

PSALM LXXXVII.

TITLE.—A Psalm or Song for the sons of Korah. *A sacred hymn and a national lyric. A theocracy blends the religious and the patriotic ideas in one; and in proportion as nations become Christianized, their popular songs will become deeply imbued with pious sentiments. Judged by this standard, our own land is far in arrears. This "Psalm or song" was either composed by the sons of Korah, or dedicated to them: as they kept the doors of the house of the Lord, they could use this beautiful composition as a Psalm within the doors, and as a song outside.*

SUBJECT AND DIVISION.—*The song is in honour of Zion, or Jerusalem, and it treats of God's favour to that city among the mountains, the prophecies which made it illustrious, and the honour of being a native of it. Many conceive that it was written at the founding of David's city of Zion, but does not the mention of Babylon imply a later date? It would seem to have been written after Jerusalem and the Temple had been built, and had enjoyed a history, of which glorious things could be spoken. Among other marvels of God's love in its later history, it had been untouched by Sennacherib when other cities of Israel and Judah had fallen victims to his cruelty. It was in Hezekiah's reign that Babylon became prominent, when the ambassadors came to congratulate the king concerning his recovery, at that time also Tyre would be more famous than at any period in David's day. But as we have no information, and the point is not important, we may leave it, and proceed to meditate upon the Psalm itself. We have no need to divide so brief a song.*

EXPOSITION

HIS foundation is in the holy mountains.

2 The LORD loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob.

3 Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God. Selah.

4 I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon to them that know me: behold Philistia, and Tyre, with Ethiopia; this *man* was born there.

5 And of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her: and the highest himself shall establish her.

6 The LORD shall count, when he writeth up the people, *that this man* was born there. Selah.

7 As well the singers as the players on instruments *shall be there*: all my springs are in thee.

1. "His foundation is in the holy mountains." The Psalm begins abruptly, the poet's heart was full, and it gained vent on a sudden.

"God's foundation stands for ever
On the holy mountain towers;
Sion's gates Jehovah favours
More than Jacob's thousand bowers."

Sudden passion is evil, but bursts of holy joy are most precious. God has chosen to found his earthly temple upon the mountains; he might have selected other spots, but it was his pleasure to have his chosen abode upon Zion. His election made the mountains holy, they were by his determination ordained and set apart for the Lord's use.

The foundation of the church, which is the mystical Jerusalem, is laid in the eternal, immutable, and invincible decrees of Jehovah. He wills that the church shall be, he settles all arrangements for her calling, salvation, maintenance and perfection, and all his attributes, like the mountains round about Jerusalem, lend

their strength for her support. Not on the sand of carnal policy, nor in the morass of human kingdoms, has the Lord founded his church, but on his own power and godhead, which are pledged for the establishment of his beloved church, which is to him the chief of all his works. What a theme for meditation is the founding of the church of God in the ancient covenant engagements of eternity; the abrupt character of this first verse indicates long consideration on the part of the writer, leading up to his bursting forth in wonder and adoration. Well might such a theme cause his heart to glow. Rome stands on her seven hills and has never lacked a poet's tongue to sing her glories, but more glorious far art thou, O Zion, among the eternal mountains of God: while pen can write or mouth can speak, thy praises shall never lie buried in inglorious silence.

2. "*The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob.*" The gates are put for the city itself. The love of God is greatest to his own elect nation, descended from his servant Jacob, yet the central seat of his worship is dearer still; no other supposable comparison could have so fully displayed the favour which Jehovah bore to Jerusalem,—he loves Jacob best and Zion better than the best. At this hour the mystical teaching of these words is plain. God delights in the prayers and praises of Christian families and individuals, but he has a special eye to the assemblies of the faithful, and he has a special delight in their devotions in their church capacity. The great festivals, when the crowds surrounded the temple gates, were fair in the Lord's eyes, and even such is the general assembly and church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven. This should lead each separate believer to identify himself with the church of God; where the Lord reveals his love the most, there should each believer most delight to be found. Our own dwellings are very dear to us, but we must not prefer them to the assemblies of the saints; we must say of the church—

"Here my best friends, my kindred dwell:
Here God, my Saviour reigns."

3. "*Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God.*" This is true of Jerusalem. Her history, which is the story of the nation of which she is the capital, is full of glorious incidents, and her use and end as the abode of the true God, and of his worship, was pre-eminently glorious. Glorious things were taught in her streets, and seen in her temples. Glorious things were foretold of her, and she was the type of the most glorious things of all. This is yet more true of the church: she is founded in grace, but her pinnacles glow with glory. Men may glory in her without being braggarts, she has a lustre about her brow which none can rival. Whatever glorious things the saints may say of the church in their eulogies, they cannot exceed what prophets have foretold, what angels have sung, or what God himself has declared. Happy are the tongues which learn to occupy themselves with so excellent a subject, may they be found around our fire-sides, in our market-places, and in all the spots where men most congregate. Never let thy praises cease, O thou bride of Christ, thou fairest among women, thou in whom the Lord himself hath placed his delight, calling thee by that pearl of names, Hephzibah,—"*for my delight is in her.*" Since the Lord has chosen thee, and deigns to dwell in thee, O thou city of beauty, none can rival thee, thou art the eye of the world, the pearl, the queen of all the cities of the universe; the true "*eternal city,*" the metropolitan, the mother of us all. The years to come shall unveil thy beauties to the astonished eyes of all peoples, and the day of thy splendour shall come to its sevenfold noon.

"*Selah.*" With the prospect before him of a world converted, and the most implacable foes transformed into friends, it was meet that the Psalmist should pause. How could he sing the glories of new-born Tyre and Ethiopia, received with open arms into union with Zion, until he had taken breath and prepared both voice and heart for so divine a song.

4. "*I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon to them that know me.*" This shall be a glorious subject to speak of concerning Zion, that her old foes are new-born and have become her friends, worshipping in the temple of her God. Rahab or Egypt which oppressed Israel shall become a sister nation, and Babylon in which the tribes endured their second great captivity, shall become a fellow-worshipper; then shall there be mention made in familiar talk of the old enmities forgotten and the new friendships formed. Some consider that these are the words of God himself, and should be rendered "*I will mention Rahab and Babylon as knowing*

me:" but we feel content with our common version, and attribute the words to the Psalmist himself, who anticipates the conversion of the two great rival nations and speaks of it with exultation. "*Behold Philistia, and Tyre, with Ethiopia.*" These also are to bow before the Lord. Philistia shall renounce her ancient hate, Tyre shall not be swallowed up by thoughts of her commerce, and distant Ethiopia shall not be too far off to receive the salvation of the Lord. "*This man was born there.*" The word *man* is inserted by the translators to the marring of the sense, which is clear enough when the superfluous word is dropped,—"*Philistia, and Tyre, with Ethiopia; this was born there*"—i.e., this nation has been born into Zion, regenerated into the church of God. Of the new births of nations we will make mention, for it is at once a great blessing and a great wonder. It is a glorious thing indeed when whole nations are born unto God.

" Mark ye well Philistia's legions,
Lo, to seek the Lord they come;
And within the sacred regions
Tyre and Cush have found a home."

Many understand the sense of these verses to be that all men are proud of their native country, and so also is the citizen of Zion, so that while of one it is said, "he was born in Egypt" and of another, "he came from Ethiopia," it would be equally to the honour of others that they were home-born sons of the city of God. The passage is not so clear that any one should become dogmatical as to its meaning, but we prefer the interpretation given above.

5. "*And of Zion, it shall be said, This and that man was born in her.*" Not as nations only, but one by one, as individuals, the citizens of the New Jerusalem shall be counted, and their names publicly declared. Man by man will the Lord reckon them, for they are each one precious in his sight; the individual shall not be lost in the mass, but each one shall be of high account. What a patent of nobility is it, for a man to have it certified that he was born in Zion; the twice born are a royal priesthood, the true aristocracy, the imperial race of men. The original, by using the noblest word for man, intimates that many remarkable men will be born in the church, and indeed every man who is renewed in the image of Christ is an eminent personage, while there are some, who, even to the dim eyes of the world, shine forth with a lustre of character which cannot but be admitted to be unusual and admirable. The church has illustrious names of prophets, apostles, martyrs, confessors, reformers, missionaries and the like, which bear comparison with the grandest names honoured by the world, nay, in many respects far excel them. Zion has no reason to be ashamed of her sons, nor her sons of her. "*Wisdom is justified of her children.*" "*And the highest himself shall establish her*"—the only establishment worth having. When the numbers of the faithful are increased by the new birth, the Lord proves himself to be the upbuilder of the church. The Lord alone deserves to wear the title of Defender of the Faith; he is the sole and sufficient Patron and Protector of the true church. There is no fear for the Lord's heritage, his own arm is sufficient to maintain his rights. The Highest is higher than all those who are against us, and the good old cause shall triumph over all.

6. "*The Lord shall count, when he writeth up the people, that this man was born there.*" At the great census which the Lord himself shall take, he will number the nations without exception and make an exact registry of them, whether they were by their natural descent Babylonians or Tyrians, or other far-off heathen. May it be our happy lot to be numbered with the Lord's chosen both in life and death, in the church-roll below, and in the church-roll above. Jehovah's census of his chosen will differ much from ours; he will count many whom we should have disowned, and he will leave out many whom we should have reckoned. His registration is infallible. Let us pray then for that adoption and regeneration which will secure us a place among the heaven-born. It was thought to be a great honour to have one's name written in the golden book of the Republic of Venice, kings and princes paid dearly for the honour, but the book of life confers far rarer dignity upon all whose names are recorded therein.

7. In vision the Psalmist sees the citizens of Zion rejoicing at some sacred festival, and marching in triumphant procession with vocal and instrumental music;—"*As well the singers as the players on instruments shall be there.*" Where God is there must be joy, and where the church is increased by numerous conversions

the joy becomes exuberant and finds out ways of displaying itself. Singers and dancers, Psalmists and pipers, united their efforts and made a joyful procession to the temple, inspired not by Bacchus, or by the Castalian fount, but by draughts from the sacred source of all good, of which they each one sing "*All my springs are in thee.*" Did the poet mean that henceforth he would find all his joys in Zion, or that to the Lord he would look for all inspiration, comfort, strength, joy, life and everything. The last is the truest doctrine. Churches have not such all-sufficiency within them that we can afford to look to them for all, but the Lord who founded the church is the eternal source of all our supplies, and looking to him we shall never flag or fail. How truly does all our experience lead us to look to the Lord by faith, and say "all my fresh springs are in thee." The springs of my faith and all my graces; the springs of my life and all my pleasures; the springs of my activity and all its right doings; the springs of my hope, and all its heavenly anticipations, all lie in thee, my Lord. Without thy Spirit I should be as a dry well, a mocking cistern, destitute of power to bless myself or others. O Lord, I am assured that I belong to the regenerate whose life is in thee, for I feel that I cannot live without thee; therefore, with all thy joyful people will I sing thy praises.

"With joy shall sing the choral train,
The minstrels breathe the answering strain:
*O Zion, Zion, fair, I see
The fountains of my bliss in thee.*"

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS.

Title.—"A Psalm or Song for the Sons of Korah." The title prefixed is "A Psalm to be sung by the sons of Korah," i.e. of fallen man. Korah signifies the state in which trees are during winter, when stript of their verdure and fruit. In the same sense it is used for the bald head, when age or sickness has deprived it of its glory and left it without hair. This is a lively description of fallen man. He has lost his pristine beauty and fruitfulness. When he left God and turned to his own ways, he became like the trees of the field in winter, from which the genial warmth of the sun is withdrawn, or like the head, which by the abating of the natural heat and vigour is left naked and bald. But being brought to a right sense of this, and finding himself stript of all the glory which the first Adam had in paradise, he has been led to seek the restoration of his nature, and has obtained of the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, a much better state than he had lost. Every such person is entitled to sing this sacred hymn, and he is called upon to do it. The name of the person whom he is to celebrate is not mentioned at first, but is soon discovered by the character given of him.—*William Romaine.*

Whole Psalm.—Bishop Bruno entitles this Psalm, "The voice of prophecy concerning the heavenly Jerusalem," that is, the Church of Christ.

Verse 1.—"His foundation is in the holy mountains." The foundation that God has given his city is in "the holy mountains." What are these holy mountains? What can they be but the eternal purpose of Jehovah—the purpose out of which the being of the Church and the whole dispensation of Divine love have sprung? What but those attributes of mercy, justice, holiness, and sovereignty, from the ineffable embrace and holy co-operation of which it comes to pass that his chosen people are redeemed? What but the promise of life that was given in Christ to the elect before the world began? What but the everlasting covenant, "ordered in all things and sure" from which grace and salvation proceed? What but these things, and Christ himself, the Rock of Ages, on which rock we know that the Church is so firmly founded, that the gates of hell cannot prevail against her? Yes, these are the holy mountains, whereon the city of God is built, and in which its deep and strong foundations are laid. The sure decree, the divine perfections, the promise of him that cannot lie, the oath and covenant of God, and the incarnate Son himself, are the holy mountains, the perpetual hills, whose summits are gloriously crowned

by the city of the Great King. There the city sits securely, beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth.—*Andrew Gray.*

Verse 1.—"Mountains." The situation of Jerusalem in several respects singular amongst the cities of Palestine. Its elevation is remarkable, occasioned, not from its being on the summit of one of the numerous hills of Judæa, like most of the towns and villages, but because it is on the edge of one of the highest tablelands of the country. Hebron, indeed, is higher still, by some hundred feet; and from the south, accordingly, the approach to Jerusalem is by a slight descent. But from every other side, the ascent is perpetual; and, to the traveller approaching Jerusalem from the west or east, it must always have presented the appearance, beyond any other capital of the then known world—we may add, beyond any important city that has ever existed on the earth—of a mountain city; breathing, as compared with the sultry plains of the Jordan or of the coast, a mountain air; enthroned, as compared with Jericho or Damascus, Gaza or Tyre, on a mountain fastness. In this respect it concentrated in itself the character of the whole country of which it was to be the capital—the "mountain throne," the "mountain sanctuary," of God. "The 'mount' of God is as the 'mount' of Bashan; an high mount as the mount of Bashan. Why leap ye so, ye high 'mountains'? this is the 'mountain' which God desireth to dwell in". . . . It was emphatically the lair of the lion of Judah, of "Ariel," the Lion of God. "In Judah is God known; his name is great in Israel. In Salem is his 'leafy covert,' and his 'rocky den' in Zion. . . . Thou art more glorious and excellent than the 'mountains of the robbers.'" And this wild and fastness-like character of Jerusalem was concentrated yet again in the fortress, the "stronghold" of Zion. That point, the highest in the city, the height which most readily catches the eye from every quarter, is emphatically the "hill fort," the "rocky hold" of Jerusalem—the refuge where first the Jebusite, and then the Lion of God, stood at bay against the hunters.—*Arthur Penrhyn Stanley.*

Verses 1, 2.—If we suppose the Psalm to have been composed in the days of Hezekiah, it will appear quite intelligible that the Psalmist should break out so suddenly at the beginning with praise of the *security* of Zion: he merely lends his mouth in this case to the full heart of the people; "*The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob,*" is seen in its true light, for this preference for Zion was at that time *verified*—its gates remained closed upon the enemies, while all the rest of the country was subject to their sway.—*E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Verse 2.—"The Lord loveth the gates," etc. The gates of a walled city give access to it and power over it, and therefore are naturally here put for the whole. The Hebrew participle (*loving*) implies constant and habitual attachment.—*J. A. Alexander.*

Verse 2.—"The Lord loveth the gates of Zion." Because of the going out and coming in of the people of God. Thus indeed the disposition of lovers is shown, that they are filled with a remarkable affection of love towards those places through which those whom they love frequently pass, as doors and gates, and those ways which they daily traverse. What other reason could God have for loving the gates of Zion?—*Musculus.*

Verse 2.—"The gates of Zion" are the doctrines of the Gospel, "*the tabernacles of Jacob*" are the teachings of the law, the law was accomplished in the gospel; therefore it is said that "the Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob."—*Plain Commentary,* 1859.

Verse 2.—"The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more," etc. No doubt the prayers which the faithful put up to heaven from under their private roofs were very acceptable unto him; but if a saint's single voice in prayer be so sweet to God's ear, much more the church choir, his saints' prayers in concert together. A father is glad to see any one of his children, and makes him welcome when he visits him, but much more when they come together; the greatest feast is when they all meet at his house. The public praises of the church are the emblem of heaven itself, where all the angels make but one concert.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 2.—"The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all," etc. It is here assumed that the Lord loves the dwellings of Jacob—he loves those that are true Israelites. These are succeeded by the name *Christian*, for the Christian Church is now become the true Israel of God. He loves his saints on account of that image

of himself which they bear; he loves them on account of those graces which are infused into them when they are renewed by the spirit; he loves them on account of the relation they stand in to him as his people, and as his church, who are qualified for the duties of the relation by that love of their Father, that reliance upon his care, that delight in his person, that enjoyment in his service, which belongs to dutiful and affectionate children. He loves them because they imitate his perfections in some humble measure—because they receive the word of his mouth—because they are ready to obey every call of his providence, setting themselves in the paths of his testimony wherever he may direct—because they yield themselves to God, as those that are alive from the dead, and their bodies as instruments of righteousness, no longer walking after the deeds of the flesh, but after the will of God. He takes a delight in them; the Lord delighteth in the righteous; he knoweth their way; he loves, approves, and confirms them. The most common occupations of life—the honest industry of the servants of God, is looked upon by him with approbation. By these they show forth their Father, and the praises of him who called them from darkness to light. The most ordinary duties of our calling become sacrifices to God, and religious duties, when performed in the spirit, and directed to the great end of glorifying God. He looks with peculiar complacency on the dwellings of his people on account of those domestic devotional acknowledgments of his majesty which are there maintained, when the head walks before his family as a priest to offer praise and thanksgiving; this attracts peculiar approbation and delight. He loves to see his people training up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and their children walking after them in the paths of that obedience which he has enjoined. He delights to see the course of purity which runs in Christian families. He loves to see the progress which the younger parts of religious families make in piety, while they grow in grace, and in favour with God and man. He looks down with peculiar delight on such circles as these: there he deigns his presence, and bestows peculiar blessings. However obscure the dwellings of Jacob may be, to him they are open and manifest at all times; and whether in cottages or in palaces, his eye rests there with complacency; and he says of such places, "Here will I dwell for ever and ever." Prayer and devotion sanctify every family, and diffuse a spirit of piety through all the avocations of life, so that we need not retire from the world, but are rather called to show forth the virtues of the Christian life in it.

But it is said, that, although "he loves the dwellings of Jacob," yet "*he loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob*"—that nothing in the dwellings of Jacob so much attracts his attention as the people of God connected together in a spiritual capacity. I. In the first place, the Divine Being regards with peculiar complacency the worship of his saints on its own account. II. On account of that union of mind and consent of heart, evinced in the assembling of God's people together, and constituting themselves into a church. III. Because of the testimony which the church bears toward the truth. IV. Upon account of that deference to his authority, which is evinced by maintaining and keeping up the practice of those institutes which rest entirely on that authority. V. By making the assembly of the saints the grand means of conversion. VI. That peculiar presence of God is generally vouchsafed to his saints, and made manifest to them, although it be hidden from the world, which induces the conviction that God is present of a truth. VII. The Divine Being shows his preference of the gates of Zion to the dwellings of Jacob, by continually maintaining in operation those gifts which are for the edification of the saints, and without which the union of the saints would be with difficulty maintained. VIII. The Divine Being shews his preference to Zion by that marvellous protection which is afforded to the interest of the church of God; whereby, though weak, and frequently reduced to a handful of disciples, yet they have been protected, and their society on earth continued.—*Robert Hall.*

Verse 2.—Some absent themselves from public worship, under pretence that they can serve the Lord at home as well in private. How many are apt to say, they see not but their time may be as well spent at home, in praying, reading some good book, or discoursing on some profitable subject, as in the use of ordinances in public assemblies! They see not but private prayer may be as good to them as public, or private reading and opening the Scripture as profitable as public preaching; they say of their private duties, as Naaman of the waters of Damascus, 2 Kings v. 12: May I not serve the Lord as acceptably, with as much advantage,

in private exercises of religion? May I not wash in these and be clean? They see not the great blessings God has annexed to public worship more than to private. Oh, but if it be thus, if one be as good as the other, what means the Lord to prefer one before the other? To what purpose did the Lord choose the gates of Zion, to place his name there, if he might have been worshipped as well in the dwellings of Jacob? How do men of this conceit run counter to the Lord? He prefers the gates of Zion, not only before one or some, but before all the dwellings of Jacob; and they prefer one such dwelling before the gates of Zion.—*David Clarkson.*

Verse 3.—“*Glorious things are spoken*” of the people of God. Take the church for a visible congregation, a mixed congregation; glorious things are spoken of that. It is the house of God. Take it as visible, “the vessels of honour and dishonour,” 2 Tim. ii. 20, and the field, the “tares and the wheat,” Matt. xiii. 1. etc., it is God’s field. Though we take the church as visible, it hath a glorious name for the good that is in it, especially for the wheat. But take the church of God for the company of his children that are gathered by the means of grace, dwelling in the visible church, enjoying the ordinances: so they are the house and temple of Christ, “the temple of the Holy Ghost, the body of Christ, the spouse of Christ.” They are God’s delight, they are spiritual kings and priests, etc. The most glorious things that can be, all other excellencies in the world, are but titular things, mere shadows of things. There is some little reality in earthly things, but it is nothing in comparison, it is scarce worth the name of reality, but Solomon calls them “vanity of vanities.” In comparison of the excellencies of the church all is nothing. I might be large in these particulars. It is enough to give you the generals of the delights and excellencies of God’s house, “the beauty of the Lord.”—*Richard Sibbes.*

Verse 3.—“*The glories of the wilderness are in thee.*” The Shechinah, which appeared upon Sinai, and marshalled the army of the Israelites upon their journey through the wilderness, has now fixed its residence in thee, O city of God. Compare Ps. lxxviii. 17.—*Samuel Horstley.*

Verse 4.—“*I will make mention,*” etc. As if he had said, I do not deny the due praises which belong to other places and countries, but rather am wont to make honorable mention of them among my acquaintance; and to allow that “*this man,*” that is, some one notable person, though comparatively of no great value, was born in them.—*Thomas Fenton.*

Verse 4.—“*Rahab,*” a poetical name of *Egypt*. The same word signifies “fierceness, insolence, pride”; if Hebrew when applied to Egypt, it would indicate the national character of the inhabitants.—*Smith’s Dictionary of the Bible.*

Verse 4.—It should comfort the church that God is able to make her chiefest enemies to become converts, and that he hath done it sundry times, and will yet do it more; and that he can take order with those enemies which shall not be converted, as he did with *Rahab* and *Babylon*; for, “*I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon to them that know me,*” signifieth a mention-making of them; *viz.* to the edification of the church’s children, both concerning what God had done in those nations in justice; and what he would do to them in mercy, or unto other enemies like unto them.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 4.—“*Rahab,*” “*Babylon,*” “*Philistia,*” “*Tyre,*” “*Ethiopia.*” This is the glory of the Church, that into her the fulness of the nations shall enter,—the proud from Egypt, who for her haughtiness is called *Rahab*,—the worldly from *Babylon*, the city of confusion,—the wrathful from *Philistia*, so long the enemies of Israel,—the covetous from *Tyre*, the rich city of the traders,—and the slaves of ignorance from *Cush*, and from the land of *Ham*,—all these shall learn the love of Christ and confess his truth, and shall enter into that all-glorious city, and be admitted and acknowledged as citizens of the celestial *Sion*.—“*Plain Commentary.*”

Verse 4.—By this testimony of the nations here mentioned, we may understand the testimony of the Gentile Christians in general, though, perhaps, a special reference is had to that extraordinary scene which took place at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost: “And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak

in his own language. And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galileans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?" Acts ii. 5—8.

The reader will find that there is a remarkable agreement between the nations specified in the book of the Acts, and the nations pointed out in the Psalm before us. Rahab, that is, Egypt, is first mentioned; and in the Acts we find enumerated, "Egypt and the parts of Libya about Cyrene;" next Babylon is in the record; and the "Parthians, Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia," were inhabitants of what once was the Babylonian empire: Philistia is also mentioned; and "dwellers in Judea" are spoken of in the Acts—"dwellers in Judea" speaking a different language from what was common at Jerusalem. Who could these be, so probably, as the inhabitants of the ancient Philistia, which was in the precincts of the allotment of Judah? Here, too, perhaps, on account of its port of Joppa, was a grand resort of "Cretes and Arabians," and "strangers of Rome."

The Grecian settlements of Asia Minor are the only ones specified in the Acts of the Apostles, which we have not noticed in the Psalm—"Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia:" but what could so probably indicate these countries, and all who spoke the dialects of the Grecian tongue, as the great mart of Tyre, in frequenting which, the Jews would have the most frequent opportunity of intercourse with these nations?—*John Fry.*

Verse 4.—"Born in her." The Missionary Society set forth in the Prophets, by our Lord and by his apostles, is, the Church; and so, whereas our natural state, after Adam's fall, was alienation from God, and disunion among ourselves, would He restore "glory to God in the highest and on the earth peace, good-will towards men," by binding us up in one holy fellowship, and making the continuance of his blessings dependent upon that unity, which he imparted and preserves. To adduce the whole proof for this, would be to go through the whole Old Testament; for the Old Testament is direct prophecy and type, is one large prophecy of the Redeemer and his Kingdom or Church. No sooner had disunion multiplied with the multiplying of men, but in the second generation from Adam, he formed union through a Church, and "Men began to call upon the name of the Lord" (Gen. iv. 26), *i. e.*, they began to unite in worshipping the Lord, and amid the growing corruption, religion was no longer entrusted to the insulated care of single families, but concentrated in a church. And when, after the flood, one righteous man was called out of the fast-corrupting world, unity was preserved, in that one only was called, but in that one a church was founded; for this was the reason assigned by God himself: "All the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him. For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord," (Gen. xviii. 18. 19). "God called Abraham alone, and blessed him, and increased him" (Isai. li. 2), and formed the Jewish Church out of him, that however it might spread, it might be bound in one by its origin of one; and he gave it also outward marks and signs between him and it, which by severing it from others, might keep it one in itself. The temporal people had their union through a temporal birth of one, and outward signs; the Christian Church has its unity by a spiritual birth and inward graces, through the power deposited in her to give spiritual birth, so that through one mother, we are all born of one Father, God, and amongst ourselves are brethren, by being members of One, our ever-blessed Lord.

The unity of the Christian Church and her office of gathering all nations unto the Lord, are set forth, in many ways, in prophecy. Thus, in our Psalm, Zion is set forth as the special object of God's love, as having (in language which anticipates the Gospel) been "founded" by him "on the holy mountains," as the "city of God," whereof "glorious things are spoken." And what are these? That she should be the spiritual birthplace of all nations. It is not merely said, as in other places, that they should "come to her," should "flow into her," but that they should be "born in her." "Of Zion it shall be said, This and that man (*i. e.* all, one by one) was born in her;" and whence? all the nations of the earth, Rahab or Egypt, Babylon, Tyre, Ethiopia, Philistia, the most learned, the most powerful, the wealthiest, the furthest, and her nearest, oldest and bitterest enemy Philistia, all, being already born after the flesh, as Egyptians, Babylonians, Ethiopians, Tyrians, Philistines, should be "born in her," and by being "born there," should become children of God, citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem, written by God in the

roll of his book. "The Lord shall count, when he writeth up the people, that this man was born there;" he shall account them as his, being re-born in his Church.

In like manner, with regard to every prophecy, whereat men's hearts beat, as an encouragement to Missionary labours. Throughout, it is the Lord and Saviour of the Church, or the Church itself, filled with his Spirit, and restored and enlarged, and widening herself by his favour, and gathering his people into herself, his fold. —E. B. Pusey, in a Sermon entitled "The Church the converter of the Heathen." 1838.

Verses 4—6. It is made the honour and dignity of Sion, that is, of the true Church of God, to have such and such born in it: "*this and that man* was born in *her*." There are two things signified in this expression, as branches of their honour; the one is the *quality* of the persons; and the other is the *number* of them. For the *quality* of them, "*this*;" for the *number* of them, "*this and that*." To have both of these born in Sion, persons of *note and eminency*, and a *multitude and plurality* of such persons; this is a part of that dignity and renown which belongs unto it. . . .

And so for the noun, "*man*;" the Hebrew word מַן which is here used for a man, except qualified by some other word as joined with it, signifies a man of *worth*, not a common or ordinary person. The Church brings forth as these, מַן מַן, men of renown, famous and eminent men, and that in all kinds of perfections, whether natural, or civil, or spiritual; men of parts, or men of power, or men of piety. There are those in all these excellencies which have been and still are born in her.

First, take it for *natural* or *acquired* abilities; men of parts, and knowledge, and wisdom, and improved understandings; the church is not without these: "*this man*," i.e., *this learned man*, or *this wise man* was born in Sion. All are not idiots who are Christians; no, but there are some of very rare and admirable accomplishments in all kinds and pieces of learning and secular knowledge, which are graciously qualified. There's Paul with his parchments, and Peter with his fisher's net. So also secondly, take it for civil or secular qualifications; men of dignity, and power, and estate: "*this man*," i.e., *this honourable man*, מַן מַן, eminent in countenance, as he is called, Isaiah iii. 2, *he* is likewise born in Sion; the mighty man, and the man of war. The Syriac interpreter was so far sensible of this, as that he expresses it in the very text; and therefore instead of saying, "*This man* was born there," he says, "*A potent man* was born there, 'and he has established it;'" whereby (as I conceive), he takes in the word "*highest*," which follows afterwards in the verse, and refers it here to this place. . . . And again, the Chaldee paraphrast in the text, "*This King* was born there," understanding thereby Solomon, as most conceive and apprehend it.

Thirdly, take it for *spirituals*, and for these accomplishments especially; "*This man*," i.e., *this godly man*; this is that which is most proper and essential to Sion, and to the being born in it; yea, it is that which *makes Sion* itself, in the sense we now take it. It is the highest perfection of it, and the greatest commendation to it of any thing else. This is the great honour of the church, that it forms men to such qualities and dispositions as those are, which no other place does beside. . . . As for other places, they may perhaps now and then reach to some *other principles*, and those likewise very glorious in the eyes of the *world*—morality, and civility, and ingenuity, and smoothness of behaviour. The school of nature and common reason may sometimes come up to these, and that in a very great measure; yea, but now go a little higher, to brokenness of heart, to self-denial, to love of enemies, to closing with Christ, the frame and spirit of the gospel; this is to be found nowhere but only in *Sion*. And here it is: "*This man* was born there."

"Behold *Philistia*, and *Tyre*, with *Ethiopia*; *this man* was born there." Here's the excellency of the ordinances, and that power and energy which is stirring in the Church of Christ; that it is able to work such a miraculous alteration as *this*; to bring men from darkness to light, from Satan to God, from a state of sin and corruption and unregeneracy, to a state of grace and holiness and regeneration; yea, from the lowest degree of the one to the highest degree of the other. That *Philistia* should turn into *Palestina*, *Tyre* into *Jerusalem*, *Ethiopia* into *Judea*; here's the wonder of all; the reconciling of these two opposite terms thus both together. That "*princes* should come out of *Egypt*," and that *Ethiopia* should stretch out her hands to God, as it is in Ps. lxxviii. 31; that the blackamoor should change his skin, and that the leopard should change his spots; and that this Ethiopian should become this Christian; that he which was born *there*, should be

born here."—*Thomas Horton*, in "*Zion's Birth-Register unfolded in a Sermon to the native citizens of London.*" 1656.

Verses 4—6.—Foreign nations are here described not as captives or tributaries, not even as doing voluntary homage to the greatness and glory of Zion, but as actually incorporated and enrolled, by a new birth, among her sons. Even the worst enemies of their race, the tyrants and oppressors of the Jews, Egypt and Babylon, are threatened with no curse, no shout of joy is raised at the prospect of their overthrow, but the privileges of citizenship are extended to them, and they are welcomed as brothers. Nay more, God himself receives each one as a child newly-born into his family, acknowledges each as his son, and enrolls him with his own hand on the sacred register of his children. It is the mode of anticipating a future union and brotherhood of all the nations of the earth, not by conquest, but by incorporation into one state, and by a birth-right so acquired, which is so remarkable. In some of the prophets, more especially in Isaiah, we observe the same liberal, conciliatory, comprehensive language towards foreign states, as Tyre and Ethiopia, and still more strikingly toward Egypt and Assyria (chap. xix. 22—25). But the Psalm stands alone amongst the writings of the Old Testament, in representing this union of nations as a new birth unto the city of God . . . It is the first announcement of that great amity of nations, or rather of that universal common citizenship of which heathen philosophers dreamt, which was "in the mind of Socrates when he called himself a citizen of the world," which had become a common-place of Stoic philosophy, which Judaism tried finally to realize by the admission of proselytes, through baptism, into the Jewish community; which Rome accomplished, so far as the external semblance went, first by subduing the nations, and then by admitting them to the rights of Roman citizenship. But the true fulfilment of this hope is to be found only in that kingdom which Christ has set up. He has gathered into his commonwealth all the kingdoms of the earth. He has made men one, members of the same family, by teaching them to feel that they are all children of the same Father. He has made it evident that the hope of the Jewish singer is no false hope; that there is a Father in heaven who cares for all, whatever name they bear. Thus the Psalm has received a better and higher fulfilment than that which lies on the surface of its words. It was fulfilled in Christ.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verses 4—7.—The main thought is that contained in ver. 4—7, the glorifying of Zion by the reception of the heathen into the number of its citizens; and a well-defined form and arrangement of this thought forms the proper kernel of the Psalm, viz., "Sion, the birth-place of the nations," which occurs in every one of the three verses (4—6), which are bounded by a *Selah* behind and before.—*E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Verse 5.—"This man." The word rendered "*Man*" is generally used for a person of eminence; and the clause "this and that man," is simply, "a Man and a Man," which some think is used as a peculiar superlative, and means, "the most eminent of men, even the Lord Jesus Christ, and they suppose, that He, in his divine nature, is "*the Highest*" who "*shall establish the church.*" No doubt he is the glory of the church, and of his people Israel: but his crucifixion was the deepest disgrace imaginable to Jerusalem itself.—*Thomas Scott.*

Verse 5.—"This man." It is well to observe that the word for "*man*," used here, is not אָדָם *adam*, the common name for man, but אִישׁ *ish*, which is usually employed when a name is introduced to be designated with distinction and honour. There are in Hebrew, in fact, three words to designate man, with varied signification—אָדָם *adam*, the common name; אִישׁ *ish*, the name of excellency and honour; and עֲנוּשׁ *enosh*, man in his weak and inferior character, as liable to misfortune, misery, and death. The illustrative discrimination with which these words are respectively employed gives to many passages of the Hebrew Scripture a force and significance which cannot be preserved in translation into a language which has but one word to represent all these meanings—or indeed has no word for man but the one answering to *Adam*, unless indeed our "*male*," in a sense of dignity and strength, answers in some measure to *ish*.—*John Kitto*, in "*The Pictorial Bible.*"

Verse 6.—The Lord will "*count*" (חָשַׁב), "*record it in a book*," when "*he writes up the people*" (רָשַׁם בְּסֵפֶר) "*registers the several nations of the earth*"; that "*this man was born in*" Zion. The Psalmist here describes the peculiar regard of God to the inhabitants of *Jerusalem*, and figuratively represents him, as keeping a register of all the nations of the earth, and marking, as it were, in that register, every one

that was a citizen of *Jerusalem*, as thereby entitled to his distinguishing favour and protection.—*Samuel Chandler*.

Verse 6.—“*This man was born there.*” When events shall be traced to their principles at the last day, many a scene will come forth into prominence, which now is of little regard. Humble churches will then prove to have been the birthplace, and stately palaces the graves of many an immortal soul, while every saved soul will ascribe its springs of glory to its Redeemer, through the instrumentality of that church, which he has ordained.—*Edward Garrard Marsh*.

6.—“*Selah.*” The Hebrew text addeth “*Selah,*” which St. Jerome translatheth *semper* (always). For the Church, as a bride glorious in her husband, shall evermore be preached of; glorious things shall be spoken of her, and in her shall be continually sung the ineffable glory of the everlasting grace of God in Christ our Lord. And so the Jews for the most part interpret the word “*Selah*” by “*everlasting.*” This is evident in their epitaphs, even as the Jewish epitaph is in Hebrew at Basle—“His soul continues in Paradise, Amen, Amen, Amen, for ever and ever.”—*Urbanus Regius* [? *Le Roi*] (—1541) in “*The Solace of Sion.*”

7.—“*The singers;*” “*the players on instruments.*” Song and music were prominent features of Divine worship in David’s time. This is evident from the large number of two hundred and eighty-eight Levites who were expressly appointed for singing and the performance of music. Not less than two hundred and fifty-five singing men and singing women returned from the exile . . . The chief instruments used by the Levites were, according to the records of the Books of Chronicles, cymbals, harps and lutes: according to Psalm v. (title), we should add the flute, which is frequently noticed on Egyptian monuments.—*Augustus F. Tholuck*.

Verse 7.—(First clause). For all its inhabitants are expert musicians; lit. sing like flute-players. The Hebrews seem to have surpassed all nations in the skill of poetry and music; and every citizen could sing and dance. This pre-eminence the Psalmist seems to hint at.—*Alexander Geddes*.

Verse 7.—“*All my springs are in thee.*” The original word זרם, which we render “*springs,*” is used in a figurative sense, to denote *any one’s posterity*. Thus Proverbs v. 16, “Let thy fountains be dispersed abroad”; i.e., thy posterity be exceeding numerous. And thus in the place before us: the inhabitants of Jerusalem should triumph and sing, “*All my springs,*” or fountains, all my friends, my family, my children, are in thee, are thy citizens, enjoy the glorious privileges thou art favoured with, are all inserted in God’s register, and entitled to his protection and favour. Thus there is a harmony and connection between all the parts of this ode, which I think is very intelligible and poetical.—*Samuel Chandler*.

Verse 7.—“*All my springs are in thee.*” Whatever conduit pipe be used, Christ is the fountain and foundation of every drop of comfort; Christ is the God of all true consolation. It is not in the power of all the angels of heaven to give any soul one drop of comfort, nor can all on earth give you one dram of comfort. They can speak the words of comfort, but they cannot cause the soul to receive comfort. God comforts by them, 2 Cor. vii. 6. Titus was but an instrument. Comforting is called frequently in Scripture the speaking to the heart, Hos. ii. 14. Who is able to speak to the heart but he who is the Lord and commander of the heart? God hath put all the oil of spiritual joy into the hands of Christ, Isa. lxi. 3, and none but he can give it out. He that wants comfort must go to Christ, he that hath received any true comfort must ascribe it to Christ. “*All my springs,*” saith the Church, “are in thee.”—*Ralph Robinson*.

Verse 7.—The silver springs of grace, and the golden springs of glory are in him.—*Thomas Watson*.

Verse 7.—“*Springs.*” The meaning of this verse is obscure, partly from its abrupt brevity, and partly from the ambiguity of one word. The word “*springs*” is, beyond all controversy, to be here taken metaphorically; but interpreters are not agreed as to the explanation of the metaphor. Some understand it as denoting *hopes*, some *affections*, and others *thoughts*. Did the idiom of the language admit, I would willingly subscribe to the opinion of those who translate it *melodies* or *songs*. But as this might be considered unsupported by the usage of the Hebrew term, I am rather inclined to adopt, as most suitable to the subject in hand, the opinion that *lookings* is the proper translation, the root of the word signifying *an eye*. It is as if the Psalmist had said, I will always be earnestly looking, as it were, with fixed eyes upon thee.—*John Calvin*.

Verse 7.—“*My springs.*”

Whether songs or melodies
In Thee are all my well-springs.

This passage is given obscurely in most of the versions; it is here rendered strictly, and, as the author hopes, perspicuously. As the Greeks had their Pierian springs, their fountain of Aganippe dedicated to the Muses, Jerusalem had, in like manner, her sacred springs, her fountains of inspiration, in a much higher degree. It is to these the holy bard alludes in the passages before us, as Milton does in the following, who has perhaps copied from the present in his address to the “*Heavenly Muse*”:

“Or if Zion’s hill
Delight thee more, or *Siloa’s fount that flowed*
Hard by the oracle of God, I thence
Invoke thine aid to my adventurous song.”

—John Mason Good.

Verse 7.—“*All my springs.*” Fitly may we here quote the delightful hymn of Robert Robinson which has puzzled so many, but which has in it a fine classical allusion to Hippocrene and Mount Parnassus.

“Come, thou fount of every blessing,
Tune my heart to sing Thy grace,
Streams of mercy, never ceasing,
Call for songs of loudest praise.
Teach me some melodious sonnet,
Sung by flaming tongues above:
Praise the mount—oh fix me on it,
Mount of God’s unchanging love.”

—C. H. S.

 HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verses 2, 3.—I. The foundation of Zion. 1. It is but one: “*foundation.*” 2. It is the Lord’s: “*his.*” 3. It is in conformity with holiness: “*holy mountains.*” 4. It consists of eternal purposes. 5. It is built up on immutable principles. 6. It is situated in a glorious position. II. The favour enjoyed by Zion. 1. God “*loves the dwellings of Jacob.*” He led, fed, guarded, lighted, visited them. 2. He loves Zion “*better*”; and gives all those blessings in a richer form. 3. There are more to love. 4. Their occupations are more spiritual. 5. Their songs and worship are more enthusiastic. 6. Their testimony is more powerful. 7. Their knowledge of truth is more clear. 8. Their fellowship is on a scale more heavenly. Let us be in the Church, and love her. III. The fame of Zion. “*Glorious things are spoken,*” 1. *of* her in history; 2. *in* her by ministry; 3. *for* her by Jesus; 4. *about* her in prophecy. Here is a fruitful theme.

Verse 3.—The idea of the text presents the Church as “*the city of God*”; let us touch upon some of the “*glorious things*” that are spoken of it. I. There are glorious things with respect to the *erection* of the city. 1. There is the plan of its erection. There was never a plan so faultless, so complete, so wonderful for its beauty and grandeur. The gates, the walls, the buildings, the streets, the monuments, the fountains, the gardens, unite to proclaim it a masterpiece of skill. The Architect was he who built the skies. 2. There is the *site* where the city is erected. See verse 1. 3. There is the *date* of the city’s erection. A halo and a glory attach, in a case like this, to great antiquity. Now it is long since the city was built. It was standing in the days of Paul. “*Ye are come unto the city of the living God.*” Heb. xii. 22. David was well acquainted with it. Ps. xvi. 4. It

was standing before the flood. Noah, Enoch, Abel, dwelt in it. It is almost as old as the creation. II. There are glorious things to tell of the *defences* of the city. It has been besieged ever since it was a city at all, and it is not taken to this hour. "We have a strong city," etc. III. There are glorious things in connexion with the *stores* and *supplies* on which the city depends: 1, their excellence; 2, their abundance; 3, their source. IV. There are glorious things respecting the *King* of the city; his name, person, character, etc. V. There are glorious things in connexion with the *citizens* of the city.—*Andrew Gray*, 1805—1861.

Verse 3.—I. Observe, that a city is not like a flower, a tree, or a plant—something that grows out of the earth, and is nourished from the earth, and dependent wholly on its juices. It is an artificial thing, constructed by wisdom and raised by power, as it was designed by genius and forethought. II. A city upon earth is surrounded generally by walls. III. Jerusalem (the most celebrated of cities, from which this figure is obviously drawn) was built upon the brow of a hill, an extremely conspicuous and beautiful object. IV. In a city there are various buildings, and structures of various shapes, materials and value: illustrate by the different denominations, etc. V. A city has municipal laws. VI. It has also trade, traffic, etc. VII. The figure, as applied to the Church of Christ, involves the idea of safety or security, honour, etc. VIII. There is also the idea of fewness.—*John Cumming*, 1843.

Verse 3.—The things "spoken" of the city of God. I. It shall be the permanent and the peculiar residence of God. II. It shall be the scene of delightful privileges and blessings. III. It shall be invested with absolute and inviolable security. IV. It shall possess renown and empire throughout the whole world. V. Its institutions and existence shall be perfected in the celestial state.—*James Parsons*, 1839.

Verse 4 (last clause).—I. Behold what the "man" was: a native of "Philistia," a heathen, and an enemy to God. II. Behold what happened to him: he "was born there," *i.e.*, new born in Zion. III. Behold what he became—he became by his new birth a freeman and burgess of Zion, etc.

Verses 4, 5.—I. What is not the most honourable birth-place—not Rahab nor Egypt, nor Babylon, nor any earthly palace or kingdom. II. What is? "Of Zion," etc. 1. Because it is a nobler birth; a being born again of the Spirit of God. 2. Because it is a nobler place; the residence of the Highest, and established for ever. Because it brings nobler rank and privileges.—*G. R.*

Verses 4—7.—I. Zion shall produce many good and great men. II. Zion's interest shall be established by divine power. III. Zion's sons shall be registered with honour. IV. Zion's songs shall be sung with joy and triumph.—*Matthew Henry*.

Verses 4—7.—I. The excellence of the church is here stated. II. Her enlargement is here promised.—*J. Scholefield*, 1825.

Verse 5.—The renowned men of the church of God. 1. Great warriors, who have fought with temptation. 2. Great poets, whose lives were Psalms. 3. Great heroes, who have lived and died for Jesus. 4. Great kings who have ruled themselves, etc. Apostles, martyrs, confessors, reformers, men renowned for virtues such as only grace can produce.

Verse 5.—"This and that man." The individuality of true religion. 1. Each soul sins for itself. 2. Rejects or accepts the Saviour for itself. 3. Must be judged, and 4. Saved or lost individually. The consequent need of personal piety; the temptations to neglect it; and the habits which promote it.

Verse 5 (last clause).—The Established Church of God—her Head, her protection her power, etc.

Verse 6.—I. "The Lord" will make the Census. II. He will "count" whether a man be rightly there or no. III. Every man truly born in Zion shall be admitted on the register.

Verse 6.—I. The time referred to. "When he writeth up," etc.; when all the true Israel is saved. II. The account to be taken: "When he writeth up," etc., *i.e.*, revises and re-enters the names in the Lamb's Book of Life. Compares the called with the chosen. III. The test to be applied. 1. Their being in Zion, or

having the means of grace. 2. Their being born there. IV. The completion of their number: "The Lord shall count." An exact number of stones in a perfect building and of members in a perfect body. So in Christ's Church. All make one bride. V. The notice taken of each one: "This man was born there." Men fell as a whole; they are saved individually.—*G. R.*

Verse 7.—I. In God our joy. II. From God our supplies. III. To God our praise.

Verse 7 (last clause).—All the springs within me, all the springs which flow for me, are in my God. There are "upper and nether springs," springs "shut up," "valley" springs (Ps. civ. 10), rock springs, etc.; but all these flow from the Lord.