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PSALM 1: 1 Blessed is the man who doesn't walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand on the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers;

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### Section I - On the Names Given to this Book

This book is termed in Hebrew ספר תהלים Sepher Tehillim, which some learned men derive from הל hal or הלל halal, to move briskly, irradiate, shine; and translate, The Book of the Shinnings forth, Irradiations, Manifestations, or Displays, namely, of Divine wisdom and love exhibited in God's dealing with his chosen people, or with particular persons, as figures, for the time being, of what should be accomplished either in the person of Christ, or in his mystical body the Church. But as halal signifies also to praise, and praise arises from a sense of gratitude, is the expression of inward joy, and was often exhibited by brisk notes, sprightly music, etc., it may be well denominated The Book of Praises, as the major part of the Psalms have for their subject the praises of the Lord.

That the Psalms were sung in the Jewish service, and frequently accompanied by musical instruments, there is no doubt, for the fact is repeatedly mentioned; and hence the most ancient translation we have of the Psalms, viz., the Septuagint, as it stands in what is called the Codex Alexandrinus, is called Ψαλτηριον, The Psalter, which is a species of musical instrument resembling the harp, according to the accounts given of it by some of the ancients. From this term came the Psalterium of the Vulgate, and our word Psalter, all of which are deduced from the verb ψαλλω, to sing, as the voice no doubt always accompanied this instrument, and by it the key was preserved and the voice sustained.

A Psalm is called in Hebrew מזמור mizmor, from זמר zamar, to cut off, because in singing each word was separated into its component syllables, each syllable answering to a note in the music.

### General Division of the Book

The Hebrews divide the Psalms into five books, and this division is noticed by several of the primitive fathers. The origin of this division is not easily ascertained; but as it was considered a book of great excellence, and compared for its importance to the Pentateuch itself, it was probably divided into five books, as the law was contained in so many volumes. But where the divisions should take place the ancients are not agreed; and some of them divide into three fifties rather than into five parts; and for all these divisions they assign certain allegorical reasons which merit little attention.

The division of the Hebrews is as follows: -

Book I. From Psa 1:1-6 to Psa 41:1-13 inclusive.

Book II. From Psa 42:1-11 to Psalm 72 inclusive.

Book III. From Psalm 73 to Psalm 89 inclusive.

Book IV. From Psalm 90 to Psalm 106 inclusive.

Book V. From Psalm 107 to Psa 150:1-6 inclusive.

The First, Second, and Third Books end with Amen and Amen; the Fourth, with Amen and Hallelujah, the Fifth, with Hallelujah.

But the Psalms themselves are differently divided in all the Versions, and in many MSS. This is often very embarrassing to the reader, not only in consulting the Polyglots, but also in referring to theological works, whether of the Greek or Latin Church, where the Psalms are quoted; the Greek ecclesiastical writers following the Septuagint; and those of the Latin Church, the Vulgate. I shall lay a proper table of these variations before the reader, remarking first, that though they differ so much in the division of the Psalms, they all agree in the number one hundred and fifty.

A Table of the Differences in Dividing the Psalms Between the Hebrew Text and the Ancient Versions, Syriac, Septuagint, Chaldee, Arabic, Aethiopic, and Vulgate

In the above versions Psalm 9 and 10 make only Psalm 9. Hence there is one Psalm less in the reckoning as you proceed to Psa 114:1-8, 115, which make Psa 113:1-9 in all those versions. Hence two Psalms are lost in the reckoning.

Psalm 116 is divided at Psa 116:9, the versions beginning Psalm 115 at Psa 115:10. Hence one Psalm is gained on the above reckoning.

Psalm 119 makes Psalm 118 in all the versions.

Psalm 147 they divide at Psa 147:11, and begin Psalm 147 with Psa 147:12. Here then the reckoning becomes equal, and all end alike with Psa 150:1-6. '

In the Syriac, Septuagint, Aethiopic, and Arabic, there is what they call an extra-numeral Psalm, said to have been composed by David after his victory over Goliath. A translation of this will be found at the close of these notes.

The Hebrew MSS. agree often with the versions in uniting Psalms which the common Hebrew text has separated, and thus often support the ancient versions. These things shall be considered in the course of the notes.

On the Compilation of the Book, and the Authors to whom the Psalms Have Been Attributed

After having said so much on the name and ancient divisions of this important book, it may be necessary to say something in answer to the question, "Who was the author of the Book of Psalms?" If we were to follow the popular opinion, we should rather be surprised at the question, and immediately answer, David, king of Israel! That many of them were composed by him, there is no doubt; that several were written long after his time, there is internal evidence to prove; and that many of them were written even by his contemporaries, there is much reason to believe.

That the collection, as it now stands, was made long after David's death, is a general opinion among learned men; and that Ezra was the collector and compiler is commonly believed. Indeed all antiquity is nearly unanimous in giving Ezra the honour of collecting the different writings of Moses and the prophets, and reducing them into that form in which they are now found in the Holy Bible, and consequently the Psalms among the rest. See this subject treated at large in the preface to Ezra, etc.

In making this collection it does not appear that the compiler paid any attention to chronological arrangement. As he was an inspired man, he could judge of the pieces which came by Divine inspiration, and were proper for the general edification of the Church of God.

The writer of the Synopsis, attributed to St. Athanasius, says that the friends of King Hezekiah chose one hundred and fifty Psalms out of the number of three thousand which David had composed, and that they suppressed the rest: he says farther, that this is written in the Chronicles; but it is not

found in the Chronicles which we now have, though it might have been in other Chronicles which that author had seen.

That some Scriptural collections were made under the influence and by the order of Hezekiah, we learn from Pro 25:1 : 'These are also proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah, king of Judah, copied out.' But whether these were employed on the writings of the father, as they were on those of the son, we cannot tell. The above authority is too slender to support any building of magnitude.

The only method we have of judging is from the internal evidence afforded by several the Psalms themselves, and from the inscriptions which many of them bear. As far as time and facts are concerned, many of them can be traced to the days of David, and the transactions which then occurred, and in which he bore so eminent a part. But there are others in which we find no note of time, and no reference to the transactions of David's reign.

As to the inscriptions, they are of slender authority; several of them do not agree with the subject of the Psalm to which they are prefixed, and not a few of them appear to be out of their places.

In one of the prologues attributed to St. Jerome, but probably of Eusebius, at the end of Vol. II. of St. Jerome's Works by Martinay, we find a table in which the whole Book of Psalms is dissected, showing those which have inscriptions, those which have none, and those to which the name of a particular person, as author, is prefixed. I shall give these in gross, and then in detail: Psalms without any name prefixed, 17; Psalms with an inscription, 133; in all 150.

These are afterwards divided into those which bear different kinds of titles, without names; and those which have names prefixed. I shall give these from the Quintuplex Psalterium, fol. Paris, 1513, as being more correct than in the edition of Jerome, by Martinay.

No Inscription 1, 2, 32, 42, 70, 90, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 103, 115, 136, 147 18 David's 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 67, 68, 69, 85, 100, 102, 107, 109, 133, 137, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144 70 Solomon's 71, 124 2 Sons of Korah 41, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 83, 84, 86 10 Asaph 49, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82 12 Heman 87 1 Ethan 88 1 Moses 89 1 No Name Specified A Song or Psalm A Song or Psalm A Psalm or Song A Prayer of the Afflicted 65, 66, 91, 101 4 Hallelujah 104, 105, 106, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 116, 117, 118, 134, 135, 145, 146, 148, 149, 150 18 Psalms of Degrees 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132 13 Grand Total 150 Supping that the persons already mentioned are the authors of those Psalms to which their names are prefixed, there are still fifty-three, which, as bearing no proper name, must be attributed to uncertain authors, though it is very probable that several of them were made by David.

The reader will observe that as the preceding enumeration is taken from the Vulgate, consequently it is not exactly the same with ours: but the rules already given at page 200, will enable him to accommodate this division to that in our common Bibles, which is the same with that in the Hebrew text.

In order to make the preceding table as correct as possible, I have carefully collated that in the Benedictine edition of St. Jerome's Works, with professedly the same table in the Quintuplex Psalter, in both of which there are several errors. In the Works, though all the numbers are given at large, as primus, decimus, centesimus, &c, yet the sum total, under each head, rarely agrees with the items above it. This was so notoriously the table in Jerome's Works, that I thought best to follow that in the Psalter above mentioned, which had been carefully corrected by Henry Stephens.

After all, this table gives but small satisfaction, when we come to collate it with the Psalms in the Hebrew text, or as they stand in our common English Bible. That nothing might be wanting, I have made an analysis of the whole from our present text, collating this with the Hebrew where I was in doubt; and by this the reader will see how greatly these tables differ from each other; and that many Psalms must now come under different arrangement, because of their different titles, from that which they had in St. Jerome's time. For instance, in St. Jerome's time there were seventy, or, as in some copies, seventy-two Psalms that had the name of David in the inscriptions; at present there are seventy-three thus inscribed in the Hebrew text.

The blessedness of the righteous shown, in his avoiding every appearance of evil, Psa 1:1. In his godly use of the law of the Lord, Psa 1:2 This farther pointed out under the metaphor of a good tree planted in a good well-watered soil, Psa 1:3. The opposite state of the ungodly pointed out, under the metaphor of chaff driven away by the wind, Psa 1:4. The miserableness of sinners, and the final happiness of the godly, Psa 1:5, Psa 1:6.

#### Verse 1

Blessed is the man - This Psalm has no title, and has been generally considered, but without especial reason, as a preface or introduction to the whole book.

The word אֲשֵׁרִי ashrey, which we translate blessed, is properly in the plural form, blessednesses, or may be considered as an exclamation produced by contemplating the state of the man who has taken God for his portion; O the blessedness of the man! And the word הַאִישׁ haish, is emphatic: That man; that one among a thousand who lives for the accomplishment of the end for which God created him.

1. God made man for happiness.
2. Every man feels a desire to be happy.
3. All human beings abhor misery.
4. Happiness is the grand object of pursuit among all men.
5. But so perverted is the human heart, that it seeks happiness where it cannot be found; and in things which are naturally and morally unfit to communicate it.
6. The true way of obtaining it is here laid down.

That walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly - There is a double Climax in this verse, which it will be proper to note: -

There are here three characters, each exceeding the other in sinfulness.

1. The Ungodly, רִשְׁעִים reshaim from רָשָׁע rasha, to be unjust; rendering to none his due; withholding from God, society, and himself, what belongs to each. Ungodly - he who has not God in him; who is without God in the world.
2. Sinners, חַטָּאִים chattaim, from חָטָא chata, "to miss the mark," "to pass over the prohibited limits," "to transgress." This man not only does no good, but he does evil. The former was without God, but not desperately wicked. The latter adds outward transgression to the sinfulness of his heart.
3. Scornful, לְצַיִם letsim, from לָצַח latsah, "to mock, deride." He who has no religion; lives in the open breach of God's laws, and turns revelation, the immortality of the soul, and the existence of an

invisible world into ridicule. He is at least a deist, and endeavours to dissolve, as Much as he can, the bonds of moral obligation in civil society. As the sinner exceeds the ungodly, so the scornful exceeds both.

The second climax is found in the words,

1. Walk
2. Stand
3. Sit

Which mark three different degrees of evil in the conduct of those persons.

Observe,

1. The ungodly man - one uninfluenced by God.
2. The sinner - he who adds to ungodliness transgression
3. The scornful - the deist, atheist, etc., who make a mock of every thing sacred.

The Ungodly man walks, the Sinner stands, and the Scornful man sits down in the way of iniquity.

Mark certain circumstances of their differing characters and conduct.

1. The ungodly man has his counsel;
2. The sinner has his way; and,
3. The scorner has his seat.

The ungodly man is unconcerned about religion; he is neither zealous for his own salvation, nor for that of others: and he counsels and advises those with whom he converses to adopt his plan, and not trouble themselves about praying, reading, repenting, etc., etc. there is no need for such things; live an honest life, make no fuss about religion, and you will fare well enough at last. Now, "blessed is the man who walks not in this man's counsel;" who does not come into his measures, nor act according to his plan.

The sinner has his particular way of transgressing; one is a drunkard, another dishonest, another unclean. Few are given to every species of vice. There are many covetous men who abhor drunkenness; many drunkards who abhor covetousness; and so of others. Each has his easily besetting sin; therefore, says the prophet, let the wicked forsake His Way. Now, blessed is he who stands not in such a man's Way.

The scorner has brought, in reference to himself, all religion and moral feeling to an end. He has sat down - is utterly confirmed in impiety, and makes a mock at sin. His conscience is seared; and he is a believer in all unbelief. Now, blessed is the man who sits not down in his Seat.

See the correspondent relations in this account.

1. He who walks according to the counsel of the ungodly will soon,
2. Stand to look on the wag of sinners; and thus, being off his guard, he will soon be a partaker in their evil deeds.

3. He who has abandoned himself to transgression will, in all probability, soon become hardened by the deceitfulness of sin; and sit down with the scorner, and endeavor to turn religion into ridicule.

The last correspondency we find is: -

1. The seat answers to the sitting of the scornful.
2. The way answers to the standing of the sinner; and
3. The counsel answers to the walking of the ungodly.

The great lesson to be learned from the whole is, sin is progressive; one evil propensity or act leads to another. He who acts by bad counsel may soon do evil deeds; and he who abandons himself to evil doings may end his life in total apostasy from God. "When lust has conceived, it brings forth sin; and when sin is finished, it brings forth death." Solomon the son of David, adds a profitable advice to those words of his father: "Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men; avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away;" Pro 4:14, Pro 4:15.

As the blessedness of the man is great who avoids the ways and the workers of iniquity, so his wretchedness is great who acts on the contrary: to him we must reverse the words of David: "Cursed is the man who walketh in the counsel of the ungodly; who standeth in the way of sinners; and who sitteth in the seat of the scornful." Let him that readeth understand.

PSALM 1: 2 but his delight is in the LORD's law. On his law he meditates day and night.

#### Verse 2

But his delight is in the law of the Lord - צפּוּת chephtso, his will, desire, affection, every motive in his heart, and every moving principle in his soul, are on the side of God and his truth. He takes up the law of the Lord as the rule of his life; he brings all his actions and affections to this holy standard. He looketh into the perfect law of liberty; and is not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the word; and is therefore blessed in his deed. He not only reads to gain knowledge from the Divine oracles, but he meditates on what he has read, feeds on it; and thus receiving the sincere milk of the word, he grows thereby unto eternal life. This is not an occasional study to him; it is his work day and night. As his heart is in it, the employment must be frequent, and the disposition to it perpetual.

PSALM 1: 3 He will be like a tree planted by the streams of water, that produces its fruit in its season, whose leaf also does not wither. Whatever he does shall prosper.

#### Verse 3

Like a tree planted - Not like one growing wild, however strong or luxuriant it may appear; but one that has been carefully cultivated, and for the proper growth of which all the advantages of soil and situation have been chosen. If a child be brought up in the discipline and admonition of the Lord, we have both reason and revelation to encourage us to expect a godly and useful life. Where religious education is neglected, alas! what fruits of righteousness can be expected? An uncultivated soul is like an uncultivated field, all overgrown with briars, thorns, and thistles.

By the rivers of water - פלגי מים palgey mayim, the streams or divisions of the waters. Alluding to the custom of irrigation in the eastern countries, where streams are conducted from a canal or river to different parts of the ground, and turned off or on at pleasure; the person having no more to do than by his foot to turn a sod from the side of one stream, to cause it to share its waters with the other parts to which he wishes to direct his course. This is called "watering the land with the foot," Deu 11:10 (note), where see the note.

His fruit in his season - In such a case expectation is never disappointed. Fruit is expected, fruit is borne; and it comes also in the time in which it should come. A godly education, under the influences of the Divine Spirit, which can never be withheld where they are earnestly sought, is sure to produce the fruits of righteousness; and he who reads, prays, and meditates, will ever see the work which God has given him to do; the power by which he is to perform it; and the times, places and opportunities for doing those things by which God can obtain most glory, his own soul most good, and his neighbor most edification.

His leaf also shall not wither - His profession of true religion shall always be regular and unsullied; and his faith be ever shown by his works. As the leaves and the fruit are the evidences of the vegetative perfection of the tree; so a zealous religious profession, accompanied with good works, are the evidences of the soundness of faith in the Christian man. Rabbi Solomon Jarchi gives a curious turn to this expression: he considers the leaves as expressing those matters of the law that seem to be of no real use, to be quite unimportant, and that apparently neither add nor diminish. But even these things are parts of the Divine revelation, and all have their use, so even the apparently indifferent actions or sayings of a truly holy man have their use; and from the manner and spirit in which they are done or said, have the tendency to bear the observer to something great and good.

Whatsoever he doeth shall prosper - It is always healthy; it is extending its roots, increasing its woody fibres, circulating its nutritive juices, putting forth fruitbuds, blossoms, leaves, or fruit; and all these operations go on in a healthy tree, in their proper seasons. So the godly man; he is ever taking deeper root growing stronger in the grace he has already received, increasing in heavenly desires, and under the continual influence of the Divine Spirit, forming those purposes from which much fruit to the glory and praise of God shall be produced.

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PSALM 1: 4 The wicked are not so, but are like the chaff which the wind drives away.

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#### Verse 4

The ungodly are not so - The Vulgate and Septuagint, and the versions made from them, such as the Ethiopic and Arabic, double the last negation, and add a clause to the end of the verse, "Not so the ungodly, not so; they shall be like the dust which the wind scatters away from the face of the earth." There is nothing solid in the men; there is nothing good in their ways. They are not of God's planting; they are not good grain; they are only chaff, and a chaff that shall be separated from the good grain when the fan or shovel of God's power throws them up to the wind of his judgments. The manner of winnowing in the eastern countries is nearly the same with that practiced in various parts of these kingdoms before the invention of winnowing machines. They either throw it up in a place out of doors by a large wooden shovel against the wind; or with their weights or winnowing fans shake it

down leisurely in the wind. The grain falls down nearly perpendicularly; and the chaff, through its lightness, is blown away to a distance from the grain.

An ungodly man is never steady; his purposes are abortive; his conversation light, trifling, and foolish; his professions, friendships, etc., frothy, hollow, and insincere; and both he and his works are carried away to destruction by the wind of God's judgments.

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PSALM 1: 5 Therefore the wicked shall not stand in the judgement, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.

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#### Verse 5

Therefore the ungodly shall not stand - This refers to the winnowing mentioned in the preceding verse. Some of the versions have, The ungodly shall not arise in the judgment - they shall have no resurrection, except to shame and everlasting contempt. But probably the meaning is, When they come to be judged, they shall be condemned. They shall have nothing to plead in their behalf. That the impious were never to have any resurrection, but be annihilated, was the opinion of several among the Jews, and of some among Christians. The former believe that only the true Israelites shall be raised again; and that the souls of all others, the Christians not excepted, die with their bodies. Such unfounded opinions are unworthy of refutation.

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PSALM 1: 6 For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked shall perish.

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#### Verse 6

The Lord knoweth - יודע yodea approveth the way, "aloweth the way", Coverdale, of the righteous, צדיקים tsaddikim, from צדק tsadak, to give even weight; the men who give to all their due; opposed to רשעים reshaim, Psa 1:1, they who withhold right from all; see above. Such holy men are under the continual eye of God's providence; he knows the way that they take; approves of their motives, purposes, and works, because they are all wrought through himself. He provides for them in all exigencies, and defends them both in body and soul.

The way of the ungodly shall perish - Their projects, designs and operations, shall perish; God's curse shall be on all that they have, do, and are. And in the day of judgment they shall be condemned to everlasting fire in the perdition of ungodly men. The wicked shall perish at the presence of the Lord. Reader take warning!

The τὸ κρινομένον in this Psalm is, Who is the happy man? or, What may make a man happy?

I. This question the prophet resolves in the first two verses: 1. Negatively. It is he, 1. "That walks not in the counsel of the ungodly." 2. "That stands not in the way of sinners." 3. "That sits not in the seat of the scornful." 2. Positively. It is he, 1. "Whose delight is in the law of the Lord." 2. "Who doth meditate in the law day and night."

II. This happiness of the good man is illustrated two ways: 1. By a similitude. 2. By comparing him with a wicked man.



1. The similitude he makes choice of is that of a tree; not every tree neither, but that which hath these eminences: 1. It is "planted; " it grows not of itself, neither is wild. 2. "Planted by the rivers of water," it wants not moisture to fructify. 3. It doth fructify; "it brings forth fruit;" it is no barren tree. 4. The fruit it brings is seasonable; "it brings forth fruit in its season." 5. It is always green, winter and summer; "the leaves wither not." Clearly, without any trope, Whatsoever this good man doth, or takes in hand, "it shall prosper."

2. He shows this good man's happiness by comparing him with a wicked man, in whom you shall find all the contrary.

1. In general. Not so. As for the ungodly, it is not so with them: not so in the plantation; in the place; in the seasonable fruit; in the greenness; in the prosperity. So far from being like a tree, that they are like, 1. Chaff, a light and empty thing. 2. Chaff which the wind whiffles up and down. 3. Chaff which the wind scatters or driveth away. 4. And never leaves scattering, till it has driven it from the face of the earth. So the Vulgate, Septuagint, and Arabic.

2. And that no man may think that their punishment shall extend only to this life; in plain terms he threatens to them, 1. Damnation at the great day: "They shall not stand in judgment;" though some refer this clause to this life. When he is judged by men, *causa cadet*, he shall be condemned. 2. Exclusion from the company of the just: "Sinners shall not stand in the congregation of the righteous."

III. In the close he shows the cause why the godly is happy, the wicked unhappy: 1. Because "the way of the righteous is known to God;" approved by him, and defended. 2. But the way, studies, plots, "counsels of the wicked, shall perish."-DAVID'S HARP STRUNG AND TUNED. See the introduction.