

## PSALM LXXIV.

TITLE.—Maschil of Asaph. *An instructive Psalm by Asaph. The history of the suffering church is always edifying; when we see how the faithful trusted and wrestled with their God in times of dire distress, we are thereby taught how to behave ourselves under similar circumstances: we learn moreover, that when the fiery trial befalls us, no strange thing has happened unto us, we are following the trail of the host of God.*

DIVISION.—From verse 1—11 the poet pleads the sorrows of the nation, and the despite done to the assemblies of the Lord; then he urges former displays of divine power as a reason for present deliverance (verses 12—23). Whether it is a prophetic Psalm, intended for use in troubles foreseen, or whether it was written by a later Asaph, after the invasion by Sennacherib or during the Maccabean wars, it would be very hard to determine, but we see no difficulty in the first supposition.

### EXPOSITION.

**O** GOD, why hast thou cast us off for ever? *why* doth thine anger smoke against the sheep of thy pasture?

2 Remember thy congregation, *which* thou hast purchased of old; the rod of thine inheritance, *which* thou hast redeemed; this mount Zion, wherein thou hast dwelt.

3 Lift up thy feet unto the perpetual desolations; *even* all that the enemy hath done wickedly in the sanctuary.

4 Thine enemies roar in the midst of thy congregations; they set up their ensigns *for* signs.

5 *A man* was famous according as he had lifted up axes upon the thick trees.

6 But now they break down the carved work thereof at once with axes and hammers.

7 They have cast fire into thy sanctuary, they have defiled *by casting down* the dwelling place of thy name to the ground.

8 They said in their hearts, Let us destroy them together: they have burned up all the synagogues of God in the land.

9 We see not our signs: *there is* no more any prophet: neither *is there* among us any that knoweth how long.

10 O God, how long shall the adversary reproach? shall the enemy blaspheme thy name for ever?

11 Why withdrawest thou thy hand, even thy right hand? pluck *it* out of thy bosom.

1. "O God, why hast thou cast us off for ever?" To cast us off at all were hard, but when thou dost for so long a time desert thy people it is an evil beyond all endurance—the very chief of woes and abyss of misery. It is our wisdom when under chastisement to enquire, "Show me wherefore thou contendest with me?" and if the affliction be a protracted one, we should the more eagerly enquire the purport of it. Sin is usually at the bottom of all the hidings of the Lord's face; let us ask the Lord to reveal the special form of it to us, that we may repent of it, overcome it, and henceforth forsake it. When a church is in a forsaken condition it must not sit still in apathy, but turn to the hand which smiteth it, and humbly enquire the reason why. At the same time, the enquiry of the text is a faulty one for it implies two mistakes. There are two questions, which only admit of negative replies. "Hath God cast away his people?" (Roms xi. 1); and the other, "Will

the Lord cast off for ever?" (Psalm lxxvii. 7). God is never weary of his people so as to abhor them, and even when his anger is turned against them, it is but for a small moment, and with a view to their eternal good. Grief in its distraction asks strange questions and surmises impossible terrors. It is a wonder of grace that the Lord has not long ago put us away as men lay aside cast-off garments, but he hateth putting away, and will still be patient with his chosen. "*Why doth thine anger smoke against the sheep of thy pasture?*" They are thine, they are the objects of thy care, they are poor, silly, and defenceless things: pity them, forgive them, and come to their rescue. They are but sheep, do not continue to be wroth with them. It is a terrible thing when the anger of God smokes, but it is an infinite mercy that it does not break into a devouring flame. It is meet to pray the Lord to remove every sign of his wrath, for it is to those who are truly the Lord's sheep a most painful thing to be the objects of his displeasure. To vex the Holy Spirit is no mean sin, and yet how frequently are we guilty of it; hence it is no marvel that we are often under a cloud.

2. "*Remember thy congregation, which thou hast purchased of old.*" What a mighty plea is redemption. O God, canst thou see the bloodmark on thine own sheep, and yet allow grievous wolves to devour them? The church is no new purchase of the Lord; from before the world's foundation the chosen were regarded as redeemed by the Lamb slain: shall ancient love die out, and the eternal purpose become frustrate? The Lord would have his people remember the Paschal Lamb, the bloodstained lintel, and the overthrow of Egypt; and will he forget all this himself? Let us put him in remembrance, let us plead together. Can he desert his blood-bought and forsake his redeemed? Can election fail and eternal love cease to flow? Impossible. The woes of Calvary, and the covenant of which they are the seal, are the security of the saints.

"*The rod of thine inheritance, which thou hast redeemed.*" So sweet a plea deserved to be repeated and enlarged upon. The Lord's portion is his people—will he lose his inheritance? His church is his kingdom, over which he stretches the rod of sovereignty; will he allow his possessions to be torn from him? God's property in us is a fact full of comfort: his value of us, his dominion over us, his connection with us are all so many lights to cheer our darkness. No man will willingly lose his inheritance, and no prince will relinquish his dominions; therefore we believe that the King of kings will hold his own, and maintain his rights against all comers. "*This mount Zion, wherein thou hast dwelt.*" The Lord's having made Zion the especial centre of his worship, and place of his manifestation, is yet another plea for the preservation of Jerusalem. Shall the sacred temple of Jehovah be desecrated by heathen, and the throne of the Great King be defiled by his enemies? Has the Spirit of God dwelt in our hearts, and will he leave them to become a haunt for the devil? Has he sanctified us by his indwelling, and will he, after all, vacate the throne? God forbid.

It may be well to note that this Psalm was evidently written with a view to the temple upon Zion, and not to the tabernacle which was there in David's time, and was a mere tent; but the destructions here bewailed were exercised upon the carved work of a substantial structure. Those who had seen the glory of God in Solomon's peerless temple might well mourn in bitterness, when the Lord allowed his enemies to make an utter ruin of that matchless edifice.

3. "*Lift up thy feet unto the perpetual desolations.*" The ruin made had already long been an eyesore to the suppliant, and there seemed no hope of restoration. Havoc lorded it not only for a day or a year, but with perpetual power. This is another argument with God. Would Jehovah sit still and see his own land made a wilderness, his own palace a desolation? Until he should arise, and draw near, the desolation would remain; only his presence could cure the evil, therefore is he entreated to hasten with uplifted feet for the deliverance of his people. "*Even all that the enemy hath done wickedly in the sanctuary.*" Every stone in the ruined temple appealed to the Lord; on all sides were the marks of impious spoilers, the holiest places bore evidence of their malicious wickedness; would the Lord ever permit this? Would he not hasten to overthrow the foe who defiled him to his face, and profaned the throne of his glory? Faith finds pleas in the worst circumstances, she uses even the fallen stones of her desolate palaces, and assails with them the gates of heaven, casting them forth with the great engine of prayer.

4. "*Thine enemies roar in the midst of thy congregations.*" Where thy people sang like angels, these barbarians roar like beasts. When thy saints come together

for worship, these cruel men attack them with all the fury of lions. They have no respect for the most solemn gatherings, but intrude themselves and their blasphemies into our most hallowed meetings. How often in times of persecution or prevalent heresy has the church learned the meaning of such language. May the Lord spare us such misery. When hypocrites abound in the church, and pollute her worship, the case is parallel to that before us; Lord save us from so severe a trial. "*They set up their ensigns for signs.*" Idolatrous emblems used in war were set up over God's altar, as an insulting token of victory, and of contempt for the vanquished and their God. Papists, Arians, and the modern school of Neologians have, in their day, set up their ensigns for signs. Superstition, unbelief, and carnal wisdom have endeavoured to usurp the place of Christ crucified, to the grief of the church of God. The enemies without do us small damage, but those within the church cause her serious harm; by supplanting the truth and placing error in its stead, they deceive the people, and lead multitudes to destruction. As a Jew felt a holy horror when he saw an idolatrous emblem set up in the holy place, even so do we when in a Protestant church we see the fooleries of Rome, and when from pulpits, once occupied by men of God, we hear philosophy and vain deceit.

5. "*A man was famous according as he had lifted up axes upon the thick trees.*" Once men were renowned for felling the cedars and preparing them for building the temple, but now the axe finds other work, and men are as proud of destroying as their fathers were of erecting. Thus in the olden times our sires dealt sturdy blows against the forests of error, and laboured hard to lay the axe at the root of the trees; but, alas! their sons appear to be quite as diligent to destroy the truth and to overthrow all that their fathers built up. O for the good old times again! O for an hour of Luther's hatchet, or Calvin's mighty axe!

6. "*But now they break down the carved work thereof at once with axes and hammers.*" The invaders were as industrious to destroy as the ancient builders had been to construct. Such fair carving it was barbarous to hew in pieces, but the Vandals had no mercy and broke down all, with any weapon which came to hand. In these days men are using axes and sledge-hammers against the gospel and the church. Glorious truths, far more exquisite than the goodliest carving, are cavilled over and smashed by the blows of modern criticism. Truths which have upheld the afflicted and cheered the dying are smitten by pretentious Goths, who would be accounted learned, but know not the first principles of the truth. With sharp ridicule, and heavy blows of sophistry, they break the faith of some; and would, if it were possible, destroy the confidence of the elect themselves. Assyrians, Babylonians, and Romans are but types of spiritual foes who labour to crush the truth and the people of God.

7. "*They have cast fire into thy sanctuary.*" Axes and hammers were not sufficient for the purpose of the destroyers, they must needs try fire. Malice knows no bounds. Those who hate God are never sparing of the most cruel weapons. To this day the enmity of the human heart is quite as great as ever; and, if providence did not restrain, the saints would still be as fuel for the flames. "*They have defiled by casting down the dwelling place of thy name to the ground.*" They made a heap of the temple, and left not one stone upon another. When the Lord left Mount Zion, and the Roman gained entrance, the military fury led the soldiery to burn out and root up the memorial of the famous House of the Lord. Could the powers of darkness have their way, a like fate would befall the church of Christ. "Rase it," say they, "rase it even to the foundation thereof." Defilement to the church is destruction; her foes would defile her till nothing of her purity, and consequently of her real self, remained. Yet, even if they could wreak their will upon the cause of Christ, they are not able to destroy it, it would survive their blows and fires; the Lord would hold them still like dogs in a leash, and in the end frustrate all their designs.

8. "*They said in their hearts, Let us destroy them together.*" It was no idle wish, their cruelty was sincere, deep-seated, a matter of their inmost heart. Extirpation was the desire of Haman, and the aim of many another tyrant; not a remnant of the people of God would have been left if oppressors could have had their way. Pharaoh's policy to stamp out the nation has been a precedent for others, yet the Jews survive, and will; the bush though burning has not been consumed. Even thus the church of Christ has gone through baptisms of blood and fire, but it is all the brighter for them. "*They have burned up all the synagogues of God in the land.*" Here is no allusion to places called synagogues, but to assemblies; and as no



assemblies for worship were held but in one place, the ruin of the temple was the destruction of all the holy gatherings, and so in effect all the meeting-places were destroyed. One object of persecutors has always been to put an end to all conventicles, as they have called them. Keep them from meeting and you will scatter them, so have the foemen said; but, glory be to God, saints are independent of walls, and have met on the hill side, by the moss, or in the catacombs, or in a boat at sea. Yet has the attempt been almost successful, and the hunt so hot, that the faithful have wandered in solitude, and their solemn congregations have been under such circumstances, few and far between. What sighs and cries have in such times gone up to the ears of the Lord God of Sabaoth. How happy are we that we can meet for worship in any place we choose, and none dare molest us.

9. "*We see not our signs.*" Alas, poor Israel! No Urin and Thummim blazed on the High Priest's bosom, and no Shekinah shone from between the cherubim. The smoke of sacrifice and cloud of incense no more arose from the holy hill; solemn feasts were suspended, and even circumcision, the covenant sign, was forbidden by the tyrant. We, too, as believers, know what it is to lose our evidence and grope in darkness; and too often do our churches also miss the tokens of the Redeemer's presence, and their lamps remain untrimmed. Sad plaint of a people under a cloud! "*There is no more any prophet.*" Prophecy was suspended. No inspiring psalm or consoling promise fell from bard or seer. It is ill with the people of God when the voice of the preacher of the gospel fails, and a famine of the word of life falls on the people. God-sent ministers are as needful to the saints as their daily bread, and it is a great sorrow when a congregation is destitute of a faithful pastor. It is to be feared, that with all the ministers now existing, there is yet a dearth of men whose hearts and tongues are touched with the celestial fire. "*Neither is there any among us that knoweth how long.*" If some one could foretell an end, the evil might be borne with a degree of patience, but when none can see a termination, or foretell an escape, the misery has a hopeless appearance, and is overwhelming. Blessed be God, he has not left his church in these days to be so deplorably destitute of cheering words; let us pray that he never may. Contempt of the word is very common, and may well provoke the Lord to withdraw it from us; may his long-suffering endure the strain, and his mercy afford us still the word of life.

10. "*O God, how long shall the adversary reproach?*" Though we know not how long yet thou dost. The times and seasons are with thee. When God is reproached, there is hope for us, for it may be he will hearken and avenge his dishonoured name. Wickedness has great license allowed it, and justice lingers on the road; God has his reasons for delay, and his seasons for action, and in the end it shall be seen that he is not slack concerning his promise as some men count slackness. "*Shall the enemy blaspheme thy name for ever?*" He will do so for ever, unless thou dost give him his quietus. Wilt thou never defend thyself, and stop slanderous tongues? Wilt thou always endure the jeers of the profane? Is there to be no end to all this sacrilege and cursing? Yes, it shall all be ended, but not by-and-by. There is a time for the sinner to rage, and a time in which patience bears with him; yet it is but a time, and then, ah, then!

11. "*Why withdrawest thou thy hand, even thy right hand?*" Wherefore this inaction, this indifference for thine own honour and thy people's safety? How bold is the suppliant! Does he err? Nay, verily, we who are so chill, and distant, and listless in prayer are the erring ones. The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and he who learns the art shall surely prevail with God by its means. It is fit that we should enquire why the work of grace goes on so slowly, and the enemy has so much power over men: the enquiry may suggest practical reflections of unbounded value.

"Why dost thou from the conflict stay?  
Why do thy chariot wheels delay?  
Lift up thyself, hell's kingdom shake,  
Arm of the Lord, awake, awake."

"*Pluck it out of thy bosom.*" A bold simile, but dying men must venture for their lives. When God seems to fold his arms we must not fold ours, but rather renew our entreaties that he would again put his hand to the work. O for more agony in prayer among professing Christians, then should we see miracles of grace. We have here before us a model of pleading, a very rapture of prayer. It is humble, but very bold, eager, fervent, and effectual. The heart of God is always moved by

such entreaties. When we bring forth our strong reasons, then will he bring forth his choice mercies.

12 For God *is* my King of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth.

13 Thou didst divide the sea by thy strength: thou brakest the heads of the dragons in the waters.

14 Thou brakest the heads of leviathan in pieces, *and* gavest him *to be* meat to the people inhabiting the wilderness.

15 Thou didst cleave the fountain and the flood: thou driedst up mighty rivers.

16 The day *is* thine, the night also *is* thine: thou hast prepared the light and the sun.

17 Thou hast set all the borders of the earth: thou hast made summer and winter.

18 Remember this, *that* the enemy hath reproached, O LORD, and *that* the foolish people have blasphemed thy name.

19 O deliver not the soul of thy turtle-dove unto the multitude of the *wicked*: forget not the congregation of thy poor for ever.

20 Have respect unto the covenant: for the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty.

21 O let not the oppressed return ashamed: let the poor and needy praise thy name.

22 Arise, O God, plead thine own cause: remember how the foolish man reproacheth thee daily.

23 Forget not the voice of thine enemies: the tumult of those that rise up against thee increaseth continually.

Having spread the sad case before the Lord, the pleader now urges another series of arguments for divine help. He reasons from the Lord's former wonders of grace, and his deeds of power, imploring a repetition of the same divine works.

12. "*For God is my King of old.*" How consoling is this avowal! Israel in holy loyalty acknowledges her King, and claims to have been his possession from of old, and thence she derives a plea for defence and deliverance. If the Lord be indeed the sole monarch of our bosoms, he will in his love put forth his strength on our behalf; if from eternity he has claimed us as his own, he will preserve us from the insulting foe. "*Working salvation in the midst of the earth.*" From the most remote period of Israel's history the Lord had worked out for her many salvations; especially at the Red Sea, the very heart of the world was astonished by his wonders of deliverance. Now, every believer may plead at this day the ancient deeds of the Lord, the work of Calvary, the overthrow of sin, death, and hell. He who wrought out our salvation of old will not, cannot desert us now. Each past miracle of grace assures us that he who has begun to deliver will continue to redeem us from all evil. His deeds of old were public and wrought in the teeth of his foes, they were no delusions or make-believes; and, therefore, in all our perils we look for true and manifest assistance, and we shall surely receive it.

13. "*Thou didst divide the sea by thy strength.*" Infinite power split the Red Sea in twain. Israel delighted to rehearse this famous act of the Lord. "*Thou brakest the heads of the dragons in the waters.*" Monsters long accustomed to the deep found themselves left high and dry. Huge things of the sea-cave and the coral grot were deprived of their vital element, and left with crushed heads upon the dry channel bed. There, too, that old dragon Pharaoh was utterly broken, and Egypt herself had the head of her power and pomp broken with an almighty blow. Even thus is that old dragon broken by him who came to bruise the serpent's head, and the sea of wrath no longer rolls before us; we pass through it dry-shod. Our faith as to the present is revived by glad memories of the past.

14. "*Thou brakest the heads of leviathan in pieces.*" It is the Lord who has done it all. The mighty dragon of Egypt was utterly slain, and his proud heads broken in pieces. Our Lord Jesus is the true Hercules, dragons with a hundred heads are crushed beneath his foot: the infernal hydra he utterly vanquishes. "*And gavest*

him to be meat to the people inhabiting the wilderness." Not only did the wild beasts feed upon the carcasses of the Egyptians, but the dwellers along the shores stripped the bodies and enriched themselves with the spoil. Israel, too, grew rich with the relics of her drowned adversaries. How often do great afflictions work our lasting good. Leviathan, who would have devoured us, is himself devoured, and out of the monster we gather sweetness. Let us not give way to fear; hydra-headed evils shall be slain, and monstrous difficulties shall be overcome, and all things shall work our lasting good.

15. "*Thou didst cleave the fountain and the flood.*" Jordan was divided by Jehovah's power; the Lord is able to repeat his miracles, what he did with a sea, he can do with a river; lesser difficulties shall be removed as well as greater ones. Perhaps the fountain refers to the smitten rock, which from its cleft poured forth a perpetual stream; so the Lord opens to us springs of water in the wilderness. "*Thou driedst up mighty rivers,*" rivers which were permanent, and not like the transient torrents of the land, were dried up for awhile; the Jordan itself, being such, was laid dry for a season. Observe the repetition of the pronoun "thou;" the song is all for God, and the prayer is all directed to him. The argument is that he who wrought such wonders would be pleased to do the like now that an emergency had arisen.

16. "*The day is thine, the night also is thine.*" Thou art not restricted by times and seasons. Our prosperity comes from thee, and our adversity is ordained by thee. Thou rulest in the darkness, and one glance of thine eye kindles it into day. Lord, be not slack to keep thy word, but rise for the help of thy people. "*Thou hast prepared the light and the sun.*" Both light and the light-bearer are of thee. Our help, and the instrument of it, are both in thy hand. There is no limit to thy power; be pleased to display it and make thy people glad. Let thy sacred preparations of mercy ripen; say, "Let there be light," and light shall at once dispel our gloom.

17. "*Thou hast set all the borders of the earth.*" Land and sea receive their boundaries from thee. Continents and islands are mapped by thy hand. Observe, again, how everything is ascribed to the divine agency by the use of the pronoun "thou;" not a word about natural laws, and original forces, but the Lord is seen as working all. It will be well when all our "ologies" are tintured with "theology," and the Creator is seen at work amid his universe. The argument of our text is, that he who bounds the sea can restrain his foes; and he who guards the borders of the dry land can also protect his chosen. "*Thou hast made summer and winter.*" Return, then, good Lord, to us the bright summer days of joy. We know that all our changes come of thee, we have already felt the rigours of thy winter, grant us now the genial glow of thy summer smile. The God of nature is the God of grace; and we may argue from the revolving seasons that sorrow is not meant to rule the year, the flowers of hope will blossom, and ruddy fruits of joy will ripen yet.

18. "*Remember this, that the enemy hath reproached, O Lord.*" Against thee, the ever glorious Maker of all things, have they spoken, thine honour have they assailed, and defied even thee. This is forcible pleading indeed, and reminds us of Moses and Hezekiah in their intercessions: "What wilt thou do unto thy great name?" "It may be that the Lord thy God will hear the words of Rabshakeh, who hath reproached the living God." Jehovah is a jealous God, and will surely glorify his own name; here our hope finds foothold. "*And that the foolish people have blasphemed thy name.*" The meanness of the enemy is here pleaded. Sinners are fools, and shall fools be allowed to insult the Lord and oppress his people; shall the abjects curse the Lord and defy him to his face? When error grows too bold its day is near, and its fall certain. Arrogance foreshadows ripeness of evil, and the next step is rottenness. Instead of being alarmed when bad men grow worse and more audacious, we may reasonably take heart, for the hour of their judgment is evidently near.

19. "*O deliver not the soul of thy turtle-dove unto the multitude of the wicked.*" Thy poor church is weak and defenceless as a dove, but yet her adversaries cannot touch her without thy permission; do not give them leave to devour her, consign her not to the merciless fangs of her foes. She is thy dove, thy turtle, thy favoured one, do not cast her to her enemies. Be merciful, and preserve the weak. Thus may we each plead, and with good hope of prevailing, for the Lord is very pitiful and full of compassion. "*Forget not the congregation of thy poor for ever.*" They look to thee for everything, for they are very poor, and they are thy poor, and there



is a company of them, collected by thyself; do not turn thy back on them for long, do not appear strange unto them, but let their poverty plead with thee; turn thou unto them, and visit thine afflicted. In such pleas we also can personally join when at any time we are sorely tried, and the Lord's presence is hidden from us.

20. "*Have respect unto the covenant.*" Here is the master-key,—heaven's gate must open to this. God is not a man that he should lie; his covenant he will not break, nor alter the thing that hath gone forth out of his lips. The Lord had promised to bless the seed of Abraham, and make them a blessing; here they plead that ancient word, even as we also may plead the covenant made with the Lord Jesus for all believers. What a grand word it is! Reader, do you know how to cry, "Have respect unto thy covenant"? "*For the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty.*" Darkness is the fit hour for beasts of prey, and ignorance the natural dwelling-place of cruelty. All the world is in a measure dark, and hence everywhere there are cruel enemies of the Lord's people; but in some places a sevenfold night of superstition and unbelief has settled down, and there rage against the saints reaches to madness. Has not the Lord declared that the whole earth shall be filled with his glory? How can this be if he always permits cruelty to riot in dark places? Surely, he must arise, and end the days of wrong, the era of oppression. This verse is a most telling missionary prayer.

21. "*O let not the oppressed return ashamed.*" Though broken and crushed they come to thee with confidence; suffer them not to be disappointed, for then they will be ashamed of their hope. "*Let the poor and needy praise thy name.*" By thy speedy answer to their cries make their hearts glad, and they will render to thee their gladdest songs. It is not the way of the Lord to allow any of those who trust in him to be put to shame; for his word is, "He shall call upon me, and I will deliver him, and he shall glorify me."

22. "*Arise, O God, plead thine own cause.*" Answer thou the taunts of the profane by arguments which shall annihilate both the blasphemy and the blasphemer. God's judgments are awful replies to the defiances of his foes. When he makes empires crumble, and smites persecutors to the heart, his cause is pleaded by himself as none other could have advocated it. O that the Lord himself would come into the battle-field. Long has the fight been trembling in the balance; one glance of his eye, one word from his lip, and the banners of victory shall be borne on the breeze. "*Remember how the foolish man reproacheth thee daily.*" The Lord is begged to remember that he is himself reproached, and that by a mere man—that man a fool, and he is also reminded that these foul reproaches are incessant, and repeated with every revolving day. It is bravely done when faith can pluck pleas out of the dragon's mouth, and out of the blasphemies of fools find arguments with God.

23. "*Forget not the voice of thine enemies.*" Great warrior, let the foemen's taunt provoke thee to the fray. They challenge thee; accept thou the gage of battle, and smite them with thy terrible hand. If the cries of thy children are too feeble to be heard, be pleased to note the loud voices of thy foes, and silence their profanities for ever. "*The tumult of those that rise up against thee increaseth continually.*" The ungodly clamour against thee and thy people, their blasphemies are loud and incessant, they defy thee, even thee, and because thou repliest not they laugh thee to scorn. They go from bad to worse, from worse to worst; their fury swells like the thunders of an advancing tempest. What will it come to? What infamy will next be hurled at thee and thine? O God, wilt thou for ever bear this? Hast thou no regard for thine honour, no respect for thy glory?

Much of this Psalm has passed over our mind while beholding the idolatries of Rome,\* and remembering her bloody persecution of the saints. O Lord, how long shall it be ere thou wilt ease thyself of those profane wretches, the priests, and cast the harlot of Babylon into the ditch of corruption? May thy church never cease to plead with thee till judgment shall be executed, and the Lord avenged upon Antichrist.

\* The Author visited Rome in November and December, 1871, while this portion of the Treasury of David was in progress.

## EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS.

*Whole Psalm.*—There is one singularity in this Psalm which reminds one strongly of Psalm xlv. : there is not one mention of national or personal sin throughout, no allusion to the Lord's righteous dealing in their punishment, no supplication for pardon and forgiveness ; and yet one can hardly doubt that the writer of the Psalm, be he who he may, must have felt as keenly as Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, or any other prophet of the captivity, the sins and iniquities which had brought all this sore evil upon them. But still, though there be expostulation, there is no complaint ; though there be mourning, there is no murmuring ; there is far more the cry of a smitten child, wondering why, and grieving that his father's face is so turned away from him in displeasure, and a father's hand so heavy on the child of his love. Or, as we might almost say, it is like the cry of one of those martyred ones beneath the altar, wondering at the Lord's continued endurance of his heritage thus trampled under foot of the marauder and oppressor, and exclaiming, "How long, O Lord, how long?" And yet it is the appeal of one who was still a sufferer, still groaning under the pressure of his calamities, "Why hast thou cast us off for ever? We see not our signs, there is no more any prophet among us."—*Barton Bouchier.*

*Whole Psalm.*—The peculiarity of this Psalm is marked by the very frequent use of the *נָּוּ*, "for ever:" verses 1, 3, 10.—*E. W. Hengstenberg.*

*Verse 1.*—This Psalm, and particularly these words, do contain the church's sad lamentation over the deep affliction, together with her earnest expostulations with God about the cause. Two things there are that the church in these words doth plead with God. First, *The greatness of her affliction* ; secondly, *the nearness of her relation*. 1. *The greatness of her affliction*. And there were three things in her affliction that did make it lie very heavy upon her. First, *the root of this affliction* ; and that was God's "anger:" "Why doth thine anger smoke," etc. Secondly, *the height of this affliction* : God was not only angry, but he did "smoke" in his anger. Thirdly, *the length of this affliction* : it was so long that God did seem to cast them off "for ever." 2. *The nearness of her relation* : "Against the sheep of thy pasture ;" as if they should have said, Lord, if thou hadst done this against thine enemies, it had been no wonder ; if thou hadst poured out thy wrath against the vessels of wrath, it had not been so much. But what wilt thou draw out thy sword against the sheep of thy pasture? It were no wonder that thou shouldst take the fat and the strong, and pour out thy judgments upon them ; but wilt thou do it to thy sheep? There be several doctrines that I may raise from these words ; as, First doctrine : That God's people are his sheep. Second doctrine : That God may be sorely angry with his own people, with his own sheep. Third doctrine : That when God is angry with his people, it becomes them carefully to enquire into the cause. Fourth doctrine : That when God's people are under afflictions, they ought to take notice of, and be much affected with, his anger, from which they do proceed. Fifth doctrine : That God's people under afflictions are, or should be, more affected with his anger than with their smart. This is that which the church doth complain of, not that the church did so smart, but that God was displeas'd and angry ; that did most affect them. Sixth doctrine : That God's people are apt to have misgiving thoughts of God when they are in sore afflictions. God was angry with his people, and their hearts did misgive them, as if God did cast off his people. Seventh doctrine : That God may be angry with his people, so sore, and so long, that in the judgment of sense it may seem that they are for ever cast off. Eighth doctrine : That though the people of God may not murmur against his proceedings, yet they may humbly expostulate with him about the cause.—*Joseph Alleine.* 1633—1668.

*Verse 1.*—"Why doth thine anger smoke," etc. Anger is a fire ; and in men, and other creatures enraged, a smoke seemeth to go out of their nostrils. Xenophon saith of the Thebans, when they are angry they breathe fire. This then is spoken of God, after the manner of men.—*John Trapp.*

*Verse 1.*—"The sheep of thy pasture." There is nothing more imbecille than a sheep : simple, frugal, gentle, tame, patient, prolific, timid, domesticated, stupid, useful. Therefore, while the name of sheep is here used, it is suggested how pressing



the necessity is for divine assistance, and how well-befitting the Most High it would be to make their cause his own.—*Lorinus*.

Verse 2.—“Remember thy congregation.” It is not without reason that they do not say, Remember us, but “Remember thy congregation,” not ours, but thine; nor that because it has now begun to be thine, but “which thou hast purchased of old, the rod of thine inheritance which thou hast redeemed:” likewise, this Mount Zion; not wherein we, but wherein “thou hast dwelt.” They had nothing which they could bring before an angry God with greater confidence, than that ancient loving-kindness shown to their fathers in former days.—*Musculus*.

Verse 2.—“The rod of thine inheritance.” עֵדוּת הַיְהוָה, the inheritance-rod is the staff with which the inheritance is measured; מִשְׁמֵר הַיְהוָה, the land-surveyor’s rod (Ez. xl. 3): and this is used as לוֹל, the lol, is for the portion, for the inheritance itself.—*E. W. Hengstenberg*.

Verse 2.—“Thine inheritance.” It signifies a nation, which through all successions God had a peculiar right and title to.—*Henry Hammond*.

Verse 2.—“Thou hast redeemed,” i.e. the purchased people, by restoring them when they had been alienated, and had fallen into the hands of others: like a goel, or near kinsman, who ransoms a brother hurried into captivity, and regains an inheritance that has been sold.—*Hermann Venema*.

Verse 3.—“Lift up thy feet.” Or, thy hammers, that is, “thy strokes,” to “stamp” or “beat down” the enemy “unto perpetual desolations.” Thus the “feet” are used to “tread down with,” Isa. xxvi. 6; and so the Greek taketh it here, changing the metaphor, and translating it, “thy hands,” which are also instruments to strike down with. Or, “lift up thy feet,” that is, come quickly to see “the perpetual desolations,” which the enemy hath made.—*Henry Ainsworth*.

Verse 3.—“Lift up thy feet.” Abu Walid renders it, *Tread hard upon thine enemies*. The Jewish Arab, *Shew forth thy punishment*, adding in a note that the *lifting up the feet* implies punishment, the bringing under by force being usually expressed by *treading under the feet*.—*Henry Hammond*.

Verse 3.—“Lift up thy feet,” etc. To these desolations they seek that God would lift up his footsteps, that is, that he would approach. In Gen. xxix. 1, there occurs the phrase, *to lift the feet*; here the expression is much more marked—*to lift up the footsteps*—and must be taken to mean a swift, impetuous, majestic, and powerful approach: like a hero, who strikes the ground with heavy tread, and advances rapidly with far-sounding footsteps.—*Hermann Venema*.

Verse 3.—“In the sanctuary.” Their cities had been laid waste, their provinces, their farms, their vineyards, their oliveyards. They themselves had been everywhere cut down without striking a blow in defence, and their means of life had been snatched away without resistance. Yet they speak not of these things; not because things of this sort ought not to cause grief, nor yet because the saints are not touched with a sense of their loss; but because those things which threatened the extinction of religion and the worship of God, overtopped the feeling of all these other misfortunes with an intolerable sorrow.—*Musculus*.

Verse 4.—“Thine enemies roar,” etc. The word רָעַם is used especially of the roar of the lion. . . . In this place we may justly extend the application of the verb to those noisy words, whether mirthful or boastful, blasphemous against God and calamitous to his people (verse 10), breathing terror and threatenings through edicts; or rude and senseless, as in their idolatrous worship; or in their prayers and thoughtless songs. As in Isa. lii. 5, its meaning is *to howl*.—*Hermann Venema*.

Verse 4.—“They set up their ensigns for signs.” The meaning is, that the enemy, having abolished the signs of the true God, of his people and religion, such as circumcision, the feasts, sacrifices, the other ordinances of religion, and other marks of liberty, substituted his own idolatrous signs, as the signs of his authority and religion.—*Hermann Venema*.

Verses 4—7.—[The persecution under Antiochus. B.C. 168.] Athenæus proceeded to Jerusalem, where, with the assistance of the garrison, he prohibited and suppressed every observance of the Jewish religion, forced the people to profane the Sabbath, to eat swine’s flesh and other unclean food, and expressly forbade the national rite of circumcision. The Temple was dedicated to Jupiter Olympus: the statue of that deity was erected on part of the altar of burnt offerings, and

sacrifice duly performed. . . . As a last insult, the feasts of the Bacchanalia, the license of which, as they were celebrated in the later ages of Greece, shocked the severe virtue of the older Romans, were substituted for the national festival of Tabernacles. The reluctant Jews were forced to join in these riotous orgies, and to carry the ivy, the insignia of the God. So near was the Jewish nation, and the worship of Jehovah, to total extermination.—*Henry Hart Milman* (1791—1868), in "A History of the Jews."

[Under Titus.] And now the Romans, upon the flight of the seditious into the city, and upon the burning of the holy house itself, and of all the buildings lying round about it, brought their ensigns to the temple, and set them over against its eastern-gate; and there did they offer sacrifices to them, and there did they make Titus Imperator, with the greatest acclamations of joy.—*Josephus*.

Verse 5.—"A man was famous," etc. It enhances the cruelty of the enemy that the temple which had been built at the cost of so much treasure, adorned with such great elegance and splendour, and finished with untiring industry and consummate skill, was not saved thereby from their barbarous hands, but was utterly overthrown. There is a simile in these verses. The enemies breaking to pieces with great violence and casting down the altars and beams of the temple, are compared to the woodman, who with axe in hand cuts down the strong trees of the wood.—*Mollerus*.

Verse 5.—"A man was famous," etc. That is, very renowned were the workmen, who, by Hiram's order, cut down the rough cedars and firs in the thick Tyrian forests, for the building of thy Temple, and thereby they did an acceptable service to thee.—*Thomas Fenton*.

Verse 6.—"The carved work thereof." Even barbarian invaders are wont to spare the more splendid buildings for art's sake. Demetrius, when he had taken a picture painted by Protogenes in the suburbs of Rhodes, was besought by the Rhodians to be lenient towards art, lest he should destroy the painting. He replied that he would sooner burn the statues of his father than so great a work of art. The ferocity of these enemies, therefore, outdoes the barbarity of others, for they ruthlessly cast down an edifice sculptured and polished with the greatest skill.—*Mollerus*.

Verse 6.—"The carved work." פְּסֵלֹת *Pittuchim*: used in 1 Kings vi. 29, of the "carved figures of cherubim, and palm-trees, and open flowers," which were on the Temple walls.—*William Kay*.

Verse 6.—"With axes and hammers." It is noted by a learned interpreter, that the words in the original rendered in our translation, "with axes and hammers," are not properly Hebrew, but Syriac words, purposely to hint thereby the time when and the persons by whom this was done.—*Arthur Jackson*.

Verse 8.—"The synagogues of God." It is the opinion of Spencer, Vitringa, and of the learned in general, that the institution of synagogues for worship originated in the reading of the law publicly after the collection of its volumes by Ezra, and that, consequently, there were no such places of solemn assembly previous to the Babylonian captivity. Some of the Jews themselves have expressed a conviction that this is the fact, and the Scriptures give no intimation of their existence antecedently to that time. We are aware, however, that one of the first Hebraists of the present day, the Rev. Dr. M'Caul, inclines to the opinion of an earlier origin than that generally adopted. We quote his words: "The existence of such places before the Babylonish captivity has been much disputed; and most writers, arguing from the silence of the Old Testament, incline to the opinion that they originated in Babylon, and that after the restoration similar oratories were opened in the land of Israel; and hence some infer that the Seventy-fourth Psalm, which says in the eighth verse, 'They have burned up all the synagogues in the land,' was written in the post-Babylonian times. The argument from silence is, however, far from conclusive. The translation of סִנְגוֹגוֹת as *synagogues*, in the verse just cited, might fairly lead to a similar translation in some other passages which were confessedly written before the captivity; and the circumstances, character, and necessities of the Israelites, the great body of whom were far removed from the temple, prove indisputably that in their towns and villages they must have had some locality where they assembled on their sabbaths, new moons, and other solemn days, for the

purpose of receiving instruction in the law, and for public prayer. That locality, however different from subsequent arrangements, was the origin of the *synagogue*. How such assemblies were conducted before the captivity it is now impossible to say."—F. A. Cox.

*Verse 8.*—"Synagogues." Dr. Prideaux affirms that they had no synagogue before the Babylonish captivity; for the main service of the synagogue, says he, being the reading of the law unto the people, where there was no book of the law to be read, there certainly could be no synagogue. But how rare the book of the law was through all Judæa, before the Babylonish captivity, many texts of Scripture tell us. When Jehoshaphat sent teachers through all Judæa, to instruct the people in the law of God, they carried a book of the law with them (2 Chron. xvii. 9), which they needed not have done if there had been any copies of the law in those cities to which they went; which certainty there would have been had there been any synagogues in them. And when Hilkiah found the law in the temple (2 Kings xxii. 8), neither he nor king Josiah needed to have been so surprised at it, had books of the law been common in those times. Their behaviour on that occasion sufficiently proves they had never seen it before, which could not be the case had there then been any other copies of it to be found among the people; and if there were no copies of the law at that time among them, there could then be most certainly no *synagogues* for them to resort to for the hearing of it read unto them. From whence he concludes there could be no *synagogues* among the Jews, till after the Babylonish captivity.—Cruden's *Concordance*.

*Verse 8.*—"Synagogues." The assertion of those who are in favour of the Maccabæan origin of the Psalm, that these words describe the destruction of the *synagogues*, is met by the remark, that in all the copious accounts which we have of the transactions of these times, there is nothing said of any such work of destruction.—E. W. Hengstenberg.

*Verse 8.*—"Synagogues." In the Old Testament we find no traces of meetings for worship in synagogues. Temporary altars, groves, and high places were used alike by the Jewish saints and sinners for the worship of God and idols. The only pre-exile instance which seems to indicate that the devout in Israel were in the habit of resorting to pious leaders for blessings and instruction on stated occasions, is to be found in 2 Kings iv. 23, where the Shunammite's husband asks, "Wherefore wilt thou go to him (Elisha) to-day? It is neither new moon nor Sabbath." Yet 2 Kings xxii. 8, etc.; 2 Chron. xxxiv. 14, etc., testify undoubtedly against the existence of places of worship under the monarchy. It is during the exile, whilst the temple-worship was in abeyance, that we find indubitable proof of the systematic meetings on fasts for devotion and instruction (Zech. vii. 3—5; viii. 19). Religious meetings were also held on Sabbaths and fasts, to instruct the exiles in the divine law, and to admonish them to obey the divine precepts (Ezra x. 1—9; Neh. viii. 1—3; ix. 1—3; xiii. 1—3). These meetings, held near the temple and in other localities, were the origin of the *synagogue*, and the place in which the people assembled was denominated the *house of assembly*. Hence, also, the synagogue in the temple itself. . . . These synagogues soon became very popular, so that the Psalmist in depicting worship in the time of the Maccabees declares that the many meeting-places of God—or "*the Synagogues of God*" as the A.V. rightly renders it—have been laid waste.—Christian D. Ginsburg, in *Cyclopædia of Biblical Literature*.

*Verse 8 (second clause).*—The sense seems to be, *they* (the Chaldæan invaders) have abolished all the solemnities in the land. They have taken away the daily sacrifice; they have put an end to the festivals and feasts of our holy ritual. Compare Lam. ii. 6: "He hath violently taken away his tabernacle; he hath destroyed his places of the assembly," (or rather, his assembly, his *moëd*). "The Lord hath caused the solemn feasts and sabbaths to be forgotten in Zion."—Christopher Wordsworth.

*Verse 9.*—"We see not our signs." As if they had said, heretofore God was wont to give us signs and tokens, he would even work miracles for us, or he would send a prophet to instruct and advise us what to do; we had those who could tell us "*how long*," that is, how long our troubles should last, and when we should have our expected end of them; but now we are in trouble, and no man can tell us how long, now we are left to the wide world, to shift for ourselves as well as we can; and the Lord will not advise us what to do, nor give us his mind what's best to be done, or how to proceed: thus deplorable was their condition upon the hiding of God's face from them.—Joseph Caryl.



*Verse 9.*—"We see not our signs." These signs, which he mourned that he did not see, were certain outward marks of God's special favour, certain testimonies of his presence, certain memorials that he was with them to bless them. And it is said that there were five things in Solomon's temple destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, which were not in the second temple, which was erected after the Babylonish captivity. Five memorials or tokens of God's special presence were there wanting. One was the ark of the covenant; another, the fire from heaven upon the brazen altar; the third, the Shechinah, or cloud that rested upon the mercy-seat; the fourth, the Urim and Thummim which were in the breast-plate of the high-priest; and the fifth, the spirit of prophecy. For though there were the prophets, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, at the time of, and shortly after, the restoration; yet the spirit of prophecy ceased with Malachi, and did not re-appear until John the Baptist, the forerunner of the Lord Jesus. . . . The lamentation of the church here, then, was, that she saw not her signs. So now, the church of the living God, the regenerate family of Zion, have often reason to pour out the same melancholy complaint. Signs of God's favour, marks and testimonies of the work of grace upon their souls, are often so out of sight, so buried in obscurity, so enveloped in clouds of darkness, that the living family are compelled, from soul-feeling, to take up the language of lamentation here expressed, and say, "*We see not our signs.*"—*J. C. Philpot.* 1802—1869.

*Verse 9.*—"Our signs." The ordinary "*signs*" of Israel being God's peculiar people are the passover (Exod. xii. 13), the Sabbath (Exod. xxxi. 13), the temple, the altar, the sacrifices; the extraordinary ones are God's miracles wrought in his people's behalf (Ps. lxxviii. 43).—*A. R. Fausset.*

*Verse 9.*—"There is no more any prophet." By us it ought to be observed what they do not say: It is not,—here is no more any giant or warlike leader who may deliver us from the adversary: but, there is no more any prophet. And yet when the prophets were with them, they were contemptible in the eyes of all, maltreated by the wicked and put to death.—*Musculus.*

*Verse 10.*—"Shall the enemy blaspheme thy name for ever?" The sinner never leaves his sin till sin first leaves him: did not death put a stop to his sin, he would never cease from sin. This may be illustrated by a similitude thus: A company of gamblers resolve to play all night, and accordingly they sit down to chess tables or some other game; their candle, accidentally or unexpectedly, goes out, or is put out, or burnt out; their candle being out, they are forced to give over their game, and go to bed in the dark; but had the candle lasted all night, they would have played all night. This is every sinner's case in regard of sin: did not death put out the candle of life, the sinner would sin still. Should the sinner live for ever, he would sin for ever; and, therefore, it is a righteous thing with God to punish him for ever in hellish torments. Every impenitent sinner would sin to the days of eternity, if he might live to the days of eternity. "*O God, how long shall the adversary reproach? shall the enemy blaspheme thy name for ever?*" For ever, and evermore; or for ever and yet—for so the Hebrew loves to exaggerate: as if the sinner, the blasphemer, would set a term of duration longer than eternity to sin in. The Psalmist implicitly saith, Lord, if thou dost but let them alone for ever, they will certainly blaspheme thy name for ever and ever. I have read of the crocodile, that he knows no *maximum quod sic*, he is always growing bigger and bigger, and never comes to a certain pitch of monstrosity so long as he lives. *Quamdiu vivit crescit.* Every habituated sinner would, if he were let alone, be such a monster, perpetually growing worse and worse.—*Thomas Brooks.*

*Verse 12.*—"God is my King of old," etc. Let us learn from this verse how to think of our God. First, that he is our King, and therefore we ought to be encouraged to pray for his help against the ungodly, and to place ourselves in entire submission to his will and government. Secondly, that he is not a new God, but the Ancient of Days, and that whatever salvation has been wrought not only in the midst of his own people, but in the midst of the whole earth, even among those by whom he is not acknowledged, has been wrought by him. Let this meaning strike at the root of all trust in other gods, or in any creature.—*Musculus.*

*Verse 13.*—"Thou didst divide the sea." Thou, O Lord, didst make firm the flowing sea, that there might be a way for our fathers to pass over, and in those very waters through which thou didst lead thy ransomed, thou didst utterly over-

throw the hosts of Egypt, who were like dragons for ferocity, as they sought to devour thy people.—*Jansenius*.

*Verse 14.*—"Thou brakest the heads of leviathan," etc. It is spoken of Pharaoh's army which God destroyed in the Red Sea; that is, the destruction of the Egyptians was a pledge of the accomplishment of God's promise to cast the Canaanite out of the promised land, and to give them possession of it. Many hardships they were to pass through in the wilderness, but God gave them this mercy as food, not to their bodies, but food to their faith, while they were in the wilderness: therefore, those former great and glorious promises were accomplished. So that former mercies are food that God gives unto the faith of his people to feed upon, till he hath perfectly accomplished whatever he hath promised unto his church.—*William Strong*.

*Verse 14.*—"Leviathan." The Arabic Lexicographers (quoted by Bochart) affirm that *Pharao*, in the Egyptian language, signified a crocodile. Parkhurst remarks that in Schencher's *Physica Sacra* may be seen a medal with Julius Cæsar's head on one side, and on the reverse a crocodile with this inscription: *ÆΓΥΠΤΟ* *ΚΑΡΤΑ*, *Egypt taken*. M. Mariette has discovered at Karnak a monumental stele of Thothmes, on which that king says of himself,

"Fierce as the huge crocodile, I made them see the glory of my God;  
Terrible Lord of the waters, none dare even approach him."

*Verse 14.*—"Leviathan" is a name given not only to the crocodile, but to the whale and other large fishes. The *Zum*, or people inhabiting the wilderness, are supposed, by many sensible writers, to be the Ichthyophagi, or fish-eaters, who occupied, according to ancient authors, a part of the coast of the Red Sea. The Psalmist is here speaking of Israel's passage through its waters; and it is a singular fact that Diodorus, who lived about two hundred years ago, mentions a tradition, prevalent amongst these very persons, to the effect that in the time of their remote forefathers an extraordinary reflux took place, the channel of the gulf becoming dry, and the green bottom appearing, whilst the whole body of water rolled away in an opposite direction. There can be little doubt that this strange people would have used for food, and various purposes, such great fish as might have been cast ashore on the termination of the miracle. Most writers give this text a figurative meaning, but that is no reason why it may not be also literally understood; for such a mode of speaking is common in the Bible. But whether we understand it one way or the other, we have the testimony of heathens to its propriety and force. If, by the term "*Leviathan*," we believe Egypt to be intended, and by its "*heads*" those petty states into which that country was divided, the traditions of India, and the East, inform us that such designations were well understood, and therefore beautifully applicable.—*Anon.*, in "*Biblical and Theological Gleanings* : by *William O'Neill*." 1854.

*Verse 14.*—"Meat to the people inhabiting the wilderness." May not the exact meaning be that even as the sea-monsters washed upon the shore furnished food for the inhabitants of the Red Sea, even so the symbolic dragon power of Egypt when destroyed at the Red Sea became food for Israel's faith, and even furnished provision for their wilderness journey by the spoil which was cast up by the tide.—*C. H. S.*

*Verse 15.*—"Flood." God in dividing Jordan did not only divide the water that ordinarily belonged to the river, or the water which came from its fountains, but also the extraordinary additional waters by the great rains a little before harvest. So God *cleaved both the fountain, i.e., the fountain water, and the flood.*—*Jonathan Edwards*.

*Verse 16.*—"The day is thine, the night also is thine."

Ah! don't be sorrowful, darling,  
And don't be sorrowful, pray—  
Taking the year together, my dear,  
There isn't more night than day.

And God is God, my darling,  
Of night as well as day;  
And we feel and know that we can go,  
Wherever he leads the way.

A God of the night, my darling,  
Of the night of death so grim,  
The gate that leads out of life, good wife,  
Is the gate that leads to Him.

From "In the Sere and Yellow Leaf," in "The Circling Year."

Verse 16.—"Day." "Night." These changes are according to a fixed law. Day and night are the ordinances of heaven upon earth for the growth of earth's life, and, if we could trace the sunshine and the dark in every follower of God, we should see them arranged with equal wisdom. It is a more complex work, but, be sure of this, there is order in it all, and the hand that rules the world in its orbit, and that makes it fulfil its course through light and shade, is governing our lives for a higher than earthly end. One feature of the law is presented so far for our guidance. *It is a law of alternation.* It is day and night, and, let us thank God, it is also in due time night and day. Each has its time and use.—*John Ker.* 1869.

Verse 16.—"Thou hast prepared the light." It is but recently that we have been able to form any conception of the power of light as an agent in the economy of the globe; the discoveries of Actinism are among the most interesting and marvellous of natural science. The discovery that "no substance can be exposed to the sun's rays without undergoing a chemical change," has been described as scarcely less important in its effects than the discovery of the law of gravitation. A sunbeam is one of the most powerful of all the agencies of nature; magical as it is, it breaks up the strongest chemical affinities; it is the author of colour, and is the creator of a myriad combinations, which all tend to the harmony of the world. Nor ought we to forget the moral influence of light. We are all aware of the sensible difference produced in our moral natures by a fine day or a dark day. Light gives zest and tone to the spirits; light gives buoyancy and joy to the soul; light crowds the chambers of the mind with ideas; Light is *Life*: the merest insect could not live without light; and even blind natures receive, in those organs which are not the property of vision, the assurance of its benignant operations. Light is *Order*: and at its wand and command the separation takes place, and dark and light pair off into their separate ranks. Light is *Beauty*: whether in the refulgence of the moon; the chill sparkle of the stars; the unrivalled play of colours in the attenuated film of the soap-bubble, at once the toy of childhood and the tool of the sage; the rich play of tints in the mother-of-pearl, or the rich gorgeous rays in the plumes of birds. Light is *Purity*: forms that wrinkle out of the glance of its clear, steady beam, contract around themselves loathsomeness and disgust, and become the seats of foulness and shame. Light is *Growth*: where it is, we know that nature pursues her work in life and in vigour; light gives vitality to the sap; light removes obstructions from the pathway of the growing agencies, while, in its absence, forms become stunted, gnarled, and impaired. Light is *Health*: as it darts its clear and brilliant points to and fro, it brings in its train those blessings of elasticity and energy, which give the fulness of being—which is perfect health to the expanding forms. There is a fine consistency, when Scripture makes light to contain, as it were, the seeds of all things, and when the prelude of all creation is made to be those words, "God said, Let there be light."

This, then, is the part light is made to play in the history of the world; it is used by moral power to become the creator of moral influence. What a long series of creations elapsed before moral causes seemed to operate in the affairs of the globe! But he, whose nature and whose name was Light, had given to light its distinct being and work; and that creative word, "*Let there be light,*" spoke right forwards to the moral energies which were to be superinduced by its creation. Thus light, it is true, went before all things, and became the cause of moral consequences; but then, this arose from the divine hand, whence darted its benevolent beams. *It was God* who gave it its divine commission, to divide between light and darkness; *it was God* who made it the fountain of knowledge and of day; *it was God* who gave to it the faculty to become, in turn, a creator, and to warm into life and beauty a myriad seeds and shapes of loveliness.—*E. Paxton Hood.*

Verse 16.—"The light and the sun." I was considerably affected in my younger days by the long-standing objection, that Moses made *light* to exist before the creation of the sun; as books then usually taught, what some still fancy, that there could not have been light without this luminary. But not choosing, on such important point, to attach my faith to any general assertion, I sought to find out if any



investigator of the nature of light had perceived any distinction in its qualities or operation, which made it a fluid or matter independent of the sun. It was not easy, before the year 1791, to meet with the works of any student of nature on such a subject, as it had been little attended to; but I at length saw the fact asserted by Henckel, a German of the old school, of some value in his day, and soon afterwards some experiments were announced in England which confirmed the supposition. It has been a favourite point of attention with me ever since; and no truth in philosophy seems to be now more clearly ascertained than that light has a distinct existence, separate and independent of the sun. This is a striking confirmation of the Mosaic record; for that expressly distinguishes the existence and operation of light from the solar action upon it, and from that radiation of it which is connected with its beams and presence. By Moses, an interval of three days is placed between the luminous creation, and the appearance and position of the sun and moon. Light was, therefore, operating by its own laws and agencies, without the sun, and independently of his peculiar agency, from the first day to the fourth of our terrestrial fabrication. But from the time that the sun was placed in his central position, and his rays were appointed to act on our earth, they have been always performing most beneficial operations, essential to the general course of things.—*Sharon Turner* (1768—1847), in *"The Sacred History of the World."*

*Verse 17.*—"Thou hast set all the borders of the earth." The actual distribution of sea and land over the surface of the globe is likewise of the highest importance to the present condition of organic life. If the ocean were considerably smaller, or if Asia and America were concentrated within the tropics, the tides, the oceanic currents, and the meteorological phenomenon on which the existence of the vegetable and animal kingdoms depend, would be so profoundly modified, that it is extremely doubtful whether man could have existed, and absolutely certain that he could never have risen to a high degree of civilisation. The dependence of human progress upon the existing configuration of the globe necessarily leads us to the conclusion that both must be the harmonious work of the same Almighty Power, and that a divine and immutable plan has from all eternity presided over the destinies of our planet. It is almost superfluous to point out how largely the irregular windings and undulations of the coasts, the numerous islands scattered over the face of the waters, the promontories stretching far away into the domains of the sea, and the gulfs plunging deeply into the bosom of the land, have contributed to the civilisation of the human race by multiplying its points of contact with the ocean, the great highway of nations.—*G. Hartwig*, in *"The Harmonies of Nature."* 1866.

*Verse 17.*—"Thou hast set all the borders of the earth." Consider the form of the earth. It is known to be globular, and in shape nearly like an orange. And why has God chosen that form? With a view that it might be inhabited by living creatures on its whole surface. In order to this, every part of the globe must have sufficient light and heat, the wind must have a free circulation, and the water must be diffused over all its parts. The rotundity of the earth is best calculated to promote these conveniences: for this round form admits light and heat, without which there could be no life all over the globe. The revolutions of day and night, the changes in the temperature of the air, heat, cold, dryness or moisture, could not have taken place without this form. Had the earth been square, had it been conic, had it been an hexagon, or any other angular form, what must the consequence have been? The greatest part of our earth would have been drowned, whilst the rest would have languished with drought. Some countries must have been torn in pieces by storms, while others would have been deprived of the wholesome circulation of wind. I have new reason to admire the supreme wisdom, when I reflect on the enormous mass which composes our world. Were the earth softer, or more spongy than it is, men and animals would sink into it; were it harder and less penetrable, it would resist the toil of the labourer, and lose its capacity for producing and nourishing the multitude of plants, herbs, roots, and flowers, which now spring out of its bosom. There are regular and distinct strata found in the earth; some of stone, others of metal and minerals. There are numerous and evident advantages which result from these in favour of mankind. Do not the strata of gravel, sunk deep in the earth, purify and in a manner filter the water, and render it sweet and fit for use? On the surface of the earth there is a varied prospect; there is an admirable mixture of plains and valleys, of small hills and mountains. The man must be blind indeed that does not see the wise purpose of the Great Author of

nature, in thus diversifying the surface of the earth. Were the earth an even plain, how much beauty would it lose? Besides, this variety of valley and mountain is very favourable to the health of living creatures, and were there no hills, the earth would be less peopled with men and animals. There would be fewer plants, fewer simples and trees. We should be deprived of metals and minerals: the vapours would not be condensed, nor should we have either springs or rivers. Must we not then acknowledge that the whole plan of the earth, its form, its inward and outward construction, are all regulated according to the wisest laws, which all combine towards the pleasure and happiness of mankind. O thou supreme Author of nature, thou hast done all things well! Whichever way I turn my eyes, whether I penetrate into the interior structure of the globe thou hast appointed me to inhabit, or whether I examine its surface, I everywhere discover marks of profound wisdom and infinite goodness.—*Christopher Christian Sturm.*

*Verse 17.*—"Thou hast made summer and winter." *Plasmasti ea.* Now thou that hast done all this and more for mankind in general, wilt thou be wanting to thy church?—*John Trapp.*

*Verse 17.*—"Winter." As if fatigued with so many cares, nature now rests; this, however, is only to collect new force, again to be employed for the good of the world. But even this rest, which nature enjoys in winter, is a secret activity. A new creation is preparing in silence. The necessary dispositions are already making, that the desolate earth may again recover the children she has lost. The corn which is to serve us for food, already shoots. The fibres of plants, which are to adorn our fields and gardens, begin insensibly to open. O my beneficent Creator! Here I find fresh cause to adore thy wisdom and power. The repose which nature takes is as worthy to enter into the plan of thy wise providence, as the activity she shows in spring and summer. Thou hast wisely combined the several revolutions of the earth, thou hast equally divided its rest and labour. It is thy will that each day should vary the scenes of nature, in that way which is most proper for the perfection of the whole. Pardon, O God, my temerity, if I have been so stupid as to blame anything in the government of the world. I am more than ever convinced that all the plans of thy providence, though they may appear extraordinary to my weak reason, are replete with wisdom and goodness.—*Christopher Christian Sturm.* 1750—1786.

*Verse 19.*—"O deliver not," etc. How weak soever the church be, and how many and strong soever the enemy be, yet cannot they all devour the church, except the Lord should deliver his church over into their hands, against which evil the church hath ground of confidence to pray, "O deliver not the soul of thy turtle-dove unto the multitude of the wicked;" for he hath given his church wings, and a hiding-place too, as the comparison importeth, if he please to give her the use thereof also.—*David Dickson.*

*Verse 19.*—The people of God are taught in this form of supplication how to edge and keen their prayers, and make them vigorous; to wit, by disclaiming any ability or sufficiency in themselves; by styling themselves a congregation of poor, silly, weak doves, no way able to encounter an army of bestial, cunning, crafty, bloody, boisterous enemies. This plea the people of God make use of: "With thee the fatherless findeth mercy," Hosea xiv. 3.—*John Langley.*

*Verse 19.*—"The soul of thy turtledove." They compare themselves to a turtledove, whose nature leads it, in whatever way it may be afflicted, not to indulge in noisy impatience, but to mourn in secret; so the afflicted people of Israel were unable to do anything but breathe their sighs and groans to God.—*Musculus.*

*Verse 19.*—"Thy turtledove." God's people are an harmless, innocent people, altogether unable and insufficient to help themselves against their enemies, who are numerous, cruel, and barbarous. Hence they are resembled to sheep, doves; called in the Word, fatherless, orphans, little ones, babes, poor, simple, needy. They are men bound to their good behaviour, may not harbour so much as a bad thought against any; are called to suffer, not to do wrong. Julian did jeer at them for this; he would strike them on the one cheek, and tell them that their Master taught them to turn the other; his soldiers would take away their cloaks, and mind them that they must part with their coats also. Out of their own dispositions they judge of others, therefore may easily be deceived and entrapped. Thus Gedaliah, that sweet man, would not believe the relation of Johanan touching the conspiracy of the crocodile Ishmael against him; nay, was even angry with him

for his faithful dealing that way, and it cost him his life. Jer. xl. 16; and xli. That famous admiral of France, Jasper Coligny, though he had information and intelligence from sundry parts beyond the seas, that the court did intend to mischief him, and that there was no security in their promises and agreements, though backed with oaths, thrust himself, notwithstanding, upon the lion, and was smoothed with one paw and torn with the other: being such, they lie open to the rage of many adversaries. . . .

One would think these turtles should rather win the love of all that come near them than incur the hatred of any, for they are quiet and peaceable persons. In the mount of the Lord there is no hurt done (Isa. xl. 9), yet, notwithstanding, they are maligned by a world of people. Because they are not like them (1 Peter iv. 4); because they are not of their number (John xv. 19); because their persons and their sacrifices are more acceptable with God than the others' (Gen. iv. 4); because they reprove them for their evil ways (John iii. 20); because they are for the most part poor and mean, have no great forecast in worldly affairs, are no deep politicians, they are such as those *pauperes Lugdunensis*, those poor men of Lyons in France, therefore are exposed to beasts and lions (Matt. i. 25); because they mourn for sin in themselves and others: they quarrel with the dove even because of her mournful note. They will jeer at sighing sisters, and men that hang the head like a bulrush; yet, seeing this bulrush cannot grow without mire and mud, why should it not hang the head?—*John Langley*.

Verse 19.—“*Thy turtledove.*” This expression may, perhaps, be further illustrated from the custom, ancient and modern, of keeping doves as favourite birds (see *Theocritus* v. 96, and *Virgil*, *Ecl. iii. v. 68, 69*), and from the care taken to secure them from such animals as are dangerous to them.—*James Merrick*.

Verse 19.—*Turtle Doves*, of whatever species they be, whether travellers or domesticated, are equally preserved by the inhabitants of Egypt: they do not kill, and never eat them. Wishing to know the motive of this abstinence among people who possess so little in the greater part of their actions, I learnt that it was for the honour of humanity. It is a consequence of the respect due to hospitality, which the Arabs hold in such high estimation, and of which they have communicated some shades to the people who dwell among them. They would regard it as a violation of this hospitality not to spare those birds, which come with a perfect confidence to live amongst them, and there to become skilful but useless receptors of love and tenderness. The very farmer, who sees his harvests a prey to the flights of turtle doves which alight on his fields, neither destroys nor harasses them, but suffers them to multiply in tranquillity.—*C. N. S. de M. Sonnini. 1775—1811.*

Verse 19.—“*Forget not the congregation of thy poor.*” *Thy poor*, by way of discrimination. There may be a greater distance between poor and poor, than there is between poor and rich. There are many “ragged regiments,” “congregations of poor,” whom the Lord will forget for ever; but *his poor* shall be saved. And these poor are of two sorts; either poor in regard of wealth and outward substance, or poor in regard of friends or outward assistance. A rich man, especially a godly rich man, may be in a poor case, destitute and forsaken, wanting patronage and protection. God saveth his poor in both notions, both those that have no friends, and those that have no estates.—*Joseph Caryl*.

Verse 20.—“*Have respect.*” The word, in the original signification of it, imports a fastening of the eyes upon some object, that a man desires to look into. Hence, by a metaphor, it is transferred to the eyes of the mind, and signifies a serious weighing and consideration of a thing. God is said to “wink at the times of ignorance,” or not to regard it, Acts xvii. 30. God’s people here look at God, as if he did wink at his covenant, and neither look at it, nor them in their miseries. The Psalmist desires him that he would be mindful of it for his people’s deliverance.—*Francis Taylor*, in “*A Sermon preached before the House of Commons,*” entitled “*God’s Covenant the Churches Plea.*” 1645.

Verse 20.—“*Have respect unto the covenant.*” This presseth the Lord more than the former; this is the close grappling, as ’twere, with him in the words of Jacob: “I will not let thee go till thou hast blessed me.” This is the throwing out of the greatest sheet-anchor in the tempest, for it lays hold on God’s faithfulness, and truth, and fatherly goodness. If they be not in covenant with God, it may be charged upon them,—“you have violated my holy law, you have incensed my wrath against you by your perverse ways, therefore I will not help you, but give



you up : " but now the souls that be in covenant with God will not be put off so (be it spoken with holy reverence), but will cry out, O Lord, though our iniquities testify against us, yet "*have respect unto thy covenant.*" Yet be sure you walk uprightly before the Lord. . . . With what face can any one say, "*Lord, have respect unto thy covenant,*" when he casts his own covenant behind his back, and cannot say with the prophet David, " I have a respect to all thy commandments " ? How canst thou say, " Deliver me not up to the many beasts without," when thou art not afraid to be delivered up to thy vile, bestial lusts and affections that are within ? Thou hypocrite, first labour the subduing of the monsters that are within thee, then a fair way will be open to have thine enemies subdued round about thee.—*John Langley.*

*Verse 20.*—"Have respect unto the covenant." Those persons and preachers who decline to think and speak of gospel mercies and free salvation as secured by covenant, deprive themselves and others of much of the blessed comforts of God's word. Such was not the manner of the inspired Psalmist.—*William S. Plumer.*

*Verse 20.*—God seems to his people to neglect his covenant, when they are oppressed by ungodly men. So Asaph complains. After an acknowledgment that God was the Shepherd of Israel, and so in covenant with his people, and accordingly had wonderfully brought them out of Egypt, and made them flourish marvellously in the land of Canaan, he attributes their misery to God's neglect. Many reasons may be given of this unkind carriage of God's people to him. As, first, because their misery blinds them ; and blind men when they are smitten suspect every man that comes near them. Secondly, self-love makes us suspect any rather than ourselves, yea, even God himself. The people should have reflected upon themselves that were nocent, but in their sorrows they reflect upon God that was innocent. We are all Adam and Eve's children. When Eve had eaten of the forbidden fruit, she tacitly lays the fault upon God : " The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat." Gen. iii. 13. Hadst thou not made a subtil serpent I had not broken thy commandment. Adam lays it openly upon God : " The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat." Gen. iii. 12. Hadst thou not given me such a companion to betray me, I had been innocent. So we their posterity, when trouble is upon us, suspect God's breaking covenant, rather than our own. Thus our nurses beat the stone when children stumble through their own neglect. Thirdly, in time of need we most commonly suspect such as are best able to help us. The sick man, if he be in danger of death, suspects not his ignorant neighbours, but his skilful physician. He that is oppressed in his estate, when the sentence goes against him, suspects none more than the advocate, or the judge. We know God is best able to help us ; our corruption, therefore, makes us to suspect him most, if our troubles continue. Fourthly, we most suspect those who, as we think, have most reason to help us in our miseries, and do it not. If the servant want meal or apparel, he complains not of his fellow servants but of his master, who is tied by covenant to provide for him ; if the child be wronged by the servants, he lays not the fault upon his brethren but upon his father, who by bands of nature is obliged to take care of him. So we, being in covenant with God, wonder not much if others fail us, but complain heavily if God seems to neglect us.—*Francis Taylor.*

*Verse 20.*—The Psalmist moves God in prayer to look to his covenant by this argument : "*For the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty ;*" that is, of cruel men, or of men so full of cruelty, that they deserve rather to be called *cruelly* than *cruel* : this sort of men inhabit and fill up all those places where the light of holy truth doth not shine. Now, if they who want the light, or have no true knowledge of God among them, are hereby prepared for the acting of all manner of wickedness, how much more are they prepared for the acting of any wickedness who have thrust the light from them, and are in dark places of their own making ? The prophet Hosea shews (ch. iv. 1), that where there is no knowledge of God in a land, for want of means, there is no truth nor mercy (that is, there is none exercised) in that land, but oppression, deceit, and falsehood bear down all : how much more must it be so where there is no knowledge of God in a land, because of the contempt of means, and rebellion against the light ? What wickedness will not they do in the dark, who put out the candle that they may not see what they do.—*Joseph Caryl.*

*Verse 20 (second clause).*—This might have some literal meaning. "*The dark places of the earth,*" some have thought, may here describe in the first instance, the caves, the dens, and the woods of the land ; for there are many such (as travellers

testify) in the land of Judæa, and in unsettled times they have often been the abodes of robbers and murderers, who have thence sallied forth to molest and cut off the traveller, to ravish peaceful villages, to waylay and plunder the merchant, to commit all sorts of crimes, and then to return in impunity to these their dark retreats, where they laugh at all law, human or divine; they quaff, with horrid pleasure, the recollection of the widow's tears, and listen with inhuman joy to the echoing remembrance of the orphan's moan and the dying father's shriek. But what a land thus infested would be, is but a faint image of the heathen world. Wherever heathenism spreads itself, there are "*the dark places of the earth.*" The Scripture often tells us that.—*John Hambleton.* 1839.

*Verse 20.*—"The dark places." An allusion, as some interpreters conceive, to the dens of wild beasts, wherein they hide themselves to seize upon their prey, Psalm civ. 21, 22. To these cruel men are compared. Psalm x. 8, 9. "He sitteth in the lurking places of the villages: in the secret places doth he murder the innocent. He lieth in wait secretly as a lion in his den: he lieth in wait to catch the poor." Such places oppressors and robbers choose. Others take it for an allusion to prisons and dark dungeons void of light. As the prophet, Isaiah xlii. 7, describes a prison: "To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house." So trouble in Scripture is compared to darkness, and prosperity to light; because darkness is irksome, and light comfortable: "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light;" and then the sorry hiding-places whither God's people went to hide themselves are here meant. Yet, could they not there be quiet, but were pursued, found out, and spoiled by their adversaries. Others take "*dark places*" for obscure and mean places, as *dark men*, in the original, are called *mean men* in our translation, Prov. xxii. 29. And then it may either signify that the meanest men did oppress God's people, or, that the poorest and meanest of God's people were not spared. Such usage have we found in our time, when the poor cottages of our foes have sent out pillagers, and no cottagers of ours have escaped spoiling in divers places.—*Francis Taylor.*

*Verse 20.*—"Cruelty." Heathenism is cruel. It is not changed in character since the days when parents made their children to pass through fire to Moloch. At this very day, for instance, infanticide prevails in China; and the "law," says a book of authority—"the law, otherwise so rigorous, does not take the slightest cognisance of that crime, nor ever subjects those guilty of it to punishment. Every morning before it is light, waggons traverse the different quarters of the city of Pekin to receive the dead infants." Well may they go "before it is light;" "the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty." "The missionaries of that city obtained details, which justify belief that the number of infants (chiefly females) destroyed there is upwards of three thousand annually." Think of this same proportion, extended throughout that densely-peopled empire. Among the same people, suicide is also of frequent occurrence. What a contrast with the religion which stays the rash hand, and calls out, "Do thyself no harm!"

We might pass to India; and there the flames of the funeral piles, on which so many widows were annually burnt, had hardly expired, when we were shocked, only a few years since, with other proofs of the cruelty of heathenism. What painful details were those, which our government brought to light respecting the secret murderers of India! What think you of a vast fraternity of murderers, consisting of many thousands of persons, which has existed from generation to generation, which has been ramified over the whole country from Cape Comorin to the Himalaya mountains, which has flourished alike under Hindoo, Mahometan, and British rulers, and which has every year destroyed multitudes of victims—and all this under the sanction of religion? The murderous system, they say, has been enjoined them by the goddess Kalee, who is represented as having made a grant of half the human race to her votaries (to be murdered, that is,) according to certain prescribed forms.—*John Hambleton.*

*Verse 23.*—If we are compelled to close our most solemn and urgent devotions, and our most earnest supplications, without seeing one ray of light beaming upon our path, it may comfort us to remember that so the pious Psalmist closed this complaint. To hope against hope is the most blessed kind of hope.—*William S. Plumer.*

## HINTS TO PREACHERS.

*Verse 1.*—I. The divine displeasure a fact. II. It is but in measure, and we are very liable to exaggerate it. III. Even while it lasts our relation to him is unaffected: "Sheep of thy pasture." IV. Our business is to enquire the reason of it, and act accordingly.

*Verse 1 (second clause).*—The Lord's anger with his people compared to smoke.—I. It is not a consuming fire. II. It suggests fear of the fire. III. It darkens the light of joy. IV. It blinds the eyes of faith. V. It checks the breath of life. VI. It blackens the beauty of our worldly comforts.

*Verse 2.*—I. The Lord's relation to his people. 1. Election. 2. Redemption. 3. Indwelling. II. The prayer arising from it: "Remember."

*Verse 3.*—Church mischief. I. The church has enemies. II. Wickedness in the church is their great weapon. III. This causes much desolation to weak saints, to enquirers, to peace, to prayer, to usefulness. IV. The cure for it is God's interposition.

*Verses 3, 4.*—The power of prayer. I. On one side were, 1. Desolation: "perpetual," etc. 2. Desecration. 3. Declamation: "enemies roar." 4. Demonstration: "they set up." II. On the other side is, 1. Supplication. 2. This brings God to the rescue effectually and quickly.

*Verse 4.*—"Ensigns for signs." The craft of Satan in supplanting truth with deceptive counterfeits.

*Verse 5.*—True fame. To build for God with labour, daring, diligence, skill, etc.

*Verse 6.*—Vandal work against the truth of God.

*Verses 6, 7.*—Things feared by a church. I. Injury to her doctrines or ordinances: "carved work." II. The fire of strife, division, etc. III. The defilement of sin. Either of these three will throw a church down; let her guard and pray against them.

*Verse 8.*—The destruction of rural churches, the aim of our enemies: the injury they would so do, and our duty to prevent it: the means the destroyers use: bribery, oppression, etc. Our proper method for sustaining such churches.

*Verse 9 (first clause).*—I. There are such things as "signs," that is, tokens and marks of God's special favour to the soul. II. There is also "a seeing those signs, when God, the Holy Ghost, is pleased to shine upon them. III. There is a third state, where there is *not seeing the signs*, those signs being enveloped in darkness, dimness, and obscurity.—*J. C. Philpot.*

*Verse 9.*—Teacheth us, that evident signs of God's wrath and displeasure, as the want of his word, the stopping of the true ministers' mouths, etc., should touch us to the quick.—*T. Wilcocks.*

*Verse 10.*—A prayer for revival. I. How God is reproached. II. What are the ill effects of it. III. When we may expect him to arise.

*Verse 11.*—I. The patience of God with man: He "withdraws his hand, even," etc., he hesitates to strike. II. The impatience of man with God: "pluck it," etc.—*G. R.*

*Verse 12.*—I. The sovereignty of God. II. Its antiquity. III. Our loyalty to it. IV. The practical character of his reign: "working." V. The graciousness of it: "working salvation." VI. The place of its operation: "in the midst of the earth."

*Verse 14.*—God's defeat of our enemies, and the benefit accruing to ourselves.

*Verse 15.*—The wonderful nature of gracious supplies, illustrated by the smitten rock.

*Verse 16.*—God present alike in all dispensations of providence.

*Verses 16, 17.*—I. The God of grace is the God of nature: "The day is thine," etc. II. The God of nature is the God of grace: the wisdom, the power, the faithfulness the same. See Psalm xix.—*G. R.*

*Verse 19.*—The soul of the believer compared to a turtle dove.

*Verse 20.*—The title given to heathen nations: "dark places of the earth." Not without the light of nature, or of reason, or of natural conscience, or of philosophy, as of Greece and Rome; but without the light of revelation. II. Their condition: "full of," etc.: cruelty in their public, social, and private relationships. See Rom i.:



“ without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful.” III. Their part in the covenant. This is known from their part in its promises, and in prophecies: “ I will give thee the heathen,” etc. IV. The prayer of others on their behalf: “ Have respect,” etc. ; “ Oh send forth thy light,” etc. The conversion of the world will be in answer to the prayers of the church.—*G. R.*

*Verse 22.*—God pleading his own cause in providential visitations of nations and individuals, as also in remarkable conversions and awakenings.

*Verse 22.*—I. The glory of our cause: it is the Lord’s own. II. The hope of our cause: he will plead it himself. III. The hope thus derivable from the violence of man: it will move the Lord to arise.

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