

PSALM XCIV.

SUBJECT.—*The writer sees evil-doers in power, and smarts under their oppressions. His sense of the divine sovereignty, of which he had been singing in the previous Psalm, leads him to appeal to God as the great Judge of the earth; this he does with much vehemence and importunity, evidently tingling under the lash of the oppressor. Confident in God's existence, and assured of his personal observation of the doings of men, the Psalmist rebukes his atheistic adversaries, and proclaims his triumph in his God: he also interprets the severe dispensation of Providence to be in very deed most instructive chastisements, and so he counts those happy who endure them. The Psalm is another pathetic form of the old enigma—"Wherefore do the wicked prosper?" It is another instance of a good man, perplexed by the prosperity of the ungodly, cheering his heart by remembering that there is, after all, a King in heaven, by whom all things are overruled for good.*

DIVISIONS.—*In the first seven verses the Psalmist utters his complaint against wicked oppressors. From 8 to 11 he reasons against their sceptical notion that God did not notice the actions of men. He then shews that the Lord does bless his people and will deliver them, though for a while they may be chastened, 12—15. He again pleads for help in verse 16, and declares his entire dependence upon God for preservation, 17—19; yet a third time urges his plaint, 20, 21; and then concludes with the confident assurance that his enemies, and all other wicked men, would certainly be made to reap the due reward of their deeds,—“yea, the Lord our God shall cut them off.”*

EXPOSITION.

O LORD God, to whom vengeance belongeth; O God, to whom vengeance belongeth, shew thyself.

2 Lift up thyself, thou judge of the earth: render a reward to the proud.

3 LORD, how long shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked triumph?

4 *How long* shall they utter *and* speak hard things? *and* all the workers of iniquity boast themselves?

5 They break in pieces thy people, O LORD, and afflict thine heritage.

6 They slay the widow and the stranger, and murder the fatherless.

7 Yet they say, The LORD shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard *it*.

1. “O Lord God, to whom vengeance belongeth; O God, to whom vengeance belongeth, shew thyself:” or, *God of retributions, Jehovah, God of retributions, shine forth!* A very natural prayer when innocence is trampled down, and wickedness exalted on high. If the execution of justice be a right thing,—and who can deny the fact?—then it must be a very proper thing to desire it; not out of private revenge, in which case a man would hardly dare to appeal to God, but out of sympathy with right, and pity for those who are made wrongfully to suffer. Who can see a nation enslaved, or even an individual downtrodden, without crying to the Lord to arise and vindicate the righteous cause? The toleration of injustice is here attributed to the Lord's being hidden, and it is implied that the bare sight of him will suffice to alarm the tyrants into ceasing their oppressions. God has but to shew himself, and the good cause wins the day. *He comes, he sees, he conquers!* Truly in these evil days we need a manifest display of his power, for the ancient enemies of God and man are again struggling for the mastery, and if they gain it, woe unto the saints of God.

2. “*Lift up thyself, thou judge of the earth.*” Ascend thy judgment-seat and be acknowledged as the ruler of men: and, moreover, raise thyself as men do who are about to strike with all their might; for the abounding sin of mankind requires a heavy blow from thy hand. “*Render a reward to the proud,*” give them measure for measure, a fair retaliation, blow for blow. The proud look down upon the

gracious poor and strike them from above, as a giant might hurl down blows upon his adversary ; after the same manner, O Lord, lift up thyself, and " return a recompense upon the proud," and let them know that thou art far more above them than they can be above the meanest of their fellow men. The Psalmist thus invokes the retributions of justice in plain speech, and his request is precisely that which patient innocence puts up in silence, when her looks of anguish appeal to heaven.

3. "*Lord, how long shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked triumph?*" Shall wrong for ever rule? Are slavery, robbery, tyranny, never to cease? Since there is certainly a just God in heaven, armed with almighty power, surely there must be sooner or later an end to the ascendancy of evil, innocence must one day find a defender. This "*how long?*" of the text is the bitter plaint of all the righteous in all ages, and expresses wonder caused by that great enigma of providence, the existence and predominance of evil. The sound "*how long?*" is very akin to howling, as if it were one of the saddest of all the utterances in which misery bemoans itself. Many a time has this bitter complaint been heard in the dungeons of the Inquisition, at the whipping-posts of slavery, and in the prisons of oppression. In due time God will publish his reply, but the full end is not yet.

4. "*How long shall they utter and speak hard things?*" The ungodly are not content with deeds of injustice, but they add hard speeches, boasting, threatening, and insulting over the saints. Will the Lord for ever endure this? Will he leave his own children much longer to be the prey of their enemies? Will not the insolent speeches of his adversaries and theirs at last provoke his justice to interfere? Words often wound more than swords, they are as hard to the heart as stones to the flesh; and these are poured forth by the ungodly in redundancy, for such is the force of the word translated *utter*; and they use them so commonly that they become their common speech (*they utter and speak them*)—will this always be endured? "*And all the workers of iniquity boast themselves?*"—they even soliloquise and talk to themselves, and of themselves, in arrogance of spirit, as if they were doing some good deed when they crush the poor and needy, and spit their spite on gracious men. It is the nature of workers of iniquity to boast, just as it is a characteristic of good men to be humble—will their boasts always be suffered by the great Judge, whose ear hears all that they say? Long, very long, have they had the platform to themselves, and loud, very loud, have been their blasphemies of God, and their railings at his saints—will not the day soon come when the threatened heritage of shame and everlasting contempt shall be meted out to them?

Thus the oppressed plead with their Lord, and shall not God avenge his own elect? Will he not speak out of heaven to the enemy, and say, "Why persecutest thou me?"

5. "*They break in pieces thy people, O Lord,*" grinding them with oppression, crushing them with contempt. Yet the men they break in pieces are God's own people, and they are persecuted because they are so; this is a strong plea for the divine interposition. "*And afflict thine heritage,*" causing them sorrowful humiliation and deep depression of heart. The term, "*thine heritage,*" marks out the election of the saints, God's peculiar interest and delight in them, his covenant relation, of long standing, to them and their fathers; this also is a storehouse of arguments with their faithful God. Will he not defend his own? Will a man lose his inheritance, or permit it to be contemptuously despoiled? Those who are ground down, and trampled on, are not strangers, but the choice and chosen ones of the Lord; how long will he leave them to be a prey to cruel foes?

6. "*They slay the widow and the stranger, and murder the fatherless.*" They deal most arrogantly with those who are the most evident objects of compassion. The law of God especially commends these poor ones to the kindness of good men, and it is peculiar wickedness which singles them out to be the victims not only of fraud but of murder. Must not such inhuman conduct as this provoke the Lord? Shall the tears of widows, the groans of strangers, and the blood of orphans be poured forth in vain? As surely as there is a God in heaven, he will visit those who perpetrate such crimes; though he bear long with them, he will yet take vengeance, and that speedily.

7. "*Yet they say, the Lord shall not see.*" This was the reason of their arrogance, and the climax of their wickedness: they were blindly wicked because they dreamed of a blind God. When men believe that the eyes of God are dim, there is no reason to wonder that they give full license to their brutal passions. The persons mentioned above not only cherished an infidel unbelief, but dared to avow it, uttering the

monstrous doctrine that God is too far away to take notice of the actions of men. "*Neither shall the God of Jacob regard it.*" Abominable blasphemy and transparent falsehood! If God has actually become his people's God, and proved his care for them by a thousand acts of grace, how dare the ungodly assert that he will not notice the wrongs done to them? There is no limit to the proud man's profanity, reason itself cannot restrain him; he has broken through the bounds of common sense. Jacob's God heard him at the brook Jabbok; Jacob's God led him and kept him all his life long, and said concerning him and his family, "Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm;" and yet these brutish ones profess to believe that he neither sees nor regards the injuries wrought upon the elect people! Surely in such unbelievers is fulfilled the saying of the wise, that those whom the Lord means to destroy he leaves to the madness of their corrupt hearts.

8 Understand, ye brutish among the people: and ye fools, when will ye be wise?

9 He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? he that formed the eye, shall he not see?

10 He that chastiseth the heathen, shall not he correct? he that teacheth man knowledge, *shall not he know?*

11 The LORD knoweth the thoughts of man, that they *are* vanity.

8. "*Understand, ye brutish among the people.*" They said that God did not *note*, and now, using the same word in the original, the Psalmist calls on the wicked to *note*, and have regard to the truth. He designates them as boors, boarish, swinish men, and well was the term deserved; and he bids them understand or consider, if they can. They thought themselves to be wise, and indeed the only men of wit in the world, but he calls them "*boors among the people*": wicked men are fools, and the more they know, the more foolish they become. "No fool like a learned fool" is a true proverb. When a man has done with God, he has done with his manhood, and has fallen to the level of the ox and the ass, yea, beneath them, for "the ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib." Instead of being humbled in the presence of scientific infidels, we ought to pity them; they affect to look down upon us, but we have far more cause to look down upon them. "*And ye fools, when will ye be wise?*" Is it not high time? Ye know the ways of folly, what profit have ye in them? Have ye no relics of reason left? no shreds of sense? If as yet there lingers in your minds a gleam of intelligence, hearken to argument, and consider the questions now about to be proposed to you.

9. "*He that planted the ear, shall he not hear?*" He fashioned that marvellous organ, and fixed it in the most convenient place near to the brain, and is he deaf himself? Is he capable of such design and invention, and yet can he not discern what is done in the world which he made? He made you hear, can he not himself hear? Unanswerable question! It overwhelms the sceptic, and covers him with confusion. "*He that formed the eye, shall he not see?*" He gives us vision; is it conceivable that he has no sight himself? With skilful hand he fashioned the optic nerve, and the eyeball, and all its curious mechanism, and it surpasses all conception that he can himself be unable to observe the doings of his creatures. If there be a God, he must be a personal intelligent being, and no limit can be set to his knowledge.

10. "*He that chastiseth the heathen, shall not he correct?*" He reproveth whole nations, can he not reprove individuals? All history shows that he visits national sin with national judgment, and can he not deal with single persons? The question which follows is equally full of force, and is asked with a degree of warmth which checks the speaker, and causes the inquiry to remain incomplete. It begins, "*He that teacheth man knowledge,*" and then it comes to a pause, which the translators have supplied with the words, "*shall not he know?*" but no such words are in the original, where the sentence comes to an abrupt end, as if the inference were too natural to need to be stated, and the writer had lost patience with the brutish men with whom he had argued. The earnest believer often feels as if he could say, "Go to, you are not worth arguing with! If you were reasonable men, these things would be too obvious to need to be stated in your hearing. I forbear." Man's knowledge comes from God. Science in its first principles was taught to our progenitor Adam,

and all after advances have been due to divine aid ; does not the author and revealer of all knowledge himself know ?

11. Whether men admit or deny that God knows, one thing is here declared, namely, that "*The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity.*" Not their words alone are heard, and their works seen, but he reads the secret motions of their minds, for men themselves are not hard to be discerned of him, before his glance they themselves are but vanity. It is in the Lord's esteem no great matter to know the thoughts of such transparent pieces of vanity as mankind are, he sums them up in a moment as poor vain things. This is the sense of the original, but that given in the authorised version is also true—the thoughts, the best part, the most spiritual portion of man's nature, even these are vanity itself, and nothing better. Poor man ! And yet such a creature as this boasts, plays at monarch, tyrannises over his fellow worms, and defies his God ! Madness is mingled with human vanity, like smoke with the fog, to make it fouler but not more substantial than it would have been alone.

How foolish are those who think that God does not know their actions, when the truth is that their vain thoughts are all perceived by him ! How absurd to make nothing of God when in fact we ourselves are as nothing in his sight.

12 Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O LORD, and teachest him out of thy law ;

13 That thou mayest give him rest from the days of adversity, until the pit be digged for the wicked.

14 For the LORD will not cast off his people, neither will he forsake his inheritance.

15 But judgment shall return unto righteousness : and all the upright in heart shall follow it.

12. "*Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Lord.*" The Psalmist's mind is growing quiet. He no longer complains to God or argues with men, but tunes his harp to softer melodies, for his faith perceives that with the most afflicted believer all is well. Though he may not feel blessed while smarting under the rod of chastisement, yet blessed he is ; he is precious in God's sight, or the Lord would not take the trouble to correct him, and right happy will the results of his correction be. The Psalmist calls the chastened one a "*man*" in the best sense, using the Hebrew word which implies strength. He is a man, indeed, who is under the teaching and training of the Lord. "*And teachest him out of thy law.*" The book and the rod, the law and the chastening, go together, and are made doubly useful by being found in connection. Affliction without the word is a furnace for the metal, but there is no flux to aid the purifying : the word of God supplies that need, and makes the fiery trial effectual. After all, the blessing of God belongs far rather to those who suffer under the divine hand than to those who make others suffer : better far to lie and cry out as a "*man*" under the hand of our heavenly Father, than to roar and rave as a brute, and to bring down upon one's self a death blow from the destroyer of evil. The afflicted believer is under tuition, he is in training for something higher and better, and all that he meets with is working out his highest good, therefore is he a blessed man, however much his outward circumstances may argue the reverse.

13. "*That thou mayest give him rest from the days of adversity, until the pit be digged for the wicked.*" The chastening hand and instructive book are sanctified to us, so that we learn to rest in the Lord. We see that his end is our everlasting benefit, and therefore abide quiet under all trying providences and bitter persecutions, waiting our time. The Mighty Hunter is preparing the pit for the brutish ones ; they are prowling about at this time, and tearing the sheep, but they will soon be captured and destroyed, therefore the people of the Lord learn to rest in days of adversity, and tarry the leisure of their God. Wicked men may not yet be ripe for punishment, nor punishment ready for them : hell is a prepared place for a prepared people ; as days of grace ripen saints for glory, so days of wantonness help sinners to rot into the corruption of eternal destruction.

14. "*For the Lord will not cast off his people.*" He may cast them down, but he never can cast them off. During fierce persecutions the saints have been apt to think that the Lord had left his own sheep, and given them over to the wolf ; but

it has never been so, nor shall it ever be, for the Lord will not withdraw his love, "*neither will he forsake his inheritance.*" For a time he may leave his own with the design of benefiting them thereby, yet never can he utterly desert them.

"He may chasten and correct,
But he never can neglect ;
May in faithfulness reprove,
But he ne'er can cease to love."

15. "*But judgment shall return unto righteousness.*" The great Judge will come, the reign of righteousness will commence, the course of affairs will yet be turned into the right channel, and then all the godly will rejoice. The chariot of right will be drawn in triumph through our streets, "*and all the upright in heart shall follow it,*" as in gladsome procession. A delightful hope is here expressed in poetic imagery of much beauty. The government of the world has been for a while in the hands of those who have used it for the basest and most vicious ends ; but the cry of prayer will bring back righteousness to the throne, and then every upright heart will have its portion of joy.

16 Who will rise up for me against the evildoers ? or who will stand up for me against the workers of iniquity ?

Notwithstanding the Psalmist's persuasion that all would be well eventually, he could not at the time perceive any one who would stand side by side with him in opposing evil ; no champion of the right was forthcoming, the faithful failed from among men. This also is a bitter trial, and a sore evil under the sun ; yet it has its purpose, for it drives the heart still more completely to the Lord, compelling it to rest alone in him. If we could find friends elsewhere, it may be our God would not be so dear to us ; but when, after calling upon heaven and earth to help, we meet with no succour but such as comes from the eternal arm, we are led to prize our God, and rest upon him with undivided trust. Never is the soul safer or more at rest than when, all other helpers failing, she leans upon the Lord alone. The verse before us is an appropriate cry, now that the church sees error invading her on all sides, while faithful ministers are few, and fewer still are bold enough to "stand up" and defy the enemies of truth. Where are our Luthers and our Calvins ? A false charity has enfeebled the most of the valiant men of Israel. One John Knox would be worth a mint at this hour, but where is he ? Our grand consolation is that the God of Knox and Luther is yet with us, and in due time will call out his chosen champions.

17 Unless the LORD *had been* my help, my soul had almost dwelt in silence.

18 When I said, My foot slippeth ; thy mercy, O LORD, held me up.

19 In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul.

17. "*Unless the Lord had been my help, my soul had almost dwelt in silence.*" Without Jehovah's help the Psalmist declares that he should have died outright, and gone into the silent land, where no more testimonies can be borne for the living God. Or he may mean that he would not have had a word to speak against his enemies, but would have been wrapped in speechless shame. Blessed be God, we are not left to that condition yet, for the Almighty Lord is still the helper of all those who look to him. Our inmost soul is bowed down when we see the victories of the Lord's enemies—we cannot brook it, we cover our mouths in confusion ; but he will yet arise and avenge his own cause, therefore have we hope.

18. "*When I said, My foot slippeth*"—is slipping even now : I perceived my danger, and cried out in horror, and then, at the very moment of my extremity, came the needed help, "*thy mercy, O Lord, held me up.*" Often enough is this the case, we feel our weakness, and see our danger, and in fear and trembling we cry out. At such times nothing can help us but *mercy* ; we can make no appeal to any fancied merit, for we feel that it is our inbred sin which makes our feet so ready to fail us ; our joy is that mercy endureth for ever, and is always at hand to pluck us out of the danger, and hold us up, where else we should fall to our destruction. Ten thousand times has this verse been true in relation to some of us, and especially to the writer of this comment. The danger was imminent, it was upon us, we were

going ; the peril was apparent, we saw it, and were aghast at the sight ; our own heart was failing, and we concluded that it was all over with us ; but then came the almighty interposition : we did not fall, we were held up by an unseen hand, the devices of the enemy were frustrated, and we sang for joy. O faithful Keeper of our souls, be thou extolled for ever and ever ! We will bless the Lord at all times, his praise shall continually be in our mouths.

19. "*In the multitude of my thoughts within me.*" When I am tossed to and fro with various reasonings, distractions, questionings, and forebodings, I will fly to my true rest, for "*thy comforts delight my soul.*" From my sinful thoughts, my vain thoughts, my sorrowful thoughts, my griefs, my cares, my conflicts, I will hasten to the Lord ; he has divine *comforts*, and these will not only console but actually *delight* me. How sweet are the comforts of the Spirit ! Who can muse upon eternal love, immutable purposes, covenant promises, finished redemption, the risen Saviour, his union with his people, the coming glory, and such like themes, without feeling his heart leaping with joy ? The little world within is, like the great world without, full of confusion and strife ; but when Jesus enters it, and whispers "Peace be unto you," there is a calm, yea, a rapture of bliss. Let us turn away from the mournful contemplation of the oppression of man and the present predominance of the wicked, to that sanctuary of pure rest which is found in the God of all comfort.

20 Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee, which frameth mischief by a law ?

21 They gather themselves together against the soul of the righteous, and condemn the innocent blood.

20. "*Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee ?*" Such thrones there are, and they plead a right divine, but their claim is groundless, a fraud upon mankind and a blasphemy of heaven. God enters into no alliance with unjust authority, he gives no sanction to unrighteous legislation. "*Which frameth mischief by a law ?*" They legalise robbery and violence, and then plead that it is the law of the land ; and so indeed it may be, but it is a wickedness for all that. With great care men prepare enactments intended to put down all protests, so as to render wrong-doing a permanent institution, but one element is necessary to true conservatism, viz., righteousness ; and lacking that, all their arrangements of the holders of power must come to an end, and all their decrees must in process of time be wiped out of the statute-book. Nothing can last for ever but impartial right. No injustice can be permanent, for God will not set his seal upon it, nor have any fellowship with it, and therefore down it must come, and happy shall be the day which sees it fall.

21. "*They gather themselves together against the soul of the righteous,*" so many are there of them that they crowd their assemblies, and carry their hard measures with enthusiasm ; they are the popular party, and are eager to put down the saints. In counsel, and in action, they are unanimous ; their one resolve is to hold their own tyrannical position, and put down the godly party. "*And condemn the innocent blood.*" They are great at slander and false accusation, nor do they stick at murder ; no crime is too great for them, if only they can trample on the servants of the Lord. This description is historically true in reference to persecuting times ; it has been fulfilled in England, and may be again if Popery is to advance in future time at the same rate as in the past few years. The dominant sect has the law on its side, and boasts that it is the national church ; but the law which establishes and endows one religion rather than another is radically an injustice, God has no fellowship with it, and therefore the synagogue of Ritualism will yet be a stench in the nostrils of all sane men. What evil times are in store for us it is not for us to prophesy ; it is ours to leave the matter in the hands of him who cannot be in fellowship with an oppressive system, and will not always endure to be insulted to his face by Popish idols, and their priests.

22 But the LORD is my defence ; and my God is the rock of my refuge.

23 And he shall bring upon them their own iniquity, and shall cut them off in their own wickedness ; yea, the LORD our God shall cut them off.

22. Let the wicked gather as they may, the Psalmist is not afraid, but sweetly sings, "*The Lord is my defence ; and my God is the rock of my refuge.*" Firm as a rock is Jehovah's love, and there do we betake ourselves for shelter. In him, even

in him alone, we find safety, let the world rage as it may; we ask not aid from man, but are content to flee into the bosom of omnipotence.

23. The natural result of oppression is the destruction of the despot; his own iniquities crush him ere long. Providence arranges retaliations as remarkable as they are just. High crimes in the end bring on heavy judgments, to sweep away evil men from off the face of the earth; yea, God himself interposes in a special manner, and cuts short the career of tyrants while they are in the very midst of their crimes. Wicked men are often arrested by the pursuivants of divine justice redhanded, with the evidences of their guilt upon them. "*He shall bring upon them their own iniquity, and shall cut them off in their own wickedness.*" While the stolen bread is in their mouths wrath slays them, while the illgotten wedge of gold is yet in their tent judgment overtakes them. God himself conspicuously visits them, and reveals his own power in their overthrow, "*yea, the Lord our God shall cut them off.*"

Here, then, the matter ends; faith reads the present in the light of the future, and ends her song without a trembling note.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS.

Verse 1.—"O Lord God, to whom vengeance belongeth." It may perhaps seem to accord too little with a lover of piety, so strenuously to urge upon God to show himself an avenger against the wicked, and to rouse him as if he were lingering and procrastinating. But this supplication must be regarded in its proper bearing: for David does not pray, neither should we pray, that God would take vengeance on the wicked in the same way that men, inflamed with anger and hatred, are wont often to avenge themselves of their enemies, but that he would punish them after his own divine manner and measure. The vengeance of God is for the most part a medicine for the evil; but ours is at times destruction even to the good. Therefore truly the Lord is alone the God of revenges. For we, when we think we have inflicted a penalty upon our enemy, are often much mistaken. What injury to us was the body of our enemy? in depriving him of which we nevertheless express all our bitterness. What wounded thee and wrought thee harm and shame, was the spirit of thine enemy, and that thou art not able to seize and hold, but God is able; and he alone has such power that in no way can the spirit escape his strength and force. Leave vengeance with him, and he will repay. He admonishes us, that if we ourselves wish to be avengers of our own pains and injuries we may hurt ourselves more deeply than our enemy: for when we take vengeance on him, we indeed wound and do violence to his body, which in itself is vile and of little regard; but in our own best and most precious part, that is, in our spirit; we ourselves, by losing patience, receive a deep stain, because when virtue and humanity have been expelled thence, we meanwhile incur faults to be atoned for therein. Wherefore God is entreated to become himself the avenger of our injuries, for he alone knows aright and is able to avenge; and to become such an avenger that only the very thing which injured us may be punished. Some greedy man has cheated thee in money, may he punish avarice in him. A proud man has treated thee with scorn, may he destroy his pride, etc. . . . This is vengeance most worthy to be inflicted of God, and by us to be sought.—*Jacopo Sadoletto, 1477—1547.*

Verse 1.—I do not think that we sufficiently attend to the distinction that exists between revenge and vengeance. "Revenge," says Dr. Johnson, "is an act of passion, vengeance of justice; injuries are revenged, crimes avenged." And it is from not attending to this essential distinction that the scorner has been led into such profane remarks, as if there were a vindictive spirit in the Almighty, and as if he found delight in wreaking vengeance on an adversary. The call which the Psalmist here makes on God as a God to whom vengeance belongeth, is no other than if he had said, "O God, to whom justice belongeth!" Vengeance indeed is not for man, because with man's feelings and propensities it would ever degenerate into revenge. "I will be even with him," says nature; "I will be above him," says grace.—*Barton Bouchier.*

Verse 1.—The two divine names (*El* and *Jehovah*,—*God* and *Lord*) recognize

God as almighty, eternal, self-existent, bound by covenant to his people, and alone entitled to take vengeance.—*J. A. Alexander.*

Verses 1—6.—

“Avenge, O Lord, thy slaughter’d saints, whose bones
Lie scatter’d on the Alpine mountains cold ;
Even them who kept thy truth so pure of old,
When all our fathers worshipt stocks and stones,
Forget not : in thy book record their groans
Who were thy sheep, and in their ancient fold
Slain by the bloody Piemontese that roll’d
Mother with infant down the rocks. Their moans
The vales redoubled to the hills, and they
To heaven. Their martyr’d blood and ashes wow
O’er all the Italian fields, where still doth sway
The triple Tyrant ; that from these may grow
A hundredfold, who, having learn’d the way,
Early may fly the Babylonian woe.”

John Milton.

Verse 3.—“*How long shall the wicked, how long,*” etc. Twice he saith it, because the wicked boast day after day, with such insolency and outrage, as if they were above control.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 3.—“*How long shall the wicked triumph ?*” For “*triumph,*” the Hebrew word is *וָיָצַח* which signifies to exalt. That is, they give themselves vain applause on account of their prosperity, and declare their success both with words and with the gestures of their body, like peacocks spreading their feathers. “*How long shall they utter ?*” etc. For “*utter*” the Hebrew is *וָיָצַח*, they shall flow, they shall cast forth. The metaphor is taken from fountains springing out of the rock with a rush and abundance of water. Where the abundance of words is noted, their rashness, their waste and profusion, their sound and eagerness, their continuance and the difficulty of obstructing them.—*Le Blanc.*

Verse 3.—“*How long shall the wicked triumph ?*” What answer shall we give, what date shall we put to this, “*How long ?*” The answer is given in verse 23, “*He shall bring upon them their own iniquity, and shall cut them off in their own wickedness,*” etc. As if he had said, Except the Lord cut them off in their wickedness, they will never leave off doing wickedly. They are men of such a kind that there is no curing of them, they will never have done doing mischief until they be cut off by death, therefore God threatens death to deter men from sin. A godly man saith, “*If God kill me, yet will I trust in him ;*” and some wicked men say (in effect, if not in the letter), *Till God kills us we will sin against him.*—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verses 3, 4.—“*Triumph,*” “*utter and speak,*” “*boast.*” In the very terms wherein the Psalmist complains of the continued prevalence of the wicked, there is matter of comfort, for we have three (rather four, as in the authorised version) words to denote speaking, and only one, *workers*, to denote action, showing us that they are far more powerful with their tongues than with their hands.—*Hugo Cardinalis, quoted by Neale.*

Verse 5.—“*They break in pieces thy people.*” They tread down ; they grind ; they crush. The Hebrew word is often used as meaning to crush under foot ; to trample on ; and hence it means to oppress. Lam. iii. 34, Isai. iii. 15.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 6.—“*Widow ;*” “*fatherless.*” An old Jewish writer * has pointed out how aptly the titles of *widow* and *orphan* befitted the Hebrew nation, because it had no helper save God only, and was cut off from all other people by its peculiar rites and usages, whereas the Gentiles, by their mutual alliances and intercourse, had, as it were, a multitude of kindred to help them in any strait.—*J. M. Neale.*

Verse 7.—“*They say, The Lord shall not see.*” As if they had said, Though God should set himself to search us out, and would greatly wish to see what we are doing, yet he shall not. We will carry it so closely and cunningly, that the eye of God shall not reach us. Their works were so foul and bloody, that the sun might be

* Philo Judæus.

ashamed to look upon them, and they were so secret that they believed God could not look upon them, or bring them to shame for them.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 7.—“*The Lord . . . the God of Jacob.*” The divine names are, as usual, significant. That the self-existent and eternal God should not see, is a palpable absurdity; and scarcely less so, that the God of Israel should suffer his own people to be slaughtered without even observing it. The last verb means to mark, note, notice.—*J. A. Alexander.*

Verses 8—11.—In these words the following particulars are to be observed. (1.) A certain spiritual *disease* charged on *some* persons, *viz.* darkness, and *blindness* of mind, appearing in their ignorance and folly. (2.) The *great degree* of this disease; so as to render the subjects of it *fools*. “*Ye fools, when will ye be wise?*” And so as to reduce them to a degree of *brutishness*. “*Ye brutish among the people.*” This ignorance and folly were to such a degree as to render men like beasts. (3.) The *obstinacy* of this disease; expressed in that interrogation, “*When will ye be wise?*” Their blindness and folly were not only very great, but deeply rooted and established, resisting all manner of cure. (4.) Of what *nature* this blindness is. It is especially in things pertaining to God. They were strangely *ignorant* of his perfections, like beasts; and had *foolish* notions of him, as though he did not see, nor know: and as though he would not execute justice, by chastising and punishing wicked men. (5.) The *unreasonableness* and *sottishness* of the notion they had of God, that he did not *hear*, did not *observe* their reproaches of him and his people, is shown by observing that he *planted* the ear. It is very *unreasonable* to suppose that he who gave power of perceiving words to *others*, should not perceive them himself. And the *sottishness* of their being insensible of God’s all-seeing eye, and particularly of his seeing their wicked actions, appears, in that God is the being who *formed* the eye, and gave others a *power* of seeing. The *sottishness* of their apprehension of God, as though he did not know what they did, is argued from his being the *fountain* and original of all knowledge. The *unreasonableness* of their expecting to escape God’s just chastisements and judgments for sin, is set forth by his chastising even the *heathen*, who did not sin against that light, or against so great mercies, as the wicked in Israel did; nor had ever made such a profession as they. (6.) We may observe, that this dreadful disease is ascribed to *mankind in general*. “*The Lord knoweth the thoughts of MAN, that they are vanity.*” The Psalmist had been setting forth the vanity and unreasonableness of the thoughts of *some* of the children of men; and immediately upon it he observes, that this vanity and foolishness of thought is *common* and *natural* to *mankind*. From these particulars we may fairly deduce the following doctrinal observation: *That there is an extreme and brutish blindness in things of religion, which naturally possesses the hearts of mankind.*—*Jonathan Edwards.*

Verses 8—15.—God hath ability, bowels, verity. Ability, *He that made the eye, cannot he see?* *He that planted the ear, cannot he hear?* verses 8, 9, 10, 11. Bowels, *He doth but chasten his, not cast them off,* verses 12, 13, 14. Verity, *this is but until a pit be made for the wicked,* verse 13. *Mordecai* is frowned upon, but till a gallows be made for Haman, and then *judgment returns unto righteousness.*—*Nicholas Lockyer.*

Verse 9.—“*He that planted the ear, shall he not hear?*” etc. The Psalmist does not say, *He that planteth the ear, hath he not an ear?* *He that formed the eye, hath he not eyes?* No; but, *Shall he not hear?* *Shall he not see?* And why does he say so? To prevent the error of humanizing God, of attributing members or corporeal parts to the infinite Spirit.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 9.—“*Planted the ear.*” The mechanism of the ear, like a root *planted* in the earth, is sunk deep into the head, and concealed from view.—*Bagster’s Comprehensive Bible.*

Verse 9.—The *planting* or deep seated position of the ear, as well as its wonderful construction, are illustrated by the following extract:—“The organ or instrument of hearing is in all its most important parts so hidden within the head, that we cannot perceive its construction by a mere external inspection. What in ordinary language we call the ear, is only the outer porch or entrance-vestible of a curious series of intricate, winding passages, which, like the lobbies of a great building, lead from the outer air into the inner chambers. Certain of these passages are full of air; others are full of liquid; and their membranes are stretched like parchment

curtains across the corridors at different places, and can be thrown into vibration, or made to tremble, as the head of a drum or the surface of a tambourine does when struck with a stick or the fingers. Between two of these parchment-like curtains, a chain of very small bones extends, which serves to tighten or relax these membranes, and to communicate vibrations to them. In the innermost place of all, rows of fine threads, called nerves, stretch like the strings of a piano from the last points to which the tremblings or thrillings reach, and pass inwards to the brain. If these threads or nerves are destroyed, the power of hearing as infallibly departs as the power to give out sound is lost by a piano or violin when its strings are broken.

We know far less, however, of the ear than of the eye. The eye is a single chamber open to the light, and we can see into it, and observe what happens there. But the ear is many-chambered, and its winding tunnels traversing the rock-like bones of the skull are narrow, and hidden from us as the dungeons of a castle are, like which, also, they are totally dark. Thus much, however, we know, that it is in the innermost recesses of these unilluminated ivory vaults, that the mind is made conscious of sound. Into these gloomy cells, as into the bright chamber of the eye, the soul is ever passing and asking for news from the world without; and ever and anon, as of old in hidden subterranean caverns where men listened in silence and darkness to the utterance of oracles, reverberations echo along the surrounding walls, and responses come to the waiting spirit, whilst the world lifts up its voice and speaks to the soul. The sound is that of a hushed voice, a low but clear whisper; for as it is but a dim shadow of the outer world we see; so it is but a faint echo of the outer world we hear."—George Wilson, in "*The Five Gateways of Knowledge*," 1861.

Verse 9.—"He that planted the ear, &c." Shall the Author of these senses be senseless? Our God is not as that Jupiter of Crete, who was pictured without ears, and could not be at leisure to attend upon small matters. He is οὐς καὶ νοῦ; he is also ἀσφθαλμός, all eye, all ear. We read of a people called *Panotii*; God only is so, to speak properly.—John Trapp.

Verse 9.—"Formed the eye." The term used of the creation of the eye, is not merely "made," as the Prayer Book version reads, but "formed," πλάσας, *finxit*, directing our attention to the wonderful mechanism of the organs of sight, and thence to the marvellous skill of the Artificer.—J. M. Neale.

Verse 9.—"He that formed the eye." The word here used is frequently employed in reference to a potter; and the idea is that God has moulded or formed the eye as the potter fashions the clay. The more the eye is studied in its structure, the more deeply shall we be impressed with the wonderful skill and wisdom of God.—Albert Barnes.

Verse 9.—"The eye." As illustrating the wisdom displayed in the eye we have selected the following. "Our physical good demands that we should have the power of comprehending the world in all the respects in which it is possible for matter or its forces to affect our bodies. The senses completely meet this want. . . . We are too apt to confine ourselves to the mere mechanism of the eye or ear, without considering how the senses supplement each other, and without considering the provision made in the world that it may be a fit place for the exercise of the senses. The eye would be useless without all the properties of light; the ear would have no power in a world without an atmosphere. Sight enables us to avoid danger, and seek distant needful objects. What a vast length of time and wearisome labour would it require for a blind man to learn what one glance of the eye may give to one blessed with sight. A race of blind men could not exist on this globe.

The sense of sight alone, as a means of adapting us to the world, would strike us as wonderful in its results, and worthy of the conception of the highest intelligence in adapting means to ends, if we knew nothing of the adjustments by which sight is secured. We can conceive of the power of sight as direct perception, without the aid of light, or of a special organ corresponding to the eye. But constituted as we are, we see only through the agency of light; and we perceive light only by a special organ; and objects only in consequence of a peculiar structure of that organ. Of all these relationships of light to objects, and of light to the eye, and of the parts of the eye to each other, not one of them is a necessary condition of matter. The arrangement of so many things by which this wonderful power of perceiving distant objects is secured, is the only one that will secure the end desired, out of an endless number of arrangements that can be conceived of. . . . Whoever contrived the organ through which we are to perceive, understood perfectly all the properties of light,

and the wants of the being that was to use it. The eye of man, though limited in its power to a certain range, gives all that the common wants of life demand. And if man needs greater range of vision, he has but to study the eye itself, and fashion instruments to increase its power; as he is able when the proper time has come in his civilization, to increase by science and art the efficacy of nearly all his physical powers. For the ordinary purposes of life, neither telescopic nor microscopic adjustment of the eye is needful.

But the eye has not only the power of vision so necessary to man, but it is an instrument of power, an instrument made up of distinct parts, of solids and liquids, of transparent and opaque tissues, of curtains, and lenses, and screens. Its mechanism can be accurately examined and the use of each part as perfectly understood as any of the works of man. We examine every part of it as we would a microscope. We have first the solid case which is to hold all the machinery, and upon which are to be fastened the cords and pulleys of its skilful mounting. This covering, opaque, white, and glistening, like silver on the back and sides of the eye, in front, where the light must enter, suddenly becomes transparent as the clearest crystal. Within this is a second coating that coming to the front changes just as suddenly into an opaque screen, through the tissues of which no ray of light can pass. That screen is self-adjusting, with a net-work that no art of man ever equalled. Whether expanding or contracting, its opening in the centre always remains a perfect circle, adapted in size to the intensity of the light. How much light shall enter the eye it determines without aid from us. Next there must be connection with the brain, the seat of the being for whom the provision is made. These two coatings are pierced upon the back part of the eye, and a thread drawn out from the brain is passed through this opening and spread out within the eye as a delicate screen upon which all impressions are to be made. To fill the larger portion of the cavity, there is packed into it a clear jelly, and imbedded in this a lens, fashioned with a skill that no artist can equal, to refract the light and throw the image on the perceptive screen. In front of this lens is another humor, not like jelly as the other, because in this, that delicate fringe the iris, is to float, and nothing but a watery fluid will answer its purpose. Here then we have a great variety of materials all brought together, of the exact quality and in the quantity needed, placed in the exact position which they ought to occupy, so perfectly adjusted that the most that man can do is to imitate the eye without ever hoping to equal it.

Nor is the curious structure of the eye itself all that is worthy of our attention. The instrument when finished must be mounted for use. A cavity is formed in solid bone, with grooves and perforations for all the required machinery. The eye, when placed, is packed with soft elastic cushions and fastened by strings and pulleys to give it variety and rapidity of motion. Its outer case is to cover it when not in use, and protect it when in danger. The delicate fringe upon its border never needs clipping; and set like a well-arranged defence, its points all gracefully turned back, that no ray of light may be obstructed. Above the protecting brow is another defence to turn aside the acrid fluids from the forehead, while near the eye is placed a gland that bathes the whole organ with a clear soothing fluid, to prevent all friction and keep its outward lens free from dust, and polished for constant use. When we consider all this, the perfect adaptation of the eye to our wants, the arrangement of every part of its structure on strict mechanical and optical principles, and all the provisions for its protection, we pronounce the instrument perfect, the work of a Being like man, but raised immeasurably above the most skilful human workman. What shall we say when we learn that this instrument was prepared in long anticipation of its use; that there is a machinery within it to keep it in constant repair; that the Maker not only adjusted the materials, but that he was the chemist who formed all these substances from the dust of the earth? We may be told that the architect found this dust ready at hand, existing from all eternity. We may not be able to prove the contrary, nor do we need to do so for this argument. It is enough for our present purpose to know that the eyes with which we now see, these wonderfully complex and perfect instruments, were not long since common earth, dust upon which we perchance have trod.

We can understand the mechanism of the eye, we can comprehend the wisdom that devised it; but the preparation of materials, and the adjustment of parts, speak of a power and skill to which man can never hope to attain. When he sees his most cunning workmanship surpassed both in plan and execution, shall he fail to recognise design? Shall we fail to recognise a builder when we contemplate such

a work?"—P. A. Chadbourne, in *"Lectures on Natural Theology; or, Nature and the Bible from the same Author. New York, 1867."*

Verse 9.—"Shall he not see?" A god or a saint that should really cast the glance of a pure eye into the conscience of the worshipper would not long be held in repute. The grass would grow again around that idol's shrine. A seeing god would not do: the idolater wants a blind god. The first cause of idolatry is a desire in an impure heart to escape from the look of the living God, and none but a dead image would serve the turn.—William Arnot.

Verse 9.—He who made the sun itself, and causes it to revolve, being a small portion of his works, if compared with the whole, is he unable to perceive all things?—Epictetus.

Verse 9.—That is wise counsel of the Rabbins, that the three best safeguards against falling into sin are to remember, first, that there is an ear which hears everything; secondly, that there is an eye which sees everything; thirdly, that there is a hand which writes everything in the Book of Knowledge, which shall be opened at the Judgment.—J. M. Neale.

Verses 9, 10.—It was no limited power that could make this eye to see, this ear to hear, this heart to understand; and, if that eye which he hath given us, can see all things that are within our prospect, and that ear, that he hath planted, can hear all sounds that are within our compass, and that heart, that he hath given us, can know all matters within the reach of our comprehension; how much more shall the sight, and hearing, and knowledge of that Infinite Spirit, which can admit of no bounds, extend to all the actions and events of all the creatures, that lie open before him that made them!—Joseph Hall.

Verse 10.—"He that teacheth man knowledge——." The question posts midway (for the words in Italics are not Scripture), the point of application being too obvious to need mention. "He that teacheth man all his knowledge." [Fill out the rest yourselves: think, What then?]
—Henry Cowles.

Verse 10.—"He that teacheth man knowledge." What knowledge have we but that which is derived from himself, or from the external world?—and what is that world, but his Creation?—and what is creation, but the composition, structure, and arrangement of all things according to his previous designs, plans, intentions, will, and mandate? In studying creation in any of its departments, we therefore study his mind: and all that we can learn from it must be his ideas, his purposes, and his performances. No author, in his compositions—no artificer, in his mechanisms, can more truly display their talents and ideas to others, than the unseen Creator manifests his thoughts and intelligence to us in the systems and substances which he has formed, and presents to our continual contemplation. In this sense, Nature is an unceasing revelation of them to us.—Sharon Turner.

Verse 11.—"The Lord knoweth the thoughts." The thoughts of man's heart—what millions are there of them in a day! The twinkling of the eye is not so sudden a thing as the twinkling of a thought; yet those thousands and thousands of thoughts which pass from thee, that thou canst not reckon, they are all known to God.—Anthony Burgess.

Verse 11.—"The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity." What a humbling thought is here suggested to us! Let us examine it.

1. If vanity had been ascribed to the meaner parts of the creation—if all inanimate and irrational beings, whose days are as a shadow, and who know not whence they came nor whither they go, had thus been characterized—it had little more than accorded with our own ideas. But the humiliating truth belongs to man, the lord of the lower creation—to man, that distinguished link in the chain of being which unites in his person mortality and immortality, heaven and earth. "The LORD knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity."

2. Had vanity been ascribed only to the exercise of our sensual or mortal part, or of that which we possess in common with other animals, it had been less humiliating. But the charge is pointed at that which is the peculiar glory of man, the intellectual part, his thoughts. It is here, if anywhere, that we excel the creatures which are placed around us. We can contemplate our own existence, dive into the past and the future, and understand whence we came and whither we go. Yet in this tender part we are touched. Even the "thoughts" of man are vanity.

3. If vanity had been ascribed merely to those loose and trifling excursions of

the imagination which fall not under the influence of choice, a kind of comers and goers, which are ever floating in the mind, like insects in the air on a summer's evening, it had been less affecting. The soul of man seems to be necessarily active. Everything we see, hear, taste, feel, or perceive, has some influence upon thought, which is moved by it as leaves on the trees are moved by every breeze of wind. But "thoughts" here include those exercises of the mind in which it is voluntarily or intensely engaged, and in which we are in earnest; even all our schemes, contrivances, and purposes. One would think, if there were anything in man to be accounted of, it should be those exercises in which his intellectual faculty is seriously and intensely employed. Yet the Lord knoweth that even these are vanity.

4. If during our state of childhood and youth only vanity had been ascribed to our thoughts, it would have been less surprising. This is a truth of which numberless parents have painful proof; yea, and of which children themselves, as they grow up to maturity, are generally conscious. Vanity at this period, however, admits of some apology. The obstinacy and folly of some young people, while they provoke disgust, often excite a tear of pity. But the charge is exhibited against man. "*Man at his best estate is altogether vanity.*"

5. The decision proceeds from a quarter from which there can be no appeal. "*The Lord knoweth*" it. Opinions dishonourable to our species may sometimes arise from ignorance, sometimes from spleen and disappointment, and sometimes from a gloomy turn of mind, which views mankind through a distorted medium. But the judgment given in this passage is the decision of him who cannot err; a decision therefore to which, if we had no other proof, it becomes us to accede.—*Andrew Fuller.*

Verse 11.—"*They are vanity.*" The Syriac version is, *for they are a vapour.* Compare James iv. 14.—*John Gill.*

Verse 12.—"*Blessed is the man,*" &c. I shall show the various benefits of affliction, when it is sanctified by the Spirit of God to those persons who are exercised by it. I. The Great God has made affliction the occasion of converting sinners, and bringing them into a spiritual acquaintance with Christ his Son. See Isa. xlviii. 10. II. God not only makes affliction the occasion of converting sinners at first, but after conversion he sanctifies an afflicted state to the saints, to weaken the remains of indwelling sin in them, and make them afraid of sinning against him in future time. III. God, in afflicting the saints, increases that good work of grace, which his Spirit has implanted in them. God causes his saints to grow in grace, when he corrects them with the rod of sorrow; God assimilates and makes the saints like unto himself, in a greater degree, by temporal troubles and distresses. Heb. xii. 10, 11. IV. God afflicts the saints for the improvement of their knowledge in divine things. The Psalmist says, in the words of the text, "*Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of thy law.*" See also Ps. cxix. 71. V. The great God, by afflicting the saints, brings them unto him with greater nearness and frequency, by prayer and supplication. VI. God afflicts the saints, to make them better acquainted with the perfections of his nature. VII. To make them more conformed to Christ his Son. VIII. To subdue the pride of their hearts, and make them more humble. IX. God oftentimes discovers to the saints, in the season of their affliction, in a clearer manner, that grace which he has implanted in them, and refreshes their souls with the consolations of his Spirit. X. God afflicts the saints, to divide their hearts more from the love of the world, and to make them more meet for heaven.—*Outline of a Sermon by John Farmer, 1744.*

Verse 12.—Here observe generally, what it is which afflictions, or God by afflictions, teacheth his children; even the self-same thing which he teacheth in his word; as the schoolmaster teacheth his scholars the same thing by the rod, which he teacheth by words. The word, then, is the storehouse of all instruction. Look not for any new diverse doctrine to be taught thee by affliction, which is not in the word. For, in truth, herein stands our teaching by affliction, that it fits and prepares us for the word, by breaking and sub-dividing the stubbornness of our hearts, and making them pliable, and capable of the impression of the word. Wherefore, as the Apostle saith, that the law is our schoolmaster to Christ, Gal. iii. Because the law, by showing unto us our disease, forceth us to the physician. So likewise it may be said that afflictions are schoolmasters to the law. For whilst we are at ease and in prosperity, though the sons of thunder terrify never so much with the fearful cracks of legal menaces, yet are we as deaf men, nothing moved therewith.

But when we are humbled and meekened by affliction, then is there way made for the terrors of the law; then do we begin with some reverence of attention to listen and give ear unto them. When therefore God sends us any affliction, we must know that then he sends us to the law and to the testimony. For he teaches us indeed in our affliction, but it is in his law. And therefore if in our affliction we will learn anything, we must take God's book into our hands, and carefully and seriously peruse it. And hereby shall it appear that our afflictions have been our teachers, if by them we have felt ourselves stirred up to greater diligence, zeal, and reverence in reading and hearing the word. . . . After that the prophet had preferred his complaint to the Lord against the adversaries of the church, from the first verse to the eighth, he leaveth God, and in a sudden conversion of speech, turns himself from the party complained unto, to the parties complained of, the cruel oppressors of the church, terrifying them by those just judgments of God, which in fine must overtake them, and so consequently cheering and comforting the distressed church. But because the distress of the church's enemies of itself could be no sufficient matter of comfort unto her, therefore a second argument of further and that far more effectual consolation is added in this twelfth verse, drawn from the happy condition of the church, even whilst she is thus overborne with those tigerly and tyrannical persecutors. And the argument is propounded by the prophet, not directing his speech to the church, but rather in his own person bringing in the church suddenly turning her speech from her enemies, with whom she was expostulating, to God himself, and breaking forth into this pathetic expostulation, "*Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of thy law.*" From the coherence of which words with the former, we may observe, that the outward miseries of our enemies is but cold comfort, unless withal we have a persuasion of our own inward happiness. . . . It would do the child little good to see the rod cast into the fire, if he himself should be cast in after it. Therefore the church having in this place meditated of the just judgments of God, which should in due time befall her adversaries, and not finding sufficiency of comfort therein, here in this verse proceedeth to a further meditation of her own case and condition. Wherein she seemeth thus to reason to herself. What though these mine enemies be brought to their deserved ends? what though I know they be reserved for shame and confusion? What ease can this bring to my mind now dejected, and happy thinking itself as miserable as these my foes? Now these doubtful thoughts something disquieting her, further comfort is ministered unto her by the Spirit of God in this verse, whereby she is enabled to answer that objection she made against herself, namely, that she is assured, that as her adversaries' case is wretched, so is her own most happy and blessed.—*Daniel Dyke, in "The Schoole of Affliction," 1633.*

Verse 12.—"Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest," etc. If by outward afflictions thy soul be brought more under the inward teachings of God, doubtless thy afflictions are in love. All the chastening in the world, without divine teaching, will never make a man blessed; that man that finds correction attended with instruction, and lashing with lessoning, is a happy man. If God, by the affliction that is upon thee, shall teach thee how to loathe sin more, how to trample upon the world more, and how to walk with God more, thy afflictions are in love. If God shall teach thee by afflictions how to die to sin more, and how to die to thy relations more, and how to die to thy self-interest more, thy afflictions are in love. If God shall teach thee by afflictions how to live to Christ more, how to lift up Christ more, and how to long for Christ more, thy afflictions are in love. If God shall teach thee by afflictions to get assurance of a better life, and to be still in a gracious readiness and preparedness for the day of thy death, thy afflictions are in love. If God shall teach thee by afflictions how to mind heaven more, and how to fit for heaven more, thy afflictions are in love. If God by afflictions shall teach thy proud heart how to lie more low, and thy hard heart how to grow more humble, and thy censorious heart how to grow more charitable, and thy carnal heart how to grow more spiritual, and thy froward heart how to grow more quiet, &c., thy afflictions are in love. Pambo, an illiterate dunce, as the historian terms him, was a-learning that one lesson, "I said I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue," nineteen years, and yet had not learned it. Ah! it is to be feared that there are many who have been in this school of affliction above this nineteen years, and yet have not learned any saving lesson all this while. Surely their afflictions are not in love, but in wrath. Where God loves, he afflicts in love, and wherever God afflicts in love, there he will first and last teach such souls such lessons as shall do them good to all eternity.

If you enjoy the special presence of God with your spirits in your affliction, then your affliction is in love. Hast thou a special presence of God with thy spirit, strengthening of that, stilling of that, satisfying of that, cheering and comforting of that? "*In the multitude of my thoughts,*"—that is, of my troubled, intricate, ensnared, intertwined, and perplexed thoughts, as the branches of a tree by some strong wind are twisted one within another, as the Hebrew word properly signifies,—"*Thy comforts delight my soul.*" Here is a presence of God with his soul, here are comforts and delights that reach the soul, here is a cordial to strengthen the spirit.—*Thomas Brooks.*

Verse 12.—You may and ought to get especial rejoicing faith out of sanctified afflictions. Thus: "Whom God doth correct and teach, *him* he loves, *he* is blessed: (Ps. xciv. 12: Heb. xii. 6:) but God doth so to me: *ergo.*" Here are bills and prayers for mercies; but who looks after the issue, the teaching, the holy use? Sanctified afflictions are very good evidences, and so very comfortable. There are those who would not have lost their sufferings, temptations, afflictions, for any good. The blessed Spirit hath taught them that way many a divine truth by heart out of the word; they are sensible of it, and from it conclude the love of God in Christ to them; and thence they have joy and comfort,—that joy that angels cannot give, and devils cannot take. Sanctified troubles are tokens of special love.—*Christopher Fowler* (1610—1678,) in "*The Morning Exercises.*"

Verse 12.—If we have nothing but the rod, we profit not by the rod; yea, if we have nothing but the word, we shall never profit by the word. It is the Spirit given with the word, and the Spirit given with the rod, by which we profit under both, or either. Chastening and divine teaching must go together, else there will be no profit by chastening.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 12.—God sees that the sorrows of life are very good for us; for, as seeds that are deepest covered with snow in winter flourish most in spring; or as the wind by beating down the flame raiseth it higher and hotter; and as when we would have fires flame the more, we sprinkle water upon them; even so, when the Lord would increase our joy and thankfulness, he allays it with the tears of affliction.—*H. G. Salter.*

Verse 12.—"And teachest." *Teaching* implies both a schoolmaster, a teacher, instructing and lessons taught. In this *teaching* both these points are here noted out. And for the first, namely, the schoolmaster, it is twofold: 1. The outward affliction and chastisement, "*Whom thou chastisest, teachest,*" that is, whom by chastising thou teachest. 2. God himself, who is the chief and principal head schoolmaster, the other being but an inferior and subordinate one: "*Whom thou teachest.*" And for the second point, the lessons taught, they are included generally in those words, "*in thy law.*" To begin then with the schoolmasters, and first with the first.

The first schoolmaster is affliction. A sharp and severe and swingeing schoolmaster indeed, and so much the fitter for such stout and stubborn scholars as we are; who because we will not be overcome by fair means, must needs therefore be dealt withal by foul. For God doth not willingly afflict us, but being necessarily thereunto enforced, by that strength of corruption in us, which otherwise will not be subdued. So physicians and surgeons are constrained to come to cutting, lancing, and burning, when milder remedies will not prevail. Let us therefore hereby take notice of the hardness of our hearts, the fallow ground whereof cannot be broken up but by this sharp plough of affliction. See what dullards and blockheads we are, how slow to understand spiritual things, not able to conceive of them by the instruction of words, unless they be even beaten and driven into our brains by blows. So thick and brawny is that foreskin which is drawn over our uncircumcised ears and hearts, that no doctrine can enter, unless it be pegged, and hammered, and knocked into us by the fists of this sour and crabbed schoolmaster.

The second schoolmaster is God himself. Afflictions of themselves, though severe schoolmasters, yet can do us no good, unless God come by his Spirit, and teach our hearts inwardly. Let us therefore pray, that as in the ministry of God's word, so also of his works and judgments, we may be *all taught of God.* For it is his Spirit that quickeneth and animateth the outward means, which otherwise are a dead letter. And this is the reason that many men have rather grown worse by their afflictions, than anything better; because God's Spirit hath not gone with the affliction, to put life and spirit into it, as Moses observed in the Israelites, Deut. xxix. 2—4.—*Daniel Dyke.*

Verse 13.—"That thou mayest give him rest." Here usually, but hereafter certainly. *Mors ærumnarum requies*, was Chaucer's motto: those that die in the Lord shall rest from their labours. Meanwhile they are chastened of the Lord, that they may not be condemned with the world. 1 Cor. xi. 32.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 13.—"To give him rest." This is the end of God's teaching, that his servant may wait in patience, unmoved by, safe from, the days of evil (comp. xlix. 5) seeing the evil all round lifting itself up, but seeing also the secret, mysterious retribution, slowly but surely accomplishing itself. In this sense the "rest" is the rest of a calm, self-possessed spirit, as Isai. vii. 4; xxx. 15; xxxii. 17; lvii. 20; and "to give him" signifies "that thou mayest give him."—*J. J. S. Perowne.*

Verse 13.—"Rest." Let there be a revival of the passive virtues. Mr. Hume calls them the "monkish virtues." Many speak of them slightlying, especially as compared with the dashing qualities so highly esteemed in the world. But quietness of mind and of spirit, like a broken heart, is of great price in the sight of God. Some seem to have forgotten that silence and meekness are graces.—*William S. Plumer.*

Verse 13.—"Rest from the days of adversity." To rest from the days of adversity is not to be disturbed by them to such an extent as to murmur, or despond in spirit, but to trust in God, and in silence of the mind and affections expect from God deliverance. See Isai. vii. 4; xxvi. 20, &c. Moreover he says not *in*, but *from* the days of adversity, an expression of greater elegance and wider range of meaning. For there is a reference to the primary form of the verb *שָׁבַע* to sink, to settle down, as when the dregs of disturbed liquor fall to the bottom; when it is applied to the mind when shaken with a great agitation of cares, and full of bitterness. The dregs, therefore, sprung from the days of adversity, are pointed out as settling down. Besides, not only is rest of mind while the evils continue indicated, but also while they are ceasing, since *ב*, from, has here, as not infrequently elsewhere, a *negativ force*.—*Venema.*

Verse 13.—"Until the pit be digged for the wicked." Behold, thou hast the counsel of God, and the reason why he spareth the wicked: the pit is being digged for the sinner. Thou wishest to bury him at once: the pit is as yet being dug for him: do not be in haste to bury him.—*Augustine.*

Verse 15.—My text contains two parts; the providence of God to his people, and the prosperity of the providence among them. The providence of God to his people lies much in after-games: God seems to go away from his, and then the wicked have the better: anon he returns, and then his people carry the day. "*Judgment shall return unto righteousness*;" or *justice shall return unto judgment*; a phrase of speech frequent in the Old Testament to note retaliation, *quid pro quo*, like for like. The term is distinct as well as the phrase, and helps to give the sense of the Spirit of God here; *אָמַר*, from *אָמַר*, *se assertit*, justice shall assert itself; Christ shall assert his people, his promises, his threatenings. "*Shall return*," *retro-agi*: what evil men do to good shall be re-done to them, done back again upon them by God. Or this root, here rendered "*return*," may be rendered to abide and rest. In Psalm xxiii. 6, it is so rendered: "I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." Justice doth, as it were, go from home sometimes, when it visits the saints; but it returns to its home and dwelling, *i.e.*, the wicked. Justice is, as it were, from home, till it returns to the wicked, there it abides and dwells. "*Justice shall dwell and rest in judgment*," *i.e.*, in the execution of punishments upon wicked men. *שָׁבַע*, from *שָׁבַע*, *judicium exercuit*, notes the exercise and execution of justice: a thing rests in its end; justice dwells and rests in judgment, *i.e.*, in its execution, in its end for which, and unto which and whom it is appointed.—*Nicholas Lockyer, 1612—1684-5.*

Verse 15.—"Shall follow it." The right reading is in the margin,—*shall be after it, or after that*; that is, (1) *shall observe it*. "He poureth contempt upon princes; he setteth the poor on high from affliction; whose is wise shall observe these things," etc., Ps. cvii. 43: this Scripture, I think, in part explains the text. (2) "*Shall be after it*;" that is, shall confess and acknowledge it. 'Tis not a small thing to bring men to confess the justice of God in his dealings. (3) "*Shall be after it*;" that is, shall triumph in it, and so to be compared with and opened by Ps. lviii. 10, 11. (4) "*Shall be after it*;" that is, the works of God shall be of effectual operation, to bring such as are upright in heart more to love and obey God, and so it is to be compared with Ps. xxxi. 23.—*Nicholas Lockyer.*

Verse 16.—“*Who will rise up,*” etc. I think we ought to look upon David here in a public capacity, as a prince or magistrate; and then as such he deplores the increase and confidence of the wicked; and having fortified himself in God by prayer, he resolves, in the words of the text, to do the duty of his station, to employ all the power God had given him for the extirpation of wickedness, and the reformation of an impious people; and earnestly invites and calls in to his assistance all that had either heart or ability for such a work, as being well aware of the great difficulty of it. This is the sense I prefer, because it best becomes the zeal and faith of David, best suits the spirit and genius of several other parallel Psalms, and seems plainly to me to have the countenance of the Targum and the Septuagint.

In the words thus explained we have these three things: 1. *The deplorable state of Israel.* This is easily to be collected from the form and manner of David's expressing himself here, “*Who will stand up for me?*” or *who will take my part?* As if he should have said, Such is the number and power of the wicked, that how much soever my heart is set upon a reformation, I can hardly hope to effect it, without the concurrence and joint endeavours of good men. And yet, alas! how little is the assistance I can reasonably expect of this kind? How few are the sincere friends of goodness? How great and how general is the coldness and indifference which possesses men in the things of God? 2. *The duty of the magistrate.* This is plainly implied here, and is, to curb and restrain wickedness, and to promote a general reformation. 3. *The duty of all good people.* Which is, as far as in them lies, to assist and encourage the magistrate in this good work.—Richard Lucas, 1697.

Verse 16.—“*Who will rise up for me against the wicked?*” In all ages, men who neither feared God nor regarded man have combined together and formed confederacies, to carry on the works of darkness. And herein they have shown themselves wise in their generation, for by this means they more effectually promoted the kingdom of their father the devil, than otherwise they could have done. On the other hand, men who did fear God, and desire the happiness of their fellow-creatures, have in every age found it needful to join together in order to oppose the works of darkness, to spread the knowledge of God their Saviour, and to promote his kingdom upon earth. Indeed he himself has instructed them so to do. From the time that men were upon the earth, he hath taught them to join together in his service, and has united them in one body by one Spirit. And for this very end he has joined them together, “that he might destroy the works of the devil;” first in them that are already united, and by them that are round about them.—John Wesley, in a Sermon on these words, preached before the Society for Reformation of Manners, Jan. 30, 1763.

Verse 17.—“*Had been my help.*” The word signifieth not only *help*, but *summum et plenum auxilium*, an *helpfulness*, or *full help*: the Hebrew hath a letter more than ordinary, to increase the signification, as learned Mr. Leigh observeth: there is the sufficiency of help.—Nathaniel Whiting, in “*The Saints' Dangers, Deliverances, and Duties,*” 1659.

Verse 19.—“*In the multitude of my thoughts,*” etc. That is, just when they were come to their height and extremity in me. The comforts of God are seasonable, and observe the proper time for their coming, neither too soon, nor too late, but “*in,*” that is, just in the very point and nick of time. There is another thing here spoken of. In the “*thoughts*” and in the “*multitude*” of the “*thoughts;*” not in the indifference of thoughts, but in the perplexity; not in the paucity of thoughts, but in the plurality: our extremity is God's opportunity. “In the mount will the Lord be seen,” when we have thought and thought and thought all we could, and know not what to think more, then does God delight to tender and exhibit his comforts to us. . . .

In the words “*within me*” we have, next, the intimacy or closeness of this grief. The Hebrew word is *בְּקִרְבִּי*, *in medio mei*. The Arabic *be-kalbi*, *in corde meo*. And so likewise the Septuagint, *ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ μου*, *in my very heart*. This is added by way of further intention and aggravation of the present evil and distress. *First*, To show the *secrecy* of this grief. Those evils which are external, and in the body, every one is ready to bemoan them, and to bewail them, and to take notice of them, and to shew a great deal of bowels towards those which are afflicted with them; but these griefs which are inward, and in the mind, they are such as are known but

to God himself. "The heart knoweth his own bitterness," saith Solomon, Proverbs xiv. 10.

Secondly, Here is hereby denoted the *settledness* and *radication* of this evil: it was within him and it was within his heart, that is, it was deeply rooted and fastened, and such as had a strong ground-work and foundation in him; such were these troublesome "*thoughts*," they were got into his very inwards and bowels, and so were not easily got out again. Thirdly, Here is hereby also signified the *impression* which they had upon him, and the *sense* which he himself had of them. They were such as did grievously afflict him, and pierce him, and went near unto him, they went to his very heart, and touched him, as it were, to the quick, through the grievousness of them, as he speaks in another place concerning the reproaches of his enemies, Psalm xlii. 10: "As with a sword (or killing) in my bones, mine enemies reproach me; while they say daily unto me, Where is thy God?"

Now what are these "*comforts*" of God which the Psalmist does more especially intend here in this place? In a word, they are the comforts which do flow from our *communion* with him. The comforts of his attributes, and the comforts of his promises, and the comforts of his gracious presence drawing near unto our souls, when it pleases him to shine upon us, and to express his good will to us, and to give us some evidence and assurance of his love and favour towards us; these are his comforts.

"*Delight*." This is a transcendent expression, which the Holy Ghost in the pen of the prophet David comes up unto. It had been a great matter to have said, they satisfy my soul, or, they quiet me, no more but so; that is the highest pitch which a perplexed spirit can wish to itself. Those which are in great pain, they would be glad if they might have but ease, they cannot aspire so high as *pleasure and delight*, this is more than can be expected by them; but see here now the notable efficacy of these Divine comforts; they do not only *pacify* the mind, but they *joy* it; they do not only *satisfy* it, but *ravish* it; they not only *quiet*, but *delight* it. "*Thy comforts delight my soul*." That is, not only take away the present grief, but likewise put in the room and place of it most unspeakable comfort and consolation; as the *sun* does not only dispel darkness, but likewise brings in a glorious light in the stead of it.

"*My soul*." We showed before how the grief was in the mind, and therefore the comfort must be so also, that the remedy may answer the malady. Bodily pleasure will not satisfy for mind distraction: nothing will ease the soul but such comforts as are agreeable to itself, and such are these present comforts of God, they delight the *soul*.—Thomas Horton.

Verse 19.—*Thoughts* considered simply in themselves do not contain any matter of grief or evil; they are the proper and natural issue and emanations of the soul which come from it with a great deal of easiness, and with a great deal of delight; but it is the *exorbitancy* and *irregularity* of them which is here intended, when they do not proceed *evenly and fairly* as they ought to do, but with some kind of *interruption*; and so the word which is here used in the text seems to import; the Hebrew *sagnaphim* carrying an affinity with *segnaphim*, which is derived from a root which signifies properly a bough. Now we know that in a bough there are two things especially considerable, as pertinent to our present purpose. First, there's the *perplexity* of it. And, secondly, there's the *agitation*. Boughs usually catch, and intangle one in another, and boughs they are easily shaken, and moved up and down by the wind. If there be never so little *air* or *breath* stirring abroad, the boughs presently discover it, and are made sensible of it. So that this expression does serve very well to intimate and set forth unto us the perplexity and inconstancy of thoughts, which David was now troubled withal, and whereof he now complains, as grievous and offensive to him. They were not thoughts *in any consideration*, but *thoughts of distraction*, such thoughts as did bring some grief and trouble with them. This the Septuagint translators were so fully apprehensive of, that they quite leave out *thoughts*, and render it only by *griefs*, κατὰ τὸ πλῆθος τῶν ὀδυνῶν μου: according to the multitude of my sorrows. But it is more full and agreeable to the word to put them both together,—*my grievous and sorrowful thoughts*—such thoughts as in regard of the carriage and ordering of them, do bring grief and sorrow with them.

And here we may by the way observe thus much, that God need not go far to punish and afflict men when he pleases; he can do it even with *their own thoughts*, no more but so. He can gather a rod of these boughs, and make a scourge of these twistings, wherewith to lash them, and that to purpose. If he does but raise a

tempest in the mind, and cause these thoughts to bluster and bustle one with another, there will be trouble and affliction enough, though there were nothing else. It is no matter whether there be any *ground* or *occasion* for it in the things themselves; it is enough that there be so but in the *conceit* and *apprehension*. God can so use a *fancy*, a mere toy and imagination itself, and so set it on upon the soul, that there shall be no quiet nor rest for it.—*Thomas Horton*.

Verse 19.—Observe the greatness of this man's distress. This is forcibly expressed in the text, though in our translation it is scarcely obvious. The word in it rendered "*thoughts*," scholars tell us, signifies originally the small branches of trees. The idea in the Psalmist's mind appears to be this: 'Look at a tree, with its branches shooting in every direction, entangling and entwining themselves one with another; let the wind take them—see how they feel it, how restless they become and confused, beating against and striving one with another. Now my mind is like that tree. I have a great many thoughts in it; and thoughts which are continually shifting and changing; they are perplexed and agitated thoughts, battling one with another. There is no keeping the mind quiet under them; they bring disorder into it as well as sorrow. And mark the word "*multitude*" in the text; there is exactly the same idea in that. It signifies more than number; confusion. Think of a crowd collected and hurrying about: 'so,' says the Psalmist, 'are my thoughts. I have a crowd of them in my mind, and a restless confused crowd. One painful thought is bad enough, but I have many; a multitude of them; and almost countless, a disturbed throng.' We now, then, understand the case we have before us. The man's sorrow arose, at this time, from disquieting thoughts within his own breast; and his sorrow was great, because these thoughts were many, and at the same time tumultuous. When the Psalmist says, "*Thy comforts*," he means more than comforts of which God is the author or giver. God is the author and giver of all our comforts—of all the earthly comforts that surround us; they are all the work and gift of his gracious hand. . . . We are to understand *here* such comforts as are peculiarly and altogether God's, such as flow at once from God; not from him through creatures to us, but from him immediately to us without the intervention of creatures. The comforts that we get from his attributes—from meditating on, and what we call realising them; the comforts we get from his promises—believing and hoping in him; and the comforts of his presence, he drawing near to our souls and shining into them—we knowing he is near us, conscious of it by the light and happiness and renewed strength within us. "*Thy comforts*"—the comforts we get from the Lord Jesus Christ; from looking at him, considering him; thinking of his person, and offices, and blood, and righteousness, and intercession, and exaltation, and glory, and his second coming; our meeting him, seeing him, being like him. "*Thy comforts*"—the comforts which come from the Holy Spirit, "the Comforter": when he opens the Scriptures to us, or speaks through ceremonies and ordinances, or witnesses within us of our adoption of God; shining in on his own work of grace in our hearts; enabling us to see that work, and to see in it God's peculiar, eternal love to us; not opening to us the book of life, and showing us our names there, but doing something that makes us almost as joyful as though that book were opened to us; showing us the hand of God in our own souls—his converting, saving hand—his hand apprehending us as his own; making us feel, as it were, his grasp of love, and feel, too, that it is a grasp which he will never loosen.—*Charles Bradley*.

Verse 19.—" *Thy comforts delight my soul.*" Xerxes offered great rewards to him that could find out a new pleasure; but the comforts of the Spirit are satisfactory, they recruit the heart. There is as much difference between heavenly comforts and earthly, as between a banquet that is eaten and one that is painted on the wall.—*Thomas Watson*.

Verse 19.—" *Thy comforts.*" Troubles may be of our own begetting; but true comforts come only from that infinite fountain, the God of consolation; for so he hath styled himself.—*Thomas Adams*.

Verse 19.—" *Delight my soul.*" The original word, *וָרָעָה*, signifies "to cause to leap or dance for joy"; but the English language will not bear an application of this image to the soul; though we say "to make the *heart* leap for joy."—*Samuel Horsley*.

Verse 19.—Because the malignant host is first entered into the ground of my text, consider with me: 1. The rebels, or mutineers, "*thoughts*." 2. The number of them, no less than a "*multitude*." 3. The captain whose colours they bear; a

disquieted mind; “*my* thoughts.” 4. The field where the battle is fought; in the heart; *apud me*, “within me.” In the other army we find, 1. *Quanta*, how puissant they are; “*comforts*.” 2. *Quota*, how many they are; indefinitely set down; abundant comfort. 3. *Cujus*, whose they are; the Lord’s, he is their general; “*thy* comforts.” 4. *Quid operantur*, what they do; they delight the soul. In the nature of them, being comforts, there is tranquillity; in the number of them, being many comforts, there is sufficiency; in the owner of them, being “*thy*” comforts, there is omnipotency; and in the effect of them, delighting the soul, there is security.—From *Thomas Adams’ Sermon entitled “Man’s Comfort.”*

Verse 19.—A text of this kind shows us forcibly the power of Divine grace in the human heart: how much it can do to sustain and cheer the heart. The world may afflict a believer, and pain him; but if the grace which God has given him is in active exercise in his soul, the world cannot make him unhappy. It rather adds by its ill treatment to his happiness; for it brings God and his soul nearer together—God the fountain of all happiness, the rest and satisfaction of his soul.

This Psalm was evidently written by a deeply afflicted man. The wicked, he says, were triumphing over him; and had been so for a long while. He could find no one on earth to take his part against them. “*Who will rise up for me against the evildoers?*” he asks in the 16th verse; “*or who will stand up for me against the workers of iniquity?*” And it seemed, too, as though God had abandoned him. His enemies thought so, and he seems to have been almost ready to think so himself. But what was the fact? All this time the Lord was secretly pouring consolation into his soul, and in the end made that consolation abundant. In appearance a wretched, he was in reality a happy man; suffering, yet comforted; yea, the text says *delighted*—“*Thy comforts delight my soul.*”—*Charles Bradley, 1845.*

Verse 20.—“*The throne of iniquity . . . which frameth mischief by a law.*” The first pretext of wicked men to colour their proceedings against innocent men is their *throne*; the second is the *law*; and the third is their *council*. What tyrant could ask more? But God has prepared an awful hell for impenitent tyrants, and they will be in it long before they now expect to leave the world.—*William Nicholson.*

Verse 20.—“*The throne of iniquity . . . which frameth mischief by a law.*” If there never had been such thrones in the world, there would not have been that mention made of them in the Scripture. But such there have been. That of Jeroboam was one, who would not suffer the people, according to the divine command, to go up to Jerusalem to worship God, who had there placed his name; but spread, for them that went, nets upon Mizpah, and set snares upon Mount Tabor. (Hosea v. 1.) And such thrones there have been since, too many of them. Well saith the Psalmist, “*Shall they have fellowship with thee?*” No, no; God keeps his distance from them. Those that we call “stinking dunghills” are not so offensive to God as thrones of iniquity are, which shall neither be approved by him nor secured. Stay a while, Christians, and “in patience possess your souls;” for the world shall see that in due time he will overturn them all.—*Samuel Slater, in “The Morning Exercises.”*

Verse 20.—“*Which frameth mischief by a law,*” *i.e.*, frame wicked laws, or under the colour of law and justice, oppress the innocent. *Summum jus, summa injuri*, the higher the law, the greater the injustice, and injuries may and are too often done *ex pravâ interpretatione legis*, from a wicked interpretation of the law. With those who do injustice with the sword of justice, God will have no fellowship.—*William Nicholson.*

Verse 23.—“*He shall bring upon them their own iniquity,*” etc. It is an ill work wicked ones are about, they make fetters for their own feet, and build houses for to fall upon their own heads; so mischievous is the nature of sin that it damnifies and destroys the parents of it.—*William Greenhill.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—I. Retribution the prerogative of God alone. II. Under what aspects may we desire his rendering it. III. How, and when he will surely fulfil this righteous wish.

Verse 1.—I. Vengeance belongs to God and not to man. II. Vengeance is better in the hands of God than of man. "Let us fall into the hands of God," etc.—*G. R.*

Verse 2.—The peculiar provocation of the sin of pride and its kindred vices. Its influence on the proud, on their fellow men, and upon God himself.

Verse 3.—The duration of the reign of evil. I. Till it has filled up its measure of guilt. II. Till it has proved its own folly. III. Till it has developed the graces and prayers of saints. IV. Till it has emptied man of all human trust and driven us to look to the Lord alone, his Spirit, and his advent.

Verse 3.—I. The sweet potion of the wicked—present triumph. II. The gall which embitters it—it is but temporary, and is prayed against.—*C. A. Davis.*

Verses 5—10.—I. High-handed oppression by the wicked (verses 5, 6). II. Hard-hearted indifference to Divine supervision (verse 7). III. Clear-headed demonstration of the Divine cognisance and vengeance (verses 8—10).—*C. A. D.*

Verses 6—9.—I. Conspicuous sin. II. Absurd supposition. III. Overwhelming argument.

Verse 8.—Practical Atheists. I. Truly described. II. Wisely counselled.—*C. A. D.*

Verses 8—11.—I. The Exhortation (verse 8). II. The Expostulation (verses 9, 10). III. The Affirmation (verse 11).—*G. R.*

Verses 9, 10.—True Rationalism; or, Reason's Revelation of God.—*C. A. D.*

Verse 11.—I. With respect to the present world, consider what multitudes of thoughts are employed in vain. 1. In seeking satisfaction where it is not to be found. 2. In poring on events which cannot be recalled. 3. In anticipating evils which never befall us. 4. To these may be added the valuing ourselves on things of little or no account. 5. In laying plans which must be disconcerted. II. Let us see what are man's thoughts with regard to religion, and the concerns of a future life. 1. What are the thoughts of the heathen world about religion? 2. What are all the thoughts of the Christian world, where God's thoughts are neglected? 3. What is all that practical atheism which induces multitudes to act as if there were no God? 4. What are all the unbelieving, self-flattering imaginations of wicked men, as though God were not in earnest in his declarations and threatenings? 5. What are the conceits of the self-righteous, by which they buoy up their minds with vain hopes, and refuse to submit to the righteousness of God?—*Andrew Fuller.*

Verse 11.—God's intimate knowledge of man. A startling truth. A humiliating truth.

Verses 12, 13.—Christ's College. The Master, the Book, the Rod, the blessed Scholar, and the result of his education.

Verses 12, 13.—I. The Blessed. 1. Divinely taught. 2. Divinely chastised. II. The Blessing. 1. Rest in Affliction. 2. Rest from Affliction.—*G. R.*

Verse 14.—I. Fear implied. That God will cast off, forsake, etc. II. Fear denied. God will not cast off—will not forsake.—*G. R.*

Verse 14.—I. Display this bright doctrine on a dark background. What if the converse were true? Considerations that might lead us to apprehend it true. II. Joyfully regard the glowing truth itself. The doctrine declared. The reasons hinted (His people. His inheritance). The confidence expressed.—*C. A. D.*

Verse 15.—I. Judgment suspended. II. Judgment returned. III. Judgment acknowledged.—*G. R.*

Verse 16.—I. The question asked by the church of her champions. II. The answer of every true-hearted man. III. The yet more encouraging answer of her Lord.

Verses 16, 17.—The sole source of succour. I. A loud cry for help. As from a champion, or advocate. II. Earth's answer. A dead silence, disturbed only by echo (verse 17). III. The succouring voice that breaks the silence—the Lord's (verse 17).—*C. A. D.*

Verse 18.—The blessedness of the confession of weakness. I. The confession. II. The succour. III. The time. IV. The acknowledgment.—*C. A. D.*

Verse 19.—I. In the multitude of my *unbelieving* thoughts thy comforts delight my soul. II. In the multitude of my *penitential* thoughts thy comforts, etc. III. In the multitude of my *worldly* thoughts, etc. IV. In the multitude of my *family* or *social* thoughts, etc. V. Of my *desponding* thoughts, etc. VI. Of my *prospective* thoughts, etc. Or, I. There is no consolation for man in himself. II. There is no consolation for him in other creatures. III. His only consolation is in God.—*G. R.*

Verse 19.—I. The soul jostled in the thoroughfare of anxious thoughts. II. The delectable company nevertheless enjoyed.—*C. A. D.*

Verse 20.—"It is the law of the land, you know,"—the limit of this authority both in temporal and spiritual matters.

Verse 20.—I. God can have no fellowship with the wicked. II. The wicked can have no fellowship with God.—*G. R.*

Verse 20.—Divine politics. I. There are thrones erected in opposition to the throne of God, "thrones of iniquity," *e.g.* which trespass on civil liberty, which infringe religious equality, which derive revenue from evil commerce, etc. II. Such thrones, whatever their pretensions, are excluded from divine fellowship; between them and God a great gulf is fixed.—*C. A. D.*

Verses 21, 22.—I. The Danger of the righteous (*verse 21*). II. Their Defence (*verse 22*).—*G. R.*

Verses 21—23.—I. Sentence passed in the court of injustice (*verse 21*). II. An element in the case not considered by the court (*verse 22*). III. The sentence consequently alighting on the right heads (*verse 23*). (This passage, under a very thin veil, exhibits Christ. *Matt. xxvii. 1.*)—*C. A. D.*

Verse 23.—I. None may punish God's enemies but himself. "He shall bring," etc. II. None need punish them but himself. 1. It will be complete,— "shall cut them off." 2. Certain. "Yea," etc.—*G. R.*