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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 II

PSALMS xlii-cl



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PREFATORY NOTE BY THE GENERAL EDITORS

THE 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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(i) An Introduction stating the bearing of modern criticism and research upon the historical character of the book, and drawing out the contribution which the book, as a whole, makes to the body of religious truth.

(ii) A careful paraphrase of the text with notes on the more difficult passages and, if need be, excursuses on any points of special importance either for doctrine, or ecclesiastical organization, or spiritual life.

But the books of the Bible are so varied in character that considerable latitude is needed, as to the proportion which the various parts should hold to each other. The General Editors will therefore only endeavour to secure a general uniformity in scope and character: but the exact method adopted in each case and

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WALTER LOCK
D. C. SIMPSON

PREFACE

THE 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 (cxx-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 guttura *Ain* is indicated by the rough breathing (‘), and *Aleph* (except at the beginning of a word) by the smooth breathing (ˆ). *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, 1917-1917.
- LOT. 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.

BOOK II

PSALMS XLII, XLIII

THIRST FOR GOD: cf Ps LXXXIV

§ 1. CONTENTS.

xlii. 1-3. The Psalmist feels himself to be separated from his God: he thirsts for His presence; and he is taunted by enemies who say, *Where is thy God?*

4, 5. The Psalmist comforts himself by recalling earlier experiences. He has been of old to the house of God and has joined in the voice of praise on the feast-day. A refrain: "Let his soul take comfort: he will yet have occasion to praise his God as before."

6, 7. The Psalmist though detained east of Jordan and under the shadow of Hermon yet remembers his God, the God that dwells in Zion. Even the storms of the mountains remind him of JEHOVAH.

8-11. Once the Psalmist could worship day and night, for JEHOVAH showed His lovingkindness to him: has God forgotten that earlier time? How bitter for the Psalmist to hear the taunt of the enemy that he is separated from his God! The refrain: "Let his soul take comfort: he will yet have occasion to praise his God as before."

xliii. 1, 2. The Psalmist calls upon God to be his champion against "an ungodly nation"; why should he have to go "like a mourner" while his enemy afflicts him?

3-5. Let God's favour and His faithfulness bring the Psalmist again to God's house that he may praise Him "upon the harp." The refrain as in xlii. 5, 11: "Let his soul take comfort: he will yet have occasion to praise his God as before."

§ 2. THE UNITY OF THE TWO PSALMS.

The two Psalms are shown to be in fact one (*a*) by the similarity of tone and purpose; (*b*) by the fact that both express a desire to be present in the Temple once more; (*c*) by the refrain which is common to both Psalms. They are however treated in LXX as separate, and Ps xliii is given a title of its own, "Psalm of David." Possibly the fact that Ps xxvi begins, "Judge me, O JEHOVAH," influenced the editor of the Psalter when he took the same words in Ps xliii as the beginning of a fresh Psalm.

§ 3. THE AUTHOR OF THE PSALM AND HIS PURPOSE.

In the Hebrew text of Ps xlii the title "A Psalm of David" is not found, nor is any title prefix to Ps xliii. But the anonymous author reveals his circumstances. He cannot at present reach the Temple: he is an exile from his country: he is perhaps in captivity: he yearns to appear once more in the house of his God. It is not enough to say that his soul is panting "for God." There were many gods in the ancient world. Here is a great soul who has been confronted with other gods and their worshippers, who nevertheless remains faithful to

JEHOVAH. He pants after the God, Whom he has known, and after no other, even as his opening simile shows, "As the hind panteth after the *water* brooks." In the summer heat the thirsty creature pants not for any "brook," but for a brook with *water* in it.

So the Psalmist thirsts for his own God, *the living God*, not for the gods of the nations, "which see not, nor hear, nor know"; cf Jer ii. 13. The heathen around him as they contemplate their images complaisantly in their shrines ask him with scorn, "Where is thy God?"

His God is JEHOVAH, the God of Israel. It is a serious loss to the meaning that an editor has substituted the word God (Heb. *Elohim*) for the proper name JEHOVAH in *vv.* 1, 2. This Psalm is sister to Ps lxxxiv, in which the name JEHOVAH appears seven times (in the Hebrew). These two Psalms (xlii-xliii and lxxxiv) are alike in purpose and in feeling. Both express the desire for nearness to God (JEHOVAH) and both hope to attain to it in the Temple. Is not the Temple the house in which He dwells? Cf xv. 1, xxiv. 3, 7, xxvi. 8, 1 K viii. 13.

The language of Ps xlii-xliii (it has been pointed out) would suit the case of the high priest Onias III. This man was supplanted in the highpriesthood by his brother Jason, and forced to take refuge in Syria, where ultimately he was put to death (2 Macc iv. 34). The "ungodly nation" would then mean Simon the original mover against Onias and his abettors including Jason and Menelaus who followed Onias as high priests (2 Macc iii. 1 ff, iv. 1 ff, 23-25). If Onias were the author of the Psalm, the date of it would be about 175 B.C. This date is probably too late, but the Psalm may refer to some similar case of a successful intrigue resulting in the banishment or the flight of the high priest from Jerusalem. The highpriesthood was the object of rivalry and contention long before the second century B.C. Occasion for future disputes was given when Solomon put Zadok as priest into the place of Abiathar (1 K ii. 35). Some centuries later the profanation of the Temple by Bagoses the Persian governor (Joseph. *Antiq.* xi. vii. 1) was caused by the rivalry of two brothers for the highpriesthood. For a discussion of the date of this event see the introduction to Ps lxxxiv. The case of Onias may be cited as a possible illustration of the circumstances supposed in the Psalm.

For the Chief Musician; Maschil of the sons of Korah.

XLII. 1 As the hart panteth after the water brooks,
So panteth my soul after thee, O God.

1-3. SEPARATION FROM GOD

XLII. 1. *the hart (hind).*

panteth. AV marg. *brayeth.* The meaning is perhaps "raiseth its voice and *crieth.*" The great simplicity of the language of this verse seemed irreverent to St Jerome or to his Hebrew teacher. Hence in *Psalterium iuxta Hebraeos* the Saint gives the paraphrastic rendering, "As the garden (*areola*) is made ready for irrigating waters, so is my soul made ready for thee, O God."

- 2 My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God:
When shall I come and appear before God?
- 3 My tears have been my meat day and night,
While they ¹continually say unto me, Where is thy God?
- 4 These things I remember, and pour out my soul ²within me,
How I went with the throng, and ³led them to the house of
God,
With the voice of joy and praise, a multitude keeping holyday.
- 5 Why art thou ⁴cast down, O my soul?
And *why* art thou disquieted within me?
Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him
⁵For the ⁶health of his countenance.

¹ Heb. *all the day*. ² Heb. *upon*. ³ Or, *went in procession with them*

⁴ Heb. *bowed down*.

⁵ According to some ancient authorities, *Who is the health of my countenance, and my God. My soul &c.*

⁶ Or, *help*

2. *the living God*. So in Jer x. 10 JEHOVAH is described in contrast with idols as "true God, *living God*, everlasting king."

appear before God. Another rendering of the Hebrew phrase is, *see the face of God*. This is an extreme instance of the ambiguity of the unpointed Hebrew text. These three Hebrew words when written without vowel points admit either of the two renderings given above: but the rendering given in EV follows the points. This interpretation is ancient, being that of LXX, ὀφθήσομαι τῷ προσώπῳ τοῦ θεοῦ. See Isa i. 12, "to appear before me": RV marg. "to see my face."

3. *Where is thy God?* So the emperor Julian being called *apostate* by blind Maris of Chalcedon retorted, "Thy Galilean God will never heal thee." Socrates, *H.E.* III. xii. Cf lxxix. 10, note.

4, 5. FORMER EXPERIENCES

4. *How I went with the throng*. The Hebrew word for "throng" is of doubtful meaning. It is possible that the sense is, "I passed into the *dwelling*," i.e. the Temple. The Heb. *sāk* or *sōk* may be a form of *sukkah* סככה, "a zariba" or defence for cattle much used in the East: xxvii. 5 Gen xxxiii. 17. The Temple was a refuge for the Psalmist.

5. *I shall yet praise him*. I.e. I shall again have occasion to praise him.

5, 6. *For the health of his countenance. O my God*. Probably the verse division is faulty: read, "*Who is the health of my countenance, and my God*," as in v. 11 and also in xliii. 5. Verse 6 should begin, "My soul is cast down."

- 6 O my God, my soul is cast down within me:
Therefore do I remember thee from the land of Jordan,
And the Hermons, from ¹the hill Mizar.
- 7 Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy ²waterspouts:
All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me.
- 8 Yet the LORD will command his lovingkindness in the day-
time,
And in the night his song shall be with me,
Even a prayer unto the God of my life.
- 9 I will say unto God my rock, Why hast thou forgotten me?
Why go I mourning ³because of the oppression of the enemy?
- 10 As with ⁴a sword in my bones, mine adversaries reproach me;
While they continually say unto me, Where is thy God?
- ¹ Or, *the little mountain* ² Or, *cataracts*
³ Or, *while the enemy oppresseth* ⁴ Or, *crushing*

6, 7. THE PSALMIST IN EXILE

6. *Therefore do I remember.* Rather, *So (or Thus) do I remember.* The reference is to the scene described in v. 4. The Hebrew term '*al kēn*' usually translated "therefore" is sometimes equivalent to "thus" as in xlv. 17, "*Thus shall the peoples give thee thanks*": cx. 7, "*Thus (i.e. victorious and refreshed) shall he lift up the head.*"

the hill Mizar. It is possible that the Psalmist is playing upon an Aramaic root meaning "to despise." If so, he calls the hill of his exile "the hill of contempt" in contrast to Zion "the holy hill."

7. *waterspouts.* Cf margin. A reference to storms which the Psalmist experienced among the mountains of the Hermon range. The Hebrews believed that their God manifested Himself in the storm: cf xviii. 7-15, xxix. 3-9; Ezek i. 4 ff.

8-11. THE PSALMIST CONTINUES TO HOPE

8. *the LORD will command...his song shall be etc.* Rather, *JEHOVAH did command...his song was with me.* The Psalmist again looks back, as in v. 4, and re-assures himself with the thought of the past loving-kindness of JEHOVAH.

9. *my rock.* The same Hebrew word (*sēla'*) as in xviii. 2, xxxi. 3, lxxi. 3, "*my rock and my strong hold*" (or "fortress" in each passage).

Why go I mourning. Or, *Why have I to go as a mourner?* So again in xliii. 2b. The Psalmist looks back to a time when he could say with Job (xxix. 25), "I chose out their way, and sat as chief."

10. *As with a sword in my bones.* (There is no "sword" here.) Rather, *As with a breaking into my (very) bones.* The bodily frame of the Psalmist seems to give way under the taunts of his tormentors.

- 11 Why art thou cast down, O my soul?
 And why art thou disquieted within me?
 Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him,
*Who is the*¹health of my countenance, and my God.

XLIII. 1 Judge me, O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly nation:

O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man.

- 2 For thou art the God of my strength; why hast thou cast me off?

Why go I mourning² because of the oppression of the enemy?

- 3 O send out thy light and thy truth; let them lead me:

Let them bring me unto thy holy hill,

And to thy tabernacles.

¹ Or, *help*

² Or, *while the enemy oppresses*

11. Who is *the health* etc. In LXX a separate sentence, ἡ σωτηρία τοῦ προσώπου μου ὁ θεός μου, "My God is the salvation of my face (my person)."

the health of my countenance, a periphrasis for "my salvation"; i.e. "my deliverer": see preceding note.

XLIII. 1, 2. BE THOU MY CHAMPION

1. *Judge me.* Cf xxvi. 1, note.

an ungodly nation. "Nation" = Heb. *goi*, "a gentile people," but the Psalmist means rather an heathen-minded section (or member) of his own people. He describes this section (or member) as "ungodly," Heb. *lō-hasid*, i.e. "without the grace" (of God).

the deceitful etc. I.e. some eminent member of the heathenized section of Israel.

3-5. LEAD ME TO THY HILL

3. *unto thy holy hill.* Away from the hill Mizar, "of contempt" (xlii. 6).

thy tabernacles. The same Hebrew word as in lxxxiv. 1. It is used of the tabernacle in the wilderness, e.g. in Exod xxv. 9 (*mishkān*), but it has the general sense of a dwelling (Heb. *shākan*, "to dwell"). The Temple is meant.

- 4 Then will I go unto the altar of God,
 Unto God ¹my exceeding joy:
 And upon the harp will I praise thee, O God, my God.
- 5 Why art thou cast down, O my soul?
 And why art thou disquieted within me?
 Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him,
 Who is the ²health of my countenance, and my God.

¹ Heb. *the gladness of my joy.*² Or, *help.*

4. *unto the altar of God... And upon the harp will I praise thee.* After this mention of the altar we should expect the Psalmist to speak of the animal—he-goat or bullock—which was to be his thankoffering: but no! The Psalmist's offering is a Psalm sung before the altar: cf. xix. 14, note.

PSALM XLIV

AN EXPOSTULATION WITH JEHOVAH: IS ISRAEL FORSAKEN BY HIS GOD?

§ 1. CONTENTS AND OCCASION OF THE PSALM.

1-8. The gracious acts of God (JEHOVAH) in the past, particularly in giving Canaan to Israel.

9-16. Israel is now suffering under overwhelming and shameful defeat.

17-22. Yet Israel has been faithful to the name of his own God.

23-26. Let the Lord awake to help His people.

This is a national Psalm with an historical background: together with lxxiv and lxxix it has been assigned by many critics to a Maccabean date. Duhm assigns it to the occasion of the disastrous fight in which Judas Maccabaeus fell (1 Macc ix. 1-22). But it may be doubted if xlv has any connexion in age or occasion with lxxiv and lxxix; it is a Psalm of the sons of Korah, while they are entitled, "of Asaph." And further xlv standing by itself is almost colourless: there is in it no suggestion of injury to Jerusalem or profanation of the Temple as in lxxiv, lxxix. It is odd that the assertion of faithfulness to JEHOVAH (v. 17-22) should be taken as an indication of a Maccabean date. There was in fact much apostasy both before and after Antiochus Epiphanes began to persecute (1 Macc i. 11-15, 43). Even among those who followed Maccabaeus in the field there were men contaminated with "the idols of Jamnia" (2 Macc xii. 40).

It is true that this Psalm refers to a persecution of the Jews for their religion. The words of v. 22, *for thy sake are we killed all the day long*, find ample illustration in such passages as 1 Macc i. 57, ii. 29-38, vii. 10-17. But it cannot be said that the Jews never submitted to persecution for their faith before the time of Antiochus Epiphanes. Scanty as our records are for the three centuries which followed the edict of Cyrus (Ezra i. 1), there are indications of religious trouble

between the native Egyptians and the Jewish colonies in Egypt, between a Persian governor and the Jews of Jerusalem, and also between the Jews and the Samaritans. The cry, *for thy sake are we killed all the day long*, may have risen up from Israel centuries before Epiphanes. Ps xliv may possibly be Maccabean, but the evidence is too slight to prove it. See also Ps lxxiv, Introduction.

§ 2. THE OUTLOOK OF THE PSALMIST.

The author begins in a tone of hearty acknowledgement of JEHOVAH's wonderful lovingkindness of old time; but he passes on to charge his God with having cast off Israel, although Israel has been faithful to the covenant. The thought is bold and the language outspoken: "Awake, why sleepest thou, O Lord?" A heathen might be upbraiding one of his many gods. Cf lx. 10, note.

Yet in all this the Psalmist shows himself a man of faith. He believes utterly in the God with whom he expostulates so boldly. "If only JEHOVAH will be again that which He has been in the past, all will be well."

Another Psalm of Defeat with which xliv should be compared is Ps lx (*q.v.*) and perhaps lxxxiii.

§ 3. THE USE OF THE DIVINE NAME.

In this Psalm, as in xlii-xliii, it is important to note that the word "God" stands frequently for the proper name JEHOVAH. The full force of many phrases cannot be felt unless we read JEHOVAH for "God." Thus

4. Thou art my King, O JEHOVAH (not "O God").

8. In JEHOVAH have we made our boast.

20, 21. If we have forgotten the name of our God,...Shall not JEHOVAH search this out?

For the Chief Musician; a *Psalm* of the sons of Korah. Maschil.

XLIV. 1 We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us,

What work thou didst in their days, in the days of old.

2 Thou didst drive out the nations with thy hand, and plantedst them in;

Thou didst afflict the peoples, and ¹didst spread them abroad.

¹ Or, *cast them forth*

1-8. THE GRACIOUS ACTS OF JEHOVAH IN THE PAST

XLIV. 1. *We have heard with our ears, O God (O JEHOVAH).* A phrase meaning, "We ourselves have heard."

work (Heb. *pō'al*). Almost a technical word to describe the exercise of Divine providence: lxxvii. 12, xc. 16; Hab iii. 2.

2. *Thou...with thy hand.* I.e. Thou thyself didst it.

didst spread them abroad. Better as marg. *didst cast them forth*, as in Jer xxviii. 16.

- 3 For they gat not the land in possession by their own sword,
Neither did their own arm save them:
But thy right hand, and thine arm, and the light of thy
countenance,
Because thou hadst a favour unto them.
- 4 Thou art my King, O God:
Command ¹deliverance for Jacob.
- 5 Through thee will we push down our adversaries:
Through thy name will we tread them under that rise up
against us.
- 6 For I will not trust in my bow,
Neither shall my sword save me.
- 7 But thou hast saved us from our adversaries,
And hast put them to shame that hate us.
- 8 In God have we made our boast all the day long,
And we will give thanks unto thy name for ever. [Selah
- 9 But now thou hast cast *us* off, and brought us to dishonour;
And goest not forth with our hosts.

¹ Or, *victories*

3. *their own sword.* Deut viii. 17, 18; Josh xxiv. 12.
hadst a favour unto them. Or, *didst delight in them*: cf Isa xlii. 1 (the same Hebrew word).

4. *my King.* v. 2, x. 16, xxix. 10.

Command deliverance. Better as LXX (following a slightly different reading of the Hebrew), ὁ ἐντελλόμενος τὰς σωτηρίας, *Who commandest* (i.e. who dost appoint) *deliverances.*

for Jacob. Rather, *O Jacob*, i.e. O Conqueror: cf xxiv. 6, xlvi. 7 with the notes. JEHOVAH is addressed as Conqueror.

5. *will we push down.* The Hebrew verb means "to thrust down with horns": it is used in Deut xxxiii. 17; 1 K xxii. 11.

6. *my bow.* The bow was the national weapon of Israel: Hosea i. 5.

7. *thou hast saved.* Or, *thou didst save.* The reference is to the past.

8. *In God have we made our boast.* Rather, *Through JEHOVAH we sang praises*, i.e. we were able to sing praise for victory (in the past). There is a happy ambiguity in the Hebrew: it might be rendered, *Of JEHOVAH we sang the praises.*

9-16. THE PRESENT SUFFERINGS OF ISRAEL

9. *goest not forth with our hosts.* Contrast Josh v. 13-15, where JEHOVAH appears to Joshua with the words, "As captain of the host of JEHOVAH am I now come."

- 10 Thou makest us to turn back from the adversary:
And they which hate us spoil for themselves.
- 11 Thou hast given us like sheep *appointed* for meat;
And hast scattered us among the nations.
- 12 Thou sellest thy people for nought,
And hast not increased *thy wealth* by their price.
- 13 Thou makest us a reproach to our neighbours,
A scorn and a derision to them that are round about us.
- 14 Thou makest us a byword among the nations,
A shaking of the head among the peoples.
- 15 All the day long is my dishonour before me,
And the shame of my face hath covered me,
- 16 For the voice of him that reproacheth and blasphemeth;
By reason of the enemy and the avenger.
- 17 All this is come upon us; yet have we not forgotten thee,
Neither have we dealt falsely in thy covenant.

10. *spoil for themselves*. Not, as P-B, *spoil our goods*. The "goods" in any case included the persons of men, women, and children who were carried off as slaves according to the custom of ancient war: cf 1 Sam xxx. 2; 2 K xv. 29; Amos i. 6; 1 Macc iii. 38-41.

11. *scattered us among the nations*. These words do not necessarily imply a general dispersion of Israel in distant lands such as took place in the Assyrian and Chaldean eras. The words may mean no more than that parties of fugitives passed for safety into neighbouring lands.

12. *Thou sellest thy people*. Here the Psalmist speaks of JEHOVAH almost as though he were a slave merchant. The bold *naïveté* of this Psalmist appears also in vv. 17, 23. Cf Amos v. 27, "I (JEHOVAH) will carry you into captivity beyond Damascus" (literal translation).

13. *a reproach to our neighbours*. I.e. a *proverb* (or *by-word*, Heb. *māshāl*) for our neighbours to use against us. This verse corresponds but for one word with lxxix. 4 (Hebrew). It was probably a "saying" in Israel. Cf xv. 3, note.

16. *the enemy and the avenger*. I.e. the implacable enemy; so viii. 2.

17-22. THE PSALMIST CLAIMS THAT HIS PEOPLE HAVE BEEN FAITHFUL

17. *yet have we not forgotten thee*. There is no similar claim of innocence in Pss lxxiv and lxxix. In lxxiv the appeal is that the cause of JEHOVAH's people is JEHOVAH's own cause, while in lxxix. 9 the Psalmist confesses (by implication) that his people have sinned.

- 18 Our heart is not turned back,
Neither have our steps declined from thy way;
- 19 ¹That thou hast sore broken us in the place of jackals,
And covered us with the shadow of death.
- 20 If we have forgotten the name of our God,
Or spread forth our hands to a strange god;
- 21 Shall not God search this out?
For he knoweth the secrets of the heart.
- 22 Yea, for thy sake are we killed all the day long;
We are counted as sheep for the slaughter.
- 23 Awake, why sleepest thou, O Lord?
Arise, cast *us* not off for ever.
- 24 Wherefore hidest thou thy face,
And forgettest our affliction and our oppression?
- 25 For our soul is bowed down to the dust:
Our belly cleaveth unto the earth.

¹ Or, *Though*

18. *Our heart...our steps.* Inwardly and outwardly we have followed Thee.

19. *the place of jackals.* The battlefield, where the jackals feed as night comes on. For *jackals* of lxiii. 10, margin. The faulty rendering of P-B, *the place of dragons*, comes perhaps from Luther, *unter den Drachen*.

the shadow of death. So rightly MT, LXX (σκιὰ θανάτου), Vulgate (*umbra mortis*) as in xxiii. 4, where RV marg. has the modern emendation, *deep darkness*. The shadow over the battlefield is the shadow not of night and sleep, but of death.

21. *Shall not God (JEHOVAH) search this out?* In the early Maccabean period, according to 2 Macc xii. 40, JEHOVAH did actually search out and uncover such unfaithfulness.

22. *for thy sake are we killed.* See Introduction, § 1.

23-26. FINAL APPEAL FOR HELP

23. *Awake.* The boldness of the language of this Psalmist is remarkable: he uses words such as Elijah in scorn challenges the priests of Baal to use, when he says of Baal, "Peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked" (1 K xviii. 27). So the Babylonian worshipper asks in his prayer, "How long will the lord (Bel), who sleeps, still sleep?" See Jeremias, *Das AT im Lichte des alten Orients*, p. 561, who cites iv R. 23, col i, lines 26 ff.

24. *hidest thou thy face.* x. 11, xiii. 1, xxii. 24.

25. *our soul is bowed down.* The words may mean *either* (1) "we

26 Rise up for our help,
And redeem us for thy lovingkindness' sake.

are brought down to the ground because of our defeat"; cf vii. 5; or (2) "we lay ourselves in the dust to implore thy help"; Num xiv. 5; Josh vii. 6.

26. *Rise up*. So iii. 7, "Arise"; x. 12, *al*.

redeem us. I.e. *buy us back*, having sold us for nought. The suggestion that *v.* 26 is a conventional petition added to avoid so vigorous an ending as *v.* 25 is unconvincing.

PSALM XLV

KING MESSIAH (*v.* 7), AND HIS KINGDOM

§ 1. CONTENTS: *vv.* 1-9, THE KING; *vv.* 10-17, THE KINGDOM.

1. The Psalmist has a great subject and is eager to set it forth.

2-7. He addresses a (new) ruler and counsels him to wear the sword of justice, and to champion the cause of the meek. The Psalmist is confident that he will do this, for God (JEHOVAH) has anointed him (as king) and rewarded him with gladness, because he has been a hater of wickedness.

8, 9. The king's splendour: spices, ivory and gold. At his right hand stands the Queen-Mother.

10-12. This lady turns to address ("O daughter") a bride whom the king is taking to wife, and exhorts her to forget her father's house, and to take "the king" for her lord. So will she herself receive homage and gifts from the daughter of Tyre and from others.

13-15. The "king's daughter" splendidly apparalled will go in procession with her companions, and will enter into the king's palace (LXX, *ναὸν βασιλείως*).

16. A promise: children in exchange for fathers.

17. The Psalmist will make the king's name remembered.

§ 2. THE NATURE AND MEANING OF THE PSALM.

The heading of the Psalm in MT gives a twofold description of it (1) *a Maschil*, i.e. a didactic or contemplative poem: (2) *a Song of loves*, a title which suggests very different ideas. The modern view attaches itself to the second title: it finds clear expression in the verdict: "A purely worldly poem composed with conscious art for the wedding of a king."

Is it so? Even the statement that the Psalm was composed for the wedding of a king needs some qualification: out of seventeen verses, seven only are devoted to the wedding. The other ten are a description of a monarch who has been recently anointed king. The Psalmist describes him in terms which befit a king rather than a bridegroom, except possibly in *vv.* 2, 8. The king—Where is he called a "bridegroom"?—is above all a righteous judge, and stern. There is no exuberance of oriental fancy over his physical beauty, nor is there any dwelling on the beauty of the bride. Of course the Psalmist has never seen

her, but if he had been a "purely worldly" court poet, he would surely have given an imaginative (if conventional) description of her eyes and hair and other charms (cf Song of Songs iv. 1 ff). This Psalm has been compared with the Song of Songs, but the only points of contact with it are v. 8, the (sober) words of v. 2, and the title, "A Song of loves."

Further, it must be remembered that language relating to marriage is often used in O.T. in a metaphorical sense. Thus Israel was "espoused" to *JEHOVAH* (Jer ii. 2); *JEHOVAH* is Israel's husband (Hosea ii. 16, 19); and a promise of restoration is made to Zion in the words, "Thy land shall be married." So the question presents itself, Is a "purely worldly" marriage the real subject, or is the Psalmist using the metaphor of marriage to convey a religious lesson? The question becomes more urgent when we search history for a king whose marriage might reasonably be supposed to be celebrated in this Psalm. Historically the Psalm is all but colourless. Even the name of *Israel* does not occur. *Tyre* (v. 12) does not help us, for Tyre was Israel's neighbour for good or for evil from the time of the Judges (Jud iii. 3, *Zidonians*) to the days of the Herods (Acts xii. 20). Modern critics will not accept a pre-exilic king as the hero, and certainly not Solomon with Pharaoh's daughter as bride. Duhm urges that *JEHOVAH*, *thy God* (so read in v. 7) excludes any (post-exilic) foreign marriage, such as has been suggested. One of the Egyptian Ptolemies of the third or second century B.C. seemed probable to some critics, for the Ptolemies on the whole were not unpopular in Palestine, but Duhm is probably right in dissenting. There remains, as he says, the Hasmonean king, Aristobulus I (104 B.C.), but this Aristobulus could hardly have been described (as in v. 7) as "loving righteousness and hating wickedness," if we accept the account given of him by Josephus (*A.J.* xiii. xi).

A "purely worldly" marriage. But it is the king himself as a just ruler, whose name is to be perpetuated through the generations (v. 17)—and not his marriage—that is the main subject here. The greater part of the Psalm runs parallel to Ps lxxii, the picture of the ideal king, who is righteous and prosperous.

But in lxxii an element is lacking which is supplied in xlv. If a new and ideal king is promised to Jerusalem, is not Jerusalem under obligation to respond to the Divine promise by some new effort of her own to submit more fully to the Divine will? This is surely the conviction of the writer who composed Ps xlv. He expresses it in vivid Eastern manner as the obligation which a bride takes upon herself. She will cut loose from old associations that she may be wholly loyal to her husband. Above all, the daughter (of Jerusalem) will enter his house (to abide there) and will bring her companions (the lesser cities of Judah) with her. Jerusalem will bring forth a new generation ("sons") to take the place of the unfaithful generations of old, the "fathers" (v. 16). And so the name of the ideal king will be perpetuated to all generations (v. 17 to be compared with lxxii. 5, 17).

We gather further from the position of this Psalm in the Psalter that it was taken into the collection under the belief that the Bride stands for Jerusalem (Zion), and that reference is made therein to solemn processions in the Temple. Of the Psalms which immediately follow, xlvi and xlviii celebrate the inviolability

of Zion; while *xlvii* contemplates a gathering of the nations to Jerusalem to celebrate the universal rule of *JEHOVAH*.

Lastly, we notice that the Septuagint (in general a literal version) gives a mystical interpretation in two places. In *v.* 6 [7] it gives *ὁ θρόνος σου ὁ θεός*, a translation which keeps the mysterious suggestion made by the Hebrew, whether *ὁ θεός* be taken as a nominative or as a vocative. In *v.* 15, [16], *LXX* gives *ἀχθήσονται εἰς ναὸν βασιλείας*: Vulgate, *adducentur in templum regis*. Eastern marriages were not celebrated in temples, but in private houses. In the words *εἰς ναὸν* the metaphor is dropped.

If the theory of so large a use of metaphor by this Psalmist seems fantastic to the English reader, it is to be remembered that metaphor and allegory are familiar to the Eastern, and are freely used in his religious poetry. The kinship of *Ps xlv* is with *Ps lxxii* and not with the Song of Songs. Not a marriage but the person of the ideal righteous king is the subject of *Ps xlv*. 1-9. The marriage spoken of in *v.* 10-16 is metaphorical; it is the marriage of the king to Jerusalem his city.

For the Chief Musician; set to ¹Shoshannim; a *Psalm* of the sons of Korah.
Maschil. A Song of loves.

XLV. 1 My heart overfloweth with a goodly matter:

²I speak the things which I have made touching the king:

My tongue is the pen of a ready writer.

2 Thou art fairer than the children of men;

Grace is poured ³into thy lips:

Therefore God hath blessed thee for ever.

3 Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O mighty one,

Thy glory and thy majesty.

4 And in thy majesty ride on prosperously,

⁴Because of truth and meekness *and* righteousness:

¹ That is, *Lilies*.

² Or, *I speak; my work is for a king*

³ Or, *upon*

⁴ Or, *In behalf of*

XLV. 1. *I speak...the king.* Rather, *I speak: my matters are as for a king.*

2. *Thou art fairer.* Better, *Thou wast made fairer.*

Therefore etc. Thus (Heb. 'al kēn) *hath God blest thee.* Cf *xlii.* 6, note.

3. *Gird thy sword.* On ascending the throne he is to be invested with the sword as a sign of his kingship.

4. *And in thy majesty.* I.e. girded with the sword of justice.

Because of truth etc. Better, *In behalf of truth and meekness in righteousness.* The Psalmist beseeches the new ruler to rule in righteousness, to be faithful to the promises made at his accession, and to act on behalf of *meekness*, i.e. "the meek," the abstract word being used for the

And ¹thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things.

5 Thine arrows are sharp;

The peoples fall under thee;

They are in the heart of the king's enemies.

6 ²Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever:

A sceptre of equity is the sceptre of thy kingdom.

7 Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated wickedness:

Therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee

With the oil of gladness above thy fellows.

8 All thy garments *smell of myrrh*, and aloes, *and cassia*;

Out of ivory palaces stringed instruments have made thee glad.

¹ Or, *let thy right hand teach*

² Or, *Thy throne is the throne of God &c.*

concrete. The "meek" are the godly section in Israel; cf xxii. 26, xxxvii. 11.

thy right hand shall teach (for) *thee terrible things*. The right hand shall deal out justice according to the *Torah*.

5. *Thine arrows* etc. Better thus:

May thine arrows be sharp

(May peoples fall under thee!)

In the heart of the king's enemies!

The *king's enemies* are the unjust and the *arrows* are the punishments which he awards them.

6. *Thy throne, O God* etc. Better, *God (JEHOVAH) be (or is) thy throne*. So LXX (ed. Swete). The expression is not too bold for Eastern thought, certainly not more daring than "Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations" (xc. 1). There is a Babylonian parallel in Tablet iv of the Seven Tablets of Creation (*Altor. Texte*, page 116), where the gods say to Marduk, "May the destiny which thou dost cast be without parallel, may thy command be Anu (the God of Heaven)!" The *throne* the Psalmist speaks of is the throne of judgment: he wishes that the justice which the king dispenses may be as JEHOVAH's own.

RV text agrees with LXX (Tischendorf; also Rahlfs) in which $\delta \theta\epsilon\acute{o}\varsigma$ ("God") is comma'ed off as a Vocative.

7. *hath anointed thee*. I.e. to be ruler.

above thy fellows. It has been suggested that this turn of the phrase would suit a king of Northern Israel (like Omri or Jehu), who was taken from among his peers, but not a king of Judah, who succeeded his father as a matter of course. But this is to press the language unduly.

8. *Out of ivory palaces...have made thee glad*. What persons, or what gifts, "have made thee glad"? The Hebrew word is *Minni*, "Armenia," or *minni*, "stringed instruments," or "portions," i.e. gifts or tribute. A mention of Armenia (in the north) in v. 8 would suitably balance the

- 9 Kings' daughters are among thy honourable women:
 At thy right hand doth stand the queen in gold of Ophir.
- 10 Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear;
 Forget also thine own people, and thy father's house;
- 11 So shall the king desire thy beauty:
 For he is thy Lord; and worship thou him.
- 12 And the daughter of Tyre *shall be there* with a gift;
 Even the rich among the people shall intreat thy favour.
- 13 The king's daughter ¹within *the palace* is all glorious:
 Her clothing is inwrought with gold.

¹ Or, *in the inner part of the palace*

mention of Ophir (in the far south) in v. 9, but may we connect Armenia (presumably, a poor country) with "ivory palaces"?

9. *the queen*. Rather, *The queen-mother*. The Heb. *Shēgāl*, "queen," is used in the same sense in Neh ii. 6. The addition *wrought about with divers colours* is taken from the Vulgate (= LXX). It is not found in MT.

10. *Hearken, O daughter*. The *daughter* addressed is "the daughter of Jerusalem," and the marriage means the anointing of a new king over the Holy City.

Forget also etc. Why is the bride to forget her father's house? Because presumably a new (and righteous) king has arisen and an era of better things is to begin: shall we say that a Hezekiah has succeeded an Ahaz? Or shall we say that the ideal king, King Messiah, is realized as present? So Jerusalem is summoned to forget her heathen traditions, such as Ezekiel taunts her with: "Thy birth...is of the land of the Canaanite; the Amorite was thy father, and thy mother was an Hittite" (Ezek xvi. 3). So speaks the prophet to Jerusalem, whom nevertheless he describes at length as the chosen bride of JEHOVAH (Ezek xvi. 8-14).

11. *desire thy beauty*. Cf cxxxii. 13, "For JEHOVAH hath chosen Zion; He hath desired it for his habitation": P-B... "He hath longed for her." Zion is "beautiful in elevation" (xlvi. 2): and "the perfection of beauty" (l. 2). The king is the bridegroom of Jerusalem.

he is thy Lord. So the Hebrew, Peshitta and LXX. P-B (= Vulgate), *he is thy Lord God (Dominus Deus)*, an interpretation, not a translation of the Hebrew.

12. *the daughter of Tyre*. Tyre is the rival and adversary of Jerusalem: Ezek xxvi. 2; Joel iii. 4-6; Amos i. 9, 10. If Tyre presents a gift to Jerusalem, a new era has indeed begun. For this use of "daughter" cf cxxxvii. 8, note.

intreat thy favour. See Isa lxi. 14; Zech viii. 22 f.

13. *The king's daughter*. I.e. Jerusalem. Cf "the daughter of Tyre," v. 12.

The king's...all glorious. Better (as P-B), *The King's daughter is all*

- 14 She shall be led unto the king ¹in broidered work:
The virgins her companions that follow her
Shall be brought unto thee.
- 15 With gladness and rejoicing shall they be led:
They shall enter into the king's palace.
- 16 Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children,
Whom thou shalt make princes in all the earth.
- 17 I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations:
Therefore shall the peoples give thee thanks for ever and ever.

¹ Or, upon

glorious within. I.e. Jerusalem is full of glory because the King (JEHOVAH) dwells in His temple within the city.

14. *She shall be led unto the king in broidered work.* Jerusalem entering the Temple in festal array is described as a bride going in procession "adorned for her husband."

The virgins her companions. I.e. the cities of Judah which join in the festal celebrations. Cf the description given in lxviii. 24, 25.

15. *the king's palace.* The Hebrew word *hēchāl*, "palace," is used both of the earthly Temple in v. 7, lxxix. 1, and of the Heavenly Temple: xviii. 6. "King's palace" (here) = "the Temple of JEHOVAH": LXX, εἰς ναὸν βασιλείως: Vulgate, *in templum regis*.

16. *Instead of thy fathers.* Cf "thy father's house": v. 10, note.

princes in all the earth. Princes under King Messiah whose rule is universal.

17. *I will make thy name to be remembered.* LXX, *μνησθήσονται*: i.e. "(thy sons) will remember," surely an inferior reading.

Therefore shall the peoples etc. Not, *therefore*, but *thus*, or *after this manner*. "The peoples shall give thee thanks following my example." See xlii. 6, note on the Heb. *נָּ לַע*, 'al *kēn*.

PSALM XLVI

JEHOVAH PROVED TO BE THE DELIVERER OF ZION

§ 1. CONTENTS.

1-3. The Psalmist declares his faith in God (JEHOVAH), even though the earth itself be moved.

4-7. The city of God when threatened by the (great) River—by raging nations, in fact—will surely be delivered by JEHOVAH.

8-11. Come and see how JEHOVAH has destroyed those who assailed her. Their serried ranks are broken, their bows and their spears destroyed, their fortified camp is burnt. JEHOVAH has rebuked the nations, and shown himself a safe refuge for His people.

§ 2. THE SUBJECT OF THE PSALM.

Many commentators find the keynote of this Psalm in *v.* 9 as usually translated, "He maketh wars to cease in all the world" (P-B). So Duhm says that the Psalm according to *v.* 10 (11, Hebrew) was written at a time of universal peace which had been preceded by general war. The author as a member of a small people knew nothing about the meaning of the War, and was interested only in the peace which, he supposed, JEHOVAH must have brought about. In the permissive Prayer Book of 1928, *v.* 9 is prefix as versicle and response to the Occasional Prayer for the League of Nations, thus:

V. He maketh wars to cease in all the world;

R. He breaketh the bow, and knappeth the spear in sunder, and burneth the chariots in the fire.

But herein is a mistranslation: there is no reference to the abolition of war: the Psalm refers only to the destruction of a powerful enemy host. A better translation of *v.* 9 runs:

He exterminateth (hostile) armies throughout the land,
He breaketh the bow and cutteth the spear in sunder,
He burneth the laager in the fire.

(A laager is a barrier formed of wagons for the defence of a camp. When this barrier is burnt resistance must come to an end.)

The subject of the Psalm may well be the deliverance of Jerusalem in the days of Isaiah by the sudden destruction of the army of Sennacherib (2 K xix. 36). Certainly *vv.* 8-10 celebrate the overthrow of a very powerful host, and *vv.* 4, 5 tell of the preservation of Jerusalem. Further, if "the River" (*v.* 4) be rightly interpreted below, there is a reference to the Assyrian power (Isa viii. 7, 8). Again it is reasonable to see in the refrain of *vv.* 7, 11, "JEHOVAH God of hosts is with us," an echo of Isaiah's motto for Jerusalem, "God is with us" (Isa viii. 8, 10). Finally, the language of *vv.* 2, 3 which speaks of great earth movements may be a reference to the well-remembered earthquake of the reign of Uzziah (Amos i. 1; Zech xiv. 5) which (quite possibly) took place in the lifetime of Isaiah. It is indeed highly probable that the events which the Psalmist contemplates are those which Isaiah witnessed.

But it does not necessarily follow that the Psalm was written in the age of the prophet. Both these events, the earthquake and the overthrow of Sennacherib, were remembered in later generations. Several suggestions have been made as to the date of the Psalm, one being that the author lived in the third century B.C., and that he celebrates the peace which followed the wars of the Diadochi (the successors of Alexander the Great) together with the preservation of Jerusalem from the dangers of that disastrous time. But the Isaianic date is not lightly to be rejected.

Other Psalms which speak of Jerusalem as inviolable are *xlvi* and *lxxvi*, both of which seem to refer to the overthrow of Sennacherib's army.

§ 3. THE RELIGIOUS VALUE OF THE PSALM.

A Psalm which merely announced the inviolability of Zion, and announced it absolutely without regard to the conduct of her citizens, would be of small

religious value. Nay more, it would come under the condemnation which Jeremiah passed on the men of his own generation, when they repeated the parrot cry, "They (these buildings) are the temple of JEHOVAH, the temple of JEHOVAH, the temple of JEHOVAH" (Jer vii. 4). But there is nothing to show that the Psalmist's assurance of inviolability is given independently of the obedience of Jerusalem to JEHOVAH. Isaiah gave such an assurance once and again (Isa xiv. 24-32, xxx. 27-33), but he did not fail to insist on the need for a moral transformation of his people. The outstanding characteristic of the Psalm is the confession that the deliverance is all JEHOVAH'S doing: the Psalmist gives a lesson in faith. More than this (or less) we cannot affirm with confidence.

The Psalmist teaches that God preserves His temple and His people through the most appalling dangers. The history of the Israelite people shows that God saved Jerusalem as the centre and rallying point of the nation. The "Jewish Church" thus preserved was the nursing mother of the Christian Church to which in a sense she gave birth. One of the house of David founded the Christian Church and took men of Israel to form its nucleus. The first generation of Christians in Palestine remained within the Jewish community (see, e.g. Acts xxi. 20-26). And so the promise, "she shall not be moved" (v. 5; cf. xlvi. 8), seems an anticipation of Christ's own promise, "Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" (Matt xvi. 18).

For the Chief Musician; a *Psalm* of the sons of Korah; set to Alamoth.
A Song.

- XLVI.** 1 God is our refuge and strength,
A very present help in trouble.
2 Therefore will we not fear, though the earth do change,
And though the mountains be moved in the heart of the seas;
3 Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled,
Though the mountains shake with the ¹swelling thereof. [Selah

¹ Or, *pride*

XLVI. 1. *God is our refuge and strength.* Better, JEHOVAH is our refuge and our stronghold.

2. *though the earth do change.* The language of this verse and the next refers to great earth movements. Earthquakes are not infrequent in Palestine: cf. lx. 2, note.

3. *the swelling thereof.* Margin (personifying the sea), *the pride thereof.* Cf. Jer xii. 5, "the pride (margin. "swelling") of Jordan." At the end of this verse (according to some scholars) the refrain as in vv. 7, 11 has been lost through the negligence of some ancient transcriber. See also page 388 on Ps lxxx.

- 4 There is a river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God,
The holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High.
- 5 God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved:
God shall help her, ¹and that right early.
- 6 The nations raged, the kingdoms were moved:
He uttered his voice, the earth melted.
- 7 The LORD of hosts is with us;
The God of Jacob is our ²refuge.

[Selah

¹ Heb. *at the dawn of morning.*² Or, *high tower*

4. *There is a river, the streams whereof make glad etc.* Read, *As for the River, its streams shall make glad the city of God.* The (overwhelming) River, i.e. the Euphrates representing the Assyrian power, being smitten into streams (i.e. channels for irrigation) by the power of JEHOVAH will not overwhelm Jerusalem, but rather will make her glad. See Isa viii. 7, xi. 15.

The holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High. Read, *the Most High hath sanctified* (or, *kept inviolate*) *his dwelling.* So LXX, followed closely by Vulg. *sanctificavit tabernaculum suum Altissimus.* (*Tabernaculum* is used in the general sense of dwelling.) The difference between MT and LXX is merely one of pointing, except that LXX read the letter *Vau*, where MT has *Jod*.

5. *God (JEHOVAH) is in the midst of her.* Isa xii. 2; Zech ii. 5; *al.*

6. *raged.* Or, *roared* as in v. 3 (same Hebrew word).

He uttered his voice. lxviii. 33; Amos i. 2, *al.*

the earth. As represented by the hostile kingdoms.

7. *The God of Jacob is our refuge.* If "Jacob" be taken here as elsewhere to mean "Israel" or "the Israelite people," the sense is not satisfactory. The phrase is meant to be emphatic, yet if it says only "Our God is our refuge," it is too colourless to form a striking refrain. So also, if the reference be to Jacob the patriarch. But another explanation of the Hebrew phrase is possible; the word "God" may be in apposition with Jacob. Now the name "Jacob" means "He who overcomes," and the compound name would signify, "God the Conqueror." "Jacob" is found as a Divine name in xxiv. 6, "This is the generation of them that seek after him, That seek thy face, O Jacob," i.e. "O Conquering God." See also xlv. 4, note; cxxxii. 2. In Ps xxiv the "Jacob" of v. 6 is the "JEHOVAH mighty in battle" of v. 8. So probably in Exod xv. 2 we should translate, "The God my Father," and not, "my father's God" as EV.

The same construction of the Hebrew is found in "Evil angels" (lxxviii. 49); "human wild ass" (Gen xvi. 12).

- 8 Come, behold the works of the LORD,
¹What desolations he hath made in the earth.
- 9 He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth;
 He breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder;
 He burneth the chariots in the fire.
- 10 ² Be still, and know that I am God:
 I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the
 earth.
- 11 The LORD of hosts is with us;
 The God of Jacob is our ³refuge. [Selah]

¹ Or, *Who hath made desolations &c.* ² Or, *Let be* ³ Or, *high tower*

8. *desolations.* As in the camp of the Assyrians.

9. *wars.* Heb. *milhāmōth*, plural of *milhāmāh*. This word has both an abstract sense, "war" or "battle," and also a concrete sense, a "body of warriors," or a "host drawn up in battle array." Here translate, *He dissolveth the ranks of war.* So in lxxvi. 3, "There break he the shield, the sword and the *battle-array*." There is a close parallel to the first two clauses of this verse in an inscription of Esar-haddon king of Assyria, in which he ascribes his success to his patron goddess:

"Ishtar the lady of conflict and of battle came to my side, and brake their bow; their ordered array she dissolved" (*Altor. Texte*, p. 356).

unto the end of the earth. Rather, *unto the limit of the land.* I.e. throughout the land of Israel.

the chariots. Rather, *the wagons.* The ancients, like the Boers of South Africa, used to make a *laager*, i.e. a circle of wagons for the defence of their camp: cf 1 Sam xvii. 20, RV with marg. The Psalmist in his anthropomorphic language says that JEHOVAH completes his victory by firing the defences of the camp of the enemy.

10. *Be still.* I.e. refrain from further attacks on Jerusalem; cf xxxvii. 8, "*Cease from anger*" (the same Hebrew verb).

I am God. Read, JEHOVAH; the proper name of the God of Israel is required here.

I will be exalted (or *high*). Cf xcix. 2, "JEHOVAH is great in Zion; And he is high above all the peoples."

PSALM XLVII

THE NATIONS INVITED TO PRAISE THE GOD OF ISRAEL

§ 1. CONTENTS.

1-4. Praise God (JEHOVAH) for His ancient mercy in subduing the nations and giving Canaan to Israel for an inheritance.

5-9. A vision of JEHOVAH enthroned on Zion with not only Israel but also representatives of the peoples gathered round Him and committing themselves to His protection.

The Psalmist is led by his vivid realisation of the power and goodness of JEHOVAH as displayed in the past to look for a further display of both (and on a universal scale) in the future. The nations will be gathered into the kingdom of God and joined to Israel.

§ 2. OCCASION AND DATE.

There is no clear indication of special occasion or of date in this Psalm, but its religious character is clearly marked. It is one of those Psalms which take a large and hopeful view of the kingdom of God and of the fate of the Gentiles. Other Psalms of like character (in varying degree) are xcvi-xcix. There is no Maccabean colour in these, and their tone is not militant nor intolerant towards the Gentiles.

Such Psalms mark perhaps a time of revival of religion, when there was an impulse to "sing a new song." The eschatological view which they set forth may be ascribed to a prophetic movement which was bound up in the same revival. Ps xlvi, like its companions, was evidently composed for use in public worship.

The more definite suggestion of a possible occasion which has lately been made rests on very slender evidence.

Mowinckel, fixing upon the phrase which he translates, "JEHOVAH hath become king" (v. 8), suggests that the Psalm was composed for the ritual of a supposed yearly feast of Enthronement of JEHOVAH. This ritual took the form (so he supposes) of an elaborate drama in which the ark or some other divine emblem was taken annually from some spot in Jerusalem to its regular home in the sanctuary. (We remember the solemn introduction of the ark into a tabernacle erected in the city of David: 2 Sam vi. 12-19.) But the evidence that such a solemnity was yearly enacted in celebration of JEHOVAH's kingship is almost non-existent. It is asserted that the Babylonians held such a festival in honour of Marduk (Bel), but the parallel is not a good one, for it is the kingship of the human king, as confirmed from time to time by Bel, which is the subject of the Babylonian celebration.

On New Year's Day the priest brought the king of Babylon, stript of his insignia, before Bel; the king knelt down, and made a declaration of his own good behaviour towards the god and towards Babylon. The priest then uttered an oracle favourable to the king. The king rose and resumed his insignia. The priest smote the king on the cheek; if his tears fell, it was a good omen. Bel was pleased.

See *Altor. Texte*, pp. 295-303.

For the Chief Musician; a Psalm of the sons of Korah.

XLVII. 1 O clap your hands, all ye peoples;

Shout unto God with the voice of triumph.

2 For ¹the LORD Most High is terrible;

He is a great King over all the earth.

3 He ²shall subdue the peoples under us,

And the nations under our feet.

4 He ³shall choose our inheritance for us,

The excellency of Jacob whom he ⁴loved.

[Selah

¹ Or, *the LORD is most high and terrible*

² Or, *subdueth*

³ Or, *chooseth*

⁴ Or, *loveth*

1-4. GIVE PRAISE TO JEHOVAH

XLVII. 1. *O clap your hands, all ye peoples.* With this address of xcvi. 1, "Sing unto JEHOVAH, all the earth"; xcvii. 1, "JEHOVAH reigneth; let the earth rejoice"; xcvi. 4, "Make a joyful noise unto JEHOVAH, all the earth"; xcix. 3, "Let them (i.e. the peoples) praise thy great and terrible name." The whole earth is to rejoice because JEHOVAH is about to judge all peoples, for all peoples have suffered from oppression and lack of justice.

all ye peoples. A commentator has called attention to the *bizzarerie* of inviting the peoples to rejoice in *v.* 1, while announcing in *v.* 3 that they will be subdued "under us." But see *v.* 3, note.

Shout unto God. Cf. xcv. 1, "Let us make a joyful noise" (the same Hebrew verb). The idea is of a shout of welcome as to a king.

triumph. Heb. *rinnah*, "joyful shouting": cf. cv. 43, "He brought forth his people with joy, And his chosen with singing."

2. *the LORD Most High is terrible etc.* A better balance of the verse is obtained by rendering,

JEHOVAH is a High One (i.e. a dweller in heaven) *and to be feared;*

He is a great King over all the earth.

The thought is that His dominion is over both heaven and earth; so in the Babylonian hymn to Marduk,

In heaven thou art exalted,

On earth thou art king. (*Altor. Texte*, p. 267)

3. *He shall subdue.* Better as LXX *ὑπέταξεν*, Vulgate *subiecit*. The Psalmist looks back with thankfulness (as do other Psalmists) to Israel's conquest of Canaan. The form of the Hebrew verb is rare when used as a preterite, but there is a precise parallel in civ. 20, "Thou didst appoint darkness, that there might be night."

4. *He shall choose.* Better, *Choosing*. The verb is dependent on the main verb of *v.* 3, "He subdued the peoples (of Canaan), choosing Canaan for us as our inheritance."

The excellency of Jacob etc. Or, *The glorious land of the Conqueror which he loveth.* For this meaning of *Jacob* cf. xli. 7.

- 5 God is gone up with a shout,
The LORD with the sound of a trumpet.
6 Sing praises to God, sing praises:
Sing praises unto our King, sing praises.
7 For God is the King of all the earth:
Sing ye praises ¹with understanding.
8 God reigneth over the nations:
God sitteth upon his holy throne.

¹ Or, in a skilful psalm Heb. *Maschil*.

5-9. JEHOVAH'S ROYAL STATE

5. *God (JEHOVAH) is gone up.* The words suggest some great religious procession up to Mount Zion. JEHOVAH is sometimes conceived as entering His land (lxviii. 4), or again as going with a procession of His people (lxviii. 24; Isa lii. 12).

6. *Sing praises to God.* Cf lxviii. 4, *sing praises to his name*, where the same Hebrew verb (*zammer*) is used. The meaning is "praise Him with psalms."

7. *Sing ye praises with understanding.* Better, *Sing ye the praises of Him that hath understanding.* JEHOVAH is to be praised as the wise king who prospers in His doings by reason of His understanding. The Hebrew word *Maschil* (a participle) means, "one that deals wisely" or "prosper" (owing to his wisdom). The verb is used in Isa lii. 13, "my servant shall deal wisely" (marg. "shall prosper"). *Maschil* occurs in the heading of Ps xxxii and twelve others and is in these cases taken to be a descriptive name of a particular kind of Psalm. It probably means a contemplative or didactic poem conveying Wisdom.

8. *God reigneth.* Or, *God (JEHOVAH) hath become king.* In v. 7, "God is the King." The difference in the English corresponds with a difference in the Hebrew. The verse is eschatological: the Psalmist in vision sees the kingdom of God already come. The present reading of the Vulgate, *regnabit Deus* (though apparently a mistake for *regnavit D.*), happens to give the right sense.

the nations. Heb. *goyim*, i.e. peoples other than Israel. "The word acquired in later times a moral significance, which is represented in the Authorised Version by the rendering 'heathen' or 'Gentiles.' While recognising this moral sense of the word, the Revisers have employed it much more sparingly than their predecessors had done" (Preface to the RV, Old Testament). "Nations" appear in RV for "the heathen" (AV) in ii. 1, xlvi. 6, *al.* In lxxii. 11 the three versions, P-B, AV, and RV, give "nations."

God sitteth. Or, *hath taken his seat.*

9 The princes of the peoples are gathered together

¹To be the people of the God of Abraham:

For the shields of the earth belong unto God;

He is greatly exalted.

¹ Or, Unto the people

9. *The princes of the peoples.* Perhaps rather, *The willing ones of the peoples*: Heb. *nēḏībē*. The corresponding verb is used in Jud v. 2, "the people offered themselves willingly." The "princes" are princes in character, noble-minded willing proselytes.

are gathered together. I.e. in the presence of the king.

To be *the people*. Or, with *the people*. The Hebrew word 'im, "with," appears to have dropt out before 'am, "the people."

the shields of the earth belong unto God. JEHOVAH is called a "shield" in iii. 3, xviii. 2, xxviii. 7, *al.* But occasionally a Psalmist seems to feel that the language is too bold, as, e.g. in vii. 10, "My shield is with God." So here the Psalmist's meaning is, "God (JEHOVAH) is the shield of the earth."

The same metaphor is used in an oracle purporting to be addressed to Esar-haddon king of Assyria by the goddess Ishtar, "I am thy gracious shield" (*Altor. Texte*, p. 282).

PSALM XLVIII

JEHOVAH MADE KNOWN AS THE DELIVERER OF ZION

§ 1. CONTENTS.

1, 2. JEHOVAH to be praised in Jerusalem, the city of beauty.

3-7. For JEHOVAH has put to headlong flight the kings who threatened her.

8. We have seen such a Divine interposition as our fathers told us of.

9, 10. JEHOVAH is to be praised for this in His temple and unto the ends of the earth.

11-13. Go about Zion and take note that she has escaped unscathed.

14. JEHOVAH shall be for ever our God and our guide.

§ 2. THE OCCASION AND DATE.

It is interesting to note that though the authors of the three cognate Psalms (xlvi, xlviii and lxxvi) write with the freshness of contemporaries or even eye-witnesses, they do not reveal even by a side allusion who was the enemy who threatened their city. It is not unreasonable in view of the likeness of subject and contents to regard the three Psalms as contemporaneous, but Duhm would arrange them in chronological order a generation apart. He thinks that Ps xlvi may be as early as the third century B.C., because it looks back to the world-devastating wars of Alexander and his successors. Ps xlviii, which asserts so confidently the inviolability of Zion, was no doubt written before the violation of the city and of the temple by Antiochus Epiphanes circ. 170 B.C. Ps lxxvi,

which owes (so Duhm) a considerable debt to xlvi, but uses "more extravagant" language regarding the overthrow of the enemy, is an Apocalyptic composition which belongs to the time of Antiochus VII Sidetes, circ. 135 B.C. The confidence of the Psalmist in this case arose (it seems) from the fact that Sidetes blockaded Jerusalem without capturing it. On the actual evidence before us these views can be described only as possible. Moreover, Duhm's general practice of crowding so many Psalms into comparatively short periods so late in Jewish history is hardly reasonable. Had the Chronicler (300-250 B.C.) only a very few Psalms before him when he wrote about Temple singers? Would the Septuagint Psalter (130 B.C.?) agree so closely with the Hebrew Psalter both in contents and in order, if new Psalms were still being received in the latter half of the second century B.C. and even in the first quarter of the first century B.C.?

The heading of lxxvi in cod. B. of the Septuagint is *πρὸς τὸν Ἀσσύριον*; Vulgate *ad Assyrios*, and the reference may indeed be to Sennacherib's siege, for there is no decisive mark of late date in the Psalm. If there is an Aramaism in v. 5 [6, Hebrew] and a possible one in v. 12 [13, Hebrew], we know that the men of Hezekiah could speak Aramaic (2 K xviii. 26). Such use of Aramaic is no indication of date. To some scholars at least this Psalm (and xlvi also) seems to speak the language of a contemporary of Isaiah, though others detect the use of Isaiah's written prophecies in it. Perhaps the most striking touch in the Psalm is in the words, "Chariot and horse are cast into a deep sleep" (v. 6); cf "The stouthearted have slept their sleep" (v. 5). The words fit in well with the overthrow of an army by a sudden pestilence, such as that of 2 K xix. 35. We have no absolute criterion for deciding the question, but the possibility of an early date for the three Psalms must be allowed.

For xlvi Duhm has an ingenious theory. He takes it to be a pilgrim Psalm like the Songs of Ascents (cxi-cxxiv); and he has an explanation of vv. 12, 13, to match his theory. The most natural interpretation of these (according to their context) is that the Psalmist is pointing out that though Zion has been so formidably threatened, she remains intact in her *towers*, her *bulwarks*, and her *stately buildings*. Duhm's interpretation is that the leader of the pilgrims points out to his fellows how stately a city is their capital. There is however nothing in the Psalm of the "ways" to Zion, and the worship suggested in vv. 9-11 is not the daily round, but rather a special thanksgiving for a great deliverance.

A Song; a Psalm of the sons of Korah.

XLVIII. 1 Great is the LORD, and highly to be praised,
In the city of our God, in his holy mountain.
2 Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth,
Is mount Zion, on the sides of the north,
The city of the great King.

1, 2. PRAISE GOD IN ZION

1. *the LORD*, Rather, *JEHOVAH*.
2. *Is mount Zion...King*. Better, *Mount Zion, O far lands of the*

- 3 God hath made himself known in her palaces for a ¹refuge.
 4 For, lo, the kings assembled themselves,
 They ²passed by together.
 5 They saw it, then were they amazed;
 They were dismayed, they ³hasted away.
 6 Trembling took hold of them there;
 Pain, as of a woman in travail.
 7 ⁴With the east wind
 Thou breakest the ships of Tarshish.
 8 As we have heard, so have we seen
 In the city of the LORD of hosts, in the city of our God:

¹ Or, high tower ² Or, passed away ³ Or, were stricken with terror

⁴ Or, As with the east wind that breaketh

north, is the city of the great King. The enemy comes from the north. For the great King we should probably read, a king who hath pleaded (her) cause: cf Hos v. 13, marg. The Heb. *rāb* (here translated "great") is rather the preterite of the verb *rīb*, "strive, contend," which is used in xliii. 1, "and plead (thou) my cause" (Heb. *rībāh rībī*); cf xxxv. 1, "Strive thou" (the same Hebrew verb).

3-7. BECAUSE HE HAS PUT THE ENEMY TO FLIGHT

3. *in her palaces.* Cf v. 13; cxxii. 7. The phrase is rhetorical; no distinction between "palaces" and "hovels" is suggested; the Psalmist seeing Jerusalem from afar thinks of her as a "city of palaces." We might use the paraphrase "in her stately self."

4. *the kings.* P-B, *the kings of the earth*: So LXX A (not LXX B) and Vulgate. But the simple term *the kings* is more forcible, i.e. "the enemy kings."

5. *They saw it.* *They themselves* (emphatic pronoun) *saw it* (the city of palaces). The kings passed by to view the city, but when they saw it, they were dismayed and hasted away in flight.

6. *Pain etc.* The comparison is with the suddenness of the panic.

7. *With the east wind.* A comparison introduced without the prefix "As when." As the "ships of Tarshish," intended for distant voyages, are broken without human agency by JEHOVAH, so were the hosts which threatened Jerusalem broken. For *Tarshish* see lxxii. 10, note.

8-10. THE PSALMIST'S REALISATION OF JEHOVAH'S LOVINGKINDNESS

8. *As we have heard etc.* As we heard from our fathers of thy wonderful works of old time, so we have seen with our own eyes the wonders which thou hast recently wrought in delivering Jerusalem from "the kings."

God will establish it for ever.

[Selah

- 9 We have thought on thy lovingkindness, O God,
In the midst of thy temple.
- 10 As is thy name, O God,
So is thy praise unto the ends of the earth:
Thy right hand is full of righteousness.
- 11 Let mount Zion be glad,
Let the daughters of Judah rejoice,
Because of thy judgements.
- 12 Walk about Zion, and go round about her:
Tell the towers thereof.
- 13 Mark ye well her bulwarks,
¹Consider her palaces;
That ye may tell it to the generation following.
- 14 For this God is our God for ever and ever:
He will be our guide *even* ²unto death.

¹ Or, *Traverse*

² Or, according to some ancient authorities, *for evermore*

God (JEHOVAH) will establish it (her). The same Heb. verb as in Ps lxxxvii. 5.

9. *We have thought on.* Not (as P-B) *We wait for.* The loving-kindness has already been shown.

10. *As is...thy praise.* Or, *As thy name* (is great, because of the great things thou has done), *so let the praise* which we offer *to thee* (in thy temple) be great.

Thy right hand is full of righteousness. I.e. Thou art full of righteous acts. *The right hand* of God is an anthropomorphic expression for the action of God. *Righteousness* (Heb. *Zedek*) when ascribed to God often stands for His help or deliverance granted to His servants.

11-14. JEHOVAH IS ZION'S PRESERVER AND HER GOD FOR EVER

11. *the daughters of Judah.* I.e. the smaller cities of the country.
thy judgements. As executed on the enemy.

12. *Tell the towers thereof.* Count them, and see that no one has been broken down.

13. *her bulwarks.* Heb. *hēl* (= Lat. *vallum*), "a ditch and rampart": in cxxii. 7, "thy walls" (same Hebrew word).

Consider. Better as marg. *Traverse*, i.e. "pass through."

14. *For this God is our God.* Rather, *This is JEHOVAH* (i.e. this is His doing), *our God.*

He will be our guide. I.e. as our shepherd; lxxviii. 52.

even unto death. LXX (from a slightly different Hebrew reading), εἰς

τοὺς αἰῶνας, "unto the ages." But the true reading may be 'al *ālāmōth*, "to soprano voices," as in xlvi, heading. In this case the words should probably stand not here but as part of the heading of xlix.

PSALM XLIX

THE PROBLEM OF THE PROSPEROUS OPPRESSOR (COMFORT FOR THE OPPRESSED)

§ 1. CONTENTS.

1-4. The Psalmist has a two-fold word of Wisdom to utter.

5-12. (a) Be not afraid of human oppressors however powerful and wealthy, for they are but mortal.

13-15. (b) The oppressors are delivered to Sheol, but the Psalmist is ransomed by God.

16-19. The moral, "Be not afraid."

20. A "parable" (*māshāl*) amended.

§ 2. CHARACTER AND PURPOSE.

This Psalm, like Pss xxxvii, lxxiii and others, belongs to the Wisdom literature; it is of the nature of a discourse or sermon. The Psalmist states his purpose in v. 4: he will take and use a *parable* or popular *proverb*, and he will solve the *riddle* which it suggests. This proverb is not quoted till v. 12, "Man being in honour abideth not": i.e., Even the great ones of the earth must die.

The Psalmist has been confronted with the recurring moral difficulty, Why are the wicked—the oppressors—allowed to prosper and enjoy their wealth? But he does not offer any theoretical solution of the difficulty. Rather, like the author of Ps xxxvii, his answer is a practical one: "Man being in honour abideth not" (v. 12) and, "Be not thou afraid when one is made rich" (v. 16). So in xxxvii. 35 f., "I have seen the wicked in great power, . . . And he passed on his way and lo! he was not."

This is the familiar answer, so appropriate in the East, where the oppressive governor falls almost without warning from the king's favour into the executioner's hand. But those to whom the Psalmist speaks might answer, This is cold comfort: if the wicked pass away, so do we the oppressed ones. They might retort, "There is one event to the righteous and to the wicked" (Ecc l. 2).

But the Psalmist has more to reveal. It is true that the rich oppressors are likened unto "the beasts that perish." They are folded in Sheol (Hades), Death "is their shepherd" (v. 14). But now comes the culminating passage of the Psalm: "Surely God will ransom my soul from the hand of Sheol, for he will take me" (v. 15). In an earlier verse the Psalmist said, "No man shall ransom his brother." Yet there still remains a possibility of ransom—through God Himself. Not all men are to be likened unto the beasts that perish. The Psalmist amends the popular proverb by a slight but significant change: "Man that is in honour, and *understandeth not*, Is likened unto the beasts that

perish." But on the other hand he who *understands*, he who receives the secret which the Psalmist has to impart, is ransomed like the Psalmist from the hand of Sheol. Herein is the solution of the riddle which is promised in *v.* 4 *b.*

A remarkable contrast of human lots is suggested in *v.* 11. The rich oppressors die and their graves are their houses for ever. The Psalmist may be thinking of some of the stately tombs, the remains of which are still to be seen in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem, or, it is tempting to suppose he may be recalling a sight of the Egyptian pyramids and mastabas, homes of the dead. Wealthy Egyptians had regular houses built to be their tombs. Thus Mereruka the vizier of king Pepi had in his tomb twenty-one chambers for himself, six for his wife and four for his son (A. Erman, *Aeg. Religion*, p. 121). This is according to the oldest views of the Egyptians concerning the dead. These were supposed to live on under the old conditions. A man lives with his wife and family: he eats and drinks. Hence offerings of food and drink have to be made by the survivors. Also magic formulae were recited beside the tomb by means of which (it was believed) the dead were furnished with sustenance. "A thousand jugs of beer, a thousand loaves of bread, a thousand oxen, a thousand ducks for the soul of M. or N." So ran the magic formula. Of all this the Psalmist may well say, "Their graves are their houses for ever," but he himself has a nobler lot: "But God will redeem my soul from the hand of Sheol: for he shall take me" (*v.* 15). See also the Introduction to Ps lxxiii, the last verses of which express the same hope more fully.

For the Chief Musician; a Psalm of the sons of Korah.

XLIX. 1 Hear this, all ye peoples;

Give ear, all ye inhabitants of the world:

2 Both low and high,

Rich and poor together.

3 My mouth shall speak wisdom;

And the meditation of my heart shall be of understanding.

4 I will incline mine ear to a parable:

1-4. INVITATION

XLIX. 1. *Hear this* etc. Cf the opening of lxxviii, where however the Psalmist addresses Israel only, "Give ear, O my people, to my *torah*" ("law"; marg. "teaching"), while here he affects to address "all peoples."

2. *low*, Heb. "sons of Adam"; *high*, Heb. "sons of a man" (*īsh*), as in iv. 2.

3. *wisdom*. I.e. a lesson of Wisdom. Wisdom is personified in Pro i. 20, ix. 1 as the revealer of moral and religious truth.

4. *I will incline mine ear to a parable*. The Heb. *māshāl*, "parable," means properly a *comparison*, such as is found in many a popular saying. Thus it comes to mean a "proverb," and since proverbs often

- I will open my dark saying upon the harp.
 5 Wherefore should I fear in the days of evil,
 When ¹iniquity at my heels compasseth me about?
 6 They that trust in their wealth,
 And boast themselves in the multitude of their riches;
 7 None of them can by any means redeem his brother,
 Nor give to God a ransom for him:
 8 (For the redemption of their soul is costly,
 And must be let alone for ever:)

¹ Or, *the iniquity of them that would supplant me compasseth me about, even of them that trust...riches?*

enshrine home-spun wisdom, *māshāl* may mean a "lesson." In lxxviii. 2 it is used of a lesson from history, a warning drawn from the past for the guidance of the present.

In xlix the Psalmist says that he will take his text from a proverb and will speak to the peoples of the world. His proverb is, "Man will not abide in honour": vv. 13 and 20 (?).

my dark saying. Heb. *hīdāh*, "a riddle," to which there is an answer: LXX, τὸ πρόβλημα μου: Jud xiv. 12. The Psalmist will give an answer to a riddle which has been propounded to him.

5-12. THE PROBLEM AND ITS ANSWER

5. *Wherefore should I fear...?* The same standpoint as in xxxvii. 1, "Fret not thyself because of evil-doers."

When iniquity at my heels etc. Rather, *When the iniquity of my victorious foes hemmeth me in.* The Heb. *ākēbai* means foes who pursue me closely at my heels.

6. *They that trust.* Or, (*Foes*) *that trust.*

wealth...riches. The two words in Hebrew have different associations: *hāyil*, "wealth," is that which gives a man power and influence: *ōsher*, "riches," connotes only abundance.

7. *None of them can by any means redeem his brother, Nor give to God (JEHOVAH) a ransom for him.* Note that the construction is continued (after the parenthesis of v. 8) in v. 9. The Psalmist's statement in full is that no rich man can pay enough to God to ensure that his should live and never see the grave. The rich man could indeed give a ransom for his brother (in a case of manslaughter) to save him from the human avenger of blood, and so prolong his life. But the ransom for life "for ever" must be paid to God, and He does not receive such ransoms.

8. *And must be let alone for ever.* Lit. (as AV), *And it ceaseth for ever*, i.e. "And it (the redemption) is never effected."

- 9 That he should still live alway,
That he should not see ¹corruption.
- 10 ²For he seeth that wise men die,
The fool and the brutish together perish,
And leave their wealth to others.
- 11 ³Their inward thought is, *that* their houses *shall continue* for
ever,
And their dwelling places to all generations;
They call their lands after their own names.
- 12 But ⁴man abideth not in honour:
He is like the beasts that perish.
- 13 ⁵This their way is ⁶their folly:
Yet after them men approve their sayings. [Selah

¹ Or, *the pit*² Or, *Yea, he shall see it: wise men &c.*³ Some ancient versions read, *Their graves are their houses for ever.*⁴ Or, *man being in honour abideth not*⁵ Or, *This is the way of them that are foolish*⁶ Or, *their confidence: and after &c.*

9. *corruption.* Marg. *the pit*: Heb. *shahath*, as in xvi. 10.

10. *For he seeth.* Rather, *For one seeth.*

wise men...The fool and the brutish. As in the Wisdom literature so here the author names the two classes of mankind the "wise" and the "foolish," not the "righteous" and the "wicked."

their wealth to others. Cf xxxix. 6.

11. *Their inward thought* etc. Here LXX follows a reading superior to that of MT: *καὶ οἱ τάφοι αὐτῶν οἰκίαι αὐτῶν εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα*, "Their tombs are their houses for ever": cf RV marg. See Introduction, § 2.

They call etc. Better, *They who called their lands* (on the earth) *after their own names.*

12. *He is like.* Or, *He is likened* (i.e. in the proverbs of the Wise) *to the beasts that perish.*

13-15. THE FATE OF THE RICH OPPRESSORS CONTRASTED WITH THAT OF THE PSALMIST

13. *This their way is their folly.* Better as marg. *This is the way of them that are foolish.*

Yet after them men approve their sayings. More literally "Yet their posterity take pleasure in their *mouth*." Here "mouth" has probably the depreciatory sense of "boasting" derived from its context in v. 11, "who called their lands after their own names." It should be remembered that silence is held a virtue among Easterns: cf lxxiii. 9. Duhm (after Wellhausen) emends and translates, "And it is the latter end of those who have pleasure in their own mouth (sayings)."

- 14 They are appointed as a flock for Sheol;
 Death shall be their shepherd:
 And the upright shall have dominion over them in the
 morning;
 And their ¹beauty shall be for Sheol to consume, that there
 be no habitation for it.
- 15 But God will redeem my soul from the ²power of Sheol:
 For he shall receive me. [Selah]
- 16 Be not thou afraid when one is made rich,
 When the ³glory of his house is increased:
- 17 For when he dieth he shall carry nothing away;
 His glory shall not descend after him.
- 18 Though while he lived he blessed his soul,
 And men praise thee, when thou doest well to thyself,

¹ Or, *form*² Heb. *hand*.³ Or, *wealth*

14. *as a flock for Sheol* etc. Contrast LXXVIII. 52, c. 3; (JEHOVAH the shepherd). *Death* is personified here as in Hos xiii. 14. P-B is wrong in these two clauses.

And the upright etc. MT, *And the upright had dominion over them*. EV follows LXX, *κατακυριεύσουσιν*: Vulgate, *dominabuntur*.

in the morning. I.e. when the Day of JEHOVAH dawns, there shall be a reversal of present conditions.

their beauty. Marg. *their form*. Heb. *zār* (C'thib), but Kri has *zūr*, lit. "rock," a title given to JEHOVAH (and also to false gods). So LXX has *ἡ βοήθεια αὐτῶν*: Vulgate, *auxilium eorum*, meaning the god in whom these rich men trusted.

that there be no habitation for it. I.e. no *lofty* dwelling (fit for their "beauty" to inhabit); Heb. *zēbūl*. In 1 K viii. 13 Solomon calls his temple *bēth zēbūl*, "lofty dwelling."

15. *he shall receive me*. Heb. *lākah*, a technical term for "remove, take, and transplant into heaven": Gen v. 24 (of Enoch); 2 K ii. 3 (of Elijah); Ps lxxiii. 24. So Duhm, who however is on uncertain ground when he declares that Ps xlix must be of very late date because of this verse. The doctrine of the After Life appears late in OT, but this Psalm expresses only an individual hope, a very different matter.

16-19. BE NOT AFRAID

16. *Be not thou afraid*. Afraid of *what*? Afraid lest *the earth be forsaken* by the just God, *and the Rock*, the God on whom we trust, *be removed out of its place* (Job xviii. 4); cf xxxvii *passim*. *Be not afraid*, but trust in JEHOVAH.

18. *And men praise thee* etc. The interchange of persons is less surprising, if we remember that the second half of the verse is a proverbial saying.

19 ¹He shall go to the generation of his fathers;

²They shall never see the light.

20 Man that is in honour, and understandeth not,
Is like the beasts that perish.

¹ Heb. *Thou shalt go, or, It shall go.*

² Or, *Which never more see*

19. *He shall go.* Lit. *It* (his soul) *shall go.*

They shall, etc. Rather as marg. *Which never more see light.*

20. A "MASHAL" AMENDED

20. *Man that is in honour, and understandeth not, is like (or, is likened to) the beasts that perish.* Cf the form given in *v. 12*: see Introduction, § 2. LXX assimilates *v. 12* to *v. 20* by reading *ἄνθρωπος ἐν τιμῇ ᾧν οὐ συνῆκεν* in both places: Duhm on the contrary assimilates *v. 20* to *v. 12* by reading in both places, "Man hath no continuance in glory (*in Pracht*)."¹ Both these authorities miss the Psalmist's solution of his riddle.

PSALM L

A THEOPHANY

§ 1. CONTENTS.

1-6. JEHOVAH appears as the Champion of His people.

7-15. JEHOVAH testifies to His people that He does not require sacrifices from them; He demands only their loyalty.

16-21. God Himself convicts the corrupt and oppressive judge.

22, 23. God accepts the righteous only.

§ 2. CHARACTER AND OCCASION.

The Psalm opens impressively with three names of Deity—*El, Elohim, JEHOVAH*. *El* is "God" as the strong one: *Elohim* is "God" as judge (*or* champion): *JEHOVAH* is the proper name of the God of Israel: "The Strong One, the Champion, the God of Israel hath spoken." The Psalmist's vision shows that what men call the Silence of God is ended: *JEHOVAH* speaks, summoning the whole world to attend; He appears in all the glory of light from Zion; Heaven and Earth are summoned as witnesses while *JEHOVAH* comforts His covenanted people, rebukes their oppressor and promises His Salvation. The Psalmist looks back to the day of dread on which Israel received the law on Sinai. He has a vision of another such day. Once again *JEHOVAH* speaks to His people out of the storm and fire. He has words of comfort for His saints and words of promise for His people.

JEHOVAH speaks as the God with whom Israel made a covenant in Sinai. The terms of that covenant, as set forth in Exod xx. 1-xxiii. 33, touch lightly on sacrifice as compared with moral duties; cf xx. 24-26, xxiii. 18 (sacrifice) with

xx. 1-17 (the Ten Commandments). JEHOVAH the Covenant-God of Israel will once more be the teacher and champion of Israel.

The key to the meaning of Ps I is to be found in certain striking verbal resemblances to Isa xl ff. Many words or expressions occurring in the Psalm have an echo in this section of the Prophet. In the last verse (and last words are often of high significance in a Psalm) we find the expression, *the Salvation of God*. This term covers some of the leading ideas of Isa xl-lv, lxi-lxii. In this prophecy the first idea is of a return of exiles from Babylon to comfort Zion. But the return was not in itself a Restoration. The exiles returned to a ruined city and to an impoverished countryside. So though bare life remained for the Jews, prosperity was gone. Even when the temple after sixty years of ruin was being rebuilt, there was room for disappointment. "Who is left among you," asks Haggai (ii. 3), "that saw this house in its former glory? and how do ye see it now? is it not in your eyes as nothing?" A second stage in JEHOVAH'S dealings with his people must be reached before Israel could rejoice with full heart.

To this second stage the writer of Isa lxi, lxii looks forward, describing it as *the Salvation of God*. God will give the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness—a garland for ashes—the old wastes shall be rebuilt—Zion shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of JEHOVAH—her people shall enjoy their own corn and wine, which shall be no longer the prey of strangers (Isa lxi. 3, 4, lxii. 3, 8, 9). So when the Psalmist promises for the faithful in the name of JEHOVAH, "I will show him the *Salvation of God*," it is most probable that he is looking forward to the full restoration of the People of God.

God is bringing salvation to his people; this is the meaning of the theophany. A theophany is not necessarily the herald of an avenging judgment. In Exod xix, xx it prelude a special revelation to be made: in Jud v. 4, 5 a deliverance to be effected. The latter is the case in this Psalm also: in v. 4 the object is stated, *that he may judge* (Heb יָרֵךְ) *his people*. What this judgment implies may be illustrated from Deut xxxii. 36:

For JEHOVAH shall *judge* (יָרֵךְ) his people,
And repent himself for his servants;
When he seeth that *their* power is gone...

On this passage Driver's note is "*Judge*, i.e. *give right to, vindicate* against foes as Gen xxx. 6." The synonym דָּפַשׁ also is frequently so used. So in v. 6 of this Psalm "For God is *judge*" (Heb. דָּפַשׁ), "champion," the title used of Gideon and Jephthah and Samson).

Again in v. 5 the summons, "Gather my saints together unto me; Those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice," does not mean, "Gather them together to receive a rebuke." It is the faithful who are to be gathered together to receive the reward of their faithfulness; they are to be shown *the Salvation of God*. JEHOVAH by granting this salvation shows His righteousness towards Israel, His people. Heaven itself confesses that JEHOVAH is righteous, for He fulfils His "duty" to His people to the full.

In vv. 7-15 JEHOVAH testifies unto (*not* "against") His people. The substance of His testimony is *first*, that He is indeed Israel's God, and *secondly*, that He does not demand animal sacrifices from His people, but only that in times of prosperity they should acknowledge that their prosperity comes from Him, and

not from any other god. The tone of this discourse belongs not to a scene of judgment, but to a scene such as that on Sinai, when JEHOVAH made revelation of Himself and of His will. There is indeed a correction of Israel's thought, but no rebuke of sin in this passage. It is an explanatory revelation.

The explanation is to the effect that JEHOVAH is not as the gods of the heathen, who were reputed to delight in sacrifice, as though they ate the flesh of the bulls and drank the blood of the goats which were laid upon the altar. JEHOVAH does not say that He refuses sacrifice altogether, but He does say that He does not ask for it: "I will take no bullock out of thy house, Nor he-goats out of thy folds." What He does ask for is a spirit of thankfulness and of worship. A Victorian poet has caught the thought:

Speak to Him thou for He hears,
and Spirit with Spirit can meet—
Closer is He than breathing,
and nearer than hands and feet.

(Tennyson, *The Higher Pantheism.*)

The Psalmist says, Let Israel acknowledge with thanksgiving in times of prosperity that prosperity comes from JEHOVAH, and in times of adversity let Israel call on Him and on no other god for help. So let them fulfil their covenant and keep JEHOVAH for their God at all times. Sacrifice—the offering of bulls and goats—is a small matter apart from the spirit in which sacrifice is offered.

Indeed, sacrifice had a grave defect as a form of worship: it agreed better with the will of the men who offered it than with the mind of the God to whom it was nominally presented. Broadly speaking, a sacrifice was a feast, out of which a small portion was reserved for JEHOVAH. Thus it was better adapted for expressing self-indulgence than self-surrender. So the Psalmist recommends prayer rather than sacrifice, because prayer is disjoined from eating and drinking, in that prayer is a simple bowing to the will of God—the good and perfect will—in prosperity to give thanks, and in adversity to bless His name. This attitude of the Psalmist is all the more impressive from the fact of his connexion with the services of the temple. This is "a Psalm of Asaph." Whether the name "Asaph" stands for an individual, or for a gild (called in Ezra ii. 41, "the sons of Asaph"), is uncertain. But we may take it as agreed that Ps 1 (together with Pss lxxiii-lxxxiii) belonged to an "Asaphic" collection intended for use in the Temple service. Thus it appears that the voice which warns Israel against an over-valuation of sacrifice comes from within the Temple itself. Well may the Chronicler reckon "Asaph" as one of those who "prophesy" with harps, with psalteries, and with cymbals (1 Chr xxv. 1). This singer who ranks as a Levite speaks with the voice of a prophet, when Israel is tempted to make sacrificial worship a substitute for obedience to moral commandments. Asaph the Temple-singer shows himself in agreement with the priest-prophets, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. The contrast often drawn between priest and prophet is sometimes overdrawn. The prophetic voice sounds from the priest in the Temple as well as from the seer in the market-place or in the desert.

From addressing the Saints the voice now turns to the Wicked, from the tone of explanation to that of reproof.

In v. 16 JEHOVAH singles out the Wicked One, the unjust judge, and rebukes

him. Here the individual stands for his class, but the recurring "thou" makes the reproof live. It may be compared with the "Thou shalt not" of the Ten Commandments. The judge here addressed is an Israelite under covenant with JEHOVAH to administer JEHOVAH'S statutes with faithfulness, but he is subject to a foreign monarch and conceives himself bound to please not God but his human master. The Wicked One, the unjust judge, forgets on the judgment seat the words of God's *Torah* and the instructions which they convey. Instead of condemning the robber, he fraternizes with him for gain, and (because he is the stronger) he takes his "brother's" wife from him. Himself an Oriental despot strong, arbitrary, envious and unjust, he thinks that he is like the God of Israel: his resolve is, I will indeed be as Thou: *whatever I will*, I will bring to pass as one who is responsible to no higher authority. But JEHOVAH lays before the Wicked One the record of his deeds, for JEHOVAH has taken note of all (v. 21). The Psalm closes with a description of the truly fortunate man. It is not the unjust judge doing all according to his own good pleasure. The man who is destined to see the salvation of God is he who offers up his thanks for JEHOVAH'S goodness and takes heed to his own ways through fear of God, being faithful to the covenant (v. 23).

A Psalm of Asaph.

- L. 1** ¹God, *even God*, the LORD, hath spoken,
 And called the earth from the rising of the sun unto the going
 down thereof.
- 2** Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty,
 God hath shined forth.
- 3** Our God ²shall come, and shall not keep silence:
 A fire shall devour before him,
 And it shall be very tempestuous round about him.

¹ Or, *The God of gods* Heb. *El Elohim*.

² Or, *cometh...devoureth...is &c.*

1-6. A THEOPHANY

L. 1. *God, even God, the LORD, hath spoken.* Heb. *El, Elohim, JEHOVAH hath spoken.* Here the emphasis is thrown on the subject—*God*, and therefore He is named by the threefold name. In the Theophany JEHOVAH speaks again, as He spoke from Sinai: cf Deut xxxiii. 1-5.

2. *Out of Zion.* Cf xx. 2, cx. 2; Isa lx. 19. Zion is the place of the sanctuary.

the perfection of beauty. Cf xlviii. 2; Isa lxii. 3.

hath shined forth. Cf xciv. 1 (the same Hebrew word).

3. *Our God* etc. Or, *Our God cometh (yea, may he not keep silence!)*. The Psalm is written under strong emotion: here it is half vision, half prayer. Cf Isa xl. 10.

A fire shall devour. Cf Exod xix. 18 (God's descent upon Mount Sinai).

- 4 He shall call to the heavens above,
And to the earth, that he may judge his people :
- 5 Gather my saints together unto me ;
Those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice.
- 6 And the heavens ¹shall declare his righteousness ;
For God is judge himself. [Selah
- 7 Hear, O my people, and I will speak ;
O Israel, and I will testify ²unto thee :
I am God, *even* thy God.
- 8 I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices ;
³And thy burnt offerings are continually before me.
- 9 I will take no bullock out of thy house,
Nor he-goats out of thy folds.
- 10 For every beast of the forest is mine,
And the cattle ⁴upon a thousand hills.

¹ Or, declare ² Or, against ³ Or, *Nor for thy burnt offerings, which are &c.*

⁴ Or, upon the mountains where thousands are

4. *He shall call.* Heaven and earth are invited to bear witness that God is showing Himself as the righteous champion of His people: cf Isa xlvi. 13 ff.

5. *Gather my saints.* Cf Isa xliii. 6. Israel is scattered among the nations, but even from dispersion some (or many) have sent money for sacrifices to Zion, or have even presented themselves in the sanctuary. Such faithfulness has been marked by JEHOVAH.

6. *And the heavens shall declare his righteousness.* Rather, *And the heavens declare:* xcvi. 6. This *righteousness* of JEHOVAH is displayed in His gathering His scattered people together as their champion.

7-15. THE SINAITIC COVENANT RENEWED

7-15. To these faithful ones JEHOVAH speaks words of reassurance: Let them not grieve that they cannot take part continually in the sacrificial worship of the temple; JEHOVAH does not desire beasts slain for food. Let those who are in exile far from Zion offer the (unbloody) sacrifice of prayer and praise. This is that which their God desires from them.

7. *I will testify unto thee.* Not, *against thee* (P-B).

I am God. Rather, *I am JEHOVAH*, as in Deut v. 6; Isa xlii. 8, xliii. 15.

8. *And thy burnt offerings.* Rather, *Nor for thy burnt offerings because they are not always before me;* cf P-B.

10. *upon a thousand hills.* Marg. Or, *upon the mountains where thousands* (i.e. of cattle) *are.* The Hebrew expression corresponds with the English "hills a thousand." It is used no doubt for emphasis.

- 11 I know all the fowls of the mountains:
And the wild beasts of the field are ¹mine.
- 12 If I were hungry, I would not tell thee:
For the world is mine, and the fulness thereof.
- 13 Will I eat the flesh of bulls,
Or drink the blood of goats?
- 14 Offer unto God the sacrifice of thanksgiving;
And pay thy vows unto the Most High:
- 15 And call upon me in the day of trouble;
I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.
- 16 But unto the wicked God saith,
What hast thou to do to declare my statutes,
And that thou hast taken my covenant in thy mouth?
- 17 Seeing thou hatest ²instruction,
And castest my words behind thee.

¹ Or, *in my mind* Heb. *with me*.

² Or, *correction*

11. *the fowls of the mountains*. I.e. the wilder and less familiar birds: cf S of S ii. 14.

13. *Will I eat the flesh of bulls* etc. The old thought in Israel was not quite so gross as that rejected in these words; but see Gen viii. 21, "JEHOVAH smelled the sweet savour": 1 Sam xxvi. 19, "Let JEHOVAH accept (Heb. *smell*) an offering." The old language lingered on.

14. *Offer unto God* (read JEHOVAH) *the sacrifice of thanksgiving*. Cf xix. 14 (with note), civ. 34.

15. *thou shalt glorify me*. Cf Isa xliii. 21.

16-22. THE WICKED RULER (OR JUDGE) REBUKED

16. *the wicked*. In the singular, referring to the local governor, probably a Jew, who served the foreign government, who moreover oppressed his own countrymen by extorting their goods, and even by taking their wives from them. He no doubt had certain supporters who followed his evil example. Hence in v. 22 the plural is used, *ye that forget God*.

What hast thou to do to declare my statutes? The person who is thus addressed must be a judge, whose duty it is to give legal decisions.

17. *thou hatest instruction* (marg. *correction*). I.e. thou refusest to correct evil men.

my words. I.e. the Ten Commandments; Deut iv. 13, v. 22 (marg. *words*). "Decalogue" = "Ten words."

- 18 When thou sawest a thief, thou consentedst with him,
And ¹hast been partaker with adulterers.
- 19 Thou givest thy mouth to evil,
And thy tongue frameth deceit.
- 20 Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother;
Thou ²slanderest thine own mother's son.
- 21 These things hast thou done, and I kept silence;
Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself:
But I will reprove thee, and set *them* in order before thine eyes.
- 22 Now consider this, ye that forget God,
Lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver:
- 23 Whoso offereth the sacrifice of thanksgiving glorifieth me;
³And to him that ordereth his ⁴conversation *aright*
Will I shew the salvation of God.

¹ Heb. *thy portion was with adulterers.*² Or, *givest a thrust against*³ Or, *And prepareth a way that I may shew him*⁴ Heb. *way.*

18. *thou consentedst with him.* The judge agreed with the thief on condition of receiving a share in the spoils.

20. *Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother.* These words taken by themselves are ambiguous. Witnesses in a court of law "sat" to give their evidence; 1 K. xxi. 13. And again the slanderer "sat" in the *mejlis*, the seated company of the men of the town or village, and slandered his brother there; cf i. 1, note. One of these views is represented in the rendering, *Thou slanderest thine own mother's son.* On the other hand, according to the preceding verses (particularly v. 16) the Wicked One is an unjust judge. In this case we may translate, *Thou sittest on the judgment seat, and condemnest thy brother: Thou givest a thrust against thine own mother's son:* cf RV marg.

21. *Thou thoughtest* etc. Rather, *Thou thoughtest*, "*I will be altogether as thou art.*" The wicked judge imagines that he will be "like the Most High"; cf Isa. xiv. 14.

set them in order. "Them" = *the things that thou hast done* P-B.

22. *ye that forget God.* The unjust judge has confederates.

I tear you in pieces. So in Hosea v. 14 (the same Hebrew verb).

23. THE GREAT PROMISE

23. *offereth the sacrifice of thanksgiving.* Heb. *sacrificeth thanksgiving.* The verb is used in the figurative sense.

that ordereth his conversation aright. Heb. *that setteth...his way,* a difficult phrase probably mutilated. We may supply what is missing somewhat thus, *that setteth his heart to his way,* i.e. *that considereth his course of life.*

the salvation of God. See Introduction, p. 244 above.

PSALM LI

THE SUBMISSION OF THE REBEL

§ 1. CONTENTS.

- 1, 2. The Psalmist cried for mercy.
- 3, 4. He makes frank confession of having been a rebel.
5. He says that he comes of a rebel stock.
6. He makes a full confession, being conscious that God knows and judges that which men would keep back.
- 7-9. He appeals to God to cleanse him, to give him joy, to blot out the record against him.
- 10-12. To create him anew.
13. To make him a witness to others of God's ways.
- 14-17. To save him from the extreme penalty, and to forgive him freely, for no sacrifice can make amends.
- 18, 19. Let Jerusalem (Zion) prosper, and let sacrifices of thanksgiving be offered in her.

§ 2. CHARACTER.

The characteristic of this Psalm is its personal tone. It is as if a repentant rebel appeals to his king to be reinstated in favour. He goes straight to the rebelled monarch with the cry, "Be merciful unto me," and he makes at once a full confession of his fault. But (be it remarked!) the Psalmist does not confess to some particular sin. He does not acknowledge (as the heading of the Psalm might suggest) that he has committed adultery or murder or both. His confession takes a wider scope. He has many names in *vv.* 1-9 for his fault and he repeats them: he speaks of *transgressions* (i.e. *rebellion*, *vv.* 1, 3), of *iniquity* or *iniquities* (*vv.* 2, 9), of *sin* or *sins* (*vv.* 2, 3, 9), and of *evil in thy sight* (*v.* 4). But the word in this list which gives colour to the rest is actually the first which occurs, פִּשְׁעַי, *pish'ei* or *pëshā'ai*, "rebellion": the cognate verb means "to rebel" in 1 K xii. 19; 2 K i. 1, iii. 5. The sense of "rebellion" is emphasised further by the form in which *v.* 4 is expressed, *Against Thee, Thee only* (or better, *Thee, the Only One*), *have I sinned*. In these words the Psalmist acknowledges not that he has committed murder or adultery, but that he has turned aside and has been a rebel against his God.

To expiate such a sin no sacrifice was provided by the Law (*v.* 16), and no priest could mediate. So the Psalmist makes his appeal for forgiveness directly to יְהוָה. His language at the beginning is not formal nor ecclesiastical: it has no relation to any ceremony of the cultus. "Blot out," the Psalmist prays, "my rebellion." His language suggests that there is a chronicle of the kingdom in which is written down his fault against his king. *Erase this record* is the Psalmist's petition. After using this plain language he falls back on familiar ritual phrases: *wash me* (*vv.* 2, 7), *cleanse* or *purify me* (*v.* 2), and *purge* (lit. *un-sin*) *me* (*v.* 7). The last two terms belong to the cultus, but it is clear that they are used metaphorically, for it is God himself, and not the priest, who is petitioned to *cleanse* and *purge* the Psalmist.

On what, it may be asked, does the Psalmist base his hope for forgiveness? On two things: *first*, on his own very frank confession, and, *secondly*, on the multitude of the tender mercies of JEHOVAH. The belief in JEHOVAH as a good God is characteristic of the Psalter: "His mercy endureth for ever" (c. 5, cvi. 1, cvii. 1). When the Psalmist is called to judgment by his king, he pleads *Guilt* to the charge. Nay, he will do more than this, for he is an ancient Hebrew filled with the thought of the solidarity of his race. He is one with his kind. His ancestors too have sinned against God: they too have been rebels: so his guilt dates from the very beginning of his life: *Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; And in sin did my mother conceive me.* In like manner Ezra confesses, "Since the days of our fathers we have been exceeding guilty unto this day" (Ezra ix. 7); and similarly Nehemiah says, "Neither have our kings, our princes, our priests, nor our fathers, kept thy law" (Neh ix. 34).

Such inclusive confessions (be it noted!) are not intended to extenuate the individual's guilt, but rather to complete the story and to tell the whole truth before JEHOVAH. The Hebrew individual who cannot in thought separate himself from his people makes one comprehensive confession of his own sin and that of his race.

He keeps back nothing of his whole story, because he knows that he has to do with a God who desires *truth in the inward parts*, i.e. entire sincerity. He knows that JEHOVAH deals with the heart. True Religion appears to him in the (unpriestly) aspect of Wisdom. What are outward rites? He craves only to be kept safe from future temptations to rebellion. So he prays, *Teach me Wisdom in my inmost heart* (v. 6).

Then he returns to the thought of his sin, and prays to be cleared from it. Here he falls back into the usual ritual language, and cries, *Purge me with hyssop*, but he is not thinking of ritual cleansing, but of the God who actually works the cleansing which is figured in the rite to which he alludes (v. 7).

The Psalmist speaks of himself as a man whose bones JEHOVAH has broken (or "crushed"). Here we may ask, Is he speaking of himself individually, or is he the spokesman of his people? Are the bones those of his own body, or do they stand metaphorically for the bones, that is the strength, of Israel?

A Psalmist smitten by sudden or grievous sickness might say to JEHOVAH, "Thou hast broken all my bones." Such would be a characteristically Hebrew way of saying, "I am reduced to a state of great pain and utter weakness." It is the opinion of some critics (e.g. Duhm) that this Psalm was composed on a bed of sickness. If we accept this view, we gain a helpful link in the history of the Psalmist. We know that he sinned grievously: we know that he makes a fervent repentance: but we have to ask, *How was he brought to repentance?* A probable answer is that he was laid on a bed of sickness, and that he recognized in his sickness the punishment of his rebellion against JEHOVAH.

But if the Psalmist speaks in the name of Israel, and the "bones" are the bones of his people, another reading of the story is needed. The people's bones were broken by the Captivity: this very metaphor is used by the prophet Jeremiah: "Israel is a scattered sheep;...this Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon hath broken his bones" (Jer l. 17). But the Psalmist, if he speaks for Israel, remembers his people's apostasy from JEHOVAH and accepts the Babylonian

Captivity as a Divinely sent punishment. So he writes, *The bones which thou hast broken*. God Himself has done it: the foreign oppressor was only God's instrument.

In *v.* 9-12 the Psalmist again makes clear the depth and spirituality of his appeal. He is in the very presence of JEHOVAH, and he asks in no formal terms for forgiveness. He has done with Rebellion, and desires only to be changed in heart that he may render faithful service to his King.

Blot out the old record, he prays once more (*v.* 9), and now *create for me a clean heart*, and *renew a constant spirit within me* (*v.* 10), i.e. a spirit which will not be shaken from its renewed loyalty to its Lord. If the Psalmist is speaking in the name of his people, he may be remembering the promise, given by Ezekiel the prophet, "I will sprinkle clean water upon you...A new heart also will I give you." (Ezek xxxvi. 25, 26).

In *v.* 11 the Psalmist speaks as one who is conscious of being the representative of Israel. As such he stands "in the presence of" JEHOVAH, just as Joshua the high priest stands in Zech iii. 1. But the parallel may be extended. Joshua is clothed "in filthy garments" as a sign that *guilt rests upon him*; and the Accuser, the Satan, stands up to protest against his remaining in his position of privilege. The Psalmist foresees a similar outcry against himself for his guilt; so he prays, *Cast me not away from thy presence*, i.e. "I have been a rebel, yet let me still attend in the court of my king." He adds, *Take not thy holy spirit from me*, for the spirit of JEHOVAH rests upon the leader of Israel, as it rested upon King Saul, though it may be taken from him, if he is found rebellious (1 Sam xvi. 13, 14). Finally he prays that he may be restored to his former state of "salvation." Here he uses the Hebrew term *yēsha'* (יֵשׁוּעַ), which means the safety and well-being which the faithful find in God: so in xxiv. 5, xxvii. 1, l. 23, lxv. 5. He asks to be "restored"; he asks also to be upheld in his restored condition, for he is conscious of the past weakness through which he fell away from JEHOVAH. *Uphold me*, he prays, *with a free spirit*—free because freely and ungrudgingly given. We might call it a spirit of grace (*v.* 12).

There is a touch of nature in the verse which follows. The truly repentant rebel will desire to bring back his fellow-rebels to loyalty. So the Psalmist cries, suddenly to the ear, but not suddenly to the heart, *Let me teach* "rebellious ones" (*transgressors*) *thy ways*, that *sinners* (another Hebrew term for "rebels"; Gen xiii. 13) *may return unto thee* (*v.* 13). So St Paul, the rebel converted at Damascus, "straightway in the synagogues proclaimed Jesus, that he is the Son of God" (Acts ix. 20).

Vt. 14-17. The Psalmist prays, *Deliver me from bloodguiltiness*. Literally, *Deliver me from blood*. "Deliver me from the sentence which is passed on those who shed blood, i.e. from death." The Psalmist is conscious of having committed rebellion against JEHOVAH, a sin of which the punishment prescribed was *death*: Deut xiii. 5; Jer xxviii. 16, 17, xxix. 32. But the Psalmist prays hopefully: he trusts to be pardoned; he addresses JEHOVAH as *the God of my salvation*, i.e. the God who is about to deliver me from the death I deserve.

Why is the Psalmist hopeful? Because he believes that his God possesses a quality which he calls Righteousness. This "Righteousness" must not be thought of as a merely legal virtue. It rather stands in contrast to legal justice. It means

the *active* goodness in which God excels. This goodness is shown in bringing good out of evil, and in rescuing mortal men from temporal or spiritual dangers which are too great for them. St John expresses the Hebrew thought when he writes, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and *righteous* to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John i. 9).

ЈЕHOVAH (so the Psalmist believes) forgives the man who has offended against him without exacting from him the compensation of an animal sacrifice. Penitence is the only offering acceptable to God. Only a *broken spirit* and a *broken and a contrite heart* can avail with the God of Israel. But other nations believed that their gods had to be propitiated (we may almost say, *bribed*) to restore to favour the man who had slighted them. The heathen attitude is illustrated in a Babylonian prayer, which is quoted by L. W. King in his *Babylonian Religion*, p. 216. The priest is introduced praying for the penitent and interceding an inferior god to intercede with the Supreme:

"Open his bonds, remove his fetters. Make bright his countenance, commend him to his god, his creator. Give thy servant life, that he may praise thy power, That he may bow down before thy greatness in all thy dwellings. *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, That in thy temple his offerings may be set, That with oil as with water he may anoint thy bolts, And that with oil in abundance he may make thy threshold overflow."

The Babylonian's petition, "Give thy servant life, that he may praise thy power" runs parallel to *vs.* 14, 15, *Deliver me from bloodguiltiness... And my mouth shall shew forth thy praise*. But the Babylonian priest and the Hebrew penitent at once part company. "That with overflowing abundance he may fill thy shrine," cries the Babylonian. In soberer, deeper mood the Psalmist continues, *Thou delightest not in sacrifice; that I should give it* (*v.* 16). The offering of the *broken heart* (*v.* 17) is peculiar to the Hebrew Psalmist, yet the Babylonian penitent is (perhaps) on the way to make it. He cries to his goddess, "O lady, through bitterness of heart I cry to thee *in sorrow*; Declare my forgiveness... Bestow mercy on thy servant who is in affliction." But the Hebrew Psalmist dares to offer in express words as his sacrifice to his God a *broken heart*. On this Rabbi Alexandri remarks, "When a common man uses a broken vessel he is ashamed of it, but it is not so with the Holy One. All the instruments of His service are broken vessels" (quoted in the *Jewish Encyclopedia* s.v. ALEXANDRI). Hopefully the Psalmist asserts, *A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise*.

With these words the Psalmist turns from the contemplation of his sin to consider his responsibilities. He is a leader—perhaps the leader of his people. His falling away has caused others to fall away, and the sin of the leaders has been visited on their city.

Quidquid delirant reges plectuntur Achivi. (Horace, *Epistles*, i. ii. 14).

Jerusalem is in low estate, open to the scoffs of the enemy, and the Psalmist turns to pray for her (*vs.* 18, 19). In metaphorical language the LORD has "made a breach" in Jerusalem, and with the use of a similar metaphor the Psalmist prays that He will build the walls of Jerusalem. Or, again, it is just possible

that the language is to be understood literally; an enemy has breached the walls and the city is defenceless, as it was in the fifth century before the coming of Nehemiah.

Sacrifice to atone for such a sin as that of rebellion against *JEHOVAH* is out of the question—so the Psalmist has declared with emphasis in *v.* 16. The favour of God is not to be bought with slain bullocks. But there is another kind of sacrifice, namely, offerings which are meant to express praise and thanksgiving. Such are simply acknowledgements of *JEHOVAH*'s benefits. They do not represent an attempt to make a crude bargain with God to make sure of His forgiveness; they are rather human testimonies to His free, His generous spirit. They move along the line of prophetic thought. This Prophet-Psalmist finds it right that men should greet God's goodness with sacrifices of righteousness, i.e. with offerings made by men who stand in the attitude of faithfulness towards *JEHOVAH*.

It remains to enquire what may be known or conjectured with probability of the author of this Psalm and of the occasion which called it forth. The heading prefix to the Psalm in MT (= LXX B) declares that the occasion was "when Nathan the prophet came unto him, after he had gone in to Bath-sheba." Pssli-lxv all bear the heading "Of David," followed in several cases by references to incidents in David's life. Thus in lii it is, "When Doeg the Edomite came and told Saul, and said unto him, David is come to the house of Ahimelech" (*Ἀβιμελεχ*, LXX): in liv it is "When the Ziphites came and said to Saul, Doth not David hide himself with us?" in lvi it is, "When the Philistines took him in Gath": in lvii it is, "When he fled from Saul, in the cave": in lix it is, "When Saul sent, and they watched the house to kill him": in lx it is, "When he strove with Aram-naharaim and with Aram-zobah, and Joab returned, and smote (of Edom) in the Valley of Salt twelve thousand": in lxiii it is "When he was in the wilderness of Judah" ("Judah" MT, *τῆς Ἰδουμαίας*, LXX).

Of these headings two may be described as indefinite, namely those prefix to Pss lvii and lxiii, while the other six introduce proper names which fix the occasion quite clearly. But this clearness is not reflected in the text of the six Psalms. In Ps lii the reference might be to any detractor or informer; there is no word which points to Doeg rather than to any other man, unless it be the address, "O mighty man" (*v.* 1). In Ps liv the reference to the Ziphites seems to be introduced only on the strength of *v.* 3, "strangers are risen up against me, And violent men have sought after my soul." But there were other "violent strangers" in O.T. times beside the Ziphites. In Ps lvi, "when the Philistines took him in Gath," there is no clear reference either to the Philistines or to Gath. Ps lvii bears the inscription, "when he fled from Saul, in the cave," but in the Psalm itself there is no hint of actual flight, nor of pursuit by Saul, nor of a cave of refuge. Possibly the author of the inscription saw in *v.* 6 a reference to Saul's unwitting entry into David's cave (1 Sam xxiv. 3). In Ps lix. 3, "they lie in wait for my soul" is a general statement; it is no clear reference to the night watch of Saul's would-be assassins. In Ps lx, Israel (Judah) and Edom seem to be at war, but nothing is said of a great victory over Edom such as the title puts forward. In Ps lxiii, the Psalmist speaks

as in the wilderness, but only in the language which any godly man (whether David or another) might use.

The comparison of the headings with the contents of the Psalms to which they are prefix leaves the impression that these headings are little more than guesses. Based on the supposition that these Psalms are Davidic, they suggest particular occasions, which however are insufficiently supported by the language of the respective Psalms. So we come to the consideration of the heading of Ps li, and again we find similar phenomena. The definite language of the heading does not find justification in the contents of the Psalm. There is no confession of murder nor of adultery nor of oppression of the subject by his king. The confession might be made by any penitent who has sinned against the LORD. We need not discuss the question whether the heading is true to fact or not; for we do not find it helpful towards the interpretation of the Psalm.

Our general conclusion is that the heading of Ps li must be set aside and that the Psalm is later than David. A great soul, great as the David of 2 Sam xii. 13, feels both in himself and for his people the heavy guilt of their rebellion against the God of Israel. But equally is he inspired with the hope of obtaining forgiveness, for he is convinced that the righteousness of *JEHOVAH* includes a full fund of lovingkindness.

For the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David: when Nathan the prophet came unto him, after he had gone in to Bath-sheba.

LI. 1 Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness:

According to the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.

2 Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity,
And cleanse me from my sin.

3 For I 'acknowledge my transgressions:
And my sin is ever before me.

4 Against thee, thee only, have I sinned,

¹ Heb. *know*.

1-6. THE APPEAL FOR MERCY

LI. 1. *Have mercy upon me.* So lvi. 1, lvii. 1.

4. *Against thee, thee only, have I sinned.* The words might be explained, "Against thee only, O God, have I sinned, and not against man." But it is more probable that the Psalmist whose sin has been Rebellion, i.e. a turning aside to serve other gods, is implicitly confessing that *JEHOVAH* is indeed the only God. We might render, "Against 'Thee, Who art *the Only One* (לְבַדֶּךָ), have I sinned." The same Hebrew

- And done that which is evil in thy sight:
 That thou mayest be justified when thou speakest,
 And be clear when thou judgest.
- 5 Behold, I was shapen in iniquity;
 And in sin did my mother conceive me.
- 6 Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts:
 And in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom.
- 7 Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean:
 Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
- 8 Make me to hear joy and gladness;
 That the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice.
- 9 Hide thy face from my sins,
 And blot out all mine iniquities.

word (*lšbad*) is used in Isa xlv. 24, "that stretcheth forth the heavens alone (*לברי*)," i.e. being alone, with no company of assistant gods or spirits round me. Cf iv. 8, note, cxxxvi. 4, note.

That thou mayest be justified. Rather, *That thou mayest prevail* in the cause which is being tried between יהוה and the Psalmist. Cf cxliii. 2, note.

when thou judgest. P-B has (strangely) *when thou art judged* (corrected in 1920 to *when thou shalt judge*).

6. *inward parts.* I.e., the heart; Heb. *טוהת*, *tuhoth*, a rare word, used also in Job xxxviii. 36, where the Vulgate renders in accordance with Jewish tradition:

Quis posuit in *visceribus* hominis sapientiam?
 Vel quis dedit gallo intelligentiam?

I.e. "Who put wisdom in the heart (bowels) of man, Or who gave the cock intelligence (to discern between day and night)?" For a fuller discussion of the meaning of *tuhoth*, see Buchanan Gray's philological note in Driver's *Job* (I.C.C.).

7-12. THE APPEAL FOR RENEWAL

7. *hyssop.* A plant used in the ritual of cleansing the leper (Lev xiv. 4, 6) and also in preparing the "water of separation" which was used in purifications (Num xix. 6, 18). This plant (Heb. *אזוב*, *əzōb*) grows in walls (1 K iv. 33 = v. 13, Hebrew) and is perhaps to be identified with the caper plant (*Capparis spinosa*), which is found in Egypt and Palestine. See *Encyclopaedia Biblica* s.v. HYSSOP.

8. *the bones.* Cf vi. 2, note: xxii. 14, 17.

9. *blot out*, i.e. from God's book; the opposite is to *keep* the record; cxxx. 3.

- 10 Create ¹in me a clean heart, O God;
And renew a ²right spirit within me.
- 11 Cast me not away from thy presence;
And take not thy holy spirit from me.
- 12 Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation:
And uphold me with a ³free spirit.
- 13 Then will I teach transgressors thy ways;
And sinners shall ⁴be converted unto thee.
- 14 Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, thou God of my
salvation;
And my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness.
- 15 O Lord, open thou my lips;
And my mouth shall shew forth thy praise.
- 16 For thou delightest not in sacrifice; ⁵else would I give it:
Thou hast no pleasure in burnt offering.

¹ Or, *for me*² Or, *stedfast*³ Or, *willing*⁴ Or, *return*⁵ Or, *that I should give it.*

10. *Create in me.* Better, as marg. *for me.* P-B, *make me*, is a defective rendering; the Hebrew verb is as in Gen i. 1. To "create" is according to Hebrew thought to "make something that is new."

13-17. THE OFFERING OF A BROKEN HEART

13. *sinners shall be converted unto thee.* Such an expectation as this is rarely express in the Old Testament. Usually the Psalmists speak as though an impassable gulf lay between the righteous and the wicked. A moral change in the latter which would make it possible for them to pass the gulf is hardly ever contemplated. Usually a Psalmist assumes that evil can be removed only by the destruction of the sinners: cf liv. 5, civ. 35 a, cxxxix. 19, cxliii. 12.

14. *O God, thou God of my salvation.* We should read *O JEHOVAH, thou God.* Similar instances are xlii. 2, xliii. 4, liv. 1-4. These are "Elohistic" Psalms: i.e., at some time an original JEHOVAH has been changed for reverence into *Elohim*, "God." For *God of my salvation* cf xxiv. 5.

15. *O Lord, open thou my lips* etc. Liturgically this verse has been used since the sixth century. Under the old system it was peculiar to Mattins, as being the first Hour of the series. In the Sarum Breviary we read:

Ad Matutinas dicat sacerdos Pater noster et Ave Maria. Postea sacerdos incipiat servitium hoc modo, Domine, labia mea aperies. Chorus respondeat, Et os meum annuntiabit laudem tuam.

16. *thou delightest not in sacrifice.* Cf xl. 6, l. 8.

- 17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit:
A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.
- 18 Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion:
Build thou the walls of Jerusalem.
- 19 Then shalt thou delight in the sacrifices of righteousness, in
burnt offering and whole burnt offering:
Then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar.

17. *a broken spirit.* In xxxiv. 18 the reference is to a heart broken by affliction without reference to sin or penitence.

18, 19. A PRAYER FOR JERUSALEM

18. *in thy good pleasure.* LXX, ἐν τῇ εὐδοκίᾳ σου, i.e. "in thy favour." Cf Luke ii. 14, "men in whom he is well pleased": marg. *men of good pleasure*, i.e. men of God's good pleasure (ἀνθρώποις εὐδοκίας).

Build. The Hebrew word is used both of building and of rebuilding. It is also used metaphorically of restoration to safety and prosperity: Jer i. 10.

19. *bullocks.* I.e., the largest offerings. *Not* young bullocks (LXX, μόσχους) as in P-B.

PSALM LII

JEHOVAH A DEFENCE AGAINST THE UNJUST JUDGE

The cry against unjust judges goes up in the Old Testament from the days of Samuel (1 Sam viii. 1-5) to those of Ecclesiastes (Eccl v. 8). The writings of the prophets are full of it, and much notice is taken of it in the Psalms, especially, e.g., in lxxxii and xciv. To these must be added lii. Here the Psalmist is face to face with one of these unjust judges, who is his powerful enemy. Yet the enemy does not attack him with open violence, but with craft just as deadly, "like a razor." Being a judge he aims at cutting off the Psalmist by an unjust judgment. He will "not speak righteousness," i.e. he will not clear the Psalmist from the offence with which he is falsely charged (vs. 1-4).

But the Psalmist does not lose his courage in the face of danger. Perhaps he sees that the judge's own position is insecure. The judge is subordinate to a foreign ruler, perhaps to a Persian governor, and the judge's increasing wealth exposes him to the suspicion and possibly to the envy of his superiors. His fall may come suddenly like that of the wicked man of xxxvii. 35 f. The Psalmist sees that the very wealth and power of his enemy expose him to danger, and he predicts the coming change. In that change he sees Providence at work. He does not say that a Persian king or governor will remove the unjust judge: God," he says, "will take thee up, and pluck thee out of thy tent, and root thee

out of the land of the living." Here speaks the popular religion, unmindful of the nobler utterance of the prophetic faith, "I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord JEHOVAH: wherefore turn yourselves, and live" (Ezek xviii. 32).

In the concluding verses (7-9) there is no note of self-righteousness, but only of complete faith in JEHOVAH's power to protect His servant. The Psalmist will wait, and trust, and give thanks in the congregation. His faith in the loving-kindness (the *hesed*) of JEHOVAH cannot be shaken. He trusts the Invisible against the Visible. Though his enemy is near at hand, and a "mighty man," and relentless in his hostility, yet the Psalmist sees that he is weak, for he has no strength in God. His strength is in his riches, which will prove his destruction. It is Mammon against God, and Mammon cannot prevail.

For the Chief Musician. Maschil of David: when Doeg the Edomite came and told Saul, and said unto him, David is come to the house of Ahimelech.

LII. 1 Why boastest thou thyself in mischief, O mighty man?

The mercy of God *endureth* continually.

2 Thy tongue deviseth very wickedness;

Like a sharp razor, working deceitfully.

3 Thou lovest evil more than good;

And lying rather than to speak righteousness.

[Selah

4 Thou lovest all devouring words,

¹O thou deceitful tongue.

¹ Or, And the deceitful tongue

1-7. THE FATE OF THE UNRIGHTEOUS JUDGE

LII. 1. *boatest thou thyself.* The same phrase in the Hebrew as in Jer ix. 23, 24 (22, 23, Hebrew), "Let not the wise man *glory* in his wisdom," etc.

mighty man. The person addressed was evidently in a high position. He could "speak," i.e. pronounce judgment—*righteously*, if he so chose. Life and death hung on his decision: he could (if he chose) utter "devouring (destroying) words." The only appeal against him was to God alone, who indeed could bring him to naught in a moment.

The mercy of God. Compare the common refrain, "His mercy endureth for ever": cvi. 1, *et passim*.

2. *very wickedness.* Rather, *destruction*, Heb. *havvoth*, as in xxxviii. 12 (13 Hebrew): see note there. See also v. 7, *infra*.

working deceitfully. Better, *O deceitful worker.*

3. *Thou lovest evil more than good.* A suitable reproach to address to an unjust judge: cf l. 16, 17.

4. *devouring words.* Rather, *destructive words* or "sentences of death": cf xxxv. 25, "we have devoured him" (P-B).

- 5 God shall likewise ¹destroy thee for ever,
 He shall take thee up, and pluck thee out of thy tent,
 And root thee out of the land of the living. [Selah]
- 6 The righteous also shall see *it*, and fear,
 And shall laugh at him, *saying*,
- 7 Lo, this is the man that made not God his ²strength;
 But trusted in the abundance of his riches,
 And strengthened himself in his wickedness.
- 8 But as for me, I am like a green olive tree in the house of
 God:
 I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever.
- 9 I will give thee thanks for ever, because thou hast done it:
 And I will wait on thy name, for it is good, in the presence
 of thy saints.

¹ Or, *break thee down*² Or, *strong hold*

5. *He shall take thee up* etc. The three verbs mark three stages: God will remove the enemy (1) from office; (2) from home; (3) from life itself.

6. *The righteous...shall laugh*. For a similar sentiment see lviii. 10. JEHOVAH himself laughs at the coming overthrow of the wicked when they are planning mischief: ii. 4, xxxvii. 13, lix. 8.

7. *his strength*. Marg. *his strong hold*, i.e. *refuge*.

strengthened himself in his wickedness. Rather, *took refuge in the pit of his destruction*. The Hebrew verb *yā'ōz* (יָעַז) means to "take refuge," as in Isa xxx. 2 (see marg. RV). Further, the Hebrew substantive הַיָּוֵה, *havvah* (plural *havvōth*, v. 1), means properly a "gulf" or "chasm" into which one falls and is destroyed. The sentence is a case of Oxymoron.

8, 9. THE SAFETY OF THE PSALMIST

8. *like a green olive tree*. Cf Hosea xiv. 6, "His beauty shall be as the olive tree." Probably olive trees grew in the courts of the Temple: cf xcii. 13; Zech iv. 1-3.

9. *thou hast done it*. What has JEHOVAH done? The Psalmist's words are to be given the widest sense: *Thou hast wrought*: cf cxix. 126, "It is time for JEHOVAH to work" (the same Hebrew word). The Psalmist praises God on the ground that He exercises an active providence over the world.

I will wait on thy name...in the presence of thy saints. The Psalmist will worship JEHOVAH in the congregation: cf cxi. 1.

thy name, for it is good. Cf cvi. 1: "JEHOVAH, for he is good."

PSALM LIII

GOD (JEHOVAH) STRONGER THAN THE OPPRESSOR

Psalm liii may be described as a variant text of Psalm xiv (*q.v.*); consequently there is little to be added here to what has been written on Psalm xiv. But the question must be asked, Are the variants due to faulty copying, or, Are they deliberate changes intended to adapt the Psalm to fresh circumstances or to make its meaning clearer? Certainly liii. 5 is more than a variant text of xiv. 5, 6; the language is more definite. The poor man, the object of oppression, takes refuge (in Jerusalem?), and is "besieged" there, but the oppressor is beaten off with loss, and leaves his "bones" scattered outside the city. Again in liii the significant expression is used of the oppressor that God has "refused" him. He had expected therefore that the God of Israel would *accept* him. Who then can the enemy be? Certainly not a Gentile, but rather one who in some sense belongs to Israel. The situation is perhaps that which confronts us in Ezra iv, when "the adversaries of Judah, the people of the land" sought to join in the building of the temple and were rejected by the Jewish authorities. Then they did indeed become "adversaries," and may be said to have "besieged" or "encamped against" Judah for many years (Ezra iv. 4, 5). Whether this hostility led to actual fighting the book of Ezra does not say, and the expression, "God hath scattered the bones of him that encampeth against thee", may be metaphorical and a way of saying that the adversaries were completely foiled with the help of JEHOVAH.

For the Chief Musician; set to Mahalath. Maschil of David.

- LIII.** 1 ¹The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.
 Corrupt are they, and have done abominable iniquity;
 There is none that doeth good.
- 2 God looked down from heaven upon the children of men,
 To see if there were any that did ²understand,
 That did seek after God.
- 3 Every one of them is gone back; they are together become
 filthy;
 There is none that doeth good, no, not one.
- 4 Have the workers of iniquity no knowledge?
 Who eat up my people *as* they eat bread,
 And call not upon God.
- 5 There were they in great fear, where no fear was:
 For God hath scattered the bones of him that encampeth
 against thee;

¹ See Ps. xiv.

² Or, *deal wisely*

Thou hast put them to shame, because God hath rejected them.

- 6 Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion!
When God ¹bringeth back the captivity of his people,
Then shall Jacob rejoice, *and* Israel shall be glad.

¹ Or, *returneth to*

PSALM LIV

FAITH TRIUMPHANT

This Psalm is an example of the prayer of Faith. The Psalmist is in great danger. His enemies are on the move against him; and it is not easy to escape from them. They are his own countrymen, but they are no better than strangers; they are ready to do him violence, for they do not fear God (JEHOVAH). But in the midst of his alarm he remembers that JEHOVAH has been—*is* his helper. He trusts in God's unfailing truth and is confident that the mischief which his enemies plot will recoil on their heads. He accepts the *lex talionis* as expressing the true justice.

In the last verses of the Psalm the Psalmist's thought leaps into the future. So sure is he that JEHOVAH will do him right, that he promises a freewill offering, because (he says) JEHOVAH *has* delivered him out of trouble. With the eye of Faith the Psalmist *sees* the fulfilment of his prayer.

Note that we should read JEHOVAH in *vs.* 1-4 for "God" (ELOHIM) which has been substituted for it through a mistaken reverence for the incommunicable Name.

For the Chief Musician; on stringed instruments. Maschil of David: when the Ziphites came and said to Saul, Doth not David hide himself with us?

- LIV.** 1 Save me, O God, by thy name,
And judge me in thy might.
2 Hear my prayer, O God;
Give ear to the words of my mouth.
3 For ¹strangers are risen up against me,

¹ See Ps. lxxxvi. 14.

LIV. 1. *by thy name.* JEHOVAH'S name is JEHOVAH'S self. Compare *xciv.* 22 with *Pro xviii.* 10.

judge me in thy might. I.e. in JEHOVAH'S avenging might; cf *Ps I* (Introduction); *Luke xviii.* 2, 3.

3. *For strangers etc.* This verse is almost identical with *lxxxvi.* 14, but there the reading is *zēdīm* ("proud men"), not *zārīm* ("strangers"). It has been proposed to read "proud men" also here on the ground that the enemies who have not set God (JEHOVAH) before them, must be

And violent men have sought after my soul :

They have not set God before them.

[Selah

4 Behold, God is mine helper :

The Lord is ¹ of them that uphold my soul.

5 ² He shall requite the evil unto ³ mine enemies :

Destroy thou them in thy truth.

6 With a freewill offering will I sacrifice unto thee :

I will give thanks unto thy name, O LORD, for it is good.

7 For he hath delivered me out of all trouble ;

And mine eye hath seen *my desire* upon mine enemies.

¹ Or, *with*

² Another reading is, *The evil shall return.*

³ Or, *them that lie in wait for me*

Jews, not foreigners. But it is more probable that the Psalmist calls these Jews "strangers" because of their hostility. Another Psalmist says, "The wicked are *estranged* from the womb"; lviii. 3.

after my soul. I.e. *after my life.* Cf vi. 2, 3, note.

4. *The Lord is of them that uphold my soul.* Or, *The Lord is in them that uphold my soul.* A peculiar Hebrew idiom variously rendered in English: cf xxxv. 2, "Stand up *for mine help*"; also cxviii. 7, "JEHOVAH is on my side *among them that help me.*" The meaning is that it is the Lord Himself who upholds the Psalmist.

5. *He shall requite the evil.* So the K'ri. Better as marg. (= C'thib), *The evil shall return.*

mine enemies. Cf Jer xi. 19, xx. 10.

6. *a freewill offering.* I.e. one additional to the prescribed sacrifice. A freewill offering might take the form of a Psalm: cf cxix. 108, "the freewill offerings of my mouth."

thy name...for it is good. So also lii. 9.

7. *hath seen my desire upon.* Lit. *hath looked upon*, i.e. "hath seen my enemies in their fall." The brevity of the phrase should be noticed. The Psalmist does not enlarge on the punishment of his enemies. His satisfaction lies in the simple fact that God has shown himself a righteous judge. Cf cxii. 8, note.

PSALM LV

FAITH VICTORIOUS

§ 1. CONTENTS.

1-8. The Psalmist's dismay.

9-15. His prayer against his enemy.

16-19. His confidence in JEHOVAH as a Deliverer.

20-23. A final expression of confidence.

§ 2. THE CHARACTER OF THE PSALM.

The Speaker in this Psalm is a ruler who is in danger through the plots of his enemies (v. 3). They seek to undermine his authority by slandering him

(*vv.* 9, 12), while professing to be friendly (*v.* 21). Worst of all, his own familiar friend has joined in circulating the slanderous tales (*vv.* 13, 14, 20), and his enemies increase in number (*v.* 18). The Psalmist feels that the city (Jerusalem) is full of hostile whispers and even of murderous plans: he is tempted to flee from it and to throw up his charge (*vv.* 6-10). But a Divine word is brought to him, "Cast thy burden upon **JEHOVAH**"; he recovers his courage, and his final words are (in P-B), "Nevertheless, my trust shall be in Thee, O Lord" (*v.* 23). Thus does he refuse to be scared from the post which **JEHOVAH** has assigned him.

In this Psalm the writer climbs upward from doubt to faith. The note of despondency is struck in the opening words "Hide not thyself from my supplication" (*v.* 1 *b*). Just one step lower and the Psalmist might have said, "Thou hast hedged thyself with a cloud, that our prayer should not pass through" (Lam iii. 44). The extreme loneliness of the Psalmist, whose "familiar friend" has turned against him, may be cited in his excuse. He despairs even of life (*v.* 4), and would fain leave his post and make his escape (*vv.* 6-8).

In the second section of the Psalm (*vv.* 9-15) the Psalmist appeals to **JEHOVAH** to frustrate the plans of his enemies. His first impulse is to ask for their destruction, but (since they are his countrymen) he corrects himself and asks only that the Lord would "divide their tongue," i.e. "confound their counsel" against him. This softening of his mood should be noted, for there is a tendency with modern commentators to exaggerate the fierceness of the Psalmists against their foes. The Psalmist is content to pray, *Divide their tongue*, though his danger is very great: the city is full of "wickedness," and he has to face his foes, when his best friend has deserted him. It is improbable that the author is David, but the situation is not unlike that at the beginning of Absalom's rebellion, when David fled from Jerusalem, and in his flight found that Ahithophel was against him (2 Sam xv. 13 ff, 31, xvi. 23). And so Targum paraphrases *v.* 13, "And thou, Ahithophel, a man like unto me, a master who taught me, and made me know wisdom." But David was not the only ruler of Jerusalem who had to complain of "conspiracy": Nehemiah is one of many other possible examples.

The Psalmist having set forth urgently the danger of his situation passes on (*vv.* 16-19) to confess his faith in **JEHOVAH** as a deliverer. He has said already that his friends fail; he now says that his enemies increase, but he will have recourse to his God: he will not flee. He is no lukewarm petitioner: evening, and morning, and at noonday he will pray; **JEHOVAH** shall indeed hear his voice. And so the Lord will redeem him, and punish those who plot against him. An intelligent faith manifests itself in these utterances. The Psalmist is confident of deliverance, because he is confident of **JEHOVAH**'s righteousness.

But the Psalmist is but human after all, and in *vv.* 20, 21 he shows that the treachery of his former friend and counsellor rankles in his heart. The soft, deceitful sounds come back to him and arouse his wrath afresh. But then there breaks upon his inward ear another voice—this time dropping down, as it were, from heaven, a *bath kōl* (to use the Hebrew term) to recall him to his faith in God: "Cast thy burden upon **JEHOVAH**, and he shall sustain thee" (*v.* 22). With that voice in his ears, he leaves his cause to his God, "But I will trust in thee" (*v.* 23).

For the Chief Musician; on stringed instruments. Maschil of David.

- LV.** 1 Give ear to my prayer, O God;
 And hide not thyself from my supplication.
 2 Attend unto me, and answer me:
 I am restless in my complaint, and moan;
 3 Because of the voice of the enemy,
 Because of the oppression of the wicked;
 For they cast iniquity upon me,
 And in anger they persecute me.
 4 My heart is sore pained within me:
 And the terrors of death are fallen upon me.
 5 Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me,
 And horror hath overwhelmed me.
 6 And I said, Oh that I had wings like a dove!
 Then would I fly away, and be at rest.
 7 Lo, then would I wander far off,
 I would lodge in the wilderness.

[Selah

1-8. THE PSALMIST WOULD FLEE FROM HIS TROUBLES

LV. 1. *hide not thyself.* The same Hebrew verb in Isa lviii. 7, "and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh."

2. *I am restless.* An exact description of the Psalmist's case: cf *vv.* 6, 7.

3. *the oppression of the wicked.* Not "oppression" but "opposition," for the speaker is a ruler: the Psalmist means that his work is made burdensome by the mischievous opposition of "the wicked one," i.e. his leading opponent. The Heb. 'ākath (עקר), "opposition," is a *hapaxlegomenon*.

For they cast iniquity upon me. Better as P-B, *For they are minded to do me some mischief*: lit. *For they set in motion mischief against me.* Cf Nehemiah's words in Neh vi. 2, "They thought to do me mischief."

they persecute me. The meaning of the Hebrew verb (שׁמַר) is rather, "they lay wait for me"; so in Gen xxvii. 41, "Esau *hated* Jacob...and said...I will slay my brother Jacob."

4. *the terrors of death.* The Psalmist feels that there is treachery all around him.

5. *horror hath overwhelmed* (AV marg. *covered*) *me.* So in Ezek vii. 18 (the same Hebrew words).

6. *wings like a dove.* Cf Isa lx. 8, "Who are these that fly...as the doves to their windows?" The homing instinct of doves was known to the Psalmist: he feels that his true home is away from the city.

be at rest. Or, *find a dwelling-place.* Cf Jer ix. 2 (ix. 1, Hebrew), "Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging place...that I might leave my people, and go from them!"

- 8 I would ¹haste me to a shelter
From the stormy wind and tempest.
9 ²Destroy, O Lord, *and* divide their tongue:
For I have seen violence and strife in the city.
10 Day and night they go about it upon the walls thereof:
Iniquity also and mischief are in the midst of it.
11 Wickedness is in the midst thereof:
³Oppression and guile depart not from her streets.
12 For it was not an enemy that reproached me;
Then I could have borne it:
Neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself
against me;
Then I would have hid myself from him:
13 But it was thou, a man mine equal,
My companion, and my familiar friend.

¹ Or, *hasten my escape*² Heb. *Swallow up.*³ Or, *Fraud*

8. (*From the stormy wind*) and tempest. Rather, *and whirlwind*. The Hebrew text is not quite certain. Vulgate (cf LXX) has a *pusillanimitate spiritus et tempestate*, as though the Psalmist were praying to be delivered from the danger within and from the danger without.

9-15. THE PSALMIST IN HIS EXTREME DANGER PRAYS AGAINST HIS ENEMIES

9. *Destroy, O Lord, and divide their tongue*. The insertion of *and* in EV is unfortunate, since it helps to disguise the distraction of the Psalmist's mind. He corrects his petition for destruction to one for the confusion of his foes: *Divide their tongue*—"make them utter divided counsels, and so confound their plot." Cf 2 Sam xvii. 14.

in the city. I.e. in Jerusalem. The Psalmist is a leading man there; cf *vs.* 12-14.

11. *Wickedness*. Heb. *havvōth*; cf *v.* 9. "Their inward part is very wickedness" (Heb. *havvōth*); xxxviii. 12, note, lii. 7.

Oppression. Heb. *tōch* (תח): so in lxxii. 14. Reject margin. *from her streets*. The *street* (Heb. *rēhōb*) is rather the *broad space* in the city where men meet for market or for debate. The *guile* is the deceit of the conspirators. The Hebrew word (*mirmāh*) is used 2 K ix. 23, "treachery." The city is full of evil in its circumference (the walls), in its centre (its midst) and in its places of assembly (the broad spaces).

12. *did magnify himself against me*. The Psalmist speaks as one holding office, whom men strive to overthrow.

13. *My companion*. Heb. *allūph* (אֱלִיפָא): cf Pro ii. 17, "(The strange woman) which forsaketh the *friend* or *guide* (*allūph*) of her youth," i.e. her husband. "My guide," P-B (ἡγεμών μου, LXX).

- 14 We took sweet counsel together,
We walked in the house of God with the throng.
- 15 ¹Let death come suddenly upon them,
Let them go down alive into ²the pit:
For wickedness is in their dwelling, in ³the midst of them.
- 16 As for me, I will call upon God;
And the LORD shall save me.
- 17 Evening, and morning, and at noonday, will I complain, and
moan:
And he shall hear my voice.
- 18 He hath redeemed my soul in peace ⁴from the battle that was
against me:

For they were many *that strove with me.*

¹ Or, as otherwise read, *Desolations be upon them!*

² Heb. *Sheol.*

³ Or, *their inward part*

⁴ Or, *so that none came nigh me*

14. *We took sweet counsel together.* I.e. We agreed together as companions in private, and also (as the following words show) as companions in public action.

We walked...with the throng. There is a suggestion here of joining together in the celebration of the great festivals. The Heb. *bērāgesh* might be rendered, *with the shouting throng.* The cognate verb is used in ii. 1 a.

15. *Let death come suddenly upon them.* Lit. *Let death deceive them.* This is according to the K'ri (= LXX). Sudden death was regarded as a Divine punishment: cf Job xxvii. 19-21. The C'thib, *Desolations be upon them!* is an inferior reading.

Let them go down alive into the pit. The fate of Dathan and Abiram: cf Num xvi. 30.

wickedness is in their dwelling. At home they plot in secret against the Psalmist. Marg. *in their inward part*, is to be preferred in the next clause.

16-19. THE PSALMIST'S CONFIDENCE IN JEHOVAH AS HIS DELIVERER

17. *Evening, and morning, and at noonday.* Cf Dan vi. 10, "He kneeled upon his knees three times a day." In Ps cxix. 164, "Seven times a day," the number is used metaphorically in the sense of "continually."

will I complain. Or, as P-B, *will I pray.* Heb. *sāah*, as in lxxvii. 12 b (13 b, Heb), "I will muse." The verb suggests meditation which readily passes into prayer; so in Gen xxiv. 63.

18. *He hath redeemed.* Rather, *He shall redeem* (or *There is redemption for*), reading *pādōh* for *pādāh*, a change of the vowel points only.

For they were etc. Better, *Though they are increased who were against*

- 19 God shall hear, and ¹answer them,
 Even he that abideth of old,
The men who have no changes,
 And who fear not God. [Sciah
- 20 He hath put forth his hands against such as were at peace
 with him:
 He hath profaned his covenant.
- 21 His mouth was smooth as butter,
 But his heart was war:
 His words were softer than oil,
 Yet were they drawn swords.
- 22 Cast ²thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee:
 He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.

¹ Or, *afflict*² Heb. *that he hath given thee.*

me; lit. *Though they grew to be many against me*: cf lvi. 2. The rebellion became strong: cf 2 Sam xv. 12. The force of the substantive verb *hāyū* is "they became," or "they grew to be" (*not* "they were"). Several points in this Psalm suggest the rising of Absalom against David. The Psalmist thinks of this or of some similar case.

19. *God shall hear.* I.e. God as judge *shall hear* the case, and as judge *shall answer* and condemn the Psalmist's opponents. The rendering *and (shall) afflict* (AV=LXX) follows a reading of the Hebrew verb with different vowel points.

that abideth. Rather, *that sitteth in judgment*: it is the same Hebrew verb as in ii. 4; xxix. 10.

The men *who have no changes*. A verb must be supplied: "(He shall answer) the men *who have* (hitherto) *received no recompense* (for their evil deeds)." The Hebrew substantive *hātīphōth*, lit. "changes," means *either* (1) *changes* of fortune, vicissitudes, or troubles; *or* here more probably, (2) *changes* in the sense of things given in exchange, i.e. in the present context, "punishments, retribution."

20-23. A FINAL STRUGGLE WITHIN THE PSALMIST ENDS IN THE VICTORY OF FAITH

20. *He hath put forth his hands.* The Psalmist refers again to the person mentioned in vv. 13, 14.

his covenant. I.e. his covenant to serve his superior (or his king in the case of Ahithophel): 2 Sam xv. 31, xvi. 23.

21. *His mouth was smooth as butter.* Or, *Smooth were the pieces of butter that fell from his mouth.* The false friend kept up his deceitful front to the last moment, when he exchanged his *words* for *drawn swords*.

22. *Cast thy burden upon JEHOVAH.* I.e. Cast upon JEHOVAH the cares (of government) which He hath given thee to bear.

thy burden, lit. "That which he hath given (appointed) thee."

23 But thou, O God, shalt bring them down into the pit of destruction :

Bloodthirsty and deceitful men shall not live out half their days ;

But I will trust in thee.

23. *But thou...shalt bring them down.* Here is another expression of the conviction which the Psalmists cherish (in spite of intermittent doubts) that JEHOVAH will ultimately punish the wicked, and will save His faithful servants: cf xxxvii. 37-40. Even in sore distress the Psalmists believe, "Verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth" (lviii. 11).

PSALM LVI

A PROPHET-PSALMIST'S PRAYER

Prophets sometimes turn Psalmists, as did Jeremiah; cf Jer xvii. 7, 8, xx. 10-13. Further in the Psalter itself there are Psalms which express the mind of a prophet: lvi is such an one. The author has been given a Divine message which he refers to in *vs.* 4, 10 as "God's word," but in *v.* 5 as "my words." The message is given to the Prophet-Psalmist as God's word; he reproduces it as in a sense his own. It is doubtless a message of reproof, for he reckons that his hearers will not receive it. "All the day," he says, "they *reject* my words" (lit. "treat them as grievous"); men hear them with displeasure and "all the day" they plan how they may do mischief to the speaker. There is a plot against the Prophet-Psalmist, as there was against Jeremiah the prophet (*vs.* 5, 6; cf Jer xviii. 18, xx. 10). But the Psalmist has manfully endeavoured to carry out the work entrusted to him. He has prophesied to "peoples," i.e. to different sections (rich and poor) of his own nation. He has been forced to wander from place to place (*vs.* 7, 8), and God has noted these wanderings. The Psalmist having been obedient to the heavenly leading is confident that God is on his side, and so he will still commend ("praise") God's word to all who will listen; he will not fear the opposition of flesh and blood (*vs.* 9-11). Finally he expresses his confidence that in pleasing God ("walking before God") he will find perfect safety and joy. Being delivered from the fear of the death which threatens him, he looks forward to "walking" in the *light of life*.

For the Chief Musician; set to ¹Jonath elem rehokim. *A Psalm* of David:
Michtam: when the Philistines took him in Gath.

LVI. 1 Be merciful unto me, O God; for man would swallow
me up:

All the day long he fighting oppresseth me.

2 ²Mine enemies would swallow me up all the day long:

For they be many that fight proudly against me.

3 What time I am afraid,

I will put my trust in thee.

4 In God I will praise his word:

In God have I put my trust, I will not be afraid;

What can flesh do unto me?

5 All the day long they wrest my words:

All their thoughts are against me for evil.

6 They gather themselves together, they hide themselves,

They mark my steps,

³Even as they have waited for my soul.

¹ That is, *The silent dove of them that are afar off* or, as otherwise read, *The dove of the distant terebinths*

² Or, *They that lie in wait for me*

³ Or, *Inasmuch as*

1-4. A PROPHET TAKING COURAGE IN HIS MISSION

LVI. 1. *Be merciful unto me, O God.* The same opening (in the Hebrew) as Pss li and lvii.

man. Heb. *ēnōsh* as in viii. 4, see note.

would swallow me up. Better, *hath trampled on me*; Vulgate, *conculcavit me*. Similarly in v. 2.

he fighting oppresseth me. Better, *One that threateneth oppresseth me*. The Hebrew root in the Kal (as here) probably means to "threaten" (as in Syriac) rather than to "fight," which is expressed in Hebrew by the Niphal. Cf xxxv. 1*b*, note.

2. *fight proudly against me.* Better, *Proudly threaten me*. The Psalmist is "poor" and "weak": his foes are proud in their superior strength.

4. *In God I will praise his word.* Here the Psalmist speaks as a prophet. He has been given God's word to speak, and strong in God he will joyfully utter it.

flesh. Cf Isa xxxi. 3.

5, 6. THE ACTIVITY OF THE ENEMY

5. *they wrest my words.* Better, *they reject my words*: lit. *they treat my words as grievous*, i.e. *they find no pleasure in them*.

6. *Even as they have waited.* Perhaps, *even as if they waited*; but the construction is harsh and the text uncertain.

- 7 ¹ Shall they escape by iniquity?
In anger cast down the peoples, O God.
- 8 Thou tellest my wanderings:
Put thou my tears into thy bottle;
Are they not in thy ² book?
- 9 Then shall mine enemies turn back in the day that I call:
This I know, ³ that God is for me.
- 10 In God will I praise *his* word:
In the LORD will I praise *his* word.
- 11 In God have I put my trust, I will not be afraid;
What can man do unto me?

¹ Or, *They think to escape*² Or, *record*³ Or, *for*

7, 8. THE PROPHET-PSALMIST A FUGITIVE

7. *Shall they escape by iniquity?* Again the construction is harsh and the text uncertain. The sense is perhaps, *They trust in vanity* (i.e. in false gods) *to escape*.

the peoples. Plural, because the prophet wanders from one kindred of his to another, appealing to each in turn. But all reject him. There is no sufficient reason for reading (with Duhm) '*azzim*, "the strong ones," instead of '*ammim*, "the kindreds."

8. *Thou tellest* (or, Thou hast counted up) *my wanderings*.

Put thou my tears into thy bottle (Heb. *nōd*, נֹד, "a water-skin"). So the Targum (*zīkak*), but LXX, *ἔθου τὰ δάκρυά μου ἐνώπιόν σου*: Vulgate, *posuisti lacrymas meas in conspectu tuo*. The LXX (like *Kimkhi* the commentator) felt that to attribute to JEHOVAH the possession of a "bottle" (i.e. a water-skin) is too bold a metaphor, and so gave a paraphrase, *in thy presence*. The Psalmist asks that his tears should be treasured *before God*. For *in thy book* see xl. 7, note.

The verse is well rendered in the Targum, "The days of my wanderings Thou thyself hast numbered: put my tears into thy water-skin: JEHOVAH, are they not in thy account?" One improvement may be admitted from LXX, "Thou didst put" (*ἔθου*) for "put." The Psalmist has wandered and suffered in the wilderness, but JEHOVAH has been daily with him as his guide. His tears have been reckoned precious as water in the desert: they are preserved in JEHOVAH'S water-skin. Such an idea is not bolder nor more homely than that expressed in Job xiv. 17, "My transgression is sealed up in a bag ("a purse"), And thou fastenest up ("sewest up") mine iniquity."

9-13. COURAGE RENEWED

9 *call*. I.e. invoke the name of JEHOVAH; cf iv. 1, note.

- 12 Thy vows are upon me, O God:
I will render thank offerings unto thee.
- 13 For thou hast delivered my soul from death:
Hast thou not delivered my feet from falling?
That I may walk before God
In the light of ¹the living.

¹ Or, *life*

12. *Thy vows are upon me.* I.e. I vowed to acknowledge thy gracious deliverance when it should come.

13. This verse should be arranged thus:

For thou hast delivered
my soul from death
Are not my feet delivered from falling,
that I may walk before God?
Into the light of the living.

An instance of chiasmus: lines 2 and 5 correspond, and 3 and 4.

In the light of the living. Better as marg. *In the light of life.* The phrase *In the land of the living* is found in a similar context in xxvii. 13, cxvi. 9, cxlii. 5.

PSALM LVII

THE STORY OF A DELIVERANCE FROM DEATH

This is a dramatic lyric, a story not told but conveyed by hints. First is heard an urgent cry, "Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful." The Psalmist has taken refuge in God in the face of appalling danger. He is alone and threatened from two sides. Already an enemy has trampled on him, and reproached him with his helplessness. The Psalmist lies a sick man or a prisoner or both at the mercy of the "lions," the rich and powerful, who are his foes. Moreover the "sons of men," the mass of the people, are "on fire" against him; their teeth are "spears and arrows"; their tongue demands his death (vs. 1-4).

The Psalmist looks back on this crisis now past and without more ado bursts out in praise of God. "To God be the glory of the great deliverance; may He for this be praised and exalted above the heavens" (v. 5).

The Psalmist speaks in the order dictated by his feeling of relief, and his outburst of praise precedes the statement of the cause which drew it forth. The incident is given in v. 6:

They prepared a net for my steps:
(But) I was held back:
They digged a pit before me;
(But) They fell into the midst of it.

The deliverance granted to the Psalmist was complete.

In v. 7 the Psalmist resumes his song of praise and continues it to v. 11, where he repeats v. 5 as a refrain,

Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens;
Let thy glory be above all the earth.

The "net" and the "pit" probably refer to one and the same experience. His enemies, we may suppose, brought some charge of disloyalty against the Psalmist before the Persian authorities, and the charge recoiled on those who brought it.

This second half (vv. 7-11) appears later in the Psalter as cviii. 1-5. Hence Duhm and Briggs (*J.C.C.*) suppose that Ps lvii (like cviii) consists of two Psalms put together. But this view is not likely to be right in the face of the definite progress of thought and feeling which may be traced through the Psalm. The two halves of Ps lvii suit one another, just as a lower step fits into the one just above it.

For the Chief Musician; set to Al-tashheth. *A Psalm* of David: **Michtam**:
when he fled from Saul, in the cave.

LVII. 1 Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me;
For my soul taketh refuge in thee:
Yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I take refuge,
Until *these* ¹calamities be overpast.
2 I will cry unto God Most High;

¹ Or, *wickednesses*

1-5. AN APPEAL ENDING IN PRAISE

LVII. 1. *Be merciful unto me, O God.* Hebrew as in li. 1, lvi. 1.
my soul. Cf vi. 2, 3, note.

taketh refuge. The same Hebrew as vii. 1, note.

in the shadow of thy wings. Cf xvii. 8, note. See also Deut xxxiii. 12, "(JEHOVAH) covereth him (Benjamin) all the day long," in allusion to the Temple being (wholly or in part) in the territory of Benjamin.

Until these calamities be overpast. The Hebrew word rendered *calamities* is *havvoth*: see xxxviii. 12, note. Render here, *Until* the danger of *utter destruction be overpast.*

2. *I will cry.* Rather, "(Thus) did I cry" or "Thus used I to cry." The Psalmist looks back, as the context shows, to a crisis which is past.

God Most High. Heb. *Elohim* 'Elyōn. The original reading was probably JEHOVAH 'Elyon as in vii. 17, xlvii. 2. The double name means "JEHOVAH is 'Elyōn." 'Elyon (LXX, ὁ ὑψιστος: RV "Most High") occurs in the Psalter some fifteen times. Other terms also are used to express the same thought, as in Mic vi. 6, אלהי מרום, "the God of height," i.e. the High God. So in Ps cxiii. 5, "Who is like unto JEHOVAH our God,

Unto God that performeth *all things* for me.

3 He shall send from heaven, and save me,

When he that would swallow me up reproacheth; [Selah
God shall send forth his mercy and his truth.

4 My soul is among lions;

¹I lie among them that are set on fire,

Even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows,
And their tongue a sharp sword.

5 Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens;

Let thy glory be above all the earth.

¹ Or, *I must lie*

That hath his seat on high?" Heathen used the term '*Elyon*' of their gods, so that the use of the phrase "JEHOVAH '*Elyon*'" probably means that the Psalmists claimed for JEHOVAH all that their neighbours claimed for their gods: "JEHOVAH is Most High." But one Psalmist can add with fine insight: "(He) humbleth himself to *regard* the heavens and the earth" (cxiii. 6): while another confesses: "Though JEHOVAH be high, yet doth he *regard* the lowly" (cxxxviii. 6).

that performeth all things for me; P-B, *that shall perform the cause which I have in hand*. Either rendering is a fairly good paraphrase of the original. The same Hebrew verb appears in cxxxviii. 8, "JEHOVAH will perfect (יגמור, *yigmôr*) that which concerneth me."

3. *He shall send* etc. Cf xviii. 16:

He sent from on high, he took me;

He drew me out of many waters.

When he that would swallow me up reproacheth. Rather, *When he that trampleth on me* (פָּדַע, the same Hebrew verb as in lvi. 1, 2) *hath reproached me*, i.e. with my helplessness.

shall send forth his mercy and his truth. Cf xliii. 3, "O send out thy light and thy truth." The Psalmist says that God will send forth His mercy, for God will be true to His promise.

4. *among lions*. Cf xxxiv. 10, note; xxxv. 17. There is a parallel between the two halves of this verse. The Psalmist says that he lies (helpless as a sick man or as a prisoner) among "lions," his rich and powerful enemies. Nor can he look for help or sympathy to the common people, the "sons of men." They are against him with teeth and tongue crying out for his death. Cf cxx. 5, 6.

5. *Be thou exalted, O God*. The Psalmist bursts into praise at the thought of his deliverance from death.

Let thy glory be above all the earth. Cf (from the Lord's Prayer) "Hallowed be thy name." The Psalmist's reason for his sudden outburst of praise is easy to guess.

- 6 They have prepared a net for my steps;
 My soul is bowed down:
 They have digged a pit before me;
 They are fallen into the midst thereof themselves. [Selah]
- 7 My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed:
 I will sing, yea, I will sing praises.
- 8 Awake up, my glory; awake, psaltery and harp:
¹I myself will awake right early.
- 9 I will give thanks unto thee, O Lord, among the peoples:
 I will sing praises unto thee among the nations.
- 10 For thy mercy is great unto the heavens,
 And thy truth unto the skies.
- 11 Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens;
 Let thy glory be above all the earth.

¹ Or, *I will awake the dawn*

6-11. THE DANGER: PRAISE FOR THE ESCAPE

6. *My soul is bowed down.* Rather (if the Hebrew text is sound), *One turned back my soul*, i.e. before it could be caught in the net, and so saved me: Heb. כָּפַף, *kāfaf*. So F. Zorell, who compares the Arabic verb *kaffa*, "avertit, inhibit."

They are fallen etc. The two halves of the verse answer one another:

They prepared a net,
 My soul escaped it:
 They dug a pit,
 They fell into it themselves.

7. *My heart is fixed.* I.e. it is steadfast, constant in its purpose to ascribe its deliverance to JEHOVAH only. Hebrew as in li. 10, "a *steadfast* spirit."

8. *Awake up, my glory.* Better, *Awake up, O Thou Who art my glory.* JEHOVAH is the glory of His people: Ps cvi. 20. The cry *Awake* addressed to JEHOVAH is found in xlv. 23: it is indeed more properly addressed to a person than to psaltery and harp. But the Psalmist means that when JEHOVAH "awakes" to deliver him, the LORD's awakening will be answered by the awakening of psaltery and harp in praise.

9. *among the peoples...among the nations.* I.e. "among the kindreds (of Israel)...among the nations of the earth." The Psalmist speaks here in his representative position: he will make his praise heard not only in Israel, but also among the Gentiles.

10. *great unto the heavens.* Cf ciii. 11.

11. *Be thou exalted* etc. A refrain. See v. 5.

PSALM LVIII

DELIVER THE RIGHTEOUS FROM UNJUST JUDGES!

This is one of the Psalms which were called forth by painful experience of the perversion of justice in the land of Israel; others are xi, lii, lxxv, lxxxii, xciv. The Psalmist first addresses the unjust judges as "gods" (*ēlim*) and later in the same verse as "sons of men." This contrast is intended to remind them that though they are rulers, and have a commission from God, they are in themselves "but men," having over them a supreme judge.

The Psalmist accuses them of deliberate wrong-doing; they work with a heart of wickedness; they commit acts of oppression, and afterwards sanction them from the judgment seat (*v.* 2). Moreover these acts are not occasional outbreaks, they spring from the corrupt nature of the perpetrators (*v.* 3). All appeals to their mercy or to their sense of justice they reject; they are like the deaf adder, which will not be charmed (*v.* 5). Then the Psalmist turns to his God and implores Him to destroy the power of the oppressors (*v.* 6). In the three verses which follow (*vv.* 7-9) he foretells the result of his prayer. In the first place the oppressors will be "rejected," and so they will take themselves off quickly, as water runs away (*v.* 7 *a*). Then God will "tread" his arrows as one preparing to shoot, and before this threat the foes will all become weak and helpless (*v.* 7 *b*). Very sudden will be JEHOVAH'S intervention. A vivid illustration is given in *v.* 9. A party of travellers in the desert begin to prepare a meal. They put their uncooked food into a pot, and beneath the pot they place fuel of wilderness thorn and set light to it. But then—suddenly—before the pot can feel the hot flame of the fire—a whirlwind comes. The fuel is all swept away before the blast. Every twig, whether alight already or too moist to burn, is carried off. No trace of the fire remains. This fate of the thorns is a just symbol of the fate of the wicked (*v.* 9).

Before so complete a catastrophe the modern man is struck with horror, even though it is the oppressor who is overwhelmed; but not so the Psalmist. The awful event is a proof to him that in spite of all suggestions to the contrary JEHOVAH does exercise an active providence over mankind. Men (the Psalmist says) will recognise the fact that there is a God who judges in the earth; and for this the righteous man will rejoice; exultingly he will "wash his feet (not *manus suas*, as Vulgate) in the blood of the wicked" (*vv.* 10, 11).

For the Chief Musician; *set to Al-tashheth. A Psalm of David: Michtam.*

LVIII. 1 ¹Do ye indeed ²in silence speak righteousness?

Do ye ³judge uprightly, O ye sons of men?

¹ Or, *Is the righteousness ye should speak dumb?*

² Or, as otherwise read, *O ye gods* or, *O ye mighty ones*

³ Or, *judge uprightly the sons of men*

1-5. THE UNJUST JUDGES

LVIII. 1. *Do ye indeed in silence speak righteousness?* For in silence (Heb. אָלֵם, *ēlem*), P-B gives *O ye congregation*, a possible rendering, for the Hebrew verbal root is used of *binding* sheaves (Gen xxxvii. 7), so

- 2 Yea, in heart ye work wickedness ;
 Ye weigh out the violence of your hands in the earth.
- 3 The wicked are estranged from the womb :
 They go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies.
- 4 Their poison is like the poison of a serpent :
They are like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear ;
- 5 Which hearkeneth not to the voice of ¹charm-ers,
 Charming never so wisely.
- 6 Break their teeth, O God, in their mouth :
 Break out the great teeth of the young lions, O LORD.
- 7 Let them melt away as water that runneth apace :

¹ Or, *enchanters*

ēlem may possibly mean a *collection* of persons. On the other hand the literal sense *binding* might pass into the metaphorical sense, *silence*. Probably the best course is to read *ēlim* (with a change of a vowel only), "O ye gods," for judges are sometimes called "gods" (*Elōhīm*, as in lxxxii. 1, 6).

The rendering of RV, *in silence speak righteousness*, would mean to "suppress righteous decisions."

2. *in heart ye work wickedness*. Rather, *ye work with wickedness of heart*, i.e. deliberately: LXX, ἐν καρδίᾳ ἀνομίας.

Ye weigh out etc. I.e. Ye dispense your acts of oppression and violence as "justice."

in the earth. Rather, *in the land*, JEHOVAH'S land, the land of Israel. In the Hebrew the words stand in an emphatic position.

3. *are estranged*. Though Israelites they behave as "strangers"—*zārīm*—Israel's enemies.

They go astray etc. Rather, *They who "speak lies"* (i.e. those who give unjust decisions) *go astray as soon as they are born*; i.e. they learn the arts of oppression from childhood.

4. *like the deaf adder*. They close their ears to the appeal of the oppressed.

5. *charm-ers*. Other allusions to the charming of serpents are found in Eccl x. 11; Jer viii. 17.

6-11. APPEAL TO THE MERCIFUL AND FAITHFUL JUDGE

6. *Break their teeth*. Strong oppressors are compared to lions in xvii. 12, xxxiv. 10, xxxv. 17, lvii. 4. The abrupt change from *adder* to *lion* need not surprise the reader.

7. *Let them melt* etc. This is not a fair rendering of the Hebrew. Rather,

They shall be rejected (i.e. by JEHOVAH);
 As waters they shall depart:
 He shall prepare (lit. *tread*) His arrow;
 As (grass?) they shall retain no strength.

When he aimeth his arrows, let them be as though they were cut off.

8 *Let them be* as a snail which melteth and passeth away:
Like the untimely birth of a woman, ¹that hath not seen the sun.

9 Before your pots can feel the thorns,
²He shall take them away with a whirlwind, the green and the burning alike.

10 The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance:
He shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked.

11 So that men shall say, Verily there is ³a reward for the righteous:

Verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth.

¹ Or, like them *that have not seen the sun*

² Or, *Even as raw flesh, even so, shall fury sweep them away*

³ Heb. *fruit*.

For the rendering *rejected*, cf xv. 4, "a reprobate" (lit. "a rejected one"): liii. 5, "God hath rejected them." The Hebrew root is **דנן** in all three places. The rendering *they shall retain no strength* follows LXX, ἀσθενήσουσιν. The exact sense of the Hebrew verb in this place is very doubtful. Unfortunately a substantive seems to have fallen out just before: Duhm suggests that the comparison intended is with *grass that withers*, but his proposed reconstruction of this verse is too arbitrary to be accepted as a whole.

8. *that hath not seen the sun*. The verb is plural: *things* (i.e. the snail and the untimely birth) *which have not seen the sun*.

9. *Before your pots* etc. An image drawn from a fire in the wilderness: see the Introduction.

10. *wash his feet*. Cf lxxviii. 23.

11. *a God that judgeth*. Gen xviii. 25; Job xix. 29; Eccl xii. 14. For a reference to denial of God's judgment see lxxiii. 11, xciv. 7.

PSALM LIX

A PRAYER FOR DELIVERANCE FROM ENEMIES, FOLLOWED BY A THANKSGIVING

What can be learnt from the Psalm itself about these enemies? First, they are called "heathen" (*gōyim*, vv. 5, 8), but they are rather the personal enemies of the Psalmist than the national enemies of Israel. They desire to take the Psalmist's life; the "fierce" ones (Heb. *'azzim*) lie in wait for him (vv. 2, 3). He is in a city, but the city gives him no sense of security; his enemies go round about it, and fill him with anxiety (vv. 6, 14): is it perchance an unwalled city, or a city whose walls have been breached and only hastily repaired? In

any case he has no confidence in it: thrice he declares that God (i.e. *JEHOVAH*) is his "high tower" (*vs.* 9, 16, 17). Further it is to be noticed that the enemy does not wage open warfare against him, but a war of controversy and intrigue. He complains of the "cursing" and "lies," which they use (*v.* 12): for they deny the greatness of his God. So he makes petition in the following verse, "Let them know that God (i.e. *JEHOVAH*) ruleth in Jacob, Unto the ends of the earth" (*v.* 13). His enemies suppose that *not* *JEHOVAH*, but some foreign (Persian?) king of flesh and blood "ruleth in Jacob," and certainly "Unto the ends of the earth."

The situation stands out with much distinctness, but not so distinctly as to enable us to identify the author beyond doubt. He can hardly be David, but may he not be Nehemiah, or one writing in his name? There is much to be said for the suggestion. Never perhaps was a man more greatly vexed by enemies than Nehemiah. And his enemies acted after the manner described in Psalm lix. They did not wage open warfare, though they gathered together in a threatening manner (*Neh.* iv. 8). They lay in wait for his life; tried to frighten him with strong words; pretended to be his friends; told him that the city was not safe for him, "Let him flee into the Temple" (*Neh.* vi, *passim*). Tobiah the Ammonite and Geshem the Arabian were of course "heathen," and Sanballat "the Horonite" (of Beth-horon), the Persian governor of Samaria, was probably of mixed blood. His name is Babylonian, meaning, "Sin (the moon god) gives life!" Moreover the complaint that the enemies "go round about the city" and "tarry all night" (*vs.* 14, 15) may be illustrated from *Neh.* xiii. The Tyrian merchants beset Jerusalem to sell fish on the Sabbath, and even tarried all night to obtain their purpose (*Neh.* xiii. 20, 21). Such men were of course enemies of legal strictness and bitter foes of Nehemiah who sought to uphold it.

Even if the Psalmist be not Nehemiah, we must confess that his circumstances are remarkably like those of the Jewish governor. The Psalmist has had a day of severe distress and extreme danger, but his God (*JEHOVAH*), in whom he has constantly trusted, has brought him safely through. The value of the Psalm for a later generation is in the fact that it is a living utterance: it records the actual experiences of a deeply religious nature: it is a story of the good fight of Faith.

For the Chief Musician; *set* to Al-tashheth. *A Psalm* of David: Michtam: when Saul sent, and they watched the house to kill him.

LIX. 1 Deliver me from mine enemies, O my God:

Set me on high from them that rise up against me.

2 Deliver me from the workers of iniquity,

And save me from the bloodthirsty men.

1-5. THE PSALMIST'S PRAYER IN DANGER

LIX. 1. *Set me on high.* The same Hebrew verb as *xx.* 1, *xc.* 14. *them that rise up against me.* The same Hebrew verb as *xvii.* 7.

2. *the workers of iniquity.* Lit. *workers of vanity* (Heb. *āven*),

- 3 For, lo, they lie in wait for my soul;
The mighty gather themselves together against me:
Not for my transgression, nor for my sin, O LORD.
- 4 They run and prepare themselves without *my* fault:
Awake thou to ¹help me, and behold.
- 5 Even thou, O LORD God of hosts, the God of Israel,
Arise to visit all the ²heathen:
Be not merciful to any wicked transgressors. [Selah]
- 6 They return at evening, they make a noise like a dog,
And go round about the city.

¹ Heb. *meet*.² Or, *nations*

"vanity" standing for "falsehood" or (specially) for that which is false, i.e. idolatry. So the prophet Hosea changes the place-name "*Beth-el*" ("House of God") into *Beth-aven* ("House of vanity" or "of idolatry") because of the worship of the golden calf which prevailed there (Hos iv. 15). So in v. 5 for "wicked transgressors" read "treacherous idolaters." Idolatry was in fact treacherous dealing towards the true God, when it was practised by those who had made a covenant with Him.

3. *they lie in wait for my soul*. Nehemiah might say this: cf Neh vi. 2.

The mighty. Rather, *The fierce ones* (Heb. 'azzim, as in Isa xix. 4).

gather themselves together. Possibly, *fall (upon me) like a robber troop*. Cf LXX, ἐπίθευτο: Vulgate, *irruerunt* (from a slightly different Hebrew reading).

Not for my transgression (rebellion), *nor for my sin*. Cf v. 4, "without my fault." If the speaker in the Psalm is Nehemiah, the reference of the words is clear: the "transgression" or "sin" is rebellion against the Persian king, whose deputy Nehemiah was (Neh vi. 6).

4. *They run and prepare themselves*. Both verbs are military terms. (Duhm.) The metaphor is of manœuvring to seize the most favourable position. The enemy seeks to upset Nehemiah's plans for Jerusalem by accusing him of treasonable designs—a clever political move.

Awake thou. The same daring appeal is made vii. 6, xliv. 23. Not *to help me* but *to meet me* (as marg.). The Psalmist speaks with the daring familiarity of a child: cf v. 10.

5. *the heathen* (Heb. *gōyim*: LXX, τὰ ἔθνη). So also in v. 8. If the reference is to the times of Nehemiah, then the term *gōyim* is appropriate; it covers the mixt as well as the purely heathen population.

6-10. IN DANGER THE PSALMIST REMAINS CONFIDENT

6. *at evening*. As the best time for accomplishing evil deeds.

they make a noise. The same Hebrew verb is used in Isa lix. 11, "We roar all like bears." A low dull sound is meant; LXX, λιμώξουσιν, "they will be famished" and so "moan." This verse is repeated in v. 14.

go round about the city. Neh iv. 11, 12, xiii. 15-20.

- 7 Behold, they belch out with their mouth ;
Swords are in their lips :
For who, *say they*, doth hear ?
- 8 But thou, O LORD, shalt laugh at them ;
Thou shalt have all the ¹heathen in derision.
- 9 ²O my strength, I will wait upon thee :
For God is my high tower.
- 10 ³The God of my mercy shall prevent me :
God shall let me see *my desire* upon ⁴mine enemies.
- 11 Slay them not, lest my people forget :
⁵Scatter them by thy power, and bring them down,
O Lord our shield.

¹ Or, *nations*

² So some ancient authorities. The Hebrew text has, *His strength*.

³ According to some ancient authorities, *My God with his mercy*.

⁴ Or, *them that lie in wait for me* ⁵ Or, *Make them wander to and fro*

7. *Swords are in their lips*. They are "bloodthirsty men" (v. 2).
For who, say they, doth hear? Cf lxiv. 5, "They say, Who shall see them?"

8. *shalt laugh at them*. Cf ii. 4.

9. *O my strength, I will wait upon thee*. So LXX, τὸ κράτος μου πρὸς σὲ φυλάξω: but MT reads "*His strength*"; hence AV, "Because of *his strength will I wait upon thee*" (a doubtful rendering). It is better to read just as v. 17, "Unto thee, O my strength, will I sing praises."

10. *The God of my mercy shall prevent me*. This is the rendering of the K'ri. The marginal rendering gives the C'thib, with which LXX agrees, ὁ θεός μου, τὸ ἔλεος αὐτοῦ προφθάσει με, וְדַחַק. With either reading the sense is that JEHOVAH's mercy will anticipate the Psalmist's need, and deliver him from his present distress.

see my desire. Cf liv. 7, xcii. 11, cxii. 8, cxviii. 7.

mine enemies. More accurately, *those who lie in wait for me*: so v. 8, xxvii. 11.

11-15. LET THE RIGHT PUNISHMENT BE METED OUT TO THE ENEMY

11. *Slay them not*. Here speaks the long-suffering statesman, let us say, Nehemiah, who is anxious not to push matters to extremity. He and Sanballat both hold office under the Persian king: anything of the nature of civil war is to be deprecated. Nehemiah's policy (though vigorous) was consistently defensive: Neh iv. 7-9, vi. 1-9, xiii. 20, 21.

by thy power. Rather, *by thy army* (Heb. *hāl'chā*, חַיִל), the same Hebrew word as in Neh iv. 2, "Sanballat spake before...the *army* of Samaria." Nehemiah prays that the armed builders of the walls of Jerusalem may be able to scatter those who would interfere with the work. P-B (*among the people*) is wrong.

- 12 *For* the sin of their mouth, *and* the words of their lips,
 Let them even be taken in their pride,
 And for cursing and lying which they speak.
- 13 Consume them in wrath, consume them, that they be no more:
 And let them know that God ruleth in Jacob,
 Unto the ends of the earth. [Selah]
- 14 And at evening let them return, let them make a noise like
 a dog,
 And go round about the city.
- 15 They shall wander up and down for meat,
 And tarry all night if they be not satisfied.
- 16 But I will sing of thy strength;
 Yea, I will sing aloud of thy mercy in the morning:
 For thou hast been my high tower,
 And a refuge in the day of my distress.
- 17 Unto thee, O my strength, will I sing praises:
 For God is my high tower, the God of my mercy.

12. *For the sin of their mouth.* Cf Neh iv. 2, 3.

13. *Consume them in wrath.* The Psalmist loses his patience. Cf Neh vi. 14; Jer xviii. 20, 21.

let them know that God ruleth in Jacob. Did God rule in Jacob? Appearances were to the contrary before Nehemiah's mission: the report was "the remnant...are in great affliction and reproach: the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire" (Neh i. 3). Apparently the enemy "ruled in Jacob." "God" stands here for JEHOVAH.

14. *let them return.* Or, *they return* (indicative) as in v. 6.

15. *(They) tarry all night.* This in Nehemiah's mouth might well refer to the men of Tyre who brought all manner of ware and sold on the Sabbath to the Jews, and lodged for the night outside Jerusalem when the city gates were shut: Neh xiii. 19, 20.

16, 17. A DOXOLOGY TO THE DELIVERER

17. *God (JEHOVAH) is my high tower.* So vv. 9, 16.

PSALM LX

IN TIME OF WAR

§ 1. CONTENTS.

1-3. Israel forsaken by God (JEHOVAH) and heavily defeated.

4, 5. Yet even so He shows His mercy by giving to His worshippers, His beloved, a banner under which to take refuge. He has so done because of His faithfulness.

6-8. Yes, His faithfulness. *He has spoken in his holiness*, i.e. "He has sworn by his holiness" (so in lxxxix. 35)—to take the whole of Israel, central (Shechem), east of Jordan (Gilead), south (Judah) as His own: Moab, Edom, and Philistia to occupy a lower station in the commonwealth of Israel. (The mixture of local and tribal names—Succoth, Ephraim, Judah—to designate Israel is not surprising: it is found also in the historical books.)

9, 10. But for the present Edom has successfully defied Israel; Israel has failed to take Edom's "strong city."

11, 12. Let JEHOVAH give His help: He shall tread down our enemy.

§ 2. OCCASION OF THE PSALM.

The heading (see p. 285) refers the Psalm to an event in the reign of David; while the king was fighting the Syrians in the north, the Edomites rose against him in the south. David detached Joab against Edom, and a great slaughter of the Edomites took place (2 S viii. 13, 14, RV marg.; 1 K xi. 15, 16). But some disaster unrecorded in the brief notices of the Edomite war may well have happened before David (or Joab) gained the upper hand. To such a disaster *vv.* 1-3, 10 may allude.

On the other hand Duhm points out that John Hyrcanus (circ. 136-105 B.C.) subdued Edom and took Sichem (Shechem), and further that since Hyrcanus was high priest such a statement as "God hath spoken *in His sanctuary*" would come with a certain naturalness from him as the fit person to receive Divine oracles. Moreover according to Josephus (*Antiq.* xiii. x *fin*) Hyrcanus possessed the gift of prophecy. Might he not (Duhm suggests) be the actual author of *vv.* 6-9? This suggestion is worthy of consideration, but with our present scanty knowledge of Edomite wars it can be no more than a suggestion.

Surely the geographical allusions in *vv.* 6, 7 suit the circumstances of Joshua's conquest better than those of John Hyrcanus. Duhm himself points out that not John, but his successor Jannaeus subdued Gilead and Manasseh. Moreover *Shechem* in *v.* 6 and *Ephraim* in *v.* 7 point to Joshua, while the mention of *Gilead and Manasseh* suggests the conquest of Transjordan which was the preliminary to Joshua's crossing of the Jordan (Deut. iii. 12, 13). The division of the land was according to Josh. xiv. 1, 2, xviii. 6 by the sacred lot "before JEHOVAH." To this division a suitable allusion can be found in the words of *v.* 6, *I will exult: I will divide Shechem*, i.e. "I will exult as victor; I will proceed to divide the spoils." JEHOVAH speaks as at the conquest of Canaan; He will divide the land among His people. Ephraim is given prominence as the tribe of Joshua: by a pardonable anachronism Judah follows with a title of honour as the tribe of the house of David. The Psalmist recalls these past things in order to reassure himself that JEHOVAH is indeed the one God of Israel.

Gunkel divides the Psalm into three sections as follows:

(a) First section, *vv.* 1-5. A complaint. JEHOVAH'S people are in flight "from before the bow—Grant them a way of escape!" For the statement *Thou hast given a banner* Gunkel reads a petition, *Grant a place to flee unto*. Cf section (c).

(b) *vv.* 6-8. In contrast to this almost despairing appeal this second section

contains a reassuring oracle from God (JEHOVAH). JEHOVAH will re-conquer Palestine for Israel from the heathen power (or powers) which now oppress it. Then the small neighbouring peoples will submit to Israel.

(c) *vv.* 9-12. The Israelite warriors fleeing southward sigh for a safe refuge in some strong city of Edom, possibly in Bozrah. Finally in *v.* 12 they recover confidence in the help of JEHOVAH of which they had formerly despaired (*vv.* 1 and 10).

The second section containing the oracle stands by itself in its proud self-confidence—even against Edom (*v.* 8), the land in which the fugitives of Israel were seeking refuge (*v.* 9). Gunkel compares the oracle given in lxxxix. 19 ff. He would in agreement with Nowack assign an earlier date to *vv.* 6-8 than to the rest of the Psalm. The decline of the Assyrian power might, he says, have fostered in the Jews fantastic hopes of domination over the neighbouring peoples and of the re-occupation of the lands of the Northern tribes, and these hopes, he thinks, are reflected in the oracle. But he would assign the Psalm as a whole to the post-exilic period. The flight of Jews into Edom is presupposed by Obadiah 14, and that they sought a hiding place there in post-exilic times is attested by Joel iv. 19. All beyond this, says Gunkel, is obscure.

So unsatisfactory are these suggestions that it is well to consult the heading of the Psalm afresh. That heading is not dependent on the present text of Samuel (2 Sam viii. 13), for it makes Joab, not David, the victor over Edom in the Valley of Salt, and reckons the Edomite slain at 12,000 not 18,000. (See also 1 Chr xviii. 12, where the victory is assigned to Abishai, the inseparable brother of Joab.) Reading between the lines one can find the story of a great disaster, decisively retrieved, in 2 Sam viii. 3-14 combined with 1 Chr xviii. 3-13 and with the heading of Ps lx. David was conducting a victorious campaign in the north and was even approaching the Euphrates, leaving the south unguarded (2 Sam viii. 3). It was Edom's opportunity, and the Edomites took it, and overran Judah, and perhaps reached the territory of Ephraim. It was also Moab's opportunity and the Moabites overran Gilead. But David rose to the occasion. He detached the valiant sons of Zeruiah ("Joab returned"), and they drove out the Edomites, pursued them into Edom, and slew 12,000 (or "18,000": Sam, Chr) in the Valley of Salt. Edom was made a vassal state.

The writer of *Samuel* says that David "gat him a name" as the result of these victories. His name was sung among the people, as it had been sung in earlier years: 1 Sam xviii. 7. The heading of the Psalm suggests that an ode (a *Michtām*) was composed by him or in his honour by another, celebrating these events: and moreover this ode was to be taught to the people ("to teach"). If Ps lx be not a literal transcript of the ode, it is at least probable that it contains important echoes of it. And the presence of Aramaisms such as are to be found in it is only what we should expect in a writing of the time of David. Could Israel possibly be at war with one Aramean (Syrian) power and under treaty with another without taking over some Aramaic expressions? The presence of Aramaisms is rather in favour of the theory of a Davidic date. Moreover the peculiar character of the heading of Ps lx tells in favour of its antiquity. The balance of evidence seems in favour of calling this a Davidic Psalm written in his age and for him, if not by him.

§ 3. RELIGIOUS SIGNIFICANCE.

The range of spiritual experience which this Psalmist displays is comparatively narrow. The situation is simple. His people have suffered a heavy defeat; he feels that JEHOVAH has forsaken them—for the time. The defeat plainly perplexes him; he does not assert that Israel has not deserved it, but he makes no confession of fault, nor does he plead for forgiveness on his people's behalf. Possibly his position is that of the Psalmist who wrote, "All this is come upon us; yet have we not forgotten thee." But he does not say so. He has a different point to emphasize, namely, that even in defeat a sign of JEHOVAH'S loving-kindness has been shown. JEHOVAH had set up an ensign, and the god-fearers in Israel had rallied round it (see *v.* 4, note). JEHOVAH'S "truth" still stands. There is no hope in man—none in big battalions—but, "Through JEHOVAH we shall (yet) do valiantly." Here is set an example of true faith in the midst of disaster.

§ 4. THE DOUBLE TEXT OF THIS PSALM.

Verses 5-12 are closely parallel to cviii. 6-13, though the opening verses of the two Psalms differ greatly. Ps cviii. 1-5 makes no confession of defeat, but consists of a fervid thanksgiving. We cannot doubt that cviii is a composite Psalm, and that lx. 5-12 is in its proper context in following lx. 1-4. Many commentators prefer the text of cviii. 9, "Over Philistia will I shout," to that of lx. 8, "Philistia, shout thou because of me," but the latter deserves the preference as the harder reading, which justifies itself on careful consideration.

For the Chief Musician; set to ¹Shushan Eduth: Michtam of David, to teach: when he strove with Aram-naharaim and with Aram-zobah, and Joab returned, and smote of Edom in the Valley of Salt twelve thousand.

- LX.** 1 O God, thou hast cast us off, thou hast broken us down;
 Thou hast been angry; O restore us again.
 2 Thou hast made the land to tremble; thou hast rent it:
 Heal the breaches thereof; for it shaketh.
 3 Thou hast shewed thy people hard things:
 Thou hast made us to drink the wine of staggering.

¹ That is, *The lily of testimony.*

1-3. ISRAEL (APPARENTLY) FORSAKEN BY GOD

LX. 1. *thou hast broken us down.* Or, *thou hast made a breach in our defences:* cf 2 K xiv. 13, the same Hebrew verb.

2. *Thou hast made the land to tremble; thou hast rent it.* Or, *Thou hast sent the earthquake, and made rents (fissures) in the land.* The words are used here in a metaphorical sense, but Palestine has been subject to earthquakes from ancient times (Amos i. 1) down to modern days; severe shocks occurred in 1837 and 1927.

3. *Thou hast shewed thy people hard things.* Cf iv. 6, "Who will shew us any good?" also lix. 10, lxxi. 20, lxxxv. 7. The reading of MT

- 4 Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee,
¹That it may be displayed because of the truth. [Selah]
- 5 That thy beloved may be delivered,
 Save with thy right hand, and answer ²us.
- 6 God hath spoken in his holiness; I will exult:
 I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth.

¹ Many ancient authorities render, *That they may flee from before the bow.*

² Another reading is, *me.*

is also the reading of the Versions: LXX, ἔδειξας: Vulgate, *ostendisti.* So too Peshitta and Targum.

Lagarde's proposed change of *hir'itha*, הָרִיתָ, "thou hast showed," into *hirvethā*, הָרִוּיָה, "thou hast made us drink copiously (of hard things)," is to be rejected though accepted by Duhm and Gunkel, and recommended "for the sake of the parallelism." It is a mechanical emendation due to the belief that Hebrew parallelism cannot rise above a mere tautology. Parallelism, writes Duhm (page xxvii), "lends at times to the language Elevation and Richness (*Schwung und Fülle*), but it leads much oftener (*viel häufiger*) to unnecessary repetitions, or even descends to mere pattern-production (*Schablone*)." But there is no "unnecessary repetition" here in MT, but rather a progress in the narrative. The first member, "*Thou hast shewed hard things*," states that a blow has been inflicted, while the second member, "*Thou hast made us to drink the wine of staggering*," tells what effect has been produced on those who received the blow: it has proved "a staggering blow." Moreover to lose the expression, *Thou hast shewed*, would be a great loss, for to *shew* is a characteristic description of JEHOVAH's way of working. In His acts He makes a revelation of Himself and of His will.

4, 5. JEHOVAH'S BANNER

4. *a banner...be displayed.* Rather, *an ensign to them that fear thee, That they may take refuge* (i.e. rally beneath it). A remnant of Israel has rallied under JEHOVAH's ensign. For "ensign" cf Isa xi. 10, xiii. 2.

because of the truth. I.e. JEHOVAH's truth (His faithfulness). The words seem to be the beginning of a sentence which is not finished. Possibly the sentence ran somewhat as follows, *From before the Truth* (i.e. Thy Truth) *let the enemy be put to flight.*

truth = Heb. *koshet*, a word borrowed from the Aramaic. LXX, Vulgate give "bow" as though for Heb. *kesheth*, an inferior reading.

6-8. THE ORACLE

6. *God hath spoken in his holiness, Or, (as Duhm) God (JEHOVAH) spake in his sanctuary.* See Introduction.
the valley of Succoth. Here Jacob is said to have made "booths"

- 7 Gilead is mine, and Manasseh is mine;
 Ephraim also is the defence of mine head;
 Judah is my ¹sceptre.
- 8 Moab is my washpot;
²Upon Edom will I cast my shoe:
 Philistia, shout thou because of me.
- 9 Who will bring me into the strong city?
³Who hath led me unto Edom?
- 10 ⁴Hast not thou, O God, cast us off?
 And thou goest not forth, O God, with our hosts.

¹ Or, *lawgiver*² Or, *Unto*³ Or, *Who will lead me &c.*⁴ Or, *Wilt not thou, O God, which hast cast us off, and goest...hosts?*

(Heb. *succōth*) for his cattle. The place has not been identified with certainty. There was a city of Succoth east of Jordan in the time of Gideon (Jud viii. 4, 5). As Shechem was west of Jordan the meaning of the verse may be, "I will divide up the whole land both east and west of Jordan."

7. *the defence of mine head*. Lit. (as P-B) *the strength of my head*. Cf the title given to the commander of the modern Egyptian army, *Sirdar*, "guardian of the head," i.e. of the person of the Ruler, King or Sultan.

Judah is my sceptre. I.e. "Judah supplies the prince who leads the host of Israel for me" (JEHOVAH is the speaker). Vulgate, *Juda rex meus*. The Heb. *mēhōkēk*, "sceptre," means sometimes "ruler's staff" as in Gen xlix. 10, where the parallel term is *shēbet*, "sceptre": cf Num xxi. 18. In other places it means "governor" or "ruler" (he who wields the staff) as in Deut xxxiii. 21; Isa xxxiii. 22 (EV "law-giver"). The word has military associations.

8. *my washpot*. For washing my feet.

Upon Edom etc. Better, as marg. *Unto Edom* etc. The master casts his shoes to his slave to take up: cf Matt iii. 11.

Philistia, shout thou because of me. Philistia, addressed as though already conquered and subject, is bidden to shout whether willing or unwilling in salutation of the God of Israel. In the parallel passage, cviii. 9, there is an inferior reading, "Over Philistia will I shout (in triumph)."

9, 10. EDM UNSUBDUED

9. *Who will bring me...Who hath led me...?* A fine instance of the terseness of expression so often found in the Psalter. The meaning is, "Who will bring me into the strong city but he who has led me as far as Edom?"

- 11 Give us help against the adversary:
For vain is the ¹help of man.
- 12 Through God we shall do valiantly:
For he it is that shall tread down our adversaries.

¹ Heb. *salvation*.

11, 12. LET JEHOVAH GIVE HIS HELP

11. *vain is the help of man*. Cf xxxiii. 16, 17.

12. *Through God* etc. Rather, *Through JEHOVAH we shall* (yet) *do valiantly*. Faith and works combine in this confession and resolution. Cf xlv. 5.

PSALM LXI

THE PRAYER OF AN EXILE FOR HIS KING

The meaning of this Psalm is somewhat obscure partly through its brevity, and partly perhaps because the Psalmist is intentionally cryptic. But three points stand out clearly. The author is in exile and in fear of "the enemy" (v. 2—4); he has received a remarkable answer to his prayers (v. 5); he prays now in fervent yet restrained language for his king (v. 6, 7).

The Psalmist's restraint is felt at once when v. 6, 7 of this Psalm are compared with the seventeen v. of Ps lxxii, or again when this Psalm as a whole is compared with Pss xx, xxi. They are defiant in tone, while this barely mentions the enemy.

A reasonable explanation of this restraint is found, if the king is to be identified with Jehoiachin, the captive king of Judah in the hands of the Chaldeans. For him the Psalmist may pray that he may have long life, that he may abide before God, that lovingkindness and truth may preserve him—the Conqueror would not grudge him these boons. But this Psalmist does not dare to pray for his king,

Send him *victorious*,
Happy and *glorious*,

in the tone of Pss xx, xxi.

On the other hand he confesses that his former prayers have been heard. May not this confession point to the favour shown to Jehoiachin by Evil-merodach the successor of Nebuchadrezzar (2 K xxv. 27—30)?

The Psalmist utters his cry "from the end of the earth," and he prays that he may be allowed to dwell (to sojourn) in the "tent" of his God, in other words that he may be restored to Jerusalem. This petition would in the Psalmist's mind include the return of the king, but this is better left unsaid, and he does not say it. Terms so general as those used in v. 6, 7 might apply to any king, even to the king of Babylon himself.

This is a notable prayer. The Psalmist (since he speaks of his king) speaks not as an individual but as the representative of his people. When he prays, *Lead me to the rock*, he thinks of his king and of his fellow-countrymen (v. 2).

When he says, *Thou hast been a refuge*, he remembers, no doubt, that God did make Jerusalem a safe defence for his people in earlier days, e.g. under Hezekiah. The Psalmist's faith has been strengthened by some recent experience of God's goodness, so he is encouraged to pray for the safety of his king for years to come. May he be preserved through all the dangers of detention in Babylon, that the Psalmist may offer unending praise.

For the Chief Musician; on a stringed instrument. *A Psalm* of David.

LXI. 1 Hear my cry, O God;

Attend unto my prayer.

2 From the end of the earth will I call unto thee, when my heart ¹is overwhelmed:

Lead me to ²the rock that is higher than I.

3 For thou hast been a refuge for me,

A strong tower from the enemy.

4 I will dwell in thy ³tabernacle for ever:

I will take refuge in the covert of thy wings. [Selah

5 For thou, O God, hast heard my vows:

Thou hast ⁴given me the heritage of those that fear thy name.

¹ Or, *fainteth*

² Or, *a rock that is too high for me*

³ Heb. *tent*.

⁴ Or, *given an heritage unto those &c.*

1-4. A PRAYER IN EXILE

LXI. 1. *my cry*. Hebrew as in xvii. 1; see note.

2. *From the end of the earth*. Hebrew as Isa v. 26. The Psalmist is in exile.

when my heart is overwhelmed. Better as marg. *fainteth*: so cii, heading. The Psalmist is strained between hope and fear.

the rock that is higher than I. Better, *the rock that is too high for me*. Metaphorical language meaning, (*Grant me*) *the safety* (perhaps also *the prosperity*) *which I cannot obtain for myself*.

4. *I will dwell*. Rather, *I would sojourn*, or *Let me sojourn*. The words are a prayer. He desires to be brought back to dwell in Jerusalem with JEHOVAH as God's guest. *Sojourn* as in xv. 1.

in the covert of thy wings. Cf xvii. 8, note; Deut xxxiii. 12.

5-8. CONFIDENCE THAT THE PRAYER HAS BEEN HEARD

5. *thou...hast heard my vows*. He regards the favour shown to Jehoiachin as an answer to his prayers. See Introduction above.

Thou hast given me the heritage etc. Or (with a slight emendation of the Hebrew), *Thou hast granted the desire* (or *request* יְרֵשָׁה as in xxi. 2) *of those that fear thy name*.

6 Thou wilt prolong the king's life:

His years shall be as many generations.

7 He shall abide before God for ever:

O prepare lovingkindness and truth, that they may preserve him.

8 So will I sing praise unto thy name for ever,

That I may daily perform my vows.

6. *Thou wilt prolong the king's life.* Lit. *Thou wilt add days to the days of the king.* Cf 2 K xx. 6.

(*His years shall be*) *as many generations.* Lit. *as a generation and a generation.* Rashi taking the words as spoken by David paraphrases as follows: "When it was decreed concerning me that I should die in my prime, he added days to my days until my years became seventy years equivalent to the years of a generation and a generation." The Hebrew phrase means, "more than one generation": it can hardly mean "many" generations.

7. *abide before God.* Cf Gen xvii. 18, "And Abraham said unto God, Oh that Ishmael might live before thee!" The thought in both passages is the same: i.e. of living in the favour of God.

lovingkindness and truth expresses one idea, namely, that of God's faithful (unchanging) mercy.

8. *So will I sing praise.* The Psalmist pays his vows with a Psalm, not with a burnt offering; cf xix. 14, note.

PSALM LXII

A LONELY RULER STEDFAST IN GOD

(CF LIX, INTRODUCTION)

The situation of the Jewish Community towards the end of the fifth century B.C. is tersely described in Neh i. 3. It is a gloomy picture. The people are "a remnant"—they are in "great affliction," in poverty and its allied ills—they are in "reproach," surrounded by scornful enemies—and "the wall of Jerusalem is broken down" so that they have no defence against their foes. The rest of the book of Nehemiah tells how much was done by the faith and energy of one man to redeem the situation.

But this improved condition was the exception, while the state of things Nehemiah found at the first was normal: so the nature of the case suggests. The spiritual isolation of Israel at which Greek and Roman wondered so greatly was a fact of long standing: indeed Israel stood alone centuries before Greek or Roman historians wrote about her. As one of the songs of Balaam has it:

Lo! it is a people that dwelleth alone

And doth not reckon itself among the nations.

Num xxiii. 9 (literal rendering)

Such a nation as this could not be popular when it was strong, and when it was weak it would certainly be insulted and oppressed.

So for several centuries after the return from Babylon the Jewish people had to suffer much at the hands of their neighbours in addition to the suffering which pestilence or famine brought. From such conditions sprang (we may believe) not a few of the Psalms which pray with so much fervour against arrogant enemies, who are not restrained by fear of JEHOVAH.

And there is a further supposition—which we may reasonably make. In the course of some four hundred years Nehemiah and Ezra were not the only men who were raised up (like the Judges of old time) to give relief, or indeed, to be saviours of their people. Surely unnamed deliverers speak to us from time to time in the Psalms.

History repeats itself, and it is allowable to take the circumstances of Nehemiah's time, and even the personal experiences of Nehemiah to illustrate the language of such a Psalm as lxii. The actual occasion may have been earlier or later than 444–432 B.C., and the speaker an earlier or later ruler of the type of Nehemiah, but the general historical background remained unchanged for centuries.

On the other hand it must be said that the names of two enemy peoples seem to be given in *vs.* 1, 2 and that these names suggest two of the personal enemies of Nehemiah. Beside Sanballat the Persian governor in Samaria, who would naturally be suspicious of the patriotic energy of Nehemiah, there were two men belonging to Sanballat's *entourage* who used their influence against the revival of the Jewish people. These were Tobiah the Ammonite and Gesheh (Gashmu) the Arabian (Neh ii. 19, iv. 3, 7, vi. 1–7). Now both the Ammonites and the Arabians seem to be named in Ps lxii. In *v.* 1 there is a word *Dūmīyah* which is ill-translated in EV as “waiteth”; it is better explained as a lengthened form of the proper name *Dumah*. *Dumah* was a descendant of Ishmael, and so Arabian (Gen xxv. 14), and an enemy of Israel (Isa xxi. 11). In *v.* 2 occurs the awkward phrase (in the English) *I shall not be greatly moved*. Why should the Psalmist qualify his confidence thus? Moreover the phrase occurs in its unqualified and natural form, *I shall not be moved*, a little later in the Psalm (*v.* 6). The awkward word *greatly* stands for the Hebrew word *Rabbah*, which is surely nothing else than the proper name of the Ammonite capital, so well known through Jewish history, *Rabbah* or *Rabbath of the children of Ammon* (Deut iii. 11; 2 Sam xi. 1; Jer xlix. 2; Amos i. 14). Surely we may render in *vs.* 1, 2 as follows: “Verily on God my soul resteth, O Dumah...I shall not be moved, O Rabbah.” If this be the right reading of the two words *Dūmīyah* and *Rabbah*, the Psalmist's enemies are Arabian and Ammonite, as were the enemies of Nehemiah.

The enemy plots, as it appears from *vs.* 3, 4, to kill or at least to thrust down from his high position *a certain person*, not *every man* as P-B in *v.* 3. It is not unreasonable in the light of Neh vi. 1–14 to identify this outstanding person with Nehemiah. His enemies did indeed plot and “lie” against him in suggesting that he wanted to make himself “king in Judah” (Neh vi. 7, 8). Again the painful feeling which the Psalmist has of being alone, and of having God only as his resource (*vs.* 6–8), re-appears in the story of Nehemiah. At every crisis

the great Jewish governor turns to God whether at Shushan the palace in the land of exile or in Jerusalem (Neh i. 4-11, ii. 4, iv. 4, 9, v. 19, vi. 9, 14).

Further, the reflection on the untrustworthiness of men, whether of high or low estate (v. 9), accords with the experiences of Nehemiah. The nobles of Tekoa would not take their share in building the wall of Jerusalem (Neh iii. 5), and later the hearts of the multitude failed them when they realized the greatness of the task they had undertaken: "Judah said, The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed...so that we are not able to build the wall" (Neh iv. 10).

Lastly, the exhortation in v. 10, "Trust not in oppression," which seems to some commentators to have no connexion with the previous context, is illuminated if the Psalm represents the thoughts of Nehemiah. He had to wrestle not only with foreign foes, but also with the men of high degree of his own people. These he found oppressing their poorer brethren with usury, and by his public reproof he succeeded in redressing the wrong (Neh v. 1-13). The thoughts of the Psalmist are *either* those of Nehemiah, *or* those of one whose circumstances and character were like his. If we may not make the identification, it is still a fact that this is a Psalm worthy of a hero like Nehemiah. Dangers are pressing: the enemy threatens assault: and among the Psalmist's own people neither rich nor poor can be trusted to make a vigorous defence. But the Psalmist does not despair, for material resources count but little with him: his trust for escape from present dangers is in God. The Psalmist believes that God knows best what to do, so he bids his soul rest in silence before God (v. 5). Duhm has well caught the significance of v. 10, *Das Leben mit Gott ist besser als die Freude an menschlichen Dingen, besonders an ungerechtem Mammon* ("Life with God is better than the enjoyment of human things, especially the enjoyment of ill-gotten wealth"). The whole Psalm hangs well together, and the suggestion in *I.C.C.* that vv. 7, 8 and 10-12 are glosses cannot be justified.

For the Chief Musician; after the manner of Jeduthun. A Psalm of David.

LXII. 1 My soul ¹waiteth only upon God:

From him *cometh* my salvation.

2 He only is my rock and my salvation:

He is my high tower; I shall not be greatly moved.

¹ Heb. *is silent unto God.*

1-4. DEFIANCE OF THE ARABIAN AND AMMONITE CONSPIRATORS

LXII. 1. *My soul waiteth only upon God.* Rather, *Verily on God my soul resteth, O Dumah.* The Psalm is introduced with a particle (ן) which has an adversative force, as though the Psalmist were answering the reproach of an enemy.

2. *He only.* Better, *Verily He* (emphatic pronoun): see last note. *I shall not be greatly moved.* Better, *I shall not be moved, O Rabbah.* *Rabbah* represents the Ammonites, whose capital was called Rabbah (2 Sam xi. 1, xii. 26). See the Introduction.

- 3 How long will ye set upon a man,
¹That ye may slay *him*, all of you,
 Like a bowing wall, like a tottering fence
 4 They only consult to thrust him down from his excellency;
 They delight in lies:
 They bless with their mouth, but they curse inwardly. [Selah
 5 My soul, ²wait thou only upon God;
 For my expectation is from him.

¹ Or, as otherwise read, *Ye shall be slain &c.* ² Heb. *be thou silent unto God.*

3. *That ye may slay him.* Not, *Ye shall be slain*, as in P-B, AV.

Like a bowing wall. The man whom they would slay seems to them already tottering to his fall; cf xxxviii. 17. The metaphor of the bowing wall may have been suggested by the condition of the walls of Jerusalem in the Psalmist's day.

4. *They only...from his excellency.* Better, *Verily they have taken counsel to thrust him (or me) down from his (or my) dignity.* *Dignity* (Heb. *se'eth*, דָּוָר) is used of the position of the firstborn: Gen xlix. 3. Perhaps we should read *me* and *my dignity* (so LXX). The Psalmist is a ruler against whom plots are laid; cf Ps lv, Introduction, §2.

They bless etc. The same complaint is made in lv. 21. Nehemiah might have uttered it, or a Psalmist speaking in the name of Nehemiah.

5-8. GOD (JEHOVAH) THE SAFE REFUGE

5. *My soul, wait thou only upon God.* Or, *But* (כִּן), *my soul, be thou silent unto God.* Cf iv. 4, 5, "Commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still (or 'be silent'). Offer the sacrifices of righteousness." Also xxxvii. 7, "Rest in the LORD," lit. "Be thou silent unto JEHOVAH." Heathen who prayed and offered at a sanctuary believed that the deity was corporeally present during the act of worship: hence the custom of silence when the deity *approached* (as it was thought) *the sacrifice*. A similar custom prevailed among the Romans. "The prayer was probably said during the slaughter [of the victim]; the priest, or whoever was the sacrificer, said it with his head covered, in order to shut out evil influences from his eyes, and under his breath (*tacitus*) while a *tibicen* played the *tibia* to drown all ill-omened sounds: the bystanders kept meanwhile a strict silence" (Warde Fowler in *Companion to Latin Studies*, §208). When the Psalmist says, *My soul, be thou silent unto God*, he may be thinking of such a scene as this. But his silent waiting is above all an expression of his trust in God. A close spiritual parallel is found in a verse of Thomas Whitehead (on Mary Magdalene at the tomb):

Myrrh and spices will I bring,
 True affection's offering;
 Close the door from sight and sound
 Of the busy world around;
 And in patient watch remain
 Till my Lord appear again.

- 6 He only is my rock and my salvation:
He is my high tower; I shall not be moved.
- 7 With God is my salvation and my glory:
 The rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in God.
- 8 Trust in him at all times, ye people;
 Pour out your heart before him:
 God is a refuge for us. [Selah
- 9 Surely men of low degree are ¹vanity, and men of high degree
 are a lie:
 In the balances they will go up;
 They are together lighter than ¹vanity.
- 10 Trust not in oppression,
 And become not vain in robbery:

¹ Heb. *a breath*.

8. *Trust in him at all times, ye people.* This text may be right, but the address, 'am ("ye people"), is unusual. LXX, ἐλπίσατε ἐπ' αὐτόν, πᾶσα συναγωγή λαοῦ, "Hope on him, all ye congregation of the people." Cf the assurance given in Neh iv. 20, "Our God shall fight for us."

Pour out your heart. Cf 1 Sam i. 15, "I (Hannah) *poured out* my soul before JEHOVAH."

9, 10. NO HELP IN MAN NOR IN RICHES

9. *vanity.* Heb. *hebel*, "a breath," as in Eccl i. 2, "All is *vanity*." It occurs in Gen iv as a proper name, *Abel*, the brother of Cain.

men of high degree. Cf cxlvi. 3, "Put not your trust in princes."

are a lie. Or, *are a disappointment* (Heb. *kāzāb*); no safe refuge is to be found with them. Cf cxvi. 11, "I said in my alarm, All men are a lie," i.e. "disappoint me" (Heb. *kōzēb*, the kindred verb).

In P-B the sense of this verse has been spoilt by an error of punctuation, "The children of men *are deceitful upon the weights*." But the Great Bible of 1539 from which the P-B version is taken reads, "The children of men are disceatfull: upon the weyghtes they are all together lyghter than vanyte it selfe."

In the balances. P-B *upon the weights* ("weights" in Old English being the scales to hold the thing weighed).

10. *Trust not in oppression.* These words come naturally from the mouth of Nehemiah who found the great men of his day oppressing their Jewish brethren. In a time of dearth they made cruel exactions on the poor (Neh v. 1-5).

become not vain in robbery. Or, *become not empty through robbery*, i.e. "Do not lose your soul by filling your store chambers with plunder." Cf Jer ii. 5, "(Your fathers) walked after that which is vain ('empty,' i.e. false gods) and are become vain ('empty').")"

If riches increase, set not your heart *thereon*.

11 God hath spoken once,

Twice have I heard this;

That power belongeth unto God:

12 Also unto thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy:

For thou renderest to every man according to his work.

If riches increase etc. Wealth is often regarded in OT as God's reward for those who are faithful to Him, as in the cases of Abraham and Job. But a higher note is struck here and in xxxvii. 16, xlix. 16-18; cf lxiii. 3-5.

11, 12. JEHOVAH'S ORACLE

11. *hath spoken once*. Cf Job xxxiii. 14, "For God speaketh once, Yea twice, though man regardeth it not."

power belongeth unto God. Vulgate, *potestas Dei est*, but Jerome (iuxta Hebraeos) *imperium Dei est*, "Imperial rule belongeth unto God" (a paraphrase); cf I Chr xxix. 11 (David's doxology).

12. *unto thee...belongeth mercy: For thou renderest* etc. This is a sentiment which may be Nehemiah's: cf Neh xiii. 22.

PSALM LXIII

FOR GOD AND FOR THE KING

§ 1. CONTENTS.

1, 2. The Psalmist at a distance from the sanctuary longs for the vision of God.

3-5. He would fain praise God, for he has more joy in uttering praise than in life itself. He desires to acknowledge God's lovingkindness.

6-8. In the night watches (when deep thoughts come to men) the Psalmist remembers that God has been his help in the past. He clings to God and feels God's right hand supporting him.

9, 10. His enemies will flee into hiding-places, and be pursued in their flight by the sword.

11. But "the king" by the help of God will triumph, and God's faithful ones will glory, while his enemies will be put to silence.

§ 2. OCCASION AND PURPOSE.

The opening words of the Psalm invite a comparison of Ps lxiii with Pss xlii-xliii. The general background is the same: *My soul thirsteth for thee* (lxiii. 1) in the one answers to *My soul thirsteth for God* in the other (xlii. 2). Both Psalmists look back with yearning to days spent in the Temple: *Right well have I beheld thee in the sanctuary* (lxiii. 2); *I went with the throng, and led them to the house of God* (xlii. 4). If the one confesses, *Thy lovingkindness is better than life* (lxiii. 3), the other is not far behind in his threefold acknowledge-

ment of God as *the health* (i.e. *the salvation*) of *my countenance* (xlii. 5, 11, xliii. 5). Both Psalmists in the silence of the night meditate upon the Divine lovingkindness (lxiii. 6 and xlii. 8).

In one respect perhaps they differ. In xliii. 3 the Psalmist makes it quite clear that the Temple is in his mind when he says that his soul is athirst for God. It is in the Temple surrounded by fellow-worshippers that he hopes to realise the presence of God (xlii. 4). But in lxiii we find the mystic's sense of God's presence in the soul of the individual. Even *in a dry and weary land* the Psalmist can *follow hard after* God and realise that the Divine *right hand* is *upholding* him in safety (v. 8).

Certainly in Ps lxiii the sense of God's presence is profound. *Thy loving-kindness is better than life* is a saying which goes very deep. The Hebrew Psalmist shows himself akin to the Indian thinker who gives all his wealth to his heir, resigns his position as Vizier at the prince's court, and sets out alone on the mystic way :

Oh, light was the world that he weighed in his hands!

Oh, heavy the tale of his fiefs and his lands!

He has gone from the council and put on the shroud,

("Can ye hear?" saith Kabir), a *Bairagi* avowed!

(R. Kipling, *A Song of Kabir*.)

The Psalmist desires simply to "make his soul" he has ceased to care for the ordinary joys of life. God has become his All.

The immediate occasion for the composition of this Psalm seems to have been a political event. The author, an adherent of the king, has been driven from Jerusalem by war or by rebellion and his king is in danger. He prays for his own safety and expresses his conviction that his king will be kept safe by God. We see such an occasion in the rebellion of Absalom, if the Psalm belong to the time of David, but it may be of later date. Why should not the king be Jehoiachin, a prisoner exposed to many dangers through intrigue at the court of Babylon? But the importance of the Psalm is independent of the precise occasion which drew it forth. A soul athirst for God is an example for all time.

A Psalm of David, when he was in the wilderness of Judah.

LXIII. 1 O God, thou art my God; ¹early will I seek thee:

My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee,

In a dry and weary land, where no water is.

¹ Or, *earnestly*

1-8. THE GOD OF THE PSALMIST

LXIII. 1. *O God, thou art my God.* Read, O **Jehovah**, *thou art my God.* Cf xlii. 1, 2.

early will I seek thee. I.e. *earnestly*, as marg.

My soul...my flesh. See vi. 2, 3, note.

In a dry...land. The Psalmist is absent from the Holy Land: he desires to be able to visit the Temple

- 2 So have I looked upon thee in the sanctuary,
To see thy power and thy glory.
- 3 For thy lovingkindness is better than life;
My lips shall praise thee.
- 4 So will I bless thee while I live:
I will lift up my hands in thy name.
- 5 My soul shall be satisfied as with ¹marrow and fatness;
And my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips;
- 6 When I remember thee upon my bed,
²*And* meditate on thee in the night watches.
- 7 For thou hast been my help,
And in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice.

¹ Heb. *fat*.² Or, *I meditate*

2. *So* (Heb. *kēn*) *have I looked upon thee* etc. Better, *Right well have I beheld thee in the sanctuary, Seeing thy power and thy glory*. See on v. 4 for *kēn*.

3. *thy lovingkindness is better than life*. This is a daring expression in the mouth of a Hebrew who probably had no hope (or only a very faint hope) of a future life. The Psalmist says in effect that JEHOVAH'S lovingkindness is better than long life without this lovingkindness. The Targum however paraphrases the sentence in the light of the later Jewish belief: "Thy lovingkindness which thou wilt perform to the righteous in the world (the age) to come is better than the life which thou hast given to the wicked in this world."

4. *So will I bless*. The Heb. *kēn*, rendered "So," is an adjective, having the sense of "right, fitting." Render, "I will bless thee as I should." Cf. v. 2, note.

while I live. Cf. cxv. 17, 18.

5. *And my mouth* etc. Note the succession of pronouns in the first person, "my hands" (v. 4)—"my soul"—"my mouth." The Psalmist is away from Jerusalem, and can neither sacrifice nor eat of the sacrifice, but he will not cease from praise. He will perform his part. Kittel refers to our Lord's words to the Samaritan woman that "the true worshippers" worship the Father neither in Gerizim nor in Jerusalem, but *in spirit* (John iv. 21-23).

6. *When I remember thee* etc. (A new sentence begins here: v. 5 should end with a full stop.) The continuation is in v. 7 (*Then I recollect*) that (not *For*) *thou hast been my help*.

7. *in the shadow of thy wings*. Cf. xvii. 8, note, xxxvi. 7, lvii. 1.

will I rejoice. Or, *will I sing aloud (thy praise)*. Just as though he were in the Temple, and not in the wilderness.

- 8 My soul followeth hard after thee :
 Thy right hand upholdeth me.
- 9 But those that seek my soul, ¹to destroy it,
 Shall go into the lower parts of the earth.
- 10 They shall be ²given over to the power of the sword :
 They shall be a portion for ³foxes.
- 11 But the king shall rejoice in God :
 Every one that sweareth by him shall glory ;
 For the mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped.

¹ Or, *shall be destroyed* ; they shall &c ² Or, *poured out by* ³ Or, *jackals*

8. *My soul followeth hard after thee* (pursueth thee):
Thy right hand upholdeth me.

In themselves the words are paradoxical, but as a statement of religious experience they satisfy. They might be taken to express the meeting of Grace and Freewill in the religious life.

9-11. THE ENEMIES OF THE PSALMIST

9. (*But those that seek my soul*) to destroy it. Better, *But they are doomed to destruction that seek my soul.*

the lower parts of the earth. I.e. "Sheol." Cf lxxxvi. 13.

10. *They shall be given over etc.* Better, *They who would give him* (i.e. the king who is introduced in the next verse) *over to the sword.*

11. *But the king.* Already in v. 10 the Psalmist was thinking of "the king," but who is this king? Jehoiachin? See Introduction, p. 296.

shall rejoice in God. Cf cxlix. 2, "Let Israel rejoice in him that made him."

that sweareth by him. I.e. by JEHOVAH. To swear by JEHOVAH was one of the most public ways by which a Jew confessed that JEHOVAH was his God: Isa xlviii. 1, lxxv. 16.

that speak lies. I.e. that deny the supremacy of JEHOVAH, or attribute power to another God.

PSALM LXIV

THE PSALMIST ASSAILED BY FALSE WITNESSES IS DELIVERED

This Psalm resembles in its contents and character the series Pss lvi-lxix: and specially in the fact that the enemies (or oppressors) against whom the Psalmist prays are his own countrymen. Apparently there are two sections among his people, one of which he describes as the "council (not 'counsel') of evil-doers," and as the "throng of workers of iniquity." A second section is perhaps indicated by "the upright in heart" of v. 10. The Psalmist as one of

the latter stands in serious danger from the opposite party, so that he prays, *Preserve my life from the enemy Fear*. Duhm goes so far as to identify the two sections with the Pharisees and the Sadducees and to date Ps lxiv with Pss lvi–lix in the Hasmonean age.

This lateness of date does not seem probable, though the suggestion of the conflict—the serious conflict—between two religious parties may be correct. As early as the date of Nehemiah it is possible to discern two sections, one of rigorists like the governor himself, the other of the more tolerant sort, who were willing to work with the Samaritans. See especially Neh xiii, *passim*. That these parties could be as bitterly opposed to each other as such passages as lix. 2, and lxiv. 3, 4 suggest, is unfortunately quite probable in the light of the later history of the struggles between Pharisee and Sadducee in the days of Alexander Jannaeus, and between “Moderate” and Zealot during the great revolt of 66–70 A.D.

But to dismiss these Psalms (lvi–lix and lxiv) as the literature of party strife would be unjust. There is a spiritual lesson in the Psalmist’s trust in God. In the midst of present dangers he believes in an invisible deliverer. He is convinced that God is a just judge, who pays back evil to the evil: they shoot their arrow, and God shoots his. And the final result of the contest is that the righteous are enabled to rejoice in **JEHOVAH** the Deliverer.

For the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.

LXIV. 1 Hear my voice, O God, in my complaint:

Preserve my life from fear of the enemy.

2 Hide me from the secret counsel of evil-doers;

From the ¹tumult of the workers of iniquity:

¹ Or, *through*

1–6. THE ADVANCE OF THE ENEMY

LXIV. 1. *in my complaint*. Or, *in my* (quiet) *meditation*. The Hebrew word *siāh* (רש) is used of murmuring or whispering, and so is suitably used of prayers, for prayers were said in ancient times in a whisper, as for instance among the Romans: see too 1 Sam i. 13. The Psalmist is not engaged in public prayer, nor even in vocal prayer, he is murmuring under his breath to God. In lv. 2, the same Hebrew word, *siāh*, is rendered, “my prayer” in P-B; “my complaint” RV. See lxii. 5, note. *from fear of the enemy*. Or, *from the enemy Fear*. The Psalmist has some terrible object of dread in his mind: he personifies his *Fear* (Heb. *pahad*).

2. *the secret counsel...the tumult*. He prays to be delivered both from secret and from open foes.

the workers of iniquity. The same Hebrew phrase as in v. 5; see note. Some take this phrase as a technical term for sorcerers who inflict injury (e.g. sickness) on those against whom they utter spells. It may be the case in this passage. See the following verses.

- 3 Who have whet their tongue like a sword,
And have aimed their arrows, even bitter words:
4 That they may shoot in secret places at the perfect:
Suddenly do they shoot at him, and fear not.
5 They encourage themselves in an evil purpose;
They commune of laying snares privily;
They say, Who shall see them?
6 They search out iniquities; ¹We have accomplished, *say they*,
a diligent search:
And the inward thought of every one, and the heart, is deep.
7 But God shall shoot at them;
With an arrow suddenly shall they be wounded.

¹ Or, as otherwise read, *they have accomplished or have hidden*

3, 4. *Who have whet their tongue* etc. The metaphors used in these verses would form a suitable description of secret plotting (in general) against the Psalmist as a ruler of his people, or again (in particular) of a conspiracy of false witness against him (cf Neh vi. 7). Or, the reference may be to the spells of sorcerers.

3. *have aimed their arrows*. Lit. *have trodden their arrow*. But it was the bow, not the arrow, which the archer trod, when he made ready to shoot. *Tread* (*dārach*) here has the general sense of *prepare*: render, *have prepared their arrow*.

bitter words. Or, *a bitter word*. The adjective *bitter* (*mar*) has many suggestions, specially of that which is unwholesome or harmful or cruel, whether false testimony or a hostile spell. A similar phrase is used in v. 5, "an evil word" or "evil matter": RV "an evil purpose."

4. *the perfect*. Heb. *tām*, as in xxxvii. 37. In xviii. 25, the cognate word *tāmim* is used. The meaning is "upright": see xv. 2, note.

and fear not. I.e. fear not God: cf lv. 19; Gen xx. 11.

5. *They encourage* etc. Lit. *They strengthen* (or *confirm*) *their evil purpose*.

They commune (*tell*) *of laying snares privily*. The conspirators glory in their wickedness, and communicate to fellow-conspirators their evil purposes. They *make a story* of their villainy: cf lxix. 26, "They tell of the sorrow of those whom thou hast wounded."

They say, Who shall see them? Better, *They say, Who shall observe them?* i.e. Who shall pay attention to their deeds. .

6. *And the inward thought* etc. The clause is perhaps overloaded with a gloss. Read simply, *And the heart of every man is deep*.

7-9. THE ROUT OF THE ENEMY

7. *But God shall shoot*. Rather, *And God hath shot*. The Psalmist sees his petition answered.

With an arrow etc. Or, *By a sudden arrow hath been their wounding*.

8 ¹So they shall be made to stumble, their own tongue being against them :

All that see them shall ²wag the head.

9 And all men shall fear ;

And they shall declare the work of God,

And shall wisely consider of his doing.

10 The righteous shall be glad in the LORD, and shall trust in him ;

And all the upright in heart shall glory.

¹ Or, *So shall they against whom their tongue was make them to stumble*

² Or, *flee away*

LXX gives βέλος νηπίων "the arrow of little ones" (as though the Hebrew were *pēthā'im* instead of *pith'om*); cf viii. 2, "Out of the mouth of babes... hast thou established strength."

8. *So they shall* etc. Better, *And they against whom their tongue was directed have cast them down.* (In the Hebrew the pronoun affix to the verb should be corrected to 3rd plural.) Cf. marg.

shall wag the head. Or, *shall flee away*, or (more literally) *shall become wanderers.* The Hebrew verb used here is found in a participial form in Gen iv. 12, 14, "A fugitive and a wanderer" (said of Cain). The enemies gathered together to overthrow the Psalmist, but suddenly they fled and were dispersed: cf lix. 11; Num xvi. 34. But the Hebrew text is not certain.

9. *shall fear...shall declare...shall wisely consider.* Better (as perfects), *have feared...have declared...have wisely considered.*

all men (have feared). *Men* (Heb. *adam*), i.e. men in general, not the chiefs of the people only.

10. THE JOY OF THE RIGHTEOUS

10. *the upright in heart.* Contrasted with those whose "heart is deep" (v. 6).

shall glory. Or, *shall rejoice*, the same Hebrew verb as in lxiii. 11.

PSALM LXV

REJOICING WITH TREMBLING: A HARVEST MEDITATION

The time of harvest is very near: Is the harvest to succeed or to fail? Now is the time, the Psalmist says, to approach God in His Temple at Zion. But how? Not with loud invocations—those may be left to the worshippers of the Baalim (1 K. xviii. 26, 29)—but with silent waiting. *To thee*, says the Psalmist, *silent waiting is due*; and afterwards *to thee shall be paid the row* which we now make in silence. This harvest supplication must be made by the whole people, men and their wives and their little ones: at such a time as this, *Unto thee shall all flesh*

come (v. 2). The Psalmist meditates, Dare we come into Thy presence? There is indeed the record of our iniquities to keep us back; yes, but, the Psalmist exclaims, *Thou thyself wilt purge away our transgressions* (v. 3). Why has he this strong confidence? Because God has brought us to dwell in Zion, and has permitted us to worship Him in His own house. We are "guests of God"! *Blessed is the man whom thou causest to approach unto thee, That he may dwell in thy courts* (v. 4). Why should we hesitate to approach Him? It is He who of old did terrible things to save us from Egyptian bondage. He is the hope of us all, even of those of us who have been dispersed to live in exile *afar off* (v. 5).

Further, we come before Him with full confidence, for He is strong. He is the Creator of the mountains, the Ruler of the deep, the Controller of the signs of heaven (the stars), the Maker of morning and evening (vv. 7-9). All is under His hand. And so He is Lord of the harvest too. He has in the heavens an irrigation channel which is full of water, and from it we pray Him freely to water the ploughed fields, and to bless all that springs forth from the earth. And so (thanks to Him!) the hills shall yield pasture and be covered with flocks, and the valleys shall stand thick with corn (vv. 10-13).

This Psalm is to be reckoned as a prayer for God's blessing on the harvest; but it is a veiled prayer. It asks for nothing. The Psalmist simply says, We come before Thee in silent adoration; we dare to come, for Thou has appointed us to worship "in Thy courts"; we remember Thy great mercy in the past; we recall Thy power as Creator; we recollect that the stores of rain are with Thee, and Thou hast given rich harvests (in other years). The Psalmist asks in words for nothing: he blesses God and so concludes his Psalm. Throughout he is consistent with the confession with which he opens, *To thee is due silent waiting*.

Twice in the course of this Psalm does the Psalmist implicitly condemn the worship of the Baalim, gods of agriculture and of fertility. *First*, in enjoining silent waiting on his hearers, and *secondly*, in his reference to the full river (rather, *irrigating channel*) of God. The Canaanites attributed the gift of rain to the Baalim (Hosea ii. 5; Jer. xiv. 22).

For the Chief Musician. A Psalm. A Song of David.

LXV. 1 ¹Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Zion:
And unto thee shall the vow be performed.

¹ Or, *There shall be silence before thee, and praise, O God &c.*

1-4. SILENT WAITING IS TRUE WORSHIP

LXV. 1. *Praise waiteth for thee.* Lit. (according to MT), *To thee silent-waiting, praise, is due.* Or, *To thee silent-waiting* (Heb. *dūmīyāh*) *is praise* (Heb. *tehillāh*). *Silence* (i.e. the *silent waiting*) is recognised as a religious duty in lxii. 5, *q.v.*, with note. A third less probable interpretation is that of LXX and Vulgate, *Te decet* (Heb. *dōmīyah*) *hymnus. shall the vow be performed.* When a rich harvest has been granted in response to the vows of Israel (v. 13).

- 2 O thou that hearest prayer,
Unto thee shall all flesh come.
- 3 ¹Iniquities prevail against me:
As for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away.
- 4 Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach *unto thee*,
That he may dwell in thy courts:
We shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house,
The holy place of thy temple.
- 5 By terrible things thou wilt answer us in righteousness,

¹ Heb. *Words* (or, *Matters*) of iniquities.

be performed. P-B adds *in Jerusalem*: so Vulgate and LXX (not LXX B).

2. *O thou that hearest* etc. The abruptness of this address should be noted; no vocative (JEHOVAH or *My God*) is expressed. The Psalmist is urgent: cf Jer xiv. 8, "O thou hope of Israel."

3. *Iniquities prevail* etc. Rather, *The story of our iniquities is more powerful than we*: cf margin, *Words of iniquities*. Can our prayers be heard, while our iniquities cry out against us?

thou shalt purge. *Thou* Thyself: the pronoun is emphatic: cf li. 7. Only the Great Absolver can help in our case.

4. *Blessed is the man* etc. In fewest words, "Blessed is the inhabitant of Zion." The blessedness of dwelling in Jerusalem was not obvious to the ordinary man. In Nehemiah's day it was necessary to urge, bribe, or coerce men to inhabit the city: see Neh xi. 1, 2. The blessing in this Psalm may be an echo of the blessing referred to in Neh xi. 2. Cf xxvii. 4.

thy courts. A designation of Zion, just as "thine altars" (lxxxiv. 3) is a designation of the Temple.

We shall be satisfied. Or, *Let us be satisfied.* Others could be satisfied only with their fields and vineyards and oliveyards outside the city. They wished to remain amongst these: cf Haggai i. 9.

the goodness of thy house. Goodness (Heb. *tub*) is ascribed to JEHOVAH Himself: xxv. 7, "For thy goodness' sake, O LORD"; xxxi. 19, "Thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee." Goodness is a synonym of "lovingkindness" (Heb. *hesed*). *The goodness of thy house* might be paraphrased as "the mercies (or "the grace") which thou showest in thy temple." *Pleasures of thy house* (P-B) gives the wrong idea.

5-8. THE POWER OF JEHOVAH OVER ALL THE EARTH

5. *thou wilt answer us.* Rather, *thou didst answer us*, Or, "thou usest to answer us." The "terrible things" are storm and tempest and plague. The Psalmist is glancing at the events which preceded the Exodus.

O God of our salvation ;

Thou that art the confidence of all the ends of the earth,

¹And of them that are afar off upon the sea :

6 Which by his strength setteth fast the mountains ;

Being girded about with might :

7 Which stilleth the roaring of the seas, the roaring of their waves,

And the tumult of the peoples.

8 They also that dwell in the uttermost parts are afraid at thy tokens :

¹ Or, *And of the sea, afar off*

all the ends of the earth. This is the Hebrew way of saying emphatically "all the earth." The special reference is to Israel in dispersion. Everywhere, even in distant lands, Israel has his God to put his trust in. The Psalmist looks to Zion and the Temple, but like Ezekiel he teaches that Israel, even when far from the Temple, has God nigh at hand (Ezek xi. 16).

them that are afar off upon the sea. Rather, *them that are far off in the West.* The Psalmist does not refer to mariners, but to his countrymen who are in exile in the West, the dark little-known lands of the Setting Sun. The term, *them that are afar off*, is used also in the heading of Ps lvi of Hebrew exiles.

6, 7. *Which by his strength etc.* This juxtaposition of mountain and sea is characteristic of Hebrew thought. The Hebrew idea of creation was that God called forth the earth from "the deep" to make it a habitation fit for man (Gen i. 1, 2). The *deep* (Heb. *tēhōm*) is the dwelling place of primeval chaos, the enemy of the Creator. The mountains are God's own work, the sea is the alien element, but as God (JEHOVAH) is Creator of the land so He is also the Controller of the sea. This Psalmist says no more, but the author of Ps xcv goes further, and declares that the sea also is God's work: "The sea is his, and he made it" (xcv. 5).

7. *Which stilleth etc.* Rather, *Which maketh the roaring of the sea to utter praise.* There is a similar thought in lxxvi. 10, "The wrath of man shall praise thee."

the tumult of the peoples. The Hebrew expression suggests the march of armies and the din of battle. The sea coast of Palestine was a highway of Western Asia, and the constant wars (Persian, Macedonian, and Syrian) in which Egypt was concerned shook Palestine from its rest, even when the armies did not pass through the country itself. But from this Psalm we learn that there were intervals of peace: cf xlv, xlvi.

8. *thy tokens.* "Eclipses, Comets, Storms" (Duhm).

Thou makest the outgoings of the morning and evening to rejoice.

9 Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it,

Thou greatly enrichest it;

The river of God is full of water:

Thou providest them corn,¹ when thou hast so prepared ² the earth.

10 Thou waterest her furrows abundantly;

Thou ³ settlest the ridges thereof:

Thou makest it soft with showers;

Thou blessest the springing thereof.

11 Thou crownest ⁴ the year with thy goodness;

And thy paths drop fatness.

¹ Or, for so preparest thou

² Heb. her.

³ Heb. lowerest.

⁴ Heb. the year of thy goodness.

the outgoings of the morning. I.e. the place of the sun-rising, the East.

evening. I.e. the West. God reveals Himself in implanting fear and also (on the other hand) in causing joy. "Among the signs (of God's power) are the night and the day and the sun and the moon" (Kuran xli. 37).

9-13. GIVER OF RAIN, SEND US A GOOD HARVEST

9. *and waterest it.* Perhaps, *makest it overflow, run* (with water).

The river of God. Rather, *The irrigating channel* (Heb. *peleg*) of God. Cf xlvi. 4.

Thou providest them corn. Lit. as P-B, *their corn*, the corn of the inhabitants of the earth. The construction is *ad sensum*.

when thou hast etc. Rather, *Surely right well thou dost provide it* (the corn). The feminine affix refers to *dagan*, "corn," though the substantive is described as masculine in the dictionaries. The Psalmist insists that corn does not make itself: it is "provided."

10. *Thou waterest* etc. This verse should be rendered as a petition: *Water her furrows abundantly; settle the ridges thereof, melting her with the drops of rain, blessing the springing thereof.*

11. *Thou crownest* etc. *Thou crownest the year of thy goodness* (so read as marg.): i.e. *the year* which has been divided by the goodness of God into favourable seasons of rain and sun.

thy paths. Where God walks the blessing of rain falls. P-B (*thy clouds*) is wrong.

fatness. Used figuratively for *abundance in general*; in Jud ix. 9 of the fruit of the olive tree.

- 12 ¹They drop upon the pastures of the wilderness:
 And the hills are girded with joy.
- 13 The pastures are clothed with flocks;
 The valleys also are covered over with corn;
 They shout for joy, they also sing.

¹ Or, *The pastures...do drop*

PSALM LXVI

THE MIGHT OF JEHOVAH DISPLAYED IN HIS PROVIDENCE OVER HIS PEOPLE

In this Psalm Israel utters his consciousness of his mission: he speaks to the world as the prophet of God. The Psalmist desires to see the whole world submitting to the One God. *Shout unto God*, he says (he means, *unto JEHOVAH*), *all the earth*; he adds that such is the *power* of God, that *his enemies will* (in the end) be obliged to *submit to him* (*vv.* 1-4). In the next section of the Psalm a warning follows: let the nations which hesitate to pay homage to God realise what terrible things He did on behalf of Israel in Egypt, and how He divided the Red Sea for His people at the Exodus (*vv.* 5-7). The Dividing of the Red Sea meant for many centuries for Israel what Bannockburn has meant for several centuries to the Scottish people. It was their greatest national memory. In the third section of the Psalm (*vv.* 8-12) the Psalmist invites the earth (the "peoples") a second time to praise God. His appeal is based on a proud race-consciousness. Israel no doubt is small among the nations, but God has dealt so wonderfully with him. God has tested Israel as by fire and has accepted him. Let the peoples bless God for what He has done for Israel. After recalling the memory of all this gracious dealing, the Psalmist passes insensibly from the "we" to the "I," and to a vivid remembrance of his own duty. He is the representative of his people, a prince, a governor, or a high priest, and he must show forth the people's thankfulness by great offerings in the Temple, offerings of *fallings, rams, bullocks, goats* (*vv.* 13-15).

Next follows in *vv.* 16-19 a passage which may be called the Psalmist's *Apologia*. No great leader of Israel—certainly not Moses, nor Samuel, nor David, nor Nehemiah—ever finished his course without provoking stiff-necked opposition and unsparing criticism. Such was the case of the Psalmist also. He was accused of having *regarded iniquity* (Heb. *āven*), i.e. of having tolerated some kind of unfaithfulness towards his God. But the Psalmist avers that he has had an answer from God to his prayers. Does God (he would ask) answer the guilty? Does He show favour to the doer of *āven*? Then surely the charge brought against the Psalmist is false.

The Psalmist's thankfulness for the answer to his prayer breaks out again; he concludes with a doxology: *Blessed be God* (*v.* 20).

Duhm finds in Ps lxvi two separate compositions which have been joined into one Psalm, the point of junction being *vv.* 12, 13, where the "we" changes into the "I." But there is no strong reason in favour of this view. A ruler speaking as the representative of his people may use sometimes the plural and at other times the singular of the first person. Further it is natural for the representative of the people to use the singular, especially when he refers to the offering of great public sacrifices, for he himself provides the victims: cf 2 Sam vi. 17, 18. In any case it should be noted that there is much in common between lxvi A (*vv.* 1-12) and lxvi B (*vv.* 13-20). If the deliverance granted by God is described as great in *vv.* 10-12, it is acknowledged as great in the lavish offerings enumerated in *vv.* 13-15. Again the thought that, in spite of God's great goodness, some may prove unfaithful to Him appears not only in *v.* 7 but also in *v.* 18, where the Psalmist has to defend himself from the charge of (secret) unfaithfulness. Finally the same kind of universal appeal is made to outsiders: in *v.* 5, *Come, and see the works of God*, and in *v.* 16, *Come, and hear, all ye that fear God*. But even if *vv.* 13-20 be, as Duhm thinks, a "thanksgiving at the offering of a sacrifice which is brought in discharge of a vow," it cannot be denied that it forms a suitable sequel to *vv.* 1-12. In any case lxvi A could hardly end with the words, *Thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place*. Rather let the sacrifice next be brought (*vv.* 13-15), and next, let all who will listen be told the reason of the thank-offering (*vv.* 16-19).

And lastly, does not the doxology of *v.* 20 look back (like *v.* 6) to the Exodus, *Blessed be God, who hath not removed his mercy—his mercy of old—from me?*

Spiritually this Psalm is of great value especially because of *vv.* 10-12. Here the truth that God puts His worshippers on their trial is as fully recognised as in Gen xxii. 1 and in the book of Job. The trial as the Psalmist knew it was no superficial testing, but a stern one, as the late War was a stern test for the nations of Europe. Ordinary conditions disappeared for Israel: all things went into the furnace: *Thou didst try us as silver is tried*. Israel was made to feel his helplessness: *Thou broughtest us into the net*. He was made to taste the bitterness of bondage: *Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads*. One kind of trouble succeeded another: *We went through fire and through water*. But after this thorough testing *Thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place*. Here is teaching for all time.

For the Chief Musician. A Song, a Psalm.

LXVI. 1 Make a joyful noise unto God, all the earth:

2 Sing forth the glory of his name:

Make his praise glorious.

1-4. PRAISE GOD, ALL THE EARTH

LXVI. 1. *Make a joyful noise unto God. Or, Shout unto God.* The Hebrew is terse, as in xlvi. 1 b, xcvi. 1 b, c. 1: Vulgate (in all four places), *iubilare (iubilemus) Deo*.

- 3 Say unto God, How terrible are thy works!
Through the greatness of thy power shall thine enemies
 ¹submit themselves unto thee.
- 4 All the earth shall worship thee,
And shall sing unto thee;
They shall sing to thy name. [Selah
- 5 Come, and see the works of God;
He is terrible in his doing toward the children of men.
- 6 He turned the sea into dry land:
They went through the river on foot:
There ²did we rejoice in him.
- 7 He ruleth by his might for ever;
His eyes observe the nations:
Let not the rebellious exalt themselves. [Selah

¹ Or, *yield feigned obedience* Heb. *lie*.

² Or, *let us rejoice*

3. *shall thine enemies submit themselves unto thee.* This rendering gives the meaning of the Hebrew, but it misses the metaphor used by the Psalmist, who says (enigmatically), *thine enemies shall lie unto thee*; Vulgate, *mentientur tibi inimici tui*. The enemy when overcome strives to propitiate the conqueror with lying flatteries. So xviii. 44, lxxx. 15; Deut xxxiii. 29. P-B, *shall be found liars*, misses the main thought of the Hebrew, which is that of "submission."

4. *All the earth.* Cf v. 8, "O bless our God, ye peoples." The summons is universal and not addressed to Israel only: see Ps xvii.

5-7. CONSIDER GOD'S WORK AT THE EXODUS

5. *Come, and see.* Or, *Come, and consider.* The nations are summoned to consider the wonder of the Crossing of the Red Sea.

6. *He turned etc.* Render, *He turned the sea into dry land, So that they went through the stream (not the river) on foot.* The word for *stream* is *nāhār*, which is used of a great river or of an expanse of water, but not of the Jordan: the reference is still to the Red Sea.

There let us rejoice in him (as marg.). The adverb *there* (Heb. *shām*) is used somewhat loosely. The invitation is to rejoice not locally "at" the Red Sea, but *ad sensum* at the event which happened *there*.

7. *for ever.* Or, *from of old*, referring back to vv. 5, 6.

observe the nations. Or, *keep watch upon the nations.* The Hebrew verb is used in Gen xxxi. 4, 9, and is cognate with *Mizpah*, "a watch tower."

Let not the rebellious exalt themselves. Or (as C'thib, which has the Hiphil form of the verb), *Let not the rebellious deal with a high hand.* K'ri has the Kal, literally, *Let not the rebellious be exalted*: cf xxi. 13,

- 8 O bless our God, ye peoples,
And make the voice of his praise to be heard :
9 Which ¹holdeth our soul in life,
And suffereth not our feet to be moved.
10 For thou, O God, hast proved us :
Thou hast tried us, as silver is tried.
11 Thou broughtest us into the net ;
Thou layedst a sore burden upon our loins.
12 Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads ;
We went through fire and through water ;
But thou broughtest us out into ²a wealthy place.

¹ Heb. *putteth*.

² Heb. *abundance*.

"Be thou exalted, O JEHOVAH"; also xii. 8, "When vileness (i.e. vile men) is exalted over the sons of men."

the rebellious. The same Hebrew word as in lxviii. 6, 18; "those who rebel against JEHOVAH."

8-12. CONSIDER NOW GOD'S RECENT DELIVERANCE OF US

8. *O bless our God*. By saying, "Blessed be JEHOVAH," xxviii. 6, xxxi. 21. Cf xli. 13, the doxology, "Blessed be JEHOVAH, the God of Israel, From everlasting and to everlasting."

ye peoples. LXX, *ἔθνη*; Vulgate, *gentes*, i.e. peoples of the world in general. Cf v. 4, "All the earth shall worship thee."

9. *Which holdeth our soul in life*. Better, *Which appointeth our soul* ("us") a place among the living.

to be moved. I.e. by shock from the enemy; cf cxxi. 3. P-B, *to slip*, is an inferior rendering.

10. *thou...hast proved us*. The main teaching of the book of Job is summed up in this sentence: cf xi. 5, "JEHOVAH trieth the righteous."

11. *Thou broughtest us into the net*. God is represented as the huntsman also in Lam i. 13. God brings "evil" as well as "good." Cf Isa xlv. 7; Amos iii. 6 b.

Thou layedst a sore burden upon our loins (Heb. *mothnayim*). Affliction, AV (*trouble*, P-B), is better than *a sore burden*. "Burdens" are laid upon the "shoulder" (Heb. *shēchem*, lxxxi. 6; Gen xlix. 15). The loins are rather the part of the body in which pain or distress is felt: lxix. 23; Isa xxi. 3 (Heb. *mothnayim*).

12. *Thou hast caused* etc. Historically we may explain the verse as follows:

Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads. I.e. Thou didst allow us to be utterly subdued by the Chaldeans. Or, the reference is to the Egyptian oppression.

We went through fire and through water. I.e. We suffered terrible hard-

- 13 I will come into thy house with burnt offerings,
 I will pay thee my vows,
 14 Which my lips have uttered,
 And my mouth hath spoken, when I was in distress.
 15 I will offer unto thee burnt offerings of fatlings,
 With the incense of rams;
 I will offer bullocks with goats. [Selah
 16 Come, and hear, all ye that fear God,
 And I will declare what he hath done for my soul.

ships and faced great danger in crossing the swamps and deserts at the Return. Or, the reference is to the forty years in the wilderness which followed the Exodus.

But thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place. I.e. But thou didst bring us back into our own land. Or, the reference may be to the Conquest of Canaan. Palestine is described in Deut viii. 7 as a "good" land and in Deut xi. 11 as watered from heaven.

13-15. I (THE PSALMIST) OFFER SACRIFICES OF THANKSGIVING
 FOR GOD'S RECENT DELIVERANCE OF US

13. *with burnt offerings.* This definite reference to animal sacrifice is interesting, because it is relatively rare in the Psalter. In xxvi. 6, 7 the Psalmist will "compass" the altar with thanksgiving; in xxvii. 6 he will offer sacrifices of loud greeting (Heb. *tērū'ah*); in xxix. 1 he urges men to give (ascribe) "glory and strength" to JEHOVAH, but not (as P-B) "young rams." With the Psalmists sacrifices come second or third, the communion of spirit and the Psalm of praise come first.

14. *when I was in distress.* Is the Psalmist speaking for himself alone, or as the spokesman of his people? He will offer burnt-offerings (plural), rams, bullocks, and goats. Such language is that of prince or governor, not of a private person. *When I was in distress* is the time when *We went through fire and through water* (v. 12).

15. *With the incense* (Heb. *kētōreth*) *of rams.* Rather, *With the smoke of sacrificed rams.* *Kētōreth* is properly "smoke of a sacrifice"; so in Isa i. 13, "sacrificial smoke (not "incense") is an abomination unto me."

I will offer (2^{do}). Rather, *I will prepare*, i.e. for sacrifice. LXX, *ποιήσω σοι*. In the first clause of the verse *I will offer* is a correct rendering of the different Hebrew verb used: LXX, *ἀνοίσω*.

16-19. GOD HATH GRANTED MY PRAYER AND ACCEPTED ME

16. *ye that fear God.* Cf xxxiv. 7; Exod xviii. 21.
for my soul. Cf v. 9.

- 17 I cried unto him with my mouth,
 And ¹he was extolled with my tongue.
 18 If I ²regard iniquity in my heart,
 The Lord ³will not hear:
 19 But verily God hath heard;
 He hath attended to the voice of my prayer.
 20 Blessed be God,
 Which hath not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy from me.

¹ Or, as otherwise read, *high praise was under my tongue*

² Or, *had regarded* ³ Or, *would*

17. *he was extolled with my tongue.* Or (as marg.), *high praise was under my tongue*, ready to be offered, as soon as relief was given: cf cxlix. 6, "Let the *high praises* of God be *in their throat*."

18. *If I regard iniquity* (Heb. *āven*, "unfaithfulness to יְהוָה") *in my heart*. The Psalmist claims sincerity: cf xlv. 20, "If we have forgotten the name of our God," etc.

20. DOXOLOGY

20. *Blessed be God.* Cf v. 8, note.

turned away my prayer. Lit. *removed* (Heb. *hāsir*, הָסִיר) *my prayer*. The prayer is thought of as deposited in the presence of God: if he rejects it, he "removes" it. Cf Amos v. 23 (יְהוָה to Israel), "Take away (or "remove") from me the noise of thy songs."

PSALM LXVII

A HARVEST PRAYER

This is a harvest Psalm as v. 6 shows clearly: cf vv. 1, 2. The thought of harvest stirs in the Psalmist's mind thoughts of the general providence of God and His government of the world. Other nations beside Israel receive harvests at His hand; by these God—the One God—shows Himself as the judge and the governor of these nations also.

The statement made in v. 4, and repeated in various forms in the Psalter, that God will judge the peoples (*or* a people) has two applications. In some passages it means that God will judge or act as champion for His own people; so in ix. 8 (probably: cf marg.): lviii. 11. In others it means that God will act as the final universal judge, who overrules the unjust decisions of corrupt human judges by His own perfect judgments: so here, also xcvi. 10, 13, xciii. 9.

This Psalm was appointed in 1552 to be said at Evensong as an alternative to the *Nunc Dimittis*, perhaps because there is a note of dismissal of the Congregation in the repeated *Benedicat nos Deus* of vv. 6, 7. The special reference to the harvest in v. 6 passed unnoticed, and the general character of the Psalm (apart from this one verse) as an invocation of blessing secured it its place in the Book of Common Prayer.

For the Chief Musician; on stringed instruments. A Psalm, a Song.

- LXVII.** 1 God be merciful unto us, and bless us,
And cause his face to shine ¹upon us; [Selah]
 2 That thy way may be known upon earth,
 Thy saving health among all nations.
 3 Let the peoples ²praise thee, O God;
 Let all the peoples praise thee.
 4 O let the nations be glad and sing for joy:
 For thou shalt judge the peoples with equity,
 And ³govern the nations upon earth. [Selah]

¹ Heb. *with us*.

² Or, *give thanks unto*

³ Heb. *lead*.

1, 2. MAY GOD BLESS ISRAEL

LXVII. 1. *God be merciful unto us.* The Hebrew verb is as in li. 1, but the petition is not for forgiveness, but for favour. The harvest is ready for cutting, may it be safely gathered in: may there be a blessing in it!

And cause his face to shine with us. (So marg.) May God's blessing go with the harvesters. P-B (= Vulgate) repeats, *and be merciful unto us* from the beginning of the verse. Not so MT, LXX.

2. *That thy way may be known upon earth.* God's way means His careful providence over His people in giving them food out of the earth year by year. If the harvest fail, then this "way" of God is not "made known upon earth": on the contrary the nations ask scornfully, *Where is their God?* (Joel ii. 17). Is He forgetful, or is He unable to supply the wants of His people? Cf Joel ii. 15-19, a passage relating to a famine which threatens to follow a plague of locusts.

saving health. Heb. *salvation*.

3-5. MAY ALL PEOPLES PRAISE GOD

3. *Let the peoples praise thee.* I.e. Let the peoples of the earth see Thy care for Israel, and acknowledge Thee as God.

4. *the nations* (Heb. *l'ummim*). The two Hebrew words *gōyim*, "nations, heathen," and *l'ummim*, "peoples," are used in parallel clauses here as in ii. 1 as synonyms.

For thou shalt judge the peoples with equity. God's universal judgment shall relieve the peoples from the unjust judgment which is rife throughout the world. (See the Introduction.) *Equity* (Heb. *mishōr*) corresponds closely with the Hebrew word, which is used of that which is "level" or "even."

govern the nations. Lit. *lead* or *guide*. The same verb in lxxviii. 72, "(David) guided them by the skilfulness of his hands." An Eastern king goes out before his people and leads them in battle (1 Sam viii. 20),

- 5 Let the peoples praise thee, O God ;
 Let all the peoples praise thee.
 6 The earth hath yielded her increase :
 God, even our own God, shall bless us.
 7 God shall bless us ;
 And all the ends of the earth shall fear him.

and also on important religious occasions (2 Sam vi. 12 ff.). The form of this verse should be noted. It is a case of constructive parallelism ; the verse consists of three members, not of the usual two. Standing as it does between *v.* 3 and *v.* 5 it gives with emphasis the reason of the summons (given in *v.* 3 and repeated in *v.* 5) to praise God. Rejoice *because* He will be the judge of the nations (and not of Israel only), and again *because* He will guide them as their king.

6, 7. MAY GOD BLESS ISRAEL'S HARVEST

6. *The earth hath yielded her increase.* The harvest is ready to begin : it has yet to be cut and safely housed.

6, 7. *God shall bless us.* Or (in each case), *God* (i.e. JEHOVAH) *bless us* (an invocation: so Vulgate, *Benedicat nos Deus*). Cf the priestly benediction in Num vi. 24, "JEHOVAH bless thee, and keep thee."

7. *And all the ends of the earth shall fear him.* I.e. the whole earth shall reverence JEHOVAH, when they see that He provides goodly harvests for His people: cf *v.* 2 with note.

PSALM LXVIII

JEHOVAH THE GRACIOUS GOD

§ 1. CONTENTS.

The Psalm consists of ten clearly marked sections as follows:

A. 1-3. God (JEHOVAH) will arise to judge between the wicked and the righteous.

B. 4-6. JEHOVAH is at hand and He is the champion of widow and orphan, of the captive and of the solitary.

C. 7-10. Of old JEHOVAH showed His goodness to His "inheritance" by going before them in the wilderness and by raining down benefits upon them.

D. 11-14. JEHOVAH gave victory over kings of armies: women gathered great spoils: a God-sent tempest of snow discomfited the enemy.

E. 15-18. JEHOVAH has chosen a mountain for His abode which is *not* one of the grand swelling summits of Bashan. Who shall dispute His choice? He has twenty thousand chariots: He has received the submission of His foes.

F. 19, 20. JEHOVAH is all-powerful: victory, life, and death are in His hand.

G. 21-23. Surely He will again grant a complete victory over the foe. JEHOVAH Himself will restore His people to Palestine.

H. 24-27. (Then men shall see again the sight they saw of old.) All Israel, North and South, marched with singers and instrument-players and dancing women into the sanctuary praising this gracious God.

J. 28-31. (A prayer.) Increase the help, O JEHOVAH, which Thou hast already given. Save us from the wild hordes that still threaten us. We trust that helpers will yet come from Egypt.

K. 32-35. Yea, JEHOVAH will assuredly help us again—the terrible God. To Him let all kingdoms give praise. Blessed be JEHOVAH.

§ 2. THE OCCASION OF THE PSALM.

The contents of this Psalm are unusually varied, and it does not reveal on the surface the occasion on which it was written. In any case it does not suggest that it was called forth by some single historical event or episode. On its face indeed it bears the character rather of a *Te Deum*, a general burst of praise to God, not for one mercy, but for a series of mercies reaching back to ancient times. The language is of a general character: it becomes elusive when it is referred to one particular historical situation. The careful reader is surprised and remains unconvinced by Duhm's positive statements. "The Psalm must have been composed, when the Jews were warring in Bashan, when they had 'rebels' among them, when Sichem had been subdued (*sic*), and Galilee had been united with Judaea. Accordingly the Psalm celebrates and supports (*unterstützt*) the enterprises of Alexander Jannaeus." (*Psalmen*, page 255.)

A further examination of the contents of the Psalm leaves very little support for these statements.

A. 1-3. The opening words are not a wish but a prediction: "God shall arise: his enemies will be scattered." This section is eschatological. JEHOVAH will hold a judgment, when the wicked shall perish, and the righteous shall rejoice. The same contrast is shown as in Ps i, also a Psalm of judgment, a contrast not between Israel and Israel's foes, but between the wicked and the righteous. The interest of these verses is moral and religious, *not* political.

B. 4-6. This section begins with a summons to praise, for it assumes that the Judgment has been carried out: the wrongs have been righted, and the stubborn have been banished to the outer wilderness. The Judge has shown himself a father to the orphans and a judge of the widows, and the lonely captives have been brought home.

These two sections A, B, might be taken as a reassurance addressed to the writer of Ps xciv. 1-7, "O God of vengeance, O avenging God, shine forth!... How long shall the wicked triumph... They slay the widow and murder the fatherless. And they say, JEHOVAH shall not see." This is eschatology: there is no hint that it is propaganda for king Jannaeus.

C. 7-10. In this paragraph the historical interest is conspicuous: it has for its subject God's care for Israel at the Exodus and in the wilderness. There He made His presence manifest; there He *prepared for the poor* (*l'ē'ānī*) as an Eastern judge, "protector of the poor," should do.

D. 11-14. And JEHOVAH gave a still greater proof (if it were possible) of his care for "the congregation" of the poor. He "gave the word" and kings fled before Israel, and women took the spoils. He sent the snow, and the enemy

could not stand before His cold. The Psalmist may be thinking of the hail-stones of Beth-horon (Josh x. 11).

E. 15-18. And then JEHOVAH chose His mountain and came Himself to dwell in the midst of His people.

But there is a strange fact emerging. Zion, Jerusalem, holds her place as the spot chosen by JEHOVAH, but she is exposed to the ill-will of other places in Canaan. Now we are accustomed to the thought of the antagonism between North and South, Israel and Judah. That antagonism was of old standing and it went with the division of the kingdom into two parts and the political rivalry between the house of David on the one side and the house of Jeroboam son of Nebat (and the succeeding dynasties) on the other. But here in the Psalm we have the indication of another antagonism, that of Eastern Palestine against Western, of Bashan, i.e. of the country east of Jordan against the Westjordanland. We have Mount Bashan pitted against Mount Zion, the rich pasturelands against the torrid rock on which the Jerusalemite Temple stood. Why should JEHOVAH prefer poverty-stricken Zion to the rich fields of Bashan? Why should not the high places of Transjordan be as acceptable to God as the sanctuary on the bare rock of Zion? The answer to this challenge is given in *vv.* 17, 18. On some great historical occasion (not defined) JEHOVAH wrought victory on Mount Zion, took captives, and was acknowledged on Zion by payment of tribute even by the rebels. The matter (if not the words) must remind us of Ps ii, where the rebels rebel and are crushed. Of long standing was the rivalry between Jerusalem and Israel's old high places. There is nothing here which points clearly to Jannaeus or to his time.

F. 19, 20. JEHOVAH is for Israel a living active beneficent God—a God who works deliverances, a God who also sends down to Sheol: cf 1 S ii. 6. This stress on JEHOVAH'S control of death is meant to meet the heathen thoughts which made Nergal or Molech, the god of Pestilence and Death, an independent power in the Semitic Pantheon. The god of the Upper Air in most heathen mythologies yields to Hades his "rights"—real rights according to ancient thought, witness the *Alcestis* of Euripides. But O.T. teaching excludes rival gods of Life and of Death. Thus we find in Isa xlv. 7,

"I (JEHOVAH) form light,
and create darkness;
I make peace (prosperity),
and create evil."

So here one and the same God controls the issues to Life and also the issues to Death. Cf pp. 129 f.

G. 21-23. This thought leads on to another, that JEHOVAH will help His own servants even to carry out the most merciless pursuit of enemies. The Psalmist has a working faith in his God, but not according to knowledge (Rom x. 2).

The Psalms are human utterances: from man to God: here the praise is discoloured by human passion. Sin will intrude itself into our holiest hours. This is a Psalm of the highest and best aspiration, *but*—It should be remembered that the difficulty lies further back, namely, in the use of war for the deliver-

ance of the oppressed. War is waged for victory, and decisive victory is not won without a pursuit with all its inevitable cruelties. This section might well express the sentiments of Jannaëus, but also (let it be added) of any other Eastern victor of ancient or modern times.

H. 24-27. Here the true climax is reached, the climax which best expresses the inmost thought of this Psalm. The Psalmist describes with enthusiasm the worship of JEHOVAH, as it is performed in the sanctuary. His feeling is like that of Browning's Theocrite:

"This Easter Day the Pope at Rome
Praises God from Peter's dome.
Said Theocrite, 'Would God that I
Might praise him, that great way, and die.'"

There is the same joy in praise in xlvi. 5:

"God is gone up with a shout,
JEHOVAH with the sound of the trumpet."

Exultation, almost intoxication of delight in public praise is expressed here just as in cii. 21 f., cxv. 17, 18, cxviii. 26-29, esp. 27 b:

"Order the festival procession with boughs,
Even unto the horns of the altar." (JV)

The joy is in all classes: Singers, Players, Damsels: Benjamin-Judah, Zebulun, Naphtali. All that calls itself Israel praises JEHOVAH the God of Israel.

J. 28-31. The strength of (little) Israel through God to control the strong warlike races by which Israel is surrounded.

In this paragraph there is a mingling of petition with a happy anticipation of accomplishment. In v. 28:

"Thy God *hath* commanded...
Strengthen, O God...."

In v. 30:

"Rebuke the beast...
He hath scattered...."

The Congregation of Israel with the praises of the true God in its mouth is making the power of JEHOVAH known among the nations.

K. 32-35. This section is a doxology. There is no room in it for thought of any earthly king. It is just *Blessed be God*—"writ large."

We have found no trace of Alexander Jannaëus, though if he were in the Psalm, he could hardly be hid. He was a vigorous, self-assertive personality, but no such individual—no "king," nor "captain," nor "hero," nor "anointed of the LORD"—figures here. The Psalm is of JEHOVAH and of Israel, of God and the people only. If it "celebrates and supports the enterprises of Jannaëus," it (somewhat strangely) leaves out all mention of this much talked of king. It is a *Te Deum*, not a *Te Alexandrum*.

§ 3. THE DATE.

A *Te Deum* may owe something to the occasion of a particularly striking deliverance, but in its essence it is timeless. So this *Te Deum* (Psalm lxviii) sums up the lessons of many deliverances: it would be an idle task to try to fix

it to one, and thence to deduce its "date." It may surely be said that Duhm has failed to produce sufficient evidence that it belongs to the age of Jannaëus.

§ 4. ALEXANDER JANNAEUS.

Jannaëus (in Hebrew "Jannai") reigned as high priest and king 103-76 B.C. In his days the Syrian kingdom was divided and oppressed by the later (rival) Seleucid kings Antiochus VIII (Grypos), Antiochus IX (Cyziçenus), Seleucus Epiphanes son of Grypos, Antiochus X (Eusebes) son of Cyziçenus, and Demetrius III (Eucaerus) another son of Grypos. Their civil wars left Jannaëus free to make wars of aggrandisement on the small surrounding states. Only Demetrius interfered with the Jews and he only for a moment. Called in by the rebellious subjects of Jannaëus he defeated the Jewish king near Sichein circ. 90 B.C., but withdrew from the country almost immediately. Jannaëus warred in the north, west, and east, and in spite of some severe defeats left his kingdom at his death greatly enlarged. For years he was engaged in war with his own subjects, but by his later foreign successes he acquired some popularity with his people. In the light of his career taken as a whole it seems unlikely that he could have been the hero or even the subject of a spiritual Psalm like this.

§ 5. THE USE OF THE NAME JEHOVAH IN THIS PSALM.

In many of the Psalms of Book II it is evident that either an early editor or (possibly) the author himself has avoided as far as possible the use of the sacred name JEHOVAH. Ps lxviii is a conspicuous example. *V.* 1, "God shall arise," is taken from Num x. 35, "Rise up, O JEHOVAH"; and similarly *v.* 7, "O God, when thou wentest forth," is taken from Jud v. 4, "JEHOVAH, when thou wentest forth." In *v.* 4 the abbreviated name JAH is introduced, but the full name JEHOVAH does not occur until *v.* 16. A feeling of reverence is no doubt responsible for this "economy" in the use of the Name, but the loss of it is felt in some verses as in *v.* 8, which should surely read, "JEHOVAH, the God of Israel."

§ 6. THE MEANING OF THE PSALM.

The message of this Psalm might be summed up in the words, "JEHOVAH is a great God, and Israel is His prophet." The writer is deeply conscious that Israel has a mission, and this mission is to proclaim JEHOVAH and to invite the nations to give their allegiance to Him as a God of graciousness and of might. The very reserve with which the Psalmist uses JEHOVAH'S name is significant. The Psalmist desires to tell of His character and of His deeds, while he feels the awe of His "Name." Moreover as he speaks to Gentiles he uses as often as he can the universal name ELOHIM, "God," rather than the special name which Israel used. This Psalm must be given a place beside such great prophetic passages as Isa ii. 2-4 (= Mic iv. 1-3), xiv. 1, 2; Zech viii. 22, 23. These like the Psalm uphold Mount Zion as a rallying point for the nations, and look forward to the gathering in of the peoples to serve JEHOVAH.

Dr Lock in the Westminster Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians (pp. 11, 12) has pointed out a number of striking coincidences in thought between the Epistle and the Psalm. Indeed *Ephesians* has been actually called "the Christian Ps lxviii." The last words of the Psalm, "Blessed be God," stand at the head of the Epistle (Ephes i. 3).

Ps lxxviii is appropriately appointed as a special Psalm for Whitsunday, the day of the inauguration of the Christian Church as a Missionary Society to all peoples.

§ 7. METRICAL FORM.

According to Duhm the text is in fifteen strophes, each consisting of a distich and a tristich. Each stichos contains four stresses. Verse 36 stands outside the scheme as a liturgical addition.

So regular a scheme of such a lyrical outburst as Ps lxxviii is antecedently improbable, and a further study of Duhm's arrangement of the text does not confirm his view. His strophes are unnatural; they do not correspond with the divisions into which the Psalm falls in accordance with the sense. His first strophe consists of *vs.* 1, 2: its form may be represented with the stresses as they appear in the Hebrew in the following rendering:

Gód aríseth, His énemíes scátter,
 And His háters flée His fáce.
 As smóke dispérsseth, dispérsseth,
 As wáx mélteth 'fore fire,
 Th' ungóddly pérish befóre Gód.

This strophe may perhaps pass, though MT yields only three stresses each for the three interior stichi, but a less formal arrangement is better suited to the text of the Psalm as a whole.

The sudden changes of thought and expression lead us to expect a more varied metrical form than Duhm's. In the meantime one feature which is independent of strophes is too conspicuous to be passed over. The Psalmist frequently uses two very short lines followed by one somewhat longer on which he evidently lays the stress. Instances are,

Our Gód aríseth,
 His énemíes scátter,
 And His háters flée His fáce. v. 1.

Síng unto Gód,
 Praíse His náme,
 Make a wáy for the désert ríder! v. 4.

A fáther of órphans,
 A júdge of wídows,
 Is Gód in His hóly dwélling. v. 5.

Notice further that sometimes the word ELOHIM, "God," is allowed to stand for emphasis outside the general rhythm: as in *v.* 2 where ELOHIM stands out at the close, or as in *v.* 6, where ELOHIM stands outside at the beginning of the verse.

For the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David, a Song.

- LXVIII.** 1 Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered;
 Let them also that hate him flee before him.
 2 As smoke is driven away, so drive them away:
 As wax melteth before the fire,
 So let the wicked perish at the presence of God.
 3 But let the righteous be glad; let them exult before God:
 Yea, let them rejoice with gladness.
 4 Sing unto God, sing praises to his name:
 Cast up a high way for him that rideth through the deserts;
 His name is JAH; and exult ye before him.
 5 A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows,
 Is God in his holy habitation.
 6 God ¹setteth the solitary in families:

¹ Heb. *maketh the solitary to dwell in a house.*

1-3. A PROMISE: GOD IS COMING TO JUDGE BETWEEN
 THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE WICKED

LXVIII. 1. *Let God arise.* Rather, *JEHOVAH shall arise.* The words are an announcement, not a wish. The verse is a slightly modified form of the words used by Moses in the wilderness, when the ark was to move forward as a signal for Israel to move camp: Num x. 35.

2. *so drive them away.* Rather (cf v. 1) *Thou wilt drive them away.*

4-6. PREPARE THE WAY FOR HIS COMING

4. *Cast up a high way.* Cf Isa xl. 3, "Prepare ye in the wilderness the way of JEHOVAH, make straight in the desert a high way for our God." The expression is metaphorical: it suggests that JEHOVAH the righteous judge is approaching Canaan from the East through the desert, "Let Israel be ready to welcome him." Vulgate, *iter facite*. The renderings "magnify him" and "upon the heavens" (P-B) are wrong. Moreover God is figured as driving in His chariot (cf Hab iii. 8), *not* riding "upon an horse." JAH is an alternative form of the ineffable name, the Tetragrammaton, which is represented in English by JEHOVAH: see Exod xv. 2 (marg.); Isa xii. 2 (marg.). It is used sometimes in compound names as in "*Zechariah*," i.e. "Jah hath remembered": Zech i. 1.

5. *A father etc.* Cf Deut x. 18; Hos xiv. 3.

6. *setteth the solitary in families.* The chief illustration of this is no doubt the case of Abraham. Cf Isa li. 2, "When he (Abraham) was but one I called him": Ezek xxxiii. 24, "Abraham was one, and he inherited the land."

He bringeth out the prisoners into prosperity:
But the rebellious dwell in a parched land.

7 O God, when thou wentest forth before thy people,
When thou didst march through the wilderness; [Selah

8 The earth trembled,
The heavens also dropped at the presence of God:
Even yon Sinai trembled at the presence of God, the God of
Israel.

9 Thou, O God, didst send a plentiful rain,
Thou didst confirm thine inheritance, when it was weary.

10 Thy ¹congregation dwelt therein:
Thou, O God, didst prepare of thy goodness for the poor.

11 The Lord giveth the word:
The women that publish the tidings are a great host.

12 Kings of armies flee, they flee:
And she that tarrieth at home divideth the spoil.

¹ Or, *troop*

bringeth out the prisoners into prosperity. The salient instance of this is the story of Joseph in Egypt: cf cv. 17-22.
the rebellious. As Ishmael (Gen xxi. 21) or Esau (Gen xxvii. 39, marg.).

7-14. GOD'S GOODNESS OF OLD AT THE EXODUS, AND AT THE CONQUEST OF CANAAN

7. *when thou wentest forth.* I.e. at the Exodus.

8. *The earth trembled.* I.e. at the giving of the Decalogue: Exod xix. 18.

9. *didst send a plentiful rain.* Rather, *didst send down a rain of gracious gifts* such as the manna, quails, and (but not exclusively) showers of literal rain.

Thou didst confirm etc. Read, *Thou didst strengthen a weary one, even thine inheritance.* The *weary one* is Israel.

11. *The Lord giveth the word* etc. Rather, *The Lord gave command* (i.e. uttered his decree). *The women that published tidings were* (as) *a great host.* This was no fight in which the "big battalions" decided the day. At the beginning the Lord spoke the decisive word, at the end the women sang the song of victory. What happened between was not worth telling except that the kings of armies—just fled! So at the Red Sea *JEHOVAH gave the word*, "Go forward" (Cross the sea) to Israel, and next Miriam sang her song of triumph. Israel had no need to fight, for *JEHOVAH "fought for Israel."*

- 13 ¹Will ye lie among the sheepfolds,
 As the wings of a dove covered with silver,
 And her pinions with yellow gold?
 14 When the Almighty scattered kings therein,
²*It was as when it snoweth in Zalmon.*
 15 A mountain of God is the mountain of Bashan;
³An high mountain is the mountain of Bashan.
 16 Why look ye askance, ye high mountains,

¹ Or, *When ye lie among the sheepfolds, it is as the wings...gold.*

² Or, *It snowed*

³ Heb. *A mountain of summits.*

13. *Will ye lie among the sheepfolds.* Rather, *Did ye still lie among the sheepfolds*, when God was giving you such a victory? The answer expected is, *No*. The tribe of Reuben tarried behind (see Jud v. 16) with their flocks, but other tribes went out to battle. These are addressed in the following words, *O wings of a dove covered with silver*. The *dove* is Israel (Hosea vii. 11), and the "wings"—an ambiguous word used of the "wings" of an army as well as of the wings of a bird—are the armies of Israel who return laden with silver and gold, the spoil taken from their enemies.

14. *the Almighty.* Heb. *Shaddai*. This name is of uncertain meaning, but LXX in a few places gives παντοκράτωρ, whence EV has *Almighty*. It is possibly connected with the Assyrio-Babylonian *shadu*, "mountain," for a Babylonian could address his god as *ilū shadū'a*, "God my mountain," just as the Hebrew could say, "God my rock"; xviii. 2, 46, xix. 14, xxviii. 1, *al*. This interpretation of the name would be specially suitable in xci. 1, "in the shadow of Shaddai."

therein. Perhaps, *by her*, i.e. by the (unwarlike) dove, Israel.

It was as when it snoweth. The marg. is better, *It snowed*. God intervened in the battle by sending snow to the discomfiture of the enemy: cf Job xxxviii. 22 f., "Hast thou entered the treasures of the snow, ... Which I have reserved...Against the day of battle and war?" See also 1 Macc xiii. 22. *Zalmon* is unknown.

15-17. GOD'S CHOICE OF MOUNT ZION TO DWELL IN

15. *A mountain of God.* Not necessarily a sacred mountain, but one lofty and massive: cf xxxvi. 6, "the mountains of God," i.e. the high mountains.

the mountain of Bashan. I.e. the mountainous district to the N.E. of the sea of Galilee, and not a single summit.

16. *Why look ye askance,* i.e. Why are ye envious? LXX, *ἵνα τί ὑπολαμβάβετε*: Vulgate, *Ut quid suspicamini?* P-B has an inferior rendering, *Why hop ye so?* AV, *Why leap ye?* i.e. in anger or dissatisfaction.

At the mountain which God hath desired for his abode?

Yea, the LORD will dwell *in it* for ever.

17 The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands upon thousands:

The Lord is among them, ¹as *in* Sinai, in the sanctuary.

18 Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led *thy* captivity captive;

Thou hast received gifts among men,

Yea, *among* the rebellious also, that ²the LORD God might ³dwell *with them*.

19 ⁴Blessed be the Lord, who daily beareth our burden,

Even the God who is our salvation.

[Selah

¹ Or, *Sinai is in the sanctuary* ² Heb. *Jah*. See ver. 4. ³ Or, *dwell there*

⁴ Or, *Blessed be the Lord day by day: if one oppresseth us, God is our salvation*

which God hath desired etc. Cf cxxxii. 13, "For JEHOVAH hath chosen Zion; He hath desired it for his habitation."

17. *The chariots of God are twenty thousand*. The Hebrew numeral *ribbôthayim*, lit. "twice 10,000," is merely symbolic for a huge number. It is an anthropomorphic reckoning of the strength of God's army. As this Psalm contains references to the story of Deborah it may be noted that with 900 chariots Sisera was able to "mightily oppress the children of Israel" (Jud iv. 3).

even thousands upon thousands. Not *even thousands of angels* as P-B. There is no mention of angels (*mal'āchim*) in the Hebrew. The mention of angels comes from the paraphrastic rendering given in the Targum, "The chariots of God are two myriads, (chariots) of flaming fire, two thousand angels conduct them" (or "drive them").

The Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the sanctuary. Rather, *The Lord came with them from Sinai in holiness*. It has just been said (v. 16) that Zion is the mount of God's abode, but the Psalmist who has spoken in v. 8 of His manifestation of Himself on Sinai, now explains that God came in all His glory from Sinai to Zion.

18-20. GOD VICTORIOUS AND ALL-POWERFUL

18. *Thou hast ascended*. God is addressed as a king returning with victory and taking once more His throne to judge His people in peace. He receives *gifts*, i.e. tribute, from those who submit. For St Paul's application of the verse see Dr Lock's note on Ephes iv. 11.

that the LORD God might dwell with them. Rather, *that thou mightest dwell with them O LORD (JAH) God*.

19. *beareth our burden*. The meaning of the Hebrew is not quite certain: it is either (1) *carrieth our burden for us*, or (2) *carrieth us as His burden*; cf Exod xix. 4, "I bare you on eagles' wings."

- 20 God is unto us a God of deliverances;
And unto JEHOVAH the Lord belong the issues from death.
- 21 But God shall smite through the head of his enemies,
The hairy scalp of such an one as goeth on still in his guiltiness.
- 22 The Lord said, I will bring again from Bashan,
I will bring *them* again from the depths of the sea:
- 23 That thou mayest dip thy foot in blood,
That the tongue of thy dogs may have its portion from *thine* enemies.
- 24 They have seen thy goings, O God,
Even the goings of my God, my King, ¹into the sanctuary.

¹ Or, *in the sanctuary* Or, *in holiness*

20. JEHOVAH the Lord. This (rare) use (in RV) is due to the fact that the word "Lord" follows: if the Revisers had kept to their usual practice they would have written, "The LORD the Lord," an intolerable collocation. JV reads, "God the Lord," as AV.

the issues from death. Rather, *the issues unto death.* Both Life and Death are in the hand of JEHOVAH: cf 1 Sam ii. 6, "JEHOVAH killeth, and maketh alive."

21-23. THE FATE OF THE ENEMIES OF GOD

This is a terrible passage composed in the spirit of the Old Israel. The Psalmist predicts with satisfaction the extermination of those whom he describes as the enemies of God. When he says, I will bring *again from Bashan*, he thinks of the conquering Israelites crossing from the east of Jordan under Joshua, and putting all to the sword.

21. *The hairy scalp.* Warriors on campaign were wont to let their hair grow, and to cut it in expiation of their vow when they returned home. This custom is alluded to in the war-song of Deborah according to some authorities, who translate the opening words (Jud v. 2), "When locks were worn loose in Israel, When the people offered themselves."

23. *dip thy foot in blood.* The Hebrew suggests deliberate action: cf lviii. 10.

That the tongue etc. Lit. *As for the tongue of thy dogs its portion is from thine enemies.*

24-27. THE WORSHIP OF GOD IN HIS TEMPLE

24. *They have seen.* Who have seen? Friends and enemies, Israelites and strangers. A happy indefiniteness of subject.

the goings of my God. I.e. when He ascended on high (v. 18).

- 25 The singers went before, the minstrels followed after,
 In the midst of the damsels playing with timbrels.
- 26 Bless ye God in the congregations,
 Even the Lord, *ye that are* of the fountain of Israel.
- 27 There is little Benjamin their ruler,
 The princes of Judah *and* their ¹council,
 The princes of Zebulun, the princes of Naphtali.
- 28 Thy God hath commanded thy strength:
²Strengthen, O God, that which thou ³hast wrought for us.
- 29 Because of thy temple at Jerusalem
 Kings shall bring presents unto thee.
- 30 Rebuke the wild beast of the reeds,
 The multitude of the bulls, with the calves of the peoples,

¹ Or, *company*² Or, *Be strong, O God, thou that hast &c.*³ Or, *hast wrought for us out of thy temple. Unto Jerusalem &c.*

26. *in the congregations.* So in xxvi. 12 (slightly different form of the Hebrew word); Vulgate, *in ecclesiis* in both passages.

ye that are of the fountain of Israel. For a similar metaphor cf Num xxiv. 7, "Water shall flow from his (Israel's) buckets."

27. *Benjamin.* Benjamin is given the first mention, because the Temple was reckoned to be in his territory: Deut xxxiii. 12.

Zebulun...Naphtali. Mentioned as northern tribes. All Israel (north and south) worships at Jerusalem in this ideal picture.

28-31. A PRAYER AND ITS ANSWER

28. *Thy God* etc. A literal rendering: the sense is well given in P-B, *Thy God hath sent forth strength for thee.*

28, 29. *thou hast wrought for us. Because of thy temple at Jerusalem.* Better perhaps to disregard the verse division and render more literally, *thou hast wrought for us from thy temple at Jerusalem* (full stop). The same thought that God works from His temple on Zion is expressed in xx. 2, l. 2, *al.*

Kings shall bring presents unto thee. A clause so important can stand by itself. See preceding note.

30. *Rebuke* etc. God is intreated to rebuke the enemy power which is described under three metaphorical terms. By the *wild beast of the reed* (or *reeds*) the enemy leader or king may be meant *The multitude* (rather *the assembly*) *of the bulls* represents the trained troops of the enemy, while *the calves of the people* are the mass of the enemy forces. There is nothing to show to what nation (or empire) the enemy belongs.

- ¹Trampling under foot the pieces of silver ;
²He hath scattered the peoples that delight in war.
 31 Princes shall come out of Egypt ;
³Ethiopia shall haste to stretch out her hands unto God.
 32 Sing unto God, ye kingdoms of the earth ;
 O sing praises unto the Lord ; [Selah
 33 To him that rideth upon the heavens of heavens, which are
 of old ;
 Lo, he uttereth his voice, *and that* a mighty voice.
 34 Ascribe ye strength unto God :
 His excellency is over Israel,
 And his strength is in the skies.
 35 ⁴O God, *thou art* terrible out of thy holy places :
 The God of Israel, he giveth strength and power unto *his*
 people.
 Blessed be God.

¹ Or, Every one submitting himself with pieces of silver

² Or, as otherwise read, Scatter thou ³ Heb. Cush.

⁴ Or, Terrible is God

Trampling under foot etc. (Here a new sentence begins, and it would be better if the beginning of a new verse were marked.) Render, *One that submitteth himself with pieces of silver hath scattered peoples that delight in war.* Every Israelite paid a poll-tax of half-a-shekel of silver to JEHOVAH: Exod xxx. 13; Matt xvii. 24. The meaning of this half-verse is that Israel which makes submission to JEHOVAH is strengthened by Him to overthrow warlike nations. AV has the imperative, *Scatter thou the people*; so LXX, διασκορπισον: Vulgate, *dissipa*. But this rendering leaves the previous clause standing in the air.

31. *Princes shall come.* I.e. as helpers. The Hebrew word *hashman-nim* is a hapaxlegomenon; it may be borrowed from the Egyptian.

Ethiopia. Mentioned as a savage, distant and little-known land from which no good thing was expected: cf Amos ix. 7.

32-35. SUMMONS TO THE NATIONS OF THE WORLD TO PRAISE
 THE GOD OF ISRAEL

33. *To him that rideth.* I.e. in His chariot: cf vv. 4, 17.
he uttereth his voice. I.e. He thundereth: cf xxix. 3; Exod xx. 18 ("thunderings": lit. "voices").

34. *Ascribe ye strength.* Cf xxix. 1 a.

His excellency (or *His glory*). The cognate Hebrew verb is used in Exod xv. 1, "(JEHOVAH) hath triumphed gloriously," i.e. at the Red Sea.

35. *Terrible is God* (as marg.). A kind of doxology: cf lxvi. 20 (the last verse of the Psalm).

Blessed be God. See Introduction, § 6.

ADDITIONAL NOTE on v. 18

*Thou hast ascended on high,
Thou hast led thy captivity captive;
Thou hast received gifts among men.* v. 18a (RV).

In Ephes iv. 7-12, St Paul applies this verse to the Ascension of our Lord and to His gift of the Ministry to the Church, quoting it in the following form:

*Ascending on high, he led captivity captive,
And gave gifts unto men.*

But this is an application only and not a strict interpretation of the words. It is parallel to an application which is found in the Targum:

“Thou didst go up, O prophet Moses, to the firmament,
Thou didst lead a captivity captive:
Thou didst teach the words of the Law,
Thou didst give gifts to the sons of men.”

The Targumist has in his mind three facts:

- (a) Moses went up to the top of Sinai;
- (b) Moses received the Law;
- (c) Moses gave the Law to Israel.

The second clause is of small importance apart from the third, so the Targumist (who is often a Commentator rather than a Translator) substitutes for the second clause the more significant third. Compare notes on Ephes iv. 11 by Dr Lock in the Westminster Commentary.

PSALM LXIX

A CRY FROM THE DEPTHS

§ 1. CONTENTS.

1-6. Save me, O God, for I am in utmost peril. Let me not (and those that seek Thee) be put to shame by my discomfiture!

7-12. That which I did was done for Thy sake, yet all men turn against me, even my own kindred, and the Elders who sit in the gate; the reprobates scorn me.

13-18. Rescue me, for now is the time; show the greatness of Thy mercy by meeting the greatness of my need.

19-21. I am *sore sick* (v. 20, marg.) but I have no comforters. My adversaries put “gall” into my food.

22-28. May a threefold curse overtake them, on their food (v. 22), on their eyes (v. 23 a), on their bodies (v. 23 b). Yea, let them feel God’s anger (v. 24). (Another threefold curse follows.) Let their dwellings be desolate (v. 25). Let the reckoning of guilt against them be increased (v. 27). Let them be blotted out of the book of life (v. 28).

29-31. I am “poor” and in pain. If JEHOVAH will save me, I will offer a more acceptable sacrifice than that of a *bullock that hath horns and hoofs*.

32-36. When the Meek see my deliverance, they will rejoice. Surely JEHOVAH

will remember His prisoners (v. 33), and will save Zion, and cause his servants once more to inherit the cities of Judah (vv. 35, 36).

§ 2. CHARACTER AND PURPOSE OF THE PSALM.

The Psalmist's enemies are not Gentiles, but his own countrymen. He is a chief man among his people, possibly a priest, a priest-prophet like Jeremiah, who has followed a line of action which has alienated his fellows. They charge him with actual wrong-doing, even with *fraud* (vv. 4, 5), but he protests his innocence. What he has done, he has done in the cause of God, and through zeal for God's house (*or* household, vv. 7-9, the Hebrew word is ambiguous). If the reference be to the Temple, it may refer to such an act as that of Nehemiah related in Neh xiii. 7, 8, when he cast forth the furniture of Tobiah the Ammonite out of one of the chambers of the Temple. If on the other hand the "household of God" be meant, i.e. the Jewish people, the reference might be to such action on behalf of the poor as is described in Neh v, when Nehemiah forced the nobles to cease from their exactions on their Hebrew debtors.

Further, the Psalmist complains that when he put on sackcloth and mourned for his own sins and the sins of his people (like Ezra; Ezra ix. 1-5), his enemies mocked him. Since these enemies are not described as Gentiles, it is probable that this Psalm reflects a phase in the long rivalry in Judaism between the stricter sort represented by Nehemiah in the fifth century and by the Pharisees in later times, and the more worldly party who ultimately were represented by the Sadducees. The Psalmist might be Nehemiah or Ezra, or some one of their school.

In any case this Psalmist—like Nehemiah (Neh i. 4, ii. 4, iv. 9) and like Ezra (Ezra viii. 21-23, ix. 5-15)—is a believer in the efficacy of prayer. "But as for me," he says, "my prayer is unto thee, O JEHOVAH, in an acceptable time." He prays laying his whole case before his God, and his faith tells him that his prayer is offered *in an acceptable time*. Why acceptable? Because he prays for no trivial cause. It is not only that the Psalmist's life is in danger (vv. 1, 4), but the cause of God is at stake (vv. 6, 7). It is *dignus vindice nodus*¹, a difficult case and worthy of Divine intervention.

This Psalmist is full of the thought of the goodness of God. So unhelped by any priest or mediator he urges his petition with the confident freedom of a child. "In the multitude of thy mercy"; "Thy lovingkindness is good"; and again, "According to the multitude of thy tender mercies," and yet again, "Draw nigh unto my soul." Such is his language, and his final cry is, "Redeem my soul." The verb "redeem" (properly, "act as kinsman") calls up a scene of Eastern life. The Elders are sitting in the gate of the city, and before them is one accused of serious crime, and apparently undefended. His accuser is a person of importance among his people, who presses his case with vehemence, and the unhappy defendant is about to be given up to his vengeance. But then a third person appears on the scene, the head of a family, and the defendant's kinsman. He declares that the defendant is his clansman, that he will answer for him, that if the defendant has injured the accuser, he (the kinsman) will see that suitable compensation is paid. So the Elders are satisfied, and the kinsman

¹ Horace, *Ars Poetica*, 191.

has "redeemed" or "ransomed" the unhappy one. The Psalmist with such a scene in his mind cries out to his God, "Draw nigh unto my soul, and *redeem* it" (v. 18).

Once more (*vv.* 19-21) he describes his situation to his God, but only in general terms, for he says, "Thou knowest." Here is true faith, faith which believes not only that God IS, but also that God CARES. It is faith like that of Jeremiah (Jer. xii. 3, xv. 15, xviii. 23, a threefold "Thou knowest"). The Psalmist's situation is that he is "sore sick," and that he is at the mercy of men, and that they taunt him with his sickness. From the Psalms, no less than from the book of Job, we learn that grievous sickness was generally supposed to be a Divinely sent punishment for some grievous act of sin. So his enemies reproach the Psalmist with such reproaches or insinuations as Job's friends used in their hardest moments.

But the Psalmist, though he does not claim perfect innocence ("God, thou knowest my foolishness," v. 5), is conscious that he does not deserve the reckless taunts and the exaggerated charges of his enemies. Under the stress of sickness and pain his patience gives way; he answers their reproaches with imprecations. He wishes that they might be in his place. May their table hold poisoned food, *such as they offer to him!* May their eyes be darkened *like his!* May their loins tremble with pain *like his!* (*vv.* 22-28).

As we read such words we must remember that the Psalms are human utterances. Broadly speaking we may say that while the Prophecies are from God manward, the Psalms are from man Godward. Their distinguishing feature lies in the unrestrained outpouring of the human soul to God. All that moves in the human heart is uttered, whether the thoughts be as *gold, silver, and precious stone*, or as *wood, hay, stubble* (1 Cor. iii. 12). The Psalms are not expurgated. We have been given them as they are for our learning, sometimes by way of example, sometimes by way of warning.

The history of Religion in this world is as a long road marked by many milestones. We may take the Psalmist's use of these imprecations as one milestone. It marks in largest letters that a long stretch is to be traversed before the Christian revelation is reached. It is a far cry from Ps. lxix to Matt. v-vii. The development is slow. Man had to learn God as his Father, before he could learn that man was his brother. The Hebrew learnt the former lesson through Assyrian invasion and Babylonian exile, through tardy recovery from exile, through dispersion over the then known world, through Seleucid persecution, and through a continual clash with Gentile superstition and immorality. But the second lesson, the lesson of the brotherhood of man, was learnt very slowly. Israel had suffered too much at the hands of the Gentiles to receive them readily as brethren. The lesson needed to be clinched by the coming of the Son of Man before the Israelite could rise to forgive his enemy, and pray for the man who hated him.

The Psalmist's prayer now returns to the higher level (*vv.* 29-31). He forgets his enemies; his faith in God is rising. He is still in pain, but he confidently expects that God's "salvation will set" him "on high." He will praise God with a song: such praise is more acceptable than the offering of an ox.

And now in the last five verses (32-36) of the Psalm it is again made clear

that this Psalmist does not speak only for himself. If he asks that his sickness may be taken away, it is in order that earnest seekers after God, the Meek ones upon earth, may come to their own. So he prays finally that God will save Zion, and build (re-build) the cities of Judah that they who love His name may "dwell" there free from the vexation of their enemies.

§ 3. UNITY OF THE PSALM.

Duhm states (too positively!) that *vv.* 32-36 are a liturgical composition and independent of the rest of the Psalm. He assigns them a different strophical arrangement, three strophes of four lines each, while he describes the rest of the Psalm as consisting of twelve strophes of six lines each. But a change of "metre" does not necessarily point to a change of author. Changes of form are characteristic of the highest lyrical poetry. Nor does the change of standpoint suggest that the Psalm is not a unity. The Psalmist, though he makes his plaint as an individual, does not forget that he belongs to Israel. He has suffered for his zeal for the house (or household) of God, and so towards the end of the Psalm he is cheered by the thought that God cares for his people. The Psalmist will share in the salvation of Zion which he foresees, and so he ends on the note of thankfulness. Duhm appeals in support of his view to his own bisection of Ps xxii between *vv.* 21, 22, and of Ps lxxvi between *vv.* 12, 13, but in these two cases also his suggestion is unconvincing.

For the Chief Musician; set to ¹Shoshannim. *A Psalm* of David.

LXIX. 1 Save me, O God;

For the waters are come in unto my soul.

2 I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing:

I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me.

3 I am weary with my crying; my throat is dried:

Mine eyes fail while I wait for my God.

4 They that hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of mine head:

They that would cut me off, being mine enemies ²wrongfully, are mighty:

Then I ³restored that which I took not away.

¹ That is, *Lilies*.

² Heb. *falsely*.

³ Or, *had to restore*

1-6. A CRY IN UTMOST NEED

LXIX. 2. *in deep mire.* A metaphor for "great danger"; cf xl. 2. The same metaphor is used in a Babylonian Penitential Hymn, "Lord, cast not down thy servant. He has fallen into the water of a morass: take him by the hand." (*Altor. Texte*, p. 262.)

3. *weary with my crying.* Like the sick Psalmist of vi. 6.

4. *are mighty.* Rather, *are many*, the Hebrew word being as in xl. 5, "they are more."

that which I took not away. The same Hebrew verb as in Job xxiv. 2,

- 5 O God, thou knowest my foolishness;
And my ¹sins are not hid from thee.
- 6 Let not them that wait on thee be ashamed through me, O
Lord God of hosts:
Let not those that seek thee be brought to dishonour through
me, O God of Israel.
- 7 Because for thy sake I have borne reproach;
Shame hath covered my face.
- 8 I am become a stranger unto my brethren,
And an alien unto my mother's children.
- 9 For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up;
And the reproaches of them that reproach thee are fallen
upon me.
- 10 When I wept, *and chastened* my soul with fasting,
That was to my reproach.

¹ Heb. *guiltinesses*.

"They *violently take away* flocks"; Micah ii. 2, "They covet fields, and *seize* them."

5. *my foolishness*. Heb. *ivveleth* as in xxxviii. 5. The word suggests blameworthy conduct. P-B, *my simpleness*, is wrong.

6. *ashamed through me*. The Psalmist is a leader to whom others who fear God have regard. Cf xxxv. 27 for a similar appeal expressed in a positive form.

O Lord God, i.e. "O Lord JEHOVAH." The ineffable Name occurs here and in vv. 13, 16, 31, 33. In the preceding Psalm, save in vv. 16, 20, there is a marked avoidance of the Name.

7-12. IT IS FOR THY SAKE THAT I HAVE SUFFERED SHAME

7. *for thy sake*. Hebrew as in xlv. 22; Jer xv. 15, "For thy sake I have suffered reproach."

8. *a stranger...an alien*. Cf xxxi. 11, xxxviii. 11.

9. *the zeal of thine house*. *House* (Heb. *bayith*, *bēth*) is ambiguous. It may mean the Temple, or it may mean the household of God, the faithful in Israel. In John ii. 17, the verse is quoted as referring to the Temple. In the Tenth Commandment (Exod xx. 17) "house" means "household."

the reproaches etc. Quoted in Rom xv. 3 of the reproaches addressed to our Lord on earth.

10. *When I wept* etc. Read perhaps, *I bowed down my soul with fasting* (LXX followed by Peshitta). MT, "With my very soul I wept with fasting," is possibly right, but the construction is harsh.

- 11 When I made sackcloth my clothing,
I became a proverb unto them.
- 12 They that sit in the gate talk of me;
And *I am* the song of the drunkards.
- 13 But as for me, my prayer is unto thee, O LORD, in an acceptable time:
O God, in the multitude of thy mercy,
Answer me in the truth of thy salvation.
- 14 Deliver me out of the mire, and let me not sink:
Let me be delivered from them that hate me, and out of the deep waters.
- 15 Let not the waterflood overwhelm me,
Neither let the deep swallow me up;
And let not the pit shut her mouth upon me.
- 16 Answer me, O LORD; for thy lovingkindness is good:
According to the multitude of thy tender mercies turn thou unto me.
- 17 And hide not thy face from thy servant;
For I am in distress; answer me speedily.
- 18 Draw nigh unto my soul, and redeem it:
Ransom me because of mine enemies.

11. *a proverb.* Heb. *māshāl* as in xlv. 14, "a byword."

12. *They that sit* etc. Or,
They that sit in the gate,
And the songs of the drinkers of wine,
Take me for their tale.

in the gate. Cf cxxvii. 5, note.

13-18. IT IS TIME FOR THEE, O GOD, TO INTERVENE,
FOR MY LIFE IS AT STAKE

13. *But as for me, my prayer is unto thee.* Cf cix. 4b, lit., "But I am prayer."

an acceptable time. Cf cii. 13, "Thou shalt...have mercy upon Zion; For it is time to have pity upon her."

14. *Deliver me* etc. A return to the urgent tone of v. 1.

16. *thy lovingkindness is good.* Cf xxv. 8, "Good and upright is JEHOVAH."

turn thou unto me. Vulgate, *respice in me.*

18. *redeem it.* I.e. act the part of kinsman. See Introduction, § 2.

- 19 Thou knowest my reproach, and my shame, and my dishonour:
Mine adversaries are all before thee.
- 20 Reproach hath broken my heart; and I am ¹full of heaviness:
And I looked for some to take pity, but there was none;
And for comforters, but I found none.
- 21 They gave me also ²gall for my meat;
And in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.
- 22 Let their table before them become a snare;
And when they are in peace, *let it become* a trap.
- 23 Let their eyes be darkened, that they see not;
And make their loins continually to shake.
- 24 Pour out thine indignation upon them,
And let the fierceness of thine anger overtake them.
- 25 Let their ³habitation be desolate;
Let none dwell in their tents.

¹ Or, *sore sick*² See Deut. xxix. 18.³ Or, *encampment*

19-21. CONSIDER MY PRESENT CONDITION

19. *Thou knowest.* Contrast the scoff of the Wicked in lxxiii. 11, xciv. 7.

before thee. As persons to be judged for their sin.

20. (*I am*) *full of heaviness.* Better as marg. *sore sick.*

21. *They gave me* etc. Rather, *They put gall* (i.e. *poison*) *into my food.* Deut xxxii. 33, "*venom of asps,*" the same Hebrew word (*rōsh*).

vinegar to drink. Reapers in rude health dipt their bread in vinegar as a relish, but this was coarse food. "As vinegar to the teeth" (Pro x. 26) is the description of an unpleasant experience. Friends would give either water or good wine to a sick person. To offer vinegar was mockery, as to give gall was murder. "Wine mingled with myrrh," a stupefying drink, was offered to our Lord on arriving at Golgotha (Mark xv. 23), and (just before his death) in answer to his cry, *I thirst*, "a sponge full of vinegar" (John xix. 28 f.) was presented in rough kindness.

22-28. LET A DOUBLE THREEFOLD CURSE FALL UPON MY PERSECUTORS

22. *when they are in peace,* let it become a *trap.* This rendering follows MT but the original text is uncertain. LXX (from a slightly different reading) has *καὶ εἰς ἀναπόδοσιν καὶ εἰς σκάνδαλον*, i.e. (*Let their table be*) *a recompense* (i.e. punishment) *and a trap.*

25. *Let their encampment* (so marg.) *be desolate.* A place of foot-prints, extinguished fires, and silences.

- 26 For they persecute him whom thou hast smitten ;
 And they tell of the ¹sorrow of those whom thou hast wounded.
- 27 Add iniquity unto their iniquity :
 And let them not come into thy righteousness.
- 28 Let them be blotted out of the book of ²life,
 And not be written with the righteous.
- 29 But I am poor and ³sorrowful :
 Let thy salvation, O God, set me up on high.
- 30 I will praise the name of God with a song,
 And will magnify him with thanksgiving.
- 31 And it shall please the LORD better than an ox,
 Or a bullock that hath horns and hoofs.
- 32 The meek have seen it, and are glad :
 Ye that seek after God, let your heart live.
- 33 For the LORD heareth the needy,
 And despiseth not his prisoners.

¹ Or, pain² Or, the living³ Or, in pain

26. *they tell.* They make a story of the Psalmist's illness, telling it as they sit together in *mejlis* (i. 1, note). Cf lxiv. 5, "They make a story of their laying snares." LXX, "they added (προσέθηκαν) to the pain of my wounds," following an inferior reading in the Hebrew *yōsīphū* for *yēsapp'rū*.

27. *Add iniquity* etc. Or, *Add guilt to their guilt*, i.e. in thy book of record.

28. *the book of life.* Cf Exod xxxii. 32; Luke x. 20; Phil iv. 3; Rev iii. 5, *al.*

29-31. THE PSALMIST'S VOW

29. *and sorrowful.* Better as marg. *in pain.*

30. *with a song.* Cf xxviii. 7.

31. *better than an ox.* Duhm suggests that the Psalmist was a priest who had fallen out with his brother-priests (*vv.* 8, 9) and had been excluded from a share in the Temple services. So of necessity he learns the lesson that a Psalm may be an acceptable sacrifice.

32-36. THE GOOD CAUSE OF ZION AND HER PEOPLE

32. *The meek* etc. Perhaps, rather (with a slight change of reading), *Behold, ye meek, and be glad.* Cf LXX, *ιδέτωσαν πτωχοὶ καὶ εὐφρανθήτωσαν*, "Let the poor see and rejoice."

33. *his prisoners.* I.e. those of His people who have been carried captive into other lands: lxviii. 6, lxxix. 11, cii. 20.

- 34 Let heaven and earth praise him,
The seas, and every thing that moveth therein.
35 For God will save Zion, and build the cities of Judah;
And they shall abide there, and have it in possession.
36 The seed also of his servants shall inherit it;
And they that love his name shall dwell therein.

34. *heaven and earth* etc. Cf xcvi. 11.

35. *abide there*. Better than *dwell there* (P-B), for the Hebrew verb (*yāshab*) has the notion of continuance: cxxv. 1, "(Zion) *abideth* for ever."

36. *his name*. Cf lxxviii. 4.

PSALM LXX

Ps lxx consists of five verses which have been detached from the end of Ps xl. There are some variations of text, the advantage being sometimes with Ps xl, as in xl. 17, sometimes again with Ps lxx, as in lxx. 3. The Editor has done well, for the five verses detached are of more general application than the whole Psalm from which they are taken. In fact Ps lxx stands out as a general prayer suitable for almost any lonely soul, who is persecuted by enemies, whether he has suffered such extremities as are alluded to in xl. 2, or not. The poor man and needy uses these verses in faith that JEHOVAH is in truth a deliverer, and he looks forward to singing with thankfulness the anthem of praise, *Let God be magnified* (v. 4).

For the Chief Musician. *A Psalm* of David;
¹to bring to remembrance.

LXX. 1 ²*Make haste*, O God, to deliver me;
Make haste to help me, O LORD.

¹ Or, *to make memorial*

² See Ps. xl. 13-17.

A CRY OF URGENCY (cf xl. 13-17)

LXX. 1. *Make haste, O God, to deliver me*. In the parallel passage (xl. 13), "Be pleased, O JEHOVAH, to deliver me." In the Hebrew of lxx. 1 the first verb is missing, perhaps advisedly. There is rude vigour in the opening as it stands, simply, *O God, to deliver me!*—an exclamation.

Make haste to help me. So xxii. 19, xxxviii. 22, xl. 13, lxxi. 12; cf cxli. 1. See also v. 5.

- 2 Let them be ashamed and confounded
That seek after my soul:
Let them be turned backward and brought to dishonour
That delight in my hurt.
- 3 Let them be turned back ¹by reason of their shame
That say, Aha, Aha.
- 4 Let all those that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee;
And let such as love thy salvation say continually,
Let God be magnified.
- 5 But I am poor and needy;
Make haste unto me, O God:

¹ Or, for a reward of

2. *That delight in my hurt.* Or, as P-B, *That wish me evil.* Contrast xxxv. 27, "That favour (same Hebrew word, חַסְדִּי) my righteous cause."

3. *Let them be turned back by reason of their shame.* The phrase is unusual and not of certain interpretation. The most probable sense is, "Let them return on the track of their shame," i.e. Let them return by the way they came with shame. The Hebrew word 'ēkeb (עָקַב) is probably to be taken as a construct form of 'ākēb in the sense of "foot-print."

That say, Aha, Aha. Cf xxxv. 21, 25. An expression of triumph.

4. *Let God (Jehovah, xl. 16) be magnified.* So LXX, μεγαλυνθήτω ὁ θεός. Targum paraphrases the verse thus, "Let all that seek teaching (or Torah) from Thee rejoice and exult in Thy Word, and let them that love Thy Salvation say continually, Let the glory of Jehovah increase." This is worth citing as a characteristic instance of early Jewish interpretation.

Peshitta gives simply, *God is great.*

5. *poor* (Heb. 'ānī, אָנִי) and *needy* (Heb. ebyōn, עֲבִיּוֹן). LXX, πτωχὸς καὶ πένης. The phrase is found in xxxv. 10, xxxvii. 14, xl. 17, lxxiv. 21, lxxxvi. 1, cix. 16, note; 22. The two adjectives taken together describe accurately the Psalmist's character and condition. The "poor" man (Heb. 'ānī) is the representative of the non-official class, the mass of the people, which in Israel (as elsewhere) was often oppressed by the rich ruling class: consequently in many cases the word may be rendered "afflicted." Moreover as the ruling class cherished political and secular aims, and showed much haughtiness in pursuing them, the non-official class was distinguished from it by the presence within itself of many men who had a deeper consciousness of the presence and of the providence of God in the world. So in other cases 'ānī may be very well rendered, *humble*—humble towards God.

The second word, *needy* (Heb. ebyon), explains itself. The *ebyon* is the man whose case is described in Deut xv. 7-9. He is the man of needs, who is to be helped, and not to be defrauded by his more fortunate brethren.

Thou art my help and my deliverer ;
O LORD, make no tarrying.

make no tarrying. So in xl. 17 ; cf Dan ix. 19. For the boldness of speech cf xlv. 23, "Awake, why sleepest thou, O Lord?"

PSALM LXXI

THE PSALMIST FAITHFUL IN ADVERSITY

§ 1. CONTENTS.

1-3. Petition mingled with confidence, "Deliver me"—"Thou hast given commandment to save me."

4-6. Appeal mingled with praise. "Rescue me"—"My praise shall be continually of thee."

7, 8. "I am a *portent* (*mōphēth*) to many, but I will still praise thee."

9-11. "My strength faileth"—"Mine enemies are encouraged to attack."

12, 13. "Be not far, O God"—"Let mine accusers be ashamed." (These verses are not to be excised from the Psalm with Duhamel, for they have an echo in *v.* 24 *b.*)

14-16. I will still praise God's righteousness.

17, 18. I have praised thee in youth : let me still praise thee in old age.

19, 20. God's wonderful righteousness in its twofold action has showed us trouble, and then again has brought us out of the depths.

21-24. "I will praise thy faithfulness...for they are ashamed, that seek my hurt."

§ 2. CHARACTER OF THE PSALM.

The Psalmist is a prophet. He has been taught of God from his youth to his gray hairs to proclaim the greatness and goodness of his God (*v.* 17-19). He does this still, though he has suffered "many and sore troubles" (*v.* 20), and though at the moment he is in the hand of his enemy (*v.* 4). He is like the Three Children who walked in the midst of the fire praising God and reciting the *Benedicite Opera Omnia*. So he is a wonder ("a portent") to many (*v.* 7).

His case is not unlike that of the author of Ps lxxix. While one Psalmist is zealous for God's house (lxxix. 9), the other longs to utter God's praise (lxxi. 18). Both have dangerous enemies. But while one pours out terrible imprecations against them (lxxix. 22-28), the other contents himself with desiring that they may be "ashamed and confounded," i.e. that their wicked designs may utterly fail (lxxi. 13, 24). (On *v.* 13, *Let them be...consumed*, see note *infra*.)

Many passages of O.T. lay stress on the holiness and majesty of God, and suggest that man may approach Him only with fear and trembling. "Man shall not see me and live": Exod xxxiii. 20. When God spoke on Sinai the people said to Moses, "Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die": Exod xx. 19. Even to the prophets (except Moses) God speaks only "in a vision, in a dream, in dark speeches": Num xii. 6-8. But in

the Psalter the case is different. Several of the Psalmists speak to God with the freedom with which a small child addresses his father. Such freedom of speech is found conspicuously in Ps lxxi. Boldly the Psalmist speaks to the Lord **JEHOVAH** of his youth, now long past, and of his present gray hairs. Boldly he pleads in v. 3, "Be thou to me a rock of habitation, whereunto I may continually resort."

LXXI. 1 ¹In thee, O LORD, do I put my trust :

Let me never be ashamed.

2 Deliver me in thy righteousness, and rescue me :

Bow down thine ear unto me, and save me.

3 Be thou to me ²a rock of habitation, whereunto I may continually resort :

¹ See Ps. xxxi. 1-3.

² According to some ancient authorities, *a strong rock, whereunto &c.*

1-3. GOD THE PSALMIST'S CONFIDENCE IN DANGER

LXXI. 1-3. Another text of these verses is found in xxxi. 1-3*a*. The chief variations are (*a*) lxxi. 2*b*, "and save me"; xxxi. 2*a*, "deliver me speedily": (*b*) lxxi. 3*a*, "a rock of habitation"; xxxi. 2*b*, "a strong rock" or "a rock of refuge."

1. *In thee, O LORD, do I put my trust.* Rather (as in xxxi. 1), *In thee, O JEHOVAH, have I taken refuge.* God is the Psalmist's *rock of habitation* (v. 3).

2. *in thy righteousness.* Cf v. 8, xxxi. 1, lxxxix. 16, cxliiii. 1*b*.

3. *a rock of habitation.* I.e. a rock (Heb. *zūr*) that is a habitation, i.e. a safe dwelling place: cf xc. 1, "Thou hast been our dwelling place." The thought of God as an *habitation* is wider than the thought of God as a *refuge*. Cf Acts xvii. 28, "In him we live, and move, and have our being," and Wordsworth, *Intimations of Immortality*,

God who is our home.

LXX (followed by Vulgate) reads *zūr mā'ōz*, lit. "rock of refuge" as in xxxi. 2, and offers a double rendering, taking "rock" in one case as equivalent to "God." Hence the Vulgate:

Esto mihi in Deum protectorem
et in locum munitum,

Be thou to me a Divine protector and a place of defence.

"God a *rock of habitation* for a man!" This child-language of mysticism puts aside all dread, and thinks only of the nearness of the Divine to man: compare,

Speak to Him thou for He hears,
And Spirit with Spirit can meet—
Closer is He than breathing
And nearer than hands and feet.

Tennyson, *The Higher Pantheism.*

- Thou hast given commandment to save me;
 For thou art my rock and my fortress.
- 4 Rescue me, O my God, out of the hand of the wicked,
 Out of the hand of the unrighteous and cruel man.
- 5 For thou art my hope, O Lord GOD:
Thou art my trust from my youth.
- 6 By thee have I been holden up from the womb:
¹Thou art he that took me out of my mother's bowels:
 My praise shall be continually of thee.
- 7 I am as a wonder unto many;
 But thou art my strong refuge.
- 8 My mouth shall be filled with thy praise,
 And with thy honour all the day.
- 9 Cast me not off in the time of old age;
 Forsake me not when my strength faileth.
- 10 For mine enemies speak concerning me;
 And they that watch for my soul take counsel together,
- 11 Saying, God hath forsaken him:
 Pursue and take him; for there is none to deliver.

¹ Or, *Thou hast been my benefactor from &c.*

(*For thou art*) *my rock and my fortress*. Better, *my crag* (Heb. *sela'*) and *my stronghold* (Heb. *mēzūdāh*). The sequence, "Be thou to me a rock...for thou art my rock," is inverted in Mark ix. 24, "I believe; help thou mine unbelief," but the spiritual crisis is the same.

4-11. THE DESPERATE CONDITION OF THE PSALMIST, OLD AND (APPARENTLY) FORSAKEN

4. *cruel man*. The enemy is singular here, plural in *vv.* 10, 13. Cf vii. 1 (with note), 14-16.

5. *my hope*. LXX, ἡ ὑπομονή μου: Vulgate, *patientia mea*, i.e. the One for whom I patiently wait.

6. *he that took me out*. Or as marg. *my benefactor from*. Vulgate, *protector meus*. The meaning of the Hebrew word is uncertain.

7. *a wonder*. I.e. *a portent*. So also P-B, *a monster* (something to wonder at). Deut xxviii. 46, "a wonder."

9. *old age*. Cf *v.* 18.

10. *speak concerning me*. Rather, *tell it of me*, i.e. that I am growing old and weak.

11. *God hath forsaken*. Cf xxii. 1, 7, 8.

- 12 O God, be not far from me:
O my God, make haste to help me.
- 13 Let them be ashamed *and* consumed that are adversaries to
my soul;
Let them be covered with reproach and dishonour that seek
my hurt.
- 14 But I will hope continually,
And will praise thee yet more and more.
- 15 My mouth shall tell of thy righteousness,
And of thy salvation all the day;
For I know not the numbers *thereof*.
- 16 I will come ¹with the mighty acts of the Lord GOD:
I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only.
- 17 O God, thou hast taught me from my youth;
And hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works.

¹ Or, *in the strength*

12, 13. MAY GOD INTERVENE

13. *be...consumed*. Read (perhaps), *be put to shame*, as in xxxv. 4 (Olshausen).

adversaries to my soul. Lit. *those who act as Satans against my soul*. Cf Zech iii. 1.

be covered with reproach. lxxxix. 45, "Thou hast covered him (wrapt him) with shame."

14-16. I WILL PRAISE WHILE I WAIT

14. *I will hope...And will praise*. Here is a living, struggling faith.

15. *the numbers thereof*. The Hebrew text is uncertain, but P-B probably gives the sense correctly, *For I know no end thereof*. On the other hand Duhm suggests that the Psalmist presents himself here as a seer, and as a seer he repudiates dependence on any writings. The Hebrew word translated *numbers* may possibly mean *books*, hence Vulgate, *Non cognovi litteraturam*. In this case the Psalmist says, "I am not book-learned, but God-taught."

17, 18. LET ME CONTINUE TO UTTER THY PRAISE

17. *thou hast taught me*. The Hebrew verb is that used in Isa l. 4, where the Servant of the LORD says, "The Lord GOD hath given me the tongue of them that are *taught*," i.e. trained or instructed to become prophets.

- 18 Yea, even ¹when I am old and gray-headed, O God, forsake me not;
 Until I have declared ²thy strength unto *the next* generation,
 Thy might to every one that is to come.
- 19 Thy righteousness also, O God, is very high;
 Thou who hast done great things,
 O God, who is like unto thee?
- 20 Thou, which hast shewed ³us many and sore troubles,
 Shalt quicken ³us again,
 And shalt bring ³us up again from the depths of the earth.
- 21 Increase thou my greatness,
 And turn again and comfort me.

¹ Heb. *unto old age and gray hairs.*² Heb. *thine arm.*³ Another reading is, *me.*

18. *thy strength.* Better as marg. *thine arm.* The *arm* represents strength which is not passive, but active; Exod vi. 6, *al.*

19, 20. THOU HAST PUT US TO THE PROOF, O GOD

19. *Thy righteousness* etc. Cf xxxvi. 5, 6.

who is like unto thee? Cf xxxv. 10, lxxxix. 6, 8; Exod xv. 11, *al.*

20. *the depths of the earth.* The deep waters of the earth, in which the Psalmist might be drowned, cf lxix. 2. Three times in the Hebrew text of this verse there is a variation between "us" and "me." This is not surprising, for the Psalmist is one who has a message for his people, and as a Hebrew must associate himself with them: notice that he uses in v. 22 two forms of address, the descriptive title, *O thou Holy One of Israel*, and *O my God.*

21-24. LET ME PRAISE THEE WITH HARP AND TONGUE FOR THE CONFUSION WHICH HAS FALLEN UPON MY ENEMIES

21. *Increase thou my greatness.* Rather, *Thou dost increase my greatness.* A statement, not a prayer. The collocation of the pronoun "my" with "greatness" is strange in O.T., for "greatness" is the prerogative of God: cxlv. 3, cl. 2; Deut iii. 24, xxxii. 3 ("Ascribe ye greatness unto our God"), *al.* Early translators had difficulty here. Thus Vulgate, changing the pronoun, gives *magnificentiam tuam*, "thy greatness"; LXX, changing both the substantive and the pronoun, gives τῆν δικαιοσύνην σου. This last is a Midrashic turn, i.e. a quotation of the text

- 22 I will also praise thee with the psaltery,
Even thy truth, O my God:
 Unto thee will I sing praises with the harp,
 O thou Holy One of Israel.
- 23 My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing praises unto thee;
 And my soul, which thou hast redeemed.
- 24 My tongue also shall talk of thy righteousness all the day
 long:
 For they are ashamed, for they are confounded, that seek my
 hurt.

in a modified form in order to convey a religious lesson. LXX desires to tell us that it was not so much the Psalmist's increase of "greatness" as JEHOVAH'S "righteousness" that was displayed in His dealings with the Psalmist. There can be no reasonable doubt that MT has the correct reading, and that the paraphrase of P-B, "Thou hast brought me to great honour," is a good one.

22. *I will also.* Rather, *I also will.* The Psalmist will add his praise to that which others offer.

with the psaltery...with the harp. Cf xxxiii. 2, lvii. 8. Sometimes with the larger instrument (the psaltery), sometimes with the smaller, but the Psalmist will always praise.

Holy One of Israel. Cf lxxviii. 41; Isa i. 4 *et passim* in Isaiah.

23. *my soul, which thou hast redeemed.* I.e. (probably) from some dangerous illness.

PSALM LXXII

A VISION OF THE TRUE KING

§ 1. CONTENTS.

1. The intercession for the king.
- 2-6. The kingly character.
- 7-11. The kingdom (like Solomon's) peaceful and far extended.
- 12-14. The king gracious to the poor.
- 15-17. The blessedness of the king.
- 18, 19. Doxology.

§ 2. CHARACTER OF THE PSALM.

A king, according to ancient Hebrew thought, is the gift of God: he is appointed by God, and becomes His representative on earth: ii. 6; 1 Sam ix. 16, xvi. 1. God gives a man "a new heart" (1 Sam x. 9), "a wise and an understanding heart" (1 K iii. 12), when he appoints him a king. The king is a

religious figure, and the collocation "God and the king" is entirely natural in Hebrew thought. Insurrection against the king is described as "against JEHOVAH and against his Anointed" (Heb. "against his Messiah": ii. 2). So the Targum on Ps lxxii commences, "Impart the ways of thy judgment unto king Messiah, and thy righteousness to the king the son of David."

When the period of the Judges was drawing to an end, Israel suffered within from the perversion of justice and without from the menace of the Philistines and the Ammonites. Then God gave Israel kings, Saul, David, and Solomon in succession, under whom Israel was delivered from his foes and some justice was done to the poor. So the early years of the Monarchy were viewed by later generations as Israel's Golden Age.

But in course of time the kingdom fell on evil days. Injustice and oppression within and the invasion of foreign enemies brought Israel into a condition of servitude, poverty, and misery. Then the seers (among whom we may count the author of this Psalm) began to look back to the Golden Age, and forward to a return of it. In their visions the re-establishment of the reign of justice by an ideal king always holds a chief place. So it is in Isa ix. 7, to establish the throne of David "with judgment and with righteousness": xi. 4, "With righteousness shall he judge the poor": xxxii. 1, "A king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment." But this reign of justice can only become a fact, if the judge is acquainted with the "judgments" of God which were revealed in the *Torah*, and if in addition he is zealous to keep them himself and to enforce them on others. So the Psalmist begins his prayer with the petition, *Give the king thy judgments*; and the Deuteronomist writes with legal detail, "A copy of this law shall be written for him (the king) in a book...and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear JEHOVAH his God, to keep all the words of this law" (Deut xvii. 18, 19). For the execution of justice the king must have the quality of righteousness. This is primarily one of the qualities of JEHOVAH Himself; in this Psalm He is entreated to impart it to His earthly representative. It may be described as the virtue which intervenes actively to deliver the oppressed and to insure the execution of just judgment. (See the Introduction to Ps li.) As the king is just so must his princes be. These "mountains" and "hills" (as the Psalmist calls them) will dispense the king's justice and so they will bring peace and prosperity; the oppressor will be ground to powder. The king will be no short-lived despot; but will prolong his reign. His mercy will be like the rain on the mown grass, and the righteous man will put forth shoots. There will be unbroken prosperity ("peace") in his days (*vs.* 1-7).

If justice is the first characteristic of the Golden Age, a second (no less important) is peace. But how was peace to be obtained in a world in which war was the normal condition of life? The seer looks back to the days of Solomon, the man of peace, as he was reputed to be (1 Chr xxii. 9). This peace was due to the fact that the small neighbouring states which at other epochs were at war with Israel were in Solomon's day subject to Israel (1 K iv. 24). So the seer of this Psalm envisages the rule of the ideal king as equal in extension to that of Solomon—"from sea to sea, And from the River (Euphrates) unto the ends of the earth."

In this vision we see perhaps the source of Dante's teaching in his *de Monarchia* (circ. 1312 A.D.). "A universal monarchy is necessary for the welfare of the world." "Universal peace," says Dante, "is the first blessing of mankind. The angels sang not riches or pleasures, but peace on earth: peace the Lord bequeathed to his disciples. For peace One must rule... Where there is parity there must be strife; where strife, judgment; the judge must be a third party intervening with supreme authority" (Milman, *Latin Christianity*, v. 392).

If it seem strange that the seer should dream of universal rule for the king of the small people of Israel, it must be remembered that his dream is religious, not political. No doubt he believed, as Isaiah believed before him, that the zeal of JEHOVAH would perform this (Isa ix. 7).

In *vs.* 15-17 the Psalmist invites the prayers of all on behalf of his king. Further he suggests the form which these prayers should take: "May the king live! May there be ample harvests in his day! May his name be used when blessings are invoked!"

The Psalm ends with a doxology which suits the preceding verses.

A note (which now is reckoned as *v.* 20) tells us that a collection of "prayers" bearing David's name, which has been included in our present Psalter, ends here.

§ 3. AN EGYPTIAN PARALLEL?

In *Altor. Texte*, p. 25, a Song is printed which celebrates the accession of Ramses IV to the throne of Egypt, but it is unlike any of the "Royal Psalms" (xx, xxi, xlv, lxxii, cx). It assumes and describes the joy of his subjects, but the reference is perhaps only to the festivities of the king's accession. Some phrases are given here:

Happy day! Heaven and Earth rejoice, for thou art the great lord of Egypt!
Those who had fled have returned to their cities, and those who were hidden
have come forth again.

Those who were hungry are satisfied and happy, those who were thirsty are
drunken.

Those who were naked are clothed in linen, and those who were filthy now go
in white.

Those who were in prison are set free, and he who was bound now rejoices.

Whatever these phrases mean, they come short of the directness of the Psalm,
"He shall judge...he shall save."

A Psalm of Solomon.

LXXII. 1 Give the king thy judgements, O God,
And thy righteousness unto the king's son.

1-6. A RIGHTEOUS KING

LXXII. 1. *the king's son.* The ideal king of this Psalm is a king and a descendant of royalty, not an upstart.

- 2 ¹He shall judge thy people with righteousness,
 And thy poor with judgement.
 3 The mountains shall bring peace to the people,
 And the hills, in righteousness.
 4 He shall judge the poor of the people,
 He shall save the children of the needy,
 And shall break in pieces the oppressor.
 5 They shall fear thee while the sun endureth,
 And ²so long as the moon, throughout all generations.
 6 He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass:
 As showers that water the earth.
 7 In his days shall the righteous flourish;
 And abundance of peace, till the moon be no more.
 8 He shall have dominion also from sea to sea,
 And from ³the River unto the ends of the earth.
 9 They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him;
 And his enemies shall lick the dust.
 10 The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall ⁴bring presents:
 The kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts.

¹ Or, *Let him* and so throughout the Psalm.

² Heb. *before the moon*.

³ See Exod. xxiii. 31.

⁴ Or, *render tribute*

2. *thy poor*. Cf Lxxiv. 19, not *the poor*, as P-B.

4. *the children of the needy*. The use of the word "children" here is due to a Hebrew idiom. The phrase means no more than *the needy*. *break in pieces*. Hebrew verb as in xciv. 5. Not *punish*, as P-B.

5. *They shall fear thee*. Rather, *Men* (indefinite subject) *shall fear thee*. This abrupt turn to address the Deity has parallels in the Psalter, e.g. in xci. 9a. Under the rule of a righteous king men will retain their faith in God.

6. *the mown grass*. Not *a fleece of wool*, P-B (from LXX, Vulgate)

7-17. A PROSPEROUS KING

8. *from sea to sea*. So Zech ix. 10.

the River. I.e. the Euphrates: cf Gen xv. 18; Josh xxiv. 15.

9. *lick the dust*. They have to lay their faces in the dust at the conqueror's feet. This action is portrayed on the Assyrian reliefs.

10. *Tarshish...the isles*. The *isles* are the lands to the West which are reached by crossing the Mediterranean Sea. *Tarshish* may stand here for Tartessus in Spain (near the mouth of the Guadalquivir).

Sheba. As in v. 15; "Arabia," P-B. Cf 1 K x. 1; Ezek xxviii. 22

- 11 Yea, all kings shall fall down before him :
All nations shall serve him.
- 12 For he shall deliver the needy when he crieth ;
And the poor, ¹that hath no helper.
- 13 He shall have pity on the ²poor and needy,
And the souls of the needy he shall save.
- 14 He shall redeem their soul from ³oppression and violence ;
And precious shall their blood be in his sight :
- 15 And ⁴they shall live ; and to him shall be given of the gold of
Sheba :
And men shall pray for him continually ;
⁴They shall bless him all the day long.
- 16 There shall be ⁵abundance of corn in the ⁶earth upon the top
of the mountains ;
The fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon :
And they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth.
- 17 His name shall endure for ever ;
His name shall ⁷be continued ⁸as long as the sun :
And men shall ⁹be blessed in him ;
All nations shall call him happy.

¹ Or, and him that hath² Or, weak³ Or, fraud⁴ Or, he⁵ Or, an handful⁶ Or, land⁷ Or, have issue⁸ Heb. before the sun.⁹ Or, bless themselves

(*Sheba* a land of "spices, precious stones, and gold"). A kingdom in south Arabia.

13. *the poor.* Heb. *dal*, "weak." P-B, *simple*, i.e. "plebeian" as opposed to "noble."

14. *precious.* Hebrew as cxvi. 15.

15. *And they shall live.* The whole verse may be rendered, *And they shall live* (i.e. prosper), *and shall give unto him of the gold of Sheba, And pray for him continually, And bless him all the day.* (A more literal rendering would be, *And one shall live, and one shall give* etc.) The margin, *And he shall live*, is a possible translation, but it does not agree so well with the context in v. 14. The rendering of P-B, *Prayer shall be made unto him*, is corrected in AV, RV and is certainly wrong.

16. *There shall be...The fruit* etc. Rather, *If there be a handful of seed corn...The fruit....* The sense is that even a small sowing shall yield great increase.

17. *shall be blessed.* Rather as marg. *shall bless themselves*; cf Gen xxii. 18, marg.

- 18 Blessed be the LORD God, the God of Israel,
Who only doeth wondrous things:
19 And blessed be his glorious name for ever;
And let the whole earth be filled with his glory.
Amen, and Amen.

20 The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended.

18, 19. A PRAYER

18. *wondrous things*. Such things as the seer sees in vision in this Psalm.

19. *the whole earth* etc. Isa vi. 3.

20. THE COLOPHON

20. *The prayers of David*. LXX, οἱ ὑμνοὶ Δαυεὶδ, reading perhaps *tēhilloth*, "praises," for *tēphilloth*, "prayers." There are Psalms standing later in the Psalter which have the name of "David" in the heading: lxxxvi, ci, ciii, *al.*, which were doubtless derived from another collection of Davidic Psalms. See the General Introduction, p. xxiv. Note that while the main part of this Psalm is a Vision, *vv.* 18, 19 are a Prayer.

BOOK III

PSALM LXXIII

THE HEART IS UNQUIET, UNTIL IT RESTS IN GOD

§ 1. CONTENTS.

This Psalm like xxxvii and xlix belongs to the Wisdom literature of the Hebrews. It is not a hymn for singing. It is a meditation, a confession to God, yet intended, like the *Confessions* of St Augustine, to be overheard by men. The Psalmist has solved a problem, and he offers his solution for the edification of others.

He begins his meditation by citing one of those religious commonplaces which were on the lips of the superficial would-be teachers of his time: *Surely God is good to Israel, Even to such as are pure in heart*. "Those who are good have a good time, at least if they belong to the chosen people." This was the confident assertion of the optimists.

But the Psalmist could not accept it. He saw that such a commonplace did not cover his own experience. *But as for me, my feet were almost gone; My*

steps had well nigh slipped (v. 2). God good to the pure in heart! The Psalmist could say, I have cleansed my heart, And washed my hands in innocency (v. 13). Yet God had not been good to him in the sense of making him earthly happy: on the contrary: All the day long have I been plagued, And chastened every morning (v. 14). Job himself could not have said more.

On the other hand the Psalmist saw prosperity falling to the lot of the wicked. *Behold, these are the wicked, he cries, And, being alway at ease, they increase in riches (v. 12).*

The wickedness of these prosperous ones consisted, first in their pride and secondly in their oppression of their people. They displayed their pride as though it were a chain of gold about the neck: they practised oppression till it fitted them like a garment (v. 6). In such men there was of course no place for the fear of God; they did in fact deny His government of the world. They were oppressors of the weak, self-sufficient, and practical atheists (vv. 7-12).

The Psalmist felt very bitterly the contrast between their prosperity and his own unceasing afflictions. He had tried hard to preserve his own innocence. Now he is tempted to declare that a clean heart receives no recompense. But he comforts himself with the thought that he has not done wrong to the faithful children of God; he has not made public his own afflictions and doubts (vv. 13-15). At first he faced his difficulties alone: *I took thought, he says, to get to understand this, but it was too hard for me (v. 16).* Then he went to the "sanctuary of God," and there in communion with God (cf 2 K xix. 14-19) he read in advance the latter end of these wicked ones. They were exalted, but they stood in fact in slippery places, and sudden destruction awaited them. The Psalmist acknowledges his former distress over their prosperity, but he now confesses that his distress was due to his ignorance of the ways of God (vv. 16-22).

In the final verses (23-28) the Psalmist realizes to the full how unjustified were his former anxieties. He knows at last that **JEHOVAH** holds his hand and guides him: **JEHOVAH** will in the end receive him, "take" him, as He took Enoch; Gen v. 24. So he rests and is comforted knowing that he is near to God.

§ 2. THE PROBLEM.

The moral difficulty arising from the prosperity of the wicked appears to be solved in vv. 18-20 by the consideration that God brings this prosperity to a sudden end. The same solution is given in xxxvii. 35, 36:

I have seen the wicked in great power,...
And he passed on his way, and, lo! he was not:
Yea, I sought him, but he could not be found.

With this solution the author of xxxvii seems to be satisfied, but not so the author of lxxiii. This Psalmist feels intensely his nearness to God. He cannot imagine that the spiritual communion which he enjoys can ever be broken. Like Enoch he has walked with God, and he expects that in the end God will take him to Himself, as He took Enoch. Thus he has a vision of a life with God which is not ended by death.

This vision he shares with the author of Ps xlix, but he is more explicit in the expression of his hope. Both Psalmists employ the suggestive word "take" or "receive" (Heb. קָבַץ), which is used of the translation of Enoch in Gen v. 24,

but there is no parallel in xlix to the concluding verses of lxxiii, which emphasize the Psalmist's communion with God. The latter Psalm has the fuller expression of the larger hope.

It should be observed further that in both Psalms it is an individual hope; the two Psalmists confess the hope as a personal testimony to a prospect which doubtless they wish "the Righteous" to share with them. But for them the Future Life is a hope, not a doctrine, a hope struggling to express itself in a *milieu* in which almost all men felt that Death was the end of all for the individual life (Job xiv. 7-12).

§ 3. THE PSALMIST TAUGHT BY GOD.

The Psalmist's consciousness of communion with God and of receiving teaching from the Most High is indeed fundamental with him. In deep perplexity he goes to the Sanctuary and there receives the guidance he seeks. Psalmists regard the Temple as God's house, as the place in which He dwells (v. 7 a, xxvi. 8, xxvii. 4, 5, lii. 8, lv. 14). So too when the word "tabernacles" (Heb. *mishkānoth*) is used for the Sanctuary, it must be remembered that it means "dwelling" (xliii. 3, xlvi. 4, lxxxiv. 1). The Temple (like the tent of meeting in the wilderness) was regarded as the place in which God was "at home," and might be sought: "Now Moses used to take the tent and to pitch it without the camp;...and he called it, The tent of meeting. And it came to pass, that every one which sought **ЈЕHOVAH**, went out unto the tent of meeting" (Exod xxxiii. 7). This going out was for the purpose of obtaining Divine guidance on the occasion of some perplexity or distress. So the Psalmist desires to obtain a solution of the difficulty which oppresses him. But he finds the solution not in a formula, nor in a doctrine, but in communion with God himself:

It is good for me to draw near unto God.

A Psalm of Asaph.

LXXIII. 1 ¹Surely God is good to Israel,

Even to such as are pure in heart.

2 But as for me, my feet were almost gone;

My steps had well nigh slipped.

¹ Or, *Only good is God*

1-3. I WAS IN DANGER THROUGH ENVY. (Cf xxxvii. 1 ff.)

LXXIII. 1. *Surely God is good.* The Psalmist quotes a dictum of the popular religion of Israel as the text of the discourse which follows: cf xlix, Introduction, § 2.

good. Cf lii. 9, liv. 6.

Israel. The parallel clause reads, *such as are pure in heart.* The popular saying meant that God "was good to Israel" or at least to the faithful among them.

- 3 For I was envious at the ¹arrogant,
 When I saw the prosperity of the wicked.
 4 For there are no ²bands in their death:
 But their strength is firm.
 5 They are not ³in trouble as *other* men;
 Neither are they plagued like *other* men.
 6 Therefore pride is as a chain about their neck;
 Violence covereth them as a garment.
 7 Their eyes stand out with fatness:
⁴They have more than heart could wish.
 8 They scoff, and in wickedness utter oppression:
 They speak ⁵loftily.
 9 They have set their mouth ⁶in the heavens,
 And their tongue walketh through the earth.
 10 Therefore ⁷his people return hither:
 And waters of a full *cup* are ⁸wrung out by them.

¹ Or, *fools* ² Or, *pangs* ³ Heb. *in the trouble of men*.

⁴ Or, *The imaginations of their heart overflow* ⁵ Or, *from on high*

⁶ Or, *against* ⁷ Another reading is, *he will bring back his people*.

⁸ Or, *drained*

3. *arrogant*. See v. 5, note.
prosperity. Heb. *shālôm*, "peace"; cf lxxii, Introduction, § 2.

4-12. THE PROSPERITY AND SECURITY OF WICKED MEN

4. *For there are etc.* If the text is sound, we may render, *There are no pangs in their death*: so marg. Or (emending the reading *in their death*) render, *They have no bands* (i.e. "they suffer no restraint"); *perfect and full* (lit. "fat") *is their strength* (or "body").

5. *Neither are they plagued*. The reference may be to diseases (Gen xii. 17, same Hebrew verb) or it may be general. LXX has οὐ μαστιγωθήσονται. *Plague* (Lat. *plaga*) may stand for any kind of calamity; cf xxxviii. 11, note.

7. *Their eyes stand out with (from) fatness*. Cf Jer v. 28, "They are waxen fat, they shine; yea, they overpass in deeds of wickedness." Fat and prosperous as they are, their (covetous) eye desires yet more.

8. *They...in wickedness utter oppression*. Or (with a change in the vowel points), *They pronounce an oppressive sentence against their neighbour*. Those of whom the Psalmist complains hold the position of judges.

They speak loftily. I.e. from their exalted judge's seat. Not as P-B, *Their talking is against the most High*: cf LXX, ἀδικίαν εἰς τὸ ὕψος ἐλάλησαν.

9. *They have set etc.* I.e. their boasting of security is heard in all places, high and low; cf xii. 4.

10. *his people return hither*. I.e. (if we follow the K'ri) the people

- 11 And they say, How doth God know?
And is there knowledge in the Most High?
- 12 Behold, these are the wicked;
And, being alway at ease, they increase in riches.
- 13 Surely in vain have I cleansed my heart,
And washed my hands in innocency;
- 14 For all the day long have I been plagued,
And ¹ chastened every morning.
- 15 If I had said, I will speak thus;
Behold, I had dealt treacherously with the generation of thy children.
- 16 When I thought how I might know this,
²It was too painful for me;
- 17 Until I went into the sanctuary of God,
And considered their latter end.

¹ Heb. *my chastisement was.*² Heb. *It was labour in mine eyes.*

who are impressed by this boasting resort to the boasters and are led by them. But read with C^thib, *Therefore my people* (so LXX) *pay tribute to these* (lit. *hither*), i.e. "submit to them."

11. *How doth God know?* The question means, "Doth God take knowledge of what we do? Doth He care?" Surely the Most High does not trouble Himself in heaven about what men do on earth: cf xciv. 7, "JEHOVAH shall not see, Neither shall the God of Jacob consider." Contrast xiv. 2, lxix. 19.

12. *being alway at ease.* Rather, *being long time at ease.*

13-15. THE AFFLICTED STATE OF THE PSALMIST

13. *washed my hands in innocency.* I.e. kept my hands free from evil deeds: cf xxvi. 6.

15. *If I had said* etc. Or, *If I had resolved to tell* (my story) *thus, I should have dealt treacherously with thy sons.* The Psalmist comforts himself with the thought that he has not done evil to JEHOVAH's "sons," His faithful children, by proclaiming aloud that he had cleansed his heart in vain. He kept his doubt to himself. (In the Hebrew text for *kēmō hinnēh* read *kēmō hēnnāh*, "thus.")

16-22. I COULD NOT SOLVE MY PROBLEM UNTIL THOU, O LORD, DIDST SHOW ME THE LATTER END

17. *Until I went into the sanctuary of God.* The Psalmist in his extremity did what King Hezekiah did in like case. Hezekiah being threatened by the king of Assyria went up to the house of JEHOVAH,

- 18 Surely thou settest them in slippery places :
 Thou castest them down to ¹destruction.
 19 How are they become a desolation in a moment !
 They are utterly consumed with terrors.
 20 As a dream when one awaketh ;
 So, O Lord, ²when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their
 image.
 21 For my heart ³was grieved,
 And I was pricked in my reins :

¹ Heb. *ruins*.² Or, *in the city*³ Heb. *was in a ferment*.

and prayed over the great king's letter. Then he received through Isaiah the prophet a reassuring answer to the effect that Sennacherib's attempt on Jerusalem should end in utter failure. So the Psalmist too prayed against the prosperous oppressors of his people, and learnt that their end would be destruction.

Some expositors are dissatisfied with the simple explanation given above. In the Hebrew "the sanctuary of God" is a plural, as in Jer li. 51, "the sanctuary (lit. "sanctuaries") of JEHOVAH's house." Duhm takes "the sanctuaries" in a metaphorical sense and translates, "Until I penetrated into God's holy secrets" (or "mysteries"). The Jews, he asserts, as well as the Gentiles had "mysteries"; for this statement he appeals to Ezekiel and Trito-Isaiah (Isa lxx. 3-5; Ezek viii. 8-12). The object of these "mysteries" was chiefly to discover the secrets of the future.

Gunkel would correct the Hebrew from *makdēshē*, "sanctuaries" or "holy things," into *mōkēshē*, "snares" or "traps." He renders "Until at last I came to perceive God's *snares*, and considered their end" ("the end of the ungodly"). Cf Jer l. 24. But the EV (in following MT) is to be preferred.

latter end. Cf xxxvii. 38.

18. *to destruction.* Rather, *in retribution*, lit. "exactions," Heb. *mash-shū'oth*, as in lxxiv. 3, "for eternal retribution." The Psalmist uses the metaphor of the exaction of an unpaid debt.

20. *As a dream* etc. This rendering is uncertain. Perhaps the words should be rendered thus:

As a dream on awakening,
 O Lord, in thy city
 Thou shalt despise their image.

(*In thy city* = ἐν τῇ πόλει σου, LXX.) The wicked ones (in spite of their fair show) shall be found despicable in Jerusalem, the city of God.

21. *was grieved.* Better, *was in a ferment* (marg.).

I was pricked in my reins. I.e. "I felt sharp pain within." Cf Acts ii. 37.

- 22 So brutish ¹was I, and ignorant;
I was *as* a beast ²before thee.
- 23 Nevertheless I am continually with thee:
Thou hast holden my right hand.
- 24 Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel,
And afterward receive me ³to glory.
- 25 Whom have I in heaven *but thee*?
And there is none upon earth that I desire ⁴beside thee.
- 26 My flesh and my heart faileth:
But God is the ⁵strength of my heart and my portion for
ever.
- 27 For, lo, they that are far from thee shall perish:
Thou hast destroyed all them that go a whoring from thee.

¹ Or, *am* ² Heb. *with thee*. ³ Or, *with* ⁴ Or, *with thee* ⁵ Heb. *rock*.

22. *I was as a beast before thee.* I.e. "Though I was with thee, I had as little understanding as dumb cattle." The Psalmist was an inhabitant of God's own city; yet he had not learnt the ways of God.

23-28. THE PSALMIST RECOVERS FULL CONFIDENCE IN GOD

24. *And afterward receive me to (or with) glory.* Duhm and others understand the passage as an assertion of life after death for the Psalmist. But the construction of the words in the Hebrew is somewhat difficult, and Gunkel and others emend the text and deny a reference to the future life. See Introduction, § 2.

25. *Whom have I...?* Cf xvi. 2.

26. *My flesh and my heart faileth.* Cf lxxi. 9.

But *God is the strength* (marg. *rock*) *of my heart and my portion for ever.* The meaning of this half-verse is obscured by the editorial change of the name JEHOVAH into "God" (*ELOHIM*). The Psalmist wishes to assert his own perfect loyalty to JEHOVAH the God of Israel. JEHOVAH, he says, is the Rock (*zûr*) of his heart, i.e. his heart's choice of a God, for "Rock" is a common Hebrew synonym for "God"; cf xviii. 2, note. Moreover the Psalmist proceeds to say that JEHOVAH is his *portion*. Why does he apply such a term to his God? Because there were many "gods" in the ancient world, and each Gentile nation may be said to have chosen his "portion," i.e. his special deity to worship of all these: cf Deut iv. 19. But the Psalmist chooses JEHOVAH here, as in xvi. 2-5, "JEHOVAH is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup."

27. *that go a whoring from thee.* I.e. that go astray after other gods: the same metaphor in cvi. 39; Exod xxxiv. 15, 16. The common sin of Israel was not to forsake JEHOVAH altogether, but to combine His worship with that of some Canaanite or other foreign deity in a sort of spiritual adultery: 1 K xviii. 21.

28 But it is good for me to draw near unto God :

I have made the Lord GOD my refuge,
That I may tell of all thy works.

28. *to draw near unto God.* The same (Hebrew) phrase as in Isa viiii. 2.

That I may tell of all thy works. P-B (= LXX, Vulgate) adds *in the gates of the daughter of Sion*, as in ix. 14. This verse, with or without this last clause, forms a telling summary of the Psalmist's experience. Once he doubted of God's moral government of the world, and almost fell through unbelief. Such doubts beset a man in his solitude, but at length he went into the Temple. There it was revealed to him that the wicked who enjoy a temporary prosperity are doomed to a sudden fall. And the Psalmist realizes that he himself is safe, for God holds his hand. So he is assured that in spite of all appearances to the contrary Providence is in action, and he announces that he will publish abroad the lesson which he has learnt.

It is hypercriticism to strike out (with some critics) the clause, *That I may tell of all thy works*, as "against the metre" and as "having nothing to do with the Psalm." The Psalmist began with the text, *Surely God is good...to the pure in heart.* He then describes his own doubts and how God removed them. He concludes by saying (implicitly) that he composes this Psalm in order to testify from his own experience of God's dealings that *God is good.*

PSALM LXXIV

AN ENEMY IN THE SANCTUARY

§ 1. CONTENTS.

1-3. The Psalmist appeals to God to remember His people and to avenge the injuries which an enemy has inflicted on them and on God's own holy place. (No hint is given in these verses to help us to identify this enemy, but see v. 18.)

4-7. The injuries inflicted by the enemy are specified. At the time of one of Israel's feasts the enemy burst in, and asserted his right to be present in the Temple by setting up his "signs." His violent entry involved grievous injury to the building; in fact he entered by fire and sword, and so grievously profaned God's dwelling place.

8-11. A fresh appeal to God. The enemy goes on triumphantly: for how long shall it be? Destroy him, O God, out of thine own territory!

12-17. The Psalmist encourages himself by recalling to mind the wondrous power of God, when at the Exodus He wrought salvation for Israel by overthrowing the Egyptian army in the Red Sea. So again He gave Israel water in the Wilderness and divided the perennial stream of Jordan for His people to pass over (v. 15). God's power remains unchanged, for He is Lord of Time (v. 16) and Lord of Space (v. 17).

18-23. The final appeal. In these verses a description of the enemy is given as the "foolish people" (v. 18) or the "foolish man" (v. 22). In both cases the Hebrew adjective is *nābāl*, and it is probable that the Samaritans who are described in Ecclus i. 26 as a "foolish (*nābāl*) people" are the "enemy" intended in this Psalm. The Samaritans might be described as the "enemy" from the time of Zerubbabel onward. This identification, if correct, leaves the date of the Psalm open, for two or three centuries. The Psalmist's appeal to God is that He should acknowledge His own people by delivering them. Israel is God's "turtle-dove"—God's "poor"—He has a "covenant" with them—Israel's "adversaries" are God's foes. The Psalmist claims for the Jews a place of privilege which he denies to the Samaritans.

§ 2. OCCASION AND DATE.

The contents of the Psalm as set forth in § 1 do not give any clear indication of the date at which it was composed. Yet many critics assign it confidently to the Maccabean period. Duhm goes so far as to assert that in Ps lxxiv we have "quite firm ground under our feet" in our search for Maccabean Psalms. Ps lxxiv is, he thinks, the earliest of them. When it was composed the Maccabees had not yet gained their victories (v. 19), the book of Daniel had not appeared (v. 9), but the horrors narrated in 1 Macc ii. 29-38 had already taken place (v. 20).

But the language of the Psalm is too indefinite to justify this confident statement. Allusions to a profanation of the Temple and a slaughter of faithful Jews (v. 8) are insufficient to prove a Maccabean date. It is impossible to establish the case as long as no reference can be pointed out in the Psalm to the constructive side of the policy of Antiochus. He desired to persuade the Jews by promises of favour to acquiesce in his religious policy which was to establish and maintain one form of worship for the whole of his great empire, from the borders of Egypt and from the Cilician gates to the Persian gulf. All "peoples, nations and languages" were to worship at appointed times in the form in which their king worshipped: his kingdom was to be welded together by a common devotion to the Olympian Zeus (2 Macc vi. 2). At other times the Jews might worship as they pleased; only, when their monarch bade them sacrifice to Zeus Olympius, they must not object that they worshipped *JEHOVAH* only.

Of this attempt to force the Jews to worship another God there is no trace in the Psalm. Nor does it contain any reference to the enemy as "Gentiles." The "heathen" (Heb. *gōyim*) appear in Ps lxxix, but not in Ps lxxiv. The most definite description of "the enemy" given in Ps lxxiv is "foolish man" or "fool" (Heb. *nābāl*) in v. 22, and "foolish nation" in v. 18, a term which is used in Ecclus i. 26 of those who dwell in Sichein, i.e. the Samaritans. It is therefore at least possible that "the enemy" who "profaned" (v. 7) the sanctuary were the Samaritans and not the Syrians of Antiochus at all.

The lack of definiteness in the language of the Psalm should in any case be noticed. Another instance occurs in v. 4, "They have set up their ensigns for signs." Is this an allusion to the building of "the abomination of desolation" (1 Macc i. 54)? It may be, but if so the language of the Psalmist is surprisingly cool beside that of the Maccabean chronicler. Moreover an "ensign" need not be an altar of Zeus.

Further the chroniclers (in 1 and 2 Maccabees) naturally make much of the prohibition of circumcision, the destruction of the books of the Law, and the attempt to enforce the eating of swine's flesh. Of all this there is nothing in the Psalm. The Psalmist has just two complaints to make. There has been a great slaughter of "the congregations of God" in the land (*v.* 8). But—a greater calamity in the eyes of the Psalmist—the Temple has been injured and profaned (*vs.* 3-7).

But profanation happened to the Temple on other occasions than when Antiochus entered it. Josephus (*Antiq.* xi. vii. 1 = §§ 297-301) says that Bagoas (Bagoas) the governor [of Judah] under Artaxerxes being provoked by a fratricide perpetrated by the high priest Joannes (Johanan) profaned (*ἐμίανε*) the Temple by forcing his way into it. Moreover he imposed a penal tribute for seven years on the Jews. This story brings together three names, Artaxerxes king of Persia, Bagoas (Bagoas) a governor (*στρατηγός*) apparently of Judah, and Joannes high priest in Jerusalem. This Artaxerxes used to be identified with Artaxerxes III, Ochus (358-338 B.C.), apparently because Josephus goes on almost immediately to notice Philip of Macedon and his son Alexander the Great. But the papyri found at Elephantine in Egypt (published by E. Sachau at Berlin, 1907) suggest a different identification. In one of these belonging to the year 408-7 B.C. we find the three names associated: Bagōhi (Bagoas) governor of Judah: Jehohanan (Joannes) chief priest in Jerusalem: and King Darius, i.e. Darius II (reigned 424-404 B.C.). Now the successor of Darius in 404 B.C. was Artaxerxes II, Mnemon, and we have only to assume that Bagoas and Joannes retained their offices some four or five years beyond 408-7, to obtain from a new source the association of the three names mentioned by Josephus and the probability that Bagoas' violation of the Temple belongs to the reign of the Second Artaxerxes (404-358) and to the earlier part of the reign. The story briefly told by Josephus probably covers much on which a Psalmist would enlarge, as in Ps lxxiv.

Again in 320 B.C. Ptolemy I (Ptolemaeus Lagi) of Egypt captured Jerusalem by taking advantage of the Jewish observance of the Sabbath, and showed himself *χαλεπὸν δεσπότην*, "a harsh lord" (Agatharchides *apud* Joseph. *Antiq.* xii. i. §§ 4-6). Ptolemy entered Jerusalem under the pretence of sacrificing (*ὡς θύσαν*), so it is not improbable that he like Bagoas forced his way into the Temple. Here no doubt were contained treasures, which would tempt a king who had troops to pay.

What is distinctive in the action of Antiochus is that he endeavoured to compel the Jews to take part in worship which they regarded as idolatrous. This characteristic is clearly reflected in the book of Daniel, which certainly contains references to the Maccabean troubles, but where in Ps lxxiv is there any clear indication of coercion of the Jews to idolatry? The Psalm may possibly be Maccabean, but it may equally well belong to some earlier period at which the Temple was entered by an "enemy," but no "religious persecution" in the proper sense was carried out.

§ 3. THE RELIGIOUS OUTLOOK OF THE PSALMIST.

The Psalmist is filled with the thought that God (JEHOVAH) is truly Israel's God, to whom His people has the right to look for deliverance; when Israel is

oppressed JEHOVAH must be jealous for His own reputation. But the Psalmist feels that God tarries, and a feeling of depression hurries him into a cry of impatience in *vv.* 8-11. But recollection of the working of God in past history and in "Nature" helps to revive his faith (*vv.* 12-17). He ends with one more urgent appeal to the one God who alone can help. We may compare Ps lxxiv with xliv and lxxvii for the religious attitude of the authors, men deeply tried but found faithful, but we need not suppose that these Psalms all sprang from one historical occasion.

Maschil of Asaph.

LXXIV. 1 O God, why hast thou cast *us* off for ever?

Why doth thine anger smoke against the sheep of thy pasture?

2 Remember thy congregation, which thou hast purchased of old,

Which thou hast redeemed to be the tribe of thine inheritance;
And mount Zion, wherein thou hast dwelt.

3 Lift up thy feet unto the perpetual ruins,

¹All the evil that the enemy hath done in the sanctuary.

¹ Or, *The enemy hath wrought all evil*

1-3. AN APPEAL TO GOD TO TURN FROM HIS ANGER

LXXIV. 1. *why* (Heb. *lāmāh*). This word stands first in the Hebrew text as in ii. 1, x. 1; cf xxii. 1.

doth thine anger smoke. Anger is said to "smoke" in Deut xxix. 20 (19, Heb.); cf Ps xviii. 8 (9, Heb.). The usual verb is "to burn" or "to be kindled": Num xxii. 27.

2. *thy congregation* (Heb. *‘ēdah*). The Hebrew word suggests the congregation of Israel during the Wandering in the wilderness: cf Num xxvii. 16, 17, "the congregation of JEHOVAH."

Which thou hast redeemed. Cf lxix. 18, note.

to be the tribe (Heb. *shēbet*) *of thine inheritance.* The Psalmist says "tribe" (not "people") because (as in lxxviii. 67, 68) he is mentally contrasting the tribe of Judah (the Jews) with the tribe of Ephraim (the Samaritans).

3. *Lift up thy feet* etc. The text of this verse is difficult, and perhaps corrupt. The general sense is however clear; the Psalmist calls on his God to exact a full retribution for all that an enemy has done against the Temple. If we follow M^T closely we render, *Lift up thy feet for eternal retributions (exactions): the enemy hath wrought every evil in the sanctuary.* Let God, the kinsman-redeemer of Israel, return on high (cf vii. 7) to sit on His judgment seat and exact from the enemy a full retribution. The Heb. *mashshū'oth*, "exactions," is a substantive with an active sense from the verb *hishshi*, "act as a creditor," i.e. "exercise

- 4 Thine adversaries have roared in the midst of thine assembly;
They have set up their ensigns for signs.
- 5 They ¹seemed as men that lifted up
Axes upon a thicket of trees.
- 6 And now all the carved work thereof together
They break down with hatchet and hammers.
- 7 They have set thy sanctuary on fire;
They have profaned the dwelling place of thy name even to
the ground.

¹ Or, *made themselves known*

one's rights mercilessly"; as in lxxxix. 22 (23, Heb.), "the enemy shall not exact upon him": marg. "do him violence."

4-7. THE SANCTUARY PROFANED BY AN ENEMY

4. *have roared.* As lions over their prey: civ. 21.

in the midst of thine assembly. I.e. in the midst of Israel gathered together in Jerusalem to keep one of the great feasts.

their ensigns for signs. The same Hebrew word (*ōth*, plural *ōthōth*) is used here both for "ensign" and for "sign." These words are too colourless to describe the setting up of abominable heathen altars as described in 1 Macc i. 47 and 54 f. But the Samaritan invaders of the Temple were (like the Jews) worshippers of JEHOVAH and the "signs" which they set up would be harmless in themselves, but provocative as asserting the triumph of the Samaritan over the Jew.

5. *They seemed as men that lifted up.* Modern editors emend freely and diversely the text of this verse, which indeed seems to be corrupt. The text as it stands suggests some such rendering as follows, *Let him (the enemy) be known on high (i.e. to God) as one that bringeth in axes as into a thicket of trees*; cf the imprecation in lxxix. 10. The enemy hews in the Temple as unconcernedly as if he were doing his day's work.

6. *And now.* Heb. *vē'ēth* or *vē'attah*, an uncertain reading.

all the carved work...They break down. Probably the reference is to a violent breaking into the Temple, not to an attempt to destroy the building itself. For *the carved work* LXX has *τὰς θύρας αὐτῆς*, "the doors thereof," a paraphrase which probably gives the sense of the passage: *Yea, now the enemy are breaking down the carved work of the doors to force their way into the Temple.*

7. *They have set thy sanctuary on fire.* As the Romans under Titus fired the cloisters in storming the Temple (Josephus, *Bellum J.* vi. iv. 2-7). But the Psalmist does not state that the Temple was destroyed by fire, on the contrary he says only, *They have "profaned" the dwelling place of thy name.*

They have profaned (Heb. *hillēlū*). Cf lxxix. 1, *Thy holy temple have*

- 8 They said in their heart, Let us make havoc of them altogether:
They have burned up all the 'synagogues of God in the
land.
- 9 We see not our signs:
There is no more any prophet;
Neither is there among us any that knoweth how long.
- 10 How long, O God, shall the adversary reproach?
Shall the enemy blaspheme thy name for ever?
- 11 Why drawest thou back thy hand, even thy right hand?
Pluck it out of thy bosom and consume them.

¹ Or, *places of assembly*

they defiled (Heb. *timm'û*). The mere entrance of the Samaritans into the Temple would constitute a profanation of it in the eyes of the Jews.

the dwelling place (Heb. *mishkan*) *of thy name*. Cf v. 2, xliii. 3, note.

to the ground. Cf lxxxix. 39.

8, 9. ISRAEL IN EXTREMIS

8. *They said* etc. Cf lxxxiii. 4.

all the synagogues. Rather, *all the assemblies*. *Assembly* (Heb. *mo'ed*) as in Lam i. 15. The sense is that the enemy *destroyed* the gatherings of faithful Israel. The verb *burn up* need not be taken in the strictly literal sense, but cf 1 Macc iii. 5, "(Judas) burnt up (ἐφλόγισεν) those that troubled his people."

9. *our signs*. I.e. such signs of Divine favour as the prophets of old used to give.

no more any prophet. Lam ii. 9; 1 Macc iv. 46, ix. 27, xiv. 41.

10, 11. THE APPEAL TO GOD RENEWED

10. *reproach...blaspheme thy name*. The terms are general; they do not imply a religious persecution. Goliath of Gath "reproached" and "defied" (1 Sam xvii. 26): so did Sennacherib (2 K xix. 16, 22).

11. *Pluck it out* etc. The rendering of P-B, AV and RV follows the K'ri (*hēkēkā*, "thy bosom" = τοῦ κόλπου σου, LXX), but the C'thib (*huk-kēkā*, "thy portion") is to be preferred. Translate, *Consume them* (i.e. the enemy) *out of the midst of thy portion* (i.e. Mount Zion), "exterminate them out of the Sacred Place into which they have thrust themselves."

- 12 Yet God is my King of old,
Working salvation in the midst of the earth.
- 13 Thou didst ¹divide the sea by thy strength :
Thou brakest the heads of the ²dragons in the waters.
- 14 Thou brakest the heads of leviathan in pieces,
Thou gavest him to be meat to the people inhabiting the
wilderness.
- 15 Thou didst cleave fountain and flood :
Thou driedst up ³mighty rivers.
- 16 The day is thine, the night also is thine :
Thou hast prepared the ⁴light and the sun.

¹ Heb. *break up*.² Or, *sea-monsters*³ Or, *ever-flowing*⁴ Heb. *luminary*.

12-17. THE POWER OF GOD (JEHOVAH) AS SHOWN IN THE EVENTS
OF THE EXODUS AND IN HIS ORDERING OF THE SEASONS

12. *Working salvation*. Heb. *salvations* (plur.), i.e. many kinds of salvation; cf xlii. 5, "health" or "help" (same Hebrew word).

13, 14. *Thou didst divide* etc. The Targum renders these two verses as follows: "Thou didst divide by thy power the waters of the sea; thou didst break the heads of the sea-monsters; and thou didst drown the Egyptians at the sea; thou didst break the heads of the mighty men of Pharaoh; thou didst give them up to destruction to thy people of the house of Israel, and their bodies to the wild creatures": cf Exod xiv. 21-31. The view that the reference is rather to the mythological story of the Creator's victory over Tiāmat (Chaos) is held by some scholars, but it is less probable.

14. *leviathan*. The word is of uncertain origin; it is perhaps the name of a mythological being. But it is used as a name for the crocodile in Job xli. 1-34, and in Isa xxvii. 1 it is probably a figure for "Egypt." So in the Psalm it seems to refer to the host of Pharaoh which was destroyed at the Red Sea.

15. *Thou didst cleave* etc. There is a contrast between the two halves of this verse. The Creator can prepare and bring forth water for His creatures to drink: He can also hold up the waters of the Sea, as He did at the Exodus.

16. *The day...the night*. Polytheism divided the heavenly bodies among many deities: the Psalmist assigns these bodies to one Owner and Maker: cf Ps viii, Introduction.

the light. Rather, *the luminary*. The reference is to the Moon, which is mentioned before the Sun, probably because the Moon was for the Hebrews the usual measure of time.

- 17 Thou hast set all the borders of the earth:
 Thou hast made summer and winter.
- 18 Remember this, that the enemy ¹hath reproached, O LORD,
 And that a foolish people have blasphemed thy name.
- 19 O deliver not ²the soul of thy turtledove unto the wild beast:
 Forget not the ³life of thy poor for ever.
- 20 Have respect unto the covenant:
 For the dark places of the ⁴earth are full of the habitations
 of violence.

¹ Or, *hath reproached the LORD* ² Or, *thy turtledove unto the greedy multitude*
³ Or, *multitude* ⁴ Or, *land*

17. *Thou hast set (up) all the borders of the earth.* Cf Deut xxxii. 8, "When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance,...He set the bounds ("borders") of the peoples."

summer and winter. The same Hebrew phrase as in Gen viii. 22. Winter (Heb. *hōreph*) is properly the time of gathering fruits, *autumn* rather than winter. But it might be a time of heavy rain, and cold: cf Jer xxxvi. 22 ("winter house"—"the brasier"—"the ninth month"); Ezra x. 9 ("the ninth month"—"the great rain").

18-23. APPEAL TO GOD TO TAKE ACTION FOR THE HONOUR OF HIS NAME

18. *hath reproached.* Cf v. 10.

a foolish (Heb. *nābāl*) *people.* Cf xiv. 1, with note. The term *foolish people* is applied to the Samaritans in Eccles. i. 26 in the moral sense of the word. The Samaritans showed their hostility to the Jews in the days of Nehemiah (Neh. iv. 2, *al.*), in the time of Alexander the Great they veiled it, and claimed kinship with the Jews, because they learnt that the Jews had secured the favour of Alexander (Josephus, *Antiq.* xi. viii. 6 = §§ 340, 341), but Josephus goes on to record that the Samaritans received into communion Jews who were excommunicated in Jerusalem. This action must have been a constant source of friction. Later still during the Maccabean revolt the Samaritans took part against the Jews (1 Macc. iii. 10).

19. *O deliver not etc.* Render (as marg.) *O deliver not thy turtledove unto the greedy multitude* (or *company*): *Forget not the multitude* (or *company*) *of thy poor.* The words suggest that the Jews had a force of some kind, a little band, to oppose to the greedy host of the foe—greedy for slaughter and for spoil.

thy turtledove. Israel is compared to a dove as to a creature harmless and helpless; so in lvi, the heading, *Jonath elem rehokim*, "The silent dove of them that are afar off," is taken by LXX, Targum and Jerome (*iuxta Hebraeos*) as a description of Israel in exile.

20. *For the dark places etc.* Rather, *For the hiding places of the*

- 21 O let not the oppressed return ashamed:
Let the poor and needy praise thy name.
- 22 Arise, O God, plead thine own cause:
Remember how the foolish man reproacheth thee all the day.
- 23 Forget not the voice of thine adversaries:
The tumult of those that rise up against thee ¹ascendeth continually.

¹ Or, *which ascendeth*

land are full (i.e. of fugitives), and *the habitations of violence* are full (i.e. of spoil taken violently). It is however possible that the Hebrew text is faulty and that the Peshitta preserves a better reading, "For the dwellings of the land are filled with darkness and iniquity." LXX seems to have read as MT, but it gives an obscure rendering.

21. *return ashamed.* I.e. be dismissed from Thy tribunal in disappointment.

22. *plead thine own cause.* Cf Jud vi. 31.

the foolish (Heb. *nābāl*, as in v. 18) *man.* The style of the verse in the Hebrew is urgent and abrupt: *Arise, O God, plead thine own cause (remember thy reproach!) from the fool all the day.*

PSALM LXXV (cf Ps ci)

GOD IS NEAR, AND ALL WRONGS SHALL BE RIGHTED

§ 1. CONTENTS.

1. (*The Congregation of Israel speaks.*) We thank God, yea, we thank God, because His "Name" is near: His wonderful works have revealed this to us.

2, 3. (*God Himself speaks.*) I will take the appointed time, and I will carry out my judgment with equity. I who established the earth upon its pillars will establish righteousness in the earth.

4-8. (*The Psalmist speaks as leader of the Congregation.*) Let men await God's judgment in silence: let none presume to decide in His place. He humbles one man, and exalts another. The cup of God's punishments which the wicked must drink is ready.

9, 10. The Psalmist will still praise God, and will himself begin the judgment which God will complete.

§ 2. THE OCCASION OF THE PSALM. THE RELIGIOUS OUTLOOK OF THE PSALMIST.

This Psalm is allied in subject on the one side to Ps ci which is the protestation of a ruler that he will rule justly, and on the other to Pss xcvi-xcviii which look forward to JEHOVAH'S Day of General Judgment. The ruler has apparently

only recently entered upon his office, and the times are unfavourable to godliness. Unjust judgment prevails, and unjust judges glory in their immunity. But the Psalmist is not dismayed, for he is confident of two things: *first*, that *God is the judge* (v. 7); *secondly*, that God has announced that at His own appointed time He will Himself judge the earth.

No suggestion as to the date of the Psalm can be made. The Psalm is apocalyptic in kind, and general in language. There is no clear reference to any specific event.

§ 3. POETICAL FORM.

This Psalm is said to be composed of stanzas of four lines, each line containing three stresses. But *vv.* 1, 6-8 do not fit easily into this metrical scheme, and emendations are proposed in *vv.* 1, 7, 8, to help the metre. But it does not help the sense in *v.* 1 to make the clause *Unto thee do we give thanks* occur a third time, nor in *v.* 8 to omit the words, *All the wicked of the earth shall...drink them*. It is better to confess that the Hebrew poets (though travelling on the way towards metre) stopt short of a rigid use of a fixt number of stresses.

For the Chief Musician ; *set to* Al-tashheth.
A Psalm of Asaph, a Song.

LXXV. 1 We give thanks unto thee, O God ;
We give thanks, ¹for thy name is near :
Men tell of thy wondrous works.

¹ Or, *for that thy name is near thy wondrous works declare*

1. WE GIVE THANKS TO GOD

LXXV. 1. *We give thanks* etc. In the MT the letter *Vau* has been wrongly repeated before קרוב, "nigh" : omitting this we render, *We give thanks to Thee, O JEHOVAH, we give thanks ; Thy Name is nigh : Thy wondrous works have declared it*. Praise is due to God, because His Name, i.e. He Himself, is near to help. Cf Isa xxx. 27, "Behold, the name of JEHOVAH cometh from far" to deliver Jerusalem from the Assyrian. The Psalmist is confident because he remembers God's wondrous works (e.g. at the Exodus) which have revealed His nature (His "Name") : cf LXXvii. 11, 12.

Some scholars, following LXX, give the middle clause of *v.* 1 as follows :

We give thanks, and we will call upon thy name ;
(καὶ ἐπικαλεσόμεθα τὸ ὄνομά σου).

This text however involves the loss of the rendering, *thy name is near*, i.e. "Thou art near," but the instant response given in *vv.* 2, 3 fits in exactly with the thought of Nearness.

- 2 When I shall ¹find the set time,
I will judge uprightly.
- 3 ²The earth and all the inhabitants thereof are dissolved:
I have ³set up the pillars of it. [Selah]
- 4 I said unto the ⁴arrogant, Deal not arrogantly:
And to the wicked, Lift not up the horn:
- 5 Lift not up your horn on high;
⁵Speak not with a stiff neck.
- 6 For neither from the east, nor from the west,
Nor yet ⁶from the ⁷south, *cometh* lifting up.
- 7 But God is the judge:
He putteth down one, and lifteth up another.

¹ Heb. *take*. ² Or, *When the earth...I set up* ³ Heb. *proportioned*.

⁴ Or, *fools* ⁵ Or, *Speak not insolently with a haughty neck*

⁶ Or, *from the wilderness of mountains, cometh judgement*

⁷ Heb. *wilderness*.

2, 3. THE DIVINE RESPONSE

2. *When I shall find the set time.* Not an appropriate form of words to put into the mouth of God. Duhm and others render, "Though (or If) I make a respite," but the meaning "respite" assigned to the Hebrew מוֹעֵד (*mō'ēd*, "fixt time") is doubtful. The Heb. *ki* ("when") may sometimes be rendered "surely"; so here, *Surely I will take the appointed time*. The rendering of P-B, AV, *When I (shall) receive the congregation* presupposes a human speaker, who is succeeding to the leadership of his people, but in the light of v. 3b it is better to take vv. 2, 3 as the utterance of JEHOVAH Himself.

3. *are dissolved.* The same Hebrew word as Exod xv. 15, "All the inhabitants of Canaan are melted away." A figure of demoralization.

the pillars of it. Cf 1 Sam ii. 8; Job ix. 6. He who made the physical world, will restore the moral world.

4-8. THE PSALMIST'S WARNING

4. *the arrogant.* The same Hebrew word as in lxxiii. 3.

5. *Speak not with a stiff neck.* Or (more lit.), *Speak not arrogancy with (uplifted) neck.* For *with the neck* Vulgate (=LXX) has *adversus Deum* as though the Hebrew were צוּר (*zūr*, "God," lit. Rock: xviii. 2, note), not צוּאָר, "neck."

6. *Nor yet from the south, cometh lifting up.* Better (perhaps) as marg. *Nor yet from the wilderness of mountains (cometh judgment).* The latter rendering supposes an Aposiopesis, which is certainly effective in this place.

7. *But God is the judge.* Cf 1 Sam ii. 3-7. The mention of the fact

- 8 For in the hand of the LORD there is a cup, and the wine
¹foameth;
 It is full of mixture, and he poureth out of the same:
 Surely the dregs thereof, all the wicked of the earth shall
²wring them out, and drink them.
- 9 But I will declare for ever,
 I will sing praises to the God of Jacob.
- 10 All the horns of the wicked also will I cut off;
 But the horns of the righteous shall be lifted up.

¹ Or, *is red*

² Or, *drain*

that God "putteth down one, and lifteth up another" may perhaps glance at the Psalmist's own case. He has been promoted by God Himself to be a ruler in Israel.

8. *a cup*. Cf lx. 3 ("Thou hast made us to drink the wine of staggering"): Isa li. 17; Jer xxv. 15 ("Take the cup of the wine of this fury at my hand, and cause all the nations, to whom I send thee, to drink it").

he poureth out of the same. Perhaps a word is missing from the Hebrew text. If we supply it, we render, *he poureth out going from this one to that one* (of His enemies), the metaphor being taken from the action of a cup-bearer, who goes from guest to guest.

Surely the dregs thereof etc. The wicked shall drink the cup to the bitter end.

shall wring them out, and drink them. The emphasis expressed by the double verb should not be missed.

9, 10. THE PSALMIST'S CONFIDENCE IN GOD

9. *I will declare*. Cf lxxi. 17, 18. The Psalmist will persevere in declaring the wondrous works of JEHOVAH, which he has mentioned in v. 1. LXX, ἀγαλλιάσομαι ("I will rejoice"), reading the same Hebrew verb as xxxi. 7.

the God of Jacob. Rather, *God the Conqueror*. Cf xlvii. 7, note. There is no reference here to the patriarch.

10. *the horns*. The horn is a symbol of strength for war or for defence; Deut xxxiii. 17; 1 K xxii. 11; Amos vi. 13.

will I cut off. The Psalmist speaks in his own person, being confident of the support of his God.

PSALM LXXVI

JEHOVAH MADE KNOWN AS THE DELIVERER OF ZION

§ 1. ANALYSIS OF CONTENTS.

1-3. God (JEHOVAH) whose dwelling place is in Zion has there broken the arrows of the bow and the battle array of the enemy (cf xlvi. 9).

4-6. (The Psalmist addresses JEHOVAH.) Thou art glorious. At Thy rebuke the might of the enemy—his chariots and horses—came to an end.

7-9. Thou art to be feared. Earth feared and was still, when (JEHOVAH) rose up as champion of "the meek ones of the earth."

10-12. Let Israel render thanks and let the men of wrath submit to JEHOVAH, for He can restrain princes and put fear upon kings.

§ 2. OCCASION, DATE AND RELIGIOUS VALUE.

This Psalm must be studied as in close connexion with xlvi and xlviij which also celebrate the praises of JEHOVAH as the deliverer of Zion. For the occasion and date see xlviij, Introduction, § 2, and for the religious value see xlvi, Introduction, § 3.

For the Chief Musician ; on stringed instruments.

A Psalm of Asaph, a Song.

LXXVI. 1 In Judah is God known :

His name is great in Israel.

2 In Salem also is his ¹tabernacle,

And his ²dwelling place in Zion.

3 There he brake the ³arrows of the bow ;

The shield, and the sword, and the battle.

[Selah

¹ Or, *covert*

² Or, *lair*

³ Or, *fiery shafts*

Or, *lightnings*

LXXVI. 1. *is God known.* Or, *God (JEHOVAH) hath made himself known* (Heb. *nōda'*, as in xlviij. 3), i.e. by His overthrow of the enemy.

2. *Salem (Shālēm).* Used here as a shortened form of "Jerusalem." It occurs elsewhere in O.T. only in Gen xiv. 18 (referred to in Heb vii. 2).

tabernacle...dwelling place. Or, as marg., *covert...lair.* JEHOVAH is thought of as a lion whom it is dangerous to attack in his den : cf Amos i. 2, "The LORD shall roar from Zion."

3. *the arrows.* The Hebrew word *rishphē* means the "flaming (arrows)" which were shot into a fortress to set fire to those parts of the defences which were constructed of wood.

the battle. Rather, *the battle array*, as in xlvi. 9 ; see note.

- 4 Glorious art thou *and* excellent, ¹from the mountains of prey.
 5 The stouthearted are spoiled, they have slept their sleep;
 And none of the men of might have found their hands.
 6 At thy rebuke, O God of Jacob,
 Both chariot and horse are cast into a dead sleep.
 7 Thou, even thou, art to be feared:
 And who may stand in thy sight when once thou art angry?
 8 Thou didst cause sentence to be heard from heaven;
 The earth feared, and was still,
 9 When God arose to judgement,
 To save all the meek of the earth. [Selah

¹ Or, *more than*

4. *Glorious...of prey.* Better, *Thou breakest forth as the dawn, O glorious One, from (or over) the mountains of prey.* On the morrow of the overthrow the Sun (JHOBVAH Himself) arises over a scene which shows no enemy but only the spoils which he has left behind. The Hebrew Niphal participle *nā'ōr*, here mistranslated "glorious," means rather "breaking forth as the dawn": cf 2 Sam ii. 32 (same Hebrew verb in Niphal). The apparent identification of JHOBVAH with Shamash the Sun-god is one instance out of several of the use of mythological conceptions by O.T. writers in describing the action of JHOBVAH. *O glorious One* = Heb. *addir*, used of JHOBVAH in xciii. 4, "mightier," RV.

from the mountains of prey. I.e. the hills covered with the "garments and vessels" which the fugitive enemy leaves behind him. LXX (following another reading, ער for הַר), ἀπὸ ὄρέων αἰωνίων, Vulgate, *a montibus aeternis*.

5. *The stouthearted*, i.e. the valiant (Heb. *abbirim*): cf xxii. 12, "*Strong (bulls) of Bashan*," lit. "Strong ones of Bashan." Vulgate (= LXX), *insipientes corde*, follows an inferior reading of the Hebrew.

And none...their hands. I.e. the mighty men have been unable to use their might. P-B (*And all the men whose hands were mighty have found nothing*) agrees rather with LXX (οὐχ εἶπον οὐδὲν...ταῖς χερσὶν αὐτῶν) and Vulgate, but MT (= RV) is to be preferred. Cf Jer li. 30.

6. *At thy rebuke.* A rebuke not in word but in act; cf ix. 5, lxviii. 30, cxix. 21.

God of Jacob. "God the Conqueror": cf xlvi. 7, note.

are cast into a dead sleep. Not simply (as P-B) *are fallen*: cf v. 5.

7. *when once thou art angry.* MT seems to be faulty here: a change of one letter of the Hebrew would give, *from the strength of thine anger*.

8. *from heaven.* Cf Jud v. 20, "They fought from heaven, The stars in their courses fought against Sisera."

The earth...was still. Cf Hab ii. 20.

9. *arose to judgement.* Cf ix. 7, 8.

To save. Not merely to help (as P-B).

- 10 Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee :
The residue of wrath shalt thou ¹gird upon thee.
- 11 Vow, and pay unto the LORD your God :
Let all that be round about him bring presents unto him that
ought to be feared.
- 12 He shall cut off the spirit of princes :
He is terrible to the kings of the earth.

¹ Or, *restrain*

all the meek of the earth. Perhaps rather, *of the land*: cf xxxvii. 11. Duhm thinks of the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

10. *the wrath of man shall praise thee.* ЯЕHOVAH has foiled the effort of the wrath of man, and for this intervention praise shall be offered to Him. Elizabethans said that the wrath of the Armada was ultimately turned to the praise of God.

The residue of wrath (i.e. the remnant left of the wrathful enemy) *shalt thou gird upon thee*, i.e. shalt Thou take for Thyself and bind to Thy service. LXX follows a different reading of the Hebrew, ἐγκατάλιμμα... ἐορτάσει σοι, "a remnant... shall keep feast to thee": cf Zech xiv. 16.

11. *Vow, and pay* is addressed to Israel: *Let all that be round about him bring presents* is addressed to the neighbouring peoples.

bring presents. Heb. *shai*, "presents," i.e. tribute: cf lxviii. 29 (same Hebrew word).

him that ought to be feared. Heb. *mōrā*, "an object of fear," as in Isa viii. 13, "Let ЯЕHOVAH be your *fear*." The Psalmist uses this unusual term, because he is addressing heathens. So in Gen xxxi. 53 Jacob in dealing with Laban, "the Syrian," swears to him by the "Fear" (Heb. *pahad*, a synonym of *mōrā*) of his father Isaac.

12. *He shall cut off.* Better (as P-B), *He shall refrain.* The Hebrew verb means "to enclose" with fortifications, and so "to curb, restrain." Contrast Ezra i. 1, "ЯЕHOVAH stirred up the spirit of Cyrus." The Heb. *rūah*, "spirit," stands for "courage" or sometimes (more generally) for "impulse" of almost any kind.

terrible. Heb. *nōrā*; translated in v. 7 "to be feared." This rendering is to be preferred, for in v. 10 there is a suggestion that some of the assailants will be converted to the service of ЯЕHOVAH; He is destined to be feared (worshipped) by the kings of the earth.

PSALM LXXVII

FROM DESPONDENCY THROUGH RECOLLECTION TO PRAISE

§ 1. CONTENTS.

1-9. The Psalmist meditates in despondency. When trouble came, he called on ЯЕHOVAH, his own God; yea, called earnestly (v. 2), but no relief was granted. He speaks probably for his people as their representative; if so, we can more

easily follow his train of thought. The memory of the past troubles him (*v.* 5): surely once it was the case that JEHOVAH helped His people—but now? No deliverance for them is in sight. God, who once was gracious in giving His promise, is now silent and gives no sign that He will fulfil it (*vv.* 8, 9).

10–20. But presently the Psalmist recovers himself: he will turn from the contemplation of his own present infirmity to the remembrance of his nation's past; he will recall "the years of the right hand of the Most High"—those years in which JEHOVAH wrought wonders for His people, such as no other God ever wrought. Then, at the Exodus, JEHOVAH spoke from the midst of the storm, and even the powers of the Sea trembled before Him, and He passed as Conqueror through the Sea. And finally the God who had thus manifested Himself in terrors proceeded to show Himself as the kindly shepherd of His people Israel.

Very striking and alien from modern ways of thought is the mode in which the Psalmist realizes to himself the power of the "right hand of the Most High." His one sufficient instance of this power is JEHOVAH's control of the waters. *The depths trembled*: the clouds obeyed His voice: He walked on the sea as on the highway. Thus did the waters, which belonged as men thought to the realm of Chaos, obey Him.

Though the Psalmist is (as it seems) the spokesman of his people, yet he does not lose his own vivid personality. He feels the present evils keenly for himself. The doubts expressed in *vv.* 7–9 are his own, though he assumes that they are shared by his people. In this outspoken utterance his own personality asserts itself: cf. *xliv.* 23 f., *lxxiii.* 13 f., *lxxxix.* 38–49.

§ 2. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PSALM.

From the last verses (10–20) it is clear that this Psalm is a national and not merely a private utterance. The Psalmist is the spokesman of Israel. It is Israel's *hand* which is *stretched out in the night* of doubt and sorrow to God. In Israel's name the Psalmist recovers his hopefulness, when he recalls the time when his God led him *just like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.*

§ 3. UNITY OF THE PSALM.

Several critics doubt the integrity of the text of this Psalm. There is a certain change of rhythm from *v.* 15 to *v.* 16, and on the other hand *v.* 20 returns to the rhythm of *v.* 15. This change of rhythm is accompanied by a certain change of thought. But if we allow for the transitions which are frequent in Eastern poetry and not least in the Hebrew Psalms, we shall not suspect an interpolation in the text. Verse 15 states that JEHOVAH redeemed His people, i.e. from Egypt and at the Red Sea, while *vv.* 16–19 describe a storm during which His way was in the sea. A storm is suggested by *Exod.* *xiv.* 24, 25, and Josephus (*Antiq.* II. *xvi.* 3 = §§ 343 f.) has introduced the description of one into his account. No doubt *vv.* 16–19 of the Psalm similarly refer to a storm at the passage of the Red Sea. After the stormy crossing JEHOVAH led Israel peaceably as a flock in the wilderness (*v.* 20).

There is in fact nothing in the matter of *vv.* 16–19 to suggest that the passage is an interpolation; neither indeed is there in the form. That the rhythm should change at the description of a storm is not surprising, nor need we be astonished if, at the end of the storm-verses, the rhythm changes again to that of the

previous verses. We see on reflexion that v. 20 in its quiet tone forms a singularly apt conclusion to the Psalm. The Psalmist is re-assured. For a similar change from apprehension of the worst to confidence Ps xxii should be compared. There the Psalmist, who sees the "dust of death" before him, ends on a deep note of thankfulness.

For the Chief Musician; after the manner of Jeduthun.

A Psalm of Asaph.

- LXXVII.** 1 I will cry unto God with my voice;
 Even unto God with my voice, and he will give ear unto me.
 2 In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord:
 My hand was stretched out in the night, and slacked not;
 My soul refused to be comforted.
 3 I remember God, and am disquieted:
 I complain, and my spirit ¹is overwhelmed. [Selah
 4 Thou holdest mine eyes watching:
 I am so troubled that I cannot speak.
 5 I have considered the days of old,
 The years of ancient times.

¹ Or, *fainteth*

1-9. URGENT PRAYER IN A TIME OF TROUBLE

LXXVII. 1. *I will cry* etc. The nuance of the original is lost: render,

My voice is to God, and let me cry!

My voice is to God, that he may give ear.

In the first clause *God* stands for JEHOVAH: so LXX, πρὸς Κύριον.

2. *In the day of my trouble.* lxxxvi. 7.

My hand was stretched out. I.e. in prayer: lit. *was poured out*, the same Hebrew verb as in lxxv. 8. P-B, *my sore ran*, preserves the force of the verb, but *hand* cannot be rightly explained as meaning a *wound* or *sore* made by a blow. The expression in any case is difficult. One emendation is, *My eye was poured out*, i.e. in tears.

3. *am disquieted.* Or, *moan*, the same Hebrew verb as in lv. 17 ("and moan").

my spirit is overwhelmed. Marg. *fainteth*. "My spirit" stands here for the pronoun "I"—"I faint." Cf vi. 3 ("my soul"); xxxi. 9 ("my soul and my body").

4. *Thou holdest mine eyes watching.* A paraphrase of the Hebrew; more lit. (as Targum), *Thou hast taken hold of the lids of mine eyes.*

I am so troubled. The same Hebrew verb as in Gen xli. 8.

I cannot speak. Cf Jer viii. 14.

- 6 I call to remembrance my song in the night;
 I commune with mine own heart;
 And my spirit made diligent search.
- 7 Will the Lord cast off for ever?
 And will he be favourable no more?
- 8 Is his mercy clean gone for ever?
 Doth his promise fail for evermore?
- 9 Hath God forgotten to be gracious?
 Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies? [Selah]
- 10 And I said, This is my infirmity;
¹But I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High.
- 11 I will make mention of the deeds of ²the LORD;
 For I will remember thy wonders of old.

¹ Or, *That the right hand of the Most High doth change*

² Heb. *Jah*.

6. *I call to remembrance etc.* Rather, *I call them* (the days of old) *to remembrance in my music at night*. The Psalmist as he sings his Psalm to his instrument ponders over the past.

And my spirit made diligent search. Rather, *And he* (JEHOVAH) *doth search out my spirit*, i.e. doth examine me. Cf Pro xx. 27.

7. *cast (us) off.* The same Hebrew verb as lxxiv. 1.

9. *Hath God forgotten...?* Isa xlix. 15.

shut up. The same Hebrew verb as Deut xv. 7.

10-20. THE PSALMIST'S RECOVERY ON RECALLING THE PAST GOODNESS OF JEHOVAH

10. *This is my infirmity.* JV, *This is my weakness.* The rendering is not quite certain.

the years of the right hand of the Most High. The words are an exclamation. Prefix the indicative verb *I will remember* as EV, or the simple imperative, *Remember!* and paraphrase the rest of the sentence as, "The years when the right hand displayed its power."

The Heb. *shēnōth* ("years") is ambiguous and may be used in the sense of "change" or "changing"—"the changing of the right hand of the Most High," as though from a decrease in power or from a change of will the Most High had ceased to work wonders for His people. Hence Duhm translates the verse, "My grief is that the right hand of the Highest has changed."

11. *I will make mention of.* So RV, following C'thib: but *I will remember* (P-B, AV) follows K'ri.

For. Better as AV, *Surely*.

- 12 I will meditate also upon all thy work,
And muse on thy doings.
- 13 Thy way, O God, is ¹in the sanctuary:
Who is a great god like unto God?
- 14 Thou art the God that doest wonders:
Thou hast made known thy strength among the peoples.
- 15 Thou hast with thine arm redeemed thy people,
The sons of Jacob and Joseph. [Selah
- 16 The waters saw thee, O God;
The waters saw thee, they ²were afraid:
The depths also trembled.
- 17 The clouds poured out water;
The skies sent out a sound:
Thine arrows also went abroad.
- 18 The voice of thy thunder was in the whirlwind;
The lightnings lightened the world:
The earth trembled and shook.
- 19 Thy way was in the sea,

¹ Or, *in holiness*² Or, *were in pain*

13. *Thy way...is in the sanctuary.* Better as marg. (= JV), *is in holiness.* Similarly P-B, *Thy way is holy.*

Who is a great god like unto God? The word *God* without further definition is unsuitable here; so LXX (= P-B) gives ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν, "our God." We should read, *like unto JEHOVAH*, as in cxiii. 5.

14. *doest wonders.* Heb. *pélé*, "wonders," as in Isa ix. 6 (*pélé yō'ēz*, "counselling wonderfully," or "Wonderful Counsellor").

15. *Thou hast with thine arm redeemed.* The kinsman might "redeem" his client by a money-payment or other peaceful means. But JEHOVAH the divine kinsman chose to redeem Israel from Egypt by power, "with a stretched out arm," Exod vi. 6. Cf Ps lxix, Introduction, § 2.

16. *The waters saw thee.* Ps cxiv. 3, "The sea saw it, and fled."

The depths...trembled. Cf xviii. 7, "the foundations of the mountains moved" (the same Hebrew verb).

17. *The skies.* Heb. *shēhakim*, as in lxxviii. 23, lxxxix. 6, "Who in the skies (*shahak*, sing.) can be compared unto JEHOVAH?"

18. *in the whirlwind.* Not *in the heaven*, as AV; Heb. *galgal*, lit. "wheel": cf lxxxiii. 13, "wheel" P-B: "whirling dust" RV.

19. *Thy way was in the sea.* I.e. at the crossing of the Red Sea (Exod xiv). But the Hebrew text would bear also the general interpretation given in AV, *Thy way is in the sea*, i.e. JEHOVAH is lord of the Sea as well as of the Dry land: cf viii. 8, note.

And thy paths in the great waters,
 And thy footsteps were not known.
 20 Thou ledest thy people like a flock,
 By the hand of Moses and Aaron.

were not known. Perhaps better as P-B, *are not known*: of Job xxiii. 8, "Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; And backward, but I cannot perceive him."

20. *Thou ledest...like a flock.* Cf lxxviii. 52, lxxx. 1.

PSALM LXXVIII

JEHOVAH IN HISTORY: A LESSON AND A WARNING

§ 1. CONTENTS.

1-8. The Psalmist has a *Maschil*, a sermon or instruction, to deliver.

9-11. He complains that of old the children of Ephraim (i.e. Israel) turned back and failed to keep the covenant of God.

12-31. He records JEHOVAH's wondrous works of mercy for Israel at the Exodus: the Sea divided—Israel led by a cloud—water given in the desert—manna rained down—flesh given. But the people lusted and were chastised.

32-41. He complains that still Israel sinned—they served the Holy One with lip-service—they tempted God.

42-51. The Psalmist records the works of JEHOVAH which Israel ungratefully forgot, i.e. the plagues sent upon Egypt for the deliverance of Israel. He specifies seven plagues: Water turned into blood—Swarms of flies—Frogs—Locusts—Hail—Murrain—Death of the firstborn.

52-55. The crown of JEHOVAH's work: He guided the people in the wilderness, and gave them His holy land.

56-67. In the land they rebelled again, and provoked their God with high places and graven images. So God rejected Israel, and refused the tent of Joseph, i.e. as a home for His ark.

68-72. Instead of Shiloh and the tribe of Ephraim JEHOVAH chose Mount Zion, Judah, and David. On Mount Zion He built His sanctuary that it might be established "for ever."

ADDITIONAL NOTE on vv. 42-51

It is an interesting fact that in this passage are recorded not ten but seven plagues. The *seven* plagues which the Psalmist mentions are those which appear in the Jehovistic narrative of the Hexateuch. The three omitted are the Darkness (Exod x. 21-23, a passage attributed to the Elohist narrative), the Lice (Exod viii. 16-19, verses which belong to the Priests' Code), and the Boil (Exod ix. 8-12, also from the Priests' Code). It may be observed that the *three* omitted plagues are of the nature of duplicates of three already found among the seven. The Lice and the Swarms of flies, the Boil (plague boil) and the Death of the firstborn are really two plagues, not four. Finally the Darkness

is probably only another account of the darkness caused by the locusts (Exod x. 15). See S. R. Driver, *L. O. T.*, pp. 24 f.

§ 2. THE OUTLOOK OF THE PSALMIST.

At first sight this Psalm might be called a piece of versified history, but in fact the Psalmist aims at something higher. He is conscious of the rivalry between the northern tribes and Judah, and shows himself Judæan in his sympathies. *The children of Ephraim*, he says, *turned back in the day of battle* (v. 9). Ephraim was the leading tribe among the northerners (Josh xvii. 14-18; Jud viii. 1-3; 1 K xi. 26), and Shiloh in Ephraim was of old the northern home of the ark (1 Sam iv. 3, 12). But the northerners provoked God with their high places and graven images (v. 58), so He *forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh* (v. 60), and *refused the tent of Joseph, and chose not the tribe of Ephraim* (v. 67). The northern sanctuary and the great northern tribe were not JEHOVAH'S choice. But He did choose *Judah*, and above all He chose *Mount Zion* as the place *which he loved* (v. 68). Further He chose a Judæan, David, to be shepherd of His people (vv. 70, 71). Finally the Psalmist gives to David the praise of a faithful follower of JEHOVAH (v. 72).

In these utterances we seem to hear a fragment of the long-standing controversy between Jew and Samaritan. "Our fathers," said the Samaritan woman to our Lord, "worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship" (John iv. 20).

But the quarrel between Jew and Samaritan was not a matter of mere ritual, or worship on Mount Zion against worship on Mount Gerizim. There was a more serious cause of dispute. The Judæan was of purer Hebrew race than the Samaritan. When the Assyrians conquered Samaria it is recorded that they brought in settlers—idolaters—from Babylonia and Northern Syria to take the place of the Israelites who were carried into captivity (2 K xvii. 24 f.; Ezra iv. 2). It is not indeed recorded that the Chaldean conquerors of Jerusalem did the same. Still some intermixture of races took place even in Judæa (Neh xiii. 23 f.). This however was countered by the measures against foreign marriages taken by Nehemiah and Ezra (Ezra ii. 61-63, ix. 1-x. 44). We may conclude from the evidence before us that the Jew was more anxious for purity of race than the Samaritan, and further that he had also a greater zeal both for the strict Monotheism of Deuteronomy and against worship on the high places. The Samaritans were willing at times to make terms with heathenism, and naturally they did not accept the doctrine of the One Sanctuary. When in 408-7 B.C. the Jews at Yeb (Elephantine) in Egypt wanted assistance to rebuild their ruined temple, they were contumacious not by the authorities of Jerusalem but by those of Samaria. If the besetting danger of the Jewish religion was formalism, that of the Samaritan was religious syncretism. Such Psalms as lxxviii, cv, cvi were for the Jews Dissuasives from Samaritanism, i.e. from a loose hold on the faith in JEHOVAH as the One true God. The two Psalms just mentioned invite particular comparison with lxxviii. Ps cv resembles lxxviii closely in its contents, but it treats its subject differently. It is not a mere "instruction" like lxxviii; it is an Invitatory to thanksgiving. It does not glance at any divisions among the people, but calls on the "children of Abraham," northerners and southerners, to praise JEHOVAH for *His marvellous*

works (*niphlā'ōth*). The Psalmist, far from identifying himself particularly with Judah, devotes seven verses to a panegyric on Joseph the eponymous ancestor of the leading northern tribe. The two Psalms differ indeed in thought, but their references to past history almost coincide. Ps lxxviii refers to seven plagues out of the ten given in Exodus, Ps cv to eight, omitting Murrain (which is given in lxxviii) and adding Lice and (perhaps) Darkness, which do not appear in lxxviii.

Of the Wilderness miracles both Psalms have the cloud and fire to guide the journey—the water brought out of the rock—the gift of flesh (quails)—and the gift of manna—but Ps cv does not give the dividing of the Red Sea.

In spite of differences of form the two Psalms (lxxviii and cv) have a unity of aim. Both authors desire to draw their hearers to complete faithfulness to JEHOVAH by reciting the story of His wonderful doings on behalf of Israel. One (lxxviii) works both positively and negatively; he adds to his narrative warning instances of the results of unfaithfulness. The other (cv) is wholly positive; he celebrates as in a canticle the merciful acts of JEHOVAH towards Israel.

The third of these Psalms (cvi) takes a line of its own. It celebrates the wonderful works of JEHOVAH, without enumerating them after the fashion of lxxviii and cv. The note of warning is most insistent in cvi. The ancient lapses of Israel are enumerated—the murmuring at the Red Sea—the Demand for flesh—the rebellion of Dathan—the Golden Calf—the matter of Baal-peor—the Demand for water—the adoption of Heathen practices in Canaan. All these things are narrated with the story of JEHOVAH's deliverances of Israel as the background to display the ingratitude of the nation. The Psalm is a stern warning against apostasy from the true God.

§ 3. THE USE OF DIVINE NAMES.

There is method in the use of Divine Names in this Psalm. The Psalmist's discourse is to the effect that Israel should be faithful to Israel's God. It is natural therefore that he should begin with the proper name of the God of Israel, i.e. JEHOVAH (*v.* 4), but he does not use it again except in *v.* 21. He substitutes for it the words *El* ("strong One, God") or *Elōhim* ("God"). But three times at almost equal intervals the significant name '*Elyōn*' ("the Most High") is found (*vv.* 17, 35, 56). Finally just once at a crucial point the great title "Holy One of Israel" is given, i.e. in *v.* 41, "They caused the Holy One of Israel to repent," i.e. that He had made Himself Israel's God.

The Psalmist is busy proclaiming JEHOVAH as the One God for Israel, but through reverence for this great name he frequently substitutes for it *El* or *Elōhim*. JEHOVAH is *El*, "the strong One." But He is also '*Elyōn*', "the high and lofty One"; and above all He is "the Holy One of Israel." He is "Holy" as removed from contact with human defilement, and yet He is Israel's own God. Finally it should be said that the use of the simple word "Lord" (Heb. *Adonai*) in *v.* 65 is due to a sense of reverence either in the author or in a scribe. It was unseemly to write "JEHOVAH awaked as one out of sleep."

§ 4. THE LESSON OF THE PSALM.

The subject of the Psalm might be described as national forgetfulness of God and its punishment. The northern tribes of Israel were unfaithful to JEHOVAH

and were punished by His removal of His sanctuary from their midst. The Psalm illustrates the principle laid down by our Lord, "The kingdom of God shall be taken away from you (from you who belong to the privileged people and have shown yourselves disobedient), and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" (Matt xxi. 43). Thus the main lesson of Ps lxxviii is rather for the Church than for individuals.

And yet the rebuke embodied in this Psalm is not for Churches only. Individuals forget God's mercies; individuals demand the good things of this life otherwise than as the perfect will of the Father allows; individuals abuse God's good gifts when they receive them. So the warnings of this Psalm, though addressed to "my people," are meant no less for the single souls who compose "my people," and yet show themselves to be unfaithful.

Maschil of Asaph.

LXXVIII. 1 Give ear, O my people, to my ¹law :

Incline your ears to the words of my mouth

2 I will open my mouth in a parable ;

I will utter dark sayings of old :

3 Which we have heard and known,

And our fathers have told us.

4 We will not hide them from their children,

Telling to the generation to come the praises of the LORD,

And his strength, and his wondrous works that he hath done.

5 For he established a testimony in Jacob,

¹ Or, *teaching*

HEADING. *Maschil*, i.e. a poem which gives instruction, or, wisdom. See note on xlvii. 7, "Sing ye praises."

1-8. A LESSON (*Maschil*) TO BE GIVEN

LXXVIII. 1. *Give ear, O my people.* A suitable beginning for a Psalm of instruction: cf xlix. 1.

my law. Heb. *torah*. Better (as marg.), *my teaching*: cf i. 2, note: xxxvii. 31.

2. *parable.* Cf xlix. 4, note.

dark sayings of old. And therefore *wise sayings*: cf Job viii. 8, 9, "Inquire...of the former age,...For we are but of yesterday."

4. *We will not hide them.* The wise man (the Psalmist) speaks in the name of himself and his fellows. Cf the use of the first person plural in lxxv. 1; cf v. 9.

Telling...the praises (Heb. tšhilloth) of JEHOVAH. Cf xxii. 3, note.

the LORD. Read, JEHOVAH. See Introduction, § 3.

5. *he established a testimony.* In the parallel clause "a law" (Heb.

- And appointed a law in Israel,
 Which he commanded our fathers,
 That they should make them known to their children :
 6 That the generation to come might know *them*, even the
 children which should be born ;
 Who should arise and tell *them* to their children :
 7 That they might set their hope in God,
 And not forget the works of God,
 But keep his commandments :
 8 And might not be as their fathers,
 A stubborn and rebellious generation ;
 A generation ¹that set not their heart aright,
 And whose spirit was not stedfast with God.
 9 The children of Ephraim, being armed and carrying bows,
 Turned back in the day of battle.

¹ Or, *that prepared not their heart*

tōrāh) answers to "a testimony." The law of the Ten Commandments is called a *testimony* as an ordinance which God solemnly testified to His people as binding upon them amid the thunderings and lightnings on Mount Sinai. P-B gives *He made a covenant*, but this is not what the Hebrew text says here.

7. *in God*. I.e. in JEHOVAH. So in *vv.* 8, 10, *al.*

8. *that set not their heart aright*. Heb. *that prepared not their heart*, i.e. "who made no steady resolution": 2 Chr xii. 14.

whose spirit was not stedfast with God. Cf *v.* 37, "their heart was not right with him." But there was a good deal of lip-service.

9-11. ISRAEL'S REVOLT FROM JEHOVAH

9. *The children of Ephraim* (so LXX). P-B, "Like as the children of Ephraim," is wrong. Ephraim (as representing the tribes of Israel and particularly the northern tribes) is the "hero" of the Psalm. The historical reference is no doubt to the refusal of Israel, when they heard the report of the spies, to advance into Canaan (Num xiv. 1-10). This is one of the outstanding instances of Israel's lack of faith and consequent disobedience to JEHOVAH. It was promptly punished by the sentence that Israel should remain forty years in the wilderness (Num xiv. 20-35). The reference to this supreme act of rebellion comes in naturally after the description of Israel as "a stubborn and rebellious generation" in *v.* 8, and it is appropriately followed in *v.* 10 by the statement, "They kept not the covenant of God." This covenant was that God would give His people the land of Canaan, but when the land was offered them, they refused to take it.

- 10 They kept not the covenant of God,
And refused to walk in his law ;
- 11 And they forgot his doings,
And his wondrous works that he had shewed them.
- 12 Marvellous things did he in the sight of their fathers,
In the land of Egypt, in the field of Zoan.
- 13 He clave the sea, and caused them to pass through ;
And he made the waters to stand as an heap.
- 14 In the day-time also he led them with a cloud,
And all the night with a light of fire.
- 15 He clave rocks in the wilderness,
And gave them drink abundantly as out of the depths.
- 16 He brought streams also out of the rock,
And caused waters to run down like rivers.
- 17 Yet went they on still to sin against him,
To rebel against the Most High in ¹the desert.
- 18 And they tempted God in their heart
By asking meat for their lust.

¹ Or, a dry land

“Ephraim” represents all northern Israel. Ephraim was the strong and warlike tribe (Josh xvii. 17 ; Jud viii. 1 ff.), yet Ephraim—harnessed and carrying the national weapon, the bow (2 K xiii. 15 ; Hosea i. 5)—turned back from the war on the very threshold of the Promised Land. A vivid picture. Much is lost by omitting (R. Kittel) this verse, or by altering (H. Gunkel) the reading, *The children of Ephraim*. Ephraim went beyond Judah in rebellion by adopting the worship of the Golden Calf.

12-31. THE RECORD OF JEHOVAH'S WORKS IN THE WILDERNESS

12. *in the field of Zoan*. LXX, ἐν πεδίῳ Τάνεως. Zoan was a city (called Τάνις by Strabo) in the north-east corner of the Egyptian Delta. It was the centre of a district which is called [δ] Ταπίτης (νομός) in Herod ii. 166. It became an important city under Ramses II (thirteenth century B.C.), and retained its political importance in the days of the great prophets: Isa xix. 11, xxx. 4 ; Ezek xxx. 14.

13. *as an heap* (Heb. *nēd*, as Exod xv. 8). LXX, Vulgate (*quasi in utre*) read the Hebrew word with different vowels (*nōd*).

14. *with a light of fire*. Vulgate, *in illuminatione ignis*. In Exod xiii. 21, “in a pillar of fire.” Cf Exod xl. 34-38 ; Num x. 34, xiv. 14.

15. *depths*. Hebrew as in Deut viii. 7.

17. *the Most High*. Heb. *Elyōn*, as vv. 35, 56. See Introduction, § 3.

18. *meat*. Heb. *ōkel*, “food.” In answer God gave them “corn of heaven” (v. 24)—“bread of the mighty” (v. 25).

- 19 Yea, they spake against God;
They said, Can God prepare a table in the wilderness?
20 Behold, he smote the rock, that waters gushed out,
And streams overflowed;
Can he give bread also?
Will he provide flesh for his people?
21 Therefore the LORD heard, and was wroth:
And a fire was kindled against Jacob,
And anger also went up against Israel;
22 Because they believed not in God,
And trusted not in his salvation.
23 Yet he commanded the skies above,
And opened the doors of heaven;
24 And he rained down manna upon them to eat,
And gave them of the corn of heaven.
25 ¹Man did eat the bread of the mighty:
He sent them meat to the full.
26 He ²caused the east wind to blow in the heaven:
And by his power he guided the south wind.

¹ Or, *Every one*² Heb. *led forth the east wind.*

19. *prepare a table.* I.e. provide a variety of food—"bread" and "flesh" (v. 20). The Hebrew *table*, such as is still used in the East, is a *tray* rather than a table. Sometimes the skin of a beast spread on the ground serves as a "table." Cf xxiii. 5.

21. *the LORD heard.* Cf Exod xvi. 12; Num xiv. 27.

was kindled against Jacob. Num xi. 1-3 (the incident of Taberah).

22. *his salvation.* P-B, *his help.*

23. *the skies.* As Lxxvii. 17.

the doors of heaven. Cf Gen vii. 11, "the *windows* of heaven."

24. *he rained down.* So Exod xvi. 4.

25. *Man did eat the bread of the mighty.* Rather (cf. marg.), *Every one did eat bread of mighty men*, i.e. Each Israelite had such food as the "mighty" eat. P-B gives, *Man did eat angels' food*, following LXX, ἄρτον ἀγγέλων ἐφαγεν ἄνθρωπος, but Heb. *ish* ("each man") is not ἄνθρωπος, nor does *abbirim* ("mighty ones") mean "angels" in any other passage of O.T.

26. *He caused the (an) east wind to blow in the heaven* (AV, RV). Better *He caused the east wind to depart from heaven*; ἀπῆρεν... ἐξ οὐρανοῦ: LXX, following a slightly different text of the Hebrew, gives, *from heaven, not in the heaven.* The Hebrew verb is as v. 52, "he caused to journey": it implies breaking camp and departing. The winds are

- 27 He rained flesh also upon them as the dust,
And winged fowl as the sand of the seas :
- 28 And he let it fall in the midst of their camp,
Round about their habitations.
- 29 So they did eat, and were well filled ;
And he gave them that they lusted after.
- 30 They were not estranged from their lust,
Their meat was yet in their mouths,
- 31 When the anger of God went up against them,
And slew of the fattest of them,
And smote down the young men of Israel.
- 32 For all this they sinned still,
And believed not in his wondrous works.
- 33 Therefore their days did he consume in vanity,
And their years in terror.
- 34 When he slew them, then they inquired after him :
And they returned and sought God ¹early.
- 35 And they remembered that God was their rock,
And the Most High God their redeemer.
- 36 But they flattered him with their mouth,
And lied unto him with their tongue.

¹ Or, *earnestly*

encamped in heaven awaiting God's commands: cf Num xi. 31, "But a wind took its journey from the presence of JEHOVAH, and brought quails from the sea" (or "from the south-west"). The east wind, oppressive to mankind (Jonah iv. 8), was sent away, and JEHOVAH guided a south or south-west wind (λίβα, LXX), a rainy wind from the sea, to bring quails. The verse offers a case of antithetic parallelism.

30. *They were not estranged from.* I.e. They were not yet sated with flesh such as they desired.

31. *the fattest of them.* Or, *the goodliest of them.* Cf Jud iii. 29, "They smote...every lusty man (or "fat man"), and every man of valour." Fatness among Easterns is taken as a sign of health and strength.

32-41. STILL ISRAEL SINNED

33. *terror.* Cf Lev xxvi. 16, "I will appoint *terror* over you."

34. *sought God early.* Cf lxiii. 1 (the same Hebrew verb).

35. *their rock.* Heb. *zūr* ; xviii. 2, note.

- 37 For their heart was not ¹right with him,
Neither were they faithful in his covenant.
- 38 But he, being full of compassion, forgave *their* iniquity, and
destroyed *them* not:
Yea, many a time turned he his anger away,
And did not stir up all his wrath.
- 39 And he remembered that they were but flesh;
A wind that passeth away, and cometh not again.
- 40 How oft did they rebel against him in the wilderness,
And grieve him in the desert!
- 41 And they turned again and tempted God,
And ²provoked the Holy One of Israel.
- 42 They remembered not his hand,
Nor the day when he redeemed them from the adversary.
- 43 How he set his signs in Egypt,
And his wonders in the field of Zoan;
- 44 And turned their rivers into blood,
And their streams, that they could not drink.

¹ Or, *stedfast*² Or, *limited*

37. *their heart was not right.* Marg. *stedfast*. The same Hebrew word as li. 10, "Renew a *right* spirit within me."

38. *forgave their iniquity.* The same verb as lxv. 3, "purge...away": it is used of the high priest's action on the Day of Atonement (Lev xvi. 6, 10, *al.*).

39. *they were but flesh.* Gen vi. 3.

A wind. Cf xxxix. 5, "vanity"; marg. "a breath."

40. *the desert* (Heb. *Jeshimon*). So lxviii. 7, cvi. 14. *Jeshimon* is perhaps the proper name of some part of the Desert of Wandering.

41. *provoked the Holy One.* Rather, *caused the Holy One of Israel to repent*, i.e. to repent of His choice of Israel. See Exod xxxii. 10 (the LORD to Moses), "I will consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation." AV; *limited the Holy One.* I.e. supposed that His power to help was limited. So JV, *set bounds to the Holy One.* This meaning would be more plausible, if vv. 19, 20 immediately followed: "They said,...He smote the rock...Can he give bread also?"

the Holy One. See Introduction, § 3.

42-51. SEVEN PLAGUES OF EGYPT

43. *set his signs.* The same Hebrew phrase as lxxiv. 4, "set up their ensigns." The LORD did not only work wonders (the plagues), but also "set" them for all to see.

- 45 He sent among them swarms of flies, which devoured them ;
And frogs, which destroyed them.
- 46 He gave also their increase unto the caterpillar,
And their labour unto the locust.
- 47 He ¹destroyed their vines with hail,
And their sycomore trees with ²frost.
- 48 He gave over their cattle also to the hail,
And their flocks to hot thunderbolts.
- 49 He cast upon them the fierceness of his anger,
Wrath, and indignation, and trouble,
³A band of angels of evil.
- 50 He ⁴made a path for his anger ;
He spared not their soul from death,
But gave ⁵their life over to the pestilence ;
- 51 And smote all the firstborn in Egypt,
The ⁶chief of their strength in the tents of Ham :
- 52 But he led forth his own people like sheep,
And guided them in the wilderness like a flock.
- 53 And he led them safely, so that they feared not :
But the sea overwhelmed their enemies.

¹ Heb. *killed*.² Or, *great hailstones*³ Heb. *A sending*.⁴ Heb. *levelled*.⁵ Or, *their beasts to the murrain*⁶ Heb. *beginning*. See Deut. xxi. 17.

45. *swarms of flies*. LXX, *κυνόμυια*. The reference is to Exod viii. 20-24, not to viii. 16-19 as P-B.

46. *locust*. P-B, *grasshopper*: cf cv. 34, cix. 23. The English word *locust* is not found in the earlier versions of the Psalter, but appears first in 1611. Cf General Introduction, p. lxvi.

50. *He made a path*. Heb. *levelled a path*, as Isa xxvi. 7, "Thou dost direct (marg. "level") the path of the just."

But gave their life over to the pestilence. This was the culmination in the last plague. The margin is to be rejected.

51. *in the tents*. This is archaic language; the sense is given in P-B, *in the dwellings*. Cf lxix. 25.

52-55. DIVINE GUIDANCE IN THE WILDERNESS

52. *he led forth his own people like sheep*. Lit. *he caused his own people to journey like sheep*. Cf xxiii, Introduction, pp. 115 f.

- 54 And he brought them to ¹the border of his sanctuary,
To this ²mountain, which his right hand had purchased.
- 55 He drove out the nations also before them,
And allotted them for an inheritance by line,
And made the tribes of Israel to dwell in their tents.
- 56 Yet they tempted and rebelled against the Most High God,
And kept not his testimonies;
- 57 But turned back, and dealt treacherously like their fathers:
They were turned aside like a deceitful bow.
- 58 For they provoked him to anger with their high places,
And moved him to jealousy with their graven images.
- 59 When God heard *this*, he was wroth,
And greatly abhorred Israel:
- 60 So that he forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh,
The tent which he placed among men;

¹ Or, *his holy border*² Or, *mountain land*

54. *the border of his sanctuary*. Better as marg. (=JV), *his holy border*, i.e. His holy land. *Border* or *coast* (Heb. *gēbūl*) often stands for the territory included within the border or *coast* (AV): cf cv. 31, 33; Exod x. 4.

which his right hand had purchased. I.e. which He had obtained by conquest. *Purchase* in a metaphorical sense as in Isa xi. 11, marg.

55. *allotted them* (the nations). I.e. their territories. *by line*, i.e. by measuring-line or by measured portion: Josh xvii. 5, *al*.

56-67. REBELLION RENEWED

56. *his testimonies*. I.e. His commandments as solemnly commended to Israel for observance; cf v. 5.

57. *a deceitful bow*. I.e. a bow that is *slack*, not taut. Pro x. 4, "he becometh poor that dealeth with a *slack* hand."

59. *When God heard*. Cf v. 21.

greatly abhorred. The Hebrew verb is used of God's rejection, as opposed to His choice, of a people or of an individual: so in v. 67 (with "Joseph," i.e. the northern tribes as object); 1 Sam xvi. 1 (with Saul as the object).

60. *he forsook* etc. More literally, *he forsook the dwelling* (Heb. *mishkān*) *in Shiloh*, *The tent which he had made his dwelling among men*. We learn from Jer vii. 12, xxvi. 6 that some calamity overtook Shiloh, or at least that it lay waste in Jeremiah's day. Did the Philistines destroy it after the death of Eli (1 Sam iv. 3, 11)? In any case the ark

- 61 And delivered his strength into captivity,
And his glory into the adversary's hand.
- 62 He gave his people over also unto the sword ;
And was wroth with his inheritance
- 63 Fire devoured their young men ;
And their maidens had no marriage-song.
- 64 Their priests fell by the sword ;
And their widows made no lamentation.
- 65 Then the Lord awaked as one out of sleep,
Like a mighty man that shouteth by reason of wine.
- 66 And he smote his adversaries backward :
He put them to a perpetual reproach.
- 67 Moreover he refused the tent of Joseph,
And chose not the tribe of Ephraim ;
- 68 But chose the tribe of Judah,
The mount Zion which he loved.
- 69 And he built his sanctuary like the heights,
Like the earth which he hath established for ever.
- 70 He chose David also his servant,
And took him from the sheepfolds :
- 71 From following the ewes that give suck he brought him,
To feed Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance.

did not return to Shiloh after its capture by the Philistines: it was carried to Beth-shemesh (1 Sam vi. 12-15), to the house of Obed-edom (2 Sam vi. 10), and finally to the city of David (*ibid.* 12).

63. *had no marriage-song.* Lit. *were not praised*, e.g. in such a composition as Song of Songs vi. 4-10. This book "is simply nothing else than a Collection of Israelitish marriage-songs" (Sellin, *Introduction to O.T.*, page 224, ET).

64. *Their priests.* Hophni and Phinehas: 1 Sam iv. 4, 17.
their widows. 1 Sam iv. 19-21.

65. *Like a mighty man* etc. The picture is of a warrior revived by a draught of wine who raises his war-cry afresh and plunges again into the fight. P-B (*refreshed with wine*) is a good paraphrase. The great name JEHOVAH is not used in this daring verse.

68-72. ZION CHOSEN IN PLACE OF SHILOH

68. *he loved.* lxxxvii. 2; cf lxxviii. 16.

69. *like the heights.* Like "the everlasting hills" (Gen xlix. 26).

72 So he fed them according to the integrity of his heart;
And guided them by the skilfulness of his hands.

72. *the integrity of his heart.* David is cited in the books of Kings as the standard of faithfulness in serving JEHOVAH: 1 K xv. 3, 11; 2 K xiv. 3, *al.*

the skilfulness of his hands. Cf 1 Sam xvi. 16, 18.

PSALM LXXIX

AN ENEMY IN THE SANCTUARY

§ 1. CONTENTS.

In *vv.* 1-4 the Psalmist complains that the Gentiles (*gōyim*) have defiled the Temple, done great destruction in Jerusalem, wrought massacres of "thy saints," and (by this great overthrow) have exposed [Judah] to the derision of the neighbours.

In *vv.* 5-7 the Psalmist breaks off in order to invoke the aid of JEHOVAH and to demand JEHOVAH'S vengeance on the Gentiles.

In *vv.* 8, 9 there is a confession of sin; the Psalmist explains the heavy blow which has fallen upon his people as a punishment for sins committed by the fathers and by their descendants. So he prays, first, "Remember not the iniquities of our forefathers," and, secondly, "Purge away our sins."

In *vv.* 10-12 the Psalmist speaks as one zealous for the honour of his God. Judah, JEHOVAH'S people, was despised by the neighbouring peoples, who took a malignant joy in her misfortunes. When Judah suffered, the Gentiles asked scoffingly, "Where is their God?"

Verse 13 is votive. The Psalmist with his people will utter perpetual praise, if the Lord will carry out His vengeance.

§ 2. OCCASION AND DATE.

This Psalm like lxxiv has been assigned by many critics with great confidence to the Maccabean period. But here as in lxxiv the language is not definite enough to justify so definite an assignment. The one point which seems settled is that neither of these Psalms belongs to the Chaldean period. The Chaldeans burnt the Temple to the ground, but the complaint of the Psalmist is rather that an enemy has "profaned" (lxxiv. 7) or "defiled" it (lxxix. 1). Moreover the Chaldeans carried away an important element in the population into captivity in Babylonia (2 K xxv. 11, 12: cf xxiv. 14), but the two Psalms have no reference to such a calamity; lxxix. 11 is no exception. Psalm lxxix may be due to some (unrecorded) inroad of the Samaritans; cf lxxiv. 18, note. If so the Samaritans are called "heathen" (*gōyim*) in lxxix. 1 not accurately, but with reference to their miot origin.

Two recorded violations of the Temple in post-exilic times are that of the Persian Bagoses (Bagohi: circ. 400 B.C.) and that by Ptolemy I of Egypt in 320 B.C. Probably both of these were occasions of slaughter. See lxxiv, Introduction, § 2.

§ 3. THE RELIGIOUS OUTLOOK OF THE PSALMIST.

Under stress of a great calamity men become victims of one idea. This is the case of the author of LXXIX. JEHOVAH's land has been invaded, and His Temple has been defiled. Why has He not intervened before this to save His people and to vindicate His own honour? The Psalmist is thrown into painful doubt: the heathen are asking in derision and triumph, *Where is their God?* The Psalmist has been brought up no doubt to believe that JEHOVAH is the Living God, Who is zealous for His people (cf v. 5) against their adversaries, but where is that zeal now? The Psalmist desires to be re-assured, and so he prays fervently for a display of vengeance on the heathen, who have slain JEHOVAH's people and above all defiled JEHOVAH's Temple.

A Psalm of Asaph.

- LXXIX.** 1 O God, the ¹heathen are come into thine inheritance;
 Thy holy temple have they defiled;
 They have laid Jerusalem on heaps.
 2 The dead bodies of thy servants have they given to be meat
 unto the fowls of the heaven,
 The flesh of thy saints unto the beasts of the earth.
 3 Their blood have they shed like water round about Jerusalem;
 And there was none to bury them.
 4 We are become a reproach to our neighbours,
 A scorn and derision to them that are round about us.

¹ Or, *nations*

1-4. THE APPEAL

LXXIX. 1. *O God.* Properly, *O JEHOVAH*: see v. 5; also v. 12 (where 10 MSS^G read JEHOVAH).

the heathen. Heb. *gōyim*. See LXXIV. 18, note.

thine inheritance. See LXXIV. 11, note on *thy bosom* (or *thy portion*). Israel (the Jews) are the special people of JEHOVAH.

have they defiled (Heb. *טמאו*, *Piel*). Holy places might be defiled by bloodshed (Num XXXV. 33 f.) or by the introduction of idols or idolatrous symbols (Jer ii. 7, 8, vii. 30).

heaps. Cf Mic i. 6.

2. *The dead bodies* etc. See 1 Macc vii. 16, 17: "He (Alcimus) laid hands on threescore men of them, and slew them in one day, according to the words which one wrote (*κατὰ τοὺς λόγους οὗς ἔγραψεν*), The flesh of thy saints and their blood did they pour out round about Jerusalem; and there was no man to bury them." It is not an exact quotation.

4. *a reproach.* This verse agrees almost verbally with xlv. 13, and Duhm proposes to omit it; Gunkel wisely retains it. It fits the context.

- 5 How long, O LORD, wilt thou be angry for ever?
Shall thy jealousy burn like fire?
- 6 Pour out thy wrath upon the heathen that know thee not,
And upon the kingdoms that call not upon thy name.
- 7 For they have devoured Jacob,
And laid waste his ¹habitation.
- 8 Remember not against us the iniquities of our forefathers:
Let thy tender mercies speedily prevent us:
For we are brought very low.
- 9 Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name:
And deliver us, and purge away our sins, for thy name's sake.
- 10 Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is their God?
Let the revenging of the blood of thy servants which is shed
Be known among the heathen in our sight.
- 11 Let the sighing of the prisoner come before thee;

¹ Or, *pasture*

5-7. A PRAYER FOR GOD'S VENGEANCE ON THE HEATHEN

5. *Shall thy jealousy* etc. Rather, *Let thy zeal* (for Thy people: cf Isa ix. 7) *burn like fire*. The sentiment is expressed further in the following verse.

6, 7. *Pour out thy wrath* etc. Cf Jer x. 25, where almost the same words occur. The chief variation is between "the kingdoms" (Ps) and "the families" (Jer). The final words, "They have laid waste his *pasture*" (so RV marg.), are the same in both texts.

8, 9. A CONFESSION OF SIN

8. *the iniquities of our forefathers*. I.e. in going after other gods: Jer xi. 10.

Let thy tender mercies speedily prevent us. A good paraphrase of the clause is given in Powis Smith's American Translation (1927), "May thy mercies quickly meet us." For *prevent* cf xxi. 3, note.

we are brought very low. The same Hebrew verb in cxvi. 6; Jud vi. 6.

9. *purge away our sins*. Or, *make an atonement over our sins*: lxxv. 3, lxxviii. 38. The Hebrew verb is that used in Lev xvi, *passim*, of the action of the high priest on the Day of Atonement (*Kippûrim*).

10-12. LET JEHOVAH BE JEALOUS FOR THE HONOUR OF HIS NAME

10. *Wherefore should the heathen say* etc. Cf xlii. 13, cxv. 2.

11. *the sighing of the prisoner*. *Prisoner* is in the singular, but the parallel term ("the children of death") suggests that *prisoner* is used in the collective sense.

According to the greatness of ¹thy power preserve thou
²those that are appointed to death;

12 And render unto our neighbours sevenfold into their bosom
 Their reproach, wherewith they have reproached thee, O
 Lord.

13 So we thy people and sheep of thy pasture
 Will give thee thanks for ever:
 We will shew forth thy praise to all generations.

¹ Heb. *thine arm*.

² Heb. *the children of death*.

12. *into their bosom*. xxxv. 13, cxxix. 7; Luke vi. 38.

13. THE PSALMIST'S VOW

13. *sheep of thy pasture*. lxxiv. 1, c. 3.

PSALM LXXX

SHOW US THY FAVOUR, AND GRANT VICTORY TO US
 WHO HAVE BEEN BROUGHT SO LOW

§ 1. CONTENTS.

1, 2. An appeal for God's help.

3. Refrain to the appeal.

4-6. The appeal renewed.

7. Refrain.

8-16*a*. The allegory of the Vine once cared for, now abandoned to the wild
 beasts.

16*b*-18. The appeal again renewed.

19. Refrain.

§ 2. THE OCCASION OF THE PSALM.

The language of the Psalm is found to be elusive when an attempt is made to draw from it indications of the particular occasion which brought it forth. The Psalm is said by some to be of North-Israelite origin, since in *v.* 2 it gives Ephraim and Manasseh so important a place, and since in addition it mentions neither Judah nor Jerusalem. But no indication of the particular occasion which called it forth is to be found: probably the Psalm refers not to some particular event, but to a condition of things which had lasted for some time. Nothing in the Psalm points definitely to the Maccabean era. There is a show of reason for referring Pss lxxiv, lxxix to the Maccabean crisis, but this is not the case with Ps lxxx. Our difficulty in finding a clue to the date is increased by the presence of (apparent) archaisms, specially in *vs.* 1, 2.

The Psalm implies in its opening verses and also in the refrain in *vs.* 3, 7, 19 that Israel is going out to war, against some (unnamed) enemy. The description

of JEHOVAH as sitting "upon the cherubim" is perhaps a further indication that War is in prospect, for this expression suggests the ark of the covenant, which from time to time was carried out with the armies of Israel: Josh vi. 4, 13; 1 Sam iv. 5, 6; 2 Sam xi. 11. But it is to be noted that the Psalmist makes his appeal as one in desperate case. His cries are most urgent: *Come to save us* (v. 2)—*Restore us* (vv. 3, 7, 19)—*Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand* (v. 17)—*Quicken thou us* (v. 18)—*Let us have the victory* (v. 19). Ps lxxx is not a mere literary composition, but it is the appeal made when to live or die is in question.

§ 3. THE POETICAL FORM OF THE PSALM.

The agitation of the author is reflected in the introduction of a digression in vv. 8 ff. Verses 1-7 and 16b-19 are fairly regular in form: thrice at approximately equal intervals occurs the refrain, *Restore us, O God, and cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved* (or *be victorious*). But this arrangement is broken by vv. 8-16a, a passage describing Israel's whilom blessedness and present desolation. It seems as though the Psalmist held "That a sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier things" (*Locksley Hall*). The memory of the Past suddenly breaks in upon him, and he is overwhelmed by the contrast between the earlier days when God brought Israel out of Egypt and his own (later) days in which God seems to have forgotten His people altogether. He is overcome by the anguish of the thought, and he breaks the strophical scheme with which he began. After a while he recovers calmness and ends with a strophe and a refrain matching vv. 1-3 or vv. 4-7.

This is surely a reasonable account of the structure of the Psalm. But some critics assume that the original text has suffered by omission, or by interpolation, or by both processes. Duhm is anxious to "restore" the Psalm to its ("originally") more regular form by inserting the refrain (v. 3) after v. 10, and again by turning v. 14a by expansion into the same refrain. He thus is able to represent the Psalm as consisting of five strophes of eight lines (or verses) each, each concluding with the refrain which is found in vv. 3, 7, and 19. But it must be said that the introduction of the refrain after v. 10 makes an awkward break in the sense. And again to make the fifth strophe of approximately the right length v. 18 has to be omitted. At such a cost is regularity of metrical form secured for this Psalm. *Das Gedicht ist künstlich genug*, remarks Duhm, and, if his reconstruction of the text is right, we may acquiesce in his judgment.

The endeavour to find a strict metrical form in this Psalm has led other critics to suppose that the passage concerning the vine (vv. 8-16a) is an independent poem which has been interpolated into the original form of Ps lxxx. On this view the Psalm consisted of just three strophes, vv. 1-3, 4-7, 16b-19. Can this impoverished form of the Psalm be original? Surely not! Gunkel holds that the passage 14c-16a binds the whole Psalm together, yet strangely enough he accepts the introduction of the refrain after v. 10 and also after v. 13.

A fundamental misconception of the nature of Hebrew psalmody underlies these attempts to force a regular metrical scheme upon Psalms. The Psalmist is primarily one who plays on an instrument of music. He extemporizes words as he plays, and his changes of feeling are reflected in abrupt turns in the de-

velopment of his subject. He is an Eastern singing in the open air, and he regular form, which a Western poet in his study easily submits to, would be abhorrent to him. Ps lxxx is the natural outpouring of an overcharged Eastern heart. *Le cœur a son ordre*, as Pascal wisely said in the *Pensées*. See GENERAL INTRODUCTION, pp. xi, xii.

For the Chief Musician ; set to ¹Shoshannim Eduth.
A Psalm of Asaph.

LXXX. 1 Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel,

Thou that leadest Joseph like a flock ;

Thou that ²sittest upon the cherubim, shine forth.

2 Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh, stir up thy
might,

And come to save us.

3 ³Turn us again, O God ;

And cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved.

4 O LORD God of hosts,

¹ That is, *Lilies, a testimony.*

² Or, *dwellest between*

³ Or, *Restor:*

1-3. LET THE SHEPHERD OF ISRAEL BE OUR LEADER
NOW TO SAVE US

LXXX. 1. *Shepherd of Israel.* xcv. 7, "He is our God, And we are...the sheep of his hand."

like a flock. Rightly as LXX. B, ὡσεὶ πρόβατα, but P-B, *like a sheep:* Vulgate, *velut ovem.*

upon the cherubim. Cf xcix. 1; Exod xxv. 22 (*q.v.*).

2. *Before Ephraim* etc. JEHOVAH is to be leader in the war. Cf Jud iv. 14 (Deborah to Barak before the battle of the Kishon), "Is not JEHOVAH gone out *before thee?*"

Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh. Three warlike tribes dwelling together in Central Palestine. See also Num ii. 18-24.

3. *Turn us again* etc. So vv. 7, 19; cf v. 14.

cause thy face to shine. I.e. "Show us Thy favour." Cf the priestly blessing in Num vi. 25.

we shall be saved. Or, *we shall be victorious.* Cf Zech ix. 9, "Thy king cometh...just, and having *salvation*" (marg. *victory*). The same Hebrew verb is used.

4-7. THE MISERY OF ISRAEL

4. *O LORD God of hosts.* Lit. *O JEHOVAH, God, Hosts.* The last three words are in apposition: the thought being that JEHOVAH is "God," and is equivalent to the Hosts of Heaven whom the heathen took for gods.

- How long ¹wilt thou be angry against the prayer of thy people?
- 5 Thou hast fed them with the bread of tears,
And given them tears to drink in large measure.
- 6 Thou makest us a strife unto our neighbours:
And our enemies laugh among themselves.
- 7 Turn us again, O God of hosts;
And cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved.
- 8 Thou broughtest a vine out of Egypt:
Thou didst drive out the nations, and plantedst it.
- 9 Thou preparedst *room* before it,
And it took deep root, and filled the land.
- 10 The mountains were covered with the shadow of it,
And ²the boughs thereof were *like* ³cedars of God.
- 11 She sent out her branches unto the sea,
And her shoots unto the River.
- 12 Why hast thou broken down her fences,
So that all they which pass by the way do pluck her?

¹ Heb. *wilt thou smoke*. See Ps. lxxiv. 1.

² Or, *the cedars of God with the boughs thereof*

³ Or, *goodly cedars*

wilt thou be angry against the prayer of thy people? Lit. *wilt thou smoke against* (i.e. be offended at) *the prayer of thy people?* Cf Isa lxxv. 5, "These (the rebellious ones) are a smoke in my nose."

5. *bread of tears*. Cf 1 K xxii. 27, "bread of affliction."

6. *a strife unto our neighbours*. These neighbours raid Israel and quarrel over the spoil which they carry off.

8-11. ISRAEL GOD'S CHOSEN VINE

8. *a vine*. For other instances of the use of this metaphor see Isa v. 1-7; Ezek xvii. 6, 8; Hosea x. 1.

10. *cedars of God*. So the Hebrew: *goodly cedars* (AV, cf P-B) is a paraphrase. Cf xxxvi. 6, *mountains of God* (RV); AV, *great mountains*; P-B, *strong mountains*.

11. *the sea...the River*. Cf lxxii. 8; Exod xxiii. 31, "I will set thy border from the Red Sea even unto the sea of the Philistines (i.e. the Mediterranean), and from the wilderness unto the River" (i.e. Euphrates).

12-16a. THE PRESENT MISERABLE CONDITION OF THE VINE OF GOD

12. *pluck her*. "She" is the vine.

- 13 The boar out of the wood doth ravage it,
 And the wild beasts of the field feed on it.
 14 Turn again, we beseech thee, O God of hosts:
 Look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine,
 15 And ¹the stock which thy right hand hath planted,
 And the ²branch that thou madest strong for thyself.
 16 It is burned with fire, it is cut down:
 They perish at the rebuke of thy countenance.
 17 Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand,
 Upon the son of man whom thou madest strong for thyself
 18 So shall we not go back from thee:

¹ Or, *protect (or maintain) that which &c.*

² Heb. *son.*

13. *The boar out of the wood.* Wild swine are still found in the Jordan valley (G. E. Post in *H.D.B.*). The Hebrew word rendered *out of the wood* is written with its middle letter suspended above the line. This proceeding usually indicates uncertainty of the text. Read perhaps *mī-yē'or*, "from the Nile," for *mī-ya'ar*, "out of the wood." The *boar* (or swine) or hippopotamus *from the Nile* would be some invading force from Egypt.

14. *Turn again.* Cf xc. 13.

visit. Cf cvi. 4, "Visit me with thy salvation." The Hebrew verb is used of visiting both in order to save and in order to punish; Exod xxxii. 34.

15. *the branch* (Heb. *bēn*). Or, *the son*: LXX (= Peshitta), *υἱὸν ἀνθρώπου*: Vulgate, *filium hominis*: Targum, "King Messiah." The sense "branch" is very doubtful. In Gen xlix. 22, "Joseph is a fruitful *bough*," render "Joseph is the son of a fruitful mother" (cf marg.). The "son" is the person whom JEHOVAH has chosen at this time to be ruler in Israel: cf ii. 6, 7. In v. 17 "son of man" represents Heb. *bēn Adam*.

16a. *It (the vine) is burned with fire.* The phrase does not necessarily mean "consumed with fire": see Isa xlii. 25.

16b-19. A FINAL APPEAL

16b. *They perish.* Rather, *Men perish.* The indefinite form of the Hebrew verb (third person plural) includes the first person plural which is in fact in the author's mind. He means, "*We perish* unless Thy hand be upon Thy Chosen One ("the man of thy right hand") to help us in our present strait," but he avoids the form *We perish* as of ill omen.

17. *Let thy hand* etc. I.e. to strengthen him. Cf 1 K xviii. 46.

18. *go back.* I.e. "apostatize"; cf xlv. 18, "Our heart is not turned back." This promise for the future is a half-confession of apostasy in the past.

Quicken thou us, and we will call upon thy name.

19 Turn us again, O LORD God of hosts :

Cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved.

Quicken thou us. Cf lxxi. 20. Not as P-B, *O let us live.* 'The thought is of reviving, of giving fresh life.

and we will call upon thy name. I.e. we will give Thee the worship which in the past we have withheld.

19. *and we shall be saved.* Or, *and let us have the victory,* which Thou didst before deny us.

PSALM LXXXI

A PROPHETIC HOMILY ON THE OCCASION OF THE HARVEST: BE FAITHFUL TO JEHOVAH

§ 1. CONTENTS.

(This Psalm resembles Ps xcvi in that it begins with an Invitatory and ends with a Warning.)

1-7. An Invitatory. Give praise to the Victorious God, who delivered His people out of Egypt, and showed them mercy in the Wilderness.

8-16. JEHOVAH's Testimony to Israel that He is a Jealous God: His Warning against lapse into Polytheism.

§ 2. CHARACTER AND PURPOSE OF THE PSALM.

Ps lxxxi is rather a prophetic message than a piece of psalmody. The Prophet-Psalmist has a double message to give: *First*, Make a hearty acknowledgment of JEHOVAH as your God in the form which He Himself has appointed: *Secondly*, Beware of stultifying this acknowledgment by paying worship to some other god.

This Psalm throws light on the attitude of the Prophets and particularly on that of the prophetic Psalmists towards the *cultus*. It is held by some scholars that the true prophetic mind rejects sacrifice and (by inference) all outward rites without exception. But this opinion ignores many prophetic utterances, including several which are found in the Psalter. Here in Ps lxxxi a Prophet-Psalmist is found, inviting and urging his people to "keep the feast." But is there not a prophetic reason for his invitation? As a prophet of JEHOVAH he desires that his people should remain faithful to JEHOVAH, but at the same time he is fully aware of the strength of the temptation which besets them to fall away. When they lifted up their eyes to the hills, they looked towards high-places of reverend antiquity where the Canaanites and (at times) their own ancestors had worshipped the god (or "the gods") of the land. When harvest drew near, they recollected that those gods were held by many to be gods of corn and wine and oil and honey—gods who "gave" these gifts of the soil, and so should receive thanks for them. The temptation thus presented is summarily described in Hosea ii. 5, "She (Israel) said, I will go after my lovers, that give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink." To

counter this the Psalmist would use the feast, JEHOVAH's own ordinance, to urge JEHOVAH's claim on the whole-hearted allegiance of Israel. The feast was a reminder of what JEHOVAH had done for His people. He had led them out of Egypt, and freed them from task-work on Pharaoh's granaries and store-cities. He had brought them into a land of corn and wine, and given them the corn of Canaan (Josh v. 10-12). The feast was to be kept with every kind of music: *timbrels* for the women, *harp* and *psaltery* for the skilled, *trumpets* (or rather, *horns*) for those who make a joyful noise. The Prophet-Psalmist asks for a public demonstration of loyalty towards JEHOVAH. The feast provides the occasion.

The Psalmist does not merely tolerate the feast as a custom: he enjoins it as a statute—an ordinance—a testimony of Divine authority. But the inner meaning of the feast is with him the important thing.

§ 3. THE IMPORTANCE OF A TENSE.

The spiritual force of a Psalm is in many cases gathered up in its final verse or verses. It is so in Ps lxxxix with *v.* 13-16. Rightly translated (as in RV) they are seen to be a yearning appeal to Israel to make the feast the beginning of a spiritual revival. Wrongly translated with past tenses (as in P-B, AV) they are merely an idle lament over a past which cannot be changed. Another important case of mistranslation of tenses in P-B is in xviii. 16, 17.

§ 4. A GOOD HARVEST, THE REWARD OF SPIRITUAL FAITHFULNESS.

Here as in Deut xxviii. 3-5 earthly prosperity in the form of an abundant harvest is promised to him who diligently keeps the commands of JEHOVAH. But we need not suppose that the Psalmist's religion went no further than this. This is a harvest Psalm, containing only the Psalmist's harvest thought.

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

LXXXI. 1 Sing aloud unto God our strength:

Make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob.

2 Take up the psalm, and ¹bring hither the timbrel,
The pleasant harp with the psaltery.

¹ Or, *strike the timbrel*

1-7. GIVE PRAISE TO THE VICTORIOUS GOD, WHO SHOWED HIS
MERCY TO ISRAEL IN EGYPT, AND ALSO IN THE WILDERNESS

LXXXI. 1. *Sing aloud... Make a joyful noise.* The same Hebrew verbs as in xcv. 1. Open air worship must be loud; cf 1 Sam iv. 5, Israel *made a joyful noise* (same Hebrew verb) of greeting to JEHOVAH, when the ark was brought into the camp.

the God of Jacob. Better, *God the Conqueror.* "Jacob" is a name or epithet of the God of Israel: cf xlvi. 7, note.

2. *Take up the psalm.* I.e. with the voice. P-B, *Take the psalm*, is hardly intelligible.

- 3 Blow up the trumpet in the new moon,
At the full moon, on our solemn feast day.
- 4 For it is a statute for Israel,
An ordinance of the God of Jacob.
- 5 He appointed it in Joseph for a testimony,
When he went out ¹over the land of Egypt:
Where I heard ²a language that I knew not.
- 6 I removed his shoulder from the burden:
His hands were freed from the basket.
- 7 Thou calledst in trouble, and I delivered thee;
I answered thee in the secret place of thunder;
I proved thee at the waters of Meribah.

[Selah

¹ Or, *against*² Or, *the speech of one that &c.*

3. *Blow up the trumpet* (Heb. *shōphār*) *in the new moon.* The Hebrew day was reckoned to begin at sunset, and the Hebrew month was lunar: the first day of the month was therefore called "The new moon." Further, according to the Law the first day of Tishri, the seventh month, i.e. New Year's Day according to the common reckoning of the civil year, was to be kept holy and announced by a *tērū'āh* (תְּרוּעָה): Lev xxiii. 24; Num xxix. 1. This *tērū'āh* is said to mean a blowing on the *shophar*, which was a "horn," the horn of a cow or of a ram, rather than a trumpet proper. The expression used here in the Psalm ("in the new moon") is ambiguous both in MT and LXX, for other New Moons beside that of the New Year were observed in Israel: 2 K iv. 23; Isa i. 13; Amos viii. 5. Ancient opinion is divided as to the meaning; the Targum fixes the reference to the New Year, "Blow ye the *shōphār* in the month Tishri." On the other hand Aquila and Symmachus (as cited in the Syro-Hexaplar) give "Blow ye the horn at the beginning of every month." The *shophar* was in fact used for giving signals of various kinds; e.g. to announce the Year of Jubile, Lev xxv. 9; to announce a king's accession, 2 K ix. 13; to give warning of the approach of an enemy, Ezek xxxiii. 3.

4. *a statute for Israel.* In Exod xii. 24 of the Passover.

5. *over the land of Egypt.* Rather (as marg.), *against the land of Egypt.*

Where I heard etc. Better, *Saying, I shall hear the language of those whom I have not known;* i.e. the Egyptians, the people who worship other gods, will be compelled to cry to me for mercy: cf Isa lxxv. 1a.

6. *the burden...the basket.* The reference is to the forced labour of building for Pharaoh (Exod i. 11). The basket was used (and is used in the East) for carrying away rubbish and for bringing building material. The rendering of P-B, "*His hands were delivered from making the pots,*" i.e. from brick-making, is wrong.

7. *in (perhaps from) the secret place of thunder.* A reference to the storm on Sinai, when the Law was given; Exod xix. 16-19.

at the waters of Meribah. Num xx. 1-13; cf Exod xvii. 1-7.

- 8 Hear, O my people, and I will testify unto thee:
O Israel, if thou wouldest hearken unto me!
- 9 There shall no strange god be in thee;
Neither shalt thou worship any strange god.
- 10 I am the LORD thy God,
Which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt:
Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.
- 11 But my people hearkened not to my voice;
And Israel would none of me.
- 12 So I let them go after the stubbornness of their heart,
That they might walk in their own counsels.
- 13 Oh that my people would hearken unto me,
That Israel would walk in my ways!
- 14 I should soon subdue their enemies,
And turn my hand against their adversaries.
- 15 The haters of the LORD should ¹submit themselves unto him:
But their time should endure for ever.
- 16 He should feed them also with the ²finest of the wheat:
And with honey out of the rock should I satisfy thee.

¹ Or, *yield feigned obedience* Heb. *lie*.² Heb. *fat of wheat*.

8-16. JEHOVAH'S WARNING TO ISRAEL

8. *I will testify unto thee.* Hebrew as in l. 7.

9. *There shall no strange god etc.* The two clauses are parallel to Exod xx. 3, 5 (from the Ten Commandments).

10. *I am JEHOVAH thy God etc.* Cf Exod xx. 2.

Open thy mouth wide. Cf l. 15.

12. *the stubbornness of their heart.* A favourite expression of Jeremiah: Jer iii. 17, vii. 24, *al*.

13. *would hearken unto me.* I.e. in the present, not, *would have hearkened unto me*, as P-B.

14. *soon.* Hebrew as in ii. 12 ("soon," RV).

15. *should submit themselves.* Or, *should be forced to submit*: cf margin, and see xviii. 44, note.

But their time. Heb. *ēth* (corresponding with *καῖρός*, LXX) is a "good" time or a "bad" time according to the context. EV treats the clause as referring to Israel: "*But their (good) time (Targum, their power) should endure for ever.*" If the Hebrew text is sound, this is the best explanation.

16. *He should feed them also.* Read perhaps with an emendation of one letter, *And I will feed him.* JEHOVAH makes His people a present offer.

wheat...honey. Palestine is described alternately as a land "of wheat and barley" (Deut viii. 8), i.e. an agricultural land, and as a land "flowing with milk and honey," i.e. as a pastoral land. The Psalmist combines the two descriptions in joining "wheat" with "honey."

PSALM LXXXII

THE RIGHTEOUS JUDGE

§ 1. CONTENTS.

1-4. The Psalmist apostrophizes the judges in Israel, warning them to give up favouring rich oppressors, and urging them to become champions of the oppressed poor.

5-7. The Psalmist's reflexions on the refusal of the judges to reform their ways.

8. His appeal to God to be Himself the Judge.

§ 2. OCCASION.

This Psalm was called forth by the author's bitter experience of the perversion of justice in Israel. Psalms of similar origin are xi, lii, lviii, lxxv, and xciv. The occasion is clear, but not the date. Failure in the administration of justice belongs to many periods of Hebrew history, to the days of Samuel (1 Sam viii. 1-3), of David (2 Sam xv. 3, 4), of Manasseh (2 K xxi. 16), to mention a few instances. The fact that there is no reference to the king as chief judge does not prove that the Psalm is post-exilic. Direct criticism of the justice of the king is hardly to be expected except from an Elijah.

§ 3. THE AUTHOR A PSALMIST, NOT A PROPHET.

If this Psalm, or at least the first four verses, had been found in a prophetic book, we might have concluded that the author had cried his remonstrance aloud in the gate of his city or in the Temple court for all to hear. But such words as these when they come from a Psalmist call up a different picture. Harp in hand he wanders through the streets of the city, and sings to his harp to any who will listen. His object is to show his sympathy with the silent suffering poor, and to encourage them to look for Divine intervention. His message is contained in the last verse, when he cries, "Arise, O God, judge the earth: For thou shalt inherit all the nations." This Psalm in fact (like xi and lviii, *q.v.*) is of the nature of a meditation before God, which the Psalmist allows to be overheard by men.

Gunkel holds the view that the "gods" in this Psalm are the gods of the nations round Israel; if so, this Psalm is wholly eschatological. "Here," he says, "JEHOVAH exacts an account from the council of gods, somewhat as the king of Persia exacts it from his highest court of justice." But this view is improbable.

A Psalm of Asaph.

LXXXII. 1 God standeth in the congregation of God;
He judgeth among the gods.

1-4. WARNING TO JUDGES

LXXXII. 1. *standeth.* I.e. is about to take an active part: cf Isa iii. 13; Acts vii. 56.

in the congregation of God (Heb. *El*). Cf Num xxxi. 16, "in the congregation of JEHOVAH," i.e. in the congregation of Israel. God is

- 2 How long will ye judge unjustly,
And respect the persons of the wicked? [Selah]
- 3 Judge the ¹poor and fatherless:
Do justice to the afflicted and destitute.
- 4 Rescue the ¹poor and needy:
Deliver them out of the hand of the wicked.
- 5 They know not, neither do they understand;
They walk to and fro in darkness:
All the foundations of the earth are moved.
- 6 I said, Ye are gods,
And all of you sons of the Most High.
- 7 Nevertheless ye shall die like men,
And fall like one of the princes.

¹ Or, *weak*

in the midst of His people. The renderings *in the congregation of princes* (P-B) and ἐν συναγωγῇ θεῶν (LXX) are unsuitable.

He judgeth among the gods. Or, *He judgeth gods in the midst* (LXX, ἐν μέσῳ δὲ θεῶν διακρίνει). Judges are "gods" as having a share in the Divine prerogative of dispensing justice. On God's judgment of the "gods" see Isa xxiv. 21.

3. *Judge the poor.* I.e. Be champions of the poor: cf x. 18, note: xxvi. 1, note.

5-7. THE JUDGES UNHEEDING

5. *They walk to and fro in darkness.* Cf Pro ii. 13, "Who forsake the paths of uprightness, To walk in the ways of darkness."

All the foundations etc. Cf xi. 3 and lxxv. 3, passages which complain of the failure of justice on earth.

6. *I said.* In English, *I said to myself*, or *I thought*.

Ye are gods. Cf v. 2, note. Our Lord's comment (John x. 35 f.) is, "If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came (and the scripture cannot be broken), say ye of him, whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God (Υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ εἶμι)?" On this Westcott's note is, "Such a phrase as that in Ps lxxxii. 6, really includes in a most significant shape the thought which underlies the whole of the Old Testament, that of a covenant between God and man, which through the reality of a personal relationship assumes the possibility of a vital union."

7. *like men.* Heb. כְּאָדָם, "like Adam," the man made by God Himself at the beginning, the "son of God" in St Luke's phrase (τοῦ θεοῦ, Luke iii. 38), who yet was doomed to die for eating the forbidden fruit.

And fall like one of the princes. Better, *And fall as one man, O princes.* "Ye shall all fall together by one act of Divine judgment": cf Isa lxy. 25.

8 Arise, O God, judge the earth :
For thou shalt inherit all the nations.

8. APPEAL TO JEHOVAH TO EXECUTE JUDGMENT

8. *thou shalt inherit all the nations.* The Psalmist enlarges the view of the Deuteronomist, "Jacob is the lot of (the LORD'S) inheritance," and he looks forward to the latter end. Then JEHOVAH shall come into His inheritance, an inheritance *consisting of* (Heb. כ) all the nations. The doctrine of the Universal Reign of JEHOVAH is found here as in ii. 8 ff., xxii. 27, 28; Zech xiv. 9, *al.*

The proposed emendation, *thou shalt rule over* (Heb. תמשל) for *thou shalt inherit* (Heb. תנחל), misses the point of the verse, i.e. that on the Day of the LORD JEHOVAH will come into possession of all peoples as destined from the beginning to be His own.

PSALM LXXXIII

A PRAYER AGAINST THE INVASION OF THE EDOMITES AND THE CHILDREN OF THE EAST. (Cf Jud vi. 1-6)

§ 1. CONTENTS.

1-4. The Psalmist cries for the help of God (JEHOVAH) against a confederacy of peoples who threaten to destroy Israel.

5-8. The roll of the nations who are gathering for invasion.

9-12. An appeal to God to deal with the new enemy as He dealt once with (the Canaanites of) Sisera and with Midian and her princes.

13-17. Let the invaders be put to flight and to destruction.

18. From the fate of these let men learn that JEHOVAH only is Most High over all the earth.

§ 2. OCCASION.

The situation suggested by this Psalm stands by itself. The Psalmist appeals to God for help in view of a formidable threat of foreign invasion. Other Psalms exhibit fears for Jerusalem and the Temple; here the threat is more general. There seems to be a *Völkerwanderung*, a general movement of peoples, in progress. The children of the East and South-East, Edom, Ishmael, Moab, Ammon, and Amalek, are on the move with the intention of seizing and occupying "the pastures" of JEHOVAH. We may guess perhaps that locusts or drought has destroyed their own pastures, and that hunger is driving them on to the (at present) unravaged lands of Palestine. The fears of Israel might be expressed in the well-known words of Num xxii. 4, "Now shall this multitude lick up all that is round about us, as the ox licketh up the grass of the field." The tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites move in the van, and the Psalmist's kin is threatened with utter destruction by famine. When the confederates have "taken in possession the pastures of God" (v. 12), nothing will be left to keep

Israel alive. "The name of Israel will be no more in remembrance" (v. 4). The old disastrous invasion of the Midianites and the Amalekites and the children of the East (Jud vi-viii) is about to be repeated.

The occasion of the Psalm is thus clearly manifest, but not the date. History must have repeated itself frequently on the eastern and southern borders of Palestine. Palestine, though not a rich country, was yet a land of corn and wine and oil (Deut viii. 8); such food supplies must have been a standing temptation to the hungry dwellers in the desert-lands to the east and south.

It is however true that a number of scholars rather confidently identify the occasion of this Psalm with the events narrated in 1 Macc v. There (v. 2) it is said that the Gentiles (τὰ ἔθνη) took counsel to destroy the race of Jacob, and it is added in the next verse that Judas Maccabaeus "fought against the children of Esau in Idumaea." Next (v. 6, 7) "he passed over to the children of Ammon, and...fought many battles with them." Further in v. 14, 15 it is said that messengers came to Judas from Galilee, "saying, That there were gathered together against them those of Ptolemais, and of Tyre, and of Sidon and all Galilee of the Gentiles to consume us (τοῦ ἐξαναλωσαι ἡμᾶς)." Again later in the chapter we read that the spies sent out by Judas brought him back word, "All the Gentiles that be round about us are gathered together...And they have hired Arabians to help them" (v. 38, 39). In v. 65 Judas fights against the children of Esau and smites Hebron, and in v. 68 he turns aside to Azotus (Ashdod) to the land of the Philistines...and takes the spoil of their cities.

A table shows these parallels:

Ps lxxxiii	1 Macc v
The tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites; Moab, and the Hagarenes (or Hagarites); (v. 6) Gebal, and Ammon, and Amalek; Philistia with the inhabitants of Tyre (v. 7): Assyria also... the children of Lot (v. 8)	The children of Esau (v. 3) Arabians (v. 39) The children of Ammon (v. 6) The land of the Philistines (v. 68) those of Ptolemais, and of Tyre, and of Sidon; v. 15. [Moab is not named]

Do these parallels point conclusively to a Maccabean date for the Psalm? Not much stress can be laid on the "crafty counsel," *Let us cut them off from being a nation* (v. 3, 4): such counsel would naturally be ascribed to any horde of allied peoples coming in hungry from the desert. Four names, significant surely in the Psalm, are absent from 1 Macc v—Moab, Gebal, Amalek and Assyria. These names taken together suggest an earlier age than the Maccabean. Kittel urges that the mention of the hostility of Tyre is very significant for the late date, but in fact this hostility appears in earlier days; Ezek xxvi. 2; Amos i. 9, 10; Zech ix. 1-4 (not Maccabean). These passages suggest that Tyre

(safe herself in her island stronghold) would be likely at all times (except those of Ahab) to make gain out of the calamities of Israel. Tyre as the typical enemy of Israel appears reduced to submission and bringing tribute in xlv. 12; cf lxxxvii. 4, where she is again in doubtful company—"Rahab and Babylon... Philistia and Tyre."

§ 3. PURPOSE.

This Psalm contains less perhaps of religious value for modern readers than most others. It is a public prayer against invasion. Israel is in danger of extermination. The existence of the nation itself is at stake. There is no complaint of profanation of the Temple nor of the sufferings of martyrs as in xlv, lxxiv, lxxix. This Psalm shows up by contrast the deeper religion of that which follows. Ps lxxxiii is a cry for safety, lxxxiv is a cry for God.

A Song, a Psalm of Asaph.

LXXXIII. 1 O God, keep not thou silence:

Hold not thy peace, and be not still, O God.

2 For, lo, thine enemies make a tumult:

And they that hate thee have lifted up the head.

3 They take crafty counsel against thy people,

And consult together against thy hidden ones.

4 They have said, Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation;

That the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance.

1-4. APPEAL FOR DIVINE INTERVENTION

LXXXIII. 1. *keep not thou silence.* It is by the voice of God that things are done: xxix. 3-5, 7-9, xxxiii. 6, 9, lxviii. 33. *God* (1^{mo}) should be **JEHOVAH**.

2. *make a tumult.* The tumult of armies assembling or advancing: cf Isa xvii. 12.

lifted up the head. Jud viii. 28.

3. *thy hidden ones.* "Hidden" as treasure to be preserved from spoliation. Duhm suggests that the Psalmist means those Jews living in Galilee and Gilead, who were thus separated from their brethren in Judaea. These were rescued by Simon and Judas and brought in after some fighting to settle in the south with the rest of their people (1 Macc v. 21-23, 45 ff.). Another and better explanation is that Israel and his land are meant, as **JEHOVAH**'s possession, *thy treasure*. The Hebrew word should perhaps be read as a singular.

4. *from being a nation* (Heb. *gôl*). There is no suggestion of a religious persecution in these words, nor in the rest of the Psalm.

- 5 For they have consulted together with one consent ;
 Against thee do they make a covenant :
 6 The tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites ;
 Moab, and the ¹Hagarenes ;
 7 Gebal, and Ammon, and Amalek ;
 Philistia with the inhabitants of Tyre :
 8 Assyria also is joined with them ;
²They have holpen the children of Lot. [Selah
 9 Do thou unto them as unto Midian ;
 As to Sisera, as to Jabin, at the river Kishon :
 10 Which perished at En-dor ;
 They became as dung for the earth.

¹ Or, *Hagrites* See 1 Chr. v. 10.

² Heb. *They have been an arm to the children of Lot.*

5-8. THE ROLL OF HOSTILE NATIONS

5. *Against thee.* I.e. against JEHOVAH, the God of Israel: cf ii. 2.

6. *The tents of Edom.* So the Midianites came up with their tents (Jud vi. 5). The invasion was no passing raid: but the invaders came intending to stay.

Ishmaelites...Hagarenes (better as marg. *Hagrites*; 1 Chr v. 10). I.e. Arabs of different stocks.

7. *Gebal...Ammon...Amalek.* Gebal, i.e. Byblus (Phoenician city), in the north; Ammon east of Jordan; Amalek in the south. The three names suggest that Israel is attacked from three sides.

Philistia with the inhabitants of Tyre. These represent the sea-coast, the fourth side; thus the encircling of Israel is completed.

8. *Assyria.* Heb. *Asshur*, the name of the ancient oppressor of Israel and Judah. Why should the name be introduced into a "Maccabean" Psalm? There are two suggestions, (1) correct the text and read *Geshur* (2 Sam iii. 3, xiii. 37), a small Syrian state; (2) take *Assyria* in the sense of Syria, as the kingdom of Antiochus Epiphanes (very doubtful!).

They have holpen. Better as marg. *They have been an arm to*, i.e. an active help. The arm represents *strength in use*.

9-12. GRANT US DELIVERANCE AS OF OLD

9. *the river Kishon.* Better than *the brook of Kison* (P-B). Kishon was no mere "brook": cf Jud v. 21, "The river Kishon swept them away." It became a torrent after rain.

10. *Which perished at En-dor.* En-dor was on the north-east of the plain of Esdrelon overlooking the battlefield of the Kishon. Near that spot no doubt many of Sisera's army fell in their flight: Jud iv. 15, 16. The pronoun *which* supplied in EV refers to the host of Sisera and Jabin.

- 11 Make their nobles like Oreb and Zeeb;
 Yea, all their princes like Zebah and Zalmunna:
 12 Who said, Let us take to ourselves in possession
 The ¹habitations of God.
 13 O my God, make them like the whirling dust;
 As stubble before the wind.
 14 As the fire that burneth the forest,
 And as the flame that setteth the mountains on fire;
 15 So pursue them with thy tempest,
 And terrify them with thy storm.
 16 Fill their faces with confusion;
 That they may seek thy name, O LORD.
 17 Let them be ashamed and dismayed for ever;
 Yea, let them be confounded and perish:
 18 That they may know that ²thou alone, whose name is
 JEHOVAH,
 Art the Most High over all the earth.

¹ Or, pastures² Or, thou, whose name alone is JEHOVAH, art &c.

11. *Oreb and Zeeb.* Jud vii. 25.

Zebah and Zalmunna. Jud viii. 12-21.

12. *The habitations of God.* Rather (cf margin), *The pastures of JEHOVAH*, i.e. the land flowing with milk and honey, which JEHOVAH gave to Israel. This is one of the Elohist Psalms (Pss xlii-lxxxiii) in which ELOHIM has been substituted for JEHOVAH either by the Author or by an Editor. So in *v.* 1 we should read, "O JEHOVAH, keep not thou silence." See Ps xlii, Introduction, § 3.

13-17. LET THE INVADERS BE DESTROYED

13. *like the whirling dust.* Cf i. 4, "like the chaff."

14. *As the fire that burneth the forest.* The same metaphor as in Isa x. 16-19.

16. *That they may seek thy name.* I.e. that they may be driven to appeal to Thee in supplication. But the Psalmist evidently means "appeal *in vain*" for he does not pray for the conversion of the invaders of his country, but rather (in *v.* 17) that they may "be confounded and perish."

18. LET MEN LEARN THE UNIVERSAL SOVEREIGNTY OF JEHOVAH

18. *That they may know.* I.e. That men may know. The subject is indefinite. This is one of the two passages in which the name JEHOVAH is introduced into P-B. The other is xxxiii. 12.

PSALM LXXXIV

THIRST FOR GOD. (Cf xlii-xliii)

§ 1. CONTENTS.

1-3. The Psalmist's affection for the Temple.

4-7. The Psalmist's Beatitudes on those who dwell in Zion (v. 4) and on those who are able to go up to Zion to worship.

8-12. The Psalmist's longing to be present even for a single day in the Temple.

§ 2. PURPOSE AND CHARACTER.

The Psalmist desires earnestly to visit the Temple, and he calls those blessed who are journeying to Zion. But the Psalm has a character of its own, which distinguishes it from the Songs of Ascents or Pilgrim-Psalms (Pss cxx ff.). This Psalmist is not going up to Jerusalem; he sees in his mind's eye others going; and he confesses to God his own longing to do as they are doing. The kernel of the Psalm is in v. 8, 9, in which he asks that God would hear his (unspoken) prayer. His request is indeed unuttered, but its nature can be gathered from v. 10. The Psalmist is an anointed person, a king or a high priest, and his desire is that he may be allowed to go up once more to Zion.

He does not show what is the obstacle which prevents his going. It might be illness, as in the case of Hezekiah (2 K xx. 5), or exile, as (apparently) in the case of the author of Pss xlii-xliii, or possibly some third, unknown cause. Probably there is a hint of the nature of the obstacle in v. 10. The Psalmist would "rather be a doorkeeper" in the Temple "than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." Is he then held back in some way "in the tents of wickedness"? and if so, what are these tents?

There is in v. 10 a contrast between the "house" and the "tents." The house stands for settled life under the shadow of JEHOVAH, the tents for the wandering life of the marauder. In Palestine, a wild rocky land full of hiding places, brigandage has often flourished (see e.g. Jud ix. 25; Mic ii. 8; Luke x. 30). In Ps xi (see the Introduction) as in Pro i. 10 ff. the brigands invite others to join them in their lawless life. In Ps lxxxiv the Psalmist finds himself actually dwelling with the robbers in their tents ("the tents of wickedness"): so he appeals to JEHOVAH to be granted an escape from them that he may find a refuge in the house of God: He would rather be a poor haunter of the threshold of the Temple, like the halt and the blind (Acts iii. 2), than to have an assured place among the wandering robbers who have broken loose from God.

In one sense this is a Temple-Psalms, but it is plainly not the Temple, but the Lord of the Temple whom the Psalmist seeks. The phrases, *thy tabernacles—the courts of JEHOVAH—thine altars—thy house*, are only screens to cover the Divine name. The Psalmist writes, *How amiable are thy tabernacles*, but his meaning might have been equally well expressed in the words, *How amiable is thy Name!* Perhaps no Psalm is richer in names and titles of God. Seven times in twelve verses the great name JEHOVAH is used, four times in the form JEHOVAH-Zēbōroth, i.e. JEHOVAH God of Hosts. Further the titles given are most

significant: *Living God—my King, and my God—the God of gods* (v. 7, if with P-B we follow the reading of LXX)—*God of Jacob—my God*. Surely the Psalmist is seeking God (not God's temple), and striving to realize Him as the Living God. His final word is not "Blessed are they that dwell in thy house" (v. 4), but "Blessed is the man that trusteth in thee" (v. 12).

§ 3. INTEGRITY OF THE TEXT.

Duhm and Gunkel find a break in the sense between vv. 7 and 8. Gunkel holds vv. 8, 9 to be an interpolated prayer for the reigning monarch, while Duhm detaches vv. 11, 12 in addition, leaving only vv. 1-7 plus v. 10 to represent the original form of Ps lxxxiv. But the break at vv. 7, 8 is apparent, not real. In vv. 5-7 the Psalmist sees in his mind's eye the progress of the worshippers towards Zion. All his sympathy goes forth to the pilgrims. But his thoughts bring a grievous pang with them. His countrymen can march and go forward, but he (for some reason) cannot stir. So he begins to make earnest petition. It is not necessary for him to frame his request in words: it is obvious that the prayer of the Psalmist, who begins his Psalm with the words, *Quam dilecta tabernacula tua*, can only be that he be allowed to visit the Temple again. He leaves his request unuttered with God, for he is sure that his God will not withhold any good thing from him (v. 11). His final thought is, Blessed is the man who trusts—and waits (v. 12).

For the Chief Musician; set to the Gittith.

A Psalm of the sons of Korah.

LXXXIV. 1 How ¹amiable are thy tabernacles,

O LORD of hosts!

2 My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD;
My heart and my flesh ²cry out unto the living God.

3 Yea, the sparrow hath found her an house,
And the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her
young,

¹ Or, lovely

² Or, sing for joy

1-3. A CONTEMPLATION OF THE TEMPLE

LXXXIV. 1. *How amiable are thy tabernacles.* Render, *How beloved are thy tabernacles*; LXX, *ὡς ἀγαπητὰ τὰ σκηνώματά σου*. *Dwellings* (P-B) is still better than *Tabernacles*, for the Hebrew word, *mishkan*, means the place on earth in which JEHOVAH dwells among His people: cf xliii. 3; 1 K viii. 12, 13.

2. *the courts of JEHOVAH.* Cf "thy tabernacles" (v. 1), "thine altars" (v. 3), "thy house" (v. 4). In each case the Psalmist means "the Temple," but he uses various terms to avoid monotony.

3. *the sparrow...the swallow.* The Psalmist thinks with pleasure of small birds haunting the house of God. Larger birds, as the vultures and ravens of Eastern cities, would rather defile it.

Even thine altars, O LORD of hosts,
My King, and my God.

4 Blessed are they that dwell in thy house:

They will be still praising thee.

[Selah

5 Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee;

In whose heart are the high ways to *Zion*.

6 Passing through the valley of ¹Weeping they make it a place
of springs;

¹ Or, *balsam trees* Heb. *Baca*. See 2 Sam. v. 23.

thine altars (plural; LXX, τὰ θυσιαστήρια σου). The expression is rhetorical like "thy tabernacles" (plural) in v. 1. "Thy tabernacles" means "the place where thou dwellest," and "thine altars" means correspondingly "the place where sacrifices are offered unto thee." The plural forms of these two substantives ("tabernacle" and "altar") are more euphonious than the singular forms.

My King, and my God. So v. 2, lxviii. 24. The words are an appropriate close to the first section of the Psalm. They make it clear that the Psalmist looks beyond the Temple to the Lord of the Temple.

4-7. A CONTEMPLATION OF PILGRIMAGE TO THE TEMPLE

4. *they that dwell in thy house*. The phrase is ambiguous. Taken in the literal sense it means those who had chambers in the Temple, i.e. the priests. But the phrase has probably the wider sense of those who dwell (not "in" but) "by" thy house, i.e. the inhabitants of Jerusalem in general.

5. *whose strength is in thee*. Better, *whose refuge is in thee*, i.e. who can take refuge in the city (or the House) of JEHOVAH.

In whose heart are the high ways to Zion. P-B, *In whose heart are thy ways*. A "high way" (Heb. *māsillah*) is a special road thrown up for the progress of a king: Deutero-Isaiah (xl. 3; cf xxxv. 8) imagines such a road being thrown up for JEHOVAH as He leads His people back from captivity in Babylon. No doubt the Psalmist is thinking of the blessedness of those leaders of the people who care for and make up the high ways for the worshippers who journey to Zion. But it is significant that in the Hebrew there is no mention of Zion: the high ways of earth and stone are symbolic of the paths of God, those paths of mercy and faithfulness in which He desires His worshippers to walk. This deeper thought is suggested by the rendering of P-B. The Beatitude of the Psalmist is intended for those who ponder in their heart the ways that please JEHOVAH.

6. *the valley of Weeping*. Vulgate, *valle lacrimarum*. Better as marg. *valley of balsam trees*. It is possibly another name for the Valley of Rephaim (near Jerusalem), in which a number of balsam trees formed a conspicuous feature (2 Sam v. 23, marg.).

make it a place of springs. The general sense is clear: the pilgrim

Yea, the early rain covereth it with blessings.

7 They go from strength to strength,
Every one of them appeareth before God in Zion.

8 O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer :

Give ear, O God of Jacob.

[Selah

9 ¹Behold, O God our shield,

And look upon the face of thine anointed.

¹ Or, *Behold our shield, O God*

find sufficient water there, and water is the primary need of travellers in the East. The Hebrew text however is uncertain.

the early rain covereth it with blessings. Perhaps rather, *the early rain covereth (filleteth) the pools*, reading the Hebrew word with a different vowel, *berēchōth* for *berāchōth*; cf P-B.

7. *They go from strength to strength.* I.e. they increase in strength as they approach Jerusalem. This is a satisfactory explanation, but the suggestion has been made to take "strength" in a concrete sense: "They go from one fortified tower to another." It is recorded of king Uzziah in 2 Chr xxvi. 10 that he built towers in the wilderness and dug many wells for the safety and refreshment of cattle and travellers.

Every one of them appeareth before God in Zion. An inaccurate rendering. Better, reading the Hebrew with the change of one vowel point, *The God of gods appeareth (or is seen) in Zion.* LXX, ἀφῆσεται ὁ θεὸς τῶν θεῶν ἐν Σιών. This rendering brings out with full effect the triumphant thought with which the second section of the Psalm closes. The Psalmist yearns for Zion, because no minor deity, but the God of gods manifests Himself there. The Psalmist's purpose here as at the close of the first section is to celebrate and to exalt the name of JEHOVAH. See Gen xxii. 14 (AV).

8-12. THE PSALMIST PRAYS THAT HE TOO MAY BE ALLOWED TO VISIT ZION

8. O JEHOVAH *God of hosts.* At the beginning of this third section the Psalmist is still possessed with the same purpose as in the two preceding sections. He uses the great designation JEHOVAH-Zēbāoth in the first member of the parallelism and balances it with the title *God of Jacob* (i.e. "God the Conqueror"; cf xlv. 7, note). The connexion between vv. 4-7 and v. 8 is obvious; there the Psalmist contemplated the happiness of those who are approaching Zion: here he begins to ask that he may be allowed to have the same happiness.

9. *Behold, O God our shield.* The Hebrew phrase is rugged in its energy: translate, "O thou that art our shield, behold, O God." The ways to Zion are dangerous, and the Psalmist invokes the aid of the protector of Israel. God is called a "shield" in iii. 3, xviii. 2, cf vii. 10, note. The rendering of marg. *Behold our shield, O God*, is also possible

- 10 For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand.
I had rather ¹be a doorkeeper in the house of my God,
Than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.
- 11 For the LORD God is a sun and a shield:
The LORD will give grace and glory:
No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.
- 12 O LORD of hosts,
Blessed is the man that trusteth in thee.

¹ Or, *stand at the threshold of &c.*

though not probable. The *shield* would then be the ruler of Israel, whether king or high priest.

thine anointed. So the speaker styles himself. He is either king or high priest.

10. *be a doorkeeper.* Better, *haunt the threshold.* The gates of temples and churches all over the world are haunted by the unfortunate (Acts iii. 2, cf Mat xxi. 14). The Psalmist would rather be one of these than be kept at a distance from Zion.

dwell in the tents. This phrase implies holding a settled or recognized position within a tribe.

11. *a sun.* The metaphor is a bold one, but it is suggested by the language of the Prophets, e.g. Isa lx. 1, 2, "The glory of JEHOVAH is risen upon thee"; ... "JEHOVAH shall arise upon thee." So in 2 Sam xxii. 29, "Thou art my lamp, O JEHOVAH." An exact paraphrase to the words, *JEHOVAH is a sun and a shield*, is found in xxvii. 1, "JEHOVAH is my *light* and my *salvation.*"

It should be noted that the phrase *JEHOVAH is Shemesh* (a sun) and *Māgēn* (a shield) is not open to the objection to which the shorter phrase, *JEHOVAH is Shemesh* is exposed. The latter might easily be perverted to mean *JEHOVAH is Shamash*, i.e. the Sun-god, who was worshipped widely in Western Asia.

that walk uprightly. I.e. those who are His sincere worshippers.

12. *Blessed is the man.* *Blessed* as in vv. 4, 5. The Psalmist comforts himself with the thought that JEHOVAH will not forsake him.

PSALM LXXXV

AN APPEAL TO JEHOVAH AND A GRACIOUS ANSWER

§ 1. CONTENTS.

1-3. Acknowledgment that JEHOVAH has performed a great act of favour for His land, showing thereby that He has forgiven His people's sin.

4-7. But some signs of His wrath still remain: let JEHOVAH grant us His "salvation," i.e. a complete restoration of prosperity.

8-13. The Psalmist hears (as a prophet) a gracious answer from JEHOVAH, and communicates it to his people.

§ 2. OCCASION AND PURPOSE.

The people feel themselves to be under the wrath of God, as *vv.* 4-7 show clearly; how then are *vv.* 1-3 which speak of the removal of wrath to be explained? The language of these verses according to MT is very emphatic: "Thou hast covered *all* their sin"—"Thou hast taken away *all* thy wrath." It is however noteworthy that LXX B omits the emphatic *all* in both passages, and it may be that the original Hebrew text agreed with Cod. B. This omission helps to remove whatever difficulty exists in the renewed mention of Divine wrath in *vv.* 4, 5.

The words, "Thou hast been favourable unto thy land" (*v.* 1), are generally taken to refer to the return from Babylonian captivity. This return is taken in Isa xl. 2 as a sign that JEHOVAH has forgiven His people's sins. But it is notorious that the return was followed by a period of disillusionment for the Jews. They returned to ruined cities and to wasted lands. Their neighbours were hostile, and the heavens threatened drought, as Haggai the prophet of the Return tells us (*Hag* i. 6-11). At first the population was insufficient to deal with the two difficulties of hostile neighbours and a neglected soil (cf Ps cxxvii. 5). Judaea (being reduced to the condition of a new country) wanted population and food. Such a state struggling to exist needed the favour of God in full measure: cf Ps I, Introduction, § 2. The prayer in *vv.* 4-7 is thoroughly appropriate to the post-exilic period.

The Psalmist's purpose is to act the pastor-prophet's part, and to guide and hearten his people under present stress. To this end he first recalls the great act of God's grace in the return from Babylon, and then (after prayer) he promises as from the mouth of his God a period of moral and material revival for Judah.

The idyllic picture sketched in *vv.* 8-13 is not to be taken as an absolute prediction, but as an ideal which is set before Israel to strive after. It is given with a caution—lest men lose it through "folly," i.e. moral insensibility, which God must chastise (*v.* 8).

§ 3. LITURGICAL USE.

A Psalm of contents such as these lends itself to special musical treatment. It is suggested that it was used as a piece of "liturgy" at the offering of a sacrifice. Verses 1-3 were sung *solo*: then the congregation took up its part as chorus and recited *vv.* 4-7 in humble deprecation of God's wrath. Then a break occurred, and the sacrifice was offered. After the sacrifice the last verses (8-12) were sung by a single voice.

That the Psalm was thus used in the Temple is after all only a conjecture, but some critics pursue the subject of musical arrangement still further, and divide the Psalm more minutely among different voices. But even if this Psalm was originally intended for Temple singing, the personal element is too important to be ignored. A prophet speaks in *vv.* 8-13 and perhaps not less in *vv.* 1-3. If *vv.* 4-7 are the voice of the congregation, it is still a prophet who leads them in prayer. If it is a suffering people which prays, it is still a leader who has shared their sufferings to the full who finds words out of his own rich experience in which to present their case before JEHOVAH.

For the Chief Musician. A Psalm of the sons of Korah.

LXXXV. 1 LORD, thou hast been favourable unto thy land :

Thou hast ¹brought back the captivity of Jacob.

2 Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people,

Thou hast covered all their sin.

[Selah

3 Thou hast taken away all thy wrath :

Thou hast turned *thyself* from the fierceness of thine anger.

4 ²Turn us, O God of our salvation,

And cause thine indignation toward us to cease.

5 Wilt thou be angry with us for ever ?

Wilt thou draw out thine anger to all generations ?

6 Wilt thou not quicken us again :

That thy people may rejoice in thee ?

¹ Or, *returned to*

² Or, *Turn to us*

1-3. JEHOVAH'S GREAT ACT OF FAVOUR

LXXXV. 1. *thou hast been favourable unto.* This rendering is perhaps too general: better, *thou hast accepted* (as Ezek xliii. 27), or, *thou hast shown favour unto.* Some particular event is suggested.

Thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob. Better, *Thou hast returned to captive Jacob:* cf xiv. 7, note. JEHOVAH has returned to the help of His captive people, Jacob.

2. *Thou hast forgiven.* Lit. *Thou hast lifted up* (and taken away). *Forgiveness* is described in this verse by two metaphors, first, as a *taking away of sin*, and, secondly, as a *covering over of sin*. The sin is *taken away* from the sinner, and it is *hidden* from the eyes of God by forgiveness. The same two metaphors are used in xxxii. 1.

all their sin. LXX B, τὰς ἀμαρτίας αὐτῶν (omitting *all*).

3. *Thou hast taken away all thy wrath.* Lit. *Thou hast gathered in* (to thyself) *all thy wrath.* God's wrath is an instrument which He puts forth, and takes to Himself again when it has done its work.

all thy wrath. LXX B, τὴν ὀργὴν σου (omitting *all*).

4-7. THE PEOPLE'S PETITION

4. *Turn us.* Better as marg. *Turn to us.*

God of our salvation. I.e. the God who saved us by returning to us and showing us favour (v. 1).

5. *Wilt thou be angry...for ever?* Cf lxxix. 5, lxxx. 4.

6. *quicken.* I.e. "impart fresh life to." The same Hebrew verb as in lxxi. 20, lxxx. 18.

rejoice in thee. Cf xc. 14, cv. 3, cxlix. 2.

- 7 Shew us thy mercy, O LORD,
And grant us thy salvation.
- 8 I will hear what God the LORD will speak :
For he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints :
But let them not turn again to folly.
- 9 Surely his salvation is nigh them that fear him ;
That glory may dwell in our land.
- 10 Mercy and truth are met together ;
Righteousness and peace have kissed each other.
- 11 Truth springeth out of the earth ;
And righteousness hath looked down from heaven.
- 12 Yea, the LORD shall give that which is good ;
And our land shall yield her increase.
7. *thy salvation.* See Ps l. 23, note.

8-13. THE PSALMIST DELIVERS JEHOVAH'S ANSWER TO HIS
PEOPLE'S PETITION

8. *I will hear what God (even) JEHOVAH will speak.* The Psalmist is as a prophet waiting to hear a communication from JEHOVAH; cf Num xxiv. 4; Isa l. 4 f.

will speak (1^{mo}). P-B, *will say concerning me*, follows (but misunderstands) LXX (= Vulgate), λαλήσει ἐν ἐμοί, i.e. *will speak in (or through) me* as His prophet. This is no doubt the general sense of the passage.

let them not turn again to folly. I.e. *let them not turn again* to their former ways *in folly*, i.e. in moral insensibility. They provoked JEHOVAH once: let them learn the lesson of their punishment, and not repeat their former provocation. With Heb. *kislah*, "folly," cf *kesel*, "folly" (from the same root), xlix. 13.

9. *his salvation is nigh.* I.e. near in time: cf Isa xlvi. 13, "My salvation shall not tarry": lvi. 1, "My salvation is near to come."

That glory may dwell. I.e. the Divine glory: cf Zech ii. 5, "For I, saith JEHOVAH, will be the glory in the midst of her (Jerusalem)."

10. *Mercy and truth are met together; Righteousness and peace have kissed each other.* JEHOVAH's righteousness which demands punishment for sin and His mercy which yearns over Israel the sinner are reconciled, for the heavy punishment which has fallen upon Israel has atoned for Israel's sin. JEHOVAH remains true to His own character, and yet He grants peace to His people.

11. *Truth springeth out of the earth.* Man once more shows himself faithful to God, and in return God's righteousness looks down from heaven, i.e. God performs His acts of righteousness on behalf of man.

12. *our land shall yield her increase.* Rich harvests were taken of old as signs of Divine favour. Cf lxxxii. 16.

13 Righteousness shall go before him ;
And shall ¹make his footsteps a way to walk in.

¹ Or, set us in the way of his steps

PSALM LXXXVI

IN GREAT DANGER THE PSALMIST APPEALS TO JEHOVAH ONLY

§ 1. CONTENTS.

1-7. The Psalmist cries to JEHOVAH to be heard. The appeal is made, first, on the ground that the Psalmist is *hāsīd*, i.e. one who has enjoyed JEHOVAH'S favour in the past, and so is one of His people, and, secondly, on the ground that JEHOVAH is ready to forgive (Heb. *sallāh*) and "plenteous in mercy."

8-10. The greatness of JEHOVAH. He has done marvels such as no other God has done and all nations shall bow down before Him. He is the One by Himself, the Only One (Heb. לַבְּרַחֵם).

11-13. The Psalmist desires to be taught JEHOVAH'S way, for JEHOVAH'S mercy has been great towards him.

14-17. The crisis. The "proud"—the congregation of the violent—have risen against the Psalmist, but he is trusting in the God who has revealed Himself as "full of compassion and gracious, Slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy and truth."

§ 2. PURPOSE.

Commentators point out that much of the language of this Psalm is of a general character, and indeed may have been gathered from other Psalms, and from the rest of the Bible. Verse 15 e.g. agrees with Exod xxxiv. 6. But the Psalm has a meaning of its own: it is an individual's utterance, a cry to be delivered from his own countrymen who are oppressing him and even threatening to take his life. Even in *vs.* 1, 2 the Psalmist begins to appear as a distinct figure, and in *v.* 7 a distinct occasion is suggested, "In the day of my trouble I call upon thee." The development in the Psalmist of the spiritual struggle is vividly shown. When trouble first overtakes a man, stunning him with its onset, he prays against it in the familiar general language which he has learnt in times of ease, but as he slowly recovers and faces the new situation, he puts something of his own experience into his prayers. So in *vs.* 8-10 the Psalmist brings his knowledge of God's greatness to counteract his fear of present dangers. He knows to whom to appeal at such a time: he is not bewildered like the polytheist; he knows that "there is none like unto JEHOVAH": to JEHOVAH only he appeals. But the Psalmist now passes on from the general thought of God's greatness to the special recollection that in the past God has shown him—individually—great mercy; indeed JEHOVAH has delivered him from death itself (*vs.* 11-13). And now the Psalmist gathers himself together for his final appeal. He is threatened with an organized attack, and against his fear of it he sets the recollection of JEHOVAH'S revelation of Himself as a God

"plenteous in mercy and truth." The Psalmist knows thereby that his God will not give him up to his enemies for a caprice. So he asks simply for a *sign* of JEHOVAH'S favour; that sign once given will (he is assured) put his foes to confusion and defeat. This petition of the Psalmist receives two illustrations from the career of Jeremiah. First, in Jehoiakim's reign a congregation or violent men, priests, prophets, and people seized Jeremiah and called for his execution. His danger was great, but JEHOVAH performed a sign for him: He raised up the powerful noble, Ahikam the son of Shaphan, to be his protector (Jer xxvi. 8-24). Again, in the reign of Zedekiah, Jeremiah was seized by the princes and cast into a muddy pit to perish there. JEHOVAH then wrought a second sign, one remarkable enough, for His prophet. He touched the heart of an Ethiopian eunuch, and the eunuch drew the prophet out of the pit which otherwise would have been his grave (Jer xxxviii. 4-13). A Jewish noble, an Ethiopian eunuch, each in his turn became a sign of JEHOVAH'S favour towards His prophet!

§ 3. REFERENCE TO SORCERY?

This is one of the Psalms in which Mowinckel discovers a reference to sorcery: see Ps iv, Introduction; vi, Introduction, *al.* The suggestion is that the "sign" (or "token") asked for in v. 17 is a dream or vision of good omen such as sick or anxious persons hoped to receive, when they slept for a cure in the temple of Asclepius. But the general language of this Psalm does not bear out the suggestion of this special reference. It is better to explain the "sign" on the lines suggested above (§ 2).

A Prayer of David.

- LXXXVI.** 1 Bow down thine ear, O LORD, and answer me;
 For I am poor and needy.
 2 Preserve my soul; for I am godly:
 O thou my God, save thy servant that trusteth in thee.
 3 Be merciful unto me, O Lord;
 For unto thee do I cry all the day long.

1-7. AN APPEAL TO THE GOD OF MERCY

LXXXVI. 1. *Bow down thine ear.* Or, *Stretch thine ear.* A bold anthropomorphism: so xvii. 6, xxxi. 2.

poor (Heb. *'ānī*). The Hebrew word suggests not mere poverty, but rather suffering from oppression. The cognate substantive *'ōnī* means affliction: cf ix. 12, 13 and Ps x, Introduction; also lxxii. 2, "thy poor." By "the poor" the Psalmist means those who need a champion to secure for them their rights.

2. *godly* (Heb. *hāsīd*). AV *holy*, with marg. *one whom thou favourest*. The same Hebrew word in xvi. 10, "thine holy one," with RV marg. "*godly* Or, *beloved*." The marginal readings express better the general meaning of the word.

3. *all the day long.* Cf lv. 17.

- 4 Rejoice the soul of thy servant ;
 For unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.
- 5 For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive,
 And plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee.
- 6 Give ear, O LORD, unto my prayer ;
 And hearken unto the voice of my supplications.
- 7 In the day of my trouble I will call upon thee ;
 For thou wilt answer me.
- 8 There is none like unto thee among the gods, O Lord ;
 Neither *are there any works* like unto thy works.
- 9 All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship
 before thee, O Lord ;
 And they shall glorify thy name.
- 10 For thou art great, and doest wondrous things :
 Thou art God alone.

4. *Rejoice the soul.* Cf li. 8 and 12.

do I lift up my soul. Cf xxv. 1, note.

5. *ready to forgive.* Cf cxxx. 4.

7. *In the day of my trouble.* Cf xx. 1, l. 15, lxxvii. 2.

8-10. THE GREATNESS OF JEHOVAH

8. *like unto thee among the gods.* Cf lxxxix. 6. Such expressions show how difficult it was for the Hebrews, even for Psalmists, to avoid all use of the language of polytheism, for all the world around them was polytheistic. Such language is as old as the Song of the Red Sea, "Who is like unto thee, O JEHOVAH, among the gods?" (Exod xv. 11).

like unto thy works. Gunkel would transpose from v. 9 the words *whom thou hast made* (LXX, ὅσα ἐποίησας), which can be equally well rendered, *which thou hast done*, so as to read: *Nor are there any works like unto thy works which thou hast done.*

9. *All nations whom thou hast made.* A surprising expression in O.T. Generally Israel only is described as a nation made by JEHOVAH. Perhaps the nearest parallel is in Amos ix. 7, 8, where it is said implicitly that JEHOVAH has done for the Philistines and for the Syrians just the same thing as He did for Israel at the Exodus. Israel was made a "nation" at the Red Sea.

All nations...shall...worship. Zech xiv. 16.

10. *wondrous things.* Such as the division of the waters of the Red Sea: Exod xv. 8.

Thou art God alone. Or, Thou art God (JEHOVAH), the Only One The Hebrew is as in li. 4.

- 11 Teach me thy way, O LORD; I will walk in thy truth:
Unite my heart to fear thy name.
- 12 I will praise thee, O Lord my God, with my whole heart;
And I will glorify thy name for evermore.
- 13 For great is thy mercy toward me;
And thou hast delivered my soul from ¹the lowest pit.
- 14 O God, the proud are risen up against me,
And the congregation of violent men have sought after my
soul,
And have not set thee before them.
- 15 But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion and gracious,
Slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy and truth.
- 16 O turn unto me, and ²have mercy upon me;
Give thy strength unto thy servant,
And save the son of thine handmaid.

¹ Or, *Sheol beneath*² Or, *be gracious unto*

11-13. TEACH ME TO DO THY WILL

11. *Unite my heart.* Rather, *Unify my heart*: i.e. make my heart *one*, i.e. undivided, sincere in its allegiance; cf Ezek xi. 19, 20: "I will give them *one heart*....that they may walk in my statutes." Contrast Ps xii. 2, "With a double heart (Heb. "with heart and heart"), do they speak." LXX however reading the Hebrew verb with different vowels, *yēhad* for *yahēd*, gives ἐὺφρανθήτω ἡ καρδία μου, "Let my heart *rejoice* to fear thy name."

12. *with my whole heart.* I.e. with the undivided heart for which he prayed in v. 11.

13. *the lowest pit.* P-B, *the nethermost hell.* Better as marg. *Sheol beneath.* *Sheol*, "the land of forgetfulness," was terrible enough of itself to the Psalmists: they do not suggest varying degrees of its misery.

14-17. THE DANGER IS GREAT: SAVE, O JEHOVAH

14. *the proud.* They were the party who forgot God, and oppressed His poor: cf xix. 13, note. The Psalmist speaks as a private person who is in danger of being unjustly condemned by lawless judges.

have not set thee before them. I.e. "have not set the fear of Thee before them in delivering their judgments." Cf xvi. 8.

15. *a God full of compassion* etc. These words to the end of the verse are the opening words of the proclamation of the Name JEHOVAH on Mount Sinai before Moses (Exod xxxiv. 6).

16. *the son of thine handmaid.* (So in cxvi. 16.) Is there a reference

17 Shew me a token for good ;

That they which hate me may see it, and be ashamed,

Because thou, LORD, hast holpen me, and comforted me.

here to some mercy shown at the time of the Psalmist's birth to his mother? Only conjecture is possible. Even if the speaker be David, we know nothing of David's history which would show this description of him to be appropriate. Was the Psalmist's mother a widow who by favour of God had risen superior to the difficulties of widowhood? Or is it simply that the Psalmist claims to be descended from faithful parents?

17. *Shew me a token* (Heb. *ōth*, "token" or "sign") *for good*. The nuance of the Hebrew is lost: rather, *Perform with me a token for good*. The Psalmist asks that JEHOVAH's co-operation with him may be manifested in some way openly, in order that men may realize that God is "on his side." See Introduction, § 2.

PSALM LXXXVII

ZION AND HER SON

§ 1. CONTENTS.

1-3. ZION A GLORIOUS CITY LOVED BY JEHOVAH.

4-6. JEHOVAH'S GOOD WILL TO ZION ANNOUNCED TO THE NATIONS AND ATTESTED TO HER CITIZENS BY THE BIRTH OF A MAN CHILD IN HER MIDST.

7. THE PSALMIST WITH ALL HIS POWERS WILL SING OF ZION.

§ 2. OCCASION AND MEANING.

This Psalm has for its background the age of Hezekiah and the period of the Assyrian danger. It begins with an echo from the oracle in which safety from the Assyrians is promised for those who take refuge in Zion, "JEHOVAH hath founded Zion, and in her shall the afflicted of his people take refuge" (Isa. xiv. 32). Echoing Isaiah, but in fewer words, the Psalmist gives his own assurance of the safety of Zion: *His foundation* (i.e. the city which JEHOVAH hath founded) *is in the holy mountains* (i.e. is protected by its sanctity). Next in v. 2 the Psalmist meets the doubt which asks, "Why should Zion escape when so many of the cities of Israel have been destroyed by the Assyrian?" His answer is, *JEHOVAH loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob*. In v. 3 the Psalmist passes on from his assurance of safety to Zion to hold out the prospect of her glory; and he announces that there is yet another oracle to be given to the sacred city: *Glorious things shall be spoken of thee, O city of God*. In v. 4 JEHOVAH Himself utters these *glorious things, I will record, O Egypt and Babylon, for those that know me—Behold* (or *Pay attention*), *O Philistia and Tyre and people of Ethiopia—This man was born there* (in Zion). JEHOVAH makes this great announcement to "those who know Him," that is, to the true citizens of Zion, that "this man," i.e. the man of JEHOVAH's choice, has been born in the midst of her. Zion is the city which has been thus glorified.

But during the Assyrian danger there were many in Judah who looked for safety to allies, to Egypt ("Rahab," Isa xxx. 6, 7), to Babylon (under Merodach-baladan, Isa xxxix. 1, 2), to the Philistines (Isa xiv. 29, 30), to Tyre (Isa xxiii. 12 f.), and to Ethiopia ("Cush," Isa xviii. 1-6). Accordingly in the Psalm the two great powers, Egypt and Babylon, broken reeds for Judah when pitted against Assyria, are the first to be told that Zion is JHOBVAH 's favoured city, and so needs no help from the nations of the world. Next Philistia and Tyre, two smaller states anti-Assyrian in policy, near neighbours of Judah, are summoned to receive the same message. With these two the far-off Ethiopians are associated, since they under Tirhakah galvanized Egypt into a show of energy against Assyria (2 K xix. 9; Isa xviii. 1-6).

In v. 5 the Psalmist speaks again and expands the second oracle in his own words, *Yea, Zion shall be called Mother* ($\mu\eta\tau\epsilon\rho$, LXX), and *a man hath been born in her*. The man of JHOBVAH 's choice has been born in Zion, a sure sign of His good will toward the city; and so the Psalmist does not hesitate to add the promise, *And the Most High himself shall establish her*. In v. 6 the significance of the birth is emphasized again: *This man, God's chosen one, was born there*, in Zion; thus does JHOBVAH write in the book which tells the fates of all peoples: Zion and her man child are written where their names can never be blotted out. In v. 7 the Psalmist concludes with the vehement cry that, all the founts of his inspiration are singing (the praises) of Zion aloud like players on wind-instruments.

Who then is this child whose birth is so significant? We need not think that he must be identified with some king or prince who is known to us from the history of Judah. There is mystery in the description of him; in vv. 4, 6 he is simply "this one" (Heb. *zeh*), while in v. 5 he is simply "a man (child)." But the term *this one* shows that he is known to JHOBVAH who gives the oracle in v. 4. The same simple term "this one" (Heb. *zeh*) is given in Micah v. 5 (an "Assyrian passage"), "This one shall be our peace" (or "safety").

The man child then belongs to theology (or rather, to religion) and not to history. He is offered to the Jews to be received through faith or to be rejected through unbelief. But the event showed that JHOBVAH 's offers made during the Assyrian crisis were not accepted owing to lack of faith in those to whom they were made. The Assyrian's attempt on Jerusalem was frustrated indeed, but the Jews could not enter into the Messianic kingdom which Isaiah and Micah offered because of their unbelief (Heb iii. 19). The Psalmist shares with these two prophets the two thoughts, *first*, of the safety of Zion, *secondly*, of the birth of the man child as a testimony to JHOBVAH 's care for "the city of God." In short, Ps lxxxvii contains the great doctrine of Messiah in a form which assigns him Zion as his "mother." The city of God in any case claims Messiah as its citizen: cf Luke ii. 49.

So in Micah iv. 8-v. 5 it is Zion which is in travail with the expected Deliverer, though his ultimate origin is from Beth-lehem, Zion is the city of David as Beth-lehem is the town of David, and thus Zion the city in which David reigned may be rightly claimed as the "mother" of a Davidic Messiah.

For a different view of the meaning of the Psalm Duhm may be cited: "Jahwe (JHOBVAH) has those that know Him among all nations, and keeps a record of

them, but Zion remains the (true) Mother of them all, and is more greatly beloved by Jahwe than all other places where Jews dwell. ... There is of course (*natürlich*) no reference to proselytes. ... It is a very late Psalm as appears from the very wide dispersion of the Diaspora (i.e. Jews in foreign countries) which is presupposed in it, and further from its use of the term *Rahab* [a late usage according to Duhm]. The Jews have been everywhere firmly established (*eingebürgert*) abroad, but in heathen lands they feel themselves to be but foreigners. The Gentile peoples come under God's notice only inasmuch as they have Jews dwelling among them" (*Die Psalmen*, 1922, pp. 329-331).

This view of Duhm is highly imaginative. Can Egypt and Babylon, Philistia, Tyre, and Ethiopia be described so suddenly and without further ceremony as "the dwellings of Jacob"? Moreover, if the reference be to the Jewish exiles, why does no term like "they that are far off" (Zech vi. 15) or "my dispersed" (Zeph iii. 10) occur in the Psalm?

The suggestion that the use of *Rahab* for *Egypt* is a mark of late date cannot be sustained: see Isa xxx. 7 (which Duhm unnecessarily emends).

§ 3. THE TEXT OF THE PSALM.

Many critics suppose the present order of the clauses of the Psalm to be faulty. Thoroughgoing is Gunkel's suggested rearrangement. He gives the text in two strophes, and removes v. 7 from the end of the Psalm into the first strophe. In his second strophe he prefixes v. 6 b (*This one was born there. Selah*) to v. 4 c (*This one was born there*); he is thus enabled to give a distributive sense both to the repeated pronoun and to the repeated adverb. He translates, *This one is at home here (Selah) and that one there*, i.e. one lives in Egypt, the other in Babylon. Further according to Gunkel the Psalmist gives to "Rahab and Babylon" the honourable title of "those that know (JEHOVAH)," because proselytes abound in those two lands. Finally the critic finds the culmination of the Psalmists' thought in v. 5, which he removes from its present place to the end of the Psalm:

Yet I must name Zion as the All-mother;
Therein is every man (*Mann für Mann*) at home.

This view of the Psalm is in some ways attractive, but it is open to a fatal objection. If Gunkel's is the original order, how did the present completely different order arise?

That the text has suffered somewhat is probable. A clause may be missing at the beginning of the Psalm; and in v. 7 a the Hebrew *kēhōlēlīm*, "as well as they that dance," is a hard reading and may need emendation.

A Psalm of the sons of Korah, a Song.

LXXXVII. 1 ¹His foundation is in the holy mountains.

2 The LORD loveth the gates of Zion
More than all the dwellings of Jacob.

3 Glorious things are spoken of thee,
O city of God.

[Selah

4 I will make mention of ²Rahab and Babylon as among them
that know me :

¹ Or, *His foundation in the holy mountains the LORD loveth, even the gates &c.*

² Or, *Egypt*

1-3. ZION LOVED BY JEHOVAH

LXXXVII. 1. *His foundation.* I.e. Zion the city which JEHOVAH founded. This apparently sudden introduction of the subject is to be explained by the fact that the Psalmist starts from the oracle given by Isaiah, and presumably well known (Isa xiv. 32). See Introduction, § 2. *in the holy mountains.* And therefore safe from the Assyrians.

2. *loveth.* Cf cxxxii. 13, 14.

the gates of Zion. I.e. the city of Zion: cf Isa xiv. 31. The *gate* as the conspicuous and much used part of the city stands for the whole: Deut xii. 15, xvi. 18.

the dwellings of Jacob. A poetical expression having a wide meaning. It would include cities (with their sanctuaries) like Beth-el and districts like Carmel and Sharon.

3. *Glorious things.* In the Psalm attention is concentrated on just one "glory"—the birth of the man child in Zion.

are spoken of thee. Better, *are about to be spoken of thee*, or perhaps (reading the Hebrew consonantal text with other vowels), *He* (JEHOVAH) *is about to speak.* With either reading the participle, which denotes immediate future action, is used. The glorious thing is to be stated at once; it follows in vv. 4, 5, 6, all of which mention the joyful birth of a son in Zion.

O city of God. Cf xlvi. 4, xlviii. 1.

4-6. ANNOUNCEMENT BY JEHOVAH OF THE BIRTH OF THE MAN CHILD

4. *I will make mention etc.* Rather, *I will record* as in a book of remembrance (cf v. 6), *O Rahab* (i.e. Egypt) *and Babylon, for (or to) those that know me—Behold O Philistia and Tyre and people of Ethiopia—This man, the man of my choice, has been born there*, i.e. in Zion. The special term used, *This man* (Heb. *zeh*), shows that the child is introduced as one known to JEHOVAH, though as yet unknown to men. The child has one significance for Israel and another for the Gentile nations addressed. For Israel he is a sign of JEHOVAH's good will to Zion, for the

Behold Philistia, and Tyre, with ¹Ethiopia ;
This one was born there.

5 Yea, of Zion it shall be said, This one and that one was born
in her ;

And the Most High himself shall establish her.

6 The LORD shall count, when he writeth up the peoples,
This one was born there.

[Selah

7 They that sing as well as ²they that dance *shall say*,
All my fountains are in thee.

¹ Heb. *Cush*.² Or, *the players on instruments shall be there*

Gentiles a sign that God will care for His own city ; the proffered help of Egypt and Babylon against Assyria is rejected as not needed.

with Ethiopia. Read, *and people of the Ethiopians*, with LXX, καὶ λαὸς Αἰθιοπίων. MT has 'im, "with," whereas LXX read *vē- 'am*, "and people," the only difference affecting the consonants being the additional prefix *vē*, "and," in the text used by LXX.

5. *Yea, of Zion etc.* Better, *Yea, Zion shall be called Mother: and a man (child) hath been born in her.*

This one and that one. Lit. *a man and a man*; Heb. *ish vē-ish*. The original text was probably *ēm vē-ish*, "Mother and a man," as rendered in the preceding note. Both words begin with the same letter, *Aleph*. Further in the old Hebrew script used in the days of Hezekiah the letter *Mēm* ("m") is distinguished from *Shin* ("sh") only by a tail. If this tail were faintly written, *ēm* might easily be mistaken for *ish*, especially since *ish* would be written "defectively" (שׁן). The LXX preserves the reading *ēm* (μήτηρ), but a scribe has added a rendering, *ἄνθρωπος καὶ ἄνθρωπος*, of the later reading found in MT.

the Most High himself shall establish her. Lit. *He, even the Most High, shall establish her.* Cf. xlvi. 8, *God will establish it* (i.e. Zion) *for ever*. The same Hebrew verb is used in both passages. The title *the Most High* (Heb. 'Elyon) is appropriately used here to imply that JEHOVAH is the supreme ruler and disposer of the world and its affairs: see xcvi. 9, where the same Hebrew title is used, and cf. lvii. 2, note.

6. *JEHOVAH shall count.* Rather as P-B, *shall rehearse*; Vulgate, *narrabit*: LXX, διηγῆσεται. The Hebrew verb should be pointed as a Piel.

7. THE PSALMIST WITH ALL HIS POWERS WILL PRAISE ZION

7. *They that sing etc.* Rather, *All my fountains of inspiration are singing of thee, O Zion, even as they who play the pipes*, when a holy feast is kept: cf. Isa. xxx. 29. It is a joy to the Psalmist to sing of the holy city. Inspiration is compared here to water welling up from the ground, but in xl. 1 to water that boils over when heated.

PSALM LXXXVIII

GOD OF MY SALVATION, LET ME RECOVER AND LIVE!

§ 1. CONTENTS.

(The Psalm does not lend itself to analysis except to a purely formal one.)

1-9. *The Appeal.* The Psalmist lays his case before JEHOVAH: he is near to death, evidently through long-continued illness ("from his youth up," v. 15), his friends have forsaken him as one as good as dead, and though he has prayed daily to JEHOVAH no help has come.

10-18. *The Appeal Renewed.* The Psalmist renews his appeal, "Who can praise God in the grave?" His underlying thought is that if JEHOVAH will raise him up and restore him to health, he will (like other Psalmists) sing new songs of praise and thanksgiving for his recovery. But he formulates no request, and he ends on the note of complaint, almost of despair, "Lover and friend hast thou put far from me."

§ 2. CHARACTER.

This Psalm stands almost alone in its gloom. It might be compared for the afflictions which it records with Pss xxxviii and xxxix, but xxxviii contains the confession, "Thou wilt answer, O Lord my God" (v. 15), while in xxxix the Psalmist cries, "My hope is in thee" (v. 7). No such relief appears in lxxxviii, and some critics (e.g. Wellhausen) suppose that some words of hope have been lost from the text. It is noteworthy that our Lord on the cross quotes not from this Psalm, but from xxii, which ends on a note of triumph.

In the *Horologium*, the Book of Hours of the Greek Church, vv. 1, 2 are repeated after v. 18, to avoid ending with the ill-omened word *darkness*. Three further characteristics of this Psalm are to be noted: *first*, the Psalmist makes no confession of sin; *secondly*, he makes no reference to enemies, and none to other gods; *thirdly*, he holds the extreme Hebrew view of the wretched condition of the Departed: he makes no suggestion that any can be delivered from the power of Hades. But the Psalmist shows this mark of true religion, that he looks to one God only: he stakes his all: JEHOVAH must help, or else of hope there is none. So the Psalm is the story of Job left half-told.

The speaker certainly speaks for himself: no Psalm bears a more truly individualistic character. It is strange that Wellhausen supposes that the "I" of the speaker represents Israel the people.

A Song, a Psalm of the sons of Korah; for the Chief Musician; set to Mahalath
¹Leannoth. Maschil of Heman the Ezrahite.

- LXXXVIII.** 1 O LORD, the God of my salvation,
 I have cried day and night before thee:
 2 Let my prayer enter into thy presence;
 Incline thine ear unto my cry:
 3 For my soul is full of troubles,
 And my life draweth nigh unto ²Sheol.
 4 I am counted with them that go down into the pit;
 I am as a man that hath no help:
 5 ³Cast off among the dead,
 Like the slain that lie in the grave,
 Whom thou rememberest no more;
 And they are cut off from thy hand.
 6 Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit,
 In dark places, in the deeps.

¹ Or, for singing

² Or, the grave

³ Or, Cast away

1-9. THE APPEAL

LXXXVIII. 1. *the God of my salvation.* Cf xxiv. 5, xxvii. 1, li. 14.

1, 2. *I have cried...into thy presence.* Rather, *When I have cried in the night before thee, Let my prayer enter into thy presence.* Prayer in the night, in the time of slumber, is earnest prayer: the Psalmist asks that such prayer may prevail: cf lxiii. 6, lxxvii. 6. The rendering, *I have cried day and night*, is a mistake of P-B left uncorrected.

3. *my life draweth nigh unto Sheol.* Or, *they* (i.e. my troubles) *have brought my life nigh unto Sheol.*

4. *with them that go down into the pit.* Cf xxviii. 1, cxliii. 7.

5. *Cast off.* Marg. *Cast away.* P-B, *Free*, comes from Vulgate, *liber*, but the Hebrew word means rather separation from one's fellows. It is used in 2 Chr xxvi. 21 of the *several* house ("house of isolation") in which the leper king Uzziah was forced to live.

Whom thou rememberest no more. Cf v. 12.

cut off from thy hand. I.e. out of reach of thy help.

6. *in the deeps.* The Hebrew expression is rare, and is possibly a false reading. LXX gives ἐν σκιᾷ θανάτου, "in the shadow of death," reading the Hebrew as in xxiii. 4 (cf Jer ii. 6). The difference between the two readings in the Hebrew concerns only the order of the consonants.

- 7 Thy wrath lieth hard upon me,
And thou hast afflicted me with all thy waves. [Selah]
- 8 Thou hast put mine acquaintance far from me;
Thou hast made me an abomination unto them:
I am shut up, and I cannot come forth.
- 9 Mine eye wasteth away by reason of affliction:
I have called daily upon thee, O LORD,
I have spread forth my hands unto thee.
- 10 Wilt thou shew wonders to the dead?
Shall ¹they that are deceased arise and praise thee? [Selah]
- 11 Shall thy lovingkindness be declared in the grave?
Or thy faithfulness in ²Destruction?

¹ Or, *the shades* Heb. *Rephaim*.

² Heb. *Abaddon*. See Job xxvi. 6.

7. *thou hast afflicted me with all thy waves*. The literal translation of MT is, *thou hast afflicted all thy waves*, but this can hardly be right. Read however with different vowels the Hebrew means, *Thou hast afflicted all that wait for thee*. The expression is bold, but not too bold for this Psalmist. He is thinking of himself and of those who have seen his affliction and have suffered in their faith from seeing the Psalmist's (undeserved) afflictions.

8. *Thou hast put mine acquaintance far from me*. Cf v. 18, lxix. 8. *shut up* (Heb. *kālū*, as in Jer xxxii. 2). Jeremiah was imprisoned: the Psalmist may be *shut up* owing either to imprisonment or to sickness.

9. *Mine eye*. Cf vi. 7, xxxi. 9, xxxviii. 10. The state of the eye is a good index of health and happiness, as the Hebrew writers realized.

I have spread forth my hands. I.e. with upturned palms. Horace, III *Carm.* xxiii. 1, "*Caelo supinas si tuleris manus.*"

10-18. THE APPEAL RENEWED

10. *Wilt thou shew wonders to the dead?* I.e. Wilt thou work a miracle on the dead (by giving them the powers of the living)?

Shall they that are deceased etc. One of the disabilities of the dead according to Hebrew thought is that they cannot worship God: cf cxv. 17, 18. The Hebrew *Rēphāim*, "deceased," is a word suggesting powerlessness and inaction. Thus in Isa xiv. 9, "(Hell) stirreth up the dead (*Rephaim*) for thee"; Isa xxvi. 14, "They are deceased (*Rephaim*), they do not rise." The *Rephaim* are in a state of slumber, and it is only a poetical fiction that they can be "stirred up" to meet the king of Babylon, when he descends to them (Isa xiv. 9).

11. *Destruction*. Marg. "Heb. *Abaddon*." The Hebrew word is a synonym of *Sheol*, the place of the dead; cf Job xxvi. 6:

Sheol is naked before him,
And Abaddon hath no covering.

- 12 Shall thy wonders be known in the dark?
And thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?
- 13 But unto thee, O LORD, have I cried,
And in the morning shall my prayer come before thee.
- 14 LORD, why castest thou off my soul?
Why hidest thou thy face from me?
- 15 I am afflicted and ready to die from my youth up:
While I suffer thy terrors I am distracted.
- 16 Thy fierce wrath is gone over me;
Thy terrors have cut me off.
- 17 They came round about me like water all the day long;
They compassed me about together.
- 18 Lover and friend hast thou put far from me,
And mine acquaintance ¹into darkness.

¹ Or, are darkness

12. *in the land of forgetfulness.* LXX, ἐν γῆ ἐπιλελησμένη, i.e. in the land forgotten by ЯЕHOBAH: cf v. 5.

13. *shall my prayer come before thee.* Or (as AV), *shall my prayer prevent thee*, i.e. overtake thee, come before thee early.

14. *castest thou off.* Hebrew verb as in lx. 1.

15. *I am afflicted* (Heb. 'ānī). Or, *poor*, as in lxxxvi. 1. *ready to die.* Better as P-B, *at the point to die.*

While I suffer thy terrors I am distracted. This is the rendering also of AV but it is doubtful. *While* corresponds to nothing in the original. Only the words, *I have suffered* (or *borne*) *thy terrors*, are clear. The Hebrew *āphūnāh* which stands at the end of the verse is taken in MT as a verb in the Cohortative. It is *hapaxlegomenon*, and its meaning can only be guessed. Perhaps the analogy of xxxix. 13 ("O spare me and let me recover strength") supplies a clue. If so, render, "I have borne thy terrors: let me have relief."

16. *have cut me off.* Or, *have destroyed me*: Hebrew as in liv. 7.

17. *like water.* In its penetrating power: cf cix. 18.

18. *And mine acquaintance etc.* Read as marg. *And mine acquaintance are darkness*: i.e. they are hidden from me. For this idiomatic use of the substantive cf cix. 4 (lit. "I am prayer"); cxx. 7 (lit. "I am peace").

PSALM LXXXIX

HAS JEHOVAH FORSAKEN JEHOVAH'S ANOINTED?
IT CANNOT BE!

§ 1. CONTENTS.

1-4. The Psalmist's aim: to celebrate the eternal mercies of JEHOVAH, specially the covenant of mercy with David.

5-14. The Greatness of JEHOVAH in Creation. To this Greatness are linked Righteousness, Faithfulness, Mercy.

15-18. The Happiness of Israel in having so gracious a God.

19-37. A recital of the terms of JEHOVAH's unchangeable covenant with David and his house.

38-45. The present low estate of the Anointed One.

46-51. Appeal to JEHOVAH to remember the Davidic Covenant.

52. The Doxology.

§ 2. PURPOSE AND CHARACTER.

This Psalm falls naturally into two parts: (a) 1-18, a hymn on JEHOVAH's greatness in His mercy and in His strength, (b) 19-51, an expostulation on the present apparent failure of His mercy to Israel. Part I is a very noble confession of the greatness of the God of Israel. He is the conqueror of Chaos, the ruler (because also the creator) of heaven and earth and sea, even of the most distant lands and of the highest mountains—even of snow-capped Hermon. Whatever other gods there be, JEHOVAH is above them, and more to be feared than they.

But power is not the sole attribute of JEHOVAH. He is a God of mercy, One who has shown favour to the house of David, and through David to the people of Israel. Israel has found joy and protection in the mercy of JEHOVAH, who has favoured Israel's king. It is to be noted that the Psalmist, like his fellow-Psalms, is a worshipper not a theologian. He leads his hearers to adore the one God JEHOVAH, but he makes no statement of Monotheism: he is not concerned to deny the existence of other gods. It is enough that they play no part in heaven or earth or sea for him or for Israel.

Part II falls into three divisions: 19-37, a recital of the terms of JEHOVAH's covenant with David; 38-45, a description of the present low estate of the king; 46-51, an appeal to JEHOVAH to remember the covenant. For several of the promises made in 19-37 parallels can be found in Assyrian and Egyptian literature. Thus there are "oracles" preserved in cuneiform writing addressed to Esar-haddon the successor of Sennacherib (2 K xix. 37), in which different gods are represented as giving assurances to the Assyrian king, such as are given in this Psalm to David. Here is one such oracle:

"I am Ishtar (the goddess) of Arbela, O Esar-haddon, king of Assyria....Eternal years will I grant to Esar-haddon my king....For eternal years have I established thy throne under the great heavens....Fear not, O king, I said unto thee, I have not cast thee off. I gave thee confidence; I will not let thee come to shame,...I am thy gracious shield...I love thee greatly....At thy right hand I send up a smoke, at thy left I make fire to burn."

Two similar oracles are combined in the following document:

"Fear not, Esar-haddon; I am Bel who speaketh with thee. Sixty great gods stand by me and protect thee... Trust not in men. Turn thine eyes toward me, look upon me. I am Ishtar of Arbela; I have made Asshur favourable to thee. When thou wast small, I took thee up (in mine arms). Fear not: give me praise."
Altor. Texte, pp. 281 f.

There are two important differences between the Psalm on the one side and the Assyrian documents on the other. In the Psalm the assurances are given to the royal house of David, in the Assyrian oracles to an individual king. This is explained by the fact that there was no unbroken royal line in Assyria. Tiglath-pileser called Pul (2 K xv. 19, 29) was a usurper, so also was Sargon, the father of Sennacherib (Isa xx. 1), but the house of David held the kingdom in unbroken succession down to the time of the destruction of the Temple by the Chaldeans. The second difference is entirely religious. The Assyrian oracles, even when they exalt one deity in the highest terms, are never free from polytheistic thought. Bel the great god of Babylon talks of sixty other gods his assistants, and Ishtar, goddess of war, boasts that she has brought round Asshur (the eponymous god of Assyria) to favour Esar-haddon. But in the Psalm **JEHOVAH** has no "assistants"; He does all Himself. When other gods are mentioned, it is only to allude to their insignificance. They are either poetic fictions, or at the most only shadows, without Divine power.

§ 3. THE OCCASION.

"This second part" (i.e. *vv.* 19-51), writes Duhm, "rich in allusions to the Maccabean Psalms, can belong only to the time, when Alexander Jannaeus after his defeat by Demetrius Eucærus had fled to the mountains" (circ. 88 B.C.; Josephus, *Antiq.* XIII. xiv. 2). Verses 1-18, he thinks, cannot be much earlier. This confident judgment is not accepted by other scholars. Gunkel considers the poem (*minus* the Davidic *vv.* 3, 4) to belong to the Northern kingdom in the time of its highest prosperity, i.e. the reign of Jeroboam II: cf. *v.* 12, notes. It was incorporated (he supposes) in our present Psalm by a much later hand. The later singer wished to make a dirge (*vv.* 38-45) over the fall of the house of David, and in order to unite his dirge with the early poem, he inserted the long oracle (*vv.* 19-37) together with *vv.* 3, 4. The Psalm culminates in the petition put into the mouth of the LORD'S Anointed in *vv.* 46-51. Here the representative of David's house in the post-exilic community prays that **JEHOVAH** will remember His mercy of old time. So far Gunkel. Of the "oracle" (*vv.* 19-37) Mowinckel writes, "Le psaume cxxxii et l'oracle contenu dans psaume lxxxix...remontent...à la fin de l'époque des Rois" (*Le Décalogue*, p. 139).

Gunkel's suggestion as to the origin of the Psalm is too ingenious. The chief fact to notice is that the Psalm has been redacted as a prayer for the house of David, and that the Hasmonæans were not Davidic. In view of the pathetic petition of *vv.* 46-51 it is reasonable to suppose that the Psalm as a whole belongs to a comparatively early date in the post-exilic period, when there was still hope that the Davidic house might be restored.

§ 4. RELIGIOUS VALUE.

Ps lxxxix like Ps xl is a cry for help in bitter need, and like xl it begins with a triumphant confession of JEHOVAH'S mercy in the past. The Psalmist who gave us the final form of this Psalm is not a mere beggar clamouring for some desired boon, but a client of JEHOVAH who knows that his Lord is a God of faithfulness and mercy; he is content to acknowledge these qualities in the confidence that JEHOVAH will be true to Himself. This is spiritual prayer.

The Psalm has an element which is cognate with Ps ii (Messianic). The king has been appointed and anointed by JEHOVAH (v. 20). He is to call JEHOVAH his "father," and to have the position of the firstborn: he is to be above the kings of the earth (vv. 26, 27). Thus far the Psalm is cognate with Ps ii (see vv. 6, 7), but the two Psalms end differently. Ps ii bids the nations submit: but lxxxix on the contrary complains that JEHOVAH has been wroth with His Anointed and has abhorred the covenant made with him.

Maschil of Ethan the Ezrahite.

LXXXIX. 1 I will sing of the mercies of the LORD for ever:

With my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations.

2 For I have said, Mercy shall be built up for ever;

Thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens.

3 I have made a covenant with my chosen,

I have sworn unto David my servant;

1-4. THE ETERNAL MERCIES OF JEHOVAH

LXXXIX. 1. *I will sing.* So in ci. 1; Isa v. 1.

of the mercies of JEHOVAH for ever. Or, *of the mercies (or kindnesses) of JEHOVAH (which are) for ever;* cf Isa liv. 8, "With everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee." The Psalmist's object is to assert in the face of present misfortune the fact that JEHOVAH'S mercy still stands. The construction is awkward, but there are other rugged constructions in this Psalm.

With my mouth will I make known. I.e. I will make known (thy faithfulness) myself; with my own mouth and in this Psalm.

2. *For I have said.* "I have said (and I say now)." The Psalmist speaks as a Teacher, as in Pss xlix, lxxviii. Septuagint (followed by Vulgate) has "Ὁτι εἶπας (second person, i.e. "Thou, O JEHOVAH"), but this does not suit v. 1 ("with my mouth"), nor v. 2 ("thy faithfulness").

in the very heavens. Things on earth change, but not things in heaven: cf lxxii. 5, 17 ("sun" and "moon").

3. *I have made a covenant.* Here is a reference to 2 Sam vii. 12-16, a passage which seems to be much in the Psalmist's mind: cf vv. 31-33 with 2 Sam vii. 14, 15. The Hebrew should be rendered *a covenant for (not with) my chosen.* God's covenant (Heb. *bē'ērith*) is a gift rather than a bargain: cf lxxiv. 20.

- 4 Thy seed will I establish for ever,
And build up thy throne to all generations. [Selah]
- 5 And the heavens shall praise thy wonders, O LORD;
Thy faithfulness also in the assembly of the holy ones.
- 6 For who in the skies can be compared unto the LORD?
Who among the ¹sons of the ²mighty is like unto the LORD,
- 7 A God very terrible in the council of the holy ones,
And to be feared above all them that are round about him?
- 8 O LORD God of hosts,
Who is a mighty one, like unto thee, O JAH?
And thy faithfulness is round about thee.
- 9 Thou rulest the pride of the sea:
When the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them.

¹ Or, *sons of God*² Or, *gods* See Ps. xxix. 1.

5-14. THE GREATNESS OF JEHOVAH IN CREATION

5. *the heavens shall praise.* Cf xix. 1 ff., l. 6, xcvi. 6.

thy wonders (Hebrew as lxxxviii. 12). Cf xlv. 1, lxxviii. 12.

Thy faithfulness. JEHOVAH who is great in the work of Creation is also morally great.

in the assembly of the holy ones. I.e. in the "court" of heaven, in which (but only by poetic figure) the "other gods" stand in attendance on JEHOVAH. Cf xxix. 1.

6. *who...can be compared.* Cf lxxxvi. 8, note.

sons of the mighty (Heb. *bēnē ʿēlīm*). Marg. *sons of God*, or (briefly) *gods*. So xxix. 1.

7. *very terrible* (Heb. *na'ārāz*; omit *very*). Parallel to "to be feared" (Heb. *nōrā*); cf lxviii. 35, cxi. 9. The thought is that utter reverence is due to JEHOVAH; cf Isa viii. 13, "The LORD of hosts, him shall ye sanctify; and let him be your fear, and let him be your *dread*." The word *dread* here is cognate with the adjective *terrible* of the Psalm. See Gen xxxi. 53, "Jacob sware by the Fear (i.e. the God) of his father Isaac." The word *very* should be transferred from v. 7a to 7b where we should read, *Great and to be feared*: so lxx.

the council (Heb. *sōd*). Cf lxiv. 2, note, cxi. 1.

the holy ones. I.e. *the sons of the mighty, the gods*, cf v. 6. See xvi. 3, note.

9. *the pride* (Heb. *gē'ūth*) *of the sea.* Or, *the majesty of the sea.* *Gē'ūth* is used in a good sense in xciii. 1, "(JEHOVAH) is apparelled with majesty." When a Psalmist wishes to describe JEHOVAH as the All-ruler, he declares that the sea (as here), the heavens (v. 11), and the mountains (v. 12) belong to Him: cf lxv. 6, 7, xcvi. 4, 5.

- 10 Thou hast broken ¹Rahab in pieces, as one that is slain ;
 Thou hast scattered thine enemies with the arm of thy
 strength.
- 11 The heavens are thine, the earth also is thine :
 The world and the fulness thereof, thou hast founded them.
- 12 The north and the south, thou hast created them :
 Tabor and Hermon rejoice in thy name.
- 13 Thou hast ²a mighty arm :
 Strong is thy hand, and high is thy right hand.

¹ Or, *Egypt*² Heb. *an arm with might.*

10. *Rahab.* Not *Egypt*, as P-B. Since the reference in *vv.* 9-12 is to the work of Creation, it is clear that the Psalmist is making use of the ancient Semitic myth which told that the Creation was preceded by a combat between the creating God and the power of Chaos which dwelt in the deep. In the Babylonian form of the myth this power is called *Tiāmat* (Heb. *tēhōm*, "the deep," Gen i. 2). The name *Rahab* ("pride, arrogance") is appropriately applied to Chaos, since Chaos challenged the power of the Creator. Cf lxxiv. 12-17, with notes.

as one that is slain (or *pierced through*). Cf Isa li. 9, "that *pierced* the dragon," where the "dragon" is *Tiāmat*.

11. *thou hast founded them.* Cf xxiv. 1, 2. The Hebrew thought of the earth as supported on the deep, and firmly fixed in its place.

12. *The north and the south.* Not only Palestine and the adjacent lands, but the far unknown north and the south too are parts of JEHOVAH'S creation.

Tabor and Hermon. These two mountains, one in the north of Canaan, the other just outside its northern border, are mentioned, it is supposed, because they were ancient sanctuaries on which JEHOVAH was worshipped. Tabor seems to be referred to as a sanctuary in Hos v. 1 (cf Jud iv. 6), and the name *Hermon* (of the Arabic word *Harām*) means a *sacred* place. The Psalmist (perhaps a Northerner) may be singling out two conspicuous northern shrines as places where devoted congregations shout JEHOVAH'S name. (It is an interesting fact that in this long Psalm, in which much is made of the house of David, nothing is said of the southern sanctuary, Zion.) On the other hand this half-verse may be parallel to xcvi. 8, "Let the floods (the rivers) clap their hands; Let the hills (the mountains) sing for joy together," i.e. Let all created things praise the Creator. If so, Tabor and Hermon are singled out simply as great natural features of Palestine.

13. *Thou hast a mighty arm.* The *arm* and the *hand* suggest power which is active, not merely latent. Lit. *an arm with might*, another rugged construction used by this Psalmist.

14 Righteousness and judgement are the foundation of thy throne:

Mercy and truth go before thy face.

15 Blessed is the people that know the ¹joyful sound:
They walk, O LORD, in the light of thy countenance.

16 In thy name do they rejoice all the day:
And in thy righteousness are they exalted.

17 For thou art the glory of their strength:
And in thy favour ²our horn shall be exalted.

18 For our shield belongeth unto the LORD;
³And our king to the Holy One of Israel.

19 Then thou spakest in vision to thy ⁴saints,

¹ Or, trumpet sound ² Another reading is, thou shalt exalt our horn.

³ Or, Even to the Holy One of Israel our King

⁴ Many MSS. and ancient versions read the plural. Other authorities have the singular.

14. *the foundation of thy throne...go before thy face.* The words might be used of an earthly king, whose throne is stable, because he judges justly, and whose royal progresses are marked by the exercise of mercy. P-B (*habitation for foundation*) is wrong.

15-18. ISRAEL HAPPY IN HIS GOD

15. *that know the joyful sound* (Heb. *tērū'āh*). Cf xlvi. 5, "God is gone up with a shout (*tērū'āh*)": 2 Sam vi. 15, "David...and Israel brought up the ark of JEHOVAH with shouting (*tērū'āh*)."
The shout or joyful sound was the utterance of some particular formula, e.g. *Hallelu-jah*, on the occasion of great religious festivals.

in the light of thy countenance. Cf iv. 6: and (for the opposite condition) lxxxii. 5, "They walk to and fro in darkness."

16. *in thy righteousness are they exalted* (LXX, ἰψωθήσονται). I.e. JEHOVAH's people are exalted through His righteous dealing with them. The thought is developed further in the following verse.

17. *the glory of their strength.* JEHOVAH is not only a strength to His people, but His manifest protection gives Israel "glory" in the sight of the nations.

our horn. Cf lxxv. 4, 5, 10. The word *horn* is used symbolically for "strength" in Horace, III *Carm.* xxi. 18, *Addis cornua pauperi.* In Dan vii. 8, viii. 5, 8 it is used of a powerful king (Antiochus Epiphanes).

18. *our shield...our king.* Cf xlvi. 9; also Lam iv. 20.

19-37. THE DAVIDIC COVENANT

19. *Then.* Cf ii. 5, note.

in vision to thy saints. I.e. in vision to prophets, Samuel (1 Sam xvi. 1), Nathan (2 Sam vii. 12-16). For *thy saints* (MT=Vulgate) LXX has

- And saidst, I have laid help upon one that is mighty ;
 I have exalted one chosen out of the people.
 20 I have found David my servant ;
 With my holy oil have I anointed him :
 21 With whom my hand shall be established ;
 Mine arm also shall strengthen him.
 22 The enemy shall not ¹exact upon him ;
 Nor the son of wickedness afflict him.
 23 And I will beat down his adversaries before him,
 And smite them that hate him.

¹ Or, do him violence

τοῖς υἱοῖς σου: Jerome (*iuxta Heb.*) gives *filiis tuis*. This reading also gives good sense: JEHOVAH spoke by vision (i.e. through His seers and prophets) to His sons (i.e. to His people Israel: cf Exod iv. 22; Hosea xi. 11).

For the reading *thy holy one* (sing.) adopted in AV there is but little support. The Versions have the plural.

I have laid help (Heb. 'ēzer) *upon one that is mighty*. The Hebrew 'ēzer, here translated (inadequately) *help*, is one of the great words of the Old Testament. It is used of Divine favour manifesting itself in all kinds of benefits. *I have laid help upon one that is mighty* is a poetic version of the statement in 1 Sam xvi. 13, "The spirit of JEHOVAH came upon David from that day forward." So the words of Ps xx. 2, "(JEHOVAH) send thee *help* from the sanctuary," are not a mere request for deliverance in battle. They are a general prayer for the king's prosperity, though they are used perhaps on the eve of battle in the Psalm. From JEHOVAH's 'ēzer came all David's success.

The proposal to read *nēzer*, "crown," instead of 'ēzer, "help," is to be rejected, though accepted by many scholars. "I have placed a *crown* upon one that is mighty" is prosaic, and is an anticipation of *v.* 20. Moreover it is not supported by any Version.

20. *I have found David my servant*. See 1 Sam xvi. 1: cf lxxviii. 70, "He chose David also his servant, And took him from the sheepfolds."

With my holy oil have I anointed him. *Vv.* 20-25 trace David's career. He is anointed, but he is not yet king (*v.* 20). He has many enemies to be saved from in the days that follow (*v.* 21-23). But God's faithfulness stands, and at length "his horn is exalted," i.e. he becomes king (*v.* 24). Finally God extends his kingdom to the sea and to the rivers (*v.* 25).

22. *The enemy shall not exact upon him*. Or (cf lv. 15, where the same Hebrew verb is used), *The enemy shall not come suddenly upon him*, i.e. to overwhelm and destroy him. The word *destruction* (Heb. *shō'āh*) in xxxv. 8 is apparently cognate with this verb. The Vulgate rendering, *Nihil proficiet inimicus in eo*, agrees with RV: the figure is of the creditor who would afflict the debtor without mercy, if he could.

- 24 But my faithfulness and my mercy shall be with him ;
 And in my name shall his horn be exalted.
- 25 I will set his hand also on the sea,
 And his right hand on the rivers.
- 26 He shall cry unto me, Thou art my father,
 My God, and the rock of my salvation.
- 27 I also will make him *my* firstborn,
 The highest of the kings of the earth.
- 28 My mercy will I keep for him for evermore,
 And my covenant shall ¹stand fast with him.
- 29 His seed also will I make to endure for ever,
 And his throne as the days of heaven.
- 30 If his children forsake my law,
 And walk not in my judgements;
- 31 If they ²break my statutes,
 And keep not my commandments;
- 32 Then will I visit their transgression with the rod,
 And their iniquity with stripes.

¹ Or, *be faithful*² Heb. *profane*.

24. *his horn*. Cf v. 17, note.

25. *I will set his hand* etc. Cf lxxii. 8, where the same promise is more plainly expressed.

26. *Thou art my father*. Cf ii. 7. Similar language is used of Egyptian kings, as on the stele of Menephta (the successor of Rameses II), "The Lord of all (Rē, the Sun God) has said: Let the sword be delivered to my upright kindly and merciful son (Menephta)." *Altor. Texte*, page 23.

29. *as the days of heaven*. Cf Deut xi. 21; Job xiv. 12.

30. *If his children forsake my law*. Cf 2 Sam vii. 14, "If he (i.e. Solomon) commit iniquity." Solomon did "commit iniquity": 1 K xi. 1-5.

32. *with the rod* (Heb. *shēbet*). So in xxiii. 4, "thy rod (*shēbet*) and thy staff"; also ii. 9, "Thou shalt *break* (rather *rule*) them with a rod (*shēbet*) of iron." This rod is a sceptre, but the sceptre of ancient kings was of the nature of a formidable weapon. See cxxv. 3 (P-B; RV) with note.

stripes. Rather, *plagues*, in the old English sense of calamities of various kinds sent as punishments by God. The Hebrew word (*nēga'*) is used in Exod xi. 1 of the plagues of Egypt. The plagues of Israel were foreign invasion (1 K xiv. 25, 26), drought (1 K xvii. 1-7), pestilence (Amos iv. 10), earthquake (Amos iv. 11), captivity (Amos v. 27).

- 33 But my mercy will I not utterly take from him,
Nor suffer my faithfulness to fail.
- 34 My covenant will I not ¹break,
Nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips.
- 35 ²Once have I sworn by my holiness;
I will not lie unto David;
- 36 His seed shall endure for ever,
And his throne as the sun before me.
- 37 ³It shall be established for ever as the moon,
⁴And *as* the faithful witness in the sky. [Selah]
- 38 But thou hast cast off and rejected,
Thou hast been wroth with thine anointed.
- 39 Thou hast abhorred the covenant of thy servant:
Thou hast profaned his crown *even* to the ground.
- 40 Thou hast broken down all his hedges;
Thou hast brought his strong holds to ruin.
- 41 All that pass by the way spoil him:
He is become a reproach to his neighbours.
- 42 Thou hast exalted the right hand of his adversaries;
Thou hast made all his enemies to rejoice.

¹ Heb. *profane*.² Or, *One thing*³ Or, *As the moon which is established for ever, and as the faithful witness &c. or, and is a faithful witness &c.*⁴ Or, *And the witness in the sky is faithful*

34. *the thing that is gone out* (Heb. *mōzā*). The same expression as Deut viii. 3, "Man doth not live by bread only, but by every *thing that proceedeth out of the mouth of JEHOVAH.*"

36. *His seed...his throne.* A double promise: *first*, the Davidic family shall not fail; *secondly*, it shall continue to possess the kingdom.

38-45. THE PRESENT LOW ESTATE OF THE ANOINTED ONE

38. *thou hast cast off.* Cf lx. 1, same Hebrew verb.

thine anointed. Cf v. 20, "with my holy oil have I anointed him."

39. *his crown* (Heb. *nēzer*). So in 2 K xi. 12. But *nēzer* is cognate with *nāzīr*, "a Nazirite, or, consecrated person," and so *nēzer* has the connotation of a *hallowed state*, the state of an anointed king. Hence LXX gives ἐβεβήλωσας τὸ ἁγίασμα αὐτοῦ, i.e. "thou hast profaned (annulled) his hallowed state as king."

40. *hedges* (OE). I.e. defences: cf lxxx. 12 (AV); Job i. 10, "Hast not thou made an *hedge* about him?"

41. *a reproach.* Cf xliv. 13.

- 43 Yea, thou turnest back the edge of his sword,
And hast not made him to stand in the battle.
- 44 Thou hast made his brightness to cease,
And cast his throne down to the ground.
- 45 The days of his youth hast thou shortened:
Thou hast covered him with shame. [Selah
- 46 How long, O LORD, wilt thou hide thyself for ever?
How long shall thy wrath burn like fire?
- 47 O remember how short my time is:
For what vanity hast thou created all the children of men!
- 48 What man is he that shall live and not see death,
That shall deliver his soul from the ¹power of ²Sheol? [Selah
- 49 Lord, where are thy former mercies,
Which thou swarest unto David in thy faithfulness?

¹ Heb. *hand*.² Or, *the grave*

43. *hast not made him to stand in the battle.* P-B, *givest him not victory in the battle* (a fair paraphrase of the Hebrew).

44. *Thou hast made his brightness to cease.* Rather, *Thou hast taken away his* (outward) *purity.* The king (a sacred person) is *defiled* (as it were) by the touch of his enemies. Cf Ezek xxviii. 7 (to the prince of Tyre), "They shall *defile* thy brightness."

cast his throne down to the ground. Cf *vv.* 29, 36.

45. *The days of his youth* (so Peshitta). I.e. his happy early days. But LXX, τὰς ἡμέρας τοῦ θρόνου αὐτοῦ, "the days of his throne."

46-51. AN APPEAL TO JEHOVAH TO REMEMBER HIS COVENANT

46. *How long...wilt thou hide thyself?* Cf xiii. 1. The use of this expression suggests that at an earlier time JEHOVAH had shown His face with favour.

shall thy wrath burn. Or, ...*consume.*

47. *how short my time is.* A good paraphrase of the Hebrew, if we assume that the letter *Yod* has fallen out of the text. More lit. *what my age* (or *my duration of life*) *is:* cf xxxix. 5, "*Mine age* is as nothing before thee."

vanity (Heb. *shāw*). *Vanity* means "uselessness" or "labour lost," as in Job vii. 3, where the patriarch complains of his time of sickness as "months of vanity."

all the children of men. The Psalmist is thinking no doubt of Israel, though he uses general terms.

48. *What man is he* etc. Cf xlix. 7-9.

from the power of Sheol. Better, *from the hand* (Heb.) *of Sheol* (stretched out to seize it). On *Sheol* see vi. 5, note.

49. *thy former mercies.* Cf *vv.* 20-25.

- 50 Remember, Lord, the reproach of thy servants;
How I do bear in my bosom *the reproach of* all the ¹mighty
peoples;
- 51 Wherewith thine enemies have reproached, O LORD,
Wherewith they have reproached the footsteps of thine
anointed.
- 52 Blessed be the LORD for evermore.
Amen, and Amen.

¹ Or, *many*

50. *bear in my bosom.* The scornful word is not forgotten: it rankles in the Psalmist's breast.

the reproach of all the mighty peoples. There seems to be a fault in the text. The word *all* may be a remnant of the original reading which had the word *insult* (Heb. *kēlimmath*). In this case render, *How I do bear in my bosom the insult* (or, collectively, *insults*) *of many peoples.*

51. *the footsteps of thine anointed.* Rather, *the heels of thine anointed.* The enemy follows the king in his retreat and hurls reproaches after him.

52. A BENEDICTION WHICH CLOSES BOOK III OF THE PSALTER
(Cf xli. 13, lxxii. 18, 19)

BOOK IV

PSALM XC

THE ETERNAL GOD A REFUGE FOR MORTAL MEN

§ 1. CONTENTS.

1, 2. The everlasting God, God from the beginning.

3-10. Man a creature of dust, and short-lived because of his sin.

11, 12. Man is ignorant; teach Thou him.

13-17. The Appeal. Let us see again JEHOVAH's former work! Let Him restore us to our former state of favour.

§ 2. PURPOSE AND CHARACTER.

There is no formal arrangement in the book of Psalms as a whole: different smaller collections have been thrown together, but not reduced to any general order. On the other hand it is clear that some grouping of Psalms according to subject has taken place. Thus Pss xlvī-xlviii have "Zion" as their subject, and a careful reading of Ps xlv adds this Psalm also to the group. So it may be said that Ps xc follows Ps lxxxix because of similarity of subject. Both are national Psalms, both are instinct with the individual feeling of the writer, both look back to the ancient mercies of JEHOVAH, and both, while they

lament present affliction, look to JEHOVAH to restore the former prosperity to His people.

In Ps xc the national note is struck in v. 1, "Thou hast been our dwelling place In all generations"; it is heard clearly again in v. 16, "Let thy work appear unto thy servants, And thy glory upon their children." The individual speaks in v. 10, "The days of our years are threescore years and ten"; he is conscious that life is short; he fears that he may not live to see the prosperity of his people restored. In vv. 13, 14 the Psalmist looks back to the mercies of earlier days, "Return, O JEHOVAH; *how long?*...O satisfy us in the morning *with thy mercy,*" the well-remembered mercy of olden time. In v. 15 he laments the present distress and looks to JEHOVAH to restore gladness to His people, "Make us glad according to...the years wherein we have seen evil."

The use of this Psalm in the Prayer Book for so private an occasion as the Burial of the Dead must not be allowed to blind us to its national character. Its main subject is not the shortness of the life of the individual, but the nation's dire need of renewal by the favour of JEHOVAH. If this be remembered the Psalm may be appropriately used in a metaphorical sense in a Burial Service. According to P-B the doctrine of a Resurrection is expressed in v. 3, "Thou turnest man to destruction: Again thou sayest, Come again, ye children of men," but it disappears in the correct rendering of AV, RV, "And sayest, Return, ye children of men." The words allude to Gen iii. 19, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." The Psalm does not say "Come again into life," but "Return to dust."

If we have to single out one point above all others in which the Old Testament is of value to modern Christians, it must be its Theology, its teaching, that is to say, direct or indirect, concerning the nature of God. Not that the Old Testament contains passages—at any rate passages of any length—which may be called theological in the sense in which the Creed is theological. Passages like Deut vi. 4 ("Hear, O Israel: JEHOVAH our God, JEHOVAH is one") are very rare in the Old Testament. But, on the other hand, the Old Testament is continually teaching us something about God which leads up towards the Christian Theology. It is a case of "here a little and there a little," but the sum of this teaching is both deep and broad.

The method of this teaching is not by definition, but by illustration. Metaphor is used with (as it seems to us) great daring. The Hebrew Prophet or Psalmist is a child, holding his father's hand, and talking with the freedom of a child. Sometimes, again, as with a child, the hush of awe comes over him, and he makes us feel that God is the High and Holy One.

This combination of familiarity and awe is strikingly displayed in Psalm xc. The Psalmist begins with the daring exclamation, "Lord, thou hast been our *dwelling place.*" The same idea is somewhat differently expressed in Ps xxxix. 12 ("I am a stranger with thee"). We find in Israel a class of persons, foreigners dwelling in the land under the express protection of the laws, who are called "strangers," but who might rather be named "clients"¹. They lived

¹ The Fourth Commandment is one of these protecting laws. "Thou shalt not do any work, ...nor *thy* stranger that is within thy gates" (Exod xx. 10. 773).

on the land of some Hebrew chief powerful enough to protect them, and they paid for their protection in some cases certainly by doing work for him, in other cases perhaps by paying annual dues. The *μέτοικοι* of Athens, who lived under a *προστάτης* or patron, formed a similar class¹.

Now the Hebrews sometimes thought of Palestine as *JEHOVAH'S* land, not their own. They themselves in that case were not citizens, but *JEHOVAH'S* strangers, clients, *μέτοικοι*. Or, again, they thought of Mount Zion as *JEHOVAH'S* dwelling, because the Temple was upon it, and so they regarded the inhabitants of Jerusalem who lived round the Temple as living there under the protection of *JEHOVAH* as His dependants. It is thus that the Psalmist asks in Ps xv. 1: "Who shall sojourn (that is, live as a protected stranger) in thy tent?" The answer given in the remaining verses of the Psalm is that God's *μέτοικοι* must be good citizens, doing good and not evil to their neighbours.

But in Psalm xc we get one step nearer in man's intimacy (if the phrase be allowed) with God. It is not God's land, nor God's city, but God Himself, who is the home of His clients. "Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place." This is the same mystical thought, though differently expressed, as in Acts xvii. 28, "In him we live, and move, and have our being," and also in Wordsworth's familiar phrase—

"God who is our home²."

Here then in brief is the theology of the Psalm; though God is a transcendent Being, He is also the Head of a household, which is Mankind.

This thought seems daringly familiar to us at first, but it begets no false confidence or levity in the Psalmist. He is saved from this by a sense of the great contrast between Man's privilege in having God for his home, and Man's weakness as a creature of dust. God, he says, was before the mountains were created, but Man is short-lived as the grass; with God a thousand years are as yesterday, but Man's life is measured by seventy or eighty years.

God by His *fiat* turns Man again to the dust from which he was taken. The shortness of the life of man is the theme of the verses which follow (*vv.* 4-6). Mentally the Psalmist is contrasting it with the eternity of God, but reverence restrains him from a direct utterance of his thought. Instead of this he contrasts the thousand years which are as nothing in God's sight with the span of human life which is but as a single day. Man flourishes "in the morning" like a flower, but in the evening he is cut down and withered. The Hebrew Psalmist who felt with his child's heart that God was his "dwelling place" could also realize as powerfully as any modern metaphysician the awful contrast between the Eternal and the children of men.

From the thought of the shortness of life, the Psalmist now turns to its emptiness (*vv.* 7-12). The history of his people is in his mind. Israel had once its Golden Age, but its glory has long departed: "We have brought our years to an end as a sigh." God is angry because of Man's iniquities, and so even the longest life, whether of a nation or of an individual, produces nothing; the glory of a life of many years is in truth only trouble and vanity. From these reflections

¹ *Cambridge Greek Studies*, p. 360.

² *Intimations of Immortality*.

the Psalmist quickly turns to prayer. Who is to teach Man the true lessons of life, the far-reaching effects of God's anger against sin? None but God Himself. The Psalmist turns to God, "Teach us rightly to measure our days!" He does not ask to know the number of his days; rather he would fain be taught the meaning of all that the days bring of sorrow, trial, correction. His first request is for a heart which has been taught Divine wisdom.

It is plain that in the concluding verses (*vs.* 13-17) the Psalmist proceeds to ask for some definite boon for his people. But this further petition is made in a form worthy of one who has just asked for a "heart of wisdom." He takes it for granted that God knows what is in his heart. He is too meek and too reverent to prescribe the answer he desires to receive. His petition (in agreement with the Lord's Prayer) asks that God's kingdom may come: "Let thy work be shown unto thy servants, and let thy majesty be displayed upon their children. No doubt he is asking that God would bring chastisement to an end and show favour once more to His people, but the particular petition is wrapped up in the larger one that God's kingdom may come with power. He prays for "his people," no doubt, and yet no such expression occurs in the Psalm, nor is the name of "Israel" or "Jacob" or "Judah" mentioned. In fact, though the Psalmist speaks in the name of others besides himself, and apparently in the name of his nation, he does not lose sight of the individual. He does not say to God "thy people," but "thy servants"; and he grieves not only over the calamities which befall his nation, but also over the short span of seventy or eighty years allowed to individual men. The individual is not lost in the nation.

These closing verses are full of metaphors, so that the language needs careful study. In *v.* 13 *a* the Psalmist calls upon God to "return," his thought being that God has "withdrawn" for a time from His people. In *v.* 13 *b* with strange boldness he calls upon God to "repent¹." In *v.* 14 the Psalmist prays that a full measure of mercy may be granted "in the morning," that is when God chooses to "awake," and to bring on a "new day" for His people.

In *v.* 15 he offers the naïve petition that God would give an equivalent in prosperous days for the evil days which he and his are now experiencing: "Make us glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us." Can we penetrate a little further into the meaning of the petition with which the Psalm closes, and discern more clearly what is the particular boon for which the Psalmist asks in *vs.* 16, 17? Perhaps we can! The striking phrase "the beauty of the LORD" occurs in only one other place in the Old Testament, namely, in Ps xxvii. 4. There the reference is to the Temple and to the stately service of God performed there. Reading the last five verses together in the light of this hint, we seem to see in them a prayer for the restoration of the Temple worship. We do not know enough of the history of the Jews to be able to say how often this worship was interrupted, but we know that such a prayer would have been appropriate from time to time in the early post-exilic days before the coming of Ezra. The Temple was rebuilt and dedicated in 516 B.C., but the services lacked the splendour of former times, and were subject to interruption. At a

¹ Similar language is used in 2 Sam xxiv. 16; Jonah iii. 10, *a*.

later time in the reign of Artaxerxes III (Ochus, 358-337)¹ it is probable that worship at the Temple was stopped for a time by the Persian government as a punishment for a revolt of the Jews. The cessation of the daily sacrifice for twelve hundred and ninety days at the beginning of the Maccabean troubles is a well-known event. It is quite probable that the Psalmist's prayer refers to some occasion on which the Temple worship was at a standstill through foreign oppression, and "the beauty of the LORD" was *not* manifested among His people.

It is perhaps impossible to exaggerate the importance of the splendid services of the Temple for the religious life of the Jews. They were Easterns to whom colour and music and symbol spoke with a force not realized by Englishmen. The beauty of this service was to the Hebrew the beauty of the LORD; the restoration of this service, once interrupted, was a manifestation of the glory of **JEHOVAH**.

One question remains as to this Psalm. Why, some may ask, when the Psalmist complains of the shortness of human life, does he make no reference to the compensation of a future life? There is a twofold answer. In the first place, though this Psalm is not purely national, yet the petition with which it closes is for a great public boon, the restoration of the Temple worship. But secondly, it must be remembered that under the revelation of the Old Testament the Future Life became only gradually and slowly an article of faith. When the sect of the Pharisees arose about a century before our Lord's time, its adherents made the Resurrection an article of their Creed², and in the thirteen Articles of Belief (attributed to Maimonides, 1135-1204 A.D.) prefixed to the Jewish Prayer Book occurs the clause, "God shall revive the dead," ὁ Θεὸς νεκροὺς ἐγείρει (Acts xxvi. 8)³. But though the Resurrection became to the Jews an Article of Faith only a short time before the Christian era, it must not be thought that it was never cherished as a hope in the earlier centuries. The visions in Ezek xxxvii and in Isa xxvi. 17-19 are sufficient to disprove this. And this Psalm is predominantly a song of hope. The Psalmist looks for mercy after wrath, for glory after evil, and after confessing fully the vanity of human effort he looks to see the work of his people completed and confirmed by the power which comes from God, "Yea, establish the work of our hands!"

§ 3. THE TITLE.

There is nothing in the text of the Psalm to suggest that Moses was the author of it. The Psalmist "complaineth of human fragility, divine chastisements, and brevity of life" (AV), without any reference to Egypt, to the Wilderness, or to the Promised Land. The title *lê-Mosheh*, "of (or for) Moses," is ambiguous like the title *lê-David*: see page xxiii. *Moses the man of God* as in Deut xxxiii. 1.

¹ See Robertson Smith, *Old Testament in the Jewish Church*, pp. 207-208, 438-439.

² Acts xxiii. 8: Φαρισαῖοι δὲ ὁμολογοῦσιν τὰ ἀμφότερα (ἀνάστασιν and πνεῦμα).

³ Cp Rom iv. 17: κατέναντι οὐ ἐπίστευσεν Θεοῦ τοῦ ζωοποιούντος τοὺς νεκροὺς.

A Prayer of Moses the man of God.

XC. 1 Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place

In all generations.

2 Before the mountains were brought forth,

Or ever thou ¹hadst formed the earth and the world,
Even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God.

3 Thou turnest man to ²destruction;

And sayest, Return, ye children of men.

4 For a thousand years in thy sight

Are but as yesterday ³when it is past,
And as a watch in the night.

5 Thou carriest them away as with a flood; they are as a sleep:

In the morning they are like grass which groweth up.

¹ Heb. *gavest birth to.*

² Or, *dust* Heb. *crushing.*

³ Or, *when it passeth*

1, 2. THE EVERLASTING GOD

XC. 1. *Lord.* A few MSS (four specified in Ginsburg) have JEHOVAH, for which name *Lord* is merely a substitute: JEHOVAH has been Israel's dwelling place.

our dwelling place (Heb. *mā'ōn*). So Peshitta: Jerome *iuxta Hieronimus* gives *habitationem tuam factus es nobis*. But LXX has *καταφυγή* (Heb. *mā'ōz*), Vulgate, *refugium* (= P-B), a commonplace reading; so in xxxi. 4, "Thou art my strong hold." A dwelling place is more than a strong hold.

2. *the earth and the world.* The Hebrew *erez*, "earth," may be translated "land" and used of the "land" of Israel. To remove ambiguity the Psalmist adds *tēbēl*, "world" (*τὴν οἰκουμένην*). *Tēbēl* seems to connote especially the heathen world: cf xvi. 10, 13, xviii. 9, and see ix. 8, note.

3-10. MAN A CREATURE OF DUST

3. *to destruction.* Better as marg. *to dust.*

Return. I.e. to dust: Gen iii. 19. Not (as P-B), *Come again*, i.e. to life.

4. *a thousand years.* Cf cii. 24, 27: also 2 Pet iii. 8, "One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."

5. *Thou carriest them away* etc. P-B (*As soon as thou scatterest them*) is wrong. JEHOVAH is God of the storm; cf xviii. 9-15, with the notes.

they are as a sleep. Or, *they are a sleep.* Cf cix. 4, "I am prayer"; cxv. 7, "I am peace." A vigorous Hebrew idiom. *They are a sleep* means "they are cast into (perpetual) sleep." For *sleep* as a metaphor for death cf Dan xii. 2.

like grass. Cf xxxvii. 2, ciii. 15.

- 6 In the morning it flourisheth, and groweth up;
In the evening it is cut down, and withereth.
- 7 For we are consumed in thine anger,
And in thy wrath are we troubled.
- 8 Thou hast set our iniquities before thee,
Our secret sins in the light of thy countenance.
- 9 For all our days are passed away in thy wrath:
We bring our years to an end as ¹a tale *that is told*.
- 10 The days of our years are threescore years and ten,
Or even by reason of strength fourscore years;
Yet is their pride but labour and sorrow;
For it is soon gone, and we fly away.
- 11 Who knoweth the power of thine anger,
And thy wrath according to the fear that is due unto thee?
- 12 So teach us to number our days,
That we may get us an heart of wisdom.

¹ Or, a sound or sigh

7. *are we troubled*. I.e. "are we reduced to helplessness"; the Hebrew expression is stronger than the English; cf vi. 3, "my soul is sore vexed."

8. *Our secret sins*. A mistaken rendering: the Hebrew word is as in lxxxix. 45, "his youth." Render, *Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, Our youth (with its follies) in the light of thy countenance*.

9. *We bring*. Rather, *We have brought*. The (happy) days of the nation's history are at an end.

a tale that is told. Better as marg. *as a sound or sigh*, or better still, *as a breathing out*. A tale is a number which has been counted: see v. 10.

10. *their pride*. Great age was esteemed a glory among the Hebrews: Gen xlvii. 9; Lev xix. 32; Pro xvi. 31. Not (as P-B), *their strength*.

and we fly away. Cf Job xx. 8, "(The wicked) shall fly away (same Hebrew verb) as a dream."

11, 12. TEACH THOU US

11, 12. *Who knoweth...an heart of wisdom*. These verses are very difficult in the original, and probably the text is corrupt. Following RV we find that the Psalmist complains that men do not recognize the power of JEHOVAH'S wrath, i.e. they do not see that their present continued afflictions are His chastisements. In v. 12 the words, "teach us to number our days," mean rather "teach us to apply and use our days," i.e. for the fulfilment of the Divine Will.

LXX, Vulgate follow a different Hebrew text, "Who knoweth the power of thine anger, and who from fear of thy wrath can measure it? Make thy right hand (i.e. thy power) known, yea unto those who have been schooled in heart by wisdom."

13 Return, O LORD; how long?

And let it repent thee concerning thy servants.

14 O satisfy us in the morning with thy mercy;

That we may rejoice and be glad all our days.

15 Make us glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us,

And the years wherein we have seen evil.

16 Let thy work appear unto thy servants,

And thy glory upon their children.

17 And let the ¹beauty of the LORD our God be upon us:

And establish thou the work of our hands upon us;

Yea, the work of our hands establish thou it.

¹ See Ps. xxvii. 4.

13-17. LET US SEE JEHOVAH'S WORK RENEWED

13. *let it repent thee.* Cf Amos vii. 3, 6.

14. *satisfy.* Cf ciii. 5, cvii. 9.

in the morning. I.e. in God's morning, when He brings in another day, i.e. a new era.

That we may rejoice. Or, *That we may sing aloud* as xcvi. 1 (same Hebrew verb).

15. *according to the days.* Day for day, a future day of rejoicing for every past day of affliction. The Psalmist looks back to a long period of national suffering.

seen evil. The Hebrew verb *to see* is freely used in the sense of *to experience*: cf iv. 6, "Who will make us see (i.e. show us) good"; lxxxix. 48, "What man is he that shall live and not *see death*?"

16. *thy work.* *Work* (Heb. *pō'al*) is used especially of JEHOVAH'S providence in delivering His people and in showing them favour: xliv. 1, lxxvii. 12, xcii. 4, note; Isa xl. 10, "His reward is with him, and his *work* (Heb. *pō'ullāh*, a cognate substantive) before him." In the last passage the reference is to the good work which JEHOVAH is about to do for His people in restoring them to their own land from exile in Babylonia.

unto thy servants...upon their children. The words express a characteristic Hebrew attitude. A reward to be ample must be extended to succeeding generations, just as a punishment to be complete must include in its range a man's descendants: cix. 12, 13; Exod xx. 5.

17. *the beauty of JEHOVAH our God.* Cf xxvii. 4, note. The reference is to the beautiful forms of worship seen in the Temple.

be upon us. Or, *be over us.*

the work of our hands. E.g. that of rebuilding the Temple, or re-establishing the walls of Jerusalem, or again of re-populating the city.

PSALM XCI

JEHOVAH THE ONE PERFECT REFUGE

(A PSALM OF THE HOLY CITY AND OF THE ROAD)

§ 1. CONTENTS.

1, 2. The Psalmist addresses an inhabitant of Zion.

3-8. He promises safety to the faithful citizen at home.

9 *a*. He interjects a confession of his own confidence in JEHOVAH.9 *b*-13. He promises safety in JEHOVAH to the faithful citizen, even when he journeys through the desert and meets the perils of his road.

14-16. JEHOVAH Himself takes up the Psalmist's words, and confirms the promises which the Psalmist has given.

§ 2. TEACHING.

This Psalm has no title to indicate its authorship or character, but it is obviously a Psalm of instruction, a Maschil. Further it may be called a "Temple Psalm," for the "secret place," so designated in *v.* 1, is not Heaven, but the earthly sanctuary in which JEHOVAH dwelt in cloud and thick darkness (Ps xxvii. 4, 5; cf 1 K viii. 10-12). The shadow thrown by the Temple-crowned Mount Zion is here described as the "shadow of the Almighty": cf Deut xxxiii. 12.

But Ps xci differs from such Temple Psalms as xlvi in that it celebrates *not* the glory of the Temple, but the glory of Him who is Lord of the Temple. The Psalm is addressed to a citizen of Zion, and it is in effect a monition to him to put his trust not in a sacred place, but in a sacred person. A knowledge of human nature leads us to expect that such a monition was needed, and our records show that such was the fact. When the prophet Jeremiah threatened the inhabitants of Jerusalem with the scourge of foreign invasion as a punishment for their sins, they pointed with contemptuous self-confidence to the Temple buildings under whose shadow they lived, reiterating the parrot cry, "Those [battlements yonder] are the Temple of JEHOVAH, the Temple of JEHOVAH" (Jer vii. 4). And so no doubt they continued to cry until the Chaldeans took their city, slew their priests, and burnt the Temple to the ground. The former deliverance of Jerusalem from the Assyrians, and the fulfilment thereby of the promise of Isaiah (Isa xiv. 32) was the starting-point of this vain confidence.

The lesson intended in the Psalm is summed up in *v.* 2,

Say thou of JEHOVAH,
He is my refuge and my fortress;
My God, in whom I trust.

Here is a twofold monition: first, to confess that JEHOVAH Himself—not Zion—is the true refuge; secondly, to acknowledge that faith is to be placed in JEHOVAH under all circumstances.

The Psalmist does not content himself with monition; he goes on to speak as a prophet, who has authority to give assurances of safety to his hearer. And first he promises deliverance from secret and hidden dangers, from the snare set by a secret foe, and in particular from "the deadly word." The last expression

is ambiguous in meaning. It might refer to false accusation (cf lxix. 4, RV) or on the other hand to spells by which the sorcerer endeavours to destroy his enemy. **ЈЕHOVAH** can save a man from these dangers, against which no material shield avails. Let the citizen of Jerusalem trust in Him (vs. 3, 4). The Psalmist now proceeds to speak of another danger of city life in terms which suggest that he himself has had recent experience of it. Eastern cities, kept with Eastern disregard of sanitation, are subject to sudden and violent epidemics. The pestilence manifests itself especially in darkness, when at midnight a great cry of terror is made (Exod xii. 29, 30); at other times men fall in the street at midday as though pierced through with an arrow. Yet when men fall thus by thousands, the man who makes **ЈЕHOVAH** his refuge escapes the contagion altogether. Such is the assurance which the Psalmist gives (vs. 5-8).

He adds, "Thou shalt see the reward (recompense) of the wicked" (v. 8 b). The words spring from a vivid recollection of recent experiences. He has himself seen in a visitation of pestilence a distinction made between the wicked and those who trust in God. Saved himself, he was granted an awful vision of the judgments of **ЈЕHOVAH**. He remembers the things that he saw and in thankfulness he ejaculates his personal confession, "Thou, O **ЈЕHOVAH**, art my refuge!" He practises the lesson which he would teach. Nothing can be truer to spiritual experience than this sudden yearning of the Psalmist to make his personal confession. We may compare the ejaculation with which Jacob interrupts his Blessing of his sons, "I have waited for thy salvation, O **ЈЕHOVAH**" (Gen xlix. 18).

The Psalmist's ejaculation is an expression of praise as well as a confession. Refreshed in spirit by this moment of communion with his God, he now continues his assurances to the man whom he wishes to win to trust in **ЈЕHOVAH**. Hitherto he has promised him protection within the city: no word has been said of the dangers which lurk without, when the citizen has to make his journey abroad. If the Psalmist had no more to say than this, he might still leave his hearers to think that the place, *the Temple*, was the Palladium of the citizens, and that its presence was a pledge that no evil could happen to them. But such an assurance was of no use to the man who was setting out from Jerusalem on a journey to another land, as for instance to Egypt. That way was "desert" (Acts viii. 26), but the man to whom the Psalmist speaks had to take it.

The case of this traveller gives the Psalmist the best opportunity of developing his theme. He is seeking to convert his hearer from a superstitious trust in the Temple to a living faith in the Lord of the Temple. Mount Zion (one said) cannot be moved (cxxv. 1)—yes! but neither can it throw its protecting shadow over the traveller as he goes through the desert of Sinai. But the dangers of that way are many and great. That desert is described in Isa xxx. 6 as "The land of trouble and anguish, from whence come the lioness and the lion, the viper and fiery flying serpent." It is to the present day a land of drought and a soil of loose hot flints, and if the lion has disappeared, the deadly cobra remains.

The assurances given by the Psalmist fit exactly the case of one travelling through such a desert as this. "There shall no evil befall thee, Neither shall any *calamity* come nigh thy *tent*." The citizen has left the shelter of his city, and is now in his tent exposed to all the dangers of the desert—marauding Bedawin,

the deadly desert wind, the loose flints which invite even the sure-footed to fall, the risk of losing the faintly marked track which should bring the traveller to his goal. But, says the Psalmist, "He shall give His messengers charge over thee, To guard thee in all thy journey. They shall bear thee up in their hands, Lest thou dash thy foot against a stone" (*vs.* 11, 12). No robber, no deadly wind, no fatal fall, no wandering from the way shall be thy portion, for even in the desert **JEHOVAH** will provide guardians to keep thee safe. So under His protection thou shalt overcome all other dangers: "Thou shalt tread upon the lion and the cobra" (*v.* 13).

The Psalm closes with a sudden change of speaker in *vs.* 14-16. Such a change need not surprise us in a Hebrew Psalm, for Semitic poetry is subject to sudden changes either of the speaker or (as in *v.* 9) of the person addressed. The Psalm concludes with an utterance of **JEHOVAH** Himself, confirming the assurances given by His prophet, the Psalmist.

§ 3. THE RHYTHM.

The rhythm of this Psalm in the original is not uniform throughout. Most of the verses (as *vs.* 1, 5, 6, 8, 11) consist each of two members of equal length, each member containing *three* stresses. Thus the rhythm of *v.* 1 might be represented in bald English as follows:

Dwélling in sécret of Highest,
Abíding in sháde of Almíghty.

But *v.* 2 similarly represented shows a different rhythm:

Sáy of **JEHÓVAH**,
Réfuge, Fórtress, the Gód of my trúst:

and *v.* 3 again:

Himsélf delivereth from snáre of fówler,
From plágue of the wórd.

Here the verses are unequally divided, the shorter member preceding in *v.* 2, and following in *v.* 3. Verse 4 returns to the rhythm of *v.* 1 in that it consists of equal members, but it departs from it in having three such members instead of two. But no one of the three members could well be spared: the first two are required to present convincingly the metaphor of God's eagle-like protection, while the third gives the key-word of the Psalm, "faithfulness."

"A shield and buckler is His faithfulness." The word "faithfulness" coming last in the order of the Hebrew is singularly impressive. Ps xci is a lyric, and this variety in the rhythm sits well upon it. But the *cacoethes emendandi* has led Bickell and Duhm and other scholars to reduce the whole Psalm under a rhythm as regular as that of an English hymn in common metre. These scholars in their pursuit of "metre" overlook the vigour which is imparted to the Psalm by metrical irregularities, as they account them. Thus both in *v.* 4 and in *v.* 7 the third member (misplaced or halting according to Duhm) gives a direct force to the verse which otherwise it would lack. Nothing could well be more forcible than *v.* 7 as it stands in MT:

A thousand shall fall at thy side,
And ten thousand at thy right hand;
But *it shall not come nigh thee.*

Yet Duhm would add at the end, to complete a supposed stanza,

His faithfulness is a shield and buckler,

words which he has removed from *v.* 4.

Of lxviii, Introduction, § 7.

XCI. 1 He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High

¹Shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

2 I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress;
My God, in whom I trust.

3 For he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler,
And from the noisome pestilence.

4 He shall cover thee with his pinions,
And under his wings shalt thou take refuge:
His truth is a shield and a buckler.

¹ Or, *That abideth...Almighty; even I &c.*

1, 2. ADDRESS TO THE INHABITANT OF ZION

XCI. 1, 2. *He that dwelleth...my fortress* etc. The translation of this passage in the three English versions follows an incorrect reading of the consonantal text and is tautological. The first verb in *v.* 2 is to be read (with a change of the Hebrew vowels only) as an imperative. The passage should accordingly be rendered, *O thou that dwellest in the secret place of the Most High, Lodging by night under the shadow of the Almighty, Say thou of JEHOVAH, He is my refuge and my fortress* etc. The person addressed is the citizen of Zion, who vainly believes that his city is inviolable. The Psalmist would have him put his trust in the Living God. See Introduction, § 2.

3-8. AN ASSURANCE OF SAFETY FOR THE FAITHFUL

3. *he shall deliver thee.* In the Hebrew the emphasis is on the pronoun: *He*, and no other, *shall deliver thee.*

from the noisome (harmful) pestilence. So EV from MT. But LXX (=Vulgate, *a verbo aspero*) read the Hebrew consonants with different vowels, and so obtained the sense, *from the harmful word.* The *harmful word* may be either a spell cast by a sorcerer over his victim, or a false accusation intended to destroy the innocent.

4. *He shall cover thee with his pinions.* JEHOVAH is compared to an eagle fluttering over her young in Deut xxxii. 11; so in Deut xxxiii. 12 he "covers" the tribe of Benjamin, for the Temple was in Benjamite territory.

His truth. P-B translates the Hebrew substantive twice, *His faithfulness and truth.* "Faithfulness" is the better rendering.

- 5 Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night,
Nor for the arrow that flieth by day ;
- 6 For the pestilence that walketh in darkness,
Nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday.
- 7 A thousand shall fall at thy side,
And ten thousand at thy right hand ;
But it shall not come nigh thee.
- 8 Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold,
And see the reward of the wicked.
- 9 ¹For thou, O LORD, art my refuge !
Thou hast made the Most High thy habitation ;
- 10 There shall no evil befall thee,
Neither shall any plague come nigh thy tent.
- 11 For he shall give his angels charge over thee,
To keep thee in all thy ways.

¹ Or, *Because thou hast said, The LORD is my refuge;*

5. *the terror by night.* That which is referred to in this verse as a *terror* and as an *arrow* is more plainly described in v. 6 as *pestilence* and as *destruction*. See Introduction, § 2.

7. *A thousand shall fall at thy side.* By the pestilence.

8. *the reward (recompense) of the wicked.* I.e. their destruction by the pestilence.

9a. AN EJACULATION OF PRAISE FROM THE PSALMIST

9b-13. AN ASSURANCE OF SAFETY FOR THE FAITHFUL ONE,
WHEN HE LEAVES THE CITY, AND GOES FORTH ON A JOURNEY

9b. *thy habitation.* The Hebrew word is as in xc. 1, "our dwelling place (*ma'on*)"; cf Acts xvii. 28, "In him we live, and move, and have our being." LXX, *καταφυγήν σου*, "thy refuge," is inaccurate: *Dwelling place* or *habitation* includes *refuge* and much more.

10. *plague.* (Heb. *néga'*), which corresponds to *plague* (Lat. *plaga*) in the Old English sense of a "calamity" of any kind—War, Fire, Flood, Famine, or Pestilence. The special Hebrew word for "pestilence" is *déber*, as in v. 6.

thy tent. Not, *thy dwelling*, as P-B, AV.

11. *his angels.* Or, *his messengers*; cf civ. 4 (RV with marg.).

To keep thee. Better, *To guard thee*, LXX, *τοῦ διαφυλάξει σε*.

in all thy ways. I.e. throughout all thy journey. The Tempter quotes this verse in Matt iv. 6, but omits the clause, *To keep thee in all thy ways*.

- 12 They shall bear thee up in their hands,
Lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.
- 13 Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder :
The young lion and the serpent shalt thou trample under
feet.
- 14 Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver
him :
I will set him on high, because he hath known my name.
- 15 He shall call upon me, and I will answer him ;
I will be with him in trouble :
I will deliver him, and honour him.
- 16 With long life will I satisfy him,
And shew him my salvation.

12. *in their hands.* Or, "as it were with hands." The faithful man will not be allowed to stumble on the loose flints of the desert.

13. *the lion and adder.* Denizens of the desert of Sinai: Isa xxx. 6.

14-16. JEHOVAH HIMSELF TAKES UP THE ASSURANCES
GIVEN BY THE PSALMIST

14. *Because he hath set his love upon me.* The Hebrew verb here translated *hath set his love* is found in Isa xxxviii. 17, "Thou hast in love to my soul *delivered it.*"

1 I *will set him on high.* I.e. out of the reach of danger. P-B, *I will set him up*, misses the point of the Hebrew.

15. *I will be with him.* Cf Isa xliii. 2, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee."

PSALM XCII

GOD'S IN HIS HEAVEN: ALL'S RIGHT WITH THE WORLD

§ 1. CONTENTS.

1-3. Praise of God is good.

4-8. For JEHOVAH is great both in the work of Creation and in His acts of Providence.

9-11. The contrasted fates of the wicked and the righteous.

12-15. The blessedness of the righteous.

§ 2. CHARACTER AND PURPOSE.

This is one of the many Psalms which consider the problem of the prosperity of the wicked; and here, as in lxxiii, the Psalmist lays before us a triumphant solution. But the experiences which form the background of the two utterances are different. In lxxiii the Psalmist confesses that he had almost lost faith in the providence of God, and that he had been "brutish" in his failure to under-

stand the Divine working. But the Psalmist of xcii merely acknowledges that JEHOVAH'S thoughts are "deep," and that a "brutish man"—he does not say himself—does not know them. The problem does exist for others, but for the Psalmist it has been solved not in words but by practical demonstration. JEHOVAH has allowed him to see the utter overthrow of the wicked. JEHOVAH has treated the Psalmist's enemies as His own. A great act of Divine justice has been done in a and in which (so the "brutish man" and the "fool" suppose) JEHOVAH leaves the wicked to spring up like the grass and to flourish in their evil doing.

It should be noted further that both Psalmists (in lxxiii and in xcii) make their experiences the subject of special praise to God. The one goes into the house of God, and confesses that "God is good to Israel (to the true Israelites), Even to such as are pure in heart" (lxxiii. 17 and 1); the other begins and ends on the note of praise: "It is a good thing to give thanks unto JEHOVAH" (v. 1)... "He is my rock" (v. 15).

A Psalm, a Song for the sabbath day.

- XCII.** 1 It is a good thing to give thanks unto the LORD,
 And to sing praises unto thy name, O Most High:
 2 To shew forth thy lovingkindness in the morning,
 And thy faithfulness every night,
 3 With an instrument of ten strings, and with the psaltery;
 With a solemn sound upon the harp.
 4 For thou, LORD, hast made me glad through thy work:
 I will triumph in the works of thy hands.

1-3. PRAISE OF GOD IS GOOD

XCII. 1. *a good thing to give thanks.* Cf xxxiii. 1, cxlvii. 1. *A good thing*, i.e. a joyous thing: cf lxxi. 23.

2. *in the morning...every night.* Cf cxix. 147, 148. A third time of prayer is given in lv. 17, "Evening, and morning, and at noonday." But the thought in these passages is not of fixt hours of prayer, but rather of an earnestness which prays at all times, early and late: cf cxix. 164.

3. *psaltery...harp.* Cf xxxiii. 2.

With a solemn sound (Heb. *Higgaion*). *Higgaion* (see ix. 16) is apparently a musical direction, but its meaning is unknown. *With a solemn sound* is a guess.

4-8. JEHOVAH IS GREAT IN HIS WORK OF PROVIDENCE AS IN HIS WORK OF CREATION

4. *thy work...the works of thy hands.* The Psalmist is thinking in this verse of two different Divine activities. *Work* (Heb. *pō'al*) means the acts of JEHOVAH'S providence (cf xc. 16, note), while *the works of thy hands* (viii. 6) means all that God made at the Creation.

I will triumph. Or, *I will shout for joy*, as xxxiii. 1, note.

- 5 How great are thy works, O LORD!
 Thy thoughts are very deep.
- 6 A brutish man knoweth not;
 Neither doth a fool understand this:
- 7 When the wicked spring as the grass,
 And when all the workers of iniquity do flourish;
 It is that they shall be destroyed for ever:
- 8 But thou, O LORD, art on high for evermore.
- 9 For, lo, thine enemies, O LORD,
 For, lo, thine enemies shall perish;
 All the workers of iniquity shall be scattered.
- 10 But my horn hast thou exalted like *the horn of the wild-ox*:
 I am anointed with fresh oil.

¹5. *Thy thoughts*. Better, *Thy purposes, Thy plans*: cf xxxiii. 11, xl. 5.
 6, 7. *A brutish man knoweth not* etc. Cf lxxiii. 16-20, where the same sentiment is more fully developed.

7. *spring as the grass*. Those who spring as the grass, fade quickly as the grass.

the workers of iniquity. Cf v. 9, v. 5, vi. 8, xciv. 4. Mowinckel gives to this phrase the special sense of sorcerers, who cast spells upon persons to bring about sickness and death. The term may possibly be applied to sorcerers, but it is extremely unlikely that it is a standing designation of the practisers of the black art. See Ps vi, Introduction; v. 5, note. The word *iniquity* (Heb. *āven*) has in it a suggestion of idolatry or worship of other gods, and it is most probable that in xcii. 7, 9 (also in xciv. 4) the reference is to men who are unfaithful to JEHOVAH; cf the term *thine enemies* twice repeated in v. 9.

8. *thou...art on high*. Lit. *thou art height*.

9-11. THE CONTRASTED FATES OF THE WICKED AND THE RIGHTEOUS

9. *All the workers of iniquity shall be scattered*. The language is of the battlefield: first, the leaders ("thine enemies, O JEHOVAH") perish in the battle, and then their followers, the rank and file ("the workers of iniquity"), are scattered in flight. The hostile force ceases to exist. The repetition in 9a, *For, lo, thine enemies, O JEHOVAH, For, lo, thine enemies shall perish*, is not found in LXX. B, but it adds to the force of the verse and is probably original. For similar instances of repetition see xxii. 4, xxix. 1, lxxvii. 16, xciii. 3, xciv. 23. The Targum on xcii. 9 is suggestive, "For behold thine enemies, O JEHOVAH, behold thine enemies shall perish for the world to come, and all that make a lie shall be separated from the congregation of the righteous." *Shall be destroyed* (P-B) for *shall be scattered* is an error.

10. *my horn*. See lxxxix. 17, note.
the wild-ox. Cf xxii. 21, xxix. 6.

- 11 Mine eye also hath seen *my desire* on ¹mine enemies,
 Mine ears have heard *my desire* of the evil-doers that rise up
 against me.
- 12 The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree:
 He shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.
- 13 They that are planted in the house of the LORD
 Shall flourish in the courts of our God.
- 14 They shall still bring forth fruit in old age;
 They shall be full of sap and green:
- 15 To shew that the LORD is upright;
 He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him.

¹ Or, *them that lie in wait for me*

11. *hath seen* my desire. Cf liv. 7, note, cxii. 8.

mine enemies. Better as marg. *them that lie in wait for me*. The Psalmist is thinking not of enemies in general, but of certain persons who are at the moment planning mischief against him.

Mine ears have heard etc. Better, *Mine ears have heard* their desire, *O evil-doers, of them that rise up against me*. The vocative of defiance is used here with great effect; cf lxii. 1, 2, note, where a similar use of the vocative occurs.

12-15. THE BLESSEDNESS OF THE RIGHTEOUS

12. *the palm tree...a cedar*. These are the two commanding trees in Palestine; the palm in the warm lower districts, the cedar on the high ground.

13. *planted in the house of JEHOVAH*. The reader of AV might think that it was unlawful to plant trees in the Temple area, because "groves" were prohibited (Deut xvi. 21; cf 1 K xiv. 23), but the word so often translated "grove" is the Heb. *āshērāh*, which means a wooden post (possibly the trunk of a tree) carved to be the symbol of a goddess. But growing trees were allowed; lii. 8. The comparison of a righteous man to a tree is found in i. 3; Jer xvii. 8.

15. *no unrighteousness*. There is no failure of His faithfulness: "God's in His heaven: all's right with the world" (Browning, *Pippa passes*). Cf the strong expressions of Deut xxxii. 4.

PSALM XCIII

JEHOVAH ASCENDS HIS THRONE

CHARACTER AND PURPOSE.

JEHOVAH is described in many passages of the Old Testament, the Psalms included, as king sometimes of Israel, sometimes of all the world. But earthly kings are subject to conditions of time, and have ascended their thrones each

at some definite date. So the Psalmists who apply the metaphor of *kingship* to JEHOVAH apply also to Him the metaphor of accession to His throne. This appears to be the case with Ps xciii, cf xlv, xlvii. The opening words may be rendered, *JEHOVAH hath become king*. The Psalm celebrates JEHOVAH'S accession to His universal throne. It is suggested by some that the Hebrews had a yearly festival to celebrate this "event." The eastern king on such an occasion clothes himself with rich garments and girds on a sword (cf xlv. 3, 6-8): so in xciii. 1 it is said that JEHOVAH is *apparelled with majesty*, and is *girded with strength*.

The first result of the reign which JEHOVAH has begun is that the world hitherto shaken and tossed will be established so that it cannot again be moved (xlvii. 3-5). God the king has His throne firmly set, and from it He gives stability to the world. God the unchangeable has manifested Himself, and brought the earth to rest. This is an eschatological picture, a sketch of what the Psalmist expects in the future, but it has a message for the present time (1931) when the world is still staggering from the effects of the World War. Because God is the "king" of the world we may look forward to a Better Day, and work with hope towards an established peace.

JEHOVAH is king, and the Psalmist sees with truth that insurrection against Him is a matter of noise, rather than of strength. "The floods lift up" only "their voice"—only (see v. 3, marg.) "their roaring." In v. 4 the Psalmist is clearly thinking of the old Semitic myth: he says that JEHOVAH on high is mightier, more majestic, than all the roaring waves of the Deep, the Chaos, that lies below. In v. 5 the Psalmist has done with Chaos: JEHOVAH is king, and the Psalmist stands in His presence to hear His voice. The LORD answers him with gracious promises, which he in turn receives with thankful acknowledgment: *Thy testimonies*, i.e. the assurances which Thou givest from Thy throne to Thy people, *are very sure*. *Holiness*, he adds, *becometh thine house for evermore*, i.e. inaccessibility from all profane touch belongs to Thy house, to Zion, for evermore.

So we who dwell in Thy house are safe under the shadow of Thee, our king.

- XCIII.** 1 The LORD reigneth; he is apparelled with majesty;
 The LORD is apparelled, he hath girded himself with strength:
 The world also is stablished, that it cannot be moved.
- 2 Thy throne is established of old:
 Thou art from everlasting.
- 3 The floods have lifted up, O LORD,
 The floods have lifted up their voice;
 The floods lift up their ¹waves.
- 4 Above the voices of many waters,
 The mighty breakers of the sea,
 The LORD on high is mighty.

¹ Or, ¹roaring

5 Thy testimonies are very sure:
 Holiness becometh thine house,
 O LORD, for evermore.

PSALM XCIV

THE GOD WHO REPAYS

§ 1. CONTENTS.

1-7. The presumption of the wicked who think to oppress the people of JEHOVAH with impunity.

8-11. An expostulation with the oppressors.

12-15. The chastisement of the righteous is only for a time.

16-19. The Psalmist's personal experience: human help failed, but JEHOVAH's mercy was not found wanting.

20-23. The end of unjust judges.

§ 2. OCCASION.

Ps xciv, like xiv, lviii, lxxv, and lxxxii, was called forth by the unjust practices of Israel's judges. He describes these judges as *workers of iniquity* (vv. 4, 16). Some of these, it appears, were no better than Ahab and Jezebel, in that they committed murder and robbery under the forms of law (vv. 6, 20, 21). The Psalmist himself was in danger of their judgment, but he escaped, he tells us, by the intervention of JEHOVAH.

The Psalm contains three chief elements: *first*, an appeal to JEHOVAH to put an end to the impunity of these wicked doers; *secondly*, a remonstrance calling on them to consider that JEHOVAH sees them; *thirdly*, a thankful personal confession that JEHOVAH has delivered him from their unjust judgment. There is nothing in the twenty-three verses of this Psalm which points with any clearness to the date at which it was written. Abuse of justice was rampant in Israel at many times: Amos in the eighth century B.C. complains bitterly of it: Amos ii. 6-8, v. 12.

§ 3. PURPOSE AND CHARACTER.

The oppression of the time must have tended to make men practical atheists. If the oppressors said with confidence, *JEHOVAH doth not see*, no doubt the oppressed would re-echo the cry in bitterness of soul. The Psalmist, a prophet in spirit, addresses himself to the situation. *First*, he intercedes for the oppressed with his God. *Next*, prophet-like, he rebukes the oppressors. *Lastly*, for the encouragement of his people he tells that he himself has been delivered from oppression by the intervention of JEHOVAH. By the instance of his own deliverance he would show that JEHOVAH does indeed see, and that the God of Jacob does consider the wrong that is done.

And here it should be noted that the Psalmist is not merely using a literary device, when he rebukes the oppressor and comforts the oppressed. He is not a *littérateur*, but a Psalmist, one who will deliver his prophetic message in the city with the harp and with his voice. Crowds will listen to him, when he sings.

Possibly he was delivering the very remonstrance contained in *vs.* 8-11, when he came into danger of his life as he says in *vs.* 16-19. But the prophet who is bold in delivering his message will often escape with his life, as Elijah from Ahab, Jeremiah from Jehoiakim, John the Baptist (for a time) from Herod Antipas. The prophet in the East is hedged with a protecting sanctity.

In the East also the invocation of a Divine name has a protective power. It is recorded that a captive woman once delivered herself from Muhammad by exclaiming, *A'ūdhu billāhi*, "I take refuge in Allah from thee." The Arabian prophet respected the appeal. So the author of this Psalm, in facing his enemies, holds up as his shield the awful name of JEHOVAH. His cry in *v.* 22, "JEHOVAH hath become (*sic*) my high tower," is a warning to the foe to forbear, and he concludes in the following verse with the defiant utterance of the great name, *JEHOVAH our God*. In the Hebrew the verse ends with this name.

XCIV. 1 O LORD, thou God to whom vengeance belongeth,

Thou God to whom vengeance belongeth, shine forth.

2 Lift up thyself, thou judge of the earth :

Render to the proud *their* desert.

3 LORD, how long shall the wicked,

How long shall the wicked triumph?

4 They prate, they speak arrogantly :

All the workers of iniquity boast themselves.

5 They break in pieces thy people, O LORD,

And afflict thine heritage.

1-7. THE PRESUMPTION OF THE WICKED WHO THINK TO OPPRESS
THE PEOPLE OF JEHOVAH WITH IMPUNITY

XCIV. 1. *thou God to whom vengeance belongeth.* Lit. as Vulgate, *Deus ultionum*, "God of vengeance" (plur.). Cf Deut xxxii. 35, 41, 43; Jer li. 56 ("JEHOVAH is a God of recompences, he shall surely requite").

shine forth. I.e. "show Thy glory"; cf l. 2 (same Hebrew verb); Deut xxxiii. 2.

2. *Lift up thyself.* I.e. display Thy power in judgment; cf Isa xxxiii. 10.

the proud (Heb. *gō'im*). I.e. the men who have overweening confidence in their own strength and use it for oppression: cf x. 2, lix. 12 (*pride*, the cognate substantive).

3. *how long...How long.* For a similar repetition see xcii. 9, note. It is effective here as well as there.

4. *they speak arrogantly.* Cf 1 Sam ii. 3 (the same Hebrew word). *workers of iniquity.* Cf xcii. 7, note.

5. *break in pieces.* Cf lxxii. 4, lxxxix. 10, cxliii. 3 ("hath smitten"; same Hebrew verb).

thine heritage. Cf lxxviii. 71; Deut xxxii. 8, 9.

- 6 They slay the widow and the stranger,
And murder the fatherless.
- 7 And they say, ¹The LORD shall not see,
Neither shall the God of Jacob consider.
- 8 Consider, ye brutish among the people:
And ye fools, when will ye be wise?
- 9 He that planted the ear, shall he not hear?
He that formed the eye, shall he not see?
- 10 He that ²chastiseth the nations, shall not he correct,
Even he that teacheth man knowledge?
- 11 The LORD knoweth the thoughts of man,
³That they are ⁴vanity.
- 12 Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, ¹O LORD,
And teachest out of thy law;

¹ Heb. *Jah*.² Or, *instructeth*³ Or, *For*⁴ Heb. *a breath*.

6. *the widow and the stranger...the fatherless*. Cf the laws of Exod xxxii. 21, 22. This order *widow, stranger, fatherless* is chosen to keep the two halves of the verse in the Hebrew in equal balance. LXX has the logical order *widow, fatherless, stranger*. *Stranger* (LXX, προσήλυτον, "proselyte") is a foreigner dwelling under the protection of a citizen: cf xxxix. 12, note.

7. *The Lord* (Heb. יהוה) *shall not see*. Cf xiv. 1, lxxiii. 11. This is the Epicurean position: God is too high to trouble Himself about what goes on among men. For the form יהוה (i.e. יהוהוה) see lxviii. 4; lxxxix. 8.

8-11. AN EXPOSTULATION

8. *ye brutish among the people*. I.e. ye brutish ones in Israel. The oppressors are not foreigners, but native judges as in lviii, lxxiii (NB v. 27), lxxxii.

when will ye be wise? Or, as P-B, *when will ye understand?*

10. *chastiseth the nations*. Better as marg. *instructeth the nations*. The Psalmist glances at the learning of nations other than Israel, at the wisdom of the Egyptians and that of the children of the east (1 K iv. 30). This wisdom is of יהוה's gift.

11. *the thoughts of man*. E.g. such thoughts as appear in v. 7.

12-15. THE CHASTISEMENT OF THE RIGHTEOUS IS ONLY FOR A TIME

12. *Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest*. The Psalmist turns inevitably from the thought of the prosperity of the wicked to the kindred subject of the sufferings of the righteous. Cf Job v. 17; Pro iii. 11, 12.

teachest out of thy law (Heb. *torah*). This is the special blessing of Israel: man in general (v. 10) is taught by other means.

- 13 That thou mayest give him rest from the days of adversity,
 Until the pit be digged for the wicked.
- 14 For the LORD will not cast off his people,
 Neither will he forsake his inheritance.
- 15 For judgement shall return unto righteousness:
 And all the upright in heart shall follow it.
- 16 Who will rise up for me against the evil-doers?
 Who will stand up for me against the workers of iniquity?
- 17 Unless the LORD had been my help,
 My soul had soon dwelt in silence.
- 18 When I said, My foot slippeth;
 Thy mercy, O LORD, held me up.
- 19 In the multitude of my ¹thoughts within me
 Thy comforts delight my soul.

¹ Or, *doubts*

13. *That thou mayest give him rest from the days of adversity.* P-B gives the general sense somewhat better, *That thou mayest give him patience in time of adversity.*

the pit. Cf vii. 15, ix. 15.

14. *will not cast off his people* etc. A reference to vv. 5-7. He will take note of the oppression.

15. *judgement shall return unto righteousness.* God's judgement which seems to have left the earth *shall return* (i.e. shall manifest itself again) and finally reveal itself as *righteousness* (i.e. as God's vindication of the righteous and deliverance of them from all their oppressors). The P-B rendering, *Until righteousness turn again unto judgment* follows LXX; it apparently means, Until God in His righteousness returns to do judgment on the oppressors.

all the upright in heart shall follow it. The words are obscure. If the text is right, the meaning is that all the upright will follow and acknowledge JEHOVAH'S judgment as right.

16-19. THE PSALMIST'S PERSONAL EXPERIENCE; HUMAN HELP FAILED, BUT JEHOVAH'S MERCY WAS NOT FOUND WANTING

16. *Who will rise up.* Better, "I asked, *Who will rise up.*" The question is rhetorical and meant to bring out the fact that while human help failed JEHOVAH Himself delivered the Psalmist.

17. *in silence.* See cxv. 17; cf xxxi. 17. Vulgate, *in inferno.*

18. *My foot slippeth.* More correctly as P-B, *My foot hath slipt.* The Psalmist gave himself up as lost.

19. *my thoughts.* Better as marg. *my doubts*: cxxxix. 23. The Hebrew word is different in v. 11.

Thy comforts. Or, *Thy consolations*, as Job xv. 11.

- 20 Shall the ¹throne of wickedness have fellowship with thee,
Which frameth mischief by statute?
- 21 They gather themselves together against the soul of the
righteous,
And condemn the innocent blood.
- 22 But the LORD hath been my high tower;
And my God the rock of my refuge.
- 23 And he hath brought upon them their own iniquity,
And shall cut them off in their own evil;
The LORD our God shall cut them off.

¹ Or, *seat*

20-23. THE END OF UNJUST JUDGES

20. *the throne of wickedness.* Or, *the judgment-seat of destruction.*

The Psalmist's complaint is that unjust judges are destroying the people of ЈЕHOVAH (vv. 5, 6) by abuse of the forms of justice. True judges (be it noted) have fellowship with ЈЕHOVAH: they are "gods" (lxxxii. 1, 6). The rendering of P-B, "stool" for "throne," is due perhaps to Luther who gives *Stuhl*; in Old English *stool* is used in a dignified sense, e.g. for a Bishop's throne. So again *mischief* in OE implies serious harm; cf lv. 10.

21. *They gather themselves together.* Like a troop of highway robbers (so the Hebrew), a bitter description of the action of Israel's judges! The Hebrew verb is cognate with *gēdūd*, "a marauding band": see xviii. 29; Hosea vii. 1

23. *he hath brought upon them.* The Psalmist in vision sees God's judgment already accomplished.

shall cut them off. For the repetition of xcii. 9, note.

PSALM XCV

AN INVITATION TO WORSHIP FOLLOWED BY A WARNING AGAINST AN ERRING HEART

The ninety-fifth Psalm has been used in the Christian Church from very early times as an introduction to our morning office of praise. It was once (as it should be) the actual beginning of a service. In the service of the Seven Hours according to the use of Sarum, which dates from a little before 1200 A.D., this Psalm is the first appointed to be sung. Saint Benedict (circ. 480-543), the founder of the Benedictine Order, directed that Psalm xcv (preceded by Psalm iii) should be said by the whole monastery together, when the monks

first arose from sleep. It has been included in our English Matins from 1549 onwards.

It is called an Invitatory, i.e. an invitation to worship; this description applies strictly to *vv.* 1-7 *b* only. In the alternative form for Morning Prayer in the permissive Prayer Book of 1928 this portion only is printed as the Invitatory. For the Jew it celebrates JHOBAN as the God both of Nature and of the Chosen People. It holds a great position among Christians, for Christians are in St Paul's phrase *the Israel of God* (Gal vi. 16).

Unfortunately our English version lacks something of the vigour of the original. Thus, in the opening words the Vulgate *Venite, exultemus Domino* is a better representative of the Hebrew than the smoother English: "O come, let us sing unto the LORD." The Psalm opens with a crash of words: the Psalmist calls upon his hearers to "shout" and "sing aloud." The rude energy of the opening is a foil to the still force of the close: "I swear in my wrath, *saying*, They shall not enter into my land of rest." But the Vulgate also misses the right emphasis of the original in the first line of the Psalm. The Hebrew calls upon the worshippers to approach JHOBAN . Vulgate and EV committed a serious fault when they followed LXX ($\acute{\alpha}$ Κύριος) and wrote *Dominus* and "the LORD" instead of JHOBAN the great Proper Name of the God of Israel. When Ps xcv was written there were lords many and gods many who received the worship of the heathen. So the heathen man went from one god to another god as feeling swayed him or circumstance led him. One day he worshipped Baal-zebub and another day Baal-shamáyim ("the lord of heaven"). A varying panic led him to change one god for another.

But the writers of the Old Testament were men of faith, and faith has a definite object. They did not believe in "a god" or "gods," but in the One God, the God of their fathers (xxii. 3, 4), JHOBAN . They realized Him as the God with whom they and all the world had to do. They could have said to the heathen, "Ye worship ye know not what: we know whom we worship."

The Psalm falls into three sections:

(A) *vv.* 1-5. Invitation to greet JHOBAN from afar at the sight of His Temple. "Let us shout."

(B) *vv.* 6-7 *b*. Invitation to worship JHOBAN within His Temple. "Enter in."

(C) *vv.* 7 *c*-11. Warning against disobedience and the refusal to accept Divine guidance. "Harden not your heart."

A. (*vv.* 1-5.) This Psalm is in character a "Song of Ascents," sung like Pss cxx-cxxxiv by persons going up to the Temple to worship. Their worship begins while they are still at some distance with a shout of greeting to God. So the Arabs when they enter the sacred territory of Mecca on pilgrimage make a shouting of the word *Labbaika*, which is said to mean, "At thy service!" "Here am I," or the like. We may shrink from the notion of such a cheerful noise as this, even when the Psalmist demands it, but we must remember that the religious enthusiasm of the East expresses itself in strange forms. David danced before the ark, "uncovered" as his indignant wife Michal expressed it, i.e. with his kingly robes laid aside. And so the loud shout had its place in the worship

of Israel. The description of the worship given in Ecclus I. 16, 17 (circ. 200 B.C.) should be noted :

Then shouted the sons of Aaron,
 They sounded the trumpets of beaten work,
 They made a great noise (*Hebrew text*, a glorious sound) to be heard,
 For a remembrance before the Most High.
 Then all the people together hasted,
 And fell down upon the earth on their faces
 To worship their Lord, the Almighty, God Most High.
 (*Hebrew text*, To worship before the Most High,
 Before the Holy One of Israel.)

It must be remembered that the worship contemplated in this Psalm is entirely out-door worship. Winding up the ascent to the Temple the worshippers see at one moment the deep valley which encloses Jerusalem on the east and south and at another the mount of Olivet comes into view. Finally as they turn westward towards the sanctuary itself they know that they are facing the sea only thirty miles distant. How varied is the earth—valley and mountain, sea and dry land—but, says the Psalmist, **JEHOVAH** the One God made it all, and holds it all in His hand.

A truism? It is not a truism in the twentieth century, and it was not a truism when the Psalmist lived. Then the earth was not the acknowledged possession of the One God. The *deep places*—the remote valleys and the desert water courses were given up (so many believed) to the evil spirits and to the dreaded god of the Underworld, whose name was never spoken, for he was known only by his title *Molech* or *Melech*, "the King." To him children were sacrificed outside the city walls on barren land which was reckoned to be his own. To his worship the indignant words of Isa lvii. 5, 6 refer, "Ye...that slay the children in the valleys, under the clefts of the rocks...(dark places for dark deeds!)...Shall I be appeased for these things?" The worshippers of **JEHOVAH** as they climbed the path to the Temple caught a glimpse from time to time of the dread valley of the Son of Hinnom lying at their feet.

As for the mountain-summits, they were assigned to Baal the sun god and upon them his high places were prepared and furnished with sun-pillars or sun-images (Isa xvii. 8). The sea again was reckoned to be outside the jurisdiction of the gods of heaven; it was ruled (as the Babylonian Creation-story tells) by Apsû and Tiamat, mysterious deities, older than Baal, older than Molech.

In the teeth of such popular beliefs the Psalmist claims the deep places and the mountain-summits and the sea itself as the possession of the One God, **JEHOVAH**. The whole earth belongs to Him. No part of it, either near or remote, is exempt from His sovereignty. His hands, the Psalmist proclaims, made height and depth, and He holds the Universe as His own. He is Creator and His providence is exerted over all.

B. Nature and History meet here. In *vv.* 6, 7 *a, b* the writer passes from the thought of **JEHOVAH**'s Creation of the World to that of His making Israel a nation. "Let us kneel before **JEHOVAH** our Maker," he says. The

Psalmist is not referring here to the Creation of Mankind. He is thinking (as the Hebrews often did think) how wonderfully their God had made their nation. JEHOVAH had brought Abraham the founder of the race from the mouths of the Euphrates to the land of Canaan. From Canaan they move to Egypt. They become slaves. From Egypt JEHOVAH led them out by Moses and further proceeded to make a home for them in Canaan, giving them great and goodly cities, and cisterns of water, and vineyards and olive trees (Deut vi. 11). So Israel felt and the Psalmist confest, *We are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.* It was a position of privilege! But Privilege brings Duty in its train. Israel was to be a Prophet-Nation, a Witness for JEHOVAH to Gentile peoples.

C. So in *vv. 7 c-fin.* the Psalmist gives a warning: Let the Prophet-Nation beware of becoming an Apostate-Nation. This warning, he shows, is not unneeded. In the Wilderness Israel did become apostate, and a whole generation lost its position of privilege and fell under the displeasure of the Most High.

XCIV. 1 O come, let us sing unto the LORD:

Let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation.

2 Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving,

Let us make a joyful noise unto him with psalms.

3 For the LORD is a great God,

And a great King above all gods.

4 In his hand are the deep places of the earth;

The ¹heights of the mountains are his also.

5 The sea is his, and he made it;

And his hands formed the dry land.

¹ Or, *strength*

1-5. SALUTE JEHOVAH AS YE APPROACH HIS HOUSE

XCIV. 1. *O come.* The Hebrew word here is a mere expletive prefix to a cohortative verb. In *v. 6* the Hebrew is different (*bō'ū*, "enter ye").

let us sing. Better, *let us shout* or *let us rejoice.* Vulgate, *exultemus.*

unto the LORD. Heb. *unto JEHOVAH.* The name is dwelt on in *vv. 3, 6*; "JEHOVAH is a great God"; "JEHOVAH our Maker."

the rock. The word is used as a synonym for "God"; cf Deut xxxii. 31, "their rock is not as our Rock": (LXX, οὐκ ἔστιν ὡς ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν οἱ θεοὶ αὐτῶν); also Isa xxvi. 4 (marg.), "rock of ages."

4. *The heights of the mountains.* The rare Hebrew word (*tō'aphoth*) is used Num xxiii. 22, "The *strength* (marg. *horns*) of the wild ox." If the meaning be indeed "horns," the metaphor "horn" for a mountain peak is common to many languages. It may be however that "strength" (P-B) is right, in which case we may paraphrase, "The strong mountains are his."

5. *The sea is his.* Gen i. 9, 10; cf Ps lxxv. 6, 7, note.

- 6 O come, let us worship and bow down ;
 Let us kneel before the LORD our Maker :
- 7 For he is our God,
 And we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his
 hand.
¹To-day, Oh that ye would hear his voice !
- 8 Harden not your heart, as at ²Meribah,
 As in the day of ³Massah in the wilderness :
- 9 When your fathers tempted me,
 Proved me, and saw my work.
- 10 Forty years long was I grieved with *that* generation,
 And said, It is a people that do err in their heart,
 And they have not known my ways :
- 11 Wherefore I sware in my wrath,
 That they should not enter into my rest.

¹ Or, *To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden &c.*

² That is, *strife.*

³ That is, *temptation.*

6, 7 a, b. WORSHIP HIM IN HIS TEMPLE

6. *O come.* Rather, *come in, enter ye:* cf v. 1.
worship. I.e. prostrate ourselves in Eastern fashion.
our Maker. I.e. the Maker of our nation: cf c. 3.

7 c-11. HARDEN NOT YOUR HEART

7. *To-day, Oh that* etc. RV agrees with MT in the division of verses, and this clause (taken as an interjection) follows naturally on the preceding words. Oh! that Israel, JEHOVAH's people, would hear His voice! P-B in taking the words into v. 8 is in agreement with Heb iii. 7, 8, 15, iv. 7.
8. *Meribah...Massah.* Cf lxxxix. 7; Num xx. 3; Exod xvii. 2.
9. *and saw my work.* Genevan version (1560), *Thogh thei had sene my worke.* A good paraphrase.
10. *with that generation.* Rather, *even for a generation,* i.e. for forty years.
11. *my rest.* Or, *my resting place:* Isa xi. 10.

PSALM XCVI

A SONG FOR THE DAWNING OF A NEW ERA

§ 1. CONTENTS.

1-3. The summons to worship.

4-6. The greatness of JEHOVAH.

7-9. The summons to worship renewed.

10-13. (Eschatological; cf xcvi. 4-9.) The Advent of JEHOVAH to judge the whole world in righteousness.

§ 2. CHARACTER.

The character of the Psalm is best seen when it is compared with other Psalms, particularly with Ps xcvi (cf xlvii). The contents suggest that it was written in a time of peace and prosperity, when (to use the ordinary Hebrew word) JEHOVAH had granted His "salvation" to His people. "Tell ye," cries the Psalmist, "the good news of his salvation from day to day." He looks upon this period of rest as a foretaste and pledge of a still better time coming, when JEHOVAH will manifest Himself as king over the Gentiles and will carry out a just general judgment in the world (vv. 10-13). For this Psalm, like so many others, shows consciousness of the failure of justice on the earth. Unexpressed but lurking at the back of the Psalmist's mind is the thought that the wicked triumph while the righteous are allowed to suffer. So the main message of the Psalm is that JEHOVAH the king will reveal Himself (shortly?) as the Universal Judge, who will redress every wrong.

Mowinckel and some other scholars have recently grouped together Pss xlvii, xciii, xcvi-xcix as hymns used at the Hebrew feast of Tabernacles at which (according to Mowinckel) the enthronization of JEHOVAH as king of the whole earth was celebrated. These Psalms (with one exception, i.e. xcvi) contain the clause, *JEHOVAH reigneth* or (as Mowinckel gives it) *JEHOVAH hath become king*. But Ps xcvi is certainly to be included with the others, because it gives with emphasis the title "the king" to JEHOVAH (v. 6). Mowinckel believes that these Psalms are simply cultic; i.e. that they were sung as part of the ritual of a (yearly) feast which celebrated the LORD's accession as king.

But the older view, championed recently by Otto Eissfeldt (*Z.A.W.* 1928, pp. 81 ff.), is more probably right. These Psalms contain too much about an approaching judgment to be considered as merely ritual exercises for yearly use. There is the prophetic tone in them as in the Rhythm of Bernard of Morlaix:

Ecce minaciter imminet Arbiter ille supremus :
Imminet, imminet, ut mala terminet, aequa coronet.

The Judge who comes in terror,
The Judge who comes with might,
To put an end to evil,
To set the crown on right.

These Psalms are eschatological: they threaten a judgment near at hand on oppressors, and a deliverance at hand for the oppressed.

- XCVI.** 1 O sing unto the LORD a new song:
Sing unto the LORD, all the earth.
2 Sing unto the LORD, bless his name;
Shew forth his salvation from day to day.
3 Declare his glory among the nations,
His marvellous works among all the peoples.
4 For great is the LORD, and highly to be praised:
He is to be feared above all gods.
5 For all the gods of the peoples are ¹idols:
But the LORD made the heavens.
6 Honour and majesty are before him:
Strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.
7 Give unto the LORD, ye kindreds of the peoples,
Give unto the LORD glory and strength.

¹ Or, *things of nought*

1-3. THE SUMMONS TO WORSHIP

XCVI. 1. *a new song.* Cf xxxiii. 3, note.

all the earth. Cf v. 7.

2. *Shew forth his salvation.* Lit. *Tell the good news of his salvation:* LXX, εὐαγγελίσεθε... τὸ σωτήριον αὐτοῦ.

3. *His marvellous works.* His works at the Exodus: cf lxxviii. 4, "his wondrous works" (same Hebrew word).

4-6. THE GREATNESS OF JEHOVAH

4. *and highly to be praised.* P-B (a finer phrase), *and cannot worthily be praised* = Vulgate, *laudabilis nimis*.

5. *idols* (Heb. *ēlîm*). The word perhaps means "nothings" or "things of no power," or possibly, "godlets," a diminutive. LXX, δαιμόνια. *the heavens.* In which these "gods" were supposed to live.

6. *Strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.* In 1 Chr xvi. 27 (the parallel passage), *Strength and gladness are in his place.* The reading *in his place* may be original: cf Isa xxvi. 21, "JEHOVAH cometh forth out of his place." "His place" is short for "His holy place" (xxiv. 3). The four qualities, *Honour and majesty, Strength and beauty,* are perhaps personified to represent courtiers in the court of the Great King.

7-9. THE SUMMONS TO WORSHIP RENEWED

7. *ye kindreds of the peoples.* I.e. "ye families of the Gentiles"; cf v. 1, "Sing unto JEHOVAH, all the earth."

Give...glory and strength. So xxix. 1.

- 8 Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name:
Bring an offering, and come into his courts.
- 9 O worship the LORD ¹in the beauty of holiness:
Tremble before him, all the earth.
- 10 Say among the nations, The LORD reigneth:
The world also is stablished that it cannot be moved:
He shall judge the peoples with equity.
- 11 Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice;
Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof;
- 12 Let the field exult, and all that is therein;
Then shall all the trees of the wood sing for joy;

¹ Or, *in holy array*

8. *Bring an offering* (Heb. *minhah*). *Minhah* is a word of general meaning: it may be used of animal sacrifice, but its special sense is that of the meal-offering as distinguished from the offering of blood: Lev ii. 1-3.

into his courts. 1 Chr xvi. 29, *before him.*

9. *O worship the LORD in the beauty (or majesty) of holiness.* The *majesty of holiness* belongs to JEHOVAH: He is to be worshipped in respect of this majesty. The Heb. word translated *beauty* here is simply a by-form of that translated *majesty* in v. 6. The reading of marg. *in holy array* (in heiligem Schmuck, i.e. "in holy dress") adopted by many commentators is unsuitable here, and well-nigh impossible in xxix. 2:

Give unto JEHOVAH the honour due unto his name;

Worship JEHOVAH for the majesty of his holiness.

There is a response to this invitation in the Communion Office of the Book of Common Prayer: "We praise thee...we give thanks to thee for thy great glory."

10-13. THE ADVENT OF THE SUPREME JUDGE (cf xcvi. 4-9)

10. *The LORD reigneth.* Or, *JEHOVAH hath become king*; cf xciii. 1, note. The emphasis is on the subject, not on the verb.

is stablished. Cf xciii, Introduction.

He shall judge the peoples with equity. This is not a threat, but a gracious promise: all the earth shall have the boon of the righteous judgment of JEHOVAH, for He has become king of all the world.

11. *Let the sea roar* (or thunder). Cf xcvi. 7.

12. *Then* (Heb. *az*). Cf ii. 5; lxxxix. 19. It is the "Then" which describes JEHOVAH's own time: it cannot be otherwise defined.

the trees...sing for joy. The image in the Psalmist's mind may be either that of the birds singing in the trees (civ. 12), or of the wind stirring the leaves with a gentle sound in summer. For the latter cf. Isa lv. 12, "All the trees of the field shall clap their hands."

- 13 Before the LORD, for he cometh;
 For he cometh to judge the earth:
 He shall judge the world with righteousness,
 And the peoples ¹with his truth.

¹ Or, *in his faithfulness*

13. *For he cometh.* For the repetition of xcii. 9, note.

PSALM XCVII

ANOTHER SONG OF COMING JUDGMENT (cf Ps xcvi)

§ 1. CONTENTS.

- 1-6. The Coming of JEHOVAH as Judge.
 7-9. The Reception of the judgment.
 10-12. Encouragement for the Righteous.

§ 2. CHARACTER AND PURPOSE.

The Psalm is an answer to the cry of the oppressed, "LORD, how long?" The Psalmist sees in vision the Kingdom of God already present: "JEHOVAH reigneth." This Advent of JEHOVAH reveals the worthlessness of graven images, but Zion as JEHOVAH's city and her daughter-towns rejoice to see God's presence. Now let the oppressed righteous be patient and still abstain from evil, and their patience will be rewarded with joy and light.

XCVII. 1 The LORD reigneth; let the earth rejoice;

Let the multitude of isles be glad.

2 Clouds and darkness are round about him:

Righteousness and judgement are the foundation of his throne.

1-6. THE COMING OF JEHOVAH AS JUDGE

XCVII. 1. *The LORD reigneth.* Or, *JEHOVAH hath become king:* cf xlvi. 8, xciii. 1, xcvi. 10, xcix. 1.

the multitude of isles. Lit. *many isles.* The *isles* are the lands of the West which the Hebrews reached by sea, and so they are described as *isles*. In lxxii. 10 the *isles* are coupled with Tarshish, which is (perhaps) Tartessus in Spain.

2. *Clouds and darkness.* The particulars given in vv. 2-6 were probably suggested by the description of the descent of JEHOVAH on Mount Sinai at the giving of the Law. "And it came to pass on the third day, ... that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount... And mount Sinai was altogether on smoke, because JEHOVAH descended upon it in fire: ... and the whole mount quaked greatly" (Exod xix. 16, 18).

Righteousness and judgement etc. So lxxxix. 14a.

- 3 A fire goeth before him,
And burneth up his adversaries round about.
- 4 His lightnings lightened the world:
The earth saw, and trembled.
- 5 The hills melted like wax at the presence of the LORD,
At the presence of the Lord of the whole earth.
- 6 The heavens declare his righteousness,
And all the peoples have seen his glory.
- 7 Ashamed be all they that serve graven images,
That boast themselves of idols:
Worship him, all ye gods.
- 8 Zion heard and was glad,
And the daughters of Judah rejoiced;
Because of thy judgements, O LORD.
- 9 For thou, LORD, art most high above all the earth:
Thou art exalted far above all gods.
- 10 O ye that love the LORD, hate evil:
He preserveth the souls of his saints;
He delivereth them out of the hand of the wicked.
3. *A fire* etc. Cf l. 3; Num xi. 1, xvi. 35.
4. *His lightnings*. See lxxvii. 18.
5. *The hills melted*. Cf Jud v. 5. The reference is to the earthquake.
6. *all the peoples have seen his glory*. A contrast, for at Sinai Israel alone saw the glory.

7-9. THE RECEPTION OF THE JUDGMENT (a) BY THE
IDOLATERS, (b) BY ZION

7. *Ashamed be*. Or, *They shall be ashamed*.
That boast themselves of idols. For an instance of such boasting see Isa xlviii. 5.
Worship him. Lit. *Prostrate yourselves to him*.
Worship him, all ye gods (Heb. *šlōhim*). LXX gives πάντες οἱ ἄγγελοι αὐτοῦ: so too Vulgate, *omnes angeli eius*. Otherwise the Targum, "And let all *the peoples who serve idols* worship before him." Both LXX and Targum evade the real meaning of the Hebrew word *šlōhim*, "gods." The reference is to the gods of the Gentiles, who are treated here in the rhetorical style of the Psalmist as having a real existence.
8. *the daughters of Judah*. I.e. the smaller cities of Judah.
9. *art exalted*. The same Hebrew verb as xlvii. 9.

10-12. ENCOURAGEMENT FOR THE RIGHTEOUS

10. *hate evil*. P-B (correctly), *see that ye hate the thing which is evil*.

- 11 Light is sown for the righteous,
And gladness for the upright in heart.
12 Be glad in the LORD, ye righteous;
And give thanks to his holy ¹name.

¹ Heb. *memorial*.

11. *Light is sown for the righteous.* A warning to the righteous to be patient. At present light is *sown* for them, it is hidden out of sight, but it will presently *spring forth* as the dawn. The rendering of P-B, *There is sprung up a light for the righteous*, misses the point of this verse and the preceding v. 10. The righteous are to go on hating evil, though they must wait awhile for the dawn of light and gladness which is prepared for them.

PSALM XCVIII

A MAGNIFICAT OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

§ 1. CONTENTS.

1-6. Sing a new song for the salvation granted to Israel.

7-9. Let all the world rejoice, for JEHOVAH is about to come to judge the whole earth with righteousness.

§ 2. CHARACTER AND PURPOSE.

Much that has been written above concerning Ps xcvi applies also to Ps xcvi. (See the Introduction to Ps xcvi.) Ps xcvi is a Psalm which Christians have made their own in a special sense. When the Virgin sang, *Magnificat* (Luke i. 46-55), the "New Song" of the Gospel, she was answering the Psalmist's challenge. Several of her sayings are parallel to phrases contained in the Psalm: *He that is mighty hath done (to me) great things—He hath shewed strength with his arm—He hath holpen Israel his servant, That he might remember mercy... Toward Abraham and his seed for ever.* Thus from the Old Testament she has constructed a "new song" for the people of the New Covenant.

It is due to a kinship of thought between the two songs that *Cantate Domino* stands in the Prayer Book as an alternative to *Magnificat*.

Ps xcvi is of a prophetic character; it was composed by a Psalmist who shared the wide religious outlook of Deutero-Isaiah. It is true that his first thought is for Israel: he begins by calling for a new song to JEHOVAH to celebrate a recent "salvation" which JEHOVAH has wrought for His people. But he looks beyond the bounds of Israel. The Babylonish captivity taught psalmist and prophet (as we see from Deutero-Isaiah) a wider sympathy, and created a longing for a world-wide judgment to correct the wrongs of other oppressed peoples. The Psalmist thinks of JEHOVAH as the king—the universal king (v. 6): so he calls upon the world to rejoice over the deliverance which He has granted to Israel. But there is deliverance in store for the Gentiles also. JEHOVAH is about to judge the whole earth in righteousness: all nations will share this benefit.

For this universal boon the Psalmist calls on universal nature to give praise. The sea, and the inhabitants of the earth, the great rivers and the mountains are to perform their part: all created things are to become loud instruments for sounding forth the praise of God their Creator.

Later Hebrew thought is shot through and through with the idea of JEHOVAH as Creator and of the world as His creation. And the creature must needs praise the Creator, and so the Psalmist hears the voice of praise in the roaring of the sea, in the murmur of the rivers, and in the sound of the winds on the mountain-tops. And so he cries, Let sea—and river—and mountain yield their praise to JEHOVAH, for now is the time, for He hath done marvellous things.

A Psalm.

XCVIII. 1 O sing unto the LORD a new song;

For he hath done marvellous things:

His right hand, and his holy arm, hath wrought salvation for him.

2 The LORD hath made known his salvation:

His righteousness hath he openly shewed in the sight of the nations.

3 He hath remembered his mercy and his faithfulness toward the house of Israel:

All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.

1-6. SING A NEW SONG FOR JEHOVAH'S GIFT OF SALVATION TO ISRAEL

XCVIII. 1. *a new song.* Cf xcvi. 1.

marvellous things. In xcvi. 3, "marvellous works" (same Hebrew word).

his holy arm. Or, *his divine arm:* cf Isa lii. 10. "Holy" connotes divinity or deity.

hath wrought salvation for him. Better as AV *hath gotten him the victory.* The pronoun is in the ethic dative; it is over-emphasized when it is rendered for *him* at the end of the verse.

2. *hath he openly shewed* (Heb. *gillāh*). Or (as marg. AV), *hath he revealed*, i.e. unveiled. The whole phrase including the words, *in the sight of the nations*, suggests some action more striking than any known event of the post-exilic history. This verse, like v. 3, is no doubt eschatological in character, but (be it remembered) eschatological visions start from present fact. The Psalmist has been contemplating some recent Divine act of mercy to Israel, and accordingly he describes his vision of the coming of the kingdom of God in past tenses, because his recent experience assures him of the coming, perhaps of the nearness, of the kingdom. So in v. 3b, "All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God." This is an anticipation of an event which the Psalmist sees in apocalyptic vision to be near at hand.

- 4 Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all the earth:
Break forth and sing for joy, yea, sing praises.
- 5 Sing praises unto the LORD with the harp;
With the harp and the voice of melody.
- 6 With trumpets and sound of cornet
Make a joyful noise before the King, the LORD.
- 7 Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof;
The world, and they that dwell therein;
- 8 Let the floods clap their hands;
Let the hills sing for joy together;
- 9 Before the LORD, for he cometh to judge the earth:
He shall judge the world with righteousness,
And the peoples with equity.

4. *Make a joyful noise.* Hebrew as in xcv. 1b.

5. *the voice of melody.* Or, as AV, *the voice of a psalm.* The meaning of the Hebrew is not certain.

6. *sound of cornet* (Heb. *shōphār*). This instrument (a horn of some kind) was used on religious occasions: cf lxxxi. 3, note; Josh vi. 4 (the taking of Jericho).

the King, the LORD. I.e. the King, even JEHOVAH. This is the right order, not *the Lord the King* as P-B. The bystanders ask, Who is the king? (xxiv. 8, 10), and the Psalmist answers with emphasis, JEHOVAH.

7-9. LET THE WORLD REJOICE BEFORE THE KING AS HE COMES
TO JUDGE IN RIGHTEOUSNESS (cf xcvi. 11-13)

7. *Let the sea roar.* Cf xcvi. 11.

8. *the floods* (Heb. *nēhāroth*). LXX, *ποταμοί*, the great rivers, specially the Euphrates and the Nile.

clap their hands. The metaphor suggests the roaring of waves: certainly in a storm the exposed reaches of Euphrates become like a raging sea. Cf Isa lv. 12 ("the trees of the field shall clap their hands").

9. *Before the Lord.* In the Hebrew there is a verse-division (*Sōph pāsūk*) between v. 8 and v. 9, but the sense is unbroken. It is a strange anomaly, intended perhaps to throw the emphasis on these first words of v. 9. In AV there is no stop at the end of v. 8.

with equity (Heb. *mēshārim*). The Hebrew word is plural in form: perhaps "with equitable decisions"; ix. 8, lviii. 1, lxxv. 2, xcvi. 10, xcix. 4.

PSALM XCIX
JEHOVAH OUR KING IS HOLY

§ 1. CONTENTS.

- 1-3. JEHOVAH who dwells in Zion has become king of the earth.
 4. He is the righteous judge: worship Him.
 5. A Refrain: cf v. 9.
 6. Remember the great men of old who called upon JEHOVAH, and received an answer.
 7, 8. Israel in the wilderness rebelled, was punished, and was forgiven.
 9. The Refrain: cf v. 5.

§ 2. CHARACTER.

Ps xcix resembles Pss xcvi, xcvi, and xcvi in that it celebrates the kingship of JEHOVAH, but it differs from them in some important particulars.

The three concern themselves seriously with the fortunes of the Gentiles: all nations are to share in the benefits of JEHOVAH'S General Judgment; all are invited to rejoice over JEHOVAH'S Advent as Judge. They might almost be called Missionary Psalms.

The case is different with xcix. There is no invitation to any one to rejoice. Worshipers are to exalt JEHOVAH because He executes judgment "in Jacob." No universal judgment is mentioned. The Gentiles are noticed, only to be told that they are to "tremble" (or "stand in awe"). Once JEHOVAH is described as "terrible" (v. 3), and thrice (vv. 3, 5, 9) as "holy," an epithet equally suggesting dread. The Psalm is Levitical or priestly in its outlook: Moses and Aaron are mentioned as priests and Samuel, though he offered sacrifice (1 Sam vii. 9, 10, xiii. 8, 9, xvi. 5), is carefully described in different terms.

XCIX. 1 The LORD reigneth; let the peoples tremble:

He ¹sitteth upon the cherubim; let the earth be moved.

2 The LORD is great in Zion;

And he is high above all the peoples.

¹ Or, *dwelleth between*

1-3. JEHOVAH HAS BECOME KING

XCIX. 1. *The LORD reigneth.* Or, *JEHOVAH hath become king:* cf xciii. 1.

let the peoples tremble. The same Hebrew verb as iv. 4, "*Stand in awe (or tremble), and sin not.*" The motive of fear is strongly expressed in this Psalm: cf v. 3. The whole verse should be rendered, *JEHOVAH hath become king; let the peoples tremble: He that sitteth upon the cherubim reigneth; let the earth be moved.* But, *be the people never so impatient... be the earth never so unquiet* (P-B) are mistranslations.

2. *great in Zion...high above all the peoples.* Here is the tone of Jewish exclusiveness, which distinguishes this Psalm from xcvi. 10-13 and xcvi. 7-9.

- 3 Let them praise thy great and terrible name:
Holy is he.
- 4 The king's strength also loveth judgement;
Thou dost establish equity,
Thou executest judgement and righteousness in Jacob.
- 5 Exalt ye the LORD our God,
And worship at his footstool:
Holy is he.
- 6 Moses and Aaron among his priests,
And Samuel among them that call upon his name;
They called upon the LORD, and he answered them.
- 7 He spake unto them in the pillar of cloud:
They kept his testimonies, and the statute that he gave them.
3. *thy great and terrible name.* Cf Deut vii. 21, x. 17, xxviii. 58.
Holy (Heb. *kādōsh*) is *he*. So in v. 5; cf v. 9.

4. THE KING IS A RIGHTEOUS JUDGE: WORSHIP HIM

4. *The king's strength...loveth judgement.* The phrase is unusual, and some commentators emend the text, but the words give good sense. This strong king when he might, if he chose, rule arbitrarily, deliberately prefers to rule according to "judgment," or "law" as moderns would say.

5. A REFRAIN

5. *at his footstool.* I.e. in His temple, cf v. 9 and cxxxii. 7, where "his tabernacle(s)" is parallel to "his footstool"; also 1 Chr xxviii. 2 (David speaks), "It was in mine heart to build an house...for the footstool of our God."

6. THE SAINTS

6. *Moses and Aaron.* Both these as being of the tribe of Levi (Exod ii. 1, iv. 14) are reckoned as priests, whereas Samuel being of the tribe of Ephraim is not so described.

They called upon JEHOVAH. The reference is to the occasions on which Moses, Aaron, and Samuel obtained forgiveness for Israel by their intercession: Moses on the occasion of the Golden Calf (Exod xxxii-xxxiv), Aaron on the occasion of the Plague (Num xvi. 44-48), Samuel during the Philistine danger (1 Sam vii. 8, 9; cf 1 Sam xii. 16 ff.).

he answered them. Not, *he heard them* (P-B).

7, 8. THE REBELLION OF ISRAEL

7. *He spake etc.* Perhaps, *Though he spake unto them* (the children of Israel) *in the pillar of cloud, yet they rebelled against his testimonies,*

- 8 Thou answeredst them, O LORD our God:
 Thou wast a God that forgavest them,
 Though thou tookest vengeance of their doings.
- 9 Exalt ye the LORD our God,
 And worship at his holy hill;
 For the LORD our God is holy.

and the statute that he gave them. There is a difficulty here in the Hebrew text: *v.* 8 presupposes that *v.* 7 contains a complaint of Israel's sin, whereas according to MT *v.* 7 contains an assertion of Israel's obedience only. Perhaps for *they kept* (Heb. *shāmērū*, *v.* 7 *b*) we should read *they rebelled against* (Heb. *māru* as in 1 Sam xii. 15; cf 1 K xiii. 21, same Hebrew verb). Another suggested emendation is *shāmē'ū*, "they heard," for *shāmērū*. Duhm would retain *shāmērū* and render, *He spake in the pillar of cloud to those who are the guardians of his statutes* ("die seine Zeugnisse bewahren").

the pillar of cloud. See Exod xiii. 21, 22, xxxiii. 9, 10.

8. *Thou wast a God that forgavest them.* More lit. *Thou becamest to them a forgiving God* (Exod xxxiv. 7).

tookst vengeance. P-B, *punishedst.* The word *vengeance* expresses the Eastern view of something which it is the Avenger's sacred duty to exact, something which can be exactly measured, as a life for a life, "an eye for an eye." *Punishment* stands for the Western view; it is used of something which may be modified in amount or even remitted altogether.

9. THE REFRAIN

9. *at his holy hill.* Cf xv. 1, xxiv. 3.

PSALM C

PRAISE JEHOVAH FOR MAKING US HIS PEOPLE

§ 1. CONTENTS.

1-3. A summons to a *tērū'āh* ("an outburst of joyful praise") to JEHOVAH, Who hath made us a nation.

4, 5. Enter His temple with thanksgiving, for He is everlastingly good.

§ 2. CHARACTER AND PURPOSE.

This like Ps xciv belongs to the cultus: it is such a composition as the Levitical singers may well have sung as an invitatory to worship, whether at one of the great feasts or on some ordinary occasion. But the language is too general to make it probable that the Psalm was to be sung over a sacrifice (or thanksgiving), as some expositors suggest; indeed the instinct of the Christian Church can hardly be in fault in seeing in this lyric a hymn of universal use. It calls all the earth to worship, though the Psalmist has Israel chiefly in his mind.

A Psalm ¹of thanksgiving.

C. 1 Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, ²all ye lands.

2 Serve the LORD with gladness:

Come before his presence with singing.

3 Know ye that the LORD he is God:

It is he that hath made us, ³and we are his;

We are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

4 Enter into his gates with ⁴thanksgiving,

¹ Or, for the thank offering

² Heb. all the earth.

³ Another reading is, and not we ourselves.

⁴ Or, a thank offering

C. **HEADING.** *A Psalm of thanksgiving.* Marg. *A Psalm for the thank offering.* The Hebrew word *tōdāh* (lit. "thanksgiving") means a thank offering in Amos iv. 5 and (as some think) also in this heading; cf v. 4.

1-3. SHOUT TO JEHOVAH

1. *Make a joyful noise* (Vulgate, *jubilare*). The same Hebrew verb as in lxxxix. 15, where see note.

2. *Serve JEHOVAH with gladness.* Cf ii. 11, "Serve JEHOVAH with fear, And rejoice with trembling." The Hebrew verb ("serve") and the cognate substantive ("service") are sometimes used in the special sense of keeping one of the festivals: Exod iii. 12, xii. 25, 26.

with singing. Or, *with loud singing*, as the Hebrew word suggests.

3. *Know ye.* P-B, *Be ye sure*, i.e. "Be ye assured." The people addressed are the inhabitants of *all lands* (v. 1), or as marg. *all the earth*. They are invited to join in praising JEHOVAH for the great things which He has done for Israel: cf Rom xv. 10, 11.

the LORD he is God. I.e. JEHOVAH *he is God*. In 1 K xviii. 39 the people who witnessed the defeat of the prophets of Baal made the confession, "JEHOVAH, he is *the* God." Perhaps this is the meaning of our passage though the definite article is missing: cf xlvi. 10, "Be still, and know that I am God."

It is he that hath made us. I.e. It is he who made us a nation when we were a horde of slaves in Egypt: cf Deut xxxii. 6, 15; Isa xliii. 1, 15, 21. The following words, *and we are his*, agree with the preceding and following context alike. It is read by K^ri, Targum, and Jerome *juxta Hebraeos*. Still the rendering of P-B (= AV), *and not we ourselves*, is well supported. It is the reading of the C^thib, LXX, Vulgate, and Peshitta.

4, 5. ENTER HIS TEMPLE

4. *his gates.* I.e. his house; cf lxxxvii. 2, note.

with thanksgiving (Heb. *tōdāh*). Cf (later in this verse) "Give thanks unto him." The language of the Psalm in general suits the thought of

And into his courts with praise:

Give thanks unto him, and bless his name.

5 For the LORD is good; his mercy *endureth* for ever;

And his faithfulness unto all generations.

thanksgiving with the lips. *With a thank offering* is a less probable rendering.

bless his name. Cf xcvi. 2.

5. For *JEHOVAH is good; his mercy endureth for ever.* This is one form of a well-known refrain; cvi. 1, cxxxvi. 1 ff.; 2 Chr xx. 21; 1 Macc iv. 24.

PSALM CI

THE RESOLUTIONS OF A NEW RULER. (Cf Ps lxxv)

§ 1. CONTENTS.

1. The ruler joyfully acknowledges the goodness of *JEHOVAH*.

2-5. The ruler will purge his household of unworthy members.

6. And he will look out faithful men to serve him in their place.

7, 8. He will cleanse Jerusalem of the wicked daily.

§ 2. CHARACTER AND PURPOSE.

The writer of this Psalm recognises the fact that the government of Israel is a theocracy: that *JEHOVAH* is the sovran lord, and that he himself, the earthly ruler, is only *JEHOVAH*'s deputy. So the Psalmist opens his heart to his suzerain and declares what his policy will be. He will expel from his household those who are unfaithful to *JEHOVAH* together with the slanderers and the haughty and disdainful. The faithful ones shall administer the government. The Psalmist being stedfast in his purpose will day after day cut off the wicked from Judah and Jerusalem. The programme in its vigour and ruthlessness might be that of the reforming king Josiah (2 K xxiii. 1-25). The Psalmist no doubt is confident of the support of *JEHOVAH* in his work, but he fails to express the truth (so well displayed in Ps lxxv. 6-8) that *JEHOVAH* Himself is the real and final judge of the wicked.

A Psalm of David.

CI. 1 I will sing of mercy and judgement:

Unto thee, O LORD, will I sing praises.

1. A RULER ACKNOWLEDGES THE GOODNESS OF *JEHOVAH*. (Cf lxxv)

CI. 1. *I will sing of mercy and judgement.* Cf lxxxix. 1, "I will sing of the mercies of *JEHOVAH*": also 1 K iii. 6 (Solomon's acknowledgment of God's mercy to David in giving his kingdom to his son).

- 2 I will ¹behave myself wisely in a perfect way:
 Oh when wilt thou come unto me?
 I will walk within my house ²with a perfect heart.
- 3 I will set no base thing before mine eyes:
 I hate ³the work of them that turn aside;
 It shall not cleave unto me.
- 4 A froward heart shall depart from me:
 I will know no ⁴evil thing.
- 5 Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, him will I destroy:
 Him that hath an high look and a proud heart will I not suffer.
- ¹ Or, give heed unto the perfect way ² Or, in the integrity of my heart
³ Or, the doing of unfaithfulness ⁴ Or, evil person

2-5. HE WILL PURGE HIS HOUSEHOLD

2. *I will behave* etc. Better as marg. *I will give heed unto the perfect way*. The first line of the verse speaks of consideration, the third ("I will walk") promises action.

when wilt thou come unto me? Cf Num xxii. 19, 20, where Balaam desires to know JEHOVAH's will, and the narrator continues, "And God came unto Balaam at night."

within my house. Rather, *within my household*: cf Isa xxxvi. 3. The "household" of a king or governor included his ministers and officers who administered affairs under him.

with a perfect heart. Better as marg. *in the integrity of my heart*. The Psalmist purposes to control his ministers and to permit no corruption of justice nor oppression of the people.

3. *I will set no base thing* (Heb. *thing of Belial*) *before mine eyes*. I.e. I will not consider any plan of evil-doing.

I hate the work of them that turn aside. Better perhaps (admitting a slight emendation), *I hate him that dealeth unfaithfully*; cf LXX, ποιούντας παραβάσεις ἐμίσησα. See cxix. 113 (P-B and RV against AV), cxxxix. 21. The reference is to unfaithful Jews who turn aside to foreign worships.

It (rather, He) shall not cleave unto me. He (i.e. the unfaithful worker) shall not be allowed to remain in my household.

4. *A froward* (or *perverse*) *heart*. I.e. a person who has a twisted (i.e. not straightforward) mind. Cf Deut xxxii. 5, "A *perverse* and crooked generation."

I will know. I.e. I will recognize as one of my household.

evil thing. Better (as marg.), *evil person*; cf v. 3, "the unfaithful worker," *not*, "the work of them that turn aside."

5. *privily slandereth*. Cf xv. 3.

Him...will I not suffer. LXX (from a slightly different reading of the Hebrew), τούτῳ οὐ συνήσθιον: Vulgate, *cum hoc non edebam*, "with him I did not eat."

an high look and a proud heart. Cf Pro xxi. 4.

6 Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me:

He that walketh in a perfect way, he shall minister unto me.

7 He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house:

He that speaketh falsehood shall not be established before mine eyes.

8 Morning by morning will I destroy all the wicked of the land; To cut off all the workers of iniquity from the city of the LORD.

6. THE RULER WILL CHOOSE FAITHFUL SERVANTS

6. *Mine eyes... upon the faithful.* I.e. I will favour such: cf Gen xlv. 21 (see Septuagint); Deut xi. 12.

may dwell with me. Or, *may sit with me*, i.e. in council: Vulgate (from LXX), *ut sedeant tecum.*

shall minister unto me. The verb *minister* (Heb. *shērēth*) describes the lower service, while *serve* (Heb. *‘ābad*) and *servant* (Heb. *‘ebed*) are used to describe the work of the higher officers—as the captain of the host, the scribe, the recorder, the vizier (“he who is over the household”).

7, 8. HE WILL CLEANSE JERUSALEM OF THE WICKED

7. *He that worketh deceit (or treachery).* Another possible rendering is, *He that dealeth negligently* (cf Jer xlvi. 10), like the unjust judge who avenged the widow only after a while and only because she troubled him (Luke xviii. 2-5).

shall not dwell. Or, *shall not sit* (in council), as v. 6.

shall not be established. I.e. in his office; cf 1 Sam xx. 31.

8. *Morning by morning will I destroy.* Not as P-B (cf AV), *I shall soon destroy.*

the wicked of the land. The same Hebrew phrase as in lxxv. 8; contrast xxxv. 20, “them that are quiet in the land.”

all the workers of iniquity. Cf v. 5, note.

PSALM CII

THE PRAYER OF ONE WHO HAD WAITED LONG FOR THE CONSOLATION OF JERUSALEM

§ 1. CONTENTS AND REFERENCE.

Like the Watchman in the *Agamemnon* of Aeschylus the Psalmist is watching for tidings which deeply concern the fortune of his city. Like the same Watchman again the Psalmist prays for release from his long and wearing vigil. He might indeed take up the line,

κλαίω... οἴκου τοῦδε συμφορὰν στένων¹. *Agam.* 16.

¹ “Moaning I wail the fortunes of this house.”

The Psalmist is urgent, for the answer has been long delayed. "Answer me speedily," he intreats, for he knows that his days are vanishing; he is growing old as he waits (*vs.* 3, 11). Solitude adds to his weariness: he is like a lonely desert bird (*v.* 6): his former fellow-watchers have deserted his side: "I am *become*," he says, "like a bird that is alone upon the housetop." He fasts and weeps (*v.* 9), hoping to obtain a favourable answer, but the answer does not come, and his enemies reproach him with his (apparent) failure (*v.* 8). Once JEHOVAH had lifted him up with hope, but now He has cast the Psalmist down. Years are passing and he feels all his strength going (*v.* 11).

But his petition—unexpressed hitherto—is not for himself, but for Zion. He comforts himself with the thought that though he himself may be near his end, JEHOVAH sits as judge for ever and that to Him Zion's cause belongs:

What matters it that I must cease,
Since Thou must BE?

"Thou," he says with emphasis on the pronoun, "sittest as judge," and again with emphasis on the pronoun, "*Thou...shalt* have mercy upon Zion." It is for Zion that the Psalmist has prayed—and watched—and fasted—and wept, and faith tells him that now at last the time has come and that favour will indeed be shown to her (*v.* 13).

The three following verses use the generalized language of poetry, but they indicate pretty clearly an important historical event. "Thy servants *show favour* to her stones." Who are "Thy servants"? Not Jews, for then the expression *show favour* would be much out of place. The reference is to the Gentile rulers of Palestine, such as Cyrus who allowed the rebuilding of the Temple, or Artaxerxes Longimanus who sent Nehemiah to build the walls of Jerusalem. In the person of such rulers "the nations (the Gentiles) feared the name of JEHOVAH." In *v.* 16 the Psalmist says that "When JEHOVAH shall build up Zion, then his glory shall be seen," especially no doubt by the surrounding heathen. Similarly in *vs.* 17, 18, the Psalmist sees in vision the effect of the event which he expects, "When he (JEHOVAH) turneth him unto the prayer of the destitute...." Then this crowning mercy shall be recorded, and Israel being born anew as a nation shall praise JEHOVAH. A further vision granted by Faith to the Psalmist is recorded in the four verses which follow (19–22). JEHOVAH looks down from heaven; i.e. He takes up His work of active providence; He releases Israel from (Babylonish) captivity; and "men" celebrate His name in Zion. This Pisgah sight of the New Age rouses in the Psalmist a yearning that he may be spared himself to taste its joys. He reflects in *v.* 23 on his own loss of youthful strength; he fears that he may be cut off before his time. But again he comforts himself with the thought that the years of JEHOVAH do not come to an end (*v.* 28). The children of those who serve Him shall dwell on in the land to see the restoration of Zion.

It is profitless to discuss whether this Psalm is "National" or "Individual." Like the prophecies of Jeremiah it is both. The Psalmist feels the sorrows of Zion as his own.

§ 2. DATE.

The date of the Psalm must remain uncertain. The one thing clear is that it is later than Deutero-Isaiah, but there is nothing which definitely connects it with Maccabean times.

A Prayer of the afflicted, when he ¹is overwhelmed, and poureth out his complaint before the LORD.

- CII. 1** Hear my prayer, O LORD,
 And let my cry come unto thee.
2 Hide not thy face from me in the day of my distress:
 Incline thine ear unto me;
 In the day when I call answer me speedily.
3 For my days consume away ²like smoke,
 And my bones are burned ³as a firebrand.
4 My heart is smitten like grass, and withered;
 For I forget to eat my bread.
5 By reason of the voice of my groaning
 My bones cleave to my flesh.
6 I am like a pelican of the wilderness;

¹ Or, fainteth² Or, in smoke³ Or, as an hearth

1-12. A CRY OF DEEP DISTRESS

CII. 2. *Hide not thy face.* Cf xiii. 1, note.

in the day of my distress. This is the vivid Hebrew form of expression, but the words might be rendered simply, "when I am in trouble." The trouble as appears from the later verses is not purely personal: it has arisen from the unhappy state of his country.

3. *like smoke.* As the following verse shows the Psalmist is comparing his days to grass which is burnt up by the Sun and goes up in smoke. The marginal reading in *smoke* is that of MT (except a few MSS) and Peshitta. Targum and LXX (ὡσεὶ καπνός) have *like smoke*.

as a firebrand. So P-B, but probably *as an hearth* (AV, RV marg.) is better. Here the Hebrew word is *mōkēd*, but the cognate word *mōkēdāh* is rendered "hearth" in Lev vi. 9 (RV, vi. 2, Hebrew). The hearth was the highest part of the altar on which the burning of the victim took place.

4. *My heart is smitten.* "My heart" = "I." Cf xvi. 9, note on "my glory."

I forget to eat. This expression suggests that the Psalmist's trouble (like Nehemiah's) is not physical but mental: cf Neh ii. 2, "This is nothing else but sorrow of heart."

5. *cleave to my flesh.* The same Hebrew verb as in xxii. 15 (16, Hebrew).

6. *pelican.* Heb. *kā'āth*. A large bird, 5-6 feet long at its greatest measurement. It is abundant in the swamps of the Jordan valley. It lives on fish which it captures and stores in a capacious pouch situated under its lower mandible. When it is filled it retires to a lonely place (in "the wilderness") to digest. The attitude of the bird when at rest

I am become as an owl of the waste places.

7 I watch, and am become

Like a sparrow that is alone upon the housetop.

8 Mine enemies reproach me all the day ;

They that are mad against me do curse by me.

9 For I have eaten ashes like bread,

And mingled my drink with weeping.

10 Because of thine indignation and thy wrath :

For thou hast taken me up, and cast me away.

11 My days are like a shadow that ¹declineth ;

And I am withered like grass.

¹ Or, *is stretched out*

is singularly listless and melancholy. See G. E. Post in *Hastings' D.B.* III. 738.

an owl of the waste places. "Owl," Heb. *kōs*: LXX, *νυκτικώραξ*, i.e. the *Strix stridula* or Tawny Owl, which utters a peculiarly loud and melancholy hoot in the evening. The owl is well known to frequent ruins.

7. *I watch, and am become Like a sparrow.* So LXX, *ἐγενήθην ὡσεὶ στρουθίου*. The Psalmist has watched on faithfully though forsaken by his fellow-watchers. MT (supported by LXX) gives a perfectly satisfactory sense, but Gunkel emends in order to obtain a line of three accented syllables and to "improve" the sentiment:

I watch by night and I moan

As a bird alone on a roof.

But the Hebrew verb used here for *watch* does not suggest night-watching, and the introduction of the phrase *by night* is gratuitous. The first line of the verse goes haltingly in the Hebrew in order to express the weariness of the Psalmist. Duhm approves "I moan," but no change of text is necessary. The Heb. *zippōr*, LXX, *στρουθίου*, means any small bird as in xi. 1.

8. *Mine enemies reproach me.* "Reproach" (AV and RV) is better than "revile" (P-B): it implies an insult of a definite character. In this case the enemies tell the Psalmist that he has watched himself ill to no purpose: the salvation he has been looking for so eagerly *has not come*.

do curse by me. Somewhat in the following form: "The LORD make thee as this disappointed Psalmist, who will never see what he hopes for." Cf Jer xxix. 22.

9. *eaten ashes.* Metaphorically, of course. The Psalmist takes no pleasure in food: he cannot feast while Jerusalem lies in the dust.

10. *thou hast taken me up.* Better as AV, "Thou hast lifted me up," i.e. with hope.

11. *like a shadow that declineth.* Rather, *like a shadow stretched out* and therefore ready to vanish altogether with the setting sun.

I am withered like grass. Better, *I shall wither like grass*, i.e. I shall

- 12 But thou, O LORD, ¹shalt abide for ever ;
 And thy memorial unto all generations.
- 13 Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion :
 For it is time to have pity upon her, yea, the set time is come
- 14 For thy servants take pleasure in her stones,
 And have pity upon her dust.
- 15 So the nations shall fear the name of the LORD,
 And all the kings of the earth thy glory :
- 16 For the LORD hath built up Zion,
 He hath appeared in his glory ;

¹ Or, *sittest* as king

depart in a moment. Withering is not a slow process under an eastern sun, but the reverse: "The (hot) wind passeth over it, and it is gone" (ciii. 16).

12. *thou, O LORD, shalt abide for ever.* Better, *thou, O JEHOVAH, sittest* (cf margin) *as judge for ever.* The Psalmist reassures himself with the thought that JEHOVAH will judge between him and his enemies, and will grant him the salvation (see p. 244) of Zion for which he is watching.

thy memorial. I.e. Thy Name associated as it is with all the wonders Thou hast done for Israel. Cf cxxxv. 13.

13-22. THE CASE OF ZION

13. *Thou shalt arise.* The appeal "Arise, O JEHOVAH" is frequent in the Psalter: cf iii. 7, note. JEHOVAH "sits" to hear the appeal of His servants and "arises" to maintain their cause.

14. *thy servants.* Not the Jewish people nor their leaders, but Gentile rulers such as Cyrus (Isa xlv. 28) or Artaxerxes (Neh ii. 1-8) who proved themselves JEHOVAH's servants by carrying out His will for the Temple and for the Holy City. See Introduction, page 476.

have pity upon her dust. Better (as AV), *favour the dust thereof*, i.e. "show favour" to the ruined city, as did Artaxerxes.

15. *So the nations shall fear.* Rather, *And the nations fear*, i.e. they show their fear of JEHOVAH through the acts of their rulers. The Hebrew tense is the same as in v. 14 *b*.

shall fear the name of JEHOVAH. In Hebrew the words *shall fear* and *shall see* are hardly to be distinguished one from the other. The versions (LXX, Peshitta, Targum, Jerome) give the former rendering. So in xcix. 3, cxi. 9 JEHOVAH's name is said to be "terrible" or "reverend" (Heb. *nōrā*). Cf lxi. 5, *those that fear thy name* (the same Hebrew verb). But Gunkel gives *sehen* ("see").

16. *JEHOVAH hath built up Zion.* The change to the perfect tense should be noted: what JEHOVAH has willed the Psalmist describes as

- 17 He hath regarded the prayer of the destitute,
And hath not despised their prayer.
- 18 This shall be written for the generation to come:
And a people which shall be created shall praise ¹the LORD.
- 19 For he hath looked down from the height of his sanctuary;
From heaven did the LORD behold the earth;
- 20 To hear the sighing of the prisoner;
To loose ²those that are appointed to death;
- 21 That men may declare the name of the LORD in Zion,
And his praise in Jerusalem;
- 22 When the peoples are gathered together,
And the kingdoms, to serve the LORD.

¹ Heb. *Jah*.² Heb. *the children of death*.

already accomplished. Further the Psalmist would say that all is due not to the heathen power, but to JEHOVAH Himself.

17. *the prayer of the destitute*. The Hebrew word used here for "destitute" is 'ar'ār, which means properly a kind of juniper which grows in the desert (Jer xvii. 6, where EV has "heath"). From its naked appearance (since it has very small leaves) it has received the name of 'ar'ār, "naked one." A poor man in his loneliness is represented here under the figure of a starveling plant of the desert just as in xxxvii. 35 the wicked oppressor in his ill-gotten wealth is compared to the "green tree." (What particular tree is meant in xxxvii. 35 is not known, but it is *not* a desert tree.) Other comparisons of man to a tree occur in i. 3, lii. 8, xcii. 12, cxxviii. 3 ("thy wife a fruitful vine"). No emendation is needed.

18. *a people which shall be created*. This is better than *the people which shall be born* (P-B). The Psalmist is thinking of an Israel gathered by JEHOVAH out of the lands of their exile and made anew into a people of the LORD; cf Isa xliii. 15, "I am JEHOVAH...the Creator of Israel."

19. *he hath looked down*. Heb. *hishkiph*, as in xiv. 2; Gen xviii. 16; Exod xiv. 24. The *looking down* implies that some judgment is at hand.

20. *the prisoner* (sing.)...*those that are appointed to death* (plural). Such an interchange of number is not unusual in Hebrew parallelism; possibly the change is significant here. The *singular* refers (perhaps) to the head of the house of David dwelling in exile, the *plural* to the exiles in general.

21. *That men etc.* An unfortunate rendering. Rather, *That they* (i.e. the exiles) may return and *declare the name* (or *the fame*) of JEHOVAH in Zion: so P-B.

22. *When the peoples are gathered together*. This verse should be read in immediate connexion with the preceding. The sense is, that the exiles now returned may sing the praise of JEHOVAH because the peoples

- 23 ¹He weakened my strength in the way;
He shortened my days.
- 24 I said, O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days:
Thy years are throughout all generations.
- 25 Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth;
And the heavens are the work of thy hands.
- 26 They shall perish, but thou shalt endure:
Yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment;
As a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be
changed:

¹ Another reading is, *He afflicted me with his strength.*

of the world are gathered in Jerusalem to serve JEHOVAH. The prophetic vision of the Return from Babylonish captivity includes an anticipation that Gentile nations will join themselves to Israel and will worship JEHOVAH in Jerusalem: Isa xiv. 1, lx. 10-12; Zech viii. 18-23.

23-28. THE PSALMIST'S OWN SUFFERINGS AND HOPES

23. *He weakened my strength in the way.* For *He weakened* read *He afflicted* (literal translation). *My strength* is one of the many Hebrew paraphrases for the simple pronoun of the first person: cf v. 4, note on *My heart*. *He afflicted me in the way* means that in the midst of the journey of my life He affrighted me with the fear of approaching death. The Psalmist fears that though he has watched (v. 7) he may not live to see the Redemption of Zion.

He (hath) shortened my days. This is an expression not of fact, but of the Psalmist's fear.

24. *O my God, take me not away.* In these words the Psalmist recovers himself and prays for reprieve from death.

Thy years are throughout all generations. More literally, *Thy years are equivalent to (Beth essentiae) a generation of generations.* Herein is a naive comparison of the life of God and the life of Man. A generation may be reckoned to last forty years. An impressive comparison is suggested in xc. 4, 10, "A thousand years in thy sight Are but as yesterday.... The days of our years are threescore years and ten."

25. *the work of thy hands.* Cf viii. 3.

26. *They shall perish.* On the other hand the permanence of creation is stated in cxlviii. 6, cf cxix. 90. That heaven and earth shall pass away is a thought infrequent in O.T., but see Isa xxxiv. 4; and particularly Isa li. 6, "The heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment." Ps cii. 26 is quoted in Heb i. 11, 12.

As a vesture shalt thou change them. The reference is to the heavens: they are reckoned as JEHOVAH'S vesture; cf civ. 2:

Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment;
Who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain.

27 But thou art the same,
And thy years shall have no end.

28 The children of thy servants shall continue,
And their seed shall be established before thee.

One day JEHOVAH will change the old heavens for new. The reading of the verb is clear in MT, "Thou shalt change," but in LXX (here) and in Heb i. 12 where the Psalm is quoted there are two readings (ἐλλάξεις, "thou shalt roll up," and ἀλλάξεις, "thou shalt change"), each of which has considerable support.

27. *But thou art the same.* Heb. *But thou art He.* The pronoun "He" is used in Hebrew as "an emphatic predicate of God": e.g. Deut xxxii. 39, "I, even I, am He; And there is no god with me"; Isa xli. 4, "I JEHOVAH, the first, and with the last, I am He." "He" stands for "the Self-existent One."

28. *The children of thy servants.* Much is implied in this verse which is not said. Because JEHOVAH exists "for ever," the descendants of those who serve Him will obtain blessing. His mercy will go on for generation after generation.

shall continue. I.e. *shall (still) dwell* (in the land) of Israel.

And their seed shall be established before thee. The Psalmist does not expect individual immortality, but only the survival of the families of the righteous. From generation to generation the descendants of the faithful worshippers of JEHOVAH will be established in Jerusalem in sight of His temple. The family lives on before God.

PSALM CIII

AN INVITATORY TO MAN IN HIS FRAILTY TO PRAISE GOD IN HIS GREATNESS

§ 1. CONTENTS.

1-5. The Psalmist, saved from death and restored to health by JEHOVAH, resolves to bless JEHOVAH for all His dealings with him.

6-14. JEHOVAH's fatherlike dealings with Israel from the days of Moses onwards.

15-18. His mercy is not to be measured by the brevity of the individual life: it continues from generation to generation.

19-22. The Majesty of JEHOVAH the King. The Psalmist calls upon the higher powers to add their praise to his own.

§ 2. CHARACTER AND PURPOSE.

This Psalm is an Invitatory. The Psalmist records JEHOVAH's mercies to himself, and resolves to give thanks (*vv.* 1-5). Then he widens his survey and tells of God's mercies to Israel, and thereby implicitly invites his people to join him in his giving of thanks (*vv.* 6 ff.). Chief among these mercies he puts God's forgiveness of sins and God's fatherly regard for His people.

Then, carried away by the spirit of thankfulness, he leads on from thought to thought of God's goodness to Israel and (so it seems at the end) to all the world. His Psalm is a striking example of the joy the Hebrews felt in praising God. Cf xcii. 1, 2. See also Ps cxlix, Introduction, § 2.

Moreover the Psalm throws an interesting light on the Hebrew view of sickness. Sickness is no "accident"; it comes directly from God; "Thine arrows stick fast in me," cries one Psalmist in his pain (xxxviii. 2). The continuance of sickness again is God's doing; "Day and night thy hand was heavy upon me," says another (xxxii. 4). Finally recovery is in all cases due to the mercy of God, "Who healeth all thy diseases" (cii. 3).

The Psalm opens (v. 1-5) with a glowing thanksgiving for the Psalmist's recovery. He calls upon his soul (Heb. *nephesh*), which was according to Hebrew thought the centre of feeling and emotion, to bless JEHOVAH. Further he summons all parts of his body to join in thanksgiving, for his members individually have felt the pains and the weariness of sickness: "All my inward parts, bless his holy name." This use of personification is characteristic of Hebrew speech: cf xxxv. 10, "All my bones shall say, JEHOVAH, who is like unto thee?"

In v. 2 the Psalmist calls further upon his soul, "Forget not all his *benefits*." The sentiment rings true, but the English word does not represent all that the Hebrew suggests. The Heb. *gēmūl* is a word *mediae significationis*, corresponding to the English word "recompense," i.e. something awarded to one by God whether as a punishment or as a reward. We might render "Forget not all His dealings with thee." The word "all" is significant here: the Psalmist wishes to remember not only the open benefits which he has received, but also those disguised benefits—the pain and the languor of sickness—which were his chastisements from JEHOVAH.

From v. 3 we learn the Psalmist's thoughts about recovery from sickness. JEHOVAH first forgives the sin, then He seals His forgiveness by the gift of health: "Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; Who healeth all thy diseases." The soul is first cured, and then the body. Our Lord observed the same order in healing the man sick of the palsy: first he said, "Son, thy sins are forgiven," and then after a pause, "I say unto thee, Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thy house" (Mark ii. 5, 11).

Verse 4 tells of the wonder of JEHOVAH'S deliverance of the Psalmist. His Lord snatched him from the verge of the "pit"—the grave—and crowned him "with lovingkindness and tender mercies," or in the words of St James (i. 12) gave him "the crown of life," i.e. restoration to perfect health.

Verse 5 should be rendered, "Who satisfieth thee with good to be thine ornament." The metaphor introduced by the word "crown" in v. 4 is continued in v. 5. God's gift of good health which imparts to the body its beauty is described first by the particular term "a crown," and afterwards by the more general word "adorning" or "ornament." The bright eye and the ruddy complexion of health are the adorning (or "ornament") of which the Psalmist is thinking. (See the note on v. 5 *infra*.) In these first five verses the Psalmist being restored to perfect health looks back to his narrow escape from death with overflowing thankfulness.

In vv. 6-14 he takes a wider range. When he speaks of JEHOVAH'S forgive-

ness and of His gift of healing to himself, he recalls as a patriotic Israelite his Lord's similar benefits to his nation. Taking a wide survey of the history of Israel—in Egypt, in the Wilderness, and in the Return from Babylon—the Psalmist finds it filled with the merciful acts of JEHOVAH. In *vs.* 6–14 the Psalmist becomes the religious philosopher who finds God at work in the history of his people.

A philosopher, but also a pastor. In this portion of the Psalm he strives earnestly to commend the LORD to his people. Like a new Moses he pleads with his hearers to recognise JEHOVAH as full of compassion and gracious, even as the LORD proclaimed His name on Mount Sinai (*Exod* xxxiv. 6). He compares JEHOVAH to a father who “pitieth his children”; he has already spoken of Him in *v.* 4 as one who “redeems,” one who acts as “kinsman-redeemer” (*gōēl*: xix. 14, note) to the Israelite in affliction. The Psalmist, like others, feels his God to be very near.

The phrase *as a father* sounds familiar, indeed almost trite to modern ears. The Christian for the last nineteen hundred years has commenced his daily prayer with the address, “Our Father.” The Jew also for something like the same period has regularly prayed, “Our Father our King.” But in Old Testament times it was not so. The title “Father” is given to God only rarely in the Hebrew Scriptures. So in *Isa* lxiii. 16, “For thou art our father, though Abraham knoweth us not, ... our kinsman-redeemer from everlasting is thy name”; *Isa* lxiv. 8, “But now, O JEHOVAH, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter”; *Deut* xxxii. 6, “Is not he (JEHOVAH) thy father that hath bought (*or* created) thee?” So again in critical passages Israel, the nation, is called God's son: *Hosea* xi. 1, “When Israel was a child (*or* a servant) I loved him, and called him out of Egypt to be my son”; *Exod* iv. 22, “Thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, ... Israel is my son, my firstborn.” But the titles “Father” for JEHOVAH and “Son” for Israel are rare enough in the Old Testament to make the appeal of the words “As a father” in *v.* 13 of this Psalm fresh and powerful. Further the reference in *v.* 14 to JEHOVAH as our Creator, “He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust,” strengthens the appeal not a little. JEHOVAH is Father and Maker of Man. So in *Wisdom of Solomon* xi. 24, “For thou lovest all things that are, And abhorrest none of the things which thou didst make; For never wouldest thou have formed anything if thou didst hate it.” God's act of Creation is the expression of fatherly love.

The Psalmist's deep faith in the mercy of JEHOVAH as the Maker of Man enables him to contemplate with courage and faith the human fate which seems so tragic to those who know not God. The Psalmist knows that Man was created from dust and returns to dust. He recollects (*vs.* 15–18) how brief after all is the individual human life, and when it ends—what then? The author reaches a very high level of thought here. He does not think that JEHOVAH's mercy comes to an end, when he (the Psalmist) dies. He does not measure Divine things by human. The Divine mercy will stand fast to succeeding generations, though the Psalmist himself passes away: cf *cii.* 12 ff.

For the Psalmist knows that JEHOVAH is God Everlasting and Ruler of all the world. He has a firm grasp of the highest truth known under the Old Covenant. He gives a worthy picture of the nature of the God of Israel, ad-

mitting no heathen traits. Heathen gods were fickle and capricious, jealous of human prosperity, and not seldom bloodthirsty. Israelite heroes of the earlier period such as Jephthah and David himself reveal the influence of heathen thoughts of God; they imagined Him to be pleased with cruel rites and eager for offerings (Jud xi. 34-39; 1 Sam xxvi. 19). But the picture which Ps ciii gives represents the God of Israel as eternally beneficent as well as powerful. He has corrected His people for their sins, and then has proceeded (as a Father) to show His compassion.

The Psalmist's highest flight comes at the end in *vv.* 19-22. He has a vision of JEHOVAH firmly seated on His throne in heaven, unshaken by any storms of the world below. All things are under His sway. Before such majesty the Psalmist forgets altogether his own personal interests. He has offered his "little human praise" to his God at the beginning of the Psalm, and the contemplation of the Divine Majesty constrains him to call for the praise of God from higher beings. Let "the mighty in strength," the angels, bless JEHOVAH; let the countless hosts, the stars of heaven, which are His ministers, add their praise. And finally since all sentient beings are simply JEHOVAH'S handiwork, let them in every place, wherever they are, *Bless the LORD*.

A Psalm of David.

CIII. 1 Bless the LORD, O my soul;

And all that is within me, *bless* his holy name.

2 Bless the LORD, O my soul,

And forget not all his benefits:

3 Who forgiveth all thine iniquities;

Who healeth all thy diseases;

1-5. JEHOVAH'S MERCIFUL DEALINGS WITH THE PSALMIST

CIII. 1. *Bless JEHOVAH, O my soul.* Cf xvi. 2 (RV marg.), "Thou hast said, O my soul"; xlii. 5, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul?" civ. 1. The "soul" is the sentient part of man's nature, and so is readily personified. To "bless" is to "give thanks": a "blessing" (2 K v. 15, marg.) is a thank-offering.

all that is within me. Rather, *all my inward parts.* The word is plural in the Hebrew; so too LXX, πάντα τὰ ἐντός μου. The Psalmist means "Let all parts of my body, which were lately suffering from disease, give praise."

2. *his benefits.* Rather, *his dealings with thee.* The Psalmist desires to remember all that God did to him and for him, not only in the way of "benefits," but also in the way of chastisement.

3. *Who forgiveth... Who healeth.* The two actions are interdependent: JEHOVAH shows His forgiveness of sin by healing the repentant sinner of his diseases; cf cvii. 17-20.

- 4 Who redeemeth thy life from ¹destruction ;
 Who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies :
 5 Who satisfieth ²thy mouth with good things ;
So that thy youth is renewed like the eagle.
 6 The LORD executeth righteous acts,
 And judgements for all that are oppressed.
 7 He made known his ways unto Moses,
 His doings unto the children of Israel.
 8 The LORD is full of compassion and gracious,
 Slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.
 9 He will not always chide ;
 Neither will he keep *his anger* for ever.

¹ Or, *the pit*

² Or, *thy years* Or, *thy prime* Heb. *thine ornament*.

4. *Who redeemeth* etc. See xix. 14, note. The action is that of the next of kin, who interferes on behalf of his kinsman who has fallen into trouble.

Who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies. God's lovingkindness confers dignity on the recipient, who becomes as one crowned. Cf "the crown of life" (James i. 12).

5. *Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things.* Lit. *Who satisfieth thee with that which is good to be thine ornament.* *Thy mouth* is an erroneous translation of the Heb. 'edyēk, which means precisely *thine ornament*. The thought is that the *good thing* which God gives to the Psalmist—in this instance restoration to health—reacts on his outward appearance. He whom God blesses is as one "adorned." So in Pro i. 8, 9 it is said that the man who accepts the teaching of his parents is as one adorned with a chaplet on his head, and with chains about his neck. We might paraphrase the clause, "Whose bounty maketh thee fair to look upon." The versions stumbled over the word 'edyēk, but there is no real difficulty in it.

like the eagle. After moulting. The vigour of the eagle was proverbial: 2 Sam i. 23; Isa xl. 31. The Heb. *neshar* ("eagle") includes also the vulture; so *ἀερός*, Luke xvii. 37, *al*.

6-14. JEHOVAH'S GRACIOUS DEALINGS WITH ISRAEL

6. *righteous acts...judgements.* So the Hebrew. The reference is, as *v.* 7 shows, to the particular acts which JEHOVAH did for Israel in Egypt and in the Wilderness. P-B (*righteousness...judgment*) misses this point by using general terms.

8. *JEHOVAH is full of compassion* etc. This verse varies only slightly from Exod xxxiv. 6, and may be a quotation from it.

9. *He will not always chide* (Heb. *yārīb*). Cf Gen vi. 3, "My spirit shall not strive (Heb. *yādōn*) with man for ever": Isa lvii. 16, "I will not contend (Heb. *ārīb*) for ever."

- 10 He hath not dealt with us after our sins,
Nor rewarded us after our iniquities.
- 11 For as the heaven is high above the earth,
So great is his mercy toward them that fear him.
- 12 As far as the east is from the west,
So far hath he removed our transgressions from us.
- 13 Like as a father pitieth his children,
So the LORD pitieth them that fear him.
- 14 For he knoweth our frame;
He remembereth that we are dust
- 15 As for man, his days are as grass;
As a flower of the field, so he flourisheth.
- 16 For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone;
And the place thereof shall know it no more.
- 17 But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting
upon them that fear him,
And his righteousness unto children's children;
- 18 To such as keep his covenant,
And to those that remember his precepts to do them.

10. *He hath not dealt with us after our sins.* The view that God's chastisement was less than Israel deserved is unusual, but see Ezra ix. 13. In Isa xl. 2 it is said that Jerusalem received of JEHOVAH'S hand "double," i.e. an exact equivalent in punishment for all her sins.

12. *So far hath he removed.* Cf Micah vii. 19.

13. *Like as a father.* Cf Malachi iii. 17.

14. *he knoweth our frame (or how we were formed); He remembereth that we are dust.* The reference is to Gen ii. 7, "The LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground." To *frame* is to "form" or "construct": Jer xviii. 11.

15-18. LIFE IS BRIEF, BUT JEHOVAH'S MERCY IS CONTINUED
TO A MAN'S DESCENDANTS

15. *man* (Heb. *ʾnōsh*). See viii. 4, note.

16. *the wind passeth over it.* The hot East wind (*rūah kādīm*) of Hosea xiii. 15; Jonah iv. 8.

17. *his righteousness unto children's children.* This is the characteristic Hebrew view; God's mercy is everlasting, but the individual enjoys it only during his life: after his death it is continued for his children. There is no thought here of eternal life for the individual man to correspond with the eternal mercy of God. Contrast xlix. 15; lxxiii. 24.

18. *To such as keep his covenant.* The mercy is restricted to the covenant people. Recent critics (Duhm, and in part Gunkel) cut down

- 19 The LORD hath established his throne in the heavens;
And his kingdom ruleth over all.
- 20 Bless the LORD, ye angels of his:
Ye mighty in strength, that fulfil his word,
Hearkening unto the voice of his word.
- 21 Bless the LORD, all ye his hosts;
Ye ministers of his, that do his pleasure.
- 22 Bless the LORD, all ye his works,
In all places of his dominion:
Bless the LORD, O my soul.

the text of *vv.* 17, 18 (for the sake of "the metre") to the words, *But the mercy of JEHOVAH is...unto everlasting...And his righteousness unto children's children. To such as keep his covenant, And remember his precepts....* This form the critics consider to be less "prosaic" than the fuller form in MT. But MT is supported by the Septuagint (LXX B).

19-22. JEHOVAH THE UNIVERSAL KING TO BE BLESSED
BY ALL HIS SUBJECTS

19. *his throne in the heavens.* So xi. 4.

20. *Bless JEHOVAH.* Cf lxviii. 35. To "bless" in this context is to pay thankful homage as to a king. So in 1 K i. 47 the king's servants "bless" David: in 1 K viii. 66 the people "bless" Solomon.

Hearkening unto the voice of his word. This clause is omitted by Duhm and Gunkel as tautological. But it adds the thought that the angels work in conscious obedience to JEHOVAH'S word. See Baruch iii. 34.

21. *all ye his hosts.* I.e. the hosts of heaven, the stars.

22. *all ye his works.* Cf *Benedicite, omnia opera Domini Domino*, "All ye works of the Lord, bless ye the Lord," the beginning of the Song of the *Three Holy Children*.

PSALM CIV

THE PRAISE OF JEHOVAH AS CREATOR AND PRESERVER

§ 1. CONTENTS.

- 1 a. A Doxology.
- 1 b-9. JEHOVAH the creator of heaven, earth and sea.
- 10-12. Running waters for the wild beasts.
- 13-15. Rain for the vegetation.
- 16-18. The functions of the High Trees and of the Mountains.
- 19-23. Day and Night.
24. An Ascription.
- 25, 26. The Sea its inhabitants.

27-30. Life and Death.

31-35 *a, b*. Praise and Petition.

35 *c, d*. A Doxology.

§ 2. CHARACTER AND PURPOSE.

Our first impulse is to call this Psalm a song of Natural Religion. It is colourless of history. There appears to be nothing in it to suggest that there ever existed a nation called Israel for which a Revelation was made on Mount Sinai, or to which the goodly fellowship of the Prophets was sent. This Psalm describes the phenomena of Nature as the works of God; it might have been written wholly for Deists—but for one fact.

This fact is the emphatic use made of the name JEHOVAH: *v.* 1, 16, 24, 31 *bis*, 33-35. JEHOVAH is the "proper" name of the God who revealed Himself to Moses, and by Moses delivered Israel from Egyptian bondage. But of history, apart from the use of the name JEHOVAH, the Psalm says simply nothing.

The Psalm begins and ends with the cry, "Bless JEHOVAH, O my soul." The Psalmist passes in review all that is in the natural world, and resolves to acknowledge the greatness of his God therein. The word *bless* which he uses connotes not thanksgiving only, but also wonder and admiration. For centuries the Jew has been taught in the Hebrew Prayer Book to say, "Blessed art thou, O LORD our God," when he sees the ocean, or a high mountain, and when he first sees the trees blossoming in spring. This wonder, this admiration, is part of the religious sense; without it Religion lacks something great. There is a saying ascribed to our Lord on good authority, though not found in the New Testament, "He that wonders shall reign, and he that reigns shall find rest¹." Coleridge has a similar thought in his *Ancient Mariner* (the Mariner is watching the water snakes):

O happy living things! no tongue
 Their beauty might declare:
 A spring of love gushes from my heart,
 And I blessed them unaware!
 Sure my kind saint took pity on me,
 And I blessed them unaware:
That self-same moment I could pray.

Admiration, Blessing, Prayer, is a spiritual order.

The Psalm does not merely enumerate the wonderful works of God; it points out the co-ordination of them all. Its motto may be found in *Ecclus.* xlii. 23, 24:

All things remain in all manner of uses²,
 And they are all obedient.
 All things are double one against another:
 And he hath made nothing imperfect.

This Psalm is arranged in order. *V.* 2-4 speak of the heavens and of the phenomena belonging to the realm of air. *V.* 2 says that God is clothed in

¹ ὁ θαυμάσας βασιλεύσει καὶ ὁ βασιλεύσας ἀναπαύσεται (Clem. Alex., *Strom.*, ii. 9. § 45).

² This first line is an attempt to restore the original text.

light. The thought is no mere pretty fancy; it fills the Psalmist with awe: earthly kings may be clothed with glorious apparel, but the Heavenly King is clad with Light, with that on which depends the glory of the gold and pearl worn by kings of flesh and blood. The Psalmist's thought suggests to us that God stands apart, needing nothing that man can give him. In this connexion it is noteworthy that the Psalm contains no allusion to sacrifice or offering; on the contrary, the author instead of saying, "I will offer bullocks with goats¹," says, "Let my meditation be sweet unto him" (v. 34).

But the question arises, If God be thus clad in light—light which, St Paul adds, no man can approach unto—how is there to be intercourse between God and Man? The Psalmist answers such a question by anticipation. V. 2 reads:

Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment;
Who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain.

The eyes of man are too feeble to bear the sight of the glory of God, but the heavens are stretched between like the curtain of a tent. Only through the chinks is the glory seen.

Yes, God is revealed, the Psalmist hastens to say in v. 3, through his works, his beneficent acts. At first he says that the clouds and the winds which bear them along are JEHOVAH'S chariot; he might well say so, for rain is the chief gift of God in Syria:

Who maketh the clouds his chariot;
Who walketh upon the wings of the wind.

But on second thoughts he corrects himself in v. 4; God *sends* the winds as his servants:

Who maketh winds his messengers.

The winds, however mighty, are but his messengers. "The winds of Syria," writes Dr Adam Smith, "are very regular, and their place obvious in the economy of her life. In the winter the west and south-west winds, damp from the sea, cause the winter rains. ... In the summer the winds blow chiefly out of the drier north-west and... greatly mitigate the heat²." No doubt this regular *service* of the winds was in the Psalmist's mind; they behave as servants, who faithfully discharge set duties.

V. 5 brings us from the air to the earth:

He hath founded the earth upon her bases,
That she should not be moved for ever.

The Creator founded the Earth upon the waters of the Deep (Gen i. 2). These waters struggle to cast off the weight imposed upon them, but the Psalmist says that they can never succeed. The foundations which JEHOVAH laid cannot be shaken.

Vv. 6-9 take us from the land to the sea, or rather the Deep, *Tehom*³, as the Hebrews called it. To them the sea was a terror; they left the sea-coast to the Phoenicians and Philistines. St John in his description of the new heaven and the

¹ Ps lxxvi. 15.

² *Historical Geography of the Holy Land*, p. 66.

³ ἄβυσσος, Septuagint.

new earth writes like a true Hebrew when he adds, "And the sea is no more" (Rev xxi. 1). No doubt this terror of the sea was connected either as cause or effect with the ancient stories about the sea. In Semitic Mythology the Deep represents the home of the primeval deity of Chaos, who had to be fought and overcome before this present Kosmos could be brought into being. Creation, according to the Babylonian myth, was preceded by a terrible combat between Marduk (Merodach), the great god of Babylon, whom men held to be the Creator, and Tiamat (Tehom), the goddess of the Abyss. Marduk overcame Tiamat and "split her up like a flat fish into two halves." In this legend we see a mythological presentation of the fact that there are waters (clouds) above the firmament as well as waters (seas) below the firmament (Gen i. 6, 7). But the Hebrew Psalmist was too deeply persuaded of JEHOVAH's infinite power to represent Him as fighting against some other divine being. JEHOVAH's word is enough: "At thy rebuke they fled; At the voice of thy thunder they hasted away" (v. 7).

Next came the division of the waters. Of some the Psalmist says, "They went up by the mountains." These became the waters that are above the heavens, the clouds. Of others he says, "They went down by the valleys, Unto the place which thou hadst founded for them" (v. 8). These became the sea.

JEHOVAH assigns to everything its place; he controls the clouds above and the ocean beneath.

In the following verse (v. 9) the Psalmist, speaking of the waters of the sea, exclaims, "Thou hast set a bound that they may not pass over." This "bound" meant, no doubt, to the Hebrew *the sand*. So Jeremiah cries, "Fear ye not me? saith the LORD: . . . which have placed the sand for the bound of the sea, by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it!" The yellow sands of Jaffa blown about by every wind pass on the Divine *flat* to the stormy Mediterranean, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further; And here shall thy proud waves be stayed?"

Vv. 10-13 describe the means whereby God waters the earth and gives drink to all living creatures. In the deep stony ravines which form a great feature in Palestinian scenery, water-springs break out. The Psalmist wonders that the hard rock produces the primary necessity—*water!* Where there is no man to drink, the wild asses of the desert quench their thirst. On the mountain-tops descends the rain. The springs and the rain of Palestine call forth the Psalmist's praise, for thus the thirsty earth is satisfied by the work of God.

In v. 14 the Psalmist, like the writer of Genesis, feels that something must be said of Man whom God has appointed to work in the world. Man is thought of as a worker; a contrast is drawn between the beast of the field and Man:

He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle (i.e. without their labour),

And herb for the labour (i.e. in return for the labour) of Man.

The special dignity of Man is labour—labour which co-operates with the rains of God. Here we have the other side of the *flat* of Gen iii. 19: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread." The Psalmist shows that there is a blessing where some have seen only a curse.

¹ Jer v. 22.

² Job xxxviii. 11.

In *vs.* 16-18 the Psalmist surveys together the great and the little. The great are the cedars of Lebanon, great in their lofty position on the mountains, where God alone can water them; great again in themselves, they are "trees of **JEHOVAH**" in the Psalmist's thought. The little are the "coney" (*Pro xxx. 26*), shy rabbit-like creatures, which inhabit places little trodden by Man. Divine providence extends even to the solitary places of the earth wherever life is found.

Vs. 19-23. The Psalmist now goes on to speak of night and day, of the division of time, and of man's labour. The Moon is a servant of God appointed to mark seasons. Lunar months (measured from new moon to new moon) were in use among the Hebrews and the neighbouring peoples. The New Moon, the first day of the month, was a very ancient feast¹. On the other hand, the Sun did not occupy a position of clear superiority to the Moon, as among the modern nations of the West. Of the greater luminary the Psalmist simply says, "The sun knoweth the time of his going down." As the ox knows his owner and the ass his master's crib, so the sun knows his appointed time for setting, and obeys his owner and master. The greater and the lesser light are both servants, who do appointed tasks. Thus simply and even poetically does the Psalmist traverse the early Semitic fancy that Sun and Moon are deities. He now turns to a fresh subject, the meaning of Darkness and of Light. He grasps Ben Sira's principle that "all things are double one against another²." The night is for the wild beasts as the day is for Man and his labour. The Psalmist does not look upon the world as made and ordered simply for the profit of human beings. God feeds the lions as well as the children of men.

Vs. 24-26. After an exclamation of wonder over all God's works on the dry land, the Psalmist turns his attention for a moment to the sea. But the sea is terrible and unfamiliar to him. Two things strike him, its immense expanse and its numberless inhabitants. But in thinking of the sea he cannot keep Man out of his mental picture. God made Man, and Man made ships; Man goes on the terrible ocean in ships. Leviathan, the mysterious power, the deity of the deep, according to Semitic mythology, cannot forbid this passage over the deep, for he too is only a creature; God has made him "to play with him"; he too subserves in some mysterious fashion the purposes of the Almighty.

Vs. 27-30. The Psalmist now sums up all his reflections upon God's providence over His living creatures. All are fed by God; all live by the breath of God. One generation comes to an end, but God sends forth His spirit and effects a new Creation.

Vs. 31-35. The Psalmist's thoughts have been inspired by the first chapter of Genesis; the epilogue of that great chapter is that "God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good." The Psalmist takes up the words as it were with a double Amen. First he cries aloud, "Let **JEHOVAH** rejoice in his works," and then he adds, "Let my meditation (on his works) be sweet unto him: I will rejoice in **JEHOVAH**." The works of God are very good, but the Psalmist cannot forget that in the Biblical narrative after Creation comes the Fall. He sees how beautiful and how well-ordered the physical Universe is, but he is no

¹ 1 Sam xx. 5; 2 Kings iv. 23.

² Ecclus xlii. 24.

mere optimist to "turn his eyes from half the human fate." He knows that sin is in the world to mar that which God has made good, and to bring into confusion that which God has set in order. But he looks upon evil from the Old Testament standpoint, that is to say, he does not see evil so much as evil men. His visions are such as those of Adam and Eve driven out of Paradise, and of Achan and all his family stoned for his trespass. The cure of evil in Man by a Healer and Redeemer was unknown to him. He contemplates the Death of the sinner as the only remedy for sin. So he prays:

Let sinners be consumed out of the earth,
And let the wicked be no more.

The prayer is the only possible one for him, if he is to pray against evil at all. But he does not dwell on the thought of evil in the face of his contemplation of all the glory of the Creator of good. His final words are a benediction: "Bless JEHOVAH, O my soul. Hallelujah."

§ 3. AN EGYPTIAN PARALLEL TO PSALM CIV.

There are two ancient Egyptian hymns which have several ideas in common with Psalm civ. The first of these, "The Praise of Amon-Rā," is dated about 1450 B.C. Amon (of Thebes, the southern capital of Egypt) was reckoned the chief of the gods of the New (Egyptian) Kingdom, until he was displaced by Aton owing to the zeal of the "heretic" king Ikhnaton, the father-in-law of the well-known Tutanchamon, who was dug up out of his splendid tomb a very few years ago. The second hymn is that which Ikhnaton addressed to the god of the sun's rays, Aton. The two hymns are given in a German translation in *Altor. Texte*, p. 14 (Drittes Lied), and pages 15-18 (Grosses Loblied auf die Sonne). The following are some phrases from the hymn to Amon-Rē:

"Thou, the Only One, Who didst create what is.... Thou out of whose eyes men proceeded, and out of whose mouth the gods arose. Who didst create herbage for the herds, and the fruit tree for men. Who didst make that whereon the fishes in the stream live, and the birds.... Who givest breath to that which is in the egg, and dost nourish the little worm. Who providest that whereon the gnats live. Who providest that whereof the mice in their holes have need.... Hail to thee who didst create all this, thou Only One with the many arms (i.e. sun-rays). Who while men sleep, dost watch and bring night to an end, and seekest that which is best for his flock, as a good shepherd."

From Ikhnaton's Hymn to Aton we cite the following:

NIGHT

When thou settest in the mountain of light in the West
The world is in darkness like Death...
Every lion comes forth from his cave.

Cf Ps civ. 20, 21.

DAY

When the earth is bright, thou goest again upon the mountain of light.
They wash, they put on their clothing,...
They do their work.

Ps civ. 22, 23.

THE WATERS

The ships go upstream and downstream...

The fish in the river leap before thee...

How manifold are thy works;

They are hidden from the sight of men.

Ps civ. 24-26.

... ..

Thou makest the Nile in the Underworld;

Thou bringest it hither at thy will,

To preserve men in life...

Thou preservest all distant mountain-lands.

Ps civ. 13.

SEASONS

Thou appointest the seasons of the year,

In order to renew all thy works.

Cf Ps civ. 19, 30.

These hymns display a study of Nature which is close and minute. Moreover that of Ikhnoton is dominated by the monotheistic idea, but monotheism died in Egypt soon after the death of Ikhnoton, while in Judaea after severe struggles it established itself as the unshaken faith of Judaism. The high thought of Ikhnoton made little impression upon his people, though the officials followed the king.

CIV. 1 Bless the LORD, O my soul.

O LORD my God, thou art very great;

Thou art clothed with honour and majesty.

2 Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment;

Who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain:

3 Who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters;

Who maketh the clouds his chariot;

Who walketh upon the wings of the wind:

1a. A DOXOLOGY

1b-9. JEHOVAH THE CREATOR OF HEAVEN, EARTH AND SEA

CIV. 1. *Thou art clothed.* Cf xciii. 1.

2. *with light.* Cf Hab iii. 4.

the heavens like a curtain. So as to hide the exceeding glory: cf xviii. 11, xcvi. 2. There may be an allusion to the curtains of the Tabernacle: 2 Sam vii. 2.

3. *in the waters.* I.e. the waters which are above the firmament: Gen i. 7.

the clouds his chariot. Cf Isa xix. 1.

the wings of the wind. Cf xviii. 10.

- 4 Who maketh ¹winds his messengers;
His ministers a flaming fire:
- 5 ²Who laid the foundations of the earth,
That it should not be moved for ever.
- 6 Thou coveredst it with the deep as with a vesture;
The waters stood above the mountains.
- 7 At thy rebuke they fled;
At the voice of thy thunder they hasted away;
- 8 ³They went up by the mountains, they went down by the
valleys,
Unto the place which thou hadst founded for them.
- 9 Thou hast set a bound that they may not pass over;
That they turn not again to cover the earth.
- 10 He sendeth forth springs into the valleys;
They run among the mountains:

¹ Or, *his angels winds*² Heb. *He founded the earth upon her bases.*³ Or, *(The mountains rose, the valleys sank down;)*

4. *Who maketh winds* etc. Better, *Who maketh of winds his messengers* (or *his angels*), And of *flaming fire his ministers*. This rendering is in accordance with the general theme of the Psalm, i.e. that JEHOVAH controls and uses all the forces of Nature. The winds, gentle or violent, and the lightnings (the "flaming fire") are simply God's servants.

The rendering of P-B, AV, *Who maketh his angels spirits*, is hardly intelligible. RV marg. is better, *Who maketh his angels winds*, i.e. swift, irresistible, and viewless as the winds: cf Heb i. 7.

5. *That it should not be moved for ever.* Cf Jer v. 22.

6. *Thou coveredst it with the deep.* Cf Gen i. 2, 9.

7. *At the voice of thy thunder.* An allusion to the ancient Semitic story of Creation, which represents Tiamat fleeing before Marduk the creator god, who carries the lightning in his hand.

8. *They went up by the mountains, they went down by the valleys.* A poetic description of the flight of the waters at the Creation to the place appointed them (Gen i. 9). P-B (*They go up as high as the hills, and down to the valleys beneath*) describes a storm at sea (cf cvii. 26), but that is not the meaning here.

9. *Thou hast set a bound.* I.e. the sand: see Jer v. 22.

10-12. RUNNING WATERS

10. *the valleys.* See xviii. 4, note on "the floods of ungodliness." The valleys ("ravines") are dry for a large part of the year, but at the season JEHOVAH fills them with rushing water.

- 11 They give drink to every beast of the field;
The wild asses quench their thirst.
- 12 By them the fowl of the heaven have their habitation,
They ¹sing among the branches.
- 13 He watereth the mountains from his chambers:
The earth is satisfied with the fruit of thy works.
- 14 He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle,
And herb for the ²service of man;
That he may bring forth ³food out of the earth:
- 15 And wine that maketh glad the heart of man,
⁴And oil to make his face to shine,
And bread that strengtheneth man's heart.
- 16 The trees of the LORD are ⁵satisfied;
The cedars of Lebanon, which he hath planted;
- 17 Where the birds make their nests:
As for the stork, the fir trees are her house.

¹ Heb. *utter their voice.*² Or, *labour*³ Heb. *bread.*⁴ Heb. *To make his face to shine with oil.*⁵ See ver. 13.

11. *wild asses.* Perhaps rather, *zebras*.
quench (Heb. *break*) *their thirst.* Cf the English word *breakfast*, i.e. "break the fast." The thought is of the violent action of animals maddened by thirst in a sun-dried land.

12. *the fowl* (Heb. *'oph*). The Hebrew word includes the larger birds and the birds of prey (Gen xl. 19).

13-15. RAIN

13. *his (upper) chambers.* The same Hebrew word in 2 K i. 2.

14. *for the service (or labour) of man.* I.e. to reward man's labour.
A contrast is suggested here: *bread (or food) out of the dark earth.*

15. *wine that maketh glad.* Cf Jud ix. 13.

And *oil to make his face to shine.* Rather, *making his face to shine more than with oil.* It is the *wine* which makes the face cheerful.
bread that strengtheneth. Cf Gen xviii. 5.

16-18. TREES AND MOUNTAINS

16. *The trees of the LORD.* Cf v. 13. See also p. 492.

17. *the birds* (Heb. *zippor*). The small birds; the larger birds have been mentioned in v. 12, "the fowl."

- 18 The high mountains are for the wild goats;
The rocks are a refuge for the ¹conies.
- 19 He appointed the moon for seasons:
The sun knoweth his going down.
- 20 Thou makest darkness, and it is night;
Wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep forth.
- 21 The young lions roar after their prey,
And seek their meat from God.
- 22 The sun ariseth, they get them away,
And lay them down in their dens.
- 23 Man goeth forth unto his work
And to his labour until the evening.
- 24 O LORD, how manifold are thy works!
In wisdom hast thou made them all:
The earth is full of thy ²riches.
- 25 Yonder is the sea, great and wide,
Wherein are things creeping innumerable,
Both small and great beasts.

¹ See Lev. xi. 5.² Or, *creatures*

18. *for the wild goats.* I.e. to inhabit.
the conies. See Lev xi. 5, where RV has the note, "Heb. *shaphan*, the *Hyrax Syriacus* or *rockbadger*." Cf Pro xxx. 26, "The conies...make their houses in the rocks."

19-23. DAY AND NIGHT

19. *for seasons* (Heb. *mō'ādīm*). I.e. for fixing the exact time of the feasts, particularly the feast of the New Moon: cf lxxxi. 3. The Hebrew months were lunar, and thirteen in number.

20. *Thou makest* (or *dost appoint*) *darkness.* Cf Isa xlv. 7, "I (JEHOVAH) form the light, and create darkness." Darkness is as much by Divine appointment as Light.

21. *from God.* Cf cxlv. 15 f.

24. THE ASCRPTION

24. *how manifold are thy works.* Cf Eccles xliii. 32:

Many things are hidden greater than these;
For we have seen but a few of his works.

- 26 There go the ships;
There is leviathan, whom thou hast formed to ¹take his pastime therein.
- 27 These wait all upon thee,
That thou mayest give them their meat in due season.
- 28 That thou givest unto them they gather;
Thou openest thine hand, they are satisfied with good.
- 29 Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled;
Thou ²takest away their breath, they die,
And return to their dust.
- 30 Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created;
And thou renewest the face of the ground.

¹ Or, *play with him* See Job xli. 5.

² Or, *gatherest in*

25, 26. THE SEA AND ITS INHABITANTS

26. *There go the ships.* The mention of the *ships* (works of man) in the midst of a catalogue of the works of God may seem strange. No doubt the Psalmist is thinking that the ships *move* on the sea only with the help of the winds of God. Cf Kuran xxii. 64, "Seest thou that the ships run on the sea by His command (*bi-amrihi*)?" Wisdom xiv. 2, 3, "An artificer...built it (i.e. the ship); But thy providence, O Father, steereth it; Because thou didst appoint a way even in the sea." Cf viii. 8, note on *Whatsoever passeth through*.

leviathan. Here (but not in lxxiv. 14) *leviathan* is the monster representing Chaos which according to the ancient Babylonian legend was overcome by the creator god (Marduk) as the first stage in bringing in the present Cosmos. The supposed formidable power of Chaos is wholly subject to JEHOVAH, who plays with it, or mocks at it. See the next note, and cf lxxxix. 10, note.

to take his pastime therein. Better as marg. *to play with him*, or even *to mock (or laugh) at him*. The expression is anthropomorphic: cf ii. 4 (with note), "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: The Lord shall have them in derision."

27-30. LIFE AND DEATH

27. *These wait all upon thee.* Cf cxlv. 15.

28. *Thou openest thine hand.* Cf cxlv. 16.

29. *Thou hidest thy face.* Cf xiii. 1, note, xxii. 24, xxvii. 9, xxx. 7.

Thou takest away (or, gatherest in) their breath. Marg. gives the true sense. The statement is parallel to Eccl xii. 7, "The spirit (i.e. at death) shall return unto God who gave it."

30. *Thou sendest forth thy spirit.* Better, *thy breath* as P-B. The Hebrew word is as in v. 29.

renewest the face of the ground. The ground is made to bring forth fresh herbage to supply the needs of the new generation of creatures.

- 31 Let the glory of the LORD endure for ever;
Let the LORD rejoice in his works :
- 32 Who looketh on the earth, and it trembleth ;
He toucheth the mountains, and they smoke.
- 33 I will sing unto the LORD as long as I live:
I will sing praise to my God while I have any being.
- 34 Let my meditation be sweet unto him :
I will rejoice in the LORD.
- 35 Let sinners be consumed out of the earth,
And let the wicked be no more.
Bless the LORD, O my soul.
¹Praise ye the LORD.

¹ Heb. *Hallelujah*.

31-35*a, b*. PRAISE AND PETITION

31. *Let the glory etc.* I.e. Let it be always a subject for praise. Cf lli. 9, "I will give thee thanks for ever."
rejoice in his works. Cf Gen i. 31.
32. *it trembleth.* Cf cxiv. 5-7.
they smoke. Exod xix. 18, "And mount Sinai was altogether on smoke, because JEHOVAH descended upon it in fire."
33. *as long as I live.* Cf lxiii. 4.
34. *Let my meditation be sweet.* Cf xix. 14, note.
- 35*a.* *Let sinners be consumed.* So LXX, Vulgate, but the Hebrew may be rendered as a prediction: cf xxxvii. 38.

35 *c, d*. A DOXOLOGY

The Psalm could not be allowed to end with the ill-sounding words, *shall be no more*, but with HALLELUJAH.

ADDITIONAL NOTE on civ. 4

ANGELS IN JEWISH THOUGHT.

In the Psalms—the spiritual heart of the Old Testament—we find a conception of the nature of angels which differs much from that which is found in the books of Daniel and Tobit, in the Gospel according to St Luke and in the Revelation. Christians dedicate churches to St Michael and to St Gabriel and sometimes to St Raphael. Archangels and Apostles are equally "personal" to us. But it is not so in the Psalter. There angels have no names and no personality. When the LORD wants a messenger (an angel), He makes one out of a passing wind; when He wants a minister of punishment, He creates him out of the flaming fire.

The same line of thought persists in post-biblical Jewish writings. Thus in

Breshith Rabba, lxxviii. 1, "Never doth any company of heaven give praise, and repeat its praises, but every day the Holy One (Blessed be He!) createth a new company of angels, and lo! they repeat a new song and perish."

The Angels of Wind and of Fire
 Chant only one hymn, and expire
 With the song's irresistible stress;
 Expire in their rapture and wonder,
 As harp-strings are broken asunder
 By music they throb to express.

LONGFELLOW, *Sandalphon*.

So Rashi a Jewish Commentator of the eleventh century A.D. writes on Gen xviii. 3 on the three men (angels) who appeared to Abraham: "One to give Sarah good news; and one to destroy Sodom; and one to make Abraham whole; for a single angel cannot perform more than one mission."

It is to be observed that although the statements of the *Breshith Rabba* and of Rashi are founded on Ps civ. 4, yet the words of the Psalm do not exclude the view that there are angels who (like men) have names and personality. What the Psalmist says here is simply that God can make and does make messengers (angels) at His pleasure out of air or fire to perform any work that He has in hand.

PSALMS CV, CVI

(See Introduction to Psalm lxxviii)

§ 1. THE CONNEXION BETWEEN PSALMS CV AND CVI.

Psalms cv, cvi are complementary in their contents and should be studied together. Psalm cvi records the "mighty acts" which JEHOVAH performed in the course of the history of Israel. Not all these acts were wrought as "favours" to the chosen people: the fire of the LORD and the plague in the wilderness were chastisements, and the supreme chastisement of captivity in Babylon accompanied by a great dispersal of Israel supplies the note on which the Psalm ends. Eight instances of revolt against JEHOVAH on the part of Israel are given, at the Red Sea, in the Wilderness, and in Canaan. The Psalm in brief tells a story of Much sinning, Much forgiveness, and Much mercy even in punishment. The final touch (in v. 46) is, "He (JEHOVAH) appointed them for compassion before all those that carried them captives."

Psalm cv follows a different line of thought; nothing is said of Israel's sins, but much of the marvels which JEHOVAH wrought for Israel, including eight of the plagues of Egypt. Psalm cv is a Catalogue of events on which Psalm cvi is the spiritual Commentary. It can hardly be an accident that these two Psalms are found one following the other. Both are intended to be thanksgivings, but Psalm cvi goes deeper than its companion. The grounds which the two suggest for thanksgiving are different. "Give thanks," says the author of Psalm cv, "because JEHOVAH has done wonderful things for Israel." "Give thanks," says his brother-Psalmist, "because JEHOVAH took an ungrateful and rebellious people into His care and never ceased to care for them in the wilderness and

in Canaan." "Even now we may hopefully appeal to Him to gather us from the nations that we may give thanks to Him" (cvi. 47).

One final point of connexion between the two Psalms should not be overlooked. The warning words with which Ps cv closes, "That they might keep his statutes and observe his laws" (v. 45), seem to look forward to the narrative of cvi, which shows how far Israel fell short of this aim.

§ 2. THE HISTORICAL CHARACTER OF THE EVENTS ALLUDED TO IN THESE TWO PSALMS.

The Hebrews who first sang these Psalms doubtlessly believed that the events to which they refer happened exactly as they are described in the Pentateuch. No doubt of the accuracy of the stories of miracles crossed their minds. So they accepted fully the account of God's Providence over their ancestors in Egypt and in the wilderness. They were bound in gratitude to recite the confession, "O give thanks unto JEHOVAH; for he is good."

Nor must we count this gratitude as "in vain," if we are unable to accept in the literal sense all the miraculous interventions ascribed to JEHOVAH in the Biblical narrative.

The story that JEHOVAH brought about the Exodus and that He watched over Israel in the wilderness does not depend on "miraculous details," nor on the estimate that over six hundred thousand went out under Moses. Further it may be the fact that the Libyan invasion of Egypt from the West in the days of Merneptah (Menephtah, circ. 1220 B.C.) helped Israel to pass the fortified frontier on the East and to escape into the peninsula of Sinai. Also it may well be that the supply of water to Israel in the desert came by "natural" (if unexpected) channels. But the spiritual mind of the Hebrew annalist looked beyond the immediate cause and effect, and pronounced, "O God, Thy hand was here," and the soul of the Hebrew Psalmist responded with, "O give thanks unto JEHOVAH, for he is good."

§ 3. THE DATE OF THESE TWO PSALMS.

Psalms cv, cvi are so closely bound together that the date of one must be the date of the other also. This date is indicated pretty clearly by two facts. They are earlier than the books of Chronicles which are usually dated circ. 300-250 B.C. This appears from the fact that cv. 1-15 is quoted in 1 Chr xvi. 8-22, and cvi. 47, 48 in 1 Chr xvi. 35, 36. On the other hand the two Psalms are later than the date of the completed Pentateuch from which Ezra read to the people (Neh viii. 1-15), as appears from the fact that they make use of the latest narratives contained in it.

PSALM CV

GOD IN HISTORY

(Providence at work in Egypt and in the Wilderness)

§ 1. CONTENTS.

1-6. A summons to the descendants of Abraham and Jacob to give thanks for JEHOVAH'S marvellous works in the past.

7-15. JEHOVAH'S mindfulness of His covenant with the Three Patriarchs and His protection of them.

16-22. The Mission of Joseph in Egypt.

23-36. The Mission of Moses and Aaron to Israel in Egypt. The Plagues (eight).

37-44. The Exodus. JEHOVAH's mindfulness of Israel in leading them in the wilderness and in giving them entrance into the land of Canaan.

45. This care constitutes a call on Israel to obey JEHOVAH's laws.

§ 2. NATURE OF THIS PSALM.

It has already been pointed out in the combined Introduction to Psalms cv, cvi that Psalm cv is linked to Psalm cvi. Considered by itself it appears one-sided. It is a fervent outburst of praise to God for His noble acts, but it reminds us of Browning's lines,

God said, "A praise is in mine ear;
There is no doubt in it, no fear."

It shows no sense of sin or of unworthiness in the Singer. That is reserved for the author of cvi, who freely confesses that JEHOVAH's noble acts were done on behalf of a disobedient and gainsaying people, of whom the Psalmist himself was one.

CV. 1 O give thanks unto the LORD, call upon his name;

Make known his doings among the peoples.

2 Sing unto him, sing praises unto him;

¹Talk ye of all his marvellous works.

3 Glory ye in his holy name:

Let the heart of them rejoice that seek the LORD.

4 Seek ye the LORD and his strength;

Seek his face evermore.

5 Remember his marvellous works that he hath done;

His wonders, and the judgements of his mouth;

6 O ye seed of Abraham his servant,

Ye children of Jacob, his chosen ones.

¹ Or, *Meditate*

1-6. A SUMMONS TO GIVE THANKS

CV. 1. *call upon his name.* A possible translation, but not in this context. Better, *proclaim his name*: the Psalmist desires to make known to the Gentiles the wonderful work of JEHOVAH. Luther, *prediget seinen Namen.*

2. *Talk ye.* Or, *Meditate ye*, as marg.

4. *Seek ye JEHOVAH and his strength* (so MT). Better, *...and be strengthened*: *κραταιώθητε*, LXX = Peshitta. The imperative is to be understood as a promise, *...and ye shall be strengthened*. This variation between MT and LXX occurs also in 1 Chr xvi. 11, the difference in the Hebrew being one of the vowel points only. For the construction of xxxvii. 3, where all four verbs are Imperatives, but (so margin) the last two convey a promise: also ex. 2, note on "Rule thou."

- 7 He is the LORD our God:
His judgements are in all the earth.
- 8 He hath remembered his covenant for ever,
The word which he commanded to a thousand generations;
9 *The covenant* which he made with Abraham,
And his oath unto Isaac;
- 10 And confirmed the same unto Jacob for a statute,
To Israel for an everlasting covenant:
- 11 Saying, Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan,
The ¹lot of your inheritance:
- 12 When they were but a few men in number;
Yea, very few, and sojourners in it;
- 13 And they went about from nation to nation,
From one kingdom to another people.
- 14 He suffered no man to do them wrong;
Yea, he reprov'd kings for their sakes;
- 15 *Saying*, Touch not mine anointed ones,
And do my prophets no harm.
- 16 And he called for a famine upon the land;
He brake the whole staff of bread.

¹ Heb. *cord*, or, *line*.

7-15. JEHOVAH'S REMEMBRANCE OF HIS COVENANT

7. *He is the LORD our God.* Rather, *Our God is He, even JEHOVAH.* The words are a defiance as though the Psalmist would say, As for us, we will serve JEHOVAH.

8. *The word which he commanded.* Better, *The promise which he made.*

10. *a statute.* I.e. a thing established and unchangeable.

11. *The lot of your inheritance.* Cf LXXVIII. 55, "He (JEHOVAH) drove out the nations also before them (Israel), And allotted them (the nations of Canaan and their land) for an inheritance by line."

12. *sojourners.* Cf v. 23, v. 4, note.

14. *he reprov'd kings.* See Gen xii. 17 (Pharaoh): Gen xx. 3 (Abimelech king of Gerar): Gen xxxi. 24 (Laban).

15. *mine anointed ones.* A plural, so LXX, τῶν χριστῶν μου. Anointing was for kings (1 Sam x. 1), for prophets (1 K xix. 16), and for priests (Exod xxx. 30). Abraham was a "prophet": Gen xx. 7.

16-22. THE MISSION OF JOSEPH IN EGYPT

16. *he called for a famine.* Cf Haggai i. 11.

the whole staff of bread. In the seventh plague of Egypt "the whole staff" was *not* broken, for "the flax and the barley were smitten....But

- 17 He sent a man before them ;
 Joseph was sold for a servant :
 18 His feet they hurt with fetters ;
¹He was laid in *chains of iron* :
 19 Until the time that his word came to pass ;
 The word of the LORD tried him.
 20 The king sent and loosed him ;
 Even the ruler of peoples, and let him go free.
 21 He made him lord of his house,
 And ruler of all his substance :
 22 To bind his princes at his pleasure,
 And teach his ²senators wisdom.

¹ Heb. *His soul entered into the iron.*² Heb. *elders.*

the wheat and the spelt were not smitten" (Exod ix. 31, 32). Joseph's famine was of longer continuance, and more severe. For "staff of bread" cf Ezek xiv. 13; also Isa iii. 1, "the whole stay of bread."

18. *He was laid in chains of iron.* Marg. "Heb. *His soul entered into the iron.*" The *soul* (Heb. *nepesh*) is the sentient part of man's nature: the word is often used in parallelism when the body or some part of the body is mentioned in the alternate half of the verse: cf ciii. 1, "Bless the LORD, O my soul; And all *my inward parts*, bless his holy name." The meaning of *His soul entered into the iron* is that he was made to realize what imprisonment and fetters meant. P-B gives a happy paraphrase, "The iron entered into his soul."

It has been suggested that *nepesh* here and in lxix. 1, cvi. 15, cxxiv. 4, 5 means not "soul," but "neck": so Gunkel renders this verse:

*They forced his feet into fetters,
 His neck must enter into iron (a yoke or fork of iron).*

So L. Dürr, *Z.A.W.* 1925, pp. 262-269, who finds the corresponding Accadian word *napishtu* associated with *kishādu*, "neck," and with other words denoting parts of the body. It is a far-fetched suggestion.

19. *Until the time that his (Joseph's) word came to pass.* I.e. as narrated in Gen xl. 20 ff., xli. 9 ff. But possibly P-B gives a correct paraphrase, *Until the time came that his cause was known*, i.e. when his cause came before Pharaoh. The Heb. *dābār* may mean *either* a word, *or* a matter, a cause.

The word of JEHOVAH tried him, i.e. put him to the proof. *The word of JEHOVAH* is a paraphrase for JEHOVAH. Joseph suffered a Divine probation in prison.

21. *lord of his house.* Joseph was appointed over Pharaoh's household, i.e. as chief minister (Gen xli. 40). Cf 2 K xviii. 18; Isa xxii. 20-22 of Eliakim the grand vizier of Hezekiah.

22. *To bind.* I.e. to restrain, to govern. The Hebrew verb is used

- 23 Israel also came into Egypt;
 And Jacob sojourned in the land of Ham.
 24 And he increased his people greatly,
 And made them stronger than their adversaries.
 25 He turned their heart to hate his people,
 To deal subtilly with his servants.
 26 He sent Moses his servant,
 And Aaron whom he had chosen.
 27 ¹They set among them ²his signs,
 And wonders in the land of Ham.
 28 He sent darkness, and made it dark;
 And they rebelled not against his words.
 29 He turned their waters into blood,
 And slew their fish.

¹ Some ancient versions have, *He*.

² Heb. *the words of his signs*.

in cxlix. 8 in the literal sense, but there *with chains* is added. The P-B rendering, *That he might inform* (i.e. instruct) *his princes*, comes from LXX, τοῦ παιδεύσαι: Vulgate, *ut erudiret*. It represents a slightly different Hebrew reading (*le-yassēr* for *le'sōr*), but it makes the two halves of the verse say exactly the same thing.

senators. The Hebrew word has not this special sense; it means "elders" (as marg.): the Genevan Bible (1560) gives *ancients*.

23-36. ISRAEL IN EGYPT

23. *sojourned*. Or, *was a guest*; cf v. 14, note. Israel entered Egypt as the guest of Pharaoh, and was afterwards enslaved.

25. *He turned their heart*. So LXX, μετέστρεψεν τὴν καρδίαν αὐτῶν. An allusion to the hardening of Pharaoh's heart. P-B, *Whose heart turned*: so also Targum. Cf 1 K xviii. 37.

27. *They* (Moses and Aaron) *set among them his signs*. But LXX, ἔθετο, i.e. *He* (Ἰησοῦα) *set among them his signs*.

28. *And they rebelled not against his words*. Rather, *And they* (the Egyptians) *rebelled against his words*. So LXX B, καὶ παρετίκρναν τοὺς λόγους αὐτοῦ. The negative (*not*, Heb. *lo*) is a mistaken reading as in Isa ix. 3 (C'thib = AV), "Thou hast multiplied the nation, and not (*sic*) increased the joy." The same construction of the Hebrew ("rebelled against my word") is found in Num xx. 24. The ninth plague ("Darkness") is singled out for first mention because of its spiritual significance. The Egyptians worshipped the Sun God, *Re*, but Ἰησοῦα sent darkness, and made *Re* dark. Ἰησοῦα is no Sun God, but more: He forms the light and creates darkness (Isa xlv. 7). Darkness is the chief sign of God's displeasure.

- 30 Their land swarmed with frogs,
In the chambers of their kings.
- 31 He spake, and there came swarms of flies,
And ¹lice in all their borders.
- 32 He gave them hail for rain,
And flaming fire in their land.
- 33 He smote their vines also and their fig trees;
And brake the trees of their borders.
- 34 He spake, and the locust came,
And the cankerworm, and that without number
- 35 And did eat up every herb in their land,
And did eat up the fruit of their ground.
- 36 He smote also all the firstborn in their land,
The ²chief of all their strength.
- 37 And he brought them forth with silver and gold:
And there was ³not one feeble person among his tribes.
- 38 Egypt was glad when they departed;
For the fear of them had fallen upon them.
- 39 He spread a cloud for a covering;
And fire to give light in the night.

¹ See Ex. viii. 16.² Heb. *beginning*. See Deut. xxi. 17.³ Or, none that stumbled31. *lice*. In Exod viii. 16, marg., "Or, sand flies Or, fleas."36. *The chief of all their strength*. Heb. *The beginning* etc. Vulgate, *primitias*. Cf Gen xlix. 3; Deut xxi. 17.

37-44. EXODUS; THE WILDERNESS; CANAAN

37. *he brought them forth with silver and gold*. I.e. God brought them out *honourably* with parting gifts, such as Abimelech gave when he dismissed Sarah from his harem (Gen xx. 16), or like the dowry which Pharaoh gave to his daughter, when he married her to Solomon (1 K ix. 16), or again like the garments and bronze vessels which the Phaeacians gave to Odysseus when they sent him on his way to Ithaca (Homer, *Odys.* XIII. 10-22). Cf Exod xii. 33-36.

not one feeble person. Cf Deut viii. 4, "Neither did thy foot swell these forty years."

39. *a cloud for a covering*. Cf Wisdom x. 17, "(Wisdom) became unto them a covering in the day-time, And a flame of stars through the night."

- 40 They asked, and he brought quails,
And satisfied them with the bread of heaven.
- 41 He opened the rock, and waters gushed out;
They ran in the dry places *like* a river.
- 42 For he remembered his holy word,
And Abraham his servant.
- 43 And he brought forth his people with joy,
And his chosen with singing.
- 44 And he gave them the lands of the nations;
And they took the labour of the peoples in possession:
- 45 That they might keep his statutes,
And observe his laws.
- ¹Praise ye the LORD.

¹ Heb. *Hallelujah*

40. *They asked.* It was more than asking: they asked in a spirit of rebellion: cvi. 14; Num xi. 4, 18-20.

41. *He (JEHOVAH) opened the rock.* Not as Vulgate, *dirupit petram*, "he clave the rock." No violent action was needed: cf Num xx. 8, "Speak ye unto the rock."

42. *Abraham.* God foretold to Abraham the Egyptian bondage, and promised ultimate deliverance: Gen xv. 13, 14.

43. *singing.* Rather, *joyful shouting*: cf xxx. 5, xlvii. 1.

44. *the labour of the peoples.* Cf Deut vi. 11.

PSALM CVI

THE FORGIVING GOD

(The Revolts of Israel and the Mercies of JEHOVAH)

§ 1. CONTENTS.

1, 2. A summons to offer praise.

3. The blessedness of the true Israel.

4-6. A prayer that the Psalmist may share in the blessedness of JEHOVAH'S people: followed by a confession of a share in their sins, which have been of old.

7-12. First Revolt: at the Red Sea.

13-15. (Cf lxxviii. 18 ff.) Second Revolt: the murmuring for flesh (Num xi. 4 ff.).

16-18. Third Revolt: Dathan and Abiram (Num xvi).

19-23. Fourth Revolt: the Making of the Molten Calf (Exod xxxii).

24-27. Fifth Revolt: the refusal to enter Palestine (Num xiv. 1-10).

28-31. Sixth Revolt: Marriages with Baal-peor (Num xxv. 1-13).

32, 33. Seventh Revolt: the waters of Meribah (Num xx. 2-13).

34-39. Eighth Revolt: Israel mingled among the heathen (Jud ii. 1, 2, iii. 5, 6).

40-46. JEHOVAH'S punishments and His mercies.

47. "Save us, O JEHOVAH our God."

48. A Doxology.

§ 2. CHARACTER AND PURPOSE.

The Psalmist's main purpose is to intercede with JEHOVAH for his people in their distress. He makes a frank confession of their rebellion, which they have renewed from age to age, and asks mercy for them in the dispersion, which has overtaken them as a punishment. But first he remembers how gracious is the LORD Whom he is approaching. JEHOVAH has been good to Israel again and again in the past, and so the Psalmist begins with a thankful remembrance of this goodness, and with confidence that his plea will be heard. He appeals for mercy from Him Whom he knows as the Merciful One.

The Psalmist speaks in his own name, but in full consciousness that he belongs to the people of JEHOVAH. He writes after the Babylonish Captivity, and after Israel had been dispersed widely through the world (*v.* 46). He knows that the severest punishments have been inflicted on Israel for his apostasy from JEHOVAH, and also on the other hand that JEHOVAH has performed wonderful acts of mercy for Israel. The Psalmist is acquainted with the contents of the completed Pentateuch, and with the whole story of Israel's rebellions in the wilderness.

The Israel of the Psalmist's day is full of sin like the Israel of old, and the Psalmist like Moses (*v.* 23) desires to stand in the breach and make intercession for his scattered countrymen. But he cannot intercede with the Omniscient God without imitating Moses' confession, "Oh, this people have sinned a great sin" (Exod xxxii. 31); hence he recites the long history of Israel's rebellions. He makes intercession for Israel not on the ground of their innocence—an impossible plea—but on the ground that JEHOVAH'S mercy is for ever. This is the Psalmist's first thought (*v.* 1) and almost his last (*vv.* 43-46).

A similar intercession accompanied by a similar earnest confession of Israel's sin and a similar acknowledgment of JEHOVAH'S many acts of mercy is found in Ezra ix. 6-15. With this again may be compared the great Levitical confession of Neh ix. 5-38, which is prefix to the covenant which Nehemiah and his associates made to keep the Mosaic Law, especially in those particulars in which the observance of it had been slack, as in intermarriage with foreigners, in neglect of the Sabbath, and in failure to maintain duly the Temple worship. The addition of the doxology and of the words, "And let all the people say, Amen," at the end of Psalm cvi shows that this Psalm was used in the Temple, but the opening verses forbid us to regard it as a simple piece of liturgy. Someone like Ezra felt in his own great heart all the emotions of this Psalm, before it was taken over by Levitical hands for Temple use. The cry of the individual soul is heard in the words, "Remember me...O visit me" (*v.* 4).

§ 3. THE UNITY AND TEXTUAL CONDITION OF THIS PSALM.

It has been suggested that *vv.* 1-5 form a separate song which was added later as an introduction to the narrative contained in *vv.* 7-46, and that *v.* 6 is

supplied as a link between these two unrelated Psalm-fragments (Duhm, *Psalmen*, pp. 382-3). *V.* 47 is also represented as a later addition. A sufficient answer to the suggestion is given in the considerations advanced in § 2. The opening verses (1-5) have pointed reference to the narrative of *vv.* 7-46. *V.* 6 is needed to introduce the following verses and in fact is most apposite. The final petition in *v.* 47 springs naturally out of the events which the Psalmist has just recalled. (The doxology in *v.* 48 is of course an addition of a liturgical character; cf. xli. 13, lxxii. 18, 19.)

This Psalm has suffered further from criticism of a textual kind, and particularly from an attempt to force it into a metrical frame. Duhm arranges his translation in stanzas of four lines each with three stresses to each line, and proceeds to sacrifice lines and phrases which do not fall in with his scheme. His second stanza is ill-compacted, and ends with a ragged edge:

Blessed is he that keepeth judgment,
That doeth righteousness at all times;
[At all times] remember me,
JEHOVAH, with thy favour to thy people. (*Vv.* 3, 4.)

The Emendator has gained his stanza, *first*, by repeating "At all times" in *v.* 4, and *secondly*, by tearing the clause, "O visit me with thy salvation," from its context to attach it to the verse which follows, but *v.* 4 is more impressive as the Masorets have delivered it:

Remember me, JEHOVAH, with thy favour to thy people:
Visit me with thy salvation.

The four-line stanzas are continued, and *v.* 18 is cut out as a vain repetition. Undoubtedly *vv.* 16, 17 must be taken together whether they are treated as forming a stanza or not, but *v.* 18 is a perfect parallel to *v.* 17, and completes the story told from Num xvi of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. Moreover the words, "The fire consumed," in *v.* 18 answer so well to "The earth opened" in *v.* 17 that both verses must surely have proceeded from the same hand. If then there be a "stanza" here, it is a stanza of six lines. Gunkel (surely rightly) keeps *v.* 18 and groups it with *vv.* 16, 17 without attempting to find stanzas in the Psalm whether of six or four lines.

In one curious excision from the text Duhm has the support of Gunkel: both commentators omit the words bracketed in *v.* 38:

And they shed innocent blood,
[the blood of their sons and of their daughters,
whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan]
And the land was polluted with blood.

(Duhm omits also the last two words.)

Now it is true that the bracketed words repeat the substance of *v.* 37, "Ye sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto demons." But repetition is characteristic of Oriental literature, and there is a reason for repetition here. The more spiritual minds in Israel abhorred the thought of human (child) sacrifice, and the repetitions in *vv.* 37, 38 attempt to express a devout man's horror of it. *V.* 37 is too bald and weak in expression, if it stands alone.

As to the omission of *v.* 47 with its moving appeal, it can only be said that

the omission follows naturally in Duhm's scheme from the cutting off of *vs.* 1-6. The Commentator has decided that *vs.* 7-46 form a truncated narrative, and he makes it such by his excisions. The emendations proposed for this Psalm show a serious want of understanding of the Hebrew spirit, and the omissions impoverish the thought of the Psalmist.

This somewhat lengthy discussion of Duhm's scheme is justified by the confident freedom with which this scholar has attempted to force most of the Psalms into one or other of his metrical schemes. Moreover he has had confident followers, and rivals, such as the late Dr Briggs in the *I.C.C.* So common in fact is the practice of forcing a Psalm into a prepared metrical mould, and so harmful to a true understanding of the text, that it is right to point out even at some length the price which must be paid for the acceptance of such strict metrical theories. See the General Introduction, § 7, pp. li-lv.

CVI. 1 ¹Praise ye the LORD.

O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever.

2 Who can utter the mighty acts of the LORD,
Or shew forth all his praise?

3 Blessed are they that keep judgement,
And he that doeth righteousness at all times.

4 Remember me, O LORD, with the favour that thou bearest
unto thy people;

O visit me with thy salvation:

¹ Heb. *Hallelujah*

1, 2. A SUMMONS TO OFFER PRAISE

CVI. 1. *Praise ye* *JEHOVAH*. Heb. *Hallelujah*. It is uncertain whether the word belongs to the beginning of this Psalm. It is possible that it has been repeated by error from the end of Psalm cv. It is not given in P-B.

O give thanks etc. An exact coincidence with cvii. 1, cxxxvi. 1; 1 Chr xvi. 34; cf 2 Chr xx. 21. It may be called a liturgical formula, like the *Gloria Patri* of the Christian Church.

3. THE BLESSEDNESS OF THE TRUE ISRAEL

3. *And he that doeth* etc. This change from the plural to the singular is not uncommon in Hebrew: cf *vs.* 10, 11.

4-6. THE PSALMIST PRAYS THAT HE MAY HAVE HIS PORTION WITH ISRAEL

4. *visit me with thy salvation*. "Visit me" (i.e. enquire into my case) and then "save me," when Thou art satisfied of mine integrity. LXX.

- 5 That I may see the prosperity of thy chosen,
That I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation,
That I may glory with thine inheritance.
- 6 We have sinned with our fathers,
We have committed iniquity, we have done wickedly.
- 7 Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt;
They remembered not the multitude of thy mercies;
But were rebellious at the sea, even at the Red Sea.
- 8 Nevertheless he saved them for his name's sake,
That he might make his mighty power to be known.
- 9 He rebuked the Red Sea also, and it was dried up:
So he led them through the depths, as through a ¹wilderness.
- 10 And he saved them from the hand of him that hated them,
And redeemed them from the hand of the enemy.
- 11 And the waters covered their adversaries:
There was not one of them left.
- 12 Then believed they his words;
They sang his praise.
- 13 They soon forgot his works;
They waited not for his counsel:

¹ Or, *pasture land*

ἐπίσκεψαι ἡμᾶς, as though the petition came from a community (*not from an individual*) still in exile.

6. *We have sinned.* Or, *We have rebelled.* Hebrew as in li. 4 a. The words *with our fathers* show that the Psalmist is conscious of his solidarity with his people even to the earliest generations: see Psalm li, Introduction, p. 251.

7-12. ISRAEL'S FIRST REVOLT: AT THE RED SEA

7. *Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt.* Rather, *Thy wonders did not teach wisdom to our fathers.* The Hebrew verb as in xxxii. 8, "I will *instruct* thee."

were rebellious at the sea, even at the Red Sea. Rather, *were rebellious* as they went up (LXX, ἀναβαίνοντες from a slightly different Hebrew reading) *at the Red Sea.* To *go up* (Heb. 'ālāh) is used of leaving Egypt for Palestine: Gen xlv. 25; Exod xiii. 18; *al.*

8. *That he might make etc.* Cf Exod x. 1, 2.

9. *He rebuked.* Cf xviii. 15, civ. 7.

12. *They sang his praise.* See Exod xv. 1 ff.

- 14 But lusted exceedingly in the wilderness,
And tempted God in the desert.
15 And he gave them their request;
But sent leanness into their soul.
16 They envied Moses also in the camp,
And Aaron the ¹saint of the LORD.
17 The earth opened and swallowed up Dathan,
And covered the company of Abiram.
18 And a fire was kindled in their company;
The flame burned up the wicked.
19 They made a calf in Horeb,
And worshipped a molten image.

¹ Or, *holy one*

13-15. SECOND REVOLT: THE MURMURING FOR FLESH
(cf lxxviii. 18 ff., Num xi. 4 ff.)

14. *And tempted God.* I.e. by saying, "Why came we forth out of Egypt?" (Num xi. 20).

15. *leanness.* I.e. wasting sickness, or (less probably) satiety, disgust.

into their soul (Heb. *nephesh*). Better, *at their desire*. Their longing for flesh brought them "leanness." L. Dürr's suggestion of "neck" as the meaning of *nephesh* ("sent wasting sickness on to their neck") is improbable, though accepted by Gunkel: cf cv. 18, note.

16-18. THIRD REVOLT: DATHAN AND ABIRAM (Num xvi)

16. *They envied.* See Num xvi. 11.

the saint. Marg. *the holy one* (Heb. *kēdōsh, kādōsh*). The rebels asserted, "All are *holy* (*kēdōshīm*)," but Moses answered, "JEHOVAH will shew who are his, and who is holy" (*kādōsh*). The test showed that Aaron alone was "holy," i.e. was the one who was accepted to burn incense to JEHOVAH (Num xvi. 3-5, 46-50).

18. *a fire.* See Num xvi. 35.

in their company. Better, *in their congregation* (Heb. *'ēdāh*) as opposed to the "congregation of JEHOVAH" (Num xxvii. 17) or the "congregation of Israel" (Exod xii. 3).

19-23. FOURTH REVOLT: THE MAKING OF THE MOLTEN CALF
(Exod xxxii)

19. *a calf in Horeb.* Cf Deut ix. 8 ff. The idea of a calf-image was derived probably from Egypt, where from ancient times before the Exodus the young bull "Apis" was worshipped under the belief that

- 20 Thus they changed their glory
For the likeness of an ox that eateth grass.
- 21 They forgat God their saviour,
Which had done great things in Egypt ;
- 22 Wondrous works in the land of Ham,
And terrible things by the Red Sea.
- 23 Therefore he said that he would destroy them,
Had not Moses his chosen stood before him in the breach,
To turn away his wrath, lest he should destroy *them*.
- 24 Yea, they despised the pleasant land,
They believed not his word ;
- 25 But murmured in their tents,
And hearkened not unto the voice of the LORD.
- 26 Therefore he lifted up his hand unto them,
That he would ¹overthrow them in the wilderness :
- 27 And that he would overthrow their seed among the nations,
And scatter them in the lands.
- 28 They joined themselves also unto ²Baal-peor,
And ate the sacrifices of the dead.
- 29 Thus they provoked him to anger with their doings ;
And the plague brake in upon them.

¹ Heb. *make them fall*.² See Num. xxv. 3. ;

in it dwelt the soul of the god Ptah (Erman, *Aegypt. Religion*, pp. 26, 80). The bull was a symbol of strength both in Egypt and in Assyria.

20. *their glory*. Cf iii. 3 ; Jer ii. 11.

23. *Had not Moses* etc. See Exod xxxii. 30-34 ; Deut ix. 25-29.

24-27. FIFTH REVOLT: THE REFUSAL TO ENTER PALESTINE AFTER
THE REPORT OF THE SPIES (Num xiv. 1-10)

24. *the pleasant land*. Heb. *land of desire* (Jer iii. 19 ; Zech vii. 14),
i.e. Canaan.

26. *lifted up his hand*. I.e. took an oath : Num xiv. 28 f.

28-31. SIXTH REVOLT: MARRIAGES WITH BAAL-PEOR (Num xxv. 1-13)

28. *ate the sacrifices of the dead*. The word *Peor* is connected etymologically with an Aramaic word signifying a "cave" or "cavern." Caves were used for the performance of rites to the infernal gods and to the spirits of ancestors. Hence perhaps the phrase *sacrifices* "of" (i.e. "offered to") *the dead*.

29. *the plague brake in*. Like an invader : Num xxv. 8, 9.

- 30 Then stood up Phinehas, and executed judgement:
And so the plague was stayed.
- 31 And that was counted unto him for righteousness,
Unto all generations for evermore.
- 32 They angered him also at the waters of ¹Meribah,
So that it went ill with Moses for their sakes:
- 33 Because they were rebellious against his spirit,
And he spake unadvisedly with his lips.
- 34 They did not destroy the peoples,
As the LORD commanded them;
- 35 But mingled themselves with the nations,
And learned their works:
- 36 And they served their idols;
Which became a snare unto them:
- 37 Yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto demons,

¹ Or, *strife*

30. *and executed judgement.* This is the correct rendering: it agrees with Num xxv. 8; Phinehas in fact slew the offenders. But such an action was unseemly in a priest, and accordingly the Versions have paraphrased the Psalmist's words. P-B (so Targum and Peshitta), *and prayed*: LXX, καὶ ἐξιλάσατο, "and made atonement" (as in Num xxv. 13).

31. *for righteousness.* See Num xxv. 10-13.

32, 33. SEVENTH REVOLT: AT THE WATERS OF MERIBAH
(Num xx. 2-13)

33. *against his spirit.* Targum, *against his holy spirit*, i.e. against the spirit which JEHOVAH had put upon Moses: cf Num xi. 17.

he spake unadvisedly. The same Hebrew verb is rendered "utter rashly" in Lev v. 4.

34-39. EIGHTH REVOLT: THE ISRAELITES MINGLED THEMSELVES
AMONG THE NATIONS

35. *mingled themselves.* I.e. by intermarriage: cf Ezra ix. 2, "The holy seed *have mingled themselves* (the same Hebrew verb) with the peoples of the lands." See also Jud ii. 1, 2, iii. 5, 6.

36. *a snare.* The Hebrew as in Jud ii. 3, and 1 Sam xviii. 21.

37. *demons.* This word (rare in EV) is used here and in Deut xxxii. 17 to translate the rare Hebrew word, *shēdim*, which represents the Assyrian *shēdu*, a term used of the bull-colossi, guardian images which stand at the entrance of Assyrian palaces. Human victims were

- 38 And shed innocent blood, even the blood of their sons and of their daughters,
Whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan;
And the land was polluted with blood.
- 39 Thus were they defiled with their works,
And went a whoring in their doings.
- 40 Therefore was the wrath of the LORD kindled against his people,
And he abhorred his inheritance.
- 41 And he gave them into the hand of the nations;
And they that hated them ruled over them.
- 42 Their enemies also oppressed them,
And they were brought into subjection under their hand.
- 43 Many times did he deliver them;
But they were rebellious in their counsel,
And were brought low in their iniquity.
- 44 Nevertheless he regarded their distress,
When he heard their cry:
- 45 And he remembered for them his covenant,
And repented according to the multitude of his mercies.

sacrificed at the entrance of men's houses and kings' palaces in order to keep the house or palace safe from intruding harmful spirits. In critical times children were passed through the fire to Molech: 1 K xi. 7; 2 K xxi. 6.

39. *a whoring*. Since Israel is regarded as JEHOVAH'S wife (Hosea ii. 2-8, 16, 19, 20), the worship of any other god is described in O.T. as spiritual adultery.

40-46. JEHOVAH'S PUNISHMENTS AND HIS MERCIES

40-42. The language of these verses comes ultimately from Deuteronomy, but cf Jud ii. 14, 18.

43. *in their counsel*. Cf 1 K xii. 28, "The king (Jeroboam) took counsel, and made two calves of gold."

And were brought low in the punishment of *their iniquity*. So the clause should be rendered. Duhm wishes to omit it, but it serves to introduce v. 44. Cf Lev xxvi. 39.

44. *Nevertheless* etc. Rather, *Then* (i.e. when they were brought low) etc.

45. *repented*. "Repentance" is ascribed to God in 2 Sam xxiv. 16; Jonah iii. 9, 10. Since JEHOVAH is revealed as "full of compassion... forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin" (Exod xxxiv. 6, 7), the

- 46 He made them also to be pitied
Of all those that carried them captives.
- 47 Save us, O LORD our God,
And gather us from among the nations,
To give thanks unto thy holy name,
And to triumph in thy praise.
- 48 Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel,
From everlasting even to everlasting.
And let all the people say, Amen.
¹Praise ye the LORD.

¹ Heb. *Hallelujah*.

Psalmist writes that he "repented according to the multitude of his mercies." God's "nature and property is ever to have mercy and to forgive" (*Book of Common Prayer*).

46. *He made them also to be pitied.* Or, *He appointed them for compassion.* A striking touch; those who took captives in ancient times were influenced by greed, seldom by mercy.

47 (cf *vv.* 4, 5). A POST-EXILIC PETITION

48. A DOXOLOGY

And let all the people say, Amen. Cf 1 Chr xvi. 36, "And all the people said, Amen, and praised the LORD."

BOOK V

PSALM CVII

THE MERCIES OF JEHOVAH

§ 1. CONTENTS.

1-3. "The redeemed of the LORD," gathered from east and west, north and south, are summoned to confess that JEHOVAH's mercy is "for ever."

4-7. A first instance of the exercise of His mercy. JEHOVAH conducted to an inhabited city a people perishing of hunger and thirst in the wilderness.

8, 9. Refrain acknowledging the deliverance described in *vv.* 4-7.

10-14. A second instance of the exercise of mercy. JEHOVAH gave a people up to bondage for their rebellion against Him; then on their repentance He delivered them, and set them free from their miseries.

15, 16. Refrain (cf *vv.* 8, 9) repeated with a variant ending, which refers back to *v.* 10.

17-20. A third instance of the exercise of mercy. JEHOVAH'S pardon of sinners. He punishes them with dangerous diseases for their sins, but heals them on their repentance.

21, 22. Refrain (cf *vv.* 8, 9 and 15, 16) repeated with a variant ending.

23-30. A fourth instance of the exercise of mercy. JEHOVAH'S rescue of mariners. He raises the storm, and the seafarers are reduced to helplessness. They cry to JEHOVAH and He brings them safely to their destination.

31, 32. Refrain (cf *vv.* 8, 9 and 15, 16 and 21, 22) with variant ending.

33-41. Judgment and mercy.

42, 43. Evil men who deny Providence are silenced: the upright rejoice.

§ 2. CHARACTER, PURPOSE AND OCCASION.

This Psalm is one of outstanding importance but it has no indication of authorship, nor heading of any kind. But in character it is a *Maschil*, i.e. a Psalm of instruction. Indeed it might be called a sermon or homily; the immediate purpose of the Psalmist is to arouse a spirit of thankfulness to JEHOVAH as a Merciful God.

The first verse is an epitome of the whole Psalm: "O give thanks unto JEHOVAH; for he is good: For his mercy *endureth* for ever." It is a theme which occurs several times in the Psalter: cf xxv. 8, c. 5, *al.* P-B gives, "The Lord is gracious": but "good" is better being of wider application.

This Psalm differs greatly from its two predecessors (*cv*, *cvi*). They are full of allusions to events in the early history of Israel; but this does not once mention the name of Israel, it speaks rather of JEHOVAH'S dealings with "the children of men" (*vv.* 8, 15, 21, 31). The language is of a general character: it might almost have been written for Gentiles. There is in fact no trace of historical allusion except in the expression, "the redeemed (*gē'ūlē*) of the LORD" (*v.* 2). The Hebrew verb *gā'al* is used of redemption from Babylon in Isa xxxv. 9, xliii. 1, lxiii. 9, *al.*, and (less often, as in Ps *cvi.* 10) of the deliverance from Egypt. The Psalmist is half-consciously remembering the release from Babylonian captivity (*vv.* 10-16) and (perhaps) even the desert wandering which followed the Exodus (*vv.* 4-7), but he makes no direct historical references. He is thinking aloud of the common daily experiences of the East, though his language takes some colour from the great events of the past. The past melts into the present, and from his full experience the Psalmist declares that the mercy of JEHOVAH is eternally shown to the individual as well as to the nation.

When this Psalm was written the Return from Babylon was probably long past. It is apparently remembered, but it does not fill the horizon of the Psalmist's thought. He sees it as one mercy among many. It leaves him full room for the consideration of his own experiences. He wrote perhaps towards the end of the fourth century (320-300 B.C.), when there were still many Jewish exiles wandering from the east and west, from north and south looking for a home. He does not say that they came from Babylon, nor that they returned to Jerusalem. The Psalmist gives the experience of his own day in general terms which cover also earlier experiences: the exiles were guided by JEHOVAH to a city where they could settle, to Alexandria and other cities where they found a new home.

§ 3. THE PSALMIST'S THOUGHTS (a) ON SICKNESS; (b) ON TRAVEL BY SEA.

(a) As to sickness the Psalmist takes the common Hebrew view (held even in our Lord's time; John ix. 1, 2), that special sickness or physical disability must be a punishment for special sin. It is "fools" who fall into sickness, i.e. persons who are foolish enough to rebel against JEHOVAH. No light punishment is inflicted on them for this rebellion: for presently "they draw near unto the gates of death." Then they submit and cry to JEHOVAH. Relief follows. He sends forth His word, the word by which the heavens were made (xxxiii. 6) and the sick are healed. There is no mention of medicine or physician, as in Eccles xxxviii. 1-4; the word of JEHOVAH alone effects the cure.

(b) It is an interesting fact that the Psalmist goes on to consider the case of mariners. Generally it may be said that the sea and its activities were alien from the Hebrew soul. During the greater part of Hebrew history the "sea coast" was in the hands of the Philistines and Phoenicians (Ezek xxv. 16, xxvi. 2 ff., xxvii. 3), and sea ventures were considered as acts of rebellion against God (1 K xxii. 48, 49; 2 Chr xx. 35-37). The sea was regarded as the home of "Leviathan," i.e. of the power of Chaos, which JEHOVAH overcame at the Creation.

On the other hand Ps xcv asserts "The sea is his (JEHOVAH'S), and he made it," and in the book of Jonah the LORD is shown to have control over the deep. He hurls a great wind into the sea, He prepares a great fish to swallow Jonah and to bring him safely to the shore. Well does Jonah describe his God as the maker of "the sea and the dry land."

The Psalmist also, like the author of the book of Jonah, has grasped the truth that JEHOVAH'S providence extends over the sea. The LORD "raiseth the stormy wind," and again the LORD "maketh the storm a calm" (v. 25, 29). So the Psalmist teaches that the providence of JEHOVAH extends even 'over the sea, and that prayer can reach Him thence. Cf civ. 26, note.

§ 4. THE APPENDIX

Vc. 33-43 stand outside the regular structure of the Psalm. They have no refrain. A historical passage consisting of vv. 35-38 is embedded in a number of *dicta* on JEHOVAH'S providence. This passage may be the description of one of the experiences of the Captivity. A number of the hungry are settled (by their captors?) in a barren land, but by the blessing of God and their own labour it is made to smile with fertility. Or again the passage may refer to the wilderness wandering and the settlement in Canaan. But we need not fix a definite reference. According to the higher Hebrew thought other nations beside Israel had particular lands assigned them: see Deut ii. 5, 9, xxxii. 8; Amos ix. 7. In v. 33 there is a reference to a common fact of physical geography specially noticed in the East. A river changes its course, and the land which it used to water becomes desert.

Ver. 34 may be an allusion to the fate of Sodom. Ver. 39 is isolated and difficult to explain: perhaps its immediate context is lost: see note on the passage. Vv. 40, 41 tell us that God humbles the rich, and enriches the poor. The last verse declares that the wise—perhaps only the wise—will understand the mercies of JEHOVAH—an appropriate ending, for God's mercies sometimes come disguised: cf Hosea xiv. 10.

CVII. 1 O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good:

For his mercy *endureth* for ever.

2 Let the redeemed of the LORD say so,

Whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the adversary;

3 And gathered them out of the lands,

From the east and from the west,

From the north and ¹from the south.

4 They wandered in the wilderness in a desert way;

They found no city of habitation.

5 Hungry and thirsty,

Their soul fainted in them.

6 Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble,

And he delivered them out their distresses.

¹ Heb. *from the sea.*

1-3. A SUMMONS TO THANKSGIVING

CVII. 1. *O give thanks.* Cf cvi. 1, note.

for ever. The Psalmist recognizes God's mercy in the Exodus from Egypt, in the Return from Babylon, and in the experiences of his own day.

2. *redeemed from the hand of the adversary* (or, *of adversity*). The language is quite general: it would apply to the Israelites at the Exodus, or again at the Return from Babylon, or finally to individuals of the Psalmist's own day who had experienced in one form or another the LORD's deliverance.

3. *from the south.* Marg. "Heb. *from the sea.*" *Sea* is used here of the lands bordering on the Mediterranean Sea, e.g. Egypt and (perhaps) Cyrene and beyond.

4-9. SALVATION FROM THE DANGERS OF THE DESERT: REFRAIN

4. *city of habitation.* This wide term is used in order to include not only Jerusalem to which many of the exiles returned, but also other cities in which they were allowed to settle as citizens. In the sixth and fifth centuries B.C. the Jews found such a city in Yeb (Elephantine) in Upper Egypt, and towards the end of the fourth century in Alexandria. The term *city of habitation* is wide enough to include all cities native or foreign in which Israel could find a home.

5, 6. *Hungry and thirsty...Then they cried...And he delivered them.* Again the reference is general: it would apply to the Exodus, to the Return, and indeed to many occasions: see e.g. 2 Sam xvii. 27-29. The "desert" encloses Palestine, and the desert wanderers are always "hungry and thirsty."

- 7 He led them also by a straight way,
That they might go to a city of habitation.
- 8 Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness,
And for his wonderful works to the children of men!
- 9 For he satisfieth the longing soul,
And the hungry soul he filleth with good.
- 10 Such as sat in darkness and in the shadow of death,
Being bound in affliction and iron;
- 11 Because they rebelled against the words of God,
And contemned the counsel of the Most High:
- 12 Therefore he brought down their heart with labour;
They fell down, and there was none to help.
- 13 Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble,
And he saved them out of their distresses.
- 14 He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death,
And brake their bands in sunder.
- 15 Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness,
And for his wonderful works to the children of men!
- 16 For he hath broken the gates of brass,
And cut the bars of iron in sunder.

7. *a straight way.* Ezra before starting for Jerusalem with his band of returning exiles proclaimed a fast to seek "from our God a *straight way* (Heb. *derek yēshārāh*) for ourselves and for our little ones" (Ezra viii. 21).

8. *to the children of men.* Four times repeated: *vs.* 8, 15 21, 31: cf viii. 4.

10-16. SALVATION FROM BONDAGE: REFRAIN

10. *Such as sat in darkness* etc. Deutero-Isaiah uses the same metaphor: Isa xlix. 9 ("Them that are bound"), li. 14 ("in the dungeon-pit"); but here the reference is general, and not specially to the Captivity in Babylon.

the shadow of death (Heb. *zal māvēth*). RV xxiii. 4 (marg.) gives, "Or, *deep darkness* (and so elsewhere)." But the text is to be preferred: see xxiii. 4, note.

11. *Because they rebelled* etc. The reference in *the words of God... the counsel* is probably to the messages of the prophets; cf 2 Chr xxxvi. 15, 16.

16. *he hath broken the gates of brass* (bronze), *And cut the bars of iron in sunder.* This with a change of tense and person is a quotation of Isa xlv. 2, in which JEHOVAH promises to give Cyrus entry into

- 17 Fools because of ¹their transgression,
 And because of their iniquities, are afflicted.
 18 Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat;
 And they draw near unto the gates of death.
 19 Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble,
 And he saveth them out of their distresses.
 20 He sendeth his word, and healeth them,
 And delivereth *them* from their ²destructions.
 21 Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness,
 And for his wonderful works to the children of men!
 22 And let them offer the sacrifices of thanksgiving,
 And declare his works with singing.

¹ Heb. *the way of their transgression.*² Heb. *pits.*

Babylon. But Babylon is not named, and the gates of "bronze" stand for any barriers which keep men in servitude. For *brass* (bronze) see xviii. 34.

17-22. SALVATION FROM DEADLY SICKNESS: REFRAIN

17. *Fools...are afflicted.* Better, *Fools...bring themselves into affliction:* cf 1 K ii. 26, "Thou didst endure affliction" (same Hebrew verb, *hithpael*). *Fools* (or *the foolish*, Heb. *ʿevilim*) are those who "despise wisdom and instruction" (Pro i. 7).

18. *the gates of death.* Cf ix. 13; Isa xxxviii. 10.

20. *He sendeth his word.* So in cxlvii. 15, 18, where "word" alternates with "commandment." It is not the personal Word.

22. *let them offer* (lit. *sacrifice*) *the sacrifices of thanksgiving.* Are the Psalmist's words to be understood literally of sacrifices of animals? In l. 14 occurs the parallel phrase, *sacrifice unto God thanksgiving; And pay thy vows unto the most Highest.* This injunction looks like a demand for sacrifices in the ordinary sense, but it is immediately preceded by the challenge which the Psalmist puts into JEHOVAH'S mouth, "Will I eat the flesh of bulls, Or drink the blood of goats?" On the other hand several Psalmists look upon the Psalms which they compose as the true sacrifices of praise: see xix. 14, lxix. 30, 31, civ. 34. Probably the attitude of such men towards sacrifices would be one of toleration for the slaughter of the animal combined with a joy in the accompanying psalmody. The stress of the Psalmist would certainly be laid on the song and on the music, as appears in the second member of this verse—*And* (let them) *declare his works with singing.* This *singing* (Heb. *rinnah*) was rather a joyful *shouting* of welcome as to a king or a deliverer: xxx. 5, xlvii. 1 ("triumph"), cv. 43.

- 23 They that go down to the sea in ships,
That do business in great waters;
24 These see the works of the LORD,
And his wonders in the deep.
25 For he commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind,
Which lifteth up the waves thereof.
26 They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the
depths:
Their soul melteth away because of trouble.
27 They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man,
And ¹are at their wits' end.
28 Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble,
And he bringeth them out of their distresses.
29 He maketh the storm a calm,
So that the waves thereof are still.

¹ Heb. *all their wisdom is swallowed up.*

23-32. SALVATION FROM THE PERIL OF THE SEA: REFRAIN

23. *great waters.* So in lxxvii. 19: but in xciii. 4, *many waters* for the same Hebrew words.

25. *raiseth.* Rather, *maketh the stormy wind continue*, not one blast but blast upon blast. For *stormy wind* read "whirlwind."

26. *Their soul.* The *soul* (Heb. *nephesh*) is in Hebrew thought the seat of the emotions and passions: cf ciii. 1, note, and the similar phrase in Josh ii. 11, "Our hearts did melt."

27. *They reel to and fro.* Lit. *They circle as in the sacred dance*, i.e. the ship does not answer its helm, but turns and turns again. Cf xlii. 4, where the phrase "a multitude keeping holyday" should be "a multitude dancing in sacred procession": also cxviii. 27 where for "Bind the sacrifice with cords" read "Set in order the sacred dancers with their (festal) boughs" (i.e. at the Feast of Booths).

And are at their wits' end. Lit. *And all their wisdom swalloweth up itself.* A violent metaphor suiting a violent situation. The sailors try one shift after another, but all fail.

29. *He maketh the storm a calm.* This is the general sense of the clause. Lit. *He maketh the storm stand in stillness.* The storm is personified as an accused person standing before the Judge. The Septuagintal text is in confusion: LXX B is defective here. Swete gives *καταγίδα αὐρῆς*, to which perhaps should be added *εἰς αὐραν*: so Vulgate, *Et statuit procellam eius in auram*, "He made the storm stand still, and it became a refreshing breeze."

- 30 Then are they glad because they be quiet;
 So he bringeth them unto ¹the haven where they would be.
- 31 Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness,
 And for his wonderful works to the children of men!
- 32 Let them exalt him also in the assembly of the people,
 And praise him in the seat of the elders.
- 33 He turneth rivers into a wilderness,
 And watersprings into a thirsty ground;
- 34 A fruitful land into a salt desert,
 For the wickedness of them that dwell therein.
- 35 He turneth a wilderness into a pool of water,
 And a dry land into watersprings.
- 36 And there he maketh the hungry to dwell,
 That they may prepare a city of habitation;
- 37 And sow fields, and plant vineyards,
 And get them fruits of increase.
- 38 He blesseth them also, so that they are multiplied greatly;
 And he suffereth not their cattle to decrease.
- 39 Again, they are minished and bowed down
 Through oppression, trouble, and sorrow.

¹ Heb. *the haven of their desire.*

30. *the haven* (λιμένα, LXX). The sense *haven* is not certain: the Heb. *māhōz* means (apparently) a large city, the seat of a market.

32. *in the seat* (better *mejlis* or *assembly*, as AV) *of the elders*. Cf i. 1, note.

33-43. JUDGMENT AND MERCY

33. *rivers into a wilderness*. Cf Isa i. 2. The Psalmist knows of rivers which have been swallowed up in the sand.

34. *a salt desert*. Cf Deut xxix. 23; Jer xvii. 6.

35. *a pool of water*. Cf cxiv. 8. Better as LXX A, εἰς λίμνας ὑδάτων, "into lakes of waters."

36. *That they may prepare*. Better, *And they established*. To "establish" a city is to build it, and something more: cf Hab ii. 12.

38. *their cattle*. The chief form of riches among the Hebrews.

39. *Again* etc. This rendering is a mistake: translate, *And they are minished*. The verse does not fit in with the previous context. Perhaps some words are missing. But the three verses (39, 40, 41) taken together tell a story in broken outline which agrees with the general tone of the Psalm. Verse 39 shows us a people suffering oppression, and being diminished. In vv. 40, 41 JEHOVAH intervenes. First, He turns the

- 40 He poureth contempt upon princes,
And causeth them to wander in the waste, where there is no
way.
- 41 Yet setteth he the needy on high from affliction,
And maketh *him* families like a flock.
- 42 The upright shall see it, and be glad;
And all iniquity shall stop her mouth.
- 43 Whoso is wise shall give heed to these things,
And they shall consider the mercies of the LORD.

princely oppressors into the desert, whence there is no road of return. Next He makes the oppressed ones safe from further oppression, and lets them increase once more. The tables are turned. The Psalmist may be thinking of Egyptian bondage, of the destruction of the male children, and of the overthrow of Pharaoh's army in the Red Sea, but here as in the rest of the Psalm he abstains from direct reference to the special events of Israel's Past. The P-B misses the sense of *vv.* 39, 40.

42. *The upright shall...be glad.* Cf lii. 6; lviii. 10.

stop her mouth. I.e. the mouth which speaks as in lxxiii. 11, xciv. 7.

43. *Whoso is wise.* Cf lxiv. 9.

PSALM CVIII

(Cf lvii. 7-11, lx. 5-12)

PETITION USHERED IN BY PRAISE

§ 1. CONTENTS.

1-5 (=lvii. 7-11). The Psalmist will praise God (JEHOVAH) because He is worthy to be praised.

6 (=lx. 5). To this merciful God he will make his appeal in the time of his trouble.

7-9 (=lx. 6-8). The Psalmist rehearses JEHOVAH's former promise to Israel of victory over the nations.

10-13 (=lx. 9-12). A confident appeal to God to grant victory at the present national crisis.

§ 2. UNITY OF THE PSALM.

Psalm cviii, as appears from the parallels cited in § 1, is a composite work: it consists of lvii. 7-11 followed by lx. 5-12. In its composite character it does not stand alone as a Psalm. Thus xix is generally taken to consist of two independent parts, and cxliv is an anthem made up of extracts taken chiefly from xviii.

But a Psalm may be composite in origin, but a unity in the result. So we ask, Have the two parts of cviii come together by accident or by design—through the slip of a negligent scribe, or through the intelligence of an editor

upon whom some portion of the spirit of a Psalmist has descended? Has the editor (if editor it be) succeeded in producing a unity?

Let the answer be, Yes. The editor of this Psalm is confronted with a historical situation similar to that which is supposed in Ps lx. But before he offers his petition for help he acknowledges in a burst of praise the known lovingkindness of his God. The praise stands in the place of a sacrifice: he will not appear before the LORD empty: cf xix. 14, civ. 33, 34. So the first part of the Psalm ends with triumph and praise: "Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens: And thy glory above all the earth" (v. 5).

But the Psalmist-editor has linked this with the next portion of the Psalm. The cry, *Be thou exalted* of v. 5 is carried on in v. 6 in the emphatic words, *that* (or *in order that*) *thy beloved* (ones) *may be delivered*. The Psalmist calls on JEHOVAH to "rise up" (as at the Red Sea) in order that He may save His people: "Sit thou on Thy lofty judgment seat and do judgment for the opprest": cf vii. 6, 7 with notes. A Christian parallel to vv. 5, 6 is in the two linked clauses of the Lord's Prayer, *Hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come*, O King and just Judge.

Psalm cviii is an Elohist Psalm, i.e. it uses the term Elohim, "God," in preference to "JEHOVAH" (except in v. 3). The neighbouring Psalms however use JEHOVAH freely. The explanation is no doubt that an original reading JEHOVAH had been changed into Elohim in lvii and lx *before* the two passages were joined together in order to form Ps cviii.

For notes on vv. 1-5 see p. 275 and for vv. 6-13 see pp. 286-8.

A Song, a Psalm of David.

CVIII. 1 ¹My heart is fixed, O God;

I will sing, yea, I will sing praises, even with my glory.

2 Awake, psaltery and harp:

²I myself will awake right early.

3 I will give thanks unto thee, O LORD, among the peoples:

And I will sing praises unto thee among the nations.

4 For thy mercy is great above the heavens,

And thy truth *reacheth* unto the skies.

5 Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens:

And thy glory above all the earth.

6 ³That thy beloved may be delivered,

Save with thy right hand, and answer ⁴us.

7 God hath spoken in his holiness; I will exult:

I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth.

8 Gilead is mine; Manasseh is mine;

¹ See Ps. lviii. 7-11.

² Or, *I will awake the dawn*

³ See Ps. lx. 5-12.

⁴ Another reading is, *me*.

- Ephraim also is the defence of mine head ;
 Judah is my ¹sceptre.
 9 Moab is my washpot ;
²Upon Edom will I cast my shoe :
 Over Philistia will I shout.
 10 Who will bring me into the fenced city ?
³Who hath led me unto Edom ?
 11 'Hast not thou cast us off, O God ?
 And thou goest not forth, O God, with our hosts.
 12 Give us help against the adversary :
 For vain is the ⁵help of man.
 13 Through God we shall do valiantly :
 For he it is that shall tread down our adversaries.

¹ Or, *lawgiver*² Or, *Unto*³ Or, *Who will lead me &c.*⁴ Or, *Wilt not thou, O God, which hast cast us off, and goest...hosts ?*⁵ Heb. *salvation.*

PSALM CIX

AN APPEAL FROM THE JUDGMENT OF MEN TO THE JUDGMENT OF JEHOVAH

§ 1. CONTENTS.

1-5. The Psalmist's appeal to God against the curses ("words of hatred") with which his enemies assail him.

6-15. The Psalmist rehearses before God these curses.

16-19. He rehearses the justification which his enemies put forward for their "words of hatred."

20. He seeks to turn these curses against those who have spoken them.

21-29. The Psalmist as a sick man appeals to JEHOVAH to restore him to his usual strength, that his enemies may realize the fact that the LORD favours him, and may see their curses fail.

30, 31. The Psalmist's confidence in JEHOVAH's protection.

§ 2. THE STORY OF THE PSALMIST RECONSTRUCTED.

The Psalmist is one who holds an office (priestly or more probably civil) among his people (*vs.* 8). He protests that he has exercised it with benevolence (*vs.* 4, 5), but he has not escaped the usual fate of Rulers; envious and slanderous tongues have spoken against him (*vs.* 2, 3, 8). An opportunity for attack has been given to his enemies, for the Psalmist has fallen sick (*vs.* 22-25). Sickness, be it remembered, was often taken among the Hebrews as a sign of God's anger and as a punishment sent by Him for a particular sin. Accordingly the Psalmist's enemies charge him with the sin of oppression (*vs.* 16-19). They assert in particular that the Psalmist has abused his office and that he has

persecuted a certain "poor and needy" person even to the extent of trying to bring about his death. He has "cursed" his victim, and delighted in doing it. The curse refreshed him like a draught of water; it seemed to give him health and activity as though oil (the best of food!) had entered into his "bones," i.e. into his whole frame. Such is the unlovely picture of the Psalmist as his enemies have drawn it. If they believed in their own picture, no wonder that they went on to wish (in *v.* 19) that a curse might envelop him as a garment and be fastened on him like a girdle.

We may suppose that language of abuse such as that of *vv.* 16-19 would be used in the post-exilic age of any reforming governor of the Jews, who tried by stern rebuke ("cursing") and by corrective measures to bring back his people to conformity to the Law of the Pentateuch. The story of Nehemiah may be taken as an illustration of the situation, though the actual occasion may have been earlier or later than his time. He was a stern governor, and no doubt many of his contemporaries would have said, *Let another take his office*. Of his methods he himself has told us in dealing with the Jews who had married foreign wives: "And I contended with them, and cursed them, and smote certain of them, and plucked off their hair.... And one of the sons of Joiada, the son of Eliashib the high priest, was son in law to Sanballat the Horonite: therefore I chased him from me" (*Neh xiii.* 25, 28).

In *v.* 22 the Psalmist describes himself as "afflicted and helpless"; this description is apposite, although he is a ruler, for he is "helpless" in respect of his sickness, and afflicted by enemies whom he cannot silence. So he turns in prayer to his God. His strong faith supports him, and the Psalm ends on the note of confidence in JEHOVAH'S protection (*vv.* 26-31).

§ 3. WHO IS THE SPEAKER IN *vv.* 6-19?

The chief of the Imprecatory Psalms are Ps *lxix* and *cix*. But there is a very great difference between the two. In Ps *lxix.* 22-28 (23-29, P-B Version), the imprecations are uttered by the Psalmist; whereas in Ps *cix.* 6-19 (5-18, P-B Version) the Psalmist quotes the imprecations of his enemies in his complaint to God against them. As the second half of this statement has been questioned by scholars, some proof of it must be offered.

(1) The setting of the imprecations in the two Psalms is very different. In Ps *cix* the Psalmist makes the definite complaint that his enemies have cursed him. He cries out, "The mouth of the wicked and the mouth of deceit have they opened against me" (*v.* 2); "They compassed me about also with words of hatred" (*v.* 3). His main prayer is, "Though they curse, yet bless thou" (*v.* 27, P-B Version; *v.* 28, RV). The earlier verses (2, 3) prepare us for an enumeration of his enemies' curses; *v.* 28 looks back at them. It is otherwise with Ps *lxix*. There, though the Psalmist speaks of "reproaches," he gives no hint that he reproduces them in the Psalm. No one can read *vv.* 21, 22 (RV; *vv.* 22, 23, P-B Version) without seeing that the imprecations are the Psalmist's own.

(2) Again, while in both Psalms the Psalmist regularly speaks of his "enemies," using the plural number, it is only in Ps *lxix* that the curses are aimed at a plurality of persons. In Ps *cix.* 6-19 all are aimed at one individual. This single person is surely the Psalmist himself, who complains that his enemies curse him.

(3) Once more. Verse 20 of Ps cix marks a transition, and clearly shows that the preceding imprecations are levelled against the Psalmist himself. He passes from verse 19:

Let it be unto *him* as the raiment wherewith *he* covereth *himself*,
And for the girdle wherewith *he* is girded continually,

to verse 20:

Let this *be* the reward of mine *adversaries* from the LORD,
And of *them* that speak evil against my soul.

This abrupt change from the singular to the plural marks a real transition. The Psalmist, horrified at the curses against himself which he has repeated, hastens to use a formula such as the ancients were accustomed to employ when they had been surprised into repeating ill-omened words: "Let this be (not my reward, but) the reward of mine adversaries!" This fear of repeating curses against one's self is illustrated by a very different instance in 1 Sam xxv. 22, where David being very wroth with Nabal for his churlishness, invokes a curse upon himself, if he should fail to take signal vengeance on Nabal. But he avoids expressing the curse in an ill-omened form. Instead of saying "God do so unto me," he says, "God do so unto *the enemies of David*," a phrase which is correctly explained in the rendering of LXX, *τάδε ποιήσαι ὁ θεὸς τῷ Δαυείδ*. But the author of Ps cix could not interpolate the words "mine enemies" into every one of the curses levelled against himself, and accordingly he repeats these curses unchanged, only turning the edge of them by a summary formula, "Let this be the reward of *mine adversaries*!"

Duhm (*Psalmen*, pp. 393-4), who takes the view that the imprecations of vv. 6-19 are the Psalmist's own, and that the Psalmist has one enemy only in view, starts from the use of the singular in the phrase, "the mouth of the wicked" (Heb. *rāshā'*) or "a wicked man's mouth," in v. 2; but to support his view he is obliged to introduce a number of emendations into MT beginning with v. 2 itself. So he reads "is opened" for "have they opened" in v. 2, following LXX which has *ἠνοιχθη*. But he cannot appeal to LXX for his further emendations, "*he* speaks" (v. 2), "*he* compasses me" and "*he* fights" (v. 3), "*he* is my adversary" (v. 4), "*he* rewards me" (v. 5), nor "mine adversary" (v. 20). These emendations, if accepted, make it easier to take the curses of vv. 6-19 as the Psalmist's own hurled against his single adversary, but the view which agrees with MT and in general with LXX is surely right. A plurality of enemies utter their words of hatred against the lonely figure of the Psalmist.

For the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.

- CIX.** 1 Hold not thy peace, O God of my praise;
 2 For the mouth of the wicked and the mouth of deceit have
 they opened against me:
 They have spoken ¹unto me with a lying tongue.
 3 They compassed me about also with words of hatred,
 And fought against me without a cause.
 4 For my love they are my adversaries:
 But I *give myself unto prayer*.
 5 And they have ²rewarded me evil for good,
 And hatred for my love.

¹ Or, *against*

² Heb. *laid upon me*.

1-5. THE PSALMIST APPEALS TO GOD AGAINST THE WORDS OF
 HATRED WITH WHICH HIS ENEMIES ASSAIL HIM

CIX. 1. *Hold not thy peace.* The same Hebrew verb is rendered, *Be not thou deaf* in xxviii. 1. "Deafness" and "Dumbness" may be expressed by the same word in Hebrew.

God of my praise. Cf Jer xvii. 14, "Thou (O JEHOVAH) art my praise," i.e. the One Whom I praise continually.

2. *the mouth of the wicked and the mouth of deceit.* This is not tautology: neither expression can be spared. The Psalmist complains of "wicked" words, i.e. of words spoken to his harm, but he complains further that they are spoken deceitfully: his enemies pretend to be his friends: cf xli. 5-9.

They have spoken. The plural should be noticed: it recurs in *vv.* 3, 4, 5, 20, 25, 27, 28, 29, 31. The Psalmist from his position is exposed to the attacks of a number of enemies.

with a lying tongue. Cf lii. 2-4.

4. *they are my adversaries.* Lit. *they act the part of a Satan* (i.e. an accuser) *against me*; cf *v.* 6, "let an *adversary* (lit. *a Satan*) stand at his right hand." Satan in Job i. 6-ii. 7; Zech iii. 1, 2 is not the wicked spirit, God's enemy, but the accusing angel, an officer of JEHOVAH'S "court," who acts under His permission. So in this Psalm the meaning of "adversary" or "Satan" is simply "accuser." Only the context shows whether the accusation be false or true.

But I give myself unto prayer. Lit. *I am prayer.* The Psalmist has no other resource. For the Hebrew idiom of cxx. 7, "I am for peace," lit. "I am peace."

5. *they have rewarded me.* Better as marg. *they have laid upon me.* The Psalmist thinks of himself as one who is being tried for his life. He thinks of his enemies partly as his judges (here and in *v.* 31), and partly as his accusers who bear false witness against him (*vv.* 2, 3;

- 6 Set thou a wicked man over him:
And let ¹an adversary stand at his right hand.
- 7 When he is judged, let him come forth guilty;
And let his prayer ²be turned into sin.
- 8 Let his days be few;
And let another take his office.
- 9 Let his children be fatherless,
And his wife a widow.
- 10 Let his children be vagabonds, and beg;
And let them seek *their bread* ³out of their desolate places.

¹ Or, *Satan* Or, *an accuser*² Or, *become*³ Or, *far from*

also *vv.* 16-19). His "trial" is only a metaphor, and only one of the charges brought against him in *vv.* 16-19 is to be understood in a literal sense. Though the Psalmist is a ruler in Israel (*v.* 8) and beneficent, he has to complain that his enemies accuse him of oppressing the poor. The accusation has succeeded; many are cursing him; and he feels their curses as the punishment which his "judges" have laid upon him. He has loved the people whom he rules, but they have "tried" him in their hearts, and paid him back with hatred.

6-15. THE WORDS OF HIS ENEMIES' CURSES

6. *Set thou etc.* The word *saying* is to be supplied at the end of *v.* 5, as in *ii.* 2, *xli.* 5 (cf *xli.* 8).

let an adversary (marg. *an accuser*) *stand*. This verse is an instance of the use of "constructive" parallelism: neither member is complete by itself, but the expression of the one thought is divided between the two halves of the verse. In English prose we should say in a single sentence, *Set thou a wicked man against him to stand at his right hand as his accuser*.

7. *When he is judged*. The Psalmist continues to use the same metaphor as in *vv.* 2, 3, 5.

And let his prayer etc. When he appeals from his enemies to *JEHOVAH*, let his prayer be counted by *JEHOVAH* as a sin; cf *xviii.* 41.

8. *his office*. There is nothing to suggest that the office was priestly; possibly it was civil. *LXX*, *ἐπισκοπήν*, as in *Acts i.* 20, where *AV* has "bishoprick"; *RV*, "office."

9. *Let his children be fatherless*. I.e. let them suffer the usual fate of the weak who have no protector.

10. *And let them seek their bread out of their desolate places*. Here a double curse is expressed in a single sentence. The first wish is not expressed, but implied, namely, that the habitations of the Psalmist's descendants may be "desolate places"; cf *lxix.* 25, "Let their habita-

- 11 Let the extortioner ¹catch all that he hath;
And let strangers make spoil of his labour.
- 12 Let there be none to ²extend mercy unto him;
Neither let there be any to have pity on his fatherless children.
- 13 Let his posterity be cut off;
In the generation following let their name be blotted out.
- 14 Let the iniquity of his fathers be remembered with the LORD;
And let not the sin of his mother be blotted out.
- 15 Let them be before the LORD continually,
That he may cut off the memory of them from the earth.
- 16 Because that he remembered not to shew mercy,
But persecuted the poor and needy man,
And the broken in heart, to slay *them*.
- 17 Yea, he loved cursing, and it came unto him;
And he delighted not in blessing, and it was far from him.

¹ Heb. *snare*.² Or, *continue kindness*

tion (marg. Or, *encampment*) be desolate." The picture is of children searching in a deserted encampment and beside an extinguished fire for some poor scraps of food.

11. *Let the extortioner* (or *creditor*, Heb. *nōsheh*) *catch* (Heb. *snare*) *all that he hath*. Cf 2 K iv. 1, "The *creditor* (Heb. *nōsheh*) is come to take my two children to be bondmen."

13. *In the generation following*. The right reading; but LXX, ἐν γενεῇ μιᾷ: Vulgate, *in generatione una*.

14. *the iniquity of his fathers...the sin of his mother*. In the first phrase the speaker shows his sense of the solidarity of the Hebrew race, as in cvi. 6, 7; in the second the solidarity of the family—the oneness of the man with his ancestors and the oneness of the man with the mother who bore him: cf li. 5, "in sin did my mother conceive me." A man shares in the sins committed by his remote ancestors, and (of course) in the sins of his own mother. This is the Hebrew (Old Testament) belief.

15. *the memory of them*. I.e. the memory of the whole kindred of the Psalmist.

16-19. THE ENEMIES' JUSTIFICATION OF THE CURSES WHICH THEY UTTER AGAINST THE PSALMIST

16. *he remembered not to shew mercy*. Cf Hab iii. 2, "In wrath remember mercy."

poor (Heb. 'ani) and *needy* (Heb. 'ebyon). So in v. 22 (Hebrew and English). Better, *afflicted and needy*. The signification of 'ani is rather *afflicted* as in cii, heading), and 'ebyon is simply, *needy*. See further Ps lxx. 5, note.

17. *it came unto him*. The enemies interpret the Psalmist's sickness as his curse turning back upon himself.

- 18 He clothed himself also with cursing as with his garment,
And it came into his inward parts like water,
And like oil into his bones.
- 19 Let it be unto him as the raiment wherewith he covereth
himself,
And for the girdle wherewith he is girded continually.
- 20 This is the reward of mine adversaries from the LORD,
And of them that speak evil against my soul.
- 21 But deal thou with me, O GOD the Lord, for thy name's
sake:
Because thy mercy is good, deliver thou me,
- 22 For I am poor and needy,
And my heart is wounded within me.
- 23 I am gone like the shadow when it ¹declineth:
I am tossed up and down as the locust.
- 24 My knees ²are weak through fasting;
And my flesh faileth of fatness.

¹ Or, *is stretched out*² Or, *totter*

18. *He clothed himself.* He indulged his passion for cursing until at length it became like a garment clinging to him and poisoning his whole body within.

20. TO TURN THE EDGE OF THE CURSES

With *v.* 19 the rehearsal of the enemies' "words of hatred" comes to an end, and in *v.* 20 the Psalmist seeks to turn the edge of these curses from himself against his enemies: *Let this* (he says) *be (rather) the recompense of my accusers from JEHOVAH*—the introduction of the Divine name at this point is emphatic. The Lord of all can turn the edge of any curse.

21-29. THE PSALMIST APPEALS FOR JEHOVAH'S FAVOUR AGAINST HIS ENEMIES

21. *deal thou with me...for thy name's sake.* The prayer of utter self-depreciation; contrast the language of xviii. 20, 24, "Rewarded me according to my righteousness."

22. *poor and needy.* Cf *v.* 16, note.

23. *tossed...as the locust.* A locust swarm is borne along on the wind, apparently helpless. Cf Exod x. 13, 19, "The east wind brought the locusts...an exceeding strong west wind, which took up the locusts, and drove them into the Red Sea."

24. *through fasting.* I.e. involuntary fasting caused by a sick man's distaste for food.

- 25 I am become also a reproach unto them :
When they see me, they shake their head.
- 26 Help me, O LORD my God ;
O save me according to thy mercy :
- 27 That they may know that this is thy hand ;
That thou, LORD, hast done it.
- 28 Let them curse, but bless thou :
When they arise, they shall be ashamed, but thy servant shall
rejoice.
- 29 ¹Let mine adversaries be clothed with dishonour,
And let them cover themselves with their own shame as with
a mantle.
- 30 I will give great thanks unto the LORD with my mouth ;
Yea, I will praise him among the multitude.
- 31 For he shall stand at the right hand of the needy,
To save him from them that judge his soul.

¹ Or, *Mine adversaries shall be clothed...and they shall cover &c.*

27. *that this is thy hand.* The Psalmist wishes his enemies to learn that his present state of weakness is due to JEHOVAH's chastisement, and not to their machinations. For since the chastisement is of God, the Psalmist has assurance of recovery.

28. *When they arise.* I.e. in the hope of seeing the Psalmist condemned.

30, 31. THE PSALMIST'S CONFIDENCE THAT JEHOVAH WILL SAVE HIM
FROM THOSE WHO WOULD CONDEMN HIM

30. *with my mouth...among the multitude.* Both privately and publicly the Psalmist will thank God and praise Him, for he is confident that JEHOVAH will grant him the deliverance for which he prays.

31. *he (JEHOVAH) shall stand at the right hand.* This is the Psalmist's answer to the enemies' curse in v. 6, "Let an accuser stand at his right hand."

that judge his soul (Heb. *nepesh*). This is the right translation : the phrase means that the Psalmist's *life* (Heb. *nepesh*) is at stake.

PSALM CX

THE KING WHO IS APPOINTED PRIEST BY JEHOVAH

This Psalm bears the title "Of" (or "Belonging to") David (Heb. *lš-David*). It is spoken of a ruler by one who claims the authority of a prophet to declare the will of God. It is hardly too much to say that the outstanding phrases of this Psalm are best explained, if they are taken as referring to certain events of David's career as king. The Psalmist is perhaps to be identified with Nathan the prophet (2 Sam xii. 1) or with Gad, David's seer (2 Sam xxiv. 11).

The Psalm consists of two parts.

In *vv.* 1-4 the Psalmist addresses the Ruler of Israel (who is probably David the king), and communicates to him a favourable oracle from JEHOVAH, Israel's king may rest in Jerusalem, for JEHOVAH Himself will send forth the commander-in-chief from Zion to victory.

In *vv.* 5-7 the Psalmist addresses JEHOVAH in words which implicitly give thanks for the oracle. He expresses his confidence in a complete victory. Sustained by JEHOVAH's right hand his lord had smitten kings (*v.* 5). Now with the same help he will "judge" the blood-stained "king" of the Ammonites (Molech), and will strike through the head of their land. He will drink of the water of the ravine soldier-like as he marches against the enemy.

The opening words of the Psalm describe for us a situation closely corresponding with a certain grave crisis of David's reign. The words contain an oracle from JEHOVAH: "Sit thou (i.e. "stay thou, remain") at my right hand, Until I make thine enemies thy footstool. JEHOVAH shall send forth thy strong rod out of Zion; Rule thou in the midst of thine enemies." The last words may be rendered as a promise, "Thou shalt rule in the midst of thine enemies." Kings, whether Israelite or Assyrian or Egyptian, were wont to seek Divine guidance or Divine approval on their military undertakings (1 Sam xiv. 37; 1 K xxii. 5, 6), and even to enquire Who was to be the leader of the army (1 K xx. 14). The Psalmist's oracle answers two purposes: *first*, it directs the hero of the Psalm ("my lord") to stay at home; and *secondly*, it promises success to his deputy, the leader of the army ("thy strong rod"). The situation supposed is the same as that described in 2 Sam x. 6-14, xi. 1. In the campaign against the Ammonites David, now no longer in his prime, stays in Jerusalem the sacred city ("at my right hand"), while Joab ("thy strong rod") is sent forth in command of the army. The Psalmist's oracle promises success by declaring that it is JEHOVAH who sends forth the "strong rod," and by rehearsing the Divine decree, "Rule thou (or "Thou shalt rule") in the midst of thine enemies." Already David had subdued Moab, the Philistines, the Aramaeans ("Syrians") of Zobah and Damascus, and Ammon with its capital Rabbah was about to be added to his conquests. East and west and north David had been victorious: his destiny was to rule "in the midst of his enemies."

Verse 3 answers to the same situation as *vv.* 1, 2: *v.* 3*a* refers to the people, *v.* 3*b* to their ruler. People and Ruler have different tasks. In the day when the host goes forth to fight the people offer themselves willingly, as when Barak

went forth against Sisera (Jud v. 2). But the ruler must not go out with them: his strength for his own task is to be renewed not on the battle-plain, but in the place where "the beauties of holiness" are, in the place where "king David went in and sat before the LORD" (2 Sam vii. 18). There he shall be born again "from the womb of the morning"; there a refreshing dew to renew his youth shall fall upon him. As Moses prayed, while Joshua fought, so let the hero of this Psalm enter the sanctuary, while his "strong rod" takes the field.

In v. 4 it is surely David to whom JEHOVAH'S oath is made, "Thou art a priest for ever after the manner of Melchizedek." David, already a king, has made himself master of Zion the sacred city of the old priest-king Melchizedek. He has already felt the appeal of the religious side of his office, as when he brought up the ark into the city of David, and again when he expressed his desire to build a permanent house for JEHOVAH. The oath of JEHOVAH confirms David in his estimate of his office, "Thou art more than king; thou art a priest, a minister of JEHOVAH for all time."

Some modern commentators (of whom we may cite Duhm as the representative) take a very different view of the reference of the Psalm. According to Duhm the hero is Simon the Maccabee, who exercised the office of high priest circ. 143-136 B.C. Duhm appeals to a coincidence of language between the Psalm and 1 Maccabees. In v. 4 of the Psalm, the words "Thou art a priest for ever" may be compared with 1 Macc xiv. 41, "The Jews and the priests were well pleased that Simon should be their leader and high *priest for ever*, until there should arise a faithful prophet": cf v. 35, "They made him their leader and high priest." It should however be remembered that the term "for ever" is not so significant in this connexion as it sounds to British ears. Eastern kings were greeted with the cry, "O king, live for ever": 1 K i. 31; Dan ii. 4.

A further argument rests on the claim of G. Bickell to have found in vv. 1-4 an acrostic yielding the name *Simeon* or *Simon*. For this four Hebrew consonants are required, *Shin*, *Mem*, *Ain*, and *Nun*. The last three are found at the beginning of vv. 2, 3, 4 respectively, but the *Shin* is further to seek. The *Shin* does not begin v. 1; it is found as the initial letter of the fourth word of the verse, *Shēb*, "Sit thou." This fact is sufficient to make the existence of an acrostic very doubtful, especially as no similar acrostic has been discovered hitherto in the Psalter.

Further it may be asked, Why should an acrostic stop with v. 4? If an acrostic were intended, surely vv. 5-7 would have been manipulated at the beginning by the Psalmist to yield Simon some appropriate title spelt with three consonants such as *nāgid*, "prince" or *kōhen*, "priest." Had the seven verses together yielded an acrostic, "Simeon *nāgid*" or "Simeon *kōhen*," Bickell's "discovery" would have been truly important.

Duhm answers this criticism in advance by treating vv. 5-7 as a fragment which is not part of Ps cx—a too easy way out of his difficulty.

A Psalm of David.

- CX.** 1 The LORD saith unto my lord, Sit thou at my right hand,
 Until I make thine enemies thy footstool.
 2 The LORD shall ¹send forth the rod of thy strength out of
 Zion:
 Rule thou in the midst of thine enemies.
 3 Thy people ²offer themselves willingly ³in the day of thy
⁴power:

¹ Or, stretch² Heb. are freewill offerings.³ Or, in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness: from &c. ⁴ Or, army

1-4. JEHOVAH'S ORACLE

CX. 1. *JEHOVAH saith* (Heb. *nē'ūm*). Or, *JEHOVAH uttereth his oracle*. Cf xxxvi. 1, "Transgression saith" (or "uttereth its oracle"): see note. The expression "*JEHOVAH saith*" (*nē'ūm*) is common in the Prophets: Isa xiv. 22, xxx. 1, xxxvii. 34, *al.*

Sit thou at my right hand. These words are usually taken to mean, "Sit down at my right hand," i.e. in the favoured place. But this explanation does not allow to the verb "sit" its full meaning. The verb "sit" offers a contrast with the verb "send forth" in the following verse; it has the sense here, as indeed in other places, of "remaining, abiding." "My lord" is to remain, when his "strong rod" is sent forth. So in 2 Sam vii. 18 it is said that David went in and "sat (i.e. continued to sit) before" *JEHOVAH*, while he uttered a lengthy thanksgiving. The leader or king who is addressed is to remain in Jerusalem, *JEHOVAH's* chosen city, and enjoy *JEHOVAH's* favour there at His *right hand*.

thy footstool. Eastern conquerors planted their feet on the prostrate bodies of their foes: Josh x. 24. Darius Hystaspis is thus represented on his Behistun inscription, and a footstool of the Egyptian king Tutanchamon has been taken from his tomb, picturing the crouching bodies of his enemies.

2. *JEHOVAH shall send forth.* While "my lord" stays at *JEHOVAH's* right hand, *JEHOVAH* Himself will direct the war.

the rod of thy strength. Better, *thy strong rod.* The "rod" (Heb. *matteh*) was a weapon of war, of the nature of a mace; it served also as a symbol of authority. Jonathan carried one in battle: 1 Sam xiv. 27, 43. The "rod" here stands for the bearer of the rod, i.e. the leader of the army. By a similar metaphor Khalid was called "a sword of God" (*saif min suyooof Allah*) for his prowess in the Moslem conquest of Syria.

Rule thou. An imperative implying the promise, "Thou shalt rule." For this Hebrew idiom cf xxxiv. 5, note; xxxvii. 3, note (p. 181).

3. *offer themselves willingly in the day of thine army* (so marg.). I.e. in the day when a host has to be gathered for war. On the other hand

- ¹In the beauties of holiness, from the womb of the morning,
²Thou hast the dew of thy youth.
 4 The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent,
 Thou art a priest for ever
 After the ³order of Melchizedek.
 5 The Lord at thy right hand
⁴Shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath.
 6 He shall judge among the nations,
⁵He ⁶shall fill *the places* with dead bodies;

¹ Or, *In holy attire* According to another reading, *On the mountains of holiness.*

² Or, *Thy youth are to thee as the dew* ³ Or, *manner*

⁴ Or, *Hath stricken* ⁵ Or, *The places are full of &c.* ⁶ Or, *hath filled*

there were cases of backwardness in the history of Israel: Jud v. 16, 17; 1 Sam xiii. 6, 7.

In the beauties of holiness. Better (from a slightly different reading of the Hebrew with *Resh* for *Daleth*) *On the mountains of holiness = in montibus sanctis*, Jerome *iuxta Hebraeos*. The Psalmist assures the ruler of Israel that his youthful warriors will be refresht on the holy mountains by the Divine favour as the earth is refresht by the morning dew: cf cxxxiii. 3, note.

4. *JEHOVAH hath sworn.* Cf ii. 7, lxxxix. 3.

After the manner (so marg.) *of Melchizedek.* Not a priest of the ordinary kind, but a king-priest like Melchizedek (Gen xiv. 18).

Melchizedek. The only other passage in O.T. which mentions Melchizedek is Gen xiv, a chapter which critics believe to be a very late addition to the text of Genesis. But it does not follow that the name of Melchizedek as priest-king is a late legendary trait, nor must it be assumed that the Psalmist must have derived the name from Gen xiv. 18.

5-7. THE PSALMIST'S CONFIDENCE

5. *The Lord.* Better, *O Lord.*

at thy right hand etc. Rather, *with* (or *relying on*) *thy right hand he hath in the day of his wrath smitten even kings.* Emphasis falls on the word "kings." The Psalmist looks back to David's past victories, and thankfully ascribes them to the help of JEHOVAH's right hand.

6. *He shall judge...with dead bodies.* Better, *He (David) shall judge among the nations him who hath his fill of corpses.* The mention of "kings" in v. 5 prepares the hearers for the reference to one whom the Ammonites called "*the king*" (Melech), and the Hebrews *Motech*, the god of the underworld, to whom children were burnt in sacrifice.

So in 2 Sam xii. 30 it is recorded that David judged this king by capturing his city and by removing his costly crown from his head.

He ¹shall strike through the head ²in many countries.

7 He shall drink of the brook in the way:

Therefore shall he lift up the head.

¹ Or, *Hath stricken*

² Or, *over a wide land*

Notice RV marg. on 2 Sam xii. 30, which gives *Malcam* ("their king") as a quasi-proper name.

He shall...many countries. A well-nigh impossible rendering. Better, *He hath smitten the head over the land of Rabbah.* The words are an anticipation of victory over the Ammonites whose capital was Rabbah. The priest-king of Zion smites "the head over the land": the rather awkward phrase means that it is the god of Ammon and not the mere human king who is smitten.

7. *He shall drink of the brook* (Heb. *nahal*) *in the way.* No deep watercourse shall stay the victor: he shall drink and go on refreshed. See 1 Sam xxx. 9, 10. "Brook" is a feeble rendering of *nahal*: "watercourse" or "ravine" is better. Cf xviii. 4, note.

Therefore shall he lift up the (P-B, *his*) *head.* Better, *Thus* or *After this manner.* Cf xlii. 6, note.

The word *Hallelujah*, "Praise ye JEHOVAH," with which Psalm cxi begins should probably be transferred to the end of Psalm cx. A copyist has divided the two Psalms at the wrong place. So too the *Hallelujah* at the beginning of Psalm cxii should be read at the end of cxi. See cvi. 1, note.

PSALMS CXI, CXII

§ 1. A PAIR OF PSALMS.

The two Psalms form a pair by reason both of their subject and of their form. Ps cxi acknowledges JEHOVAH's goodness to the people of Israel. By the marvellous deeds of His providence He gave the promised land to His people (xx. 5, 6). At a later time He "redeemed" them from the Captivity by the same wonderful providence.

Ps cxii confesses the blessedness of the individual Israelite who fears JEHOVAH and gladly obeys His commandments. The two Psalms may very well have proceeded from one author. Their optimism is to be noted. They declare that all is well, or shall be well, with Israel the nation and with the individual Israelite. The same tone is found in Pss xxv and xxxiv and indeed in other Psalms, e.g. in xxxvii.

§ 2. ALPHABETICAL ARRANGEMENT.

Pss cxi and cxii are alphabetical Psalms. Each clause (not each verse as in Ps xxxiv) begins with a fresh letter of the alphabet until the twenty-two letters from *Aleph* to *Tau* have been gone through. *Vv.* 9, 10 consist each of three clauses both in Ps cxi and in Ps cxii.

This alphabetical arrangement imposes some restraint on the Psalmist, in that

the first word of a clause is chosen, because it begins with the appropriate letter of the alphabet, and not because it gives the best sense. So in cxi. 4 the unusual word "memorial" (Heb. *zeker*) is used, where "name" (Heb. *shēm*) would perhaps have been more appropriate, "He hath made a *name* for his wonderful works." So in v. 5 the word "prey" (so margin; Heb. *tereph*) is surprising: "heritage" (Heb. *nahālāh*) would have been more natural. So in Ps cxii. 5 the expression "Well is it with the man" is strange in the Hebrew, but it was chosen because "Well" in the Hebrew (*Tōb*) begins with the letter *Tēth*.

These two short Psalms are perfectly regular in alphabetical arrangement, but it is otherwise (at least according to the present Hebrew text) with longer alphabetical Psalms. Thus in xxv the letters *Vau* and *Koph* are unrepresented: *Resh* appears twice, and the last verse, whether it be original or added by an editor, ends with *Pe*. In xxxiv again *Vau* is unrepresented, and the last verse (as well as v. 16) begins with the letter *Pe*. The order of the alphabet may be sacrificed to the order of thought.

PSALM CXI

THE WONDERFUL WORK OF JEHOVAH FOR ISRAEL

CONTENTS.

1-6. The Psalmist's purpose to praise JEHOVAH for His wonderful works.

7-9. The continuance of His providential work for Israel in the Return from Captivity.

10. The Psalmist's reflexion. The Wisdom by which events are interpreted comes by the fear of JEHOVAH.

CXI. 1 ¹Praise ye the LORD.

I will give thanks unto the LORD with my whole heart,
In the council of the upright, and in the congregation.

2 The works of the LORD are great,
Sought out of all them that have pleasure therein.

¹ Heb. *Hallelujah*.

1-6. JEHOVAH'S WORKS ARE TO BE PRAISED

CXI. 1. *Praise ye JEHOVAH.* See note on cx. 7.

the council (Heb. *sōd*) *of the upright...the congregation* (Heb. *'ēdāh*). Two descriptions of Israel, first an ideal one: "God's upright counselors"; secondly, the description often found in the Pentateuch, "the congregation," i.e. the assembled people.

2. *The works of JEHOVAH.* I.e. His works of delivering Israel from Egypt, maintaining them in the wilderness, and giving them the land of Canaan (v. 6).

Sought out (Heb. *dērūshim*). I.e. enumerated and pondered over as

- 3 His work is honour and majesty:
And his righteousness endureth for ever.
- 4 He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered:
The LORD is gracious and full of compassion.
- 5 He hath given ¹meat unto them that fear him:
He will ever be mindful of his covenant.
- 6 He hath shewed his people the power of his works,
In giving them the heritage of the nations.
- 7 The works of his hands are truth and judgement;
All his precepts are sure.
- 8 They are established for ever and ever,
They are ²done in truth and uprightness.

¹ Heb. *prey*.² Or, *made*

in lxxviii, cv, cvi. In later times the Hebrew verb was used of the minute study given by the Rabboth to Scripture, a study which often resulted in surprising and far-fetched interpretations. Hence the words *Derash* and *Midrash*.

3. *His work is honour and majesty*. This a literal rendering of the Hebrew. P-B gives a good paraphrase, *His work is worthy to be praised and had in honour*.

his righteousness etc. I.e. He will continue for ever His righteous acts on behalf of Israel: cf v. 2.

4. *He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered*. This is a paraphrastic rendering. Better, *He hath appointed a memorial* (Heb. *zēker*) *for His wonders*. The "memorial" may be the record of these wonders preserved in the Pentateuch, or again it may have a special reference to the Feast of the Passover, as Gunkel thinks, citing Exod xii. 14 (where "memorial" = Heb. *zikkārōn*).

gracious and full of compassion. Exod xxxiv. 6.

5. *meat* (Heb. *tereph*; LXX, τροφήν). Rather as marg. *prey*. I.e. the spoils of Canaan.

6. *In giving them* etc. This is the correct rendering, since the reference is to a past act of grace, not (as P-B) to something future.

7-9. JEHOVAH REDEEMED HIS PEOPLE FROM BABYLON

7. *truth and judgement*. Truth towards Israel in keeping His promise, judgment towards the inhabitants of Canaan.

his precepts. Here the word *pikkūdim* (rendered "precepts" in RV; "commandments" in P-B) has no reference to commandments given to men. The reference is rather to JEHOVAH's *providences*, His "ordering" of affairs so as to carry out his purposes. JEHOVAH's purposes are faithfully carried out.

- 9 He hath sent redemption unto his people ;
 He hath commanded his covenant for ever :
 Holy and reverend in his name.
- 10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom ;
¹A good understanding have all they that do ²thereafter :
 His praise endureth for ever.

¹ Or, *Good repute*² Heb. *them*.

9. *He hath sent redemption unto his people.* This rendering of RV suggests that the Psalmist is acknowledging some recent deliverance, as e.g. from Babylon. The abstract word "redemption," not "redeemer," suits the story of the Return from Babylon, which took place at different times under various leaders, none of whom was of special distinction. If the reference were to the Exodus, one would expect the concrete word, "a Redeemer," in allusion to the great figure of Moses.

He hath commanded his covenant for ever. The Psalmist writing in the light of *two* great deliverances—from Babylon and from Egypt—acknowledges that JEHOVAH'S covenant is one that lasts.

reverend (Heb. *nōrā*). I.e. to be feared: cf lxxvi. 7, 12; Deut vii. 21, "A great God and a terrible (*nōrā*)."

10. WISDOM COMES FROM FEAR OF JEHOVAH

10. *the beginning* (Heb. *rēshīth*) of wisdom. Better, *the chief part* (or *the best part*) of wisdom: cf Amos vi. 6, "the *chief* ointments." In Pro ix. 10 however the rendering, "The fear of JEHOVAH is the beginning (Heb. *tšhillath*) of wisdom" is correct.

A good understanding. The marg. *Good repute* is supported by the use of the phrase in Pro iii. 4, "So shalt thou find favour and *good repute* In the sight of God and man" (as RV marg.).

PSALM CXII

THE HAPPY STATE OF THE RIGHTEOUS MAN

CONTENTS.

1-9. The manifold blessings which belong to the man who fears JEHOVAH. He is blest in his descendants, and he is remembered after death. He has no fear of his enemies, for he is allowed to witness their helplessness. The chief point in his character is generosity. "He dealeth *graciously* and lendeth," i.e. he does not exact usury; moreover he hath dispersed, i.e. he has given generously to the needy. A wealthy man who does not oppress the poor is rare and so attracts the Psalmist's eulogy.

Among the blessings (be it noted) life after death is not included. No resurrection is promised.

10. The envy of the wicked is powerless to harm the righteous.

CXII. 1 ¹Praise ye the LORD.

- Blessed is the man that feareth the LORD,
That delighteth greatly in his commandments.
- 2 His seed shall be mighty upon earth:
The generation of the upright shall be blessed.
- 3 Wealth and riches are in his house:
And his righteousness endureth for ever.
- 4 Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness:
He is gracious, and full of compassion, and righteous.
- 5 Well is it with the man that dealeth graciously and lendeth;
He shall maintain his cause in judgement.
- 6 For he shall never be moved;
The righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance.

¹ Heb. *Hallelujah*.

1-9. THE CHARACTER AND THE BLESSINGS OF THE
MAN THAT FEARETH JEHOVAH

CXII. 1. *Praise ye JEHOVAH.* These words probably belong to the end of Ps cxi. See cx. 7, note.

Blessed (Heb. *ashērē*). So i. 1, cxix. 1. Lit. *O the blessings of!*

2. *mighty*. Cf Gen vi. 4, x. 8, 9. There is no reference here to greatness in war: the thought is rather of wealth and repute: cf v. 3.

The generation (Heb. *dōr*) *of the upright*. Better, *The dwelling(s) of the upright*: here *dōr* means a number of people dwelling together; cf xiv. 5, xxiv. 6, lxxiii. 15.

3. *Wealth and riches*. Heb. *hōn* is "wealth" in the sense of "sufficiency," and *ōsher*, "riches" in the sense of "abundance."

And his righteousness endureth for ever. The same is said of JEHOVAH's righteousness in cxi. 3. Here the meaning is that the righteous deeds of the God-fearer shall not be forgotten: cf Eccles xlv. 10.

4. *Unto the upright etc*. Render, *There is arisen for the upright a Light, even He who is gracious, and full of compassion, and righteous*. The verb "arise" (*zārah*) is said of JEHOVAH in Deut xxxiii. 2; the descriptive title "Light" is used of Him in Micah vii. 8, and the epithets "gracious and full of compassion" are given to Him in cxi. 4; Exod xxxiv. 6.

5. *dealeth graciously and lendeth*. So xxxvii. 26.

He shall maintain his cause in judgement. An illustration of the statement of the first half of the verse that it is well with the man. Another possible but less probable rendering is, *He guideth his affairs with right*, i.e. he acts fairly in his business, an additional characteristic of the man who fears JEHOVAH.

6. *The righteous shall be had etc*. Cf v. 3.

- 7 He shall not be afraid of evil tidings:
His heart is fixed, trusting in the LORD.
- 8 His heart is established, he shall not be afraid,
Until he see *his desire* upon his adversaries.
- 9 He hath dispersed, he hath given to the needy;
His righteousness endureth for ever:
His horn shall be exalted with honour.
- 10 The wicked shall see it, and be grieved;
He shall gnash with his teeth, and melt away:
The desire of the wicked shall perish.

7. *He shall not be afraid.* Pro i. 33. Contrast Job xv. 21.

His heart is fixed. Cf lvii. 7.

8. *is established.* Or, *is sustained*, i.e. by its confidence in JEHOVAH. The next clause, *he shall not be afraid*, is an illustration of the previous statement; the half-verse may be rendered, *His heart is sustained free from fear.*

Until he see his desire upon his adversaries. Cf liv. 7, "Mine eyehath seen *my desire* upon mine enemies." The same Hebrew idiom in both passages. So on the Moabite Stone (line 4) king Mesha describes the vengeance he took on Israel for Israel's forty years of oppression of Moab (2 K iii. 4-27) in the words, "[Chemosh] made me see *my desire* upon all mine enemies."

9. *He hath dispersed.* Or, *scattered.* I.e. "he hath given freely." There is a suggestion of recklessness in the verb. St Paul quotes this verse as a description of the "cheerful giver": 2 Cor ix. 9. Cf Pro xi. 24, "There is that scattereth, and increaseth yet more."

His righteousness endureth. Cf v. 3.

His horn. See lxxxix. 17, note.

10. ENVY POWERLESS

10. *and be grieved.* LXX, ὀργισθήσεται, "shall be angry." The meaning of the Hebrew verb *kā'as* sways in meaning between *grief* and *anger*.
and melt away. Cf lviii. 8, lxviii. 2.

The desire...shall perish. Cf i. 6, "The way of the wicked shall perish."

PSALM CXIII

THE MOST HIGH GOD

CHARACTER AND USE.

This Psalm is the first of the group called the Egyptian *Hallel*. The *Hallel* was sung on the occasion of the Passover at home at the table. It is the "hymn" referred to in Mark xiv. 26. Cf Ps cxviii, Introduction, § 2.

In the Book of Common Prayer it is one of the special Psalms for Easter Day.

It is suitable on three grounds, *first* because it is a vehement outburst of praise (*vv.* 1-3), *secondly* because it tells of Divine condescension to this world (*vv.* 4-6), and *thirdly* because it speaks of the exaltation of one who is poor and needy to sit on high with the great (*vv.* 7-9). It is a story of a reversal of conditions by the hand of God. So our Lord went from the Cross to the Crown.

CXIII. 1 ¹Praise ye the LORD.

Praise, O ye servants of the LORD,
Praise the name of the LORD.

2 Blessed be the name of the LORD

From this time forth and for evermore.

3 From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same
The LORD's name is to be praised.

4 The LORD is high above all nations,
And his glory above the heavens.

5 Who is like unto the LORD our God,
That hath his seat on high,

6 That humbleth himself ²to behold
The things that are in heaven and in the earth?

¹ Heb. *Hallelujah.*

² Or, *to regard the heavens and the earth*

1-3. AN INVITATION TO GIVE PRAISE

CXIII. 1. *Praise ye JEHOVAH.* This invitatory belongs probably to the end of Ps cxii: see cx. 7, note.

O ye servants of JEHOVAH. Cf xxxiv. 22, lxix. 36, cii. 28; Isa liv. 17; Song of the Three Children, 63. P-B, *Praise the Lord, ye servants* (so LXX, Vulgate), follows an inferior reading. Israel is JEHOVAH's servant: Isa xli. 8, xlv. 21.

3. *From the rising of the sun* etc. I.e. from East to West: cf Mal i. 11.

is to be praised. P-B, *is praised*, an inferior rendering. Hebrew as in xviii. 3.

4-9. GREATNESS AND CONDESCENSION OF JEHOVAH

4. *high above all nations.* Cf xlvi. 6, 10: also Isa xl. 15, 17. "Above" all these formidable oppressors of Israel.

glory above the heavens. Cf viii. 1, lvii. 5, 11.

5. *Who is like* etc. Cf xxxv. 10; Exod xv. 11; Isa xl. 18, 25, xlvi. 5.

That hath his seat on high. Cf xxix. 10, ciii. 19.

6. *That humbleth himself to behold.* This rendering is limited to the English versions, the anthropomorphism being too strong for the ancients. LXX gives τὰ ταπεινὰ ἐφορῶν ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ καὶ ἐν τῇ γῆ: Vulgate,

- 7 He raiseth up the poor out of the dust,
And lifteth up the needy from the dunghill;
8 That he may set him with princes,
Even with the princes of his people.
9 He maketh the barren woman to keep house,
And to be a joyful mother of children.
¹Praise ye the LORD.

¹ Heb. *Hallelujah*.

humilia respicit in coelo et in terra. A more literal rendering is, *Who looketh downward into heaven and earth*; cf xiv. 2, cxxxviii. 6.

7. *from the dunghill.* Lam iv. 5.

8. *set him with princes.* Or, *cause him to take his seat with nobles*, i.e. in the gate where the chief men met together.

9. *He maketh the barren woman to keep house.* The *barren woman* is Zion, who was bereft of her children by the Babylonish Captivity, but received them back again at the Return. Cf Isa liv. 1, "Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear." This sudden turn from the individual note to the national can be paralleled from other Psalms: xxv. 22, cxxx. 7, cxxxii. 3.

Praise ye JEHOVAH. In LXX and Vulgate these words are (wrongly) transferred to the beginning of Ps cxiv.

PSALM CXIV

THE GLORIES OF THE EXODUS

CHARACTER AND PURPOSE.

In its subject Ps cxiv resembles Ps cv: in form it differs greatly. Ps cv summons to praise; cxiv is praise itself. The first is a sermon, the second is a hymn. Ps cxiv (like cxiii) belongs very appropriately to the *Hallel*, i.e. to the collection of Psalms sung at table at the Passover. From Passover use it has gone on to be used for Easter in the Book of Common Prayer.

CXIV. 1 When Israel went forth out of Egypt,
The house of Jacob from a people of strange language;

1-4. WONDERS AT THE EXODUS

CXIV. 1. *a people of strange language* (LXX, λαοῦ βαρβάρου). A description of a hostile people: cf Isa xxviii. 11, "By men of strange lips and with another tongue will he speak to this people" (Isaiah is threatening Israel with an invasion by the Assyrians): also Jer v. 15 (of the Scythian raider from the North, or possibly of the Chaldeans).

- 2 Judah became his sanctuary,
Israel his dominion.
- 3 The sea saw it, and fled;
Jordan was driven back.
- 4 The mountains skipped like rams,
The little hills like young sheep.
- 5 What aileth thee, O thou sea, that thou fleest?
Thou Jordan, that thou turnest back?
- 6 Ye mountains, that ye skip like rams;
Ye little hills, like young sheep?
- 7 Tremble, thou earth, at the presence of the Lord,
At the presence of the God of Jacob;
- 8 Which turned the rock into a pool of water,
The flint into a fountain of waters.

2. *Judah became his sanctuary* etc. I.e. Judah-Israel (the twelve tribes) became holy to JEHOVAH as His subjects over whom He ruled. Cf Jer ii. 3, "(In the wilderness) Israel was holiness unto JEHOVAH."

3. *The sea saw.* Cf lxxvii. 16.

Jordan. Josh iii. 13-16.

3, 4. *The sea...fled...The mountains skipped* (or *danced*, Vulgate, *exultaverunt*). There is a contrast of behaviour between the two natural objects. The sea (the representative of Chaos: cf xciii. 3, 4) fled: but the mountains rejoiced and danced at the presence of JEHOVAH. The reference is to the giving of the Law on Sinai when the whole *mount* quaked (Exod xix. 18), but the *quaking* which is there ascribed to fear, is here represented as the joyful movement of the dance.

5-8. THE PSALMIST REALIZES THE POWER OF THE WONDER-WORKING GOD AS STILL PRESENT

5. *that thou fleest.* So MT rightly. P-B, *that thou fleddest*: so LXX, Vulgate. For a similar challenge cf lxviii. 16.

7. *Tremble, thou earth.* So EV (=MT), but LXX, *ἐσαλεύθη ἡ γῆ*: Vulgate, *mota est terra*.

at the presence of the Lord (Heb. *ādōn*). Or, *at the presence of thy Lord*.

of the God of Jacob. Rather, *of Eloah* ("God") *the Conqueror*. Cf xlvi. 7, note.

8. *a pool of water.* The pool is not mentioned in Num xx. 8, 11, but the fact that the beasts drank implies the existence of a pool.

PSALM CXV

A TE DEUM IN DEFIANCE OF HEATHENDOM

§ 1. CONTENTS.

1-3. JEHOVAH has done great things for Israel, which Israel could not have done for himself.

4-8. The gods of the nations on the contrary have no faculties and no power. They are idols man-made.

9-13. (An appeal to history.) Israel has trusted in JEHOVAH, and all Israel, laymen, priests and proselytes, have found help and a defender in Him.

14-16. A blessing upon Israel, a people delivered from death.

17, 18. Israel as a living people will thank JEHOVAH for His deliverance.

§ 2. CHARACTER AND PURPOSE.

This Psalm is throughout a Song of Praise and Thanksgiving. Israel (himself defenceless) has experienced the mercy and faithfulness of JEHOVAH (*v.* 1); JEHOVAH has been a threefold help and shield (*vv.* 9-11). The Psalm ends, "We will bless (i.e. "thank") JAH," i.e. JEHOVAH: ...*Hallelujah*. It is a general thanksgiving. No reference to any special event can be discovered: the Psalmist speaks apparently not of a single event, but of a state of things which has lasted for some time.

But this hymn of thanksgiving has (like other Psalms of the same kind) its didactic side. This side is clearly expressed in *vv.* 4-11. The Psalm besides being a Thanksgiving to the true God is also a Dissuasive from the worship of the gods of the nations (the heathen). In *v.* 11 Proselytes are mentioned, a fact which shows that Israel is in controversy with heathendom. Israel has gained converts, but where there is gain, there also is the danger of loss. The gods of the heathen represented by their images were a temptation to some, perhaps to many, in Israel. A god whose form could be "seen" made an appeal to grosser minds. So the caustic description of the "idols" given in *vv.* 4-7 is not otiose: it is a piece of polemic called forth by the danger which threatened Israel from Heathendom. Heathenism too could make proselytes. On many occasions before the Exile Israel fell into idolatry, and there is good evidence in the later prophecies that idolatrous practices continued long after the Return from Babylon.

§ 3. A LITURGICAL PSALM? THE DATE.

Some Psalms which were applied by the Jews to liturgical use were undoubtedly composed originally by an individual to express his own devotion. Ps cxv however may very well be an exception. It is expressed throughout in the first person plural: it shows a consciousness of the division of the people into lay folk and priests (the house of Aaron) (*vv.* 9, 10); there is a hint of the Temple with its shrine empty of images (*vv.* 2-7); there is apparently a priestly blessing in *vv.* 14-16; lastly in *vv.* 17, 18 the living praising congregation is contrasted with the dumb assembly of the dead.

On the Date of this Psalm there is not much to be said. From 1 Chr xvi we may conclude that public Psalmody was practised in the Chronicler's day and for some time before—a length of time sufficient to allow for the rise of the

belief that the custom dated from the time of David. Granted then that Ps cxv is liturgical in the full sense, it need not be later than 300-250 B.C., and it may be earlier. It may indeed be a "hymn of the Second Temple." Prof. Kennett on the other hand, who suggests that the Chronicler wrote "at least as late as 165 B.C.," is able to give a later date than this to liturgical Psalms (*O.T. Essays*, pp. 127-132).

- CXV.** 1 Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us,
 But unto thy name give glory,
 For thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake.
 2 Wherefore should the nations say,
 Where is now their God?
 3 But our God is in the heavens:
 He hath done whatsoever he pleased.
 4 Their idols are silver and gold,
 The work of men's hands.

1-3. JEHOVAH A GOD OF POWER

CXV. 1. *Not unto us.* A note of triumph: Israel has experienced a deliverance, but the victory was due not to Israel's sword, but to JEHOVAH's mercy: xlv. 6.

For thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake. According to MT each verse of a Psalm commonly consists of two parallel members, but occasionally a third member is added, which stands outside the parallelism, and gives emphasis to the verse. Such verses are often found at the beginning of a Psalm (as lxxix. 1, 2) or at the end (as lxxvii. 16-19): cxv. 1 is an instance of the former kind. The stress is on the third member: the Psalmist wishes to give glory to JEHOVAH for His mercy and His faithfulness to Israel.

2. *Wherefore etc.* Rather, *To what purpose:* cf Isa i. 11. Israel's God has shown His power: the question put by the heathen has been conclusively answered: it is vain to repeat it.

Where is now (Heb. *nā*, "I pray") *their God?* The *now* does not refer to time. The question is the same as in xlii. 3, 10, where *now* does not appear in EV. See note there.

3. *But our God is in the heavens.* In the Hebrew this clause is weighted with a succession of long vowels. It is plainly emphatic: it might be read with a pause after each word. The meaning is that JEHOVAH is too high to be represented by any earthly object.

He hath done whatsoever (rather, *all that*) *he pleased.* He has set Israel up in spite of the enmity of the nations.

4-8. THE POWERLESSNESS OF THE GODS OF THE NATIONS

4. *silver and gold.* The scorn intended by these words is brought out by the words which follow, *The work of men's hands.* A stone idol might

- 5 They have mouths, but they speak not ;
 Eyes have they, but they see not ;
 6 They have ears, but they hear not ;
 Noses have they, but they smell not ;
 7 They have hands, but they handle not ;
 Feet have they, but they walk not ;
 Neither speak they through their throat.
 8 They that make them shall be like unto them ;
 Yea, every one that trusteth in them.
 9 O Israel, trust thou in the LORD :
 He is their help and their shield.

be meteoric and unshapen by human hands; it might be regarded as having fallen down from heaven (Acts xix. 35); a *wooden* idol might be a rough-hewn post, and hardly to be distinguished from a natural object, but where silver and gold were used, the craftsman's hand would be conspicuous on the figure of the god: Jer x. 8, 9.

5. *but they speak not.* Hab ii. 18, 19.

Eyes have they. With the description in vv. 5-7, cf Wisdom xv. 15.

7. *They have hands* etc. Cf Kuran xxii. 72: "Verily those whom ye invoke other than Allah cannot create a fly...and if the fly snatch anything from them, they do not attempt to recover it from him."

Feet have they, but they walk not. The images of the gods were carried in public procession, and sometimes carried off by an enemy: Isa xlv. 1, 2; Baruch vi. 26 (*q.v.*).

Neither speak they through their throat. Or, *Neither do they make a sound in their throat.* This has already been said in v. 5*a*, "They have mouths, but they speak not." But neither clause lies under just suspicion as an interpolation. The Psalmist repeats himself for emphasis: he denies first and last that any oracle or instruction (Jer x. 8) is to be had from these "dumb" idols (Hab ii. 18).

8. *shall be like unto them.* A statement, but LXX, ὁμοιοὶ αὐτοῖς γένοιντο, "May they become like unto them." A wish. Cf Kuran xxii. 72, "Weak is the petitioner and the petitioned one" (closing words of the verse).

9-13. ISRAEL HAS TRUSTED JEHOVAH AND FOUND A DEFENDER IN HIM

9-11. *O Israel...O house...Ye that fear.* So MT, but the use of the vocative in the first half of these three verses does not harmonize with the use of the third person in the second half. LXX, reading the Hebrew consonants with different vowels, gives the third person throughout, beginning with οἶκος Ἰσραὴλ ἠλπισεν ἐπὶ Κύριον, "The house of Israel hoped (or "hath hoped") in the LORD."

9. *their shield.* See iii. 3, note.

- 10 O house of Aaron, trust ye in the LORD:
He is their help and their shield.
- 11 Ye that fear the LORD, trust in the LORD:
He is their help and their shield.
- 12 The LORD hath been mindful of us; he will bless *us*:
He will bless the house of Israel;
He will bless the house of Aaron.
- 13 He will bless them that fear the LORD,
Both small and great.
- 14 The LORD increase you more and more,
You and your children.
- 15 Blessed are ye of the LORD,
Which made heaven and earth.
- 16 The heavens are the heavens of the LORD;
But the earth hath he given to the children of men.
- 17 The dead praise not ¹the LORD,
Neither any that go down into silence;

¹ Heb. *Jah*.

10. *house of Aaron*. I.e. the priests; cxviii. 3. In cxxxv. 19, 20 they are distinguished from the "house of Levi" as the full priests from the Levites.

11. *Ye that fear JEHOVAH*. Those addressed must be proselytes, since they are distinguished from "Israel" (v. 9) and from the "house of Aaron" (v. 10). Cf St Paul's address in the synagogue of Antioch in Pisidia, "Men of Israel, and *ye that fear God*" (Acts xiii. 16).

13. *Both small and great*. The Psalmist speaks in a missionary spirit: he welcomes all from among the Gentiles who fear JEHOVAH.

14-16. A BLESSING UPON ISRAEL

14. *You and your children*. The Psalmist looks to the continued life of the nation, but (see v. 17) he has no hope of continued life for individuals after death.

16. *The heavens...But the earth...* JEHOVAH is gracious, for He has given the great gift of the earth to mankind, but He is also transcendent, dwelling far apart from men: cf 1 K viii. 27, "Will God in very deed dwell on the earth? behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee" (from Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the Temple).

17, 18. A CONTRAST BETWEEN THE STATE OF THE DEAD AND THAT OF THE LIVING

17. *The dead praise not the LORD*. More literally, *The dead do not raise the Hallelu-jah*. The dead are not able to join in public praise.

18 But we will bless ¹the LORD
 From this time forth and for evermore.
²Praise ye the LORD.

¹ Heb. *Jah.*

² Heb. *Hallelujah.*

To be cut off from worship in the Temple is the great loss of the dead: vi. 5, xxx. 9, lxxxviii. 10.

18. *But we.* LXX, ἡμῶν οἱ ζῶντες: Vulgate, *nos qui vivimus*, "We the living."

PSALM CXVI

A PSALMIST SAVED FROM DEATH AND OVERFLOWING WITH THANKFULNESS

§ 1. CONTENTS.

1-6. The Psalmist's deliverance from death.

7-9. The Psalmist's confidence for the future.

10-12. When all men failed him, JEHOVAH gave him a full deliverance.

13, 14. The Psalmist will render thanks.

15, 16. JEHOVAH cares for His Saints.

17-19. (A recapitulation.) The Psalmist will render thanks not in solitude, but in the presence of JEHOVAH's people, yea, *in the Temple, in the midst of Jerusalem.*

§ 2. CHARACTER AND PURPOSE.

This Psalm, says Gunkel, is composed of heterogeneous elements—Complaint, Petition, Expression of trust, Thanksgiving—apparently without any arrangement. He proceeds in the name of Order to omit v. 14 (as an anticipation of v. 18) and to incorporate v. 16 *a* in v. 4, so as to read,

Then called I on the name of JEHOVAH:
 O (Heb. *ānnāh*) JEHOVAH,
 Deliver my soul.
 Verily I am thy servant.

The rest of v. 16 truncated with the loss of the vocative is allowed to stand in its place as follows:

(But) I am thy servant, the son of thine handmaid;
 Thou hast loosed my bonds.

But neither Gunkel's criticism nor his rearrangement is convincing. A strictly logical sequence is not to be expected in the prayer of a struggling saint. Such an one will certainly mingle petition with thanksgiving. Delivered to-day he faces fresh conflicts to-morrow. A still more striking instance of the ebb and flow of feeling under the storms of life is found in Psalm xl, which opens with a loud burst of thanksgiving and closes with the earnest appeal for help, "Make no tarrying, O my God." See Ps xl, Introduction, § 1.

The purpose of Ps cxvi is twofold, *first*, to give thanks for a wonderful

deliverance from death, *secondly*, to acknowledge JEHOVAH as the sole Deliverer. Human helpers failed the Psalmist: "I said, All men are a lie" (v. 11; cf cxlvi. 3, 4). Of "other gods" as saviours there is simply no word: the thought does not enter the Psalmist's mind.

Duhm has gone even further than Gunkel in attempting to remedy the lack of logical order which they both detect in this Psalm. Duhm even re-writes it in a semi-liturgical form. He arranges it in eleven stanzas of four lines each and with a refrain for each stanza except the last. But he has to alter MT (with which LXX agrees) in order to obtain his refrain for his first stanza. So in v. 2 for "In my days (of trial) I call (unto Him)" he reads, "On the name of JEHOVAH I call," not a gain for the sense. He finds his refrain standing ready for him (v. 4 a) at the end of his second stanza, but for the next five stanzas he has to supply his refrain by conjecture.

The best of Duhm's stanzas is the last, the only one in which he has left the text untouched:

My vows I pay to JEHOVAH,
Yea, before all His people,
In the courts of the house of JEHOVAH,
In thy midst, O Jerusalem (vv. 18, 19).

The Psalmist has now attained to the quietness of resolve, and his last words may well take the form of an ordered stanza. But the monotony of Duhm's earlier stanzas is ill-fitted for the joyous outburst of a rescued soul. It is necessary to notice this arrogant re-editing, for if it is seldom done on so large a scale in a single Psalm (as here and in lxii), yet it affects the text of very many Psalms, and it is too often allowed to pass without serious challenge.

CXVI. 1 I love the LORD, because he hath heard
My voice and my supplications.
2 Because he hath inclined his ear unto me,
Therefore will I call *upon him* as long as I live.

1-6. AN ACKNOWLEDGMENT THAT JEHOVAH HEARS THE
PSALMIST'S PRAYERS

CXVI. 1. *I love JEHOVAH, because he hath heard...my supplications.* More literally (cf P-B), *I love that JEHOVAH heareth the voice of my supplications.* The object (understood) of the verb *I love* is no doubt JEHOVAH (as AV and RV suppose), but two explanations of the actual MT can be given. First, the extreme conciseness of the Psalmist's style: cf the "I believe" of v. 10. Secondly, a feeling of reverence or awe which prevents him saying outright, "I love JEHOVAH." We might paraphrase "I am in a glow of love, because JEHOVAH heareth" etc.

2. *as long as I live.* Rather as the Hebrew, *in my days*, i.e. in my days of trial; xxvii. 5; Deut xxxiii. 25, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be."

- 3 The cords of death compassed me,
And the pains of ¹Sheol ²gat hold upon me:
I found trouble and sorrow.
- 4 Then called I upon the name of the LORD;
O LORD, I beseech thee, deliver my soul.
- 5 Gracious is the LORD, and righteous;
Yea, our God is merciful.
- 6 The LORD preserveth the simple:
I was brought low, and he saved me.
- 7 Return unto thy rest, O my soul;
For the LORD hath dealt bountifully with thee.
- 8 For thou hast delivered my soul from death,
Mine eyes from tears,
And my feet from falling.
- 9 I will walk before the LORD
In the ³land of the living.

¹ Or, *the grave*² Or, *found me*³ Heb. *lands*.

3. *The cords* (Heb. *heblē*) of death. Cf xviii. 4, "The cords (Heb. *heblē*) of death compassed me."

I found trouble and sorrow. When I was looking for quietness, I found danger and distress.

4. *deliver my soul.* Cf vi. 4, xvii. 13, xxii. 20, cxx. 2. A cry of urgency from one in danger of death.

5. *Gracious* (towards the Psalmist)...*righteous* (towards his foes).

6. *the simple.* Cf cxix. 130. Heb. *pāthā'im*, "childish, uninstructed persons": LXX, τὰ νήπια, "babes" (as Matt xi. 25).

I was brought low (Heb. *dallōthī*). The Hebrew verb is used of the result of oppression by an enemy: lxxix. 8; Jud vi. 6, "Israel was brought very low because of Midian."

7-9. CONFIDENCE FOR THE FUTURE

7. *Return unto thy rest.* The Hebrew substantive is rendered "resting place" in cxxxii. 8 and 14.

hath dealt bountifully with thee. Rather, *hath awarded thee (rest).*

8. *Mine eyes from tears.* Cf Isa xxv. 8; Rev vii. 17.

from falling. Rather, *from thrusting to the ground:* cf cxviii. 13, "Thou didst (or *Ye did*) thrust sore at me that I might fall." The enemy failed to cast him down.

9. *I will walk* (or *I walk*) before JEHOVAH. Vulgate, *Placebo Domino*. To walk before JEHOVAH is to serve Him: Gen xxiv. 40, xlviii. 15.

In the land (lit. *lands*) of the living. Cf xxvii. 13, cxlii. 5. In lvi. 13 (q.v.) the phrase is, *In the light of life, or In the light of the living.*

- 10 ¹I believe, for I will speak:
 I was greatly afflicted:
 11 I said in my ²haste,
 All men are ³a lie.
 12 What shall I render unto the LORD
 For all his benefits toward me?
 13 I will take the cup of salvation,
 And call upon the name of the LORD.
 14 I will pay my vows unto the LORD,
 Yea, in the presence of all his people.
 15 Precious in the sight of the LORD
 Is the death of his saints.

¹ Or, *I believed, when I spake thus*

² Or, *alarm*

³ Heb. *liars*.

10-12. ALL MEN FAILED THE PSALMIST, BUT JEHOVAH
 INTERVENED AND SAVED HIM

10. *I was greatly afflicted.* The *affliction* was probably by sickness: cxix. 67.

11. *in my haste.* I.e. *as I hastened to escape*; 2 Sam iv. 4.

All men are a lie. Better, *All men fail me.* Cf lxii. 9, "Men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree are a lie."

13, 14. THE PSALMIST WILL RENDER THANKS

13. *I will take...And call.* The two actions constitute one act of worship. The Psalmist takes up the cup containing his libation and names over it the name of JEHOVAH. The "cup of salvation" means the drink offering which was part of the thank offering, that was offered for deliverance from danger. The drink offering gave completeness to a sacrifice, and so is mentioned here as though it were the thank offering itself. It is given special emphasis in the description of sacrifice as performed by Simon, the son of Onias, in Ecclus l. 14, "And finishing the service at the altar(s), That he might adorn the offering of the Most High, the Almighty, He stretched out his hand to the cup, And poured of the blood of the grape; He poured out at the foot of the altar A sweet-smelling savour unto the Most High, the King of all. Then shouted the sons of Aaron,...For a remembrance before the Most High."

14. *I will pay my vows.* See v. 18 and cf lxvi. 13, 14; also l. 14 f. The verse is omitted in LXX (ed. Swete), but it appears in Vulgate, Peshitta, Jerome *iuxta Hebraeos*.

in the presence of all his people. Vows must be paid publicly.

15, 16. JEHOVAH CARES FOR HIS SAINTS

15. *Precious.* Or (as in xlix. 8 where a cognate Hebrew word is used), *Costly*, with the suggestion that the object is too costly for attainment.

- 16 O LORD, truly I am thy servant :
 I am thy servant, the son of thine handmaid ;
 Thou hast loosed my bonds.
- 17 I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving,
 And will call upon the name of the LORD.
- 18 I will pay my vows unto the LORD,
 Yea, in the presence of all his people ;
- 19 In the courts of the LORD's house,
 In the midst of thee, O Jerusalem.
¹Praise ye the LORD.

¹ Heb. *Hallelujah*.

Here a Rabbinic comment expresses the sense well, "JEHOVAH willeth not to let the righteous die before their time" (Aben Ezra).

16. *thy servant, the son of thine handmaid*. The Psalmist speaks as a faithful servant (worshipper) of JEHOVAH, and as the descendant of one, just as St Paul calls himself a "Hebrew of Hebrews" (Phil iii. 5): cf lxxxvi. 16, note. The reference to the mother has a parallel in xxvii. 10. The impression that Woman occupied a very unimportant position in old Hebrew life needs to be corrected. The Mother in particular held a high place of honour and influence, as we see from the regular record of the names of the Mothers of the Kings of Israel (1 K xiv. 21, xv. 2, *al.*). The frequent mention of the Wife and of the Mother in the book of Proverbs is also significant. Cf Oesterley, *Proverbs*, pp. lxxx ff.

Thou hast loosed my bonds. The same Hebrew verb as in cv. 20, "The ruler...let him go free."

17-19. HIS RESOLUTION RENEWED

17-19. *I will offer to thee*. The Psalmist repeats his resolution declared in vv. 13, 14, but he now adds the crowning words of his thanksgiving, "I will pay my vows...In the courts of JEHOVAH's house." As long as he was in his "bonds" he could not go up to the house of JEHOVAH, but now—

PSALM CXVII AN INVITATORY

Short as this Psalm is, it is complete in itself. It answers well to the Hebrew name for a Psalm, *Tēhillah*, "a praise," for it begins and ends with the invitation, *Praise ye JEHOVAH*.

It is address to the Gentiles (*gōyim*, v. 1 *a*), but they are to praise God, not for some benefit conferred on themselves, but because "his mercy is great

toward us (i.e. toward Israel)." So in Ps xlvii. 1, 2 the "peoples" (Heb. *'ammim*) are invited to rejoice, because JEHOVAH conquered the peoples of Canaan and gave their land as an inheritance to Israel.

We may understand this appeal to the Gentiles in either of two ways. Either it is rhetorical as in xcvi. 11-13, where heaven and earth are summoned to show gladness because JEHOVAH is coming to judge the world, or (more probably) it marks the beginnings of a missionary approach on the part of Israel to the Gentiles. The next step for the Gentiles after rejoicing over God's mercy to Israel is to seek to be joined to Israel, and to obtain a share in the mercy given: see Zech viii. 23.

In Rom xv. 11 St Paul quotes z. 1 in support of his urgent appeal "that with one accord ye (i.e. Jews and Gentiles in Rome) may with one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." A short Psalm, but important.

CXVII. 1 O praise the LORD, all ye nations;
 Laud him, all ye peoples.
 2 For his mercy is great toward us;
 And the truth of the LORD *endureth* for ever.
¹Praise ye the LORD.

¹ Heb. *Hallelujah*.

PSALM CXVIII

A RULER'S THANKSGIVING FOR DELIVERANCE FROM DEATH

§ 1. CONTENTS.

- 1-4. An Invitatory to public thanksgiving.
- 5-7. The Psalmist's own story of his great deliverance.
- 8-12. The Psalmist's confidence in JEHOVAH (not in Man) against all men.
- 13-16. The Psalmist defies his enemy in the name of his God.
- 17-19. The Psalmist at the Temple gates demands admission that he may declare with thankfulness what JEHOVAH has done for him.
- 20. The answer from within the gates.
- 21, 22. The Psalmist refers again to his wonderful deliverance, for which he desires to give thanks.
- 23, 24. The guardians of the Temple acknowledge that JEHOVAH has brought in "the Day."
- 25-27. The guardians of the Temple welcome the Psalmist.
- 28, 29. The Psalmist's own words of thankful acknowledgment of the eternal mercy of JEHOVAH.

§ 2. CHARACTER AND PURPOSE.

This Psalm forms the conclusion of the Egyptian *Hallel*, which consisted of Psalms cxiii-cxviii. This *Hallel* was sung at Passover at table by each household assembled to observe the festival of the Exodus. Our Lord Himself

sang it at the Last Supper: "And when they had sung a hymn, they went out unto the mount of Olives" (Mark xiv. 26). The "hymn" was no doubt the last portion of the *Hallel*.

It must not however be supposed that this Psalm was originally composed for liturgical use and for the occasion of a festival. Its tone is unmistakably personal, as in *v.* 5-7, 13, 17, 18 and 21-23. The Psalm is built round a vivid episode from a life. It is true that in the opening verses (1-4) we hear a choir singing to us about thankfulness, but from *v.* 5 onward we are face to face with an individual, one who has had the spiritual experiences which other men know only at second hand. He is thankful because he is fresh from a great experience of the goodness of God. He was in grievous affliction: without he saw formidable enemies, while within himself he was conscious of utter weakness. He was perhaps on a sick bed and near to death. No man stood by him: no appeal to great men ("princes," *v.* 9) brought him any help.

And then he cried to his God, and the result (marvellous to the onlookers) was that *JEHOVAH* delivered him, and he, the despised and helpless one, became the corner stone, the ruler and protector of his people.

The name of the Psalmist is lost, but it is noteworthy that his sorrows are parallel to those described in the song of Hezekiah's convalescence (Isa xxxviii. 10-20). It is not at all probable that Ps cxviii is the composition of Hezekiah, but History repeats itself both in the character of persons and also in incidents, and it is clear that the hero of this Psalm passed through much the same experiences as Isaiah's king. Hezekiah was not the first nor the last monarch who was cast upon a bed of sickness just when the enemy was at the gate; nor was he the last to recover marvellously and to rise victorious over the foe.

Vixere fortes post Agamemnona Multi. Much of the language of this Psalm becomes plainer, if we illustrate it from the career of Hezekiah, who in his weakness was doubtless rejected of men, but by the grace of God became once more the "head of the corner" for Israel. Protected by *JEHOVAH* he became again a protector of the poor of his people. Hezekiah's story is told as follows in 2 K xx. 1-7:

"In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came to him, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live. Then he turned his face to the wall, and prayed unto the LORD, saying, Remember now, O LORD, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore. And it came to pass, afore Isaiah was gone out into the middle part of the city, that the word of the LORD came to him, saying, Turn again, and say to Hezekiah the prince of my people, Thus saith the LORD, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will heal thee: on the third day thou shalt go up unto the house of the LORD. And I will add unto thy days fifteen years; and I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria; and I will defend this city for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake. And Isaiah said, Take a cake of figs. And they took and laid it on the boil, and he recovered."

We may suppose that some later Jewish ruler, reading this story, found that

his own circumstances reproduced those of Hezekiah. And so he writes somewhat as Hezekiah might have written, yet with a vigour drawn from his own experience.

The Psalm as it stands has been put to a liturgical use, but the definitely personal tone still clings to it. We may suppose that an editor found this Psalm, i.e. *vs.* 5-28, and that he prepared it for public use by prefixing *vs.* 1-4, and perhaps by adding the doxology (*v.* 29) at the end.

Vs. 1-4 are a reiterated appeal to give thanks to JEHOVAH. The cause for thanksgiving is great. The mercy or lovingkindness of JEHOVAH, manifested so often in the past, has been renewed.

The writer declares that this mercy is "for ever," for an *aeon*, in short that it is eternal. And so he calls on all whom his voice can reach—laymen ("Israel"), priests ("the house of Aaron"), and proselytes ("them that fear JEHOVAH")—to give thanks and confess that JEHOVAH'S mercy endureth for ever. The tone of these four introductory verses is wholly impersonal: no doubt they were intended from the beginning for liturgical use.

But the same cannot be said of the verses which follow: we hear the tone of personal feeling and a new voice in *v.* 5. A Psalmist breaks in with a piece of autobiography: he has experiences to relate and thanks to give to JEHOVAH. The interest of the Psalm now becomes biographical; the Psalmist's story is psychologically parallel to that of the Assyrian invasion of Sennacherib and the sickness of Hezekiah.

The subject is introduced with dramatic suddenness, "Out of my distress I called upon the LORD (Heb. *JAH*)." What the distress was he does not tell us until later in the Psalm. There were, it seems, several elements in it. He has enemies who "hate" him (*v.* 7); he cannot trust the "princes" who might be expected to help him (*vs.* 8, 9); his enemies are Gentiles and very many in number and they are all round him (*v.* 10).

In any case the Psalmist came very near a fall, as did Hezekiah. He was (as it were) engaged in a hand-to-hand struggle with the foe: "Thou (O Sennacherib) didst thrust—*thrust* against me, but JEHOVAH helped me." (Or better perhaps with a slight change in the reading, "Ye, O Assyrians, did thrust.") The victory was not won by human effort; it was the right hand of JEHOVAH which did valiantly: "the angel of JEHOVAH went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred fourscore and five thousand" (2 K xix. 35). But while the danger was still at its height the leader of Israel fell on a bed of sickness. Then came Isaiah to assure the king that he would recover, and further to promise that JEHOVAH would save Jerusalem. So Hezekiah arose from his sick bed and went up to the Temple to give thanks for his recovery. In the Psalm we have an echo of a similar episode: *vs.* 17 ff. run, "I shall not die, but live, And declare the works of the LORD. The LORD hath chastened—*chastened* me: But he hath not given me over unto death. Open to me the gates of righteousness: I will enter into them, I will give thanks unto the LORD (Heb. *JAH*)."

The Singer of *vs.* 5-19 has now reached the Temple gates, and claims admission. He is answered in *v.* 20 by the priestly porters within the Temple, and from this point the singing is antiphonal. The priests recite, "This is the gate of JEHOVAH (i.e. the gate of JEHOVAH'S house); let righteous men enter

in" (v. 20). Then the Singer enters with the response (addressed however not to the choir but to God himself), "I will give thanks unto thee, for thou hast answered me, And art become my salvation. The stone which the builders rejected (the Singer means himself) Is become the head of the corner."

At once in v. 23, 24 the priests receive the Singer's claim. They confess that this marvellous change from abasement to triumph could have come only from **JEHOVAH** Himself. **JEHOVAH** has given us (they say) this day of rejoicing over our new head. And so they pass (as so often happens in the Psalter) from praise for the past to supplication in face of the uncertain future. Let this happy day be the beginning of a new era: "O LORD, send now prosperity." The hero of the Day is now entering the Temple, and the priests cry, "Blessed be he that cometh in the name of **JEHOVAH**: We bless you from His house, and so with blessing of double power."

The greeting of the priests in v. 26 shows us that the Singer is not alone. When he rose up from his sickness, when he no longer appeared as "the stone rejected by the builders," friends gathered round him. He leads a procession of these to the Temple. The priests cry to the Leader, "Blessed be he that cometh in the name of **JEHOVAH**," while they salute his followers, with the salutation, "We have blessed you out of the house of **JEHOVAH**."

In v. 27 these followers of the hero give utterance to their thoughts of praise. They cry, "**JEHOVAH** is God"—Heb. *ēl*, "a strong one." And they cry again, "He hath given us light"—light the first and best of all things—God has done a great thing for us. And then they begin to feel that they are pressing too tumultuously into the Temple court. "Order ye the procession," they cry to their leaders, "let it be an ordered march" (such as is described in lxxviii. 24-27) "right up to the altar itself. And let the green branches with the golden fruit be carried by all to mark the gladness of the day."

The words *Order ye the procession with boughs* call up the ceremonies of the Feast of Tabernacles (rather, "of Booths," Heb. *sukkoth*). On this occasion the Jews carry in procession the symbol called the *lulab*. Josephus writes, "On the fifteenth day of the [seventh] month [the Law] commands us to sacrifice to God thank-offerings, bearing in our hands a bundle of myrtle and willow with a sprig of palm" (*Antiq.* III. x. 4; cf Lev xxiii. 40). In *Antiq.* XIII. xiii. 5 the *lulab* is called a *thyrsus* of palm-branches and *citrons*. "In the Second Temple [the *lulab*] was waved during the recitation of the passages expressive of thanksgiving or praise, viz. Ps cxviii. 1-4, 25 (T.B. *Sukkah*, 37 b)" (*Jewish Encyclopedia*, s.v. *Lulab*).

But the carrying of branches of palm and of other trees was not limited to the occasion of the Feast of Booths. In 2 Macc x. 6, 7 it is said that the same ceremony was performed when Maccabaeus purified the Temple, after it had been profaned by Antiochus Epiphanes (circ. 168 B.C.): "Bearing wands wreathed with leaves, and fair boughs, and palms also, they offered up hymns of thanksgiving to him that had prosperously brought to pass the cleansing of his own place." So again just before the Passover the multitude went out from Jerusalem to meet Jesus bearing "branches of the palm trees" (John xii. 13). The Psalm ends with the Psalmist's own thanksgiving in v. 28. Verse 29 may be (not "must be") an editorial addition intended to give a liturgical ending to the Psalm.

§ 3. THE DATE OF THE PSALM.

Much of the language might be used of the episode of Hezekiah's sickness, but the Psalm as a whole belongs no doubt to a much later period.

Gunkel pronounces it to be "surely of very late date," as the mention of proselytes in *v.* 4 shows. It contains allusions to older poems, e.g. in *v.* 14 to Exod xv. 2, and there is little in it which has not been said before. Duhm (more positive than Gunkel) attributes this Psalm (with many others) to Maccabean times. *Vs.* 10-12 sound to him like a march of the Maccabees, and the "voice of rejoicing in the tents of the righteous" is their song of victory. *Vs.* 17, 18 (according to Duhm) is the thankful confession of some who have fought and have come safely through the war. But the Psalmist uses general terms, and the scholar's definite application of them is arbitrary. Duhm has not appealed specially to *vs.* 10-12, but if the refrain could be rightly translated "I will make them to be circumcised" (*B.D.B.*), we might see a reference to the proselyting zeal of John Hyrcanus. Hyrcanus took two cities of Idumaea, and permitted the Idumaeans to remain in their country on condition that they received circumcision and adopted the customs of the Jews (Josephus, *Antiq.* XIII. ix. 1). But a reference to circumcision in *vs.* 10-12 is very improbable. The more probable translation of the refrain is, "I will cut them off." Even if the Psalm be late, it is not likely that it is as late as the reign of Hyrcanus (135-105 B.C.).

CXVIII. 1 O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good:

For his mercy *endureth* for ever.

2 Let Israel now say,

That his mercy *endureth* for ever.

3 Let the house of Aaron now say,

That his mercy *endureth* for ever.

1-4. THE INTRODUCTION. A GENERAL INVITATION TO PAY TO
JEHOVAH THE PRAISE DUE TO HIM

CXVIII. 1. *O give thanks...for ever.* So *cvi*, *cvii* (cf also *cv*). This verse is a liturgical formula which may be prefix to a Psalm of private thanksgiving to fit it for public use.

2, 3, 4. *Israel...the house of Aaron...them now that fear JEHOVAH.* The same sequence as in *cxv.* 9, 10, 11. "Israel" is the chosen people as a whole; "the house of Aaron" means the priests: the fearers of JEHOVAH are the Gentiles who have joined themselves to the Jewish Church. In some other places in the Psalter the term "fearers of JEHOVAH" is applied to Jews who are faithful in their observance of the Law: so in *cxix.* 63, 74, 79.

2. *Let Israel now say, That his mercy endureth for ever.* The thought is that JEHOVAH's mercy never fails for Israel as a people; it continues from generation to generation (*Ps ciii.* 17); the assurance is not true for every individual. In *v.* 4 the proselytes are invited to confess that they share the mercy which is extended to the house of Israel.

- 4 Let them now that fear the LORD say,
That his mercy *endureth* for ever.
- 5 Out of my distress I called upon ¹the LORD:
¹The LORD answered me *and set me* in a large place.
- 6 The LORD is on my side; I will not fear:
What can man do unto me?
- 7 The LORD is on my side among them that help me:
Therefore shall I see *my desire* upon them that hate me.
- 8 It is better to trust in the LORD
Than to put confidence in man.
- 9 It is better to trust in the LORD
Than to put confidence in princes.
- 10 All nations compassed me about:
In the name of the LORD I will cut them off.
- 11 They compassed me about; yea, they compassed me about:
In the name of the LORD I will cut them off.
- 12 They compassed me about like bees; they are quenched as
the fire of thorns:
In the name of the LORD I will cut them off.

¹ Heb. *Jah*.

5-7. THE PSALMIST HAS EXPERIENCED THE FAVOUR OF JEHOVAH

7. *among them that help me*. Cf liv. 4, "The Lord is of them that uphold my soul" (see note). The Psalmist speaks as one who is protected by guards, but it is the presence of JEHOVAH among them that gives him confidence.

8-12. THE PSALMIST'S CONFIDENCE

8. *to trust in*. Or, *to take refuge in*, an anthropomorphism: so also in xviii. 2. JEHOVAH is, as it were, a cleft rock, in which a fugitive can hide.

9. *confidence in princes*. Ps cxlvi. 3, "Put not your trust in princes." Princes (Heb. *nedibim*) are people of wealth and authority in Israel, not foreign rulers.

10. *All nations*. Rather, *All heathen*, i.e. heathens of every kind. The reference is not to one of the great invasions, Assyrian or Chaldean, nor is Israel the nation the speaker here. The Psalmist's position is rather that of the lonely Nehemiah beset by Arabians and Ammonites and Ashdodites, and (we may add) Tyrians (Neh iv. 7, xiii. 16).

I will cut them off. LXX, ἠμυνάμην, "I warded them off" (inflicting punishment upon them). The meaning of the Hebrew verb is not certain.

12. *like bees*. Deut i. 44, "(the Amorites) chased you, as bees do."

- 13 Thou didst thrust sore at me that I might fall:
But the LORD helped me.
- 14 ¹The LORD is my strength and song;
And he is become my salvation.
- 15 The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tents of the
righteous:
The right hand of the LORD doeth valiantly.
- 16 The right hand of the LORD is exalted:
The right hand of the LORD doeth valiantly.
- 17 I shall not die, but live,
And declare the works of ¹the LORD.
- 18 ¹The LORD hath chastened me sore:
But he hath not given me over unto death.
- 19 Open to me the gates of righteousness:
I will enter into them, I will give thanks unto ¹the LORD.

¹ Heb. *Jah*.

13-16. A GOD WHOSE ARM IS STRONG TO HELP

13. *Thou didst thrust sore at me.* The plural verb would be more suitable here, unless the words are addressed to some leader of the enemy—some Sanballat. The reading *dēhithūnī*, “Ye did thrust,” may be read without change of any consonant in MT. For the abrupt address to the enemy see vi. 8, lxii. 1, 3, cxix. 115, cxxxix. 19.

16. *The right hand of JEHOVAH is exalted.* Better as LXX (= Vulgate, Peshitta), δεξιά Κυρίου ὑψώσέν με, i.e. ...*did exalt me*. So in xxvii. 5, “He shall lift me up,” where the same Hebrew verb (a transitive form) is used. The enemy sought to thrust the Psalmist down, but JEHOVAH answered for him by lifting him up into safety and honour.

17-19. THE PSALMIST AT THE TEMPLE GATES DEMANDS ADMISSION THAT HE MAY GIVE THANKS FOR JEHOVAH'S BENEFITS

17. *I shall not die, but live.* The words do not suggest escape from a violent death, but rather recovery from sickness.

declare the works. Cf lxxiii. 28, cvii. 22, 24.

18. *The LORD hath chastened me sore.* Better, *JAH hath indeed chastened me*. The stress is not on the amount of chastening, but rather on the fact. The Psalmist feels with gratitude that he has been all the time in God's hand, at first for chastisement, and afterwards for deliverance.

19. *the gates of righteousness.* The gates within which dwells the God of righteousness.

- 20 This is the gate of the LORD;
The righteous shall enter into it.
- 21 I will give thanks unto thee, for thou hast answered me,
And art become my salvation.
- 22 The stone which the builders rejected
Is become the head of the corner.
- 23 ¹This is the LORD's doing;
It is marvellous in our eyes.
- 24 This is the day which the LORD hath made;
We will rejoice and be glad in it.
- 25 Save now, we beseech thee, O LORD:
O LORD, we beseech thee, send now prosperity.
- 26 Blessed be he that ²cometh in the name of the LORD:
We have blessed you out of the house of the LORD.

¹ Heb. *This is from the LORD.*

² Or, *entereth*

20. THE LEVITICAL PORTERS ANSWER FROM WITHIN

20. *This is the gate* etc. The answer from within to the Psalmist's summons, *Open to me the gates*. There were keepers of the gates: 2 K xxv. 18; 1 Chr xxvi. 1-19; Neh xiii. 5.

21, 22. THE PSALMIST'S WORDS OF THANKSGIVING

21. *salvation*. I.e. victory, complete success.

22. *The stone* etc. The Psalmist is the stone. In his sickness he was despised by men, but now that JEHOVAH has restored him to health he has become the headstone, the ruler, in fact as well as in name, of his people.

23, 24. THE GUARDIANS OF THE TEMPLE ACKNOWLEDGE THAT
JEHOVAH HAS BROUGHT ON THE DAY

23. *This is JEHOVAH'S doing*. A good paraphrase: lit. *This hath taken place from JEHOVAH*.

It is marvellous etc. "Too wonderful to be true." "Marvellous" (from the Hebrew root מַרְבֵּעַ) is the proper epithet for the works of God, works which are beyond the power of man to perform. The verb is used in Gen xviii. 14, "Is anything *too hard* for JEHOVAH?"

24. *the day which JEHOVAH hath made*. Cf Mal iii. 17, iv. 3.

25-27. THE GUARDIANS OF THE TEMPLE WELCOME THE PSALMIST

25, 26. *Save now, ... Blessed be he that cometh*. See Mark xi. 9, 10, where the crowd cry before our Lord, as He enters Jerusalem, "Hosanna (*Save, we beseech thee*); Blessed is *he* that cometh in the name of the Lord: Blessed is the kingdom that cometh, *the kingdom* of our father David: Hosanna in the highest."

26. *We have blessed you out of the house of JEHOVAH*. Cf cxxix. 8.

- 27 The LORD is God, and he hath given us light:
 Bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar.
- 28 Thou art my God, and I will give thanks unto thee:
 Thou art my God, I will exalt thee.
- 29 O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good:
 For his mercy *endureth* for ever.

The words of blessing are given in cxxxiv. 3, "JEHOVAH bless thee out of Zion."

27. *The LORD is God.* Better, *JEHOVAH is a God* of might. The word God (Heb. *ēl*) means "a mighty one."

and he hath given us light. Another way of saying that JEHOVAH has appointed a day (of joy) to the speakers: cf v. 24.

Bind the sacrifice with cords. Rather, *Order the procession with boughs; lead it to the very altar.* See Introduction, § 2. There is some uncertainty as to the precise meaning of the words, but the rendering of P-B = AV, RV is undoubtedly wrong. It suggests that the festival victim was tied to the altar and sacrificed there, but there is no evidence that this was the Hebrew procedure. On the contrary it seems that the victim was slain and cut up at the entrance to the Temple (Ezek xl. 38-43), and the portions (Heb. *nēthāhīm*) were brought into the Temple by the priests and offered on the altar by the high priest (Ecclus i. 12). Similarly the Mishnah states that the portions of the victims were brought up to the ramp leading to the altar by priests, the victim being slain elsewhere (*Yoma* ii. 3).

28, 29. THE PSALMIST'S THANKSGIVING OVER THE SACRIFICE

28. *Thou art my God.* Exod xv. 2.

29. *O give thanks etc* Cf v. 1, note.

PSALM CXIX

THE UNQUIET HEART SEEKING REST IN GOD

But for the unquiet heart and brain

A use in measured language lies;

The sad mechanic exercise,

Like dull narcotics, numbing pain.

(*In Memoriam*, v.)

I am sure, my love's

More richer than my tongue.

King Lear (Act i. Sc. i).

§ 1. THE FORM.

This is an alphabetical Psalm, and more formal in its arrangement than any other of its class. Thus in Ps xxv there are twenty-two verses as there are twenty-

two letters in the Hebrew alphabet. Each verse begins with a fresh letter, until the whole alphabet has been used in order¹. But the arrangement of Ps cxix is more formal even than this. Each of its twenty-two sections consists of eight verses, each of which begins with the letter to which the section is assigned. Thus we have the eight opening verses, each beginning with *Aleph*, the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet, and the last eight verses beginning each with *Tau*, the last letter. It would surely be difficult to find in the whole range of literature—real literature—a more artificial arrangement than this.

There is a second feature which is artificial. The Psalm consists of 176 verses, but there are only five or six of them in which the Law of Moses is not mentioned under one designation or another. Thus in the first eight verses we find "the law of JEHOVAH" (v. 1), "his testimonies" (v. 2), "his ways" (v. 3), "thy precepts" (v. 4), "thy statutes" (v. 5, 8), "thy commandments" (v. 6), "thy judgements" (v. 7). The Psalmist refers to the Law in every verse, but in order to avoid monotony he varies his name for the Law. Yet the effect is still monotonous.

The monotony arises from the repetition not only of words, but also of sentiments. The Psalmist prays again and again for the same thing. But not all repetitions are "vain repetitions." Often (and in this case) they are the sign of a strong resolve: the Psalmist is the champion of a threatened Law. His motto might well be, "What I have, I hold."

Again it is right to note that there is method in the use of the eight synonymous words which stand for the Law of JEHOVAH. The Law has as many aspects as it has names. The Psalmist dwells on these different aspects; he feels rather the variety than the monotony of his theme. The Pentateuch is *Law*—yes, but the Hebrew equivalent—*Torah*—is rather Teaching, Guidance, Instruction. The function of *Torah* is practical: it is a *lamp* to his feet (v. 105) when every inch of the way has to be scanned, and a *light*, a luminary, to light the Path of God.

Again the Psalmist thinks of the Law as made up of *testimonies*. JEHOVAH testifies His will to Israel: see especially Deut xxx. 11-20. He takes pains to explain to men the way of righteousness. Heathens believe that they must find out by use of special means through a priest or diviner what the Will of a god is: Christians and Jews believe that God of His own good will reveals His Moral Law (cf xix. 7).

Perhaps a similar thought lies behind the term "precepts," literally "visitations." JEHOVAH visits His people—sometimes indeed to punish, but at other times to save and to bless: 1 Sam ii. 21.

"Statutes" suggest yet another thought: JEHOVAH's commands are not lightly given and lightly changed. The Hebrew word *hōk*, "statute," comes from a verb meaning to inscribe, to carve, i.e. on stone or some other durable substance. The Ten Commandments of the Mosaic Law and the Code of Hammu-rabi were both engraved on stone. Statutes are something written not "in water" nor on sand, but on the rock. They abide: they are *fixt*: *fixt* like the boundaries of sea and land: *fixt* like the alternation of night and day: *fixt* as foundations (v. 152).

¹ One or two alphabetical irregularities which occur in this Psalm are perhaps due to corruption of the text.

Lastly, the term "way" or "ways" suggests that JEHOVAH's Law has a positive character. A *way* is a course of conduct. The God of Israel claimed from Israel an active devotion.

Here a *caveat* must be entered against the zeal of some emendators who attempt to make the use of these synonyms for "Law" (*Torah*) more rigid than it is in MT. They propose to make each section of eight verses without exception to contain these eight synonyms, one to each verse. So in section *Aleph* where *word* (Heb. *imrah*) is absent, and *statutes* (*hukkim*) occurs twice (*vs.* 5, 8), they say, *word* is to be read for *statutes* in *v.* 8. *Way, ways* occurs in *vs.* 1, 3, but *word* (Heb. *dābār*) is absent; therefore, say they, read *word* for *ways* in *v.* 3. *Statutes* again occurs twice in section *Beth* (*vs.* 12, 16), but as the word *Torah* does not occur in the section, Duhm (followed by Gunkel) would substitute it for *statutes* in *v.* 16. Such attempts to make the poem more mechanical and less human in its workmanship are unworthy of serious scholars.

Directly we turn from the mere form to look at the substance of the Psalm we find the opposite quality to artificiality. The Psalmist is inspired with a great passion; he is standing for a great cause, the cause of God and of the Law of God. He has weak allies and powerful enemies. The struggle is intense, and the fight so evenly contested, that some time-servers are holding back, until they see on which side victory will declare itself. Moreover, the contest is within as well as without. The Psalmist is conscious of his own defects and weakness, and struggles with himself. He implores his God to keep him in the way. So he fights on, and his last utterance is an appeal to JEHOVAH to come to his help and grant him the victory.

The particular period at which this Psalm was written cannot be identified. The Jews returned from the Babylonian Captivity keenly conscious of their religious isolation. From the time of the first return from exile in response to the decree of Cyrus (537 B.C.) to the days of the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes (168 B.C.) the Jews had to contend on behalf of monotheism and "the Law of JEHOVAH" against open violence or veiled seduction. The Psalm may not be as late as the time of the Maccabees, but the first book of Maccabees supplies us with illustrations of the kind of opposition to the Law against which the Psalmist had to contend (1 Macc i. 41-ii. 48).

The Psalmist, being faithful to the Law, "perfect in the way" (*v.* 1), was exposed to the scoffs and the persecution of those who believed that the *Torah* was the chief obstacle to a union between Jew and Gentile. Among the scoffers are some of the leading men of his own countrymen: 1 Macc i. 11-15; 2 Macc iv. 7-15. The Psalmist in cleaving to the *Torah* knowingly chose the weaker side. In a low key he sings his Psalm in words which many find monotonous. But the note of steadfastness runs through it; it is in truth a hero's song. It is a refusal to buy peace and ease at the price of a wounded conscience. Turning to God he protests: "I esteem all thy precepts to be right; every false way I hate" (*v.* 128). He chooses a low estate through his loyalty to his God (*vs.* 71, 72).

The Psalmist speaks for his people, but with his own convictions. He is a leader and not a mere delegate. He utters his own thoughts and lays bare his inmost soul. He seeks to inspire his people with his own fervent love for the Law of God. He appeals to his fellow-countrymen, while he speaks in their name.

"The Law." The word falls rather coldly on Christian ears, for we have become accustomed to contrast it with "the Gospel." But it is truer to think of it as the forerunner of the Gospel. The Hebrew word *Torah* suggests rather such guidance as is described in Isa xxx. 20, 21: "Thine eyes shall see thy teachers (*morēka*)¹: and thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it; when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left."

The terms in which the Psalmist speaks of what we call the Law are sufficient to show that he regarded it as no burden. Its precepts are to him a delight. He says that the Divine words are "sweeter than honey" unto his mouth (v. 103), and that he loves the commandments of God "above gold, yea, above fine gold" (v. 127; cf v. 14). Further, the Law allures him by bringing to him a sense of mystery; it partly reveals and partly conceals the working of the God on whom his hope is set. More than once the Psalmist says that he will "meditate" on the Divine words (vv. 27², 78). Twice he says, "I have sought thy precepts" (vv. 45, 94), using a verb (Heb. *dārash*) which implies mental and spiritual effort to grasp religious truth. Such study and meditation are needful, because, as the Psalmist says, God's testimonies are "wonderful" (v. 129); their meaning does not lie on the surface. In like manner the first name of Messiah in Isa ix. 6 is "Wonderful," because there is a secret about His person.

The Psalmist is a spiritual man. He is conscious of past sin and of the need of present grace. Nine times in the course of this Psalm his petition is, Quicken me. His prayer, frequently uttered, for the Divine gift of understanding is in no sense formal; it is based on a vivid sense of the greatness of the Divine *Torah*, which is "wonderful," "exceeding broad" (v. 96), and able to make the simple wise. The Psalmist is Pauline in his thought; to him the revelation contained in the Old Testament is both a mystery and a Gospel. The wisdom of the *Torah* is higher than the wisdom of the world, and yet it is a help even for the simple.

The spirituality of the Psalmist is seen again in the fact that he is no mere Levite absorbed in the details of the Temple services. He makes but one allusion to sacrifice, and even this is only by way of metaphor: "Accept, I beseech thee, the freewill offerings of my mouth, O JEHOVAH" (v. 108). His sacrifice is a sacrifice of praise.

The Psalmist is one of the nobler Pharisees, such a one as is described in Psalm i, a man devoted to God through the Law. He loves the *Torah* as the mirror of the perfections of JEHOVAH (cf v. 96).

Very characteristic of his mind is the fact that he accepts the discipline of suffering and of patient waiting. His attitude in general is that of praying for grace and waiting for deliverance. He throws himself upon God all through the Psalm with a cry for further teaching, and he waits and looks for the accomplishment of the Divine promise to save him from all his troubles. Such a man has instruction of life to communicate for all time.

§ 2. CONTENTS.

The Psalm begins in a quiet meditative strain, which may deceive us by its

¹ *Mōrim*, "teachers," comes from the same Hebrew root as *Torah*.

² Read, "thy wondrous words" (not "works"; cf v. 129).

level tones: "Blessed are they that are perfect in the way, Who walk in the law of JEHOVAH." A true sentiment, but prosaically expressed. And yet we have to read only as far as *v.* 4 to learn that the Psalmist is deeply stirred. An emphatic "Thou" in *v.* 4 shows us that the Psalmist is speaking with his God. He is standing in thought beneath Mount Sinai; he has heard the Voice delivering the Law; he responds, "Thou, even Thou hast commanded us thy precepts, That we should keep them diligently (*or* stoutly)." And this thought comes in an hour when (as it seems) the Psalmist is being urged to neglect the Law. The particular period at which this Psalm was written cannot be identified with certainty, but it was assuredly a time of trial for the faithful Jew. There are allusions to persecution (*vv.* 23, 84, 161), to temptation (*vv.* 71, 72), to treachery (*v.* 85), to unfaithfulness (*v.* 53), to contempt (*vv.* 51, 141). The Psalmist repeats himself, but he does not utter vain repetitions, rather he reports to his God the hourly ebb and flow of a hard-fought spiritual fight. To him we may apply the words of Matthew Arnold:

A fever in thy pages burns
Beneath the calm they feign,
A wounded human spirit turns
Here on its bed of pain. (Obermann.)

This Psalm is not a mere eulogy on the Law. To the Psalmist the *Torah* is a means, not an end: by it he draws near to his God. And so the Psalm which begins with words of meditation passes almost at once into prayer and entreaty. The Psalmist seeks to know JEHOVAH from his Law; let JEHOVAH teach him its meaning (so he prays); may JEHOVAH keep him faithful in observing it (*vv.* 134 f.). Boldly does he push his claim on his God: "I am a sojourner (Heb. *gēr*, "a guest") with thee in thy land: Hide not thy commandments from me" (*v.* 19).

In the third section (*Gimel*) of the Psalm two facts become plain. The first is that the Psalmist who beseeches JEHOVAH to teach him the Law has already learnt something of its excellence. A second fact is that his knowledge has been acquired in the school of Opposition; for his championship of the Law has set many, "princes" included, against him (*v.* 23). His courage is great, he shows in the fourth section (*Daleth*) that he realizes the weight of the forces arrayed against him. "My soul cleaveth unto the dust," he says, and a few verses later, "My soul melteth for heaviness" (*vv.* 25, 28).

But the Psalmist recovers himself and turns again to earnest petition. He prays for two things, *first* that JEHOVAH would teach him and give him understanding of the Law, and *secondly* that JEHOVAH would keep him from *covetousness*. The word *covetousness* suggests one stumbling-block which was placed in the way of Jewish faithfulness to the Jewish law. Kings like Antiochus Epiphanes who wished to pervert the Jews to a syncretic worship, divided between JEHOVAH and some chief god of the heathen, offered rewards in money and honours to leading men who bent to the royal will (1 Macc ii. 15-18). But the Psalmist stands out boldly. On the one hand he prays to be delivered from covetousness, on the other he re-asserts his faithful resolves. "I will speak of thy testimonies before kings"; and further, "I will lift up my hands unto thy commandments" (*vv.* 46, 48).

In the succeeding section (*Zain*) Memory comes to the Psalmist's aid. He recalls the fact that JEHOVAH has made life-giving promises to him in the *Torah*. And so when persecution at the hands of the wicked overtakes the Psalmist like some deadly wind from the desert, the memory of JEHOVAH'S "statutes" is as the memory of cheerful songs (*vs.* 53, 54). He may be thinking of the promises of Lev xxvi. 3-13 or Deut xxviii. 1-13 to those who keep the Law.

The next section (*Cheth*) is headed with the words of a great resolution, "JEHOVAH is my portion." The Psalmist is no mere legalist, lost in the details of a code, but a worshipper who realizes the greatness of his God: "The earth, O JEHOVAH," he sings, "is full of thy mercy." He has experienced the wonderful providence of God, and he cries aloud, "At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto thee Because of thy righteous judgements" (*v.* 62). At midnight when human faculties seek rest, the Psalmist's overpowering sense of the Divine goodness impels him to praise. Did Paul and Silas repeat this verse when they prayed and sang hymns to God (*ὑμνοῦν τὸν θεόν*, Acts xvi. 25) "about midnight" in the jail at Philippi? "Prayers are better than sleep," so the Mu'ezzin cries in the morning from the Mosque.

In the next section (*Teth*) the Psalmist rises again to great heights. He begins by saying, "Thou hast done good unto thy servant," but it has been only a mixt good judged by the worldly standard, for the Psalmist has been made to suffer. But he has learnt his lesson and has gladly accepted the discipline of suffering. "Before I was afflicted," he says, "I went astray"; and again, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted; That I might learn thy statutes" (*vs.* 67, 71). This affliction the Psalmist does not regard as simply a cruel accident, for indeed it came from God. He confesses, "In faithfulness thou hast afflicted me" (*v.* 75), and he accepts the affliction because it comes from the God who created him. He makes the double acknowledgment: *first*, "Thy hands have made me and established me," and *secondly*, "Thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me." He is of one mind with Job, who asks, *Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?* (Job ii. 10).

In the next section (*Caph*) comes the expression of a not unnatural impatience. The Psalmist by the frailty of human nature cannot always stand upright. In *v.* 81 he cries out, "My soul fainteth (*or* "faileth") in looking for thy salvation," and in *v.* 84 he asks, "When wilt thou execute judgement?" In *v.* 86 he exclaims, "They persecute me wrongfully; help thou me."

But in the following section (*Lamed*) faith again prevails. In unruffled calm the Psalmist confesses, "For ever, O JEHOVAH, Thy word is settled in heaven. Thy faithfulness is unto all generations" (*vs.* 89, 90). And again, "I have seen an end to every perfect thing, But thy commandment is exceeding broad"—limitless in its scope (*v.* 96). JEHOVAH'S writ runs everywhere. The Psalmist's faith stands complete.

In the next section (*Mem*) the Psalmist recounts the benefits which the Law has rendered to his own soul. It has made him wise; and its words have been sweet (*vs.* 98-103).

He follows up the same line of thought in *v.* 105 (section *Nun*) with the exclamation, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, And light unto my path." To this light he asseverates that he will be faithful.

With *v.* 113 (section *Samech*) the Psalmist is conscious again of his enemies. He himself is whole-hearted in the service of JEHOVAH, but others are *double-minded*, like Elijah's contemporaries who tried to serve JEHOVAH and Baal at once. Moreover they are not content to keep their syncretic religion to themselves; they wish the Psalmist to join them: hence he says, "Depart from me, ye evil-doers; That I may keep the commandments of my God" (*v.* 115). Finally in contrast to the frivolity of his double-minded contemporaries he confesses the overmastering power of his own faith: "My flesh trembleth for fear of thee; And I am afraid of thy judgements" (*v.* 120).

Perhaps there is a touch of something like self-righteousness and impatience in the next section (*Ain*): "I have done judgement and justice," he cries: "Leave me not to mine oppressors" (*v.* 121). But in a little he recovers himself: "I am thy servant, give me understanding...I love thy commandments Above gold, yea, above fine gold" (*vs.* 125, 127).

In the next section (*Pe*) the Psalmist speaks of the Law as of a storehouse out of which JEHOVAH deals wisdom and light. The Psalmist longs for a share in these good things, but he fears lest the stress of persecution may drive him from his hope. So he cries out, "I opened wide my mouth, and panted; For I longed for thy commandments"; and further, "Redeem me from the oppression of man; So will I observe thy precepts" (*vs.* 131, 134).

Whether the persecution the Psalmist speaks of goes so far as to threaten his life is not certain, but it is serious enough. "I am small and despised," he says (*Tzade*): and again, "Trouble and anguish have taken hold on me" (*vs.* 141, 143). Duhm scoffs at these and other complaints of persecution as mere literary flourishes, but Jewish history does not support him. Monotheism was the unpopular faith of a very small minority in the Ancient World and those who professed it had to suffer for their profession.

In the two following sections (*Koph* and *Resh*) the tone of rising anguish in intreaty should be noted. The very Alphabetic arrangement ceases to be a "sad mechanic exercise"; and becomes a means to add the tone of urgency to the Psalmist's petition. *Kārāthī, Kērāthākā*, "I have called, I have called unto thee" (*vs.* 145, 146)—*Rē'eh, Rā'ithī, Rē'eh*, "See, I have seen, See!" (*vs.* 153, 158, 159)—such repetitions show a man at earnest prayer, who feels the nearness of danger and the need for speedy help.

In the next section (*Shin*) the Psalmist grows calmer. He begins indeed with the complaint, "Princes have persecuted me without a cause," but from *v.* 164 onwards his words are all of devotion and love and hope.

The structure of the final section (*Tau*) is noteworthy. The first two verses ask that the Psalmist's prayer may reach JEHOVAH's presence: "Let my cry come near." The next pair ask that the Psalmist may have cause to praise and glorify JEHOVAH: "Let my lips utter praise." The third pair show some urgency, "Let thine hand be ready to help me." The last verse is a cry of human distress, "I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek thy servant; For I do not forget thy commandments." It is the naïve intreaty of childlike religion, "Do not forget me, for I do not forget Thee." We may realize the better its naturalness, if we compare with it the sentences of the Book of Common Prayer founded on it, "We have erred, and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep.

We have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts." Here the passionate cry of the Psalmist is fitted into a mould to be used by all, yet even so it gives life to a form in our Prayer Book, which might otherwise be killed by frequent repetition.

This Psalmist has been taught much from religious experience. His first words show very deep insight: "Blessed (i.e. Happy) are they that are perfect in the way." By this word *perfect* we must not think of a theoretic standard of virtue: the word means rather *whole-hearted*. The Psalmist says, "Happy are the whole-hearted." That is a truth established by experience. Belief in One God must be allowed to exercise the chief influence in a man's life, else Religion becomes to him only one more source of distraction and unhappiness. The Psalm closes with words of whole-hearted surrender, "I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek thy servant; For I do not forget thy commandments." (See the note on *z.* 176.)

ALEPH.

- CXIX.** 1 Blessed are they that are ¹perfect in the way,
 Who walk in the law of the LORD.
 2 Blessed are they that keep his testimonies,
 That seek him with the whole heart.
 3 Yea, they do no unrighteousness;
 They walk in his ways.
 4 Thou hast commanded *us* thy precepts,
 That we should observe them diligently.
 5 Oh that my ways were established
 To observe thy statutes!
 6 Then shall I not be ashamed,
 When I have respect unto all thy commandments.
 7 I will give thanks unto thee with uprightness of heart,
 When I learn thy righteous judgements.

¹ Or, *upright in way*

1-8. ALEPH

CXIX. 1. *the way*. I.e. *the way* of JEHOVAH, as the parallelism shows. *Way* is almost equivalent to "religion" as in Acts ix. 2, xix. 9.

4. *Thou hast commanded us thy precepts, That we should observe them diligently*. Better, *Thou didst command us thy precepts* (a reference to the giving of the Law on Sinai), *That we should observe them with might* (Heb. *mē'ōd*, an allusion to Deut vi. 5, "Thou shalt love JEHOVAH thy God...with all thy might," Heb. *mē'ōdekā*). The Psalmist, when he is tempted to neglect the Law, remembers the circumstances under which it was given on Mount Sinai.

- 8 I will observe thy statutes:
O forsake me not utterly.

BETH.

- 9 Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?
By taking heed *thereto* according to thy word.
- 10 With my whole heart have I sought thee:
O let me not wander from thy commandments.
- 11 Thy word have I laid up in mine heart,
That I might not sin against thee.
- 12 Blessed art thou, O LORD:
Teach me thy statutes.
- 13 With my lips have I declared
All the judgements of thy mouth.
- 14 I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies,
As much as in all riches.
- 15 I will meditate in thy precepts,
And have respect unto thy ways.
- 16 I will delight myself in thy statutes:
I will not forget thy word.

9-16. BETH

9. *a young man* (Heb. *na'ar*). Or, *retainer, follower*. The *na'ar* is younger than the *'ebed*, "servant" (cf v. 17), and so ranks beneath him. The Psalmist in his humility calls himself *first* a "retainer" of ЖЕHOVAH, and *later* (a more honourable title) "thy servant."

10. *let me not wander*. Or, *make me not to wander*. Cf Isa lxiii. 17, "O ЖЕHOVAH, why dost thou make us to err from thy ways, and hardenest our heart from thy fear?" The thought that God in His displeasure with men (presumably for their sins) sometimes leads them on to commit some further sin, for which they receive condign punishment, is found in the Old Testament. See the story of David's numbering of the people in 2 Sam xxiv. Some sins, such as Pharaoh's before the Exodus, are so defiant that the Hebrew thinker could explain their occurrence only on the theory that ЖЕHOVAH Himself had "strengthened" the sinner's heart to defy Him so stoutly (Exod ix. 12). Thus God Himself is represented as the responsible cause of such sins. On the other hand the free-will of men in general to sin or abstain from sinning is fully acknowledged in such passages as Deut xxx. 19.

14. *As much as in all riches*. A naïve expression: cf v. 162, "I rejoice at thy word, As one that findeth great spoil." The emendation proposed by Wellhausen, *More than in all riches*, has no support in LXX and is quite unnecessary.

16. *I will delight myself*. So Jerome *iuxta Heb.*, *Delectabor*. But LXX,

GIMEL.

- 17 Deal bountifully with thy servant, that I may live;
So will I observe thy word.
- 18 Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold
Wondrous things out of thy law.
- 19 I am a sojourner in the earth:
Hide not thy commandments from me.
- 20 My soul breaketh for the longing
That it hath unto thy judgements at all times.
- 21 Thou hast rebuked the proud¹ that are cursed,
Which do wander from thy commandments.
- 22 Take away from me reproach and contempt;
For I have kept thy testimonies.
- 23 Princes also sat and talked against me:
But thy servant did meditate in thy statutes.

¹ Or, *Cursed are they which &c.*

μελετήσω: Vulgate, *meditabor*, "I will be occupied." The Hebrew root (גמל) is represented by the verb in *vs.* 16, 47 (Hithpalpel), and 70 (Pilpel), and by the substantive (in the plural) in *vs.* 24, 77, 92, 143, 174. Ancient authority is divided as to the meaning of the stem. The alternative rendering in this verse is, "I will occupy myself in thy statutes," and in *v.* 24 where the substantive is used the alternative rendering is, "Thy testimonies also are my occupation." But Jerome is supported by the later Greek versions and Targum, and (it may be added) by the use of the verb in Isa xi. 8, "The sucking child shall play (*or* delight itself) on the hole of the asp."

17-24. GIMEL

18. *Wondrous things* (Heb. *niphlā'ōth*). So ix. 1, "(JEHOVAH'S) marvellous works," xxvi. 7, "(JEHOVAH'S) wondrous works." For the Psalmist the Law is superhuman. We might almost paraphrase *Wondrous things* as "Divine things."

19. *I am a sojourner* (Heb. *gēr*) in the land (not in the earth). The significant word *gēr* shows what is in the Psalmist's mind. In JEHOVAH'S land he is JEHOVAH'S client, and so he claims to be under JEHOVAH'S protection. Cf *v.* 4, "Evil shall not *sojourn* with thee" (see note).

21. *Thou hast rebuked* etc. Rather, *Thou hast rebuked the proud* (*or presumptuous*) pronouncing them *to be cursed*. For *the proud* see xix. 13, note. The presumptuous who despise the Law are *cursed* (the same Hebrew word) according to the sentences pronounced in Deut xxvii. 15-26, the last of which is, "Cursed be he that confirmeth not the words of this law to do them."

23. *Princes also sat and talked against me*. Chief men of his own people

- 24 Thy testimonies also are my delight
And ¹my counsellors.

DALETH.

- 25 My soul cleaveth unto the dust:
Quicken thou me according to thy word.
26 I declared my ways, and thou answeredst me:
Teach me thy statutes.
27 Make me to understand the way of thy precepts:
So shall I meditate of thy wondrous works.
28 My soul ²melteth for heaviness:
Strengthen thou me according unto thy word.
29 Remove from me the way of falsehood:
And grant me thy law graciously.
30 I have chosen the way of faithfulness:
Thy judgements have I set *before me*.
31 I cleave unto thy testimonies:
O LORD, put me not to shame.
32 I will run the way of thy commandments,
When thou shalt enlarge my heart.

HE.

- 33 Teach me, O LORD, the way of thy statutes;
And I shall keep it unto the end.

¹ Heb. *the men of my counsel*.² Heb. *droppeth*.

spake together against him, taking counsel how to silence him by obtaining his condemnation before the judges: *vs.* 86, 161; cf *v.* 46. A case like that of Jeremiah is in the Psalmist's mind (*Jer xxxviii.* 4).

25-32. DALETH

25. *My soul cleaveth unto the dust.* Cf *xliv.* 25.

28. *melteth.* I.e. in tears.

30. *Thy judgements have I set before me.* This translation is hardly possible. Duhm, Gunkel propose to emend the Hebrew verb by changing one letter, "Thy judgements have I desired" (*'ivvethi*).

32. *When thou shalt enlarge my heart.* I.e. When thou shalt enlarge my *understanding*. The Hebrews regarded the heart as the seat of the intellect, not (as with us) as the seat of the feelings. Cf *v.* 70, *xxv.* 17, note.

33-40. HE

33. *And I shall keep it unto the end.* Rather (as Gunkel), *And if I keep it, I have a reward* (*'ēkeb*).

- 34 Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law;
Yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart.
- 35 Make me to go in the path of thy commandments;
For therein do I delight.
- 36 Incline my heart unto thy testimonies,
And not to covetousness.
- 37 Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity,
And quicken me in thy ways.
- 38 Confirm thy word unto thy servant,
¹Which *belongeth* unto the fear of thee.
- 39 Turn away my reproach whereof I am afraid;
For thy judgements are good.
- 40 Behold, I have longed after thy precepts:
Quicken me in thy righteousness.

VAU.

- 41 Let thy mercies also come unto me, O LORD,
Even thy salvation, according to thy word.
- 42 So shall I have an answer for him that reproacheth me;
For I trust in thy word.
- 43 And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth;
For I have hoped in thy judgements.

¹ Or, *Who* is devoted to

35. *Make me to go in the path of thy commandments.* Cf xxv. 4, 5.

36. *And not to covetousness.* The Psalmist has felt the temptation to leave caring for the *Torah*, and to devote himself to pleasing the powers of the world for the sake of gain.

38. *Which belongeth unto the fear of thee.* A slight change in the Hebrew text would produce the sense, *Which belongeth unto those that fear thee* (Duhm, Gunkel).

39. *my reproach.* Cf v. 42, "Him that reproacheth me": v. 51, "The proud have had me greatly in derision."

41-48. VAU

41. *thy salvation.* I.e. deliverance from the present persecution: vv. 81, 123, 166, 174.

43. *And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth.* The form of this petition shows to what great distress the Psalmist is reduced. In his trouble, when his enemies have taunted him (v. 39) as one whom his God has forsaken, he has hitherto boldly appealed to "the word of truth," i.e. to JEHOVAH'S promise to succour the righteous. But

- 44 So shall I observe thy law continually
For ever and ever.
- 45 And I will walk at liberty ;
For I have sought thy precepts.
- 46 I will also speak of thy testimonies before kings,
And will not be ashamed.
- 47 And I will delight myself in thy commandments,
Which I have loved.
- 48 I will lift up my hands also unto thy commandments, which I
have loved ;
And I will meditate in thy statutes.

ZAIN.

- 49 Remember the word unto thy servant,
¹Because thou hast made me to hope.
- 50 This is my comfort in my affliction :
²For thy word hath quickened me.
- 51 The proud have had me greatly in derision :
Yet have I not swerved from thy law.
- 52 I have remembered thy judgements of old, O LORD,
And have comforted myself.

¹ Or, *Wherein*² Or, *That*

as time passes and the succour in his own case is delayed, the Psalmist fears lest he lose courage to appeal to a promise whose fulfilment is so long delayed.

45. *I will walk at liberty.* These words do not mean that the Psalmist is at the moment in prison. The Hebrew word (*bā-rəḥābāh*, "at large") suggests simply that the Psalmist will be relieved from the oppression of his enemies, and from the restraint which they endeavour to impose upon him: cf xxxi. 8, "in a large place," where a cognate word is used in the Hebrew.

46. *before kings.* The expression is rhetorical. It is unnecessary to suppose either that the Israelite kingdom existed when this Psalm was composed, or that the Psalmist intends to visit the courts of the petty kings of the countries bordering on Judah.

48. *I will lift up my hands...unto thy commandments.* To lift up the hands is an accompaniment of prayer. The Psalmist will pray and give thanks for the commandments which God has given. The reference to prayer is continued in the following verb ("I will meditate"), for *meditation* (Heb. *sāh*) is a synonym of *prayer*: cf lv. 2, "my complaint" (or "my meditation"); cii, title, "his complaint" (or "his meditation").

- 53 ¹Hot indignation hath taken hold upon me,
 Because of the wicked that forsake thy law.
 54 Thy statutes have been my songs
 In the house of my pilgrimage.
 55 I have remembered thy name, O LORD, in the night,
 And have observed thy law.
 56 This I have had,
²Because I kept thy precepts.

CHETH.

- 57 ³The LORD is my portion:
 I have said that I would observe thy words.
 58 I intreated thy favour with my whole heart:
 Be merciful unto me according to thy word.
 59 I thought on my ways,
 And turned my feet unto thy testimonies.
 60 I made haste, and delayed not,
 To observe thy commandments.
 61 The cords of the wicked have wrapped me round;
But I have not forgotten thy law.

¹ Or, *Horror*

² Or, *That I have kept*

³ Or, *The LORD is my portion, have I said: that I may observe &c.*

49-56. ZAIN

53, 54. *Hot indignation* etc. Rather, *A burning wind from the wicked overtook me, even from the men that forsake thy law; but thy statutes became my songs wheresoever I sojourned.* The Psalmist was in imminent danger of his life. The Heb. *zai'āphāh* is not "indignation," but "a burning wind" such as overwhelms travellers in the desert (xi. 6). Cf Isa xxv. 4, "When the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall." The Psalmist compares himself to a traveller who has to face the dangers of the way, but has reason to praise God for His guidance. P-B (*I am horribly afraid*) misses the point.

55. *in the night.* Cf v. 62, lxxxviii. 1, note.

57-64. CHETH

57. *The LORD is my portion* etc. Rather, *I have said* (i.e. *resolved*), *ЖЕHOBAH is my portion, that I may keep thy words.* For *I have said*, cf xxxix. 1, note. For *my portion*, cf lxxiii. 26.

59. *I thought on my ways.* Targum, *I thought to better my ways; cf v. 168; Haggai i. 5. LXX, thy ways, an inferior reading.*

61. *The cords of the wicked have wrapped me round.* The metaphor

- 62 At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto thee
Because of thy righteous judgements.
- 63 I am a companion of all them that fear thee,
And of them that observe thy precepts.
- 64 The earth, O LORD, is full of thy mercy:
Teach me thy statutes.

TETH.

- 65 Thou hast dealt well with thy servant,
O LORD, according unto thy word.
- 66 Teach me good judgement and knowledge;
For I have believed in thy commandments.
- 67 Before I was afflicted I went astray;
But now I observe thy word.
- 68 Thou art good, and doest good;
Teach me thy statutes.
- 69 The proud have forged a lie against me:
With my whole heart will I keep thy precepts.
- 70 Their heart is as fat as grease;
But I delight in thy law.
- 71 It is good for me that I have been afflicted;
That I might learn thy statutes.
- 72 The law of thy mouth is better unto me
Than thousands of gold and silver.

is that of a trap: cf cxl. 5. P-B, *The congregations of the ungodly have robbed me*, follows Luther, *Der Gottlosen Rotte beraubet mich*. RV is better.

64. *The earth...is full of thy mercy*. These words (in substance a doxology) form a fitting close to this section, which begins with the supreme confession, *I have said, JEHOVAH is my portion*.

65-72. TETH

66. *Teach me good judgement and knowledge*. The word *good* is superfluous here, for the Heb. *ta'am*, "judgment," is a synonym of *discretion* or *wisdom* (1 Sam xxv. 33). This *judgment* enables him to see that the Law is better than gold and silver (v. 72).

67. *Before I was afflicted I went astray*. Cf vv. 71, 75.

69. *have forged a lie*. I.e. have given false witness against me (cf v. 61).

70. *Their heart is as fat as grease*. Cf xvii. 10; Isa vi. 10. The *heart* according to the Hebrew view is the seat of the *understanding*; when it is overlaid with fat, it becomes heavy and uncomprehending.

JOD.

- 73 Thy hands have made me and ¹fashioned me:
Give me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments.
- 74 They that fear thee shall see me and be glad;
Because I have hoped in thy word.
- 75 I know, O LORD, that thy judgements are righteous,
And that in faithfulness thou hast afflicted me.
- 76 Let, I pray thee, thy lovingkindness be for my comfort,
According to thy word unto thy servant.
- 77 Let thy tender mercies come unto me, that I may live:
For thy law is my delight.
- 78 Let the proud be ashamed; for they have overthrown me
²wrongfully:
But I will meditate in thy precepts.
- 79 Let those that fear thee turn unto me,
³And they shall know thy testimonies.
- 80 Let my heart be perfect in thy statutes;
That I be not ashamed.

¹ Or, *established*² Or, *with falsehood*³ Another reading is, *Even they that know.*

JOD

73. *Thy hands have made me and fashioned me (or, established me).* Above in *v.* 64 the Psalmist confessed the general providence of JEHOVAH over the world: he now confesses that this providence was extended to himself.

75. *in faithfulness thou hast afflicted me.* There is an implicit confession of sin here. JEHOVAH announced that certain transgressions would be visited with certain punishments. The Psalmist transgressed, and JEHOVAH being faithful to His word punished him. In the next verse the Psalmist calls for the mercy which his God has similarly promised to those who repent.

78. *they have overthrown me wrongfully (lit. with falsehood).* Better probably as in *v.* 61, *they have wrapped me round with falsehood.* The Hebrew verbs in the two passages closely resemble one another; it may be a case of a difference of spelling without a difference of meaning.

CAPH.

- 81 My soul fainteth for thy salvation:
But I hope in thy word.
- 82 Mine eyes fail for thy word,
 While I say, When wilt thou comfort me?
- 83 For I am become like a ¹bottle in the smoke;
 Yet do I not forget thy statutes.
- 84 How many are the days of thy servant?
 When wilt thou execute judgement on them that persecute
 me?
- 85 The proud have digged pits for me,
 Who are not after thy law.
- 86 All thy commandments are faithful:
 They persecute me ²wrongfully; help thou me.
- 87 They had almost consumed me upon earth;
 But I forsook not thy precepts.
- 88 Quicken me after thy lovingkindness;
 So shall I observe the testimony of thy mouth.

LAMED.

- 89 For ever, O LORD,
 Thy word is settled in heaven.
- 90 Thy faithfulness is unto all generations:
 Thou hast established the earth, and it abideth.
- 91 ³They abide this day according to thine ordinances;
 For all things are thy servants.
- 92 Unless thy law had been my delight,
 I should then have perished in mine affliction.

¹ Or, wineskin ² Or, with falsehood

³ Or, As for thy judgements, they abide this day

CAPH

81, 82. *My soul fainteth...Mine eyes fail.* The two English verbs represent the same Hebrew verb: translate, *My soul faileth* (in looking) *for thy salvation.* Cf v. 123.

LAMED

89. *Thy word is settled* (Heb. *nizzab*) *in heaven.* JEHOVAH'S Word (Heb. *dābār*) is sometimes personified, as in cvii. 20, cxlvii. 18, so here. Translate, *Thy Word standeth* (i.e. in a position of dignity and authority) *in heaven.* Cf lxxxii. 1, "God *standeth* (Heb. *nizzab*) in the congregation of God."

- 93 I will never forget thy precepts ;
For with them thou hast quickened me.
- 94 I am thine, save me ;
For I have sought thy precepts.
- 95 The wicked have waited for me to destroy me ;
But I will consider thy testimonies.
- 96 I have seen an end of all perfection ;
But thy commandment is exceeding broad.

MEM.

- 97 Oh how love I thy law !
It is my meditation all the day.
- 98 ¹Thy commandments make me wiser than mine enemies ;
For they are ever with me.
- 99 I have more understanding than all my teachers ;
For thy testimonies are my meditation.
- 100 I understand more than the aged,
Because I have kept thy precepts.
- 101 I have refrained my feet from every evil way,
That I might observe thy word.
- 102 I have not turned aside from thy judgements ;
For thou hast taught me.
- 103 How sweet are thy words unto my ²taste !
Yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth !
- 104 Through thy precepts I get understanding :
Therefore I hate every false way.

¹ Or, *Thou through thy commandments makest*² Heb. *palate*.

96. *I have seen an end of all perfection* etc. I.e. I have seen that there is a limit to everything which is counted perfect by mankind, but there is no limit to the greatness of JEHOVAH'S Law.

MEM

98. *wiser than mine enemies*. The Psalmist has been able to escape the snares of his enemies and to resist the temptation they put to him to forsake JEHOVAH.

99. *I have more understanding than all my teachers*. The Hebrew verb *hischil* from which *Maschil*, "(a Psalm of) instruction," comes may be translated "teach" as in Dan xii. 3, "they that be wise" (marg. "the teachers"). In the Mishnah, *Aboth* iv. 1, a different turn is given to the verse, namely, "*From* all my teachers I gat understanding."

NUN.

- 105 Thy word is a lamp unto my feet,
And light unto my path.
- 106 I have sworn, and have confirmed it,
That I will observe thy righteous judgements.
- 107 I am afflicted very much :
Quicken me, O LORD, according unto thy word.
- 108 Accept, I beseech thee, the freewill offerings of my mouth,
O LORD,
And teach me thy judgements.
- 109 My soul is continually in my hand ;
Yet do I not forget thy law.
- 110 The wicked have laid a snare for me ;
Yet went I not astray from thy precepts.
- 111 Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever ;
For they are the rejoicing of my heart.
- 112 I have inclined mine heart to perform thy statutes,
For ever, even unto the end.

SAMECH.

- 113 I hate them that are of a double mind ;
But thy law do I love.

NUN

109. *My soul is continually in my hand.* Here the Psalmist speaks plainly of himself as being in danger of his life. So in *v.* 107 he says, "I am afflicted very much," and in *v.* 110, "The wicked have laid a snare for me." On this Duhm remarks, "Perhaps his situation was not so bad as this; a man in danger of his life does not compose such a Psalm as this." Others hold that a man awaiting death during prolonged imprisonment or lingering sickness might compose just such a Psalm.

SAMECH

113. *I hate them that are of a double mind.* The double mind appeared in Israel on more than one occasion. In the reign of Ahab the people tried to combine the service of JEHOVAH with that of Baal (1 K xviii. 21). In the days of Antiochus Epiphanes many, including some of the priests, adopted Greek customs and acknowledged other gods while professing to be worshippers of JEHOVAH (1 Macc i. 11-15; 2 Macc iv. 7-20). Beside these two well-known historical instances there were doubtless others.

- 114 Thou art my hiding place and my shield :
I hope in thy word.
- 115 Depart from me, ye evil-doers ;
That I may keep the commandments of my God.
- 116 Uphold me according unto thy word, that I may live ;
And let me not be ashamed of my hope.
- 117 Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe,
And shall have respect unto thy statutes continually.
- 118 Thou hast set at nought all them that err from thy statutes ;
For their deceit is ¹falsehood.
- 119 Thou ²puttest away all the wicked of the earth like dross :
Therefore I love thy testimonies.
- 120 My flesh trembleth for fear of thee ;
And I am afraid of thy judgements.

AIN.

- 121 I have done judgement and justice :

¹ Or, *vain*² Heb. *causest to cease*.

115. *ye evil-doers*. He addresses "them that are of a double mind" (v. 113), who would persuade him to be a time-server and slack in keeping the commandments.

117. *shall have respect unto*. Or, *shall look to*, as Isa xvii. 7 (same Hebrew verb).

118. *Thou hast set at nought* (so LXX). Or, *Thou hast rejected*. P-B (= Targum), *Thou hast trodden down*, but wrongly.

err. Better, *wander*, as v. 21. LXX, τοὺς ἀπστανοῦντας, "those who revolt."

For their deceit is vain (so marg.). Their "deceit" is their double-dealing in endeavouring to combine the worship of the One True God with that of gods worshipped by the Gentiles. Cf Kuran lxiii. 1, "The hypocrites are certainly liars," an allusion to certain men who tried to keep in with Muhammad and his enemies at the same time. LXX (having perhaps a different reading), ὅτι ἄδικον τὸ ἐνθυμήμα αὐτῶν, "Because their thought is unrighteous." So P-B, "For they imagine but deceit."

119. *Thou puttest away*. Marg. *Thou causest to cease*. Notice the progress: in v. 118 יְהוָה "rejects" the wicked ones; in v. 119 He makes an end of them.

AIN

121. *I have done judgement and justice*. *Mishpat* (translated *judgment*) means "(right) custom" or "the thing that is done and ought to be done." *Zedek* (translated "justice" or "righteousness") is a higher word often used to denote one of the Divine qualities, as in v. 142, "an

- Leave me not to mine oppressors.
 122 Be surety for thy servant for good :
 Let not the proud oppress me.
 123 Mine eyes fail for thy salvation,
 And for thy righteous word.
 124 Deal with thy servant according unto thy mercy,
 And teach me thy statutes.
 125 I am thy servant, give me understanding ;
 That I may know thy testimonies.
 126 It is time for the LORD to work ;
 For they have made void thy law.
 127 Therefore I love thy commandments
 Above gold, yea, above fine gold.
 128 Therefore I esteem ¹all *thy* precepts concerning all *things*
 to be right ;
 And I hate every false way.

¹ Or, as read by the Sept., Syr. and Vulg., *all thy precepts to be right*

everlasting *righteousness*." These words would be most in place in the mouth of a judge: the speaker is probably a leader or governor among the Jews.

mine oppressors. Or, *the men who do me injustice, or, slander me.*

122. *Be surety.* Cf Isa xxxviii. 14, where Hezekiah prays in his sickness, "Be thou my surety," i.e. "Give me assurance that I shall recover."

123. *Mine eyes fail* etc. Well paraphrased in P-B, *Mine eyes are wasted away with looking for thy health* (i.e. for the saving help which I expect from Thee).

125. *thy servant.* The Heb. *'ebed* (translated *servant*) means a servant of the higher rank, who is allowed to know "what his lord doeth," like Abraham's servant, who is entrusted with the confidential mission of finding a wife for Isaac (Gen xxiv. 2, 34). The petition, *Give me understanding*, is therefore entirely suitable as sequent to the confession, *I am thy servant*. See v. 9, note.

126. *have made void.* Not *destroyed* as P-B. The men "of a double mind" (v. 113) made the Law of Monotheism of none effect.

127. *fine gold* (Heb. *paz*, as in xix. 10). Not, *precious stone*, as in P-B.

128. *Therefore* etc. Better (with an emendation of MT), *So have I been establish'd* (cf LXX, *καταρθούμην*) to keep thy commandments.

PE.

- 129 Thy testimonies are wonderful:
Therefore doth my soul keep them.
- 130 The opening of thy words giveth light;
It giveth understanding unto the simple.
- 131 I opened wide my mouth, and panted;
For I longed for thy commandments.
- 132 Turn thee unto me, and have mercy upon me,
As thou usest to do unto those that love thy name.
- 133 Order my footsteps in thy word;
And let not any iniquity have dominion over me.
- 134 Redeem me from the oppression of man:
So will I observe thy precepts.
- 135 Make thy face to shine upon thy servant;
And teach me thy statutes.
- 136 Mine eyes run down with rivers of water,
Because they observe not thy law.

PE

129. *wonderful*. Cf *v.* 18, *wondrous things* (also *v.* 27), where a cognate word is used. The meaning is that the testimonies are beyond man's comprehension, if considered apart from the "opening" or "exposition" which their Divine author alone can supply: cf *vv.* 130, 135.

130. *The opening*. I.e. *The exposition*. Cf *xlix.* 4, "I will open (i.e. expound) my dark saying."

131. *I opened wide*. Not simply, *I opened* (as P-B). The phrase is used of *Sheol* (Hades) in *Isa.* *v.* 14.

132. *As thou usest to do*. Lit. *according to right* (or "judgment," or "custom"). Cf *v.* 149 (with margin).

133. *let not any iniquity have dominion*. Here the abstract, *iniquity*, stands for the concrete, *unjust rulers*. Cf *v.* 122, "Let not the proud oppress me," i.e. coerce me to be unfaithful to Thee. See also *xix.* 13, note.

134. *Redeem me*. I.e. by paying a price. The metaphor may seem a strange one to apply to the work of *Ἰεσοῦς*, but it signifies finality. When blood-money (wergild) has been paid, nothing remains to be said or done; cf *xxvi.* 11, note.

135. *Make thy face to shine*. Cf *xxxi.* 16, note.

136. *Because they observe not thy law*. The tears are tears of vexation: cf *v.* 139. Symmachus gives, *περὶ τῶν μὴ φυλασσόντων τὸν νόμον σου*, "For those who do not keep thy law," a quite possible rendering. Jeremiah (*ix.* 1, *xiii.* 17) would weep for the fate of his disobedient

TZADE.

- 137 Righteous art thou, O LORD,
And upright ¹are thy judgements.
- 138 Thou hast commanded thy testimonies in righteousness
And very faithfulness.
- 139 My zeal hath ²consumed me,
Because mine adversaries have forgotten thy words.
- 140 Thy word is very ³pure;
Therefore thy servant loveth it.
- 141 I am small and despised:
Yet do not I forget thy precepts.
- 142 Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness,
And thy law is truth.
- 143 Trouble and anguish have ⁴taken hold on me:
Yet thy commandments are my delight.

¹ Or, *in thy judgements*² Heb. *cut me off*.³ Heb. *tried, or, refined*.⁴ Or, *found me*

brethren, and perhaps this is the meaning of Symmachus. LXX (Tischendorf) reproduces the verse thus, *Mine eyes descend in streams of water, because I did not keep* (ἐπεὶ οὐκ ἐφύλαξα) *thy law*, but no doubt Dr Swete is right in editing ἐπεὶ οὐκ ἐφύλαξαν here from the Codex Sinaiticus, "Because they did not keep," as MT. The Psalmist asserts his own faithfulness several times in this Psalm. For v. 176 see note there.

TZADE

137. *Righteous art thou, O JEHOVAH* etc. Rev xvi. 5-7; xix. 2.

138. *Thou hast commanded*. Cf v. 4, note.

faithfulness. Deut vii. 9, "The faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy."

139. *My zeal*. I.e. for the One God and for His law. Some texts of LXX assimilate the wording to that of lxix. 9 (10) by reading, "Zeal for thy house"; but the wording of the Hebrew is quite different in the two passages.

140. *Thy word is very pure*. P-B gives an excellent paraphrase, *Thy word* (i.e. "thy promise" or "thy reassurance") *is tried to the uttermost*. JEHOVAH's promise to care for His own is put to severe test in the day of persecution.

141. *I am small* etc. A ruler or leader might use these words, as Gideon (Jud vi. 15), and Saul (1 Sam ix. 21). The Psalmist means that (apart from Divine help) he is unequal to the crisis, which he indicates in v. 143.

143. *have taken hold on me*. Or, *have overtaken me*.

- 144 Thy testimonies are righteous for ever:
Give me understanding, and I shall live.

KOPH.

- 145 I have called with my whole heart; answer me, O LORD:
I will keep thy statutes.
146 I have called unto thee; save me,
And I shall observe thy testimonies.
147 I prevented the dawning of the morning, and cried:
I hoped in thy words.
148 Mine eyes prevented the night watches,
That I might meditate in thy word.
149 Hear my voice according unto thy lovingkindness:
Quicken me, O LORD, ¹according to thy judgements.
150 They draw nigh ²that follow after wickedness;
They are far from thy law.
151 Thou art nigh, O LORD;
And all thy commandments are truth.
152 Of old have I known from thy testimonies,
That thou hast founded them for ever.

¹ Or, as thou art wont² Or, that persecute me with wickedness

144. *and I shall live.* Cf v. 175; Lev xviii. 5, "Ye shall keep my statutes, . . . which if a man do, he shall live in them." *Live* has the sense of "live to God" or "prosper with the Divine blessing"; cf Deut xxx. 15, 16.

KOPH

147, 148. *I prevented the dawning, . . . prevented the night watches.* The Psalmist was early at his morning prayer, and early also at the evening prayer. He is earnest in prayer: similarly in v. 62 he declares that he will rise at midnight to give thanks, while in v. 164 he says, "Seven times a day do I praise thee."

149. *according to thy judgements.* Cf Solomon's prayer, "Judge thy servants, condemning the wicked; . . . and justifying the righteous" (1 K viii. 32).

150. *They draw nigh.* But JEHOVAH is also nigh: v. 151.

that follow after wickedness. Better as marg. *that persecute me with wickedness* (Heb. *zimmah*). For *zimmah* see xxvi. 10, note on *mischievous*.

151. *Thou art nigh.* Cf xxxiv. 18, cxlv. 18.

152. *thou hast founded them.* I.e. thou hast laid for them an everlasting foundation: cf Pro x. 25.

RESH.

- 153 Consider mine affliction, and deliver me ;
For I do not forget thy law.
- 154 Plead thou my cause, and redeem me :
Quicken me according to thy word.
- 155 Salvation is far from the wicked ;
For they seek not thy statutes.
- 156 Great are thy tender mercies, O LORD :
Quicken me according to thy judgements.
- 157 Many are my persecutors and mine adversaries ;
Yet have I not swerved from thy testimonies.
- 158 I beheld the treacherous dealers, and ¹was grieved ;
Because they observe not thy word.
- 159 Consider how I love thy precepts :
Quicken me, O LORD, according to thy lovingkindness.
- 160 The sum of thy word is truth ;
And every one of thy righteous judgements *endureth* for
ever.

SHIN.

- 161 Princes have persecuted me without a cause ;
But my heart standeth in awe of thy words.
- 162 I rejoice at thy word,
As one that findeth great spoil.
- 163 I hate and abhor falsehood ;
But thy law do I love.

¹ Or, *loathed* them

RESH

153. *mine affliction.* Exod iii. 7.
I do not forget. Cf *vv.* 16, 83, 93, 109, 141, 153, 176.
154. *Quicken me.* I.e. Give me new life: cf *vv.* 144 (note), 149, 156,
159, 175.
155. *they seek not.* I.e. to know the meaning of Thy statutes.
158. *and was grieved.* Rather as marg. *and loathed* them.
160. *The sum* (Heb. *rōsh*) *of thy word* (perhaps, *words*) *is truth.* Cf
cxxxix. 17.

SHIN

161. *Princes have persecuted me.* Cf *v.* 23, note.
in awe of thy words. He fears God, and not princes.
163. *falsehood.* I.e. the double mind: cf *vv.* 113, 118, with notes.

- 164 Seven times a day do I praise thee,
Because of thy righteous judgements.
- 165 Great peace have they which love thy law;
And they have none occasion of stumbling.
- 166 I have hoped for thy salvation, O LORD,
And have done thy commandments.
- 167 My soul hath observed thy testimonies;
And I love them exceedingly.
- 168 I have observed thy precepts and thy testimonies;
For all my ways are before thee.

TAU.

- 169 Let my cry come near before thee, O LORD:
Give me understanding according to thy word.
- 170 Let my supplication come before thee:
Deliver me according to thy word.
- 171 Let my lips utter praise;
For thou teachest me thy statutes.
- 172 Let my tongue sing of thy word;
For all thy commandments are righteousness.

164. *Seven times.* Cf *vv.* 147, 148, note.

165. *Great peace have they which love thy law.* This sentiment is perhaps too optimistic for the writer of this Psalm, and since the word "peace" (Heb. *shālôm*) is often used as a greeting, it would be better to render the clause as a wish, "Abundance of peace be to those who love thy law, and find no stumbling-block in it!" The "transgressors" found a stumbling-block in the law, in that it separated them from the Gentiles and deprived them of the advantages which friendship with the Gentiles might have given them (1 Macc i. 11). But the Psalmist on the contrary waits to see *abundance of peace* falling to the lot of those who remain faithful to the Law (*v.* 166).

166. *thy salvation.* Cf *vv.* 41, 81, 123, 174.

168. *For all my ways are before thee.* The Psalmist appeals on his innocence to God here as in cxxxix. 23, 24.

TAU

169. *my cry* (Heb. *rinnah*). The Psalmist's *cry*, i.e. his prayer, is personified as his representative, who seeks an audience with his Divine king. He whom a king (or ruler) favours is allowed to *come near*: Gen xlv. 4; Dan iii. 8; Esth v. 2, 3.

172. *Let my tongue sing of thy word.* The Hebrew word *sing* may often be rendered *answer*. *JEHOVAH* has spoken in the *Torah*; the Psalmist answers with praise of His commandments.

- 173 Let thine hand be ready to help me;
For I have chosen thy precepts.
- 174 I have longed for thy salvation, O LORD;
And thy law is my delight.
- 175 Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee;
And let thy judgements help me.
- 176 I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek thy servant;
For I do not forget thy commandments.

175. *Let my soul live.* Cf v. 144, note.

176. *I have gone astray like a lost sheep.* The meaning is (as a German commentator has said), "I am helpless" (*hilftlos*). The addition of the qualification *like a lost sheep* shows that the meaning is not (as some might suppose) "I have been faithless" (*treulos*). The suggestion that the verse is over-full and that the words *like a lost sheep* should be omitted is ill-considered. The last verse of a Psalm is often either "over-full" or "deficient" (judged by a merely metrical standard): e.g. lxxxiii. 18, xc. 17, xciv. 23. The "irregularity" of the form lends emphasis to the thought.

THE SONGS OF ASCENTS

(Psalms cxx-cxxxiv)

These fifteen Psalms have the same heading in the Hebrew Bible, and are reckoned as a separate collection. They are not however completely homogeneous.

The meaning of the heading has given rise to some discussion. Each Psalm is called "A Song of Ma'loth," in the Greek of LXX, *ὁδὴ τῶν ἀναβαθμῶν*. The Hebrew word *ma'loth* is used in 1 K x. 19, 20 of the six steps which led up to the seat of Solomon's throne, the Greek of LXX being again *ἀναβαθμοί*, "steps." A possible rendering therefore of the title is "A Song of the Steps." But we ask, What steps (if any) are meant? The Mishnah, *Sukkah* v. 4, suggests an answer:

"Holy men repeated songs and praises...and Levites stood with harps...upon the fifteen steps which go down from the court of Israel to the court of Women, corresponding in number with the fifteen Songs of *Ma'loth* which are in the book of Psalms."

So in the Great Bible of 1539 the heading of each of these Psalms is "A songe of the steares (stairs)."

But the word "step" ("steps") may be used metaphorically of advances in rank or station: hence the Genevan version of 1560 (= AV) has "a song of degrees" translating from the Vulgate *canticum graduum*. This cryptic rendering was changed in the Bishops' Bible of 1568 into the unambiguous form, "A song of high degrees," i.e. an excellent song.

But a different rendering is given by Aquila and Symmachus, *εἰς τὰς ἀναβάσεις*,

"for the goings up." The "goings up" have been explained as the return from Babylonian Captivity, and a reference to the Return in some of these songs is not to be denied. But it is best to understand the "going up" in most cases as the going up to Jerusalem from the lower level of the surrounding country-side. Jerusalem is the place

Whither the tribes go up,...

To give thanks unto the name of **JEHOVAH**. (cxxxii. 4.)

Duhm's remarks on the fifteen Psalms are worth quoting: "These pilgrim songs are as a collection the most valuable of all the small booklets from which the Psalter was composed. Ps cxxxii was perhaps inserted in the collection at a later time. These Psalms form a true People's Song Book speaking the language of the people and revealing their feelings and sentiments; it introduces us to their religion, and also to their civil life, their family life, their day's work—such things indeed as the people themselves tell in a natural and naïve manner. Only two or three of these Psalms are pilgrim-songs in the strict sense of the term, but they may have all been sung on pilgrimage." (Duhm, *Psalmen*, p. 428.)

Looking at this small collection we are struck by its wide range in tone. Pss cxx, cxxiii, cxxix are composed in a low key; the enemy's contempt of Israel, and the injuries he has done or is doing bite into the Psalmist's bone. The enemy who shows this contempt belongs probably to the Samaritans or to the Gentiles who pushed into Palestine when the land was left half-empty. So the remnant of Israel dwelling in the land are described to Nehemiah in 445 B.C. as "in great affliction and reproach" (Neh. i. 3). A leaderless crowd thinly scattered over Judaea could not inspire respect in their neighbours. On the other hand faith and joyful purpose shine out conspicuously in cxxi, cxxii, cxxviii and cxxxii, cxxxiii.

The religion of these songs of Ascents is the religion of the persecuted, brave but hard. The first song is a bitter defiance of the persecutors: "They make them ready to battle" (cxx. 7): so let them taste fire and sword! Other denunciations, not quite so bitter, occur in the songs which follow, for the afflictions of the singers continue; dangers still threaten: scornful treatment is still the singers' portion.

But if there is a lively memory of wrong, there is also a lively memory of **JEHOVAH's** wonderful deliverances (cxxiv) and of His wonderful mercies (cxxvi). The note of thankfulness is struck for all to hear (cxxiv. 6, cxxix. 2, cxxxiii), and with it the note of patient faith: "I wait for **JEHOVAH**, my soul doth wait, And in his word ("his promise") do I hope" (cxxx. 5). Allied to this patient waiting is the meek resignation expressed in cxxiv.

This collection of fifteen Psalms is composed of five trilogies, five groups each of three Psalms, which are connected by some similarity of subject. See below. It is not certain whether these groups are due to accident or to design. In general Mount Zion and the Temple may be said to be the background of the fifteen Psalms, and the whole collection ends appropriately with the invocation, "May **JEHOVAH** bless thee out of Zion."

THE FIRST TRILOGY

(Psalms cxx-cxxii.)

These three Psalms should be studied together, for they form a trilogy. Indeed it is only when they are taken together that their character as "Songs of Ascents" is clearly seen. A progress is to be traced from cxx to cxxii. In cxx the Psalmist is dwelling away from Jerusalem, not in Babylonia but probably east of Jordan, among the Ammonites, and living in a state of unhappiness because surrounded by unfriendly neighbours. The keynote of cxx is, "Woe is me." The Psalmist breaks off with a cry of disappointment over his failure to attain to peace in the place where his lot is cast.

In cxxi the Psalmist is ascending towards Jerusalem; he is raising his eyes to the mountains which stand about the city (*v.* 1). Faith springs up within him at the sight. On those mountains is the dwelling of JEHOVAH, who is the un-sleeping guardian of Israel. The Psalmist concludes with a blessing on his people, one and all, as many as have the privilege of dwelling in Jerusalem (*v.* 8). He himself is outside, gazing up at the mountains.

But in cxxii the ascent has been made. The Psalmist exclaims in ecstasy, "Our feet have attained, they stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem!" There is misery in cxx, yearning in cxxi, attainment in cxxii. The name of the Holy City absent from cxx, subconsciously present in cxxi, rings out in triumph in cxxii.

PSALM CXX

AN EXILE AMONG THE AMMONITES

§ 1. CONTENTS.

1. The Psalmist's story summarily told: (1) He was in distress; (2) He cried to JEHOVAH; (3) JEHOVAH answered him.
2. The Psalmist's prayer: To be delivered from lying lips.
- 3, 4. The recompense to be given to the deceitful tongue: "Fire and sword."
- 5, 6. The miserable condition of the Psalmist (in the past), compelled to live beside Arab tent-dwellers and with the people of Rabbah, i.e. the Ammonites.
7. The character of these peoples: they have shown themselves implacable.

§ 2. THE SITUATION OF THE PSALMIST.

The Psalmist was "in distress" (*v.* 1). He was not in his own land, but sojourning in "Meshech," and dwelling beside the tents of Kedar. *Meshech* and *Kedar* stand for the Arab peoples who pressed into eastern Palestine, and intermingled with their kindred, the children of Ammon. Hence we may explain the Hebrew word *Rabbath* in *v.* 6 as the name of the capital of Ammon, and not as an adjective used adverbially, *rabbath*, "long" or "a long time." The rendering "hath long dwelt" is in any case very doubtful.

To cross the Jordan and seek refuge among the Ammonites or Moabites was an obvious course for Israelites to take, when their own land could not shelter them or could not feed them. Famine drove Naomi and her family into Moab (Ruth i. 1); the Hebrews fled from the Philistines "over Jordan" in the days of Saul (1 Sam xiii. 7); and later after the fall of the southern kingdom

Ishmael the murderer of Gedaliah fled to the king of Ammon (Jer xl. 14). The Psalmist may have been one of the fugitives who at one time or another preferred to trust themselves among their near neighbours, their kindred the Ammonites and the men of Kedar, rather than remain in Palestine to serve the Chaldeans (cf Jer xl. 9). But the Ammonites with their deceitful professions of friendship (vv. 2, 3) were in fact hostile as in the days of David (2 Sam x. 1-4). Moreover their land bordered on the desert, and there was no doubt an Arab element in the population. Ammonite and Arab were equally treacherous. "Woe is me that I dwell beside the tents of Kedar," the Psalmist cries, and again he says, "I have dwelt with Rabbah, with one that hateth peace." The Egyptians in the days of Moses had learned to oppress the Israelites who fled to them from the face of famine, and the Ammonites of a later day followed the precedent, when the Jews took refuge with them from the sword of the Chaldeans.

A Song of Ascents.

CXX. 1 In my distress I cried unto the LORD,

And he answered me.

2 Deliver my soul, O LORD, from lying lips,

And from a deceitful tongue.

3 What shall be given unto thee, and what shall be done more unto thee,

Thou deceitful tongue?

4 ¹Sharp arrows of the mighty,

With coals of ²juniper.

¹ Or, It is as the sharp arrows of the mighty man

² Or, broom

1. THE PSALMIST'S STORY

CXX. 1. *In my distress.* Cf iv. 1, xviii. 6, *al.*

he answered me. The statement is final: it shows that the situation described in vv. 2-7 belongs to the past.

2. THE PSALMIST'S PRAYER

2. *from lying lips.* From false offers of hospitality like Jael's: Jud iv. 18. See Introduction.

3, 4. THE RECOMPENSE TO THE FALSE FRIEND

3. *What shall be given...?* The words are in the form of a wish.

4. *Sharp arrows...coals of juniper.* The Psalmist's wish is that an exterminating war may arise against his treacherous hosts. Let other Arab tribes war against them with the desert weapon—the bow (Gen xxi. 20): let their tents be surprised and fired with burning embers of desert broom.

- 5 Woe is me, that I sojourn in Meshech,
That I dwell among the tents of Kedar!
6 My soul hath long had her dwelling
With him that hateth peace.
7 I am *for* peace:
But when I speak, they are for war.

5, 6. ARAB AND AMMONITE

5. *Woe is me* etc. Rather, *Woe was mine, when I sojourned with Meshech*.

Meshech. Not to be identified with the *Meshech* (one of the sons of Japheth, Gen x. 2), but with *Mash* (i.e. Meshech, one of the sons of Aram, "Syria," Gen x. 23 = 1 Chr i. 17). This Meshech was a tribe with Arabian affinities.

Kedar. One of the "sons" of Ishmael, and so an Arabian tribe: Gen xxv. 13; 1 Chr i. 29; cf Isa xxi. 13-17.

6. *My soul hath long had her dwelling*. Better, *My soul dwelt with Rabbath*. Rabbath of the children of Ammon (2 Sam xii. 26) is the well-known capital of the Ammonites.

7. IRRECONCILABLE FOES

7. *I am for peace*. Better, *I was for peace*; LXX, ἤμην εἰρηνικός: Vulgate, *eram pacificus*. The Jewish fugitives came seeking safety only, but they were received as foes. For the friendly attitude of Israel towards Ammon cf Deut ii. 18, 19. The experience for the Psalmist is past: once he dwelt with Rabbath, with hosts who were hostile to their guest; but now (v. 1) JEHOVAH has answered his prayer, and (presumably) he is once more in his own land.

PSALM CXXI (cf Ps xci)

JEHOVAH THE PERFECT REFUGE

§ 1. CONTENTS.

1, 2. The Psalmist confesses that he has found his help in JEHOVAH.

3-8. He assures the inhabitants of Jerusalem ("Israel") of JEHOVAH's sleepless care for them: or (if we accept the rendering of the margin), he invokes JEHOVAH's care for them.

§ 2. PURPOSE, OCCASION AND DATE.

This Psalmist is a Pastor and this Psalm is a piece of *Pastoralia*. The Psalmist has experienced JEHOVAH's providence over himself, and so he is bold to assure the people of Jerusalem of JEHOVAH's unflinching providence over them.

No particular occasion (or date) can be suggested for this Psalm. The language is general; it does not suggest by what particular plague, famine, or hostile attack (if any) Jerusalem was threatened at this time. But Jerusalem was often in danger from one or other of these calamities, and such a Psalm as this can never have been out of place. If on the other hand we accept the marginal rendering of *vv.* 3-8 we get for general use a national anthem or general intercession for the safety of the beloved city.

A Song of Ascents.

CXXI. 1 I will lift up mine eyes unto the mountains:

From whence shall my help come?

2 My help *cometh* from the LORD,
Which made heaven and earth.

3 ¹He will not suffer thy foot to be moved:
He that keepeth thee will not slumber.

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

¹ Or, *Let him not suffer...let him not slumber that &c.*

1, 2. THE PSALMIST'S CONFIDENCE

CXXI. 1. *I will lift up.* The words are to be understood as continuing the story told in **cxx.** The Psalmist from the misery of his situation in "Meshech" looks westward to the mountains of Judaea, and seeks relief from the God whose temple is there. The rendering of AV marg. *Shall I lift up mine eyes to the hills?* is meant to refer to the hills ("mountains") on which were the high places: "Shall I look for help to the false gods, who were worshipt on the hills?"

the mountains. I.e. of Judaea: cf **cxxv.** 2.

2. *Which made heaven and earth.* Cf **cxv.** 15, **cxxiv.** 8, **cxxxiv.** 3. This title conveys a special defiance of false gods: see Jer x. 11, "The gods that have not made...shall perish."

3-8. HIS ASSURANCES TO JERUSALEM

3. *He will not suffer* etc. Or, *Let him not suffer* (a prayer). So as a prayer to the end of the Psalm.

thy foot to be moved. Cf **xc.** 12.

He that keepeth thee. The verb *keep* and its substantive *keeper* (*v.* 5) are used here in a sense which is antiquated. Cf **xii.** 7, **xvii.** 8, also **Phil.** iv. 7, "The peace of God shall keep (RV, *'guard*) your hearts." A more modern word for *keeper* is "Warden" or "Guardian," i.e. one who protects.

will not slumber. Cf **xliv.** 23, note.

- 5 The LORD is thy keeper:
The LORD is thy shade upon thy right hand.
- 6 The sun shall not smite thee by day,
Nor the moon by night.
- 7 The LORD shall keep thee from all evil;
He shall keep thy soul.
- 8 The LORD shall keep thy going out and thy coming in,
From this time forth and for evermore.

5. *thy shade.* Cf xci. 1; Jonah iv. 5-8; Baruch v. 8.

8. *Jehovah shall keep etc.* Deut xxviii. 6.

thy going out and thy coming in. I.e. thy work (and conduct) abroad, and thy work (and conduct) at home. Cf 1 Sam xviii. 13, 16, xxix. 6.

PSALM CXXII

JERUSALEM ATTAINED

The Psalmist celebrates the fame of Jerusalem. In Jerusalem is the house of JEHOVAH (*vs.* 1, 2); Jerusalem is the centre of unity for Israel (*vs.* 3, 4); in Jerusalem justice is dispensed and the golden age of David is remembered (*v.* 5). The Psalmist will pray and work for Jerusalem, and specially for the sake of the house of JEHOVAH which is there (*vs.* 6-9). He expresses in poetry such thoughts and aspirations as Nehemiah writes down in his prose memoirs.

A Song of Ascents; of David.

- CXXII.** 1 I was glad when they said unto me,
Let us go unto the house of the LORD.
- 2 Our feet ¹are standing
Within thy gates, O Jerusalem;

¹ Or, *have stood*

1, 2. THE PSALMIST'S JOY IN REACHING JERUSALEM

CXXII. 1. *I was glad etc.* Better, *I have joy in those who say unto me, Let us go unto the house of JEHOVAH.* These are the faithful ones in Israel (cf *v.* 6), as distinguished from the "double-minded" of cxix. 113 and the men of "crooked ways" of cxv. 5.

2. *Our feet are standing.* Not, *shall stand* (as P-B, AV). Decisive action takes place between *vs.* 1 and 2. In *v.* 1 the Psalmist rejoices in companions who make a proposal to him, in *v.* 2 he exults that the proposal has been carried out. A literal rendering is, *Our feet have come to be standing.*

- 3 Jerusalem, that art builded
 As a city that is compact together:
 4 Whither the tribes go up, even the tribes of ¹the LORD,
For a testimony unto Israel,
 To give thanks unto the name of the LORD.
 5 For there ²are set thrones for judgement,
 The thrones of the house of David.
 6 ³Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:
⁴They shall prosper that love thee.
 7 Peace be within thy walls,
 And prosperity within thy palaces.

¹ Heb. *Jah*. ² Or, *were* ³ Or, *Salute ye Jerusalem* ⁴ Or, *May they*

3-5. JERUSALEM A CENTRE OF UNITY FOR THE TRIBES OF ISRAEL

3. *that art builded As a city*. Better, *that art rebuilt* (i.e. by the returned exiles), *Thou art a city where* etc. The *As* is really superfluous. *that is compact together* (so AV). Better, *where fellowship is made*. (חברה, Pual.) Jerusalem is the centre at which a great act of union takes place, for the crowds from the different tribes of Israel are "compacted together" by joining in common worship in the holy city. The subject of the verb is indefinite, "Fellowship" is made. Perhaps here (as in cxxi. 3-8) we have not a statement, but an aspiration, a picture of a condition for which the Psalmist prays: cf Ezek xxxvii. 19, where a union between Ephraim and his "fellows" (חבריו) on the one part and Judah on the other is contemplated.

4. For *a testimony*. I.e. that all the tribes are JEHOVAH'S tribes, and that they owe Him thanksgiving.

5. *For there are set*. Israel has in Jerusalem both a common seat of worship, and also a common seat of justice. The words do not assert that the house of David is still reigning: perhaps the plural, *thrones*, points the other way. But the city where David once dispensed justice is still the seat of justice for Israel.

6-9. LET US PRAY FOR THE PROSPERITY OF JERUSALEM

6. *Pray for the peace of Jerusalem*. Better as marg. *Salute ye Jerusalem*, or (more literally), *Ask concerning the peace of Jerusalem*.

They shall prosper that love thee. For these words Ewald, Duham, Bertholet and Gunkel read against MT, LXX, Peshitta, Targum, Jerome *iuxta Hebraeos*, "May thy tents prosper!" Jerusalem's tents! A wanton emendation.

7. *within thy walls*. Lit. *within thy rampart*. The Hebrew word for *rampart* is the same (in its consonants) as the word for *strength*: hence LXX, ἐν τῇ δυνάμει σου: Vulgate, *in virtute tua*.

within thy palaces. Cf xlvi. 3, note.

- 8 For my brethren and companions' sakes,
I will now ¹say, Peace be within thee.
9 For the sake of the house of the LORD our God
I will seek thy good.

¹ Or, *speaking peace concerning thee*

8. *For my brethren and companions' sakes.* The Psalmist thinks of the men of other tribes whom he now recognizes as his *brethren* and *companions*. A common love of Jerusalem has united them to him.

THE SECOND TRILOGY

(Psalms cxxiii-cxxv)

THE RISING TIDE OF FAITH

These three Psalms like cxx-cxxii form a trilogy. They trace a similar ascent from the Psalmist's misery in his present surroundings to joy in the Holy City. They show a rising tide of Faith. The first of them, cxxiii, offers a parallel to cxx: the Psalmist dwelling in Rabbah, i.e. among the Ammonites, is surrounded by hostile and contemptuous neighbours. So again the second in the trilogy, cxxiv, is parallel to cxxi: in both the great confession is made that JEHOVAH is the true help in trouble. Finally, in cxxv the name of the holy place, "mount Zion—Jerusalem," rings out as in cxxii. The triumphant note is heard that JEHOVAH is round about His people as the mountains are round about Jerusalem. Israel is safe. This second trilogy is appropriately concluded with the blessing, "Peace upon Israel."

PSALM CXXIII

A PEOPLE SCORNE

CHARACTER.

This is the first of the three Psalms (cxxiii-cxxv) which form the second trilogy in the collection of Songs of Ascents. It is an utterance of deep depression, but it is relieved by the steadfastness of the Psalmist in looking to JEHOVAH, and to JEHOVAH only, for help.

A Song of Ascents.

CXXIII. 1 Unto thee do I lift up mine eyes,

O thou that sittest in the heavens.

2 Behold, as the eyes of servants *look* unto the hand of their
master,

As the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress;

CXXIII. 1. *Unto thee do I lift up mine eyes.* Cf cxxi. 1.

thou that sittest. Not as P-B, *thou that dwellest.* The Psalmist appeals to JEHOVAH as to one who sits on the judgment seat.

So our eyes *look* unto the LORD our God,
Until he have mercy upon us.

3 Have mercy upon us, O LORD, have mercy upon us:

For we are exceedingly filled with contempt.

4 Our soul is exceedingly filled

With the scorning of those that are at ease,

And with the contempt of the proud.

2. *Until he have mercy.* A patient waiting: cf xl. 1, "I waited patiently for JEHOVAH."

3. *Have mercy upon us.* Cf cii. 13 b, "It is time to *have pity* (same Hebrew verb) upon her (Jerusalem)."

filled (or, *satiated*) *with contempt.* Neh iv. 2-4. The wording, *we are exceedingly filled*, is tautological in the Hebrew as in the English; the Hebrew word *rab* rendered here "exceedingly" is perhaps an error for *Rabbath*, "at Rabbah." See note on the following verse.

4. *Our soul is exceedingly filled* etc. Rather, *At Rabbah* (Heb. *Rabbath*) *our soul is filled with the scorning of those that are at ease.* *Rabbath* should be taken as a proper name as in cxx. 6. The last clause is perhaps to be rendered as a wish: *Let contempt be the portion of the proud!* LXX,

ἡ ἐξουδένωσις τοῖς ὑπερηφάνοις.

PSALM CXXIV

JEHOVAH THE ONLY HELP IN TROUBLE

CONTENTS.

1, 2. These verses begin each with the same tense cry (two words only in the Hebrew), "But for JEHOVAH...But for JEHOVAH." They express Faith triumphant.

3-5. These three verses begin each with the same word forced from the Psalmist by the sting of memory—"Then...Then...Then." The Psalmist looks back to a scene too well remembered; he sees himself with his people suddenly assaulted, and powerless to resist the rage of the enemy, helpless against the oncoming flood.

6-8. But when all seemed lost, JEHOVAH'S deliverance came. Blessed be JEHOVAH. The Creator is the Saviour too.

A Song of Ascents; of David.

CXXIV. 1 If it had not been the LORD who was on our side,
Let Israel now say;

1, 2. JEHOVAH THE ONLY DELIVERER

CXXIV. 1. *on our side* (lit. *for us*). So cxviii. 6, "on my side" (lit. *for me*).

- 2 If it had not been the LORD who was on our side,
When men rose up against us :
- 3 Then they had swallowed us up alive,
When their wrath was kindled against us :
- 4 Then the waters had overwhelmed us,
The stream had gone over our soul :
- 5 Then the proud waters had gone over our soul.
- 6 Blessed be the LORD,
Who hath not given us as a prey to their teeth.
- 7 Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers :
The snare is broken, and we are escaped.
- 8 Our help is in the name of the LORD,
Who made heaven and earth.

2. *men* (Heb. *ādām*). I.e. men as contrasted with God: xlix. 12, cxv. 4, cxlvi. 3; Isa xxxi. 3.

3-5. THE PERIL

3. *they had swallowed us up alive*. I.e. by a sudden death: Pro i. 12.
4. *the waters had overwhelmed us*. *Waters*, i.e. an invading enemy: xviii. 4, 16, 17; Isa viii. 6, 7.
over our soul. Cf lxix. 1.
5. *the proud* (Heb. *zēdōnīm*) *waters*. The cognate Hebrew word (*zēdīm*) is used in xix. 13; see note: lxxxvi. 14, note. The Genevan version (1560 A.D.) has, *the swelling waters*.

6-8. BLESSED BE JEHOVAH FOR HIS HELP

6. *Blessed be JEHOVAH*. The classic expression of thanks: lxvi. 20; Job i. 21. "Graces" over food or wine in the Authorized (Jewish) Prayer Book begin with the form, "Blessed art thou, O JEHOVAH."
a prey to their teeth. The same metaphor in vii. 2 (the enemy as a wild beast).
7. *the snare of the fowlers*. So xci. 3; cf cxli. 9, 10.
8. *Our help*. So cxxi. 2.
Who made heaven and earth. See cxxi. 2, note. This description of JEHOVAH is not otiose. The Psalmist explains his faith. JEHOVAH is indeed strong to deliver, for He is the maker of all things.

PSALM CXXV

JEHOVAH AN ABIDING DEFENCE FOR HIS PEOPLE

In Ps cxxv the faith in JEHOVAH expressed in cxiv reappears, but in calmer mood. The Psalmist views the critical events referred to in cxiv at a greater distance. Though foes are still in sight ("such as turn aside unto their crooked ways," v. 5) he speaks in general of JEHOVAH's abiding protection of Israel, and not of some special deliverance.

A Song of Ascents.

CXXV. 1 They that trust in the LORD

Are as mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abideth for ever.

2 As the mountains are round about Jerusalem,
So the LORD is round about his people,
From this time forth and for evermore.

3 For the sceptre of wickedness shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous;
That the righteous put not forth their hands unto iniquity.

CXXV. 1. *which cannot be moved.* Cf xlv. 5 (spoken of the "city of God").

2. *the mountains are round about Jerusalem.* It is not to be supposed that Jerusalem appears to the spectator as a city shut in by mountains. But the Mount of Olives with its summits stands like a broad shield as though to protect the city on the east from the foe.

3. *the sceptre of wickedness.* Or (as P-B), *the rod of the ungodly.* The reference is to some hostile power which is on the march. Fear says that the threatening host will descend on Judaea, perhaps will enter Jerusalem. But the Psalmist in the spirit of Isaiah or one of the old prophets declares that this "sceptre," this war-club of wickedness, shall not, when it is lifted up, descend on Judaea to harm her. He has faith that JEHOVAH will avert the blow. Cf Isa xiv. 5.

But if it did fall, what would be the result? The particular fear expressed by the Psalmist should be noted. He does not dread the destruction of Jerusalem, nor a massacre of the inhabitants. His fear is that if the enemy prevail, the righteous may *put forth their hands unto iniquity*. There were two different ways in which this result might come about. If it were a purely heathen invasion, the people might behave as they did on the occasion described in Isa xxii. 1-14. They might lose all faith in JEHOVAH. They might say, *To-morrow we die*, and give themselves up to vicious excesses. Or if the invasion be such as that described in 1 Macc vii. 10-17, if it be the armed inroad of the double-minded faction (cxix. 113, note), the fear is that the steadfast ones ("the righteous") in the land might turn to iniquity (i.e. lose their perfect loyalty to JEHOVAH).

- 4 Do good, O LORD, unto those that be good,
And to them that are upright in their hearts.
- 5 But as for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways,
The LORD shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity.
Peace be upon Israel.

THE THIRD TRILOGY (Psalms cxxvi-cxxviii)

RETURN AND RESTORATION

These three Psalms deal with three subjects, the Return from the Babylonian Captivity (cxxvi), the Rebuilding (cxxvii), and the Re-peopling (cxxviii) of Jerusalem.

The first member of this trilogy (cxxvi) describes the joy which arose at the prospect of return from the Babylonian Captivity. It is to be noted that it is a restricted return of which the Psalmist speaks. There was (History shows us) only a slender trickle back to Judaea of the large captive population which dwelt by the Euphrates. The Psalmist prays that **ГЕHOBAH** would turn this trickle into a mighty stream (v. 4).

The second member of the trilogy, cxxvii, contemplates the exiles dwelling indeed again in their own land, but faced with difficult tasks of reconstruction. The Temple ("the house") must be rebuilt, and to some extent, the city round it.

Further the city must be well guarded against the irruption of jealous neighbours, eager to destroy all that had been rebuilt. Finally, hardest task of all, a population must be brought up to fill the waste places and to guard what Israel was beginning to recover.

The final Psalm of the trilogy, cxxviii, returns to the problem of population. The Psalmist has his contribution to make, "Only let Israel fear **ГЕHOBAH**, and **ГЕHOBAH** will increase Israel more and more." The third trilogy concludes (appropriately) like the second with the benediction, "Peace be upon Israel."

PSALM CXXVI

THE CAPTIVITY "TURNED"

The Hebrew phrase, *turn again the captivity of*, is capable of more than one reference. In almost every war of ancient times defeat was followed by the captivity of a number of the defeated—men, women and children. The victor took them away to re-people some district which he had conquered and now found wasted through war. This was especially the Assyrian practice under such monarchs as Tiglath-pileser III (2 K xv. 29), Sargon (2 K xvii. 23, 24), Esarhaddon (Ezra iv. 2), and Assurbanipal (Osnappar, Ezra iv. 9, 10).

The practice was continued by Babylonian and later kings. Accordingly, captivities were unhappily common in Western Asia for many centuries, and the word Captivity occurring in a Psalm may possibly refer to a calamity either earlier or later than the well-known Babylonian Captivity.

But it may be said that the great joy express in cxxvi would suit the great event anticipated in Isa xl. 1-11, and it is probable that Ps cxxvi commemorates one of the more important stages in the "Return" from Babylon. This view is supported by a consideration of *v.* 4, where the Psalmist prays for Return, though he has already greeted a Return as a present fact. But the Return was by stages, and it is only natural that one who had knowledge of an early stage should pray that another and fuller stage should follow. But it is not natural to suppose that he would take pains to explain to a modern reader exactly what he was doing.

Gunkel has a different explanation of the apparent discrepancy between *vv.* 1 and 4. He thinks that the phrase, *turn again the captivity*, is used in an eschatological sense. In *v.* 1 the Psalmist sees in a vision the *turning again of Judah's captivity*, i.e. the Return of Israel's Golden Age: in *vv.* 4-6 he prays that the vision may be accomplished.

A Song of Ascents.

CXXVI. 1 When the LORD¹ turned again the captivity of Zion,

We were like unto them that dream.

2 Then was our mouth filled with laughter,

And our tongue with singing :

Then said they among the nations,

The LORD hath done great things for them.

3 The LORD hath done great things for us ;

Whereof we are glad.

4 Turn again our captivity, O LORD,

¹ Or, brought back those that returned to Zion

CXXVI. 1. *When...Zion.* Better (cf margin), *When JEHOVAH came back with those that returned to Zion.* The prophets sometimes represent JEHOVAH as coming back with the exiles, not as bringing them back: Isa xl. 3, 9-11, lii. 11, 12. 'The Temple vessels which the returning exiles brought would be a sign that JEHOVAH was among them: see xiv. 7, note, lxxxv. 1, note.

We were. Rather, *We became.*

2. *with singing.* Rather, *with joyful shouting:* so in *v.* 6, instead of *with joy.*

4. *Turn...our captivity.* The Psalmist has confessed already that JEHOVAH has turned the captivity of Zion, but much remains to be done before her inhabitants can live in the safety and happiness which they desire. Cf xl, where the Psalmist acknowledges deliverance in *vv.* 1-3 and prays afresh for deliverance in *vv.* 13-17.

As the streams in the South.

5 They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.

6 Though he goeth on his way weeping, ¹bearing forth the seed ;
He shall come again with joy, bringing his sheaves *with him*.

¹ Or, *bearing the measure of seed*

the streams (Heb. *āphikīm*) *in the South* (Heb. *the Negeb*). *Streams* should rather be *channels, watercourses*. The *Negeb* is a name for the south of Judah, a district of uncertain boundaries. It may be described roughly as the land between Beersheba on the north and Kadesh on the south. It merges into the wilderness of Sinai. Of this district, C. L. Woolley writes, "Only in one place in all this country is there a stream of real running water that can serve for irrigation—in the little valley of Ain el Guderat... Everywhere the beautiful feathery tamarisk (is) in abundance along each dried-up watercourse... In winter there is much rain." (*P.E.F. Annual, 1914, The Wilderness of Zin*, page 17.)

With the help of this description we can catch the Psalmist's simile. He likens his people to a forlorn land of dry watercourses. But the heavy rains of winter followed by the lighter rains of spring turn for a space these dry watercourses into green valleys of corn and spreading trees. "May JEHOVAH so refresh and revivify His people!"

6. *Though* etc. The couplet can hardly be rendered justly in English: a rendering a little closer to the original is,

He goeth weeping as he goeth—he that beareth the trail of seed:

He cometh, coming in with joyful shouting—he that beareth his sheaves.

The emphasis in each half-verse is on the subject of the verb, on the sower and on the harvestman.

Trail of seed (Heb.) is a picturesque phrase: the sower leaves a trail of seed behind him.

PSALM CXXVII

SLEEP FOR THE BELOVED

MEANING AND OCCASION.

This Psalm opens with two proverbial sayings which are closely linked together. House-building is in vain unless JEHOVAH builds with the builders. City-guarding is in vain unless JEHOVAH keeps guard. The words are quite general in their outlook, like Rudyard Kipling's lines which are based on them,

All valiant dust that builds on dust,

And guarding, calls not Thee to guard.

We cannot assert that sayings so general must refer to the building of the Second Temple (520-516 B.C.) by Zerubbabel. Further if the *building* and the *watching* of v. 1 glance at Nehemiah's combined building and guarding of the

wall of Jerusalem (Neh iv. 16-23), yet it must be noted that the Psalmist's main thought is of building of a far different kind. Frequently in the Old Testament *house* means "household" or "family," and to *build* means to "make a family." So in Gen xxx. 3 Rachel's words (see margin), *I may be builded*, are explained in the text by the paraphrase, *I may obtain children*. So again JEHOVAH's promise to David, "I will build thee an house," means "I will make thee the founder of a family" (2 Sam vii. 27).

So we reach the main teaching of the Psalm in *vv.* 3-5. It is good no doubt to build houses, and good to man the city wall; and both these things are being done under the Psalmist's eyes; but the pressing need is to build up the family and to guard the little ones from the many dangers which beset young life; and this JEHOVAH alone can do.

This Psalm, though not so entitled, is a *Maschil*, a song meant to convey a lesson in Wisdom to the hearers. The lesson is that JEHOVAH does all: nothing prospers except by His grace. He is Builder; He is Watchman; He is the Giver of sleep and of rest from labour; above all children are His gift.

The connexion throughout is unimpeachable, and the suggestion (Duhm, Gunkel) that *vv.* 3-5 introduce an alien thought, and form no part of the original Psalm, is to be rejected.

A Song of Ascents; of Solomon.

CXXVII. 1 Except the LORD build the house,

They labour in vain that build it:

Except the LORD keep the city,

The watchman waketh but in vain.

2 It is vain for you that ye rise up early, and so late take rest,
And eat the bread of toil:

For so he giveth unto his beloved ¹sleep.

3 Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD:

And the fruit of the womb is *his* reward.

¹ Or, *in sleep*

CXXVII. 1. *the house*. A term often used of the Temple: 1 K vi. 1, 2, *al.*; but see Introduction.

keep the city. Cf cxxv. 2; Isa xxxviii. 6.

2. *For so he giveth*. Rather, *Well doth he appoint*: cf lxiii. 2, 4, note. God's good gift of sleep is not to be abridged; let men cease to be anxious for the morrow: cf Matt vi. 31, 32. It is strange that the literal rendering, *he giveth* (or *appointeth*) *sleep*, has failed to satisfy many commentators. Some render, *He giveth* (bread or enough) *in sleep*, i.e. while men rest from labour.

3. *Lo, children etc.* The Psalmist proceeds to answer an unspoken objection, Of what use are houses and city walls, if the nation dies for lack of children? For *heritage* read *a portion assigned* by JEHOVAH.

In the second clause Israel as JEHOVAH's servant is promised *the fruit of the womb* as his *hire*, i.e. as his wage.

- 4 As arrows in the hand of a mighty man,
So are the children of youth.
- 5 Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them:
They shall not be ashamed,
When they speak with their enemies in the gate.

4. *the children of youth.* I.e. children begotten while the father is still young. P-B ("young children") is a mistake. The "children of youth" are a formidable aid to the *mighty man* their father.

5. *They shall not be ashamed.* I.e. They shall not be put to shame. Disputes between families were brought before the elders of the city as they sat in the gate, i.e. in the open space which was usually found beside the city gate: cf lxix. 12; Ruth iv. 1 ff.; Job xxix. 7, 8. The ordinary street of a city was too narrow for an assembly to gather in. The man who appeared before the judges attended by a body of stalwart sons would secure an attentive hearing, perhaps a verdict, for his case.

PSALM CXXVIII

JEHOVAH'S GIFT OF CHILDREN

This, the last Psalm of the trilogy, takes up and continues the subject of Ps cxxvii. If children are the gift of JEHOVAH (cxxvii. 3), how are they to be obtained for Jerusalem in her need? The Psalmist answers that everyone that feareth JEHOVAH shall be rewarded with children; they shall be like olive branches round about his table. Similarly Zechariah has a glad vision of the streets of Jerusalem "full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof" (Zech viii. 5). Here the Psalmist means that the city shall be populous, and so prosperous.

A Song of Ascents.

- CXXVIII.** 1 Blessed is every one that feareth the LORD,
That walketh in his ways.
- 2 For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands:
Happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee.

CXXVIII. 1. *Blessed is every one that feareth JEHOVAH.* Cf the less emphatic form in cxii. 1.

2. *For thou shalt eat etc.* Rather, *The labour of thy hands thou shalt surely* (Heb. *kî*) *eat.* No enemy shall carry off thy harvests: see Isa lxix. 8, 9.

Happy etc. P-B makes a distinction of tenses here: "O well is thee, and happy shalt thou be." The Targum explains the double blessing as follows: "Happy art thou *in this world*, and it shall be well with thee

3 Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine, in the innermost parts of thine house:

Thy children like olive plants, round about thy table.

4 Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed
That feareth the LORD.

5 The LORD ¹shall bless thee out of Zion:

And ²thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life.

6 Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children.

³Peace be upon Israel.

¹ Or, *bless thee*

² Or, *see thou*

³ Or, *And peace upon Israel*

in the world to come." This interpretation is found in other Jewish authorities also.

3. *in the innermost parts of thine house.* The vine grows on the inner walls of the courtyard of the house; so the wife's energies are exerted within the enclosure of the house.

olive plants. Cf cxliv. 12; Hosea xiv. 6, "His beauty shall be as the olive tree."

5. *shall bless thee.* A promise, but in cxxxiv. 3 the same Hebrew words are translated as an invocation. Only in a comparatively few cases is it possible in Hebrew to distinguish between a future and an optative: the two forms are very often the same. Cf cxxi. 3, margin, cxxii. 6 *b*, margin.

And thou shalt see. More lit. (as marg.), *And see thou.* But an imperative in O.T. sometimes conveys a promise: see Ps xxxvii, Introduction, § 1, A.

see the good of Jerusalem. The Hebrew words might be rendered, *look upon* (i.e. with satisfaction) *the prosperity of Jerusalem*, or *see thy desire in the prosperity of Jerusalem.* The construction is as liv. 7 *b*.

6. *see thy children's children.* Cf Gen i. 23.

Peace be upon Israel. So cxxv. 5 *b*.

THE FOURTH TRILOGY

(Psalms cxxix-cxxxi)

The fourth trilogy, consisting of Pss cxxix, cxxx and cxxxi, has a character of its own. It may be called a trilogy of hope and waiting. In all three Psalms national hopes and fears are expressed though the Psalmist uses the first person singular. He speaks for Israel.

In cxxix the Psalmist prays vehemently against national enemies, who have persisted in their hostility from of old time. His vehemence shows that these

foes are extremely formidable. But he stays himself in hope on the ground that in the past JEHOVAH has not allowed them to prevail. A patient hope is the characteristic of cxxx also. The Psalmist cries to JEHOVAH "out of the depths" (v. 1), being conscious of faults which may drag him down. But hope predominates. He himself insists on "waiting for JEHOVAH," and he cries aloud to his people, "O Israel, hope in JEHOVAH," for he knows that JEHOVAH is a God who forgives: *v.* 4, 7.

The last of the trilogy (cxxx) strikes the same note of waiting in hope. The Psalmist realizes his own weakness; he is but a "weaned child," though he is a leader among his people; he does not meddle with great matters, as with alliances or treaties with foreign nations; his hope for the safety of his people is in his God; he cries here (*v.* 3) as in the preceding Psalm, "O Israel, hope in JEHOVAH."

PSALM CXXIX

HISTORY A CORDIAL FOR FAILING COURAGE

This Psalm, like cxxx, is uttered "out of the depths." Zion is confronted by those who "hate" her. Her present troubles remind the Psalmist that Israel has been afflicted ever since she became a people; even "from (her) youth up." But the Psalmist remembers not only the calamities of the Past, but also the wonderful deliverances granted by the God of Israel. So confronting the present enemy, he sums up hopefully his experiences in the words: "They have not prevailed against me" (*v.* 2).

A Song of Ascents.

- CXXIX.** 1 ¹Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth up,
 Let Israel now say;
 2 ¹Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth up:
 Yet they have not prevailed against me.
 3 The plowers plowed upon my back;
 They made long their furrows.

¹ Or, *Much*

CXXIX. 1. *Many a time* (LXX, πλεονάκις, Vulgate, *saepe*). Better, *In Rabbath*, i.e. east of Jordan, in the Ammonites' country: cf cxx. 6, note, cxxii. 4, note.

2. *afflicted me from my youth.* Cf Deut xxvi. 5-7.

Yet they have not prevailed against me. A sentiment natural in the mouth of one of those who took part in the return from Babylon and the rebuilding of Jerusalem.

3. *plowed upon my back.* A figure for oppression. Similarly bold metaphors are found in Isa iii. 15, "Crush my people and grind the face (the persons) of the poor."

- 4 The LORD is righteous:
 He hath cut asunder the cords of the wicked.
- 5 Let them be ashamed and turned backward,
 All they that hate Zion.
- 6 Let them be as the grass upon the housetops,
 Which withereth afore it 'groweth up:
- 7 Wherewith the reaper filleth not his hand,
 Nor he that bindeth sheaves his bosom.
- 8 Neither do they which go by say,
 The blessing of the LORD be upon you;
 We bless you in the name of the LORD.

¹ Or, be *plucked up*

4. *cut asunder the cords.* Cf xxv. 15.

5. *Let them be ashamed.* I.e. Let them be disappointed of their aim: cf xxxv. 4.

6. *as the grass upon the housetops.* So Isa xxxvii. 27. Not *grass*, but *herbs* or *vegetables*: cf v. 7.

8. *The blessing of JEHOVAH.* Cf Ruth ii. 4 for salutations at harvest tide.

PSALM CXXX

OUT OF THE DEPTHS

The situation of the Psalmist is one of great misery: "Out of the depths have I cried." Implicitly, but not expressly, he acknowledges that his situation is due to his "iniquities" (v. 3). But Ps cxxx is not like Ps li a frank and full confession of sin: it lays stress rather on the fact that all forgiveness rests with JEHOVAH; it is not to be obtained save from Him. The expression in v. 4 is even strangely emphatic: *With Thee* (alone) *is the* (only) *forgiveness*: so we may paraphrase the Hebrew. So again in v. 7 the Psalmist says, *With JEHOVAH is the* (pre-eminent) *lovingkindness*, *And with him is plenteous redemption*.

Ps cxxx is reckoned among the seven Penitential Psalms, but it is rather a strong affirmation of JEHOVAH'S readiness to forgive; it is complementary to the Penitential collection, but strictly outside it. In spite of the personal tone, it is clear that the Psalmist thinks of national sin—perhaps of national apostasy—and of national redemption.

A Song of Ascents.

CXXX. 1 Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O LORD.

CXXX. 1. *Out of the depths.* Cf lxix. 2, 14. The Psalmist speaks as one in danger of perishing in deep waters. In Palestine the greatest risk of this kind arises from winter rains and the sudden flooding of the usually dry watercourses: cf cxxvi. 4, note.

- 2 Lord, hear my voice:
 Let thine ears be attentive
 To the voice of my supplications.
- 3 If thou, ¹LORD, shouldst mark iniquities,
 O Lord, who shall stand?
- 4 But there is forgiveness with thee,
 That thou mayest be feared.
- 5 I wait for the LORD, my soul doth wait,
 And in his word do I hope.
- 6 My soul *looketh* for the Lord,
 More than watchmen *look* for the morning;
Yea, more than watchmen for the morning.
- 7 O Israel, hope in the LORD;
 For with the LORD there is mercy,
 And with him is plenteous redemption.

¹ Heb. *Jah*.

2. *attentive*. Cf 2 Chr vi. 40 (same Hebrew word: "attent," EV).

3. *If thou...shouldst mark iniquities*. So (paraphrastically) P-B, *If thou wilt be extreme to mark what is done amiss*. The Hebrew verb, *shāmar*, "mark" or "observe" or "pay regard to" (as in xxxi. 6), has also the different sense of "keep, store up." More probably this is the meaning here, *If thou shouldst keep in store my iniquities* (or *the punishments for mine iniquities*) with a view to inflicting punishment at a later time.

who shall stand? Cf lxxvi. 7 (see note), "Who may stand in thy sight when once thou art angry?"

4. *there is forgiveness* etc. **JEHOVAH** keeps in store His own forgiveness, but He does not (cf v. 3) store up the iniquities of men:

Why, all the souls that were, were forfeit once;
 And He that might the vantage best have took,
 Found out the remedy.

Measure for Measure, Act ii, Scene ii.

That thou mayest be feared. Or, *That thou mayest be revered*. A cognate form is *nōrā*, an epithet applied to **JEHOVAH** in xlvi. 2, lxxviii. 35, lxxvi. 7 in the sense of "one to be feared (or revered)."

5. *in his word*. Or, *in his promise*.

7. *mercy* (Heb. *hesed*). Rather, *lovingkindness*, which is more than *mercy*.

And with him. Another allusion (cf v. 4) to the stored up treasures of **JEHOVAH**.

plenteous redemption. The Heb. *pādūth*, "redemption" or "ransom,"

8 And he shall redeem Israel
From all his iniquities.

implies the paying of a fine or sometimes of blood-money (*wergild*) to set free an accused person. The Psalmist says in effect that JEHOVAH is lavish in providing ransom. Cf xxvi. 11; cxix. 134.

8. *he shall redeem.* In the Hebrew the stress is on the pronoun: JEHOVAH Himself will provide the fine or ransom which is due indeed to Himself. The emphasis falls as in *Measure for Measure*, Act ii, Scene ii, quoted above.

PSALM CXXXI

HUMILITY COMMENDS THE HUMBLE TO GOD

This short Psalm consists of two parts. In *vs.* 1, 2 Israel in post-exilic, perhaps early post-exilic time, with a full sense of his weakness throws himself on God in meek submission, making no definite petition and certainly without demanding any restoration of the glories of earlier time. In *v.* 3 the Psalmist replies, approving and welcoming this submissive attitude and encouraging his people to hope in God. This Psalm in tone resembles Ps cxxx closely.

A Song of Ascents; of David.

CXXXI. 1 LORD, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty;
Neither do I ¹exercise myself in great matters,
Or in things too wonderful for me.
2 Surely I have stilled and quieted my soul;
Like a weaned child with his mother,
My soul is with me like a weaned child.
3 O Israel, hope in the LORD
From this time forth and for evermore.

¹ Heb. *walk*.

CXXXI. 1. *my heart...mine eyes.* Cf xxii. 26, xxxvii. 11, "The meek shall inherit the land." Pro xxi. 4, "An high look, and a proud heart...is sin."

2. *I have stilled and quieted my soul* (Heb. *nephesh*). The soul is the seat of desire: so in xxxv. 25 the Heb. *naphshēnū* (lit. "our soul" or "our desire") is freely but aptly rendered by the exclamation, "So would we have it."

My soul is with me. Or, *within me*, as xlii. 5. The Psalmist distinguishes here between himself and the *nephesh*, the seat of his passions and desires.

3. *O Israel, hope in JEHOVAH* etc. So cxxx. 7. Duhm suggests that the verse is simply a variant of cxxx. 7 *a* misplaced here. But its omission would leave cxxxI without an appropriate conclusion. See Introduction.

THE FIFTH TRILOGY
(Psalms cxxxii-cxxxiv)

MOUNT ZION AND HER BLESSINGS

The last three of the Songs of Ascents form a Temple trilogy. They deal with the Temple, with the Temple Mount, and with JEHOVAH'S blessing, which radiates thence. Ps cxxxii tells of David's labours in choosing and securing Mount Zion as the one suitable site for the Temple. Ps cxxxiii describes the abundance of blessing which JEHOVAH showers down upon Mount Zion. Ps cxxxiv has for its theme: "Bless JEHOVAH, and receive His blessing."

PSALM CXXXII

A PRAYER FOR ZION AND THE HOUSE OF DAVID

§ 1. CONTENTS.

1-5. Let JEHOVAH remember the earnest work of David to find a home for the ark of JEHOVAH.

6-10. (The Psalmist puts himself back in thought to the days of David.) From Beth-lehem we journeyed to Kiriath-jearim and there we found the ark. Now we carry it up to Jerusalem to place it in the tent which David has pitched for it (2 Sam vi. 17). May JEHOVAH be pleased with that which we have done: may he bless priests and laymen ("saints") for the part they have taken: may he accept the person of our anointed leader!

11-18. A rehearsal of JEHOVAH'S promises of a continuance of His mercies to the descendants of David, and through them to Zion also.

§ 2. CHARACTER AND PURPOSE.

As a motto for this Psalm we might choose the words, "Pray for the prosperity of Jerusalem." The Psalm is a general intercession containing two chief petitions: *first*, that the priests may be clothed with righteousness (salvation); *secondly*, that Zion as the city of David and governed by a descendant of David (*vs.* 10, 11) may find sustenance and prosper.

A Song of Ascents.

CXXXII. 1 LORD, remember for David

All his affliction;

1-5. DAVID'S FORWARDNESS TO BUILD A HOUSE FOR JEHOVAH

CXXXII. 1. *All his affliction.* The reference is chiefly to David's labours for the erection of the Temple. See 1 Chr xxii. 14, "In my affliction I have prepared for the house of JEHOVAH...(such and such treasures and materials)."

- 2 How he sware unto the LORD,
 And vowed unto the Mighty One of Jacob:
 3 Surely I will not come into the ¹tabernacle of my house,
 Nor go up into ²my bed;
 4 I will not give sleep to mine eyes,
 Or slumber to mine eyelids;
 5 Until I find out a place for the LORD,
³A tabernacle for the Mighty One of Jacob.
 6 Lo, we heard of it in ⁴Ephrathah:
 We found it in the field of ⁵the wood.

¹ Heb. *tent*. ² Heb. *the couch of my bed*. ³ Heb. *Tabernacles*.

⁴ Or, *Ephraim*

⁵ Or, *Jaar* See 1 Chr. xiii. 5.

2. *How he sware*. No oath of David is recorded in the historical books, but his earnestness for the project is on record in 2 Sam vii. 2; 1 Chr xxviii. 2, 3.

vowed. Cf Gen xxviii. 20 (Jacob); Num xxi. 2; Jonah i. 16.

the Mighty One of Jacob. The word "mighty" when applied to God receives a special pointing in MT (*ābīr*: Gen xlix. 24; Isa i. 24), but it seems to be identical with a word *abbīr* which is applied to men and even to animals (bulls). This usage is one more indication that the early Semites thought of their gods in the first place as powerful. The ascription of *Holiness* in the moral sense to the deity came later in history. The phrase should be rendered, "the Mighty One, Jacob" or "the Mighty One, the Conqueror," *Jacob* being a Divine name here as in xxiv. 6, xlv. 4, xlvi. 7, 11.

3. *the tabernacle of my house*. Better, *my household tent*. The reference is to abstinence from the intercourse of marriage.

4. *Or (Nor) slumber to mine eyelids*. The additional clause in P-B, "Neither the temples of my head to take any rest," comes from LXX, καὶ ἀνάπαυσιν τοῖς κροτάφοις μου. It is not found in MT and it is to be regarded simply as a doublet of the preceding clause: for another instance of doublet see xxix. 1.

5. *a place* (Heb. *mākōm*). Rather, *a set place, an appointed place*: 1 K viii. 30; Isa xxvi. 21: it is almost equivalent in this context to *mikdash*, "a sanctuary."

A tabernacle (Heb. *Tabernacles*, plural). The plural is perhaps based on the fact that the second Temple included a number of chambers.

6-10. THE PSALMIST'S VISION: HOW DAVID BROUGHT IN THE ARK

6. *in Ephrathah*. Marg. *in Ephraim*. *Ephrath* (sic) is a place near Beth-el (Gen xxxv. 16); also a name of Beth-lehem (Mic v. 2); also (here apparently) the name of a district in which Kiriath-jearim was situated (1 Sam vii. 1, 2). See 2 Sam vi. 1-3.

in the field of the wood. In this expression in the Hebrew there is an allusion to the name Kiriath-jearim, "city of woods."

- 7 We will go into his tabernacles;
We will worship at his footstool.
- 8 Arise, O LORD, into thy resting place;
Thou, and the ark of thy strength.
- 9 Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness;
And let thy saints shout for joy.
- 10 For thy servant David's sake
Turn not away the face of thine anointed.
- 11 The LORD hath sworn unto David in truth;
He will not turn from it:
Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne.
- 12 If thy children will keep my covenant
And my testimony that I shall teach them,
Their children also shall sit upon thy throne for evermore.

7. *his footstool.* The Temple itself is the "footstool": cf 1 Chr xxviii. 2.

8. *the ark of thy strength.* Or, *thy strong ark.* Cf cx. 2, "the rod of thy strength," i.e. "thy strong rod." The ark is an instrument of war (Josh vi. 6, 7; 1 Sam iv. 3-8; 2 Sam xi. 11); hence the epithet *strong*. But the expression gave some trouble to translators. Targum has, *the ark in which is thy Law*: LXX, ἡ κιβωτὸς τοῦ ἀγιάσματος σου, "the ark of thy sanctuary." This is the only passage in the Psalter in which the ark is named, but see the reference to the Cherubim in lxxx. 1, xcix. 1.

9 (cf v. 16.) *Let thy priests... And let thy saints....* Targum, *Let thy priests be clothed with garments of righteousness, And let the Levites thy saints give praise over the sacrifices.* But more probably *saints* means Israel, the whole people: cf cxlv. 10.

10. *For... David's sake.* Cf v. 1: Targum gives, "For the righteousness of David in that he brought in the ark within doors." The *anointed* one is a descendant of David. *Turn not away* is equivalent to *Accept*, but the phrase, *Accept the face*, is often used in OT in a sinister sense, and so is avoided here.

11-18. JEHOVAH'S GRACIOUS PROMISES TO DAVID AND TO ZION REHEARSED

11. *JEHOVAH hath sworn etc.* Cf the similar passage in lxxxix. 19-29; and see 2 Sam vii. 12, 16.

thy throne. P-B, *thy seat.* The Heb. *kissē*, "throne," is rendered "seat" in P-B in twelve passages including xlv. 7 (6), "Thy seat, O God, endureth for ever." In four passages only in P-B is "throne" given; perhaps the word had not become "Market English" in 1539, though Wyclif uses "trone" in Matt v. 34. In all sixteen passages of the Psalms AV has "throne."

- 13 For the LORD hath chosen Zion ;
 He hath desired it for his habitation.
 14 This is my resting place for ever :
 Here will I dwell ; for I have desired it.
 15 I will ¹abundantly bless her provision :
 I will satisfy her poor with bread.
 16 Her priests also will I clothe with salvation :
 And her saints shall shout aloud for joy.
 17 There will I make ²the horn of David to bud :
 I have ³ordained a lamp for mine anointed.

¹ Or, *surely* ² Or, *a horn to spring forth unto David* ³ Or, *prepared*

13. *ЈЕHOVAH* hath chosen Zion. Cf lxxviii. 68 ; Deut xii. 5, 11, 14 ; 1 Chr xxi. 28-xxii. 1 ; 2 Chr vi. 6.

He hath desired it (better *her*). See xlv. 11, note. Jerusalem is spoken of as the bride both there and here.

15. *I will abundantly bless*. Better as marg. *I will surely bless*.

her provision. Cf cxlvii. 14. Jerusalem (situate on a stony mountain) was not easily fed : the problem of feeding her was earnestly faced by king Uzziah (2 Chr xxvi. 10). See G. Adam Smith, *Jerusalem*, vol. 1, p. 314 (corn), p. 317 f. (fish), p. 319 (salt). For *her provision* Vulgate reads *viduam eius* : LXX corruptly *χῆραν* for *θήραν*.

16 (cf v. 9). *will I clothe with salvation*. For the force of the metaphor "to clothe" in this connexion see Job xxix. 14, "I put on righteousness, and it clothed me," i.e. "I dealt righteously and persisted in righteousness" : Ps xxxv. 26, "Let them be clothed with shame," i.e. "Let shame cling to them" : Ezek vii. 27, "The prince shall be clothed with desolation," i.e. "he shall be overtaken by a desolation of spirit which he shall not be able to shake off." On the analogy of these passages the meaning of "I will clothe with salvation" is "I will save *and keep in safety*." *salvation* (Heb. *yésha'*). The word implies *deliverance* from danger, and subsequent *prosperity*.

shout aloud. The Hebrew word is used generally of rejoicing, and also specially of religious rejoicing : xc. 14, xcii. 4.

17. *the horn of David*. See lxxv. 10, note, lxxxix. 17, note ; also Ezek xxix. 21 ("I will cause an horn to bud forth unto the house of Israel").

I have ordained (marg. *prepared*) *a lamp*. 1 K xi. 36, "That David my servant may have a lamp always before me in Jerusalem." The burning lamp is a symbol of prosperous life : and the extinguished lamp of adversity : 2 Esd x. 1, 2, "When my son was entered into his wedding chamber, he fell down, and died. Then we all overthrew the lights" etc. Cf Ps xxvii. 1, note. A similar metaphor is used in the Neo-Babylonian text of a Prayer to Ishtar :

Speak the word, that at thy command
 My gloomy, smoking brazier may shine,
 My quenched torch be relighted.

18 His enemies will I clothe with shame :

But upon himself shall his crown flourish.

(R. W. Rogers, *Cuneiform Parallels*, p. 159; cf L. W. King, *Seven Tablets of Creation* (pp. 233, 235).)

for mine anointed. LXX (= Vulgate), τῷ Χριστῷ μου, but the word is to be translated literally, and not taken as a proper name.

18. *shall his crown flourish.* So Targum. But LXX (followed by Peshitta), τὸ ἀγιασμό μου, "My sanctification of him." *Flourish* is lit. *blossom out*.

PSALM CXXXIII

THE BLESSING OF REUNION

MEANING OF THE PSALM.

Zion is the true meeting place for the scattered brethren, the sons of Israel, to reassemble. How happy for these brethren to be together again at Zion, for there JEHOVAH'S blessing descends like oil in the comfort it brings, and like the dew of Hermon in its abundance.

A Song of Ascents; of David.

CXXXIII. 1 Behold, how good and how pleasant it is

For brethren to dwell together in unity!

2 It is like the precious oil upon the head,

That ran down upon the beard,

Even Aaron's beard;

That came down upon the ¹skirt of his garments;

3 Like the dew of Hermon,

That cometh down upon the mountains of Zion:

For there the LORD commanded the blessing,

Even life for evermore.

¹ Or, *collar*

CXXXIII. 1. *For brethren to dwell together.* The additional words *in unity* are not found in the Hebrew: they are due probably to Luther's version, "dass Brüder *einträchtig* bei einander wohnen." The thought of the Hebrew is simply "that brethren—once scattered in exile—should be brought together again." For *together* LXX gives ἐν τὸ αὐτό, the phrase used in Acts ii. 44, "All that believed were *together*, and had all things common." It means unity of place, and not necessarily of mind.

2. *the skirt.* Better as marg. *the collar.*

3. *Like etc.* Render, *Plenteous as the dew of Hermon is that which descendeth upon the mountains of Zion.* In a parched country dew is an apt emblem of the blessing of God: Gen xxvii. 28; Hosea xiv. 5,

"I will be as the dew unto Israel." The Psalmist acknowledges the fullness of blessing which Zion is receiving in his day.

The English versions have missed the obvious rendering. P-B and RV make the dew of Hermon descend upon Mount Zion—geographically a grotesque conception. Duhm cuts out the clause *That which descendeth upon the mountains of Zion* and leaves the adverb *there* to refer to Hermon and not to Zion—an emendation which spoils the sense.

PSALM CXXXIV

BY NIGHT BLESS YE JEHOVAH

This is a little song of action. The speaker approaches the Temple at night and calls on those whom he finds there to bless JEHOVAH. He speaks of them as those "Which by night stand in the house of JEHOVAH," or "Which remain by night" etc. The practice of the priests who kept watch in the Temple is described in Mishnah, *Tamid*, i, "They slept with the keys of the *Azārāh* (the "court") beside them: they changed the holy garments for others, before they slept" etc. On the other hand in Luke ii. 36-38 is recorded the custom of Anna the prophetess, "who departed not from the Temple, worshipping with fastings and supplications night and day." On this analogy we may conclude that other devout persons also were allowed in the Temple to offer prayer by night.

The form of the invitation, *Bless ye JEHOVAH*, suggests that a well-known set prayer is being asked for. The usual form of such a prayer in Judaism is, *Blessed be Thou, O JEHOVAH*, followed by some words referring to the special occasion, if any, for which the prayer is offered. No special occasion is clearly suggested in this Psalm.

But the speaker adds a qualifying clause. *Lift up your hands*, he says, *in holiness* (so margin, rightly). No doubt the original reference in the phrase is to ritual holiness, i.e. to hands ceremonially clean, but we need not so restrict the reference in a late Psalm like this, if we remember that in xxiv. 4 "clean hands" are associated with "a pure heart." Cf 1 Tim ii. 8, "I desire that the men pray in every place, lifting up *holy hands*, without wrath and disputing." The clean hands are symbolic of inward purity.

Finally in v. 3 the priests within the Temple make their answer to the speaker of vv. 1, 2. Whether we are to take this speaker as representing Israel, or whether he speaks as the Governor of Judaea or as a Temple officer is not clear. But in any case he receives from the priests a true priestly blessing, "JEHOVAH" (the sacred name is used) "bless thee out of Zion, even he that made heaven and earth." Cf Num vi. 27, "So shall they put my name upon the children of Israel; and I will bless them."

A Song of Ascents.

CXXXIV. 1 Behold, bless ye the LORD, all ye servants of the LORD,
Which by night stand in the house of the LORD.

- 2 Lift up your hands ¹to the sanctuary,
And bless ye the LORD.
3 The LORD bless thee out of Zion ;
Even he that made heaven and earth.

¹ Or, *in holiness*

PSALM CXXXV (cf cxv)

A *TE DEUM* ENDING IN A DISSUASIVE FROM IDOLATRY

§ 1. CONTENTS.

- 1-3. The summons to praise JEHOVAH.
4. JEHOVAH'S favour to Israel.
5-7. The greatness of JEHOVAH in Nature.
8-12. His greatness in History.
13, 14. An expectation of a future vindication of Israel.
15-18. The powerlessness of the idols of the heathen.
19-21. The summons to bless "JEHOVAH as the God who dwells in Jerusalem."

§ 2. CHARACTER AND PURPOSE.

This Psalm may be described as an anthem compiled from many sources. The opening is almost verbally the same as that of cxiii. There are echoes from the Pentateuch (*v.* 4; cf Deut vii. 6); from Jeremiah (*v.* 7*a*; cf Jer x. 13); from Job (*v.* 7*c*; cf Job xxxviii. 22); and from other Psalms (*vv.* 15-18; cf cxv. 4-8).

Though this Psalm is not entitled *A Song of Ascents*, it might well be so called. It was probably sung by a number of persons going up to Zion or even standing in the Temple courts (cf *v.* 2). Its familiar phrases made it suitable for community singing. But we need not suppose that it was written just for liturgical use. The Psalmist writes in the first place to express his own thoughts and desires: cf *v.* 5. Contrast the definitely liturgical form of the following Psalm, cxxxvi.

§ 3. METRE AND MEANING.

In *v.* 9 there is an interesting instance of the conflict which often arises between metrical theory and the essential force of a passage. Duhm with the help of some omissions reduces Psalm cxxxv to a system of five stanzas each of four short lines, each line having three accents or stresses. His first two stanzas consisting respectively of *vv.* 1, 2 and *vv.* 3, 4 are plausible enough. (He has however to omit *Praise ye the LORD* at the beginning of *v.* 1.) But *vv.* 8, 9 are intractable, for the second half of his stanza, consisting of *v.* 9, contains *three* lines, not *two*:

"He sent signs and wonders
Into the midst of thee, O Egypt,
Upon Pharaoh, and upon all his servants."

If the four-line stanza is accepted as original, one line of *v.* 9 must be condemned as an interpolation.

But an appeal lies to the general sense of the passage, and to the style of the author. This Psalm was turned no doubt to liturgical use, but for all that it has the personal touch. The author makes his energy felt through his terse phrases and short lines. In *v.* 9 he is defying an ancient enemy of his people and of his God. Egypt was the land of many gods and the land of magic, but the Psalmist reminds his hearers that JEHOVAH by His signs disorganized all her life. The magicians of Pharaoh were defeated, and driven to confess, "This is the finger of God" (Exod viii. 19; cf ix. 11). The Psalmist presses home the story of their defeat in the triumphant exclamation, *Into the midst of thee, O Egypt*. No magic spells could stay the finger of JEHOVAH.

The clause, *Into the midst of thee, O Egypt*, cannot be spared: it is both apposite and vigorous, unlike the thoughtless interpolation of a copyist.

But neither can the third clause, *Upon Pharaoh, and upon all his servants*, be removed without serious loss to the sense. Pharaoh and his officers, the magicians and others, were the real offenders, and upon them chiefly the punishment was sent. The climax is reached not in the second clause but in the third. Neither clause can be spared.

It is well therefore to remember St Jerome's caution that at times Hebrew rhythm breaks free from bondage to number of feet (Preface to *Job*). Of course it does. We must not think of a Psalmist as writing his "verses" at a desk, but as extemporizing on his harp, and making his words fit the music. His fingers repeat the notes which he has already struck, and he adds fresh words to accompany them, but without breaking the thread of his thought.

CXXXV. 1 ¹Praise ye the LORD.

Praise ye the name of the LORD;

Praise *him*, O ye servants of the LORD:

2 Ye that stand in the house of the LORD,

In the courts of the house of our God.

3 Praise ye the LORD; for the LORD is good:

Sing praises unto his name; for it is pleasant.

¹ Heb. *Hallelujah*.

1-3. SUMMONS TO PRAISE JEHOVAH

CXXXV. 1. *Praise ye* etc. Cf cxiii. 1.

2. *Ye that stand*. I.e. as servants waiting to do a Master's will. Cf Deut x. 8, "JEHOVAH separated the tribe of Levi...to stand before JEHOVAH to minister unto him": Ps cxxxiv. 1, "Ye that stand by night."

3. *JEHOVAH is good* (Heb. *tōb*). The adjective is used of JEHOVAH in xxv. 8, c. 5, cvi. 1, cvii. 1, cxxxv. 3, cxxxvi. 1. In all these passages P-B gives *gracious*, while AV, RV give *good*. The usual rendering in LXX is *χαριστός*, the adjective used in Luke vi. 35, "He (the Most High) is *kind* (AV=RV) toward the unthankful and evil."

- 4 For ¹the LORD hath chosen Jacob unto himself,
And Israel for his peculiar treasure.
- 5 For I know that the LORD is great,
 And that our Lord is above all gods.
- 6 Whatsoever the LORD pleased, that hath he done,
 In heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deeps.
- 7 He causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth;
 He maketh lightnings for the rain;
 He bringeth forth the wind out of his treasuries.
- 8 Who smote the firstborn of Egypt,
 Both of man and beast.

¹ Heb. *Jah*.

4. JEHOVAH'S FAVOUR TO ISRAEL

4. *For JEHOVAH hath chosen Jacob.* This verb is first used as a theological term denoting God's choice of Israel in Deuteronomy and in Deutero-Isaiah. See S. R. Driver on Deut vii. 6.

his peculiar treasure (Heb. *səgullāh*). The word comes from Exod xix. 5, whence it found its way also into Mal iii. 17, "And they shall be mine...even a peculiar treasure" (RV). The Latin word *peculiaris* is used of property which belongs particularly to one's self and is not held in common with others.

5-7. THE GREATNESS OF JEHOVAH IN NATURE

5. *JEHOVAH is great.* So xcv. 3.

6. *Whatsoever JEHOVAH pleased etc.* Cf cxv. 3.

7. *He causeth the vapours to ascend.* The Hebrew word (*nəš'īm*) means *ascending vapours*, not "clouds" (as P-B=LXX, Vulgate). The expression comes from Jer x. 13. The Psalmist may possibly be thinking of "The Dead Sea with its heavy mists" (*HGHL*, page 315). "Morning mists (in Palestine) are not uncommon...but they are soon dispersed" (*HGHL*, page 65).

He maketh lightnings for the rain. This is the literal rendering: but P-B is clearer in sense, *And sendeth forth lightnings with the rain.* The Psalmist admires the Divine power, which can thus produce *fire* and *water* in one act.

his treasuries. Cf Job xxxviii. 22 f., "The treasuries of the snow... the treasuries of the hail, Which I have reserved."

8-12. JEHOVAH'S GREATNESS IN HISTORY

8. *Who smote the firstborn.* Cf Exod xii. 29. There is a note of defiance here, JEHOVAH smote "the strength" of Egypt (cf lxxviii. 51). Egypt ruled Palestine in the third century B.C., and her influence was no doubt in favour of idolatry and the use of magic: cf *vv.* 15-18. She might still be reckoned an enemy of JEHOVAH.

- 9 He sent signs and wonders into the midst of thee, O Egypt,
Upon Pharaoh, and upon all his servants.
- 10 Who smote ¹many nations,
And slew mighty kings;
- 11 Sihon king of the Amorites,
And Og king of Bashan,
And all the kingdoms of Canaan:
- 12 And gave their land for an heritage,
An heritage unto Israel his people.
- 13 Thy name, O LORD, *endureth* for ever;
Thy memorial, O LORD, throughout all generations.
- 14 For the LORD shall judge his people,
And repent himself concerning his servants.
- 15 ²The idols of the nations are silver and gold,
The work of men's hands.
- 16 They have mouths, but they speak not;
Eyes have they, but they see not;
- 17 They have ears, but they hear not;
Neither is there any breath in their mouths.

¹ Or, *great*² See Ps. cxv. 4, &c.

9. *He sent signs and wonders.* I.e. He sent one (Moses) who performed wonders: cf cxi. 9, "He sent redemption" (i.e. a redeemer).

into the midst of thee, O Egypt. Duhm and Gunkel omit these words as against "the metre," but they are forcible and for the sense they cannot well be spared: cf Introduction, § 3.

11. *Sihon...Og.* Num xxi. 21-35; Deut ii. 26-iii. 13.

12. *gave...for an heritage* (Heb. *nahālāh*). A Deuteronomic phrase: Deut iv. 21, *al*.

13, 14. EXPECTATION OF A FUTURE VINDICATION OF ISRAEL

13. *Thy name...Thy memorial.* The two words are synonymous: for *memorial* see cii. 12.

14. *For JEHOVAH shall judge* (vindicate) *his people.* This verse is quoted from Deut xxxii. 36.

15-18 (see the parallel in cxv. 4-8). THE POWERLESSNESS OF THE IDOLS OF THE HEATHEN

15. *silver and gold.* Cf cxv. 4, note. *Vv. 15-17 a* are closely parallel to cxv. 4-6 *a*.

17. *Neither is there any breath in their mouths.* The parallel clause in cxv. 6 *b* is, "Noses have they, but they smell not." The author of cxxxv

- 18 They that make them shall be like unto them;
 Yea, every one that trusteth in them.
 19 O house of Israel, bless ye the LORD:
 O house of Aaron, bless ye the LORD:
 20 O house of Levi, bless ye the LORD:
 Ye that fear the LORD, bless ye the LORD.
 21 Blessed be the LORD out of Zion,
 Who dwelleth at Jerusalem.
¹Praise ye the LORD.

¹ Heb. *Hallelujah*.

breaks off the description here and makes no reference to the "hands," "feet" and "throat" of the idol. But the clause with which this Psalmist closes is the most telling of all. It is not a duplicate of 16 a, "They have mouths, but they speak not." The Psalmist is no longer referring to the mere power of speech. His final point of contrast between the idols and JEHOVAH is that they have no *rūah*, no breath (of life), no *spirit* in their mouths. The idols have no creative power, but of JEHOVAH it is said, that all the host of heaven was made "by the breath (*rūah*, "spirit") of his mouth" (xxxiii. 6 b), and to JEHOVAH the confession is made, "Thou sendest forth thy breath (*rūah*, "spirit"), and they (the inhabitants of the sea) are created, and thou renewest the face of the earth." The Psalmist ends his denunciation of the idols by declaring that they have no life-giving breath.

The emendation "Neither is there any power of *scent* (German, *Geruch*; Heb. *rēah*) in their nostrils (*bē'appēhem*)" is unwanted.

18. *They that make them shall be like unto them.* So in cxv. 8. A threatening of judgment. But LXX in both passages translates the clause as expressing a wish, Ὅμοιοι αὐτοῖς γένοιτο (*Let all that make them become like them*). This is a possible rendering, but AV, "They that make them are like unto them," is wrong.

19-21. A SUMMONS TO BLESS JEHOVAH

19, 20. *O house of Israel... O house of Aaron... O house of Levi... Ye that fear the LORD.* Here four categories: (1) the laity, Israel in general; (2) the priests; (3) the Levites; (4) the proselytes, are successively invited to bless JEHOVAH. After the repudiation of the idols follows homage to JEHOVAH the true God.

21. *Blessed be JEHOVAH out of Zion, Who dwelleth at Jerusalem.* I.e. "Let JEHOVAH be blessed by the inhabitants of Zion," for He has chosen Jerusalem as His dwellingplace on earth.

PSALM CXXXVI

A CANTICLE OF THE SECOND TEMPLE

§ 1. CONTENTS.

- 1-3. A quadruple summons to give thanks:
 4-9. (a) For JEHOVAH's work in creation;
 10-15. (b) For JEHOVAH's deliverance of Israel from Egypt;
 16-22. (c) For the gift of Canaan;
 23-26. (d) For His general lovingkindness.

§ 2. STRUCTURE.

The composer has studied cxxxv. 6-12, and has taken from the passage heads for thanksgiving. To each of these heads he has added the response,

For his mercy *endureth* for ever.

The matter thus arranged becomes suitable for antiphonal singing. Such singing is referred to more than once by the Chronicler: 2 Chr vii. 3, 6; Neh xii. 40.

§ 3. METRE AND TEXT.

Recent commentators (Duhm, Gunkel) correct the text of this Psalm on slight grounds. Thus, in v. 4, "To him who alone doeth great wonders," Duhm would omit "wonders" as making the line metrically too long. But the words are emphatic; they introduce a reference to the stupendous work of creation, and the repetition, "wondrous things, great things," is appropriate in this place. Again, in v. 9, "The moon and stars to rule by night," Duhm and Gunkel propose to omit the words, "and stars," on the ground that only sun and moon exercise rule according to Gen i. 16, but this is surely to strain the meaning of the Genesis passage. Some of the planets, e.g. Jupiter and Saturn, were regarded as very powerful influences in Old Testament times. Once more, in v. 15, "(He) overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea," Duhm wishes to omit "in the Red Sea" for the sake of the metre. He adds the suggestion that the words are derived from v. 13. But "in the Red Sea" is a great watchword with the Hebrews; it is in itself a cry of defiance against all potential oppressors of Israel; cvi. 9, 22; Deut xi. 4; Neh ix. 9; it underlines the statement, "He shook off Pharaoh and his host." Yet another gratuitous emendation is to read *gōyīm*, "nations," for *mēlāchīm*, "kings" in v. 17.

CXXXVI. 1 O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good:

For his mercy *endureth* for ever.

2 O give thanks unto the God of gods:

For his mercy *endureth* for ever.

3 O give thanks unto the Lord of lords:

For his mercy *endureth* for ever.

1-3. GIVE THANKS

CXXXVI. 1. *O give thanks* etc. An exact repetition of cvi. 1 b (Heb.); see note.

2, 3. *the God of gods...the Lord of lords.* These two titles are found

- 4 To him who alone doeth great wonders :
For his mercy *endureth* for ever.
- 5 To him that by understanding made the heavens :
For his mercy *endureth* for ever.
- 6 To him that spread forth the earth above the waters :
For his mercy *endureth* for ever.
- 7 To him that made great lights :
For his mercy *endureth* for ever :
- 8 The sun to rule by day :
For his mercy *endureth* for ever :
- 9 The moon and stars to rule by night :
For his mercy *endureth* for ever.
- 10 To him that smote Egypt in their firstborn :
For his mercy *endureth* for ever :
- 11 And brought out Israel from among them :
For his mercy *endureth* for ever :

in Deut x. 17, "JEHOVAH your God, he is God of gods, and Lord of lords, the great God, the mighty, and the terrible." The Hebrew phrase *Elohē hā-Elohim*, "the God of gods," should rather be rendered "the Very God": it is equivalent to the *El-Elohim*, "God, even God," of l. 1; it contains no direct suggestion of the real existence of "other gods." So also the phrase "the Lord of lords" means "Lord indeed"; it does not assert that the Lord has a court of lesser lords about Him.

4-9. THANKS FOR THE WORK OF CREATION

4. *To him who alone doeth great wonders.* Rather, *To him who doeth great wonders, the Only One* (Heb. *lēbaddō*). Cf li. 4, note.

5. *that by understanding* (Heb. *tēbūnah*) *made the heavens.* Cf Pro iii. 19, "JEHOVAH by wisdom founded the earth; By understanding he established the heavens." Both these passages show a tendency towards personifying Wisdom (or Understanding) as an agent by which God made the world. Cf Pro viii. 22, 27, 30 ("Wisdom" is the speaker); also John i. 1-4 (ὁ λόγος, the "Word" or "Reason").

6. *that spread forth the earth above the waters.* Cf xxiv. 2, "For he hath founded it upon the seas"; Exod xx. 4, "The water under the earth." The Hebrew verb ("spread forth") is cognate with the substantive "firmament" (marg. "expanse") of Gen i. 6. Heaven is one "expanse," and Earth another.

7. *that made great lights* (Heb. *'ōrim*). Gen i. 16, "And God made the two great lights" (or "luminaries"; Heb. *mē'ōroth*).

9. *The moon and stars.* The moon is masculine in Hebrew, and in Babylonian mythology Nannar is the moon-god (not goddess).

- 12 With a strong hand, and with a stretched out arm:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever.
- 13 To him which divided the Red Sea in sunder:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever:
- 14 And made Israel to pass through the midst of it:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever:
- 15 But ¹overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever.
- 16 To him which led his people through the wilderness:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever.
- 17 To him which smote great kings:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever:
- 18 And slew famous kings:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever:
- 19 Sihon king of the Amorites:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever:
- 20 And Og king of Bashan:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever:
- 21 And gave their land for an heritage:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever:
- 22 Even an heritage unto Israel his servant:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever.
- 23 Who remembered us in our low estate:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever:

¹ Heb. *shook off*.

10-15. THANKS FOR DELIVERANCE FROM EGYPT

12. *With a strong hand, and with a stretched out arm.* Deut iv. 34, *al.*
13. *divided...in sunder.* Not, *in two parts*, as P-B.
15. *overthrew.* Marg. *shook off*, an expression suggesting the *ease* of the action: cf cix. 23, "I am shaken off as a *locust*."

16-22. THANKS FOR THE GIFT OF CANAAN

18. *famous* (kings). Not, *mighty*, as P-B (= *κραταιούς*, LXX), but rather "majestic, glorious."
22. *Israel his servant.* For this title of the people see Isa xli. 8, xliv. 1, 2, xlix. 3.

23-26. THANKS FOR ALL JEHOVAH'S LOVINGKINDNESS

23. *in our low estate.* Eccl x. 6, "Folly is set in great dignity, and the rich sit *in low place*" (same Hebrew word).

24 And hath delivered us from our adversaries :

For his mercy *endureth* for ever.

25 He giveth food to all flesh :

For his mercy *endureth* for ever.

26 O give thanks unto the God of heaven :

For his mercy *endureth* for ever.

25. *food*. Lit. *bread*.

all flesh. I.e. either, "all living beings" (Gen vi. 17), or, "all mankind" (Gen vi. 12).

26. *the God of heaven*. A phrase used in later books: Ezra v. 12 (Aramaic); Neh i. 4, 5 (Heb.); Dan ii. 18 f.

P-B adds v. 27, "O give thanks unto the Lord of lords" etc., following Vulgate. It is only an echo of v. 3.

PSALM CXXXVII

A SOUL IN BITTERNESS

§ 1. CONTENTS.

1-3. The captives as they sat by the rivers of Babylon refused to sing the mirthful songs of Zion.

4-6. Their protest: How could they sing songs addressed to JEHOVAH in the land of another God? How could they forget Jerusalem and her sorrows?

7. A petition that JEHOVAH will remember against the Edomites the eagerness they showed for the destruction of Jerusalem.

8, 9. A beatitude pronounced on the man who shall execute vengeance and destroy the infant children of the "daughter of Babylon."

§ 2. THE OCCASION.

When this Psalm was written the conditions described in *vv.* 1-3 had ceased. The Jews were no longer sitting and weeping beside the waters (or the rivers) of Babylon. The past tense of the three English versions ("we sat down") is no doubt correct. Moreover the Psalmist himself is no longer in Babylon; he points to it as a place far off, "*There we sat down*." He has perhaps returned from exile to his own country. But the intensity of feeling shown in the Psalm forbids us to suppose that any long interval separates the Psalm from the situation which it describes. Perhaps the Psalmist is viewing the ruins of Jerusalem; perhaps he is still experiencing the hostility of the neighbouring Edomites, and his wrath is rekindled, not only against the Edomites, but also against "the daughter of Babylon," the actual destroyer of his city.

A generation or more ago it would have been said that Babylon had already suffered punishment, for she had been captured by "Cyrus the Persian," her rule had been brought to an end, and her captives set free. But now the inscription on the Cylinder of Cyrus shows that Cyrus entered Babylon without fighting, that he professed himself a worshipper of Marduk (Bel) the god of Babylon, and that (far from hurting the city) he conferred striking benefits upon

the inhabitants (Rogers, *Cuneiform Parallels*, pages 381-383). Thus when the first exiles returned, Babylon was still "unpunished." But in the early years of Darius Hystaspis (521-485 B.C.)—within the first nine years, perhaps—a terrible fate overtook Babylon. "A certain Babylonian named Nidintu-Bel lied unto the people saying, *I am Nebuchadrezzar, the son of Nabonidus*. . . He seized on the kingdom of Babylonia." The sequel is told with some fulness in Herod. III. 159: "But when Darius overcame the Babylonians (by taking their city) he destroyed this wall of theirs, and carried off all the gates. For before when Cyrus took Babylon he did neither of these things. And in addition Darius took the leading citizens to the number of 3000 and crucified them." Nöldeke thinks that Xerxes, not Darius, was the actor in this tragedy (*Encyclopaedia Brit.*, article PERSIA). If so, it did not happen before 485 B.C. It is very unlikely that vv. 8, 9 contain any allusion to it.

§ 3. THE TEXT: METRICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

The Masoretic text of vv. 1, 2 shows five clauses thus:

1. By the rivers of Babylon,
There we sat, yea, we wept,
When we remembered Zion.
2. Upon the willows in her midst
We hanged up our harps.

This text is established by the concurrence of the ancient versions, and by its poetic merits. Modern commentators however suggest emendation on "metrical" grounds. They propose accordingly to reduce the three clauses of v. 1 to two and to treat vv. 1, 2 as a stanza of four lines. Duhm forms a second such stanza out of v. 3 by excising two words of Hebrew ("Sing ye to us"). A third, fourth and fifth stanza can be formed out of vv. 4-7 without doing violence to the text, but the sixth and last "stanza," consisting of vv. 8, 9, again contains five lines, and again is subjected to excision of one line. In the case of vv. 1, 2 two distinct proposals have been made. The first is to omit the clause

"When we remembered Zion."

To do this however is *first* to lose the speaking contrast of names between *Babylon* at the beginning and *Zion* at the end of the verse, and *secondly* to sacrifice the telling juxtaposition of memory and weeping. Duhm's emended text is mutilated poetry.

The alternative emendation, that of Bickell (*apud* Duhm), is to contract the first two lines into one, thus:

"By the waters of Babylon...we wept."

With this emendation however the text suffers a threefold loss. The most important is that of the words *we sat down*. To *sit* is the attitude for mourners; so in Isa iii. 26, "She (Zion) being desolate shall sit upon the ground"; Ezek viii. 14, "There sat the women weeping for Tammuz"; cf Isa xlvi. 1; Lam ii. 10. On the well-known medal of Titus inscribed *Judaea capta* Judaea is represented as a woman sitting and weeping. Sitting and weeping are related in Hebrew thought.

Nor is the loss of the adverb, *there*, negligible. *There*, says the Psalmist, by

the riverside, where some would find rest and refreshment, *there* we sat down and wept. And lastly it is not well to cut down the words *yea, we wept* by the omission of *yea*. They are simple enough to be forcible as they stand. The exiles might have sat in silence, but feeling prevailed—and they wept. If sense is to be preferred to form as the criterion of the text, then Bickell's emendation must be rejected equally with Duhm's.

§ 4. THE MORAL STANDPOINT OF THE PSALMIST.

In Ps cxxxvii we are conscious of a moral atmosphere similar to that of the SONG OF DEBORAH, specially as in Jud v. 24–27 (The Blessing on Jael). In both cases the Singer is contemplating a ruthless enemy of Israel, and he becomes ruthless himself. But in cxxxvii the Psalmist's passion, though at white heat, is not blind. He has been brought up in the doctrine of *life for life, eye for eye* (Exod xxi. 23 f.); he knows of no other just retribution but this. True justice, Divine justice, must be (so the Psalmist held) on these lines: cf Ps lviii, Introduction.

The form of cxxxvii. 8 must be noted in its three clauses:

"O daughter of Babylon, that art to be destroyed;
Happy shall he be, that rewardeth thee
As thou hast served us."

The third line is literally rendered:

"With thy dealing which thou didst deal to us."

The Psalmist blesses the man who takes a just retribution (as he conceives it) from the foe. It is in order to make this "just retribution" complete that he adds the terrible beatitude contained in the last verse. The little ones of Jerusalem were dashed against the rock; may the infants of the daughter of Babylon meet the same fate!

It should be added that the Psalmist's imprecations cut across the nobler teaching of Jeremiah (xxix. 7):

"Seek the peace of the city whither *I have led you captive, and pray unto JEHOVAH for it; for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace.*"

CXXXVII. 1 By the rivers of Babylon,

There we sat down, yea, we wept,

When we remembered Zion.

2 Upon the willows in the midst thereof

We hanged up our harps.

1–3. MOURNING BY THE RIVERS OF BABYLON

CXXXVII. 1. *By the rivers of Babylon.* For the text of this verse see Introduction, § 3. The mention of waters and trees in *vv.* 1, 2 suggest a place of rest and refreshment, but for the captives it proved a place of lamentation. The *rivers* are the numerous canals fed by the Euphrates.

2. *Upon the willows.* LXX, ἐν ταῖς ἰρίαις. In each mention (Lev

- 3 For there they that led us captive required of us ¹songs,
 And ²they that wasted us *required of us* mirth, saying,
 Sing us one of the songs of Zion.
- 4 How shall we sing the LORD'S song
 In a strange land?
- 5 If I forget thee, O Jerusalem,
 Let my right hand forget *her cunning*.
- 6 Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth,
 If I remember thee not;
 If I prefer not Jerusalem
 Above my chief joy.
- 7 Remember, O LORD, against the children of Edom
 The day of Jerusalem ;

¹ Heb. *words of song*.² Or, *our tormentors*

xxiii. 40; Job xl. 22; Ps cxxxvii. 2; Isa xv. 7, xlv. 4) of this tree there is reference to its growing by watercourses; and there can be little doubt that either a willow or a poplar closely resembling a willow (such as *Populus euphratica*) is intended (*E.B.*). The *iría* is mentioned by Herodotus as supplying the ribs of the small boats used on the Euphrates (i. 194).

3. *songs*. Marg. *words of song*. The rendering of P-B, *a song, And melody*, suggests that the conquerors asked for music, but the Hebrew expression suggests rather that they wanted the *words* of one of Israel's Psalms. But since a Psalm was composed as an offering to JEHOVAH (xix. 14, lxix. 30, 31, civ. 34), the singer naturally felt that it would be a profanation to sing it for the pleasure of idolaters.

they that wasted us. The meaning of the expression is uncertain: perhaps, *they that laid us* (i.e. our city) *on heaps*.

4-6. THE PSALMIST WILL NOT FORGET JERUSALEM

4. *How shall we sing*. Some introductory formula is understood though not expressed as, "Then we made answer," *How shall we sing* etc.

In a strange land. I.e. in a land belonging to a strange god.

5. *Let my right hand forget* (her cunning, i.e. with the harp). There is no need to emend the text; the *aposiopesis* has more force than any of the suggested emendations.

6. *Above my chief joy*. Lit. *Over the head of my mirth*, i.e. *above my mirth*. The word *mirth* refers back to v. 3. Sorrow in Jerusalem is better than mirth in Babylon.

Who said, Rase it, rase it,
Even to the foundation thereof.

8 O daughter of Babylon, ¹that art to be destroyed;
Happy shall he be, that rewardeth thee
As thou hast served us.

9 Happy shall he be, that taketh and dasheth thy little ones
Against the rock.

¹ Or, *that art laid waste*

7. LET THE SIN OF EDOM BE REMEMBERED

7. *Rase it.* Cf Ezek xxvi. 4 (against Tyre), "I will also scrape her dust from her, and make her a bare rock."

to the foundation thereof. Lit. *to the foundation therein.* In Jerusalem in the Temple area the native rock (described here as "the foundation") thrusts itself through the soil and displays a broad platform. In this case the foundation may be described indifferently as "in" the city or under it or "of" it.

8, 9. HAPPY THE MAN WHO AVENGES JERUSALEM ON THE DAUGHTER OF BABYLON

8. *daughter of Babylon.* The phrase occurs in Isa xlvii. 1 (parallel to "daughter of the Chaldeans") in a passage announcing the punishment of Babylon. It is a metaphorical term: Babylon is a *mother*, the "daughter of Babylon" is her people: so "daughter of Tyre" in xlv. 12 means the people of Tyre.

that art to be destroyed. The Hebrew participle used here is thus rendered because participles in Hebrew have sometimes a future reference. Another possible rendering is, *that art worthy to be destroyed*: cf xviii. 3 and xlviii. 1 (*mēhullāl*, "highly to be praised"). The marg. *that art laid waste* (the most literal rendering of the Hebrew) agrees with *vastata* (Jerome), but the rest of the language of the Psalm gives no support to the suggestion that Babylon has already been destroyed. Targum and Peshitta give the active rendering "O Destroyer" (i.e. of Jerusalem), reading the Hebrew consonants with other vowels, *shādōdāh* instead of *shēdūdāh* (MT).

9. *thy little ones.* LXX, τὰ νήπιά σου. The same word (Heb. and Greek) as in viii. 2, "Out of the mouth of *babes*."

PSALM CXXXVIII HEART-FELT THANKS

§ 1. CONTENTS.

1-3. The Psalmist will give thanks to JEHOVAH "before the gods" in JEHOVAH'S OWN Temple, for JEHOVAH has shown Himself even better than His promise to the Psalmist.

4-6. The kings of the earth shall praise JEHOVAH, because He has pronounced His judgment and considered the cause of the lowly.

7, 8. The Psalmist's confidence in the continuance of JEHOVAH's mercy.

§ 2. OCCASION AND CHARACTER.

This Psalm is an individual's thanksgiving for a great mercy vouchsafed to him. It is not a merely liturgical composition intended for general use. The Psalmist was in danger from enemies (v. 7); he cried to JEHOVAH; deliverance came at once—"In the day that I called." Other Psalmists speak of patient waiting, but in this case there was no delay. The Psalmist was one of the lowly ones, but JEHOVAH imparted strength to him, and he was thus enabled to confront his foes.

The Psalm is the fresh utterance of one who has just undergone a great spiritual experience. He worships towards the Temple, as JEHOVAH's dwelling-place whence He gives ear to man's prayers and praises. The Psalmist has grasped one chief feature of JEHOVAH's "character," that He is transcendent over all and yet gives heed to earthly affairs and protects men His creatures.

The Psalm has God for its subject, and the Psalmist can speak calmly of his enemies. He leaves them to the judgment of the Divine power; it is enough for him that JEHOVAH "knows" these "haughty" ones "afar off."

A Psalm of David.

CXXXVIII. 1 I will give thee thanks with my whole heart:

Before the gods will I sing praises unto thee.

2 I will worship toward thy holy temple,

And give thanks unto thy name for thy lovingkindness and
for thy truth:

For thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.

1-3. JEHOVAH'S GREAT ACT

CXXXVIII. 1. *I will give thee thanks with my whole heart.*

Cf cxi. 1 b, "I will give thanks unto JEHOVAH with my whole heart."

Before the gods (Heb. *Elohîm*). At times apparently the Hebrew word *Elohim*, "God" or "gods," is used of lesser powers under God: see viii. 5, note. So LXX gives, *ἐναντίον ἀγγέλων* (= Vulgate, *in conspectu angelorum*): Targum, "before judges": Peshitta (correct text), "before kings." The Psalmist means that he will not be ashamed to acknowledge JEHOVAH's benefits before the highest authorities of his people: cf cxi. 1 c, a parallel passage. There is a suggestion of defiance in the word "before" (Heb. *neged*); it is so used in xxiii. 5, "in the presence of mine enemies"; cxix. 46, "before kings." The interpretation, "In defiance of the gods of the heathen," is less probable.

2. *toward thy holy temple.* Cf xxviii. 2; 1 K viii. 29, 30 (Solomon's prayer).

For thou hast magnified etc. "Thy word," i.e. "Thy promise"; cf Ephes. iii. 20. The Psalmist confesses that JEHOVAH has so performed His promise as to exceed all expectation.

- 3 In the day that I called thou answeredst me,
 Thou didst encourage me with strength in my soul.
 4 All the kings of the earth shall give thee thanks, O LORD,
 For they have heard the words of thy mouth.
 5 Yea, they shall sing of the ways of the LORD;
 For great is the glory of the LORD.
 6 For though the LORD be high, yet hath he respect unto the
 lowly:
 But the haughty he knoweth from afar.

3. *Thou didst encourage me.* The Hebrew verb might be translated, *Thou didst make me formidable* (תרהבני). The Psalmist who thinks of himself as one of the lowly (Heb. *shāphāl*, v. 6) thanks JEHOVAH, Who has made his enemies fear his new-found strength. The root רהב, *rahab*, suggests sometimes "strength," and sometimes the "pride" which arises from an opinion of one's own strength. So in xc. 10, said of mankind, "their pride," RV, but "their strength," P-B, AV. So again Isa xxx. 7, of the Egyptians, "They are but *arrogancy*," RV marg., but "strength" according to AV.

4-6. THE WORLD SHALL KNOW OF IT

4. *All the kings.* Cf cii. 15, "All the kings of the earth (shall fear) thy glory."

shall give thee thanks. Rather, *shall confess thee*; cf Dan iv. 34, 37, vi. 26.

the words of thy mouth. I.e. Thy promises to Thy people which have now been fulfilled.

5. *sing of the ways.* Not, "sing in the ways," as P-B, AV.

great is the glory of JEHOVAH. Cf cxxxv. 5, where the Psalmist says, "JEHOVAH is great." The term "the glory of JEHOVAH," used for the simple name JEHOVAH, is a periphrasis such as the later Jews used from a feeling of reverence. A similar term is "the name of JEHOVAH"; xx. 7; Pro xviii. 10, *q.v.*

6. *hath he respect unto the lowly.* "Respect" is used in the old sense: the phrase is equivalent to, "he hath considered the lowly." Cf cxiii. 5, 6. For "lowly" (Heb. *shāphāl*) see Isa lvii. 15, where the same Hebrew word is twice rendered "humble."

he knoweth from afar. To "know" a person is to acknowledge him with favour: Gen xviii. 19, RV. To know one "afar off" is to refuse to acknowledge him thus. The phrase is all the more significant for the reserve which belongs to it; cf Matt xxv. 12. Duhm points to the unusual form of the Hebrew verb, *yēyēda'* for *yēda'*, "he knoweth," and proposes to read *yigda'*, "he heweth down," appealing to Isa x. 33—a prosaic emendation and unwanted.

- 7 Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me;
 Thou shalt stretch forth thine hand against the wrath of mine
 enemies,
 And thy right hand shall save me.
- 8 The LORD will perfect that which concerneth me:
 Thy mercy, O LORD, *endureth* for ever;
 Forsake not the works of thine own hands.

7, 8. THE PSALMIST'S CONFIDENCE

7. *trouble*. Or, *affliction*, arising from the wrath of his enemies.
revive me. Or, *impart fresh life to me*. *Revive* in the modern sense
 is not a sufficient equivalent for the Hebrew. Cf lxxi. 20, "(Thou)
 shalt *quicken* (same Hebrew verb) us again."

8. *JEHOVAH will perfect that which concerneth me*. The same verb
 and almost the same phrase as in lvii. 2, "God that performeth all
 things for me"; see note there.

Forsake not. Or, *fail (me) not*: cf Deut iv. 31 (same Hebrew verb).
the works (better, *work*) *of thine own hands*. Cf cxix. 73, "thy hands
 have made me."

PSALM CXXXIX (Cf xxiii, xci. 10-18)

A JOURNEY PSALM: JEHOVAH'S PROVIDENCE OVER THE WANDERER

§ 1. CONTENTS.

1-6. JEHOVAH knows the ways and thoughts of the Psalmist: He overtakes
 him and surprises him when he is on a secret journey. OMNISCIENCE.

7-12. No journey, no change of night and day can remove the Psalmist from
 the presence of JEHOVAH. OMMIPRESENCE.

13-18. JEHOVAH'S providence in the making of man. FOREKNOWLEDGE.

19-22. Mine enemies are thine, and thine are mine, O JEHOVAH.

23, 24. The Psalmist appeals to JEHOVAH to test his innocency.

§ 2. CHARACTER AND PURPOSE.

This is a Psalm which stands by itself. It is deeply personal, the work of an
 individual speaking in his own name. It resembles one of the soliloquies of the
 prophet Jeremiah; the Psalmist speaks with God of his own cares and fears.
 Further the Psalm is monotheistic in the highest sense; the writer has no con-
 sciousness whatever of "other gods": he does not even repudiate them, as do
 other Psalmists.

He is alone with God (as a modern Christian might be), and he is filled with
 the consciousness of an all-embracing spiritual presence. He knows that *the*
spirit of the Lord hath filled the world (Wisdom i. 7); he asks, *Whither shall I*

go from thy spirit? So he speaks directly to JEHOVAH as to one close at hand, and makes the acknowledgment that JEHOVAH knows his thoughts and his words. He wonders at the facts, but he accepts them.

Early religious thought localized gods and limited the sphere within which each deity had unquestioned authority. To leave your own land was equivalent to leaving your own gods: Ruth i. 15, 16; 1 Sam xxvi. 19. The Psalmist in *vv.* 7-12 makes it clear that he on the contrary realizes the presence of JEHOVAH in every land. He speaks as a traveller, possibly as a fugitive: going by solitary and unknown ways he has been overtaken by his God. Distance has not separated him, nor has darkness hidden him from JEHOVAH.

In *vv.* 13-18 the Psalmist proceeds to give a reason for the great faith that is in him. "For," he says in *v.* 13, "thou didst create and acquire me." In patient length of days, in the nine months that "go to the shaping an infant ripe for his birth," JEHOVAH watched over the unborn Psalmist. To the Psalmist his birth was an act of God's creation, nothing less. Job dwells on the same thought, but in his pain he tends to despair—"Yet thou dost destroy me" (Job x. 8-12).

In *vv.* 19-22 comes a sudden change of subject; the Psalmist turns from confession of belief in JEHOVAH to an appeal to God against his enemies. Duhm ascribes this appeal to the *rabies theologorum*. Is this fair? The Psalmist is not a "theologian" living in the shelter of a monastery. He is in the world, and in danger. When he speaks of journeys in *vv.* 7-12 his language suggests a flight. His enemies are "bloodthirsty men"; they want to kill him: if they do not strike at once, it is because they await their opportunity. They are such people as Alcimus and his party: 1 Macc vii. 8, 9...12-17. The Psalmist asks in a wistful tone, *Dost thou slay the wicked one, O God?* He desires God's judgment to fall upon the men of blood (his enemies). How else is he to escape the death with which they threaten him? Cf the description of enemies in xvii. 7-14.

§ 3. OMNIPRESENCE AND OMNISCIENCE.

The doctrine of the Omnipresence and Omniscience of JEHOVAH as it is represented in this Psalm in a purely spiritual form is a rare phenomenon in Hebrew as in general religious history. In the Old Testament the best parallel is found in Jeremiah, as e.g. in xxiii. 23, 24, "Am I a God at hand, saith JEHOVAH, and not a God afar off? Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith JEHOVAH."

Passages addressed to a sun-god in Gentile literature are not true parallels to Ps cxxxix. Such passages are not uncommon. Thus in a poetic passage in a Tell-el-Amarna letter dating from the fourteenth century B.C. Pharaoh, who is the representative of Rē, the sun-god, is addressed as follows: "Whether we climb up towards heaven or go down into hell, our head is in thy hands." Again, in a Babylonian hymn to the sun-god Shamash, "Thou dost traverse the broad, wide sea, whose inner depths not even the Igigi (the upper gods) know. Thy mighty rays descend[even into the abyss. The monsters of the deep behold thy light."

A truer parallel is offered by a hymn of ancient India, Atharvaveda iv. 16. It consists of nine verses: *vv.* 1-5 praise the sky-god, Varuna, for his Omnipresence and for his Omniscience; *vv.* 6-9 invoke Varuna's intervention against an enemy's

treacherous designs. (The hymn is given in full in Max Müller, *Sacred Books of the East*, xlii. pp. 88, 89. A more recent rendering of vv. 1-6 appears in *ZAW*, NF vi. p. 112.) The following extracts may be compared with the contents of Ps cxxxix:

1. The great lord of this world sees as if he were near at hand. If any one think that he walks unseen, the gods know it all.

2. Whether one walk or stand or hide one's self, whether one goes to lie down or to stand up: the counsel which two take sitting together—king Varuna knows it: he is between them as the third....

4. If any one flew far off, to the other side of heaven, even there he would not escape Varuna our king. His scouts go forth from heaven down to earth. With a thousand eyes they search the world.

5. King Varuna beholds all this, that which is between heaven and earth, and that which lies above. He has numbered the glances of men's eyes. As a gamester casts the dice, so he orders all things.

6. May all thy hurtful snares...catch the man who speaks a lie. (*Vc.* 1-6 from *ZAW*.)

9. With all these snares I fetter thee, N.N., descended from N.N., the son of the woman N.N.; all these do I design for thee. (*V.* 9 from *Sacred Books of the East*.)

It may be said in conclusion that the Psalm and the hymn have as many differences as resemblances. In particular the first part of the hymn is a philosophic monologue, while the Psalm expresses the spiritual struggles of one who has found God, or rather, has been found of God.

For the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.

CXXXIX. 1 O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known *me*.

2 Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising,
Thou understandest my thought afar off.

1-6. JEHOVAH KNOWS THE PATH OF THE PSALMIST AND OVERTAKES HIM FAR FROM HOME

CXXXIX. 1. *O LORD* etc. Or, *JEHOVAH*, thou hast searched me, and thou knowest. What does JEHOVAH know? The following verses answer the question. He knows the whole life of the Psalmist—all his activities of body or mind—the actions he performs by day and the thoughts he entertains by night. Contrast the belief of the "fool" (*nābāl*) who supposes that God has no knowledge of the life of man: xiv. 1, note, lxxiii. 11, note, xciv. 7.

2. *my downsitting and mine uprising.* Deut vi. 7.

Thou understandest my thought. Cf vii. 9, "The righteous God trieth the (very) hearts and reins"; with note: also Jer xx. 12. The heart is the seat of the thoughts.

- 3 Thou ¹searchest out my path and my lying down,
And art acquainted with all my ways.
- 4 For there is not a word in my tongue,
But, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether.
- 5 Thou hast beset me behind and before,
And laid thine hand upon me.
- 6 *Such* knowledge is too wonderful for me;
It is high, I cannot attain unto it.
- 7 Whither shall I go from thy spirit?
Or whither shall I flee from thy presence?
- 8 If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there:
If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, thou art there.

¹ Or, *winnovest*

3. *Thou searchest out my path.* Or, *Thou winnowest.* The metaphor resembles that used in Matt iii. 12, "Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly cleanse his threshing-floor." *Winnowing* is a metaphor for "thorough examination," ending in the separation of the good from the bad.

my lying down. Or, *my lair.* The Hebrew (or rather, Aramaic) word used here suggests the place in which a wild beast makes its bed. The Psalmist is travelling by a road far removed from the haunts of men, but the eye of God follows the jungle-path until it lights on the bed of grass and leaves on which the traveller is sleeping.

4. *not a word in my tongue.* Before the word is actually spoken JEHOVAH knows it.

5. *Thou hast beset me.* The Psalmist may elude his enemies, but he cannot elude JEHOVAH's beneficent pursuit of him. Readers of Francis Thompson will be reminded of the *Hound of Heaven*.

And laid thine hand upon me. There is a double suggestion here: JEHOVAH overtakes the Psalmist and seizes him: then He covers him with a protecting hand; cf Exod xxxiii. 22.

6. *too wonderful.* Job xlii. 3.

7-12. NO JOURNEYING, NO CHANGE OF DAY AND NIGHT, CAN
REMOVE THE PSALMIST FROM THE PRESENCE OF JEHOVAH

7. *Whither shall I go from thy spirit?* A rhetorical question, meaning, "There is no place whither I can flee to escape from Thy spirit." Cf Jer xxiii. 23, 24; Hag ii. 5.

8. *Sheol.* See vi. 5, note, ix 17, xvi. 10, xviii. 5; Job xxvi. 6, "Sheol is naked before him." See also the Revisers' Preface to the Old Testament.

- 9 If I take the wings of the morning,
 And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea ;
 10 Even there shall thy hand lead me,
 And thy right hand shall hold me.
 11 If I say, Surely the darkness shall ¹overwhelm me,
²And the light about me shall be night ;
 12 Even the darkness hideth not from thee,
 But the night shineth as the day :
 The darkness and the light are both alike *to thee*.
 13 For thou hast ³possessed my reins :
 Thou hast ⁴covered me in my mother's womb.
 14 I will give thanks unto thee ; for I am fearfully and wonder-
 fully made :

¹ Or, *cover*² Or, *Then the night shall be light about me*³ Or, *formed*⁴ Or, *knit me together*

9. *If I take the wings etc.* Better, *If I take the wings of the Dawn* (the wings of the East Wind), *That I may alight in the uttermost part of the South-West*. The Psalmist says that if he, starting from the east, were to fly as swiftly as the Dawn, not halting until he reached the far distant shores of the Western Sea, yet JEHOVAH would not lose sight of him. Even there JEHOVAH would guide him and keep him safe (v. 10).

11. *Surely the darkness shall overwhelm me.* LXX, σκότος καταπατήσει με. The thought is of the accidents of the dark overwhelming the Psalmist. Possibly too there is a reference to evil spirits supposed to be active at night. The Hebrew verb is twice translated *bruise* (i.e. "crush") in Gen iii. 15.

13-18. JEHOVAH'S PROVIDENCE IN THE MAKING OF MAN

13. *thou hast possessed my reins.* The Hebrew verb *kanah*, here rendered *possessed*, contains two main thoughts which cannot be expressed by a single English verb. *Kanah* may be fitly rendered "possess" in the Old English sense of "acquire" or "get," as in Gen iv. 1, where Eve says, "I have gotten a man," i.e. her firstborn Cain. But Eve "got" Cain by bearing him and bringing him forth. So here in the Psalm the suggestion of the verb *kanah* is that JEHOVAH created the Psalmist and so acquired him for Himself. In Gen xiv. 19 the participle *kōneh* may be rendered "Maker" or "Author" (of heaven and earth).

For *my reins* might be said *my body* or even *me* (the pronoun alone). The part is put for the whole: cf xxvi 2, note. So in xxvii. 2, "my flesh" is equivalent to the simple pronoun "me."

14. *I am fearfully and wonderfully made.* A good paraphrase of a Hebrew phrase which cannot be literally rendered. The Psalmist says that he has been *fearfully* made, because he feels the awe of the near-

- Wonderful are thy works;
 And that my soul knoweth right well.
 15 My frame was not hidden from thee,
 When I was made in secret,
 And curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.
 16 Thine eyes did see mine unperfect substance,
 And in thy book ¹were all *my members* written,
 Which day by day were fashioned,
 When as yet there was none of them.
 17 How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God!
 How great is the sum of them!

¹ Or, *they were all written, even the days that were ordained*

ness of God who has fashioned him with daily care (*v.* 16) in the womb. Again he was *wonderfully* made as each member of a body of many members came into being. A different sense is obtained if the reading of LXX B be adopted, φοβερώς ἐθαυμάσθησθης, Vulgate, *terribiliter magnificatus es*, i.e. *Thou hast shown Thyself wonderful and terrible*.

And that my soul knoweth right well. On this reading (= LXX) the Psalmist acknowledges *with his soul* ("from the heart") the wonderful working of God. Thus the last clause of the verse answers to the first clause, "I will give thanks unto thee." But a plausible alternative reading is obtained by reading the Hebrew verb with other vowels (*yāda'ta*) and by correcting *mē'ōd* ("well") into *mē'āz*, thus we get, *And thou didst know my soul of old* (or *long ago*, xciii. 2). Thus read the last clause of *v.* 14 forms an appropriate introduction to *vv.* 15, 16.

15. *My frame.* LXX, τὸ ὀστούν μου, from which (ultimately) is derived "my bones" (P-B); cf Eccl xi. 5, "As thou knowest not...how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child." The Psalmist means here that the thing unknown to man is known to God.

in the lowest parts of the earth. A comparison, but with no particle of comparison prefixt. The womb is a hiding-place even as the lowest parts of the earth: so Aben Ezra.

16. *mine unperfect substance.* I.e. the embryo. The Hebrew word is hapaxlegomenon, but there is no reason to doubt its meaning.

And in thy book etc. The text is faulty, but the general sense appears to be somewhat as follows:

"And in thy book were all of them written, even the days during which they (i.e. my members) were formed, and not one of them (the days) failed." The Psalmist says in effect that the fixt number of his days was fulfilled.

17. *How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God.* The Hebrew word for *thoughts* is the same as in *v.* 2. The Psalmist *prizes* the careful thought which *JEHOVAH* has for him. For *precious* cf lxxii. 14, "Precious shall their blood be in his sight." Older commentators (e.g. Maurer)

18 If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand:

When I awake, I am still with thee.

19 ¹Surely thou wilt slay the wicked, O God:

Depart from me therefore, ye bloodthirsty men.

20 For they ²speak against thee wickedly,

And thine enemies ³take *thy name* in vain.

21 Do not I hate them, O LORD, that hate thee?

And ⁴am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee?

22 I hate them with perfect hatred:

I count them mine enemies.

¹ Or, *Oh that thou wouldst slay*

² Or, *utter thy name* (Heb. *thee*) Or, as otherwise read, *rebel against thee*

³ Or, *lift themselves up against thee for vanity* ⁴ Or, *do not I loathe*

took the Hebrew verb *yākĕrū* ("are precious") in the sense "are difficult," i.e. hard to understand: cf xcii. 5, "Thy thoughts are very deep." LXX (followed by Vulgate) gives a wholly different rendering, *ἐμοὶ δὲ λίαν ἐτιμήθησαν οἱ φίλοι σου ὁ θεός*: similarly Targum, "And to me how dear are thy friends *the righteous*, O God!" The rendering of LXX is possible, but RV is to be preferred.

How great is the sum of them. Cf the close parallel in xl. 5.

18. *When I awake, I am still with thee.* I.e. When I awake (from my musing over these matters), I am still with thee: I awake to the dangers of the present, and look for Thy intervention—*Oh that thou wouldst slay the wicked one!* Then, I say, *depart from me, ye bloodthirsty men*, lest I perish in your company. Such seems to be the connexion. For *awake* in a metaphorical sense see xvii. 15.

19-22. THE PSALMIST'S ENEMIES ENEMIES OF GOD

19. *Surely thou wilt slay the wicked, O God.* Better as marg. *Oh that thou wouldst slay the wicked one, O God.* See note on v. 18.

20. *they speak against* (or *concerning*) *thee wickedly.* (So the Eastern Masoretic authorities.) Better, *they rebel against thee wickedly.* The "rebels" are Jews who in some way have been unfaithful to *JEHOVAH.*

thine enemies take thy name in vain. If the rendering *thine enemies* be right, the rendering of the rest of the clause may be accepted. The Psalmist stigmatizes the unfaithful Jews to *JEHOVAH* as "Thine enemies." For the rendering "enemies" there is good ancient authority: Targum, Aquila (*ἀντίζηλοί σου*), Symmachus (*οἱ ἐναντίοι σου*), Jerome (*adversarii tui*), but modern scholars pronounce against it, though modern emendations do not commend themselves by any intrinsic probability.

21. *Do not I hate them.* Cf xxvi. 5 (note); [*not xxxi. 6, see note*]; cxix. 113. See also xcvi. 10, "O ye that love *JEHOVAH*, hate evil."

22. *with perfect hatred.* Or, *with perfection of hatred.* The Psalmist desires to be completely loyal to *JEHOVAH.*

23 Search me, O God, and know my heart:

Try me, and know my thoughts:

24 And see if there be any way of ¹wickedness in me,
And lead me in the way everlasting.

¹ Or, *grief*

23, 24. THE PSALMIST APPEALS TO JEHOVAH TO TRY HIS INNOCENCY

23. *Search me.* The same appeal in xxvi. 2. In both the prayer is for an interior examination: here, "Know my thoughts"; there, "Try my reins and my heart."

24. *way of wickedness* (Heb. 'ozeb). Perhaps rather, *way of idolatry*: the Psalmist wishes to be found free from idolatrous sin. Marg. has *way of grief*, i.e. a way that brings sorrow: cf Gen iii. 16 (Heb. 'ezeb).

the way everlasting. Or, *the ancient way* (Heb. *derech 'olām*): cf Jer vi. 16, xviii. 15, "ancient paths."

PSALM CXL

MANY ENEMIES, ONE DELIVERER

§ 1. CONTENTS.

1-5. The Psalmist prays to be delivered from enemies who make secret plans to overthrow him. Apparently the weapon which they use is false accusation.

6, 7. The Psalmist confesses JEHOVAH to be his God, and acknowledges the protection he has received in the past from Him.

8-10. He asks that a fiery overthrow may be the punishment of his enemies.

11-13. The Psalmist's confidence in JEHOVAH'S intervention.

§ 2. CHARACTER AND PURPOSE.

This Psalm contains echoes of Pss x, xxxv, lvi-lix, lxiv, and was composed no doubt under similar circumstances. The Psalmist is a religious leader, a member probably of the stricter party in Israel, and so open to the violent attacks of the opposing, stronger party. The latter included the ruling class ("the proud," v. 5) who attacked him with false accusations laid before the heathen (Persian or Grecian) government.

§ 3. MOWINCKEL'S THEORY.

This is one of the many Psalms which Mowinckel believes to be a prayer against the power of the black art. He takes the Psalmist's enemies to be men who employ sorcery against him. Some criticisms of the theory have been given on pp. 17 and 23, and in the Introduction to Ps vi. These criticisms apply also in the case of Ps cxl.

Clear references to magic or sorcery are in fact rare in the Psalter: we may cite xii. 5 (the mention of an enemy who "puffs"); lviii. 4, 5 (serpent charming). The distinctive names for magic and magicians which are found in O.T. are for the most part absent from the Psalms. In general it may be said that the Psalmists lived a life of faith in God, and of freedom from fear of magic: lvi. 4.

For the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.

CXL. 1 Deliver me, O LORD, from the evil man ;

Preserve me from the violent man :

2 Which imagine mischiefs in their heart ;

Continually do they ¹gather themselves together for war.

3 They have sharpened their tongue like a serpent ;

Adders' poison is under their lips.

[Selah

4 Keep me, O LORD, from the hands of the wicked ;

Preserve me from the violent man :

Who have purposed to thrust aside my steps.

5 The proud have hid a snare for me, and cords ;

They have spread a net by the way side ;

They have set gins for me.

[Selah

6 I said unto the LORD, Thou art my God :

¹ Or, *stir up wars*

CXL. 1. *Deliver...from the evil man;...from the violent man.* In the Hebrew there is the same distinction between the two words for "man" as in lxii. 9. We may paraphrase, "Deliver...from the evil men of low degree,...and from the violent man of high degree." The latter is marked out as the leader of the Psalmist's foes.

2. *in their heart.* Cf lviii. 2.

they gather themselves together for war. Or, *they gather themselves together in battle array* (lit. *in battles*, in the Old English sense of the word). The same Hebrew verb as in lix. 3. RV marg. follows a slight emendation of the Hebrew text, and renders, *they stir up wars.*

3. *They have sharpened their tongue like a serpent.* Mowinckel sees a reference to the preparation of spells by a sorcerer against his victim, but the words may with at least equal probability be referred to the evil zeal of the talebearer.

Adders' poison. The Heb. 'achshūb (rendered *Adder*) is an hapaxlegomenon of uncertain meaning: it is found here only. It is possible that it is only another form of 'akkābīsh, "the tarantula."

Selah. So vv. 5, 8, cxliii. 6. The distribution of this word in the Psalter is singularly unequal. In Pss i-lxxxix it occurs frequently, while in xc-cl it is found only here and in the three places cited above. For *Selah* see note on page 15.

4. *to thrust aside my steps.* I.e. to give me a fall: cf cxviii. 13.

5. *The proud.* Heb. gā'im, as in xciv. 2, note.

have hid a snare...and cords; They have spread a net...They have set gins. The fulness of the language and its disjointedness show the fear and the agitation of the speaker. There is no need to emend: LXX supports MT, only adding *for my feet* (τοῖς ποσίν μου) after *a net*.

6. *I said.* This phrase may be rendered sometimes, "I thought," as

Give ear unto the voice of my supplications, O LORD.

7 O GOD the Lord, the strength of my salvation,
Thou hast covered my head in the day of battle.

8 Grant not, O LORD, the desires of the wicked;
Further not his evil device; lest they exalt themselves. [Selah

9 As for the head of those that compass me about,
Let the mischief of their own lips cover them.

10 Let burning coals fall upon them:
Let them be cast into the fire;
Into ¹deep pits, that they rise not up again.

11 ²An evil speaker shall not be established in the earth:
Evil shall hunt the violent man to overthrow him.

¹ Or, floods

² Heb. A man of tongue.

in xxx. 6; sometimes, "I resolved," as in xxxix. 1, cxix. 57; sometimes (as here and in cxlii. 5), "I confessed."

7. *Thou hast covered my head.* I.e. *Thou hast protected me.* Cf lx. 7, "Ephraim is the defence of mine head," i.e. "is my defence." "Head" stands for "person," like the Greek, *κάρα*. "My head" = "me."

8. *Further not...exalt themselves.* The *Selah* appended to the verse calls attention to the difficulty of the text: see note on *Selah*, page 15. Can we think of God as at any time furthering an evil device? But the Psalmist believes that if a man succeeds even in an evil design, it is by permission of JEHOVAH the All-ruler.

9. *Let the mischief of their own lips cover (overwhelm) them.* I.e. Let them be served as they would serve others.

10. *Let burning coals fall upon them.* The Hebrew text is uncertain. Following the K^ri we get, *Let them be removed* (from their station) *with hot coals falling upon them.* The picture suggested is of Lot expelled from Sodom under a rain of fire. The rendering, *Let them be removed*, agrees with the context, for the enemy desires to remove the Psalmist from his office (v. 4), and the Psalmist's petition is (v. 9) that the evil which they design for him may overtake themselves. But the proposed emendation (*yamtēr* for *yimmōtū*), *may it rain hot coals upon them*, receives some support from xi. 6.

Into deep pits. Rather, *In the floods* (RV marg.) *let them not be able to stand.* With this picture of destruction by fire or by water contrast the picture of escape in Isa xliii. 2.

11. *An evil speaker.* Lit. *A man of tongue*, i.e. a talebearer, who goes about estranging friends and relations by his words. The fault is frequently alluded to in O.T., e.g. Lev xix. 16; Pro xi. 13, xviii. 8, xxvi. 20; Jer vi. 28. Or, possibly, the expression may mean "a flatterer," who seeks his own ends by false compliments: cf v. 9; Pro xxviii. 23. Mowinkel on the other hand urges that "a sorcerer" is meant: see Introduction.

12 I know that the LORD will maintain the cause of the afflicted,
And the right of the needy.

13 Surely the righteous shall give thanks unto thy name:
The upright shall dwell in thy presence.

12. *JEHOVAH will maintain the cause of the afflicted.* The form of this sentence suggests that the Psalmist is standing before the judgment seat and being attacked by slander or false witness; it does not suggest the black art of the sorcerer.

13. *The upright shall dwell in thy presence.* Cf. lxxv. 4, "Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, . . . That he may dwell in thy courts."

PSALM CXLI

A FAITHFUL PROPHET

§ 1. CONTENTS.

1-5. The Appeal of one who is faithful to JEHOVAH: Accept this my prayer as equivalent to the offering of a sacrifice. Save me from falling into the unfaithfulness of those who are around me.

6, 7. The great disaster which has overtaken the people of JEHOVAH.

8-10. The Appeal renewed: Let me escape from the snares of those who desire to draw me to their own unfaithfulness.

§ 2. THE OCCASION OF THE PSALM.

The Psalmist has a prayer to offer, not a story to tell, but his prayer springs immediately from his circumstances. His allusions to these follow indeed the order of feeling rather than of narrative, but the story which the Psalm indicates may be reconstructed with much probability as follows. Disaster in war has overtaken the people of JEHOVAH as a punishment for their worship of other gods: the Psalmist has a message, a call to repentance, to deliver: he prays, Keep me faithful: perhaps my people will at last give ear to me. May punishment overtake the guilty, and may I escape!

The Psalmist is in the position of

The seraph Abdiel faithful found
Among the faithless, . . .
Among innumerable false, unmoved.

Paradise Lost, v. 893 ff.

Only he prays that he may still remain "unmoved."

He is a prophet with a message ("words") for his people in time of distress (v. 6). They have suffered a great overthrow: their leaders ("judges," v. 6) have been taken and destroyed by casting down from a rocky height; the bones of their army are scattered over the ground (v. 7). This calamity has overtaken them as a punishment, for they have been unfaithful to JEHOVAH; they have been occupied in idolatrous practices ("deeds of wickedness"), and they have eaten forbidden sacrifices ("their dainties"). Thus does the Psalmist read the

situation, and his appeal to his people (if it were directly express in the Psalm) would no doubt be, "Repent, and return unto JEHOVAH your God." But the people are unprepared to receive such an appeal. Their own thought under their terrible calamity is that JEHOVAH has cast them off, and the remedy which they choose is to devote themselves to the service of another god. So did the fugitive remnant of the Jews in Egypt declare to Jeremiah that their worship of JEHOVAH had brought the sword and famine upon them, while the service of the Queen of Heaven had secured them "plenty of victual" and prosperity (Jer xliv. 15-19). Evidently the opinion of the multitude, the example of the unfaithful, and the hard fact of disaster, all these combined threaten to shake the Psalmist's own firmness. He comes near to confessing, like the author of lxxiii. 14 [15], "Yea, and I had almost said even as they." He prays earnestly in *vs.* 3, 4 that he may not be seduced to speak and to do after the manner of his unfaithful countrymen: he comforts himself in *v.* 6 with the thought that ultimately some of them will listen to his prophetic message: in the end they will discover that his words are "sweet," a God-given remedy for their present ills.

§ 3. THE STYLE.

The language of this Psalm is peculiar, perhaps overstrained. Lit. rendered *vs.* 5-7 run thus:

Let the righteous smite me down—with lovingkindness;
 Let him reprove me—with oil for the head;
 Let not my head refuse it;
 For my prayer shall continue against their wickedness.
 Their judges were cast down the sides of the precipice,
 That (my people) might hear my words (i.e. my call to repentance),
 (And know) that they are sweet (i.e. acceptable).
 As by one that ploweth and cleaveth the earth,
 Our bones have been scattered at the mouth of Sheol.

The disjointed style of the passage is due to the agitation of the Psalmist. He acknowledges that the blow which has fallen upon Israel (*vs.* 6, 7) has been deserved, for Israel (with the exception of a remnant, "the Righteous", *v.* 5) has fallen away from JEHOVAH. The Psalmist is divided in feeling. He deplors the fact that it is the heathen who have beaten down his people in battle: if JEHOVAH had used the Righteous (*v.* 5) as His instrument, the Psalmist could have accepted the chastisement as a proof of the Divine lovingkindness: it would have been as "oil poured upon the head." (It should be noted that it is the "head," which in Hebrew phrase is said to receive punishment: vii. 16, lxxviii. 21; Pro xxv. 22, and so it is oil poured upon the head, which signifies forgiveness and the resultant healing.)

The agitation of the Psalmist is marked especially by his use of varying pronouns. He speaks of his own circumstances in *vs.* 1-4, consistently using the first person singular, but in *vs.* 5-7 he is thinking of the fortunes of his people and so he vacillates between "me" and "our" on the one side and "they" and "their" on the other. At one time he identifies himself with his people as in *v.* 5 *a-c*, and speaks as though he shared their punishment with them ("Let not my head refuse it"), but in the last clause of *v.* 5 and also in *v.* 6 he claims

innocence for himself and takes his stand apart: he speaks of "their" wickedness and of "their" judges. In v. 7 he once more identifies himself with his countrymen in their overthrow by declaring that "our" bones have been scattered at the mouth of Sheol.

A Psalm of David.

- CXLI.** 1 LORD, I have called upon thee; make haste unto me:
 Give ear unto my voice, when I call unto thee.
 2 Let my prayer be set forth as incense before thee;
 The lifting up of my hands as the evening ¹sacrifice.
 3 Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth;
 Keep the door of my lips.
 4 Incline not my heart to any evil thing,
 To be occupied in deeds of wickedness
 With men that work iniquity:
 And let me not eat of their dainties.

¹ Or, *oblation*

1-5. AN APPEAL: ACCEPT MY PRAYER, SAVE ME
 FROM UNFAITHFULNESS

CXLI. 1. *I have called upon thee...when I call unto thee.* Or, "I have invoked thee...when I invoke thee." The Hebrew verb suggests more than the English. The Psalmist in his trouble appeals to JEHOVAH, and to JEHOVAH only, while his people are turning to other gods. Cf iv. 1, note, cxxx. 1.

make haste. Cf xl. 13, 17. The language of childlike boldness; the case is urgent.

2. *Let my prayer be set forth.* Or, *be prepared*, set in order as a gift to be offered: cf Gen. xliii. 25, "They made ready the present" (the same Hebrew verb).

incense. Or, *sacrificial smoke*; cf lxvi. 14, note. See also lxix. 30, 31.

3. *Set a watch...before my mouth.* The Psalmist having invoked the great name of JEHOVAH fears to annul the effect of his appeal by the utterance of any other name. A solemn silence is one element of religious duty: cf lxii. 5, RV marg. "My soul, be thou silent unto God." The heathen in times of trouble were wont to seek the help of more than one god. So too Ahaziah king of Israel sends in his sickness to enquire of Baal-zebub the god of Ekron: 2 K i. 2.

4. *Incline not my heart.* Cf cxix. 36, "Incline my heart unto thy testimonies." Cf 2 Sam xxiv. 1 ff.; 1 K xviii. 37. In the Old Testament in many places the writer expresses the sovereignty of God in terms which seem to exclude the free will of man. In other places the freedom of the will is assumed, e.g. Deut xxx. 19.

let me not eat of their dainties. I.e. "let me not take part in heathen feasts." Cf cvi. 28; Num xxv. 2; Isa lxv. 4, 11.

5 Let the righteous smite me, *it shall be* a kindness;
 And let him reprove me, *it shall be* as oil upon the head;
 Let not my head refuse it:

¹For even in their ²wickedness shall my prayer continue.

6 Their judges are thrown down by the sides of the rock;
 And they shall hear my words; for they are sweet.

7 As when one ploweth and cleaveth the earth,
³Our bones are scattered at ⁴the grave's mouth.

8 For mine eyes are unto thee, O GOD the Lord:
 In thee do I put my trust; ⁵leave not my soul destitute.

¹ Or, *For still is my prayer against their wickedness*

² Or, *calamities*

³ According to some ancient authorities, *Their*.

⁴ Heb. *the mouth of Sheol*.

⁵ Or, *pour thou not out my life*

5. *Let the righteous smite me* etc. The vigour of the Heb. verb is missed here: *smite me* should be *beat me down*. Cf Pro xxvii. 6, "Faithful are the wounds of a friend." RV gives fair sense. LXX however, following a different reading of the Hebrew, presents an attractive alternative rendering, "*A righteous man will correct me in lovingkindness, but let not the oil of the sinner (rāshā' for rōsh) anoint my head.*"

For even in their wickedness shall my prayer continue. Or (cf marg.), *For my prayer shall continue against their wickedness.*

6, 7. THE GREAT DISASTER WHICH HAS OVERTAKEN ISRAEL

6. *Their judges.* I.e. the leaders of Israel. He does not say "our" judges, for he regards them as the misleaders of the people of JEHOVAH. These judges were captured by the enemy and destroyed by casting down from a rocky height, as Amaziah destroyed the Edomites: 2 Chr xxv. 12.

And they shall hear my words. Their disasters will open their ears to receive the Psalmist's call to repentance.

7. *As when one ploweth and cleaveth the earth.* With like irresistible force the enemy broke up Israel's battle array.

Our bones. I.e. *The bones of our people.* This no doubt is the true reading: so MT, LXX, Jerome, Targum. The marginal reading *Their bones* is that of Peshitta.

8-10. AN APPEAL TO JEHOVAH AS THE PSALMIST'S ONE HOPE

8. *For (or Surely) mine eyes* etc. Cf xxv. 15, cxxiii. 1, 2. The words, *Mine eyes are unto thee* of v. 8 correspond to the appeal *I have called upon thee* of v. 1; with eye and voice the Psalmist appeals to JEHOVAH only.

leave not my soul destitute. The Hebrew verb means to *strip bare*:

- 9 Keep me from the snare which they have laid for me,
And from the gins of the workers of iniquity.
10 Let the wicked fall into their own nets,
Whilst that I withal ¹escape.

¹ Heb. *pass over*.

cf *Henry VIII*, Act iii, Sc. ii, "He would not in mine age have left me naked to mine enemies." Better perhaps as marg. *pour thou not out my life*; cf Isa liii. 12.

9. *the workers of iniquity* (Heb. *pō'ālā āvōn*, as in v. 5). Mowinckel holds that this term has the special sense of "sorcerers." But see v. 5, vi. 8 with notes, and cf p. 17.

10. *Let the wicked fall into their own nets*. The Hebrew is *into his (or His) net*: so LXX, Targum, Jerome. The net is that with which JEHOVAH catches offenders: Lam i. 13; Ezek xii. 13, xxxii. 3. The metaphor of the net in the hand of God may be derived from Babylon. In the Creation story in the great fight with Tiamat it is said (*Fourth Tablet*, line 95):

The Lord (i.e. Marduk) cast his net, and enmeshed her.

Whilst that I withal escape. The Hebrew text here is difficult, but the sense of the verse seems to be, "Let the wicked fall by the net of JEHOVAH, while I in my loneliness (i.e. unhelped by man) pass by in safety."

PSALM CXLII

AN APPEAL TO JEHOVAH THE DELIVERER

§ 1. CONTENTS.

1-4. The appeal of the friendless to JEHOVAH for help against his foes.

5-7. The Psalmist's confession of confidence in JEHOVAH: if JEHOVAH will deliver the Psalmist from the present strait, then the Psalmist will again have friends, and they and he will offer their garland of praise to JEHOVAH.

§ 2. CHARACTER.

Ps cxlii resembles Ps cxli as an urgent cry for help against foes. In both the Psalmist hopes that in the end those whom he calls "the Righteous" will rally round him. The "Righteous" are (no doubt) those of his people who are faithful to JEHOVAH and devoted to the strict observance of the Law.

In one important respect however the two Psalms differ considerably: cxli has a direct reference to public affairs, while cxlii is concerned only with the Psalmist's personal experiences. But the two Psalms are one in the personal faith which shines through them. There is nothing liturgical in them, nothing of generalized devotion. The editor who assigned them in the headings to David was right in so far as he assigned them to an author of vivid personality.

§ 3. THE OCCASION.

An interesting suggestion as to the occasion of this and of some similar Psalms (e.g. xxvi) is made by Hans Schmidt in his *Beihft* to *ZAW* entitled, *Gebet der Angeklagten* (1928). He calls attention to the fact that the Temple was used on occasion as a place of judicial enquiry (1 K viii. 31, 32; cf Exod xxii. 7-11). A man suspected of having defrauded his neighbour might be brought "before thine altar in this house" (1 K viii. 31) or "near unto God" (Exod xxii. 8), there to take an oath of purgation that he had not "put his hand to his neighbour's goods." If he swear falsely, some evil, it was thought, would overtake him.

Schmidt interprets the word "prison" in v. 7 in its literal sense—a doubtful interpretation—and assumes that the accused person was imprisoned until the oath could be administered. If so, the accused while in prison (v. 7) might very well offer a prayer in a Psalm asserting his innocence before *JEHOVAH*. But unfortunately for the theory there is no mention of any accusation, true or false, in this Psalm.

Schmidt's case is not so weak in the instance of Ps xxvi, for there the Psalmist begins with the cry, "Judge me, O *JEHOVAH*," and also protests his past innocence and his determination to preserve his innocence in the future. But even there the proof is weak. The Psalmist is protesting his innocence of any act of apostasy from his God; he has not been accused of dishonest dealing with his neighbour.

Maschil of David, when he was in the cave; a Prayer.

CXLII. 1 I cry with my voice unto the LORD;

With my voice unto the LORD do I make supplication.

2 I pour out my complaint before him;

I shew before him my trouble.

3 When my spirit ¹was overwhelmed within me, thou knewest my path.

In the way wherein I walk have they hidden a snare for me.

¹ Or, *fainted*

1-4. THE FIRST APPEAL

CXLII. 1. *I cry with my voice.* I.e. I cry aloud.

2. *my complaint* (Heb. *sāh*). See lxiv. 1, note.

my trouble. Or, *my affliction* caused by enemies: vv. 3, 6.

3. *When my spirit* (Heb. *rūah*) *was overwhelmed* (or *fainted*) etc. When the Psalmist's courage failed, then *JEHOVAH* took knowledge of his condition, and knew the path on which he was travelling, and was aware that it was beset by foes. The same Hebrew verb in cvii. 5, cxliii. 4 a (marg. "my spirit fainteth")

- 4 ¹Look on *my* right hand, and see; for there is no man that knoweth me:
 Refuge hath failed me; no man careth for my soul.
- 5 I cried unto thee, O LORD;
 I said, Thou art my refuge,
 My portion in the land of the living.
- 6 Attend unto my cry; for I am brought very low:
 Deliver me from my persecutors; for they are stronger than I.
- 7 Bring my soul out of prison, that I may give thanks unto thy name:

¹ According to some ancient versions, *I looked...and saw &c.*

4. *Look* (Heb. *habbēt*) on my right hand, and see. This is the correct translation of MT; so Jerome, *Respice ad dexteram et vide*. The Psalmist calls upon his God to take knowledge of a certain aggravation of his trouble: though he is walking on a dangerous path he has no friend with him. Similar appeals to JEHOVAH introduced by the word *Look* (*habbēt*) are found in lxxiv. 20 ("*Have respect* unto the covenant"); lxxx. 14 ("*Look* down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine").

For the vigorous reading, *Look...and see*, of MT, most of the versions read as LXX (= Vulgate, P-B, AV, also Targum, Peshitta), *κατενόουν...καὶ ἐπέβλεπον*, *I lookt...and saw*.

Look on my right hand. *The right hand* is the side from which good things are to be expected, as e.g. a helper in time of danger: cix. 31, "(JEHOVAH) shall stand at the right hand of the needy, To save him...." Gunkel's emendation, "I look to the right, And I gaze to the left," is heavily prosaic.

no man careth for my soul. The same Hebrew verb is used in Deut xi. 12, "a land which JEHOVAH careth for": Isa lxii. 12, "a city (Jerusalem) sought out."

5-7. THE SECOND APPEAL, ENDING ON THE NOTE OF CONFIDENCE

5. *I cried...I said*. Or, *I cry* (as v. 1)...*saying*.

my refuge...My portion. I.e. my immediate help in my present danger... and also my continual possession, He who supplies all my needs. For *My portion* cf lxxiii. 26, cxix. 57. In Num xviii. 20, JEHOVAH says to Aaron (i.e. to the Aaronic priesthood), "Thou shalt have no inheritance in their (Israel's) land: I am thy *portion*."

6. *I am brought very low*. The same Hebrew verb (*dālal*) in Jud vi. 6, "And Israel was brought very low because of Midian."

they are stronger than I. The same Hebrew as in xviii. 17.

7. *Bring my soul out of prison*. The word *prison* (Heb. *masgēr*, "prison" or "dungeon") is used probably in a metaphorical sense, e.g. of such a situation as that described in xxii. 12, 16. The Psalmist is

The righteous shall ¹compass me about;
For thou shalt deal bountifully with me.

¹ Or, *crown themselves because of me*

surrounded by enemies, and apparently in their power, but not necessarily in prison. Jeremiah might have used the Psalmist's language, even when he was nominally at liberty. *My soul* stands for the pronoun *me*. Cf. cxliii. 11, "Bring my soul out of trouble."

The righteous shall compass me about. P-B gives the same sense in other words, *Then shall the righteous resort unto my company.* Similarly LXX, ἐμὲ ὑπομενούσιν δίκαιοι, "The righteous shall wait for me": Vulgate, *me expectant iusti.* But the Hebrew verb is perhaps connected in sense with the substantive, *kether*, "a crown" (Esth i. 11, ii. 17). Reading the verb with MT as Hiphil, we get the sense of making a crown (in the literal or metaphorical sense), so the Targum, *Because of me the righteous will make for Thee a crown of praise.* This is better.

On the other hand reading the verb as a Niphal with a change of vowels we may obtain the rendering, *The righteous shall crown themselves because of me* (στεφανώσονται, Symm.), i.e. shall have reason to rejoice and triumph. So RV marg. (= JV). Or again translating the Niphal as a passive Jerome *iuxta Hebraeos* gives, *in me coronabuntur iusti.*

PSALM CXLIII

THE SEVENTH PENITENTIAL PSALM

§ 1. CONTENTS AND CHARACTER.

1, 2. An appeal for favour. The Psalmist confesses that no man can pass the just judgment of JEHOVAH. On the other hand he does not make any particular confession of sin, as does the author of li. 4—"Against thee...have I sinned,...That thou mayest be clear when thou judgest."

3, 4. The Psalmist's evil case: he is brought near to death by sickness.

5-8. The Psalmist, remembering the lovingkindness of JEHOVAH in the past, turns for help to JEHOVAH in the present.

9-12. The Psalmist's threefold prayer: (a) to be delivered from the enemy or enemies (v. 9, 12); (b) to be healed of his sickness (v. 11); (c) to be taught the will of God (v. 10).

§ 2. ORIGINALITY OF THE PSALM.

The notes which follow show that many of the expressions which occur in this Psalm are found earlier in the Psalter. No doubt the Psalmist was familiar with the compositions of his predecessors, and used their language to express his own thoughts and feelings. But it would be a mistake to pronounce this Psalm to be a "secondary" composition. The vigour of the style shows that the Psalmist went through great spiritual experiences and trials of his own. In one striking utterance he stands almost alone among his brethren: "In thy sight

shall no man living prevail" (or "be justified," *v.* 2). His meaning is that no man can successfully argue with God about God's dealings with mankind, nor say to God, "Why doest Thou thus?" The Psalmist agrees with the teaching of the book of Job.

§ 3. USE OF THE PSALM IN THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

Ps cxliii is the last of the seven Penitential Psalms, the others being vi, xxxii, xxxviii, li, cii, cxxx. These Psalms were referred in the Middle Ages each to one of the seven deadly sins, cxliii being described as *contra acediam*, i.e. against a certain kind of discontent and restlessness which was one of the besetting sins of monks. It cannot however be said that there is any special appropriateness in any of these assignments.

A Psalm of David.

CXLIII. 1 Hear my prayer, O LORD; give ear to my supplications:

In thy faithfulness answer me, *and* in thy righteousness.

2 And enter not into judgement with thy servant;

For in thy sight shall no man living be justified.

3 For the enemy hath persecuted my soul;

He hath smitten my life down to the ground:

He hath made me to dwell in dark places, as those that have been long dead.

1, 2. AN APPEAL FOR FAVOUR

CXLIII. 1. *In thy faithfulness...in thy righteousness.* For this collocation of xxxvi. 5, 6, with notes.

2. *And enter not into judgement with thy servant.* Cf the expostulation of Job (xiv. 3 b), "Bringest (thou) me into judgement with thee?" *shall no man living be justified.* Rather, *shall no man living prevail.* Heb. *yizdak*, יִצֵדַק, the same verb as li. 4, *q.v.* For the sentiment cf Job ix. 2, xxv. 4 (the challenge uttered by Job and taken up by Bildad), "How can man be just (*or* prevail) with God?" If God find fault with a man, man has no defence, he must endure whatever chastisement God inflicts. 'This of course is not the same as to say that all men have sinned.

3, 4. THE EVIL CASE OF THE PSALMIST

3. *the enemy.* The Hebrew has not the definite article, and it is better to translate, *an enemy.* The Psalmist thinks of one in the court of heaven, who acts as the Satan or Adversary, and is permitted to inflict evils, as on Israel (1 Chr xxi. 1) or on an individual (Job i. 12, ii. 4-6). *He hath smitten* (Heb. *dikka*, דִּכָּא) *my life.* Rather, *He hath crushed my life, or reduced it to dust:* cf Isa liii. 10, "Yet it pleased JEHOVAH to bruise (rather, crush) him," where the same Hebrew verb is used. *in dark places.* AV, *in darkness.* The same Hebrew expression as in

- 4 Therefore ¹is my spirit overwhelmed within me;
My heart within me is desolate.
- 5 I remember the days of old;
I meditate on all thy doings:
I muse on the work of thy hands.
- 6 I spread forth my hands unto thee:
My soul *thirsteth* after thee, as a weary land. [Selah
- 7 Make haste to answer me, O LORD; my spirit faileth:
Hide not thy face from me;
Lest I become like them that go down into the pit.
- 8 Cause me to hear thy lovingkindness in the morning;
For in thee do I trust:
Cause me to know the way wherein I should walk;
For I lift up my soul unto thee.

¹ Or, *my spirit fainteth*

lxxxviii. 6. The reference is to the gloom which severe sickness brings: cf Job iii. 5, x. 21, "Darkness and the shadow of death." In lxxxviii. 6 the Psalmist ascribes his situation not to "an enemy," but directly to his God, "Thou hast laid me...in dark places."

4. *is my spirit overwhelmed*. Marg. *my spirit fainteth*: cf cxlii. 3, note.

is desolate. I.e. "has become like a desert." Cf xl. 15.

5-8. THE PSALMIST PLEADS THAT THE LOVINGKINDNESS OF JEHOVAH MAY BE RENEWED TO HIM

5. *all thy doings*. Or, *all thy work*; i.e. "Thy providence"; Hebrew as in xlv. 1, note, xc. 16, note.

6. *spread forth my hands*. I.e. in prayer: xlv. 20; 1 K viii. 22. *as a weary land*. Cf lxiii. 1.

7. *Make haste*. See xl. 13, 17 = lxx. 1, 5, with note on lxx. 5.

Lest I become like (or be likened to) them that go down into the pit. See xxviii. 1, note, xlix. 12. Scoffers will use this comparison.

8. *in the morning*. He asks for an early answer to his prayer.

Cause me to know the way etc. Or, *Make known to me the way that I shall go*, LXX, πορεύσομαι, i.e. "Let me know whether I shall go the way of recovery or the way of death." So king Ahaziah (2 K i. 2) enquires of the god of Ekron, "Shall I recover of this sickness?" Cf xxxix. 4, "Make me to know mine end, And the measure of my days, what it is."

I lift up my soul unto thee. So xxv. 1, note, lxxxvi. 4.

9 Deliver me, O LORD, from mine enemies :

¹ I flee unto thee to hide me.

10 Teach me to do thy will ; for thou art my God :

² Thy spirit is good ; lead me in ³ the land of uprightness.

11 Quicken me, O LORD, for thy name's sake :

In thy righteousness bring my soul out of trouble.

12 And in thy lovingkindness cut off mine enemies,

And destroy all them that afflict my soul ;

For I am thy servant.

¹ Heb. *Unto thee have I hidden.*

² Or, *Let thy good spirit lead me.*

³ Or, *a plain country*

9-12. A THREEFOLD PRAYER : TEACH ME (v. 10) ; HEAL ME (v. 11) ;
RID ME OF MINE ENEMIES (vv. 9, 12).

9. *I flee unto thee to hide me.* The text is doubtful ; MT has, "*Unto thee (possibly, upon thee, i.e. "in thy charge") I have hidden...*," a word apparently being lost. LXX, πρὸς σὲ κατέφυγον, "To thee I fled." EV attempts to combine the Hebrew with the Greek. Duhm proposes, "I take to flight towards thee," נסתי for נסתי. Another suggestion is, "I have waited for thee," תכיתי, *hikkithi*, as Isa viii. 17. The general sense can hardly be far from EV.

10. *Teach me to do thy will.* I.e. that I may not offend Thee again, and provoke further chastisement.

Thy spirit is good. I.e. kindly. Cf xxv. 8, "Good and upright is JEHOVAH" ; lxxxvi. 5, "Good and ready to forgive" ; cxix. 68, "Thou art good, and doest good."

11. *Quicken me.* I.e. *revive me, grant me recovery from sickness.*

for thy name's sake. I.e. (in this case) JEHOVAH'S name for *righteousness* and (v. 12) for *lovingkindness*.

12. *cut off mine enemies.* Cf liv. 5, "Destroy thou them (mine enemies) in thy truth" ; civ. 35 a ; cxxxix. 19-22. See li. 13, note.

thy servant. This term address by the Psalmist to JEHOVAH occurs some six-and-twenty times in the Psalter : e.g. cxvi. 16, "I am thy servant, the son of thine handmaid" (see note).

PSALM CXLIV

(An Anthem with an Appendix)

WAR AND PEACE

§ 1. CONTENTS.

1-8. The Psalmist realizes JEHOVAH'S gracious protection of himself in war, and directs his prayer for safety to JEHOVAH.

9-11. He foresees that JEHOVAH will grant deliverance and victory, and promises a New Song.

12-15. (Appendix.) The New Song describing the blessings of Peace, and ascribing them to the gift of JEHOVAH.

§ 2. COMPOSITE CHARACTER.

This Psalm may be called an Anthem because like many Anthems in our modern collections it consists of verses brought together from different Psalms and from other sources to form a new composition. Thus *vv.* 1, 2, 5 *a*, 6, 7, 10 reproduce the thoughts and sometimes the very words of xviii. 2, 9, 14, 16, 34, 46, 47, 50. *V.* 3 quotes from viii. 4 and *v.* 4 from xxxix. 5 and from cii. 11. *V.* 5 *b* is an echo from civ. 32, and *v.* 9 from xxxiii. 2, 3. In short *vv.* 1-11 supply an illustration of Westcott's dictum, "The later Psalms are a softened echo of the strains of David, and not new songs."

It is otherwise with *vv.* 12-15, which come from some independent mind. But the fact that *vv.* 1-11 are of the nature of an anthem should keep us from the hasty judgment that *vv.* 12-15 "have nothing to do with *vv.* 1-11" (Duhm). It is true that no proper junction is made (if we can trust MT) between these two parts of the Psalm. A fresh subject is introduced without warning in *v.* 12, with the words, "We whose sons are as plants" or (possibly, as RV) "When our sons" etc. But it must be remembered that the whole Psalm is the work of a compiler, and compilers are sometimes unskilful in cementing their work.

The parts of the Psalm according to their contents fit well together. There is a telling contrast between the two parts. The first part (*vv.* 1-8) ends with a prayer for deliverance from War and its dangers. In the second part (*vv.* 9-11) the Psalmist has a vision of Deliverance and Victory, and vows that he will sing a New Song to his God. Finally in *vv.* 12-15 the New Song is given. It is a picture of the blessings of Peace, and ends with the confession that these blessings come from JEHOVAH. The Psalm as a compilation is to be regarded as a unity. See § 3.

§ 3. OCCASION AND PURPOSE.

The compiler of this "Anthem" lived at a time when a war with its dangers was coming to an end in victory. The Psalmist looks forward hopefully to the blessings of peace and strives to impress upon his countrymen that these blessings come from JEHOVAH. In *vv.* 1-8 he sets forth JEHOVAH as the giver of victory, and in *vv.* 12-15 he enumerates in thankfulness the blessings of the peace which He grants.

Domestic welfare stands first. The family lives the family life undisturbed. The sons are cared for and are trained like the plants of the husbandman. The daughters in their beauty are safe, fixt in their place at home, as though they were corner stones of the Temple (*v.* 12). The barns are filled each harvest: the flocks increase and multiply (*v.* 13). The rulers are strong men fit to bear the burden of government. There is no breach in the defences of Jerusalem and no cry of alarm in the fields outside (*v.* 14). All these good things come to Israel, because they have JEHOVAH for their God.

§ 4. CONDITION OF THE TEXT.

It has been confidently asserted that *vv.* 3, 4 were entered by a reader in his Psalter in the margin of this Psalm as in a Common Place Book, and so the words subsequently found their way into the text itself (Duhm, not Gunkel). These verses (it is said) cannot be fitted into the context. On the contrary these two self-depreciatory verses are in tune with the preceding *vv.* 1, 2 which

ascribe everything good and strong to JEHOVAH only, and further they agree with *vs.* 5, 6 which look to JEHOVAH for a special intervention to bring about the Psalmist's deliverance. If it be objected that the terms used in *vs.* 3, 4 are of too general a character for the context, surely it is in accordance with the manner of this Psalmist to quote without caring to fit his quotation exactly to its new setting.

Again, commentators find several errors of text in *vs.* 12-14. Gunkel e.g. re-writes the passage as follows:

Our sons as plants grown tall in their garden-beds;
 Our daughters as corner posts carved according to design;
 Our granaries dispensing supply upon supply (of food);
 Our sheep bringing forth thousands and ten thousands on our lands;
 Our oxen heavy laden, overflowing with strength;
 No uncleanness and no complaining in our streets.

This re-writing impoverishes the passage. The reference to the Temple in *v.* 12 is surely original: the comparison loses much, if the word *Temple* be omitted. The reference to the leaders of Israel in *v.* 14 is supported by the parallel of *lxxii.* 3, "The mountains (i.e. the great men) shall bring peace to the people." (See Psalm *lxxii.*, Introduction.) The Psalmist associates prosperity with good government. Fat oxen are no substitute for capable statesmen. Again the emendation which reads *peresh*, "dung," for *perez*, "breaking in," is indefensible. Some reference to safety from external foes is surely needed in any Old Testament picture of national prosperity: this is lost if we read *peresh* for *perez*; and a reference to clean streets is a poor substitute for a promise of safety from a foreign foe.

A Psalm of David.

CXLIV. 1 Blessed be the LORD my rock,
 Which teacheth my hands to war,
 And my fingers to fight:
 2 My lovingkindness, and my fortress,
 My high tower, and my deliverer;
 My shield, and he in whom I trust;
 Who subdueth my people under me.

1-4. JEHOVAH'S GRACIOUS CARE OF THE PSALMIST

CXLIV. 1. *Blessed...my rock* (Heb. *zūrî*). In *xviii.* 46, "Blessed be my rock."
my hands to war. Cf *xviii.* 34 f. The Psalmist is taught to handle the bow.

2. *My lovingkindness* (Heb. *hasdi, hesed*). I.e. "He who is all loving-kindness to me." P-B, *My hope*, is wrong.

subdueth my people under me. Read perhaps *peoples for my people*, and cf *xviii.* 47, where the Hebrew is 'ammim, "peoples," not 'ammi, "my people."

- 3 LORD, what is man, that thou takest knowledge of him?
Or the son of man, that thou makest account of him?
- 4 Man is like to ¹vanity:
His days are as a shadow that passeth away.
- 5 Bow thy heavens, O LORD, and come down:
Touch the mountains, and they shall smoke.
- 6 Cast forth lightning, and scatter them;
Send out thine arrows, and discomfit them.
- 7 Stretch forth thine hand from above;
Rescue me, and deliver me out of great waters,
Out of the hand of strangers;
- 8 Whose mouth speaketh vanity,
And their right hand is a right hand of falsehood.

¹ Heb. *a breath*.

3. *what is man*. Cf viii. 4, where however the two verbs which follow are different.

takest knowledge of him. Cf Gen xviii. 19, "For I have known him (Abraham), to the end that he may command his children...that they may keep the way of JEHOVAH."

4. *vanity* (Heb. *hebel*). Cf xxxix. 11, lxii. 9, note.

5-8. A PRAYER AGAINST THE PSALMIST'S FOES

5. *Bow thy heavens*. Cf xviii. 9, "He bowed the heavens also, and came down."

Touch etc. Cf civ. 32.

6. *Cast forth lightning*. Cf xviii. 14.

7. *Stretch forth*. Cf xviii. 16.

great waters. Hebrew as xviii. 16, "many waters."

strangers. More literally, *sons of a strange (god)*; cf 2 Chr xxiv. 7; Mal ii. 11, "Judah hath married the daughter of a strange god." "Son," "Daughter" are used in these passages in the sense of "adherent, worshipper." The phrase "strangers" (Heb. *bēnē nēchār*) comes from xviii. 44 f.

8. *speaketh vanity*. Rather, *hath spoken vanity*. *Vanity* (Heb. *shāv*), "a lie," is a term used to describe a thing which disappoints those who trust in it, as e.g. a false god, or in the more general sense, "worship of idols." The man who has "spoken vanity" is he who has declared his allegiance to a false god.

right hand. The hand with which allegiance is given, and a vow is taken. *The right hand of falsehood* (not as P-B, *of wickedness*) is the hand which has given fealty to a false god. Cf Isa xlv. 20, "Is there not a lie in my right hand?"

- 9 I will sing a new song unto thee, O God:
 Upon a psaltery of ten strings will I sing praises unto thee.
- 10 It is he that giveth salvation unto kings:
 Who rescueth David his servant from the hurtful sword.
- 11 Rescue me, and deliver me out of the hand of strangers,
 Whose mouth speaketh vanity,
 And their right hand is a right hand of falsehood.
- 12 When our sons shall be as plants grown up in their youth;
 And our daughters as corner stones hewn after the fashion of
 a palace;
- 13 *When* our garners are full, affording all manner of store;
And our sheep bring forth thousands and ten thousands in
 our fields;

9-11. THE PSALMIST REPEATS HIS PRAYER, PREFACING IT WITH
 WORDS OF PRAISE

9. *I will sing a new song.* Cf xxxiii. 3, xl. 3, note, xcvi. 1.

Upon a psaltery of ten strings will I sing praises. The sentiment is like Milton's "Let the pealing Organ blow." The Psalmist will give no "lean song grating on scannel Pipe of wretched straw," but a full sound of praise. Cf xxxiii. 2, 3, notes.

10. *salvation.* Better as P-B, *victory.*

from the hurtful sword. Vulgate, *de gladio maligno*, i.e. from the sword in the hand of wicked men.

11. *Rescue me* etc. The refrain is varied from the text of 7 b, 8 by the omission of the reference to "great waters."

12-15. THE "NEW SONG." THE PSALMIST DESCRIBES THE
 HAPPINESS OF THE PEOPLE TO WHOM JEHOVAH GRANTS THE
 BLESSINGS OF PEACE

12. *When* etc. For the conclusion of this long sentence, see v. 15.

our sons etc. Rather, *our sons are brought up in their youth as the plants.* There is a double metaphor here: the sons are like the plants, *first*, because JEHOVAH has rooted them in their own land; *secondly*, because they receive attention as careful as that which the husbandman bestows on his crops.

our daughters as corner stones. Again the comparison implies *two* things: *first*, a dwelling at home, as opposed to being carried away captive by an enemy; *secondly*, the possession of a stately beauty.

of a palace. So also AV, but *of the Temple* (P-B) is better. Cf Rev iii. 12, "I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go out thence no more."

13. *in our fields.* Not as P-B, AV, *in our streets.* The Hebrew word

- 14 *When our oxen are well laden ;
When there is no breaking in, and no ¹going forth,
And no outcry in our streets ;*
- 15 *Happy is the people, that is in such a case :
Yea, happy is the people, whose God is the LORD.*

¹ Or, *sallying*.

hūzōth means places which are "outside," either outside a city and so *fields*, or outside houses and so *streets*.

14. *When our oxen are well laden*. Rather, *When our princes are laden*, i.e. when they bear their burden of government. The Hebrew word *allūphim*, "princes," is found in Gen xxxvi. 15, where it is rendered "dukes" (marg. "chiefs"); Exod xv. 15, "dukes"; Zech xii. 5, 6, "chieftains." In Ps cxliv however (and here only) successive English versions following LXX, Vulgate, and many Jewish authorities have taken *allūphim* as equivalent to *ālāphim*, "oxen," probably because they did not see how "princes" could be described as "laden." But the authority of the Jewish commentator Rashi may be cited in favour of giving *allūphim* its usual sense, and the description of "princes" as "laden" is according to a metaphor well known to the Hebrews. In several places of the O.T. government is represented as a burden to be carried, thus: Num xi. 11 (Moses speaks to God), "Thou layest the burden of all this people upon me"; Isa ix. 6, "The government shall be upon his shoulder"; xxii. 22, "The key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder." Here in the Psalm the best rendering is, *When our princes bear their burden*. On the other hand, when the chiefs shrink from the burden of government, it is a sure sign that the state is in grave danger: Isa iii. 6, 7.

no breaking in (Heb. *perez*). The Hebrew word is used of a breach in a city wall: Neh vi. 1.

no going forth. Marg. *sallying*. Better, *no going into captivity*: cf P-B, *no leading into captivity*. See Jer xv. 1, 2; Ezek xii. 4.

no outcry. Or, *no complaining* (P-B, AV): Jer xiv. 2 (because of famine).

15. *Yea, happy...the Lord*. Cf xxxiii. 12.

PSALMS CXLV-CL

Psalm cxlv has the heading "(A Psalm of) praise," a title which applies equally well to each of the six Psalms which conclude the Psalter. The six have much in common both in language and in thought, as the following list of parallels shows:

ЈЕHOVAH "raiseth up all those that be bowed down":

cxlv. 14 = cxlvi. 8; cf cxlviii. 14.

He feeds all creatures:

cxlv. 16; cf cxlvii. 9.

Earthly powers are of no avail :

cxlvi. 3, 4; cf cxlvii. 10, 11.

JEHOVAH shows special kindness to Israel (Zion) :

cxlvi. 5, cxlvii. 2, 19, 20, cxlviii. 14, cxlix. 2.

He cares for the unfortunate :

cxlvi. 7-9; cf cxlvii. 3.

He has authority over natural processes :

cxlvii. 15-18; cf cxlviii. 8.

Further parallels may be found with earlier Psalms, e.g. with ciii, civ.

Duhm, looking at these Psalms from a purely literary standpoint, dismisses them rather lightly. Psalm cxlv is "a compilation from Psalms, some very late"; cxlvi is "a collection of quotations made as for learning by heart"; cxlvii. 1-3, 6 is a "harmless doxological composition," while *vv.* 12-20 were perhaps "quickly thrown off"; cxlviii and others like it were "easy for any one acquainted with the Scriptures to compose."

But judged from the religious standpoint these six Psalms make a different impression. There are repetitions which are not "vain," but spring from an earnest mind, and there is a literary simplicity which is due to truthfulness of soul.

Moreover thanks to the method of compilation five of these Psalms are of a universal character; they are Canticles which may be adapted without paraphrasing to the use of the Christian Church. They may be said to belong to universal religion. How far Jewish particularism dominates Ps cxlix must be decided from a separate study of that Psalm.

PSALM CXLV

PRAISE OF THE LOVINGKINDNESS OF JEHOVAH

§ 1. CONTENTS.

1-7. I, the Psalmist, and my fellow-men, yea, and men from generation to generation, will extol Thee, my God and king.

8, 9. The lovingkindness of JEHOVAH.

10-12. JEHOVAH'S works in Creation will praise Him, and His saints will tell mankind of His glory.

13-20. JEHOVAH'S providence is exercised over all living things.

21 (cf *vv.* 1-7). The Psalmist will praise JEHOVAH; let all flesh (or "all mankind") do the same.

§ 2. ARRANGEMENT.

This is an alphabetical Psalm, like xxv and some others. It consists of twenty-one verses, each beginning with a different letter of the alphabet from *Aleph* to *Tau* in order. There are however twenty-two letters in the Hebrew alphabet, and in MT the verse which should begin with the letter *Nun* and should stand after *v.* 13 is missing. But at this point LXX has a verse which evidently began with *Nun*: πιστός (i.e. Heb. *ne'ēman*, נְעִיִן) Κύριος ἐν τοῖς λόγοις αὐτοῦ, καὶ ὁσιος (Heb. *hāsīd*, חַסִּדִּים) ἐν πάσι τοῖς ἔργοις αὐτοῦ, "The Lord is faithful in his words,

and holy in all his works." No doubt these words stood in the Hebrew text which lay before the LXX translators, though not perhaps in all Hebrew MSS of the time.

§ 3. CHARACTER AND ORIGINALITY.

Again it must be said, as in the Introduction to xxv, that the "artificial" alphabetic arrangement which this Psalmist employs does not prove him to be a mere formalist. There is deep feeling in his strangely ordered song of praise. The Psalm is dominated by a definite conception of the character of JEHOVAH. The Psalmist is transported with the thought of the mercy and kindness of his God. JEHOVAH, he says, is *great* (v. 3), *gracious and full of compassion* (v. 8), *good to all* (v. 9), *righteous... And gracious* (v. 17) and *nigh unto all them that call upon him* (v. 18). The additional verse found in LXX (v. 14 a) also contains the epithet *hāsīd*, "gracious, kind." The Psalmist has repeated the sayings of earlier Psalmists, but he has made them his own. With the heading of *praise* compare the conclusion *the praise of JEHOVAH* (v. 21).

A Psalm of praise; of David.

- CXLV.** 1 I will extol thee, my God, O King;
 And I will bless thy name for ever and ever.
 2 Every day will I bless thee;
 And I will praise thy name for ever and ever.
 3 Great is the LORD, and highly to be praised;
 And his greatness is unsearchable.
 4 One generation shall laud thy works to another,
 And shall declare thy mighty acts.

1-7. THE PSALMIST'S RESOLUTION TO GIVE PRAISE

CXLV. 1. *I will extol thee.* Or, *I will exalt thee*, as cxviii. 28, the same Hebrew verb: LXX, ὑψώσω. The expression is strange, even child-like as from man to God: it is derived no doubt from Exod xv. 2, "My father's God, and I will exalt him." Cf xcvi. 9, xcix. 2.

King. This title (often in the form, *My King*) is given to JEHOVAH in v. 2, x. 16, xxiv. 7, xxix. 10, xlv. 4, xlvii (see Introduction and v. 2), lxxviii. 24, lxxiv. 12, xcvi. 6, cxlix. 2.

2. *Every day.* Cf Exod xxix. 28, where the daily morning and evening sacrifice of a lamb is enjoined.

3. *highly to be praised.* P-B, *marvelous* (sic) *worthy to be praised* (sic), where *marvelous* is an adverb governing the adjective *worthy*; Vulgate, *laudabilis nimis*.

his greatness is unsearchable. Cf Job v. 9, "(God) Which doeth great things and unsearchable." P-B, *There is no end of his greatness* (Vulgate, *non est finis*), is inaccurate.

4. *One generation...to another.* Cf xxii. 30, 31.

shall laud. The verb *laud* is used occasionally to translate the rare

- 5 Of the glorious majesty of thine honour,
And of thy wondrous works, will I meditate.
- 6 And men shall speak of the might of thy terrible acts;
And I will declare thy greatness.
- 7 They shall utter the memory of thy great goodness,
And shall sing of thy righteousness.
- 8 The LORD is gracious, and full of compassion;
Slow to anger, and of great mercy.
- 9 The LORD is good to all;
And his tender mercies are over all his works.
- 10 All thy works shall give thanks unto thee, O LORD;
And thy saints shall bless thee.
- 11 They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom,
And talk of thy power;
- 12 To make known to the sons of men his mighty acts,
And the glory of the majesty of his kingdom.

Hebrew verb שָׁחַ, a synonym of the better known הָלַל, to avoid the repetition of the verb *praise*. *Laud* is used in cxxxv. 1 (P-B) and in Rom xv. 11 (AV).

5. *thy wondrous works*. Lit. *the words of thy wonders*, i.e. the story of thy wondrous works.

will I meditate. Cf civ. 34, "Let my meditation be sweet unto him" (JEHOVAH). This first resolution of the Psalmist is followed up in the following verse with a second, "I will declare thy greatness." The Psalmist will first *muse* and then *speak out*.

8, 9. THE LOVINGKINDNESS OF JEHOVAH

8. *JEHOVAH is gracious* etc. A free quotation of Exod xxxiv. 6 (JEHOVAH proclaims His name on Mount Sinai before Moses).

9. *good to all*. P-B, *loving unto every man*; Vulgate, *suavis... universis*. The Hebrew term used here for *all* (*hak-kōl*) is uncommon; but of ciii. 19, "His kingdom ruleth over *all*"; cxix. 91, "*All things* are thy servants." *All* means "all persons" or "all Creation." The sentiment agrees with the general tone of cxlv, but the text is not quite certain. LXX BA gives *χρηστέος... τοῖς ὑπομένουσιν [αὐτόν]*, "kind to those who wait for him."

10-12. JEHOVAH'S WORKS IN CREATION WILL PRAISE HIM, AND HIS SAINTS WILL TELL MANKIND OF HIS GLORY

10. *All thy works shall give thanks*. Cf cxlviii. 3 ("Praise ye him, sun and moon") and *passim*.

- 13 Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
And thy dominion *endureth* throughout all generations.
- 14 The LORD upholdeth all that fall,
And raiseth up all those that be bowed down.
- 15 The eyes of all wait upon thee;
And thou givest them their meat in due season.
- 16 Thou openest thine hand,
And ¹satisfiest the desire of every living thing.
- 17 The LORD is righteous in all his ways,
And gracious in all his works.
- 18 The LORD is nigh unto all them that call upon him,
To all that call upon him in truth.

¹ Or, *satisfiest every living thing with favour*

13-20. JEHOVAH'S PROVIDENCE IS EXERCISED OVER
ALL LIVING THINGS

13. *an everlasting kingdom*. Lit. *a kingdom of all ages*, βασιλεία πάντων τῶν αἰώνων. Cf cxlvi. 10, note.

14. JEHOVAH *upholdeth all that fall*. This verse should perhaps be reckoned as v. 15, for in LXX v. 13 is immediately followed by a verse not found in MT,

*The Lord is faithful in his words,
And holy (or gracious) in all his works.*

See the Introduction.

JEHOVAH *upholdeth all that fall*. Thus does the Psalmist expand the restricted statement of xxxvii. 17, "JEHOVAH upholdeth the righteous." So in v. 9, "JEHOVAH is good to all," while xxxiv. 8 reads simply, "JEHOVAH is good."

raiseth up all those that be bowed down. This is repeated in cxlvi. 8 *b*, only without the adjective *all*. Men are "bowed down" in distress or in humiliation.

15. *The eyes of all etc*. This verse as rendered in the Vulgate has been long used as a grace before food, *Oculi omnium in te sperant, Domine, et tu das escam illorum in tempore opportuno*.

in due season. Or, *in its season*, as in i. 3, the same Hebrew phrase.

16. *Thou openest thine hand*. So in civ. 28 *b*.

And satisfiest etc. Better as marg. *And satisfiest every living thing with favour*. *Favour*, Heb. *rāzōn*, LXX, *eúdoκίας*, "good pleasure," is right, not *desire* (AV, RV), nor *plenteousness* (P-B): so in v. 12.

17. *gracious*. Heb. *hāsīd*, "endued with kindness." The Hebrew word is usually applied to men, and is sometimes rendered, "saint, saints"; cf lxxxvi. 2, "I am godly" (RV, but "I am holy" AV). It is used of God here and in Jer iii. 12, "I am *merciful*, saith JEHOVAH."

18. JEHOVAH *is nigh*. Cf xxxiv. 18.

- 19 He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him ;
 He also will hear their cry, and will save them.
 20 The LORD preserveth all them that love him ;
 But all the wicked will he destroy.
 21 My mouth shall speak the praise of the LORD ;
 And let all flesh bless his holy name for ever and ever.

19. *He will fulfil the desire.* The Heb. *rāzōn* is rather the "good pleasure": cf v. 16, note.

20. *will he destroy.* So AV, but P-B has *scattereth abroad*, as though the translator had mistaken the Vulgate *disperdet*, "he will destroy," for *disperget*, "he will scatter."

21. THE COLOPHON

21. *all flesh.* I.e. "all mankind": cf lxxv. 2, cxxxvi. 25.

PSALM CXLVI

JEHOVAH IS CREATOR, BENEFACTOR AND ETERNAL KING

This Psalm is a compilation; but if the words are borrowed, the feeling is the Psalmist's own: cf Ps cxlv, Introduction. Surely his own experience speaks in vv. 2-4, though he appeals to wider (perhaps national) experience in v. 6-9.

Duhm has said that this Psalm was meant to be learnt by heart. Such too is the case in the Christian Church with the Baptismal Creed (the *Apostolicum*). Ps cxlvi may be described as an Old Testament Creed. JEHOVAH is confessed as Creator and Saviour in vv. 6-9, and in v. 10 it is said that His kingdom shall have no end. With the solemn chanting of this Creed Israel met the pressure of surrounding Gentile Polytheism. The Psalm lives. Cf cxv, Introduction.

CXLVI. 1 ¹Praise ye the LORD.

Praise the LORD, O my soul.

2 While I live will I praise the LORD:

I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being.

¹ Heb. *Hallelujah.*

CXLVI. 1. *Praise ye JEHOVAH.* Heb. *Hallelujah.* Pss cxlvi-cl together with Ps cvi begin and end each with *Hallelujah*, which became a liturgical formula like *Amen*. Similarly Ps civ begins *Bless JEHOVAH, O my soul*, and ends with *Hallelujah*.

2. *While I live.* Cf lxiii. 4.

while I have any being. So civ. 33, Hebrew and RV.

- 3 Put not your trust in princes,
Nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help.
4 His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth;
In that very day his ¹thoughts perish.
5 Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help,
Whose hope is in the LORD his God:
6 Which made heaven and earth,
The sea, and all that in them is;
Which keepeth truth for ever:
7 Which executeth judgement for the oppressed;
Which giveth food to the hungry:
The LORD looseth the prisoners;
8 The Lord openeth *the eyes of the blind*;

¹ Or, *purposes*

3. *Put not your trust etc.* Cf cxviii. 8, 9.

in princes...in the son of man. There is the same contrast here as in lxii. 9, "men of low degree...men of high degree." The Hebrew word *nēdībīm* (נְדִיבִים) "princes," denotes a class rather than an office.

in whom there is no help. Or, *for he hath no salvation (or deliverance)* to give. Cf 1 Macc ii. 63, "To-day he (man) shall be lifted up, and tomorrow he shall in no wise be found, because he is returned unto his dust, and his thought (ὁ διαλογισμὸς) is perished."

4. *thoughts.* Marg. *purposes.* The same Hebrew word is used in the original text of Eccles iii. 24, "Many are the thoughts (or "conceits") of the sons of men."

5. *the God of Jacob.* Heb. *El-Jacob*, "God the Conqueror": cf xlvi. 7, note.

6. *The sea, and all that in them is.* Cf Gen i. 9, 10, 21. Heathen thought imagined the sea to be under the authority of a god other than the god of heaven. The Psalmists on the other hand often assert the rule of JEHOVAH over the sea and its inhabitants: xxxiii. 7, lxv. 6, 7, note, xc. 5, civ. 25, cvii. 23 ff.

Which keepeth truth for ever. Cf cxvii. 2. P-B, *Who keepeth his promise for ever* (a good paraphrase).

7. *looseth the prisoners.* Cf cv. 20, cvii. 10-14. The extreme misery of prisoners is illustrated in Jer xxxviii. 6-9.

8. *JEHOVAH openeth the eyes of the blind.* So Peshitta. The text is difficult owing to the absence of the words "the eyes of" from MT. LXX gives Κύριος σοφοί τυφλοῦς, "The LORD maketh wise the blind." Targ. "JEHOVAH watches over immigrants (*achsanyān* = ξένους) who are likened (in this passage) to the blind."

- The LORD raiseth up them that are bowed down ;
 The LORD loveth the righteous ;
 9 The LORD preserveth the strangers ;
 He upholdeth the fatherless and widow ;
 But the way of the wicked he ¹turneth upside down.
 10 The LORD shall reign for ever,
 Thy God, O Zion, unto all generations.
²Praise ye the LORD.

¹ Or, *maketh crooked*² Heb. *Hallelujah*.

raiseth up them that are bowed down. So cxlv. 14, *q.v.*
loveth the righteous. So also AV, rightly: LXX, ἀγαπᾷ. P-B, paraphras-
 tically, *careth for the righteous.*

9. *strangers* (Heb. *gērim*). I.e. foreigners residing in Israel under the protection of some person of influence: cf xxxix. 12, note; so in the Fourth Commandment, "Thy stranger that is within thy gates," Exod xx. 10. The Psalmist says that JEHOVAH Himself acts as the Protector of these foreigners. So Boaz says to Ruth, "A full reward be given thee of JEHOVAH...under whose wings thou art come to take refuge" (Ruth ii. 12).

He upholdeth. Or, *He helpeth.* Cf cxlvii. 6, "JEHOVAH upholdeth the meek," the same Hebrew verb.

he turneth upside down. More lit. as marg. *maketh crooked*, i.e. difficult and dangerous. Cf i. 6, xxxv. 6.

10. *JEHOVAH shall reign.* Cf x. 16.

PSALM CXLVII

JEHOVAH'S POWER AND HIS PROVIDENCE

§ 1. CONTENTS.

1-6. Praise JEHOVAH for His goodness to Israel.

7-9. The good providence of JEHOVAH over the animal creation.

10-14. Peace (prosperity) is not secured by horsemen and footmen, nor by fortifications: it is the gift of JEHOVAH.

15-18. The power of JEHOVAH as displayed in natural phenomena.

19, 20. JEHOVAH's favour to Israel in giving them His law.

§ 2. This Psalm is indeed a *Tēhillah*, a song of praise. It begins and closes with the great word *Hallelujah*, "Praise ye JAH." There is no word of petition in it. This Psalmist is specially remarkable for his combination of subjects of praise. In *vv.* 1-6 JEHOVAH is praised for His goodness to Israel, and in *vv.* 10-14 the Psalmist returns to his subject and shows that he means in particular the favour of his God to Zion. So again in *vv.* 7-9 he celebrates JEHOVAH's power over nature and returns to the same subject under another aspect in *vv.* 15-18. He has a world-wide outlook as well as a care for his own people.

Further this Psalmist realizes in two brief sentences two chief characteristics of the work of JEHOVAH in the world. Europe's greatest cynic in the nineteenth century (Napoleon Bonaparte) is said to have declared that God was always on the side of "the big battalions": the Psalmist on the contrary affirms that his God "hath no pleasure" in powerful cavalry nor in sturdy infantry: His pleasure is in the God-fearing (vs. 10, 11). The Psalmist yields his final outburst of praise not for any material benefit, but for JEHOVAH'S gift of the Law to Israel (vs. 19, 20).

The division of this Psalm into two Psalms, the second consisting of vs. 12-20, which is found in LXX, Vulgate, and Peshitta, is unfortunate, for it separates vs. 10, 11 from vs. 12, 13. JEHOVAH Himself defends Zion without the help of horsemen or footmen.

CXLVII. 1 ¹Praise ye the LORD;

²For it is good to sing praises unto our God;
For it is pleasant, *and* praise is comely.

2 The LORD doth build up Jerusalem;
He gathereth together the outcasts of Israel.

3 He healeth the broken in heart,
And bindeth up their ³wounds.

4 He telleth the number of the stars;
He giveth them all their names.

¹ Heb. *Hallelujah*.

² Or, *For he is good: sing praises unto our God, for he is gracious*

³ Heb. *sorrows*.

1-6. JEHOVAH'S GOODNESS TO ISRAEL

CXLVII. 1. *Praise ye etc.* Read (cf marg.) *Praise ye JEHOVAH, for he is good; I will praise our God with a Psalm, for he is gracious. Praise is comely!* For *I will praise...with a Psalm* the Hebrew is *zammērah*, probably an infinitive used absolutely, so that a tense-form must be supplied in English to express the sense completely.

2. *doth build up.* I.e. "rebuild," as in li. 18, cii. 16.

the outcasts of Israel. Cf Isa xi. 12, "He shall assemble *the outcasts of Israel*, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth."

3. *their wounds.* Rather as marg. *their sorrows.* JEHOVAH sees and heals the sorrows of the heart.

4. *He telleth etc.* According to heathen thought the stars were themselves gods and exercised influence over human affairs. But this verse puts the stars under the feet of the One God: He *numbers* them as a king numbers his armies; He gives names to them as a superior to inferiors: cf Gen ii. 19, 20; 2 K xxiii. 34, xxiv. 17.

- 5 Great is our Lord, and mighty in power;
His understanding is infinite.
- 6 The LORD upholdeth the meek:
He bringeth the wicked down to the ground.
- 7 Sing unto the LORD with thanksgiving;
Sing praises upon the harp unto our God:
- 8 Who covereth the heaven with clouds,
Who prepareth rain for the earth,
Who maketh grass to grow upon the mountains.
- 9 He giveth to the beast his food,
And to the young ravens which cry.

5. *Great is our Lord.* Cf viii. 1, "O JEHOVAH, our *Lord*." (P-B, "our Governor.") The Hebrew word *ādōn* used here (as in viii. 1) designates JEHOVAH as the ruler. The title *ādōn* was given to heathen gods, e.g. to the Syrian god "Adonis," hence the qualifying pronoun, "*our Lord*." In cxxxvi. 3, JEHOVAH is described as *ādōn* of *ādōnīm*, "Lord of lords."

His understanding is infinite. Lit. (as AV marg.) *Of his understanding* there is *no number* (or *no telling*). The Hebrew word for *number*, like the English word *tell*, loses sometimes its special sense of "counting."

6. *upholdeth.* Cf cxlvi. 9, note.

the meek (Heb. 'ānāvīm). See ix. 12, note.

He bringeth...down. Or *abaseth*.

7-9. JEHOVAH'S GOOD PROVIDENCE OVER THE ANIMAL CREATION

7. *Sing* (Heb. *Answer*). The Hebrew verb suggests antiphonal singing: it is used in Exod xv. 21, "And Miriam *answered* them, Sing ye to JEHOVAH." See also cxix. 172, note.

Sing praises. Or, *Sing a Psalm*; LXX, ψάλατε.

8. *covereth the heaven with clouds.* The glory of Palestine as contrasted with Egypt is that it is a land of rains, "a land of hills and valleys, and drinketh water of the rain of heaven" (Deut xi. 11). The rains bring that flush of green herbage which the traveller sees far above him "upon the mountains." The wonder of the rain is all the greater because the heavens of Palestine are sometimes like "brass" (Deut xxviii. 23).

9. *the beast* (Heb. *bēhēmāh*). The reference here is to wild beasts, as in Deut xxviii. 26. P-B introduces an inappropriate thought: *Who giveth fodder unto the cattle.*

the young ravens. Cf Job xxxviii. 41. JEHOVAH feeds the wild creatures, for whom man does not provide. So civ. 10-12, 21, 27.

- 10 He delighteth not in the strength of the horse :
 He taketh no pleasure in the legs of a man.
- 11 The LORD taketh pleasure in them that fear him,
 In those that hope in his mercy.
- 12 Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem ;
 Praise thy God, O Zion.
- 13 For he hath strengthened the bars of thy gates ;
 He hath blessed thy children within thee.
- 14 ¹He maketh peace in thy borders ;
 He filleth thee with the ²finest of the wheat.
- 15 He sendeth out his commandment upon earth ;
 His word runneth very swiftly.

¹ Heb. *He maketh thy border peace.*² Heb. *fat of wheat.*

10-14. PEACE (PROSPERITY) IS NOT SECURED BY ARMED FORCES :
 IT IS THE GIFT OF JEHOVAH

10. *He delighteth not in the strength of the horse.* This mention of the horse calls up at once the thought of war, of cavalry and chariotry : cf xxxiii. 17 ; Deut xvii 16 ; xx. 1 ; Isa ii. 7. Again the mention of the *legs of a man* in this connexion suggests the marching of stout infantry. On several Assyrian reliefs of scenes of war one panel shows an array of proud war-horses, while another panel above or below has an ordered body of stalwart infantry, showing the calves of the legs strongly developed. See e.g. the representation of the installation of Ummanigash as king of Elam in the Kouyunjik Gallery, B.M. This verse teaches that JEHOVAH does not grant victory (and the peace which follows victory) to "the big battalions."

11. *JEHOVAH taketh pleasure.* Victory and safety will be granted rather to the true worshippers of JEHOVAH, men who do not organize themselves for war, but are content to wait for the manifestation of the Divine favour towards them. The Psalmist may be thinking of the passage of the Red Sea : "Stand still, and see the salvation of JEHOVAH... JEHOVAH shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace" (Exod xiv. 13, 14).

13. *For he hath strengthened the bars etc.* The Psalmist proceeds to show that in deprecating all trust in horses and armaments ("in the arm of flesh") he has not spoken wildly. He appeals to recent experience. JEHOVAH has in fact defended Jerusalem, and blessed her inhabitants by granting to them peace and plenty (v. 14).

15-18. THE POWER OF JEHOVAH AS DISPLAYED IN
 NATURAL PHENOMENA

15. *His word.* I.e. His word of command : cf v. 18. Nothing falls from heaven, no natural process takes place on earth, but by JEHOVAH'S command.

- 16 He giveth snow like wool;
 He scattereth the hoar frost like ashes.
- 17 He casteth forth his ice like morsels:
 Who can stand before his cold?
- 18 He sendeth out his word, and melteth them:
 He causeth his wind to blow, and the waters flow.
- 19 He sheweth his word unto Jacob,
 His statutes and his judgements unto Israel.
- 20 He hath not dealt so with any nation:
 And as for his judgements, they have not known them.
- ¹Praise ye the LORD.

¹ Heb. *Hallelujah*.

16. *snow like wool*. Soft and white and more rarely seen in Palestine than with us it was a standing wonder to Israel.

17. *ice like morsels* (of bread). Another cause of wonder to the Eastern man.

Who can stand before his cold? A vivid turn in the description; it should not be removed by "emendation." Cold (with its accompanying "snow" and "hail") is one of JEHOVAH's instruments of war: lxviii. 14, note; Josh x. 11; Job xxxviii. 22, 23; cf 1 Macc xiii. 21, 22. The abrupt question introduced to give variety to a descriptive passage is characteristic of Hebrew style: see viii. 4, xxv. 12; cf 2 Chr xxxii. 4. Derenbourg's emendation, *Waters stand* (i.e. are frozen) *before his cold*, is lifeless and perverse.

18. *He sendeth out his word* etc. The alternations of cold and heat are seen by the Psalmist to be the action of JEHOVAH.

19, 20. JEHOVAH'S FAVOUR TO ISRAEL IN GIVING THEM HIS LAW

19. *He sheweth his word*. So C'thib, but K'ri has *his words*. The reference as the rest of the verse shows is to the Pentateuch.

His statutes and his judgements. Cf Deut xxvi. 16, 17.

20. *He hath not dealt so with any nation*. See Deut iv. 6-8, "What great nation is there, that hath statutes and judgements so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?"

PSALM CXLVIII

BENEDICITE IN THE PSALTER

§ 1. CONTENTS.

1-6. Praise JEHOVAH from heaven all ye angels and ye heavenly bodies. Dan iii. 58-63 (from the *Song of the Three Holy Children, Benedicite, omnia opera*) should be compared in the true LXX text from cod. 87 (ed. H. B. Swete).

7-10. Praise JEHOVAH all ye inhabitants of the sea and of the land and also

all ye natural phenomena. Dan iii. 64-81 should be compared, though that passage has been considerably expanded from the four verses of the Psalm.

11-13. Let all peoples and let all classes in Israel praise JEHOVAH. Dan iii. 82-87 should be compared.

14. Praise is due to JEHOVAH, for He has "lifted up the horn" of His people.

§ 2. RELATION OF THE PSALM TO THE *SONG OF THE THREE HOLY CHILDREN*, THE *Benedicite*.

The Song is printed separately in the Revised Version of the Apocrypha. The portion of the Song appointed as a Canticle in the Book of Common Prayer consists of *vv.* 35-66 *a* = Dan iii. 57-88 *a* in the Septuagint. *Vv.* 35-66 *a* of the Song can be best described as an expansion of the Psalm. The Psalm both by its conciseness, and by certain touches absent from the *Benedicite*, escapes the monotony which belongs to the Canticle.

CXLVIII. 1 ¹Praise ye the LORD.

Praise ye the LORD from the heavens:

Praise him in the heights.

2 Praise ye him, all his angels:

Praise ye him, all his host.

3 Praise ye him, sun and moon:

Praise him, all ye stars of light.

4 Praise him, ye heavens of heavens,

And ye waters that be above the heavens.

5 Let them praise the name of the LORD:

For he commanded, and they were created.

¹ Heb. *Hallelujah*.

1-6. LET PRAISE BE GIVEN TO JEHOVAH FROM HEAVEN

CXLVIII. 2. *all his host(s)*. In the *Benedicite* (P-B), *all ye Powers of the Lord*. The reference is to the stars, in which gods were supposed by the Gentiles to reside.

Here the invocation is given in the language of strict Monotheism. The earlier form of this invocation—a survival from the language of Polytheism—is found in xcvi. 7, "Worship him, all *ye gods*." See note there.

3. *all ye stars of light*. The Hebrew text is uncertain. LXX, πάντα τὰ ἀστρα καὶ τὸ φῶς. A slight change of MT would yield, *every star and light*. The Hebrew word אור, *or* ("light"), is perhaps used here in the sense of "luminary" as in cxxxvi. 7, "great lights," i.e. luminaries.

4. *waters that be above the heavens*. See Gen i. 7.

5. *Let them praise*. I.e. by doing His will: v. 8.

he commanded. The pronoun is emphatic.

- 6 He hath also stablished them for ever and ever :
 He hath made a decree ¹which shall not pass away.
- 7 Praise the LORD from the earth,
 Ye ²dragons, and all deeps :
- 8 Fire and hail, snow and vapour ;
 Stormy wind, fulfilling his word :
- 9 Mountains and all hills ;
 Fruitful trees and all cedars :
- 10 Beasts and all cattle ;
 Creeping things and flying fowl :
- 11 Kings of the earth and all peoples ;
 Princes and all judges of the earth :

¹ Or, *which none shall transgress* ² Or, *sea-monsters* Or, *waterspouts*

6. *a decree.* The Hebrew word *hōk* may be rendered *either* "decree" or "boundary." With the former rendering RV text agrees, *a decree which shall not pass away.* With the latter rendering RV marg. is suitable, *a boundary which none shall transgress*: so Job xxxviii. 10, "I prescribed for it (the sea) my boundary (so margin), and set bars and doors."

7-10. LET PRAISE BE GIVEN FROM SEA AND LAND

7. *Ye dragons* (marg. *sea-monsters*), and *all deeps* (Heb. *tēhōmōth*). The conjunction of *dragons* and *tēhōmōth* (the plural of *tēhōm*) shows that the Psalmist is thinking of the old Semitic myth of Creation, when *Tēhōm* (*Tiāmat*) and her horde of monsters, the powers of Chaos, fought against the Creator-God. The Psalmist would say, "Let every rebellious power submit and give praise."

8. *Stormy wind, fulfilling his word.* Instances are Exod x. 19, xiv. 21 ; Num xi. 31 ; Jonah i. 4 ; iv. 8.

9. *all hills.* Cf xcvi. 8 b.

Fruitful trees. Cf xcvi. 12 f.

10. *Beasts and all cattle.* I.e. Wild beasts and domesticated animals.

Creeping things. Not *worms* (P-B), but creatures large or small, which "creep" whether on land or in the waters : see civ. 25 ; Gen i. 21 ("every living creature that creepeth," so the Hebrew), 26. *Worm* in the English of the sixteenth century includes serpents.

11-13. LET MANKIND IN HIS DIFFERENT RANKS AND CLASSES GIVE PRAISE

11. *Kings of the earth.* The absence of any hostile tone towards "Kings" should be noted. There is a note of Universalism in these last Psalms. There is no real exception in cxlix. 6-9, *q.v.*

- 12 Both young men and maidens ;
 Old men and children :
- 13 Let them praise the name of the LORD ;
 For his name alone is exalted :
 His glory is above the earth and heaven.
- 14 And he hath lifted up ¹the horn of his people,
 The praise of all his saints ;
 Even of the children of Israel, a people near unto him.
²Praise ye the LORD.

¹ Or, a horn for his people, a praise for all his saints; even for &c.

² Heb. *Hallelujah*.

13. *his name alone is exalted*. Phrases to the effect that the name of one God or another is exalted above the rest are common in Babylonian (Assyrian) literature. A hymn to Sin the Moon God begins with the words, "O Lord, chief of the gods, who alone is exalted on earth and in heaven." So again a hymn to Ishtar declares, "Thou art queen, thy name is exalted." But no direct Babylonian influence on the Psalm need be supposed. Cf xcvii. 9.

14. PRAISE IS DUE TO JEHOVAH FOR THE FAVOUR HE HAS SHOWN
 TO HIS PEOPLE

14. *And he hath etc.* Better, *And he hath raised up a horn for his people, And hath given an occasion for praise to all his saints*. For *horn* see lxxv. 10, note, lxxxix. 17, note. It is uncertain who is meant by the *horn*, but possibly the reference is to the high priest Simon the son of Onias whose beneficent acts to his people are described in Ecclus l. 1-21. Unfortunately the date of this Simon cannot be fixt. Some suppose him to be Simon I (300-290 B.C.) who was grandson of Jaddua, who was a contemporary of Alexander the Great, while others identify him with Simon II also "son of Onias," who flourished circ. 219-199 B.C. But possibly the reference is quite general and the meaning is that God has raised up those that are bowed down (cxlv. 14), i.e. His people Israel.

P-B, *He shall exalt the horn of his people*, follows lxx, *ὑψώσει*, but MT is doubtless right in giving a past tense. For a modern interpretation of the raising up of the horn see Ps cxlix, Introduction, § 2.

a people near unto him. Deut iv. 7, "What great nation is there, that hath a god (or "gods") so nigh unto them, as JEHOVAH our God is whensoever we call upon him?"

PSALM CXLIX

THE TRIUMPH OF THE SAINTS

§ 1. CONTENTS.

- 1-3. A summons to give praise.
 4. The reason for giving praise.
 5-9. The prospect for the future.

§ 2. OCCASION AND DATE.

Duhm (p. 484) describes this as "A very interesting Psalm, which may even have had its origin among the earliest of the Maccabean warriors." The "assembly of the saints" (Heb. *kēhal hāsīdīm*) is (he supposes) the συναγωγή Ἀσιδαίων of 1 Macc ii. 42, "who offered themselves willingly for the law." He emends the text, transferring cxlviii. 14 *a, c* to a position between *v.* 6 and *v.* 7, and translating the words as follows:

"For he lifts up a horn for his people,
 For the sons of Israel, the people whom he brings near to himself."

Further he explains the "horn" to mean the aptitude for war which the Jews suddenly displayed after Antiochus had profaned the Temple. Here are (bare) possibilities, and a truly arbitrary emendation.

Gunkel's view accords better with the language of the Psalm. He regards it (cf *v.* 7, note) as a vision. The Psalmist is not concerned with past events; but out of present distresses he is granted a vision of future triumphs: Israel *shall take them captive, whose captives they were; and they shall rule over their oppressors* (cf Isa xiv. 2).

But in the setting which he gives to the Psalm Gunkel can hardly be right. The Psalmist, he supposes, sees in his vision an Israelite army returning victorious from war, and *singing for joy* (*v.* 5) not "upon their beds," but "in their battle array" (an emendation of the Hebrew). The warriors praise יהוה with full-throated song *sword in hand*. It is a vivid picture, but hardly to be accepted in the absence from *vv.* 5-9 of any indication of a procession, and still more by the presence of the telling phrase "upon their beds" in *v.* 5. A view which requires the support of an emendation lies under suspicion.

Further be it said that we may lose the true significance of a Psalm, when we seek for a particular historical occasion to account for its birth. The saints praise God simply because they cannot help praising Him:

Morning, evening, noon and night,
 "Praise God!" sang Theocrite.

As with this Psalm, so also with the following. Ps cl needs no further explanation than the irresistible desire of the heart to give praise. "Man would praise Thee, because he is one of Thy creatures. Thou dost prompt us thereto, making it a joy to praise Thee." So writes St Augustine, *Conf.* i. i.

CXLIX. 1 ¹Praise ye the LORD.

Sing unto the LORD a new song,

And his praise in the assembly of the saints.

2 Let Israel rejoice in him that made him:

Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King.

3 Let them praise his name in the dance:

Let them sing praises unto him with the timbrel and harp.

4 For the LORD taketh pleasure in his people:

He will beautify the meek with ²salvation.

5 Let the saints exult in glory:

Let them sing for joy upon their beds.

¹ Heb. *Hallelujah*.

² Or, *victory*

1-3. A SUMMONS TO GIVE PRAISE

CXLIX. 1. *Praise ye* JEHOVAH (Heb. *Hallelujah*). The Great Bible of 1539 from which P-B is taken gives *Prayse the everlastinge*, rendering *JAH* (i.e. JEHOVAH) in the sense of the Everlasting One. But P-B has omitted this introductory clause.

a new song. See xxxiii. 3, note, xl. 3, note.

2. *him that made him*. I.e. that made him into a nation: see Ps c. 3, note.

in their King. The title *King* is given to JEHOVAH in many passages of the Psalms: e.g. v. 2, x. 16, xxix. 10, *al*. A king *defends* and judges his people (1 Sam viii. 20). See also xlvii, Introduction, § 2.

3. *in the dance*. In the Genevan (Puritan) version of 1560, *with the flute*: AV marg. *with the pipe*. But LXX has ἐν χορῷ, "in the dance," and the same Hebrew word is used in Jer xxxi. 4, 13, "in the dance(s)." The processional religious dance was a custom in Israel: Exod xv. 20; 1 Sam x. 5; 2 Sam vi. 14-16; cf Ps cl. 4 *a* (*flute*, Genevan version). Did the Genevan translators doubt if dancing could be a religious exercise?

4. THE REASON FOR GIVING PRAISE

4. *taketh pleasure*. Cf cii. 14, an interesting parallel.

beautify. Or, *glorify*, as Isa lx. 7, "I will *glorify* the house of my glory" (the same Hebrew verb).

the meek (Heb. 'ānāvīm). See ix. 12, note.

5-9. THE PROSPECT FOR THE FUTURE

5. *the saints* (Heb. *hāsīdīm*). For the meaning of *hāsīd* see xii. 1, note.

Let them sing etc. Let them have joy at night, and *à fortiori* by day: cf Job xxxv. 10, "God...who giveth songs in the night."

The reading *in* (i.e. *upon*) *their beds*, LXX, ἐπὶ τῶν κοιτῶν αὐτῶν, is certainly to be retained: it is a vivid touch suggesting the tranquil

- 6 *Let the high praises of God be in their ¹mouth,*
And a two-edged sword in their hand;
 7 *To execute vengeance upon the nations,*
And punishments upon the peoples;
 8 *To bind their kings with chains,*
And their nobles with fetters of iron;
 9 *To execute upon them the judgement written:*
²*This honour have all his saints.*
³*Praise ye the LORD.*

¹ Heb. *throat.* ² Or, *He is the honour of all his saints* ³ Heb. *Hallelujah.*

security of the "saints." Gunkel, who thinks that *vv.* 5 ff. imply a procession of victors returning from war, wishes to read על מערכותם, "in their ranks," for על משכבותם, "upon their beds," but LXX and other versions agree with MT, and there is no word in the Psalm which directly suggests a procession.

6. *Let the high praises of God be in their mouth etc.* Rather, *Such as have the high praises of God in their mouth (or throat), And a two-edged sword in their hand.* No wish is expressed in the Hebrew: the verse characterizes those who are called "saints" in *v.* 5.

7. *To execute vengeance etc.* The terms used in *vv.* 7-9, *nations, peoples, kings, nobles, the judgment written,* are all of a general character; they do not suggest a reference to any particular episode.

8. *To bind their kings etc.* As of old kings of the Gentiles bound kings of Israel and led them captive: 2 K xxv. 7; 2 Chr xxxiii. 11.

9. *To execute upon them the judgement written.* The judgment which the saints execute is a "written" judgment, i.e. one written in heaven, prescribed by JEHOVAH Himself, announced perhaps from of old by His prophets as in Isa xxiv. 21, 22. The following clause is literally rendered, *It (i.e. the punishment of kings) is an honour granted to all his saints.*

PSALM CL

PRAISE AT ITS HEIGHT

It has been said earlier in this book that a Psalm is not a poem, but the words of a Song composed (or extemporized) to accompany a piece of instrumental music. David and the Psalmists are musicians first, poets afterwards. Ps cl may be called an ideal illustration of this fact. The Psalmist's words are simply an appeal to the players on instruments to let every instrument contribute its quota to the praise of God.

There is no reason for enquiring into the "occasion" of this Psalm. This Psalmist felt like others that "It is a good thing...to sing praises unto thy name, O Most High" (xcii. 1; cf cxlvii. 1. See Ps cxlix, Introduction, § 2).

This natural outburst calling for an act of praise forms a fitting close to the

Book of Psalms. Its last words are spent in a universal appeal to Mankind, or perhaps to all Creation ("every thing that hath breath"). Considerations of time and space are wholly absent. Ps cl belongs to no one age and to no one country.

It is therefore with a feeling of resentment that we find in LXX and Vulgate yet another Psalm allowed to occupy this place of honour. Though not without merit, "Ps cli" is devoid of poetic fire. It is a prosaic postscript to a book of Songs of Praise. With its heading it is read as follows in the Septuagint:

"This is a private Psalm relating to David and outside the number (*ἔξωθεν τοῦ ἀριθμοῦ*), when he fought his single combat with Goliath.

1. I was a little one among my brethren,
And a junior (*νεώτερος*) in my father's house:
I fed my father's sheep.
2. My hands made a pipe,
My fingers constructed a psaltery.
3. And who am I to tell it (*ἀναγγελάω*, cod R) to my Lord?
The Lord Himself, He heareth.
4. He sent forth His angel,
And took me away from my father's sheep,
And anointed me with the oil of His anointing.
5. My brethren were fair and tall,
And the Lord had no pleasure in them.
6. I went forth to meet the Philistine,
And he cursed me by his idols;
7. But I took his sword from him,
I cut off his head, and took away the reproach from the children of Israel."

CL. 1 ¹Praise ye the LORD.

Praise God in his sanctuary:

Praise him in the firmament of his power.

2 Praise him for his mighty acts:

Praise him according to his excellent greatness.

3 Praise him with the sound of the trumpet:

Praise him with the psaltery and harp.

¹ Heb. *Hallelujah*.

CL. 1. *Praise ye JEHOVAH* (Heb. *Hallelujah*). The last Psalm begins and ends appropriately with *Hallelujah*.

in his sanctuary...in the firmament. I.e. on earth and in heaven. Cf lxix. 34, "Let heaven and earth praise him."

3. *with the sound of the trumpet*. Lit. *with blast of horn* (Heb. *shōphār*). The *shōphār*, a simple, primitive instrument consisting of the curved horn of an animal, was appointed for announcing the New Moon: lxxxi. 3. *with the psaltery* (Heb. *nēbel*, "the great harp") and *harp* (or *lyre*). Cf lxxi. 22.

- 4 Praise him with the timbrel and dance:
 Praise him with stringed instruments and the pipe.
 5 Praise him upon the loud cymbals:
 Praise him upon the high sounding cymbals.
 6 Let every thing that hath breath praise ¹the LORD.
²Praise ye the LORD.

¹ Heb. *Jah*.² Heb. *Hallelujah*.

4. *the timbrel and dance*. This appeal is specially for the women: cf lxviii. 25; Exod xv. 20.

the pipe (Heb. 'ügāb or 'uggāb). See Gen iv. 21, where *harp* and *pipe* (so RV) seem to stand as representatives of stringed and wind instruments respectively. AV gives *organ(s)* here and in Gen iv. 21, understanding the Hebrew word to mean an instrument consisting of a number of reeds; it is not an "organ" in the present sense of the English word.

5. *loud cymbals*. Lit. *cymbals of hearing*, a phrase which LXX understands as "pleasant to hear," *κμβάλους εὐήχους*, hence "well-tuned cymbals," P-B.

high sounding cymbals. Lit. *cymbals of a loud noise* (or *shout*: Heb. *tšrū'āh*). See xxxiii. 3, note, xlvii. 5.

6. *Let every thing that hath breath etc.* Lit. *Let every breath praise JAH*: so LXX, *πάσα πνοή αἰνεσάτω τὸν κύριον*.

IS SIT FINIS LIBRI, SED NON FINIS QUAERENDI

S. BERNARD

Embosomed deep in thy dear love (cxlvi. 8),
 Held in thy law I stand (cxix. 128);
 Thy hand in all things I behold (cix. 27),
 And all things in thy hand (xxvi. 6);
 Thou leadest me by unsought ways (cxxxix. 10),
 And turn'st my mourning into praise (xxx. 12).

S. LONGFELLOW

ADDITIONAL NOTE

THE USE OF THE PSALTER IN THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER

The Preface to the Prayer Book of 1549 complains that the reading of the Scriptures in the "common prayers in the church...hath been these many years past altered, broken, and neglected." Books, even Isaiah and Genesis, were begun, three or four chapters were read, and the rest were left unread.

A similar complaint is made about the Psalms: "A few of them have been daily said...and the rest utterly omitted." Accordingly it was directed that the whole Psalter should be read through once a month, and a table was constructed in which a portion of the Psalms was assigned for Matins and a portion for Evensong for each day of the month. The portions were taken in sequence, so that Pss i-v were assigned to the Matins of the first day of the month, and Pss cxlvii-cl to the Evensong of the thirtieth. The arrangement made for the thirtieth was repeated on the thirty-first, when necessary. Special Psalms were appointed for the great festivals, e.g. for Christmas, Matins and Evensong (as in 1662); for Easter Day (as in 1662); for Ascension, Matins (as in 1662), but for Evensong, Pss xxiv, lxviii, and cxlviii (in 1662, Pss xxiv, xlvii, and cviii); lastly, for Whitsunday, Matins, Pss xlvi, lxvii, cxlv (in 1662, Pss xlvi, lxviii), and for Evensong, Pss civ, cxlv (as in 1662). No special Psalms were appointed for Ash Wednesday and Good Friday till 1662.

There was the less need for supplying special Psalms for these two days, since appropriate Introits were appointed, namely, Ps vi (*Domine, ne in furore*) for Ash Wednesday, and Ps xxii (*Deus, Deus meus*) for Good Friday. The Introits form an important feature in the Prayer Book of 1549. A new selection was made deviating considerably from the Sarum Missal, and including some Psalms which were omitted in the Sarum use, one object of the Revisers being no doubt to enlarge the selection. Among the improvements made in 1549 must be reckoned the choice of Ps xxiii for Septuagesima in place of Ps xviii (Sarum and Missale Romanum), and of Ps xxiv for Sexagesima in place of Ps xlv (Sarum and Missale Romanum).

These Introits are printed in full with the Collect, Epistle and Gospel

for each Sunday and Holy Day. On Christmas Day were appointed for the first and second celebrations respectively Ps xcvi ("With his own right hand... hath he gotten himself the victory," v. 2), and Ps viii ("Out of the mouth of very babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength," v. 2). To Epiphany is assigned Ps xcvi ("Tell it out among the heathen that the Lord is King," v. 10). Easter Day has for the first and second celebrations respectively Ps xvi ("Thou shalt not leave my soul in hell," v. 11), and Ps iii ("I laid me down and slept, And rose up again: for the Lord sustained me," v. 5). To Ascension Day is assigned Ps xlvii ("God is gone up with a merry noise," v. 5), and to Whitsunday, Ps xxxiii ("By the word of the Lord were the heavens made: And all the hosts of them by the breath of his mouth," v. 6). Trinity Sunday has Ps lxxvii with its threefold "May God bless (*benedicat*) us." Ps xliii ("Give sentence with me") is appointed for the Third Sunday in Lent.

Psalms have been used freely in the Occasional Offices. Pss cxxviii and lxxvii (as alternatives) have been used in the Marriage Service from 1549 onwards: in the Revised Book of 1928 another alternative is added, namely, Ps xxxvii. 3-7 ("Put thou thy trust in the Lord"). The Order for the Visitation of the Sick began in 1549 with Ps cxliii ("Enter not into judgement with thy servant," v. 2), and proceeded to include Ps lxxi ("Cast me not away in the time of age: Forsake me not when my strength faileth me," v. 8). The first of these Psalms is absent from the form of 1662, while the Book of 1928 prints one Psalm only—Ps cxxi ("The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil," v. 7), but other Psalms are allowed including Ps xxiii ("The Lord is my shepherd") and Ps ciii ("Praise the Lord, O my soul"). For the Burial of the Dead three Psalms were provided in 1549 to be said in the following order, namely cxvi, cxxxix, cxlvi. In 1662 the appointed Psalms were xxxix and xc; in 1928 a wider choice was given by the addition of xxiii ("The Lord is my shepherd") and cxxx ("Out of the deep"): for the Burial of a Child in 1928 Ps xxiii only is prescribed. For the Purification ("Churching") of Women the Book of 1549 appoints Ps cxxi ("I have lifted—*sic!*—mine eyes unto the hills"). In the Books of 1662 and 1928 the choice is given between cxvi ("I am well pleased that the Lord hath heard the voice of my prayer") and cxxvii ("Except the Lord build the house"). In the Communion Service (1549 and 1662) which is "to be used on the first day of Lent, and at other times, as the Ordinary shall appoint" (1662), Ps li is to be said kneeling. In the Forms of Prayer to be used at Sea (1662) Pss lxvi and cvii are printed as a

Thanksgiving after a storm. In the Accession Service (1925) Pss xx, ci and cxxi are to be used.

In the Prayer Book of 1928 the Psalter of 1662 in its unrevised text was retained, but in view of the occurrence of imprecatory expressions certain passages were bracketed to show that they might be omitted in recitation at the discretion of the Minister. The passages thus marked are according to the enumeration of the Prayer Book: lv. 16; lviii (the whole Psalm); lxviii. 21-23; lxix. 23-29; cix. 5-19; cxxxvii. 7-9; cxl. 9, 10; cxli. 7, 8.

It is unfortunate that no use was made of the revised Psalter of 1916-1920. (See General Introduction, p. lxviii.) Beside the improvements mentioned on p. lxviii the following passages should be consulted: Ps xviii. 5, 6 (future tenses rightly changed to preterites); xlii. 8 (“*from the land of Jordan*”: the Psalmist is exiled from Jerusalem); lxxxvii. 1 (“*His*—i.e. JEHOVAH’S—foundation,” i.e. Zion); xciv. 20 (“*the judgement-seat of wickedness*”); cvi. 30 (“*Phinehas...executed judgement*”); cxix. 61.

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