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For the Chief Musician. Set to "The Death of the Son." A Psalm by David.

PSALM 9: 1 I will give thanks to the LORD with my whole heart. I will tell of all your marvellous works.

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David praises God for the benefits which he has granted to Israel in general, and to himself in particular, Psa 9:1-6. He encourages himself in the Lord, knowing that he will ever judge righteously, and be a refuge for the distressed, Psa 9:7-10. He exhorts the people to praise God for his judgments, Psa 9:11, Psa 9:12; prays for mercy and support; and thanks God for his judgments executed upon the heathen, Psa 9:13-16. He foretells the destruction of the ungodly, Psa 9:17; prays for the poor and needy, and against their oppressors, Psa 9:18-20.

The inscription to this Psalm in the Hebrew text is, To the chief Musician upon Muth-lab-ben, A Psalm of David. The Chaldee has, "A Song of David, to be sung concerning the Death of the Strong Man, (or champion, אַדְגַּבְרָא degabra), who went out between the Camps," that is, Goliath, on account of whose defeat this Psalm has been supposed by many to have been composed. The date in the margin is several years posterior to the death of Goliath. See the introduction.

The Vulgate: A Psalm of David, for the end; concerning the secrets of the Son."

The Septuagint and Aethiopic are the same with the Vulgate.

The Syriac: "A Psalm of David concerning Christ's receiving the throne and the kingdom, and defeating his enemies.

The Arabic: "Concerning the mysteries of the Son, as to the glory of Christ, his resurrection, and kingdom, and the destruction of all the disobedient."

Houbigant causes the Hebrew title to agree with the Vulgate, Septuagint, and Ethiopic, by uniting עַל מוֹת al muth, "concerning the death," into the word עַלְמוֹת alamoth, which signifies secret, or hidden things. "To the chief musician, or conqueror; secrets concerning the Son: A Psalm of David.

About a hundred MSS. and printed editions unite the words as above. Some translate עַלְמוֹת alamoth, "concerning the youth or infancy; the infancy of the Son." Several of the fathers have on this ground interpreted it, "concerning the incarnation of our Lord." Indeed the title and the Psalm have been so variously understood, that it would be as painful as it would be useless to follow the different commentators, both ancient and modern, through all their conjectures.

Verse 1

I will praise thee, O Lord, with my whole heart - And it is only when the whole heart is employed in the work that God can look upon it with acceptance.

I will show forth - אַסְפֶּרָה asapperah, "I will number out, or reckon up;" a very difficult task, נִפְלְאוֹתֶיךָ niphleotheycha, "thy miracles;" supernatural interventions of thy power and goodness. He whose eye is attentive to the operation of God's hand will find many of these. In the Vulgate this Psalm begins with Confitebor tibi, Domine, "I will confess unto thee, O Lord," which my old MS. above quoted translates thus: I sal schrife Lard, til the, in al my hert, I sal tel al twi wonders. On which we find the following curious paraphrase: "Here the prophete spekes agaynes that grucches with ese of il men: and the travel and anguis of gude men. I sal schrife til the Lard, that is, I sal lufe the in al my

hert, hally gederant it til thi luf: and gyfand na party tharof tyl errour, na to covatyse: ne til fleschly luf. A vile errour it is that some men says, that God dose unrightwisly in mani thinges in erthe: for tham thynk that tay sold nocht be done. Als I hard say nocht lang sythem, of a man of religyon, and of grete fame, that qwen he was in tle see, in poynte to peryshe, he said tyl Gode: Lard thu dos unryghtwysly if thou sofyre us to perysch here. God myght haf answered and said, My rightwysnes reches to sofer a beter man than thou ert to perisse here: for I hope, had he ben a ryghtwyse man, he had nocht sayd swa: for al ar unryghtwyse, that hopes that any unrightwysnes may be in Godes wyll. Bot I sal luf the in al thi workes; and tel al thy wonders; that is, bathe that er sene, and that ar nocht sene; visibels and invisibels."

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PSALM 9: 2 I will be glad and rejoice in you. I will sing praise to your name, O Most High.

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Verse 2

I will be glad and rejoice in thee - I am glad that thou hast heard my prayer, and showed me mercy; and I will rejoice in thee, in having thee as my portion, dwelling and working in my heart.

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PSALM 9: 3 When my enemies turn back, they stumble and perish in your presence.

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Verse 3

When mine enemies are turned back - It is a sure sign of a nearly approaching complete conquest over sin, when, by resistance to its influences, it begins to lose its power. That is the time to follow on to know the Lord.

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PSALM 9: 4 For you have maintained my just cause. You sit on the throne judging righteously.

PSALM 9: 5 You have rebuked the nations. You have destroyed the wicked. You have blotted out their name forever and ever.

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Verse 5

Thou hast rebuked the heathen - We know not what this particularly refers to, but it is most probably to the Canaanitish nations, which God destroyed from off the face of the earth; hence it is said, Thou hast put out their name for ever and ever, ועד לעולם leolam vaed, endlessly. Here עולם olam has its proper signification, without end. He who contends it means only a limited time, let him tell us where the Hivites, Perizzites, Jebusites, etc., now dwell; and when it is likely they are to be restored to Canaan.

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PSALM 9: 6 The enemy is overtaken by endless ruin. The very memory of the cities which you have overthrown has perished.

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Verse 6

Destructions are come to a perpetual end - Rather, "The enemy is desolated for ever; for thou hast destroyed their cities, and their memory is perished with them." Multitudes of the cities of the Canaanites have perished so utterly that neither name nor vestige remains of them.

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PSALM 9: 7 But the LORD reigns forever. He has prepared his throne for judgement.

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Verse 7

But the Lord shall endure - All things shall have an end but God and holy spirits.

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PSALM 9: 8 He will judge the world in righteousness. He will administer judgement to the peoples in uprightness.

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Verse 8

He shall judge the world in righteousness - All the dispensations of God's providence are founded in righteousness and truth.

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PSALM 9: 9 The LORD will also be a high tower for the oppressed; a high tower in times of trouble.

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Verse 9

A refuge - מִשְׁגַּב misgab, a high place, where their enemies can neither reach nor see them. He who has God for his portion has all safety in him.

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PSALM 9: 10 Those who know your name will put their trust in you, for you, LORD, have not forsaken those who seek you.

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Verse 10

They that know thy name - Who have an experimental acquaintance with thy mercy, will put their trust in thee, from the conviction that thou never hast forsaken, and never wilt forsake, them that trust in thee.

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PSALM 9: 11 Sing praises to the LORD, who dwells in Zion, and declare among the people what he has done.

Verse 11

Declare among the people his doings - It is the duty of all those who have received the salvation of God, to recommend him and his salvation to the whole circle of their acquaintance, Christians, so called, when they meet, seldom speak about God! Why is this? Because they have nothing to say.

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PSALM 9: 12 For he who avenges blood remembers them. He doesn't forget the cry of the afflicted.

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Verse 12

When he maketh inquisition for blood - This not only applies to the Canaanites, Moabites, Ammonites, and Philistines, who shed the blood of God's people unjustly, but to all the nations of the earth who, to enlarge their territory, increase their wealth, or extend their commerce, have made destructive wars. For the blood which such nations have shed, their blood shall be shed. If man should make no inquisition for this iniquitously spilt blood, God will do it, for he remembers them; and the cry of the humbled, distressed people, driven to distraction and ruin by such wars, is not forgotten before him.

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PSALM 9: 13 Have mercy on me, LORD. See my affliction by those who hate me, and lift me up from the gates of death;

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Verse 13

Have mercy upon me, O Lord - David, having laid down the preceding maxims, now claims his part in their truth. I also am in trouble through the unjust dealings of my enemies; I am brought to the gates of death; have mercy on me, and lift me up, that, being saved from the gates of death, I may show forth thy praise in the gates of the daughter of Zion. The gates of death - an open grave, leading to a yawning hell. The gates of the daughter of Zion - all the ordinances of God, by which the soul is helped forward to heaven.

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PSALM 9: 14 that I may show all of your praise. In the gates of the daughter of Zion, I will rejoice in your salvation.

PSALM 9: 15 The nations have sunk down in the pit that they made. In the net which they hid, their own foot is taken.

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Verse 15

The heathen are sank down to the pit - See on Psa 7:15 (note).

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PSALM 9: 16 The LORD has made himself known. He has executed judgement. The wicked is snared by the work of his own hands. Meditation. Selah.

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Verse 16

The Lord is known by the judgment - It is not every casualty that can properly be called a judgment of God. Judgment is his strange work; but when he executes it, his mind is plainly to be seen. There are no natural causes to which such calamities can be legally attributed.

The wicked is snared in the work of his own hands - There is nothing that a wicked man does that is not against his own interest. He is continually doing himself harm, and takes more pains to destroy his soul than the righteous man does to get his saved unto eternal life. This is a weighty truth; and the psalmist adds: Higgsion, Selah. Meditate on this; mark it well. See on Psa 3:3 (note). Some think that it is a direction to the musicians, something like our Presto, Largo, Vivace, Allegro, "Play briskly and boldly; beat away; and let sense and sound accompany each other."

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PSALM 9: 17 The wicked shall be turned back to Sheol, even all the nations that forget God.

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Verse 17

The wicked shall be turned into hell - לשאולה lisholah, headlong into hell, down into hell. The original is very emphatic.

All the nations that forget God - They will not live in his fear. There are both nations and individuals who, though they know God, forget him, that is, are unmindful of him, do not acknowledge him in their designs, ways and works. These are all to be thrust down into hell. Reader, art thou forgetful of thy Maker, and of Him who died for thee?

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PSALM 9: 18 For the needy shall not always be forgotten, nor the hope of the poor perish forever.

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Verse 18

The needy shall not always be forgotten - The needy, and the poor, whose expectation is from the Lord, are never forgotten, though sometimes their deliverance is delayed for the greater confusion of their enemies, the greater manifestation of God's mercy, and the greater benefit to themselves.

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PSALM 9: 19 Arise, LORD! Don't let man prevail. Let the nations be judged in your sight.

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Verse 19

Arise, O Lord - Let this be the time in which thou wilt deliver thy poor people under oppression and persecution.

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PSALM 9: 20 Put them in fear, LORD. Let the nations know that they are only men. Selah.

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Verse 20

Put them in fear - יהוה מורה להם shithah Yehovah morah lahem, "O Lord, place a teacher among them," that they may know they also are accountable creatures, grow wise unto salvation, and be prepared for a state of blessedness. Several MSS. read מורא morre, fear; but teacher or legislator is the reading of all the versions except the Chaldee. Coverdale has hit the sense, translating thus: O Lorde, set a Scholemaster over them; and the old Psalter, Sett Lorb a brynger of Law abouen tham.

That the nations may know themselves to be but men - אנוש enosh; Let the Gentiles be taught by the preaching of thy Gospel that they are weak and helpless, and stand in need of the salvation which Christ has provided for them. This may be the spirit of the petition. And this is marked by the extraordinary note Selah; Mark well, take notice. So the term may be understood. "This whole Psalm," says Dr. Horsley, "seems naturally to divide into three parts. The first ten verses make the First part; the six following, the Second; and the remaining four the Third. "The First part is prophetic of the utter extermination of the irreligious persecuting faction. The prophecy is delivered in the form of an ἑπιτυχιον, or song of victory, occasioned by the promise given in the fifteenth verse of the tenth Psalm; and through the whole of this song the psalmist, in the height of a prophetic enthusiasm, speaks of the threatened vengeance as accomplished. "The Second part opens with an exhortation to the people of God to praise him as the Avenger of their wrongs, and the watchful Guardian of the helpless, and, as if the flame of the prophetic joy which the oracular voice had lighted in the psalmist's mind was beginning to die away, the strain is gradually lowered, and the notes of triumph are mixed with supplication and complaint, as if the mind of the psalmist were fluttering between things present and to come, and made itself alternately present to his actual condition and his future hope. "In the Third part the psalmist seems quite returned from the prophetic enthusiasm to his natural state, and closes the whole song with explicit but cool assertions of the future destruction of the wicked, and the deliverance of the persecuted saints, praying for the event."