

PSALM XIX.

SUBJECT.—It would be idle to enquire into the particular period when this delightful poem was composed, for there is nothing in its title or subject to assist us in the enquiry. The heading, "To the chief Musician, a Psalm of David," informs us that David wrote it, and that it was committed to the Master of the service of song in the sanctuary for the use of the assembled worshippers. In his earliest days the Psalmist, while keeping his father's flock, had devoted himself to the study of God's two great books—nature and Scripture; and he had so thoroughly entered into the spirit of these two only volumes in his library, that he was able with a devout criticism to compare and contrast them, magnifying the excellency of the Author as seen in both. How foolish and wicked are those who instead of accepting the two sacred tomes, and delighting to behold the same divine hand in each, spend all their wits in endeavouring to find discrepancies and contradictions. We may rest assured that the true "Vestiges of Creation" will never contradict Genesis, nor will a correct "Cosmos" be found at variance with the narrative of Moses. He is wisest who reads both the world-book and the Word-book as two volumes of the same work, and feels concerning them, "My Father wrote them both."

DIVISION.—This song very distinctly divides itself into three parts, very well described by the translators in the ordinary heading of our version. The creatures show God's glory, 1—6. The word showeth his grace, 7—11. David prayeth for grace, 12—14. Thus praise and prayer are mingled, and he who here sings the work of God in the world without, pleads for a work of grace in himself within.

EXPOSITION.

THE heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork.

2 Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge.

3 *There is* no speech nor language, *where* their voice is not heard.

4 Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun,

5 Which *is* as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, *and* rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race.

6 His going forth *is* from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.

1. "*The heavens declare the glory of God.*" The book of nature has three leaves, heaven, earth, and sea, of which heaven is the first and the most glorious, and by its aid we are able to see the beauties of the other two. Any book without its first page would be sadly imperfect, and especially the great Natural Bible, since its first pages, the sun, moon, and stars, supply light to the rest of the volume, and are thus the keys, without which the writing which follows would be dark and undiscerned. Man walking erect was evidently made to scan the skies, and he who begins to read creation by studying the stars begins the book at the right place.

The heavens are plural for their variety, comprising the watery heavens with their clouds of countless forms, the aerial heavens with their calms and tempests, the solar heavens with all the glories of the day, and the starry heavens with all the marvels of the night; what the Heaven of heavens must be hath not entered into the heart of man, but there in chief all things are telling the glory of God. Any part of creation has more instruction in it than human mind will ever exhaust, but the celestial realm is peculiarly rich in spiritual lore. The heavens *declare*, or are *declaring*, for the continuance of their testimony is intended by the participles employed; every moment God's existence, power, wisdom, and goodness, are being sounded abroad by the heavenly heralds which shine upon us from above. He who would guess at divine sublimity should gaze upward into the starry vault; he who would imagine infinity must peer into the boundless expanse; he who desires

to see divine wisdom should consider the balancing of the orbs; he who would know divine fidelity must mark the regularity of the planetary motions; and he who would attain some conceptions of divine power, greatness, and majesty, must estimate the forces of attraction, the magnitude of the fixed stars, and the brightness of the whole celestial train. It is not merely glory that the heavens declare, but the "*glory of God*," for they deliver to us such unanswerable arguments for a conscious, intelligent, planning, controlling, and presiding Creator, that no unprejudiced person can remain unconvinced by them. The testimony given by the heavens is no mere hint, but a plain, unmistakable declaration; and it is a declaration of the most constant and abiding kind. Yet for all this, to what avail is the loudest declaration to a deaf man, or the clearest showing to one spiritually blind? God the Holy Ghost must illuminate us, or all the suns in the milky way never will.

"*The firmament sheweth his handy-work*;" not *handy*, in the vulgar use of that term, but *hand-work*. The expanse is full of the works of the Lord's skilful, creating hands; hands being attributed to the great creating Spirit to set forth his care and workmanlike action, and to meet the poor comprehension of mortals. It is humbling to find that even when the most devout and elevated minds are desirous to express their loftiest thoughts of God, they must use words and metaphors drawn from the earth. We are children, and must each confess, "I think as a child, I speak as a child." In the expanse above us God flies, as it were, his starry flag to show that the King is at home, and hangs out his escutcheon that atheists may see how he despises their denunciations of him. He who looks up to the firmament and then writes himself down an atheist, brands himself at the same moment as an idiot or a liar. Strange is it that some who love God are yet afraid to study the God-declaring book of nature; the mock-spirituality of some believers, who are too heavenly to consider the heavens, has given colour to the vaunts of infidels that nature contradicts revelation. The wisest of men are those who with pious eagerness trace the goings forth of Jehovah as well in creation as in grace; only the foolish have any fears lest the honest study of the one should injure our faith in the other. Dr. M'Cosh has well said, "We have often mourned over the attempts made to set the works of God against the Word of God, and thereby excite, propagate, and perpetuate jealousies fitted to separate parties that ought to live in closest union. In particular, we have always regretted that endeavours should have been made to depreciate nature with a view of exalting revelation; it has always appeared to us to be nothing else than the degrading of one part of God's works in the hope thereby of exalting and recommending another. Let not science and religion be reckoned as opposing citadels, frowning defiance upon each other, and their troops brandishing their armour in hostile attitude. They have too many common foes, if they would but think of it, in ignorance and prejudice, in passion and vice, under all their forms, to admit of their lawfully wasting their strength in a useless warfare with each other. Science has a foundation, and so has religion; let them unite their foundations, and the basis will be broader, and they will be two compartments of one great fabric reared to the glory of God. Let the one be the outer and the other the inner court. In the one, let all look, and admire and adore; and in the other, let those who have faith kneel, and pray, and praise. Let the one be the sanctuary where human learning may present its richest incense as an offering to God, and the other the holiest of all, separated from it by a veil now rent in twain, and in which, on a blood-sprinkled mercy-seat, we pour out the love of a reconciled heart, and hear the oracles of the living God."

2. "*Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge.*" As if one day took up the story where the other left it, and each night passed over the wondrous tale to the next. The original has in it the thought of pouring out, or welling over, with speech; as though days and nights were but as a fountain flowing evermore with Jehovah's praise. Oh to drink often at the celestial well, and learn to utter the glory of God! The witnesses above cannot be slain or silenced; from their elevated seats they constantly preach the knowledge of God, unawed and unbiassed by the judgments of men. Even the changes of alternating night and day are mutely eloquent, and light and shade equally reveal the Invisible One; let the vicissitudes of our circumstances do the same, and while we bless the God of our days of joy, let us also extol him who giveth "*songs in the night.*"

The lesson of day and night is one which it were well if all men learned. It should be among our day-thoughts and night-thoughts to remember the flight of time, the changeful character of earthly things, the brevity both of joy and sorrow,

the preciousness of life, our utter powerlessness to recall the hours once flown, and the irresistible approach of eternity. Day bids us labour, night reminds us to prepare for our last home; day bids us work for God, and night invites us to rest in him; day bids us look for endless day, and night warns us to escape from everlasting night.

3. "*There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard.*" Every man may hear the voices of the stars. Many are the languages of terrestrials, to celestials there is but one, and that one may be understood by every willing mind. The lowest heathen are without excuse, if they do not discover the invisible things of God in the works which he has made. Sun, moon, and stars are God's travelling preachers; they are apostles upon their journey confirming those who regard the Lord, and judges on circuit condemning those who worship idols.

The margin gives us another rendering, which is more literal, and involves less repetition; "*no speech, no words, their voice is not heard;*" that is to say, their teaching is not addressed to the ear, and is not uttered in articulate sounds; it is pictorial, and directed to the eye and heart; it touches not the sense by which faith comes, for faith cometh by hearing. Jesus Christ is called the Word, for he is a far more distinct display of Godhead than all the heavens can afford; they are, after all, but dumb instructors; neither star nor sun can arrive at a word, but Jesus is the express image of Jehovah's person, and his name is the Word of God.

4. "*Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.*" Although the heavenly bodies move in solemn silence, yet in reason's ear they utter precious teachings. They give forth no literal words, but yet their instruction is clear enough to be so described. Horne says that the phrase employed indicates a language of signs, and thus we are told that the heavens speak by their significant actions and operations. Nature's words are like those of the deaf and dumb, but grace tells us plainly of the Father. By their line is probably meant the *measure* of their domain which, together with their testimony, has gone out to the utmost end of the habitable earth. No man living beneath the copes of heaven dwells beyond the bounds of the diocese of God's Court-preachers; it is easy to escape from the light of ministers, who are as stars in the right hand of the Son of Man; but even then men, with a conscience yet unseared, will find a Nathan to accuse them, a Jonah to warn them, and an Elijah to threaten them in the silent stars of night. To gracious souls the voices of the heavens are more influential far, they feel the sweet influences of the Pleiades, and are drawn towards their Father God by the bright bands of Orion.

"*In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun.*" In the midst of the heavens the sun encamps, and marches like a mighty monarch on his glorious way. He has no fixed abode, but as a traveller pitches and removes his tent, a tent which will soon be taken down and rolled together as a scroll. As the royal pavilion stood in the centre of the host, so the sun in his place appears like a king in the midst of attendant stars.

5. "*Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber.*" A bridegroom comes forth sumptuously apparelled, his face beaming with a joy which he imparts to all around; such, but with a mighty emphasis, is the rising Sun. "*And rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race.*" As a champion girt for running cheerfully addresses himself to the race, so does the sun speed onward with matchless regularity and unwearying swiftness in his appointed orbit. It is but mere play to him; there are no signs of effort, flagging or exhaustion. No other creature yields such joy to the earth as her bridegroom the sun; and none, whether they be horse or eagle, can for an instant compare in swiftness with that heavenly champion. But all his glory is but the glory of God; even the sun shines in light borrowed from the Great Father of Lights.

"Thou sun, of this great world both eye and soul,
Acknowledge Him thy greater; sound His praise
Both when thou climb'st, and when high noon hast gained.
And when thou fall'st."

6. "*His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it.*" He bears his light to the boundaries of the solar heavens, traversing the zodiac with steady motion, denying his light to none who dwell within his range. "*And there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.*" Above, beneath, around, the heat of the sun exercises an influence. The bowels of the earth are stored with the ancient produce of the solar rays, and even yet earth's inmost caverns feel

their power. Where light is shut out, yet heat and other more subtle influences find their way.

There is no doubt a parallel intended to be drawn between the heaven of grace and the heaven of nature. God's way of grace is sublime and broad, and full of his glory; in all its displays it is to be admired and studied with diligence; both its lights and its shades are instructive; it has been proclaimed, in a measure, to every people, and in due time shall be yet more completely published to the ends of the earth. Jesus, like a sun, dwells in the midst of revelation, tabernacled among men in all his brightness; rejoicing, as the Bridegroom of his church, to reveal himself to men; and, like a champion, to win unto himself renown. *He* makes a circuit of mercy, blessing the remotest corners of the earth; and there are no seeking souls, however degraded and depraved, who shall be denied the comfortable warmth and benediction of his love—even death shall feel the power of his presence, and resign the bodies of the saints, and this fallen earth shall be restored to its pristine glory.

7 The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.

8 The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.

9 The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.

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

11 Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward.

In the three following verses we have a brief but instructive hexapla containing six descriptive titles of the word, six characteristic qualities mentioned, and six divine effects declared. Names, nature, and effect are well set forth.

7. "*The law of the Lord is perfect*;" by which he means not merely the law of Moses but the doctrine of God, the whole run and rule of sacred Writ. The doctrine revealed by God he declares to be perfect, and yet David had but a very small part of the Scriptures, and if a fragment, and that the darkest and most historical portion, be perfect, what must the entire volume be? How more than perfect is the book which contains the clearest possible display of divine love, and gives us an open vision of redeeming grace. The gospel is a complete scheme or law of gracious salvation, presenting to the needy sinner everything that his terrible necessities can possibly demand. There are no redundancies and no omissions in the Word of God, and in the plan of grace; why then do men try to paint this lily and gild this refined gold? The gospel is perfect in all its parts, and perfect as a whole: it is a crime to add to it, treason to alter it, and felony to take from it.

"*Converting the soul.*"—Making the man to be returned or restored to the place from which sin had cast him. The practical effect of the Word of God is to turn the man to himself, to his God, and to holiness; and the turn or conversion is not outward alone, "*the soul*" is moved and renewed. The great means of the conversion of sinners is the Word of God, and the more closely we keep to it in our ministry the more likely are we to be successful. It is God's Word rather than man's comment on God's Word which is made mighty with souls. When the law drives and the gospel draws, the action is different but the end is one, for by God's Spirit the soul is made to yield, and cries, "Turn me, and I shall be turned." Try men's depraved nature with philosophy and reasoning, and it laughs your efforts to scorn, but the Word of God soon works a transformation.

"*The testimony of the Lord is sure.*" God bears his testimony against sin, and on behalf of righteousness; he testifies of our fall and of our restoration; this testimony is plain, decided, and infallible, and is to be accepted as sure. God's witness in his Word is so sure that we may draw solid comfort from it both for time and eternity, and so sure that no attacks made upon it, however fierce or subtle, can ever weaken its force. What a blessing that in a world of uncertainties we have something sure to rest upon! We hasten from the quicksands of human speculations to the *terra firma* of Divine Revelation.

"*Making wise the simple.*" Humble, candid, teachable minds receive the word, and are made wise unto salvation. Things hidden from the wise and prudent are revealed unto babes. The persuadable grow wise, but the cavillers continue fools. As a law or plan the Word of God converts, and then as a testimony it instructs; it is not enough for us to be converts, we must continue to be disciples; and if we have felt the power of truth, we must go on to prove its certainty by experience. The perfection of the gospel converts, but its sureness edifies; if we would be edified it becomes us not to stagger at the promise through unbelief, for a doubted gospel cannot make us wise, but truth of which we are assured will be our establishment.

8. "*The statutes of the Lord are right.*" His precepts and decrees are founded in righteousness, and are such as are right or fitted to the right reason of man. As a physician gives the right medicine, and a counsellor the right advice, so does the Book of God. "*Rejoicing the heart.*" Mark the progress; he who was converted was next made wise and is now made happy; that truth which makes the heart right then gives joy to the right heart. Free grace brings heart-joy. Earthborn mirth dwells on the lip, and flushes the bodily powers; but heavenly delights satisfy the inner nature, and fill the mental faculties to the brim. There is no cordial of comfort like that which is poured from the bottle of Scripture.

"Retire and read thy Bible to be gay."

"*The commandment of the Lord is pure.*" No mixture of error defiles it, no stain of sin pollutes it; it is the unadulterated milk, the undiluted wine. "*Enlightening the eyes,*" purging away by its own purity the earthly grossness which mars the intellectual discernment: whether the eye be dim with sorrow or with sin, the Scripture is a skilful oculist, and makes the eye clear and bright. Look at the sun and it puts out your eyes, look at the more than sunlight of Revelation and it enlightens them; the purity of snow causes snow-blindness to the Alpine traveller, but the purity of God's truth has the contrary effect, and cures the natural blindness of the soul. It is well again to observe the gradation; the convert became a disciple and next a rejoicing soul, he now obtains a discerning eye, and as a spiritual man discerneth all things, though he himself is discerned of no man.

9. "*The fear of the Lord is clean.*" The doctrine of truth is here described by its spiritual effect, viz., inward piety, or the fear of the Lord; this is clean in itself, and cleanses out the love of sin, sanctifying the heart in which it reigns. Mr. Godly-fear is never satisfied till every street, lane, and alley, yea, and every house and every corner of the town of Mansoul is clean rid of the Diabolonians who lurk therein. "*Enduring for ever.*" Filth brings decay, but cleanness is the great foe of corruption. The grace of God in the heart being a pure principle is also an abiding and incorruptible principle, which may be crushed for a time, but cannot be utterly destroyed. Both in the Word and in the heart, when the Lord writes, he says with Pilate, "What I have written, I have written;" he will make no erasures himself, much less suffer others to do so. The revealed will of God is never changed; even Jesus came not to destroy but to fulfil, and even the ceremonial law was only changed as to its shadow, the substance intended by it is eternal. When the governments of nations are shaken with revolution, and ancient constitutions are being repealed, it is comforting to know that the throne of God is unshaken, and his law unaltered.

"*The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether;*"—jointly and severally the words of the Lord are true; that which is good in detail is excellent in the mass; no exception may be taken to a single clause separately, or to the book as a whole. God's judgments, all of them together, or each of them apart, are manifestly just, and need no laborious excuses to justify them. The judicial decisions of Jehovah, as revealed in the law, or illustrated in the history of his providence, are truth itself, and commend themselves to every truthful mind; not only is their power invincible, but their justice is unimpeachable.

10. "*More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold.*" Bible truth is enriching to the soul in the highest degree; the metaphor is one which gathers force as it is brought out;—gold—fine gold—much fine gold; it is good, better, best, and therefore it is not only to be desired with a miser's avidity, but with more than that. As spiritual treasure is more noble than mere material wealth, so should it be desired and sought after with greater eagerness. Men speak of solid gold, but what is so solid as solid truth? For love of gold pleasure is forsworn, ease renounced, and life endangered; shall we not be ready to do as much for love

of truth? "*Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.*" Trapp says, "Old people are all for profit, the young for pleasure; here's gold for the one, yea, the finest gold in great quantity; here's honey for the other, yea, live honey dropping from the comb." The pleasures arising from a right understanding of the divine testimonies are of the most delightful order; earthly enjoyments are utterly contemptible, if compared with them. The sweetest joys, yea, the sweetest of the sweetest falls to his portion who has God's truth to be his heritage.

11. "*Moreover by them is thy servant warned.*" We are warned by the Word both of our duty, our danger, and our remedy. On the sea of life there would be many more wrecks, if it were not for the divine storm-signals which give to the watchful a timely warning. The Bible should be our Mentor, our Monitor, our Memento Mori, our Remembrancer, and the Keeper of our Conscience. Alas, that so few men will take the warning so graciously given; none but servants of God will do so, for they alone regard their Master's will. Servants of God not only find his service delightful in itself, but they receive good recompense; "*In keeping of them there is great reward.*" There is a wage, and a great one; though we earn no wages of debt, we win great wages of grace. Saints may be losers for a time, but they shall be glorious gainers in the long run, and even now a quiet conscience is in itself no slender reward for obedience. He who wears the herb called heart's-ease in his bosom is truly blessed. However, the main reward is yet to come, and the word here used hints as much, for it signifies *the heel*, as if the reward would come to us at the end of life when the work was done;—not while the labour was in the hand, but when it was gone and we could see the heel of it. Oh, the glory yet to be revealed! It is enough to make a man faint for joy at the prospect of it. Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. Then shall we know the value of the Scriptures when we swim in that sea of unutterable delight to which their streams will bear us, if we commit ourselves to them.

12 Who can understand *his* errors? cleanse thou me from secret *faults*.

13 Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous *sins*; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression.

14 Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.

12. "*Who can understand his errors?*" A question which is its own answer. It rather requires a note of exclamation than of interrogation. By the law is the knowledge of sin, and in the presence of divine truth, the Psalmist marvels at the number and heinousness of his sins. He best knows himself who best knows the Word, but even such an one will be in a maze of wonder as to what he does not know, rather than on the mount of congratulation as to what he does know. We have heard of a comedy of errors, but to a good man this is more like a tragedy. Many books have a few lines of errata at the end, but our errata might well be as large as the volume if we could but have sense enough to see them. Augustine wrote in his older days a series of Retractions; ours might make a library if we had enough grace to be convinced of our mistakes and to confess them. "*Cleanse thou me from secret faults.*" Thou canst mark in me faults entirely hidden from myself. It were hopeless to expect to see all my spots; therefore, O Lord, wash away in the atoning blood even those sins which my conscience has been unable to detect. Secret sins, like private conspirators, must be hunted out, or they may do deadly mischief; it is well to be much in prayer concerning them. In the Lateran Council of the Church of Rome, a decree was passed that every true believer must confess his sins, all of them, once in a year to the priest, and they affixed to it this declaration, that there is no hope of pardon but in complying with that decree. What can equal the absurdity of such a decree as that? Do they suppose that they can tell their sins as easily as they can count their fingers? Why, if we could receive pardon for all our sins by telling every sin we have committed in one hour, there is not one of us who would be able to enter heaven, since, besides the sins that are known to us and that we may be able to confess, there are a vast mass of sins, which are as truly sins as those which we lament, but which are secret, and come not beneath our eyes. If we had eyes like those of God, we should think very differently of ourselves. The transgressions which we see and confess are but

like the farmer's small samples which he brings to market, when he has left his granary full at home. We have but a very few sins which we can observe and detect, compared with those which are hidden from ourselves and unseen by our fellow-creatures.

13. "*Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me.*"—This earnest and humble prayer teaches us that saints may fall into the worst of sins unless restrained by grace, and that therefore they must watch and pray lest they enter into temptation. There is a natural proneness to sin in the best of men, and they must be held back as a horse is held back by the bit or they will run into it. Presumptuous sins are peculiarly dangerous. All sins are great sins, but yet some sins are greater than others. Every sin has in it the very venom of rebellion, and is full of the essential marrow of traitorous rejection of God; but there be some sins which have in them a greater development of the essential mischief of rebellion, and which wear upon their faces more of the brazen pride which defies the Most High. It is wrong to suppose that because all sins will condemn us, that therefore one sin is not greater than another. The fact is, that while all transgression is a greatly grievous and sinful thing, yet there are some transgressions which have a deeper shade of blackness, and a more double scarlet-dyed hue of criminality than others. The presumptuous sins of our text are the chief and worst of all sins; they rank head and foremost in the list of iniquities. It is remarkable that though an atonement was provided under the Jewish law for every kind of sin, there was this one exception: "But the soul that sinneth presumptuously shall have no atonement; it shall be cut off from the midst of my people." And now under the Christian dispensation, although in the sacrifice of our blessed Lord there is a great and precious atonement for presumptuous sins, whereby sinners who have erred in this manner are made clean, yet without doubt, presumptuous sinners, dying without pardon, must expect to receive a double portion of the wrath of God, and a more terrible portion of eternal punishment in the pit that is digged for the wicked. For this reason is David so anxious that he may never come under the reigning power of these giant evils. "*Then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression.*" He shudders at the thought of the unpardonable sin. Secret sin is a stepping-stone to presumptuous sin, and that is the vestibule of "the sin which is unto death." He who is not wilful in his sin, will be in a fair way to be innocent so far as poor sinful man can be; but he who tempts the devil to tempt him is in a path which will lead him from bad to worse, and from the worse to the worst.

14. "*Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my Redeemer.*" A sweet prayer, and so spiritual that it is almost as commonly used in Christian worship as the apostolic benediction. *Words of the mouth* are mockery if the heart does not *meditate*; the shell is nothing without the kernel; but both together are useless unless *accepted*; and even if accepted by man, it is all vanity if not acceptable in the *sight of God*. We must in prayer view Jehovah as our *strength* enabling, and our *Redeemer* saving, or we shall not pray aright, and it is well to feel our personal interest so as to use the word *my*, or our prayers will be hindered. Our near Kinsman's name, our *Goel* or *Redeemer*, makes a blessed ending to the Psalm; it began with the heavens, but it ends with him whose glory fills heaven and earth. Blessed Kinsman, give us now to meditate acceptably upon thy most sweet love and tenderness.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—The magnificent scenery to which the poem alludes is derived entirely from a contemplation of nature, in a state of pastoral seclusion; and a contemplation indulged in, at noontide or in the morning, when the sun was travelling over the horizon, and eclipsing all the other heavenly bodies by his glory. On which account it forms a perfect contrast with the eighth Psalm, evidently composed in the evening, and should be read in connection with it, as it was probably written nearly at the same time: and as both are songs of praise derived from natural phenomena, and therefore peculiarly appropriate to rural or pastoral life.—*John Mason Good*.

Whole Psalm.—The world resembleth a divinity-school, saith Plutarch, and Christ, as the Scripture telleth, is our doctor, instructing us by his works, and by his words. For as Aristotle had two sorts of writings, one called *exoterical*, for his common auditors, another *acroamatical*, for his private scholars and familiar acquaintance: so God hath two sorts of books, as David intimates in this Psalm; namely, the book of his creatures, as a common-place book for all men in the world: "*The heavens declare the glory of God,*" verses 1—6; the book of his Scriptures as a statute-book for his domestical auditory, the church: "*The law of the Lord is an undefiled law,*" verses 7, 8. The great book of the creatures in folio, may be termed aptly *the shepherd's kalendar*, and the *ploughman's alphabet*, in which even the most ignorant may run (as the prophet speaks) and read. It is a letter patent, or open epistle for all, as David, in our text, *Their sound is gone out into all lands, and their words unto the ends of the world; there is neither speech nor language but have heard of their preaching.* For albeit, heaven, and the sun in heaven, and the light in the sun are mute, yet *their voices* are well understood, catechising plainly the first elements of religion, as, namely, that there is a God, and that this God is but one God, and that this one God excelleth all other things infinitely both in might and majesty. *Universon mundus* (as one pithily *nihil aliud est quam Deus explicatus*: the whole world is nothing else but God expressed. So St. Paul, Rom. i. 20: God's *invisible things*, as his eternal power and Godhead, "are clearly seen" by the creation of the world, "being understood by the things that are made." The heavens declare this, and the firmament showeth this, and the day telleth this, and the night certifieth this, the sound of the thunder proclaimeth, as it were, this in all lands, and the words of the whistling wind unto the ends of the world. More principally *the sun, which as a bridegroom cometh out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a giant to run his course.* The body thereof (as mathematicians have confidently delivered) is one hundred and sixty-six times bigger than the whole earth, and yet it is every day carried by the finger of God so great a journey, so long a course, that if it were to be taken on the land, it should run every several hour of the day two hundred and twenty-five German miles. It is true that God is incapable to sense, yet he makes himself, as it were, visible in his works; as the divine poet (Du Bartas) sweetly:—

"Therein our fingers feel, our nostrils smell,
Our palates taste his virtues that excel,
He shows him to our eyes, talks to our ears,
In the ordered motions of the spangled spheres."

So "*the heavens declare,*" that is, they make men declare the glory of God, by their admirable structure, motions, and influence. Now, the preaching of the *heavens* is wonderful in three respects. 1. As preaching all the night and all the day without intermission: verse 2. *One day telleth another, and one night certifieth another.* 2. As preaching in every kind of language: verse 3, *There is neither speech, nor language, but their voices are heard among them.* 3. As preaching in every part of the world, and in every parish of every part, and in every place of every parish: verse 4, *Their sound is gone into all lands, and their words unto the ends of the world.* They be diligent pastors, as preaching at all times; and learned pastors, as preaching in all tongues; and catholic pastors, as preaching in all towns. Let us not then in this University (where the voices of so many great doctors are heard), be like to truants in other schools, who gaze so much upon the babies*, and gilded cover, and painted margent of their book, that they neglect the text and lesson itself. This is *God's primer*, as it were, for all sorts of people; but he hath another book proper only for his domestical auditory the church: "*He sheweth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation, neither have the heathen knowledge of his laws.*" Psa. cxlvii. 19, 20. Heathen men read in his primer, but Christian men are well acquainted with his Bible. The primer is a good book, but it is imperfect; for after a man hath learned it he must learn more; but "*the law of the Lord,*" that is, the body of the Holy Scriptures, is a most absolute canon of all doctrines appertaining either to faith or good manners; it is a *perfect law, converting the soul, giving wisdom to the simple, sure, pure, righteous, and rejoicing the heart,*" etc.—*John Boys.*

Whole Psalm. Saint Chrysostom conjectures that the main intention of the greatest part of this Psalm consists in the discovery of divine providence, which

* The pictures or illustrations of a book.

manifests itself in the motions and courses of the heavenly bodies, concerning which the Psalmist speaketh much, from verse 1 to verse 7. Saint Austin upon the place, is of a quite different opinion, who conjectures that Christ is the whole subject of this Psalm; whose person is compared to the sun for excellency and beauty, and the course of whose doctrine was dispersed round about the world by his apostles, to which Saint Paul alludes (Rom. x. 18); "Have they not heard? Yes, verily, their sound went into all the earth," etc., and the efficacy of whose gospel is like the heat of the sun, which pierceth into the very heart of the earth, so that into the secrets of the soul. I confess this allegorical exposition is not altogether impertinent, neither is that literal exposition of Saint Chrysostom to be blamed, for it hath its weight. But to omit all variety of conjectures, this Psalm contains in it:

1. A double kind of the *knowledge of God*, of which one is *by the book of the creature*; and this divines call a natural knowledge: there is not any one creature, but it is a leaf written all over with the description of God; his eternal power and Godhead may be understood by the things that are seen, saith the apostle. Rom. i. 20. And, as every creature, so especially "*the heavens*" do lead us to the knowledge of a God: so verse 1 of this Psalm: "*The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handywork*;" they are the theatres, as it were, of his wisdom, and power, and glory. Another is *by the book of Scripture*; and this knowledge is far more distinct and explicit: with the other even the heathens do grope after a deity, but with this Christians do behold God, as it were, with open face. The characters here are now fresh, spiritual, complete, and lively. The word of God is the singular means to know God aright. Look, as the light which comes from the sun, so that word of God, which is light, is the clearest way to know God who is light itself. Hence it is that the Psalmist stands much upon this from verse 7 to verse 12, where he sets open the word in its several encomiums and operations; namely, in its perfection, its certainties and firmness; its righteousness, and purity, and truth; and then in its efficacy—that it is a converting word, an enlightening word, an instructing word, a rejoicing word, a desirable word, a warning word, and a rewarding word.

2. A *singular and experimental knowledge of himself*.—So it seemeth, that that word which David did so much commend, he did commend it from an experimental efficacy; he had found it to be a righteous, and holy, and pure, and discovering word, laying open, not only visible and gross transgressions, but also, like the light of the sun, those otherwise unobserved and secret atoms of senses flying within the house; I mean in the secret chambers of the soul.—*Obadiah Sedgwick*, 1660.

Verse 1.—"The heavens declare the glory of God," etc.—The eminent saints of ancient times were watchful observers of the objects and operations of nature. In every event they saw the agency of God; and, therefore, they took delight in its examination. For they could not but receive pleasure from witnessing the manifestations of his wisdom and beneficence, whom they adored and loved. They had not learned, as we have in modern times, to interpose unbending laws between the Creator and his works; and then, by giving inherent power to these laws, virtually to remove God away from his creation into an ethereal extramundane sphere of repose and happiness. I do not say that this is the universal feeling of the present day. But it prevails extensively in the church, and still more in the world. The ablest philosophers of modern times do, indeed, maintain that a natural law is nothing more than the uniform mode in which God acts; and that, after all, it is not the efficiency of the law, but God's own energy, that keeps all nature in motion; that he operates immediately and directly, not remotely and indirectly, in bringing about every event, and that every natural change is as really the work of God as if the eye of sense could see his hand turning round the wheels of nature. But, although the ablest philosophy of modern times has reached this conclusion, the great mass of the community, and even of Christians, are still groping in the darkness of that mechanical system which ascribes the operations of the natural world to nature's laws instead of nature's God. By a sort of figure, indeed, it is proper, as the advocates of this system admit, to speak of God as the author of natural events, because he originally ordained the laws of nature. But they have no idea that he exerts any direct and immediate agency in bringing them about; and, therefore, when they look upon these events they feel no impression of the presence and active agency of Jehovah.

But how different, as already remarked, were the feelings of ancient saints. The Psalmist could not look up to heaven without exclaiming, "*The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard.*" When he cast his eyes abroad upon the earth, his full heart cried out, "O Lord, how manifold are thy works! In wisdom hast thou made them all; the earth is full of thy riches." In his eye everything was full of God. It was God who "sent springs into the valleys, which run among the hills." When the thunder-storm passed before him, it was "God's voice in the heavens, and his lightnings that lighted the world." When he heard the bellowings, and saw the smoke of the volcano, it was "God who looketh on the earth, and it trembleth; he toucheth the hills, and they smoke."—*Edward Hitchcock, D.D., LL.D., 1867.*

Verse 1.—"*The heavens declare,*" etc. Man has been endued by his Creator with mental powers capable of cultivation. He has employed them in the study of the wonderful works of God which the universe displays. His own habitation has provided a base which has served him to measure the heavens. He compares his own stature with the magnitude of the earth on which he dwells; the earth, with the system in which it is placed; the extent of the system, with the distance of the nearest fixed stars; and that distance again serves as a unit of measurement for other distances which observation points out. Still no approach is made to any limit. How extended these wonderful works of the Almighty may be no man can presume to say. The sphere of creation appears to extend around us indefinitely on all sides; "to have its centre everywhere, its circumference nowhere." These are considerations which from their extent almost bewilder our minds. But how should they raise our ideas toward their great Creator, when we consider that all these were created from nothing, by a word, by a mere volition of the Deity. "Let them be," said God, and they were. "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth." "For he spake, and it was done. He commanded, and it stood fast." Psalm xxxiii. 6, 9. What must be that power which so formed worlds on worlds; worlds in comparison of which this earth which we inhabit sinks into utter nothingness! Surely when we thus lift up our thoughts to the heavens, the moon and the stars which he hath ordained, we must feel, if we can ever feel, how stupendous and incomprehensible is that Being who formed them all; that "*the heavens*" do indeed "*declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork.*"—*Temple Chevallier, in "The Hulsean Lectures for 1827."*

Verse 1.—I have often been charmed and awed at the sight of the nocturnal heavens, even before I knew how to consider them in their proper circumstances of majesty and beauty. Something like magic has struck my mind, on transient and unthinking survey of the æthereal vault, tinged throughout with the purest azure, and decorated with innumerable starry lamps. I have felt, I know not what, powerful and aggrandising impulse, which seemed to snatch me from the low entanglements of vanity, and prompted an ardent sigh for sublimer objects. Methought I heard, even from the silent spheres, a commanding call to spurn the abject earth, and pant after unseen delights. Henceforth I hope to imbibe more copiously this moral emanation of the skies, when, in some such manner as the preceding, they are rationally seen, and the sight is duly improved. The stars, I trust, will teach as well as shine, and help to dispel both nature's gloom and my intellectual darkness. To some people they discharge no better a service than that of holding a flambeau to their feet, and softening the horrors of their night. To me and my friends may they act as ministers of a superior order, as counsellors of wisdom, and guides to happiness! Nor will they fail to execute this nobler office, if they gently light our way into the knowledge of their adored Maker—if they point out with their silver rays our path to his beatific presence.—*James Hervey, A.M., 1713—1758.*

Verse 1.—Should a man live underground, and there converse with the works of art and mechanism, and should afterwards be brought up into the open day, and see the several glories of the heaven and earth, he would immediately pronounce them the works of such a Being as we define God to be.—*Aristotle.*

Verse 1.—When we behold "*the heavens,*" when we contemplate the celestial bodies, can we fail of conviction? Must we not acknowledge that there is a Divinity, a perfect Being, a ruling intelligence, which governs; a God who is everywhere

and directs all by his power? Anybody who doubts this may as well deny there is a sun that lights us. Time destroys all false opinions, but it confirms those which are formed by nature. For this reason, with us as well as with other nations, the worship of the gods and the holy exercises of religion, increase in purity and extent every day.—*Cicero*.

Verse 1.—“*The heavens declare the glory of God,*” etc. They discover his *wisdom*, his *power*, his *goodness*; and so there is not any one creature, though never so little, but we are to admire the Creator in it. As a chamber hung round about with looking-glasses represents the face upon every turn, thus all the world doth the mercy and the bounty of God; though that be visible, yet it discovers an invisible God and his invisible properties.—*Anthony Burgess*, 1656.

Verse 1.—None of the elect are in that respect so unwise as to refuse to hear and consider the works and words of God as not appertaining unto him. God forbid. No man in the world doth with more fervency consider the works of God, none more readily lift up their ears to hear God speak than even they who have the inward revelation of the Holy Spirit.—*Wolfgang Musculus*.

Verse 1.—During the French revolution Jean Bon St. André, the Vendean revolutionist, said to a peasant, “I will have all your steeples pulled down, that you may no longer have any object by which you may be reminded of your old superstitions.” “But,” replied the peasant, “*you cannot help leaving us the stars.*”—*John Bate's “Cyclopædia of Moral and Religious Truths,”* 1865.

Verse 1.—“*The heavens declare the glory of God*”—

How beautiful this dome of sky,
And the vast hills in fluctuation fixed
At thy command, how awful! Shall the soul,
Human and rational, report of thee
Even less than these? Be mute who will, who can,
Yet I will praise thee with impassioned voice.
My lips, that may forget thee in the crowd,
Cannot forget thee here, where thou hast built
For thine own glory, in the wilderness!

William Wordsworth, 1770—1850.

Verse 1.—“*The firmament sheweth his handywork*”—

The glittering stars
By the deep ear of meditation heard,
Still in their midnight watches sing of him.
He nods a calm. The tempest blows his wrath:
The thunder is his voice; and the red flash
His speedy sword of justice. At his touch
The mountains flame. He shakes the solid earth,
And rocks the nations. Nor in these alone—
In ev'ry common instance God is seen.

James Thomson.

Verse 1.—

These are thy glorious works, Parent of good,
Almighty! Thine this universal frame,
Thus wondrous fair. Thyself how wondrous, then
Unspeakable, who sitt'st above these heavens
To us invisible, or dimly seen
In these thy lowest works; yet these declare
Thy goodness beyond thought, and power divine.

John Milton.

Verses 1, 2.—In order more fully to illustrate the expressive richness of the Hebrew, I would direct the attention of my reader to the beautiful phrasology of the XIX. Psalm. The literal reading of the first and second verses may be thus given:—

“The heavens are *telling* the glory of God,
The firmament *displaying* the work of his hands;
Day unto day *welleth forth* speech,
Night unto night *breatheth out* knowledge.”

Thus the four distinct terms in the original are preserved in the translation; and the overflowing fulness with which day unto day pours forth divine instruction, and the gentle whisperings of the silent night, are contrasted as in the Hebrew.—*Henry Craik*, 1860.

Verses 1—4.—Though all preachers on earth should grow silent, and every human mouth cease from publishing the glory of God, the heavens above will never cease to declare and proclaim his majesty and glory. They are for ever preaching; for, like an unbroken chain, their message is delivered from day to day and from night to night. At the silence of one herald another takes up his speech. One day, like the other, discloses the same spectacles of his glory, and one night, like the other, the same wonders of his majesty. Though nature be *hushed* and *quiet* when the sun in his glory has reached the zenith on the azure sky—though the world keep her *silent* festival when the stars shine brightest at night—yet, says the Psalmist, *they speak*; ay, holy silence itself is a speech, provided there be the ear to hear it.—Augustus T. Tholuck.

Verses 1—4.—“*The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handywork.*” If the heavens declare the glory of God, we should observe what that glory is which they declare. The heavens preach to us every day. . . . “*Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.*” Sun, moon, and stars are preachers; they are universal, they are natural apostles. The world is their charge; “*their words,*” saith the Psalm, “*go to the end of the world.*” We may have good doctrine from them, especially this doctrine in the text, of the wisdom and power of God. And it is very observable that the apostle alludes to this text in the Psalm for a proof of gospel preaching to the whole world. Rom. x. 18. The gospel, like the sun, casts his beams over, and sheds his light into all the world. David in the Psalm saith, “*Their line is gone out,*” etc. By which word he shows that the heavens, being so curious a fabric, made, as it were, by a line and level, do clearly, though silently, preach the skill and perfections of God. Or, that we may read divine truths in them as a line formed by a pen into words and sentences (the original signifies both a measuring line and a written line), letters and words in writing being nothing but lines drawn into several forms or figures. But the Septuagint, whose translation the apostle citeth, for *Kavam*, *their line*, read *Kolam*, *their sound*; either misreading the word or studiously mollifying the sense into a nearer compliance with the latter clause of the verse, “*And their words to the end of the world.*”—Joseph Caryl.

Verses 1—4.—Like as the sun with his light beneficially comforteth all the world, so Christ, the Son of God, reacheth his benefits unto all men, so that they will receive them thankfully, and not refuse them disobediently.—Robert Cawdray.

Verse 2.—“*Day unto day,*” etc. But what is the meaning of the next word—*One day telleth another, and one night certifieth another*? Literally, *dies diem dicit*, is nothing else but *dies diem docet*. One day telleth another, is one day teacheth another. The day past is instructed by the day present: every new day doth afford new doctrine. The day is a most apt time to learn by reading and conference; the night a most fit time for invention and meditation. Now that which thou canst not understand this day thou mayest haply learn the next, and that which is not found out in one night may be gotten in another. Mystically (saith Heirom), Christ is this “*day,*” who saith of himself, “*I am the light of the world,*” and his twelve apostles are the twelve hours of the day; for Christ’s Spirit revealed by the mouths of his apostles the mysteries of our salvation, in other ages not so fully known unto the sons of men. *One day telleth another*, that is, the spiritual utter this unto the spiritual; and *one night certifieth another*, that is, Judas insinuates as much unto the Jews in the night of ignorance, saying, “*Whomsoever I shall kiss, that is he, lay hold on him.*” Matt. xxvi. 28. Or, the Old Testament only shadowing Christ is the *night*, and the New Testament plainly showing Christ, is the *day*.—John Boys.

Verse 2.—“*Day unto day,*” or day after day; the vicissitude or continual succession of day and night speaketh much divine knowledge. The assiduity and constancy without any intermission by the heavens preaching is hereby expressed.—John Richardson.

Verse 2.—“*Uttereth,*” poureth forth abundantly; “*sheweth,*” demonstrates clearly and effectually, without ambiguity. Job xxxvi. 2. Many in the full light of gospel day, hear not that speech, who yet in the night of affliction and trouble, or in the conviction of their natural darkness, have that knowledge communicated to them which enables them to realise the joy that cometh in the morning.—W. Wilson.

Verse 2.—“*Sheweth knowledge.*” We may illustrate the differing measures

in which natural objects convey knowledge to men of differing mental and spiritual capacity by the story of our great English artist. He is said to have been engaged upon one of his immortal works, and a lady of rank looking on remarked, "But, Mr. Turner, I do not see in nature all that you describe there." "Ah, Madam," answered the painter, "do you not wish you could?"—*C. H. S.*

Verse 3.—"There is no speech," etc. The sunset was one of the most glorious I ever beheld, and the whole earth seemed so still that the voice of neither God nor man was heard. There was not a ripple upon the waters, not the leaf of a tree nor even of a blade of grass moving, and the rocks upon the opposite shore reflected the sun's "after-glow," and were again themselves reflected from or in the river during the brief twilight, in a way I do not remember ever to have beheld before. No! I will not say the voice of God was not heard; it spoke in the very stillness as loud as in roaring thunder, in the placid scene as in rocks and cliffs impassable, and louder still in the heavens and in the firmament, and in the magnificent prospect around me. His wondrous works declared him to be near, and I felt as if the very ground upon which I was treading was holy.—*John Gadsby.*

Verse 4.—"Their line is gone out," etc. "Their sound went," etc. Rom. x. 18. The relations which the gospel of Christ Jesus hath to the Psalms of David I find to be more than to all the Bible besides, that seldom anything is written in the New Testament, but we are sent to fetch our proofs from these. The margin here sends me to the Psalm, and the Psalm sends me back to this again; showing that they both speak one thing. How comes it then that it is not one, for "line" and "sound" are not one thing? Is there not some mistake here? Answer—To fetch a proof from a place is one thing, an allusion is another. Sometimes the evangelists are enforced to bring their proofs for what they write out of the Old Testament, else we should never believe them, and then they must be very sure of the terms, when they say, "This was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken," etc. But the apostle was not now upon that account; only showing to the Romans the marvellous spreading of the gospel, alluding to this passage of David discoursing of "the heavens," to which the prophet compared the publication of the word; the sun and moon and stars not only shining through, but round all the earth. The same subject Paul was now upon, and for this purpose makes use of a term fitter to express the preaching of the gospel, by the word "sound," than that other word expressing the limitations of the law, by the word "line;" both of these agreeing that there is no fitter comparison to be fetched from anything in nature than from "the heavens," their motions, revolutions, influences upon sublunary bodies; also in their eclipses, when one text seems to darken another, as if it were put out altogether by crossing and opposing, which is but seemingly so to the ignorant, they agree sweetly enough in themselves; no bridegroom can agree better with his bride, nor rejoice more to run his course. So they both conclude in this, that the sun never saw that nation yet where the world of truth, in one degree or other (all the world, you must think, cannot be right under the meridian) hath not shined.—*William Streat, in "The Dividing of the Hoof," 1654.*

Verse 4.—"Unto the end of the world." Venantius Fortunatus eleven hundred years ago witnesses to the peregrinations of Paul the apostle.

He passed the ocean's curled wave,
As far as islands harbours have;
As far as Brittain yields a bay,
Or Iceland's frozen shore a stay.

John Cragge, 1557.

Verse 4.—"Their line is gone out through all the earth," etc. The molten sea did stand upon twelve oxen, that is, as Paul doth interpret it, upon twelve apostles (1 Cor. ix. 10); which in that they looked four ways, east, west, north, and south, they did teach all nations. And in that they looked three and three together, they did represent the blessed Trinity. Not only teaching all nations, but also in that sea of water, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Wherefore, though the two kine which carried the ark wherein were the tables of the law, went straight and kept one path, turning neither to the right hand nor to the left; yet these twelve oxen which carried the molten sea, signifying the doctrine of the gospel, went not straight, neither kept one path, but turned into

the way of the Gentiles ; yea, they looked all manner of ways, east, west, north, and south. And those two kine stood still and lowed no more when they came to the field of Joshua, dwelling in Bethshemesh, that is, the house of the sun. To note, that all the kine, and calves, and sacrifices, and ceremonies of the old law were to cease and stand still when they came to Jesus, who is the true Joshua, dwelling in heaven, which is the true Bethshemesh. But these twelve oxen were so far from leaving off, either to go, or to low, when they came to Christ, that even then they went much faster and lowed much louder ; so that now "*their sound is gone out into all lands, and their words to the end of the world ;*" and "*in them hath God set*" Bethshemesh, that is, a house or "*tabernacle for the sun.*" Therefore, as the material sun, through the twelve signs of the Zodiac, goeth forth from the uttermost parts of the heaven, and runneth about to the end of it again : in like sort, the spiritual *Sun of Righteousness*, by the twelve apostles, as by twelve signs, hath been borne round about the world, that he might be not only "the glory of his people Israel," but also "a light to lighten the Gentiles ;" and that all, "*all the ends of the earth might see the salvation of our God.*"—*Thomas Playfere.*

Verses 4—6.—It appears to me very likely that the Holy Ghost in these expressions, which he most immediately uses about the rising of the sun, has an eye to the rising of the Sun of Righteousness from the grave, and that the expressions that the Holy Ghost here uses are conformed to such a view. The times of the Old Testament are times of night in comparison of the gospel day, and are so represented in Scripture, and therefore the approach of the day of the New Testament dispensation in the birth of Christ, is called the day-spring from on high visiting the earth (Luke i. 78), "Through the tender mercy of our God ; whereby the day-spring from on high hath visited us ;" and the commencing of the gospel dispensation as it was introduced by Christ, is called the Sun of Righteousness rising. Mal. iv. 2. But this gospel dispensation commences with the resurrection of Christ. Therein the Sun of Righteousness rises from under the earth, as the sun appears to do in the morning, and comes forth as a bridegroom. He rose as the joyful, glorious bridegroom of his church ; for Christ, especially as risen again, is the proper bridegroom, or husband, of his church, as the apostle teaches (Rom. vii. 4), "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that he should bring forth fruit unto God." He that was covered with contempt, and overwhelmed in a deluge of sorrow, has purchased and won his spouse, for he loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might present it to himself ; now he comes forth as a bridegroom to bring home his purchased spouse to him in spiritual marriage, as he soon after did in the conversion of such multitudes, making his people willing in the day of his power, and hath also done many times since, and will do in a yet more glorious degree. And as the sun when it rises comes forth like a bridegroom gloriously adorned, so Christ in his resurrection entered on his state of glory. After his state of sufferings, he rose to shine forth in ineffable glory as the King of heaven and earth, that he might be a glorious bridegroom, in whom his church might be unspeakably happy. Here the Psalmist says that God has *placed a tabernacle for the sun in the heavens* : so God the Father had prepared an abode in heaven for Jesus Christ ; he had set a throne for him there, to which he ascended after he rose. The sun after it is risen ascends up to the midst of heaven, and then at that end of its race descends again to the earth ; so Christ when he rose from the grave ascended up to the height of heaven, and far above all heavens, but at the end of the gospel day will descend again to the earth. It is here said that the risen sun "*rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race.*" So Christ, when he rose, rose as a man of war, as the Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle ; he rose to conquer his enemies, and to show forth his glorious power in subduing all things to himself, during that race which he had to run, which is from his resurrection to the end of the world, when he will return to the earth again. . . . That the Holy Ghost here has a mystical meaning, and has respect to the light of the Sun of Righteousness, and not merely the light of the natural sun, is confirmed by the verses that follow in which the Psalmist himself seems to apply them to the word of God, which is the light of that Sun, even of Jesus Christ, who himself revealed the word of God : see the very next words, "*The law of the Lord is perfect,*" etc.—*Jonathan Edwards, 1703—1758.*

Verses 5.—"Which is as a bridegroom," etc. The sun is described like a bride-

groom coming out of his chamber, dressed and prepared, and as a giant rejoicing to run his race; but though the sun be thus prepared, and dressed, and ready, yet if the Lord send a writ and a prohibition to the sun to keep within his chamber, he cannot come forth, his journey is stopped. Thus also he stops man in his nearest preparations for any action. If the Lord will work, who shall let it? Isaiah xliii. 13. That is, there is no power in heaven or earth which can hinder him. But if the Lord will let, who shall work? Neither sun, nor stars, nor men, nor devils, can work, if he forbids them. The point is full of comfort.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 5.—“Which is as a bridegroom,” etc. The Sun of Righteousness appeared in three signs especially; *Leo, Virgo, Libra*. 1. In *Leo*, roaring as a lion, in the law; so that the people could not endure his voice. 2. In *Virgo*, born of a pure virgin in the gospel. 3. In *Libra*, weighing our works in his balance at the day of judgment. Or as Bernard distinguisheth his threefold coming aptly—*venit ad homines, venit in homines, venit contra homines*: in the time past he came unto men as upon this day*; in the time present, he comes by his spirit into men every day; in the time future, he shall come against men at the last day. The coming here mentioned is his coming in the flesh—for so the fathers usually gloss the text—he came forth of the virgin’s womb, “as a bridegroom out of his chamber.” As a bridegroom, for the King of heaven at this holy time made a great wedding for his Son. Matt. xxii. 1. Christ is the bridegroom, man’s nature the bride, the conjunction and blessed union of both in one person is his marriage. The best way to reconcile two disagreeing families is to make some marriage between them: even so, the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us in the world that he might hereby make our peace, reconciling God to man and man to God. By this happy match the Son of God is become the Son of Man, even flesh of our flesh, and bone of our bones; and the sons of men are made the sons of God, “of his flesh and of his bones,” as Paul saith, Eph. v. 30. So that now the church being Christ’s own spouse, saith, “I am my Beloved’s, and my Beloved is mine.” Cant. vi. 3. My sin is his sin, and his righteousness is my righteousness. He who knew no sin, for my sake was made sin; and I, contrariwise, having no good thing, am made the righteousness of God in him: I which am brown by persecution, and black by nature (Cant. i. 5), so foul as the sow that walloweth in the mire, through his favour am comely, without spot or wrinkle, so white as the snow, like a lily among thorns, even the fairest among women. Cant. ii. 2. This happy marriage is not a *mar age*, but it makes a *merry age*, being “the consolation of Israel,” and comfort of Jerusalem’s heart. Indeed, Christ our husband doth absent himself from us in his body for a time; but when he did ascend into heaven he took with him our pawn, namely his flesh; and he gave us his pawn, namely, his Spirit, assuring us that we shall one day, when the world is ended, enter with him into the wedding chamber, and there feast with him, and enjoy his blessed company for evermore.—*John Boys.*

Verse 6.—“There is nothing hid from the heat thereof.”—This is literally the case. The earth receives its heat from the sun, and by conduction, a part of it enters the crust of our globe. By convection, another portion is carried to the atmosphere, which it warms. Another portion is radiated into space, according to laws yet imperfectly understood, but which are evidently connected with the colour, chemical composition, and mechanical structure of parts of the earth’s surface. At the same time the ordinary state of the air, consisting of gases and vapour, modifies the heat rays and prevents scorching. Thus, the solar heat is equalised by the air. Nothing on earth or in air is hid from the heat of the sun. . . . Even the colour of some bodies is changed by heat. . . . Heat also is in bodies in a state which is not sensible, and is therefore called latent heat, or heat of fluidity, because it is regarded as the cause of fluidity in ponderable substances. It can fuse every substance it does not decompose below the melting point, as in the case of wood. Every gas may be regarded as consisting of heat, and some basis of ponderable matter, whose cohesion it overcomes, imparting a tendency to great expansion, when no external obstacle prevents, and this expansive tendency is their elasticity or tension. Certain gases have been liquefied under great pressure, and extreme cold. Heat, also, at certain temperatures, causes the elasticity of vapours to overcome the atmospheric pressure which can no longer restrain them. An example of this is the boiling point of water; and, indeed, in every case the

* The Nineteenth Psalm is one “appointed to be read” on *Christmas Day*.

true instance is the boiling point. Philosophers are agreed that the affinity of heat for any ponderable substance is superior to all other forces acting upon it. No ponderable matters can combine without disengagement of heat. . . . And the same occurs from every mechanical pressure and condensation of a body. In all these cases, and many more, there are like evidences of the presence and influences of heat; but the facts now advanced are sufficient to show us the force of the expression, that in terrestrial things nothing is hid from, or can by any possibility escape the agency of heat.—*Edwin Sidney, A.M., in "Conversations on the Bible and Science," 1866.*

Verse 6 (last clause).—“There is nothing hid from the heat,” nothing from the light of Christ. It is not solely on the mountain top that he shines, as in the days before he was fully risen, when his rays, although unseen by the rest of the world, formed a glory round the heads of his prophets, who saw him while to the chief part of mankind he was still lying below the horizon. Now, however, that he is risen, he pours his light through the valley, as well as over the mountain; nor is there any one, at least in these countries, who does not catch some gleams of that light, except those who burrow and hide themselves in the dark caverns of sin. But it is not light alone that Christ sheds from his heavenly tabernacle. As nothing is hid from his light, neither is anything hid from his heat. He not only enlightens the understanding, so that it shall see and know the truth; he also softens, and melts, and warms the heart, so that it shall love the truth, and calls forth fruit from it, and ripens the fruit he has called forth; and that too on the lowliest plant which creeps along the ground, as well as the loftiest tree. . . .

Though while he was on earth, he had fullest power of bestowing every earthly gift, yet, in order that he should be able to bestow heavenly gifts with the same all-healing power, it was necessary that he should go up into heaven. When he had done so, when he had ascended into *his tabernacle in the heavens*, then, he promises his disciples, he would send down the Holy Spirit of God, who should bring them heavenly gifts, yea, who should enter into their hearts, and make them bring forth all the fruits of the Spirit in abundance; should make them abound in love, in peace, in longsuffering, in gentleness, in goodness, in faith, in meekness, in temperance. These are the bright heavenly rays, which, as it were, make up the pure light of Christ; and *from this heat nothing is hid*. Even the hardest heart may be melted by it; even the foulest may be purified.—*Julius Charles Hare, M.A., 1841.*

Verse 7.—“The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul.” To man fallen, the law only convinceth of sin, and bindeth over to death, it is nothing but a killing letter; but the gospel, accompanied by the power of the Spirit, bringeth life. Again, it is said, “*The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul;*” therefore it seems the law may also be a word of salvation to the creature. I answer; by the law there, is not meant only that part of the word which we call the covenant of works, but there it is put for the whole word, for the whole doctrine of the covenant of life and salvation; as Psalm i. 2: “His delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.” And if you take it in that stricter sense, then it converteth the soul but by accident, as it is joined with the gospel, which is the ministry of life and righteousness, but in itself it is the law of sin and death. Look, as a thing taken simply, would be poison and deadly in itself, yet mixed with other wholesome medicines, it is of great use, is an excellent physical ingredient; so the law is of great use as joined with the gospel, to awaken and startle the sinner, to show him his duty, to convince him of sin and judgment; but it is the gospel properly that pulls in the heart.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 7.—The law, or doctrine, an orderly manner of instruction, an institution or disposition, called in Hebrew torah, which implies both doctrine and an orderly disposition of the same. Therefore where one prophet, relating David’s words, saith the law of man (2 Sam. vii. 19), another saith, the orderly estate, or, course of man. 1 Cor. xvii. 17. The Holy Ghost, in Greek, calls it Nomos, a law (Heb. viii. 10), from Jer. xxxi. 33. This name is most commonly ascribed to the precepts given by Moses at Mount Sinai (Deut. xxxii. 4; Mal. iv. 4; John i. 17, and vii. 19); it is also largely used for all his writings. For the history of Genesis is called law (Gal. iv. 21), from Gen. xvi. And though sometimes the law be distinguished from the Psalms and Prophets (Luke xvi. 16, and xxiv. 24), yet the other prophets’ books are called law (1 Cor. xiv. 21), from Isa. xxviii. 11; the Psalms are also thus named (John x. 24 and xv. 25), from Psalm lxxii. 6 and xxxv. 19. Yea, one Psalm

is called a *law* (Psalm lxxviii. 1); and the many branches of Moses' doctrine as the *law of the sin-offering*, etc., Lev. vi. 25. And generally it is used for any *doctrine*, as the *law of works*, the *law of faith*, etc. Rom. iii. 27.—*Henry Ainsworth*.

Verse 7.—"Converting the soul." This version conveys a sense good and true in itself, but is not in accordance with the design of the Psalmist which is, to express the divine law on the feelings and affections of good men. The Hebrew terms properly mean, "bringing back the spirit," when it is depressed by adversity, by refreshing and consoling it: like food, it restores the faint, and communicates vigour to the disconsolate.—*William Walford*, 1837.

Verse 7.—"Converting the soul." The heart of man is the most free and hard of anything to work upon, and to make an impression and stamp upon this hard heart, this heart that is so stony, adamantine, "harder than the nether millstones," as the Scripture teacheth. To compel this free-will, this *Domina sui actus*, the queen in the soul, the empress, it cannot be without a divine power, without a hand that is omnipotent; but the ministers do this by the Word—they mollify, and wound, and break this heart, they incline, and bow, and draw this free-will whither the spirit listeth. And Clemens Alexandrinus is not afraid to say, that if the fables of Orpheus and Amphion were true—that they drew birds, beasts, and stones, with their ravishing melody—yet the harmony of the Word is greater, which translates men from Helicon to Zion, which softens the hard heart of man obdurate against the truth, that "raises up children to Abraham of stones," that is (as he interprets), of unbelievers, which he calls stocks and stones, that put their trust in stones and stocks; which metamorphoses men that are beastlike, wild birds for their lightness and vanity, serpents for their craft and subtlety, lions for their wrath and cruelty, swine for voluptuousness and luxury, etc.; and charms them so that of wild beasts they become tame men; that makes living stones (as he did others) come of their own accord to the building of the walls of Jerusalem (as he of Thebes), to the building of a living temple to the everliving God. This must needs be a truly persuasive charm, as he speaks.—*John Stoughton's "Choice Sermons,"* 1640.

Verse 7.—"Making wise the simple." The apostle Paul in Eph. i. 8, expresseth conversion, and the whole work inherently wrought in us, by the making of a man wise. It is usual in the Scriptures, and you may oftentimes meet with it: "converting the soul," "making wise the simple." The beginning of conversion, and so all along, the increase of all grace to the end, is expressed by wisdom entering into a man's heart. "If wisdom enter into thy heart," and so goes on to do more and more; not unto thy head only—a man may have all that, and be a fool in the end, but when it entereth into the heart, and draws all the affections after it, and along with it, "when knowledge is pleasant to thy soul," then a man is converted; when God breaks open a man's heart, and makes wisdom fall in, enter in, and make a man wise.—*Thomas Goodwin*.

Verse 7.—This verse, and the two next following, which treat of God's law, are in Hebrew, written each of them with ten words, according to the number of the ten commandments, which are called the ten words. Exodus xxxiv. 28.—*Henry Ainsworth*.

Verse 7, 8.—"The testimony of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes," revealing the object, ennobling the organ.—*Richard Stock*.

Verses 7—11.—All of us are by nature the children of wrath; our souls are like the *porches* of Bethesda (John v.), in which are lodged a great many "sick folk, blind, halt, withered;" and the Scriptures are like the *pool* of Bethesda, into which whosoever entereth, after God's Holy Spirit hath a little stirred the water, is "made whole of whatsoever disease he hath." He that hath anger's frenzy, being as furious as a lion, by stepping into this pool shall in good time become as gentle as a lamb; he that hath the blindness of intemperance, by washing in this pool shall easily see his folly; he that hath envy's rust, avarice's leprosy, luxury's palsy, shall have means and medicines here for the curing of his maladies. *The word of God* is like the drug *catholicon*, that is instead of all purges; and like the herb *panaces*, that is good for all diseases. Is any man heavy? *the statutes of the Lord rejoice the heart*: is any man in want? *the judgments of the Lord are more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold, and by keeping of them there is great reward*: is any man ignorant? *the testimonies of the Lord give wisdom to the simple*, that is, to little ones, both in standing and understanding. In standing, as unto little Daniel, little John the evangelist, little Timothy: to little ones in under-

standing; for the great philosophers who were the wizards of the world, because they were not acquainted with God's law became fools while they professed themselves wise. Rom. i. 22. But our prophet saith, "I have more understanding than all my teachers, because thy testimonies are my meditation," and my study. Psalm cxix. 99. To conclude, whatsoever we are by corruption of nature, God's law *converteth* us, and maketh us to speak with new tongues, and to sing new songs unto the Lord, and to become new men and new creatures in Christ. 2 Cor. v. 17.—*J. Boys.*

Verse 8.—"The statutes." Many divines and critics, and Castalio in particular, have endeavoured to attach a distinct shade of meaning to the words, *law, testimony, the statutes, commandments, fear, judgments*, occurring in this context. *הנהיגה*, the law, has been considered to denote the preceptive part of revelation. *עדות*, the testimony, has been restricted to the doctrinal part. *סופרים*, the statutes, has been regarded as relating to such things as have been given in charge. *הקנה*, the commandment, has been taken to express the general body of the divine law and doctrine. *היראה*, religious fear. *הדין*, the judgments, the civil statutes of the Mosaic law, more particularly the penal sanctions.—*John Morison.*

Verse 8.—"The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart." How odious is the profaneness of those Christians who neglect the Holy Scriptures, and give themselves to reading other books! How many precious hours do many spend, and that not only on work days, but holy days, in foolish romances, fabulous histories, lascivious poems! And why this, but that they may be cheered and delighted, when as full joy is only to be had in these holy books. Alas! the joy you find in those writings is perhaps pernicious, such as tickleth your lust, and promoteth contemplative wickedness. At the best it is but vain, such as only pleaseth the fancy and affecteth the wit; whereas these holy writings (to use David's expression), are "*right, rejoicing the heart.*" Again, are there not many who more set by Plutarch's morals, Seneca's epistles, and such like books, than they do by the Holy Scriptures? It is true, Beloved, there are excellent truths in those moral writings of the heathen, but yet they are far short of these sacred books. Those may comfort against outward trouble, but not against inward fears; they may rejoice the mind, but cannot quiet the conscience; they may kindle some flashy sparkles of joy, but they cannot warm the soul with a lasting fire of solid consolations. And truly, brethren, if ever God give you a spiritual ear to judge of things aright, you will then acknowledge there are no bells like to those of Aaron's, no harp like to that of David's, no trumpet like to that of Isaiah's, no pipes like to those of the apostle's; and, you will confess with Petrus Damianus, that those writings of heathen orators, philosophers, poets, which formerly were so pleasing, are now dull and harsh in comparison of the comfort of the Scriptures.—*Nathanael Hardy, D.D., 1618—1670.*

Verse 10.—"Sweeter than honey and the honeycomb." Love the word written. Psa. cxix. 97. "Oh, how love I thy law!" "Lord," said Augustine, "let the Holy Scriptures be my chaste delight." Chrysostom compares the Scripture to a garden, every truth is a fragrant flower, which we should wear, not on our bosom, but in our heart. David counted the word "*sweeter than honey and the honeycomb.*" There is that in Scripture which may breed delight. It shows us the way to riches: Deut. xxviii. 5, Prov. iii. 10; to long life: Psa. xxxiv. 12; to a kingdom: Heb. xii. 28. Well, then, may we count those the *sweetest hours* which are spent in reading the holy Scriptures; well may we say with the prophet (Jer. xv. 16), "Thy words were found and I did eat them; and they were the joy and rejoicing of my heart."—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 10.—"Sweeter than honey and the honeycomb." There is no difference made amongst us between the delicacy of honey in the comb and that which is separated from it. From the information of Dr. Halle, concerning the diet of the Moors of Barbary, we learn that they esteem honey a very wholesome breakfast, "and the most delicious that which is in the comb with the young bees in it, before they come out of their cases, whilst they still look milk-white." (*Miscellanea Curiosa*, vol. iii. p. 382.) The distinction made by the Psalmist is then perfectly just and conformable to custom and practice, at least of more modern, and probably, equally so of ancient times.—*Samuel Burder, A.M., in "Oriental Customs," 1812.*

Verse 11.—“*Moreover by them is thy servant warned.*” A certain Jew had formed a design to poison Luther, but was disappointed by a faithful friend, who sent Luther a portrait of the man, with a warning against him. By this, Luther knew the murderer and escaped his hands. Thus the word of God, O Christian, shows thee the face of those lusts which Satan employs to destroy thy comforts and poison thy soul.—G. S. Bowes, B.A., in “*Illustrative Gatherings for Preachers and Teachers,*” 1860.

Verse 11.—“*In keeping of them there is great reward.*” This “*keeping of them*” implies great carefulness to know, to remember, and to observe; and the “*reward*” (lit. “*the end*”), i.e., the recompense, is far beyond anticipation.—W. Wilson.

Verse 11.—“*In keeping of them there is great reward.*” Not only for keeping, but in keeping of them, there is great reward. The joy, the rest, the refreshing, the comforts, the contents, the smiles, the incomes that saints now enjoy, in the ways of God, are so precious and glorious in their eyes, that they would not exchange them for ten thousands worlds. Oh! if the veils,* be thus sweet and glorious before pay-day comes, what will be that glory that Christ will crown his saints with for cleaving to his service in the face of all difficulties, when he shall say to his Father, “*Lo, here am I, and the children which thou hast given me.*” Isa. viii. 18. If there be so much to be had in the wilderness, what then shall be had in paradise!—Thomas Brooks.

Verse 11.—“*In keeping of them there is great reward.*” Not only for keeping but in keeping of them. As every flower hath its sweet smell, so every good action hath its sweet reflection upon the soul: and as Cardan saith, that every precious stone hath some egregious virtue; so here, righteousness is its own reward, though few men think so, and act accordingly. Howbeit, the chief reward is not till the last cast, till we come to heaven. The word here rendered “*reward,*” signifieth *the heel*, and by a metaphor, the *end* of a work, and the *reward* of it, which is not till the end.—John Trapp.

Verse 11.—“*Reward.*” Though we should not serve God for a reward, yet we shall have a reward for our service. The time is coming when ungodliness shall be as much prosecuted by justice, as in times past godliness had been persecuted by injustice. Though our reward be not for our good works, yet we shall have our good works rewarded, and have a good reward for our works. Though the best of men (they being at the best but unprofitable servants) deserve nothing at the hands of God, yet they may deserve much at the hands of men; and if they have not the recompense they deserve, yet it is a kind of recompense to have deserved. As he said, and nobly, “*I had rather it should be said, Why doth not Cato’s image stand here? than that it should be said, Why doth it stand here?*” —Ralph Venning. 1620—1673.

Verse 12.—“*Who can understand his errors?*” After this survey of the works and word of God, he comes at last to peruse the third book, his *conscience*; a book which though wicked men may keep shut up, and naturally do not love to look in to it, yet will one day be laid open before the great tribunal in the view of the whole world, to the justifying of God when he judges, and to impenitent sinners’ eternal confusion. And what finds he here? A foul, blurred copy that he is puzzled how to read; “*who,*” says he, “*can understand his errors?*” Those notions which God had with his own hand imprinted upon conscience in legible characters, are partly defaced and slurred with scribble and interlinings of “*secret faults*,” partly obliterated and quite razed out with capital crimes, “*presumptuous sins.*” And yet this *manuscript* cannot be so abused, but it will still give in evidence for God; there being no argument in the world that can with more force extort an acknowledgment of God from any man’s conscience than the conviction of guilt itself labours under. For the sinner cannot but know he has transgressed a law, and he finds within him, if he is not past all sense, such apprehensions that though at present he “*walk in the ways of his heart and in the sight of his eyes*” (as the wise man ironically advises the young man to do, Ecc. xi. 9), yet he knows (as the same wise man there from his own experience tells him) that “*for all these things God will bring him into judgment.*” The *conscience* being thus convicted of sin, where there is any sense of true piety the soul will, with David, here address itself to God for pardon, that it may be “*cleansed from secret faults*,” and for grace, that by its restraints, and

* Gratuities, presents.

preventions, and assistances, it may be "*kept back from presumptuous sins,*" and if unhappily engaged, that it may be freed at least from the "*dominion*" of them—"*Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me,*" etc.—*Adam Littleton.*

Verse 12.—The prophet saith, "*Who can understand his own faults?*" No man can, but God can; therefore reason after this manner, as Saint Bernard saith: I know and am known; I know but in part, but God knows me and knows me wholly; but what I know, I know but in part. So the apostle reasons; "I know nothing of myself, yet am I not hereby justified."

Admit that thou keepest thyself so free, and renewest thy repentance so daily that thou knowest nothing by thyself, yet mark what the apostle adds farther; "Notwithstanding, I do not judge myself I am not hereby justified, but he that judgeth me is the Lord." This is the condition of all men; he that is infinite knows them; therefore they should not dare to judge themselves, but with the prophet David, in Psalm xix., entreat the Lord that he would cleanse them from their secret sins.—*Richard Stock.*

Verse 12.—"Who can understand his own errors?" None can to the depth and bottom. In this question there are two considerables:—1. A concession; 2. A confession. He makes a grant that *our life is full of errors*; and the Scriptures say the same, while they affirm that "All we like sheep have gone astray" (Isa. liii. 6); "I have gone astray like a lost sheep" (Psa. cxix. 176); that the "house of Israel" hath "lost sheep," Matt. x. 6. I need not reckon up the particulars, as the errors of our senses, understandings, consciences, judgments, wills, affections, desires, actions, and occurrences. The whole man *in nature* is like a tree nipped at root, which brings forth worm-eaten fruits. The whole man *in life* is like an instrument out of tune, which jars at every stroke. If we cannot understand them, certainly they are very many.—*Robert Abbot, 1646.*

Verse 12.—"Who can understand his errors?" If a man repent not until he have made confession of all his sins in the ear of his ghostly father, if a man cannot have absolution of his sins until his sins be told by tale and number in the priest's ear; in that, as David saith, *none* can understand, much less, then, utter all his sins: *Delicta quis intelligat?* "*Who can understand his sins?*" In that David of himself complaineth elsewhere how that his "sins are overflowed his head, and as a heavy burden do depress him" (Psa. xxxviii. 4); alas! shall not a man by this doctrine be utterly driven from repentance? Though they have gone about something to make plasters for their sores, of confession or attrition to assuage their pain, bidding a man to hope well of his contrition, though it be not so full as is required, and of his confession, though he have not numbered all his sins, if so be that he do so much as in him lieth; dearly beloved, in that there is none but that herein he is guilty (for who doth as much as he may?) trow ye that this plaster is not like salt for sore eyes? Yes, undoubtedly, when they have done all they can for the appeasing of consciences in these points, this is the sum, that we yet should hope well, but yet so hope that we must stand in a mammering* and doubting whether our sins be forgiven. For to believe *remissionem peccatorum*, that is to be certain of "forgiveness of sins," as our creed teacheth us, they count it a presumption. Oh, abomination! and that not only herein, but in all their penance as they paint it.—*John Bradford (Martyr) 1510—1555.*

Verse 12.—"Who can understand his errors?" By "*errors*" he means his unwitting and inconsiderate mistakes. There are sins, some of which are committed when the sun shines—*i.e.*, with light and knowledge; and then, as it is with colours when the sun shines, you may see them; so these, a man can see, and know, and confess them particularly to be transgressions. There are other sins which are committed either in the times of ignorance, or else (if there be knowledge), yet with unobservance. Either of these may be so heaped up in the particular number of them, that as a man did when he did commit them, take no notice of them; so now, after the commission, if he should take the brightest candle to search all the records of his soul, yet many of them would escape his notice. And, indeed, this is a great part of our misery, that we cannot understand all our debts. We can easily see too many, yet many more lie, as it were, dead and out of sight. To sin is one great misery, and then to forget our sins is a misery too. If in repentance we could set the battle in array, point to every individual sin in the true and

* Hesitating.

particular times of acting and re-acting, oh, how would our hearts be more broken with shame and sorrow, and how would we adore the richness of the treasure of mercy which must have a multitude in it to pardon the multitude of our infinite errors and sins. But this is the comfort; though we cannot understand every particular sin, or time of sinning, yet if we be not idle to search and cast over the books, and if we be heartily grieved for these sins which we have found out, and can by true repentance turn from them unto God, and by faith unto the blood of Jesus Christ, I say that God, who knows our sins better than we can know them, and who understands the true intentions and dispositions of the heart—that if it did see the unknown sins it would be answerably carried against them—he will for his own mercy sake forgive them, and he, too, will not remember them. Nevertheless, though David saith, “*Who can understand his errors?*” as the prophet Jeremiah spake also, “*The heart of man is desperately wicked, who can know it?*” yet must we bestir ourselves at heaven to get more and more heavenly light, to find out more and more of our sinnings. So the Lord can search the heart; and, though we shall never be able to find out all our sins which we have committed, yet it is proper and beneficial for us to find out yet more sins than yet we do know. And you shall find these in your own experience; that as soon as ever grace entered your hearts, you saw sin in another way than you ever saw it before; yea, and the more grace hath traversed and increased in the soul the more full discoveries hath it made of sins. It hath shown new sins as it were; new sins, not for their being, not as if they were not in the heart and life before, but for their evidence and our apprehension. We do now see such wages and such inclinations to be sinful which we did not think to be so before. As physic brings those humours which had their residence before now more to the sense of the patient, or as the sun makes open the motes of dust which were in the room before, so doth the light of the word discover more corruption.—*Obadiah Sedgwick.*

Verse 12.—“*Who can understand his errors?*” Who can tell how oft he offendeth? No man. The hairs of a man’s head may be told, the stars appear in multitudes, yet some have undertaken to reckon them; but no arithmetic can number our sins. Before we can recount a thousand we shall commit ten thousand more; and so rather multiply by addition than divide by subtraction; there is no possibility of numeration. Like Hydra’s head, while we are cutting off twenty by repentance, we find a hundred more grown up. It is just, then, that infinite sorrows shall follow infinite sins.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 12.—“*Cleanse thou me from secret faults.*” It is the desire of a holy person to be cleansed, not only from public, but also from *private and secret sins*. Rom. vii. 24. “*O wretched man (saith Paul), who shall deliver me?*” Why, O blessed apostle! what is it that holds thee? What is it that molests thee? Thy life, thou sayest, was unblamable before thy conversion, and since thy conversion. Phil. iii. Thou hast exercised thyself to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men. Acts xxiv. 16. And yet thou criest out, “*O wretched man,*” and yet thou complainest, “*Who shall deliver me?*” Verily, brethren, it was not sin abroad, but at home: it was not sin without, but at this time sin within; it was not Paul’s sinning with man, but Paul’s sinning within Paul: oh! that “*law of his members warring (secretly within him) against the law of his mind;*” this, this made that holy man so to cry out, so to complain. As Rebekah was weary of her life, not as we read for any foreign disquietments, but because of domestic troubles: “*The daughters of Heth*” within the house made her “*weary of her life;*” so the private and secret birth of corruption within Paul—the workings of that—that was the cause of his trouble, that was the ground of his exclamation and desires, “*Who shall deliver me?*” I remember that the same Paul adviseth the Ephesians as “*to put off the former conversation*” so “*to put on the renewed spirit of the mind*” (Eph. iv. 22, 23); intimating that there are sins lurking within as well as sins walking without; and that true Christians must not only sweep the door, but wash the chamber; my meaning is, not only come off from sins which lie open in the conversation, but also labour to be cleansed from sins and sinning which remain secret and hidden in the spirit and inward disposition.—*Obadiah Sedgwick.*

Verse 12.—“*Cleanse thou me from secret faults.*” Learn to see thy spots. Many have unknown sins, as a man may have a mole on his back and himself never know it. Lord, cleanse me from my secret faults. But have we not spots whereof we are not ignorant? In diseases sometimes nature is strong enough to put forth

spots, and there she cries to us by these outward declarations that we are sick. Sometimes she cannot do it but by the force of cordials. Sometimes conscience of herself shows us our sins; sometimes she cannot but by medicines, arguments that convince us out of the holy word. Some can see, and will not, as Balaam; some would see, and cannot, as the eunuch; some neither will nor can, as Pharaoh; some both can and will, as David. . . . We have many spots which God does not hear from us, because we see them not in ourselves. Who will acknowledge that error, whereof he does not know himself guilty? The sight of sins is a great happiness, for it causeth an ingenuous confession.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 12.—“*Cleanse thou me from secret faults.*”—The law of the Lord is so holy that forgiveness must be prayed for, even for hidden sins. (*Note*—This was a principal text of the Reformers against the auricular confession of the Roman Catholics.)—*T. C. Barth's "Bible Manual," 1865.*

Verse 12.—“*Secret faults.*” Sins may be termed “*secret*” either, 1. *When they are coloured and disguised*—though they do fly abroad, yet not under that name, but apparelled with some semblance of virtues. Cyprian complains of such tricks in his second epistle, which is to Donatus. 2. *When they are kept off from the stage of the world*; they are like fire in the chimney; though you do not see it, yet it burns. So many a person, like those in Ezekiel, “*commit abominations in secret*”—that is, so as the public eye is not upon them. He is sinful, and acts it with the greatest vileness; all the difference betwixt another sinner and him is this—that he is, and the other saith he is, a sinner. Just as ‘twixt a book shut and a book opened; that which is shut hath the same lines and words, but the other being opened every man may see and read them. 3. *When they are kept, not only from the public eye, but from any mortal eye*; that is, the carnal eye of him who commits the sins sees them not: he doth, indeed, see them with the eye of conscience, but not with an eye of natural sense. Even those persons with whom he doth converse, and who highly commend the frame of his ways, cannot yet see the secret discourings and actings of sin in his mind and heart. For, brethren, all the actings of sin are not without, they are not visible; but there are some, yea, the most dangerous actings within the soul, where corruption lies as a fountain and root. The heart of man is a scheme of wickedness; nay, a man saith that in his heart which he dares not speak with his tongue, and his thought will do that which his hands dare not to execute. Well, then, sin may be called “*secret*” when it is sin, and acted as sin, even there, where none but God and conscience can see. Methinks sin is like a candle in a lantern, where the shining is first within and then bursting out at the windows; or like evils and ulcerous humours, which are scabs and scurvy stuff, first within the skin, and afterwards they break out to the view on the outside. So it is with sin; it is a malignant humour and a fretting leprosy, diffusing itself into several secret acts and workings within the mind, and then it breaks abroad and dares adventure the practice of itself to the eye of the world; and be it that it may never see the light, that it may be like a child born and buried in the womb, yet as that child is a man, a true man there closeted in that hidden frame of nature, so sin is truly sin, though it never gets out beyond the womb which did conceive and enliven it.—*Obadiah Sedgwick.*

Verse 12.—“*Secret faults.*” “*Secret sins*” are more dangerous to the person in some respects than open sins. For a man doth, by his art of sinning, deprive himself of the help of his sinfulness. Like him who will carry his wound covered, or who bleeds inwardly, help comes not in because the danger is not described nor known. If a man’s sin breaks out there is a minister at hand, a friend near, and others to reprove, to warn, to direct; but when he is the artificer of his lusts, he bars himself of all public remedy, and takes great order and care to damn his soul, by covering his “*secret sins*” with some plausible varnish which may beget a good opinion in others of his ways. A man does by his secrecy give the reins unto corruption: the mind is fed all the day long either with sinful contemplations or projectings, so that the very strength of the soul is wasted and corrupted. Nay, *secret actings do but heat and inflame natural corruption.* As in shouldering in a crowd, when one hath got out of the door, two or three are ready to fall out after; so when a man hath given his heart leave to act a secret sin, this begets a present, and quick, and strong flame in corruption to repeat and multiply and throng out the acts. Sinful acts are not only fruits of sin, but helps and strengths, all sinning being more sinful by more sinning, not only in the effects but in the cause: the spring and cause of sin will grow mad and insolent hereby, and more corrupt; this being a

truth, that if the heart gives way for one sin, it will be ready for the next; if it will yield to bring forth once at the devil's pleasure, it will bring it forth twice by its own motion. A man by "*secret sins*" doth but polish and square the hypocrisy of his heart: he doth strive to be an exact hypocrite; and the more cunning he is in the palliating of his sinnings, the more perfect he is in his hypocrisy.—*Obadiah Sedgwick*.

Verse 12.—"Secret faults." Beware of committing acts which it will be necessary to conceal. There is a singular poem by Hood, called "The Dream of Eugene Aram"—a most remarkable piece it is indeed, illustrating the point on which we are now dwelling. Aram had murdered a man, and cast his body into the river—"a sluggish water, black as ink, the depth was so extreme." The next morning he visited the scene of his guilt—

" And sought the black accursed pool,
With a wild misgiving eye;
And he saw the dead in the river bed,
For the faithless stream was dry."

Next he covered the corpse with heaps of leaves, but a mighty wind swept through the wood and left the secret bare before the sun—

" Then down I cast me on my face,
And first began to weep,
For I knew my secret then was one
That earth refused to keep;
On land or sea though it should be
Ten thousand fathoms deep."

In plaintive notes he prophesies his own discovery. He buried his victim in a cave, and trod him down with stones, but when years had run their weary round, the fool deed was discovered and the murderer put to death.

Guilt is a "grim chamberlain," even when his fingers are not bloody red. Secret sins bring fevered eyes and sleepless nights, until men burn out their consciences, and become in very deed ripe for the pit. Hypocrisy is a hard game to play at, for it is one deceiver against many observers; and for certain it is a miserable trade, which will earn at last, as its certain climax, a tremendous bankruptcy. Ah! ye who have sinned without discovery, "Be sure your sin will find you out;" and bethink you, it may find you out ere long. Sin, like murder, will come out; men will even tell tales about themselves in their dreams. God has made men to be so wretched in their consciences that they have been obliged to stand forth and confess the truth. Secret sinner! if thou wantest the foretaste of damnation upon earth, continue in thy secret sins; for no man is more miserable than he who sinneth secretly, and yet trieth to preserve a character. Yon stag, followed by the hungry hounds, with open mouths, is far more happy than the man who is pursued by his sins. Yon bird, taken in the fowler's net, and labouring to escape, is far more happy than he who hath weaved around himself a web of deception, and labours to escape from it, day by day making the toils more thick and the web more strong. Oh the misery of secret sins! One may well pray, "Cleanse thou me from secret faults."—*Spurgeon's Sermon* (No. 116), on "Secret Sins."

Verse 12.—The sin through ignorance (חטא) is the same that David prays against in Psalm xix. 12, "Who can understand his errors (חטאיו)? cleanse thou me from secret things!" These are not sins of omission, but acts committed by a person, when at the time, he did not suppose that what he did was sin. Although he did the thing deliberately, yet he did not perceive the sin of it. So deceitful is sin, we may be committing that abominable thing which cast angels into an immediate and an eternal hell, and yet at the moment be totally unaware! Want of knowledge of the truth, and too little tenderness of conscience to hide it from us. Hardness of heart and a corrupt nature cause us to sin unperceived. But here again the form of the Son of Man appears! Jehovah, God of Israel, institutes sacrifice for sins of ignorance, and thereby discovers the same compassionate and considerate heart that appears in our High Priest, "who can have compassion on the ignorant!" Heb. v. 2. Amidst the types of this tabernacle, we recognise the presence of Jesus—it is his voice that shakes the curtains, and speaks in the ear of Moses, "If a soul shall sin through ignorance!" The same yesterday, to-day, and for ever!—*Andrew A. Bonar*, in "*Commentary on Leviticus*," ch. iv. v. 2.

Verse 12 (last clause).—This is a singular difference between pharisaical and real sanctity : that is curious to look abroad, but seeth nothing at home : so that Pharisee condemned the Publican, and saw nothing in himself worthy of blame ; but this careful to look at home, and searcheth into the secret corners, the very spirit of the mind. So did good David when he prayed, “*Cleanse thou me from secret faults.*” — Nathanael Hardy.

Verse 12.—Our corruptions have made us such combustible matter, that there is scarce a dart thrown at us in vain : when Satan tempts us, it is but like the casting of fire into tinder, that presently catcheth : our hearts kindle upon the least spark that falls ; as a vessel that is brimful of water, upon the least jog, runs over. Were we but true to ourselves, though the devil might knock by his temptations, yet he could never burst open the everlasting doors of our hearts by force or violence : but, alas ! we ourselves are not all of one heart and one mind : Satan hath got a strong party within us, that, as soon as he knocks, opens to him, and entertains him. And hence it is, that many times, small temptations and very petty occasions draw forth great corruptions ; as a vessel, that is full of new liquor, upon the least vent given, works over into foam and froth ; so truly, our hearts, almost upon every slight and trivial temptation, make that inbred corruption that lodgeth there, swell and boil, and run over into abundance of scum and filth in our lives and conversations.—Ezekiel Hopkins.

Verse 12.—Sins are many times hid from the godly man’s eye, though he commits them, because he is not diligent and accurate in making a search of himself, and in an impartial studying of his own ways. If any sin be hid, as Saul was behind the stuff, or as Rahab had hid the spies, unless a man be very careful to search, he shall think no sin is there where it is. Hence it is that the Scripture doth so often command that duty of *searching* and *trying*, of examining and communing with our hearts. Now what need were there of this duty, but that it is supposed many secrets and subtle lusts lie lurking in our hearts, which we take no notice of ? If then the godly would find out their hidden lusts, know the sins they not yet know, they must more impartially judge themselves ; they must take time to survey and examine themselves ; they must not in an overly and slight manner, but really and industriously look up and down as they would search for thieves ; and they must again and again look into this dark corner, and that dark corner of their hearts, as the woman sought for the lost goat. This self-scrutiny and self-judging, this winnowing and sifting of ourselves, is the only way to see what is chaff and what is wheat, what is mere refuse and what is enduring.—Anthony Burgess.

Verse 12.—Sin is of a growing and advancing nature. From weakness to wilfulness, from ignorance to presumption, is its ordinary course and progress. The cloud that Elijah’s man saw, was at first no bigger than a hand’s-breadth, and it threatened no such thing as a general tempest ; but yet, at last, it overspread the face of the whole heavens ; so truly, a sin that at first ariseth in the soul but as a small mist, and is scarcely discernible ; yet, if it be not scattered by the breath of prayer, it will at length overspread the whole life, and become most tempestuous and raging. And therefore, David, as one experienced in the deceitfulness of sin, doth thus digest and methodise his prayer : first against secret and lesser sins ; and then against the more gross and notorious ; as knowing the one proceeds and issues from the other : Lord, *cleanse me from my secret faults* ; and this will be a most effectual means to preserve and *keep thy servant from presumptuous sins.*—Ezekiel Hopkins.

Verses 12, 13.—That there is a difference betwixt *infirmities* and *presumptuous sins* is not to be denied ; it is expressly in the Holy Scripture. Papists say that the man who doth a mortal sin is not in the state of grace ; but for venials, a man may commit (in their divinity) who can tell how many of them, and yet be in Christ for all that ! I hope there is no such meaning in any of our divines as to tie up men’s consciences, to hang on such a distinction of sins ; since it is beyond the wit of man to set down a distinct point between mortal and venial sins. Now when it is an impossible matter punctually to set down to the understanding of man which is, and which is not a venial sin, they must pardon me for giving the least way to such divinity as must needs leave the conscience of a man in a maze and labyrinth. I find that the nature of infirmities doth so depend upon circumstances, that that is an infirmity in one man which is a gross sin in another ; and some men plead for themselves that the things they do are but infirmities. He that *will* sin, and when he hath done will say—not to comfort his soul against Satan, but—

to flatter himself in his sin, that it is but an infirmity; for aught I know, he may go to hell for his infirmities. Besides, if that be good divinity, that a man who is in the state of grace may do infirmities, but not commit gross sins, then I would I could see a man that would undertake to find us out some rule out of the word, by which a sinner may find by his sin, when he is in Christ and when out of Christ; at what degrees of sinning—where lies the mathematical point and stop—that a man may say, “Thus far may I go and yet be in grace; but if I step a step farther, then I am none of Christ’s.” We all know that sins have their latitude; and for a man to hang his conscience on such a distinction as hath no rule to define where the difference lies, is not safe divinity. The conscience on the rack will not be laid and said with forms and quiddities. The best and nearest way to quiet the heart of man is to say, that be the sin a sin of *infirmity* when we strive and strive but yield at last; or, of *precipitancy*, when we be taken in haste, as he was who said in his haste, “All men are liars;” or, a mere *gross* sin in the matter: ay, say it be a *presumptuous* sin, yet if we allow it not, it hinders not but we are in Christ, though we do with reluctance act and commit it. And I say that we do resist it if we do not allow it. For let us not go about to deny that a godly man during his being a godly man may possibly commit *gross* and *presumptuous* sins; and for infirmities, if we allow them and like them that we know to be sins, then we do not resist them; and such a man who allows himself in one is guilty of all, and is none of Christ’s as yet. Be the sin what it will, James makes no distinction; and, where the law distinguisheth not, we must not distinguish. I speak not of *doing* a sin, but *allowing*; for a man may do it, and yet allow it not; as in Paul (Rom. vii. 15, 16), “That which I would not, that I do;” and he that allows not sin doth resist it. Therefore, a man may resist it, hate it, and yet do it. All the difference that I know is this: 1. That a man may live after his conversion all his days, and yet never fall into a gross sin. By gross here I mean *presumptuous* sins also. So David saith not “*cleanse*,” but *KEEP BACK thy servant from presumptuous sins.*” We may, then, be *kept* from them. I speak not that all are, but some be; and, therefore, in itself all might be. 2. For lesser sins, “*secret faults*,” we cannot live without them—they are of daily and almost hourly incursions; but yet we must be *cleansed* from them, as David speaks. Daily get your pardon; there is a pardon, of course, for them; they do not usually distract and plague the conscience, but yet we must not see them and allow them; if we do our case is to be pitied, we are none of Christ’s as yet. 3. Great staring sins a man cannot usually and commonly practise them, but he shall allow them. So Psalm xix. 13, “*Keep back thy servant from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me,*” implying that except we be kept back from them they will have dominion over us. It follows, “*then shall I be upright;*” so that the man in whom *gross* or *presumptuous* sin or sins have no dominion, he is an *upright man*.—Richard Capel.

Verses 12, 13.—The Psalmist was sensible of sin’s force and power; he was weary of sin’s dominion; he cries unto God to deliver him from the reign of all the sins he knew; and those sins which were secret and concealed from his view, he begs that he might be convinced of them, and thoroughly cleansed from them. The Lord can turn the heart perfectly to hate the sin that was most of all beloved; and the strength of sin is gone when once ’tis hated; and as the hatred grows stronger and stronger, sin becomes weaker and weaker daily.—Nathaniel Vincent, 1695.

Verse 13.—“*Keep back thy servant also from all presumptuous sins.*” He doth desire absolutely to be kept from “*presumptuous sins*;” but then, he adds by way of supposition and reserve, that if he could not by reason of his naughty heart be kept from them, yet that they might not have full power and dominion over him.—Thomas Manton.

Verse 13.—“*Keep back thy servant.*” It is an evil man’s cross to be restrained, and a good man’s joy to be kept back from sin. When sin puts forth itself, the evil man is putting forth his hand to the sin; but when sin puts forth itself, the good man is putting forth his hand to heaven; if he finds his heart yielding, out he cries, *O keep back thy servant*. An evil man is kept back from sin, as a friend from a friend, as a lover from his lover, with knit affections and projects of meeting; but a good man is kept back from sin, as a man from his deadly enemy, whose presence he hates, and with desires of his ruin and destruction. It is the good man’s misery that he hath yet a heart to be more tamed and mastered; it is an evil man’s vexation and discontent, that still, or at any time, he is held in by cord or bridle. And

thus you see what David aims at in desiring to be *kept back from presumptuous sins*, namely, not a mere suspension, but a mortification, not a not acting only, but a subduing of the inclination; not for a time, but for ever.—*Obadiah Sedgwick.*

Verse 13.—“*Keep back thy servant,*” etc. Even all the people of God, were they not kept by God’s grace and power, they would every moment be undone both in soul and body. It is not our grace, our prayer, our watchfulness keeps us, but it is the power of God, his right arm, supports us; we may see David praying to God that he would “*keep*” him in both these respects from temporal dangers (Psalm xvii. 8, 9; “*keep me,*”) etc.; where he doth not only pray to be kept, but he doth insinuate how carefully God keeps his people, and in what precious account their safety is, even as “*the apple of the eye,*” and for spiritual preservation he often begs it. Though David be God’s “*servant*” yet he will, like a wild horse, run violently, and that into “*presumptuous sins,*” if God “*keep*” him not “*back,*” yea, he prayeth that God would “*keep*” the particular parts of his body that they sin not: “*keep the door of my lips*” (Psalm cxli. 3); he entreateth God to “*keep*” his lips and to set a watch about his mouth, as if he were not able to set guard sure enough: thus much more are we to pray that God would “*keep*” our hearts, our minds, our wills, our affections, for they are more masterful.—*Anthony Burgess.*

Verse 13.—“*Keep back thy servant.*” God keeps back his servants from sin 1. *By preventing grace*, which is, by infusing such a nature as is like a bias into a bowl, drawing it aside another way; 2. *By assisting grace*, which is a further strength superadded to that first-implanted nature of holiness; like a hand upon a child holding him in; 3. *By quickening grace*, which is, when God doth enliven our graces to manifest themselves in actual opposition; so that the soul shall not yield, but keep off from entertaining the sin; 4. *By directing grace*, which is, when God confers that effectual wisdom to the mind, tenderness to the conscience, watchfulness to the heart, that his servants become greatly solicitous of his honour, scrupulously jealous of their own strength, and justly regardful of the honour of their holy profession; 5. *By doing grace*, which is, when God effectually inclines the hearts of his servants to the places and ways of their refuge, safeties, and preservation from sin, by enlarging the spirit of supplication, and framing the heart to the reverent and affectionate use of his ordinances.—*Condensed from Obadiah Sedgwick.*

Verse 13.—“*Thy servant:*” as if he had said, “O God, thou art my Lord, I have chosen thee, to whom I will give obedience; thou art he whom I will follow; I bestow all that I am on thee. Now a Lord will help his servant against an enemy, who for the Lord’s service is the servant’s enemy. O my Lord, help me! I am not able by my own strength to uphold myself, but thou art All-sufficiency”—“*Keep back thy servant from presumptuous sins.*” . . . Beloved, it is a great thing to stand in near relations to God; and then it is a good thing to plead by them with God, forso much as nearer relations have strongest force with all. The servant can do more than a stranger, and the child than a servant, and the wife than a child. . . . There be many reasons against sinning. . . . Now this also may come in, namely, the speciality of our relation to God, that we are his children, and he is our Father; we are his servants, and he is our Lord: though the common obligations are many and sufficient, yet the special relations are also a further tie: the more near a person come to God, the more careful he should be not to sin against God.—*Obadiah Sedgwick.*

Verse 13.—“*Presumptuous sins.*” The Rabbins distinguish all sins unto those committed *בטוה* ignorantly, and *בזדון* presumptuously.—*Benjamin Kennicott, D.D., 1718—1783.*

Verse 13.—“*Presumptuous sins.*” When sin grows up from act to delight, from delight to new acts, from repetition of sinfulness to vicious indulgence, to habit and custom and a second nature, so that anything that toucheth upon it is grievous and strikes to the man’s heart; when it is got into God’s place, and requires to be loved with the whole strength, makes grace strike sail, and other vices do it homage, demands all his concerns to be sacrificed to it and to be served with his reputation, his fortunes, his parts, his body and soul, to the irreparable loss of his time and eternity both—this is the height of its *dominion*—then sin becomes “*exceeding sinful,*” and must needs make strange and sad alterations in the state of saints themselves, and be great hindrances to them in their way to Heaven, having brought them so near to Hell.—*Adam Littleton.*

Verse 13.—“*Presumptuous sins.*” The distribution of sins into sins of *ignorance*, of *infirmity*, and of *presumption*, is very usual and very useful, and complete enough without the addition (which some make) of a fourth sort, to wit, sins of *negligence*

or *inadvertency*, all such sins being easily reducible to some of the former three. The ground of the distinction is laid in the soul of man, where there are three distinct prime faculties, from which all our actions flow—the understanding, the will, and the sensual appetite or affections. . . . The enquiry must be, when a sin is done, where the fault lay most ; and thence it must have the right denomination. 1. If the *understanding* be most in fault, not apprehending that good it should, or not aright, the sin is so done, though possibly it may have in it somewhat both of infirmity and presumption withal, is yet properly a sin of *ignorance*. 2. If the main fault be in the *affections*, through some sudden passion or perturbation of mind, blinding, or corrupting, or but outrunning the judgment—as of fear, anger, desire, joy, or any of the rest—the sin thence arising, though perhaps joined with some ignorance or presumption withal, is yet properly a sin of *infirmity*. But if the understanding be competently informed with knowledge, and not much blinded or transported with the incursion of any sudden, or violence of any vehement perturbation, so as the greatest blame must remain upon the untowardness of the *will*, resolutely bent upon the evil, the sin arising from such *wilfulness*, though probably not free from all mixture of ignorance and infirmity withal, is yet properly a *wilful presumption*, such a *presumptuous sin* as we are now in treaty of. Rules are soonest learned and best remembered when illustrated with fit examples ; and of such the rich storehouse of the Scripture affordeth us in each kind variety and choice enough, whence it shall suffice us to propose but one eminent of each sort. *The men*, all of them for their holiness, of singular and worthy renown : David, St. Peter, and St. Paul. *The sins*, all of them for their matter, of the greatest magnitude : murdering of the innocent, abnegation of Christ, persecution of the church : Paul's persecution a grievous sin, yet a sin of *ignorance* ; Peter's denial a grievous sin, yet a sin of *infirmity* ; David's murder, a far more grievous sin than either of both, because a sin of *presumption*. St. Paul, before his conversion, whilst he was Saul, persecuted and wasted the church of God to the utmost of his power, making havoc of the professors of Christ, entering into their very houses, and haling thence to prison, both men and women ; and posting abroad with letters into remote quarters, to do all the mischief he could, everywhere with great fury, as if he had been mad, breathing out, wherever he came, nothing but threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord. His *affections* were not set against them through any personal provocations, but merely out of zeal to the law ; and surely his zeal had been good had it not been blind. Nor did his *will* run cross to his judgment, but was led by it, for he “ verily thought in himself that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus ; ” and verily his will had been good had it not been misled. But the error was in his *understanding*, his judgment being not yet actually convinced of the truth of the Christian religion. He was yet fully persuaded that Jesus was an impostor, and Christianity a pestilent sect, raised by Satan, to the disgrace and prejudice of Moses and the law. If these things had indeed been so, as he apprehended them, his *affections* and *will*, in seeking to root out such a sect, had been not only blameless, but commendable. It was his erroneous judgment that poisoned all, and made that which otherwise had been zeal, to become persecution. But, however, the first discernible obliquity therein being in the *understanding*, that persecution of his was therefore a *sin of ignorance*, so called, and under that name condemned by himself. 1 Tim. i. 13. But such was not Peter's denial of his Master. He *knew* well enough who he was, having conversed so long with him, and having, long before, so amply confessed him. And he *knew* also that he ought not, for anything in the world, to have denied him. That made him so confident before that he *would not* do it, because he was abundantly satisfied that he *should not* do it. Evident it is, then, that Peter wanted no *knowledge*, either of the Master's person, or of his own duty ; and so no plea left him of *ignorance*, either *facti* or *juris*. Nor was the fault so much in his *will* as to make it a sin properly of *presumption*. For albeit *de facto* he did deny him when he was put to it, and that with fearful oaths and imprecations, yet was it not done with any premeditated apostasy, or out of design, yea, he came rather with a *contrary resolution*, and he still honoured his Master *in his heart*, even then when he denied him with his tongue ; and as soon as ever the watchword was given him by the second cock, to prefer to his consideration what he had done, it grieved him sore that he had so done, and he wept bitterly for it. We find no circumstance, in the whole relation, that argueth any deep obstinacy in his *will*. But in his *affections*, then ! Alas ! there was the fail ! A sudden quail of fear surprising his soul when he saw his Master so despit-

fully used before his face (which made him apprehensive of what hard usage himself might fall under if he should there and then have owned him) took from him for that time the benefit and use of his reason, and so drew all his thoughts to this one point—how to decline the present danger—that he had never a thought at so much liberty as to consult his judgment, whether it were a sin or no. And this, proceeding from such a sudden distemper of passion, Peter's denial was a sin properly of *infirmity*. But David's sin, in contriving the death of Uriah, was of a yet higher pitch, and of a deeper dye than either of these. He was no such stranger in the law of God as not to know that the wilful murder of an innocent party, such as he also knew Uriah to be, was a most loud crying sin; and therefore nothing surer than that it was not merely a sin of *ignorance*. Neither yet was it a sin properly of *infirmity*, and so capable of that extenuating circumstance of being done in the heat of anger, as his uncleanness with Bathsheba was in the heat of lust, although that extenuation will not be allowed to pass there, unless *in tanto* only, and as it standeth in comparison with this fouler crime. But having time and leisure enough to bethink himself what he was about, he doth it *in cool blood*, and with much advised *deliberation*, plotting and contriving this way and that way to perfect his design. He was *resolved*, whatsoever should become of it, to have it done; in regard of which *settled resolution of his will*, this sin of David was therefore a high *presumptuous sin*.—Robert Sanderson (*Bishop of Lincoln*), 1587—1662-3.

Verse 13.—“*Presumptuous sins.*” David prays that God would keep him back from “*presumptuous sins*,” from known and evident sins, such as proceed from the choice of the perverse will against the enlightened mind, which are committed with deliberation, with design, resolution, and eagerness, against the checks of conscience, and the motions of God's spirit: such sins are direct rebellion against God, a despising of his command, and they provoke his pure eyes.—Alexander Cruden.

Verse 13.—“*Then shall I be innocent from the great transgression.*” It is in the motions of a tempted soul to sin, as in the motions of a stone falling from the brow of a hill; it is easily stopped at first, but when once it is set a-going, who shall stay it? And therefore it is the greatest wisdom in the world to observe the first motions of the heart, to check and stop it there.—G. H. Salter.

Verse 13.—“*The great transgression.*” Watch very diligently against all sin; but above all, take special heed of those sins that come near to the sin against the Holy Ghost; and these are, hypocrisy, taking only the outward profession of religion, and so dissembling and mocking of God; sinning wilfully against conviction of conscience, and against great light and knowledge, sinning presumptuously, with a high hand. These sins, though none of them are the direct sin against the Holy Ghost, yet they will come very near to it: therefore take special heed of them, lest they, in time, should bring you to the committing of that unpardonable sin.—Robert Russel, 1705.

Verse 13.—“*Let them not have dominion over me.*” Any small sin may get the upper-hand of the sinner and bring him under in time, and after that is once habituated by long custom so as he cannot easily shake off the yoke, neither redeem himself from under the tyranny thereof. We see the experiment of it but too often and too evidently in our common swearers and drunkards. Yet do such kind of sins, for the most part, grow on by little and little, steal into the throne insensibly, and do not exercise dominion over the enslaved soul till they have got strength by many and multiplied acts. But a *presumptuous sin* worketh a great alteration in the state of the soul at once, and by one single act advanceth marvellously, weakening the spirit, and giving a mighty advantage to the flesh, even to the hazard of a complete conquest.—Robert Sanderson.

Verse 13.—To sin presumptuously is the highest step. So in David's account; for first he prays, “*Lord keep me from secret sins*,” which he maketh sins of ignorance, and then next he prays against “*presumptuous sins*,” which, as the opposition shows, are sins against knowledge; for says he, “if they get dominion over me, I shall not be free from that great offence,” that is, that unpardonable sin which shall never be forgiven: so as these are nearest it of any other, yet not so as that every one that falls into such a sin commits it, but he is nigh to it, at the next step to it. For to commit that sin, but two things are required—light in the mind, and malice in the heart; not malice alone, unless there be light, for then that apostle had sinned it, so as knowledge is the parent of it, it is “after receiving the knowledge of the truth.” Heb. x. 27, 28.—Thomas Goodwin.

Verse 13.—Happy souls, who, under a sense of peace through the blood of Jesus, are daily praying to be kept by the grace of the Spirit. Such truly know themselves, see their danger of falling, will not, dare not palliate or lessen the odious nature, and hateful deformity of their sin. They will not give a softer name to sin than it deserves, lest they depreciate the infinite value of that precious blood which Jesus shed to atone its guilt. Far will they be from flattering themselves into a deceitful notion that they are perfect, and have no sin in them. The spirit of truth delivers them from such errors; he teacheth them as poor sinners to look to the Saviour, and to beseech him to “keep back” the headstrong passions, the unruly lusts, and evil concupiscences which dwell in their sinful natures. Alas! the most exalted saint, the most established believer, if left to himself, how soon might the blackest crimes, the most “presumptuous sins,” get the “dominion” over him! David had woeful experience of this for a season. He prays from a heartfelt sense of past misery, and the dread of future danger, and he found the blessing of that covenant-promise: “Sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace.” Rom. vi. 14.—*William Mason, 1719—1791, in “A Spiritual Treasury for the Children of God.”*

Verse 14.—“Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord,” was David’s prayer. David could not bear it, that a word or a thought of his should miss acceptance with God. It did not satisfy him that his actions were well witnessed unto men on earth, unless his very thoughts were witnessed to by the Lord in heaven.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 14.—“Let the words of my mouth,” etc. The best of men have their failing, and an honest Christian may be a weak one; but weak as he may be, the goodness and sincerity of his heart will entitle him to put the petition of this verse, which no hypocrite or cunning deceiver can ever make use of.—*Thomas Sherlock (Bishop), 1676—1761.*

Verse 14.—“Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my Redeemer.” Fast and pray; Lord, I do fast, and I would pray; for to what end do I withhold sustenance from my body if it be not the more to cheer up my soul? my hungry, my thirsty soul? But the bread, the water of life, both which I find nowhere but in thy word, I partake not but by exercising my soul therein. This I begin to do, and fain would do it well, but in vain shall I attempt except thou do bless: bless me then, O Lord; bless either part of me, both are thine, and I would withhold neither part from thee. Not my body; I would set my tongue on work to speak of thee; not my soul, I would exercise my heart in thinking on thee; I would join them in devotion which thou hast joined in creation. Yea, Lord, as they have conspired to sin against thee, so do they now consort to do their duty to thee; my tongue is ready, my heart is ready; I would think, I would speak; think upon thee, speak to thee. But, Lord, what are my words? what are my thoughts? Thou knowest the thoughts of men, that they are altogether vanity, and our words are but the blast of such thoughts; both are vile. It were well it were no more; both are wicked, my heart a corrupt fountain, and my tongue an unclean stream; and shall I bring such a sacrifice to God? The halt, the lame, the blind, though otherwise the beasts be clean, yet are they sacrifices abominable to God: how much more if we offer those beasts which are unclean? And yet, Lord, my sacrifice is no better, faltering words, wandering thoughts, are neither of them presentable to thee; how much less evil thoughts and idle words? Yet such are the best of mine. What remedy? If any, it is in thee, O Lord, that I must find it, and for it now do I seek unto thee. Thou only, O Lord, canst hallow my tongue, and hallow my heart that my tongue may speak, and my heart think that which may “be acceptable unto thee,” yea, that which may be thy delight. Do not I lavish? Were it not enough that God should bear with, that he should not punish, the defects of my words, of my thoughts? May I presume that God shall accept of me? nay, delight in me? Forget I who the Lord is? Of what majesty? Of what felicity? Can it stand with his Majesty to vouchsafe acceptance? with his felicity to take content in the words of a worm? in the thoughts of a wretch? And, Lord, I am too proud that vilify myself so little, and magnify thee no more. But see whither the desire of thy servant doth carry him; how, willing to please, I consider not how hard it is for dust and ashes to please God, to do that wherein God should take content. But Lord, here is my comfort, that I may set God to give content unto God; God is mine, and I cannot want

access unto God, if God may approach himself. Let me be weak, yet God is strong; O Lord, thou art "*my strength*." Let me be a slave to sin, God is a *Saviour*; O Lord, thou art *my Saviour*; thou hast *redeemed* me from all that woful state whereunto Adam cast me, yea, thou hast built me upon a rock, strong and sure, that the gates of hell might never prevail against me. These two things hast thou done for me, O Lord, and what may not he presume of for whom thou hast done these things! I fear not to come before thee. I presume my devotion shall content thee; be thine eyes never such all-seeing eyes, I will be bold to present my inward, my outward man before thee; be thy eyes never so holy eyes, I will not fly with Adam to hide my nakedness from thee, for I am able to keep my ground; seeing I am supported by *my Lord*, I doubt not but to prove a true Israelite, and to prevail with God. For all my woe, for all my sin, I will not shrink, nay, I will approach, approach to thee, for thou art "*My Redeemer*." The nearer I come to thee, the freer shall I be both from sin and woe. Oh, blessed state of man who is so weak, so strong; so wretched, and so happy; weak in himself, strong in God; most happy in God, though in himself a sinful wretch. And now, my soul, thou wouldst be devout; thou mayst be what thou wouldst: sacrifice to God thy words, sacrifice to God thy thoughts, make thyself a holocaust, doubt not but thou shalt be accepted, thou shalt content even the most glorious the most holy eyes of God. Only presume not of thyself, presume on him; build thy words, build thy thoughts upon thy *Rock*, they shall not be shaken; free thy words, free thy thoughts (thoughts and words enthralled to sin), by thy *Saviour*, and thy sacrifice shall be accepted. So let me build on thee, so let me be enlarged by thee, in soul, in body, that "*The words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord. my strength and my Redeemer*."—Arthur Lake (Bishop), in "*Divine Meditations*," 1629,

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—"Chalmers' *Astronomical Discourses*" will suggest to the preacher many ways of handling this theme. The power, wisdom, goodness, punctuality, faithfulness, greatness, and glory of God are very visible in the heavens.

Verses 1—5.—Parallel between the heavens and the revelation of Scripture, dwelling upon Christ as the central Sun of Scripture.

Verse 1.—"*The heavens declare the glory of God*." Work in which we may unite, the nobility, pleasure, usefulness, and duty of such service.

Verse 2.—Voices of the day and of the night. Day and night thoughts.

Verse 3.—The marginal reading, coupled with verse four, suggests the eloquence of an unobtrusive life—silent yet heard.

Verse 4.—In what sense God is revealed to all men.

Verses 4, 5, 6.—The Sun of righteousness. I. His tabernacle. II. His appearance as a Bridegroom. III. His joy as a champion. IV. His circuit and his influence.

Verse 5.—"*Rejoiceth as a strong man*," etc. The joy of strength, the joy of holy labour, the joy of the anticipated reward.

Verse 6.—The permeating power of the gospel.

Verse 7 (*first clause*).—Holy Scripture. I. What it is—"law." II. Whose it is—"of the Lord." III. What is its character—"perfect." IV. What its result—"converting the soul."

Verse 7 (*second clause*).—I. Scholars. II. Class-book. III. Teacher. IV. Progress.

Verses 7, 8, 9.—The Hexapla. See *Notes*.

Verse 7 (*last clause*).—The wisdom of a simple faith.

Verse 8 (*first clause*). The heart-cheering power of the Word. I. Founded in its righteousness. II. Real in its quality. III. Constant in its operation.

Verse 8 (*second clause*).—Golden ointment for the eyes.

Verse 9.—The purity and permanence of true religion, and the truth and justice of the principles upon which it is founded.

Verse 10.—Two arguments for loving God's statutes—Profit and Pleasure.

Verse 10.—The inexpressible delights of meditation on Scripture.

Verse 11 (*first clause*).—I. What? "Warned." II. How? "By them." III. Who? "Thy servant." IV. When? "Is"—present.

Verse 11 (*second clause*).—Evangelical rewards—"In," not for keeping.

Verse 12.—See "Spurgeon's Sermons," No 116. "Secret Sins."

Verse 12, 13.—The three grades of sin—secret, presumptuous, unpardonable.

Verse 13.—See "Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 135. "Presumptuous Sins."

Verse 13 (*last clause*).—"The great transgression." What it is not, may be, involves, and suggests.

Verse 14.—A prayer concerning our holy things.

Verse 14.—All wish to please. Some please *themselves*. Some please *men*. Some seek to please *God*. Such was David. I. The prayer shows his *humility*. II. The prayer shows his *affection*. III. The prayer shows a *consciousness of duty*. IV. The prayer shows a *regard to self-interest*.—William Jay.

Verse 14.—The harmony of heart and lips needful for acceptance.

