i>Resh</i> " v. 14	<i>Tau</i> " v. 17

The argument from these traces of alphabetical arrangement is weak at best. The break between the *Caph* of ix. 18 and the *Lamed* of x. 1 is too great, nor is the *Lamed* followed by *Mem* and *Nun*. Indeed the *Lamed* needs no alphabetical explanation, for the word *Lamah*, "Wherefore," is a suitable opening for a Psalm: so Pss ii, lxxiv; cf xxii, "My God, my God, Why...?" Moreover is it necessary to suppose that a Psalmist who began with an alphabetical arrangement would feel bound to finish it? Do modern critics realise how strait and disabling are the bonds, if twenty-two verses (or double verses) are to be constructed on this plan? This Psalmist is alive and in present trouble. Is it really inconceivable that after beginning to follow a custom of his time (alphabetical order) he should break off with the alphabet half finished and turn to  $\text{JHONAH}$  in a fresh outburst of appeal? The alphabetical argument does not tell *for* nor *against* the unity of the two Psalms: it is otiose.

Nor is the argument from the likeness of contents cogent. It is true that both Psalms contain appeals for help for the "poor" (or "meek"). But this may mean no more than that the two Psalms have been set side by side by an editor of the Psalter, just because of the resemblance of their contents. There is a difference as well as a resemblance. Ps ix contemplates a plurality of enemies, and these of a public sort—"the heathen" (*gōyīm*), vv. 5, 15, 17, 19. In Ps x a certain "wicked one" (*rāshā*) is the enemy, vv. 2, 3, 4, 13, 15; the single occurrence of *gōyīm* in v. 16 need not be regarded as significant. Further there is a difference of attitude between the two Psalmists. In Ps ix the Psalmist

speaks in a personal way: he is himself one of the sufferers: he says, "I will give thanks" (v. 1)—"*mine* enemies" (v. 3)—"Have mercy upon *me*"—"my affliction"—"Thou that liftest *me* up" (v. 13)—"That *I* may shew"—"*I* will rejoice" (v. 14). In Ps x on the other hand the Psalmist never uses the first person of himself. He is an observer (a deeply moved observer, no doubt) of the sufferings of others. He is indignant at the oppression of "the poor," "the innocent," "the helpless," but his attitude does not differ from that of a philanthropic Englishman towards the persecution of (say) the Armenians. It does differ greatly from the attitude of the Psalmist of Ps ix.

Some would find a third reason for holding these two Psalms to be one in "the metre" in which they are written. Duhm finds the same metrical arrangement running through both Psalms: they are written in regular strophes of four lines each, each line containing three accented syllables. But here the ground is uncertain: the "facts" are not firm. Duhm gives up the attempt to reduce ix. 5, 6 and x. 3 to metre, and only preserves his metre in some other places with the help of (uncertain) emendations. No stress therefore can be laid on a supposed identity of metre. Again, no significance is to be attached to the absence of a heading from Ps x. Pss i, ii and xxxiii also have no heading in MT. We conclude that Pss ix, x are better treated each by itself.

## PSALM IX

### A SONG OF PRAISE FOR A GREAT DELIVERANCE.

#### § 1. CONTENTS.

1-6. The Psalmist gives thanks for a great deliverance granted in the past.

7-12. He expresses his confidence in the just judgment of JEHOVAH.

13-20. He cries for help in his present danger, asserting his confidence the while in the justice of JEHOVAH.

#### § 2. CHARACTER AND OCCASION.

Ps ix is a prayer offered by one who is in extreme danger and is crying for help, indeed crying to be saved from death; it is (we may assert) a pattern prayer. It reminds us of the *Paternoster* in that it begins with Praise of God or (as the Jews say) with a Hallowing of the Name: "I will give thanks unto JEHOVAH...I will sing the praise of thy name" (v. 1, 2). Again the Psalmist as he prays shows a thankful remembrance of past mercies: "Thou hast (of old) rebuked the heathen" (v. 5). Yet again he makes an ardent confession of faith, "*JEHOVAH sitteth as king for ever...*He forgetteth not the cry of the poor" (v. 7, 12), so the first half of this Psalm-prayer is devoted to Praise, Thanksgiving, Confession of faith: no fitter introduction is possible for the cry for help which follows. The Psalmist shows a steady piety: he is not praying in a panic, but in faith. He belongs to a party in Israel which is faithful to JEHOVAH, and for its faithfulness is threatened by the violence of the opposing party; he is spokesman for the faithful.

For the Chief Musician ; set to Muth-labben. A Psalm of David.

- IX.** 1 I will give thanks unto the LORD with my whole heart ;  
 I will shew forth all thy marvellous works.  
 2 I will be glad and exult in thee :  
 I will sing praise to thy name, O thou <sup>1</sup>Most High.  
 3 When mine enemies turn back,  
 They stumble and perish at thy presence.  
 4 For thou hast maintained my right and my cause ;  
 Thou satest in the throne judging righteously.  
 5 Thou hast rebuked the <sup>2</sup>nations, thou hast destroyed the  
 wicked,  
 Thou hast blotted out their name for ever and ever.  
 6 <sup>3</sup>The enemy are come to an end, they are desolate for ever ;

<sup>1</sup> Or, *Most High*; because mine &c.

<sup>2</sup> Or, *heathen*

<sup>3</sup> Or, *O thou enemy, desolations are come to a perpetual end*

#### 1-6. THANKS FOR DELIVERANCE

**IX.** 1, 2. *I will give thanks... O thou Most High.* The Psalmist desires Divine help ; but however urgent his danger, his thanks still precede his petition. Similarly Ps xl begins with an outburst of praise, and ends with the urgent request, "Make no tarrying, O my God."

1. *thy marvellous works* (Heb. *niphlā'ōth*) such as are indicated in *v.* 4, 5. Cf *xl.* 5, "*thy wonderful works* (Heb. *niphlā'ōth*) which thou hast done, And thy thoughts which are to us-ward."

3. *When mine enemies, etc.* Rather, *Because mine enemies turned backward, because they stumbled and perished at thy presence.* This verse gives the ground of the Psalmist's thanksgiving in *v.* 1 : he experienced in the past one of JEHOVAH's great deliverances and the memory of it encourages him now.

5. *Thou hast rebuked the nations* (or, *heathen*). There is no article : JEHOVAH has rebuked heathens, who have shown themselves dangerous to the Psalmist and his friends. We need not think of great powers like the Assyrians under Sennacherib or Chaldeans under Nebuchadrezzur. In the days of Judah's weakness, specially after the Return, Judah suffered from the hostility of his near neighbours the Samaritans in the North and the Arab tribes in the East. Cf *Neh vi* 16.

6. *The enemy.* Rather, *O thou enemy*, as P-B, AV. The Psalmist addresses JEHOVAH in *v.* 5, but in *v.* 6 he turns in defiance to the Gentiles. The verse may be paraphrased thus : O thou enemy (i.e. O Gentiles that were and are the enemies of Israel), it is true that the lands which thou didst lay waste will never revive ; it is true that thou didst destroy cities so thoroughly that their very name has perished,

- <sup>1</sup>And the cities which thou hast <sup>2</sup>overthrown,  
Their very memorial is perished.
- 7 But the LORD sitteth *as king* for ever:  
He hath prepared his throne for judgement.
- 8 And he shall judge the world in righteousness,  
He shall minister judgement to the <sup>3</sup>peoples in uprightness.
- 9 The LORD also will be a high tower for the oppressed,  
A high tower in times of trouble;
- 10 And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee;  
For thou, LORD, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.
- 11 Sing praises to the LORD, which dwelleth in Zion:  
Declare among the <sup>4</sup>people his doings.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *And their cities thou hast overthrown*

<sup>2</sup> Heb. *plucked up*.

<sup>3</sup> Or, *people*

<sup>4</sup> Or, *peoples*

but thy violence cannot touch JEHOVAH'S throne: He sits there to judge thee and all the world. Cf Isa xxxvii. 26-29, JEHOVAH'S words to Sennacherib.

#### 7-12. CONFIDENCE IN JEHOVAH'S JUDGMENT

7. *But JEHOVAH sitteth as king for ever.* The verb to *sit* (Heb. *yāshab*) is significant: cf xxix. 10, "*JEHOVAH sat as king at the Flood.*" To *sit* (absolute) or to *sit on a seat* is a sign of dignity and authority: on the other hand cf Isa iii. 26, "And she shall be desolate and sit upon the ground."

8. *he shall judge the world.* He (and no other): the pronoun is emphatic in the Hebrew. The phrase, "he shall judge the world in (with) righteousness" is repeated in xcvi. 13, xcviii. 9. "World" (Heb. *tēbēl*, LXX, *τὴν οἰκουμένην*) is inclusive of all inhabited lands. Plainly the judgment which the Psalmist foresees is to be executed on the whole world.

9. *A high tower.* Anthropomorphic language. Cf xviii. 2; Pro xviii. 10, "The name of JEHOVAH is a strong tower: The righteous runneth into it, and is safe."

*times of trouble.* So x. 1. The (plural) phrase suggests successive waves of trouble.

10. *they that know thy name.* To know God's name is more than to know of Him; it is to know Him by experience of His ways and of His character; cf xci. 14. A less suggestive phrase is used in xxxvi. 10, "them that know thee."

11. *which dwelleth in Zion.* An allusion to the presence of JEHOVAH in His temple. The Temple, as long as it stood, was a sign to Israel that God was present among His people.

*his doings* (Heb. *'ātilōth*). The word is used of great or strange deeds, as in lxxvii. 13, lxxviii. 11.

- 12 <sup>1</sup>For he that maketh inquisition for blood remembereth them:  
He forgetteth not the cry of the <sup>2</sup>poor.
- 13 Have mercy upon me, O LORD;  
Behold my affliction *which I suffer* of them that hate me,  
Thou that liftest me up from the gates of death;
- 14 That I may shew forth all thy praise:  
In the gates of the daughter of Zion,  
I will rejoice in thy <sup>3</sup>salvation.
- 15 The nations are sunk down in the pit that they made:  
In the net which they hid is their own foot taken.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *For when he maketh...he remembereth*<sup>2</sup> Or, *meek*<sup>3</sup> Or, *saving help*

12. *he that maketh inquisition for blood.* Cf Ezek xxxiii. 6. *the poor.* RV = P-B. So C'thib ('*ānāyīm*): LXX, τῶν πενήτων: Vulgate, *pauperum*. But AV, *the humble* (Heb. K'ri, '*ānāvīm*). The "humble" (or, *meek*) is a designation of the party to which the Psalmist himself belonged, the non-official many, as opposed to the official few who cared, it seems, more for their own places than for the welfare of Israel. In later times the Pharisees correspond with the "humble," the Sadducees (the high priestly party) with their opponents. The high priestly party acted as persecutors on more than one occasion: cf 1 Macc vii. 5-20. The governing class were more disposed to be friendly with the heathen, and so came into collision with the stricter party.

### 13-20. PRESENT DANGER

13. *Behold my affliction* which I suffer of *them that hate me*. The Hebrew text is awkward (as indeed EV shows), and it is probable that it contains a gloss. Read,

"Have mercy upon me, O JEHOVAH; Behold my affliction, Thou that liftest me up from the gates of death."

*the gates of death.* Cf cvii. 18.

14. *In the gates*, where men congregate: Ruth iv. 1; 1 K xxii. 10; Pro xxxi. 31.

*in thy salvation.* Better, as marg., *in thy saving help*.

15. *The nations.* Better, *The heathen*, or better still, *Heathen men* (without the definite article).

*is their own foot taken*, i.e. in such a case as that of Haman and Mordecai (Esth v. 14, vii. 9), or of Daniel and his accusers (Dan vi. 24).

Vv. 15, 16 are the Psalmist's Song of Triumph, which, if we follow

16 The LORD hath made himself known, he hath executed judgement:

<sup>1</sup>The wicked is snared in the work of his own hands.

[Higgaion. Selah

17 The wicked shall return to Sheol,  
Even all the nations that forget God.

18 For the needy shall not alway be forgotten,  
Nor the expectation of the <sup>2</sup>poor perish for ever.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *He snareth the wicked*

<sup>2</sup> Or, *meeke*

the rhythm of the original, should be written thus in short tripping lines:

“The heathen are sunk  
In the pit that they made:  
In the net which they hid  
Is their foot taken.  
JEHOVAH made Himself known;  
He executed judgment:  
By the work of his hands  
He snareth the wicked.”

It is clear from the present tense in the last line that the crisis is not yet over. The Psalmist's praise is based on past experiences; it expresses his confidence for the future.

16. JEHOVAH hath made himself known (Heb. *nōda'*). Cf lxxvi. 1, “In Judah God hath made himself known”; also Exod vi. 6, 7 (an important passage).

*The wicked is snared in the work of his own hands* = LXX, *ἐν τοῖς ἔργοις τῶν χειρῶν αὐτοῦ συνελήμφθη ὁ ἁμαρτωλός*. But MT is to be preferred, *He* (JEHOVAH) *by the work of his own hands taketh the wicked*. The stress is on JEHOVAH as Agent, while in v. 15 the stress is on the Action. In v. 15 *b* it is said that the foot of the heathen was taken in a net, in v. 16 *b* it is explained that JEHOVAH Himself did the work of snaring.

17. *The wicked shall return to Sheol*. An impossible rendering, since the wicked did not come from Sheol. Render, *The wicked shall turn back* (i.e. from the assault on the good) *Sheol-ward*.

*all the nations* (rather, *the heathen*) *that forget God*. The heathen who do not realise their sin against JEHOVAH in attacking His people: cf lxxxiii. 17, 18.

18. *the needy shall not alway be forgotten*. Rather, *the needy shall never be forgotten*. The Hebrew negative is universal.

*the expectation of the poor*. P-B, *the patient abiding of the meek*. The Hebrew C<sup>thib</sup> has, *the meek*; the K<sup>ri</sup> (so LXX, Vulgate) has, *the poor* (*πενήτων, pauperum*).

*perish for ever*. Rather, *ever go astray* (or, *be lost*). Again the universal negative. The fervent faith of the Psalmist is too faintly expressed in EV.

19 Arise, O LORD; let not man prevail:

Let the nations be judged in thy sight.

20 Put them in fear, O LORD:

Let the nations know themselves to be but men. [Selah

19. *Arise, O JEHOVAH.* Cf iii. 7, note.

*let not man prevail.* Rather, *let not man* (Heb. *šnōsh*) *bestrong.* Cf viii. 5, note. "Strength," according to the teaching of O.T., belongs to God alone; when men possess it, it is a gift from Him: cf xxviii. 8, xxix. 11, lxxxiv. 5, *al.*

*Let the nations* (rather, "the heathen") *be judged in thy sight.* This expression might be simply a way of avoiding the direct form of petition, *Judge thou the nations*, but the words which follow suggest that JEHOVAH is asked to appoint a human judge (or "reprover") to act for Him and under His eye.

20. *Put them in fear, O JEHOVAH.* But the consonantal text is rightly rendered by LXX, *κατάστησον, Κύριε, νομοθέτην ἐπ' αὐτούς*; Vulgate, *Constituē, Domine, legislatorem super eos*; Coverdale (1535), *O Lorde, set a scolemaster over them.* The Hebrew word *moreh* (so the consonantal text), "lawgiver, guide," is singularly appropriate in this place. The "nations" (vv. 19, 20) are probably the Samaritans, whose idolatrous practices (2 K xvii. 29 ff.) made them the enemies of the Jews. The Samaritans (like the Jews) possessed the Pentateuch—the *torah*—and the Psalmist prays that they may receive a *moreh* to teach them its true meaning. They (unlike the Jews) were not strict monotheists. Cf. v. 5, note.

EV, *Put them in fear*, reading *mōrā*, "a terror," a conjectural reading, but supported by the chief Jewish authorities, i.e. Aben Ezra, Targum, Aquila (*φόβημα*) and Jerome (*iuxta Hebraeos, Pone, Domine, terrorem eis*). Rashi gives a choice of interpretations for *mora*: (Appoint them), either "bitter things and a yoke," or "an overthrow," or "a razor" (cf Isa vii. 20).

*Let the nations know themselves to be but men.* Rather, *Let the heathen know* (or, "let them have a lesson," i.e. of the power of JEHOVAH): *they are but men.*

## PSALM X

### MAKE AN END, O JEHOVAH, OF THIS OPPRESSION

#### § 1. CONTENTS.

1, 2. Remonstrance with JEHOVAH for His apparent toleration of the oppression of the poor.

3-6. The thought of the oppressor described: "There is no God," i.e. no Divine Governor of the World.

7-11. The deeds of the oppressor described: he lies in wait for the poor, being confident that God takes no notice of his deeds.

12-15. Appeal to JEHOVAH (by His Name) to intervene.

16-18. A glimpse granted to the Psalmist's faith of this intervention.

## § 2. CHARACTER OF THE PSALM.

Ps x is a prayer which (as we have seen) has some features in common with Ps ix. The culminating point in each is a strong cry for Divine help. In Ps ix it is

“Arise, O JEHOVAH; let not man be strong,  
Let the heathen be judged in thy sight” (v. 19),

and in Ps x,

“Arise, O JEHOVAH; O God, lift up thine hand:  
Forget not the poor” (v. 12).

On the note of assured triumph Ps ix opens, while the opening words of Ps x indeed express something like doubt, “Wherefore, O JEHOVAH, dost thou stand afar off?” The next ten verses show that though the Psalmist is endeavouring to look up to God in prayer yet his attention is distracted by the earthy scene. His mind is “clouded with a doubt” as he witnesses the undisturbed confidence with which the wicked man goes about his work of robbing and killing the “poor,” the “innocent.” His spiritual state is that of many a man who during the Great War said, “There is no God,” just because the horrors of the War still went on. At last in v. 12 he arrives at the great appeal, “Arise, O JEHOVAH.” And then immediately afterwards the word of doubt, “Wherefore,” tells us that the Psalmist’s doubts are reviving again. Finally, Faith conquers in the cry, “Thou hast seen it.” The Psalmist realises the fact that he is not alone, as he views the progress of the wicked one. A greater witness is present, JEHOVAH himself, and JEHOVAH will assuredly perform His own part,

“To judge the fatherless and the oppressed,  
That man which is of the earth may be terrible no more.”

The Psalmist, as he prays, wins through from Doubt to Faith.

**X. 1** Why standest thou afar off, O LORD?

Why hidest thou thyself in times of trouble?

2 In the pride of the wicked <sup>1</sup>the poor <sup>2</sup>is hotly pursued;

<sup>3</sup>Let them be taken in the devices that they have imagined.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *he doth hotly pursue the poor*

<sup>2</sup> Heb. *is set on fire.*

<sup>3</sup> Or, *They are taken*

## 1, 2. A REMONSTRANCE

**X. 1.** *Why standest thou afar off, O JEHOVAH?* Words of deep depression. Cf xxii. 1, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Why art thou so far from helping me...?” xxxv. 22, xxxviii. 21.

*hidest thou thyself.* Better, as P-B, *hidest thy face*: and still better after the analogy of Isa i. 15, “Wherefore hidest thou thine eyes?” Contrast Ps xxxiv. 15, “The eyes of JEHOVAH are upon the righteous”; Jer xxiv. 6, “I will set mine eyes (or “mine eye”) upon them for good.”

*in times of trouble.* So ix. 9.

2. *In the pride of the wicked the poor is hotly pursued* (margin, *is set on fire*). It is difficult to choose between these two renderings, but perhaps the margin is to be preferred. It is supported by LXX and Vulgate,

- 3 For the wicked boasteth of his heart's desire,  
 And <sup>1</sup>the covetous renounceth, *yea*, <sup>2</sup>contemneth the LORD.  
 4 The wicked, in the pride of his countenance, *saith*, He will  
 not require *it*.  
 All his thoughts are, There is no God.  
 5 His ways are <sup>3</sup>firm at all times;

<sup>1</sup> Or, *blesseth the covetous*, but *contemneth &c.*    <sup>2</sup> Or, *revileth*    <sup>3</sup> Or, *grievous*

*Dum superbit impius incenditur pauper.* The wicked man is conceived as burning the poor man's house over his head (Jud xiv. 15; xv. 6) so that he is set on fire, and *flames* (literal rendering) together with his house. The punishment of burning is allowed in two passages of Leviticus (xx. 14; xxi. 9), but only for the two sins which perhaps most revolted Eastern feeling. But in this Psalm the poor man is innocent (v. 8).

*Let them be taken.* Cf ix. 15.

### 3-6. THE SCEPTIC'S THOUGHT

3. *boasteth.* Cf xciv. 3, 4.

*And the covetous renounceth, yea, contemneth* JEHOVAH. Better, *And he blesseth* (cf marg.) *the robber, he contemneth* JEHOVAH. The overweening pride of the wicked one (v. 2) is revealed in this double manner: he makes oppressors his friends and he makes light of the judgment of God.

4. *The wicked, in the pride of his countenance, saith, He will not require it.* Rather, *The wicked in his angry pride careth not*, almost as Vulgate, *Peccator secundum multitudinem irae suae non quaeret*. The translation *irae suae* for Heb. *appo* is correct. The angry pride of the wicked man is careless of consequences.

*There is no God* (Heb. *elohim*). This is not a denial of the existence of gods, but an Epicurean denial of providence, such as is more plainly expressed in v. 11, "God hath forgotten—He hideth His face—He will never see it." Cf lxxiii. 11, "They say, How doth God know? And is there knowledge (of things on earth) in the Most High (who dwelleth in heaven)?" xciv. 7, "They say, JEHOVAH shall not see, Neither shall the God of Jacob consider."

5. *His ways are firm at all times.* But P-B and AV, *His ways are always grievous*, i.e. "they give pain, cause grief." The rendering of this clause is uncertain. For RV it may be said that it fits in with the following verse, "He saith in his heart, I shall not be moved," but on the other hand it is not certain that the Hebrew verb (*yāhīlū*) can mean, "are firm, stable." Yet a third rendering is given by LXX, followed by Vulgate, *Inquinatae sunt viae illius in omni tempore*, "his wayes are allwaye filthie" (Coverdale, 1535).

- Thy judgements are far above out of his sight :  
 As for all his adversaries, he puffeth at them.
- 6 He saith in his heart, I shall not be moved :  
 To all generations I shall not be in adversity.
- 7 His mouth is full of cursing and deceit and <sup>1</sup>oppression :  
 Under his tongue is mischief and iniquity.
- 8 He sitteth in the lurking places of the villages :  
 In the covert places doth he murder the innocent :  
 His eyes are privily set against the <sup>2</sup>helpless.
- 9 He lurketh in the covert as a lion in his den :  
 He lieth in wait to catch the poor :  
 He doth catch the poor, when he draweth him in his net.
- 10 <sup>3</sup>He croucheth, he boweth down,  
 And the <sup>2</sup>helpless fall by his strong ones.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *fraud*<sup>2</sup> Or, *hapless*<sup>3</sup> Another reading is, *And being crushed*.

*As for all his adversaries, he puffeth at them.* This "puffing" is a means of casting a magic spell upon an enemy to render him weak and helpless: cf xii. 5, "I will set him in safety at whom they puff"; xxvii. 12, "such as breathe out cruelty." In California the Maidu medicine man blows smoke towards hostile villages with the idea of causing sickness in them. He repeats a formula: "Over there...not here...We are good...Make these people sick...They are bad people." The practice of black magic prevailed sufficiently in Western Asia to be noticed in the Psalter as a danger to be prayed against. The evil was real because the fears of the people sometimes brought about the mischief intended by the magicians. Cf Ps vi, Introduction, § 3.

#### 7-11. THE DEEDS OF THE OPPRESSOR

7. *His mouth is full of cursing.* Rather, *of a curse*, perhaps a wizard's curse to execute some design against a man's life.

*deceit.* Hebrew *deceits*, i.e. different forms of deceit.

*Under his tongue.* It is to be observed that the weapon of the enemy is simply the spoken word, though death is his object. The reference, if not to magic spells, must be to false accusation before a court having power of life and death.

8. *helpless.* Marg. *hapless*. The exact meaning of the Hebrew word *hēlchāh* is unknown: indeed the word itself is probably not Hebrew: it occurs only here and in *vv.* 10, 14.

10. *He croucheth, he boweth down.* He acts like a hunter hiding himself and watching his snare.

*the helpless.* Not *the congregation of the poor*, P-B. The Heb. *hēlchā'im* is only the plural of *hēlchāh* (*v.* 8).

- 11 He saith in his heart, God hath forgotten :  
He hideth his face ; he will never see it.
- 12 Arise, O LORD ; O God, lift up thine hand :  
Forget not the <sup>1</sup>poor.
- 13 Wherefore doth the wicked contemn God,  
And say in his heart, Thou wilt not require *it*?
- 14 Thou hast seen *it* ; for thou beholdest <sup>2</sup>mischief and spite, to  
take it into thy hand :  
The <sup>3</sup>helpless committeth *himself* unto thee ;  
Thou hast been the helper of the fatherless.
- 15 Break thou the arm of the wicked ;  
And as for the evil man, seek out his wickedness till thou  
find none.
- 16 The LORD is King for ever and ever :  
The <sup>4</sup>nations are perished out of his land.
- 17 LORD, thou hast heard the desire of the meek :

<sup>1</sup> Or, meek    <sup>2</sup> Or, travail and grief    <sup>3</sup> Or, hapless    <sup>4</sup> Or, heathen

11. *God hath forgotten.* Cf v. 4, note.

#### 12-15. AN APPEAL

12. *Arise, O JEHOVAH.* Cf ix. 19, note.

13. *contemn God.* Cf v. 3, note.

14. *Thou hast seen it.* The answer of the Faithful to the "Epicurean": cf xciv. 7, 9, "He that formed the eye, shall He not see?" *committeth himself.* Rather, *committeth his cause.*

15. *Breakthou the arm.* P-B, *Break thou the power* (a good paraphrase); cf xxxvii. 17, "For the arms of the wicked shall be broken"; lxxxiii. 8, RV. marg. "They have been an arm to the children of Lot."

*seek out his wickedness till thou find none,* i.e. search into his wickedness, until the wicked man himself be destroyed under the Divine scrutiny. Since he is all evil, nothing of him will survive.

#### 16-18. RE-ASSURANCE

16. *The nations.* Rather, *The heathen.*

*out of his land,* i.e. JEHOVAH'S land. P-B (faultily), *out of the land.*

17. *thou hast heard the desire.* Cf Montgomery's lines:

"Prayer is the soul's sincere desire  
Uttered or unexpressed."

Thou wilt <sup>1</sup>prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear:

18 To judge the fatherless and the oppressed,  
That man which is of the earth may be terrible no more.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *establish*

*Thou wilt prepare their heart.* Better (as marg.) *Thou wilt establish their heart.* The thought is that JEHOVAH makes the heart of the meek constant towards Himself: cf lvii. 7, "My heart is fixed ("established" or "prepared"), O God, ... I will sing, yea, I will sing praises."

18. *To judge the fatherless*, i.e. to be their champion. The (good) Eastern judge is one who "avenges" the widow of her adversary (cf Luke xviii. 3-5). So the Judges who ruled in Israel before the Kings are to be thought of rather as Champions of their people in war than as dispensers of even-handed justice at home. P-B, *To help the fatherless... unto their right* is a rendering which catches the spirit of the Hebrew. Cf xxvi. 1, note.

*That man which etc.* Cf Isa ii. 10, 11, also 22, "Cease ye from man... for wherein is he to be accounted of?"

## PSALM XI

### VICTORY IN THE NAME OF JEHOVAH

#### § 1. CONTENTS.

1-3. The Temptation.

4-7. The Temptation resisted, because the Psalmist knows JEHOVAH to be a righteous God.

#### § 2. THE CHARACTER OF THE PSALM.

This Psalm is a complaint of the perversion of justice: the Psalmist considers the injustice done by corrupt human judges, and comforts himself with the thought that JEHOVAH the supreme Judge will deal out a complete overthrow to the wicked. What then is the Psalmist's temptation of which he speaks in z. 1? It springs, it is clear, from the general situation supposed in the Psalm. Justice has failed; there is no redress of wrong; all is confusion. In such a case two courses are open to the sufferers. One is to suffer in silence and to hope that some day things will mend themselves. The other is to "take to the hills," to become lawless one's self, to rob rather than be robbed. This is the temptation with which the Psalmist is tried. The tempters suggest that he should abandon his endangered home, and join them on their hill. Expressed in full the temptation would be that of Pro i. 11 ff, "Come with us, Let us lay wait for blood, Let us lurk privily for the innocent without cause; ... We shall find all precious substance, We shall fill our houses with spoil; Thou shalt cast thy lot among us; We will all have one purse."

For the Chief Musician. *A Psalm of David.*

**XI. 1** In the LORD put I my trust:

How say ye to my soul,

Flee <sup>1</sup>as a bird to your mountain?

2 For, lo, the wicked bend the bow,

They make ready their arrow upon the string,

That they may shoot in darkness at the upright in heart.

3 <sup>2</sup>If the foundations be destroyed,

What can the righteous do?

4 The LORD is in his holy temple,

The LORD, his throne is in heaven;

His eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men.

<sup>1</sup> Or, ye birds

<sup>2</sup> Or, For the foundations are destroyed; what hath the righteous wrought?

### 1-3. THE TEMPTATION

**XI. 1.** In *JEHOVAH* put I my trust. Better (keeping the Hebrew metaphor), In *JEHOVAH* have I taken refuge (so JV): cf vii. 1, note. The words are the Psalmist's answer to the tempters who invite him to join them on a mountain of lawless retreat.

as a bird, i.e. light, without encumbrance, leaving all behind him, that he may live among the "hills of the robbers."

2. *the wicked.* These tempters are indeed murderers and robbers such as are described in Pro i. 11 ff.

*That they may shoot in darkness.* Cf Pro i. 11, 12.

3. *If the foundations be destroyed, What can the righteous do?* The first clause is, it seems, proverbial: the "foundations" are to be taken in a metaphorical sense: they are the governors and judges or (possibly) the tried institutions which preserve justice and order in the state. The second clause might be rendered, *What has the righteous man been able to do to avert the threatened danger?*

### 4-7. THE TEMPTATION RESISTED

4. *JEHOVAH* is in his holy temple. The Psalmist answers his own doubt (expressed in v. 3). All is well, for *JEHOVAH* is in his Temple, and therefore near; also He is King in Heaven, and so has all power to see and all authority to judge. The Psalmist means, like Browning's heroine,

"God's in his heaven—

All's right with the world!"

*Pippa passes.*

*His eyes behold.* Contrast xciv. 7, "And they say, JAH (*JEHOVAH*) shall not see, Neither shall the God of Jacob consider." LXX (= Vulgate) supplies an object for the verb: hence P-B, *His eyes consider the poor.*

- 5 The LORD trieth the righteous:  
 But the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth.
- 6 Upon the wicked he shall rain snares;  
 Fire and brimstone and burning wind shall be the portion of  
 their cup.
- 7 For the LORD is righteous; he loveth <sup>1</sup>righteousness:  
<sup>2</sup>The upright shall behold his face.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *righteous deeds*<sup>2</sup> Or, *His countenance doth behold the upright*

*his eyelids try.* The Psalmist is thinking of "the eyelids of the morning": Job iii. 9, xli. 18 (10 Heb.). He looks upon the morning red as a sign of God's presence, or rather of His coming. Cf Tennyson, *Vision of Sin* (last two lines):

"And on the glimmering limit far withdrawn  
 God made Himself an awful rose of dawn."

5. *JEHOVAH trieth the righteous: But etc.* This (uneven) division of the version is according to MT; that of LXX is perhaps better, *Κύριος ἐξέταζεν τὸν δίκαιον καὶ τὸν ἀσεβῆ* (Vulgate, *Dominus interrogat justum et impium*). The balance of the verse is well preserved in Coverdale (1535):

*The LORD seeth both the righteous and ungodly, but who so deliteth<sup>1</sup> in wickedness, him his soul abhorreth.*

6. *he shall rain snares.* Not *snares* (Heb. *pahim*), but *burning coals* (Heb. *pehām*). Gen xix. 24 (Sodom and Gomorrah). Not, *he shall rain*, but *may he rain* (a wish).

*burning wind.* So in cxix. 53. The burning wind (Heb. *zal'aphāh*) is the Samūm, the hot poisonous whirlwind of the desert. The wayfarer when overtaken by it must throw himself on the ground and cover his head completely with his mantle, if he is to save his life. The robbers who have taken to the open country will be overwhelmed there by the forces of "Nature."

7. *The upright shall behold his face.* Rather, *He loveth them whose faces behold uprightness.* "To behold uprightness" is one of the works of JEHOVAH as supreme judge: the statement made here is that He loves those who behold (and approve) uprightness, even as He beholds and approves. JEHOVAH Who rains fire upon the Wicked loves those who judge righteously.

The great variations in the rendering of this verse are due to the ambiguous form of the Heb. pronominal suffix used here. "His face" is a very doubtful translation of the Heb. *pānēmō*, which should rather be rendered "their face" or "their faces."

<sup>1</sup> So Coverdale.

## PSALM XII

## A PRAYER AGAINST OPPRESSION

## § 1. CONTENTS.

- 1-4. The oppressor's boastings.
5. JEHOVAH answers.
- 6, 7. The Psalmist re-assured.
8. The Psalmist recalls the present evil conditions.

## § 2. CHARACTER OF THE PSALM.

Pss. xii and xiv form a pair. Both assume the existence of two classes in the nation: on the one side the Proud Boasters (xii. 2-4), the Workers of iniquity (xiv. 4) who oppress the Poor (*'ānīyim*), and on the other side the Poor themselves (xii. 5, xiv. 6) who by the mouth of the Psalmist appeal for JEHOVAH'S protection. The Oppressors are practical Atheists: they ask, *Who is lord over us?* and assert, *There is no God*, i.e. there is no supreme Judge of the world: cf x. 4, note.

## § 3. THE DATE.

The heading is a "Psalm of David," which Rabbinic authorities understand as a statement of Davidic authorship. But the situation presumed in the Psalm seems to belong to a later age than David's. Accordingly Kimkhi writes, "This Psalm was spoken in the Holy Spirit concerning the future concerning a generation in which the wicked oppressed the poor" (*'ānīyim*). To what age then is the Psalm to be referred? Duhm suggests a Maccabean date: the Oppressors are the triumphant Hasmonean party which became more worldly as it became more prosperous. The Poor are the Hasidæans of 1 Macc vii. 13 who separated from Judas Maccabæus, and were willing to accept Alcimus the high priest whom the Syrian king had appointed. It is however difficult to believe that a Psalm of so late a date could be received into a collection of Davidic Psalms. Certainly there were parties among the worshippers of JEHOVAH as early as the date of Nehemiah (444 B.C.) and probably still earlier. The Persian period is more likely to furnish the right date for these two Psalms than the Maccabean. Indeed they may be earlier still.

The problem of the prosperity of the wicked and the suffering of the righteous was made practically more difficult when the wicked were triumphantly oppressing the righteous. Such is the situation presented in these two Psalms. The Psalmist comforts himself with the promise of JEHOVAH which he cites in v. 5, but even so his sense of distress breaks out again in the complaint with which the Psalm closes that the wicked are stalking through the land in safety, because the rulers of the land are vile.

For the Chief Musician; set to <sup>1</sup>the Sheminith. A Psalm of David.

**XII.** 1 Help, LORD; for the godly man ceaseth;

For <sup>2</sup>the faithful fail from among the children of men.

2 They speak vanity every one with his neighbour:

With flattering lip, and with a double heart, do they speak.

3 The LORD shall cut off all flattering lips,

The tongue that speaketh great things:

4 Who have said, With our tongue will we prevail;

Our lips are <sup>3</sup>our own: who is lord over us?

<sup>1</sup> Or, the eighth

<sup>2</sup> Or, faithfulness faileth

<sup>3</sup> Heb. with us.

#### 1-4. THE OPPRESSOR'S BOASTINGS

**XII.** 1. *Help, JEHOVAH.* Vulgate, *Salvum me fac.* "Help" should be "Save": the Hebrew word is *hōshī'āh*, of which *Hosanna* is another form. Cf iii. 8, "Salvation belongeth unto JEHOVAH."

*the godly man.* Heb. *hāsīd*. The same Hebrew word is used in iv. 3, xviii. 25 ("the merciful"); xxxii. 6, xliii. 1 (Heb. *lo-hāsīd*, "ungodly," RV marg. "unmerciful"); lxxxvi. 2. The word usually means one who does *hesed*, "mercy, kindness, beneficence." In the Hebrew of Ecclus (Ben Sira) xlv. 1, the "famous men" who are to be praised appear as "men of *hesed*" (so also in v. 10), i.e. as men who in different ways benefited their people as Moses, David, Elijah, Simon the son of Onias and others. Sometimes however the word has a passive sense, as in iv. 3 where *hāsīd* is applied to Israel as one *favoured* (treated with kindness) by JEHOVAH.

*the faithful fail.* Rather as marg. *faithfulness faileth*. The Hebrew word (*ēmūnim*) is plural, so that the meaning is, *All kinds of faithfulness fail*.

2. *They speak vanity.* Vulgate, *Vana locuti sunt*, i.e. empty words in which no trust can be placed.

*every one with his neighbour.* These men are the Psalmist's own countrymen, though enemies.

*With flattering lip.* LXX, *χεῖλη δόλια*; Vulgate, *labia dolosa*, i.e. deceitful lips. Those whom the Psalmist denounces are unjust judges who do not "flatter" their victims, but try to draw them into making admissions of guilt against themselves by a pretended sympathy.

*with a double heart.* Vulgate, *in corde et corde*, "with heart and (another) heart": a literal translation of the Hebrew.

3. *The LORD shall cut off.* Rather, *May JEHOVAH cut off*; a prayer.

*flattering lips.* Rather as P-B, *deceitful lips*; Vulgate, *labia dolosa*: cf v. 2. The reference is to the pronouncements of unjust judges, who give a colour of justice to their unjust decisions.

4. *With our tongue will we prevail*, etc. Rather, *We will make our tongue prevail; our lips are with us*. As judges these men can have

- 5 For the spoiling of the poor, for the sighing of the needy,  
 Now will I arise, saith the LORD;  
 I will set him <sup>1</sup>in safety at whom they puff.
- 6 The words of the LORD are pure words;  
 As silver tried in a furnace on the earth,  
 Purified seven times.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *in the safety he panteth for*

their decisions carried out: they need no other allies than their own pronouncements which have the force of law among their countrymen. They do not acknowledge a supreme judge in heaven to whom they themselves are responsible, but they ask, *Who is lord over us?* This is an utterance of practical Atheism like that of the unjust judges in Ps xciv. 7.

#### 5. JEHOVAH ANSWERS

5. *For the spoiling of the poor.* This is better than P-B, *for the comfortless trouble's sake of the needy*; Vulgate, *propter miseriam inopum*. The reference is to the plundering of the poor through unjust judgments, which deprive them of their own.

*will I arise.* Cf ix. 19, x. 12, "Arise, O JEHOVAH...lift up thine hand: Forget not the poor."

*I will set him in safety at whom they puff.* To *puff at a man* would ordinarily signify to "treat him with contempt, *de haut en bas*." But the reference in this passage may be to the practice of sorcerers. In various parts of the world the sorcerer turns himself in the direction of his victim, and blows out of his mouth breath or smoke which is believed to convey illness (probably followed by death) to the object of his malevolence. Cf x. 5, note.

#### 6, 7. THE PSALMIST RE-ASSURED

6. *The words of JEHOVAH*, i.e. the "promises" of JEHOVAH, specially the promises of Israel's safety.

*The words (promises) of JEHOVAH are pure words.* This clause comes in aptly after the promise given in the preceding verse, "I will set him in safety at whom they puff." Dr Briggs (I.C.C. *in loco*) chiefly for metrical reasons wishes to reject the clause as a gloss containing a gnomic saying, such as a scribe might introduce into his copy of the text. But the saying not only fits its immediate context, but also supplies a telling contrast to v. 3.

*As silver tried (refined) in a furnace on the earth.* If this rendering is correct, the Psalmist's thought is that God's promises are tested and proved true *upon earth*, so that men can know that they have been kept. But the Hebrew text is probably corrupt, and if the words *on the earth* be omitted the remainder of the verse offers good sense, *As silver tried, purified seven times.*

- 7 Thou shalt keep them, O LORD,  
 Thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever.  
 8 The wicked walk on every side,  
 When vileness is exalted among the sons of men.

*Purified seven times.* The process of refining is alluded to in Isa i. 25; Jer vi. 27-30. It was practised by the Egyptians in very early times.

*Seven* is not to be understood literally. The meaning is that the refining is repeated *again and again* until the impurities have been removed. Cf cxix. 164.

7. *Thou shalt keep them... Thou shalt preserve them* (him). In the second case the Hebrew pronoun is *him* (sing.), not *them*. The reference in both cases is to the *poor* (Heb. 'āniyim) of v. 5. As these *poor* form a class by themselves, being the loyal worshippers of JEHOVAH, they are regarded as the true Israel, and so may be spoken of collectively by a pronoun in the singular. For the 'āniyim see ix. 12, note. For *keep* (= *guard*) see cxxi. 3, note.

*from this generation.* The Hebrew *dōr*, usually translated "generation," sometimes loses its reference to a particular time, as in this passage: cf xiv. 5, "the generation (almost, 'the community') of the righteous"; lxxiii. 15, "the generation of thy children."

#### 8. A FINAL COMPLAINT: WICKEDNESS TRIUMPHANT

8. *The wicked walk on every side.* The poor are in danger because they are surrounded by the wicked; the wicked are triumphant.

*When vileness is exalted among the sons of men.* I.e. when the government falls into the hands of those least worthy to govern. See the picture drawn in Isa iii. 1-7 of a state deprived of all its heads both in Church and State. This Psalm, Dr Duhm says, ends abruptly, but in fact, it also begins abruptly. It is a cry in distress, and sudden as a cry.

### PSALM XIII

#### LORD, SAVE ME, I PERISH

##### § 1. CONTENTS.

1-4. An appeal.

5, 6. The resolution to be of good cheer.

##### § 2. CHARACTER.

This Psalm affords a good example of the boldness of speech used by the Psalmists. There is a childlike freedom in their questions, *How long, Why, Dost thou?* Yet all this questioning throws their living faith into clearer light; indeed when the writer of this Psalm says in v. 5, "I have trusted in thy mercy," we know that he is speaking from experience as one well-tryed by adversities. His confession is not verbal but real.

This Psalm is a cry from the heart. The Psalmist, a leader of Israel, has a

formidable enemy, and he feels himself for the time left to himself by JEHOVAH. His foes wish to thrust him down from his office, and he cannot resist. He looks to no party to support him; his one hope is in JEHOVAH's all-powerful help, his "salvation," as the Psalmist calls it. He calls one "counsel" after another to mind, without adopting any one of them. He is possibly helpless on a sick bed (v. 3, "lest I sleep the sleep of death"). So he begs for JEHOVAH's "countenance" and help: if he can win back JEHOVAH's favour, he is full of confidence for the rest. This little Psalm is a lesson in the exercise of faith under the most disheartening circumstances.

For the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.

**XIII.** 1 How long, O LORD, wilt thou forget me for ever?

How long wilt thou hide thy face from me?

2 How long shall I take counsel in my soul,

Having sorrow in my heart all the day?

How long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?

3 Consider *and* answer me, O LORD my God:

Lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the *sleep of death*;

#### 1-4. THE APPEAL

**XIII.** 1. *How long...?* Cf vi. 3, xc. 13.

*wilt thou forget me.* The Psalmist speaks here (as in other places) with the *naïveté* of a child in ascribing forgetfulness to God. Cf x. 12, xliv. 24, lxxiv. 19, 23.

*wilt thou hide thy face.* I.e. *wilt thou withhold thy favour.* The opposite sense is conveyed by the verb "to look": lxxxiv. 9, "Look upon the face of thine anointed."

2. *How long shall I take counsels (not counsel, singular) in my soul?* LXX, ἕως τίνος θήσομαι βουλὰς ἐν ψυχῇ μου; Vulgate, *quamdiu ponam consilia in anima mea.* The speaker, a ruler, complains that he, being forsaken of God, is obliged to take counsel for himself unhelped by JEHOVAH. So being dissatisfied he turns from counsel to counsel; he cannot continue in one stay. To emend (as some do) the Hebrew 'ēzōth, "counsels" into 'azzābōth, "pains" or "cares" is to miss one of the leading thoughts of the Psalm: the Psalmist prays in v. 3 that JEHOVAH will *lighten his eyes* to see good counsel, by which he may escape the dangers which threaten him.

*all the day.* Rather *by day*, LXX ἡμέρας. The Psalmist finds it hard that his sorrow should be *by day*, for day should bring relief from the sorrows of the night. Cf xxx. 5, "Weeping may tarry for the night, But joy cometh in the morning."

*be exalted over me.* The same verb as in xii. 8, "When vileness is exalted."

3. *Consider.* Rather, *Look* (upon me); cf v. 1.

*Lighten mine eyes.* Two thoughts are suggested by this phrase: (1) an

- 4 Lest mine enemy say, I have prevailed against him ;  
*Lest* mine adversaries rejoice when I am moved.  
 5 But I have trusted in thy mercy ;  
 My heart shall rejoice in thy salvation :  
 6 I will sing unto the LORD,  
 Because he hath dealt bountifully with me.

improvement of the understanding, so in xix. 8, "The commandment of JEHOVAH giveth light unto the eyes"; (2) a revival of the vital powers, so in 1 Sam xiv. 29, "Mine eyes have been enlightened, because I tasted a little of this honey."

*lest I sleep* the sleep of *death*. The Psalmist fears that his sorrows will overcome him, and that he will die. He speaks perhaps from a sick bed.

4. *Lest my enemy say, I have prevailed against him*. If the Psalmist was a ruler (v. 2, note), his enemy may be a rival who hopes to win the post for himself.

*when I am moved*. P-B, *if I be cast down*. The reference is probably to a fall from office. The situation may be illustrated from Sanballat's ill-will towards Nehemiah, whom he desired no doubt to see removed from his governorship: Neh ii. 10, iv. 1, 2.

## 5, 6. THE RESOLUTION

5. *thy mercy*. The English word *mercy* is defective as a rendering of the Heb. *hesed*, which includes the more general sense of *lovingkindness* or *favour*. See General Introduction, page xxxiv.

*My heart shall rejoice in thy salvation*. Rather, *Let my heart rejoice*. ... The words are a petition. Similarly v. 6 contains an aspiration, *I would fain sing to JEHOVAH*, saying, *he hath dealt bountifully with me*.

6. *hath dealt bountifully with me*. P-B (less accurately), ... *so lovingly with me*. P-B adds here the closing words of Ps vii, "yea, I will praise the Name of the Lord most Highest" on the authority of LXX and Vulgate (*et psallam nomini Domini altissimi*). Such additions however are under suspicion as attempts to round off Psalms which seem to end abruptly. The abrupt ending to a cry for help is natural.

## PSALM XIV

### A PRAYER AGAINST OPPRESSION

#### § 1. CONTENTS.

The Psalm falls into three divisions:

1-3. The prevalence of "Folly" (*nēbālāh*) on the earth. Men have ceased to think of God: consequently they have one and all become corrupt as the generation which perished in the Flood (Gen vi. 11, 12).

4-6. But when they proceeded to oppress the faithful ones ("my people," v. 4), they received a check. Even as they feasted on gain made by oppression, they were seized with a mysterious panic. Browning tells a similar story of a tyrant pursuing his victim:

When sudden...how think ye, the end?  
 Did I say "without friend"?  
 Say rather, from marge to blue marge  
 The whole sky grew his targe...  
 Do you see? Just my vengeance complete,  
 The man sprang to his feet,  
 Stood erect, caught at God's skirts, and prayed!  
 —So, I was afraid! *Instans Tyrannus.*

Neither Browning nor the Psalmist tells the precise form which the intervention took.

7. An appeal to JEHOVAH for a final decision between the "Israel of God" and the foe.

## §2. COMPARISON OF THE TEXTS OF xiv AND liii.

On the relation of this Psalm to Ps xii see the Introduction to Ps xii. Further it should be noted that Ps xiv is repeated with some variations in the Psalter as Ps liii. Thus the Name JEHOVAH which occurs four times in Ps xiv is everywhere in Ps liii replaced by the simple ELOHIM, "God." The change was made perhaps in the interest of reverence.

Other differences may be tabulated as follows:

xiv	liii
1. They have done abominable works.	1. They have done abominable iniquity.
3. They are all gone aside.	3. Every one of them is gone back.
4. All the workers.	4. The workers.
5. In great fear. God is in the dwelling of the righteous.	5. In great fear, where no fear was God hath scattered the bones of him that encampeth against thee.
6. Will ye put to shame the counsel of the poor? Know that JEHOVAH is his refuge.	Thou hast put them to shame, Because God hath rejected them.

Generally the text of xiv is superior to that of liii. liii. 5 is almost certainly corrupt; and Vulgate (= LXX) reads, *Deus dissipavit ossa eorum, qui hominibus placent.*

For the Chief Musician. *A Psalm* of David.

- XIV.** 1 The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.  
 They are corrupt, they have done abominable works;  
 There is none that doeth good.
- 2 The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men,  
 To see if there were any that did <sup>1</sup>understand,  
 That did seek after God.
- 3 They are all gone aside; they are together become filthy;  
 There is none that doeth good, no, not one.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *deal wisely*

**XIV.** 1. *The fool.* Vulgate, *insipiens*: Heb. *nābāl*. This is a word characteristic of Hebrew thought. With the Hebrews the Fear of JEHOVAH was the beginning (Heb. *tēhillath*) of Wisdom (Pro ix. 10) and also the chief part (Heb. *rēshūth*) of Wisdom. Wisdom meant pre-eminently knowing the law of JEHOVAH and keeping it. Folly (Heb. *nēbālah*) on the other hand meant ignoring JEHOVAH and his commandments. The *fool* (*nābāl*) is one morally dense, who has no true conception of God or of his law. He asserts that there is no Providence and no Judgment to come: there is in fact "no fear of God before his eyes." So Horace says that he had learnt (from Epicurus) that the gods lead a life free from care concerning the affairs of men: *Namque deos didici securum agere aevum* (1 *Sat* v. 101). The fool of the Psalm stands for himself and "eats up" the poor. Cf lxxiii. 10, 11, xciv. 6, 7. See also x. 4.

*They are corrupt.* Or, *They deal corruptly.* The same Hebrew word as in Gen vi. 12 (*bis*).

*none that doeth good.* The addition of P-B, *no, not one*, comes from Vulgate (= LXX), and ultimately from v. 3 (= liii. 3).

2. *JEHOVAH looked down.* The same Hebrew verb as in Exod xiv. 24, "JEHOVAH looked down into the host of the Egyptians...and troubled the host."

*any that did understand.* Or, *any wise man.* The *wise man* (Heb. *maschil*) is the opposite of the *fool* (*nābāl*): he is one who *seeks after God*, and desires to know his will. So in Dan xii. 10 the *wise* (*maschilim*) are contrasted with the *wicked*.

3. *They are all gone aside.* The Hebrew verb *sūr* is used frequently of going after other gods, e.g. in Exod xxxii. 8.

*There is none that doeth good, no, not one.* In the Psalm this is not a formal statement of the universal depravity of mankind; rather it is a characterization of those powerful ones who oppress the poor whom the Psalmist calls his "people." But his language is highly significant, for the great men whom he condemns as "corrupt" and as doers of "abominable works" are his own countrymen. And it is just these leaders who were expected to be examples in religion. The great dis-

4 Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge?

Who eat up my people *as* they eat bread,  
And call not upon the LORD.

5 There were they in great fear:

For God is in the generation of the righteous.

appointment comes when these fail. So Jeremiah writes, "I will get me unto the great men...for they know the way of JEHOVAH...But these with one accord have broken the yoke, and burst the bands" (Jer v. 5). And so again, when our Lord said, *How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God*, the disciples were astonished into answering, *Then who can be saved?* (Mark x. 23, 26). If the rich, the leaders of the people, go wrong, then who can go right? So it is not surprising that in Rom iii. 9-22 St Paul should quote this passage amongst many others in support of the thesis that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin, and that all have need of the new Righteousness which is through faith in Jesus Christ.

At this point P-B gives three verses (numbered 5-7 in the Prayer Book) which are not found in the Hebrew text. They were taken from the Vulgate into Coverdale's English Bible of 1535, the Vulgate having taken them over from LXX. From Coverdale they passed into the Great Bible of 1539 which was made (or at least revised) from the Hebrew, but they were enclosed in brackets as not being found in the original. They are certainly not part of the Psalm, but they were introduced into the text of LXX from Rom iii. 13-18. It is a pity that the brackets are omitted in modern editions of the Prayer Book.

4. *Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge?* See v. 5, note. The *workers of iniquity* are the unrighteous judges.

*Who eat up my people as they eat bread.* Rather, *Those who eat up my people have eaten bread.* To *eat bread* is a phrase which connotes much more than the literal sense of the words allows. It means to have the wants of life supplied; to live in ease and prosperity, as in 2 K xxv. 29 (Jehoiachin, the deposed king of Judah, obtained favour and ate bread before the king of Babylon all his days); cf Luke xiv. 15, "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God."

*And call (rather, called) not upon JEHOVAH.* The scene is a feast like Belshazzar's. The oppressors eat (and drink), and do *not* praise JEHOVAH. And "there," at their feast, they are seized (like Belshazzar) with panic, for God is in the dwelling of the righteous whom they have unjustly condemned and spoiled. Some alarm (as of the Medes and Persians at the gate) has come upon them.

5. *There were they in great fear.* Or, *There were they seized with panic.* The presence of the adverb *there* gave rise, it seems, to the additional clause found in liii. 5, "where no fear was." This clause is found also in the Greek and Latin texts (LXX and Vulgate) of xiv. 5. But the word *there* is used *apodeiktikos*, see General Introduction, page xii.

*For God is in the generation of the righteous.* Better, *in the righteous*

6 Ye put to shame the counsel of the poor,

<sup>1</sup>Because the LORD is his refuge.

7 Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion!

When the LORD <sup>2</sup>bringeth back the captivity of his people,  
Then shall Jacob rejoice, *and* Israel shall be glad.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *But*

<sup>2</sup> Or, *returneth to*

*dwelling.* Coverdale paraphrases, *God stondest by the generation of the righteous.* A very different text is shown in liii. 5, "For God hath scattered the bones of him that encampeth against thee." In Ps xiv civil strife is presupposed, but in Ps liii rather open war, and an attack on Jerusalem. See the Introduction to Ps liii.

6. *Ye put to shame.* This verse yields better sense if it be taken as consisting of question and answer, thus:

*Will ye put to shame the counsel of the poor?*

(I.e. "Do you hope to succeed in this endeavour?")

*Know that JEHOVAH is his refuge.*

This sudden turn and challenge of the enemy in the second person is characteristically Hebraic.

7. *O that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion!* May JEHOVAH "which dwelleth in Zion" (ix. 11) manifest his power from Zion in saving Israel. Cf xciv. 1, "Thou God to whom vengeance belongeth, shine forth."

*When JEHOVAH bringeth back the captivity of his people.* Better, *When JEHOVAH returneth to his captive people.* A Psalmist who believes that God has brought any calamity on his people by way of punishment calls upon him to "return," i.e. to his former disposition of favour to Israel: so in lxxx. 14, xc. 13. The phrase *his captive people* is general in meaning: it does not necessarily allude to the Babylonian captivity. Israel was a "captive people" through a great part of its history in that it was subject to deportations successively by Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Macedonian successors of Alexander the Great and others. Probably when this Psalm was written more than a half of the Jewish race was scattered over the known world. The list of peoples and countries given in Acts ii. 9-11 affords a vivid illustration of the extent of this Dispersion. The Salvation for which the Psalmist longed no doubt included a gathering together again of Israel into his own land.

## PSALM XV

### THE CHARACTER OF THE GUEST OF JEHOVAH

The Psalm opens with the question, *O JEHOVAH, who shall be thy guest in thy tent?* The rendering of P-B is too indefinite, *Lord, who shall dwell in thy tabernacle,* for the image of the Hebrew text is lost. JEHOVAH, so the Psalmist pictures him, is dwelling in a tent pitched perhaps out in the wilderness. The

Psalmist asks, What kind of traveller is worthy to halt at this tent and crave hospitality from JEHOVAH? In the second half of the verse the Psalmist drops his metaphor, and asks the plain question, *Who shall dwell in thy holy hill?* i.e. "Who shall be found worthy of being a citizen of Zion?" He then proceeds to sketch (vv. 2-5) the character of the man who is worthy of being the guest of God.

The elements of this character are these. *First*, the citizen of Zion is a faithful worshipper of JEHOVAH; he is whole-hearted; he has no secret hankering after the worship of other gods (v. 2). *Secondly*, he has his tongue under control; he is free from those sins of speech which are frequently alluded to in the Psalter (v. 3). *Thirdly*, the citizen of Zion is actively on the side of JEHOVAH: those whom JEHOVAH rejects, he too will have nought to do with; those who fear JEHOVAH he will honour as his friends (v. 4). *Fourthly*, the true citizen is free from covetousness: he does not take usury, nor does he accept bribes (v. 5). In at least three out of four of these particulars the Psalmist might be sketching the character of Nehemiah.

#### A Psalm of David.

**XV. 1** LORD, who shall sojourn in thy <sup>1</sup>tabernacle?

Who shall dwell in thy holy hill?

2 He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness,  
And speaketh truth in his heart.

<sup>1</sup> Heb. tent.

**XV. 1.** *LORD, who shall sojourn in thy tabernacle?* Better, *O JEHOVAH, who shall be thy guest in thy tent?* See Introduction, above.

*thy tabernacle.* Or, *thy tent*: cf. xxvii. 5, 6 (RV marg.); lxi. 4 (RV marg.), lxxviii. 60. The Hebrew loved to think of God's earthly dwelling as a tent or a house of curtains (Exod xxvi. 1-3; 2 Sam vii. 1, 2). So in Heb. ix. 1 ff. the Author in his account of the Sanctuary takes Moses' tabernacle (σκηνή, "tent"), and not Solomon's temple as his text. The low spreading tent with its curtains represented better the clouds which veiled JEHOVAH in heaven: cf. xcvi. 2, civ. 2.

*Who shall dwell in thy holy hill?* The Psalmist drops his metaphor and asks the plain question, "What kind of man is worthy of being a citizen of Zion?"

2. *He that walketh uprightly.* The Hebrew word rendered *uprightly* is *tāmīm*, an adjective used frequently in the Psalter and in the Priestly Code. In the latter it describes a sacrificial victim as "perfect," i.e. as whole in all its parts and therefore fit for sacrifice. Applied to a person it means "genuine, sincere," a worshipper of JEHOVAH who is free from leanings towards the worship of other gods. Cf. xviii. 23, "I was also perfect with him," i.e. with JEHOVAH: Gen xvii. 1, "Walk before me, and be thou perfect."

*And speaketh truth in his heart.* I.e. "who thinketh true thoughts," or "who is true within." LXX, λαλῶν ἀλήθειαν ἐν καρδίᾳ αὐτοῦ.

- 3 <sup>1</sup>He that slandereth not with his tongue,  
 Nor doeth evil to his friend,  
 Nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour.  
 4 In <sup>2</sup>whose eyes a reprobate is despised;  
 But he honoureth them that fear the LORD.  
<sup>3</sup>He that sweareth <sup>4</sup>to his own hurt, and changeth not.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *He slandereth*<sup>2</sup> Or, *his*<sup>3</sup> Or, *He sweareth*<sup>4</sup> Some ancient versions have, *to his friend.*

3. *He that slandereth not with his tongue.* Better, *He that doth not go about as a tale-bearer.* The Hebrew phrase pictures a man as going about from house to house or from village to village carrying with him a tale meant to injure his neighbour. Warnings against tale-bearing are found: Lev xix. 16; James iv. 11. Tale-bearing may easily pass into downright false witness which may do grievous harm. So the Psalmist adds, *Nor doeth evil to his friend.*

*Nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour.* The *taking up of a reproach* is illustrated by many passages of the Psalms. Often a reproach is based on some illness or other calamity which has overtaken a Psalmist. The onlookers suggest (as in the case of Job) that the calamity is punishment due to some unconfessed sin committed by the sufferer. Sometimes they add that the sick man will not recover (xli. 8), and that his God has forsaken him (lxxi. 11). The malice of these suggestions was sometimes overpowering for the victim, so that he confessed, "Reproach hath broken my heart."

4. *In whose eyes a reprobate is despised; But he honoureth them that fear JEHOVAH.* This couplet depicts the man as utterly loyal to his God. He despises the "reprobate," i.e. the man who is rejected by JEHOVAH, and he gives honour to the fearer of JEHOVAH. So another Psalmist (cxxxix. 21, 22) in asserting his faithfulness cries out, "Do not I hate them, O JEHOVAH, that hate thee?" The rendering in P-B, *He that setteth not by himself* (i.e. He that does not exalt himself), *but is lowly in his own eyes*, does not agree with MT nor with LXX Vulgate, and is no doubt a mistake.

*He that sweareth...and changeth not.* Loyalty to JEHOVAH is more-over expressed by loyalty to the oath which is taken in his Name. The oath was of very great importance in the social life of Israel: it had a definite place in the judicial system. A man accused of unfaithfulness in the care of his neighbour's cattle might purge himself by taking "the oath of JEHOVAH" (Exod xxii. 10, 11). A wife accused of unchastity could clear herself by drinking the water of bitterness and by accepting the oath administered to her by the priest of JEHOVAH (Num v. 21 ff). The crown of king Zedekiah's guilt was that he despised the oath which Nebuchadrezzar had made him swear by JEHOVAH's name (Ezek xvii. 19; 2 Chr xxxvi. 13).

5 <sup>1</sup>He that putteth not out his money to usury,  
 Nor taketh reward against the innocent.  
 He that doeth these things shall never be moved.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *He putteth*

In the English Versions (AV and RV) we read, "He that sweareth to his own hurt." But the Hebrew text is uncertain, and the rendering of LXX is ὁ ὀμνίων τῷ πλησίον αὐτοῦ. Strangely enough P-B accepts both renderings though they are in fact alternatives, "He that sweareth unto his neighbour (τῷ πλησίον αὐτοῦ), and disappointeth him not: though it were to his own hindrance." The uncertainty however does not affect the main sense: the true citizen of Zion, when he swears, does not revoke his engagement.

5. *usury*. Heb. *nēshek*, lit., "biting," includes all interest. A moderate interest was unknown, and the heavy interest charged to a borrower was (rightly) regarded as a form of oppression. So Deut xxiii. 19f runs, "Thou shalt not lend upon usury to thy brother; usury of money, usury of victuals: . . . unto a foreigner thou mayest lend upon usury." The poor in Israel had a claim on the rich for a free loan to meet some special need: Deut xv. 7, 8.

*Nor taketh reward against the innocent*. This clause shows that the person whose character is sketched in this Psalm is one of sufficient status to exercise authority as a judge.

*shall never be moved*. Cf xiii. 4, note. To be moved is to be removed from some office or exalted station; cf xxxvii. 35, 36.

## PSALM XVI

### JEHOVAH IS MY ONLY GOD

The opening verses of this Psalm are among the most obscure in the Hebrew Bible; on the other hand the closing verses touch one of its highest notes. The reader who faces the difficulties which present themselves at the beginning of the Psalm is rewarded by the message of hope with which it closes.

The situation of the Psalmist is clearly shown. He was sick and in danger of his life, and he would appeal for help to no God but JEHOVAH (vv. 1-4). The LORD gave him the help he desired (vv. 5-7). But with life thus given back to him, his hope soared yet higher, and the Psalm ends with an aspiration after eternal life with God (vv. 8-11).

Very impressive at the opening of the Psalm is the energy with which the Psalmist repudiates the thought of applying to any other God than JEHOVAH in his trouble. This vehemence is explained by the contact with heathens in which the Jews lived. In the case of sickness the heathen man became distracted and called on many healers. Divine providence was unknown to him; powers unseen afflicted him, and he did not know, until he was directed, which of several gods would be the one to give him relief.

Thus in an ancient Babylonian prayer the sufferer cries out:

“O Ea, O Shamash, O Marduk, deliver me,  
 And through your mercy let me have relief.  
 O Shamash, a horrible spectre for many days  
 Hath fastened on my back, and will not loose its hold upon me.  
 He taketh the power from my body, he maketh mine eyes start out,  
 He plagueth my back, he poisoneth my flesh,  
 He plagueth my whole body.”<sup>1</sup>

Here the Babylonian sufferer appeals to three gods, Ea the god of Wisdom, Shamash the Sun-god, and Marduk the patron god of Babylon, for relief from his disease. Sometimes, however, the great gods were not called upon, but the aid of magicians was summoned, and spells were employed to exorcize the evil spirit which brought disease.

It is easy with such instances before us to picture the influences which beset the Psalmist on his bed of sickness. It is true that the Mosaic law had forbidden all appeal to “other gods” and all use of supposed magical powers. But in time of elemental distress elemental feeling is stirred, and it cannot be doubted that some of the Psalmist’s friends (if not the Psalmist himself) would feel that when he was laid upon a bed of dangerous sickness the time had come for invoking some special god.

The Psalmist’s faithfulness was thus tested, but his faithfulness remains unshaken. His one cry for help, “Preserve me, O God,” is linked with a profession of full confidence, “For in thee have I taken refuge.” This vivid Hebrew phrase expresses fact, not feeling merely. He is hidden in *JEHOVAH*, as a fugitive might find refuge in some strong tower. As for the gods of the heathen, he will have none of them. They shall receive no drink offerings from him, neither will he invoke their names in his distress. *JEHOVAH* is his portion and he is satisfied.

In *v.* 7 the Psalmist rises from faith to insight. Faith, as Bishop Westcott writes, is a principle of knowledge.<sup>2</sup> From knowledge of God’s ways the Psalmist is led to thanksgiving. He gives thanks that the LORD has given him counsel, and instructed him. He is grateful for the thoughts and experiences which came to him during the sleepless (and perhaps painful) nights of sickness; by a splendid act of faith he recognizes them as conveying a message from *JEHOVAH*. He says that his reins, the parts of the body which the Hebrews regarded as most sensitive to pain, have instructed him: *Παθήματα μαθήματα*. He accepts his sufferings as God’s instructions.

In *vv.* 8-11 the Psalmist makes a full confession of faith. He has set *JEHOVAH* before him; he will not lift up his eyes to any strange God; the LORD is indeed at his right hand, and so he is confident of safety, “I shall not be moved.” His whole being, “heart” and “glory” and “flesh,” rejoices and is confident. God will not leave his soul to the power of Death, God will not give him up to see the grave instead of the light of life. On the contrary, God teaches him the way of life, and in the Divine presence he is assured that there is fulness of joy and beauty for evermore.

<sup>1</sup> L. W. King, *Babylonian Religion*, pp. 45 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Historic Faith*, p. 8.

It is easy to recognize the greatness of this Psalm as a religious confession. It tells of faith tried and coming forth triumphant. Its later verses give noblest expression to the Creed of the Old Testament: God is the author of life and joy. A question, however, has been raised as to the exact meaning of v. 10; Is the Psalmist referring to his condition after his death? Does he mean that he does not fear death, because JEHOVAH will grant him a resurrection?

Now if we take v. 10 by itself, it is *possible* to explain the words in such a way that the whole verse will appear to refer simply to deliverance from the imminent danger of death in which the Psalmist was at the moment. The words "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell" (AV) may be translated, "Thou wilt not abandon my soul to Death" (Heb. "Sheol"); and the second half of the verse, "Neither wilt thou suffer thine holy one to see corruption," can be translated "Thou wilt not give thy saint to see the grave." If we adopt these alternative renderings, the meaning of the verse is that God will not allow the Psalmist to perish in the affliction in which he stands.

But in fact v. 10 cannot be interpreted apart from its continuation in v. 11. The same truth is stated in both verses, in the former from the negative, in the latter from the positive side. The first says "not death," but the second says "life." V. 10, if it stood by itself, might be taken to refer to a single occasion, it might be only an assertion of the Psalmist's confidence that he would not be allowed to perish *now*. V. 11, however, has no reference to time. Its three clauses when considered together are seen to bear a meaning so full, that no merely temporal reference can satisfy it. Each has a suggestion of the limitless.

(1) "Thou wilt show me the path of life." The phrase "path of life" suggests something fuller than the mere earthly life of the Psalmist; it means a path to a life not yet possessed.

(2) "In thy presence is fulness of joy." This clause takes us beyond the temporal deliverance spoken of in v. 10. "Joy" and "fulness" suggest something transcending the Psalmist's present experience.

(3) "At thy right hand is fair beauty for evermore." "For evermore" in this context is very significant. It is possible of course to say that it refers wholly to God, and not to the Psalmist. But taken in connexion with what goes before, with the Psalmist's own nearness to death, it is more reasonable to see in it at least a hope that the God who delivered the Psalmist once from the peril of death will continue his beneficent care over him "for evermore." V. 10, 11 taken together express a confident expectation of a fuller life called forth by a present danger of death. The same thing may be said of Ps xvii. 15.

It may be objected that the doctrine of a life beyond the grave might have been stated more definitely, so as to preclude the necessity of this detailed discussion. But a satisfactory rejoinder may be made to the objection. In the first place, the Psalms belong to the realm of poetry, and in them poetic forms are used for the expression of spiritual truth. Poetry is indeed one of the handmaids of revelation, for revelation is for the many, not for the few, and that which poetry loses in scientific definition, it gains in simplicity of statement and in power of appeal to the many. It is so in the case before us. The poetic phrase

“the path of life” is more vivid than the definite theological term “everlasting life.”

Secondly, it must be remembered that we are dealing with private assurance, not with a public creed. The Psalmist and a few spiritual giants in Israel were rising to the conception of eternal life, but Israel had no formal creed, in which the mass of the people could be invited to proclaim their belief in the “Life Everlasting.” Jesus Christ was not yet raised from the dead, so that the after-life could not be taught with the vigorous certainty of St Paul. With the Psalmist it was a hopeful aspiration, with us it is an article of our Creed.

Thirdly, if the actual words and syllables are less definite than we wish, the tone of the Psalm must count for something. The note of hope with which Pss xvi, xvii close is too strong to be concerned with this life only. Indeed, it is just such passages as these which justify the protest of the seventh Article of Religion against the supposition that the Fathers of the Old Testament “did look only for transitory promises.” The writer of Ps xvi looked to be taught nothing less than a Path of Life (v. 11), that is, a new line of progress and not a mere temporary escape from death. Aspiration in the Psalm surely rises as high as in Tennyson’s lines:

’Tis life, whereof our nerves are scant,  
Oh life, not death, for which we pant;  
More life, and fuller, that I want.

*(The Two Voices.)*

A notable use is made of one striking half-verse of this Psalm in the New Testament. *V. 10b* is quoted in Acts ii. 27 and also in Acts xiii. 35 in the form, “Thou wilt not give thy Holy One to see corruption.” The earlier passage belongs to St Peter’s Pentecostal sermon, the latter to St Paul’s sermon in the synagogue of the Pisidian Antioch. In both cases the words are said to apply to Christ, and not to the Psalmist (David). “He (David), foreseeing this, spake of the resurrection of the Christ, that neither was he left in Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption.” And yet, in spite of the use made in the New Testament of the Psalm, it is difficult, when we read the first part of it, to feel that the Psalm is directly Messianic. Rather it reads like the record of the struggle of some pre-Christian Jew towards the Christian truth of the Resurrection. And as such we may indeed deem it, though a special application of it is made in the Acts. A Psalm which speaks of the resurrection speaks necessarily also of Christ, for that doctrine is wrapped up in his Person. Christ *is* the Resurrection and the Life. The earliest Christian preaching was of “Jesus and the Resurrection.” The Psalm speaks not immediately of Christ, but of Christ through the hope of Resurrection, which became an assurance to us by Christ’s victory over Death on the first Easter Day.

Michtam of David.

**XVI.** 1 Preserve me, O God: for in thee do I put my trust.2 <sup>1</sup>I have said unto the LORD, Thou art <sup>2</sup>my Lord:

I have no good beyond thee.

3 <sup>3</sup>As for the saints that are in the earth,<sup>4</sup>They are the excellent in whom is all my delight.<sup>1</sup> So the Sept., Vulg. and Syr. The Hebrew text as pointed reads, *Thou hast said, O my soul.*<sup>2</sup> Or, *the Lord*      <sup>3</sup> Or, *Unto*      <sup>4</sup> Or, *And the excellent...delight: their &c.*

## 1-4. NO OTHER GOD BUT JEHOVAH

**XVI.** 1. *Preserve me.* Or, *Guard me*, LXX, φύλαξόν με.*O God.* Heb. *El*. The same name of God is used in xix. 1, "The heavens declare the glory of *El*," but the use of this name by itself is not common: cf l. 1 "*God (El)*, even *God (Elohim)*, the LORD (JEHOVAH) hath spoken." Its literal meaning is perhaps the "Strong One." It is not confined in use to the true God.*in thee do I put my trust.* Or, *in thee have I taken refuge.* JEHOVAH is called the Rock (*Zur*); a rock pierced with caves, if the illustration be taken from the limestone rocks of Palestine. The Psalmist takes refuge in JEHOVAH, as a fugitive might take refuge in one of these caves. Cf vii. 1; xi. 1.2. *I have said.* LXX, εἶπα. The marginal reading, "*Thou hast said, O my soul,*" is unlikely to be original: by a very slight emendation of the Hebrew text, by the addition of the smallest letter of the Hebrew alphabet, we get *I have said (I said)*. This formula occurs in other passages of the Psalter to introduce a solemn profession or resolve: xxxi. 14, "I said, Thou art my God": xxxii. 5, "I said, I will confess my transgressions": xl. 7, 8, "Then said I, Lo, I am come...I delight to do thy will, O my God."*Thou art my Lord.* Better, *Thou art Lord*, i.e. universal Lord.*I have no good beyond thee.* This is practically St Augustine's dictum, "Thou Thyself art our good" (*Confessions* iv. *ad fin.*). But it is possible that the negative in the Hebrew text is a mistake, and that we should read *col* ("all") instead of *bal* ("not"): the translation would then be, *All my welfare is with thee*, i.e. it is in thy hands to make or to mar.3, 4. *As for* etc. In the Hebrew the first word of v. 3 is, *Of* (or *Unto*) *the holy ones*, while the first word of v. 2 is, *Of* (or *Unto*) JEHOVAH. There is a strong contrast: here the Psalmist repudiates the so-called "holy ones," while in v. 2 he acknowledges JEHOVAH as the one true God. Render, *I have said of the "holy ones" which are in the land—and of the nobles who have pleasure in them, Their sorrows shall be many: they have endowed another god.* The Heb. *kédōshim* ("holy ones") is used here to avoid calling them "gods" in accordance with the Psalmist's resolve, "I will not take their names upon my lips" (v. 4). The same contrast between

4 Their sorrows shall be multiplied that <sup>1</sup>exchange *the LORD* for another *god*:

Their drink offerings of blood will I not offer,  
Nor take their names upon my lips.

5 The LORD is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup:  
Thou maintainest my lot.

6 The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places;  
Yea, I have a goodly heritage.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *give gifts for*

the true God and the "holy ones" is in lxxxix. 7; Hosea xi. 12, "Judah is restive with God, but keeps faith with the *holy ones*," i. e. the Baalim: Hosea ii. 17, "I will take away the names of the Baalim out of her mouth." The Hebrew root *k-d-sh* is used in OT not only of consecration to JEHOVAH, but also of heathen consecration, e.g. Deut xxiii. 17; Isa lxxv. 5. The "excellent" (Heb. *addirim*) are not "such as excel in virtue" (P-B), but simply "nobles" (Neh iii. 5) or chiefs who support the worship of the "holy ones". The Heb. יצדק, "my delight," is to be read with the same vowels as in xxxv. 27, where it is rendered as a plural, "that have pleasure" in my righteousness (RV marg.).

4. *Their drink offerings of blood.* Blood was offered in the sacrifices of the Law; it was sprinkled or thrown from a bowl (*mizrāk*) upon the altar: Lev i. 5, 11, xvii. 6. But blood was never to be tasted (Lev iii. 17), and the drink offerings were of wine; Exod xxix. 40. In the heathen sacrifices to which the Psalmist alludes the blood was to be tasted; this was abhorrent to an observer of the Mosaic Law.

*Nor take their names upon my lips.* This resolution is in agreement with the Law: Exod xxiii. 13, "Make no mention of the name of other gods": Hos ii. 17, "I will take away the names of the Baalim out of her mouth (i. e. out of Israel's mouth), and they shall no more be mentioned by their name." The ancient belief was that there was power in a name, and the Hebrew who mentioned the name of any false god would seem to acknowledge his existence and power.

### 5-7. JEHOVAH'S GRACIOUS DEALING

5. *the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup.* The Hebrew word rendered "inheritance" is specially applied to a portion of land assigned by lot: Josh xviii. 9 ("they described it by cities into seven portions—*hālākīm*—in a book"). The Psalmist speaks as one whose lot it is to dwell in Zion, the Mount of JEHOVAH: so he writes with bold childlike language, "JEHOVAH is the portion of mine inheritance."

If the word *portion* alludes to the Psalmist's home, the word *cup* will signify the experiences which JEHOVAH sends him in the course of his life. For these also the Psalmist praises his God.

6. *The lines are fallen...in pleasant places* (Heb. *nē'imoth*). The translation *pleasant* is not adequate. The Hebrew word suggests "the

7 I will bless the LORD, who hath given me counsel:

Yea, my reins instruct me in the night seasons.

8 I have set the LORD always before me:

Because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.

9 Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth:

My flesh also shall dwell <sup>1</sup>in safety.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *confidently*

fair beauty (*nō'am*) of the Lord" (xxvii. 4, P-B), and the joy which the Temple services gave to the true worshippers. This joy could live beside some painful experiences as appears from the words of the Psalmist in the next verse, "My reins chasten me in the night-season" (P-B). He had times of pain of body or of painful thought.

7. *I will bless JEHOVAH.* For instances of such blessing see xviii. 1, 2, ciii. (*passim*).

*who hath given me counsel.* Cf xxxii. 8, "I will counsel thee with mine eye upon thee." Both the heathen and the worshippers of JEHOVAH looked for Divine counsel in the affairs of life. The use of the oracle, *Urim* and *Thummim* among the Hebrews, is well known.

#### 8-11. AN ASPIRATION AFTER LIFE WITH JEHOVAH

8. *I have set JEHOVAH always before me.* Again with childlike expression the Psalmist shows his utter devotion to his God. His approach to JEHOVAH is personal: he is not content to say with the author of cxix. 30, "Thy judgements have I set before me." He places before his inner eye a vision of his God who has saved him from death, has instructed him, and has given him a great hope for the Future. See the following verses.

*Because he is at my right hand.* The equivalent of *he is* is wanting in the Hebrew, but it is supplied in LXX and Vulgate.

*he is at my right hand.* Here the Psalmist uses language which was used also by the worshippers of other gods. Thus on the Cylinder of Cyrus it is written, "Marduk (the god of Babylon) made him (Cyrus) take the road to Babylon, going as a friend and companion at his side" (R. W. Rogers, *Cuneiform Parallels*, page 381).

*I shall not be moved.* In Hebrew Prosperity and Safety are expressed by the metaphor of Standing: cxvii. 2, cxxx. 3; while the opposite condition is described as being moved: xv. 5 ("shall never be moved"); xciv. 18 ("my foot *slippeth*"). To "be moved" or to "slip" is commonly said of the foot, but it is used of mountains shaken by earthquake (xlvi. 2), and metaphorically of kingdoms (xlvi. 6).

9. *my glory rejoiceth.* Personal identity is described in Hebrew in terms which are strange to Western minds. Where we say simply "I," the Hebrew used various paraphrases, "my heart"—"my glory"—"my flesh" as here, or (as in xxxi. 9) "mine eye"—"my soul"—"my body" (Heb. *bitnī*). LXX, ἡ γλῶσσά μου, "my tongue," is not a good rendering.

- 10 For thou wilt not leave my soul to Sheol;  
 Neither wilt thou suffer thine <sup>1</sup>holy one to see <sup>2</sup>corruption.  
 11 Thou wilt shew me the path of life:  
 In thy presence is fulness of joy;  
 In thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.

<sup>1</sup> Or, godly Or, beloved<sup>2</sup> Or, the pit

*shall dwell in safety.* Rather, *shall dwell confidently*, as margin, i.e. unmoved by fears.

10. *thou wilt not leave my soul to Sheol.* On *Sheol* see the notes on vi. 5. Here it is personified as in xlix. 14, 15. So among the Greeks Hades is a God and the place is called the "house (*δῶμος*) of Hades" (*Odyssey* xi. 47, 69).

*Neither wilt thou suffer thine holy one* (or *give thine holy one*) *to see corruption* (better, *the pit*, as margin). *Holy one* from (Heb. *hasid*) as iv. 3 ("him that is godly"); cf xii. 1 note. The translation *corruption* is from Vulgate, *corruptionem*, which in turn comes from LXX, *διαφθοράν*: cf Acts ii. 27, xiii. 35. But the Hebrew word (*shathath*) certainly has the meaning of "pit," e.g. ix. 15, xciv. 13; Ezek xix. 4; Pro xxvi. 27. It should be noted that "to see the pit" is a phrase parallel to "to see the sun": the one means *to be alive*, the other *to be dead*. It is true that our Lord did not "see corruption": it is equally true that, in the proper sense of the phrase, he did not "see the pit." To "see" in the Heb. sense is to "have and to hold".

11. *Thou wilt shew me.* Rather, *Thou wilt make me to know*, or, *Thou wilt teach me*: Vulgate, *Notas mihi fecisti vias vitae*.

*the path of life.* This phrase is found in Pro v. 6, x. 17, xv. 24; and (plural, *paths of life*) in Pro ii. 19. It means the path which if pursued secures a man from the death which befalls transgressors: it might be described from another standpoint as "the path of righteousness": cf Pro xii. 28, "In the way of righteousness is life"; but this way is not the easy path: Pro xv. 24, "To the wise the way of life goeth upward, That he may depart from Sheol beneath."

*In thy presence.* This phrase may mean God's presence in the Sanctuary, as in xcv. 2; but it may on the contrary have an unrestricted reference.

*fulness of joy.* Or, *satisfaction in joys*; cf xvii. 15, "I shall be satisfied," where the cognate Hebrew root is used.

*pleasures.* Heb. *nē'imoth*, "fair beauties": cf v. 6, note. But in this later verse the successive boons, the "path of life"—"satisfaction in joys"—"fair beauties," are described simply as in *JEHOVAH's* presence or in his right hand without any mention of the Temple. Probably the Psalmist has now in mind not the blessings of Temple worship, but the blessings of a life lived in God and continuing beyond the grave.

## PSALM XVII

## GOD HIMSELF THE ONLY GOOD AND THE TRUE RICHES

## § 1. CONTENTS.

- 1, 2. An appeal: Hear the right.  
 3-5. The Psalmist protests his faithfulness.  
 6-8. The appeal renewed: Keep me (i.e. Guard me).  
 9-12. The enemy lying in wait.  
 13. Again the appeal: Deliver my soul.  
 14, 15. A contrast: the portion of the men of the world and the portion of the Psalmist.

## § 2. CHARACTER.

All Psalms show a wonderful consciousness of God's nearness, but perhaps no Psalm more than this short poem of fifteen verses. The Psalmist begins by protesting that he is sincere in his appeal to JEHOVAH (*vs.* 1, 2). His past experiences tell him of God's active presence in the World. He has suffered "in the night," and knows that this suffering was not an accident, but one of JEHOVAH'S testings of men. He claims that he has been found innocent. In the course of this testing he was upheld by JEHOVAH, Who of old has been (as he knows) a guide and a deliverer (*vs.* 3-7).

The Psalmist now repeats his urgent appeal for deliverance. He tells of deadly enemies, who have no consciousness of God, who boast that they have their victim in their power: they have but to make their spring like some wild beast, and the Psalmist will be their certain prey (*vs.* 8-12).

So the Psalmist's prayer grows more urgent, "Arise, O JEHOVAH." The language of the Psalm becomes more anthropomorphic. The author prays for something more than deliverance: his petition (as he grows in confidence) is that the Deliverer will reveal himself. It is a prayer for a *parousia* of the God to whom he prays (*vs.* 13-15).

The question arises, Is the Psalmist looking for a *parousia* on this side of the grave or beyond? It is possible that a Revelation of God's glory on this earth is the great thing which the Psalmist is looking for. Such revelations are expected in Pss 1, xciv, xcvi, xcix and others, which speak of a Day of Judgment such as Christian fancy has often indicated or described.

The "deadly enemies" (*v.* 9), the "violent" (*v.* 4), are not to be understood as opponents who have a private quarrel with the Psalmist. The Psalmist belongs to the strictest section among the Jews: he is earnest, unworldly, and legal-minded. Opposed to him is the "government party," which Duhm would identify with the Hasmoneans who at the end of the second century B.C. fell into bitter strife with the newly arisen party of the Pharisees who inherited the traditions of the Hasidim (Hasidæans, 1 Macc. vii. 13-17).

But there are no decisive marks in this Psalm to fix it at so late a date. If it be two centuries or more earlier (as it may well be), the government party would be the more secular high priests, who desired to keep on good terms with their heathen governors (Persian or Greek), even to the extent of some compliance in matters of religion.

## A Prayer of David.

- XVII.** 1 Hear the right, O LORD, attend unto my cry;  
 Give ear unto my prayer, that goeth not out of feigned lips.  
 2 Let my sentence come forth from thy presence;  
<sup>1</sup>Let thine eyes look upon equity.  
 3 Thou hast proved mine heart; thou hast visited me in the  
 night;  
 Thou hast tried me, and <sup>2</sup>findest nothing;  
 I am purposed that my mouth shall not transgress.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *Thine eyes behold with equity*

<sup>2</sup> Or, *findest no evil purpose in me; my mouth &c.*

## 1, 2. HEAR THE RIGHT

**XVII.** 1. *Hear the right.* Or, *Hear righteousness:* cf v. 2, "Let thine eyes look upon equity." The Psalmist means his own cause by the words *righteousness and equity.*

*my cry.* Heb. *rinnah*, a word which is used of glad shouting at harvest (cxxxvi. 5, 6 translated "joy") and of uttering praise (xlii. 4, "with the voice of joy and praise"). There is an undercurrent of praise in this Psalm: the Psalmist is conscious of God as One who hears and as One who saves.

*my prayer.* Hence the Psalm is called in the title "A Prayer of David": cf lxxii. 20, "The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended"; xc title, "A Prayer of Moses"; cii title, "A Prayer of the afflicted."

*that goeth not out of feigned lips.* Or, (the prayer of one) *who hath not deceitful lips.* The Psalmist protests that he is utterly sincere in his prayer to JEHOVAH.

2. *Let my sentence come forth.* I.e. *Let my (just) sentence of acquittal be pronounced.*

*equity.* Cf v. 1, note.

## 3-5. A PROTEST OF FAITHFULNESS

3. *Thou hast proved.* I.e. thou hast put to the proof.

*thou hast visited me in the night.* Cf Job iv. 12-19, where Eliphaz describes a night vision, in which the searching question is asked, "Shall mortal man be more just than God?"

3, 4. *I am purposed...by the word of thy lips.* The passage is a difficult one, chiefly perhaps because a wrong division of *vv.* has been made. It is better to regard the sense as carried on from v. 3 to v. 4 thus: *I am purposed that my mouth shall not offend (owing to the dealings of men) against the word of thy lips.* Men may do what they will and fare as they may, but the Psalmist is resolved not to break out into complaint against JEHOVAH's decrees for the government of the world. This Psalmist is further advanced in religion than Jeremiah, who exclaims, "Righteous art thou, O JEHOVAH, when I plead with thee:

- 4 As for the works of men, by the word of thy lips  
I have kept me from the ways of the violent.
- 5 My steps have held fast to thy paths,  
My feet have not slipped.
- 6 I have called upon thee, for thou wilt answer me, O God:  
Incline thine ear unto me, *and* hear my speech.
- 7 Shew thy marvellous lovingkindness, O thou that savest them  
which put their trust *in thee*
- <sup>1</sup>From those that rise up *against them*, by thy right hand.
- 8 Keep me as the apple of the eye,  
Hide me under the shadow of thy wings,

<sup>1</sup> Or, *From those that rise up against thy right hand*

yet would I reason the cause with thee: wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper?" (Jer xii. 1).

4, 5. *I have kept me...to thy paths.* The rendering *I have kept me from* is impossible. A better rendering is, *As for me, when I observed (or watched) the paths of the violent (or the destroyer)—in dismay—thou didst support my steps in thy ways.* It might be a picture of David watching Saul's approach, when the king hunted him in the wilderness: JEHOVAH leads David safely away.

#### 6-8. THE APPEAL RENEWED (cf *vs.* 1, 2)

6. *I have called upon thee.* Rather, *I* (with a slight emphasis on the pronoun) *have invoked thee.* Cf iv. 1, note.

*O God.* Heb. *El*: cf xvi. 1, note.

7. *that savest them....From those that rise up against them, by thy right hand.* This is no doubt the right rendering: God saves by his right hand, i.e. by the exercise of his great power: cf lx. 5. The rendering of P-B, *From such as resist thy right hand*, comes from Vulgate, *A resistentibus dexteræ tuæ*, and is not likely to be right.

8. *Keep me.* LXX, *φύλαξόν με.*

*Hide me under (or, in) the shadow of thy wings.* The phrase *in the shadow of thy wings* occurs also xxxvi. 7, lvii. 1, lxiii. 7. Hugo Gressmann (*The Psalmists*, Essays edited by D. C. Simpson, 1926, page 14) writes, "Wings of Jahveh are never heard of, but we know of the wings of the sun-god which hide the king under their shadow. This figure originated in Egypt where the hawk of Horus stretched out his wings over the king." Gressmann thus holds that the metaphor is of foreign origin, and that when it is used by a Psalmist, the Psalm is a royal Psalm spoken in the name of a king, if not actually composed by one. But Gressmann's suggestions are too positively expressed. Our Lord uses a similar metaphor in Matt xxiii. 37. In Deut xxxiii. 12 it is said that JEHOVAH (in the Temple) "covers" Benjamin all the day long.

- 9 From the wicked that spoil me,  
My deadly enemies, that compass me about.
- 10 <sup>1</sup>They are inclosed in their own fat:  
With their mouth they speak proudly.
- 11 They have now compassed us in our steps:  
They set their eyes to cast *us* down to the earth.
- 12 He is like a lion that is greedy of his prey,  
And as it were a young lion lurking in secret places.
- 13 Arise, O LORD,  
<sup>2</sup>Confront him, cast him down:  
Deliver my soul from <sup>3</sup>the wicked by thy sword;

<sup>1</sup> Or, *They have shut up their heart:*<sup>2</sup> Or, *Forestall*<sup>3</sup> Or, *the wicked, which is thy sword*

## 9-12. THE ENEMY LYING IN WAIT

9. *that spoil me.* Perhaps, *that laid me waste* (perfect tense). The object of the Hebrew verb should be a country, or a city, but the word may be used metaphorically. It often means "to destroy," but the speaker has not been destroyed. Duhm would read the verb in the Imperfect tense, and translate, "that use force against me."

10. *They are inclosed in their own fat.* Rather, *They have closed their fat*, i.e. as a door preventing true thoughts from entering. They have closed their heart (the seat of intelligence according to Hebrew thought) in fat, so that they cannot understand. See Isa vi. 10.

*With their mouth they speak proudly.* Cf xii. 3, 4.

11. *They have now compassed us in our steps.* The Heb. 'attāh (rendered *now*) should probably be taken as equivalent to the Syriac 'ettā, "fraud, deceit." Render, "They compass us in our steps with deceit."

*to cast us down to the earth.* A doubtful rendering. Probably P-B is right, *turning (their eyes) down to the ground.* The clause explains the word *deceit* in the first half of the verse: the enemy affects humility in order to deceive his victim and so overcome him.

12. *He is like a lion.* Lions are extinct now in Palestine, but allusions to them in O.T. show that they were once common there: indeed Hebrew has five different words for "lion". See Jud xiv. 5; 1 Sam xvii. 34; 2 Sam xxiii. 20; 1 K xiii. 24, xx. 36; 2 K xvii. 25: *al.*

## 13. AGAIN THE APPEAL

13. *Confront him.* For a petition addressed to JEHOVAH in similarly naïve language cf xxxv. 2, 3, "Take hold of shield...Draw out also the spear."

*Deliver my soul from the wicked by thy sword.* This rendering is by no means certain. P-B, *Deliver my soul from the ungodly, which is a*

- 14 From <sup>1</sup>men, by thy hand, O LORD,  
<sup>2</sup>From men of the world, whose portion is in *this* life,  
 And whose belly thou fillest with thy treasure:  
 They are satisfied with children,  
 And leave the rest of their substance to their babes.
- 15 As for me, <sup>3</sup>I shall behold thy face in righteousness:  
<sup>3</sup>I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy <sup>4</sup>likeness.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *men which are thy hand*

<sup>2</sup> Or, *From men whose portion in life is of the world*

<sup>3</sup> Or, *let me*

<sup>4</sup> Heb. form. See Num. xii. 8.

*sword of thine*, a translation which is supported by Isa x. 5, "Ho Assyrian, the rod of mine anger." Cf v. 7, note.

#### 14, 15. A CONTRAST OF THE LOT OF THE RICH OF THIS WORLD WITH THE LOT OF THE PSALMIST

14. *From men, by thy hand.* This rendering of RV is less certain than the last. There is a lack of vigour in it. We should expect rather "(deliver) by thy right hand." But neither is P-B satisfactory. Probably the Hebrew text has suffered.

*whose belly thou fillest with thy treasure.* There is no emphasis on the word *belly*: the sense is simply, "*whom* thou fillest with good things of varied kinds."

*They are satisfied with children.* I.e. they have as many children as they desire (cf P-B). A large family was one of the chief blessings which the men of O.T. times looked for: cf cxxvii. 4, 5; Gen xv. 5, xxiv. 60: *al.*

(*They*) *leave the rest of their substance to their babes.* Cf Eccl ii. 18 f.

15. *I shall behold thy face in righteousness.* Righteousness forms a bond between JEHOVAH and the Psalmist. His vision of God is not a casual glimpse, but a continual experience.

*I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.* Rather, *I shall be satisfied when thy likeness awaketh* (i.e. when thou awakest). In the naïve, childlike language of the Psalter God is represented as asleep, as long as he does not come to the help of his worshippers; so xlv. 23, "Awake, why sleepest thou, O Lord?" The periphrasis *when thy likeness awaketh* for *when thou awakest* is to be explained as due to reverence. The meaning is well paraphrased in LXX, *χορτασθήσομαι ἐν τῷ ὄφθῆναι τὴν δόξαν σου*: Vulgate, *satiabor, cum apparuerit gloria tua*, "I shall be filled when thy glory shall appear."

## PSALM XVIII

## JEHOVAH'S NEVER FAILING PROVIDENCE

## § 1. THE DOUBLE TEXT OF THE PSALM.

Ps xviii occurs a second time in O.T. as 2 Sam xxii. There are several small variations of text between the two passages, which may be tabulated as follows:

Ps xviii.	2 Sam xxii.
1. I love thee, O JEHOVAH, my strength.	[omits]
4. The <i>cords</i> of death compassed me.	The <i>waves</i> of death...
11. <i>Darkness</i> of waters.	<i>Gathering</i> of waters.
15. The channels of (the) <i>waters</i> .	...of (the) <i>sea</i> .
28. Thou <i>wilt light</i> my lamp.	Thou <i>art</i> my lamp, O JEHOVAH (cf. Ps xxvii. 1).
41. They <i>cried</i> , but there was none to save.	They <i>looked</i> ...
43. From the strivings of (the) <i>people</i> .	From the strivings of <i>my people</i> .

## § 2. CONTENTS.

1-3. The Psalmist has found his perfect refuge in JEHOVAH.

4-19. The story of the Psalmist's supreme danger and of JEHOVAH's intervention to save him.

20-27. The Psalmist professes his complete loyalty to JEHOVAH, and acknowledges JEHOVAH's perfect justice in awarding to men good or evil according to their ways.

28-36. JEHOVAH's watchful providence over the Psalmist.

37-45. The help of JEHOVAH gave the Psalmist complete victory over his foes.

46-50. The Doxology.

## 3. AUTHORSHIP AND DATE.

The title both in the Psalter and in 2 Samuel definitely asserts the Davidic authorship of the Psalm. After giving the usual *lš-David*, "of (*or* concerning David," which proves nothing as to authorship, it adds the unambiguous statement, "Who spake unto JEHOVAH the words of this song." Doubts however are raised by modern scholars against this ascription of authorship. It must be confessed that the titles in general are of small (if any) authority. At first sight, it is true, the evidence for Davidic authorship in 2 Samuel would seem to be strong, but this is hardly the case. The passage 2 Sam xxi-xxiv is generally taken to be an appendix—of uncertain date—to the book: indeed it is probable—*pace* Duhm—that the editor of 2 Samuel extracted the Psalm from the Psalter to put it into his appendix.

What conclusion then can be drawn from the title as it stands? *First*, the heading appears to have been expanded. In its older form it may have been shorter and colourless, such a title indeed as stands now at the head of Ps cii:

"A Prayer of the afflicted one (Heb. 'ānī), when he fainteth and poureth out his complaint before JEHOVAH."

The title of Ps xviii revised after this pattern would be:

(A Psalm) of the servant of JEHOVAH...who spake the words of this song in the day that JEHOVAH delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies....

An editor wishing to identify the servant of JEHOVAH and also one at least of all his enemies filled the gaps (as he conceived them) with the words "David" and "from the hand of Saul" respectively. Such is a reasonable conjecture.

But if we leave on one side the question of Davidic or non-Davidic authorship we have still to consider the question of reference. Does the Psalmist speak in the person of David or does he represent some Jewish king of the Hasmonean dynasty? There can be no decisive answer to the question: Duhm presents us with the alternative, "David or Alexander Jannaeus"! But while we know many particulars of the life of David, we have only a general knowledge of the career of Jannaeus. We cannot weigh fairly the claims advanced for these two against one another. The Psalm, says Duhm, answers in all particulars (*Einzelheiten*, an exaggerated statement) to the history of Alexander Jannaeus, who suffered annihilating defeat in the field, but was often successful in the capture of cities, and was involved in grievous civil wars with his Pharisaic opponents. Duhm refers to the battle of Sichem fought against the Syrian king, Demetrius III, Eucerus circ. 88 B.C. (Josephus, *Antiq.* xiii. xiv. 1). But vv. 16-19 are expressed in terms too general to be limited to a stricken field. There is hardly any kind of danger of which this passage might *not* be the poetic description.

Surely a fuller, more detailed parallel can be drawn between the language of this Psalm and the story of David.

(1) The opening words take us into the midst of hair-breadth escapes. The writer speaks of being caught in the snares of death (vv. 4, 5), of being appalled by the danger of raging mountain torrents, of being drawn alive from many waters, of being overtaken by enemies, and yet delivered (vv. 16, 17). He exhausts the language of metaphor in describing the LORD as his deliverer. JEHOVAH is his "crag" from which he watches in safety the threatening movements of his enemies, his "cave-stronghold" in which he hides from them, his "rock" on which he gains a firm footing after struggling through the raging waters, or finally, JEHOVAH is his "shield" warding off the sudden arrow shot against his life. The atmosphere of the Psalm is the atmosphere of the book of Samuel. The Psalmist claims to be "perfect" (the Hebrew word rather means "upright" or "innocent"); like David he is clear in his conscience as to the charges brought against him. Yet in spite of his innocence he has to make his way about the country like a marauding troop, moving quickly and avoiding the danger of walled towns.<sup>1</sup> His haunts are the high places; the stony hills of the wilderness of Judah, let us say. Finally, after all his escapes, he has long and severe wars before him with the Gentiles (vv. 43-45). All this suits David's case so well that some scholars who deny the Psalm Davidic authorship assert nevertheless that it was written with a view to David's career.

(2) The key-note of the Psalm is "I believe in God the Deliverer." The

<sup>1</sup> Compare v. 29 with 1 Sam xxiii. 7-13.

Psalmist's words crowd in upon one another in the effort to express this one thought (*vs.* 1, 2, and 46, 48). The thought reappears as David's own in 2 Sam iv. 9; 1 K i. 29. The reality of the Psalmist's faith is unmistakable. His creed is a short one, firmly held. Thomas Carlyle once said that what matters in religion is not the half-dozen things a man half believes, but the one thing he believes with all his heart. The thing which the Psalmist thoroughly believed in is the power of JEHOVAH to save.

(3) The language of *vs.* 4-19, in which he describes how the LORD delivered him, is full of metaphors. JEHOVAH comes with storm and fire to save him; the whole of Nature is convulsed. In our modern language David's escapes as recorded in the book of Samuel were due to "natural" causes. Once his pursuer was recalled by the news of a Philistine incursion; twice he appealed with success to Saul's conscience; twice again he took refuge in the Philistine country; once he was warned by the ephod-bearing priest to escape from a city whose inhabitants would have given him up (1 Sam xxiii. 6-13). But where we see natural causes the Psalmist sees—and sees vividly—the hand of God.

(4) The simplicity and directness of the language used for God is to be noticed. The Psalm begins, "I yearn for Thee, O LORD." He goes on to use the most daringly simple metaphors to describe all that JEHOVAH has been to him in his troubles. His language throughout is anthropomorphic. Thus in *vs.* 25, 26, in describing God's absolute justice, he says, addressing God:

With the pure thou showest thyself pure;

And with the perverse, thou showest thyself froward.<sup>1</sup>

We are reminded of E. B. Browning's characterisation of a great English poet:

Chaucer with his infantine

Familiar clasp of things Divine.

The Psalmist's meaning is that JEHOVAH is just—just to the last scruple. As men behave to him, so will he behave to them. Such modes of expression belong to a very early age. Later ages reflecting on the fuller experience which they had of the working of God in the world shrank from describing his action in language so anthropomorphic.

As JEHOVAH is just, so is He thorough. When He saves or gives victory, He leaves nothing undone. The Psalmist describes this experience of his with details which startle the modern reader. Thus he says of his enemies in *v.* 41: "They cry, there is no saviour; Unto JEHOVAH, and he answers them not." The Psalmist seems to rejoice that his enemies can find no mercy even from "the LORD merciful and gracious." But *v.* 41 must not be isolated; it is a detail in a picture (*vs.* 37-45), and not the picture itself. There is no fickleness with the LORD. Greeks might imagine a pantheon in which, through the whims of the gods, victory inclined sometimes to the Greeks and sometimes to the Trojans, but the Hebrew had too firm a grasp of the unchangeable character of JEHOVAH to indulge in any such dreams. JEHOVAH gives the Psalmist the victory in full measure without wavering.

The protestations of innocence in *vs.* 20-24, which some take to be a mark of late date, might be taken equally well as characteristic of an early age. It must

<sup>1</sup> "Tortuous" (*Oxford Lexicon*).

not be asserted by a mistake parallel to Duhm's that they *prove* an early date; that would strain the evidence. But they have an early look, and they answer David's own case in two important respects.

(a) In *v.* 24 the Psalmist claims that his deliverance was God's recompense to him for his righteousness, or, as he says still more definitely, for "the cleanness of his hands." Now in common English phrase hands are "clean" when they are free from bribes or other unlawful gain. But it is not so in Hebrew. To the Israelite "clean" hands meant hands pure from blood. The Psalmist claims to be clean from bloodshed. Further, the preceding verse shows that there was first an inward struggle. "I kept myself," he says, "from mine iniquity" (*v.* 23). The best explanation of *v.* 24 is that the Psalmist was tempted to shed blood, and was rewarded for resisting the temptation by a full deliverance from all his dangers. May we not say that David confesses here that ЈЕHOVAH gave him the kingdom, because he twice resisted the temptation to save himself by slaying his pursuer, Saul, "the LORD's anointed"?<sup>1</sup>

(b) The general claim, "I have not wickedly departed from my God," corresponds with the faithfulness to ЈЕHOVAH which is ascribed to David. David, unlike Solomon, was never a worshipper of any other God but ЈЕHOVAH.

Further the Psalmist's protestations of innocence agree with the external view of sin which belonged to the earlier form of Israelite religion. Sin in this view is the commission of certain sinful acts; if the Psalmist keeps himself from these he is "perfect" or innocent. The deeper view of sin as an infection of nature is found first in a Psalm which belongs to a later era (*li.* 5, 6).

Duhm regards the Psalmist's protestations of innocence as a mark of late date. Why? Self-complacency—if *vv.* 22, 23 be instances of it—is not confined to any special age, and that a late age of religious history. In the Egyptian Book of the Dead (Steindorff, *Religion of the Ancient Egyptians*, pp. 131–132), the soul makes forty-two separate and particular protestations of innocence before it is admitted to the realm of the Blessed over which Osiris presides. No man or woman could possibly be such a pattern of innocence as every deceased Egyptian professed to be. Yet no critic proposes a very late date for the Book of the Dead on that account.

But Duhm probably means that the Psalmist's professions of innocence refer directly to the standard of the Priestly Code and the orthodoxy introduced by Ezra. But is this the case? Is the language really so definite that it must be held to have this special reference? There are indeed the two terms "Judgments" and "Statutes." But in fact neither "Judgment" (*mishpat*), nor "Statute" (*hok*), nor the use of both terms in combination, refers necessarily to the Priestly Code of the fourth century B.C. Indeed, it is far from certain that any written code is referred to.

### *Religion in early days.*

The earliest religion of Israel was but a little under the bondage of what we call the Law. Here is a religious poem of fifty verses; and Sacrifice and Priest are not mentioned in it. The Psalmist has direct access to God; he talks to God and of God as Moses the servant of the LORD might have done. It is such a

<sup>1</sup> 1 Sam. xxiv, xxvi.

poem as Thomas à Kempis might have written, had Thomas been a Hebrew soldier and ruler instead of a Christian recluse. We are quite in a different atmosphere from that of the Law of Holiness, in which ceremonial cleansings are prescribed before a man is allowed to approach JEHOVAH. In the Psalm the writer throws himself upon the mercy of God without any preliminary beyond the human cry, "I yearn for thee, O JEHOVAH, my strength."

The Psalmist's hero is a man subject to the human passions of an early and barbarous age. The sanguinary record of the Books of Samuel is the framework of this noble Song of Praise. David was no cloistered saint taught meekness by a life of prayer, but a man of many wars and a shedder of much blood.<sup>1</sup> Ps xviii needs, not a whit less than Ps cxxxvii,<sup>2</sup> to be studied in the light of its historical connexion. It is a noble religious poem, but the religion is not that of Christ. David must be regarded as a very early representative even of the Hebrew religion; he stands far back in the gray dawn. He is not to be judged by the full light of Judaism, far less by the full light of Christianity. His Psalm is a Song of Faith in God, in the course of which some discordant notes of Defiance of Man are heard. It could not have been otherwise in the age in which he lived. The noteworthy fact in such an age is not his defiance of visible enemies, but his faith in an unseen friend. Ps xviii reveals its religious power in that it has for its subject the excellences of a Divine Protector, but its religion betrays itself as early and undeveloped by the unmeasured terms in which the fate of the human enemy is described.

For the Chief Musician. *A Psalm* of David the servant of the LORD, <sup>1</sup>who spake unto the LORD the words of this song in the day that the LORD delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul: and he said,

**XVIII.** 1 I love thee, O LORD, my strength.

2 The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer;  
My God, my strong rock, in him will I trust;  
My shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower.

<sup>1</sup> See 2 Sam xxii.

1-3. THE PSALMIST HAS FOUND A PERFECT REFUGE IN JEHOVAH

**XVIII.** 1. *I love thee*, LXX ἀγαπήσω σε, Vulgate *diligam te*. Rather, *I yearn for thee*. The Hebrew verb (found here only) is derived from *rahāmim*, "bowels" (Gen xliii. 30; 1 K iii. 26). Aben Ezra softens the expression by translating, "I would have compassion from thee, O JEHOVAH." In the parallel passage of 2 Samuel, v. 1 is left out. For an equally strong expression, cf xlii. 1, "So panteth my soul after thee, O God." The Hebrew said on other occasions that he "loved" his God, but he used a different word (*āhēb*): Deut vi. 5, Jud v. 31. See also xxxi. 23, note.

2. *my rock*. The metaphors used in this verse remind us that the

<sup>1</sup> 1 Chr xxii. 8.

<sup>2</sup> *Super flumina Babylonis*.

- 3 I will call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised:  
 So shall I be saved from mine enemies.
- 4 The cords of death compassed me,  
 And the floods of <sup>1</sup>ungodliness made me afraid.
- 5 The cords of Sheol were round about me:  
 The snares of death came upon me.
- 6 In my distress I called upon the LORD,  
 And cried unto my God:  
 He heard my voice out of his temple,  
 And my cry before him came into his ears.
- 7 Then the earth shook and trembled,  
 The foundations also of the mountains moved  
 And were shaken, because he was wroth.

<sup>1</sup> Heb. *Belial*.

Psalmist was dwelling in a mountainous land. The terms "rock" (Heb. *sēla'*), "hold" (Heb. *mezūdāh*, "cave-stronghold"), "strong rock" (Heb. *zūr*), "horn" (Heb. *keren*, "peak" of a hill) all suggest the rugged country of Judaea. It was a district in which a hunted man had many opportunities of hiding from his enemies or evading them. But the Psalmist confesses here that he owes his safety not so much to the natural features of the country as to JEHOVAH who is present in cave and rock and hiding place to deliver his fugitive worshipper. "Rock" (*Zūr*) is frequently used as equivalent to *Elohim*, "God"; e.g. Deut xxxii. 4, 18, 31; 1 Sam ii. 2. Cf xxxi. 2, note.

3. *worthy to be praised*. Heb. *mēhullāl*, as in xlvi. 1.

#### 4-19. THE PSALMIST'S DANGER AND JEHOVAH'S INTERVENTION

4. *The cords of death*. In 2 Sam *the waves* (or *breakers*) of death, a less suitable expression: see next note.

*the floods of ungodliness*. Rather, *the empty ravines*, Heb. *ravines of Belial*, i.e. the dry water courses which scar Southern Judaea and the adjoining wilderness, which borders on Egypt. The Hebrew is *nahal*, corresponding to Arabic *wadi*. A *wadi* is a ravine dry in summer but filled (it may be) in winter with a raging torrent. It is absurdly translated "brook" in several passages of AV (= RV), e.g. 1 Sam xxx. 9, 21, "Brook Besor."

6. *In my distress I called*. lxvi. 14, cii. 2.

*his temple*. Or, *his palace*, Heb. *hēychāl*. See note, *The Temple*, at the end of this Psalm.

*my cry before him* (i.e. my petition) *came into his ears* (i.e. was accepted).

7. *Then the earth shook*. The description which follows as far as v. 19 reminds the reader of JEHOVAH's deliverance of Israel at the Red Sea. The Psalmist, though he speaks generally in the person of David, slips

- 8 There went up a smoke <sup>1</sup>out of his nostrils,  
And fire out of his mouth devoured:  
Coals were kindled by it.
- 9 He bowed the heavens also, and came down;  
And thick darkness was under his feet.
- 10 And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly:  
Yea, he flew swiftly upon the wings of the wind.
- 11 He made darkness his hiding place, his pavilion round about  
him;  
Darkness of waters, thick clouds of the skies.
- 12 At the brightness before him his thick clouds passed,  
Hailstones and coals of fire.
- 13 The LORD also thundered in the heavens,  
And the Most High uttered his voice;  
Hailstones and coals of fire.
- 14 And he sent out his arrows, and scattered them;  
<sup>2</sup>Yea, lightnings manifold, and discomfited them.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *in his wrath*<sup>2</sup> Or, *And he shot out lightnings*

naturally at times into speaking in the character of the nation whose representative David was.

8. *a smoke out of his nostrils.* The verse describes the darkness of a storm, which is lit up by flashes of lightning. Cf lxxiv. 1, note.

9. *He bowed the heavens.* The lowering clouds of the storm are represented as the result of JEHOVAH'S "bowing of the heavens."

10. *he rode upon a cherub, and did fly.* The description of the chariot of the cherubim given in Ezek i, specially vv. 22-27, should be compared. The "living creatures" of Ezek i are to be identified with the cherubim of Ezek x (cf v. 20). The form of the "cherub" as conceived by the Hebrews was derived from the powerful winged images which once stood at the gate of Assyrian palaces. On such a monster JEHOVAH came swiftly through the storm to Ezekiel in Babylon (Ezek i).

11. *He made darkness his hiding place.* Cf 1 Kings viii. 12: JEHOVAH must be veiled in darkness, for men are not able to bear His light.

12. *At the brightness before him, etc.* Read, *From the brightness before him there passed by hailstones and coals of fire* (omitting *his thick clouds* as probably a dittography of the following word: עביו is followed by עברו). The Psalmist means that JEHOVAH sent hail and lightnings: he will not say directly that they came from Him, but only "from the brightness that was before Him." This is for the sake of reverence.

13. *Hailstones and coals of fire.* These words seem to be repeated in error from v. 12. They are absent from the parallel passage, 2 Sam xxii. 14.

14. *And he sent out, etc.* The language of vv. 14-16 suggests the

- 15 Then the channels of waters appeared,  
 And the foundations of the world were laid bare,  
 At thy rebuke, O LORD,  
 At the blast of the breath of thy nostrils.
- 16 He sent from on high, he took me;  
 He drew me out of <sup>1</sup>many waters.
- 17 He delivered me from my strong enemy,  
 And from them that hated me, for they were too mighty for me.
- 18 They came upon me in the day of my calamity:  
 But the LORD was my stay.
- 19 He brought me forth also into a large place;  
 He delivered me, because he delighted in me.
- 20 The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness;  
 According to the cleanness of my hands hath he recom-  
 pensed me.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *great*

occasion of the deliverance of Israel at the Red Sea. That a storm broke out against the Egyptians seems to be the meaning of Exod xiv. 24. Ver. 15 of the Psalm describes in hyperbolic language the opening of a passage on dry land through the Sea. In v. 16 Israel's safe arrival on the far shore is adequately announced in the words, *He drew me out of many waters*. Further, there may well be an allusion to the conquest of Canaan in v. 19, "He brought me forth into a large place."

15. *the world*. Heb. *tēbēl*. See xxiv. 1, note.

*At the blast of the breath of thy nostrils*. Cf Exod xiv. 21, "JEHOVAH caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all the night." Thus *the channels of waters appeared, And the foundations of the world were laid bare*.

18. *They came upon me*. If the allusion in vv. 14 ff is to the Crossing of the Red Sea, the same may be said with probability of v. 18. The day when Israel was "entangled in the land" (Exod xiv. 3) was certainly "the day of [Israel's] calamity," and then Pharaoh's army came upon them. The translation, "They prevented me" (P-B) exactly describes the position before a way through the Sea was opened. Israel was caught as he tried to escape.

19. *into a large place*. See note on v. 14.

*he delighted in me*. The same Hebrew word as in xxii. 8, "Let him deliver him, seeing he delighteth in him."

#### 20-27. THE PSALMIST'S PERFECT LOYALTY AND JEHOVAH'S PERFECT JUSTICE

20. *JEHOVAH rewarded me according to my righteousness*. Could a Hebrew writer represent his people as "righteous" at the time of the Exodus? Certainly. Israel's early religion is idealized in Jer ii. 2, 3,

- 21 For I have kept the ways of the LORD,  
And have not wickedly departed from my God.
- 22 For all his judgements were before me,  
And I put not away his statutes from me.
- 23 I was also perfect with him,  
And I kept myself from mine iniquity.
- 24 Therefore hath the LORD recompensed me according to my  
righteousness,  
According to the cleanness of my hands in his eyesight.
- 25 With the merciful thou wilt shew thyself merciful;  
With the perfect man thou wilt shew thyself perfect;

where JEHOVAH testifies, "I remember for thee the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals; how thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown. Israel was holiness unto JEHOVAH." Similarly Hosea writes as though Israel had been faithful at the first and had fallen away only later; "I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness: I saw your fathers as the firstripe in the fig tree": Hos ix. 10 a.

On the other hand some points of language in vv. 20-27 suggest rather that David (if David be the speaker) is speaking in his own name. See Introduction.

21. *For I have kept.* Perhaps rather, *I have observed.* The Hebrew verb includes the thought of *mental observation, consideration*, as in xvii. 4, "I have observed (or "watched") the paths of the violent."

*And have not wickedly departed from my God.* By watching the Psalmist has learnt to resist the temptation which assailed him. Though there is no prayer against temptation here, the Psalmist is not far from the New Testament mind.

22. *all his judgements were before me.* More vividly P-B, *I have (read had) an eye unto all his laws.*

*judgements...statutes.* The law of JEHOVAH appears sometimes in the form of decisions given by judges who derive their authority from God, sometimes in that of statutes, i.e. of fixed enactments.

23. *perfect.* Or, *upright*; Heb. *tāmim*. See xv. 2, note.

*I kept myself from mine iniquity.* The words suggest that the Psalmist on some occasion of great temptation preserved his loyalty to the law of JEHOVAH. If the words come from David, he may be referring to the occasion when Saul in hunting him fell into his power in the cave, and David rejected the suggestion of his men to kill the king (1 Sam xxiv. 3-7). If on the contrary they are a general statement, they imply a consciousness different from that of the Christian, who would say rather that the grace of God kept him from committing iniquity.

25. *the merciful.* P-B, *the holy.* The same Hebrew word (*hāsīd*) as in iv. 3, where it is translated "godly" both in P-B and in RV.

- 26 With the pure thou wilt shew thyself pure;  
And with the perverse thou wilt shew thyself froward.
- 27 For thou wilt save the afflicted people;  
But the haughty eyes thou wilt bring down.
- 28 For thou wilt light my lamp:  
The LORD my God will lighten my darkness.
- 29 For by thee I run <sup>1</sup>upon a troop;  
And by my God do I leap over a wall.
- 30 As for God, his way is perfect:  
The word of the LORD is tried;  
He is a shield unto all them that trust in him.
- 31 For who is God, save the LORD?  
And who is a rock, beside our God?
- 32 The God that girdeth me with strength,  
And maketh my way perfect.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *through*

26. *thou wilt shew thyself froward.* This anthropomorphic expression is a mark of early date. God will show himself not "toward," i.e. ready to listen to and receive, but "froward," i.e. unwilling to do this. The Hebrew word, תַּחַתָּל (Hithpael), is rare, and the translation not quite certain.

#### 28-36. JEHOVAH'S WATCHFUL PROVIDENCE OVER THE PSALMIST

28. Read (cf 2 Sam):

*Thou art my lamp, O JEHOVAH;*

*My God will lighten my darkness.*

The expression is bold, but we may compare xxvii. 1, *JEHOVAH is my light.*

29. Read:

*For by thee I run troopwise (or, like a troop);*

*And by my God I leap the wall.*

The verse contains a double reference to David's history. Before he came to the kingdom he was successful as the leader of a "troop" (1 Sam xxii. 2, xxiii. 13), and again he was successful in escaping, when Saul hoped to catch him within the walled town of Keilah (1 Sam xxiii. 7-13).

30. *The word of JEHOVAH is tried.* His *promise* is put to the test of experience, and is found faithful.

31. *who is a rock.* P-B, *who hath any strength*; but this rendering does not bring out the thought of the Hebrew that God is a strong place of refuge.

- 33 He maketh my feet like hinds' feet:  
And setteth me upon my high places.
- 34 He teacheth my hands to war;  
So that mine arms do bend a bow of brass.
- 35 Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation:  
And thy right hand hath holden me up,  
And thy <sup>1</sup>gentleness hath made me great.
- 36 Thou hast enlarged my steps under me,  
And my <sup>2</sup>feet have not slipped.
- 37 I will pursue mine enemies, and overtake them:  
Neither will I turn again till they are consumed.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *condescension*

<sup>2</sup> Heb. *ankles*.

33. *like hinds' feet*. To escape over the mountains of Judaea. *setteth me upon my high places*. Rather, *causeth me to stand* (without falling) *upon my high places*.

34. *He teacheth my hands to war*. This is early thought, like that in Exod xv. 3, "JEHOVAH is a man of war." War was the normal condition of the world in Old Testament times: kings went out to war every year, unless detained at home by some extraordinary event such as insurrection or plague. So a pious ruler would ascribe his success in war just as much as his prosperity in peace to the instruction and the help which he received from his God. It is a much later Psalm which teaches that JEHOVAH is a God of peace: cxlvii. 10, note. An Egyptian relief at Karnak shows Tutmosis III holding a bow with the God Sutekh or Seth just behind him teaching him how to use the weapon (Gressmann, fig. 53).

*a bow of brass*. P-B, *a bow of steel*. The bow was neither of *brass*, which was unknown to the ancients, nor of *steel*. The Hebrew word *nēhōshēth* means (properly) "copper" or sometimes "bronze," a mixture of copper and tin, which was much used by the Babylonians, Egyptians, and Greeks. "A bow of bronze" means a bow hard to bend.

The Psalmist's arms "bend" (RV) not "break" (P-B) the bow.

35. *hath holden me up*. Perfect tense to describe David's experiences, *not* his hopes for the future (as P-B).

*thy gentleness*. P-B, *thy loving correction*; Vulgate, *disciplina tua*.

*hath made me great*. Or, *maketh me to grow* (or *multiply*).

36. *Thou hast enlarged my steps under me*. More clearly (cf. P-B), *Thou hast made room enough under me for to go*.

### 37-45. THE COMPLETENESS OF THE VICTORY WHICH JEHOVAH GIVES

37. *I will pursue*. Rather, *I pursue*. The Psalmist describes what he is able to do with JEHOVAH's help. The stress is not on the Psalmist's determination to destroy, but rather on the completeness of the victory which JEHOVAH grants to him. So also are vv. 38-40 to be understood.

- 38 I will smite them through that they shall not be able to rise:  
They shall fall under my feet.
- 39 For thou hast girded me with strength unto the battle:  
Thou hast <sup>1</sup>subdued under me those that rose up against me.
- 40 Thou hast also made mine enemies turn their backs unto me,  
That I might cut off them that hate me.
- 41 They cried, but there was none to save:  
Even unto the LORD, but he answered them not.
- 42 Then did I beat them small as the dust before the wind:  
I did <sup>2</sup>cast them out as the mire of the streets.
- 43 Thou hast delivered me from the strivings of the people;  
Thou <sup>3</sup>hast made me the head of the nations:  
A people whom I have not known shall serve me.
- 44 As soon as they hear of me they shall obey me:  
The strangers shall <sup>4</sup>submit themselves unto me.
- 45 The strangers shall fade away,  
And shall come trembling out of their close places.

<sup>1</sup> Heb. *caused to bow*.<sup>2</sup> Heb. *empty*.<sup>3</sup> Or, *wilt make*<sup>4</sup> Or, *yield feigned obedience* Heb. *lie*.

41. *They cried...Even unto JEHOVAH.* Duhm, who refers the Psalm to the time of Alexander Jannaeus, finds a reference here to that king's wars with the Pharisees: it is (he says) the Pharisees who cry even to JEHOVAH, and are not heard. But the language is more probably imaginative. The Psalmist means that even if his enemies had cried to JEHOVAH, He would not have listened, for He had determined to give the victory to the Psalmist. Render, *Had they cried to JEHOVAH, He would not have answered them.*

43. *the strivings of the people.* Better, according to 2 Sam, *the strivings of my people*, the reference of 43 a being to civil war, while 43 b speaks of foreign conquest.

*A people whom I have not known shall serve me.* If the reference be to an event of David's reign, the Psalmist may be thinking of the payment of tribute by Toi king of Hamath (2 Sam viii. 9, 10).

44. *The strangers.* So AV, RV correctly. By a too literal rendering of the Hebrew P-B gives, *The strange children.*

*shall submit themselves unto me.* Lit. *shall lie unto me.* The enemy when thoroughly beaten will fawn upon the victor with flattering speeches and insincere professions in order to secure favourable treatment; lxvi. 3, lxxxi. 15; Deut xxxiii. 29. See also lx. 8, where Philistia as a conquered people is bidden to salute (willingly or unwillingly) her conqueror.

45. *shall come trembling out of their close places.* The surrender of the enemy shall be complete: they will give themselves up out of their

- 46 The LORD liveth; and blessed be my rock;  
 And exalted be the God of my salvation:  
 47 Even the God that executeth vengeance for me,  
 And subdueth peoples under me.  
 48 He rescueth me from mine enemies:  
 Yea, thou liftest me up above them that rise up against me:  
 Thou deliverest me from the violent man.

fortified cities and also out of their hiding places in the country. "Close places" includes every kind of places of refuge.

#### 46-50. THE DOXOLOGY

46-48 could perhaps be better arranged by disregarding the present verse divisions, thus:

- A. (three clauses) 46,  
 JEHOVAH is a living God,  
 And my Rock is worthy to be blessed,  
 And the God of my salvation shall be exalted.
- B. (three clauses) 47, 48 *a*,  
 Even the God who granteth me vengeance,  
 And hath subdued nations under me,  
 Even He who rescueth me from my enemies.
- C. (two clauses) 48 *b*, 48 *c*,  
 Yea, thou liftest me up above mine adversaries,  
 Thou deliverest me from the man of violence.

46. *JEHOVAH liveth.* The epithet *living* (Heb. *hai*) is given to JEHOVAH to distinguish him from the inanimate idols of the heathen: xlii. 2, lxxxiv. 2; Jer x. 9, 10.

*my rock.* Cf v. 2, note.

47. *that executeth vengeance.* Better, *that granteth vengeance.* The Psalmist speaks as one who has been engaged in wars in which JEHOVAH granted him victory.

*subdueth peoples under me.* The same Hebrew phrase (but *under us*) in xlvi. 3. The text of the parallel passage ("my people") in cxliv. 2 is probably due to error.

48. *Yea, thou liftest me up.* The Psalmist speaks here as a king, who has not only been saved from his foes but also has been throned above them by the Most High: cf ii. 6. Metaphorically these words might be put into the mouth of Israel, as the chosen people.

*the violent man.* Better, *the man of violence.* The change from the plural in (*a*) *them that rise up against me* to the singular here has many parallels in the Psalter: cf vii. 1, 2, 4, 6. It may be that the Psalmist singles out his chief enemy to characterize him, or again that he personifies his foes as one. The reference should be to Saul, who specially sought David's life: cf the heading of the Psalm.

- 49 Therefore I will give thanks unto thee, O LORD, among the nations,  
 And will sing praises unto thy name.  
 50 Great <sup>1</sup>deliverance giveth he to his king;  
 And sheweth lovingkindness to his anointed,  
 To David and to his seed, for evermore.

<sup>1</sup> Heb. *salvations*.

49, 50. These two verses are continuous in sense. In the previous verses the Psalmist has narrated the mercies of his God to Israel and to Israel's king. He now makes a final acknowledgement of them:

Therefore I will give thanks unto thee, O JEHOVAH, among the nations,  
 And will sing praises unto thy name.  
 As one that giveth great deliverance unto his king,  
 And showeth lovingkindness to his anointed,  
 To David and to his seed for evermore.

This ending is worthy of the beginning of the Psalm. Both stand on the highest level of praise. The mention of "David" is against the Hasmonean theory, but Duhm proposes to omit *vv.* 49 and 50 *c* as interpolations.

#### ADDITIONAL NOTE ON THE TEMPLE

The "Temple" is referred to in the Psalter under different names according to the different standpoints from which it is regarded.

The earliest reference is in ii. 6 (cf xv. 1). Here it makes no substantial difference to the sense whether we give as our translation, "Zion my holy hill (mountain)" or "Zion the mountain of my sanctuary." The Hebrew word *kōdesh* is ambiguous; it means (*a*) "holiness" (often), but also (*b*) "holy place" or "sanctuary" as in xx. 2 (cf xxiv. 3), lxiii. 2, lxxviii. 24, lxxiv. 3, lxxvii. 13 (?), cii. 19 (the heavenly sanctuary); cxiv. 2 (Judah his sanctuary); cxxxiv. 2 (Render, "towards the sanctuary"); cl. 1 (AV, RV). Another Hebrew word, *mikdash*, "sanctuary," is used lxxiii. 17 ("the sanctuary of EL"); lxxiv. 7, lxxviii. 99, xevi. 6. The general notion of a Sanctuary is that of a space cut off from profane contact or use: cf xxiv. 3, 4, lxxiv. 3-7.

Another favourite thought of the Psalmists is that the Temple is JEHOVAH'S house in which He dwells in the midst of His people, so that they may approach Him. "Tent" (Heb. *Ohel*) and "Dwelling" or "Tabernacle" (Heb. *mishkān*, *mishkānōth*), or "House" (Heb. *bayith*, *bēth*) are the terms used in this connexion: Ps xv. 1, xxvi. 8, xlii. 4, xliii. 3, xlvi. 4, lxxxiv. 4, 10.

Yet another term is *hēychāl* (derived from the Sumerian *i-kallu*, "great house"), which describes JEHOVAH'S Temple as a "Palace": v. 7, xi. 4 (?), xviii. 6, xxvii. 4, xxix. 9 (referring perhaps to the heavenly temple); xlvi. 9, lxxviii. 29, lxxxix. 1.

Some of the Psalmists reveal by their utterances a great affection for the Temple, though at the same time they strike the note of "spiritual" religion.

The allusions are oftener to the Temple as the dwelling place of JEHOVAH than to the Temple as a place of sacrifice. It is true that the altar is occasionally referred to; xxvi. 6, xliii. 4, lxxxiv. 3. But the most characteristic references are those in which the Psalmist seeks the Temple in order that he may "see the face of JEHOVAH": xlii. 1, 2 (cf. xliii. 3), lxiii. 1, 2, lxxxiv (*passim*). A specially interesting passage in which David is commemorated as the true founder of the Temple is Ps cxxxii.

## PSALM XIX

### THE GLORY OF GOD IN NATURE AND IN REVELATION

#### § 1. CONTENTS.

The Psalm falls into four divisions. In the first the subject is the praise offered by the heavens to God (EL) who made them (*vv.* 1-4 *b*). In the second the Psalmist speaks of God's appointment of the Sun to run his course (*vv.* 4 *c*-6 *c*). In the third the subject is the wonderful Law of JEHOVAH which gives spiritual light as the Sun gives natural light (*vv.* 7-11), while the fourth division is occupied with a prayer that the Psalmist may be acquitted of the Great Transgression, and that his present prayer—the Psalm—may be accepted by JEHOVAH (*vv.* 12-14).

#### § 2. LITERARY UNITY OF THE PSALM.

In comparing *vv.* 1-6 with *vv.* 7-14 three things are to be noticed. *First*, there is a change of subject; the author passes from the sun in the heavens to the law in the Pentateuch. *Secondly*, the rhythm, or, as some prefer to call it, the "metre," changes. A lighter measure is followed by a heavier. So well marked is this change that the reader can detect it even in the English version. The first division of the Psalm begins in a running rhythm:

"The heavens are telling  
the glory of God;  
And the firmament showeth  
His handywork."

The second division presents a slow and stately march of the words:

"The law of JEHOVAH is perfect,  
restoring the soul;  
The testimony of JEHOVAH is sure,  
making wise the simple."

*Thirdly*, it is to be noticed that whereas in *vv.* 1-6 the Divine name is used but once, and in the form EL ("God"), in *vv.* 7-14 the Divine name is dwelt on with manifest persistence, and the form used is JEHOVAH (the LORD).

Accordingly recent commentators have denied the literary unity of the Psalm. *Vv.* 1-6 form "only a fragment of a (probably) lengthy poem, which celebrated the glory of God in nature"; *vv.* 7-14 form "an independent poem which has nothing whatever to do with" the preceding verses.<sup>1</sup> Must we say then that an unintelligent scribe has joined together pieces which it is the duty of the literary critic to put asunder?

<sup>1</sup> B. Duhm, *Die Psalmen erklärt* (2<sup>o</sup> Aufl., 1922).

A better explanation is forthcoming. An author who wished to sing the praises of the Law desired to find an introduction for his poem which would attract and interest his hearers. He found some verses of high poetic worth, and prefixed them to his own. His choice was not arbitrary, nor irrelevant; on the contrary, he was guided by a sound religious instinct to find an introduction which was suited to his theme. He wished to say that men were taught and blessed and gladdened by God's words written in the Pentateuch, but he realized that God was also teaching and blessing and gladdening men by the heavens which His word had made. An ancient poem had already expressed that which he felt; and so he adopted some of its verses, and prefixed them to his own. He wisely put the nature-lesson first, wishing his hearers to ascend from EL the God of Nature to JEHOVAH the God of Revelation.

The nature-poem with which the Psalm begins curiously illustrates the rise of religion from Nature-worship to God-worship. The language of an earlier polytheism shines through the monotheistic teaching of these first six verses. The Hebrew poet, no doubt with the monotheistic story of Creation in mind, writes, "The heavens are telling the glory of God (EL)," but the form of his phrase was perhaps governed by some echo of the old Babylonian myth, according to which the *gods* told the glory of Marduk as the champion of the gods and creator of the Universe.<sup>1</sup>

But while it may be acknowledged that early mythological conceptions have coloured the language of *vv.* 1-6, it must not for a moment be thought that the Psalmist is unsettled in his monotheism. On the contrary, it is probable that his repeated use of the name JEHOVAH is meant as an asseveration of his faithfulness to the one God of Israel. The Divine name *EL* used in the ancient poem which the Psalmist incorporated with his own could be used of a deity who was only one among many. The writer perhaps felt this, and so in the later verses of the Psalm he uses the name JEHOVAH only, and clearly in his own mind identifies JEHOVAH the lawgiver with *EL* the Creator.

Further there is in the Psalm an implied comparison between the Sun, the greatest of the works of the Creator, and the Pentateuchal law, the greatest work of Revelation that the Psalmist knew. The description of the Sun in the heavens stands by itself at the beginning, just as in Homer an elaborate simile sometimes precedes a new subject in order to introduce it. The description of the Law given in *vv.* 7-11 plainly looks back to the story of celestial glories given in *vv.* 1-6. To the Psalmist the Law is a Sun, which, he says, *restoreth the soul* (or *the life*). So an ancient Egyptian poet sings (Breasted, *A History of Egypt*, p. 372):

"When thou sendest forth thy rays,  
 (Men are) awake and standing upon their feet,  
 For thou hast raised them up.  
 Their limbs bathed, they take their clothing;  
 Their arms lifted in adoration to thy dawning.  
 Then in all the world they do their work."

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<sup>1</sup> See L. W. King, *The Seven Tablets of Creation*, vol. i, pp. 94-95, "The homage of the gods to Marduk."

Further, the Psalmist says that the commandment of the Lord is "pure" or "bright," and "gives light to the eyes." Here the comparison with the Sun is obvious and needs no illustration. Again, there is no need to point out at length that when the Psalmist says of the fear of the Lord that it "endureth for ever," the description applies equally well in Hebrew thought to the heavenly bodies. It is enough to refer to Ps lxxxix. 36:

"His seed shall endure for ever,  
And his throne is as the sun before me."

The Sun and the Moon are types of things that endure.<sup>1</sup> Thus this Psalm, broadly described, is like Ps cxix a song in praise of the law of JEHOVAH.

The Psalmist has temptations of his own, fears of his own, aspirations of his own, but he holds all back for the conclusion of the Psalm. He finishes first his twofold song of praise. He sings of the Glory of God and of the Will of God before he makes petition for himself. The order of the Psalm is that of the Lord's Prayer. The first division (*vv.* 1-6) corresponds with the opening words of the Prayer, "Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name." The second division (*vv.* 7-11) may be said to answer to the third petition, "Thy will be done," while the third division of the Psalm (*vv.* 12-14) corresponds closely with the sixth petition of the Prayer, "Bring us not into temptation."

The Psalmist desires to fear God, but he is conscious of the temptation to give way to the fear of men. First he prays to be "cleared" of his sins, asking with the anxiety of one who does not think lightly either of the Law or of breaches of the Law. But he lets it be seen at once that a great difficulty stands in the way of obedience. He is surrounded by persons whom he calls "the presumptuous." It can hardly be doubted that he means by these the class of persons mentioned more than once in Ps cxix, men who rebelled against the Law given to their fathers, and were willing to conform more or less to the ways of their Gentile neighbours. Such persons were no doubt to be found in Israel throughout its history, but they are mentioned chiefly perhaps in the literature which belongs to the Greek period. By example and by actual constraint they turned their fellow-countrymen from the Law; the Psalmist, one of the Saints of Judaism, asks to be delivered from them. The Prayer ends on the note of faith and assurance. JEHOVAH, to whom he appeals, is, he knows, a Rock and a Redeemer.

For the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.

**XIX. 1** The heavens declare the glory of God;  
And the firmament sheweth his handywork.

1-4 *b.* THE HEAVENS PRAISE THEIR CREATOR

**XIX. 1.** *The heavens declare.* Lit. *The heavens are telling.* The Hebrew word is a present participle.

*the glory of God* (EL). For the name EL see note on xvi. 1. *Glory* (Heb. *kābōd*) denotes properly "abundance, wealth" which reflects

<sup>1</sup> Cp Ps lxxii. 17.

- 2 Day unto day uttereth speech,  
And night unto night sheweth knowledge.
- 3 There is no speech nor language;  
Their voice cannot be heard.
- 4 Their line is gone out through all the earth,  
And their words to the end of the world.  
In them hath he set a <sup>1</sup>tabernacle for the sun,
- 5 Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber,  
And rejoiceth as a strong man to run his course.

<sup>1</sup> Heb. *tent*.

“glory” on the possessor: cf civ. 24, “O LORD...The earth is full of thy riches” (Heb. *kinyān*).

*the firmament sheweth his handywork.* An allusion to Gen i. 6. The making of the firmament, which divides the upper waters (the clouds) from the lower waters (the seas and rivers), is described as the one work accomplished on the second day of creation. In the Babylonian legend Marduk the Creator makes the firmament out of the body of Tiamat the goddess of Chaos.

2. *Day unto day.* I.e. *Day after day*, each successive day.

*uttereth speech.* Lit. *poureth forth* (its) *story*. The same Hebrew verb in xl. 1, “My heart *overfloweth with a goodly matter*.” The metaphor is that of a spring *pouring forth* its waters.

*night unto night.* I.e. *night after night*.

*sheweth knowledge.* *Knowledge* is an advance on *story*. The reference here is no doubt to *knowledge of God*. Cf Rom i. 20, “The invisible things of (God) since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even his everlasting power and divinity.”

3, 4. *There is no speech*, etc. *Vv. 3 a-4 b* should be rendered thus:

*It is not a story, nor are they words,*

*Whose sound is not heard;*

(Rather) *Their music* (lit. *strain*) *has gone forth into all the earth,*

*And their words to the end of the world.*

#### 4 c-6 b. THE CREATOR'S PROVISION FOR THE SUN

4 c. *In them* (In the heavens) *hath he set a tabernacle* (tent) *for the sun*. The Sun has a course to run which taxes the strength even of a hero: he needs a tent in which to rest at night, and this God (EL) provides for him. This clause should begin v. 5, as in P-B.

5. *as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber*. For *chamber* read *canopy*. At a wedding a *canopy* (*huppāh*) was held over bride and bridegroom. Cf Joel ii. 16, where EV has (wrongly) *closet* for *canopy*.

*as a strong man*. Heb. *gibbōr*, “a warrior, man of valour.” P-B, *giant* from LXX (through Vulgate), *ὡς γίγας*. See the story of Ahimaz in 2 Sam xviii. 19 ff.

6 His going forth is from the end of the heaven,  
 And his circuit unto the ends of it:  
 And there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.

7 The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul:  
 The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.

6. *His going forth, etc. His rising is at Heaven's end.* The Hebrew phrase is ambiguous: it describes equally well the Sun rising and also a man starting forth for his day's work: 2 Sam iii. 25.

*there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.* Here speaks the Eastern cowering in his black tent of skin and gasping for the heat. In Persia deep underground refuges are used to give some relief.

With the Psalmist's description of the rising Sun as a bridegroom coming out from his bridal canopy we may compare a passage from a Babylonian hymn addressed to the setting Sun:

"O Shamash,<sup>1</sup> when thou enterest into the midst of heaven...  
 The doors of heaven shall bless thee...  
 And Ai, thy beloved wife, shall come joyfully into thy presence,  
 She shall give rest unto thine heart.  
 A feast for thy godhead shall be spread for thee."

#### 7-11. JEHOVAH'S LAW (THE *TORAH*) A BENEFICENT CREATION

7. *perfect.* Cf xviii. 23, 30; also note on xv. 2 (*uprightly*).

*restoring the soul.* The soul which faints in the heat of the Sun is refreshed and restored by the *Torah*. The Psalmist glances at the parallel which he has drawn by implication between the Sun and the Law, a parallel which admits also some points of contrast. The Eastern Sun, glorious as it is, brings affliction with it, but the *Torah* is "perfect." As a moral tonic it restores the vigour which physical distress has impaired: cf cxix. 50.

Duhm can see nothing in this division of the Psalm but the ideal of a "Scribe," a man whose religion is a book-religion. The *Torah*, he says, means here the written Law, and even so, not the whole Law, but the law of the cultus, with its small ethical wrapping (*Einschlag*); the "Testimony," as seen in Deuteronomy, means the exhortations and warnings which hold out reward and punishment for obedience and disobedience respectively. *The testimony of JEHOVAH is faithful (sure)* means only that the rewards and punishments will inevitably follow just as announced. No wonder that Duhm calls this passage an exaggerated (*überschwänglich*) panegyric.

But the emphatic word in vv. 7-9 is not "Law" nor "testimony," but JEHOVAH. The *Torah* of JEHOVAH is His teaching in all its fullness, and His *testimony* is His revelation of His will to men: cf l. 7, lxxxix. 8. The enthusiasm of the Psalmist is drawn out not by the mere book, but by the belief that JEHOVAH is behind the book, and that He has been

<sup>1</sup> Heb. *shemesh*, "sun."

- 8 The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart:  
The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.
- 9 The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever:  
The judgements of the LORD are true, *and* righteous altogether.
- 10 More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold:  
Sweeter also than honey and <sup>1</sup>the honeycomb.

<sup>1</sup> Heb. *the droppings of the honeycomb.*

pleased to make His ways known to men. The words "testimony" and "testify" must be allowed their full weight. They tell us that JEHOVAH takes pains to show men the way of righteousness. Heathens have believed and still believe that they must find out by use of special means through a priest or a diviner what the will of a god is: Christians and Jews believe that it is God's will and pleasure to reveal His moral law to man.

*making wise the simple.* *Simple* (Heb. *pēthi*) is in the singular: the Psalmist means himself: cf cxix. 98-100.

8. *rejoicing the heart.* The heart, in Hebrew thought, is the seat of the understanding. JEHOVAH's precepts give joy to the Psalmist in that they show him which path to choose in the wilderness of life.

*enlightening the eyes.* Here the comparison with the Sun is obvious.

9. *The fear of JEHOVAH is clean.* In the religion of JEHOVAH there are no unclean nor cruel (blood-stained) rites such as defile heathen worship.

*The judgements of JEHOVAH are true.* What JEHOVAH lays down cannot be gainsaid.

10. *More to be desired are they than gold.* Cf cxix. 127, "I love thy commandments above gold, yea, above fine gold." This statement is not rhetorical: the Psalmist knew probably what it was to be tempted for reward (as were the Maccabees: 1 Macc ii. 18) to be disloyal to JEHOVAH.

*fine gold.* Heb. *paz* as in cxix. 127 where P-B has "precious stone," from *τοπάσιον* (LXX) whence *topazion* (Vulgate). LXX here as in some other places has (ignorantly) translated a Hebrew word by a Greek word of similar sound, but not of the same meaning. Perhaps the translators thought that Hebrew and Greek words having a similar sound must bear the same sense. Thackeray, *Grammar of O.T. in Greek*, pp. 36 f.

*Sweeter...than honey.* Cf cxix. 103,

"How sweet are thy words unto my taste!

Yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!"

*the honeycomb.* Marg. *the droppings of the honeycomb*: so the Hebrew; cf 1 Sam xiv. 26. Canaan was a land of milk and honey: in the pastures there were many wild bees.

11 Moreover by them is thy servant warned:

In keeping of them there is great reward.

12 Who can discern *his* errors?

Clear thou me from hidden *faults*.

13 Keep back thy servant also <sup>1</sup>from presumptuous *sins*;

Let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be perfect,

And I shall be clear from great transgression.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *from the proud*

11. *by them is thy servant warned*. P-B, *taught* (for *warned*); cf Exod xviii. 20, "And thou shalt *teach* them the statutes," etc. The Hebrew verb is the same. The keynote of the *Torah* ("the teaching") is of warning as in Deut xxx. 15, "See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil."

*great reward*. Or, *much reward*. The form in the Hebrew suggests a reference to the preceding verse, *much fine gold*. The enemy offers *much...gold* as the reward for disloyalty to JEHOVAH, the Psalmist retorts that there is *much reward* for obedience to JEHOVAH's law.

#### 12-14. FINAL PETITIONS

12. *Who can discern his errors? Errors* are sins committed in ignorance, especially sins against the cultus: the corresponding verb is used in Lev iv. 13 and translated "err" (RV) and "sin through ignorance" (AV). On the other hand the *hidden faults* may be moral offences. Yet the main fear of the Psalmist is of committing unconscious sins against God. The old heathen thought that the gods lie in wait to surprise man in sin is not altogether absent from this Psalm, but v. 13 stands on a higher moral plane, and the tone of deep sincerity cannot be ignored in it.

13. *Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins*. Rather, *Keep back thy servant from the proud* (Heb. *zēdim*). The *zēdim* are a class of men who are mentioned in lxxxvi. 14, cxix. 51, 69, 78, 85, 122. Their characteristic mark is that they are "presumptuous": they are evidently the Psalmist's own countrymen, and rulers of the Jews, but they sit loose to the Law themselves, and encourage, nay, constrain others to follow their example. So he prays, *Let them not have dominion over me*, as the author of cxix (v. 122) prays, *Let not the proud oppress me*. The historical situation was probably like that described in 1 Macc vii. 10-22, but it is not necessary to suppose that the Psalm is as late as the Maccabean era. There was religious persecution and there were "presumptuous men," disloyal to the *Torah*, at more than one period in the history of Israel.

*perfect*. See v. 7, note.

*great transgression*. The substantive suggests the thought of "rebellion" against JEHOVAH as king. Cf li. 1, 13.

14 Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart  
be acceptable in thy sight,  
O LORD, my rock, and my redeemer.

14. *Let the words...be acceptable.* Cf civ. 34. The Psalmist regards the Psalm which he composes as an offering or sacrifice to JEHOVAH. In lxx. 30, 31 he declares that his song of thanksgiving will please JEHOVAH "better than a bullock that hath horns and hoofs."

*my rock.* Cf xviii. 2, note.

*my redeemer* (Heb. *gōēl*). This rendering, which comes from the Vulgate *Redemptor meus*, is inadequate in this passage. In other passages, in which the deliverance of Israel from bondage in Egypt or from exile in Babylon is referred to, JEHOVAH is said by a happy metaphor to have redeemed, i.e. to have ransomed, His people. Slaves and captives regained their freedom by a money payment. But the Hebrew term *gōēl* has a wider and a somewhat different reference. The *gōēl* is a man's nearest of kin, whose duty it is by tribal custom to help and to protect the man or his family in time of trouble, difficulty or danger. One duty of the *gōēl* was to marry the widow of a childless relative in order to "raise up seed unto his brother" (Ruth iii. 9, iv. 1-6). By a daring metaphor the Psalmist calls JEHOVAH his *kinsman*.

## PSALMS XX, XXI

### § 1. OCCASION AND DATE.

Pss xx and xxi form a pair of "royal Psalms." There were in Israel kings from the time of Saul to the date of the Captivity (586 B.C.). After this there were (so far as history tells) no native kings until John Aristobulus I (*circ.* 105 B.C.). Duhm has no hesitation in choosing this later period as the date for these two Psalms: he maintains that they must have been composed for Hasmonean kings, and so cannot be earlier than 105 B.C. and may be some half a century later. Duhm holds Pss xx, xxi for Sadducean compositions ("like Ps xviii"), while he attributes Pss xvii, xix to Pharisaic authorship. He even suggests that the taking of "Sadducean" and "Pharisaic" poems alternately into the Psalter was a compromise due to the attempt made in the reign of Queen Salome (Alexandra) to reconcile the two parties.

These are, however, precarious conclusions. So little, after all, is known of the history of Israel: long periods after the Captivity are almost a blank. Indeed we cannot be sure that the Judaeans with their proud memories of David and Solomon made no attempt to set up a "king" of their own between the proclamation of Cyrus in 538 (537) B.C. and the revolt of the Maccabees *circ.* 167 B.C. We have no direct evidence, yet we are bound to consider seriously the suggestion that an attempt was made late in the sixth century B.C. to crown the Jewish Prince Zerubbabel king in Jerusalem: cf Zech iii. 8, 9, iv. 6-10. Again, did none of the Jews think of the strong Nehemiah, the favourite of Artaxerxes, as "king," subordinate of course to his Persian suzerain? Certainly as much as

this is suggested in Neh vi. 6, 7 (the report of an enemy, but perhaps at least half true).

The date of these two Psalms must remain unsettled within wide limits. If we cannot be sure (with Dr Duhm) that Pss xliiv (Korahite), lxxiv, lxxix (Asaphic) are *early* Maccabean (*circ.* 165 B.C.), much less can we be sure in assigning Pss xx, xxi, which belong to the Davidic collection, to *later* Maccabean times, i.e. to *circ.* 90 B.C. More important however than the question of date is the question of the religious value of Pss xx, xxi. These two Psalms taken together (for they are closely connected) have the character of a National Anthem, and bear the scars of war upon them. But a genuine religious tone is heard in xx, 7, "Some make mention of chariots...but we will make mention of the name of JEHOVAH our God," and again in xxi, 13, "Be thou exalted, O JEHOVAH, in thy strength." These touches (together with *v.* 9*b*) relieve the impression left by the language of xxi, 8-12 as a whole, that the king's might (and not JEHOVAH'S) is celebrated.

## § 2. CHARACTER AND PURPOSE.

It was the custom among ancient peoples before they went out to battle to offer a sacrifice, and to entreat the help of their God; cf 1 Sam. vii. 7-9; xiii. 8-12. Such sacrifices would be accompanied by invocations of the Deity and in Israel probably by the cry of Hosanna, "Save now": cf xx, 9, "Save, O JEHOVAH." But in the day of Psalmody a Psalm would naturally take the place of informal cries, and no Psalm could be more appropriate for such an occasion than Ps xx. As the king was the leader in war the prayers would naturally have special reference to him.

Accordingly it has been suggested that Ps xx is a prayer used in the Temple to accompany the sacrifice offered by custom when the king went out to battle.

*Vv* 1-5 beginning

"JEHOVAH answer thee in the day of trouble"

and ending

"JEHOVAH fulfil all thy petitions"

were sung (it is suggested) by the Temple choir before the offering of the sacrifice.

*Vv.* 6-8 beginning

"Now know I that JEHOVAH saveth his anointed"

and ending

"But we are risen, and stand upright"

were sung *solo* after the offering, when it had been concluded from some sign that JEHOVAH had accepted the sacrifice.

The final verse (*v.* 9),

"Save (*Hōshi'ah*), O JEHOVAH: Let the King answer us when we call,"

was shouted by the whole people.

Similar suggestions are made as to Ps xxi. *Vv.* 1-6 were sung by the Temple choir, *v.* 7-12 were sung *solo*, *v.* 13 was an acclamation by the whole people.

More doubtful is the suggestion that Ps xx was to be used before the battle, and Ps xxi after the victory. In xxi, 8-12 victory is confidently anticipated, not recorded.

For the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.

- XX.** 1 The LORD answer thee in the day of trouble;  
 The name of the God of Jacob set thee up on high;  
 2 Send thee help from the sanctuary,  
 And <sup>1</sup>strengthen thee out of Zion;  
 3 Remember all thy <sup>2</sup>offerings,  
 And <sup>3</sup>accept thy burnt sacrifice; [Selah  
 4 Grant thee thy heart's desire,  
 And fulfil all thy counsel.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *support*

<sup>2</sup> Or, *meal offerings*

<sup>3</sup> Heb. *accept as fat*.

### PSALM XX. ONLY BY JEHOVAH COMETH VICTORY

#### 1-5. THE PETITION

1. *answer thee*. Cf iv. 1, note.

*The name of the God of Jacob*. The phrase *The name of God* is a periphrasis for *God*; it stands for the known character of God; cf v. 7, note. We may paraphrase the opening words of this verse as "May JEHOVAH in His known characteristics of power, eternity and holiness set thee up on high." To be set on high means of course to be set in safety. For the meaning of *God of Jacob* ("God the Conqueror") see xlvi. 7, note.

2. *Send thee help*, etc. Cf cx. 2, "JEHOVAH shall send forth the rod of thy strength out of Zion." The Psalmist thinks of the presence of JEHOVAH as localised in the Temple: cf l. 2, "Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined forth."

*strengthen thee*. The same Hebrew verb is used in Isa ix. 7, "to uphold it," i.e. the Messianic kingdom.

3. *Remember all thy offerings*. This language embodies the lower view of sacrifice, such as the heathen held. Thus, a priest of Babylon in interceding with his god on behalf of a penitent prays as follows:

"Receive his gift, accept his purchase-money,  
 That he may walk before thee in a land of peace,  
 That with overflowing abundance he may fill thy shrine."

L. W. King, *Babylonian Religion*, p. 216.

*accept thy burnt sacrifice*. Lit. *accept thy burnt sacrifice as fat*. The fat was regarded as the best part of any sacrificial victim: cf Lev iii. 16 f, "All the fat is JEHOVAH'S...Ye shall eat neither fat nor blood." The Greeks had a similar feeling: an offering without fat or with only scanty fat might bring down the wrath of the god upon the niggardly worshipper. Such was the fate of Prometheus, who dared to mock Zeus with an offering of white bones disguised under a thin layer of fat. (Hesiod, *Theogony*, ll. 535 ff.)

- 5 We will triumph in thy <sup>1</sup>salvation,  
 And in the name of our God we will set up our banners:  
 The LORD fulfil all thy petitions.
- 6 Now know I that the LORD saveth his anointed;  
 He will answer him from his holy heaven  
 With the saving strength of his right hand.
- 7 Some *trust* in chariots, and some in horses:  
 But we will make mention of the name of the LORD our God.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *victory*

5. *We will triumph.* Or, *shout aloud.*

*salvation.* Marg. *victory.* *Victory* is usually expressed in Hebrew by the words *yēshū'āh* or *tēshū'āh* (2 K v. 1), either of which may be translated "salvation." Cf xxxiii. 16, "There is no king saved (*nōshā'*) by the multitude of an host," i.e. "No king gains the victory by numbers": v. 17, "The horse is a vain thing for achieving victory (*tēshū'āh*)."

*we will set up our banners.* Heb. *nādgōl* denominative verb from *degel*, "a standard." A *degel* (Num ii. 2, 10, *al.*) was a pole on which certain distinctive signs (*ōthōth*) were displayed. Cf lxxiv. 4, "They have set up their (own) signs (emblems) for signs." The Psalmist says that he and his fellows will maintain "our banners," i.e. the standards which testify to their faithfulness to JEHOVAH. So again in lx. 4, "Thou hast given a banner (Heb. *nēs*) to them that fear thee." The Vulgate rendering (derived from LXX), *magnificabimur*, is from an inferior reading of the Hebrew text. The modern emendation, *we will rejoice*, is a commonplace.

#### 6-9. THE PSALMIST'S ASSURANCE TO HIS KING

6. *Now.* Duhm suggests that this Psalm was used in the Temple cultus on the king's accession day or possibly on his birthday. *First*, the intercessory prayer for the king (vs. 1-5) is recited. Then an interval follows during which sacrifice is offered for the king, the victims being provided by him. Next after the priests have carefully considered certain outward signs and have satisfied themselves that the sacrifice has been accepted (cf Gen iv. 4, 5), the Psalmist resumes. He gives his king an assurance of victory in this second half of the Psalm.

*saveth his anointed.* Or, *giveth victory to his anointed (his Messiah).*

7. *Some trust in chariots.* Rather, *Some make mention of chariots*, i.e. when counsel is held for war. Cf 2 K xviii. 24 (the scoff of Rabshakeh).

*the name of JEHOVAH our God.* Pro xviii. 10, "The name of JEHOVAH is a strong tower: The righteous runneth into it, and is set on high."

- 8 They are bowed down and fallen :  
But we are risen, and stand upright.  
9 <sup>1</sup>Save, LORD :  
Let the King answer us when we call.

<sup>1</sup> Or, as some ancient versions have, *O LORD, save the king; and answer &c.*

8. *They are bowed down and fallen.* Or, *They stumbled that they might fall*: cf Rom xi. 11. It was a complete overthrow.

9. *Save, JEHOVAH: Let the King answer us.* A very slight change in the Hebrew text enables us to render, *O JEHOVAH, save the king; and answer us*: LXX Κύριε, σῶσον τὸν βασιλέα καὶ ἐπάκουσον ἡμῶν.

*when we call.* The literal rendering is better: *in the day on which we invoke* (Thee); Vulgate, *in die qua invocaverimus te*. The day, whether the king's accession day, or his birthday, or New Year's Day, is regarded as propitious.

For the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.

- XXI.** 1 The king shall joy in thy strength, O LORD ;  
And in thy salvation how greatly shall he rejoice !  
2 Thou hast given him his heart's desire,  
And hast not withholden the request of his lips. [Selah  
3 For thou preventest him with the blessings of <sup>1</sup>goodness :  
Thou settest a crown of fine gold on his head.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *good things*

**PSALM XXI.** SEND HIM VICTORIOUS THROUGH THY FAVOUR

1—7. THE PSALMIST SPEAKS FOR THE KING

1. *The king shall joy in thy strength, O LORD.* Better (following the Hebrew order of the words) *O JEHOVAH, the king shall joy in thy strength.* The name JEHOVAH is the keynote of the Psalm: in JEHOVAH and none other is the king's help. So in Pss iii, vi, vii, viii, xi, xv, the first word (of the Hebrew text) is JEHOVAH. "*The king*" is right; though here (as often in the Psalms) the definite article is omitted by poetic licence.

*And in thy salvation how greatly shall he rejoice.* P-B, *Exceeding glad shall he be of thy salvation* (= LXX).

2. *his heart's desire.* I.e. his secret wish, known but to his confidants. *the request.* LXX τὴν δέησιν (*v.l. θέλησιν*): Vulgate *voluntate*. The openly expressed wish.

3. *thou preventest him, etc.* *Thou sendest thy blessings to meet him.* Cf lix. 11, "*My God with his mercy shall prevent me*" (C'thib: so LXX Vulgate).

- 4 He asked life of thee, thou gavest it him ;  
 Even length of days for ever and ever.
- 5 His glory is great in thy salvation :  
 Honour and majesty dost thou lay upon him.
- 6 For thou <sup>1</sup>makest him most blessed for ever :  
 Thou makest him glad with joy in thy presence.
- 7 For the king trusteth in the LORD,  
 And through the lovingkindness of the Most High he shall  
 not be moved.
- 8 Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies :  
 Thy right hand shall find out those that hate thee.

<sup>1</sup> Heb. *settest him to be blessings*. See Gen. xii. 2.

*Thou settest a crown.* The phrase suggests that the occasion of the Psalm is the day of the king's coronation.

*of fine gold.* LXX, ἐκ λίθου τιμίον. Cf xix. 10, note.

4. *He asked life.* Solomon is praised in 1 K iii. 11, for asking for understanding rather than for "many days." The salutation of a king at his accession was, "Let the king live": 2 K xi. 12, RV marg: cf 1 K i. 39 (in Hebrew the same phrase).

*length of days.* So xxiii. 6, marg. The additional words *for ever and ever* are hyperbolic: cf Dan iii. 9, v. 10, vi. 6, where Nebuchadrezzar, Belsazzar, and Darius respectively are saluted with the words, "O king, live for ever" (lit. "for ages").

5. *great in thy salvation.* In this passage the Heb. *yōshū'āh*, "salvation," means "saving grace" continually in action. Thus it is said of Saul after his anointing as king that "God gave him another heart" (1 Sam x. 9), and so he was able to "get him a name" by his victory over Ammon (1 Sam xi. 12, 13).

*Honour and majesty.* These are attributes of JEHOVAH himself: civ. 1.

6. *most blessed.* See marg. above.

*Thou makest him glad with joy in thy presence.* Duhm refers this to the joyful observance of the great festivals, especially at Pentecost, for which the commandment was given to Israel "Thou shalt rejoice before JEHOVAH thy God": Deut xvi. 11.

7. *he shall not be moved.* I.e. from that position of favour which JEHOVAH has assigned him. The same assurance is made on behalf of Zion in xlv. 5.

#### 8-12. ASSURANCE OF VICTORY GIVEN TO THE KING

8, 9. *Thy right hand shall find out.* The same Hebrew phrase as in Isa x. 14, "My hand hath found as a nest the riches of the peoples." The first step in the king's success is that he *overtakes* his enemies who are (presumably) intrenched in some stronghold. The next step (naturally)

- 9 Thou shalt make them as a fiery furnace in the time of thine  
<sup>1</sup>anger.  
 The LORD shall swallow them up in his wrath,  
 And the fire shall devour them.
- 10 Their fruit shalt thou destroy from the earth,  
 And their seed from among the children of men.
- 11 For they intended evil against thee:  
 They imagined a device, which they are not able to perform.
- 12 For thou shalt make them turn their back,  
 Thou shalt make ready with thy bowstrings against the face  
 of them.
- 13 Be thou exalted, O LORD, in thy strength:  
 So will we sing and praise thy power.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *presence* Heb. *countenance*.

is to force them to surrender and to bring them forth out of their "close places" (cf xviii. 45). This second step is described in the second clause of the verse, if we may read (by emendation of one letter in the Hebrew), "Thy right hand shall lead forth (bring out: *tōzā* for *timzā*) those that hate thee." Thus we get three stages in the course of victory expressed in *vs.* 8, 9, thus:

- (a) Thy right hand shall overtake all thine enemies:
- (b) Thy right hand shall bring forth those that hate thee:
- (c) Thou shalt make them as (the fuel of) a fiery furnace.

Thus the enemy is (a) overtaken; (b) forced to surrender; (c) destroyed.

9. *in the time of thine anger*. Rather, *in the time of thy presence*, i.e. the time at which JEHOVAH accepts thy presence, i.e. shows thee favour. The king's own right hand is represented as effecting the victory, through the favour of JEHOVAH, for God Himself co-operates with the king: "JEHOVAH shall swallow them (the enemy) up in his wrath."

10. *Their fruit shalt thou destroy from the earth*. Words intended to describe the completeness of the king's victory.

11. *For they intended evil*. Lit. *they stretched out* (i.e. threatened) *evil*.

12. *Thou shalt make ready with thy bowstrings against the face of them*. The Psalmist comes down to earth with the charge to the king: Make ready; meet the foe face to face.

### 13. THE "GLORIA"

13. *Be thou exalted, O JEHOVAH, in thy strength*. This is the better kind of "Gloria," since man cannot be said except in figure to "exalt" God. In the words of xcix. 9, "Exalt ye JEHOVAH our God," there is an accommodation to human thought, for God is already exalted beyond human praise.

*praise thy power*. Better *praise thy might*, i.e. thy mighty acts in war.

## PSALM XXII

## THE PRAYER OF ONE CAST DOWN, BUT NOT FORSAKEN

## § 1. CONTENTS.

- 1- 5. The Silence of God.
- 6-11. The Reproaches of Men.
- 12-21. The Cry *in extremis*.
- 22-25. Praise for a great deliverance.
- 26-31. The whole world shall take up JEHOVAH'S praise.

## § 2. PS XXII NOT SIMPLY AN ANTICIPATION OF THE STORY OF CALVARY.

It is not easy to approach the study of Ps xxii with a perfectly open mind. The facts of its use have taken it almost entirely out of its context in the Old Testament and given it a new and purely Christian setting. Our Lord used the opening words in his agony on the cross.<sup>1</sup> The priests and elders quoted the eighth verse in their mockery of the Crucified.<sup>2</sup> St John narrates the division of the Saviour's clothes among the soldiers as a fulfilment<sup>3</sup> of the words of v. 18. Finally the words "They pierced my hands and my feet" (v. 16), though unnoticed in the New Testament and almost certainly due to mistranslation, are found in the text of our three English versions. The English student in reading this Psalm recalls the scenes of the Crucifixion.

It must not be thought that our Lord's death supplied the pre-Christian author with the occasion for the composition of this Psalm. If this Psalm be a direct prediction of Calvary, then the cries and agonies and fears and hopes of the Psalmist were all unreal; the sufferings and the triumph were not his own. For all the years until the Crucifixion, the Psalm must have been not a part of God's Revelation, but a cryptogram without a key. These thoughts that breathe and words that burn were for centuries only a tale of little meaning, if so be that they are simply a prediction of Calvary.

Yet this Psalm has light to throw on the mystery of our Lord's death. The sacrifice on Calvary was the culmination of an age-long Divine Dispensation, to which this Psalm bears witness. The mystery of the Crucifixion cannot be understood apart from its context, and that context stretches back in the past to the times of the Prophets and Psalmists. The writer of Ps xxii does not speak of the scene on Golgotha, but he tells us that through suffering God made a fresh revelation of himself both to Jews and to the Ends of the earth. This teaching brings us, it is true, near to the foot of the cross, but the Psalm is in itself a pre-Christian song of Israel, and as such it must be interpreted.

## § 3. THE PSALM HAS A STORY OF ITS OWN. ANALYSIS OF ITS CONTENTS.

This Psalm, written in the first person, gives no doubt the personal experiences of the author of it. It is a dramatic monologue, in which the speaker puts before us a complete story in two Acts, the first of which may be called "The Struggle" (vs. 1-21), the second "The Triumph" (vs. 22-31). The first "Act" may be divided into three "Scenes," the first of which is contained in vs. 1-5.

<sup>1</sup> Matt xxvii. 46.<sup>2</sup> Matt xxvii. 43.<sup>3</sup> *ἵνα πληρώθῃ* (John xix. 24).

It sets before us "The Silence of God." The Psalmist has heard of the goodness of God in old time, but now that he himself is in trouble, he cries and receives no answer. What has he done, he seems to ask, that the God who dwells among the praises of Israel, the God of his people, the God of the Temple, has forsaken him?

The second scene (*vv.* 6-11) portrays for us "The Reproaches of Men." Heaven may be silent, but the earth is full of mocking voices. The Psalmist is despised of men, who insinuate to him that God has abandoned him. And yet he knows that from a child he has been under JEHOVAH'S care. Let not God be far from him now, he prays, for he has no other helper!

In the third scene (*vv.* 12-21) we hear the Psalmist's cry *in extremis*. He is in a state of weakness and near to death. He has powerful foes who rejoice over his calamity, and are prepared to take advantage of it, even to dividing his possessions among them. He fears that they will hasten his end, and prays to be delivered "from the sword."

With *v.* 22 the last scene of the first Act comes to an end, and the second, and final Act opens. God is no longer silent. When things were all but at their worst, when the Psalmist was already beset by the horns of the wild oxen, JEHOVAH answered him. The Deliverance is complete and unexpected; it is an event to be celebrated far and wide; it is the Triumph of the poor and of the meek. JEHOVAH has revealed himself as one who does not despise those who are of no account in the eyes of men. The Psalmist will make known to his own people ("to my brethren") this revelation of JEHOVAH in his work as Deliverer. The Gentiles also will hear, for they too are under JEHOVAH'S rule. So from great and small in all the earth thanksgiving will go up to JEHOVAH for this new revelation of his willingness to save. Nor are the good tidings for one generation only; they will be told to a people yet to be born.

#### § 4. THE PSALM BELONGS TO THE *PRAEPRATIO EVANGELICA*.

The experiences of the Psalmist, though like our Lord's, are not identical with our Lord's. The Psalmist is one who is very near to God; all his life he has trusted in JEHOVAH. But he is of no account at all among men, and now he seems to be left alone among his enemies. His heart melts within him, and he feels himself near to death. His enemies already divide his belongings.

All this applies to our Lord's human career, but (we must be careful to note) not to our Lord's only. These experiences are not unique, but they are such as remind us that Jesus Christ was made "in all things" like unto his brethren, and in particular like unto the holy men who lived before him. Especially does this Psalm remind us of the experiences of Jeremiah. Jeremiah was called "from the womb"<sup>1</sup> to be a prophet. He was hated among his countrymen,<sup>2</sup> and left in the hands of his enemies.<sup>3</sup> His heart failed him so that he cursed the day on which he was born.<sup>4</sup> There is nothing in Ps xxii. 1-21 which Jeremiah might not have said. The experiences here described were our Lord's in common with some other men.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Jer i. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Jer xv. 10 ff.

<sup>3</sup> Jer xxxviii. 1-6.

<sup>4</sup> Jer xx. 14 ff.

<sup>5</sup> For the expression, "They pierced my hands and my feet" (*v.* 16 c) see the separate note.

Indeed, in (perhaps) the most important point of all the Psalmist's experiences are different from our Lord's. The Psalmist escapes from the sword, and from the lion's mouth; he is in danger of death, but he does not die. God answers him, and delivers him (vs. 22 ff.). But our Lord was not so delivered; he drank the cup, and tasted death.

After the suffering the Triumph! If this Psalm is of Messianic application, it is not because of the particular sufferings endured by the Psalmist, for such sufferings fell to the lot of more than one Old Testament Saint. But the sequence of suffering and Triumph belongs in substance to the eternal Gospel. Vv. 22-31 tell of a gracious Deliverance of the poor which makes JEHOVAH's name known, not only in Israel, but also to the ends of the earth; not only to the Psalmist's generation, but also to a people yet to be born. The whole earth turns to the worship of JEHOVAH. This is a Messianic triumph, both in its spiritual quality and in the breadth and depth of its reach.

All that is said in this Psalm about Lowliness, and Suffering, and the Conversion of the Gentiles ought to have appealed to the Jews of our Lord's time. Had they learnt the lesson of Ps xxii they would not have brought it forward as a reason for rejecting him that he came from Galilee, or that he was put to death on the cross, or that he did not limit his kingdom to Israel. The Psalm does indeed form part of the *Praeparatio Evangelica*.

#### § 5. THE UNITY OF THE PSALM. THE STATE OF THE TEXT.

Duhm treats vv. 22-31 as a separate Psalm, which he calls "Ps xxii B." He describes "Ps xxii A" (i.e. vv. 1-21) as one of the best pieces in the Psalter. It is natural in language, and yet it contains some striking images. The author is a straightforward soul, who is innocent in heart, unconscious of sin, and strong in his trust in his God. On the other hand, Duhm describes Ps xxii B as a liturgical composition intended to be sung by the Temple singers; when a sacrifice in payment of a vow was offered. Its terms are quite general, and it might be used on different occasions.

Surely if vv. 22-31 did not originally form the ending of Ps xxii they were well chosen by the editor to fill the gap. The occasion demanded a *Te Deum*, and a *Te Deum* was found. The writer is deeply thankful and he heaps phrase on phrase in his effort to express all that he feels.

#### § 6. THE DATE OF THE PSALM.

Ps xxii A (according to Duhm) must be late, for it has coincidences with Isaiah and Job. The author (he says) was perhaps one of the *Hāsīdīm* put to death by Alcimus (1 Macc vii. 12-17) or an innocent victim of the later Has-monean wars. His Psalm was carried out of his prison by his friends, as the followers of Socrates preserved the last words of the Greek sage (so Duhm). But why must the Psalmist be an unknown victim of Alcimus rather than the prophet Jeremiah? The identification must remain uncertain.

For the Chief Musician ; set to <sup>1</sup>Ajeleth hash-Shahar. A Psalm of David.

**XXII.** 1 My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

<sup>2</sup>Why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?

2 O my God, I cry in the day-time, but thou answerest not ;  
And in the night season, <sup>3</sup>and am not silent.

3 But thou art holy,

O thou that <sup>4</sup>inhabitest the praises of Israel.

<sup>1</sup> That is, *The hind of the morning.*

<sup>2</sup> Or, *Far from my help are the words of my roaring.*

<sup>3</sup> Or, *but find no rest*      <sup>4</sup> Or, *art enthroned upon*

#### 1-5. THE SILENCE OF GOD

**XXII.** 1. *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* These are the words of our Lord's cry on the cross (Matt xxvii. 46 ; Mark xv. 34). But P-B gives *My God, my God, look upon me; why hast thou forsaken me...?* The additional words are from LXX (πρόσχες μοι): Vulgate, *respice in me*; they were possibly introduced through a reminiscence of v. 2, lv. 2 (Hebrew לִי הִשְׁתַּיֵּב, "attend to me"). Duhm and others, relying on LXX, propose to read:

"My God, attend unto me;  
My God, why has thou forsaken me?  
Thou remainest far (רחוק) from my help,  
From the cause of my crying, O my God."

(The last words *O my God* being transferred from v. 2.) A smoother rhythm is thus obtained; so with the text thus emended Duhm pronounces the metre to consist of strophes of six lines each, each line being of three accents (accented syllables). But there is a loss of the extreme vigour of the opening, *My God, my God*. The Psalmist is in peril of his life; he sinks back into a smoother rhythm only as he grows calmer.

Why art thou so far from helping me. The words supplied in the English spoil the rugged vigour of the Hebrew. In the original the words are an exclamation, *Far from my salvation!* If any words are to be supplied they might be *O thou who art* (far from my salvation)!

and from *the words of my roaring*. The construction is very difficult, if MT be accepted. We should perhaps read (correcting the vowel points only), *In my cause* (lit. *in my matters*) *I have roared* ("cried with full voice"), *O my God*.

2. *and am not silent*. Lit. *and no silence is mine*. The Hebrew word *dūmīyāh*, "silence," as in xxxix. 2, "I was dumb with silence."

3. *But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel*. The second clause should be rendered as a statement, *But thou art*

- 4 Our fathers trusted in thee:  
They trusted, and thou didst deliver them.
- 5 They cried unto thee, and were delivered:  
They trusted in thee, and were not ashamed.
- 6 But I am a worm, and no man;  
A reproach of men, and despised of the people.
- 7 All they that see me laugh me to scorn:  
They shoot out the lip, they shake the head, *saying*,

*Holy*; thou art *inhabiting the praises of Israel*. The Psalmist makes a double appeal to his God. *First* he says, "Thou art Holy" (Heb. *kādōsh*), i.e. "Thou art God" (for *kādōsh* is used almost as a synonym for "a divine being") and as such "thou art endued with power and knowledge to help me." *Secondly* he says (in effect), "And thou art not a stranger, nor far off, for thou art Israel's God; thou dwellest where Israel praises thee." The phrase "inhabiting the praises of Israel" is boldly metaphorical, and characteristically Eastern.

LXX represents a somewhat different reading of the Hebrew, σὺ δὲ ἐν ἁγίοις κατοικεῖς, ὁ ἔπαινος Ἰσραὴλ, "But thou dwellest in the holy place, O thou Praise of Israel." Similarly Duhm, "But thou dwellest in the sanctuary; Israel's boast (or "glorying," *tēhillath*) is of thee"; he supplies *bēchā* in the Hebrew at the end of the verse.

*the praises*. Heb. *tēhillōth*, which is another form of *tēhillām*, the Hebrew title of the book of Psalms.

4. *Our fathers trusted in thee*. Cf xlv. 1, lxxviii. 3.

5. *They cried unto thee*. Cf cvi. 44, cvii. 6.

*were not ashamed*. I.e. were not disappointed.

#### 6-11. THE REPROACHES OF MEN

6. *a worm, and no man*. Rather, *a worm, and a man of no account*. Cf Isa xli. 14, "Fear not, thou worm Jacob." The Hebrew expression *lō'ish* ("a no man, a nobody") is found in Isa xxxi. 8.

*A reproach of men*. Or, *A term of reproach* in the mouths of men. For an instance cf Jer xxix. 22, "JEHOVAH make thee like Zedekiah and like Ahab, whom the king of Babylon roasted in the fire."

*despised of the people*. Cf Isa xlix. 7, liii. 3. In all three passages the suggestion is of one who has claims to a hearing or to obedience, but whose claims are contemptuously rejected.

7. *All they that see me*. I.e. that see me in my present condition of nearness to death.

*they shake the head*. I.e. in sign of contemptuous defiance: Isa xxxvii. 22.

*saying*. This word, though not in the Hebrew, is rightly supplied in English; cf ii. 2, *al*. It should stand also before cix. 6.

- 8 <sup>1</sup>Commit *thyself* unto the LORD; let him deliver him:  
 Let him deliver him, seeing he delighteth in him.
- 9 But thou art he that took me out of the womb:  
 Thou didst make me trust *when I was* upon my mother's  
 breasts.
- 10 I was cast upon thee from the womb:  
 Thou art my God from my mother's belly.
- 11 Be not far from me; for trouble is near;  
 For there is none to help.
- 12 Many bulls have compassed me:  
 Strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round.
- 13 They gape upon me with their mouth,  
 As a ravening and a roaring lion.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *He trusted on the LORD, that he would deliver him*

8. Commit thyself unto *JEHOVAH*. Better, *He committed himself unto JEHOVAH*: so LXX, ἠλπισεν ἐπὶ Κύριον; Vulgate, *speravit in Domino*. The Hebrew (לָ) is ambiguous: pointed *gal* it is a Perfect: pointed *gōl* it is either Inf. Absolute (standing for a Perfect tense) or an Imperative, as it is taken in RV text. So in xxxvii. 5 *gōl* is used as an Imperative, "Commit thy way unto *JEHOVAH*." In Matt xxvii. 43 the quotation is, Πέποιθεν ἐπὶ τὸν θεόν, ῥυσάσθω νῦν εἰ θέλει αὐτόν.

*seeing he delighteth in him*. The words of course are spoken in scorn.

9. *that took me out of the womb*. So LXX, ὁ ἐκπάσας με ἐκ γαστρός. The meaning of the verb is somewhat uncertain.

10. *I was cast upon thee*. The Psalmist may be speaking thus as having been an orphan almost from birth; or again the language may be metaphorical. He feels that he owes more to *JEHOVAH*'s protection than to the care of his parents.

11. *trouble is near*. "Trouble" according to its modern usage is too weak to be an equivalent for Hebrew *zārāh*: better "affliction": LXX, θλίψις, Vulgate, *tribulatio*.

#### 12-21. THE CRY IN EXTREMIS

12. *Strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round*. In Bashan was found the *rē'em* (or *rēm*, v. 21), "the wild ox" ("unicorn" AV), which is frequently mentioned in O.T. as a type of strength and fierceness: xcii. 10; Num xxiii. 22; Job xxxix. 9; Isa xxxiv. 7: cf v. 21, note. *Bashan* is the district east of Jordan extending from the river Jabbok on the south northward to mount Hermon.

- 14 I am poured out like water,  
 And all my bones are out of joint:  
 My heart is like wax;  
 It is melted in the midst of my bowels.
- 15 My strength is dried up like a potsherd;  
 And my tongue cleaveth to my jaws;  
 And thou hast brought me into the dust of death.
- 16 For dogs have compassed me:  
 The assembly of evil-doers have inclosed me;  
<sup>1</sup>They pierced my hands and my feet.
- 17 I may tell all my bones;  
 They look and stare upon me:
- 18 They part my garments among them,  
 And upon my vesture do they cast lots.

<sup>1</sup> So the Sept., Vulg. and Syr. According to other ancient versions, *They bound*. The Hebrew text as pointed reads, *Like a lion*.

14. *I am poured out like water.* Vv. 14, 15, together with 17a, suggest that the Psalmist is suffering from some raging fever, but Duhm, relying on v. 16, and particularly on his own interpretation of 16c, thinks that the Psalmist has been put in the stocks and that his enemies are standing round. He supposes that the Psalmist's case was like that of Jeremiah: see Jer xxix. 26, xxxviii. 6.

15. *My strength is dried up like a potsherd.* Commentators wish to read *hikki*, "my palate," for *kōhi*, "my strength." The emendation is possible, but it does not sound conclusive. MT gives a vivid Eastern metaphor—the "drying up" of strength, and LXX has ἡ ἰσχὺς μου. Cf xxxi. 10, lxxi. 9.

*thou hast brought me into the dust of death.* Rather, *thou hast made me (as) dead dust.*

16. *dogs have compassed me.* P-B, *many dogs...*, LXX, κίνες πολλοί, Vulgate, *canes multi*. The reading of MT is better, for the quality, not the quantity, of the foe is the subject of complaint. The Psalmist is in the power of "unclean" wretches. The adjective *many* may have been brought in from v. 12, "many bulls."

*They pierced my hands and my feet.* The Hebrew (MT) yields no sense, *As a lion my hands and my feet*. This passage is not cited in any of the Gospel accounts of the Passion: the references to "piercing" in John xix. 37; Rev i. 7 are to Zech xii. 10. See special Note at the end of this Psalm.

17. *and stare upon me.* Better, *and see their desire upon me*. The same phrase as in liv. 7, lix. 10, [xcii. 11], cxii. 8, cxviii. 7.

18. *They part my garments, etc.* Quoted John xix. 23, 24. No distinction is made in the Psalm between "garments" and "vesture," as in the

- 19 But be not thou far off, O LORD:  
 O thou my succour, haste thee to help me.
- 20 Deliver my soul from the sword;  
<sup>1</sup>My darling from the power of the dog.
- 21 Save me from the lion's mouth;  
 Yea, from the horns of the wild-oxen thou hast answered me.

<sup>1</sup> Heb. *My only one.*

Gospel between the "garments" (*ἱμάτια*) and the "coat" (*χιτών*), the inner garment. In the Psalm "garments" (LXX *ἱμάτια*) and "vesture" (*ἱματισμός*) are both general terms.

19. *O thou my succour.* "Succour" (a substantive) is an archaism; cf. cxv. 9, "succour," P-B; "help," RV.

*haste thee.* This urgent form occurs xxxviii. 22, xl. 13, lxx. 1, lxxi. 12, cxli. 1. Cf "Make no tarrying," xl. 17, lxx. 5. The Psalmist prays with the bold urgency of a child.

20. *Deliver my soul from the sword.* More than one explanation is possible. "The sword" may be (1) the sword of the executioner; or (2) the sword of war, or (3)—since the sword among the Hebrews was used not in fight, but in the pursuit to give the *coup de grâce*—"the sword" may be used metaphorically in the sense of the bitter end, i.e. death. Thus the meaning of the words would be, "Save my life from death," in whatever form death threatens. The Psalmist's language is full of metaphors—"the dog"—"the lion's mouth"—"the horns of the wild-oxen."

*My darling.* Heb. *yēhīdāthī*, lit. "my only one," i.e. my life. The word is used exactly in the same way in xxxv. 17, parallel to "my soul."

21. *Yea, from the horns of the wild-oxen thou hast answered me.* According to M<sup>T</sup>, which is accurately rendered as above, the Psalmist turns abruptly in the middle of this verse from urgent petition to full acknowledgement that his petition has been answered. Abrupt turns are found not seldom in the Psalter, and M<sup>T</sup> may be correct here. But LXX read the last Hebrew word (עֲנִיתִי, *ʿānīthānī*) differently, so that the whole verse in the Greek runs:

Σῶσόν με ἐκ στόματος λέοντος,  
 καὶ ἀπὸ κερᾶτων μονοκερῶτων τὴν ταπεινώσιν μου (= ἵτιν)."

"Save me from the mouth of the lion,  
 And my low estate (i.e. me the lowly one) from the horns of the unicorns."

This reading yields a close parallelism between the two halves of the verse. It is perhaps to be preferred.

The "wild ox" (*Bos primigenius*), Heb. *rē'ēm*, now extinct, was once common in Syria. It is figured on Assyrian monuments. It was known for its strength and fierceness. "Unicorn" (P-B, AV) is a fanciful rendering derived from LXX.

- 22 I will declare thy name unto my brethren:  
 In the midst of the congregation will I praise thee.
- 23 Ye that fear the LORD, praise him;  
 All ye the seed of Jacob, glorify him;  
 And stand in awe of him, all ye the seed of Israel.
- 24 For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the  
 afflicted;  
 Neither hath he hid his face from him;  
 But when he cried unto him, he heard.
- 25 Of thee cometh my praise in the great congregation:  
 I will pay my vows before them that fear him.

#### 22-25. PRAISE FOR A GREAT DELIVERANCE

22. *I will declare thy name.* "Thy name" is "thy glory," "thy fame." The Psalmist is offering a sacrifice of thanksgiving for his wonderful deliverance from death, and he takes the opportunity of confessing to his "brethren," i.e. to his fellow-worshippers in the Temple, that his deliverance is due to the goodness of JEHOVAH.

23. *Ye that fear JEHOVAH, praise him.* This address is quite general in form, whereas the two that follow are addressed to "Jacob" and to "Israel." It may be therefore that this clause is addressed to proselytes, or to potential proselytes; cf *v.* 27. The fulness or even redundancy of words in this verse (and generally in this section of the Psalm) should be noted. The Psalmist cannot find words enough to express his praise for his deliverance.

24. *For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted* (one). Two points are to be noticed here: (1) the fulness of the language; (2) the fact that the Psalmist says *not* "my affliction" but "the affliction of the afflicted." As regards the "redundancy" of words, it should be said that LXX supports MT both here and in *v.* 23. Moreover, some allowance should be made for the oriental love of repeating the same thought in different words. As to the second point, it must be said that the Psalmist takes his own case as representative, and his phrase "the affliction of the afflicted" expresses exactly what he means. The emendation which shortens the half verse to *For he hath not abhorred my affliction* comes from the Western scholar's study.

25. *Of thee cometh my praise.* I.e. the deliverance for which I now utter praise came from thee.

*I will pay my vows.* Cf *lxvi.* 13 f. The Psalmist is offering a peace offering; *Lev vii.* 11-17.

*before them that fear him.* Cf *v.* 22.

26 The meek shall eat and be satisfied :

They shall praise the LORD that seek after him :

Let your heart live for ever.

27 All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn unto the LORD :

And all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee.

28 For the kingdom is the LORD'S :

And he is the ruler over the nations.

29 All the fat ones of the earth shall eat and worship :

All they that go down to the dust shall bow before him,

Even he that cannot keep his soul alive.

26-31. THE WHOLE WORLD SHALL TAKE UP JEHOVAH'S PRAISE.

26. *The meek.* Heb. 'ānāvīm, the class to which the Psalmist himself belonged.

*Let your heart live for ever.* I.e. "May ye live for ever"—"May ye revive, gather fresh strength": cf lxix. 32; Gen xlv. 27. See also xxvii. 8, xxviii. 7 ("My heart" standing for the simple pronoun "I").

27. *shall remember... (shall) turn... shall worship.* A progress is described in these three verbs: the nations even those that are remote from Israel shall *first* recall what they once heard of the fame of JEHOVAH, and *next* suffer a change of heart towards Him, and *finally* bow in worship before Him. The same progress is recognised in LXX and in the Vulgate (following LXX): *Reminiscentur... convertentur... adorabunt.*

*unto JEHOVAH... before thee.* This change of person is not unnatural in a Psalm, particularly as the words *before thee* come at the end of a section. But LXX has ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ (Vulgate, *in conspectu eius*), which may be original.

28. *The kingdom is JEHOVAH'S.* Cf xlvi. 2; 1 Chr xxix. 11. The kingdom over all the earth is meant.

*And he is the ruler.* This rendering follows LXX καὶ αὐτὸς δεσπόζει. In the Hebrew text (which is probably defective) there is no stress on the pronoun.

29. *All the fat ones* etc. All have cause to worship JEHOVAH: the prosperous ("fat") ones who have eaten of JEHOVAH'S bounty, those again who have been unfortunate and came near to death, and specially the Psalmist himself who did not deliver himself in his hour, but was delivered by JEHOVAH.

*shall eat and worship.* Rather as P-B, *have eaten and worshipped*; LXX, ἔφαγον καὶ προσεκύνησαν.

*All they that go down to the dust.* Rather, *All they that were going down...*, i.e. those who were at the point of death but were delivered by JEHOVAH.

*shall bow before him.* I.e. in thankfulness.

*Even he that cannot keep his soul alive.* There is no suggestion of

30 A seed shall serve him ;

<sup>1</sup> It shall be told of the Lord unto the *next* generation.

31 They shall come and shall declare his righteousness

Unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done it.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *It shall be counted unto the Lord for his generation*

“can” in the Hebrew: the tense is perfect and describes a past fact. Read, *Even he* (the Psalmist) *who did not keep his own soul* (himself) *alive*. JEHOVAH preserved him.

30. *A seed shall serve him*. Not “*my seed*” only, but the seed of all those mentioned in the preceding verse. The next generation shall continue JEHOVAH’S praise, and shall serve him.

*It shall be told of JEHOVAH unto the next generation*. This is better than marg. *It shall be counted unto the Lord for his generation*.

31. *They shall come*. Men from the ends of the earth (v. 27) shall come to Jerusalem. For *and shall declare* P-B following the Vulgate has (wrongly), *and the heavens shall declare*.

*his righteousness*. In the thought of the Prophets and Psalmists God’s righteousness is revealed when He delivers the oppressed from the oppressor or a faithful worshipper from sickness.

*Unto a people that shall be born*. Cf v. 30, *unto the next generation*. LXX λαῶ τῶ τεχθσομένῳ, a good rendering, for the Hebrew participle is used often of the future; cxxxvii. 8.

*that he hath done it*. Or, *that he* (JEHOVAH) *hath wrought* (deliverance).

#### NOTE ON vv. 9, 10

“Thou art he that took me out of the womb.”

The sense of God’s election of men is very strong in several important passages of the Old Testament. But the election of an individual Hebrew or of the Hebrew people does not imply reprobation for those outside. On the contrary, it leads to the conversion of the Gentiles (v. 27). Neither does Election mean election to the enjoyment of worldly good. The Psalmist is elected by God for enduring suffering and for bearing testimony, but the suffering and the testimony end in the advantage of others. The Biblical doctrine of Election is what the seventeenth Article of Religion declares it to be, “full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort...to such as feel in themselves the working of the Spirit of Christ, *mortifying the works of the flesh, and their earthly members*.” Election connotes discipline and demands service.

#### NOTE ON v. 16c

“They pierced my hands and my feet.”

These well-known words can only be described either as a mistranslation or as a conjecture. The original reading of the passage seems to be lost. The Masoretic Hebrew text has—

“Like a lion my hands and my feet.”

This reading contains no verb, makes no sense, and cannot be right.

The Septuagint gives—

ἄρουξαν χεῖράς μου καὶ πόδας  
 "They dug my hands and my feet."

This rendering contains a verb, but still gives no satisfactory sense, but since we have ἄρουξαν in the Septuagint and כָּאָרַךְ in the Masoretic text, we may conclude with practical certainty that the Greek translators had before them כָּרַךְ (or כָּאָרַךְ). But the sense of כָּרַךְ is "dig," not "pierce," and "dig hands" has no meaning.

The rendering of the Peshitta, "they rent" or "pierced," is most probably derived from the Septuagint, where perhaps the Syriac translator read ἄρουξαν as ἄρηξαν; Jerome, in his own translation *iuxta Hebraeos* gives *vinzerunt*, "they bound," and it was formerly supposed that this rendering had the support of the Greek translator Symmachus, but a fragment of the Hexapla of Origen, published in 1900, shows that Symmachus agreed with the Masoretic text (ὡς λέων)<sup>1</sup>.

## PSALM XXIII

### JEHOVAH THE PROTECTOR OF THE TRAVELLER

#### § 1. CONTENTS.

1. The Journey and the Guide.
- 2-5. The Guide provides for all needs and delivers from all dangers.
6. The Journey ends in safe return.

#### § 2. THE CHARACTER OF THE PSALM.

This like xci. 9b-13 and cxxxix. 1-12 is a *journey* Psalm; it expresses the Psalmist's confidence that JEHOVAH will protect him through the dangers of a journey. This fact is obscured for the reader by a persistent mistranslation in the last verse. The Versions and the majority of modern commentators translate v. 6b, "I will  *dwell*  in the house of JEHOVAH for ever." But MT has, "I will  *return*  within the house of JEHOVAH." The rendering of LXX, καὶ τὸ κατοικεῖν με ἐν οἴκῳ Κυρίου, is forced, whereas MT with an Imperfect Tense in v. 6a and a Converted Perfect in v. 6b is altogether regular.

The end of the Psalm tells of a return journey; the opening words suggest a journey outward bound. The Psalmist begins, JEHOVAH  *is my shepherd* : he intends us to think of himself as guided by JEHOVAH. A shepherd has to feed his flock, and he cannot do this in such a land as Palestine without constantly journeying on to "pastures new." The grass is short-lived under the Eastern sun; fresh patches of herbage have to be sought for daily; to stand still would be to lose the flock. Shepherd and sheep are above all things travellers. So runs lxxviii. 52,

"And he caused his people like sheep to journey,  
 And guided them like a flock in the wilderness."

<sup>1</sup> *Cairo Genizah Palimpsests*, edited by C. Taylor, D.D., Cambridge, 1900.

So the sons of Jacob lead his flocks from Hebron to Dothan, forty miles distant (Gen xxxvii. 12-17), and Moses leads the flock of Jethro far across the peninsula of Sinai (Exod iii. 1).

This Psalm then was said by way of preparation for a journey. Travelling in the East in Old Testament times was neither easy nor safe. Even a short journey in Palestine involved danger from robbers or wild beasts or unbridged rivers or sudden precipices, or from all four combined. If the journey here referred to be indeed David's flight from Absalom the hardships and dangers were very great. The road which leads north-eastward from Jerusalem to the Jordan goes by deep rugged watercourses, ready hiding places whether for wild beasts or for lawless men. Such a course is the Wadi Kelt, a ravine some 400 yards deep with precipitous sides pierced with caves which contain unknown dangers. A step aside may hurl a man to instant death: the lonely traveller may perish through robbers or through wild beasts. Such a spot is a veritable Valley of the Shadow of Death.

The Psalmist starts from the house of  $\text{J}\text{E}\text{H}\text{O}\text{V}\text{A}\text{H}$ , Mount Zion, under the guidance of  $\text{J}\text{E}\text{H}\text{O}\text{V}\text{A}\text{H}$  and he is confident that he will return thither when his journey is done (v. 6). He has friends who fear for him as he sets out, but he tells them that he has no fears. Protection will be given him in danger (v. 4), and food will be given him without fail (v. 5). He answers the forebodings of his friends with the calm words, "I shall not want" (v. 1), "I will fear no evil" (v. 4).

Such is the substance of his answer to his friends, but we may consider further the form in which it is given. The Psalmist is not a "poet" nor a writer, but a singer and a skilful player on a psaltery. He takes it with him to beguile the tediousness of the way. When his friends show their anxiety over his journey, he strikes the chords and *sings* his triumphant answer to their fears. One of these friends stores up the words in memory. Later the extemporised song is committed to writing.

### § 3. AUTHORSHIP OR REFERENCE.

The Psalm has the common heading *lě-David*, i.e. "of (or for) David." The situation indeed is like that of David when he was leaving Jerusalem to escape from Absalom. Many of the king's adherents no doubt felt that, if he once forsook the city, he would never be able to return to it. David's own feelings as he left Jerusalem trembled between hope and fear. He went out by the Mount of Olives weeping (2 Sam xv. 30). But when Zadok the priest wanted the ark to follow the king's flight, David's faith asserted itself. "Carry back the ark of God," he commanded, "into the city: if I shall find grace in the eyes of  $\text{J}\text{E}\text{H}\text{O}\text{V}\text{A}\text{H}$ , he will bring me again and will show me both it and his habitation" (2 Sam xv. 25).

$\text{P}\text{s}$  **xxiii** rises to a still higher level of confidence. If David be indeed the author, it may represent his later feelings after the first danger was over, and after he had received fresh signs of God's favour in the proved faithfulness of Barzillai the Gileadite and others (2 Sam xvii. 27-29). But it is possible that the Psalm is by another hand, though written with reference to this crisis of David's life. The author may have been a student of 2 Samuel and of a generation later than that of David. But, if so, David is his hero.

The journey here portrayed is easily adapted as a figure of the pilgrimage of life, and not so much of the daily round as of the turning points, when one takes up new work or lays down old. The change, like a journey of old time, is often a trial of faith. We do not misuse the Psalmist's language if we apply it to the changes and chances of our own religious life.

A Psalm of David.

**XXIII.** 1 The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

2 He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:

He leadeth me beside the <sup>1</sup>still waters.

3 He restoreth my soul:

He guideth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

<sup>1</sup> Heb. *waters of rest*.

### 1. THE JOURNEY AND THE GUIDE

**XXIII.** 1. *JEHOVAH is my shepherd.* Cf xxviii. 9, c. 3. The same figure is used in Isa xl. 11, "(The Lord JEHOVAH) shall feed his flock like a shepherd, he shall gather the lambs in his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that give suck." The Psalmist, who is about to start on a journey, has full confidence in his Guide.

*I shall not want.* Cf xxxiv. 9, 10. For a long journey many things must be provided, but the Psalmist knows that JEHOVAH will provide for him all that he needs.

### 2-5. THE PROVISION FOR THE WAY

2. *He maketh me to lie down in green (grassy) pastures.* The words suggest both *rest* and *abundance*. The Divine shepherd finds abundant sustenance for His sheep.

*the still waters.* Rather, *the waters of resting places*, places around some spring where the flock can stay for a while and be watered; Gen xxix. 2, 3.

3. *He restoreth my soul.* I.e. *He restoreth my strength* with rest and food. Cf xix. 7, "The law of JEHOVAH is perfect, restoring the soul," where another voice of the same Hebrew verb is used. The stress here (xxiii. 3) is not on "my soul" (which stands for the simple pronoun "me") but on the thought of *strengthening* or *refreshing*. The rendering of P-B, "He converteth my soul," introduces a different thought.

*He guideth me in the paths of righteousness.* The phrase *in the paths of righteousness* must not be understood in the sense of *in righteous conduct*. The *righteousness* is the righteousness of JEHOVAH, not of the Psalmist. JEHOVAH in his character of *righteousness* assigns *safe* paths to his faithful worshipper.

*for his name's sake.* He does this because his name is "Righteous": vii. 9; xi. 7.

- 4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of <sup>1</sup>the shadow of death,  
 I will fear no evil; for thou art with me:  
 Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.
- 5 Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies:  
 Thou hast anointed my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *deep darkness* (and so elsewhere)

4. *though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death.* The shepherd in his journeying must make his flock traverse some dangerous districts of Palestine. There are *wādi's* (to use the Arabic word), that is, deep dry rugged watercourses to be crossed, which may well be called "valleys of the shadow of death."

*in the valley of the shadow of death* (so Peshitta). LXX, ἐν μέσῳ σκιᾶς θανάτου; Vulgate, *in medio umbræ mortis* (i.e. "in the midst of the shadow of death"). The proposal to correct the reading *zal māvēth*, "shadow of death," into *zalmūth*, "deep darkness," has no ancient support and very little to recommend it. (The two words *zal māvēth* should however be written separately and not united as in MT.) But *zalmūth*, "deep darkness," is only an invention of grammarians devised to oust *zal māvēth* wherever it occurs: xlv. 19, cvii. 10, 14; Jer ii. 6. It is a pity that it has been received into RV marg.

*I will fear no evil.* Cf v. 1, "I shall not want."

*Thy rod.* Heb. *shēbet*, an iron-shod club, used against wild beasts, and sometimes also in war: 2 Sam xxiii. 21, "a staff" (rather, "club"). The same word means "sceptre," for the early sceptre was a weapon. In war scenes Egyptian kings wield a sceptre as a club or a mace (Gressmann, figs. 27, 62). Cf ii. 9, note.

*thy staff.* Heb. *mish'eneth*, the shepherd's crook for steadying his steps on uneven ground, and for helping the sheep in an *impasse*.

5. *Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies.* The Psalmist still thinks of his journey, though he drops the metaphor of sheep and shepherd. He fancies himself among the dangerous ravines of Palestine, but he recalls the fact that the Valley of the Shadow of Death may sometimes prove his safety. He is pursued by enemies, and fainting for food, but even so JEHOVAH provides for him. He may safely spread his table and eat and drink undisturbed, for a yawning chasm broader than bowshot separates him from the foe. They can see him, but they are too weary to cross the deep ravine to come up with him. At leisure he anoints his face against the fierce rays of the sun, and at leisure he drains his full cup of water, for his Divine guide has put the *wādi* between him and his foes.

6 <sup>1</sup> Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life:

And I will dwell in the house of the LORD <sup>2</sup> for ever.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *Only*

<sup>2</sup> Heb. *for length of days.*

#### 6. THE RETURN IN SAFETY

6. *Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me.* There is no pursuit by the enemy, but the Psalmist as he goes on his way is conscious of a beneficent following. JEHOVAH'S goodness and mercy follow his footsteps perpetually, assuring him of safety.

*And I will dwell in the house of JEHOVAH.* Rather according to the literal translation of MT, *And I shall return within the house of JEHOVAH.* The Psalmist is a citizen of Zion, and his journey ends in a return thither. *for ever.* Lit. *for length of days.*

The Hebrew Psalmist writes (it seems) of this life only: of a dangerous journey, and of a safe return to dwell "for length of days" in the House of JEHOVAH, on Mount Zion, but the Christian who has received a fuller revelation must needs think, as he reads, of the eternal mansions which the Lord prepares for His own true disciples.

### PSALM XXIV

#### A UNIVERSAL CHALLENGE TO WORSHIP JEHOVAH

##### § 1. CONTENTS.

1, 2. JEHOVAH the Creator of the whole earth and the God of all mankind.

3, 4. He has a holy place set on a hill which is named after himself, *JEHOVAH'S Hill.*

(a) A Challenge: Who is worthy of all the men whom he has made to join the procession up the hill to worship JEHOVAH there? (v. 3).

(b) The Answer: Whosoever is pure ceremonially in the hands, and pure morally in the heart and so has not yearned after the worship of idols, nor been insincere in his worship of JEHOVAH (v. 4).

5, 6. Yea, such persons (of whatever race), who thus seek JEHOVAH, shall be rewarded for their righteousness.

7, 8. (The procession has now reached the summit, and waits admission to the Temple.) Let the gates be opened wide to admit JEHOVAH'S people, who come headed by JEHOVAH himself.

9, 10. Yea, let the gates be opened wide, for it is the God of Israel (JEHOVAH), who is also God of the hosts of heaven (*Zēbāōth*), who claims admission.

##### § 2. OBJECT OF THE PSALM.

Ps xxiv is akin on the one side to Ps viii and on the other to Ps xciv. Ps xxiv (like Ps viii) celebrates JEHOVAH'S work of creation and His providence: and (like Ps xciv) invites men to worship JEHOVAH on the ground that He is the Maker and Preserver of the World.

Further it must be remembered that to the Semite Creation implied not only a "making" of the Universe, but also a victory over the powers of Chaos over "the Deep" (Heb. *Tēhōm*, Gen i. 2). This victory was emphasized, the Psalmist tells us, by the fact that the Creator (JEHOVAH) laid the foundations of the Earth "upon the seas" and made them safe against any inrush of the "floods," i.e. the streams of *Tēhōm* (*Tiāmat*).

Who are the men who are invited to offer this worship? It is probable that the Psalmist is thinking specially of the Gentiles, for the appeal is based not on what JEHOVAH has done in the history of Israel, but on what he has done and is doing as Creator and Sustainer of the Universe. In later Judaism there was a willingness to receive proselytes, and in spite of much harshness of tone and even much fierce denunciation of the Gentiles, we detect the early stirrings of a missionary spirit in many later passages of the Prophets and in the Psalter. The challenge, "Say among the nations, JEHOVAH reigneth" (xcvi. 10) is not a mere rhetorical flourish, for it does not stand alone. The Temple itself, says the Prophet, "shall be called an house of prayer for all peoples" (Isa lvi. 7).

### § 3. LITURGICAL USE.

This Psalm was sung in the Temple on "the first day of the week." See General Introduction, p. lxxvi.

A Psalm of David.

- XXIV.** 1 The earth is the LORD'S, and the fulness thereof;  
The world, and they that dwell therein.  
2 For he hath founded it upon the seas,  
And established it upon the floods.

#### 1, 2. JEHOVAH THE CREATOR

**XXIV.** 1. *The earth is the LORD'S.* Rather, *To JEHOVAH belongeth the earth*; Vulgate, *Domini est terra*. The stress is on the Divine Name at the beginning as at the close of the Psalm, "JEHOVAH *Zēbāōth*, He is the King of glory."

*and the fulness thereof.* Heb. *mēlō'āh*; LXX, τὸ πλήρωμα αὐτῆς. Deut xxxiii. 16; cf Isa vi. 3, lit. "The fulness of the earth is His glory," i.e. all that is in the earth testifies to the glory of God.

*The world.* Heb. *tēbēl*. The Hebrew word (borrowed perhaps from Babylonian) is used without the article as a quasi-proper name. What difference of meaning exists between "the earth" (Heb. *ereṣ*) and "world" (*tēbēl*) is not clear, but LXX gives ἡ γῆ for the first, and ἡ οἰκουμένη, "the inhabited world," for the second; Vulgate (for *tēbēl*), *orbis terrarum*, whence P-B, *the round world*, here and in xviii. 15, xciii. 2 (1).

2. *hath founded it upon* (Heb. 'al) *the seas*. Cf cxxxvi. 6, "To him that spread forth the earth above (Heb. 'al "upon") the waters": also Gen i. 7, 9. See Introduction § 2, above.

*the floods.* Heb. *nēhārōth*, as in Job xxviii. 11 ("the streams"). The reference in both places is to underground waters.

- 3 Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD?  
And who shall stand in his holy place?
- 4 He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart;  
Who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity,  
And hath not sworn deceitfully.
- 5 He shall receive a blessing from the LORD,  
And righteousness from the God of his salvation.

### 3, 4. THE CHALLENGE AND ANSWER

3. *Who shall ascend...?* Of the similar challenge (and answer) in xv 1, "JEHOVAH, who shall be thy guest in thy tent? Who shall dwell in thy holy hill?"

4. *hath clean hands.* I.e. is ceremonially clean.

*a pure heart.* I.e. is sincere in his worship of JEHOVAH.

*hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity.* "Vanity" (Heb. *shāv*) means that which is empty or has no substance. It is applied to idols and to worship of idols. This and many other passages of the Psalter are illustrations of the strength of the temptation which beset the Jews to practise idolatry, no less after the Babylonish captivity than before. They were a very small people to whom all image-worship was strictly forbidden, living in the midst of tribes who had always been idolaters. A short day's journey in almost any direction would bring the Jew into a land where images were made and worshipt.

Many of the gods or idols of their heathen neighbours were supposed to have powers of healing and of conferring benefits, and great was the temptation to resort to them in times of stress; cf 2 K i. 2, 3; 2 Macc xii. 39, 40. The wonder is not that the Jews had frequent lapses, but that they survived as a monotheistic and image-hating people.

*his soul.* So C'thib, Lxx B, Vulgate, but K'ri, LXX A, read *my soul*, τὴν ψυχὴν μου. With the latter reading we may see perhaps a reference to Exod xx. 7 (the Third Commandment): *Who hath not taken my soul (i.e. myself or my name) in vain.*

*And hath not sworn deceitfully.* I.e. *hath not sworn allegiance to JEHOVAH deceitfully*, with mental reservation in favour of some particular idolatrous cult to be practised on occasion in addition to the worship of JEHOVAH: Israel's great temptation was not to renounce JEHOVAH, but to associate some other god with Him: cf Exod xx. 3, "none other *gods before (or beside) me*": 1 K xviii. 21, "How long go ye limping, being of two opinions?"

### 5, 6. THE REWARD OF THE PURE IN HEART

5. *righteousness.* I.e. the reward which God in his righteousness gives to those who deserve a reward.

- 6 This is the generation of them that seek after him,  
That seek thy face, <sup>1</sup>O <sup>2</sup>God of Jacob. [Selah]
- 7 Lift up your heads, O ye gates;  
And be ye lift up, ye <sup>3</sup>everlasting doors:  
And the King of glory shall come in.
- 8 Who is the King of glory?  
The LORD strong and mighty,  
The LORD mighty in battle.
- 9 Lift up your heads, O ye gates;  
Yea, lift them up, ye <sup>3</sup>everlasting doors:  
And the King of glory shall come in.
- 10 Who is this King of glory?  
The LORD of hosts,  
He is the King of glory. [Selah]

<sup>1</sup> Or, even *Jacob*<sup>2</sup> So some ancient versions.<sup>3</sup> Or, *ancient*

6. *This is the generation.* I.e. Such are the people. Cf lxxviii. 8. *That seek thy face, O God of Jacob.* This rendering follows LXX, Vulgate, but the Hebrew has, *That seek thy face, O Jacob*, as AV. *Jacob* (lit. "Conqueror") is here a name or epithet of the God of Israel: see xliv. 4, xlvi. 7, with the notes.

#### 7, 8. THE SUMMONS: OPEN THE GATES

7. *Lift up your heads.* A poetical variation from *Lift up yourselves* which comes in the following clause. Cf vii. 16a, "His mischief shall return upon his head," i.e. upon himself.

*ye everlasting doors.* Better, *ye ancient doors.* Lit. *doors of an age* (Hebrew 'ōlām = Gk. αἰών), i.e. the Temple doors. Cf cxliii. 3, "as those that have been long dead," lit. "as the dead of an age" ('olam).

*the King of glory.* LXX, ὁ βασιλεὺς τῆς δόξης. The King to whom glory should be ascribed: xxix. 1, 2, 9.

8. *JEHOVAH mighty in battle* (or *war*). This is a stronger phrase even than *JEHOVAH is a man of war* in the Song of Miriam: Exod xv. 3. The reference may be to some recent deliverance of Jerusalem from a foreign foe. Other passages of the Psalter which refer to *JEHOVAH* as a God of war are xviii. 14, 34, xxxv. 1-3, xlvi. 8, 9 (note), cxliv. 1. For a passage discountenancing war see cxlvii. 10, note.

#### 9, 10. THE ANSWER: YES, OPEN THE GATES

9. *Lift up your heads* etc. For other cases of the use of refrains see xlii. 11 with xliii. 5 and lxvii. 3 and 5.

10. *The LORD of hosts* (Heb. *JEHOVAH Zēbāōth*). The title is perhaps an abbreviation of "JEHOVAH the God of hosts." The "hosts" are understood to mean either "the starry hosts," or "the hosts of Israel," who fought from time to time the battles of *JEHOVAH* their God.

## PSALM XXV

THOU ART MY GOD...FORGIVE ME MY TRESPASSES...  
DELIVER ME FROM EVIL MEN....

## § 1. "ARTIFICIAL" ARRANGEMENT OF THE TEXT.

The verses of this Psalm are arranged in alphabetical order, or nearly so; cf Introduction to Ps ix, x. There are twenty-two verses as there are twenty-two letters in the Hebrew alphabet. *V.* 1 begins with the letter *Aleph*; *v.* 2 began (once) with *Beth*; *v.* 3 begins with *Gimel*, the third letter of the alphabet, and so on. This order is broken at *v.* 6, where the letter *Vau* is not represented, and again at *vv.* 18, 19, both of which begin with the same letter, *Resh*. The alphabet ends with *Tau* at *v.* 21. *V.* 22 stands outside the alphabetic scheme.

In spite of this "artificial" arrangement this Psalm is a living utterance; nor ought it to be called "a mosaic of all sorts of petitions" (Duhm). What is artificial to a Western is (often) nature to an Eastern, and this Psalm, though formal in its arrangement, is in its matter a heartfelt human cry, as the following analysis of the contents shows.

## § 2. CONTENTS.

1-3 (*Aleph* to *Gimel*). The Psalmist appeals to JEHOVAH against his enemies. As so often happens with other men, it is trouble that makes the Psalmist feel his need of JEHOVAH.

4-7 (*Daleth* to *Heth*). He entreats JEHOVAH for his merciful guidance, while he confesses his own past sin.

8-10 (*Teth* to *Caph*). A description of JEHOVAH'S kindness towards those

- (a) who have been offenders (*v.* 8),
- (b) yet belong to the class of the *'anāvim* (*v.* 9),
- (c) and so are keepers of His covenant (*v.* 10).

11 (*Lamed*). An interlude. The Psalmist breaks out into a fresh cry for forgiveness.

12-14 (*Mem* to *Samech*). The Blessedness of those who fear JEHOVAH.

15-21 (*Ain* to *Tau*). The Psalmist renews the appeal which he made in *vv.* 1-3 at greater length and with increased earnestness. He fears even for his life.

22 (standing outside the alphabetical arrangement). A prayer for Israel, the nation.

## § 3. NATIONAL AND INDIVIDUAL PSALMS.

Ps xxv throws an interesting light on the recurring question whether a Psalmist is speaking in his own name or in the name of his people. Plainly the Author (or the Editor who added *v.* 22) felt that this Psalm needed the addition of some more definite words to adapt it to the needs of the nation. As *vv.* 1-21 stand they are an individual's prayer on his own behalf.

## § 4. PENITENTIAL?

In view of the contents of *vv.* 6, 7, 8, 11, and 18 we should expect to find this Psalm reckoned as a Penitential Psalm in addition to the Seven so called. See xxxii, Introduction.

*A Psalm of David.*

- XXV.** 1 Unto thee, O LORD, do I lift up my soul.  
 2 O my God, in thee have I trusted,  
 Let me not be ashamed;  
 Let not mine enemies triumph over me.  
 3 Yea, none that wait on thee shall be ashamed:  
 They shall be ashamed that deal treacherously without cause.  
 4 Shew me thy ways, O LORD;  
 Teach me thy paths.  
 5 Guide me in thy truth, and teach me;  
 For thou art the God of my salvation;  
 On thee do I wait all the day.  
 6 Remember, O LORD, thy tender mercies and thy lovingkindnesses;  
 For they have been ever of old.

#### 1-7. THE APPEAL

**XXV.** 1. *Unto thee...do I lift up my soul.* The same vivid phrase in lxxxvi. 4, cxliii. 8. In xxviii. 2 occurs the more formal phrase, "I lift up my hands toward thy holy oracle," i.e. toward the Holy of holies (Heb ix 3) of the Temple. The Psalmist's whole being aspires towards his God.

2. *O my God.* This address is to be joined on to the preceding verse: translate, *Unto thee, O JEHOVAH, do I lift up my soul,* saying, *O my God.* The Psalmist is making a vehement profession of faithfulness to JEHOVAH.

*Let me not be ashamed.* I.e. "Let me not be *disappointed* of the succour I hope for." The Psalmist has a reason for his qualms, for he is conscious of sin (v. 7, 11): "What if his sin should come between him and his God?"

3. *wait on thee.* Faith expresses itself in waiting: cf v. 5, xxxvii. 9, "those that wait upon JEHOVAH, they shall inherit the land," i.e. in due time: cxxx. 5, 6, "I wait for JEHOVAH...More than watchmen for the morning."

*that deal treacherously without cause.* Rather, *that deal treacherously after the manner of vile fellows.* Probably the Hebrew adverb *rēkām* ("without a cause") means here "after the manner of the *rēkīm*," "vile fellows," who can be led into any mischief: Jud ix. 4. Another suggestion is that *rēkām* means, "without effect": the treacherous dealers shall be ashamed in that they shall not be able to effect anything.

5. *Guide me.* Or, *Make me to tread*; cf cxix. 35, "Make me to tread in the path of thy commandments." A petition for grace. See v. 8, note on *Lead me.*

6. *Remember...thy tender mercies.* Cf Isa lxiii. 15, "Where is thy zeal

7 Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions :  
According to thy lovingkindness remember thou me,

For thy goodness' sake, O LORD.

8 Good and upright is the LORD :

Therefore will he instruct sinners in the way.

and thy mighty acts? the yearning of thy bowels and thy compassions are restrained toward me."

7. *Remember not the sins of my youth.* With the mention of his sins and the recollection of the danger in which they involve him the Psalmist breaks through the easy rhythm of the preceding verses and shows his urgency in broken sentences :

Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions ;  
According to thy lovingkindness remember me thou,  
For thy goodness' sake, O JEHOVAH.

Even in the English the reader can perceive the eager piling up of words which interrupts the general rhythm of the Psalm.

The recurring question in the criticism of the Psalms arises here, Are we to look for sense or for strict "metre"? By the sense the present text is justified; the Psalmist is in deadly earnest; he desires to be free from his sins of every kind. But two kinds are representative of all (a) the idle, careless fault called usually "sin" (*ἀμαρτία*, Heb. *hattāth*) and (b) the deliberate sin ("transgression, rebellion," Heb. *pésha'*). When it comes to asking for a blotting out of sin the Psalmist forgets his alphabet and breaks free from his metre, and prays according to the extremity of his need; May JEHOVAH pass over both his careless sins and his deliberate transgressions—may JEHOVAH forget the sin and remember the Psalmist—for JEHOVAH is good!

But Duhm, for the sake of strict metre, re-writes the verse as a simple couplet :

The sins of my youth remember not  
For thy goodness' sake, JEHOVAH.

Thus the Psalmist's urgency is lost.

*According to thy lovingkindness remember thou me.* There is emphasis on the pronoun *Thou*: the Hebrew order is, *Remember me Thou*,—"Thou—JEHOVAH—to whom I have lifted up my Soul—who art indeed the God of my salvation."

#### 8-10. JEHOVAH'S LOVINGKINDNESS

8. *Good and upright.* I.e. "merciful and righteous." The Psalmist has anticipated the character of the Christian's God. For *upright* of xcii. 15, "JEHOVAH is upright...and there is no unrighteousness in him." For *good* of cxxxv. 3, note.

*will he instruct sinners.* The Hebrew verb is *yōreh*, cognate with

- 9 The meek will he guide in judgement:  
And the meek will he teach his way.
- 10 All the paths of the LORD are lovingkindness and truth  
Unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies.
- 11 For thy name's sake, O LORD,  
Pardon mine iniquity, for it is great.

*Torah*, "the Law," or (more literally) "the instruction"; i. 2 note. To *instruct sinners* is an unfamiliar thought in O.T.; but cf li. 13, "Sinners shall be converted unto thee." Usually *sinners* are regarded as a permanent class of men, for whom nothing but punishment remains: i. 5, civ. 35. Here LXX gives not ἁμαρτωλούς, "sinners," but the milder ἁμαρτάνοντας (ἐν ὁδῷ), "who miss the way."

9. *The meek...the meek.* LXX, πραεῖς...πραεῖς. The repetition of the same word in the two parallel halves of the verse is unusual, but the term ἄνῳνῖμ, "meek ones," is technical here, so that it could not be changed with advantage: see ix. 12, note on *the poor*.

(*will he guide*) in judgement. I.e. within the sphere of judgment or "Right." Cf v. 5.

10. *the paths of JEHOVAH.* "Path" or "Way" is used metaphorically in the language of many religions to signify the collective teaching of that religion. So it comes to mean the religion itself, as in Acts ix. 2, where "the way" (ἡ ὁδός) stands for the Christian religion.

*lovingkindness and truth* (faithfulness). LXX, ἔλεος καὶ ἀλήθεια. God's commandments spring from His mercy towards mankind and from His faithfulness in His dealings with men. JEHOVAH is not arbitrary, nor fickle like the gods of the nations who are moved by various passions. This thought is frequent in the Psalter: it is expressed by the words "truth" (Heb. *ēmeth*), "faithfulness" (Heb. *ēmūnāh*).

*Unto such as keep his covenant.* The words glance at unfaithful Jews, and warn them against yielding to heathen influence: cf 1 Mac i. 11-15; 2 Mac iv. 7-15. There is a "covenant" between JEHOVAH and His people, and His commands are not lightly given: they are "testimonies" solemnly delivered.

## 11. FORGIVE!

11. *For thy name's sake.* Cf v. 7, "For thy goodness' sake, JEHOVAH," an appeal which is immediately followed by the confession, "Good and upright is JEHOVAH." See Ezek xx. 8, 9, "I said I would pour out my fury upon them...But I wrought for my name's sake, that it should not be profaned in the sight of the nations."

*for it is great.* His iniquity is "great," therefore he makes the supreme appeal "for thy name's sake."

12 What man is he that feareth the LORD?

Him shall he instruct in the way that he shall choose.

13 His soul shall dwell at ease;

And his seed shall inherit the land.

14 The <sup>1</sup>secret of the LORD is with them that fear him;

<sup>2</sup>And he will shew them his covenant.

15 Mine eyes are ever toward the LORD;

For he shall pluck my feet out of the net.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *counsel* Or, *friendship*

<sup>2</sup> Or, *And his covenant, to make them know it*

#### 12-14. THE BLESSEDNESS OF THOSE WHO FEAR JEHOVAH

12. *Him shall he instruct...choose.* Rather, *Him shall he instruct, for him he shall choose a way.* I.e. JEHOVAH shall guide him. For illustrations of Exod xiii. 21; Num x. 33.

13. *His soul.* A periphrasis for the pronoun "he."

*shall dwell.* Or, *shall pass the night*, after a day of toil or of journeying. *at ease.* Lit. *with good*, a perfectly general expression.

*his seed shall inherit the land.* Prosperity according to Hebrew thought was hardly to be reckoned as prosperity unless it were transmitted to the next generation. Cf xc. 16, "Let thy work appear unto thy servants, And thy glory upon their children": ciii. 17, cxv. 14.

14. *The secret of JEHOVAH* etc. I.e. *Intimacy with JEHOVAH have those who fear him.* The Hebrew noun *sōd* means (1) "council," as in lxiv. 2, "the council (or "company") of evil-doers": (2) "counsel" as in lv. 14, "we took sweet counsel together": (3) "familiar converse, intimacy," as in Pro iii. 32, "his (JEHOVAH'S) intimacy is with the upright." See also Ecclus iii. 19 (Hebrew text), "He revealeth his secret to the meek."

*And he will shew them his covenant.* Better as marg. *And his covenant, to make them know it.* The meaning is to make these men see that God's covenant is a firm covenant, and that God who makes the covenant is utterly faithful in it. The rendering of RV (text) suggests that the "fearers of JEHOVAH" need to be taught the *terms* of the covenant, but this is an unlikely meaning.

#### 15-21. THE APPEAL RENEWED

15. *Mine eyes are ever toward JEHOVAH.* Cf v. 5, "On thee do I wait all the day."

*he shall pluck my feet out of the net.* Rather, *he shall bring me forth from the net that is about my feet* (lit. "the net of my feet"). What is meant by "the net"? Probably it means his present position: he is in trouble of some kind, and in addition he is conscious of sin. His malicious enemies (vv. 2, 3, 19) take advantage of the situation to cast a snare upon him, by telling him (after the manner of Job's friends) that

- 16 Turn thee unto me, and have mercy upon me;  
For I am desolate and afflicted.
- 17 The troubles of my heart <sup>1</sup>are enlarged:  
O bring thou me out of my distresses.
- 18 Consider mine affliction and my travail;  
And forgive all my sins.
- 19 Consider mine enemies, for they are many;  
And they hate me with cruel hatred.

<sup>1</sup> Or, as otherwise read, *relieve thou, and bring me &c.*

his trouble is the punishment of his sin—therefore irreparable. They wish to drive him to despair. The only remedy is with ΙΕΗΟΥΑΗ, so the Psalmist cries “*he* (the pronoun is emphatic) shall bring me forth from the net.”

16. *Turn thee unto me, and have mercy upon me.* The same phrase as in lxxxvi. 16; “To turn unto” is of course the opposite of “To hide the face from” (xiii. 1).

*desolate.* Heb. *yāhīd*, “an only one” (a lonely one), applied to Isaac in Gen xxii. 2. Here LXX gives *μονογενής* as the rendering: Vulgate, *unicus*. The Psalmist feels himself to be *one* against *many* enemies (v. 19).

17. *The troubles of my heart are enlarged.* Better (perhaps), *Troubles have enlarged my heart.* The *heart* (with the Hebrews) is the seat of the understanding: the Psalmist wishes to say that the troubles have taught him the desired lesson. Cf cxix. 67, “Before I was afflicted I went astray; But now I observe thy word.” So the Psalmist having received his lesson prays now to be brought out of his troubles.

18, 19. The Psalmist, being deeply moved, forgets his alphabetical arrangement here. These two verses begin with the same letter, *Resh*. The initial word of the Hebrew is in both cases *Rš'ēh*, “Consider.” There is deep significance in this repetition of the cry—“Consider... Consider.” The Psalmist is in double distress, *first*, from his original trouble, and *secondly*, from the danger he is in from enemies who would add to his trouble.

There is a proposal to amend the *rš'ēh* of v. 18, and to read *kazzēr* in order to have the missing letter, *Koph*, represented. The text thus corrected would read in v. 18, “Shorten mine affliction,” to be followed by “Consider mine enemies” in v. 19. But the repetition “Consider... Consider” has the more natural ring in it. It is urgent. Is it incredible that the Psalmist should forget his alphabetic arrangement?

18. *forgive all my sins.* This is one of the few passages of the Psalter which contain a downright acknowledgement of sin. Not all the Penitential Psalms (so-called) are definite in this sense. The opposite tendency—to assert innocence—is perhaps more conspicuous in the Psalter.

19. *they hate me with cruel hatred.* Lit. *with hatred of violence*, i.e.

- 20 O keep my soul, and deliver me:  
 Let me not be ashamed, for I put my trust in thee.
- 21 Let integrity and uprightness preserve me,  
 For I wait on thee.
- 22 Redeem Israel, O God,  
 Out of all his troubles.

hatred which is capable of doing deeds of violence. Hence the Psalmist prays, as in the following verse:

20. *O keep my soul*, i.e. from the violence of those that hate me.

*Let me not be ashamed.* Cf v. 2.

21. *Let integrity and uprightness preserve me.* I.e. Let my present integrity and my present uprightness preserve me. He asks that his present faithfulness may keep him from the punishment due for his past sin.

## 22. A PETITION FOR ISRAEL

22. *Redeem Israel, O God, Out of all his troubles.* The Psalm itself is an individual's prayer under his own troubles. Possibly it is an editor who adds this colophon to fit the Psalm for national use.

## PSALM XXVI

### A FAITHFUL WORSHIPPER OF JEHOVAH CLAIMS JEHOVAH'S HELP

#### § 1. CONTENTS.

The Psalm falls into four divisions:

1. The Psalmist's appeal in the consciousness of his own "integrity" for JEHOVAH'S help.

2-8. The grounds of his appeal: Through love of JEHOVAH'S house he has held himself aloof from those who have profaned it by their corrupt conduct.

9-11. He renews his appeal with fresh complaints of the profanity of the "sinners," as he calls them.

12. The Psalmist's assurance that his appeal has been accepted.

#### § 2. THE OCCASION OF THIS PSALM: THE OFFENCE OF MONOTHEISM.

One modern criticism passed on the Psalmists is that they are "continually cursing their neighbours." There are in fact few Psalms in which no reference is made to foes. But what were the circumstances in general under which the Psalmists lived? The religion of Israel, especially as it reveals itself in the Psalms, was based on two great principles. These principles have been well summed in the phrase *Ethical Monotheism*. The first principle, which the later Jews called a Root (*'ikkār*), is that of Monotheism: it is found stated in its most impressive form in Deut vi. 4, "Hear, O Israel: JEHOVAH our God, JEHOVAH is one." There could be for Israel only one God, for JEHOVAH the

God who had brought the people out of Egypt and had made them a nation, was also the God who had created heaven and earth, and still exercised His providence over all things. The religion of Israel knew nothing of any rival God, nothing of Dualism. The Hebrew prophets confronted boldly the problem of Pain and Sorrow: by their mouth *JEHOVAH* proclaimed, "I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace, and create evil; I am *JEHOVAH*, that doeth all these things" (Isa. xlvi. 7).

But pure Monotheism was unthinkable to the nations among whom Israel lived. The idea of a Supreme God was indeed a favourite one; but He for his dignity must have other less important gods "before him": cf. Exod. xx. 3, the First Commandment. He must have a wife, and a son as Mouthpiece or "Prophet," and perhaps a number of other deities as attendants standing in his presence. The Queen of Heaven and the Host of Heaven were to the mind of the Semite the necessary corollaries to the Lord (*Baal*) of Heaven. The religion of Israel, which acknowledged none of these things, was a standing offence to the neighbouring peoples. To them one god more or less was a small matter: he could easily be found a place in some capacity in the Pantheon. Probably he represented some interest in the life of the time—War or Agriculture or healing of disease or the like.

Such ideas made a successful appeal to many Israelites. They were easier, less lofty than Monotheism for those lower natures who wanted "warmth and colour." And so under the pressure of neighbouring religions there were always men in Israel who held loosely their own religion and divided their worship between *JEHOVAH* and one or more of the *Baalim*, the lesser gods, who from the time of the Amorite and Canaanite were remembered at local shrines.

The second principle of the religion of Israel is that *JEHOVAH* is good. He is full of lovingkindness (v. 7), "good and upright" (xxv. 8), "there is no unrighteousness in him" (xcii. 15). Moreover this good and righteous God demanded goodness and righteousness from His worshippers. The religion of Israel was ethical.

On the other hand, so the heathen thought, the duty of man towards the gods was done when the gods were worshipped with the accustomed sacrifices at the accustomed shrines. The gods would not care what men did, or did not do, to one another. Again a heathen view commended itself to many Israelites. They preferred the absence of moral restraint allowed by heathen religions, as we learn from such passages as xiv. 1, "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God," i.e. no Divine Judge (Heb. *ēlōhīm*) to call men to account for acts of oppression: cf. xciv. 7.

But the Israelite who was faithful to *JEHOVAH* and to his religion was brought into complete opposition to his heathen neighbours. Nor could the opposition remain merely theoretical. Heathenism in its later form of Hellenism was an aggressive force which turned away many Israelites from their natural allegiance. It parted brother from brother, and so left bitterness between the faithful Hebrew and his unfaithful compatriot. The bitterness was doubled when heathen influence invaded the priesthood itself, and the faithful priest was confronted with the priest of heathen morals.

The Psalmist of Ps. xxvi as a faithful Israelite could not ignore his heathen

and Israelitish foes. He did well (according to his lights) to be angry. As a true worshipper of JEHOVAH he hates the corrupt priests who profane true religion by accepting bribes in judgment, and causing (or allowing) men to be put to death wrongfully. As a brother-priest he fears to be involved in the judgment which he expects to fall upon his fellows.

For the improbable suggestion that the Psalm is of the nature of an oath of purification to meet the charge of wrong done to a neighbour see Introduction to Ps cxlii, § 3.

*A Psalm of David.*

**XXVI.** 1 Judge me, O LORD, for I have walked in mine integrity:

I have trusted also in the LORD <sup>1</sup>without wavering.

2 Examine me, O LORD, and prove me;

Try my reins and my heart.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *I shall not slide*

1. THE APPEAL

**XXVI.** 1. *Judge me.* P-B *Be thou my judge.* The same appeal is made in vii. 8. The Hebrew root שָׁפַט, "judge," is that from which the well-known *shōphēt*, "a judge" (Book of Judges, *passim*), is derived. The Heb. *shōphēt* was the "champion" of his people like Gideon or Jephthah or Samson: his office as arbiter in civil disputes (like an English judge) was of secondary importance in those days of perpetual war. So *Be thou my judge* means rather, *Be thou my champion*. The Hebrews did not distinguish clearly between the Judge and the Advocate (or even Avenger), as the parable of the Unjust Judge shows (Luke xviii. 2 ff). *without wavering.* Lit. *I slide not*, or *I slip not*, i.e. through distracted attention, through looking away from JEHOVAH and thinking of some other god. *Without wavering* in 1 b answers to *in mine integrity* in 1 a. P-B *therefore shall I not fall* does not suit the context, for v. 1 tells of the Psalmist's faithfulness, not of his confidence of safety.

2-8. THE GROUNDS OF THE APPEAL

2. *Examine...and prove.* The Psalmist now seeks to justify his appeal to JEHOVAH to be his champion; he urges that he has been faithful and will continue faithful to JEHOVAH. *Prove*, the same verb in the Hebrew as in Gen xxii. 1, "God did *prove* Abraham."

*Try my reins.* LXX, πύρωσον τοὺς νεφρούς μου; Vulgate, *ure renes meos*. The verb is used of metal-working, "smelt, refine" with fire; so in xii. 6, "silver tried in a furnace." The "reins" (kidneys) were regarded by the Hebrews as the seat of the emotions and affections. Here and elsewhere LXX gives νεφρούς, which is right as the literal meaning of the Hebrew word, but the Greek σπλάγχνα, "bowels" or "heart," suggests better the connotation of the Heb. *kālāyōth*, "reins."

- 3 For thy lovingkindness is before mine eyes;  
And I have walked in thy truth.
- 4 I have not sat with vain persons;  
Neither will I go in with dissemblers.
- 5 I hate the congregation of evil-doers,  
And will not sit with the wicked.
- 6 I will wash mine hands in innocency;  
So will I compass thine altar, O LORD:
- 7 That I may <sup>1</sup>make the voice of thanksgiving to be heard,  
And tell of all thy wondrous works.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *publish with the voice of thanksgiving*

3. *thy lovingkindness is before mine eyes.* The Psalmists are well assured of the *hesed*, "lovingkindness" of JEHOVAH; cf v. 7, xxiii. 6, xxv. 10; *al.*

*in thy truth.* Cf xxv. 5, note.

4. *I have not sat.* Cf i. 1, "the seat of the scornful," with note. *vain persons.* Lit. *men of vanity* (Heb. *shāv*). The expression may mean simply "men of no moral worth," *worthless men*, or it may contain a reference to idolatry, *worshippers of vain gods*.

*Neither will I go in.* I.e. into the houses of (the dissemblers), P-B (*bené*), *Neither will I have fellowship with the deceitful.*

*dissemblers.* Those who are secretly unfaithful to JEHOVAH: cf Ezek viii. 7-12.

5. *I hate.* Cf cxxxix. 21. The Hebrews were not able to discriminate between "evil" and "the evil person"; they therefore in the name of JEHOVAH hated both.

*the congregation.* Heb. *kāhāl*; LXX, *ἐκκλησίαν*. It is used of Israel in the wilderness: Num xvi. 3, xx. 4 ("the congregation of JEHOVAH"). The use of the word *kāhāl* suggests that the Psalmist regarded his enemies as an organized body. There were indeed times in which the main body of the priests were unfaithful to the ideals of Judaism: Neh xiii. 4-9, 28-30; 2 Macc iv. 14, 15.

6. *I will wash mine hands.* Cf Deut xxi. 6, 7; Matt xxvii. 24.

*in innocency.* I.e. in freedom from the pollution which he would have incurred but for the abstention he describes in *vv.* 4, 5.

*So will I compass thine altar.* The phrase contains two suggestions: (1) that the Psalmist will defend (cf Deut xxxii. 10) the altar in his purity; (2) that he will wait on (or attend it) in purity. If the Psalmist was himself a priest, both suggestions would apply.

7. *make the voice of thanksgiving to be heard.* The Psalmist was (possibly) one of the Temple singers: 2 Chr v. 13.

*thy wondrous works* (Heb. *niphlā'ōth*), "deeds, deliverances beyond belief," such as are enumerated in Pss lxxviii, cv, cvi.

- 8 LORD, I love the habitation of thy house,  
 And the place <sup>1</sup>where thy glory dwelleth.  
 9 <sup>2</sup>Gather not my soul with sinners,  
 Nor my life with men of blood:  
 10 In whose hands is mischief,  
 And their right hand is full of bribes.  
 11 But as for me, I will walk in mine integrity:  
 Redeem me, and be merciful unto me.

<sup>1</sup> Heb. *of the tabernacle of thy glory.*

<sup>2</sup> Or, *Take not away*

8. *JEHOVAH, I love. I have loved* (P-B), a rendering which springs from a misunderstanding of the Hebrew use of tenses. The tense is the same as in v. 5, "I hate"; and in vi. 6, "I am weary." States of *present* feeling are frequently expressed in Hebrew by the perfect tense.

*the habitation of thy house. Habitation* (Heb. *mā'ōn*) is the word used in xc. 1, "Lord, thou hast been an habitation for us." The Temple is not only JEHOVAH'S house, but it is also a *habitation*, a home, for His people. Compare what is said of the tribe of Benjamin in Deut xxxiii. 12, "Of Benjamin he said, The beloved of JEHOVAH shall dwell in safety by him; He covereth him all the day long."

*And the place where thy glory dwelleth.* Lit. *the place of the tabernacle of thy glory.* The Psalmist loves Mount Zion as the place where JEHOVAH'S *tabernacle* (Heb. *mishkan*) was to find permanent rest.

#### 9-11. THE APPEAL RENEWED

9. *Gather not my soul with sinners.* The word "gather" (Heb. *āsaph*) is used of the gathering in of the harvest. Here however the thought is of gathering in the *tares* ("sinners"; Matt xiii. 30). The Psalmist prays that he may not be reckoned among them.

*men of blood.* Heb. *anshē dāmīm*. The sing. (Heb. *īsh dāmīm*) is translated "bloodthirsty man" in v. 6, but the more general rendering given here is better. The expression *men of blood* may mean either "bloodthirsty men" or "men with the guilt of bloodshed already on them."

10. (*In whose hands*) *is mischief.* Rather, *are deeds of wickedness.* The Hebrew word *zimmāh* (used here collectively) is applied to different kinds of unchastity: Lev xviii. 17, xix. 29; Job xxxi. 11: also to deeds of cruelty, cxix. 150.

*full of bribes.* If those whom the Psalmist criticizes were priests, it must be remembered that interpretation of the *Torah*, in other words the function of judging, belonged to the priests. But these priests were corrupt in judgment. Deut xvii. 8, 9; Mal ii. 7.

11. *But as for me.* The Psalmist claims to be different from his fellow-priests: cf vv. 5, 6 with the notes.

*Redeem me.* "Pay the price which will save me from being put to

12 My foot standeth in an even place :

In the congregations will I bless the LORD.

death"; cf 1 Sam xiv. 45, RV marg. (the ransoming of Jonathan). The idea of *wergild* is so familiar in the East that the Psalmist uses it metaphorically even of a deliverance wrought by JEHOVAH : cf cxix. 134 ; Isa xliii. 3, 4.

## 12. THE PSALMIST'S ASSURANCE THAT HIS APPEAL IS ACCEPTED

12. *My foot standeth.* The Hebrew verb *'amad*, "stand," has the suggestion of *permanence* and *safety*, as the English verb in :

"He said and stood ;

But Satan smitten with amazement fell."

(Milton, *P.R.* iv. 561-2)

*in an even place.* I.e. in a place of vantage. The Psalmist has gained level ground easy for his feet and commanding a view of any approaching enemy.

*will I bless JEHOVAH.* The Psalmist is beforehand with his thanksgiving, and he is faithful. JEHOVAH is the second word (and the last!) of this Psalm.

## PSALM XXVII

### LIGHT AND SHADE IN THE PSALMIST'S LIFE

#### § 1. CONTENTS.

1-3. The Psalmist's confidence in JEHOVAH.

4-6. His one petition : to remain through all his life a citizen of Jerusalem with access to the Temple.

7-12. He pleads as a faithful worshipper of JEHOVAH that JEHOVAH will not leave him to the malice of his enemies.

13, 14. The Psalmist encourages himself and once more asserts his confidence in JEHOVAH.

#### § 2. UNITY OF THE PSALM.

There is a well-marked break in the Psalm after *v.* 6. The six verses express confidence in JEHOVAH and love of the Temple, and end with the words, *I will sing praises unto JEHOVAH.* *V.* 7 however begins, *Hear, O JEHOVAH, when I cry,* and in *vv.* 9 and 12 the note of keen distress is heard. "Hide not thy face from me"—"Deliver me not over unto the will of mine adversaries." Thus the circumstances of the Psalmist in *vv.* 1-6 and in *vv.* 7-14 seem to be different, and some hold that while in *vv.* 1-6 the Psalmist is a leader, a prince or high priest, in *vv.* 7-14 he is just one of the people, a poor man who is in danger from false witnesses. It follows that *vv.* 1-6 and *vv.* 7-14 form two separate Psalms, yet it is allowed that Ps xxvii B deserves to stand next to Ps xxvii A, for it expresses the same childlike faith in JEHOVAH.

Indeed the contrast between the two halves of the Psalm has been overcoloured. Is it indeed a private man who complains in *v.* 12 of the attacks of false witnesses? Was not Nehemiah so assailed (Neh vi. 5-9)? And the good high priest Onias (2 Macc iv. 1)? And are the circumstances of the speaker really different in *vv.* 1-6 and in *vv.* 7-14? The words of *vv.* 1-3 have a confident sound, but they allow the note of anxiety to be heard. In *vv.* 4-6 the Psalmist lets us see that he is not yet in safety: "And now (now at length) shall mine head be lifted up."

The Psalmist is at the very crisis of his fate, and so in *v.* 7 ff he gives himself to earnest petition for God's favour, "Hear my voice, O JEHOVAH." But even so faith wrestles with anxiety and he declares in *v.* 10 that even if father and mother forsook him, JEHOVAH would care for him. Finally in *vv.* 13, 14 he encourages himself with words of faith, ending as he began.

*A Psalm of David.*

**XXVII.** 1 The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?

The LORD is the <sup>1</sup>strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

2 When evil-doers came upon me to eat up my flesh,  
*Even mine adversaries and my foes, they stumbled and fell.*

3 Though an host should encamp against me,  
My heart shall not fear:

<sup>1</sup> Or, *strong hold*

1-3. THE PSALMIST CONFIDENT

**XXVII.** 1. *JEHOVAH is my light and my salvation.* Darkness and danger, light and salvation are pairs. Cf xviii. 28, 29. The Vulgate rendering, *Dominus illuminatio mea* (the motto of the University of Oxford), follows LXX, *Κύριος φωτισμός μου*. *Light* in Hebrew stands for almost everything that is good, as *joy* (xcvii. 11); *prosperity* (Job xxix. 3); perhaps for *life* itself (Ps xxxvi. 9).

*the strength (mā'ōz) of my life.* Rather, *the refuge whither I flee for my life* in time of danger; cf xxxi. 4, "my strong hold"; xxxii. 7, "my hiding place" (*sēther*); xc. 1, "our dwelling place" (*mā'ōn*).

2. *to eat up my flesh.* I.e. to make an utter end of me. The Psalmist is a leader, high priest or prince of his people. The object of the enemy is to destroy him, the leader. "My flesh" is almost equivalent to the pronoun, "me."

3. *Though an host should encamp against me.* Cf the case of Elisha in Dothan: 2 K vi. 14-16.

*My heart shall not fear.* "My heart" for the simple pronoun "I"; cf xxii. 26, "Let your heart live" for "May ye live!"

Though war should rise against me,

<sup>1</sup>Even then will I be confident.

- 4 One thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after;  
That I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of  
my life,  
To behold <sup>2</sup>the beauty of the LORD, and to <sup>3</sup>inquire in his  
temple.

- 5 For in the day of trouble he shall keep me secretly in his  
pavilion:

<sup>1</sup> Or, *In this*

<sup>2</sup> Or, *the pleasantness*

<sup>3</sup> Or, *consider his temple*

*Though war should rise against me.* Rather, *Though an ambush should rise against me.* The Hebrew word *milhāmāh*, "war," also means "battle," and like the word "battle" in old English it means also "a body of warriors": cf lxxvi. 3, "There he brake the arrows of the bow, the shield, and the sword and the battle array" (not "the battle," a rendering which gives no sense). Also 1 K xxii. 35 (not "And the battle increased," but) "And the battle-array (i.e. of Israel) went up," retired, from the field. The Hebrew word for "rise" is used of an ambush rising to an attack: Josh viii. 19; Jud ix. 43.

V. 3 describes two special dangers of war: (1) to be besieged by a host in a city, (2) to be surprised by an ambush in the field. The common rendering, "Though an host should encamp... Though war should rise," gives a vapid sense to the second clause, for the special danger is mentioned before the general instead of *vice versa*.

*Even then will I be confident.* P-B paraphrases correctly, *Yet will I put my trust in him* (i.e. in JEHOVAH), but the last two words are not expressed in the Hebrew.

#### 4-6. THE PSALMIST'S ONE PETITION

4. *That I may dwell in the house of JEHOVAH all the days of my life.* The Psalmist asks to be allowed to *dwell*, to continue in the holy city, *first*, that he may enjoy the Temple worship ("behold the beauty" of JEHOVAH); *secondly*, that he may be able to inquire (Heb. *bakkēr*), i.e. inquire of God for direction in times of difficulty: cf lxxiii. 17, note; 1 Sam xxiii. 9-12, xxx. 7, 8; 2 K xvi. 15 ("the brasen altar...for me to inquire by": Heb. *bakkēr*).

5. *in the day of trouble.* Cf xxxvii. 19, "in the time of evil." Heb. *rā'āh*, "trouble, evil."

*he shall keep me secretly.* Rather, *he shall keep me safely.* The thought is of keeping safe some valuable thing.

*in his pavilion.* Better, *within his fence* (of thorn). The Hebrew substantive *sōk* or *sukkah* means a "screen," or "defence." A shepherd in the wilderness erects a *sukkah*, a "screen" several feet high, composed of thorn (cactus), round his flock to protect it at night from wild beasts:

In the covert of his <sup>1</sup>tabernacle shall he hide me;  
He shall lift me up upon a rock.

6 And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies  
round about me;

And I will offer in his <sup>1</sup>tabernacle sacrifices of <sup>2</sup>joy;  
I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the LORD.

7 Hear, O LORD, when I cry with my voice:

Have mercy also upon me, and answer me.

8 *When thou saidst*, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee,  
Thy face, LORD, will I seek.

<sup>1</sup> Heb. tent.

<sup>2</sup> Or, shouting Or, trumpet-sound

xxx. 20; Gen xxxiii. 17. Perhaps the nearest equivalent to *sukkah* (*sōk*) is the Arabic word *zarība* which is used of the temporary defences of thorn thrown up by both sides in the Soudanese wars of the end of the nineteenth century.

*In the covert of his tabernacle.* Rather, *In the secret corner of his tent*; LXX, ἐν ἀποκρύφῳ τῆς σκηνῆς αὐτοῦ. This Psalmist, like the writer of xxxiii, is thinking of JEHOVAH as a shepherd. The language of the original is homely: such English renderings as "pavilion," "covert," and "tabernacle" are out of place.

*upon a rock.* Where the tent is pitched. The *tent* stands for the Temple, the *rock* for Mount Zion.

6. *shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me.* The Psalmist will now feel safe, and will give thanks for his safety.

*sacrifices of joy.* Or, *sacrifices of Tšrū'āh*. *Tšrū'āh*, "shouting" or "sounding of trumpets," was practised as a religious exercise in procession on great occasions: 2 Sam vi. 15; 1 Chr xv. 28. "Sacrifices of *Tšrū'āh*" may be a phrase intended to exclude the thought of animal sacrifice. In xix. 14 (see note), lxix. 30, 31 (NB), civ. 34, the Psalmist regards the Psalm itself as a sacrificial offering. So here he says (not "I will offer bullocks with goats" as in lxvi. 15, but), "I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto JEHOVAH."

#### 7-12. THE PSALMIST IN DISTRESS, BUT RESOLVED TO WAIT ON JEHOVAH

7. *when I cry.* I.e. *when I invoke thee*; iv. 1, note.

8. *When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, JEHOVAH, will I seek.* Rather, *Thee (my heart saith it) my face hath sought; thee, O JEHOVAH, I seek* (still). So LXX, ἐξέζητησέν σε (N<sup>o. 2</sup>) τὸ πρόσωπόν μου (N), followed by τὸ πρόσωπόν σου, Κύριε, ζήτησω.

The rendering preferred here requires only a change of one vowel point (*bikkšshū* for *bakkeshū*). The pronoun *lēchā* (emphatic) used for the accusative is rare, but not without parallels.

- 9 Hide not thy face from me;  
Put not thy servant away in anger:  
Thou hast been my help;  
Cast me not off, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation.
- 10 <sup>1</sup>For my father and my mother have forsaken me,  
But the LORD will take me up.
- 11 Teach me thy way, O LORD;  
And lead me in a plain path,  
Because of <sup>2</sup>mine enemies.
- 12 Deliver me not over unto the will of mine adversaries:  
For false witnesses are risen up against me, and such as  
breathe out cruelty.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *When my father and my mother forsake me, the LORD &c.*

<sup>2</sup> Or, *them that lie in wait for me*

9. *Hide not thy face from me.* Cf xiii. 1, xxii. 24; Gen xliii. 5; Exod x. 28.

*Thou hast been my help.* I.e. in the past. A Psalmist not infrequently appeals for fresh help on the ground of past help received. The Hebrew verb is in the perfect tense, but LXX gives the imperative, βοηθός μου γένοῦ; Vulgate, *adiutor meus esto.*

10. *For my father and my mother have forsaken me, But JEHOVAH etc.* Rather, *Though my father and my mother should forsake me, Yet JEHOVAH will take me up.* For the use of the Hebrew particle *ki* in the sense of "though" cf xxxvii. 24, "Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down."

*will take me up.* The Hebrew verb (*āsaph*) is used of the rearguard of an army which picks up weary stragglers: so Isa lviii. 8, "The glory of JEHOVAH shall be thy rearguard."

11. *in a plain path.* As opposed to a path leading through some deep *wādī*, in which wild beasts lurk and enemies lie in ambush.

*mine enemies.* Lit. as marg. *them that lie in wait for me.*

12. *unto the will.* Rather, *unto the lust, appetite, Heb. nephesh*, as in xxxv. 25, "Aha, our desire" or "Aha, so would we have it."

*false witnesses are risen up.* Cf xxxv. 11, "Unrighteous witnesses rise up." The same witness might be described as *false* in regard to his words, and *unrighteous* in regard to the wrong he does to his neighbour. False witness and oppressive judgments are often denounced in the Psalter; cf v. 5, *workers of iniquity*, with note.

*such as breathe out cruelty.* The phrase may refer to persecution in general as in Acts ix. 1 (Saul) ἐμπνέων ἀπειλῆς καὶ φόνου, "breathing threatening and slaughter." But some see a reference here to the work of sorcerers who endeavour by spells to inflict disease and death upon innocent people: cf xii. 5, "him at whom they puff," with note.

13 *I had fainted*, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD

In the land of the living.

14 Wait on the LORD:

Be strong, and let thine heart take courage;

Yea, wait thou on the LORD.

### 13, 14. THE PSALMIST RE-ASSURED

13. I had fainted, *unless I had believed*. Better simply, *I believe* (LXX, πιστεύσω or πιστεύω). The first clause is absent from MT and LXX; in fact it is only an interpretation of the English versions. The word *unless* (Heb. *lûle*) is also absent from LXX: it is found in MT, but there it is marked with dots to show that it should be omitted from the text.

*I had believed to see the goodness of JEHOVAH*. Rather, *I believe that I shall look upon* (i.e. *enjoy*) *the goodness of JEHOVAH*.

*In the land of the living*. Cf lii. 5, cxvi. 9, cxlii. 5; Job xxviii. 13. In the other place—in Sheol—no one sees the goodness of JEHOVAH; cf lxxxviii. 5, 11.

14. *Wait on JEHOVAH*. Heb. *wait towards*, i.e. “look with patient waiting towards JEHOVAH”; P-B, *tarry thou the Lord's leisure*; Vulgate, *expecta Dominum*.

*let thine heart take courage*. More correct than P-B, “he shall comfort thine heart.” It is not a promise, but an exhortation: LXX, κραταύουσθω ἡ καρδία σου; Vulgate, *confortetur cor tuum*. So the Psalmist comforts himself in xlii. 5, 11, xliii. 5.

## PSALM XXVIII

### THE PSALMIST, THOUGH HARD PRESSED, RETAINS HIS FAITH

#### § 1. CONTENTS.

1-5. A calamity of some kind has fallen upon Israel: it may be invasion, or a plague, or (less likely) a famine. Men, *wicked* men (as the Psalmist reckons them), are falling around him. He prays that the same fate may not overtake himself. He desires that his enemies, who are practical atheists, should receive the reward of their doings.

6-8. Thanksgiving to JEHOVAH who has heard the cry for help, and shown himself the deliverer of his people.

9. A final prayer that JEHOVAH would save his people from the calamity which has overtaken them, and that He would still be their shephord.

#### § 2. UNITY OF THE PSALM.

Some think that v. 5 is interpolated from Isa v. 12 *b*, and that it has no connexion with vv. 3, 4. But see the notes on vv. 3-5, below.

The Psalm takes a new turn at v. 6, but there is nothing unnatural in the change. The Psalmist, who begins with earnest entreaty, obtains sudden relief and so turns quickly to thanksgiving. Cf the ending, vv. 8-10, of P's vi.

*A Psalm of David.*

**XXVIII.** 1 Unto thee, O LORD, will I call;

My rock, be not thou deaf unto me:

Lest, if thou be silent unto me,

I become like them that go down into the pit.

2 Hear the voice of my supplications, when I cry unto thee,  
When I lift up my hands <sup>1</sup>toward thy holy oracle.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *toward the innermost place of thy sanctuary*

1-5. MAY I NOT SHARE THE FATE OF THE WICKED!

**XXVIII.** 1. *Unto thee, O JEHOVAH, will I call.* Cf xxv. 1, "Unto thee, O JEHOVAH, do I lift up my soul." The pronoun in both passages is emphatic: the Psalmist appeals to the God of Israel and to none other.

*My rock.* Cf xviii. 2, note.

*be not thou deaf unto me.* In xxxv. 22 the same Hebrew expression is translated, "keep not silence." The Hebrew verb *hārēsh* signifies both "to be deaf" and "to be dumb." The Greek adjective *κωφός* is similarly ambiguous. The two defects are indeed often associated in one person.

*I become like them.* Rather, *I be likened* (by the scoffers) *unto them.* The Hebrew verb *māshal* means "to use comparisons" usually in a derogatory sense, and the cognate substantive *māshāl* (usually rendered "proverb" or "parable") may be translated "a taunting song," e.g. Num xxiv. 20, 21; Isa xiv. 4. The Psalmist's dread is lest he be brought so low that his enemies will taunt him as a man at the verge of death; cf xli. 5, 8.

2. *toward thy holy oracle.* In 1 K viii. 29 at the dedication of the Temple Solomon prays "That thine eyes may be open *toward this house*... to hearken unto the prayer which thy servant shall pray *toward this place*." In the rest of his prayer he asks that those who pray "in this house" (v. 33) or "toward this place" (v. 35) or "toward this house" (v. 38) in the time of defeat or drought or other calamity may be heard; Solomon asks the same even for the stranger from a far country who shall pray "toward this house" (v. 42).

*thy holy oracle.* Rather, *thy holy shrine.* The Hebrew word *dēbīr* (here translated "oracle") means "the innermost part" of the Temple, as in 1 K vi. 16, "for an oracle (*dēbīr*), even for the most holy place." The Temple looked eastward and was entered from the east, consequently the innermost part was on the west, and so might be called the "back" of the building. *Dēbīr* is cognate to the Arabic word *dubur*, "back," and not to the common Hebrew word *dibber*, "speak": yet Symmachus gives *χρηματιστήριον*, whence Vulgate, *oraculum*, and EV, *oracle*.

- 3 Draw me not away with the wicked,  
 And with the workers of iniquity;  
 Which speak peace with their neighbours,  
 But mischief is in their hearts.
- 4 Give them according to their work, and according to the  
 wickedness of their doings:  
 Give them after the operation of their hands;  
 Render to them their desert.
- 5 Because they regard not the works of the LORD,  
 Nor the operation of his hands,  
 He shall break them down and not build them up.
- 6 Blessed be the LORD,  
 Because he hath heard the voice of my supplications.
- 7 The LORD is my strength and my shield;

3. *Draw* (or "Drag") *me not away with the wicked*. I.e. for punishment. Cf xxvi. 9, "Gather not my soul with sinners." P-B inserts "neither destroy me" (LXX, *μη συναπολέσης με*) to make clear the meaning of the preceding clause.

*speak peace with their neighbours*. Cf v. 9, xii. 2, lv. 20, 21, lxii. 4. Treachery on the part of neighbours seems to have been a common sin in Israel: cf Micah vii. 5, 6; Pro iii. 29.

4. *Give them according to their work*. Cf xli. 10, lxix. 22 ff, cxxxvii. 8.

5. *Because they regard not the works of JEHOVAH*. The "works" (*ps'ulloth*) of JEHOVAH are the works He performs in His government of the world in reward and in punishment: cf Isa xl. 10, "Behold, the Lord JEHOVAH will come as a mighty one, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his recompense (*ps'ullak*) before him." So v. 5 means that the *workers of iniquity* act as they do act, because they do not believe in God's righteous government of the world. They do acts of treachery because they are practical atheists; cf xiv. 1-3; Isa v. 12.

*He shall break them down and not build them up*. These expressions suggest that these wicked ones occupy high positions, perhaps are the rulers of the state. For the metaphor cf Mal iii. 15, "yea, they that work wickedness are built up."

#### 6-8. A THANKSGIVING

6. *Blessed be JEHOVAH*. xxxi. 21, xli. 13, lxvii. 18, lxxxix. 52, cvi. 48. These words are the beginning of the Doxology with which in each case Books i, ii, iii and iv of the Psalter close.

7. *my shield*. The same bold metaphor in iii. 3, xviii. 2, *al.* LXX, *ὑπερασπιστής μου*, "my shield bearer" i.e. he who holds the shield in front of me; 1 Sam xvii. 41.

My heart hath trusted in him, and I am helped :  
Therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth ;  
And with my song will I praise him.

8 The LORD is <sup>1</sup>their strength,  
And he is a strong hold of salvation to his anointed.

9 Save thy people, and bless thine inheritance :  
Feed them also, and bear them up for ever.

<sup>1</sup> According to some ancient versions, *a strength unto his people*.

*And with my song will I praise him.* More literally, *And out of my store of song will I give him thanks.* The "sacrifice of thanksgiving" (Heb. *Tōdah*) which I shall offer will not be taken from the flock or from the herd, but from the songs which I sing. Instead of *from my songs* (Hebrew), LXX has ἐκ θελήματός μου, "out of my will," "freely."

8. *JEHOVAH is their strength.* Better as LXX, Κύριος κραταίωμα τοῦ λαοῦ αὐτοῦ, i.e. "JEHOVAH is a strength unto his people" (reading *le'ammō* for *lāmō*, one consonant having been lost from MT). The reading "unto his people" balances the "to his anointed" of the second half of the verse.

*his anointed.* LXX, τοῦ χριστοῦ αὐτοῦ. The phrase is not equivalent to "his Messiah"; the reference is to the leader of the nation, whether king or high priest; cf cxxxii. 10, note. It is applied to (1) a king of Israel; (2) to a high priest; (3) to the whole people of Israel, as in cv. 15, where LXX gives μὴ ἀψησθε τῶν χριστῶν μου; Vulgate, *Nolite tangere christos meos*.

## 9. A PETITION FOR THE NATION

9. *Feed them.* Or, *be their shepherd*, as in lxxviii. 71 f. *and bear them up for ever.* Cf Deut xxxii. 11b, "He (JEHOVAH) spread abroad his wings, he took them (Israel), He bare them on his pinions"; Isa lxiii. 9, "he bare them, and carried them all the days of old."

## PSALM XXIX

### THE GOD OF THE STORM IS ALSO THE GOD OF PEACE

#### § 1. THE PURPOSE OF THE PSALM.

LXX prefixes to this Psalm the title ἐξοδίου σκηνῆς, which Vulgate translates, *in consummatione tabernaculi*. In 2 Sam vi. 17 it is said, "They brought in the ark of JEHOVAH (from the house of Obed-edom), and set it in its place, in the midst of the tent that David had pitched for it: and David offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before JEHOVAH." To this event, it seems, the title in LXX alludes. But Ps xxix was not originally written for use in public worship.

Neither in form nor in substance is it liturgical. The contrast which it affords to Ps xcvi (which has borrowed some phrases from it) makes this fact quite clear, for Ps xcvi is liturgical throughout. But xxix is a Nature Psalm such as a lonely shepherd or indeed a prophet like Amos might have composed (cf Amos iv. 13). There is no word in it of animal sacrifices, though a reading of LXX (followed by Vulgate and P-B) has unhappily introduced the subject. Thus the Psalm begins with the words,

“Ascribe unto JEHOVAH, O ye sons of the gods”

(literal), but LXX has a doublet, i.e. a couple of renderings, one right, the other wrong, thus: Ἐνέγκατε τῷ κυρίῳ υἱοὶ θεοῦ (right), followed by Ἐνέγκατε τῷ κυρίῳ υἱοῦς κριῶν = Vulgate, *Afferte Domino filios arietum* (wrong).

Probably the second rendering belongs to the original faulty LXX, while the first is a correction introduced from Origen's Hexapla. The rendering “young rams” is not surprising in a pre-Christian translation. The world still believed in the necessity of animal sacrifice when the Psalter was translated into Greek, probably 150-100 B.C.

Nor again is LXX happy when it introduces a mention of the Temple into v. 2 (*in the beauty of holiness*); see note there. The modern interpretation that *holy garments* are meant in v. 2b is unsuitable to the context.

## § 2. THE SUBSTANCE OF THE PSALM.

The Psalmist is conscious of God *sub Divo*, in the open air beneath the mountains and in the wilderness. He is like “the poor Indian”—why pity him?—

“Whose untutored mind

Sees God in storms, and hears Him in the wind.”

He has the soul of a Prophet and Evangelist: knowing the power and glory of the God he worships, he calls upon the heathen gods and through them upon the heathen themselves to acknowledge JEHOVAH as the God above gods. He bases his appeal on his experience of the work of JEHOVAH in Nature. JEHOVAH gives a command to the clouds, and the mighty waters descend, He smites the mighty cedars and they are broken, He shakes the mountains and they tremble before Him, the whole land north and south quakes at His presence. His lightnings pierce the recesses of the forests and discover (P-B, i.e. uncover) their hidden places. The whole heaven cries, Glory (to God)!

This strong God once sat in judgment at the Flood, but now He exercises His power by giving Peace to His people.

## § 3. DATE OF THE PSALM.

It is inscribed *Of David*: it belongs to the Davidic collection of Psalms, and on that account is probably early rather than late. There is very little to help us to a more precise date. The use of an Aramaic word (*hābū*, “ascribe ye”) in v. 1, 2 is not by itself decisive of a late date (General Introduction, page xxvi), neither is the reference to the *mabbūl*, “Noah's flood,” in v. 10 a proof that the Psalmist was acquainted with the completed form of the Pentateuch. Indeed the *mabbūl* was probably known by tradition in Israel in early times without book. There is nothing to stamp this Psalm as late, and it may in fact be very early, at least pre-exilic rather than post-exilic.

A Psalm of David.

- XXIX.** 1 Give unto the LORD, O ye <sup>1</sup>sons of the <sup>2</sup>mighty,  
 Give unto the LORD glory and strength.  
 2 Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name;  
 Worship the LORD <sup>3</sup>in the beauty of holiness.  
 3 The voice of the LORD is upon the waters:  
 The God of glory thundereth,  
 Even the LORD upon <sup>4</sup>many waters.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *sons of God*      <sup>2</sup> Or, *gods* See Ex. xv. 11.      <sup>3</sup> Or, *in holy array*  
<sup>4</sup> Or, *great*

### 1, 2. THE SUMMONS

**XXIX.** 1. *Give unto the Lord, O ye sons of the mighty etc.* Better, *Ascribe unto JEHOVAH, O ye gods, Ascribe unto JEHOVAH glory and strength.* The loss of the proper name of the God of Israel in EV is serious, since it obscures the meaning of the Psalm as a whole. The central thought is that the power and glory of JEHOVAH is manifested throughout Nature; even the gods of the Gentiles must bow down before him; cf. xcvi. 7, "Worship him, all ye gods." The reader will remember the story of Dagon falling before the ark, when the ark was brought into his temple in Ashdod (1 Sam. v. 2, 3).

*glory and strength.* Cf. 1 Chr. xxix. 11, "Thine is the greatness, and the power, and the glory": Matt. vi. 13 (at the end of the Lord's Prayer; AV not RV).

2. *Worship the Lord.* Rather, *Bow down to JEHOVAH*, "Prostrate yourselves." The Psalmist adds *in the beauty of holiness*, lit. *in the majesty of holiness* (so also in xcvi. 9). Modern commentators understand the injunction, *Prostrate yourselves in the majesty of holiness* to mean, "Worship clothed in sacred vestments"; cf. the margin of RV, *in holy array*. LXX has ἐν αὐτῇ ἁγία αὐτοῦ, *in his holy court*.

But it is unlikely that either *holy garments* or *the holy place* is meant in this passage. *Majesty* and *Holiness* are two qualities of JEHOVAH, and a reference to these as such suits the context best. JEHOVAH excels in Majesty and Holiness; so the Psalmist tells the gods of the heathen to prostrate themselves before JEHOVAH in respect of, i.e. because of, His majesty and holiness.

### 3-10. THE GLORY AND STRENGTH OF JEHOVAH DISPLAYED IN THE STORM

3. *The voice of JEHOVAH.* I.e. the thunder: lxxviii. 33.  
*upon the waters.* I.e. upon the upper waters, the clouds, which presently descend in torrential rain.

*The God of glory.* Cf. the title "The King of glory": xxiv. 7-10.

- 4 The voice of the LORD is powerful;  
The voice of the LORD is full of majesty.
- 5 The voice of the LORD breaketh the cedars;  
Yea, the LORD breaketh in pieces the cedars of Lebanon.
- 6 He maketh them also to skip like a calf;  
Lebanon and Sirion like a young wild-ox.
- 7 The voice of the LORD <sup>1</sup>cleaveth the flames of fire.
- 8 The voice of the LORD shaketh the wilderness;  
The LORD shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh.
- 9 The voice of the LORD maketh the hinds to calve,  
And strippeth the forests bare:  
And in his temple every thing saith, Glory.
- 10 The LORD sat *as king* at the Flood;  
Yea, the LORD sitteth as king for ever.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *heweth out flames of fire*

6. *He maketh them also to skip.* The pronoun "them" is written in anticipation of the names of the two mountains which follow. *Sirion* (Deut iii. 9) is a name given by the Zidonians to Mount Hermon. Hermon belongs to the Anti-Lebanon range: it has three peaks, hence the plural "the Hermons" (Heb. *Hermonim*) in xlii. 6. Cf cxiv. 4. *Libanus* (P-B) is the Latin form of *Lebanon*.

7. *cleaveth the flames of fire.* Rather, *cleaveth with flames of fire.* The voice of JEHOVAH, being accompanied by lightnings, is like a sword which flashes as it falls; cf Deut xxxii. 41, "If I whet the lightning of my sword."

8. *JEHOVAH shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh.* The storm which the Psalmist descried in the north (Lebanon and Hermon) has now passed through the land and has reached the extreme south, the wilderness of Kadesh. At Kadesh Israel halted before entering the Holy Land (Num xx. 1, 14, 22; Deut i. 19, 46).

9. *maketh the hinds to calve.* Moderns prefer to render, *maketh the oaks to writhe*, but the mention of living creatures is a finer touch.

*strippeth the forests bare.* The Hebrew verb *hasaph* is used of stripping off clothes and (in Joel i. 7) of locusts stripping a fig tree.

*in his temple.* The heavenly Temple: xi. 4, xviii. 6; Micah i. 2, 3.

10. *sat as king at the Flood.* Since *judgment* was one of the King's chief duties, "sat as judge" would equally well express the Psalmist's thought. The Hebrew word used here is *mabbûl*, i.e. Noah's flood: Gen vi. 17, vii. 10. In saying that JEHOVAH sat as king at the Flood the Psalmist may be glancing at the behaviour of the gods in the Babylonian story. They feared and wept and fled just like human beings.

*Yea, JEHOVAH sitteth as king for ever.* The Psalmist is confident that JEHOVAH'S providence over the world will continue.

11 The LORD will give strength unto his people;  
The LORD will bless his people with peace.

### 11. JEHOVAH'S GIFT OF PEACE

11. *JEHOVAH will bless his people with peace.* The Heb. *shālôm*, "peace," is a word of wide meaning; it may often be rendered "welfare, prosperity." So in Gen xliii. 27, Joseph "asked them of their *welfare* (Heb. *shālôm*), and said, Is your father *well?*" (Heb. *shālôm*); lit. "Is your father *peace?*"

## PSALM XXX

### A SPIRITUAL DRAMA (cf Ps xxxi)

#### § 1. CONTENTS.

This Psalm might be called "The Appeal." It is a dramatic monologue. It begins with a Prologue in which the Psalmist presents his thanks to JEHOVAH, for that JEHOVAH has delivered him from imminent death. He cried to JEHOVAH and JEHOVAH healed him (*sv.* 1-3). Then the Psalmist turns to the *Hāsīdīm*, the "Saints," the faithful in Israel, and bids them give thanks, for that JEHOVAH'S anger is short-lived (*sv.* 4, 5).

Then he starts afresh, and tells his story as to JEHOVAH, but the Saints are meant to overhear it. At first the Psalmist was feeling secure, for JEHOVAH had favoured him. But suddenly the whole prospect changed and the Psalmist found himself standing on the brink of the grave, no doubt through some fell disease. He drew the conclusion (so often drawn in the ancient world) that he had incurred JEHOVAH'S anger. What could he do? He took the bold course; he appealed directly to the God who had afflicted him. His appeal was heard; he was restored to health; he learnt that JEHOVAH'S anger is short-lived. Indeed the Psalmist was not merely "healed"; he was also "girded with gladness," and strengthened for his work. So the Psalmist concludes that he must take up again the voice of praise, for JEHOVAH values the praise which His worshippers offer. For the mercies which he has received, he must give thanks for ever.

#### § 2. LITURGICAL USE.

The heading of the Psalm reads "A Psalm | a Song at the Dedication of the House | of David." But it was Solomon (not David) who dedicated the House, i.e. the Temple (1 K viii). Probably the words "A Song at the Dedication of the House" have been inserted into an earlier and simpler form, "A Psalm of David." The Dedication intended is (most likely) that performed by Judas Maccabaeus (1 Macc iv. 36-59). See General Introduction, lxxvi f.

A Psalm; a Song at the Dedication of the House; a *Psalm* of David.

- XXX.** 1 I will extol thee, O LORD; for thou hast<sup>1</sup> raised me up,  
 And hast not made my foes to rejoice over me.  
 2 O LORD my God,  
 I cried unto thee, and thou hast healed me.  
 3 O LORD, thou hast brought up my soul from Sheol:  
 Thou hast kept me alive,<sup>2</sup> that I should not go down to the pit.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *drawn*

<sup>2</sup> Another reading is, *from among them that go down to the pit.*

### 1-3. THE PSALMIST GIVES THANKS

**XXX.** 1. *I will extol thee.* Lit. *I will exalt thee*: xxxiv. 3, "let us exalt his name." For an instance of this "extolling" of the name see xviii. 2.

*thou hast raised me up.* Lit. *thou hast drawn me up* (Heb. *diltithā*, cognate with *dālī*, "a bucket"), i.e. from the pit (the grave): cf v. 3. Jeremiah might have fittingly used this expression: Jer xxxviii. 6-13.

2. *O JEHOVAH my God.* This address takes up again the JEHOVAH of v. 1. The Psalmists love to dwell upon the name of the God of Israel: cf v. 1, note.

*and thou hast healed me.* Cf vi. 2, "Heal me, for my bones are vext." In O.T. thought JEHOVAH is the only healer of sickness (ciii. 3); Gentile thought on the other hand connected healing with magic and with the special powers of local gods: cf 2 K i. 2 (Baal-zebub the god of Ekron); 2 Chr xvi. 12, "(Asa) sought not JEHOVAH, but (enquired) through physicians (of other gods)." In Ecclus xxxviii. 1-15 Ben Sira endeavours to give the true principles of treatment of disease. The Lord (he says) has created both the physician and medicines: in sickness repent and pray to the Lord: after this give place to the physician.

3. *from Sheol.* LXX, ἐξ ᾗδου; AV, *from the grave*; P-B, *out of hell*; Vulgate, *ab inferno*. The Heb. *Shēōl* (accented on the second syllable) means "the unseen world": its nearest equivalent is the Gk. *Hades*: Job iii. 17-19; Isa xiv. 9-15. The rendering "the grave" (AV) is unsuitable because the dead are thought of as a community, whereas "the grave" suggests rather the resting place of the individual. "Hell" in the old English sense is equivalent to *Hades*, as in the Apostles' Creed, "He descended into hell," but in modern English it has gathered the associations of *Tartarus*, a place of torment for the wicked, and so is unsuitable as a rendering of *Sheol*. Neither "the grave" nor "hell" is equivalent to *Sheol*, and the Revisers of 1885 have rightly left the Hebrew word untranslated. Cf notes on vi. 5.

*that I should not go down to the pit.* So also AV from the K'ri, but the C'thib (the better reading) is adopted in RV marg. *from among them that go down to the pit.* Similarly P-B and LXX, ἀπὸ τῶν καταβαίνόντων εἰς λάκκον.

- 4 Sing praise unto the LORD, O ye saints of his,  
And give thanks to his holy <sup>1</sup>name.  
5 For his anger is but for a moment;  
<sup>2</sup>In his favour is life:  
Weeping <sup>3</sup>may tarry for the night,  
But joy *cometh* in the morning.  
6 As for me, I said in my prosperity,  
I shall never be moved.

<sup>1</sup> Heb. *memorial*. See Ex. iii. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Or, *His favour is for a life time*

<sup>3</sup> Heb. *may come in to lodge at even*.

#### 4, 5. THE PSALMIST CALLS ON THE SAINTS TO GIVE THANKS

4. *Sing praise*. Or, *Sing Psalms*. The Heb. verb *zammērū* is cognate with *mizmōr*, "a Psalm."

*O ye saints of his*. The Psalmist calls on his own circle of friends to rejoice with him. For the meaning of *hāsīd*, "saint," see xii. 1, note.

*to his holy name* (Heb. *zēcher*). AV, *at the remembrance of his holiness*. The word "Name" when applied to JEHOVAH has two equivalents in Hebrew. JEHOVAH's "name" or "memorial" (Heb. *zēcher*) stands for His achievements, all that He has done for Israel in history, things to be remembered with thanksgiving. On the other hand His name (Heb. *shēm*) stands for His character—all that he is: so in cxiii. 1, "Praise the name (*shēm*) of JEHOVAH," i.e. Praise Him in respect of His holiness, His faithfulness, His mercy, His righteousness.

5. *his anger is but for a moment*. "Though sin excites the anger of God, anger is with Him but a passing emotion" (A. B. Davidson). The appropriate contrast is supplied in the following clause, as rendered in RV marg. *His favour is for a life time*. The rendering of the second clause in P-B, *In his pleasure (or favour) is life* (cf LXX, ζωὴ ἐν τῷ θελήματι αὐτοῦ) follows the usual meaning of the Hebrew word *hayyim*, "life," as a state opposed to death; here however it is better to understand *hayyim* of life as duration, "life time": Lev xviii. 18; 2 Sam xviii. 18.

*Weeping may tarry for the night*. Lit. (as marg.), *Weeping may come in to lodge at even*. The Hebrew verb for *tarry for the night* occurs also in Gen xix. 2, "Turn aside into your servant's house, and tarry all night." The meaning is that Weeping (through the favour of JEHOVAH) will be only a chance visitant staying for no longer than one night.

*joy*. Better, *joyful shouting*; Heb. *rinnāh*, as Isa xxxv. 10; li. 11, "The ransomed...shall return, and come with shouting unto Zion."

#### 6-10. THE PSALMIST'S RETROSPECT

6. *I shall never be moved*. LXX, οὐ μὴ σαλευθῶ εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα. Cf xiii. 4, note; xv. 5.

- 7 Thou, LORD, of thy favour hadst made my mountain to stand strong:  
 Thou didst hide thy face; I was troubled.
- 8 I cried to thee, O LORD;  
 And unto the LORD I make supplication:
- 9 What profit is there in my blood, when I go down to the pit?  
 Shall the dust praise thee? shall it declare thy truth?
- 10 Hear, O LORD, and have mercy upon me:  
 LORD, be thou my helper.
- 11 Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing;  
 Thou hast loosed my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness:

7. *Thou...hadst made my mountain to stand strong.* Cf lxx. 6, "Which by his strength setteth fast the mountains." But what is the meaning of "my mountain"? If a king of the house of David be the speaker, the allusion may be to the "oracle" cited in ii. 6, "Yet I have set my king Upon my holy hill of Zion," and so Mount Zion is "my mountain." Or, if the Psalmist be not a king, then *mountain* may be used in a metaphorical sense of the assured position which JEHOVAH has assigned to the Psalmist; cf xl. 2, "He set my feet upon a rock."

LXX renders παράσχου τῷ κάλλει μου δύναμις, "Grant (imperative) strength to my beauty (i.e. to me)," reading *la-hādāri* τῷ κάλλει μου instead of *lā-harēri*, "my mountain," the letter *Daleth* standing for *Resh*, a common error. Hence the Vulgate, *praestitisti* (as though *παρέσχου*) *decori meo virtutem*. Cf v. 12, *my glory*, with note.

*Thou...hadst made...strong...Thou didst hide thy face.* That JEHOVAH sets up and also casts down is a favourite Hebrew thought. The rigid Hebrew monotheism traced all—good and evil, prosperity and calamity—to the one God; cf xxvi, Introduction, § 2.

8. *I cried to thee, O LORD.* Rather, *Thee, O JEHOVAH, I began to invoke*. A marked change of tense in the Hebrew occurs here.

9. *What profit is there...?* For a similar *naiveté* of language cf xliv. 12, "Thou sellest thy people for nought, And hast not increased thy wealth by their price." In Gentile religion the idea occurs frequently that the gods "profited" in some way by the honour done them by their worshippers: see, e.g., *Aeneid* i. 48 f. (Juno); 415 ff. (Venus).

*Shall the dust praise thee?* Cf cxv. 17.

## 11, 12. THE SEQUEL OF THE PSALMIST'S STORY

11. *Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing.* The contrast is a vivid one in the original: mourning or wailing is a demonstrative business in the East: the cries and movements of the "mourners" challenge a comparison with the singing and movements of dancers. See Driver on Amos v. 16 (*Cambridge Bible*).

12 To the end that *my* glory may sing praise to thee, and not be silent.

O LORD my God, I will give thanks unto thee for ever.

12. *that my glory may sing praise to thee.* *My glory* = "all that is best in me," a paraphrase for the simple pronoun "I." The possessive pronoun *my*, which is absent from the Hebrew (also from Peshitta), is found in LXX (ἡ δόξα μου) and Vulgate. Jerome, in agreement with MT Peshitta, gives *ut laudet te gloria*, and the Targum, "that the honourable ones of the world may praise thee." This last interpretation is not to be rejected hastily.

## PSALM XXXI

### AN UNFINISHED SPIRITUAL DRAMA (cf Ps xxx)

The Psalm, says Duhm, consists of a mixture of complaints, praises, and thanksgivings: it appears to have been put together from a number of pieces, though the boundaries of the pieces are not clearly marked; only *vs.* 19-24 can be plausibly separated from the rest as an independent Psalm or fragment. Kittel, accepting Duhm's view, pronounces this to be a composite liturgical Psalm.

But are not these varying cries rather the outpouring of a single troubled heart? The Psalm is marked throughout by strong personal touches, in *vs.* 19, 20 no less than in *vs.* 5, 9, 12, 15 *al.* Waves of feeling succeed one another, yet the Psalmist maintains his faith through all. There is no real breach of continuity in the changing fortunes of this man's soul. He tells us by implication a story of spiritual struggle spread over a long period. He is one of the *Hāsīdīm* (the "Saints"), he is their poet-representative indeed, and leader. He has his own spiritual battle to fight, but he realizes that he has also the duty of sustaining the courage of his fellows. So he prays aloud, and he meditates aloud.

The Psalmist begins with an appeal to be heard in his own case, but it should be noticed that even so he sets an example (*vs.* 1-4). The first words of his prayer are a confession of faith: "In thee, O יְהוָה, have I taken refuge." The hour of trial has found him faithful to his God: his fellow-Saints may still look to him for guidance. But his case is critical. Like Job he suffers under some severe bodily affliction, and the sight of it scares men from him, while his enemies assert it to be the punishment of his "iniquity" and reproach him with it (*vs.* 9-11). A hard case for one of the Saints.

The Psalmist prays, not like a worldling terrified by some sudden calamity, but as one who knows to Whom he is appealing. There is a fountain of spiritual life in him. In *v.* 5 he breaks out afresh into confession of faith in יְהוָה: "Into thine hand I commend my spirit"—my breath—my life! Memories of the past rise up within him and assure him that his faith is rightly placed. "Thou didst redeem me" (in early days)—"Thou didst know of the afflictions of my soul"—"Thou didst set my feet in a large place" (*vs.* 5-8).

From the memory of past deliverance the Psalmist is drawn back inevitably to the sense of his present danger. Some men forsake him, others plot against his life (*vs.* 11-13). But again his faith shines out. Distressed as he is he has two sources of comfort. It comforts him in the first place to recall the terms in which he had before made his confession of JEHOVAH as his God. It is indeed a memorable confession of a faith fitted for the working (and the suffering) day: "My times are in thy hand"—my time of prosperity and my time of adversity—both came from thee; and in that fact lies my comfort, my hope (*vs.* 14, 15). But his second source of comfort is in an altruistic thought: he remembers the wonderful goodness of JEHOVAH in preserving and blessing others who took refuge in Him (*vs.* 19, 20). His God is one who carries on a moral government over men: he preserves the good and punishes the evil-doer. And so the Psalmist concludes by calling on his fellow-Saints to regain their courage. The time of trial is not over, but those who wait for JEHOVAH, even as he himself does, will not be disappointed (*vs.* 23, 24).

(*Vs.* 1-3 of this Psalm are almost identical with Ps lxxi. 1-3.)

For the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.

**XXXI.** 1 In thee, O LORD, do I put my trust; let me never be ashamed:

Deliver me in thy righteousness.

2 Bow down thine ear unto me; deliver me speedily:

Be thou to me a strong rock, an house of <sup>1</sup>defence to save me.

<sup>1</sup> Heb. *fortresses*.

#### 1-4. THE CRY FOR SPEEDY DELIVERANCE

**XXXI.** 1. *In thee, O JEHOVAH, do I put my trust.* Rather, *In thee, O JEHOVAH, have I taken refuge:* cf vii. 1, xi. 1 (with note).

*let me never be ashamed.* I.e. through crying on thee for help in vain. The closing words of the *Te Deum* are taken from this verse, *In te, Domine, speravi: non confundar in aeternum.*

*Deliver me in thy righteousness.* JEHOVAH'S righteousness is vindicated by his deliverance of his worshippers.

2. *deliver me speedily.* Cf (for the childlike urgency) lxxi. 12, "make haste to help me."

*Be thou to me a strong rock.* Rather, *a rock of refuge* (Heb. *zūr mā'ōz*). In lxxi. 3 it is "a rock of habitation" (Heb. *zur mā'ōn*). The Heb. *zur*, "rock," is used almost as a synonym for *ēl*, "God," e.g. in Deut xxxii. 31, "Their rock (LXX *θεοι*) is not as our Rock" (LXX *θεός*). So here Vulgate (following LXX) gives, *esto mihi in Deum protectorem*, "Be to me a protecting God." The two words *refuge* and *habitation* closely resemble one another when written in Hebrew. For *habitation* cf xc. 1, "Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place (Heb. *mā'ōn*) In all generations."

- 3 For thou art my rock and my fortress;  
Therefore for thy name's sake lead me and guide me.
- 4 Pluck me out of the net that they have laid privily for me;  
For thou art my strong hold.
- 5 Into thine hand I commend my spirit:  
Thou hast redeemed me, O LORD, thou God of truth.
- 6 I hate them that regard lying vanities:  
But I trust in the LORD.
- 7 I will be glad and rejoice in thy mercy:  
For thou hast seen my affliction;  
Thou hast known <sup>1</sup>my soul in adversities:

<sup>1</sup> Or, *the adversities of my soul*

*an house of defence.* Rather, *a place of strong holds.* The Psalmist is thinking of one of the natural fortresses of southern Palestine formed by a group of caves communicating with one another and supplying vantage points for retreat and attack.

3. *thou art my rock.* Here "rock" stands not for *zūr*, but for *sela'* ("crag") as in xl. 2; cf xviii. 2, note.

*and guide me.* The same Hebrew verb as in xxiii. 2, "he *leadeth* me beside the still waters."

#### 5-8. MEMORY OF PAST DELIVERANCES BRINGS HOPE

5. *Into thine hand I commend my spirit.* Quoted Luke xxiii. 46, *εἰς χεῖράς σου παρατίθεμαι τὸ πνεῦμά μου*, where the *Textus Receptus* has *παραθήσομαι* (future, "I will commend," in agreement with LXX which translates the Hebrew literally). "My spirit" (Heb. *rūhī*) is literally "My breath."

*Thou hast redeemed me.* Rather, *Thou didst redeem me*, i.e. didst ransom me on some well-remembered occasion. Cf xxvi. 11.

6. *I hate them.* Rather, *Thou hatest them*: so LXX, *ἐμίσησας*; Vulgate, *odisti*. The use of the first person in MT is probably due to an assimilation of the text to xxvi. 5, ci. 3, cxix, 104, 113, 128, 163.

*them that regard lying vanities.* Almost the same Hebrew phrase as in Jonah ii. 8; it means "worshippers of idols or of other gods." Idols are "vanities" as being vain, unreal things: they are "lying" because they do not perform the things which are promised in their name. For "vanities" (Heb. *hābātīm*, *hablē*) in the sense of "false gods," cf Jer xiv. 22, "Are there any among the vanities (gods) of the heathen that can cause rain?"

7. *thou hast seen* (i.e. "regarded") *my affliction.* Cf Exod iii. 7, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people."

*Thou hast known my soul in adversities.* A possible rendering. A better one is, *Thou hast known* concerning (Hebrew prefix *bē-*) *the troubles*

- 8 And thou hast not shut me up into the hand of the enemy ;  
Thou hast set my feet in a large place.
- 9 Have mercy upon me, O LORD, for I am in distress :  
Mine eye wasteth away with grief, *yea*, my soul and my body.
- 10 For my life is spent with sorrow, and my years with sighing :  
My strength faileth because of mine iniquity, and my bones  
are wasted away.
- 11 Because of all mine adversaries I am become a reproach,  
Yea, unto my neighbours exceedingly, and a fear to mine  
acquaintance :  
They that did see me without fled from me.
- 12 I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind :  
I am like a broken vessel.
- 13 For I have heard the defaming of many,

*of my soul* (the same construction as in Jer xxxviii. 24). The Psalmist would not write, *Thou hast known the troubles of my soul*, because the verb "to know" in Hebrew includes the notion of "approving," and he does not wish to say that JEHOVAH approves his many afflictions: he prefers to say that JEHOVAH knows of them.

8. *in a large place*. Cf xviii. 19. A large place in which there is room to walk safely. The word is used metaphorically (of prosperity) here, as in cxviii. 5. Cf xviii. 33, *He maketh me stand firm upon my high places*.

#### 9-13. THE PSALMIST RENEWS HIS APPEAL FOR DELIVERANCE. HE IS DESERTED BY HIS ACQUAINTANCE AND THREATENED BY ENEMIES

9. *Mine eye wasteth away with grief*. The same Hebrew phrase as in vi. 7, with one slight variation: see note there.

*my soul*. See vi. 2, 3, note.

10. *My strength faileth* (hath stumbled) *because of mine iniquity*. The verb "stumble" is appropriate here, because among the Hebrews the *leg* was an outstanding symbol of strength; cf cxlvii. 10, where "the legs of a man" is parallel to "the strength of the horse"; also Jud xv. 8, "he (Samson) smote them *hip and thigh*," more literally "(lower) leg and thigh (upper leg)," i.e. he broke their strength utterly.

11. *They that did see me without fled from me*. Those who saw the Psalmist in the street or in the open country avoided him. Was he a leper? Vulgate (wrongly) punctuates its rendering, *qui videbant me, foras fugerunt a me*, i.e. those who came to see me in my house, fled out of doors at the sight of me.

12. *I am forgotten*. By man. In lxxxviii. 5 the Psalmist declares that he is forgotten by God.

13. *the defaming*. Better than *the blasphemy* (P-B), for it is the Psalmist, not God, whom they defame.

- Terror on every side:  
 While they took counsel together against me,  
 They devised to take away my life.
- 14 But I trusted in thee, O LORD:  
 I said, Thou art my God.
- 15 My times are in thy hand:  
 Deliver me from the hand of mine enemies, and from them  
 that persecute me.
- 16 Make thy face to shine upon thy servant:  
 Save me in thy lovingkindness.
- 17 Let me not be ashamed, O LORD; for I have called upon thee:  
 Let the wicked be ashamed, let them be silent in Sheol.
- 18 Let the lying lips be dumb;  
 Which speak against the righteous insolently,  
 With pride and contempt.
- 19 Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for  
 them that fear thee,

#### 14, 15. THE PSALMIST FINDS COMFORT

14. *But I trusted.* The pronoun is emphatic: the Psalmist is one against "many" (v. 13).

15. *My times are in thy hand.* *Times* = "experiences, fortunes": 1 Chr xxix. 30, "the *times* that went over him (David) and over Israel": LXX, οἱ κληροῖ μου; Vulgate, *sortes meae*. *My time* (sing.), P-B, would mean the (desired) time of the Psalmist's deliverance, but the Psalmist is thinking rather of all that happens to him of good or evil.

#### 16-18. PETITION FOR DELIVERANCE RENEWED

16. *Make thy face to shine upon thy servant.* Cf the words of the priestly blessing, "JEHOVAH make his face to shine upon thee" (Num vi. 25).

18. *Let the lying lips be dumb; Which speak against the righteous.* In the Hebrew *the righteous* is in the singular. The situation seems to be that the Psalmist, the "righteous man," a ruler, is assailed by the calumnies of a party which hopes to overthrow him.

#### 19-22. THE PSALMIST FINDS FRESH COMFORT

19. *Oh how great is thy goodness.* This is an abrupt turn, but it is unnecessary to suggest that these words begin a new Psalm-fragment (vv. 19-24). The Psalmist though sorely tried returns again and again to faith in JEHOVAH.

Which thou hast wrought for them that put their trust in thee, before the sons of men!

20 In the covert of thy presence shalt thou hide them from the plottings of man:

Thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues.

21 Blessed be the LORD:

For he hath shewed me his marvellous lovingkindness in a strong city.

22 As for me, I said in my <sup>1</sup>haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes:

Nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my supplications when I cried unto thee.

23 O love the LORD, all ye his saints:

<sup>1</sup> Or, *alarm*

*before the sons of men.* God's kind dealing with those that fear Him is well known: it has been shown openly, perhaps even to the confusion of the sons of men, who had not expected that JEHOVAH would act thus.

20. *In the covert of thy presence.* Or, *In the secret place where thou art present.* Cf xxvii. 5, "In the secret corner of his tent shall he hide me." There is no allusion here to the custom of taking asylum in a temple (cf Neh vi 10, 11): the Psalmist is speaking metaphorically.

*in a pavilion.* Rather, *within his fence* (of thorn). See xxvii. 5, note.

*from the strife of tongues.* From false accusations and from slander.

21. *in a strong city.* Rather perhaps, *as in a besieged city*, i.e. a city threatened with the sword, famine, and pestilence. The phrase may be metaphorical in the Psalmist's mouth, the meaning being that JEHOVAH was his protector from every kind of danger.

22. *I said in my haste.* The same Hebrew phrase as in cxvi. 11. In both passages the marginal rendering *in my alarm* is better.

*I am cut off from before thine eyes.* I.e. I am forgotten by thee. Cf lxxxviii. 5, "They are cut off from thy hand," i.e. they are out of reach of thy help.

#### 23-24. THE EPILOGUE

23. *O love JEHOVAH.* Cf Deut vi. 5, "And thou shall love JEHOVAH thy God with all thine heart." With the exception of some places in Deuteronomy love of God is not spoken of in the Pentateuch except in Exod xx. 6, "Them that love me." So in the Psalter love to God is more often expressed obliquely, as v. 11 ("that love thy name"), xxvi. 8 ("love the habitation of thy house"). In general it may be said that in

The LORD preserveth <sup>1</sup>the faithful,  
 And plentifully rewardeth the proud doer.  
 24 Be strong, and let your heart take courage,  
 All ye that <sup>2</sup>hope in the LORD.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *faithfulness*

<sup>2</sup> Or, *wait for*

early times and even in later times (in many cases) the Hebrews hesitated to speak of man as *loving* God. See xviii. 1, note.

*preserveth the faithful.* Or (as marg.) *keepeth faithfulness*, i.e. performs his promises. So in v. 5, "JEHOVAH, thou God of truth"; and see xii. 1, note.

*plentifully rewardeth.* Rather perhaps, *repayeth upon the string* (i.e. with the string of the bow), the expression being proverbial. (The Hebrew is as in xi. 2.) The proud are proud in their fancied prosperity, but JEHOVAH suddenly shoots the arrow of destruction against them. Cf lxiv. 7, "But God shall shoot at them: With an arrow suddenly shall they be wounded."

*the proud doer.* Cf xciv. 2-7.

24. *Be strong.* LXX, ἀνδριζέσθε, as in 1 Cor xvi. 13, "Quit you like men."

*hope in JEHOVAH.* Better, *wait for JEHOVAH.* Cf xxv. 3, note.

## PSALM XXXII

### CHASTISEMENT LEADS TO CONFESSION OF SIN

This is a Psalm which tells a story of Sin followed by Chastisement—Confession—Forgiveness. It is akin in subject to Pss xxv and li and should be studied in connexion with them. In these Psalms sin is described by the three Hebrew synonyms, *pésha'* (transgression), *hátv'āh* (sin), *'āvōn* (error). It is viewed solely in its relation to God; sin is that which is an offence to Him.

His eyes survey the whole earth, and the sight of sin disturbs His sacred peace. Thus in Jer ii. 22 the LORD complains to Judah, "Thine iniquity is marked (is blazoned, or, is as a blood-stain) before me"; and again the Psalmist confesses (li. 4), "Against thee...have I sinned, And done that which is evil in thy sight." That the eyes of JEHOVAH perceive sin, even when it is "hidden," has been brought to the knowledge of the author of Ps xxxii. He confesses himself a detected sinner. How is he to obtain forgiveness?

Under the Old Covenant the method of propitiation depended on the nature of the sin. The Psalmist (we gather from vv. 3, 4) had suffered from a grievous illness. In an early stage of it he may have applied for relief to some Gentile God of healing, such as Baal-zebul god of Ekron. Then his disease grew worse and he awoke to the conviction that he had shown unfaithfulness to his own God. For a time he was too stubborn to confess his lapse, but at last his stubbornness gave way.

He said to himself that he must onco more approach the God whom he had

forsaken. So with no offering of sacrifice, no visit to the Temple, he "made known" (v. 5; "acknowledged," RV) to יְהוָה his sin. He made it known—he uncovered it—with the full seriousness which his condition of sickness imposed upon him. And then relief—restoration to health—came: "Thou didst take away mine iniquity." If the sin were one of ignorance or of carelessness or of a ritual nature only, particular kinds of sacrifices were enjoined under the Law (Lev. iv. 1—vi. 7), and by due offering of the prescribed sacrifice the sin was "removed," for the priest made atonement for the offender. But in Pss xxv, xxxii there is no mention of sacrifice of any kind, while in Ps li the notion of making propitiation by sacrifice is definitely rejected.

In each of these three Psalms the sin is described by the Hebrew word *pésha'*. *Pésha'* (like its cognate verb) is used of rebellion against a human king or against God Himself. A flagrant example of such rebellion would be to sacrifice to another god or to consult another god in the case of illness.

The utter seriousness of the Psalmist's repentance as shown in v. 5 should be noted. His confession of sin in its intensity does not fall behind the anguished words of Ps li. V. 5, which appears at first to be wordy, contains in fact a concise and vivid picture of the Psalmist's spiritual crisis. Literally translated the words are, "I began to make known my sin"—it was a slow and painful process—"and mine iniquity did I not cover"—though he was tempted to cover it!—"I said" (with purpose in my heart), "I will confess my transgressions to יְהוָה; and Thou"—Here is emphasis on the pronoun: the Psalmist felt himself face to face with God—"Thou thyself"—directly, through no mediator—"didst take away the iniquity of my sin." The Psalmist's resolution—his pain—and finally his deep relief are all revealed to us in one verse. We see here Confession as a process in the soul. Montefiore writes, "True joy is the prerogative of the righteous. It is beyond the reach of the high-handed sinner; it is even beyond the opportunity of him, . . . who has not repented and been forgiven." For this truth he appeals to Pss xxxii and li, while pointing out that only few passages in the Psalter make it clear (*Old Testament and After*, pp. 106 f).

*A Psalm of David. Maschil.*

**XXXII. 1** Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

2 Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity,  
And in whose spirit there is no guile.

**XXXII. Maschil.** See xlvii. 7, note.

1, 2. THE BLESSED STATE OF THE FORGIVEN

1. *Blessed.* Heb. *ashrē*, as in i. 1. The sentiment, "Blessed is the forgiven sinner," has a New Testament ring: see Rom. iv. 7, 8.

*transgression.* Heb. *pésha'*, i.e. some act of disloyalty towards the God of Israel. The allusion may be to such a case as that described in 2 Macc. xii. 40, i.e. a trafficking with Gentile idolatry *in secret*.

2. *in whose spirit there is no guile* (or *deceit*). Until the Psalmist had confessed his fault there was indeed deceit in him.

- 3 When I kept silence, my bones waxed old  
Through my roaring all the day long.
- 4 For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me:  
My moisture was changed <sup>1</sup>as with the drought of summer. [Selah
- 5 I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I  
not hid:  
I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD;  
And thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. [Selah
- 6 For this let every one that is godly pray unto thee <sup>2</sup>in a time  
when thou mayest be found:  
Surely when the great waters overflow they shall not reach  
unto him.
- 7 Thou art my hiding place; thou wilt preserve me from  
trouble;  
Thou wilt compass me about with songs of deliverance. [Selah

<sup>1</sup> Or, into<sup>2</sup> Or, in the time of finding out sin

### 3, 4. THE MISERY OF SIN UNCONFESSSED

3. *my bones waxed old.* The opposite experience is described in Job xxi. 24, "the marrow of his bones is moistened."

*my roaring.* I.e. my loud cries of distress: cf xxii. 1.

4. *thy hand was heavy.* Cf xxxviii. 2. "Hand" for "chastisement."

*My moisture was changed.* Hebrew loves concrete expressions: the Psalmist means, "my bodily vigour was lost as through the heat (or the fevers) of summer."

### 5-7. CONFESSION FOLLOWED BY RECOVERY

5. *thou forgavest the iniquity (or guilt) of my sin.* Forgive (Heb. *nāsā*) means lit. "take away."

6. *For this.* Rather, *After this manner*, i.e. with full confession of past sin. Cf lxv. 2, 3.

*in a time when thou mayest be found.* Cf Isa lv. 6; lxv. 1.

*when the great waters overflow.* Cf lxix. 2, 14, 15. The expression is metaphorical, as in English, "a sea of trouble."

7. *Thou wilt compass me about.* I.e. protect me; cf v. 10; Deut xxxii. 10.

- 8 I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go:  
I will counsel thee with mine eye upon thee.
- 9 Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding:  
Whose trappings must be bit and bridle to hold them in,  
<sup>1</sup> *Else* they will not come near unto thee.
- 10 Many sorrows shall be to the wicked:  
But he that trusteth in the LORD, mercy shall compass him about.
- 11 Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, ye righteous:  
And shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *That they come not near*

#### 8, 9. A DIVINE OFFER AND WARNING

8. *I will instruct thee.* Or, *Let me instruct thee.* This Psalm is called a *Maschil*, i.e. an instruction: cf the teacher's invitation in xxxiv. 11.

9. *Be ye not...unto thee.* This change from plural to singular (and *vice versa*) is not unusual in didactic writing: e.g. it is found in Deuteronomy; see Deut xi. 8-12, "Ye...thee...ye...thou...ye...thou...thy...ye...thy." The speaker thinks of his audience at one moment and at another of one particular member of it.

*the horse.* Cf Jer viii. 6, "As a horse that rusheth headlong in the battle."

*Whose trappings* (lit. *ornament*). These were very conspicuous, as the Assyrian reliefs show.

*Else they will not come near unto thee.* Without "trappings," i.e. harness, they cannot be made to obey thee. The rendering is uncertain; the Hebrew text is possibly corrupt.

#### 10, 11. A CONTRAST BETWEEN THE WICKED AND THE RIGHTEOUS

10. *Many sorrows.* Or, *Many pains.* The same Hebrew word in xxxviii. 17, lxix. 26, where the "sorrow" is regarded as sent as a punishment for sin. The Psalmist takes the view that the wicked receive punishment in this life: cf Vulgate, *multa flagella peccatoris*. As a rule the Psalmists in justifying Divine providence are content to say as in Ps xxxiv. 19, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous: But JEHOVAH delivereth him out of them all." When the wicked man is punished, he who trusts in JEHOVAH escapes.

11. *Be glad in JEHOVAH.* This Psalm ends (like xxxi) with a heartening appeal.

## PSALM XXXIII

PRAISE JEHOVAH: HE IS THE GOD OF CREATION  
AND OF PROVIDENCE

## § 1. CONTENTS.

- 1- 3. A summons to praise JEHOVAH.  
 4- 9. The greatness of JEHOVAH in creation.  
 10-17. The counsel of men is of no avail against the counsel of God.  
 18-22. The Psalmist's faith in JEHOVAH'S providence.

§ 2. Psalm xxxiii (unlike many others) plunges us at once into a congregational atmosphere. We find ourselves in an assembly of the righteous, whom the Psalmist is inviting to raise a song of praise. The lyre with its three or four strings and the great harp with its ten strings are to sound forth, and a new song composed for the occasion is to be sung. The Psalmist justifies his invitation by a lesson on JEHOVAH'S greatness.

And what is the occasion? None is suggested by the context. Rather the Psalmist proceeds to give reasons of universal application why men should praise God. JEHOVAH, he says, has shown His lovingkindness and His power in creating the Universe and in ruling it. His power is of instant effect; he has but to speak and the thing He wills is done. And then comes a nearer touch. The nations have counsels and "thoughts" (devices) against Israel, but all their devising can avail nothing. JEHOVAH the All-powerful Creator has chosen Israel for His own inheritance: Israel is safe and blessed (*v.* 12).

Israel is safe because the Almighty is also the All-seeing, *er-Raḳīb*<sup>1</sup>, "The Watcher," as He is named in Islam. He governs men's hearts; He it is Who brings them to unity of counsel; He knows what men will attempt to do. So again the nations which threaten Israel cannot succeed with the help of horses and a great host, for victory does not depend on these. The eye of JEHOVAH, i.e. His providence, saves all who look to Him. At the thought of JEHOVAH'S saving power the Psalmist turns again to general language. JEHOVAH saves His faithful ones from "death," i.e. pestilence, from famine, and in all cases He proves Himself the help and shield of those for whom the Psalmist speaks. The Psalm ends with a profession of confidence in JEHOVAH'S name coupled with a petition that His lovingkindness may be "upon us."

**XXXIII. 1** Rejoice in the LORD, O ye righteous:

Praise is comely for the upright.

## 1-3. A SUMMONS TO PRAISE JEHOVAH

1. *Rejoice*. Rather, *Shout for joy*, as in xxxii. 11 (the same Hebrew root).

*Praise is comely*. Cf xciii. 5, "Holiness becometh thine house," where a cognate Hebrew word is used: Vulgate (in both passages), *deceat*.

<sup>1</sup> *er-Raḳīb* is one of the hundred names of God which Moslems repeat in their devotions.

- 2 Give thanks unto the LORD with harp:  
Sing praises unto him with the psaltery of ten strings.
- 3 Sing unto him a new song;  
Play skilfully with a loud noise.
- 4 For the word of the LORD is right;  
And all his work is *done* in faithfulness.
- 5 He loveth righteousness and judgement:  
The earth is full of the lovingkindness of the LORD.
- 6 By the word of the LORD were the heavens made;  
And all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.

Since the Heb. *tšhillāh*, "praise," is used in the title "Psalms," *Tšhillim*, we might translate, *A Psalm is befitting*.

2. *with harp...with the psaltery*. These two stringed instruments were used to accompany the words of a Psalm. When words were wanting notes of music would fill the void. Thus did David sing and play to the harp before Saul (1 Sam xvi. 16).

3. *a new song*. I.e. the present Psalm, which comes fresh from the Psalmist's heart; cf xl. 3, note.

(*with*) *a loud noise*. Heb. *tšrū'āh*. What is meant is a combined shout of greeting to God or in honour of God: cf xlvii. 5, "God is gone up with a shout" (*tšrū'āh*); i.e. in procession of the ark of the covenant up Mount Zion. In Num x. 10 the priests are charged to blow with the trumpets over the sacrifices on "days of gladness" and "in the set feasts," and the people were to respond with a great shout. See xxvii. 6, note.

#### 4-9. THE GREATNESS OF JEHOVAH IN CREATION

5. *He loveth righteousness and judgement*. Or, (*JEHOVAH*) *loveth* (to exercise) *righteousness and judgement*. Kimkhi's comment is, "He doeth in his world at one time *righteousness* and at another *judgment*, but *lovingkindness* is that which prevaieth. Therefore he saith, *The earth is full of the lovingkindness of JEHOVAH*."

6. *By the word of JEHOVAH*. An allusion to Gen i. 3, 6, etc.

(*by*) *the breath (of his mouth)*. Heb. *rūah*, as in Gen i. 2, "the spirit (*rūah*) of God." *Breath* and *spirit* are represented by the same word in Hebrew (*rūah*), in Greek (*πνεῦμα*) and in Latin (*spiritus*).

*all the host of them*. A reference to Gen ii. 1. The Hebrew word for *host* (*zābā*, plural *zšbā'ōth*) has the suggestion of *attendance* or *service* (Exod xxxviii. 8; 1 Sam ii. 22). According to Gentile opinion the great stars are great gods; the lesser stars are attendant on them. The Psalmist declares that JEHOVAH made them all, both small and great, and by just a word, "the breath of his mouth."

- 7 He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap:  
He layeth up the deeps in storehouses.
- 8 Let all the earth fear the LORD:  
Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him.
- 9 For he spake, and it was done;  
He commanded, and it stood fast.
- 10 The LORD bringeth the counsel of the nations to nought:  
He maketh the thoughts of the peoples to be of none effect.
- 11 The counsel of the LORD standeth fast for ever,  
The thoughts of his heart to all generations.
- 12 Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD;  
The people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance.
- 13 The LORD looketh from heaven;  
He beholdeth all the sons of men;

7. *He gathereth the waters.* An allusion to Gen i. 9. *as an heap.* Heb. *nēd* as in Exod xv. 8. But LXX gives ὡς ἀσκόν, i.e. "as (into) a bottle," Heb. *nōd*, "a skin-bottle." In Job xxxviii. 37 the clouds are called the *bottles* (Heb. *nēbālim*, *niblē*) of heaven.

*the deeps.* In Hebrew the plural of *deep* (*tēhōm*) in Gen i. 2.

8. *Let all the earth fear* *ἸΕΗΟΥΑΗ*. Cf xcix. 1, "ἸΕΗΟΥΑΗ reigneth; let the peoples tremble."

9. *and it was done.* Cf Gen i. 9, "And it was (so)".

*and it stood fast.* Rather, *and it remained so*, i.e. the Universe remained as *ἸΕΗΟΥΑΗ* had arranged it: cf cxlviii. 6.

#### 10-17. THE COUNSEL OF MEN IS OF NO AVAIL AGAINST THE COUNSEL OF GOD

10. *He maketh the thoughts* etc. V. 10b in LXX (followed by Vulgate and P-B) consists of two clauses instead of one only (as in the Hebrew text), thus:

ἀθετεῖ δὲ λογισμοὺς λαῶν,  
καὶ ἀθετεῖ βουλὰς ἀρχόντων.

These are *doublets*, duplicate translations of the original Hebrew: it is not easy to choose between them. The latter, "And casteth out the counsels of princes" (P-B), may be right, though it disagrees with MT. See Ps xxix, Introduction, § 1.

12. *Blessed is the nation* (Heb. *goi*). *Nations* (Heb. *goyim*) is the term regularly used in O.T. for Gentiles, but *goi* (singular) is applied not seldom to Israel.

13. *ἸΕΗΟΥΑΗ looketh from heaven.* Cf xiv. 2 = liii. 2. The same thought is somewhat differently expressed in Zech iv. 10, "The eyes of *ἸΕΗΟΥΑΗ*... run to and fro through the whole earth."

- 14 From the place of his habitation he looketh forth  
Upon all the inhabitants of the earth ;
- 15 He that fashioneth the hearts of them all,  
That considereth all their works.
- 16 There is no king saved by <sup>1</sup>the multitude of an host :  
A mighty man is not delivered by great strength.
- 17 An horse is a vain thing for safety :  
Neither shall he deliver any by his great power.
- 18 Behold, the eye of the LORD is upon them that fear him,  
Upon them that <sup>2</sup>hope in his mercy ;
- 19 To deliver their soul from death,  
And to keep them alive in famine.
- 20 Our soul hath waited for the LORD :  
He is our help and our shield.

<sup>1</sup> Or, a great power<sup>2</sup> Or, wait for

15. *He that fashioneth the hearts of them all.* So He can dispose and turn them, as it seems best to His godly wisdom.

16. *There is no king saved by the multitude of an host.* *Saved* (Heb. *nōshā'*) might be rendered "is victorious." In ancient warfare the king exposed himself freely in the battle, and to return in safety (or "in peace": 1 K xxii. 27 f.) usually implied victorious return. So in Zech ix. 9, "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion ;... behold, thy king cometh unto thee... *having salvation*" (Heb. *nōshā'*), i.e. victorious.

*is not delivered by great strength.* Cf Eccl ix. 11, "The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong."

17. *An horse.* Cf cxlvii. 10.

#### 18-22. THE PSALMIST'S FAITH IN JEHOVAH'S PROVIDENCE

18. *the eye of JEHOVAH is upon them.* The same Hebrew phrase as in xxxiv. 15, "the eyes of JEHOVAH are toward the righteous." The Hebrew preposition *al*, which is translated above "upon" or "toward," is used sometimes in a hostile sense, as in the phrase, "Behold, I am against you (*or thee*)"; Ezek xiii. 8, xxi. 3, *al*. Hence in this passage the Psalmist continues the construction into v. 19, "the eye of JEHOVAH is upon them... To deliver their soul from death." So any ambiguity is removed.

19. *from death.* The common Hebrew word *māvēth*, "death," is sometimes used specially of *pestilence*, e.g. Jer ix. 21, xv. 2. The thought in the Psalm is that JEHOVAH delivers from battle (vv. 16, 17), and from pestilence and famine (v. 19).

20. *Our soul hath waited.* The *soul* (Heb. *nephesh*) is regarded as the seat of the appetites and of the emotions and passions. All that is

- 21 For our heart shall rejoice in him,  
Because we have trusted in his holy name.  
22 Let thy mercy, O LORD, be upon us,  
According as we <sup>1</sup>have hoped in thee.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *wait for*

eager in the Psalmist's nature has been tutored into patient waiting on JEHOVAH's will: cf cxxxii. 2.

21. *in his holy name.* The Psalmist's trust is placed not in any man, whether king or hero, but in Him who is "holy" and far above mankind.

22. *thy mercy.* Rather, *thy lovingkindness*, as in v. 5. In modern English *mercy* tends to be restricted to a narrower sense.

## PSALM XXXIV

### A WISE MAN'S HOMILY (AN ALPHABETICAL PSALM)

#### § 1. CONTENTS.

1, 2. The Psalmist's resolve to give God praise.

3-10. A series of challenges (a) *Magnify JEHOVAH*, v. 3; (b) *Look unto Him* (v. 5 as emended); (c) *Fear JEHOVAH* (v. 9).

11-14. The Psalmist's "Instruction": cf Pro iv. 1 ff.

15-21. JEHOVAH's providence over the righteous and the wicked.

22. Assurance of safety for those who trust in JEHOVAH.

#### § 2. THE CHARACTER OF THE PSALM.

The title prefixed to this Psalm gives no help towards interpreting it. The incident described in 1 Sam xxi. 10-15 is not reflected in the Psalm, if a reflection means a clear outline. David fled from Saul to Achish (not to "Abimelech") king of Gath. The Gittites told Achish that this David was the great champion of Israel against the Philistines. Then David was overcome by fear and feigned madness. Madmen are sacrosanct in the East, so Achish did not kill David, but was content to drive him away. David then became a captain of outlaws among the hill-fastnesses of Judah. The language of the Psalm nowhere reflects the particular case of David among the Philistines, indeed there is no mention throughout of foreigners or Gentiles (*gōyim*). Perhaps the words which suit David's case best are those of v. 6, "Lo! a poor man (an afflicted one) cried, and JEHOVAH heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles." But such words do not distinguish David's case from others.

The Psalmist calls on all who will listen to him, his pupils, *children* (v. 11) to accept his teaching. This teaching is that JEHOVAH cares for the righteous, and that He saves the oppressed ("the bruised in spirit"). By the "righteous" the Psalmist means specially those who keep themselves from sins of the tongue,

who turn from evil and do good, who seek earnestly after "peace." In illustration of the LORD's protection of such men the Psalmist cites his own case (*v.* 6). On the other hand he asserts that evil overtakes the wicked (*vs.* 16, 21). This teaching that in this present life the righteous receive reward and the wicked are punished is just the teaching which Job and several Psalmists hesitate to receive. Personal experiences differed much and each writer testifies that which he has seen.

The address *Children* in *v.* 11 reminds us that this Psalm is (like some others) a piece of "Wisdom literature." The wise man seeks to instruct his juniors. The address "My son" occurs six times in Proverbs, and a dozen times in Ecclesiasticus. The alphabetical form in which the Psalm is cast makes its contents easier to remember. For "alphabetical form" see xxv, Introduction, §§ 1, 2.

*A Psalm of David; when he <sup>1</sup>changed his behaviour before Abimelech, who drove him away, and he departed.*

**XXXIV.** 1 I will bless the LORD at all times:

His praise shall continually be in my mouth.

2 My soul shall make her boast in the LORD:

The meek shall hear thereof, and be glad.

3 O magnify the LORD with me,

And let us exalt his name together.

4 I sought the LORD, and he answered me,

And delivered me from all my fears.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *feigned madness*

#### 1, 2. THE PSALMIST'S RESOLVE TO GIVE PRAISE

**XXXIV.** 1. *I will bless JEHOVAH at all times.* Cf cxix. 164, "Seven times a day do I praise thee."

2. *The meek* (Heb. *'ānāvīm*) shall hear thereof, and be glad. I.e. they shall rejoice *with me* (over my deliverance shortly to be narrated). For *'ānāvīm* see ix. 12, note.

#### 3-10. CHALLENGES

4. *my fears.* Heb. *māgōr*, "fear," means a *cause* of terror, as in xxxi. 13; Jer vi. 25, "There is the sword of the enemy and terror on every side." But LXX B has *ἐκ πασῶν μου παροικιῶν μου*, *from all my sojournings*, so the writer of the title prefixt to this Psalm supposed that there was a reference in this verse to David's "sojourning" in a foreign land (Philistia).

- 5 They looked unto him, and were lightened:  
 And their faces shall never be confounded.
- 6 This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him,  
 And saved him out of all his troubles.
- 7 The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that  
 fear him,  
 And delivereth them.
- 8 O taste and see that the LORD is good:  
 Blessed is the man that trusteth in him.

5. *They looked unto him* etc. LXX, following a different reading of the Hebrew, has words of exhortation here:

προσέλθατε πρὸς αὐτὸν καὶ φωτίσθητε,  
 καὶ τὰ πρόσωπα ὑμῶν οὐ μὴ καταισχυνθῆ,

i.e. Approach him and be enlightened,  
 And your faces shall not be ashamed.

So also the Peshitta. Thus read the verse contains a challenge like *vv.* 3 and 9. Conversely, by a slight correction of LXX from MT, we read for the whole verse:

Look unto him, and be enlightened;  
 And let not your faces be ashamed,

i.e. Do not faint in your prayer if the answer is long in coming.

There is a promise for those who *look to him* that they shall be *enlightened*. (The Hebrew word is the same as in Isa lx. 5, "Then thou shalt see and be lightened.") A promise is sometimes conveyed in Hebrew by an imperative as in Gen xii. 2, RV (cf AV).

6. *This poor man cried*. Rather, *Lo!* (or *See,*) *a poor man cried*. The Psalmist means himself: he enforces the statement of his case given in *v.* 4. The parallelism of the two verses should be noted:

*v.* 4  
 I sought JEHOVAH,  
 and he answered me,  
 And delivered me  
 from all my fears.

*v.* 6  
 Lo! a poor man cried,  
 and JEHOVAH heard him,  
 And saved him  
 out of all his troubles.

7. *The angel of JEHOVAH encampeth round about them that fear him*. Duhm, pressing the metaphor of *encamping*, declares that the Hebrew phrase, "Angel (*mal'ach*) of JEHOVAH," is a collective here. This however is improbable. The Psalmist may be thinking of Exod xiv. 19, "The angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them." "Angel of JEHOVAH" is used for "JEHOVAH" Himself for the sake of reverence, when the reference is to Divine activity manifested to men.

8. *taste and see that JEHOVAH is good* (or *gracious*). Because of this verse, this Psalm was appointed in the Liturgy of the Apostolic Con-

9 O fear the LORD, ye his saints:

For there is no want to them that fear him.

10 The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger:

But they that seek the LORD shall not want any good thing.

11 Come, ye children, hearken unto me:

I will teach you the fear of the LORD.

12 What man is he that desireth life,

And loveth *many* days, that he may see good?

stitutions to be sung while the people communicated (F. E. Brightman, *Liturgies*, page 25). But the verse has a general reference: of the lines,

“O make but trial of his love

Experience will decide.

How blest are they and only they

Who in his truth confide.”

9. *O fear JEHOVAH.* There is no special stress on the verb “fear” as opposed to “love”: the words might be paraphrased, “Be obedient servants of JEHOVAH.” The Psalmist explains in *vv.* 11-14 what he means by “Fear of JEHOVAH.” From Pro xvi. 6 we learn that “by fear of JEHOVAH men depart from evil.” Further, Obadiah the steward of Ahab showed that he “feared JEHOVAH greatly” by hiding a hundred “prophets” from Jezebel’s fury, and by feeding them in their hiding place (1 K xviii. 3, 4).

*ye his saints* (Heb. *kəḏōšim*). The same Hebrew word is used in Deut xxxiii. 3; its root meaning is perhaps that of separateness: Saints are those who are separate from the mass of men. The Hebrew word used in lxxxix. 19, “thy saints,” is different. It means “godly” and is so translated in iv. 3, xii. 1 (*hāsīd*, pl. *hāsīdīm*).

10. *The young lions* (Heb. *kəphīrīm*). The Hebrew word means a lion in its vigour: civ. 21. It is used metaphorically of great men or rulers, who exercise oppression: xxxv. 17; Ezek xix. 3, 6 of the evil successors of Josiah (2 K xxiii. 31—xxiv. 12). Though the strong go hungry, the worshippers of JEHOVAH shall be fed.

At the end of this verse LXX has the word *διάψαλμα*, which corresponds to the Hebrew *Selah*, but *Selah* is not found here in MT. If *διάψαλμα* is a note signifying a change in the music, or, again, a musical interval, it is certainly suitable, for at this place there is a change in the thought. For the meaning of *Selah* see NOTE, page 15.

#### 11-14. THE PSALMIST'S INSTRUCTION

12. *And loveth many days, that he may see good.* This is a more literal rendering of MT: LXX, ἀγαπῶν ἰδεῖν ἡμέρας ἀγαθάς, “(and) would fain see good days” (as P-B). “Good days” are *days* of rejoicing, *feast days*.

*life...days.* “One expression refers to this life; the other to the life to come” (*Kimkhi*).

- 13 Keep thy tongue from evil,  
And thy lips from speaking guile.
- 14 Depart from evil, and do good;  
Seek peace, and pursue it.
- 15 The eyes of the LORD are toward the righteous,  
And his ears are *open* unto their cry.
- 16 The face of the LORD is against them that do evil,  
To cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.
- 17 *The righteous* cried, and the LORD heard,  
And delivered them out of all their troubles.
- 18 The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart,  
And saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.

14. *Seek peace, and pursue it.* I.e. "Seek peace with the mouth, and pursue it with the heart" (*Kimkhi*).

#### 15-21. JEHOVAH'S PROVIDENCE OVER THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE WICKED

15, 16. These two verses seem to have been transposed: *v.* 15 begins with the letter *Ain* and *v.* 16 with *Pe*: this is the alphabetical order which is observed today. But in an order (probably old) which is followed in Lam ii. and iii. *Pe* precedes *Ain*. If we accept this order, the result is good: *v.* 16 follows *v.* 14, and *v.* 17 follows *v.* 15 to the improvement of the general sense. Upon the charge, "Depart from evil" (*v.* 14), follows quite naturally the warning statement, "The face of JEHOVAH is against them that do evil" (*v.* 16). Again, if *vv.* 15, 17 are consecutive, the subject of the verb, "cried" (*v.* 17), which seems to be missing, is quite easily supplied from *v.* 15. Probably these verses stood once in the order 14, 16, 15, 17.

15. *The eyes etc.* The nervous force of the Hebrew would be better represented thus,

*The eyes of JEHOVAH to the righteous:  
And his ears to their cry!*

16. *To cut off the remembrance.* Cf ix. 5, "Thou hast blotted out their name." The Psalmist shares the common Hebrew view which limited the punishment of the wicked to this earth. Thus if a wicked man prospered during his life he could be adequately punished only by the annihilation of his descendants.

17. *The righteous cried.* See note on *vv.* 15, 16, above.

18. *JEHOVAH is nigh.* For the same thought of lxxxv. 9, "Surely his salvation is nigh": cxlv. 18, "JEHOVAH is nigh unto all them that call upon him."

*a broken heart...a contrite (or bruised) spirit.* The resemblance of these words to Ps li. 17 suggests that they contain a reference to penitence.

- 19 Many are the afflictions of the righteous:  
But the LORD delivereth him out of them all.
- 20 He keepeth all his bones:  
Not one of them is broken.
- 21 Evil shall slay the wicked:  
And they that hate the righteous shall be <sup>1</sup>condemned.
- 22 The LORD redeemeth the soul of his servants:  
And none of them that trust in him shall be <sup>1</sup>condemned.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *held guilty*

In Ps xxxiv however the thought of a heart broken and a spirit bruised by afflictions apart from the thought of sin and its effects suits the context better: cf v. 19.

19. *Many are the afflictions.* Cf Pro xxiv. 16, "A righteous man falleth seven times, and riseth up again."

20. *He keepeth all his bones.* Contrast li. 8b.

21. *Evil (Misfortune, P-B) shall slay the wicked.* Cf (for a similar personification) xxxv. 8, "Let destruction come upon him at unawares." The rendering of Vulgate, *Mors peccatorum pessima*, follows LXX.

*that hate the righteous.* Rather, *that hate a righteous man*, such as the "poor man" of v. 6: see note there.

## 22. ASSURANCE OF SAFETY FOR THOSE WHO TRUST IN JEHOVAH

22. *JEHOVAH redeemeth (or ransometh).* The preceding verse ends with *Tau*, the last letter of the alphabet, and the present verse (beginning like v. 16 with *Pe*) stands outside the scheme. Verse 22 sums up the main teaching of the Psalm.

## PSALM XXXV

### AN APPEAL FROM THE OPPRESSION OF MEN TO THE JUDGMENT OF GOD

#### § 1. CHARACTER AND PURPOSE

The burden of this Psalm is, *Save me, O my God.* There is no doubt of the urgency of the case. The Psalmist uses several metaphors, but they all point to the great danger that he is in. He is pursued by enemies (vv. 1-3), who would trap him like some wild beast (vv. 7, 8). They are too strong for him (v. 10); they would bring him into court and strip him by false witness of his goods (vv. 11, 12); he is surrounded by hostile faces (vv. 15, 16), some of whom wish to be able to say, We have swallowed him up (v. 25).

There is a progress in his prayer against his enemies. First, he asks simply to be defended from them: "Take hold of shield...stop the way" (vv. 2, 3): next

he asks for the defeat of the enemy: "Let them be turned back" (v. 4); finally he asks that they may suffer complete overthrow, and that they themselves may meet with the destruction which they plan for him (vv. 7, 8). If this petition be granted, then the Psalmist will rejoice in JEHOVAH; indeed, he begins at once to put together words of praise for the deliverance for which he hopes (vv. 9, 10). Then he complains afresh of his foes; they are men to whom he had shown friendship, but now they turn against him in hostility (vv. 11-16).

The Psalms are "Praises" (Heb. *Tēhillim*) according to the Hebrew title, but it will be noticed that there is but little praise in Ps xxxv. The Psalmist is too fully occupied with his enemies to devote to the praise of JEHOVAH the energy which other Psalmists show, but he never finches in his loyalty to JEHOVAH. To Him alone he looks for deliverance.

Plainly an individual speaks here, and speaks for himself, not for his nation. His enemies are his own countrymen, and in spite of the metaphors of vv. 2, 3 the weapon with which they attack him is not the sword but the tongue. They hope to crush him with false witness and unjust judgment. Pss v, lix and others should be compared. Duhm usually takes the Psalmist to be the speaker of a religious party, the Pharisaic in the case of lix. But in most cases the language is too general to show that a particular party is referred to.

#### § 2. THE DATE.

There is no clear indication of the date of the Psalm. Duhm thinks that it reflects the conditions which prevailed in the last centuries (second and first) before the Christian era. He states rather oddly that one indication that the Psalm is "very young" (*sehr jung*) is the use of the foreign word *σάγαρις* in v. 3. To this may be answered (1) that the word is an uncertain reading, without a second occurrence to confirm it: (2) that if *sēgor* be for *σάγαρις*, it is not a Greek but an Eastern word, which may have been introduced into Hebrew at quite an early period.

The phrase *them that are quiet in the land* (v. 20) suggests to some commentators, e.g. R. Kittel, the Maccabean times in which the party of the *Hāsīdim*, "the pious ones," wished to keep the peace and to accept Alcimus the High Priest appointed by the Syrian government rather than follow Judas in his armed resistance (1 Macc vii. 10-17). But surely there were quiet ones in the land of Israel long before the Maccabean Age, e.g. the Rechabites, who are held up for an example in Jer xxxv. 1-11.

#### *A Psalm of David.*

**XXXV.** 1 Strive thou, O LORD, with them that strive with me:  
Fight thou against them that fight against me.

1-3. I AM PURSUED BY ENEMIES: INTERPOSE IN ARMS,  
O JEHOVAH, AND SAVE ME

**XXXV.** 1. *Strive thou.* Or, "*Plead thou my cause,*" P-B. So also in xl.iii. 1. The Psalmist begins thus with the metaphor of a forensic struggle, but he changes it in the next verse. *Fight thou*, etc., should rather be, *Threaten thou those that threaten me*: cf lvi. 1, note.

- 2 Take hold of shield and buckler,  
And stand up for mine help.
- 3 Draw out also the spear, <sup>1</sup>and stop the way against them  
that pursue me:  
Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation.
- 4 Let them be ashamed and brought to dishonour that seek  
after my soul:  
Let them be turned back and confounded that devise my hurt.
- 5 Let them be as chaff before the wind,  
And the angel of the LORD driving *them* on.
- 6 Let their way be <sup>2</sup>dark and slippery,  
And the angel of the LORD pursuing them.
- 7 For without cause have they hid for me <sup>3</sup>their net *in* a pit,  
Without cause have they digged *a pit* for my soul.

<sup>1</sup> Or, and the battle axe against &c.      <sup>2</sup> Heb. darkness and slippery places.  
<sup>3</sup> Or, the pit of their net

2. *Take hold of shield and buckler.* The "shield" (Heb. *māgōn*) is small and easily carried: the "buckler" (Heb. *zinnah*) is sometimes the term for a large screen behind which two combatants stood to shoot arrows against a besieged city. The small shield carried on the arm and the great shield planted in front constituted a double defence.

3. *and stop the way.* Probably right, but some critics take the Heb. *sāgōr* ("stop," imperative) as a form of *σάγαις*, a word used in Herodotus (e.g. i. 215) of a weapon—possibly an axe, single- or double-edged—carried by Scythian tribes. This suggestion is improbable.

#### 4-6. LET THE ENEMY BE PUT TO FLIGHT AND BE PURSUED IN THEIR TURN

4. *Let them be ashamed* etc. So also xl. 14 = lxx. 2.  
*that devise my hurt.* I.e. by endeavouring to get me falsely condemned.

5. *the angel of JEHOVAH driving them on.* This means "JEHOVAH driving them on"; cf xxxiv. 7, note. For *driving them on* we should rather read, *casting them down*. *V. 5a* describes a *flight*; in *v. 5b* the fugitives are overtaken and hewn down; in *v. 6* the pursuit is resumed by the active pursuer.

#### 7, 8. LET THE PLOT RECOIL ON THE PLOTTER

7. *without cause*... *Without cause* (Heb. *hinnām*). This repetition is not surprising, for the Psalmist feels with intensity that he has given his enemies no cause to hate him. In *vv. 11-16* he explains that his enemies

- 8 Let destruction come upon him at unawares;  
 And let his net that he hath hid catch himself:  
<sup>1</sup>With destruction let him fall therein.
- 9 And my soul shall be joyful in the LORD:  
 It shall rejoice in his salvation.
- 10 All my bones shall say, LORD, who is like unto thee,  
 Which deliverest the poor from him that is too strong for him,  
 Yea, the poor and the needy from him that spoileth him?
- 11 <sup>2</sup>Unrighteous witnesses rise up;  
 They ask me of things that I know not.
- 12 They reward me evil for good,  
 To the bereaving of my soul.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *Into that very destruction let him fall*      <sup>2</sup> Or, *Malicious* See Ex. xxiii. 1.

have awarded him evil for good, and in v. 19 he describes his foes as those who hate him "without a cause." The word *a pit* is perhaps misplaced: here,

*Without cause have they hid for me their net;  
 Without cause have they digged a pit for my soul.*

8. *destruction*. P-B, *sudden destruction* (*benê*). Heb. *shō'āh* is perhaps onomatopoeic, "a crash." So at the end of the verse, *With a crash let him fall into it*.

#### 9, 10. LET ME HAVE CAUSE TO GIVE PRAISE

10. *All my bones*. I.e. every part of me: cf xxxiv. 20 "(JEHOVAH) keepeth *all his bones*"; also ciii. 1, "All that is within me, bless his holy name."

*the poor and the needy*. See lxx. 5, note, for the difference between these two adjectives.

*from him that spoileth him*. Or, *from him that robbeth him*: the Hebrew verb is the same as in Pro xxii. 22, "Rob not the poor, because he is poor." The Psalmist fears to be stript by unjust judgment of all that he possesses. So he refers in the following verse to unrighteous witnesses.

#### 11-16. MY ASSAILANTS ARE MEN TO WHOM I FORMERLY SHOWED FRIENDSHIP

11. *Unrighteous witnesses*. Or, *witnesses who do violence*, a contradiction in terms, but a telling phrase. So also in Exod xxiii. 1, "Put not thine hand with the wicked to be an *unrighteous witness*."

12. *To the bereaving of my soul*. The Psalmist feels himself bereft of friends, for those who should have been his friends have turned against him.

- 13 But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth:  
I afflicted my soul with fasting;  
And my prayer <sup>1</sup>returned into mine own bosom.
- 14 I behaved myself as though it had been my friend or my  
brother:  
I bowed down mourning, as one that bewaileth his mother.
- 15 But when I halted they rejoiced, and gathered themselves  
together:  
The <sup>2</sup>abjects gathered themselves together against me, and  
<sup>3</sup>I knew *it* not;  
They did tear me, and ceased not:
- 16 <sup>4</sup>Like the profane mockers in feasts,  
They gnashed upon me with their teeth.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *shall return*<sup>2</sup> Or, *smilers*<sup>3</sup> Or, those whom *I knew not*<sup>4</sup> Or, *Among*

13. *I afflicted my soul with fasting.* The Hebrew phrase is used in a technical sense in Lev xvi. 29, 31, xxiii. 27 of abstinence on the day of Atonement. It is applied generally to fast days in Isa lviii. 3, 5.

*And my prayer returned into mine own bosom.* Rather, *And my prayer shall return into mine own bosom*, i.e. it shall be reckoned to me by JEHOVAH for good.

14. *mourning.* For a description of mourning see 2 Sam xix. 24, "He had neither dressed his feet, nor trimmed his beard, nor washed his clothes, from the day the king departed."

15. *when I halted.* P-B, *in mine adversity (bend)*. To *halt* (in the English of AV) is to *walk lamely*; so in 1 K xviii. 21, "How long halt ye between two opinions?" The people whom Elijah addressed were *walking lamely* in that they tried to worship JEHOVAH and Baal at the same time. The Hebrew word in the Psalm is the same (*zal'i*) as in Jer xx. 10, "they that watch for my halting," i.e. for my getting into difficulties.

*abjects* (i.e. outcasts) is an old word found in the English versions from 1539 to 1885. The Hebrew word (*nēchīm*) may possibly be rendered "smilers." But if we accept the emendation, *nochrīm*, "strangers" (lxix. 8, "an alien"), we read, "Strangers...and those whom I knew not gathered themselves together."

16. *Like the profane mockers in feasts.* The meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain, the text being probably corrupt; perhaps the meaning is, "Like profane (or godless) ones they made mock of me."

- 17 Lord, how long wilt thou look on?  
Rescue my soul from their destructions,  
<sup>1</sup>My darling from the lions.
- 18 I will give thee thanks in the great congregation:  
I will praise thee among <sup>2</sup>much people.
- 19 Let not them that are mine enemies <sup>3</sup>wrongfully rejoice  
over me:  
Neither let them wink with the eye that hate me without a  
cause.
- 20 For they speak not peace:  
But they devise deceitful words against them that are quiet  
in the land.
- 21 Yea, they opened their mouth wide against me;  
They said, Aha, aha, our eye hath seen it.

<sup>1</sup> Heb. *My only one*.<sup>2</sup> Or, *a mighty people*<sup>3</sup> Heb. *falsely*.

17, 18. RESCUE ME AND I WILL PRAISE THEE; cf *vv.* 8-10

17. *My darling*. Cf xxii. 20, note.

18. *in the great congregation*. "Congregation" (Heb. *kāhāl*) as in xxii. 22: cf xxvi. 5, note.

19-26. LET NOT THE ENEMY EXULT OVER ME; LET HIM RATHER  
BE PUT TO CONFUSION

19. *wink with the eye*. From Pro vi. 13 f. it appears that this winking means to give signals to a confederate for the carrying out of some mischievous design: "He winketh with his eyes...he deviseth evil continually."

20. *they speak not peace*. Lit. *they speak that which is no-peace*. The expression is almost equivalent to *they declare war*. The expression gave difficulty to the LXX, and they omitted the negative in their translation, *ἐμοὶ εἰρημικὰ ἐλάλουν...δόλους διελογίζοντο*, i.e. "to me they spoke peaceable words...they devised deceits"; Vulgate, *mihi pacifice loquebantur...dolos cogitabant*.

*deceitful words*. So also P-B, but *deceitful matters* (AV), i.e. "treachery," is better.

*them that are quiet in the land*. Heb. (רַנְיֵי אֶרֶץ), "the quiet ones of the land." Peshitta, *the meek of (v.l. in) the land*. See Introduction, § 2, above.

21. *our eye hath seen*. So the Hebrew: the final *it* is unnecessary. The meaning is, "We have seen what we desired to see"; cf *v.* 25.

- 22 Thou hast seen it, O LORD; keep not silence:  
O Lord, be not far from me.
- 23 Stir up thyself, and awake to my judgement,  
*Even* unto my cause, my God and my Lord.
- 24 Judge me, O LORD my God, according to thy righteousness;  
And let them not rejoice over me.
- 25 Let them not say in their heart, <sup>1</sup>Aha, so would we have it:  
Let them not say, We have swallowed him up.
- 26 Let them be ashamed and confounded together that rejoice  
at mine hurt:  
Let them be clothed with shame and dishonour that magnify  
themselves against me.
- 27 Let them shout for joy, and be glad, that <sup>2</sup>favour my righteous  
cause:  
Yea, let them say continually, The LORD be magnified,  
Which hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servant.
- 28 And my tongue shall talk of thy righteousness,  
*And* of thy praise all the day long.

<sup>1</sup> Heb. *Aha, our desire.*<sup>2</sup> Heb. *have pleasure in my righteousness.*

22. *keep not silence.* The same Hebrew phrase is rendered in xxviii. 1 (see note), "be not thou deaf."

23. *Even unto my cause.* The Psalmist returns to the forensic language of v. 1.

25. *Aha, so would we have it.* Lit. *Aha, our soul* (or *our appetite*, Heb. *nephesh*). So Vulgate, *Euge euge animae nostrae*, i.e. "Well, well for our soul." Cf xxvii. 12, note.

*We have swallowed him up.* I.e. completely destroyed him. The same Hebrew verb is used in Isa xxv. 8, "He hath swallowed up death for ever."

26. *Let them be clothed.* Cf cxxxii. 16, note.

*that magnify themselves against me.* Or (as P-B = LXX, Vulgate), *that boast themselves against me.*

27, 28. MAY THOSE WHO ARE WITH ME HAVE CAUSE  
TO PRAISE JEHOVAH

27. *JEHOVAH be magnified.* Or, *JEHOVAH be great.* P-B, "Blessed be the Lord," misses the *nuance* in the meaning of the Heb. verb. *the prosperity.* Or *the peace* (Heb. *shālōm*). Cf xxix. 11, note.

28. *my tongue shall talk of thy righteousness.* Vulgate, *lingua mea meditabitur justitiam tuam.* The corresponding Heb. verb, *hagāh*, may be differently rendered in different passages. Sometimes it describes

dwelling on a subject in the mind, as in i. 2, "In His law doth he *meditate* day and night"; Pro xxiv. 2, "Their heart *studieth* oppression." At other times (as here) it describes dwelling on a subject by continuing to *talk* about it. In Isa lix. 11 it is used even of the continued murmuring of doves. The Psalmist will murmur to himself of God's goodness, and will also publish aloud his praise. The verse returns to the note of thankful confidence sounded in *vv.* 9, 10, and so forms an appropriate ending to the Psalm.

### PSALM XXXVI

#### A TRAVELLER FACES THE DANGERS AND DIFFICULTIES OF HIS JOURNEY WITH THE CALMNESS OF FAITH

Eastern poetry, particularly among the Hebrews and the Arabs, is characterized by the abruptness of its turns. It is open air poetry and can best be understood by one who takes into consideration the natural surroundings of the author. In this connexion it should be noted that a number of Psalms are Journey Psalms; they have relation to the dangers of the way and to the faith of the traveller in his Divine guide and guard.

Under this head we may probably reckon xxiii, xci, cxxxix, and the present Psalm (xxxvi). The Psalmist, we suggest, is going down the ill-famed road from Jerusalem to Jericho. He thinks of the danger from the robbers who have always beset that road, and he sees again in mind the figure of one of the worst of them. This robber chief had once been a leader and benefactor of his people, but "he hath left off to be wise and to do good" (*v.* 3). Once he was (in Eastern phrase) "a Protector of the Poor," but now "he abhorreth not evil" (*v.* 4). He commits the outrages which once he would have put down.

But as the Psalmist follows his dangerous road comforting thoughts come over him. In the open air with the heaven above him he thinks of *JEHOVAH* the Creator and of His never-failing lovingkindness (*v.* 5). He is descending lower and lower to meet the Jordan valley, and as he looks back he sees "the mountains of God" (the mountains that stand about Jerusalem) beginning to tower up behind him like the ramparts of some impregnable city. Far below him he catches glimpses of the waters of the Dead Sea, a shining jewel as the traveller sees it from the descending road. The sight of Sea and Mountain—those wonderful works of God—recall to the Psalmist's mind thoughts of the moral perfections of *JEHOVAH*. His righteousness and his judgments cannot be measured, they keep the world in being: *JEHOVAH* saves by his providence both man and beast in their hours of danger (*v.* 6). The Psalmist feels safe under the lofty skies which speak to him of such lovingkindness: he, as one of "the children of men," one of the crowd, takes refuge under the wings of the Almighty (*v.* 7).

But the road is desert, no habitation on it, and that deep impassable ravine (*wadi Kelt*) beside it, dry perhaps in the summer heat, and the one spring (*Ain Shems*) by the way to quench his thirst: how is the traveller to fare? The

Psalmist is of good cheer. In 1895 the present writer found *Ain Shems* guarded by men who sold its refreshing water for money, but the Psalmist tells a different tale: "With Thee (in Thy charge) is the fountain of life." JEHOVAH will supply his wants: the forbidding steepes of the *wadi* shall yield "pleasures," and water shall be drawn—living water from the spring—for his thirst (*vv.* 8, 9*a*). The toilsome journey is coming to an end, but darkness has fallen suddenly on the traveller: O for some guiding light for the last steps! The light will surely come: "In Thy light" the Psalmist will find his way to his journey's end and to his resting-place for the night. It may be the light in some *fellâh's* cottage, but to the traveller it is a gift from God.

But the Psalmist's faith is still subject to alternations of hope and fear. It is a working (not an otiose) faith. He remembers God's past lovingkindness and His righteousness. (That righteousness means for the Psalmist God's vindication of Himself as a righteous judge, the helper of the afflicted.) The Psalmist calls on his God to *continue*, to prolong that lovingkindness for his present need (*v.* 10). The enemy comes on with swift foot and threatening hand: let him fail in his attack (*v.* 11). So the Psalmist prays, and so his faith is strengthened. He sees his prayer answered: "there," where his foes lay in wait, they "fell," and could not rise up again (*v.* 12).

The suggestion made by many writers, e.g. Cheyne and Duhm, that *vv.* 1-4 are a fragment of another Psalm and unconnected with *vv.* 5 ff. has little to recommend it beyond the *prima facie* impression of a break in the sense between *vv.* 4 and 5. If the wicked man disappears at the end of *v.* 4, he reappears with his associates in *vv.* 11, 12. Duhm actually detaches *v.* 12 from its place and attaches it to his fragment, *vv.* 1-4. But this act weakens (or destroys) his case against the unity of the Psalm.

For the Chief Musician. *A Psalm* of David the servant of the Lord.

**XXXVI. 1** <sup>1</sup>The transgression of the wicked <sup>2</sup>saith within <sup>3</sup>my heart,

There is no fear of God before his eyes.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *Transgression saith to the wicked*

<sup>2</sup> Or, *uttereth its oracle*

<sup>3</sup> Or, *according to many ancient versions, his*

#### 1-4. THE ROBBER BY THE WAY

**XXXVI. 1, 2.** *The transgression of the wicked saith etc.* The text of these two verses has suffered, but the main sense is clear, though not sufficiently expressed in RV text. The margin supplies some additional help. Making use of the margin we may accept the following rendering as substantially correct:

"Rebellion is as an oracle for the wicked within his heart;  
There is no fear of God before his eyes;  
For his god (read, *elohav*) maketh it easy in his eyes  
To achieve his iniquitous design and to hate (instruction)."

- 2 For <sup>1</sup>he flattereth himself in his own eyes,  
<sup>2</sup>That his iniquity shall not be found out and be hated.
- 3 The words of his mouth are iniquity and deceit:  
 He hath left off to be wise *and* to do good.
- 4 He deviseth iniquity upon his bed;  
 He setteth himself in a way that is not good;  
 He abhorreth not evil.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *it (or, he) flattereth him in his eyes*

<sup>2</sup> Or, *Until his iniquity be found and be hated* Heb. *Concerning the finding out of his iniquity and hating it.*

“Rebellion” (Heb. *pésha'*) is a better rendering than “transgression”: it means rebellion against *JEHOVAH*. Here it is personified as in Job viii. 4, “delivered them into the hand of their *transgression*” (or “rebellion”). Cf xxxii. 1, note.

Again, *is as an oracle* is a better rendering of the Hebrew *né'um* than the simple *saith*, for *né'um* is used almost always to introduce a Divine utterance, as in the phrase “saith the LORD.” It occurs in all the Hebrew prophets except Habakkuk and Jonah. Rebellion against *JEHOVAH* speaks with authority to the wicked man. Further *within his heart* is the reading found in LXX (*év éavrō*) and accordingly it is given in RV margin. MT gives *in my heart*, a very difficult reading; if we accept it, we may translate the Hebrew, *My heart sheweth me the wickedness of the ungodly* (so P-B). *For he flattereth himself* is an uncertain rendering: the Hebrew word *hehélík* means “to make smooth,” e.g. Isa xli. 7, “he that smootheth with the hammer”: hence in the present passage “to make easy.” *To achieve his iniquitous designs*; more literally, *to find (overtake or compass) his iniquity. To hate (instruction)* is the rendering of Targum; which uses the Aramaic word *ulphānā* here.

3. *He hath left off to be wise and to do good.* The history of the wicked man whom the Psalmist has in his eye was probably the common story of the robbers of Palestine. At first he dwelt at home tilling his own land. Then gradually the oppression and exactions of the rulers (*perhaps* foreigners) of Palestine became too heavy for him so that he forsook his peaceful pursuits and “took to the hills”: cf Ps xi, Introduction.

4. *He deviseth iniquity* (Heb. *āven*) *upon his bed. Iniquity* (RV) is only one of two possible renderings. The Heb. *āven*, as a breach of the Moral Law, is “iniquity,” but in reference to the man who suffers under it, it is “mischief”: so P-B, AV. “*Mischief*,” taken in the sense of “injury” or “serious hurt,” is a good alternative rendering of *āven*.

Three steps are described in this verse. First, *the wicked man devises iniquity upon his bed*, i.e. (as appears from the context) he plans highway robbery in his hour of rest. Secondly, *he setteth himself in a way*

- 5 Thy lovingkindness, O LORD, is in the heavens ;  
 Thy faithfulness *reacheth* unto the skies.
- 6 Thy righteousness is like the mountains of God ;  
 Thy judgements are a great deep :  
 O LORD, thou preservest man and beast.
- 7 How precious is thy lovingkindness, O God !  
 And the children of men take refuge under the shadow of  
 thy wings.

*that is not good*, i.e. he takes his station in ambush on the road. Thirdly, *he abhorreth not evil*, i.e. when the chance presents itself he carries out his act of robbery and violence.

#### 5-9. THE GUARDIAN BY THE WAY

5. *is in the heavens*. Better, *reacheth unto the heavens* (as P-B): cf lvii. 10, "thy mercy (or lovingkindness) is great unto the heavens," i.e. it overtops all human measurements. *Lovingkindness* and *faithfulness* ("truth") are coupled together here as in xxv. 10, for they are complementary virtues. *Lovingkindness* which is not faithful, i.e. permanent, is no lovingkindness.

6. *the mountains of God*. Cf the expression in civ. 16, "the trees of JEHOVAH," where the reference is to the cedars of Lebanon, trees which in the largeness of their growth and in the height of their situation excel all other trees. So *the mountains of God* are mountains which in one respect or another excel all other mountains. As the traveller stands in the Jordan valley and looks upwards and westwards at the central range of heights on which Jerusalem is set, he may well call them *mountains of God*, as they stand up in majesty over the plain. Above all—to the Jew—they were *mountains of God*, because they bore on their bosom the house of the God of Israel.

*Thy judgements are a great deep*. The comparison with the *great deep* may have been suggested to the traveller by the sight of the mysterious Dead Sea lying far below him while he was still descending the mountain side from Jerusalem. By God's *judgments* the Psalmist means very much what the modern man means by the "laws" of Nature. God's judgments are "unsearchable"; cf cxlv. 3, "His greatness is unsearchable."

*preservest man and beast*. I.e. The traveller and the beast which carries him. For this sense of "beast" (Heb. *bšhēmah*) see 1 K xviii. 5; Neh ii. 12, 14.

7. *How precious*. The same Hebrew adjective as in cxvi. 15, "Precious in the sight of JEHOVAH is the death of his saints."

*the children of men*. There is something slightly depreciatory in the Hebrew phrase: "men," "the common crowd."

*under the shadow of thy wings*. Cf xvii. 8, note.

- 8 They shall be <sup>1</sup>abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house;  
 And thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures.
- 9 For with thee is the fountain of life:  
 In thy light shall we see light.
- 10 O continue thy lovingkindness unto them that know thee;  
 And thy righteousness to the upright in heart.
- 11 Let not the foot of pride come against me,  
 And let not the hand of the wicked drive me away.
- 12 There are the workers of iniquity fallen:  
 They are thrust down, and shall not be able to rise.

<sup>1</sup> Heb. *watered*.

8. *fatness*. *Fat* is the Eastern ideal of rich food: cf lxiii. 5; Neh viii. 10, "Eat the fat, and drink the sweet."

*the river*. Not a "river" in our sense; it is the Heb. *nahal*, corresponding with Arabic *wadi*, "a ravine": cf xviii. 4, note. Here the metaphor is drawn from a ravine having drinking water in it.

*pleasures*. Heb. *'ādānim*, plural of *'ēden*, "a luxury, a dainty." Perhaps the Hebrews connected the name of the Garden of *Eden* (Gen ii. 8) with this word. Moderns however connect the proper name with the Assyrian word *edinu*, "plain."

9. *the fountain of life*. To Easterns fountains and springs form a suitable symbol of life, for to them the absence of water means death. Cf Job vi. 15-18 (RV), which describes the drying up of water in a *wadi*, and the death from thirst of the disappointed caravan. On the other hand, cf the phrase, "water out of the wells of salvation," Isa xii. 3.

*In thy light*. Belated travellers look for the light of some dwelling to guide them to a resting-place. JEHOVAH shows light.

#### 10-12. THE APPEAL

11. *the foot of pride*. I.e. the foot of the wicked man of v. 4 who devises mischief. Cf xix. 13, note on *presumptuous sins*.

*drive me away*. Better, *cast me down*, as P-B. The same Hebrew verb is used in xxxv. 5, cxl. 4, "thrust aside my steps"; better as Cheyne, "trip up my feet."

12. *There*. LXX, ἐκεῖ ἐπεσον. The adverb is emphatic. "There where they hoped to overthrow me they were themselves overthrown."

*workers of iniquity*. *Iniquity* here as in v. 4 might be rather *mischief*.

PSALM XXXVII  
A LESSON OF THE WISE

"IT SHALL BE WELL WITH THEM THAT FEAR GOD;  
IT SHALL NOT BE WELL WITH THE WICKED."

§ 1. STRUCTURE.

This Psalm proves on examination to be one of the great ones, but it is marked by two features which may repel the hasty reader. The Hebrew student may be put off by the alphabetical arrangement, while the English reader may find the repetition of the same thoughts tedious. Yet in fact this Psalm makes a living and powerful appeal.

There is a double arrangement in this Psalm, first by sections, and secondly (in the Hebrew text) also by the alphabet. We may say roughly that every other verse follows with its initial letter the order of the alphabet, thus:

<i>v.</i> 1. <i>Al</i> , "(fret) not"	Aleph
<i>v.</i> 3. <i>Bētah</i> , "trust"	Beth
<i>v.</i> 5. <i>Gōl</i> , "commit"	Gimel
<i>v.</i> 7. <i>Dōm</i> , "be still"	Daleth

and so on.

Further, there are many repetitions in this Psalm, e.g. it is stated seven times in different words that the wicked will be cut off: so in *vs.* 2, 9, 15, 20, 22, 28, 38. Similarly the Psalmist declares some five times that JEHOVAH upholds the righteous or that he will not abandon them to the power of the wicked. But the Psalm is not a mere pell-mell of assertions; it is in fact arranged in seven sections of approximately equal length. The same general truth is conveyed by each of the seven, but each contributes something of its own. The sections may be designated by the letters A, B, C, D, E, F, and G.

A (*vs.* 1-6) begins with a precept in *v.* 1,

"Fret not thyself because of evil-doers";

it ends with an assurance in *v.* 6,

"He shall make thy righteousness to go forth as the light."

Very striking in this section is the description of the reward of a whole-hearted faith, as it is given in *v.* 3, which may be rendered thus,

"Trust in JEHOVAH, and do good;  
So shalt thou dwell in the land,  
And feed securely." (See RV marg.)

The verbs in the Hebrew are imperatives as they are given in RV, but an imperative in God's mouth is a promise, as St Augustine believed, when he prayed, *Da quod iubes, et iube quod vis*, "Give (grace to do) what thou commandest, and then command what thou wilt."

B (*vs.* 7-11) begins with a precept in *v.* 7,

"Be still before JEHOVAH":

it ends with an assurance in *v.* 11,

"The meek shall inherit the land."

Remarkable in this section is the warning to leave off anger and to abstain from fretting. Fretting, the Psalmist says, leads to evil-doing: the case of Ahab (1 K xxi. 4) might be in his mind. The Psalmist is approaching the teaching of the sermon on the Mount, "Every one who is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgement" (Matt v. 22, RV).

How vain is anger against the wicked! Even the place (the palace) in which the wicked man flaunted his prosperity shall pass away. "Thou shalt consider his place, and it shall not be" (so RV marg.).

"The lion and the lizard keep  
The courts where Jamsheed gloried and drank deep."

So Omar Khayyam, writing of Persepolis, the city of ancient Persian kings.

C (vv. 12-17) is parallel to D (q.v.). It has for its subject *the wicked*, their plots and their failure. It begins,

"The wicked plotteth against the just" (v. 12).

It ends,

"The arms of the wicked shall be broken."

The section gives a vivid picture of the impotence of the wicked: JEHOVAH "laughs": and the plots bring disaster upon the plotters.

D (vv. 18-24) gives a companion picture to that of C. The subject is the righteous and their ultimate deliverance when the wicked are cut off. V. 18 declares,

"JEHOVAH knoweth the days of the perfect."

V. 24 concludes,

"JEHOVAH upholdeth him (the good man) with his hand."

The striking thought in this section is that the LORD watches over the vicissitudes of a man's life: He knows his "days," i.e. his times, whether of good or of evil. But He not only "knows"; He also exercises His providence, "A man's goings are established of JEHOVAH." The Psalmist confesses a providence not vague and general, but particular and effective.

E (vv. 25-29) begins in v. 25,

"I have been young, and now am old";

it ends in v. 29,

"The righteous shall inherit the land,  
And dwell therein for ever."

The personal testimony given here is arresting. It is clear that the Psalmist has seen much oppression and much undeserved suffering, and it is all the more striking that he bears witness that he has *not* seen the righteous completely overthrown,

"Yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken"

(i.e. by JEHOVAH)

"Nor his seed begging their bread."

F (vv. 30-34) is a recapitulation of the thoughts of the Psalm. The LORD will not leave the righteous in the hand of the wicked. Moreover,

"When the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see it" (v. 34).

This section is distinguished from the others by the mention of the *Torah*. This is not to be identified with the Pentateuch: like *Gospel so Torah* ("Law") has the meaning of the spirit of a Divine revelation. Render, "the guidance of his God is in his heart; so none of his footsteps shall slide."

G (vs. 35-40), like E, contains the Psalmist's personal testimony: he has seen the fall of the wicked from prosperity.

It begins (v. 35),

"I have seen a wicked one, an oppressor,  
And he was spreading himself like a green tree."

It ends (v. 40),

"**ЈЕHOVAH** helpeth them (the righteous).

Because they have taken refuge in him."

## § 2. OCCASION AND CHARACTER.

This Psalm may be said to stand by itself. Many Psalms, e.g. xiv, xxxv, xxxviii, might be described as pessimistic in tone, but this is determinedly "optimistic." The fact is surprising, for the Psalmist is keenly conscious of the evils which surround him, such as successful plots of the wicked (v. 7), famine (v. 19), oppression (v. 21), imminent danger of death (v. 32). And yet he seems to be always thinking "Right will triumph." He asserts evidently with conviction that "the righteous (or "the meek") shall inherit the land" (vs. 11, 29, *al.*)

The chief key to the meaning of the Psalm is in this pronouncement. The "righteous" or "meek" (Heb *'ānāvim*) are the section of the people whose voice is heard in Ps xxii. They are the unworldly in Israel, who have no share in the government and are oppressed by those in power. The government was often corrupt and oppressive. The high priesthood was obtained from time to time by priests who were guilty of simony and even of murder (Josephus, *A.J.* xi, vii, 1; 2 Macc iv, 7, 8, 23-34), and they were supported by underlings who oppressed the people.

The Psalmist addresses the *'ānāvim*, the meek and poor who had to endure this oppression. They were liable to be condemned by unjust judgment—hence the assurance given in v. 6. They were marked out for attack, as v. 12 shows, and they had to look on helplessly, and see their property—particularly their beasts of burden—"borrowed" and ill used by their insolent oppressors: v. 21. They stood (like Naboth) in danger of death if they protested: v. 32.

Whence then came the Psalmist's "optimism"? Ultimately it came from his firm faith in the goodness of **ЈЕHOVAH**. But some further light may be thrown upon it. In the first place his optimism is not so much for the individual as for the cause, and he looks with expectancy to the future. His view is eschatological. The righteous—the meek—the true worshippers of **ЈЕHOVAH** shall—one day—inherit the land. This shall be simply because "Right is right, and God is God." But further even in the present the Psalmist finds good cheer: he has had reassuring experiences of **ЈЕHOVAH**'s care even for individual righteous persons. "I have been young, and now am old; Yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, Nor his seed begging their bread" (v. 25). On the other hand the Psalmist has seen a striking example of reversal of fortune in the case of a prosperous

oppressor. He was spreading himself "like a green tree," but "he *passed on* and lo, he was not: Yea, I sought him, but he could not be found" (v. 36). He fell from his great office into obscurity like Ferishtah's Melon-seller:

"Can it be? What, turned melon-seller—thou?...  
Wast thou the Shah's prime minister men saw  
Ride on his right hand while a trumpet blew  
And Persia hailed the Favourite?"

Through one striking example the Psalmist learnt that "God is the judge: He putteth down one, and lifteth up another" (lxxv. 7). And finally if the perfect man suffers greatly through life, "There is a latter end for the man of peace" (v. 37). There is no doubt an ambiguity in the words. The latter end might be a return of worldly welfare, like Job's, or it might be a happy posterity, sons to call him blessed, or finally it might be a future hereafter with God. In any case the Psalmist is convinced that some mark of approval will be set on the career of the "perfect" man.

*A Psalm of David.*

**XXXVII.** 1 Fret not thyself because of evil-doers,

Neither be thou envious against them that work unrighteousness.

2 For they shall soon be cut down like the grass,  
And wither as the green herb.

3 Trust in the LORD, and do good;

<sup>1</sup>Dwell in the land, and <sup>2</sup>follow after faithfulness.

4 <sup>3</sup>Delight thyself also in the LORD;

And he shall give thee the <sup>4</sup>desires of thine heart.

5 <sup>5</sup>Commit thy way unto the LORD;

Trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *So shalt thou dwell in the land and feed securely*

<sup>2</sup> Heb. *feed on.*

<sup>3</sup> Or, *So shalt thou have thy delight in etc.*

<sup>4</sup> Heb. *petitions.*

<sup>5</sup> Heb. *Roll thy way upon the LORD.*

1-6. FRET NOT

**XXXVII.** 1. *Fret not thyself.* This verse appears with slight changes in Pro xxiv. 19. Cf lxxiii. 2, 3, 12-14; 1 Pet v. 6, 7.

4. *Delight thyself also in JEHOVAH* etc. The sentiment of this verse is the same as that of Rabban Gamliel (Gamaliel II, not St Paul's teacher) in the Mishnah: "Do His will as if it were thy will, that He may do thy will, as if it were His will" (*Aboth* II. 4).

5. *Commit thy way unto JEHOVAH.* Cf xci. 11,

"He shall give his angels charge over thee,  
To keep thee in all thy ways."

- 6 And he shall make thy righteousness to go forth as the light,  
 And thy judgement as the noonday.
- 7 <sup>1</sup>Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him:  
 Fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way,  
 Because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass.
- 8 Cease from anger, and forsake wrath:  
 Fret not thyself, *it tendeth* only to evil-doing.
- 9 For evil-doers shall be cut off:  
 But those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit <sup>2</sup>the land.
- 10 For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be:  
 Yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and <sup>3</sup>he shall not be.
- 11 But the meek shall inherit the land;  
 And shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.
- 12 The wicked plotteth against the just,  
 And gnasheth upon him with his teeth.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *Be still before* (Heb. *silent to*) the LORD.

<sup>2</sup> Or, *the earth* (and so in vv. 11, 22, 29, 34)

<sup>3</sup> Or, *it*

6. *thy righteousness* etc. I.e. the reward of thy righteousness, and the favourable judgment that thy conduct deserves. The Psalmist shall be vindicated and rewarded "openly."

#### 7-11. REST IN JEHOVAH

7. *Rest in JEHOVAH*. Lit. *Be still for JEHOVAH*.  
*wait patiently for him*. Lit. *endure pain as a travailing woman for him*. The Psalmist demands *faith, silent waiting, and endurance of pain*; in fact, threefold virtue.

9. *shall inherit the land*. The promise is repeated in vv. 11, 22, 29, 34; and (virtually) in vv. 19 and 25. To *inherit the land* means to have possession of it and to enjoy its harvests. God's blessing was traced by the Hebrews especially in the gift of seasonable rain and of abundant harvests: Deut xxviii. 3-5, 8, 11, 12.

10. *his place*. I.e. the place in which he flourished and displayed his greatness: cf vv. 35, 36. *it* (so marg.) *shall not be*, the very place shall be wholly changed.

- 13 The Lord shall laugh at him:  
For he seeth that his day is coming.
- 14 The wicked have drawn out the sword, and have bent their  
bow;  
To cast down the poor and needy,  
To slay such as be upright in the way:
- 15 Their sword shall enter into their own heart,  
And their bows shall be broken.
- 16 Better is a little that the righteous hath  
Than the abundance of many wicked.
- 17 For the arms of the wicked shall be broken:  
But the LORD upholdeth the righteous.
- 18 The LORD knoweth the days of the perfect:  
And their inheritance shall be for ever.
- 19 They shall not be ashamed in the time of evil:  
And in the days of famine they shall be satisfied.
- 20 But the wicked shall perish,  
And the enemies of the LORD shall be as <sup>1</sup>the excellency of  
the pastures:  
They shall consume; <sup>2</sup>in smoke shall they consume away.
- 21 The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again:  
But the righteous dealeth graciously, and giveth.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *the fat of lambs*<sup>2</sup> Or, *like smoke*

## 12-17. THE LORD SHALL LAUGH AT THE WICKED

13. *shall laugh*. Eastern laughter signifies "mockery" or "defiance," cf ii. 4, xxii. 7, *al*. The laughter of pure merriment is mentioned only rarely in O.T.

*his day*. Ezek xxi. 25 (30 Heb.).

## 18-24. JEHOVAH ORDERETH A MAN'S GOING

18. *the perfect*. Called *the meek* (v. 11), *the upright in the way* (v. 14), or *the righteous* (v. 17). The meaning of *perfect* (Heb. *tāmim*) is "faithful to JEHOVAH"; there is no suggestion of moral perfection. Cf xv. 2, note.

20. *as the excellency of the pastures*. Not as P-B, *as the fat of lambs*. A flush of green grass comes upon the highest rocks in spring, but it perishes almost the same day under the rays of the sun.

21. *The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again*. The great man, the oppressor, does not return the ox or the ass which he borrows to do his own work: he merely allows it to stray back (worn out) to his indigent owner. So did the Turks to the Palestinian peasant as late as 1895.

- 22 For such as be blessed of him shall inherit the land;  
And they that be cursed of him shall be cut off.
- 23 A man's goings are established of the LORD;  
And he delighteth in his way.
- 24 Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down:  
For the LORD <sup>1</sup>upholdeth him with his hand.
- 25 I have been young, and now am old;  
Yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken,  
Nor his seed begging *their* bread.
- 26 All the day long he dealeth graciously, and lendeth;  
And his seed is blessed.
- 27 Depart from evil, and do good;  
And dwell for evermore.
- 28 For the LORD loveth judgement,  
And forsaketh not his saints;  
They are preserved for ever:  
But the seed of the wicked shall be cut off.
- 29 The righteous shall inherit the land,  
And dwell therein for ever.
- 30 The mouth of the righteous talketh of wisdom,  
And his tongue speaketh judgement.
- 31 The law of his God is in his heart;  
None of his steps shall slide.
- 32 The wicked watcheth the righteous,  
And seeketh to slay him.
- 33 The LORD will not leave him in his hand,  
Nor condemn him when he is judged.
- 34 Wait on the LORD, and keep his way,

<sup>1</sup> Or, *upholdeth his hand*

23. *A man's goings are established of* *ЖЕПОВАИ*. P-B, *The Lord ordereth a good man's going*, gives the key to the meaning of the next clause: *God delights in the good man's way.*

#### 25-29. I HAVE NOT SEEN THE RIGHTEOUS FORSAKEN

28. *But the seed of the wicked shall be cut off.* This clause is preceded in P-B by the clause, "The unrighteous shall be punished": so LXX, Vulgate. It is not found in the Hebrew and it is in fact superfluous.

#### 30-34. WHEN THE WICKED ARE CUT OFF, THOU SHALT SEE IT

- And he shall exalt thee to inherit the land:  
 When the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see it.
- 35 I have seen the wicked in great power,  
 And spreading himself like a green tree in its native soil.
- 36 <sup>1</sup>But <sup>2</sup>one passed by, and, lo, he was not:  
 Yea, I sought him, but he could not be found.
- 37 Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright:  
 For <sup>3</sup>the latter end of *that* man is peace.
- 38 As for transgressors, they shall be destroyed together:  
 The latter end of the wicked shall be cut off.
- 39 But the salvation of the righteous is of the LORD:  
 He is their strong hold in the time of trouble.
- 40 And the LORD helpeth them, and rescueth them:  
 He rescueth them from the wicked, and saveth them,  
 Because they have taken refuge in him.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *Yet he passed away*

<sup>2</sup> Or, according to some ancient versions, *I passed by*

<sup>3</sup> Or, *there is a reward (or, future or, posterity) for the man of peace*

#### 35-40. A LATTER END FOR THE MAN OF PEACE

36. *But one passed by.* Rather, *And he* (the wicked man) *passed on his way.* MT is, "And he passed by," in agreement with which a few cursive MSS of the LXX have *καὶ παρήλθεν*. AV (a little differently) renders, "Yet he passed away." Other authorities, however, agree in giving the first person; thus, Peshitta "when I passed by," LXX *καὶ παρήλθον*, Vulgate and Jerome (*iuxta Hebraeos transivi*, and finally P-B, "I went by." MT is, however, to be preferred as at first sight the more difficult reading, but on further consideration approving itself as the more vivid. The other authorities, supposing that the man is thought of in v. 35 as firmly planted like a tree, cannot see that the Psalmist speaks of him as in movement in v. 36. Yet there is no difficulty here. The Psalmist does not describe the man as firmly rooted: that would be contrary to his idea of the condition of the wicked. He speaks of him only as making a fair show of prosperity, as a tree makes a fair show with leaves. The metaphor is confined to the second half of v. 35, in v. 36 the writer returns to plain statement. The wicked man *passed on* out of the Psalmist's sight and was never seen again. Similarly St James says that the rich man shall fade away *in his goings*, i.e. as he passes on in his journeys his prosperity (or even his life) comes to an end suddenly (James i. 11).

37. *the latter end of that man is peace.* An ungrammatical rendering. The margin is right, *there is a reward for the man of peace.* The "man of peace" is one who has peace within (cf *vv.* 1, 7, 11, 26) and is at peace with his neighbours.

## PSALM XXXVIII

## CONFESSION FROM A SICK BED

## § 1. CONTENTS.

One of the Seven Penitential Psalms, the others being vi, xxxii, li, cii, cxxx and cxliii: see Ps vi, Introduction. The Author has been brought to penitence and confession of sin by a Divine chastisement which has taken the form of a painful illness. He confesses frankly that his affliction is the punishment of his sin, and he appeals to JEHOVAH to set him free.

1, 2. The Psalmist (in sickness) prays that chastisement be inflicted *in measure*.

3-5. He confesses that chastisement is deserved for his "sin"—"iniquities"—"foolishness."

6-8. His sickness is very *grievous*.

9. Yet he has confidence that JEHOVAH knows his case.

10-15. Deserted by friends and threatened by foes he leaves his cause in the hands of JEHOVAH.

16-20. He fears that his enemies will triumph over him, but he will confess his sin.

21, 22. His final appeal to JEHOVAH: *Make haste*.

## § 2. THE SPEAKER AND HIS PURPOSE.

The Psalmist begins with the same words of appeal as in vi. 1, "O JEHOVAH, rebuke me not in thy wrath." (Much of the language of Prayer is of course common property.) The Psalmist's petition reappears (in a somewhat different form) in Hab iii. 2, "In wrath remember mercy." The answer to such a petition is presented in Isa lvii. 16, "I (JEHOVAH) will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth."

It is to be noted that the Author does not doubt whence his sickness comes. He describes his pains in *v. 3-10*, and ascribes them in *v. 2* to the arrows which JEHOVAH has discharged against him. But even in describing his miseries he does not forget that he has brought them on himself by sin. *Mine iniquities*, he says, *are gone over mine head*; cf 1 Tim vi. 9, "Hurtful lusts, such as drown (*βυθίζουσι*) men in perdition." And again the Psalmist says, *My wounds stink... Because of my foolishness*, "foolishness" being only another term for "sin": lxix. 5.

The deep personal faith of the Author comes out tellingly in *v. 9*, *Lord, all my desire is before thee; And my groaning is not hid from thee*. He believes in a Living God who knows about human affairs; his God is *not* "careless of mankind."

The Psalmist is one who under the most adverse circumstances retains his faith. He himself says that "the light of his eyes," that is, the joy of life, has gone out of him. Yet he does not despair, for (as he says) "I *wait* for thee, O JEHOVAH" (*v. 15*). His Faith waits on in the dark.

Like Job he has unhelpful friends; they stand *aloof from his plague* (*v. 11*). "Plague" is one of the key-words of this Psalm. In the language of the Old Testament a "plague" (Latin, *plaga*) is a blow, a punishment divinely sent, which may take the form of sickness, bereavement, loss of wealth; cf xci. 10, note. The

"lovers" of the Psalmist seeing their friend overwhelmed by a great calamity believed that he had offended  $\text{JHOBVAH}$ , and so they stood aloof, afraid to come to his help, lest they themselves should be involved in his punishment.

But the Psalmist was in worse state than Job. He had enemies who, going beyond mere hostility in words, took counsel how they might destroy him. They did more than *speaking mischievous things* (v. 12, note); for *they spake of destruction*, i.e. of destroying the Psalmist.

But he kept his faith. He would not cry out upon his enemies; he would appeal to  $\text{JHOBVAH}$ , and be content to wait for the Divine answer to be given. His words in 15*b* are very great in the simple faith which they express: *Thou wilt answer for me, O Lord my God*. The pronoun *Thou* is emphatic in the Hebrew; the words *for me* are absent from MT, but they are rightly supplied in P-B, for the emphasis on *Thou* requires some such antithesis as *for me*. George Herbert makes an effective use of the half-verse in the last lines of his poem *The Quip*:

"Yet when the hour of thy design  
To answer these fine things shall come;  
Speak not at large, say I am thine:  
And then they have their answer home."

But the Psalmist is still human. His faith is great, but the sight of the prosperity of the wicked, his persecutors, is a sore trial of his faith. He complains to God: *Mine enemies are lively, and are strong*, while he himself is sick and in sore pain. For how long must this be? *Make haste to help me, O Lord my salvation* is his last cry of mingled faith and impatience.

To understand more fully the Psalmist's mind it is necessary to notice not only the contents of the Psalm but also what is *not* to be found there. In many parts of the Old Testament, as in heathen religions also, forgiveness of sin is associated with the bringing of sacrifice or offering. But there is not a word of this here. If this Psalm was written as a prayer to accompany an offering—this indeed is possible—all reference to the offering is absent. The Psalmist seems to move in that rare spiritual atmosphere in which the man approaching God with the deepest sense of unworthiness cries out,

"Nothing in my hands I bring."

### § 3. IS THE PSALM A COUNTER-SPELL?

S. Mowinckel (i. 42) holds that this Psalm (like vi) is intended to counteract the spells by which the enemies of the Psalmist have brought grievous and dangerous sickness upon him. Mowinckel points in particular to the words of 12*b*, "(they) imagine deceits all the day long," or, as he himself renders them, "täglich sie *Trug*-worte murmeln," i.e. "daily they mutter lies (secret spells)."

This view, however, when we consider the structure of the Psalm appears very improbable. The opening words assume quite clearly that the Psalmist's sickness has been sent by  $\text{JHOBVAH}$  himself. In the following nine verses no reference is made to enemies, certainly none to malicious magicians. The Psalmist confines himself to stating his case before  $\text{JHOBVAH}$ . In the next section (vv. 11-14) the enemies do at length appear, but they come on the stage only after his friends have left it. They taunt him, but the Psalmist is recovering tone, and

makes no reply, for he is persuaded that JEHOVAH will answer for him. In *vs.* 19, 20 he complains that while he is in sorrow his enemies are prosperous, though they hate him for no cause and render evil for good. In short, the order of subjects in the Psalm and the language employed by the Psalmist tell against the suggestion that the writer believes himself the victim of a sorcerer's attack. His language suggests only the activities of an ordinary enemy.

Equally unsupported is the view adopted by many that the Psalmist speaks in the name of the people of Israel. Baethgen indeed says that if the Psalmist speaks in his own name, and if this sickness is to be understood in the literal sense, it is difficult to understand why his enemies are so fierce against him. So the sickness must rather be a figure for severe sufferings, and the body covered with wounds must be the body of Israel personified as in Isa i. 6. This is plausible, but there is nothing compelling in these considerations. The most natural reading of the Psalm (*I go, or walk, mourning all the day long, 6b*) is that the Author is an individual sufferer—perhaps a leper (Lev xiii. 45). Nor is there anything unconvincing in the picture of an enemy pushing his hostility against the Psalmist even in his sickness.

The heading of the Psalm contains the name of David, but there is nothing in the Psalm which agrees specially with any known incident in his career. The words need no historical illustration. One thing is clear: they are the fruit of ripened spiritual experience.

A Psalm of David, <sup>1</sup>to bring to remembrance.

**XXXVIII.** 1 O LORD, rebuke me not in thy wrath:

Neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure.

2 For thine arrows <sup>2</sup>stick fast in me,

And thy hand <sup>2</sup>presseth me sore.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *to make memorial*

<sup>2</sup> Heb. *lighted on me.*

#### 1-10. SIN AND SICKNESS

**XXXVIII.** (Heading) *to bring to remembrance.* I.e. to keep alive the memory of JEHOVAH's gracious dealings with the Psalmist: cf Deut viii. 2 ff.

1. *O JEHOVAH, rebuke me not.* This verse agrees almost verbally with vi. 1; it is a universal prayer.

2. *thine arrows.* JEHOVAH's arrows are the different calamities which He sends—pestilence, famine or storm: cf Deut xxxii. 23 f. In the Psalm the reference is to sickness (*vs.* 3, 7).

*thy hand presseth me sore.* Cf xxxii. 4, "Day and night thy hand was heavy upon me": xxxix. 10, "I am consumed by the blow of thine hand." God's hand may be laid upon a man for evil (as here), or for good as in cxxxix. 5.

3 There is no soundness in my flesh because of thine indignation;

Neither is there any <sup>1</sup>health in my bones because of my sin.

4 For mine iniquities are gone over mine head:

As an heavy burden they are too heavy for me.

5 My wounds stink and are corrupt,

Because of my foolishness.

6 I am <sup>2</sup>pained and bowed down greatly;

I go mourning all the day long.

7 For my loins are filled with burning;

And there is no soundness in my flesh.

8 I am faint and sore bruised:

I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *rest*

<sup>2</sup> Heb. *bent*.

3. *There is no soundness.* The same expression in the Hebrew as in Isa i. 6.

*any rest.* The Hebrew substantive is *shālōm*, "peace, rest, well-being." Cf xxix. 11, note.

4. *mine iniquities are gone over mine head.* The Psalmist compares the chastisements which follow his iniquities to waves which drown: cf Jonah ii. 3, "All thy waves and thy billows passed over me," where the same Hebrew verb is used.

5. *My wounds.* Those caused by his disease.

*my foolishness.* I.e. sinfulness: cf lxix. 5, "O God, thou knowest my foolishness; And my sins (guiltinesses) are not hid from thee." The Hebrew word is the same.

6. *I am pained.* Or (as marg.), *I am bent*, Heb. *na'āvēthī*, as in Isa xxi. 3, "I am pained so that I cannot hear."

*I go mourning.* Or, *I behave as a mourner.* The Psalmist is sick, but the words *I go* (or *I walk*) perhaps imply that he moves about, even as lepers move.

7. *with burning.* Heb. *nikleh*. So RV, and AV, *with a loathsome disease*. But the Versions connect the Hebrew word rather with *kālōn*, "contempt": so LXX B, ἡ ψυχὴ μου ἐπλήσθη ἐνπαιγμῶν, "my soul is full of mockings." Cf Heb xi. 36, "and others had trial of mockings and scourgings" (ἐνπαιγμῶν καὶ μαστίγων), the mockings being such as were expressed by the infliction of physical pain.

8. *I am faint.* Or, *I am benumbed* (B.D.B.).

*I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart.* Or, *Out of the moaning of my heart I have broken out into roaring.* The Psalmist means that as he bemoans himself he is forced to utter through the sharpness of his pain a cry piercing as the roar of the lion as it springs upon the deer.

- 9 Lord, all my desire is before thee;  
 And my groaning is not hid from thee.
- 10 My heart throbbereth, my strength faileth me:  
 As for the light of mine eyes, it also is gone from me.
- 11 My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my plague;  
 And my kinsmen stand afar off.
- 12 They also that seek after my life lay snares *for me*;  
 And they that seek my hurt speak mischievous things,  
 And imagine deceits all the day long.

9. *all my desire...And my groaning.* The Psalmist says that all his pleasures and all his pains are known to JEHOVAH: cf cxxxix. 2, "Thou understandest my thought afar off." An advanced religious experience lies behind these words: the Psalmist may be in advance of his contemporaries, or, possibly, the Psalm may be of (comparatively) late date.

10. *My heart throbbereth.* Heb. סחררר, "whirleth." In modern English, *I am seized with giddiness.*

*the light of mine eyes.* As a final result of his sickness all joy has gone from him. P-B, *the sight*, is simply an old misprint found in some copies of the Psalter of 1539.

#### 11-14. FRIENDS ESTRANGED: ENEMIES ENCOURAGED

11. *My lovers and my friends.* The key-word of this verse is "my plague." A "plague" or "blow" (Heb. נגע *nēga'*) is some affliction regarded as a punishment sent by God. Cf lxxxviii. 18, xci. 10. The Psalmist is in a situation analogous to that of the Servant of JEHOVAH as described in Isa liii. 3, 4, "He was...as one from whom men hide their face...we did esteem him *stricken* (rather "plagued," Heb. נגעו *nāgūa'*), smitten of God, and afflicted."

12. *They also that seek etc.* Rather, *So (or Then) they that sought after my life laid snares for me.* When the Psalmist's enemies saw that his friends were standing aloof, they were encouraged to plan his death.

*Speak mischievous things.* An inadequate rendering taken over by RV from AV, for *mischievous* is now freely used of petty wrong-doing. Lit. *spoke of destruction*, i.e. they suggested or urged that I should be destroyed. The Hebrew substantive has a plural form הויות *havvōth*, with an intensive force, "utter destruction." It occurs in six other passages of the Psalter.

(a) v. 9, "Their inward part is *very wickedness*" (margin, "a yawning gulf"), i.e. they plan in their hearts utter destruction for others.

(b) lii. 2, "Thy tongue deviseth *very wickedness*."

- 13 But I, as a deaf man, hear not;  
 And I am as a dumb man that openeth not his mouth.
- 14 Yea, I am as a man that heareth not,  
 And in whose mouth are no <sup>1</sup>reproofs.
- 15 For in thee, O LORD, do I hope:  
 Thou wilt answer, O Lord my God.
- 16 For I said, Lest they rejoice over me:  
 When my foot slippeth, they magnify themselves against me.
- 17 For I am ready to halt,  
 And my sorrow is continually before me.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *arguments*

(c) lv. 11, "*Wickedness* is in the midst thereof," i.e. men of murderous mind are dwelling in the midst of the city in which the Psalmist lives.

(d) lvii. 1, "Until these *calamities* be overpast" (margin, "wickednesses"), i.e. until the danger of utter destruction is over.

(e) xci. 3, "The *noisome* pestilence." "Noisome" should be "destructive" or "destroying."

(f) xciv. 20, "The throne of *wickedness*." Rather "the judgment seat that *destroyeth* (the innocent)." "Wickedness" and "Very wickedness" are inadequate renderings, for *havvōth* has the special sense of the wickedness which delights in destruction.

*imagine deceits.* The Psalmist's enemies go secretly to work for his destruction.

13. *as a deaf man...as a dumb man.* So in xxxix. 1, the Psalmist says that he will keep his mouth with a bridle. In both Psalms the fear of the writer is that he may be provoked by the sight of his enemies (who prosper) to murmur against God. Cf Job i. 22, ii. 10 (after his wife's provocation), "In all this did not Job sin with his lips."

14. *no reproofs.* Or (as margin) *no arguments*, i.e. in his own defence. His enemies reproach him with his sickness as the punishment of his sins, but he holds his peace.

#### 15-20. JEHOVAH THE PSALMIST'S ADVOCATE (PARACLETE)

15. *in thee...do I hope.* Or, *for thee...do I wait.* It is the same Hebrew verb as in Job xxxii. 11, "I *waited* for your words." So in Ps xlii. 5, 11, "Hope thou in God" might be "wait thou for God." Cf xxv. 3, note.

*Thou wilt answer.* The pronoun is emphatic, *Thou* wilt answer. The sense is well given in P-B, *Thou shalt answer for me*, though "for me" is not expressed in the Hebrew. See Introduction, § 2.

17. *ready to halt.* To *halt* is to walk as a lame man, as in 1 K xviii. 21, "How long halt ye between two opinions?" "Ready" (Heb. *nāchōm*) means "prepared, settled." The phrase is thus a case of oxymoron: two

- 18 For I will declare mine iniquity;  
I will be sorry for my sin.
- 19 But mine enemies are lively, *and* are strong:  
And they that hate me <sup>1</sup>wrongfully are multiplied.
- 20 They also that render evil for good  
Are adversaries unto me, because I follow the thing that is  
good.
- 21 Forsake me not, O LORD:  
O my God, be not far from me.

<sup>1</sup> Heb. *falsely*.

contraries are brought together, as though the Psalmist had said, "I am good—for stumbling." He means, "I have lost my power of standing or walking firmly."

*my sorrow.* The Hebrew word as in Isa liii. 3, "a man of sorrows."

18. *I will declare* (Heb. *aggid*). Not, *I will confess* (as P-B). The Psalmist will *tell out* his fault for all friends or enemies to hear. The Hebrew word in xxxii. 5, "I will confess...unto יהוה," is different, *odeh*.

19. *mine enemies are lively, and are strong.* Lit. *mine enemies are strong in (or as to) life.* Herein is the Psalmist's chief complaint. He a faithful follower of יהוה is sick almost to death (vv. 5-8), while his enemies live in rude health. LXX, οἱ δὲ ἐχθροὶ μου ζῶσιν καὶ κεκραταίωνται ὑπὲρ ἐμέ, "but mine enemies live and have prevailed over me." Houbigant, wishing to make the parallelism more complete within the verse, proposed to read 19a thus, "But they that without cause are mine enemies are strong," substituting, *hinnām*, "without cause," for *hayyim*, "lively" or "life." But the emendation, which is adopted by many, lessens the force of a sentence of singular vigour, and moreover it lacks the support of LXX and the other Versions.

20. *Are adversaries unto me.* A good rendering, for the Hebrew word is akin to the name *Satan*, "The Adversary." LXX, ἐνδιέβαλλον με: cf ὁ διάβολος, Matt iv. 1-11.

*I follow etc.* Rather, *I pursue the thing that is good.* The phrase is stronger than "I do good": cf xxxiv. 14, "Seek peace, and pursue it"; Pro xv. 9, "(יהוה) loveth him that followeth after (or pursueth) righteousness."

## 21, 22. THE FINAL APPEAL

21. *Forsake me not.* The same cry with the same Hebrew verb is found in lxxi. 9, 18, cxix. 8. The same Hebrew verb in xxii. 1, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

*be not far from me.* This phrase also recurs: xxii. 11, xxxv. 22, lxxi. 12. A yet more daringly anthropomorphic expression follows in the next verse.

22 Make haste to help me,  
O Lord my salvation.

22. *Make haste to help me.* The same expression (both in Hebrew and EV) in xxii. 19. In each case LXX has slightly softened the verb to *πρόσχεσ*, "take heed."

## PSALM XXXIX

### AN APPEAL FROM ONE WHO IS NEAR TO DEATH

§ 1. This is a sister-Psalm to xxxviii. "Thy stroke" (v. 10) is one of its key-words, just as "My plague" (i.e. "my stroke," objective genitive) is a key-word in xxxviii. In the East the sick man has to bear a burden additional to his sickness. He is regarded as "smitten of God." It is only natural to an Eastern to ask, "Who did sin, this man or his parents?" (John ix. 2), that this calamity has fallen upon him. *Make me not the reproach of the fool* (Heb. *Nabal*) is a petition which would spring naturally to the lips of the Hebrew sufferer.

In this Psalm the Author does not complain so much of his pains as of the near approach of death: he protests that he is being prematurely removed from the earth. The "wicked man" (*rāshā'*) comes to visit him, and, like Job's wife, would provoke him to speak against God. But in this Psalm, as in the preceding, the Author is resolved to complain (if he must complain) to God only. He has the root of true religion in him, and he answers the wicked man by a guarded silence (vv. 1, 2).

The wicked visitor departs at last, and then the Psalmist breaks out into speech, an appeal that he may be told "the worst." He is no longer able to control himself. So in vv. 3-6 he utters his complaint: *JEHOVAH* has appointed to him and to mankind generally a life that is short and unprofitable. The Psalmist is apparently a man of position, but he realizes the fact that "man at his best estate" as well as man in the mass is only "vanity" (Heb. *hebel*, "a breath"). Man cannot retain anything that he acquires in this world.

But the Psalmist recovers himself and turns abruptly from his complaints. His next words are words of faith and submission:

*And now, Lord, what wait I for?  
My hope is in thee (v. 7).*

He bases this implicit appeal for Divine help on three grounds.

(1) In vv. 8, 9 he fears that without it he will be exposed to the reproaches of the enemy. The Fool, the man who says, "There is no God" (xiv. 1), will take up a taunt, and say, "This man (the Psalmist) trusted in *JEHOVAH*, and see what has happened to him."

(2) In vv. 10, 11 the Psalmist pleads and urges the weakness of himself and of mankind: Man is only "a breath"; he cannot bear up under *JEHOVAH*'s chastisement.

(3) In vv. 12, 13 the Psalmist presents a personal plea: "I am a stranger (Heb. *gēr*) and a sojourner (Heb. *tōshāb*) with thee." The stress falls on *with thee*. The Psalmist claims to be the guest of God and as such under his protec-

tion. For *gēr* see v. 4, note. But the Psalmist's plea is not personal only. He remembers that he belongs to a family. His ancestors were like himself *clients* of JEHOVAH: "I am a stranger sojourning *with thee*, nay more, such was the position of my fathers also."

So the Psalmist prays that under the protection of JEHOVAH he may attain once more to joy: *Spare me*, he prays, *that I may brighten up* (i.e. taste joy again, LXX, ἵνα ἀναψύξω), *Before I go hence*. For *brighten up* read *be of good cheer*, as in Job ix. 27, נִחַם, the same Hebrew word.

The final words, *and be no more*, show that this Psalmist at least had no hope which reached beyond the grave.

## § 2. UNITY OF THE PSALM.

Strangely does Duhm deny the unity of this Psalm. He disjoins vv. 8, 10, 12 and 13 from the rest as a fragment of a longer Psalm otherwise lost, which he describes as a lament for sin and its consequences, and a petition for relief. He urges the "difference of metre." But an argument based on metre is anything but convincing here, for the scansion of several verses is uncertain. A more important argument on the other side may be drawn from the structure of the Psalm.

Though it is possible to discern two subjects in the Psalm, yet the two do not remain separate, but are intertwined. They form one whole. Some verses are occupied with the Psalmist's own affliction from which he prays to be delivered; others with the vanity of human life in general. But the first subject leads naturally to the second. The Psalmist's own fate makes him think of the universal human fate. He is Sufferer and Thinker, a natural combination of rôles.

For the Chief Musician, for Jeduthun. A Psalm of David.

**XXXIX.** 1 I said, I will take heed to my ways,

That I sin not with my tongue:

I will keep <sup>1</sup>my mouth with a bridle,

While the wicked is before me.

2 I was dumb with silence, I held my peace, <sup>2</sup>even from good;

And my sorrow was stirred.

<sup>1</sup> Heb. a bridle (or, muzzle) for my mouth.

<sup>2</sup> Or, and had no comfort Heb. away from good.

## 1, 2. THE PSALMIST KEEPS SILENCE IN THE PRESENCE OF THE WICKED MAN

**XXXIX.** 1. *I said*. I.e. *I said* in my heart, or, *I thought*, or *I resolved*. The same Hebrew expression as in xxx. 6, xxxi. 22, *al*.

*I will keep my mouth with a bridle*. Or, *I will take heed with bridled mouth*. Some emend the text and read *I will appoint* (Heb. וָאֲשִׁימָה) *a bridle for my mouth*: cf LXX, ἐθέμην.

2. *I was dumb with silence*. I.e. *I was put to a waiting silence*. Heb. *dümÿyāh* is silent waiting. Cf lxxv. 1, note.

- 3 My heart was hot within me ;  
While I was musing the fire kindled :  
Then spake I with my tongue :
- 4 LORD, make me to know mine end,  
And the measure of my days, what it is ;  
Let me know how frail I am.
- 5 Behold, thou hast made my days as handbreadths ;  
And mine age is as nothing before thee :  
Surely every man <sup>1</sup>at his best estate is altogether <sup>2</sup>vanity.  
[Selah
- 6 Surely every man walketh <sup>3</sup>in a vain shew :  
Surely they are disquieted <sup>4</sup>in vain :  
He heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them.
- 7 And now, Lord, what wait I for ?  
My hope is in thee.

<sup>1</sup> Heb. *standing firm*.<sup>2</sup> Heb. *a breath*.<sup>3</sup> Or, *as a shadow*<sup>4</sup> Or, *for vanity*

*even from good.* Cf Gen xxxi. 24, "Speak not to Jacob either good or bad" (lit. "from good unto bad"). So here, "I kept my lips from all speech." The marginal rendering is, however, possible, "I kept silence, and had no comfort." Something more was wanted for the attainment of relief, namely, appeal to JEHOVAH.

### 3-6. A COMPLAINT ADDRESSED TO GOD OF THE SHORTNESS OF LIFE

3. *the fire kindled.* The same metaphor in Jer xx. 9.

*spake I with my tongue.* I.e. I broke my silence (*v.* 2).

4. *how frail I am.* P-B, (That I may be certified) *how long I have to live.* This is the general sense, but the precise meaning of the Hebrew adjective (*hādēl*, "frail"?) is uncertain.

5. *handbreadths.* Hebrew as in 1 K vii. 26.

6. *every man.* Rather, *a man* (Heb. עַם), i.e. a man of position, as distinguished from one of the populace: cf lxii. 9.

*in a vain shew.* LXX, ἐν εἰκότι; Vulgate, *in imagine*, as opposed to *in reality*.

*they are disquieted in vain.* The Hebrew verb (*hāmāh*) suggests the murmur or even the tumult of the populace of a city or of an army in camp or on the march: xlv. 6 ("the nations raged"); lxxxiii. 2 ("make a tumult"); Isa xxii. 2 ("tumultuous city").

### 7. THE CRY OF FAITH IN JEHOVAH

7. *what wait I for?* These words take up the thought expressed in *v.* 2, "I was dumb with silence," i.e. *I was put to a waiting silence.*

- 8 Deliver me from all my transgressions:  
Make me not the reproach of the foolish.
- 9 I was dumb, I opened not my mouth;  
Because thou didst it.
- 10 Remove thy stroke away from me:  
I am consumed by the <sup>1</sup>blow of thine hand.
- 11 When thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity,  
Thou <sup>2</sup>makest his beauty to consume away like a moth:  
Surely every man is <sup>3</sup>vanity. [Selah

<sup>1</sup> Heb. *conflict*.<sup>2</sup> Or, *consumest like a moth his delights*<sup>3</sup> Heb. *a breath*.

## 8, 9. SAVE ME FROM REPROACH

8. *Deliver me from all my transgressions.* The prayer is for deliverance from the guilt and the consequences of his transgressions. What the Psalmist specially desires, as the second half of the verse shows, is to be saved from the taunt that he has appealed to JEHOVAH for relief from his distresses, and has appealed *in vain*.

*the reproach of the foolish.* Rather, *the reproach of the fool* (Heb. *nābāl*). See xiv. 1, note. The "fool" (*nābāl*) is the man who has no knowledge of God.

9. *Because thou didst it.* P-B, *For it was thy doing.* Perhaps the best rendering is, *Because thou wast at work.* The Hebrew verb (*āsāk*) is used in an impressive way of Divine working: cf xxii. 31 ("He hath done it"); cxix. 126 ("It is time for JEHOVAH to work").

## 10, 11. REMEMBER MY HUMAN WEAKNESS

10. *thy stroke.* P-B, *thy plague.* The Psalmist is convinced that his sickness (or other calamity) has been inflicted by JEHOVAH.

*by the blow of thine hand.* Rather (as B.D.B.) *from* (i.e. *through*) *the hostility of thine hand* (Heb. *תורה* from root *נרה*, Hithp. "to engage in strife").

11. *rebukes.* The same Hebrew word is used in 2 K xix. 3, "a day of trouble, and of rebuke." The "rebuke" is administered in action, not in words.

*Thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth.* Better (as marg.), *Thou consumest like a moth his delights.* All that man takes pleasure in is taken from him, when God afflicts him with such sickness as the Psalmist suffers from.

*vanity.* Or, *a breath*: Heb. *hebel*, as in lxii. 9, xciv. 11; Eccl i, 2; *et passim*, "vanity of vanities."

- 12 Hear my prayer, O LORD, and give ear unto my cry;  
 Hold not thy peace at my tears:  
 For I am a stranger with thee,  
 A sojourner, as all my fathers were.
- 13 <sup>1</sup>O spare me, that I may <sup>2</sup>recover strength,  
 Before I go hence, and be no more.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *Look away from me*

<sup>2</sup> Heb. *brighten up*.

### 12, 13. THE FINAL APPEAL

12. *a stranger with thee*. I.e. one of Thy clients, living in Thy land under Thy protection, a *gēr*, protected in Israel by the law of God, a *sojourner* rather than a stranger: Deut v. 14; x. 18, 19. Cf Introduction, § 1 (3).

13. *O spare me*. Marg. *Look away from me*. Cf Job vii. 19, "How long wilt thou not look away from me, Nor let me alone...?"

## PSALM XL

### A GOOD FIGHT OF FAITH

#### § 1. CONTENTS AND CHARACTER.

This Psalm is described by some critics as lacking in unity. It begins with an acknowledgement of a deliverance from a great danger and a confession of the many wonderful and gracious works which JEHOVAH has done "to us-ward." It ends on a very different note. In v. 12 the Psalmist cries aloud, "Innumerable evils have compassed me about," and so the rest of the Psalm is an urgent cry for help, culminating in the daring words, "Make no tarrying, O my God."

Impressed by this contrast some commentators suppose that two separate Psalms have been combined into one. They suggest that Ps xl ends with the declaration of confidence in v. 11, "Thou, O JEHOVAH, wilt not withhold thy tender mercies from me: thy lovingkindness and thy truth shall continually preserve me." They pronounce vv. 13-17 (the urgent prayer for help) to be an independent Psalm. Strange to say, another text of these verses is in fact preserved in the Psalter as Ps lxx. V. 12 (hitherto unnoticed) is declared to be a link supplied by an editor to bind together two discordant compositions.

But why should an editor think of binding together two poems which are *ex hypothesi* incompatible? And again, is there real incompatibility here? Further, is there no hint in vv. 8-11 of a coming change of subject? A careful analysis of the contents of the Psalm should answer these questions.

1-4. The Psalmist tells the story of a wonderful deliverance vouchsafed him

in the past. It was the occasion of the new song which JEHOVAH puts in his mouth, so he declares in *v.* 3, 4:

“Many shall see (it) and fear,  
And shall trust in JEHOVAH, (saying),  
Blessed is the man who maketh JEHOVAH his trust,  
And looketh not to the idols,  
Nor to such as turn aside to false gods.”

5. The Psalmist confesses that the wonderful works of JEHOVAH are without number.

6-8. Yet the Psalmist does not offer as his thank-offering any (animal) sacrifice or meal offering (Heb. *minḥah*), for these JEHOVAH did not require. Rather he shows his gratitude by presenting himself as one ready to perform his God's will. JEHOVAH'S *Torah* (he says) is in his heart: he will be guided by it.

9-12. In *v.* 9, 10 the Psalmist shows that his mind is passing on to a fresh subject. He protests that he has been faithful in acknowledging JEHOVAH as his God and he is confident that JEHOVAH will be equally faithful to His servant now that fresh troubles are arising; “For innumerable evils have compassed me about” (*v.* 12).

13-16. A petition that the Psalmist may be delivered and that his enemies may be put to shame. A new paragraph may be said to begin with *v.* 13, but no sequence could be more natural than that between this and the preceding paragraph: a cry for deliverance in *v.* 13 follows inevitably on the mention of “innumerable evils” in *v.* 12. Moreover, the very form of the cry links *v.* 13 with the first half of the Psalm. “Be pleased (Heb. *rēzēh*) to deliver me” in *v.* 13 answers to “I delight to do thy pleasure” (Heb. *rāzōn*, “pleasure” or “will”) in *v.* 8, as if the Psalmist were pleading, “I bend my will to Thy will, I beseech thee bend Thy will to my will.” Cf Mishnah, *Pirke Aboth* ii. 4, “Do His will as if it were thy will, that He may do thy will, as if it were His will.”

17. A confession of confidence in the Lord ending with a cry for speedy relief. It should be noted that in this verse also there is a striking link with the first half of the Psalm. Here the Psalmist says with thankfulness, “The Lord *thinketh* (Heb. *yahdshob*) upon me”; there (in *v.* 5) is the confession, “Many are thy thoughts (Heb. *mahshābōth*, from the same root) which are to us-ward.”

More important is the fact that there is a unity of spiritual experience in the Psalm. From *v.* 13-17 we gather that the Psalmist is in danger of his life and at the same time that he has strong faith in JEHOVAH. If we ask, *Why* has he faith at such a time, we find an answer in the opening verses; once, on an occasion which he can never forget, he was in the very pit of destruction, and JEHOVAH brought him out, and set him safe on the rock. He (the Psalmist) sang a new Psalm on that well-remembered day. Yet his enemies may retort, Your God saved you *once*, but will He do it again? And so the Psalmist links on wider experiences to the one outstanding mercy which was granted to him. He clings to his God with the implicit appeal, “Many are the wonderful works which thou hast done.” JEHOVAH is not niggardly in his lovingkindness. Nor does the Lord seek for any return for His gracious help: He does not delight in sacrifice and meal offering: He will accept the “poor and needy” Psalmist,

who brings no burnt offering, but only the offer of a willing and obedient heart, together with praise and acknowledgement for mercies already received.

But human fears will assert themselves. The Psalmist, who has been looking to his God, now looks at his troubles. God's wonderful mercies were many (*v.* 5), but the evils which now encompass the Psalmist are "without number." And the advent of troubles makes the Eastern man fear that he has committed some sin which has alienated his God from him. This Psalmist is no exception. He who was asserting his own faithfulness in *vv.* 9, 10 now thinks that he sees in the evils which have overtaken him the delayed punishment of sins once committed against JEHOVAH. And so he prays urgently for deliverance, and asks that shame may overtake his enemies, but that joy may be the portion of those who seek his God (*vv.* 14-16). That the enemy is first mentioned as late as *v.* 14 need not surprise us, for he has already been alluded to in the mention of the "innumerable evils" (*v.* 12). Some at least of these must be due to his machinations. And still earlier "the pit of destruction" (*v.* 2) is most naturally interpreted as the pit which was dug by the Psalmist's foes. So we find real continuity of thought throughout this Psalm. The journey starts from the Mount of Vision and passes into the Valley of Humiliation, but the traveller is the same throughout. Cf the case of Ps cxxvi, where on first reading the petition of *v.* 4 seems to follow strangely on the statement in *v.* 1.

But a question still remains to be answered; If *vv.* 13-17 are truly part of Ps xl, what account is to be given of Ps lxx? Probably it does represent *vv.* 13-17 torn roughly from their context in Ps xl. It is mutilated at the beginning, some imperative such as "Be pleased" being missing; still, it forms by itself a suitable prayer for use in time of trouble. It is a petition on the higher spiritual level, for it prays, "Let God be magnified," nor does it consist merely of petition, for it includes the confession of faith, "Thou art my help and my deliverer."

## § 2. THE AUTHOR.

The Psalmist speaks as one commissioned as a prophet by JEHOVAH: his commission is written in JEHOVAH'S book (*v.* 7). He is well furnished for his task, for JEHOVAH'S law (Heb. *tōrāh*, "teaching") is in the Prophet's heart. Like Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, his work was to proclaim that JEHOVAH desires righteousness, and not burnt offering (*vv.* 6, 8). This was a message unacceptable to the rich among the people, but the Psalmist delivered it boldly as a prophet: he writes, "I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth from the great congregation."

It is hardly possible to go beyond this in attempting to identify the Psalmist. Most prophets have prophesied in the face of opposition and danger. But the career of Jeremiah supplies some pointed illustrations (as it seems) to the career of this Psalmist. Jeremiah was set aside as a prophet from the womb; Jeremiah was delivered from the pit; Jeremiah at great cost to himself delivered his message (Jer i. 5, xx. 9, xxxviii. 6).

For the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.

- XL.** 1 I waited patiently for the LORD;  
 And he inclined unto me, and heard my cry.  
 2 He brought me up also out of <sup>1</sup>an horrible pit, out of the  
 miry clay;  
 And he set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings.  
 3 And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto  
 our God:  
 Many shall see it, and fear,  
 And shall trust in the LORD.  
 4 Blessed is the man that maketh the LORD his trust,  
 And respecteth not the proud, nor such as <sup>2</sup>turn aside to lies.  
 5 Many, O LORD my God, are the wonderful works which thou  
 hast done,

<sup>1</sup> Heb. *a pit of tumult or destruction.*

<sup>2</sup> Or, *fall away treacherously*

**XL.** 1. *he inclined unto me.* *Inclined* is a transitive verb: the full phrase would be, *he inclined* (or *extended* or *stretched out*) *mercy to me*: so in Gen xxxix. 21 “(JEHOVAH) *extended to him mercy*” (lit. translated). The same verb is used of God’s arm *stretched out* to save: Deut iv. 34.

2. *an horrible pit.* This rendering given in P-B has been retained in AV and RV for lack of a better. The meaning of the Hebrew (if the text be sound) is “(from) the pit of the battle-tumult.” Had the Psalmist fallen into some pit while the battle raged round him?

3. *And he hath put.* Better, *And he put.* The reference is to an event some time past.

*a new song.* Not one of the old songs which would have cost the Psalmist nothing, but a new song to match the new mercy: cf xxxiii. 3. The burden of this song is given in the words which follow in vv. 3, 4. Cf Rev v. 9, xiv. 3, “And no man could learn the song save the hundred and forty and four thousand.”

4. *respecteth not the proud.* Better, *looketh not to the idols.* *Respecteth* does not give the force of the Hebrew verb *pānāh*, which means to “turn towards,” whether to receive commands, or to implore help. Again, the precise meaning of the Hebrew word *rēhābīm* is unknown, but “vanities, idols” is an approximate paraphrase.

*turn aside to lies.* I.e. to false gods.

5. *Many, O LORD etc.* Better, *Many things* (possibly, *great things*) *thou hast done, even thou, O JEHOVAH my God, even thy wonders and thy thoughts* (or *thy carefulness*) *which have been to us-ward.* The Psalmist is glancing at the false gods: they have done nothing for Israel, but JEHOVAH has done great things.

- And thy thoughts which are to us-ward :  
 1 They cannot be set in order unto thee ;  
 If I would declare and speak of them,  
 They are more than can be numbered.  
 6 Sacrifice and 2 offering thou hast no delight in ;  
 3 Mine ears hast thou opened :  
 Burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required.  
 7 Then said I, Lo, I am come ;  
 In the roll of the book it is 4 written of me :  
 8 I delight to do thy will, O my God ;  
 Yea, thy law is within my heart.  
 9 I have 5 published righteousness in the great congregation ;

<sup>1</sup> Or, *There is none to be compared unto thee*

<sup>2</sup> Or, *meal offering*

<sup>3</sup> Heb. *Ears hast thou digged (or, pierced) for me.*

<sup>4</sup> Or, *prescribed to*

<sup>5</sup> Or, *proclaimed glad tidings of*

*thy thoughts...to us-ward.* I.e. thy care for us: cf v. 17, "the Lord thinketh upon me" or (as P-B) "careth for me."

*They cannot be set etc.* Read as marg. *There is none to be compared unto thee.* Such interjections of praise are found elsewhere in the Psalter, e.g. xci. 9 a.

6. *Sacrifice and offering.* The Psalmist has just said in the preceding verse that he cannot number JEHOVAH'S many gracious acts: he now adds that sacrifice and offering would form an inadequate acknowledgement. JEHOVAH is not like the heathen gods who take delight in sacrifices.

*Mine ears hast thou opened.* A good paraphrase of the Hebrew, *Ears hast thou digged for me.* In these words the Psalmist claims to have received a revelation from God; cf Isa i. 4, 5, "(JEHOVAH) wakeneth mine ear to hear...the Lord JEHOVAH hath opened mine ear."

7. *Then said I.* I.e. in my heart to JEHOVAH. With *Lo, I am come*, cf Isa vi. 8, *Here am I: send me.*

*In the roll of the book it is prescribed to me.* So read with marg. The Psalmist's commission is written down in heaven in the book of God, which is pictured as a roll, for (probably) no other form of book was known to the writers of O.T. It is mentioned in lvi. 8, "Are they (my tears) not in thy book?" where RV marg. has "record" (Heb. *siphra-thékā*, ספרת). So also cxxxix. 16, "In thy book (Heb. *siphra-kā*, ספר) were they all written, even the days that were ordained."

8. *thy will.* Better, *thy pleasure*, for the Hebrew substantive is cognate with the verb, *be pleased*, in v. 13.

9. *I have proclaimed glad tidings of thy righteousness.* So read with correction from marg. The word *righteousness* refers to JEHOVAH'S wonderful works and His carefulness of which the Psalmist speaks in v. 5, 10.

- Lo, I will not refrain my lips,  
O LORD, thou knowest.
- 10 I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart;  
I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation:  
I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth from  
the great congregation.
- 11 Withhold not thou thy tender mercies from me, O LORD:  
Let thy lovingkindness and thy truth continually preserve me.
- 12 For innumerable evils have compassed me about,  
Mine iniquities have overtaken me, so that I am not able to  
look up;  
They are more than the hairs of mine head, and my heart  
hath <sup>1</sup>failed me.
- 13 Be pleased, O LORD, to deliver me:  
Make haste to help me, O LORD.
- 14 Let them be ashamed and confounded together  
That seek after my soul to destroy it:  
Let them be turned backward and brought to dishonour  
That delight in my hurt.
- 15 Let them be <sup>2</sup>desolate <sup>3</sup>by reason of their shame  
That say unto me, Aha, Aha.

<sup>1</sup> Heb. *forsaken*.<sup>2</sup> Or, *astonished*<sup>3</sup> Or, *for a reward of*

11. *Withhold not thou*. Rather, *Thou wilt not withhold*. RV (= AV; cf P-B) cannot be right; for such a deprecation is out of place in this context.

In *vv.* 7-10 the Psalmist has been asserting his own faithfulness to *JEHOVAH*; he now asserts his confidence that *JEHOVAH* will be no less faithful to his servant. *Thou*, he says, and the pronoun is emphatic, *Thou*, in Thy turn wilt not withhold Thy tender mercies from me now that fresh waves of trouble are overtaking me.

12. *Mine iniquities have overtaken me*. Cf Num xxxii. 23, "Your sin will find you out."

14. *Let them be...confounded together*. Cf xxxv. 26 (the same phrase). I.e. "Let them be confounded one and all."

*That seek after my soul* (Heb. *nephesh*) *to destroy it*. Cf 1 K xix. 14, "They seek my life (Heb. *nephesh*), to take it away." In lxx. 2, the phrase is simply, *That seek after my soul*, but this short phrase is less forcible.

15. *Let them be desolate*. The better reading, *Let them return* is preserved in lxx. 3; see note there.

- 16 Let all those that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee:  
 Let such as love thy salvation say continually,  
 The LORD be magnified.
- 17 But I am poor and needy;  
 Yet the Lord thinketh upon me:  
 Thou art my help and my deliverer;  
 Make no tarrying, O my God.

17. *the Lord thinketh upon me.* Cf "thy thoughts which are to us-ward" (v. 5); "What is...the son of man, that thou *makest account* of him?" (cxliv. 3, same Hebrew verb). See also 1 Pet v. 7, "He careth for you." To emend the reading, *the Lord thinketh upon me*, by substituting for it the reading of the parallel passage in lxx. 5, *make haste unto me, O God*, is to sacrifice a truly great (and surely *original*) saying in favour of an unnecessary and mechanical "emendation." Moreover, it is to disregard the evidence of the Septuagint (Κύριος φροντίζει μου) and the other Versions. Yet even this emendation has been accepted by some scholars.

## PSALM XLI

### THE APPEAL OF ONE WHO IS SICK, CONSCIOUS OF SIN, AND BESET BY FOES

#### § 1. CONTENTS.

1-3. In sickness the Psalmist, who describes himself as "the poor" man (v. 1), invites the aid of his neighbours by assuring them that he who gives aid will himself be guarded by JEHOVAH from enemies, and be restored to health from sickness: JEHOVAH will "preserve him" and also "revive him." The Psalmist gratefully acknowledges that his God has tended him in sickness.

4-12. The Psalmist confesses that he has sinned against JEHOVAH (v. 4). It follows (so he believes) that JEHOVAH has sent his sickness as a punishment for his sin; it follows further that JEHOVAH can remove the sickness: therefore he cries, *Heal my soul* (v. 4). He continues his appeal by complaining of the covert malice of his enemies. They look forward with impatience to a fatal termination of his sickness. Even if one of these comes to visit the Psalmist in his affliction, he is still only an enemy in disguise. His procedure is summarily described in three clauses in v. 6. To the sick man he *speakeeth falsehood*—feigned words of sympathy. *His heart gathereth iniquity*—even in the sick chamber he plots evil against the sick man. Finally as he goes forth and meets his fellows in the street, *he telleth it*—all his ill-will towards the Psalmist. The general opinion of the onlookers (v. 7) is that of Job's friends, i.e. that the sufferer has committed a special sin for which he is undergoing a special punishment: "Some wicked thing," they say, "cleaveth fast unto him." Thus they bring the Psalmist no comfort; they coldly maintain that his sin has overtaken him. Even the man

who had been the Psalmist's special ally has encouraged his enemies against him (v. 9). In these desperate straits the Psalmist repeats his appeal to **JEHOVAH**, "Have mercy upon me" (vv. 4, 10). But the rest of his petition reveals the gulf which divides the spirit of the Old Testament (and of the Psalms in part) from that of the New. The Psalmist asks for restoration to health that he may be able to "requite" his enemies (v. 10) with eye for eye and tooth for tooth. Requital is of the essence of right conduct, so the Eastern thinks: injury must be repaid with injury, and death with death. There is no such thing as forgiveness between man and man, for no individual has the power to forgive. The man is simply a member of his tribe, and an injury done to him or still more his death is an injury done to his tribe. So the nearest of his kin or the head of his tribe must take up the matter. Often the injury may be atoned for by a money payment, but it can never be freely forgiven. According to the Eastern view some requital must be made; otherwise justice is not done. This idea appears also in xxxviii (see v. 3), xxxix (see v. 11). In these instances the Psalmist appeals for God's forgiveness, but (in part) on the ground that he has already been "requited" in his sickness for his sin. Still the case between God and man differs fundamentally from the case between man and man. The sinner sins, and God sends sickness upon him for his sin, but that is not the end. The sinner, if he be a man after the Psalmist's mind, turns to God and makes confession. Then God restores the sinner to health. God's procedure differs from man's by the Divine act of Forgiveness.

13. A doxology. The Jews divide the Psalter into five Books: Book I ends here, and is closed with this doxology. Similarly lxxii. 18, 19 is a doxology marking the close of Book II.

### § 2. AUTHOR AND OCCASION.

This is a Psalm of unknown authorship and of unknown date. But it is probable that the author was one highly placed, a civil ruler, or possibly a high priest. His description of himself as "the poor man" is to be understood in reference to his present condition: owing to sickness he is as helpless and friendless as the poorest of his people. But the interest, hostile though it was, taken in him shows that he was a person of importance, and the friend who had eaten his bread was (apparently) anxious to succeed to his office. The circumstances of the Psalmist point to some internal conflict in Judah itself which History has not recorded. There is no allusion to a foreign foe which might give a hint of the date of the composition of the Psalm. The general situation is like that of the writer of Ps xxxix.

### § 3. IS THIS PSALM AN ANSWER TO THE SORCERER?

Does the Psalmist believe that his sickness is due to a spell cast upon him by an enemy? Is he praying to **JEHOVAH** to loose him from the spell? Such is the view of Mowinckel, who sees an allusion to sorcery in such phrases as "*speaking evil*" (v. 5), "*speaking falsehood*" (v. 6), "*whisper together against me*" (v. 7), "*a matter of Belial*" (or "*some wicked thing*," v. 8). But each of these terms has a general signification. If a man says that his enemy is *speaking falsehood* against him, he may mean any one of several injurious acts other than the casting of a spell, e.g. that his enemy is slandering him in the market-place, or again

bearing false witness against him before the judge. But further it may be said that the phrase "whisper *together*" is a better description of hostile talk in general than of the deliberate work of the sorcerer. The sorcerer works alone confident in the power of his spells. Even when the four phrases are grouped together in *vv.* 5-8 they still retain their general sense.

For the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.

**XLI.** 1 Blessed is he that considereth <sup>1</sup>the poor:

The LORD will deliver him in the day of evil.

2 <sup>2</sup>The LORD will preserve him, and keep him alive, and he shall be blessed <sup>3</sup>upon the earth;

And deliver not thou him unto the will of his enemies.

3 <sup>4</sup>The LORD will support him upon the couch of languishing: Thou <sup>5</sup>makest all his bed in his sickness.

4 I said, O LORD, have mercy upon me: Heal my soul; for I have sinned against thee.

5 Mine enemies speak evil against me, *saying*,  
When shall he die, and his name perish?

<sup>1</sup> Or, *the weak*

<sup>2</sup> Or, *The LORD preserve*

<sup>3</sup> Or, *in the land*

<sup>4</sup> Or, *The LORD support*

<sup>5</sup> Heb. *turnest, or, changest.*

**XLI.** 1. *the poor (man).* The Psalmist is thinking of himself on his bed of sickness (*vv.* 4, 5).

2. *keep him alive.* Rather, *restore him to health.*

*he shall be blessed* etc. Rather, *he shall be counted happy in the land*: cf *lxxii.* 17, "All nations shall call him happy." This is the climax: he shall be saved from his enemy, restored from sickness, and lastly, he shall prosper in the land.

3. *support him.* Or, *sustain him*, i.e. with food. The same Hebrew verb as in *Gen xviii.* 5, "I will fetch a morsel of bread, and comfort ye (i.e. *sustain ye*) your heart."

*Thou makest* (lit. *turnest*) *all his bed.* The sudden change of person marks the deep feeling of the Psalmist: he is telling of his own case. *All his bed*, not *part* of it, like the action of some incompetent nurse. This homely language is a stumbling-block to commentators; but is it more homely than *xxii.* 10, "I was cast upon thee from the womb," i.e. I was placed on thy knees to be acknowledged by thee as a new-born child by its father?

4. *Heal my soul.* Heal me.

5. *his name perish.* An added bitterness to death: 1 *Sam xxiv.* 21; 2 *Sam xiv.* 7; *xviii.* 18.

- 6 And if he come to see *me*, he speaketh <sup>1</sup>vanity ;  
His heart gathereth iniquity to itself :  
When he goeth abroad, he telleth it.
- 7 All that hate me whisper together against me :  
Against me do they devise my hurt.
- 8 <sup>2</sup>An evil disease, *say they*, <sup>3</sup>cleaveth fast unto him :  
And now that he lieth he shall rise up no more.
- 9 Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did  
eat of my bread,  
Hath lifted up his heel against me.
- 10 But thou, O LORD, have mercy upon me, and raise me up,  
That I may requite them.
- 11 By this I know that thou delightest in me,  
Because mine enemy doth not triumph over me.
- 12 And as for me, thou upholdest me in mine integrity,  
And settest me before thy face for ever.
- 13 Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel,  
From everlasting and to everlasting.  
Amen, and Amen.

<sup>1</sup> Or, falsehood      <sup>2</sup> Or, Some wicked thing      <sup>3</sup> Or, is poured out upon him

6. *vanity*. Better as marg. *falsehood*.  
*abroad*. I.e. into the street or market-place.

8. *An evil disease*. Lit. *a matter of Belial*. Better as marg. *Some wicked thing*, i.e. some past sin bringing its punishment with it. Cf Num xxxii. 23.

9. *mine own familiar friend*. Lit. *the man of my peace*, "the man my ally."

*Hath lifted up his heel against me*. In this form the Psalm is quoted in John xiii. 18, "He that eateth my bread lifted up his heel against me" (*ἐπήρην ἐπ' ἐμὲ τὴν πτέρναν αὐτοῦ*). The Hebrew phrase is a little difficult: it may perhaps be rendered, *Hath been my great persecutor* (or *would-be supplanter*).

11. *By this* etc. To be paraphrased thus, *By this I shall come to know...if my enemy shall not in the end raise a triumphal shout over me*. The Psalmist says that he will be re-assured by the result of the present crisis.

12. *mine integrity*. I.e. my *faithfulness* to thee, *JEHOVAH*, my God : cf xxvi. 1.

*before thy face*. I.e. in a place of favour : 2 Sam vii. 26 ; 1 K ii. 45.

## ADDITIONAL NOTE ON viii. 2.

*Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou established strength,  
Because of thine adversaries, That thou mightest still the enemy and the  
avenger.*

A closer rendering of the leading phrases of this verse from MT runs as follows:—“Out of the mouth of babes...hast thou laid a foundation of strength ...That thou mightest destroy the enemy...” But LXX (in agreement with the quotation of the first half of the verse in Matt xxi. 16) shows a striking variation, *ἐκ στόματος νηπίων καὶ θηλαζόντων κατηρήσω αἶνον*, “Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings didst thou fashion praise.” With this the Peshitta rendering of the Psalm agrees, except in adding a pronoun, “thy praise.”

At first sight so marked a variation as “praise” in the place of “strength” (Heb. *‘ōz*) suggests that the Greek translators had a different reading before them. A further examination however of the treatment of the Heb. *‘ōz* by the LXX makes another explanation more probable. We find that in four places (in all) in the Psalter *‘ōz* is not rendered by “strength” nor by any synonym of “strength,” but either by “praise” (as here) or by “honour” (*τιμὴν*) or “glory” (*δόξαν*), two synonyms of praise. The other passages are xxix. 1; lxviii. 34; xcvi. 7.

These passages illustrate the transition in the meaning of the Heb. word *‘ōz* from “strength” to “praise.” Both in xxix. 1 and in xcvi. 7 RV carries over from AV the literal translation, “Give unto the LORD glory and *strength*”; but for “strength” LXX has in each case *τιμὴν*, “honour.” In the third passage, lxviii. 34, the Hebrew is “Ascribe ye (lit. “Give ye”) *strength* unto God”; but LXX has *δόξαν*, “glory.”

There can be no doubt that the Greek translators followed a sound instinct in these renderings. Man cannot give “strength” in the objective sense to God, but he does give in the Psalter an ascription of strength which may be described as “honour” or “glory” or as “praise”; and the Heb. *‘ōz*, though it usually means “strength” in the objective sense, can, as these passages show, have a subjective reference, if the context be suitable. And certainly the context in viii. 2 is suitable: “Out of the mouth”—comes most naturally not “strength,” but—an *ascription of strength*.

The facts before us and particularly the avoidance of the rendering “strength” in these four separate passages suggest the conclusion that LXX followed some well-established and well-known tradition in choosing *αἶνον*, “praise,” as the rendering of *‘ōz*, “strength,” in viii. 2. Surely the Greek translators did not invent this interpretation, but took it over on earlier authority. Our Lord accepted it as we see from Matt xxi. 16, but He cannot have taken it from LXX. The Greek wording which agrees with the LXX is to be attributed to the Greek translator of St Matthew’s Gospel.

By the use of the word “strength” the Psalmist draws a contrast: Out of weakness JEHOVAH establish strength. The “babes and sucklings” according to Rashi are the Levites and the priests. When these praised the strength of JEHOVAH, the Gentiles heard; they were impressed; and were drawn to confess and worship Him. Their kings brought Him presents (lxviii. 24, 26, 29). Thus out of weakness the LORD fashioned strength.

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