

PSALM XIV.

TITLE.—*This admirable ode is simply headed, "To the Chief Musician by David." The dedication to the Chief Musician stands at the head of fifty-three of the Psalms, and clearly indicates that such Psalms were intended, not merely for the private use of believers, but to be sung in the great assemblies by the appointed choir at whose head was the overseer, or superintendent, called in our version, "the Chief Musician," and by Ainsworth, "the master of the Music." Several of these Psalms have little or no praise in them, and were not addressed directly to the Most High, and yet were to be sung in public worship; which is a clear indication that the theory of Augustine lately revived by certain hymn-book makers, that nothing but praise should be sung, is far more plausible than Scriptural. Not only did the ancient Church chant hallowed doctrine and offer prayer amid her spiritual songs, but even the wailing notes of complaint were put into her mouth by the sweet singer of Israel who was inspired of God. Some persons grasp at any nicety which has a gloss of apparent correctness upon it, and are pleased with being more fancifully precise than others; nevertheless it will ever be the way of plain men, not only to magnify the Lord in sacred canticles, but also, according to Paul's precept, to teach and admonish one another in Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in their hearts unto the Lord.*

As no distinguishing title is given to this Psalm, we would suggest as an assistance to the memory, the heading—**CONCERNING PRATICAL ATHEISM.** *The many conjectures as to the occasion upon which it was written are so completely without foundation, that it would be a waste of time to mention them at length. The apostle Paul, in Romans iii., has shown incidentally that the drift of the inspired writer is to show that both Jews and Gentiles are all under sin; there was, therefore, no reason for fixing upon any particular historical occasion, when all history reeks with terrible evidence of human corruption. With instructive alterations, David has given us in Psalm liii. a second edition of this humiliating psalm, being moved of the Holy Ghost thus doubly to declare a truth which is ever distasteful to carnal minds.*

DIVISION.—*The world's foolish creed (verse 1); its practical influence in corrupting morals, 1, 2, 3. The persecuting tendencies of sinners, 4; their alarms, 5; their ridicule of the godly, 6; and a prayer for the manifestation of the Lord to his people's joy.*

EXPOSITION.

THE fool hath said in his heart, *There is no God.* They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, *there is none that doeth good.*

"The fool." The Atheist is the fool pre-eminently, and a fool universally. He would not deny God if he were not a fool by nature, and having denied God it is no marvel that he becomes a fool in practice. Sin is always folly, and as it is the height of sin to attack the very existence of the Most High, so is it also the greatest imaginable folly. To say there is no God is to belie the plainest evidence, which is obstinacy; to oppose the common consent of mankind, which is stupidity; to stifle consciousness, which is madness. If the sinner could by his atheism destroy the God whom he hates there were some sense, although much wickedness, in his infidelity; but as denying the existence of fire does not prevent its burning a man who is in it, so doubting the existence of God will not stop the Judge of all the earth from destroying the rebel who breaks his laws; nay, this atheism is a crime which much provokes heaven, and will bring down terrible vengeance on the fool who indulges it. The proverb says, "A fool's tongue cuts his own throat," and in this instance it kills both soul and body for ever: would to God the mischief stopped even there, but alas! one fool makes hundreds, and a noisy blasphemer spreads his horrible doctrines as lepers spread the plague. Ainsworth, in his "Annotations," tells us that the word here used is *Nabal*, which has the signification of fading, dying, or falling away, as a withered leaf or flower; it is a title given to the foolish man as having lost the juice and sap of wisdom, reason, honesty, and godliness. Trapp hits the mark when he calls him "that sapless fellow, that carcase of a man, that walking sepulchre of himself, in whom all religion and right reason is withered

and wasted, dried up and decayed." Some translate it *the apostate*, and others *the wretch*. With what earnestness should we shun the appearance of doubt as to the presence, activity, power and love of God, for all such mistrust is of the nature of folly, and who among us would wish to be ranked with the fool in the text? Yet let us never forget that all unregenerate men are more or less such fools.

The fool "*hath said in his heart.*" May a man with his mouth profess to believe, and yet in heart say the reverse? Had he hardly become audacious enough to utter his folly with his tongue? Did the Lord look upon his thoughts as being in the nature of words to him though not to man? Is this where man first becomes an unbeliever?—in his heart, not in his head? And when he talks atheistically, is it a foolish heart speaking and endeavouring to clamour down the voice of conscience? We think so. If the affections were set upon truth and righteousness, the understanding would have no difficulty in settling the question of a present personal Deity, but as the heart dislikes the good and the right, it is no wonder that it desires to be rid of that Elohim, who is the great moral Governor, the Patron of rectitude and the Punisher of iniquity. While men's hearts remain what they are, we must not be surprised at the prevalence of scepticism; a corrupt tree will bring forth corrupt fruit. "Every man," says Dickson, "so long as he lieth un-renewed and un-reconciled to God is nothing in effect but a madman." What wonder then if he raves? Such fools as those we are now dealing with are common to all time, and all countries; they grow without watering, and are found all the world over. The spread of mere intellectual enlightenment will not diminish their number, for since it is an affair of the heart, this folly and great learning will often dwell together. To answer sceptical cavillings will be labour lost until grace enters to make the mind willing to believe; fools can raise more objections in an hour than wise men can answer in seven years, indeed it is their mirth to set stools for wise men to stumble over. Let the preacher aim at the heart, and preach the all-conquering love of Jesus, and he will by God's grace win more doubters to the faith of the gospel than any hundred of the best reasoners who only direct their arguments to the head.

"*The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God,*" or "*no God.*" So monstrous is the assertion, that the man hardly dared to put it as a positive statement, but went very near to doing so. Calvin seems to regard this saying "*no God,*" as hardly amounting to a syllogism, scarcely reaching to a positive, dogmatical declaration; but Dr. Alexander clearly shows that it does. It is not merely the wish of the sinner's corrupt nature, and the hope of his rebellious heart, but he manages after a fashion to bring himself to assert it, and at certain seasons he thinks that he believes it. It is a solemn reflection that some who worship God with their lips may in their hearts be saying, "*no God.*" It is worthy of observation that he does not say there is no Jehovah, but there is no Elohim; Deity in the abstract is not so much the object of attack, as the covenant, personal, ruling and governing presence of God in the world. God as ruler, lawgiver, worker, Saviour, is the butt at which the arrows of human wrath are shot. How impotent the malice! How mad the rage which raves and foams against him in whom we live and move and have our being! How horrible the insanity which leads a man who owes his all to God to cry out, "*No God!*" How terrible the depravity which makes the whole race adopt this as their hearts' desire, "*no God!*"

"*They are corrupt.*" This refers to all men, and we have the warrant of the Holy Ghost for so saying; see the third chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. Where there is enmity to God, there is deep, inward depravity of mind. The words are rendered by eminent critics in an active sense, "*they have done corruptly:*" this may serve to remind us that sin is not only in our nature passively as the source of evil, but we ourselves actively fan the flame and corrupt ourselves, making that blacker still which was black as darkness itself already. We rivet our own chains by habit and continuance.

"*They have done abominable works.*" When men begin with renouncing the Most High God, who shall tell where they will end? When the Master's eyes are put out, what will not the servants do? Observe the state of the world before the flood, as portrayed in Genesis vi. 12, and remember that human nature is unchanged. He who would see a terrible photograph of the world without God must read that most painful of all inspired Scriptures, the first chapter of the epistle to the Romans. Learned Hindoos have confessed that the description is literally correct in Hindostan at the present moment; and were it not for the restraining grace of God, it would be so in England. Alas! it is even here but too correct a

picture of things which are done of men in secret. Things loathsome to God and man are sweet to some palates.

"*There is none that doeth good.*" Sins of omission must abound where transgressions are rife. Those who do the things which they ought not to have done, are sure to leave undone those things which they ought to have done. What a picture of our race is this! Save only where grace reigns, there is none that doeth good; humanity, fallen and debased, is a desert without an oasis, a night without a star, a dunghill without a jewel, a hell without a bottom.

2 The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, *and* seek God.

3 They are all gone aside, they are *all* together become filthy: *there is* none that doeth good, no, not one

"*The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men.*" As from a watch-tower, or other elevated place of observation, the Lord is represented as gazing intently upon men. He will not punish blindly, nor like a tyrant command an indiscriminate massacre because a rumour of rebellion has come up to his ears. What condescending interest and impartial justice are here imagined! The case of Sodom, visited before it was overthrown, illustrates the careful manner in which Divine Justice beholds the sin before it avenges it, and searches out the righteous that they perish not with the guilty. Behold then the eyes of Omniscience ransacking the globe, and prying among every people and nation, "*to see if there were any that did understand and seek God.*" He who is looking down knows the good, is quick to discern it, would be delighted to find it; but as he views all the unregenerate children of men his search is fruitless, for of all the race of Adam, no unrenewed soul is other than an enemy to God and goodness. The objects of the Lord's search are not wealthy men, great men, or learned men; these, with all they can offer, cannot meet the demands of the great Governor: at the same time, he is not looking for superlative eminence in virtue, he seeks for *any that understand* themselves, their state, their duty, their destiny, their happiness; he looks for *any that seek God*, who, if there be a God, are willing and anxious to find him out. Surely this is not too great a matter to expect; for if men have not yet known God, if they have any right understanding, they will seek him. Alas! even this low degree of good is not to be found even by him who sees all things; but men love the hideous negation of "No God," and with their backs to their Creator, who is the sun of their life, they journey into the dreary region of unbelief and alienation, which is a land of darkness as darkness itself, and of the shadow of death without any order and where the light is as darkness.

"*They are all gone aside.*" Without exception, all men have apostatized from the Lord their Maker, from his laws, and from the eternal principles of right. Like stubborn heifers they have sturdily refused to receive the yoke, like errant sheep they have found a gap and left the right field. The original speaks of the race as a whole, as a totality; and humanity as a whole has become depraved in heart and defiled in life. "*They have altogether become filthy;*" as a whole they are spoiled and soured like corrupt leaven, or, as some put it, they have become putrid and even stinking. The only reason why we do not more clearly see this foulness is because we are accustomed to it, just as those who work daily among offensive odours at last cease to smell them. The miller does not observe the noise of his own mill, and we are slow to discover our own ruin and depravity. But are there no special cases, are all men sinful? "Yes," says the Psalmist, in a manner not to be mistaken, "*they are.*" He has put it positively, he repeats it negatively, "*There is none that doeth good, no, not one.*" The Hebrew phrase is an utter denial concerning any mere man that he of himself doeth good. What can be more sweeping? This is the verdict of the all-seeing Jehovah, who cannot exaggerate or mistake. As if no hope of finding a solitary specimen of a good man among the unrenewed human family might be harboured for an instant. The Holy Spirit is not content with saying all and altogether, but adds the crushing threefold negative, "*none, no, not one.*" What say the opponents to the doctrine of natural depravity to this? Rather what do we feel concerning it? Do we not confess that we by nature are corrupt, and do we not bless the sovereign grace which has renewed us in the spirit of our minds, that sin may no more have dominion over us, but that grace may rule and reign?

4 Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge? who eat up my people as they eat bread, and call not upon the LORD.

Hatred of God and corruptness of life are the motive forces which produce persecution. Men who having no saving knowledge of divine things, enslave themselves to become workers of iniquity, have no heart to cry to the Lord for deliverance, but seek to amuse themselves with devouring the poor and despised people of God. It is hard bondage to be a "*worker of iniquity*;" a worker at the galleys, or in the mines of Siberia, is not more truly degraded and wretched; the toil is hard and the reward dreadful; those who have no knowledge choose such slavery, but those who are taught of God cry to be rescued from it. The same ignorance which keeps men bondsmen to evil, makes them hate the freeborn sons of God; hence they seek to eat them up "*as they eat bread*,"—daily, ravenously, as though it were an ordinary, usual, every-day matter to oppress the saints of God. As pikes in a pond eat up little fish, as eagles prey on smaller birds, as wolves rend the sheep of the pasture, so sinners naturally and as a matter of course persecute, malign, and mock the followers of the Lord Jesus. While thus preying, they forswear all praying, and in this act consistently, for how could they hope to be heard while their hands are full of blood?

5 There were they in great fear: for God is in the generation of the righteous.

Oppressors have it not all their own way, they have their fits of trembling and their appointed seasons of overthrow. *There*—where they denied God and hectoring against his people; *there*—where they thought of peace and safety, they were made to quail. "*There were they*"—these very loud-mouthed, iron-handed, proud-hearted Nimrods and Herods, these heady, high-minded sinners—" *there were they in great fear.*" A panic terror seized them: "they feared a fear," as the Hebrew puts it; an undefinable, horrible, mysterious dread crept over them. The most hardened of men have their periods when conscience casts them into a cold sweat of alarm. As cowards are cruel, so all cruel men are at heart cowards. The ghost of past sin is a terrible spectre to haunt any man, and though unbelievers may boast as loudly as they will, a sound is in their ears which makes them ill at ease.

"*For God is in the generation of the righteous.*" This makes the company of godly men so irksome to the wicked because they perceive that God is with them. Shut their eyes as they may, they cannot but perceive the image of God in the character of his truly gracious people, nor can they fail to see that he works for their deliverance. Like Haman, they instinctively feel a trembling when they see God's Mordecais. Even though the saint may be in a mean position, mourning at the gate where the persecutor rejoices in state, the sinner feels the influence of the believer's true nobility and quails before it, for God is there. Let scoffers beware, for they persecute the Lord Jesus when they molest his people; the union is very close between God and his people, it amounts to a mysterious indwelling, for God is in the generation of the righteous.

6 Ye have shamed the counsel of the poor, because the LORD is his refuge.

Notwithstanding their real cowardice, the wicked put on the lion's skin and lord it over the Lord's poor ones. Though fools themselves, they mock at the truly wise as if the folly were on their side; but this is what might be expected, for how should brutish minds appreciate excellence, and how can those who have owl's eyes admire the sun? The special point and butt of their jest seems to be the confidence of the godly in their Lord. What can your God do for you now? Who is that God who can deliver out of our hand? Where is the reward of all your praying and beseeching? Taunting questions of this sort they thrust into the faces of weak but gracious souls, and tempt them to feel ashamed of their refuge. Let us not be laughed out of our confidence by them, let us scorn their scorning and defy their jeers; we shall need to wait but a little, and then the Lord our refuge will avenge his own elect and ease himself of his adversaries, who once made so light of him and of his people.

7 Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion! when the LORD bringeth back the captivity of his people, Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad.

Natural enough is this closing prayer, for what would so effectually convince atheists, overthrow persecutors, stay sin, and secure the godly, as the manifest appearance of Israel's great Salvation? The coming of Messiah was the desire of the godly in all ages, and though he has already come with a sin-offering to purge away iniquity, we look for him to come a second time, to come without a sin-offering unto salvation. O that these weary years would have an end! Why tarries he so long? He knows that sin abounds and that his people are down-trodden; why comes he not to the rescue? His glorious advent will restore his ancient people from literal captivity, and his spiritual seed from spiritual sorrow. Wrestling Jacob and prevailing Israel shall alike rejoice before him when he is revealed as their salvation. O that he were come! What happy, holy, halcyon, heavenly days should we then see! But let us not count him slack, for behold, he comes, he comes quickly! Blessed are all they that wait for him.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—There is a peculiar mark upon this Psalm, in that it is twice in the Book of Psalms. The fourteenth Psalm and the fifty-third Psalm are the same with the alteration of one or two expressions at most. And there is another mark put upon it, that the apostle transcribes a great part of it.—Rom. iii. 10—12.

It contains a description of a most deplorable state of things in the world—ay, in Israel; a most deplorable state, by reason of the general corruption that was befallen all sorts of men, in their principles, and in their practices, and in their opinions.

First, it was a time when there was a mighty prevalent *principle* of atheism got into the world, got among the great men of the world. Saith he, "That is their principle, they say in their hearts, 'There is no God.'" It is true, they did not absolutely profess it; but it was the principle whereby all their actions were regulated and which they conformed unto. "*The fool*," saith he, "*hath said in his heart, There is no God.*" Not this or that particular man, but the fool—that is, those foolish men; for in the next word he tells you "*They are corrupt*;" and verse 3, "*They are all gone aside.*" "*The fool*" is taken indefinitely for the great company and society of foolish men, to intimate that whatsoever they were divided about else, they were all agreed in this. "*They are all a company of atheists*," saith he, "*practical atheists.*"

Secondly, their *affections* were suitable to this principle, as all men's affections and actions are suitable to their principles. What are you to expect from men whose principle is, that there is no God? Why, saith he, for their affections, "*They are corrupt*;" which he expresseth again (verse 3), "*They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy.*" "*All gone aside.*" The word in the original is, "*They are all grown sour*;" as drink, that hath been formerly of some use, but when grown vapid—lost all its spirits and life—it is an insipid thing, good for nothing. And, saith he, "*They are altogether become filthy*"—"become stinking," as the margin hath it. They have corrupt affections, that have left them no life, no savour; but stinking, corrupt lusts prevail in them universally. They say, "*There is no God*;" and they are filled with stinking, corrupt lusts.

Thirdly, if this be their principle and these their affections, let us look after their *actions*, to see if they be any better. But consider their actions. They be of two sorts:—1. How they act in the world, 2. How they act towards the people of God.

1. How do they act in the world? Why, consider that, as to their duties which they omit, and as to the wickednesses which they perform. What good do they do? Nay, saith he, "*None of them doeth good.*" Yea, some of them. "*No, not one.*" Saith he, verses 1, 3, "*There is none that doeth good, no, not one.*" If there was any one among them that did attend to what was really good and useful in the world, there was some hope. "*No*," saith he, "*their principle is atheism, their affections are corrupt*; and for good, there is not one of them doeth any good—they omit all duties."

What do they do for evil? Why saith he, "*They have done abominable works*"—"works," saith he, "not to be named, not to be spoken of—works which God abhors, which all good men abhor." "Abominable works," saith he, "such as the very light of nature would abhor;" and give me leave to use the expression of the Psalmist—"Stinking, filthy works." So he doth describe the state and condition of things under the reign of Saul, when he wrote this Psalm.

2. "If thus it be with them, and if thus it be with their own ways, yet they let the people of God alone; they will not add that to the rest of their sins." Nay, it is quite otherwise, saith he, "*They eat up my people as they eat bread.*" "Those workers of iniquity have no knowledge, who eat up my people as they eat bread, and call not upon the LORD." What is the reason why he brings it in in that manner? Why could he not say, "They have no knowledge that do such abominable things;" but brings it in thus, "They have no knowledge who eat up my people as they eat bread?" "It is strange, that after all my dealings with them and declaration of my will, they should be so brutish as not to know this would be their ruin. Don't they know this will devour them, destroy them, and be called over again in a particular manner?" In the midst of all the sins, and greatest and highest provocations that are in the world, God lays a special weight upon the eating of his people. They may feed upon their own lusts what they will; but, "Have they no knowledge, that they eat up my people as they eat bread?"

There are very many things that might be observed from all this; but I aim to give but a few hints from the Psalm.

Well, what is the state of things now? You see what it was with them. How was it with the providence of God in reference unto them? Which is strange, and a man would scarce believe it in such a course as this is, he tells you (verse 5), notwithstanding all this, they were in great fear. "*There were they in great fear,*" saith he. May be so, for they saw some evil coming upon them. No, there was nothing but the hand of God in it; for in Psalm liii. 5, where these words are repeated, it is, "There were they in great fear, where no fear was"—no visible cause of fear; yet they were in great fear.

God by his providence seldom gives an absolute, universal security unto men in their height of sin, and oppression, and sensuality, and lusts; but he will secretly put them in fear where no fear is; and though there be nothing seen that should cause them to have any fear, they shall act like men at their wits' end with fear.

But whence should this fear arise? Saith he, it ariseth from hence, "*For God is in the generation of the righteous.*" Plainly they see their work doth not go on; their meat doth not digest with them; their bread doth not go well down. "They were eating and devouring my people, and when they came to devour them, they found God was among them (they could not digest their bread); and this put them in fear; quite surprised them." They came, and thought to have found them a sweet morsel: when engaged, God was there filling their mouth and teeth with gravel; and he began to break out the jawbone of the terrible ones when they came to feed upon them. Saith he, "God was there." (Verse 5.)

The Holy Ghost gives an account of the state of things that was between those two sorts of people he had described—between the fool and the people of God—them that were devouring, and them that had been utterly devoured, had not God been among them. Both were in fear—they that were to be devoured, and those that did devour. And they took several ways for their relief; and he showeth what those ways were, and what judgment they made upon the ways of one another. Saith he, "*Ye have shamed the counsel of the poor, because the Lord is his refuge.*"

There are the persons spoken of—they are "the poor;" and that is those who are described in the verses foregoing, the people that were ready to be eaten up and devoured.

And there is the hope and refuge that these poor had in such a time as this, when all things were in fear; and that was "the LORD." The poor maketh the Lord his refuge.

And you may observe here, that as he did describe all the wicked as one man, "the fool," so he describes all his own people as one man, "the poor"—that is, the poor man: "Because the LORD is his refuge." He keeps it in the singular number. Whatsoever the people of God may differ in, they are all as one man in this business.

And there is the way whereby these poor make God their refuge. They do it by "counsel," saith he. It is not a thing they do by chance, but they look upon

It as their wisdom. They do it upon consideration, upon advice. It is a thing of great wisdom.

Well, what thoughts have the others concerning this acting of theirs? The poor make God their refuge; and they do it by counsel. What judgment, now, doth the world make of this counsel of theirs? Why, they "shame it;" that is, they cast shame upon it, condemn it as a very foolish thing, to make the Lord their refuge. "Truly, if they could make this or that great man their refuge, it were something; but to make the Lord their refuge, this is the foolishest thing in the world," say they. To shame men's counsel, to despise their counsel as foolish, is as great contempt as they can lay upon them.

Here you see the state of things as they are represented in this Psalm, and spread before the Lord; which being laid down, the Psalmist showeth what our duty is upon such a state of things—what is the duty of the people of God, things being thus stated. Saith he, "Their way is to go to prayer:" verse 7, "*O that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion! when the Lord bringeth back the captivity of his people, Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad.*" If things are thus stated, then cry, then pray, "O that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion," etc. There shall a revenue of praise come to God out of Zion, to the rejoicing of his people.—*John Owen.*

Verse 1.—"The fool." That sapless fellow, that carcase of a man, that walking sepulchre of himself, in whom all religion and right reason is withered and wasted, dried up and decayed. That apostate in whom natural principles are extinct, and from whom God is departed, as when the prince is departed, hangings are taken down. That mere animal that hath no more than a reasonable soul, and for little other purpose than as salt, to keep his body from putrefying. That wicked man hereafter described, that studieth atheism.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 1.—"The fool," etc. The world we live in is a world of fools. The far greater part of mankind act a part entirely irrational. So great is their infatuation, that they prefer time to eternity, momentary enjoyments to those that shall never have an end, and listen to the testimony of Satan in preference to that of God. Of all folly, that is the greatest, which relates to eternal objects, because it is the most fatal and when persisted in through life, entirely remediless. A mistake in the management of temporal concerns may be afterwards rectified. At any rate, it is comparatively of little importance. But an error in spiritual and eternal matters, as it is in itself of the greatest moment, if carried through life, can never be remedied; because after death there is no redemption. The greatest folly that any creature is capable of, is that of denying or entertaining unjust apprehensions of the being and perfections of the great Creator. Therefore, in a way of eminence, the appellation of fool is given by the Spirit of God, to him who is chargeable with this guilt. "*The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.*"—*John Jamieson, M.A., 1789.*

Verse 1.—"The fool," a term in Scripture signifying a wicked man, used also by the heathen philosophers to signify a vicious person, 𐤀𐤍 as coming from 𐤀𐤍 signifies the extinction of life in men, animals, and plants; so the word 𐤀𐤍 is taken, Isaiah xl. 7, 𐤀𐤍 𐤀𐤍 "the flower fadeth" (Isaiah xxviii. 1), a plant that hath lost all that juice that made it lovely and useful. So a fool is one that hath lost his wisdom and right notion of God and divine things, which were communicated to man by creation; one dead in sin, yet one not so much void of rational faculties, as of grace in those faculties; not one that wants reason, but abuses his reason.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 1.—"The fool hath said," etc. This folly is bound up in every heart. It is bound, but it is not tongue-tied; it speaks blasphemous things against God, it says there is "no God." There is a difference indeed in the language: gross sins speak this louder, there are crying sins; but though less sins speak it not so loud they whisper it. But the Lord can hear the language of the heart, the whisperings of its motions, as plainly as we hear one another in our ordinary discourse. Oh, how heinous is the least sin, which is so injurious to the very being of the great God! *David Clarkson.*

Verse 1.—"The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." If you will turn over some few leaves as far as the fifty-third Psalm, you shall not only find my text, but this whole Psalm, without any alteration, save only in the fifth verse, and that not at all in the sense neither. What shall we say? Took the Holy Spirit of God such especial particular notice of the sayings and deeds of a fool, that one expression of them would not serve the turn? Or, does the babbling and madness of a fool

so much concern us, as that we need to have them urged upon us once and again, and a third time in the third of the Romans? Surely not any one of us present here, is this fool! Nay, if any one of us could but tell where to find such a fool as this, that would offer to say, though in his heart, "*There is no God,*" he should not rest in quiet, he should soon perceive we were not of his faction. We that are able to tell David an article or two of faith more than ever he was acquainted with! Nay, more; can we with any imaginable ground of reason be supposed liable to any suspicion of atheism, that are able to read to David a lecture out of his own Psalms, and explain the meaning of his own prophecies much clearer than himself which held the pen to the Holy Spirit of God? Though we cannot deny but that in other things there may be found some spice of folly and imperfection in us, but it cannot be imagined that we, who are almost cloyed with the heavenly manna of God's word, that can instruct our teachers, and are able to maintain opinions and tenets, the scruples whereof not both the universities in this land, nor the whole clergy are able to resolve, that it should be possible for us ever to come to that perfection and excellency of folly and madness, as to entertain thought that *there is no God*: nay, we are not so uncharitable as to charge a Turk or an infidel with such a horrible imputation as this.

Beloved Christians, be not wise in your own conceits: if you will seriously examine the third of Romans (which I mentioned before), you shall find that Paul, out of this Psalm, and the like words of Isaiah, doth conclude the whole posterity of Adam (Christ only excepted), under sin and the curse of God; which inference of his were weak and inconcluding, unless every man of his own nature were such a one as the prophet here describes; and the same apostle in another place expresses, "*Even altogether without God in the world,*" i.e., not maintaining it as an opinion which they would undertake by force of argument to confirm, That there is no God: for we read not of above three or four among the heathens that were of any fashion, which went thus far; but such as though in their discourse and serious thoughts they do not question a deity, but would abhor any man that would not liberally allow unto God all his glorious attributes, yet in their hearts and affections they deny him; they live as if there was no God, having no respect at all to him in all their projects and therefore, indeed and in God's esteem, become formally, and in strict propriety of speech very atheists.—*William Chillingworth, 1602—1643.*

Verse 1.—"*The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.*" Why do men resist God's authority, against which they cannot dispute? and disobey his commands, unto which they cannot devise to frame an exception? What but the spirit of enmity, can make them regret "so easy a yoke," reject so "light a burden," shun and fly off from so peaceful and pleasant paths? yea, and take ways that so manifestly "take hold of hell, and lead down to the chambers of death," rather choosing to perish than obey? Is not this the very height of enmity? What further proof would we seek of a disaffected and implacable heart? Yet to all this we may cast in that fearful addition, their saying in their heart, "*No God*;" as much as to say, "O that there were none!" This is enmity not only to the highest pitch of *wickedness*, to wish their common parent extinct, the author of their being, but even unto *madness* itself. For in the forgetful heat of this transport, it is not thought on that they wish the most absolute impossibility; and that, if it were possible, they wish, with his, the extinction of their own and of all being; and that the sense of their hearts, put into words, would amount to no less than a direful and most horrid execration and curse upon God and the whole creation of God at once! As if, by the blasphemy of their poisonous breath, they would wither all nature, blast the whole universe of being, and make it fade, languish, and droop into nothing. This is to set their mouth against heaven and earth, themselves, and all things at once, as if they thought their feeble breath should overpower the omnipotent Word, shake and shiver the adamantine pillars of heaven and earth, and the Almighty *fiat* be defeated by their *nay*, striking at the root of all! So fitly is it said "*The fool hath in his heart*" muttered thus. Nor are there few such fools; but this is plainly given us as the common character of apostate man, the whole revolted race, of whom it is said in very general terms, "They are all gone back, there is none that doeth good." This is their sense, one and all, that is, comparatively; and the true state of the case being laid before them, it is more their temper and sense to say, "*No God,*" than to repent, "and turn to him." What mad enmity is this! Nor can we devise into what else to resolve it.—*John Howe.*

Verse 1.—"*The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God.*" He that shall deny

there is a God, sins with a very high hand against the light of nature ; for every creature, yea, the least gnat and fly, and the meanest worm that crawls upon the ground will confute and confound that man that disputes whether there be a God or no. The name of God is written in such full, fair and shining characters upon the whole creation, that all men may run and read that there is a God. The notion of a deity is so strongly and deeply impressed upon the tables of all men's hearts, that to deny a God is to quench the very principles of common nature ; yea, it is formally *deicidium*, a killing of God, as much as in the creature lies. There are none of these atheists in hell, for the devils believe and tremble. James ii. 19. The Greek word *φλοισσοισι*, that is here used, signifies properly the roaring of the sea ; it implies such an extreme fear, as causeth not only trembling, but also a roaring and screeching out. Mark vi. 49 ; Acts xvi. 29. The devils believe and acknowledge four articles of our faith. Matt. viii. 29. (1.) They acknowledge God ; (2.) Christ ; (3) The day of judgment ; (4.) That they shall be tormented then ; so that he that doth not believe that there is a God, is more vile than a devil. To deny there is a God, is a sort of atheism that is not to be found in hell.

" On earth are atheists many,
In hell there is not any."

Augustine, speaking of atheists saith, " That albeit there be some who think, or would persuade themselves, that there is no God, yet the most vile and desperate wretch that ever lived would not say, there was no God." Seneca hath a remarkable speech, *Mentiuntur qui dicunt se non sentire Deum esse : nam etsi tibi affirmant interdum noctu tamen dubitant.* They lie, saith he, who say they perceive not there is a God ; for although they affirm it to thee in the daytime, yet by night they doubt of it. Further, saith the same author, I have heard of some that deny that there was a God ; yet never knew the man, but when he was sick he would seek unto God for help ; therefore they do but lie that say there is no God ; they sin against the light of their own consciences ; they who most studiously go about to deny God, yet cannot do it but some check of conscience will fly in their faces. Tully would say that there was never any nation under heaven so barbarous as to deny that there was a God.—*T. Brooks.*

Verse 1.—" *The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.*" Popery has not won to itself so great wits as atheism ; it is the superfluity of wit that makes atheists. These will not be beaten down with impertinent arguments ; disordered hail-shot of Scriptures will never scare them ; they must be convinced and beaten by their own weapons. " Hast thou appealed to Cæsar ? To Cæsar thou shalt go." Have they appealed to reason ? Let us bring reason to them, that we may bring them to reason. We need not fear the want of weapons in that armoury, but our own ignorance and want of skill to use them. There is enough even in philosophy to convince atheism, and make them confess, " We are foiled with our own weapons ;" for with all their wit atheists are fools.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 1.—As there is no wound more mortal than that which plucketh forth man's heart or soul ; so, likewise, is there no person or pestilence of greater force suddenly in men to kill all faith, hope, and charity, with the fear of God, and consequently to cast them headlong into the pit of hell, than to deny the principle and foundation of all religion—namely, that there is a God.—*Robert Cawdray's "Treasury or Storehouse of Similes,"* 1609.

Verse 1.—" *The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.*"—Who in the world is a verier fool, a more ignorant, wretched person, than he that is an atheist ? A man may better believe there is no such man as himself, and that he is not in being, than that there is no God ; for himself can cease to be, and once was not, and shall be changed from what he is, and in very many periods of his life knows not that he is ; and so it is every night with him when he sleeps ; but none of these can happen to God ; and if he knows it not, he is a fool. Can anything in this world be more foolish than to think that all this rare fabric of heaven and earth can come by chance, when all the skill of art is not able to make an oyster ? To see rare effects, and no cause ; an excellent government and no prince ; a motion without an immovable ; a circle without a centre ; a time without eternity ; a second without a first ; a thing that begins not from itself, and therefore, not to perceive there is something from whence it does not begin, which must be without beginning ; these things are so against philosophy and natural reason, that he must needs be a beast in his understanding that does not assent to them ; this is the atheist : " *The*

fool hath said in his heart, *There is no God.*" That is his character ; the thing framed, says that nothing framed it ; the tongue never made itself to speak, and yet talks against him that did ; saying, that which is made, is, and that which made it, is not. But this folly is as infinite as hell, as much without light or bound, as the chaos of the primitive nothing.—*Jeremy Taylor, 1613—1667.*

Verse 1.—" *The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.*" A wise man, that lives up to the principles of reason and virtue, if one considers him in his solitude as taking in the system of the universe, observing the mutual dependence and harmony by which the whole frame of it hangs together, beating down his passions, or swelling his thoughts with magnificent ideas of providence, makes a nobler figure in the eye of an intelligent being, than the greatest conqueror amidst the pomps and solemnities of a triumph. On the contrary, there is not a more ridiculous animal than an atheist in his retirement. His mind is incapable of rapture or elevation : he can only consider himself as an insignificant figure in a landscape, and wandering up and down in a field or a meadow, under the same terms as the meanest animals about him, and as subject to as total a mortality as they, with this aggravation, that he is the only one amongst them who lies under the apprehension of it. In distresses he must be of all creatures the most helpless and forlorn ; he feels the whole pressure of a present calamity, without being relieved by the memory of anything that is past, or the prospect of anything that is to come. Annihilation is the greatest blessing that he proposes to himself, and a halter or a pistol the only refuge he can fly to. But if you would behold one of these gloomy miscreants in his poorest figure, you must consider them under the terrors or at the approach of death. About thirty years ago, I was a shipboard with one of these vermin, when there arose a brisk gale, which could frighten nobody but himself. Upon the rolling of the ship he fell upon his knees, and confessed to the chaplain, that he had been a vile atheist and had denied a Supreme Being ever since he came to his estate. The good man was astonished, and a report immediately ran through the ship, that there was an atheist upon the upper deck. Several of the common seamen, who had never heard the word before, thought it had been some strange fish ; but they were more surprised when they saw it was a man, and heard out of his own mouth, " That he never believed till that day that there was a God." As he lay in the agonies of confession, one of the honest tars whispered to the boatswain, " That it would be a good deed to heave him overboard." But we were now within sight of port, when of a sudden the wind fell, and the penitent relapsed, begging all of us that were present, as we were gentlemen, not to say anything of what had passed. He had not been ashore above two days, when one of the company began to rally him upon his devotion on shipboard, which the other denied in so high terms, that it produced the lie on both sides, and ended in a duel. The atheist was run through the body, and after some loss of blood, became as good a Christian as he was at sea, till he found that his wound was not mortal. He is at present one of the free-thinkers of the age, and now writing a pamphlet against several received opinions concerning the existence of fairies.—*Joseph Addison (1671—1719), in "The Tatler."*

Verse 1.—

" There is no God," the fool in secret said :
 ' There is no God that rules or earth or sky.'
 Tear off the band that binds the wretch's head,
 That God may burst upon his faithless eye !
 Is there no God ?—The stars in myriads spread,
 If he look up, the blasphemy deny ;
 While his own features, in the mirror read,
 Reflect the image of Divinity.
 Is there no God ?—The stream that silver flows,
 The air he breathes, the ground he treads, the trees,
 The flowers, the grass, the sands, each wind that blows,
 All speak of God ; throughout, one voice agrees,
 And, eloquent, his dread existence shows :
 Blind to thyself, ah, see him, fool, in these !" *Giovanni Cotta.*

Verse 1.—

" The owl, *Atheism*,
 Sailing on obscene wings across the noon,
 Drops his blue-fringed lids, and shuts them close,
 And, hooting at the glorious sun in heaven,
 Cries out, ' Where is it ?'"

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 1772—1834.

Verse 1.—"They are corrupt, they have done abominable works." Sin pleaseth the flesh. *Omne simile nutrit simile.* Corruption inherent is nourished by the accession of corrupt actions. Judas's covetousness is sweetened with unjust gain. Joab is heartened and hardened with blood. 1 Kings ii. 5. Theft is fitted to and fattened in the thievish heart with obvious booties. Pride is fed with the officious compliments of observant grooms. Extortion battens in the usurer's affections by the trolling in of his moneys. Sacrilege thrives in the church-robber by the pleasing distinctions of those sycophant priests, and helped with their not laborious profit. Nature is led, is fed with sense. And when the citadel of the heart is once won, the turret of the understanding will not long hold out. As the suffumigations of the oppressed stomach surge up and cause the headache, or as the thick spumy mists, which vapour up from the dark and foggy earth, do often suffocate the brighter air, and to us more than eclipse the sun, the black and corrupt affections, which ascend out of the nether part of the soul, do no less darken and choke the understanding. Neither can the fire of grace be kept alive at God's altar (man's heart), when the clouds of lust shall rain down such showers of impiety on it. *Perit omne iudicium, cum res transit ad affectum.* Farewell the perspicuity of judgment, when the matter is put to the partiality of affection.—Thomas Adams.

Verse 1.—"They are corrupt, they have done abominable things : there is none that doeth good." "Men," says Bernard, "because they are corrupt in their minds, become abominable in their doings : corrupt before God, abominable before men. There are three sorts of men of which none doeth good. There are those who neither understand nor seek God, and they are the dead : there are others who understand him, but seek him not, and they are the wicked. There are others that seek him but understand him not, and they are the fools." "O God," cries a writer of the middle ages, "how many are here at this day who, under the name of Christianity, worship idols, and are abominable both to thee and to men! For every man worships that which he most loves. The proud man bows down before the idol of worldly power ; the covetous man before the idol of money ; the adulterer before the idol of beauty ; and so of the rest." And of such, saith the apostle, "They profess that they know God, but in works deny him, being abominable and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate." Titus i. 16. "*There is none that doeth good.*" Notice how Paul avails himself of this testimony of the epistle to the Romans, where he is proving concerning "both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin." Rom. iii. 9.—John Mason Neale, *in loc.*

Verse 1.—The argument of my text is the atheist's divinity, the brief of his belief couched all in one article, and that negative too, clean contrary to the fashion of all creeds, "*There is no God.*" The article but one ; but so many absurdities tied to the train of it, and itself so irreligious, so prodigiously profane, that he dares not speak it out, but saith it softly to himself, in secret, "*in his heart.*" So the text yields these three points ; Who is he ? A "*fool.*" What he saith, "*no God.*" How he speaks it, "*in his heart.*" A fool, his bolt, and his draught. I will speak of them severally There is a child in years, and there is a child in manners, *ætalet et moribus*, saith Aristotle. So there is a fool ; for fools and children both are called *ἄφρονας*. There is a fool in wit, and there is a fool in life ; *stultus in scientia, et stultus in conscientia*, a witless and a graceless fool. The latter is worthy of the title as the first ; both void of reason ; not of the faculty but of the use. Yea, the latter fool is indeed the more kindly of the twain ; for the sot would use his reason if he could ; the sinner will not though he may. It is not the natural, but the moral fool that David means, the wicked and ungracious person, for so is the sense of the original term It is time we leave the person, and come unto the act. What hath this fool done ? Surely nothing ; he hath only said. What hath he said ? Nay, nothing either ; he hath only thought : for to say *in heart*, is but to think. There are two sorts of saying in the Scripture, one meant indeed so properly, the other but in hope ; one by word of mouth, the other by thought of heart. You see the Psalmist means here the second sort. The bolt the fool here shoots is atheism : he makes no noise at the loss of it, as bowmen use ; he draws and delivers closely, and stilly, out of sight, and without sound : he saith, "*God is not,*" but "*in heart.*" The heart hath a mouth ; *intus est os cordis*, saith Augustine. God, saith Cyprian, *is cordis auditor*, he hears the heart ; then belike it hath some speech. When God said to Moses, *quare clamas ?* why criest thou ? we find no words he uttered : *silens auditur*, saith Gregory, he is heard through saying nothing. There is a silent speech (Psalm iv. 4), "*Commune with your own heart,*" saith David, "and be

still." Speech is not the heart's action, no more than meditation is the mouth's. But sometimes the heart and mouth exchange offices; *lingua mea meditabitur*, saith David. Psalm xxxv. 28. There is *lingua meditans*, a musing tongue; here is *eor loquens*, a speaking heart. And to say the truth, the philosopher saith well, it is the heart doth all things, *mens videt, mens audit, mens loquitur*. It is the heart that speaks, the tongue is but the instrument to give the sound. It is but the heart's echo to repeat the words after it. Except when the tongue doth run before the wit, the heart doth dictate to the mouth; it suggests what it shall say. The heart is the soul's herald: look what she will have proclaimed, the heart reads it, and the mouth cries it. The tongue saith nought but what the heart saith first. Nay, in very deed, the truest and kindest speech is the heart's. The tongue and lips are Jesuits, they lease, and lie, and use equivocations: flattery, or fear, or other by-respect, other wry respect adulterate their words. But the heart speaks as it means, worth twenty mouths, if it could speak audibly.—Richard Clerke. D.D., 1634 (*one of the translators of our English Bible*).

Verses 1, 4.—The Scripture give this as a cause of the notorious courses of wicked men, that "God is not in all their thoughts." Psalm x. 4. They forget there is a God of vengeance and a day of reckoning. "The fool" would needs enforce upon his heart, that "there is no God," and what follows: "Corrupt they are, there is none doeth good: they eat up my people as bread," etc. They make no more bones of devouring men and their estates, than they make conscience of eating a piece of bread. What a wretched condition hath sin brought man unto, that the great God who "fillesh heaven and earth" (Jer. xxiii. 24) should yet have no place in the heart which he hath especially made for himself! The sun is not so clear as this truth, that God is, for all things in the world are because God is. If he were not, nothing could be. It is from him that wicked men have that strength they have to commit sin, therefore sin proceeds from atheism, especially these plotting sins; for if God were more thought on, he would take off the soul from sinful contrivings, and fix it upon himself.—Richard Sibbes.

Verse 2.—"To see if there were any that did understand . . . seek God." None seek him aright, and as he ought to be sought, nor can do while they live in sin; for men in seeking God fail in many things: as, First, men seek him not for himself. Secondly, they seek him not alone, but other things with him. Thirdly, they seek other things before him, as worldlings do. Fourthly, they seek him coldly or carelessly. Fifthly, they seek him inconstantly; example of Judas and Demas. Sixthly, they seek him not in his word, as heretics do. Seventhly, they seek him not in all his word, as hypocrites do. Lastly, they seek him not seasonably and timely, as profane, impenitent sinners do; have no care to depend upon God's word, but follow their own lusts and fashions of this world.—Thomas Wilson, 1653.

Verses 2, 3.—What was the issue of God's so looking upon men? "They are all gone aside," that is, from him and his ways; "They are altogether become filthy:" their practices are such as make them stink; "There is none that doeth good, no, not one;" of so many millions of men as are upon the earth, there is not one doeth good. There were men of excellent parts then in the world, men of soul, but not one of them did know God, or seek after God: Paul therefore hath laid it down for a universal maxim, that the animal, natural, or intellectual man, receives not the things of the Spirit of God for they are foolishness unto him, and so are rejected by him.—William Greenhill.

Verse 3.—The ungodly are "vile" persons (Nah. i. 14). "I will make thy grave; for thou art vile." Sin makes men base, it blots their name, it taints their blood: "They are altogether become filthy;" in the Hebrew it is, they are become stinking. Call wicked men ever so bad, you cannot call them out of their name; they are "swine" (Matt. vii. 6); "vipers" (Matt. iii. 7); "devils" (John vi. 70). The wicked are the dross and refuse (Psa. cxix. 119); and heaven is too pure to have any dross mingle with it.—Thomas Watson.

Verse 3.—"Altogether become filthy." Thus the Roman satirist describes his own age:

"Nothing is left, nothing, for future times
To add to the full catalogue of crimes;
The baffled sons must feel the same desires,
And act the same mad follies as their sires,
Vice has attained its zenith."

Juvenal, Sat. 1.

Verse 3.—“*There is none that doeth good, no not one.*” Origen maketh a question how it could be said that there was none, neither among the Jews nor Gentiles, that did any good; seeing there were many among them which did clothe the naked, feed the hungry, and did other good things: he hereunto maketh this answer:—That like as one that layeth a foundation, and buildeth upon it a wall or two, yet cannot be said to have built a house till he have finished it: so although those might do some good things, yet they attained not unto perfect goodness, which was only to be found in Christ. But this is not the apostle’s meaning only to exclude men from the perfection of justice; for even the faithful and believers were short of that perfection which is required; he therefore showeth what men are by nature, all under sin and in the same state of damnation, without grace and faith in Christ: if any perform any good work, either it is of grace, and so not of themselves, or if they did it by the light of nature, they did it not as they ought, and so it was far from a good work indeed.—*Andrew Willet* (1562—1621), on *Romans* iii, 10.

Verse 4.—“*Have the workers of iniquity no knowledge?*” Men’s ignorance is the reason why they fear not what they should fear. Why is it that the ungodly fear not sin? Oh, it’s because they know it not. “*Have the workers of iniquity no knowledge?*” Sure enough they have none, for “*they eat up my people as they eat bread*,” such morsels would scald their mouths, they would not dare to be such persecutors and destroyers of the people of God; they would be afraid to touch them if they did but know what they did.—*Richard Alleine*.

Verse 4.—“*Who eat up my people as they eat bread.*”—That is, *quotidiè*, daily, saith Austin; as duly as they eat bread; or, with the same eagerness and voracity. These man-eaters, these *λαοβόροι*, cruel cannibals, make no more conscience to undo a poor man, than to eat a good meal when they are hungry. Like pickerels in a pond, or sharks in the sea, they devour the poorer, as those do the lesser fishes; and that many times with a plausible, invisible consumption; as the usurer, who, like the ostrich, can digest any metal; but especially money.—*John Trapp*.

Verse 4.—“*Who eat up my people as they eat bread.*” Oh, how few consult and believe the Scriptures setting forth the enmity of wicked men against God’s people! The Scripture tells us “*they eat up God’s people as bread*,” which implies a strange inclination in them to devour the saints, and that they take as great delight therein as a hungry man in eating, and that it is natural to them to molest them. The Scripture compares them, for their hateful qualities, to the lions and bears, to foxes for subtlety, to wild bulls, to greedy swine, to scorpions, to briars and thorns (grievous and vexing things). The Scripture represents them as industrious and unwearied in their bloody enterprises, they cannot sleep without doing mischief. Herodias had rather have the blood of a saint than half a kingdom. Haman would pay a great fine to the king that the scattered Jews (who keep not the king’s laws) may be cut off. Wicked men will run the hazard of damning their own souls, rather than not fling a dagger at the apple of God’s eye. Though they know what one word—aha!—cost, yet they will break through all natural, civil, and moral obligations, to ruin God’s people. The Holy Ghost calls them “*implacable*” men, fierce and headstrong; they are like the hot oven for fury, like the sea for boundless rage; yet “*who hath believed*” this Scripture “*report*”? Did we believe what enemies all wicked men are unto all saints, we should not lean to our own prudence and discretion to secure us from any danger by these men; we would get an ark to secure us from the deluge of their wrath; if at any time we be cast among them and delivered, we would bless God with the three children, that the hot fiery oven did not consume us; we would not wonder when we hear of any of their barbarous cruelty, but rather wonder at God’s restraining them every day; we would be suspicious of receiving hurt when cast among light and frothy companions; we would shun their company as we do lions and scorpions; we would never commit any trust or secret into their hands; we would not be light-hearted whilst in their society; we would not rely on their promises any more than we would on the promise of the devil, their father; we would long for heaven, to be delivered from “*the tents of Kedar*”; we would not count any of the saints secured from danger, though related to any great wicked man; we would not twist ourselves with them by matching ourselves or children to these sons and daughters of Belial; neither would we make choice of devils to be our servants.—*Lewis Stuckley*.

Verse 4.—This is an evil world. It hates the people of God. “*Because ye are*

not of the world, therefore the world hateth you." John xv. 19. Haman's hatred was against the whole seed of the Jews. When you can find a serpent without a sting, or a leopard without spots, then may you expect to find a wicked world without hatred to the saints. Piety is the target which is aimed at. "They are mine adversaries because I follow the thing that good is." Psalm xxxviii. 20. The world pretends to hate the godly for something else, but the ground of the quarrel is holiness. The world's hatred is implacable: anger may be reconciled, hatred cannot. You may as soon reconcile heaven and hell as the two seeds. If the world hated Christ, no wonder that it hates us. "The world hated me before it hated you." John xv. 18. Why should any hate Christ? This blessed Dove had no gall, this rose of Sharon did send forth a most sweet perfume; but this shows the world's baseness, it is a Christ-hating and a saint-eating world.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 5.—"There were they in great fear." That we may not mistake the meaning of the point, we must understand that this faintheartedness and cowardliness doth not always come upon presumptuous sinners when they behold imminent dangers, for though none of them have true courage and fortitude, yet many of them have a kind of desperate stoutness and resolution when they do, as it were, see death present before their faces; which proceedeth from a kind of deadness that is upon their hearts, and a brawniness that hath overgrown their conscience to their greater condemnation. But when it pleaseth the Lord to waken them out of the dead slumber, and to set the worm of conscience awork within them, then this doctrine holdeth true without any exception, that the boldest sinners prove at length the basest cowards: and they that have been most audacious in adventuring upon the most mischievous evils, do become of all others most timorous when God's revenging hand seizeth upon them for the same.—*John Dod, 1547—1645.*

Verse 5.—"God is in the generation of the righteous;" that is, he favours that generation or sort of men; God is in all generations, but such he delights in most: the wicked have cause enough to fear those in whom God delights.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 5.—The King of Glory cannot come into the heart (as he is said to come into the hearts of his people as such; Psalm xxiv. 9, 10), but some glory of himself will appear; and as God doth accompany the word with majesty because it is his word, so he doth accompany his own children, and their ways, with majesty, yea, even in their greatest debasements. As when Stephen was brought before the council as a prisoner at the bar for his life, then God manifested his presence to him, for it is said, "his face shone as the face of an angel of God." (Acts vi. 15); in a proportionable manner it is ordinarily true what Solomon says of all righteous men, "A man's wisdom makes his face to shine." Eccles. viii. 1. Thus Peter also speaks (1 Peter iv. 14): "If you be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are you, for the Spirit," not only of God, or of grace, but "of glory, resteth upon you." And so in the martyrs; their innocency and carriage, and godly behaviour, what majesty had it with it! What an amiableness in the sight of the people, which daunted, dashed and confounded their most wretched oppressors; so that although the wicked persecutors "*did eat up God's people as bread*" (verse 4), yet it is added that they were in great fear upon this very account, that "*God is in the generation of the just.*" Verse 5. God stands, as it were, astonished at their dealings: "*Have the workers of iniquity no knowledge,*" (so in the words afore) "*that eat up my people as bread,*" and make no more ado of it than a man doth that heartily eats of his meat? They seem to do thus, they would carry it and bear it out; but for all that they are in great fear whilst they do thus, and God strikes their hearts with terror then when they most insult. Why? For, "*God is in the generation of, or dwelleth in the just,*" and God gives often some glimmerings, hints, and warnings to the wicked (such as Pilate had concerning Christ), that his people are righteous. And this you may see in Phil. i. 28: "And in nothing terrified by your adversaries, which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God." In that latter passage, I observe that an assurance of salvation, and a spirit of terror, and that of God, is given to either. In the Old Testament it is recorded of David (1 Sam. xviii. 12), that although Saul hated him (verse 9), and sought to destroy him (verses 10, 11), "yet Saul was afraid of David, because the Lord was with him, and was departed from Saul;" which is the reason in hand. God manifested his presence in David, and struck Saul's conscience with his godly and wise carriage, and that made him afraid.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 6.—"Ye have shamed the counsel of the poor, because the Lord is his refuge."

In the fifty-third Psalm it is, "Thou hast put them to shame, because God hath despised them." Of course, the allusion is totally different in each; in this Psalm it is the indignant remonstrance of the Psalmist with "the workers of iniquity" for undervaluing and putting God's poor to shame; the other affirms the final shame and confusion of the ungodly, and the contempt in which the Lord holds them. In either case it sweetly illustrates God's care of his poor, not merely the poor in spirit, but literally the poor and lowly ones, the oppressed and the injured. It is this character of God which is so conspicuously delineated in his word. We may look through all the Shasters and Vedas of the Hindoo, the Koran of the Mahometan, the legislation of the Greek, and the code of the Roman, aye, and the Talmud of the Jew, the bitterest of all; and not in one single line or page shall we find a vestige or trace of that tenderness, compassion, or sympathy for the wrongs, and oppressions, and trials, and sorrows of God's poor, which the Christian's Bible evidences in almost every page.—*Barton Bouchier*.

Verse 6.—"Ye have shamed." Every fool that saith in his heart there is no God, hath out of the same quiver a bolt to shoot at goodness. Barren Michal hath too many sons, who, like their mother, jeer at holy David.—*John Trapp*.

Verse 6.—"Ye have shamed," saith he, "the counsel of the poor." There is nothing that wicked men do so despise as the making God a refuge—nothing which they scorn in their hearts like it. "They shame it," saith he, "It is a thing to be cast out of all consideration. The wise man trusts in his wisdom, the strong man in his strength, the rich man in his riches; but this trusting in God is the foolishest thing in the world." The reasons of it are—1. They know not God; and it is a foolish thing to trust one knows not whom. 2. They are enemies to God, and God is their enemy; and they account it a foolish thing to trust their enemy. 3. They know not the way of God's assistance and help. And—4. They seek for such help, such assistance, such supplies as God will not give; to be delivered, to serve their lusts; to be preserved, to execute their rage, filthiness, and folly. They have no other design or end of these things; and God will give none of them. And it is a foolish thing in any man to trust God to be preserved in sin. It is true their folly is their wisdom, considering their state and condition. It is a folly to trust in God to live in sin, and despise the counsel of the poor.—*John Owen*.

Verse 6.—"Ye have made a mock of the counsel of the poor:" and why? "because the Lord is his trust." This is the very true cause, whatsoever other pretences there be. Whence observe this doctrine; that true godliness is that which breeds the quarrel between God's children and the wicked. Ungodly men may say what they list, as, namely, that they hate and dislike them for that they are proud and saucy in meddling with their betters; for that they are so scornful and disdainful towards their neighbours; for that they are malcontent, and turbulent, and I know not what; but the true reason is yielded by the Lord in this place, to wit, because they make him their stay and their confidence, and will not depend upon lying vanities as the men of the world do.—*John Dod*.

Verse 6.—"The Lord is his refuge."—Be persuaded actually to hide yourselves with Jesus Christ. To have a hiding-place and not to use it, is as bad as to want one; fly to Christ; run into the holes of this Rock.—*Ralph Robinson, 1656*.

Verse 7.—"O that the salvation," etc. Like as when we be in quiet, we do pray either nothing at all, or very coldly unto God; so in adversity and trouble, our spirit is stirred up and enkindled to prayer, whereof we do find examples everywhere in the Psalms of David: so that affliction is as it were the sauce of prayer, as hunger is unto meat. Truly their prayer is usually unsavoury who are without afflictions, and many of them do not pray truly, but do rather counterfeit a prayer, or pray for custom.—*Wolfgang Musculus, 1497—1563*.

Verse 7.—"Out of Zion." Zion the church is no Saviour, neither dare we trust in her ministers or ordinances, and yet salvation comes to men through her. The hungry multitudes are fed by the hands of the disciples, who delight to act as the servitors of the gospel feast. Zion becomes the site of the fountain of healing waters which shall flow east and west till all nations drink thereat. What a reason for maintaining in the utmost purity and energy all the works of the church of the living God!—*C. H. S.*

Verse 7.—"When the Lord turneth the captivity of his people: then shall Jacob rejoice and Israel shall be glad."—Notice that by Israel we are to understand those other sheep which the Lord has that are not of this fold, but which he must also

bring, that they may hear his voice. For it is Israel, not Judah; Sion, not Jerusalem. "When the Lord turneth the captivity of his people." "Then," as it is in the parallel passage, "were we like unto them that dream." A glorious dream indeed, in which, fancy what we may, the half of the beauty, the half of the splendour, will not be reached by our imagination. "The captivity" of our souls to the law of concupiscence, of our bodies to the law of death; the captivity of our senses to fear; the captivity, the conclusion of which is so beautifully expressed by one of our greatest poets:—namely, *Giles Fletcher* (1588—1623), in his "Christ's Triumph over Death."

"No sorrow now hangs clouding on their brow;
No bloodless malady impales their face;
No age drops on their hairs his silver snow;
No nakedness their bodies doth embrace;
No poverty themselves and theirs disgrace;
No fear of death the joy of life devours;
No unchaste sleep their precious time deflowers;
No loss, no grief, no change, wait on their winged hours."

John Mason Neale, in loc.

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1 (first clause).—The folly of atheism.

Verse 1.—Atheism of the heart.—*Jamieson's Sermons on the Heart.*

Verse 1 (whole verse).—Describe: I. The creed of the fool. II. The fool who holds the creed: or thus, Atheism. I. Its source: "the heart." II. Its creed: "no God." III. Its fruits: "corrupt," etc.

Verse 1.—I. The great source of sin—alienation from God. II. Its place of dominion—the heart. III. Its effect upon the intellect—makes man a fool. IV. Its manifestations in the life—acts of commission and omission.

Verse 1 (last clause).—The lantern of Diogenes. Hold it up upon all classes, and denounce their sins.

Verse 2.—I. Condescending search. II. Favoured subjects. III. Generous intentions.

Verse 2.—What God looks for, and what we should look for. Men usually are quick to see things congruous to their own character.

Verses 2, 3.—God's search for a naturally good man; the results; lessons to be learned therefrom.

Verse 3.—Total depravity of the race.

Verse 4.—"Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge?" If men rightly knew God, his law, the evil of sin, the torment of hell, and other great truths, would they sin as they do? Or if they know these and yet continue in their iniquities, how guilty and foolish they are! Answer the question both positively and negatively, and it supplies material for a searching discourse.

Verse 4.—(*first clause*).—The crying sin of transgressing against light and knowledge.

Verse 4 (last clause).—Absence of prayer, a sure mark of a graceless state.

Verse 5.—The foolish fears of those who have no fear of God.

Verse 5.—The Lord's nearness to the righteous, its consequences to the persecutor, and its encouragement to saints.

Verse 6.—The wisdom of making the Lord our refuge.—*John Owen.*

Verse 6.—Describe I. The poor man here intended. II. His counsel. III. His reproach. IV. His refuge.

Verse 6.—Trust in God, a theme for mockery to fools only. Show its wisdom.

Verse 7.—Longings for the Advent.

Verse 7.—"Out of Zion." The church, the channel of blessings to men.

Verse 7.—Discourse to promote revival. I. Frequent condition of the church, "captivity." II. Means of revival—the Lord's coming in grace. III. Consequences, "rejoice," "be glad."

Verse 7.—Captivity of soul. What it is. How provided for. How accomplished. With what results.