

PSALM CIX.

TO THE CHIEF MUSICIAN.—*Intended therefore to be sung, and sung in the temple service!* Yet is it by no means easy to imagine the whole nation singing such dreadful imprecations. We ourselves, at any rate, under the gospel dispensation, find it very difficult to infuse into the Psalm a gospel sense, or a sense at all compatible with the Christian spirit; and therefore one would think the Jews must have found it hard to chant such strong language without feeling the spirit of revenge excited; and the arousal of that spirit could never have been the object of divine worship in any period of time—under law or under gospel. At the very outset this title shows that the Psalm has a meaning with which it is fitting for men of God to have fellowship before the throne of the Most High: but what is that meaning? This is a question of no small difficulty, and only a very childlike spirit will ever be able to answer it.

A PSALM OF DAVID. Not therefore the ravings of a malicious misanthrope, or the execrations of a hot, revengeful spirit. David would not smite the man who sought his blood, he frequently forgave those who treated him shamefully; and therefore these words cannot be read in a bitter, revengeful sense, for that would be foreign to the character of the son of Jesse. The imprecatory sentences before us were penned by one who with all his courage in battle was a man of music and of tender heart, and they were meant to be addressed to God in the form of a Psalm, and therefore they cannot possibly have been meant to be mere angry cursing.

Unless it can be proved that the religion of the old dispensation was altogether hard, morose, and Draconian, and that David was of a malicious, vindictive spirit, it cannot be conceived that this Psalm contains what one author has ventured to call "a pitiless hate, a refined and insatiable malignity." To such a suggestion we cannot give place, no, not for an hour. But what else can we make of such strong language? Truly this is one of the hard places of Scripture, a passage which the soul trembles to read; yet as it is a Psalm unto God, and given by inspiration, it is not ours to sit in judgment upon it, but to bow our ear to what God the Lord would speak to us therein.

This Psalm refers to Judas, for so Peter quoted it; but to ascribe its bitter denunciations to our Lord in the hour of his sufferings is more than we dare to do. These are not consistent with the silent Lamb of God, who opened not his mouth when led to the slaughter. It may seem very pious to put such words into his mouth; we hope it is our piety which prevents our doing so. See our first note from Perowne on page 445.

DIVISION.—In the first five verses David humbly pleads with God that he may be delivered from his remorseless and false-hearted enemies. From 6—20, filled with a prophetic furor, which carries him entirely beyond himself, he denounces judgment upon his foes, and then from 21—31 he returns to his communion with God in prayer and praise. The central portion of the Psalm in which the difficulty lies must be regarded not as the personal wish of the Psalmist in cool blood, but as his prophetic denunciation of such persons as he describes, and emphatically of one special "son of perdition" whom he sees with prescient eye. We would all pray for the conversion of our worst enemy, and David would have done the same; but viewing the adversaries of the Lord, and doers of iniquity, AS SUCH, AND AS INCORRIGIBLE, we cannot wish them well; on the contrary, we desire their overthrow and destruction. The gentlest hearts burn with indignation when they hear of barbarities to women and children, of crafty plots for ruining the innocent, of cruel oppression of helpless orphans, and gratuitous ingratitude to the good and gentle. A curse upon the perpetrators of the atrocities in Turkey may not be less virtuous than a blessing upon the righteous. We wish well to all mankind, and for that very reason we sometimes blaze with indignation against the inhuman wretches by whom every law which protects our fellow creatures is trampled down, and every dictate of humanity is set at nought.

EXPOSITION.

HOLD not thy peace, O God of my praise;

2 For the mouth of the wicked and the mouth of the deceitful are opened against me: they have spoken against me with a lying tongue.

3 They compassed me about also with words of hatred; and fought against me without a cause.

4 For my love they are my adversaries: but I *give myself unto* prayer.

5 And they have rewarded me evil for good, and hatred for my love.

1. "*Hold not thy peace.*" Mine enemies speak, be thou pleased to speak too. Break thy solemn silence, and silence those who slander me. It is the cry of a man whose confidence in God is deep, and whose communion with him is very close and bold. Note, that he only asks the Lord to speak: a word from God is all a believer needs. "*O God of my praise.*" Thou whom my whole soul praises, be pleased to protect my honour and guard my praise. "My heart is fixed," said he in the former Psalm, "I will sing and give praise," and now he appeals to the God whom he had praised. If we take care of God's honour he will take care of ours. We may look to him as the guardian of our character if we truly seek his glory. If we live to God's praise, he will in the long run give us praise among men.

2. "*For the mouth of the wicked and the mouth of the deceitful are opened against me.*" Wicked men must needs say wicked things, and these we have reason to dread; but in addition they utter false and deceitful things, and these are worst of all. There is no knowing what may come out of mouths which are at once lewd and lying. The misery caused to a good man by slanderous reports no heart can imagine but that which is wounded by them: in all Satan's armoury there are no worse weapons than deceitful tongues. To have a reputation, over which we have watched with daily care, suddenly bespattered with the foulest aspersions, is painful beyond description; but when wicked and deceitful men get their mouths fully opened we can hardly expect to escape any more than others. "*They have spoken against me with a lying tongue.*" Lying tongues cannot lie still. Bad tongues are not content to vilify bad men, but choose the most gracious of saints to be the objects of their attacks. Here is reason enough for prayer. The heart sinks when assailed with slander, for we know not what may be said next, what friend may be alienated, what evil may be threatened, or what misery may be caused to us and others. The air is full of rumours, and shadows impalpable flit around; the mind is confused with dread of unseen foes and invisible arrows. What ill can be worse than to be assailed with slander,

"Whose edge is sharper than the sword, whose tongue
Outvenoms all the worms of Nile"?

3. "*They compassed me about also with words of hatred.*" Turn which way he would they hedged him in with falsehood, misrepresentation, accusation, and scorn. Whispers, sneers, insinuations, satires, and open charges filled his ear with a perpetual buzz, and all for no reason, but sheer hate. Each word was as full of venom as an egg is full of meat: they could not speak without showing their teeth. "*And fought against me without a cause.*" He had not provoked the quarrel or contributed to it, yet in a thousand ways they laboured to "corrode his comfort, and destroy his ease." All this tended to make the suppliant feel the more acutely the wrongs which were done to him.

4. "*For my love they are my adversaries.*" They hate me because I love them. One of our poets says of the Lord Jesus—"Found guilty of excess of love." Surely it was his only fault. Our Lord might have used all the language of this complaint most emphatically—they hated him without a cause and returned him hatred for love. What a smart this is to the soul, to be hated in proportion to the gratitude which it deserved, hated by those it loved, and hated because of its love. This was a cruel case, and the sensitive mind of the Psalmist writhed under it. "*But I give myself unto prayer.*" He did nothing else but pray. He became prayer as they became malice. This was his answer to his enemies, he appealed from men and their injustice to the Judge of all the earth, who must do right. True bravery alone can teach a man to leave his traducers unanswered, and carry the case unto the Lord.

“Men cannot help but reverence the courage that walketh amid calumnies unanswering.”

“He standeth as a gallant chief unheeding shot or shell.”

5. “*And they have rewarded me evil for good, and hatred for my love.*” Evil for good is devil-like. This is Satan’s line of action, and his children upon earth follow it greedily: it is cruel, and wounds to the quick. The revenge which pays a man back in his own coin has a kind of natural justice in it; but what shall be said of that baseness which returns to goodness the very opposite of what it has a right to expect? Our Lord endured such base treatment all his days, and, alas, in his members, endures it still.

Thus we see the harmless and innocent man upon his knees pouring out his lamentation: we are now to observe him rising from the mercy-seat, inspired with prophetic energy, and pouring forth upon his foes the forewarnings of their doom. We shall hear him speak like a judge clothed with stern severity, or like the angel of doom robed in vengeance, or as the naked sword of justice when she bares her arm for execution. It is not for himself that he speaks so much as for all the slandered and the down-trodden, of whom he feels himself to be the representative and mouth-piece. He asks for justice, and as his soul is stung with cruel wrongs he asks with solemn deliberation, making no stint in his demands. To pity malice would be malice to mankind; to screen the crafty seekers of human blood would be cruelty to the oppressed. Nay, love, and truth, and pity lift their wounds to heaven, and implore vengeance on the enemies of the innocent and oppressed; those who render goodness itself a crime, and make innocence a motive for hate, deserve to find no mercy from the great Preserver of men. Vengeance is the prerogative of God, and as it would be a boundless calamity if evil were for ever to go unpunished, so it is an unspeakable blessing that the Lord will recompense the wicked and cruel man, and there are times and seasons when a good man ought to pray for that blessing. When the Judge of all threatens to punish tyrannical cruelty and falsehearted treachery, virtue gives her assent and consent. Amen, so let it be, saith every just man in his inmost soul.

6 Set thou a wicked man over him: and let Satan stand at his right hand.

7 When he shall be judged, let him be condemned: and let his prayer become sin.

8 Let his days be few; *and* let another take his office.

9 Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow.

10 Let his children be continually vagabonds, and beg: let them seek *their bread* also out of their desolate places.

11 Let the extortioner catch all that he hath; and let the strangers spoil his labour.

12 Let there be none to extend mercy unto him: neither let there be any to favour his fatherless children.

13 Let his posterity be cut off; *and* in the generation following let their name be blotted out.

14 Let the iniquity of his fathers be remembered with the LORD; and let not the sin of his mother be blotted out.

15 Let them be before the LORD continually, that he may cut off the memory of them from the earth.

16 Because that he remembered not to shew mercy, but persecuted the poor and needy man, that he might even slay the broken in heart.

17 As he loved cursing, so let it come unto him: as he delighted not in blessing, so let it be far from him.

18 As he clothed himself with cursing like as with his garment, so let it come into his bowels like water, and like oil into his bones.

19 Let it be unto him as the garment *which* covereth him, and for a girdle wherewith he is girded continually.

20 *Let this be* the reward of mine adversaries from the LORD, and of them that speak evil against my soul.

6. "*Set thou a wicked man over him.*" What worse punishment could a man have? The proud man cannot endure the proud, nor the oppressor brook the rule of another like himself. The righteous in their patience find the rule of the wicked a sore bondage; but those who are full of resentful passions, and haughty aspirations, are slaves indeed when men of their own class have the whip hand of them. For Herod to be ruled by another Herod would be wretchedness enough, and yet what retribution could be more just? What unrighteous man can complain if he finds himself governed by one of like character? What can the wicked expect but that their rulers should be like themselves? Who does not admire the justice of God when he sees fierce Romans ruled by Tiberius and Nero, and Red Republicans governed by Marat and Robespierre? "*And let Satan stand at his right hand.*" Should not like come to like? Should not the father of lies stand near his children? Who is a better right-hand friend for an adversary of the righteous than the great adversary himself? The curse is an awful one, but it is most natural that it should come to pass: those who serve Satan may expect to have his company, his assistance, his temptations, and at last his doom.

7. "*When he shall be judged, let him be condemned.*" He judged and condemned others in the vilest manner, he suffered not the innocent to escape; and it would be a great shame if in his time of trial, being really guilty, he should be allowed to go free. Who would wish Judge Jeffries to be acquitted if he were tried for perverting justice? Who would desire Nero or Caligula to be cleared if set at the bar for cruelty? When Shylock goes into court, who wishes him to win his suit? "*And let his prayer become sin.*" It is sin already, let it be so treated. To the injured it must seem terrible that the black-hearted villain should nevertheless pretend to pray, and very naturally do they beg that he may not be heard, but that his pleadings may be regarded as an addition to his guilt. He has devoured the widow's house, and yet he prays. He has put Naboth to death by false accusation and taken possession of his vineyard, and then he presents prayers to the Almighty. He has given up villages to slaughter, and his hands are red with the blood of babes and maidens, and then he pays his vows unto Allah! He must surely be accursed himself who does not wish that such abominable prayers may be loathed of heaven and written down as new sins. He who makes it a sin for others to pray will find his own praying become sin. When he at last sees his need of mercy, mercy herself shall resent his appeal as an insult. "Because that he remembered not to show mercy," he shall himself be forgotten by the God of grace, and his bitter cries for deliverance shall be regarded as mockeries of heaven.

8. "*Let his days be few.*" Who would desire a persecuting tyrant to live long? As well might we wish length of days to a mad dog. If he will do nothing but mischief the shortening of his life will be the lengthening of the world's tranquillity. "Bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days,"—this is bare justice to them, and great mercy to the poor and needy. "*And let another take his office.*" Perhaps a better man may come, at any rate it is time a change were tried. So used were the Jews to look upon these verses as the doom of traitors, of cruel and deceitful mind, that Peter saw at once in the speedy death of Judas a fulfilment of this sentence, and a reason for the appointment of a successor who should take his place of oversight. A bad man does not make an office bad: another may use with benefit that which he perverted to ill uses.

9. "*Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow.*" This would inevitably be the case when the man died, but the Psalmist uses the words in an emphatic sense, he would have his widow "a widow indeed," and his children so friendless as to be orphaned in the bitterest sense. He sees the result of the bad man's decease, and includes it in the punishment. The tyrant's sword makes many children fatherless, and who can lament when his barbarities come home to his own family, and they, too, weep and lament. Pity is due to all orphans and widows as such, but a father's atrocious actions may dry up the springs of pity. Who mourns that Pharaoh's children lost their father, or that Sennacherib's wife became a widow? As Agag's sword had made women childless none wept when Samuel's weapon made his mother childless among women. If Herod had been slain when he had just murdered the innocents at Bethlehem no man would have lamented it even though Herod's wife would have become a widow. These awful maledictions are not for common men to use, but for judges, such as David was, to pronounce over the enemies of God and man. A judge may sentence a man to death whatever the consequences may be to the criminal's family, and in this there will be no feeling of private revenge, but

simply the doing of justice because evil must be punished. We are aware that this may not appear to justify the full force of these expressions, but it should never be forgotten that the case supposed is a very execrable one, and the character of the culprit is beyond measure loathsome and not to be met by any common abhorrence. Those who regard a sort of effeminate benevolence to all creatures alike as the acme of virtue are very much in favour with this degenerate age; these look for the salvation of the damned, and even pray for the restoration of the devil. It is very possible that if they were less in sympathy with evil, and more in harmony with the thoughts of God, they would be of a far sterner and also of a far better mind. To us it seems better to agree with God's curses than with the devil's blessings; and when at any time our heart kicks against the terrors of the Lord we take it as a proof of our need of greater humbling, and confess our sin before our God.

10. "*Let his children be continually vagabonds, and beg.*" May they have neither house nor home, settlement nor substance; and while they thus wander and beg may it ever be on their memory that their father's house lies in ruins,—"*let them seek their bread also out of their desolate places.*" It has often been so: a race of tyrants has become a generation of beggars. Misused power and abused wealth have earned the family name universal detestation, and secured to the family character an entail of baseness. Justice herself would award no such doom except upon the supposition that the sin descended with the blood; but supreme providence which in the end is pure justice has written many a page of history in which the imprecation of this verse has been literally verified.

We confess that as we read some of these verses we have need of all our faith and reverence to accept them as the voice of inspiration; but the exercise is good for the soul, for it educates our sense of ignorance, and tests our teachableness. Yes, Divine Spirit, we can and do believe that even these dread words from which we shrink have a meaning consistent with the attributes of the Judge of all the earth, though his name is LOVE. How this may be we shall know hereafter.

11. "*Let the extortioner catch all that he hath.*" A doom indeed. Those who have once fallen into the hands of the usurer can tell you what this means: it were better to be a fly in the web of a spider. In the most subtle, worrying, and sweeping manner the extortioner takes away, piece by piece, his victim's estate, till not a fraction remains to form a pittance for old age. Baiting his trap, watching it carefully, and dexterously driving his victim into it, the extortioner by legal means performs unlawful deeds, *catches* his bird, strips him of every feather, and cares not if he die of starvation. He robs with law to protect him, and steals with the magistrate at his back: to fall into his clutches is worse than to be beset by professed thieves. "*And let the strangers spoil his labour,*"—so that his kindred may have none of it. What with hard creditors and pilfering strangers the estate must soon vanish! Extortion drawing one way, and spoliation the other, a known money-lender and an unknown robber both at work, the man's substance would soon disappear, and rightly so, for it was gathered by shameless means. This too has been frequently seen. Wealth amassed by oppression has seldom lasted to the third generation: it was gathered by wrong and by wrong it is scattered, and who would decree that it should be otherwise? Certainly those who suffer beneath high-handed fraud will not wish to stay the retributions of the Almighty, nor would those who see the poor robbed and trampled on desire to alter the divine arrangements by which such evils are recompensed even in this life.

12. "*Let there be none to extend mercy unto him.*" He had no mercy, but on the contrary, he crushed down all who appealed to him. Loath to smite him with his own weapon, stern justice can do no otherwise, she lifts her scales and sees that this, too, must be in the sentence. "*Neither let there be any to favour his fatherless children.*" We are staggered to find the children included in the father's sentence, and yet as a matter of fact children do suffer for their father's sins, and, as long as the affairs of this life are ordered as they are, it must be so. So involved are the interests of the race, that it is quite impossible in all respects to view the father and the child apart. No man among us could desire to see the fatherless suffer for their deceased father's fault, yet so it happens, and there is no injustice in the fact. They share the parent's ill-gotten gain or rank, and their aggrandizement is a part of the object at which he aimed in the perpetration of his crimes; to allow them to prosper would be an encouragement and reward of his iniquity; therefore, for these and other reasons, a man perishes not alone in his iniquity. The ban is on his race. If the man were innocent this would be a crime; if he were but commonly guilty it

would be excessive retribution ; but when the offence reeks before high heaven in unutterable abomination, it is little marvel that men devote the man's whole house to perpetual infamy, and that so it happeneth.

13. "*Let his posterity be cut off ; and in the generation following let their name be blotted out.*" Both from existence and from memory let them pass away till none shall know that such a vile brood existed. Who wishes to see the family of Domitian or Julian continued upon earth ? Who would mourn if the race of Tom Paine or of Voltaire should come to an utter end ? It would be undesirable that the sons of the utterly villainous and bloodthirsty should rise to honour, and if they did they would only revive the memory of their father's sins.

14. This verse is, perhaps, the most terrible of all, but yet as a matter of fact children do procure punishment upon their parents' sins, and are often themselves the means of such punishment. A bad son brings to mind his father's bad points of character ; people say, " Ah, he is like the old man. He takes after his father." A mother's sins also will be sure to be called to mind if her daughter becomes grossly wicked. " Ah," they will say, " there is little wonder, when you consider what her mother was." These are matters of everyday occurrence. We cannot, however, pretend to explain the righteousness of this malediction, though we fully believe in it. We leave it till our heavenly Father is pleased to give us further instruction. Yet, as a man's faults are often learned from his parents, it is not unjust that his consequent crimes should recoil upon him.

15. Again, he wishes that his father's sins may follow up the transgressor and assist to fill the measure of his own iniquities, so that for the whole accumulated load the family may be smitten with utter extinction. A king might justly wish for such an end to fall upon an incorrigible brood of rebels ; and of persecutors, continuing in the same mind, the saints might well pray for their extinction ; but the passage is dark ; and we must leave it so. It must be right or it would not be here, but how we cannot see. Why should we expect to understand all things ? Perhaps it is more for our benefit to exercise humility, and reverently worship God over a hard text, than it would be to comprehend all mysteries.

16. "*Because that he remembered not to shew mercy.*" Because he had no memory to show mercy the Judge of all will have a strong memory of his sins. So little mercy had he ever shown that he had forgotten how to do it, he was without common humanity, devoid of compassion, and therefore only worthy to be dealt with after the bare rule of justice. "*But persecuted the poor and needy man.*" He looked on poor men as a nuisance upon the earth, he ground their faces, oppressed them in their wages, and treated them as the mire of the streets. Should he not be punished, and in his turn laid low ? All who know him are indignant at his brutalities, and will glory to see him overthrown. "*That he might even slay the broken in heart.*" He had malice in his heart towards one who was already sufficiently sorrowful, whom it was a superfluity of malignity to attack. Yet no grief excited sympathy in him, no poverty ever moved him to relent. No, he would kill the heart-broken and rob their orphans of their patrimony. To him groans were music, and tears were wine, and drops of blood precious rubies. Would any man spare such a monster ? Will it not be serving the ends of humanity if we wish him gone, gone to the throne of God to receive his reward ? If he will turn and repent, well ; but if not, such a upas tree ought to be felled and cast into the fire. As men kill mad dogs if they can, and justly too, so may we lawfully wish that cruel oppressors of the poor were removed from their place and office, and, as an example to others, made to smart for their barbarities.

17. "*As he loved cursing, so let it come unto him.*" Deep down in every man's soul the justice of the *lex talionis* is established. Retaliation, not for private revenge, but as a measure of public justice, is demanded by the Psalmist and deserved by the crime. Surely the malicious man cannot complain if he is judged by his own rule, and has his corn measured with his own bushel. Let him have what he loved. They are his own chickens, and they ought to come home to roost. He made the bed, let him lie on it himself. As he brewed, so let him drink. So all men say as a matter of justice, and though the higher law of love overrides all personal anger, yet as against the base characters here described even Christian love would not wish to see the sentence mitigated. "*As he delighted not in blessing, so let it be far from him.*" He felt no joy in any man's good, nor would he lift a hand to do another a service, rather did he frown and fret when another prospered or mirth was heard upon his window ; what, then, can we wish him ? Blessing was wasted on him, he hated

those who gently sought to lead him to a better mind ; even the blessings of providence he received with murmurs and repinings, he wished for famine to raise the price of his corn, and for war to increase his trade. Evil was good to him, and good he counted evil. If he could have blasted every field of corn in the world he would have done so if he could have turned a penny by it, or if he could thereby have injured the good man whom he hated from his very soul. What can we wish for him ? He hunts after evil, he hates good ; he lays himself out to ruin the godly whom God has blessed, he is the devil's friend, and as fiendish as his patron ; should things go well with such a being ? Shall we " wish him good luck in the name of the Lord " ? To invoke blessings on such a man would be to participate in his wickedness, therefore let blessing be far from him, so long as he continues what he now is.

18, 19. He was so openly in the habit of wishing ill to others that he seemed to wear robes of cursing, therefore let it be as his raiment girded and belted about him, yea, let it enter as water into his bowels, and search the very marrow of his bones like a penetrating oil. It is but common justice that he should receive a return for his malice, and receive it in kind, too.

20. This is the summing up of the entire imprecation, and fixes it upon the persons who had so maliciously assailed the inoffensive man of God. David was a man of gentle mould, and remarkably free from the spirit of revenge, and therefore we may here conceive him to be speaking as a judge or as a representative man, in whose person great principles needed to be vindicated and great injuries redressed.

Thousands of God's people are perplexed with this Psalm, and we fear we have contributed very little towards their enlightenment, and perhaps the notes we have gathered from others, since they display such a variety of view, may only increase the difficulty. What then ? Is it not good for us sometimes to be made to feel that we are not yet able to understand all the word and mind of God ? A thorough bewilderment, so long as it does not stagger our faith, may be useful to us by confounding our pride, arousing our faculties, and leading us to cry, " What I know not teach thou me."

21 But do thou for me, O GOD the Lord, for thy name's sake : because thy mercy *is* good, deliver thou me.

22 For I *am* poor and needy, and my heart is wounded within me.

23 I am gone like the shadow when it declineth : I am tossed up and down as the locust.

24 My knees also weak through fasting ; and my flesh faileth of fatness.

25 I became also a reproach unto them : *when* they looked upon me they shook their heads.

26 Help me, O LORD my God : O save me according to thy mercy :

27 That they may know that this *is* thy hand ; *that* thou, LORD, hast done it.

28 Let them curse, but bless thou : when they arise, let them be ashamed ; but let thy servant rejoice.

29 Let mine adversaries be clothed with shame, and let them cover themselves with their own confusion, as with a mantle.

30 I will greatly praise the LORD with my mouth ; yea, I will praise him among the multitude.

31 For he shall stand at the right hand of the poor, to save *him* from those that condemn his soul.

21. " *But do thou for me, O God the Lord, for thy name's sake.*" How eagerly he turns from his enemies to his God ! He sets the great THOU in opposition to all his adversaries, and you see at once that his heart is at rest. The words are very indistinct, and though our version may not precisely translate them, yet it in a remarkable manner hits upon the sense and upon the obscurity which hang over it. " Do thou for me"—what shall he do ? Why, do whatever he thinks fit. He leaves himself in the Lord's hands, dictating nothing, but quite content so long as his God will but undertake for him. His plea is not his own merit, but *the name*. The saints have always felt this to be their most mighty plea. God

himself has performed his grandest deeds of grace for the honour of his name, and his people know that this is the most potent argument with him. What the Lord himself has guarded with sacred jealousy we should reverence with our whole hearts and rely upon without distrust. "*Because thy mercy is good, deliver thou me.*" Not because I am good, but because thy mercy is good : see how the saints fetch their pleadings in prayer from the Lord himself. God's mercy is the star to which the Lord's people turn their eye when they are tossed with tempest and not comforted, for the peculiar bounty and goodness of that mercy have a charm for weary hearts. When man has no mercy we shall still find it in God. When man would devour we may look to God to deliver. His name and his mercy are two firm grounds for hope, and happy are those who know how to rest upon them.

22. "*For I am poor and needy.*" When he does plead anything about himself he urges not his riches or his merits, but his poverty and his necessities : this is gospel supplication, such as only the Spirit of God can indite upon the heart. This lowliness does not comport with the supposed vengeful spirit of the preceding verses : there must therefore be some interpretation of them which would make them suitable in the lips of a lowly-minded man of God. "*And my heart is wounded within me.*" The Lord has always a tender regard to broken-hearted ones, and such the Psalmist had become : the undeserved cruelty, the baseness, the slander of his remorseless enemies had pierced him to the soul, and this sad condition he pleads as a reason for speedy help. It is time for a friend to step in when the adversary cuts so deep. The case has become desperate without divine aid ; now, therefore, is the Lord's time.

23. "*I am gone like the shadow when it declineth.*" I am a mere shadow, a shadow at the vanishing point, when it stretches far, but is almost lost in the universal gloom of evening which settles over all, and so obliterates the shadows cast by the setting sun. Lord, there is next to nothing left of me, wilt thou not come in before I am quite gone ? "*I am tossed up and down as the locust,*" which is the sport of the winds, and must go up or down as the breeze carries it. The Psalmist felt as powerless in his distress as a poor insect, which a child may toss up and down at its pleasure. He entreats the divine pity, because he had been brought to this forlorn and feeble condition by the long persecution which his tender heart had endured. Slander and malice are apt to produce nervous disorders and to lead on to pining diseases. Those who use these poisoned arrows are not always aware of the consequences ; they scatter firebrands and death and say it is sport.

24. "*My knees are weak through fasting ;*" either religious fasting, to which he resorted in the dire extremity of his grief, or else through loss of appetite occasioned by distress of mind. Who can eat when every morsel is soured by envy ? This is the advantage of the slanderer, that he feels nothing himself, while his sensitive victim can scarcely eat a morsel of bread because of his sensitiveness. However, the good God knoweth all this, and will succour his afflicted. The Lord who bids us confirm the feeble knees will assuredly do it himself. "*And my flesh faileth of fatness.*" He was wasted to a skeleton, and as his body was emaciated, so was his soul bereft of comfort : he was pining away, and all the while his enemies saw it and laughed at his distress. How pathetically he states his case ; this is one of the truest forms of prayer, the setting forth of our sorrow before the Lord. Weak knees are strong with God, and failing flesh has great power in pleading.

25. "*I became also a reproach unto them.*" They made him the theme of ridicule, the butt of their ribald jests : his emaciation by fasting made him a tempting subject for their caricatures and lampoons. "*When they looked upon me they shook their heads.*" Words were not a sufficient expression of their scorn, they resorted to gestures which were meant both to show their derision and to irritate his mind. Though these things break no bones, yet they do worse, for they break and bruise far tenderer parts of us. Many a man who could have answered a malicious speech, and so have relieved his mind, has felt keenly a sneer, a putting out of the tongue, or some other sign of contempt. Those, too, who are exhausted by such fasting and wasting as the last verse describes are generally in a state of morbid sensibility, and therefore feel more acutely the unkindness of others. What they would smile at during happier seasons becomes intolerable when they are in a highly nervous condition.

26. "*Help me, O Lord my God.*" Laying hold of Jehovah by the appropriating word *my*, he implores his aid both to help him to bear his heavy load and to enable him to rise superior to it. He has described his own weakness, and the strength and fury of his foes, and by these two arguments he urges his appeal with double force.

This is a very rich, short, and suitable prayer for believers in any situation of peril, difficulty, or sorrow. "*O save me according to thy mercy.*" As thy mercy is, so let thy salvation be. The measure is a great one, for the mercy of God is without bound. When man has no mercy it is comforting to fall back upon God's mercy. Justice to the wicked is often mercy to the righteous, and because God is merciful he will save his people by overthrowing their adversaries.

27. "*That they may know that this is thy hand.*" Dolts as they are, let the mercy shown to me be so conspicuous that they shall be forced to see the Lord's agency in it. Ungodly men will not see God's hand in anything if they can help it, and when they see good men delivered into their power they become more confirmed than ever in their atheism; but all in good time God will arise and so effectually punish their malice and rescue the object of their spite that they will be compelled to say like the Egyptian magicians, "this is the finger of God." "*That thou, Lord, hast done it.*" There will be no mistaking the author of so thorough a vindication, so complete a turning of the tables.

28. "*Let them curse, but bless thou,*" or, "*they will curse and thou wilt bless.*" Their cursing will then be of such little consequence that it will not matter a straw. One blessing from the Lord will take the poison out of ten thousand curses of men. "*When they arise, let them be ashamed.*" They lift up themselves to deal out another blow, to utter another falsehood, and to watch for its injurious effects upon their victim, but they see their own defeat and are filled with shame. "*But let thy servant rejoice.*" Not merely as a man protected and rescued, but as God's servant in whom his master's goodness and glory are displayed when he is saved from his foes. It ought to be our greatest joy that the Lord is honoured in our experience; the mercy itself ought not so much to rejoice us as the glory which is thereby brought to him who so graciously bestows it.

29. "*Let mine adversaries be clothed with shame.*" It is a prophecy as well as a wish, and may we read both in the indicative and the imperative. Where sin is the underclothing, shame will soon be the outer vesture. He who would clothe good men with contempt shall himself be clothed with dishonour. "*And let them cover themselves with their own confusion, as with a mantle.*" Let their confusion be broad enough to wrap them all over from head to foot, let them bind it about them and hide themselves in it, as being utterly afraid to be seen. Now they walk abroad unblushingly and reveal their own wickedness, acting as if they either had nothing to conceal or did not care whether it was seen or no; but they will be of another mind when the great Judge deals with them, then will they entreat mountains to hide them and hills to fall upon them, that they may not be seen: but all in vain, they must be dragged to the bar with no other covering but their own confusion.

30. "*I will greatly praise the Lord with my mouth.*" Enthusiastically, abundantly, and loudly will he extol the righteous Lord, who redeemed him from all evil; and that not only in his own chamber or among his own family, but in the most public manner. "*Yea, I will praise him among the multitude.*" Remarkable and public providences demand public recognition, for otherwise men of the world will judge us to be ungrateful. We do not praise God to be heard of men, but as a natural sense of justice leads every one to expect to hear a befriended person speak well of his benefactor, we therefore have regard to such natural and just expectations, and endeavour to make our praises as public as the benefit we have received. The singer in the present case is the man whose heart was wounded within him because he was the laughing-stock of remorseless enemies; yet now he praises, praises greatly, praises aloud, praises in the teeth of all gainsayers, and praises with a right joyous spirit. Never let us despair, yea, never let us cease to praise.

31. "*For he shall stand at the right hand of the poor.*" God will not be absent when his people are on their trial; he will hold a brief for them and stand in court as their advocate, prepared to plead on their behalf. How different is this from the doom of the ungodly who has Satan at his right hand (verse 6). "*To save him from those that condemn his soul.*" The court only met as a matter of form, the malicious had made up their minds to the verdict, they judged him guilty, for their hate condemned him, yea, they pronounced sentence of damnation upon the very soul of their victim: but what mattered it? The great King was in court, and their sentence was turned against themselves. Nothing can more sweetly sustain the heart of a slandered believer than the firm conviction that God is near to all who are wronged, and is sure to work out their salvation.

O Lord, save us from the severe trial of slander: deal in thy righteousness with

all those who spitefully assail the characters of holy men, and cause all who are smarting under calumny and reproach to come forth unsullied from the affliction, even as did thine only-begotten Son. Amen.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—"Mysterious" was the one word written opposite this Psalm in the pocket Bible of a late devout and popular writer. It represents the utter perplexity with which it is very generally regarded.—*Joseph Hammond.*

Whole Psalm.—In this Psalm David is supposed to refer to Doeg the Edomite, or to Ahithophel. It is the most imprecatory of the Psalms, and may well be termed the *Iscariot Psalm*. What David here refers to his mortal enemy, finds its accomplishment in the betrayer of the Son of David. It is from the 8th verse that Peter infers the necessity of filling up the vacancy occasioned by the death of Judas: it was, says he, predicted that another should take his office.—*Paton J. Gloag, in "A Commentary on the Acts,"* 1870.

Whole Psalm.—We may consider Judas, at the same time, as the virtual head of the Jewish nation in their daring attempt to dethrone the Son of God. The doom pronounced, and the reasons for it, apply to the Jews as a nation, as well as to the leader of the band who took Jesus.—*Andrew A. Bonar.*

Whole Psalm.—Is it possible that this perplexing and distressing Psalm presents us after all, not with David's maledictions upon his enemies, but with their maledictions upon him? Not only do I hold this interpretation to be quite legitimate, I hold it to be by far the more natural and reasonable interpretation.—*Joseph Hammond.*

[In Dr. Cox's *Expositor*, Vol. II. p. 225, this theory is well elaborated by Mr. Hammond, but we cannot for an instant accept it.—*C. H. S.*]

The Imprecations of the Psalm.—The language has been justified, not as the language of David, but as the language of Christ, exercising his office of Judge, or, in so far as he had laid aside that office during his earthly life, calling upon his Father to accomplish the curse. It has been alleged that this is the prophetic foreshadowing of the solemn words, "Woe unto that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born" (Matt. xxvi. 24). The curse in the words of Chrysostom is, "a prophecy in the form of a curse" (*προφητεία ἐν εἴδει ἄρας*).

The strain which such a view compels us to put on much of the language ought to have led long since to its abandonment. Not even the words denounced by our Lord against the Pharisees can really be compared to the anathemas which are here strung together. Much less is there any pretence for saying that those words so full of deep and holy sorrow, addressed to the traitor in the gospels, are merely another expression of the appalling denunciations of the Psalm. But terrible as these undoubtedly are, to be accounted for by the spirit of the Old Dispensation, not to be defended by that of the New, still let us learn to estimate them aright.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

The Imprecations.—These imprecations are not appropriate in the mouth of the suffering Saviour. It is not the spirit of Zion but of Sinai which here speaks out of the mouth of David; the spirit of Elias, which, according to Luke ix. 58, is not the spirit of the New Testament. This wrathful spirit is overpowered by the spirit of love. But these anathemas are still not on this account so many beatings of the air. There is in them a divine energy, as in the blessing and cursing of every man who is united to God, and more especially of a man whose temper of mind is such as David's. They possess the same power as the prophetic threatenings, and in this sense they are regarded in the New Testament as fulfilled in the son of perdition (John xvii. 12). To the generation of the time of Jesus they were a deterrent warning not to offend against the Holy One of God, and this *Psalmus Ischrioticus* (Acts i. 20) will ever be such a mirror of warning to the enemies and persecutors of Christ and his church.—*Franz Delitzsch.*

The Imprecations.—Respecting the imprecations contained in this Psalm, it will be proper to keep in mind what I have said elsewhere, that when David forms such maledictions, or expresses his desire for them, he is not instigated by any immoderate carnal propensity, nor is he actuated by zeal without knowledge, nor is he influenced by any private personal considerations. These three matters must

be carefully weighed, for in proportion to the amount of self-esteem which a man possesses, is he so enamoured with his own interests as to rush headlong upon revenge. Hence it comes to pass that the more a person is devoted to selfishness, he will be the more immoderately addicted to the advancement of his own individual interests. This desire for the promotion of personal interest gives birth to another species of vice : for no one wishes to be avenged upon his enemies because such a thing would be right and equitable, but because it is the means of gratifying his own spiteful propensity. Some, indeed, make a pretext of righteousness and equity in the matter ; but the spirit of malignity, by which they are inflamed, effaces every trace of justice, and blinds their minds.

When the two vices, selfishness and carnality, are corrected, there is still another thing demanding correction : we must repress the ardour of foolish zeal, in order that we may follow the Spirit of God as our guide. Should any one, under the influence of perverse zeal, produce David as an example of it, that would not be an example in point ; for to such a person may be very aptly applied the answer which Christ returned to his disciples, " Ye know not what spirit ye are of," Luke ix. 55. How detestable a piece of sacrifice is it on the part of the monks, and especially the Franciscan friars, to pervert this Psalm by employing it to countenance the most nefarious purposes ! If a man harbour malice against a neighbour, it is quite a common thing for him to engage one of those wicked wretches to curse him, which he would do by daily repeating this Psalm. I know a lady in France who hired a parcel of these friars to curse her own and only son in these words. But I return to David, who, free from all inordinate passion, breathed forth his prayers under the influence of the Holy Spirit.—*John Calvin.*

The Imprecations.—It is possible, as Tholuck thinks, that in some of the utterances in what are called the *vindictive Psalms*, especially the imprecations in Psalm cix., unholy personal zeal may have been mingled with holy zeal, as was the case seemingly with the two disciples James and John, when the Lord chided their desire for vengeance (Luke ix. 54—56). But, in reality, the feeling expressed in these Psalms may well be considered as virtuous anger, such as Bishop Butler explains and justifies in his sermons on " Resentment and the Forgiveness of Injuries," and such as Paul teaches in Ephesians iv. 26, " Be ye angry, and sin not." Anger against sin and a desire that evildoers may be punished, are not opposed to the spirit of the gospel, or to that love of enemies which our Lord both enjoined and exemplified. If the emotion or its utterance were essentially sinful, how could Paul wish the enemy of Christ and the perverter of the gospel to be accursed (*ἀνάθεμα*, 1 Cor. xvi. 22 ; Gal. i. 8) ; and especially, how could the spirit of the martyred saints in heaven call on God for vengeance (Rev. vi. 10), and join to celebrate its final execution (Rev. xix. 1—6) ; Yea, resentment against the wicked is so far from being necessarily sinful that we find it manifested by the Holy and Just One himself, when in the days of his flesh he looked around on his hearers " with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts" (Mark iii. 5) ; and when in " the great day of his wrath" (Rev. vi. 17), he shall say to " all workers of iniquity" (Luke xiii. 27), " Depart from me, ye cursed" (Matt. xxv. 41).—*Benjamin Davies* (1814—1875), in *Kitto's Cyclopædia*.

Imprecations.—It is true that this vengeance is invoked on the head of the betrayer of Christ : and we may profit by reading even the severest of the passages when we regard them as dictated by a burning zeal for the honour of Jehovah, a righteous indignation and a jealousy of love, and generally, if not universally, as denunciations of just judgment against the obstinate enemies of Christ, and all who obey not the Gospel of God. At the same time, these passages cannot be fully accounted for without a frank recognition of the fact that the Psalter was conceived and written under the Old Covenant. That dispensation was more stern than ours. God's people had with all other peoples a conflict with sword and spear. They wanted to tread down their enemies, to crush the heathen ; and thought it a grand religious triumph for a righteous man to wash his feet in the blood of the wicked, Ps. lvi. 10 ; lxxviii. 23. Now the struggle is without carnal weapons, and the tone of the dispensation is changed.—*Donald Fraser*, 1873.

Imprecations.—Imprecations of judgment on the wicked on the hypothesis of their continued impenitence are not inconsistent with simultaneous efforts to bring them to repentance ; and Christian charity itself can do no more than labour for the sinners' conversion. The law of holiness requires us to pray for the fires of divine retribution : the law of love to seek meanwhile to rescue the brand from the burning. The last prayer of the martyr Stephen was answered not by any general averting

of doom from a guilty nation, but by the conversion of an individual persecutor to the service of God.—*Joseph Francis Thrupp.*

Imprecations.—That explanation which regards the “enemies” as spiritual foes has a large measure of truth. It commended itself to a mind so far removed from mysticism as Arnold’s. It is most valuable for devout private use of the Psalter. For, though we are come to Mount Zion, crested with the eternal calm, the opened ear can hear the thunder rolling along the peaks of Sinai. In the Gospel, the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness. Sin is utterly hateful to God. The broad gates are flung wide open to the city that lies foursquare towards all the winds of heaven; for its ruler is divinely tolerant. But there shall in no wise enter it anything that defileth, neither whatever worketh abomination; for he is divinely intolerant too. And thus when, in public or private, we read these Psalms of imprecation, there is a lesson that comes home to us. We must read them, or dishonour God’s word. Reading them, we must depart from sin, or pronounce judgment upon ourselves. Drunkenness, impurity, hatred, every known sin of flesh or spirit—these, and not mistaken men, are the worst enemies of God and of his Christ. Against these we pray in our Collects for Peace at Morning and Evening Prayer—“Defend us in all assaults of our enemies, that by thee we being defended from the fear of our enemies, may pass our time in rest and quietness.” These were the dark hosts which swept through the Psalmist’s vision when he cried, “Let all mine enemies be ashamed and sore vexed,” Ps. vi. 10.—*William Alexander, in “The Witness of the Psalms to Christ and Christianity,”* 1877.

Imprecations.—I cannot forbear the following little incident that occurred the other morning at family worship. I happened to be reading one of the imprecatory Psalms, and as I paused to remark, my little boy, a lad of ten years, asked with some earnestness: “Father, do you think it right for a good man to pray for the destruction of his enemies like that?” and at the same time referred me to Christ as praying for his enemies. I paused a moment to know how to shape the reply so as to fully meet and satisfy his enquiry, and then said, “My son, if an assassin should enter the house by night, and murder your mother, and then escape, and the sheriff and citizens were all out in pursuit, trying to catch him, would you not pray to God that they might succeed and arrest him, and that he might be brought to justice?” “Oh, yes!” said he, “but I never saw it so before. I did not know that that was the meaning of these Psalms.” “Yes,” said I, “my son, the men against whom David prays were bloody men, men of falsehood and crime, enemies to the peace of society, seeking his own life, and unless they were arrested and their wicked devices defeated, many innocent persons must suffer.” The explanation perfectly satisfied his mind.—*F. G. Hibbard, in “The Psalms chronologically arranged,”* 1856.

Title.—It is worth noting, that the superscription, “to the chief Musician,” to the precentor (פְּזָמוֹן), proves it to have been designed, such as it is, for the Tabernacle or Temple service of song.—*Joseph Hammond, in “The Expositor,”* 1875.

Title.—*Syriac inscription.*—The verbs of the Hebrew text through nearly the whole of the imprecatory part of this Psalm are read in the singular number, as if some particular subject were signified by the divine prophet. But our translators always change the verbs into the plural number; which is not done by the Seventy and the other translators, who adhere more closely to the Hebrew text. But without doubt this has arisen, because the Syriac Christians explain this Psalm of the sufferings of Christ, which may be understood from the Syriac inscription of this Psalm, and which in Polyglottis Angl. reads thus:—“Of David: when they made Absalom king, he not knowing: and on account of this he was killed. But to us it sets forth the sufferings of Christ.” For this reason all these imprecations are transferred to the enemies or murderers of Jesus Christ.—*John Augustus Dathe, 1731—1791.*

Verse 1.—“Hold not thy peace, O God of my praise.” All commendation or manifestation of our innocence is to be sought from God when we are assailed with calumnies on all sides. When God is silent, we should cry all the more strongly; nor should we because of such delay despair of help, nor impatiently cease from praying.—*Martin Geier.*

Verse 1.—“Hold not thy peace.” How appropriately this phrase is applied to God, with whom to speak is the same as to do; for by his word he made all things. Rightly, therefore, is he said to be silent when he seems not to notice the things which are done by the wicked, and patiently bears with their malice. The Psalmist

begs him to rise up and speak with the wicked in his wrath, and thus take deserved vengeance on them ; which is as easy for him to do as for an angry man to break forth in words of rebuke and blame. This should be to us a great solace against the wickedness of this last age, which God, our praise, can restrain with one little word.—*Wolfgang Musculus.*

Verse 1.—" *O God.*" As the most innocent and holy servants of God are subject to heavy slanders and false calumnies raised against them, so the best remedy and relief in this case is to go to God, as here the Psalmist doth.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 1.—" *God of my praise.*" Thou, who art the constant object of my praise and thanksgiving, Jer. xvii. 14.—*William Keatinge Clay.*

Verse 1.—" *O God of my praise.*" In denominating him *the God of his praise*, he intrusts to him the vindication of his innocence, in the face of the calumnies by which he was all but universally assailed.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 1.—" *The God of my praise.*" Give me leave, in order to expound it the better, to expostulate. What, David, were there no saints but thyself that gave praise to God ? Why dost thou then seem to appropriate and engross God unto thyself, as the God of thy praise, as if none praised him else but thee ? It is because his soul had devoted all the praise he was able to bestow on any, unto the Lord alone ; as whom he had set himself to praise, and praise alone. As of a beloved son we use to say, " the son of my love." And further, it is as if he had said, If I had all the ability of all the spirits of men and angels wherewith to celebrate him, I would bestow them all on him, he is the God of my praise. And as he was David's, so he should be ours.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 2.—" *For the mouth of the wicked and the mouth of the deceitful are opened against me.*" Speak, says Arnobius, to thine own conscience, O man of God, thou who art following Christ ; and when the mouth of the wicked and deceitful man is opened concerning thee, rejoice and be secure ; because while the mouth of the wicked is opened for thy slander in the earth, the mouth of God is opened for thy praise in heaven.—*Lorinus.*

Verses 2, 3.—Note, first, the detractor opens his mouth, that he may pour forth his poison, and that he may devour his victim. Hence, David says, " the mouth of the wicked is opened against me." Note, secondly, the detractor is talkative—" *They have spoken,*" etc. The mouth of the detractor is a broken pitcher leaking all over. Note, thirdly, detraction springs from hatred, " they compassed me about also with words of hatred." In Greek, ἐκύκλωσάν με, i. e., as in a circle they have enclosed me. St. Climacus says, " Detraction is *odii partus*, a subtle disease, a fat but hidden leech which sucks the blood of charity and after destroys it.—*Lorinus.*

Verses 2—5.—" *The mouth of the wicked,*" etc.

Vice—deformed

Itself, and ugly, and of flavour rank—
To rob fair Virtue of so sweet an incense,
And with it to anoint and salve its own
Rotten ulcers, and perfume the path that led
To death, strove daily by a thousand means :
And oft succeeded to make Virtue sour
In the world's nostrils, and its loathly self
Smell sweetly. Rumour was the messenger
Of defamation, and so swift that none
Could be the first to tell an evil tale.

'Twas Slander filled her mouth with lying words
Slander, the foulest whelp of Sin. The man
In whom this spirit entered was undone.
His tongue was set on fire of hell ; his heart
Was black as death ; his legs were faint with haste
To propagate the lie his tongue had framed
His pillow was the peace of families
Destroyed, the sigh of innocence reproached,
Broken friendships, and the strife of brotherhoods.
Yet did he spare his sleep, and hear the clock
Number the midnight watches, on his bed
Devising mischief more ; and early rose,
And made most hellish meals of good men's names.

Peace fled the neighbourhood in which he made
 His haunts ; and, like a moral pestilence,
 Before his breath the healthy shoots and blooms
 Of social joy and happiness decayed.
 Fools only in his company were seen,
 And those forsaken of God, and to themselves
 Given up. The prudent man shunned him and his house
 As one who had a deadly moral plague.

—Robert Pollok.

Verse 3.—Although an individual may be absent, so that he cannot corporeally be encompassed and fought with ; nevertheless, so great is the force and malice of an envenomed tongue, that an absent man may be none the less dangerously surrounded and warred against. Thus David, though absent and driven into exile, was nevertheless surrounded and assailed by the calumnies of Doeg and the other flatterers of Saul, so that at length he was also corporeally surrounded ; in which contest he would clearly have perished unless he had been divinely delivered : see 1 Sam. xxiii. And this kind of surrounding and assault is so much the more deadly as it is so much the less possible to be avoided. For who can be so innocent as to escape the snares of a back-biting and calumnious tongue ? What place can be so remote and obscure as that this evil will not intrude when David could not be safe in the mountains and caves of the rocks ?—*Wolfgang Musculus*.

Verse 4 (first clause).—None prove worse enemies than those that have received the greatest kindnesses, when once they turn unkind. As the sharpest vinegar is made of the purest wine, and pleasant meats turn to the bitterest humours in the stomach ; so the highest love bestowed upon friends, being ill digested or corrupt, turns to the most unfriendly hatred, *proximorum odia sunt acerrima*.—*Abraham Wright*.

Verse 4.—“ *For my love they are my adversaries* ” ; that’s an ill requital ; but how did David requite them ? We may take his own word for it ; he tells us how, “ *But I give myself unto prayer* ” ; yea, he seemed a man wholly given unto prayer. The elegant conciseness of the Hebrew is, “ *But I prayer* ” ; we supply it thus, “ *But I give myself unto prayer.* ” They are sinning against me, requiting my love with hatred, “ *But I give myself unto prayer.* ” But for whom did he pray ? Doubtless he prayed and prayed much for himself ; he prayed also for them. We may understand these words, “ *I give myself unto prayer,* ” two ways. First, I pray against their plots and evil dealings with me (prayer was David’s best strength always against his enemies), yet that was not all. But, secondly, “ *I give myself unto prayer,* ” that the Lord would pardon their sin, and turn their hearts, when they are doing me mischief ; or, though they have done me mischief, I am wishing them the best good. David (in another place) showed what a spirit of charity he was clothed with, when no reproof could hinder him from praying for others, Ps. cxli. 5.—*Joseph Caryl*.

Verse 4.—The translator of the Syriac version has inserted in the 4th verse $\text{ܕܘܨܝܘܢܐ ܕܘܨܝܘܢܐ ܕܘܨܝܘܢܐ}$ “ *and I have prayed for them,* ” as if he had copied them from the words of our Lord in Matt. v. 44, where in the Syriac version of the New Testament we have exactly the same construction. It is in keeping with the inscription of the Psalm, which applies it directly to Christ. It would seem as if the Translator understood this verse of the crucifixion and of the Redeemer’s prayer for his murderers, or as if the only way to understand the elliptical language of the Psalmist was from the teaching and example of our Lord.—*E. T. Gibson, of Crayford*.

Verse 4.—“ *I prayer.* ” The Messiah says in this prophetic Psalm, “ *I am prayer.* ” During his pilgrimage on earth, his whole life was communion with God ; and now in his glory he is constantly making intercession for us. But this does not exhaust the idea, “ *I am prayer.* ” He not merely prayed and is now praying, he not merely teaches and influences us to pray, but he *is* prayer, the fountain and source of all prayer, as well as the foundation and basis of all answers to our petitions. He is the Word in this sense also. From all eternity his Father heard him, heard him as interceding for that world which, created through him, he represented, and in which, through him, divine glory was to be revealed. In the same sense, therefore, in which he is light and gives light, in which he is life and resurrection, and therefore quickens, Jesus *is* prayer.—*Adolph Saphir, in Lectures on the Lord’s Prayer, 1870.*

Verse 4.—Persecuted saints are men of prayer, yea, they are as it were made

up all of prayer. David prayed before ; but, oh, when his enemies fell a persecuting of him, then he gave himself up wholly to prayer. Oh, then he was more earnest, more fervent, more frequent, more diligent, more constant, and more abundant in the work of prayer ! When Numa, king of the Romans, was told that his enemies were in arms against him, he did but laugh at it, and answered, " And I do sacrifice " ; so when persecutors arm themselves against the people of God, they do but divinely smile and laugh at it, and give themselves the more up to prayer. When men arm against them, then they arm themselves with all their might to the work of prayer ; and woe, woe to them that have armies of prayers marching against them.—*Thomas Brooks.*

Verse 4.—" *I give myself unto prayer.*" The instruction to ourselves from these words is most comforting and precious. Are we bowed down with sorrow and distress ? " *I give myself unto prayer.*" Are we persecuted, and reviled, and compassed about with words of hatred ? " *I give myself unto prayer.*" Has death entered our dwellings ? and as we gaze in heart-broken anguish on the no longer answering look of one who was our earthly stay, and we feel as if all hope as well as all help were gone, still there remains the same blessed refuge for all the Lord's sorrowing ones, " *I give myself unto prayer.*" In the allegory of the ancients, Hope was left at the bottom of the casket, as the sweetener of human life ; but God, in far richer mercy, gives prayer as the balm of human trial.—*Barton Bouchier.*

Verse 4.—A Christian is all over prayer : he prays at rising, at lying down, and as he walks : like a prime favourite at court, who has the key to the privy stairs, and can wake his prince by night.—*Augustus Montague Toplady, 1740—1778.*

Verse 6.—" *Set thou a wicked man over him,*" etc. Here commences that terrible series of maledictions, unparalleled in Holy Writ, as directed against an individual sinner, albeit it is little more than a special reduplication of the national woes denounced in Leviticus xxvi. and Deuteronomy xxviii.—*Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 6.—" *Set thou a wicked man over him.*" The first thing that the Psalmist asks is, that his foe might be subjected to the evil of having a man placed over him like himself :—a man regardless of justice, truth, and right ; a man who would respect character and propriety no more than he had himself done. It is, in fact, a prayer that he might be punished *in the line of his offences.* It cannot be wrong that a man should be treated as he treats others ; and it cannot be in itself wrong to desire that a man should be treated according to his character and deserts, for this is the object of all law, and this is what all magistrates and legislators are endeavouring to secure.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 6.—" *Over him.*" Consider what would have been the effect if these denunciations had been against the *sins* of men and not, as they are in these passages, against the *sinner.* Men would have said, " My sin is denounced, not *me.*" What a license would have been given to sin ! The depraved nature would have said, " if I am not condemned, but only my *sin,* I can do as I like ; I shall not be called to account for it. I *love* sin and can go on in it." This is what men would have said. There would have been no effort to get rid of it. Why should there be, if only *sin* is condemned and not the *sinner* ? But man's *sin* is identified with *himself,* and this makes him tremble. God's wrath rests on *him* because of his sin. Condemnation is awaiting *him* because of his sin. This makes him anxious to get rid of it.—*Frederick Whitfield.*

Verse 6.—" *Let Satan stand at his right hand.*" It appears to have been the custom at trials before the Jewish tribunals for a pleader to stand at the right hand of the accused : See Zech. iii. 1, where are described Joshua the High Priest, standing before the Angel of Jehovah, and the adversary (שֵׁטֶן, *Satan*, as here) standing at his right hand to oppose him. See also verse 31.—*John Le Clerc, 1657—1736.*

Verse 6.—" *Let Satan stand at his right hand.*" Hugo observes that the Devil is on the left hand of those whom he persecutes in temporal things : on the right of those whom he rules in spiritual things : before the face of those who are on their guard against his wiles : behind those who are not foreseeing and prudent : above those whom he treads down : below, and beneath the feet of those who tread him down. A recent Spanish author,* writing in that language, thinks that there cannot be anything worse than that man who diligently and of set purpose injures others by speaking deceitfully, by surrounding with speeches of hatred, by attacking without

* *Peter Vega* On the Penitential Psalms.

cause, by slandering, by returning evil for good, and hatred for love : therefore, in this place it is desired that a wicked man may be set over such a one, and the devil at his right hand ; and as if he should be doomed to take the lowest place because he is the worst.—*Lorinus*.

Verse 6.—“*At his right hand.*” The strength or force of the body shows itself principally in the right hand. Therefore, he who wishes to obstruct another, and to hinder his endeavour, stands at his right hand ; and thus easily parries his stroke or attempt. This I consider to be the most simple meaning of this passage which shows that God represses and restrains the ragings of the enemies of the Church, who withstand each other by their opposing efforts, either from envy or from other causes. Thus, 2 Sam. xvii., the counsels of Ahithophel are broken by Hushai ; and in one day we see that the counsels and attempts of our enemies have been frequently and wonderfully restrained by the hindrances they have given one to the other : in which matter the goodness of God is to be discerned.—*Mollerus*.

Verse 6.—He beginneth to prophesy what they should receive for their great impiety, detailing their lot in such a manner as if he wished its realisation from a desire of revenge ; while he declareth what was to happen with the most absolute certainty, and what of God’s justice would worthily come upon such. Some not understanding this mode of predicting the future under the appearance of wishing evil, suppose hatred to be returned for hatred, and an evil will for an evil will : since in truth it belongeth to few to distinguish in what way the punishment of the wicked pleaseth the accuser, who longeth to satiate his enmity ; and in how widely different a way it pleaseth the judge, who with a righteous mind punisheth sins. For the former returneth evil for evil, but the judge when he punisheth doth not return evil for evil, since he returneth justice to the unjust ; and what is just is surely good. He therefore punisheth not from delight in another’s misery, which is evil for evil, but from love of justice, which is good for evil. Let not then the blind pervert the light of the Scriptures, imagining that God doth not punish sins : nor let the wicked flatter themselves, as if he rendered evil for evil. Let us therefore hear the sequel of this divine composition ; and in the words of one who seemeth to wish ill, let us recognise the predictions of a prophet ; and let us see God making a just retribution, raising our mind up to his eternal laws.—*Augustine*.

Verses 6—19.—These terrible curses are repeated with many words and sentences, that we may know that David has not let these words fall rashly or from any precipitate impulse of mind ; but, the Holy Spirit having dictated, he employs this form of execration that it may be a perpetual prophecy or prediction of the bitter pains and destruction of the enemies of the Church of God. Nor does David imprecate these punishments so much on his own enemies and Judas the betrayer of Christ ; but that similar punishments await all who fight against the kingdom of Christ.—*Mollerus*.

Verse 6—20.—I had also this consideration, that if I should now venture all for God, I engaged God to take care of my concernments ; but if I forsook him and his ways for fear of any trouble that should come to me or mine, then I should not only falsify my profession, but should count also that my concernments were not so sure, if left at God’s feet, while I stood to and for his name, as they would be if they were under my own tuition [or care] though with the denial of the way of God. This was a smarting consideration, and was as spurs unto my flesh. This Scripture [Ps. cix. 6—20] also greatly helped it to fasten the more upon me, where Christ prays against Judas, that God would disappoint him in all his selfish thoughts, which moved him to sell his master : pray read it soberly. I had also another consideration, and that was, the dread of the torments of hell, which I was sure they must partake of, that for fear of the cross do shrink from their profession of Christ, his words, and laws, before the sons of men. I thought also of the glory that he had prepared for those that, in faith, and love, and patience, stood to his ways before them. These things, I say, have helped me, when the thoughts of the misery that both myself and mine might for the sake of my profession be exposed to, hath lain pinching on my mind.—*John Bunyan*.

Verse 7.—“*Let his prayer become sin.*” As the clamours of a condemned malefactor not only find no acceptance, but are looked upon as an affront to the court. The prayers of the wicked now become sin, because soured with the leaven of hypocrisy and malice ; and so they will in the great day, because then it will be too late to cry, “*Lord, Lord, open unto us.*”—*Matthew Henry*.

Verse 7.—" *Let his prayer become sin.*" Evidently his prayer in reference to his trial for crime; his prayer that he might be acquitted and discharged. Let it be seen in the result that such a prayer was *wrong*; that it was, in fact, a prayer for the discharge of a bad man—a man who *ought* to be punished. Let it be seen to be what a prayer *would* be if offered for a murderer, or violator of the law,—a prayer that he might escape or not be punished. All must see that *such* a prayer would be wrong, or would be a "sin"; and so, in his own case, it would be equally true that a prayer for his own escape would be "sin." The Psalmist asks that, by the result of the trial, such a prayer might be *seen* to be in fact a prayer for the protection and escape of a *bad man*. A just sentence in the case would demonstrate this; and this is what the Psalmist prays for.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 7.—" *Let his prayer become sin.*" Kimchi in his annotations thus explains these words: *i. e.*, "let it be without effect, so that he does not get what he asks for; let him not hit the mark at which he aims: for מִצַּד sometimes has the meaning 'to miss.'"—*Wolfgang Musculus.*

Verse 7.—" *Let his prayer become sin.*" St. Jerome says that Judas's prayer was turned into sin, by reason of his want of hope when he prayed: and thus it was that in despair he hanged himself.—*Robert Bellarmine.*

Verse 7.—" *Let his prayer become sin.*" The prayer of the hypocrite is sin formally, and it is sin in the effect, that is, instead of getting any good by it, he gets hurt, and the Lord instead of helping him because he prayeth, punisheth him because of the sinfulness of his prayers. Thus his prayer becomes sin to him, because he receives no more respect from God when he prays than when he sins. And sin doth not only mingle with his prayer (as it doth with the prayers of the holiest), but his prayer is nothing else but a mixture or mingle-mangle (as we speak) of many sins.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 7.—" *Let his prayer become sin.*" We should be watchful in prayer lest the most holy worship of God should become an abomination: Isaiah i. 15; lxvi. 3; James iv. 3; Hosea vii. 14; Amos v. 23. If the remedy be poisoned, how shall the diseased be cured?—*Martin Geier.*

Verses 7—19.—These and the following verses, although they contain terrible imprecations, will become less dreadful if we understand them as spoken concerning men pertinaciously cleaving to their vices, against whom only has God threatened punishments; not against those who repent with all their heart, and become thoroughly changed in life.—*John Le Clerc.*

Verse 8.—" *Let his days be few.*" By "*his days*," he meant the days of his apostle-ship, which were few; since before the passion of our Lord, they were ended by his crime and death. And as if it were asked, What then shall become of that most sacred number twelve, within which our Lord willed, not without a meaning, to limit his twelve first apostles? he at once addeth, "*and let another take his office.*" As much as to say, let both himself be punished according to his desert, and let his number be filled up. And if any one desire to know how this was done, let him read the Acts of the Apostles.—*Augustine.*

Verse 8.—" *Let another take his office.*" So every man acts, and practically prays, who seeks to remove a bad and corrupt man from office. As such an office must be filled by some one, all the efforts which he puts forth to remove a wicked man tend to bring it about that "another should take his office," and for this it is *right* to labour and pray. The act does not of itself imply malignity or bad feeling, but is consistent with the purest benevolence, the kindest feelings, the strictest integrity, the sternest patriotism, and the highest form of piety.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 9.—" *Let his children be fatherless.*" Helpless and shiftless. A sore vexation to many on their death-beds, and just enough upon graceless persecutors. But happy are they who, when they lie a-dying, can say as Luther did, "*Domine Deus gratias ago tibi quod velueris me esse pauperem, et mendicum, &c.*" Lord God, I thank thee for my present poverty, but future hopes. I have not an house, lands, possessions, or monies to leave behind me. Thou hast given me wife and children; behold, I return them back to thee, and beseech thee to nourish them, teach them, keep them safe, as hitherto thou hast done, O thou father of the fatherless, and judge of widows.—*John Trapp.*

Verses 9, 10, 12, 13.—" *His children;*" "*his posterity.*" Though in matters of a civil or judicial character, we have it upon the highest authority that the children

are not to be made accountable for the fathers, nor the fathers for the children, but every transgressor is to bear the penalty of his own sin; yet, in a moral, and in a social and spiritual sense, it is impossible that the fathers should eat sour grapes, and yet that the children's teeth should not be set on edge. The offspring of the profligate and the prodigal may, and often do, avoid the specific vices of the parent; but rarely, if ever, do they escape the evil consequences of those vices. And this re-action cannot be prevented, until it shall please God first to unmake and then to remodel his whole intelligent creation.—*T. Dale, in a Sermon to Heads of Families, 1839.*

Verses 9—13.—Under the Old Covenant, calamity, extending from father to son, was the meed of transgression; prosperity, *vice versa*, of obedience: (see Solomon's prayer, 2 Chron. vi. 23): and these prayers of the Psalmist (cf. Pss. x. 13, xii. 1, lviii. 10, etc.) may express the wish that God's providential government of his people should be asserted in the chastisement of the enemy of God and man.—*Speaker's Commentary.*

Verses 10.—“*Let his children be continually vagabonds.*” The word used in the sentence pronounced upon Cain, Gen. iv. 12. Compare Ps. lix. 11, 15.—*William Kay.*

Verses 10.—“*Let them seek,*” etc. Horsley renders this clause, “*Let them be driven out from the-very-ruins-of their dwellings,*” and remarks that the image is that of “*vagabonds seeking a miserable shelter among the ruins of decayed or demolished buildings, and not suffered to remain even in such places undisturbed.*”

Verses 9, 10.—When we consider of whom this Psalm is used there will be no difficulty about it. No language could be more awful than that of verses 6 to 19. It embraces almost every misery we can think of. But could any man be in a more wretched condition than Judas was? Could any words be too severe to express the depth of his misery—of him, who, for three whole years, had been the constant attendant of the Saviour of mankind; who had witnessed his miracles, and had shared his miraculous powers; who had enjoyed all the warnings, all the reproofs of his love, and then had betrayed him for thirty pieces of silver? Can we conceive a condition more miserable than that of Judas? And this Psalm is a *prophecy of the punishment* that should overtake him for his sin. S. Peter, in the Acts of the Apostles, quotes part of this Psalm, and applies it to Judas: he applies it as a prophecy of the punishment he should suffer on the betrayal of the Son of God.

It is probable that in this Psalm, when it uses the word children, it does not mean those who are his offspring by natural descent, but those *who resemble him, and who partake with him in his wickedness.* This is a common meaning of the word sons, or children, in Holy Scripture. As where our blessed Lord tells the Jews, “*Ye are of your father the devil,*” he could not mean that the Jews were the natural descendants of the devil, but that they were his children because they did his works. Again, when they are called Abraham's children, it means those who do the works of Abraham. So in this Psalm, where it is foretold that fearful punishment should happen to Judas for the betrayal of his Lord, and should be extended to his children, it means *his associates, his companions, and imitators in wickedness.*—*F. H. Dunwell, in “A Tract on the Commination Service,” 1853.*

Verses 10, 12, 13.—It is for public ends that the Psalmist prayed that the families of the wicked might be involved in their ruin. These are very terrible petitions; but it is God, not man, who has appointed these calamities as the ordinary consequences of persistence in wickedness. It is God, not man, who visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, to the third and fourth generations. It is because this is the ordinary portion of the transgressors, and *that thus in God's wonted way his abhorrence of the transgressions of his enemies might be marked,* that the Psalmist prays for these calamities. He asks God to do what he had declared he would do, and this for public ends, for he says: “*I will greatly praise the Lord with my mouth; yea, I will praise him among the multitude.* For he shall stand at the right hand of the poor, to save him from those that condemn his soul,” verses 30, 31.—*R. A. Bertram, in “The Imprecatory Psalms,” 1867.*

Verses 10—13.—Many penurious fathers are so scraping for their children, that they ravish the poor children of God; but the hand of the Lord shall be against their young lions. Nah. ii. 13. They join house to house, and field to field, but their children shall be “*vagabonds and beg,*” “*seeking their bread out of their desolate places.*” How many a covetous mole is now digging a house in the earth for his posterity, and never dreams of this sequel, that God should make those children

beggars, for whose sake their fathers had made so many beggars! This is a quittance which the sire will not believe, but as sure as God is just the son shall feel. Now if he had but leave to come out of hell for an hour, and see this, how should he curse his folly! Sure, if possible, it would double the pain of his infernal torture. Be moderate, then, ye that so insatiately devour, as if you had an infinite capacity: you overload your stomachs, it is fit they should be disburdened in shameful spewing. How quickly doth a worldly-minded man grow a defrauder, from a defrauder to a usurer, from a usurer to an oppressor, from an oppressor to an extortioner! if his eyes do but tell his heart of a booty, his heart will charge his hand, and he must have it, Micah ii. 2. They do but see it, like it, and take it. Observe their due payment. "Let the extortioner catch all that he hath": they got all by extortion, they shall lose all by extortion. They spoiled their neighbours, strangers shall spoil them. How often hath the poor widow and orphan cried, wept, groaned to them for mercy, and found none! They have taught God how to deal with themselves; "let there be none to extend mercy to them." They have advanced houses for a memorial, and dedicated lands to their own names, Ps. xlix. 11; all to get them a name; and even in this they shall be crossed: "In the next generation their name shall be quite put out."—Thomas Adams.

Verse 11.—"Let the extortioner catch all that he hath." Note: he is most miserable who falls into the hands of usurers; for they will flay him alive and drain his blood. The Romans, that they might deter the citizens from usury, placed a statue of Marsyas in the Forum or law-court, by which they signified that those who came into the hands of usurers would be skinned alive; and to show that usurers, as the most unjust litigants, deserved hanging, they placed a rope in the hand of the figure.—*Le Blanc*.

Verse 11.—"Catch." This refers to the obligations between creditors and debtors, and he calls these snares, by which, as it were, the insolvent debtors are caught, and at last come to servitude.—*Mollerus*.

Verse 12.—"Let there be none to extend mercy to him." He does not say, None who shall shew, but none who shall "extend" kindness to him. The extending of kindness is, when after a friend's death it is shown to his children, and true friendship is of this sort, that the kindness which friends shewed to each other while alive is maintained, not extinguished with the death of the friend.—*Wolfgang Musculus*.

Verse 12.—"Let there be none to extend mercy to him." Let God in his justice set off all hearts from him that had been so unreasonably merciless. Thus no man opened his mouth to intercede for Haman; Judas was shaken off by the priests, and bid see to himself, etc.—*John Trapp*.

Verse 15.—"Let them be before the Lord continually." The fearful punishment of sinners is, to be always under the eye of an angry God: then the soul of the sinner is dismayed at its own deformity.—*Le Blanc*.

Verse 15.—"Let them be before the Lord continually." Lafayette, the friend and ally of Washington, was in his youth confined in a French dungeon. In the door of his cell there was cut a small hole, just big enough for a man's eye; at that hole a sentinel was placed, whose duty it was to watch, moment by moment, till he was relieved by a change of guard. All Lafayette saw was the winking eye, but the eye was always there; look when he would, it met his gaze. In his dreams, he was conscious it was staring at him. "Oh," he says, "it was horrible; there was no escape; when he lay down and when he rose up, when he ate and when he read, that eye searched him."—"New Cyclopædia of Illustrative Anecdote," 1875.

Verses 15—19, 29.—Strict justice, and nothing more, breathes in every petition. Cannot you say, Amen! to all these petitions? Are you not glad when the wicked man falls into the ditch he has made for another's destruction, and when his mischief returns upon his own head? But you say, "These petitions are unquestionably just, but why did not the Psalmist ask, not for justice, but for mercy?" The answer is, that in his public capacity, he was bound to think first about justice.

No government could stand upon the basis of forgiveness, justice must always go before mercy. Suppose that in the course of the next session Parliament should decree that henceforth, instead of justice being shown to thieves, by sending them to prison, they should be treated charitably, and compelled to restore *one-half* of what they stole, what would honest men say about the government? The thieves would

doubtless be very complimentary, but what would honest men say? Why, they would say the government had altogether failed of its function, and it would not live to be a week older. And just so, the Psalmists were bound first of all to seek for the vindication and establishment of justice and truth. Like the magistrates of to-day, they considered first the well-being of the community. This they had in view in all the calamities they sought to bring upon wrong-doers.—*R. A. Bertram.*

Verse 16.—"Because." Why, what is the crime? "*Because that he remembered not to shew mercy,*" etc. See what a long vial full of the plagues of God is poured out upon the unmerciful man!—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 16.—"But persecuted the poor." If any man will practice subtraction against the poor, God will use it against him, and take his name out of the book of life. If he be damned that gives not his own, what shall become of him that takes away another man's? (*Augustine.*) If judgment without mercy shall be to him that shows no mercy (*Jam. ii. 13*) where shall subtraction and rapine appear? "*Let the extortioner catch all that he hath; and let strangers spoil his labour,*" ver. 11: there is one subtraction, his estate. "*Let his posterity be cut off; and in the generation following let their name be blotted out,*" ver. 13: there is another subtraction, his memory. "*Let there be none to extend mercy unto him: neither let there be any to favour the fatherless children,*" ver. 12: there is another subtraction, a denial of all pity to him and his. "*Let him be condemned: and let his prayer become sin,*" ver. 7: there is another subtraction, no audience from heaven. "*Let another take his office;*" there is a subtraction of his place: "*let his days be few,*" ver. 8: there is a subtraction of his life. "*Let him be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous,*" Ps. lxxix. 28; there is the last, the subtraction of his soul. This is a fearful arithmetic: if the wicked add sins, God will add plagues. If they subtract from others their rights, God shall subtract from them his mercies.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 17.—*Cursing* is both good and bad. For we read in the Scriptures that holy men have often cursed. Indeed none can offer the Lord's Prayer rightly without cursing. For when he prays, "Hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done," etc., he must include in the same outpouring of his desires all that is opposed to these, and say, cursed and execrated and dishonoured must all other names be, and all kingdoms which are opposed to thee must be destroyed and rent in pieces, and all devices and purposes formed against thee fall to the ground.—*Martin Luther.*

Verse 17.—"As he delighted not in blessing, so let it be far from him."

He was a wolf in clothing of the lamb,
That stole into the fold of God, and on
The blood of souls, which he did sell to death,
Grew fat; and yet, when any would have turned
Him out, he cried, "Touch not the priest of God."
And that he was anointed, fools believed;
But knew, that day, he was the devil's priest,
Anointed by the hands of Sin and Death,
And set peculiarly apart to ill—
While on him smoked the vials of perdition,
Poured measureless. Ah, me! What cursing then
Was heaped upon his head by ruined souls,
That charged him with their murder, as he stood
With eye, of all the unredeemed, most sad,
Waiting the coming of the Son of Man!

Robert Pollok.

Verses 17—19.—Possibly verses 17 and 18 describe as fact what verse 19 amplifies in a wish, or prayer. "He loved cursing, and it loved him in return, and came to him: he delighted not in blessing, and it was far from him. He clothed himself with cursing as with a garment, and it permeated his inmost parts as water, as the refreshing oil with which the body is anointed finds a way into marrow and bones." The images are familiar; the daily dress, the water that permeates daily every part of the body, the oil used daily for nourishment (Ps. civ. 15) and gladness (Ps. xxiii. 5). In the wish that follows (verse 19), the mantle, or garment, which is always worn, and the girdle or belt with which the accursed one is always girded, are substituted, apparently, for more general terms.—*Speaker's Commentary.*

Verses 17—19.—As the loss of the soul is a loss peculiar to itself, and a loss double, so it is a loss most fearful, because it is attended with the most heavy curse of God. This curse lieth in a deprivation of all good, and in a being swallowed up of all the most fearful miseries that a holy and just and eternal God can righteously inflict, or lay upon the soul of a sinful man. Now let reason here come in and exercise itself in the most exquisite manner; yea, let him now count up all, and all manner of curses and torments that a reasonable and an immortal soul is, or can be made capable of, and able to suffer, and when he has done, he shall come infinitely short of this great anathema, this master curse which God has reserved amongst his treasures, and intends to bring out in that day of battle and war, which he proposeth to make upon damned souls in that day. And this God will do, partly as a retaliation, as the former, and partly by way of revenge. 1. By way of retaliation: “As he loved cursing, so let it come unto him: as he delighted not in blessing, so let it be far from him.” Again, “As he clothed himself with cursing like as with his garment, so let it come into his bowels like water, and like oil into his bones. Let it be unto him as the garment which covereth him, and for a girdle wherewith he is girded continually.” “Let this,” saith Christ, “be the reward of mine adversaries from the Lord,” etc. 2. As this curse comes by way of retaliation, so it cometh by way of revenge. God will right the wrongs that sinners have done him, will repay vengeance for the despite and reproach wherewith they have affronted him, and will revenge the quarrel of his covenant. As the beginnings of revenges are terrible (Deut. xxxii. 41, 42); what, then, will the whole execution be, when he shall come in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of Jesus Christ? And, therefore, this curse is executed in wrath, in jealousy, in anger, in fury; yea, the heavens and the earth shall be burned up with the fire of that jealousy in which the great God will come when he cometh to curse the souls of sinners, and when he cometh to defy the ungodly, 2 Thess. i. 7—9.—*John Bunyan.*

Verse 18.—The three figures in this verse are climatic: he has clothed himself in cursing, he has drunk it in like water (Job xv. 16, xxxiv. 7), it has penetrated to the marrow of his bones, like the oily preparations which are rubbed in and penetrate to the bones.—*Franz Delitzsch.*

Verse 18.—We must not pass this verse without remarking that there is an allusion in its tone to Num. v. 21, 22, 24—the unfaithful wife. Her curse was to penetrate into her bowels; “the water that causeth the curse shall enter into her”; and such a curse comes on unfaithful Judas, who violates his engagement to the Lord, and upon Israel at large also, who have departed from him “as a wife treacherously departeth from her husband,” and have committed adultery against the Bridegroom.—*Andrew A. Bonar.*

Verses 18, 19.—Peter, in Acts i. 20, applies this Psalm to Christ when the Jews cried, “His blood be upon us and upon our children”; then did they put on the envenomed garment which has tormented them ever since. It is girded about their loins; the curse has penetrated like water, and entered the very bones like oil. How awful will be the state of those who crucify him afresh, and again put him to open shame.—*Samuel Horsley.*

Verse 21.—“For thy name’s sake.” My enemies would soon become my friends and my protectors, if I would but renounce my allegiance to thee; my refusal to disobey thee constitutes all my crime in their eyes. My cause, therefore, becomes thine, it will be to thy glory to declare thyself on my side, lest the impious should take occasion from my sufferings to blaspheme thy holy name, as if thou hadst not the power to deliver, or wert utterly indifferent to those who, renouncing all human help, have put their confidence in thee.—*Jean Baptiste Massillon.*

Verse 21.—“For thy name’s sake.” He does not say, For my name, that it may be vindicated from reproach and shame: but for Thy name; as if he would say, whatever I may be, O Lord, and whatever may befall me, have respect to Thy name, have regard to it only. I am not worthy, that I should seek Thy help, but Thy name is worthy which thou mayest vindicate from contempt. We learn here with what passion for the glory of the divine name they ought to be animated who are peculiarly consecrated to the name of God.

He does not say, “Because my case is good,” but “because thy mercy is good.” Note this also, he does not simply say, Because thou art good, or because thou art merciful; but because thy mercy is good. He had experienced a certain special goodness in the Divine mercy; *i.e.*, such timeliness, kind readiness in all afflictions,

and help for every kind of affliction prepared and provided. On this he rests hope and confidence, in this takes refuge. All those are truly happy who have had experience of this mercy, and can depend on it with firm hope and confidence.—*Wolfgang Musculus.*

Verse 21.—Unto a truly broken, humbled sinner, the mercies that are in God, out of which he pardons, should have infinitely more of goodness and sweetness in them than the pardon itself, or all things else that are in the promises. This a soul that hath tasted how good the Lord is will instantly acknowledge. A promise of life to a condemned man is sweet, for life is sweet, as we say; but “thy lovingkindness,” said David, who had tasted how good the Lord is, “is better than life,” and infinitely sweeter, Ps. lxxiii. 3. And again says David, “*Because thy mercy is good, deliver thou me.*” Deliverance was good; yea, but the mercy of God apprehended therewith was infinitely more good to him, which was the greatest inducement to him to seek deliverance. And indeed God’s mercy doth eminently bear the style of goodness.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verses 21—25.—The thunder and lightning are now as it were followed by a shower of tears of deep sorrowful complaint.—*Franz Delitzsch.*

Verse 22.—“*For I am poor and needy, and my heart is wounded within me.*” Note here, how beautifully he unites these arguments. He had said, “*Because Thy mercy is good*”; and he adds, “*Because I am poor and needy.*” He could not have added anything more appropriate: for this is the nature of goodness and mercy, even in the human heart, much more in God, the best and most merciful of all beings, that nothing more easily moves it to give succour, than the affliction, calamity, and misery of those by whom it is invoked.—*Wolfgang Musculus.*

Verse 22.—“*My heart is wounded within me.*” The hearts of the saints and pious men are not as brass or stone, that the apathy of the Stoics should have lodging in them, but are susceptible to griefs and passions.—*Musculus.*

Verse 23.—“*I am gone like the shadow when it declineth.*”—Bishop Horsley renders, “*I am just gone, like the shadow stretched to its utmost length*”; and remarks:—“The state of the shadows of terrestrial objects at sunset, lengthening every instant, and growing faint as they lengthen; and in the instant that they shoot to an immeasurable length disappearing.”

Verse 23.—“*I am tossed up and down as the locust.*” Although the locusts have sufficient strength of flight to remain on the wing for a considerable period, and to pass over great distances, they have little or no command over the direction of their flight, always travel with the wind, in the same way as the quail. So entirely are they at the mercy of the wind, that if a sudden gust arises the locusts are tossed about in the most helpless manner; and if they should happen to come across one of the circular air-currents that are so frequently found in the countries which they inhabit, they are whirled round and round without the least power of extricating themselves.—*J. G. Wood.*

Verse 23.—“*I am tossed up and down as the locust.*” This reference is to the flying locust. I have had frequent opportunities to notice how these squadrons are tossed up and down, and whirled round and round by the ever-varying currents of the mountain winds.—*W. M. Thomson.*

Verse 28.—“*Let them curse, but bless thou.*” Fear not thou, who art a saint, their imprecations; this is but like false fire in the pan of an uncharged gun, it gives a crack, but hurts not; God’s blessings will cover thee from their curse.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 28 (first clause).—Men’s curses are impotent, God’s blessings are omnipotent.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 30.—“*I will greatly praise the Lord with my mouth.*” In the celebration of God’s praises, there can be no question that these must issue from the heart ere they can be uttered by the lips; at the same time, it would be an indication of great coldness, and of want of fervour, did not the tongue unite with the heart in this exercise. The reason why David makes mention of the tongue only is, that he takes it for granted that, unless there be a pouring out of the heart before God, those praises which reach no farther than the ear are vain and frivolous; and, therefore, from the very bottom of his soul, he pours forth his heart-felt gratitude in fervent strains

of praise ; and this he does from the same motives which ought to influence all the faithful—the desire of mutual edification ; for to act otherwise would be to rob God of the honour which belongs to him.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 31.—“ *He shall stand at the right hand of the poor.*” This expression implies, first, that he appears there as a *friend*. How cheering, how comforting it is to have a friend to stand by us when we are in trouble ! Such a friend is Jesus. In the hour of necessity he comes as a friend to stand by the right hand of the poor creature whose soul is condemned by guilt and accusation. But he stands in a far higher relation than that of a friend ; he stands, too, as *surety and a deliverer*. He goes, as it were, into the court ; and when the prisoner stands at the bar, he comes forward and stands at his right hand as his surety and bondsman ; he brings out of his bosom the acquittance of the debt, signed and sealed with his own blood, he produces it to the eyes of the court, and claims and demands the acquittal and absolution of the prisoner at whose right hand he stands. He stands there, then, that the prisoner may be freely pardoned, and completely justified from those accusations that “ *condemn his soul.*” O sweet standing ! O blessed appearance !—*Joseph C. Philpot* (1802—1869).

Verse 31.—“ *He shall stand at the right hand of the poor.*” One of the oldest Rabbinical commentaries has a very beautiful gloss on this passage. “ Whenever a poor man stands at thy door, the Holy One, blessed be his Name, stands at his right hand. If thou givest him alms, know that thou shalt receive a reward from him who standeth at his right hand.”—*Alfred Edersheim, in “ Sketches of the Jewish Social Life in the Days of Christ,”* 1876.

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—The silence of God. What it may mean : what it involves : how we may endeavour to break it.

Verse 1.—“ *God of my praise.*” A text which may be expounded in its double meaning.

Verse 2.—Slander. Its cause—wickedness and malice. Its instruments—deceit and lies. Its frequency—Jesus and the saints slandered. Its punishment. Our resort when tried by it—prayer to God.

Verses 1—3.—I. God is for his people when the wicked are against them (verse 1) ; 1. for his people's sake ; 2. for his own sake. II. The wicked are against his people when he is for them (verses 2, 3) ; 1. from hatred to God ; 2. from hatred to his people.—*G. R.*

Verse 4.—On the excellency of prayer. See Expository Notes.

Verse 4.—Our Lord's adversaries, and his resort.

Verses 4, 5.—I. David's spirit and conduct towards his enemies. 1. His spirit is love—love for hatred ; hence his denunciations are against their sins, rather than against them. 2. His conduct. He returned good for evil : he interceded for them. II. Their spirit and conduct towards him. 1. Hatred for love. 2. Evil for good.—*G. R.*

Verse 5.—“ *Evil for good.*” This is devil-like. Have not men been guilty of this to parents, to those who have warned them, to saints and ministers, and especially to the Lord himself ?

Verse 5.—How has the Redeemer been recompensed ? Show what he deserves and what he receives from various individuals. He feels the unkindness of those who are ungrateful.

Verse 6.—It is the law of retribution to punish the wicked by means of the wicked.—*Starke.*

Verse 7.—When may prayer become sin ? From what is sought, how sought, by whom sought, and wherefore sought.

Verse 8.—“ *Let his days be few.*” Sin the great shortener of human life. After the flood the whole race lived a shorter time ; passion and avaricious care shorten life, and some sins have a peculiar power to do this, lust, drunkenness, &c.

Verses 20, 21.—I. David leaves his enemies in the hand of God (verse 20). II. He puts himself into the same hands (verse 21).—*G. R.*

Verse 21.—The plea of a believer must be drawn from his God,—his “name” and “mercy.” The opposite habit of searching for arguments in self very common and very disappointing.

Verse 21.—The peculiar goodness of divine mercy.

Verse 22.—The inward sorrows of a saint. Their cause, effects, consolations, and cure.

Verses 26, 27.—I. The Prayer. II. The Believing Title: “*O Lord my God.*” III. The attribute relied upon. IV. The motive for the petition.

Verse 28.—The divine cure for human ill-will; and the saint’s temper when he trusts therein—“let thy servant rejoice.”

Verse 29.—I. A prayer for the repentance of David’s adversaries. II. A prophecy for their confusion if they remain impenitent.—*G. R.*

Verse 29.—The sinner’s last mantle.

Verse 30.—Vocal praise. Should be personal, resolute, intelligent, abundant, hearty. It should attract others, join with others, stimulate others, but never lose its personality.

Verses 30, 31.—I. David’s *will* with respect to himself: “I will . . . yea, I will,” etc. (verse 30). II. His *shall* with respect to God: “he shall,” etc. (verse 31).—*G. R.*

Verses 30, 31.—He promiseth God that he will praise him, verse 30. He promiseth himself that he shall have cause to praise God, ver. 31.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 31.—I. The character to whom the promise is made—the poor. II. The danger to which he is exposed—those that condemn his soul. III. The deliverance which is promised to him—divine, opportune, efficient, complete, everlasting.