

PSALM LXXXIII.

TITLE.—A Song or Psalm of Asaph. *This is the last occasion upon which we shall meet with this eloquent writer. The patriotic poet sings again of wars and dangers imminent, but it is no godless song of a thoughtless nation entering upon war with a light heart. Asaph the seer is well aware of the serious dangers arising from the powerful confederate nations, but his soul in faith stays itself upon Jehovah, while as a poet-preacher he excites his countrymen to prayer by means of this sacred lyric. The Asaph who penned this song was in all probability the person referred to in 2 Chron. xx. 14, for the internal evidence referring the subject of the Psalm to the times of Jehoshaphat is overwhelming. The division in the camp of the confederate peoples in the wilderness of Tekoa not only broke up their league, but led to a mutual slaughter, which crippled the power of some of the nations for many years after. They thought to destroy Israel and destroyed each other.*

DIVISION.—An appeal to God in a general manner fills the verses from 1—4 : and then the Psalmist enters into details of the league, 5—8. This leads to an earnest entreaty for the overthrow of the enemy, 9—15, with an expression of desire that God's glory may be promoted thereby.

EXPOSITION.

KEEP not thou silence, O God : hold not thy peace, and be not still, O God.

2 For, lo, thine enemies make a tumult : and they that hate thee have lifted up the head.

3 They have taken crafty counsel against thy people, and consulted against thy hidden ones.

4 They have said, Come, and let us cut them off from *being* a nation ; that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance.

1. "*Keep not thou silence, O God.*" Man is clamorous, be not thou speechless. He rails and reviles, wilt not thou reply ? One word of thine can deliver thy people ; therefore, O Lord, break thy quiet and let thy voice be heard. "*Hold not thy peace, and be not still, O God.*" Here the appeal is to EL, the Mighty One. He is entreated to act and speak, because his nation suffers and is in great jeopardy. Now entirely the Psalmist looks to God ; he asks not for "a leader bold and brave," or for any form of human force, but casts his burden upon the Lord, being well assured that his eternal power and Godhead could meet every difficulty of the case.

2. "*For, lo, thine enemies make a tumult.*" They are by no means sparing of their words, they are like a hungry pack of dogs, all giving tongue at once. So sure are they of devouring thy people that they already shout over the feast. "*And they that hate thee have lifted up the head.*" Confident of conquest, they carry themselves proudly and exalt themselves as if their anticipated victories were already obtained. These enemies of Israel were also God's enemies, and are here described as such by way of adding intensity to the argument of the intercession. The adversaries of the church are usually a noisy and a boastful crew. Their pride is a brass which always sounds, a cymbal which is ever tinkling.

3. "*They have taken crafty counsel against thy people.*" Whatever we may do, our enemies use their wits and lay their heads together ; in united conclave they discourse upon the demands and plans of the campaign, using much treachery and serpentine cunning in arranging their schemes. Malice is cold-blooded enough to plot with deliberation ; and pride, though it be never wise, is often allied with craft. "*And consulted against thy hidden ones.*" Hidden away from all harm are the Lord's chosen ; their enemies think not so, but hope to smite them ; they might as well attempt to destroy the angels before the throne of God.

4. "*They have said, Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation.*" Easier said than done. Yet it shows how thorough-going are the foes of the church. Theirs was the policy of extermination. They laid the axe at the root of the matter. Rome has always loved this method of warfare, and hence she has gloated over the massacre of Bartholomew, and the murders of the Inquisition. "*That the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance.*" They would blot them out of history as well as out of existence. Evil is intolerant of good. If Israel would let Edom alone yet Edom cannot be quiet, but seeks like its ancestor to kill the chosen of the Lord. Men would be glad to cast the church out of the world because it rebukes them, and is thus a standing menace to their sinful peace.

5 For they have consulted together with one consent: they are confederate against thee:

6 The tabernacles of Edom, and the Ismaelites; of Moab, and the Hagarenes.

7 Gebal, and Ammon, and Amalek; the Philistines with the inhabitants of Tyre;

8 Assur also is joined with them; they have holpen the children of Lot. Selah.

5. "*For they have consulted together with one consent.*" They are hearty and unanimous in their designs. They seem to have but one heart, and that a fierce one, against the chosen people and their God. "*They are confederate against thee.*" At the Lord himself they aim through the sides of his saints. They make a covenant, and ratify it with blood, resolutely banding themselves together to war with the Mighty God.

6. "*The tabernacles of Edom.*" Nearest of kin, yet first in enmity. Their sire despised the birthright, and they despise the possessors of it. Leaving their rock-built mansions for the tents of war, the Edomites invaded the land of Israel. "*And the Ishmaelites.*" A persecuting spirit ran in their blood, they perpetuated the old grudge between the child of the bondwoman and the son of the freewoman. "*Of Moab.*" Born of incest, but yet a near kinsman, the feud of Moab against Israel was very bitter. Little could righteous Lot have dreamed that his unhallowed seed would be such unrelenting enemies of his uncle Abraham's posterity. "*And the Hagarenes*"—perhaps descendants of Hagar by a second husband. Whoever they may have been, they cast their power into the wrong scale, and with all their might sought the ruin of Israel. Children of Hagar, and all others who dwell around Mount Sinal, which is in Arabia, are of the seed which gendereth to bondage, and hence they hate the seed according to promise.

7. "*Gebal*" was probably a near neighbour of Edom, though there was a Gebal in the region of Tyre and Sidon. "*And Ammon, and Amalek.*" Two other hereditary foes of Israel, fierce and remorseless as ravening wolves. In the roll of infamy let these names remain detestably immortalised. How thick they stand! Their name is legion, for they are many. Alas, poor Israel, how art thou to stand against such a Bloody League? Nor is this all. Here comes another tribe of ancient foemen, "*the Philistines*;" who once blinded Samson, and captured the ark of the Lord; and here are old allies become new enemies; the builders of the temple conspiring to pull it down, even "*the inhabitants of Tyre.*" These last were mercenaries who cared not at whose bidding they drew sword, so long as they carved something for their own advantage. True religion has had its quarrel with merchants and craftsmen, and because it has interfered with their gains, they have conspired against it.

8. "*Assur is also joined with them.*" It was then a rising power, anxious for growth, and it thus early distinguished itself for evil. What a motley group they were; a league against Israel is always attractive, and gathers whole nations within its bonds. Herod and Pilate are friends, if Jesus is to be crucified. Romanism and Ritualism make common cause against the gospel. "*They have holpen the children of Lot.*" All these have come to the aid of Moab and Ammon, which two nations were among the fiercest in the conspiracy. There were ten to one against Israel, and yet she overcame all her enemies. Her name is not blotted out; but many, nay, most of her adversaries are now a name only, their power and their excellence are alike gone.

"*Selah.*" There was good reason for a pause when the nation was in such jeopardy : and yet it needs faith to make a pause, for unbelief is always in a hurry.

9 Do unto them as *unto* the Midianites ; as *to* Sisera, as *to* Jabin, at the brook of Kison :

10 *Which* perished at En-dor : they became *as* dung for the earth.

11 Make their nobles like Oreb, and like Zeeb : yea, all their princes as Zebah, and as Zalmunna :

12 Who said, Let us take to ourselves the houses of God in possession.

13 O my God, make them like a wheel ; as the stubble before the wind.

14 As the fire burneth a wood, and as the flame setteth the mountains on fire ;

15 So persecute them with thy tempest, and make them afraid with thy storm.

9. "*Do unto them as unto the Midianites.*" Faith delights to light upon precedents, and quote them before the Lord ; in the present instance, Asaph found a very appropriate one, for the nations in both cases were very much the same, and the plight of the Israelites very similar. Yet Midian perished, and the Psalmist trusted that Israel's present foes would meet with the like overthrow from the hand of the Lord. "*As to Sisera, as to Jabin, at the brook of Kison.*" The hosts were swept away by the suddenly swollen torrent, and utterly perished ; which was a second instance of divine vengeance upon confederated enemies of Israel. When God wills it, a brook can be as deadly as a sea. Kishon was as terrible to Jabin as was the Red Sea to Pharaoh. How easily can the Lord smite the enemies of his people. God of Gideon and of Barak, wilt thou not again avenge thine heritage of their bloodthirsty foes ?

10. "*Which perished at En-dor.*" There was the centre of the carnage, where the heaps of the slain lay thickest. "*They became as dung for the earth,*" manuring it with man ; making the earth, like Saturn, feed on its own children. War is cruel, but in this case its avengements were most just,—those who would not give Israel a place above ground are themselves denied a hiding-place under the ground ; they counted God's people to be as dung, and they became dung themselves. Asaph would have the same fate befall other enemies of Israel ; and his prayer was a prophecy, for so it happened to them.

11. "*Make their nobles like Oreb, and like Zeeb.*" Smite the great ones as well as the common ruck. Suffer not the ringleaders to escape. As Oreb fell at the rock and Zeeb at the winepress, so do thou mete out vengeance to Zion's foes wherever thou mayest overtake them. They boastfully compare themselves to ravens and wolves ; let them receive the fate which is due to such wild beasts. "*Yea, all their princes as Zebah, and as Zalmunna.*" These were captured and slain by Gideon, despite their claiming to have been anointed to the kingdom. Zebah became a sacrifice, and Zalmunna was sent to those shadowy images from which his name is derived. The Psalmist seeing these four culprits hanging in history upon a lofty gallows, earnestly asks that others of a like character may, for truth and righteousness' sake, share their fate.

12. "*Who said, Let us take to ourselves the houses of God in possession.*" Viewing the temple, and also the dwellings of the tribes, as all belonging to God, these greedy plunderers determined to push out the inhabitants, slay them, and become themselves landlords and tenants of the whole. These were large words and dark designs, but God could bring them all to nothing. It is in vain for men to say " Let us take," if God does not give. He who robs God's house will find that he has a property reeking with a curse ; it will plague him and his seed for ever. " Will a man rob God ? " Let him try it, and he will find it hot and heavy work.

13. "*O my God, make them like a wheel ;*" like a rolling thing which cannot rest, but is made to move with every breath. Let them have no quiet. May their minds eternally revolve and never come to peace. Blow them away like thistle down, "*as the stubble before the wind.*" Scatter them, chase them, drive them to destruction. Every patriot prays thus against the enemies of his country, he would be no better than a traitor if he did not.

14. "*As the fire burneth a wood.*" Long years have strewn the ground with

deep deposits of leaves ; these being dried in the sun are very apt to take fire, and when they do so the burning is terrific. The underwood and the ferns blaze, the bushes crackle, the great trees kindle and to their very tops are wrapped in fire, while the ground is all red as a furnace. In this way, O Lord, mete out destruction to thy foes, and bring all of them to an end. "*The flame setteth the mountains on fire.*" Up the hill sides the hanging woods glow like a great sacrifice, and the forests on the mountain's crown smoke towards heaven. Even thus, O Lord, do thou conspicuously and terribly overthrow the enemies of thine Israel.

15. "*So persecute them with thy tempest, and make them afraid with thy storm.*" The Lord will follow up his enemies, alarm them, and chase them till they are put to a hopeless rout. He did this, according to the prayer of the present Psalm, for his servant Jehoshaphat ; and in like manner will he come to the rescue of any or all of his chosen.

16 Fill their faces with shame ; that they may seek thy name, O LORD.

17 Let them be confounded and troubled for ever ; yea, let them be put to shame, and perish :

18 That *men* may know that thou, whose name alone is JEHOVAH, art the most high over all the earth.

16. "*Fill their faces with shame ; that they may seek thy name, O Lord.*" Shame has often weaned men from their idols, and set them upon seeking the Lord. If this was not the happy result, in the present instance, with the Lord's enemies, yet it would be so with his people who were so prone to err. They would be humbled by his mercy, and ashamed of themselves because of his grace ; and then they would with sincerity return to the earnest worship of Jehovah their God, who had delivered them.

17. Where no good result followed, and the men remained as fierce and obstinate as ever, justice was invoked to carry out the capital sentence. "*Let them be confounded and troubled for ever ; yea, let them be put to shame, and perish.*" What else could be done with them ? It was better that they perished than that Israel should be rooted up. What a terrible doom it will be to the enemies of God to be "confounded and troubled for ever,"—to see all their schemes and hopes defeated, and their bodies and souls full of anguish without end : from such a shameful perishing may our souls be delivered.

18. "*That men may know that thou, whose name alone is JEHOVAH, art the most high over all the earth.*" Hearing of the Lord's marvellous deeds in defeating such a numerous confederacy, the very heathen would be compelled to acknowledge the greatness of Jehovah. We read in 2 Chron. xx. 30, that the fear of God was on all the neighbouring kingdoms when they heard that Jehovah fought against the enemies of Israel. Jehovah is essentially the Most High. He who is self-existent is infinitely above all creatures, all the earth is but his footstool. The godless race of man disregards this, and yet at times the wonderful works of the Lord compel the most unwilling to adore his majesty.

Thus has this soul-stirring lyric risen from the words of complaint to those of adoration ; let us in our worship always seek to do the same. National trouble called out the nation's poet laureate, and well did he discourse at once of her sorrows, and prayers, and hopes. Sacred literature thus owes much to sorrow and distress. How enriching is the hand of adversity !

The following attempt to versify the Psalm, and tune it to gospel purposes, is submitted with great diffidence.

O God, be thou no longer still,
Thy foes are leagued against thy law ;
Make bare thine arm on Zion's hill,
Great Captain of our Holy War.

As Amalek and Ishmael
Had war for ever with thy seed,
So all the hosts of Rome and hell
Against thy Son their armies lead.

Though they're agreed in nought beside,
Against thy truth they all unite ;
They rave against the Crucified,
And hate the gospel's growing might.

By Kishon's brook all Jabin's band
 At thy rebuke were swept away ;
 O Lord, display thy mighty hand,
 A single stroke shall win the day.

Come, rushing wind, the stubble chase !
 Come, sacred fire, the forests burn !
 Come, Lord, with all thy conquering grace,
 Rebellious hearts to Jesus turn !

That men may know at once that thou,
 Jehovah, lovest truth right well ;
 And that thy church shall never bow
 Before the boastful gates of hell.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS.

Title.—"A Song or Psalm." When the two words (*Shir, Mizmor*), occur together, the meaning seems to be, a lyric poem appointed to be sung.—*John Jebb.*

Title.—This Psalm, according to the title, was composed by Asaph. In accordance with this, we read, in 1 Chron. xx. 14, that the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jehasiel, of the sons of Asaph, in the midst of the assembly. This Jehasiel is probably the author of the Psalm. Our Psalm is a true picture of the state of feeling which prevailed throughout the people during the danger under Jehoshaphat. According to the history of Chronicles, they praised God at that time, in the midst of their danger, with loud voice, ver. 19 ; and here in the title, which is an appendage to that of Ps. xlviii., the Psalm is called a *song of praise* ; and it is such in reality, although it bears the form of a *prayer*,—a song of triumph sung before the victory,—no contest, no doubt, the distress is simply committed to God.

The mention of the *Amalekites* among the enemies of Israel, in ver. 7, renders it impossible to come down to times later than that of Jehoshaphat. The last remains of the Amalekites were, according to 1 Chron. iv. 43, rooted out by the Simeonites, under Hezekiah. From that time they disappear altogether from history. Ewald's assertion that Amalek stands here "only as a name of infamy applied to parties well-known at the time," is to be considered as a miserable shift. The Psalm must have been composed previous to the extension of the empire of the Assyrians over Western Asia. For the Assyrians named last, in the eighth verse, appear here in the very extraordinary character of an ally of the sons of Lot.—*E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Verse 1.—"Keep not thou silence, O God." In Scripture there are three reasons why the Lord keeps silence when his people are in danger, and sits still when there is most need to give help and assistance. One is, the Lord doth it to try their faith, as we see clearly, Matthew viii. 24, where it is said that our Lord Christ was asleep : "There arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves : but he was asleep. And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us : we perish." We read more fully in Mark iv. and Luke viii., he left them, when the ship was covered with waves, and they were rowing for their lives, their Lord was asleep the while, and he said to them, "Why are ye so fearful ? how is it that you have no faith ? And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm." Truly, the Lord will not suffer his people to be overwhelmed, that is certain, but he will suffer them to come very near, that the waves cover them, and fear and horror shall cover their souls, and all to try their faith. . . . 2. I find another reason in Isaiah lix., and that is, the Lord doth keep silence in the midst of the troubles of his people, to try men's uprightness, and discover who will stick to God, and his cause, and his people, out of uprightness of heart. For if God should always appear for his cause, God and his cause should have many favourites and friends ; but sometimes God leaves his cause, and leaves his people, and leaves his gospel, and

his ordinances to the wide world, to see who will plead for it and stick to it. . . . 3. There is a third reason : God, as it were, *keeps silence* in the midst of the greatest troubles, that he may, as it were, *gather the wicked into one fagot, into one bundle, that they may be destroyed together*. There is a great deal of ado to "*gather the saints*" in this world ; and truly there is some ado to gather the *wicked*. So God withdraws himself from his people, yet he hath a *hook* within their hearts, he holds them up secretly by his Spirit, that they shall not leave him ; yet the world shall not see but that God hath quite *left* them, and all their ordinances and his gospel and everything ; and there the wicked *come together* and insult, whereby God may come upon them *at once*, and destroy them, as we find ten nations in the Psalm. And so in Genesis, God stirs up the nations against Abraham and his posterity, and there are ten nations that God promised to cut off before Abraham at once, the Perizzites and the Jebuzites, and the Canaanites, etc. So God *heaps them together*, and burns them like stubble. Those that burn stubble have *rakes*, and they gather it *to heaps*, and then they fire it. This is the way of *God's keeping silence* among his people, and *sitting still* in the midst of their miseries, thus God gathers their enemies in heaps as stubble, that he may burn them together.—Gualter [Walter] Cradock, in "*Divine Drops*," 1650.

Verse 1.—"Keep not thou silence," etc.—The Hebrew words have great emphasis, and express the main *causes* of silence—closing the mouth, deafness of the ears, and a tranquillity maintained to such an extent as to reject all disquietude. The first clause, let not thy *mouth* be closed, and thy tongue cleave to the roof of thy mouth immovably, properly denotes, from the inherent force of the word מִן whose root means to *fix* to and compact firmly, what is fastened with *lime* or daubed with plaster. . . . The second clause, "*be not thou deaf*," properly pertains to the ears, as Mich. vii. 16, "*Their ears shall be deaf*." The third, "*be not still*," suggests the course of the thoughts of the mind when it is brought to a state of clear tranquillity, all cares and commotions being laid aside. The word שָׁטַח is properly to *settle, to settle down*, as when the disturbed dregs of liquor settle down and seek the bottom, whence it is applied to the mind when freed from a great fermentation of cares and the sediment of anxieties and bitterness, a mind serene, clear, and refined. . . .

Let us now see what the poet had in mind when he poured out these prayers, or what he wished to indicate. He hinted, that the people were reduced to these earnest entreaties, because unless God should speedily bring help to them, it might seem that Jehovah, the God of Israel, is like the false gods, a sort of deity, either mute, or deaf, or at his ease.—Hermann Venema.

Verse 1.—Is the Lord silent ? Then be not thou silent ; but cry unto him till he breaks the silence.—Starke, in *Lange's Bibelwerk*.

Verse 1.—The reference to "*tumult*" in the following verse gives force to the earnest appeal in this. Amidst all the tumult of gathering foes, he earnestly calls on God to break his silence, and to speak to them in wrath.—W. Wilson.

Verse 2.—"For, lo." The prayer begins with the particle "*lo*," which has not only the force of *arousing* God, but also gives the idea of *something present*, with the view of pointing out the opportune moment for God to gird himself for the work.—Hermann Venema.

Verse 2.—"Thine enemies make a tumult." The whole world is but like an *army*, a *brigade* of men (as it were) under a *general* ; and God is the Lord of Hosts, that is, the Lord of *his armies* : now when there is a tumult in an army, they complain to the *officers*, to the *general* especially ; and he must come and suppress it. Therefore, saith he, Thou Lord of hosts, thou art general of the world ; lo, there is a *tumult* in the world, a *mutiny*.—Walter Cradock.

Verse 3.—"Thy hidden ones." This representation of God's people is worthy our notice. It may be taken two ways. First, As referring to their *safety*. We often hide only to preserve. This is the meaning of the word in the parable, with regard to the discovery of the treasure in the field ; "*which, when a man hath found, he hideth it*." His aim is not to conceal but to secure ; and the cause is put for the effect. Thus God's people are hidden. He hid Noah in the Ark, and the waters that drowned the world could not *find* him. When his judgments were coming over the land, "*Come, my people*," saith he, "*enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee : hide thee also for a little season, until the indignation be overpast*." Hence the promise, "*Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy*

presence from the pride of man : thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues." Hence the confidence expressed by David, "In the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion : in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me ; he shall set me upon a rock." The Saviour could say, "In the shadow of his hand hath he hid me." And, "All the saints are in his hand." They are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation. For he himself is their "refuge," their "hiding-place." They are his "hidden ones."

Secondly. As intimating their *concealment*. This is not absolute. But it holds in various respects and degrees. It is true with regard to the nature of their *spiritual life*. Our life, says the Apostle, is hid with Christ in God ; and that he refers to its invisibleness, rather than to its safety, is obvious from the words following : "When he who is our life shall *appear*, we also shall *appear* with him in glory." . . . The heart of the believer only knows his own bitterness ; and a stranger intermeddled not with his joy. The manna on which he feeds is hidden manna. And no one knoweth the new name in the white stone given him, but the receiver. . . .

They are sometimes hidden by *persecution*. For though this does not prevent their being Christians, it hinders them from appearing as such ; especially by secluding them from their social and public assemblies. . . . They are sometimes hidden by the obscurity of their stations. Not many of the wise, and mighty, and noble are called ; but when they are called, they are also *exhibited*. They are like cities set on hills, which cannot be hid. A little religion in high life goes a great way, and is much talked of, because it is so often a strange thing. But God has chosen the poor of this world ; and they are often rich in faith. Yet how is their moral wealth to be known ? How few opportunities have they for religious display or exertion ! There may be the principle of benevolence, where there is no ability to give. And the Lord seeth the heart, but men can only judge from actions. Many who are great in the sight of the Lord are living in cottages and hovels ; and are scarcely known, unless to a few neighbours equally obscure.

They are sometimes hidden by their *disposition*. They are reserved, and shrink back from notice. They are timid and self-diffident. This restrains them in religious conversation, especially as it regards their own experience. This keeps them from making a profession of religion, and joining a Christian church. Joseph of Arimathæa was a disciple of Jesus ; but secretly, for fear of the Jews. And Nicodemus, from the same cause, came to Jesus by night. They had difficulties in their situations, from which others were free. They ought to have overcome them ; and so they did at last : but it was a day of small things with them at first. Others are circumstanced and tried in a similar way ; and we must be patient towards all men.

They are sometimes hidden by their *infirmities*. We would not plead for sin ; but grace may be found along with many imperfections. The possessors have what is essential to religion in them ; but not everything that is ornamental, and lovely, and of good report.

The same will also apply to *errors*. Here, again, we are far from undervaluing divine truth. It is a good thing that the heart be established with grace. But it is impossible for us to say how much ignorance, and how many mistakes, may be found, even in the Israelites indeed, in whom there is no guile.—*William Jay*.

Verse 3.—The less the world knows thee, the better for thee ; thou mayst be satisfied with this one thing—God knows them that are his : not lost, although *hidden* is the symbol of a Christian.—*Frisch, in Lange's Bibelwerk*.

Verse 4.—"That the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance." This desperate and dreadful scheme, and wretched design of theirs, took not effect ; but, on the contrary, the several nations hereafter mentioned, who were in this conspiracy, are no more, and have not had a name in the world for many hundreds of years ; whilst the Jews are still a people and are preserved, in order to be called and saved, as all Israel will be in the latter day, Rom. xl. 25. So Diocletian thought to have rooted the Christian name out of the world ; but in vain.—*John Gill*.

Verse 5.—"For they have consulted together with one consent." Margin, as in Hebrew, *heart*. There is no division in their counsels on this subject. They have one *desire*—one *purpose*—in regard to the matter. Pilate and Herod were made friends together against Christ (Luke xxiii. 12) ; and the world, divided and hostile in other matters, has been habitually united in its opposition to Christ and to a pure and spiritual religion.—*Albert Barnes*.

Verse 5.—"They have consulted together with one consent," etc. To push on this unholy war, they lay their heads together, and their horns, and their hearts too. *Fas est ab hoste doceri.* Do the enemies of the church act with one consent to destroy it? Are the kings of the earth of one mind to give their power and honour to the beast? And shall not the church's friends be unanimous in serving her interests? If Herod and Pilate are made friends that they may join in crucifying Christ, sure Paul and Barnabas, Paul and Peter, will soon be made friends, that they may join in preaching Christ.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 5.—"They have consulted together," etc. Though there may fall out a private grudge betwixt such as are wicked, yet they will all agree and unite against the saints: if two greyhounds are snarling at a bone, yet put up a hare between them, and they will leave the bone, and follow after the hare; so, if wicked men have private differences amongst themselves, yet if the godly be near them, they will leave snarling at one another, and will pursue after the godly.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 5.—"They are confederate against thee." "They have made a covenant," בריית יריח, *berith yachrithu*, "they have cut the covenant sacrifice." They have slain an animal, divided him in twain, and passed between the pieces of the victim; and have thus bound themselves to accomplish their purpose.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 6.—"The tabernacles of Edom," etc. The prophet having entered his suit and complaint in general, he comes to particulars, and tells God who they are that had done this. God might say, Who are these that conspire against me, and against my people, and hidden ones? Lord, saith the prophet, I will tell thee who they are. . . . He names some *ten nations* that joined together against *one poor Israel*. It is a thing you should observe, that when the people of God are conspired against, God rests not in *general complaints*, but he will know *who* they are. As I told you, He is the Lord of Hosts, the great *general*. When there is a mutiny the general asks, what officer, or what corporal, or what sergeant, or who did begin the mutiny? and it is a fearful thing when the poor persecuted saint shall bring thy name as a persecutor before the God of heaven. When a poor saint shall go home and say, There is a confederacy in London, a conspiracy against the saints of God; and when a poor saint shall say, such a magistrate, such a minister, such a man in such a street, such a woman set her husband against the saints, and against thine ordinances; it is a fearful thing. Therefore I remember a blessed woman, if it be true that is reported of her in the *Book of Martyrs*, that when the wicked abused her, and reproached her, and oppressed her, she would say no more but this, "I will go home and tell my Father:" give over, or else I will bring your names before God, and tell him: there was all, and that was enough; for he would presently take it up. A man may better bear a pound of dirt on his *feet*, than a grain of dirt in his *eye*; the saints are "the apple of God's eye."—*Walter Cradock.*

Verse 6.—"Hagarenes." These people dwelt on the east of Gilead; and were nearly destroyed in the days of Saul, being totally expelled from their country, 1 Chron. v. 10, but afterwards recovered some strength and consequence.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verses 6, 7, 8.—It may be observed that these were on all sides of the land of Israel; the Edomites, Ishmaelites, and Amalekites, were on the south; the Moabites, Ammonites, and Hagarenes, were on the east; the Assyrians on the north; and the Philistines, Gebalites, and Tyrians, on the west; so that Israel was surrounded on all sides with enemies, as the Lord's people are troubled on every side, 2 Cor. iv. 8; and so the Gog and Magog army, of which some understand this, will encompass the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city, Rev. xx. 9.—*John Gill.*

Verses 6—8.—The enemies of Israel, as enumerated by the Psalmist, fall into four main divisions: 1st, those most nearly connected with the Israelites themselves by the ties of blood-relationship, the descendants of Esau and Ishmael; 2ndly, the two branches of the descendants of Lot along with their respective Arabian auxiliaries, viz., the Moabites, who had engaged the assistance of the Hagarenes, and the Ammonites, who had gathered round their standard the Giblites and Amalekites; 3rdly, the inhabitants of the coast, the Philistines and Tyrians; 4thly, the more distant Assyrians.

Of all these the bitterest in their hostility to Israel were those who were the most nearly allied to them in blood—the Edomites. Their hostility was founded upon hatred. From their conduct to the Israelites through a long course of years it would seem as though in them were lastingly perpetuated that older hatred where-

with their forefather Esau had hated Jacob because of Isaac's blessing. And though they had once and again succeeded, according to the prophecy, in breaking Israel's yoke from off their neck, yet they never could wrest away from Israel the possession of the birthright, and with it of the promises, which their ancestors had profanely despised: from Israel, not from Edom, was the Redeemer of the world to spring, and in Israel were all the families of the earth to be blessed. The Edomites may accordingly be appropriately viewed as the types of those whom the Church of Christ has ever found her bitterest foes, the sceptics who have refused to acknowledge that redemption through a personal Redeemer, on which, as on a basis, the church is founded, whose intellectual pride is offended by the humbling doctrines of Christianity, and who hate those that hold them for their possession of blessings which *they* have wilfully neglected; whose human learning has nevertheless all along been subservient on the whole to the edification of the church, in spite of the violence with which they have striven, and for a while, as it would sometimes appear, successfully, to gain the mastery over her by opposing her, and to exercise a temporary dominion. Dwelling themselves in tabernacles, they cannot bear that others, more blessed than they, should have the houses of God in possession: "owning themselves to be astray, and unable to find the way to the truth, they are yet most importunate and imperious that others should come away from the ancient paths, and try to join them, or at least, wander as they are wandering." In conjunction with the Edomites the Psalmist makes mention of the Ishmaelites. And these, as the descendants of the bondwoman, may fitly represent those Jewish opponents of Christianity, still, perhaps, locally, if not generally, formidable, who in their rejection of Christian doctrine have been swayed by the same feelings of intellectual pride as the sceptics of Christian descent; who professing to hold fast to that covenant of Mount Sinai which gendereth to bondage, persecuted, so long as they were able, those born after the Spirit. . . .

In the descendants of Lot and their Arabian auxiliaries, we have the types of a different class of foes. The historical origin of the former marks them as the appropriate representatives of the slaves of sinful lusts; who hate the church not for the humbling tone of her doctrines, but for the standard of holiness which she exacts and for which she is continually witnessing. And experience shews how such persons are wont, in their attacks upon the church, to enlist into their service those who are more wildly, but at the same time more ignorantly, unholily than themselves; how in order, if possible, to uproot those fences and safeguards of the law of holiness on which, having transgressed them, they hate to look, they appeal to the unbridled passions of the lawless multitude by whom the very existence of the fences had been utterly disregarded.

From the enemies of the Church who are animated by feelings of positive hatred we pass to those who act from calculation rather than passion, and whose proceedings are all directed with a view to their own earthly aggrandisement. The Philistines and Tyrians had engaged in the hostile confederacy with the hope of obtaining Israelitish captives, from whom they might reap a profit by selling them abroad as slaves. It does not appear that they regarded the Israelites in themselves with other feelings than those of mere selfish indifference.

Both nations had tendered their services to Israel in the days of Israel's prosperity; for the Philistines had probably furnished the Cherethites and Pelethites of David's body-guard, and the Tyrians had furnished Solomon with materials and workmen for the building of the temple: both nations were now seeking to enrich themselves at Israel's expense in the days of Israel's adversity. And these then are the fitting types of all who in their varying professions of friendliness or hostility to the Church of God are actuated by the mere mercenary desire of lucre; favouring, and even zealously favouring her interests, when they can procure a good recompense for their services; unhesitatingly combining with her bitterest enemies to vilify and despoil her, whenever the opportunity offer of increasing their worldly substance thereby.

The last class of enemies are those of whom Assyria is the type; the worldly potentates, whether ecclesiastical or temporal, papal or imperial, who are unscrupulously ready to employ all means for the ultimate accomplishment of their one object, that of extending and consolidating their dominion. . . .

Such potentates seem to represent most truly that determined and resolute selfishness, which, to eyes that are not dazzled by the grandeur of its proportions or the gorgeousness in which it is arrayed, must ever appear as one of the most

terrible embodiments of the enmity of the world to God. Pride of intellect and unbelief,—unholiness and lawlessness of life,—covetousness,—worldly ambition,—such are the characteristics of four important classes of those by whom God's church is threatened.—*Joseph Francis Thrupp.*

Verse 7.—"Gebal." 1. It is generally supposed to indicate the mountainous tract extending from the Dead Sea southward to Petra, still named *Jebel*. But some of the best writers identify it with No. 2, as mentioned in conjunction with Tyre. 2. A place spoken of in connection with Tyre, Ezek. xxvii. 9. Most probably the residence of the Giblites, and therefore to the north of Palestine, Josh. xiii. 5. The Giblites were employed by Hiram, king of Tyre, in preparing materials for Solomon's temple, 1 Kings v. 18, margin.

The Greek name of this place was Byblus. The town is called *Jebeil*, and has a population of about six hundred. It is about seventeen miles north of Beyroot. The ancient ruins are very extensive. Immense numbers of granite columns are strewn about in the village and over the surrounding fields. These columns are mostly small, varying from one foot to two feet in diameter. Some of the stones measure nearly twenty feet in length. The citadel is the most remarkable ruin. The port is nearly choked up with sand and ruins.—*George H. Whitney's "Hand-Book of Bible Geography."* 1872.

Verse 8.—"Assur also," etc. This determines the date of this Psalm to the latter times of the Jewish kingdom; for the other nations here mentioned had molested them before, but the Assyrians not till towards the end.—*William Wall*, 1645 or 1646—1727-8.

Verse 9.—"Do unto them as unto the Midianites." That is, dash their heads together, make their policies to cross one another.—*Walter Cradock.*

Verse 9.—"The brook of Kison." The river Kishon traverses the plain [of Esdraelon] and terminates in the Bay of Acre or Akka. This is the stream regarding which it is written, after Barak and Deborah had gained their victory over Sisera, "The river of Kishon swept them away, that ancient river, the river Kishon. O my soul, thou hast trodden down strength." Although it is now no insignificant stream, yet it needs heavy rains to make it really considerable in magnitude: it is very unequal in size, and seems to be only temporary in its character. At any rate, when Robinson passed its head waters in midsummer, he found the channels all dry, and they had been so for a whole year. On the other hand, in the winter the waters are often exceedingly abundant; particularly in the northern and southern chief tributaries; so that, in 1799, at the time of the French invasion, many of the vanquished Turks perished in the floods which swept down from Deburieh, and which inundated the plain. It was a scene like that described in Judges v. regarding the fate of Sisera's hosts.—*Carl Ritter (1779—1859) in "The Comparative Geography of Palestine and the Sinaitic Peninsula."* Translated by William L. Gage. 1866.

Verse 10.—"They became as dung for the earth." The land was enriched or made fertile by their flesh, their blood, and their bones.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 10.—"They became as dung for the earth." In the year 1830, it is estimated that more than a million bushels of "human and inhuman bones" were imported from the continent of Europe into the port of Hull. The neighbourhood of Leipsic, Austerlitz, Waterloo, etc., where the principal battles were fought some fifteen or twenty years before, were swept alike of the bones of the hero, and the horse which he rode. Thus collected from every quarter, they were shipped to Hull, and thence forwarded to the Yorkshire bone-grinders, who, by steam-engines and powerful machinery, reduced them to a granular state. In this condition they were sent chiefly to Doncaster, one of the largest agricultural markets of the country, and were there sold to the farmers to manure their lands. The oily substance gradually evolving as the bone calcines, makes better manure than almost any other substance—particularly human bones.—*K. Arvine.*

Verse 11.—The word *nobles* is placed in antithesis with the names *Oreb* and *Zeeb*. The word נריבים nobles, denotes properly *liberal, munificent, and beneficent* men, such as princes and potentates ought to be among men, but the names *Oreb* and *Zeeb* have the very opposite signification, for the one signifies a *raven*, the other a

wolf. When into such rapacious and truculent beasts their nobles have degenerated, as a just reward the hostile shock shall come upon them.—*Hermann Venema.*

Verse 13.—“A wheel.” What sort of vegetable is this whose stems our muleteers are cutting up and chewing with so much relish? It is a wild artichoke. We can amuse ourselves with it and its behaviour for a while, and may possibly extract something more valuable than the insipid juice of which our men are so fond. You observe that in growing it throws out numerous branches of equal size and length in all directions, forming a sort of sphere or globe a foot or more in diameter. When ripe and dry in autumn, these branches become rigid and light as a feather, the parent stem breaks off at the ground, and the wind carries these vegetable globes whithersoever it pleaseth. At the proper season thousands of them come scudding over the plain, rolling, leaping, bounding with vast racket, to the dismay both of the horse and his rider. Once, on the plain north of Hamath, my horse became quite unmanageable among them. They charged down upon us on the wings of the wind, which broke them from their moorings, and sent them careering over the desert in countless numbers. Our excellent native itinerant, A—F—, had a similar encounter with them on the eastern desert, beyond the Hauran, and his horse was so terrified that he was obliged to alight and lead him. I have long suspected that this wild artichoke is the *gulgal*, which, in Psalm lxxxiii. 13, is rendered “wheel,” and in Isaiah xvii. 13, “a rolling thing.” Evidently our translators knew not what to call it. The first passage reads thus: “O my God, make them like a wheel—*gulgal*—as the stubble before the wind,” and the second, “Rebuke them, and they shall flee far off, and shall be chased as the chaff of the mountains before the wind, and like a rolling thing—*gulgal*—before the whirlwind.” Now, from the nature of the parallelism, the *gulgal* cannot be a “wheel,” but something corresponding to chaff. It must also be something that does not fly like the chaff, but in a striking manner *rolls* before the wind. The signification of *gulgal* in Hebrew and its equivalent in other Shemitic dialects, requires this, and this rolling artichoke meets the case most emphatically, and especially when it rolls before the whirlwind. In the encounter referred to north of Hamath, my eyes were half blinded with the stubble and chaff which filled the air; but it was the extraordinary behaviour of this “rolling thing” that riveted my attention. Hundreds of these globes, all bounding like gazelles in one direction over the desert, would suddenly wheel short round at the bidding of a counter-blast, and dash away with equal speed on their new course. An Arab proverb addresses this “rolling thing” thus: “Ho! ’akkûb, where do you put up to-night?” to which it answers as it flies, “Where the wind puts up.” They also derive one of their many forms of cursing from this plant: “May you be whirled, like the ’akkûb, before the wind, until you are caught in the thorns, or plunged into the sea.” If this is not the “wheel” of David, and the “rolling thing” of Isaiah, from which they also borrowed their imprecations upon the wicked, I have seen nothing in the country to suggest the comparison.—*W. M. Thomson, in “The Land and the Book.”*

Verse 13.—“Make them like a wheel.” That is, cause them to fall into such great calamities that they can find no counsel or remedy for their misfortunes, and that they may run hither and thither like a wheel or a ball, and yet see not where they ought to stop, or whither they ought to escape. Such are the minds of wicked men in calamities, wherever they turn they find no harbour wherein to rest, no certain consolation can they discover. They are tossed with perpetual disquietude; by running hither and thither and seeking various remedies they but weary themselves the more and plunge themselves the more deeply in their woes. This must necessarily happen to those who seek to cure evil with evil. Therefore Isaiah also says, *the wicked are like the troubled sea.*—*Mollerus.*

Verse 13.—“Like a wheel.” Mortals, like cylinders, are rolled hither and thither, oppressed with innumerable ills. *Aurea Carmina.—Pythagoras (?)*

Verse 13.—There is no greater evidence against error, than that it is not constant to itself, no greater argument against these pretended great spirits, than that they cannot sit, know not where to fix, are always moving, as if the Psalmist’s curse had taken hold of them, as if God had made them “like a wheel and as stubble before the wind,” that can sit nowhere, rest at nothing, but turn about from one uncertainty to another. The Holy Spirit is a spirit that will sit still, and be at peace, continue and abide.—*Mark Frank.*

Verses 13, 14.—In imagery both obvious and vivid to every native of the gusty

hills and plains of Palestine, though to us comparatively unintelligible, the Psalmist describes them as driven over the uplands of Gilead like the clouds of chaff blown from the threshing-floors; chased away like the spherical masses of dry weeds which course over the plains of Esdraelon and Philistia—flying with the dreadful hurry and confusion of the flames, that rush and leap from tree to tree and hill to hill when the wooded mountains of a tropical country are by chance ignited.—*William Smith in "A Dictionary of the Bible."* 1863.

Verse 14.—"Mountains on fire." Many of the mountains in this country are covered with dense forests. The leaves which fall every autumn accumulate, sometimes for years, until we have a particularly dry summer, when, somehow or other, either by accident or design, they are always set on fire, and burn sometimes for several days. The mountains in one of the States of the neighbouring Republic are on fire at this very moment while I am now writing, and have been burning for more than a week, and we can distinctly see the red glare in the sky above them, although from their great distance, even the tops of the mountains themselves from whence the flames arise are beyond the limits of our horizon.—*From "Philip Musgrave: or Memoirs of a Church of England Missionary in the North American Colonies."* 1846.

Verse 14.—"Fire" has greater force on a mountain, where the wind is more powerful, than upon a wood situated in a valley—*Honorius Augustodunensis.*

Verse 14.—Humboldt saw forests on fire in South America and thus describes them. "Several parts of the vast forests which surround the mountain, had taken fire. Reddish flames, half enveloped in clouds of smoke, presented a very grand spectacle. The inhabitants set fire to the forests, to improve the pasturage, and to destroy the shrubs that choke the grass. Enormous conflagrations, too, are often caused by the carelessness of the Indians, who neglect, when they travel, to extinguish the fires by which they have dressed their food."

Verse 14.—Let us pray the divine aid to break this power and enmity of the natural man; that it may yield unto the word of grace; and let the wood, hay and stubble of all false doctrine perish before the brightness of the face of God.—*Edward Waller.* 1854.

Verse 18.—"That men may know that thou, whose name alone is JEHOVAH," etc. Early English History informs us, that some bloodthirsty persecutors were marching on a band of Christians. The Christians, seeing them approaching, marched out towards them, and, at the top of their voices, shouted, "Hallelujah, hallelujah!" (Praise Jehovah). The name of the Lord being presented, the rage of the persecutors abated. Josephus says, that the Great Alexander, when on his triumphal march, being met near Jerusalem by the Jewish high priest, on whose mitre was engraved the name of Jehovah, "approached by himself, and adored that name," and was disarmed of his hostile intent. There was significance and power in the glorious old name as written by the Jews. But the name of Jesus is now far more mighty in the world than was the name Jehovah in these earlier ages.—*"The Dictionary of Illustrations,"* 1872.

Verse 18.—"JEHOVAH" is one of the incommunicable names of God, which signifies his eternal essence. The Jews observe that in God's name *Jehovah* the Trinity is implied. *Je* signifies the present tense, *ho* the preter-perfect tense, *vah* the future. The Jews also observe that in his name Jehovah all the Hebrew letters are *literæ quiescentes*, that denote rest, implying that in God and from God is all our rest. Every gracious soul is like Noah's dove, he can find no rest nor satisfaction but in God. God alone is the godly man's ark of rest and safety. Jehovah is the incommunicable name of God, and is never attributed to any but God: "Thou, whose name alone is JEHOVAH."

Verse 18.—"The most high." His being the High and lofty One, notes forth the transcendancy and super-excellency of his divine being in itself, and that it is utterly of another kind from creatures, and indeed that it only is truly being. When the Psalmist says, "That men may know that thou, whose name alone is JEHOVAH art the most high over all the earth," he thereby argues his height from his name, that his name is alone Jehovah, and therefore he is most high, and in that very respect. Now Jehovah is the name of his essence, "I AM," and he is MOST HIGH in respect of such a glorious being as is proper alone unto him.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—The long silence of God, the reasons for it, and our reasons for desiring him to end it.

Verse 3.—“*Thy hidden ones.*” I. Hidden as to their new nature, which is an enigma to men. II. Hidden for protection, as precious things. III. Hidden, for solace and rest. IV. Hidden, because not yet fully revealed.

Verse 4.—The immortality of the church.

Verse 5.—The confederacies of evils against the saints.

Verses 13—15.—The instability, restlessness, and impotence of the wicked; their horror when God deals with them in justice.

Verse 16.—A prayer for the Pope and his priests.

Verse 17.—The righteous fate of persecutors, and troublers.

Verse 18.—The Golden Lesson: how taught, to whom, by whom, through whom?
