

PSALM X.

Since this Psalm has no title of its own, it is supposed by some to be a fragment of Psalm ix. We prefer, however, since it is complete in itself, to consider it as a separate composition. We have had instances already of Psalms which seem meant to form a pair (Ps. i. and ii., Ps. iii. and iv.), and this, with the ninth, is another specimen of the double Psalm.

The prevailing theme seems to be the oppression and persecution of the wicked; we will, therefore, for our own guidance, entitle it, THE CRY OF THE OPPRESSED.

DIVISION.—The first verse, in an exclamation of surprise, explains the intent of the Psalm, viz., to invoke the interposition of God for the deliverance of his poor and persecuted people. From verse 2 to 11, the character of the oppressor is described in powerful language. In verse 12, the cry of the first verse bursts forth again, but with a clearer utterance. In the next place (verses 13—15), God's eye is clearly beheld as regarding all the cruel deeds of the wicked; and as a consequence of divine omniscience the ultimate judgment of the oppressed is joyously anticipated (verses 16—18). To the Church of God during times of persecution, and to individual saints who are smarting under the hand of the proud sinner, this Psalm furnishes suitable language both for prayer and praise.

EXPOSITION.

WHY standest thou afar off, O LORD? *why* hidest thou *thyself* in times of trouble?

To the tearful eye of the sufferer the Lord seemed to *stand* still, as if he calmly looked on, and did not sympathize with his afflicted one. Nay, more, the Lord appeared to be *afar off*, no longer "a very present help in trouble," but an inaccessible mountain, into which no man would be able to climb. The presence of God is the joy of his people, but any suspicion of his absence is distracting beyond measure. Let us, then, ever remember that the Lord is nigh us. The refiner is never far from the mouth of the furnace when his gold is in the fire, and the Son of God is always walking in the midst of the flames when his holy children are cast into them. Yet he that knows the frailty of man will little wonder that when we are sharply exercised, we find it hard to bear the apparent neglect of the Lord when he forbears to work our deliverance.

"*Why hidest thou thyself in times of trouble?*" It is not the trouble, but the hiding of our Father's face, which cuts us to the quick. When trial and desertion come together, we are in as perilous a plight as Paul, when his ship fell into a place where two seas met (Acts xxvii. 41). It is but little wonder if we are like the vessel which ran aground, and the fore-part stuck fast, and remained unmovable, while the hinder part was broken by the violence of the waves. When our sun is eclipsed, it is dark indeed. If we need an answer to the question, "*Why hidest thou thyself?*" it is to be found in the fact that there is a "needs-be," not only for trial, but for heaviness of heart under trial (1 Pet. i. 6); but how could this be the case, if the Lord should shine upon us while he is afflicting us? Should the parent comfort his child while he is correcting him, where would be the use of the chastening? A smiling face and a rod are not fit companions. God bares the back that the blow may be felt; for it is only *felt* affliction which can become *blest* affliction. If we are carried in the arms of God over every stream, where would be the trial, and where the experience, which trouble is meant to teach us?

2 The wicked in *his* pride doth persecute the poor: let them be taken in the devices that they have imagined.

3 For the wicked boasteth of his heart's desire, and blesseth the covetous, *whom* the LORD abhorreth.

4 The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek *after* God: God is not in all his thoughts.

5 His ways are always grievous ; thy judgments *are* far above out of his sight : *as for* all his enemies, he puffeth at them.

6 He hath said in his heart, I shall not be moved : for *I shall* never be in adversity.

7 His mouth is full of cursing and deceit and fraud : under his tongue is mischief and vanity.

8 He sitteth in the lurking places of the villages : in the secret places doth he murder the innocent : his eyes are privily set against the poor.

9 He lieth in wait secretly as a lion in his den : he lieth in wait to catch the poor : he doth catch the poor, when he draweth him into his net.

10 He croucheth, *and* humbleth himself, that the poor may fall by his strong ones.

11 He hath said in his heart, God hath forgotten : he hideth his face ; he will never see *it*.

2. The second verse contains the formal indictment againt the wicked : "*The wicked in his pride doth persecute the poor.*" The accusation divides itself into two distinct charges,—pride and tyranny ; the one the root and cause of the other. The second sentence is the humble petition of the oppressed : "*Let them be taken in the devices that they have imagined.*" The prayer is reasonable, just, and natural. Even our enemies themselves being judges, it is but right that men should be done by as they wished to do to others. We only weigh you in your own scales, and measure your corn with your own bushel. Terrible shall be the day, O persecuting Babylon ! when thou shalt be made to drink of the winecup which thou thyself hast filled to the brim with the blood of saints. There are none who will dispute the justice of God, when he shall hang every Haman on his own gallows, and cast all the enemies of his Daniels into their own den of lions.

3. The indictment being read, and the petition presented, the evidence is now heard upon the first count. The evidence is very full and conclusive upon the matter of *pride*, and no jury could hesitate to give a verdict against the prisoner at the bar. Let us, however, hear the witnesses one by one. The first testifies that he is a boaster. "*For the wicked boasteth of his heart's desire.*" He is a very silly boaster, for he glories in a mere desire : a very brazen-faced boaster, for that desire is villainy ; and a most abandoned sinner, to boast of that which is his shame. Bragging sinners are the worst and most contemptible of men, especially when their filthy desires,—too filthy to be carried into act—become the theme of their boastings. When Mr. Hate-Good and Mr. Heady are joined in partnership, they drive a brisk trade in the devil's wares. This one proof is enough to condemn the prisoner at the bar. Take him away, jailor ! But stay, another witness desires to be sworn and heard. This time, the impudence of the proud rebel is even more apparent ; for he "*blesseth the covetous, whom the Lord abhorreth.*" This is insolence, which is pride unmasked. He is haughty enough to differ from the Judge of all the earth, and bless the men whom God hath cursed. So did the sinful generation in the days of Malachi, who called the proud happy, and set up those that worked wickedness (Mal. iii. 15). These base pretenders would dispute with their Maker ; they would—

" Snatch from his hand the balance and the rod,
Rejudge his justice, be the god of God."

How often have we heard the wicked man speaking in terms of honour of the covetous, the grinder of the poor, and the sharp dealer ! Our old proverb hath it—

" I wot well how the world wags ;
He is most loved that hath most bags."

Pride meets covetousness, and compliments it as wise, thrifty, and prudent. We say it with sorrow, there are many professors of religion who esteem a rich man, and flatter him, even though they know that he has fattened himself upon the flesh and blood of the poor. The only sinners who are received as respectable are covetous men. If a man is a fornicator, or a drunkard, we put him out of the church ; but who ever read of church discipline against that idolatrous wretch,—

the covetous man? Let us tremble, lest we be found to be partakers of this atrocious sin of pride, "blessing the covetous, whom Jehovah abhorreth."

4. The proud boastings and lewd blessing of the wicked have been received in evidence against him, and now his own face confirms the accusation, and his empty closet cries aloud against him. "*The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God.*" Proud hearts breed proud looks and stiff knees. It is an admirable arrangement that the heart is often written on the countenance, just as the motion of the wheels of a clock find their record on its face. A brazen face and a broken heart never go together. We are not quite sure that the Athenians were wise when they ordained that men should be tried in the dark lest their countenances should weigh with the judges; for there is much more to be learned from the motions of the muscles of the face than from the words of the lips. Honesty shines in the face, but villainy peeps out at the eyes.

See the effect of pride; it kept the man from seeking God. It is hard to pray with a stiff neck and an unbending knee. "*God is not in all his thoughts:*" he thought much, but he had no thoughts for God. Amid heaps of chaff there was not a grain of wheat. The only place where God is not is in the thoughts of the wicked. This is a damning accusation; for where the God of heaven is not, the Lord of hell is reigning and raging; and if God be not in our thoughts, our thoughts will bring us to perdition.

5. "*His ways are always grievous.*" To himself they are hard. Men go a rough road when they go to hell. God has hedged-up the way of sin: O what folly to leap these hedges and fall among the thorns! To others, also, his ways cause much sorrow and vexation; but what cares he? He sits like the idol god upon his monstrous car, utterly regardless of the crowds who are crushed as he rolls along. "*Thy judgments are far above out of his sight:*" he looks high, but not high enough. As God is forgotten, so are his judgments. He is not able to comprehend the things of God; a swine may sooner look through a telescope at the stars than this man study the Word of God to understand the righteousness of the Lord. "*As for all his enemies, he puffeth at them.*" He defies and domineers; and when men resist his injurious behaviour, he sneers at them, and threatens to annihilate them with a puff. In most languages there is a word of contempt borrowed from the action of puffing with the lips, and in English we should express the idea by saying, "He cries 'Pooh! Pooh!' at his enemies." Ah! there is one enemy who will not thus be puffed at. Death will puff at the candle of his life and blow it out, and the wicked boaster will find it grim work to brag in the tomb.

6. The testimony of the sixth verse concludes the evidence against the prisoner upon the first charge of pride, and certainly it is conclusive in the highest degree. The present witness has been prying into the secret chambers of the heart, and has come to tell us what he has heard. "*He hath said in his heart, I shall not be moved: for I shall never be in adversity.*" O impertinence run to seed! The man thinks himself immutable, and omnipotent too, for he, he is never to be in adversity. He counts himself a privileged man. He sits alone, and shall see no sorrow. His nest is in the stars, and he dreams not of a hand that shall pluck him thence. But let us remember that this man's house is built upon the sand, upon a foundation no more substantial than the rolling waves of the sea. He that is too secure is never safe. Boastings are not buttresses, and self-confidence is a sorry bulwark. This is the ruin of fools, that when they succeed they become too big, and swell with self-conceit, as if their summer would last for ever, and their flowers bloom on eternally. Be humble, O man! for thou art mortal, and thy lot is mutable.

The second crime is now to be proved. The fact that the man is proud and arrogant may go a long way to prove that he is vindictive and cruel. Haman's pride was the father of a cruel design to murder all the Jews. Nebuchadnezzar builds an idol; in pride he commands all men to bow before it; and then cruelty stands ready to heat the furnace seven times hotter for those who will not yield to his imperious will. Every proud thought is twin brother to a cruel thought. He who exalts himself will despise others, and one step further will make him a tyrant.

7. Let us now hear the witnesses in court. Let the wretch speak for himself, for out of his own mouth he will be condemned. "*His mouth is full of cursing and deceit and fraud.*" There is not only a little evil there, but his mouth is full of it. A three-headed serpent hath stowed away its coils and venom within the den of his black mouth. There is *cursing* which he spits against both God and men, *deceit* with which he entraps the unwary, and *fraud* by which, even in his

common dealings, he robs his neighbours. Beware of such a man : have no sort of dealing with him : none but the silliest of geese would go to the fox's sermon, and none but the most foolish will put themselves into the society of knaves. But we must proceed. Let us look under this man's tongue as well as in his mouth ; "*under his tongue is mischief and vanity.*" Deep in his throat are the unborn words which shall come forth as mischief and iniquity.

8. Despite the bragging of this base wretch, it seems that he is as cowardly as he is cruel. "*He sitteth in the lurking places of the villages : in the secret places doth he murder the innocent : his eyes are privily set against the poor.*" He acts the part of the highwayman, who springs upon the unsuspecting traveller in some desolate part of the road. There are always bad men lying in wait for the saints. This is a land of robbers and thieves ; let us travel well armed, for every bush conceals an enemy. Everywhere there are traps laid for us, and foes thirsting for our blood. There are enemies at our table as well as across the sea. We are never safe, save when the Lord is with us.

9. The picture becomes blacker, for here is the cunning of the lion, and of the huntsman, as well as the stealthiness of the robber. Surely there are some men who come up to the very letter of this description. With watching, perversion, slander, whispering, and false swearing, they ruin the character of the righteous, and murder the innocent ; or, with legal quibbles, mortgages, bonds, writs, and the like, they catch the poor, and draw them into a net. Chrysostom was peculiarly severe upon this last phase of cruelty, but assuredly not more so than was richly merited. Take care, brethren, for there are other traps besides these. Hungry lions are crouching in every den, and fowlers spread their nets in every field.

Quarles well pictures our danger in those memorable lines,—

"The close pursuers' busy hands do plant
Snares in thy substance ; snares attend thy want ;
Snares in thy credit ; snares in thy disgrace ;
Snares in thy high estate ; snares in thy base ;
Snares tuck thy bed ; and snares surround thy board ;
Snares watch thy thoughts ; and snares attack thy word ;

Snares in thy quiet ; snares in thy commotion,
Snares in thy diet ; snares in thy devotion :
Snares lurk in thy resolves ; snares in thy doubt ;
Snares lie within thy heart, and snares without ;
Snares are above thy head, and snares beneath ;
Snares in thy sickness ; snares are in thy death."

O Lord ! keep thy servants, and defend us from all our enemies !

10. "*He croucheth and humbleth himself, that the poor may fall by his strong ones.*" Seeming humility is often armour-bearer to malice. The lion crouches that he may leap with the greater force, and bring down his strong limbs upon his prey. When a wolf was old and had tasted human blood, the old Saxon cried, "Ware, wolf !" and we may cry, "Ware, fox !" They who crouch to our feet are longing to make us fall. Be very careful of fawners ; for friendship and flattery are deadly enemies.

11. As upon the former count, so upon this one ; a witness in forthcoming, who has been listening at the keyhole of the heart. Speak up, friend, and let us hear your story. "*He hath said in his heart, God hath forgotten : he hideth his face ; he will never see it.*" This cruel man comforts himself with the idea that God is blind, or, at least, forgetful : a fond and foolish fancy, indeed. Men doubt Omniscience when they persecute the saints. If we had a sense of God's presence with us, it would be impossible for us to ill-treat his children. In fact, there can scarcely be a greater preservation from sin than the constant thought of "thou, God, seest me."

Thus has the trial proceeded. The case has been fully stated ; and now it is but little wonder that the oppressed petitioner lifts up the cry for judgment, which we find in the following verse :—

12 Arise, O LORD ; O God, lift up thine hand ; forget not the humble

With what bold language will faith address its God ! and yet what unbelief is mingled with our strongest confidence. Fearlessly the Lord is stirred up to

arise and lift up his hand, yet timidly is he begged not to forget the humble ; as if Jehovah could ever be forgetful of his saints. This verse is the incessant cry of the Church, and she will never refrain therefrom until her Lord shall come in his glory to avenge her of all her adversaries.

13 Wherefore doth the wicked contemn God ? he hath said in his heart, Thou wilt not require it.

14 Thou hast seen it ; for thou beholdest mischief and spite, to requite it with thy hand : the poor committeth himself unto thee ; thou art the helper of the fatherless.

15 Break thou the arm of the wicked and the evil man : seek out his wickedness till thou find none.

In these verses the description of the wicked is condensed, and the evil of his character traced to its source, viz., atheistical ideas with regard to the government of the world. We may at once perceive that this is intended to be another urgent plea with the Lord to show his power, and reveal his justice. When the wicked call God's righteousness in question, we may well beg him to teach them terrible things in righteousness. In verse 13, the hope of the infidel and his heart-wishes are laid bare. He despises the Lord, because he will not believe that sin will meet with punishment : " *he hath said in his heart, Thou wilt not require it.*" If there were no hell for other men, there ought to be one for those who question the justice of it. This vile suggestion receives its answer in verse 14. " *Thou hast seen it ; for thou beholdest mischief and spite, to requite it with thy hand.*" God is all-eye to see, and all-hand to punish his enemies. From Divine oversight there is no hiding, and from Divine justice there is no fleeing. Wanton mischief shall meet with woeful misery, and those who harbour spite shall inherit sorrow. Verily there is a God which judgeth in the earth. Nor is this the only instance of the presence of God in the world ; for while he chastises the oppressor, he befriends the oppressed. " *The poor committeth himself unto thee.*" They give themselves up entirely into the Lord's hands. Resigning their judgment to his enlightenment, and their wills to his supremacy, they rest assured that he will order all things for the best. Nor does he deceive their hope. He preserves them in times of need, and causes them to rejoice in his goodness. " *Thou art the helper of the fatherless.*" God is the parent of all orphans. When the earthly father sleeps beneath the sod, a heavenly Father smiles from above. By some means or other, orphan children are fed, and well they may when they have such a Father.

15. In this verse we hear again the burden of the Psalmist's prayer : " *Break thou the arm of the wicked and the evil man.*" Let the sinner lose his power to sin ; stop the tyrant, arrest the oppressor, weaken the loins of the mighty, and dash in pieces the terrible. They deny thy justice : let them feel it to the full. Indeed, they shall feel it ; for God shall hunt the sinner for ever : so long as there is a grain of sin in him it shall be sought out and punished. It is not a little worthy of note, that very few great persecutors have ever died in their beds : the curse has manifestly pursued them, and their fearful sufferings have made them own that divine justice at which they could at one time launch defiance. God permits tyrants to arise as thorn-hedges to protect his church from the intrusion of hypocrites, and that he may teach his backsliding children by them, as Gideon did the men of Succoth with the briers of the wilderness ; but he soon cuts up these Herods, like the thorns, and casts them into the fire. Thales, the Milesian, one of the wise men of Greece, being asked what he thought to be the greatest rarity in the world, replied, " To see a tyrant live to be an old man." See how the Lord breaks, not only the arm, but the neck of proud oppressors ! To the men who had neither justice nor mercy for the saints, there shall be rendered justice to the full, but not a grain of mercy.

16 The LORD is King for ever and ever : the heathen are perished out of his land.

17 LORD, thou hast heard the desire of the humble : thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear :

18 To judge the fatherless and the oppressed, that the man of the earth may no more oppress.

The Psalm ends with a song of thanksgiving to the great and everlasting King, because he has granted the desire of his humble and oppressed people, has defended the fatherless, and punished the heathen who trampled upon his poor and afflicted children. Let us learn that we are sure to speed well, if we carry our complaint to the King of kings. Rights will be vindicated, and wrongs redressed, at his throne. His government neglects not the interests of the needy, nor does it tolerate oppression in the mighty. Great God, we leave ourselves in thine hand; to thee we commit thy church afresh. Arise, O God, and let the man of the earth—the creature of a day—be broken before the majesty of thy power. Come, Lord Jesus, and glorify thy people. Amen and Amen.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—There is not, in my judgment, a Psalm which describes the mind, the manners, the works, the words, the feelings, and the fate of the ungodly with so much propriety, fulness, and light, as this Psalm. So that, if in any respect there has not been enough said heretofore, or if there shall be anything wanting in the Psalms that shall follow, we may here find a perfect image and representation of iniquity. This Psalm, therefore, is a type, form, and description of that man, who, though he may be in the sight of himself and of men more excellent than Peter himself, is detestable in the eyes of God; and this it was that moved Augustine, and those who followed him, to understand the Psalm of ANTICHRIST. But as the Psalm is without a title, let us embrace the most general and common understanding of it (as I said), and let us look at the picture of ungodliness which it sets before us. Not that we would deny the propriety of the acceptance in which others receive it, nay, we will, in our general acceptance of the Psalm, include also its reference to ANTICHRIST. And, indeed, it will not be at all absurd if we join this Psalm with the preceding, in its order thus. That David, in the preceding spoke of the ungodly converted, and prayed for those who were to be converted. But that here he is speaking of the ungodly that are still left so, and in power prevailing over the weak ALMUTH, concerning whom he has no hope, or is in a great uncertainty of mind, whether they ever will be converted or not.—*Martin Luther.*

Verse 1.—“*Why hidest thou thyself in times of trouble?*” The answer to this is not far to seek, for if the Lord did not hide himself it would not be a time of trouble at all. As well ask why the sun does not shine at night, when for certain there could be no night if he did. It is essential to our thorough chastisement that the Father should withdraw his smile: there is a need not only for manifold temptations, but that we be in heaviness through them. The design of the rod is only answered by making us smart. If there be no pain, there will be no profit. If there be no hiding of God, there will be no bitterness, and consequently no purging efficacy in his chastisements.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 1 (last clause).—“*Times of trouble*” should be times of confidence; fixedness of heart on God would prevent fears of heart. Psalm cxii. 7. “He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed.” How? “Trusting in the Lord. His heart is established, he shall not be afraid.” Otherwise without it we shall be as light as a weather-cock, moved with every blast of evil tidings, our hopes will swim or sink according to the news we hear. Providence would seem to sleep unless faith and prayer awaken it. The disciples had but little faith in their Master’s account, yet that little faith awakened him in a storm, and he relieved them. Unbelief doth only discourage God from showing his power in taking our parts.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 2.—“*The wicked in his pride doth persecute the poor.*” THE OPPRESSOR’S PLEA. I seek but what is my own by law; it was his own free act and deed—the execution lies for goods and body; and goods or body I will have, or else my money. What if his beggarly children pine, or his proud wife perish? they perish at their own charge, not mine; and what is that to me? I must be paid, or he lie by it until I have my utmost farthing, or his bones. The law is just and good; and,

being ruled by that, how can my fair proceedings be unjust? What is thirty in the hundred to a man of trade? Are we born to thrum caps or pick straws? and sell our livelihood for a few tears, and a whining face? I thank God they move me not so much as a howling dog at midnight. I'll give no day if heaven itself would be security. I must have present money, or his bones. . . . Fifteen shillings in the pound composition! I'll hang first. Come, tell me not of a good conscience: a good conscience is no parcel of my trade; it hath made more bankrupts than all the loose wives in the universal city. My conscience is no fool: it tells me my own is my own, and that a well crammed bag is no deceitful friend, but will stick close to me when all my friends forsake me. If to gain a good estate out of nothing, and to regain a desperate debt which is as good as nothing, be the fruits and sign of a bad conscience, God help the good. Come, tell me not of griping and oppression. The world is hard, and he that hopes to thrive must gripe as hard. What I give I give, and what I lend I lend. If the way to heaven be to turn beggar upon earth, let them take it that like it. I know not what you call oppression, the law is my direction; but of the two, it is more profitable to oppress than to be oppressed. If debtors would be honest and discharge, our hands were bound; but when their failing offends my bags, they touch the apple of my eye, and I must right them.—*Francis Quarles*.

Verse 2.—That famous persecutor, Domitian, like others of the Roman emperors, assumed divine honours, and heated the furnace seven times hotter against Christians because they refused to worship his image. In like manner, when the popes of Rome became decorated with the blasphemous titles of *Masters of the World*, and *Universal Fathers*, they let loose their blood-hounds upon the faithful. Pride is the egg of persecution.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 2.—“*Pride*,” is a vice which cleaveth so fast unto the hearts of men, that if we were to strip ourselves of all faults one by one, we should undoubtedly find it the very last and hardest to put off.—*Richard Hooker*, 1554—1600.

Verse 3.—“*The wicked boasteth*,” etc. He braggeth of his evil life, whereof he maketh open profession; or he boasteth that he will accomplish his wicked designs; or glorieth that he hath already accomplished them. Or it may be understood that he commendeth others who are according to the desires of his own soul; that is, he respecteth or honoureth none but such as are like him, and them only he esteemeth. Psalm xxxvi. 4, and xlix. 18; Rom. i. 32.—*John Diodati*, 1648.

Verse 3.—“*The wicked . . . blesteth the covetous.*” Like will to like, as the common proverb is. Such as altogether neglect the Lord's commandments not only commit divers gross sins, but commend those who in sinning are like themselves. For in their affections they allow them, in their speeches they flatter and extol them, and in their deeds they join with them and maintain them.—*Peter Muffet*, 1594.

Verse 3.—“*The covetous.*” Covetousness is the desire of possessing that which we have not, and attaining unto great riches and worldly possessions. And whether this be not the character of trade and merchandise and traffic of every kind, the great source of those evils of over-trading which are everywhere complained of, I refer to the judgment of the men around me, who are engaged in the commerce and business of life. Compared with the regular and quiet diligence of our fathers, and their contentment with small but sure returns, the wild and widespread speculation for great gains, the rash and hasty adventures which are daily made, and the desperate gamester-like risks which are run, do reveal fully surely that a spirit of covetousness hath been poured out upon men within the last thirty or forty years. And the providence of God corresponding thereto, by wonderful and unexpected revolutions, by numerous inventions for manufacturing the productions of the earth, in order to lead men into temptation, hath impressed upon the whole face of human affairs, a stamp of earnest worldliness not known to our fathers: insomuch that our youth do enter life no longer with the ambition of providing things honest in the sight of men, keeping their credit, bringing up their family, and realising a competency, if the Lord prosper them, but with the ambition of making a fortune, retiring to their ease, and enjoying the luxuries of the present life. Against which crying sin of covetousness, dearly beloved brethren, I do most earnestly call upon you to wage a good warfare. This place is its seat, its stronghold, even this metropolitan city of Christian Britain; and ye who are called by the grace of God out of the great thoroughfare of Mammon, are so elected for the express purpose of testifying against this and all other the backslidings of the church planted

here ; and especially against this, as being in my opinion, one of the most evident and the most common of them all. For who hath not been snared in the snare of covetousness ?—*Edward Irving, 1828.*

Verse 3.—“ *The covetous, whom the Lord abhorreth.*” Christ knew what he spake when he said, “ No man can serve two masters.” Matt. vi. 24. Meaning God and the world, because each would have all. As the angel and the devil strove for the body of Moses (Jude 9), not who should have a part, but who should have the whole, so they strive still for our souls, who shall have all. Therefore, the apostle saith, “ The love of this world is enmity to God (James iv. 4), signifying such emulation between these two, that God cannot abide the world should have a part, and the world cannot abide that God should have a part. Therefore, the love of the world must needs be enmity to God, and therefore the lovers of the world must needs be enemies to God, and so no covetous man is God’s servant, but God’s enemy. For this cause covetousness is called idolatry (Eph. v. 5), which is the most contrary sin to God, because as treason sets up another king in the king’s place, so idolatry sets up another god in God’s place.—*Henry Smith.*”

Verse 4.—“ *The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God.*” He is judged a proud man (without a jury sitting on him), who when condemned will not submit, will not stoop so low as to accept of a pardon. I must indeed correct myself, men are willing to be justified, but they would have their duties to purchase their peace and the favour of God. Thousands will die and be damned rather than they will have a pardon upon the sole account of Christ’s merits and obedience. Oh, the cursed pride of the heart ! When will men cease to be wiser than God ? To limit God ? When will men be contented with God’s way of saving them by the blood of the everlasting covenant ? How dare men thus to prescribe to the infinitely wise God ? Is it not enough for thee that thy destruction is of thyself ? But must thy salvation be of thyself too ? Is it not enough that thou hast wounded thyself, but wilt thou die for ever, rather than be beholden to a plaister of free grace ? Will be damned unless thou mayest be thine own Saviour ? God is willing (“ God so loved the world that he gave his only Son ”), art thou so proud as that thou wilt not be beholden to God ? Thou wilt deserve, or have nothing. What shall I say ? Poor thou art, and yet proud ; thou hast nothing but wretchedness and misery, and yet thou art talking of a purchase. This is a provocation. “ God resisteth the proud,” especially the spiritually proud. He that is proud of his clothes and parentage, is not so contemptible in God’s eyes as he that is proud of his abilities, and so scorns to submit to God’s methods for his salvation by Christ, and by his righteousness alone.—*Lewis Stuckley.*

Verse 4.—“ *The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God.*” The pride of the wicked is the principal reason why they will not seek after the knowledge of God. This knowledge it prevents them from seeking in various ways. In the first place, it renders God a disagreeable object of contemplation to the wicked, and a knowledge of him as undesirable. Pride consists in an unduly exalted opinion of one’s self. It is, therefore, impatient of a rival, hates a superior, and cannot endure a master. In proportion as it prevails in the heart, it makes us wish to see nothing above us, to acknowledge no law but our own wills, to follow no rule but our own inclinations. Thus it led Satan to rebel against his Creator, and our first parents to desire to be as gods. Since such are the effects of pride, it is evident that nothing can be more painful to a proud heart than the thoughts of such a being as God ; one who is infinitely powerful, just and holy ; who can neither be resisted, deceived, nor deluded ; who disposes, according to his own sovereign pleasure, of all creatures and events ; and who, in an especial manner, hates pride, and is determined to abase and punish it. Such a being pride can contemplate only with feelings of dread, aversion, and abhorrence. It must look upon him as its natural enemy, the great enemy, whom it has to fear. But the knowledge of God directly tends to bring this infinite, irresistible, irreconcilable enemy full to the view of the proud man. It teaches him that he has a superior, a master, from whose authority he cannot escape, whose power he cannot resist, and whose will he must obey, or be crushed before him, and be rendered miserable for ever. It shows him what he hates to see, that, in despite of his opposition, God’s counsel shall stand, that he will do all his pleasure, and that in all things wherein men deal proudly, God is above them. These truths torture the proud unhumblen hearts of the wicked, and hence they hate that knowledge of God which teaches these

truths, and will not seek it. On the contrary, they wish to remain ignorant of such a being, and to banish all thoughts of him from their minds. With this view, they neglect, pervert, or explain away those passages of revelation which describe God's true character, and endeavour to believe that he is altogether such a one as themselves.

How foolish, how absurd, how ruinous, how blindly destructive of its own object, does pride appear! By attempting to soar, it only plunges itself in the mire; and while endeavouring to erect for itself a throne, it undermines the ground on which it stands, and digs its own grave. It plunged Satan from heaven into hell; it banished our first parents from paradise; and it will, in a similar manner, ruin all who indulge in it. It keeps us in ignorance of God, shuts us out from his favour, prevents us from resembling him, deprives us in this world of all the honour and happiness which communion with him would confer; and in the next, unless previously hated, repented of, and renounced, will bar for ever against us the door of heaven, and close upon us the gates of hell. O then, my friends, beware, above all things, beware of pride! Beware, lest you indulge it imperceptibly, for it is perhaps, of all sins, the most secret, subtle, and insinuating.—*Edward Payson, D.D., 1783—1827.*

Verse 4.—David speaks in Psalm x. of great and potent oppressors and politicians, who see none on earth greater than themselves, none higher than they, and think therefore that they may *impunè* prey upon the smaller, as beasts use to do; and in the fourth verse this is made the root and ground of all, that God is not in all his thoughts. “*The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts.*” The words are diversely read, and all make for this sense. Some read it, “No God in all his crafty presumptuous purposes;” others, “All his thoughts are, there is no God.” The meaning whereof is not only that among the swarm and crowd of thoughts that fill his mind, the thought of God is seldom to be found, and comes not in among the rest, which yet is enough for the purpose in hand; but further, that in all his projects and plots, and consultations of his heart (the first reading of the words intends), whereby he contrives and lays the plot, form, and draught of all his actions, he never takes God or his will into consideration or consultation, to square and frame all accordingly, but proceeds and goes on in all, and carries on all as if there were no God to be consulted with. He takes not him along with him, no more than if he were no God; the thoughts of him and his will sway him not. As you use to say, when a combination of men leave out some one they should advise with, that such a one is not of their counsel, is not in the plot; so nor is God in their purposes and advisings, they do all without him. But this is not all the meaning, but farther, all their thought is, that there is no God. This is there made the bottom, the foundation, the groundwork and reason of all their wicked plots and injurious projects, and deceitful carriages and proceedings, that seeing there is no God or power above them to take notice of it, to regard or requite them, therefore they may be bold to go on.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 4.—“*Of his countenance.*” Which pride he carrieth engraven in his very countenance and forehead, and makes it known in all his carriages and gestures. “*Will not seek,*” namely, he contemneth all divine and human laws, he feareth not, respecteth not God's judgments; he careth for nothing, so he may fulfil his desires; enquires after, nor examines nothing; all things are indifferent to him.—*John Diodati.*

Verse 4.—“*All his thoughts are, there is no God;*” thus some read the passage. Seneca says, there are no atheists, though there would be some; if any say there is no God, they lie; though they say it in the day time, yet in the night when they are alone they deny it; howsoever some desperately harden themselves, yet if God doth but show himself terrible to them, they confess him. Many of the heathens and others, have denied that there is a God, yet when they were in distress, they did fall down and confess him, as Diagoras, that grand atheist, when he was troubled with the strangullion, acknowledged a deity which he had denied. These kind of atheists I leave to the tender mercies of God, of which I doubt it whether there be any for them.—*Richard Stock.*

Verse 4.—“*God is not in all his thoughts.*” It is the black work of an ungodly man or an atheist, that God is not in all his thoughts. What comfort can be had in the being of God without thinking of him with reverence and delight? A God forgotten is as good as no God to us.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 4.—Trifles possess us, but “*God is not in all our thoughts,*” seldom the

sole object of them. We have durable thoughts of transitory things, and flitting thoughts of a durable and eternal good. The covenant of grace engageth the whole heart to God, and bars anything else from engrossing it; but what strangers are God and the souls of most men! Though we have the knowledge of him by creation, yet he is for the most part an unknown God in the relations wherein he stands to us, because a God undelighted in. Hence it is, as one observes, that because we observe not the ways of God's wisdom, conceive not of him in his vast perfections, nor are stricken with an admiration of his goodness, that we have fewer good sacred poems than of any other kind. The wits of men hang the wing when they come to exercise their reasons and fancies about God. Parts and strength are given us, as well as corn and wine to the Israelites, for the service of God, but those are consecrated to some cursed Baal, Hosea ii. 8. Like Venus in the poet, we forsake heaven to follow some Adonis.—*Stephen Charnock*.

Verses 4, 5.—The world hath a spiritual fascination and witchcraft, by which, where it hath once prevailed, men are enchanted to an utter forgetfulness of themselves and God, and being drunk with pleasures, they are easily engaged to a madness and height of folly. Some, like foolish children, are made to keep a great stir in the world for very trifles, for a vain show; they think themselves great, honourable, excellent, and for this make a great bustle, when the world hath not added one cubit to their stature of real worth. Others are by this Circe transformed into savage creatures, and act the part of lions and tigers. Others, like swine, wallow in the lusts of uncleanness. Others are unmanned, putting off all natural affections, care not who they ride over, so they may rule over or be made great. Others are taken with ridiculous frenzies, so that a man that stands in the cool shade of a sedate composure would judge them out of their wits. It would make a man admire to read of the frisks of Caius Caligula, Xerxes, Alexander, and many others, who because they were above many men, thought themselves above human nature. They forgot they were born and must die, and did such things as would have made them, but that their greatness overawed it, a laughing-stock and common scorn to children. Neither must we think that these were but some few or rare instances of worldly intoxication, when the Scripture notes it as a general distemper of all that bow down to worship this idol. They live "without God in the world," saith the apostle, that is, they so carry it as if there were no God to take notice of them to check them for their madness. "*God is not in all his thoughts.*" Verse 4. "*The judgments of God are far above out of his sight;*" he puffs at his enemies (ver. 5), and saith in his heart, he "*shall never be moved.*" Verse 6. The whole Psalm describes the worldling as a man that hath lost all his understanding, and is acting the part of a frantic bedlam. What then can be a more fit engine for the devil to work with than the pleasures of the world?—*Richard Gilpin*.

Verse 5.—"Grievous," or troublesome; that is, all his endeavours and actions aim at nothing but at hurting others. "*Are far above,*" for he is altogether carnal, he hath not any disposition nor correspondence with the justice of thy law, which is altogether spiritual; and therefore cannot lively represent unto himself thy judgments, and the issue of the wicked according to the said law. Rom. vii. 14; 1 Cor. ii. 14. "*He puffeth;*" he doth most arrogantly despise them, and is confident he can overthrow them with a puff.—*John Diodati*.

Verse 5.—"Thy judgments are far above out of his sight." Because God does not immediately visit every sin with punishment, ungodly men do not see that in due time he judges all the earth. Human tribunals must of necessity, by promptness and publicity, commend themselves to the common judgment, but the Lord's modes of dealing with sin are sublimer and apparently more tardy, hence the bat's eyes of godless men cannot see them, and the grovelling wits of men cannot comprehend them. If God sat in the gate of every village and held his court there, even fools might discern his righteousness, but they are not capable of perceiving that for a matter to be settled in the highest court, even in heaven itself, is a far more solemn matter. Let believers take heed lest they fall in a degree into the same error, and begin to criticise the actions of The Great Supreme, when they are too elevated for human reason to comprehend them.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 5.—"The judgments of God are far above out of his sight." Out of his sight, as an eagle at her highest towering so lessons herself to view, that he sees not the talons, nor fears the grip. Thus man presumes till he hath sinned, and then despairs as fast afterwards. At first, "Tush, doth God see it?" At last, "Alas! will God

forgive it?" But if a man will not know his sins, his sins will know him; the eyes which presumption shuts, commonly despair opens.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 5.—"As for all his enemies, he puffeth at them." David describeth a proud man, puffing at his enemies: he is puffed up and swelled with high conceits of himself, as if he had some great matter in him, and he puffs at others as if he could do some great matter against them, forgetting that himself is but, as to his being in this world, a puff of wind which passeth away.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 5.—"As for all his enemies he puffeth at them;" literally, "He whistles at them." He is given over to the dominion of gloomy indifference, and he cares as little for others as for himself. Whosoever may be imagined by him to be an enemy he cares not. Contempt and ridicule are his only weapons; and he has forgotten how to use others of a more sacred character. His mental habits are marked by scorn; and he treats with contempt the judgments, opinions, and practices of the wisest of men.—*John Morison.*

Verse 6.—"He hath said in his heart, I shall not be moved: for I shall never be in adversity." Carnal security opens the door for all impiety to enter into the soul. Pompey, when he had in vain assaulted a city, and could not take it by force, devised this stratagem in way of agreement; he told them he would leave the siege and make peace with them, upon condition that they would let in a few weak, sick, and wounded soldiers among them to be cured. They let in the soldiers, and when the city was secure, the soldiers let in Pompey's army. A carnal settled security will let in a whole army of lusts into the soul.—*Thomas Brooks.*

Verse 6.—"He hath said in his heart, I shall not be moved: for I shall never be in adversity." To consider religion always on the comfortable side; to congratulate one's self for having obtained the end before we have made use of the means; to stretch the hands to receive the crown of righteousness before they have been employed to fight the battle; to be content with a false peace, and to use no efforts to obtain the graces to which true consolation is annexed: this is a dreadful calm, like that which some voyagers describe, and which is a very singular forerunner of a very terrible event. All on a sudden, in the wide ocean, the sea becomes calm, the surface of the water clear as a crystal, smooth as glass—the air serene; the unskilled passenger becomes tranquil and happy, but the old mariner trembles. In an instant the waves froth, the winds murmur, the heavens kindle, a thousand gulfs open, a frightful light inflames the air, and every wave threatens sudden death. This is an image of many men's assurance of salvation.—*James Saurin, 1677—1730.*

Verse 7.—"Under his tongue is mischief and vanity." The striking allusion of this expression is to certain venomous reptiles, which are said to carry bags of poison under their teeth, and with great subtlety to inflict the most deadly injuries upon those who come within their reach. How affectingly does this represent the sad havoc which minds tainted with infidelity inflict on the community! By their perversions of truth, and by their immoral sentiments and practices, they are as injurious to the mind as the deadliest poison can be to the body.—*John Morison.*

Verse 7.—Cursing men are cursed men.—*John Trapp.*

Verses 7—9. In Anne Askew's account of her examination by Bishop Bonner, we have an instance of the cruel craft of persecutors: "On the morrow after, my lord of London sent for me at one of the clock, his hour being appointed at three. And as I came before him, he said he was very sorry of my trouble, and desired to know my opinion in such matters as were laid against me. He required me also boldly in any wise to utter the secrets of my heart; bidding me not to fear in any point, for whatsoever I did say within his house no man should hurt me for it. I answered, 'For so much as your lordship hath appointed three of the clock, and my friends shall not come till that hour, I desire you to pardon me of giving answer till they come.'" Upon this Bale remarks: "In this preventing of the hour may the diligent perceive the greediness of this Babylon bishop, or bloodthirsty wolf, concerning his prey. 'Swift are their feet,' saith David, 'in the effusion of innocent blood, which have fraud in their tongues, venom in their lips, and most cruel vengeance in their mouths.' David much marvelleth in the spirit that, taking upon them the spiritual governance of the people, they can fall into such frenzy or forgetfulness of themselves, as to believe it lawful thus to oppress the faithful, and to devour them with as little compassion as he that greedily devoureth a piece of bread. If such have read anything of God, they have little minded their true duty therein.

'More swift,' saith Jeremy, 'are our cruel persecutors than the eagles of the air. They follow upon us over the mountains, and lay privy wait for us in the wilderness.' He that will know the crafty hawking of bishops to bring in their prey, let him learn it here. Judas, I think, had never the tenth part of their cunning workmanship.'" *John Bale, D.D., Bishop of Ossory, 1495—1563, in "Examination of Anne Askew." Parker Society's Publications.*

Verse 8.—"He sitteth in the lurking places of the villages," etc. The Arab robber lurks like a wolf among these sand-heaps, and often springs out suddenly upon the solitary traveller, robs him in a trice, and then plunges again into the wilderness of sand-hills and reedy downs, where pursuit is fruitless. Our friends are careful not to allow us to straggle about, or lag behind, and yet it seems absurd to fear a surprise here—Kaifa before, Acre in the rear, and travellers in sight on both sides. Robberies, however, do often occur, just where we now are. Strange country! and it has always been so. There are a hundred allusions to just such things in the history, the Psalms, and the prophets of Israel. A whole class of imagery is based upon them. Thus, in Psalm x. 8—10, "He sits in the lurking places of the villages: in the secret places doth he murder the innocent: he lieth in wait secretly as a lion in his den: he lieth in wait to catch the poor: he doth catch the poor, when he draweth him into his net; he croucheth and humbleth himself, that the poor may fall by his strong ones." And a thousand rascals, the living originals of this picture, are this day crouching and lying in wait all over the country to catch poor helpless travellers. You observe that all these people we meet or pass are armed; nor would they venture to go from Acre to Kaifa without their musket, although the cannon of the castles seem to command every foot of the way. Strange, most strange land! but it tallies wonderfully with its ancient story.—*W. M. Thomson, D.D., in "The Land and the Book," 1859.*

Verse 8.—My companions asked me if I knew the danger I had escaped. "No," I replied; "What danger?" They then told me that, just after they started, they saw a wild Arab skulking after me, crouching to the ground, with a musket in his hand; and that, as soon as he had reached within what appeared to them musket-shot of me, he raised his gun; but, looking wildly around him, as a man will do who is about to perpetrate some desperate act, he caught sight of them and disappeared. Jeremiah knew something of the ways of these Arabs when he wrote, (chap. iii. 2) "In the ways hast thou sat for them, as the Arabian in the wilderness;" and the simile is used in Psalm x. 9, 10, for the Arabs wait and watch for their prey with the greatest eagerness and perseverance.—*John Gadsby, in "My Wanderings," 1860.*

Verse 8.—"He sitteth in the lurking places of the villages: in the secret places doth he murder the innocent: his eyes are privily set against the poor." All this strength of metaphor and imagery is intended to mark the assiduity, the cunning, the low artifice, to which the enemies of truth and righteousness will often resort in order to accomplish their corrupt and vicious designs. The extirpation of true religion is their great object; and there is nothing to which they will not stoop in order to effect that object. The great powers which have oppressed the church of Christ, in different ages, have answered to this description. Both heathen and papistical authorities have thus condescended to infamy. They have sat, as it were, in ambush for the poor of Christ's flock; they have adopted every stratagem that infernal skill could invent; they have associated themselves with princes in their palaces, and with beggars on their dunghill; they have resorted to the villages, and they have mingled in the gay and populous city; and all for the vain purpose of attempting to blot out a "name which shall endure for ever, and which shall be continued as long as the sun."—*John Morison.*

Verse 9.—"He doth catch the poor." The poor man is the beast they hunt, who must rise early, rest late, eat the bread of sorrow, sit with many a hungry meal, perhaps his children crying for food, while all the fruit of his pains is served into Nimrod's table. Complain of this while you will, yet, as the orator said of Verres, *pecuniosus nescit damnari*. Indeed, a money-man may not be damned, but he may be damned. For this is a crying sin, and the wakened ears of the Lord will hear it, neither shall his provoked hands forbear it. *Si tacuerint pauperes loquentur lapides*. If the poor should hold their peace, the very stones would speak. The fines, rackings, enclosures, oppressions, vexations, will cry to God for vengeance.

"The stone will cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it. Hab. ii. 11. You see the beasts they hunt. Not foxes, nor wolves, nor boars, bulls, nor tigers. It is a certain observation, no beast hunts its own kind to devour it. Now, if these should persecute wolves, foxes, &c., they should then hunt their own kind; for they are these themselves, or rather worse than these, because here *homo homini lupus*. But though they are men they hunt, and by nature of the same kind, they are not so by quality, for they are lambs they persecute. In them there is blood, and flesh, and fleece to be had; and therefore on these do they gorge themselves. In them there is weak armour of defence against their cruelties; therefore over these they may domineer. I will speak it boldly: there is not a mighty Nimrod in this land that dares hunt his equal; but over his inferior lamb he insults like a young Nero. Let him be graced by high ones, and he must not be saluted under twelve score off. In the country he proves a termagant; his very scowl is a prodigy, and breeds an earthquake. He would be a Cæsar, and tax all. It is well if he prove not a cannibal! Only Macro salutes Sejanus so long as he is in Tiberius's favour; cast him from that pinnacle, and the dog is ready to devour him.—*Thomas Adams*.

Verse 9.—"He draweth him into his net." "They hunt with a net." Micah vii. 2. They have their politic gins to catch men; gaudy wares and dark shops (and would you have them love the light that live by darkness, as many shopkeepers?) draw and tole customers in, where the crafty leeches can soon feel their pulses; if they must buy, they shall pay for their necessity. And though they plead, We compel none to buy our ware, *caveat emptor*; yet with fine voluble phrases, damnable protestations, they will cast a mist of error before an eye of simple truth, and with cunning devices hunt them in. So some among us have feathered their nests, not by open violence, but politic circumvention. They have sought the golden fleece, not by Jason's merit, but by Medea's subtlety, by Medea's sorcery. If I should intend to discover these hunters' plots, and to deal punctually with them, I should afford you more matter than you would afford me time. But I limit myself, and answer all their plans with Augustine. Their tricks may hold in *jure fori*, but not in *jure poli*—in the common-pleas of earth, not before the king's bench in heaven. *Thomas Adams*.

Verse 9.—Oppression turns princes into roaring lions, and judges into evening wolves. It is an unnatural sin, against the light of nature. No creatures do oppress them of their own kind. Look upon the birds of prey, as upon eagles, vultures, hawks, and you shall never find them preying upon their own kind. Look upon the beasts of the forest, as upon the lion, the tiger, the wolf, the bear, and you shall ever find them favourable to their own kind; and yet men unnaturally prey upon one another, like the fish in the sea, the great swallowing up the small.—*Thomas Brooks*.

Verse 10.—"He croucheth, and humbleth himself," etc. There is nothing too mean or servile for them, in the attempt to achieve their sinister ends. You shall see his holiness the Pope washing the pilgrims' feet, if such a stratagem be necessary to act on the minds of the deluded multitude; or you shall see him sitting on a throne of purple, if he wishes to awe and control the kings of the earth.—*John Morison*.

Verse 10.—If you take a wolf in a lambskin, hang him up; for he is the worst of the generation.—*Thomas Adams*.

Verse 11.—"He hath said in his heart, God hath forgotten." Is it not a senseless thing to be careless of sins committed long ago? The old sins forgotten by men, stick fast in an infinite understanding. Time cannot raze out that which hath been known from eternity. Why should they be forgotten many years after they were acted, since they were foreknown in an eternity before they were committed, or the criminal capable to practise them? Amalek must pay their arrears of their ancient unkindness to Israel in the time of Saul, though the generation that committed them were rotten in their graves. 1 Sam. xv. 2. Old sins are written in a book, which lies always before God; and not only our own sins, but the sins of our fathers to be requited upon their posterity. "Behold it is written." Isa. lxxv. 6. What a vanity is it then to be regardless of the sins of an age that went before us; because they are in some measure out of our knowledge, are they therefore blotted out of God's remembrance? Sins are bound up with him, as men do bonds, till they resolve to sue for the debt. "The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up." Hosea

xlii. 12. As his foreknowledge extends to all acts that shall be done, so his remembrance extends to all acts that have been done. We may as well say, God foreknows nothing that shall be done to the end of the world, as that he forgets anything that hath been done from the beginning of the world.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 11.—“*He hath said in his heart, God hath forgotten : he hideth his face ; he will never see it.*” Many say in their hearts, “*God seeth them not,*” while with their tongues they confess he is an all-seeing God. The heart hath a tongue in it as well as the head, and these two tongues seldom speak the same language. While the head-tongue saith, “*We cannot hide ourselves from the sight of God,*” the heart-tongue of wicked men will say, “*God will hide himself from us, he will not see.*” But if their heart speak not thus, then as the prophet saith (Isa. xxix. 15), “*They dig deep to hide their counsel from the Lord ;*” surely they have a hope to hide their counsels, else they would not dig deep to hide them. Their digging is nor proper, but tropical ; as men dig deep to hide what they would not have in the earth, so they by their wits, plots, and devices, do their best to hide their counsels from God, and they say, “*Who seeth, who knoweth ? We, surely, are not seen either by God or man.*”—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 11.—The Scripture everywhere places sin upon this root. “*God hath forgotten : he hideth his face ; he will never see it.*” He hath turned his back upon the world. This was the ground of the oppression of the poor by the wicked, which he mentions, verses 9, 10. There is no sin but receives both its birth and nourishment from this bitter root. Let the notion of providence be once thrown out, or the belief of it faint, how will ambition, covetousness, neglect of God, distrust, impatience, and all other bitter gourds, grow up in a night ! It is from this topic all iniquity will draw arguments to encourage itself ; for nothing so much discourteousness those rising corruptions, and puts them out of heart, as an actuated belief that God takes care of human affairs.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 11.—“*He hath said in his heart,*” etc. “*Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.*” Eccl. viii. 11. God forbears punishing, therefore men forbear repenting. He doth not smite upon their back by correction, therefore they do not smite upon their thigh by humiliation. Jer. xxxi. 19. The sinner thinks thus : “*God hath spared me all this while, he hath eked out patience into longsuffering ; surely he will not punish.*” “*He hath said in his heart, God hath forgotten.*” God sometimes in infinite patience adjourns his judgments and puts off the sessions a while longer ; he is not willing to punish. 2 Peter iii. 9. The bee naturally gives honey, but stings only when it is angered. The Lord would have men make their peace with him. Isa. xxvii. 5. God is not like a hasty creditor that requires the debt, and will give no time for the payment ; he is not only gracious, but “*waits to be gracious.*” (Isa. xxx. 18) ; but God by his patience would bribe sinners to repentance ; but alas ! how is this patience abused. God’s longsuffering hardens : because God stops the vials of his wrath, sinners stop the conduit of tears.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 11.—“*He hath said in his heart, God hath forgotten : he hideth his face ; he will never see it.*” Because the Lord continues to spare them, therefore they go on to provoke him. As he adds to their lives, so they add to their lusts. What is this, but as if a man should break all his bones because there is a surgeon who is able to set them again ? Because justice seems to wink, men suppose her blind ; because she delays punishment, they imagine she denies to punish them ; because she does not always reprove them for their sins, they suppose she always approves of their sins. But let such know, that the silent arrow can destroy as well as the roaring cannon. Though the patience of God be *lasting*, yet it is not *everlasting*.—*William Secher.*

Verses 11, 12, 13.—The atheist denies God’s ordering of sublunary matters. “*Tush, doth the Lord see, or is there knowledge in the Most High ?*” making him a maimed Deity, without an eye of providence, or an arm of power, and at most restraining him only to matters above the clouds. But he that dares to confine the King to heaven, will soon after endeavour to depose him and fall at last flatly to deny him.—*Thomas Fuller.*

Verse 13.—“*He hath said in his heart, Thou wilt not require it.*”—As when the desperate pirate, ransacking and rifling a bottom, was told by the master, that though no law could touch him for the present, he should answer it at the day of

judgment, replied, "If I may stay so long ere I come to it, I will take thee and thy vessel too." A conceit wherewith too many land-thieves and oppressors flatter themselves in their hearts, though they dare not utter it with their lips.—*Thomas Adams*.

Verses 13, 14.—What, do you think that God doth not remember our sins which we do not regard? for while we sin the score runs on, and the Judge setteth down in that table of remembrance, and his scroll reacheth up to heaven. Item, for lending to usury; item, for racking of rents; item, for starching thy ruffs; item, for curling thy hair; item, for painting thy face; item, for selling of benefices; item, for starving of souls; item, for playing at cards; item, for sleeping in the church; item, for profaning the Sabbath-day, with a number more hath God to call to account, for every one must answer for himself. The fornicator, for taking of filthy pleasure; the careless prelate, for murdering so many thousand souls; the landlord, for getting money from his poor tenants by racking of his rents; see the rest, all they shall come like very sheep when the trumpet shall sound, and the heaven and earth shall come to judgment against them; when the heavens shall vanish like a scroll, and the earth shall consume like fire, and all the creatures standing against them; the rocks shall cleave asunder and the mountains shake and the foundation of the earth shall tremble, and they shall say to the mountain, Cover us, fall upon us, and hide us from the presence of his anger and wrath, whom we have not cared to offend. But they shall not be covered and hid; but then shall they go the back way, to the snakes and serpents, to be tormented of devils for ever.—*Henry Smith*.

Verse 14.—"Thou hast seen it; for thou beholdest mischief and spite, to requite it with thy hands," etc. This should be a terror to the wicked, to think that whatsoever they do, they do it in the sight of him that shall judge them, and call them to a strict account for every thought conceived against his majesty; and therefore, it should make them afraid to sin; because that when they burn with lust, and toil with hatred, when they scorn the just and wrong the innocent, they do all this, not only *in conspectu Dei*, within the compass of God's sight, but also in *sinu divinitatis*, in the bosom of that Deity, who, though he suffered them for a time to run on, like "a wild ass used to the wilderness," yet he will find them out at the last, and then cut them off and destroy them. And as this is terror unto the wicked, so it may be a comfort unto the godly to think that he who should hear their prayers and send them help, is so near unto them; and it should move them to rely still upon him, because we are sure of his presence wherever we are.—*G. Williams*, 1636.

Verse 14.—"The poor committeth himself unto thee." The awkwardness of our hearts to suffer comes much from distrust. An unbelieving soul treads upon the promise as a man upon ice; at first going upon it he is full of fears and tumultuous thoughts lest it should crack. Now, daily resignation of thy heart, as it will give thee an occasion of conversing more with the thoughts of God's power, faithfulness, and other of his attributes (for want of familiarity with which, jealousies arise in our hearts when put to any great plunge), so also it will furnish thee with many experiences of the reality both of his attributes and promises; which, though they need not any testimony from sense, to gain them credit with us, yet so much are we made of sense, so childish and weak is our faith, that we find our hearts much helped by those experiences we have had, to rely on him for the future. Look, therefore, carefully to this; every morning leave thyself and ways in God's hand, as the phrase is. Psalm x. 14. And at night look again how well God hath looked to his trust, and sleep not till thou hast affected thy heart with his faithfulness, and laid a stronger charge on thy heart to trust itself again in God's keeping in the night. And when any breach is made, and seeming loss befalls thee in any enjoyment, which thou hast by faith insured of thy God, observe how God fills up that breach, and makes up that loss to thee; and rest not till thou hast fully vindicated the good name of God to thy own heart. Be sure thou lettest no discontent or dissatisfaction lie upon thy spirit at God's dealings; but chide thy heart for it, as David did his. Psalm xlii. And thus doing, with God's blessing, thou shalt keep thy faith in breath for a longer race, when called to run it.—*W. Gurnall*.

Verse 14.—"Thou art the helper of the fatherless." God doth exercise a more special providence over men, as clothed with miserable circumstances; and therefore among his other titles this is one, to be a "helper of the fatherless." It is the argument the church used to express her return to God; Hosea xiv. 3, "For in

thee the fatherless find mercy." Now what greater comfort is there than this, that there is one presides in the world who is so wise he cannot be mistaken, so faithful he cannot deceive, so pitiful he cannot neglect his people, and so powerful that he can make stones even to be turned into bread if he please! God doth not govern the world only by his will as an absolute monarch, but by his wisdom and goodness as a tender father. It is not his greatest pleasure to show his sovereign power, or his inconceivable wisdom, but his immense goodness, to which he makes the other attributes subservient.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 14.—“*Thou hast seen it,*” etc. If God did not see our ways, we might sin and go unpunished; but forasmuch as he seeth them with purer eyes than to behold iniquity and approve it, he is engaged both in justice and honour to punish all that iniquity of our ways which he seeth or beholdeth. David makes this the very design of God’s superintendency over the ways of men: “*Thou hast seen it: for thou beholdest mischief and spite to requite it with thy hand: the poor committeth himself unto thee; thou art the helper of the fatherless.*” Thus the Psalmist represents the Lord as having taken a view or survey of the ways of men. “*Thou hast seen.*” What hath God seen? Even all that wickedness and oppression of the poor spoken of in the former part of the Psalm, as also the blasphemy of the wicked against himself (verse 13), “*Wherefore doth the wicked contemn God? he hath said in his heart, Thou wilt not requite it.*” What saith the Psalmist concerning God, to this vain, confident man? “*Thou,*” saith he, “*beholdest mischief and spite;*” but to what purpose? the next words tell us that—“*to requite it with thy hand.*” As thou hast seen what mischief they have done spitefully, so in due time thou wilt requite it righteously. The Lord is not a bare spectator, he is both a rewarder and an avenger. Therefore, from the ground of this truth, that the Lord seeth all our ways, and counteth all our steps, we, as the prophet exhorts (Isaiah iii. 10, 11), may “say to the righteous, that it shall be well with him: for they shall eat the fruit of their doings.” We may also say, “Woe unto the wicked! it shall be ill with him: for the reward of his hands shall be given him.” Only idols which have eyes and see not, have hands and strike not.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 14.—“*Thou hast seen it; for thou beholdest mischief and spite, to requite it with thy hand: the poor committeth himself unto thee; thou art the helper of the fatherless.*” Let the poor know that their God doth take care of them, to visit their sins with rods who spoil them, seeing they have forgotten that we are members one of another, and have invaded the goods of their brethren; God will arm them against themselves, and beat them with their own staves; either their own compassing and over-reaching wits shall consume their store, or their unthrifty posterity shall put wings upon their riches to make them fly; or God shall not give them the blessing to take use of their wealth, but they shall leave to such as shall be merciful to the poor. Therefore let them follow the wise man’s counsel (Eccles. x. 20), “Curse not the rich, no, not in thy bedchamber;” let no railing and unchristian bitterness wrong a good cause; let it be comfort enough to them that God is both their supporter and avenger. Is it not sufficient to lay all the storms of discontent against their oppressors, that God sees their affliction, and cometh down to deliver and avenge them?—*Edward Marbury.*

Verse 14.—“*Thou hast seen it; for thou beholdest mischief and spite, to requite it with thy hand,*” etc. God considers all your works and ways, and will not you consider the works, the ways of God? Of this be sure, whether you consider the ways of God, his word-ways, or work-ways, of this be sure, God will consider your ways, certainly he will; those ways of yours which in themselves are not worth the considering or looking upon, your sinful ways, though they are so vile, so abominable, that if yourselves did but look upon them and consider them, you would be utterly ashamed of them; yea, though they are an abomination to God while he beholds them, yet he will behold and consider them. The Lord who is of purer eyes than to behold any the least iniquity, to approve it, will yet behold the greatest of your iniquities, and your impure ways to consider them. “*Thou,*” said David, “*beholdest mischief and spite, to requite it:*” God beholdeth the foulest, dirtiest ways of men, their ways of oppression and unrighteousness, their ways of intemperance and lasciviousness, their ways of wrath and maliciousness, at once to detest, detect, and requite them. If God thus considereth the ways of men, even those filthy and crooked ways of men, should not men consider the holy, just and righteous ways of God?—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verses 14—18.—“*God delights to help the poor.*” He loves to take part with

the best, though the weakest side. Contrary to the course of most, who when a controversy arises use to stand in a kind of indifferency or neutrality, till they see which part is strongest, not which is justest. Now if there be any consideration (besides the cause) that draws or engages God, it is the weakness of the side. He joins with many, because they are weak, not with any, because they are strong; therefore he is called *the helper of the friendless, and with him the fatherless* (the orphans) *find mercy*. By fatherless we are not to understand such only whose parents are dead, but any one that is in distress; as Christ promiseth his disciples; "*I will not leave you orphans,*" that is, helpless, and (as we translate) *comfortless*; though ye are as children without a father, yet I will be a father to you. Men are often like those clouds which dissolve into the sea; they send presents to the rich, and assist the strong; but God sends his rain upon the dry land, and lends his strength to those who are weak. . . . The prophet makes this report to God of himself (Isaiah xxv. 4): "*Thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm,*" etc.—*Joseph Caryl*.

Verse 16.—"The Lord is King for ever and ever: the heathen are perished out of his land." Such confidence and faith must appear to the world strange and unaccountable. It is like what his fellow citizens may be supposed to have felt (if the story be true) toward that man of whom it is recorded, that his powers of vision were so extraordinary, that he could distinctly see the fleet of the Carthaginians entering the harbour of Carthage, while he stood himself at Lilybœum, in Sicily. A man seeing across an ocean, and able to tell of objects so far off! he could feast his vision on what others saw not. Even thus does faith now stand at its Lilybœum, and see the long tossed fleet entering safely the desired haven, enjoying the bliss of that still distant day, as if it was already come.—*Andrew A. Bonar*.

Verse 17.—There is a humbling act of faith put forth in prayer. Others style it praying in humility; give me leave to style it praying in faith. In faith which sets the soul in the presence of that mighty God, and by the sight of him, which faith gives us, it is that we see our own vileness, sinfulness, and abhor ourselves, and profess ourselves unworthy of any, much less of those mercies we are to seek for. Thus the sight of God had wrought in the prophet (Isaiah vi. 5), "Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." And holy Job speaks thus (Job xlii. 5, 6), "Now mine eye seeth thee: wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." This is as great a requisite to prayer as any other act; I may say of it alone, as the apostle (James i. 7), that without it we shall receive nothing at the hands of God! God loves to fill empty vessels, he looks to broken hearts. In the Psalms how often do we read that God hears the prayers of the humble; which always involves and includes faith in it. Psalm ix. 12, "He forgetteth not the cry of the humble," and Psalm x. 17, "Lord thou hast heard the desire of the humble: thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear." To be deeply humbled is to have the heart prepared and fitted for God to hear the prayer; and therefore you find the Psalmist pleading *sub forma pauperis*, often repeating, "I am poor and needy." And this prevents our thinking much if God do not grant the particular thing we do desire. Thus also Christ himself in his great distress (Psalm xxii), doth treat God (verse 2), "O my God, I cry in the day-time, but thou hearest not; and in the night season am not silent. Our fathers trusted in thee. They cried unto thee, and were delivered. But I am a worm, and no man; reproached of men, and despised of the people; (verse 6) "and he was "heard" in the end "in what he feared." And these deep humblings of ourselves, being joined with vehement implorations upon the mercy of God to obtain, is reckoned into the account of praying by faith, both by God and Christ. Matt. viii.—*Thomas Goodwin*.

Verse 17.—"Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble." A spiritual prayer is a humble prayer. Prayer is the asking of an alms, which requires humility. "The publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner." Luke xviii. 13. God's incomprehensible glory may even amaze us and strike a holy consternation into us when we approach nigh unto him: "O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee." Ezra ix. 6. It is comely to see a poor nothing lie prostrate at the feet of its Maker. "Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes." Gen. xviii. 27. The lower the heart descends, the higher the prayer ascends.—*Thomas Watson*.

Verse 17.—“*Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble,*” etc. How pleasant is it, that these benefits, which are of so great a value both on their own account, and that of the divine benignity from whence they come, should be delivered into our hands, marked, as it were, with this grateful inscription, *that they have been obtained by prayer!*—*Robert Leighton.*

Verse 17.—“*The desire of the humble.*” Prayer is the offering up of our desires to God in the name of Christ, for such things as are agreeable to his will. It is an offering of our *desires*. Desires are the soul and life of prayer; words are but the body; now as the body without the soul is dead, so are prayers unless they are animated with our desires: “*Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble.*” God heareth not words, but *desires*.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 17.—God’s choice acquaintances are humble men.—*Robert Leighton.*

Verse 17.—He that sits nearest the dust, sits nearest heaven.—*Andrew Gray, of Glasgow, 1616.*

Verse 17.—There is a kind of omnipotency in prayer, as having an interest and prevalency with God’s omnipotency. It hath loosed iron chains (Acts xv. 25, 26); it hath opened iron gates (Acts xii. 5—10); it hath unlocked the windows of heaven (1 Kings xviii. 41); it hath broken the bars of death (John xi. 40, 43). Satan hath three titles given in the Scriptures, setting forth his malignity against the church of God: a dragon, to note his malice; a serpent, to note his subtlety; and a lion, to note his strength. But none of all these can stand before prayer. The greatest malice of Haman sinks under the prayer of Esther; the deepest policy, the counsel of Ahithophel, withers before the prayer of David; the largest army, a host of a thousand Ethiopians, run away like cowards before the prayer of Asa.—*Edward Reynolds, 1599—1676.*

Verse 18.—“*To judge the fatherless and the oppressed,*” etc. The tears of the poor fall down upon their cheeks, *et ascendunt ad cœlum*, and go up to heaven and cry for vengeance before God, the judge of widows, the father of widows and orphans. Poor people be oppressed even by laws. Woe worth to them that make evil laws against the poor, what shall be to them that hinder and mar good laws? What will ye do in the day of great vengeance when God shall visit you? he saith he will hear the tears of the poor woman, when he goeth on visitation. For their sake he will hurt the judge, be he never so high, he will for widows’ sakes change realms, bring them into temptation, pluck his judges’ skins over their heads. Cambyses was a great emperor, such another as our master is, he had many lord deputies, lord presidents, and lieutenants under him. It is a great while ago since I read the history. It chanced he had under him in one of his dominions a briber, a gift-taker, a gratifier of rich men; he followed gifts as fast as he that followed the pudding; a handmaker in his office, to make his son a great man, as the old saying is “Happy is the child whose father goeth to the devil.” The cry of the poor widow came to the emperor’s ear, and caused him to slay the judge quick, and laid his skin in his chair of judgment, that all judges that should give judgment afterward, should sit in the same skin. Surely it was a goodly sign, a goodly monument, the sign of the judge’s skin. I pray God we may once see the sign of the skin in England. Ye will say, peradventure, that this is cruelly and uncharitably spoken. No, no; I do it charitably, for a love I bear to my country. God saith, “I will visit.” God hath two visitations; the first is when he revealeth his word by preachers; and where the first is accepted, the second cometh not. The second visitation is vengeance. He went to visitation when he brought the judge’s skin over his ears. If this word be despised, he cometh with the second visitation with vengeance.—*Hugh Latimer, 1480—1555.*

Verse 18.—“*Man of the earth,*” etc. In the eighth Psalm (which is a circular Psalm ending as it did begin, “O Lord our God, how excellent is thy name in all the world!” That whithersoever we turn our eyes, upwards or downwards, we may see ourselves beset with his glory round about), how doth the prophet base and discountenance the nature and whole race of man; as may appear by his disdainful and derogatory interrogation, “What is man that thou art mindful of him; and the Son of Man, that thou regardest him?” In the ninth Psalm, “Rise, Lord; let not man have the upper hand; let the nations be judged in thy sight. Put them in fear, O Lord, that the heathen may know themselves to be but men.” Further, in the tenth Psalm, “Thou judgest the fatherless and the poor, that the man of the earth do no more violence.”

The Psalms, as they go in order, so, methinks they grow in strength, and each hath a weightier force to throw down our presumption. 1. We are "men," and the "sons of men," to show our descent and propagation. 2. "Men in our own knowledge," to show that conscience and experience of infirmity doth convict us. 3. "Men of the earth," to show our original matter whereof we are framed. In the twenty-second Psalm, he addeth more disgrace; for either in his own name, regarding the misery and contempt wherein he was held, or in the person of Christ, whose figure he was, as if it were a robbery for him to take upon him the nature of man, he falleth to a lower style, *at ego sum vermis et non vir*; but I am a worm, and no man. For as corruption is the father of all flesh, so are the worms his brethren and sisters, according to the old verse—

"First man, next worms, then stench and loathsomeness,
Thus man to no man alters by changes."

Abraham, the father of the faithful (Genesis xviii.), sifteth himself into the coarsest man that can be, and resolveth his nature into the elements whereof it first rose. "Behold I have begun to speak to my Lord, being dust and ashes." And if any of the children of Abraham, who succeed him in the faith, or any of the children of Adam, who succeed him in the flesh, thinketh otherwise, let him know that there is a threefold cord twisted by the finger of God, that shall tie him to his first original, though he contend till his heart break. "O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord" (Jer. xxii); that is, earth by creation, earth by continuance, earth by resolution. Thou camest earth, thou remainest earth, and to earth thou must return.—*John King.*

Verse 18.—"*The man of the earth.*" Man dwelling in the earth, and made of earth.—*Thomas Wilcocks.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—The answer to these questions furnishes a noble topic for an experimental sermon. Let me suggest that the question is not to be answered in the same manner in all cases. Past sin, trials of graces, strengthening of faith, discovery of depravity, instruction, etc., etc., are varied reasons for the hiding of our Father's face.

Verse 2.—Religious persecution in all its phases based on pride.

Verse 3.—God's hatred of covetousness: show its justice.

Verse 4.—Pride the barrier in the way of conversion.

Verse 4 (*last clause*).—Thoughts in which God is not, weighed and condemned.

Verse 5.—"*Thy judgments are far above out of his sight.*" Moral inability of men to appreciate the character and acts of God.

Verse 6.—The vain confidence of sinners.

Verse 8.—Dangers of godly men, or the snares in the way of believers.

Verse 9.—The ferocity, craftiness, strength, and activity of Satan.

Verse 9 (*last clause*).—The Satanic fisherman, his art, diligence, success, etc.

Verse 10.—Designing humility unmasked.

Verse 11.—Divine omniscience and the astounding presumption of sinners.

Verse 12.—"*Arise, O Lord.*" A prayer needful, allowable, seasonable, etc.

Verse 13 (*first clause*).—An astounding fact, and a reasonable enquiry.

Verse 13.—Future retribution: doubts concerning it. I. By whom indulged: "*the wicked.*" II. Where fostered: "*in his heart.*" III. For what purpose: *quieting of conscience*, etc. IV. With what practical tendency: "*contemn God.*" He who disbelieves hell distrusts heaven.

Verses 13, 14.—Divine government in the world. I. Who doubt it? and why? II. Who believe it? and what does this faith cause them to do?

Verse 14 (*last clause*).—A plea for orphans.

Verse 16.—The Eternal Kingship of Jehovah.

Verse 17 (*first clause*).—I. The Christian's character—"humble." II. An attribute of the Christian's whole life—"desire:" he desires more holiness, communion, knowledge, grace, and usefulness; and then he desires glory. III. The Christian's great blessedness—"Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble."

Verse 17 (*whole verse*).—I. Consider the nature of gracious desires. II. Their origin. III. Their result. The three sentences readily suggest these divisions, and the subject may be very profitable.