

## PSALM LXV.

**TITLE.**—This title is very similar to many we have before studied. To the Chief Musician. It is consigned to the care of the usual overseer of song. When a man does his work well, there is no use in calling in others for novelty's sake. A Psalm and Song of David. The Hebrew calls it a Shur and Mizmor, a combination of psalm and song, which may be best described by the term, "A Lyrical Poem." In this case the psalm may be said or sung, and be equally suitable. We have had two such Psalms before, Psalms XXX. and XLVIII., and we have now the first of a little series of four following each other. It was meet that Psalms of pleading and longing should be followed by hymns of praise.

**SUBJECT AND DIVISIONS.**—David sings of the glory of God in his church, and in the fields of nature : here is the song both of grace and providence. It may be that he intended hereby to commemorate a remarkably plentiful harvest, or to compose a harvest hymn for all ages. It appears to have been written after a violent rebellion had been quelled, verse 7, and foreign enemies had been subdued by signal victory, verse 8. It is one of the most delightful hymns in any language.

We shall view in the first four verses the way of approach to God, then from 5 to 8 we shall see the Lord in answer to prayer performing wonders for which he is praised, and then from 9—13 we shall sing the special harvest-song.

### EXPOSITION.

**P**RAISE waiteth for thee, O God, in Zion : and unto thee shall the vow be performed.

2 O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come.

3 Iniquities prevail against me : as for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away.

4 Blessed is the man whom thou chooseth, and causeth to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts : we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple.

1. "Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Zion." Though Babylon adores Antichrist, Zion remains faithful to her King ; to him, and to him only, she brings her perpetual oblation of worship. Those who have seen in Zion the blood of sprinkling, and know themselves to belong to the church of the firstborn, can never think of her without presenting humble praise to Zion's God ; his mercies are too numerous and precious to be forgotten. The praises of the saints wait for a signal from the divine Lord, and when he shows his face they burst forth at once. Like a company of musicians gathered to welcome and honour a prince, who wait till he makes his appearance, so do we reserve our best praises till the Lord reveals himself in the assembly of his saints ; and, indeed, till he shall descend from heaven in the day of his appearing. Praise also waits like a servant or courtier in the royal halls—gratitude is humble and obedient. Praise attends the Lord's pleasure, and continues to bless him, whether he shows tokens of present favour or no ; she is not soon wearied, but all through the night she sings on in sure hope that the morning cometh. We shall continue to wait on, tuning our harps, amid the tears of earth ; but O what harmonies will those be which we will pour forth, when the home-bringing is come, and the King shall appear in his glory. The passage may be rendered "praise is silent for thee ;" it is calm, peaceful, and ready to adore thee in quietness. Or, it may mean, our praise is but silence compared with thy deservings, O God. Or, in solemn silence we worship thee, because our praise cannot be uttered ; accept, therefore, our silence as praise. Or, we are so engrossed in thy praise, that to all other things we are dumb ; we have no tongue for anything but thee. Perhaps the poet best expressed the thought of the Psalmist when he said—

"A sacred reverence checks our songs,  
And praise sits silent on our tongues."

Certainly, when the soul is most filled with adoring awe, she is least content with her own expressions, and feels most deeply how inadequate are all mortal songs to proclaim the divine goodness. A church, bowed into silent adoration by a profound sense of divine mercy, would certainly offer more real praise than the sweetest voices aided by pipes and strings; yet, vocal music is not to be neglected, for this sacred hymn was meant to be sung. It is well before singing to have the soul placed in a waiting attitude, and to be humbly conscious that our best praise is but silence compared with Jehovah's glory.

"*And unto thee shall the vow be performed.*" Perhaps a special vow made during a season of drought and political danger. Nations and churches must be honest and prompt in redeeming their promises to the Lord, who cannot be mocked with impunity. So, too, must individuals. We are not to forget our vows, or to redeem them to be seen of men—*unto God* alone must they be performed, with a single eye to his acceptance. Believers are all under covenant, which they made at conversion, and have renewed upon being baptised, joining the church, and coming to the table, and some of them are under special pledges which they entered into under peculiar circumstances: these are to be piously and punctually fulfilled. We ought to be very deliberate in promising, and very punctilious in performing. A vow unkept will burn the conscience like a hot iron. Vows of service, of donation, of praise, or whatever they may be, are no trifles; and in the day of grateful praise they should, without fail, be fulfilled to the utmost of our power.

2. "*O thou that hearest prayer.*" This is thy name, thy nature, thy glory. God not only has heard, but is now hearing prayer, and always must hear prayer, since he is an immutable being, and never changes in his attributes. What a delightful title for the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! Every right and sincere prayer is as surely heard as it is offered. Here the Psalmist brings in the personal pronoun "*thou,*" and we beg the reader to notice how often "*thou,*" "*thee,*" and "*thy,*" occur in this hymn; David evidently believed in a personal God, and did not adore a mere idea or abstraction. "*Unto thee shall all flesh come.*" This shall encourage men of all nations to become suppliants to the one and only God, who proves his Deity by answering those who seek his face. Flesh they are, and therefore weak; frail and sinful, they need to pray; and thou art such a God as they need, for thou art touched with compassion, and dost condescend to hear the cries of poor flesh and blood. Many come to thee now in humble faith, and are filled with good, but more shall be drawn to thee by the attractiveness of thy love, and at length the whole earth shall bow at thy feet. To come to God is the life of true religion; we come weeping in conversion, hoping in supplication, rejoicing in praise, and delighting in service. False gods must in due time lose their deluded votaries, for man when enlightened will not be longer befooled; but each one who tries the true God is encouraged by his own success to persuade others also, and so the kingdom of God comes to men, and men come to it.

3. "*Iniquities prevail against me.*" Others accuse and slander me, and in addition my own sins rise up and would beset me to my confusion, were it not for the remembrance of the atonement which covers every one of my iniquities. Our sins would, but for grace, prevail against us in the court of divine justice, in the court of conscience, and in the battle of life. Unhappy is the man who despises these enemies, and worse still is he who counts them his friends! He is best instructed who knows their deadly power, and flees for refuge to him who pardons iniquity. "*As for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away.*" Thou dost cover them all, for thou hast provided a covering propitiation, a mercy-seat which wholly covers thy law. Note the word "*our,*" the faith of the one penitent who speaks for himself in the first clause, here embraces all the faithful in Zion; and he is so persuaded of the largeness of forgiving love that he leads all the saints to sing of the blessing. What a comfort that iniquities which prevail against us, do not prevail against God. They would keep us away from God, but he sweeps them away from before himself and us; they are too strong for us, but not for our Redeemer, who is mighty, yea, and almighty to save. It is worthy of note that as the priest washed in the laver before he sacrificed, so David leads us to obtain purification from sin before we enter upon the service of song. When we have washed our robes and made them white in his blood, then shall we acceptably sing, "*Worthy is the Lamb that was slain.*"

4. "*Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee.*" After cleansing comes benediction, and truly this is a very rich one. It comprehends

both election, effectual calling, access, acceptance, and sonship. First, we are chosen of God, according to the good pleasure of his will, and this alone is blessedness. Then, since we cannot and will not come to God of ourselves, he works graciously in us, and attracts us powerfully; he subdues our unwillingness, and removes our inability by the almighty workings of his transforming grace. This also is no slight blessedness. Furthermore, we, by his divine drawings, are made nigh by the blood of his Son, and brought near by his Spirit, into intimate fellowship; so that we have access with boldness, and are no longer as those who are afar off by wicked works: here also is unrivalled blessedness. To crown all, we do not come nigh in peril of dire destruction, as Nadab and Abihu did, but we approach as chosen and accepted ones, to become dwellers in the divine household: this is heaped-up blessedness, vast beyond conception. But dwelling in the house we are treated as sons, for the servant abideth not in the house for ever, but the son abideth ever. Behold what manner of love and blessedness the Father has bestowed upon us that we may dwell in his house, and go no more out for ever. Happy men who dwell at home with God. May both writer and reader be such men. "*That he may dwell in thy courts.*" Acceptance leads to abiding: God does not make a temporary choice, or give and take; his gifts and calling are without repentance. He who is once admitted to God's courts shall inhabit them for ever; he shall be

"No more a stranger or a guest,  
But like a child at home."

Permanence gives preciousness. Terminating blessings are but half-blessings. To dwell in the courts of the Great King is to be ennobled; to dwell there for ever is to be emparadised: yet such is the portion of every man whom God has chosen and caused to approach unto him, though once his iniquities prevailed against him.

5 *By terrible things in righteousness wilt thou answer us, O God of our salvation; who art the confidence of all the ends of the earth, and of them that are afar off upon the sea:*

6 *Which by his strength setteth fast the mountains; being girded with power:*

7 *Which stilleth the noise of the seas, the noise of their waves, and the tumult of the people.*

8 *They also that dwell in the uttermost parts are afraid at thy tokens: thou makest the outgoings of the morning and evening to rejoice.*

5. "*By terrible things in righteousness wilt thou answer us, O God of our salvation.*" God's memorial is that he hears prayer, and his glory is that he answers it in a manner fitted to inspire awe in the hearts of his people. The saints, in the commencement of the Psalm, offered praise in reverential silence; and now, in the like awe-stricken spirit, they receive answers to their prayers. The direct allusion here is, no doubt, to the Lord's overthrow of the enemies of his people in ways calculated to strike terror into all beholders; his judgments in their severe righteousness were calculated to excite fear both among friends and foes. Who would not fear a God whose blows are so crushing? We do not always know what we are asking for when we pray; when the answer comes, the veritable answer, it is possible that we may be terrified by it. We seek sanctification, and trial will be the reply: we ask for more faith, and more affliction is the result: we pray for the spread of the gospel, and persecution scatters us. Nevertheless, it is good to ask on, for nothing which the Lord grants in his love can do us any harm. Terrible things will turn out to be blessed things after all, when they come in answer to prayer.

See in this verse how righteousness and salvation are united, the terrible things with the gracious answers. Where but in Jesus could they be blended? The God who saves may answer our prayers in a way which puts unbelief into a flutter; but when faith spies the Saviour, she remembers that "things are not what they seem," and she is of good courage. He who is terrible is also our refuge from terror when we see him in the Well-beloved. "*Who art the confidence of all the ends of the earth.*" The dwellers in the far-off isles trust in God; those most remote from Zion yet confide in the ever living Jehovah. Even those who dwell in countries, frozen or torrid, where nature puts on her varied terrors, and those who see dread

wonders on the deep, yet fly from the terrors of God and place their confidence in the God of terrors. His arm is strong to smite, but also strong to save. "*And of them that are afar off upon the sea.*" Both elements have their elect bands of believers. If the land gave Moses elders, the sea gave Jesus apostles. Noah, when all was ocean, was as calm with God as Abraham in his tent. All men are equally dependent upon God: the seafaring man is usually most conscious of this, but in reality he is not more so than the husbandman, nor the husbandman than anyone else. There is no room for self-confidence on land or sea, since God is the only true confidence of men on earth or ocean. Faith is a plant of universal growth, it is a tree of life on shore and a plant of renown at sea; and, blessed be God, those who exercise faith in him anywhere shall find that he is swift and strong to answer their prayers. A remembrance of this should quicken our devotions when we approach unto the Lord our God.

6. "*Which by his strength setteth fast the mountains.*" He, as it were, fixed them in their sockets, and preserved them from falling by earthquake or storm. The firmest owe their stability to him. Philosophers of the forget-God school are too much engrossed with their laws of upheaval to think of the Upheaver. Their theories of volcanic action and glacier action, etc., etc., are frequently used as bolts and bars to shut the Lord out of his own world. Our poet is of another mind, and sees God's hand settling Alps and Andes on their bases, and therefore he sings in his praise. Let me for ever be just such an unphilosophic simpleton as David was, for he was nearer akin to Solomon than any of our modern theorists. "*Being girded with power.*" The Lord is so himself, and he therefore casts a girdle of strength around the hills, and there they stand, braced, belted, and bulwarked with his might. The poetry is such as would naturally suggest itself to one familiar with mountain scenery; power everywhere meets you, sublimity, massive grandeur, and stupendous force are all around you; and God is there, the author and source of all.

Let us learn that we poor puny ones, if we wish for true establishment, must go to the strong for strength. Without him, the everlasting hills would crumble; how much more shall all our plans, projects, and labours come to decay. Repose, O believer, where the mountains find their bases—viz., in the undiminished might of the Lord God.

7. "*Which stilleth the noise of the seas.*" His soft breath smooths the sea into a glass, and the mountainous waves into ripples. God does this. Calms are of the God of peace; it needs not that we look for a hurricane when it is said that he cometh. He walked of old in the garden in the cool of the day; he is resting even now, for his great seventh day is not yet over, and he is always "the Lord and giver of peace." Let mariners magnify the God who rules the waves. "*The noise of their waves.*" Each separate brawler amid the riot of the storm is quieted by the divine voice. "*And the tumult of the people.*" Nations are as difficult to rule as the sea itself, they are as fitful, treacherous, restless, and furious; they will not brook the bridle nor be restrained by laws. Canute had not a more perilous sea by the rising billows than many a king and emperor has had when the multitude have been set on mischief, and have grown weary of their lords. God alone is King of nations. The sea obeys him, and the yet more tumultuous nations are kept in check by him. Human society owes its preservation to the continued power of God: evil passions would secure its instant dissolution; envy, ambition, and cruelty would create anarchy to-morrow, if God did not prevent; whereof we have had clear proof in the various French revolutions. Glory be unto God who maintains the fabric of social order, and checks the wicked, who would fain overthrow all things. The child of God in seasons of trouble should fly at once to him who stills the seas: nothing is too hard for him.

8. "*They also that dwell in the uttermost parts are afraid at thy tokens.*" Signs of God's presence are not few, nor confined to any one region. Zembla sees them as well as Zion, and Terra del Fuego as surely as the Terra Sacra. These tokens are sometimes terrible phenomena in nature—such as earthquake, pestilence, tornado, or storm; and when these are seen, even the most barbarous people tremble before God. At other times they are dread works of providence—such as the overthrow of Sodom, and the destruction of Pharaoh. The rumour of these judgments travels to earth's utmost verge, and impresses all people with a fear and trembling at such a just and holy God. We bless God that we are not afraid but rejoice at his tokens; with solemn awe we are glad when we behold his mighty acts. We fear,

but not with slavish fear. "Thou makest the outgoings of the morning and evening to rejoice." East and west are made happy by God's favour to the dwellers therein. Our rising hours are bright with hope, and our evening moments mellow with thanksgiving. Whether the sun go forth or come in we bless God and rejoice in the gates of the day. When the fair morning blushes with the rosy dawn we rejoice; and when the calm evening smiles restfully we rejoice still. We do not believe that the dew weeps the death of the day; we only see jewels bequeathed by the departing day for its successor to gather up from the earth. Faith, when she sees God, rounds the day with joy. She cannot fast, because the bridegroom is with her. Night and day are alike to her, for the same God made them and blessed them. She would have no rejoicing if God did not make her glad; but, blessed be his name, he never ceases to make joy for those who find their joy in him.

9 Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it: thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God, *which* is full of water: thou preparest them corn, when thou hast so provided for it.

10 Thou waterest the ridges thereof abundantly: thou settlest the furrows thereof: thou makest it soft with showers: thou blessest the springing thereof.

11 Thou crownest the year with thy goodness; and thy paths drop fatness.

12 They drop *upon* the pastures of the wilderness; and the little hills rejoice on every side.

13 The pastures are clothed with flocks; the valleys also are covered over with corn; they shout for joy, they also sing.

9. "Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it." God's visits leave a blessing behind; this is more than can be said of every visitor. When the Lord goes on visitations of mercy, he has abundance of necessary things for all his needy creatures. He is represented here as going round the earth, as a gardener surveys his garden, and as giving water to every plant that requires it, and that not in small quantities, but until the earth is drenched and soaked with a rich supply of refreshment. O Lord, in this manner visit thy church, and my poor, parched, and withering piety. Make thy grace to overflow towards my graces; water me, for no plant of thy garden needs it more.

" My stock lies dead, and no increase  
Doth my dull husbandry improve;  
O let thy graces without cease  
Drop from above."

"Thou greatly enrichest it." Millions of money could not so much enrich mankind as the showers do. The soil is made rich by the rain, and then yields its riches to man; but God is the first giver of all. How truly rich are those who are enriched with grace; this is great riches. "With the river of God, which is full of water. The brooks of earth are soon dried up, and all human resources, being finite, are liable to failure; but God's provision for the supply of rain is inexhaustible; there is no bottom or shore to his river. The deluge poured from the clouds yesterday may be succeeded by another to-morrow, and yet the waters above the firmament shall not fail. How true is this in the realm of grace; there "the river of God is full of water," and "of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace." The ancients in their fables spake of Pactolus, which flowed over sands of gold; but this river of God, which flows above and from which the rain is poured, is far more enriching; for, after all, the wealth of men lies mainly in the harvest of their fields, without which even gold would be of no value whatever. "Thou preparest them corn." Corn is specially set apart to be the food of man. In its various species it is a divine provision for the nutriment of our race, and is truly called the staff of life. We hear in commerce of "prepared corn-flour," but God prepared it long before man touched it. As surely as the manna was prepared of God for the tribes, so certainly is corn made and sent by God for our daily use. What is the difference whether we gather wheat-ears or manna, and what matters it if the first comes upward to us, and the second downward? God is as much

present beneath as above ; it is as great a marvel that food should rise out of the dust, as that it should fall from the skies. "*When thou hast so provided for it.*" When all is prepared to produce corn, the Lord puts the finishing stroke, and the grain is forthcoming ; not even, when all the material is prepared, will the wheat be perfected without the continuous and perfecting operation of the Most High. Blessed be the Great Householder ; he does not suffer the harvest to fail, he supplies the teeming myriads of earth with bread enough from year to year. Even thus does he vouchsafe heavenly food to his redeemed ones : "He hath given meat unto them that fear him ; he is ever mindful of his covenant."

10. "*Thou waterest the ridges thereof abundantly : thou settlest the furrows thereof.*" Ridge and furrow are drenched. The ridges beaten down and settled, and the furrows made to stand like gutters flooded to the full. "*Thou makest it soft with showers.*" The drought turned the clods into iron, but the plenteous showers dissolve and loosen the soil. "*Thou blessest the springing thereof.*" Vegetation enlivened by the moisture leaps into vigour, the seed germinates and sends forth its green shoot, and the smell is that of a field which the Lord has blessed. All this may furnish us with a figure of the operations of the Holy Spirit in beating down high thoughts, filling our lowly desires, softening the soul, and causing every holy thing to increase and spread.

11. "*Thou crownest the year with thy goodness.*" The harvest is the plainest display of the divine bounty, and the crown of the year. The Lord himself conducts the coronation, and sets the golden coronal upon the brow of the year. Or, we may understand the expression to mean that God's love encircles the year as with a crown ; each month has its gems, each day its pearl. Unceasing kindness girdles all time with a belt of love. The providence of God in its visitations makes a complete circuit, and surrounds the year. "*And thy paths drop fatness.*" The footsteps of God, when he visits the land with rain, create fertility. It was said of the Tartar hordes, that grass grew no more where their horses' feet had trodden ; so, on the contrary, it may be said that the march of Jehovah, the Fertiliser, may be traced by the abundance which he creates. For spiritual harvests we must look to him, for he alone can give "times of refreshing" and feasts of Pentecost.

12. "*They drop upon the pastures of the wilderness.*" Not alone where man is found do the showers descend, but away in the lone places, where only wild animals have their haunt, there the bountiful Lord makes the refreshing rain to drop. Ten thousand oases smile while the Lord of mercy passes by. The birds of the air, the wild goats, and the fleet stags rejoice as they drink from the pools, new filled from heaven. The most lonely and solitary souls God will visit in love. "*And the little hills rejoice on every side.*" On all hands the eminences are girt with gladness. Soon they languish under the effects of drought, but after a season of rain they laugh again with verdure.

13. "*The pastures are clothed with flocks.*" The clothing of man first clothes the fields. Pastures appear to be quite covered with numerous flocks when the grass is abundant. "*The valleys also are covered over with corn.*" The arable as well as the pasture land is rendered fruitful. God's clouds, like ravens, bring us both bread and flesh. Grazing flocks and waving crops are equally the gifts of the Preserver of men, and for both praise should be rendered. Sheep-shearing and harvest should both be holiness unto the Lord. "*They shout for joy.*" The bounty of God makes the earth vocal with his praise, and in opened ears it lifts up a joyous shout. The cattle low out the divine praises, and the rustling ears of grain sing a soft sweet melody unto the Lord.

"Ye forests bend, ye harvests wave to him ;  
Breathe your still song into the reaper's heart,  
As home he goes beneath the joyous moon,  
Bleat out afresh, ye hills ; ye mossy rocks  
Retain the sound ; the broad responsive low  
Ye valleys raise ; for the GREAT SHEPHERD reigns,  
And his *unsuffering* kingdom yet will come."

"*They also sing.*" The voice of nature is articulate to God ; it is not only a shout, but a song. Well ordered are the sounds of animate creation as they combine with the equally well-tuned ripple of the waters, and sighings of the wind. Nature has no discords. Her airs are melodious, her chorus is full of harmony. All, all is for the Lord ; the world is a hymn to the Eternal, blessed is he who, hearing, joins in it, and makes one singer in the mighty chorus.

## EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS.

From Psalm lxxv. onwards we find ourselves in the midst of a series of Psalms which, with a varying arrangement of the words, are inscribed both *שִׁיר* and *מִזְמוֹר* (lxxv.—lxxviii.) The two words signify a *Psalm-song*. This series, as is universally the case, is arranged according to the community of prominent watchwords. In Psalm lxxv. 2 we read: "*To thee is the vow paid;*" and in lxxvi. 13: "*I will pay thee my vows;*" in Psalm lxxvi. 20: "*Blessed be Elohim;*" and in lxxvii. 8: "*Elohim shall bless us.*" Besides Psalms lxxvi. and lxxvii. have this feature in common, that *שִׁיר*, which occurs fifty-five times in the Psalter, is accompanied by the name of the poet in every instance, with the exception of these two anonymous Psalms. The frequently occurring *Sela* of both Psalms also indicates that they were intended to have a musical accompaniment.—*Franz Delitzsch*.

*Title.*—A *Psalm of Jeremiah and Ezekiel*.—The Psalm is assigned to them, not as being its authors, but because it is supposed that it was often rehearsed by them at the beginning of the return from captivity, to teach us that those things ought especially to be sung concerning that happy restoration which these prophets were wont to sing about. But this inscription is not in the Hebrew text, nor in some translations, but only in certain versions. Jeremiah was not carried away to Babylon; see Jeremiah xxxix. 11, etc. Moreover, both he and Ezekiel died before the return.—*Pool's Synopsis*.

*Whole Psalm.*—The author of the Psalm is mentioned, but not the date of its composition; but, from an examination of its contents, it would seem to have been intended as a song for the "day of atonement," and for the "feast of tabernacles," which followed immediately after. Num. xxix. 7, 12. The sins of the year were then "covered over," and a thorough purification of the sanctuary was made by a special service of expiation. The labours of the year were also by that time all concluded, and its fruits secured; and Israel could look on the goodness of God towards them, through its entire extent; and this Psalm was penned to serve as a fitting expression of their feelings. It opens with a reference to the "silence" that reigned in the sanctuary; to the profound, unbroken, solemn stillness that reigned within it; while, in deep abasement, the people without waited in hushed expectation the return of their high priest from the immediate presence of God. Lev. xvi. 17. It goes on to a statement of the blessedness of those who are accepted of God, and admitted to fellowship with One so unspeakably great; and concludes with a description of the various processes by which the Almighty had fitted the earth to yield a year's supplies for his people.—*Dalman Hapstone*, in "*The Ancient Psalms in appropriate Metres. . . . with Notes.*" 1867.

*Whole Psalm.*—We have here a psalm of thanksgiving to be sung in the Temple during a public festivity, at which the sacrifices were to be offered which had been vowed during a long and protracted drought (verses 1, 2). To the thanksgiving, however, for a gracious rain, and the hope of an abundant harvest (verses 9—14), is added gratitude for a signal deliverance during a time of distress and commotion affecting all the nations around (verses 7, 8). Thus the Psalm becomes a song of praise to Jehovah as the God of history and the God of nature alike.—*From the "Psalms Chronologically Arranged. By Four Friends."* 1867.

*Whole Psalm.*—This is a charming psalm. Coming after the previous sad ones, it seems like the morning after the darkness of night. There is a dew freshness about it, and from the ninth verse to the end there is a sweet succession of landscape pictures that reminds one of the loveliness of spring; and truly it is a description, in natural figures, of that happy state of men's minds which will be the result of the "Day-Spring's visiting us from on high." Luke i. 7, 8.—*Prescott Hiller*.

*Verse 1.*—"Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Sion." The believer sometimes seems to want words to exalt God, and stops, as it were, in the middle; his thoughts are overmatched. Thus praise waits, or is silent for God; it is silent to other things, and it waits to be employed about him. The soul is often put to a nonplus in crying up the grace of God, and wants words to express its greatness; yea, to answer the elevation of the thoughts; the heart indites a song of praise, but it cannot tune it. The Psalmist is stopped, as it were, through admiration (which

is *silentium intellectus*), for when the mind can rise no higher, it falls admiring; hence some say, God is most exalted with fewest words.—*Alexander Carmichael*.

Verse 1.—“*Praise waiteth for thee, O God.*” Mercy is not yet come, we expect it: whilst thou art preparing the mercy, we are preparing the praise.—*Edward Leigh* in “*Annotations on the Five Poetical Books of the Old Testament.*” 1657.

Verse 1.—“*Praise waiteth on thee.*” As a servant, whose duty it is to do what thou commandest; or, *for thee*; is ready to be offered in thy courts for special favours. I think there is an allusion to the daily service in which God was praised.—*Benjamin Boothroyd*.

Verse 1.—“*Praise waiteth for thee, O God.*” *Te decet hymnus*, so the vulgar edition reads this place. To thee, O Lord, belong our hymns, our psalms, our praises, our cheerful acclamations, and conformable to that, we translate it, “*Praise waiteth for thee, O God.*” But if we take it according to the original, it must be *tibi silentium laus est*, Thy praise, O Lord, consists in silence. That man praises God best that says least of him; of his mysterious essence, of his unrevealed will and secret purposes.—*Abraham Wright*.

Verse 1.—“*To thee is silence and praise.*”—*Piscator*.

Verse 1.—The Hebrew may be rendered, “*Praise is silent for thee.*” As if the holy man had said, “Lord, I quietly wait for a time to praise thee; my soul is not in an uproar because thou stayest. I am not murmuring, but rather stringing my harp and tuning my instrument with much patience and confidence, that I may be ready to strike up when the joyful news of my deliverance come.”—*William Gurnall*.

Verse 1.—“*To thee belongeth silence-praise.*” Praise without any tumult. (*Alexander*.) It has been said, “The most intense feeling is the most calm, being condensed by repression.” And Hooker says of prayer, “The very silence which our unworthiness putteth us unto doth itself make request for us, and that in the confidence of his grace. Looking inward, we are stricken dumb; looking upward, we speak and prevail.” Horsley renders it, “Upon thee is the repose of prayer.”—*Andrew A. Bonar*.

Verse 1.—“*Praise is silent for thee.*” The Chaldee interpretation is, that our praise is not sufficiently worthy that we should praise God. The very praises of angels are esteemed as nothing before him. For so its rendering is: “*Before thee, O God, whose Majesty dwells in Zion, the praise of angels is regarded as silence.*” . . . Jerome's version here is, “*To thee silence is praise, O God, in Zion.*” Atheneus says, silence is a divine thing; and Thomas à Kempis calls silence the nutriment of devotion.—*Thomas Le Blanc*.

Verse 1.—“*To thee belong submission, praise, O God, in Zion.*” [Version of the American Bible Union.] Thou hast a claim for submission in times of sorrow, for praise in seasons of joy.—*Thomas J. Conant*, in “*The Psalms. . . with occasional Notes.*” 1871.

Verse 1.—“*Vow.*” A vow is a voluntary and deliberate promise made unto God in an extraordinary case. “It is a religious promise made unto God in a holy manner:” so a modern writer defines it.\* It is a “holy and religious promise, advisedly and freely made unto God, concerning something which to do or to omit appeareth to be grateful and well-pleasing unto him:” so Bucanus. I forbear Aquinas's definition of a vow. If these which I have given satisfy not, then view it in the words of Peter Martyr, a man of repute, and well-known to our own nation in the days of Edward VI., of ever-blessed memory: “It is a holy promise, whereby we bind ourselves to offer somewhat unto God.” There is one more who defines it, and he is a man whose judgment, learning, and holiness hath perfumed his name; it is learned Perkins, in his “*Cases of Conscience.*” “A vow,” saith he, “is a promise made unto God of things lawful and possible.”—*Henry Hurst* (—1690), in “*The Morning Exercises.*”

Verse 1 (*last clause*).—The reference here is to the vows or promises which the people had made in view of the manifested judgments of God, and the proofs of his goodness. Those vows they were now ready to carry out in expressions of praise.—*Albert Barnes*.

Verse 2.—“*O thou that hearest prayer,*” etc. This is one of his titles of honour, he is a God that hears prayer; and it is as truly ascribed to him as mercy or justice.

\* Szegeidinus.



He hears all prayer, therefore, "*unto thee shall all flesh come.*" He never rejects any that deserves the name of prayer, how weak, how unworthy soever the petitioner be. "*All flesh!*" And will he (may faith say) reject mine only? Rom. x. 12, "He is rich unto all that call upon him;" Ps. lxxxvi. 5, "Thou art plenteous in mercy to all that call upon thee;" Heb. xi. 6. "A rewarder of them that diligently seek him." This must be believed as certainly as we believe that God is. As sure as God is the true God, so sure is it that none who sought him diligently departed from him without a reward. He rewards all seekers, for *indefinita in materia necessaria equipollet universali*. And if all, why not me? You may as well doubt that he is God, as doubt that he will not reward, not hear prayer; so James i. 5, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him."—*David Clarkson*.

Verse 2.—"*O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come.*" What avails prayer, if it be not heard? But God's people need not lay it aside on that score. Our text bears two things with respect to that matter. 1. A comfortable title ascribed to God, with the unanimous consent of all the sons of Zion, who are all praying persons: "*O thou that hearest prayer.*" He speaks to "*God in Zion,*" or Zion's God, that is in New Testament language, to God in Christ. An absolute God thundereth on sinners from Sinai, there can be no comfortable intercourse betwixt God and them, by the law: but in Zion, from the mercy-seat, in Christ, he is the hearer of prayer; they give in their supplications, and he graciously hears them. Such faith of it they have, that praise waits there for the prayer-hearing God. 2. The effect of the savour of this title of God, spread abroad in the world: "*Unto thee shall all flesh come.*" not only Jews, but Gentiles. The poor Gentiles who have long in vain implored the aid of their idols, hearing and believing that God is the hearer of prayer, will flock to him, and present their petitions. They will throng in about his door, where by the gospel they understand beggars are so well served. They will "*come in even unto thee,*" Heb. They will come in even to thy seat, thy throne of grace, even unto thyself through the Mediator. . . . That God is the hearer of prayer, and will hear the prayers of his people, is evident from these considerations:—First. The supernatural instinct of praying that is found in all that are born of God, Gal. iv. 6. It is as natural for them to fall a praying when the grace of God has touched their hearts, as for children when they are born into the world to cry, or to desire the breasts. Zechariah xii. 10, compared with Acts ix. 11, where in the account that is given of Paul, at his conversion, it is particularly noticed, "Behold he prayeth." Hence the whole saving change on a soul comes under the character of this instinct. Jeremiah iii. 4, 19. Secondly. The intercession of Christ, Rom. viii. 34. It is a great part of the work of Christ's intercession to present the prayers of his people before his Father, Rev. viii. 4, to take their causes in hand, contained in their supplications. 1 John ii. 1. Thirdly. The promise of the covenant, whereby God's faithfulness is impawned for the hearing of prayer, as Matt. vii. 7: see also Isaiah lxxv. 24. Fourthly. The many encouragements given in the Word to the people of God, to come with their cases unto the Lord by prayer. He invites them to his throne of grace with their petitions for supply of their needs. Cant. ii. 14. He sends afflictions to press them to come. Hosea v. 15. He gives them ground of hope of success, Psalm l. 15, whatever extremity their case is brought to. Isaiah xli. 17. He shows them that however long he may delay for their trial, yet praying and not fainting shall be successful at length. Luke xviii. 8. Fifthly. The gracious nature of God, with the endearing relations he stands in to his people. Exodus xxii. 27. He wants not power and ability to fulfil the holy desires of his people; he is gracious, and will withhold no good from them that they really need. He has the bowels of a father to pity them, the bowels of a mother to her sucking child. He has a most tender sympathy with them in all their afflictions, the touches on them are as on the apple of his eye; and he never refuses them a request, but for their good. Rom. viii. 28. Sixthly. The experiences which the saints of all ages have had of the answer of prayer. The faith of it brings them to God at conversion, as the text intimates; and they that believe cannot be disappointed. Lastly. The present ease and relief that prayer sometimes gives to the saints, while yet the full answer of prayer is not come. Psalm cxxxviii. 3.—*Thomas Boston* (1676—1732).

Verse 2.—"*O thou that hearest prayer.*" Observe 1. That God is called the hearer of prayers, since he hears, without distinction of persons, the prayers of every one poured forth with piety, not only of the Jews, but also of the Gentiles; as in

Acts x. 34, 35. . . . It follows, therefore, as a necessary consequence, *that all flesh should come to him.* 2. *To come to God*, is not indeed simply tantamount to saying, *to draw near to God*, to adore, call upon, and worship him, but to come to *Zion* for the purpose of adoring God; for it was just now said, that God must be praised in *Zion*, and to this the phrase, *to come to God*, must be referred. On this account also  $\times$  is not used, but  $\times$ , whose proper force is *right up to God*, or to the place of the habitation of God to render adoration to God.—*Hermann Venema.*

Verse 2.—“*To thee shall all flesh come.*” To Christ “*all flesh comes,*” that is (1), every sinner and carnal man. He himself says, Matt. ix. 13, “*I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.*” The Grecian priest in olden times, when approaching to receive the sacrifice, used to exclaim, *Who comes there?* and the reply was, *Many and good.* But God receives publicans and sinners, and inviteth them to his banquet, and eateth with them; but for the purpose of delivering them from sin. “*All flesh shall see the salvation of God.*” (2.) *All flesh* may be taken for the whole flesh, the whole body; all the senses and members of the body shall come to God that they may pay him tribute as their King.—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verse 2.—“*All flesh.*” By *flesh* is meant man in his weakness and need.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 3.—“*Iniquities prevail against me.*” There are two ways in which iniquities may prevail against the Christian—the first is in the growing sense of his guilt, the second is in the power of their acting. This prevalence cannot be entire, for sin shall not have dominion over them; but it may be occasional and partial. There are two ways, according to Scripture, in which God purges our transgressions; and they always go together. The one is by pardoning mercy. Thus David prays “*Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean.*” Thus the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin. The other is by sanctifying grace: “*I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean.*” And this is as much the work of God as the former. He subdues our iniquities as well as forgives them.—*William Jay.*

Verse 3.—“*Iniquities.*” Literally, *Words of iniquities*, by some regarded as a pleonastic phrase for iniquities themselves. More probably, however, the phrase means the charge or accusation of iniquity.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verse 3.—The deeds of iniquity are said to *prevail against us*, in so far as they are too strong and powerful for us to deny or refute, and to subject us to a demand of those penalties which the sin merits; hence there remains no other refuge than the clemency and grace of God, the Judge. See Psalms cxliii. 2; cxxx. 3, 4.—*Hermann Venema.*

Verse 3.—“*As for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away.*” In the Hebrew it is, *Thou shalt hide them.* It alludes to the mercy-seat, which was covered with the wings of the Cherubim; so are the sins of the godly, when repented of, covered with the wings of mercy and favour.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 3.—“*Thou shalt purge them away;*” or “*Thou coverest them.*” The pronoun is emphatic, as though to express the conviction that God and God alone could do this.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 3.—The holy prophets, and penmen of Scripture, have no grounds of hope for pardon of sin, save those which are common to the meanest of God’s people; for David, in his confession, cometh in by himself alone, aggravating his own sins most: “*Iniquities prevail against me,*” saith he. But in hope of pardon, he joineth with the rest of God’s people, saying, “*As for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away.*”—*David Dickson.*

Verses 3, 4.—Now, soul, thou art molested with many lusts that infest thee, and obstruct thy commerce with heaven; yea, thou hast complained to thy God, what loss thou hast suffered by them; is it now presumption to expect relief from him, that he will rescue thee from them, that thou mayest serve him without fear, who is thy liege Lord? You have the saints for your precedents; who, when they have been in combat with their corruptions, yea, been foiled by them, have even then exercised their faith on God, and expected the ruin of those enemies, which, for the present, have overrun them. “*Iniquities prevail against me;*” he means his own sins; but see his faith; at the same time that they prevailed over him, he beholds God destroying them, as appears in the very next words, “*As for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away.*” See here, poor Christian, who thinkest that thou shalt never get above deck, holy David has a faith, not only for himself, but also for all believers, of whose number I suppose thee one. And mark the ground he hath

for this his confidence, taken from God's choosing act: "*Blessed is the man whom thou chooseth, and causeth to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts.*" As if he had said, Surely he will not let them be under the power of sin, or in want of his gracious succour, whom he sets so near himself. This is Christ's own argument against Satan, in the behalf of his people. "*The Lord said unto Satan, the Lord rebuke thee.*" Zech. iii. 2.—William Gurnall.

Verse 4.—"*Blessed is the man whom thou chooseth.*" The benedictions of the Psalter advance in spirituality and indicate a growth. The first blessed the godly reader of the word. Ps. i. 1. The second described the pardoned child. Ps. xxxii. 1. The third pronounced a blessing upon faith. Ps. xxxiv. 8 and Ps. xl. 4. The fourth commended the active and generous believer, abundant in deeds of charity (Ps. xli. 1); and this last, mounting to the fountain head of all benediction, blesses the elect of God.—C. H. S.

Verse 4.—"*The man whom thou chooseth.*" Christ, whom God chose, and of whom he said, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased," is, indeed, "over all, God blessed for ever;" but in him his elect are blessed too. For his sake, not for our own, are we chosen; in him, not in ourselves, are we received by God, being accepted in the Beloved; and, therefore, in him are we blessed: he is our blessing. With that High Priest who has ascended into the holy place and entered within the veil, we enter into the house of God; we learn to dwell therein; we are filled with its spiritual joys; we partake of its holy mysteries and sacraments of grace and love.—From "*A Plain Commentary on the Book of Psalms,*" 1859.

Verse 4.—"*We shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple.*" We shall be so filled, that nothing can be said to be wanting, we shall have nothing to look for outside. What can be wanting, in the house of him who made everything, who is the master of everything, who will be all unto all, in whom is an inexhaustible treasure of good. Of him is said in Psalm ciii. "Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things;" and in Psalm xvii. "I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness."—Robert Bellarmine (1542—1621).

Verse 4.—"*Satisfied with the goodness of thy house.*" There is an allusion here to the oblations which were devoted to God, of which, also, sacred persons partook.—Hermann Venema.

Verse 5.—"*By terrible things in righteousness wilt thou answer us.*" The reason why he answers thus is, because what God doth for his people, take one thing with another, is still in order to the crucifying of the flesh; and what more terrible than such a death? We pray for *pleasing* things, as we imagine, but as we are flesh as well as spirit; so the flesh hath still a part in every prayer, and what we beg is partly carnal, and upon the matter, in part, we beg we know not what. Now, the answer as it comes from God, take all together, is spiritual, which is a crucifying thing to sinful flesh; hence comes in all the terror. . . . You pray for pardon; that is a pleasing thing, yet rightly understood not pleasing to the flesh; it mortifies corruption, breaks the heart, engages to a holy life: every answer from our God to us, one way or the other, first or last, shall tend that way. God useth so to give good things unto his children, as withal to give himself, and show to them his heavenly glory in what is done. . . . Now God is *terrible* to sinful flesh: so far as he appears, it dies. Jacob, therefore, whilst he conquered God in prayer, himself was overcome, signified by that touch upon his thigh put out of joint, where the chiefest stress in wrestling lies. When we are weak, then are we strong; because as God appears, we die unto ourselves and live in him.—William Carter, in a *Fast Sermon* entitled, "*Light in Darkness,*" 1648.

Verse 5.—God's judgments are these *terribilia*, terrible, fearful things; and he is faithful in his covenant; and by terrible judgments he will answer, that is, satisfy our expectation; and that is a convenient sense of these words. But the word which we translate "*righteousness*" here, is *tzadok*, and *tzadok* is not faithfulness, but holiness; and these "*terrible things*" are reverend things; and so Tremellius translates it, and well. *Per res reverendas, by reverend things*, things to which there belongs a reverence—"thou shalt answer us." And thus, the sense of this place will be, that the God of our salvation (that is, God working in the Christian church) calls us to holiness, to righteousness, by terrible things; not terrible in the way and nature of revenge, but terrible, that is, stupendous, reverend,

mysterious ; so that we should not make religion too homely a thing, but come always to all acts and exercises of religion with reverence, with fear, and trembling, and make a difference between religious and civil actions.—*John Donne.*

*Verse 5.*—God's deliverance of his church and people "by terrible things" is "in righteousness." The meaning of the point is this : God in all the deliverances of his people by terrible things, doth therein manifest his righteousness. He doth therein nothing but what is according to righteousness and justice. To clear this, consider that there is a double righteousness, the righteousness of his word, which is the righteousness of his faithfulness ; and the righteousness of his works, or his just acts of righteousness. And God doth manifest both these in his deliverance of his people by terrible things.—*John Bewick.* 1644.

*Verse 5.*—But what is the meaning when they say, "will thou answer us ?" *Us*, who are inhabitants of Zion, who are constituted thy people, and truly worship Thee ; *us*, moreover, in contact with enemies, who stirred up strife against us, and wished us ill ; *us*, lastly, who aim at and seek the stability of the Kingdom and Church, and every kind of felicity and safety ; with such things *will thou answer us*, it says, that is, for our advantage and benefit, and according to our vows, and therefore by pleading our cause, and deciding in our favour, and satisfying our desires ; and in this way rendering us happy and establishing us, and subduing and confounding our foes.—*Hermann Venema.*

*Verse 5.*—"Who art the confidence of all the ends of the earth." How could God be the confidence of all the ends of the earth, if he does not reign and constantly work ? The stability of the mountains is ascribed not to certain physical laws, but to the power of God. The noise of the seas is stilled not by laws without a powerful agent, but by the immediate influence of the Almighty Ruler. Human laws also may be the means of restraining persecution, but they are only means ; and it is God who stilleth the tumult of the people. It is God who maketh the outgoings of the morning and evening to sing. The Scriptures, in viewing the works which God does through means, never lose sight of God himself. God visits and waters the earth : God prepares the corn. Without his own immediate power, the laws of nature could not produce their effect. How consoling and satisfactory is this view of Divine Providence, compared with that of an infidel philosophy, that forbids us to go further back than to the power of certain physical laws, which it grants, indeed, were at first established by God, but which can now perform their office without him.—*Alexander Carson.* (1776—1844).

*Verse 5.*—"All the ends of the earth." God is in himself potentially, "The confidence of all the ends of the earth." Hereafter he will be recognised by all to be so (Ps. xxiii. 27, 28), of which the Queen of Sheba's coming to Solomon "from the uttermost parts of the earth" is a type. Matt. xli. 42.—*A. R. Fausset.*

*Verse 5.*—"And of them that are afar off upon the sea." We must beseech God in the words of this Psalm, that since He stands upon the shore, and beholds our perils, he would make us, who are tossed on the turbulent sea, secure for his name's sake, and enable us to hold between Scylla and Charybdis, the middle course, and escaping the danger on either hand, with a sound vessel and safe merchandise, reach the port.—*Lorinus (from Augustine).*

*Verses 5—8.*—The divine watering of the earth is obviously symbolical of the descent of the Holy Spirit after Christ's ascension ; and when on the great day of Pentecost the devout Jews, "out of every nation under heaven," heard the apostle speaking in their several tongues the wonderful works of God, it was a testimony that God was beginning spiritually to make "the outgoings of the morning and evening to rejoice." To God "which stilleth the noise of the waves and the tumult of the people," the apostles betook themselves in prayer after their first conflict with Jewish authorities, the first conflict of the infant Christian community with the powers of this world : the language of the Psalm (ver. 5), "O God of our salvation ; who art the confidence of all the ends of the earth, and of them that are afar off upon the sea," is reflected in the opening words of their prayer on that occasion (Acts iv. 24), "Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is ;" and if, when they prayed, "the place was shaken where they were assembled together, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost," it was no idle sign that "by terrible things in righteousness" were they being answered by the God of their salvation. These are, of course, mere illustrations of the inner harmony of Scripture ; but, as such, they may not be without their value.—*Joseph Francis Thrupp.*

*Verse 6.*—“*Setteth fast the mountains.*” It is by thy strength they have been raised, and by thy power they are girded about and preserved. He represents the mountains as being formed and pitched into their proper places by the mighty hand of God; and shows that they are preserved from splitting, falling down, or mouldering away, as it were, by a girdle by which they are surrounded. The image is very fine. They were hooped about by the divine power.—*Adam Clarke.*

*Verse 8.*—“*Thou makest the outgoings of the morning and evening to rejoice.*” That is, thou makest men to rejoice, they are glad, they rejoice in, or at, the outgoings in the morning. And at the evening men rejoice too, for then they go to their rest, being wearied with the labour of the day. Or, we may thus expound it: Thou makest men who live at the outgoings of the morning, and at the outgoings of the evening, to rejoice. As if it had been said, Thou makest the eastern people and the western people, all people from east to west, rejoice. And that which makes all people to rejoice, naturally, is the rising of light with them in the east, and the coming of light towards them in the west.—*Joseph Caryl.*

*Verse 8.*—“*Thou makest the outgoings of the morning and evening to rejoice.*” How contrary soever light and darkness are to each other, and how inviolable soever the partition between them (Gen. i. 4), both are equally welcome to the world in their season; it is hard to say which is more welcome to us, the light of the morning which befriends the business of the day, or the shadows of the evening which befriends the repose of the night. Doth the watchman wait for the morning? so doth the hireling earnestly desire the shadow. Some understand it for the morning and evening sacrifice, which good people greatly rejoiced in, and in which God was constantly honoured. Thou makest them to sing, so the word is; for every morning and every evening songs of praise were sung by the Levites; it was that which the duty of every day required. And we are to look upon our daily worship alone, and with our families, to be both the most needful of our daily business, and the most delightful of our daily comforts; and if therein we keep up our communion with God, the outgoings both of the morning and of the evening are thereby made truly to rejoice.—*Matthew Henry.*

*Verse 8.*—*Lyranus*, *Dionysius Carthusianus*, *Cajetanus*, *Placidus Parmensis*, (who treads in the footsteps of *Cajetanus* though he does not mention him,) take the first clause to refer to the wonder of all mankind at the wonderful works of God on the land and the sea; and explain the second respecting the sacrifices which were wont to be offered in the morning and evening: that God made these acceptable to himself and delightful to those who offered them, especially after the return from captivity. In the beginning of the Psalm sacrifices are hinted at by *praise* and *vows*, as we have seen, and in the history of *Esdra* it is recorded, that *the morning and evening sacrifice were offered unto the Lord* by those who had returned; and that those who approached, when they entered, and others who had made their offerings, when they departed, gave praises to God. Hence it is here said, that the outgoings of the morning and of the evening, that is to say, when they who praise God go forth from either sacrifice, God will be well pleased, he will receive delight from that praise, and it will be grateful to him.—*Lorinus.*

*Verse 8.*—Figuratively, “*the outgoing of the morning,*” or dawn, is the light of grace in the beginning of conversion; “*the outgoing of the evening*” is the fine light of grace in the hour of death.—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

*Verse 9.*—“*Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it,*” etc. How beautiful are the words of the inspired poet, read in this month of harvest, nearly three thousand years after they were written! For nearly three thousand years since the royal poet looked over the plains of Judea covered with the bounty of God, and broke forth into his magnificent hymn of praise, has the earth rolled on in her course, and the hand of God has blessed her, and all her children, with seed-time and harvest, with joy and abundance. The very steadfastness of the Almighty’s liberality, flowing like a mighty ocean through the infinite vast of the universe, makes his creatures forget to wonder at its wonderfulness, to feel true thankfulness at its immeasurable goodness. The sun rises and sets so surely; the seasons run on amid all their changes with such inimitable truth, that we take as a matter of course that which is amazing beyond all stretch of imagination, and good beyond the widest expansion of the noblest human heart.

The poor man, with his half-dozen children, toils, and often dies, under the vain labour of winning bread for them. God feeds his family of countless myriads swarming over the surface of all countless worlds, and none know need but through the follies of themselves, or the cruelty of their fellows. God pours his light from innumerable suns on innumerable rejoicing planets; he waters them everywhere in the fittest moment; he ripens the food of globes and of nations, and gives them fair weather to garner it. And from age to age, amid his endless creatures of endless forms and powers, in the beauty and the sunshine, and the magnificence of nature, he seems to sing throughout creation the glorious song of his own divine joy, in the immortality of his youth, in the omnipotence of his nature, in the eternity of his patience, and the abounding boundlessness of his love. What a family hangs on his sustaining arm! The life and soul of infinite ages, and of uncounted worlds! Let a moment's failure of his power, of his watchfulness, or of his will to do good, occur, and what a sweep of death and annihilation through the universe! How stars would reel, planets expire, and nations perish! But from age to age, no such catastrophe occurs, even in the midst of national crimes, and of atheism that denies the hand that made and feeds it. Life springs with a power ever new; food springs up as plentifully to sustain it, and sunshine and joy are poured over all from the invisible throne of God, as the poetry of the existence which he has given. If there come seasons of dearth, or of failure, they come but as warnings to proud and tyrannic man. The potato is smitten that a nation may not be oppressed for ever; and the harvest is diminished that the laws of man's unnatural avarice may be rent asunder. And then, again, the sun shines, the rain falls, and the earth rejoices in a renewed beauty, and in a redoubled plenty.—*William Howitt, in "The Year-Book of the Country," 1850.*

Verse 9.—*"Thou visitest the earth."* God seems to come with the coming-in of each of the seasons. In some respects, during winter, God seems like a man travelling into a far country. Darkness, and barrenness, and coldness, suggest absence on the part of God. The spring looks like his return. The great change it involves cheerily whispers, "He is not far from any one of us." In longer days, and a warmer atmosphere, and a revived earth, God comes to us. These things are not of necessity, but of providence. There are second causes, but above all these is the First Cause, intelligent, loving, and free, God rules in all, over all, and above all. He is not displaced or supplanted by the forces and agencies which he employs, he is not absorbed by care of other worlds, he is not indifferent toward the earth. A personal superintendence and providence are not beneath his dignity, or in anywise distasteful to him. As Maker, and Life-giver, and Father, "*Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it.*"—*Samuel Martin, in "Rain upon the Mown Grass, and other Sermons."* 1871.

Verse 9.—The Psalmist is here foretelling the gracious outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and the conversion of the nations of the earth to Christ.—*Origen.*

Verse 9.—The chiefs of Hebrew theology attribute four keys to God, which he never entrusted to any angel or seraph, and as the first of these they place the key of rain. He himself is said, in Job xxviii. 26, to give a law to the rain, and in chap. xxvi. 8, to bind up the waters in the clouds.—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verse 9.—*"With the river of God, which is full of water."* That is, the clouds figuratively described.—*Edward Leigh (1602-3-1671).*

Verse 9.—*"The river of God,"* as opposed to earthly streams. However these may fail, the divine resources are exhaustless.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verse 9.—*"The river of God."* The Chaldee paraphrase is, *From the fountain of God which is in the heavens, which is full of the rain-storms of blessing, thou wilt prepare their cornfields.*—*Lorinus.*

Verse 9.—*"Thou preparest their grain; for so dost thou prepare the earth."* [Version of Am. Bib. Un.] "*So,*" namely, with this design, and for this end. In the Hebrew, "for so dost thou prepare her:" referring to "the earth," which in Hebrew is *fem.*, while grain is *masc.* The meaning can be expressed in English only by using the word (earth) which the Hebrew pronoun represents. The English pronoun (it) would necessarily refer to "grain," and would represent neither the meaning of the Hebrew nor its form.—*Thomas J. Conant.*

Verse 9.—*"Thou preparest them corn,"* etc. Corn is the special gift of God to man. There are several interesting and instructive ideas connected with this view of it. All the other plants we use as food are unfit for this purpose in their natural condition, and require to have their nutritious qualities developed, and

their natures and forms to a certain extent changed by a gradual process of cultivation. There is not a single useful plant grown in our gardens and fields, but is utterly worthless for food in its normal or wild state; and man has been left to himself to find out, slowly and painfully, how to convert these crudities of nature into nutritious vegetables. But it is not so with corn. It has from the very beginning been an abnormal production. God gave it to Adam, we have every reason to believe, in the same perfect state of preparation for food in which we find it at the present day. It was made expressly for man, and given directly into his hands. "Behold," says the Creator, "I have given you every herb bearing seed which is upon the face of all the earth;" that is, all the cereal plants—such as corn, wheat, barley, rice, maize, etc., whose peculiar characteristic it is to produce seed. . . .

There is another proof that corn was created for man's use, in the fact that it has never been found in a wild state. The primitive types from which all our other esculent plants were derived are still to be found in a state of nature in this or other countries. The wild beet and cabbage still grow on our sea-shores; the crab-apple and the sloe, the savage parents of our luscious pippins and plums, are still found among the trees of the wood; but where are the original types of our corn plants? Where are the wild grasses which, according to some authors, the cumulative processes of agriculture, carried on through successive ages, have developed into corn, wheat, and barley? Much has been written, and many experiments have been tried, to determine the natural origin of these cereals, but every effort has hitherto proved in vain. Reports have again and again been circulated that corn and wheat have been found growing wild in some parts of Persia and the steppes of Tartary, apparently far from the influence of cultivation; but when tested by botanical data, these reports have turned out, in every instance, to be unfounded. Corn has never been known as anything else than a cultivated plant.

History and observation prove that it cannot grow spontaneously. It is never, like other plants, self-sown and self-diffused. Neglected of men, it speedily disappears and becomes extinct. It does not return, as do all other cultivated varieties of plants, to a natural condition, and so become worthless as food, but utterly perishes, being constitutionally unfitted to maintain the struggle for existence with the aboriginal vegetation of the soil. All this proves that it must have been produced miraculously; or, in other words, given by God to man directly, in the same abnormal condition in which it now appears; for nature never could have developed or preserved it. In the mythologies of all the ancient nations it was confidently affirmed to have had a supernatural origin. The Greeks and Romans believed it to be the gift of the goddess Ceres, who taught her son, Triptolemus, to cultivate and distribute it over the earth; and from her, the whole class of plants received the name of cereals, which they now bear. And we only express the same truth when we say to him, whom these pagans ignorantly worshipped, "*Thou preparest them corn, when thou hast so provided for it.*"

Let me bring forth one more proof of special design, enabling us to recognise the hand of God in this mercy. Corn is universally diffused. It is almost the only species of plant which is capable of growing everywhere in almost every soil, in almost any situation. In some form or other, adapted to the various modifications of climate and physical conditions, which occur in different countries, it is spread over an area of the earth's surface as extensive as the occupancy of the human race. . . .

Rice is grown in tropical countries where periodical rains and inundations, followed by excessive heat, occur, and furnishes the chief article of diet for the largest proportion of the human race. Wheat will not thrive in hot climates, but flourishes all over the temperate zone, at various ranges of elevation, and is admirably adapted to the wants of highly civilised communities. Maize spreads over an immense geographical area in the new world, where it has been known from time immemorial, and formed a principal element of that Indian civilisation which surprised the Spaniards in Mexico and Peru. Barley is cultivated in those parts of Europe and Asia where the soil and climate are not adapted for wheat; while oats and rye extend far into the black north, and disappear only from those desolate Arctic regions where man cannot exist in his social capacity. By these striking adaptations of different varieties of grain, containing the same essential ingredients, to different soils and climates, Providence has furnished the indispensable food for the sustenance of the human race throughout the whole habitable globe.

and all nations, and tribes, and tongues can rejoice together, as one great family, with the joy of harvest.—*Hugh Macmillan, in "Bible Teachings in Nature."* 1868.

Verses 9—13.—I do not know any picture of rural life that in any measure comes up to the exquisite description here brought before us, and which every one's heart at once recognises as so true to nature in all its branches. In the brief compass of five verses we have the whole scene vividly sketched, from the first preparation of the earth or soil; the provision of the corn-seed for the sower; the rain in its season, the former and the latter rain, watering the ridges, settling the furrows, and causing the seed to swell and to spring forth, and bud and blossom; then the crowning of the whole year in the appointed weeks of harvest, and men's hearts rejoicing before God according to the joy in harvest, the very foot-paths dropping with fatness, and the valleys shouting and singing for joy. Our harvest-homes are times of rejoicing too, but I would that our tillers and reapers of the soil would as piously refer all to God as the Psalmist did. "*Thou waterest the earth, Thou greatly enrichest it, Thou preparest the corn, Thou waterest the ridges, Thou settlest the furrows, Thou makest it soft with showers, Thou blesses the springing thereof, Thou crownest the year with thy goodness.*" Not one word of man, of man's skill, or of man's labour, not one thought of self. How different from him whose grounds brought forth abundantly, and whose only thought was, "I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry."—*Barton Bouchier.*

Verse 10.—The rain hath a *mollifying nature*. When the earth is like iron under our feet by long droughts or hard frosts, a few good showers supple it, and make it tender. David, speaking of the earth, saith, "*Thou makest it soft with showers.*" Jesus Christ hath a softening virtue. Sometimes the heart is hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. . . . If Christ would but now drop a few drops from heaven, the veriest flint in the congregation would be turned into a fountain of water. . . . The rain hath a *fructifying virtue*. All the labour of the husbandman comes to nothing if either the former or the latter rain be denied. The Psalmist sets out this virtue of the rain in verses 9—13. Want of rain brings a famine upon the earth. . . . If Christ do not rain, there will be no fruits; but if Christ will drop down his dew, the pastures will be green. All the labour and pains of the spiritual husbandman will come to nothing if the rain come not down from Christ; and, if he please to pour down showers, let not the eunuch say, "I am a dry tree." Though your heart be as dry and withered as the rod of Aaron was, yet if Christ will rain upon it, it shall both bud, and blossom, and bring forth almonds. . . . The rain hath a *recreating virtue*. It causeth a gladness and cheerfulness in the hearts of men, and it begets a kind of briskness in the sensitive creatures: the birds chirp, the beasts of the field rejoice in their kind; yea, there is a kind of joy in the very inanimate creatures. The Psalmist speaks of this: "The pastures are clothed with flocks, the valleys also are covered over with corn; they shout for joy, they also sing." When rain comes after a long drought, there is melody made by all creatures in this lower world. Jesus Christ hath a cheering virtue; he doth fill the soul with joy when he comes down into the soul; the heart that was dead, and dull, and heavy is made pleasant and joyful when these showers fall upon it. When Jesus Christ comes to the soul, he brings joy to the soul: "They joy before thee according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil." Isa. ix. 3.—*Ralph Robinson.*

Verse 10.—Thou art the right Master-cultivator, who cultivates the land much more and much better than the farmer does. He does nothing more to it than break up the ground, and plough, and sow, and then lets it lie. But God must be always attending to it with rain and heat, and must do everything to make it grow and prosper, while the farmer lies at home and sleeps.—*Martin Luther.*

Verse 11.—"*Thou crownest the year with thy goodness.*" Dr. William Whewell, in his *Bridgewater Treatise*, notes the evidence of design in the length of the year, and, although it may not perhaps be considered to be a direct comment on the text, I beg to quote it here, as it may awaken a train of thought, and make more conspicuous the goodness of God, in the revolution of the seasons. "If any change in the length of the year were to take place, the working of the botanical world would be thrown into utter disorder, the functions of plants would be entirely



deranged, and the whole vegetable kingdom involved in instant decay and rapid extinction. That this would be the case, may be collected from innumerable indications. Most of our fruit trees, for example, require the year to be of its present length. If the summer and the autumn were much shorter, the fruit could not ripen; if these seasons were much longer, the tree would put forth a fresh suit of blossoms, to be cut down by the winter. Or, if the year were twice its present length, a second crop of fruit would probably not be matured, for want, among other things, of an immediate season of rest and consolidation, such as the winter is. Our forest trees, in like manner, appear to need all the seasons of our present year for their perfection; the spring, summer, and autumn, for the development of their leaves and consequent formation of their *proper juice*, and of wood from this; and the winter for the hardening and solidifying the substance thus formed. . . . . The processes of the rising of the sap, of the formation of proper juices, of the unfolding of leaves, the opening of flowers, the fecundation of the fruit, the ripening of the seed, its proper deposition in order for the reproduction of a new plant; all these operations require a certain portion of time, and could not be compressed into a space less than a year, or at least could not be abbreviated in any very great degree. And, on the other hand, if the winter were greatly longer than it now is, many seeds would not germinate at the return of spring. Seeds which have been kept too long, require stimulants to make them fertile. If, therefore, the duration of the seasons were much to change, the processes of vegetable life would be interrupted, deranged, distempered. What, for instance, would become of our calendar of Flora, if the year were lengthened or shortened by six months? Some of the dates would never arrive in the one case, and the vegetable processes which mark them would be superseded; some seasons would be without dates in the other case, and these periods would be employed in a way hurtful to the plants, and no doubt speedily destructive. We should have, not only a *year of confusion*, but, if it were repeated and continued, a year of death. . . . . The same kind of argument might be applied to the animal creation. The pairing, nesting, hatching, fledging, and flight of birds, for instance, occupy each its peculiar time of the year; and, together with a proper period of rest, fill up the twelve months; the transformations of most insects have a similar reference to the seasons, their progress and duration. 'In every species' (except man's), says a writer\* on animals, 'there is a particular period of the year in which the reproductive system exercises its energies. And the season of love and the period of gestation are so arranged that the young ones are produced at the time wherein the conditions of temperature are most suited to the commencement of life.' It is not our business here to consider the details of such provisions, beautiful and striking as they are. But the prevalence of the great law of periodicity in the vital functions of organised beings will be allowed to have a claim to be considered in its reference to astronomy, when it is seen that their periodical constitution derives its use from the periodical nature of the motions of the planets round the sun; and that the duration of such cycles in the existence of plants and animals has a reference to the arbitrary elements of the solar system, a reference which, we maintain, is inexplicable and unintelligible, except by admitting into our conceptions an intelligent Author, alike of the organic and inorganic universe."

*Verse 11.*—"Thou crownest the year with thy goodness." God has surrounded this year with his goodness, "compassed and enclosed it" on every side. So we translate the same word, (Ps. v. 12) "With favour wilt thou compass (or crown) him as with a shield." He has given us instances of his goodness in every thing that concerns us; so that turn which way we will, we meet with the tokens of his favour; every part of the year has been enriched with the blessings of heaven, and no gap has been left open for any desolating judgment to enter by.—*Matthew Henry*.

*Verse 11.*—"Thou crownest the year." A full and plentiful harvest is the crown of the year; and this springs from the unmerited goodness of God. This is the *diadem* of the earth. ~~now~~ *iltarta*, "Thou encirclest," as with a diadem. A most elegant expression, to show the progress of the sun through the *twelve* signs of the zodiac, producing the seasons, and giving a sufficiency of light and heat alternately, to all places on the surface of the globe, by its north and south declination (amounting to 23° 28' at the solstices) on each side of the equator. A more beautiful image

\* Flemming.

could not have been chosen; and the very appearance of the *space*, termed the *zodiac* on a celestial globe, shows with what propriety the idea of a *circle* or *diadem* was conceived by this inimitable poet.—*Adam Clarke*.

Verse 11.—“*Thou crownest.*” The herbs, fruits, and flowers, produced by the earth, are here finely represented as a beautiful variegated crown, set upon her head, by the hands of the great Creator.—*Samuel Burder*.

Verse 11.—*To crown* the year of goodness, is to raise it to the highest degree and summit of prosperity, happiness and glory. *To crown*, to fill up, to make glorious and joyful: *the year of the goodness* of God is the time in which he unfolds his own highest goodness; *one is crowned*, when the effects of this goodness are displayed on the grandest scale, and bring great glory and joy. Such was the time when he shone forth, and the clouds dropped fatness, and all parts of the earth were filled with fertility. . . . The paths of God are the clouds, before called the *river* of God (see Ps. civ. 3), now the *paths* in which God himself seems to move, and whence, from the place of rain, from the river of God, flows fatness itself, or the copious abundance of all that is sweetest and best.—*Hermann Venema*.

Verse 11.—“*Thy paths drop fatness.*” When the conqueror journeys through the nations, his paths drop blood; fire and vapour of smoke are in his track, and tears, and groans, and sighs attend him. But where the Lord journeys, his “*paths drop fatness.*” When the kings of old made a progress through their dominions, they caused a famine wherever they tarried; for the greedy courtiers who swarmed in their camp devoured all things like locusts, and were as greedily ravenous as palmer-worms and caterpillars. But where the great King of kings journeys, he enriches the land; his “*paths drop fatness.*” By a bold Hebrew metaphor the clouds are represented as the chariots of God: “He maketh the clouds his chariot;” and as the Lord Jehovah rides upon the heavens in the greatness of his strength, and in his excellency on the sky, the rains drop down upon the lands, and so the wheel-tracks of Jehovah are marked by the fatness which makes glad the earth. Happy, happy are the people who worship such a God, whose coming is ever a coming of goodness and of grace to his creatures.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 11.—“*Paths*” here are properly such tracks as are made by chariot wheels.—*Henry Ainsworth*.

Verse 12.—“*The wilderness.*” By *desert*, or *wilderness*, the reader is not always to understand a country altogether barren and unfruitful, but such only as is rarely or never sown or cultivated; which, though it yields no crops of corn or fruit, yet affords herbage more or less for the grazing of cattle, with fountains or rills of water, though more sparingly interspersed than in other places.—*Thomas Shaw* (1692—1751).

Verse 13.—The phrase, “*the pastures are clothed with flocks,*” cannot be regarded as the vulgar language of poetry. It appears peculiarly beautiful and appropriate, when we consider the numerous flocks which whitened the plains of Syria and Canaan. In the eastern countries, sheep are much more prolific than with us, and they derive their name from their great fruitfulness; bringing forth, as they are said to do, “thousands and ten thousands in their streets,” Ps. cxliv. 13. They, therefore, formed no mean part of the wealth of the East.—*James Anderson*, in *editorial Note to Calvin in loc.*

Verse 13.—The hills, where not tilled, were bushy and green, and sprinkled with numerous flocks; the valleys broad and covered with a rich crop of wheat; the fields full of reapers and gleaners in the midst of the harvest, with asses and camels receiving their loads of sheaves, and feeding unmuzzled and undisturbed upon the ripe grain.—*Edward Robinson*.

Verse 13.—It may seem strange, that he should first tell us, that “*they shout for joy,*” and then add the feebler expression, that “*they sing;*” interposing, too, the intensive particle, *ye, aph, they shout for joy, YEA, they also sing*. The verb, however, admits of being taken in the future tense, *they shall sing;* and this denotes a continuation of joy, that they would rejoice, not only one year, but through the endless succession of the seasons. I may add, what is well-known, that in Hebrew the order of expression is frequently inverted in this way.—*John Calvin*.

Verse 13.—“*They also sing.*” *They ardently sing:* such is the real meaning of *ye*; primarily “heat” or “warmth,” thence “ardour, passion, anger,” and thence again “the nostrils,” as the supposed seat of this feeling.—*John Mason Good*.

## HINTS TO PREACHERS.

*Verse 1.*—The fitness, place, use, and power of silence in worship.

*Verse 1.*—The limitations, advantages, and obligations of vows.

*Verse 2 (first clause).*—The hearing and granting of prayer is the Lord's property, his usual practice, his pleasure, his nature, and his glory.—*David Dickson.*

*Verse 3.*—I. *The humble confession.* Sins prevail against us. 1. *When* we are unwatchful, or go into temptation, and even after most sacred engagements. 2. *How.* Through our inbred corruption, natural constitution, suddenness of temptation, neglect of means of grace, and want of fellowship. 3. *In whom.* In the best of men: David says, "against me." Let us take home the caution. II. *The reassuring confidence.* Sin is forgiven. 1. By God: "Thou." 2. By atonement: covering all. 3. Effectually: "purge away." 4. Comprehensively: "our transgressions."

*Verse 3.*—I. *A cry of distress.* Mansoul besieged: "Iniquities prevail against me." II. *A shout of delight.* Mansoul relieved: "Thou shalt purge them away."—*E. G. Gange.*

*Verse 4.*—Nearness to God is the foundation of a creature's happiness. This doctrine appears in full evidence, while we consider the three chief ingredients of true felicity, *viz.*, the contemplation of the noblest object, to satisfy all the powers of the understanding; the love of the supreme good, to answer the utmost propensities of the will, and the sweet and everlasting sensation and assurance of the love of an Almighty Friend, who will free us from all the evils which our nature can fear, and confer upon us all the good which a wise and innocent creature can desire. Thus all the capacities of man are employed in their highest and sweetest exercises and enjoyments.—*Isaac Watts.*

*Verse 4.*—Election, effectual calling, access, adoption, final perseverance, satisfaction. This verse is a body of divinity in miniature.

*Verse 5.*—Treat the first clause experimentally, and show how prayers for our own sanctification are answered by trial; for God's glory, by our persecution; for our babes' salvation, by their death; for the good of others, by their sickness, etc., etc.

*Verse 7.*—The Lord, the giver, creator, and preserver of peace.

*Verse 8.*—Tokens of God's presence; those causing terror, and those inspiring joy.

*Verse 8 (last clause).*—The peculiar joys of morning and evening.

*Verse 9.*—"The river of God." John Bunyan's treatise on "The Water of Life" would be suggestive on this topic.

*Verse 9.*—Divine visits and their consequences.

*Verses 9—13.*—A Harvest Sermon. I. *The general goodness of God.* Visiting the earth in rotation of seasons: "Seed time and harvest," etc. II. *The greatness of his resources:* "The river of God, which is full of water;" not like Elijah's brook, which dried up. III. *The variety of his benefactions:* "Corn;" "Water;" "Blessed the springing thereof," etc. IV. *The perpetuity of his blessings:* "Crownest the year."—*E. G. G.*

*Verse 10.*—Divine grace like rain. I. In itself. II. In its abundance. III. In its effects on the heart and entire nature; falling on ridge and furrow; softening, etc. IV. In its fruitful results. See the extract from Ralph Robinson in loc.

*Verse 10 (last clause).*—See "Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 675: "Spring in the Heart."

*Verse 11.*—See "Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 532: "Thanksgiving and Prayer."

*Verse 12 (first clause).*—I. *Our dwelling place:* "the wilderness." II. *Our spiritual provision:* "pastures." III. *Our heavenly refreshment:* "they drop."

*Verse 12.*—Causes for joy for small churches. God remembers them, stablishes and increases them, feeds them and revives them, etc.

*Verse 13.*—The song of nature and the ear which hears it.