

PSALM L.

TITLE.—A Psalm of Asaph.—*This is the first of the Psalms of Asaph, but whether it was the production of that eminent musician, or merely dedicated to him, we cannot tell. The titles of twelve Psalms bear his name, but it could not in all of them be meant to ascribe their authorship to him, for several of these Psalms are of too late a date to have been composed by the same writer as the others. There was an Asaph in David's time, who was one of David's chief musicians, and his family appear to have continued long after in their hereditary office of temple musicians. An Asaph is mentioned as a recorder or secretary in the days of Hezekiah (2 Kings xviii. 18), and another was keeper of the royal forests under Artaxerxes. That Asaph did most certainly write some of the Psalms is clear from 2 Chron. xxix. 30, where it is recorded that the Levites were commanded to "sing praises unto the Lord with the words of David, and of Asaph the seer," but that other Asaphic Psalms were not of his composition, but were only committed to his care as a musician, is equally certain from 1 Chron. xvi. 7, where David is said to have delivered a Psalm into the hand of Asaph and his brethren. It matters little to us whether he wrote or sang, for poet and musician are near akin, and if one composes words and another sets them to music, they rejoice together before the Lord.*

DIVISIONS.—*The Lord is represented as summoning the whole earth to hear his declaration, 1—6; he then declares the nature of the worship which he accepts, 7—15, accuses the ungodly of breaches of the precepts of the second table, 16—21, and closes the court with a word of threatening, 22, and a direction of grace, 23.*

EXPOSITION.

THE mighty God, *even* the LORD, hath spoken, and called the earth from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof.

2 Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined.

3 Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him.

4 He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people.

5 Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice.

6 And the heavens shall declare his righteousness: for God is judge himself. Selah.

1. "*The mighty God, even the Lord*"—El, Elohim, Jehovah, three glorious names for the God of Israel. To render the address the more impressive, these august titles are mentioned, just as in royal decrees the names and dignities of monarchs are placed in the forefront. Here the true God is described as Almighty, as the only and perfect object of adoration and as the self-existent One, "*Hath spoken, and called the earth from the rising of the sun until the going down thereof.*" The dominion of Jehovah extends over the whole earth, and therefore to all mankind is his decree directed. The east and the west are bidden to hear the God who makes his sun to rise on every quarter of the globe. Shall the summons of the great King be despised? Will we dare provoke him to anger by slighting his call?

2. "*Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined.*" The Lord is represented not only as speaking to the earth, but as coming forth to reveal the glory of his presence to an assembled universe. God of old dwelt in Zion among his chosen people, but here the beams of his splendour are described as shining forth upon all nations. The sun was spoken of in the first verse, but here is a far brighter sun. The majesty of God is most conspicuous among his own elect, but it is not confined to them; the church is not a dark lantern, but a candlestick. God shines

not only in Zion, but out of her. She is made perfect in beauty by his indwelling and that beauty is seen by all observers when the Lord shines forth from her.

Observe how with trumpet voice and flaming ensign the infinite Jehovah summons the heavens and the earth to hearken to his word.

3. "*Our God shall come.*" The Psalmist speaks of himself and his brethren as standing in immediate anticipation of the appearing of the Lord upon the scene. "He comes," they say, "our covenant God is coming;" they can hear his voice from afar, and perceive the splendour of his attending train. Even thus should we wait the long-promised appearing of the Lord from heaven. "*And shall not keep silence.*" He comes to speak, to plead with his people, to accuse and judge the ungodly. He has been silent long in patience, but soon he will speak with power. What a moment of awe when the Omnipotent is expected to reveal himself! What will be the reverent joy and solemn expectation when the poetic scene of this Psalm becomes in the last great day an actual reality! "*A fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him.*" Flame and hurricane are frequently described as the attendants of the divine appearance. "Our God is a consuming fire." "At the brightness that was before him his thick clouds passed, hailstones and coals of fire." Psalm xviii. 12. "He rode upon a cherub, and did fly; yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind." "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God." 2 Thes. i. 7, 8. Fire is the emblem of justice in action, and the tempest is a token of his overwhelming power. Who will not listen in solemn silence when such is the tribunal from which the judge pleads with heaven and earth?

4. "*He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth.*" Angels and men, the upper and the lower worlds, are called to witness the solemn scene. The whole creation shall stand in court to testify to the solemnity and the truth of the divine pleading. Both earth beneath and heaven above shall unite in condemning sin; the guilty shall have no appeal, though all are summoned that they may appeal if they dare. Both angels and men have seen the guilt of mankind and the goodness of the Lord, they shall therefore confess the justice of the divine utterance, and say "Amen" to the sentence of the supreme Judge. Alas, ye despisers! What will ye do and to whom will ye fly? "*That he may judge his people.*" Judgment begins at the house of God. The trial of the visible people of God will be a most awful ceremonial. He will throughly purge his floor. He will discern between his nominal and his real people, and that in open court, the whole universe looking on. My soul, when this actually takes place, how will it fare with thee? Canst thou endure the day of his coming?

5. "*Gather my saints together unto me.*" Go, ye swift-winged messengers, and separate the precious from the vile. Gather out the wheat of the heavenly garner. Let the long-scattered, but elect people known by my separating grace to be my sanctified ones, be now assembled in one place. All are not saints who seem to be so—a severance must be made; therefore let all who profess to be saints be gathered before my throne of judgment, and let them hear the word which will search and try the whole, that the false may be convicted and the true revealed. "*Those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice;*" this is the grand test, and yet some have dared to imitate it. The covenant was ratified by the slaying of victims, the cutting and dividing of offerings; this the righteous have done by accepting with true faith the great propitiatory sacrifice, and this the pretenders have done in merely outward form. Let them be gathered before the throne for trial, and testing, and as many as have really ratified the covenant by faith in the Lord Jesus shall be attested before all worlds as the objects of distinguishing grace while formalists shall learn that outward sacrifices are all in vain. Oh, solemn assize, how does my soul bow in awe at the prospect thereof!

6. "*And the heavens shall declare his righteousness.*" Celestial intelligences and the spirits of just men made perfect, shall magnify the infallible judgment of the divine tribunal. Now they doubtless wonder at the hypocrisy of men; then they shall equally marvel at the exactness of the severance between the true and the false. "*For God is judge himself.*" This is the reason for the correctness of the judgment. Priests of old, and churches of later times, were readily deceived, but not so the all-discerning Lord. No deputy-judge sits on the great white throne; the injured Lord of all himself weighs the evidence and allots the vengeance or reward. The scene in the Psalm is a grand poetical conception, but it is also an inspired prophecy of that day which shall burn as an oven, when the Lord shall discern

between him that feareth him and him that feareth him not. "*Selah.*" Here we may well pause in reverent prostration, in deep searching of heart, in humble prayer and in awe-struck expectation.

7 Hear, O my people, and I will speak; O Israel, and I will testify against thee: I *am* God, *even* thy God.

8 I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices or thy burnt offerings, *to have been* continually before me.

9 I will take no bullock out of thy house, *nor* he goats out of thy folds.

10 For every beast of the forest *is* mine, *and* the cattle upon a thousand hills.

11 I know all the fowls of the mountains: and the wild beasts of the field *are* mine.

12 If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world *is* mine, and the fulness thereof.

13 Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats?

14 Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the most High:

15 And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.

The address which follows is directed to the professed people of God. It is clearly, in the first place, meant for Israel; but is equally applicable to the visible church of God in every age. It declares the futility of external worship when spiritual faith is absent and the mere outward ceremonial is rested in.

7. "*Hear, O my people, and I will speak.*" Because Jehovah speaks, and they are avowedly his own people, they are bound to give earnest heed. "Let me speak," saith the great I AM. The heavens and earth are but listeners, the Lord is about both to testify and to judge. "*O Israel, and I will testify against thee.*" Their covenant name is mentioned to give point to the address; it was a double evil that the chosen nation should become so carnal, so unspiritual, so false, so heartless to their God. God himself, whose eyes sleep not, who is not misled by rumour, but sees for himself, enters on the scene as witness against his favoured nation. Alas! for us when God, even our fathers' God, testifies to the hypocrisy of the visible church. "*I am God, even thy God.*" He had taken them to be his peculiar people above all other nations, and they had in the most solemn manner avowed that he was their God. Hence the special reason for calling them to account. The law began with, "I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt," and now the session of their judgment opens with the same reminder of their singular position, privilege, and responsibility. It is not only that Jehovah is God, but *thy* God, O Israel; this it is that makes thee so amenable to his searching reproofs.

8. "*I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifice or thy burnt offerings, to have been ever before me.*" Though they had not failed in maintaining his outward worship, or even if they had, he was not about to call them to account for this: a more weighty matter was now under consideration. They thought the daily sacrifices and the abounding burnt offerings to be everything: he counted them nothing if the inner sacrifice of heart devotion had been neglected. What was greatest with them was least with God. It is even so to-day. Sacraments (so called) and sacred rites are the main concern with unconverted but religious men, but with the Most High the spiritual worship which they forget is the sole matter. Let the external be maintained by all means according to the divine command, but if the secret and spiritual be not in them, they are a vain oblation, a dead ritual, and even an abomination before the Lord.

9. "*I will take no bullock out of thy house.*" Foolishly they dreamed that bullocks with horns and hoofs could please the Lord, when indeed he sought for hearts and souls. Impiously they fancied that Jehovah needed these supplies, and that if they fed his altar with their fat beasts, he would be content. What he intended for their instruction, they made their confidence. They remembered not that "to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." "*Nor*

he goats out of thy folds." He mentions these lesser victims as if to rouse their common sense to see that the great Creator could find no satisfaction in mere animal offerings. If he needed these, he would not appeal to their scanty stalls and folds; in fact, he here refuses to take so much as one, if they brought them under the false and dishonouring view, that they were in themselves pleasing to him. This shows that the sacrifices of the law were symbolical of higher and spiritual things, and were not pleasing to God except under their typical aspect. The believing worshipper looking beyond the outward was accepted, the unspiritual who had no respect to their meaning was wasting his substance, and blaspheming the God of heaven.

10. "*For every beast of the forest is mine.*" How could they imagine that the Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth, had need of beasts, when all the countless hordes that find shelter in a thousand forests and wildernesses belong to him? "*And the cattle upon a thousand hills.*" Not alone the wild beasts, but also the tamer creatures are all his own. Even if God cared for these things, he could supply himself. Their cattle were not, after all, their own, but were still the great Creator's property, why then should he be beholden to them. From Dan to Beer-sheba, from Nebaioth to Lebanon, there fed not a beast which was not marked with the name of the great Shepherd; why, then, should he crave oblations of Israel? What a slight is here put even upon sacrifices of divine appointment when wrongly viewed as in themselves pleasing to God! And all this to be so expressly stated under the law! How much more is this clear under the gospel, when it is so much more plainly revealed, that "God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth"? Ye Ritualists, ye Sacramentarians, ye modern Pharisees, what say ye to this?

11. "*I know all the fowls of the mountains.*" All the winged creatures are under my inspection and near my hand; what then can be the value of your pairs of turtledoves and your two young pigeons? The great Lord not only feeds all his creatures, but is well acquainted with each one; how wondrous is this knowledge! "*And the wild beasts of the field are mine.*" The whole population moving over the plain belongs to me; why then should I seek your beeves and rams? In me all things live and move; how mad are you to suppose that I desire your living things! A spiritual God demands other life than that which is seen in animals; he looks for spiritual sacrifice, for the love, the trust, the praise, the life of your hearts.

12. "*If I were hungry, I would not tell thee.*" Strange conception, a hungry God! Yet if such an absurd ideal could be truth, and if the Lord hungered for meat he would not ask it of men. He could provide for himself out of his own possessions; he would not turn suppliant to his own creatures. Even under the grossest idea of God, faith in outward ceremonies is ridiculous. Do men fancy that the Lord needs banners, and music, and incense, and fine linen? If he did, the stars would emblazon his standard, the winds and the waves become his orchestra, ten thousand times ten thousand flowers would breathe forth perfume, the snow should be his alb, the rainbow his girdle, the clouds of light his mantle. O fools and slow of heart, ye worship ye know not what! "*For the world is mine, and the fulness thereof.*" What can he need who is owner of all things and able to create as he wills? Thus overwhelmingly does the Lord pour forth his arguments upon formalists.

13. "*Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats?*" Are you so infatuated as to think this? Is the great I AM subject to corporeal wants, and are they to be thus grossly satisfied? Heathens thought thus of their idols, but dare ye think thus of the God who made the heavens and the earth? Can ye have fallen so low as to think thus of me, O Israel? What vivid reasoning is here! How the fire-flashes dart into the idiot faces of trusters in outward forms! Ye dupes of Rome, can ye read this and be unmoved? The expostulation is indignant; the questions utterly confound; the conclusion is inevitable; heart worship only can be acceptable with the true God. It is inconceivable that outward things can gratify him, except so far as through them our faith and love express themselves.

14. "*Offer unto God thanksgiving.*" No longer look at your sacrifices as in themselves gifts pleasing to me, but present them as the tributes of your gratitude; it is then that I will accept them, but not while your souls have no love and no thankfulness to offer me. The sacrifices, as considered in themselves, are contemned, but the internal emotions of love consequent upon a remembrance of divine goodness, are commended as the substance, meaning, and soul of sacrifice. Even when the legal ceremonials were not abolished, this was true, and when they came to an end, this truth was more than ever made manifest. Not for want of bullocks on

the altar was Israel blamed, but for want of thankful adoration before the Lord. She excelled in the visible, but in the inward grace, which is the one thing needful, she sadly failed. Too many in these days are in the same condemnation. "*And pay thy vows unto the most High.*" Let the sacrifice be really presented to the God who seeth the heart, pay to him the love you promised, the service you covenanted to render, the loyalty of heart you have vowed to maintain. O for grace to do this! O that we may be graciously enabled to love God, and live up to our profession! To be, indeed, the servants of the Lord, the lovers of Jesus, this is our main concern. What avails our baptism, to what end our gatherings at the Lord's table, to what purpose our solemn assemblies, if we have not the fear of the Lord, and vital godliness reigning within our bosoms?

15. "*And call upon me in the day of trouble.*" Oh, blessed verse! Is this then true sacrifice? Is it an offering to ask an alms of heaven? It is even so. The King himself so regards it. For herein is faith manifested, herein is love proved, for in the hour of peril we fly to those we love. It seems a small thing to pray to God when we are distressed, yet is it a more acceptable worship than the mere heartless presentation of bullocks and he-goats. This is a voice from the throne, and how full of mercy it is! It is very tempestuous round about Jehovah, and yet what soft drops of mercy's rain fall from the bosom of the storm! Who would not suffer such sacrifice? Troubled one, haste to present it now! Who shall say that Old Testament saints did not know the gospel? Its very spirit and essence breathe like frankincense all around this holy Psalm. "*I will deliver thee.*" The reality of thy sacrifice of prayer shall be seen in its answer. Whether the smoke of burning bulls be sweet to me or no, certainly thy humble prayer shall be, and I will prove it so by my gracious reply to thy supplication. This promise is very large, and may refer both to temporal and eternal deliverances; faith can turn it every way, like the sword of the cherubim. "*And thou shalt glorify me.*" Thy prayer will honour me, and thy grateful perception of my answering mercy will also glorify me. The goats and bullocks would prove a failure, but the true sacrifice never could. The calves of the stall might be a vain oblation, but not the calves of sincere lips.

Thus we see what is true ritual. Here we read inspired rubrics. Spiritual worship is the great, the essential matter; all else without it is rather provoking than pleasing to God. As helps to the soul, outward offerings were precious, but when men went not beyond them, even their hallowed things were profaned in the view of heaven.

16 But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or *that* thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth?

17 Seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee.

18 When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentedst with him, and hast been partaker with adulterers.

19 Thou givest thy mouth to evil, and thy tongue frameth deceit.

20 Thou sittest *and* speakest against thy brother; thou slanderest thine own mother's son.

21 These *things* hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether *such an one* as thyself: *but* I will reprove thee, and set *them* in order before thine eyes.

Here the Lord turns to the manifestly wicked among his people; and such there were even in the highest places of his sanctuary. If moral formalists had been rebuked, how much more these immoral pretenders to fellowship with heaven? If the lack of heart spoiled the worship of the more decent and virtuous, how much more would violations of the law, committed with a high hand, corrupt the sacrifices of the wicked?

16. "*But unto the wicked God saith.*" To the breakers of the second table he now addresses himself; he had previously spoken to the neglecters of the first. "*What hast thou to do to declare my statutes?*" You violate openly my moral law, and yet are great sticklers for my ceremonial commands! What have you to do with them? What interest can you have in them? Do you dare to teach my law to others, and profane it yourselves? What impudence, what blasphemy is

this! Even if you claim to be sons of Levi, what of that? Your wickedness disqualifies you, disinherits you, puts you out of the succession. It should silence you, and would if my people were as spiritual as I would have them, for they would refuse to hear you, and to pay you the portion of temporal things which is due to my true servants. You count up your holy days, you contend for rituals, you fight for externals, and yet the weightier matters of the law ye despise! Ye blind guides, ye strain out gnats and swallow camels; your hypocrisy is written on your foreheads and manifest to all. "*Or that thou shouldst take my covenant in thy mouth.*" Ye talk of being in covenant with me, and yet trample my holiness beneath your feet as swine trample upon pearls; think ye that I can brook this? Your mouths are full of lying and slander, and yet ye mouth my words as if they were fit morsels for such as you! How horrible an evil it is, that to this day we see men explaining doctrines who despise precepts! They make grace a coverlet for sin, and even judge themselves to be sound in the faith, while they are rotten in life. We need the grace of the doctrines as much as the doctrines of grace, and without it an apostle is but a Judas, and a fair-spoken professor is an arrant enemy of the cross of Christ.

17. "*Seeing thou hatest instruction.*" Profane professors are often too wise to learn, too besotted with conceit to be taught of God. What a monstrosity that men should declare those statutes which with their hearts they do not know, and which in their lives they openly disavow! Woe unto the men who hate the instruction which they take upon themselves to give. "*And castest my words behind thee.*" Despising them, throwing them away as worthless, putting them out of sight as obnoxious. Many boasters of the law did this practically; and in these last days there are pickers and choosers of God's words who cannot endure the practical part of Scripture; they are disgusted at duty, they abhor responsibility, they disembowel texts of their plain meanings, they wrest the Scriptures to their own destruction. It is an ill sign when a man dares not look a Scripture in the face, and an evidence of brazen impudence when he tries to make it mean something less condemnatory of his sins, and endeavours to prove it to be less sweeping in its demands. How powerful is the argument that such men have no right to take the covenant of God into their mouths, seeing that its spirit does not regulate their lives!

18. "*When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentedst with him.*" Moral honesty cannot be absent where true grace is present. Those who excuse others in trickery are guilty themselves; those who use others to do unjust actions for them are doubly so. If a man be ever so religious, if his own actions do not rebuke dishonesty, he is an accomplice with thieves. If we can acquiesce in anything which is not upright, we are not upright ourselves, and our religion is a lie. "*And hast been partaker with adulterers.*" One by one the moral precepts are thus broken by the sinners in Zion. Under the cloak of piety, unclean livers conceal themselves. We may do this by smiling at unchaste jests, listening to indelicate expressions, and conniving at licentious behaviour in our presence; and if we thus act, how dare we preach, or lead public prayer, or wear the Christian name? See how the Lord lays righteousness to the plummet! How plainly all this declares that without holiness no man shall see the Lord! No amount of ceremonial or theological accuracy can cover dishonesty and fornication; these filthy things must be either purged from us by the blood of Jesus, or they will kindle a fire in God's anger which will burn even to the lowest hell.

19. "*Thou givest thy mouth to evil.*" Sins against the ninth commandment are here mentioned. The man who surrenders himself to the habit of slander is a vile hypocrite if he associates himself with the people of God. A man's health is readily judged by his tongue. A foul mouth, a foul heart. Some slander almost as often as they breathe, and yet are great upholders of the church, and great sticklers for holiness. To what depths will not they go in evil, who delight in spreading it with their tongues? "*And thy tongue frameth deceit.*" This is a more deliberate sort of slander, where the man dexterously elaborates false witness, and concocts methods of defamation. There is an ingenuity of calumny in some men, and, alas! even in some who are thought to be followers of the Lord Jesus. They manufacture falsehoods, weave them in their loom, hammer them on their anvil, and then retail their wares in every company. Are these accepted with God? Though they bring their wealth to the altar, and speak eloquently of truth and of salvation, have they any favour with God? We should blaspheme the holy God if we were to think so.

They are corrupt in his sight, a stench in his nostrils. He will cast all liars into hell. Let them preach, and pray, and sacrifice as they will; till they become truthful, the God of truth loathes them utterly.

20. "*Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother.*" He sits down to it, makes it his meat, studies it, resolves upon it, becomes a master of defamation, occupies the chair of calumny. His nearest friend is not safe, his dearest relative escapes not. "*Thou slanderest thine own mother's son.*" He ought to love him best, but he has an ill word for him. The son of one's own mother was to the Oriental a very tender relation; but the wretched slanderer knows no claims of kindred. He stabs his brother in the dark, and aims a blow at him who came forth of the same womb: yet he wraps himself in the robe of hypocrisy, and dreams that he is a favourite of heaven, an accepted worshipper of the Lord. Are such monsters to be met with nowadays? Alas! they pollute our churches still, and are roots of bitterness, spots in our solemn feasts, wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever. Perhaps some such may read these lines, but they will probably read them in vain; their eyes are too dim to see their own condition, their hearts are waxen gross, their ears are dull of hearing; they are given up to a strong delusion to believe a lie, that they may be damned.

21. "*These things hast thou done, and I kept silence.*" No swift judgment overthrew the sinner—longsuffering reigned; no thunder was heard in threatening, and no bolt of fire was hurled in execution. "*Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself.*" The inference drawn from the Lord's patience was infamous: the respited culprit thought his judge to be one of the same order as himself. He offered sacrifice, and deemed it accepted; he continued in sin, and remained unpunished, and therefore he rudely said, "Why need believe these crazy prophets? God cares not how we live so long as we pay our tithes. Little does he consider how we get the plunder, so long as we bring a bullock to his altar." What will not men imagine of the Lord? At one time they liken the glory of Israel to a calf and anon their brutish selves. "*But I will reprove thee.*" At last I will break silence and let thee know my mind. "*And set them in order before thine eyes.*" I will marshal thy sins in battle array. I will make thee see them, I will put them down item by item, classified, and arranged. Thou shalt know that if silent awhile, I was never blind or deaf. I will make thee perceive what thou hast tried to deny. I will leave the seat of mercy for the throne of judgment, and there will I let thee see how great the difference between thee and me.

22 Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear *you* in pieces, and *there be none* to deliver.

22. "*Now*" or *oh!* it is a word of entreaty, for the Lord is loth even to let the most ungodly run on to destruction. "*Consider this,*" take these truths to heart, ye who trust in ceremonies and ye who live in vice, for both of you sin in that "*ye forget God.*" Bethink you how unaccepted you are, and turn unto the Lord. See how you have mocked the eternal, and repent of your iniquities. "*Lest I tear you in pieces,*" as a lion rends his prey, "*and there be none to deliver,*" no Saviour, no refuge, no hope. Ye reject the Mediator: beware, for ye will sorely need one in the day of wrath, and none will be near to plead for you. How terrible, how complete, how painful, how humiliating, will be the destruction of the wicked! God uses no soft words, or velvet metaphors, nor may his servants do so when they speak of the wrath to come. O reader, consider this.

23 Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me: and to him that ordereth *his* conversation *aright* will I shew the salvation of God.

23. "*Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me.*" Praise is the best sacrifice; true, hearty, gracious thanksgiving from a renewed mind. Not the lowing of bullocks bound to the altar, but the songs of redeemed men are the music which the ear of Jehovah delights in. Sacrifice your loving gratitude, and God is honoured thereby. "*And to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God.*" Holy living is a choice evidence of salvation. He who submits his whole way to divine guidance, and is careful to honour God in his life, brings an offering which the Lord accepts through his dear Son; and such a one shall be more and more instructed, and made experimentally to know the Lord's salvation. He

needs salvation, for the best ordering of the life cannot save us, but *that salvation* he shall have. Not to ceremonies, not to unpurified lips, is the blessing promised, but to grateful hearts and holy lives.

O Lord, give us to stand in the judgment with those who have worshipped thee aright and have seen thy salvation.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—The exordium or beginning of this Psalm is the most grand and striking that can possibly be imagined—the speaker God, the audience an assembled world! We cannot compare or assimilate the scene here presented to us with any human resemblance; nor do I imagine that earth will ever behold such a day till that hour when the trumpet of the archangel shall sound, and shall gather all the nations of the earth from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other; when the dead, small and great, shall stand before God, and the sea shall give up the dead which are in it, and death and hell shall deliver up the dead that are in them.—*Barton Bouchier.*

Verse 1.—“*El, Elohim, Jehovah has spoken!*” So reads the Hebrew.—*Anrew A. Bonar.*

Verse 1 (first clause).—Some have observed that these three names, *El, Elohim, Jehovah*, here mentioned, have three very distinct accents set to them, and which being joined to a verb singular הִשָּׁמַע , *hath spoken*, contains the mystery of the trinity of Persons in the unity of the divine Essence.—*John Gill.*

Verse 1.—“*And called the earth,*” etc., i.e., *all the inhabitants of the earth* he has commanded to come as witnesses and spectators of the judgment.—*Simon de Muis.*

Verses 1—5.—

No more shall atheists mock his long delay;
His vengeance sleeps no more; behold the day!
Behold!—the Judge descends; his guards are nigh,
Tempests and fire attend him down the sky.
When God appears, all nature shall adore him.
While sinners tremble, saints rejoice before him.
Heaven, earth, and hell, draw near; let all things come,
To hear my justice, and the sinner's doom;
But gather first my saints (the Judge commands),
Bring them, ye angels, from their distant lands.
When Christ returns, wake every cheerful passion,
And shout, ye saints; he comes for your salvation.

Isaac Watts.

Verse 2.—*Out of Zion, the perfection of God's beauty hath shined; or, God has caused the perfection of beauty to shine out of Zion.*—*Martin Geier.*

Verse 2.—“*God hath shined.*” Like the sun in his strength, sometimes for the comfort of his people, as Psalm lxxx. 1; sometimes for the terror of evil-doers, as Psalm xciv. 1, and here. But evermore God is terrible out of his holy places. Psalm lxxviii. 35, and lxxxix. 7.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 2.—“*God hath shined.*” The proper meaning of שָׁרַח is to scatter rays from afar, and from a lofty place, and to glitter. *It is a word of a grand sound*, says Ch. Schultens, *which is always used of a magnificent and flashing light. . . .* It is apparently used of the splendid symbol of God's presence, as in Deut. xxxiv. 2, where he is said to *scatter beams* from Mount Paran. From which it is manifest that it may refer to the pillar of cloud and fire, the seat of the Divine Majesty conspicuous on Mount Sinai, or on the tabernacle, or the loftiest part of the temple.—*Hermann Venema.*

Verse 3.—“*Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence.*” He kept silence that he might be judged, he will not keep silence when he begins to judge. *It*

would not have been said, "*He shall come manifestly,*" unless at first he had come concealed; nor, "*He shall not keep silence,*" had he not at first kept silence. How did he keep silence? Ask Isaiah: "He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth." Isa. liii. 7. But he shall come manifestly, and shall not keep silence. How manifestly? "*A fire shall go before him, and round about him a mighty tempest.*" That tempest is to carry wholly away the chaff from the floor which is now in threshing; that fire, to consume what the tempest carries off. Now, however, he is silent; silent in judgment, but not in precept. For if Christ is silent, what mean these gospels? What the voices of the apostles? the canticles of the Psalms? the lofty utterances of the prophets? Truly in all these Christ is not silent. Howbeit he is silent for the present in not taking vengeance, not in not warning. But he will come in surpassing brightness to take vengeance, and will be seen of all, even of those who believe not on him; but now, forasmuch as although present he was not concealed, it behoved him to be despised: for unless he had been despised he would not have been crucified; if not crucified he would not have shed his blood, the price with which he redeemed us. But in order that he might give a price for us, he was crucified; that he might be crucified, he was despised; that he might be despised, he appeared in humble guise.—*Augustine.*

Verse 3 (first clause).—The future in the first clause may be rendered *he is coming*, as if the sound of his voice and the light of his glory had preceded his actual appearance. The imagery is borrowed from the giving of the law at Sinai.—*J. A. Alexander.*

Verse 3 (first clause).—*May our God come!** A prayer for the hastening of his advent, as in the Apocalypse, xxii. 20.—*Pool's Synopsis.*

Verse 3.—"*A fire shall devour before him.*" As he gave his law in fire, so in fire shall he require it.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 4.—"*He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth.*" That these dumb creatures may be as so many speaking evidences against an unworthy people, and witnesses of God's righteous dealings against them. See Deut. xxxii. 1; Isaiah i. 2; Mic. vi. 2. The Chaldee thus paraphraseth: *He will call the high angels from above; and the just of the earth from beneath.*—*John Trapp.*

Verse 5.—"*Gather,*" etc. To whom are these words addressed? Many suppose to the angels, as the ministers of God's will; but it is unnecessary to make the expression more definite than it is in the Psalm.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 5.—"*My saints,*" the objects of my mercy, those whom I have called and specially distinguished. The term is here descriptive of a relation, not of an intrinsic quality.—*J. A. Alexander.*

Verse 5.—"*Gather my saints together unto me.*" There is a double or two-fold gathering to Christ. There is a gathering unto Christ by faith, a gathering within the bond of the covenant, a gathering into the family of God, a gathering unto the root of Jesse, standing up for an ensign of the people. "In that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious." Isa. xi. 10. This is the main end of the gospel, the great work of ministers, the gathering of sinners unto Christ. But then there is a gathering unto Christ at the general judgment; and this is the gathering that is here spoken of. This gathering is consequential to the other. Christ will gather none to him at the last day but those that are gathered to him by faith here; he will give orders to gather together unto him all these, and none but these, that have taken hold of his covenant. . . .

I would speak of Christ's owning and acknowledging the saints at his second coming. His owning and acknowledging them is imported in his giving these orders, "*Gather my saints together unto me.*" . . . Now upon this head I mention the things following:—1. Saintship will be the only mark of distinction in that day. There are many marks of distinction now; but these will all cease, and this only will remain. 2. Saintship will then be Christ's badge of honour. Beware of mocking at saintship, or sanctity, holiness, and purity; for it is Christ's badge of honour, the garment with which his followers are clothed, and will be the only badge of honour at the great day. 3. Christ will forget and misken none of the

* Version of Junius & Tremellius.

saints. Many of the saints are forgotten here, it is forgotten that such persons were in the world, but Christ will forget and misken none of them at the great day ; he will give forth a list of all his saints, and give orders to gather them all unto him. 4. He will confess, own, and acknowledge them before his Father, and his holy angels. Matt. x. 32 ; Luke xii. 8 ; Rev. iii. 5 ; They are to go to my Father's house, and they are to go thither in my name, in my right, and at my back ; and so it is necessary I should own and acknowledge them before my Father. But what need is there for his owning them before the angels ? *Ans.* They are to be the angels' companions, and so it is necessary he should own them before the angels. This will be like a testimonial for them unto the angels. Lastly. The evidences of his right to, and propriety in them, will then be made to appear. Mal. iii. 17 : " And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels." It is too late for persons to become his then ; so the meaning is, they shall evidently appear to be mine.—*James Scot, 1773.*

Verse 5.—" *Gather my saints together unto me.*" Our text may be considered as the commission given by the great Judge to his angels—those ministering spirits who do his will, hearkening to the voice of his power. The language of the text is in accordance with that which was uttered by our Lord when, alluding to the coming of the Son of Man, he says, " And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." But previous to this final, this *general* gathering together of his saints to judgment, Jehovah gathers them together in various ways, in various places, and by various means, both of providence and of grace. Previous to his being seated on a throne of judgment, we behold him sitting on a throne of mercy, and we hear him saying, "*Gather my saints together unto me.*" These words lead us to notice—I. The characters described, "*My saints.*" II. The command issued, "*Gather my saints together unto me.*" I. THE CHARACTERS HERE DESCRIBED—" *My saints.*" By the term "*my saints,*" we are to understand *my holy ones*—those who have been sanctified and set apart by God. None of us possess this character by *nature*. We are born sinners, and there is no difference ; but by divine *grace* we experience a change of nature, and consequently a change of name. The title of saint is frequently given to the people of God in derision. " Such an one," says a man of the world, " is one of your saints." But, my brethren, no higher honour can be conferred upon us than to be denominated saints, if we truly deserve that character ; but in what way do we become saints ? We become saints—1. *By divine choice.* The saints are the objects of everlasting love ; their names are written in the Lamb's book of life ; and it is worthy of remark that wherever the people of God are spoken of in sacred Scripture, as the objects of that everlasting love, it is in connection with their *personal sanctification*. Observe, they are not chosen because they *are* saints, nor because it is foreseen that they *will* be so, but they are chosen to *be* saints ; sanctification is the effect and the only evidence of election. We become saints—2. *By a divine change which is the necessary consequence of this election.* An inward, spiritual, supernatural, universal change is effected in the saints by the power of the Holy Ghost. Thus they are renewed in the spirit of their minds, and made partakers of a divine nature. . . . Remember, then, this important truth, that Christians are called by the gospel to be saints ; that you are Christians, not so much by your *orthodoxy* as by your *holiness* ; that you are saints no further than as you are holy in all manner of conversation. 3. *The people of God furnish an evidence of being saints by their godly conduct.* " By their fruits," not by their feelings ; not by their lips, not by their general profession, but, " by their fruits shall ye know them." 4. The character of the saints is evidenced by *divine consecration*. The people of God are called holy inasmuch as they are dedicated to God. It is the duty and the privilege of saints to consecrate themselves to the service of God. Even a heathen philosopher could say, " *I lend myself to the world, but I give myself to the gods.*" But we possess more light and knowledge, and are therefore laid under greater obligations than was Seneca.

II. THE COMMAND ISSUED—" *Gather my saints together unto me.*" Jehovah gathers his saints to himself in various ways. 1. *He gathers them to himself in their conversion.* The commission given by Christ to his ministers is, " Go ye forth into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature," or in other words, "*Gather my saints together unto me.*" The gospel is to be preached to *sinners* in order that they may become *saints*. 2. *Saints are gathered together by God in public worship.* . . .

3. *He gathers his saints together to himself in times of danger.* When storms appear to be gathering around them, he is desirous to screen them from the blast. He says to them, in the language of Isaiah, "Come, my people, and enter into thy chamber—the chamber of my perfections and my promises—enter into thy chamber and shut the doors about thee, and hide thyself until the calamity is overpast."

4. *God gathers his saints together in the service of his church.* Thus Christ collected his apostles together to give them their apostolic commission to go and teach all nations. At the period of the Reformation, the great Head of the church raised up Luther and Calvin, together with other eminent reformers, in order that they might light up a flame in Europe, yea, throughout the world, that the breath of popery should never be able to blow out. 5. *God gathers his saints together in death, and at the resurrection.* "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." This is the commission which death is habitually receiving—"Go, death, and gather such-and-such of my saints unto me." As the gardener enters the garden, and plucks the full-blown flower and the ripened fruit, so Jesus Christ enters the garden of his church and gathers his saints to himself; for he says, "Father, I will that all they whom thou hast given me may be with me, where I am, and behold my glory."—*Condensed from J. Sibree's "Sermon preached at the re-opening of Surrey Chapel, August 29th, 1830."*

Verse 5 (second clause).—"Made," or *ratifying a covenant*; literally, *cutting*, striking, perhaps in allusion to the practice of slaying and dividing victims as a religious rite, accompanying solemn compacts. (See Genesis xv. 10—18). The same usage may be referred to in the following words, *over sacrifice, i. e.*, standing over it; or, *on sacrifice, i. e.*, founding the engagement on a previous appeal to God. There is probably allusion to the great covenant transaction recorded in Ex. xxiv. 4—8. This reference to sacrifice shows clearly that what follows was not intended to discredit or repudiate that essential symbol of the typical or ceremonial system.—*J. A. Alexander.*

Verse 5.—"Made a covenant with me." Formerly soldiers used to take an oath not to flinch from their colours, but faithfully to cleave to their leaders; this they called *sacramentum militare*, a military oath; such an oath lies upon every Christian. It is so essential to the being of a saint, that they are described by this, "*Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me.*" We are not Christians till we have subscribed this covenant, and that without any reservation. When we take upon us the profession of Christ's name, we enlist ourselves in his muster-roll, and by it do promise that we will live and die with him in opposition to all his enemies. . . . He will not entertain us till we resign up ourselves freely to his disposal, that there may be no disputing with his commands afterwards, but, as one under his authority, go and come at his word.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 6.—"The heavens shall declare his righteousness." It is the manner of Scripture to commit the teaching of that which it desires should be most noticeable, and important to the heavens and the earth: for the heavens are seen by all, and their light discovers all things. Here it speaks of the heavens, not the earth, because these are everlasting, but not the earth.—*Geier and Muis in Pool's Synopsis.*

Verse 8.—"I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices;" *i. e.*, for thy neglect of them, but for thy resting in them, sticking in the bark, bringing me the bare shell without the kernel, not referring to the right end and use, but satisfying thyself in the work done.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 8.—"I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices or thy burnt offerings continually before me." Those words "*to have been,*" which our translators supply, may be left out, and the sense remain perfect: or if those words be continued, then the negative particle *not*, is to be reassumed out of the first part of the verse, and the whole read thus, "*I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices or thy burnt offerings not to have been continually before me.*" That is, I will not charge thee with a neglect of outward duty or worship, the inward or spiritual (of which he speaks, ver. 14), being that which is most pleasing unto me.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verses 8, 9.—It is the very remonstrance which our Lord himself makes against the Pharisees of his days, for laying so much stress on the outward observance of their own traditions, the washing of pots and cups and other such like things; the paying of tithes of anise and mint and cummin; the ostentatious fulfilment of all ceremonious observances in the eyes of men, the exalting the shadow to the exclusion of the substance. And have we not seen the like in our own days, even

to the very vestment of the minister, the obeisance of the knee, and the posture of the body ? as if the material church were all in all, and God were no Spirit, that demanded of those that worshipped him that they should worship him in spirit and in truth ; as if the gold and ornaments of the temple were far beyond the hidden man of the heart in that which is incorruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.—*Barton Bouchier.*

Verse 10.—“ *For to me [belongs] every beast of the forest, the cattle in hills of a thousand.*” This last idiomatic phrase may either mean a thousand hills, or hills where the cattle rove by thousands, with probable allusion to the hilly grounds of Bashan beyond Jordan. According to etymology, the noun in the first clause means an *animal*, and that in the second *beasts* or *brutes* in general. But when placed in antithesis, the first denotes a wild beast, and the second domesticated animals or cattle. Both words were necessary to express God’s sovereign propriety in the whole animal creation. Thus understood, the verse assigns a reason for the negative assertion in the one before it. Even if God could stand in need of animal oblations, for his own sake, or for their sake, he would not be under the necessity of coming to man for them, since the whole animal creation is his property and perfectly at his disposal.—*J. A. Alexander.*

Verses 11, 12.—We show our scorn of God’s sufficiency, by secret thoughts of meriting from him by any religious act, as though God could be indebted to us, and obliged by us. As though our devotions could bring a blessedness to God more than he essentially hath ; when indeed “ our goodness extends not to him.” Ps. xvi. 2. Our services to God are rather services to ourselves, and bring a happiness to us, not to God. This secret opinion of merit (though disputed among the Papists, yet) is natural to man ; and this secret self-pleasing, when we have performed any duty, and upon that account expect some fair compensation from God, as having been profitable to him ; God intimates this : “ The wild beasts of the field are mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee : for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof.” He implies, that they wronged his infinite fulness, by thinking that he stood in need of their sacrifices and services, and that he was beholden to them for their adoration of him. All merit implies a moral or natural insufficiency in the person of whom we merit, and our doing something for him, which he could not, or at least so well do for himself. It is implied in our murmuring at God’s dealing with us as a course of cross providences, wherein men think they have deserved better at the hands of God by their service, than to be cast aside and degraded by him. In our prosperity we are apt to have secret thoughts that our enjoyments were the debts God owed us, rather than gifts freely bestowed upon us. Hence it is that men are more unwilling to part with their righteousness than with their sins, and are apt to challenge salvation as a due, rather than beg it as an act of grace.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 12.—“ *If I were hungry,*” etc. Pagan sacrifices were considered as feasts of the gods.—*Daniel Cresswell.*

Verse 13.—“ *Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats ?*” That is, did I want anything I would not tell thee ; but hast thou indeed such gross notions of men, as to imagine that I have appointed and required the blood and flesh of animals for their own sake and not with some design ? Dost thou think I am pleased with these, when they are offered without faith, love, and gratitude ? Nay, offer the sacrifice of praise, etc. Render to me a spiritual and reasonable service, performing thy engagements, and then thou wilt find me a very present help in trouble.—*B. Boothroyd.*

Verse 15.—“ *Call upon me,*” etc. Prayer is like the ring which Queen Elizabeth gave to the Earl of Essex, bidding him if he were in any distress send that ring to her, and she would help him. God commandeth his people if they be in any perplexity to send this ring to him : “ *Call upon me in the day of trouble : I will deliver thee,*” and thou shalt glorify me.”—*George Swinnoek.*

Verse 15.—“ *Call upon me in the day of trouble,*” etc. Who will scrape to a keeper for a piece of venison who may have free access to the master of the game to ask and have ? Hanker not after other helpers, rely on him only, fully trusting him in the use of such means as he prescribeth and affordeth. God is jealous, will have

no co-rival, nor allow thee (in this case) two strings to thy bow. He who worketh all in all must be unto thee all in all : of, through, and to whom are all things, to him be all praise for ever. Rom. xi. 36.—*George Gipps, in "A Sermon preached (before God, and from him) to the Honourable House of Commons, 1645."*

Verse 15.—"Call upon me in the day of trouble," etc. The Lord hath promised his children supply of all good things, yet they must see the means of impetration; by prayer. He feeds the young ravens when they call upon him. Ps. cxlvii. 9. He feeds the young ravens, but first they call upon him. God withholdeth from them that ask not, lest he should give to them that desire not. (Augustine.) David was confident that by God's power he should spring over a wall; yet not without putting his own strength and agility to it. Those things we pray for, we must work for. (Augustine.) The carter in Isidore, when his cart was overthrown, would needs have his god Hercules come down from heaven, to help him up with it; but whilst he forbore to set his own shoulder to it, his cart lay still. Abraham was as rich as any of our aldermen, David as valiant as any of our gentlemen, Solomon as wise as any of our deepest naturians, Susanna as fair as any of our painted pieces. Yet none of them thought that their riches, valour, policy, beauty, or excellent parts could save them; but they stirred the sparks of grace, and bestirred themselves in pious work. And this is our means, if our meaning be to be saved.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 15.—"I will deliver thee:" properly, *I will draw thee forth with my own mighty hand,*" and plant thee in liberty and prosperity.—*Hermann Venema.*

Verse 16.—"Unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes?" etc. "As snow in summer, and as rain in harvest, so honour is not seemly for a fool." Is it not? No wonder then that divine wisdom requires us ourselves to put off the old man (as snakes put off their skins) before we take on us the most honourable office of reproving sin; a duty which above any other brings praise to God, and profit to men; insomuch that God hath not a more honourable work that I know of to set us about. And what think you? Are greasy scullions fit to stand before kings? Are dirty kennel-rakers fit to be plenipotentiaries or ambassadors? Are unclean beasts fit to be made lord-almoners, and sent to bestow the king's favours? Are swine fit to cast pearl, and the very richest pearl of God's royal word? No man dreams it; consequently none can believe himself qualified or commissioned to be a reprover of sin "till he is washed, till he is sanctified, till he is justified in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the Spirit of our God." A lunatick beggar in Athens would not believe but that all the ships in the harbour were his. His mistake exceeded not theirs, who persuade themselves that this richer office is theirs, before they are "alive from the dead," and "born of the Spirit," before they are returned to God or to themselves. The Duke of Alva is said to have complained that, "his king sent him in fetters to fight for him;" because without his pardon given him, and while he was a prisoner, he employed him in war. But the supreme King is a more merciful one, and orders our charity to begin at home; making it our first duty to break off our sins; and then when we have put off these our shackles, go to fight his battles.—*Daniel Burgess (1645—1712—13) in "The Golden Snuffers."*

Verse 16.—"The wicked." By whom are meant, not openly profane sinners; but men under a profession of religion, and indeed who were teachers of others, as appears from the following expostulations with them: the Scribes, Pharisees, and doctors among the Jews, are designed, and so Kimchi interprets it of their wise men, who learnt and taught the law, but did not act according to it.—*John Gill.*

Verse 16.—"What hast thou to do to declare my statutes?" etc. All the mediæval writers teach us, even from the Mosaic law concerning the leper, how the writer of this Psalm only put into words what those statutes expressed in fact. For so it is written: "The leper in whom the plague is, . . . he shall put a covering upon his upper lip." As they all, following Origen, say: Let them who are themselves of polluted lips, take good heed not to teach others. Or, to take it in the opposite way, see how Isaiah would not speak to his people, because he was a man of polluted lips, and he dwelt among a people of polluted lips, till they had been touched with the living coal from the altar; and by that, as by a sacrament of the Old Testament, a sentence of absolution had been pronounced upon them.—*J. M. Neale.*

Verse 16 (second clause).—Emphasis is laid on the phrase, *to declare God's statutes*, which both denotes such an accurate knowledge of them as one may obtain by numbering them, and a diligent and public review of them. Properly speaking the word is derived from the Arabic, and signifies *to reckon in dust*, for the ancients were accustomed to calculate in *dust* finely sprinkled over tablets or the Abacus.—*Hermann Venema*.

Verse 16.—“*But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do . . . to take my covenant into thy mouth?*” For whom is the covenant made but for the wicked? If men were not wicked or sinful, what needed there a covenant of grace? The covenant is for the wicked, and the covenant brings grace enough to pardon those who are most wicked; why, then, doth the Lord say to the wicked, “*What hast thou to do to take my covenant into thy mouth?*” Observe what follows, and his meaning is expounded: “*Seeing thou hatest to be reformed.*” As if God had said, Thou wicked man, who protectest thy sin, and holdest it close, refusing to return and hating to reform; what hast thou to do to meddle with my covenant? Lay off thy defiled hands. He that is resolved to hold his sin takes hold of the covenant in vain, or rather he lets it go, while he seems to hold it. Woe unto those who sue for mercy while they neglect duty.—*Joseph Caryl*.

Verse 16.—When a minister does not do what he teaches, this makes him a vile person; nay, this makes him ridiculous, like Lucian's apothecary, who had medicines in his shop to cure the cough, and told others that he had them, and yet was troubled with it himself. With what a forehead canst thou stand in a pulpit and publish the laws of God, and undertake the charge of souls, that when thine own nakedness appears, when thy tongue is of a larger size than thy hands, thy ministry is divided against itself, thy courses give thy doctrine the lie; thou sayest that men must be holy, and thy deeds do declare thy mouth's hypocrisy; thou doest more mischief than a hundred others.—*William Fenner*.

Verse 17.—“*And castest my words behind thee.*” Thou castest away contemptuously, with disgust and detestation, as idols are cast out of a city; or as Moses indignantly dashed to the earth the tables of the law.—*Martin Geier*.

Verse 17.—“*My words:*” apparently the ten commandments, accustomed to be called the *ten words*, by which God is often said to have made his covenant with Israel.—*Hermann Venema*.

Verse 18.—“*When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentedst with him;*” or *didst run with him*. This was literally true of the Scribes and Pharisees; they devoured widows' houses, and robbed them of their substance, under a pretext of long prayers; they consented to the deeds of Barabbas, a robber, when they preferred him to Jesus Christ; and they joined with the thieves on the cross in reviling him; and, in a spiritual sense, they stole away the word of the Lord, every man from his neighbour; took away the key of knowledge from the people, and put false glosses upon the sacred writings.—*John Gill*.

Verse 18.—“*Thou consentedst with him;*” became his accomplice. Συμπρέχες αὐτῷ, LXX, i.e., you helped him to carry off his booty and to make his escape.—*Samuel Horsley*.

Verse 18.—“*Thou consentedst with him.*” Or, thou runnest along with him. “*Hasst been partaker with;*” namely, thou art his companion; a term taken from commerce of merchants, or from banquets made after the ancient manner, to which divers did contribute, and had their shares therein.—*John Diodati*.

Verse 18 (last clause).—To give entertainment to them we know to be dissolute, is to communicate with their sins.—*Thomas Adams*.

Verse 19.—“*Thou givest thy mouth to evil,*” etc. “*Thou givest.*” Heb., *thou sendest forth*; to wit, free; for the word is used of men's dismissing their wives or their servants, whom they left to their freedom. Thou hast an unbridled tongue, and castest off all restraints of God's law, and of thine own conscience, and givest thy tongue liberty to speak what thou pleasest, though it be offensive and dishonourable to God, and injurious to thy neighbour, or to thy own soul; which is justly produced as an evidence of their hypocrisy. “*To evil,*” either to sinful or mischievous speeches. “*Frameth deceit,*” i.e., uttereth lies or fair words, where-to to circumvent those who deal with them.—*Matthew Pool*.

Verse 19.—The ninth commandment is now added to the other two, as being habitually violated by the person here addressed.—*J. A. Alexander*.

Verse 20.—" *Thou sittest and speakest,*" etc. A man may both speak and do evil while he sits still and doth nothing; an idle posture may serve the turn for such work as that.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 20.—" *Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother,*" etc. When you are sitting still, and have nothing else to do, you are ever injuring your neighbour with your slanderous speech. Your table-talk is abuse of your nearest friends.—*Samuel Horsley.*

Verse 20.—" *Thine own mother's son.*" To understand the force of this expression, it is necessary to bear in mind that polygamy was allowed amongst the Israelites. Those who were born to the same father were all brethren, but a yet more intimate relationship subsisted between those who had the same mother as well as the same father.—*French and Skinner.*

Verse 21.—" *These things hast thou done, and I kept silence.*" Neither sleep nor slumber, nor connivance, nor neglect of anything can be incident to God. Because he doth not execute present judgment and visible destruction upon sinners, therefore blasphemy presumptuously inferreth—will God trouble himself about such petty matters? So they imagined of their imaginary Jupiter. *Non vacat exiguis rebus adesse Jovem.* What a narrow and finite apprehension this is of God! He that causeth and produceth every action—shall he not be present at every action? What can we do without him, that cannot move but in him? He that takes notice of sparrows, and numbers the seeds which the very ploughman thrusts in the ground, can any action of man escape his knowledge, or slip from his contemplation? He may seem to wink at things, but never shuts his eyes. He doth not always manifest a reprehensive knowledge, yet he always retains an apprehensive knowledge. Though David smote not Shimei cursing, yet he heard Shimei cursing. As judges often determine to hear, but do not hear to determine; so though God does not see to like, yet he likes to see.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 21.—" *Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself.*" Such is the blindness and corruption of our nature, that we have very deformed and misshapen thoughts of him, till with the eye of faith we see his face in the glass of the word; and therefore Mr. Perkins affirms, that all men who ever came of Adam (Christ alone excepted) are by nature atheists; because at the same time that they acknowledge God, they deny his power, presence, and justice, and allow him to be only what pleaseth themselves. Indeed, it is natural for every man to desire to accommodate his lusts with such conception of God as may be most favourable to and suit best with them. God charges some for this: " *Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself.*" Sinners do with God as the Ethiopians do with angels, whom they picture with black faces that they may be like themselves.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 21.—" *Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself.*" This men do when they plead for sins as little, as venial, as that which is below God to take notice of; because they themselves think it so, therefore God must think it so too. Men, with a giant-like pride, would climb into the throne of the Almighty, and establish a contradiction to the will of God by making his own will, and not God's, the square and rule of his actions. This principle commenced, and took date in Paradise, when Adam would not depend upon the will of God revealed to him, but upon himself and his own will, and thereby makes himself as God.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 21.—" *I will set them in order before thine eyes.*" This is to be understood *more militari*, when sins shall be set in rank and file, in bloody array against thy soul; or *more forensi*, when they shall be set in order as so many indictments for thy rebellion and treason.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 21.—" *And set them in order before thine eyes:*" as if he should say, Thou thoughtest all thy sins were scattered and dispersed; that there was not a sin to be found; that they should never be rallied and brought together; but I assure thee I will make an army of those sins, a complete army of them, I will set them in rank and file before thine eyes; and see how thou canst behold, much less contend with, such an host as they. Take heed therefore you do not levy war against your own souls; that's the worst of all civil or intestine wars. If any army of divine terrors be so fearful, what will an army of black, hellish sins be? when God shall bring whole regiments of sins against you—here a regiment of oaths, there a regiment of lies, there a third of false dealings, here a troop of filthy actions, and there a legion

of unclean or profane thoughts, all at once fighting against thy life and everlasting peace.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 21.—Atheists do mock at those Scriptures which tell us that we shall give account of all our deeds ; but God shall make them find the truth of it in that day of their reckoning. It is as easy for him to make their forgetful minds remember as to create the minds in them. When he applieth his register to their forgetful spirits they shall see all their forgotten sins. When the printer presseth clean paper upon his oiled irons, it receiveth the print of every letter : so when God shall stamp their minds with his register, they shall see all their former sins in a view. The hand was ever writing against Belshazzar, as he was ever sinning, though he saw it not till the cup was filled : so is it to the wicked ; their sins are numbered, and themselves weighed, and see not till they be divided by a fearful waking.—*William Struther.*

Verse 21 (last clause).—“ *God setteth his sins in order before his eyes.*” *Imprimis*, the sin of his conception. *Item*, the sins of his childhood. *Item*, of his youth. *Item*, of his man’s estate, etc. Or, *Imprimis*, sins against the first table. *Item*, sins against the second ; so many of ignorance, so many of knowledge, so many of presumption, severally sorted by themselves. He committed sins confusedly, huddling them up in heaps ; but God *sets them in order*, and methodizes them to his hands.—*Thomas Fuller.*

Verse 22.—“ *Now consider this, ye that forget God,*” etc. What is less than a grain of sand ? Yet when it comes to be multiplied, what is heavier than the sands of the sea ? A little sum multiplied rises high ; so a little sin unrepented of will damn us, as one leak in the ship, if it be not well looked to, will drown us. “ *Little sins,*” as the world calls them, but great sins against the majesty of God Almighty, whose majesty, against which they are committed, doth accent and enhance them, if not repented of, will damn. One would think it no great matter *to forget God*, yet it has a *heavy doom* attending on it. The non-improvement of talents, the non-exercise of grace, the world looks upon as a small thing ; yet we read of him who *hid his talent in the earth*—he had not spent it, only not trading it is sentenced.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 22.—“ *Lest I tear you in pieces.*” This is a metaphorical expression, taken from the strength and irresistible fury of a lion, from which the interference of the shepherd can supply no protection, or defence, for his flock.—*William Walford.*

Verse 23.—“ *Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me.*” Thanksgiving is a God-exalting work. Though nothing can add the least cubit to God’s essential glory, yet praise exalts him in the eyes of others. Praise is a setting forth of God’s honour, a lifting up of his name, a displaying the trophy of his goodness, a proclaiming his excellency, a spreading his renown, a breaking open the box of ointment, whereby the sweet savour and perfume of God’s name is sent abroad into the world. “ *To him that ordereth his conversation aright.*” Though the main work of religion lies within, yet “ *our light must so shine,*” that others may behold it : the foundation of sincerity is in the heart, yet its beautiful frontispiece appears in the conversation. The saints are called “ *jewels,*” because they cast a sparkling lustre in the eyes of others. An upright Christian is like Solomon’s temple, gold within and without : sincerity is a holy leaven, which if it be in the *heart* will work itself into the life, and make it swell and rise as high as heaven. Phil. iii. 20.—*Thomas Watson.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—It unspeakably concerns *all* men to know what God has spoken.—*W. S. Plumer.*

Verse 1.—I. Who has spoken ? The mighty, not men or angels, but God himself. II. To whom has he spoken ? To all nations—all ranks—all characters. This calls for, 1. Reverence—it is the voice of God. 2. Hope—because he condescends to speak to rebels. III. Where has he spoken ? 1. In creation. 2. In providence. 3. In his word.—*G. R.*

Verses 1–6.—I. The court called in the name of the King of kings. II. The judgment set, and the judge taking his seat ; v. 2, 3. III. The parties summoned ; v. 8. IV. The issue of this solemn trial foretold ; v. 6.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verses 1—15.—I. God's call to man. II. Man's call to God.

Verse 2.—I. The internal beauty of Zion. 1. *Positive* beauty of wisdom—holiness—love. 2. *Comparative* with the beauty of Paradise and the heaven of angels. 3. *Superlative*—all the perfections of God combined. II. Its external glory. Out of it God hath shined. 1. On this world. 2. On gracious souls. 3. On angels who desire to look, etc. 4. On the universe. "All the creatures heard I," etc.—*G. R.*

Verse 4.—1. What God will do for his people. He will judge them. 1. Deliver. 2. Defend. 3. Uphold. II. The means at his disposal for this purpose. "He shall call," etc.—heaven and earth are subservient to him for the good of his church.—*G. R.*

Verse 4.—The judgment of the visible church. It will be by God himself, public, searching—with fire and wind, exact, final.

Verse 5.—The great family gathering. I. Who are gathered. II. How they are gathered. III. To whom. IV. When they are gathered.

Verse 5 (last clause).—I. The covenant. II. The sacrifice which ratifies it. III. How we may be said to make it.

Verse 6 (last clause).—Then slander will not pervert the sentence, undue severity will not embitter it, partiality will not excuse, falsehood will not deceive, justice will surely be done.

Verse 7.—Sins of God's people specially against God, and only known to God. A searching subject.

Verses 13—15.—What sacrifices are not, and what are acceptable with God.

Verse 15.—I. The occasion—"trouble." II. The command—"call upon me." III. The promise—"I will deliver thee." IV. The design—"thou shalt," etc.—*G. R.*

Verse 15.—"Thou shalt glorify me." This we do by praying, and by praising when prayer is heard; as also by confidence in his promises, submission to his chastisements, concern for his honour, attachment to his cause, affection to his people, and by continual obedience to his commands.

Verse 15.—I. A special invitation as to person and time. II. Special promise to those accepting it. III. Special duty involved when the promise is fulfilled.

Verses 16, 17.—I. The prohibition given. 1. The prohibited *things*—"declare my statutes." "Take my covenant," etc. (1.) Preaching. (2.) Teaching, as in Sunday-schools. (3.) Praying. (4.) Attending ordinances. 2. Prohibited *persons*. Wicked preachers, etc., while they continue in wickedness. II. The reason assigned; v. 17. 1. No self-application of the truth. 2. Inward hatred of it. 3. Outward rejection.—*G. R.*

Verse 17.—I. *The fatal sign*. 1. Hating to be taught. 2. Hating what is taught. II. *What it indicates*. 1. Pride. 2. Contempt of God. 3. Indifference to truth. 4. Atheism at heart. 5. Deadness of conscience. II. *What it leads to*. See verse 22.

Verses 17, 18.—Rejection of salutary instruction leads sooner or later to open transgression. Instances, reasons, inferential warnings.

Verses 20, 21.—I. Man speaking and God silent. II. God speaking and man silent.

Verse 21.—I. God leaves men for a time to themselves. II. They judge of God on this account by themselves. III. He will in due time reveal their whole selves to themselves. "I will reprove," etc.—*G. R.*

Verses 21, 23.—Note the alternative; a life rightly ordered now, or sins set in order hereafter.

Verse 22.—I. The accusation—"Ye that forget God," his omniscience, his power, his justice, his goodness, his mercy, his word, his great salvation. II. The admonition—"Consider this," rouse yourselves from your forgetfulness into serious reflection. III. The condemnation—"Lest," etc. 1. The awfulness. "Tear," as a lion or eagle its prey—tear body and soul. 2. Its irresistibility—"None to deliver."—*G. R.*

Verse 23.—I. Salvation is the work of God. II. The evidence of salvation is holiness of heart and life. III. The effect of that evidence is praise. IV. The tendency of that praise is to glorify God. God is not glorified by the doubts, and fears, and murmurings of his people, but by their praise.—*G. R.*

Verse 23 (last clause).—The true order of life. I. That first which is first. II. That most which is most. III. That ever which is ever. IV. That all which is all.