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PSALM 116: 1 I love the LORD, because he listens to my voice, and my cries for mercy.

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The psalmist praises God for his deliverance from thralldom, which he compares to death and the grave, Psa 116:1-9. The exercises through which he had passed, Psa 116:10, Psa 116:11. His gratitude for these mercies, and resolution to live to God's glory, Psa 116:12-19.

This Psalm is also without a title, and its author is unknown. It appears to have been written after the captivity, and to be a thanksgiving to God for that glorious event. The psalmist compares this captivity to death and the grave; and shows the happy return to the promised land, called here The land of the living. The people recollect the vows of God which were upon them, and purpose to fulfill them. They exult at being enabled to worship God in the temple at Jerusalem.

The Syriac, which abounds in conjectural prefaces, supposes this Psalm to have been written on the occasion of Saul coming to the mouth of the cave in which David lay hidden; but spiritually taken, it relates to the bringing of a new people, the Gentiles, to the Christian faith. In a few MSS. this Psalm is joined to the preceding. Many think it relates wholly to the passion, death, and triumph of Christ. Most of the fathers were of this opinion.

#### Verse 1

I love the Lord because he hath heard - How vain and foolish is the talk, "To love God for his benefits to us is mercenary, and cannot be pure love!" Whether pure or impure, there is no other love that can flow from the heart of the creature to its Creator. We love him, said the holiest of Christ's disciples, because he first loved us; and the increase of our love and filial obedience is in proportion to the increased sense we have of our obligation to him. We love him for the benefits bestowed on us. Love begets love.

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PSALM 116: 2 Because he has turned his ear to me, therefore I will call on him as long as I live.

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#### Verse 2

Because he hath inclined his ear - The psalmist represents himself to be so sick and weak, that he could scarcely speak. The Lord, in condescension to this weakness, is here considered as bowing down his ear to the mouth of the feeble suppliant, that he may receive every word of his prayer.

Therefore will I call upon him - I have had such blessed success in my application to him, that I purpose to invoke him as long as I shall live. He that prays much will be emboldened to pray more, because none can supplicate the throne of grace in vain.

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PSALM 116: 3 The cords of death surrounded me, the pains of Sheol got a hold of me. I found trouble and sorrow.

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#### Verse 3

The sorrows of death - חבלי מות chebley maveth, the cables or cords of death; alluding to their bonds and fetters during their captivity; or to the cords by which a criminal is bound who is about to be led out to execution; or to the bandages in which the dead were enveloped, when head, arms, body, and limbs were all laced down together.

The pains of hell - מצרי שאול metsarey sheol the straitnesses of the grave. So little expectation was there of life, that he speaks as if he were condemned, executed, and closed up in the tomb. Or, he may refer here to the small niches in cemeteries, where the coffins of the dead were placed.

Because this Psalm has been used in the thanksgiving of women after safe delivery, it has been supposed that the pain suffered in the act of parturition was equal for the time to the torments of the damned. But this supposition is shockingly absurd; the utmost power of human nature could not, for a moment, endure the wrath of God, the deathless worm, and the unquenchable fire. The body must die, be decomposed, and be built up on indestructible principles, before this punishment can be borne.

PSALM 116: 4 Then I called on the LORD's name: "LORD, I beg you, deliver my soul."

PSALM 116: 5 The LORD is Gracious and righteous. Yes, our God is merciful.

#### Verse 5

Gracious is the Lord - In his own nature.

And righteous - In all his dealings with men.

Our God is merciful - Of tender compassion to all penitents.

PSALM 116: 6 The LORD preserves the simple. I was brought low, and he saved me.

#### Verse 6

The Lord preserved the simple - פתאים pethaim, which all the Versions render little ones. Those who are meek and lowly of heart, who feel the spirit of little children, these he preserves, as he does little children; and he mentions this circumstance, because the Lord has a peculiar regard for these young ones, and gives his angels charge concerning them. Were it otherwise, children are exposed to so many dangers and deaths, that most of them would fall victims to accidents in their infancy.

PSALM 116: 7 Return to your rest, my soul, for the LORD has dealt bountifully with you.

#### Verse 7

Return unto thy rest, O my soul - God is the center to which all immortal spirits tend, and in connection with which alone they can find rest. Every thing separated from its center is in a state of violence; and, if intelligent, cannot be happy. All human souls, while separated from God by sin, are

in a state of violence, agitation, and misery. From God all spirits come; to him all must return, in order to be finally happy. This is true in the general case; though, probably, the rest spoken of here means the promised land, into which they were now returning.

A proof of the late origin of this Psalm is exhibited in this verse, in the words למנוחאי limenuchaichi, "to thy rest," and עליי alaiichi, "to thee," which are both Chaldaisms.

PSALM 116: 8 For you have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, and my feet from falling.

#### Verse 8

Thou hast delivered my soul from death - Thou hast rescued my life from the destruction to which it was exposed.

Mine eyes from tears - Thou hast turned my sorrow into joy.

My feet from falling - Thou hast taken me out of the land of snares and pitfalls, and brought me into a plain path. How very near does our ancient mother tongue come to this: For thou he nerode sawle mine of deathe, eapan mine of tearum; fet mine of slide. And this language is but a little improved in the old Psalter: -

For he toke my saule fra dede; my eghen fra teres; my fete fra slippyng.

PSALM 116: 9 I will walk before the LORD in the land of the living.

#### Verse 9

I will walk before the Lord - אתהלך ethhallech, I will set myself to walk. I am determined to walk; my eyes are now bright ened, so that I can see; my feet are strengthened, so that I can walk; and my soul is alive, so that I can walk with the living.

The Vulgate, the Septuagint, the Ethiopic, the Arabic, and the Anglo-Saxon end this Psalm here, which is numbered the cxivth; and begin with the tenth verse another Psalm, which they number cxvth; but this division is not acknowledged by the Hebrew, Chaldee, and Syriac.

PSALM 116: 10 I believed, therefore I said, "I was greatly afflicted."

#### Verse 10

I believed, therefore have I spoken - Distressed and afflicted as I was, I ever believed thy promises to be true; but I had great struggles to maintain my confidence; for my afflictions were great, oppressive, and of long standing.

It is scarcely worth observing that the letters called heemantic by the Hebrew grammarians, and which are used in forming the derivatives from the roots, are taken from the first word in this verse, האמנתי heemanti, "I have believed;" as the prefixes in that language are found in the technical words משה וכלב Mosheh vecaleb, "Moses and Caleb;" and the formatives of the future are found in the word איתן eythan, "strength."

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PSALM 116: 11 I said in my haste, "All men are liars."

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Verse 11

I said in my haste - This is variously translated: I said in my Light, Chaldee. In my excess, or ecstasy, Vulgate. In my ecstasy, εκστασει, Septuagint. fi tahayury, in my giddiness, Arabic. In my fear or tremor, Syriac. I quoth in outgoing mine, when I was beside myself, Anglo-Saxon. In myn oute passyng, old Psalter. When passion got the better of my reason, when I looked not at God, but at my afflictions, and the impossibility of human relief.

All men are liars - כל האדם כזב col haadam cozeb, "the whole of man is a lie." Falsity is diffused through his nature; deception proceeds from his tongue; his actions are often counterfeit. He is imposed on by others, and imposes in his turn; and on none is there any dependence till God converts their heart. "O what a thing were man, if his attires

Should alter with his mind,

And, like a dolphin's skin,

His clothes combine with his desires!

Surely if each one saw another's heart,

There would be no commerce;

All would disperse, And live apart."

Hebert.

To the same purpose I shall give the following Italian proverb: -

Con arte e con inganno,

Si vive mezzo l'anno.

Con inganno e con arte

Si vive l' altro parti. "Men live half the year by deceit and by art;

By art and deceit men live the other part."

Who gives this bad character of mankind? Man.

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PSALM 116: 12 What will I give to the LORD for all his benefits toward me?

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## Verse 12

What shall I render - מה אשיב mah ashib, "What shall I return?"

For his benefits - תגמולוהי tagmulohi, "His retributions," the returns he had made to my prayers and faith.

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PSALM 116: 13 I will take the cup of salvation, and call on the LORD's name.

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## Verse 13

I will take the cup of salvation - Literally, The cup of salvation, or deliverance, will I lift up. Alluding to the action in taking the cup of blessing among the Jews, which, when the person or master of the family lifted up, he said these words, "Blessed be the Lord, the Maker of the world, who has created the fruit of the vine!"

But it may probably allude to the libation-offering, Num 28:7; for the three last verses seem to intimate that the psalmist was now at the temple, offering the meat-offering, drink-offering, and sacrifices to the Lord. Cup is often used by the Hebrews to denote plenty or abundance. So, the cup of trembling, an abundance of misery; the cup of salvation, an abundance of happiness.

And call upon the name of the Lord - I will invoke his name, that I may get more of the same blessings; for the only return that God requires is, that we ask for more. Who is like God? One reason why we should never more come to a fellow-mortal for a favor is, we have received so many already. A strong reason why we should claim the utmost salvation of God is, because we are already so much in debt to his mercy. Now this is the only way we have of discharging our debts to God; and yet, strange to tell, every such attempt to discharge the debt only serves to increase it! Yet, notwithstanding, the debtor and creditor are represented as both pleased, both profited, and both happy in each other! Reader, pray to him, invoke his name; receive the cup - accept the abundance of salvation which he has provided thee, that thou mayest love and serve him with a perfect heart.

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PSALM 116: 14 I will pay my vows to the LORD, yes, in the presence of all his people.

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## Verse 14

I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all his people - He was probably now bringing his offering to the temple. These words are repeated, Psa 116:18.

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PSALM 116: 15 Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.

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## Verse 15

Precious in the sight of the Lord - Many have understood this verse as meaning, "the saints are too precious in the Lord's sight, lightly to give them over to death:" and this, Calmet contends, is the true

sense of the text. Though they have many enemies, their lives are precious in his sight, and their foes shall not prevail against them.

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PSALM 116: 16 LORD, truly I am your servant. I am your servant, the son of your handmaid. You have freed me from my chains.

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Verse 16

I am thy servant - Thou hast preserved me alive. I live with, for, and to Thee. I am thy willing domestic, the son of thine handmaid - like one born in thy house of a woman already thy property. I am a servant, son of thy servant, made free by thy kindness; but, refusing to go out, I have had my ear bored to thy door-post, and am to continue by free choice in thy house for ever. He alludes here to the case of the servant who, in the year of jubilee being entitled to his liberty, refused to leave his master's house; and suffered his ear to be bored to the door-post, as a proof that by his own consent he agreed to continue in his master's house for ever.

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PSALM 116: 17 I will offer to you the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call on the LORD's name.

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Verse 17

I will offer to thee - As it is most probable that this Psalm celebrates the deliverance from Babylon, it is no wonder that we find the psalmist so intent on performing the rites of his religion in the temple at Jerusalem, which had been burnt with fire, and was now reviving out of its ruins, the temple service having been wholly interrupted for nearly four-score years.

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PSALM 116: 18 I will pay my vows to the LORD, yes, in the presence of all his people,

PSALM 116: 19 in the courts of the LORD's house, in your midst, Jerusalem. Praise the LORD!

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Verse 19

In the midst of thee, O Jerusalem - He speaks as if present in the city, offering his vowed sacrifices in the temple to the Lord.

Most of this Psalm has been applied to our Lord and his Church; and in this way it has been considered as prophetic; and, taken thus, it is innocently accommodated, and is very edifying. This is the interpretation given of the whole by the old Psalter.