

## PSALM LXXVIII.

**TITLE.**—Maschil of Asaph. *This is rightly entitled an instructive Psalm. It is not a mere recapitulation of important events in Israelitish history, but is intended to be viewed as a parable setting forth the conduct and experience of believers in all ages. It is a singular proof of the obtuseness of mind of many professors that they will object to sermons and expositions upon the historical parts of Scripture, as if they contained no instruction in spiritual matters: were such persons truly enlightened by the Spirit of God, they would perceive that all Scripture is profitable, and would blush at their own folly in undervaluing any portion of the inspired volume.*

**DIVISION.**—The unity is well maintained throughout, but, for the sake of the reader's convenience, we may note that verses 1—8 may be viewed as a preface, setting forth the Psalmist's object in the epic which he is composing. From 9—41 the theme is Israel in the wilderness; then intervenes an account of the Lord's preceding goodness towards his people in bringing them out of Egypt by plagues and wonders, 42—52. The history of the tribes is resumed at verse 53, and continued to verse 66, where we reach the time of the removal of the ark to Zion, and the transference of the leadership of Israel from Ephraim to Judah, which is rehearsed in song from verses 67—72.

### EXPOSITION.

**G**IVE ear, O my people, to my law: incline your ears to the words of my mouth.

2 I will open my mouth in a parable: I will utter dark sayings of old:

3 Which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us.

4 We will not hide *them* from their children, shewing to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done.

5 For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children:

6 That the generation to come might know *them*, even the children *which* should be born; *who* should arise and declare *them* to their children:

7 That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments:

8 And might not be as their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation; a generation *that* set not their heart aright, and whose spirit was not stedfast with God.

1. "Give ear, O my people, to my law." The inspired bard calls on his countrymen to give heed to his patriotic teaching. We naturally expect God's chosen nation to be first in hearkening to his voice. When God gives his truth a tongue, and sends forth his messengers trained to declare his word with power, it is the least we can do to give them our ears and the earnest obedience of our hearts. Shall God speak, and his children refuse to hear? His teaching has the force of law, let us yield both ear and heart to it. "*Incline your ears to the words of my mouth.*" Give earnest attention, bow your stiff necks, lean forward to catch every syllable. We are at this day, as readers of the sacred records, bound to study them deeply, exploring their meaning, and labouring to practise their teaching. As the officer of an army commences his drill by calling for "Attention," even so every trained soldier of Christ is called upon to give ear to his words. Men lend their ears to music, how much more then should they listen to the harmonies of the gospel; they sit enthralled in the presence of an orator, how much rather should they yield to the eloquence of heaven.

2. *"I will open my mouth in a parable.* Analogies are not only to be imagined, but are intended by God to be traced between the story of Israel and the lives of believers. Israel was ordained to be a type; the tribes and their marchings are living allegories traced by the hand of an all-wise providence. Unspiritual persons may sneer about fancies and mysticisms, but Paul spake well when he said "which things are an allegory," and Asaph in the present case spake to the point when he called his narrative "a parable." That such was his meaning is clear from the quotation, "All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world."—Matthew xiii. 34, 35. *"I will utter dark sayings of old;"*—enigmas of antiquity, riddles of yore. The mind of the poet-prophet was so full of ancient lore that he poured it forth in a copious stream of song, while beneath the gushing flood lay pearls and gems of spiritual truth, capable of enriching those who could dive into the depths and bring them up. The letter of this song is precious, but the inner sense is beyond all price. Whereas the first verse called for attention, the second justifies the demand by hinting that the outer sense conceals an inner and hidden meaning, which only the thoughtful will be able to perceive.

3. *"Which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us."* Tradition was of the utmost service to the people of God in the olden time, before the more sure word of prophecy had become complete and generally accessible. The receipt of truth from the lips of others laid the instructed believer under solemn obligation to pass on the truth to the next generation. Truth, endeared to us by its fond associations with godly parents and venerable friends, deserves of us our best exertions to preserve and propagate it. Our fathers told us, we heard them, and we know personally what they taught; it remains for us in our turn to hand it on. Blessed be God we have now the less mutable testimony of written revelation, but this by no means lessens our obligation to instruct our children in divine truth by word of mouth: rather, with such a gracious help, we ought to teach them far more fully the things of God. Dr. Doddridge owed much to the Dutch tiles and his mother's explanations of the Bible narratives. The more of parental teaching the better; ministers and Sabbath-school teachers were never meant to be substitutes for mothers' tears and fathers' prayers.

4. *"We will not hide them from their children."* Our negligent silence shall not deprive our own and our father's offspring of the precious truth of God, it would be shameful indeed if we did so. *"Shewing to the generation to come the praises of the Lord."* We will look forward to future generations, and endeavour to provide for their godly education. It is the duty of the church of God to maintain, in fullest vigour, every agency intended for the religious education of the young; to them we must look for the church of the future, and as we sow towards them so shall we reap. Children are to be taught to magnify the Lord; they ought to be well informed as to his wonderful doings in ages past, and should be made to know *"his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done."* The best education is education in the best things. The first lesson for a child should be concerning his mother's God. Teach him what you will, if he learn not the fear of the Lord, he will perish for lack of knowledge. Grammar is poor food for the soul if it be not flavoured with grace. Every satchel should have a Bible in it. The world may teach secular knowledge alone, 'tis all she has a heart to know, but the church must not deal so with her offspring; she should look well to every Timothy, and see to it that from a child he knows the Holy Scriptures. Around the fire-side fathers should repeat not only the Bible records, but the deeds of the martyrs and reformers, and moreover the dealings of the Lord with themselves both in providence and grace. We dare not follow the vain and vicious traditions of the apostate church of Rome, neither would we compare the fallible record of the best human memories with the infallible written word, yet would we fain see oral tradition practised by every Christian in his family, and children taught cheerfully by word of mouth by their own mothers and fathers, as well as by the printed pages of what they too often regard as dull, dry task books. What happy hours and pleasant evenings have children had at their parents' knees as they have listened to some "sweet story of old." Reader, if you have children, mind you do not fail in this duty.

5. *"For he established a testimony in Jacob."* The favoured nation existed for the very purpose of maintaining God's truth in the midst of surrounding idolatry.

Theirs were the oracles, they were the conservators and guardians of the truth. "And appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children." The testimony for the true God was to be transmitted from generation to generation by the careful instruction of succeeding families. We have the command for this oral transmission very frequently given in the Pentateuch, and it may suffice to quote one instance from Deut. vi. 7: "And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." Reader, if you are a parent, have you conscientiously discharged this duty?

6. "That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born." As far on as our brief life allows us to arrange, we must industriously provide for the godly nurture of youth. The narratives, commands, and doctrines of the word of God are not worn out; they are calculated to exert an influence as long as our race shall exist. "Who should arise and declare them to their children." The one object aimed at is transmission; the testimony is only given that it may be passed on to succeeding generations.

7. "That they might set their hope in God." Faith cometh by hearing. Those who know the name of the Lord will set their hope in him, and that they may be led to do so is the main end of all spiritual teaching. "And not forget the works of God." Grace cures bad memories; those who soon forget the merciful works of the Lord have need of teaching; they require to learn the divine art of holy memory. "But keep his commandments." Those who forget God's works are sure to fail in their own. He who does not keep God's love in memory is not likely to remember his law. The design of teaching is practical: holiness towards God is the end we aim at, and not the filling of the head with speculative notions.

8. "And might not be as their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation." There was room for improvement. Fathers stubborn in their own way, and rebellious against God's way, are sorry examples for their children; and it is earnestly desired that better instruction may bring forth a better race. It is common in some regions for men to count their family custom as the very best rule; but disobedience is not to be excused because it is hereditary. The leprosy was none the less loathsome because it had been long in the family. If our fathers were rebellious we must be better than they were, or else we shall perish as they did. "A generation that set not their heart aright." They had no decision for righteousness and truth. In them there was no preparedness, or willingness of heart, to entertain the Saviour; neither judgments, nor mercies could bind their affections to their God; they were fickle as the winds, and changeful as the waves. "And whose spirit was not stedfast with God." The tribes in the wilderness were constant only in their inconstancy; there was no depending upon them. It was, indeed, needful that their descendants should be warned, so that they might not blindly imitate them. How blessed would it be if each age improved upon its predecessor; but, alas! it is to be feared that decline is more general than progress, and too often the heirs of true saints are far more rebellious than even their fathers were in their unregeneracy. May the reading of this patriotic and divine song move many to labour after the elevation of themselves and their posterity.

9 The children of Ephraim, *being armed, and carrying bows*, turned back in the day of battle.

10 They kept not the covenant of God, and refused to walk in his law;

11 And forgat his works, and his wonders that he had shewed them.

12 Marvellous things did he in the sight of their fathers, in the land of Egypt, *in the field of Zoan*.

13 He divided the sea, and caused them to pass through; and he made the waters to stand as a heap.

14 In the daytime also he led them with a cloud, and all the night with a light of fire.

15 He clave the rocks in the wilderness, and gave *them* drink as *out of* the great depths.

16 He brought streams also out of the rock, and caused waters to run down like rivers.

17 And they sinned yet more against him by provoking the most High in the wilderness.

18 And they tempted God in their heart by asking meat for their lust.

19 Yea, they spake against God; they said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?

20 Behold, he smote the rock, that the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed; can he give bread also? can he provide flesh for his people?

21 Therefore the LORD heard *this*, and was wroth: so a fire was kindled against Jacob, and anger also came up against Israel;

22 Because they believed not in God, and trusted not in his salvation:

23 Though he had commanded the clouds from above, and opened the doors of heaven,

24 And had rained down manna upon them to eat, and had given them of the corn of heaven.

25 Man did eat angels' food: he sent them meat to the full.

26 He caused an east wind to blow in the heaven: and by his power he brought in the south wind.

27 He rained flesh also upon them as dust, and feathered fowls like as the sand of the sea:

28 And he let *it* fall in the midst of their camp, round about their habitations.

29 So they did eat, and were well filled: for he gave them their own desire;

30 They were not estranged from their lust. But while their meat *was* yet in their mouths,

31 The wrath of God came upon them, and slew the fattest of them and smote down the chosen *men* of Israel.

32 For all this they sinned still, and believed not for his wondrous works.

33 Therefore their days did he consume in vanity, and their years in trouble.

34 When he slew them, then they sought him: and they returned and enquired early after God.

35 And they remembered that God *was* their rock, and the high God their redeemer.

36 Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues.

37 For their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant.

38 But he, *being* full of compassion, forgave *their* iniquity, and destroyed *them* not: yea, many a time turned he his anger away, and did not stir up all his wrath.

39 For he remembered that *they were but* flesh; a wind that passeth away, and cometh not again.

40 How oft did they provoke him in the wilderness, *and* grieve him in the desert!

41 Yea, they turned back and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel.

9. "The children of Ephraim, being armed, and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle." Well equipped and furnished with the best weapons of the times, the leading tribe failed in faith and courage and retreated before the foe. There were several particular instances of this, but probably the Psalmist refers to the general failure of Ephraim to lead the tribes to the conquest of Canaan. How often have

we also, though supplied with every gracious weapon, failed to wage successful war against our sins, we have marched onward gallantly enough till the testing hour has come, and then "in the day of battle" we have proved false to good resolutions and holy obligations. How altogether vain is unregenerate man! Array him in the best that nature and grace can supply, he still remains a helpless coward in the holy war, so long as he lacks a loyal faith in his God.

10. "*They kept not the covenant of God.*" Vows and promises were broken, idols were set up, and the living God was forsaken. They were brought out of Egypt in order to be a people separated unto the Lord, but they fell into the sins of other nations, and did not maintain a pure testimony for the one only true God. "*And refused to walk in his law.*" They gave way to fornication, and idolatry, and other violations of the decalogue, and were often in a state of rebellion against the benign theocracy under which they lived. They had pledged themselves at Sinai to keep the law, and then they willfully disobeyed it, and so became covenant-breakers.

11. "*And forgot his works, and his wonders that he had shewed them.*" Had they remembered them they would have been filled with gratitude and inspired with holy awe: but the memory of God's mercies to them was as soon effaced as if written upon water. Scarcely could one generation retain the sense of the divine presence in miraculous power, the succeeding race needed a renewal of the extraordinary manifestations, and even then was not satisfied without many displays thereof. Ere we condemn them, let us repent of our own wicked forgetfulness, and confess the many occasions upon which we also have been unmindful of past favours.

12. Egypt, here called *the field of Zoan*, was the scene of marvellous things which were done in open day in *the sight of Israel*. These were extraordinary, upon a vast scale, astounding, indisputable, and such as ought to have rendered it impossible for an Israelite to be disloyal to Jehovah, Israel's God.

13. "*He divided the sea, and caused them to pass through.*" A double wonder, for when the waters were divided the bottom of the sea would naturally be in a very unfit state for the passage of so vast a host as that of Israel; it would in fact have been impassable, had not the Lord made the road for his people. Who else has ever led a nation through a sea? Yet the Lord has done this full often for his saints in providential deliverances, making a highway for them where nothing short of an almighty arm could have done so. "*And he made the waters to stand as an heap.*" He forbade a drop to fall upon his chosen, they felt no spray from the crystal walls on either hand. Fire will descend and water stand upright at the bidding of the Lord of all. The nature of creatures is not their own intrinsically, but is retained or altered at the will of him who first created them. The Lord can cause those evils which threaten to overwhelm us to suspend their ordinary action, and become innocuous to us.

14. "*In the daytime also he led them with a cloud.*" HE did it all. *He alone.* He brought them into the wilderness, and he led them through it; it is not the Lord's manner to begin a work, and then cease from it while it is incomplete. The cloud both led and shadowed the tribes. It was by day a vast sun-screen, rendering the fierce heat of the sun and the glare of the desert sand bearable. "*And all the night with a light of fire.*" So constant was the care of the Great Shepherd that all night and every night the token of his presence was with his people. That cloud which was a shade by day was as a sun by night. Even thus the grace which cools and calms our joys, soothes and solaces our sorrows. What a mercy to have a light of fire with us amid the lonely horrors of the wilderness of affliction. Our God has been all this to us, and shall we prove unfaithful to him? We have felt him to be both shade and light, according as our changing circumstances have required.

"He hath been our joy in woe,  
Cheer'd our heart when it was low,  
And, with warnings softly sad,  
Calm'd our heart when it was glad."

May this frequently renewed experience knit our hearts to him in firmest bonds.

15. "*He clave the rocks in the wilderness.*" Moses was the instrument, but the Lord did it all. Twice he made the flint a gushing rill. What can he not do? "*And gave them drink as out of the great depths,*"—as though it gushed from earth's innermost reservoirs. The streams were so fresh, so copious, so constant, that they seemed to well up from earth's primeval fountains, and to leap at once from "the deep which coucheth beneath." Here was a divine supply for Israel's urgent

need, and such an one as ought to have held them for ever in unwavering fidelity to their wonder-working God.

16. The supply of water was as plenteous in quantity as it was miraculous in origin. Torrents, not dribblets came from the rocks. Streams followed the camp; the supply was not for an hour or a day. This was a marvel of goodness. If we contemplate the aboundings of divine grace we shall be lost in admiration. Mighty rivers of love have flowed for us in the wilderness. Alas, great God! our return has not been commensurate therewith, but far otherwise.

17. "*And they sinned yet more against him.*" Outdoing former sins, going into greater deeps of evil: the more they had the more loudly they clamoured for more, and murmured because they had not every luxury that pampered appetites could desire. It was bad enough to mistrust their God for necessaries, but to revolt against him in a greedy rage for superfluities was far worse. Ever is it the nature of the disease of sin to proceed from bad to worse: men never weary of sinning, but rather increase their speed in the race of iniquity. In the case before us the goodness of God was abused into a reason for greater sin. Had not the Lord been so good they would not have been so bad. If he had wrought fewer miracles before, they would not have been so inexcusable in their unbelief, so wanton in their idolatry. "*By provoking the most High in the wilderness.*" Although they were in a position of obvious dependence upon God for everything, being in a desert where the soil could yield them no support, yet they were graceless enough to provoke their benefactor. At one time they provoked his jealousy by their hankering after false gods, anon they excited his wrath by their challenges of his power, their slanders against his love, their rebellions against his will. He was all bounty of love, and they all superfluity of naughtiness. They were favoured above all nations, and yet none were more ill-favoured. For them the heavens dropped manna, and they returned murmurs; the rocks gave them rivers, and they replied with floods of wickedness. Herein, as in a mirror, we see ourselves. Israel in the wilderness acted out, as in a drama, all the story of man's conduct towards his God.

18. "*And they tempted God in their heart.*" He was not tempted, for he cannot be tempted by any, but they acted in a manner calculated to tempt him, and it is always just to charge that upon men which is the obvious tendency of their conduct. Christ cannot die again, and yet many crucify him afresh, because such would be the legitimate result of their behaviour if its effects were not prevented by other forces. The sinners in the wilderness would have had the Lord change his wise proceedings to humour their whims, hence they are said to tempt him. "*By asking meat for their lust.*" Would they have God become purveyor for their greediness? Was there nothing for it but that he must give them whatever their diseased appetites might crave? The sin began in their hearts, but it soon reached their tongues. What they at first silently wished for, they soon loudly demanded with menaces, insinuations, and upbraidings.

19. From this verse we learn that unbelief of God is a slander against him. "*Yea, they spake against God.*" But how? The answer is, "*They said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?*" To question the ability of one who is manifestly Almighty, is to speak against him. These people were base enough to say that although their God had given them bread and water, yet he could not properly order or furnish a table. He could give them coarse food, but could not prepare a feast properly arranged, so they were ungrateful enough to declare. As if the manna was a mere make-shift, and the flowing rock-stream a temporary expedient, they ask to have a regularly furnished table, such as they had been accustomed to in Egypt. Alas, how have we also quarrelled with our mercies, and querulously pined for some imaginary good, counting our actual enjoyments to be nothing because they did not happen to be exactly conformed to our foolish fancies. They who will not be content will speak against providence even when it daily loadeth them with benefits.

20. "*Behold, he smote the rock, that the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed.*" They admit what he had done, and yet, with superabundant folly and insolence, demand further proofs of his omnipotence. "*Can he give bread also? can he provide flesh for his people?*" As if the manna were nothing, as if animal food alone was true nourishment for men. If they had argued, "*can he not give flesh?*" the argument would have been reasonable, but they ran into insanity; when, having seen many marvels of omnipotence, they dared to insinuate that other things were beyond the divine power. Yet, in this also, we have imitated their

senseless conduct. Each new difficulty has excited fresh incredulity. We are still fools and slow of heart to believe our God, and this is a fault to be bemoaned with deepest penitence. For this cause the Lord is often wroth with us and chastens us sorely; for unbelief has in it a degree of provocation of the highest kind.

21. *"Therefore the Lord heard this, and was wroth."* He was not indifferent to what they said. He dwelt among them in the holy place, and, therefore, they insulted him to his face. He did not hear a report of it, but the language itself came into his ears. *"So a fire was kindled against Jacob."* The fire of his anger which was also attended with literal burnings. *"And anger also came up against Israel."* Whether he viewed them in the lower or higher light, as Jacob or as Israel, he was angry with them: even as mere men they ought to have believed him; and, as chosen tribes, their wicked unbelief was without excuse. The Lord doeth well to be angry at so ungrateful, gratuitous and dastardly an insult as the questioning of his power.

22. *"Because they believed not in God, and trusted not in his salvation."* This is the master sin, the crying sin. Like Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, it sins and makes Israel to sin; it is in itself evil and the parent of evils. It was this sin which shut Israel out of Canaan, and it shuts myriads out of heaven. God is ready to save, combining power with willingness, but rebellious man will not trust his Saviour, and therefore is condemned already. In the text it appears as if all Israel's other sins were as nothing compared with this; this is the peculiar spot which the Lord points at, the special provocation which angered him. From this let every unbeliever learn to tremble more at his unbelief than at anything else. If he be no fornicator, or thief, or liar, let him reflect that it is quite enough to condemn him that he trusts not in God's salvation.

23. *"Though he had commanded the clouds from above."* Such a marvel ought to have rendered unbelief impossible: when clouds become granaries, seeing should be believing, and doubts should dissolve. *"And opened the doors of heaven."* The great storehouse doors were set wide open, and the corn of heaven poured out in heaps. Those who would not believe in such a case were hardened indeed; and yet our own position is very similar, for the Lord has wrought for us great deliverances, quite as memorable and undeniable, and yet suspicions and forebodings haunt us. He might have shut the gates of hell upon us, instead of which he has opened the doors of heaven; shall we not both believe in him and magnify him for this?

24. *"And had rained down manna upon them to eat."* There was so much of it, the skies poured with food, the clouds burst with provender. It was fit food, proper not for looking at but for eating; they could eat it as they gathered it. Mysterious though it was, so they that called it manna, or "what is it?" yet it was eminently adapted for human nourishment; and as it was both abundant and adapted, so also was it available! They had not far to fetch it, it was nigh them, and they had only to gather it up. O Lord Jesus, thou blessed manna of heaven, how all this agrees with Thee! We will even now feed on Thee as our spiritual meat, and will pray Thee to chase away all wicked unbelief from us. Our fathers ate manna and doubted; we feed upon Thee and are filled with assurance. *"And had given them of the corn of heaven."* It was all a gift without money and without price. Food which dropped from above, and was of the best quality, so as to be called heavenly corn, was freely granted them. The manna was round, like coriander seed, and hence was rightly called corn; it did not rise from the earth, but descended from the clouds, and hence the words of the verse are literally accurate. The point to be noted is that this wonder of wonders left the beholders, and the feasters, as prone as ever to mistrust their Lord.

25. *"Man did eat angels' food."* The delicacies of kings were outdone, for the dainties of angels were supplied. Bread of the mighty ones fell on feeble man. Those who are lower than the angels fared as well. It was not for the priests, or the princes, that the manna fell; but for all the nation, for every man, woman and child in the camp: and there was sufficient for them all, for *"he sent them meat to the full."* God's banquets are never stinted; he gives the best diet, and plenty of it. Gospel provisions deserve every praise that we can heap upon them; they are free, full, and pre-eminent; they are of God's preparing, sending, and bestowing. He is well fed whom God feeds; heaven's meat is nourishing and plentiful. If we have ever fed upon Jesus we have tasted better than angels' food; for

"Never did angels taste above  
Redeeming grace and dying love."

It will be our wisdom to eat to the full of it, for God has so sent it that we are not straitened in him, but in our own bowels. Happy pilgrims who in the desert have their meat sent from the Lord's own palace above; let them eat abundantly of the celestial banquet, and magnify the all-sufficient grace which supplies all their needs, according to His riches in glory, by Christ Jesus.

26. "*He caused an east wind to blow in the heaven.*" He is Lord Paramount, above the prince of the power of the air: storms arise and tempests blow at his command. Winds sleep till God arouses them, and then, like Samuel, each one answers, "Here am I, for thou didst call me." "*And by his power he brought in the south wind.*" Either these winds followed each other, and so blew the birds in the desired direction, or else they combined to form a south-east wind; in either case they fulfilled the design of the Lord, and illustrated his supreme and universal power. If one wind will not serve, another shall; and if need be, they shall both blow at once. We speak of *fickle* winds, but their obedience to their Lord is such that they deserve a better word. If we ourselves were half as obedient as the winds, we should be far superior to what we now are.

27. "*He rained flesh also upon them as dust.*" First, he rained bread and then flesh, when he might have rained fire and brimstone. The words indicate the speed, and the abundance of the descending quails. "*And feathered fowls like as the sand of the sea;*" there was no counting them. By a remarkable providence, if not by miracle, enormous numbers of migratory birds were caused to alight around the tents of the tribes. It was, however, a doubtful blessing, as easily acquired, and superabounding riches generally are. The Lord save us from meat which is seasoned with divine wrath.

28. "*And he let it fall in the midst of their camp.*" They had no journey to make; they had clamoured for flesh, and it almost flew into their mouths, "*round about their habitations.*" This made them glad for the moment, but they knew not that mercies can be sent in anger, else had they trembled at sight of the good things which they had lusted after.

29. "*So they did eat, and were well filled.*" They greedily devoured the birds, even to repletion. The Lord shewed them that he could "provide flesh for his people," even enough and to spare. He also shewed them that when lust wins its desire it is disappointed, and by the way of satiety arrives at distaste. First the food satiates, then it nauseates. "*For he gave them their own desire.*" They were filled with their own ways. The flesh-meat was unhealthy for them, but as they cried for it they had it, and a curse with it. O my God, deny me my most urgent prayers sooner than answer them in displeasure. Better hunger and thirst after righteousness than to be well filled with sin's dainties.

30, 31. "*They were not estranged from their lust.*" Lust grows upon that which it feeds on. If sick of too much flesh, yet men grow not weary of lust, they change the object, and go on lusting still. When one sin is proved to be a bitterness, men do not desist, but pursue another iniquity. If, like Jehu, they turn from Baal, they fall to worshipping the calves of Bethel.

"*But while their meat was yet in their mouths,*" before they could digest their coveted meat, it turned to their destruction. "*The wrath of God came upon them*" before they could swallow their first meal of flesh. Short was the pleasure, sudden was the doom. The festival ended in a funeral. "*And slew the fittest of them, and smote down the chosen men of Israel.*" Perhaps these were the ringleaders in the lusting; they are first in the punishment. God's justice has no respect of persons, the strong and the valiant fall as well as the weak and the mean. What they ate on earth they digested in hell, as many have done since. How soon they died, though they felt not the edge of the sword! How terrible was the havoc, though not amid the din of battle! My soul, see here the danger of gratified passions; they are the janitors of hell. When the Lord's people hunger God loves them, Lazarus is his beloved, though he pines upon crumbs; but when he fattens the wicked he abhors them; Dives is hated of heaven when he fares sumptuously every day. We must never dare to judge men's happiness by their tables, the heart is the place to look at. The poorest starveling believer is more to be envied than the most full-fleshed of the favourites of the world. Better be God's dog than the devil's darling.

32. "*For all this they sinned still.*" Judgments moved them no more than mercies. They defied the wrath of God. Though death was in the cup of their iniquity, yet they would not put it away, but continued to quaff it as if it were a healthful



potion. How truly might these words be applied to ungodly men who have been often afflicted, laid upon a sick bed, broken in spirit, and impoverished in estate, and yet have persevered in their evil ways, unmoved by terrors, unswayed by threatenings. "*And believed not for his wondrous works.*" Their unbelief was chronic and incurable. Miracles both of mercy and judgment were unavailing. They might be made to wonder, but they could not be taught to believe. Continuance in sin and in unbelief go together. Had they believed they would not have sinned, had they not have been blinded by sin they would have believed. There is a reflex action between faith and character. How can the lover of sin believe? How, on the other hand, can the unbeliever cease from sin? God's ways with us in providence are in themselves both convincing and converting, but unrenewed nature refuses to be either convinced or converted by them.

33. "*Therefore their days did he consume in vanity.*" Apart from faith life is vanity. To wander up and down in the wilderness was a vain thing indeed, when unbelief had shut them out of the promised land. It was meet that those who would not live to answer the divine purpose by believing and obeying their God should be made to live to no purpose, and to die before their time, unsatisfied, unblest. Those who wasted their days in sin had little cause to wonder when the Lord cut short their lives, and swore that they should never enter the rest which they had despised. "*And their years in trouble.*" Weary marches were their trouble, and to come to no resting place was their vanity. Innumerable graves were left all along the track of Israel, and if any ask, "Who slew all these?" the answer must be, "They could not enter in because of unbelief." Doubtless much of the vexation and failure of many lives results from their being sapped by unbelief, and honeycombed by evil passions. None live so fruitlessly and so wretchedly as those who allow sense and sight to override faith, and their reason and appetite to domineer over their fear of God. Our days go fast enough according to the ordinary lapse of time, but the Lord can make them rust away at a bitterer rate, till we feel as if sorrow actually ate out the heart of our life, and like a canker devoured our existence. Such was the punishment of rebellious Israel, the Lord grant it may not be ours.

34. "*When he slew them, then they sought him.*" Like whipped curs, they licked their Master's feet. They obeyed only so long as they felt the whip about their loins. Hard are the hearts which only death can move. While thousands died around them, the people of Israel became suddenly religious, and repaired to the tabernacle door, like sheep who run in a mass while the black dog drives them, but scatter and wander when the shepherd whistles him off. "*And they returned and enquired early after God.*" They could not be too zealous, they were in hot haste to prove their loyalty to their divine King. "The devil was sick, and the devil a monk would be." Who would not be pious when the plague is abroad? Doors, which were never so sanctified before, put on the white cross then. Even reprobates send for the minister when they lie a dying. Thus sinners pay involuntary homage to the power of right and the supremacy of God, but their hypocritical homage is of small value in the sight of the Great Judge.

35. "*And they remembered that God was their rock.*" Sharp strokes awoke their sleepy memories. Reflection followed infliction. They were led to see that all their dependence must be placed upon their God; for he alone had been their shelter, their foundation, their fountain of supply, and their unchangeable friend. What could have made them forget this? Was it that their stomachs were so full of flesh that they had no space for ruminating upon spiritual things? "*And the high God their redeemer.*" They had forgotten this also. The high hand and outstretched arm which redeemed them out of bondage had both faded from their mental vision. Alas, poor man, how readily dost thou forget thy God! Shame on thee, ungrateful worm, to have no sense of favours a few days after they had been received. Will nothing make thee keep in memory the mercy of thy God except the utter withdrawal of it?

36. "*Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth.*" Bad were they at their best. False on their knees, liars in their prayers. Mouth-worship must be very detestable to God when dissociated from the heart: other kings love flattery, but the King of kings abhors it. Since the sharpest afflictions only extort from carnal men a feigned submission to God, there is proof positive that the heart is desperately set on mischief, and that sin is ingrained in our very nature. If you beat a tiger with many stripes you cannot turn him into a sheep. The devil cannot be whipped out of human nature, though another devil, namely hypocrisy, may be whipped

into it. Piety produced by the damps of sorrow and the heats of terror is of mushroom growth ; it is rapid in its upspringing—" they enquired early after God"—but it is a mere unsubstantial fungus of unabiding excitement. "*And they lied unto him with their tongues.*" Their godly speech was cant, their praise mere wind, their prayer a fraud. Their skin-deep repentance was a film too thin to conceal the deadly wound of sin. This teaches us to place small reliance upon professions of repentance made by dying men, or upon such even in others when the basis is evidently slavish fear, and nothing more. Any thief will whine out repentance if he thinks the judge will thereby be moved to let him go scot free.

37. "*For their heart was not right with him.*" There was no depth in their repentance, it was not heart work. They were fickle as a weathercock, every wind turned them, their mind was not settled upon God. "*Neither were they stedfast in his covenant.*" Their promises were no sooner made than broken, as if only made in mockery. Good resolutions called at their hearts as men do at inns ; they tarried awhile, and then took their leave. They were hot to-day for holiness, but cold towards it to-morrow. Variable as the hues of the dolphin, they changed from reverence to rebellion, from thankfulness to murmuring. One day they gave their gold to build a tabernacle for Jehovah, and the next they plucked off their ear-rings to make a golden calf. Surely the heart is a chameleon. Proteus had not so many changes. As in the ague we both burn and freeze so do inconstant natures in their religion.

38. "*But he, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and destroyed them not.*" Though they were full of flattery, he was full of mercy, and for this cause he had pity on them. Not because of their pitiful and hypocritical pretensions to penitence, but because of his own real compassion for them he overlooked their provocations. "*Yea, many a time turned he his anger away.*" When he had grown angry with them he withdrew his displeasure. Even unto seventy times seven did he forgive their offences. He was slow, very slow, to anger. The sword was uplifted and flashed in mid-air, but it was sheathed again, and the nation yet lived. Though not mentioned in the text, we know from the history that a mediator interposed, the man Moses stood in the gap ; even so at this hour the Lord Jesus pleads for sinners, and averts the divine wrath. Many a barren tree is left standing because the dresser of the vineyard cries, " let it alone this year also." "*And did not stir up all his wrath.*" Had he done so they must have perished in a moment. When his wrath is kindled but a little men are burned up as chaff ; but were he to let loose his indignation, the solid earth itself would melt, and hell would engulf every rebel. Who knoweth the power of thine anger, O Lord ? We see the fulness of God's compassion, but we never see all his wrath.

39. "*For he remembered that they were but flesh.*" They were forgetful of God, but he was mindful of them. He knew that they were made of earthy, frail, corruptible material, and therefore he dealt leniently with them. Though in this he saw no excuse for their sin, yet he constrained it into a reason for mercy ; the Lord is ever ready to discover some plea or other upon which he may have compassion. "*A wind that passeth away, and cometh not again.*" Man is but a breath, gone never to return. Spirit and wind are in this alike, so far as our humanity is concerned ; they pass and cannot be recalled. What a nothing is our life. How gracious on the Lord's part to make man's insignificance an argument for staying his wrath.

40. "*How oft did they provoke him in the wilderness.*" Times enough did they rebel : they were as constant in provocation as he was in his patience. In our own case, who can count his errors ? In what book could all our perverse rebellions be recorded ? The wilderness was a place of manifest dependence, where the tribes were helpless without divine supplies, yet they wounded the hand which fed them while it was in the act of feeding them. Is there no likeness between us and them ? Does it bring no tears into our eyes, while, as in a glass, we see our own selves. "*And grieve him in the desert.*" Their provocations had an effect ; God was not insensible to them, he is said to have been grieved. His holiness could not find pleasure in their sin, his justice in their unjust treatment, or his truth in their falsehood. What must it be to grieve the Lord of love ! Yet we also have vexed the Holy Spirit, and he would long ago have withdrawn himself from us, were it not that he is God and not man. We are in the desert where we need our God, let us not make it a wilderness of sin by grieving him.

41. "*Yea, they turned back.*" Their hearts sighed for Egypt and its fleshpots.

They turned to their old ways again and again, after they had been scourged out of them. Full of twists and turns, they never kept the straight path. "*And tempted God.*" As far as in them lay they tempted him. His ways were good, and they in desiring to have them altered tempted God. Before they would believe in him they demanded signs, defying the Lord to do this and that, and acting as if he could be cajoled into being the minion of their lusts. What blasphemy was this! Yet let us not tempt Christ lest we also be destroyed by the destroyer. "*And limited the Holy One of Israel.*" Doubted his power and so limited him, dictated to his wisdom and so did the same. To chalk out a path for God is arrogant impiety. The Holy One must do right, the covenant God of Israel must be true, it is profanity itself to say unto him thou shalt do this or that, or otherwise I will not worship thee. Not thus is the Eternal God to be led by a string by his impotent creature. He is the Lord and he will do as seemeth him good.

42 They remembered not his hand, *nor* the day when he delivered them from the enemy.

43 How he had wrought his signs in Egypt, and his wonders in the field of Zoan :

44 And had turned their rivers into blood ; and their floods, that they could not drink.

45 He sent divers sorts of flies among them, which devoured them ; and frogs, which destroyed them.

46 He gave also their increase unto the caterpillar, and their labour unto the locust.

47 He destroyed their vines with hail, and their sycamore trees with frost.

48 He gave up their cattle also to the hail, and their flocks to hot thunderbolts.

49 He cast upon them the fierceness of his anger, wrath, and indignation, and trouble, by sending evil angels *among them*.

50 He made a way to his anger ; he spared not their soul from death, but gave their life over to the pestilence ;

51 And smote all the firstborn in Egypt ; the chief of *their* strength in the tabernacles of Ham :

52 But made his own people to go forth like sheep, and guided them in the wilderness like a flock.

53 And he led them on safely, so that they feared not : but the sea overwhelmed their enemies.

42. "*They remembered not his hand.*" Yet it must have been difficult to forget it. Such displays of divine power as those which smote Egypt with astonishment, it must have needed some more than usual effort to blot from the tablets of memory. It is probably meant that they practically, rather than actually, forgot. He who forgets the natural returns of gratitude, may justly be charged with not remembering the obligation. "*Nor the day when he delivered them from the enemy.*" The day itself was erased from their calendar, so far as any due result from it or return for it. Strange is the faculty of memory in its oblivions as well as its records. Sin perverts man's powers, makes them forceful only in wrong directions, and practically dead for righteous ends.

43. "*How he had wrought his signs in Egypt.*" The plagues were ensigns of Jehovah's presence and proofs of his hatred of idols ; these instructive acts of power were wrought in the open view of all, as signals are set up to be observed by those far and near. "*And his wonders in the field of Zoan.*" In the whole land were miracles wrought, not in cities alone, but in the broad territory, in the most select and ancient regions of the proud nation. This the Israelites ought not to have forgotten, for they were the favoured people for whom these memorable deeds were wrought.

44. "*And had turned their rivers into blood.*" The waters had been made the

means of the destruction of Israel's newborn infants, and now they do as it were betray the crime—they blush for it, they avenge it on the murderers. The Nile was the vitality of Egypt, its true life-blood, but at God's command it became a flowing curse; every drop of it was a horror, poison to drink, and terror to gaze on. Sometimes he has allowed men, who were his rod, to make rivers crimson with gore, and this is a severe judgment; but the event now before us was more mysterious, more general, more complete, and must, therefore, have been a plague of the first magnitude. "*And their floods, that they could not drink.*" Lesser streams partook in the curse, reservoirs and canals felt the evil; God does nothing by halves. All Egypt boasted of the sweet waters of their river, but they were made to loathe it more than they had ever loved it. Our mercies may soon become our miseries if the Lord shall deal with us in wrath.

45. "*He sent divers sorts of flies among them, which devoured them.*" Small creatures become great tormentors. When they swarm they can sting a man till they threaten to eat him up. In this case, various orders of insects fought under the same banner: lice and beetles, gnats and hornets, wasps and gadflies dashed forward in fierce battalions, and worried the sinners of Egypt without mercy. The tiniest plagues are the greatest. What sword or spear could fight with these innumerable bands? Vain were the monarch's armour and robes of majesty, the little cannibals were no more lenient towards royal flesh than any other; it had the same blood in it, and the same sin upon it. How great is that God who thus by the minute can crush the magnificent. "*And frogs, which destroyed them.*" These creatures swarmed everywhere when they were alive, until the people felt ready to die at the sight; and when the reptiles died, the heaps of their bodies made the land to stink so foully, that a pestilence was imminent. Thus not only did earth and air send forth armies of horrible life, but the water also added its legions of loathsomeness. It seemed as if the Nile was first made nauseous and then caused to leave its bed altogether, crawling and leaping in the form of frogs. Those who contend with the Almighty, little know what arrows are in his quiver; surprising sin shall be visited with surprising punishment.

46. "*He gave also their increase unto the caterpillar, and their labour unto the locust.*" Different sorts of devourers ate up every green herb and tree. What one would not eat another did. What they expected from the natural fertility of the soil, and what they looked for from their own toil, they saw devoured before their eyes by an insatiable multitude against whose deprivations no defence could be found. Observe in the text that the Lord did it all—"he sent," "he gave," "he destroyed," "he gave up," etc.; whatever the second agent may be, the direct hand of the Lord is in every national visitation.

47. "*He destroyed their vines with hail.*" No more shall thy butler press the clusters into thy cup, O Pharaoh! The young fruitbearing shoots were broken off, the vintage failed. "*And their sycamore trees with frost.*" Frost was not usual, but Jehovah regards no laws of nature when men regard not his moral laws. The sycamore fig was perhaps more the fruit of the many than was the vine, therefore this judgment was meant to smite the poor, while the former fell most heavily upon the rich. Mark how the heavens obey their Lord and yield their stores of hail, and note how the fickle weather is equally subservient to the divine will.

48. "*He gave up their cattle also to the hail.*" What hail it must have been to have force enough to batter down bullocks and other great beasts. God usually protects animals from such destruction, but here he withdrew his safeguards and gave them up: may the Lord never give us up. Some read, "shut up," and the idea of being abandoned to destructive influences is then before us in another shape. "*And their flocks to hot thunderbolts.*" Fire was mingled with the hail, the fire ran along upon the ground, it smote the smaller cattle. What a storm must that have been: its effects were terrible enough upon plants, but to see the poor dumb creatures stricken must have been heart breaking. Adamantine was the heart which quailed not under such plagues as these, harder than adamant those hearts which in after years forgot all that the Lord had done, and broke off from their allegiance to him.

49. "*He cast upon them the fierceness of his anger, wrath, and indignation, and trouble.*" His last arrow was the sharpest. He reserved the strong wine of his indignation to the last. Note how the Psalmist piles up the words, and well he might; for blow followed blow, each one more staggering than its predecessor, and then the crushing stroke was reserved for the end. "*By sending evil angels among them.*" Messengers of evil entered their houses at midnight, and smote the

dearest objects of their love. The angels were evil to them, though good enough in themselves; those who to the heirs of salvation are ministers of grace, are to the heirs of wrath executioners of judgment. When God sends angels, they are sure to come, and if he bids them slay they will not spare. See how sin sets all the powers of heaven in array against man; he has no friend left in the universe when God is his enemy.

50. "*He made a way to his anger,*" coming to the point with them by slow degrees; assailing their outworks first by destroying their property, and then coming in upon their persons as through an open breach in the walls. He broke down all the comforts of their life, and then advanced against their life itself. Nothing could stand in his way; he cleared a space in which to do execution upon his adversaries. "*He spared not their soul from death, but gave their life over to the pestilence.*" In their soul was the origin of the sin, and he followed it to its source and smote it there. A fierce disease filled the land with countless funerals; Jehovah dealt out myriads of blows, and multitudes of spirits failed before him.

51. "*And smote all the firstborn in Egypt.*" No exceptions were made, the monarch bewailed his heir as did the menial at the mill. They smote the Lord's firstborn, even Israel, and he smites theirs. "*The chief of their strength in the tabernacles of Ham.*" Swinging his scythe over the field, death topped off the highest flowers. The tents of Ham knew each one its own peculiar sorrow, and were made to sympathise with the sorrows which had been ruthlessly inflicted upon the habitations of Israel. Thus curses come home to roost. Oppressors are repaid in their own coin, without the discount of a penny.

52. "*But made his own people to go forth like sheep.*" The contrast is striking, and ought never to have been forgotten by the people. The wolves were slain in heaps, the sheep were carefully gathered, and triumphantly delivered. The tables were turned, and the poor serfs became the honoured people, while their oppressors were humbled before them. Israel went out in a compact body like a flock; they were defenceless in themselves as sheep, but they were safe under their Great Shepherd; they left Egypt as easily as a flock leaves one pasture for another. "*And guided them in the wilderness like a flock.*" Knowing nothing of the way by their own understanding or experience, they were, nevertheless, rightly directed, for the All-wise God knew every spot of the wilderness. To the sea, through the sea, and from the sea, the Lord led his chosen; while their former taskmasters were too cowed in spirit, and broken in power, to dare to molest them.

53. "*And he led them on safely, so that they feared not.*" After the first little alarm, natural enough when they found themselves pursued by their old taskmasters, they plucked up courage and ventured boldly into the sea, and afterwards into the desert where no man dwelt. "*But the sea overwhelmed their enemies.*" They were gone, gone for ever, never to disturb the fugitives again. That tremendous blow effectually defended the tribes for forty years from any further attempt to drive them back. Egypt found the stone too heavy and was glad to let it alone. Let the Lord be praised who thus effectually freed his elect nation.

What a grand narrative have we been considering. Well might the mightiest master of sacred song select "*Israel in Egypt*" as a choice theme for his genius; and well may every believing mind linger over every item of the amazing transaction. The marvel is that the favoured nation should live as if unmindful of it all, and yet such is human nature. Alas, poor man! Rather, alas, base heart!

We now, after a pause, follow again the chain of events, the narration of which had been interrupted by a retrospect, and we find Israel entering into the promised land, there to repeat her follies and enlarge her crimes.

54 And he brought them to the border of his sanctuary, *even to this mountain, which* his right hand had purchased.

55 He cast out the heathen also before them, and divided them an inheritance by line, and made the tribes of Israel to dwell in their tents.

56 Yet they tempted and provoked the most high God, and kept not his testimonies:

57 But turned back, and dealt unfaithfully like their fathers: they were turned aside like a deceitful bow.

58 For they provoked him to anger with their high places, and moved him to jealousy with their graven images.

59 When God heard *this*, he was wroth, and greatly abhorred Israel :

60 So that he forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent *which* he placed among men ;

61 And delivered his strength into captivity, and his glory into the enemy's hand.

62 He gave his people over also unto the sword ; and was wroth with his inheritance.

63 The fire consumed their young men ; and their maidens were not given to marriage.

64 Their priests fell by the sword ; and their widows made no lamentation.

65 Then the Lord awaked as one out of sleep, *and* like a mighty man that shouteth by reason of wine.

66 And he smote his enemies in the hinder parts : he put them to a perpetual reproach.

54. "*And he brought them to the border of his sanctuary.*" He conducted them to the frontier of the Holy Land, where he intended the tabernacle to become the permanent symbol of his abode among his people. He did not leave them halfway upon their journey to their heritage ; his power and wisdom preserved the nation till the palm trees of Jericho were within sight on the other side of the river. "*Even to this mountain, which his right hand had purchased.*" Nor did he leave them then, but still conducted them till they were in the region round about Zion, which was to be the central seat of his worship. This the Lord had purchased in type of old by the sacrifice of Isaac, fit symbol of the greater sacrifice which was in due season to be presented there : that mountain was also redeemed by power, when the Lord's right hand enabled his valiant men to smite the Jebusites, and take the sacred hill from the insulting Canaanite. Thus shall the elect of God enjoy the sure protection of the Lord of hosts, even to the border land of death, and through the river, up to the hill of the Lord in glory. The purchased people shall safely reach the purchased inheritance.

55. "*He cast out the heathen also before them,*" or "he drove out the nations." Not only were armies routed, but whole peoples displaced. The iniquity of the Canaanites was full ; their vices made them rot above ground ; therefore, the land ate up its inhabitants, the hornets vexed them, the pestilence destroyed them, and the sword of the tribes completed the execution to which the justice of long provoked heaven had at length appointed them. The Lord was the true conqueror of Canaan ; he cast out the nations as men cast out filth from their habitations, he uprooted them as noxious weeds are extirpated by the husbandman. "*And divided them an inheritance by line.*" He divided the land of the nations among the tribes by lot and measure, assigning Hivite, Perizzite, and Jebusite territory to Simeon, Judah, or Ephraim, as the case might be. Among those condemned nations were not only giants in stature, but also giants in crime ; those monsters of iniquity had too long defiled the earth ; it was time that they should no more indulge the unnatural crimes for which they were infamous ; they were, therefore, doomed to forfeit life and lands by the hands of the tribes of Israel. The distribution of the forfeited country was made by divine appointment ; it was no scramble, but a judicial appointment of lands which had fallen to the crown by the attainder of the former holders. "*And made the tribes of Israel to dwell in their tents.*" The favoured people entered upon a furnished house : they found the larder supplied, for they fed upon the old corn of the land, and the dwellings were already builded in which they could dwell. Thus does another race often enter into the lot of a former people, and it is sad indeed when the change which judgment decrees does not turn out to be much for the better, because the incomers inherit the evils as well as the goods of the ejected. Such a case of judicial visitation ought to have had a salutary influence upon the tribes ; but, alas, they were incorrigible, and would not learn even from examples so near at home and so terribly suggestive.

56. "*Yet they tempted and provoked the most high God.*" Change of condition had not altered their manners. They left their nomadic habits, but not their

tendencies to wander from their God. Though every divine promise had been fulfilled to the letter, and the land flowing with milk and honey was actually their own, yet they tried the Lord again with unbelief, and provoked him with other sins. He is not only high and glorious, but most High, yea the most High, the only being who deserves to be so highly had in honour; yet, instead of honouring him, Israel grieved him with rebellion. "*And kept not his testimonies.*" They were true to nothing but hereditary treachery; steadfast in nothing but in falsehood. They knew his truth and forgot it, his will and disobeyed it, his grace and perverted it to an occasion for greater transgression. Reader, dost thou need a looking-glass? See here is one which suits the present expositor well; does it not also reflect thine image?

57. "*But turned back.*" Turned over the old leaf, repeated the same offences, started aside like an ill-made bow, were false and faithless to their best promises. "*And dealt unfaithfully like their fathers,*" proving themselves legitimate by manifesting the treachery of their sires. They were a new generation, but not a new nation—another race yet not another. Evil propensities are transmitted; the birth follows the progenitor; the wild ass breeds wild asses; the children of the raven fly to the carrion. Human nature does not improve, the new editions contain all the errata of the first, and sometimes fresh errors are imported. "*They were turned aside like a deceitful bow,*" which not only fails to send the arrow towards the mark in a direct line, but springs back to the archer's hurt, and perhaps sends the shaft among his friends to their serious jeopardy. Israel boasted of the bow as the national weapon, they sang the song of the bow, and hence a deceitful bow is made to be the type and symbol of their own unsteadfastness; God can make men's glory the very ensign of their shame, he draws a bar sinister across the escutcheon of traitors.

58. "*For they provoked him to anger with their high places.*" This was their first error—will worship, or the worship of God, otherwise than according to his command. Many think lightly of this, but indeed it is no mean sin; and its tendencies to further offence are very powerful. The Lord would have his holy place remain as the only spot for sacrifice; and Israel, in wilful rebellion, (no doubt glossed over by the plea of great devotion,) determined to have many altars upon many hills. If they might have but one God, they insisted upon it that they would not be restricted to one sacred place of sacrifice. How much of the worship of the present day is neither more nor less than sheer will-worship! Nobody dare plead a divine appointment for a title of the offices, festivals, ceremonies, and observances of certain churches. Doubtless God, so far from being honoured by worship which he has not commanded, is greatly angered at it. "*And moved him to jealousy with their graven images.*" This was but one more step; they manufactured symbols of the invisible God, for they lusted after something tangible and visible to which they could shew reverence. This also is the crying sin of modern times. Do we not hear and see superstition abounding. Images, pictures, crucifixes, and a host of visible things are had in religious honour, and worst of all men now-a-days worship what they eat, and call that a God which passes into their belly, and thence into baser places still. Surely the Lord is very patient, or he would visit the earth for this worst and basest of idolatry. He is a jealous God, and abhors to see himself dishonoured by any form of representation which can come from man's hands.

59. "*When God heard this, he was wroth.*" The mere report of it filled him with indignation; he could not bear it, he was incensed to the uttermost, and most justly so. "*And greatly abhorred Israel.*" He cast his idolatrous people from his favour, and left them to themselves, and their own devices. How could he have fellowship with idols? What concord hath Christ with Belial? Sin is in itself so offensive that it makes the sinner offensive too. Idols of any sort are highly abhorrent to God, and we must see to it that we keep ourselves from them through divine grace, for rest assured idolatry is not consistent with true grace in the heart. If Dagon sit aloft in any soul, the ark of God is not there. Where the Lord dwells no image of jealousy will be tolerated. A visible church will soon become a visible curse if idols be set up in it, and then the pruning knife will remove it as a dead branch from the vine.

Note that God did not utterly cast away his people Israel even when he greatly abhorred them, for he returned in mercy to them, so the subsequent verses tell us: so now the seed of Abraham, though for awhile under a heavy cloud, will be gathered yet again, for the covenant of salt shall not be broken. As for the spiritual seed,

the Lord hath not despised nor abhorred them ; they are his peculiar treasure and lie for ever near his heart.

60. *So that he forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent which he placed among men.*" His glory would no more reveal itself there, he left Shiloh to become a complete ruin. At the door of that tent shameless sin had been perpetrated, and all around it idols had been adored, and therefore the glory departed, and Ichabod was sounded as a word of dread concerning Shiloh and the tribe of Ephraim. Thus may the candlestick be removed though the candle is not quenched. Erring churches become apostate, but a true church still remains ; if Shiloh be profaned Zion is consecrated. Yet is it ever a solemn caution to all the assemblies of the saints, admonishing them to walk humbly with their God, when we read such words as those of the prophet Jeremiah in his seventh chapter, " Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, are these. Go ye now unto my place which was in Shiloh, where I set my name at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people Israel." Let us take heed, lest as the ark never returned to Shiloh after its capture by the Philistines, so the gospel may be taken from us in judgment, never to be restored to the same church again.

61. *"And delivered his strength into captivity."* The ark was captured by the Philistines in battle, only because the Lord for the punishment of Israel chose to deliver it into their hands, otherwise they could have had no power at all against it. The token of the divine presence is here poetically called " his strength ;" and, indeed, the presence of the Lord is his strength among his people. It was a black day when the mercy-seat was removed, when the cherubim took flight, and Israel's palladium was carried away. *"And his glory into the enemy's hand."* The ark was the place for the revealed glory of God, and his enemies exulted greatly when they bore it away into their own cities. Nothing could more clearly have shewn the divine displeasure. It seemed to say that Jehovah would sooner dwell among his avowed adversaries than among so false a people as Israel ; he would sooner bear the insults of Philistia than the treacheries of Ephraim. This was a fearful downfall for the favoured nation, and it was followed by dire judgments of most appalling nature. When God is gone all is gone. No calamity can equal the withdrawal of the divine presence from a people. O Israel, how art thou brought low ! Who shall help thee now that thy God has left thee !

62. *"He gave his people over also unto the sword."* They fell in battle because they were no longer aided by the divine strength. Sharp was the sword, but sharper still the cause of its being unsheathed. *"And was wroth with his inheritance."* They were his still, and twice in this verse they are called so ; yet his regard for them did not prevent his chastising them, even with a rod of steel. Where the love is most fervent, the jealousy is most cruel. Sin cannot be tolerated in those who are a people near unto God.

63. *"The fire consumed their young men."* As fire slew Nadab and Abihu literally, so the fire of divine wrath fell on the sons of Eli, who defiled the sanctuary of the Lord, and the like fire, in the form of war, consumed the flower of the people. *"And their maidens were not given to marriage."* No nuptial hymns were sung, the bride lacked her bridegroom, the edge of the sword had cut the bands of their espousals, and left unmarried those who else had been extolled in hymns of congratulation. Thus Israel was brought very low, she could not find husbands for her maids, and therefore her state was not replenished ; no young children clustered around parental knees. The nation had failed in its solemn task of instructing the young in the fear of Jehovah, and it was a fitting judgment that the very production of a posterity should be endangered.

64. *"Their priests fell by the sword."* Hophni and Phineas were slain ; they were among the chief in sin, and, therefore, they perished with the rest. Priesthood is no shelter for transgressors ; the jewelled breastplate cannot turn aside the arrows of judgment. *"And their widows made no lamentation."* Their private griefs were swallowed up in the greater national agony, because the ark of God was taken. As the maidens had no heart for the marriage song, so the widows had no spirit, even to utter the funeral wail. The dead were buried too often and too hurriedly to allow of the usual rites of lamentation. This was the lowest depth ; from this point things will take a gracious turn.

65. *"The Lord awaked as one out of sleep."* Justly inactive he had suffered the enemy to triumph, his ark to be captured, and his people to be slain ; but now he arouses himself, his heart is full of pity for his chosen, and anger against the insulting



foe. Woe to thee, O Philistia, now shalt thou feel the weight of his right hand ! Waking and putting forth strength like a man who had taken a refreshing draught the Lord is said to be, "*like a mighty man that shouteth by reason of wine.*" Strong and full of energy the Lord dashed upon his foes, and made them stagger beneath his blows. His ark from city to city went as an avenger rather than as a trophy, and in every place the false gods fell helplessly before it.

66. "*He smote his enemies in the hinder parts.*" The emeros rendered them ridiculous, and their numerous defeats made them yet more so. They fled but were overtaken and wounded in the back to their eternal disgrace. "*He put them to a perpetual reproach.*" Orientals are not very refined, and we can well believe that the hemorrhoids were the subject of many a taunt against the Philistines, as also were their frequent defeats by Israel until at last they were crushed under, never to exist again as a distinct nation."

67 Moreover he refused the tabernacle of Joseph, and chose not the tribe of Ephraim :

68 But chose the tribe of Judah, the mount Zion which he loved.

69 And he built his sanctuary like high *palaces*, like the earth which he hath established for ever.

70 He chose David also his servant, and took him from the sheepfolds :

71 From following the ewes great with young he brought him to feed Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance.

72 So he fed them according to the integrity of his heart ; and guided them by the skilfulness of his hands.

67. "*Moreover he refused the tabernacle of Joseph.*" God had honoured Ephraim, for to that tribe belonged Joshua the great conqueror, and Gideon the great judge, and within its borders was Shiloh the place of the ark and the sanctuary ; but now the Lord would change all this and set up other rulers. He would no longer leave matters to the leadership of Ephraim, since that tribe had been tried and found wanting. "*And chose not the tribe of Ephraim.*" Sin had been found in them, folly and instability, and therefore they were set aside as unfit to lead.

68. "*But chose the tribe of Judah.*" To give the nation another trial this tribe was elected to supremacy. This was according to Jacob's dying prophecy. Our Lord sprang out of Judah and he it is whom his brethren shall praise. "*The Mount Zion which he loved.*" The tabernacle and ark were removed to Zion during the reign of David ; no honour was left to the wayward Ephraimites. Hard by this mountain the Father of the Faithful had offered up his only son, and there in future days the great gatherings of his chosen seed would be, and therefore Zion is said to be lovely unto God.

69. "*And he built his sanctuary like high palaces.*" The tabernacle was placed on high, literally and spiritually it was as a mountain of beauty. True religion was exalted in the land. For sanctity it was a temple, for majesty it was a palace. "*Like the earth which he hath established for ever.*" Stability as well as stateliness were seen in the temple, and so also in the church of God. The prophet saw both in vision.

70. "*He chose David also his servant.*" It was an election of a sovereignly gracious kind, and it operated practically by making the chosen man a willing servant of the Lord. He was not chosen because he was a servant, but in order that he might be so. David always esteemed it to be a high honour that he was both elect of God, and a servant of God. "*And took him from the sheepfolds.*" A shepherd of sheep he had been, and this was a fit school for a shepherd of men. Lowliness of occupation will debar no man from such honours as the Lord's election confers, the Lord seeth not as man seeth. He delights to bless those who are of low estate.

71. "*From following the ewes great with young he brought him to feed Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance.*" Exercising the care and art of those who watch for the young lambs, David followed the ewes in their wanderings ; the tenderness and patience thus acquired would tend to the development of characteristics most becoming in a king. To the man thus prepared, the office and dignity which God had appointed for him, came in due season, and he was enabled worthily to wear them. It is wonderful how often divine wisdom so arranges the early and obscure

portion of a choice life, so as to make it a preparatory school for a more active and noble future.

72. "So he fed them according to the integrity of his heart." David was upright before God, and never swerved in heart from the obedient worship of Jehovah. Whatever faults he had, he was unfeignedly sincere in his allegiance to Israel's superior king; he shepherded for God with honest heart. "And guided them by the skilfulness of his hands." He was a sagacious ruler, and the Psalmist magnifies the Lord for having appointed him. Under David, the Jewish kingdom first rose to an honourable position among the nations, and exercised an influence over its neighbours. In closing the Psalm which has described the varying conditions of the chosen nation, we are glad to end so peacefully; with all noise of tumult or of sinful rites hushed into silence. After a long voyage over a stormy sea, the ark of the Jewish state rested on its Ararat, beneath a wise and gentle reign, to be wafted no more hither and thither by floods and gales. The Psalmist had all along intended to make this his last stanza, and we too may be content to finish all our songs of love with the reign of the Lord's anointed. Only we may eagerly enquire, when will it come? When shall we end these desert roamings, these rebellions, and chastisings, and enter into the rest of a settled kingdom, with the Lord Jesus reigning as "the Prince of the house of David?"

Thus have we ended this lengthy parable, may we in our life-parable have less of sin, and as much of grace as are displayed in Israel's history, and may we close it under the safe guidance of "that great Shepherd of the sheep." AMEN.

#### EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS.

*Whole Psalm.*—This Psalm appears to have been occasioned by the removal of the sanctuary from Shiloh in the tribe of Judah, and the co-incident transfer of pre-eminence in Israel from the former to the latter tribe, as clearly evinced by David's settlement as the head of the church and nation. Though this was the execution of God's purpose, the writer here shows that it also proceeded from the divine judgment on Ephraim, under whose leadership the people had manifested the same sinful and rebellious character which had distinguished their ancestors in Egypt.—*B. M. Smith, in "The Critical and Explanatory Pocket Bible."* 1867.

*Verse 1.*—"Give ear, O my people, to my law: incline your ears." Inclining the ears does not denote any ordinary sort of hearing, but such as a disciple renders to the words of his master, with submission and reverence of mind, silent and earnest, that whatever is enunciated for the purpose of instruction may be heard and properly understood, and nothing be allowed to escape. He is a hearer of a different stamp, who hears carelessly, not for the purpose of learning or imitation, but to criticise, to make merry, to indulge animosity, or to kill time.—*Musculus.*

*Verse 1.*—"Incline your ears." Lay them close to my lips, that no parcel of this sacred language fall to the ground by your default.—*John Trapp.*

*Verse 1.*—"To the words of my mouth." Was it not sufficient for the parallelism to say, *To my words?* Obviously. Why then is there any notice taken of the *mouth?* Because those who can prescribe laws to their subjects are also those who scorn to address them with their mouth. Such is the custom of kings, princes, pontiffs, both Roman and others. For the higher every one rises in dignity, the less he considers it becoming to him to speak to the people, to teach and instruct them by word of mouth. They think they owe nothing to the people, but are altogether taken up with this, that they may be looked up to as princes, and so retain a certain secular majesty of command. But, with one's own mouth to teach the ignorant, is a singular proof of love and paternal affection, such as becomes the preceptor, pastor and teacher. This Christ most constantly employed, because he was touched with paternal affection towards the lost sheep, and came as a shepherd to seek them. The manner of earthly princes he therefore rejected, and clothed himself with that paternal custom which becomes the shepherd and teacher, going about and opening his mouth in order to give instruction. See Matthew v. 1. Rightly,

therefore, was the prophet not content with saying, "Give ear, O my people, to my law:" he adds, "Incline your ears to the words of my mouth." Thus he indicates that he was about to address and instruct them with paternal affection.—*Musculus*.

*Verse 2.*—"Parable." "Dark sayings." לִּפְתָּי, an authoritative weighty speech or saying. The Hebrew term very nearly answers to the Greek, κήρυμα δόξαι, i.e., authoritative sentences or maxims, or weighty sayings, expressing or implying a comparison, as such sayings frequently do. חֵידָה, an *enigma*, a *parable*, which penetrates the mind, and when understood makes a deep impression of what is intended or represented by it. Here חֵידָה seems to refer to the historical facts mentioned in the subsequent part of the Psalm, considered as *enigmas* of spiritual concerns.—*John Parkhurst*.

*Verse 2.*—"Parable." Parables are the speeches of wise men, yea, they are the extracts and spirits of wisdom. The Hebrew word signifies to rule, or have authority, because such speeches come upon us with authority, and subdue our reason by the weight of theirs.—*Joseph Caryl*.

*Verse 2.*—"I will utter." The metaphor in this word is taken from a fountain which pours forth water abundantly. For פָּרַח properly means to gush forth, or bubble up. The heart of teachers in the Church ought to be full, and ready to pour forth those streams by which the Church is watered. Their spring ought not to become exhausted, and fail in the summer.—*Mollerus*.

*Verse 3.*—"Which we have heard and known." We have "heard" the law and "known" the facts.—*Adam Clarke*.

*Verse 3.*—"Fathers." Those are worthy of the name of *fathers* in the church, in relation to posterity, who transmit to posterity the truth of God contained in Scripture, such as here is set down in this Psalm: and this is the only infallible sort of tradition, which delivereth to posterity what God delivered to the prophets or their predecessors by Scripture, such as is the doctrine delivered in this Psalm.—*David Dickson*.

*Verse 4.*—"We will not hide them from their children," etc. Thou must not only praise God thyself, but endeavour to transmit the memorial of his goodness to posterity. Children are their parents' heirs; it were unnatural for a father, before he dies, to bury up his treasure in the earth, where his children should not find or enjoy it; now the mercies of God are not the least part of a good man's treasure, nor the least of his children's inheritance, being both helps to their faith, matter for their praise, and spurs to their obedience. "Our fathers have told us what works thou didst in their days, how thou didst drive out the heathen," etc., Psalm xlv. 1, 2; from this they ground their confidence, verse 4, "Thou art my King, O God; command deliverances for Jacob," and excite their thankfulness, verse 8, "In God we boast all the day long, and praise thy name for ever." Indeed, as children are their parents' heirs, so they become in justice liable to pay their parents' debts; now the great debt which the saint at death stands charged with, is that which he owes to God for his mercies, and, therefore, it is but reason he should tie his posterity to the payment thereof. Thus mayest thou be praising God in heaven and earth at the same time.—*William Gurnall*.

*Verses 4-6.*—The cloth that is dyed in the wool will keep colour best. Disciples in youth will prove angels in age. Use and experience strengthen and confirm in any art or science. The longer thy child hath been brought up in Christ's school, the more able he will be to find out Satan's wiles and fallacies, and to avoid them. The longer he hath been at the trade the more skill and delight will he have in worshipping and enjoying the blessed God. The tree when it is old stands strongly against the wind, just as it was set when it was young.

The children of Merindal so answered one another in the matters of religion, before the persecuting Bishop of Cavailon, that a stander-by said unto the bishop, I must needs confess I have often been at the disputations of the doctors in the Sorbonne, but I never learned so much as by these children. Seven children at one time suffered martyrdom with Symphrosia, a godly matron, their mother. Such a blessing doth often accompany religious breeding; therefore Julian the apostate, to hinder the growth and increase of Christianity, would not suffer children to be taught either human or divine learning.

Philip was glad that Alexander was born whilst Aristotle lived, that he might

be instructed by Aristotle in philosophy. It is no mean mercy that thy children are born in the days of the gospel, and in a valley of vision, a land of light, where they may be instructed in Christianity. Oh, do not fail, therefore, to acquaint thy children with the nature of God, the natures and offices of Christ, their own natural sinfulness and misery, the way and means of their recovery, the end and errand for which they were sent into the world, the necessity of regeneration and a holy life, if ever they would escape eternal death! Alas! how is it possible they should ever arrive at heaven if they know not the way thither?

The inhabitants of Mitylene, sometime the lords of the seas, if any of their neighbours revolted, did inflict this punishment,—they forbade them to instruct their children, esteeming this a sufficient revenge.—(*Ælian.*) Reader, if thou art careless of this duty, I would ask thee what wrong thy children have done thee that thou shouldst revenge thyself by denying them that which is their due. I mean pious instruction.

The Jewish rabbis speak of a very strict custom and method for the instruction of their children, according to their age and capacity. At five years old they were *filii legis*, sons of the law, to read it. At thirteen they were *filii præcepti*, sons of the precept, to understand the law. At fifteen they were *Talmudiste*, and went to deeper points of the law, even to Talmudic doubts. As thy children grow up, so do thou go on to instruct them in God's will. They are "born like the wild ass's colt," Job xi. 12—that is, unruly, foolish, and ignorant. We often call a fool an ass, but here it is a "wild ass," which is more silly and untractable than a tame one; nay, it is a "wild ass's colt," which is most rude, unruly, and foolish. How, then, shall thy ignorant children come to know God or themselves without instruction?

Thy duty is to acquaint thy children with the works of God. Teach them his doings as well as his sayings. "Take heed to thyself, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen: but teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons," Deut. iv. 9. God's wonders should be had in everlasting remembrance. "He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered," Ps. cxi. 4. Now, one special way to do this is by writing them in our children's memories, hereby they are transmitted to posterity. This was the godly practice of the patriarchs, to instruct their children concerning the creation of the world, transgression of man, destruction of the old world, God's providence, the Messiah to be revealed, and the like. The parents' mouths were large books, in which their children did read the noble acts of the Lord. The precept is here urged [verses 2—7] upon a double ground, *partly for God's praise*, in the perpetuity of his worthy deeds: his words are of great weight, and therefore, as curious pictures or precious jewels, must in memory of him be bequeathed from father to son whilst the world continueth. If they are written on paper or parchment they may perish (and is it not a thousand pities that such excellent records should be lost?); but if they be written by fathers successfully on their children's hearts, no time shall blot or wear them out, Exod. xii. 26, 27. Therefore, as the rabbis observe, the night before the passover the Jews (to keep God's mercies in memory to his honour) were wont to confer with their children on this wise. The child said, Why is it called the passover? The father said, Because the angel passed over us when it slew the Egyptians, and destroyed us not. The child said, Why do we eat unleavened bread? The father answered, Because we were forced to hasten out of Egypt. The child said, Why do we eat bitter herbs? The father answered, To mind us of our afflictions in Egypt.

But the duty is also urged, *partly for their own profit*, verse 7, "*That they might set their hope in God,*" etc. Acquaintance with God's favour will encourage their faith; knowledge of his power will help them to believe his promise. Reader, obedience to this precept may tend much to thy own and thy children's profit. By teaching thy children God's actions, thou wilt fix them the faster, and they will make the greater impression, upon thy own spirit. A frequent mention of things is the best art of memory: what the mouth preacheth often the mind will ponder much. Besides, it may work for thy children's weal; the more they be acquainted with the goodness, wisdom, power, and faithfulness of God which appear in his works, the more they will fear, love, and trust him.—*George Swinnoek.*

Verse 5.—"*He established a testimony in Jacob,*" etc. The meaning is, that God ordained a law, and commanded that the fathers should each one tell his children those things which he had learned from his parents. In this verse therefore we understand by "*testimony*" and "*law,*" that particular law which is written in

Deut. iv. 9 in these words: "Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons."—*Simon de Muis.*

Verse 5.—By the "testimony" and "law" are meant the whole contents of the Pentateuch, the direct commandments contained in it, and the deeds of the Lord, which are to be considered as indirect commandments: for all the deeds of God contain a kernel of instruction, of duty, and of warning; "I have done this for thee, what dost thou for me?"—*E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Verse 5.—"To their children." He who learns the law in his youth, resembles him that writes easily on new and pliable parchment; but he who begins to learn it in his old age, is like a man that tries to write on old and shrivelled parchment.—*John Van den Driesche, [Drusius.] 1550—1616.*

Verses 5, 6.—Five generations appear to be mentioned: 1. "Fathers;" 2. "Their children;" 3. "The generation to come;" 4. "And their children;" 5. And their children.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 6.—Children should earnestly hearken to the instruction of their parents that they themselves may afterwards be able to tell the same to their sons, and so a golden chain be formed, wherewith being bound together, the whole family may seek the skies. Whilst the father draws the son, the son the grandson, the grandson his children to Christ, as the magnet of them all, that they all may be made one.—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verse 7.—"Set their hope in God." Their hope was to be set not in the law which punishes, but in grace freely given which redeems; therefore is it added "and not forget the works of God."—*Johannes De Turrecremata. 1476.*

Verse 8.—"And might not be as their fathers." The warning is taken from an example at home. He does not say, That they might not be as the nations, which know not God: but, That they might not be "as their fathers." Domestic examples of vice are much more pernicious than foreign ones. Hence one says: *Sic natura jubet, velocius et citius nos corruptunt vitiorum exempla domestica.* Let us learn from this place, that it is not safe in all things to cleave to the footsteps of our fathers. He speaks of those fathers who perished in the wilderness: of whom, see Num. xiv., Deut. i., and Ps. lxxviii. 6.—*Musculus.*

Verse 8.—"As their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation." Forasmuch as this bad emulation of their ancestors is with difficulty plucked from the minds of men, because of our innate reverence for our fathers, the prophet heaps up words in the description of the crimes of their fathers. He says they were ירי כרי, that is, a generation detracting from the authority of God, and continually breaking the bonds of the law, and in their petulance shaking off the yoke, as a violent and refractory horse, or an untamed bullock, enduring not the rein, or refusing to yield its neck to the yoke, but constantly drawing back and rejecting the bride.—*Mollerus.*

Verse 8, 9.—Look carefully to the ground of the active obedience, that it be sound and sincere. The same right principles whereby the sincere soul acts for Christ, will carry him to suffer for Christ, when a call from God comes with such an errand. "The children of Ephraim, being armed, and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle." Why? what is the matter? so well armed, and yet so cowardly? This seems strange: read the preceding verse and you will cease wondering; they are called there, "A generation that set not their heart aright, and whose spirit was not steadfast with God." Let the armour be what it will, yea, if soldiers were in a castle, whose foundations were rock, and walls brass; yet if their hearts be not right to their prince, an easy storm will drive them from the walls, and a little scare open their gate, which hath not this bolt of sincerity on it to hold it fast. In our late wars we have seen that the honest hearts within thin and weak works have held the town, when no walls could defend treachery from betraying trust.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 9.—"The children of Ephraim, being armed," etc. "When ye had girded on every man his weapons of war, ye were ready to go up into the hill. And the Lord said unto me, Say unto them, Go not up, neither fight; for I am not among you; lest ye be smitten before your enemies. So I spake unto you; and ye would

not hear, but rebelled against the commandment of the Lord, and went presumptuously up into the hill. And the Amorites, which dwelt in that mountain, came out against you, and chased you, as bees do, and destroyed you in Seir, even unto Hormah." Deut. i. 41—44.

*Verse 9.*—Many persons suppose the passage to refer to the event recorded in 1 Chron. vii. 21, 22, where are mentioned the sons of Ephraim, "whom the men of Gath that were born in the land slew, because they came down to take away their cattle. And Ephraim their father mourned many days, and his brethren came to comfort him." The manner of the relation shews that the slaughter must have been great; and this flight and defeat, and their not acknowledging their dependence upon God, it is supposed the Psalmist has in view in this place. But the objection to this interpretation is, that the event referred to in the book of Chronicles, evidently occurred at a time anterior to that of the Israelitish exodus from Egypt; whilst the 11th verse of this Psalm speaks of these same Ephraimites being forgetful of God's doings and wonderful works which he did at the time of their exit from Egypt. It is, therefore, more probable that בני אפרים may designate the Israelitish people generally, which Mendlessohn thinks to be the case. He observes that "the meaning of the noun Ephraim was that of a general term for Israel before the reigning of the house of David, because that Joshua the son of Nun, the first judge, was of this tribe; also because the territory assigned to this tribe was in the region of Shiloh: and it is possible that because of the reputation of this tribe in those days, all those who were in high esteem were also called Ephraimites." He might have added another and stronger reason than any of the preceding for this application of the term to Israel, and it is, that Jeroboam, who may be regarded as the founder of the Israelitish monarchy, is said, in 1 Kings xi. 26, to have been a descendant of Ephraim. The war alluded to may have been one of those which were waged between the ten tribes and the people of Judah.—*George Phillips.*

*Verse 10.*—"Walk in his law." Note, we must walk in the law of God, this is that narrow and sacred way which Christ traces before us. At Athens there was *λεπὰ ὁδὸς*, the sacred way, by which, as Harpocratio relates, the priests of the mysteries travelled to Eleusin. At Rome also there was a way which was called *Via Sacra*. To us also there is a way to the skies, consecrated by the footsteps of the saints. It behoves us therefore not to loiter, but to be ever on the march.—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

*Verse 12.*—"Zoa." The name of a city in Egypt (Numb. xiii. 22), though it be not set down in the story in Exodus, is twice specified by the writer of this psalm, here, and verse 43, as the scene wherein the wondrous works were wrought on Pharaoh by Moses; either because really the first and principal of the miracles were shewed Pharaoh there, this city being the seat of the king, and a most ancient city, as appears by the expression used of Hebron, in Numbers xiii. 22, where to set out the antiquity of that city, where Abraham, the tenth from Noah, dwelt, 'tis said, that "it was built seven years before Zoan in Egypt;" or perhaps only in poetical style, as "the field" or country of Zoan, is all one with the "land of Egypt" foregoing. Thus, in other prophetic writings, when judgments are threatened, instead of "Egypt" sometimes we find "Zoan" alone, Isa. xix. 11, where "the princes of Zoan" are all one with the counsellors of Pharaoh; sometimes "the princes of Zoan," with the addition of some other city, as verse 13, "the princes of Zoan, the princes of Noph," *i.e.*, again, the counsellors of that kingdom, which as it follows, "have seduced Egypt,"—brought the whole nation to ruin. So Isa. xxx. 4, where they send to Egypt for relief, 'tis said, their "princes were at Zoan, their ambassadors at Hanes."—*Henry Hammond.*

*Verse 12.*—"In the field of Zoan." We see in this passage that it was not without reason that God most powerfully displayed his wondrous works, his virtue and his glory in the more famous cities: not that he despised the humbler and obscure, but that he might more conveniently in this way scatter abroad the knowledge and renown of his name. For this cause he desired Moses to perform his miracles in the royal city, and in its field; for the same reason he afterwards fixed his dwelling-place in the most famous city of Canaan, in which he decreed also that Christ his Son should be crucified and the foundation of his heavenly kingdom laid.—*Musculus*

*Verse 13.*—"He made the waters to stand as an heap." The original word imports, those great heaps which are made use of as dykes or banks to restrain the waters.

But the Jews have not only understood these expressions literally, but have likewise taken upon them to add particular circumstances, as if the history had been so concise, that it wanted to be supplied therewith. They say, that the sea had formed, as it were, twelve roads or causeways, according to the number of the tribes of the Israelites.—*James Saurin*.

Verse 13.—“*He made the waters to stand as an heap.*” God did not wish altogether to take the sea from the gaze of the Hebrews, but to interrupt and divide it, that like a wall it might stand firm on either side of the way. This was done, first, that the miracle might be evident, for in that sea there is no tidal rise or fall of the waters. Secondly, that the people might have greater joy at the sight of so great a miracle. Thirdly, that in their whole passage they might depend more upon the providence of God, who, in a single moment, could allow the sea to return to its bed and drown all of them. It is God’s will that we should flee to him the more ardently at the aspect of present danger. Fourthly and lastly, that the people might pass over the more rapidly, since they knew not how long God wished the miracle to last.—*Thomas Le Blanc*.

Verse 14.—That there was a mystery in this *pillar of cloud and fire* is clear from Isaiah iv. 5, 6, for there never was a *literal* cloud and fire upon Mount Zion. This fiery pillar did cease when they were entered into Canaan; Isaiah therefore intends a *spiritual* thing under those expressions. So it is represented by the Apostle as representing a gospel-mystery: 1 Cor. x. 2. It signified and shadowed forth, 1. Something of *Christ himself*; 2. The *benefits* of Christ; 3. The *ordinances* of Christ.

1. *Christ himself*.—Some have noted a shadow both of his *Deity* and *humanity*. There was a *fiery brightness* in the clouds, which yet was but a dark shadow of the glory of his Deity, which was often in visions so represented; but his divine nature was veiled and over-clouded by his human, as in this shadow there was a pillar of cloud as well as fire. In Rev. x. 1, Christ is represented as *clothed with a cloud, and his feet as pillars of fire*; expressions notably answering this ancient type and shadow. 2. It holds forth something of the *benefits* of Christ. What benefits had they from this pillar of fire and cloud? They had three: (1) Light and direction. (2) Defence and protection. (3) Ornament and glory. All which we have in a higher manner in Christ by the gospel. 3. It figured also the *ordinances*, and his presence in and with them; for the ordinances are the outward and visible tokens of God’s presence with his people, as this fiery pillar was of old. And, therefore, when the Tabernacle was made and set up, it *rested upon the Tabernacle*, Exodus xl. 38. There be some duties are secret, which the world sees not, nor may see; as alms-deeds and personal and secret prayer. But the *ordinances* of institution are things that ought to be practised with all the publickness that may be: they are outward and visible tokens of God’s presence, particularly that great ordinance of *baptism*, as in 1 Cor. x. 2. The cloud, it seems, had a refreshing moisture in it, to shade, refresh, and cool them from the burning heat; and they were bedewed \* with it, as we are with the water of baptism; whereby this legal cloud became a type of gospel baptism. And so you see how it represented something of *Christ himself*, and something of his *benefits*, and something of all his *ordinances* under the New Testament.—*Samuel Mather*.

Verse 14.—“*All the night.*” We need not dwell long upon the thought of what this “*all*” was to the Israelites. In night *marchings*, and night restings, it was very precious; whether they were in motion or at rest, it was alike needed, alike good. This light of fire, unless continuous, would have been of comparatively little worth. Were it suddenly extinguished as they marched, all Israel would have been plunged into confusion and dismay; the quenching of the light would have changed into a disorderd rabble, the marshalled host.—*Philip Bennet Power*, in “*Breviates: or Short Texts and their Teachings.*”

Verse 15.—“*The rocks.*” They were typical of Christ, 1 Cor. x. 4; who is frequently compared to one for height, strength, and duration, shade, shelter, and protection; and is called the “*Rock of Israel,*” the “*Rock of offence to both houses of Israel,*” the “*Rock of salvation,*” the “*Rock of refuge,*” the “*Rock of strength,*” the “*Rock that is higher than*” the saints, and on which the church is built, and who is “*the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.*”—*John Gill*.

\* Rather “*baptised*” in it, as Paul puts it in 1 Cor. x. 2.

Verse 15.—“*Gave them drink as out of the great depths.*” As if he had formed a lake or an ocean, furnishing an inexhaustible supply.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 16.—“*He brought streams also out of the rock,*” etc. “Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.” The second murmuring for water at Kadesh seems to have been a more aggravated act of rebellion than the former, and yet the water is given in greater abundance. Oh, the freeness of the sovereign grace of God!—*W. Wilson.*

Verse 17.—“*And they sinned yet more against him.*” He does not say that they sinned only, but that they sinned against God. “*And they sinned yet more against him,*” namely, *God.* Against what God? Against him who had delivered them by great and unheard of wonders out of Egypt, who had led them as free men across the Red Sea with a dry foot, who had continued to lead and to protect them with pillars of cloud and fire by day and night, and had given them to drink abundantly of water drawn from the arid rock. Against this God they had added sin to sin. Simply to sin is human, and happens to the saints even after they have received grace: but to sin against God argues a singular degree of impiety. To sin against God is to injure and dishonour him in things immediately pertaining to himself. So they sinned against God, because after so many distinguished proofs and testimonies of his care made manifest to them, they continued to think and speak evil against him. All sins indeed, of whatever class they may be, are done against God, because they are opposed to his will; but those which are committed peculiarly against God, are certainly greater than others. Such are those wrought against his name, goodness, providence, power, truth, and worship, and against those things which specially concern him, whatever they may be. So we read of the sins of the sons of Eli, 1 Sam. ii. 24, 25: “It is no good report that I hear: ye make the Lord’s people to transgress. If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him; but if a man sin against the Lord, who shall intreat for him?”—*Musculus.*

Verse 17.—“*They sinned yet more.*” Their sin was not murmuring only, sinful as that is, but *uncontrolled desire.* And for what was that desire? It was for meat. They had grown so weary of the bread of heaven which God so mercifully provided; and they wanted something in addition—something, too, which was not absolutely necessary to their existence. When they murmured for water at Massah, they murmured for something *needful.* Their sin *then* was in *murmuring,* instead of *praying.* But here they lusted for something *unnecessary,* and this was an aggravation of their sin. And thus the Psalmist, evidently comparing this sin with the murmuring at Massah, says, “They sinned *yet more* against him.”—*George Wagner,* in “*The Wanderings of the Children of Israel.*”

Verse 18.—“*They tempted God in their heart.*” They tempted God, tried his patience over and over again, made as it were another experiment upon it; and, from the expression of “*tempting him in their heart,*” it would seem as if they had made it a thing of mental calculation whether he would still bear with them.—*Thomas Chalmers* (1780—1847), in “*Daily Scripture Readings.*”

Verse 18.—“*They tempted God.*” We know that, although “God cannot be tempted with evil,” he may justly be said to be tempted, whensoever men, by being dissatisfied with his dealings, virtually ask that he will alter those dealings, and proceed in a way more congenial with their feelings. If you reflect a little, you can hardly fail to perceive, that in a very strict sense, this and the like may be said to be a tempting of God. Suppose a man to be discontented with the appointments of Providence; suppose him to murmur and repine at what the Almighty allots him to do or to bear: is he not to be charged with provoking God to change his purposes? and what is this if it be not “tempting” God—a striving to induce him to swerve from his plans, though every one of those plans has been settled by infinite wisdom? Or, again, if any one of us, notwithstanding multiplied proofs of the Divine lovingkindness, doubt or question whether God do indeed love him; of what is he guilty, if not of tempting the Lord, seeing that he solicits God to give additional evidence, as though there were deficiency, and challenges him to fresh demonstrations of what he has already abundantly displayed? This would be called “tempting” amongst men. If a child were to show by his actions that he doubted or disbelieved the affection of his parents, he would be considered as thereby



striving to extort from them fresh proofs of that affection, though they had already done as much as either in justice or in wisdom they ought to have done ; this would be a clear tempting of them, and that too in the ordinary sense of the term. In short, unbelief of every kind and degree may be said to be a tempting of God ; for not to believe on the evidence which he has seen fit to give, is to tempt him to give more than he has already given—offering our possible assent, if proof were increased, as an inducement to him to go beyond what his wisdom has prescribed. . . . You cannot distrust God, and not accuse him of a want either of power or of goodness ; you cannot repine,—no, not even in thought—without virtually telling him that his plans are not the best, nor his dispensations the wisest, which might have been appointed in respect of yourselves. So that your fear, or your despondency, or your anxiety in circumstances of perplexity, or of peril, is nothing less than a call upon God to depart from his fixed course,—a suspicion, or rather an assertion, that he might proceed in a manner more worthy of himself, and therefore a challenge to him to alter his dealings, if he would prove that he possesses the attributes which he claims. You may not intend thus to accuse, or provoke God, whenever you murmur ; but your murmuring does all this, and cannot fail to do it. You cannot be dissatisfied, without virtually saying that God might order things better ; you cannot say that he might order things better, without virtually demanding that he change his course of acting, and give other proofs of his infinite perfections. And thus you *tempt* him, tempt him even as did the Israelites in the wilderness.—*Henry Melvill.*

*Verse 18.*—“*Asking meat for their lust.*” God had given them meat for their hunger in the manna, wholesome, pleasant food, and in abundance ; he had given them meat for their faith, out of the heads of Leviathan which he brake in pieces, Ps. lxxiv. 14. But all this would not serve, they must have meat “*for their lust ;*” dainties and varieties to gratify a luxurious appetite. Nothing is more provoking to God, than our quarrelling with our allotment, and indulging the desires of the flesh.—*Matthew Henry.*

*Verse 19.*—It is particularly to be observed, that the sin of which the children of Israel were on this occasion guilty, was not in wishing for bread and water, but in thinking for one moment, that after the Lord had brought them out of Egypt, he would suffer them for the lack of any needful thing, to come short of Canaan. It was no sin to be hungry and thirsty ; it was a necessity of their nature. There is nothing living that does not desire and require food : when we do not we are dead, and that they did so was no sin. Their sin was *to doubt that God could or would support them in the wilderness, or allow those who followed his leadings to lack any good thing.* This was their sin. It is just the same with the Christian now. These Israelites did not more literally require a supply of daily food for their bodies, than does the Christian for his soul. Not to do so is a sign of death, and the living soul would soon die without it. And so far from its being a sin, our Lord has pronounced that man blessed who hungers and thirsts after righteousness, adding the most precious promise, that all such shall be satisfied. But it is a sin, and very great sin, should this food not be perceptibly, and to the evidence of our senses, immediately supplied, to murmur and be fearful. It was for the *trial of their faith* that these things happened to the Israelites, as do the trials of all Christians in all ages : and it is “*after we have suffered awhile*” that we may expect to be established, strengthened, settled.—*Brownlow North, in “Ourselves. A Picture sketched from the History of the Children of Israel.”* [1865.]

*Verses 19, 20.*—After all their experience, they doubted the divine omnipotence, as if it were to be regarded as nothing, when it refused to gratify their lusts. Unbelief is so deeply rooted in the human heart, that when God performs miracles on *earth*, unbelief doubts whether he can perform them in *heaven*, and when he does them in *heaven*, whether he can do them on *earth*?—*Augustus F. Tholuck.*

*Verse 20.*—“*Can he give bread also ?*” They should have said, “*Will he serve our lusts ?*” but that they were ashamed to say.—*John Trapp.*

*Verse 0.*—Who will say that a man is thankful to his friend for a past kindness, if he nourishes an ill opinion of him for the future ? This was all that ungrateful Israel returned to God, for his miraculously broaching the rock to quench their thirst : “*Behold, he smote the rock,*”—“*Can he give bread also ?*” This, indeed,

was their trade all the time they were in the wilderness. Wherefore, God gives them their character, not by what they seemed to be while his mercies were before them; then they could say, "God was their rock, and the High God their Redeemer;" but by their temper and carriage in straits; when the cloth was drawn, and the feast taken out of their sight, what opinion then had they of God? Could they sanctify his name so far as to trust him for their dinner to-morrow who feasted them yesterday? Truly no, as soon as they feel their hunger return, like froward children, they are crying, as if God meant to starve them. Wherefore, God rejects their praises, and owns not their hypocritical acknowledgments, but sets their ingratitude upon record; they forgot his works, and waited not for his counsel. O how sad is this, that after God hath entertained a soul at his table with choice mercies and deliverances, these should be so ill husbanded, that not a bit of them should be left to give faith a meal, to keep the heart from fainting, when God comes not so fast to deliver as desired. He is the most thankful man that treasures up the mercies of God in his memory, and can feed his faith with what God hath done for him, so as to walk in the strength thereof in present straits.—*William Gurnall*.

*Verse 23.*—"Opened the doors of heaven." There is an allusion here to the flood as in *verse 15.*—*A. R. Fausset*.

*Verse 23.*—"Opened the doors of heaven." God, who has the key of the clouds, "opened the doors of heaven," that is more than opening the windows, which yet is spoken of as a great blessing, *Mal. iii. 19.*—*Matthew Henry*.

*Verse 23.*—"Opened the doors of heaven." This is a metaphor taken from a granary, from which corn is brought; and by opening the doors is signified, that the manna fell very plentifully. Compare *Gen. vii. 11.*—*Thomas Fenton*.

*Verses 24, 25.*—"Manna." The prophet celebrates this miracle, *first*, because of the unusual place whence the manna was sent. For he did not produce fruits from the earth wherewith to feed them, but rained down this food from the clouds, and from the depths of the skies. *Secondly*, because of the facility of the distribution. By the command of God alone, without any labour of men, yea, while they slept, this food was prepared. Therefore is it said, "*He gave,*" etc. *Thirdly*, he celebrates its great abundance which sufficed to supply so great a multitude. *Fourthly*, the excellence of the food. He calls it the food of the excellent or the strong, such as was not pleasant merely to the common multitude, but to the princes also, and to the heroes, for it was the food of "*the mighty ones.*"—*Mollerus*.

*Verse 25.*—"Man." Rather, as *Exodus xvi. 6*, "*every man.*" Not one of them was left without it.—*A. R. Fausset*.

*Verse 25.*—"Man did eat angels' food." 'Tis called "*angels' food,*" not because the angels do daily feed upon it, but because it was both made and ministered by the ministry of angels, and that phrase sets forth the excellency of it.—*Christopher Ness (1621—1705), in "The Sacred History and Mystery of the Old Testament."*

*Verse 25.*—"Angels' food." Manna is called the bread of angels because it was brought down by their ministry; and it was so pleasant in taste, that if the angels had eaten bread, it might have served them.—*John Weemse*.

*Verse 25.*—"Angels' food." So their manna was called, either, 1. because it was provided and sent by the ministry of angels; or, 2. because it seemed to come down from heaven, the dwelling-place of the angels; or, 3. to set forth the excellency of this bread, that it was meat, as one would say, fit for angels, if angels needed meat. And so, indeed, the exceeding glory of Stephen's countenance is set forth by this, that they "saw his face as it had been the face of an angel," *Acts vi. 15*; and Paul calls an excellent tongue, "the tongue of angels," *1 Cor. xiii. 1.*—*Arthur Jackson*.

*Verse 25.*—The more excellent the benefit is which God giveth, the greater is the ingratitude of him who doth not esteem of it and make use of it as becometh; as we see in Israel's sin, who did not esteem of manna as they should have done. Had the Lord fed them with dust of earth, or roots of grass, or any other mean thing, they should have had no reason to complain: but when he giveth them a new food, created every morning for their sakes, sent down from heaven as fresh furniture every day, of such excellent colour, taste, smell and wholesomeness;

what a provocation of God was it, not to be content now ; in special, when he gave them abundantly of it ? " He sent them meat to the full."—*David Dickson.*

*Verse 26.*—"He caused an east wind to blow in the heaven : and by his power he brought in the south wind." Here, on examining the geographical position of the Israelites, we see exactly how the south-east winds would bring the "quails." The Israelites had just passed the Red Sea, and had begun to experience a foretaste of the privations which they were to expect in the desert, through which they had to pass. Passing northwards in their usual migrations, the birds would come to the coast of the Red Sea, and there would wait until a favourable wind enabled them to cross the water. The south-east wind afforded them just the very assistance which they needed, and they would naturally take advantage of it.—*J. G. Wood, in "Bible Animals."* 1869.

*Verse 27.*—"As dust." The amazing clouds of fine dust or sand, which a violent wind raises in the deserts of the East, constitute the point of comparison.—*William Keatinge Clay.*

*Verse 27.*—"Feathered fowls." Hebrew, "fowl of wing ;" *i.e.*, flying fowls, in distinction from domestic poultry.—*Williams, in Notes to Calvin in loc.*

*Verses 27, 31.*—If the cemetery on Sarbut-el-Khadem be, what all the antecedent evidences combine to indicate, the workmanship of the Israelites, (a chief burial-ground of their fatal encampment at Kibroth-Hattaavah), it may most reasonably be expected that its monuments shall contain symbolic representations of the miracle of the "feathered fowls," and of the awful plague which followed it. Now Niebuhr happily enables us to meet this just expectation, by his copies of the hieroglyphics on three of those tombstones, published in the XLVth. and XLVIth. plates of his first volume, and prefaced plate XLIV. by a plan of the cemetery itself, which is of more value than any or all subsequent descriptions. It was discovered by the present writer (as stated in a former work, ["The Voice of Israel"] on the evidence of no less than four Sinaitic inscriptions, that the birds of the miracle, named by Moses, generically, שׂוֹר, *salu*, and by the Psalmist, still more generally, כְּנֵף הַיָּבֵשׁ, "winged fowls," or more correctly "long-winged fowls," were not (as rendered by all our versions, ancient and modern) "quails," but a crane-like red bird resembling a goose, named in the Arabic *nuham*. The discovery received subsequently a singular and signal corroboration from the further discovery, by Dean Stanley, and previously by Schubert, of immense flocks of these very *nuhams* on the reputed scene of the miracle at Kibroth-Hattaavah. With these antecedents in his mind, the reader will now turn to the three monuments copied by Niebuhr in the cemetery of Sarbut-el-Khadem. He will at once see that a crane-like bird resembling a goose, with slender body and long-legs, is the leading hieroglyphic symbol in all the three tablets. No fewer than twenty-five of these symbolic birds occur in the first, ten in the second, and fifteen in the third tablet. The goose appears occasionally, but the principal specimens have the air of the goose, but the form of the crane. In a word, they are the very species of birds seen by Dean Stanley, both at this point of Sinai, and at the first cataract of the Nile ; and which constantly occur also in Egyptian monuments : as though the very food of Egypt, after which the Israelites lusted, was sent to be at once their prey and their plague. "And the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots." Exod. xvi. 3.

The reader has here before him the irrefragable fact that the very birds which by every kind of evidence stand identified with the *salus*, or long-legged and long-winged fowls of the miracle, are the very birds depicted on the tombstones of Sarbut-el-Khadem, both standing, flying, and apparently even trussed and cooked. . . . The inevitable inference is . . . that these tombstones record the miracle of the "feathered fowls," and stand over the graves of the gluttons who consumed them.—*Charles Forster, in "Israel in the Wilderness."* 1865.

Mr. Forster thus deciphers by his alphabet some of the mixed legends and devices :—

"From the sea the cranes congregate to one spot ;  
The archers shoot at the cranes passing over the plain.  
Evil-stomached they rush after the prey—  
The sepulchre their doom—their marrow corrupted by God.  
The sleepy owl, emblem of death, God sends destruction among them.

\* \* \* \* \*

The mother of sepulchres—the black and white geese,  
 A sudden death, greedily lusting after flesh, die the gluttons.  
 The mountain top ascend the Hebrews,  
 They eat, devour, consume, till nothing is left, exceeding all bounds.  
 Their bodies corrupted, by gluttony they die."

*Verse 29.*—Note: The prophet in this Psalm institutes, as it were, a conflict between God and man. God contends with blessings, man with sins. God exerts his power for the benefit of undeserving man, v. 12, "Marvellous things did he in the sight of their fathers:" man repays the divine power with infidelity, v. 17, "And they sinned yet more against him." And farther on, in v. 19, "Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?" *Secondly*, God showers down his bounty to overwhelm ungrateful sinners with his gifts, v. 23, "He commanded the clouds from above, etc., and rained down manna upon them." These less than men (*homunciones*) oppose their gluttony to the liberality of God, and abuse the gifts conferred, v. 29, "They did eat, and were well filled." *Thirdly*, divine justice renews the conflict to scourge at once stupidity out of them, v. 30, 31, "While their meat was yet in their mouths, the wrath of God came upon them." Still obdurate they kick against the goad, v. 32, "For all this they sinned still." *Fourthly*, mercy flies down from heaven, to invite them to peace, v. 38, "But he being full of compassion." Men are but emboldened by his compassion, and the more easily relapse into sin, v. 40, "How oft did they provoke him in the wilderness?" *Fifthly*, and *lastly*, when all seems lost, love draws nigh, and performs unheard-of wonders, to touch their hardness, and to deliver them from the dangers by which they were pressed, v. 43, "How he set his signs in Egypt." To these shafts of his love sinners oppose a forgetfulness of all his benefits, v. 42, "They remembered not his hand nor the day when he delivered them from the enemy." And all this took place before they entered the land of promise. The conflict that happened between the Hebrews and God in the land of promise is related in the next section of the Psalm.—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

*Verse 30.*—"They were not estranged from their lust." This implies, that they were still burning with their lust. If it is objected that this does not agree with the preceding sentence, where it is said, that "they did eat, and were thoroughly filled," I would answer, that if, as is well known, the minds of men are not kept within the bounds of reason and temperance, they become insatiable; and, therefore, a great abundance will not extinguish the fire of a depraved appetite.—*John Calvin.*

*Verse 30.*—"They were not estranged from their lust." Satiated they were, but not satisfied. It is as easy to quench the fire of Etna, as the thoughts set on fire by lust.—*John Trapp.*

*Verse 30.*—"They were not estranged from their lust." Consider that there is more real satisfaction in mortifying lusts than in making provision for them or in fulfilling them: there is more true pleasure in crossing and pinching our flesh than in gratifying it; were there any true pleasure in sin, hell would not be hell, for the more sin, the more joy. You cannot satisfy one lust if you would do your utmost, and make yourself never so absolute a slave to it; you think if you had your heart's desire you would be at rest: you much mistake; they had it.—*Alexander Carmichael.*

*Verse 31.*—"The wrath of God came upon them, and slew the fattest of them." Two things are here worthy of notice. 1. One, Why he gave them abundance and sufficiency of quails, and afterwards punished the murmuring and unbelieving. If he had punished them before, he would have appeared to have had greater ability to destroy them, than to give them flesh. Therefore, that he might first declare his power, and so make the unbelief of the people the more plain, and show how deserving they were of punishment, he first showed he could give, because they believed he could not, and then punished them for their unbelief. . . . 2. The other, that he destroyed the fat and the chosen men among the people, although they all are said to have murmured. Without a doubt, they were first in the crime, and therefore they are specially mentioned in the punishment.—*Musculus.*

*Verse 31.*—"Slew the fattest of them." They were fed as sheep for the slaughter. The butcher takes the fattest first. We may suppose there were some pious and contented Israelites that did eat moderately of the quails, and were never the worse;

for it was not the meat that poisoned them, but their own lust. Let epicures and sensualists here read their doom; they who make "a god of their belly, their end is destruction," Phil. iii. 19.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verses 31—34.—The Christian has more true pleasure from the creature than the wicked, as it comes more refined to him than to the other. The unholy wretch sucks dregs and all, dregs of sin and dregs of wrath, whereas the Christian's cup is not thus spiced. *First*, dregs of sin; the more he hath of the creature's delights given him, the more he sins with them. Oh, it is sad to think what work they make in his naughty heart! they are but fuel for his lusts to kindle upon; away they run with their enjoyments, as the prodigal with his bags, or like hogs in shaking time; no sight is to be had of them, or thought of their return as long as they can get anything abroad, among the delights of the world. None so prodigiously wicked as those who are fed high with carnal pleasures. They are to the ungodly as the dung and ordure is to the swine which grows fat by lying in it; so their hearts grow gross and fat; their consciences more stupid and senseless in sin by them; whereas the comforts and delights that God gives unto a holy soul by the creature, turn to spiritual nourishment in his graces, and draw these forth into exercise, as they do others' lusts. *Secondly*, dregs of wrath. The Israelites had little pleasure from their dainties, when the wrath of God fell upon them, before they could get them down their throats. The sinner's feast is no sooner served in but divine justice is preparing to send up a reckoning after it, and the fearful expectation of this cannot but spoil the taste of the other.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 32.—"For all this they sinned still." They went on sinning, "and believed not for his wondrous works." That is, even his great wonders or miracles, did not bring them to believe. Neither *speculative atheism*, nor *atheism of heart*, nor *practical atheism* was ever cured by miracle, because they are all founded in a wicked disposition. "Men are not always in a mood to be convinced." It is not want of evidence, but the want of right dispositions that keeps men from believing God.—*William S. Plumer.*

Verse 32.—They did believe the history of his works, namely, that such things as are there recorded were done; they could not but believe that God had wrought wonders for them in Egypt, that he had drowned Pharaoh in, and brought them safe through, the Red Sea: they saw these things, their senses were witnesses, but yet they did not believe the *prophecy* or *promise* which was virtually in those works, namely, that God would do more wonders for them till he had finished and accomplished their deliverance. That history of bringing through the Red Sea had this prophecy in it—that they should be brought safe to Canaan; but they did not believe the voice of this prophecy. When God gave them water out of the rock, this work promised that he would give them meat out of the clouds, if they needed it; but this they believed not. Hence the same Psalm reports their unbelief, under this notion (ver. 19, 20). "They spake against God; they said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness? Behold, he smote the rock, that the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed; can he give bread also? can he provide flesh for his people?" "When the Lord heard this (language of unbelief) he was wroth."—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verses 32, 33.—What faith can do to a prophecy of judgment, the same can unbelief to a promise of mercy; overthrow it. The Psalmist assigns this to the unbelief of the works of God, as well as of his word. "They believed not his wondrous works. Therefore their days did he consume in vanity, and their years in trouble:" but are not the days of all men consumed in vanity? Is not man at his best estate altogether vanity? Yes, but here was a special vanity, and somewhat more penal and judicial lay upon that generation for their unbelief, than lies upon mankind as the fruit of sin in general. And what was that? Even the evil threatened in the text [Isa. vii. 9, latter part]: they could not be established. God lets them wander forty years in a wilderness, up and down, forward and backward; now in hope, anon in fear; now in joy, anon in sorrow; now in success, by-and-by in disappointment.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 32.—Experience ought to strengthen faith; but there must be present faith to use experience.—*J. N. Darby, "in Practical Reflections on the Psalms."* [1870.]

Verse 33.—"Their days did he consume in vanity." He says with great significance, In vanity their days were consumed, because they were plainly deprived of

their hope, and endured all their sufferings in vain. They did not attain what they had hoped for, but only their children entered the land.—*Mollerus.*

*Verses 33.*—"Days" are put in the first place, and then "years;" by which it is intimated, that the duration of their life was cut short by the curse of God, and that it was quite apparent that they failed in the midst of their course.—*John Calvin.*

*Verses 34—36.*—There are some if they come under afflictions, or if they fall in sickness, or a fever, and God shake death over their head; or if they be at some solemn ordinances, they will be at resolving and purposing, and readily bringing vows on themselves, of personal covenanting with God; but as they are easily gotten, so they easily vanish: "*When he slew them, then they sought him: and they returned and enquired early after God.*" Several times our afflictions are like a gutter; when there is a great shower we will be running over with purposes after God. "*Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues. For their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant:*" and yet when he slew them they sought after him, and they early enquired after him: so that indeliberate actions and covenantings with God, as they are hastily forgotten, they no less suddenly vanish; the action ought then to be deliberate when we indenture with the Cautioner, and oblige ourselves to more watchfulness, and more tenderness, or else it will soon vanish.—*Alexander Wedderburn, in "David's Testament, opened up in Fourty Sermons."* 1701.

*Verses 31—37.*—In these words you see plainly that these people are very early and earnest in seeking God to take off his hand, to remove judgments that were upon them, but not that God would cure them of those sins that provoked him to draw his sword, and to make it drunk with their blood; for, notwithstanding the sad slaughters that divine justice had made among them, they did but flatter and lie, and play the hypocrites with God; they would fain be rid of their sufferings, but did not care to be rid of their sins. Ah! but a gracious soul cries out, Lord, do but take away my sins, and it will satisfy me and cheer me, though thou shouldst never take off thy heavy hand. A true Nathanael sighs it out under his greatest affliction, as that good man did, *A me, me salva, Domine,\** deliver me, O Lord, from that evil man myself. No burden to the burden of sin. Lord! says the believing soul; deliver me from my inward burden, and lay upon me what outward burden thou pleasest.—*Thomas Brooks.*

*Verses 34—37.*—There are a sort of men that lie in the enmity of their natures, and in an unreconciled state, living in the visible church, who are not only much restrained, and bite their enmity in, but who, by means of an inferior work of the word and Spirit of God upon their hearts, are brought to seek unto God for friendship, yea, and do much for him in outward actions, and side and take part with his friends; and yet their hearts being unchanged, the cursed enmity of their nature remaining unkilld and not taken away, they lie still in the gall of bitterness. For instance, look to these in Psalm lxxviii. 34—37. It is said that they 'sought the Lord early as their Redeemer,' whilst he was slaying of them; yet they did but "*flatter him with their mouths,*" etc. A flatterer, you know, differs from a friend, in that he pretendeth much kindness, yet wants inward good-will, doing it for his own ends. And so do many seek God, that yet he accounts as enemies; for they seek him whilst they see themselves in his lurch.

Now, it is hard to discover these, because they pretend much friendship, and externally (it may be) do as many outward kindnesses as the true friends; as flatters will abound in outward kindnesses as much as true friends, nay, often exceed them, because they may not be discovered. Now, if none of the former signs reach to them, nor touch them, then there is no better way left than to search unto the grounds of all they do, and to examine whether it proceeds from true, inward, pure, and constant good-will, yea or no, or self-respects? As now, when we see an ape do many things that a man doth, how do we therefore distinguish those actions in the one and in the other? Why, by the inward principles from whence they spring, by saying that they proceed from reason in the one, but not so in the other. If, therefore, it can be evinced, that all that any man seems to do for God, comes not from good-will to him, it is enough to convince them to be persons unreconciled; for whereas all outward kindnesses and expressions of friendship proceed not from friend-like dispositions and pure good-will, but altogether from self-respects, it is

\* Augustine.

but feigned flattery, even among men ; and when discovered once, it breeds double hatred. And there is much more reason it should do so with God, because he being a God that knows the heart, to flatter him is the greater mockery ; for that is it which chiefly provoketh men to hate such as dissemble friendship, because there is mockery joined with it. Now, that God accounteth every one that doth not turn to him out of pure good-will a flatterer is plain by these words in verses 36, 37 : "*Notwithstanding, they did but flatter him, and dealt falsely in his covenant.*" If men's hearts be not inwardly for God, and with him, as a friend would be to a friend, in their actions he esteems them against him. "Thy heart," says Peter to Simon Magus, "is not right before the Lord," Acts viii. 22, and therefore he tells him he was "still in the gall of bitterness."—*Thomas Goodwin.*

*Verse 35.*—"Redeemer." That is, from Egyptian bondage ; for the bulk of the people did not understand the spiritual redemption which was typified by that transaction.—*Thomas Scott.*

*Verse 35.*—Between this and the following verse the Masorah puts this note, "*half of the book,*" i.e., half of the Book of Psalms ends here.—*John Gill.*

The numbering of the verses must differ from ours, for on counting the verses as in our version, we find verse 57 to be the centre verse of the book.—*C. H. S.*

*Verse 36.*—"They did flatter him," etc. But could they flatter God ? Man is flattered when that is ascribed to him which he hath not, or when he is applauded for what he hath, beyond the worth of it. God cannot be flattered thus : he is as much beyond flatterings as he is beyond sufferings. The Jews, then, are said to flatter God, not because they applauded him by fair speeches more than was his due, but because by fair speeches they hoped to prevent what themselves did deserve ; or they flattered God with their own promises, not with his praises. They sinned against him, and he slew them ; and when the sword found them they sought God, they crept to him and fawned upon him, they came as with ropes about their necks, confessing they were worthy to die, yet humbly begging for life : and if God would but humbly sheathe his sword and spare them, O what manner of men they would be in all holy conversation and godliness. Thus "they flattered God with their mouth, while their hearts were not right : " they made great shews of repentance and turning to God, but they meant no such thing ; this was their flattery. Neither can the Lord be flattered any other way. And as he cannot be flattered by over-praising him, so his person cannot be unduly honoured by over-respecting him.—*Joseph Caryl.*

*Verse 36.*—God may be the object, self is the end, and a heavenly object is made subservient to a carnal design. Hypocrisy passes a compliment on God, and is called "flattery" : "*They did flatter him with their mouth,*" etc. They gave him a parcel of good words for their own preservation. . . . An hypocrite may well be termed a religious atheist, an atheist masked with religion.—*Stephen Charnock.*

*Verse 36.*—"They lied unto him with their tongues." The heart is the metal of the bell, the tongue is but the clapper ; when the metal of the bell is right and good (as silver) such will the sound be ; if the metal of the bell be cracked, or lead, the sound will soon discover it to a judicious ear. God can see the diseases and spots of the heart upon the tongue. As Jacob said to his mother, "If I dissemble, my father will find me out, and I shall meet with a curse instead of a blessing."—*George Swinnoek.*

*Verses 36—38.*—There is no disputing the fact which gives accuracy to the text, that God was moved by a repentance which had not in it even the elements of godly sorrow for sin ; which could not even, by a casual observer, much less by him who searches the heart, have been mistaken for that repentance which supposes an inward and radical change, and, nevertheless, even such a repentance as this sufficed to procure a recompense at the hands of God. Though the sackcloth was on the body and not on the soul ; though it was the punishment of the sin and not the sin itself which led to this outward humiliation, God did not turn away from the forced supplication, but vouchsafed the deliverance which was sought at his hands. Yes, God, who never expresses greater abhorrence of any character than of that of the hypocrite ; God, who rejects nothing more indignantly than outward homage when it is not the index of inward prostration—God may be said to have removed the humiliation of the people as though he could not read their hearts, or as though,

having read them, and noted their unsubdued rebellion, he still thought the apparent contrition deserving of some recompense. . . .

If God would not leave the show and semblance of contrition without a recompense, will he be unmindful of real penitence? If "*many a time turned he his anger away*" from those who "*did but flatter him with their mouths, and lied unto him with their tongues,*" has he nothing in store for those who are humble in spirit, and who come to him with the sacrifice of a broken heart? Oh! the turning away of temporal wrath because idols were outwardly abandoned, this is a mighty pledge that eternal wrath will be averted if we are inwardly stricken, and flee for refuge to the Saviour. God must have eternal good in store for his friends, if even his enemies are recompensed with temporal good. Yes, as I mark the Philistines and the Ammonites oppressing the idolatrous Israelites, and then see the oppressors driven back in return even for heartless service, oh! I learn that true penitence for sin and true faith in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ will cause all enemies to be scattered; I return from the contemplation of the backsliding people, emancipated notwithstanding the known hollowness of their vows, I return assured that a kingdom which neither Philistine nor Ammonite can invade, shall be the portion of all who seek deliverance through Christ.—*Henry Melvill.*

*Verse 37.*—"Their heart was not right with him." God pleases them when he replenishes them with food, not their heart with his graces; therefore they repay him with the mouth, and not with the heart. They are altogether mouth and tongue: but God is all heart and breast. They give words; God gives milk and perfect love. Love does not reach the inner nature of many men, it sticks in the entrance.—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

*Verse 37.*—"Their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast," etc. This is the ever-repeated complaint, see verses 8, 22. There is no permanence, no stability in the reformation which has been produced. Compare Hosea vi. 4.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

*Verse 38.*—According to *B. Kiddushin 30a*, this verse is the middle one of the 5896 פסוקים, στίχοι, of the Psalter. According to *B. Maccoth 22b*, Ps. lxxviii. 38, and previously Deut. xxviii. 58, 59; xxix. 9, were recited when the forty strokes of the lash save one, which, according to 2 Cor. xi. 24, Paul received five times, were being counted out to the culprit.—*Franz Delitzsch.*

*Verse 38.*—"He, being full of compassion," etc. When his hand was up, and he giving the blow, he called it back again, as one that could not find it in his heart to do it; and when he did it, "*he did not stir up all his wrath;*" he let fall some drops of it, but would not shed the whole shower of it; and he giveth the reason of both, for "*they are but flesh;*" and, indeed, his primary scope is to show mercy; and that he afflicts is but upon occasion; and therefore he is provoked, and provoked much before he doth it. As it is natural to the bee to give honey, but it stings; but it stings but by occasion when it is provoked; and this we see to be true in God by experience, who suffers men, and suffers them long; they continue in their sins, and yet he continues in his mercies, and withholds his judgments.—*John Preston (1587—1628)*, in "*The Golden Sceptre held forth to the Humble.*"

*Verse 38.*—"Forgave" is a very inadequate translation of the Hebrew word, which necessarily suggests the idea of expiation as the ground of pardon.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

*Verse 38.*—"Many a time turned he his anger away." God is provoked every day, yet is he slow to anger. Yea, sometimes when he has determined to bring evil upon a people, and has put himself into a posture of judgment, drawn out the sword, and smitten them; though they cease not to provoke him, he ceaseth to punish them; as a tender father in correcting a rebellious and graceless child, holds his hand sometimes, before the child begs for mercy, and of mere grace forbears: so God did with Israel. Notwithstanding their dissembling with their flattering tongues, and covenant-breaking hearts, "*He forgave their iniquity, and destroyed them not: yea, many a time turned he his anger away, and did not stir up all his wrath.*" The words are, "*He multiplied to turn away his anger:*" as they multiplied to provoke it, he multiplied to turn it away; and so at length overnumbered their sins with his mercies, that they were not destroyed.—*John Strickland*, in "*A Sermon preached before the House of Commons, entitled 'Mercy rejoicing against Judgment.'*" 1645.

*Verse 38.*—"He did not stir up all his wrath." His patience is manifest in



moderating his judgments when he sends them. Doth he empty his quiver of his arrows, or exhaust his magazine of thunder? No; he could roll one thunderbolt successively upon all mankind; it is as easy with him to create a perpetual motion of lightning and thunder, as of the sun and stars, and make the world as terrible by the one as it is delightful by the other. He opens not all his store; he sends out a light party to skirmish with men, and puts not in array his whole army. "*He stirs not up all his wrath;*" he doth but pinch, where he might have torn asunder; when he takes away much, he leaves enough to support us. If he had stirred up all his anger, he had taken away all, and our lives to boot. He rakes up but a few sparks, takes but one firebrand to fling upon men, when he might discharge the whole furnace upon them; he sends but a few drops out of the cloud, which he might make to break in the gross, and fall down upon our heads to overwhelm us; he abates much of what he might do.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 39.—"*A wind that passeth away.*"

The secret wheels of hurrying time do give  
So short a warning, and so fast they drive,  
That I am dead before I seem to live.

And what's a life? a weary pilgrimage,  
Whose glory in one day doth fill thy stage  
With childhood, manhood, and decrepid age.

And what's a life? the flourishing array  
Of the proud summer-meadow, which to-day  
Wears her green plush, and is to-morrow hay.

And what's a life? a blast sustained with clothing,  
Maintained with food, retained with vile self-loathing,  
Then weary of itself, again to nothing.

—*Francis Quarles.*

Verse 40.—"*How oft did they provoke,*" etc. They provoked God at least ten times (Num. xiv. 22) during the first two years of their journey through the wilderness: (1) at the Red Sea (Exod. xiv. 11, 12): (2) at the waters of Marah (Exod. xv. 24): (3) in the wilderness of sin (Exod. xvi. 2): (4) when they kept the manna until the following day (Exod. xvi. 10): (5) when the manna was collected on the Sabbath (Exod. xvi. 27): (6) in Rephidim, where there was no water (Num. xx. 2, 13): (7) at Horeb, when a molten calf was made (Exod. xxii. 1, etc.): (8) at Taberah (Num. xi. 1, 2, 3): (9) when they lusted for flesh (Num. xi. 4): (10) when they murmured at the news brought by the men, who had been sent to search the land (Num. xiv. 1, etc.).—*Daniel Cresswell.*

Verse 40.—"*How oft.*" God kept an account how oft they provoked him, though they did not, Numb. xiv. 22: "They have tempted me these ten times."—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 41.—"*They turned back.*" As for that expression, *שבו*, which we translate, "*and they turned back*"; that is, say some, to go back again into *Egypt*, or as others, returned back to their *old wont* of rebellion; I say, it hath no such meaning here; it is a Hebraism, and should be rendered, "*they returned and tempted,*" that is, *sepiel tentaverunt, they oftentimes tempted him, or they tempted him again.*—*Thomas Froyssel, in "Sermons concerning Grace and Temptations."* 1678.

Verse 41.—"*Tempted God.*" This only expresses the fact that men act towards him as if he could be tempted, or in a way fitted to put him to the proof, to provoke his righteous displeasure, and make him proceed against them, as it were just for him actually to do because of their offences. It is not in the least degree opposed to the statement of James—"God cannot be tempted with evil," which is to the effect that he cannot be influenced by evil, so as to be drawn into it, turned toward it—so as to feel its power or experience its contamination. He is infinitely far removed from it, raised above it, under all its forms. He is so because of the absolute perfection of his being and blessedness.—*John Adam, in "Exposition of the Epistle of James."* 1867.

Verse 41.—"*Limited the Holy One of Israel.*" They limited either, 1. God's power, as above, verses 19, 20. Or, 2. God's will, directing and prescribing to him what to do, and when, and in what manner; and murmuring at him if he did not always grant their particular and various desires.—*Matthew Pool.*

Verse 41.—“*They limited the Holy One of Israel.*” Here, then, is an awful charge, and mysterious it seems to us as awful. How dreadful that man, the worm, should arrogate to himself *that*, to say to him that made him, “*Thus far shall thou go and no farther.*” Amazing, I say, the charge! to contract the dimensions and operations of the Deity. Amazing insolence, to draw a boundary line, beyond which the Creator himself must not pass, to define and prescribe to the Lawgiver of nature himself the pathway of his providence! The turpitude is immense. But we know, my friends, that the crime is not uncommon; and one of the natural results of sin seems to be this,—that the sinful spirit, whether of man or of the lost archangel, unable to shake the firm foundations of the Eternal Throne, *amuses* its malignity, and seeks a temporary cessation from its withering cares, in putting up barriers on the outskirts and frontiers of the Almighty empire, vainly hoping to annoy the Possessor of the throne they cannot disturb.

Affecting words! Do they affect you as they affect me? “*They turned back and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel.*” Somehow, it seems no combination of words could have been so affecting. *They limited God.* They limited *the Almighty.* They limited *the Infinite.* No! These words have an awful and affecting surge of meaning in them; for while they describe *Him*, they also convey his relation to us. *They limited*;—*The One*;—the solitary, awful and self-contained Being whose essence is eternity and power; whose self-existence is declared by the amazing marvels of nature; whose life was essential being. They limited *Him*—*The One* in whose being all being was swallowed up and absorbed—*The One* before whose glance mountains and hills fled away and were not found—*The One* from everlasting, God; *high over all, blessed for evermore.* *The One* to whom all the nations were as the drop of a bucket, and who took up the isles as a very little thing,—*Him* “*they limited.*”

They had known his character as “*The Holy One*”; it was all they knew of his character; but it was surrounded with an awfulness more dread than even the solitary power and self-repose of Deity. In awful words and meanings they had heard his character proclaimed—*The Holy One.* Him they limited. *Him*, whose throne was curtailed with the dreadful wings of sinless archangels, crying through the darkness of that ineffable brightness, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty! and whose holiness was asserted even by the disorders of the rolling world.

*They limited him.*—More personal, and therefore more wonderful, became the enormity. The generations of their race had testified for Him, the Holy One of Israel; they had beheld the marvels of his holiness and power in Egypt, in the Red Sea; they had heard of the God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob; they had heard of him who had spoken to their Captain in the bush burning with fire; they beheld his pillar of fire and cloud; they knew themselves divinely selected and chosen; and him who chose *they limited!* That which should have ensured their faith became only the fountain of their criminality.—*E. Paxton Hood.*

Verse 41.—“*They limited the Holy One of Israel.*” God cannot bear it with patience, that we should *limit him*, either to the time, or manner, or means of help. He complains of the Jews for this presumption, *they limited the Holy One of Israel.* It is insufferable to circumscribe an infinite wisdom and power. He will work, but when he pleases, and how he pleases, and by what instruments he pleases, and if he please, without instruments, and if he please by weak and improbable, by despised and exploded instruments.—*Joseph Caryl, in a “Sermon before the House of Commons,” entitled, “The Workes of Ephesus.”*

Verse 41.—(*last clause.*) This was Israel’s sin, and has it not often been ours? Our God is the “*Holy One,*” and will do what is most for His glory; he is the Holy One “*of Israel,*” and will therefore consult his people’s welfare. We must not limit his *wisdom*, for it is infinite; we must not limit his *power*, for it is omnipotent; we must not limit his *mercy*, for it is as high as heaven and deep as hell; we must not limit him to *time*, for he will display his sovereignty: he will not be tied to walk by our rules, or be bound to keep our time; but he will perform his word, honour our faith, and reward them that diligently seek him.—*James Smith.*

Verse 41.—“*Limited.*” In the only other place where the Hebrew word occurs (Ezra ix. 4), it means to set a mark upon a person, which some apply here, in the figurative sense of stigmatising or insulting.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verse 41.—“*Limited the Holy One of Israel,*” or *signed him*; signed him with a sign, so the Targum; they tempted him by asking a sign of him, as Jarchi interprets it; insisting that a miracle be wrought, by which it might be known whether the

Lord was among them or not, Exod. xvii. 7 ; with which compare Matt. xv. 1 : or they set bounds, so Kimchi, to his power and goodness, saying, this he could do, and the other he could not ; see verses 19, 20 ; and so men limit the Lord when they fix on a blessing they would have, even that, and not another ; and the measure of it, to what degree it should be bestowed on them, as well as the set time when they would have it ; whereas the blessing itself, and the degree of it, and the time of giving it, should be all left with the Lord who knows which and what of it is most convenient for us, and when is the best time to bestow it on us.—*John Gill*.

*Verse 41.*—"Limited the Holy One of Israel"—mistrust of God's power to effectuate all his grace, to do what is needed in any case for his people, and carry out his purposes for them. The moment I suppose anything cannot be for blessing, I limit God. This is a great sin—doubly, when we think of all he has done for us. The Holy Ghost ever reasons from God's revealed, infinite love to all its consequences. He reconciled ; surely he will save to the end. He did not spare his Son ; how shall he not give all things ?—*J. N. Darby*.

*Verse 42.*—"They remembered not his hand," etc. God hates forgetfulness of his blessings. First, because he has commanded that we should not forget them, Deut. iv. 9 ; and viii. 14. Secondly, because forgetfulness is a sign of contempt. Thirdly, it is the peculiarity of singular carelessness. Fourthly, it springs from unbelief. Fifthly, it is the greatest mark of ingratitude.—*Thomas Le Blanc*.

*Verse 42.*—"They remembered not his hand," etc. The rallying point of faith in time of trial is the primary manifestation of grace. To an Israelite a remembrance of the deliverance from Egypt is the test of active faith. In like manner, to the tried believer now it is the Cross that furnishes the outlet of deliverance from the misty darkness with which Satan sometimes is permitted to envelope our conscience, when the Lord has not been kept watchfully before our face. Because Israel forgot that first deliverance, they went on forwardly in the way of evil. Because a Christian sometimes stops short of the Cross in his spiritual conflicts, he fails to defeat the enemy and remains unfruitful and unhappy, until by some special intervention of the great Restorer, he is again brought, in spirit, to that place where God first met him, and welcomed him in Jesus in the fulness of forgiveness and of peace. No intermediate experience, how truthful soever in its character, will meet his case. It is at the cross alone that we regain a thorough right-mindedness about ourselves as well as about God. If we would glorify him, we must "hold fast the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end," Heb. iii. 14.—*Arthur Pridham*.

*Verse 42.*—"They remembered not his hand," etc. Eaten bread is soon forgotten. *Nihil citius senescit quam gratia*. Nothing so soon grows stale as a favour.—*John Trapp*.

*Verse 43.*—"Zaan," or *San*, seems to have been one of the principal capitals, or royal abodes of the Pharaohs (Isalah xix. 11, 13 ; xxx. 4) : and accordingly "the field of Zaan," or the fine alluvial plain around the city, is described as the scene of the marvellous works which God wrought in the time of Moses.—*John Kitto*.

*Verses 43—51.*—Moses wrought wonders destructive, Christ wonders preservative ; he turned water into blood, Christ water into wine ; he brought flies and frogs and locusts and caterpillars, destroying the fruits of the earth, and annoying it ; Christ increased a little of these fruits, five loaves and a few fishes, by blessing them, so that he herewith fed five thousand men : Moses smote both men and cattle with hail, and thunder and lightning, that they died, Christ made some alive that were dead, and saved from death the diseased and sick ; Moses was an instrument to bring all manner of wrath and evil angels amongst them, Christ cast out devils and did all manner of good, giving sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, speech to the dumb, limbs to the lame, and cleansing to the leper, and when the sea was tempestuous appeasing it ; Moses slew their first-born, thus causing an horrible cry in all the land of Egypt ; Christ saveth all the first-born, or by saving makes them so ; for thus they are called, Heb. xii. 23.—*John Mayer*.

*Verse 44.*—"Turned their rivers into blood," etc. This displays also the folly of creature worship. Pharaoh adores the life-sustaining power of nature, as embodied in the majestic river before him. The God of nature transforms the running water into a river of death before his eyes. It demonstrates, in the way that was most striking to the Hebrew and the Egyptian, that the God of Israel was the true and

only God of heaven and earth, and that all other objects of worship were but the creatures of God or the works of men's hands.—*James G. Murphy.*

*Verse 44.*—"Turned their river into blood," etc. They looked upon their river not only as consecrated to a deity; but, if we may believe some authors, as their chief national god; and worshipped it accordingly. . . . They must have felt the utmost astonishment and horror, when they beheld their sacred stream changed and polluted, and the divinity whom they worshipped so shamefully soiled and debased. And these appearances must have had a salutary effect upon the Israelites; as they were hence warned not to accede to this species of idolatry; but to have it ever in contempt, as well as abhorrence.

It is to be observed, that God might, if it had been the divine pleasure, have many different ways tainted and polluted the streams of Egypt. But he thought proper to change it to blood. Now the Egyptians, and especially their priests, were particularly nice and delicate in their outward habit and rites; and there was nothing which they abhorred more than blood, they seldom admitted any bloody sacrifices; and with the least stain of gore they would have thought themselves deeply polluted. Their affectation of purity was so great that they could not bear to come within contact with a foreigner, or even to handle his clothes; but to touch a dead body was an abomination, and required to be immediately expiated. . . . On these accounts the priests were continually making ablutions. There were four stated times, twice in the day, and as often in the night, at which they were all obliged to bathe themselves. Many accidents caused them to repeat it much oftener. Hence this evil brought upon them must have been severely felt, as "there was blood throughout all the land of Egypt," Exod. vii. 21.—*Jacob Bryant (1715—1804), in "Observations upon the Plagues inflicted upon the Egyptians."*

*Verse 44.*—"And their floods, that they could not drink." A third calamity accompanying this plague was the impossibility of drinking the water of the Nile, a vexation the keener felt by them, because the water of the Nile, after having been purified from the slime by a kind of almond-dough is, on the one hand, most agreeable, tasteful and healthy, so that it appears to strangers almost as an artificially prepared drink—whence the Egyptian proverb originated: "the water of the Nile is as sweet as honey and sugar," and the adage, "that if Mohammed had drank of it, he would have besought God to be immortal, that he might always enjoy it; and it is, on the other hand, the only drinkable water which the inhabitants can possibly use; for, says Maillet (l. p. 20): "The well and cistern-water in Egypt is detestable and unwholesome; fountains are so rare, that they are a kind of prodigy in that country; and, as to rain-water, that is out of the question, as scarcely any rain falls in Egypt."—*M. M. Kalisch, in "A Historical and Critical Commentary on the Old Testament."* 1867.

*Verse 45.*—"Flies." [Exodus viii. 13, 14. זבובים or זבוב]. It is a matter of difficulty precisely to determine the species or kind of animals denoted by that expression; but so much is certain: 1. That they must be a very small kind of insects, as they are represented to arise from the grains of dust; 2. That they are noxious both to man and beasts (ver. 13.) and in a still higher degree than the frogs. The singular, זב, is used in Isaiah li. 6, where it represents something very frail, weak, and perishable. The etymology leads to the Greek root, *κνῶω*, to gnaw or pinch—and this coincides with the English noun *gnats*, with which, indeed, all the qualities just mentioned perfectly agree. And the Septuagint, which is naturally of great authority in all matters concerning the natural phenomena of Egypt, its home, translates also *σκνίφες* (musquito gnats); which Philo, likewise an Egyptian, describes thus: "It is an insect although of very small size, yet of a most troublesome nature; for it hurts not only the surface, causing intolerable and protracted itching, but penetrates also into the interior through the ears and noses. It flies even into the eyes of those who do not guard themselves, and produces pain." All which qualities are perfectly applicable to gnats.—*M. M. Kalisch.*

*Verse 45.*—"He sent divers sorts of flies." "I will send swarms of flies upon thee," etc. (Exod. viii. 21.) Heb. זבוב, *arob*, a mixture, or mixed swarm, i.e. probably of flies, wasps, hornets, and other vexatious and stinging insects. It will be observed that "flies" in our version, being printed in italics, is not in the original. . . . the Septuagint renders זבוב, *arob*, by *κνῶβιαν*, *dog fly*, from its biting, an insect that fastens its teeth so deep in the flesh, and sticks so very close, that it oftentimes makes cattle run mad. . . .

"*He sent (אֵרַב, arob) divers sorts of flies among them which devoured them.*" The *arob* is described as *devouring* the Egyptians, which is an act which seems inapplicable to a fly. Upon the whole we strongly incline to the opinion which has found some able supporters of late years, that the Egyptian beetle (*blatta Egyptiaca*) is denoted in this place. The beetle, which is almost everywhere a nuisance, is particularly abundant and offensive in Egypt, and all the circumstances which the Scriptures in different places intimates concerning the *arob*, applies with much accuracy to this species. It devours everything that comes in its way, even clothes, books, and plants, and does not hesitate to inflict severe bites on men. If also we conceive that one object of these plagues was to chasten the Egyptians through their own idols, there is no creature of its class which could be more fitly employed than this insect. What precise place it filled in the religious system of that remarkable people has never, we believe, been exactly determined; but that it occupied a conspicuous place among their sacred creatures seems to be evinced by the fact, that there is scarcely any figure which occurs more frequently in Egyptian sculpture and painting.—George Bush.

Verse 45.—"*Flies, which devoured them.*" [See Exodus viii. 24.] "*The land was corrupted by reason of the swarm of flies.*" Bochart understands by *land*, the inhabitants, whose blood these flies sucked, and left such a poison in it, that their bodies swelled, and many of them died. Le Clerc understands it of the flesh and other eatables, which those vermin having preyed upon, and fly-blown, bred maggots, stench and putrefaction throughout the land.—Jameson's *Critical and Practical Exposition of the Pentateuch*. 1748.

Verse 45.—"*And frogs, which destroyed them.*" Galerius observes, that the Egyptians were punished in this plague upon all the five senses. The sight was punished, that was offended with the multitude, with the greatness, with the hideous form and colour of these frogs. Their hearing was offended with the croaking of them; for it was but harsh music to dainty ears. Their smell was offended with the stench of them. Their taste was offended that they came into their troughs, the places of their dough, and so hindered them of the food that was provided for their nourishment. . . . "The frogs shall come up both on thee, and upon thy people, and upon all thy servants," (Exod. viii. 4.) So that thou shalt not rid thyself of this annoyance. What! in their meat, and drink; and upon their bodies! Then observe with me, beloved, God can lay judgments upon people, that shall not be more painful, and troublesome, than odious, loathsome and noisome.—*Josias Shute*, in "*Judgment and Mercy: or the Plague of Frogs* { *inflicted removed.*—1645."

Verse 45.—"*Frogs.*" The Egyptians suffered most keenly from the infliction. They were a singularly fastidious people, and abhorred the contact of anything that they held to be unclean. We may well realise, therefore, the effect of a visitation of frogs, which rendered their houses unclean by entering them, and themselves unclean by leaping upon them; which deprived them of rest by getting on their beds, and of food by crawling into their ovens and upon the dough in the kneading-troughs. And, as if to make the visitation still worse, when the plague was removed, the frogs died in the places into which they had intruded, so that the Egyptians were obliged to clear their houses of the dead carcasses, and to pile them up in heaps, to be dried by the sun, or eaten by birds and other scavengers of the East. As to the species of frog which thus invaded the houses of the Egyptians, there is no doubt whatever. It can be but the *green*, or *edible frog* (*Rana esculenta*), which is so well known for the delicacy of its flesh. This is believed to be the only aquatic frog of Egypt, and therefore must be the species which came out of the river into the houses. Both in Egypt and Palestine it exists in very great numbers, swarming in every marshy place, and inhabiting the pools in such numbers that the water can scarcely be seen for the frogs. Thus the multitudes of the frogs which invaded the Egyptians was no matter of wonder, the only miraculous element being that the reptiles were simultaneously directed to the houses, and their simultaneous death when the plague was taken away.—*J. G. Wood*.

Verse 45.—"*Frogs.*" The rod is lifted up again. Behold, that Nilus, which they had before adored, was never so beneficial as it is now troublesome; yielding them not only a dead, but a living annoyance: it never did so store them with fish as it now plagues them with frogs. Whatsoever any man makes his god, besides the true one, shall be one day his tormentor. Those loathsome creatures leave their own element to punish them which rebelliously detained Israel from their own.

No bed, no table, can be free from them : their dainty ladies cannot keep them out of their bosoms ; neither can the Egyptians sooner open their mouths than they are ready to creep into their throats, as if they would tell them, that they came on purpose to revenge the wrongs of their Maker.—*Joseph Hall.*

Verse 46.—“*Caterpillar.*” כְּשֵׁרִים, *chasil*, is rendered βροῦχος by the LXX, in 2 Chron. vi. 28, and by Aquila here, and also by the Vulgate in Chron. and in Isai. xxxiii. 4, and it is rendered by Jerome here, *bruchus*, “the chaffer,” which everyone knows to be a great devourer of the leaves of trees. The Syriac in Joel i. 4, ii. 25, renders it תַּרְזוּרָה *tzartzoora*, which Michaelis, from the Arabic تارزار *tsartzar*, a cricket, interprets the *mole-cricket*, which, in its grub state, is also very destructive to corn, grass, and other vegetables, by cankering the roots on which it feeds.—*Editorial Note to Calvin in loc.*

Verse 46.—“*Caterpillar.*” In former times, any destructive, crawling creature occurring in cultivated places was thus called ; now, by general consent, we restrict the term to the second stage of insects of the Lepidopterous order, namely, butterflies and moths. These caterpillars, by the voracity with which they attack the leaves, the fruit, and sometimes the solid wood of plants and trees, are made conspicuous even to those who are little acquainted with natural history.—“*Biblical Treasury.*”

Verse 46.—“*Locust.*” Their quantity is incredible to all who have not themselves witnessed their astonishing numbers ; the whole earth is covered with them for the space of several leagues. The noise they make in browsing on the trees and herbage may be heard at a great distance, and resembles that of an army plundering in secret. The Tartars themselves are a less destructive enemy than these little animals. One would imagine that fire had followed their progress. Wherever their myriads spread, the verdure of the country disappears ; trees and plants stripped of their leaves and reduced to their naked boughs and stems, cause the dreary image of winter to succeed in an instant to the rich scenery of spring. When these clouds of locusts take their flight, to surmount any obstacles, or to traverse more rapidly a desert soil, the heavens may literally be said to be obscured with them.—*F. C., Comte de Volney.*

Verse 47.—“*He destroyed their vines with hail, and their sycamore trees with frost.*” The grape vine for the rich, and the sycamore fig for the poor, were cut off by the just judgment of God upon the nation.—*W. Wilson.*

Verse 47.—The sycamore (not sycamore, for this is altogether different, though, in consequence of a typographical error, often confounded with it in our Bibles) was the name of a tree, common in Egypt, Amos. vii. 14 ; Luke xix. 4. This tree resembled the mulberry in its leaves, and the fig in its fruit ; and on its produce the inferior ranks of people, for the most part, lived. The Psalmist refers to but one sort, still he clearly means every kind, of valuable tree.—*William Keatinge Clay.*

Verse 49.—“*By sending evil angels.*” Evils come uncalled, but not unsent. Are they not here called “*angels*” ? they are sent ; the word *angel* means a messenger. Not things only without life, but not living creatures neither, brute, nor men, nor Satan’s self can hurt unless God bid. The three days’ darkness in Egypt, how came it ? “*He sent darkness,*” saith David. Psalm cv. 28. So the hail, thunder, and lightning, the Lord sent them, saith Moses. The frogs, flies, lice, grasshoppers, and caterpillars, that infected Egypt, and the lions that slew the idolaters in Samaria (2 Kings xvii.), the text saith of them all, *Dominus inimisil*, the Lord sent them. And for men—“*Am I come*” (said Rabshakeh) “*without the Lord ?*” He bade me go. Yea, the devil, the arch-evil-angel, who seeks to devour, yet must be sent ere he can do ought. The lying spirit in the mouths of the false prophets longed to seduce Ahab ; God must first bid ; *Egredere*, go forth, and do so. The use of this is easy without my help : not to fear, doing well ; not man, fiend, any creature, can hurt you, God not sending them. But sinning, to fear everything. The weakest creature can quell the mightiest man, if God bid, go. A mouse (saith the poet) will bite a wicked man. Be it proud Herod, great Antiochus ; if God but ask the creatures, *Quem mittam*, which of you shall I send ? the worm will answer, *Ecce me*, send me ; I will devour him. And such poor, silly, despicable creatures are some of these “*evil angels*” in my text. “*He sent :*” what sent he ? “*evil angels,*” the next thing in this Scripture.

“*Evil angels ?*” *Par dispar*, a pair of words which seem not well matched. The latter may say to the former, *Quid mihi et tibi*, what have I to do with thee ? Angels

were the best and holiest of God's creatures. They all were good, very good, Moses saith; but angels *κατ' ἐξοχήν*, excellently good. Then is "evil" here an evil epithet for angels. And is never read but here, and here (some think) not well translated. But the phrase of "evil angels" hath other meaning here: *evil angels, i.e., the angels, i.e., the messengers of evil.* It is in the Hebrew, not *שְׂרָפִים*, but *שְׂרָפִי*; insomuch that some expositors think the Psalmist means the words of Moses and Aaron; that they were sent from God to be the messengers of evil, *i.e., of all the plagues that God would bring on Egypt.* That sense I censure not, but follow not. The Greek Fathers have another—that by the "evil angels" are meant the *evil spirits.* Christ calls them angels too, the Jewish angels. Augustine likes not that sense. The most current exposition is as a Jewish writer speaks: the "evil angels" are the ten several plagues.—*Richard Clerke. (—1634.)*

*Verse 49.—"By sending evil angels among them."* That the devil and his angels are so very evil, that for them everlasting fire is prepared, no believer is ignorant: but that there should be sent by means of them an infliction from the Lord God upon certain whom he judgeth to be deserving of this punishment, seemeth to be a hard thing to those who are little prone to consider how the perfect justice of God doth use well even evil things. For these indeed, as far as regardeth their substance, what other person but himself hath made? But evil he hath not made them; yet he doth use them, inasmuch as he is good, conveniently and justly; just as on the other hand unrighteous men do use his good creatures in evil manner: God therefore doth use evil angels not only to punish evil men, as in the case of all those concerning whom the Psalm doth speak, as in the case of king Ahab, whom a spirit of lying by the will of God did beguile, in order that he might fall in war; but also to prove and make manifest good men, as he did in the case of Job.—*Augustine.*

*Verse 50.—"He made a way to his anger."* Literally—"weighed a way;" implying that God, in punishing the Egyptians so severely, did nothing but what was just and equitable, when weighed in the balance of right. Prov. iv. 26.—*A. R. Fausset.*

*Verse 50.—"He made a way to his anger."* As if the Psalmist had said, If there were not "a way" for his anger, that is, for the execution of his anger, he forced his way; though he did not find a way, yet he "made" one, and fought himself through all difficulties which seemed to oppose the destruction of his enemies. We put in the margin, "he weighed a path," he made the path as exact as if he had put it into a balance; the way was fitted to the largeness of his own anger, and 'twas fitted to the dimensions of their wickedness. Thus "he made a way to his anger," both by suiting the way to his anger and by removing all impediments out of the way of his anger. If God will work to save, who shall let it? and if God will work to destroy, who or what shall let it?—*Joseph Caryl.*

*Verse 51.—"The chief of their strength in the tabernacles of Ham."* The sun of the last day of the sojourn of Israel in Egypt had set. It was the fourth day after the interview with Moses. Pharaoh, his princes, and the priests of his idols would doubtless take courage from this unwonted delay. Jehovah and his ministers are beaten at length, for now the gods of Egypt prevail against them. The triumph would be celebrated in pomps and sacrifices, in feasts and dances. Nothing is more likely than that the banquet halls of Pharaoh at Rameses were blazing with lamps, and that he and his princes were pouring forth libations of wine to their gods, and concerting schemes amid their revelry, for the perpetuation of the thralldom of Israel. . . . Pharaoh Sethos started from his couch that night yelling in fierce and bitter agony, and gnawing at the sharp arrow that was rankling in his vitals, like a wounded lion. His son, his first-born, his only son, just arrived at man's estate, just crowned king of Egypt, and associated with his father in the cares of sovereignty writhed before him in mortal throes, and died. His transports of grief were re-echoed, and with no feigned voice, by the princes, the councillors, and the priests that partook of his revelry. Each one rends his garments and clasps to his bosom the quivering corpse of his first-born son. On that fearful night "there was a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt," but if we have rightly read its history, the loudest, wildest wail of remorseful anguish would arise from Pharaoh's banquet hall!—*William Osburn, in "Israel in Egypt." 1856.*

*Verse 52.—"But made his own people to go forth like sheep."* It is not said that they went forth like sheep; but that he made them go forth like sheep. It is not

a description of the character of the people, but a commendation of the providence and goodness of God, by which, after the manner of a good shepherd, he led forth from Egypt his own people with all security, like sheep snatched from the midst of wolves.—*Musculus*.

Verse 53.—“*They feared not.*” First, they had no cause for fear, in their departure from Egypt. Though they saw the Egyptians slain, yet against them not even a dog moved its tongue. 2. They were all in sound health. 3. They were enriched with the spoils of the Egyptians. 4. They went forth a great multitude. 5. They supplied themselves with arms. Secondly, *they feared not to enter the Red Sea*, for the fear started by the approach of Pharaoh was swiftly suppressed. Thirdly, *they feared not to wander in the desert* for forty years, God going before his pillar. Fourthly, *they feared not, though enemies attacked them.*—*Thomas Le Blanc*.

Verse 54.—“*He brought them to the border of his sanctuary,*” or holiness; that is, to the holy land; so called in divers respects, but especially because of his sanctuary, the place of his residence; to which he makes all the land to be but as bounds and limits, because of the eminency of that place, the holiness whereof did, as it were, spread to all other parts of the land, as if the whole had been a sanctuary, and consecrated ground. It is therefore to the honour of the whole land, as well as of the sanctuary, that he calleth it “*the holy border,*” a “*border of his sanctuary.*”—*Westminster Assembly's Annotations*.

Verse 57.—“*They were turned aside like a deceitful bow.*” The eastern bow, which when at rest is in the form of a  $\circ$ , must be *recurved*, or turned the contrary way, in order to be what is called *bent* and *strung*. If a person who is unskilful or weak attempt to *recurve* and string one of these bows, if he take not great heed it will spring back and regain its quiescent position, and perhaps break his arm. And sometimes I have known it, when bent, to *start aside*, and regain its quiescent position, to my no small danger, and in one or two cases to my injury. This image is frequently used in the sacred writings; but no person has understood it, not being acquainted with the eastern bow  $\circ$ , which must be *recurved* or bent the contrary way  $\smile$ , in order to be proper for use. If not well made, they will fly back in discharging the arrow. It is said of the bow of Jonathan, “*it turned not back,*” 2 Samuel i. 22, אָחִי יִשָׁי בֶן-נֹחַח, *lo nasog achor*, “did not twist itself backward.” It was a good bow, one on which he could depend. Hosea, chap. vii. 16, compares the unfaithful Israelites to a “*deceitful bow*”; one that, when bent, would suddenly start aside and recover its former position. We may find the same passage in Jer. ix. 3. And this is precisely the kind of bow mentioned by *Homer*, *Odys.* xxi., which none of Penelope's suitors could bend, called *καμπύλα τόξα* and *αγκύλο τόξα*, the *crooked bow*, in the state of rest; but *τόξον παλιντόνον*, the *recurved bow* when prepared for use. And of his trial of *strength* and *skill* in the bending of the bow of Ulysses, none of the critics and commentators have been able to make anything, because they knew not the instrument in question. On the *τόξου θησις* of *Homer* I have written a dissertation elsewhere. The image is very correct; these Israelites, when brought out of their natural bent, soon recoiled, and relapsed into their former state.—*Adam Clarke*.

Verse 57.—“*Starting aside like a broken bow*” (*English Prayer Book*): but if a bow breaks, it will not start aside, for the elasticity which should make it start aside will be destroyed.—*Stephen Street*.

Verse 57.—“*They were turned aside like a deceitful bow.*” When the bow is unbent the rift it hath may be undiscerned, but go to use it by drawing the arrow to the head, and it flies in pieces; thus doth a false heart when put to the trial. As the ape in the fable, drest like a man, when nuts are thrown before her, cannot then dissemble her nature any longer, but shows herself an ape indeed; a false heart betrays itself before it is aware, when a fair occasion is presented for its lust; whereas sincerity keeps the soul pure in the face of temptation.—*William Gurnall*.

Verse 57.—The fourth thing is the *deceitful bow*, יִשָׁי בֶן-נֹחַח, a slack or warping bow *arcus doll* vel *dolusus seu fallax* (Hebrew) will be sure to deceive the archer that shoots in it; 'twill turn back into belly, as the archer's phrase is; and though he level both his eye and his arrow never so directly to the mark and think confidently with himself to hit it; yet, in the event, the arrow, through the warping of the bow, flies a quite contrary way, yea, and sometimes reflects upon the archer himself. *Non semper feriet, quodcumque minabitur arcus*, the bow smites not all it threatens, and the ill-fashioned or casting bow will turn in the shooter's hand, and send the



arrow sometimes one way and sometimes another way; yea, and sometimes it rebounds into his own sides; or if it be a rotten bow (though otherwise fair to look upon), when an arrow is drawn to the head it breaks in the hand, and deceives the archer. The same thing happeneth when the string of the bow is naughty, and breaks when the arrow is drawn. This is no less than a divine Scripture allegory. Behold, such a fallacious, warping, and rotten bow is man's deceitful heart; his purposes and promises are the arrows that he puts upon the string, the mark he aims at is repentance, to the which (in affliction especially) he looketh with an accurate and intent eye, as though he would repent indeed; but, alas! his heart deceives him, as being unsound in God's statutes, Psalm cxix. 80; and hence it is that his promises and pretences do fall at his foot, or vanish in the air as smoke. Thus a *deceiving*, as well as a *deceived* heart, turns him aside, *Isalah* xlv. 20, as it did those false Israelites: oh, then, look to the secret warpings of your own heart, and seeing you are God's bow, you must be bent by him, and stand bent for him, *Zech.* ix. 13; thereby you shall be like Jonathan's bow that "never returned empty," 2 Samuel i. 22.—*Christopher Ness*, in "*A Chrystal Mirror*." 1679.

Verses 57—59.—Not to be settled in the faith, is provoking to God. To espouse the truth, and then to fall away, brings an ill report upon the gospel, which will not go unpunished. "*They turned back, and dealt unfaithfully. When God heard this, he was wroth, and greatly abhorred Israel.*" The apostate drops as a windfall into the devil's mouth.—*Thomas Watson*.

Verse 58.—"*High places.*" Or, altars, chapels, and such like places, to celebrate divine service in, out of the only place which was by him consecrated, and was alone acceptable unto him; or peradventure also dedicated to idols; and were so called, because that they chose out the choicest hills and hillocks for those purposes.—*John Diodati*.

Verse 59.—"*When God heard this.*" The Psalmist represents the noise of the ill deeds of the people ascending to the ears of the Eternal.—*Armand de Mestral*, in "*Commentaire sur le Livre de Psaumes.*" 1856.

Verse 60.—It is a heathenish delusion and false confidence to suppose that God is bound to any place or spot, as the Trojans thought because they had the temple of Pallas in their city it could not be taken, and in the present day the manner of the Papists is to bind Christ to Rome and the chair of Peter, and then defiantly maintain "I shall never be moved" (Ps. x. 6). For, they say, the ship of Peter may sink a little, but not altogether. Then the only point that is deficient is this, that they are not the ship of Peter, but rather an East Indiaman with a cargo of Indian apes and such like foreign merchandize, pearls, purple, silk, brass, iron, silver, gold, incense, lead, that they may carry on simony and make merchandize of religion, and deceive the whole world (Rev. xviii. 11—24).—*Johann Andreas Cramer*. 1723—1788.

Verse 61.—"*And delivered his strength into captivity,*" etc. He calls the *strength of God*, not because the virtue of God was shut up therein, or was so bound to it that he could not, unless through it, be powerful and strong: but because his presence, whose symbol the ark was, had always revealed its virtue and might to Israel, in the perpetual defence and various deliverances of that people. After the same manner he calls it the beauty or glory of God, because God by his own presence declared his glory among the people, and desired that it should be conspicuous by this external symbol.—*Mollerus*.

Verse 63.—"*The fire consumed their young men.*" "*Fire*" here may be regarded as an image of destructive war, as in Num. xxi. 28. "For there is a fire gone out of Heshbon, a flame from the city of Sihon: it hath consumed Ar of Moab," etc.—*Albert Barnes*.

Verse 63 (*first clause*).—When religion is overthrown among God's people, let not the commonwealth think to stand: when God gave his glory unto the enemies' hand, "He gave his people over also unto the sword, and the fire consumed their young men."—*David Dickson*.

Verse 63.—"*Not given to marriage.*" "*Not praised:*" viz. they had not been honoured with nuptial songs according to the customs of those times, see Jer. vii. 34; xvi. 9; xxv. 10. The meaning is, they had not been honourably married, because men were grown scarce by reason of the wars, *Isal.* iv. 1; Jer. xxxi. 22. Or, they

had been married without any solemnity, like poor bond-women; or privately, as in the time of public calamities.—*John Diodati.*

*Verse 64.*—“*Their widows made no lamentation.*” This implies the extent of the destruction, and is full of meaning to one who has been in an Oriental city, during a plague or other devastating calamity. At first the cry of wailing, which always follows a death in ordinary circumstances, is loud and frequent; but such cries do not increase, but subside, with the increase of the calamity and desolation. Death becomes a familiar object in every house; and every one, absorbed in his own losses, has little sympathy to spare for others. Hence the loudest lamentations cease to be noticed, or to draw condoling friends to the house of mourning; and therefore, as well as from the stupefaction of feeling which scenes of continued horror never fail to produce, a new death is received in silence, or only with sighs and tears. In fact, all the usual observances are suspended. The dead are carried out and buried without mourning ceremonies, and without the presence of surviving friends, by men who make it an employment to take away the dead, on the backs of mules or asses, from the homes they leave desolate. We have seen this.—*Kittó's "Pictorial Bible."* 1856.

*Verse 64.*—“*Their widows made no lamentation.*” The meaning is, either 1. That being overwhelmed with sorrow they could not weep; or, 2. That being in captivity amongst the Philistines they were not suffered to lament the death of their husbands; or 3. That dying with grief, they lived not to make any lamentations for them at their funerals; or 4. That they were so taken up and oppressed with their own miseries, and especially with the miseries of the church and people of God in general, that they had not leisure to bewail their husbands; of both which last we have a clear instance in the wife of Phinehas in particular, 1 Sam. iv. 19, 20, who dying, made no mention of her husband.—*Arthur Jackson.*

*Verse 64.*—The daughter-in-law of Eli, when she was at once travelling, and in that travail dying, to make up the full sum of God's judgment upon that wicked house, as one insensible of the death of her father, of her husband, of herself, in comparison of this loss, calls her (then unseasonable) son Ichabod, and with her last breath says, “The glory is departed from Israel, the ark is taken.”—*Joseph Hall.*

*Verse 65.*—“*Then the Lord awaked.*” Know how to understand this and similar passages in Scripture, as to the Lord's sleeping and forgetting his people, Ps. xiii. 1; xlv. 33; lxxvii. 9. These are not to be understood as to an universal and absolute forgetting and sleep of providence; for God hath not his vacation time; he still holds the reins of government in his hand, all the world over. Neither do they infer an absolute cessation of providence in reference to that object-matter which the Lord to our apprehension seems to forget, and lies dormant; for there is a promoting-work of providence, which we see not, and are not so sensible of for the present, as hath been shewed. Besides, such forgetting and sleep of providence, as it is such, bespeaks the beauty of providence in the way of bringing things to pass. It is so far from inferring an *interregnum*, or letting fall the sceptre of government, as that it is a glorious demonstration that God orders matters, and that wisely, whilst he seems to forget, and be as one asleep. As the night, as night, falls under the providence of God as well as the day, for there are the ordinances of heaven for the night season, Jer. xxxi. 35: so the dark night, when as to matters the Lord seems to sleep, is part and parcel of his all-wise model of government. The seventy years' captivity was a long night of the church's distress; and yet thus it must be according to the ordinance of providence. Jer. xxix. 10.—*Thomas Crane.*

*Verse 65.*—“*Like a mighty man that shouteth by reason of wine:*” whose spirit and courage is revived and inflamed by a liberal draught of generous wine; which comparison is no more injurious to the Divine Majesty than that of a thief's coming in the night, to which Christ's second coming is compared, 1 Thess. v. 2.—*Matthew Pool.*

*Verse 66.*—“*He smote his enemies in the hinder parts.*” This has reference to the Philistines being smitten with hemorrhoids, or piles, whilst the ark was retained a captive by them, 1 Sam. v. 6, 12. . . . . The Greek version, as quoted by Suidas is, *he smote his enemies on the back parts of the seat*; signifying, he says, a disease modestly expressed.—*John Gill.*

*Verse 67.*—The moving of the ark is not the removing of it; Shiloh has lost it, but Israel has not. God will have a church in the world, and a kingdom among

men, though this or that place may have its candlestick removed; nay, the rejection of Shiloh is the election of Zion.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verses 67, 68.—“*Refused.*” “*Chose not.*” “*Chose.*” As God’s love is set out to us, as not independently pitched, but as having all the persons in his eye and having them all in view; so by this also, that he hath not pitched it upon everybody. This is distinct from the former; for an indefinite is not knowing whom he pitched it upon. Now, as he knew whom he pitched upon, so he hath pitched but upon some, not on every one. . . . If God would love, it was fit he should be free. It is a strange thing that you will not allow God that which kings and princes have the prerogative of, and you will allow it them. They will have favourites whom they will love, and will not love others; and yet men will not allow God that liberty, but he must either love all mankind, or he must be cruel and unjust. The specialness of his love greateneth it, and endeareth it to us. You shall find almost all along the Bible, that when God would express his love, he doth it with a speciality to his own elect, which he illustrates by the contrary done to others. . . . And you shall find frequently in the Scripture, when he mentioneth his choice of some persons, he holdeth up likewise on purpose his refusing of others. . . . When he speaks of an election out of the tribes, he contents not himself to say he chose Judah, but he puts in the rejection, the preterition at least, of Joseph. “*He refused the tabernacle of Joseph, and chose not the tribe of Ephraim: But chose the tribe of Judah, the mount Zion which he loved.*” . . . He speaks of the times of the judges. The rejection of the ten tribes began to show itself soon; he says, he refused the tabernacle of Ephraim, but he chose Judah. After Solomon’s time, they fell to worshipping of calves (let me tell you, it is the declining of election that undoes a nation, when election grows low, and ceases in an age), till at last the ten tribes were cast off, as they are at this day; but the tribe of Judah had election among them. . . .

Though at the first, and for a long time, both were alike his people, yet at last election began to pass a discrimination. Ephraim, or the ten tribes, had at first the advantage of Judah in spirituals; for the ark, the token of God’s presence, was committed unto their keeping at Shiloh; the seal of God’s worship and ordinances was intrusted to them, and Judah must come up thither, if they would seek the Lord. But Ephraim, for their sinning against that worship, forfeited and lost it, and should therefore have the keeping of it no longer, no, not for ever any more; but Judah had it at Bethlehem, till at last it was fixedly seated in Zion, as “the earth is established” (ver. 69); and this for no other reason than that he had loved them, and out of love had chosen them (ver. 67—69). For otherwise Judah was, as well as Ephraim, alike involved in the same guilt of sin which had forfeited it, as ver. 56—60 of the Psalm plainly show. “*Yet they tempted and provoked the most high God, and kept not his testimonies,*” etc. He speaks it of the whole in those verses, and yet takes the occasion against Ephraim to remove it for ever. Thus, the first are last, and the last first; and those whom God’s presence is with for a while, upon some eminent sin God begins to withdraw from them and by degrees, as he did by that people of the ten tribes till at last he cast them off from being a people, but dealt not so with Judah, though these made a forfeiture of their temple and worship, and nation, in the captivity of Babylon, yet God restored all again to greater glory at last. The ground was that in verse 68, “*Zion which he loved.*”—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 70.—“*He took him from the sheepfolds.*” The art of feeding cattle, and the art of ruling men are sisters, saith Basil.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 71.—“*From following the ewes great with young.*” A good and steady lamber is of great value to a grazier, but I would advise all graziers to attend to this operation themselves, as few servants will be found to pay that attention which is necessary, or which a master himself would do, and the slightest neglect is, in many cases, followed with the greatest disadvantage. I have attended to the practice of lambing for several years, therefore, trust I am not a novice in it, or incompetent to give a description of it. Many lambs may be lost without its being possible to charge the lamber with neglect or ignorance, though greater attention on his part might have saved many that otherwise perish. . . . The practice of lambing is at times very intricate, and is apt to exhaust the patience of a lamber. Sheep are obstinate, and lambing presents a scene of confusion, disorder, and trouble, which it is the lamber’s business to rectify, and for which he ought always to be prepared:

some of the ewes perhaps leave their lambs, or the lambs get intermixed, and the ewes which have lost their lambs run about bleating, while others want assistance. These are only a few of the various occurrences which call for the immediate attention of the lamher.—*Daniel Price*, in “*A System of Sheep-grazing and Management.*” 1809.

*Verse 71.*—“*From following the ewes great with young.*” It hath been reported that a learned doctor of Oxford hung up his leathern breeches in his study for a memorial to visitors of his mean original; the truth I avouch not, but history tells us of Agathocles who arose from a potter to be king of Sicily, and would be served in no other plate at his table but earthenware, to mind him of his former drudgery. ’Twere well if some would remember whose shoes they have cleaned, whose coats they have carried, and whose money they have borrowed, and deal gratefully with their creditors, as the good Lord Cromwell did by the Florentine merchant in the time of Henry the Eighth, when Wolsey\* like a butcher forgot the king his master. ’Twas otherwise with holy David, who being in kingly dignity, graciously calls to mind his following the ewes great with young, when now feeding the sheep of Israel. His golden sceptre points at his wooden hook, and he plays the old lessons of his oaten pipe upon his Algem harp, and spreads his Bethlehem tent within his marble palace on Mount Zion.—*Samuel Lee*.

*Verse 71.*—“*To feed Jacob his people.*”† Observe a good shepherd must be humble and faithful, he ought to have bread in a wallet, a dog by a string, a staff with a rod, and a tuneful horn. The bread is the word of God, the wallet is the memory of the word; the dog is zeal, wherewith the shepherd glows for the house of God, casts out the wolves with pious barking, following preaching and unweariet prayer: the string by which the dog is held is the moderation of zeal, and discretion, whereby the zeal of the shepherd is tempered by the spirit of piety and knowledge. The staff is the consolation of pious exhortation by which the too timid are sustained and refreshed, lest they fail in the time of tribulation; but the rod is the authority and power by which the turbulent are restrained. The tuneful horn, which sounds so sweetly, signifies the sweetness of eternal blessedness, which the faithful shepherd gently and often instils into the ears of his flock.—*Johannes Paulus Palanterius*. 1600.

*Verse 72.*—In spite of his transgressions, which he always bitterly repented of, and which were therefore blotted out of the Book of God, he remains to all princes and rulers of the earth as the noblest pattern. In perfect inward truth he knew and felt himself to be “*King by the grace of God.*” The crown and sceptre he bore merely in trust from the King of all kings; and to his latest breath he endeavoured with all his earnestness to be found as a genuine theocratic king, who in everything must conduct his earthly government according to the ordinances and directions of God. Therefore the Lord made all that he took in hand prosper, and nothing was clearer to the people than that the Lord was truly with the king.—*Frederick William Krummacher*, in “*David the King of Israel.*” 1867.

#### HINTS TO PREACHERS.

*Verse 1.*—The duty of attending to God’s word. Modes of neglecting the duty; ways of fulfilment; reasons for obedience; evils of inattention.

*Verse 2 (first clause).*—Preach on the “*Parable of the Prodigal Nation,*” as given in the whole Psalm.—*C. A. Davies, of Chesterfield*.

*Verses 2, 3.*—I. Truths are none the worse for being old: “*sayings of old.*” “*Old wood,*” says Lord Bacon, “*is best to burn; old books are best to read; and old friends are best to trust.*” II. Truths are none the worse for being concealed under metaphors: “*I will open,*” etc., “*in a parable;*” “*dark sayings.*” 1. They lead to more research. 2. They become eventually better known. III. Truths

\* Foxe’s Martyrology.

† This is a curious specimen of mediæval spiritualising, and is here inserted as such. It is amusing to note that a Tractarian expositor quotes the passage with evidently intense admiration.

are none the worse for being often repeated. 1. They are more tested. 2. They are better testified.—*G. R.*

*Verse 3.*—The connection between what we have “heard,” and what we have personally “known” in religion.

*Verse 4.*—A good resolution, and a blessed result.—*C. D.*

*Verse 4.*—I. What is to be made known? “The praises of the Lord;” “his strength and his wonderful works.” II. To whom are they to be made known? “To the generations to come.” III. By whom? Parents—one generation to another. IV. How made known? 1. By hiding nothing. 2. By declaring everything God has done.—*G. R.*

*Verse 5.*—Scriptural tradition, or the heirloom of the gospel.

*Verses 5, 6.*—Family religion. I. The fathers’ knowledge the children’s heritage—verses 5, 6. II. The fathers’ fall the children’s preservation—verses 7, 8.—*C. D.*

*Verses 5—8.*—I. Truth once started can never be arrested—verses 5, 6. II. Truth received binds the soul to God—verse 7. III. Truth rejected lights beacons for others—verse 8.—*C. D.*

*Verse 6.*—Care for the rising generation and for future posterity.

*Verse 7.*—Practical philosophy. I. Fix your hope wisely. II. Store the memory richly. III. So shall you guide the actions obediently.

*Verses 7, 8.*—On the deceitfulness of the heart, in disregarding providential dispensations in general.—*John Jamieson’s “Sermons on the Heart,”* I. 430.

*Verse 8.*—Stubbornness not steadfastness, or the difference between a natural vice and a gracious quality.

*Verse 8.*—The false heart (*middle clause*), with its left hand, “Stubbornness in the wrong” (*first clause*), and its right hand, “Fickleness in the right” (*last clause*).—*C. D.*

*Verse 9.*—Who were they? What had they? What did they? When did they do it?

*Verses 9, 67.*—The backsliding of prominent believers. I. The Lord’s soldiers: who they were; belonged to God’s chosen people; were distinguished by grace. Gen. xlviii. 17—20. Strong by God’s blessing. Deut. xxxiii. 17. Honourable place among their brethren. Favoured with the tabernacle at Shiloh—verse 60. II. Their equipment: armour defensive and offensive; like that of others who triumphed. III. Their behaviour in battle: to turn back was traitorous, cowardly, dangerous, disastrous, dishonourable. IV. Their punishment—verse 57. Deprived of their special honour. Rev. iii. 11—*C. D.*

*Verses 10, 11.*—The gradations of sin: neglecting, rejecting, forgetting God.—*C. D.*

*Verses 12—16.*—God revealed in his deeds. The wonder-working God—verses 12—16. The avenging God—verse 12. The interposing God—verse 13. The guiding God—verse 14. The Father-God—verses 14—16.—*C. D.*

*Verses 12—17.*—Obstinacy of unbelief. It makes head against God’s majesty—verse 17; his gracious providence—verses 14—16; his interposing care—verse 13; his avenging justice—verse 12; his distinguishing grace—verses 12—16.—*C. D.*

*Verses 12—17.*—Prodigies cannot convert the soul. Luke xvi. 31.—*C. D.*

*Verse 14.*—The adaptations of God: a beautiful theme.—*C. D.*

*Verse 14.*—I. Direction. II. Protection. III. Refreshment.—*R. P. Buddicom.*

*Verse 14.*—The Lord guides his people by being, I. Their shade in prosperity, cooling and calming. II. Their light in adversity, cheering and warming.

*Verses 15, 16.*—Divine supplies seasonable, plentiful, of the best, marvellous.

*Verse 16.*—Streams from the Rock Christ Jesus. I. Their source. II. Their variety. III. Their abundance.—*B. Davies, of Greenwich.*

*Verse 17.*—Sin in its progress feeds upon divine mercies to aid its advance, as also every other surrounding circumstance.

*Verses 17—21.*—I. They tempted God’s patience; verse 17. II. They tempted God’s wisdom; verse 18. III. They tempted God’s power; verses 19, 20. IV. They tempted God’s wrath; verse 21.—*E. G. Gange, of Bristol.*

*Verse 18.*—“*Meat for their lust.*” In what respects temporal mercies may be so sought, and so become.

*Verses 18—21.*—The progress of evil. I. They are drawn away by their lust; verse 18. II. Lust having conceived bringeth forth sin: verses 19—20. III. Sin being finished bringeth forth death: verse 21. “Their carcasses fell.”—*C. D.*

*Verse 19.*—Unbelief a slander of God.

*Verses 21, 22.*—Evil consequences of unbelief. I. The sin itself: they doubted the ultimate certainty, completeness, and reality of God's salvation from Egypt. II. The aggravation of it: the object of it was God; they who entertained it were God's people: The aids to faith were overlooked: "though." III. What it led them to; inward sin—verse 18; outward sin—verse 19, etc. IV. What it brought upon them; and verse 21. Fiery serpents, etc.—*C. D.*

*Verse 22.*—Unbelief the mother of sorrows.

*Verse 25.*—Different kinds of food. Beasts' food, Luke xv. 16. Sinners' food, Hosea iv. 8. Formalists' food, Hosea xii. 1. Saints' food, Jer. xv. 16; John vi. 53—57. Angels' food. Christ's food, John iv. 34.—*C. D.*

*Verses 29—31.*—Dangerous prayers. When lust dictates, wrath may answer. Let grace dictate, and mercy will answer.—*C. D.*

*Verses 34—37.*—The hypocrite's feet, verse 34. The hypocrite's memory, verse 35. The hypocrite's tongue, verse 36. The hypocrite's heart, verse 37. Or, the hypocrite's cloak and the hypocrite's heart.—*C. D.*

*Verse 36.*—Flattery of God. I. A common sin. II. A hateful sin. III. A dangerous sin.—*B. D.*

*Verses 38 (last clause) and 50 (first clause).*—God's anger as exercised against his people and against his foes.—*C. D.*

*Verses 39 and 35.*—God's memory of his people and their memory of God.

*Verse 42.*—The day of days. I. The enemy encountered on that day. II. The conflict endured. III. The deliverance accomplished. IV. The joy experienced.—*B. D.*

*Verse 45.*—The power of little things when commissioned to plague us.

*Verse 47 (last clause).*—Sometimes it will not shoot. Sometimes it will. And when it does it misses the mark.

*Verse 52.*—I. God has a people in the world. II. He brings them away from others. III. He brings them into fellowship with himself. IV. He brings them into fellowship with each other. V. He guides them to their rest.

*Verse 55.*—Divine supplantings. He supplants the fallen angels in heaven. One nation of earth by another (see all history). The thoughts and affections of the heart in regeneration, &c.—Isaiah lv. 13.—*C. D.*

*Verses 56, 57.*—On the deceitfulness of the heart, with respect to the performance of duty.—*J. Jamieson.* I. 326

On the deceitfulness of the heart, with respect to the omission of duty.—*J. Jamieson.* I. 353.

*Verses 59—72.*—I. A gloomy sunset, verses 59, 60. II. A baleful night, verses 60—64. III. A blessed sunrise, verses 65—72.—*C. D.*

*Verse 69.*—The builder of the church. Its sanctity. Grandeur. Comprehensiveness (like the earth, Mark xi. 17). Perpetuity.—*C. D.*

*Verses 70, 71.*—I. David's calling. Two questions present themselves. 1. How was David's shepherd-life an unconscious preparation for his calling? 2. How did the divine summons, when it came, fit him for his mighty destiny? Observe—he was sent back to his flocks. Nothing could train him more perfectly than that waiting. Two great convictions awakened in him then, that formed in him elements of strength. (1.) The belief in a divine leader (see Ps. xxiii.) (2.) The belief in a divine choice. II. Its modern lessons. 1. There is a divine plan in every life. 2. There is a divine vocation for every man. 3. There is a divine Shepherd for every man.—*E. L. Hull.*

*Verses 70—72.*—Scriptural promotions. I. Analogies between lower and higher service, verse 71. II. Humbler work, a preparation for higher, verses 71, 72. III. Promotion the act of the Divine will, verses 70, 71. IV. Our powers shall be equal to the position to which God promotes us.—*C. D.*