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For the Chief Musician. A Psalm by David.

PSALM 19: 1 The heavens declare the glory of God. The expanse shows his handiwork.

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The heavens and their host proclaim the majesty of God, Psa 19:1-6; the excellence and perfection of the Divine law, Psa 19:7-10; its usefulness, Psa 19:11. The psalmist prays for pardon and preservation from sin, Psa 19:12, Psa 19:13; and thy his Words and thoughts may be holy, Psa 19:14.

The title of this Psalm has nothing particular in it; but it is not very clear that it was written by David, to whom it is attributed; though some think that he composed it in the wilderness, while persecuted by Saul. For this opinion, however, there is no solid ground. There is no note in the Psalm itself to lead us to know when, where, or by whom it was written. It is a highly finished and beautiful ode.

Verse 1

The heavens declare the glory of God - Literally, The heavens number out the glory of the strong God. A first view of the starry heavens strikes every beholder with astonishment at the power by which they were made, and by which they are supported. To find out the wisdom and skill displayed in their contrivance requires a measure of science: but when the vast magnitude of the celestial bodies is considered, we feel increasing astonishment at these works of the strong God.

The firmament - The whole visible expanse; not only containing the celestial bodies above referred to, but also the atr, light, rains, dews, etc., etc. And when the composition of these principles is examined, and their great utility to the earth and its inhabitants properly understood, they afford matter of astonishment to the wisest mind, and of adoration and gratitude even to the most unfeeling heart.

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PSALM 19: 2 Day after day they pour out speech, and night after night they display knowledge.

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Verse 2

Day unto day uttereth speech - Each day is represented as teaching another relative to some new excellence discovered in these manifold works of God. The nights also, by the same figure, are represented as giving information to each other of the increase of knowledge already gained. "The labors of these our instructors know no intermission; but they continue incessantly to lecture us in the science of Divine wisdom. There is one glory of the sun, which shines forth by day; and there are other glories of the moon and of the stars, which become visible by night. And because day and night interchangeably divide the world between them, they are therefore represented as transmitting, in succession, each to other, the task enjoined them, like the two parts of a choir, chanting forth alternately the praises of God." - Bisbop Horne.

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PSALM 19: 3 There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard.

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## Verse 3

There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard - Leave out the expletives here, which pervert the sense; and what remains is a tolerable translation of the original: - אין אמר ואין דברים בלי נשמע קולם

Ein omer veein debarim, beli nishma kolam. "No speech, and no words; their voice without hearing." בכל הארץ יצא קום ובקצה תבל מליהם

Bechol haarets yatsa kavvam: Ubiktsey thebel milleyhem. "Into all the earth hath gone out their sound; and to the extremity of the habitable world, their eloquence."

The word קו kau, which we translate line, is rendered sonus, by the Vulgate, and φθαγγος, sound, by the Septuagint; and St. Paul, Rom 10:18, uses the same term. Perhaps the idea here is taken from a stretched cord, that emits a sound on being struck; and hence both ideas may be included in the same word; and קום kavvam may be either their line, or cord, or their sound. But I rather think that the Hebrew word originally meant sound or noise; for in Arabic the verb kavaha signifies he called out, cried, clamavit. The sense of the whole is this, as Bishop Horne has well expressed it: - "Although the heavens are thus appointed to teach, yet it is not by articulate sounds that they do it. They are not endowed, like man, with the faculty of speech; but they address themselves to the mind of the intelligent beholder in another way, and that, when understood, a no less forcible way, the way of picture or representation. The instruction which the heavens spread abroad is as universal as their substance, which extends itself in lines, or rays. By this means their words, or rather their significant actions or operations, מליהם, are everywhere present; and thereby they preach to all the nations the power and wisdom, the mercy and lovingkindness, of the Lord."

St. Paul applies this as a prophecy relative to the universal spread of the Gospel of Christ, Rom 10:18; for God designed that the light of the Gospel should be diffused wheresoever the light of the celestial luminaries shone; and be as useful and beneficent, in a moral point of view, as that is in a natural. All the inhabitants of the earth shall benefit by the Gospel of Christ, as they all benefit by the solar, lunar, and stellar light. And, indeed, all have thus benefited, even where the words are not yet come. "Jesus is the true Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world." His light, and the voice of his Spirit, have already gone through the earth; and his words, and the words of his apostles, are by means of the Bible and missionaries going out to all the extremities of the habitable globe.

On these words I shall conclude with the translation of my old Psalter: - Rom 10:1 Hevens telles the joy of God; and the werkes of his handes schwis the firmament. Rom 10:2 Day til day riftes word; and nyght til nyght schewes conying. Rom 10:3 Na speches er, ne na wordes, of the qwilk the voyces of thaim be noght herd. Rom 10:4 In al the land yede the soun of tham; and in endes of the wereld thair wordes. Rom 10:5 In the Soun he sett his tabernacle; and he as a spouse comand forth of his chaumber: he joyed als geant at ryn the way. Rom 10:6 Fra heest heven the gangyng of hym: and his gayne rase til the heest of hym: nane es that hym may hyde fra his hete.

All the versions, except the Chaldee, render the last clause of the fourth verse thus: "In the sun he hath placed his tabernacle;" as the old Psalter likewise does. They supposed that if the Supreme Being had a local dwelling, this must be it; as it was to all human appearances the fittest place. But the Hebrew is, "Among them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun." He is the center of the universe; all the other heavenly bodies appear to serve him. He is like a general in his pavilion, surrounded by his troops, to whom he gives his orders, and by whom he is obeyed. So, the solar influence gives

motion, activity, light, and heat to all the planets. To none of the other heavenly bodies does the psalmist assign a tabernacle, none is said to have a fixed dwelling, but the sun.

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PSALM 19: 4 Their voice has gone out through all the earth, their words to the end of the world. In them he has set a tent for the sun,

PSALM 19: 5 which is as a bridegroom coming out of his room, like a strong man rejoicing to run his course.

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#### Verse 5

Which is as a bridegroom, etc. - This is a reference to the rising of the sun, as the following verse is to the setting. He makes his appearance above the horizon with splendor and majesty; every creature seems to rejoice at his approach; and during the whole of his course, through his whole circuit, his apparent revolution from east to west, and from one tropic to the same again, no part of the earth is deprived of its proper proportion of light and heat. The sun is compared to a bridegroom in his ornaments, because of the glory and splendour of his rays; and to a giant or strong man running a race, because of the power of his light and heat. The apparent motion of the sun, in his diurnal and annual progress, are here both referred to. Yet both of these have been demonstrated to be mere appearances. The sun's diurnal motion arises from the earth's rotation on its axis from west to east in twenty-three hours, fifty-six minutes, and four seconds, the mean or equal time which elapses between the two consecutive meridian-transits of the same fixed star. But on account of the sun's apparent ecliptic motion in the same direction, the earth must make about the three hundred and sixty-fifth part of a second revolution on its axis before any given point of the earth's surface can be again brought into the same direction with the sun as before: so that the length of a natural day is twenty-four hours at a mean rate. The apparent revolution of the sun through the twelve constellations of the zodiac in a sidereal year, is caused by the earth's making one complete revolution in its orbit in the same time. And as the earth's axis makes an angle with the axis of the ecliptic of about twenty-three degrees and twenty eight minutes, and always maintains its parallelism, i.e., is always directed to the same point of the starry firmament; from these circumstances are produced the regular change of the seasons, and continually differing lengths of the days and nights in all parts of the terraqueous globe, except at the poles and on the equator. When we say that the earth's axis is always directed to the same point of the heavens, we mean to be understood only in a general sense; for, owing to a very slow deviation of the terrestrial axis from its parallelism, named the precession of the equinoctial points, which becomes sensible in the lapse of some years, and which did not escape the observation of the ancient astronomers, who clearly perceived that it was occasioned by a slow revolution of the celestial poles around the poles of the ecliptic, the complete revolution of the earth in its orbit is longer than the natural year, or the earth's tropical revolution, by a little more than twenty minutes; so that in twenty-five thousand seven hundred and sixtythree entire terrestrial revolutions round the sun, the seasons will be renewed twenty-five thousand seven hundred and sixty-four times. And in half this period of twelve thousand eight hundred and eighty-two natural years, the points which are now the north and south poles of the heavens, around which the whole starry firmament appears to revolve, will describe circles about the then north and south poles of the heavens, the semi-diameters of which will be upwards of forty-seven degrees.

Coming out of his chamber - מִחַפְּתוֹ mechuppatho, from under his veil. It was a sort of canopy erected on four poles, which four Jews held over the bridegroom's head.

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PSALM 19: 6 His going out is from the end of the heavens, his circuit to its ends; There is nothing hidden from its heat.

PSALM 19: 7 The LORD's law is perfect, restoring the soul. The LORD's testimony is sure, making wise the simple.

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#### Verse 7

The law of the Lord - And here are two books of Divine Revelation:

1. The visible Heavens, and the works of creation in general.
2. The Bible, or Divinely inspired writings contained in the Old and New Testaments.

These may all be called the Law of the Lord; תּוֹרָה torah, from יָרָה yarah, to instruct, direct, put straight, guide. It is God's system of instruction, by which men are taught the knowledge of God and themselves, directed how to walk so as to please God, redeemed from crooked paths, and guided in the way everlasting. Some think that תּוֹרָה torah means the preceptive part of Revelation. Some of the primitive fathers have mentioned three Laws given by God to man:

1. The law of nature, which teaches the knowledge of God, as to his eternal power and Deity, by the visible creation.
2. The law given to Moses and the prophets, which teaches more perfectly the knowledge of God, his nature, his will and our duty.
3. The law of grace given by Christ Jesus, which shows the doctrine of the atonement, of purification, and of the resurrection of the body.

The first is written in hieroglyphics in the heavens and the earth. The second was written on tables of stone, and in many rites and ceremonies. The third is to be written on the heart by the power of the Holy Ghost.

Is perfect - תְּמִימָה temimah, it is perfection, it is perfect in itself as a law, and requires perfection in the hearts and lives of men. This is Its character.

Converting the soul - Turning it back to God. Restoring it to right reason, or to a sound mind; teaching it its own interest in reference to both worlds. This is Its use.

The testimony of the Lord - עֵדוּת eduth, from אֵד ad, beyond, forward. The various types and appointments of the law, which refer to something beyond themselves, and point forward to the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Some understand, the doctrinal parts of the law.

Is sure - נֶאֱמָנָה neemanah, are faithful; they point out the things beyond them fairly, truly, and fully, and make no vain or false report. They all bear testimony to the great atonement. This is Their character.

Making wise the simple - The simple is he who has but one end in view: who is concerned about his soul, and earnestly inquires, "What shall I do to be saved?" These testimonies point to the atonement, and thus the simple-hearted is made wise unto salvation. This is Their use.

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PSALM 19: 8 The LORD's precepts are right, rejoicing the heart. The LORD's commandment is pure, enlightening the eyes.

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#### Verse 8

The statutes of the Lord - פקודים pikkudim, from פקד pakad, he visited, cared, took notice of, appointed to a charge. The appointments, or charge delivered by God to man for his regard and observance.

Are right - ישרים yesharim, from ישר yashar, to make straight, smooth, right, upright, opposed to crookedness in mind or conduct; showing what the man should be, both within and without. This is Their character.

Rejoicing the heart - As they show a man what he is to observe and keep in charge, and how he is to please God, and the Divine help he is to receive from the visitations of God, they contribute greatly to the happiness of the upright - they rejoice the heart. This is Their use.

The commandment - מצוה mitsvah, from צוה tsavah, to command, give orders, ordain. What God has ordered man to do, or not to do. What he has commanded, and what he has prohibited.

Is pure - From ברה barah, to clear, cleanse, purify. All God's commandments lead to purity, enjoin purity, and point out that sacrificial offering by which cleansing and purification are acquired. This is Its character.

Enlightening the eyes - Showing men what they should do. and what they should avoid. It is by God's commandments that we see the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and the necessity of redemption, so that we may love the Lord with all our heart, and our neighbor as ourselves. For this is the end of the commandment, and thus to enlighten the eyes is Its use.

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PSALM 19: 9 The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever. The LORD's ordinances are true, and righteous altogether.

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#### Verse 9

The fear of the Lord - יראת יראה yirah, from ירא yara, to fear, to venerate; often put for the whole of Divine worship. The reverence we owe to the Supreme Being.

Is clean - טהורה tehorah, from טהר tahar, to be pure, clean; not differing much from ברה barah, (see above), to be clean and bright as the heavens; as purified Silver. Its object is to purge away all defilement, to make a spotless character.

Enduring for ever - עומדת לעד omedeth laad, standing up to Perpetuity. The fear that prevents us from offending God, that causes us to reverence him, and is the beginning as it is the safeguard of

wisdom, must be carried all through life. No soul is safe for a moment without it. It prevents departure from God, and keeps that clean which God has purified. This is Its use.

The judgments of the Lord - משפטים mishpatim, from שפוט shaphat, he judged, regulated, disposed, All God's regulations, all his decisions; what he has pronounced to be right and proper.

Are true - אמת emeth, truth, from אמ am, to support, confirm, make stable, and certain. This is the character of God's judgments. They shall all stand. All dispensations in providence and grace confirm them; they are certain, and have a fixed character.

And righteous altogether - They are not only according to truth; but they are righteous, צדקו tsadeku, they give to all their due. They show what belongs to God, to man, and to ourselves. And hence the word altogether, יחדו yachdav, equally, is added; or truth and righteousness united.

PSALM 19: 10 More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the extract of the honeycomb.

#### Verse 10

More to be desired are they than gold - This is strictly true; but who believes it? By most men gold is preferred both to God and his judgments; and they will barter every heavenly portion for gold and silver!

Sweeter also than honey - To those whose mental taste is rectified, who have a spiritual discernment.

Honey-comb - Honey is sweet; but honey just out of the comb has a sweetness, richness and flavour, far beyond what it has after it becomes exposed to the air. Only those who have eaten of honey from the comb can feel the force of the psalmist's comparison: it is better than gold, yea, than fine gold in the greatest quantity; it is sweeter than honey, yea, than honey from the comb.

PSALM 19: 11 Moreover by them is your servant warned. In keeping them there is great reward.

#### Verse 11

By them is thy servant warned - נזהר nizhar, from זהר zahar, to be clear, pellucid. By these laws, testimonies, etc., thy servant is fully instructed; he sees all clearly; and he discerns that in keeping of them there is great reward: every man is wise, holy, and happy, who observes them. All Christian experience confirms this truth. Reader, what says thine?

PSALM 19: 12 Who can discern his errors? Forgive me from hidden errors.

#### Verse 12

Who can understand his errors? - It is not possible, without much of the Divine light, to understand all our deviations from, not only the letter, but the spirituality, of the Divine law. Frequent self-examination, and walking in the light, are essentially necessary to the requisite degree of spiritual perfection.

Cleanse thou me from secret faults - From those which I have committed, and have forgotten; from those for which I have not repented; from those which have been committed in my heart, but have not been brought to act in my life; from those which I have committed without knowing that they were sins, sins of ignorance; and from those which I have committed in private, for which I should blush and be confounded were they to be made public.

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PSALM 19: 13 Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins. Let them not have dominion over me. Then I will be upright. I will be blameless and innocent of great transgression.

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Verse 13

From presumptuous sins - Sins committed not through frailty or surprise, but those which are the offspring of thought, purpose, and deliberation. Sins against judgment, light, and conscience. The words might be translated, Preserve thy servant also from the proud; from tyrannical governors, i.e., from evil spirits - Bishop Horsley. So most of the versions understand the place.

Let them not have dominion over me - Let me never be brought into a habit of sinning. He who sins presumptuously will soon be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

Then shall I be upright - Let me be preserved from all the evil that the craft and malice of the devil or man work against me, then shall I continue to walk uprightly, and shall be innocent from the great transgression - from habitual sinning, from apostasy, from my easily-besetting sin. He who would be innocent from the great transgression, must take care that he indulge not himself in any. See Bishop Horne. Most men have committed some particular sin which they ought to deplore as long as they breathe, and on account of the enormity of which they should for ever be humbled.

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PSALM 19: 14 Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, LORD, my rock, and my redeemer.

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Verse 14

Let the words of my mouth - He has prayed against practical sin, the sins of the body; now, against the sins of the mouth and of the heart. Let my mouth speak nothing but what is true, kind, and profitable; and my heart meditate nothing but what is holy, pure, and chaste.

Acceptable in thy sight - Like a sacrifice without spot or blemish, offered up with a perfect heart to God.

O Lord, my strength - צורי tsurî, "my fountain, my origin."

My redeemer - גאלי goalî, my kinsman, he whose right it is to redeem the forfeited inheritance; for so was the word used under the old law. This prayer is properly concluded! he was weak, he felt the

need of God's strength. He had sinned and lost all title to the heavenly inheritance, and therefore needed the interference of the Divine kinsman; of Him who, because the children were partakers of flesh and blood, also partook of the same. No prayer can be acceptable before God which is not offered up in his strength; through Him who took our nature upon him, that he might redeem us unto God, and restore the long-lost inheritance. Lord my help and my byer. - Old Psalter. He who is my only help, and he that bought me with his blood. This prayer is often, with great propriety, uttered by pious people when they enter a place of worship.