

THE TREASURY OF DAVID

VOLUME 2

Psalms 31-60

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PSALM 31

Title. *To the Chief Musician*—a Psalm of David. The dedication to the chief musician proves that this song of mingled measures and alternate strains of grief and woe was intended for public singing, and thus a deathblow is given to the notion that nothing but praise should be sung. Perhaps the Psalms, thus marked, might have been set aside as too mournful for temple worship, if special care had not been taken by the Holy Spirit to indicate them as being designed for the public edification of the Lord's people. May there not also be in Psalms thus designated a peculiar distinct reference to the Lord Jesus? He certainly manifests himself very clearly in the twenty-second, which bears this title; and in the one before us we plainly hear his dying voice in the fifth verse. Jesus is chief everywhere, and in all the holy songs of his saints he is the chief musician. The surmises that Jeremiah penned this Psalm need no other answer than the fact that it is "*a Psalm of David.*"

Subject. The psalmist in dire affliction appeals to his God for help with much confidence and holy importunity, and ere long finds his mind so strengthened that he magnifies the Lord for his great goodness. Some have thought that the occasion in his troubled life which led to this Psalm, was the treachery of the men of Keilah, and we have felt much inclined to this conjecture; but after reflection it seems to us that its very mournful tone, and its allusion to his iniquity demand a later date, and it may be more satisfactory to illustrate it by the period when Absalom had rebelled, and his courtiers were fled from him, while lying lips spread a thousand malicious rumours against him. It is perhaps quite as well that we have no settled season mentioned, or we might have been so busy in applying it to David's case as to forget its suitability to our own.

Division. There are no great lines of demarcation; throughout the strain undulates, falling into valleys of mourning, and rising with hills of confidence. However, we may for convenience arrange it thus: David testifying his confidence in God pleads for help, Psalm 31:1-6; expresses gratitude for mercies received, Psalm 31:7-8; particularly describes his case, Psalm 31:9-13; vehemently pleads for deliverance, Psalm 31:14-18; confidently and thankfully expects a blessing, Psalm 31:19-22; and closes by showing the bearing of his case upon all the people of God.

EXPOSITION

Ver. 1. *In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust.* Nowhere else do I fly for shelter, let the tempest howl as it may. The psalmist has one refuge, and that the best one. He casts out the great sheet anchor of his faith in the time of storm. Let other things be doubtful, yet the fact that he relies on Jehovah, David lays down most positively; and he begins with it, lest by stress of trial he should afterwards forget it. This avowal of faith is the fulcrum by means of which he labours to uplift and remove his trouble; he dwells upon it as a comfort to himself and a plea with God. No mention is made of merit, but faith relies upon divine favour and faithfulness, and upon that alone.

Let me never be ashamed. How can the Lord permit the man to be ultimately put to shame who depends alone upon him? This would not be dealing like a God of truth and grace. It would bring dishonour upon God himself if faith were not in the end rewarded. It will be an ill day indeed for religion when trust in God brings no consolation and no assistance.

Deliver me in thy righteousness. Thou are not unjust to desert a trustful soul, or to break thy promises; thou wilt vindicate the righteousness of thy mysterious providence, and give me joyful deliverance. Faith dares to look even to the sword of justice for protection: while God is righteous, faith will not be left to be proved futile and fanatical. How sweetly the declaration of faith in this first verse sounds, if we read it at the foot of the cross, beholding the promise of the Father as yea and amen through the Son; viewing God with faith's eye as he stands revealed in Jesus crucified.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 1. *In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust.* Let us therefore shun mistrust; doubt is death, trust alone is life. Let us make sure that we trust the Lord, and never take our trust on trust.

Let me never be ashamed. If David prays against being ashamed, let us strive against it. Lovers of Jesus should be ashamed of being ashamed. C. H. S.

Ver. 1. *Deliver me in thy righteousness.* For supporting thy faith, mark well whereon it may safely rest; even upon God's *righteousness*, as well as upon his mercy. On this ground did the apostle in faith expect the crown of

righteousness 2 Timothy 4:7-8, because the Lord from whom he expected it is a righteous judge; and the psalmist is bold to appeal to the righteousness of God. Psalm 35:24. For we may be well assured that what God's goodness, grace, and mercy moved him to promise, his truth, his faithfulness, and righteousness will move him to perform. *William Gouge.*

Ver. 1-3.: —

*Shadows are faithless, and the rocks are false;
No trust in brass, no trust in marble walls;
Poor cots are even as safe as princes' halls.
Great God! there is no safety here below;*

*Thou art my fortress, thou that seemest my foe,
It is thou that strik'st the stroke, must guard the blow.*

*Thou art my God, by thee I fall or stand;
Thy grace hath given me courage to withstand*

All tortures, but my conscience and thy hand.

I know thy justice is thyself; I know,

Just God, thy very self is mercy too;

If not to thee, where, whither shall I go? — Francis Quarles.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 1. Faith expressed, confusion deprecated, deliverance sought.

Ver. 1. (*first clause*). Open avowal of faith.

1. Duties which precede it, self examination, etc.
2. Modes of making the confession.
3. Conduct incumbent on those who have made the profession.

Ver. 1. (*last clause*). How far the righteousness of God is involved in the salvation of a believer.

PSALM 31:2

EXPOSITION

Ver. 2. *Bow down thine ear to me.* Condescend to my low estate; listen to me attentively as one who would hear every word. Heaven with its

transcendent glories of harmony might well engross the divine ear, but yet the Lord has an hourly regard to the weakest moanings of his poorest people.

Deliver me speedily. We must not set times or seasons, yet in submission we may ask for swift as well as sure mercy. God's mercies are often enhanced in value by the timely haste which he uses in their bestowal; if they came late they might be too late—but he rides upon a cherub, and flies upon the wings of the wind when he intends the good of his beloved.

Be thou my strong rock. Be my Engedi, my Adullam; my immutable, immovable, impregnable, sublime, resort.

For an house of defence to save me, wherein I may dwell in safety, not merely running to thee for temporary shelter, but abiding in thee for eternal salvation. How very simply does the good man pray, and yet with what weight of meaning! he uses no ornamental flourishes, he is too deeply in earnest to be otherwise than plain: it were well if all who engage in public prayer would observe the same rule.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 2. *Bow down thy ear.* Listen to my complaint. Put thy ear to my lips, that thou mayest hear all that my *feebleness* is capable of uttering. We generally put our ear near to the lips of the sick and dying that we may hear what they say. To this the text appears to allude. *Adam Clarke.*

Ver. 2. *Deliver me speedily.* In praying that he might be delivered *speedily* there is shown the greatness of his danger, as if he had said, All will soon be over with my life, unless God makes haste to help me. *John Calvin.*

Ver. 2-3. *Be thou my strong rock,* etc. What the Lord is engaged to be unto us by covenant, we may pray and expect to find him in effect. "*Be thou my strong rock,* "saith he, "*for thou art my rock.*" *David Dickson.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 2. (*first clause*). God's hearing prayer a great condescension.

Ver. 2 (*second clause*). How far we may be urgent with God as to time.

Ver. 2-3 (*last and first clauses*). That which we have we may yet seek for.

PSALM 31:3

EXPOSITION

Ver. 3. *For thou art my rock and my fortress.* Here the tried soul avows yet again its full confidence in God. Faith's repetitions are not vain. The avowal of our reliance upon God in times of adversity is a principle method of glorifying him. Active service is good, but the passive confidence of faith is not one jot less esteemed in the sight of God. The words before us appear to embrace and fasten upon the Lord with a fiducial grip which is not to be relaxed. The two personal pronouns, like sure nails, lay hold upon the faithfulness of the Lord. O for grace to have our heart fixed in firm unstaggering belief in God! The figure of a rock and a fortress may be illustrated to us in these times by the vast fortress of Gibraltar, often besieged by our enemies, but never wrested from us: ancient strongholds, though far from impregnable by our modes of warfare, were equally important in those remoter ages—when in the mountain fastnesses, feeble bands felt themselves to be secure. Note the singular fact that David asked the Lord to be his rock Psalm 31:2 because he was his rock; and learn from it that we may pray to enjoy in experience what we grasp by faith. Faith is the foundation of prayer.

Therefore for thy name's sake lead me, and guide me. The psalmist argues like a logician with his fors and therefore. Since I do sincerely trust thee, saith he, O my God, be my director. To lead and to guide are two things very like each other, but patient thought will detect different shades of meaning, especially as the last may mean *provide for me*. The double word indicates an urgent need—we require double direction, for we are fools, and the way is rough. Lead me as a soldier, guide me as a traveller! lead me as a babe, guide me as a man; lead me when thou art with me, but guide me even if thou be absent; lead me by thy hand, guide me by thy word. The argument used is one which is fetched from the armoury of free grace: not for my own sake, but *for thy name's sake* guide me. Our appeal is not to any fancied virtue in our own names, but to the glorious goodness and graciousness which shines resplendent in the character of Israel's God. It is not possible that the Lord should suffer his own honour to be tarnished, but this would certainly be the case if those who trusted him should perish. This was Moses' plea, "What wilt thou do unto thy great name?"

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 2-3. *Be thou my strong rock*, etc. What the Lord is engaged to be unto us by covenant, we may pray and expect to find him in effect. *Be thou my strong rock*, saith he, *for thou art my rock*. *David Dickson*.

Ver. 3. *For thy name's sake*. If merely a creature's honour, the credit of ministers, or the glory of angels were involved, man's salvation would indeed be uncertain. But every step involves the honour of God. We plead for *his name's sake*. If God should begin and not continue, or if he should carry on but not complete the work, all would admit that it was for some reason that must bring reproach on the Almighty. This can never be. God was self moved to undertake man's salvation. His glorious name makes it certain the top stone shall be laid in glory. *William S. Plumer*.

Ver. 3. *For thy name's sake*. On account of the fame of thy power, thy goodness, thy truth, &c.

Lead me. As a shepherd an erring sheep, as a leader military bands, or as one leads another ignorant of the way. See Genesis 24:27 Nehemiah 9:12-13 Psalm 23:3 73:24. Govern my counsels, my affections, and my thoughts. *Martin Geier*, 1614-1681.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 2-3. (*last and first clauses*). That which we have we may yet seek for.

Ver. 3. Work out the metaphor of God as a rocky fastness of the soul.

Ver. 3. (*last clause*).

1. A blessing needed, *lead me*.
2. A blessing obtainable.
3. An argument for its being granted, *for thy name's sake*..

PSALM 31:4

EXPOSITION

Ver. 4. *Pull me out of the net that they have laid privily for me*. The enemies of David were cunning as well as mighty; if they could not

conquer him by power, they would capture him by craft. Our own spiritual foes are of the same order—they are of the serpent's brood, and seek to ensnare us by their guile. The prayer before us supposes the possibility of the believer being caught like a bird; and, indeed, we are so foolish that this often happens. So deftly does the fowler do his work that simple ones are soon surrounded by it. The text asks that even out of the meshes of the net the captive one may be delivered; and this is a proper petition, and one which can be granted; from between the jaws of the lion and out of the belly of hell can eternal love rescue the saint. It may need a sharp *pull* to save a soul from the net of temptation, and a mighty pull to extricate a man from the snares of malicious cunning, but the Lord is equal to every emergency, and the most skilfully placed nets of the hunter shall never be able to hold his chosen ones. Woe unto those who are so clever at net laying: they who tempt others shall be destroyed themselves. Villains who lay traps in secret shall be punished in public.

For thou art my strength. What an inexpressible sweetness is to be found in these few words! How joyfully may we enter upon labours, and how cheerfully may we endure sufferings when we can lay hold upon celestial power. Divine power will rend asunder all the toils of the foe, confound their politics and frustrate their knavish tricks; he is a happy man who has such matchless might engaged upon his side. Our own strength would be of little service when embarrassed in the nets of base cunning, but the Lord's strength is ever available; we have but to invoke it, and we shall find it near at hand. If by faith we are depending alone upon the strength of the strong God of Israel, we may use our holy reliance as a plea in supplication.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 4. *Pull me out of the net:* that *noted net*, as the Hebrew hath it. *John Trapp.*

Ver. 4. *Pull me out of the net that they have laid privily for me.* By these words, he intimates that his enemies did not only by open force come against him, but by cunning and policy attempted to circumvent him, as when they put him on, as Saul instructed them, to be the king's son-in-law, and to this end set him on to get two hundred foreskins of the Philistines for a dowry, under a pretence of goodwill, seeking his ruin; and when wait also was laid for him to kill him in his house. But he trusted in God, and

prayed to be delivered, if there should be any the like enterprise against him hereafter. *John Mayer.*

Ver. 4. *For thou art my strength.* Omnipotence cuts the net which policy weaves. When we poor puny things are in the net, God is not. In the old fable the mouse set free the lion, here the lion liberates the mouse. *C. H. S.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 4. *The rescue of the ensnared.*

1. The fowlers.
2. The laying of the net.
3. The capture of the bird.
4. The cry of the captive.
5. The rescue.

Ver. 4. (*last clause*). The weak one girt with omnipotence.

PSALM 31:5

EXPOSITION

Ver. 5. *Into thine hand I commit my spirit.* These living words of David were our Lord's dying words, and have been frequently used by holy men in their hour of departure. Be assured that they are good, choice, wise, and solemn words; we may use them now and in the last tremendous hour. Observe, the object of the good man's solicitude in life and death is not his body or his estate, but his spirit; this is his jewel, his secret treasure; if this be safe, all is well. See what he does with his pearl! He commits it to the hand of his God; it came from him, it is his own, he has aforetime sustained it, he is able to keep it, and it is most fit that he should receive it. All things are safe in Jehovah's hands; what we entrust to the Lord will be secure, both now and in that day of days towards which we are hastening. Without reservation the good man yields himself to his heavenly Father's hand; it is enough for him to be there; it is peaceful living and glorious dying to repose in the care of heaven. At all times we should commit and continue to commit our all to Jesus' sacred care, then, though life may hang on a

thread, and adversities may multiply as the sands of the sea, our soul shall dwell at ease, and delight itself in quiet resting places.

Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth. Redemption is a solid base for confidence. David had not known Calvary as we have done, but temporal redemption cheered him; and shall not eternal redemption yet more sweetly console us? Past deliverances are strong pleas for present assistance. What the Lord has done he will do again, for he changes not. He is a God of veracity, faithful to his promises, and gracious to his saints; he will not turn away from his people.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 5. *Into thine hand I commit my spirit.* These were the last words of Polycarp, of Bernard, of Huss, of Jerome of Prague, of Luther, of Melancthon, and many others. "Blessed are they," says Luther, "who die not only *for* the Lord, as martyrs, not only *in* the Lord, as all believers, but likewise *with* the Lord, as breathing forth their lives in these words, 'Into thine hand I commit my spirit.'" *J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Ver. 5. *Into thine hand I commit my spirit.* These words, as they stand in the *Vulgate*, were in the highest credit among our ancestors; by whom they were used on all dangers, difficulties, and in the article of death. *In manus tuas, Domine, commendo spiritum meum*, was used by the sick when about to expire, if they were sensible; and if not, the priest said it in their behalf. In *forms of prayer* for sick and dying persons, these words were frequently inserted in Latin, though all the rest of the prayer was English; for it was supposed there was something sovereign in the *language* itself. But let not the abuse of such words hinder their usefulness. For an ejaculation nothing can be better; and when the pious or the tempted with confidence use them, nothing can exceed their effect. *Adam Clarke.*

Ver. 5. *Into thine hand I commit my spirit*, etc. For what are the saints to commit their spirits into the hands of God by Jesus Christ?

1. That they may be safe; *i.e.*, preserved in their passage to heaven, from all the enemies and dangers that may stand in the way. When saints die, the powers of darkness would, doubtless, if possible, hinder the ascending of their souls to God. As they are cast out of heaven, they are filled with rage to see any out of our world going thither. One thing, therefore, which the saint means in committing his spirit into the hands of God, is, that the

precious *depositum* may be kept from all that wish or would attempt its ruin. And they are sure that almighty power belongs to God: and if this is engaged for their preservation, none can pluck them out of his hand. The Redeemer hath spoiled principalities and powers, and proved it by his triumphant ascension to glory; and hath all his and the believer's enemies in a chain, so that they shall be more than conquerors in and through him. Angels, for order's sake, are sent forth to minister to them and be their guard, who will faithfully attend them their charge, till they are brought to the presence of the common Lord of both. "I know," saith the apostle, "whom I have believed; and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

2. They commit their soul into the hands of God, that they may be admitted to dwell with him, even in that presence of his where there is fulness of joy, and where there are pleasures for evermore: where all evil is excluded, and all good present, to fill their desires, and find them matter of praise to all eternity.

3. They commit their departing spirits into the hands of God, that their bodies may be at length raised and reunited to them, and that so they may enter at last into the blessedness prepared for them that love him...The grounds on which they may do this with comfort, *i.e.*, with lively hopes of being happy for ever, are many. To mention only two: —

1. God's interest in them, and upon the most endearing foundation, that of redemption. *Into thine hand I commit my spirit; for thou hast redeemed me.*

Redeemed me from hell and the wrath to come, by giving thy Son to die for me. Lord, I am not only thy creature, but thy redeemed creature, bought with a price, saith the saint.

Redeemed me from the power of my inward corruption, and from love to it, and delight in it; and with my consent hast drawn me to be thine, and thine for ever. *Lord, I am thine*, save me unchangeably.

2. His known faithfulness. *Into thine hand I commit my spirit, O Lord God of truth.* Into thine hand I commit my spirit, who hast been a *God of truth*, in performing thy promises to all thy people that are gone before me out of this world; and has been so to me hitherto, and, I cannot doubt, wilt continue so to the end. *Daniel Wilcox.*

Ver. 5. *Into thine hand.* When those hands fail me, then I am indeed abandoned and miserable! When they sustain and keep me, then am I safe, exalted, strong, and filled with good.

Receive me then, O Eternal Father, for the sake of our Lord's merits and words; for he, by his obedience and his death, hath now merited from thee everything which I do not merit of myself. Into thy hands, my Father and my God, I commend my spirit, my soul, my body, my powers, my desires. I offer up to thy hands, all; to them I commit all that I have hitherto been, that thou mayest forgive and restore all; my wounds, that thou mayest heal them; my blindness, that thou mayest enlighten it; my coldness, that thou mayest inflame it; my wicked and erring way, that thou mayest set me forth in the right path; and all my evils, that thou mayest uproot them all from my soul. I commend and offer up into thy most sacred hands, O my God, what I am, which thou knowest far better than I can know, weak, wretched, wounded, fickle, blind, deaf, dumb, poor, bare of every good, nothing, yea, less than nothing, on account of my many sins, and more miserable than I can either know or express. Do thou, Lord God, receive me and make me to become what he, the divine Lamb, would have me to be. I commend, I offer up, I deliver over into thy divine hands, all my affairs, my cares, my affections, my success, my comforts, my labours, and everything which thou knowest to be coming upon me. Direct all to thy honour and glory; teach me in all to do thy will, and in all to recognise the work of thy divine hands; to seek nothing else, and with this reflection alone to find rest and comfort in everything.

O hands of the Eternal God, who made and still preserve the heavens and earth for my sake, and who made me for yourselves, suffer me not ever to stray from you. In those hands I possess my Lamb, and all I love; in them therefore must I be also, together with him. Together with him, in these loving hands shall I sleep and rest in peace, since he in dying left me hope in them and in their infinite mercies, placed me within them, as my only and my special refuge. Since by these hands I live and am what I am, make me continually to live through them, and in them to die; in them to live in the love of our Lord, and from them only to desire and look for every good; that from them I may at last, together with the Lord, receive the crown.
Fra Thome de Jesu.

Ver. 5. *Into thine hand I commit my spirit.* No shadowy form of a dark destiny stands before him at the end of his career, although he must die on

the cross, the countenance of his Father shines before him. He does not behold his life melting away into the gloomy floods of mortality. He commends it into the hands of his Father. It is not alone in the general spirit of humanity, that he will continue to live. He will live on in the definite personality of his own spirit, embraced by the special protection and faithfulness of his Father. Thus he does not surrender his life despondingly to death for destruction, but with triumphant consciousness to the Father for resurrection. It was the very centre of his testament: assurance of life; surrender of his life into the hand of a living Father. With loud voice he exclaimed it to the world, which will for ever and ever sink into the heathenish consciousness of death, of the fear of death, of despair of immortality and resurrection, because it for ever and ever allows the consciousness of the personality of God, and of personal union with him, to be obscured and shaken. With the heart of a lion, the dying Christ once more testified of life with an expression which was connected with the word of the Old Testament Psalm, and testified that the Spirit of eternal life was already operative, in prophetic anticipation, in the old covenant. Thus living as ever, he surrendered his life, through death, to the eternally living One. His death was the last and highest fact, the crown of his holy life. *J.P. Lange, D.D., in "The Life of the Lord Jesus Christ." 1864.*

Ver. 5. *Into thine hand I commit my spirit.* David committed his spirit to God that he might not die, but Christ and all Christians after him, commit their spirit to God, that they may live for ever by death, and after death. This Psalm is thus connected with the twenty-second Psalm. Both of these Psalms were used by Christ on the cross. From the twenty-second he derived those bitter words of anguish, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" From the present Psalm he derived those last words of love and trust which he uttered just before his death. The Psalter was the hymn book and prayer book of Christ. *Christopher Wordsworth.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 5.

1. Dying, in a saint's account, is a difficult work.
2. The children of God, when considering themselves as dying, are chiefly concerned for their departing immortal spirits.
3. Such having chosen God for their God, have abundant encouragement when dying, to commit their departing spirits into his

hand, with hopes of their being safe and happy for ever with him.
Daniel Wilcox.

Ver. 5. The believer's requiem. Redemption the foundation of our repose in God.

1. What we do—*commit ourselves to God.*
2. What God has done—*redeemed us.*

PSALM 31:6

EXPOSITION

Ver. 6. *I have hated them that regard lying vanities.* Those who will not lean upon the true arm of strength, are sure to make to themselves vain confidences. Man must have a god, and if he will not adore the only living and true God, he makes a fool of himself, and pays superstitious regard to a lie, and waits with anxious hope upon a base delusion. Those who did this were none of David's friends; he had a constant dislike to them: the verb includes the present as well as the past tense. He hated them for hating God; he would not endure the presence of idolaters; his heart was set against them for their stupidity and wickedness. He had no patience with their superstitious observances, and calls their idols vanities of emptiness, nothings of nonentity. Small courtesy is more than Romanists and Puseyists deserve for their fooleries. Men who make gods of their riches, their persons, their wits, or anything else, are to be shunned by those whose faith rests upon God in Christ Jesus; and so far from being envied, they are to be pitied as depending upon utter vanities.

But I trust in the Lord. This might be very unfashionable, but the psalmist dared to be singular. Bad example should not make us less decided for the truth, but the rather in the midst of general defection we should grow the more bold. This adherence to his trust in Jehovah is the great plea employed all along: the troubled one flies into the arms of his God, and ventures everything upon the divine faithfulness.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 6. *I have hated.* Holy men have strong passions, and are not so mincing and charitable towards evil doers as smooth tongued

latitudinarians would have them. He who does not hate evil does not love good. There is such a thing as a good hater. *C. H. S*

Ver. 6. *They that regard lying vanities.* The Romanists feign miracles of the saints to make them, as they suppose, the more glorious. They say that the house wherein the Virgin Mary was when the angel Gabriel came unto her was, many hundred years after, translated, first, out of Galilee into Dalmatia, above 2,000 miles, and thence over the sea into Italy, where also it removed from one place to another, till at length it found a place where to abide, and many most miraculous cures, they say, were wrought by it, and that the very trees when it came, did bow unto it. Infinite stories they have of this nature, especially in the Legend of Saints, which they call "The Golden Legend," a book so full of gross stuff that Ludovicus Vives, a Papist, but learned and ingenuous, with great indignations cried out, "What can be more abominable than that book?" and he wondered why they should call it "golden," when as he that wrote it was a man "of an iron mouth and of a leaden heart." And Melchior Canus, a Romish bishop, passed the same censure upon that book, and complains (as Vives also had done before him), that Laertius wrote the lives of philosophers, and Suetonius the lives of the Caesars, more sincerely than some did the lives of the saints and martyrs. They are most vain and superstitious in the honour which they give to the relics of the saints; as their dead bodies, or some parts of them; their bones, flesh, hair; yea, their clothes that they wore, or the like. "You may now, everywhere," saith Erasmus, "see held out for gain, "Mary's milk, which they honour almost as much as Christ's consecrated body; prodigious oil; so many pieces of the cross, that if they were all gathered together a great ship would scarce carry them. Here Francis's hood set forth to view; there the innermost garment of the Virgin Mary; in one place, Anna's comb; in another place, Joseph's stocking; in another place, Thomas of Canterbury's shoe; in another place, Christ's foreskin, which, though it be a thing uncertain, they worship more religiously than Christ's whole person. Neither do they bring forth these things as things that may be tolerated, and to please the common people, but all religion almost is placed in them. (Erasmus, on Matthew 23:5).
Christopher Cartwright.

Ver. 6. The sense lies thus, that heathen men, when any danger or difficulty approacheth them, are solemnly wont to apply themselves to auguries and divinations, and so to false gods, to receive advice and direction from them: but doing so and observing their responses most superstitiously, they

yet gain nothing at all by it. These David detests, and keeps close to God, hoping for no aid but from him. *H. Hammond, D.D.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 6. Holy detestation, as a virtue discriminated from bigotry: or, the good hater.

PSALM 31:7

EXPOSITION

Ver. 7. *I will be glad and rejoice in thy mercy.* For mercy past he is grateful, and for mercy future, which he believably anticipates, he is joyful. In our most importunate intercessions, we must find breathing time to bless the Lord: praise is never a hindrance to prayer, but rather a lively refreshment therein. It is delightful at intervals to hear the notes of the high sounding cymbals when the dolorous sackbut rules the hour. Those two words, *glad* and *rejoice*, are an instructive reduplication, we need not stint ourselves in our holy triumph; this wine we may drink in bowls without fear of excess.

For thou hast considered my trouble. Thou hast seen it, weighed it, directed it, fixed a bound to it, and in all ways made it a matter of tender consideration. A man's consideration means the full exercise of his mind; what must God's consideration be?

Thou hast known my soul in adversities. God owns his saints when others are ashamed to acknowledge them; he never refuses to know his friends. He thinks not the worse of them for their rags and tatters. He does not misjudge them and cast them off when their faces are lean with sickness, or their hearts heavy with despondency. Moreover, the Lord Jesus knows us in our pangs in a peculiar sense, by having a deep sympathy towards us in them all; when no others can enter into our griefs, from want of understanding them experimentally, Jesus dives into the lowest depths with us, comprehending the direst of our woes, because he has felt the same. Jesus is a physician who knows every case; nothing is new to him. When we are so bewildered as not to know our own state, he knows us altogether. He has known us and will know us: O for grace to know more

of him! "Man, know thyself, "is a good philosophic precept, but "Man, thou art known of God, "is a superlative consolation. *Adversities* in the plural— "Many are the afflictions of the righteous."

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 7. *I will be glad and rejoice in thy mercy.* In the midst of trouble faith will furnish matter of joy, and promise to itself gladness, especially from the memory of by past experiences of God's mercy; as here,

I will be glad and rejoice in thy mercy. ...The ground of our gladness, when we have found a proof of God's kindness to us should not be in the benefit so much as in the fountain of the benefit; for this giveth us hope to drink again of the like experience from the fountain which did send forth that benefit. Therefore David says,

I will be glad and rejoice in thy mercy. David Dickson.

Ver. 7. *Thou hast considered my trouble:*

*Man's plea to man, is, that he never more
Will beg, and that he never begged before:*

*Man's plea to God, is, that he did obtain
A former suit, and, therefore sues again.*

How good a God we serve, that when we sue,

Makes his old gifts the examples of his new! Francis Quarles.

Ver. 7. *Thou hast known my soul in adversities.* One day a person who, by the calamities of war, sickness, and other affliction, had been reduced from a state of affluence to penury, came to Gotthold in great distress. He complained that he had just met one of his former acquaintances, who was even not distantly related to him, but that he had not condescended to bow, far less to speak to him, and he had turned his eyes away, and passed him as if he had been a stranger. O sir, he exclaimed with a sigh, how it pained me! I felt as if a dagger had pierced my heart! Gotthold replied, Do not think it strange at all. It is the way of the world to look high, and to pass unnoticed that which is humble and lowly. I know, however, of *One* who, though he dwelleth on high, humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven and in the earth Psalm 113:5-6, and of whom the royal prophet testifies:

Thou hast known my soul in adversities. Yes; though we have lost our rich attire, and come to him in rags; though our forms be wasted because of grief, and waxed old (Psalm 6:7, Luther's Version); though sickness and sorrow have consumed our beauty like a moth Psalm 39:11; though blushes, and tears, and dust, overspread our face Psalm 69:7, he still recognises, and is not ashamed to own us. Comfort yourself with this, for what harm will it do you at last, though men disown, if God the Lord have not forgotten you? *Christian Scriver.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 7.

1. An endearing attribute rejoiced in.
2. An interesting experience related.
3. A directly personal favour from God delighted in.

Ver. 7. (*centre clause*). Consider the measure, the effects, the time, the tempering, the ending, and the recompense.

Ver. 7. (*last clause*). The Lord's familiarity with his afflicted.

PSALM 31:8

EXPOSITION

Ver. 8. *And hast not shut me up into the hand of the enemy.* To be shut up in one's hand is to be delivered over absolutely to his power; now, the believer is not in the hand of death or the devil, much less is he in the power of man. The enemy may get a temporary advantage over us, but we are like men in prison with the door open; God will not let us be shut up, he always provides a way of escape.

Thou hast set my feet in a large room. Blessed be God for liberty: civil liberty is valuable, religious liberty is precious, spiritual liberty is priceless. In all troubles we may praise God if these are left. Many saints have had their greatest enlargements of soul when their affairs have been in the greatest straits. Their souls have been in a large room when their bodies have been lying in Bonner's coal hole, or in some other narrow dungeon.

Grace has been equal to every emergency; and more than this, it has made the emergency an opportunity for displaying itself.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 8. He openeth and no man shutteth. Let us bless the Lord for an open door which neither men nor devils can close. We are not in man's hands yet, because we are in the hands of God; else had our feet been in the stocks and not in the large room of liberty. Our enemies, if they were as able as they are willing, would long ago have treated us as fowlers do the little birds when they enclose them in their hand. *C. H. S.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 8. Christian liberty, a theme for gladness.

PSALM 31:9

EXPOSITION

Ver. 9. *Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am in trouble.* Now, the man of God comes to a particular and minute description of his sorrowful case. He unbosoms his heart, lays bare his wounds, and expresses his inward desolation. This first sentence pithily comprehends all that follows, it is the text for his lamenting discourse. Misery moves mercy—no more reasoning is needed. "Have mercy" is the prayer; the argument is as prevalent as it is plain and personal, "I am in trouble."

Mine eye is consumed with grief. Dim and sunken eyes are plain indicators of failing health. Tears draw their salt from our strength, and floods of them are very apt to consume the source from which they spring. God would have us tell him the symptoms of our disease, not for his information, but to show our sense of need.

Yea, my soul and my belly (or *body*). Soul and body are so intimately united, that one cannot decline without the other feeling it. We, in these days, are not strangers to the double sinking which David describes; we have been faint with physical suffering, and distracted with mental distress: when two such seas meet, it is well for us that the Pilot at the helm is at

home in the midst of the water floods, and makes storms to become the triumph of his art.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 9. *Mine eye is consumed with grief.* This expression seems to suggest that the eye really suffers under the influence of grief. There was an old idea, which still prevails amongst the uninstructed, that the eye, under extreme grief, and with a constant profuse flow of tears, might sink away and perish under the ordeal. There is no solid foundation for this idea, but there is a very serious form of disease of the eyes, well known to oculists by the title of Glaucoma, which seems to be very much influenced by mental emotions of a depressing nature. I have know many striking instances of cases in which there has been a constitutional proneness to Glaucoma, and in which some sudden grief has brought on a violent access of the disease and induced blindness of an incurable nature. In such instances the explanation seems to be somewhat as follows. It is essential to the healthy performance of the functions of the eye, that it should possess a given amount of elasticity, which again results from an exact balance between the amount of fluid within the eye, and the external fibrous case or bag that contains or encloses it. If this is disturbed, if the fluid increases unduly in quantity, and the eye becomes too hard, pain and inflammation may be suddenly induced in the interior of the eye, and sight may become rapidly extinguished. There are a special set of nerves that preside over this peculiar physical condition, and keep the eye in a proper state of elasticity; and it is a remarkable fact, that through a long life, as a rule, we find that the eye preserves this elastic state. If, however, the function of these nerves is impaired, as it may readily be under the influence of extreme grief, or any depressing agent, the eye may become suddenly hard. Until a comparatively recent date, acute Glaucoma, or sudden hardening of the eye, attended with intense pain and inflammation, caused complete and hopeless blindness; but in the present day it is capable of relief by means of an operation. The effect of grief in causing this form of blindness seems to be an explanation of the text, *Mine eye is consumed with grief.*

On application for information to the Royal London Ophthalmic Hospital, as to the effect of grief upon the eye, we received the above, with much other valuable information, from GEORGE CRITCHETT, Esq., the senior

medical officer. The courtesy of this gentleman, and of the secretary of that noble institution, deserves special mention.

Ver. 9-10. —

If thou wouldst learn, not knowing how to pray,

Add but a faith, and say as beggars say:

Master, I am poor, and blind, in great distress, Hungry, and lame, and cold, and comfortless; O succour him that's gravelled on the shelf Of pain, and want, and cannot help himself Cast down thine eye upon a wretch, and take Some pity on me for sweet Jesus' sake: But hold! take heed this clause be not put in, I never begged before, nor will again.
Francis Quarles.

NOTES TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 9. The mourner's lament.

Ver. 9. (*last clause*). Excessive sorrow, its injurious effects on the body, the understanding, and the spiritual nature. Sin of it, cure of it.

Ver. 9-10. The sick man's moan, a reminder to those who enjoy good health.

PSALM 31:10

EXPOSITION

Ver. 10. *For my life is spent with grief, and my years with sighing.* It had become his daily occupation to mourn; he spent all his days in the dungeon of distress. The sap and essence of his existence was being consumed, as a candle is wasted while it burns. His adversities were shortening his days, and digging for him an early grave. Grief is a sad market to spend all our wealth of life in, but a far more profitable trade may be driven there than in Vanity Fair; it is better to go to the house of mourning than the house of feasting. Black is good wear. The salt of tears is a healthy medicine. Better spend our years in sighing than in sinning. The two members of the sentence before us convey the same idea; but there are no idle words in

Scripture, the reduplication is the fitting expression of fervency and importunity.

My strength faileth because of mine iniquity. David sees to the bottom of his sorrow, and detects sin lurking there. It is profitable trouble which leads us to trouble ourselves about our iniquity. Was this the psalmist's foulest crime which now gnawed at his heart, and devoured his strength? Very probably it was so. Sinful morsels, though sweet in the mouth, turn out to be poison in the bowels: if we wantonly give a portion of our strength to sin, it will by and by take the remainder from us. We lose both physical, mental, moral, and spiritual vigour by iniquity.

And my bones are consumed. Weakness penetrated the innermost parts of his system, the firmest parts of his frame felt the general decrepitude. A man is in a piteous plight when he comes to this.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 10. *Mine iniquity.* Italian version, "*my pains*"; "because that death and all miseries are come into the world by reason of sin, the Scripture doth often confound the names of the cause and of the effects. *John Diodati.*

Ver. 10.. I find that when the saints are under trial and well humbled, little sins raise great cries in the conscience; but in prosperity, conscience is a pope that gives dispensations and great latitude to our hearts. The cross is therefore as needful as the crown is glorious. *Samuel Rutherford.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 9-10. The sick man's moan, a reminder to those who enjoy good health.

Ver. 10. *My strength faileth because of mine iniquity.* The weakening influence of sin.

PSALM 31:11

EXPOSITION

Ver. 11. *I was a reproach among all mine enemies.* They were pleased to have something to throw at me; my mournful estate was music to them, because they maliciously interpreted it to be a judgment from heaven upon me. Reproach is little thought of by those who are not called to endure it, but he who passes under its lash knows how deep it wounds. The best of men may have the bitterest foes, and be subject to the most cruel taunts.

But especially among my neighbours. Those who are nearest can stab the sharpest. We feel most the slights of those who should have shown us sympathy. Perhaps David's friends feared to be identified with his declining fortunes, and therefore turned against him in order to win the mercy if not the favour of his opponents. Self interest rules the most of men: ties the most sacred are soon snapped by its influence, and actions of the utmost meanness are perpetrated without scruple.

And a fear to mine acquaintance. The more intimate before, the more distant did they become. Our Lord was denied by Peter, betrayed by Judas, and forsaken by all in the hour of his utmost need. All the herd turn against a wounded deer. The milk of human kindness curdles when a despised believer is the victim of slanderous accusations.

They that did see me without fled from me. Afraid to be seen in the company of a man so thoroughly despised, those who once courted his society hastened from him as though he had been infected with the plague. How villainous a thing is slander which can thus make an eminent saint, once the admiration of his people, to become the general butt, the universal aversion of mankind! To what extremities of dishonour may innocence be reduced!

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 11. *I was a reproach among all mine enemies.* If anyone strives after patience and humility, he is a hypocrite. If he allows himself in the pleasures of this world, he is a glutton. If he seeks justice, he is impatient; if he seeks it not, he is a fool. If he would be prudent, he is stingy; if he would make others happy, he is dissolute. If he gives himself up to prayer,

he is vainglorious. And this is the great loss of the church, that by means like these many are held back from goodness! which the psalmist lamenting says, *I became a reproof among all mine enemies.* Chrysostom, quoted by J.M. Neale.

Ver. 11. *They that did see me without fled from me.* I once heard the following relation from an old man of the world, and it occurs to me, as illustrative of what we are now considering. He was at a public assembly, and saw there an individual withdrawing herself from the crowd, and going into a corner of the room. He went up to her, she was an old and intimate friend of his; he addressed himself to her—she, with a sigh, said, "Oh, I have seen many days of trouble since we last met." What does the man of the world do? Immediately he withdrew himself from his sorrow stricken friend and hid himself in the crowd. Such is the sympathy of the world with Christ or his servants. *Hamilton Verschoyle.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 11.. The good man evil spoken of.

PSALM 31:12

EXPOSITION

Ver. 12. *I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind.* All David's youthful prowess was now gone from remembrance; he had been the saviour of his country, but his services were buried in oblivion. Men soon forget the deepest obligations; popularity is evanescent to the last degree: he who is in every one's mouth today may be forgotten by all tomorrow. A man had better be dead than be smothered in slander. Of the dead we say nothing but good, but in the psalmist's case they said nothing but evil. We must not look for the reward of philanthropy this side of heaven, for men pay their best servants but sorry wages, and turn them out of doors when no more is to be got out of them.

I am like a broken vessel, a thing useless, done for, worthless, cast aside, forgotten. Sad condition for a king! Let us see herein the portrait of the King of kings in his humiliation, when he made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 12. *I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind.* A striking instance of how the greatest princes are forgotten in death is found in the deathbed of Louis XIV. "The Louis that was, lies forsaken, a mass of abhorred clay; abandoned `to some poor persons, and priests of the *Chapelle Ardente*, 'who make haste to put him `in two lead coffins, pouring in abundant spirits of wine.' The new Louis with his court is rolling towards Choisy, through the summer afternoon: the royal tears still flow; but a word mispronounced by Monseigneur d'Artois sets them all laughing, and they weep no more." *Thomas Carlyle in "The French Revolution."*

Ver. 12. *I am forgotten*, etc. As a dying man with curtains drawn, whom friends have no hope of, and therefore look off from; or rather like a dead man laid aside out of sight and out of mind altogether, and buried more in oblivion than in his grave; when the news is, "she is dead, trouble not the Master." Luke 8:49. *Anthony Tuckney, D.D., 1599-1670.*

Ver. 12. *I am like a broken vessel.* As a vessel, how profitable soever it hath been to the owner, and how necessary for his turn, yet, when it is broken is thrown away, and regarded no longer: even so such is the state of a man forsaken of those whose friend he hath been so long as he was able to stand them in stead to be of advantage to them. *Robert Cawdray.*

Ver. 12-15: —

*Forgot as those who in the grave abide,
And as a broken vessel past repair,
Slandered by many, fear on every side.
Who counsel take and would my life ensnare.*

*But, Lord, my hopes on thee are fixed: I said,
Thou art my God, my days are in thy hand;
Against my furious foes oppose thy aid,
And those who persecute my soul withstand. George Sandys.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 12. The world's treatment of its best friends.

PSALM 31:13

EXPOSITION

Ver. 13. *For I have heard the slander of many.* One slanderous viper is death to all comfort—what must be the venom of a whole brood? What the ear does not hear the heart does not rue; but in David's case the accusing voices were loud enough to break in upon his quiet—foul mouths had grown so bold, that they poured forth their falsehoods in the presence of their victim. Shimei was but one of a class, and his cry of "Go up, thou bloody man, "was but the common speech of thousands of the sons of Belial. All Beelzebub's pack of hounds may be in full cry against a man, and yet he may be the Lord's anointed.

Fear was on every side. He was encircled with fearful suggestions, threatenings, remembrances, and forebodings; no quarter was clear from incessant attack.

While they took counsel together against me, they devised to take away my life. The ungodly act in concert in their onslaughts upon the excellent of the earth: it is to be wondered at that sinners should often be better agreed than saints, and generally set about their wicked work with much more care and foresight than the righteous exhibit in holy enterprises. Observe the cruelty of a good man's foes! they will be content with nothing less than his blood—for this they plot and scheme. Better fall into the power of a lion than under the will of malicious persecutors, for the beast may spare its prey if it be fed to the full, but malice is unrelenting and cruel as a wolf. Of all fiends the most cruel is envy. How sorely was the psalmist bested when the poisoned arrows of a thousand bows were all aimed at his life! Yet in all this his faith did not fail him, nor did his God forsake him. Here is encouragement for us.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 13. *I have heard the slander of many.* From my very childhood when I was first sensible of the concerns of men's souls, I was possessed with some admiration to find that everywhere the religious, godly sort of people, who did but exercise a serious care of their own and other men's salvation, were made the wonder and obloquy of the world, especially of

the most vicious and flagitious men; so that they that professed the same articles of faith, the same commandments of God to be their law, and the same petitions of the Lord's prayer to be their desire, and so professed the same religion, did everywhere revile those that endeavoured to live in good earnest in what they said. I thought this was impudent hypocrisy in the ungodly, worldly sort of men—to take those for the most intolerable persons in the land who are but serious in their own religion, and do but endeavour to perform what all their enemies also vow and promise. If religion be bad, and our faith be not true, why do these men profess it? If it be true, and good, why do they hate and revile them that would live in the serious practise of it, if they will not practise it themselves? But we must not expect reason when sin and sensuality have made men unreasonable. But I must profess that since I observed the course of the world, and the concord of the word and providence of God, I took it for a notable proof of man's fall, and of the truth of the Scripture, and of the supernatural original of true sanctification, to find such a universal enmity between the holy and the serpentine seed, and to find Cain and Able's case so ordinarily exemplified, and he that is born after the flesh persecuting him that is born after the Spirit. And I think to this day it is a great and visible help for the confirmation of our Christian faith. *Richard Baxter.*

Ver. 13. *Slander.* Be thou as chaste as ice, as pure a snow, thou shalt not escape calumny. *William Shakespeare.*

Ver. 13. *They took counsel together against me,* etc. While they mangled his reputation, they did it in such a manner as that they covered their wickedness under the appearance of grave and considerate procedure, in consulting among themselves to destroy him as a man who no longer ought to be tolerated on the earth. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that his mind was wounded by so many and so sharp temptations. *John Calvin.*

PSALM 31:14

EXPOSITION

Ver. 14-18. In this section of the Psalm he renews his prayers, urging the same pleas as at first: earnest wrestlers attempt over and over again the same means of gaining their point.

Ver. 14. *But I trusted in thee, O Lord.* Notwithstanding all afflicting circumstances, David's faith maintained its hold, and was not turned aside from its object. What a blessed saving clause is this! So long as our faith, which is our shield, is safe, the battle may go hard, but its ultimate result is no matter of question; if that could be torn from us, we should be as surely slain as were Saul and Jonathan upon the high places of the field.

I said, Thou art my God. He proclaimed aloud his determined allegiance to Jehovah. He was no fair weather believer, he could hold to his faith in a sharp frost, and wrap it about him as a garment fitted to keep out all the ills of time. He who can say what David did need not envy Cicero his eloquence: "Thou art my God," has more sweetness in it than any other utterance which human speech can frame. Note that this adhesive faith is here mentioned as an argument with God to honour his own promise by sending a speedy deliverance.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 14. *But I trusted in thee, O Lord.* The rendering properly is, *And I have trusted in thee*, but the Hebrew copulative particle (ו), *vau*, *and*, is used here instead of the adversative particle *yet*, or *nevertheless*. David, setting the steadfastness of his faith in opposition to the assaults of the temptations of which he has made mention, denies that he had ever fainted, but rather maintains, on the contrary, that he stood firm in his hope of deliverance from God. Nor does this imply that he boasted of being so magnanimous and courageous that he could not be overthrown through the infirmity of the flesh. However contrary to one another they appear, yet these things are often joined together, as they ought to be, in the same person, namely, that while he pines away with grief, and is deprived of all strength, he is nevertheless supported by so strong a hope that he ceases not to call upon God. David, therefore, was not so overwhelmed in deep sorrow, and other direful sufferings, as that the hidden light of faith could not shine inwardly in his heart; nor did he groan so much under the weighty load of his temptations, as to be prevented from arousing himself to call upon God. He struggled through many obstacles to be able to make the confession which he here makes. He next defines the manner of his faith, namely, that he reflected with himself thus—that God would never fail him nor forsake him. Let us mark his manner of speech: *I have said, Thou art my God.* In these words he intimates that he was so entirely persuaded of this truth, that God was his God, that he would not admit even a

suggestion to the contrary. And until this persuasion prevails so as to take possession of our minds, we shall always waver in uncertainty. It is, however, to be observed, that this declaration is not only inward and secret—made rather in the heart than with the tongue—but that it is directed to God himself, as to him who is the alone witness of it. Nothing is more difficult, when we see our faith derided by the whole world, than to direct our speech to God only, and to rest satisfied with this testimony which our conscience gives us, *that he is our God*. And certainly it is an undoubted proof of genuine faith, when, however fierce the waves are which beat against us, and however sore the assaults by which we are shaken, we hold fast this as a fixed principle, that we are constantly under the protection of God, and can say to him freely, *Thou art our God*. *John Calvin*.

Ver. 14. *Thou art my God*. How much it is more worth than ten thousand mines of gold, to be able to say, God is mine! God's servant is apprehensive of it, and he seeth no defect, but this may be complete happiness to him, and therefore he delights in it, and comforts himself with it. As he did sometime who was a great courtier in King Cyrus's court, and one in favour with him; he was to bestow his daughter in marriage to a very great man, and of himself he had no great means; and therefore one said to him, O Sir, where will you have means to bestow a dowry upon your daughter proportionable to her degree? Where are your riches? He answered, What need I care, *opou Kuros moi filos* Cyrus is my friend. But may not we say much more, *opou Kurios moi filos*, where the Lord is our friend, that hath those excellent and glorious attributes that cannot come short in any wants, or to make us happy, especially we being capable of it, and made proportionable. *John Stoughton's "Righteous Man's Plea to True Happiness," 1640.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 14. Faith peculiarly glorious in season of great trial.

PSALM 31:15

EXPOSITION

Ver. 15. *My times are in thy hand.* The sovereign arbiter of destiny holds in his own power all the issues of our life; we are not waifs and strays upon the ocean of fate, but are steered by infinite wisdom towards our desired haven. Providence is a soft pillow for anxious heads, an anodyne for care, a grave for despair.

Deliver me from the hand of mine enemies, and from them that persecute me. It is lawful to desire escape from persecution if it be the Lord's will; and when this may not be granted us in the form which we desire, sustaining grace will give us deliverance in another form, by enabling us to laugh to scorn all the fury of the foe.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 15. *My times are in thy hand.* It is observable that when, of late years, men grow weary of the long and tedious compass in their voyages to the East Indies, and would needs try a more compendious way by the North west passage, it ever proved unsuccessful. Thus it is that we must not use any compendious way; we may not neglect our body, nor shipwreck our health, nor anything to hasten death, because we shall gain by it. He that maketh haste (even this way) to be rich shall not be innocent; for our times are in God's hands, and therefore to his holy providence we must leave them. We have a great deal of work to do, and must not, therefore, be so greedy of our Sabbath day, our rest, as not to be contented with our working day, our labour. Hence it is that a composed frame of mind, like that of the apostle's Philippians 1:21, wherein either to stay and work, or to go and rest, is the best temper of all. *Edward Reynolds, in J. Spencer's "Things New and Old."*

Ver. 15. *My times.* He does not use the plural number, in my opinion, without reason; but rather to mark the variety of casualties by which the life of man is usually harassed. *John Calvin.*

Ver. 15. *In thy hand.* The watch hangs ticking against the wall, when every tick of the watch is a sigh, and a consciousness, alas! Poor watch! I called once to see a friend, the physician and the secretary of one of the most

noble and admirable of the asylums for the insane in this country. A poor creature, with a clear, bright intelligence, only that some of its chords had become unstrung, who had usually occupied itself innocently by making or unmaking watches, had just before I called, exhibited some new, alarming symptoms, dashing one and then another upon the stone floor, and shivering them. Removed into a more safe room, I visited him with the secretary. "How came you to destroy your favourite watches, so much as you loved them, and so quiet as you are?" said my friend; and the poor patient replied, in a tone of piercing agony, "I could not bear the tick, tick, ticking, and so I dashed it on the pavement." But when the watch is able to surrender itself to the maker, to the hand holding the watch, and measuring out the moments, it becomes a sight affecting indeed, but very beautiful, very sublime. We transfer our thoughts from the watch to *the hand* that holds the watch. *My times, Thy hand*; the watch and the hour have a purpose, and so are not in vain. God gives man permission to behold two things. Man can see the whole work, the plan's completeness, also the minutest work, the first step towards the plan's completeness. Nothing is more certain, nothing are men more indisposed to perceive than this. We have to

*"Wait for some transcendent life,
Reserved by God to follow this."
Robert Browning.*

To this end God's real way is made up of all the ways of our life. His hand holds all our times. *My times*; "*Thy hand*." Some lives greatly differ from others. This we know; but see, some lives fulfil life's course, gain life's crown—life in their degree. This, on the contrary, others quite miss. Yet, for even human strength there must be a love meted out to rule it. It is said, there is a moon to control the tides of every sea; is there not a master power for souls? It may not always be so, apparently, in the more earthly lives, but it is so in the heavenly; not more surely does the moon sway tides, than God sways souls. It does not seem sometimes as if man found no adequate external power, and stands forth ordained to be a law to his own sphere; but even then his times are in the hands of God, as the pathway of a star is in the limitations of its system—as the movements of a satellite are in the forces of its planet. But while I would not pause on morbid words or views of life, so neither do I desire you to receive or charge me with giving only a moody, morbid view of the world, and an

imperfect theology; but far other. *My times are in thy hand* —the hand of my Saviour."

"I report as a man may of God's work—all's love, but all's law. In the Godhead I seek and I find it, and so it shall be A face like my face that receives thee, a Man like to me Thou shalt love and be loved by for ever, a hand like this hand Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee: *See the Christ stand!*" Robert Browning.

And now he is "the restorer of paths to dwell in." The hand of Jesus is the hand which rules our times. He regulates our life clock. Christ for and Christ in us. *My times in his hand*. My life can be no more in vain than was my Saviour's life in vain. *E. Paxton Hood, in "Dark Sayings on a Harp, "1865.*

Ver. 15. When David had Saul at his mercy in the cave, those about him said, *This is the time* in which God will deliver thee. 1 Samuel 24:4. No, saith David, the time is not come for my deliverance till it can be wrought without sin, and I will wait for that time; for it is God's time, and that is the best time. *Matthew Henry.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 15. The believer the peculiar care of providence.

Ver. 15. (*first clause*).

1. The character of the earthly experience of the saints, "My times, "that is, the changes I shall pass through, etc.
2. The advantage of this variety.
 1. Changes reveal the various aspects of the Christian character.
 2. Changes strengthen the Christian character.
 3. Changes lead us to admire an unchanging God.
3. Comfort for all seasons.
 1. This implies the changes of life are subject to the divine control.
 2. That God will support his people under them.
 3. And, consequently, they shall result in our being abundantly profited.

4. The deportment which should characterise us. Courageous devotion to God in times of persecution; resignation and contentment in times of poverty and suffering; zeal and hope in times of labour.

From Stems and Twigs, or Sermon Framework.

PSALM 31:16

EXPOSITION

Ver. 16. *Make thy face to shine upon thy servant.* Give me the sunshine of heaven in my soul, and I will defy the tempests of earth. Permit me to enjoy a sense of thy favour, O Lord, and a consciousness that thou art pleased with my manner of life, and all men may frown and slander as they will. It is always enough for a servant if he pleases his master; others may be dissatisfied, but he is not their servant, they do not pay him his wages, and their opinions have no weight with him.

Save me for thy mercies' sake. The good man knows no plea but mercy; whoever might urge legal pleas David never dreamed of it.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 16. *Make thy face to shine upon thy servant.* When the cloud of trouble hideth the Lord's favour, faith knoweth it may shine again, and therefore prayeth through the cloud for the dissolving of it.

Make thy face to shine upon thy servant. David Dickson.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 16. A sense of divine favour.

1. Its value.
2. How to lose it.
3. How to obtain a renewal of it.
4. How to retain it.

The heavenly servant's best reward.

Ver. 16. (*last clause*). A prayer for saints in all stages. Note its object, *save me*; and its plea, *Thy mercies' sake*. Suitable to the penitent, the sick, the doubting, the tried, the advanced believer, the dying saint.

PSALM 31:17

EXPOSITION

Ver. 17. *Let me not be ashamed, O Lord; for I have called upon thee.* Put not my prayers to the blush! Do not fill profane mouths with jeers at my confidence in my God.

Let the wicked be ashamed, and let them be silent in the grave. Cause them to their amazement to see my wrongs righted and their own pride horribly confounded. A milder spirit rules our prayers under the gentle reign of the Prince of Peace, and, therefore, we can only use such words as these in their prophetic sense, knowing as we do full well, that shame and the silence of death are the best portion that ungodly sinners can expect. That which they desired for despised believers shall come upon themselves by a decree of retributive justice, at which they cannot cavil—"As he loved mischief, so let it come upon him."

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 17. The shame and silence of the wicked in eternity.

The silence of the grave, its grave eloquence.

PSALM 31:18

EXPOSITION

Ver. 18. *Let the lying lips be put to silence.* A right good and Christian prayer; who but a bad man would give liars more license than need be? May God silence them either by leading them to repentance, by putting them to thorough shame, or by placing them in positions where what they may say will stand for nothing.

Which speak grievous things proudly and contemptuously against the righteous. The sin of slanderers lies partly in the matter of their speech; "they speak grievous things; "things cutting deep into the feelings of good men, and wounding them sorely in that tender place—their reputations. The sin is further enhanced by the manner of their speech; they speak proudly and contemptuously; they talk as if they themselves were the cream of society, and the righteous the mere scum of vulgarity. Proud thoughts of self are generally attended by debasing estimates of others. The more room we take up ourselves, the less we can afford our neighbours. What wickedness it is that unworthy characters should always be the loudest in railing at good men! They have no power to appreciate moral worth of which they are utterly destitute, and yet they have the effrontery to mount the judgment seat, and judge the men compared with whom they are as so much chaff. Holy indignation may well prompt us to desire anything which may rid the world of such unbearable impertinence and detestable arrogance.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 18. *Lying lips...which speak grievous things proudly and contemptuously against the righteous.* The primitive persecutors slighted the Christians for a company of bad, illiterate fellows, and therefore they used to paint the God of the Christians with an ass's head and a book in his hand, saith Tertullian; to signify, that though they pretended learning, yet they were silly and ignorant people. Bishop Jewel, in his sermon upon Luke 11:15, cites this out of Tertullian and applies it to his times. Do not our adversaries the like, saith he, against all that profess the gospel? Oh! say they, who are those that favour this way? None but shoemakers, tailors, weavers, and such as never were at the University. These are the bishop's own words. Bishop White said in open court, that the Puritans were all a company of blockheads. *Charles Bradbury.*

Ver. 18. *Lying lips...which speak grievous things proudly and contemptuously against the righteous.* In that venerable and original monument of the Vaudois Church, entitled "The Golden Lesson, " of the date 1100, we meet with a verse, which has been thus translated: —

*"If there be anyone who loves and fears Jesus Christ,
 Who will not curse, nor swear, nor lie,
 Nor be unchaste, nor kill, nor take what is another's.
 Nor take vengeance on his enemies;
 They say that he is a Vaudes, and worthy of punishment."*

Antoine Monastier, in "A History of Vaudois Church, "1859.

PSALM 31:19

EXPOSITION

Ver. 19-22. Being full of faith, the psalmist gives glory to God for the mercy which he is assured will be his position.

Ver. 19. *Oh how great is thy goodness.* Is it not singular to find such a joyful sentence in connection with so much sorrow? Truly the life of faith is a miracle. When faith led David to his God, she set him singing at once. He does not tell us how great was God's goodness, for he could not; there are no measures which can set forth the immeasurable goodness of Jehovah, who is goodness itself. Holy amazement uses interjections where adjectives utterly fail. Notes of exclamation suit us when words of explanation are of no avail. If we cannot measure we can marvel; and though we may not calculate with accuracy, we can adore with fervency.

Which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee. The psalmist in contemplation divides goodness into two parts, that which is in store and that which is wrought out. The Lord has laid up in reserve for his people supplies beyond all count. In the treasury of the covenant, in the field of redemption, in the caskets of the promises, in the granaries of providence, the Lord has provided for all the needs which can possibly occur to his chosen. We ought often to consider the laid up goodness of God which has not yet been distributed to the chosen, but is already provided for them: if we are much in such contemplations, we shall be led to feel devout gratitude, such as glowed in the heart of David.

Which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men. Heavenly mercy is not all hidden in the storehouse; in a thousand ways it has already revealed itself on behalf of those who are bold to avow their confidence in God; before their fellow men this goodness of the Lord

has been displayed, that a faithless generation might stand rebuked. Overwhelming are the proofs of the Lord's favour to believers, history teems with amazing instances, and our own lives are full of prodigies of grace. We serve a good Master. Faith receives a large reward even now, but looks for her full inheritance in the future. Who would not desire to take his lot with the servants of a Master whose boundless love fills all holy minds with astonishment?

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 19. *Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee.* As a provident man will regulate his liberality towards all men in such a manner as not to defraud his children or family, nor impoverish his own house, by spending his substance prodigally on others; so God, in like manner, in exercising his beneficence to aliens from his family, knows well how to reserve for his own children that which belongs to them, as it were by hereditary right; that is to say, because of their adoption. *John Calvin.*

Ver. 19. *Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee.* Mark the phrase "Laid up for them; "his mercy and goodness it is intended for them, as a father that lays by such a sum of money, and writes on the bag, "This is a portion for such a child." But how comes the Christian to have this right to God, and all that vast and untold treasure of happiness which is in him? This indeed is greatly to be heeded; it is faith that gives him a good title to all this. That which maketh him a child, makes him an heir. Now, faith makes him a child of God. John 1:12, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believed on his name." As therefore if you would not call your birthright into question, and bring your interest in Christ and those glorious privileges that come along with him, under a sad dispute in your soul, look to your faith. *William Gurnall.*

Ver. 19. *How great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee.* When I reflect upon the words of thy prophet, it seems to me that he means to depict God as a father who, no doubt, keeps his children under discipline, and subjects them to the rod; but who, with all his labours and pains, still aims at nothing but to lay up for them a store which may contribute to their comfort when they have grown to maturity, and learned the prudent use of it. My Father, in this world thou hidest from thy children

thy great goodness, as if it did not pertain to them. But being thy children, we may be well assured that the celestial treasure will be bestowed upon none else. For this reason, I will bear my lot with patience. But, oh! from time to time, waft to me a breath of air from the heavenly land, to refresh my sorrowful heart; I will then wait more calmly for its full fruition.

Christian Scriver.

Ver. 19. *Oh how great is thy goodness.* Let me, to set the crown on the head of the *duty of meditation*, add one thing over and above—let meditation be *carried up to admiration*: not only should we be affected, but transported, rapt up and ravished with the beauties and transcendencies of heavenly things; act meditation to admiration, endeavour the highest pitch, coming the nearest to the highest patterns, the patterns of saints and angels in heaven, whose actings are the purest, highest ecstasies and admirations. Thus were these so excellent artists in meditation, David, an high actor of admiration in meditation, as often we see it in the psalms; so in Psalm 8:1,9 31:19; "*Oh how great is thy goodness*," etc.: Psalm 104:24 "O Lord, how manifold are thy works," etc; and in other places David's meditation and admiration were as his harp, well tuned, and excellently played on, in rarest airs and highest strains; as the precious gold, and the curious burnishing; or the richest stone, and the most exquisite polishing and setting of it. So blessed Paul, who was a great artist in musing, acted high in admiration, his soul was very warm and flaming up in it: it was as a bird with a strong and long wing that soars and towers up aloft, and gets out of sight. *Nathanael Ranew.*

Ver. 19. *Before the sons of men*, i.e., *openly*. The psalmist here perhaps refers to temporal blessings conferred on the pious, and evident to all. Some, however, have supposed the reference to be to the reward of the righteous, bestowed with the utmost publicity on the day of judgment; which better agrees with our interpretation of the former part of the verse. *Daniel Cresswell, D.D., F.R.S. (1776-1844), in loc.*

Ver. 19. Believe it, Sirs, you cannot conceive what a friend you shall have of God, would you be but persuaded to enter into covenant with him, to be his, wholly his. I tell you, many that sometimes thought and did as you do now, that is, set light by Christ and hate God, and see no loveliness in him, are now quite of another mind; they would not for ten thousand worlds quit their interest in him. Oh, who dare say that he is a hard Master? Who that knows him will say that he is an unkind friend? Oh, what do poor

creatures all, that they do entertain such harsh sour thoughts of God? What, do they think that there is nothing in that scripture,

Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee! Doth the psalmist speak too largely? Doth he say more than he and others could prove? Ask him, and he will tell you in verse 21, that he blesseth God. These were things he could speak to, from his own personal experience; and many thousands as well as he, to whom the Lord had showed his marvellous kindness, and therefore he doth very passionately plead with the people of God to love him, and more highly to express their sense of his goodness, that the world might be encouraged also to have good thoughts of him. *James Janeway.*

Ver. 19. Very observable is that expression of the psalmist,

Oh how great is thy goodness which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought before the sons of men for them that trust in thee. In the former clause, God's goodness is said to be *laid up*; in the latter, to be *wrought*. Goodness is laid up in the promise, wrought in the performance; and that goodness which is laid up is wrought for them that trust in God; and thus, as God's faithfulness engages us to believe, so our faith, as it were, engages God's faithfulness to perform the promise. *Nathanael Hardy.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 19. See "Spurgeon's Sermons, "No. 773. "David's Holy Wonder at the Lord's Great Goodness."

PSALM 31:20

EXPOSITION

Ver. 19-22. Being full of faith, the psalmist gives glory to God for the mercy which he is assured will be his position.

Ver. 20. *Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of man.* Pride is a barbed weapon: the proud man's contumely is iron which entereth into the soul; but those who trust in God, are safely housed in the Holy of holies, the innermost court, into which no man may dare intrude;

here in the secret dwelling place of God the mind of the saint rests in peace, which the foot of pride cannot disturb. Dwellers at the foot of the cross of Christ grow callous to the sneers of the haughty. The wounds of Jesus distil a balsam which heals all the scars which the jagged weapons of contempt can inflict upon us; in fact, when armed with the same mind which was in Christ Jesus, the heart is invulnerable to all the darts of pride.

Thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues.

Tongues are more to be dreaded than beasts of prey—and when they strive, it is as though a whole pack of wolves were let loose; but the believer is secure even in this peril, for the royal pavilion of the King of kings shall afford him quiet shelter and serene security. The secret tabernacle of sacrifice, and the royal pavilion of sovereignty afford a double security to the Lord's people in their worst distresses. Observe the immediate action of God, "*Thou* shalt hide, "*Thou* shalt keep, "the Lord himself is personally present for the rescue of his afflicted.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 20. *Thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues.* This our beloved God does secretly, so that no human eyes may or can see, and the ungodly do not know that a believer is, in God, and in the presence of God, so well protected, that no reproach or contempt, and no quarrelsome tongue can do him harm. *Arndt, quoted by W. Wilson, D.D.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 20. The believer preserved from the sneers of arrogance by a sense of the divine presence, and kept from the bitterness of slander by the glory of the King whom he serves.

PSALM 31:21

EXPOSITION

Ver. 19-22. Being full of faith, the psalmist gives glory to God for the mercy which he is assured will be his position.

Ver. 21. *Blessed be the Lord.* When the Lord blesses us we cannot do less than bless him in return.

For he hath shewed me his marvellous kindness in a strong city. Was this in Mahanaim, where the Lord gave him victory over the hosts of Absalom? Or did he refer to Rabbath of Ammon, where he gained signal triumphs? Or, best of all, was Jerusalem the strong city where he most experienced the astonishing kindness of his God? Gratitude is never short of subjects; her Ebenezers stand so close together as to wall up her path to heaven on both sides. Whether in cities or in hamlets our blessed Lord has revealed himself to us, we shall never forget the hallowed spots: the lonely mount of Hermon, or the village of Emmaus, or the rock of Patmos, or the wilderness of Horeb, are all alike renowned when God manifests himself to us in robes of love.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 21. *Marvellous kindness.* Marvellous that it should come to me in such a way, at such a time, in such a measure, for so long.

Ver. 21. Memorable events in life to be observed, recorded, meditated on, repeated, made the subject of gratitude, and the ground of confidence.

PSALM 31:22

EXPOSITION

Ver. 19-22. Being full of faith, the psalmist gives glory to God for the mercy which he is assured will be his position.

Ver. 22. Confession of faults is always proper; and when we reflect upon the goodness of God, we ought to be reminded of our own errors and offences.

For I said in my haste. We generally speak amiss when we are in a hurry. Hasty words are but for a moment on the tongue, but they often lie for years on the conscience.

I am cut off from before thine eyes. This was an unworthy speech; but unbelief will have a corner in the heart of the firmest believer, and out of

that corner it will vent many spiteful things against the Lord if the course of providence be not quite so smooth as nature might desire. No saint ever was, or ever could be, cut off from before the eyes of God, and yet no doubt many have thought so, and more than one has said so. For ever be such dark suspicions banished from our minds.

Nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my supplications when I cried unto thee. What a mercy that if we believe not, yet God abideth faithful, hearing prayer even when we are labouring under doubts which dishonour his name. If we consider the hindrances in the way of our prayers, and the poor way in which we present them, it is a wonder of wonders that they ever prevail with heaven.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 22. *I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes: nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my supplications.* Who would have thought those prayers should ever have had any prevalence in God's ears which were mixed with so much infidelity in the petitioner's heart! *William Secker.*

Ver. 22. *I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes.* No, no, Christian; a prayer sent up in faith, according to the will of God, cannot be lost, though it be delayed. We may say of it, as David said of Saul's sword and Jonathan's bow, that they never return empty. So David adds, *Nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my supplications when I cried unto thee.* *John Flavel.*

Ver. 22. *I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes,* etc. Let us with whom it was once night, improve that morning joy that now shines upon us. Let us be continual admirers of God's grace and mercy to us. He has prevented us with his goodness, when he saw nothing in us but impatience and unbelief, when we were like Jonas in the belly of hell, his bowels yearned over us, and his power brought us safe to land. What did we to hasten his deliverance, or to obtain his mercy? If he had never come to our relief till he saw something in us to invite him, we had not yet been relieved. No more did we contribute to our restoration than we do to the rising of the sun, or the approach of day. We were like dry bones without motion, and without strength. Ezekiel 37:1-11. And we also said, that 'we were cut off for our parts, and our hope was gone, and he caused breath to enter into us, and we live.' Who is a God like to our God that pardoneth

iniquity, transgression, and sin? that retains not his anger for ever? that is slow to wrath and delights in mercy? that has been displeased with us for a moment, but gives us hope of his everlasting kindness? Oh! what love is due from us to Christ, that has pleaded for us when we ourselves had nothing to say! That has brought us out of a den of lions, and from the jaws of the roaring lion! To say, as Mrs. Sarah Wright did, "I have obtained mercy, that thought my time of mercy past for ever; I have hope of heaven, that thought I was already damned by unbelief; I said many a time, there is no hope in mine end, and I thought I saw it; I was so desperate, I cared not what became of me. Oft was I at the very brink of death and hell, even at the very gates of both, and then Christ shut them. I was as Daniel in the lion's den, and he stopped the mouth of those lions, and delivered me. The goodness of God is unsearchable; how great is the excellency of his majesty, that yet he would look upon such a one as I; that he has given me peace that was full of terror, and walked continually as amidst fire and brimstone." *Timothy Rogers*.

Ver. 22. *I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes:* —i.e., Thou hast quite forsaken me, and I must not expect to be looked upon or regarded by thee any more. I shall perish one day by the hand of Saul, and so be cut off from before thine eyes, be ruined while thou lookest on 1 Samuel 27:1. This he said in his flight (so some read it), which notes the distress of his affairs: Saul was just at his back, and ready to seize him, which made the temptation strong; *in his haste* (so we read it), which notes the disturbance and discomposure of his mind, which made the temptation surprising, so that it found him off his guard. Note, it is a common thing to speak amiss, when we speak in haste and without consideration; but what we speak amiss in haste, we must repent of at leisure, particularly that which we have spoken distrustfully of God. *Matthew Henry*.

Ver. 22. *I said in my haste.* Sometimes a sudden passion arises, and out it goes in angry and froward words, setting all in an uproar and combustion: by and by our hearts recur upon us, and then we wish, "O that I had bit my tongue, and not given it such an unbridled liberty." Sometimes we break out into rash censures of those that it may be are better than ourselves, whereupon when we reflect, we are ashamed that the fools' bolt was so soon shot, and wish we had been judging ourselves when we were censuring our brethren. *Richard Alleine*.

Ver. 22. *Nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my supplications when I cried unto thee.* As if he had said, when I prayed with so little faith, that I, as it were, unprayed my own prayer, by concluding my case in a manner desperate; yet God pardoned my hasty spirit, and gave me that mercy which I had hardly any faith to expect; and what use doth he make of this experience, but to raise every saint's hope in time of need? *"Be of good courage and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the Lord."* William Gurnall.

Ver. 22. He confesseth the great distress he was in, and how weak his faith was under the temptation; this he doth to his own shame acknowledge also, that he may give the greater glory to God. Whence learn,

1. —The faith of the godly may be slackened, and the strongest faith may sometimes show its infirmity. *I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes.*
2. —Though faith be shaken, yet it is fixed in the root, as a tree beaten by the wind keeping strong grips of good ground. Though faith seem to yield, yet it faileth not, and even when it is at the weakest, it is uttering itself in some act, as a wrestler, for here the expression of David's infirmity in faith, is directed to God, and his earnest prayer joined with it, *I am cut off from before thine eyes: nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my supplications.*
3. —Praying faith, how weak soever, shall not be misregarded of God; for *nevertheless*, saith he, *thou heardest the voice of my supplications.*
4. — There may be in a soul at one time, both grief oppressing, and hope upholding; both darkness of trouble, and the light of faith; both desperately doubting, and strong gripping of God's truth and goodness; both a fainting and a fighting; a seeming yielding in the fight, and yet a striving of faith against all opposition; both a foolish haste, and a settled staidness of faith; as here, *I said in my haste*, etc. David Dickson.

Ver. 22. David vents his astonishment at the Lord's condescension in hearing his prayer. How do we wonder at the goodness of a petty man in granting our desires! How much more should we at the humility and goodness of the most sovereign Majesty of heaven and earth! Stephen Charnock.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 22. Unbelief confessed and faithfulness adored.

The mischief of hasty speeches.

PSALM 31:23

EXPOSITION

Ver. 23. *O love the Lord, all ye his saints.* A most affecting exhortation, showing clearly the deep love of the writer to his God: there is the more beauty in the expression, because it reveals love toward a smiting God, love which many waters could not quench. To bless him who gives is easy, but to cling to him who takes away is a work of grace. All the saints are benefited by the sanctified miseries of one, if they are led by earnest exhortations to love their Lord the better. If saints do not love the Lord, who will? Love is the universal debt of all the saved family: who would wish to be exonerated from its payment? Reasons for love are given, for believing love is not blind.

For the Lord preserveth the faithful. They have to bide their time, but the recompense comes at last, and meanwhile all the cruel malice of their enemies cannot destroy them.

And plentifully rewardeth the proud doer. This also is cause for gratitude: pride is so detestable in its acts that he who shall mete out to it its righteous due, deserves the love of all holy minds.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 23. *O love the Lord, all ye his saints.* The holy psalmist in the words does, with all the warmth of an affectionate zeal, incite us to the love of God, which is the incomparably noblest passion of a reasonable mind, its brightest glory and most exquisite felicity; and it is, as appears evident from the nature of the thing, and the whole train of divine revelation, the comprehensive sum of that duty which we owe to our Maker, and the very soul which animates a religious life, that we "love the Lord with all our heart, and strength, and mind." *William Dunlap. A.M., 1692-1720.*

Ver. 23. *O love the Lord, all ye his saints*, etc. Some few words are to be attended in the clearing of the sense. *Saints* here in the text is or may be read, *ye that feel mercies*. "*Faithful*," the word is sometimes taken for *persons*, sometimes *things*; and so the Lord is said to preserve true men, and truths, faithful men, and faithfulnesses.

He plenteously rewardeth the proud doer; or, the Lord rewardeth plenteously; *the Lord*, who doth wonderful things. *Plenteously* is either *in cumulum*, *abunde*, or *in nepotes*, as some would have it; but I would rather *commend*, than go about to *amend* translations: though I could wish some of my learned brethren's quarrelling hours were spent rather upon clearing the originals, and so conveying over pure Scripture to posterity, than in scratching others with their sharpened pens, and making cockpits of pulpits. *Hugh Peter's* "Sermon preached before both Houses of Parliament, "the Lord Mayor and Aldermen of the City of London, and the Assembly of Divines, at the last Thanksgiving Day, April 2. For the recovering of the West, and disbanding of 5,000 of the King's Horse, etc., 1645.

Ver. 23. *And plentifully rewardeth the proud doer*. The next query is, *how God rewardeth the proud doer?* in which, though the Lord's proceedings be diverse, and many times his paths in the clouds, and his judgments in the deep, and the uttermost farthing shall be paid the proud doer at the great day; yet so much of his mind he hath left unto us, that even in this life he gives out something to the proud which he calls "the day of recompense, "which he commonly manifests in these particulars:

1. By way of *retaliation* —for *Adonibezek* that would be cutting off thumbs, had his thumbs cut off. Judges 1:7. So the poor Jews that cried so loud, "Crucify him, crucify him, "were so many of them crucified, that if you believe *Josephus*, there was not wood enough to make crosses, nor in the usual place room enough to set up the crosses when they were made. Snares are made and pits are digged by the proud for *themselves* commonly, to which the Scripture throughout gives abundant testimony.

2. By shameful *disappointments*, seldom reaping what they sow, nor eating what they catch in hunting, which is most clear in the Jewish State when Christ was amongst them. *Judas* betrays him to get money, and hardly lived long enough to spend it. *Pilate*, to please Caesar, withstands all counsels against it, and gives way to that murder, by which he ruined both himself and Caesar. The Jewish priests, to maintain that domination and honour (which they thought the son of Joseph and Mary stole from them)

cried loud for his death, which proved a sepulchre to them and their glory. And the poor people that crucified him (through fear of the *Romans* taking their city) by his death had their gates opened to the *Romans* —yea, *Caesar* himself, fearing a great change in his government by Christ living near him (which today sets all the king craft in the world to work) met such a change that shortly he had neither crown nor sceptre to boast of, if you read the story of Titus and Vespasian, all which dealings of God with the proud is most elegantly set forth unto us by the psalmist. "Behold, he travaileth with iniquity, and hath conceived mischief, and brought forth falsehood. He made a pit, and digged it, and is fallen into the ditch which he made." *Hugh Peters*.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 23. An exhortation to love the Lord.

1. The matter of it, *love the Lord*.
2. To whom addressed, *all ye his saints*.
3. By whom spoken.
4. With what arguments supported, *for the Lord preserveth*, etc.

PSALM 31:24

EXPOSITION

Ver. 24. *Be of good courage*. Keep up your spirit, let no craven thoughts blanch your cheek. Fear weakens, courage strengthens. Victory waits upon the banners of the brave.

And he shall strengthen your heart. Power from on high shall be given in the most effectual manner by administering force to the fountain of vitality. So far from leaving us, the Lord will draw very near to us in our adversity, and put his own power into us.

All ye that hope in the Lord. Every one of you, lift up your heads and sing for joy of heart. God is faithful, and does not fail even his little children who do but *hope*, wherefore then should we be afraid?

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 24. *Be of good courage.* Christian courage may thus be described. It is the undaunted audacity of a sanctified heart in adventuring upon difficulties and undergoing hardships for a good cause upon the call of God. The *genus*, the common nature of it is an undaunted audacity. This animosity, as some phrase it, is common both unto men and to some brutes. The lion is said to be the strongest among beasts, that turneth not away from any. Proverbs 30:30. And there is an elegant description of the war horse in regard of boldness. Job 39:19, etc. And this boldness that is in brutes is spoken of as a piece of this same *courage* that God is pleased to give to men. Ezekiel 3:9. This is the Lord's promise — "As an adamant harder than flint have I made thy forehead." The word "harder" is the same in the Hebrew that is here in my text— *fortiorem petra* —the rock that is not afraid of any weather, summer or winter, sun and showers, heat and cold, frost and snow; it blushes not, shrinks not, it changes not its complexion, it is still the same. Such a like thing is *courage*, in the common nature of it. Secondly, consider the subject, it is the *heart*, the castle where courage commands and exerciseth military discipline; (shall I so say) it's within the bosom, it is the soul of a valiant soldier. Some conceive our English word *courage* to be derived from *cordis actio*, the very acting of the heart. A valiant man is described 2 Samuel 17:10 for to be a man whose heart is as the heart of a lion. And sometimes the original translated *courageous*, as Amos 2:16, may most properly be rendered *a man of heart*. Beloved, valour doth not consist in a piercing eye, in a terrible look, in big words; but it consists in the mettle, the vigour that is within the bosom. Sometimes a coward may dwell at the sign of a roaring voice and of a stern countenance; whereas true fortitude may be found within his breast whose outward deportment promises little or nothing in that kind. Thirdly, note the qualification of this same subject; I said a sanctified heart; for I am not now speaking of fortitude as a moral virtue, whereof heathens that have not God are capable, and for which many among them that are not Christians, have been worthily commended. But I am now discoursing of courage as a virtue theological, as a gracious qualification, put upon the people of God by special covenant. And there are three things that do characterize it, and which do distinguish it from the moral virtue of fortitude.

- (1) The *root*, whence it ariseth;
- (2) the *rule*, whereby it is directed;
- (3) the *end*, to which it is referred.

The *root*, whence it ariseth, is *love to God*: all the saints of God that love the Lord be of good courage. The love of Christ constraineth me to make these bold and brave adventures, saith the apostle. 2 Corinthians 5:14. The *rule*, whereby it is directed, is the *word of God* —what the Lord hath pleased to leave on record for a Christian's guidance in holy pages. 1 Chronicles 22:12-13. "Only the Lord give thee wisdom and understanding, and give thee charge concerning Israel, that thou mayest keep the law of the Lord thy God. Then shalt thou prosper, if thou takest heed to fulfil the statutes and judgments which the Lord charged Moses with concerning Israel: be strong, and of good courage; dread not, nor be dismayed." Be a man of mettle, but let thy mettle be according to my mind, according to this rule. And the *end*, to which it refers, is *God*. For every sanctified man being a self denying and a God advancing man, his God is his centre, wherein his actings, his undertakings rest; and his soul is not, yea, it cannot be satisfied but in God. *Simeon Ash's "Sermon preached before the Commanders of the Military Forces of the renowned Citie of London, 1642."*

Ver. 24. *Be of good courage.* Shall I hint some of the weighty services that are charged upon all our consciences? The work of mortification, to pick out our eyes, to chop off our hands, to cut off our feet; do you think that a milksop, a man that is not a man of a stout spirit, will do this? Now to massacre fleshly lusts, is (as it were) for a man to mangle and dismember his own body; it is a work painful and grievous, as for a man to cut off his own feet, to chop off his own hands, and to pick out his own eyes, as Christ and the apostle Paul do express it. Besides this, there are in Christian's bosoms strongholds to be battered, fortifications to be demolished; there are high hills and mountains that must be levelled with the ground; there are trenches to be made, valleys to be filled. O beloved, I may not mention the hills that lie before us in heaven way, which we must climb up, and craggy rocks that we must get over; and without courage certainly the work put upon our hands will not be discharged. There are also the walls of Jerusalem to be repaired, and the temple to be edified again. If Nehemiah had not been a man of a brave spirit he would never have gone through stitch with that church work, those weighty services which he did undertake. How this is applicable to us for the present time,

the time of our begun reformation, I speak not, but rather do refer it to your considerations. I beseech you to read Nehemiah 4:17-18, "They which builded on the wall, and they that bare burdens, with those that laded, every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon. For the builders, every one had his sword girded by his side, and so builded, and he that sounded the trumpet was by me." While they were at work, they were all ready for war. *Simeon Ash.*

Ver. 24. *And he shall strengthen your heart.* Put thou thyself forth in a way of bold adventure for him, and his providence shall be sweetly exercised for thy good. A worthy commander, how careful he is of a brave blade, a man that will fight at a cannon's mouth! Doth he hear from him that a bone is broken? Send for the bone setter. Is he like to bleed to death? Call for the surgeon; let him post away to prevent that peril. Doth he grow weaker and weaker? Is there anything in the camp that may restore his spirit? withhold nothing; nothing is too good, too costly; would he eat gold he should have it. Thus it is with God. Oh, what letters of commendation doth he give in manifestation of his own love to them in Pergamos upon this very ground. "Thou, saith the Lord, thou hast held forth my name, and not denied it, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth!" thou didst fight for Christ in the cave where the devil commanded; thou didst stand and appear for him when other men did lose heart and courage. Here is a man that God will own; such a one shall have God's heart and hand to do him honour, to yield him comfort. And therefore I appeal to your consciences, is not this courage worth the having? worth the seeking? *Simeon Ash.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 24. Holy courage. Its excellences, difficulties, encouragements, and triumphs.

PSALM 32

PSALM 32:1

Title. A Psalm of David, *Maschil*. That David wrote this gloriously evangelic Psalm is proved not only by this heading, but by the words of the apostle Paul, in Romans 4:6-8. "Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works," &c. Probably his deep repentance over his great sin was followed by such blissful peace, that he was led to pour out his spirit in the soft music of this choice song. In the order of history it seems to follow the fifty-first. *Maschil* is a new title to us, and indicates that this is an instructive or didactic Psalm. The experience of one believer affords rich instruction to others, it reveals the footsteps of the flock, and so comforts and directs the weak. Perhaps it was important in this case to prefix the word, that doubting saints might not imagine the Psalm to be the peculiar utterance of a singular individual, but might appropriate it to themselves as a lesson from the Spirit of God. David promised in the fifty-first Psalm to teach transgressors the Lord's ways, and here he does it most effectually. Grotius thinks that this Psalm was meant to be sung on the annual day of the Jewish expiation, when a general confession of their sins was made.

Division. In our reading we have found it convenient to note the benediction of the pardoned, Psalm 32:1-2; David's personal confession, Psalm 32:3-5; and the application of the case to others, Psalm 32:6-7. The voice of God is heard by the forgiven one in Psalm 32:8-9; and the Psalm then concludes with a portion for each of the two great classes of men, Psalm 32:10-11.

EXPOSITION

Ver. 1. *Blessed.* Like the sermon on the mount on the mount, this Psalm begins with beatitudes. This is the second Psalm of benediction. The first Psalm describes the result of holy blessedness, the thirty-second details the cause of it. The first pictures the tree in full growth, this depicts it in its first planting and watering. He who in the first Psalm is a reader of God's book, is here a suppliant at God's throne accepted and heard.

Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven. He is now blessed and ever shall be. Be he ever so poor, or sick, or sorrowful, he is blessed in very deed. Pardoning mercy is of all things in the world most to be prized, for it is the only and sure way to happiness. To hear from God's own Spirit the words, "*absolve te*" is joy unspeakable. Blessedness is not in this case ascribed to the man who has been a diligent law keeper, for then it would never come to us, but rather to a lawbreaker, who by grace most rich and free has been forgiven. Self righteous Pharisees have no portion in this blessedness. Over the returning prodigal, the word of welcome is here pronounced, and the music and dancing begin. A full, instantaneous, irreversible pardon of transgression turns the poor sinner's hell into heaven, and makes the heir of wrath a partaker in blessing. The word rendered forgiven is in the original *taken off* or *taken away*, as a burden is lifted or a barrier removed. What a lift is here! It cost our Saviour a sweat of blood to bear our load, yea, it cost him his life to bear it quite away. Samson carried the gates of Gaza, but what was that to the weight which Jesus bore on our behalf?

Whose sin is covered. Covered by God, as the ark was covered by the mercyseat, as Noah was covered from the flood, as the Egyptians were covered by the depths of the sea. What a cover must that be which hides away for ever from the sight of the all seeing God all the filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit! He who has once seen sin in its horrible deformity, will appreciate the happiness of seeing it no more for ever. Christ's atonement is the propitiation, the covering, the making an end of sin; where this is seen and trusted in, the soul knows itself to be now accepted in the Beloved, and therefore enjoys a conscious blessedness which is the antepast of heaven. It is clear from the text that a man may *know* that he is pardoned: where would be the blessedness of an unknown forgiveness? Clearly it is a matter of knowledge, for it is the ground of comfort.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Title. The term *Maschil* is prefixed to thirteen Psalms. Our translators have not ventured to do more, in the *text*, than simply print the word in English characters; in the *margin* however they render it, as the Geneva version had done before them, "to give instruction." It would be going too far to affirm that this interpretation is subject to no doubt. Some good Hebraists take exception to it; so that, perhaps, our venerable translators did well to leave it untranslated. Still the interpretation they have set down in the

margin, as it is in the most ancient, so it is sustained by the great preponderance of authority. It agrees remarkably with the contents of the thirty-second Psalm, which affords the earliest instance of its use, for that Psalm is preeminently didactic. Its scope is to instruct the convicted soul how to obtain peace with God, and be compassed about with songs of deliverance. *William Binnie, D.D., in "The Psalms: Their History, Teachings, and Use," 1870.*

Whole Psalm. This is a Didactic Psalm, wherein David teacheth sinners to repent by his doctrine, who taught them to sin by his example. This science is universal and pertaineth to all men, and which necessarily we must all learn; princes, priests, people, men, women, children, tradesmen; all, I say, must be put to this school, without which lesson all others are unprofitable. But to the point. This is a mark of a true penitent, when he hath been a stumbling block to others, to be as careful to raise them up by his repentance as he was hurtful to them by his sin; and I never think that man truly penitent who is ashamed to teach sinners repentance by his own particular proof. The Samaritan woman, when she was converted, left her bucket at the well, entered the city, and said, "Come forth, yonder is a man who hath told me all that I have done." And our Saviour saith to St. Peter, "When thou art converted, strength thy brethren." John 4:29 Luke 22:32. St. Paul also after his conversion is not ashamed to call himself chiefest of all sinners, and to teach others to repent of their sins by repenting for his own. Happy, and thrice happy, is the man who can build so much as he hath cast down. *Archibald Symson.*

Whole Psalm. It is told of Luther that one day being asked which of all the Psalms were the best, he made answer, "*Psalmi Paulini*," and when his friends pressed to know which these might be, he said, "The 32nd, the 51st, the 130th, and the 143rd. For they all teach that the forgiveness of our sins comes, without the law and without works, to the man who believes, and therefore I call them Pauline Psalms; and David sings, 'There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared,' this is just what Paul says, 'God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.' Romans 11:32. Thus no man may boast of his own righteousness. That word, 'That thou mayest be feared,' dusts away all merit, and teaches us to uncover our heads before God, and confess *gratia est, non meritum: remissio, non satisfactio*; it is mere forgiveness, not merit at all." *Luther's Table Talk.*

Whole Psalm. Some assert that this Psalm used to be sung on the day of expiation. *Robert Leighton.*

The Penitential Psalms. When Galileo was imprisoned by the Inquisition at Rome, for asserting the Copernican System, he was enjoined, as a penance, to repeat the Seven Penitential Psalms every week for three years. This must have been intended as extorting a sort of confession from him of his guilt, and acknowledgment of the justice of his sentence; and in which there certainly was some cleverness and, indeed, humour, however adding to the iniquity (or foolishness) of the proceeding. Otherwise it is not easy to understand what idea of painfulness or punishment the good fathers could attach to a devotional exercise such as this, which, in whatever way, could only have been agreeable and consoling to their prisoner. *M. Montague, in "The Seven Penitential Psalms in Verse...with an Appendix and Notes," 1844.*

Ver. 1. *Blessed.* Or, O blessed man; or, Oh, the felicities of that man! to denote the most supreme and perfect blessedness. As the elephant, to denote its vast bulk, is spoken of in the plural number, *Behemoth.* *Robert Leighton.*

Ver. 1. Notice, this is the first Psalm, except the first of all, which begins with Blessedness. In the first Psalm we have the blessing of innocence, or rather, of him who only was innocent: here we have the blessing of repentance, as the next happiest state to that of sinlessness. *Lorinus, in Neale's Commentary.*

Ver. 1. *Blessed is the man,* saith David, *whose sins are pardoned,* where he maketh remission of sins to be true felicity. Now there is no true felicity but that which is enjoyed, and felicity cannot be enjoyed unless it be felt; and it cannot be felt unless a man know himself to be in possession of it; and a man cannot know himself to be in possession of it, if he doubt whether he hath it or not; and therefore this doubting of the remission of sins is contrary to true felicity, and is nothing else but a torment of the conscience. For a man cannot doubt whether his sins be pardoned or not, but straightway, if his conscience be not seared with a hot iron, the very thought of his sin will strike a great fear into him; for the fear of eternal death, and the horror of God's judgment will come to his remembrance, the consideration of which is most terrible. *William Perkins.*

Ver. 1. *Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.* Get your sins hid. There is a covering of sin which proves a curse. Proverbs 28:13. "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; "there is a covering it, by not confessing it, or which is worse, by denying it—Gehazi's covering—a covering of sin by a lie; and there is also a covering of sin by justifying ourselves in it. I have not done this thing; or, I did no evil in it. All these are evil coverings: he that thus covereth his sin shall not prosper. But there is a *blessed* covering of sin: forgiveness of sin is the hiding it out of sight, and that's the blessedness. *Richard Alleine.*

Ver. 1. *Whose transgression is forgiven.* We may lull the soul asleep with carnal delights, but the virtue of that opium will be soon spent. All those joys are but stolen waters, and bread eaten in secret—a poor sorry peace that dares not come to the light and endure the trial; a sorry peace that is soon disturbed by a few serious and sober thoughts of God and the world to come; but when once sin is pardoned, then you have true joy indeed. "Be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee." Matthew 9:2. *Thomas Manton.*

Ver. 1. *Forgiven.* Holy David, in the front of this Psalm shows us wherein true happiness consists: not in beauty, honour, riches (the world's trinity), but in the forgiveness of sin. The Hebrew word to *forgive*, signifies to carry out of sight; which well agrees with that Jeremiah 50:20. "In those days, saith the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found." This is an incomprehensible blessing, and such as lays a foundation for all other mercies. I shall but glance at it, and lay down these five assertions about it.

1. Forgiveness is an act of God's free grace. The Greek word to *forgive*, deciphers the original of pardon; it ariseth not from anything inherent in us, but is the pure result of free grace. Isaiah 43:25. "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake." When a creditor forgives a debtor, he doeth it freely. Paul cries out, "I obtained mercy." 1 Timothy 1:13. The Greek signifies, "I was mercied; "he who is pardoned, is all bestrewed with mercy. When the Lord pardons a sinner, he doth not pay a debt, but gives a legacy.

2. God in forgiving sin, remits the guilt and penalty. Guilt cries for justice: no sooner had Adam eaten the apple, but he saw the flaming sword, and heard the curse; but in remission God doth indulge the sinner; he seems to say thus to him: Though thou art fallen into the

hands of my justice, and deserve to die, yet I will absolve thee, and whatever is charged upon thee shall be discharged.

3. Forgiveness of sin is through the blood of Christ. Free grace is the impulsive cause; Christ's blood is the meritorious. "Without shedding of blood is no remission." Hebrews 9:22. Justice would be revenged either on the sinner or the surety. Every pardon is the price of blood.

4. Before sin is forgiven, it must be repented of. Therefore repentance and remission are linked together. "That repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name." Luke 24:47. Not that repentance doth in a Popish sense merit forgiveness; Christ's blood must wash our tears; but repentance is a qualification, though not a cause. He who is humbled for sin will the more value pardoning mercy.

5. God having forgiven sin, he will call it no more into remembrance. Jeremiah 31:34. The Lord will make an act of indemnity, he will not upbraid us with former unkindnesses, or sue us with a cancelled bond. "He will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea." Micah 7:19. Sin shall not be cast in as a cork which riseth up again, but as lead which sinks to the bottom. How should we all labour for this covenant blessing! *Thomas Watson.*

Ver. 1. *Sin is covered.* Every man that must be happy, must have something to hide and cover his sins from God's eyes; and nothing in the world can do it, but Christ and his righteousness, typified in the ark of the covenant, whose cover was of gold, and called a propitiatory, that as it covered the tables that were within the ark, so God covers our sins against those tables. So the cloud covering the Israelites in the wilderness, signified God's covering us from the danger of our sins. *Thomas Taylor's "David's Learning: or the Way to True Happiness."* 1617.

Ver. 1. *Sin covered.* This *covering* hath relation to some nakedness and filthiness which should be covered, even sin, which defileth us and maketh us naked. Why, saith Moses to Aaron, hast thou made the people naked? Exodus 32:25. The garments of our merits are too short and cannot cover us, we have need therefore to borrow of Christ Jesus his merits and the mantle of his righteousness, that it may be unto us as a garment, and as those breeches of leather which God made unto Adam and Eve after their fall. Garments are ordained to cover our nakedness, defend us from the injury of the weather, and to adorn us. So the mediation of our Saviour serveth to cover our nakedness, that the wrath of God seize not upon us—

he is that "white raiment" wherewith we should be clothed, that our filthy nakedness may not appear—to defend us against Satan—he is "mighty to save," etc. —and to be an ornament to decorate us, for he is that "*wedding garment*:" "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ." Revelation 3:18 Isaiah 63:1 Matthew 22:11 Romans 13:14. *Archibald Symson.*

Ver. 1. The object of pardon—about which it is conversant, is set forth under diverse expressions—*iniquity*, *transgression*, and *sin*. As in law many words of like import and signification are heaped up and put together, to make the deed and legal instrument more comprehensive and effectual. I observe it the rather, because when God proclaims his name the same words are used, Exodus 34:7, "Taking away iniquity, transgressions, and sin." Well, we have seen the meaning of the expression. Why doth the holy man of God use such vigour and vehemency of inculcation. "*Blessed is the man!*" and again, "*Blessed is the man!*" Partly with respect to his own case. David knew how sweet it was to have sin pardoned; he had felt the bitterness of sin in his own soul, to the drying up of his blood, and therefore he doth express his sense of pardon in the most lively terms. And then, partly, too, with respect to those for whose use this instruction was written, that they might not look upon it as a light and trivial thing, but be thoroughly apprehensive of the worth of so great a privilege. Blessed, happy, thrice happy they who have obtained pardon of their sins, and justification by Jesus Christ. *Thomas Manton.*

Ver. 1-2. In these verses *four* evils are mentioned; 1. — *Transgression*, ([vpe] pesha. 2. *Sin*, (hamh) chataah. 3. — *Iniquity*, (wQp) avon. 4. — *Guile*, (hWmr) remiyah. The *first* signifies the *passing over a boundary, doing what is prohibited*. The *second* signifies the *missing of a mark*, not doing what was commanded; but it is often taken to express *sinfulness*, or sin in the nature, producing transgression in the life. The *third* signifies *what is turned out of its proper course or situation; anything morally distorted or perverted*. *Iniquity*, what is contrary to *equity* or *justice*. The *fourth* signifies *fraud, deceit, guile*, etc. To remove these evils, *three* acts are mentioned: *forgiving, covering*, and not *imputing*.

1. TRANSGRESSION, ([vpe] pesha, must be forgiven, (yWcn) nesui, borne away, *i.e.*, by a vicarious sacrifice; for *bearing sin*, or *bearing away sin*, always implies this.

2. SIN, (**hamh**) *chataah*, must be *covered*, (**ywsK**) *kesui*, hidden from the sight. It is odious and abominable, and must be put out of sight.

3. INIQUITY, (**wQ**) *avon*, what is *perverse* or *distorted*, must not be imputed, (**bvtyd**) *yachshobh*, must *not be reckoned to his account*.

4. GUILLE, (**hWmir**) *remiyah*, must be annihilated from the soul. *In whose spirit there is no GUILLE*. The man whose *transgression* is forgiven; whose *sin* is hidden, God having cast it as a millstone into the depths of the sea; whose iniquity and perversion is not reckoned to his account; and whose *guile*, the deceitful and desperately wicked heart, is annihilated, being emptied of sin, and filled with righteousness, is necessarily a happy man. *Adam Clarke*.

Ver. 1-2. *Transgression*. Prevarication. Some understand by it sins of omission and commission.

Sin. Some understand those inward inclinations, lusts, and motions, whereby the soul swerves from the law of God, and which are the immediate cause of external sins.

Iniquity. Notes original sin, the root of all.

Levatus, forgiven, eased, signifies to take away, to bear, to carry away. Two words in Scripture are chiefly used to denote remission, to expiate, to bear or carry away: the one signifies the manner whereby it is done, namely, atonement, the other the effect of this expiation, carrying away; one notes the meritorious cause, the other the consequent.

Covered. Alluding to the covering of the Egyptians in the Red Sea. Menochius thinks it alludes to the manner of writing among the Hebrews, which he thinks to be the same with that of the Romans; as writing with a pencil upon wax spread upon tables, which when they would blot out they made the wax plain, and drawing it over the writing, covered the former letters. And so it is equivalent with that expression of "blotting out sin," as in the other allusion it is with "casting sin into the depths of the sea."

Impute. Not charging upon account. As sin is a defection from the law, so it is forgiven; as it is offensive to God's holiness, so it is covered; as it is a debt involving man in a debt of punishment, so it is not imputed; they all note the certainty, and extent, and perfection of pardon: the three words

expressing sin here, being the same that are used by God in the declaration of his name. *Stephen Charnock*.

Ver. 1-2, 6-7. Who is blessed? Not he who cloaks, conceals, confesses not his sin. As long as David was in this state he was miserable. There was guile in his spirit Psalm 32:2 misery in his heart, his very bones waxed old, his moisture was dried up as the drought in summer Psalm 32:3-4. Who is blessed? He that is without sin, he who sins not, he who grieves no more by his sin the bosom on which he reclines. This is superlative blessedness, its highest element the happiness of heaven. To be like God, to yield implicit, ready, full, perfect obedience, the obedience of the heart, of our entire being; this is to be blessed above all blessedness. But among those who live in a world of sin, who are surrounded by sin, who are themselves sinners, who is blessed?

He whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered, to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity; and especially does he feel it to be so, who can, in some degree, enter into the previous state of David's soul Psalm 32:3-4. Ah, in what a wretched state was the psalmist previously to this blessedness! How must sin have darkened and deadened his spiritual faculties, to have guile in the spirit of one who could elsewhere exclaim, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me," any way of pain or grief, any way of sin which most surely leads to these. Psalm 139:23-34. What a mournful condition of soul was his, who while he roared all the day long, yet kept silence before God, had no heart to open his heart unto God, was dumb before him, not in submission to his will, not in accepting the punishment of his iniquity Leviticus 26:46, not in real confession, and honest, upright, and sincere acknowledgment of his iniquity to him against whom he had committed it. *"I kept silence,* "not merely I was silent, *"I kept silence,* "resolutely, perseveringly; I kept it notwithstanding all the remembrance of my past mercies, notwithstanding my reproaches of conscience, and my anguish of heart. I kept it notwithstanding *"thy hand was heavy upon me day and night,* "notwithstanding *"my moisture,* "all that was spiritual in me, my vital spirit, all that was indicative of spiritual life in my soul, seemed dried up and gone. Yes, Lord, notwithstanding all this, *I kept it.* But Nathan came, thou didst send him. He was to me a messenger full of reproof, full of faithfulness, but full of love. He came with thy word, and with the word of a King there was power. I acknowledged my sin unto him, and my iniquity did I not hide, but this was

little. Against thee, thee only, did I sin, and to thee was my confession made. I acknowledged my sin unto thee, O Lord. I solemnly said that I would do so, and I did it. I confessed my transgression unto the Lord, "*and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.*"

Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven. Behold the man who is blessed; blessed in the state of his mind, his guileless spirit, his contrite heart, the fruit of the spirit of grace; blessed in the forgiveness of a forgiving God; a forgiveness, perfect, entire, lacking nothing, signified by sin "covered, ""iniquity not imputed" of the Lord; blessed in the blessings which followed it.

Thou art my hiding place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance. Beneath the hollow of that hand which was once so heavy upon me, I can now repose. Thou art my hiding place, I dread thee no more; nay, I dwell in thee as my habitation, and my high tower, my covert, my safety, my house. Safe in thy love, whatever trouble may be my portion, and by the mouth of Nathan thy servant thou hast declared that trouble shall be my portion, I shall yet be preserved; yea, more, so fully wilt thou deliver me that I believe thou wilt encompass me so with the arms of thy mercy, as to call forth songs of grateful praise for thy gracious interposition.

Behold, the blessedness of him whom God forgives! No wonder, then, that the psalmist adds,

for this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found: surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him. As much as if he had said, Surely after this thy gracious

conduct towards *me*, all that truly love and fear thee, *every one that is godly*, when he hears of thy dealings with *me*, "*will pray unto thee.*"

Encouraged by my example, he will not keep silence as I foolishly and sinfully did, but will confess and supplicate before thee, since thou art to be "*found*," and hast so wondrously shown that thou art, of all that truly seek thee, since there is *the place* of finding, as I lay my hand upon the victim, and look through that victim to him the promised Seed; since there is *the time* of finding, declared in thy word, and manifested by the secret drawing of my heart to thee by thy grace; since the unwillingness is not in thee, but in thy sinning creature to come to thee; *for this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee*, then, however deep the water floods may be, however fierce the torrent, and headlong the stream, they shall not even

come nigh unto him, much less shall they overwhelm him. *James Harrington Evans, M.A., 1785-1849.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 1. Gospel benedictions. Take the first Psalm with thirty-second, show the doctrinal and practical harmoniously blended. Or, take the first, the thirty-second, and the forty-first, and show how we go from reading the word, to feeling its power, and thence to living charitably towards men.

Ver. 1. *Evangelical Blessedness.*

1. The original condition of its possessor.
2. The nature of the benefit received.
3. The channel by which it came.
4. The means by which it may be obtained by us.

Ver. 1-2. The nature of sin and the modes of pardon.

WORKS UPON THE THIRTY-SECOND PSALM

This treatyse concernynge the fruytful sonnges of David the Kynge & prophete in the seuen penytencyall psalmes. Deuyded in seuen sermons was made and compyled by the ryght reuerent fader In god Juhau fyssher doctore of dyuynyte & bysshop of Rochester at the exortacyo and sterynge of the most excellet princesse Margarete contesse of Rychemont and Derby & moder to our souerayne lorde Kynge henry the VII.

(No date, but marked in the B.M. Cat. 1509. An 8 volume edition has on Title Page, An. M.D.J.A.)

David's Learning, or Way to True Happiness: in a Commentarie upon the 32 Psalm. Preached and now published by THOMAS TAYLOR, late fellow of Christ's College in Cambridge. London: 1617.

David's Teares. By SIR JOHN HAYWARD, Knight, Doctor of Lawe. London. Printed by John Bell. 1623. On Psalms VI, XXXII, and CXXX.

Meditations on Psalm XXXII. in Archbishop Leighton's Works.

In the Works of JOHN DONNE: *Sermons on Psalm XXXII.* Vols. II., III. Alford's Edition.

A Godly and Fruitful Exposition on the Thirty-second Psalm, the Third of the Penitentials; in A Sacred Septenarie; or, a Godly and Fruitful Exposition on the Seven Psalmes of Repentance. By Mr. ARCHIBALD SYMSON, late Pastor of the Church at Dalkeith in Scotland. 1638.

Meditations and Disquisitions upon the 32 Psalm, in Meditations and Disquisitions upon the Seven Psalmes of David, commonly called the Penitential Psalmes. By SIR RICHARD BAKER, Knight. 1639.

Lectures on the Thirty-second Psalm. By CHARLES H. BINGHAM, B.A., Curate of Hale Magna. 1836.

Lectures on the Thirty-second Psalm, preached in Portman Chapel, Baker Street, during Lent, 1859. By the Rev. J. W. REEVE, M.A., Minister of the Chapel. 1859.

PSALM 32:2

EXPOSITION

Ver. 2. *Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity.* The word blessed is in the plural, *oh, the blessednesses!* the double joys, the bundles of happiness, the mountains of delight! Note the three words so often used to denote our disobedience: transgression, sin, and iniquity, are the three headed dog at the gates of hell, but our glorious Lord has silenced his barkings for ever against his own believing ones. The trinity of sin is overcome by the Trinity of heaven. Non imputation is of the very essence of pardon: the believer sins, but his sin is not reckoned, not accounted to him. Certain divines froth at the mouth with rage against imputed righteousness, be it ours to see our sin not imputed, and to us may there be as Paul words it, "Righteousness imputed without works." He is blessed indeed who has a substitute to stand for him to whose account all his debts may be set down.

And in whose spirit there is no guile. He who is pardoned, has in every case been taught to deal honestly with himself, his sin, and his God. Forgiveness is no sham, and the peace which it brings is not caused by playing tricks with conscience. Self deception and hypocrisy bring no blessedness, they may drug the soul into hell with pleasant dreams, but into the heaven of true peace they cannot conduct their victim. Free from guilt,

free from guile. Those who are justified from fault are sanctified from falsehood. A liar is not a forgiven soul. Treachery, double dealing, chicanery, dissimulation, are lineaments of the devil's children, but he who is washed from sin is truthful, honest, simple, and childlike. There can be no blessedness to tricksters with their plans, and tricks, and shuffling, and pretending: they are too much afraid of discovery to be at ease; their house is built on the volcano's brink, and eternal destruction must be their portion. Observe the three words to describe sin, and the three words to represent pardon, weigh them well, and note their meaning. (See note at the end.)

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 2. *Unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity.* Aben Ezra paraphrases it, of *whose sins God does not think*, does not regard them, so as to bring them into judgment, reckoning them as if they were not; *ou me logizetai does not count or calculate them*; does not require for them the debt of punishment. To us the remission is entirely free, our Sponsor having taken upon him the whole business of paying the ransom. His suffering is our impunity, his bond our freedom, and his chastisement our peace; and therefore the prophet says, "The chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed." *Robert Leighton.*

Ver. 2. *In whose spirit there is no guile.* In the saint's trouble, conscience is full of Scripture sometimes, on which it grounds its verdict, but very ill interpreted. Oh, saith the poor soul, this place is against me!

Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile. Here, saith he, is a description of a sincere soul, to be one in whose spirit there is no guile; but I find much guile in me, therefore I am not the sincere one. Now this is a very weak, yea, false inference. By a spirit without guile, is not meant a person that hath not the least deceitfulness and hypocrisy remaining in his heart. To be without sin, and to be without guile, in this strict sense are the same—a prerogative here on earth peculiar to the Lord Christ 1 Peter 2:22, "Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth." And therefore when we meet with the same phrase attributed to the saints, as to Levi, Malachi 2:6; "Iniquity was not found in his lips; "and to Nathanael, John 1:47: "Behold an Israelite indeed in whom is no guile!" we must sense it in an inferior way, that may suit with their imperfect state here below, and not put that which

was only Christ's crown on earth, and is the glorified saint's robe in heaven, on the weak Christian while militant here on earth, not only with a devil without, but with a body of sin within him. Wipe thine eyes again, poor soul, and then if thou readest such places, wherein the Spirit of God speaks so highly and hyperbolically of his saint's grace, thou shalt find he doth not assert the perfection of their grace, free from all mixture of sin, but rather to comfort poor drooping souls, and cross their misgiving hearts, which, from the presence of hypocrisy, are ready to overlook their sincerity as none at all, he expresses his high esteem of their little grace, by speaking of it as if it were perfect, and their hypocrisy none at all. *William Gurnall*.

Ver. 2. *In whose spirit there is no guile.* When once pardon is realized, the believer has courage to be truthful before God: he can afford to have done with *guile* in the spirit. Who would not declare all his debts when they are certain to be discharged by another? Who would not declare his malady when he was sure of a cure? True faith knows not only that *guile* before God is impossible, but also that it is no longer necessary. The believer has nothing to conceal: he sees himself as before God, stripped, and laid open, and bare; and if he has learned to see himself as he is, so also has he learned to see God as he reveals himself. There is no guile in the spirit of one who is justified by faith; because in the act of justification truth has been established in his inward parts. There is no guile in the spirit of him who sees the truth of himself in the light of the truth of God. For the truth of God shows him at once that in Christ he is perfectly righteous before God, and in himself he is the chief of sinners. Such a one knows he is not his own, for he is bought with a price, and therefore he is to glorify God. There is no guile in the spirit of him whose real object is to glorify Christ and not himself. But when a man is not quite true to Christ, and has not quite ceased to magnify self, there may be guile, for he will be more occupied with thoughts about himself than with the honour of Christ. But if the truth, and honour, and glory of Christ be his supreme care, he may leave himself out of the question, and, like Christ, "O commit himself to him that judgeth righteously." *J. W. Reeve, M.A., in "Lectures on the Thirty-second Psalm, " 1860.*

Ver. 2. *No guile.* Sincerity is that property to which pardoning mercy is annexed. True, indeed, it is that Christ covers all our sins and failings; but it is only the sincere soul over which he will cast his skirt.

Blessed is he whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity. None will doubt this; but which is the man? The next words tell us his name;

And in whose spirit there is no guile. Christ's righteousness is the garment which covers the nakedness and shame of our unrighteousness; faith the grace that puts this garment on; but what faith? None but the faith unfeigned, as Paul calls it. 2 Timothy 1:5. "Here is water," said the eunuch, "what doth hinder me to be baptized?" Acts 8:36. Now mark Philip's answer, Acts 8:37, "If thou believest with all thine heart thou mayest; "as if he had said, Nothing but an hypocritical heart can hinder thee. It is the false heart only that finds the door of mercy shut. *William Gurnall.*

Ver. 2. *Guile.* The guile of the spirit is an inward corruption in the soul of man, whereby he dealeth deceitfully with himself before God in the matter of salvation. *Thomas Taylor.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 1-2. The nature of sin and the modes of pardon.

Ver. 2. Non imputation, a remarkable doctrine. —Prove, explain, and improve it.

Ver. 2. *No guile.* The honesty of heart of the pardoned man.

PSALM 32:3

EXPOSITION

Ver. 3-5. David now gives us his own experience: no instructor is so efficient as one who testifies to what he has personally known and felt. He writes well who like the spider spins his matter out of his own bowels.

Ver. 3. *When I kept silence.* When through neglect I failed to confess, or through despair dared not do so, *my bones*, those solid pillars of my frame, the stronger portions of my bodily constitution, *waxed old*, began to decay with weakness, for my grief was so intense as to sap my health and destroy my vital energy. What a killing thing is sin! It is a pestilent disease! A fire in

the bones! While we smother our sin it rages within, and like a gathering wound swells horribly and torments terribly.

Through my roaring all the day long. He was silent as to confession, but not as to sorrow. Horror at his great guilt, drove David to incessant laments, until his voice was no longer like the articulate speech of man, but so full of sighing and groaning, that it resembled to hoarse roaring of a wounded beast. None knows the pangs of conviction but those who have endured them. The rack, the wheel, the flaming fagot are ease compared with the Tophet which a guilty conscience kindles within the breast: better suffer all the diseases which flesh is heir to, than lie under the crushing sense of the wrath of almighty God. The Spanish inquisition with all its tortures was nothing to the inquest which conscience holds within the heart.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 3. *My bones waxed old.* God sports not at the sins of his elect, but outwardly doth deal with them more hardly, and chastise them more rigorously than he doth the reprobate. David's troubles and pains were partly external, partly internal: external I call those that were cast on his body; internal upon his conscience. And in the body were torments and vexations, seizing sometimes on his flesh— which was less painful— sometimes on his bones, which was more grievous, yea, almost intolerable, as experience teacheth. And this is God's just recompense; when we bestow our strength on sin, God abates it, and so weakens us. Samson spent his strength on Delilah, but to what weakness was he brought! Let us, therefore, learn, that God hath given us bones and the strength thereof for another use, that is, to serve him, and not waste or be prodigal of them in the devil's service. *Archibald Symson.*

Ver. 3. *My bones waxed old.* By bones, the strength of the body, the inward strength and vigour of the soul is meant. The conscience of sin, and the terror of judgment doth break the heart of a true penitent, so long as he beholdeth his sin deserving death, his judge ready to pronounce the sentence of it, hell open to receive him for it, and the evil angels, God's executioners, at hand to hurry him to it. *Samuel Page, in "David's Broken Heart," 1646.*

Ver. 3. *My bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long.* David here not only mourns for sin as a man, but he roars, as it were, like a

pained beast. He seems fitter for a wilderness to cry out, than for a secret chamber to weep in; at other times he can "water his couch" in the night, now he "*roars*" all the day long; at other times, "*his moisture is dried*," now his "*bones*," the pillars of his house shake and wax old. *Alexander Carmichael*, 1677.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 3. *Retention of our griefs to ourselves.* Natural tendency of timidity and despair; danger of it; means of divulging grief; encouragements to do so; the blessed person who is ready to hear confession.

The silent mourner the greatest sufferer.

Ver. 3-4. "Terrible Conviction and Gentle Drawings." See "Spurgeon's Sermons," "No. 313.

PSALM 32:4

EXPOSITION

Ver. 3-5. David now gives us his own experience: no instructor is so efficient as one who testifies to what he has personally known and felt. He writes well who like the spider spins his matter out of his own bowels.

Ver. 4. *For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me.* God's finger can crush us—what must his hand be, and that pressing heavily and continuously! Under terrors of conscience, men have little rest by night, for the grim thoughts of the day dog them to their chambers and haunt their dreams, or else they lie awake in a cold sweat of dread. God's hand is very helpful when it uplifts, but it is awful when it presses down: better a world on the shoulder, like Atlas, than God's hand on the heart, like David.

My moisture is turned into the drought of summer. The sap of his soul was dried, and the body through sympathy appeared to be bereft of its needful fluids. The oil was almost gone from the lamp of life, and the flame flickered as though it would soon expire. Unconfessed transgression, like a fierce poison, dried up the fountain of the man's strength and made him like a tree blasted by the lightning, or a plant withered by the scorching heat of a tropical sun. Alas! for a poor soul when it has learned its sin but forgets

its Saviour, it goes hard with it indeed. *Selah*. It was time to change the tune, for the notes are very low in the scale, and with such hard usage, the strings of the harp are out of order: the next verse will surely be set to another key, or will rehearse a more joyful subject.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 4. *Thy hand*. A *correcting* hand, whereby God scourges and buffets his own children. Now the sense of God's power punishing or correcting, is called God's hand, as 1 Samuel 5:11. The hand of God was sore at Ekron, because of the ark; and a *heavy* hand in resemblance, because when men smite they lay their hand heavier than ordinary. Hence, we may note three points of doctrine: first, that all afflictions are God's hand; secondly, that God lays his hand heavily often upon his dear children; thirdly, that God often continues his heavy hand night and day on them. *Thomas Taylor*.

Ver. 4. *My moisture is turned into the drought of summer*. Another meaning may be attributed to these words. We may suppose the psalmist to be referring to *spiritual drought*. *Charles H. Bingham, B.A., in "Lectures on the Thirty-second Psalm, "1836.*

Ver. 4. *My moisture is turned into the drought of summer*. The summer is from the middle of August to the middle of November. The intensity of the heat is great, and almost intolerable...Up to the beginning or middle of September there are no showers, rain being as scarce in summer as snow...The dry grass of the fields sometimes takes fire, and produces desolating conflagrations, and the parched earth is cleft and broken into chasms. *John Eadie, D.D., LL.D., in Biblical Cyclopaedia, 1868.*

Ver. 4. *The drought of summer*. Dr. Russell, in his account of the weather at Aleppo, which very much resembles that of Judea, says that the verdure of the spring fades before the middle of May, and before the end of that month the whole country puts on so parched and barren an aspect that one would scarce think it capable of producing anything, there being but very few plants that have vigour enough to resist the extreme heat. *Thomas Harmer's "Observations, "1775.*

Ver. 4. *The drought of summer*. During the twelve years from 1846 to 1859 only two slight showers fell in Jerusalem between the months of May and October. One fell in July, 1858, another in June 1859. *Dr. Whitty's "Water Supply of Jerusalem, "quoted in Kitto's Cyclopaedia.*

Ver. 4. If God striketh those so sore whom he favoureth, how sharply and sore will he strike them whom he favoureth not. *Gregory.*

Ver. 4-5. If our offences have been not gnats, but camels, our sorrow must be not a drop, but an ocean. Scarlet sins call for bloody tears; and if Peter sin heinously he must weep bitterly. If, then, thy former life hath been a cord of iniquity, twisted with many threads, a writing full of great blots, a course spotted with various and grievous sins, multiply thy confessions and enlarge thy humiliation; double thy fastings and treble thy prayers; pour out thy tears, and fetch deep sighs; in a word, iterate and aggravate thy acknowledgments, though yet, as the apostle saith in another case, I say in this, "Grieve not as without hope, "that upon thy sincere and suitable repentance divine goodness will forgive thee thy sins. *Nathanael Hardy.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 3-4. "Terrible Conviction and Gentle Drawings." See "Spurgeon's Sermons, "No. 313.

Ver. 4. The sorrows of a convinced soul. Daily, nightly, from God, heavy, weakening, destroying.

Ver. 4. (*last clause*) Spiritual drought.

PSALM 32:5

EXPOSITION

Ver. 3-5. David now gives us his own experience: no instructor is so efficient as one who testifies to what he has personally known and felt. He writes well who like the spider spins his matter out of his own bowels.

Ver. 5. *I acknowledged my sin unto thee.* After long lingering, the broken heart bethought itself of what it ought to have done at the first, and laid bare its bosom before the Lord. The lancet must be let into the gathering ulcer before relief can be afforded. The least thing we can do, if we would be pardoned, is to acknowledge our fault; if we are too proud for this we double deserve punishment. *And mine iniquity have I not hid.* We must confess the guilt as well as the fact of sin. It is useless to conceal it, for it is well known to God; it is beneficial to us to own it, for a full confession

softens and humbles the heart. We must as far as possible unveil the secrets of the soul, dig up the hidden treasure of Achan, and by weight and measure bring out our sins. *I said.* This was his fixed resolution.

I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord. Not to my fellow men or to the high priest, but unto Jehovah; even in those days of symbol the faithful looked to God alone for deliverance from sin's intolerable load, much more now, when types and shadows have vanished at the appearance of the dawn. When the soul determines to lay low and plead guilty, absolution is near at hand; hence we read,

And thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Not only was the sin itself pardoned, but the iniquity of it; the virus of its guilt was put away, and that at once, so soon as the acknowledgment was made. God's pardons are deep and thorough: the knife of mercy cuts at the roots of the ill weed of sin. *Selah.* Another pause is needed, for the matter is not such as may be hurried over.

*"Pause, my soul, adore and wonder,
Ask, O why such love to me?
Grace has put me in the number
Of the Saviour's family. Hallelujah!
Thanks, eternal thanks, to thee."*

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 4-5. *See Psalms on "Psalm 32:4"* for further information.

Ver. 5. *Selah.* See Volume I., pp 25, 29, 346, 352; and Vol. II., pp 249-252.

Ver. 5. *I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid.* The godly man is ingenuous in laying open his sins. The hypocrite doth veil and smother his sin; he doth not *abscindere peccatum*, but *abscondere*; like a patient that hath some loathsome disease in his body, he will rather die than confess his disease; but a godly man's sincerity is seen in this—he will confess and shame himself for sin. "Lo, I have sinned, and I have done wickedly." 2 Samuel 24:17. Nay, a child of God will confess sin in particular; an unsound Christian will confess sin by wholesale; he will acknowledge he is a sinner in general, whereas David doth, as it were, point with his finger to the sore: "I have done this evil" Psalm 51:4; he doth

not say I have done evil, but this evil. He points at his blood guiltiness.
Thomas Watson.

Ver. 5. *I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.* Be thine own accuser in the free confession of thy sins. *Peccavi pater* (as the prodigal child), "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight." For it fares not in the court of heaven as it doth in our earthly tribunals. With men a free confession makes way for a condemnation; but with God, the more a sinner bemoans his offence, the more he extenuates the anger of his Judge. Sin cannot but call for justice, as it is an offence against God; yet, when once it is a wound to the soul it moveth him to mercy and clemency. Wherefore as David having but resolved to confess his sins, was accosted eftsoon with an absolution: so, *Tu agnosce, et Dominus ignoscet* (Augustine.) Be thou unfeigned in confessing, and God will be faithful in forgiving. 1 John 1:9. Only let *confessio peccati* be *professo desinendi* (Hilary.) —the acknowledgment of thy sin an obligation to leave it; and then thou mayest build upon it. "He that confesseth and forsaketh shall have mercy." Proverbs 28:13. *Isaac Craven's Sermon at Paul's Cross, 1630*

Ver. 5. *I said, I will confess,* etc. Justified persons, who have their sins forgiven, are yet bound to confess sin to God...There are many queries to be dispatched in the handling of this point. The first query is, what are the reasons why persons justified and pardoned are yet bound to make confession of sin unto God in private? The reasons are six. First, they are to confess sin unto God because holy confession gives a great deal of ease and holy quiet unto the mind of a sinner: concealed and indulged guilt contracts horror and dread on the conscience. Secondly, because God loves to hear the complaints and the confessions of his own people. Lying on the face is the best gesture, and the mourning weed the best garment that God is well pleased with. A third reason is, because confession of sin doth help to quicken the heart to strong and earnest supplication to God (see Psalm 32:6). Confession is to the soul as the whetstone is to the knife, that sharpens it and puts an edge on it; so doth confession of sin. Confessing thy evils to God doth sharpen and put an edge on thy supplication; that man will pray but faintly that doth confess sin but slightly. A fourth reason is, because confession of sin will work a holy contrition and a godly sorrow in the heart. Psalm 38:18. Declaration doth work compunction. Confession of sin is but the causing of sin to recoil on the conscience, which causeth blushing and shame of face, and grief of

heart. A fifth reason is, because secret confession of sin doth give a great deal of glory to God. It gives glory to God's justice. I do confess sin, and do confess God in justice may damn me for my sin. It gives glory to God's mercy. I confess sin, yet mercy may save me. It gives glory to God's omniscience. In confessing sin I do acknowledge that God knoweth my sin. A sixth reason why justified persons must confess sin unto God is, because holy confession of sin will embitter sin, and endear Christ to them, when a man shall let sin recoil on his conscience, by a confession. *Condensed from Christopher Love's "Soul's Cordial," 1683.*

Ver. 5. *I said, I will confess...and thou forgavest.* It remaineth as a truth, remission is undoubtedly annexed to confession. *Tantum valent tres syllabae* PEC-CA-VI, saith St. Austin, of so great force are those three syllables in the Latin, three words in the English, when uttered with a contrite heart, *"I have sinned."* Nathanael Hardy.

Ver. 5. *Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.* This sin seems very probably to have been his adultery with Bathsheba, and murder of Uriah. Now David, to make the pardoning mercy of God more illustrious, saith he did not only forgive his *sin*, but the *iniquity* of his sin; and what was that? Surely the worst that can be said of that, his complicated sin, is that there was so much hypocrisy in it, he woefully juggled with God and man in it; this, I do not doubt to say, was *the iniquity* of his sin, and put a colour deeper on it than the blood which he shed. And the rather—I lay the accent there—because God himself, when he would set out the heinousness of this sin, seems to do it rather from the hypocrisy in the fact than the fact itself, as appears by the testimony given this holy man 1 Kings 15:5: "David did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, and turned not aside from any thing that he commanded him all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite." Were there not other false steps which David took beside this? Doth the Spirit of God, by excepting this, declare his approbation of all that else he ever did? No, sure the Spirit of God records other sins that escaped this eminent servant of the Lord; but all those are drowned here, and this mentioned is the only stain of his life. But why? Surely because there appeared less sincerity, yea, more hypocrisy in this one sin than in all his others put together; though David in them was wrong as to the matter of his actions, yet his heart was more right in the manner of committing them. But here his sincerity was sadly wounded, though not to the total destruction of the habit, yet to lay it in a long swoon, as to any actings thereof. And truly the wound went very deep when that grace was

stabbed in which did run the life blood of all the rest. We see, then, God hath reason, though his mercy prompted him, yea, his covenant obliged him, not to let his child die of this wound, yet so to heal it that a scar might remain upon the place, a mark upon the sin, whereby others might know how odious hypocrisy is to God. *William Gurnall*.

Ver. 5. *Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.* We must observe the *matter forgiven*, and the *manner of forgiving*. The matter forgiven is the *iniquity of his sin*. It is disputed what is here meant by *iniquity*, whether *culpa* or *paena*. Some understand *paenam*, and think that an allusion is made in this word unto the message of Nathan, wherein God doth remit the heaviest stroke of his wrath, but yet retains some part in punishing the child, and permitting Absalom to rebel and abuse king David's concubines: so Theodoret, *Deus non condigna paena Davidem punivit*. Some understand *culpam*, and will have this phrase to be an amplification of that, as if *superbia defendens*, or *taciturnitas celans*, or *impietas contra Deum assurgens*, or some such great guilt were meant by this phrase. But as I do not censure these opinions, which may well stand, so I think the phrase looks back into that word which was in the *confession*. The sin confessed was ([və]) and this is but an analysis of this word; for (ytāmĵ æwD), what is it, word for word, but the *perverseness of my aberration?* (hamh) is an aberration from the scope or mark whereat we aim; all men aim at felicity, but most men stray from it, because they are not led by the law that guides unto it, the violating whereof is called (hamh) But some do stray out of mere ignorance, and they only break the law; some out of stubbornness, which will not submit themselves to the Lawgiver; these men's sin is called *perverseness*, which God is said here to forgive. So that David did not confess more against himself than God includes in his pardon. Well may God exceed our desire; he never doth come short thereof if it do concern our spiritual, our eternal good. As he doth exclude no sinner that doth confess, so doth he except against no sin that is confessed. *Arthur Lake*.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 5. The gracious results of a full confession; or, confession and absolution scripturally explained.

PSALM 32:6

EXPOSITION

Ver. 6. *For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found.* If the psalmist means that *on account of* God's mercy others would become hopeful, his witness is true. Remarkable answers to prayer very much quicken the prayerfulness of other godly persons. Where one man finds a golden nugget others feel inclined to dig. The benefit of our experience to others should reconcile us to it. No doubt the case of David has led thousands to seek the Lord with hopeful courage who, without such an instance to cheer them, might have died in despair. Perhaps the psalmist meant *for* this favour or the like all godly souls would seek, and here, again, we can confirm his testimony, for all will draw near to God in the same manner as he did when godliness rules their heart. The mercy seat is the way to heaven for all who shall ever come there. There is, however, a set time for prayer, beyond which it will be unavailing; between the time of sin and the day of punishment mercy rules the hour, and God may be found, but when once the sentence has gone forth pleading will be useless, for the Lord will not be found by the condemned soul. O dear reader, slight not the accepted time, waste not the day of salvation. The godly pray while the Lord has promised to answer, the ungodly postpone their petitions till the Master of the house has risen up and shut to the door, and then their knocking is too late. What a blessing to be led to seek the Lord before the great devouring floods leap forth from their lairs, for then when they do appear we shall be safe.

Surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him.

The floods shall come, and the waves shall rage, and toss themselves like Atlantic billows; whirlpools and waterspouts shall be on every hand, but the praying man shall be at a safe distance, most surely secured from every ill. David was probably most familiar with those great land floods which fill up, with rushing torrents, the beds of rivers which at other times are almost dry: these overflowing waters often did great damage, and, as in the case of the Kishon, were sufficient to sweep away whole armies. From sudden and overwhelming disasters thus set forth in metaphor the true suppliant will certainly be held secure. He who is saved from sin has no need to fear anything else.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 6. *For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found*, etc. Seeing he is such a God, who should refuse or delay his return! Surely every rational and pious mind will, without delay, invoke so gentle and mild a Lord; *will pray to him while he is exorable*, or, as the Hebrew expresses it, *in a time of finding*. For he who promises pardon, does not promise tomorrow. There are *tempora fandi*—certain times in which he may be spoken with, and a certain appointed day of pardon and of grace, which if a man by stupid perverseness despise, or by sloth neglect, surely he is justly overwhelmed with eternal might and misery, and must necessarily perish by the deluge of divine wrath; since he has contemned and derided that Ark of salvation which was prepared, and in which whoever enters into it shall be safe, while the world is perishing. *Robert Leighton.*

Ver. 6. *For this shall every one that is godly pray to thee*, saith David. *For this!* What? Because of his sins. And who? Not the most wicked, but the *godly*, in this respect, have cause to pray. And for what should he pray? Surely, for renewed pardon, for increase of grace, and for the perfection of glory. We cannot say we have no sin. Oh, then let us pray with David, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord!" Where there is a double emphasis observable, it is not *ab hoste*, but *a servo*. Though God's servant, yet he would not have God to enter into judgment with him. And again, *ne intres*, it is the very entrance into judgment that he dreads, and prayeth against; not only do not *proceed*, but do not so much as *enter*. *Nathanael Hardy.*

Ver. 6. *For this shall every one that is godly.* We are here furnished with a fact which does not appear in the history of David. It is commonly supposed that after his grievous fall, till Nathan reproved him, he had been careless and stupefied; and this has often been adduced as a proof of the hardening nature of sin. But the thing was far otherwise. He was all the while tortured in his mind, yet unwilling to humble himself before God, and condemn himself before men, as he ought to have done. He kept silence and endeavoured to pass off the distress by time, palliation, and excuse. But the repression and concealment of his anguish preyed not only upon his peace, but his health, and endangered life itself. At length he was reduced to the deepest penitence, and threw himself, by an unqualified confession, on the compassion of God.

For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee. Here we see not only that all the godly pray, but every one of them prays for pardon. This is the very thing which our Saviour teaches his disciples: "When ye pray, say, Forgive us our trespasses." And this praying does not only regard the manifestation of forgiving mercy, as some would have it, but the exercise of it. *William Jay.*

Ver. 6. *Godly.* A godly man is like God, he hath the same judgment with God! he thinks of things as God doth; he hath a God like disposition; he partakes of the divine nature. 2 Peter 1:4. A godly man doth bear God's name and image: godliness is God likeness. *Thomas Watson.*

Ver. 6. *A time.* There be seasons, which, if taken, sweeten actions, and open the door for their better entertainment: Proverbs 25:11, "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver; "the Hebrew is, A word spoken upon its wheels: fit times and seasons are wheels to carry words with great advantage. And so for actions; when things are done in due time they are beautiful, acceptable. When God gives rain to a land in season, how acceptable is it! when a tree bears fruit in its season, it is grateful: so when angels or men do things seasonably, it is pleasing to the Lord Christ: there are fit times, which, if we miss, actions are unlovely, and miss of their aims.

For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found. There are times, if we have the wisdom to discern them, when prayer will be seasonable, acceptable, effectual. *William Greenhill.*

Ver. 6. *Surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him.* The effects of prayer heretofore have been wonderful. Prayer hath sent down hailstones from heaven to overcome five kings with their armies. Prayer hath shut up the windows of heaven that it should not rain, and again hath opened them that the earth might give her increase. Prayer hath stayed the swift course of the sun and caused it to go backward fifteen degrees. Prayer hath held God's hands that he could not strike when he was ready to plague his people. Prayer without any other help or means hath thrown down the strong walls of Jericho. Prayer hath divided the sea that the floods thereof could not come near the Israelites. In this place it delivereth the faithful man from all the dangers of this world.

Surely in the floods of many waters they shall not come nigh unto him. The sum is this, That no calamity of this world, no troubles of this life, no

terrors of death, no guiltiness of sin, can be so great, but that a *godly* man by means of his faith and felicity in Christ shall wade out of them well enough. For howsoever other things go, still he shall have such a solace in his soul, such a comfort in his conscience, such a heaven in his heart, knowing himself reconciled to God and justified by faith, that,

Surely in the floods of many waters they shall not come nigh unto him.

Which, that it may better appear, I shall desire you to observe two things, the danger, the deliverance. The danger is in these words,

In the floods of many waters; where the tribulations that the godly man is subject to in this life are likened, first, to *waters*; then to *many waters*; thirdly, to a *flood* of many waters. The deliverance is in these words,

Surely they shall not come near him; where the deliverance of the godly man hath three degrees also. First, "they shall not come *near*;" secondly, *him*, "they shall not come near *him*;" then, *surely*—"surely they shall not come near him." *Thomas Playfere.*

Ver. 6. *The floods of great waters.* The afflictions of the faithful are likened to *waters*. Fire and water have no mercy, we say. But of the two water is the worst. For any fire may be quenched with water; but the force of water, if it begins to be violent, cannot by any power of man, be resisted. But these our tribulations which are *waters* are "*many waters*." Our common proverb is, "Seldom comes sorrow alone:" but as waters come rolling and waving many together, so the miseries of this life. *Thomas Playfere.*

Ver. 6. *Floods of great waters.* Unfamiliar with the sudden flooding of thirsty water courses, we seldom comprehend the full force of the most striking images in the Old and New Testaments. *W.J. Conybeare, and J.S. Howson, in "Life and Epistles of St. Paul."*

Ver. 6. *In the floods,* etc. Washed he may be, as Paul was in the shipwreck, but not drowned with those floods of great waters: be they never so great they are bounded. *Joseph Trapp.*

Ver. 6. *Him.* This word must in no case be omitted; it helpeth us to answer a very strong objection. For it may be said, Many holy men have lost their goods, have suffered great torments in their body, have been troubled also in mind; how then did not the "floods of many waters" come near them? The word *him* helps us to answer. The very philosophers themselves

reckoned their goods pertained no more to them, than, be it spoken with reverence and regard, the parings of their nails. Zenon hearing news he had lost all he had by sea, said only thus, Thou hast done very well, Fortune, to leave me nothing but my cloak. Another, called Anaxarchus, when as Nicocreon the tyrant commanded he should be beaten to death in a mortar, spake thus to the executioner, Beat and bray as long as thou wilt Anaxarchus his bag or satchel (so he called his own body), but Anaxarchus thou canst not touch. Yet these, making so small reckoning of their goods and body, set their minds notwithstanding at a high rate. The mind of a man is himself, say they. Hence it is that Julius Caesar, when Amyclas the pilot was greatly afraid of the tempest, spake to him thus: What meanest thou to fear, base fellow? dost thou not know thou carriest Caesar with thee? As if he should say, Caesar's body may well be drowned, as any other man's may; but his mind, his magnanimity, his valour, his fortitude, can never be drowned. Thus far went philosophy; but divinity goeth a degree further. For philosophy defines *him*, that is, a man, by his reason, and the moral virtues of the mind; but divinity defines a Christian man by his faith, and his conjunction thereby with Christ. Excellently saith Saint Austin: Whence comes it that the soul dieth? Because faith is not in it. Whence that the body dieth? Because a soul is not in it. Therefore the soul of thy soul is faith. So that if we would know what is a faithful man, we must define him, not by his natural soul, as he is reasonable, but by the soul of his soul, which is his faith. And then we easily answer the objection, that a flood may come near a faithful man's goods, near his body, near his reasonable soul; but to his faith, that is, to HIM, it can never come near. *Thomas Playfere.*

Ver. 6. Few verses in the Psalms are harder to be understood than this: and none has given rise to more varied expositions among the commentators. *For this.* Some will have it: encouraged by this example, that after so foul a fall God so readily forgave. Others again: *for this*, namely, warned by this example, they who are holy shall make their prayers that they may not be permitted to fall as David did. Whichever be the sense, they well argue from this passage, that the state of absolute and enduring perfection is impossible to a Christian in this life. *Lorinus, and Cajetan* (1469-1534), *quoted by Neale.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 6. The *godly* man's picture, drawn with a Scripture pencil. *Thomas Watson*.

Ver. 6. The experience of one, the encouragement of all.

Ver. 6. (*first clause*). —The day of grace, how to improve it.

Ver. 6. (*whole verse*). —Pardon of sin the guarantee that other mercies shall be given.

Ver. 6. (*last clause*). —Imminent troubles, eminent deliverances.

Ver. 6. (*last clause*). —The felicity of the faithful. *Thomas Playfere*.

PSALM 32:7

EXPOSITION

Ver. 7. *Thou art my hiding place.* Terse, short sentences make up this verse, but they contain a world of meaning. Personal claims upon our God are the joy of spiritual life. To lay our hand upon the Lord with the clasp of a personal "my" is delight at its full. Observe that the same man who in the fourth verse was oppressed by the presence of God, here finds a shelter in him. See what honest confession and full forgiveness will do! The gospel of substitution makes him to be our refuge who otherwise would have been our judge.

Thou shalt preserve me from trouble. Trouble shall do me no real harm when the Lord is with me, rather it shall bring me much benefit, like the file which clears away the rust, but does not destroy the metal. Observe the three tenses, we have noticed the sorrowful past, the last sentence was a joyful present, this is a cheerful future.

Thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance. What a golden sentence! The man is encircled in song, surrounded by dancing mercies, all of them proclaiming the triumphs of grace. There is no breach in the circle, it completely rings him round; on all sides he hears music. Before him hope sounds the cymbals, and behind him gratitude beats the timbrel. Right and left, above and beneath, the air resounds with joy, and all this for the very

man who, a few weeks ago, was roaring all the day long. How great a change! What wonders grace has done and still can do! *Selah*. There was a need of a pause, for love so amazing needs to be pondered, and joy so great demands quiet contemplation, since language fails to express it.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 7. *Thou art my hiding place*. David does not say, "Thou art a hiding place" merely, as one among many; or *the* "hiding place," as the only one; but, "Thou art *my* hiding place." *There* lies all the excellency of the text. "He is *mine*;" I have embraced the offer of his salvation, "says David; "I have applied to him in my own person: I have, as a sinner, taken shelter in his love and compassion; I have placed myself under his wings; I have covered myself with the robe of his righteousness; and now, therefore, I am safe." "Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered." This is having a part and a lot in the matter, having the personal and individual benefit of the Saviour's work of atonement. How different is an *appropriating* from a *speculative* faith! Men tell us that they believe the doctrine, that they acknowledge the truth, that they assent to our creed; and they say, that to declare to them the character of Christ as the sinner's only help and safety, is merely putting before them what they already know. Now, follow up the idea suggested by the figure in our text, and see the folly and danger of acting thus. Suppose a traveller upon a bleak and exposed heath to be alarmed by the approach of a storm. He looks out for shelter. But if his eye discern a place to hide him from the storm, does he stand still and say, "I see there *is* a shelter, and therefore I may remain where I am"? Does he not betake himself to it? Does he not run, in order to escape the stormy wind and tempest? It was a "hiding place" before; but it was *his* hiding place only when he ran into it, and was safe. Had he not gone into it, though it might have been a protection to a thousand other travellers who resorted there, to him it would have been as if no such place existed. Who does not see at once, from this simple illustration, that the blessings of the gospel are such only in their being *appropriated* to the soul? The physician can cure only by being *applied to*; the medicine can heal only by being *taken*; money can enrich only by being *possessed*; and the merchantman in the parable would have been none the wealthier for discovering that there was a "pearl of great price," had he not made it *his*. So with the salvation of the gospel: if Christ is the "Balm in Gilead," *apply* the remedy; if he is the "physician there," go to him; if he is the "pearl of

great price, "sell all that you have and *buy* it; and if he is the "hiding place, "run into it and be safe; there will be no solid joy and peace in the mind until he is your "hiding place." *Fountain Elwin*, 1842.

Ver. 7. *Thou art my hiding place.* An allusion, probably, to the *city of refuge*. *Adam Clarke*.

Ver. 7. *Hiding place.* Kirke White has a beautiful hymn upon this word, beginning, "Awake, sweet harp of Judah, wake." We have no room to quote it, but it will be found in "Our Own Hymn Book, "No. 381.

Ver. 7. *Thou shalt preserve me from trouble.* If we content ourselves with that word which our translators have chosen here, *trouble*, we must rest in one of these two senses; either that God shall arm, and indue those that are his with such a constancy, as those things that trouble others shall not trouble them; but, "As the sufferings of Christ abound in them, so their consolation also aboundeth by Christ:" "As unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things" 2 Corinthians 1:5 6:9; for God uses both these ways in the behalf of his servants—sometimes to suspend the working of that that should work their torment, as he suspended the rage of the lions for Daniel, and the heat of the fire in the furnace for the others; sometimes by imprinting a holy stupefaction and insensibleness in the person that suffers; so St. Lawrence was not only patient, but merry and facetious when he lay broiling upon the fire, and so we read of many other martyrs that have been less moved, less affected with their torments than their executioners or their persecutors have been. That which troubled others never troubled them; or else the phrase must have this sense, that though they be troubled with their troubles, though God submit them so far to the common condition of men, that they be sensible of them, yet he shall preserve them from that trouble so as that it shall never overthrow them, never sink them into a dejection of spirit, or diffidence in his mercy! they shall find storms, but a stout and strong ship under foot; they shall feel thunder and lightning, but garlands of triumphant bays shall preserve them; they shall be trodden into earth with scorns and contempt, but yet as seed is buried, to multiply to more. So far this word of our translators assists our devotion, *Thou shalt preserve me from trouble*, thou shalt make me insensible of it, or thou shalt make me victorious in it. *John Donne*.

Ver. 7. *Thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance.* In these words the prophet David riseth up by a gradation, and goeth beyond that which he had formerly said concerning his confidence in God. First, he had said that God was his *hiding place*; secondly, that he would *preserve him in trouble*; and now, thirdly, that the Lord would make him *joyful*, and to triumph over his troubles and enemies, by compassing him, instead of troubles, with mercies... Learn to acknowledge God's goodness to thyself with particular application, as David saith here, "Thou shalt compass *me* about with songs of deliverance." Not only confess his goodness to others, as to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob; nor only his deliverance of Noah, Daniel, Lot; but also his mercies to and deliverance of thyself, as Paul did: "Christ gave himself for *me*, and died for *me*." Ga 2:20. This will exceedingly whet up thankfulness; whereas only to acknowledge God good in himself, or to others, and not to thyself, will make thee murmur and repine. *Thomas Taylor.*

Ver. 7. *Thou shalt compass me about.* This word imports, that as we are besieged on every side with troubles, so we are compassed with as many comforts and deliverances; as our crosses grow daily, so our consolations are augmented day by day. We are on every side offended and on every side defended; therefore we ought on every side to sound God's praise, as David saith, "Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me." Psalm 103:1. *Archibald Symson.*

Ver. 7. *Songs of deliverance.* In that he will not be content only with thanks, but also will have them conjoined with *songs*, he letteth us see how high all the strings of his heart are bent that he cannot contain himself for the mercies of God to his church, and for his manifold deliverances for the same. Many sing praises to God with an half open mouth; and, albeit, they can sing aloud any filthy ballad in their house, they make the mean, I warrant you, in the church, that scarce can they hear the sound of their own voice. I think they be ashamed to proclaim and show forth God's praises, or they fear to deafen God by their loud singing; but David bent all his forces within and without to praise his God. *Archibald Symson.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 7. Danger felt, refuge known, possession claimed, joy experienced.

Ver. 7. (*first sentence*). —Christ, a hiding place from sin, Satan, and sorrow, in death and at judgment.

Ver. 7. (*second sentence*). —Troubles from which saints shall be preserved.

Ver. 7. (*last sentence*). —The circle of song—who draws the circle, what is the circumference, who is in the centre.

Ver. 7. *Songs of deliverance.* From guilt, hell, death, enemies, doubts, temptations, accidents, plots, etc.

The divine schoolmaster, his pupils, their lessons, their chastisements and their rewards.

PSALM 32:8

EXPOSITION

Ver. 8. *I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go.*

Here the Lord is the speaker, and gives the psalmist an answer to his prayer. Our Saviour is our instructor. The Lord himself deigns to teach his children to walk in the way of integrity, his holy word and the monitions of the Holy Spirit are the directors of the believer's daily conversation. We are not pardoned that we may henceforth live after our own lusts, but that we may be educated in holiness and trained for perfection. A heavenly training is one of the covenant blessings which adoption seals to us: "All thy children shall be taught by the Lord." Practical teaching is the very best of instruction, and they are thrice happy who, although they never sat at the feet of Gamaliel, and are ignorant of Aristotle, and the ethics of the schools, have nevertheless learned to follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.

I will guide thee with mine eye. As servants take their cue from the master's eye, and a nod or a wink is all that they require, so should we obey the slightest hints of our Master, not needing thunderbolts to startle our incorrigible sluggishness, but being controlled by whispers and love touches. The Lord is the great overseer, whose eye in providence overlooks everything. It is well for us to be the sheep of his pasture, following the guidance of his wisdom.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 8. *I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go.*

No other than God himself can undertake so much as is promised in the text. For here is faith, a rectifying of the understanding, *I will instruct thee*, and in the original there is somewhat more than our translation reaches to; it is there, *Intelligere faciam te*, *I will make thee understand*. Man can instruct, God only can make us understand. And then it is *Faciam te*, I will make thee, *thee* understand; the work is the Lord's, the understanding is the man's: for God does not work in man as the devil did in idols and in *pythonissis*, and in *ventriloquis*, in possessed persons, who had no voluntary concurrence with the action of the devil, but were merely passive; God works so in man as that he makes man work too, *faciam te*, I will make thee understand; that that shall be done by me, but in thee; the power that rectifies the act is God's, the act is man's; *Faciam te*, says God, I will make thee, thee, every particular person (for that arises out of this singular and distributive word, *thee*, which threatens no exception, no exclusion), I will make every person to whom I present instruction, capable of that instruction; and if he receive it not, it is only his, and not my fault. And so this first part is an instruction *de credendis*, of such things, as by God's rectifying of our understanding we are bound to believe. And then, in a second part, there follows a more particular instructing, *Docebo*, "*I will teach thee*," and that *in via*, "*in the way*"; "it is not only *de via*, to teach thee which is the way, that thou mayest find it, but *in via*, how to keep the way when thou art in it; he will teach thee, not only *ut gradiaris*, that you may walk in it and not sleep, but *quomodo gradieris*, that you may walk in it and not stray; and so this second part is an institution *de agendis*, of those things which, thine understanding being formerly rectified, and deduced into a belief, thou art bound to do. And then in the last words of the text,

I will guide thee with mine eye, there is a third part, and establishment, a confirmation by an incessant watchfulness in God; he will consider, consult upon us (for so much the original word imports), he will not leave us to contingencies, to fortune; no, nor to his own general providence, by which all creatures are universally in his protection and administration, but he will ponder us, consider us, study us; and that with his eye, which is the sharpest and most sensible organ and instrument, soonest feels if anything be amiss, and so inclines him quickly to rectify us; and so this third part is an instruction *de sperandis*, it hath evermore a relation to the future, to the

constancy and perseverance of God's goodness towards us; to the end, and in the end he will guide us with his eye: except the eye of God can be put out we cannot be put out of his sight and his care. So that, both our freight which we are to take in, that is, what we are to believe concerning God; and the voyage which we are to make, how we are to steer and govern our course, that is, our behaviour and conversation in the household of the faithful; and then the haven to which we must go, that is, our assurance of arriving at the heavenly Jerusalem, are expressed in this chart, in this map, in this instruction, in this text. *John Donne.*

Ver. 8. This threefold repetition, *I will instruct thee, I will teach thee, I will guide thee*, teaches us three properties of a good teacher. First, to make the people understand the way of salvation; secondly, to go before them; thirdly, to watch over them and their ways. *Archibald Symson.*

Ver. 8. *The way.* If we compare this way with all other ways, it will whet our care to enter into and continue in it; for, first, this is the *King's highway*, in which we have promise of protection. Psalm 91:11. Secondly, God's ways are the *cleanest* of all. 2 Samuel 22:31. Thirdly, God's ways are the *rightest* ways; and, being rightest, they be also the *shortest* ways. Ho 14:9. Fourthly, God's ways are most *lightsome and cheerful*. Proverbs 3:17. Therefore, God's ways being the safest, cleanest, rightest, shortest, and lightsomest ways, we must be careful to walk in them. *Condensed from Thomas Taylor.*

Ver. 8. *I will guide thee with mine eye.* We read in natural story (A reviewer remarks upon the bad natural history which we quote. We reply that to alter it would be to spoil the allusions, and we are making a book for men, not for babes. No person in his senses is likely at this day to believe the fables which in former ages passed current for facts.), of some creatures, *Qui solo oculorum aspectu foveant ova* (Pliny), which hatch their eggs only by looking upon them. What cannot the eye of God produce and hatch in us? *Plus est quod probatur aspectu, quam quod sermone* (Ambrose.) A man may seem to commend in words, and yet his countenance shall dispraise. His word infuses good purposes into us; but if God continue his eye upon us it is a further approbation, for he is a God of pure eyes, and will not look upon the wicked. "This land doth the Lord thy God care for, and the eyes of the Lord are always upon it from beginning of the year, even to the end thereof." Deuteronomy 11:12. What a cheerful spring, what a fruitful autumn hath that soul, that hath the eye of the Lord

always upon her! The eye of the Lord upon me makes midnight noon; it makes Capricorn Cancer, and the winter's the summer's solstice; the eye of the Lord sanctifies, nay, more than sanctifies, glorifies all the eclipses of dishonour, makes melancholy cheerfulness, diffidence assurance, and turns the jealousy of the sad soul into infallibility...This guiding us with his eye manifests itself in these two great effects; conversion to him, and union with him. First, his eye works upon ours; his eye turns ours to look upon him. Still it is so expressed with an *Ecce*; "Behold, the eye of the Lord is upon all them that fear him; "his eye calls ours to behold that; and then our eye calls upon his, to observe our cheerful readiness...When, as a well made picture doth always look upon him that looks upon it, this image of God in our soul is turned to him, by his turning to it, it is impossible we should do any foul, any uncomely thing in his presence...The other great effect of his guiding us with his eye, is, that it unites us to himself; when he fixes his eye upon us, and accepts the return of ours to him, then he "keeps" us as the "apple" of his "eye." Zechariah 2:8 ...These are the two great effects of his guiding us by his eye, that first, his eye turns us to himself, and then turns us into himself; first, his eye turns ours to him, and then, that makes us all one with himself, so as that our afflictions shall be put upon his patience, and our dishonours shall be injurious to him; we cannot be safer than by being his; but thus we are not only his, but he; to every persecutor, in every one of our behalf, he shall say, *Cur me?* Why persecutest thou me? And as he is all power, and can defend us, so here he makes himself all eye, which is the most tender part, and most sensible of our pressures. *Condensed from John Donne.*

Ver. 8. *I will guide thee with mine eye.* Margin, *I will counsel thee, mine eye shall be upon thee.* The margin expresses the sense of the Hebrew. The literal *meaning* is, "I will counsel thee; mine eyes shall be upon thee." Deuteronomy Wette: "my eye shall be directed towards thee." The *idea* is that of one who is telling another what way he is to take in order that he may reach a certain place; and he says he will watch him, or will keep an eye upon him; he will not let him go wrong. *Albert Barnes.*

Ver. 8. *Mine eye.* We may consider mercies as the beamings of the Almighty's eye, when the light of his countenance is lifted up upon us; and that man as guided by the eye, whom mercies attract and attach to his Maker. But oh! let us refuse to be guided by the eye, and it will become needful that we be curbed with the hand. If we abuse our mercies, if we forget their Author, and yield him not gratefully the homage of our

affections, we do but oblige him, by his love for our souls, to apportion us disaster and trouble. Complain not, then, that there is so much of sorrow in your lot; but consider rather how much of it you may have wilfully brought upon yourselves. Listen to the voice of God.

I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way in which thou shalt go; I will guide thee with mine eye —mine eye, whose glance gilds all that is beautiful, whose light disperses all darkness, prevents all danger, diffuses all happiness. And why, then, is it that ye are sorely disquieted? why is it that "fear and the pit" are so often upon you; that one blessing after another disappears from your circle; and that God seems to deal with you as with the wayward and unruly, on whom any thing of gentleness would be altogether lost? Ah! if you would account for many mercies that have departed, if you would insure permanence to those that are yet left, examine how deficient you may hitherto have been, and strive to be more diligent for the future, in obeying an admonition which implies that we should be guided by the soft lusters of the eye, if our obduracy did not render indispensable the harsh constraints of the rein. *Henry Melvill.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 8. The power of the eye. *Henry Melvill.* In which he vainly tries to prove infant baptism and episcopacy, which he admits are not expressly taught in Scripture, but declares them to be hinted at as with the divine eye.

PSALM 32:9

EXPOSITION

Ver. 9. *Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding.* Understanding separates man from a brute—let us not act as if we were devoid of it. Men should take counsel and advice, and be ready to run where wisdom points them the way. Alas! we need to be cautioned against stupidity of heart, for we are very apt to fall into it. We who ought to be as the angels, readily become as the beasts.

Whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee. It is much to be deplored that we so often need to be severely chastened before we will obey. We ought to be as a feather in the wind,

wafted readily in the breath of the Holy Spirit, but alas! we lie like motionless logs, and stir not with heaven itself in view. Those cutting bits of affliction show how hard mouthed we are, those bridles of infirmity manifest our headstrong and wilful manners. We should not be treated like mules if there was not so much of the ass about us. If we will be fractious, we must expect to be kept in with a tight rein. Oh, for grace to obey the Lord willingly, lest like the wilful servant, we are beaten with many stripes. Calvin renders the last words, "Lest they kick against thee," a version more probable and more natural, but the passage is confessedly obscure—not however, in its general sense.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 9. *Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule*, etc. How many run mad of this cause, inordinate and furious lusts! The prophet Jeremiah, Jeremiah 2:24, compares Israel to "a swift dromedary, traversing her ways," and to "a wild ass used to the wilderness, that snuffeth up the wind at her pleasure." *Be ye not*, said the psalmographer, "as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle." Men have understanding, not beasts; yet when the frenzy of lust overwhelms their senses, we may take up the word of the prophet and pour it on them: "Every man is a beast by his own knowledge." And therefore "man that is in honour and understandeth not, is like unto beasts that perish" Psalm 49:20. Did not the bridle of God's overruling providence restrain their madness, they would cast off the saddle of reason, and kick nature itself in the face. *Thomas Adams*.

Ver. 9. *Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule*, etc. According to the several natures of these two beasts, the fathers and other expositors have made several interpretations; at least, several allusions. They consider the horse and the mule to admit any rider, any burden, without discretion or difference, without debate or consideration; they never ask whether their rider be noble or base, nor whether their load be gold for the treasure, or roots for the market. And those expositors find the same indifference in an habitual sinner to any kind of sin; whether he sin for pleasure, or sin for profit, or sin but for company, still he sins. They consider in the mule, that one of his parents being more ignoble than the other, he is like the worst, he hath more of the ass than of the horse in him; and they find in us, that all our actions and thoughts taste more of the more ignoble part of the earth than of heaven. St. Hierome thinks fierceness and rashness to be presented

in the horse, and sloth in the mule. And St. Augustine carries these two qualities far; he thinks that in this fierceness of the horse the Gentiles are represented, which ran far from the knowledge of Christianity; and by the laziness of the mule the Jews, who came nothing so fast, as they were invited by their former helps to the embracing thereof. They have gone far in these allusions and applications; and they might have gone as far further as it had pleased them; they have sea room enough, that will compare a beast and a sinner together; and they shall find many times, in the way, the beast the better man. *John Donne.*

Ver. 9. *Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule*, etc. Consider the causes why a broken leg is incurable in a horse, and easily curable in a man. The horse is incapable of counsel to submit himself to the farrier; and therefore in case his leg be set he flings, flounces, and flies out, unjointing it again by his misemployed mettle, counting all binding to be shackles and fetters unto him: whereas a man willingly resigns himself to be ordered by the *surgeon*, preferring rather to be a prisoner for some days, than a cripple all his life. *Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding*; but "let patience have its perfect work in thee." Jas 1:4. *Thomas Fuller.*

Ver. 9. *Bit and bridle* (ἑσρῳAghm) The LXX render the first of these two words by χαλινῶ, the second by κημῶ. The word χαλινός signifies the iron of the common bridle, which is put into the horse's mouth, the bit, or curb. But κημός was something like a muzzle, which was put upon mischievous horses or mules to keep them from biting. Xenophon says, that it allowed them to breathe, but kept the mouth shut, so that they could not bite. Not knowing the term of art for this contrivance, I call it a muzzle. The verb (brq) is a military term, and signifies to advance, as an enemy, to attack. The "coming near," therefore, intended here, is a coming near to do mischief. The admonition given by the psalmist to his companions, is to submit to the instruction and guidance graciously promised from heaven, and not to resemble, in a refractory disposition, those ill conditioned colts which are not to be governed by a simple bridle; but, unless their jaws are confined by a muzzle, will attack the rider as he attempts to mount, or the groom as he leads them to the pasture and the stable. *Samuel Horsley.*

Ver. 9. *Lest they come near unto thee.* The common version of this clause would be suitable enough in speaking of a wild beast, but in reference to a mule or a horse the words can only mean, because they will not follow or

obey thee of their own accord; they must be constantly coerced, in the way both of compulsion and restraint. *J. A. Alexander.*

Ver. 9. "Be ye not like a horse or mule, which have no understanding, and whose ornament is a bridle and bit, to hold them: they do not come unto thee *of themselves*." *Charles Carter, in "The Book of Psalms."* 1869. *A new Translation.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 9. God's bits and bridles, the mules who need them, and reasons why we ought not to be of the number.

Ver. 9. How far in our actions we are better, and how far worse than horses and mules.

PSALM 32:10

EXPOSITION

Ver. 10. *Many sorrows shall be to the wicked.* Like refractory horses and mules, they have many cuts and bruises. Here and hereafter the portion of the wicked is undesirable. Their joys are evanescent, their sorrows are multiplying and ripening. He who sows sin will reap sorrow in heavy sheaves. Sorrows of conscience, of disappointment, of terror, are the sinner's sure heritage in time, and then for ever sorrows of remorse and despair. Let those who boast of present sinful joys, remember the *shall be* of the future and take warning.

But he that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about. Faith is here placed as the opposite of wickedness, since it is the source of virtue. Faith in God is the great charmer of life's cares, and he who possesses it, dwells in an atmosphere of grace, surrounded with the bodyguard of mercies. May it be given to us of the Lord at all times to believe in the mercy of God, even when we cannot see traces of its working, for to the believer, mercy is as all surrounding as omniscience, and every thought and act of God is perfumed with it. The wicked have a hive of wasps around them, *many sorrows*; but we have a swarm of bees storing honey for us.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 10. *He that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about.*

Even as in the midst of the sphere is the centre, from which all lines being drawn do tend towards their circumference: so a good Christian man hath God for his circumference; for whatever he thinketh, speaketh, or doth, it tendeth to Christ, of whom he is compassed round about. *Robert Cawdray.*

Ver. 10. *Mercy shall compass him about.* He shall be *surrounded* with mercy—as one is surrounded by the air, or by the sunlight. He shall find mercy and favour everywhere—at home, abroad; by day, by night; in society, in solitude; in sickness, in health; in life, in death; in time, in eternity. He shall walk amidst mercies; he shall die amidst mercies; he shall live in a better world in the midst of eternal mercies. *Albert Barnes.*

Ver. 10. "Mark that text, "said Richard Adkins to his grandson Abel, who was reading to him the thirty-second Psalm. "Mark that text, 'He that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about.' I read it in my youth and believed it; and now I read it in my old age, thank God, I know it to be true. Oh! it is a blessed thing in the midst of the joys and sorrows of the world, Abel, to trust in the Lord." *The Christian Treasury*, 1848.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 10. The many sorrows which result from sin. The encompassing mercy of the believer's life even in his most troublesome times.

The portion of the wicked, and the lot of the faithful.

PSALM 32:11

EXPOSITION

Ver. 11. *Be glad.* Happiness is not only our privilege, but our duty. Truly we serve a generous God, since he makes it a part of our obedience to be joyful. How sinful are our rebellious murmurings! How natural does it seem that a man blest with forgiveness should be glad! We read of one who died at the foot of the scaffold of overjoy at the receipt of his monarch's pardon; and shall we receive the free pardon of the King of kings, and yet pine in inexcusable sorrow? "*In the Lord.*" Here is the directory by which

gladness is preserved from levity. We are not to be glad in sin, or to find comfort in corn, and wine, and oil, but in our God is to be the garden of our soul's delight. That there is a God and such a God, and that he is ours, ours for ever, our Father and our reconciled Lord, is matter enough for a never ending psalm of rapturous joy.

And rejoice, ye righteous, redouble your rejoicing, peal upon peal. Since God has clothed his choristers in the white garments of holiness, let them not restrain their joyful voices, but sing aloud and shout as those who find great spoil.

And shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart. Our happiness should be demonstrative; chill penury of love often represses the noble flame of joy, and men whisper their praises decorously where a hearty outburst of song would be far more natural. It is to be feared that the church of the present day, through a craving for excessive propriety, is growing too artificial; so that enquirers' cries and believers' shouts would be silenced if they were heard in our assemblies. This may be better than boisterous fanaticism, but there is as much danger in the one direction as the other. For our part, we are touched to the heart by a little sacred excess, and when godly men in their joy over leap the narrow bounds of decorum, we do not, like Michal, Saul's daughter, eye them with a sneering heart. Note how the pardoned are represented as upright, righteous, and without guile; a man may have many faults and yet be saved, but a false heart is everywhere the damning mark. A man of twisting, shifty ways, of a crooked, crafty nature, is not saved, and in all probability never will be; for the ground which brings forth a harvest when grace is sown in it, may be weedy and waste, but our Lord tells us it is *honest* and good ground. Our observation has been that men of double tongues and tricky ways are the least likely of all men to be saved: certainly where grace comes it restores man's mind to its perpendicular, and delivers him from being doubled up with vice, twisted with craft, or bent with dishonesty. Reader, what a delightful Psalm! Have you, in perusing it, been able to claim a lot in the goodly land? If so, publish to others the way of salvation.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 11. *Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous: and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart*. This exhortation containeth three parts. First, what he doth exhort unto, *to rejoice*. Secondly, whom, the *righteous*,

and *upright men*. Thirdly, the limitation, *in the Lord*. He exhorteth them three times—be glad, rejoice, and be joyful; and as he made mention of a threefold blessing, so doth he of a threefold joy. Wherein we have two things necessary to be observed. First the dulness of our natures, who as slow horses need many spurs and provocations to spiritual things, whereas we are naturally overmuch bent to carnal things, that we need no incitations thereunto. But by the contrary in spiritual things, we are cast into a deep sleep, who cannot be awakened at the first cry; but as men after drink have need to be roused often, that they may behold the light; so men drunken with the pleasures of sin, as Nazianzen saith, must be wakened by divers exhortations; as this same prophet in the subsequent Psalm redoubles his exhortations for the same effect. And the apostle to the Philippians saith: "Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, rejoice," Philippians 4:4. Next, perceive that this exhortation grows: for the word *be glad*, properly in the original signifieth an inward and hearty joy, by the presence or hope at least of a thing desirable or good. The word *rejoice*, to express our joy by some outward gesture, sometimes used for dancing, as, "The hills skip for gladness." Psalm 65:12. The word *be joyful*, to cry for gladness, as the dumb man's tongue shall sing. This gradation teacheth us, that this is the nature of spiritual joy—that it still increaseth in us by certain degrees, until it come to the perfection of all joy, which is signified by the last word, importing, as it were, a triumph and shouting after victory. So that they are truly penitent who have overcome sin and Satan in their spiritual combat, and have triumphed over them as vanquished enemies.
Archibald Symson.

Ver. 11. *Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous.* There's never a joyful man alive but a believer. Will you say that men take pleasure in their sins? Why, that is the *Devil's* joy; or that they rejoice in full barns and bags? That is the *fool's* joy; or that they rejoice in wine, that is, all dainties that gratify the palate? That is a *Bedlam* joy. Read and believe Ecclesiastes 2:3; indeed, from the first verse to the eleventh, the whole book, but especially that chapter, is the most divine philosophy that ever was or will be. *Christopher Fowler* (1610-1678), in "*Morning Exercises*."

Ver. 11. *Shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart.* When the poet Carpani enquired of his friend Haydn, how it happened that his church music was so cheerful, the great composer made a most beautiful reply. "I cannot," he said, "make it otherwise, I write according to the thoughts I feel: when I think upon God, my heart is so full of joy that the notes dance,

and leap, as it were, from my pen: and, since God has given me a cheerful heart, it will be pardoned me that I serve him with a cheerful spirit." *John Whitecross's Anecdotes.*

Ver. 11. Here the sensual man, that haply would catch hold when it is said, *Rejoice*, by and by, when it is added, *in the Lord*, will let his hold go. But they that, by reason of the billows and waves of the troublesome sea of this world, cannot brook the speech when it is said, *Rejoice*, are to lay sure hold fast upon it when it is added, *Rejoice in the Lord.* *Henry Airay.*

Ver. 11. —

*O sing unto this glittering glorious King.
O praise his name let every living thing;
Let heart and voice, like bells of silver, ring
The comfort that this day doth bring.*

Kinwellmersh, quoted by A. Moody Stuart.

Ver. 11. It is storied by the famous Tully concerning Syracuse, that there is no day throughout the whole year so stormy and tempestuous in which the inhabitants have not some glimpse and sight of the sun. The like observation may be truly made on all those Psalms of David in which his complaints are most multiplied, his fears and pressures most insisted on; that there is not any of them so totally overcast with the black darkness of despair, but that we may easily discern them to be here and there intervened and streaked with some comfortable expressions of his faith and hope in God. If in the beginning of a Psalm we find him restless in his motions, like Noah's dove upon the overspreading waters; yet in the close we shall see him like the same dove returning with an olive branch in its mouth, and fixing upon the ark. If we find him in another Psalm staggering in the midst of his distresses, through the prevalence of carnal fears, we may also in it behold him recovering himself again, by fetching arguments from faith, whose topics are of a higher elevation than to be shaken by the timorous suggestions that arise from the flesh. If at another time we behold him like to a boat on drift, that is, tossed and beaten by the inconstant winds and fierce waves; yet we shall still find all his rollings and agitations to be such as carry him towards the standing shore, where he rides at last both in peace and safety. *William Spurstowe.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 11. A believer's gladness. *Its spring*, "in the Lord; " *its vivacity*, "shout; "*its propriety*, it is commanded; *its beautiful results and its abundant reasons*.

Ver. 11. *Upright in heart*, an instructive description. Not horizontal or grovelling, nor bent, nor inclined, but vertical in heart.

PSALM 33

PSALM 33:1

Title. This song of praise bears no title or indication of authorship; to teach us, says Dickson, "to look upon Holy Scripture as altogether inspired of God, and not put price upon it for the writers thereof."

Subject and Division. The praise of Jehovah is the subject of this sacred song. The righteous are exhorted to praise him, Psalm 33:1-3; because of the excellency of his character, Psalm 33:4-5; and his majesty in creation, Psalm 33:6-7. Men are bidden to fear before Jehovah because his purposes are accomplished in providence, Psalm 33:8-11. His people are proclaimed blessed, Psalm 33:12. The omniscience and omnipotence of God, and his care for his people are celebrated, in opposition to the weakness of an arm of flesh, Psalm 33:13-19; and the Psalm concludes with a fervent expression of confidence, Psalm 33:20-21, and an earnest prayer, Psalm 33:22.

EXPOSITION

Ver. 1. *Rejoice in the Lord.* Joy is the soul of praise. To delight ourselves in God is most truly to extol him, even if we let no notes of song proceed from our lips. That God is, and that he is such a God, and our God, ours for ever and ever, should wake within us an unceasing and overflowing joy. To rejoice in temporal comforts is dangerous, to rejoice in self is foolish, to rejoice in sin is fatal, but to rejoice in God is heavenly. He who would have a double heaven must begin below to rejoice like those above.

O ye righteous. This is peculiarly your duty, your obligations are greater, and your spiritual nature more adapted to the work, be ye then first in the glad service. Even the righteous are not always glad, and have need to be stirred up to enjoy their privileges.

For praise is comely for the upright. God has an eye to things which are becoming. When saints wear their choral robes, they look fair in the Lord's sight. A harp suits a blood washed hand. No jewel more ornamental to a

holy face than sacred praise. Praise is not comely from unpardoned professional singers; it is like a jewel of gold in a swine's snout. Crooked hearts make crooked music, but the upright are the Lord's delight. Praise is the dress of saints in heaven, it is meet that they should fit it on below.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Whole Psalm. A thanksgiving of the church triumphant in the latter ages, for her final deliverance, by the overthrow of Antichrist and his armies.
Samuel Horsley.

Whole Psalm. Let us follow the holy man a moment in his meditation. His Psalm is not composed in scholastic form, in which the author confines himself to fixed rules; and, scrupulously following a philosophic method, lays down principals, and infers consequences. However, he establishes principles, the most proper to give us sublime ideas of the Creator; and he speaks with more precision of the works and attributes of God than the greatest philosophers have spoken of them.

How absurdly have the philosophers treated of *the origin of the world!* How few of them have reasoned conclusively on this important subject! Our prophet solves the important question by one single principle; and, what is more remarkable, this principle, which is nobly expressed, carries the clearest evidence with it. The principle is this: "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth," Psalm 33:6. This is the most rational account that was ever given of the creation of the world. The world is the work of a self efficient will, and it is this principle alone that can account for its creation. The most simple appearances in nature are sufficient to lead us to this principle. Either my will is self efficient, or there is some other being whose will is self efficient. What I say of myself, I say of my parents; and what I affirm of my parents, I affirm of my more remote ancestors, and of all the finite creatures from whom they derive their existence. Most certainly either finite beings have a self efficient will, which it is impossible to suppose, for a finite creature with a self efficient will is a contradiction: either, I say, a finite creature has a self efficient will, or there is a First Cause who has a self efficient will; and that there is such a Being is the principle of the psalmist; "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth."

If philosophers have reasoned inconclusively on the origin of the world, they have spoken of *its government* with equal uncertainty. The psalmist determines this question with a great facility, by a single principle, which results from the former, and which, like the former, carries its evidence with it. "The Lord looketh from heaven; he considereth all the works of all the inhabitants of the earth, " Psalm 33:13-14. This is the doctrine of providence. And on what is the doctrine of providence founded? On this principle: God "fashioneth their hearts alike, "Psalm 33:15. Attend a moment to the evidence of this reasoning, my brethren. The doctrine of providence expressed in these words, "God considereth the works of the inhabitants of the earth, "is a necessary consequence of his principle, "God fashioneth their hearts alike; "and this principle is a necessary consequence of that which the psalmist had before laid down to account for the origin of the world. Yes, from that doctrine of God the Creator of men, follows that of God the inspector, the director, rewarder, and the punisher of their actions. One of the most specious objections that has ever been opposed to the doctrine of providence, is a contrast between the grandeur of God and the meanness of men. How can such an insignificant creature as man be the object of the care and attention of such a magnificent being as God? No objection can be more specious, or, in appearance, more invincible. The distance between the meanest insect and the mightiest monarch, who treads and crushes reptiles to death without the least regard to them, is a very imperfect image of the distance between God and man. That which proves that it would be beneath the dignity of a monarch to observe the motions of ants, or worms, to interest himself in their actions, to punish, or to reward them, seems to demonstrate that God would degrade himself were he to observe, to direct, to punish, to reward mankind, who are infinitely inferior to him. But one fact is sufficient to answer this specious objection: that is, God has created mankind. Does God degrade himself more by governing than by creating mankind? Who can persuade himself that a wise Being has given to intelligent creatures faculties capable of obtaining knowledge and virtue, without willing that they should endeavour to acquire knowledge and virtue? Or who can imagine, that a wise Being, who wills that his intelligent creatures should acquire knowledge and virtue, will not punish them if they neglect those acquisitions; and will not show by the distribution of his benefits that he approves their endeavours to obtain them?

Unenlightened philosophers have treated of *the attributes of God* with as much abstruseness as they have written of his works. The moral attributes of God, as they are called in the schools, were mysteries which they could not unfold. These may be reduced to two classes; attributes of *goodness*, and attributes of *justice*. Philosophers, who had admitted these, have usually taken that for granted which they ought to have proved. They collected together in their minds all perfections; they reduced them all to one object which they denominated *a perfect being*: and supposing, without proving, that a perfect being existed, they attributed to him, without proof, everything that they considered as a perfection. The psalmist shows by a surer way that there is a God supremely just and supremely good. It is necessary, in order to convince a rational being of the justice and goodness of God, to follow such a method as that which we follow to prove his existence. When we would prove the existence of God, we say, there are creatures, therefore there is a Creator. In like manner, when we would prove that a creature is a just and a good being, we say, there are qualities of goodness and justice in creatures, therefore he, from whom these creatures derive their existence, is a being just and good. Now, this is the reasoning of the psalmist in this Psalm: "The Lord loveth righteousness and judgment: the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord" Psalm 33:5; that is to say, it is impossible to consider the work of the Creator, without receiving evidence of his goodness. And the works of nature which demonstrate the goodness of God, prove his justice also; for God has created us with such dispositions, that we cannot enjoy the gifts of his goodness without obeying the laws of his righteousness. The happiness of an individual who procures a pleasure by disobeying the laws of equity, is a violent happiness, which cannot be of long duration; and the prosperity of public bodies, when it is founded in iniquity, is an edifice which, with its basis, will be presently sunk and gone.

But what we would particularly remark is, that *the excellent principle of the psalmist concerning God are not mere speculations*; but truths from which he derives practical inferences; and he aims to extend their influence beyond private persons, even to legislators and conquerors. One would think, considering the conduct of mankind, that the consequences, which are drawn from the doctrines of which we have been speaking, belong to none but to the dregs of the people; that lawgivers and conquerors have a plan of morality peculiar to themselves, and are above the rules to which other men must submit. Our prophet had other notions. What are his

maxims of policy? They are all included in these words: "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord; and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance," Psalm 33:12. What are his military maxims? They are all included in these words: "There is no king saved by the multitude of an host: a mighty man is not delivered by much strength. An horse is a vain thing for safety: neither shall he deliver any by his great strength," Psalm 33:16-17. Who proposes these maxims? A hermit, who never appeared on the theatre of the world? or a man destitute of the talents necessary to shine there? No: one of the wisest of kings; one of the most bold and able generals: a man whom God has self elected to govern his chosen people, and to command those armies which fought the most obstinate battles, and gained the most complete victories. Were I to proceed in explaining the system of the psalmist, I might prove, that as he had a right to infer the doctrine of providence from the works of nature, and that of the moral attributes of God from the works of creation; so from the doctrines of the moral attributes of God, of providence, and of the works of creation, he had a right to conclude, that no conquerors or lawgivers could be truly happy but those who acted agreeably to the laws of the just and good Supreme. *James Saurin.*

Ver. 1. *Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous. Exult, ye righteous, in Jehovah!* The Hebrew verb, according to the etymologists, originally means to dance for joy, and is therefore a very strong expression for the liveliest exultation. *J. A. Alexander.*

Ver. 1. *Rejoice, O ye righteous:* not in yourselves, for that is not safe, but *in the Lord.* *Augustine.*

Ver. 1. *Praise is comely for the upright.* Praise is not comely for any but the godly. A profane man stuck with God's praise is like a dunghill stuck with flowers. Praise in the mouth of a sinner is like an oracle in the mouth of a fool: how uncomely is it for him to praise God, whose whole life is a dishonouring of God? It is as indecent for a wicked man to praise God, who goes on in sinful practices, as it is for an usurer to talk of living by faith, or for the devil to quote Scripture. The godly are only fit to be choristers in God's praise; it is called, "the garment of praise." Isaiah 61:3. This garment sits handsome only on a saint's back. *Thomas Watson.*

Ver. 1. This Psalm is coupled with the foregoing one by the *catchword* with which it opens, which is a repetition of the exhortation with which the preceding ends,

Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous; "Shout for joy, all ye upright."
Christopher Wordsworth.

Ver. 1. He pleaseth God whom God pleaseth. *Augustine.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Whole Psalm This Psalm is *eucharistic*: the contents are: --

1. *An exhortation to praise God* Psalm 33:1-3.
2. *The arguments to enforce the duty* Psalm 33:4-19.
3. *The confidence of God's people in his name, their happiness, and petition* Psalm 33:20-22. *Adam Clarke.*

Ver. 1. Rejoicing--the soul of praise; the Lord--a wellspring of joy.
 Character--indispensable to true enjoyment.

Ver. 1. (*last clause*). *Praise comely.* What? Vocal, meditative, habitual praise. Why? It is comely as wings to an angel, we mount with it; as flowers to a tree, it is our fruit; as a robe to a priest, it is our office; as long hair to a woman, it is our beauty; as a crown to a king, it is our highest honour. When? Evermore, but chiefly amid blasphemy, persecution, sickness, poverty, death. Whom? Not from the ungodly, hypocritical, or thoughtless. To be without praise is to miss our comeliest adornment.

PSALM 33:2

EXPOSITION

Ver. 2. *Praise the Lord with harp.* Men need all the help they can get to stir them up to praise. This is the lesson to be gathered from the use of musical instruments under the old dispensation. Israel was at school, and used childish things to help her to learn; but in these days, when Jesus gives us spiritual manhood, we can make melody without strings and pipes. We who do not believe these things to be expedient in worship, lest they should mar its simplicity, do not affirm them to be unlawful, and if any George Herbert or Martin Luther can worship God better by the aid of well tuned instruments, who shall gainsay their right? We do not need them, they would hinder than help our praise, but if others are otherwise minded, are they not living in gospel liberty?

Sing unto him. This is the sweetest and best of music. No instrument like the human voice. As a help to singing the instrument is alone to be tolerated, for keys and strings do not praise the Lord.

With the psaltery and an instrument of ten strings. The Lord must have a full octave, for all notes are his, and all music belongs to him. Where several pieces of music are mentioned, we are taught to praise God with all the powers which we possess.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 2. *Praise the Lord with harp: sing unto him with the psaltery and an instrument of ten strings.* Here we have the first mention of musical instruments in the Psalms. It is to be observed that the early fathers almost with one accord protest against their use in churches; as they are forbidden in the Eastern church to this day, where yet, by the consent of all, the singing is infinitely superior to anything that can be heard in the West. *J. M. Neale.*

Ver. 2. *Harp; Psaltery,* etc. Our church does not use musical instruments, as harps and psalteries, to praise God withal, that she may not seem to Judaize. *Thomas Aquinas.* It was only permitted to the Jews, as sacrifice was, for the heaviness and grossness of their souls. God condescended to their weakness, because they were lately drawn off from idols; but now instead of organs, we may use our own bodies to praise him withal. *Chrysostom.* The use of singing with instrumental music was not received in the Christian churches as it was among the Jews in their infant state, but only the use of plain song. *Justin Martyr.*

Ver. 2. *(last clause).* It is said that David praised God upon *an instrument of ten strings;* and he would never have told how many strings there were, but that without doubt he made use of them all. God hath given all of us bodies, as it were, instruments of many strings; and can we think it music good enough to strike but one string, to call upon him with our tongues only? No, no; when the still sound of the heart by holy thoughts, and the shrill sound of the tongue by holy words, and the loud sound of the hands by pious works, do all join together, that is God's concert, and the only music wherewith he is affected. *Sir Richard Baker.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 2. Instrumental music. Is it lawful? Is it expedient? If so, its uses, limits, and laws. A sermon to improve congregational music.

PSALM 33:3

EXPOSITION

Ver. 3. *Sing unto him a new song.* All songs of praise should be *unto him*. Singing for singing's sake is nothing worth; we must carry our tribute to the King, and not cast it to the winds. Do most worshippers mind this? Our faculties should be exercised when we are magnifying the Lord, so as not to run in an old groove without thought; we ought to make every hymn of praise a new song. To keep up the freshness of worship is a great thing, and in private it is indispensable. Let us not present old worn out praise, but put life, and soul, and heart, into every song, since we have new mercies every day, and see new beauties in the work and word of our Lord.

Play skilfully. It is wretched to hear God praised in a slovenly manner. He deserves the best that we have. Every Christian should endeavour to sing according to the rules of the art, so that he may keep time and tune with the congregation. The sweetest tunes and the sweetest voices, with the sweetest words, are all too little for the Lord our God; let us not offer him limping rhymes, set to harsh tunes, and growled out by discordant voices.

With a loud noise. Heartiness should be conspicuous in divine worship. Well bred whispers are disreputable here. It is not that the Lord cannot hear us, but that it is natural for great exultation to express itself in the loudest manner. Men shout at the sight of their kings: shall we offer no loud hosannahs to the Son of David?

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 3. *Sing unto him.*

I. Singing is the music of *nature*. The Scriptures tell us the mountains sing Isaiah 55:12; the valleys sing Psalm 65:13; the trees of the wood sing 1 Chronicles 16:33; nay, the air is the birds' music room, they chant their musical notes.

II. Singing is the music of *ordinances*. Augustine reports of himself, that when he came to Milan and heard the people sing, he wept for joy in the church to hear that pleasing melody. And Beza confesses that at his first entrance into the congregation, and hearing them sing the ninety-first Psalm, he felt himself exceedingly comforted, and did retain the sound of it afterwards upon his heart. The Rabbins tell us that the Jews, after the feast of the Passover was celebrated, sang the hundred and eleventh and five following Psalms; and our Saviour and his apostles sang a hymn immediately after the blessed Supper. Matthew 26:30.

III. Singing is the music of *saints*.

- (1.) They have performed this duty in their greatest *numbers*. Psalm 149:1-2.
- (2.) In their greatest *straits*. Isaiah 26:19.
- (3.) In their greatest *flight*. Isaiah 42:10-11.
- (4.) In their greatest *deliverances*.
- (5.) In their greatest *plenties*. Isaiah 65:14.

In all these changes singing hath been their stated duty and delight. And indeed it is meet that the saints and servants of God should sing forth their joys and praises to the Lord Almighty: every attribute of him can set both their song and their tune.

IV. Singing is the music of *angels*. Job tells us "the morning stars sang together," Job 38:7. Now these "morning stars," as Pineda tells us, are the angels; to which the Chaldee paraphrase accords, naming these morning stars, *aciem angelorum*, an host of angels. Nay, when this heavenly host was sent to proclaim the birth of our dearest Jesus, they deliver their message in this raised way of duty. Luke 2:13. They were (*αἰνοῦντες*), delivering their messages in a laudatory singing, the whole company of angels making a musical quire. Nay, in heaven there is the angels' joyous music; they there sing hallelujahs to the Most High, and to the Lamb who sits upon the throne, Revelation 5:11.

V. Singing is the music of *heaven*; the glorious saints and angels accent their praises this way, and make one harmony in their state of blessedness; and this is the music of the Bride chamber. The saints who were tuning

here their Psalms, are now singing their hallelujahs in a louder strain, and articulating their joys, which here they could not express to their perfect satisfaction; here they laboured with drowsy hearts, and faltering tongues; but in glory these impediments are removed, and nothing is left to jar their joyful celebration. *John Wells, in "Morning Exercises."*

Ver. 3. *A new song.* That is to say, a *new* and recent composition on account of recent benefits; or constantly new songs, song succeeding song as daily new material for divine praise offers itself to the attentive student of the works of God. Or *new*, that is, always fresh and full of life, and renewed as new occasions offer themselves: as Job says, "My glory was fresh in me, and my bow was renewed in my hand." Or *new*, *i.e.*, not common but rare and exquisite; as the new name in Revelation 2:17; the new commandment; John 13:34. Or this respects the gospel state, wherein is a new covenant Hebrews 8:8, a new Jerusalem Revelation 21:2, a new man Ephesians 2:15, and all things new, 2 Corinthians 5:17. *New*, on account of its matter being unknown of men: as in Revelation 14:3, "They sung a new song, "and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth. *New* may be used in opposition to old. The song of Moses is old, and of the Lamb is new. *Martin Geir (1614-1681), in "Poli Synopsis Criticorum."*

Ver. 3. *Sing unto him a new song.* Put off oldness: ye know the new song. A new man, a New Testament, a new song. A new song belongeth not to men that are old; none learn that but new men, renewed through grace from oldness, and belonging now to the New Testament, which is the kingdom of heaven. *Augustine.*

Ver. 3. *A new song;* namely, sung with such fervency of affections as novelties usually bring with them; or, always new, seeing God's graces never wax old; or, sung by the motion of this new spirit of grace, which doth not so much look after the old benefits of the creation as after the new benefit of the redemption in Christ, which renews all things. Psalm 40:3 96:1 Revelation 5:9 14:3. *John Diodati.*

Ver. 3. *Sing unto him a new song.* It is a melancholy proof of the decline of the church, when the exhortation to sing a new song is no longer attended to: in such a case, there is need of the greatest care to prevent the old ones falling into oblivion. *E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Ver. 3. *Play skilfully.* It is not an easy matter to praise God aright; it must be done *corde, ore, spere*, with the very best of the best. *John Trapp.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 3. (*first clause*). The duty of maintaining the freshness of our devotions.

Freshness, skill, and heartiness, to be combined in our congregational psalmody.

PSALM 33:4

EXPOSITION

Ver. 4. *For the word of the Lord is right.* His ordinances both natural, moral, and spiritual, are right, and especially his incarnate Word, who is the Lord our righteousness. Whatever God has ordained must be good, and just, and excellent. There are no anomalies in God's universe, except what sin has made; his word of command made all things good. When we look at his word of promise, and remember its faithfulness, what reasons have we for joy and thankfulness!

And all his works are done in truth. His work is the outflow of his word, and it is true to it. He neither doth nor saith anything ill; in deed and speech he agrees with himself and the purest truth. There is no lie in God's word, and no sham in his works; in creation, providence, and revelation, unalloyed truth abounds. To act truth as well as to utter it is divine. Let not children of God ever yield their principles in practice any more than in heart. What a God we serve! The more we know of him, the more our better natures approve his surpassing excellence; even his afflicting works are according to his truthful word.

*"Why should I complain of want of distress,
Afflictions or pain? he told me no less;
The heirs of salvation, I know from his word,
Through much tribulation must follow their Lord."*

God writes with a pen that never blots, speaks with a tongue that never slips, acts with a hand which never fails. Bless his name.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 4. *The word of the Lord is right.* His word of promise given to the church. The divine revelation to all setting forth what is to be believed, hoped for, and done. The decrees of God and his penal judgments. The whole counsel and determination of God in the creation and government of the world. *Is right*, without defect or error. The word *right* is opposed to *tortuous*; it means true or certain. *John de Pineda* (1577-1637); *D.H. Mollerus* (1639), and others, in *Synopsis*.

Ver. 4. *All his works are done in truth.*

*Truth is in each flower
As well as in the most solemn things of God:
Truth is the voice of nature and of time--
Truth is the startling monitor within us--

Nought is without it, it comes from the stars,
The golden sun, and every breeze that blows--
Truth, it is God! and God is everywhere!
William Thomas Bacon.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 4. God's word and works, their rightness, and agreement, and our view of both.

Ver. 4. (*first clause*). The word doctrinal, preceptive, historical, prophetic, promissory, and experimental, always right, *i.e.*, free from error or evil.

Ver. 4. (*second clause*). God's work of creation, providence, and grace, always in conformity with truth. His hatred of everything like a sham.

Ver. 4-5. A fourfold argument for praise, from the *truth*, the *faithfulness*, the *justice*, and *goodness* of God:

1. For the word of the Lord is right.
2. All his works are done in truth.
3. He loveth righteousness and judgment.
4. The earth is full of his goodness. — *Adam Clarke*.

PSALM 33:5

EXPOSITION

Ver. 5. *He loveth righteousness and judgment.* The theory and practice of right he intensely loves. He doth not only approve the true and the just, but his inmost soul delights therein. The character of God is a sea, every drop of which should become a wellhead of praise for his people. The righteousness of Jesus is peculiarly dear to the Father, and for its sake he takes pleasure in those to whom it is imputed. Sin, on the other hand, is infinitely abhorrent to the Lord, and woe unto those who die in it; if he sees no righteousness in them, he will deal righteously with them, and judgment stern and final will be the result.

The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord. Come hither, astronomers, geologists, naturalists, botanists, chemists, miners, yea, all of you who study the works of God, for all your truthful stories confirm this declaration. From the midge in the sunbeam to leviathan in the ocean all creatures own the bounty of the Creator. Even the pathless desert blazes with some undiscovered mercy, and the caverns of ocean conceal the treasures of love. Earth might have been as full of terror as of grace, but instead thereof it teems and overflows with kindness. He who cannot see it, and yet lives in it as the fish lives in the water, deserves to die. If earth be full of mercy, what must heaven be where goodness concentrates its beams?

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 5. *The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord.* If we reflect on the prodigious number of human beings who constantly receive their food, raiment, and every pleasure they enjoy, from their mother earth, we shall be convinced of the great liberality with which nature dispenses her gifts; and not only human beings, but an innumerable quantity of living creatures besides--inhabitants of the air, the waters, and the earth--are daily indebted to nature for their support. Those animals which are under our care are still indebted to the earth for their subsistence; for the grass, which nature spontaneously produces, is their chief food. The whole race of fishes, except those which men feed for their amusement, subsist without any of their aid. The species of birds which is perhaps the most despised and most

numerous, is the sparrow. What they require for their support is incredible, but nature takes care to feed them; they are however but the smallest part of her children. So great is the quantity of insects, that ages may pass before even their species and classes can be known. How many and how diversified the sorts of flies that play in the air! The blood taken from us by the gnat is very accidental food for them; and we may suppose that where there is one gnat that lives upon it, there are millions that have never tasted human blood, or that of any other animal. On what can all these creatures subsist? Perhaps every handful of earth contains living insects; they are discovered in every drop of water; their multiplying and means of support are incomprehensible. While nature is thus prolific in children, she is also fruitful in means for their subsistence; or, rather, it is the God of nature who has poured into her bosom this inexhaustible store of riches. He provides each creature with its food and dwelling. For them he causes the grass and other herbs to grow, leaving each to select its proper food. And, however mean many creatures may appear to us, he feeds and assists them all. O Almighty God, how manifest is thy greatness! Thou dost what the united efforts of all mankind would fail to accomplish. Thou hast given life, and breath, and being to all creatures that live in the air, the waters, or the earth. Surely thou wilt do for thy believing people what thou dost for animals and insects! When we are filled with doubts and fears, let us consider the ravens whom the Lord feeds when they cry. Let them and all creatures beside, which man takes no care of, teach us the art of contentment. The great Author of nature knows all our wants. Let us cast our every care on him, for he careth for us; and may we come boldly to the throne of grace in faith and sincerity, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help us in every time of need. *Christopher Christian Sturm.*

Ver. 5. *The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord.* To hear its worthless inhabitants complain, one would think that God dispensed *evil*, not *good*. To examine the operation of his hand, everything is marked with mercy, and there is no place where his goodness does not appear. The *overflowing kindness* of God fills the earth. Even the iniquities of men are rarely a bar to his goodness: he causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends his rain upon the *just* and the *unjust*. *Adam Clarke.*

Ver. 5. *The goodness of the Lord.* In discoursing on the glorious perfections of God, his *goodness* must by no means be omitted; for though all his perfections are his glory, yet this is particularly so called, for when Moses, the man of God, earnestly desired to behold a grand display of the

glory of Jehovah, the Lord said in answer to his petition, "I will make all my *goodness* pass before thee; "thus intimating that he himself accounted his goodness to be his glory Exodus 33:19 34:7; and it includes that mercy, grace, longsuffering, and truth, which are afterwards mentioned. When it relieves the miserable, it is *mercy*; when it bestows favours on the worthless, it is *grace*; when it bears with provoking rebels, it is *long suffering*; when it confers promised blessings, it is *truth*; when it supplies indigent beings, it is *bounty*. *The goodness of God* is a very comprehensive term; it includes all the forms of his kindness shown to men; whether considered as creatures, as sinners, or as believers. *George Burder*, 1838

Ver. 5. *The goodness of the Lord.* He might, if he had pleased, have made everything we tasted bitter, everything we saw loathsome, everything we touched a sting, every smell a stench, every sound a discord. *William Paley, D.D.*, 1743-1805.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 4-5. A fourfold argument for praise, from the *truth*, the *faithfulness* the *justice*, and *goodness* of God:

1. For the word of the Lord is right.
2. All his works are done in truth.
3. He loveth righteousness and judgment.
4. The earth is full of his goodness. *Adam Clarke*.

Ver. 5. Justice and goodness equally conspicuous in the divine action.

Ver. 5. (*last clause*). A matchless theme for an observant eye and an eloquent tongue.

PSALM 33:6

EXPOSITION

Ver. 6. *By the word of the Lord were the heavens made.* The angelic heavens, the sidereal heavens, and the firmament or terrestrial heavens, were all made to start into existence by a word; what if we say by *the*

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINI SAYINGS

Ver. 6. *By the word of the Lord.* May be understood of the hypostatic Word, as John teaches us. John 1:1. (*John Cocceius*), 1603-1669. This is an illustration of the old saying, that while Grotius finds Christ nowhere, Cocceius finds Christ everywhere. *C. H. S.*

Ver. 6. Let any make a world, and he shall be a God, saith Augustine; hence is it that the church maketh it the very first article of her Creed to believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth. *John Weemse.*

Ver. 6,9. It is all one with God to do as to say, to perform as to promise; it is as easy, he is as willing, as able, to do the one as the other. There is no such distance betwixt God's saying and doing, as amongst men. His saying is doing:

He spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast. By the word of the Lord were the heavens made. "The worlds were framed by the word of God." Hebrews 11:3. There is omnipotence in his word, both of command and promise; therefore called, "The word of his power." Hebrews 1:3. One word of his can do more in an instant than the united powers of heaven and earth can do in eternity. This consideration removes at once the chief discouragements that hinder the lively actings of faith; for what is it that weakens our confidence of the promises' performance, but because we look upon the accomplishment as uncertain or difficult, or future and afar off! Now from hence faith may conclude the performance is certain, easy, and present. *David Clarkson.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 6. The power of the Word and the Spirit in the old and new creations.

PSALM 33:7

EXPOSITION

Ver. 7. *He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap.* The waters were once scattered like corn strewn upon a threshing floor: they are now collected in one spot as an heap. Who else could have gathered them into one channel but their great Lord, at whose bidding the waters fled away? The miracle of the Red Sea is repeated in nature day by day, for the sea which now invades the shore under the impulse of sun and moon, would soon devour the land if bounds were not maintained by the divine decree.

He layeth up the depth in storehouses. The depths of the main are God's great cellars and storerooms for the tempestuous element. Vast reservoirs of water are secreted in the bowels of the earth, from which issue our springs and wells of water. What a merciful provision for a pressing need? May not the text also refer to the clouds, and the magazines of hail, and snow, and rain, those treasures of merciful wealth for the fields of earth? These aqueous masses are not piled away as in lumber rooms, but in storehouses for future beneficial use. Abundant tenderness is seen in the foresight of our heavenly Joseph, whose granaries are already filled against earth's time of need. These stores might have been, as once they were, the ammunition of vengeance, they are now a part of the commissariat of mercy.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 7. He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap, etc. "God called the gathering together of the waters, seas." Genesis 1:10. This unstable element must, like all other elements, be put under law, and confined within bounds, that there might be a habitable earth for man and all the creatures around him. Thus the psalmist sings,

He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap: he layeth up the depth in storehouses. The boundary was such as to cause his servants to wonder. They looked from the shore, as we do, and under the influence of a well known law, the billows in their heaving swells, seemed as if they would, as if they did, touch the sky itself; and as if they were so much higher than the shore, that they were in danger of leaving their basin and stretching over the land. Just such an impression, we with all our science, popularly hold. The prophets thus looked as we do, and under the same kind of feeling. How wonderful, they thought, is all this! A low barrier of sand is made Jehovah's agent for bounding the deep. "The Lord hath placed the sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it: and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it." Jeremiah 5:22. *John Duns, D.D., in "Science and Christian Thought," 1868.*

Ver. 7. *The waters of the sea.* Of all objects that I have ever seen, there is none which affect my imagination so much as the sea or ocean. I cannot see the heavings of this prodigious bulk of waters, even in a calm, without a very pleasing astonishment; but when it is worked up in a tempest, so

that the horizon on every side is nothing but foaming billows and floating mountains, it is impossible to describe the agreeable horror that rises from such a prospect. A troubled ocean, to a man who sails upon it, is, I think, the biggest object that he can see in motion, and consequently gives his imagination one of the highest kinds of pleasure that can arise from greatness. I must confess it is impossible for me to survey this world of fluid matter without thinking on the hand that first poured it out, and made a proper channel for its reception. Such an object naturally raises in my thoughts the idea of an Almighty Being, and convinces me of his existence as much as a metaphysical demonstration. The imagination prompts the understanding, and by the greatness of the sensible object, produces in it the idea of a Being who is neither circumscribed by time nor space.
Spectator.

Ver. 7. *As a heap.* Dealing with fluids as if they were solids, with an obvious allusion to Exodus 15:8. *Depths*, masses of water. The main point of the description is God's handling these vast liquid masses, as men handle solid substances of moderate dimensions, heaping the waves up, and storing them away, as men might do with stones or wheat. *J. A. Alexander.*

Ver. 7. The vast masses of waters which had hitherto covered the entire surface of the globe, was on the third day of creation brought within narrower compass, and large tracts of the submerged earth reclaimed and rendered habitable ground...The waters were, *for the most part*, congregated together in one vast body, instead of being universally diffused over the face of the earth. This is the state of things which we now contemplate; the various great seas and oceans constituting in fact but one body of water called in different regions by different names, as the Atlantic, Pacific, Indian, Southern, etc., oceans. *George Bush*, on Genesis 1:9.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 7. God's control of destructive and reconstructive agencies.

Ver. 7. The storehouses of the Great Husbandman.

PSALM 33:8

EXPOSITION

Ver. 8. *Let all the earth fear the Lord.* Not only Jews, but Gentiles. The psalmist was not a man blinded by national prejudice, he did not desire to restrict the worship of Jehovah to the seed of Abraham. He looks for homage even to far off nations. If they are not well enough instructed to be able to praise, at least let them fear. There is an inferior kind of worship in the trembling which involuntarily admits the boundless power of the thundering God. A defiant blasphemer is out of place in a world covered with tokens of the divine power and Godhead: the whole earth cannot afford a spot congenial for the erection of a synagogue of Atheism, nor a man in whom it is becoming to profane the name of God.

Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him. Let them forsake their idols, and reverently regard the only living God. What is here placed as a wish may also be read as a prophecy: the adoration of God will yet be universal.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 8. *Let all the earth.* For who can doubt that God can do as he wills upon earth, since he so tamed the unconquerable nature of the sea? *Hugo Grotius*, 1583-1645.

Ver. 8. *Let all the earth fear the Lord*, etc. Let them not fear another instead of him. Doth a wild beast rage? Fear God. Doth a serpent lie in wait? Fear God. Doth man hate thee? Fear God. Doth the devil fight against thee? Fear God. For the whole creation is under him whom thou art commanded to fear. *Augustine*.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 8. Reasons for universal worship, obstacles to it, future prospects of it, our duty in relation to it.

Ver. 8. (*last clause*). Awe--the soul of worship.

PSALM 33:9

EXPOSITION

Ver. 9. *For he spake, and it was done.* Creation was the fruit of a word. Jehovah said, "Light be, "and light was. The Lord's acts are sublime in their ease and instantaneousness. "What a word is this?" This was the wondering enquiry of old, and it may be ours to this day.

He commanded, and it stood fast. Out of nothing creation stood forth, and was confirmed in existence. The same power which first uplifted, now makes the universe to abide; although we may not observe it, there is as great a display of sublime power in confirming as in creating. Happy is the man who has learned to lean his all upon the sure word of him who built the skies!

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 9. *He spake, and it was done.* As we say in Latin, *Dictum factum*, SAID DONE, no delay having interposed. *Hugo Grotius*.

Ver. 9. *He spake, and it was done;* so that the creatures were not emanations from the divine nature, but effects of the divine will, the fruits of intelligence, and design, and counsel. *William Binnie, D.D.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 9. *The irresistible word of Jehovah* in creation, in calling his people, in their comfort and deliverance, in their entrance to glory.

PSALM 33:10

EXPOSITION

Ver. 10. *The Lord bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought.* While his own will is done, he takes care to anticipate the wilfulness of his enemies. Before they come to action he vanquishes them in the council chamber; and when, well armed with craft, they march to the assault, he frustrates their knaveries, and makes their promising plots to end in

nothing. Not only the folly of the heathen, but their wisdom too, shall yield to the power of the cross of Jesus: what a comfort is this to those who have to labour where sophistry, and philosophy, falsely so called, are set in opposition to the truth as it is in Jesus.

He maketh the devices of the people of none effect. Their persecutions, slanders, falsehoods, are like puff balls flung against a granite wall--they produce no result at all; for the Lord overrules the evil, and brings good out of it. The cause of God is never in danger: infernal craft is outwitted by infinite wisdom, and Satanic malice held in check by boundless power.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 10. *The Lord bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought*, etc. The more the Pharisees of old, and their successors the prelates of late, opposed the truth, the more it prevailed. The Reformation in Germany was much furthered by the Papists' opposition; yea, when two kings (amongst many others), wrote against Luther, namely, Henry 8th of England, and Ludovicus of Hungary, this kingly title being entered into the controversy (making men more curious to examine the matter), stirred up a general inclination towards Luther's opinions. *Richard Younge's Christian Library*, 1655.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 10. Educated and philosophical heathen within the reach of missions.

Ver. 10-11. The opposing counsels.

PSALM 33:11

EXPOSITION

Ver. 11. *The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever.* He changes not his purpose, his decree is not frustrated, his designs are accomplished. God has a predestination according to the counsel of his will, and none of the devices of his foes can thwart his decree for a moment. Men's purposes are blown to and from like the thread of the gossamer or the down of the thistle, but the eternal purposes are firmer than the earth.

The thoughts of his heart to all generations. Men come and go, sons follow their sires to the grave, but the undisturbed mind of God moves on in unbroken serenity, producing ordained results with unerring certainty. No man can expect his will or plan to be carried out from age to age; the wisdom of one period is the folly of another, but the Lord's wisdom is always wise, and his designs run on from century to century. His power to fulfil his purposes is by no means diminished by the lapse of years. He who was absolute over Pharaoh in Egypt is not one whit the less today the King of kings and Lord of lords; still do his chariot wheels roll onward in imperial grandeur, none being for a moment able to resist his eternal will.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 11. *The counsel of the Lord.* Note the contrast between the counsel of the heathen in the last verse, and the counsel of the Lord in this. *C. H. S.*

Ver. 11. *The thoughts.* The same word as *devices* in the preceding verse. *William de Burgh, D.D., in loc.*

Ver. 11. The wheels in a watch or a clock move contrary one to another, some one way, some another, yet all serve the intent of the workman, to show the time, or to make the clock strike. So in the world, the providence of God may seem to run cross to his promises; one man takes this way, another runs that way; good men go one way, wicked men another, yet all in conclusion accomplish the will, and centre in the purpose of God the great Creator of all things. *Richard Sibbes.*

Ver. 11. (*last clause*). Think not, brethren, because he said, *The thoughts of his heart*, that God as it were sitteth down and thinketh what he should do, and taketh counsel to do anything, or not to do anything. To thee, O man, belongs such tardiness. *Augustine.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 10-11. The opposing counsels.

Ver. 11. The eternity, immutability, efficiency, and wisdom of the divine decrees. God's purposes, "the thoughts of his heart," hence their wisdom, and yet more their love.

PSALM 33:12

EXPOSITION

Ver. 12. *Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord.* Israel was happy in the worship of the only true God. It was the blessedness of the chosen nation to have received a revelation from Jehovah. While others grovelled before their idols, the chosen people were elevated by a spiritual religion which introduced them to the invisible God, and led them to trust in him. All who confide in the Lord are blessed in the largest and deepest sense, and none can reverse the blessing.

And the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance. Election is at the bottom of it all. The divine choice rules the day; none take Jehovah to be their God till he takes them to be his people. What an ennobling choice this is! We are selected to no mean estate, and for no ignoble purpose: we are made the peculiar domain and delight of the Lord our God. Being so blessed, let us rejoice in our portion, and show the world by our lives that we serve a glorious Master.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 12. *Blessed--whom he hath chosen.* A man may have his name set down in the chronicles, yet lost; wrought in durable marble, yet perish; set upon a monument equal to a Colossus, yet be ignominious; inscribed on the hospital gates, yet go to hell; written in the front of his own house, yet another come to possess it; all these are but writings in the dust, or upon the waters, where the characters perish so soon as they are made; they no more prove a man happy than the fool could prove Pontius Pilate because his name was written in the Creed. But the true comfort is this, when a man by assurance can conclude with his own soul that his name is written in those eternal leaves of heaven, in the book of God's election, which shall never be wrapped up in the cloudy sheets of darkness but remain legible to all eternity. *Thomas Adams.*

Ver. 12. *The people whom he hath chosen.* Some read it, The people which hath chosen him for their inheritance. It cometh all to one. See Deuteronomy 26:17-19. *John Trapp.*

Ver. 12. It's an happiness to have an interest in one greater than ourselves; an interest in a beggar is of no worth, because he is of no power; but interest in a prince all men seek, therefore it is said, *Blessed are the people whose God is the Lord.* Joseph Symonds.

Ver. 12. Lest it should be thought that men obtain so great a good by their own efforts and industry, David teaches us expressly that it proceeds from the fountain of God's gracious electing love that we are accounted the people of God. *John Calvin.*

Ver. 12. I have sometimes compared the *great* men of the world, and the *good* men of the world to the *consonants* and *vowels* in the alphabet. The *consonants* are the most and the biggest letters; they take up most room, and carry the greatest bulk; but, believe it, the *vowels* though they are the fewest and least of all the letters, yet they are most useful; they give the greatest sound of all; there is no pronunciation without vowels. O beloved, though the *great* men of the world take up room, and make a show above others, yet they are but *consonants*, a company of mute and dumb *consonants* for the most part; the *good men* they are the *vowels* that are of the greatest use and most concernment at every turn: *a good man* to help with his prayers; *a good man* to advise with his counsels; *a good man* to interpose with his authority; this is the loss we lament, we have lost *a good man*; death has blotted out a *vowel*; and I fear me there will be much silence where he is lacking; silence in the bed, and silence in the house, and silence in the shop, and silence in the church, and silence in the parish, for he was everywhere a *vowel*, *a good man* in every respect. *John Kitchin, M.A., in a Funeral Sermon, 1660.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 12. Two elections made by a blessed people and a gracious God, and their happy result.

*The happiness of the church of God.
God's delight in his people, and their delight in him.*

PSALM 33:13

EXPOSITION

Ver. 13. *The Lord looketh from heaven.* The Lord is represented as dwelling above and looking down below; seeing all things, but peculiarly observing and caring for those who trust in him. It is one of our choicest privileges to be always under our Father's eye, to be never out of sight of our best Friend.

He beholdeth all the sons of men. All Adam's sons are as well watched as was Adam himself, their lone progenitor in the garden. Ranging from the frozen pole to the scorching equator, dwelling in hills and valleys, in huts and palaces, alike doth the divine eye regard all the members of the family of man.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 13. Omniscience and its lessons.

Ver. 13-15. The doctrine of providence.

PSALM 33:14

EXPOSITION

Ver. 14. *From the place of his habitation he looketh upon all the inhabitants of the earth.* Here the sentiment is repeated: it is worth repeating, and it needs repeating, for man is most prone to forget it. As great men sit at their windows and watch the crowd below, so doth the Lord; he gazes intently upon his responsible creatures, and forgets nothing of what he sees.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 13-15. The doctrine of providence.

PSALM 33:15

EXPOSITION

Ver. 15. *He fashioneth their hearts alike.* By which is meant that all hearts are equally fashioned by the Lord, kings' hearts as well as the hearts of beggars. The text does not mean that all hearts are created originally alike by God, such a statement would scarcely be true, since there is the utmost variety in the constitutions and dispositions of men. All men equally owe the possession of life to the Creator, and have therefore no reason to boast themselves. What reason has the vessel to glorify itself in presence of the potter?

He considereth all their words. Not in vain doth God see men's acts: he ponders and judges them. He reads the secret design in the outward behaviour, and resolves the apparent good into its real elements. This consideration foretokens a judgment when the results of the divine thoughts will be meted out in measures of happiness or woe. Consider thy ways, O man, for God considereth them!

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 15. *He fashioneth their hearts alike.* As an illustration of the passage as it stands in our version, we append the following: -- "Every circumstance concurs in proving that mankind are not composed of species essentially different from each other; that, on the contrary, there was originally but one species, which, after multiplying and spreading over the whole surface of the earth, has undergone various changes, from the influence of climate, food, mode of living, diseases, and mixture of dissimilar individuals; that at first these changes were not so conspicuous, and produced only individual varieties; that these varieties became afterward more specific, because they were rendered more general, more strongly marked, and more permanent, by the continual action of the same causes; and that they are transmitted from generation to generation." *G. L. Leclerc, Comte de Buffon, 1707-1788.*

Ver. 15. The Creator of all things *fashioneth their hearts alike*; the word (*rhē*), which signifies together at once, intimating that the hearts of all men though separated from one another by never so vast a gulf of time or place, are as exactly alike in respect of their original inclinations, as if they had been all moulded at the same time. The worship of a God and then some kind of religion, is necessary to us, we cannot shift it off. *William Pinke, 1631.*

Ver. 15. (*last clause*). Two men give to the poor, one seeketh his reward in heaven, the other the praise of men. Thou in two seest one thing, God understandeth two. For he understandeth what is within, and knoweth what is within; their ends he seeth, their base intentions he seeth. *He understandeth all their works. Augustine.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 13-15. The doctrine of providence.

Ver. 15. God's acquaintance with men hearts, and his estimate of their actions.

The similarity of human nature.

PSALM 33:16

EXPOSITION

Ver. 16. *There is no king saved by the multitude of an host.* Mortal power is a fiction, and those who trust in it are dupes. Serried ranks of armed men have failed to maintain an empire, or even to save their monarch's life when a decree from the court of heaven has gone forth for the empire's overthrow. The all seeing God preserves the poorest of his people when they are alone and friendless, but ten thousand armed men cannot ensure safety to him whom God leaves to destruction.

A mighty man is not delivered by much strength. So far from guarding others, the valiant veteran is not able to deliver himself. When his time comes to die, neither the force of his arms nor the speed of his legs can save him. The weakest believer dwells safely under the shadow of Jehovah's throne, while the most mighty sinner is in peril every hour. Why

do we talk so much of our armies and our heroes? the Lord alone has strength, and let him alone have praise.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 16. *There is no king saved by the multitude of an host.* At the battle of Arbela, the Persian hosts numbered between five hundred thousand and a million men, but they were utterly put to the rout by Alexander's band of fifty thousand; and the once mighty Darius was soon vanquished. Napoleon led more than half a million of men into Russia--

*"Not such the numbers, nor the host so dread,
By northern Bren, or Scythian Timour led."*

But the terrible winter left the army a mere wreck, and their leader was soon a prisoner on the lone rock of St. Helena. All along the line of history this verse has been verified. The strongest battalions melt like snowflakes when God is against them. *C. H. S.*

Ver. 16. *A mighty man;* or a giant; Goliath for instance. As the most skilful swimmers are often drowned, so here. *John Trapp.*

Ver. 16-17.: --

*Not the chief his serried lances,
Not his strength secures the brave;
All in vain the warhorse prances,
Weak his force his lord to save.
Richard Mant.*

Ver. 16-17. The weakness and insufficiency of all human *power*, however great, as before of all human *intellect*. *J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Ver. 16-17. As a passenger in a storm, that for shelter against the weather, steps out of the way, betakes him to a fair spread oak, stands under the boughs, with his back close to the body of it, and finds good relief thereby for the space of some time; till at length comes a sudden gust of wind, that tears down a main arm of it, which falling upon the poor passenger, either maims or mischieves him that resorted to it for succour. Thus falleth it out with not a few, meeting in the world with many troubles, and with manifold vexations, they step aside out of their own way, and too, too often out of God's, to get under the wing of some great one, and gain, it may be, some aid and shelter thereby for a season; but after awhile, that great one himself

coming down headlong, and falling from his former height of favour, or honour, they are also called in question and to fall together with him, that might otherwise have stood long enough on their own legs, if they had not trusted to such an arm of flesh, such a broken staff that deceived them.

Thomas Gataker.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 16-18. The fallacy of human trust, and the security of faith in God.

PSALM 33:17

EXPOSITION

Ver. 17. *An horse is a vain thing for safety.* Military strength among the Orientals lay much in horses and scythed chariots, but the psalmist calls them a lie, a deceitful confidence. Surely the knight upon his gallant steed may be safe, either by valour or by flight? Not so, his horse shall bear him into danger or crush him with its fall.

Neither shall he deliver any by his great strength. Thus the strongest defences are less than nothing when most needed. God only is to be trusted and adored. Sennacherib with all his calvary is not a match for one angel of the Lord, Pharaoh's horses and chariots found it vain to pursue the Lord's anointed, and so shall all the leaguered might of earth and hell find themselves utterly defeated when they rise against the Lord and his chosen.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 16-17. The weakness and insufficiency of all human *power*, however great, as before of all human *intellect*. *J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Ver. 17. *An horse.* If the strength of horses be of God, or be his gift Job 39:19, then trust not in the strength of horses: use the strength of horses, but do not trust the strength of horses. If you trust the strength which God hath given to horses, you make them your god. How often doth God forbid trusting in the strength of horses, as knowing that we are apt to trust in anything that is strong, though but a beast.

An horse is a vain thing for safety: neither shall he deliver any by his great strength. As if God had said, you think a horse can save you, but know he is a vain thing. And when the psalmist saith, "A horse is a vain thing," he doth not mean it of a weak horse, but of a horse of the greatest strength imaginable; such a horse is a vain thing to save a man, neither can he deliver any by his strength; and therefore the Lord, when he promised great deliverances to his people, lest they should expect it by the strength of horses, saith Ho 1:7, "I will save them by the Lord their God, and will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen;" as if he had told them, do not look after creature strength to be saved by; a horse will be a vain thing to save you, and I can save you effectually without horses, and I will. *Joseph Caryl.*

Ver. 17-20. Man is sensible of his want of earthly blessings, and will never cease, with excessive care, diligence, and vexation, to hunt after them, till he come to know that God will provide for him. When one hath great friends which they are known to lean upon, we say of them, such need take no care, they know such and such will see to them. On the contrary, come to one who knows no end of toiling and caring, ask him, Why will you thus tire yourself out? He will answer, I must needs do it, I have none but myself to trust to. So Christ followeth his disciples' carefulness to this door, their unbelief, which did not let them consider our heavenly Father cared for them. No present estate, though never so great, can free the heart from distraction, because it is subject to decay and vanishing; we shall never cast the burden of care off our own shoulders, till we learn by faith to cast it upon the Lord, whose eye is over us for good. He will never renounce carnal supports who make not God the stay of his soul for outward things. He will trust in the abundance of his riches, wisdom, friends, or strength, that makes not God his strength. The heart of man, being aware of his inability to sustain himself if he be not underset, will seek out some prop, true or false, sound or rotten, to lean unto. They will go down to Egypt for help, and stay on horses, and trust in chariots, because they are many, and in horsemen because they are very strong, who look not to the Holy One of Israel, and seek not the Lord. *John Ball.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 16-18. The fallacy of human trust, and the security of faith in God.

PSALM 33:18

EXPOSITION

Ver. 18. *Behold.* For this is a greater wonder than hosts and horses, a surer confidence than chariots or shields.

The eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him. That eye of peculiar care is their glory and defence. None can take them at unawares, for the celestial watcher foresees the designs of their enemies, and provides against them. They who fear God need not fear anything else; let them fix their eye of faith on him, and his eye of love will always rest upon them.

Upon them that hope in his mercy. This one would think to be a small evidence of grace, and yet it is a valid one. Humble hope shall have its share as well as courageous faith. Say, my soul, is not this an encouragement to thee? Dost thou not hope in the mercy of God in Christ Jesus? Then the Father's eye is as much upon thee as upon the elder born of the family. These gentle words, like soft bread, are meant for babes in grace, who need infant's food.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 18. *Behold,* etc. Hitherto he had given a proof of God's providence towards *all men*, but now he descends to a particular proof of it, by his care over his *church*, which he wonderfully guides, defends, and protects in all dangers and assaults; and that notice may be taken of it, he begins with, "*Behold!*" *Adam Clarke.*

Ver. 18. *The eye of the Lord is upon.* Look upon the sun, how it casts light and heat upon the whole world in its general course, how it shineth upon the good and the bad with an equal influence; but let its beams be but concentrated in a burning glass, then it sets fire on the object only, and passeth by all others: and thus God in the creation looketh upon all his works with a general love, *erant omnia valde bona*, they pleased him very well. Oh! but when he is pleased to cast the beams of his love, and cause them to shine upon his elect through Christ, then it is that their hearts burn within them, then it is that their affections are inflamed; whereas others are but as it were a little warmed, have a little shine of common graces cast upon them. *Richard Holdsworth, 1651.*

Ver. 18. *Behold, the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy.* This is a very encouraging character. They who cannot claim the higher distinctions of religion, may surely know that they "fear God, and hope in his mercy." Some may wonder at the combination; and suppose that the qualities are incompatible with each other. But the first Christians "walked in the fear of the Lord, and in the comforts of the Holy Ghost." They may think that the fear will injure the hope, or the hope the fear. But these are even mutually helpful; and they are, not only never so beautiful, but never so influential as when they are blended. The fear promotes hope by the evidence it affords; and by keeping us from loose and careless walking, which must always affect our peace and pleasure. And hope no less befriends this fear. For never is God seen so glorious, so worthy of all our devotedness to him as when we hope in his mercy; and even the more assured we are of his regard, the more we shall enquire, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? The more we shall tremble at the thought of offending and grieving him, the more we shall continue upon our knees praying, "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, *my Strength and my Redeemer.*" It is called "a lively hope:" and Christians know, by experience, that upon all their principles and duties it has the same influence as Spring has upon the fields and the gardens. *William Jay.*

Ver. 18. *Who hope in his mercy.* When thou canst not get assurance, make as much improvement of the grounds upon which thou mayest build *hopes* of salvation. The probable grounds thou hast, thou wouldst not part with for all the world. If thy heart is not full of joy through sense of God's love, yet thine eyes are full of tears, and thy soul full of sorrow, through the sense of thy sin: wouldst thou change thy condition with any hypocrite whatsoever, with the richest man that hath no grace? I would not have thee rest satisfied with a probability, but yet bless God for a probability of salvation. Is it nothing that one that hath deserved hell most certainly, should have a probability that he should escape it? Would not this be a little ease to the torments of the damned, if they had but a strong probability that they should be saved? but *no hope* makes it heavy. When thou art sick, thou enquirest of the physician, Sir, what do you think of me? Shall I live, or shall I die? If he reply it is not certain, but there is *good hopes*, it is probable you will live and do well; this is some support unto thee in thy sickness. *Thomas Doolittle, M.A. (1630-1707), in "Morning Exercises."*

Ver. 18. The weakest believer, the least of saints, hath ground to hope. The gospel is so ordered, the covenant so methodised, God hath made such ample provision, that every one may "have good hope through grace" 1Th 2:16; and all that bear this character are allowed, encouraged, nay, commanded to hope: their hoping is as mighty a pleasure to God, as it is a comfort to themselves. *Samuel Doolittle's "Righteous Man's Hope in Death,"* 1693.

Ver. 18-19. During the siege of Rochelle, which was endured with unexampled bravery for nearly fifteenth months, the inhabitants were reduced by famine to the misery of being obliged to have recourse to the flesh of horses, asses, mules, dogs, cats, rats, and mice; and a single peck of corn is said to have been sold for a sum equivalent to about twenty-five pounds sterling of our money in the present day. There were numerous examples of great and liberal generosity among the inhabitants. Some dispensed their charity so secretly that their names were never discovered. Among the rest, the following example is narrated: --"The Sieur de la Goute, an honorary king's advocate, had a sister, the widow of a merchant named Prosni, who, being a very religious and benevolent woman, at the time when the famine became more severe than it had been, freely assisted the poor with her present surplus. Her sister-in-law, the wife of her brother, Deuteronomy la Goute, being differently inclined, reproved her for her conduct, asking her in anger, 'What she would do when all should be expended?' Her reply was, 'My sister, *the Lord will provide for me.*' The siege was continued, and the famine increased its fearful ravages; and poor widow Prosni, who had four children, found herself in a great strait--all her store of provisions being exhausted. She applied to her sister for relief, who, in the stead of comforting, reproached her for her improvidence; tauntingly adding that, as she had done mighty well to be so reduced under all her great faith and fine words, that '*the Lord will provide for her.*' so in good time he might provide for her. Wounded to the heart by these words, poor widow Prosni returned to her house in sad distress; resolving nevertheless to meet death patiently. On reaching her home, her children met her with gladdened hearts and joyous faces, and told her that a man, to them an entire stranger, had knocked at the door, it being late; and, on its being opened, he threw in a sack of about two bushels of wheat; and then, without saying a word, suddenly departed. The widow Prosni, scarcely able to believe her own eyes, with an overflowing, grateful heart towards her gracious benefactor, immediately ran to her sister-in-law as quickly as

her famished condition would allow; and upon seeing her, exclaimed aloud, 'My sister, the Lord HATH provided for me; 'and, saying no more, returned home again. By means of this unexpected relief, conveyed to her so opportunely, she was enabled to support herself and family until the end of the siege, and she never knew to whom she was instrumentally indebted for this timely and merciful assistance." *The Biblical Treasury, Vol. 4*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 16-18. The fallacy of human trust, and the security of faith in God.

Ver. 18. Hoping in the mercy of God--false and true forms distinguished.

Ver. 18.

1. The eyes of God's *knowledge* are upon them.
2. The eyes of his *affection* are upon them.
3. The eyes of his *providence* are upon them. *William Jay.*

PSALM 33:19

EXPOSITION

Ver. 19. *To deliver their soul from death.* The Lord's hand goes with his eye; he sovereignly preserves those whom he graciously observes. Rescues and restorations hedge about the lives of the saints; death cannot touch them till the King signs his warrant and gives him leave, and even then his touch is not so much mortal as immortal; he doth not so much kill us as kill our mortality.

And to keep them alive in famine. Gaunt famine knows its master. God has meal and oil for his Elijahs somewhere. "Verily thou shalt be fed" is a divine provision for the man of faith. The Preserver of men will not suffer the soul of the righteous to famish. Power in human hands is outmatched by famine, but God is good at a pinch, and proves his bounty under the most straitened circumstances. Believer, wait upon thy God in temporals. His eye is upon thee, and his hand will not long delay.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 19. Life in famine, natural and spiritual, especially a famine of inward hope and legal satisfaction.

PSALM 33:20

EXPOSITION

Ver. 20. *Our soul waits for the Lord.* Here the godly avow their reliance upon him whom the Psalm extols. To wait is a great lesson. To be quiet in expectation, patient in hope, single in confidence, is one of the bright attainments of a Christian. Our soul, our life, must hang upon God; we are not to trust him with a few gewgaws, but with all we have and are.

He is our help and our shield. Our help in labour, our shield in danger. The Lord answereth all things to his people. He is their all in all. Note the three "*ours*" in the text. These holdfast words are precious. Personal possession makes the Christian man; all else is mere talk.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 20. *Our soul waiteth for the Lord.* There is an emphasis on the word *soul* which should be attended to; for although this is a common mode of speech among the Hebrews, yet it expresses earnest affection; as if believers should say, We sincerely rely upon God with our whole heart, accounting him our shield and help. *John Calvin.*

Ver. 20. *Our soul.* Not our souls, but *our soul*, as if they all had only one. And what is the language of God by the prophet? "I will give them one heart and one way." And thus the two disciples going to Emmaus exclaimed, upon their discovery and surprise, "Did not our heart burn within us?" And thus in the beginning of the gospel it was said, "The multitude of them that believed were of one heart, and of one soul." We have seen several drops of water on the table, by being brought to touch, running into one. If Christians were better acquainted with each other, they would easily unite. *William Jay.*

Ver. 20. *He is our help.* Antigonus, king of Syria, being ready to give battle near the Isle of Andreos, sent out a squadron to watch the motions

of his enemies, and to descry their strength: return was made that they had more ships, and better manned than he was. "How?" says Antigonus, "that cannot be; *quam multis meipsum opponis* (for how many dost thou reckon me?)" intimating that the dignity of a general weighed down many others, especially when poised with valour and experience. And where is valour, where is experience to be found, if not in God? He is the Lord of hosts; with him alone is strength and power to deliver Israel our of all her troubles. He may do it, he can do it, he will do it; he is wise in heart and mighty in strength; besides him there is no Saviour, no deliverer; he is a shield to the righteous, strength to the weak, a refuge to the oppressed. He is *instar omnium* (all in all), and who is like unto him in all the world? *John Spencer*.

Ver. 20. There is an excellent story of a young man, that was at sea in a mighty raging tempest; and when all the passengers were at their wits' end for fear, he only was merry; and when he was asked the reason of his mirth, he answered, "That the pilot of the ship was his father, and he knew his father would have a care of him." The great and wise God, who is our Father, hath from all eternity decreed what shall be the issue of all wars, what the event of all troubles; he is our pilot, he sits at the stern; and though the ship of the church or state be in a sinking condition, yet be of good comfort, our Pilot will have a care of us. There is nothing done in the lower house of Parliament on earth, but what is first decreed in the higher house in heaven. All the lesser wheels are ordered and overruled by the upper. Are not five sparrows, saith Christ, sold for a farthing? One sparrow is not worth half a farthing. And there's no man shall have half a farthing's worth of harm more than God hath decreed from all eternity. *Edmund Calamy*.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 20. *Waiting for the Lord*, includes:

1. *Conviction* --a persuasion that the Lord is the supreme good.
2. *Desire* --it is expressed by hungering and thirsting after righteousness.
3. *Hope*.
4. *Patience* --God is never slack concerning his promise. *William Jay*.

Ver. 20. (*first clause*). The believer's hourly position.

PSALM 33:21

EXPOSITION

Ver. 21. *For our hearts shall rejoice in him.* The duty commended and commanded in the first verse is here presented to the Lord. We, who trust, cannot but be of a glad heart, our inmost nature must triumph in our faithful God.

Because we have trusted in his holy name. The root of faith in due time bears the flower of rejoicing. Doubts breed sorrow, confidence creates joy.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 21. Joy, the outflow of faith.

PSALM 33:22

EXPOSITION

Ver. 22. Here is a large and comprehensive prayer to close with. It is an appeal for *mercy*, which even joyful believers need; and it is sought for in a proportion which the Lord has sanctioned. "According to your faith be it unto you," is the Master's word, and he will not fall short of the scale which he has himself selected. Yet, Master, do more than this when hope is faint, and bless us far above what we ask or even think.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 22. *According as we hope in thee;* not according to any merits of theirs, but according to the measure of grace, of the grace of hope which God had bestowed on them, and encouraged them to exercise on him, in expectation of finding grace and mercy with him. *John Gill.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 22. A prayer for believers only.

Ver. 22. Measure for measure, or mercy proportioned to faith.

PSALM 34

PSALM 34:1

Title. Psalm of David, when he changed his behaviour before Abimelech; who drove him away, and he departed. Of this transaction, which reflects no credit upon David's memory, we have a brief account in 1 Samuel 21:1-15. Although the gratitude of the psalmist prompted him thankfully to record the goodness of the Lord in vouchsafing an undeserved deliverance, yet he weaves none of the incidents of the escape into the narrative, but dwells only on the grand fact of his being heard in the hour of peril. We may learn from his example not to parade our sins before others, as certain vainglorious professors are wont to do who seem as proud of their sins as old Greenwich pensioners of their battles and their wounds. David played the fool with singular dexterity, but he was not so real a fool as to sing of his own exploits of folly. In the original, the title does not teach us that the psalmist composed this poem at the time of his escape from Achish, the king or Abimelech of Gath, but that it is intended to commemorate that event, and was suggested by it. It is well to mark our mercies with well carved memorials. God deserves our best handiwork. David in view of the special peril from which he was rescued, was at great pains with this Psalm, and wrote it with considerable regularity, in almost exact accordance with the letters of the Hebrew alphabet. This is the second alphabetical Psalm, the twenty-fifth being the first.

Division. The Psalm is split into two great divisions at the close of Psalm 34:10, when the Psalmist having expressed his praise to God turns in direct address to men. The first ten verses are A HYMN, and the last twelve A SERMON. For further assistance to the reader we may subdivide thus: In Psalm 34:1-3, David vows to bless the Lord, and invites the praise of others; from Psalm 34:4-7 he relates his experience, and in Psalm 34:8-10 exhorts the godly to constancy of faith. In Psalm 34:1-14, he gives direct exhortation, and follows it up by didactic teaching from Psalm 34:15-22 to the close.

EXPOSITION

Ver. 1. *I will bless the Lord at all times.* He is resolved and fixed, *I will*; he is personally and for himself determined, let others so as they may; he is intelligent in head and inflamed in heart --he knows to whom the praise is due, and what is due, and for what and when. To Jehovah, and not to second causes our gratitude is to be rendered. The Lord hath by right a monopoly in his creatures praise. Even when a mercy may remind us of our sin with regard to it, as in this case David's deliverance from the Philistine monarch was sure to do, we are not to rob God of his meed of honour because our conscience justly awards a censure to our share in the transaction. Though the hook was rusty, yet God sent the fish, and we thank him for it. *At all times*, in every situation, under every circumstance, before, in and after trials, in bright days of glee, and dark nights of fear. He would never have done praising, because never satisfied that he had done enough; always feeling that he fell short of the Lord's deservings. Happy is he whose fingers are wedded to his harp. He who praises God for mercies shall never want a mercy for which to praise. To bless the Lord is never unseasonable.

His praise shall continually be in my mouth, not in my heart merely, but in my mouth too. Our thankfulness is not to be a dumb thing; it should be one of the daughters of music. Our tongue is our glory, and it ought to reveal the glory of God. What a blessed mouthful is God's praise! How sweet, how purifying, how perfuming! If men's mouths were always thus filled, there would be no repining against God, or slander of neighbours. If we continually rolled this dainty morsel under our tongue, the bitterness of daily affliction would be swallowed up in joy. God deserves blessing with the heart, and extolling with the mouth--good thoughts in the closet, and good words in the world.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Title. *Abimelech* was king of Gath, the same with Achish, 1 Samuel 21:20: who either had two names, or this of Abimelech, as it should seem, was a common name to all the kings of the Philistines (see Genesis 20:2 26:8); as Pharaoh was to the Egyptian kings and Caesar to the Roman emperors: the name signifies a *father king*, or *my father king*, or a *royal father*; as kings should be the fathers of their country: before him *David changed his behaviour*, his taste, sense, or reason; he imitated a madman. *John Gill*.

Whole Psalm. (This Psalm is alphabetical.) The Alphabetical Psalms, the *psalmi abcedarii*, as the Latin fathers called them, are nine in number; and I cannot help thinking it is a pity that, except in the single instance of the hundred and nineteenth, no hint of their existence should have been suffered to appear in our authorised version. I will not take it upon me to affirm, with Ewald, that no version is faithful in which the acrostic is suppressed; but I do think that the existence of such a remarkable style of composition ought to be indicated in one way or another, and that some useful purposes are served by its being actually reproduced in the translation. No doubt there are difficulties in the way. The Hebrew alphabet differs widely from any of those now employed in Europe. Besides differences of a more fundamental kind, the Hebrew has only twenty-two letters, for our twenty-six; and of the twenty-two, a considerable number have no fellows in ours. An exact reproduction of a Hebrew acrostic in English version is therefore impossible. *William Binnie, D.D.*

Whole Psalm. Mr. Hapstone has endeavoured to imitate the alphabetical character of this Psalm in his metrical version. The letter answering to F is wanting, and the last stanza begins with the letter answering to R. One verse of his translation may suffice--

*"At all times bless Jehovah's name will I;
His praise shall in my mouth be constantly:
Boast in Jehovah shall my soul henceforth;
Hear it, ye meek ones, and exult with mirth."*

Ver. 1. *I will bless the Lord at all times.* Mr. Bradford, martyr, speaking of Queen Mary, at whose cruel mercy he then lay, said, If the queen be pleased to release me, I will thank her; if she will imprison me, I will thank her; if she will burn me, I will thank her, etc. So saith a believing soul: Let God do with me what he will, I will be thankful. *Samuel Clarke's "Mirror."*

Ver. 1. Should the whole frame of nature be unhinged, and all outward friends and supporters prove false and deceitful, our worldly hopes and schemes be disappointed, and possessions torn from us, and the floods of sickness, poverty, and disgrace overwhelm our soul with an impetuous tide of trouble; the sincere lover of God, finding that none of these affects his portion and the object of his panting desires, retires from them all to God his refuge and hiding place, and there feels his Saviour incomparably better, and more than equivalent to what the whole of the universe can ever offer,

or rob him of; and his tender mercies, unexhausted fulness, and great faithfulness, yield him consolation and rest; and enable him, what time he is afraid, to put his trust in him. Thus we find the holy psalmist expressing himself: *I will bless the Lord at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth.* William Dunlop.

Ver. 1. S. Basil tells us that the praise of God, once rightly impressed as a seal on the mind, though it may not always be carried out into action, yet in real truth causes us perpetually to praise God. *J. M. Neal's Commentary.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 1. Firm resolution, serious difficulties in carrying it out, helps for its performance, excellent consequences of so doing.

Six questions. --Who? "I." What? "Will bless." Whom? "The Lord." When? "At all times." How? Why?

Ver. 1. Direction for making a heaven below.

WORK UPON THE THIRTY-FOURTH PSALM

Meditations upon the 34. Psalm, in Sir RICHARD BAKER'S Works.

PSALM 34:2

EXPOSITION

Ver. 2. *My soul shall make her boast in the Lord.* Boasting is a very natural propensity, and if it were used as in this case, the more it were indulged the better. The exultation of this verse is no mere tongue bragging, "*the soul*" is in it, the boasting is meant and felt before it is expressed. What scope there is for holy boasting in Jehovah! His person, attributes, covenant, promises, works, and a thousand things besides, are all incomparable, unparalleled, matchless; we may cry them up as we please, but we shall never be convicted of vain and empty speech in so doing. Truly he who writes these words of comment has nothing of his own to boast of, but much to lament over, and yet none shall stop him of his boast in God so long as he lives.

The humble shall hear thereof, and be glad. They are usually grieved to hear boastings; they turn aside from vauntings and lofty speeches, but boasting in the Lord is quite another matter; by this the most lowly are consoled and encouraged. The confident expressions of tried believers are a rich solace to their brethren of less experience. We ought to talk of the Lord's goodness on purpose that others may be confirmed in their trust in a faithful God.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 2. *My soul shall make her boast in the Lord.* Not like the boasting of the Pharisee, so hateful in the eyes of God, so offensive in the ears of the humble; for *the humble can hear this boasting and be glad*, which they would never do if it were not conformable to the rules of humility. Can any boasting be greater than to say, "I can do all things"? Yet in this boasting there is humility when I add, "In him that strengtheneth me." For though God likes not of boasting, yet he likes of this boasting, which arrogates nothing to ourselves, but ascribes all to him. *Sir Richard Baker.*

Ver. 2-6. There is somewhat very striking and pleasing in the sudden transitions, and the change of persons, that is observable in these few verses. *"My soul shall boast; ""The humble shall hear; " "I sought the Lord; ""They looked to him; ""This poor man cried."* There is a force and elegance in the very unconnectedness of the expressions, which, had they been more closely tied by the proper particles, would have been in a great measure lost. Things thus separated from each other, and yet accelerated, discover, as Longinus observes, the earnestness and the vehemency of the inward working of the mind; and though it may seem to interrupt, or disturb the sentence, yet quickens and enforces it. *Samuel Chandler, D.D.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 2. The commendable boaster and his gratified audience.

We may boast of the Lord, in himself, his manifestations of himself, his relationship to us, our interest in him, our expectations from him, etc.

The duty of believers to relate their experience for the benefit of others.

PSALM 34:3

EXPOSITION

Ver. 3. *O magnify the Lord with me.* Is this request addressed to the humble? If so it is most fitting. Who can make God great but those who feel themselves to be little? He bids them help him to make the Lord's fame greater among the sons of men. Jehovah is infinite, and therefore cannot really be made greater, but his name grows in manifested glory as he is made known to his creatures, and thus he is said to be magnified. It is well when the soul feels its own inability adequately to glorify the Lord, and therefore stirs up others to the gracious work; this is good both for the man himself and for his companions. No praise can excel that which lays us prostrate under a sense of our own nothingness, while divine grace like some topless Alp rises before our eyes and sinks us lower and lower in holy awe.

Let us exalt his name together. Social, congregated worship is the outgrowth of one of the natural instincts of the new life. In heaven it is enjoyed to the full, and earth is like heaven where it abounds.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 2-6. There is somewhat very striking and pleasing in the sudden transitions, and the change of persons, that is observable in these few verses.

"My soul shall boast; ""The humble shall hear; " "I sought the Lord; ""They looked to him; ""This poor man cried." There is a force and elegance in the very unconnectedness of the expressions, which, had they been more closely tied by the proper particles, would have been in a great measure lost. Things thus separated from each other, and yet accelerated, discover, as Longinus observes, the earnestness and the vehemency of the inward working of the mind; and though it may seem to interrupt, or disturb the sentence, yet quickens and enforces it. *Samuel Chandler, D.D.*

Ver. 3. Venema remarks that after the affair with Achish, we are told in 1 Samuel 22:1, "His brethren, and all his father's house went down to the cave Adullam unto him, "and these, together with those who were in debt, and discontented with Saul's government, formed a band of four hundred

men. To these his friends and comrades, he relates the story of his escape, and bids them with united hearts and voices extol the Lord. *C. H. S.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 3. Invitation to united praise.

Ver. 3. *Magnifying* --or making great the work of God, a noble exercise.

PSALM 34:4

EXPOSITION

Ver. 4. *I sought the Lord, and he heard me.* It must have been in a very confused manner that David prayed, and there must have been much of self sufficiency in his prayer, or he would not have resorted to methods of such dubious morality as pretending to be mad and behaving as a lunatic; yet his poor limping prayer had an acceptance and brought him succour: the more reason for then celebrating the abounding mercy of the Lord. We may seek God even when we have sinned. If sin could blockade the mercyseat it would be all over with us, but the mercy is that there are gifts even for the rebellious, and an advocate for men who sin.

And delivered me from all my fears. God makes a perfect work of it. He clears away both our fears and their causes, all of them without exception. Glory be to his name, prayer sweeps the field, slays all the enemies and even buries their bones. Note the egoism of this verse and of those preceding it; we need not blush to speak of ourselves when in so doing we honestly aim at glorifying God, and not at exalting ourselves. Some are foolishly squeamish upon this point, but they should remember that when modesty robs God it is most immodest.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 4. *I sought the Lord, and he heard me.* God expects to hear from you before you can expect to hear from him. If you restrain prayer, it is no wonder the mercy promised is retained. Meditation is like the lawyer's studying the case in order to his pleading at the bar; when, therefore, thou hast viewed the promise, and affected thy heart with the riches of it, then

fly thee to the throne of grace, and spread it before the Lord. *William Gurnall.*

Ver. 4. *He delivered me from all my fears.* To have delivered me from all my troubles had been a great favour, but a far greater to deliver me from all my fears; for where that would but have freed me from present evil, this secures me from evil to come; that now I enjoy not only tranquillity, but security, a privilege only of the godly. The wicked may be free from trouble, but can they be free from fear? No; God knows, though they be not in trouble like other men, yet they live in more fear than other men. Guiltiness of mind, or mind of the world, never suffers them to be secure: though they be free sometimes from the fit of an ague, yet they are never without a grudging; and (if I may use the expression of poets) though they feel not always the whip of Tysiphone, yet they feel always her terrors; and, seeing the Lord hath done this for me, hath delivered me from all my fears, have I not cause, just cause, to magnify him, and exalt his name? *Sir Richard Baker.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 4. *Confessions of a ransomed soul.* Simple, honouring to God, exclude merit, and encourage others to seek also.

Ver. 4. *Four stages, "fears, ""sought, ""heard, ""delivered."*

PSALM 34:5

EXPOSITION

Ver. 5. *They looked unto him, and were lightened.* The psalmist avows that his case was not at all peculiar, it was matched in the lives of all the faithful; they too, each one of them on looking to their Lord were brightened up, their faces began to shine, their spirits were uplifted. What a means of blessing one look at the Lord may be! There is life, light, liberty, love, everything in fact, in a look at the crucified One. Never did a sore heart look in vain to the good Physician; never a dying soul turned its darkening eye to the brazen serpent to find its virtue gone.

And their faces were not ashamed. Their faces were covered with joy but not with blushes. He who trusts in God has no need to be ashamed of his confidence, time and eternity will both justify his reliance.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 5. *They looked unto him.* The more we can think upon our Lord, and the less upon ourselves, the better. Looking to him, as he is seated upon the right hand of the throne of God, will keep our heads, and especially our hearts, steady when going through the deep waters of affliction. Often have I thought of this when crossing the water opposite the old place of Langholm. I found, when I looked down on the water, I got dizzy; I therefore fixed my eyes upon a steady object on the other side, and got comfortably through. *David Smith, 1792-1867.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 5. The power of a faith look.

PSALM 34:6

EXPOSITION

Ver. 6. *This poor man cried.* Here he returns to his own case. He was poor indeed, and so utterly friendless that his life was in great jeopardy; but he cried in his heart to the protector of his people and found relief. His prayer was a cry, for brevity and bitterness, for earnestness and simplicity, for artlessness and grief; it was a poor man's cry, but it was none the less powerful with heaven, for *the Lord heard him*, and to be heard of God is to be delivered; and so it is added that the Lord *saved him out of all his troubles*. At once and altogether David was clean rid of all his woes. The Lord sweeps our griefs away as men destroy a hive of hornets, or as the winds clear away the mists. Prayer can clear us of troubles as easily as the Lord made riddance of the frogs and flies of Egypt when Moses entreated him. This verse is the psalmist's own personal testimony: he being dead yet speaketh. Let the afflicted reader take heart and be of good courage.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 6. *This poor man cried.* The reasons of *crying* are

1. Want cannot blush. The pinching necessity of the saints is not tied to the law of modesty. Hunger cannot be ashamed. "I mourn in my complaint, and make a noise, "saith David Psalm 55:2; and Hezekiah, "Like a crane or a swallow, so did I chatter: I did mourn as a dove" Isaiah 38:14. "I went mourning without the sun: I stood up, and I cried in the congregation" Job 30:28.

2. Though God hear prayer only as prayer offered in Christ, not because very fervent; yet fervour is a heavenly ingredient in prayer. An arrow drawn with full strength hath a speedier issue; therefore, the prayers of the saints are expressed by *crying* in Scripture. "O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not" Psalm 22:2. "At noon, will I pray, and cry aloud" Psalm 55:17. "In my distress I cried to the Lord" Psalm 18:6. "Unto thee have I cried, O Lord" Psalm 88:13. "Out of the depths have I cried" Psalm 130:1. "Out of the belly of hell cried I" Jonah 2:2. "Unto thee will I cry, O Lord my rock" Psalm 28:1. Yea, it goeth to somewhat more than *crying*: "I cry out of wrong, but I am not heard" Job 19:7. "Also when I cry and shout, he shutteth out my prayer" Lamentations 3:8. He who may teach us all to pray, sweet Jesus, "In the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears" Hebrews 5:7; he prayed with war shouts.

3. And these prayers are so prevalent, that God answereth them:

This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his fears Psalm 34:6. "My cry came before him, even into his ears" Psalm 18:6. The *cry* addeth wings to the prayer, as a speedy post sent to court upon life and death: "Our fathers cried unto thee, and were delivered" Psalm 22:5. "*The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth*" Psalm 34:17. *Samuel Rutherford.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 6. --

- 1.** The poor man's heritage, "troubles."
- 2.** The poor man's friend.

3. The poor man's cry.

4. The poor man's salvation.

Ver. 6. The poor man's wealth.

The position of prayer in the economy of grace, or the natural history of mercy in the soul.

PSALM 34:7

EXPOSITION

Ver. 7. *The angel of the Lord.* The covenant angel, the Lord Jesus, at the head of all the bands of heaven, surrounds with his army the dwellings of the saints. Like hosts entrenched so are the ministering spirits encamped around the Lord's chosen, to serve and succour, to defend and console them.

Encampeth round about them that fear him. On every side the watch is kept by warriors of sleepless eyes, and the Captain of the host is one whose prowess none can resist.

And delivereth them. We little know how many providential deliverances we owe to those unseen hands which are charged to bear us up lest we dash our foot against a stone.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 7. *The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.* I will not rub the questions, whether these angels can contract themselves, and whether they can subsist in a point, and so stand together the better in so great a number, neither will I trouble myself to examine whether they are in such and such a place in their *substance*, or only in their *virtue* and *operation*. But this the godly man may assure himself of, that whensoever he shall want their help, in spite of doors, and locks, and bars, he may have it in a moment's warning. For there is no impediment, either for want of power because they are spirits, or from want of good will, both because it is their duty, and because they bear an affection to him; not only rejoicing at his first conversion Luke 15:10, but, I dare confidently affirm, always disposed with abundance of cheerfulness

to do anything for him. I cannot let pass some words I remember of Origen's to this purpose, as I have them from his interpreter. He brings in the angels speaking after this manner: --"If he (meaning the Son of God) went down, and went down into a body, and was clothed with flesh, and endured its infirmities and died for men, what do we stand still for? Come, let's all down from heaven together." *Zachary Bogan*.

Ver. 7. *The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him.*

This is the first time that, in the psalter, we read of the ministrations of angels. But many fathers rather take this passage of the "Angel of the Great Counsel, "and gloriously to him it applies. *J. M. Neale*.

Ver. 7. *The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him,*

etc. By whom may be meant, either the uncreated Angel, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Angel of God's presence, and of the covenant, the Captain of salvation, the Leader and Commander of the people; and whose salvation is as walls and bulwarks about them, or as an army surrounding them; or a created angel may be intended, even a single one, which is sufficient to guard a multitude of saints, since one could destroy at once such a vast number of enemies, as in 2 Kings 19:35; or one may be put for more, since they are an innumerable company that are on the side of the Lord's people, and to whom they are joined; and these may be said to encamp about them, because they are an host or army (see Genesis 32:1-2 Luke 2:13); and are the guardians of the saints, that stand up for them and protect them, as well as minister to them. *John Gill*.

Ver. 7. *The angel of the Lord* is represented in his twofold character in this pair of Psalms, as an angel of mercy, and also as an angel of judgment, Psalm 35:6. This pair of Psalms (the thirty-fourth and thirty-fifth), may in this respect be compared with the twelfth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, where the angel of the Lord is displayed as encamping about St. Peter, and delivering him, and also as smiting the persecutor, Herod Agrippa. *Christopher Wordsworth, D.D.*

Ver. 7. *Round about.* In illustration of this it may be observed, that according to D'Arvieux, it is the practice of the Arabs to pitch their tents in a circular form; the prince being in the middle, and the Arabs about him, but so as to leave a respectful distance between them. And Thevenot, describing a Turkish encampment near Cairo, having particularly; noticed the spaciousness, decorations, and conveniences of the Bashaw's tent, or pavilion, adds, "Round the pale of his tent, within a pistol shot, were above

two hundred tents, pitched in such a manner that the doors of them all looked towards the Bashaw's tent; and it ever is so, that they may have their eye always upon their master's lodging, and be in readiness to assist him if he be attacked." *Richard Mant.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 7. *Castra angelorum, salvatio bonorum.*

Ver. 7. The ministry of angels.

In what sense Jesus is "The angel of the Lord."

PSALM 34:8

EXPOSITION

Ver. 8. *O taste and see.* Make a trial, an inward, experimental trial of the goodness of God. You cannot see except by tasting for yourself; but if you taste you shall see, for this, like Jonathan's honey, enlightens the eyes.

That the Lord is good. You can only know this really and personally by experience. There is the banquet with its oxen and fatlings; its fat things full of marrow, and wine on the lees well refined; but their sweetness will be all unknown to you except you make the blessings of grace your own, by a living, inward, vital participation in them.

Blessed is the man that trusteth in him. Faith is the soul's taste; they who test the Lord by their confidence always find him good, and they become themselves blessed. The second clause of the verse, is the argument in support of the exhortation contained in the first sentence.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 8. *O taste and see that the Lord is good.* Our senses help our understandings; we cannot by the most rational discourse perceive what the sweetness of honey is; *taste* it and you shall perceive it. "His fruit was sweet to my *taste*." Dwell in the light of the Lord, and let thy soul be always ravished with his love. Get out the marrow and the fatness that thy portion yields thee. Let fools learn by beholding thy face how dim their

blazes are to the brightness of thy day. *Richard Alleine, in "Heaven Opened," 1665.*

Ver. 8. *O taste and see*, etc. It is not enough for thee to see it afar off, and not have it, as Dives did; or to have it in thee, and not to taste it, as Samson's lion had great store of honey in him, but tasted no sweetness of it; but thou must as well have it as see it, and as well taste it as have it.

O taste and see, says he, "*how sweet the Lord is*"; "for so indeed Christ giveth his church not only *a sight* but also *"a taste"* of his sweetness. A *sight* is where he saith thus: "We will rise up early, and go into the vineyard, and see whether the vine have budded forth the small grapes, and whether the pomegranates flourish; "there is *a sight* of the vine. A *taste* is where he says thus, "I will bring thee into the wine cellar, and cause thee to drink spice wine, and new wine of the pomegranates; "there is *a taste* of the wine. The church not only goes into the vineyard and *sees* the wine, but also goes into the wine cellar, and *tastes* the wine. *Thomas Playfere.*

Ver. 8. *Taste and see.* There are some things, especially in the depths of the religious life, which can only be understood by being experienced, and which even then are incapable of being adequately embodied in words.

O taste and see that the Lord is good. The enjoyment must come before the illumination; or rather the enjoyment is the illumination. There are things that must be loved before we can know them to be worthy of our love; things to be believed before we can understand them to be worthy of belief. And even after this --after we are conscious of a distinct apprehension of some spiritual truth, we can only, perhaps, answer, if required to explain it, in the words of the philosopher to who the question was put, "What is God?" "I know, *if I am not asked.*" *Thomas Binney's "Sermons," 1869.*

Ver. 8. *Taste and see.* Be unwilling that all the good gifts of God should be swallowed without taste, or maliciously forgotten, but use your palate, know them, and consider them. *D. H. Mollerus.*

Ver. 8. Heaven and earth are replete with the goodness of God. We omit to open our mouths and eyes, on which account the psalmist desires us to *taste* and *see*. *Agustus F. Tholuck.*

Ver. 8. The *taste and see* invite, as it were, to a sumptuous feast, which has long been ready; to a rich sight openly exposed to view. The imperatives are in reality not oratory but persuasive. *E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Ver. 8. All that the believer can attain of spiritual consolation in this life is but a taste. *David Dickson.*

Ver. 8.: --

*O taste the Lord, and see how sweet He is,
The man that trusts in him lives still in bliss.
Sir John Davies, 1569-1626.*

Ver. 8-10. All these verses are beautiful representations of the fulness, suitableness, completeness, and all sufficiency of God in Christ to answer all the wants of his people. And is there not a vast elegance in the comparison taken from the hunger and rapacity of the lion, even the impetuosity of the young lion, to that of the patience and silent waiting of the faithful believer? A life of faith will find food in everything, because it is all founded in Christ. The young lions may, and will lack, because nothing will supply their voracious appetites but that which is carnal. *Robert Hawker.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 8. Experience the only true test of religious truth.

Ver. 8. *Taste.* The sanctified palate, the *recherche* provision, the gratified verdict, the celestial host.

PSALM 34:9

EXPOSITION

Ver. 9. *O fear the Lord, ye his saints.* Pay to him humble childlike reverence, walk in his laws, have respect to his will, tremble to offend him, hasten to serve him. Fear not the wrath of men, neither be tempted to sin through the virulence of their threats; fear God and fear nothing else.

For there is no want to them that fear him. Jehovah will not allow his faithful servants to starve. He may not give luxuries, but the promise binds

him to supply necessities, and he will not run back from his word. Many whims and wishes may remain unfulfilled, but real wants the Lord will supply. The fear of the Lord or true piety is not only the duty of those who avow themselves to be saints, that is, persons set apart and consecrated for holy duties, but it is also their path of safety and comfort. Godliness hath the promise of the life which now is. If we were to die like dogs, and there were no hereafter, yet were it well for our own happiness' sake to fear the Lord. Men seek a patron and hope to prosper; he prospers surely who hath the Lord of Hosts to be his friend and defender.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 9. The blest estate of a God fearing man.

Ver. 9. Fear expelling fear. *Similia similibus curantur.*

PSALM 34:10

EXPOSITION

Ver. 10. *The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger.* They are fierce, cunning, strong, in all the vigour of youth, and yet they sometimes howl in their ravenous hunger, and even so crafty, designing, and oppressing men, with all their sagacity and unscrupulousness, often come to want; yet simple minded believers, who dare not act as the greedy lions of earth, are fed with food convenient for them. To trust God is better policy than the craftiest politicians can teach or practice.

But they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing. No really good thing shall be denied to those whose first and main end in life is to seek the Lord. Men may call them fools, but the Lord will prove them wise. They shall win where the world's wisecracks lose their all, and God shall have the glory of it.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 10. *The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger,* The old lions will have it for them, if it be to be had. *But they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.* As they would feel no evil thing within, so they shall

want no good thing without. He that freely opens the upper, will never wholly close the nether springs. There shall be no silver lacking in Benjamin's sack, while Joseph has it to throw in. Grace is not such a beggarly visitant, as will not pay its own way. When the best of beings is adored, the best of blessings are enjoyed. *William Secker.*

Ver. 10. People are apt to fancy that a wild beast's life must be happy--in a brute's sense--and that the carnivorous and graminivorous creatures which have never come under the dominion of mankind are better off than the domesticated quadrupeds which buy their quieter and safer lives at the price of ministering to the luxuries or necessities of their human lords. But the contrary is the case: the career of a flesh eating animal must be wretched, even from the tiger's or leopard's point of view. They must often suffer pangs of long continued hunger, and when they find and kill food they frequently have to wage desperate war for the enjoyment of their victim. The cry of almost every wild beast is so melancholy and forlorn, that it impresses the traveller with sadness more even than with fear. If the opportunity occurs for watching them in the chase, they are seen to sneak and sniff about, far less like "kings of the forest," than poor, dejected, starving wretches, desperate upon the subject of their next meal. They suffer horribly from diseases induced by foul diet and long abstinence; and very few are found without scars in their hide--the tokens of terrible combats. If they live to old age their lot is piteous: their teeth are worn down, their claws are blunt, and in this state numbers of them perish by starvation. Not one half of the wild animals die a natural death; and their life, so far as can be observed, is a series of stern privations, with desperate and bloody fights among themselves. *Clipping from "Daily Telegraph."*

Ver. 10. *They that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.* There shall be no want to such, and such shall want no good thing: so that he must be such an one to whom the promise is made; and he must also be sure that it is *good* for him which is promised. But oftentimes it is not good for a man to abound with earthly blessings; as strong drink is not good for weak brains. Yea, if anything be wanting to a good man, he may be sure it is not good for him; and then better that he doth want it, than that he did enjoy it; and what wise man will complain of the want of that, which if he had, would prove more gainful than hurtful to him? As a sword to a madman, a knife to a child, drink to them that have a fever or the dropsy. "No good thing will God withhold," etc., and therefore, not wants themselves, which to many are also good, yea, very good things, as I could

reckon up many. Want sanctified is a notable means to bring to repentance, to work in us amendment of life, it stirs up prayer, it weans from the love of the world, it keeps us always prepared for the spiritual combat, discovers whether we be true believers or hypocrites, prevents greater evils of sin and punishment to come; it makes us humble, conformable to Christ our Head, increaseth our faith, our joy, and thankfulness, our spiritual wisdom, and likewise our patience, as I have largely shown in another treatise. *Richard Young, in the "Poor's Advocate," 1653.*

Ver. 10. I remember as I came through the country, that there was a poor widow woman, whose husband fell at Bothwell: the bloody soldiers came to plunder her house, telling her they would take all she had. "We will leave thee nothing," said they, "either to put in thee, or on thee." "I care not," said she, "I will not want as long as God is in the heavens." That was a believer indeed. *Alexander Peden's Sermon, 1682.*

Ver. 10. Take a survey of heaven and earth and all things therein, and whatsoever upon sure ground appears good, ask it confidently of Christ; his love will not deny it. If it were good for you that there were no sin, no devil, no affliction, no destruction, the love of Christ would instantly abolish these. Nay, if the possession of all the kingdoms of the world were absolutely good for any saint, the love of Christ would instantly crown him monarch of them. *David Clarkson.*

Ver. 10. (*last clause*). Part of his last afternoon was spent by Columba, in transcribing the Psalms of David. Having come to that passage in the thirty-fourth Psalm, where it is said,

They that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing, he said, "I have come to the end of a page, and I will stop here, for the following Psalm 34:11, "*Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the Lord*," will better suit my successor to transcribe than me. I will leave it, therefore, to Baithen." As usual the bell was rung at midnight for prayers. Columba was the first to hasten to church. On entering it soon after, Dermid found him on his knees in prayer, but evidently dying. Raising him up in his arms, he supported his head on his bosom. The brethren now entered. When they saw Columba in this dying condition they wept aloud. Columba heard them. He opened his eyes and attempted to speak, but his voice failed. He lifted up his hands as if to bless them, immediately after which he breathed out his spirit. His countenance retained in death the expression it wore in life, so that it seemed as if he

had only fallen asleep. "*Story of Columba and his successors*, "in the *Christian Treasury* for 1848.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 10. Lions lacking, but the children satisfied. See "Spurgeon's Sermons, "No. 65.

1. Description of a true Christian, "seek the Lord."
2. The promise set forth by a contract.
3. The promise fulfilled.

Ver. 10. What is a good thing?

PSALM 34:11

EXPOSITION

Ver. 11. *Come, ye children.* Though a warrior and a king, the psalmist was not ashamed to teach children. Teachers of youth belong to the true peerage; their work is honourable, and their reward shall be glorious. Perhaps the boys and girls of Gath had made sport of David in his seeming madness, and if so, he here aims by teaching the rising race to undo the mischief which he had done aforetime. Children are the most hopeful persons to teach--wise men who wish to propagate their principles take care to win the ear of the young.

Hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the Lord. So far as they can be taught by word of mouth, or learned by the hearing of the ear, we are to communicate the faith and fear of God, inculcating upon the rising generation the principles and practices of piety. This verse may be the address of every Sabbath school teacher to his class, of every parent to his children. It is not without instruction in the art of teaching. We should be winning and attractive to the youngsters, bidding them "come," and not repelling them with harsh terms. We must get them away, apart from toys and sports, and try to occupy their minds with better pursuits; for we cannot well teach them while their minds are full of other things. We must drive at the main point always, and keep the fear of the Lord ever uppermost in our teachings, and in so doing we may discreetly cast our

own personality into the scale by narrating our own experiences and convictions.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 11. *Come, ye children.* Venema in substance remarks that David in addressing his friends in the cave, called them his sons or children, because he was about to be their teacher, and they his disciples; and again, because they were young men in the flower of their age, and as sons, would be the builders up of his house; and still more, because as their leader to whose discipline and command they were subject, he had a right to address them as his children. *C. H. S.*

Ver. 11. *Come, ye children,* etc. You know your earthly parents, aye, but labour to know your heavenly. You know the fathers of your flesh, aye, but strive to know the Father of your spirits. You are expert it may be in Horace's Odes, Virgil's Eclogues, Cicero's Orations; oh! but strive to get understanding in David's Psalms, Solomon's Proverbs, and the other plain books of Holy Writ. Manna was to be gathered in the morning. The orient pearl is generated of the morning dew; *aurora musis amica*, the morning is a friend to the muses. O "*remember thy Creator*," know him in the morning of thy childhood. When God had created the heavens and the earth, the first thing he did was to adorn the world with light, and separate it from the darkness. Happy is that child on whom the light of saving knowledge begins to dawn early. God, in the law, required the firstborn, and the first fruits, so he doth still our first days, to be offered to him. They are wisdom's words, "They that seek me early shall find me." Proverbs 8:17. Where a rabbin observeth a (n is added to the verb more than usual, which in numbering goeth for fifty. With this note, that early seeking hath not only twenty, or thirty, but fifty, nay, indeed, an hundred fold recompense attending on it. *Nathaneal Hardy.*

Ver. 11. *Come, ye children.* David in this latter part of the Psalm undertakes to teach children; though a man of war and anointed to be king, he did not think it below him: though now he had his head so full of cares, and his hands of business, yet he could find heart and time to give good counsel to young people from his own experience. *Matthew Henry.*

Ver. 11. Observe. I. What he expects from them, *Hearken unto me*, leave your play, lay by your toys, and hear what I have to say to you; not only

give me the hearing, but observe and obey me. II. What he undertakes to teach them,

The fear of the Lord, inclusive of all the duties of religion. David was a famous musician, a statesman, a soldier, but he doth not say to his children, I will teach you to play upon the harp, or to handle the sword or spear, or draw the bow, or I will teach you the maxims of state policy, but I will teach you *the fear of the Lord*, which is better than all arts and sciences, better than all burnt offerings and sacrifices. That is it which we should be solicitous both to learn ourselves, and to teach our children. *Matthew Henry*.

Ver. 11. *I will teach you the fear of the Lord.* I shall introduce the *translation* and *paraphrase* from my old Psalter; and the rather because I believe there is a reference to that very improper and unholy method of teaching youth the system of heathen mythology before they are taught one sound lesson of true divinity, till at last their *minds* are *imbued* with *heathenism* and the vicious conduct of gods, goddesses, and heroes (here very properly called tyrants), becomes the model of their own; and they are as heathenish *without* as they are heathenish *within*. Translation. Cummes sones lere me: dred of Lard I sal you lere. Paraphrase. "Cummes, with trauth and luf: sones, qwam I gette in haly lere: beres me. With eres of hert. I sal lere you, noght the fabylys of poets; na the storys of tryauntz; bot the dred of oure Larde, that wyl bring you til the felaghschippe of aungels; and thar in is lyfe." I need not paraphrase this paraphrase, as it is plain enough. *Adam Clarke*.

Ver. 11. *The fear of the Lord.* The Master of Sentences dwells, from this verse, on the four kinds of fear: mundane, servile, initial, filial. *Mundane*, when we fear to commit sin, simply lest we should lose some worldly advantage or incur some worldly inconvenience. *Servile*, when we fear to commit sin simply because of hell torments due to it. *Initial*, when we fear to commit it, lest we should lose the happiness of heaven. *Filial*, when we fear, only, and entirely because we dread to offend that God whom we love with all our hearts. *I will teach.* Whence notice, that this fear is not a thing to be learnt all at once; it needs careful study and a good master. S. Chrysostom compares the Psalmist's school here with the resort of heathen students to the academy; and S. Ephraem, referring to this passage, calls the fear of God itself the school of the mind. As if he proclaimed, "says S. Lawrence Justiniani, "I will teach you, not the courses of the stars, not the

nature of things, not the secrets of the heavens, but *the fear of the Lord.*" The knowledge of such matters, without fear, puffs up; but *the fear of the Lord, without any such knowledge*, can save." "Here," says Cassiodorus, "is not fear to be feared, but to be loved. Human fear is full of bitterness; divine fear of sweetness: the one drives to slavery, the other allures to liberty; the one dreads the prison of Gehenna, the other opens the kingdom of heaven." *J. M. Neale.*

Ver. 11. *The fear of the Lord.* Let this, therefore, good children, be your principal care and study: for what shall it avail you to be cunning in Tully, Virgil, Homer, and other profane writers, if you be unskilful in God's book? to have learned Greek and Latin, if you learn not withal the language of Canaan? to have your speech agreeable to the rules of Priscian, of Lily, if your lives and courses be not consonant to the rules and laws of Christianity? to have knowledge of the creatures when you are ignorant of the Creator? to have learned that whereby you may live a while here, and neglect that whereby you may live eternally hereafter? Learn to fear God, to serve God, and then God will bless you; for "He will bless them that fear him, both small and great." Psalm 115:13. *Thomas Gataker's "David's Instructor,"* "1637.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 11. A royal teacher, his youthful disciples, his mode of instruction, "Come; "his choice subject.

Ver. 11. Sunday school work.

PSALM 34:12

EXPOSITION

Ver. 12. Life spent in happiness is the desire of all, and he who can give the young a receipt for leading a happy life deserves to be popular among them. Mere existence is not life; the art of living, truly, really, and joyfully living, it is not given to all men to know. To teach men how to live and how to die, is the aim of all useful religious instruction. The rewards of virtue are the baits with which the young are to be drawn to morality.

While we teach piety to God we should also dwell much upon morality towards man.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 12. It is no great matter to live long, or always, but to live happily. That loyal prayer, "Let the king live" (in every language) imports a prosperous state. When the psalmist saith, "Who is the man that would see life?" he explains himself presently after by "good days." *Vivere* among the Latins is sometimes as much as *valere*, to live is as much as to be well; and upon this account it is that, on the one hand, the Scripture calls the state of the damned an eternal death, because their life is only a continuance in misery; so on the other hand the state of the blessed is an eternal life, because it is a perpetual abode in felicity. *Nathanael Hardy*.

Ver. 12. The benefit of life is not in the length, but in the use of it. He sometimes lives the least that lives the longest. *Seneca*.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 12-14. How to make the best of both worlds.

PSALM 34:13

EXPOSITION

Ver. 13. *Keep thy tongue from evil.* Guard with careful diligence that dangerous member, the tongue, lest it utter evil, for that evil will recoil upon thee, and mar the enjoyment of thy life. Men cannot spit forth poison without feeling some of the venom burning their own flesh.

And thy lips from speaking guile. Deceit must be very earnestly avoided by the man who desires happiness. A crafty schemer lives like a spy in the enemy's camp, in constant fear of exposure and execution. Clean and honest conversation, by keeping the conscience at ease, promotes happiness, but lying and wicked talk stuffs our pillow with thorns, and makes life a constant whirl of fear and shame. David had tried the tortuous policy, but he here denounces it, and begs others as they would live long and well to avoid with care the doubtful devices of guile.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 13. *Keep thy tongue from evil*, etc. Ficinus, after his tracts, *De sanitate tuenda*, of keeping good health; and another, of recovering health; and a third, of prolonging life; because all will not do, wisely addeth a fourth, of laying hold on eternal life; which cannot be done but by mortifying this earthly member, a loose and lewd tongue. "For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned," saith the Judge himself. Matthew 12:37. Compare Genesis 49:21, with Deuteronomy 33:23, and it will appear that good words ingratiate with God and man. *John Trapp*.

Ver. 13. *And thy lips from speaking guile*. Perhaps David is warning us that we speak no guile, reflects upon his own sin in changing his behaviour. They that truly repent of what they have done amiss, will warn others to take heed in doing likewise. *Matthew Henry*.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 12-14. How to make the best of both worlds.

Ver. 13. Sins of the tongue--their mischief, their cause, and their cure.

PSALM 34:14

EXPOSITION

Ver. 14. *Depart from evil*. Go away from it. Not merely take your hands off, but yourself off. Live not near the pest house. Avoid the lion's lair, leave the viper's nest. Set a distance between yourself and temptation.

And do good. Be practical, active, energetic, persevering in good. Positive virtue promotes negative virtue; he who does good is sure to avoid evil.

Seek peace. Not merely prefer it, but with zeal and care endeavour to promote it. Peace with God, with thine own heart, with thy fellow man, search after this as the merchantman after a precious pearl. Nothing can more effectually promote our own happiness than peace; strife awakens passions which eat into the heart with corroding power. Anger is murder to one's own self, as well as to its objects.

And pursue it. Hunt after it, chase it with eager desire. It may soon be lost, indeed, nothing is harder to retain, but do your best, and if enmity should arise let it be no fault of yours. Follow after peace when it shuns you; be resolved not to be of a contentious spirit. The peace which you thus promote will be returned into your own bosom, and be a perennial spring of comfort to you.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 14. *Depart from evil*, etc. This denotes that evil is near to men; it keeps close to them, and should be declined and shunned: and it regards all sorts of evil; evil men and their evil company; evil things, evil words and works, and all appearance of evil; and the fear of the Lord shows itself in a hatred of it, and a departure from it. Proverbs 8:13 16:6. *John Gill*.

Ver. 14. *Depart from evil*. The other precepts are the duty of works, and they are four, where the precepts of words were but two; because we must be more in works than in words; and they are all affirmative, for it is against the nature of a work to be in the negative; for so working should be no better than idleness: the two former are general, as general as good and evil; that if we meet with anything that is evil, our part is to *depart*, for there is no demurring upon evil. *Sir Richard Baker*.

Ver. 14. *Do good*. Negative goodness is not sufficient to entitle us to heaven. There are some in the world whose religion runs all upon negatives; they are not drunkards, they are not swearers, and for this they do bless themselves. See how the Pharisee vapours Luke 18:11, "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, "etc. Alas! the not being scandalous will no more make a Christian than a cypher will make a sum. We are bid, not only to *cease from evil*, but to *do good*. It will be a poor plea at last--Lord, I kept myself from being spotted with gross sin: I did no hurt. But what good is there in thee? It is not enough for the servant of the vineyard that he doth no hurt there, he doth not break the trees, or destroy the hedges; if he doth not work in the vineyard he loseth his pay. It is not enough for us to say at the last day, we have done no hurt, we have lived in no gross sin; but what good have we done in the vineyard? Where is the grace we have gotten? If we cannot show this, we shall lose our pay, and miss of salvation. *Thomas Watson*.

Ver. 14. *Seek peace, and pursue it*. Yea, do well, and thou shalt not need to pursue it; peace will find thee without seeking. Augustine says, *Fiat*

justitia, et habebis pacem --Live righteously, and live peaceably. Quietness shall find out righteousness wheresoever he lodgeth. But she abhorreth the house of evil. Peace will not dine where grace hath not first broken her fast. Let us embrace godliness, and "the peace of God, that passeth all understanding, shall preserve our hearts and minds in Jesus Christ." Philippians 4:7. *Thomas Adams.*

Ver. 14. *See peace and pursue it.* The most desirable things are not the easiest to be obtained. What is more lovely to the imagination than the tranquillity of peace? But this great blessing does not voluntarily present itself: it must be *sought*. Even when sought it often eludes the grasp: it flies away, and must be *pursued*.

1. The man of a peaceable carriage must be cautious not to give offence when needless, or, when it may innocently be spared.
2. Another part of the peaceable man's character is, not to take offence; especially in small matters, which are hardly worth a wise man's notice.
3. If any needless offence has been either given or taken, we must endeavour to put a stop to it as soon as may be. If a difference is already begun, stifle it in the birth, and suffer it not to proceed farther. *Condensed from Dr. Waterland's Sermon, in J. R. Pitman's Course of Sermons on the Psalms, 1846.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 12-14. How to make the best of both worlds.

Ver. 14. (*first clause*). The relation between the negative and positive virtues.

Ver. 14. (*second clause*). *The royal hunt.* The game, the difficulties of the chase, the hunters, their methods, and their rewards.

PSALM 34:15

EXPOSITION

Ver. 15. *The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous.* He observes them with approval and tender consideration; they are so dear to him that he

cannot take his eyes off them; he watches each one of them as carefully and intently as if there were only that one creature in the universe.

His ears are open unto their cry. His eyes and ears are thus both turned by the Lord towards his saints; his whole mind is occupied about them: if slighted by all others they are not neglected by him. Their cry he hears at once, even as a mother is sure to hear her sick babe; the cry may be broken, plaintive, unhappy, feeble, unbelieving, yet the Father's quick ear catches each note of lament or appeal, and he is not slow to answer his children's voice.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 15. *His ears are open unto their cry.* The word "open" is not in the original, but the meaning is that the ear of God is propense, and in a leaning kind of posture, towards the cries of the righteous; the word may here be taken emphatically, as many times in Scripture it is, for some worthy, choice, and excellent strain of righteousness. Those who are worthy and righteous indeed, the ear of God, I say, is propense, and leans and hangs towards them and their prayers, according to that of So 2:14, "Let me hear thy voice, for sweet is thy voice." There is a kind of naturalness and pleasantness between the ear of God and the prayers, and petitions, and cries of such a righteous man. John 15:7. *John Goodwin.*

Ver. 15. *His ears are open unto their cry.* Hebrew, *Are to their cry*, or as St. Peter hath it, *His ears are into their prayers* 1 Peter 3:12; to show that though their prayers are so faint and feeble that they cannot enter into the ears of the Lord of Hosts, yet that he will bow down and incline his ears *unto*, nay, *into* their prayers, their breathings. Lamentations 3:56. *John Trapp.*

Ver. 15-17. *The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry.* Strangers may howl, and we take little notice what they ail--it is a venture whether we relieve them or no; but if our children cry, being in great distress, we hasten to their help. Our relation to God may well strengthen our hope that our desires shall be heard. He that can cry, *Abba, Father*, may be confident of the success of his suit, and that God will deal with him as a son. *George Swinnoek.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 15. Our observant God. Eyes and ears both set on us.

PSALM 34:16

EXPOSITION

Ver. 16. *The face of the Lord is against them that do evil.* God is not indifferent to the deeds of sinners, but he sets his face against them, as we say, being determined that they shall have no countenance and support, but shall be thwarted and defeated. He is determinately resolved that the ungodly shall not prosper; he sets himself with all his might to overthrow them.

To cut off the remembrance of them from the earth. He will stamp out their fires, their honour shall be turned into shame, their names forgotten or accursed. Utter destruction shall be the lot of all the ungodly.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 15-17. *The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry. See Psalms on "Psalm 34:15" for further information.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 16. The evil man checkmated in life, and forgotten in death.

PSALM 34:17

EXPOSITION

Ver. 17. *The righteous cry.* Like Israel in Egypt, they cry out under the heavy yoke of oppression, both of sin, temptation, care, and grief.

And the Lord heareth; he is like the night watchman, who no sooner hears the alarm bell than he flies to relieve those who need him.

And delivereth them out of all their troubles. No net of trouble can so hold us that the Lord cannot free us. Our afflictions may be numerous and complicated, but prayer can set us free from them all, for the Lord will show himself strong on our behalf.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 15-17. *The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry. See Psalms on "Psalm 34:15"* for further information.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 17. *Afflictions and their threefold blessing.*

1. They make us pray.
2. They bring us the Lord's hearing ear.
3. They afford room for joyful experience of deliverance.

PSALM 34:18

EXPOSITION

Ver. 18. *The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart.* Near in friendship to accept and console. Broken hearts think God far away, when he is really most near them; their eyes are holden so that they see not their best friend. Indeed, he is with them, and in them, but they know it not. They run hither and thither, seeking peace in their own works, or in experiences, or in proposals and resolutions, whereas the Lord is nigh them, and the simple act of faith will reveal him.

And saveth such as be of a contrite spirit. What a blessed token for good is a repentant, mourning heart! Just when the sinner condemns himself, the Lord graciously absolves him. If we chasten our own spirits the Lord will spare us. He never breaks with the rod of judgment those who are already sore with the rod of conviction. Salvation is linked with contrition.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 18. *The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart.* God is *nigh unto them* (with reverence be it spoken), God takes so much complacency in the company of such, that he cannot endure to have them far from him; he must have them always under his eyes; as for these *broken* ones, he will be sure not to leave them long, nor go far from them, but will be ready at hand to set their bones, to bind up their wounds to keep them from festering. It may be he may put them to much pain before he brings the cure to perfection, but it is to prevent future aches. He is a foolish cruel surgeon, who, for fear of putting his patient to some pain, never searcheth the wound, but skins it over presently; and a wise man will not think him unmerciful that puts him to exquisite pain, so he may make a thorough cure of it. Thus God doth by his patients sometimes, when the nature of their distemper calls for it. But, however, he will be sure not to be out of the way when they want him most. It is possible that they may look upon themselves as forgotten by God, they may not know their Physician when he is by them, and they may take their Friend for an enemy; they may think God far off when he is near; but when their eyes are opened and their distemper is pretty well worn off, they will, with shame and thankfulness, acknowledge their error; nay, they do from their souls confess, that they do not deserve the least look of kindness from God, but to be counted strangers and enemies; but God will let them know that he loves to act like himself, that is, like a God of love, mercy, and goodness; and that they are the persons that he hath set his heart upon; he will have them in his bosom, never leave them nor forsake them; and though these contrite ones many times look upon themselves as lost, yet God will save them, and they shall sing a song of thankfulness amongst his delivered ones. *James Janeway.*

Ver. 18. *The Lord is nigh unto them,* etc. Consider the ADVANTAGES of this broken heart; as

I. A broken heart is acceptable and wellpleasing to God, "A broken and a contrite heart, O God thou wilt not despise." Psalm 51:17.

II. It makes up many defects in your service and duties, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit." Psalm 51:17.

III. It makes the soul a fit receptacle for God to dwell in, "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy; I dwell

in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." Isaiah 57:15.

IV. It brings God near to men, "*The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.*" Psalm 34:18. And

V. It lays you open to Christ's sweet healing, "I will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick." Ezekiel 34:16. And, oh, who would not be broken that they might find Christ's soft hand healing them, and find the proof of that sweet word, "For I will restore health unto thee, and I will heal thee of thy wounds, saith the Lord." Jeremiah 30:17. Yea,

VI. It puts you in the right road to heaven, where all your wounds and bruises will be cured; for there is a tree Revelation 22:2 the leaves whereof are for the healing of the nations; there is no complaining there of wounds or bruises, but all are perfectly healed. *John Spalding, in "Synaxis Sacra, or a Collection of Sermons, " etc., 1703.*

Ver. 18. "*The Lord is nigh unto them,* "etc. We are apt to overlook men, in proportion as they are humbled beneath us; God regards them in that proportion. Vessels of honour are made of that clay which is "*broken*" into the smallest parts. *George Horne.*

Ver. 18. *Broken heart...contrite spirit.* Oh, this is the misery of all miseries which ministers have most cause to complain of, that men are not fitted enough for Jesus Christ, they are not lost enough in themselves for a Saviour. "In thee the fatherless findeth mercy." Hosea 14:3. Were we more hopeless, helpless, and fatherless, we should find more mercy from the hand of Jesus Christ. O that God would awaken and shake some sin sleeping soul this day! O that this doctrine thus opened might be as a thunderbolt to let some of you see the inside of yourselves! O poor sinner, thou hast an unsupportable burden of sin and guilt lying on thy soul, ready to press thee down to hell, and yet you feel it not; thou hast the wrath of God hanging over thy head by the twined thread of a short life, which it may be thou mayest not be free from one year, nay, perhaps not one month, but thou seest it not; if thou didst but see it, then thou wouldest cry out as he did in Bosworth field, "A horse! a horse! a kingdom for a horse!" So thou wouldest cry out, None but Christ! nothing but Christ! ten thousand worlds for Christ! *James Nalton, 1664.*

Ver. 18. *A contrite spirit.* (*hwa Aya & De*), *dakkeey ruach*, "the beaten out spirit." In both words the *hammer* is necessarily implied; in breaking to pieces the ore first, and then plating out the metal when it has been separated from the ore. This will call to the reader's remembrance Jeremiah 23:29, "Is not my word like as a fire?" saith the Lord: and like a *hammer* that breaketh the *rock* in pieces? The *breaking to shivers*, and the *beating out* are metaphorical expressions: so are the *hammer* and the *rock*. What the large *hammer* struck on a rock by a powerful hand would do, so does the word of the Lord when struck on the sinner's heart by the power of the Holy Spirit. The *broken heart*, and the *contrite spirit*, are two essential characteristics of true repentance. *Adam Clarke*.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 18. The nearness of God to broken hearts, and the certainty of their salvation.

PSALM 34:19

EXPOSITION

Ver. 19. *Many are the afflictions of the righteous.* Thus are they made like Jesus their covenant Head. Scripture does not flatter us like the story books with the idea that goodness will secure us from trouble; on the contrary, we are again and again warned to expect tribulation while we are in this body. Our afflictions come from all points of the compass, and are as many and as tormenting as the mosquitoes of the tropics. It is the earthly portion of the elect to find thorns and briars growing in their pathway, yea, to lie down among them, finding their rest broken and disturbed by sorrow. BUT, blessed *but*, how it takes the sting out of the previous sentence!

But the Lord delivereth him out of them all. Through troops of ills Jehovah shall lead his redeemed scatheless and triumphant. There is an end to the believer's affliction, and a joyful end too. None of his trials can hurt so much as a hair of his head, neither can the furnace hold him for a moment after the Lord bids him come forth of it. Hard would be the lot of the righteous if this promise, like a bundle of camphire, were not bound up in it, but this sweetens all. The same Lord who sends the afflictions will also

recall them when his design is accomplished, but he will never allow the fiercest of them to rend and devour his beloved.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 19. *Many are the afflictions of the righteous*, etc. Be our troubles many in number, strange in nature, heavy in measure; yet God's mercies are more numerous, his wisdom more wondrous, his power more miraculous; he will deliver us out of all. *Thomas Adams*.

Ver. 19. *Many are the afflictions of the righteous*, etc. When David did behold his trouble, like the host of the Aramites 2 Kings 6:16, he looked back unto God like Elisha, and spied one with him stronger than all against him. Therefore, respecting his afflictions he crieth,

Many are the troubles of the righteous; respecting the promise he says,

The Lord delivereth him out of all. Thus, by his own foot, David measures the condition of the righteous, and saith,

Many are the troubles of the righteous; and then, by his own cure, he showeth how they should be healed, saying,

The Lord will deliver him out of them all. ...The lawyer can deliver his client but from strife, the physician can deliver his patient but from sickness, the master can deliver his servant but from bondage, but the Lord delivereth us from *all*. As when Moses came to deliver the Israelites, he would not leave a hoof behind him, so when the Lord cometh to deliver the righteous he will not leave a trouble behind him. He who saith, "I put away all thine iniquities, " will also say, "I put away all thine infirmities." *Henry Smith*.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 19. Black and white, or bane and antidote.

Special people, special trials, special deliverances, special faith as a duty.

PSALM 34:20

EXPOSITION

Ver. 20. *He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken.* David had come off with kicks and cuffs, but no broken bones. No substantial injury occurs to the saints. Eternity will heal all their wounds. Their real self is safe; they may have flesh wounds, but no part of the essential fabric of their being shall be broken. This verse may refer to frequent providential protections vouchsafed to the saints; but as good men have had broken limbs as well as others, it cannot absolutely be applied to bodily preservations; but must, it seems to me, be spiritually applied to great injuries of soul, which are for ever prevented by divine love. Not a bone of the mystical body of Christ shall be broken, even as his corporeal frame was preserved intact. Divine love watches over every believer as it did over Jesus; no fatal injury shall happen to us, we shall neither be halt or maimed in the kingdom, but shall be presented after life's trials are over without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, being preserved in Christ Jesus, and kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 20. *He keepeth all his bones*, which were very many. Perhaps (saith Abenezra here), David had been scourged by the Philistines, but his bones were not broken, nor were our Saviour's. John 19:36. *John Trapp.*

Ver. 20. *All his bones.* Muis observes, "It says not his *body*, for this he permits to be afflicted; but it signifies that the evils of the godly are light, and scarcely penetrate to the bone; "but Geier observes, "This is too subtle, rather the bone reminds us of the essential parts of the body, by whose injury the whole frame is endangered. It is a proverbial form of speech like that in Matthew 10:30, 'The very hairs of your head are all numbered,' expressing the remarkable defence afforded to the righteous." Genebrard says, "The bones are put by synecdoche for all the members." *From Poli Synopsis.*

Ver. 20. The passover lamb, of which not a bone was broken, prefigured Jesus as one, "not a bone of whose body should be broken; " and yet, at the same time, it prefigured the complete keeping and safety of Christ's body,

the church; as it is written, *He keepeth all his bones; not one of them is broken.* Andrew A. Bonar's Commentary on Leviticus.

Ver. 20. Christ's bones were in themselves breakable, but could not actually be broken by all the violence in the world, because God had fore decreed, *a bone of him shall not be broken.* So we confess God's children mortal; but all the power of devil or man may not, must not, cannot, kill them before their conversion, according to God's election of them to life, which must be fully accomplished. *Thomas Fuller.*

Ver. 20. Observe as a point of resemblance between this and the following Psalm, the mention of the bones here and in Psalm 35:10. *C. Wordsworth.*

HINTS THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 20. The real safety of a believer when in great perils. His soul, his spiritual life, his faith, hope, love, etc.; his interest in Jesus, his adoption, justification, these all kept.

PSALM 34:21

EXPOSITION

Ver. 21. *Evil shall slay the wicked.* Their adversaries shall be killing; they are not medicine, but poison. Ungodly men only need rope enough and they will hang themselves; their own iniquities shall be their punishment. Hell itself is but evil fully developed, torturing those in whom it dwells. Oh! happy they who have fled to Jesus to find refuge from their former sins, such, and such only will escape.

And they that hate the righteous shall be desolate. They hated the best of company, and they shall have none; they shall be forsaken, despoiled, wretched, despairing. God makes the viper poison itself. What desolation of heart do the damned feel, and how richly have they deserved it!

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 21. *Evil.* Afflictions though in the plural, prove not ruinous to the righteous, for the Lord delivers him out of them all, whereas *evil in the singular* slays the wicked, to signify the difference of God's economy

towards righteous and wicked men. The former is permitted to fall into many pressures, the latter is not so frequently exercised with them, yet the many that befall the one do no hurt, but work good for him, whereas the few that befall the wicked, or perhaps the *one singular affliction* of his life is the utter ruin of him. *Henry Hammond.*

Ver. 21. –

Conscience self the culprit tortures, gnawing him with pangs unknown; For that now amendment's season is for ever past and gone, And that late repentance findeth pardon none for all her moan. *S. Peter Damiano, 988-1072.*

Ver. 21. *Shall be desolate.* In the margin it is, *shall be guilty.* And this is the proper meaning of the original word, (*Wmvaý*). They are guilty, and liable to punishment. Thus the word is frequently rendered in our version (see Leviticus 4:13,22); and generally includes it in the idea of guilt, and the punishment incurred by it. *Samuel Chandler, D.D.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 21. Wickedness, its own executioner, illustrated by scriptural cases, by history, by the lost in hell. Lessons from the solemn fact.

The forlorn condition of a man of malicious spirit.

Ver. 21-22. Who shall and who shall not be desolate.

PSALM 34:22

EXPOSITION

Ver. 22. *The Lord redeemeth the soul of his servants* --with price and with power, with blood and with water. All providential helps are a part of the redemption by power, hence the Lord is said still to redeem. All thus ransomed belong to him who bought them-- this is the law of justice and the verdict of gratitude. Joyfully will we serve him who so graciously purchases us with his blood, and delivers us by his power.

And none of them that trust in him shall be desolate. Faith is the mark of the ransomed, and wherever it is seen, though in the least and meanest of

the saints, it ensures eternal salvation. Believer, thou shalt never be deserted, forsaken, given up to ruin. God, even thy God, is thy guardian and friend, and bliss is thine.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 22. The promises of God to his church, and his threatenings of sin recorded in the living book of his word, are not antiquate; no age shall ever superannuate them, or put them out of full force and virtue. What if good persons and good causes do suffer oppression? The poet is a divine in that case--

*Informes hiemes reducit
Jupiter; idem
Summovet. Non si male nunc, et olim
Sic erit.*

After foul weather comes fair; though it be ill with us now, it will not be always. What if enemies of religion and moths of commonwealth do flourish and prosper, and have all things at will, let it not trouble David and Job; both of them saw as fair a sunshine shut up in a dark cloud, and a world of foul weather following. *Edward Marbury.*

Ver. 22. Satan cannot tempt longer than God shall give him leave; and he will never suffer thee to be tempted above measure, but will give a good issue unto the temptation. Thou art called to fight under the banner of Christ Jesus, and in the name of the Lord thou shalt be enabled to do valiantly and overcome. If Satan continue his assaults, "God's grace is sufficient for thee." 2 Corinthians 12:9. If thy strength be clean gone, God's power shall be magnified the more in thee, and he hath brought thee low that thou mayest not trust in thyself, but in the living Lord, and that the whole praise of the victory might be ascribed unto him. If thy strength did remain, it was not to be leaned unto; and now it is decayed and gone, there is no cause of fear, for the Lord will be thy stay. In the most difficult assaults and tedious encounters, we are exhorted to "be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." Be of good courage, and God will grant thee an easy, a joyful victory. Satan's drift in tempting is to turmoil, dishearten, and perplex with fears, and drive into despair; and if thou take heart to rest quietly upon God's grace, and fly unto his name, thou shalt put him to flight, thou hast already got the day. Wait but awhile, and these dark mists and terrible storms shall be dispersed. By these temptations the Lord

hath taught thee to see by weakness, and the malice of Satan; to deny thine own wisdom and prize his favour, lightly to esteem all things here below, and highly to value mercy reaching to the pardon of sin, and heavenly communion and fellowship with God. And if this bitter potion hath wrought so kindly for thy spiritual good, why shouldest thou be dismayed? Trust in the Lord, be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thee. *The Lord redeemeth the soul of his servants: and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate, John Ball.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 21-22. Who shall and who shall not be desolate.

Ver. 22. *Redemption* in its various meanings; *faith* in its universal preservation; *the Lord* in his unrivalled glory in the work of grace.

PSALM 35

PSALM 35:1

Title. A Psalm of David. Here is all we know concerning this Psalm, but internal evidence seems to fix the date of its composition in those troublous times when Saul hunted David over hill and dale, and when those who fawned upon the cruel king, slandered the innocent object of his wrath, or it may be referred to the unquiet days of frequent insurrections in David's old age. The whole Psalm is the appeal to heaven of a bold heart and a clear conscience, irritated beyond measure by oppression and malice. Beyond a doubt David's Lord may be seen here by the spiritual eye.

Divisions. The most natural mode of dividing this Psalm is to note its triple character. Its complaint, prayer, and promise of praise are repeated with remarkable parallelism three times, even as our Lord in the Garden prayed three times, using the same words. The first portion occupies from Psalm 35:1-10, the second from Psalm 35:11-18, and the last from Psalm 35:19-28; each section ending with a note of grateful song.

EXPOSITION

Ver. 1. *Plead my cause, O Lord, with them that strive with me.* Plead against those who plead against me; strive with my strivers; contend with my contenders. If they urge their suit in the law court, Lord, meet them there, and beat them at their own weapons. Every saint of God shall have this privilege: the accuser of the brethren shall be met by the Advocate of the saints.

Fight against them that fight against me. If my advisers try force as well as fraud, be a match for them; oppose thy strength to their strength. Jesus does this for all his beloved--for them he is both intercessor and champion; whatever aid they need they shall receive from him, and in whatever manner they are assaulted they shall be effectually defended. Let us not fail to leave our case into the Lord's hand. Vain is the help of man, but ever effectual is the interposition of heaven. What is here asked for as a boon,

may be regarded as a promise to all the saints; in judgment they shall have a divine advocate, in warfare a divine protection.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Whole Psalm. Bonar entitles this Psalm, "*The awful utterance of the Righteous One regarding those that hate him without cause,*" and he makes the following remarks thereupon: --"Throughout the endless day of eternity the Lord Jesus shall himself speak the Father's `praise,' and shall put marked emphasis on his `*righteousness*'-- that righteousness which shall have been exhibited, both in the doom of those who hated the offered Redeemer, and in the salvation of those who received him. There is nothing in all this wherein his own may not fully join, especially on that day when their views of justice shall be far clearer and fuller than now. On that day we shall be able to understand how Samuel could hew Agag in pieces, and the godly hosts of Israel slay utterly in Canaan man and woman and child, at God's command. We shall be able, not only fully agree in the doom, `Let them be confounded, 'etc., but even to sing, `Amen, Hallelujah, ' over the smoke of torment. Revelation 19:1-2. We should in some measure now be able to see every verse of this Psalm in the spirit in which *the Judge* speaks it, we feeling ourselves his assessors in judging the world. 1 Corinthians 6:2. We shall, at all events, be able to use it on that day when what is written here shall be all accomplished." *Andrew A. Bonar.*

Ver. 1. *Plead my cause, O God, with them that strive with me.*

1. Doth the world condemn thee for thy zeal in the service of God? Reproachfully scorn thee for thy care to maintain good works? not blush to traduce thee with imputations of preciseness, conceited singularity, pharisaical hypocrisy? Oh, but if thy conscience condemn thee not all this while, if that be rectified by the sacred word of God, if thou aim at his glory in pursuing thine own salvation, and side not with the disturbers of the church, go on, good Christian, in the practice of piety, discourage not thyself in thy laudable endeavours, but recount with comfort that the Lord is thy judge 1 Corinthians 4:4, with a *scio cui crediderim*, "I know whom I have believed." 2 Timothy 1:12.

2. Art thou wrongfully adjudged in the erroneous courts of men? are truth and righteousness gone aside from their proper places? Is equity neglected, and poverty overlaid? Well, have patience awhile, cheer up thy fainting spirits, there is a God that beholdeth the innocency of thy cause, unto

whom thou hast liberty to make thy last appeal: *Plead my cause, O Lord, with them that strive with me: fight against them that fight against me.* Or,

3. Art thou otherwise injured by the hands of malicious men? and doth a penurious estate disable thee to sue for amends? Doth a *Nimrod* oppress thee? A *Laban* defraud thee? A covetous landlord gripe thee? Well, yet take not the matter into thine own hands by attempting unlawful courses; presume not to be judge in thine own cause, for default of a present redress; but often remember what the apostle taught his Thessalonians: "It is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you." *Isaac Craven's Sermon at Paul's Cross*, 1630.

Ver. 1. *Plead*, etc. More literally, *litigate*, *O Lord, with them* that litigate against me, contend against them that contend with me; *i.e.*, avenge me of mine adversaries. *Daniel Cresswell, D.D., F.R.S., in "The Psalms of David according to the Book of Common Prayer: with Critical and Explanatory Notes"*, 1843.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 1. Jesus our Advocate and Champion; our friend in the courts of heaven and the battles of earth.

PSALM 35:2

EXPOSITION

Ver. 2. *Take hold of shield and buckler, and stand up for mine help.* In vivid metaphor the Lord is pictured as coming forth armed for battle, and interposing himself between his servant and his enemies. The greater and lesser protections of providence may be here intended by the two defensive weapons, and by the Lord's standing up is meant his active and zealous preservation of his servant in the perilous hour. This poetic imagery shows how the psalmist realised the existence and power of God; and thought of him as a real and actual personage, truly working for his afflicted.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 2. *Shield and buckler.* The word rendered *shield* is in the Hebrew text (גִּלְדִּי), *magen*, which was a short buckler intended merely for defence. The word rendered *buckler* is (חֲזִקָּה) *tsinnah*; it was double the weight of the *magen*, and was carried by the infantry; the *magen*, being lighter and more manageable, was used by the calvary. The *tsinnah* answered to the *scutum*, and the *magen* to the *clypeus*, among the Romans. The word *tsinnah*, means that kind of shield from the middle of which there arose a large boss, surmounted by a dagger, and which was highly useful both as a defensive and an offensive weapon in ancient warfare. *James Anderson, note to Calvin in loc.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 2. Jesus armed as the defender of the faithful.

PSALM 35:3

EXPOSITION

Ver. 3. *Draw out also the spear, and stop the way against them that persecute me.* Before the enemy comes to close quarters the Lord can push them off as with a long spear. To stave off trouble is no mean act of lovingkindness. As when some valiant warrior with his lance blocks up a defile, and keeps back a host until his weaker brethren have made good their escape, so does the Lord often hold the believer's foes at bay until the good man had taken breath, or clean fled from his foes. He often gives the foes of Zion some other work to do, and so gives rest to his church. What a glorious idea is this of Jehovah blocking the way of persecutors, holding them at the pike's end, and giving time for the hunted saint to elude the pursuit!

Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation. Besides holding off the enemy, the Lord can also calm the mind of his servant by express assurance from his own mouth, that he is, and shall be, safe under the Almighty wing. An inward persuasion of security in God is of all things the most precious in the furnace of persecution. One word from the Lord quiets all our fears.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 3. *Draw out the spear, and stop the way.* The spear in the days of Saul and David was a favourite weapon. (See 1 Chronicles 11:1-47). A valiant man bravely defending a narrow pass might singly with his lance keep back a pursuing host, and give time for his friends to escape. Very remarkable were the feats of valour of this sort performed in Oriental warfare. David would have his God become his heroic defender, making his enemies pause. *C. H. S.*

Ver. 3. *Draw out;* or, as the Hebrew phrase is, *empty*, that is, *unsheath*; the like is of the *sword*. Exodus 15:9 Leviticus 26:33. *Henry Ainsworth.*

Ver. 3. *Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation.* Observe,

1. That salvation may be made sure to a man. David would never pray for that which could not be. Nor would Peter charge us with a duty which stood not in possibility to be performed. 2 Peter 1:10. "Make your election sure." And to stop the bawling throats of all cavilling adversaries, Paul directly proves it: "Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" 2 Corinthians 13:5. We may then know that Christ is in us. If Christ be in us, we are in Christ; if we be in Christ, we cannot be condemned, for Romans 8:1, "There is no damnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." But I leave this point that it may be sure, as granted; and come to ourselves, that we may make it sure. The Papists deny this, and teach the contrary, that salvation cannot be made sure; much good do it them, with their sorry and heartless doctrine! If they make that impossible to any which God hath made easy for many, "into their secret let not my soul come." Genesis 49:6. Observe,

2. That the best saints have desired to make their salvation sure. David that knew it, yet entreats to know it more. "I know thou favourest me" Psalm 41:11; yet here, still, *dic animae*, "*Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation.*" A man can never be too sure of his going to heaven. *Thomas Adams.*

Ver. 3. *Say unto my soul.* God may speak with *his own voice*; and thus he gave assurance to Abraham, "Fear not, I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." Genesis 15:1. If God speak comfort, let hell roar horror.

2. He may speak by *his works*: actual mercies to us demonstrate that we are in his favour, and shall not be condemned. "By this I know that thou favourest me, because mine enemy doth not triumph over me."

3. He may speak by *his Son*. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28.

4. He may speak by *his Scripture*; this is God's epistle to us, and his letters patent, wherein are granted to us all the privileges of salvation. A universal *si quis*; "Whosoever believes, and is baptised, shall be saved."

5. He may speak by *his ministers*, to whom he hath given "the ministry of reconciliation." 2 Corinthians 5:19. 6. He doth speak this by *his Spirit*: he "sendeth forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father." Galatians 4:6. By all these voices God says to his elect,

I am your salvation. ...My. There is no vexation to the vexation of the soul; so no consolation to the consolation of the soul. ...Let this teach us to make much of this *My*. Luther says there is great divinity in pronouns. The assurance that God will save some is a faith incident to devils. The very reprobates may believe that there is a book of election; but God never told them that their names were written there. The hungry beggar at the feast house gate smells good cheer, but the master doth not say, "This is provided for thee." It is small comfort to the harbourless wretch to pass through a goodly city, and see many glorious buildings, when he cannot say, *Haec mea domus*, I have a place here. The beauty of that excellent city Jerusalem, built with sapphires, emeralds, chrysolites, and such precious stones, the foundation and walls whereof are perfect gold Revelation 21:1-27, affords a soul no comfort, unless he can say, *Mea civitas*, I have a mansion in it. The all sufficient merits of Christ do thee no good, unless, *tua pars et portio*, he be thy Saviour. Happy soul that can say with the psalmist, "O Lord, thou art my portion!" Let us all have oil in our lamps, lest if be then to buy, beg, or borrow, we be shut out of doors like the fools, not worthy of entrance. Pray,

Lord, say unto my soul, I am thy salvation. ...Who? What? To whom? When? WHO? The Lord! To the Lord David prays. He hath made a good choice, for there is salvation in none other. "Thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thy help." Hosea 13:9. The world fails, the flesh fails, the devil kills. Only the Lord saves. **WHAT?** Salvation. A special good thing; every man's desire. I will give thee a lordship, saith God to Esau. I will give thee a kingdom, saith God to Saul. I will give thee an apostleship, saith God to Judas. But, I will be thy salvation, he says to David, and to none but saints. **TO WHOM?**

My salvation. Not others only, but "*thine*." A man and a Christian are two creatures. He may be a man that hath reason and outward blessings; he is only a Christian that hath faith, and part in the salvation of Christ. God is plentiful salvation, but it is not ordinary to find a *cui* --to whom. Much of heaven is lost for lack of a hand to apprehend it. WHEN? In the present, "*I am*." *Sum, non sufficit quod ero*. It is comfort to Israel in captivity that God says, *Ero tua redemptio*, I will redeem thee; but the assurance that quiets the conscience is this,

I am thy salvation. As God said to Abraham, "Fear not, I am with thee." Deferred hope faints the heart. Whatsoever God forbears to assure us of, oh, pray we him not to delay this, "Lord, say to our soul, *I am thy salvation*." *Condensed from Thomas Adams.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 3. Enemies kept at arm's length. How the Lord does this, and the blessedness of it to us.

Ver. 3. (*last clause*). Full assurance. An assurance positive, personal, spiritual, present, divine, complete, coming by a word from God.

Ver. 3. (*last clause*). Heaven made sure. *Thomas Adams' Sermon.*

PSALM 35:4

EXPOSITION

Ver. 4. *Let them be confounded and put to shame that seek after my soul.* There is nothing malicious here, the slandered man simply craves for justice, and the petition is natural and justifiable. Guided by God's good spirit the psalmist foretells the everlasting confusion of all the haters of the righteous. Shameful disappointment shall be the portion of the enemies of the gospel, nor would the most tender hearted Christian have it otherwise: viewing sinners as men, we love them and seek their good, but regarding them as enemies of God, we cannot think of them with anything but detestation, and a loyal desire for the confusion of their devices. No loyal subject can wish well to rebels. Squeamish sentimentality may object to the

strong language here used, but in their hearts all good men wish confusion to mischief makers.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 4. *Let them be confounded and put to shame.* Here David begins his imprecations, which yet, saith Theodoret, he doth not utter as cursing, but as prophesying rather. If we shall at any time take upon us thus to imprecate (as we may in some cases), we must see to it, first, that our cause be good; secondly, that we do it not out of private revenge, but merely for the glory of God; thirdly, that we utter not a syllable this way, but by the guidance of God's good Spirit. *John Trapp.*

Ver. 4-8,26. How are we to account for such prayers for vengeance? We find them chiefly in four Psalms, the seventh, thirty-fifth, sixty-ninth, and one hundred and ninth, and the imprecations in these form a terrible climax. In the last no less than thirty anathemas have been counted. Are these the mere outbursts of passionate and unsanctified feeling, or are they the legitimate expression of a righteous indignation? Are they to be excused as being animated by the "spirit of Elias"? a spirit not unholy indeed, but far removed from the meekness and gentleness of Christ; or are they the stereotyped forms in which the spirit of devotion may utter itself? Are they Jewish only, or may they be Christian also? An uninstructed fastidiousness, as it is well known, has made many persons recoil from reading these Psalms at all. Many have found their lips falter when they have been called to join in using them in the congregation, and have either uttered them with bated breath and doubting heart, or have interpreted them in a sense widely at variance with the letter. Some have tried to reconcile them with a more enlightened conscience, by regarding such words not as the expression of a wish, but as the utterance of a prediction; but the Hebrew optative which is distinct enough from the simple future, absolutely forbids this expedient. Others again would see in them expressions which may lawfully be used in the soul's wrestling against spiritual enemies. And finally, some would defend them as utterances of righteous zeal for God's honour, and remind us that if we do not sympathise with such zeal, it may be not because our religion is more pure, but because our hearts are colder.

Now the real source of the difficulty lies in our not observing and bearing in mind the essential difference between the Old Testament and the New. The older dispensation was in every sense a sterner one than the new. The

spirit of Elias, though not an evil spirit, was not the spirit of Christ. "The Son of Man came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them." Luke 9:56. And through him his disciples are made partakers of the same spirit. But this was not the spirit of the older economy. The Jewish nation had been trained in a sterner school. It had been steeled and hardened by the discipline which had pledged it to a war of extermination with idolaters; and however necessary such a discipline might be, it would not tend to foster the gentler virtues; it is conceivable how even a righteous man, under it, feeling it to be his bounden duty to root out evil wherever he saw it, and identifying, as he did, his own enemies with the enemies of Jehovah, might use language which to us appears unnecessarily vindictive. To men so trained and taught, what we call "religious toleration, "was a thing not only wrong, but absolutely inconceivable.

It may be quite true that we find revenge forbidden as directly in the Old Testament as in the New, as, for instance, in Leviticus 19:18, "Thou shalt not avenge, "etc., though even there is a limitation, "against the children of thy people." And it may be no less true that we find instances of imprecation in the New; as when St. Paul says 2 Timothy 4:14, "Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works, "or when he exclaims Acts 23:3, "God will smite thee, thou whited wall; "or, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema." But even these expressions are very different from the varied, deliberate, carefully constructed, detailed anathemas of the Psalms. And our Lord's denunciations, to which Hengstenberg refers, are in no way parallel. They are not curses upon individuals, but in fact solemn utterances of the great truth, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." But after all, whatever may be said of particular passages, the general tone which runs through the two covenants, is unquestionably different. To deny this is not to honour Moses, but to dishonour Christ. Matthew 5:43 19:8. On the other hand, we must not forget that these imprecations are not the passionate longings for personal revenge. The singer undoubtedly sees in his enemies the enemies of God and his church. They that are not with him are against God. And because the zeal of God's house even consumes him, he prays that all the doers of iniquity may be rooted out. The indignation therefore is righteous, though it may appear to us wrongly directed, or excessive in its utterance.

Once more, the very fact that a dark cloud hid God's judgment in the world to come from the view of the Old Testament saints, may be alleged in

excuse of this their desire to see him take vengeance on his enemies here. How deeply this problem of God's righteousness exercised their minds is abundantly evident from numerous places in the Psalms. They longed to see that righteousness manifested. It could be manifested, they thought, only in the evident exaltation of the righteous, and the evident destruction of the wicked here. Hence, with their eye always fixed on temporal recompense, they could even wish and pray for the destruction of the ungodly. The awful things of the world to come were to a great extent hid from their eyes. Could they have seen these, then surely their prayer would have been not, "Let the angel of the Lord persecute them," "Blot them out of thy book; "but rather with him who hung upon the cross; "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." *J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Ver. 4,8,26. David was about as devoid of vindictiveness as any public character who can well be named. His conduct in relation to Saul, from first to last displayed a singularly noble spirit, far removed from anything like the lust of vengeance; and the meekness with which he endured the bitter reproaches of Shimei, bore witness to the same spirit after his accession to the throne. ...When David's whole career is intelligently and fairly reviewed, it leaves on the mind the impression of a man possessed of as meek and placable a temper as was ever associated with so great strength of will, and such strong passions. Even in the heats of sudden resentment, he was not apt to be hurried into deeds of revenge. Such being the case, it would certainly have been a strange and unaccountable thing if he had shown himself less the master of his own spirit in poems composed in seasons of retirement and communion with God, especially since these very poems express a keen sense of the heinousness of the sin that has been laid to his charge. He can affirm regarding his implacable enemies, "As for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth: I humbled my soul with fasting; and my prayer returned into mine own bosom. I behaved myself as though he had been my friend or brother: I bowed down heavily, as one that mourneth for his mother." Psalm 35:13-14. "O Lord, my God, if I have done this; if there be iniquity in my hands; if I have rewarded evil unto him that was at peace with me (yea, I have delivered him that without cause is mine enemy): let the enemy persecute my soul, and take it; yea, let him tread down my life upon the earth." Psalm 7:3-5. Surely one ought to think twice before putting on the imprecations an interpretation which would make them utterly incongruous with these appeals, uttered almost in the same breath. *William Binnie, D.D.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 4. The everlasting confusion of the devil.

PSALM 35:5

EXPOSITION

Ver. 5. *Let them be as chaff before the wind.* They were swift enough to attack, let them be as swift to flee. Let their own fears and the alarms of their consciences unman them so that the least breeze of trouble shall carry them hither and thither. Ungodly men are worthless in character, and light in their behaviour, being destitute of solidity and fixedness; it is but just that those that make themselves chaff should be treated as such. When this imprecation is fulfilled in graceless men, they will find it an awful thing to be for ever without rest, without peace of mind, or stay of soul, hurried from fear to fear, and from misery to misery.

And let the angel of the Lord chase them. Fallen angels shall haunt them, good angels shall afflict them. To be pursued by avenging spirits will be the lot of those who delight in persecution. Observe the whole scene as the psalmist sketches it: the furious foe is first held at bay, then turned back, then driven to headlong flight, and chased by fiery messengers from whom there is no escape, while his pathway becomes dark and dangerous, and his destruction overwhelming.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 5. *As chaff.* Literally, "As the thistledown." *John Morison.*

PSALM 35:6

EXPOSITION

Ver. 6. *Let their way be dark and slippery.* What terrors are gathered Here! No light, no foothold, and a fierce avenger at their heels! What a doom is appointed for the enemies of God! They may rage and rave today, but how altered will be their plight ere long!

And let the angel of the Lord persecute them. He will follow them hot foot, as we say, never turning aside, but like a trusty pursuivant serving the writ of vengeance upon them, and arresting them in the name of unflinching justice. Woe, woe, woe, unto those who touch the people of God; their destruction is both swift and sure.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 6. *Let their way be dark and slippery.* A horrible way! Darkness alone who feareth not? A slippery way alone who avoids not? In a dark and slippery way, how shalt thou go? where set foot? These two ills are the great punishments of men: darkness, ignorance; a slippery way, luxury.

Let their way be darkness and slipping; and let the angel of the Lord persecute them, that they be not able to stand. For anyone in a dark and slippery way, when he seeth that if he move his foot he will fall, and there is no light before his feet, haply resolves to wait until light come; but here is the angel of the Lord persecuting them. *Augustine.*

Ver. 6. *Slippery.* Margin, as in Hebrew, *slipperiness*. This is a circumstance which adds increased terror to the image. It is not only a *dark* road, but a road made slippery by rains; a road where they are in danger every moment of sliding down a precipice where they will be destroyed. *Albert Barnes.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 6. The horrible pilgrimage of the ungodly.

Ver. 6. The trinity of dangers in the pathway of the wicked, their way dark with ignorance, and slippery with temptation, while behind them is the avenger.

PSALM 35:7

EXPOSITION

Ver. 7. In this verse the psalmist brings forward the gravamen of his charge against the servants of the devil.

For without cause --without my having injured, assailed, or provoked them; out of their own spontaneous malice *have they hid for me their net in a pit*, even as men hunt for their game with cunning and deception. Innocent persons have often been ruined by traps set for them, into which they have fallen as guilelessly as beasts which stumble into concealed pits, and are taken as in a net. It is no little thing to be able to feel that the enmity which assails us is undeserved-- not caused by any wilful offence on our part. Twice does David assert in one verse that his adversaries plotted against him *without cause*. Net making and pit digging require time and labour, and both of these the wicked will expend cheerfully if they may but overthrow the people of God. Fair warfare belongs to honourable men, but the assailants of God's church prefer mean, ungenerous schemes, and so prove their nature and their origin. We must all of us be on our guard, for gins and pitfalls are still the favourite weapons of the powers of evil.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 7. *They hid for me their net in a pit.* As if David had said that they had dug a pit, and covered and hid its mouth with a net, that I might pass upon it and fall into it. *Kimchi*.

PSALM 35:8

EXPOSITION

Ver. 8. *Let destruction come upon him at unawares.* This tremendous imprecation is frequently fulfilled. God's judgments are often sudden and signal. Death enters the persecutor's house without pausing to knock at the door. The thunderbolt of judgment leaps from its hiding place, and in one crash the wicked are broken for ever.

And let his net that he hath hid catch himself: into that very destruction let him fall. There is a *lex talionis* with God which often works most wonderfully. Men set traps and catch their own fingers. They throw up stones, and they fall upon their own heads. How often Satan outwits himself, and burns his fingers with his own coals! This will doubtless be one of the aggravations of hell, that men will torment themselves with what was once the fond devices of their rebellious minds. They curse and are

cursed; they kick the pricks and tear themselves; they pour forth floods of fire, and it burns within and without.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 8. *Let destruction come upon him at unawares.* Or a storm, such as is caused in the Eastern countries by a south wind, very sudden, violent, and destructive. *John Gill.*

Ver. 8. *Let his net that he hath hid catch himself: into that very destruction let him fall.* By giving Ahithophel rope enough, the Lord preserved David from perishing. Who will not admire that Goliath should be slain with his own sword, and that proud Haman should hold Mordecai's stirrup, and be the herald of his honour? The wicked shall be undone by their own doings; all the arrows that they shoot at the righteous shall fall upon their own pates. Maxentius built a false bridge to drown Constantine, but was drowned himself. Henry the Third of France was stabbed in the very same chamber where he had helped to contrive the cruel massacre of the French Protestants. And his brother, Charles the Ninth, who delighted in the blood of the saints, had blood given him to drink, for he was worthy. It is usual with God to take persecutors in the snares and pits that they have laid for his people, many thousands in this nation have experienced; and though Rome and her confederates are this day laying snares and traps and digging pits for the righteous, who will rather burn than bow to their Baal, yet do but wait and weep, and weep and wait a little, and you shall see that the Lord will take them in the very snares and pits that they have laid and digged for his people. *Condensed from Thomas Brooks.*

Ver. 8. *Let the net that he hath hid catch himself.* Thou fool, who opposest thy counsels to those of the Most High. He who devises evil for another, falls at last into his own pit, and the most cunning finds himself caught by what he had prepared for another. But virtue without guile, erect like the lofty palm, rises with greater vigour when it is oppressed. *Pietro Metastasio, 1698-1782.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 8. Destruction at unawares, an awful topic.

PSALM 35:9

EXPOSITION

Ver. 9. *And my soul shall be joyful in the Lord.* Thus rescued, David ascribes all the honour to the Judge of the right; to his own valorous arm he offers no sacrifice of boasting. He turns away from his adversaries to his God, and finds a deep unbroken joy in Jehovah, and in that joy his spirit revels.

It shall rejoice in his salvation. We do not triumph in the destruction of others, but in the salvation given to us of God. Prayer heard should always suggest praise. It were well if we were more demonstrative in our holy rejoicing. We rob God by suppressing grateful emotions.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 9. *And my soul shall be joyful in the Lord,* etc. While some ascribe to fortune, and others to their own skill, the praise of their deliverance from danger, and few, if any, yield the whole praise of it to God, David here, declares that he will not forget the favour which God had bestowed upon him. My soul, says he, shall rejoice, not in a deliverance of the author of which it is ignorant, but in the salvation of God. To place the matter in a still stronger light, he assigns to his very bones the office of declaring the divine glory. As if not content that his tongue should be employed in this, he applies all the members of his body to the work of setting forth the praises of God. The style of speaking which he employs is hyperbolical, but in this way he shows unfeignedly that his love to God was so strong that he desired to spend his sinews and bones in declaring the reality and truth of his devotion. *John Calvin.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 9. Joy in God and in his salvation.

PSALM 35:10

EXPOSITION

Ver. 10. As the tongue were not enough to bless God with, David makes every limb vocal—

All my bones shall say, Lord, who is like unto thee? His whole anatomy he would make resonant with gratitude. Those bones which were to have been broken by my enemies shall now praise God; every one of them shall bring its tribute, ascribing unrivalled excellence to Jehovah the Saviour of his people. Even if worn to skin and bone, yet my very skeleton shall magnify the Lord,

which deliverest the poor from him that is too strong for him, yea, the poor and the needy from him that spoileth him. God is the champion, the true knight errant of all oppressed ones. Where there is so much condescension, justice, kindness, power, and compassion, the loftiest songs should be rendered. Come, dear reader, have you not been delivered from sin, Satan, and death, and will not you bless the Redeemer? You were poor and weak, but in due time Christ sought you, and set you free. O magnify the Lord today, and speak well of his name.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 10. *All my bones*, etc. These words contain the most vivid description of the highest delight which by the whole soul and body should be experienced and openly manifested. He mentions his soul Psalm 35:9 and all his bones as about to take part in the joy, to indicate that he most heartily and with his whole body was about to rejoice, and that the joy which he would manifest would not be of an ordinary character, but of the highest order, so that each several bone should sing forth the praises of God. *Herman Venema*, 1697-1787.

Ver. 10. *All my bones*. In the Scriptures emotions are generally ascribed to the viscera, the bones are usually regarded as passive; in this place and Psalm 51:8, and in these two places only, exulting joy is attributed to the bones. Ordinary experience shows us that the intestines have sympathy with our passionate excitements, but we have no consciousness of the bones becoming sympathetically sensitive. The expression therefore is

highly poetical, and indicates that they joy intended would be far beyond ordinary and common delight; it would be so profound that even the most callous part of the human frame would partake of it. Doubtless the poetry has a basis of truth in it, for though we may not perceive it, there is most assuredly a true and real sympathy with our mental states in every particle of bone and muscle, as well as in those tender organs which are more apparently affected. *C. H. S. Thoughts suggested by a passage in "Biblical Psychology," by Franz Delitzsch.*

Ver. 10. *All my bones.* That is, whatsoever strength and vigour is in me shall be spent in celebrating thy praises. Or, although I have nothing left me but skin and bones so poor am I grown, yet I will not be wanting to the work. *John Trapp.*

Ver. 10. My bones are riving through my skin, and yet all my bones are praising him. "I said, I am cast out of thy sight, but I will look again towards thy holy temple." *Thomas Halyburton.* 1674-1711.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 10. A matchless God, and his matchless grace--these are the themes. An experienced heart, thoroughly quickened--this is the songster; and from this cometh matchless music.

The music of a shattered harp.

PSALM 35:11

EXPOSITION

Ver. 11. *False witnesses did rise up.* This is the old device of the ungodly, and we must not wonder if it be used against us as against our Master. To please Saul, there were always men to be found mean enough to impeach David.

They laid to my charge things that I knew not. He had not even a thought of sedition; he was loyal even to excess; yet they accused him of conspiring against the Lord's anointed. He was not only innocent, but ignorant of the fault alleged. It is well when our hands are so clean that no trace of dirt is upon them.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 11. *They laid to my charge things that I knew not.* You will say, Why does God permit wicked people to lay to the charge of the godly such things as they are clear of: God if he pleased could prevent it, and stop the mouths of the wicked, that they should not be able to speak against his children? Answer--As all things work for the best to them that love God, so this works for the good of God's people. God doth permit it for the good of his people, and thus he frustrates the hopes of the wicked: they intend evil against the godly, and God disposes of it for good. As Joseph said to his brethren, "You intended evil against me, and God disposed of it for good; "so we may say to such as falsely slander God's people, You intended evil against the people of God, but God disposes of it for good. There is fivefold good that God brings out of it to his people.

First, God doth by this means humble them, and brings them to examine what is amiss: so that though they be clear of that crime laid to their charge, yet they will then examine whether there be nothing else amiss betwixt God and them; they will search their hearts, and walk more humbly, and cleave more close to the Lord.

Secondly, God doth by this means bring them oftener upon their knees, to seek unto him, to plead their cause, and to clear their innocency. How oft did the prophet speak unto God when the wicked did falsely accuse him; how did he make his moan at the throne of grace unto God, beseeching him to plead his cause, and to keep him close in his way, that the wicked might not rejoice at his downfall! So when God's people see that it is that which the wicked would have, that which is their joy, to see the godly fall into such and such a sin; then the godly will pray more earnestly with David, Lord, lead me in a right path because of my observers; then they will be earnest with God to keep them from falling into that sin that the wicked desire they might fall into; and this is a second good that comes of it.

Thirdly, God doth us the reproach of the wicked as a preventing medicine against that crime which the wicked lay to their charge. The godly have unrenewed nature as well as renewed, and if God should leave them never so little to themselves, they are not their own keepers, they might fall into that sin which the wicked lay to their charge: and every godly man and woman may say when they are falsely accused, It is God's mercy that I did not fall into that sin they lay to my charge. God doth use wicked people's

tongues as a warning against such a sin, that when they see how the wicked joy at a brat of their own hatching, then they consider, if the wicked thus joy without a cause, what would they do if they had just cause? Well, by the help of God this shall be a warning to me for ever to watch against that sin: for the time to come I will pray more against that particular sin than I have done, and watch more against that sin than I have done; through God's help they shall never have occasion to rejoice over me in that kind. Truly, I verily believe many a child of God can say by experience, I never should have prayed and watched against such a sin so much, had not God used the tongues of the wicked as preventing physic: I know not my own heart, but that I might have fallen into such and such a sin had not God by this means hedged up my way with thorns; and this is the third good comes of it.

Fourthly, God doth by this means exercise the graces of his people by letting them undergo bad report as well as good report: he tries whether they will cleave close to him in all conditions, as Psalm 94:15-17.

Fifthly, God doth by this means teach them how to judge of others when they are falsely accused. For the time to come they will not receive a false report against their neighbour; they will know the truth of a thing before they believe it, and they know how to comfort others in the like condition; and thus God disposes of it for good, and thus God makes the wicked the servant of his people in that very thing which the wicked think to wrong them most in; for he uses the wicked as the rod and wisp, to scour off the rust of their graces and to correct their security; and when the rod hath done its office then it is thrown into the fire; and thus you see how God disposes of the wicked's false accusations of his people for good.

Zephaniah Smyth's Sermon, "The Malignant's Plot", 1647.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 11. The meanness, cruelty, sinfulness, and commonness of slander.

PSALM 35:12

EXPOSITION

Ver. 12. *They rewarded me evil for good.* This is devilish; but men have learned the lesson well of the old Destroyer, and practise it most perfectly.

To the spoiling of my soul. They robbed him of comfort, and even would have taken his life had it not been for special rescues from the hand of God. The wicked would strip the righteous naked to their very soul: they know no pity. There are only such limits to human malice as God himself may see fit to place.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 12. *They rewarded me evil for good.* For the good David did in killing Goliath, and slaying his ten thousands of Philistines, and thereby saving his king and country, Saul and his courtiers envied him, and sought to slay him: so our Lord Jesus Christ, for all the good he did to the Jews, by healing their bodies of diseases, and preaching the gospel to them for the benefit of their souls, was rewarded with reproaches and persecutions, and at last with the shameful death of the cross; and in like manner are his people used, but this is an evil that shall not go unpunished: see Proverbs 17:13. *John Gill.*

Ver. 12. *To the spoiling of my soul.* They robbed not his body of goods but his soul of consolation. They bereaved his soul (that is the word), like a widow who loses her children in whom she delighted and found succour. They were not content with injuring his estate, but they were for ruining the man himself by their undeserved malice, they attacked him in name and reputation, which were as dear to him as his sons and daughters, or even as his soul. It is evermore an injury to the soul to be attacked with slander, it puts a man into a warring attitude, endangers his peace of mind, imperils his enjoyment of quiet contemplation, and tends to interrupt his communion with God. Thus the spiritual nature is despoiled and suffers bereavement. *C. H. S.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 12. How a soul may be robbed.

PSALM 35:13

EXPOSITION

Ver. 13. *But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth.*

David had been a man of sympathy; he had mourned when Saul was in ill health, putting on the weeds of sorrow for him as though he were a near and dear friend. His heart went into mourning for his sick master.

Humbled my soul with fasting. He prayed for his enemy, and made the sick man's case his own, pleading and confessing as if his own personal sin had brought on the evil. This showed a noble spirit in David, and greatly aggravated the baseness of those who now so cruelly persecuted him.

And my prayer returned into mine own bosom. Prayer is never lost: if it bless not those for whom intercession is made, it shall bless the intercessors. Clouds do not always descend in showers upon the same spot from which the vapours ascended, but they come down somewhere; and even so do supplications in some place or other yield their showers of mercy. If our dove find no rest for the sole of her foot among our enemies, it shall fly into our bosoms and bring an olive branch of peace in its mouth. How sharp is the contrast all through this Psalm between the righteous and his enemies! We must be earnest to keep the line of demarcation broad and clear.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 13. *My prayer returned into, or was directed to, my bosom.* Of the many interpretations that are given of this passage, that appears to me the most probable which derives it from the posture of the worshipper; who standing with his head inclined downward toward his bosom, turned away his attention from all external objects, and uttered his mournful and earnest requests, as if they were directed to his own bosom. Such a posture of devotion is in use both among Jews and Mohammedans. *Koeler in Repertor. Lit. Orient.; and Reland de Relig. Mohammedica, quoted by Walford in loc.*

Ver. 13. *(last clause).* We may read it thus: *Let my prayer return into my bosom;* that is, I wished no worse to them than to myself: let me receive of God such good as I prayed for them. See Psalm 79:12. *Henry Ainsworth.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 13. Christian sympathy even for the froward.

Ver. 13. (*last clause*). Personal benefit of intercessory prayer.

Ver. 13-14. Compassion to the sick. *C. Simeon.*

PSALM 35:14

EXPOSITION

Ver. 14. *I behaved myself as though he has been my friend or brother:* I waited upon him assiduously, comforted him affectionately, and sympathised with him deeply. This may refer to those days when David played on the harp, and chased away the evil spirit from Saul.

I bowed down heavily, as one that mourneth for his mother. He bowed his head as mourners do. The strongest natural grief was such as he felt when they were in trouble. The mother usually wins the deepest love, and her loss is most keenly felt: such was David's grief. How few professors in these days have such bowels of compassion; and yet under the gospel there should be far more tender love than under the law. Had we more hearty love to manhood, and care for its innumerable ills, we might be far more useful; certainly we should be infinitely more Christ like. "He prayeth best that loveth best."

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 14. *For his mother.* On account of the plurality of wives in an Eastern household, the sons are usually far more attached to their mother than their father. Their father they share with a numerous band of half brothers, who are envious of them, or of whom they are jealous, but their mother is all their own, with her they are brought up in childhood; she takes their part in youth, in the numerous battles of the harem; and on their part when they are grown up, they love her intensely, and hence their mourning at her decease is of the bitterest kind. *C. H. S.*

Ver. 14. *His mother.* Mahomet was once asked what relation had the strongest claim upon our affection and respect; when he instantly replied, "The mother, the mother, the mother."

Ver. 14. (*last clause*). *Bewailleth his mother: mourneth at her funeral.* In this case the affections are most strong. Therefore the priests were permitted to mourn for such. Leviticus 21:1-3. *Henry Ainsworth.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 13-14. Compassion to the sick. *C. Simeon.*

PSALM 35:15

EXPOSITION

Ver. 15. *But in mine adversity they rejoiced.* In my halting they were delighted. My lameness was sport to them. Danger was near, and they sang songs over my expected defeat. How glad are the wicked to see a good man limp! "Now," say they, "he will meet with his downfall."

And gathered themselves together, like kites and vultures around a dying sheep. They found a common joy in my ruin, and a recreation in my sorrow, and therefore met together to keep the feast. They laid their heads together to devise, and their tongues to deceive.

Yea, the objects gathered themselves together against me. Those who deserved horsewhipping, fellows the soles of whose feet were needing the bastinado, came together to plot, and held hole and corner meetings. Like curs around a sick lion, the mean wretches taunted and insulted one whose name had been their terror. The very cripples hobbled out to join the malicious crew. How unanimous are the powers of evil; how heartily do men serve the devil; and none decline his service because they are not endowed with great abilities!

I knew it not. It was all done behind my back. What a fluster the world may be in, and the cause of it all may not even know that he has given offence.

They did tear me, and ceased not. It is such dainty work to tear to pieces a good man's character, that when slanderers have their hand in they are

loath to leave off. A pack of dogs tearing their prey is nothing compared with a set of malicious gossips mauling the reputation of a worthy man. That lovers of the gospel are not at this time rent and torn as in the old days of Mary, is to be attributed to the providence of God rather than to the gentleness of men.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 15. *But in mine adversity they rejoiced*, etc. Do not glory in your neighbour's ruins. The firefly leaps and dances in the fire, and so do many wicked men rejoice in the sufferings of others. Such as rejoice in the sufferings of others are sick of the devil's disease; but from that disease the Lord deliver all your souls. It is sad to insult over those whom God hath humbled; it is high wickedness to triumph over those to whom God hath given a cup of astonishment to drink. Such as make the desolations of their neighbours to be the matter either of their secret repast, or open exultation, such may fear that the very dregs of divine wrath are reserved for them. It is bad playing upon the harp because others have been put to hang their harps upon the willows. We must not pray with him in the tragedy, that it may rain calamities; nor with Clemens' Gnostic, Give me calamities that I may glory in them. There cannot be a greater evidence of a wicked heart, than for a man to be merry because others are in misery. "He that is glad at calamities (that is, at the calamities of others) shall not be unpunished" Proverbs 17:5. If God be God, such as congratulate our miseries instead of condoling them, shall be sure to be punished with the worst of punishments; for such do not only sin against the law of grace, but also against the very law of nature; the law of nature teaching men to sympathise with those that are in misery, and not to rejoice over them because of their miseries. O sirs, do not make other's mourning your music, do not make other's tears your wine; as you would not be made drunk at last with the wine of astonishment. *Thomas Brooks.*

Ver. 15. *But in mine adversity they rejoiced*, etc. Marvellous prophecy of the cross! second only, if indeed second, to that in the twenty-second Psalm. Still closer to the history if we take the Vulgate: *the scourges* were gathered *together upon me*. Even so, O Lord Jesus, the ploughers ploughed upon thy back, and made long furrows: precious furrows for us, where are sown patience for the present life, and glory in the next; where are sown hope that maketh not ashamed, and love that many waters cannot quench. "*The very abjects.*" Even those worst of abjects, who said, "God, I

thank thee that I am not as other men are; "who had set the poor sinner before the Lord, with their "Moses in the law commanded that such should be stoned." "*Making mouths at me.*" And is it not wonderful that, well knowing the prophecy, yet the chief priests and scribes should have so fulfilled it, as that it should be written concerning them, "They that passed by mocked him, wagging their heads." *Lewis de Grenada*, 1504-1588.

Ver. 15. *In mine adversity they rejoiced.* Now, as men often relent at seeing the misfortunes of their enemies, so that they cease to hate or persecute those who are already miserably wretched, it was an evidence of the very cruel and fierce spirit by which David's former friends were actuated against him, when, upon seeing him cast down and afflicted, they were rather by this incited furiously and insolently to assail him. *John Calvin.*

Ver. 15. *The abjects.* *The very abjects* (Prayer Book Version). The Hebrew word *Nechim*, thus translated, comes from a verb signifying *to be smitten*. Hence, in the Septuagint it is rendered *scourges*. But it may also be rendered, with Jerome, *smiters*, and may mean *smiting with the tongue*. Compare Jeremiah 18:18. Another of its meanings is, according to Buxtorf, *the wry legged, the lame*; and so it is used in 2 Samuel 4:4 9:3 whence the epithet of *Necho* was given to one of the Pharaohs who halted in his gait. Our translators seem to have understood the word in this last sense, as a term of contempt. *Daniel Cresswell.*

Ver. 15. David, having showed how compassionate he was to his enemies in their affliction Psalm 35:14, he presently shows Psalm 35:15, how uncompassionate, or barbarously cruel rather, his enemies were to him in his.

Abjects are vile persons, men smitten in their estates and credits; yea, often as slaves or ill servants smitten with cudgels or whips. So a learned translator renders the Psalm, *The smitten gathered against me*; that is, vile men who deserve to be beaten and cudgelled. *Joseph Caryl.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 15. The shameful conspiracy of men against our Lord Jesus at his passion.

PSALM 35:16

EXPOSITION

Ver. 16. *With hypocritical mockers in feasts, they gnashed upon me with their teeth.* Like professional buffoons who grin around the banquet to make sport, so they made a business of jeering at the good man; not, however, out of mirth, but from violent, insatiable hatred. Like cake scoffers, or men who will jeer for a bit of bread, these hireling miscreants persecuted David in order to get a bellyful for themselves from Saul's table: having moreover an inward grudge against the son of Jesse because he was a better man than themselves. Very forcibly might our Lord have used the words of these verses! Let us not forget to see the Despised and Rejected of men here painted to the life. Calvary and the ribald crew around the cross seem brought before our eyes.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 16. *With hypocritical mockers in feasts.* Some cannot be merry, but it must be with Scripture; if they want a little diversion, the saints must be the subject of their discourse! they can vent their profane jests upon the word of God; this is their pastime over their cups upon the ale bench. How ready they are with their contumelious reflections; they have learnt their father's dialect, they are accusers of the brethren, their speech betrays them to be Hellians. You know that in ordinary, we can tell what countryman a person is by his speech, every country having almost a peculiar idiom; so it is here, these scoffers at religion by speaking the language of hell, let us understand whence they are. They have, it may be, a little wit, which they set off with a sort of an air in rhetorical raillery, and oh, how quick and sharp when they are upon this subject! These scoffing Ishmaelites are seated in the devil's chair, somewhat above their brethren in iniquity, as most deserving the place; and there is less ground to hope that such persons will be savingly wrought upon who arrive to such a height is sin as to make a mock of it, and to sport with holiness, than of others. Persons are got a great way towards hell when they mock at what is serious, and that with delight. This the Lord will visit for in his due time; for he knows who they are that so dishonour him by reproaching them that are his. *Oliver Heywood.*

Ver. 16. *Hypocritical mockers in feasts.* (ys yl ypḡhB] Very difficult. The word (gwQm), in 1 Kings 17:12, the only other passage where it occurs, means "a cake." Hence (ym yl ḡ) is interpreted by Gesenius and others to mean, hangers on at the table of the rich (literally "cake mockers"), whose business it was, by witticisms and buffoonery to make entertainment for the guests, and who got their dinner in return, like the ψωμοκόλακες κνισοκόλακες, and the Medieval *Lat. buccellarii*. Then the words would mean, "Amongst the most profane." *J. J. Stewart Perowne*. (Would not our word *loafers* be somewhat analogous to these cake eaters of antiquity!) *C. H. S.*

Ver. 16. *Hypocritical mockers.* David aggravates the sin of those jeering companions who made him their table talk, and could not taste their cheer except seasoned with some salt jest quibbled out at him, with this, that they were *hypocritical mockers*; they did it slily, and wrapped up their scoffs, it is like in such language as might make some think, who did not well observe them, that they applauded him. There is a way of commending which some have learned to use when they mean to cast the greatest scorn upon those they hate bitterly, and these hypocritical mockers deserve the chair to be given them from all other scorers. *William Gurnall*.

Ver. 16. *Mockers in feasts.* If it were known at a feast that there was any one present or absent, whom the host disliked, it was customary for the guests to "make fun of them," and use sarcastic language respecting them. These are the *hypocritical mockers in feasts*. *John Gadsby*.

PSALM 35:17

EXPOSITION

Ver. 17. *Lord, how long wilt thou look on?* Why be a mere spectator? Why so neglectful of thy servant? Art thou indifferent? Carest thou not that we perish? We may thus reason with the Lord. He permits us this familiarity. There is a time for our salvation, but to our impatience it often seems to be very slow in coming; yet wisdom has ordained the hour, and nothing shall delay it.

Rescue my soul from their destructions. From their many devices; their multiplied assaults, be pleased to set me free. "*My darling*," my lovely,

only, precious soul, do thou rescue *"from the lions."* His enemies were fierce, cunning, and strong as young lions; God only could deliver him from their jaws, to God he therefore addresses himself.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 17. Satan no sooner spies our wanderings, but he presently runs with a complaint to God, filing bills against us in the star-chamber of heaven, where the matter would go hard with us, but for the Great Lord Chancellor of peace, our Advocate Jesus Christ. As God keeps all our tears in a bottle, and registereth the very groans of our holy passion in a book, so Satan keeps a record of our sins, and solicits justice against us. Were God like man, subject to passions, or incensible by the suggestions of the common barrator, woe were us. But he will hear one son of truth before ten thousand fathers of lying. No matter what the plaintiff libelleth, when the judge acquitteth. We have forfeited our estates by treason, and the busy devil begs us; but there is one that steps in, and pleads a former grant, and that both by promise and purchase. *"Lord, rescue my soul from their destructions, my darling from the lions."* Lord Jesus, challenge thy own; let not Satan enter upon by force or fraud, what thou hast bought with thine own blood. *Thomas Adams.*

Verse 17. *"My darling."* In Poole's Synopsis the critics explain this name for the soul, as my only one, my solitary one, desolate, deserted, and destitute of human hope. Such is the soul under sore affliction. See Psalm 22:21. *"From the lions."* Daniel in the den was literally where David was spiritually. Shut in amongst fierce, cruel, and angry creatures, and himself defenceless, having no weapon but prayer, no helper but the Lord. The people of God may be exposed to the lions of hell, and their roarings may grievously affright them; but the soul which is their "darling" is also God's dear one, and therefore they shall be rescued. [C. H. S.]

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Verse 17. The limit of divine endurance.

Verse 18. "I will give thee thanks in the great congregation." Notable deliverances must be recorded, and their fame emblazoned. All the saints should be informed of the Lord's goodness. The theme is worthy of the largest assembly, the experience of a believer is a subject fit for an

assembled universe to hear of. Most men publish their griefs, good men should proclaim their mercies. ["I will praise thee among much people."] Among friends and foes will I glorify the God of my salvation. Praise — personal praise, public praise, perpetual praise — should be the daily revenue of the King of heaven. Thus, for the second time, David's prayer ends in praise, as indeed all prayers should.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Verse 18. The duty, blessedness, and seasonableness of public praise.

Verse 19. He earnestly prays that as they have no cause for their enmity, they may have no cause for triumph either in his folly, sin, or overthrow. *"Neither let them wink with the eye that hate me without a cause."* The winking of the eye was the low-bred sign of congratulation at the ruin of their victim, and it may also have been one of their scornful gestures as they gazed upon him whom they despised. To cause hatred is the mark of the wicked, to suffer it causelessly is the lot of the righteous. God is the natural Protector of all who are wronged, and he is the enemy of all oppressors.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Verse 19. *"Wink with the eye."* Showing pleasure in their eyes because of my evil. [Francis Vatablus,] 1545

Verse 19. *"Wink the eye."* This was a sign which malicious persons made to each other when the object of their malice was gained, scornfully twisting their eyes together. The Hebrew word here has no sufficiently expressive substitute in English. [Benjamin Weiss.]

EXPOSITION

Verse 20. *"For they speak not peace."* They love it not; how can they speak it? They are such troublers themselves that they cannot judge others to be peaceable. Out of the mouth comes what is in the heart. Riotous men charge others with sedition. *"They devise deceitful matters against them that are quiet in the land."* David would fain have been an orderly citizen, but they laboured to make him a rebel. He could do nothing aright, all his dealings were misrepresented. This is an old trick of the enemy to brand good men with S.S. on their cheeks, as sowers of sedition, though they

have ever been a harmless race, like sheep among wolves. When mischief is meant, mischief is soon made. Unscrupulous partisans could even charge Jesus with seeking to overturn Cæsar, much more will they thus accuse his household. At this very hour, those who stand up for the crown rights of King Jesus are called enemies of the church, favourers of Popery, friends of Atheists, levellers, red republicans, and it were hard to say what besides. Billingsgate and Babylon are in league.

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EXPOSITION

Verse 21. *"Yea, they opened their mouth wide against me."* As if they would swallow him. Uttering great lies which needed wide mouths. They set no bounds to their infamous charges, but poured out wholesale abuse, trusting that if all did not stick, some of it would.

"And said, Aha, aha, our eye hath seen it." Glad to find out a fault or a misfortune, or to swear they had seen evil where there was none. Malice has but one eye; it is blind to all virtue in its enemy. Eyes can generally see what hearts wish. A man with a mote in his eye sees a spot in the sun. How like a man is to an ass when he brays over another's misfortunes! how like to a devil when he laughs a hyæna-laugh over a good man's slip! Malice is

folly, and when it holds a festival its tones and gestures far exceed all the freaks and mummeries of the lord of misrule.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Verse 21. *"Our eye hath seen."* [Eye] for [eyes], unless we would say that all the wicked are so conjoined, that they may seem to have but one eye, heart, head. [John Trapp.]

Verse 21. Yet, O ye saints, divulge not these things to wicked men; whisper them softly one to another, with fear and trembling, lest some profane wretch or other overhear you, and take that for encouragement that was only meant for caution. What is more common than for the vilest sinners to plead for their excuse, or warrant rather, the foul miscarriages of God's dearest saints? Thus the drunkard looks upon holy Noah as a pot-companion, whereby he discovers his nakedness in a worse sense than ever Cham did; and thus the unclean sensualist quotes David, and calls him in to be the patron of his debauchery. Certainly, if their be any grief that can overcast the perfect joys of the saints in heaven, it is that their names and examples should, to the great dishonour of God, be produced by wicked and sinful men, to countenance their grossest sins and wickednesses. But let such know, that God hath set up these in his church to be monuments of his mercy, to declare to humble and penitent sinners how great sins he can pardon; yet if any hereupon embolden themselves in sin, instead of being set up as monuments of mercy, God will set them up as pillars of salt. [Ezekiel Hopkins (Bishop).]

Verse 21. He who rejoices in another's fall rejoices in the devil's victory. [Ambrose, quoted in Nichol's Proverbs.]

Verses 21, 22: ---

*They gape and drawe their mouthes in scornful wise.
And crie, fie, fie, wee sawe it with our eyes.
But thou their deed, (O Lord!) dost also see;
Then bee not silent soe, nor farr from mee.*

EXPOSITION

Verse 22. *"This thou hast seen, O Lord."* Here is comfort. Our heavenly Father knows all our sorrow. Omniscience is the saint's candle which never

goes out. A father will not long endure to see his child abused. Shall not God avenge his own elect?

"Keep not silence." Rebuke thine enemies and mine, O Lord. A word will do it. Clear my character, comfort my heart.

"O Lord, be not far from me." Walk the furnace with me. Stand in the pillory at my side. The sweet presence of God is the divine cordial of the persecuted; his painful absence would be their seepest misery.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Verses 21, 22:---

*They gape and drawe their mouthes in scornful wise,
And crie, fie, fie, wee sawe it with our eyes.
But thou their deed, (O Lord!) dost also see;
Then be not silent soe, nor farr from mee.
[Sir John Davies.]*

NOTES TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Verse 22. Omniscience pleaded, a word sought for, presence requested, action entreated, affiance urged as a claim.

EXPOSITION

Verse 23. *"Stir up thyself."* Be upon thy mettle. Prove that thou art no indifferent witness to all this infamy.

"Awake to my judgement." Take the sceptre and summon the great assize; vindicate justice, avenge oppression. Do not tarry as men do who sleep.

"Even unto my cause, my God and my Lord." He claims a nearness to his God, he holds him with both hands; he leaves his case with the righteous Judge. He begs that the suit may be brought on, heard, tried, and verdict given. Well is it for a man when his conscience is so clear that he dares to make such an appeal.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Verse 23. *"My God and my Lord."* The cry of Thomas when he saw the wounds of Jesus. If he did not count our Lord to be divine, neither does

David here ascribe Deity to Jehovah, for there is no difference except in the order of the words and the tongue in which they were spoken, the meaning is identical. What words they are, with their two eyes seeing Jehovah in two aspects yet as one, grasping him with two hands in the double "my" to one heart for the word is but one, bowing before him on both knees to worship him in lowliest reverence. Well might Nouet, in his exposition of the words as used by Thomas, exclaim, "Oh, sweet word, I will say it all my life long; I will say it in the hour of death; I will say it in eternity." [C. H. S.]

EXPOSITION

Verse 24. The appeal is here repeated; the plaintiff feels that the joy of his accusers will be shortlived as soon as impartial justice rules. The oppressors' wrong, the proud man's contumely, the fool's grimace — all, all will cease when the righteous Lord sits down upon the judgment seat.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Verse 24. *"O Lord my God."* O Jehovah my God; here is another precious word. He takes Jehovah to be his God, in opposition to those who make idols, or riches, or their own lusts their God. He claims a full possession of all that is in the great I AM. Even though he views him as a judge he lays the hand of faith upon his God, and flinches not even before the blaze of his righteousness. It is a noble word, a grand utterance of faith; he who can pronounce that word "my" from his inmost soul in such a connection may well laugh to scorn all his enemies. [C. H. S.]

EXPOSITION

Verse 25. *"Let them not say in their hearts, Ah, so would we have it: let them not say, We have swallowed him up."* Disappoint them of their prey when their mouths are ready to swallow it. Saints are too dear a morsel for the powers of evil; God will not give his sheep over to the wolfish jaws of persecutors. Just when they are tuning their pipes to celebrate their victory, they shall be made to laugh on the other side of their mouths. They are all too sure, and too boastful; they reckon without their host: little do they dream of the end which will be put to their scheming. Their bird shall be flown, and they themselves shall be in the trap. The prayer of this text is a promise. Even before the lips of the wicked can frame a speech of

exultation, they shall be disappointed; their heart-speech shall be forestalled, their wishes frustrated, their knavish tricks exposed.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Verse 25. "*Let them not say we have swallowed him up.*" And even if they could, like Jonah's whale, they would soon be sickened of their feast. A living child of God were more easily swallowed than digested by the malice of hell. [C. H. S.]

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Verse 25. The ungodly man's delight, and the righteous, man's refuge.

EXPOSITION

Verse 26. Here is the eternal result of all the laborious and crafty devices of the Lord's enemies. God will make little of them, though they "magnified themselves;" he will shame them for shaming his people, bring them to confusion for making confusion, pull off their fine apparel and give them a beggardly suit of dishonour, and turn all their rejoicing into weeping and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. Truly, the saints can afford to wait.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Verses 4 - 8, 26. How are we to account for such prayers for vengeance? We find them chiefly in four Psalms, the seventh, thirty-fifth, sixty-ninth, and one-hundred and ninth, and the imprecations in these form a terrible climax. In the last no less than thirty anathemas have been counted. Are these the mere outbursts of passionate and unsanctified feeling, or are they the legitimate expression of a righteous indignation? Are they to be excused as being animated by the "spirit of Elias"? a spirit not unholy indeed, but far removed from the meekness and gentleness of Christ; or are they the stereotyped forms in which the spirit of devotion may utter itself? Are they Jewish only, or may they be Christian also? An uninstructed fastidiousness, as it is well known, has made many persons recoil from reading these Psalms at all. Many have found their lips falter when they have been called to join in using them in the congregation, and have either uttered them with bated breath and doubting heart, or have interpreted them in a sense widely at variance with the letter. Some have tried to

reconcile them with a more enlightened conscience, by regarding such words not as the expression of a wish, but as the utterance of a prediction; but the Hebrew optative which is distinct enough from the simple future, absolutely forbids this expedient. Others again would see in them expressions which may lawfully be used in the soul's wrestling against spiritual enemies. And finally, some would defend them as utterances of righteous zeal for God's honour, and remind us that if we do not sympathise with such zeal, it may be not because our religion is more pure, but because our hearts are colder.

Now the real source of the difficulty lies in our not observing and bearing in mind the essential difference between the Old Testament and the New. The older dispensation was in every sense a sterner one than the new. The spirit of Elias, though not an evil spirit, was not the spirit of Christ. "The Son of Man came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them." Luke 9:56. And through him his disciples are made partakers of the same spirit. But this was not the spirit of the older economy. The Jewish nation had been trained in a sterner school. It had been steeled and hardened by the discipline which had pledged it to a war of extermination with idolaters; and however necessary such a discipline might be, it would not tend to foster the gentler virtues; it is conceivable how even a righteous man, under it, feeling it to be his bounden duty to root out evil wherever he saw it, and identifying, as he did, his own enemies with the enemies of Jehovah, might use language which to us appears unnecessarily vindictive. To men so trained and taught, what we call "religious toleration," was a thing not only wrong, but absolutely inconceivable.

It may be quite true that we find revenge forbidden as directly in the Old Testament as in the New, as, for instance, in Leviticus 19:18, "Thou shalt not avenge," etc., though even there is a limitation, "against the children of thy people." And it may be no less true that we find instances of imprecation in the New; as when St. Paul says (2 Timothy 4:14), "Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works," or when he exclaims (Acts 23:3), "God will smite thee, thou whited wall;" or, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema." But even these expressions are very different from the varied, deliberate, carefully constructed, detailed anathemas of the Psalms. And our Lord's denunciations, to which Hengstenberg refers, are in no way parallel. They are not curses upon individuals, but in fact solemn utterances of the great truth, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." But after

all, whatever may be said of particular passages, the general tone which runs through the two covenants, is unquestionably different. To deny this is not to honour Moses, but to dishonour Christ. Matthew 5:43; 19:8. On the other hand, we must not forget that these imprecations are not the passionate longings for personal revenge. The singer undoubtedly sees in his enemies the enemies of God and his church. They that are not with him are against God. And because the zeal of God's house even consumes him, he prays that all the doers of iniquity may be rooted out. The indignation therefore is righteous, though it may appear to us wrongly directed, or excessive in its utterance.

Once more, the very fact that a dark cloud hid God's judgment in the world to come from the view of the Old Testament saints, may be alleged in excuse of this their desire to see him take vengeance on his enemies here. How deeply this problem of God's righteousness exercised their minds is abundantly evident from numerous places in the Psalms. They longed to see that righteousness manifested. It could be manifested, they thought, only in the evident exaltation of the righteous, and the evident destruction of the wicked here. Hence, with their eye always fixed on temporal recompense, they could even wish and pray for the destruction of the ungodly. The awful things of the world to come were to a great extent hid from their eyes. Could they have seen these, then surely their prayer would have been not, "Let the angel of the Lord persecute them," "Blot them out of thy book;" but rather with him who hung upon the cross; "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." [*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*]

Verses 4, 8, 26. David was about as devoid of vindictiveness as any public character who can well be named. His conduct in relation to Saul, from first to last displayed a singularly noble spirit, far removed from anything like the lust of vengeance; and the meekness with which he endured the bitter reproaches of Shimei, bore witness to the same spirit after his accession to the throne. . . .

When David's whole career is intelligently and fairly reviewed, it leaves on the mind the impression of a man possessed of as meek and placable a temper as was ever associated with so great strength of will, and such strong passions. Even in the heats of sudden resentment, he was not apt to be hurried into deeds of revenge. Such being the case, it would certainly have been a strange and unaccountable thing if he had shown himself less the master of his own spirit in poems composed in seasons of retirement

and communion with God, especially since these very poems express a keen sense of the heinousness of the sin that has been laid to his charge. He can affirm regarding his implacable enemies, "As for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth: I humbled my soul with fasting; and my prayer returned into mine own bosom. I behaved myself as though he had been my friend or brother: I bowed down heavily, as one that mourneth for his mother." Psalm 35:13, 14. "O Lord, my God, if I have done this; if there be iniquity in my hands; if I have rewarded evil unto him that was at peace with me (yea, I have delivered him that without cause is mine enemy): let the enemy persecute my soul, and take it; yea, let him tread down my life upon the earth." Psalm 7:3 - 5. Surely one ought to think twice before putting on the imprecations an interpretation which would make them utterly incongruous with these appeals, uttered almost in the same breath. [William Binnie, D.D.]

NOTES TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Verse 26. The convict dress of the wicked - "clothed with shame," etc.

EXPOSITION

Verse 27. *"Let them shout for joy, and be glad, that favour my righteous cause."* Even those who could not render him active aid, but in their hearts favoured him, David would have the Lord reward most abundantly. Men of tender heart set great store by the good wishes and prayers of the Lord's people. Jesus also prizes those whose hearts are with his cause. The day is coming when shouts of victory shall be raised by all who are on Christ's side, for the battle will turn, and the foes of truth shall be routed.

"Yea, let them say continually, Let the Lord be magnified." He would have their gladness contributory to the divine glory; they are not to shout to David's praise, but for the honour of Jehovah. Such acclamations may fitly be continued throughout time and eternity.

"Which hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servant." They recognised David as the Lord's servant, and saw with pleasure the Lord's favour to him. We can have no nobler title than "servant of God," and no greater reward than for our Master to delight in our prosperity. What true prosperity may be we are not always best able to judge. We must leave that in Jesus' hand; he will not fail to rule all things for our highest good.

*"For by his saints it stands confessed,
That what he does is always best."*

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Verse 27. See how the hearts of the saints have been drawn out against their persecutors. Prayers are the arms that in times of persecution the saints have still had recourse to. The Romans being in great distress were put so hard to it, that they were fain to take the weapons out of the temple of their gods to fight with their enemies, and so they overcame them: so when the people of God have been hard put to it by reason of afflictions and persecutions, the weapons that they have fled to have been prayers and tears, and with these they have overcome their persecutors. [*Thomas Brooks.*]

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Verse 27 ([last clause]). What is that prosperity in which the Lord hath pleasure?

EXPOSITION

Verse 28. Unceasing praise is here vowed to the just and gracious God. From morning till evening the grateful tongue would talk and sing, and glorify the Lord. O for such a resolve carried out by us all!

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Verse 28. *"My tongue shall speak of thy righteousnesses and of thy praise all the day long."* See now I have made a discourse something longer; ye are wearied. Who endureth to praise God all the day long? I will suggest a remedy whereby thou mayest praise God all the day long if thou wilt. Whatever thou dost, do well, and thou hast praised God. When thou singest a hymn, thou praisest God, but what doth thy tongue, unless thy heart also praise him? Hast thou ceased from singing hymns, and departed that thou mayest refresh thyself? Be not drunken, and thou hast praised God. Dost thou go away to sleep? Rise not to do evil, and thou hast praised God. Dost thou transact business? Do no wrong, and thou hast praised God. Dost thou till thy field? Raise not strife, and thou hast praised God. In the innocency of thy works prepare thyself to praise God all the day long. [*Augustine.*]

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Verse 28. A blessed theme, a fitting tongue, an endless speech.

PSALM 36

PSALM 36:1

Title. To the Chief Musician, He who had the leadership of the Temple service was charged with the use of this song in public worship. What is everybody's business is never done. It was well to have one person specially to attend to the service of song in the house of the Lord. Of David the servant of the Lord. This would seem to indicate that the Psalm peculiarly befits one who esteems it an honour to be called Jehovah's servant. It is THE SONG OF HAPPY SERVICE; such a one as all may join in who bear the easy yoke of Jesus. The wicked are contrasted with the righteous, and the great Lord of devout men is heartily extolled; thus obedience to so good a Master is indirectly insisted on, and rebellion against him is plainly condemned.

Divisions. From Psalm 36:1-4 David describes the rebellious; in Psalm 36:5-9 he extols the various attributes of the Lord; in Psalm 36:10-11 he addresses the Lord in prayer, and in the last verse his faith sees in vision the overthrow of all the workers of iniquity.

EXPOSITION

Ver. 1. *The transgression of the wicked.* His daring and wanton sin; his breaking the bounds of law and justice.

Saith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes. Men's sins have a voice to godly ears. They are the outer index of an inner evil. It is clear that men who dare to sin constantly and presumptuously cannot respect the great Judge of all. Despite the professions of unrighteous men, when we see their unhallowed actions our heart is driven to the conclusion that they have no religion whatever. Unholiness is clear evidence of ungodliness. Wickedness is the fruit of an atheistic root. This may be made clear to the candid head by cogent reasoning, but it is clear already and intuitively to the pious heart. If God be everywhere, and I fear him, how can I dare to break his laws in his very presence? He must be a desperate traitor who will rebel in the monarch's own halls. Whatever theoretical

opinions bad men may avow, they can only be classed with atheists, since they are such practically. Those eyes which have no fear of God before them now, shall have the terrors of hell before them for ever.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Title. To the Chief Musician, has given rise to many conjectures. In the Septuagint the Hebrew word is translated, eiz to telos, to the end; a meaning so utterly vague as to defy all reasonable conjecture. ...The meaning of the term appears to be this: the Psalms in which it occurs were given in charge by their inspired authors to the Chief Musician overseeing some specific band of music, whether harps, psalteries, or wind instruments. *John Jebb, A.M., in "A Literal Translation of the Book of Psalms, " 1846.*

Title. The servant of the Lord. David only uses this title here and in Psalm eighteen. In both he describes the dealings of God both with the righteous and the wicked, and it is most fit that at the very outset he should take his place with the servants of the Lord. *C. H. S.*

Whole Psalm. *First Part.* A character of a wicked man Psalm 36:1.

1. He calls evil good Psalm 36:2.
2. He continues in it.
3. He is an hypocrite Psalm 36:3.
4. He is obstinate.
5. He is studious in wickedness Psalm 36:4.

Second part. God's patience and mercy Psalm 36:5-6.

1. To all, even all creatures.
2. But particularly to his people, which he admires. Upon which the faithful (1) trust, (2) are satisfied Psalm 36:7-8.

The *Third part.* He prays that this effect may light,

1. On God's people Psalm 36:10.
2. On himself Psalm 36:11.
3. His acclimation upon it Psalm 36:12. *William Nicholson (Bishop), 1662.*

Ver. 1. In this Psalm we have a description of sin, especially as it appears in those who have openly broken God's bands. The introduction is very striking;

The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes. How could the *transgression of the wicked* speak within the *heart* of him who in the inscription of the Psalm declares himself to be *the servant of JEHOVAH*? These words are generally understood as signifying that the outward conduct of the sinner, as often as he thought of it, naturally suggested this conclusion to his mind, that he was destitute of all fear of God. But they may perhaps admit of another meaning, equally agreeable to the literal reading; *wickedness, saith of the wicked, within my heart*, etc. According to this view, the psalmist meant that notwithstanding the external pretences of the wicked, and all their attempts to cover their iniquity, he was certain that they had no real sense of the presence of God, that they secretly renounced his authority. How was he assured of this? By a comparison of their conduct with the dictates of the heart. He could not indeed look into their hearts, but he could look into his own, and *there* he found corruption so strong, that were it not for the fear of God that was implanted within him, he would be as bad as they. *John Jamieson.*

Ver. 1. It is not the imperfection or shortcoming in the fear of God, but the being destitute of it altogether, that proveth a wicked man: *There is no fear of God before his eyes.* *David Dickson.*

Ver. 1. (*last clause*). *Not having the fear of God before his eyes*, has become inwoven into proceedings in criminal courts. When a man has no fear of God, he is prepared for any crime.

Total depravity is not too strong a term to describe human wickedness. The sinner has *no fear of God*. Where that is wanting, how can there be any piety? And if there is no piety, there must be total want of right affections, and that is the very essence of depravity. *William S. Plumer.*

Ver. 1. Durst any mock God with flourishes and formalities in religion, if they feared him? Durst any provoke God to his face by real and open wickedness, if they feared him? Durst any sin with the judgments of God fresh bleeding before their eyes, if they feared the Lord and his wrath? Durst they sin with heaps of precious mercy before their eyes, if they feared the Lord and his goodness? Durst any flatter either others or themselves with hopes of impunity in their sin, if they feared the Lord and

his truth? Durst any slight their own promises, professions, protestations, oaths, or design the entangling of others by them, rather than the binding of themselves, did they fear the Lord and his faithfulness, even the Lord who keepeth covenant and promise for ever? All these and many more transgressions of the wicked (all these ways of transgression are found among the wicked, it were well if none of them were found among those who have a name of godliness; I say, all these transgressions of the wicked) say, *There is no fear of God before their eyes.* *Joseph Caryl.*

Ver. 1. The *wicked* man has no regard to the oracles of God: he had one in his own heart, which dictates nothing but rebellion. *Zachary Mudge.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 1. What is the fear of God? How does it operate? What is the effect of its absence? What should we learn from seeing such evil results?

Or the atheism underlying transgression.

PSALM 36:2

EXPOSITION

Ver. 2. *For.* Here is the argument to prove the proposition laid down in the former verse. David here runs over the process of reasoning by which he had become convinced that wicked men have no proper idea of God or respect for him. God fearing men see their sins and bewail them, where the reverse is the case we may be sure there is no fear of God.

He flattereth himself in his own eyes. He counts himself a fine fellow, worthy of great respect. He quiets his conscience, and so deceives his own judgment as to reckon himself a pattern of excellence; if not for morality, yet for having sense enough not to be enslaved by rules which are bonds to others. He is the free thinker, the man of strong mind, the hater of cant, the philosopher; and the servants of God are, in his esteem, mean spirited and narrow minded. Of all flatteries this is the most absurd and dangerous. Even the silliest bird will not set traps for itself; the most pettifogging attorney will not cheat himself. To smooth over one's own conduct to one's conscience (which is the meaning of the Hebrew) is to smooth one's own

path to hell. The descent to eternal ruin is easy enough, without making a glissade of it, as self flatters do.

Until his iniquity be found to be hateful. At length he is found out and detested, despite his self conceit. Rottenness smells sooner or later too strong to be concealed. There is a time when the leprosy cannot be hidden. At last the old house can no longer be propped up, and falls about the tenant's ears: so there is a limit to a man's self gratulation; he is found out amid general scorn, and can no longer keep up the farce which he played so well. If this happens not in this life, the hand of death will let light in upon the coveted character, and expose the sinner to shame and contempt. The self flattering process plainly proves the atheism of sinners, since the bare reflection that God sees them would render such self flatteries extremely difficult, if not impossible. Belief in God, like light reveals, and then our sin and evil are perceived; but wicked men are in the dark, for they cannot see what is so clearly within them and around them that it stares them in the face.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 2. *For he flattereth himself in his own eyes.* The matter which this self flattery especially concerns is sin, as appears from the following clause. He deceives himself as to its nature and consequences, its evil and aggravations, and he continues to do so *until his iniquity be found to be hateful*; till it be fully discovered, and appear in its magnitude and atrocious circumstances both to himself and others, by some awful divine judgment, such as that mentioned in the last verse of the Psalm: "*There are the workers of iniquity fallen: they are cast down, and shall not be able to rise.*" He adduces this self deceit and continuance in it, as illustrating the truth of that judgment he had formed of the state of such a person:

There is no fear of God before his eyes: for he flattereth himself in his own eyes. And surely the proof is incontrovertible. For a man under the bondage of sin would never *flatter himself in his own eyes*, were it not that God is not before them. The reason why he thinks so well of himself is, that *God is not in all his thoughts*. He hath cast off all fear about himself because he hath no fear of God. *John Jamieson.*

Ver. 2. *He flattereth himself.*

1. Some flatter themselves with a secret hope, that there is no such thing as *another world*.
2. Some flatter themselves that *death* is a great way off, and that they shall hereafter have much opportunity to seek salvation.
3. Some flatter themselves that they lead *moral* and orderly lives, and therefore think that they shall not be damned.
4. Some make the *advantages* under which they live an occasion of self flattery. They flatter themselves that they live in a place where the gospel is powerfully preached, and among a religious people, where many have been converted; and they think it will be much easier for them to be saved on that account.
5. Some flatter themselves with their own *intentions*. They intend to give themselves liberty for a while longer, and *then* to reform.
6. There are some who flatter themselves that they *do*, and have *done*, a great deal for their salvation, and therefore hope they shall obtain it; when indeed they neither do what they ought to do, nor what they might do even in their present state of unregeneracy; nor are they in any likely way to be converted.
7. Some hope by their strivings to obtain salvation of *themselves*. They have a secret imagination that they shall, by degrees, work in themselves sorrow and repentance of sin, and love towards God and Jesus Christ. Their striving is not so much an earnest seeking to God, as a striving to do themselves that which is the work of God.
8. Some sinners flatter themselves that they are *already* converted. They sit down and rest in a false hope, persuading themselves that all their sins are pardoned; that God loves them; that they shall go to heaven when they die; and that they need trouble themselves no more. "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Revelation 3:17. *Condensed from Jonathan Edwards.*

Ver. 2. *In his own eyes.* He had not God before his eyes in holy awe, therefore he puts himself there in unholy admiration. He who makes little of God makes much of himself. They who forget adoration fall into

adulation. The eyes must see something, and if they admire not God, they will flatter self. *C. H. S.*

Ver. 2. *Until his iniquity be found to be hateful*; that is, until he finds by experience that it is a more dreadful thing to sin against God, and break his holy commands, than he imagined. *Jonathan Edwards.*

Ver. 2. *Hateful.* Odious to himself, others, and to God. *Gilbert Genebrard, 1537-1597.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 2. The arts, motives, assistances, results, and punishments of self flattery, and the discovery which concludes it.

Ver. 2. Self flatteries. *Jonathan Edwards' Sermon.*

Ver. 2. On the deceitfulness of the heart, with regard to the commission of sin. *Two Sermons, in Jamieson's "Sermons on the Heart."*

PSALM 36:3

EXPOSITION

Ver. 3. *The words of his mouth are iniquity and deceit.* This pair of hell dogs generally hunt together, and what one does not catch the other will; if iniquity cannot win by oppression, deceit will gain by chicanery. When the heart is so corrupt as to flatter itself, the tongue follows suit. The open sepulchre of the throat reveals the foulness of the inner nature. God fearing men make a conscience of their words, and if they sin through infirmity they do not invent excuses, or go about to boast of their wickedness: but because wicked men think little of evil and artful speeches, we may be clear that God rules not in their souls. The original by declaring that the words of the wicked are falsehood and deceit is peculiarly strong; as if they were not only false in quality, but actual falseness itself.

He hath left off to be wise, and to do good. From the good way he has altogether gone aside. Men who fear God proceed from strength to strength in the right path, but godless men soon forsake what little good they once knew. How could men apostatise if they had respect unto the

supreme Judge? Is it not because they grow more and more forgetful of God, that in due season they relinquish even that hypocritical reverence of him which in former days they maintained in order to flatter their souls?

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 3. *He hath left off.* That little light he once had, he hath lost, and cast off such good practices as once in hypocrisy he performed; neither will he learn to do better. *John Trapp.*

Ver. 3. (*last clause*). Apostasy from God is really an undoing of all the good which we have done. It is a wicked repentance quite contrary to the grace of repentance; as that is a repentance from dead works, so this is a repentance from works of a better sort:

He hath left off to be wise, and to do good. It is a perversion to evil after a seeming conversion from it. *Timothy Cruso.*

Ver. 3-4: —

*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.*

*From door to door you might have seen him speed,
Or placed amid a group of gaping fools.
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 shunned him and his house
As one who had a deadly moral plague.*

Robert Pollock, 1799-1827.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 3. Bad words. Two out of many kinds.

Ver. 3. (*second clause*). The relation between true wisdom and practical goodness.

PSALM 36:4

EXPOSITION

Ver. 4. *He deviseth mischief upon his bed.* His place of rest becomes the place for plotting. His bed is a hot bed for poisonous weeds. God fearing men meditate upon God and his service; but when men turn all their thoughts and inventive faculties towards evil, their godlessness is proved to a demonstration. He hath the devil for his bed fellow who lies abed and schemes how to sin. God is far from him.

He setteth himself in a way that is not good. When he gets up he resolutely and persistently pursues the mischief which he planned. The worst of ways he prefers for his walking, for he has taught his heart to love filthiness, having accustomed himself to revel in it in imagination.

He abhorreth not evil. So far from having a contempt and abhorrence for evil, he even rejoices in it, and patronises it. He never hates a wrong thing because it is wrong, but he meditates on it, defends it, and practises it. What a portrait of a graceless man these few verses afford us! His jauntiness of conscience, his licentiousness of speech, his intentness upon wrong doing, his deliberate and continued preference of iniquity, and withal his atheistic heart, are all photographed to the life. Lord, save us from being such.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 4. *He deviseth mischief upon his bed.* As the man that fears God communes with his heart upon his bed, that he may not sin, no, not in his heart; so the man that fears not God, devises how he may plot and perform sin willingly. *David Dickson.*

Ver. 4. *Upon his bed.* Most diligently does Ayguan follow up the scriptural expressions concerning a bed, and tell us that there are six different beds of wickedness—that of luxury, that of avarice, of ambition, of greediness, of

torpor, and of cruelty, and he illustrates them all by examples from Scripture. *J. M. Neale.*

Ver. 4. *He setteth himself in a way that is not good.* To wait to sin is to sin deliberately, yea, to wait to sin resolvedly. That sin is exceedingly sinfully committed which we set and prepare ourselves to commit. David, describing a wicked man, saith,

He setteth himself in a way that is not good; that is, in an evil way: he doth not only fall into sin (that may be the case of a good man), but he takes or chooseth an evil way, and then sets or settles himself in it, resolving not to leave it, no, nor to be beaten out of it. Sin may be said to wait for a godly man, that is, Satan waits and watches his season to tempt him unto sin; but a godly man doth not wait nor watch to sin. It is bad enough to be overtaken with sin, or with a fault (as the apostle speaks, Galatians 6:1); but to be taken with sin, and so to wait for a season to take our fill of it, is as bad as bad can be. *Joseph Caryl.*

Ver. 4. *He setteth himself in a way that is not good.* Proud sinners have strongest conceit that they go right, at least in the way of their choice. Satan blindeth them so, that they mistake both the end and the way: in their count they are running to heaven, when they are posting to hell: he serveth them kindly with fresh post horses. Sometimes he mounts them on drunkenness, and when they have run a stage on that beastliness, he can mount them on lechery. Again, he can refresh them with avarice; and if they be weary of that slow jade, he setteth them on lofty ambition, and to make them more spirited he can horse them on restless contention. Every one seeth not Satan's enquiry: there is no complexion or disposition, but he hath a fit horse for it, and that of itself. Every man's predominant is a beast of Satan's saddling and providing to carry men to hell. The way is one, the post master is one, he is to be found at every stage, mounting his gallants, their horses are all of one kind though not of one colour. Happy is the man whom God dismounts in that evil way, and more happy is he who taketh with that stay, and turneth his course to heaven. *William Struther.*

Ver. 4. *He abhorreth not.* i.e., is far enough from rejecting any instrument, however sinful, for attaining his purposes. *J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 4. Diligence in doing evil, a mark of deep depravity. *W.S. Plumer.*

Ver. 4. The abuse of retirement to wicked purposes, a sure characteristic of an habitual sinner. *N. Marshall.*

Ver. 4. The sinner on his bed, in his conduct, in his heart; and to this, in his death, and in his doom.

Ver. 4. (*second clause*). Ways which are not good.

Ver. 4. (*last clause*). Neutrality condemned.

PSALM 36:5

EXPOSITION

Ver. 5-9. From the baseness of the wicked the psalmist turns his contemplation to the glory of God. Contrasts are impressive.

Ver. 5. *Thy mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens.* Like the ethereal blue, it encompasses the whole earth, smiling upon universal nature, acting as a canopy for all the creatures of earth, surmounting the loftiest peaks of human provocations, and rising high above the mists of mortal transgression. Clear sky is evermore above, and mercy calmly smiles above the din and smoke of this poor world. Darkness and clouds are but of earth's lower atmospheres: the heavens are evermore serene, and bright with innumerable stars. Divine mercy abides in its vastness of expanse, and matchless patience, all unaltered by the rebellions of man. When we can measure the heavens, then shall we bound the mercy of the Lord. Towards his own servants especially, in the salvation of the Lord Jesus, he has displayed grace higher than the heaven of heavens, and wider than the universe. O that there atheist could but see this, how earnestly would he long to become a servant of Jehovah!

Thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds. Far, far above all comprehension is the truth and faithfulness of God. He never fails, nor forgets, nor falters, nor forfeits his word. Afflictions are like clouds, but the divine truthfulness is all around them. While we are under the cloud we are in the region of God's faithfulness; when we mount above it we shall not need such an assurance. To every word of threat, or promise, prophecy or covenant, the Lord has exactly adhered, for he is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 5. *Thy mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens.* David considering the thoughts and deeds of impious men, and the mercy of God towards them, utters this exclamation. When men are so impudently, who does not admire the divine longsuffering! *Sebastian Munster*, 1489-1552.

Ver. 5-7. This Psalm doth fitly set forth unto us the estate and condition of these times, wherein wickedness increaseth: and so in the former part of the Psalm is a discovery of wickedness, verse 3. And what should we do when there is such wickedness in the earth? In the fifth verse,

Thy mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens; and thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds. God is gathering up all goodness, mercy, and peace from man to himself; and though there is cruelty, mischief, and wickedness in the world, in the earth, yet there is mercy, truth, and faithfulness in the clouds; and it's good that wisdom, goodness, truth, and righteousness leave the world, and cleave to God, that so we may follow it; and that what goodness, mercy, truth, and faithfulness we formerly enjoyed in man, we may enjoy it in God. And when wickedness increaseth, righteousness increaseth likewise:

Thy righteousness is like the great mountains: when the world tears and breaks itself in pieces, then is the righteousness of God a great mountain.

Thy judgments are a great deep; when the whole world is become one sea of confusion, then are the judgments of the Lord a great deep, where not only man, but beasts may rest safely.

Thou preservest man and beast. And though this time is a time of growing and spreading wickedness in man, yet it is a time of sweetest admiration and love in God; and when men that sin do cry out, O woeful man! they that enjoy God, cry out, O happy man! And though men that live in the earth cry out, O miserable! what times are here? men that live in heaven cry out,

How excellent is thy lovingkindness, O God! The Lord makes all things naked and bare, that we only may have him to be our safety. *William Sedgwick* (1600-1668). In *"The Excellency of the love of God, "a sermon in a volume, entitled "Some Flashes of Lightnings of the Son of Man,* "1648.

Ver. 5-9: —

*Thy mercie Lord doth to the HEAUENS extend,
Thy faithfulness doth to the CLOUDES assend;
Thy justice stedfast as a MOUNTAINE is,
Thy JUDGEMENTS deepe as is the great Abisse;*

*Thy noble mercies saue all liueinge thinges,
The sonnes of men creepe underneath thy winges:
With thy great plenty they are fedd at will,
And of thy pleasure's streame they drinke their fill;
For euen the well of life remaines with thee,
And in thy glorious light wee light shall see.*

Sir John Davies.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 5-6. Four glorious similes of the mercy, faithfulness, and providence of God. The preacher has here a wealth of poetic imagery never surpassed.

PSALM 36:6

EXPOSITION

Ver. 6. *Thy righteousness is like the great mountains.* Firm and unmoved, lofty and sublime. As winds and hurricanes shake not an Alp, so the righteousness of God is never in any degree affected by circumstances; he is always just. Who can bribe the Judge of all the earth, or who can, by threatening, compel him to pervert judgment? Not even to save his elect would the Lord suffer his righteousness to be set aside. No awe inspired by mountain scenery can equal that which fills the soul when it beholds the Son of God slain as a victim to vindicate the justice of the Inflexible Lawgiver. Right across the path of every unholy man who dreams of heaven stand the towering Andes of divine righteousness, which no unregenerate sinner can ever climb. Among great mountains lie slumbering avalanches, and there the young lightnings try their callow wings until the storm rushes down amain from the awful peaks; so against the great day of the Lord's wrath the Lord has laid up in the mountains of his righteousness dreadful ammunition of war with which to overwhelm his adversaries.

Thy judgments are a great deep. God's dealings with men are not to be fathomed by every boaster who demands to see a why for every wherefore. The Lord is not to be questioned by us as to why this and why that. He has reasons, but he does not choose to submit them to our foolish consideration. Far and wide, terrible and irresistible like the ocean are the providential dispensations of God: at one time they appear as peaceful as the unrippled sea of glass; at another tossed with tempest and whirlwind, but evermore most glorious and full of mystery. Who shall discover the springs of the sea? He who shall do this may hope to comprehend the providence of the Eternal.

*"Undiscovered sea!
 Into thy dark, unknown, mysterious caves,
 And secret haunts unfathomably deep,
 Beneath all visible retired, none went
 And came again to tell the wonders there."*

Yet as the deep mirrors the sky, so the mercy of the Lord is to be seen reflected in all the arrangements of his government on earth, and over the profound depth the covenant rainbow casts its arch of comfort, for the Lord is faithful in all that he doeth.

O Lord, thou preservest man and beast. All the myriads of creatures, rational and irrational, are fed by Jehovah's hand. The countless beasts, the innumerable birds, the inconceivable abundance of fishes, the all but infinite armies of insects, all owe their continuance of life to the unceasing outgoings of the divine power. What a view of God this presents to us! What a debased creature must he be who sees no trace of such a God, and feels no awe of him!

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 6. *Thy righteousness is like the great mountains.* Literally *mountains of God*, which men have not planted, and which men cannot move. *Christopher Wordsworth.*

Ver. 6. *Thy judgments are a great deep.* Men's sins are a great deep, and Satan's ways are called a depth; but God's judgments, his ways in the wheels, are the greatest deep of all, they are unsearchable. *William Greenhill.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 5-6. Four glorious similes of the mercy, faithfulness, and providence of God. The preacher has here a wealth of poetic imagery never surpassed.

Ver. 6. God's word and works mysterious. *C. Simeon.*

Ver. 6. (*second clause*). God's judgments are—

1. Often unfathomable—we cannot discover the foundation or cause, and spring of them.
2. They are safe sailing. Ships never strike on rocks out in the great deeps.
3. They conceal great treasure.
4. They work much good—the great deep, though ignorance thinks it to be all waste, a salt and barren wilderness, is one of the greatest blessings to this round world.
5. They become a highway of communion with God. The sea is today the great highway of the world.

Ver. 6. (*last clause*). Kindness of God to the lower animals, as well as man.

PSALM 36:7

EXPOSITION

Ver. 7. *How excellent is thy lovingkindness, O God.* Here we enter into the Holy of Holies. Benevolence, and mercy, and justice, are everywhere, but the excellence of that mercy only those have known whose faith has lifted the veil and passed into the brighter presence of the Lord; these behold the excellency of the Lord's mercy. The word translated *excellent* may be rendered "precious; "no gem or pearl can ever equal in value a sense of the Lord's love. This is such a brilliant as angels wear. King's regalia are a beggarly collection of worthless pebbles when compared with the tender mercies of Jehovah. David could not estimate it, and therefore, after putting a note of admiration, he left our hearts and imagination, and, better still, our experience, to fill up the rest. He writes *how excellent!* because he cannot tell us the half of it.

Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings. The best of reasons for the best of courses. The figure is very beautiful. The Lord overshadows his people as a hen protects her brood, or as an eagle covers its young; and we as the little ones run under the blessed shelter and feel at rest. To cower down under the wings of God is so sweet. Although the enemy be far too strong for us, we have no fear, for we nestle under the Lord's wing. O that more of Adam's race knew the excellency of the heavenly shelter! It made Jesus weep to see how they refused it: our tears may well lament the same evil.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 7. *How excellent is thy lovingkindness, O God!* etc. The expressions here which denote the abundance of divine blessings upon the righteous man, seems to be taken from the temple, from whence they were to issue. Under the covert of the temple, the wings of the cherubim, they were to be sheltered. The richness of the sacrifices, the streams of oil, wine, odours, etc., and the light of the golden candlestick, are all plainly referred to. *Samuel Burder.*

Ver. 7. *Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings.* The word signifies to fly, to betake one's self to a place of safety: as the chickens in danger to be seized on, fly under the wings of the hen. "Under whose wings thou art come to trust." Ruth 2:12. The helpless bird pursued by the kite, in danger to be devoured, runs under the shadow of the dam. Thus it is with a sinner at the first working of faith, he apprehends himself pursued by wrath and judgment; he knows if they seize on him he must perish without remedy. Oh, the sad condition of such a soul! Oh, but he sees Christ spreading his wings ready to secure perishing sinners; he hears him inviting in the gospel to come under his shadow! Oh, how sweet is that voice to him (however, while senseless he rejected it)! He hears, obeys, and runs to Christ for shelter, and so he is safe. *How excellent is thy lovingkindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings.* *David Clarkson.*

Ver. 7. *Thy wings.* A common figure in the Psalms, taken more immediately, in my opinion, from the wings of the cherubim overshadowing the mercyseat which covered the ark; but more remotely from the birds, which defend their young from the solar rays by overshadowing them with their wings. *Francis Hare (Bishop), 1740.*

Ver. 7.: —

*In lonesome cell, guarded and strong I lie,
Bound by Christ's love, his truth to testify,
Though walls be thick the door no hand uncloses,
God is my strength, my solace, and repose.*

In a letter of Jeronius Segerson, written in the prison at Antwerp to his wife, named Lysken, who likewise lay a prisoner there, 1551.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 7. The object, reasons, nature, and experience of faith.

Ver. 7-8. Admiration! Confidence! Expectation! Realisation!

PSALM 36:8

EXPOSITION

Ver. 8. *They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house.*

Those who learn to put their trust in God shall be received into his house, and shall share in the provision laid up therein. The dwelling place of the Lord is not confined to any place, and hence reside where we may, we may regard our dwelling, if we be believers, as one room in the Lord's great house; and we shall, both in providence and grace, find a soul contenting store supplied to us as the result of living by faith in nearness to the Lord. If we regard the assembly of the saints as being peculiarly the house of God, believers shall, indeed, find in sacred worship the richest spiritual food. Happy is the soul that can drink in the sumptuous dainties of the gospel—nothing can so completely fill the soul.

And thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures. As they have the fruits of Eden to feed on, so shall they have the river of Paradise to drink from. God's everlasting love bears to us a constant and ample comfort, of which grace makes us to drink by faith, and then our pleasure is of the richest kind. The Lord not only brings us to this river, but makes us drink: herein we see the condescension of divine love. Heaven will, in the fullest sense, fulfil these words; but they who trust in the Lord enjoy the antepast even here. The happiness given to the faithful is that of God

himself; purified spirits joy with the same joy as the Lord himself. "That my joy may be in you, that your joy may be full."

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 8. *They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house: and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures.* Mark, first, the excellency of the provision, *fatness of thy house*, the *river of thy pleasures*. The fattest is esteemed the fairest and the most excellent food; therefore the saint was enjoined to offer the fat in sacrifice under the law. As God expects the best from us, so he gives the best to us. This made David, when he had feasted so curiously, to sing so cheerfully. Fatness here is the top, the cream of all spiritual delicacies. "My soul is filled as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips." Psalm 63:5. But, though God keeps so noble a house to satisfy his people's hunger, what special care doth he take to quench their thirst!

Thou shalt make them drink of the rivers of thy pleasures. Oh, he drinks to them, and they pledge him in his own cup! Hath the child, then, any cause, when his Father keeps so rare and costly a table, to leave such dainties and go begging up and down the country for scraps and fragments? Oh, how much do these disgrace their Parent's provision, and their own discretion! But mark, reader, secondly, the plenty as well as the excellency of this provision. Here is fatness in the abstract, a *river of pleasure*; and so much as that they who enjoy it shall be *satisfied*, and *abundantly* satisfied. A river is overflowing and ever flowing; it communicates its water, and yet is never empty. It is fed with springs and fountains, and therefore it is no wonder if it always be full. They that are at such a well need not complain of want; but here are not only rivers and fatness, but of God's people it is said, *they shall be abundantly satisfied*. In the original it is *inebriated*. They shall have not only a sufficiency, but a redundancy of spiritual delights. The vessels of their souls shall be filled to the brim out of that river whose streams make glad the city of God. Surely, then, they who may have bread in such abundance, enough and to spare, in their Father's house, made of the kidneys of the wheat, of the finest flour, need not hanker after the world's homely fare. Our heavenly Father doth not keep so starveling a house that the world's scraps should go down with us. *George Swinnock*.

Ver. 8. *They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house.* I once heard a father tell, that when he removed his family to a new

residence where the accommodation was much more ample, the substance much more rich and varied than that to which they had previously been accustomed, his youngest son, yet a lisping infant, ran round every room and scanned every article with ecstasy, calling out in childish wonder at every new sight, "Is this ours, father? and is this ours?" The child did not say "yours;" and I observed that the father while he told the story was not offended with the freedom. You could read in his glistening eye that the infant's confidence in appropriating as his own all that his father had, was an important element in his satisfaction. Such, I suppose, will be the surprise, and joy, and appropriating confidence with which the child of our Father's family will count all his own when he is removed from the comparatively mean condition of things present, and enters the infinite things to come. When the glories of heaven burst upon his view, he does not stand at a distance like a stranger saying, O God, these are thine. He bounds forward to touch and taste every provision which those blessed mansions contain, exclaiming as he looks in the Father's face, Father, this and this is ours! The dear child is glad of all the father's riches, and the Father is gladder of his dear child. *William Arnot.*

Ver. 8. *The fatness of thy house.* If there is an allusion to the temple, as Hupfield thinks, *fatness* would equal "fat sacrifices." and men would be regarded as the priests in the house, after the analogy of Jeremiah 31:14. *J. Stewart Perowne.*

Ver. 8. *The fatness of thy house.* Fat was regarded among the Jews, as among all other nations of antiquity, as the richest part of animals, and therefore became synonymous with *the first, the best, the prime of anything.* *Christian D. Ginsburg, LL.D., in Kitto's Cyclopaedia.*

Ver. 8. *Of thy house.* This is emphatic, and means that which thou hast prepared for thine own household, thine own faithful domestics. Here is intended not the good things prepared for all men, but for the household retainer of God. *John Piscator, 1546-1626, and D.H. Mollerus.*

Ver. 8. *Pleasures.* *Delights*, the same word as is translated "Eden" in Genesis, only it is here in the plural number. *Dalman Hapstone, M.A.*

Ver. 8. And, saith one of the fathers, do you ask me what heaven is? Saith one, When I meet you there I will tell you. The world to come, say the Rabbins, is the world where all is well. I have read of one that would willingly swim through a sea of brimstone to get to heaven, for there, and

only there, is perfection of happiness. What are the silks of Persia, the spices of Egypt, the gold of Ophir, and the treasures of both Indies, to the glory of another world? Augustine tells us that one day, when he was about to write something upon the eighth verse of the thirty-sixth Psalm,

Thou shalt make them drink of the rivers of thy pleasures, and being almost swallowed up with the contemplation of heavenly joys, one called unto him very loud by his name; and, enquiring who it was, he answered, I am Jerome, with whom in my lifetime thou hadst so much conference concerning doubts in Scripture, and am now best experienced to resolve thee of any doubts concerning the joys of heaven; but only let me first ask thee this question—Art thou able to put the whole earth, and all the eaters of the sea, into a little pot? Canst thou measure the waters in thy fist, and mete out heaven with thy span, or weigh the mountains in scales, or the hills in a balance? If not, no more is it possible that thy understanding should comprehend the least of the joys of heaven; and certainly the least of the joys of heaven are inconceivable and inexpressible. *Thomas Brooks*.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 7-8. Admiration! Confidence! Expectation! Realisation!

Ver. 8. (*first clause*). *The provisions of the Lord's house*. What they are, their excellence and abundance, and for whom provided.

Ver. 8. (*second clause*). *The heavenly Hiddekel* —Its source, its flood, the happy drinkers, how they came to drink.

PSALM 36:9

EXPOSITION

Ver. 9. *For with thee is the fountain of life*. This verse is made of simple words, but like the first chapter of John's Gospel, it is very deep. From the Lord, as from an independent self sufficient spring, all creature life proceeds, by him is sustained, through him alone can it be perfected. Life is in the creature, but the fountain of it is only in the Creator. Of spiritual life, this is true in the most emphatic sense; "it is the Spirit that quickeneth, ""and we are dead, and our life is hid with Christ in God."

In thy light shall we see light. Light is the glory of life. Life in the dark is misery, and rather death than life. The Lord alone can give natural, intellectual, and spiritual life; he alone can make life bright and lustrous. In spiritual things the knowledge of God sheds a light on all other subjects. We need no candle to see the sun, we see it by its own radiance, and then see everything else by the same lustre. We never see Jesus by the light of self, but self in the light of Jesus. No inward intelligence of ours leads us to receive the Spirit's light, but the rather, it often helps to quench the sacred beam; purely and only by his own illumination, the Holy Ghost lights up the dark recesses of our heart's ungodliness. Vain are they who look to learning and human wit, one ray from the throne of God is better than the noonday splendour of created wisdom. Lord, give me the sun, and let those who will delight in the wax candles of superstition and the phosphorescence of corrupt philosophy. Faith derives both light and life from God, and hence she neither dies nor darkens.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 9. *For with thee is the fountain of life.* These are some of the most wonderful words in the Old Testament. Their fulness of meaning no commentary can ever exhaust. They are, in fact, the kernel and the anticipation of much of the profoundest teaching of S. John. *J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Ver. 9. *In thy light shall we see light.* The object and matter of our eternal happiness is called *light*. It will not be a dazzling and confounding light as was the brightness of Moses' face at his coming down from the mount; the people could not behold him: it will not be an astonishing light, as that in the mount at our Lord's transfiguration; the disciples fell to the ground, their weak eyes could not behold those glimpses of glory that shined through the vail of flesh. But the light in our heaven of happiness will be *a strengthening and comforting light*; it will strengthen and confirm the eyes of our understanding to behold it. Then shall we be enabled as the young eagles, to behold the Sun of Righteousness in his brightness and glory. It was said by the Lord to Moses, "None can see my face and live." Exodus 33:20. That glorious sight which Daniel saw took strength from him. Daniel 10:8. The object being without him, drew out all his spirits to behold and admire it and so weakened him; but in heaven our God, whom we shall see and know, will be within us to strengthen us; then shall we live because we see his face. It will be also a *comforting light*, like the light of

the morning to the wearied watchman, who longed after it in the nighttime.
William Colville.

Ver. 9. *In thy light shall we see light.* It is but a kind of dim twilight comparatively, which we enjoy here in this world. While we are hid in this prison house we can see but little; but our Father's house above is full of light; "*Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun,*" etc. Matthew 13:43. If the Day star be risen in your hearts, live in the pleasant and cheerful expectation of perfect day. For we can ascend but a little way into the mysteries of the kingdom, as long as we are upon the footstool; and we shall know vastly and inconceivably more in the first moment after we come to heaven, than we are capable of attaining here throughout all our days. *Timothy Cruso.*

Ver. 9. *In thy light shall we see light.* The light of nature is like a spark, the light of the gospel a lamp, the light of grace a star, but the light of glory the sun itself. The higher our ascent the greater our light; God dwelleth "in the light which no man can approach unto." 1 Timothy 6:16 —no man, while he carries mortality and sin about him; but when those two corrupt and incapable qualities shall be put off, then shall we be brought to that light. We are now glad of the sun and stars over our heads, to give us light: what light and delight shall that be when these are under our feet! That light must needs go as far beyond their light as they now go beyond us. But alas! they are only able to discourse of that light, that do enjoy it, to whom that eternal day is risen; not we that live in the humble shade of mortality and natural dimness. I leave it therefore to your meditations: it is a glorious light which we do well often to consider, considering to admire, admiring to love, loving to desire, desiring to seek, and finding to enjoy for ever.
Thomas Adams.

Ver. 9. *In thy light shall we see light.* There is a great boast of light in the world, and there is some ground for it in natural things; but, as of old the world by wisdom knew not God, so of late. If ever we know God, it must be through he medium of his word. This I take to be the meaning of the passage. The term *light* in the last clause means the true knowledge of God; and, in the first, the true medium of attaining it, namely, divine revelation. The sum seems to amount to this: the word of God is the grand medium by which we can attain a true and saving knowledge of God. What the sun and stars are to the regions of matter, that revelation is to the mental region. Genesis 1:13,17. ...There are many things of which you may

entertain no doubt, concerning which there may be no manner of dispute; yet, make a point of seeing them in God's light. Many content themselves with seeing them in the light in which great and good men have placed them; but, though angels, they are not the true light: they all view things partially. If what they say be true, yet, if we receive it merely on their representation, our faith will stand in the wisdom of men, and not in the power of God. 1 Corinthians 2:5. That knowledge or faith which has not God's word for its ground will not stand in the day of trial. *Andrew Fuller.*

Ver. 9. *In this communion of God what can we want?* Why, God shall be all and in all unto us; he shall be beauty for the eye, music for the ear, honey for the taste, the full content and satisfaction of our desires, and that immediately from himself. True it is God is all in all in this world, "In him we live, and move, and have our being; " but here he works by means of secondary causes; here he gives wine to make the heart glad, and oil, etc.; but there all intervening means between God and us is removed: with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light; not in the light of the sun, or the light of a candle; there is no need of them Revelation 22:5; but "in thy light, "the light of God himself; yea, the whole life of glory, together with all the concomitants of it, flows from him as the sole and original fountain of it. Oh, how sweet must that happiness be that is so derived! Edmund Pinchbeck, B.D., in "The Fountain of Life:" a Funeral Sermon, 1652.

Ver. 9. Whatsoever can be found in the creature, even when God blesseth the use thereof to his own children, is but a drop from the ocean, is but a little water out of the well, in comparison of what a believer will see and feel to be in God reconciled through Christ, for with thee is the fountain of life. David Dickson.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 9. (first clause). LIFE, natural, mental, spiritual, proceeds from God, is sustained, restored, purified, and perfected by him. In him it dwells with permanency, from him it flows freely, with freshness, abundance, and purity; to him it should be consecrated.

Ver. 9. (second clause). LIGHT, what it is to see it. Divine light, what it is; how it is the medium by which we see other light. The experience here described, and the duty here hinted at.

PSALM 36:10

EXPOSITION

Ver. 10. *O continue thy lovingkindness unto them that know thee.* We ask no more than a continuance of the past mercy. Lord, extend this grace of thine to all the days of all who have been taught to know thy faithful love, thy tenderness, thine immutability and omnipotence. As they have been taught of the Lord to know the Lord, so go on to instruct them and perfect them. This prayer is the heart of the believer asking precisely that which the heart of his God is prepared to grant. It is well when the petition is but the reflection of the promise. And thy righteousness to the upright in heart. As thou hast never failed the righteous, so abide thou in the same manner their defender and avenger. The worst thing to be feared by the man of God is to be forsaken of heaven, hence this prayer; but the fear is groundless, hence the peace which faith brings to us. Learn from this verse, that although a continuance of mercy is guaranteed in the covenant, we are yet to make it a matter of prayer. For this good thing will the Lord be enquired of.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 10. Continue thy lovingkindness. When God begins once to let out mercy to his servants, he stints not presently, but proceeds. ...When Rachel had her first son, she called his name Joseph, which signifieth adding, or increase; for she said, "The Lord shall add to me another son." Genesis 30:24. Now God hath begun to show kindness, he shall not only give me this, but he shall give me another son also. When the Lord hath bestowed one mercy on you, you may name it Joseph, increase, addition, for God will bestow another upon you. Abraham had many mercies from God, one after another; and Moses, a multitude of mercies; he converses with God face to face; he hears God speak; he has God's presence to go along with him; yea, he sees all God's goodness and glory to pass before him. When mercies come forth, God will not presently shut the door of mercy again. Continue thy lovingkindness. The Hebrew is, draw forth, or draw out thy lovingkindness: a metaphor either taken from vessels of wine, which being set abroach once, yield not only one cup, but many cups; so when God setteth abroach the wine of his mercy, he will not fill your cup once, but twice and seven times: or, taken from a mother, who hath her breasts full

of milk, draws them out for her child, not once, but often; the child shall have the breast many times in the day, and many times in the night, so when God begins to show mercy to you, he will draw out his breasts of consolation, and will bestow mercy after mercy upon you; or, from a line which is extended, for so God being in a way of mercy, will extend the line of mercy, and measure out mercy after mercy for you. William Greenhill.

Ver. 10. The true mark of a godly man standeth in the conjunction of faith in God, with sincere study of obedience to him, for, He is the man that knoweth God, and is upright in heart. David Dickson.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 10. —

1. The character of the righteous —he knows God, and is upright in heart.
2. His privilege —lovingkindness and righteousness.
3. His prayer, continue, etc.

Ver. 10. The need of daily supplies of grace.

PSALM 36:11

EXPOSITION

Ver. 11. *Let not the foot of pride come against me.* The general prayer is here turned into a particular and personal one for himself. Pride is the devil's sin. Good men may well be afraid of proud men, for the serpent's seed will never cease to bite the heel of the godly. Fain would proud scoffers spurn the saints or trample them under foot: against their malice prayer lifts up her voice. No foot shall come upon us, no hand shall prevail against us, while Jehovah is on our side. Let not the hand of the wicked remove me. Suffer me not to be driven about as a fugitive, nor torn from my place like an uprooted tree. Violence with both hand and foot, with means fair and means foul, strove to overthrow the psalmist, but he resorts to his great Patron, and sings a song of triumph in anticipation of the defeat of his foes.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 11. *Foot...Hand*. Both foot and hand are named because both used in waging war. Simeon de Muis.

PSALM 36:12

EXPOSITION

Ver. 12. *There are the workers of iniquity fallen*. Faith sees them scattered on the plain. There! before our very eyes sin, death, and hell, lie prostrate. Behold the vanquished foes! They are cast down. Providence and grace have dashed them from their vantage ground. Jesus has already thrown all the foes of his people upon their faces, and in due time all sinners shall find it so. And shall not be able to rise. The defeat of the ungodly and of the powers of evil is final, total, irretrievable. Glory be to God, however high the powers of darkness may carry it at this present, the time hastens on when God shall defend the right, and give to evil such a fall as shall for ever crush the hopes of hell; while those who trust in the Lord shall eternally praise him and rejoice in his holy name.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 12. *There are the workers of iniquity fallen*. This is said as if the psalmist pointed, when he said it, to a particular place with his finger; and the same mode of expression occurs in Psalm 14:5; or, it may be rendered, then (i.e., when the just are satisfied with the plenteousness of thy house, being rewarded for sincerely worshipping thee in it), shall they fall, all that work wickedness; they shall be cast down, and shall not be able to rise, as is the case with persons who have been thrown with violence upon the hard ground. Daniel Cresswell.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 12. A view of the overthrow of evil powers, principles, and men.

PSALM 37

PSALM 37:1

Title. *Of David.* There is but this word to denote the authorship; whether it was a song or a meditation we are not told. It was written by David in his old age Psalm 37:25, and is the more valuable as the record of so varied an experience.

Subject. The great riddle of the prosperity of the wicked and the affliction of the righteous, which has perplexed so many, is here dealt with in the light of the future; and fretfulness and repining are most impressively forbidden. It is a Psalm in which the Lord hushes most sweetly the too common repinings of his people, and calms their minds as to his present dealings with his own chosen flock, and the wolves by whom they are surrounded. It contains eight great precepts, is twice illustrated by autobiographical statements, and *abounds in remarkable contrasts.*

Division. The Psalm can scarcely be divided into considerable sections. It resembles a chapter of the book of Proverbs, most of the verses being complete in themselves. It is an alphabetical Psalm: in somewhat broken order, the first letters of the verses follow the Hebrew alphabet. This may have been not only a poetical invention, but a help to memory. The reader is requested to read the Psalm through without comment before he turns to our exposition.

EXPOSITION

Ver. 1. The Psalm opens with the first precept. It is alas! too common for believers in their hours of adversity to think themselves harshly dealt with when they see persons utterly destitute of religion and honesty, rejoicing in abundant prosperity. Much needed is the command,

Fret not thyself because of evildoers. To fret is to worry, to have the heartburn, to fume, to become vexed. Nature is very apt to kindle a fire of jealousy when it sees lawbreakers riding on horses, and obedient subjects walking in the mire: it is a lesson learned only in the school of grace, when

one comes to view the most paradoxical providences with the devout complacency of one who is sure that the Lord is righteous in all his acts. It seems hard to carnal judgments that the best meat should go to the dogs, while loving children pine for want of it.

Neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity. The same advice under another shape. When one is poor, despised, and in deep trial, our old Adam naturally becomes envious of the rich and great; and when we are conscious that we have been more righteous than they, the devil is sure to be at hand with blasphemous reasonings. Stormy weather may curdle even the cream of humanity. Evil men instead of being envied, are to be viewed with horror and aversion; yet their loaded tables, and gilded trappings, are too apt to fascinate our poor half opened eyes. Who envies the fat bullock the ribbons and garlands which decorate him as he is led to the shambles? Yet the case is a parallel one; for ungodly rich men are but as beasts fattened for the slaughter.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Whole Psalm. The righteous are preserved in Christ with a special preservation, and in a peculiar safety. In the thirty-seventh Psalm this point is excellently and largely handled, both by direct proof, and by answer to all the usual objections against their safety. That they shall be preserved is affirmed, Psalm 37:3,17,23,25,32. The objections answered are many.

Objection 1. Wicked men flourish.

Solution. A righteous man should never grieve at that, for "they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb." Psalm 37:2.

Objection 2. Righteous men are in distress.

Solution —Psalm 37:6. The night of their adversity will be turned into the light of prosperity; and as surely as they can believe when it is night that it shall be day, so surely may they be persuaded when crosses are upon them, that comfort and deliverance shall come.

Objection 3. But there are great plots laid against the righteous, and they are pursued with great malice, and their intended ruin is come almost to the very issue.

Solution —Psalm 37:12-15. The Lord sees all the plots of wicked men, and laughs at their spiteful and foolish malice; while they are busy to destroy the righteous, and hope to have a day against them, "The Lord seeth that their own day is coming upon them, even a day of destruction, a day of great judgment and eternal misery; "their bow shall be broken, and the sword that they have drawn shall enter into their own heart.

Objection 4. But the just have but small means.

Solution —Psalm 37:16-17. "A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked. For the arms of the wicked shall be broken: but the Lord upholdeth the righteous."

Objection 5. Heavy times are like to befall them.

Solution —Psalm 37:19. "They shall not be ashamed in the evil time, and in the days of famine they shall have enough."

Objection 6. But the wicked wax fatter and fatter, and they prevail in vexing the righteous.

Solution —Psalm 37:20. Indeed the wicked are fat, but it is but "the fat of lambs, "their prosperity shall soon melt; and as they be like smoke in vexing the godly, so shall they be like smoke in vanishing away.

Objection 7. But the righteous do fall.

Solution —Psalm 37:24. Though he do fall, yet he falls not finally, nor totally, for he "is not utterly cast down; "and besides, there is an upholding providence of God in all the falls of the righteous.

Objection 8. We see some wicked men that do not so fall into adversity, but rather are in prosperity to their dying days.

Solution —Psalm 37:28. Though they do, yet, "their seed shall be cut off."

Objection 9. But some wicked men are strong yet, and in their seed spread also.

Solution —Psalm 37:35-36. Note also that these "spreading bay trees" many times "soon pass away; "and they and their houses are sometimes "utterly cut off."

Objection 10. But upright men are under many and long crosses.

Solution —Psalm 37:37. Yet "his end is peace."

Objection 11. But nobody stands for the godly when they come into question.

Solution —Psalm 37:39-40. "Their salvation is of the Lord; "he is their strength, he will help them and deliver them, etc.

But if we would be thus delivered, observe:

1. That we must not unthankfully fret at God's providence Psalm 37:1.
2. We must "trust in the Lord and do good" Psalm 37:3.
3. We must "delight ourselves in the Lord, "and not place our contentment on earthly things Psalm 37:4.
4. We must "commit our ways to God" Psalm 37:5.
5. We must get patience and humble affections Psalm 37:7-11.
6. We must be of upright conversation Psalm 37:14.
7. We must be merciful Psalm 37:25-26.
8. We must "speak righteous things, "and get "the law into our hearts" Psalm 37:30-31.
9. We must "keep our way, "and "wait on God" and not use ill means.
Nicolas Byfield.

Whole Psalm. This Psalm may well be styled, The good man's cordial in bad times; a sovereign plaister for the plague of discontent; or, a choice antidote against the poison of impatience. *Nathaniel Hardy, in a Funeral Sermon, 1649.*

Whole Psalm. This Psalm very much reminds one in its construction of the sententious and pithy conciseness of the Book of Proverbs. It does not contain any prayer, nor any direct allusion to David's own circumstances of persecution or distress. It is rather the utterance of sound practical wisdom

and godliness from the lips of experience and age, such as we might suppose an elder of the church, or a father of a family, to let fall as he sat with his household gathered around him, and listening to his earnest and affectionate admonitions. *Barton Bouchier.*

Whole Psalm. The present Psalm is one of the alphabetical Psalms, it is called "*Providentiae speculum*," by Tertullian; "*Potio contra murmur*," by Isidore; "*Vestis piorum*," by Luther. *Christopher Wordsworth.*

Ver. 1. *Fret*, or, inflame not, burn not thyself with anger or grief. *John Diodati.*

Ver. 1. *Neither be thou envious*, etc. Queen Elizabeth envied the milkmaid when she was in prison; but if she had known what a glorious reign she should have had afterwards for forty-four years, she would not have envied her. And as little needeth a godly man, though in misery, to envy a wicked man in the ruff of all his prosperity and jollity, considering what he hath in hand, much more what he hath in hope. *John Trapp.*

Ver. 1. Would it not be accounted folly in a man that is heir to many thousands per annum that he should envy a stage player, clothed in the habit of a king, and yet not heir to one foot of land? who, though he have the form, respect, and apparel of a king or nobleman, yet he is, at the same time, a very beggar, and worth nothing? Thus, wicked men, though they are arrayed gorgeously, and fare deliciously, wanting nothing, and having more that heart can wish, yet they are but only possessors: the godly Christian is the heir. What good doth all their prosperity do them? It does but hasten their ruin, not their reward. The ox that is the labouring ox is the longer lived than the ox that is in the pasture; the very putting of him there doth but hasten his slaughter; and when God puts the wicked men into fat pastures, into places of honour and power, it is but to hasten their ruin. Let no man, therefore, fret himself because of evil doers, nor be envious at the prosperity of the wicked; for the candle of the wicked shall be put into everlasting darkness; they shall soon be cut off, and wither as a green herb. *Ludovic de Carbone, quoted by John Spencer.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 1. The art of tranquillity. *W. Jones.*

Ver. 1-2. A frequent temptation, and a double corrective—a sight of sinners in death and hell.

PSALM 37:2

EXPOSITION

Ver. 2. *For they shall soon be cut down like the grass.* The scythe of death is sharpening. Green grows the grass, but quick comes the scythe. The destruction of the ungodly will be speedy, sudden, sure, overwhelming, irretrievable. The grass cannot resist or escape the mower.

And wither as the green herb. The beauty of the herb dries up at once in the heat of the sun, and so all the glory of the wicked shall disappear at the hour of death. Death kills the ungodly man like grass, and wrath withers him like hay; he dies, and his name rots. How complete an end is made of the man whose boasts had no end! Is it worth while to waste ourselves in fretting about the insect of an hour, an ephemeral which in the same day is born and dies? Within believers there is a living and incorruptible seed which liveth and abideth for ever; why should they envy mere flesh, and the glory of it, which are but as grass, and the flower thereof?

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 2. *Cut down like the grass,* with a scythe, and even at one blow. *Thomas Wilcocks.*

Ver. 2. *Wither.* O bitter word, which will make the ears of them that hear it to tingle! O sentence intolerable, which deprives sinners of all good things, and bringeth them to all woe! The Lord sometime accursed the fig tree, and immediately, not only the leaves, but also the body and root were wholly withered: even so, that fearful curse of the last day shall be no less effectual; for on whomsoever it falleth is shall so scorch them, and shall so make them destitute of God's grace, that they shall never more be able to do, to speak, think, or to hope for any good thing. *Thomas Tymme.*

Ver. 2. *Green herb.* We cannot gather riper fruit of patience from any tree than is found upon the low shrubs of man's short life; for if that fretting canker of *envy at the prosperity of the wicked* have overrun thy mind, a

malady from which the saints have no shelter to be freed, out of this apothecary's shop take antidote; either thy time is short to behold it, or theirs shorter to enjoy is; "they are set in slippery places, and are suddenly destroyed, "Psalm 73:18; "They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave, " Job 21:13; *They shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb.* Edmund Layfield's Sermon, entitled "*The Mappe of Man's Mortality and Vanity*", 1630.

Ver. 2. Sometimes the wicked, like the green herb, wither in their spring, they fall in their rise, they perish in the beginnings of their mischievous designs; but if they do come to a full growth, they grow but to harvest, the fit season of their cutting off. *Robert Mossom.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 1,2. A frequent temptation, and a double corrective—a sight of sinners in death and hell.

Ver. 2. How and when the wicked perish.

PSALM 37:3

EXPOSITION

Ver. 3. *Trust in the Lord.* Here is the second precept, and one appropriate to the occasion. Faith cures fretting. Sight is cross-eyed, and views things only as they seem, hence her envy: faith has clearer optics to behold things as they really are, hence her peace.

And do good. True faith is actively obedient. Doing good is a fine remedy for fretting. There is a joy in holy activity which drives away the rust of discontent.

So shalt thou dwell in the land. In "the land" which floweth with milk and honey; the Canaan of the covenant. Thou shalt not wander in the wilderness of murmuring, but abide in the promised land of content and rest. "We which have believed do enter into rest." Very much of our outward depends upon the inward: where there is heaven in the heart there will be heaven in the house.

And verily thou shalt be fed, or *shepherded*. To integrity and faith necessities are guaranteed. The good shepherd will exercise his pastoral care over all believers. In truth they shall be fed, and fed on truth. The promise of God shall be their perpetual banquet; they shall neither lack in spirituals nor in temporals. Some read this as an exhortation, "*Feed on truth*;" certainly this is good cheer, and banishes for ever the hungry heart burnings of envy.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 3. Note well the double precept *trust* and *do*. This is the true order, the two must go together, the one produces, the other proves; the promise is to both. *C. H. S.*

Ver. 3. *So shall thou dwell in the land*, etc. Thou shalt have a settlement, a quiet settlement, and a maintenance, a comfortable maintenance:

Verily thou shalt be fed; some read it, Thou shalt be fed by faith, as the just are said to live by faith, and it is good living, good feeding upon the promises.

Verily thou shalt be fed, as Elijah in the famine, with what is needful for thee. God himself is a shepherd, a feeder to all those that trust in him, Psalm 23:1. *Matthew Henry*.

Ver. 3. *So shalt thou dwell in the land*, etc. The land of Canaan was considered as the sum of earthly, and the type of heavenly felicity: to be provided for in the Lord's land, and there to dwell under his protection, near his ordinances, and among his people, was all that the genuine Israelite could desire. *Thomas Scott* (1744-1821) *in loc.*

Ver. 3. *Thou shalt be fed*. A manner of speech taken from cattle feeding securely, under the conduct and keeping of a good shepherd. *Henry Ainsworth*.

Ver. 3. *Thou shalt be fed*. Fed in plenty. *Thomas Secker* (Archbishop), 1768.

Ver. 3. Fed in security. *John Parkhurst*.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 3.

1. A combination descriptive of holy living.
2. A combination descriptive of happy living.

Ver. 3. The believer portrayed.

1. His object of trust.
2. His mode of life.
3. His place of abode.
4. His certainty of provision.

Ver. 3. (*last clause*). Read it in four ways.

1. "Certainly fed, "or the certainty of supply.
2. "Fed in verity, "or the sufficiency of the provision for soul and body.
3. "Fed on truth, "or the spirituality of the provision.
4. "Feed on truth, "or the duty of choosing such provision.

PSALM 37:4

EXPOSITION

Ver. 4. There is an ascent in this third precept. He who was first bidden not to fret, was then commanded actively to trust, and now is told with holy desire to delight in God.

Delight thyself also in the Lord. Make Jehovah the joy and rejoicing of thy spirit. Bad men delight in carnal objects; do not envy them if they are allowed to take their fill in such vain idols; look thou to thy better delight, and fill thyself to the full with thy more sublime portion. In a certain sense imitate the wicked; they delight in their portion—take care to delight in yours, and so far from envying you will pity them. There is no room for fretting if we remember that God is ours, but there is every incentive to sacred enjoyment of the most elevated and ecstatic kind. Every name, attribute, word, or deed of Jehovah, should be delightful to us, and in

meditating thereon our soul should be as glad as is the epicure who feeds delicately with a profound relish for his dainties.

And he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. A pleasant duty is here rewarded with another pleasure. Men who delight in God desire or ask for nothing but what will please God; hence it is safe to give them *carte blanche*. Their will is subdued to God's will, and now they may have what they will. Our innermost desires are here meant, not our casual wishes; there are many things which nature might desire which grace would never permit us to ask for; these deep, prayerful, *asking* desires are those to which the promise is made.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 4. Note thy part and God's part. Do thou *delight*, and he will *give*.
C. H. S.

Ver. 4. How much grace and love breathes in these words,

Delight thyself also in the Lord! Trust in him was recommended before, and now, this being added also, how plain is it that your ease and rest is the thing designed! Is it fit to receive so much kindness with neglect? Again, *he delights in you*; I speak to such of whom this may be supposed. And it is indefinitely said, "His delights were with the sons of men," Proverbs 8:31. Think what he is, and what you are; and at once, both wonder and yield. And what else have you to delight in? what thing will you name that shall supply the place of GOD, or be to you in the stead of him? Moreover, who should delight in him but you—his friends, his sons, those of his own house? Think what life and vigour it will infuse into you, and that "the joy of the Lord will be your strength," Nehemiah 8:10. How pleasantly will you hold on your course, and discharge all the other duties of this your present state? You must serve him. Dare you think of throwing off his yoke? How desirable is it then to take delight in him whom I must serve; which only makes that service acceptable to him, and easy to myself! Further, this is a pleasure none can rob you of; a joy that cannot be taken from you. Other objects of your delight are vanishing daily. Neither men nor devils can ever hinder you delighting in God, if your hearts be so inclined. And were you never brought to take pleasure in any person or thing to which you had a former aversion? One that had wronged you might yet possibly win you by after kindness. Give a reason why you should be more difficult towards the blessed God that never wronged you,

and whose way towards you hath constantly imported so much good will! And consider that your condition on earth is such as exposes you to many sufferings and hardships, which, by your not delighting in him, you can never be sure to avoid (for they are things common to men), but which, by your delighting in him, you may be easily able to endure. Besides all this, seriously consider that you must die. You can make no shift to avoid that. How easily tolerable and pleasant will it be to think, then, of going to him with whom you have lived in a delightful communion before! And how dreadful to appear before him to whom your own heart shall accuse you to have been (against all his importunities and allurements) a disaffected stranger! *John Howe's "Treatise of Delight in God."*

Ver. 4. We have in the former part extended the meaning of the words *Delight thyself in the Lord*, beyond what they seem at first sight literally to signify; so as not to understand them merely as requiring that very single act of *delight* to be immediately and directly terminated on God himself; but to take them as comprehending all *the sum of all holy and religious converse with God, i.e.,* as it is delightful, or as it is seasoned (intermingled, and as it were besprinkled) with delight; and upon the same account, of all out other converse, so far as it is influenced by religion. And I doubt not, to such as shall attentively have considered what hath been said, it will be thought very reasonable to take them in that latitude; whereof the very letter of the text (as may be alleged for further justification hereof) is most fitly capable. For the particle which we read *in the Lord*, hath not that signification alone, but signifies also *with, or by, or besides, or before, or in presence of*, as if it had been said, "Come and sit down with God, retire thyself to him, and solace thyself in the delights which are to be found in his presence and converse, in walking with him, and transacting thy course as before him, and in his sight." As a man may be said to delight himself with a friend that puts himself under his roof, and, besides personal converse with himself, freely enjoys the pleasure of all the entertainments, accommodations, and provisions which he is freely willing to communicate with him, and hath the satisfaction which a sober person would take in observing the rules and order of a well governed house. *John Howe.*

Ver. 4. *He shall give thee the desires of thine heart.* It shall be unto thee even as thou wilt. It is said of Luther that he could have what he would of Almighty God. What may not a favourite, who hath the royalty of his prince's care, obtain of him? *John Trapp.*

Ver. 4. *The desires of thine heart.* All the desires of this spiritual seed are of the nature of this seed, namely, substantial, and shall meet with substance. All the desires of natural man, even after God, after Christ, after righteousness, shall burn and perish with him (for they are not the truth, nor do they come from the truth, nor can they reach to the truth;) but all the desires of this spirit shall live with the Spirit of God, in rest and satisfaction for ever. *John Pennington, 1656.*

Ver. 4. The *desires* of God, and the *desires* of the righteous, agree in one; they are of one mind in their desires. *John Bunyan.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 4. Explain the delight and the desire of the believer, and show the connection between them.

PSALM 37:5

EXPOSITION

Ver. 5. *Commit thy way unto the Lord.* Roll the whole burden of life upon the Lord. Leave with Jehovah not thy present fretfulness merely, but all thy cares; in fact, submit the whole tenor of thy way to him. Cast away anxiety, resign thy will, submit thy judgment, leave all with the God of all. What a medicine is this for expelling envy! What a high attainment does this fourth precept indicate! How blessed must he be who lives every day in obedience to it!

Trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass. Our destiny shall be joyfully accomplished if we confidently entrust all to our Lord. We may serenely sing—

*"Thy way, not mine, O Lord,
 However dark it be;
 O lead me by thine own right hand,
 Choose out the path for me."*

*"Smooth let it be or rough,
 It will be still the best;
 Winding or straight, it matters not,
 It leads me to thy rest."*

*"I dare not choose my lot,
 I would not if I might;
 But choose Thou for me, O my God,
 So shall I walk aright."*

*"Take thou my cup, and it
 With joy or sorrow fill;
 As ever best to thee may seem,
 Choose thou my good and ill."*

The ploughman sows and harrows, and then leaves the harvest to God. What can he do else? He cannot cover the heavens with clouds, or command the rain, or bring forth the sun or create the dew. He does well to leave the whole matter with God; and so to all of us it is truest wisdom, having obediently trusted in God, to leave results in his hands, and expect a blessed issue.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 5. *Commit thy way unto the Lord*, etc. When we bear the burden of our own affairs ourselves, and are chastised with anxiety and want of success, and with envying the ungodly who prosper better than we do, the best remedy is first to do our duty, as we are enabled in the use of the means, then cast the care of the success over on God, as the ploughman doth when he hath harrowed his land; and let the burden of it rest on God, and let us not take it off him again, but put our mind to rest, resolved to take the harvest in good part, as he shall send it. *David Dickson*.

Ver. 5. *Commit thy way unto the Lord*, is rendered by the Vulgate, *Revela viam Domino*, reveal thy way; and by St. Ambrose, understood of revealing our sins to God. Indeed, since it is impossible to cover, why should we not discover our sins? Conceal not that which God knoweth already, and would have thee to make known. It is a very ill office to be the

devil's secretary. Oh, break thy league with Satan be revealing his secrets, thy sins, to God. *Nathaniel Hardy*.

Ver. 5. *Commit thy way unto.* Margin and Hebrew, *Roll thy way upon* —as one who lays upon the shoulder of one stronger than himself a burden which he is not able to bear. *William De Burgh, D.D., in "A Commentary on the Book of Psalms. Dublin:" 1860.*

Ver. 5. Note the double again, *Commit* and *trust*. *C. H. S.*

Ver. 5. *He shall bring it to pass.* When a hard piece of work is put into the hand of an apprentice for the first assay of his skill, the beholders are justly afraid of a miscarriage in his young and inexperienced hand; but when the worker is an old master of craft, none are afraid but his cunning hand can act again what so oft it hath wrought to the contentment of all the beholders. Were our God a novice in the great art of governing the world, and of the church in the bosom thereof; had he to this day never given any proof of his infinite wisdom, power, and goodness, in turning about the most terrible accidents to the welfare and joy of his saints; we might indeed be amazed whenever we feel ourselves sinking in the dangers wherein the practices of our enemies oft do plunge us over head and ears; but the Lord having given in times past so many documents of his uncontroverted skill and most certain will to bring about all human affairs, as to his own glory, so to the real good of all that love him, it would be in us an impious and unexcusable uncharitableness to suspect the end of any work which he hath begun. *Robert Baylie's Sermon before the House of Commons, 1643.*

Ver. 5, 7. —

*To God thy way commending,
Trust him whose arm of might,
The heavenly circles bending,
Guides every star aright:*

*The winds, and clouds, and lightning,
By his sure hand are led;
And he will dark shades brightening.
Show thee what path to tread.*

*Although to make God falter,
The powers of hell combine,
One jot they cannot alter
Of his all wise design:*

*All projects and volition
Of his eternal mind,
Despite all opposition,
Their due fulfilment find.*

*No more, then, droop and languish,
Thou sorrow stricken soul;
Even from the depths of anguish,
Whose billows over thee roll,*

*Thy Father's hand shall draw thee:
In hope and patience stay,
And joy will soon shed over thee
An ever brightening ray.*

*All faithless murmurs leaving,
Bid them a last good night,
No more thy vexed soul grieving,
Because things seem not right;*

*Wisely his sceptre wielding,
God sits in regal state,
No power to mortals yielding,
Events to regulate.*

*Trust with a faith untiring
In thine Omniscient King,
And thou shalt see admiring
What he to light will bring.*

*Of all thy griefs, the reason
Shall at the last appear:
Why now denied a season,
Will shine in letters clear.*

*Then raise thine eyes to heaven,
Thou who canst trust his frown;
Thence shall thy meed be given,
The chaplet and the crown:*

*Thy God the palm victorious
In thy right hand shall plant,
Whilst thou, in accents glorious,
Melodious hymns shall chant.*

Paul Gerhard (1606-1676), translated by Frances Elizabeth Cox, in "Hymns from the German," 1864.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 5-6. The higher life.

1. Based on hearty resignation.
2. Sustained by faith.
3. Constantly unfolded by the Lord.
4. Consummated in meridian splendour.

PSALM 37:6

EXPOSITION

Ver. 6. *And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light.* In the matter of personal reputation we may especially be content to be quiet, and leave our vindication with the Judge of all the earth. The more we fret in this case the worse for us. Our strength is to sit still. The Lord will clear the slandered. If we look to his honour, he will see to ours. It is wonderful how, when faith learns to endure calumny with composure, the filth does not defile her, but falls off like snowballs from a wall of granite. Even in the worst cases, where a good name is for awhile darkened, Providence will send a clearing like the dawning light, which shall increase until the man once censured shall be universally admired.

And thy judgment as the noonday. No shade of reproach shall remain. The man shall be in his meridian of splendour. The darkness of his sorrow and his ill repute shall both flee away.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 6. *He shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light,* etc. If thou shouldest be accused as a man of evil designs, let not that trouble thee neither: for though thy fame may be obscured for a time by calumnies and slanders, as the sun is by mists and clouds, yet as that scatters them all at last, so shall thy integrity appear, and shine as bright as the sun at noonday. *Symon Patrick.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 5-6. The higher life.

1. Based on hearty resignation.
2. Sustained by faith.
3. Constantly unfolded by the Lord.
4. Consummated in meridian splendour.

Ver. 6. Sweet comfort for slandered saints. Where their character now is. Who shall reveal it. The gradual yet sure manner of the revelation, and the glorious conclusion.

PSALM 37:7

EXPOSITION

Ver. 7. *Rest in the Lord.* This fifth is a most divine precept, and requires much grace to carry it out. To hush the spirit, to be silent before the Lord, to wait in holy patience the time for clearing up the difficulties of Providence—that is what every gracious heart should aim at. "Aaron held his peace:" "I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it." A silent tongue in many cases not only shows a wise head, but a holy heart.

And wait patiently for him. Time is nothing to him; let it be nothing to thee. God is worth waiting for. "He never is before his time, he never is too late." In a story we wait for the end to clear up the plot; we ought not to prejudge the great drama of life, but stay till the closing scene, and see to what a finish the whole arrives.

Fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass. There is no good, but much evil, in worrying your heart about the present success of graceless plotters: be not enticed into premature judgments—they dishonour God, they weary yourself. Determine, let the wicked succeed as they may, that you will treat the matter with indifference, and never allow a question to be raised as to the righteousness and goodness of the Lord. What if wicked devices succeed and your own plans are defeated! there is more of the love of God in your defeats than in the successes of the wicked.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 7. *Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him.* There are two words in the original, which express the privilege and the duty of resting on Christ: one implies such a state of acquiescence, as silences the clamours of conscience, and composes the perturbation of the spirit; the other signifies the refreshment and repose of a weary pilgrim, when he arrives at the end of his journey, and is settled for life in a secure, commodious, plentiful habitation. *James Hervey.*

Ver. 7. *Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him.* Take the case of one who, with a load above his strength, has been toiling some steep and broken path, when suddenly he finds it lifted off and transferred to another whose strength he knows to be more than equal to the task, and in whose sympathy he can securely trust. What would his feeling be but one of perfect rest, and calm reliance, and joyous freedom, as they went on their way together? And such is the blessedness of rolling our care upon the Lord—in weakness we are resting on superior strength, in perplexity and doubt we are resting on superior wisdom, in all times of trial and hard service we can stay ourselves on the assurance of his perfect sympathy. The literal meaning of the word *rest*, is *be silent* towards the Lord. With the eye fixed on him let all unbelieving thoughts be stilled, such thoughts as rise and rankle in the querulous spirit when it sees only its troubles, and not God in them, when the mists of earth hide from its sight the eternal stars of heaven. Then like Jacob, it may say morosely, "All these things are against me;" or, like Elijah, despondently, "It is enough now, O Lord, take away my life;" or, like Jonah, fretfully, "I do well to be angry." In regard to all such dark and unbelieving suggestions, the heart is to keep silence, to be still and know that he is God; silent as to murmuring, but not silent as to prayer, for in that holy meditative stillness the heart turns to commune with him. What is "resting in God," but the instinctive movement and upward glance of the spirit to him; the confiding all one's griefs and fears to him, and feeling strengthened, patient, hopeful in the act of doing so! It implies a willingness that he should choose for us, a conviction that the ordering of all that concerns us is safer in his hands than in our own.

A few practical remarks:

1. Our "*resting patiently*" in the Lord applies only to the trials which he sends, not to the troubles which even Christians often make for themselves. There is a difference in the burdens that come in the way of duty, and those

that come through our wandering into other ways. We can roll the one upon the Lord, but with the other our punishment may be to be left to bear them long, and to be bruised in bearing them.

2. The duty here enjoined is to be carried through all our life. We all admit that *patient* waiting is needed for the great trials of life, but may not acknowledge so readily that it is needed as much for little, daily, commonplace vexations. But these are as much a test of Christian principle as the other.

3. This resting in God is a criterion of a man's spiritual state. It needs a special faculty of discernment, a new sense to be opened in the soul, before our fallen nature can understand or desire it. *James D. Burns, M.A.*

Ver. 7. (*first clause*). *Hold thee still* (so it may be translated). And this is the hardest precept that is given to man; insomuch that the most difficult precept of action sinks into nothing when compared with this command to inaction. *Jerome.*

Ver. 7. (*first clause*). The Hebrew word rendered *silent* is (דָּמָה), *dom*, from which the English word *dumb* appears to be derived. The silence here enjoined is opposed to murmuring or complaining. *James Anderson, in Calvin's Commentary.*

Ver. 7. Note again the twin duties, *rest* and *wait*.

Ver. 7. *Bringeth wicked devices to pass.* Observe the opposition between this and *God's* bringing to pass, in verse five. The ground for grief is that the ungodly appear to achieve their end, the reason for comfort is that our end shall be achieved also, and that in the best manner by God himself. *C. H. S.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 7. *Rest in the Lord.* What? Where? When? Why? How?

Ver. 7. Peace, patience, self possession.

Ver. 7. Stillness in God. *Bishop Wilberforce.*

Ver. 7. *Rest in the Lord.*

1. Rest in the *will* of God, for whatever he wills is for your good, your highest good.
2. Rest in the *love* of God, and often meditate on the words of Jesus on this point, "Thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me."
3. Rest in the *mercy* of God.
4. Rest in the *word* of God.
5. Rest in the *relation* thy God fills to thee; he is the Father.
6. Rest in the Lord as he is manifested in Jesus, thy God *in covenant*.
James Smith.

PSALM 37:8

EXPOSITION

Ver. 8. *Cease from anger and forsake wrath.* Especially anger against the arrangements of Providence, and jealousies of the temporary pleasures of those who are so soon to be banished from all comfort. Anger anywhere is madness, here it is aggravate insanity. Yet since anger will try to keep us company, we must resolutely forsake it.

Fret not thyself in any wise to do evil. By no reasonings and under no circumstances be led into such a course. Fretfulness lies upon the verge of great sin. Many who have indulged a murmuring disposition have at last come to sin, in order to gain their fancied rights. Beware of carping at others, study to be yourself found in the right way; and as you would dread outward sin, tremble at inward repining.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 8. *Forsake wrath;* which is anger wrought up to a greater degree; and the rather to be shunned and avoided, as being very disagreeable to the character of a good man.

Fret not thyself in any wise to do evil; evil may be done by fretting at the prosperity of wicked men, or by imitating them, doing as they do, in hope of being prosperous as they are. *John Gill.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 8. A SERMON FOR THE FRETFUL.

1. *Cease* from present anger. It is madness, it is sin; it shuts out our prayers; it will grow into malice; it may lead to worse.
2. *Forsake it* for the future. Repent of it, watch temper, discipline thy passions, etc.
3. *Avoid* all kindred feelings of fretfulness, impatience, envy, etc., for they lead to evil.

PSALM 37:9

EXPOSITION

Ver. 9. *For evil doers shall be cut off.* Their death shall be a penal judgment; not a gentle removal to a better state, but an execution in which the axe of justice will be used.

But those that wait upon the Lord —those who in patient faith expect their portion in another life—*they shall inherit the earth.* Even in this life they have the most of real enjoyment, and in the ages to come theirs shall be the glory and the triumph. Passion, according to Bunyan's parable, has his good things first, and they are soon over; Patience has his good things last, and they last for ever.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 9. *They shall inherit the earth.* He means that they shall live in such a manner as that the blessing of God shall follow them, even to the grave.
John Calvin.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 9. How the humble are the true lords of the land.

PSALM 37:10

EXPOSITION

Ver. 10. *For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be.* When bad men reach to greatness, the judgments of God frequently sweep them away; their riches melt, their power decays, their happiness turns to wretchedness; they themselves cease any longer to be numbered with the living. The shortness of life makes us see that the glitter of the wicked great is not true gold. O wherefore, tried believer, dost thou envy one who in a little while will lie lower than the dust?

Yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be. His house shall be empty, his chair of office vacant, his estate without an owner; he shall be utterly blotted out, perhaps cut off by his own debauchery, or brought to a deathbed of penury by his own extravagance. Gone like a passing cloud—forgotten as a dream—where are his boastings and hectorings, and where the pomp which made poor mortals think the sinner blest?

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 10. *Thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be.* To wit, because he shall be grubbed up by the roots. *Arthur Jackson.*

Ver. 10. *His place...shall not be.* The very land he occupied as a home, and the title to which was unimpeachable, is no longer *his place*. It has passed into other hands. Nothing of all he had on earth is his. He is as poor as the most miserable object that subsisted on alms. *William S. Plumer.*

Ver. 10. The peacock, a glorious fowl, when he beholds that comely fan and circle which he maketh of the beautiful feathers of his tail, he rejoiceth, he setteth, and beholdeth every part thereof: but when he looketh on his feet, which he perceiveth to be black and foul, he by and by, with great misliking, vails his top gallant, and seemeth to sorrow. In like manner, a great many know by experience, that when they see themselves to abound in riches and honours, they glory and are deeply conceited of themselves; they praise their fortune, and admire themselves; they make plots, and appoint much for themselves to perform in many years to come. This year, they say, we will bear this office, and the next year that; afterward we shall

have the rule of such a province; then we will build a palace in such a city, whereunto we will adjoin such gardens of pleasure, and such vineyards: and thus they make a very large reckoning aforehand, who if they did but once behold their feet, if they did but think upon the shortness of their life, so transitory and inconstant; how soon would they let fall their proud feathers, forsake their arrogancy, and change their purpose, their minds, their lives, and their manners. *Thomas Tymme.*

HINTS FOR THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 10.

1. Consider what the departed sinner has left. Possessions, joys, honours, aims, hopes, etc.
2. Consider where he has gone.
3. Consider whether you will share the same lot.

Ver. 10-11. Terror to the wicked: comfort for believers. *A. Farindon.*

PSALM 37:11

EXPOSITION

Ver. 11. *But the meek shall inherit the earth.* Above all others they shall enjoy life. Even if they suffer, their consolations shall overtop their tribulations. By inheriting the land is meant obtaining covenant privileges and the salvation of God. Such as are truly humble shall take their lot with the rest of the heirs of grace, to whom all good things come by a sacred birthright.

And shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace. Peace they love and peace they shall have. If they find not abundance of gold, abundance of peace will serve their turn far better. Others find joy in strife, and thence arises their misery in due time, but peace leads on to peace, and the more a man loves it the more shall it come to him. In the halcyon period of the latter days, when universal peace shall make glad the earth, the full prophetic meaning of words like these will be made plain.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 11. *The meek shall inherit the earth.* In the meantime, they, and they only, possess the present earth, as they go toward the kingdom of heaven, by being humble, and cheerful, and content with what their good God has allotted them. They have no turbulent, repining, vexatious thoughts that they deserve better; nor are vexed when they see others possessed of more honour, or more riches, than their wise God has allotted for their share. But they possess what they have with a meek and contented quietness; such a quietness as makes their very dreams pleasing, both to God and themselves. *Isaak Walton (1593-1683), in "The Complete Angler."*

Ver. 11. *The meek.* What is thy Beloved more than any other beloved? It is spoken to the spouse. So what is meekness more than any other virtues? We may say, here is *synecdoche speciei*, one particular taken for the general, one virtue for all the rest. Or the effect is put for the cause; because meekness is one of the principal and chiefest parts of holiness. But if you will give me leave to conjecture, the Holy Ghost may seem in this promise at once to show the condition of the church, and to comfort her; and because being laid hard at on every side, she stands in need of this virtue more than any other, to fit and fashion the reward to the virtue, to cherish and exalt it in us with the promise of something beyond our expectation, even the *inheritance of the earth*. And indeed what fitter reward can there be of meekness? What more fit and just than that they who have been made the anvil for injuries to beat on, who have been *viriperpessitii*, as Seneca speaks of Socrates, men of great sufferance, who have suffered not only their goods to be torn from them by oppression and wrong, but their reputations to be wounded with the sharp razor of detraction, and have withstood the shock of all *spectantibus similes*, with the patience of a looker on, should be raised and comforted with a promise of that which their meekness gave up to the spoil; and that by the providence of God which loves to thwart the practice of the world, they should be made heirs even of those possessions which the hand of violence hath snatched from them. *Anthony Farindon, B.D., 1596-1658.*

Ver. 11. Not the hot stirring spirits who bustle for the world shall have it, but the meek, who are thrust up and down from corner to corner, and hardly suffered to remain anywhere quietly in it. This earth, which they seem most deprived of, they only shall have and enjoy. When the Lord hath made it worth the having, then none shall have it but they.

They shall inherit the earth. The earth is the Lord's; these are the children of the Lord, and they shall inherit this earth. When the Lord taketh it into his own possession and enjoyment, they shall succeed him in the possession and enjoyment of it. It is their right, and shall descend unto them by right, by inheritance. It is the Lord's right, and by the Lord shall descend to them as their right. They cannot yet have it, for the Lord hath it not yet; but when the Lord hath it, it shall fairly descend to them. This accursed earth they shall never have, but when it is taken into the hands of the Lord, and blessed by the Lord, then it shall be theirs, then it shall be inherited by the children of blessing. *John Pennington.*

Ver. 11. *And shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.* Surely when the glory of the Lord covers the earth, and all the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of the Prince of Peace, and the wicked one is rooted out, we may well expect peace in rich abundance. *W. Wilson.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 10-11. Terror to the wicked: comfort to believers. *A. Farindon.*

Ver. 11. The meek man's delight, or "the harvest of a quiet eye."

PSALM 37:12

EXPOSITION

Ver. 12-15. Here is the portrait of a proud oppressor armed to the teeth.

Ver. 12. *The wicked plotteth against the just.* Why can he not let the good man alone? Because there is enmity between the serpent's seed and the seed of the woman. Why not attack him fairly? Why plot and scheme? Because it is according to the serpent's nature to be very subtle. Plain sailing does not suit those who are on board of "The Apollyon."

And gnashed upon him with his teeth. The wicked show by their gestures what they would do if they could; if they cannot gnaw they will gnash; if they may not bite they will at least bark. This is precisely what the graceless world did with "that just One, "the Prince of Peace. Yet he took no vengeance upon them, but like a silent lamb received injuries in patience.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 12-13. Note how the gesture of the wicked in *gnashing their teeth* is returned to them in the Lord's scornful *laughter* at their devices. Their plotting, too, is countermined by that winding up of all plots, which the Lord knoweth, though they are wilfully ignorant of it. *C. H. S.*

PSALM 37:13

EXPOSITION

Ver. 13. *The Lord shall laugh at him.* The godly man needs not trouble himself, but leave well deserved vengeance to be dealt out by the Lord, who will utterly deride the malice of the good man's enemies. Let the proud scorner gnash his teeth and foam at the mouth; he has one to deal with who will look down upon him and his ravings with serene contempt.

For he seeth that his day is coming. The evil man does not see how close his destruction is upon his heels; he boasts of crushing others when the foot of justice is already uplifted to trample him as the mire of the streets. Sinners, in the hand of an angry God, and yet plotting against his children! Poor souls, thus to run upon the point of Jehovah's spear.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 13. *The Lord shall laugh at him,* etc. He seems to provide very coldly for our consolation under sorrow, for he represents God as merely *laughing*. But if God values highly our salvation, why does he not set himself to resist the fury of our enemies, and vigorously oppose them? We know that this, as has been said in Psalm 2:4, is a proper trial of our patience when God does not come forth at once, armed for the discomfiture of the ungodly, but connives for a time, and withholds his hand. Lest the flesh should still murmur and complain, demanding why God should only laugh at the wicked, and not rather take vengeance upon them, the reason is added, that he sees the day of their destruction at hand. *For he seeth that his day is coming. John Calvin.*

Ver. 13. *For he seeth that his day is coming.* He laughs at such poor worms, who make themselves so great upon the earth, and act so loftily in

their impotence, seeing it must so soon be over with them. *Berleb. Bible, quoted by E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Ver. 13. *For he seeth that his day is coming.* His dismal day, his death's day, which will also be his doom's day. *John Trapp.*

PSALM 37:14

EXPOSITION

Ver. 14. *The wicked have drawn out the sword.* They hold their weapon out of its sheath, and watch for a time to use it.

And have bent their bow. One weapon is not enough, they carry another ready for action. They carry so strong a bow that they have trodden upon it to bend it—they will lose nothing for want of force or readiness.

To cast down the poor and needy. These are their game, the objects of their accursed malice. These cowards attack not their equals, but seek out those excellent ones who, from the gentleness of their spirits and the poverty of their estates, are not able to defend themselves. Note how our meek and lowly Lord was beset by cruel foes, armed with all manner of weapons to slay him.

And to slay such as be of upright conversation. Nothing short of the overthrow and death of the just will content the wicked. The sincere and straightforward are hated by the crafty schemers who delight in unrighteousness. See, then, the enemies of the godly doubly armed, and learn how true were our Lord's words, "If ye were of the world, the world would love its own: but because ye are not of this world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you."

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 14-15. The tongue is a *sword* and a *bow*, which shooteth its arrows, even bitter words, against the humble and upright, Jesus and his disciples. But these are not the only weapons that have been drawn against them. How the malice of the Jews returned upon their own heads no one is ignorant, though few lay it to heart, and consider them as set forth for an example. *George Horne.*

Ver. 14-15. When the wicked are most near to do a mischief to the Lord's people, then is a mischief most near unto them. *David Dickson.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 14. *Upright conversation.*

1. What it excludes. The horizontal or earthly, the crooked or crafty, the slanting or sinister.
2. What it includes. Motive, object, language, action.
3. What it achieves. It stands like a pillar; it supports like a column; it ascends like a tower; it adorns like a monument; it illuminates like a Pharos.

PSALM 37:15

EXPOSITION

Ver. 15. *Their sword shall enter into their own heart.* Like Haman they shall be hanged upon the gallows built by themselves for Mordecai. Hundreds of times has this been the case. Saul, who sought to slay David, fell on his own sword; and the bow, his favourite weapon, the use of which he taught the children of Israel, was not able to deliver him on Gilboa.

And their bows shall be broken. Their inventions of evil shall be rendered useless. Malice outwits itself. It drinks the poisoned cup which it mixed for another, and burns itself in the fire which it kindled for its neighbour. Why need we fret at the prosperity of the wicked when they are so industriously ruining themselves while they fancy they are injuring the saints? The next nine verses mainly describe the character and blessedness of the godly, and the light is brought out with a few black touches descriptive of the wicked and their doom.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 14-15. When the wicked are most near to do a mischief to the Lord's people, then is a mischief most near unto them. *David Dickson.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 15. The self destructive nature of evil.

PSALM 37:16

EXPOSITION

Ver. 16. *A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked.* This is a fine proverb. The little of one good man is contrasted with the riches of many wicked, and so the expression is rendered the more forcible. There is more happiness in the godly dinner of herbs than in the stalled ox of profane rioters. In the original there is an allusion to the noise of a multitude, as if to hint at the turmoil and hurly burly of riotous wealth, and to contrast it with the quiet of the humbler portion of the godly. We would sooner hunger with John than feast with Herod; better feed on scant fare with the prophets in Obadiah's cave than riot with the priests of Baal. A man's happiness consists not in the heaps of gold which he has in store. Content finds *multum in parvo*, while for a wicked heart the whole world is too little.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 16. *A little that a righteous man hath*, etc. To wit,

- 1.** Because the wicked do often enrich themselves by unjust means, and so have much vexation and trouble with them, and likewise thereby do treasure up wrath against the day of wrath; whereas the righteous with a little, well gotten, have much peace of conscience, with hope of heaven hereafter.
- 2.** Because the righteous use theirs well, and are the better for them; whereas the wicked abuse theirs many ways, and are in many respects the worse for them.
- 3.** Because the righteous enjoy what they have from hand to mouth as the gifts of God, and the pledges of his fatherly love and care over them, and so it is to them as manna from heaven, and hereby they enjoy much sweet comfort, and are fully satisfied with what they have; whereas the wicked have none of this joy nor satisfaction by their wealth.

4. Because God by his blessing doth usually make that the righteous enjoy to be more effectual for their good than is the abundance of the wicked. A little coarse fare makes them more healthful and strong than the wicked are with all their plenty. And, **5.** Because the wicked enjoys not his wealth long, as the righteous man doth; and this indeed agrees best with the following words. *Arthur Jackson.*

Ver. 16. Strangers to Christ have the use of outward mercies, but cannot be properly said to have the enjoyment; they seem to be masters of them, but indeed they are servants to them; possessors as to outward use, but slaves as to their inward affections; they serve them while they seem to dispose of them; they do not *dominari*, but *servire* —have not the command of, but are enslaved. Nor is their use truly comfortable; they may fancy comfort, but their comfort is but a fancy; it flows from another fountain than can be digged in earth; true, solid comfort is the portion of those only who have the righteousness of Christ for their portion. These may look upon every temporal enjoyment as a token of everlasting love, as a pledge and earnest of eternal glory; and both these, because they may receive them as the purchase of the blood and righteousness of Christ; aye, here is the well spring of comfort, the fountain of that comfort which is better than life. Oh, what comfort is it to taste the sweetness of Christ's love in every enjoyment! When we can say, "Christ loved me, and gave himself for me, that I might enjoy these blessings, "oh, how will this raise the value of every common mercy! Christ's righteousness which was performed, the highest expression of his love, purchased this for me! Upon this account is that of the psalmist true,

A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked. He that hath but food and raiment hath in this respect more than he that hath the Turkish empire, or the gold of the Indies. He hath more ground of comfort in his little than they in all. *David Clarkson.*

Ver. 16. If thine estate were but little, yet it would be perfumed with love, and that lump of sugar in thy cup would make the liquor sweet, be it never so small. As the waters which flow from the hills of some of the islands of Molucca taste of the cinnamon and cloves which grow there, so should thy gift, though it were but water, taste of the goodwill and special grace of the Giver. Thy *little*, with the fear of the Lord, would be *better than the riches of many wicked men*. As a little ring with a very costly diamond in it is far more worth than many great ones without it, so thy estate, though it

were but a penny, should be joined with the precious jewel of that love which is better than life, and enjoyed by special promise, and thereby be infinitely more worth than the thousands and millions of others bestowed merely from common bounty, and enjoyed only by a general providence.
George Swinnock.

Ver. 16. It is as possible for a wicked man to fill his body with air and his chest with grace, as his mind with wealth. It is with them as with a ship; it may be overladen with silver and gold, even unto sinking, and yet have compass and sides to hold ten times more. So here, a covetous wretch, though he have enough to sink him, yet he shall never have enough to satisfy him. So that the conclusion which the psalmist delivers is most worthy to be observed:

A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked; he doth not say of how many, because let us think of never so many, yea, all of them, the righteous man's little is better in very many respects than all their greatest treasures heaped together. The King of Spain although the greatest prince in Christendom by far, having his empire so far extended, that he may truly say, that the sun ever shines upon his dominions, yet gives this for his motto, *Totus non sufficit orbis*, The whole world is not sufficient. God by Solomon tells us that "In the house of the righteous is much treasure" Proverbs 15:6, although many times there is scarce a good bed to lie, or a seat to sit on. The time will certainly come, when the richest wicked men that ever lived will see clearly that their account would have been much narrower, and consequently their condition to all eternity less miserable, if they had been so poor as to have begged their bread from door to door all their lives long. It is with the blessings of this life as it is with perfumed gloves; when they are richly perfumed their perfume is much more valuable than the leather of which they are made: so, not so much earthly blessings considered in themselves, as their being perfumed with the sweet love of God in Christ, is that which maketh them blessings indeed, truly deserving the name they bear. Now all the blessings of those who have made Mary's choice are all thus perfumed; all the barley bread they eat, be it never so coarse; all the clothes they wear, be they never so mean; with all their other temporal blessings, they proceed from the same sweet love of God, wherewith he was moved to bestow Jesus Christ upon them for salvation. Romans 8:32. *John Glascock's Sermon, entitled "Mary's Choice," 1659.*

Ver. 16-17. A little blest is better than a great deal curst; a little blest is better than a world enjoyed; a pound blest is better than a thousand curst; a black crust blest is better than a feast curst; the gleanings blest are better than the whole harvest curst; a drop of mercy blest is better than a sea of mercy curst; Lazarus crumbs blest was better than Dives' delicates curst; Jacob's little blest unto him was better than Esau's great estate that was curst unto him. It is always better to have scraps with a blessing, than to have manna and quails with a curse; a thin table with a blessing is better than a full table with a snare; a threadbare coat with a blessing is better than a purple robe curst; a hole, a cave, a den, a barn, a chimney corner with a blessing, is better than stately palaces with a curse; a woollen cap blest is better than a golden crown curst; and it may be that emperor understood as much, that said of his crown, when he looked on it with tears: "If you knew the cares that are under this crown you would never stoop to take it up." And therefore, why should not a Christian be contented with a little, seeing his little shall be blest unto him? Isaac tills the ground and sows his seed, and God blesses him with an hundredfold; and Cain tills the ground and sows his seed, but the earth is cursed to him and commanded not to yield to him his strength. Oh, therefore never let a Christian murmur because he hath but little, but rather let him be still blessing of that God that hath blest his little, and doth bless his little, and that will bless his little to him. *Thomas Brooks.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 16. How to make much of a little.

Ver. 16-17.

1. The owners contrasted.
2. The possessions compared.
3. The preference given.
4. The reasons declared.

PSALM 37:17

EXPOSITION

Ver. 17. *For the arms of the wicked shall be broken.* Their power to do mischief shall be effectually taken away, for the arms which they lifted up against God shall be crushed even to the bone. God often makes implacable men incapable men. What is a more contemptible sight than toothless malice, armless malevolence!

But the Lord upholdeth the righteous. Their cause and course shall be safe, for they are in good keeping. The sword of two edges smites the wicked and defends the just.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 17. *For the arms of the wicked shall be broken: but he upholdeth* (or underprops) *the righteous.* By *the arms of the wicked*, you are to understand their strength, their valour, their power, their wit, their wealth, their abundance, which is all the arms they have to support and bear up themselves in the world with. Now, these arms shall be broken, and when they are broken, then, even then, will God uphold the righteous, that is, God will be a continual overflowing fountain of good to his righteous ones; so that they shall never want, though all the springs of the wicked are dried up round about them. *Thomas Brooks.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 17. (*last clause*).

1. The favoured persons.
2. Their evident need, "upholding."
3. Their singular blessedness, "upheld, "above trial, under trial, after trial.
4. Their august Patron.

PSALM 37:18

EXPOSITION

Ver. 18. *The Lord knoweth the days of the upright.* His foreknowledge made him laugh at the proud, but in the case of the upright he sees a brighter future, and treats them as heirs of salvation. Ever is this our comfort, that all events are known to our God, and that nothing in our future can take him at unawares. No arrow can pierce us by accident, no danger smite us by stealth; neither in time nor eternity can any unforeseen ill occur to us. Futurity shall be but a continual development of the good things which the Lord has laid up in store for us.

And their inheritance shall be for ever. Their inheritance fades not away. It is entailed, so that none can deprive them of it, and preserved, so that none shall destroy it. Eternity is the peculiar attribute of the believer's portion: what they have on earth is safe enough, but what they shall have in heaven is theirs without end.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 18. *The Lord knoweth the days of the upright.* Deposits their days, lays them up in safety for them: for such is the original idea of (*ely*). *John Fry.*

Ver. 18. *The Lord knoweth the days of the upright,* and they cannot be cut short by the malice of man. *W. Wilson.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 18. The comforts derivable from a consideration of the divine knowledge. The eternity of the righteous man's possessions.

Ver. 18.

1. The *persons*, "the upright."
2. The *period*, "their days." These are known to God. (1) He knows them *kindly* and *graciously*; (2) He knows their *number*; (3) He knows the *nature* of them.
3. The *portion*, "their inheritance shall be for ever." *William Jay.*

Ver. 18 (*last clause*). What it is. How they come by it. How long they hold it.

PSALM 37:19

EXPOSITION

Ver. 19. *They shall not be ashamed in the evil time.* Calamities will come, but deliverances will come also. As the righteous never reckoned upon immunity from trouble, they will not be disappointed when they are called to take their share of it, but the rather they will cast themselves anew upon their God, and prove again his faithfulness and love. God is not a friend in the sunshine only, he is a friend indeed and a friend in need.

And in the days of famine they shall be satisfied. Their barrel of meal and cruse of oil shall last out the day of distress, and if ravens do not bring them bread and meat, the supply of their needs shall come in some other way, for their bread shall be given them. Our Lord stayed himself upon this when he hungered in the wilderness, and by faith he repelled the tempter; we too may be enabled not to fret ourselves in any wise to do evil by the same consideration. If God's providence is our inheritance, we need not worry about the price of wheat. Mildew, and smut, and bent, are all in the Lord's hands. Unbelief cannot save a single ear from being blasted, but faith, if it do not preserve the crop, can do what is better, namely, preserve our joy in the Lord.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 19. Good words for hard times.

PSALM 37:20

EXPOSITION

Ver. 20. *But the wicked shall perish.* Whatever phantom light may mock their present, their future is black with dark, substantial night. Judgment has been given against them, they are but reserved for execution. Let them flaunt their scarlet and fine linen, and fare sumptuously every day; the

sword of Damocles is above their heads, and if their wits were a little more awake, their mirth would turn to misery.

The enemies of the Lord shall be as the fat of lambs. As the sacrificial fat was all consumed upon the altar, so shall the ungodly utterly vanish from the place of their honour and pride. How can it be otherwise? If the stubble dares to contend with the flame, to what end can it hope to come?

They shall consume. As dry wood, as heaps of leaves, as burning coals, they shall soon be gone, and gone altogether, for *into smoke shall they consume away*. *Sic transit gloria mundi*. A puff is the end of all their puffing. Their fuming ends in smoke. They made themselves fat, and perished in their own grease. Consumers of the good they tried to be, and consumed they shall be.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 20. *As the fat of lambs.* As the glory of fat sheep, which are at length slain. *Targum*.

Ver. 20. *Fat of lambs.* As the fat of the sacrifices was consumed on the altar by the fire (which was a type of God's righteous vengeance upon sinners), till it vanished into smoke; so the wicked will be the sacrifices to God's justice, and be destroyed by the fire of his indignation. *Thomas Scott*.

Ver. 20. *Into smoke shall they consume.* "What hath pride profited us? or what hath our boasting of riches given us?" Such are the things, they shall speak who are in hell and who have sinned. For, the hope of the ungodly is like a dry thistle down, by the wind carried away, or the thin foam spread upon the billows, or as a smoke floated hither and thither by the wind, or as the remembrance of a wayfaring man for a day. *Wouter of Stoelwyk*, 1541.

PSALM 37:21

EXPOSITION

Ver. 21. *The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again.* Partly because he will not, but mainly because he cannot. Want follows upon waste, and debt remains undischarged. Often are the wicked thus impoverished in this life.

Their wanton extravagance brings them down to the usurer's door and to the bankrupt's suit.

But the righteous sheweth mercy, and giveth, Mercy has given to him, and therefore he gives in mercy. He is generous and prosperous. He is not a borrower, but a giver. So far as the good man can do it, he lends an ear to the requests of need, and instead of being impoverished by what he imparts, he grows richer, and is able to do more. He does not give to encourage idleness, but in real mercy, which supposes real need. The text suggests to us how much better it generally is to give than to lend. Generally, lending comes to giving in the end, and it is as well to anticipate the fact, and by a little liberality forestall the inevitable. If these two sentences describe the wicked and the righteous, the writer of these lines has reason to know that in and about the city of London the wicked are very numerous.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 21. *Payeth not again;* i.e., has it not in his power, from his straitened circumstances, to repay what he has borrowed: compare Deuteronomy 28:12. A Jew thus circumstanced became the bond slave of his creditors: compare 2 Kings 4:1. *Daniel Cresswell.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 21. Monetary transactions tests of character.

PSALM 37:22

EXPOSITION

Ver. 22. *For such as be blessed of him shall inherit the earth.* God's benediction is true wealth after all. True happiness, such as the covenant secures to all the chosen of heaven, lies wrapped up in the divine favour. *And they that be cursed of him shall be cut off.* His frown is death; nay, more, It is hell.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 22. God promises that the seed of his people shall inherit the earth. The child of such a tenant as paid his rent well, shall not be put out of his farm. *John Glascock.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 22. The divine blessing the secret of happiness. The divine displeasure the essence of misery.

PSALM 37:23

EXPOSITION

Ver. 23. *The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord.* All his course of life is graciously ordained, and in lovingkindness all is fixed, settled, and maintained. No reckless fate, no fickle chance rules us; our every step is the subject of divine decree.

He delighteth in his way. As parents are pleased with the tottering footsteps of their babes. All that concerns a saint is interesting to his heavenly Father. God loves to view the holy strivings of a soul pressing forward to the skies. In the trials and the joys of the faithful, Jesus has fellowship with them, and delights to be their sympathising companion.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 23. *The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord.* When this Pilot undertakes to steer their course, their vessel shall never split upon the rock, run upon the sands, or spring a leak, so as to sink in the seas. To be sure he will see them safe in their harbour. He was no Christian, yet I suppose none will deny but he spake good divinity, who said, "If a man will choose God for his Friend, he shall travel securely through a wilderness that hath many beasts of prey in it; he shall pass safely through this world; for he only is safe that hath God for his guide." (Ar. Epist. 27) Doth he not speak a little like David himself Psalm 37:23, who never expected to come to glory except he were guided by his counsel? Now, if a poor heathen could say thus, and see good reason to trust God, and admire his faithfulness as he

doth frequently (and so doth Seneca, justifying God's faithfulness in all his dealings with the best men in all their sufferings, and the prosperity of the wicked); what then shall the heavenly Christian say, who hath experienced so much of God's faithfulness in answering his prayers, in fulfilling his promises, and supplying all his exigencies? *James Janeway*.

Ver. 23. *He delighteth in his way.* Note that in verse four, we are bidden to delight in the Lord, and here he delights in us, and as here our way is his delight, so in verse thirty-four we are to "keep *his way*." These antitheses are instructive. *C. H. S.*

Ver. 23-24. Strange words to us! the very *steps* all *ordered*, and that by an Almighty One, who "delights" in the goodness of the good man's way. And yet the inference so distinctly to be drawn is that the good man *may* fall, and that his God and Guide may stand by and behold and permit! Let us add to the suggestion of these verses, one or two references which may help us to establish the principle in our hearts, that the child of God may fall and still remain the child of God; and also to explain somewhat of the reason why this is part of their lot, whether ordered, or only permitted, at all events, a step of the "right way, "by which God leads them to a "city of habitation." Psalm 107:7. It is observed near the close of Hezekiah's good and prosperous life that, "in the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon...God left him *to try him*, that he might know all that was in his heart, " 2 Chronicles 32:31. And again, in Daniel's prophecy regarding the latter days, we find Daniel 11:35, "And some of them of understanding shall fall, *to try them*, and *to purge*, and *make them white*." In the two preceding verses, we have also some valuable details regarding such falls, such as the help with which God will uphold them, the flatteries with which the world will still beset, and hinder them from rising again; the outward troubles into which their fall shall lead them, as through a furnace; the high position (instructors of many) which yet shall not save them from their needed ordeal—the time appointed—and the end in view. So here. The acknowledgment of the possibility of the good man's fall is accompanied with the precious assurance that *he shall not be utterly cast down*. *Mary B. M. Duncan*, in "*Under the Shadow*, 1867."

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 23-24.

1. The divine predestination.

2. The divine delight.
3. The divine support.

PSALM 37:24

EXPOSITION

Ver. 24. *Though he fall.* Disasters and reverses may lay him low; he may, like Job, be stripped of everything; like Joseph, be put in prison; like Jonah, be cast into the deep.

He shall not be utterly cast down. He shall not be altogether prostrate. He shall be brought on his knees, but not on his face; or, if laid prone for a moment, he shall be up again ere long. No saint shall fall finally or fatally. Sorrow may bring us to the earth, and death may bring us to the grave, but lower we cannot sink, and out of the lowest of all we shall arise to the highest of all.

For the Lord upholdeth him with his hand. Condescendingly, with his own hand, God upholds his saints; he does not leave them to mere delegated agency, he affords personal assistance. Even in our falls the Lord gives a measure of sustaining. Where grace does not keep from going down, it shall save from keeping down. Job had double wealth at last, Joseph reigned over Egypt, Jonah was safely landed. It is not that the saints are strong, or wise, or meritorious, that therefore they rise after every fall, but because God is their helper, and therefore none can prevail against them.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 24. *Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down*, etc. Thus the Spirit comforts and answers the secret thoughts which everyone might have, saying with himself, I have, however, seen it happen, that the righteous is oppressed, and his cause is trodden in the dust by the wicked. Nay, he replies, dear child, let it be so, that he falls; he still cannot remain lying thus and be cast away; he must be up again, although all the world doubts of it. For God catches him by the hand, and raises him again.

Martin Luther.

Ver. 24. *Though he fall*, namely, as one that were faint hearted, *he shall not be cast off*, namely, utterly, or for ever from God 2 Corinthians 4:9; *"for the Lord putteth under his hand, "i.e., his power and might, namely, to uphold him from utter falling away, which we should quickly do if God were not with us. Thomas Wilcocks.*

Ver. 24. A man pardoned, and justified by faith in Christ, though he may, and sometimes doth, fall into foul sins, yet they never prevail so far as to reverse pardon, and reduce to a state of non-justification.

Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand! He speaks of a good man pardoned, justified; he may fall; but how far? from pardon, from justification? No, then he should utterly fall, be cast down beneath God's hand; but the text saith, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand; or, as Montanus renders the words, the Lord upholdeth his hands, and he will not let him sink into such a condition. If it were so, then sin should have dominion over him, but, Romans 6:14. "Sin shall not have dominion over you; "and Romans 8:2, justified ones are freed from the law of sin and death; and Romans 8:30, the predestinated, called, justified, and glorified ones, are so linked together, that there is no breaking their chain; if they do sin, they have an "Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins." 1Jo 2:1-2. *William Greenhill.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 23-24.

1. The divine predestination.
2. The divine delight.
3. The divine support.

Ver. 24. Temporary trials.

1. To be expected.
2. Have their limit.
3. Have their results.
4. Our secret comfort under them.

What may be. What cannot be. What shall be.

PSALM 37:25

EXPOSITION

Ver. 25. This was David's observation, *I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.* It is not *my* observation just as it stands, for I have relieved the children of undoubtedly good men, who have appealed to me as common mendicants. But this does not cast a doubt upon the observation of David. He lived under a dispensation more outward, and more of this world than the present rule of personal faith. Never are the righteous forsaken; that is a rule without exception. Seldom indeed do their seed beg bread; and although it does occasionally occur, through dissipation, idleness, or some other causes on the part of their sons, yet doubtless it is so rare a thing that there are many alive who never saw it. Go into the union house and see how few are the children of godly parents; enter the gaol and see how much rarer still is the case. Poor minster's sons often become rich. I am not old, but I have seen families of the poor godly become rich, and have seen the Lord reward the faithfulness of the father in the success of the son, so that I have often thought that the best way to endow one's seed with wealth is to become poor for Christ's sake. In the Indian mission of the "Baptist Missionary Society, "this is abundantly illustrated.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 25. *I have been young, and now am old, yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken* (he doth not say, In my experience I never saw the righteous afflicted, but, I never saw him left or forsaken in his affliction), *and I never saw his seed begging their bread:* he puts in that, because begging of bread, especially in the commonwealth of Israel, and in the state of the Jews, was a note of utter dereliction! for though God had told them that they should have the poor always with them, yet he had given an express law that there should be no beggar among them; therefore, saith he, I have not seen the righteous so forsaken, that they should be forced to live by begging. If any say, that David himself begged, he asked bread of Abimelech and of Nabal; I answer, it is a good rule, and it resolves the case; transitory cases, and sudden accidents, make no beggars: we must not say, David was a beggar, or begged his bread, because once he was in a strait and asked bread of Abimelech; and in a second strait sent to Nabal:

in such sudden cases, the richest man in the world may be put to ask a piece of bread. A good man may fall into such wants, but good men are rarely, if ever or at all, left in them. *Joseph Caryl.*

Ver. 25. *Yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.* Perhaps it will be objected that there have been many righteous men poor: but the place speaketh of a righteous charitable man, for so the following verse sheweth, which saith, "He is ever merciful, and lendeth; and his seed is blessed." And who hath seen such a one or his seed to be brought to such poverty as to beg his bread? When our Saviour Christ had fed four thousand with seven loaves and a few fishes, all being filled, seven baskets full of fragments were gathered up: and it is Saint Austin's note upon it, *crescit dum impenditur victus, sic eleemosyna si indigentibus erogetur*, the victuals in expending were augmented, and so is the alms which is given to the poor. *Michael Jermin.*

Ver. 25. *Yet have I not seen,* etc. I believe this to be literally true in all cases. I am now grey headed myself; I have travelled in different countries, and have had many opportunities of seeing and conversing with religious people in all situations in life; and I have not, to my knowledge, seen one instance to the contrary. I have seen no *righteous man forsaken*, nor any *children of the righteous begging their bread*. God puts honour upon all that fear him; and thus careful is he of *them*, and of their *posterity*. *Adam Clarke.*

Ver. 25. *Begging bread.* This is not meant of an occasional seeking relief in want (for so David himself desired bread of Abimelech, 1 Samuel 21:3, and he and his soldiers desired some supply of victuals from Nabal, 1 Samuel 25:8); but of living in a continual way of begging from door to door, which is denounced as a curse against the wicked Psalm 109:10, "Let his children be continually vagabonds, and beg." Nor doth it hence follow, that neither the righteous man, nor his seed, are ever brought to this sad degree of misery; but only that it doth so rarely happen, that David in all his time had never seen it. *Arthur Jackson.*

Ver. 25. This observation of the psalmist will be found generally verified. We find indeed exceptions, as in the case of Eli's family. But this was the result of his defect of character as a righteous man. And we know that the promises must fail, if they neglect the means necessary to their accomplishment (see Genesis 18:19). But some think that this verse admits of an explanatory supplement; and render the last clause thus, "Nor his

seed (forsaken, though) begging bread." *David Davidson, in "The Pocket Commentary, 1836."*

Ver. 25. These words must be taken as a general observation, not absolutely verified in every case; yet the strict fact is, I apprehend, that the immediate descendants of truly pious persons are very seldom, if ever, reduced to such extremities, unless by their own great imprudence, or their abandoned practices. *William Walford.*

Ver. 25. Here he records an experiment of his (such as whereof Psalm 119 is mostly made up), and if other men's experiences agree not altogether with his, it is no wonder: kings use not to mind beggars. *John Trapp.*

Ver. 25-26. Many persons are solicitously perplexed how their children shall do when they are dead; yet they consider not, how God provided for them when they were children. Is the Lord's arm shortened? Did he take thee from thy mothers breasts; and when thy parents forsook thee (as the psalmist saith), became thy Father? And cannot this experienced mercy to thee, persuade thee that he will not forsake thine? Is not "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and for ever?" "I have been young, "saith David, "and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, "that is granted, nay, "not his seed begging bread."

Many distrustful fathers are so carking for their posterity, that while they live they starve their bodies, and hazard their souls, to leave them rich. To such a father it is said justly, *Dives es haeredi, pauper inopsque tibi.* Like an over kind hen, he feeds his chickens, and famishes himself. If usury, circumvention, oppression, extortion, can make them rich, they shall not be poor. Their folly is ridiculous; they fear lest their children should be miserable, yet take the only course to make them miserable; for they leave them not so much heirs to their goods as to their evils. They do as certainly inherit their fathers' sins as their lands: "God layeth his iniquity for his children: and his offspring shall want a morsel of bread." Job 21:19.

On the contrary, the good man *is merciful, and lendeth; and his seed is blessed.* What the worldling thinks shall make his posterity poor, God saith shall make the good man's rich. The precept gives a promise of mercy to obedience, not confined to the obedient man's self, but extended to his seed, and that even to a thousand generations, Exodus 20:6. Trust, then, Christ with thy children; when thy friends shall fail, usury bear no date, oppression be condemned to hell, thyself rotten to the dust, the world itself

turned and burned into cinders, still "Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today, and forever." *Thomas Adams.*

NOTES TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 25. Memorandum of an aged observer.

PSALM 37:26

EXPOSITION

Ver. 26. *He is ever merciful, and lendeth.* The righteous are constantly under generous impulses; they do not prosper through parsimony, but through bounty. Like the bounteous giver of all good, of whom they are the beloved sons, they delight in doing good. How stingy covetous professors can hope for salvation is a marvel to those who read such verses as this in the Bible.

And his seed is blessed. God pays back with interest in the next generation. Where the children of the righteous are not godly, there must be some reason for it in parental neglect, or *some* other guilty cause. The friend of the father is the friend of the family. The God of Abraham is the God of Isaac and of Jacob.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 26. *He is ever merciful, and lendeth; and his seed is blessed.* He, the good man, is *merciful* to *himself*, for mercy, like charity, begins at home; he is not afraid to eat a good meal because he hath children. And he is merciful to *others* too; for he will lend and do good to whom he can, and then his seed fares the better for it. Mark, that the more he gives and lends in doing works of mercy, the better it is for his children; for those children are ever best provided for whose parents bear this mind—they had rather trust God with their children, than their children with riches; and have made this their hope, that though they die, yet God lives. Did but one of those rich and wretched parents (who pinched and pined himself to make his son a gentleman, forsooth), rise from the dead, and see that proverb of Solomon fulfilled in himself, "He begetteth a son, and in his hand is nothing; "I persuade myself, the rumination of this would afflict him in his

soul as much as any one pain of sense, even in hell itself. O consider this, you that now live and see it in others; and remember withal, that if your goods be either ill gotten, or worse kept, it may be your children's case when you are departed, and feel it, though you see it not. *Matthew Griffith.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 26. The righteous man's merciful disposition, generous action, and rich reward.

Ver. 26. The benediction of the good man's family: what it is, and what it is not.

PSALM 37:27

EXPOSITION

Ver. 27-29. Here we have the seventh precept, which takes a negative and positive form, and is the quintessence of the entire Psalm

Ver. 27. *Depart from evil, and do good.* We must not envy the doers of evil, but depart altogether from their spirit and example. As Lot left Sodom without casting a look behind, so must we leave sin. No truce or parley is to be held with sin, we must turn away from it without hesitation, and set ourselves practically to work in the opposite direction. He who neglects to do good will soon fall into evil. *And dwell for evermore.* Obtain an abiding and quiet inheritance. Short lived are the gains and pleasures of evil, but eternal are the rewards of grace.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 27. Negative, positive, remunerative.

PSALM 37:28

EXPOSITION

Ver. 28. *For the Lord loveth judgment.* The awarding of honour to whom honour is due is God's delight, especially when the upright man has been traduced by his fellow men. It must be a divine pleasure to right wrongs, and to defeat the machinations of the unjust. The great Arbiter of human destinies is sure to deal out righteous measure both to rich and poor, to good and evil, for such judgment is his delight.

And forsaketh not his saints. This would not be right, and, therefore, shall never be done. God is as faithful to the objects of his love as he is just towards all mankind.

They are preserved for ever. By covenant engagements their security is fixed, and by suretyship fulfilments that safety is accomplished; come what may, the saints are preserved in Christ Jesus, and because he lives, they shall live also. A king will not lose his jewels, nor will Jehovah lose his people. As the manna in the golden pot, which else had melted, was preserved in the ark of the covenant beneath the mercyseat, so shall the faithful be preserved in the covenant by the power of Jesus their propitiation.

But the seed of the wicked shall be cut off. Like the house of Jeroboam and Ahab, of which not a dog was left. Honour and wealth ill gotten seldom reach the third generation; the curse grows ripe before many years have passed, and falls upon the evil house. Among the legacies of wicked men the surest entail is a judgment on their family.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 28. *For the Lord...forsaketh not his saints; they are preserved for ever.* How? since they die as others do. Mark the *antithesis*, and that will explain it.

They are preserved for ever: but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off. They are preserved in their posterity: children are but the parents multiplied, and the parents continued; it is *nodosa aeternitas*; when the father's life is run out to the last, there is a knot tied, and the line is still

continued by the child. I confess temporal blessings, such as long life, and the promise of an happy posterity, are more visible in the eye of that dispensation of the covenant; but yet God still taketh care for the children of his people, and many promises run that way that belong to the gospel administration, and still God's service is the surest way to establish a family, as sin is the ready way to root it out. And if it doth not always fall out accordingly, yet for the most part it doth; and we are no competent judges of God's dispensations in this kind, because we see providence by pieces, and have not the skill to set them together; but at the day of judgment, when the whole contexture of God's dealings is laid before us, we shall clearly understand how *the children of his servants continue, and their seed is established*. Psalm 102:28. *Thomas Manton*.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 28.

1. The Lord's love of right.
2. His faithfulness to the righteous.
3. Their sure preservation thus doubly guaranteed.
4. The doom of the wicked thus certified.

PSALM 37:29

EXPOSITION

Ver. 29. *The righteous shall inherit the land.* As heirs with Jesus Christ, the Canaan above, which is the antitype of "the land," shall be theirs with all covenant blessing.

And dwell therein for ever. Tenures differ, but none can match the holding which believers have of heaven. Paradise is theirs for ever by inheritance, and they shall live for ever to enjoy it. Who would not be a saint on such terms? Who would fret concerning the fleeting treasures of the godless?

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 29. *The righteous shall inherit the land,* or the earth. There is clearly an emphasis in the repetition of the same promise in the same terms which

ought to have been uniformly rendered throughout Psalm 37:9,11,22,29,34. And it cannot be doubted, that there is a reference to the new heavens and the new earth of Isaiah 56:17 2 Peter 3:13. *W. Wilson.*

Ver. 29. *The righteous shall inherit the land*, etc. Compare Matthew 5:5. Consider well this Bible truth, of the future exclusive possession of the earth by the righteous. The millennial kingdom furnishes a fuller explanation. *T. C. Barth.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 29. Canaan as a type of the righteous man's inheritance.

PSALM 37:30

EXPOSITION

Ver. 30. *The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom.* Where the whole Psalm is dedicated to a description of the different fates of the just and the wicked, it was meet to give a test by which they could be known. A man's tongue is no ill index of his character. The mouth betrays the heart. Good men, as a rule, speak that which is to edifying, sound speech, religious conversation, consistent with the divine illumination which they have received. Righteousness is wisdom in action, hence all good men are practically wise men, and well may the speech be wise.

His tongue talketh of judgment. He advocates justice, gives an honest verdict on things and men, and he foretells that God's judgments will come upon the wicked, as in the former days. His talk is neither foolish nor ribald, neither vapid nor profane. Our conversation is of far more consequence than some men imagine.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 30. *Our speech* as a test of godliness.

PSALM 37:31

EXPOSITION

Ver. 31. *The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide.*

The best thing in the best place, producing the best results. Well might the man's talk be so admirable when his heart was so well stored. To love holiness, to have the motives and desires sanctified, to be in one's inmost nature obedient to the Lord—this is the surest method of making the whole run of our life efficient for its great ends, and even for securing the details of it, our *steps* from any serious mistake. To keep the even tenor of one's way, in such times as these, is given only to those whose hearts are sound towards God, who can, as in the text, call God their God. Policy slips and trips, it twists and tacks, and after all is worsted in the long run, but sincerity plods on its plain pathway and reaches the goal.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 31. *The law of his God is in his heart*, etc. The flock of sheep that's indisposed and unwilling to drive, start out of the way into every lane's end, one this way and another that; and just so is it with an unwilling heart; one thought starts this way, and another that, and it's a piece of skill to drive them through. But a willing heart, a heart prepared and ready to every good work, it flies quite up an end, and delights itself in the Lord.
Richard Steele.

Ver. 31. (*first clause*). He hath a Bible in his head, and another in his heart; he hath a good treasure within, and there hence bringeth good things. *John Trapp.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 31.

1. The best thing.
2. In the best place.
3. With the best of results.

PSALM 37:32

EXPOSITION

Ver. 32. *The wicked watcheth the righteous, and seeketh to slay him.* If it were not for the laws of the land, we should soon see a massacre of the righteous. Jesus was watched by his enemies, who were thirsting for his blood: his disciples must not look for favour where their Master found hatred and death.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 32-33. The Jews *watched* that Just One daily and hourly; they *sought to slay him*, and did so; but *Jehovah left him not on their hands*, but vindicated his innocence by raising him from the dead. *George Horne.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 32-33. Our enemies; their inveterate malice; our safeguard and justification.

PSALM 37:33

EXPOSITION

Ver. 33. *The Lord will not leave him in his hand.* God often appears to deliver his servants, and when he does not do so in this life as to their bodies, he gives their souls such joy and peace that they triumphantly rise beyond their tormentors' power. We may be in the enemy's hand for awhile, as Job was, but we cannot be left there.

Nor condemn him when he is judged. Time shall reverse the verdict of haste, or else eternity shall clear away the condemnation of time. In due season just men will be justified. Temporary injustices are tolerated, in the order of Providence, for purposes most wise; but the bitter shall not always be called sweet, nor light for ever be traduced as darkness; the right shall appear in due season; the fictitious and pretentious shall be unmasked, and the real and true shall be revealed. If we have done faithfully, we may

appeal from the petty sessions of society to the solemn assize of the great day.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 32-33. The Jews *watched* that Just One daily and hourly; they *sought to slay him*, and did so; but *Jehovah left him not in their hands*, but vindicated his innocence by raising him from the dead. *George Horne*.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 32-33. Our enemies; their inveterate malice; our safeguard and justification.

PSALM 37:34

EXPOSITION

Ver. 34. *Wait on the Lord.* We have here the eighth precept, and it is a lofty eminence to attain to. Tarry the Lord's leisure. Wait in obedience as a servant, in hope as an heir, in expectation as a believer. This little word "wait" is easy to say, but hard to carry out, yet faith must do it.

And keep his way. Continue in the narrow path; let no haste for riches or ease cause unholy action. Let your motto be, "On, on, on." Never flag, or dream of turning aside. "He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved."

And he shall exalt thee to inherit the land. Thou shalt have all of earthly good which is really good, and of heavenly good there shall be no stint. Exaltation shall be the lot of the excellent.

When the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see it. A sight how terrible and how instructive! What a rebuke for fretfulness! what an incentive to gratitude! My soul, be still, as you foresee the end, the awful end of the Lord's enemies.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 34. *Wait on the Lord*, etc. He that truly trusts in God will stay God's time, and use God's means, and walk in God's way, though it seem round about; they will not neglect their souls for haste; they know this would be to make more haste than good speed. Nor would they step out of the way, the way that is holy and righteous, though they may escape a loss, an affliction by it, though they might gain some desirable advantage by it. True faith goes leaning upon God, and therefore will *keep his way*. He that will not be liberal for the promoting and honouring of the gospel; he that fears poverty or affliction more than he fears sin; he that is more careful for the things of the world than for his soul; he that takes indirect or suspected courses, to get, or increase, or secure his estate; he that is not jealous or watchful, lest his cares for the world (when he is much engaged therein) should be immoderate—it is plain he doth not trust God with his estate; and that he does not trust God for his estate, whatever he thinks or pretend, he does not trust God for his soul, for his salvation; his hopes of heaven and salvation are but presumption. *David Clarkson*.

Ver. 34. *Wait on the Lord*. Bind him not to a day, wake not the Beloved till he please. *John Trapp*.

Ver. 34. *Wait...keep*. While we are waiting let us take heed of wavering. Go not a step out of God's way, though a lion be in the way; avoid not duty to meet with safety; keep God's highway, the good old way Jeremiah 6:16, the way which is paved with holiness. "And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called the way of holiness." Isaiah 35:8. Avoid crooked paths, take heed of turning to the left hand, lest you be set on the left hand. Sin doth cross our hopes, it barricades up our way; a man may as well expect to find heaven in hell, as in a sinful way. *Thomas Watson*.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 34.

1. A twofold admonition:

1. *Wait on the Lord*.

2. *And keep his way*; wait and work, wait and walk, get grace and exercise it.

2. A twofold promise:

1. *He shall exalt thee to inherit the land;* God is the source of all elevation and honour.

2. *When the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see it;* and they will be cut off. *William Jay.*

Ver. 34. Patient faith, persevering holiness, and promised exaltation.

Ver. 34 (*last clause*). Emotions caused in the godly by a sight of the sinner's doom.

Ver. 34. (*last clause*). The wicked are often cut off

1. Even *in life*, from their places, and riches, and prospects.

2. At *death* they are cut off from all their possessions and comforts.

3. In *the last day* they will be cut off from "the resurrection of life."
William Jay.

PSALM 37:35

EXPOSITION

Ver. 35. A second time David turns to his diary, and this time in poetic imagery tells us of what he had observed. It were well if we too took notes of divine providences.

I have seen the wicked in great power. The man was terrible to others, ruling with much authority, and carrying things with a high hand, a Caesar in might, a Croesus in wealth.

And spreading himself like a green bay tree. Adding house to house and field to field, rising higher and higher in the state. He seemed to be ever verdant like a laurel, he grew as a tree in its own native soil, from which it had never been transplanted. No particular tree is here meant, a spreading beech or a wide expanding oak may serve us to realize the picture; it is a thing of earth, whose roots are in the clay; its honours are fading leaves; and though its shadow dwarfs the plants which are condemned to pine beneath it, yet it is itself a dying thing as the feller's axe shall prove. In the noble tree, which claims to be king of the forest, behold the grandeur of the

ungodly today; wait awhile and wonder at the change, as the timber is carried away, and the very root torn from the ground.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 35. *Green bay tree.* The LXX translate (ʿn[ʔ]) as if it were (ʿn[ʔ] j rʔK), "Like the cedar of Lebanon; "but (Nne xrza) according to Delitzsch, means a noble timber tree, one that in the course of centuries of growth has acquired a gigantic trunk, and an umbrageous, dome like crown.

Ver. 35. *Green bay tree.* The marginal rendering—"a tree that groweth in his own soil"—is, no doubt, the true one. The idea generally formed of this passage by the reader of the English Bible is that the tree referred to was the bay laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*), or cherry laurel of our gardens. But this plant belongs to an entirely different family. The bay and the Portugal laurels, whose forms of growth and evergreen leaves make them highly ornamental in shrubberies, belong to a subfamily (*Drupaceae*, Lind.) of the rose tribe (*Rosaceae*), but the bay tree proper, which flourisheth luxuriantly in Southern Europe, is the type of the laurel family (*Lauraceae*). Several circumstances make it unlikely that the true bay tree represents the Hebrew *esrach*. There is no evidence that it was ever so plentiful in Palestine as to be chosen by the psalmist in an illustration in a poem for popular use. It is indeed to be met with, but that chiefly in localities on the borders of the eastern shore of the Great Sea. The chief objection to the supposition that the bay tree was referred to by the royal poet is to be found in the Psalm itself. Having mentioned it in the lines quoted above, he adds, "Yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not: yea, I sought him, but he could not be found." The idea here is not one which could be represented and illustrated by an evergreen plant, slow of growth, and yet reaching in maturity a height of above thirty feet. The words demand a quick growing tree, in a soil more than usually favourable to its growth. Thus planted, and shooting up in calm and sunshine, it would attract every eye; but when the storm broke over it, when the strong wind swept imperiously through its branches, it would not stand. Torn up by the root, and its timber comparatively useless, like Abraham's dead, it would be buried out of sight. And thus with the wicked. He was sought and could not be found. *John Duns, D.D., F.R.S.E., in "Biblical Natural Science."*

Ver. 35. We see no force in the observation of Dr. Duns; in fact, if there were not other reasons for preferring the translation given in the following note by Wilson, we should see all the more reason to keep to the bay tree. It was a tree of permanence and of long continued verdure, and so the prosperous wicked seem to be. They look as if their happiness would be eternal; yet, for all that, those who carefully note the dealings of providence, observe with holy wonder that divine justice cuts short their glory, and they perish utterly. *C. H. S.*

I have seen the wicked in great power (terrible, fierce, violent), *and spreading himself like a green bay tree* (a tree in its native soil, vigorous, and luxuriant, that had never been transplanted). A striking figure of the ungodly man of the world, firmly rooted in earthly things—his native soil, grown proud and wanton in his prosperity, without fear or apprehension of any reverse. *William Wilson.*

Ver. 35. *Like a green bay tree*, which produces all leaves and no fruit. *Matthew Henry.*

Ver. 35. *I have seen the wicked*, saith David, *in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree.* And why like a green bay tree? Because in the winter, when all other trees—as the vine tree, fig tree, apple tree, etc., which are more profitable trees—are withered and naked, yet the bay tree continueth as green in the winter as the summer. So fares it with wicked men when the children of God, in the storms of persecutions, and afflictions, and miseries, seem withered, and, as it were, dead, yet the wicked all that time flourish, and do appear green in the eyes of the world: they wallow in worldly wealth, but it is for their destruction; they wax fat, but it is for the day of slaughter. It was the case of Hophni and Phinehas: the Lord gave them enough and suffered them to go on and prosper in their wickedness; but what was the reason? Because he would destroy them. *J. Gore's Sermon at St. Paul's, 1633.*

Ver. 35-36. —

——*Today he puts forth*
The tender leaves of hopes, tomorrow blossoms,
And bears his blushing honours upon him:
Third day comes a frost, a killing frost;

And—when he thinks, good easy man, full surely
His greatness is a ripening—nips his root,
And then he falls, as I do.

William Shakespeare, in Henry VIII.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 35-37. Three memorable scenes.

1. The imposing spectacle.
2. The astounding disappearance.
3. The delightful exit.

PSALM 37:36

EXPOSITION

Ver. 36. *Yet he passed away.* Tree and man both gone, the son of man as surely as the child of the forest. What clean sweeps death makes!

And, lo, he was not. To the surprise of all men the great man was gone, his estates sold, his business bankrupt, his house alienated, his name forgotten, and all in a few months.

Yea, I sought him, but he could not be found. Moved by curiosity, if we enquire for the ungodly, they have left no trace; like birds of ill omen none desire to remember them. Some of the humblest of the godly are immortalized, their names are imperishably fragrant in the church, while of the ablest of infidels and blasphemers hardly their names are remembered beyond a few years. Men who were in everybody's mouths but yesterday are forgotten tomorrow, for only virtue is immortal.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 36-37. The hawk flies high, and is as highly prized, being set upon a perch, verved with the jingling bells of encouragement, and carried on his master's fist; but being once dead and picked over the perch, is cast upon the dunghill as good for nothing. The hen scrapes in the dust, not anything rewarded when she is alive, but being dead, is brought as a choice dish to her master's table. Thus wicked men are commonly set in high places, and prosper in this life; and good men lie grovelling with their mouths in the dust, as the very underlings of the world; but being once dead, the one is cast into the dungeon of hell, the other advanced to the kingdom of heaven: the one is into Abraham's bosom, whilst the other is tormented with the devil and his angels. *Thomas Westfield, D.D., 1644.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 35-37. Three memorable scenes.

1. The imposing spectacle.
2. The astounding disappearance.
3. The delightful exit.

PSALM 37:37

EXPOSITION

Ver. 37. *Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright.* After having watched with surprise the downfall of the wicked, give your attention to the sincerely godly man, and observe the blessed contrast. Good men are men of mark, and are worth our study. Upright men are marvels of grace, and worth beholding.

For the end of that man is peace. The man of peace has an end of peace. Peace without end comes in the end to the man of God. His way may be rough, but it leads home. With believers it may rain in the morning, thunder at midday, and pour in torrents in the afternoon, but it must clear up ere the sun goes down. War may last till our last hour, but then we shall hear the last of it.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 37. *Mark...and behold.* Herodotus maketh mention of a custom among the Ethiopians to set the dead bodies of their friends in glazed sepulchres, that their proportions might be obvious to the passengers. How needless soever that custom was, it is doubtless no more than just that the pious lineaments of their minds who die in the Lord should be presented to the living in the mirror of art. Indeed, commendation after death is the tribute of a religious life. Good works are jewels not to be locked up in a cabinet, but to be set forth to public view. If Christ would have Mary's name remembered in the gospel until the world's end for one box of ointment poured on his head, we cannot imagine that he would have the many pious and charitable deeds of his servants to be buried in oblivion. Consult the Scriptures and you shall scarce find any godly man laid in his grave without an epitaph of honour. View the fathers, and you shall observe it their practice to honour the death of the good by giving them their deserved praises. *Nathaniel Hardy.*

Ver. 37. *The perfect man,* etc. —Divines well distinguish of a double perfection, it is *absoluta* or *comparata*. That is absolutely *perfect*, to which nothing (that it may be accounted truly good) is wanting; and thus He only is *perfectus* who is *infactus*; God, who made all things, and himself is not made, only enjoying an all sufficient perfection, in and of himself. That is comparatively *perfect*, in which, notwithstanding some wants there is a fulness compared with others. Thus every saint is *perfect* in comparison of the wicked among whom he liveth. In this respect it is said of Noah,

That he was a perfect man in his generations; his grace compared with the wickedness of the old world well deserving the name of perfection; indeed every upright man is *perfect* in comparison of them who are openly bad, or but openly good; stained with wickedness, or but painted with holiness. Thus one saint may be *perfect* if compared with another, the strong Christian in respect of the weak, whom he outstrips in grace and piety: such saints Paul means when he saith, "We speak wisdom among them that are perfect;" that is, such as have attained to greater measures of grace than others. It was said of Benaiah, "He was more honourable than thirty, but he attained not to the first three;" and though no saint can ever attain to the perfections of the *first three*, the blessed Trinity, yet many saints may be honourable amongst *thirty perfect* in comparison of those among whom they live.

We must further distinguish of a double perfection, it is *extrinseca* and *intrinseca*. Extrinsic perfection so called, because by imputation, is that which every believer is partaker of through the perfect righteousness of Christ, whereby all his imperfections are covered; in this respect the author to the Hebrews tells us, "That by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified;" and S. Paul tells the Colossians that they were "complete in him," meaning Christ. Indeed *omnia Dei mandata tunc facta deputantur, quando id quod non fit ignoscitur*: divine commands are then in God's account fulfilled when our defects for Christ's sake are pardoned; and the evangelical perfection of a Christian consists not *in perfectione virtutum, sed remissionis vitiorum*, in the completion of our graces, but remission of our sins.

Intrinsic perfection, so called because by inherence, is no less rationally than usually thus distinguished, there is *perfectio partium et graduum*. He is said to be *perfect*, *cui nihil deest eorum quae ad statum salutis necessaria*, who wants no graces that accompany salvation; or he is perfect, *cui nihil deest in gradibus gratiarum et virtutum*; who is not defective in the measures of those graces; both these are frequently and fitly illustrated by the resemblance of a child, and a grown man; the one whereof hath all the essential and integral parts of a man, the other a complete use and measure of those parts. *Nathaniel Hardy*.

Ver. 37. *The end.* All wise men affect the conclusion to be best: to ride two or three miles of fair way, and to have a hundred deep and foul ones to pass afterward is uncomfortable; especially when the end is worse than the way. But let the beginning be troublesome, the progress somewhat more easy, and the journey's end happy, and there is fair amends.

Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace. Mark him in the setting out, he hath many oppositions; mark him in the journey, he is full of tribulations; but mark in the conclusion, and the end of that man is peace. *Thomas Adams*.

Ver. 37. *The end of that man is peace.* Give me leave to determine what it is to end or die in peace. To end in peace with *Euthymius*, is to end in *pax cogitationis*, in peace of mind as it is opposed to doubting. To end in peace with *Cyprian*, is to end in *pax securitatis*, in peace of security, as it is opposed to final falling. To end in peace with *Origen*, is to end in *pax conscientiae*, in peace of conscience as it is opposed to despairing. To end in peace with old *Irenaeus*, is to end in *pax mortis*, in the peace of death

as it is opposed to labouring. Again, to end in peace, is to end in *pace Dei*, in the peace of God which passeth all understanding, *i.e.*, far beyond men's apprehensions. To end in peace, is to end in *pace proximi*, in peace with our neighbours, *i.e.*, when no outcries or exclamations follow us. And lastly, to end in peace, is to end in *pace sui*, in peace with ourselves, *i.e.*, when no distractions or perturbations of mind molest us. *Richard Parre.*

Ver. 37. The text may be divided into these two parts. Here is

1. The godly man's *property*; and
2. The godly man's *privilege*.

His property is perfection; his privilege is peace. Here is the saint's *character* and the saint's *crown*: he is characterised by uprightness or sincerity, and crowned with peace. Here is the Christian's *way* and his *end*, his *motion*, and his *rest*. His way is holiness, his end happiness; his motion is towards perfection and in uprightness; his rest is peace at his journey's end. *John Whitlock, in a Funeral Sermon entitled, "The Upright Man and his Happy End, "1658.*

Ver. 37. Time would fail me to tell how Christians die, nor can anything save the pen of the recording angel who has stood by their bed of death and borne them to Abraham's bosom narrate the unnumbered instances of their delightful departure from the present world, which verify the truth of the Bible. "I could never have believed," said a dying saint, "that it was so delightful a thing to die, or that it was possible to have such views of the heavenly world as I now enjoy." The memorable Melancthon just before he died, chanted in his sleep the words, "I will not any more eat thereof until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God." He seemed restless, and on being asked by one near him, "Whether there was anything more that he desired?" replied, *Aliud nihil nisi coelum* —nothing more, unless it be heaven. *Gardiner Spring.*

Ver. 37. To die well be sure to live well; we must not think to have Lazarus's death, and Dive's life; like him in Plutarch that would live with Craesus, as he said, but he would die with Socrates. No, Balaam's wishes are foolish and fruitless: If you would die well, Christians, you must have a care to live well: *qualis vita, finis ita*, if you would die quietly, you must live strictly; if you would die comfortably, you must live conformably; if you would die happily, you must live holily. *Mark the perfect man, and*

behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace. John Kitchin, M.A., 1660.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 35-37. Three memorable scenes.

1. The imposing spectacle.
2. The astounding disappearance.
3. The delightful exit.

PSALM 37:38

EXPOSITION

Ver. 38. *But the transgressors shall be destroyed together.* A common ruin awaits those who are joined in common rebellion.

The end of the wicked shall be cut off. Their time shall be shortened, their happiness shall be ended, their hopes for ever blasted, their execution hastened on. Their present is shortened by their sins; they shall not live out half their days. They have no future worth having, while the righteous count their future as their true heritage.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 38. *The end of the wicked shall be cut off.* The wicked in this world do easily run up without rub or interruption, many times with acclamations and applause, all the golden steps of honours and preferments; but upon the highest stair they find the most slippery standing, and the top of their earthly felicity is the most immediate and certain descent unto the greatest downfall. They are royally mounted here upon earth, and gallop swiftly over the fair and green plains of plenty and pleasures; but at the end of their race they are overturned horse and man, and tumbled headlong into the pit of destruction. They fairly glide over the sea of this world with full sail, with much calmness and serenity, and richly laden; but in the brightest sunshine, and when they least suspect it, they suddenly and without recovery, sink into the gulf of darkness and desolation. *Robert Bolton.*

PSALM 37:39

EXPOSITION

Ver. 39. *But the salvation of the righteous is of the Lord.* Sound doctrine this. The very marrow of the gospel of free grace. By salvation is meant deliverance of every kind; not only *the* salvation which finally lands us in glory, but all the minor rescues of the way; these are all to be ascribed unto the Lord, and to him alone. Let him have glory from those to whom he grants salvation.

He is their strength in the time of trouble. While trouble overthrows the wicked, it only drives the righteous to their strong Helper, who rejoices to uphold them.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 39-40.

1. The doctrines of grace condensed.
2. The experience of the gracious epitomised.
3. The promises of grace summarised.
4. The grandest evidence of grace declared: *because they trust in him.*

PSALM 37:40

EXPOSITION

Ver. 40. *And the Lord shall help them.* In all future time Jehovah will stand up for his chosen. Our Great Ally will bring up his forces in the heat of the battle.

He shall deliver them from the wicked. As he rescued Daniel from the lions, so will he preserve his beloved from their enemies; they need not therefore fret, nor be discouraged.

And save them, because they trust in him. Faith shall ensure their safety of the elect. It is the mark of the sheep by which they shall be separated from the goats. Not their merit, but their believing, shall distinguish them. Who

would not try the walk of faith? Whoever truly believes in God will be no longer fretful against the apparent irregularities of this present life, but will rest assured that what is mysterious is nevertheless just, and what seems hard, is, beyond a doubt, ordered in mercy. So the Psalm ends with a note which is the death knell of the unhallowed disquietude with which the Psalm commenced. Happy they who can thus sing themselves out of ill frames into gracious conditions.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 40. *And the Lord shall help them.* He *shall*, he *shall*, he *shall*. Oh, the rhetoric of God! the safety of the saints! the certainty of the promises!
John Trapp.

Luther closes his Exposition of the Psalm with the words, Oh, shame on our faithlessness, mistrust, and vile unbelief, that we do not believe such rich, powerful, consolatory, declarations of God, and take up so readily with little grounds of offence, whenever we but hear the wicked speeches of the ungodly. Help. O God, that we may once attain to right faith. Amen.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 39-40.

1. The doctrines of grace condensed.
2. The experience of the gracious epitomised.
3. The promises of grace summarised.
4. The grandest evidence of grace declared: *because they trust in him.*

PSALM 38

PSALM 38:1

Title. A Psalm of David, to bring remembrance. David felt as if he had been forgotten of his God, and, therefore, he recounted his sorrows and cried mightily for help under them. The same title is given to Psalm 70, where in like manner the psalmist pours out his complaint before the Lord. It would be foolish to make a guess as to the point in David's history when this was written; it may be a commemoration of his own sickness and endurance of cruelty; it may, on the other hand, have been composed by him for the use of sick and slandered saints, without special reference to himself.

Divisions. The Psalm opens with a prayer, Psalm 38:1; continues in a long complaint, Psalm 38:2-8; pauses to dart an eye to heaven, Psalm 38:9; proceeds with a second tale of sorrow, Psalm 38:10-14; interjects another word of hopeful address to God, Psalm 38:15; a third time pours out a flood of griefs, Psalm 38:16-20; and then closes as it opened, with renewed petitioning, Psalm 38:21-22.

EXPOSITION

Ver. 1. *O Lord, rebuke me not in thy wrath.* Rebuked I must be, for I am an erring child and thou a careful Father, but throw not too much anger into the tones of thy voice; deal gently although I have sinned grievously. The anger of others I can bear, but not thine. As thy love is most sweet to my heart, so thy displeasure is most cutting to my conscience.

Neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure. Chasten me if thou wilt, it is a Father's prerogative, and to endure it obediently is a child's duty; but, O turn not the rod into a sword, smite not so as to kill. True, my sins might well inflame thee, but let thy mercy and longsuffering quench the glowing coals of thy wrath. O let me not be treated as an enemy or dealt with as a rebel. Bring to remembrance thy covenant, thy fatherhood, and my feebleness, and spare the servant.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Title. The first word, MIZMOR, or Psalm, is the designation of forty-four sacred poems, thirty-two of which are ascribed to David. The English reader must observe, that this word is not the same in the original Hebrew as that which forms the general title of the book of Psalms; the latter expressing a Hymn of Praise. The word *Psalm*, however, as used both in the context and in the titles of the individual compositions, is uniformly *Mizmor* in the original; a term which accurately defines their poetical character. To explain its proper meaning I must have recourse to the beautiful and accurate definition of Bishop Lowth. "The word *Mizmor* signifies a composition, which in a peculiar manner is cut up into sentences, short, frequent, and measured by regular intervals." ...He adds that *Zamar* means to cut or prune, as applied to the removing superfluous branches from trees; and, after mentioning the secondary sense of the word, "to sing with a voice or instrument," gives it as his opinion, that *Mizmar* may be more properly referred to the primary sense of the root, so as to mean a poem cut up into short sentences, and pruned from all superfluity of words, which is the peculiar characteristic of the Hebrew poetry. *John Jebb*.

Title. The title that David gives this Psalm is worth your notice. A *Psalm of David to bring to remembrance*. David was on his deathbed as he thought, and he said it shall be a Psalm of remembrance, to bring sin to remembrance, to confess to God my uncleannesses with Bathsheba, to bring to my remembrance the evils of my life. Whenever God brings thee under affliction, thou art then in a fit plight to confess sin to God, and call to remembrance thy sins. *Christopher Love*.

Title. The Psalm is *to bring to remembrance*. This seems to teach us that good things need to be kept alive in our memories, that we should often sit down, look back, retrace, and turn over in our meditation things that are past, lest at any time we should let any good thing sink into oblivion. Among the things which David brought to his own remembrance, the first and foremost were, (1) *his past trials and his past deliverances*. The great point, however, in David's Psalm is to bring to remembrance, (2) *the depravity of our nature*. There is, perhaps, no Psalm which more fully than this describes human nature as seen in the light which God the Holy Ghost casts upon it in the time when he convinces us of sin. I am persuaded that the description here does not tally with any known disease of the body. It is very like leprosy, but it has about it certain features which cannot be found

to meet in any leprosy described either by ancient or modern writers. The fact is, it is a spiritual leprosy, it is an inward disease which is here described, and David paints it to the very life, and he would have us to recollect this. A third thing the Psalm brings to our remembrance is, (3) *our many enemies*. David says, that his enemies laid snares for him, and sought his hurt, and spoke mischievous things, and devised and imagined deceits all the day long. "Well," says one, "how was it that David had so many enemies?" How could he make so many? Must he not have been imprudent and rash, or perhaps morose? It does not appear so in his life. He rather made enemies by his being scrupulously holy. His enemies attacked him, not because he was wicked, but as he says, in this very Psalm, they were his enemies because he loved the thing which is good. The ultimate result of the religion of Christ is to make peace everywhere, but the first result is to cause strife. Further, the Psalm reminds us of, (4) *our gracious God*. Anything which drives us to God is a blessing, and anything which weans us from leaning on the arm of flesh, and especially that weans us from trying to stand alone, is a boon to us. *C. H. S*

Whole Psalm. The most wonderful features in this Psalm, are the depth of misery into which the psalmist gradually plunges in his complaints in the first part of it, the sudden grasp at the arm of mercy and omnipotence that is made in Psalm 38:8, and the extreme height of comfort and consolation that it reaches in the end. *Benjamin Weiss*.

Ver. 1. *O Lord, rebuke me not in thy wrath.* But is it not an absurd request, to require God not to rebuke me in his anger; as though I thought he would rebuke me if he were not angry? Is it not a senseless suit to pray to God not to chasten me in his displeasure, as though he would chasten me if he were not displeased? The most froward natures that are, will yet be quiet as long as they be pleased: and shall I have such a thought of the great yet gracious God, that he should be pleased and yet not be quiet? But, O my soul, is it all one, to rebuke in his anger and to rebuke when he is angry? He may rebuke when he is angry, and yet restrain and bridle in his anger; but to rebuke in his anger is to let loose the reins to his anger; and what is it to give the reins to his anger, but to make it outrun his mercy? And then what a miserable case should I be in, to have his anger to assault me, and not his mercy ready to relieve me? To have his indignation fall upon me when his lovingkindness were not by to take it off! Oh, therefore, *rebuke me not in thine anger, O God*, but let thy rebuking stay for thy

mercy; chasten me not in thy displeasure, but let thy lovingkindness have the keeping of thy rod. *Sir Richard Baker.*

Ver. 1. *Neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure*, etc. Both these words, which we translate to *chasten*, and *hot displeasure*, are words of a heavy and of a vehement signification. They extend both to express the eternity of God's indignation, even to the binding of the soul and body in eternal chains of darkness. For the first, *jasar*, signifies in the Scriptures, *vincire*, to bind, often with ropes, often with chains; to fetter, or manacle, or pinion men that are to be executed; so that it imports a slavery, a bondage all the way, and a destruction at last. And so the word is used by Rehoboam, "My father chastised you with whips, but I will chasten you with scorpions." 1 Kings 12:11. And then, the other word, *chamath*, doth not only signify *hot displeasure*, but that effect of *God's hot displeasure* which is intended by the prophet Esay: "Therefore hath he poured forth his fierce wrath, and the strength of battle, and it hath set him on fire round about, yet he knew it not, and it burned him, yet he laid it not to heart." These be the fearful conditions of God's hot displeasure, to be in a furnace, and not to feel it; to be in a habit of sin, and not know what leads us into temptation; to be burnt to ashes, and so not only without all moisture, all holy tears, but, as ashes, without any possibility that any good thing can grow in us. And yet this word, *chamath*, hath a heavier signification than this; for it signifies poison itself, destruction itself, for so it is twice taken in one verse: "Their poison is like the poison of a serpent" Psalm 58:4; so that this *hot displeasure* is that poison of the soul, obduration here, and that extension of that obduration, a final impenitence in this life, and an infinite impenitableness in the next, to die without any actual penitence here, and live without all possibility of future penitence for ever hereafter. David therefore foresees, that if God *rebuke in anger*, it will come to a *chastening in hot displeasure*. For what should stop him? For, "if a man sin against the Lord, who will plead for him?" says Eli. "Plead thou my cause," says David; it is only the Lord that can be of counsel with him, and plead for him and that Lord is both the judge and angry too. *John Donne.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Title. The art of memory. Holy memorabilia. The usefulness of sacred remembrance.

Ver. 1. The rebuke of God's wrath.

1. Richly deserved.
2. Reasonably dreaded.
3. Earnestly deprecated. *B. Daries.*

Ver. 1. The evil consequences of sin in this world. *J. J. Blunt.*

Ver. 1. The bitterest of bitters, *thy wrath*; why deprecated; and how escaped.

WORKS UPON THE THIRTY-EIGHTH PSALM

"*A Sacred Septenarie*, "etc., by ARCHIBALD SYMSON, 1638, contains an Exposition of this Psalm. See Vol. I, p. 74.

"*Meditations and Disquisitions upon the Seven Psalmes of David, commonly called the Penitential Psalmes.*" By Sir RICHARD BAKER, Knight: London: 1639, (4to.) contains "*Meditations upon the XXXVIII. Psalm.*"

PSALM 38:2

EXPOSITION

Ver. 2. *For thine arrows stick fast in me.* By this he means both bodily and spiritual griefs, but we may suppose, especially the latter, for these are most piercing and stick the fastest. God's law applied by the Spirit to the conviction of the soul of sin, wounds deeply and rankles long; it is an arrow not lightly to be brushed out by careless mirthfulness, or to be extracted by the flattering hand of self righteousness. The Lord knows how to shoot so that his bolts not only strike but stick. He can make convictions sink into the innermost spirit like arrows driven in up to the head. It seems strange that the Lord should shoot at his own beloved ones, but in truth he shoots at their sins rather than them, and those who feel his sin killing shafts in this life, shall not be slain with his hot thunderbolts in the next world.

And thy hand presseth me sore. The Lord had come to close dealings with him, and pressed him down with the weight of his hand, so that he had no rest or strength left. By these two expressions we are taught that conviction of sin is a piercing and a pressing thing, sharp and sore,

smarting and crushing. Those who know by experience "the terrors of the Lord," will be best able to vouch for the accuracy of such descriptions; they are true to the life.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 2. *For thine arrows stick fast in me.* First, we shall see in what respect he calls them *arrows*: and therein, first, that they are *alienae*, they are shot from others, they are not in his own power; a man shoots not an arrow at himself; and then that they are *veloces*, swift in coming, he cannot give them their time; and again, they are *vix visibiles*, though they be not altogether invisible in their cunning, yet there is required a quick eye, and an express diligence and watchfulness to avoid them; so they are arrows in the hand of another, not his own; and swift as they come, and invisible before they come. And secondly, they are many arrows, the victory lies not in escaping one or two. And thirdly, they *stick* in him: they find not David so good proof as to rebound back again, and imprint no sense: and they stick *Fast*: though the blow be felt and the wound discerned, yet there is not a present cure, he cannot shake them off; *infixae sunt*, and then, with all this, they stick fast *in him*; that is, in all him; in his body and soul; in him, in his thoughts and actions; in him, in his sins and in his good works too; *infixae mihi*, there is no part of him, no faculty in him, in which they stick not; for (which may well be another consideration), that *hand*, which shot them, *presses him*: follows the blow, and presses him *sore*, that is, vehemently. But yet (which will be our conclusion), *sagittae tuae*, *thy arrows*, and *manus tua*, *thy hand*, these arrows that are shot, and this hand that presses him so sore, are the arrows, and the hand of *God*; and therefore, first, they must have their effect, they cannot be disappointed; but yet they bring their comfort with them, because they are his, because no arrows from him, no pressing with his hand, comes without that *balsamum* of mercy to heal as fast as he wounds. *John Donne*.

Ver. 2. *Thine arrows stick fast.* Though importunity be to God most pleasing always, yet to us it is then most necessary when the cheerful face of God is turned into frowns, and when there is a justly conceived fear of the continuance of his anger: and have I not just cause to fear it, having the arrows of his anger sticking so fast in me? If he had meant to make me but a butt, at which to shoot his arrows, he would quickly, I suppose, have taken them up again; but now that he leaves them sticking in me, what can I think, but that he means to make me his quiver; and then I may look long

enough before he come to pluck them out. They are arrows, indeed, that are feathered with swiftness, and headed with sharpness; and to give them a force in flying, they are shot, I may say, out of his crossbow, I am sure his bow of crosses; for no arrows can fly so fast, none pierce so deep, as the crosses and afflictions with which he hath surprised me: I may truly say surprised me, seeing when I thought myself most safe, and said, "I shall never be moved," even then, these arrows of his anger lighted upon me, and stick so fast in my flesh, that no arm but his that shot them, is ever able to draw them forth. Oh, then, as thou hast stretched forth thine arm of anger, O God, to shoot these arrows at me, so stretch forth thine arm of mercy to draw them forth, that I may rather sing hymns than dirges unto thee; and that thou mayest show thy power, as well in pardoning as thou hast done in condemning. *Sir Richard Baker.*

Ver. 2. *Thine arrows.* Arrows are (1) swift, (2) secret, (3) sharp (4) killing instruments. They are instruments drawing blood and drinking blood, even unto drunkenness Deuteronomy 32:42; afflictions are like arrows in all these properties.

1. Afflictions often come very speedily, with a glance as an arrow, quick as a thought.

2. Afflictions come suddenly, unexpectedly; an arrow is upon a man afore he is aware, so are afflictions. Though Job saith, the thing he feared came upon him, he looked for this arrow before it came; yet usually afflictions are unlooked for guests, they thrust in upon us when we dream not of them.

3. They come with little noise; an arrow is felt before, or, as soon as it is heard; an arrow flies silently and secretly, stealing upon and wounding a man, unobserved and unseen. Lastly, all afflictions are sharp, and in their own nature killing and deadly. That any have good from them, is from the grace of God, not from their nature. *Joseph Caryl.*

Ver. 2. Let no one think these expressions of penitence Psalm 38:1-4 overstrained or excessive. They are the words of the Holy Spirit of God, speaking by the mouth of the man after God's own heart. If we were as repentant as David, we should bring home to ourselves his language; as it is, our affections are chilled, and therefore we do not enter into his words...And let us observe how all the miseries are referred to their proper end. The sin is not bewailed merely on account of its ill effect on the guilty

one, but on account of the despoil done to God. The psalmist's first thought is the "*anger*" of the Lord, and his *hot displeasure*. It is not the "arrows" that afflict him so much as that they are God's. "*Thine arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me.*" The reason why there is no health in his flesh is because of God's displeasure. Such is true contrition, "not the sorrow of the world which worketh death, but the sorrow that worketh repentance not to be repented of." *A Commentary on the Seven Penitential Psalms. Chiefly from Ancient Sources, (by A.P.F.) 1847.*

Ver. 2. *Thy hand presseth me sore.* Not the hand of Egypt or Ashur; then it were hand for hand, a duel of some equality: hand to hand; here forces and stratagems might achieve a victory: but *Thy hand*. The weight of a man's blow is but weak, according to the force and pulse of his arm; as the princes of Midian answered Gideon, when he bade his son try the dint of his sword upon them; "Rise thou, and fall upon us: for as the man is, so is his strength." Judges 8:21. But "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." Hebrews 10:31. As Homer called the hands of Jupiter *ceirez aeptoi*, hands whose praise could not be sufficiently spoken; which some read *ceires aaptoii*, hands inaccessible, irresistible for strength: all the gods in heaven could not ward a blow of Jupiter's hand. This hand never strikes but for sin; and where sin is mighty his blow is heavy. *Thomas Adams.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 2. God sharply chasteneth many of his children, and yet for all that he loves them never a whit the less, nor withholdeth in good time his mercy from them. *Thomas Wilcocks.*

PSALM 38:3

EXPOSITION

Ver. 3. *There is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger.* Mental depression tells upon the bodily frame; it is enough to create and foster every disease, and is in itself the most painful of all diseases. Soul sickness tells upon the entire frame; it weakens the body, and then bodily weakness reacts upon the mind. One drop of divine anger sets the whole of our blood boiling with misery.

Neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin. Deeper still the malady penetrates, till the bones, the more solid parts of the system, are affected. No soundness and no rest are two sad deficiencies; yet these are both consciously gone from every awakened conscience until Jesus gives relief. God's anger is a fire that dries up the very marrow; it searches the secret parts of the belly. A man who has pain in his bones tosses to and fro in search of rest, but he finds none; he becomes worn out with agony, and in so many cases a sense of sin creates in the conscience a horrible unrest which cannot be exceeded in anguish except by hell itself.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 3. *Thine anger...my sin.* I, alas! am as an anvil under two hammers; one of thine anger, another of my sin; both of them beating incessantly upon me; the hammer of thine anger beating upon my flesh and making that unsound; the hammer of my sin beating upon my bones and making them unquiet; although indeed both beat upon both; but thine anger more upon my flesh, as being more sensible; my sin more upon my bones, as being more obdurate. God's anger and sin are the two efficient causes of all misery; but the procatastic (as applied to diseases, signifies the exciting cause) cause indeed is sin: God's anger, like the house that Samson pulled upon his own head, falls not upon us but when we pull it upon ourselves by sin. *Sir Richard Baker.*

Ver. 3. *My flesh...my bones.* I know by the unsoundness of my flesh that God is angry with me; for if it were not for his anger my flesh would be sound: but what soundness can there be in it now, when God's angry hand lies beating upon it continually, and never ceaseth? I know by the unquietness of my bones that I have sin in my bosom; for if it were not for sin my bones would be quiet. But what quietness can be in them now, when sin lies gnawing upon them incessantly with the worm of remorse? One would think my bones were far enough removed and closely enough hidden from sins doing them any hurt: yet see the searching nature, the venomous poison of sin, which pierceth through my flesh, and makes unquietness in my very bones. I know my flesh is guilty of many faults, by which it justly deserves unsoundness; but what have my bones done? for they minister no fuel to the flames of my flesh's sensuality; and why then should they be troubled? But are not my bones supporters of my flesh, and are they not by this at least accessory to my flesh's faults? As accessories,

then, they are subject to the same punishment the flesh itself is, which is the principal. *Sir Richard Baker.*

Ver. 3. *neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin.* A Christian in this life is like quicksilver, which hath a principle of motion in itself, but not of rest: we are never quiet, but as the ball upon the racket, or the ship upon the waves. As long as we have sin, this is like quicksilver: a child of God is full of motion and disquiet...We are here in a perpetual hurry, in a constant fluctuation; our life is like the tide; sometimes ebbing, sometimes flowing; here is no rest; and the reason is because we are out of centre. Everything is in motion till it comes at the centre; Christ is the centre of the soul; the needle of the compass trembles till it comes to the North Pole. *Thomas Watson.*

Ver. 3. Learn here of beggars how to procure succour and relief. Lay open thy sores, make known thy need, discover all thy misery, make not thy case better than it is. Beggars by experience find that the more miserable they appear to be, the more they are pitied, the more succoured; and yet the mercies of the most merciful men are but as drops in comparison of the oceans of God's mercies; and among men there are many, like the priest and Levite in the parable Luke 10:30-32, that can pass by a naked, wounded man, left half dead, and not pity him nor succour him. But God, like the merciful Samaritan, hath always compassion on such as with sense of their misery are forced to cry out and crave help. Read how Job, Job 6:1-30 and Job 7:1-21; David, Psalm 38:3, etc., Hezekiah, Isaiah 38:10, etc., and other like saints poured out their complaints before the Lord, and withal observe what mercy was showed them of the Lord, and you may have in them both good patterns how to behave yourselves in like cases, and good encouragement so to do. This is it which God expects of us, and whereunto he desireth to bring us, that seeing our own emptiness and insufficiency, and the impotency and disability of others to help us, we should in all humility fly to his mercy. *William Gouge.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 3. (*last clause*). Sin causes *unrest*. He who cures it alone gives rest. Dwell on both facts.

PSALM 38:4

EXPOSITION

Ver. 4. *For mine iniquities are gone over mine head.* Like waves of the deep sea; like black mire in which a man utterly sinks. Above my hopes, my strength, my life itself, my sin rises in its terror. Unawakened sinners think their sins to be mere shallows, but when conscience is aroused they find out the depth of iniquity.

As an heavy burden they are too heavy for me. It is well when sin is an intolerable load, and when the remembrance of our sins burdens us beyond endurance. This verse is the genuine cry of one who feels himself undone by his transgressions and as yet sees not the great sacrifice.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 4. *For mine iniquities are gone over mine head: as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me.* David proceeds to a reason why his prayer must be vehement, why these miseries of his are so violent, and why God's anger is permanent, and he finds this all to be, because in his sins, all these venomous qualities, vehemence, violence, and continuance, were complicated, and unwrapped; for he had sinned vehemently, in the rage of lust, and violently, in the effusion of blood, and permanently, in a long and senseless security. They are all contracted in this text into two kinds, which will be our two parts in handling these words: first, the *Supergressae super*, "*Mine iniquities are gone over my head*," there is the multiplicity, the number, the succession, and so the continuation of his sin; and then, the *Gravatae super*, "*My sins are as a heavy burden, too heavy for me*," there is the greatness, the weight, the insupportableness of his sin. St. Augustine calls these two distinctions or considerations of sin, *ignorantiam, et difficultatem*; first that David was ignorant, that he saw not the tide, as it swelled up upon him, *abyssus abyssum*, depth called upon depth; and all thy waters, and all thy billows are gone over me (says he in another place); he perceived them not coming till they were over him, he discerned not his particular sins then when he committed them, till they came to the *supergressae super*, to that height that he was overflowed, surrounded, his iniquities were gone over his head; and in that St. Augustine notes *ignorantiam*, his inobservance, his inconsiderations of his own case; and

then he notes *difficultatem*, the hardness of recovering, because he that is under water hath no air to see by, no air to hear by, he hath nothing to reach to, he touches not ground, to push him up, he feels no bough to pull him up, and therein that further notes *difficultatem*, the hardness of recovering. Now Moses expresses these two miseries together, in the destruction of the Egyptians, in his song, after Israel's deliverance, and the Egyptians' submersion, "The depths have covered them" (there is the *supergressae super*, their iniquities, in that punishment of their iniquities, were gone over their heads), and then they sank into the bottom like a stone (says Moses), there is the *gravatae super*, they depressed them, suppressed them, oppressed them, they were under them, and there they must lie. The Egyptians had, David had, we have, too many sins to swim above water, and too great sins to get above water again when we are sunk. *John Donne*.

Ver. 4. *As an heavy burden they are too heavy for me.* No strength is so great but it may be overburdened; though Samson went light away with the gates of Gaza, yet when a whole house fell upon him it crushed him to death. And such, alas! am I; I have had sin as a burden upon me ever since I was born, but bore it a long time as light as Samson did the gates of Gaza; but now that I have pulled a whole house of sin upon me, how can I choose but be crushed to death with so great a weight? And crushed, O my soul, thou shouldest be indeed, if God for all his anger did not take some pity on thee, and for all his displeasure did not stay his hand from further chastening thee. *Sir Richard Baker*.

Ver. 4. It is of singular use to us, that the backslidings of the holy men of God are recorded in Holy Writ. Spots appear nowhere more disagreeable than when seen in a most beautiful face, or on the cleanest garment. And it is expedient to have a perfect knowledge of the filthiness of sin. We also learn from them to think humbly of ourselves, to depend on the grace of God, to keep a stricter eye upon ourselves, lest perhaps we fall into the same or more grievous sins. Ga 6:1. *Herman Witsius, D.D.*, 1636-1708.

Ver. 4-5. It is only when we can enter into *all* that is implied here that we begin to see our exceeding sinfulness. There is a certain feeling of sin which does not interfere with our pride, and self respect. We can have that sort of feeling, and say pretty earnestly, *Mine iniquities are gone over mine head: as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me.* But it is otherwise with us when we get to know ourselves better, and to feel ourselves

loathsome in our wickedness, when our folly and meanness and ingratitude oppress us, and we begin to loathe ourselves, and can enter into verse five. Our wounds, once an object of self pity, and something in which we could claim sympathy and healing from our friends, have become *corrupt*, because of the meanness and folly we feel to be in us. We hide them now, for if they were seen, would not "lovers and friends stand aloof from our sore"? Then we are silent except to God, "For in *thee*, O Lord, do I hope; *thou* wilt hear, O Lord my God, "Psalm 38:15. O love of God that turns not away! O blessed Jesus, that turneth not away from the leprous man that fell upon his face and said, "If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean, but put forth thine hand and *touched* him, saying, 'I will: be thou clean, 'to whom *can* we go but unto thee!" *Mary B. M. Duncan.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 4. (*first clause*). Sin in its relations to us. To the *eye* pleasing. To the *heart* disappointing. In the *bones* vexing. Over the *head* overwhelming.

Ver. 4. The confession of an awakened sinner.

Ver. 4. (*last clause*). Sin.

1. Heavy—*a burden*.
2. Very heavy—*A heavy burden*.
3. Superlatively heavy—*too heavy for me*.
4. Not immovable, for though too heavy *for me*, yet Jesus bore it.

PSALM 38:5

EXPOSITION

Ver. 5. *My wounds stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness.* Apply this to the body, and it pictures a sad condition of disease; but read it of the soul, and it is to the life. Conscience lays on stripe after stripe till the swelling becomes a wound and suppurates, and the corruption within grows offensive. What a horrible creature man appears to be in his own consciousness when his depravity and vileness are fully opened up by the law of God, applied by the Holy Spirit! It is true there are diseases which are correctly described in this verse, when in the worst stage; but we prefer

to receive the expressions as instructively figurative, since the words "because of my foolishness" point rather at a moral than a physical malady. Some of us know what it is to stink in our own nostrils, so as to loathe ourselves. Even the most filthy diseases cannot be so foul as sin. No ulcers, cancers, or putrifying sores, can match the unutterable vileness and pollution of iniquity. Our own perceptions have made us feel this. We write what we do know, and testify what we have seen; and even now we shudder to think that so much of evil should lie festering deep within our nature.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 5. *My wounds stink and are corrupt*, etc. These expressions seem to be in a great measure figurative, and significant rather of the diseased state of his mind than of his body. *William Walford*.

Ver. 5. *My wounds stink and are corrupt*. I know, O Lord, I have done most foolishly, to let my sores run so long without seeking for help; for now,

My wounds stink and are corrupt, in as ill a case as Lazarus' body was when it had been four days buried; enough to make any man despair that did not know thee as I do. For, do not I know, that *nullum tempus occurrit tibi*; do not I know thou hast as well wisdom to remedy my foolishness as power to cure my wounds? Could the grave hold Lazarus when thou didst but open thy mouth to call him forth? No more can the corruption of my sores be any hindrance to their healing when thy pleasure is to have them to be cured. Although, therefore, I have done my own discretion wrong to defer my care, yet I will not do thy power wrong to despair of thy cure; for, how should I despair, who know thee to be as powerful as thou art merciful; if I may not rather say, to be as merciful as thou art powerful! *Sir Richard Baker*.

Ver. 5. *My wounds stink and are corrupt*. Either they must be understood literally of the sores that were in his body (as the words in the following verse may also seem to import) which he calls *wounds*, to intimate that he looked upon them as the wheals or swelling tumours (for so the original word may signify) which the rod of God had made in his flesh, or the wounds of those arrows of which he had spoken Psalm 38:2, "Thine arrows stick fast in me;" or else figuratively, of any other miseries that God had brought upon him, comparing them to stinking and festering sores;

either to imply the long continuance of them, or the sharp pains and sorrows which he felt in himself by reason thereof. Yet some, I know, would have it meant of the shame which his sins had brought upon him. *Arthur Jackson.*

Ver. 5-6. The spiritual feeling of sin is indispensable to the feeling of salvation. A sense of the malady must ever precede, and prepare the soul for, a believing reception and due apprehension of the remedy. Wherever God intends to reveal his Son with power, wherever he intends to make the gospel to be "a joyful sound," he makes the conscience feel and groan under the burden of sin. And sure am I that when a man is labouring under the burden of sin, he will be full of complaint. The Bible records hundreds of the complaints of God's people under the burden of sin.

My wounds stink and are corrupt, cries one, *because of my foolishness. I am troubled; I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long.* "My soul," cries another, "is full of troubles: and my life draweth nigh until the grave," Psalm 88:3. "He hath led me," groans out a third, "and brought me into darkness, but not into light." Lamentations 3:2. A living man must needs cry under such circumstances. He cannot carry the burden without complaining of its weight. He cannot feel the arrow sticking in his conscience without groaning under the pain. He cannot have the worm gnawing his vitals, without complaining of its venomous tooth. He cannot feel that God is incensed against him without bitterly complaining that the Lord is his enemy. Spiritual complaint then is a mark of spiritual life, and is one which God recognises as such. "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself." Jeremiah 31:18. It shows that he has something to mourn over; something to make him groan being burdened; that sin has been opened up to him in its hateful malignancy; that it is a trouble and distress to his soul; that he cannot roll it like a sweet morsel under his tongue; but that it is found out by the penetrating eye, and punished by the chastening hand of God. *J. C. Philpot. 1842.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 5. Foolishness. The folly of sin. Everything that a man has to do with sin shows his folly.

1. Dallying with sin.
2. Committing it.

3. Continuing in it.
4. Hiding it.
5. Palliating it. *B. Davies.*

PSALM 38:6

EXPOSITION

Ver. 6. *I am troubled.* I am wearied with distress, writhing with pain, in sore travail on account of sin revealed within me.

I am bowed down greatly. I am brought very low, grievously weakened and frightfully depressed. Nothing so pulls a man down from all loftiness as a sense of sin and of divine wrath concerning it.

I go mourning all the day long. The mourner's soul sorrow knew no intermission, even when he went about such business as he was able to attend, he went forth like a mourner who goes to the tomb, and his words and manners were like the lamentations of those who follow the corpse. The whole verse may be the more clearly understood if we picture the Oriental mourner, covered with sackcloth and ashes, bowed as in a heap, sitting amid squalor and dirt, performing contortions and writhings expressive of his grief; such is the awakened sinner, not in outward guise, but in very deed.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 6. *I am troubled.* *I writhe with pain.* This is the proper sense of the original, which means to "turn out of its proper situation, or course; "thence to be "distorted, writhed, "as a person in pain. Our Bible translation, which says in the text, *I am troubled*, adds in the margin, "wried, "an obsolete word, correctly expressing the Hebrew. *Richard Mant.*

Ver. 6. *I go mourning all the day long.* And now was I both a burden and a terror to myself, nor did I ever so know, as now, what it was to be weary of my life, and yet afraid to die. Oh, how gladly now would I have been anybody but myself! Anything but a man! and in any condition but mine own! for there was nothing did pass more frequently over my mind than

that it was impossible for me to be forgiven my transgression, and to be saved from wrath to come. *John Bunyan, in "Grace Abounding."*

Ver. 6. Let a man see and feel himself under the bonds of guilt, in danger of hell, under the power of his lusts, enmity against God, and God a stranger to him; let but the sense of this condition lie upon his heart, and let him go on in his jollity if he can. What a woeful creature doth a man see himself now to be! He envies the happiness of the beasts that are filled, and play in their pastures. We have heard of him who when he saw a toad, stood weeping, because God had made him a *man*, so excellent a creature, and not a toad, so abominable: the goodness of God, then, it seems, as he apprehended it, made him weep; but this man meets a toad, and he weeps also, but why? because he is a *man* who thinks his estate infinitely worse than the condition of a toad, and if it were possible to attain it, would change states with the toad, that hath no guilt of sin, fears no wrath of God, is not under power of lusts or creatures; God is not enemy to it, which is his miserable state. *Giles Firmin, 1617-1697.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 6. Conviction of sin. Its grief, its depth, its continuance.

Ver. 6. *I go mourning.*

1. Unlawful reasons for mourning.
2. Legitimate themes for sorrow.
3. Valuable alleviations of grief.

PSALM 38:7

EXPOSITION

Ver. 7. *For my loins are filled with a loathsome disease* —a hot, dry, parching disorder, probably accompanied by loathsome ulcers. Spiritually, the fire burns within when the evil of the heart is laid bare. Note the emphatic words, the evil is *loathsome*, it is in the *loins*, its seat is deep and vital—the man is *filled* with it. Those who have passed through the time of conviction understand all this.

And there is no soundness in my flesh. This he had said before, and thus the Holy Spirit brings humiliating truth again and again to our memories, tears away every ground of glorying, and makes us know that in us, that is, in our flesh, there dwelleth no good thing.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 7. *For my loins are filled with a loathsome disease.* The word here used, according to Gesenius (*Lex.*), properly denotes the internal muscles of the loins near the kidneys, to which the fat adheres. The word rendered *loathsome*—the word *disease* being supplied by our translators—is derived from (hl q), *kalah*, a word which means to roast, to parch, as fruit, grain, etc.; and then, in the form used here, it means scorched, burned; hence, a burning or inflammation; and the whole phrase would be synonymous with *an inflammation of the kidneys*. The word here used does not imply that there was any eruption, or ulcer, though it would seem from verse five that this was the fact, and that the inflammation had produced this effect. *Albert Barnes.*

Ver. 7. *A loathsome disease.* In many things our estimates are extravagant; but we never over estimate the evil of sin. It is as corrupting as it is damning. It covers the soul with plague spots, with the leprosy. Isaiah 1:5-6. *William S. Plumer.*

PSALM 38:8

EXPOSITION

Ver. 8. *I am feeble.* The original is "benumbed, "or frozen, such strange incongruities and contradictions meet in a distracted mind and a sick body—it appears to itself to be alternately parched with heat and pinched with cold. Like souls in the Popish fabled Purgatory, tossed from burning furnaces into thick ice, so tormented hearts rush from one extreme to the other, with equal torture in each. A heat of fear, a chill of horror, a flaming desire, a horrible insensibility—by these successive miseries a convinced sinner is brought to death's door.

And sore broken. Crushed as in a mill, pounded as in a mortar. The body of the sick man appears to be all out of joint and smashed into a palpitating

pulp, and the soul of the desponding is in an equally wretched case; as a victim crushed under the car of Juggernaut, such is a soul over whose conscience the wheels of divine wrath have forced their awful way.

I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart. Deep and hoarse is the voice of sorrow, and often inarticulate and terrible. The heart learns groanings which cannot be uttered, and the voice fails to tone and tune itself to human speech. When our prayers appear to be rather animal than spiritual, they are none the less prevalent with the pitiful Father of mercy. He hears the murmur of the heart and the roaring of the soul because of sin, and in due time he comes to relieve his afflicted. The more closely the preceding portrait of an awakened soul is studied in the light of experience, the more will its striking accuracy appear. It cannot be a description of merely outward disorder, graphic as it might then be; it has a depth and pathos in it which only the soul's mysterious and awful agony can fully match.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 8. *I am feeble*, literally, *I am benumbed*. I have become deadly cold, cold as a corpse; possibly with reference to the burning inflammation in the previous verse, as marking the alternations in the fever fit. *J. J. Stewart Perowne*.

Ver. 8. *I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart.* Where sin is, there will never be but unquietness of heart; and an unquiet heart will always produce these miserable effects— feebleness of body, dejectedness of mind, and roaring of voice. But how can roaring stand with feebleness, which seems to require a strength of spirits? Is it not, therefore, a roaring, perhaps not so much in loudness as in an inarticulate expressing? that having done actions more like a beast than a man, I am forced to use a voice not so much of a man as of a beast? Or is it perhaps a roaring in spirit, which the heart may send forth though the body be feeble; or rather then most, when it is most feeble; not unlike the blaze of a candle then greatest when going out? Howsoever it be, this is certain: the heart is that unhappy plot of ground, which, receiving into it the accursed seed of sin, brings forth in the body and soul of man these miserable fruits: and how, then, can I be free from these weeds of the fruits, since I have received into me so great a measure of the seed? Oh, vile sin, that I could as well avoid thee as I can see thee, or could as easily resist thee as I deadly hate thee, I

should not then complain of either feebleness of body, or dejectedness of mind, or roaring of voice; but I should perfectly enjoy that happy quietness in all my parts, which thou, O God, didst graciously bestow as a blessed dowry on our first parents at their creation. *Sir Richard Baker.*

Ver. 8. *I have roared*, etc. It is difficult for a true penitent, in the bitterness of his soul, to go over the life which he has dragged on in sinfulness, without groaning and sighing from the bottom of his heart. But happy are these groans, happy these sighs, happy these sobs, since they flow from the influence of grace, and from the breath of the Holy Spirit, who himself in an ineffable manner groans in us and with us, and who forms these groans in our hearts by penitence and love! but as the violence of both, that is, of penitence and of love, cannot but burst the narrow limits of a penitent heart, it must make a vent for itself by the eyes and mouth. The eyes shed tears, and the mouth sends forth sighs and groans, which it can no longer restrain; because they are driven on by the fire of divine love, and so these lamentations frame themselves into words and intelligible sentences. *Jean Baptiste Elias Avrillon, 1652-1729.*

Ver. 8. *The disquietness of my heart.* David felt pains gather about his heart, and then he cried out. The heart is the mark that God principally aims at when a Christian hath turned aside from his upright course; other outward parts he may hit and deeply wound, but this is but to make holes in the heart, where the seat of unsoundness that principally offends him is. The fire which conscience kindles, it may flash forth into the eyes, and tongue, and hands, and make a man look fearfully, speak desperately, and do bloodily, against the body; but the heat of the fire is principally within, in the furnace, in the spirit; it is but some sparkles and flashes only that you see come forth at the lower holes of the furnace, which you behold in the eyes, words, and deeds of such men. *Nicholas Lockyer.*

PSALM 38:9

EXPOSITION

Ver. 9. *Lord, all my desire is before thee.* If unuttered, yet perceived. Blessed be God, he reads the longings of our hearts; nothing can be hidden from him; what we cannot tell to him he perfectly understands. The psalmist is conscious that he has not exaggerated, and therefore appeals to

heaven for a confirmation of his words. The good Physician understands the symptoms of our disease and sees the hidden evil which they reveal, hence our case is safe in his hands.

And my groaning is not hid from thee.

*"He takes the meaning of our tears,
The language of our groans."*

Sorrow and anguish hide themselves from the observation of man, but God spies them out. None more lonely than the broken hearted sinner, yet hath he the Lord for his companion.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 9. There are usually, if not always, pains with desires, especially in desires after the creature, because that oftentimes there is a frustration of our desires, or an elongation of the things, the things are far off, hard to come by; our desires oftentimes are mute, they speak not; or the things that we desire, know not our minds: but our desires after God always speak, they are open unto God, he heareth their voice.

Lord, all my desire is before thee, saith David, *and my groaning is not hid from thee*. Therefore it must needs be sweet, when the soul lies thus open unto God. Other desires do not assure and secure a man in the things he desires; a man may wish this and wish that, and go without both; but the soul that thus longs after God is instated in his wish, hath a present enjoyment, and certainly shall have a full enjoyment of him. "He will fulfil the desire of those that fear him: he also will hear their cry." Psalm 145:19. *Joseph Symonds.*

Ver. 9. *My groaning is not hid from thee.* Secret tears for secret sins are an excellent sign of a holy heart, and a healing balsam for broken spirits. God well understands the language of half words interrupted with sighs, and interprets them as the steams and breathings of a broken heart. As all our foolishness is before him to cover it, so is all our heaviness to ease it; and therefore shall our souls praise and please him more than a bullock with young horns and hoofs upon his altar. Holy mourning keeps out carnal sorrow and produces spirit joy. It stirs up the heart of a saint to beg preventing grace which no false heart can perform without secret reserves. This inward sorrow prevents open shame. God will never give up *such* souls to be trampled on by spiritual enemies, who are already humbled by

themselves. In saints' humiliation there's a door opened for secret hope, because of the precious promises that are plighted to it, and especially of preventing future sin by strengthening grace. For as the love of God is the fountain of all true repentance, so it is the attractive of more incomes of divine love to the soul. *Samuel Lee.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 9. The many desires of God's children: the fact that God understands them even when unexpressed; and the certainty that he will grant them.

Ver. 9. Omniscience, a source of consolation to the desponding.

PSALM 38:10

EXPOSITION

Ver. 10. *My heart panteth.* Here begins another tale of woe. He was so dreadfully pained by the unkindness of friends, that his heart was in a state of perpetual palpitation. Sharp and quick were the beatings of his heart; he was like a hunted roe, filled with distressing alarms, and ready to fly out of itself with fear. The soul seeks sympathy in sorrow, and if it finds none, its sorrowful heart throbs are incessant.

My strength faileth me. What with disease and distraction, he was weakened and ready to expire. A sense of sin, and a clear perception that none can help us in our distress, are enough to bring a man to death's door, especially if there be none to speak a gentle word, and point the broken spirit to the beloved Physician.

As for the light of mine eyes, it also is gone from me. Sweet light departed from his bodily eye, and consolation vanished from his soul. Those who were the very light of his eyes forsook him. Hope, the last lamp of night, was ready to go out. What a plight was the poor convict in! Yet here, we have some of us been; and here should we have perished had not infinite mercy interposed. Now, as we remember the lovingkindness of the Lord, we see how good it was for us to find our own strength fail us, since it drove us to the strong for strength; and how right it was that our light should all be quenched, that the Lord's light should be all in all to us.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 10. *My heart panteth.* The verb which David here uses signifies *to travel* or *wander hither and thither*, but here it is taken for the agitation or disquietude which distress of heart engenders when we know not what to do. According as men are disquieted in mind, so do they turn themselves on all sides; and so their heart may be said to turn round, or to run to and fro. *John Calvin.*

PSALM 38:11

EXPOSITION

Ver. 11. *My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sore.* Whatever affection they might pretend to, they kept out of his company, lest as a sinking vessel often draws down boats with it, they might be made to suffer through his calamities. It is very hard when those who should be the first to come to the rescue, are the first to desert us. In times of deep soul trouble, even the most affectionate friends cannot enter into the sufferer's case; let them be as anxious as they may, the sores of a tender conscience they cannot bind up. Oh, the loneliness of a soul passing under the convincing power of the Holy Ghost!

And my kinsmen stand afar off. As the women and others of our Lord's acquaintances from afar gazed on his cross, so a soul wounded for sin sees all mankind as distant spectators, and in the whole crowd finds none to aid. Often relatives hinder seekers after Jesus, oftener still they look on with unconcern, seldom enough do they endeavour to lead the penitent to Jesus.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 11. *My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sore; and my kinsmen stand afar off.* So miserable am I, that I am left alone as one utterly forsaken; they are all pieces that recoil and fly back at the first voice of the powder. Yet it is not so much me they stand aloof from as my sore; for if it were not for my sore, I should have enough of their company easily enough; but they cannot abide sores, their eyes are too tender to endure to see them, and yet hard enough not to relieve them. Or is it they stand aloof,

that is, so near as to show they are willing enough to see them; but yet so far off as to show they have no meaning to come and help them! ...

My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sore, as fearing more my sore than me; but *my kinsmen stand afar off*, as fearing me no less than my sore; and where my lovers and friends by standing aloof do but violate the law of a contracted friendship, my kinsmen by standing afar off violate even the law of natural affection; and is not this a grievous thing, that the law of reason, the law of friendship, the law of nature, shall all be broken rather than I shall be relieved or find assistance? *Sir Richard Baker*.

Ver. 11. *My lovers and my friends stand afar off*. Deserted by false friends, but conqueror through thee, to thee I speed, who though seeming to act the part of an enemy, yet never changest thy love; but lovest for ever him whom thou once hast loved. When you seem afar off, you are near. I conceive this sorrow on account of the treachery of false friends, and the cowardliness of my kinsfolk, who are to me as piercing thorns rather than sweet smelling roses. The proof of affection is seen by deeds. I hear the *name* of kinsman and friend; I see no deed. To thee, therefore, I flee, whose word is deed; for I need thy help. *From the Latin of A. Rivetus*.

PSALM 38:12

EXPOSITION

Ver. 12. *They also that seek after my life lay snares for me*. Alas! for us when in addition to inward griefs, we are beset by outward temptations. David's foes endeavoured basely to ensnare him. If fair means would not overthrow him, foul should be tried. This snaring business is a vile one, the devil's own poachers alone condescend to it; but prayer to God will deliver us, for the craft of the entire college of tempters can be met and overcome by those who are led of the Spirit.

They that seek my hurt speak mischievous things. Lies and slanders poured from them like water from the town pump. Their tongue was for ever going, and their heart fore ever inventing lies. *And imagine deceit all the day long*. They were never done, their forge was going from morning to night. When they could not act they talked, and when they could not talk they imagined, and schemed, and plotted. Restless is the activity of malice.

Bad men never have enough of evil. They compass sea and land to injure a saint; no labour is too severe, no cost too great if they may utterly destroy the innocent. Our comfort is, that our glorious Head knows the pertinacious malignity of our foes, and will in due season put an end to it, as he even now sets a bound about it.

PSALM 38:13

EXPOSITION

Ver. 13. *But I, as a deaf man, heard not.* Well and bravely was this done. A sacred indifference to the slanders of malevolence is true courage and wise policy. It is well to be as if we could not hear or see. Perhaps the psalmist means that this deafness on his part was unavoidable because he had no power to answer the taunts of the cruel, but felt much of the truth of their ungenerous accusations.

And I was as a dumb man that openeth not his mouth. David was bravely silent, and herein was eminently typical of our Lord Jesus, whose marvellous silence before Pilate was far more eloquent than words. To abstain from self defence is often most difficult, and frequently most wise.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 13. *But I, as a deaf man, heard not; and I was as a dumb man that openeth not his mouth.* For why should I hear when I meant not to speak? and why should I speak when I knew beforehand I should not be heard? I knew by contesting I should but provoke them, and make them more guilty that were guilty too much before. I therefore thought it better myself to be silent than to set them a roaring and make them grow outrageous. No doubt a great wisdom in David, to know that to be deaf and dumb was in this case his best course, but yet a far greater virtue that knowing it, he was able to do it. Oh, how happy should we be, if we could always do that which we know is best to be done, and if our wills were as ready to act, as our reason is able to enact; we should then decline many rocks we now run upon, we should then avoid many errors we now run into. To be deaf and dumb are indeed great inabilities and defects, when they be natural; but when they be voluntary, and I may say artificial, they are them great abilities, or rather perfections. *Sir Richard Baker.*

Ver. 13. *But I, as a deaf man, heard not.* The inspired writer here compares himself to a dumb and deaf man for two reasons. In the first place, he intimates that he was so overwhelmed with the false and wicked judgments of his enemies, that he was not even permitted to open his mouth in his own defence. In the second place, he alleges before God his own patience, as a plea to induce God the more readily to have pity upon him; for such meekness and gentleness, not only with good reason, secures favour to the afflicted and the innocent, but it is also a sign of true piety.
John Calvin.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 13. The wisdom, dignity, power, and difficulty of silence.

PSALM 38:14

EXPOSITION

Ver. 14. *Thus I was as a man that heareth not, and in whose mouth are no reproofs.* He repeats the fact of his silence that we may note it, admire it, and imitate it. We have an advocate, and need not therefore plead our own cause. The Lord will rebuke our foes, for vengeance belongs to him; we may therefore wait patiently and find it our strength to sit still.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 14. *Thus I was as a man that heareth not, and in whose mouth are no reproofs.* You, who truly know yourselves; by whom silent suffering, secret grief, and hidden joy are understood; by the knowledge of your own unspoken sorrow, unexpressed, because inexpressible feelings, by the consciousness of the unrevealed depths of your own nature, the earnest, but ever unsatisfied yearnings of your spirit, learn to reverence and love those by whom you are surrounded, whose inner life can never be completely read, but whom you are sure must need sacred sympathy and tender consideration. If a secret grief is constantly gnawing my heart, making my voice falter in the song of praise, may not my brother's downcast eye and heavy heart be occasioned by a similar cause; shall I condemn him for his want of gladness? No: but remember, "the heart knoweth his own bitterness, and a stranger doth not intermeddle with his

joy." The silent breathings of the spirit are not for our ears; the hot tears which in secret fall, are not for our eyes; in mercy has the veil been drawn round each heart; but by the sacred memory of our own sadness, let our voice be gentle, our look tender, our tread quiet, as we pass amongst the mourners. *Jessie Coombs, in "Thoughts for the Inner Life, "1867.*

PSALM 38:15

EXPOSITION

Ver. 15. David committed himself to him that judgeth righteously, and so in patience was able to possess his soul. Hope in God's intervention, and belief in the power of prayer, are two most blessed stays to the soul in time of adversity. Turning right away from the creature to the sovereign Lord of all, and to him as our own covenant God, we shall find the richest solace in waiting upon him. Reputation like a fair pearl may be cast into the mire, but in due time when the Lord makes up his jewels, the godly character shall shine with unclouded splendour. Rest then, O slandered one, and let not thy soul be tossed to and fro with anxiety.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 15. A man that is to go down into a deep pit, he does not throw himself headlong into it, or leap down at all adventures, but fastens a rope at top upon a cross beam or some sure place, and so lets himself down by degrees: so let thyself down into the consideration of thy sin, hanging upon Christ; and when thou art gone so low that thou canst endure no longer, but art ready to be overcome with the horror and darkness of thy miserable estate, dwell not too long at the gates of hell, lest the devil pull thee in, but wind thyself up again by renewed acts of faith, and "fly for refuge unto the hope that is set before thee." Hebrews 6:18. *Thomas Cole (1627-1697), in "Morning Exercises."*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 15. Prayer, the offspring of hope.

Hope strengthened by confidence in God's answering prayer.

PSALM 38:16

EXPOSITION

Ver. 16. *For I said, hear me, lest otherwise they should rejoice over me.*

The good man was not insensible, he dreaded the sharp stings of taunting malice; he feared lest either by his conduct or his condition, he should give occasion to the wicked to triumph. This fear his earnest desires used as an argument in prayer as well as an incentive to prayer.

When my foot slippeth, they magnify themselves against me. The least flaw in a saint is sure to be noticed; long before it comes to a fall the enemy begins to rail, the merest trip of the foot sets all the dogs of hell barking. How careful ought we to be, and how importunate in prayer for upholding grace! We do not wish, like blind Samson, to make sport for our enemies; let us then beware of the treacherous Delilah of sin, by whose means our eyes may soon be put out.

PSALM 38:17

EXPOSITION

Ver. 17. *For I am ready to halt.* Like one who limps, or a person with tottering footsteps, in danger of falling. How well this befits us all. "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." How small a thing will lame a Christian, how insignificant a stumbling block may cause him to fall! This passage refers to a weakness caused by pain and sorrow; the sufferer was ready to give up in despair; he was so depressed in spirit that he stumbled at a straw. Some of us painfully know what it is to be like dry tinder for the sparks of sorrow; ready to halt, ready to mourn, and sigh and cry upon any occasion, and for any cause.

And my sorrow is continually before me. He did not need to look out of window to find sorrow, he felt it within, and groaned under a body of sin which was an increasing plague to him. Deep conviction continues to irritate the conscience; it will not endure a patched up peace; but cries war to the knife till the enmity is slain. Until the Holy Ghost applies the

precious blood of Jesus, a truly awakened sinner is covered with raw wounds which cannot be healed nor bound up, nor mollified with ointment.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 17. *For I am ready to halt:* to show my infirmity in my trials and afflictions; as Jacob halted after his wrestling with God. Genesis 32:31. In the Greek, *I am ready for scourges*, that is, to suffer correction and punishment for my sins: so the Chaldee saith, *for calamity*. Henry Ainsworth.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 17. Mr. Ready to halt. His pedigree, and infirmity; his crutches, and his cure; his history, and safe departure.

PSALM 38:18

EXPOSITION

Ver. 18. *For I will declare mine iniquity.* The slander of his enemies he repudiates, but the accusations of his conscience he admits. Open confession is good for the soul. When sorrow leads to hearty and penitent acknowledgment of sin it is blessed sorrow, a thing to thank God for most devoutly.

I will be sorry for my sin. My confession will be salted with briny tears. It is well not so much to bewail our sorrows as to denounce the sins which lie at the root of them. To be sorry for sin is no atonement for it, but it is the right spirit in which to repair to Jesus, who is the reconciliation and the Saviour. A man is near to the end of his trouble when he comes to an end with his sins.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 18. Pliny writeth of some families that had private marks on their bodies peculiar to those of that line, and every man hath, as it were, a private sin, which is most justly called his; but if we will confess our sins

aright, we must not leave out that sin; nay, our chiefest spite must be against it, according to David's resolve:

I will declare mine iniquity; I will be sorry for my sin. ...David doth not only say, *I will declare*, but, *I will be sorry for my sin*. The people of God 1 Samuel 7:6 in the day of their confession not only say, "We have sinned, "but draw water, and pour it out before the Lord in token of contrition. We should, in confessing sin, have our hearts so affected, that our eyes, with Job, may "pour tears before God" Job 16:20; that, with David, "rivers of tears may run down our eyes" Psalm 119:136; yea, we should wish with Jeremiah, that "our head were waters, and our eyes a fountain of tears." Jeremiah 9:1. But, however, *nonne stillabit oculus noster?* if we cannot pour out, shall we not drop a tear? or at least, if we cannot shed a tear, let us breathe forth a sigh for our sins. It is only the heart broken with godly sorrow that sends forth a true confession. *Nathanael Hardy*.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 18. The excellence of penitent confession.

Ver. 18. The twin children of grace—confession and contrition: their mutual revelation and reaction.

Ver. 18. (*last clause*). There is good reason for such sorrow, God is well pleased with it. It benefits the mourner.

PSALM 38:19

EXPOSITION

Ver. 19. *But mine enemies are lively, and they are strong.* However weak and dying the righteous man may be, the evils which oppose him are sure to be lively enough. Neither the world, the flesh, nor the devil, are ever afflicted with debility or inertness; this trinity of evils labour with mighty unremitting energy to overthrow us. If the devil were sick, or our lusts feeble, or Madame Bubble infirm, we might slacken prayer; but with such lively and vigorous enemies we must not cease to cry mightily unto our God.

And they that hate me wrongfully are multiplied. Here is another misery, that as we are no match for our enemies in strength, so also they outnumber us as a hundred to one. Wrong as the cause of evil is, it is a popular one. More and more the kingdom of darkness grows. Oh, misery of miseries, that we see the professed friends of Jesus forsaking him, and the enemies of his cross and his cause mustering in increasing bands!

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 19. The terrible energy and industry of the powers of evil.

PSALM 38:20

EXPOSITION

Ver. 20. *They also that render evil for good are mine adversaries.* Such would a wise man wish his enemies to be. Why should we seek to be beloved of such graceless souls? It is a fine plea against our enemies when we can without injustice declare them to be like the devil, whose nature it is to render evil for good.

Because I follow the thing that good is. If men hate us for this reason we may rejoice to bear it: their wrath is the unconscious homage which vice renders to virtue. This verse is not inconsistent with the writer's previous confession; we may feel equally guilty before God, and yet be entirely innocent of any wrong to our fellow men. It is one sin to acknowledge the truth, quite another thing to submit to be belied. The Lord may smite me justly, and yet I may be able to say to my fellow man, "Why smitest thou me?"

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 20. *They are mine enemies because I follow the thing that good is.* It is a bold attempt to ding Satan out of his nest. If we conform us to the men of this world we find peace with them; they will not discord with us so long as we go their way; but to shame them by a godly life is an affront they cannot digest; and to rebuke their sin, findeth at their hand all that Satan disappointed or corruption provoked can devise. A sleeping dog is quiet, but being stirred, turneth all in barking and biting. Not to do as they do is

matter enough of anger, but a reproof is the highest degree of disgrace in their account. All that hatred which they ought to bear to Satan and his instruments, is turned upon God in his rebuking and reclaiming servants. That anger that in remorse should burn against their own sin is set against their reprovers. *William Struther.*

PSALM 38:21

EXPOSITION

Ver. 21. *Forsake me not, O Lord.* Now is the time I need thee most. When sickness, slander, and sin, all beset a saint, he requires the especial aid of heaven, and he shall have it too. He is afraid of nothing while God is with him, and God is with him evermore.

Be not far from me. Withhold not the light of thy near and dear love. Reveal thyself to me. Stand at my side. Let me feel that though friendless besides, I have a most gracious and all sufficient friend in thee.

PSALM 38:22

EXPOSITION

Ver. 22. *Make haste to help me.* Delay would prove destruction. The poor pleader was far gone and ready to expire, only speedy help would serve his turn. See how sorrow quickens the importunity of prayer! Here is one of the sweet results of affliction, it gives new life to our pleading, and drives us with eagerness to our God.

O Lord my salvation. Not my Saviour only, but my salvation. He who has the Lord on his side has salvation in present possession. Faith foresees the blessed issue of all her pleas, and in this verse begins to ascribe to God the glory of the expected mercy. We shall not be left of the Lord. His grace will succour us most opportunely, and in heaven we shall see that we had not one trial too many, or one pang too severe. A sense of sin shall melt into the joy of salvation; grief shall lead on to gratitude, and gratitude to joy unspeakable and full of glory.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 22. *O Lord my salvation.* Faith the suppliant is now made faith triumphant. *Franz Delitzsch.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 22. Faith tried, faith trembling, faith crying, faith grasping, faith conquering.

PSALM 39

PSALM 39:1

Title. To the Chief Musician, even to Jeduthun. Jeduthun's name, which signifies praising or celebrating, was a most appropriate one for a leader in sacred psalmody. He was one of those ordained by the King's order "for song in the house of the Lord with cymbals, psalteries, and harps" 1 Chronicles 15:6, and his children after him appear to have remained in the same hallowed service, even so late as the days of Nehemiah. To have a name and a place in Zion is no small honour, and to hold this place by a long entail of grace is an unspeakable blessing. O that our household may never lack a man to stand before the Lord God of Israel to do him service. David left this somewhat sorrowful ode in Jeduthun's hands because he thought him most fit to set it to music, or because he would distribute the sacred honour of song among all the musicians who in their turn presided in the choir. A Psalm of David. Such as his chequered life would be sure to produce; fit effusions for a man so tempted, so strong in his passions, and yet so firm in faith.

Division. The psalmist, bowed down with sickness and sorrow, is burdened with unbelieving thoughts, which he resolves to stifle, lest any evil should come from their expression, Psalm 39:1-2. But silence creates an insupportable grief, which at last demands utterance, and obtains it in the prayer of Psalm 39:3-6, which is almost a complaint and a sigh for death, or at best a very desponding picture of human life. From Psalm 39:7-13 the tone is more submissive, and the recognition of the divine hand more distinct; the cloud has evidently passed, and the mourner's heart is relieved.

EXPOSITION

Ver. 1. *I said.* I steadily resolved and registered a determination. In his great perplexity his greatest fear was lest he should sin; and, therefore, he cast about for the most likely method for avoiding it, and he determined to be silent. It is right excellent when a man can strengthen himself in a good course by the remembrance of a well and wisely formed resolve. "What I

have written I have written, "or what I have spoken I will perform, may prove a good strengthener to a man in a fixed course of right.

I will take heed to my ways. To avoid sin one had need be very circumspect, and keep one's actions as with a guard or garrison. Unguarded ways are generally unholy ones. Heedless is another word for graceless. In times of sickness or other trouble we must watch against the sins peculiar to such trials, especially against murmuring and repining.

That I sin not with my tongue. Tongue sins are great sins; like sparks of fire ill words spread, and do great damage. If believers utter hard words of God in times of depression, the ungodly will take them up and use them as a justification for their sinful courses. If a man's own children rail at him, no wonder if his enemies' mouths are full of abuse. Our tongue always wants watching, for it is restive as an ill broken horse; but especially must we hold it in when the sharp cuts of the Lord's rod excite it to rebel.

I will keep my mouth with a bridle, or more accurately, with a muzzle. The original does not so much mean a bridle to check the tongue as a muzzle to stop it altogether. David was not quite so wise as our translation would make him; if he had resolved to be very guarded in his speech, it would have been altogether commendable; but when he went so far as to condemn himself to entire silence, "even from good, "there must have been at least a little sullenness in his soul. In trying to avoid one fault, he fell into another. To use the tongue against God is a sin of commission, but not to use it at all involves an evident sin of omission. Commendable virtues may be followed so eagerly that we may fall into vices; to avoid Scylla we run into Charybdis.

While the wicked is before me. This qualifies the silence, and almost screens it from criticism, for bad men are so sure to misuse even our holiest speech, that it is as well not to cast any of our pearls before such swine; but what if the psalmist meant, "I was silent while I had the prosperity of the wicked in my thoughts, "then we see the discontent and questioning of his mind, and the muzzled mouth indicates much that is not to be commended. Yet, if we blame we must also praise, for the highest wisdom suggests that when good men are bewildered with sceptical thoughts, they should not hasten to repeat them, but should fight out their inward battle upon its own battlefield. The firmest believers are exercised with unbelief, and it would be doing the devil's work with a vengeance if they were to publish abroad all their questionings and suspicions. If I have the fever myself, there is no

reason why I should communicate it to my neighbours. If any on board the vessel of my soul are diseased, I will put my heart in quarantine, and allow none to go on shore in the boat of speech till I have a clean bill of health.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Title. — "*To Jeduthun.*" A Levite of the family of Merari, and one of the great masters of the temple music. The department superintended by Jeduthun and his colleagues in the temple service was that of the "instruments of the song of God, "by which are intended the nebel or psaltery, the kinnor or harp, and the metsiltaim or cymbals. In 2 Chronicles 35:15, Jeduthun is called "the king's seer, " which would seem to indicate that he was the medium of divine guidance to David. The name occurs in the title of Psalms 39, 62, 77; where some have thought that it indicates some special kind of composition, and others some instrument of music, but without reason. *William Lindsay Alexander, in Kitto's Cyclopaedia.*

Whole Psalm. The most beautiful of all the elegies in the psalter. *H. Ewald.*

Ver. 1. *I said.* It was to himself that he said it; and it is impossible for any other to prove a good or a wise man, without much of this kind of speech to himself. It is one of the most excellent and distinguishing faculties of a reasonable creature; much beyond vocal speech, for in that, some birds may imitate us; but neither bird nor beast has anything of this kind of language, of reflecting or discoursing with itself. It is a wonderful brutality in the greatest part of men, who are so little conversant in this kind of speech, being framed and disposed for it, and which is not only of itself excellent, but of continual use and advantage; but it is a common evil among men to go abroad, and out of themselves, which is a madness, and a true distraction. It is true, a man hath need of a well set mind, when he speaks to himself; for otherwise, he may be worse company to himself than if he were with others. But he ought to endeavour to have a better with him, to call in God to his heart to dwell with him. If thus we did, we should find how sweet this were to speak to ourselves, by now and then intermixing our speech with discourses unto God. For want of this, the most part not only lose their time in vanity, in their converse abroad with others, but do carry in heaps of that vanity to the stock which is in their own hearts, and do converse with them in secret, which is the greatest and deepest folly in the world. *Robert Leighton.*

Ver. 1. No lesson so hard to be learned of us here, as the wise and discreet government of the tongue. David promised a singular care of this, *I said, I will take heed*, etc. Socrates reports of one Pambo, an honest, well meaning man, who came to his friend, desiring him to teach him one of David's Psalms, he read to him this verse. He answered: this one verse is enough, if I learn it well. Nineteen years after, he said, in all that time, he had hardly learned that one verse. *Samuel Page.*

Ver. 1. *That I sin not with my tongue.* Man's mouth, though it be but a little hole, will hold a world full of sin. For there is not any sin forbidden in the law or gospel which is not spoken by the tongue, as well as thought in the heart, or done in the life. Is it not then almost as difficult to rule the tongue as to rule the world? *Edward Reyner.*

Ver. 1. *I will keep a muzzle on my mouth, whilst a wicked man is before me.* *New Translation, by Charles Carter,*

Ver. 1. *While the wicked is before me.* It is a vexation to be tied to hear so much impertinent babbling in the world, but profitable to discern and abhor it. A wonder that men can cast out so much wind, and the more they have to utter, the more they are prodigal of their own breath and of the patience of others, and careless of their own reckoning. If they believe to give account of every idle word, they would be more sparing of foolish speaking. I like either to be silent, or to speak that that may edify. At tables or meetings, I cannot stop the mouth of others, yet may I close mine own ears, and by a heavenly soul speech with God divert my mind from fruitless talking. Though I be among them I shall as little partake their prattling as they do my meditation. *William Struther.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 1-2. *I was dumb*, etc.

1. There is a time to be silent. He had been enabled to do this when reproached and unjustly accused by others. He did it for good; others might attribute it to sullenness, or pride, or timidity, or conscious guilt; but he did it for good. Breathe upon a polished mirror and it will evaporate and leave it brighter than before; endeavour to wipe it off, and the mark will remain.

2. There is a time to meditate in silence. The greater the silence without, often the greater commotion within. *"His heart was hot."* The

more he thought, the warmer he grew. The fire of pity and compassion, the fire of love, the fire of holy zeal burned within him.

3. There is a time to speak. "*Then spake I.*" The time to speak is when the truth is clear and strong in the mind, and the feeling of the truth is burning in the heart. The emotions burst forth as from a volcano. Jeremiah 20:8-9. The language should always be a faithful representation of the mind and the heart. *G. Rogers, Tutor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle College.*

WORK UPON THE THIRTY-NINTH PSALM

Expository Lectures on Psalm Thirty-nine, in Archbishop Leighton's Works.

PSALM 39:2

EXPOSITION

Ver. 2. *I was dumb with silence.* He was as strictly speechless as if he had been tongueless—not a word escaped him. He was as silent as the dumb.

I held my peace, even from good. Neither bad nor good escaped his lips. Perhaps he feared that if he began to talk at all, he would be sure to speak amiss, and, therefore, he totally abstained. It was an easy, safe, and effectual way of avoiding sin, if it did not involve a neglect of the duty which he owed to God to speak well of his name. Our divine Lord was silent before the wicked, but not altogether so, for before Pontius Pilate he witnessed a good confession, and asserted his kingdom. A sound course of action may be pushed to the extreme, and become a fault.

And my sorrow was stirred. Inward grief was made to work and ferment by want of vent. The pent up floods are swollen and agitated. Utterance is the natural outlet for the heart's anguish, and silence is, therefore, both an aggravation of the evil and a barrier against its cure. In such a case the resolve to hold one's peace needs powerful backing, and even this is most likely to give way when grief rushes upon the soul. Before a flood gathering in force and foaming for outlet the strongest banks are likely to be swept away. Nature may do her best to silence the expression of

discontent, but unless grace comes to her rescue, she will be sure to succumb.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 2. *I was dumb with silence*, etc. That is, for a while I did what I resolved; I was so long wholly silent, that I seemed in a manner to be dumb, and not able to speak.

I held my peace, even from good; that is, I forbore to speak what I might well and lawfully enough have spoken, as from alleging anything that I might have said in mine own defence, from making my complaint to God, and desiring justice at his hands, and such like; to wit, lest by degrees I should have been brought to utter anything that was evil, and whilst I intended only to speak that which was good, some unseemly word might suddenly slip from me; or lest mine enemies should misconstrue anything I spake. *Arthur Jackson*.

Ver. 2. *I was dumb with silence*. We shall enquire what kind of *dumbness* or *silence* this of the psalmist was, which he is commended for, and which would so well beseem us when we smart under the rod of God, and then the doctrine will be, in a great measure, evident by its own light. We shall proceed to our inquiry, 1. Negatively, to prevent mistakes. 2. Positively, and show you what it doth import. First, negatively.

1. This dumbness doth not import any such thing, as if the prophet had been brought to that pass that he had nothing to say to God by way of prayer and supplication. He was not so dumb, but that he could *pray and cry too*. Psalm 39:8,10-11.

2. Nor was he so dumb, as that he could not frame to the confession and bewailing of his sins.

3. Nor was it a dumbness of stupidity and senselessness. It doth not imply any such thing, as if by degrees he grew to that pass, he cared not for, or made no matter of his affliction, but set, as the proverb is, an hard heart against his hard hap. No, he did make his moan to God, and as he smarted, so he did lament under the sense of his afflicting hand.

4. Neither was he so dumb as not to answer God's voice in the rod that was upon him.

5. Much less was he dumb, and kept silence in any such sort as they did of whom Amos speaks Amos 6:10, that in their misery they took up a resolution *to mention the name of God no more*, in whom they had gloried formerly.

Secondly, affirmatively.

- 1.** He was dumb so as neither to complain of, nor quarrel with God's providence, nor to entertain any hard thoughts against him. Complain *to* God he did; but *against* him he durst not.
- 2.** He neither did nor durst quarrel, or fall out with the ways of holiness for all his sufferings, a thing we are naturally prone unto.
- 3.** He was dumb, so as not to defend himself, or justify his own ways before God, as if they were righteous, and he had not deserved what he suffered.
- 4.** He was dumb, so as to hearken to the voice of the rod. "I will (saith he in another place) hear what God the Lord will speak." Psalm 85:8. Now a man cannot listen to another while he will have all the talk and discourse to himself.
- 5.** Lastly, the prophet was dumb, that is, he did acquiesce, and rest satisfied with God's dispensation; and that not only as good, but as best. *Condensed from a Funeral Sermon by Thomas Burroughes, B.D., entitled, "A Sovereign Remedy for all kinds of Grief, "1657.*

Ver. 2. *I held my peace.* A Christian being asked what fruit he had by Christ: Is not this fruit, said he, not to be moved at your reproaches? In cases of this nature, we must refer all to God; *si tu tacueris, Deus loquitur*; if thou hold thy peace, God speaks for thee; and if God speaks for us, it is better than we can speak for yourselves. David saith, *Obmutui, quia tu fecisti. I held my peace, for it was thy doing.* Christopher Sutton, B.D., — 1629, in *Disce Vicere*.

Ver. 2-9. An invalid who had been ordered a couple of pills, took them very absurdly, for, in place of swallowing them at once, he rolled them about in his mouth, ground them to pieces, and so tasted their full bitterness. Gotthold was present, and thus mused. The insults and calumnies of a slanderer and adversary are bitter pills, and all do not understand the art of swallowing without chewing them. To the Christian, however, they are wholesome in many ways. They remind him of his guilt, they try his meekness and patience, they show him what he needs to guard

against, and at last they redound to his honour and glory in the sight of him for whose sake they were endured. In respect of the pills of slander, however, as well as the others, it is advisable not to roll them about continually in our minds, or judge of them according to the flesh, and the world's opinion. This will only increase their bitterness, spread the savour of it to the tongue, and fill the heart with proportional enmity. The true way is to *swallow, keep silence, and forget*. We must inwardly devour our grief, and say,

I will be dumb, and not open my mouth, because thou didst it. The best antidotes to the bitterness of slander, are the sweet promises and consolations of Scripture, of which not the least is this, "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven." Matthew 5:11-12. Alas, my God! how hard it is to swallow the pills of obloquy, to bless them that curse me, to do good to them that hate me, and to pray for them that despitefully use me! *But, Lord, as thou wilt have it so, give it as thou wilt have it*, for it is a matter in which, without thy grace, I can do nothing! *Christian Scriver.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 1-2. *I was dumb*, etc.

1. There is a time to be silent. He had been enabled to do this when reproached and unjustly accused by others. He did it for good; others might attribute it to sullenness, or pride, or timidity, or conscious guilt; but he did it for good. Breathe upon a polished mirror and it will evaporate and leave it brighter than before; endeavour to wipe it off, and the mark will remain.
2. There is a time to meditate in silence. The greater the silence without, often the greater commotion within. "*His heart was hot.*" The more he thought, the warmer he grew. The fire of pity and compassion, the fire of love, the fire of holy zeal burned within him.
3. There is a time to speak. "*Then spake I.*" The time to speak is when the truth is clear and strong in the mind, and the feeling of the truth is burning in the heart. The emotions burst forth as from a volcano. Jeremiah 20:8-9. The language should always be a faithful representation of the mind and the heart. *G. Rogers, Tutor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle College.*

Ver. 2. There is a sevenfold silence.

1. A *stoical* silence.
2. A *politic* silence.
3. A *foolish* silence.
4. A *sullen* silence.
5. A *forced* silence.
6. A *despairing* silence.
7. A *prudent*, a *holy*, a *gracious* silence. *Thomas Brooks' "Mute Christian."*

PSALM 39:3

EXPOSITION

Ver. 3. *My heart was hot within me.* The friction of inward thoughts produced an intense mental heat. The door of his heart was shut, and with the fire of sorrow burning within, the chamber of his soul soon grew unbearable with heat. Silence is an awful thing for a sufferer, it is the surest method to produce madness. Mourner, tell your sorrow; do it first and most fully to God, but even to pour it out before some wise and godly friend is far from being wasted breath.

While I was musing the fire burned. As he thought upon the ease of the wicked and his own daily affliction, he could not unravel the mystery of providence, and therefore he became greatly agitated. While his heart was musing it was fusing, for the subject was confusing. It became harder every moment to be quiet; his volcanic soul was tossed with an inward ocean of fire, and heaved to and fro with a mental earthquake; and eruption was imminent, the burning lava must pour forth in a fiery stream.

Then spake I with my tongue. The original is grandly laconic. *I spake.* The muzzled tongue burst all its bonds. The gag was hurled away. Misery, like murder, will out. You can silence praise, but anguish is clamorous. Resolve or no resolve, heed or no heed, sin or no sin, the impetuous torrent forced for itself a channel and swept away every restraint.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 3. *My heart was hot within me, while I was musing the fire burned.*

They say of the lodestone (that wonder in nature), when either by carelessness in keeping it, or by some accident it loses its virtue, yet by laying it some good space of time in the filings of steel, it will again recover its virtues: when the spirit of a Christian by not looking well to it, loses of its heavenly heat and liveliness, the way of recovery is by laying it asleep in this so warming and quickening meditation. Oh, how burning and flaming may we often observe the spirit of the holy psalmist David, in his acting of meditation! Musing made him hot, yea, burning hot at the heart. Thus often in the beginning of a Psalm we find his heart low and discouraged, but as this musing was acted and heightened, his spirit grew hotter, and at last flies all on a flame, flies up to a very high pitch of heavenly heat. Oh, how do all the conscientious practisers of meditation, ever and anon experience these happy, heavenly heats, and heart enlargements! Ah, if all the saints' so glorious heart quickenings were gathered together, what a rich chain of pearls, pearls of rare experiences, would they make up of the heart warming efficacies of meditation! *Nathanael Ranew.*

Ver. 3. *I was musing.* What a blessed (shall I say duty or) privilege is prayer! Now meditation is a help to prayer. Gersom calls it the nurse of prayer. Meditation is like oil to the lamp; the lamp of prayer will soon go out unless meditation cherish and support it. Meditation and prayer are like two turtles, if you separate one the other dies; a cunning angler observes the time and season when the fish bite best, and then he throws in the angle, when the heart is warmed by meditation, now is the best season to throw in the angle of prayer, and fish for mercy. After Isaac had been in the field meditating he was fit for prayer when he came home. When the gun is full of powder it is fittest to discharge. So when the mind is full of good thoughts, a Christian is fittest by prayer for discharge; now he sends up whole volleys of sighs and groans to heaven. Meditation hath a double benefit in it, it pours in and pours out; first it pours good thoughts into the mind, and then it pours out those thoughts again into prayer; meditation first furnishes with matter to pray and then it furnishes with a heart to pray.

I was musing, saith David, and the very next words are a prayer, "*Lord, make me to know mine end.*" I muse on the works of thy hands, I stretch forth my hands to thee. The musing of his head made way for the stretching forth of his hands in prayer. When Christ was upon the Mount,

then he prayed: so when the soul is upon the mount of meditation, now it is in tune for prayer. Prayer is the child of meditation: meditation leads the van, and prayer brings up the rear. *Thomas Watson.*

Ver. 3. *Musing.* Meditation is prayer in bullion, prayer in the ore, soon melted and run into holy desires. The laden cloud soon drops into rain, the piece charged soon goes off when fire is put to it. A meditating soul is *in proxima potentia* to prayer. This was an ejaculatory prayer shot from his soul when in the company of the wicked. *William Gurnall.*

Ver. 3. *The fire burned.* My thoughts kindled my passions. *Matthew Pool.*

Ver. 3. *The fire burned.* Meditate so long till thou findest thy heart grow warm in this duty. If, when a man is cold you ask how long he should stand by the fire? sure, till he be thoroughly warm, and made fit for his work. So, Christian, thy heart is cold; never a day, no, not the hottest day in summer, but it freezes there; now stand at the fire of meditation till thou findest thy affections warmed, and thou art made fit for spiritual service. David mused till his heart waxed hot within him. I will conclude this with that excellent saying of Bernard: "Lord, I will never come away from thee without thee." Let this be a Christian's resolution, not to leave off his meditations of God till he find something of God in him; some moving of the bowels after God; some flamings of love, Song of Solomon 5:4. *Thomas Watson.*

Ver. 3. His company was bad, but his thoughts were good; even *while the wicked was before him his heart was hot within him, while he was musing the fire burned.* His thoughts inflame his affections with holy zeal, and this *holy fore*, as by an ante-peristasis, burnt so much the hotter for the *frost* of cursed contrariety that was about it. When the careful magistrates or officers of a company break into a suspected house in the nighttime, the great question is, What company have you here? So when God breaks in upon our dark hearts, the enquiry is, What thoughts have you here? Why do thoughts arise in your minds? Are ye not become judges of evil thoughts? Luke 24:38 James 2:4. *Faithful Teat.*

Ver. 3. *The spake I with my tongue, Lord,* etc. It is, indeed, a happy circumstance when that silence which has long been preserved is first broken before the Lord. *John Morison.*

PSALM 39:4

EXPOSITION

Ver. 4. *Lord.* It is well that the vent of his soul was toward God and not towards man. Oh! if my swelling heart must speak, Lord let it speak with thee; even if there be too much of natural heat in what I say, thou wilt be more patient with me than man, and upon thy purity it can cast no stain; whereas if I speak to my fellows, they may harshly rebuke me or else learn evil from my petulance.

Make me to know mine end. Did he mean the same as Elias in his agony, "Let me die, I am no better than my father"? Perhaps so. At any rate, he rashly and petulantly desired to know the end of his wretched life, that he might begin to reckon the days till death should put a finish to his woe. Impatience would pry between the folded leaves. As if there were no other comfort to be had, unbelief would fain hide itself in the grave and sleep itself into oblivion. David was neither the first nor the last who have spoken unadvisedly in prayer. Yet, there is a better meaning: the psalmist would know more of the shortness of life, that he might better bear its transient ills, and herein we may safely kneel with him, uttering the same petition. That there is no end to its misery is the hell of hell; that there is an end to life's sorrow is the hope of all who have a hope beyond the grave. God is the best teacher of the divine philosophy which looks for an expected end. They who see death through the Lord's glass, see a fair sight, which makes them forget the evil of life in foreseeing the end of life.

And the measure of my days. David would fain be assured that his days would be soon over and his trials with them; he would be taught anew that life is measured out to us by wisdom, and is not a matter of chance. As the trader measures his cloth by inches, and ells, and yards, so with scrupulous accuracy is life measured out to man.

That I may know how frail I am, or when I shall cease to be. Alas! poor human nature, dear as life is, man quarrels with God at such a rate that he would sooner cease to be than bear the Lord's appointment. Such pettishness in a saint! Let us wait till we are in a like position, and we shall do no better. The ship on the stocks wonders that the barque springs a leak, but when it has tried the high seas, it marvels that its timbers hold

together in such storms. David's case is not recorded for our imitation, but for our learning.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 4. *Lord, make me to know mine end,* etc. But did not David know this? Yes, he knew it, and yet he desires to know it. It is very fit we should ask of God that he would make us to know the things that we do know; I mean, that what we know emptily and barely, we may know spiritually and fruitfully, and if there be any measure of this knowledge, that it may increase and grow more... We know we must die, and that it is no long course to the utmost period of life; yet our hearts are little instructed by this knowledge. *Robert Leighton.*

Ver. 4. *Lord, make me to know mine end.* David would know his *end*, not so much his death—the end consuming, as Christ the Lord of life—the end and perfection of all our desires; or know it, not for vain science, but in his experience feel the reward of his patience. Though thy chastisement be sharp, it will be but short, and therein sweet; thou shalt lie still and be quiet, thou shalt sleep and be at rest, Job 3:13,17-19. How few and evil soever thy days be in the world, by patience and rolling thyself upon God they will prove unto thee both long enough and good. *Edmund Layfielde.*

Ver. 4. *Lord, make me to know mine end,* etc. Seeing that both sorrow and joy are both able to kill you, and your life hangeth upon so small a thread, that the least gnat in the air can choke you, as it choked a pope of Rome; a little hair in your milk strangle you, as it did a councillor in Rome; a stone of a raisin stop your breath, as it did the breath of Anacreon: put not the evil day far from you, which the ordinance of God hath put so near; "Remember you Creator in time, before the days come wherein you shall say, We have no pleasure in them; "walk not always with your faces to the east, sometimes have an eye to the west, where the sun goeth down; sit not ever in the prow of the ship, sometimes go to the stern; "stand in your watchtowers, "as the creature doth Romans 8:19, and wait for the hour of your deliverance; provide your armies before that dreadful king cometh to fight against you with his greater forces; order your houses before you die, that is, dispose of your bodies and souls, and all the implements of them both; let not your eyes be gadding after pleasure, nor your ear itching after rumours, nor your minds wandering in the fields, when death is in your houses; your bodies are not brass, nor your strength the strength of stones,

your life none inheritance, your breath no more than as the vapour and smoke of the chimney within your nostrils, or as a stranger within your gates, coming and going again, not to return any more till the day of final redemption. *John King.*

Ver. 4. *Lord, make me to know mine end,* etc. It is worthy your notice, that passage you read of in Scripture, 1 Samuel 10:2. Samuel, when he had anointed Saul king, and the people had chosen him, what signal doth he give him, to confirm him anointed? It was to go to Rachel's sepulchre. Now the reason is this, that he might not be gluttoned with the preferments and honours he was entering upon. The emperors of Constantinople, in their inaugurations, on their coronation days, had a mason come and show them several marble stones, and ask them to choose which of these should be made ready for their grave stones. And so we read of Joseph of Arimathea, that he had his tomb in his garden, to check the pleasures of the place. *Christopher Love.*

Ver. 4. *How frail I am.* Between Walsall and Iretsy, in Cheshire, is a house built in 1636, of thick oak framework, filled in with brick. Over the window of the tap room is still legible, cut in the oak, the following Latin inscription: —*Fleres si scires unum tua tempora mensem; rides cum non scis si sit forsitan una dies.* The sense of which is: "You would weep if you knew that your life was limited to one month, yet you laugh while you know not but it may be restricted to a day." How sad the thought, that with this silent monitor, this truthful sermon before their very eyes, numbers have revelled in soul destructive inebriation! And yet this is but a likeness of what we see constantly about us. *Quoted in a Monthly Periodical.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 4. *Make me to know mine end.*

1. What we may desire to know about our end. Not its date, place, circumstances, but

- 1.** *Its nature.* Will it be the end of saint or sinner?
- 2.** *Its certainty.*
- 3.** *Its nearness.*
- 4.** *Its issues.*
- 5.** *Its requirements.* In the shape of attention, preparation, passport.

2. Why ask God to make us know it? Because the knowledge is important, difficult to acquire, and can be effectually imparted by the Lord only. W. Jackson.

Ver. 4. David prays,

1. That he may be enabled continually to keep in view the end of life: all things should be judged by their *end*. "Then understood I their end." Life may be honourable, and cheerful, and virtuous here; but the *end*! What will it be?

2. That he may be diligent in the performance of all the duties of this life. The measure of his days, how short, how much to be done, how little time to do it in!

3. He prays that he may gain much instruction and benefit from the frailties of life. *That I may know*, etc. My frailties may make me more humble, more diligent, while I am able for active service; more dependent upon divine strength, more patient and submissive to the divine will, more ripe for heaven. G. Rogers.

PSALM 39:5

EXPOSITION

Ver. 5. *Behold, thou hast made my days as an handbreadth.* Upon consideration, the psalmist finds little room to bewail the length of life, but rather to bemoan its shortness. What changeful creatures we are! One moment we cry to be rid of existence, and the next instant beg to have it prolonged! A handbreadth is one of the shortest natural measures, being the breadth of four fingers; such is the brevity of life, by divine appointment; God hath made it so, fixing the period in wisdom. The *behold* calls us to attention; to some the thoughts of life's hastiness will bring the most acute pain, to others the most solemn earnestness. How well should those live who are to live so little! Is my earthly pilgrimage so brief? then let me watch every step of it, that in the little of time there may be much of grace.

And mine age is as nothing before thee. So short as not to amount to an entity. Think of eternity, and an angel is as a newborn babe, the world a fresh blown bubble, the sun a spark just fallen from the fire, and man a

nullity. Before the Eternal, all the age of frail man is less than one ticking of a clock.

Verily, every man at his best state is altogether vanity. This is the surest truth, that nothing about man is either sure or true. Take man at his best, he is but a man, and a man is a mere breath, unsubstantial as the wind. Man is *settled*, as the margin has it, and by divine decree it is settled that he shall not be settled. He is constant only in inconstancy. His vanity is his only verity; his best, of which he is vain, is but vain; and this is verily true of every man, that everything about him is every way fleeting. This is sad news for those whose treasures are beneath the moon; those whose glorying is in themselves may well hang the flag half mast; but those whose best estate is settled upon them in Christ Jesus in the land of unfading flowers, may rejoice that it is no vain thing in which they trust.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 5. *My days.* Man's life is styled *days* because it is not conferred upon us by wholesale, by months and years, but by retail of days, hours, minutes, moments, as to check our curiosity in making enquiry how long we have to live Psalm 39:4: so acquainting us with the brevity thereof, we may learn to depend upon God's bounty for the *loan* of our life, employ it for his glory, and every day prepare for the Bridegroom, Christ. *Edmund Layfelde.*

Ver. 5. *My days an handbreadth.* That is one of the shortest measures. We need not long lines to measure our lives by: each one carries a measure about with him, his own hand; that is the longest and fullest measure. It is not so much as a span: that might possibly have been the measure of old age in the infancy of the world, but now it is contracted to a handbreadth, and that is the longest. But how many fall short of that! Many attain not to a finger breadth: multitudes pass from the womb to the grave; and how many end their course within the compass of childhood! *Robert Leighton.*

Ver. 5. *Behold, thou hast made my days as an handbreadth.* The line wherewith our lives are measured, is made both of coarse and fine thread. 1. It is measured by itself, and considerable in its own frailty; so the just length of it is *an handbreadth*. 2. Secondly, with eternity, so it is found to be as nothing.

Mine age is as nothing before thee. ...An handbreadth, and is that all? So he says, that exactly measures them all, and whatsoever else was created

with its own hand. A handbreadth is one of the shortest kind of measures. There is an ell, a cubit, and a palm or handbreadth, whereof there be two kinds, the greater and the less. The greater handbreadth is the whole space betwixt the top of the thumb and the little finger, when the hand is extended, called a span, in account near twelve inches. The lesser handbreadth, in a more proper and strict signification, is the just breadth of the four fingers of the hand closed together, here chiefly intended, this interpretation best agreeing with the original, and complying most with the prophet's mind, by the unanimous consent of the choice interpreters.
Edmund Layfelde.

Ver. 5. *Mine age is as nothing before thee.*

1. David might truly have said, Mine age is short *in respect of Methuselah's*; the days of Methuselah are said to be nine hundred and sixty and nine years; the days of David, by computation of the time when he began and how long he reigned, were not much above three score and ten, so that he lived not so many tens as Methuselah did hundreds.

2. David might have said, Mine age is very short in comparison of *the age of the world*. St. Paul saith of the fashion of this Macrocosm, it passeth away 1 Corinthians 7:31; but the age of the microcosm, man, passeth away far swifter.

3. David might have said, Mine age in this world is exceeding little in comparison of *the duration of the other world*.

4. Finally, David might have said, Mine age is scarcely anything *before the angels*, whose duration began with this world and shall continue in the world to come, and so is coetaneous with both the worlds. But all these are far short of this comparison which he here maketh of his age *with God* which is eternal, both *a parte ante*, and *a parte post*, from everlasting to everlasting. *Nathanael Hardy.*

Ver. 5. *As nothing.* If a man be so diminutive a creature, compared with the fabric of that great world, and the world itself so little that it cannot contain the Lord, so little and light that he feels not the weight thereof upon the tip of his finger, man will well merit the name *nothing*, when he is placed before the Lord. The keel of man's life is laden with more vanity than verify and substance, if the searcher of the reins and heart come aboard to view it. Ten thousand of our days will not make God one year,

and a thousand of our years in his sight are but "as a day wherein it is past, and as a watch in the night." As drops of rain are unto the sea, and as a gravel stone is in comparison of the sand, so are a thousand years to the days everlasting. *Edmund Layfielde.*

Ver. 5. *Verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity.* The Holy Spirit is pleased elsewhere to speak more sparingly, as it were, in favour of man; he discovers the nakedness, but yet comes backward to cast a garment of lenity over it, that somewhat shadows the shame of it. "Man is like to vanity Psalm 144:4; their days consume in vanity Psalm 78:33; Man is vanity" Psalm 39:11; but here with open mouth an unveiled terms full of emphasis, he proclaims every man to be *abstracted vanity*; and as if that were short he adds, *he is all vanity; mere vanity, all manner of vanity, altogether vanity*: nothing else, nothing less; yea, somewhat more than vanity, *"lighter than vanity"* Psalm 62:9; and "vanity of vanities." Ecclesiastes 1:2. And that no place of doubt may be left, he ushers the doctrine unto our hearts with a strong asseveration; *assuredly, in truth*, without all controversy, *man is altogether vanity.* *Edmund Layfielde.*

Ver. 5. *Verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity.* Bythner expounds it thus. *Every man at his best state is altogether vanity; hoc est omni ex parte, ita ut vanitas et miseriea quae per alias creaturas frustratim spargitur in uno homine aggregata videatur; sic homo evadit compendium omnium vanitatum quae in creaturis extant*: that is, he is the sink and centre of all the vanities in the world; he is as it were the universe of vanity. *Quoted in William Reynold's Funeral Sermon for the Honourable Francis Pierrepont, 1657.*

Ver. 5. "Every Adam standing is all Abel." *See Hebrew Text.*

Ver. 5. *Selah.* A little word, yet of no small difficulty to explain. Left out of the *Bible* by the *vulgar translators*, as though it were *impertinent*, where, let them consider, whether they come not within the verge of that malediction in Revelation 22:19. The *ancient* interpreters did not much *meddle* with it, and our editions leave it *without interpretation*. But seeing *"whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope"* Romans 15:4, and till *"heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled"* Matthew 5:18, we have sufficient warrant after the example of the learned, and encouragement to make enquiry after the mind of the Holy Spirit, in that which he hath both

commanded to be written, and hath *commanded* unto us. Wherein, like the crystal glass, I will rather present you with the true visage of antiquity, than use any newly framed feature or painting of my own.

Selah is mentioned *seventy-four times* in the Scripture, whereof seventy-one in the book of Psalms, and thrice in the prophet Habakkuk, which is written psalm wise; and it is ever placed in the end of a Psalm or verse, four places only excepted, where, like the sun in the midst of the planets, it is seated to conjoin the precedent words with the subsequent, and communicate splendour unto both. There was a threefold use of it in ancient times, whereof the first concerned the music; the second, the matter handled unto which it was affixed; and the third, the men or congregation assembled in the temple of the Lord, which two last may still have place among us Christians, who are ingrafted into the stock Christ, from whence the Jews were cut off, but from the first we cannot properly suck such nourishment as once they did.

I. First of the music. The king's choir (1 Chronicles 25:1-6 Psalm 62:1-12, *Επιγραφή*; 1 Chronicles 16:41) learned five things by it:

First. To make a little pause, stop, or stay, when they came to *Selah*, and to meditate awhile upon the matter foregoing.

Second. They knew by that cessation and interval that King David as he was prophesying unto the people, and praising God upon the loud sounding cymbals, was at that instant inspired and taught some new lesson. Wherefore, as men being in serious discourse, when they hear a sudden noise hold their peace to listen, saying, hark! see, lo! so David's heart being smitten by the voice of God's Spirit, the music ceased, stopped, and he checked himself as it were thus: "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth."

Third. It signifieth the change and variation of the music in some strains, or of the metre, or sense, or disjunction of the rhyme, or ceasing of some one sort of music, which howsoever St. Hierome makes some scruple of. The Septuagint, as often as they meet with *Selah* in the Hebrew text, in their Greek version translated it, *the change of the song*.

Fourth. It directed them to sing the same verse over again whereunto *Selah* was annexed. Lastly, it was their instruction to elevate and lift up their voices, praising God with louder voices and loud sounding cymbals. *Selah* called upon them for louder strains of music and shrillness of voice. But

seeing the Jewish harmony and sweet melody is overwhelmed in the ruins of their glorious temple, we remain unskilled in their notes, which doth obscure our annotations upon it. Let this suffice for the "music."

II. *Selah* concerns the *text* of Scripture itself, or the matter handled, in five branches.

First. Some think it to be only an ornament of speech, to grace the language with a sweet emphasis; or a nonsignificant word to complete the harmony, lest the verse should halt for want of a foot, but this conjecture is inform, and many feet wide from the truth.

Second. It is not only an adorning of speech, but signifies *an end* of that verse, matter, or Psalm, where it is found, and it is ever in the end of Psalm and verse, these four places only exempted from this rule: Psalm 55:19 57:3 Habakkuk 3:3,9. For as we write "finis" at the end of a book, song, or poem, so the Jews underwrite *Selah*, "Salome, "or "Amen, "at the end or finishing of any canticle or work. And the modern Jew at thus day, following the opinion of Aben Ezra, take *Selah* to be the same with "Amen, "using it at the end of their epithets and prayers twice or thrice indifferently; thus: "Amen, *Selah*, Amen, *Selah*, "which receives some credit from this that the particular Psalms end with *Selah* Psalm 3:8, and the books of Psalms with "Amen." For whereas the Psalter is divided into five books, four of them end with "Amen" —*so be it*. As you shall find: Psalm 41:13, the end of the first book; Psalm 72:19, the end of the second book; Psalm 89:52, the end of the third; and Psalm 106:48, the conclusion of the fourth.

Third. *Selah* is an hyperbole or illustration of the truth by way of excess in advancing and enlarging it, to make the truth and sense more clear and evident, as if we should say, '*that is wonderful!*' or, '*that is excellent!*' and sometimes by way of aggravation that is, '*monstrous, intolerable, horrible!*' '*The Lord came from Teman and the Holy One from Mount Paran. Selah.*' Habakkuk 3:3. *Selah.* 1. God came with *great dignity, excellency, and ample majesty.* '*Many there be that say of my soul there is no help for him in God. Selah.*' Psalm 3:2. *Selah*, as if he had said, *Oh, monstrous, and horrible blasphemy*, to excommunicate a child out of the favour of his heavenly Father; and limit his mercy whose hand is *omnipotent* to relieve all that rely upon him.

Fourth. It serves to declare *the eternity of the truth* revealed in that Psalm or verse, though perhaps it only began then to be manifested in the church, or more fully at that time than in former ages. Howsoever, the people unto whom it was published, or the persons unto whom it was sent, were otherwise persuaded at the first publication of it. That it was a truth from everlasting and shall continue for ever: instance Psalm 3:8, 'Salvation belongs unto the Lord, thy blessing is upon thy people. *Selah.*' As if he had said, 'This is a thing beyond all controversy true, that God hath ever delivered, and will for ever bless his people.' This doctrine is sempiternal and durable, that the mercy of the Lord endureth for ever. Psalm 136.

Fifth. It did instruct them to meditate seriously upon those themes where *Selah* was engraven, as containing matter worthy of singular observation, meditation, and remembrance, as either concerning Christ, "Who is the King of glory? The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory. *Selah.*" Psalm 24:10. The mysteries of grace. "The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. *Selah.*" Psalm 46:7. Man's duty Psalm 4:4 32:5, or frailty Psalm 9:20 32:4. That as the diamond is of greater value than other precious stones, and the sun is more glorious than the planets, so those sentences are more resplendent, than other parcels of Scripture. Which though at the first bare view, it doth not always so appear, there being other texts of Holy Writ more excellent (if it were meet to make any comparison) where *Selah* is not found, yet if we dive into the *occasion*, *scope*, and *nature* of the sentence, we shall more willingly accept, when we consider, that it is an usual custom of the Holy Spirit, for our singular instruction and benefit, to propound things of a low and inferior nature to our deepest meditation. Instance Psalm 9:16. "The Lord is known by the judgment which he executeth; the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands, "which is shut up with "Higgaion *Selah*, "meditation *Selah*, as if he had said, here is a matter worthy of observation and eternal meditation; the righteous should never forget this, that the wicked perish in their own counsels, and are taken in their own net. An observation worthy to be engraven in every religious person's bosom, that God will one time or other be known among the wicked by his most severe judgments executed upon them, though they would never learn by his patience and mercies to acknowledge him for their Lord. Thus far of the matter. Now it remains for a conclusion to unfold the several instructions which *Selah* afforded unto the congregation, which are these six.

First. It served as a *note of attention and intention of the mind* to what was sung or said, Psalm 3:2-8, that wheresoever they cast an eye upon *Selah*, they might conceive they heard the Lord's voice from heaven speaking. "Hear this, all ye people, give ear, all ye inhabitants of the world. Both high and low, rich and poor together." Psalm 49:1-2. That as their voices were lift up in singing, so much more their hearts and affections might be elevated, that their voice and hearts being both in tune, the joint harmony might be sweet in the ears of the Lord.

Secondly. It was a note of affirmation, whereby they declared their consent and assent unto the truth delivered, as we say when we approve of another's speech; right, just, you say truly, it is most certain. So their *Selah* was as much as true, certain, excellent. Instance Psalm 3:4, "I cried unto the Lord with my voice, and he heard me out of his holy hill." *Selah*, i.e., It is most certain that the Lord knows the secrets of our hearts, and is the judge of the quick and dead, and will pass most righteous sentence upon us, giving to every man according to his deeds in the flesh, whether good or evil. Psalm 52:3. "Thou lovest evil more than good; and lying rather than to speak righteousness. *Selah*" —that is to say, undeniable, we all confess it, our own experience and sorrows have made us know this, that those who have not the fear of God before their eye love to speak and do all the mischief they are able against God's people, to *hurt* them rather than *help* them, to wound their innocent reputation rather than preserve it.

Thirdly. It was a devout *ejaculation* of the heart and soul unto God, wishing and desiring the *accomplishment* of what was spoken or promised. Instance, Habakkuk 3:13. "Thou wentest forth for the salvation of thy people. *Selah*." As if he had said, Lord, I beseech thee, evermore, go out so to deliver thine anointed. Psalm 55:17-19. "Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice. He hath delivered my soul in peace from the battle that was against me; for there were many with me. God shall hear, and afflict them, even he that abideth of old. *Selah*, "i.e., *O Lord, I entreat thee*, ever bow down an ear unto my humble suit, and rise up against them that rise up against me.

Fourthly. It denoted their *admiration* at some strange unusual effect, whether the work of God, or wickedness of man. Psalm 57:3. "He shall send me from and save me from the reproach of him that would swallow me up. *Selah*, "i.e., Oh, wonderful and admirable goodness of God, that is pleased to send sometimes his angel from heaven, always his mercy and

truth to deliver his poor perplexed servants from them that are too strong and mighty for them, Psalm 54:3. "Strangers are risen up against me, and oppressors seek after my soul: they have not set God before them *Selah*, "i.e., *Oh, horrible impiety and cruelty to hurt after the life of the saints, and cast the God of life and his remembrance behind their backs.*

Fifthly. *Of humiliation and consternation of their mind*, by the consideration of God's incomprehensible majesty, and their own great frailty and misery. Instance, Psalm 65:7. "He ruleth by his power for ever; his eyes behold the nations: let not the rebellious exalt themselves. *Selah*, "i.e., here is a matter of humiliation before the King of all the world, Psalm 68:7,8. "O God, when thou wentest forth before thy people, when thou didst march through the wilderness. *Selah*, "i.e., my very heart trembled to consider; I am moved out of my place, to reflect upon that majesty before whom "the earth shook, the heavens also dropped at the presence of God; even Sinai itself was moved at the presence of God, the God of Israel." Psalm 39:11. "When thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity, thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth: surely every man is vanity. *Selah*." As if he should say, this may humble the proudest heart in the world, and cast him down to the ground.

Sixthly. *It was a note of Doxology and praising of God in a special manner*, not much unlike, or the very same with this, "For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever." As for example, "All the earth shall worship thee, and shall sing unto thee, they shall sing to thy name. *Selah*, "Psalm 66:4. "Yea, Lord, in thee will we boast all the day long, and praise thy name for ever. *Selah*, "Psalm 44:8. "Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. And blessed be his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory; so be it, even so be it." Psalm 72:18-19. *Edmund Layfelde.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 5. (*last clause*). Man is vanity, *i.e.*, he is mortal, he is mutable. Observe how emphatically this truth is expressed here.

1. Every man is vanity, without exception, high and low, rich and poor.
2. He is so at his *best estate*; when he is young, and strong, and healthful, in wealth and honour, etc.
3. He is *altogether* vanity, as vain as you can imagine.

4. *Verily* he is so.

5. *Selah* is annexed, as a note commanding observation. *Matthew Henry*.

PSALM 39:6

EXPOSITION

Ver. 6. *Surely every man walketh in a vain shew.* Life is but a passing pageant. This alone is sure, that nothing is sure. All around us shadows mock us; we walk among them, and too many live for them as if the mocking images were substantial; acting their borrowed parts with zeal fit only to be spent on realities, and lost upon the phantoms of this passing scene. Worldly men walk like travellers in a mirage, deluded, duped, deceived, soon to be filled with disappointment and despair.

Surely they are disquieted in vain. Men fret, and fume, and worry, and all for mere nothing. They are shadows pursuing shadows, while death pursues them. He who toils and contrives, and wearies himself for gold, for fame, for rank, even if he wins his desire, finds at the end of his labour lost; for like the treasure of the miser's dream, it all vanishes when the man awakes in the world of reality. Read well this text, and then listen to the clamour of the market, the hum of the exchange, the din of the city streets, and remember that all this *noise* (for so the word means), this breach of quiet, is made about unsubstantial, fleeting vanities. Broken rest, anxious fear, over worked brain, failing mind, lunacy, these are the steps in the process of disquieting with many, and all to be rich, or, in other words, to load one's self with the thick clay; clay, too, which a man must leave so soon.

He heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them. He misses often the result of his ventures, for there are many slips between the cup and the lips. His wheat is sheaved, but an interloping robber bears it away—as often happens with the poor Eastern husbandman; or, the wheat is even stored, but the invader feasts thereon. Many work for others all unknown to them. Especially does this verse refer to those all gathering muckrakes, who in due time are succeeded by all scattering forks, which scatter riches as profusely as their sires gathered them parsimoniously. We know not our heirs, for our children die, and strangers fill the old ancestral

halls; estates change hands, and entail, though riveted with a thousand bonds, yields to the corroding power of time. Men rise up early and sit up late to build a house, and then the stranger tramps along its passages, laughs in its chambers, and forgetful of its first builder, calls it all his own. Here is one of the evils under the sun for which no remedy can be prescribed.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 6. *Man walketh in a vain shew.* I see that we who live are nothing else but images, and a vain shadow. *Sophocles.*

Ver. 6. (*first clause*). When in the Bristol election, his competitor died, Burke said, "What shadows we are, and what shadows we pursue." *William S. Plumer.*

Ver. 6. Every carnal man walks *in a vain shew*, and yet how vain is he of his shew of vanity! He is *disquieted in vain*, and it is only vanity which disquiets him. He labours all his life for the profits of riches, and yet in death his riches will not profit him. He that views an ox grazing in a fat pasture, concludes that he is but preparing for the day of slaughter. *William Secker.*

Ver. 6. *He heapeth up riches.* This is the great foolishness and disease especially of old age, that the less way a man has to go, he makes the greater provision for it. When the hands are stiff, and fit for no other labour, they are fitted and composed for scraping together. *Robert Leighton.*

Ver. 6. *He heapeth up riches.* The Hebrew word rendered, *He heapeth up*, signifies *to rake together*; in which there is an allusion to the husbandman's collecting his corn together before he carries it to the barn. The metaphor is elegant, intimating the precariousness of human life, and the vanity of human acquisitions; which though heaped up together like corn, by one person, may soon become the possession of another. *Samuel Burder.*

Ver. 6.

*Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow,
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,
To the last syllable of recorded time;*

*And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!
Life's but a walking shadow; a poor player,
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more; it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.*

William Shakespeare.

Ver. 6. The plentiful showers of tears which stand in our eyes when we come from the womb, and when we draw to the tomb, are faithful witnesses of man's vanity. We bid the world "good morrow" with grief, and "good night" with a groan. *Edmund Layfielde.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 6. The vanity of man, as mortal, is here instanced in three things, and the vanity of each shown.

1. The vanity of our joys and honours: *Surely every man walketh in a vain show.*
2. The vanity of our griefs and fears: *Surely they are disquieted in vain.*
3. The vanity of our cares and toils: *He heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them.* *Matthew Henry.*

Ver. 6. The world's trinity consists,

1. In fruitless honours: what appears to them to be substantial honours are but *a vain show.*
2. In needless cares. *They are disquieted in vain.* Imaginary cares are substituted for real ones.
3. In useless riches; such as yield no lasting satisfaction to themselves, or in their descent to others. *G. Rogers.*

PSALM 39:7

EXPOSITION

Ver. 7. *And now, Lord, what wait I for?* What is there in these phantoms to enchant me? Why should I linger where the prospect is so uninviting, and the present so trying? It were worse than vanity to linger in the abodes of sorrow to gain a heritage of emptiness. The psalmist, therefore, turns to his God, in disgust of all things else; he has thought on the world and all things in it, and is relieved by knowing that such vain things are all passing away; he has cut all cords which bound him to earth, and is ready to sound "Boot and saddle, up and away."

My hope is in thee. The Lord is self-existent and true, and therefore worthy of the confidence of men; he will live when all the creatures die, and his fulness will abide when all second causes are exhausted; to him, therefore, let us direct our expectation, and on him let us rest our confidence. Away from sand to rock let all wise builders turn themselves, for if not today, yet surely ere long, a storm will rise before which nothing will be able to stand but that which has the lasting element of faith in God to cement it. David had but one hope, and that hope entered within the veil, hence he brought his vessel to safe anchorage, and after a little drifting all was peace.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 7. *Lord, what wait I for?*

*At first her mother earth she holdeth dear,
And doth embrace the world and worldly things:
She flies close by the ground and hovers here
And mounts not up with her celestial wings.*

*Yet under heaven she cannot light on ought
That with her heavenly nature doth agree;
She cannot rest, she cannot fix her thought,
She cannot in this world contented bee.*

*Then as a bee which among weeds doth fall,
Which seem sweet flowers with lustre fresh and gay:
She lights on that, and this, and tasteth all,
But pleased with none, doth rise, and soar away.*

*So, when the soul finds here no true content,
And like Noah's dove, can no sure footing take,
She doth return from whence she first was sent,
And flies to Him, that first her wings did make.*

Sir John Davies.

Ver. 7.

*O loose this frame, this knot of man untie,
That my free soul may use her wing.
Which is now pinioned with mortality,
As an entangled, hampered thing.
What have I left that I should stay and groan?
The most of me to heaven is fled;
My thoughts and joys are all packed up and gone,
And for their old acquaintance plead.*

George Herbert.

Ver. 7. *My hope is in thee.* Sweet is it that our hope should rest in him who is never shaken: should abide in him who never changeth; should bind us to him who can hold us fast to himself, who alone is the full contentment of the soul; should, as it were, enter into him; since *in* him is our being, who is love. *E. B. Pusey, D.D., 1853.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 7. *What wait I for?*

- 1.** *For what salvation as a sinner?* Of works or grace—from Sinai or Calvary?
- 2.** *For what consolation as a sufferer?* Earthly or heavenly?
- 3.** *For what supply as a suppliant?* Meagre or bountiful? Present or future?
- 4.** *For what communication as a servant?* Miraculous or ordinary? Pleasing or unacceptable?
- 5.** *For what instruction as a pupil?* Mental or spiritual? Elating or humbling? Ornamental or useful?

6. *For what inheritance as an heir? Sublunary or celestial? W. Jackson.*

Ver. 7.

1. An urgent occasion. *And now Lord*, etc. There are seasons that should lead us specially to look up to God, and say, *Now, Lord*. "Father, the hour is come."

2. A devout exclamation, *Now, Lord, what wait I for?* Where is my expectation? where my confidence? To whom shall I look? I am nothing, the world is nothing, all earthly sources of confidence and consolation fail: *What wait I for?* In life, in death, in a dying world, in a coming judgment, in an eternity at hand; what is it that I need? *G. Rogers.*

PSALM 39:8

EXPOSITION

Ver. 8. *Deliver me from all my transgressions.* How fair a sign it is when the psalmist no longer harps upon his sorrows, but begs freedom from his sins! What is sorrow when compared with sin! Let but the poison of sin be gone from the cup, and we need not fear its gall, for the bitter will act medicinally. None can deliver a man from his transgression but the blessed One who is called Jesus, because he saves his people from their sins; and when he once works this great deliverance for a man from the cause, the consequences are sure to disappear too. The thorough cleansing desired is well worthy of note: to be saved from some transgressions would be of small benefit; total and perfect deliverance is needed.

Make me not the reproach of the foolish. The wicked are the foolish here meant: such are always on the watch for the faults of saints, and at once make them the theme of ridicule. It is a wretched thing for a man to be suffered to make himself the butt of unholy scorn by apostasy from the right way. Alas, how many have thus exposed themselves to well deserved reproach! Sin and shame go together, and from both David would fain be preserved.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 8. *Make me not the reproach of the foolish.* Let not their prosperity and my misery give them occasion to deride and reproach me for my serving of thee and trusting in thee to so little purpose. *Matthew Pool.*

Ver. 8. *Make me not the reproach of the foolish.* Doubt not this; that of all the bitter agony which will be the portion of the lost soul at that, "Depart, ye cursed, "not the least will be the bitter reproaches and derision of those evil spirits who have seduced him to his ruin. "For this morsel of meat to have sold thy birthright! For the fleshly pleasures of a few days to have bartered thine eternal jewel! For a few grains of yellow earth to have missed the city with streets of gold, and gates of several pearls! O fool, beyond all folly! O madman, beyond all insanity! Truly we have need to pray with all earnestness, *Make me not the reproach of the foolish.*" *Origen, quoted by J. M. Neale.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 8.

1. Prayer should be *general*: *Deliver me from all my transgressions.*

We often need anew to say, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

Afflictions should remind us of our sins. If we pray to be delivered from all transgressions, we are sure to be delivered from the one for which affliction was sent.

2. Prayer should be *particular*: *Make me not the reproach of the foolish.* Suffer me not so to speak or show impatience in affliction as to give occasion even to the foolish to blaspheme. The thought that many watch for our halting should be a preservative from sin. *G. Rogers.*

PSALM 39:9

EXPOSITION

Ver. 9. *I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it.* This had been far clearer if it had been rendered, "I am silenced, I will not open my mouth." Here we have a nobler silence, purged of all sullenness, and sweetened with submission. Nature failed to muzzle the mouth, but grace

achieved the work in the worthiest manner. How like in appearance may two very different things appear! silence is ever silence, but it may be sinful in one case and saintly in another. What a reason for hushing every murmuring thought is the reflection, "because thou didst it."! It is his right to do as he wills, and he always wills to do that which is wisest and kindest; why should I then arraign his dealings? Nay, if it be indeed the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 9. *I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it.* See David's carriage here; it was a patience not constrained, but from satisfaction of spirit: he saw love in his affliction, and that sweetened his soul. *Joseph Symonds.*

Ver. 9. *I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it.* God is training up his children here. This is the true character of his dealings with them. The education of his saints is the object he has in view. It is training for the kingdom; it is education for eternity...It is the discipline of love. Every step of it is kindness. There is no wrath nor vengeance in any part of the process. The discipline of the school may be harsh and stern; but that of the family is love. We are sure of this; and the consolation which it affords is unutterable. Love will not wrong us. There will be no needless suffering. Were this but kept in mind there would be fewer hard thoughts of God amongst men, even when his strokes are most severe. I know not a better illustration of what the feelings of a saint should be, in the hour of bitterness, than the case of Richard Cameron's father. The aged saint was in prison "for the Word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ." The bleeding head of his martyred son was brought to him by his unfeeling persecutors, and he was asked derisively if he knew it. "I know it, I know it,"—said the father, as he kissed the mangled forehead of his fair haired son—"it is my son's, my own dear son's! It is the Lord! good is the will of the Lord, who cannot wrong me or mine, but who hath made goodness and mercy to follow us all our days." *Horatius Bonar, in "The Night of Weeping," 1847.*

Ver. 9. *Because thou didst it.* This holy man had a breach made both at his body and spirit at this time; he was sick and sad; yet he remembers from whose hand the blow came. Thou, Lord, didst it; thou, whom I love dearly, and so can take it kindly; thou whom I have offended, and so take it

patiently; yea, thou, who mightest have cast me into a bed of flames, instead of my bed of sickness, and therefore I accept thy correction thankfully. Thus he catches at the blow without retorting it back upon God by any quarrelling discontented language. *William Gurnall*.

Ver. 9. *Because thou didst it.* We digest not a blow from our equals, but a blow from our king we can well digest. If the King of kings lays his hand on our backs, let us, beloved, lay our hands on our mouths. I am sure this stopped David's mouth from venting fretful speeches. "I held my tongue and said nothing." Why didst thou so, David? *Because thou, Lord, didst it;* and God gives this testimony of such an one; that he is a prudent man that keeps silence at an evil time. Amos 5:13. *Nicholas Estwick, B.D., 1644.*

Ver. 9. Perkins, in his *"Salve for a Sick Man,"* gives the "last words" of many holy men, among others of Calvin:—"I held my tongue, because thou, Lord, hast done it—I mourned as a dove—Lord, you ground me to powder, but it suffices me because it is thy hand."

Ver. 9. I wondered once at providence, and called white providence black and unjust, that I should be smothered in a town where no soul will take Christ off my hand. But providence hath another lustre (shining; appearance) with God than with my bleared eyes. I proclaim myself a blind body, who knoweth not black and white, in the unco (strange) course of God's providence. Suppose that Christ should set hell where heaven is, and devils up in glory beside the elect angels (which yet cannot be), I would I had a heart to acquiesce in his way, without further dispute. I see that infinite wisdom is the mother of his judgments, and that his ways pass finding out. I cannot learn, but I desire to learn, to bring my thoughts, will, and lusts in under (close under) Christ's feet, that he may trample upon them. But, alas! I am still upon Christ's wrong side. *Samuel Rutherford.*

Ver. 9. A little girl, in the providence of God, was born deaf and dumb. She was received, and instructed, at an institution established for these afflicted ones. A visitor was one day requested to examine the children thus sadly laid aside from childhood's common joys. Several questions were asked, and quickly answered by means of a slate and pencil. At length the gentleman wrote, *Why were you born deaf and dumb?* A look of anguish clouded for the moment the expressive face of the little girl; but it quickly passed, as she took her slate, and wrote, *"Even so, Father; for so it seemeth good in thy sight."* *Mrs. Rogers, in "The Shepherd King."*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 9.

1. The *occasion* referred to. *I was dumb*, etc. We are not told what the particular trial was, that each one may apply it to his own affliction, and because all are to be viewed in the same light.
2. The *conduct* of the psalmist upon that particular occasion: *I opened not my mouth*.
 1. Not in anger and rebellion against God in murmurs or complaints.
 2. Not in impatience, or complaining, or angry feelings against men.
3. The *reason* he assigns for this conduct: *Because thou didst it*. G. Rogers.

PSALM 39:10

EXPOSITION

Ver. 10. *Remove thy stroke away from me*. Silence from all repining did not prevent the voice of prayer, which must never cease. In all probability the Lord would grant the psalmist's petition, for he usually removes affliction when we are resigned to it; if we kiss the rod, our Father always burns it. When we are still, the rod is soon still. It is quite consistent with resignation to pray for the removal of a trial. David was fully acquiescent in the divine will, and yet found it in his heart to pray for deliverance; indeed, it was while he was rebellious that he was prayerless about his trial, and only when he became submissive did he plead for mercy.

I am consumed by the blow of thine hand. Good pleas may be found in our weakness and distress. It is well to show our Father the bruises which his scourge has made, for peradventure his fatherly pity will bind his hands, and move him to comfort us in his bosom. It is not to consume us, but to consume our sins, that the Lord aims at in his chastisements.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 10. *Remove thy plague away from me:* thy plague and mine; thine by affliction, mine by passion; thine because thou didst send it, mine because I endure it; thine because it comes from thy justice, mine because it answers my injustice; remit what I have done, and remove what thou hast done. But whosoever laid it on, the Lord will take it off. *Thomas Adams.*

Ver. 10. *Remove,* etc. Having first prayed off his sin, he would now pray off his pain, though it less troubled him; and for ease he repairs to *Jehovah that healeth*, as well as woundeth. Ho 6:1. *John Trapp.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 10.

1. *Afflictions are sent by God. Thy strokes.* They are strokes of his hand, not of the rod of the law, but of the shepherd's rod. Every affliction is *his* stroke.
2. *Afflictions are removed by God. Remove.* He asks not for miracles, but that God in his own way, in the use of natural means, would interpose for his deliverance. We should seek his blessing upon the means employed for our deliverance both by ourselves and others. "*Cause to remove,* "etc.
3. *Afflictions have their end from God. I am consumed by the conflict,* etc. God hath a controversy with his people. It is a conflict between his will and their wills. The psalmist owns himself conquered and subdued in the struggle. We should be more anxious that this end should be accomplished than that the affliction should be removed, and when this is accomplished the affliction will be removed. *G. Rogers.*

Ver. 10.

1. The *cause* of our trials: "*for iniquity.*" Oh, this trial is come to take away my comforts, my peace of mind, and the divine smile! No, this is all the fruit to take away their sin—the dross, none of the gold—sin, nothing but sin.
2. The *effect* of our trials. All that he counted desirable in this life, but not for his real good, is *consumed*. His robes which are beautiful in men's esteem are moth eaten, but the robe of righteousness upon his soul cannot decay.

3. The *design* of our trials. They are not penal inflictions, but friendly *rebukes* and fatherly *corrections*. On Christ our Surety the penal consequences were laid, upon us their paternal chastisements only.
4. The *reasonableness* of our trials. "*Surely every man is vanity.*" How in a world like this could any expect to be exempt from trials! The world is the same to the Christian as before, and his body is the same. He has a converted soul in an unconverted body, and how can he escape the external ills of life? *G. Rogers.*

PSALM 39:11

EXPOSITION

Ver. 11. *When thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity.* God does not trifle with his rod; he uses it because of sin, and with a view to whip us from it; hence he means his strokes to be felt, and felt they are.

Thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth. As the moth frets the substance of the fabric, mars all its beauty, and leaves it worn out and worthless, so do the chastisements of God discover to us our folly, weakness, and nothingness, and make us feel ourselves to be as worn out vestures, worthless and useless. Beauty must be a poor thing when a moth can consume it and a rebuke can mar it. All our desires and delights are wretched moth eaten things when the Lord visits us in his anger.

Surely every man is vanity. He is as Trapp wittily says "a curious picture of nothing." He is unsubstantial as his own breath, a vapour which appeareth for a little while, and then vanisheth away. *Selah.* Well may this truth bring us to a pause, like the dead body of Amasa, which, lying in the way, stopped the hosts of Joab.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 11. *Thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth.* The meaning may be, As the moth crumbles into dust under the slightest pressure, or the gentlest touch, so man dissolves with equal ease, and vanishes into darkness, under the finger of the Almighty. *Paxton's Illustrations of Scripture.*

Ver. 11. *Thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth.* Moths I must not omit naming. I once saw some knives, the black bone hafts of which were said to have been half consumed by them. I also saw the remains of a hair seated sofa which had been devoured. It is no uncommon thing to find dresses consumed in a single night. In Isaiah 51:6, "wax old" probably refers to a garment that is moth eaten. So in Psalm 6:7 31:9, *consumed* means moth eaten; and again in Psalm 39:11. *John Gadsby.*

Ver. 11. *Like a moth.* The moths of the East are very large and beautiful, but short lived. After a few showers these splendid insects may be seen fluttering in every breeze, but the dry weather, and their numerous enemies, soon consign them to the common lot. Thus the beauty of man consumes away like that of this gay rover, dressed in his robes of purple, and scarlet, and green. *John Kitto.*

Ver. 11. The body of man is as a "garment" to the soul: in this garment sin hath lodged a "moth," which, by degrees, fretteth and weareth away, first, the beauty, then the strength, and finally, the contexture of its parts. Whoever has watched the progress of a consumption, or any other lingering distemper, nay, the slow and silent devastations of time alone, in the human frame, will need no farther illustration of this just and affecting similitude; but will discern at once the propriety of the reflection which follows upon it. *Surely every man is vanity.* *George Horne.*

Ver. 11. *Surely every man is vanity.* What is greatness? Can we predicate it of man, independently of his qualities as an immortal being? or of his actions, independently of principles and motives? Then the glitter of nobility is not superior to the plumage of the peacock; nor the valour of Alexander to the fury of a tiger; nor the sensual delights of Epicurus to those of any animal that roams the forest. *Ebenezer Porter, D.D., in Lectures on Homiletics, 1834.*

PSALM 39:12

EXPOSITION

Ver. 12. *Hear my prayer, O Lord.* Drown not my pleadings with the sound of thy strokes. Thou hast heard the clamour of my sins, Lord; hear the laments of my prayers.

And give ear unto my cry. Here is an advance in intensity: a cry is more vehement, pathetic, and impassioned, than a prayer. The main thing was to have the Lord's ear and heart.

Hold not thy peace at my tears. This is a yet higher degree of importunate pleading. Who can withstand tears, which are the irresistible weapons of weakness? How often women, children, beggars, and sinners, have betaken themselves to tears as their last resort, and therewith have won the desire of their hearts! — "This shower, blown up by tempest of the soul, "falls not in vain. Tears speak more eloquently than ten thousand tongues; they act as keys upon the wards of tender hearts, and mercy denies them nothing, if through them the weeper looks to richer drops, even to the blood of Jesus. When our sorrows pull up the sluices of our eyes, God will ere long interpose and turn our mourning into joy. Long may he be quiet as though he regarded not, but the hour of deliverance will come, and come like the morning when the dewdrops are plentiful.

For I am a stranger with thee. Not *to* thee, but *with* thee. Like thee, my Lord, a stranger among the sons of men, an alien from my mother's children. God made the world, sustains it, and owns it, and yet men treat him as though he were a foreign intruder; and as they treat the Master, so do they deal with the servants. "It is no surprising thing that we should be unknown." These words may also mean, "I share the hospitality of God, "like a stranger entertained by a generous host. Israel was bidden to deal tenderly with the stranger, and the God of Israel has in much compassion treated us poor aliens with unbounded liberality.

And a sojourner, as all my fathers were. They knew that this was not their rest; they passed through life in pilgrim guise, they used the world as travellers use an inn, and even so do I. Why should we dream of rest on earth when our fathers' sepulchres are before our eyes? If they had been immortal, their sons would have had an abiding city this side the tomb; but as the sires were mortal, so must their offspring pass away. All of our lineage, without exception, were passing pilgrims, and such are we. David uses the fleeting nature of our life as an argument for the Lord's mercy, and it is such a one as God will regard. We show pity to poor pilgrims, and so will the Lord.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 12. *Hear my prayer, O Lord*, etc. Now, in this prayer of David, we find three things, which are the chief qualifications of all acceptable prayers. The first is *humility*. He humbly confesses his sins, and his own weakness and worthlessness. We are not to put on a stoical, flinty kind of spirit under our affliction, that so we may seem to shun womanish repinings and complaints, lest we run into the other evil, of *despising the hand of God*, but we are to humble our proud hearts, and break our unruly passions...The second qualification of this prayer is, *fervency* and *importunity*, which appears in the elegant gradation of the words,

Hear my prayer, my words; if not that, yet, *Give ear to my cry*, which is louder; and if that prevail not, yet, *Hold not thy peace at my tears*, which is the loudest of all; so David, elsewhere, calls it *the voice of weeping*. ...The third qualification is *faith*. "He who comes to God must believe that he is, and is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Hebrews 11:6. And, certainly, as he that comes to God must believe this, so he that believes this, cannot but come to God; and if he be not presently answered, "he that believes makes no haste, "he resolves patiently to wait for the Lord, and go to no other. *Condensed from Robert Leighton*.

Ver. 12. *Hold not thy peace at my tears*. We may, in all humility, plead our heart breakings and weepings in sense of want of mercies which we crave, and our pantings and faintings after the same. *Thomas Cobbett*.

Ver. 12. *For I am a stranger with thee, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were*. Both in thy judgment expressed Leviticus 25:23, and in their own opinion Hebrews 11:13. Upon which account thou didst take a special care of them, and therefore do so to me also. *Matthew Poole*.

Ver. 12. *I am a stranger with thee and a sojourner*. How settled soever their condition be, yet this is the temper of the saints upon earth—to count themselves but strangers. All men indeed are strangers and sojourners, but the saints do best discern it, and most freely acknowledge it. Wicked men have no firm dwelling upon earth, but that is against their intentions; their inward thought and desire is that they may abide for ever; they are strangers against their wills, their abode is uncertain in the world, and they cannot help it. And pray mark, there are two distinct words used in this case, *strangers* and *sojourners*. A stranger is one that hath his abode in a foreign country, that is not a native and a denizen of the place, though he

liveth there, and in opposition to the natives he is called a stranger: as if a Frenchman should live in England, he is a stranger. But a *sojourner* is one that intends not to settle, but only passes through a place, and is in motion travelling homeward. So the children of God in relation to a country of their own in another place, namely, heaven, they are denizens there, but strangers in the world; and they are sojourners and pilgrims in regard of their motion and journey towards their country. *Thomas Manton.*

Ver. 12. *A Stranger.*

- 1.** A stranger is one that is absent from his country, and from his father's house: so are we, heaven is our country, God is there, and Christ is there.
- 2.** A stranger in a foreign country is not known, nor valued according to his birth and breeding: so the saints walk up and down in the world like princes in disguise.
- 3.** Strangers are liable to inconveniences: so are godly men in the world. Religion, saith Tertullian, is like a strange plant brought from a foreign country, and doth not agree with the nature of the soil, it thrives not in the world.
- 4.** A stranger is patient, standeth not for ill usage, and is contented with pilgrim's fare and lodging. We are now abroad and must expect hardship.
- 5.** A stranger is wary, that he may not give offence, and incur the hatred and displeasure of the natives.
- 6.** A stranger is thankful for the least favour; so we must be thankfully contented with the things God hath bestowed upon us: anything in a strange country is much.
- 7.** A stranger, that hath a journey to go, would pass over it as soon as he can, and so we, who have a journey to heaven desire to be dissolved.
- 8.** A stranger buyeth not such things as he cannot carry with him; he doth not buy trees, house, household stuff, but jewels and pearls, and such things as are portable. Our greatest care should be to get the jewels of the covenant, the graces of God's Spirit, those things that will abide with us.

9. A stranger's heart is in his country; so is a saint's.

10. A stranger is inquisitive after the way, fearing lest he should go amiss, so is a Christian.

11. A stranger provides for his return, as a merchant, that he may return richly laden. So we must appear before God in Sion. What manner of persons ought we to be? Let us return from our travel well provided. *Condensed from Thomas Manton.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 12. David pleads the good impressions made upon him by his affliction.

1. It had set him a weeping.

2. It had set him a praying.

3. It had helped to wean him from the world. *Matthew Henry.*

Ver. 12. (*last clause*). Am I a stranger and a sojourner with God? Let me realise, let me exemplify the condition.

1. Let me look for *the treatment* such characters commonly meet with.

2. And surely if any of my own nation be near me, I shall *be intimate with them*.

3. Let me *not be entangled* in the affairs of this life.

4. Let my affection be *set on things that are above*, and my conversation be always *in heaven*.

5. Let me be *not impatient for home*; but *prizing* it. *W. Jay.*

PSALM 39:13

EXPOSITION

Ver. 13. *O spare me.* Put by thy rod. Turn away thine angry face. Give me breathing time. Do not kill me.

That I may recover strength. Let me have sufficient cessation from pain, to be able to take repose and nourishment, and so recruit my wasted frame.

He expects to die soon, but begs a little respite from sorrow, so as to be able to rally and once more enjoy life before its close.

Before I go hence, and be no more. So far as this world is concerned, death is a being no more; such a state awaits us, we are hurrying onward towards it. May the short interval which divides us from it be gilded with the sunlight of our heavenly Father's love. It is sad to be an invalid from the cradle to the grave, far worse to be under the Lord's chastisements by the month together, but what are these compared with the endurance of the endless punishment threatened to those who die in their sins!

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 13. *O spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more.* Man in his corrupt state is like Nebuchadnezzar, he hath a beast's heart, that craves no more than the satisfaction of his sensual appetite; but when renewed by grace, then his understanding returns to him, by which he is enabled in praying for temporals to elevate his desires to a nobler end. Doth David pray that some farther time may be added to his temporal life? It is not out of a fond love for this world, but to prepare himself the better for another. Is he comforted with hopes of a longer stay here? It is not this world's carnal pleasures that kindle this joy in his holy breast, but the advantage that thereby he shall have for praising God in the land of the living...

O spare me, that I may recover strength. David was not yet recovered out of that sin which had brought him exceeding low as you may perceive, Psalm 39:10-11. And the good man cannot think of dying with any willingness till his heart be in a holier frame: and for the peace of the gospel, serenity of conscience, and inward joy; alas! all unholiness is to it as poison is to the spirits which drink them up. *William Gurnall.*

Ver. 13. *O spare me,* etc. Attachment to life, the feeling cherished by the psalmist, when he thus appealed to the Sovereign of the universe, varies in its character with the occasions and the sentiments by which it is elicited and confirmed. Take one view of it, and you pronounce it *criminal*; take another, and you pronounce it *innocent*; take a third, and you pronounce it *laudable*.

1. Life may inspire a *criminal* attachment, warranting our censure. The most obvious and aggravated case is that in which the attachment has its

foundations in the opportunities which life affords, of procuring "the wages of unrighteousness, "and "the pleasures of sin."

2. Life may inspire an *innocent* attachment, awakening our sympathy...Life is a scene in which we often descry a verdant and luxuriant spot, teeming with health, and ease, and harmony, and joy. We have beheld the husbands and the wives whose interwoven regards have, from year to year, alleviated all their afflictions, and heightened all their privileges. We have beheld the parents and the children whose fellowship has yielded them, through the shifting seasons, a daily feast. There are indulgent masters, and faithful servants; some neighbourhoods are undisturbed; some Christian societies are exquisitely attractive; here and there we have intercourse with those individuals in whom are seen the beauties of high character irradiated by the beams of general prosperity. You would pronounce no censure on a man thus happily connected, were he, when beginning to languish, as one "going the way of all the earth, to cry, "*O spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more.*"

3. The last view which it has been proposed to take of human life, shows that it may inspire a *laudable* attachment, at once challenging our approbation, and urging us to bring our minds under its influence. The language before us admits of being illustrated as the prayer of a *penitent*, a *saint*, and a *philanthropist*.

1. Commend him who pleads for life as a *penitent*. Was it recently that the Holy Spirit first wounded him with the arrows of conviction? Perhaps, he doubts the source, the quality, and the result, of his powerful feelings. He knows that we may be solemnly impressed, without being converted. There are many considerations which entitle to favourable opinion those who, not having arrived at a view of their moral state, at once evident and encouraging, wish earnestly to live till grace shall have carried them from victory to victory, and enabled them "to make" their "calling and election sure." Even they may fall from their steadfastness; and these words, "O spare me, that I may recover strength, "may proceed from the lips of a backslider, once more blushing, trembling, and petitioning to be restored.

2. Commend him, in the next place, who pleads for life, as a *saint*. ...The distinguishing office of pleading, acting, and suffering, for the advancement of the divine honour among the profane, the sensual, the formal, and the worldly is delegated, exclusively, to "the saints which are upon the earth." Yet, surely he whose attachment to life is strongly enhanced by a

commission which dooms him to the contradiction of sinners, and defers "the fulness of joy," a saint so magnanimous and devoted, puts forth the expressions of a piety which the very angels are compelled to revere.

3. Commend him, finally, who pleads for life as a *philanthropist*. I refer to the generous *patron*, a man intent on doing good. I would also refer to a fond *parent*. I would now refer to "*a preacher of righteousness*," "a good minister of Jesus Christ."

Outline of a Sermon entitled "Attachment to Life, "preached by Joseph Hughes, M.A., as a Funeral Sermon for Rev. John Owen, M.A., 1822.

Ver. 13. May not the very elect and faithful themselves fear the day of judgment, and be far from fetching comfort at it? I answer, he may. First, at his first conversion and soon after, before he have gotten a full persuasion of the remission of his sins. And again, in some spiritual desertion, when the Lord seems to leave a man to himself, as he did David and others, he may fear to think of the same. And lastly, when he hath fallen into some great sin after he is a strong man in Christ, he may fear death and judgment, and be constrained to pray with Job and David, *O spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more.* *John Barlow's Sermon, 1618.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 13.

1. The *subject* of his petition—not that he may escape death and live always in this life, because he knows that he must go hence; but

- 1.** That he may be recovered from his afflictions; and,
- 2.** That he may continue longer in this life. Such a prayer is lawful when offered in submission to the will of God.

2. The *reasons* for this petition.

- 1.** That he may remove by his future life, the calumnies that had been heaped upon him.
- 2.** That he may have brighter evidences of his interest in the divine favour.
- 3.** That he may become a blessing to others, his family and nation.

4. That he might have greater peace and comfort in death; and,
 5. That he might "have an entrance ministered more abundantly, "etc.
- G. Rogers.*

PSALM 40

PSALM 40:1

Title. To the Chief Musician. Well might so exceedingly precious a Psalm be specially committed to the most skilled of the sacred musicians. The noblest music should be made tributary to a subject so incomparable. The dedication shows that the song was intended for public worship, and was not a merely personal hymn, as its being in the first person singular might lead us to suppose. A Psalm of David. This is conclusive as to the authorship: lifted by the Holy Spirit into the region of prophecy, David was honoured to write concerning a far greater than himself.

Subject. Jesus is evidently here, and although it might not be a violent wresting of language to see both David and his Lord, both Christ and the church, the double comment might involve itself in obscurity, and therefore we shall let the sun shine even though this should conceal the stars. Even if the New Testament were not so express upon it, we should have concluded that David spoke of our Lord in Psalm 40:6-9, but the apostle in Hebrews 10:5-9, puts all conjecture out of court, and confines the meaning to him who came into the world to do the Father's will.

Division. From Psalm 40:1-3, is a personal thanksgiving, followed by a general declaration of Jehovah's goodness to his saints, Psalm 40:4-5. In Psalm 40:6-10, we have an avowal of dedication to the Lord's will; Psalm 40:11-17, contains a prayer for deliverance from pressing trouble, and for the overthrow of enemies.

EXPOSITION

Ver. 1. *I waited patiently for the Lord.* Patient waiting upon God was a special characteristic of our Lord Jesus. Impatience never lingered in his heart, much less escaped his lips. All through his agony in the garden, his trial of cruel mockings before Herod and Pilate, and his passion on the tree, he waited in omnipotence of patience. No glance of wrath, no word of murmuring, no deed of vengeance came from God's patient Lamb; he waited and waited on; was patient, and patient to perfection, far excelling

all others who have according to their measure glorified God in the fires. Job on the dunghill does not equal Jesus on the cross. The Christ of God wears the imperial crown among the patient. Did the Only Begotten wait, and shall we be petulant and rebellious?

And he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. Neither Jesus the head, nor any one of the members of his body, shall ever wait upon the Lord in vain. Mark the figure of inclining, as though the suppliant cried out of the lowest depression, and condescending love stooped to hear his feeble moans. What a marvel is it that our Lord Jesus should have to cry as we do, and wait as we do, and should receive the Father's help after the same process of faith and pleading as must be gone through by ourselves! The Saviour's prayers among the midnight mountains and in Gethsemane expound this verse. The Son of David was brought very low, but he rose to victory; and here he teaches us how to conduct our conflicts so as to succeed after the same glorious pattern of triumph. Let us arm ourselves with the same mind; and panoplied in patience, armed with prayer, and girt with faith, let us maintain the Holy War.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Whole Psalm. *David's Psalm*, or, a *Psalm of David*; but David's name is here set first, which elsewhere commonly is last: or *A Psalm concerning David*, that is *Christ*, who is called *David* in the prophets: Hosea 3:5 Jeremiah 30:9 Ezekiel 34:23 32:24. Of him this Psalm entreateth as the apostle teacheth, Hebrews 10:5-6, etc. *Henry Ainsworth*.

Whole Psalm. It is plain, from Psalm 40:6-8 of this Psalm, compared with Hebrews 10:5, that the prophet in speaking in the person of Christ, who, Psalm 40:1-5, celebrates the deliverance wrought for his mystical body, the church, by his resurrection from the grave, effecting that of his members from the guilt and dominion of sin; for the abolition of which he declareth, Psalm 40:6-8, the inefficacy of the legal sacrifices, and mentions his own inclination to do the will of his Father, and Psalm 40:9-10, to preach righteousness to the world. Psalm 40:11-13. He represents himself as praying, while under his sufferings, for his own, and his people's salvation; he foretells, Psalm 40:14-15, the confusion and desolation of his enemies, and, Psalm 40:16, the joy and thankfulness of his disciples and servants; for the speedy accomplishment of which, Psalm 40:17, he prefers a petition. *George Horne*.

Ver. 1. *I waited patiently for the Lord: and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry.* I see that the Lord, suppose he drifts and delays the effect of his servant's prayer, and grants not his desire at the first, yet he hears him. I shall give a certain argument, whereby thou may know that the Lord heareth thee, suppose he delay the effect of thy prayers. Do you continue in prayer? Hast thou his strength given thee to persevere in suing (petitioning for or praying for) anything? Thou may be assured he heareth; for this is one sure argument that he heareth thee, for naturally our impatience carrieth us to desperation; our suddenness is so great, specially in spiritual troubles, that we cannot continue in suing. When thou, therefore, continues in suing, thou may be sure that this strength is furnished of God, and cometh from heaven, and if thou have strength, he letteth thee see that he heareth thy prayer; and suppose he delay the effect and force thereof, yet pray continually. This doctrine is so necessary for the troubled conscience, that I think it is the meetest bridle in the Scripture to refrain our impatience; it is the meetest bit to hold us in continual exercise of patience; for if the heart understand that the Lord hath rejected our prayer altogether, it is not possible to continue in prayer; so when we know that the Lord heareth us, suppose he delay, let us crave patience to abide his good will. *Robert Bruce, 1559-1631.*

Ver. 1. *I waited for the Lord.* The infinitive (*waiting*) being placed first brings the action strongly out: *I waited*. This strong emphasis on the waiting, has the force of an *admonition*; it suggests to the sufferer that everything depends on *waiting*. *E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Ver. 1. *I waited patiently:* rather *anxiously*; the original has it, *waiting I waited*; a Hebraism which signifies vehement solicitude. *Daniel Cresswell.*

Ver. 1. *I waited.* The Saviour endureth his sufferings *waitingly*, as well as patiently and prayerfully. He "waited for the Lord." He expected help from Jehovah; and he waited for it until it came. *James Frame, in "Christ and his Work: an Exposition of Psalm 40." 1869.*

Ver. 1. *Patiently.* Our Lord's patience under suffering was an element of perfection in his work. Had he become impatient as we often do, and lost heart, his atonement would have been vitiated. Well may we rejoice that in the midst of all his temptations, and in the thickest of the battle against sin and Satan, he remained patient and willing to finish the work which his Father had given him to do. *James Frame.*

Ver. 1. *Heard my cry.* Our Saviour endured his sufferings *prayerfully* as well as *patiently*. *James Frame.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 1.

1. *My part* —praying and waiting.
2. *God's part* —condescension and reply.

WORKS UPON THE FORTIETH PSALM

A Sermon upon the Fortieth Psalme, preached in the time of Public Fast; in "Sermons by the Rev. ROBERT BRUCE, Minister of Edinburgh, reprinted from the original edition of 1590, and 1591...Edinburgh: printed for the Wodrow Society. 1843."

Christ and his Work: an Exposition of Psalm 40. By JAMES FRAME, 1869.

PSALM 40:2

EXPOSITION

Ver. 2. *He brought me up also out of an horrible pit.* When our Lord bore in his own person the terrible curse which was due to sin, he was so cast down as to be like a prisoner in a deep, dark, fearful dungeon, amid whose horrible glooms the captive heard a noise as of rushing torrents, while overhead resounded the tramp of furious foes. Our Lord in his anguish was like a captive in the *oubliettes*, forgotten of all mankind, immured amid horror, darkness, and desolation. Yet the Lord Jehovah made him to ascend from all his abasement; he retraced his steps from that deep hell of anguish into which he had been cast as our substitute. He who thus delivered our surety *in extremis*, will not fail to liberate us from our far lighter griefs.

Out of the miry clay. The sufferer was as one who cannot find a foothold, but slips and sinks. The figure indicates not only positive misery as in the former figure, but the absence of solid comfort by which sorrow might have been rendered supportable. Once give man a good foothold, and a

burden is greatly lightened, but to be loaded and to be placed on slimy, slippery clay, is to be tried doubly. Reader, with humble gratitude, adore the dear Redeemer who, for thy sake, was deprived of all consolation while surrounded with every form of misery; remark his gratitude at being born up amid his arduous labours and sufferings, and if thou too hast experienced the divine help, be sure to join thy Lord in this song.

And set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. The Redeemer's work is done. He reposes on the firm ground of his accomplished engagements; he can never suffer again; for ever does he reign in glory. What a comfort to know that Jesus our Lord and Saviour stands on a sure foundation in all that he is and does for us, and his goings forth in love are not liable to be cut short by failure in years to come, for God has fixed him firmly. He is for ever and eternally able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by him, seeing that in the highest heavens he ever liveth to make intercession for them. Jesus is the true Joseph taken from the pit to be Lord of all. It is something more than a "sip of sweetness" to remember that if we are cast like our Lord into the lowest pit of shame and sorrow, we shall by faith rise to stand on the same elevated, sure, and everlasting rock of divine favour and faithfulness.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 2. *An horrible pit.* Some of the pits referred to in the Bible were prisons, one such I saw at Athens, and another at Rome. To these there were no openings, except a hole at the top, which served for both door and window. The bottoms of these pits were necessarily in a filthy and revolting state, and sometimes deep in mud.

He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay; one of these filthy prisons being in the psalmist's view, in Isaiah 38:17, called "the pit of corruption, "or putrefaction and filth. *John Gadsby.*

Ver. 2. *An horrible pit;* or, as it is in the Hebrew, *a pit of noise;* so called because of waters that falling into it with great violence, make a roaring dreadful noise; or because of the strugglings and outcries they make that are in it; or because when anything is cast into deep pits, it will always make a great noise; and where he stuck fast in *miry clay*, without seeming possibility of getting out. And some refer this to the greatness of Christ's terrors and sufferings, and his deliverance from them both. *Arthur Jackson.*

Ver. 2. Three things are stated in verse two. First, resurrection as the act of God, *He brought me up*, etc. Secondly, the justification of the name and title of the Sufferer, *and set my feet upon a rock*. Jesus is set up, as alive from the dead, upon the basis of accomplished truth. Thirdly, there is his ascension,

He establisheth my goings. The Son of God having trodden, in gracious and self renouncing obedience the passage to the grave, now enters finally as Man the path of life. "He is gone into heaven," says the Spirit. And again, "He ascended on high, and led captivity captive." *Arthur Pridham in "Notes and Reflections on the Psalms," 1869.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 2.

1. The *depth* of God's goodness to his people. It finds them often in a horrible pit and miry clay. There is a certain spider which forms a pit in sand, and lies concealed at the bottom, in order to seize upon other insects that fall into it. Thus David's enemies tried to bring him into a pit.
2. The *height* of his goodness. He brought me out and set my feet upon a rock. That rock is Christ. Those feet are faith and hope.
3. The *breadth* of his goodness establisheth my *goings*, restored me to my former place in his love, showing me still to have been his during my low estate. He was the same to me, though I felt not the same to him. My *goings* refer both to the past and the future.
4. The *strength* of his goodness *established* my *goings*, making me stand firmer after every fall. *George Rogers.*

Ver. 2-3. The sinner's position by nature, and his rescue by grace.

Ver. 2-3. By one and the same act the Lord works our salvation, our enemies' confusion, and the church's edification. *J. P. Lange's Commentary.*

PSALM 40:3

EXPOSITION

Ver. 3. *And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God.* At the passover, before his passion, our Lord sang one of the grand old Psalms of praise; but what is the music of his heart now, in the midst of his redeemed! What a song is that in which his glad heart for ever leads the chorus of the elect! Not Miriam's tabor nor Moses' triumphant hymn over Miriam's chivalry can for a moment rival that ever new and exulting song. Justice magnified and grace victorious; hell subdued and heaven glorified; death destroyed and immortality established; sin overthrown and righteousness resplendent; what a theme for a hymn in that day when our Lord drinketh the red wine new with us all in our heavenly Father's kingdom! Even on earth, and before his great passion, he foresaw the joy which was set before him, and was sustained by the prospect. *Our God.* The God of Jesus, the God of Israel, "my God and your God." How will we praise him, but ah! Jesus will be the chief player on our stringed instruments; he will lead the solemn hallelujah which shall go up from the sacramental host redeemed by blood.

Many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord. A multitude that no man can number shall see the griefs and triumphs of Jesus, shall tremble because of their sinful rejection of him, and then through grace shall receive faith and become trusters in Jehovah. Here is our Lord's reward. Here is the assurance which makes preachers bold and workers persevering. Reader, are you one among the many? Note the way of salvation, a sight, a fear, a trust! Do you know what these mean by possessing and practising them in your own soul? Trusting in the Lord is the evidence, nay, the essence of salvation. He who is a true believer is evidently redeemed from the dominion of sin and Satan.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 3. *A new song.* See Notes on Psalm 33:3.

Ver. 3. *Many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord.* The terms *fear*, and *hope*, or *trust*, do not seem at first view to harmonise; but David has not improperly joined them together, for no man will ever entertain the

hope of the favour of God but he whose mind is first imbued with the *fear* of God. I understand *fear*, in general, to mean the feeling of piety which is produced in us by the knowledge of the power, equity, and mercy of God.
John Calvin.

Ver. 3. *Many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord.* First of all they *see*. Their eyes are opened; and their opened eyes see and survey *what* they are, *where* they are, *whence* they came, and *whither* they are going...When the attention of sinners is really and decisively arrested by the propitiation of Jesus, not only are their eyes opened to their various moral relations, not only do they "see" but they *fear* too. They "see" and "fear." ...Conviction follows illumination...But while the sinner only sees and fears, he is but in the initial stage of conversion, only in a state of readiness to flee from the city of destruction. He may have set out on his pilgrimage, but he has not yet reached his Father to receive the kiss of welcome and forgiveness. The consummating step has not yet been taken. He has seen indeed; he has feared too; but he still requires to *trust*, to trust in the Lord, and banish all his fears. This is the culminating point in the great change; and, unless this be reached, the other experiences will either die away, like an untimely blossom, or they will only be fuel to the unquenchable fire.
James Frame.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 2-3. The sinner's position by nature, and his rescue by grace.

Ver. 2-3. By one and the same act the Lord works our salvation, our enemies' confusion, and the church's edification. *J. P. Lange's Commentary.*

Ver. 3. The new song, the singer, the teacher.

PSALM 40:4

EXPOSITION

Ver. 4. *Blessed.* This is an exclamation similar to that of the first Psalm, "Oh, the happiness of the man." God's blessings are emphatic, "I wot that he whom thou blessest is blessed, "indeed and in very truth.

Is that man that maketh the Lord his trust. Faith obtaineth promises. A simple single eyed confidence in God is the sure mark of blessedness. A man may be as poor as Lazarus, as hated as Mordecai, as sick as Hezekiah, as lonely as Elijah, but while his hand of faith can keep its hold on God, none of his outward afflictions can prevent his being numbered among the blessed; but the wealthiest and most prosperous man who has no faith is accursed, be he who he may.

And respecteth not the proud. The proud expect all men to bow down and do them reverence, as if the worship of the golden calves were again set up in Israel; but believing men are too noble to honour mere money bags, or cringe before bombastic dignity. The righteous pay their respect to humble goodness, rather than to inflated self consequence. Our Lord Jesus was in this our bright example. No flattery of kings and great ones ever fell from his lips; he gave no honour to dishonourable men. The haughty were never his favourites.

Nor such as turn aside to lies. Heresies and idolatries are lies, and so are avarice, worldliness, and pleasure seeking. Woe to those who follow such deceptions. Our Lord was ever both the truth and the lover of truth, and the father of lies had no part in him. We must never pay deference to apostates, time servers, and false teachers; they are an ill leaven, and the more we purge ourselves of them the better; they are blessed whom God preserves from all error in creed and practice. Judged by this verse, many apparently happy persons must be the reverse of blessed, for anything in the shape of a purse, a fine equipage, or a wealthy establishment, commands their reverence, whether the owner be a rake or a saint, an idiot or a philosopher. Verily, were the arch fiend of hell to start a carriage and pair, and live like a lord, he would have thousands who would court his acquaintance.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 4. (*last clause*).

1. Find out who turn aside to lies—Atheists, Papists, self righteous, lovers of sin.
2. Show their folly in turning aside from God and truth, and in turning to fallacies which lead to death.

3. Show how to be preserved from the like folly, by choosing truth, truthful persons, and above all the service of God.

PSALM 40:5

EXPOSITION

Ver. 5. *Many, O Lord my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done.* Creation, providence, and redemption, teem with wonders as the sea with life. Our special attention is called by this passage to the marvels which cluster around the cross and flash from it. The accomplished redemption achieves many ends, and compasses a variety of designs; the outgoings of the atonement are not to be reckoned up, the influences of the cross reach further than the beams of the sun. Wonders of grace beyond all enumeration take their rise from the cross; adoption, pardon, justification, and a long chain of godlike miracles of love proceed from it. Note that our Lord here speaks of the Lord as "my God." The man Christ Jesus claimed for himself and us a covenant relationship with Jehovah. Let our interest in our God be ever to us our peculiar treasure.

And thy thoughts which are toward us. The divine thoughts march with the divine acts, for it is not according to the God's wisdom to act without deliberation and counsel. All the divine thoughts are good and gracious towards his elect. God's thoughts of love are very many, very wonderful, very practical! Muse on them, dear reader; no sweeter subject ever occupied your mind. God's thoughts of you are many, let not yours be few in return.

They cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee. Their sum is so great as to forbid alike analysis and numeration. Human minds fail to measure, or to arrange in order, the Lord's ways and thoughts; and it must always be so, for he hath said, "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." No maze to lose oneself in like the labyrinth of love. How sweet to be outdone, overcome and overwhelmed by the astonishing grace of the Lord our God!

If I would declare and speak of them, and surely this should be the occupation of my tongue at all seasonable opportunities, *they are more than can be numbered;* far beyond all human arithmetic they are multiplied;

thoughts from all eternity, thoughts of my fall, my restoration, my redemption, my conversion, my pardon, my upholding, my perfecting, my eternal reward; the list is too long for writing, and the value of the mercies too great for estimation. Yet, if we cannot show forth all the works of the Lord, let us not make this an excuse for silence; for our Lord, who is in this our best example, often spake of the tender thoughts of the great Father.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 5. *Many, O Lord my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done*, etc. Behold God in the magnificence and wisdom of the works which his hands have made, even this immense universe, which is full of his glory. What art and contrivance! What regularity, harmony, and proportion, are to be seen in all his productions, in the frame of our own bodies, or those that are about us! And with what beams of majestic glory do the sun, moon, and stars proclaim how august and wonderful in knowledge their Maker is! And ought not all these numberless beauties wherewith the world is stored, which the minds of inquisitive men are ready to admire, lead up our thoughts to the great Parent of all things, and inflame our amorous souls with love to him, who is infinitely brighter and fairer than them all? Cast abroad your eyes through the nations, and meditate on the mighty acts which he hath done, and the wisdom and power of his providence, which should charm all thy affections. Behold his admirable patience, with what pity he looks down on obstinate rebels; and how he is moved with compassion when he sees his creatures polluted in their blood, and bent upon their own destruction; how long he waits to be gracious; how unwillingly he appears to give up with sinners, and execute deserved vengeance on his enemies; and then with what joy he pardons, for "with him is plenteous redemption." And what can have more force than these to win thy esteem, and make a willing conquest of thy heart? so that every object about thee is an argument of love, and furnishes fuel for this sacred fire. And whether you behold God in the firmament of his power, or the sanctuary of his grace, you cannot miss to pronounce him "altogether lovely." *William Dunlop.*

Ver. 5. *Thy thoughts which are toward us, they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee:* i.e., there is no one can digest them in order; for although that may be attempted according to the comprehension and meaning of men, yet *not before thee*, every attempt of that nature being infinitely

beneath thy immeasurable glory. *Victorinus Bythner's "Lyre of David; "translated by T. Dee: new edition, by N. L. Benmohel, 1847.*

Ver. 5. *Toward us.* It is worthy of notice that while addressing his Father, as Jehovah and his God, our Saviour speaks of the members of the human family as his fellows. This is implied in the expression "toward us." He regarded himself as most intimately associated with the children of men. *James Frame.*

Ver. 5. *They cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee.* They are "in order" in themselves, and if they could be "reckoned up" as they are, they would be "reckoned in order." Created mind may not be able to grasp the principle of order that pervades them, but such a principle there is. And the more we study the whole series in its interrelations, the more shall we be convinced that as to time and place all the preparations for the mediatorial work of Christ, all the parts of its accomplishment, and all the divinely appointed consequences of its acceptance throughout all time into eternity, are faultlessly in order; they are precisely what and where and when they should be. *James Frame.*

Ver. 5. *They are more than can be numbered.* The pulses of Providence are quicker than those of our wrists or temples. The soul of David knew right well their multiplicity, but could not multiply them aright by any skill in arithmetic; nay, the very sum or chief heads of divine kindnesses were innumerable. His "wonderful works" and "thoughts" towards him could not be reckoned up in order by him, they were *more than could be numbered.* *Samuel Lee (1625-1691), in The Triumph of Mercy in the Chariot of Praise.*

Ver. 5. It is Christ's speech, of whom the Psalm is made, and that relating unto his Father's resolved purposes and contrivings from eternity, and those continued unto his sending Christ into the world to die for us, as Psalm 40:6-7. It follows so, as although his thoughts and purposes were but one individual act at first, and never to be altered; yet they became many, through a perpetuated reiteration of them, wherein his constancy to himself is seen...My brethren, if God have been thinking thoughts of mercy from everlasting to those that are his, what a stock and treasury do these thoughts arise to, besides those that are in his nature and disposition! This is in his actual purposes and intentions, which he hath thought, and doth think over, again and again, every moment.

Many, O Lord my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are toward us, saith Jesus Christ; for Psalm 40 is a Psalm of Christ, and quoted by the apostle, and applied unto Christ in Hebrews 10, *How many are thy thoughts toward us!* —he speaks it in the name of the human nature—that is, to me and mine.

If I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered. And what is the reason? Because God hath studied mercies, mercies for his children, even from everlasting. And then, "He renews his mercies every morning; "not that any mercies are new, but he actually thinketh over mercies again and again, and so he brings out of his treasury, mercies both new and old, and old are always new. What a stock, my brethren, must this needs amount unto! *Thomas Goodwin.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 5.

1. *There are works of God in his people and for his people.* There are his works of creation, of providence, and of redemption, and also his works of grace, wrought in them by his Spirit, and around them by his providence, as well as for them by his Son.
2. *These are wonderful works;* wonderful in their variety, their tenderness, their adaptation to their need, their cooperation with outward means and their power.
3. *They are the result of the divine thoughts respecting us.* They come not by chance, not by men, but by the hand of God, and that hand is moved by his will, and that will by his thought respecting us. Every mercy, even the least, represents some kind thought in the mind of God respecting us. God thinks of each one of his people, and every moment.
4. They are innumerable. *They cannot be reckoned up.* Could we see all the mercies of God to us and his wonderful works wrought for us individually, they would be countless as the sands, and all these countless mercies represent countless thoughts in the mind and heart of God to each one of his people. *George Rogers.*

Ver. 5. The multitude of God's thoughts, and deeds of grace; beginning in eternity, continuing for ever; and dealing with this life, heaven, hell, sin, angels, devils, and indeed all things.

PSALM 40:6

EXPOSITION

Ver. 6. Here we enter upon one of the most wonderful passages in the whole of the Old Testament, a passage in which the incarnate Son of God is seen not through a glass darkly, but as it were face to face.

Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire. In themselves considered, and for their own sakes, the Lord saw nothing satisfactory in the various offerings of the ceremonial law. Neither the victim pouring forth its blood, nor the fine flour rising in smoke from the altar, could yield content to Jehovah's mind; he cared not for the flesh of bulls or of goats, neither had he pleasure in corn and wine, and oil. Typically these offerings had their worth, but when Jesus, the Antitype, came into the world, they ceased to be of value, as candles are of no estimation when the sun has arisen.

Mine ears hast thou opened. Our Lord was quick to hear and perform his Father's will; his ears were as if excavated down to his soul; they were not closed up like Isaac's wells, which the Philistines filled up, but clear passages down to the fountains of his soul. The prompt obedience of our Lord is here the first idea. There is, however, no reason whatever to reject the notion that the digging of the ear here intended may refer to the boring of the ear of the servant, who refused out of love to his master to take his liberty, at the year of jubilee; his perforated ear, the token of perpetual service, is a true picture of our blessed Lord's fidelity to his Father's business, and his love to his Father's children. Jesus irrevocably gave himself up to be the servant of servants for our sake and God's glory. The Septuagint, from which Paul quoted, has translated this passage, "A body hast thou prepared me:" how this reading arose it is not easy to imagine, but since apostolical authority has sanctioned the variation, we accept it as no mistake, but as an instance of various readings equally inspired. In any case, the passage represents the Only Begotten as coming into the world equipped for service; and in a real and material body, by actual life and death, putting aside all the shadows of the Mosaic law.

Burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required. Two other forms of offerings are here mentioned; tokens of gratitude and sacrifices for sin as typically presented are set aside; neither the general nor the private offerings are any longer demanded. What need of mere emblems when the

substance itself is present? We learn from this verse that Jehovah values far more the obedience of the heart than all the imposing performances of ritualistic worship; and that our expiation from sin comes not to us as the result of an elaborate ceremonial, but as the effect of our great Substitute's obedience to the will of Jehovah.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 6. *Sacrifice and offering...burnt offering and sin offering.* Four kinds are here specified, both by the psalmist and apostle: namely, *sacrifice* (j bz) *zebhach*, *θυσία*; *offering*, (hj mj) *minchah*, *προσφορὰ*; *burnt offering*, (hl wḡ) *olah*, *ὄλοκαύτωμα*; *sin offering*, (hamj) *chataah*, *περὶ ἁμαρτίας*. Of all these we may say with the apostle, it was impossible that the blood of bulls and goats, etc., should take away sin. *Adam Clarke.*

Ver. 6. *Mine ears hast thou opened.* The literal translation is, *mine ears hast thou digged* (or *pierced*) *through*; which may well be interpreted as meaning, "Thou hast accepted me as thy slave, " in allusion to the custom Exodus 21:6 of masters boring the ear of a slave, who had refused his offered freedom, in token of retaining him. *Daniel Cresswell.*

Ver. 6. John Calvin, in treating upon the interpretation, "mine ears hast thou bored, " says, "this mode of interpretation appears to be too forced and refined."

Ver. 6. *Mine ears hast thou opened.* If it is to be said that the apostle to the Hebrews read this differently, I answer, this does not appear to me. It is true, he found a different, but corrupted translation (ὠτία, *ears*, as the learned have observed, having been changed into σῶμα, *body*) in the LXX, which was the version then in use; and he was obliged to quote it as he found it, under the penalty, if he altered it, of being deemed a false quoter. He therefore took the translation as he found it, especially as it served to illustrate his argument equally well. Upon this quotation from the LXX the apostle argues, Psalm 40:9, "He, (Christ) taketh away the first (namely, legal sacrifices), that he may establish the second" (namely, obedience to God's will), in offering himself a sacrifice for the sins of mankind; and thus he must have argued upon a quotation for the Hebrew text as it stands at present. *Green, quoted in S. Burder's "Scripture Expositor."*

Ver. 6. The apostle's reading Hebrews 10:5, though it be far distant from the letter of the Hebrew, and in part from the LXX (as I suppose it to have been originally), yet is the most perspicuous interpretation of the meaning of it: *Christ's body* comprehended the *ears*, and that assumed on purpose to perform in it the utmost degree of obedience to the will of God, to be obedient even to death, and thereby to be as the priest. *Henry Hammond.*

Ver. 6.

*Nor sacrifice thy love can win,
Nor offerings from the stain of sin
Obnoxious man shall clear:
Thy hand my mortal frame prepares,
(Thy hand, whose signature it bears,)
And opens my willing ear.*

James Merrick, M.A., 1720-1769.

Ver. 6-7. In these words an allusion is made to a custom of the Jews *to bore the ears* of such as were to be their perpetual servants, and *to enrol their names in a book*, or make some instrument of the covenant.

"Sacrifices and burnt offerings thou wouldst not have; "but because I am thy vowed servant, bored with an awl, and enrolled in thy book,

I said, Lo, I come; I delight to do thy will, O my God. These words of the Psalm are alleged by S. Paul, Hebrews 10. But the first of them with a most strange difference. For whereas the psalmist hath, according to the Hebrew verity,

Sacrifice and burnt offering thou wouldst not: mine ears thou hast bored or digged, (tyrK); S. Paul reads with the LXX, *σῶμα κατηρτίσω μοι,* "A body thou hast prepared or fitted me." What equipollency can be in sense between these two? This difficulty is so much the more augmented because most interpreters make the life of the quotation to lie in those very words where the difference is, namely, That the words, "A body thou hast prepared me," are brought by the apostle to prove our Saviour's incarnation; whereunto the words in the Psalm itself (*Mine ears hast thou bored, or digged, or opened*), take them how you will in no wise suit. I answer, therefore, That the life of the quotation lies not in the words of difference, nor can do, because this epistle was written to the Hebrews, and so first in the Hebrew tongue, where this translation of the LXX could have no place. And if the life of the quotation lay here, I cannot see how it

can possibly be reconciled. It lies therefore in the words where there is no difference, namely, That Christ was such a High Priest as came to sanctify us, not with the legal offerings and sacrifices, but by his obedience in doing like a devoted servant the will of his Father. Thus, the allegation will not depend at all upon the words of difference, and so they give us liberty to reconcile them:

Mine ears hast thou bored, saith the psalmist, *i.e.*, Thou hast accepted me for a perpetual servant, as masters are wont, according to the law, to *bore* such servants' *ears* as refuse to part from them. Now the LXX, according to whom the apostle's epistle readeth, thinking perhaps the meaning of this speech would be obscure to such as knew not that custom, chose rather to translate it generally *σῶμα δὲ κατερτίσω μοι*, "*Thou hast fitted my body*", namely, to be thy servant, in such a manner as servants' bodies are wont to be. And so the sense is all one, though not specified to the Jewish custom of boring the ear with an awl, but left indifferently applicable to the custom of any nation in marking and stigmatising their servants' bodies. *Joseph Mede, B.D.*, 1586-1638.

Ver. 6-10. Here we have in Christ for our instruction, and in David also (his type) for our example;

1. A firm purpose of obedience, in a *bored ear*, and a yielding heart.
2. A ready performance thereof: *Lo, I come*.
3. A careful observance of the word written: *In the volume of the Book it is written of me*, Psalm 40:7.
4. A hearty delight in that observance, Psalm 40:8.
5. A public profession and communication of God's goodness to others, Psalm 40:9-10. Now, we should labour to express Christ to the world, to walk as he walked 1 John 2:6: our lives should be in some sense parallel with his life, as the transcript with the original: he left us a copy to write by, saith St. Peter, 1 Peter 2:21. *John Trapp*.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 6. Here David goes beyond himself, and speaks the language of David's Son. This was naturally suggested by God's wonderful works, and innumerable thoughts of love to man.

1. *The sacrifices that were not required.* These were the sacrifices and burnt offerings under the law.

1. When required? From Adam to the coming of Christ.
2. When not required?
3. Why required before? As types of the one method of redemption.
4. Why not now required? Because the great Antitype had come.

2. *The sacrifice that was required.* This was the sacrifice offered on Calvary.

1. It was required by God by his justice, his wisdom, his faithfulness, his love, his honour, his glory.
2. It was required by man to give him salvation and confidence in that salvation.
3. It was required for the honour of the moral government of God throughout the universe.

3. *The person by whom this sacrifice was offered. **Mine ears hast thou opened.*** This is the language of Christ, prospectively denoting—

1. Knowledge of the sacrifice required.
2. Consecration of himself as a servant for that end. *George Rogers.*

Ver. 6. ***Mine ears hast thou opened.*** Readiness to hear, fixity of purpose, perfection of obedience, entireness of consecration.

Ver. 6-8. The Lord gives an ear to hear his word, a mouth to confess it, a heart to love it, and power to keep it. *James Merrick, M.A., 1720-1769.*

PSALM 40:7

EXPOSITION

Ver. 7. ***Then said I.*** That is to say, when it was clearly seen that man's misery could not be remedied by sacrifices and offerings. It being certain that the mere images of atonement, and the bare symbols of propitiation were of no avail, the Lord Jesus, *in propria persona*, intervened. O blessed "then said I." Lord, ever give us to hear and feed on such living words as these, so peculiarly and personally thine own. *Lo, I come.* Behold, O

heavens, and thou earth, and ye places under the earth! Here is something worthy of your most intense gaze. Sit ye down and watch with earnestness, for the invisible God comes in the likeness of sinful flesh, and as an infant the Infinite hangs at a virgin's breast! Immanuel did not send but *come*; he came in his own personality, in all that constituted his essential self he came forth from the ivory palaces to the abodes of misery; he came promptly at the destined hour; he came with sacred alacrity as one freely offering himself. *In the volume of the book it is written of me.* In the eternal decree it is thus recorded. The mystic roll of predestination which providence gradually unfolds, contained within it, to the Saviour's knowledge, a written covenant, that in the fulness of time the divine I should descend to earth to accomplish a purpose which hecatombs of bullocks and rams could not achieve. What a privilege to find our names written in the book of life, and what an honour, since the name of Jesus heads the page! Our Lord had respect to his ancient covenant engagements, and herein he teaches us to be scrupulously just in keeping our word; have we so promised, it is so written in the book of remembrance? then let us never be defaulters.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 7. *Then said I, Lo, I come.* As his name is above every name, so this coming of his is above every coming. We sometimes call our own births, I confess, a coming into the world; but properly, none ever came into the world but he. For,

1. He only truly can be said to come, who is before he comes; so were not we, only he so.
2. He only strictly comes who comes willingly; our crying and struggling at our entrance into the world, shows how unwillingly we come into it. He alone it is that sings out, *Lo, I come.*
3. He only properly comes who comes from some place or other. Alas! we had none to come from but the womb of nothing. *He* only had a place to be in before he came. *Mark Frank.*

Ver. 7. *Then said I, Lo, I come,* to wit, as surety, to pay the ransom, and to do thy will, O God. Every word carrieth a special emphasis as

1. The time, *then*, even so soon as he perceived that his Father had prepared his body for such an end, then, without delay. This speed implies forwardness and readiness; he would lose no opportunity.
2. His profession in this word, *said I*; he did not closely, secretly, timorously, as being ashamed thereof, but he maketh profession beforehand.
3. This note of observation, *Lo*, this is a kind of calling angels and men to witness, and a desire that all might know his inward intention, and the disposition of his heart; wherein was as great a willingness as any could have to anything.
4. An offering of himself without any enforcement or compulsion; this he manifests in this word, *I come*.
5. That very instant set out in the present tense, *I come*; he puts it not off to a future and uncertain time, but even in that moment, he saith, *I come*.
6. The first person twice expressed, thus, "*I said, ""I come.*" He sends not another person, nor substitutes any in his room; but he, even he himself in his own person, comes. All which do abundantly evidence Christ's singular readiness and willingness, as our surety, to do his Father's will, though it were by suffering, and by being made a sacrifice for our sins. *Thomas Brooks*.

Ver. 7. *Lo, I come*, i.e., to appear before thee; a phrase used to indicate the coming of an inferior into the presence of a superior, or of a slave before his master, Numbers 22:38 2 Samuel 19:20: as in the similar expression, "Behold, here I am," generally expressive of willingness. *J. J. Stewart Perowne*.

Ver. 7. *Lo, I come*. Christ's coming in the spirit is a *joyful* coming. I think this, *Lo, I come*, expresses

1. *Present joy*.
2. It expresses *certain* joy: the *Lo*, is a note of certainty; the thing is certain and true; and his joy is certain; certain, true, solid joy.
3. It expresses *communicative* joy; designing his people shall share of his joy, *Lo, I come!* The joy that Christ has as Mediator is a fulness of

joy, designed for his people's use, that *out of his fulness we may receive, and grace for grace*, and joy for joy; grace answering grace in Jesus, and joy answering joy in him.

4. It expresses *solemn* joy. He comes with a solemnity; *Lo, I come!* according to the council of a glorious Trinity. Now, when the purpose of heaven is come to the birth, and the decree breaks forth, and the fulness of time is come, he makes heaven and earth witness, as it were, to his solemn march on the errand: he says it with a loud, *Lo!* that all the world of men and angels may notice, *Lo, I come!* And, indeed, all the elect angels brake forth into joyful songs of praise at this solemnity; when he came in the flesh, they sang, "Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and good will towards man." *Ralph Erskine*, 1685-1752.

Ver. 7. *Lo, I come*, or, *am come*, to wit, *into the world* Hebrews 10:5, and particularly *to Jerusalem*, to give myself a sacrifice for sin. *Henry Ainsworth*.

Ver. 7. *The volume of the book*. What book is meant, whether the Scripture, or the book of life, is not certain, probably the latter. *W. Wilson, D.D.*

Ver. 7. *The volume of the book*. But what volume of manuscript roll is here meant? Plainly, the one which was already extant when the psalmist was writing. If the psalmist was David himself (as the title of the Psalm seems to affirm), the only parts of the Hebrew Scriptures then extant, and of course, the only part to which he could refer, must have been the Pentateuch, and perhaps the book of Joshua. Beyond any reasonable doubt, then, the κεφαλὴς βιβλίου (dpsetLgm] was the Pentateuch...But I apprehend the meaning of the writer to be, that the *book of the law*, which prescribes sacrifices that were merely *skiai* or *parabolai* of the great atoning sacrifice by Christ, did itself teach, by the use of these, that something of a higher and better nature was to be looked for than Levitical rites. In a word, it pointed to the Messiah; or, some of the contents of the *written law* had respect to him. *Moses Stuart, M.A., in "A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews, "1851.*

Ver. 7. *The volume of the book* etc. When I first considered Romans 5:14, and other Scriptures in the New Testament which make the first Adam, and the whole story of him both before and after, and in his sinning or falling,

to be the type and lively shadow of Christ, the second Adam; likewise observing that the apostle Paul stands admiring at the greatest of this mystery or mystical type, the Christ, the second Adam should so wonderfully be shadowed forth therein, as Ephesians 5:32, he cries out, "This is a great mystery, "which he speaks applying and fitting some passages about Adam and Eve unto Christ and his church; it made me more to consider an interpretation of a passage in Hebrews 10:7, out of Psalm 40:7, which I before had not only not regarded, but wholly rejected, as being too like a postil (A marginal note) gloss. The passage is, that "when Christ came into the world, "to take our nature on him, he alleged the reason of it to be the fulfilling of a Scripture written in "the beginning of God's book, "ἐν κεφαλίδι βιβλίου, so out of the original the words may be, and are by many interpreters, translated, though our translation reads them only thus,

In the volume of the book it is written of me. It is true, indeed, that in the fortieth Psalm, whence they are quoted, the words in the Hebrew may signify no more than that in God's book (the manner of writing which was anciently in rolls of parchment, folded up in a volume) Christ was everywhere written and spoken of. Yet the word κεφαλίς which out of the Septuagint's translation the apostle took, signifying, as all know, the beginning of a book; and we finding such an emphasis set by the apostle in the fifth chapter of the Ephesians, upon the history of Adam in the beginning of Genesis, as containing the mystery, yea, the great mystery about Christ, it did somewhat induce, though not so fully persuade, me to think, that the Holy Ghost in those words might have some glance at the story of Adam in the first of the first book of Moses. And withal the rather because so, the words so understood do intimate a higher and further inducement to Christ to assume our nature, the scope of the speech, Hebrews 10, being to render the reason why he so willingly took man's nature: not only because God liked not sacrifice and burnt offering, which came in but upon occasion of sin, and after the fall, and could not take sin away, but further, that he was prophesied of, and his assuming a body prophetically foresighted, as in the fortieth Psalm, so even by Adam's story before the fall, recorded in the very beginning of Genesis, which many other Scriptures do expressly apply it unto. *Thomas Goodwin.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 6-8. The Lord gives an ear to hear his word, a mouth to confess it, a heart to love it, and power to keep it.

Ver. 7.

1. The time of Christ's coming. *Then said I.* When types were exhausted, when prophecies looked for their fulfilment, when worldly wisdom had done its utmost, when the world was almost entirely united under one empire, when the time appointed by the Father had come.

2. The design of his coming. *In the volume* was written—

- 1.** The constitution of his person.
- 2.** His teaching.
- 3.** The manner of his life.
- 4.** The design of his death.
- 5.** His resurrection and ascension.
- 6.** The kingdom he would establish.

3. The voluntariness of his coming, *Lo, I come.* Though sent by the Father, he came of his own accord. "Christ Jesus came into the world." Men do not come into the world, they are sent into it. *Lo, I come,* denotes pre-existence, pre-determination, pre-operation. *George Rogers.*

PSALM 40:8

EXPOSITION

Ver. 8. *I delight to do thy will, O my God.* Our blessed Lord alone could completely do the will of God. The law is too broad for such poor creatures as we are to hope to fulfil it to the uttermost: but Jesus not only did the Father's will, but found a delight therein; from old eternity he had desired the work set before him; in his human life he was straitened till he reached the baptism of agony in which he magnified the law, and even in Gethsemane itself he chose the Father's will, and set aside his own. Herein is the essence of obedience, namely, in the soul's cheerful devotion to God: and our Lord's obedience, which is our righteousness, is in no measure

lacking in this eminent quality. Notwithstanding his measureless griefs, our Lord found delight in his work, and for "the joy that was set before him he endured the cross, despising the shame." *Yea, thy law is within my heart.* No outward, formal devotion was rendered by Christ; his heart was in his work, holiness was his element, the Father's will his meat and drink. We must each of us be like our Lord in this, or we shall lack the evidence of being his disciples. Where there is no heart work, no pleasure, no delight in God's law, there can be no acceptance. Let the devout reader adore the Saviour for the spontaneous and hearty manner in which he undertook the great work of our salvation.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 8. *I delight to do thy will, O my God.* The will of God to redeem sinners by the incarnation and death of Jesus Christ, was most grateful and pleasing to the very heart of Christ. It is said, Proverbs 8:31, when he was solacing himself in the sweetest enjoyment of his Father, whilst he lay in that blessed bosom of delights, yet the very prospect of this work gave him pleasure, then his "delights were with the sons of men." And when he was come into the world, and had endured many abuses and injuries, and was even now come to the most difficult part of the work; yet, "how am I straitened, or pained (saith he), till it be accomplished!" Luke 12:50. Two things call our thoughts to stay upon them in this point. First. —The decency of it—why it ought to be so.

1. —It became Christ to go about this work with cheerfulness and delight, that thereby he might give his death the nature and formality of a sacrifice. In all sacrifices you shall find that God had still a regard, a special respect to the will of the offerer. See Exodus 35:5,21 Leviticus 1:3.
2. —It ought to be so in view of the unity of Christ's will with the Father's.
3. —This was necessary to commend the love of Jesus Christ to us for whom he gave himself. That he came into the world to die for us is a mercy of the first magnitude; but that he came in love to our souls, and underwent all his sufferings with such willingness for our sakes, this heightens it above all apprehension.
4. —It was necessary to be so for the regulating of all our obedience to God, according to this pattern; that seeing and setting this great

example of obedience before us, we might never grudge nor grumble at any duty of suffering that God should call us to.

Secondly. —Let us consider and examine whence it came to be so pleasant and acceptable to Jesus Christ, to come into the world and die for poor sinners.

1. —That in his sufferings there would be made a glorious display and manifestation of the divine attributes:
2. —Another delightful prospect Christ had of the fruit of his sufferings, was the recovery and salvation of all the elect by his death; and though his sufferings were exceedingly bitter, yet such fruit of them as this was exceedingly sweet.
3. — Add to this, the glory which would redound to him from his redeemed ones to all eternity, for it will be the everlasting employment of the saints in heaven to be ascribing glory, praise, and honour to the Redeemer.

Did Christ find pleasure in abasement and torment, in suffering and dying for me, and can I find no pleasure in praying, hearing, meditating, and enjoying the sweet duties of communion with him? Did he come so cheerfully to die for me, and do I go so dead heartedly to prayers and sacraments to enjoy fellowship with him? Was it a pleasure to him to shed his blood, and is it none to me to apply it, and reap the benefits of it? O let there be no more grumblings, lazy excuses, shiftings of duty, or dead hearted and listless performances of them, after such an example as this. Be ready to do the will of God, be ye also ready to suffer it. And as to sufferings for Christ, they should not be grievous to Christians that know how cheerfully Christ came from the bosom of the Father to die for them. What have we to leave or lose, in comparison with him? What are our sufferings to Christ's? Alas! there is no compare; there was more bitterness in one drop of his sufferings than in a sea of ours. To conclude: your delight and readiness in the paths of obedience is the very measure of your sanctification. *Condensed from John Flavel.*

Ver. 8. Now, saith Christ, *I delight to do thy will, O my God*; it is the joy and rejoicing of my heart to be seeking and saving lost sinners. When Christ was an hungry, he went not into a victualling house but into the temple, and taught the people most part of the day, to show how much he delighted in the salvation of sinners, etc. Christ did so much delight, and his

heart was so much set upon the conversion and salvation of the Samaritans, that he neglected his own body to save their souls, as you may clearly see in John 4. *Thomas Brooks.*

Ver. 8. *To do.* It was Jesus who was the doer of the work. The Father willed it; but he did not do it. It was Jesus who did it, who wrought it out; who brought it in; who carried it within the veil, and laid it as an acceptable and meritorious offering at the feet of his well pleased Father. The work then is done; it is finished. We need not attempt to do it. We cannot do it. We cannot do that which is already done; and we could not do it, though it were yet undone. There is much that man can do, but he cannot make a propitiation. *James Frame.*

Ver. 8. *Thy will.* The covenant between the Father and the Son, as elsewhere, so it is most clearly expressed Hebrews 10:7, from Psalm 40:7-8, "Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God." And what will? Psalm 40:10, "The will by which we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." The will of God was, that Jesus should be offered; and to this end, that we might be sanctified and saved. It is called "The offering of the body of Jesus Christ, "in answer to what was said before, "A body has thou prepared me, "or a human nature, by a synecdoche. "My will, "says God the Father, "is that thou have a body, and that thy body be offered up; and all to this end, that the children, the elect, might be sanctified." Says the Son to this, "Lo, I come to do thy will; "— "I accept of the condition, and give up myself to the performance of thy will." *John Owen.*

Ver. 8. *Thy law is within my heart.* The law of God is not to be kept in books, but in the midst of our heart, that we may rightly understand the same, admire it, and observe it. *Martin Geier.*

Ver. 8. *Thy law is within my heart.* The will of God in which Christ delighted, was (as appears by the coherence, and the quotation of Hebrews 10:5) that Christ should make his soul an offering for sin, as more acceptable to God than all other burnt offerings and sin offerings. This law was *in his heart*, ([*meēwōb*]), in the midst of his bowels. He did as much delight in it as we do in following those inclinations which nature has implanted in our hearts, as we do in eating and drinking. So he expresses it John 4:34, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." He was as willing to bleed and die for thee as thou art to eat when

hungry. He was delighted as much to be scourged, wounded, crucified, as thou delightest in meat when most delicious. *David Clarkson.*

Ver. 8. *Within my heart*, margin, *my bowels*. The intestines or viscera are here mentioned as the place of the most profound spiritual occupation. *Franz Delitzsch.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 6-8. The Lord gives an ear to hear his word, a mouth to confess it, a heart to love it, and power to keep it.

Ver. 8. *To do thy will, O God.*

1. The will of God is seen in the fact of salvation. It has its origin in the will of God.
2. The will of God is seen in the plan of salvation. All things have proceeded, are proceeding, and will proceed according to that plan.
3. It is seen in the provision of salvation, in the appointment of his own Son to become the mediator the atoning sacrifice, the law fulfiller, the head of the church, that his plan required.
4. It is seen in the accomplishment of salvation.

PSALM 40:9

EXPOSITION

Ver. 9. *I have preached righteousness in the great congregation.* The purest morality and the highest holiness were preached by Jesus. Righteousness divine was his theme. Our Lord's whole life was a sermon, eloquent beyond compare, and it is heard each day by myriads. Moreover, he never shunned in his ministry to declare the whole counsel of God; God's great plan of righteousness he plainly set forth. He taught openly in the temple, and was not ashamed to be a faithful and a true witness. He was the great evangelist; the master of itinerant preachers; the head of the clan of open air missionaries. O servants of the Lord, hide not your lights, but reveal to others what your God has revealed to you; and especially by your lives testify for holiness, be champions for the right, both in word and deed.

Lo, I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, thou knowest. Never either from love of ease, of fear of men, did the Great Teacher's lips become closed. He was instant in season and out of season. The poor listened to him, and princes heard his rebuke; Publicans rejoiced at him, and Pharisees raged, but to them both he proclaimed the truth from heaven. It is well for a tried believer when he can appeal to God and call him to witness that he has not been ashamed to bear witness for him; for rest assured if we are not ashamed to confess our God, he will never be ashamed to own us. Yet what a wonder is here, that the Son of God should plead, just as we plead, and urge just such arguments as would befit the mouths of his diligent minsters! How truly is he "made like unto his brethren."

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 9. *I have preached righteousness*, etc. It is Jesus who speaks, and he speaks of himself as a PREACHER. He was a preacher, and a great preacher too. He was great—

1. In *genuine eloquence*. All the handmaids of the choicest rhetoric ministered to him as he spake. His mind touched the minds of his auditors on all sides.
2. He was great in *knowledge*. Many who have an astonishing command of words, and who can use their words with astonishing rhetorical adroitness, spoil their influence by their "lack of knowledge." They go blunderingly onward when they attempt to think for themselves, or to guide their hearers into fields of thought which have not been tracked by minds of the pioneer order.
3. He was great also in *goodness*. There is a greatness in goodness, and the greatness of goodness is an important element in the greatness of a preacher.
4. Jesus was great, too, in *official status*. Official status, whether in things civil, literary, or sacred, when conferred on worthy individuals, confers, in its turn, undoubted weight and moral authority. Now Jesus was the highest official in the universe. His authority extended to all other office bearers, his office exceeded all others offices. He came from above, and was "above all." He was Lord of lords, and King of kings.

5. Another element still in the greatness of Jesus, as a preacher, consisted in the greatness of his *essential dignity*. He was God as well as man. Such was Christ as a preacher. True he was more than a preacher; he was likewise a pattern, and a priest, and a propitiator; and as pattern, priest, and propitiator, he stands without a peer. But he was a preacher too, and as a preacher, he has never had, and never will have an equal. *James Frame.*

Ver. 9. *The great congregation.* The *congregation* here referred to was *great* not only in *numbers*, but *great* also in the necessities of its individual members, and great in *pollution*. *James Frame.*

Ver. 9-10. *I have published...I would not refrain...I have not covered...I have uttered...I have not hid:* words are heaped upon words to express the eager forwardness of a heart burning to show forth its gratitude. No elaborate description could so well have given us the likeness of one whose "life was a thanksgiving." *J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 9. Referring to our Lord; a great preacher, a great subject, a great congregation, and his great faithfulness in the work.

PSALM 40:10

EXPOSITION

Ver. 10. *I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart.* On the contrary, "Never man spake like this man." God's divine plan of making men righteous was well known to him, and he plainly taught it. What was in our great Master's heart he poured forth in holy eloquence from his lips. The doctrine of righteousness by faith he spake with great simplicity of speech. Law and gospel equally found in him a clear expositor.

I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation. Jehovah's fidelity to his promises and his grace in saving believers were declared by the Lord Jesus on many occasions, and are blessedly blended in the gospel which he came to preach. God, faithful to his own character, law and threatenings, and yet

saving sinners, is a peculiar revelation of the gospel. God faithful to the saved ones evermore is the joy of the followers of Christ Jesus.

I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth from the great congregation. The tender as well as the stern attributes of God, our Lord Jesus fully unveiled. Concealment was far from the Great Apostle of our profession. Cowardice he never exhibited, hesitancy never weakened his language. He who as a child of twelve years spake in the temple among the doctors, and afterward preached to five thousand at Gennesaret, and to the vast crowds at Jerusalem on that great day, the last day of the feast, was always ready to proclaim the name of the Lord, and could never be charged with unholy silence. He could be dumb when so the prophecy demanded and patience suggested, but otherwise, preaching was his meat and his drink, and he kept back nothing which would be profitable to his disciples. This in the day of his trouble, according to this Psalm, he used as a plea for divine aid. He had been faithful to his God, and now begs the Lord to be faithful to him. Let every dumb professor, tongue tied by sinful shame, bethink himself how little he will be able to plead after this fashion in the day of his distress.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 10. *I have not hid.* This intimates, that whoever undertook to preach the gospel of Christ would be in great temptation to hide it, and conceal it, because it must be preached with great contention, and in the face of great opposition. *Matthew Henry.*

Ver. 10. *I have not hid,* etc. What God has done for us, or for the church, we should lay to heart; but not lock up in our heart. *Carl Bernhard Moll in Lange's "Bibelwerk."* 1869.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 10. (*first clause*).

1. The righteousness *possessed* by God.
2. The righteousness *prescribed* by God.
3. The righteousness *provided* by God. *James Frame.*

Ver. 10.

I. The preacher must reveal his whole message.

II. He must not conceal any part.

1. Not of the righteousness of the law or the gospel.
2. Not of the lovingkindness of grace.
3. Not of any portion of the truth with flowers of rhetoric.
4. To give a partial representation.
5. To put one truth in the place of another.
6. To give the letter without the spirit. *G.R.*

Ver. 10. The great sin of concealing what we know of God.

PSALM 40:11

EXPOSITION

Ver. 11. *Withhold not thou thy tender mercies from me, O Lord.* Alas! these were to be for awhile withheld from our Lord while on the accursed tree, but meanwhile in his great agony he seeks for gentle dealing; and the coming of the angel to strengthen him was a clear answer to his prayer. He had been blessed aforetime in the desert, and now at the entrance of the valley of the shadow of death, like a true, trustful, and experienced man, he utters a holy, plaintive desire for the tenderness of heaven. He had not withheld his testimony to God's truth, now in return he begs his Father not to withhold his compassion. This verse might more correctly be read as a declaration of his confidence that help would not be refused; but whether we view this utterance as the cry of prayer, or the avowal of faith, in either case it is instructive to us who take our suffering Lord for an example, and it proves to us how thoroughly he was made like unto his brethren.

Let thy lovingkindness and thy truth continually preserve me. He had preached both of these, and now he asks for an experience of them, that he might be kept in the evil day and rescued from his enemies and his afflictions. Nothing endears our Lord to us more than to hear him thus

pleading with strong crying and tears to him who was able to save. O Lord Jesus, in our nights of wrestling we will remember thee.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 11. *Withhold not thou thy tender mercies from me.* Do not hinder them from coming showering down upon me. *Let thy lovingkindness and thy truth continually preserve me;* or, do thou employ them in preserving me. *John Diodati.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 11. Enrichment and preservation sought. The true riches are from God, gifts of his sovereignty, fruits of his mercy, marked with his tenderness. The best preservations are divine love and faithfulness.

Ver. 11-13. As an instance of clerical ingenuity, it may be well to mention that Canon Wordsworth has a sermon from these verses upon "the duty of making responses in public prayer."

PSALM 40:12

EXPOSITION

Ver. 12. *For innumerable evils have compassed me about.* On every side he was beset with evils; countless woes environed the great Substitute for our sins. Our sins were innumerable, and so were his griefs. There was no escape for us from our iniquities, and there was no escape for him from the woes which we deserved. From every quarter evils accumulated about the blessed One, although in his heart evil found no place.

Mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up. He had no sin, but sins were laid on him, and he took them as if they were his. "He was made sin for us." The transfer of sin to the Saviour was real, and produced in him as man the horror which forbade him to look into the face of God, bowing him down with crushing anguish and woe intolerable. O my soul, what would thy sins have done for thee eternally if the Friend of sinners had not condescended to take them all upon himself? Oh, blessed Scripture! "The Lord hath made to meet upon him the iniquity of us all."

Oh, marvellous depth of love, which could lead the perfectly immaculate to stand in the sinner's place, and bear the horror of great trembling which sin must bring upon those conscious of it.

They are more than the hairs of mine head: therefore my heart faileth me.

The pains of the divine penalty were beyond compute, and the Saviour's soul was so burdened with them, that he was sore amazed, and very heavy even unto a sweat of blood. His strength was gone, his spirits sank, he was in an agony.

*"Came at length the dreadful night.
Vengeance with its iron rod
Stood, and with collected might
Bruised the harmless Lamb of God,
See, my soul, thy Saviour see,
Prostrate in Gethsemane!"*

*"There my God bore all my guilt,
This through grace can be believed;
But the horrors which he felt
Are too vast to be conceived.
None can penetrate through thee,
Doleful, dark Gethsemane."*

*"Sins against a holy God;
Sins against his righteous laws;
Sins against his love, his blood;
Sins against his name and cause;
Sins immense as is the sea—
Hide me, O Gethsemane!"*

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 12. *For innumerable evils have compassed me about: mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head.* We lose ourselves when we speak of the sins of our lives. It may astonish any considering man to take notice how many sins he is guilty of any one day; how many sins accompany any one single act; nay, how many bewray themselves in any one religious duty.

Whensoever ye do anything forbidden, you omit the duty at that time commanded; and whenever you neglect that which is enjoined, the omission is joined with the acting of something forbidden; so that the sin, whether omission or commission, is always double; nay, the apostle makes

every sin tenfold. James 2:10. That which seems one to us, according to the sense of the law, and the account of God, is multiplied by ten. He breaks every command by sinning directly against one, and so sins ten times at once; besides that swarm of sinful circumstances and aggravations which surround every act in such numbers, as atoms use to surround your body in a dusty room; you may more easily number these than those. And though some count these but fractions, incomplete sins, yet even from hence it is more difficult to take an account of their number. And, which is more for astonishment, pick out the best religious duty that ever you performed, and even in that performance you may find such a swarm of sins as cannot be numbered. In the best prayer that ever you put up to God, irreverence, lukewarmness, unbelief, spiritual pride, self seeking, hypocrisy, distractions, etc., and many more, that an enlightened soul grieves and bewails; and yet there are many more that the pure eye of God discerns, than any man does take notice of. *David Clarkson.*

Ver. 12. *Mine iniquities have taken hold upon me.* They seized him as the sinner's substitute, to deal with him as regards their own penalty, according to the sinner's desert. *James Frame.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 11-13. As an instance of clerical ingenuity, it may be well to mention that Canon Wordsworth has a sermon from these verses upon "the duty of making responses in public prayer."

Ver. 12. Compare this with Psalm 40:5. The number of our sins, and the number of his thoughts of love.

Ver. 12. (*second clause*).

1. The soul arrested—"taken hold."
2. The soul bewildered—"cannot look up."
3. The soul's only refuge—prayer, Psalm 40:13.

PSALM 40:13

EXPOSITION

Ver. 13. *Be pleased, O Lord, to deliver me: O Lord, make haste to help me.* How touching! How humble! How plaintive! The words thrill us as we think that after this sort our Lord and Master prayed. His petition is not so much that the cup should pass away undrained, but that he should be sustained while drinking it, and set free from its power at the first fitting moment. He seeks deliverance and help; and he entreats that the help may not be slow in coming; this is after the manner of our pleadings. Is it not? Note, reader, how our Lord was heard in that he feared, for there was after Gethsemane a calm endurance which made the fight as glorious as the victory.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 13. The remaining verses of this Psalm are almost exactly identical with Psalm 70.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 11-13. As an instance of clerical ingenuity, it may be well to mention that Canon Wordsworth has a sermon from these verses upon "the duty of making responses int public prayer."

Ver. 13.

1. The language of believing prayer—deliver me, help me; looking for deliverance and help to God only.
2. Of earnest prayer—make haste to help me.
3. Of submissive prayer—be pleased, O Lord, if according to thy good pleasure.
4. Of consistent prayer. Help me, which implies efforts for his own deliverance, putting his own shoulder to the wheel.

PSALM 40:14

EXPOSITION

Ver. 14. *Let them be ashamed and confounded together that seek after my soul to destroy it.* Whether we read this as a prayer or a prophecy it matters not, for the powers of sin, and death, and hell, may well be ashamed as they see the result of their malice for ever turned against themselves. It is to the infinite confusion of Satan that his attempts to destroy the Saviour destroyed himself; the diabolical conclave who plotted in council are now all alike put to shame, for the Lord Jesus has met them at all points, and turned all their wisdom into foolishness.

Let them be driven backward and put to shame that wish me evil. It is even so; the hosts of darkness are utterly put to the rout, and made a theme for holy derision for ever and ever. How did they gloat over the thought of crushing the seed of the woman! but the Crucified has conquered, the Nazarene has laughed them to scorn, the dying Son of Man has become the death of death and hell's destruction. For ever blessed be his name.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 14. *Let them be ashamed and confounded,* etc. Even this prayer carried benevolence in its bosom. It sought from the divine Father, such a manifestation of what was glorious and like God as might unnerve each rebel arm, and overawe each rebel heart in the traitor's company. If each arm were for a little unnerved, if each heart were for a little unmanned, there might be time for the better principles of their nature to rise and put an arrest upon the prosecution of their wicked design. Such being the benevolent aim of the prayer, we need not wonder that it issued from the same heart that by and by exclaimed, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do; "neither need we marvel that it was answered to the very letter, and that as soon as he said to the traitor band, "I am he, " they went backward and fell to the ground. *James Frame.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 14. *Honi soit mal y pense;* or, the reward of malignity.

PSALM 40:15

EXPOSITION

Ver. 15. *Let them be desolate*, or amazed; even as Jesus was desolate in his agony, so let his enemies be in their despair when he defeats them. The desolation caused in the hearts of evil spirits and evil men by envy, malice, chagrin, disappointment, and despair, shall be a fit recompense for their cruelty to the Lord when he was in their hands.

For a reward of their shame that say unto me, Aha, aha. Did the foul fiend insult over our Lord? Behold how shame is now his reward! Do wicked men today pour shame upon the name of the Redeemer? Their desolation shall avenge him of his adversaries! Jesus is the gentle Lamb to all who seek mercy through his blood; but let despisers beware, for he is the Lion of the tribe of Judah, and "who shall rouse him up?" The Jewish rulers exulted and scornfully said, "Aha, aha; "but when the streets of Jerusalem ran like rivers deep with gore, "and the temple was utterly consumed, "then their house was left unto them desolate, and the blood of the last of the prophets, according to their own desire, came upon themselves and upon their children. O ungodly reader, if such a person glance over this page, beware of persecuting Christ and his people, for God will surely avenge his own elect. Your "ahas" will cost you dear. It is hard for you to kick against the pricks.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 15. *Aha, aha.* An exclamation which occurs three times in the Psalms; and in each case there seems to be reference to the mockery at the Passion. See Psalm 35:21 70:3, which appear to belong to the same time as the present Psalm. *Christopher Wordsworth.*

PSALM 40:16

EXPOSITION

Ver. 16. *Let all those that seek thee, rejoice and be glad in thee.* We have done with Ebal and turn to Gerizim. Here our Lord pronounces

benedictions on his people. Note who the blessed objects of his petition are: not all men, but some men, "I pray for them, I pray not for the world." He pleads for seekers: the lowest in the kingdom, the babes of the family; those who have true desires, longing prayers, and consistent endeavours after God. Let seeking souls pluck up heart when they hear of this. What riches of grace, that in his bitterest hour Jesus should remember the lambs of the flock! And what does he entreat for them? it is that they may be doubly glad, intensely happy, emphatically joyful, for such the repetition of terms implies. Jesus would have all seekers made happy, by finding what they seek after, and by winning peace through his grief. As deep as were his sorrows, so high would he have their joys. He groaned that we might sing, and was covered with a bloody sweat that we might be anointed with the oil of gladness.

Let such as love thy salvation say continually, The Lord be magnified.

Another result of the Redeemer's passion is the promotion of the glory of God by those who gratefully delight in his salvation. Our Lord's desire should be our directory; we love with all our hearts his great salvation, let us then, with all our tongues proclaim the glory of God which is resplendent therein. Never let his praises cease. As the heart is warm with gladness let it incite the tongue to perpetual praise. If we cannot do what we would for the spread of the kingdom, at least let us desire and pray for it. Be it ours to make God's glory the chief end of every breath and pulse. The suffering Redeemer regarded the consecration of his people to the service of heaven as a grand result of his atoning death; it is the joy which was set before him; that God is glorified as the reward of the Saviour's travail.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 16. *Let all those that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee.* As every mercy to every believer giveth a proof of God's readiness to show the like mercy to all believers, when they stand in need; so should every mercy shown to any of the number, being known to the rest, be made the matter and occasion of magnifying the Lord. *David Dickson.*

Ver. 16. *Such as love thy salvation.* To love God's salvation is to love God himself, the Saviour, or Jesus. *Martin Geier.*

Ver. 16. *Such as love thy salvation.* One would think that self love alone should make us love salvation. Aye, but they love it because it is his, "that

love *thy* salvation." It is the character of a holy saint to love salvation itself; not as his own only, but as God's, as God's that saves him. *Thomas Goodwin*.

Ver. 16. *Let such as love thy salvation say continually, The Lord be magnified.* Jesus who gave us our capacity of happiness and our capacity of speaking, realised the relation which he had established between them; and hence in praying for his friends, he prayed that in the joy and gladness of their souls they might say, "The Lord be magnified." He desired them to speak of their holy happiness; and it was his wish that when they did speak of it they should speak in terms of praise of Jehovah, for he was the source of it. He desired them to say continually, *The Lord be magnified.* *James Frame*.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 16. (*last clause*). An everyday saying. Who can use it? What does it mean? Why should *they* say it? Why say it continually?

PSALM 40:17

EXPOSITION

Ver. 17. *But I am poor and needy.* The man of sorrows closes with another appeal, based upon his affliction and poverty.

Yet the Lord thinketh upon me. Sweet was this solace to the holy heart of the great sufferer. The Lord's thoughts of us are a cheering subject of meditation, for they are ever kind and never cease. His disciples forsook him, and his friends forgot him, but Jesus knew that Jehovah never turned away his heart from him, and this upheld him in the hour of need.

Thou art my help and my deliverer. His unmoved confidence stayed itself alone on God. O that all believers would imitate more fully their great Apostle and High Priest in his firm reliance upon God, even when afflictions abounded and the light was veiled.

Make no tarrying, O my God. The peril was imminent, the need urgent, the suppliant could not endure delay, nor was he made to wait, for the angel came to strengthen, and the brave heart of Jesus rose up to meet the foe.

Lord Jesus, grant that in all our adversities we may possess like precious faith, and be found like thee, more than conquerors.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 17. In Dr. Malan's memoir, the editor, one of his sons, thus writes of his brother Jocelyn, who was for some years prior to his death, the subject of intense bodily sufferings: — "One striking feature in his character was his holy fear of God, and reverence for his will." One day I was repeating a verse from the Psalms, *'As for me, I am poor and needy, but the Lord careth for me: thou art my helper and deliverer; O Lord, make no long tarrying.'* He said, 'Mamma, I love that verse, all but the last bit, it looks like a murmur against God. He never `tarries' in my case.' *From "The Life, Labours, and Writings of Caesar Malan" (1787-1864): By one of his sons, 1869.*

Ver. 17. *Yet the Lord thinketh upon me.* Sacred story derives from heaven the kindness of Abimelech to Abraham, of Laban and Esau to Jacob, of Ruth to Naomi, of Boaz to Ruth, and Jonathan to David. When others think of kindness to us, let us imitate David, it is the Lord that thinketh upon me, and forms those thoughts within their hearts. This should calm our spirits when a former friend's heart is alienated by rash admissions of false suggestions, or when any faithful Jonathan expires his spirit into the bosom of God. It should not be lost what Hobson, the late noted carrier of Cambridge, said to a young student receiving a letter of the sad tidings of his uncle's decease (who maintained him at the University), and weeping bitterly, and reciting the cause of his grief, he replied, *Who gave you that friend?* Which saying did greatly comfort him, and was a sweet support to him afterwards in his ministry. The Ever living God is the portion of a living faith, and *he* can never want that hath *such* an ocean. He that turns the hearts of kings like rivers at his pleasure, turns all the little brooks in the world into what scorched and parched ground he pleases. *Samuel Lee.*

Ver. 17. *The Lord thinketh upon me.* There are three things in *God's thinking upon us*, that are solacing and delightful. Observe the *frequency* of his thoughts. Indeed, they are incessant. You have a friend, whom you esteem and love. You wish to live in his mind. You say when you part, and when you write, "Think of me." You give him, perhaps, a token to revive his remembrance. How naturally is Selkirk, in his solitary island, made to say: —

*"My friends, do they now and then send
A wish or a thought after me?
O tell me, I yet have a friend,
Though a friend I am never to see."*

*"Ye winds, that have made me your sport,
Convey to this desolate shore
Some cordial, endearing report
Of a land I shall visit no more."*

But the dearest connexion in the world cannot be always thinking upon you. Half his time he is in a state of unconsciousness; and how much during the other half is he engrossed! But there is no remission in the Lord's thoughts...Observe in the next place, the *wisdom* of his thoughts. You have a dear child, absent from you, and you follow him in your mind. But you know not his present circumstances. You left him in such a place; but where is he now? You left him in such a condition. But what is he now? Perhaps while you are thinking upon his health, he is groaning under a bruised limb, or a painful disorder. Perhaps, while you are thinking of his safety, some enemy is taking advantage of his innocence. Perhaps, while you are rejoicing in his prudence, he is going to take a step that will involve him for life. But when God thinketh upon you, he is perfectly acquainted with your situation, your dangers, your wants. He knows all your walking through this great wilderness, and can afford you the seasonable succour you need. For again, observe the *efficiency* of his thoughts. You think upon another, and you are anxious to guide, or defend, or relieve him. But in how many cases can you think only? Solicitude cannot control the disease of the body, cannot dissipate the melancholy of the mind. But with God all things are possible. He who thinks upon you is a God at hand and not afar off; he has all events under his control; he is the God of all grace. If, therefore, he does not immediately deliver, it is not because he is unable to redress, but because he is waiting to be gracious. *William Jay.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 17. The humble *But*, and the believing *Yet*. The little *I am*, and the great *Thou art*. The fitting prayer.

Ver. 17. *The Lord thinketh upon me.* Admire the condescension, and then consider that this is—

1. A promised blessing.

2. A practical blessing—he thinks upon us to supply, protect, direct, sanctify, &c.
3. A precious blessing—kind thoughts, continual, greatly good. He thinks of us as his creatures with pity, as his children with love, as his friends with pleasure.
4. A present blessing—promises, providences, visitations of grace.

Ver. 17.

1. The less we think of ourselves the more God will think upon us.
2. The less we put trust in ourselves the more we may trust in God for help and deliverance.
3. The less delay in prayer and active efforts the sooner God will appear for us.

PSALM 41

PSALM 41:1

Title. To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David. This title has frequently occurred before, and serves to remind us of the value of the Psalm, seeing that it was committed to no mean songster; and also to inform us as to the author who has made his own experience the basis of a prophetic song, in which a far greater than David is set forth. How wide a range of experience David had! What power it gave him to edify future ages! And how full a type of our Lord did he become! What was bitterness to him has proved to be a fountain of unfailing sweetness to many generations of the faithful.

Jesus Christ betrayed by Judas Iscariot is evidently the great theme of this Psalm, but we think not exclusively. He is the antitype of David, and all his people are in their measure like him; hence words suitable to the Great Representative are most applicable to those who are in him. Such as receive a vile return for long kindness to others, may read this song with much comfort, for they will see that it is alas! too common for the best of men, to be rewarded for their holy charity with cruelty and scorn; and when they have been humbled by falling into sin, advantage has been taken of their low estate, their good deeds have been forgotten and the vilest spite has been vented upon them.

Division. The psalmist in Psalm 41:1-3, describes the mercies which are promised to such as consider the poor, and this he uses as a preface to his own personal plea for succour: from Psalm 41:4-9 he states his own case, proceeds to prayer in Psalm 41:10, and closes with thanksgiving, Psalm 41:11-13.

EXPOSITION

Ver. 1. *Blessed is he that considereth the poor.* This is the third Psalm opening with a benediction, and there is a growth in it beyond the first two. To search the word of God comes first, pardoned sin is second, and now the forgiven sinner brings forth fruit unto God available for the good of others. The word used is as emphatic as in the former cases, and so is the

blessing which follows it. The poor intended, are such as are poor in substance, weak in bodily strength, despised in repute, and desponding in spirit. These are mostly avoided and frequently scorned. The worldly proverb bequeaths the hindmost to one who has no mercy. The sick and the sorry are poor company, and the world deserts them as the Amalekite left his dying servant. Such as have been made partakers of divine grace receive a tenderer nature, and are not hardened against their own flesh and blood; they undertake the cause of the downtrodden, and turn their minds seriously to the promotion of their welfare. They do not toss them a penny and go on their way, but enquire into their sorrows, sift out their cause, study the best ways for their relief, and practically come to their rescue: such as these have the mark of the divine favour plainly upon them, and are as surely the sheep of the Lord's pasture as if they wore a brand upon their foreheads. They are not said to have considered the poor years ago, but they still do so. Stale benevolence, when boasted of, argues present churlishness. First and foremost, yea, far above all others put together in tender compassion for the needy is our Lord Jesus, who so remembered our low estate, that though he was rich, for our sakes he became poor. All his attributes were charged with the task of our uplifting. He weighed our case and came in the fulness of wisdom to execute the wonderful work of mercy by which we are redeemed from our destructions. Wretchedness excited his pity, misery moved his mercy, and thrice blessed is he both by his God and his saints for his attentive care and wise action towards us. He still considereth us; his mercy is always in the present tense, and so let our praises be.

The Lord will deliver him in time of trouble. The compassionate lover of the poor thought of others, and therefore God will think of him. God measures to us with our own bushel. Days of trouble come even to the most generous, and they have made the wisest provision for rainy days who have lent shelter to others when times were better with them. The promise is not that the generous saint shall have no trouble, but that he shall be preserved in it, and in due time brought out of it. How true was this of our Lord! never trouble deeper nor triumph brighter than his, and glory be to his name, he secures the ultimate victory of all his blood bought ones. Would that they all were more like him in putting on bowels of compassion to the poor. Much blessedness they miss who stint their alms. The joy of doing good, the sweet reaction of another's happiness, the approving smile of heaven upon the heart, if not upon the estate; all these

the niggardly soul knows nothing of. Selfishness bears in itself a curse, it is a cancer in the heart; while liberality is happiness, and maketh fat the bones. In dark days we cannot rest upon the supposed merit of alms giving, but still the music of memory brings with it no mean solace when it tells of widows and orphans whom we have succoured, and prisoners and sick folk to whom we have ministered.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Title. The *Syriac* says, "It was a Psalm of David, when he appointed overseers to take care of the poor." *Adam Clarke*.

Whole Psalm. A prophecy of Christ and the traitor Judas. *Eusebius of Caesarea, quoted by J. M. Neale*.

Ver. 1. *Blessed is he that considereth the poor.* Interpreters are generally of opinion that the exercise of kindness and compassion, manifested in taking care of the miserable, and helping them, is here commended. Those, however, who maintain that the psalmist here commends the considerate candour of those who judge wisely and charitably of men in adversity, form a better judgment of his meaning. Indeed, the participle, (*I ksm*), *maskil*, cannot be explained in any other way. At the same time it ought to be observed on what account it is that David declares those to be blessed who form a wise and prudent judgment concerning the afflictions by which God chastises his servants...Doubtless it happened to him as it did to the holy patriarch Job, whom his friends reckoned to be one of most wicked of men, when they saw God treating him with great severity. And certainly it is an error which is by far too common among men, to look upon those who are oppressed with afflictions as condemned and reprobate...For the most part, indeed, we often speak rashly and indiscriminately concerning others, and, so to speak, plunge even into the lowest abyss those who labour under affliction. To restrain such a rash and unbridled spirit, David says, that they are blessed who do not suffer themselves, by speaking at random, to judge harshly of their neighbours; but discerning aright the afflictions by which they are visited, mitigate, by the wisdom of the spirit, the severe and unjust judgments to which we naturally are so prone. *John Calvin*.

Ver. 1. *Blessed is he that considereth the poor.* As Christ considered us in our state of poverty, so ought we most attentively to consider him in his; to

consider what he suffered in his own person; to discern him suffering in his poor afflicted members; and to extend to them the mercy which he extended to us. He, who was "blessed" of Jehovah, and "delivered in the evil day" by a glorious resurrection, will "bless" and "deliver" in like manner, such as for his sake, love and relieve their brethren. *George Horne.*

Ver. 1. *Blessed is he that considereth the poor.* Not the poor of the world in common, nor poor saints in particular, but some single poor man; for the word is in the singular number, and designs our Lord Jesus Christ, who, in the last verse of the preceding Psalm, is said to be *poor and needy*. *John Gill.*

Ver. 1. *Blessed is he that considereth the poor.* I call your attention to the way in which the Bible enjoins us to take up the care of the poor. It does not say in the text before us, Commiserate the poor; for, if it said no more than this, it would leave their necessities to be provided for by the random ebullitions of an impetuous and unreflecting sympathy. It provided them with a better security than the mere feeling of compassion—a feeling which, however useful to the purpose of excitement, must be controlled and regulated. Feeling is but a faint and fluctuating security. Fancy may mislead it. The sober realities of life may disgust it. Disappointment may extinguish it. Ingratitude may embitter it. Deceit, with its counterfeit representations, may allure it to the wrong object. At all events, Time is the little circle in which it in general expatiates. It needs the impression of sensible objects to sustain it; nor can it enter with zeal or with vivacity into the wants of the abstract and invisible soul. The Bible, then, instead of leaving the relief of the poor to the mere instinct of sympathy, makes it a subject for *consideration*—"Blessed is he that *considereth* the poor," a grave and prosaic exercise, I do allow, and which makes no figure in those high wrought descriptions, where the exquisite tale of benevolence is made up of all the sensibilities of tenderness on the one hand, and of all the ecstasies of gratitude on the other. The Bible rescues the cause from the mischief to which a heedless or unthinking sensibility would expose it. It brings it under the cognisance of a higher faculty—a faculty of sturdier operation than to be weary in well doing, and of sturdier endurance than to give it up in disgust. It calls you to *consider* the poor. It makes the virtue of relieving them a matter of computation, as well as of sentiment, and in so doing puts you beyond the reach of the various delusions, by which you are at one time led to prefer the indulgence of pity to the substantial

interest of its object; at another, are led to retire chagrined and disappointed from the scene of duty, because you have not met with the gratitude or the honesty that you laid your account with; at another, are led to expend all your anxieties upon the accommodation of time, and to overlook eternity. It is the office of *consideration* to save you from all these fallacies. Under its tutorage attention to the wants of the poor ripens into principle...

It must be obvious to all of you, that it is not enough that you give money, and add your name to the contributions of charity. You must give it with judgment. You must give your time and your attention. You must descend to the trouble of examination. You must rise from the repose of contemplation, and make yourself acquainted with the object of your benevolent exercises...To give money is not to do all the work and labour of benevolence. You must go to the poor man's sick bed. You must lend your hand to the work of assistance. This is true and unsophisticated goodness. It may be recorded in no earthly documents; but, if done under the influence of Christian principle, in a word, if done unto Jesus, it is written in the book of heaven, and will give a new lustre to that crown to which his disciples look forward in time, and will wear through eternity. *From a Sermon preached before the Society for Relief of the Destitute Sick, in St. Andrew's Church, Edinburgh, by Thomas Chalmers, D.D. and L.L.D. (1780-1847.)*

Ver. 1. *Blessed is he that considereth the poor.* A Piedmontese nobleman into whose company I fell, at Turin, told me the following story: "I was weary of life, and after a day such as few have known, and none would wish to remember, was hurrying along the street to the river, when I felt a sudden check, I turned and beheld a little boy, who had caught the skirt of my cloak in his anxiety to solicit my notice. His look and manner were irresistible. No less so was the lesson he had learnt—'There are six of us, and we are dying for want of food.' 'Why should I not, 'said I, to myself, 'relieve this wretched family? I have the means, and it will not delay me many minutes. But what if it does?' The scene of misery he conducted me to I cannot describe. I threw them my purse, and their burst of gratitude overcame me. It filled my eyes, it went as a cordial to my heart. 'I will call again tomorrow, 'I cried. 'Fool that I was to think of leaving a world where such pleasure was to be had, and so cheaply!'" *Samuel Rogers (1763-1855) in "Italy."*

Ver. 1. *He that considereth the poor:* —

*An ardent spirit dwells with Christian love,
The eagle's vigour in the pitying dove.
It is not enough that we with sorrow sigh,
That we the wants of pleading man supply,*

*That we in sympathy with sufferers feel,
Nor hear a grief without a wish to heal:
Not these suffice—to sickness, pain, and woe,
The Christian spirit loves with aid to go:*

*Will not be sought, waits not for want to plead,
But seeks the duty—nay, prevents the need;
Her utmost aid to every ill applies,
And plants relief for coming miseries.*

George Crabbe, 1754-1832.

Ver. 1. How foolish are they that fear to lose their wealth by giving it, and fear not to lose themselves by keeping it! He that lays up his gold may be a good *jailer*, but he that lays it out is a good *steward*. Merchants traffic thither with a commodity where it is precious in regard of scarcity. We do not buy wines in England to carry them to France, spices in France to carry them to the Indies; so for labour and work, repentance and mortification, there is none of them in heaven, there is peace and glory, and the favour of God indeed. A merchant without his commodity hath but a sorry welcome. God will ask men that arrive at heaven's gates, *ubi opera?* Revelation 22:12. His reward shall be according to our works. Thou hast riches here, and here be objects that need thy riches—the poor; in heaven there are riches enough but no poor, therefore, by faith in Christ make over to them thy moneys in this world, that by bill of exchange thou mayest receive it in the world to come; that only you carry with you which you send before you. Do good while it is in your power; relieve the oppressed, succour the fatherless, while your estates are your own; when you are dead your riches belong to others. One light carried before a man is more serviceable than twenty carried after him. In your compassion to the distressed, or for pious uses, let your hands be your executors, and your eyes your overseers. *Francis Raworth, Teacher to the Church at Shore-ditch, in a Funeral Sermon, 1656.*

Ver. 1,3. It is a blessed thing to receive when a man hath need; but it is a more blessed thing to give than to receive. *Blessed* (saith the prophet

David) *is he that considereth the poor*. What? to say, alas, poor man! the world is hard with him, I would there were a course taken to do him good? No, no; but to so consider him as to give; to give till the poor man be satisfied, to draw out one's sheaf, aye, one's very soul to the hungry. But what if troubles should come? were it not better to keep money by one? Money will not deliver one. It may be an occasion to endanger one, to bring one into, rather than help one out of trouble; but if a man be a merciful man, *God will deliver him*, either by himself, or by some other man or matter. Aye, but what if *sickness* come?

Why, *the Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing*; and, which is a great ease and kindness; God, as it were, himself *will make all his bed in his sickness*. Here poor people have the advantage: such must not say, Alas, I am a poor woman, what work of mercy can I do? for they are they who best can make the beds of sick folk, which we see is a great act of mercy, in that it is said, that *the Lord himself will make their bed in their sickness*. And there are none so poor, but they may *make the beds* of the sick. *Richard Capel*.

Ver. 1,5. *He that considereth. Mine enemies*. Strigelius has observed, there is a perpetual antithesis in this Psalm between the few who have a due regard to the poor in spirit, and the many who afflict or desert them. *W. Wilson, D.D.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 1. (*first clause*). The incidental blessings resulting from considering the pious poor.

1. We learn gratitude.
2. We see patience.
3. We often remark the triumphs of great grace.
4. We obtain light on Christian experience.
5. We have their prayers.
6. We feel the pleasure of beneficence.
7. We enter into communion with the lowly Saviour.

Ver. 1. The support of the Small pox Hospitals recommended. *Bishop Squire*, 1760. Scores of sermons of this kind have been preached from this text.

WORK UPON THE FORTY-FIRST PSALM

"David's Evidence; or, the Assurance of God's Love: declared in seven Sermons upon the three last verses of the Forty-first Psalm. By WILLIAM BURTON. Minister of the Word at Reading in Berkshire ...1602." 4to.

The ancient Rabbins saw in the Five Books of the Psalter the image of the Five Books of the Law. This way of looking at the Psalms as a second Pentateuch, the echo of the first, passed over into the Christian church, and found favour with some early fathers. It has commended itself to the acceptance of good recent expositors, like Dr. Delitzsch, who calls the Psalter "the congregation's five fold word to the Lord, even as the *Thora* (the Law) is the Lord's five fold word to the Congregation." This may be mere fancy, but its existence from ancient times shows that the five fold division attracted early notice. *William Binnie, D.D.*

God presented Israel with the Law, a Pentateuch, and grateful Israel responded with a Psalter, a Pentateuch of praise, in acknowledgment of the divine gift. *J. L. K.*

HERE ENDETH THE FIRST BOOK OF THE PSALMS

PSALM 41:2

EXPOSITION

Ver. 2. *The Lord will preserve him, and keep him alive.* His noblest life shall be immortal, and even his mortal life shall be sacredly guarded by the power of Jehovah. Jesus lived on till his hour came, nor could the devices of crafty Herod take away his life till the destined hour had struck; and even then no man took his life from him, but he laid it down of himself, to take it again. Here is the portion of all those who are made like their Lord, they bless and they shall be blessed, they preserve and shall be preserved, they watch over the lives of others and they themselves shall be precious in

the sight of the Lord. The miser like the hog is of no use till he is dead—then let him die; the righteous like the ox is of service during life—then let him live.

And he shall be blessed upon the earth. Prosperity shall attend him. His cruse of oil shall not be dried up because he fed the poor prophet. He shall cut from his roll of cloth and find it longer at both ends.

*"There was a man, and some did count him mad,
The more he gave away the more he had."*

If temporal gains be not given him, spirituals shall be doubled to him. His little shall be blessed, bread and water shall be a feast to him. The liberal are and must be blessed even here; they have a present as well as a future portion. Our Lord's real blessedness of heart in the joy that was set before him is a subject worthy of earnest thought, especially as it is the picture of the blessing which all liberal saints may look for.

And thou wilt not deliver him unto the will of his enemies. He helped the distressed, and now he shall find a champion in his God. What would not the good man's enemies do to him if they had him at their disposal? Better be in a pit with vipers than to be at the mercy of persecutors. This sentence sets before us a sweet negative, and yet it were not easy to have seen how it could be true of our Lord Jesus, did we not know that although he was exempted from much of blessing, being made a curse for us, yet even he was not altogether nor for ever left of God, but in due time was exalted above all his enemies.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 2. *The Lord will preserve him, and keep him alive.* It is worthy of remark, that *benevolent persons*, who "*consider the poor*," and especially the *sick poor*; who search cellars, garrets, back lanes, and such abodes of misery, to find them out (even in the places where contagion keeps its seat), very seldom fall a prey to their own benevolence. The Lord, in an especial manner, keeps them *alive*, and preserves them; while many, who endeavour to keep far from the contagion, are assailed by it, and fall victims to it. God loves the merciful man. *Adam Clarke.*

Ver. 2. *He shall be blessed upon the earth.* None of the godly man's afflictions shall hinder or take away his begun blessedness, even in this world. *David Dickson.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 2. *Blessed upon the earth.* What blessings of an earthly character godly character secures, and in general what it is to be blessed with regard to this life.

Ver. 2. (*second clause*). What it is to be delivered *in* trouble. From impatience, from despair, from sinful expedients, from violent attacks, from losing fellowship with God.

PSALM 41:3

EXPOSITION

Ver. 3. *The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing.* The everlasting arms shall stay up his soul as friendly hands and downy pillows stay up the body of the sick. How tender and sympathising is this image; how near it brings our God to our infirmities and sicknesses! Whoever heard this of the old heathen Jove, or of the gods of India or China? This is language peculiar to the God of Israel; he it is who deigns to become nurse and attendant upon good men. If he smites with one hand he sustains with the other. Oh, it is blessed fainting when one falls upon the Lord's own bosom, and is borne up thereby! Grace is the best of restoratives; divine love is the noblest stimulant for a languishing patient; it makes the soul strong as a giant, even when the aching bones are breaking through the skin. No physician like the Lord, no tonic like his promise, no wine like his love.

Thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness. What, doth the Lord turn bed maker to his sick children? Herein is love indeed. Who would not consider the poor if such be the promised reward? A bed soon grows hard when the body is weary with tossing to and fro upon it, but grace gives patience, and God's smile gives peace, and the bed is made soft because the man's heart is content; the pillows are downy because the head is peaceful. Note that the Lord will make *all* his bed, from head to foot. What considerate and indefatigable kindness! Our dear and ever blessed Lord Jesus, though in all respects an inheritor of this promise, for our sakes condescended to forego the blessing, and died on a cross and not upon a bed; yet, even there, he

was after awhile upheld and cheered by the Lord his God, so that he died in triumph.

We must not imagine that the benediction pronounced in these three verses belongs to all who casually give money to the poor, or leave it in their wills, or contribute to societies. Such do well, or act from mere custom, as the case may be, but they are not here alluded to. The blessing is for those whose habit it is to love their neighbour as themselves, and who for Christ's sake feed the hungry and clothe the naked. To imagine a man to be a saint who does not consider the poor as he has ability, is to conceive the fruitless fig tree to be acceptable; there will be sharp dealing with many professors on this point in the day when the King cometh in his glory.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 3. *Thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness.* Into what minuteness of exquisite and touching tenderness does the Lord condescend to enter! One feels almost as we may suppose Peter felt when the Saviour came to him and would have washed his feet, "Lord! thou shalt never wash my feet; "thou shalt never make my bed. And yet, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me; "if the Lord make not our bed in our sickness, there is no peace nor comfort there. We have had David calling on God to bow down his ear, like a loving mother listening to catch the feeblest whisper of her child; and the image is full of the sweetest sympathy and condescension; but here the Lord, the great God of heaven, he that said when on earth, "I am among you as one that serveth, "does indeed take upon him the form, and is found in fashion as a servant, fulfilling all the loving and tender offices of an assiduous nurse. *Barton Bouchier.*

Ver. 3. *Thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness.* The meaning rather is, "it is no longer a sick bed, for thou hast healed him of his disease." *J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Ver. 3. When a good man is ill at ease, God promises to make all his bed in his sickness. Pillow, bolster, head, feet, sides, all his bed. Surely that God who made him knows so well his measure and temper as to make his bed to please him. Herein his art is excellent, not fitting the bed to the person, but the person to the bed; infusing patience into him. But, oh! how shall God make my bed, who have no bed of mine own to make. Thou fool, he can make thy not having a bed to be a bed unto thee. When Jacob slept on

the ground, who would not have had his hard lodging, therewithal to have his heavenly dream? *Thomas Fuller.*

Ver. 3. Sure that bed must need be soft which God will make. *T. Watson.*

Ver. 3. We must not forget that Oriental beds needed not to be made in the same sense as our own. They were never more than mattresses or quilts thickly padded, and were turned when they became uncomfortable, and that is just the word here used. *C. H. S.*

Ver. 3. When I visited one day, as he was dying, my beloved friend Benjamin Parsons, I said, "How are you today, Sir?" He said, "My head is resting very sweetly on three pillows—infinite power, infinite love, and infinite wisdom." Preaching in the Canterbury Hall, in Brighton, I mentioned this some time since; and many months after I was requested to call upon a poor but holy young woman, apparently dying. She said, "I felt I must see you before I died." I heard you tell the story of Benjamin Parsons and his three pillows; and when I went through a surgical operation, and it was very cruel, I was leaning my head on pillows, and as they were taking them away I said, "May I keep them?" The surgeon said, "No, my dear, we must take them away." "But," said I, "you cannot take away Benjamin Parsons three pillows. I can lay my head on infinite power, infinite love, and infinite wisdom." *Paxton Hood, in "Dark Sayings on a Harp, "1865.*

Ver. 3-4. What saith David from the very bottom of his heart, in his sickness? Not, take away this death only. No; but David being sick, first comforts himself with this promise,

The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing: thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness; and then adds, I said, Lord, be merciful unto me, and heal my soul; that is, destroy my lusts, which are the diseases of my soul, Lord; and heal my soul, and renew life and communion with thee, which is the health and strength of my soul. Do not take this sickness and death only away; but this sin away, that hath dishonoured thee, hath separated between me and thee: Heal my soul, for I have sinned against thee. Thomas Goodwin.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 3. Strength in weakness. Inward strength, divinely given, continuously sustained, enduring to the end, triumphant in death, glorifying to God, proving the reality of grace, winning others to the faith.

Ver. 3. (*last clause*). The heavenly bed making.

PSALM 41:4

EXPOSITION

Ver. 4-9. Here we have a controversy between the pleader and his God. He has been a tender friend to the poor, and yet in the hour of his need the promised assistance was not forthcoming. In our Lord's case there was a dark and dreary night in which such arguments were well befitting himself and his condition.

Ver. 4. *I said* —said it in earnest prayer—*Lord, be merciful unto me.* Prove now thy gracious dealings with my soul in adversity, since thou didst aforetime give me grace to act liberally in my prosperity. No appeal is made to justice; the petitioner but hints at the promised reward, but goes straightforward to lay his plea at the feet of mercy. How low was our Redeemer brought when such petitions could come from his reverend mouth, when his lips like lilies dropped such sweet smelling but bitter myrrh!

Heal my soul. My time of languishing is come, now do as thou hast said, and strengthen me, especially in my soul. We ought to be far more earnest for the soul's healing than for the body's ease. We hear much of the cure of souls, but we often forget to care about it. *For I have sinned against thee.* Here was the root of sorrow. Sin and suffering are inevitable companions. Observe that by the psalmist sin was felt to be mainly evil because directed against God. This is of the essence of true repentance. The immaculate Saviour could never have used such language as this unless there be here a reference to the sin which he took upon himself by imputation; and for our part we tremble to apply words so manifestly indicating personal rather than imputed sin. Applying the petition to David and other sinful believers, how strangely evangelical is the argument: heal me, not for I am innocent,

but *I have sinned*. How contrary is this to all self righteous pleading! How consonant with grace! How inconsistent with merit! Even the fact that the confessing penitent had remembered the poor, is but obliquely urged, but a direct appeal is made to mercy on the ground of great sin. O trembling reader, here is a divinely revealed precedent for thee, be not slow to follow it.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 4. *I said, Lord, be merciful.* Mercy, not justice! The extreme of mercy for the extreme of misery. Righteousness as filthy rags; a flesh in which dwelleth no good thing, on the one side; on the other, it is "neither herb nor mollifying plaster that restored" to health; "but thy word, O Lord, which healeth all things." Wisdom 16:12. *Thomas Aquinas, quoted by J. M. Neale.*

Ver. 4. God is the strength of a Christian's heart, by healing and restoring him when the infused habits of grace fail, and sin grows strong and vigorous. A Christian never fails in the exercise of grace, but sin gives him a wound; and therefore David prayed,

Lord, heal my soul, for I have sinned. And what David prayed for, God promises to his people: "I will heal their backsliding." Hosea 14:4. The weakness and decay of grace, brings a Christian presently to the falling sickness; and so it did in David and Ephraim; aye, but God will be a physician to the soul in this case, and will heal their diseases; and so he did David's falling sickness, for which he returned the tribute of praise. Psalm 103:3. *Samuel Blackerby.*

Ver. 4. (*last clause*). Saul and Judas each said, "I have sinned; "but David says, "I have sinned *against thee*." *William S. Plumer.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 4. (*first clause*). A saying worth repeating: *I said*. It expresses penitence, humility, earnestness, faith, importunity, fear of God, etc.

Ver. 4. *Heal my soul.*

1. The hereditary disease, breaking out in many disorders—open sin, unbelief, decline of grace, etc.

2. Spiritual health struggling with it; shown in spiritual pain, desire, prayer, effort.

3. The well proved Physician. Has healed, and will, by his word, his blood, his Spirit, &c.

Ver. 4. *I have sinned against thee.* This confession is personal, plain, without pretence of excuse, comprehensive and intelligent, for it reveals the very heart of sin—"against thee."

PSALM 41:5

EXPOSITION

Ver. 5. *Mine enemies speak evil of me.* It was their nature to do and speak evil; it was not possible that the child of God could escape them. The viper fastened on Paul's hand: the better the man the more likely, and the more venomous the slander. Evil tongues are busy tongues, and never deal in truth. Jesus was traduced to the utmost, although no offence was in him.

When shall he die, and his name perish? They could not be content till he was away. The world is not wide enough for evil men to live in while the righteous remain, yea, the bodily presence of the saints may be gone, but their memory is an offence to their foes. It was never merry England, say they, since men took to Psalm singing. In the Master's case, they cried, "Away with such a fellow from the earth, it is not fit that he should live." If persecutors could have their way, the church should have but one neck, and that should be on the block. Thieves would fain blow out all candles. The lights of the world are not the delights of the world. Poor blind bats, they fly at the lamp, and try to dash it down; but the Lord liveth, and preserveth both the saints and their names.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 1,5. *He that considereth. Mine enemies.* Strigelius has observed, there is a perpetual antithesis in this Psalm between the few who have a due regard to the poor in spirit, and the many who afflict or desert them. *W. Wilson, D.D.*

Ver. 5. *Mine enemies speak evil of me.* To speak is here used in the sense of to imprecate. John Calvin.

Ver. 5. *His name.* It is the name, the character, and privileges of a true servant of God, that calls out the hatred of ungodly men, and they would gladly extirpate him from their sight. W. Wilson, D.D.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 5. What we may expect. What our enemies desire. What we may therefore prize, *i.e.*, the power of Christian life and name. What we should do—tell the Lord all in prayer. What good will then come of the evil.

PSALM 41:6

EXPOSITION

Ver. 6. *And if he come to see me, he speaketh vanity.* His visits of sympathy are visitations of mockery. When the fox calls on the sick lamb his words are soft, but he licks his lips in hope of the carcass. It is wretched work to have spies haunting one's bedchamber, calling in pretence of kindness, but with malice in their hearts. Hypocritical talk is always fulsome and sickening to honest men, but especially to the suffering saint. Our divine Lord had much of this from the false hearts that watched his words.

His heart gathereth iniquity to itself. Like will to like. The bird makes its nest of feathers. Out of the sweetest flowers chemists can distil poison, and from the purest words and deeds malice can gather groundwork for calumnious report. It is perfectly marvellous how spite spins webs out of no materials whatever. It is no small trial to have base persons around you lying in wait for every word which they may pervert into evil. The Master whom we serve was constantly subject to this affliction.

When he goeth abroad, he telleth it. He makes his lies, and then vends them in open market. He is no sooner out of the house than he outs with his lie, and this against a sick man whom he called to see as a friend—a sick man to whose incoherent and random speeches pity should be showed. Ah, black hearted wretch! A devil's cub indeed. How far abroad men will

go to publish their slanders! They would fain placard the sky with their falsehoods. A little fault is made much of; a slip of the tongue is a libel, a mistake a crime, and if a word can bear two meanings the worse is always fathered upon it. Tell it in Gath, publish it in Askelon, that the daughters of the uncircumcised may triumph. It is base to strike a man when he is down, yet such is the meanness of mankind towards a Christian hero should he for awhile chance to be under a cloud.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 6. *If he come to see me, he speaketh vanity*: many fair words, but none of them true. *David Dickson*.

Ver. 6. I remember a pretty apologue that Bromiard tells: —A fowler, in a sharp, frosty morning, having taken many little birds for which he had long watched, began to take up his nets, and nipping the birds on the head laid them down. A young thrush, espying the tears trickling down his cheek by reason of the extreme cold, said to her mother, that certainly the man was very merciful and compassionate, who wept so bitterly over the calamity of the poor birds. But her mother told her more wisely, that she might better judge of the man's disposition by his hand than by his eye; and if the hands do strike treacherously, he can never be admitted to friendship, who speaks fairly and weeps pitifully. *Jeremy Taylor*.

Ver. 6. *His heart gathereth iniquity to itself*.

1. By adding sin to sin, in that he covers over his malice with such horrid hypocrisy.
2. By inventing or contriving all the several ways he can to ensnare me, or do me some mischief, thereby seeking to satisfy and please his corrupt lusts and affections;
3. (Which I like best), by observing all he can in me, and drawing what he can from me, and so laying all up together in his mind, as the ground of his unjust surmises and censures concerning me. *Arthur Jackson*.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 6. (*first clause*). The folly and sin of frivolous visits.

Ver. 6. (*second and third clauses*). Like to like, or the way in which character draws its like to itself. The same subject might be treated under

the title of *The Chiffonnier*, or the rag collector. What he gathers; where he puts it—in his *heart*; what he does with it; what he gets for it; and what will become of him.

PSALM 41:7

EXPOSITION

Ver. 7. *All that hate me whisper together against me.* The spy meets his comrades in conclave and sets them all a whispering. Why could they not speak out? Were they afraid of the sick warrior? Or were their designs so treacherous that they must needs be hatched in secrecy? Mark the unanimity of the wicked—*all*. How heartily the dogs unite to hunt the stag! Would God we were half as united in holy labour as persecutors in their malicious projects, and were half as wise as they are crafty, for their whispering was craft as well as cowardice, the conspiracy must not be known till all is ready.

Against me do they devise my hurt. They lay their heads together, and scheme and plot. So did Ahithophel and the rest of Absalom's counsellors, so also did the chief priests and Pharisees. Evil men are good at devising; they are given to meditation, they are deep thinkers, but the mark they aim at is evermore the hurt of the faithful. Snakes in the grass are never there for a good end.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 7-12. On a sick bed a man discovers not only his enemies and his friends, but himself and his God, more intimately.

PSALM 41:8

EXPOSITION

Ver. 8. *An evil disease, say they, cleaveth fast unto him.* They whisper that some curse has fallen upon him, and is riveted to him. They insinuate that a

foul secret stains his character, the ghost whereof haunts his house, and never can be laid. An air of mystery is cast around this doubly dark saying, as if to show how indistinct are the mutterings of malice. Even thus was our Lord accounted "smitten of God and afflicted." His enemies conceived that God had forsaken him, and delivered him for ever into their hands.

And now that he lieth he shall rise up no more. His sickness they hoped was mortal, and this was fine news for them. No more would the good man's holiness chide their sin, they would now be free from the check of his godliness. Like the friars around Wycliffe's bed, their prophesyings were more jubilant than accurate, but they were a sore scourge to the sick man. When the Lord smites his people with his rod of affliction for a small moment, their enemies expect to see them capitally executed, and prepare their *jubilates* to celebrate their funerals, but they are in too great a hurry, and have to alter their ditties and sing to another tune. Our Redeemer eminently foretokened this, for out of his lying in the grave he has gloriously risen. Vain the watch, the stone, the seal! Rising he pours confusion on his enemies.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 8. *An evil disease, say they, cleaveth fast unto him.* An evil deed of Belial cleaveth fast to him. Grammarians maintain that the word *Belial* is compounded of (yl B), *beli*, and (l [y]), *yaal*, which signify "not to rise" the expression, "*thing of Belial*" (for so it is literally in the Hebrew), I understand in this place as meaning an extraordinary and hateful crime which as we commonly say can never be expiated, and from which there is no possibility of escape; unless perhaps some would rather refer it to the affliction itself under which he laboured, as if his enemies had said that he was seized by some incurable malady. *John Calvin.*

Ver. 8. *An evil disease*, etc. What is here meant by (l [yl B]adbD) is matter of some difficulty. The ancient interpreters generally render it a *perverse* or *mischievous*, or *wicked word*; the Chaldee, a *perverse word*; the Syriac, a *word of iniquity*; the LXX λόγον παράνομον; the Latin, *iniquum verbum*, a *wicked word*; the Arabic, *words contrary to the law*. And so in all probability it is set to signify a *great slander*, or *calumny* — that as "men of Belial" are *slandrous* persons, so the *speech of Belial* shall signify a *slandrous* speech. And this is said to "*cleave*" to him on whom it

is fastened, it being the nature of calumnies, when strongly affixed on any, to *cleave* fast, and leave some *evil mark* behind them. *Henry Hammond*.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 7-12. On a sick bed a man discovers not only his enemies and his friends, but himself and his God, more intimately.

PSALM 41:9

EXPOSITION

Ver. 9. *Yea*. Here is the climax of the sufferer's woe, and he places before it the emphatic affirmation, as if he thought that such villainy would scarcely be believed.

Mine own familiar friend. "The man of my peace, "so runs the original, with whom I had no differences, with whom I was in league, who had aforetime ministered to my peace and comfort. This was Ahithophel to David, and Iscariot with our Lord. Judas was an apostle, admitted to the privacy of the Great Teacher, hearing his secret thoughts, and, as it were, allowed to read his very heart. "*Et tu Brute?*" said the expiring Caesar. The kiss of the traitor wounded our Lord's heart as much as the nail wounded his hand.

In whom I trusted. Judas was the treasurer of the apostolic college. Where we place great confidence an unkind act is the more severely felt.

Which did eat of my bread. Not only as a guest but as a dependant, a pensioner at my board. Judas dipped in the same dish with his Lord, and hence the more accursed was his treachery in his selling his Master for a slave's price.

Hath lifted up his heel against me. Not merely turned his back on me, but left me with a heavy kick such as a vicious horse might give. Hard is it to be spurned in our need by those who formerly fed at our table. It is noteworthy that the Redeemer applied only the last words of this verse to Judas, perhaps because, knowing his duplicity, he had never made a familiar friend of him in the fullest sense, and had not placed implicit trust in him. Infernal malice so planned it that every circumstance in Jesus' death

should add wormwood to it; and the betrayal was one of the bitterest drops of gall. We are indeed, wretched when our *quondam* friend becomes our relentless foe, when confidence is betrayed, when all the rites of hospitality are perverted, and ingratitude is the only return for kindness; yet in so deplorable a case we may cast ourselves upon the faithfulness of God, who, having, delivered our Covenant Head, is in verity engaged to be the very present help of all for whom that covenant was made.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 9. *Yea, mine own familiar friend*, etc. The sufferings of the church, like those of her Redeemer, generally begin at home: her open enemies can do her no harm, until her pretended friends have delivered her into their hands; and, unnatural as it may seem, they who have waxed fat upon her bounty, are sometimes the first to *lift the heel* against her. *George Horne*.

Ver. 9. *Mine own familiar friend*. He who, on visiting me, continually saluted me with the kiss of love and veneration, and the usual address: peace be to thee. *Hermann Venema*.

Ver. 9. *Which did eat of my beard*. If the same sentiment prevailed among the Hebrews, which prevails at the present day among the Bedouin Arabs, of sacred regard to the person and property of one with whom they have eaten bread and salt, the language is very forcible.

Hath lifted up his heel: a metaphor drawn from the horse, which attacks with its heel. This language may well have been used by our Saviour, in John 13:18, in the way of rhetorical illustration or emphasis. *George R. Noyes, D.D.*

Ver. 9. *Hath lifted up his heel against me*. In this phrase he seems to allude to a beast's kicking at his master by whom he is fed, or the custom of men's spurning at or trampling upon those that are cast down on the ground, in a way of despite and contempt. *Arthur Jackson*.

Ver. 9. *Hath lifted up his heel against me*; i.e., hath spurned me, hath kicked at me, as a vicious beast of burden does; hath insulted me in my misery. *Daniel Cresswell*.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 7-12. On a sick bed a man discovers not only his enemies and his friends, but himself and his God, more intimately.

Ver. 9. The treachery of Judas.

PSALM 41:10

EXPOSITION

Ver. 10. *But thou, O Lord, be merciful unto me.* How the hunted and affrighted soul turns to her God! How she seems to take breath with a "but, thou!" How she clings to the hope of mercy from God when every chance of pity from man is gone!

And raise me up. Recover me from my sickness, give me to regain my position. Jesus was raised up from the grave; his descent was ended by an ascent.

That I may requite them. This as it reads is a truly Old Testament sentence, and quite aside from the spirit of Christianity, yet we must remember that David was a person in magisterial office, and might without any personal revenge, desire to punish those who had insulted his authority and libelled his public character. Our great Apostle and High Priest had no personal animosities, but even he by his resurrection has requited the powers of evil, and avenged on death and hell all their base attacks upon his cause and person. Still the strained application of every sentence of this Psalm to Christ is not to our liking, and we prefer to call attention to the better spirit of the gospel beyond that of the old dispensation.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 10. *That I may requite them.* Either (1), kindness for injuries (as in Psalm 35:13): it is the mark of a good and brave man to do good to all in his power, to hurt no one, even though provoked by wrong: or, (2), punishment for wrong doing—*that I may punish them*; for am I not their magistrate, and the executioner of God's justice! *Martin Geier.*

Ver. 10. *That I may requite them.* David was not as one of the common people, but a king appointed by God and invested with authority, and it is not from an impulse of the flesh, but in virtue of the nature of his office, that he is led to denounce against his enemies the punishment which they had merited. *John Calvin.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 7-12. On a sick bed a man discovers not only his enemies and his friends, but himself and his God, more intimately.

PSALM 41:11

EXPOSITION

Ver. 11. We are all cheered by tokens for good, and the psalmist felt it to be an auspicious omen, that after all his deep depression he was not utterly given over to his foe.

By this I know that thou favourest me. Thou hast a special regard to me, I have the secret assurance of this in my heart, and, therefore, thine outward dealings do not dismay me, for I know that thou lovest me in them all.

Because mine enemy doth not triumph over me. What if the believer has no triumph over his foes, he must be glad that they do not triumph over him. If we have not all we would we should praise God for all we have. Much there is in us over which the ungodly might exult, and if God's mercy keeps the dog's mouths closed when they might be opened, we must give him our heartiest gratitude. What a wonder it is that when the devil enters the lists with a poor, erring, bedridden, deserted, slandered saint, and has a thousand evil tongues to aid him, yet he cannot win the day, but in the end slinks off without renown.

*"The feeblest saint shall win the day
Though death and hell obstruct the way, "*

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 11. *By this I know that thou favourest me, because mine enemy doth not triumph over me:* not because I have no enemies, or because I have no

trouble which would overcome me. Therefore when he wrote down *many troubles*, he blotted it (as it were) with his pen again, as a merchant razes his book when the debt is discharged; and instead of *many troubles*, he putteth in, *the Lord delivereth*. Because he forgiveth all sins, he is said to deliver from all troubles, to show that we have need of no Saviour, no helper, no comforter, but him. *Henry Smith*.

Ver. 11. *By this I know that thou favourest me.* In this text we see two things. 1. How David assures himself of God's love towards him. 2. How thankful he is to God for assuring him of his love. The first he doth by two arguments; one is taken from his enemies, they were prevented of their expectation—"Therefore thou lovest me." The other is taken from his own estate, which was not one whit hurt, or impaired, but bettered by them...Here the prophet speaketh of his knowledge, and telleth us that though he knew not all things, yet he knew that God loved him, and so long as he knoweth that, he careth not greatly for other matters, how the world goeth with him, etc. And, to say the truth, he need not, for he that is sure of that, is sure of all. God loveth all his creatures as a good God, and hateth nothing that he made, but he loveth his elect children with a more especial love than the rest, as a Father in Christ Jesus, and he that is sure that God doth so favour him, is sure, I say, of all. For to him whom God loveth, he will deny no good thing, no, not his own Son; and if he gave us his Son, because he loved us, how shall he not with him give us all things else?

When the child is persuaded that his father loveth him, he is bold to ask this and that of his father: so may we be bold to ask anything of God our heavenly Father that is good for us, when we be sure that he loveth us. As Mary and Martha put Christ in mind but of two things; the first was, that Christ loved their brother Lazarus; the second was, that Lazarus was sick; "He whom thou lovest is sick:" it was no need to tell him what he should do, for they knew he would do what might be done for him, because he loved him. So we may say to the Lord, when we are sure that he loveth us: Lord, he whom thou lovest wanteth this or that for his body or his soul. We need not then appoint him what to do, or when, or how; for look what he seeth most convenient for us, and for his own glory, he will surely do it. Therefore whatsoever David knoweth, he will be sure to know this; and whatsoever he is ignorant of, yet of this he will not be ignorant; to teach is that whatsoever we seek to make sure, this must first be made sure, or else nothing is sure. Peter bids us make our election sure; Job, when he saith, "I

am sure that my Redeemer liveth, "teacheth us to make our redemption sure. And here David teacheth us to make *God's favour* sure: now if we make that sure, then our election is sure, our redemption is sure, our vocation is sure, and our salvation is sure. *William Barton*, 1602.

Ver. 11. *Because mine enemy doth not triumph over me.* When God doth deliver us from the hands of our enemies, or any trouble else, we may persuade ourselves thereby, he hath a favour unto us, as David did. But then it may be demanded, If God doth love his church, why doth he suffer his church to be troubled and molested with enemies? The reason is this, because by this means his love may be made more manifest in saving and delivering them. For as a sure friend is not known but in time of need, so God's goodness and love is never so well perceived as it is in helping of us when we cannot help ourselves. As Adam's fall did serve to manifest God's justice and mercy, the one in punishing, the other is pardoning of sin, which otherwise we had never known: so the troubles of the church serve to manifest, first, our deserts by reason of our sins; secondly, our weakness and inability to help ourselves; and, thirdly, the lovingkindness of the Lord our God, in saving and defending, that so we might be truly thankful, and return all the praise and glory to God, and none to ourselves. So that the church of God may have enemies, and yet be still the beloved of God, as Lazarus was beloved of Christ, although he was sick; for whom the Lord loveth he correcteth, and therefore he correcteth them because he loveth them. *William Burton*.

Ver. 11. God preserves his own, and bringeth their foes to nought: after Passion week comes Easter. *J. P. Lange's Commentary*.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 7-12. On a sick bed a man discovers not only his enemies and his friends, but himself and his God, more intimately.

Ver. 11. Deliverance from temptation a token of divine favour.

PSALM 41:12

EXPOSITION

Ver. 12. *And as for me*, despite them all and in the sight of them all, *thou upholdest me in mine integrity*; thy power enables me to rise above the reach of slander by living in purity and righteousness. Our innocence and consistency are the result of the divine upholding. We are like those glasses without feet, which can only be upright while they are held in the hand; we fall, and spill, and spoil all, if left to ourselves. The Lord should be praised every day if we are preserved from gross sin. When others sin they show us what we should do but for grace. "He today and I tomorrow," was the exclamation of a holy man, whenever he saw another falling into sin. Our integrity is comparative as well as dependent, we must therefore be humbled while we are grateful. If we are clear of the faults alleged against us by our calumniators, we have nevertheless quite enough of actual blameworthiness to render it shameful for us to boast.

And settest me before thy face for ever. He rejoiced that he lived under the divine surveillance; tended, cared for, and smiled upon by his Lord; and yet more, that it would be so world without end. To stand before an earthly monarch is considered to be a singular honour, but what must it be to be a perpetual courtier in the palace of the King Eternal, Immortal, Invisible?

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 12. *Integrity.* This same integrity is like Noah's ark, wherein he was preserved, when others perished, being without it. It is like the red thread, which the spies of Joshua gave to Rahab, it was a charter whereby she claimed her life when the rest were destroyed, which had not the like. So is this integrity of small reckoning, I confess, with the men of this world, which think that there is no other heaven but earth; but as Rahab's thread was better to her than all her goods and substance when the sword came, so this is better to God's children than all the world when death comes. If they have this within they care not, nay, they need not care what can come without. If Satan's buffeting come, this is a helmet of proof; if Satan's darts fly out, this is a shield to quench them; if floods of crosses come to carry us away, this is a boat to bear us up; if all the world cast mire and filth in our faces, we are never a whit the more deformed, but still beautiful for all that,

for "the king's daughter, "(saith Solomon, Psalm 45:13), that is, the church of Christ, "is all glorious within." *William Burton.*

Ver. 12. *Settest me before thy face for ever; or hast confirmed or established me in thy presence; i.e.* either under thine eye and special care, or to minister to thee, not only in thy temple, but as a king over thy people, or in that land where thou art peculiarly present. *Matthew Poole.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 7-12. On a sick bed a man discovers not only his enemies and his friends, but himself and his God, more intimately.

Ver. 12. This text reveals the insignia of those whom grace has distinguished.

1. Their integrity is manifest.
2. Their character is divinely sustained.
3. They dwell in the favour of God.
4. Their position is stable and continues.
5. Their eternal future is secure.

PSALM 41:13

EXPOSITION

Ver. 13. The Psalm ends with a doxology.

Blessed be the Lord, i.e., let him be glorified. The blessing at the beginning from the mouth of God is returned from the mouth of his servant. We cannot add to the Lord's blessedness, but we can pour out our grateful wishes, and these he accepts, as we receive little presents of flowers from children who love us. Jehovah is the personal name of our God. *God of Israel* is his covenant title, and shows his special relation to his elect people.

From everlasting and to everlasting. The strongest way of expressing endless duration. *We* die, but the glory of God goes on and on without pause.

Amen and amen. So let it surely, firmly, and eternally be. Thus the people joined in the Psalm by a double shout of holy affirmation; let us unite in it with all our hearts. This last verse may serve for the prayer of the universal church in all ages, but none can sing it so sweetly as those who have experienced as David did the faithfulness of God in times of extremity.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 13. *Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting, and to everlasting. Amen, and Amen.* We are here taught,

1. To give glory to God, as *the Lord God of Israel*, a God in covenant with his people; that has done great and kind things for them, and has more and better in reserve.
2. To give him glory as an eternal God, that has both his being and his blessedness *from everlasting and to everlasting*.
3. To do this with great affection and fervour of spirit, intimated in a double seal set to it, *Amen, and Amen*. We say Amen to it, and let all others say Amen too. *Matthew Henry*.

Ver. 13. *Amen and Amen.* As the Psalms were not written by one man, so neither do they form one book. The Psalter is, in fact, a Pentateuch, and the lines of demarcation, which divide the five books one from another, are clear and distinct enough. At the end of the 41st Psalm, of the 72nd, of the 89th, and of the 106th, we meet with the solemn, *Amen*, single or redoubled, following on a doxology, which indicates that one book ends and that another is about to begin. A closer study of the Psalms shows that each book possesses characteristics of its own. Jehovah ("the Lord") for example, is prominent as the divine name in the first book, Elohim ("God") in the second. *E. H. Plumptre, M.A., in "Biblical Studies," 1870.*

Ver. 13. There is also another observable difference between the two books. In the first, all those Psalms which have any inscription at all are expressly assigned to David as their author, whereas in the second we find a whole series attributed to some of the Levitical singers. *J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Ver. 13. How ancient the division is cannot now be clearly ascertained. Jerome, in his epistle to Marcella, and Epiphanius speak of the Psalms as having been divided by the Hebrews into five books, but when this division

was made they do not inform us. The forms of ascription of praise, added at the end of each of the five books, are in the Septuagint version, from which we may conclude that this distribution had been made before that version was executed. It was probably made by Ezra, after the return of the Jews from Babylon to their own country, and the establishment of the worship of God in the new temple, and it was perhaps made in imitation of a similar distribution of the books of Moses. In making this division of the Hebrew Psalter, regard appears to have been paid to the subject matter of the Psalms. *John Calvin.*

Ver. 13. These forty-one Psalms, it has been observed, forming the first book, relate chiefly to the ministry of Christ upon earth, preparing those who were looking for the consolation of Israel, for his appearing amongst them. Accordingly, the second book, commencing with Psalm 42, may refer chiefly to the infant church of Christ. *W. Wilson, D.D.*

Ver. 13. May not the growth of the Book of Psalms be illustrated by the case of our Modern Hymn Books which in the course of years require first one appendix and then another, so as to incorporate the growing psalmody of the church? In this case the purely Davidic Psalms of the first division formed the nucleus to which other sacred songs were speedily added. *C. H. S.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 13.

1. The object of praise—Jehovah, the covenant God.
2. The nature of the praise—without beginning or end.
3. Our participation in the praise—"Amen and Amen."

The ancient rabbins saw in the Five Books of the Psalter the image of the Five Books of the Law. This way of looking on the Psalms as a second Pentateuch, the echo of the first, passed over into the Christian church, and found favour with some early fathers. It has commended itself to the acceptance of good recent expositors, like Dr. Delitzsch, who calls the Psalter "the congregation's five fold word to the Lord, even as the *Thora* (the Law) is the Lord's five fold word to the Congregation." This may be mere fancy, but its existence from ancient times shows that the five fold division attracted early notice. *William Binnie, D.D.*

God presented Israel with the Law, a Pentateuch, and grateful Israel responded with a Psalter, a Pentateuch of praise. *F.L.K.*

HERE ENDETH THE FIRST BOOK OF THE PSALMS

PSALM 42

PSALM 42:1

Title. To the chief Musician, Maschil, for the sons of Korah. Dedicated to the Master of Music, this Psalm is worthy of his office; he who can sing best can have nothing better to sing. It is called, Maschil, or an instructive ode; and full as it is of deep experimental expressions, it is eminently calculated to instruct those pilgrims whose road to heaven is of the same trying kind as David's was. It is always edifying to listen to the experience of a thoroughly gracious and much afflicted saint.

That choice band of singers, the sons of Korah, are bidden to make this delightful Psalm one of their peculiars. They had been spared when their father and all his company, and all the children of his associates were swallowed up alive in their sin. Numbers 27:11. They were the spared ones of sovereign grace. Preserved, we know not why, by the distinguishing favour of God, it may be surmised that after their remarkable election to mercy, they became so filled with gratitude that they addicted themselves to sacred music in order that their spared lives might be consecrated to the glory of God. At any rate, we who have been rescued as they were from going down into the pit, out of the mere good pleasure of Jehovah, can heartily join in this Psalm, and indeed in all the songs which show forth the praises of our God and the pantings of our hearts after him. Although David is not mentioned as the author, this Psalm must be the offspring of his pen; it is so Davidic, it smells of the son of Jesse, it bears the marks of his style and experience in every letter. We could sooner doubt the authorship of the second part of Pilgrim's Progress than question David's title to be the composer of this Psalm.

Subject. It is the cry of a man far removed from the outward ordinances and worship of God, sighing for the long loved house of his God; and at the same time it is the voice of a spiritual believer, under depressions, longing for the renewal of the divine presence, struggling with doubts and fears, but yet holding his ground by faith in the living God. Most of the Lord's family have sailed on the sea which is here so graphically described.

It is probable that David's flight from Absalom may have been the occasion for composing this Maschil.

Division. The structure of the song directs us to consider it in two parts which end with the same refrain; Psalm 42:1-5 and then Psalm 42:6-11.

EXPOSITION

Ver. 1. *As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.* As after a long drought the poor fainting hind longs for the streams, or rather as the hunted hart instinctively seeks after the river to lave its smoking flanks and to escape the dogs, even so my weary, persecuted soul pants after the Lord my God. Debarred from public worship, David was heartsick. Ease he did not seek, honour he did not covet, but the enjoyment of communion with God was an urgent need of his soul; he viewed it not merely as the sweetest of all luxuries, but as an absolute necessity, like water to a stag. Like the parched traveller in the wilderness, whose skin bottle is empty, and who finds the wells dry, he must drink or die—he must have his God or faint. His *soul*, his very self, his deepest life, was insatiable for a sense of the divine presence. As the hart brays so his soul prays. Give him his God and he is as content as the poor deer which at length slakes its thirst and is perfectly happy; but deny him his Lord, and his heart heaves, his bosom palpitates, his whole frame is convulsed, like one who gasps for breath, or pants with long running. Dear reader, dost thou know what this is, by personally having felt the same? It is a sweet bitterness. The next best thing to living in the light of the Lord's love is to be unhappy till we have it, and to pant hourly after it—hourly, did I say? thirst is a perpetual appetite, and not to be forgotten, and even thus continual is the heart's longing after God. When it is as natural for us to long for God as for an animal to thirst, it is well with our souls, however painful our feelings. We may learn from this verse that the eagerness of our desires may be pleaded with God, and the more so, because there are special promises for the importunate and fervent.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Title. *"Sons of Korah."* Who were *the sons of Korah*? These opinions have more or less prevailed. One is that they sprang from some one of that name in the days of David. Mudge and others think that the sons of Korah were a society of musicians, founded or presided over by Korah. Others think

that the sons of Korah were the surviving descendants of that miserable man who, together with two hundred and fifty of his adherents, who were princes, perished when "the earth opened her mouth and swallowed them up, together with Korah." In Numbers 26:11 we read: "Notwithstanding the children of Korah died not." They had taken the warning given, and had departed from the tents of these wicked men. Numbers 16:24,26. It must be admitted that the name *Korah* and the patronymic *Korahite* are found in the Scriptures in a way that creates considerable doubt respecting the particular man from whom the Korahites are named. See 1 Chronicles 1:35 2:43 6:22,54 9:19 26:1 2 Chronicles 20:19. Yet the more common belief is that they descended from him who perished in his gainsaying. This view is taken by Ainsworth with entire confidence, by Gill, and others. Korah, who perished, was a Levite. Whatever may have been their origin, it is clear *the sons of Korah* were a Levitical family of singers. Nothing, then, could be more appropriate than the dedication of a sacred song to these very people. *William S. Plumer.*

Title. "*Sons of Korah.*" The "*Korah*" whose "*sons*" are here spoken of, is the Levite who headed the insurrection against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. Numbers 16:1-50. We find his descendants existing as a powerful Levitical family in the time of David, at least, if they are to be identified, as is probable, with the Korahites mentioned in 1 Chronicles 12:6, who, like our own warlike bishops of former times, seem to have known how to doff the priestly vestment for the soldier's armour, and whose hand could wield the sword as well as strike the harp. The Korahites were a part of the band who acknowledged David as their chief, at Ziklag; warriors "whose faces, "it is said, "were like the faces of lions, and who were (for speed) like gazelles upon the mountains." According to 1 Chronicles 9:17-19, the Korahites were in David's time, keepers of the threshold of the tabernacle; and still earlier, in the time of Moses, watchmen at the entrance of the camp of the Levites. In 1 Chronicles 26:1-19, we find two branches of this family associated with that of Merari, as guardians of the doors of the Temple. There is probably an allusion to this their office, in Psalm 84:10. But the Korahites were also celebrated musicians and singers; see 1 Chronicles 6:16-33, where Heman, one of the three famous musicians of the time, is said to be a Korahite (compare 1 Chronicles 25:1-31). The musical reputation of the family continued in the time of Jehoshaphat 2 Chronicles 20:19, where we have the peculiar

doubly plural form (𐤀𐤓𐤕𐤁 𐤕𐤓𐤕𐤁 𐤕𐤓𐤕𐤁), "Sons of the Korahites." *J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Title. *"Sons of Korah."* Medieval writers remark how here, as so often, it was the will of God to raise up saints where they could have been least looked for. Who should imagine that from the posterity of him who said, "Ye take too much upon you, ye sons of Aaron, "should have risen those whose sweet Psalms would be the heritage of the church of God to the end of time? *J. M. Neale.*

Ver. 1. *The hart panteth after the water brooks.* And here we have started up, and have sent leaping over the plain another of Solomon's favourites. What elegant creatures these gazelles are, and how gracefully they bound! ...The sacred writers frequently mention gazelles under the various names of harts, roes, and hinds...I have seen large flocks of these panting harts gather round the water brooks in the great deserts of Central Syria, so subdued by thirst that you could approach quite near them before they fled. *W. M. Thomson.*

Ver. 1. Little do the drunkards think that take so much pleasure in frequenting the houses of Bacchus, that the godly take a great deal more, and have a great deal more joy in frequenting the houses of God. But it is a thing that God promised long ago by the prophet: "Then will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people." Isaiah 56:7. And I think, I hear the willing people of God's power, merrily calling one to another in the words of Micah 4:2, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." How is a godly man ravished with "the beauty of holiness, "when he is at such meetings! How was holy David taken with being in the house of God at Jerusalem! insomuch, that if he were kept from it but a little while, his soul panted for it, and longed after it, and fainted for lack of it, as a thirsty hart would do for lack of water!

As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God? The poor disconsolate captives preferred it to the

best place in their memory. "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning." Psalm 137:5; nay, they preferred it to their chiefest joy: "If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy," Psalm 42:6. There was no place in the world that David regarded or cared to be in in comparison of it. "A day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness" Psalm 84:10, insomuch, that he could find it in his heart, nay, and would choose, if he might have his desire, to spend all his days in that house. Psalm 27:4. *Zachary Bogan.*

Ver. 1. The soul strongly desires acquaintance with God here in his ordinances. Chrysostom's very rhetorical upon the text, and tells us how that David, like a lover in absence, must express his affection; as they have their dainty sighs, and passionate complaints, their loving exclamations, and sundry discoveries of affection; they can meet with never a tree, but in the bark of it they must engrave the name of their darling, Δεινὸς δ' ὁ ἔρως ὁ κιττὸς αὐτὸν ἐκ πάσης ἀναδῆραι προφάσεως; it will twine upon every opportunity, as the Moralist speaks. And the true lovers of God, they are always thinking upon him, sighing for him, panting after him, talking of him, and (if it were possible) would engrave the name of the Lord Jesus upon the breasts of all the men in the world. Look upon David, now a banished man, and fled from the presence of Saul, and see how he behaves himself: not like Themistocles or Camillus, or some of those brave banished worthies. He does not complain of the ungratefulness of his country, the malice of his adversaries, and his own unhappy success. No, instead of murmuring, he falls a panting, and that only after his God. He is banished from the sanctuary, the palace of God's nearest presence, and chiefest residence; he cannot enjoy the beauty of holiness, and all other places seem to him but as the tents of Kedar. He is banished from the temple, and he thinks himself banished from his God, as it is in the following words,

When shall I come and appear before God? The whole stream of expositors run this way, that it is meant of his strong longing to visit the Temple, and those amiable courts of his God, with which his soul was so much taken. *Nathanael Culverwel's "Panting Soul," 1652.*

Ver. 1-3. are an illustration of the frequent use of the word Elohim in the second book of Psalms. We give Fry's translation of the first three verses.

*As the hart looketh for the springs of water,
So my soul looketh for thee, O Elohim.*

*My soul is athirst for Elohim for the living El:
When shall I go and see the face of Elohim?*

*My tears have been my meat day and night,
While they say to me continually, Where is thy Elohim?*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 1. The longing heart and the panting hart compared.

Ver. 1,2. Those who have enjoyed the presence of God in the public ordinances of religion will greatly desire, if deprived of them, to be favoured with them again...Prevention from attending the public ordinances of God's house may be made the means of great benefit to the soul.

1. By renewing our relish for the provisions of the Lord's house, which so soon and so often palls.
2. By making us to prize the means of grace more highly. There is, through human degeneracy, a proneness to value things less, however excellent in themselves, because of their being common, or plentiful, or of easy attainment.
3. By driving us more directly from God. *H. March.*

Ver. 1-3. The home sickness of the soul. What awakens it in the soul? To what is it directed, or does it point or tend? Wherewith can it be satisfied? By the bitter, but oftentimes wholesome food of tears. *J. P. Lange.*

WORKS UPON THE FORTY-SECOND PSALM

A Practical Exposition of the Forty-second Psalm, in ten Sermons, in *Choice and Practical Expositions on four select Psalms*. Psalms 4, 42, 51, 63. By THOMAS HORTON, D.D. 1675. Folio.

Sabbaths at Home: or, a help to their right improvement; founded on the Forty-second and Forty-third Psalms. Intended for the use of pious

persons when prevented from attending the public worship of God. By HENRY MARCH. London: 1823.

On the eleventh verse of this Psalm there are the following works: —

Twelve Sermons, in "*A Cordial for a Fainting Soule.*" By JOHN COLLINGS. 1652. Part 2, pp. 133-206.

Thirteen Sermons in the works of WILLIAM BRIDGE (1600-1670), entitled, "*A Lifting Up for the Downcast.*" Volume 2, of the edition of 1845.

Comfort and Counsel for Dejected Souls. By JOHN DURANT. 8vo. 1651.

The Soul's Conflict with Itself. By RICHARD SIBBES. (Numerous old editions). In Sibbes' Works, Nichol's Puritan Series, vol. I.

PSALM 42:2

EXPOSITION

Ver. 2. *My soul.* All my nature, my inmost self. *Thirsteth.* Which is more than hungering; hunger you can palliate, but thirst is awful, insatiable, clamorous, deadly. O to have the most intense craving after the highest good! this is no questionable mark of grace.

For God. Not merely for the temple and the ordinances, but for fellowship with God himself. None but spiritual men can sympathise with this thirst.

For the living God. Because he lives, and gives to men the living water; therefore we, with greater eagerness, desire him. A dead God is a mere mockery; we loathe such a monstrous deity; but the ever living God, the perennial fountain of life and light and love, is our soul's desire. What are gold, honour, pleasure, but dead idols? May we never pant for these.

When shall I come and appear before God? He who loves the Lord loves also the assemblies wherein his name is adored. Vain are all pretences to religion where the outward means of grace have no attraction. David was never so much at home as in the house of the Lord; he was not content with private worship; he did not forsake the place where saints assemble, as the manner of some is. See how pathetically he questions as to the

prospect of his again uniting in the joyous gathering! How he repeats and reiterates his desire! After his God, his Elohim (his God to be worshipped, who had entered into covenant with him), he pined even as the drooping flowers for the dew, or the moaning turtle for her mate. It were well if all our resortings to public worship were viewed as appearances before God, it would then be a sure mark of grace to delight in them. Alas, how many appear before the minister, or their fellow men, and think that enough! "To see the face of God" is a nearer translation of the Hebrew; but the two ideas may be combined—he would see his God and be seen of him: this is worth thirsting after!

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 1-3. are an illustration of the frequent use of the word Elohim in the second book of Psalms. We give Fry's translation of the first three verses.

*As the hart looketh for the springs of water,
So my soul looketh for thee, O Elohim.*

*My soul is athirst for Elohim for the living El:
When shall I go and see the face of Elohim?*

*My tears have been my meat day and night,
While they say to me continually, Where is thy Elohim?*

Ver. 2. *My soul thirsteth for God*, etc. See that your heart rest not short of Christ in any duty. Let go your hold of no duty until you find something of Christ in it; and until you get not only an *handful*, but an *armful* (with old Simeon, Luke 2:28); yea, a *heartful* of the blessed and beautiful babe of Bethlehem therein. Indeed you should have commerce with heaven, and communion with Christ in duty, which is therefore called *the presence of God*, or your appearing before him. Exodus 23:17 Psalm 42:2. Your duties then must be as a bridge to give you passage, or as a boat to carry you over into the bosom of Christ. Holy Mr. Bradford, Martyr, said he could not leave *confession* till he found his heart touched and broken for sin; nor *supplication*, till his heart was affected with the beauty of the blessings desired; nor *thanksgiving*, till his soul was quickened in return of praises; nor *any duty*, until his heart was brought into a duty frame, and something of Christ was found therein. Accordingly Bernard speaks, *Nunquam abs te absque te recedam Domine*: I will never depart (in duty) from thee without thee, Lord. Augustine said he loved not Tully's elegant orations (as

formerly) because he could not find *Christ* in them: nor doth a gracious soul love empty duties. Rhetorical flowers and flourishes, expressions without impressions in praying or preaching, are not true bread, but a tinkling cymbal to it, and it cannot be put off with the empty spoon of aery notions, or lovely (that are not also lively) songs: if Christ talk with you in the way (of duty) your heart will burn within you. Luke 24:16,32.

Christopher Ness's "Crystal Mirror," 1679.

Ver. 2. *The living God.* There are three respects especially in which our God is said to be the *living God*. First, *originally*, because he only hath life in himself, and of himself, and all creatures have it from him. Secondly, *operatively*, because he is the only giver of life unto man. Our life, in the threefold extent and capacity of it, whether we take it for natural, or spiritual, or eternal, flows to us from God. Thirdly, God is said to be the *living God* by way of *distinction*, and in opposition to all false gods. *Thomas Horton.*

Ver. 2. (last clause). A wicked man can never say in good earnest, *When shall I come and appear before God?* because he shall do so too soon, and before he would, as the devils that said Christ came "to torment them before their time." Ask a thief and a malefactor whether he would willingly appear before the judge. No, I warrant you, not he; he had rather there were no judge at all to appear before. And so is it with worldly men in regard of God, they desire rather to be hidden from him. *Thomas Horton.*

Ver. 2. *Come and appear before God.* When any of us have been at church, and waited in the sanctuary, let us examine what did we go thither to see: a shadow of religion? An outside of Christian form? A graceful orator? The figures and shapes of devotion? Surely then we might with as much wisdom, and more innocence, have gone to the wilderness "to see a reed shaken with the wind." Can we say as the Greeks at the feast John 12:21, "We would see Jesus?" Or, as Absalom 2 Samuel 14:32, "It is to little purpose I am come to Jerusalem if I may not see the King's face." To little purpose we go to church, or attend on ordinances, if we seek not, if we see not God there. *Isaac Watts, D.D., 1674-1748.*

Ver. 2. If you attempt to put a little child off with toys and fine things, it will not be pleased long, it will cry for its mother's breast; so, let a man come into the pulpit with pretty Latin and Greek sentences, and fine stories, these will not content a hungry soul, he must have the sincere milk of the word to feed upon. *Oliver Heywood.*

Ver. 2. *When shall I come and appear before God? —*

*While I am banished from thy house
I mourn in secret, Lord;
"When shall I come and pay my vows,
And hear thy holy word?"*

*So while I dwell in bonds of clay,
Methinks my soul shall groan,
"When shall I wing my heavenly way
And stand before thy throne?"*

*I love to see my Lord below,
His church displays his grace;
But upper worlds his glory know
And view him face to face.*

*I love to worship at his feet,
Though sin attack me there,
But saints exalted near his seat
Have no assaults to fear.*

*I am pleased to meet him in his court,
And taste his heavenly love,
But still I think his visits short,
Or I too soon remove.*

*He shines, and I am all delight,
He hides and all is pain;
When will he fix me in his sight,
And never depart again?*

Isaac Watts, from his Sermons.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 1-2. Those who have enjoyed the presence of God in the public ordinances of religion will greatly desire, if deprived of them, to be favoured with them again...Prevention from attending the public ordinances of God's house may be made the means of great benefit to the soul.

- 1.** By renewing our relish for the provisions of the Lord's house, which so soon and so often palls.
- 2.** By making us to prize the means of grace more highly. There is, through human degeneracy, a proneness to value things less, however

excellent in themselves, because of their being common, or plentiful, or of easy attainment.

3. By driving us more directly from God. *H. March.*

Ver. 1-3. The home sickness of the soul. What awakens it in the soul? To what is it directed, or does it point or tend? Wherewith can it be satisfied? By the bitter, but oftentimes wholesome food of tears. *J. P. Lange.*

Ver. 2.

- 1.** What thirsts? "my soul."
- 2.** For what? "for God."
- 3.** In what way? "when shall I come."

Or, the cause, incentives, excellences, and privileges of spiritual thirst.

Ver. 2. (*last clause*). The true view of public worship.

Ver. 2. (*last clause*). Appearance before God here and hereafter. *Isaac Watts, D.D., Two Sermons.*

PSALM 42:3

EXPOSITION

Ver. 3. *My tears have been my meat day and night.* Salt meats, but healthful to the soul. When a man comes to tears, constant tears, plenteous tears, tears that fill his cup and trencher, he is in earnest indeed. As the big tears stand in the stag's eyes in her distress, so did the salt drops glitter in the eyes of David. His appetite was gone, his tears not only seasoned his meat, but became his only meat, he had no mind for other diet. Perhaps it was well for him that the heart could open the safety valves; there is a dry grief far more terrible than showery sorrows. His tears, since they were shed because God was blasphemed, were "honourable dew," "drops of holy water, such as Jehovah putteth into his bottle.

While they continually say unto me, Where is thy God? Cruel taunts come naturally from coward minds. Surely they might have left the mourner alone; he could weep no more than he did—it was a supererogation of malice to pump more tears from a heart which already overflowed. Note

how incessant was their jeer, and how artfully they framed it! It cut the good man to the bone to have the faithfulness of his God impugned. They had better have thrust needles into his eyes than have darted insinuations against his God. Shimei may here be alluded to who after this fashion mocked David as he fled from Absalom. He roundly asserted that David was a bloody man, and that God was punishing him for supplanting Saul and his house; his wish was father to his thought. The wicked know that our worst misfortune would be to lose God's favour, hence their diabolical malice leads them to declare that such is the case. Glory be to God, they lie in their throats, for our God is in the heavens, aye, and in the furnace too, succouring his people.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 1-3. are an illustration of the frequent use of the word Elohim in the second book of Psalms. We give Fry's translation of the first three verses.

*As the hart looketh for the springs of water,
So my soul looketh for thee, O Elohim.*

*My soul is athirst for Elohim for the living El:
When shall I go and see the face of Elohim?*

*My tears have been my meat day and night,
While they say to me continually, Where is thy Elohim?*

Ver. 3. *My tears have been my meat day and night.* The psalmist could eat nothing because of his extreme grief. *John Gadsby.*

Ver. 3. *They say unto me.* It is not only of me, but to me; they spake it to his very face, as those who were ready to justify it and make it good, that God had forsaken him. Backbiting argues more baseness, but open reproach carries more boldness, and shamelessness, and impudence in it; and this is that which David's enemies were guilty of here in this place. *Thomas Horton.*

Ver. 3. *Where is thy God?* God's children are impatient, as far as they are men, of reproaches; but so far as they are Christian men, they are impatient of reproaches in religion;

Where is now thy God? They were not such desperate Atheists as to think there was no God, to call in question whether there were a God or no,

though, indeed, they were little better; but they rather reproach and upbraid him with his singularity, *where is thy God?* You are one of God's darlings; you are one that thought nobody served God but you; you are one that will go alone—*your God!* So this is an ordinary reproach, an ordinary part for wicked men to cast at the best people, especially when they are in misery. What it become of your profession now? What is become of your forwardness and strictness now? What is become of your God that you bragged so of, and thought yourselves so happy in, as if he had been nobody's God but yours? We may learn hence the disposition of wicked men. It is a character of a full of poison, cursed disposition to upbraid a man with his religion. But what is the scope? The scope is worse than the words

Where is thy God? The scope is to shake his faith and his confidence in God, and this is *that* which touched him so nearly while they upbraided him. For the devil knows well enough that as long as God and the soul join together, it is in vain to trouble any man, therefore he labours to put jealousies, to accuse God to man, and man to God. He knows there is nothing in the world can stand against God. As long as we make God our confidence, all his enterprises are in vain. His scope is, therefore, to shake our affiance in God.

Where is thy God? So he dealt with the head of the church, our blessed Saviour himself, when he came to tempt him. "If thou be the Son of God, command these stones to be made bread." Matthew 4:3. He comes with an *if*, "he laboured to shake him in his Sonship. The devil, since he was divided from God himself eternally, is become a spirit of division; he labours to divide even God the Father from his own Son; *"If thou be the Son of God?"* So he labours to sever Christians from their head Christ.

Where is thy God? There was his scope, to breed division if he could, between his heart and God, that he might call God into jealousy, as if he had not regarded him: thou hast taken a great deal of pains in serving thy God; thou seest how he regards thee now; *Where is thy God?* Richard Sibbes.

Ver. 3. How powerfully do the scoffs and reproaches of the ungodly tend to shake the faith of a mind already dejected! How peculiarly afflictive to the soul that loves God, is the dishonour cast upon him by his enemies! Henry March, in *"Sabbaths at Home,"* 1823.

Ver. 3. *Where is thy God?*

*"Where is now thy God!" Oh, sorrow!
 Hourly thus to hear him say,
 Finding thus the longed for morrow,
 Mournful as the dark to day.*

*Yet not thus my soul would languish,
 Would not thus be grieved and shamed,
 But for that severer anguish,
 When I hear the Lord defamed.*

*"Where is now thy God!" Oh, aid me,
 Lord of mercy, to reply—
 "He is **HERE**—though foes invade me,
 Know his outstretched arm is nigh."*

*Help me thus to be victorious,
 While the shield of faith I take;
 Lord, appear, and make thee glorious:
 Help me for thy honour's sake. Henry March.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 1-3. The home sickness of the soul. What awakens it in the soul? To what is it directed, or does it point or tend? Wherewith can it be satisfied? By the bitter, but oftentimes wholesome food of tears. *J. P. Lange.*

Ver. 3. The believer's Lent, and its salt meats.

1. What causes the sorrow?
2. What will remove it?
3. What benefit will come of it?

Ver. 3,10. The carriage of David's enemies.

1. The *nature* of it, and that was *reproach*.
2. The *expression* of it, *They say unto me*.
3. The *constancy* of it: *daily*, or, *all the day long*.
4. The *specification* of it, in a scornful and opprobrious question: *Where is (now) thy God?* *Thomas Horton.*

PSALM 42:4

EXPOSITION

Ver. 4. *When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me.* When he harped upon his woes his heart melted into water and was poured out upon itself. God hidden, and foes raging, a pair of evils enough to bring down the stoutest heart! Yet why let reflections so gloomy engross us, since the result is of no value: merely to turn the soul on itself, to empty it from itself into itself is useless, how much better to pour out the heart before the Lord! The prisoner's tread wheel might sooner land him in the skies than mere inward questioning raise us nearer to consolation.

For I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God. Painful reflections were awakened by the memory of past joys; he had mingled in the pious throng, their numbers had helped to give him exhilaration and to awaken holy delight, their company had been a charm to him as with them he ascended the hill of Zion. Gently proceeding with holy ease, in comely procession, with frequent strains of song, he and the people of Jehovah had marched in reverent ranks up to the shrine of sacrifice, the dear abode of peace and holiness. Far away from such goodly company the holy man pictures the sacred scene and dwells upon the details of the pious march.

With the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holyday. The festive noise is in his ears, and the solemn dance before his eyes. Perhaps he alludes to the removal of the ark and to the glorious gatherings of the tribes on that grand national holy day and holiday. How changed his present place! For Zion, a wilderness; for the priests in white linen, soldiers in garments of war; for the song, the sneer of blasphemy; for the festivity, lamentation; for joy in the Lord, a mournful dirge over his absence.

*"I sigh to think of happier days
When thou, O God, wast nigh,
When every heart was tuned to praise;
And none more blest than I."*

When in a foreign land, amid the idolatries of Popery, we have felt just the same home sickness for the house of the Lord which is here described; we have said, "Ziona, Ziona, our holy and beautiful house, when shall I see

thee again? Thou church of the living God, my mother, my home, when shall I hear thy psalms and holy prayers, and once again behold the Lord in the midst of his people" David appears to have had a peculiarly tender remembrance of *the singing* of the pilgrims, and assuredly it is the most delightful part of worship and that which comes nearest to the adoration of heaven. What a degradation to supplant the intelligent song of the whole congregation by the theatrical prettiness of a quartet, the refined niceties of a choir, or the blowing off of wind from inanimate bellows and pipes! We might as well pray by machinery as praise by it.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 4. *When I remember these things*, etc. To a person in misery it is a great increase of misery to have been once happy: it was to David an occasion of new tears when he remembered his former joys. Time was, says the poor soul, when I thought of God with comfort, and when I thought of him as my own God; and to lose a God that I once enjoyed is the loss of all my losses, and of all my terrors the most terrible. Time was when I could go and pray to him, and ease myself in prayer; but now I have no boldness, no hope, no success in prayer. I cannot call him *my Father* any more. Time was when I could read the Bible and treasure up the promises, and survey the land of Canaan as my own inheritance; but now I dare not look into the Word lest I read my own condemnation there. The Sabbath was formerly to me as one of the days of heaven, but now it is also, as well as the rest, a sad and mournful day. I formerly rejoiced in the name of Christ, "I sat under his shadow." Song of Solomon 2:3. I was in his eyes as one that found favour; but now my soul is like the deserts of Arabia, I am scorched with burning heat. From how great a height have I fallen! How fair was I once for heaven and for salvation, and now am like to come short of it! I once was flourishing in the courts of the Lord, and now all my fruit is blasted and withered away: "his dew lay all night upon my branches, "but now I am like the mountains of Gilboa, no rain falls upon me. Had I never heard of heaven I could not have been so miserable as I now am: had I never known God, the loss of him had not been so terrible as now it is like to be. Job 29:2-3. *Timothy Rogers*.

Ver. 4. (*first clause*). The blessedness of even the remembrance of divine worship is so great, that it can save the soul from despair. *J. P. Lange's Commentary*.

Ver. 4. *I pour out my soul.* The very soul of prayer lies in the pouring out of the soul before God. *Thomas Brooks.*

Ver. 4. *I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holyday.* The gracious God is pleased to esteem it his glory to have many beggars thronging at the beautiful gate of his temple, for spiritual and corporal alms. What an honour is it to our great Landlord that multitudes of tenants flock together to his house to pay their rent of thanks and worship for their all which they hold of him! How loud and lovely is the noise of many golden trumpets! Good Lord, what an echo do they make in heaven's ears! When many skilful musicians play in concert with well tuned and prepared instruments the music cannot but be ravishing to God himself. *George Swinnock.*

Ver. 4. Do but consider David's tears and grief for want of, and his fervent prayers for the fruition of public ordinances even then, when he had opportunities for private performances; and surely thou wilt esteem the ministry of the Word no mean mercy. See his sorrow when he was driven from God's sanctuary.

When I remember these things I pour out my soul in me: for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God." "My soul is poured out; that is, I am overwhelmed with grief, and ever ready to die when I compare my present condition with my former happiness in the fruition of religious assemblies. There is an elegancy in the phrase *poured out*; the word is applied to water, or any liquid thing, and in Scripture signifieth abundance. Joel 2:28. My life is ready to be poured out as water upon the ground, which cannot be gathered up again, when I remember my former mercies, and consider my present misery...The loss of his father, mother, wives, children, lands, liberty—nay, of his very life, would not have gone so near his heart as the loss of public ordinances. As his sorrow was great for the want, so was his suit most earnest for the enjoyment of them. How many a prayer doth he put up for the liberty of the tabernacle! Psalm 43:3-4 27:4,8. It is the one thing, the principal thing which he begs of God. *Henry Smith.*

Ver. 4. The bias of the soul is remarkably shown by the objects of regretful recollection. *Henry March.*

Ver. 4. *With a multitude that kept holy day.*

*Though private prayer be a brave design
 Yet public hath more promises, more love:
 And love's a weight to hearts, to eyes a sign.
 We all are but cold suitors; let us move
 Where it is warmest. Leave thy six and seven;
 Pray with the most: for where most pray, is heaven.*

George Herbert, in "The Temple."

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 4.

1. It is common for the mind, in seasons of sorrow, to seek relief from the present in recollections of the past.
2. In recollections of past enjoyments, those that relate to social worship will be peculiarly dear to the servant of God.
3. Man is a social being, hence he derives help from united worship.

Ver. 4. *I pour out my soul in me.* The uselessness of mistrustful introspection.

Ver. 4. *I had gone with the multitude,* etc. Company, if it be that which is good, is a very blessed and comfortable accommodation in sundry respects.

1. It is an exercise of men's faculties, and the powers and abilities of the mind.
2. It is a fence against danger, and a preservative against sadness and various temptations.
3. An opportunity of doing more good. *Thomas Horton.*

Ver. 4. *I had gone,* etc. Sunny memories, their lessons of gratitude and hope.

Ver. 4 (*last clause*). Not Chaucer's tales of the Canterbury pilgrims, but David's tales of the Jerusalem pilgrims.

Ver. 4. *With the voice,* etc. Congregational singing defended, extolled, discriminated, and urged.

PSALM 42:5

EXPOSITION

Ver. 5. *Why art thou cast down, O my soul?* As though he were two men, the psalmist talks to himself. His faith reasons with his fears, his hope argues with his sorrows. These present troubles, are they to last forever? The rejoicings of my foes, are they more than empty talk? My absence from the solemn feasts, is that a perpetual exile? Why this deep depression, this faithless fainting, this chicken hearted melancholy? As Trapp says, "David chides David out of the dumps; "and herein he is an example for all desponding ones. To search out the cause of our sorrow is often the best surgery for grief. Self ignorance is not bliss; in this case it is misery. The mist of ignorance magnifies the causes of our alarm; a clearer view will make monsters dwindle into trifles.

Why art thou disquieted within me? Why is my quiet gone? If I cannot keep a public Sabbath, yet wherefore do I deny my soul her indoor Sabbath? Why am I agitated like a troubled sea, and why do my thoughts make a noise like a tumultuous multitude? The causes are not enough to justify such utter yielding to despondency. Up, my heart! What aileth thee? Play the man, and thy castings down shall turn to up liftings, and thy disquietudes to calm.

Hope thou in God. If every evil be let loose from Pandora's box, yet is there hope at the bottom. This is the grace that swims, though the waves roar and be troubled. God is unchangeable, and therefore his grace is the ground for unshaken hope. If everything be dark, yet the day will come, and meanwhile hope carries stars in her eyes; her lamps are not dependent on oil from without, her light is fed by secret visitations of God, which sustain the spirit.

For I shall yet praise him. Yet will my sighs give place to songs, my mournful ditties shall be exchanged for triumphal paeans. A loss of the present sense of God's love is not a loss of that love itself; the jewel is there, though it gleams not on our breast; hope knows her title good when she cannot read it clear; she expects the promised boon though present providence stands before her with empty hands.

For I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance. Salvations come from the propitious face of God, and he will yet lift up his countenance upon us. Note well that the main hope and chief desire of David rest in the smile of God. His face is what he seeks and hopes to see, and this will recover his low spirits, this will put to scorn his laughing enemies, this will restore to him all the joys of those holy and happy days around which memory lingers. This is grand cheer. This verse, like the singing of Paul and Silas, looses chains and shakes prison walls. He who can use such heroic language in his gloomy hours will surely conquer. In the garden of hope grow the laurels for future victories, the roses of coming joy, the lilies of approaching peace.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 5. See also on Psalm 42:11 43:5.

Ver. 5. WHY *art thou cast down, O my soul?* Athanasius counselled his friend, that when any trouble should fall upon him, he should fall presently to the reading of this Psalm; for there was a way, he thought, of curing by the like, as well as by the *contrary*: for it is observed indeed that when two instruments are tuned to the same unison, if you touch the strings of the one, the strings of the other will move too, though untouched, if placed at a convenient distance. That therefore you may try the same experiments upon yourselves, do but set your affections for a tune in the same key in which these words were spoken; if really you *feel* none, imagine some affliction laid upon you; when you have done so, that you may be the more fully moved, place your attention at a convenient distance, look narrowly on this holy prophet, observe how he retires himself, shuts out the world, calls his sad soul to as sad a reckoning: *Quare tam tristis?* O my soul! thou that wert infused to give me life; nay, says Philo the Jew, a spark, a beam of the divinity, thou, which shouldest be to this dark body of mine as the sun is to the earth, enlightening, quickening, cheering up my spirits; tell me, why art *thou* clouded? why art *thou* cast down? ...

Think of this, ye that feel the heaviness of your soul; think of it, ye that do not, for ye may feel it. Know there is a sorrow "that worketh repentance not to be repented of." Know again there is a sorrow "that worketh death." Remember that there were tears that got sinful Mary heaven; remember again there were tears that got sinful Esau *nothing*. For as in martyrdom, it is not the sword, the boiling lead, or fire, not *what* we suffer, but *why*, that

makes us martyrs; so in our sorrows, it is not how deep they wound, but *why*, that justifies them. Let every one, therefore, that hath a troubled heart, ask his soul the "*Why*:" "*Why art thou cast down?*" Is it not for thine own sins, or the sins of others? Take either of them, thine eyes will have a large field to water. Is it for that thou hast been a child of wrath, a servant of the devil? Is it for that thou art a candle set in the wind, blown at by several temptations? or is it for that thou wouldst be freed from them? "Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!" Psalm 120:5. Art thou troubled as St. Augustine was, when he read that the way to heaven was narrow, the number small that travelled thither? Or hast thou put on St. Bernard's resolution, who had made a compact with his soul, never to joy till he had heard his Saviour call him, "Come ye blessed, "nor never to leave sorrowing till he had escaped the bitter sentence, "Go, ye cursed?" If any of these be the *Why*, the ground of thy sorrows, if such thoughts have *cast thee down*; know, that thy Saviour hath already blessed thee, for "Blessed are they that mourn." The angels are thy servants, they gather thy tears; God is thy treasurer, he lays them up in his bottle; the Holy Ghost is thy comforter, he will not leave thee. Fear not, then, to be thus *cast down*, fear not to be thus *disquieted within thee*. Brian Duppa (Bishop), 1588-1662, in a Sermon entitled "*The Soule's Soloquie*."

Ver. 5. *Why art thou cast down, O my soul?* Why, or what may be the reason, that this text is three times used in this Psalm and in the next? whereas you do not find two verses of the same length used in all the Book of Psalms besides, except in Psalm 107, where is often repeated, "O that men would praise the Lord, "etc. Now, surely the frequent mention of this text and words doth argue and note unto us the weightiness of the matter...Wicked men oppressed David, and the devil tempted him; yet he chides his own heart and nothing else. David did not chide at Saul, nor chide at Absalom; but he chides and checks his own heart. "Why art thou cast down, O my soul?" Though the devil and wicked men, the one do tempt, the other do oppress as instruments of punishment for sin; yet we with David are to chide our own hearts. Consider, what though in our translations the words are translated and rendered passively, *Why art thou cast down?* yet, in the original, they are rendered actively; we read it, *Why art thou cast down?* etc; but in the original it is read, (yl [;ymh,TAhmę yvpj yj j yOvTAhm) "*Why bowest (or pressest) thou down thyself, my soul? and why tumultest thou against me?*" As Arias Montanus, *Cur*

humiliasti te? Cur deprimes te anima mea? So Lorinus, Proverbs 12:25. And the words so read, they do not intimate thus much, that God's own people may be cast down too much for the sense of sin, and they are most active in their own down casting. It is not God nor the devil that cast thee down; but *Why dost thou cast thyself down?* to create more trouble on thyself than either God doth inflict or the devil tempt thee to. *Christopher Love, in "The Dejected Soul's Cure, "1657.*

Ver. 5. *Why art thou cast down, O my soul?* Consider but this, how much there is of God in the affliction.

1. Came it not without *God's privity*? Why art thou troubled, then? Thy Father knowing of it would have stopped its course if it had been best for thee.
2. Came it not *without his command*? Why art thou troubled? It is the cup that thy Father hath given thee, and wilt thou not drink it?
3. Is it thy Father's will that thou shouldest suffer, and shall it be thy humour to rebel?
4. Hath God done *no more than he might do*? Why dost thou murmur, as if he had done thee wrong?
5. Is it a piece of his *wise acting*? Why dost thou exalt thy foolish will above his infinite wisdom?
6. Is his way *a way of mercy*? Why does thy mutinous spirits tumble at it, as a rough way?
7. Is the thing *good* that is befallen thee? Why dost thou quarrel as if it were evil?
8. Is it *less than men suffer*, than his own people, yea, than his own Son hath suffered, and hast thou cause to complain?
9. Is it but *thy merit*? and less than that, too; and shall the living man complain for the punishment of his sin?
10. Is it *in measure*, ordered with care?
 - (1) by the physician's hand; and
 - (2) a little draught, and
 - (3) proportioned to thy strength;

(4) measured out according to the proportion of strength and comfort he intends to measure thee out, to bear it withal?

Why are thou cast down? Why art thou disquieted? Is the end and fruit of it but to make thee white, and purify thee? to purge thy sin past, and to prevent it for the time to come? and dost thou find a present fruit in it? Dost thou find that now thou art turned into a chalk stone; thy groves and images—those corruptions which did attend thee while thou wert in prosperity, and which would attend thee if you had those good things which you want, and are disquieted for; and if those evils which you feel or fear were far from your sense and fear, would still attend thee—that those do not now stand up? Lift up thy head, Christian! say to thy soul, *Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me?* Meditate what there is of God in the cause of thy disquietments. *John Collinge (1623-1690) in "A Cordial for a Fainting Soule, " 1652.*

Ver. 5. *Why art thou disquieted?* more literally, *tumultuated*, a word frequently applied to the roaring and tumult and tossing of the sea. See Isaiah 17:12 Jeremiah 5:22 6:23 51:55. *Henry March.*

Ver. 5. *Hope thou in God.* I shall show what powerful influence *hope* hath on the Christian in affliction, and how. First, it stills and silences him under affliction. It keeps the king's peace in the heart, which else would soon be in an uproar. A hopeless soul is clamorous: one while it charges God, another while it reviles his instruments. It cannot long rest, and no wonder, when hope is not there. Hope hath a rare art in stilling a froward spirit, when nothing else can; as the mother can make the crying child quiet by laying it to the breast, when the rod makes it cry worse. This way David took, and found it effectual; when his soul was unquiet by reason of his present affliction, he lays it to the breast of the promise: "Why art thy cast down O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God." And here his soul sweetly sleeps, as the child with the breast in his mouth; and that this was his usual way, we may think by the frequent instances we find; thrice we find him taking this course in two Psalms, 42 and 43...Secondly, this hope fills the afflicted soul with such inward joy and consolation, that it can laugh while tears are in the eye, sigh and sing all in a breath; it is called "the rejoicing of hope," Hebrews 3:6. And hope never affords more joy than in affliction. It is on a watery cloud that the sun paints those curious colours in the rainbow...There are two graces, which Christ useth above any other, to fill the soul with joy—faith and hope,

because these two fetch all their wine of joy without door. Faith tells the soul what Christ hath done for it; and so comforts it; hope revives the soul with the news of what Christ will do: both draw at one tap—Christ and his promise. *Condensed from William Gurnall.*

Ver. 5. *Hope thou in God.* The word which is here rendered, *hope* denotes that *expectation* which is founded on faith in God, and which leads the soul to *wait* upon him. The idea is beautifully expressed in Psalm 39:7. "And now, Lord, what wait I for? my hope is in thee." *Henry March.*

Ver. 5. *I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance.* When it may be said, "He whom God loveth is sick," then it may be said, "This sickness is not unto death;" and though it be to the first death, yet not to the second. Who would think when Jonah was in the sea Jonah 3:1-10, that he would preach at Nineveh? Who would think when Nebuchadnezzar was in the forest Daniel 4:1-37, that he should reign again in Babel? Who would think when Joseph was banished of his brethren, that his brethren should seek unto him like his servants? Who would think when Job scraped his sores upon the dunghill, all his houses were burned, all his cattle stolen, and all his children dead, that he should be richer than ever he was? These are the acts of mercy which make the righteous sing, "The Lord hath triumphed valiantly." Exodus 15-21. *Henry Smith.*

Ver. 5. *I shall yet praise him.* David's mind is upon the *duty* more than upon the *mercy*; upon the *duty*, as it is a matter of *grace*, more than upon the *mercy*, as it is a matter of *sense*. And, therefore, by a happy mistake, his tongue slips, as men are wont to do in such cases, and he puts one for the other; when he should say, *I shall receive mercy from God*, he says, *I shall give praise to him.* *Thomas Horton.*

Ver. 5. He is the skilful physician, who at the same time that he evacuates the disease, doth also comfort and strengthen nature; and he the true Christian, that doth not content himself with a bare laying aside evil customs and practices, but labours to walk in the exercise of the contrary graces. Art thou discomposed with impatience, haunted with a discontented spirit under any affliction? Think it not enough to silence thy heart from quarrelling with God, but leave not till thou canst bring it sweetly to rely on God. Holy David drove it thus far, he did not only chide his soul for being disquieted, but he charges it to trust in God. *William Gurnall.*

Ver. 5. There was one Alice Benden, who, among others, was imprisoned for religion in Canterbury Castle; but after awhile, by the bishop's order, she was let down into a deep dungeon, where none of her friends could come at her. There she was fed with an halfpenny bread, and a farthing beer a day, neither would they allow her any more for her money. Her lodging was upon a little straw, between a pair of stocks and a stone wall. This made her grievously to bewail and lament her estate, reasoning with herself, why her Lord God did in so heavy a wise afflict her, and suffered her thus to be sequestered from the sweet society of her loving prison fellows. In this extremity of misery, and in the midst of these dolorous mournings she continued, till on a night, repeating that of the psalmist: *"Why art thou so heavy, O my soul? and why art thou so cast down within me? Still trust in God,"* etc.; and, *God's right hand can change all this,* etc.; she received comfort in the midst of her sorrows, and so continued joyful to the time of her release. *Samuel Clarke's "Mirror."*

Ver. 5,11. In case thou art at any time oppressed with sorrows, ask thy heart and soul that question which David did in the like case twice in one Psalm: *Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me?* and certainly the soul would return answer, My distress of sadness springs from my unbelief. You may know the disease by the cure, in the very next words,

O put thy trust in God; hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God. All sorrow of heart springs principally from our unbelief, not from the greatness of other evils; I mean, *destructive* sorrow, for godly sorrow is a friend to godly joy. It is not so much the weight of the burden, as the soreness of the back, that troubles the poor beast: so it is not so much the weight of outward evils, as the inward soreness of a galled conscience, not purified nor healed by faith, that vexes and troubles the poor creature. *Matthew Lawrence, in "The Use and Practice of Faith," 1657.*

Ver. 5,11. As afflictions do proceed from ourselves, they may be called troubles, or perturbations; for the best man doth sometimes cause this bad liquor to boil out of his own bowels. David, not once, but often, hath cried out,

Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? And show me the man that annoys and troubles not himself in vain, because with patience he doth not tarry the Lord's leisure? The foolish bird,

who, being in a room whose door is locked, and the casements shut, beateth herself against the wall and windows, breaking her feathers and bruising her body, whereas, would she stay till the passages were by the keeper opened, she might depart, being not at all wounded; even so falleth it out with us: for when the Lord doth shut us up, and straiten our liberty for a time, we would fain make way for ourselves, having many devices in our hearts to break through the walls of his providence; whereas, if we would stay his leisure, depend on his promise, and submit ourselves to be disposed of by his hand, we might with more ease endure this prison, and with less hurt at the last be set at liberty. For God is in one mind, and who can change him? He will bring to pass that thing that he hath decreed upon us. *John Barlow's Sermon, 1618.*

Ver. 5,11. If you would get assurance, spend more time in strengthening your evidences for heaven, than in questioning of them. It is the great fault of many Christians they will spend much time in questioning, and not in strengthening their comforts. They will reason themselves into unbelief, and say, Lord, why should I believe? Why should I take hold of a promise that am so unholy and so unmortified a creature? And so by this they reason themselves to such a pass that they dare not lay hold upon Christ, whereas it should be your work to reason yourselves into Christ as much as you can. Labour to strengthen your comforts, and reason thus, Why should I not believe in Christ? Thus David did. Psalm 42. *"Why art thou troubled, O my soul, and why art thou cast down within me?"* Is not the mercy of God more than sin in the creature? Is not there free grace where there is guilt? Are not there pardoning mercies where condemnation is deserved? You should reason up your comforts rather than reason them down, and spend more time in strengthening than in questioning of them. You would count him a very unwise man that hath a lease of so much land, and he himself shall create scruples and doubts, and shall use no means to make his title good. And truly many Christians are as unwise for heaven. They have, as I may say, good bond and seal that God will bring them to heaven, and yet they will question and cavil themselves into unbelief. Beloved, this should not be, but you ought rather to strengthen your comforts than question them. *Christopher Love.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 5. Sorrow put to the question, or the Consolatory Catechism.

Ver. 5. The sweetness, safety, and rightness of hope *in* God. Good grip for the anchor.

Ver. 5. The music of the future, *I shall yet praise him.*

Ver. 5. *The help of his countenance*, or the sustaining power of God's presence.

Ver. 5. *Why art thou cast down?*

1. The mind, even of a holy man, may be unduly cast down and disquieted.
2. In cases of undue dejection and disquietude, the proper remedy is to expostulate with the soul, and to direct it to the *only true source* of relief.
3. Expostulation with the soul in times of distress, is then productive of its proper end, when it leads to an immediate application to God. *H. March.*

Ver. 5. An emphasis of *enquiry or examination*; David calls himself to account for his present passion and trouble of mind. An emphasis of *reproof or objurgation*; David chides and rebukes himself for his present distemper. "*Why art thou thus?*" *Thomas Horton.*

Ver. 5,11. or *help and health.*

PSALM 42:6

EXPOSITION

Ver. 6. *O my God, my soul is cast down within me.* Here the song begins again upon the bass. So sweet an ending deserves that for the sake of a second hopeful close the Psalm should even begin again. Perhaps the psalmist's dejection continued, the spasm of despondency returned; well, then, he will down with his harp again, and try again its power upon himself, as in his younger days, he saw its influence upon Saul when the evil spirit came upon him. With God the song begins a second time more nearly than at first. The singer was also a little more tranquil. Outward expression of desire was gone; there was no visible panting; the sorrow was not all restrained within doors. Within or upon himself he was cast

down; and, verily, it may well be so, while our thoughts look more within than upward. If self were to furnish comfort, we should have but poor provender. There is no solid foundation for comfort in such fickle frames as our heart is subject to. It is well to tell the Lord how we feel, and the more plain the confession the better: David talks like a sick child to its mother, and we should learn to imitate him.

Therefore will I remember thee. It is well to fly to our God. Here is *terra firma*. Blessed down casting which drives us to so sure a rock of refuge as thee, O Lord! *From the hill Mizar.* He recalls his seasons of choice communion by the river and among the hills, and especially that dearest hour upon the little hill, where love spake her sweetest language and revealed her nearest fellowship. It is great wisdom to store up in memory our choice occasions of converse with heaven; we may want them another day, when the Lord is slow in bringing back his banished ones, and our soul is aching with fear. "His love in times past" has been a precious cordial to many a fainting one; like soft breath it has fanned the smoking flax into a flame, and bound up the bruised reed. Oh, never to be forgotten valley of Achor, thou art a door of hope! Fair days, now gone, ye have left a light behind you which cheers our present gloom. Or does David mean that even where he was he would bethink him of his God; does he declare that, forgetful of time and place, he would count Jordan as sacred as Siloa, Hermon as holy as Zion, and even Mizar, that insignificant rising ground as glorious as the mountains which are round about Jerusalem! Oh! it is a heavenly heart which can sing

*"To me remains nor place nor time;
my country is in every clime;
I can be calm and free from care
On any shore, since God is there."*

*"Could I be cast where thou art not,
That were indeed a dreadful lot,
But regions none remote I call,
Secure of finding God in all."*

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 6. *O my God, my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember thee.* "Because I am very low in spirit, am deeply sorrowful, *therefore* will I remember thee. I will remember how condescending thou

art to thy `poor and afflicted people; 'how ready to receive them when deserted or cast out by men; how kind and patient to hear their complaint when they pour out the soul before thee. I will remember thy lovingkindness to *me* in seasons past; how thou hast looked on my distress, hast heard the voice of my supplications, hast delivered me from my trials, or helped me to bear their burden, strengthening me with strength in my soul. I will remember all that I have enjoyed of thy presence when waiting on thee in thy house, or when celebrating thy praises in company with thy `saints, the excellent of the earth.' I will remember what thou ART; how meet an object for the trust of a desolate being like myself! For though I am poor, thou art rich; though I am weak, thou art mighty; though I am miserable, thou art happy. I will remember that thou art *my* God. That thou hast manifested thyself to my soul, that thou hast enabled me to choose thee for my portion, that I have trusted in thee, and have never been confounded. I will remember that word of promise on which thou hast caused me to hope, to which thou hast ever been faithful throughout all the past, and *will* be, as I truly believe, even unto the end." Oh, how happy, even in the midst of their unhappiness, are they, who in their trials, can take shelter in God! *Henry March.*

Ver. 6. "MY *God*." Astonishing expression! Who shall dare to say to the Creator of the ends of the earth, the Majesty in the heavens, "*My God*"? An exile, a wanderer, an outcast; a man forsaken, despised, reviled; a soul cast down and disquieted: *he* shall dare. By what right? Of covenant. *Henry March.*

Ver. 6. *Therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar.* It is remarkable what course the psalmist took to regain comfort; he would remember three experiments of his goodness—"the land of *Jordan*, "the land "of the *Hermonites*, "and "the hill *Mizar*." First, will I remember the land *Jordan*; that is, I will remember the great goodness of God in drying up the river Jordan, that so the tribes of Israel might pass over to the promised land: why, God that hath been good, will be good. Then, I will remember the land of the *Hermonites*; in that land were Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, king of Bashan, defeated; that you read of in Joshua 12:1-2. "Now these are the kings of the land, which the children of Israel smote, and possessed their land on the other side Jordan toward the rising of the sun, from the river Arnon unto Mount Hermon." *Mizar*, some think to be a little hill near Mount Sinai, where the law was given. I will remember God's goodness, in

giving a law to his people. Here David would call to remembrance the goodness of God of old, to regain to him comfort and quietness in his mind. *Christopher Love.*

Ver. 6. *The Hermons*, or the peaks or ridges of Hermon, the plural being used either because of the *two* peaks of the mountain (Wilson, "*Land of the Bible*"), or as I think probably, of the whole range of its snowy heights. *J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Ver. 6. *The Hermons*, i.e., as some suppose, Mount Hermon, and the other mountains upon that side of the river, just as Baalim means Baal, and other idols worshipped with him; or more probably Mount Hermon considered not as a single eminence, but a chain or range, like the Alps, the Alleghenies, etc. *J. A. Alexander.*

Ver. 6. *From the hill.* He that has a rich life of past experience is thereby placed upon an eminence from which he may take a happy view of the path lying before him. *J. P Lange's Commentary.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 6. *Remember thee.* The consolation derivable from thoughts of God.

Ver. 6. *Therefore will I remember thee.* There are two ways of understanding this; each of them instructive and profitable...

1. It may be considered as an expression of *determined remembrance of God* should he ever be found in such places and conditions. Believers can suppose the worst, and yet hope for the best.
2. The language may be considered as an expression of *encouragement derived from reflection*. He had been in these situations and circumstances, and had experienced in them displays of divine providence and grace. *W. Jay.*

Ver. 6. Ebenezers, many, varied, remembered, helpful.

PSALM 42:7

EXPOSITION

Ver. 7. *Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts.* Thy severe dealings with me seem to excite all creation to attack me; heaven, and earth, and hell, call to each other, stirring each other up in dreadful conspiracy against my peace. As in a waterspout, the deeps above and below clasp hands, so it seemed to David that heaven and earth united to create a tempest around him. His woes were incessant and overwhelming. Billow followed billow, one sea echoed the roaring of another; bodily pain aroused mental fear, Satanic suggestions chimed in with mistrustful forebodings, outward tribulation thundered in awful harmony with inward anguish: his soul seemed drowned as in a universal deluge of trouble, over whose waves the providence of the Lord moved as a watery pillar, in dreadful majesty inspiring the utmost terror. As for the afflicted one he was like a lonely bark around which the fury of a storm is bursting, or a mariner floating on a mast, almost every moment submerged.

All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me. David thought that every trouble in the world had met in him, but he exaggerated, for *all* the breaking waves of Jehovah have passed over none but the Lord Jesus; there are griefs to which he makes his children strangers for his love's sake. Sorrow naturally states its case forcibly; the mercy is that the Lord after all hath not dealt with us according to our fears. Yet what a plight to be in! Atlantic rollers sweeping in ceaseless succession over one's head, waterspouts coming nearer and nearer, and all the ocean in uproar around the weary swimmer; most of the heirs of heaven can realise the description, for they have experienced the like. This is a deep experience unknown to babes in grace, but common enough to such as do business on great waters of affliction: to such it is some comfort to remember that the waves and billows are the Lord's, "*thy waves and thy billows*," says David, they are all sent, and directed by him, and achieve his designs, and the child of God knowing this, is the more resigned.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 7. *Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts.* Here he has conjoined two awful and terrific phenomena of nature. It is a fact well

ascertained by the evidence of travellers, that the falling of waterspouts is not uncommon on the coast of Judea. It should seem that they are occasioned by the congregating of great masses of cloud, whose waters concentrating to a point, pour themselves down in a tremendous column, accompanied with a roaring noise. Now, the image conceived in the mind of the psalmist seems to be that of the rushing of this vast waterspout down into the sea, already agitated, and increasing the turbulence and disorder of its waves. And awful picture! Especially if there be added to it the ideas of a black tempestuous sky, and the deafening roar occasioned by the tumult. What would be the situation of a vessel in the midst of such a tempest, the deluge pouring down from above, and all around her the furious ocean heaving its tremendous surges—how ungovernable, how helpless, how next to impossible that she should escape foundering except by some almost miraculous interference! Yet to such a situation does David here compare the state of his soul when submersed, as it were, under a sea of afflictions; "all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me." How pungent must his sense of grief have been to occasion him to make use of such a comparison, so strongly expressive of the utmost danger and terror!
Henry March.

Ver. 7. *Deep calleth unto deep*, etc. The abyss above calls on the abyss below, in the voice of the droppings of thy waterspouts. *Targum.*

Ver. 7. *Deep calleth unto deep.* So let prayer unto prayer, and faith unto faith, and one grace to the exercise of another. If we cannot prevail with God it may be the first time, yet we may the second; or if not then, the third. *Thomas Horton.*

Ver. 7. *Deep calleth unto deep.* What's that? Why, it is expressed in the verse before: "O God, "says he, "*my soul is cast down within me.*" "*Down*, "that is *deep* into the jaws of distrust and fear. And, Lord, my soul in this *depth* of sorrow, calls for help to thy *depth* of mercy. For though I am sinking and going down, yet not so low but that thy mercy is yet underneath me. Do, of thy compassions, open those everlasting arms, and catch him that has no help or stay in himself. For so it is with one that is falling into a *well* or a *dungeon*. *John Bunion.*

Ver. 7. Here the psalmist feels the spirit of bondage, which is wrath and fear; and he prays for the joy of God's salvation, and to be upheld by God's free spirit, which is the Holy Spirit, the spirit of love and power. He complains of "*deep calling unto deep.*" A soul in the horrible pit hears little

else but the calls of law and justice for vengeance, which are always answered again by the accusations of Satan and conscience. The storms of Sinai, like a *waterspout* at sea, threaten the earthen vessel with a deluge of wrath, which would soon drown it in destruction and perdition. These waves of real, and some imaginary, displeasure (no less terrible than real), rolling over the poor creature, are ready to send the bark to the bottom. This is the terrible way in which some fallen and backsliding souls are purged and reclaimed, and especially such as have brought public scandal upon the gospel, and church of Christ. *William Huntington* (1744-1813) in *"Contemplations of the God of Israel."*

Ver. 7. *Thy waterspouts.* Dr. Boothroyd translates (Ἐγρωῶ), "*thy cataracts.*" In justification of which translation, he observes that the situation of David suggested this forcible image. He saw the torrents falling from the precipices, and heard them resounding, and as if calling to one another for assistance; so, says he, all thy waves, that is, afflictions and troubles, come upon me and overwhelm me. *John Morison.*

Ver. 7. *Waterspouts.* Look at those clouds which hang like a heavy pall of sackcloth over the sea, along the western horizon. From them, on such windy days as these, are formed *waterspouts*, and I have already noticed several incipient "spouts" lengthening downward from their lower edge. These remarkable phenomena occur most frequently in spring, but I have also seen them in autumn. They are not accompanied with much rain; and between the dark stratum above and the sea, the sky is clear and bright. Here and there fragments of black vapour, shaped like long funnels, are drawn down from the clouds towards the sea, and are seen to be in violent agitation, whirling around on themselves as they are driven along by the wind. Directly beneath them, the surface of the sea is also in commotion by a whirlwind, which travels on in concert with the spout above. I have often seen the two actually unite in midair, and rush toward the mountains, writhing, and twisting, and bending, like a huge serpent, with its head in the clouds and its tail on the deep. They make a loud noise, of course, and appear very frightful.

Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts: all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me, said David, when his soul was cast down within him. But, though formidable in appearance, they do very little injury. I have never heard of more than one instance in which they proved destructive even to boats, though the sailors are extremely afraid of them.

As soon as they approach the shore, they dissolve and disappear. That kind of waterspout which bursts on the mountains, generally in the dry months of summer, does immense mischief. In a few minutes the wadies along its track are swollen into furious rivers, which sweep away grain, olives, raisins, and every other produce of the farmer. I have frequently known them to carry off and drown flocks of sheep and goats, and even cows, horses, and their owners alike. *W. M. Thomson.*

Ver. 7. *All thy waves and thy billows.*

*Deep to deep incessant calling,
Tossed by furious tempests' roll,
Endless waves and billows falling,
Overwhelm my fainting soul.*

*Yet I see a Power presiding
Mid the tumult of the storm,
Ever ruling, ever guiding,
Love's intentions to perform.*

*Yes, mid sorrows most distressing,
Faith contemplates thy design,
Humbly bowing, and confessing
All the waves and billows THINE.*

Henry March.

Ver. 7. *All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me.*

*Wide over misfortune's surging tide
Billows succeeding billows spread;
Should one, its fury spent, subside,
Another lifts its boisterous head.*

Aeschylus in "The Seven Chiefs against Thebes."

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 7. *Deep calleth unto deep.* See Spurgeon's Sermons, No. 865.

Ver. 7. *Deep calleth unto deep.* One evil inviting another.

1. The *variety* of evils—one evil to another.
2. The *conjunction* of evils—one evil with another.

3. The *connexion* of evils, or dependence and mutual reference —one evil upon another. *T. Horton.*

Ver. 7. The threefold depth which the saints and servants of God are subject to here in this life.

1. The depth of *temptation*.

2. The depth of *desertion*.

3. The depth of *affliction and human calamities*. *T. Horton.*

Ver. 7,8. In seasons of affliction the servants of God will be distinguished from others by their ready perception and acknowledgment of the hand of God in their trials. *H. March.*

PSALM 42:8

EXPOSITION

Ver. 8. *Yet the Lord will command his lovingkindness in the daytime.*

Come what may there shall be "a certain secret something" to sweeten all. Lovingkindness is a noble life belt in a rough sea. The day may darken into a strange and untimely midnight, but the love of God ordained of old to be the portion of the elect, shall be by sovereign decree meted out to them. No day shall ever dawn on an heir of grace and find him altogether forsaken of his Lord: the Lord reigneth, and as a sovereign he will with authority command mercy to be reserved for his chosen.

And in the night. Both divisions of the day shall be illuminated with special love, and no stress of trial shall prevent it. Our God is God of the nights as well as the days; none shall find his Israel unprotected, be the hour what it may.

His song shall be with me. Songs of praise for blessings received shall cheer the gloom of night. No music sweeter than this. The belief that we shall yet glorify the Lord for mercy given in extremity is a delightful stay to the soul. Affliction may put out our candle, but if it cannot silence our song we will soon light the candle again.

And my prayer unto the God of my life. Prayer is yoked with praise. He who is the living God, is the God of our life, from him we derive it, with

him in prayer and praise we spend it, to him we devote it, in him we shall perfect it. To be assured that our sighs and songs shall both have free access to our glorious Lord is to have reason for hope in the most deplorable condition.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 8. *Yet the Lord will command his lovingkindness.* His expression is remarkable; he does not say simply that the Lord will bestow, but *command his lovingkindness*. As the gift bestowed is grace—free favour to the unworthy; so the manner of bestowing it is sovereign. It is given by decree; it is a royal donative. And if *he* commands the blessing, who shall hinder its reception? *Henry March.*

Ver. 8. It is all one to a godly man, *night* or *day*. For what *night* can there be to him who hath God always with him, who is a *sun* to comfort him, as well as a shield to protect him Psalm 84:11; and *the light of whose countenance*, if it be but very little, is more comfortable than all things else whatsoever that the *day* can bring with it. He can say, "When I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me" Micah 7:8; and "the Lord my God will enlighten my darkness." Psalm 18:28. To tell you the truth, I think the *night* is the merriest time that the godly man hath, and the saddest for the wicked man (who, though he may make use of *darkness* to hide his sin, yet is he afraid, because of that very thing in which his safety consists). For if a man be merry in good company, he must needs be more merry when he enjoys it better, and there is less to disturb his mirth. So as it is with a godly man in the *night*, when the greatest part of his hindrances are removed, and he can "delight himself in the Almighty" without disturbance. Job 27:10. David says that the Lord would indeed *command his lovingkindness in the daytime*. but, *in the night* (says he) *his song shall be with me*. —"His song, "as I think, not of *thanksgiving*, but of *joy and exultation*, such as God uses to give at that time. Job 35:10. In the *daytime* the soul is so taken up with base employments, so distracted with variety of sensible objects, and so busied with work for the body, that either she hath no leisure at all to do her own work (such as this joy is as much as anything) or she cannot do it so well as she would, or so well as she could *in the night*, when she hath less to do. I doubt not but the worldly and carnal man, now that I am talking so much of *night*, and sleep, will be ready to say that I do but *dream*, and to answer me as the fellow did the hunter, when he bade him hear "what heavenly music his dogs made." For I

know he counts the music and songs that we speak of, nothing but a frenzy, or a fancy at least, such as mad and diseased people have in their brain, while they imagine it to be in the air. But, as Peter said of those upon whom the Holy Ghost fell, "These men are not drunk, as ye suppose; "so may I reply to such men, No such matter, the godly are not mad, as ye suppose, for their songs are not works of their own fancy, not made of their own head, but set for them by God himself, "who giveth songs in the night." Job 35:10. *Zachary Bogan.*

Ver. 8. *And my prayer unto the God of my life.* Here may be seen that David's religion was a religion of prayer *after* deliverance, as well as before. The selfish who cry out in trouble will have done with their prayers, when the trouble is over. With David it was the very reverse. Deliverance from trouble would strengthen his confidence in God, embolden his addresses to him, and furnish him with new arguments...There is great *need* of prayer after deliverance; for the time of deliverance is often a time of temptation; the soul being elated, and thrown off its guard. At such seasons much of the joy that is felt may be merely natural, as David's would probably be when rescued from that corroding care which injures the body as well as distresses the soul. There is danger of mistaking; of supposing it to be all spiritual, and hence of imagining the soul to be in a higher state of grace than it really is, and so, of being imperceptibly drawn into a state of false security. There is then especial need of that prayer. "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe." And with some peculiarly, who being of a sanguine constitution of mind, are in times of enjoyment, soon puffed up and brought into danger. *Henry March.*

Ver. 8. (*last clause*). Your song and your prayer must be directed to God as *the God of your life*. You do not own him as God, except you own and adore him as your all sufficient good, and that "fulness which filleth all in all." You detract from the glory of his Godhead, if you attribute not this to him; and if, accordingly, as one that cannot live without him, you do not seek union with him, and join yourself to him, and then rejoice and solace yourself in that blessed conjunction. *John Howe.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 7,8. In seasons of affliction the servants of God will be distinguished from others by their ready perception and acknowledgment of the hand of God in their trials. *H. March.*

Ver. 8. Daily mercy and nightly song; the mercies of sunshine and shade.

Ver. 8. (*last clause*). The blessed alternation between praise and prayer.

Ver. 8. *God of my life*. Author, sustainer, comforter, object, crown, consummation.

Ver. 8. *The God of my life*. There is a threefold life whereof we partake, and God is the God of each unto us. First, the life of *nature*; secondly, the life of *grace*; thirdly, the life of *glory*. *T. Horton*.

PSALM 42:9

EXPOSITION

Ver. 9. *I will say unto God my rock, Why hast thou forgotten me?* Faith is allowed to enquire of her God the causes of his displeasure, and she is even permitted to expostulate with him and put him in mind of his promises, and ask why apparently they are not fulfilled. If the Lord be indeed our refuge, when we find no refuge, it is time to be raising the question, "Why is this?" Yet we must not let go our hold, the Lord must be *my* rock still; we must keep to him as our alone confidence, and never forego our interest in him.

Why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? He who condescends to be pleaded with by Abraham, his friend, allows us to put to him the question that we may search out the causes of his severity towards us. Surely he can have no pleasure in seeing the faces of his servants stained and squalid with their tears; he can find no content in the harshness with which their foes assail them. He can never take pleasure in the tyranny with which Satan vexes them. Why then does he leave them to be mocked by his enemies and theirs? How can the strong God, who is as firm and abiding as a rock, be also as hard and unmoved as a rock towards those who trust in him? Such enquiries humbly pressed often afford relief to the soul. To know the reason for sorrow is in part to know how to escape it, or at least to endure it. Want of attentive consideration often makes adversity appear to be more mysterious and hopeless than it really is. It is a pitiable thing for any man to have a limb amputated, but when we know that the operation was needful to save life, we are glad to hear that it has been successfully performed; even thus as trial unfolds, the design of the Lord sending it becomes far more easy to bear.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 9. *God my rock.* David was a fugitive, with little means of defence, and continually pursued by enemies who were powerful and numerous. The country in which he wandered was mountainous, and he often sought and found shelter on the tops of precipitous rocks, or in their natural hollows or excavated caves. Thus the idea of shelter and defence being associated in his mind with that of a rock, how natural that he should apply the term to God, and when seeking him as his refuge and helper, should address him by that appellation..

Why hast thou forgotten me? Not that he supposed he was literally forgotten of God, so as to be given up and abandoned by him; because he had still sufficient trust in his faithfulness to seek him for a refuge, and to hope in his mercy. His expression is to be regarded as the language of feeling, not of judgment. He felt, he seemed, as one forgotten by God. Those visits of love, those manifestations of favour with which he had formerly been indulged, and which then seemed to him to be so many tokens of the divine remembrance, were now withheld, now when, on account of his distress, they appeared so unspeakably more needful and desirable; whence it was that he felt as one forgotten. *Henry March.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 9. *God my rock.* Appellations of God, suited to circumstances.

Ver. 9. *My rock.* See Keach in his metaphors.

Ver. 9.

1. Why *thou*?

2. Why *I*?

3. Why *he*? It is a *why* to all three. To God, *Why has thou forgotten me?* To David himself, *Why do I go mourning?* To David's adversary, whoever he was, *Why does the enemy oppress me?* *T. Horton.*

PSALM 42:10

EXPOSITION

Ver. 10. *As with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me.* Cruel mockeries cut deeper than the flesh, they reach the soul as though a rapier were introduced between the ribs to prick the heart. If reproaches kill not, yet they are killing, the pain caused is excruciating. The tongue cuts to the bone, and its wounds are hard to cure.

While they say daily unto me, Where is thy God? This is the most unkind cut of all, reflecting as it does both upon the Lord's faithfulness and his servant's character. Such was the malice of David's foes, that having thought of the cruel question, they *said* it, said it *daily*, repeated *it to him*, and that for a length, of time; surely the continual yapping of these curs at his heel was enough to madden him, and perhaps would have done so had he not resorted to prayer and made the persecutions of his enemies a plea with his Lord.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 10. *Mine enemies.* It is strange that *he* should have enemies, that was so harmless a man that when they were sick and distressed, he prayed for them, and put on sackcloth for them, as it is, Psalm 35:1-28. This compassionate sweet natured man, yet, notwithstanding, you see he had enemies, and enemies that would discover themselves to reproach him, and that bitterly; in the bitterest manner, they reproach him in his religion. We may be armed by this observation against the scandal of opposition—that if we meet with enemies in the world, we should not be much offended at it; grieve we may, but wonder we need not. Was there ever any that did more good than our Saviour Christ? "He went about doing good." Acts 10:38. He did never a miracle that was harmful (but only of the swine that were drowned in the sea, and that was their own fault), but he went about doing all the good he could; yet, notwithstanding, we see what malicious opposites he had. That that is true of the head must be true in the members. Therefore we should rejoice in our conformity to Christ, if it be in a good cause, that we find enemies and opposition. The devil is not made a Christian yet, and he will never be made good, for his is *in termino*, as we say, he is in his bounds, his nature is immovable; he is in hell in regard of

his estate, though he be loose to do mischief. Now, until the devil be good, God's children shall never want enemies; and he will never be good; therefore, though there were good kings and good governors over all the world, yet good men shall never want enemies as long as the devil is alive, as long as he hath anything to do in the world. Enemies, therefore, we must look for, and such enemies as will not conceal their malice neither; for that were something, if they would suffer their malice to boil and concoct in their own hearts, but that will not be, but "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth will speak." *Richard Sibbes*.

Ver. 10. *They say daily unto me.* Here's their constancy and perseverance in this their carriage and language, it is *daily*, or *all the day*, (SWQ AI K) It is not only for a fit and away, but it is their frequent and continual practice; it's every, and it's all the day; they begin in the morning, and they hold out still till night as unquiet persons use to do; and they begin the week with it, and so they continue till the end; he could never come into their company or near them, but he had such language from them. *Thomas Horton*.

Ver. 10. *Where is thy God?* David might rather have said to them, Where are your eyes? where is your sight? for God is not only in heaven, but in me. Though David was shut out from the sanctuary, yet David's soul was a sanctuary for God; for God is not tied to a sanctuary made with hands. God hath two sanctuaries, he hath two heavens—the heaven of heavens and a broken spirit. God dwelt in David as in his temple. God was with David and in him; and he was never more with him, nor never more in him than in his greatest afflictions. They wanted eyes, he wanted not God. Though sometimes God hide himself, not only from the world but from his own children, yet he is there; howsoever their sorrow is such that it dims their sight (as we see in Hagar), so that they cannot see him for the present, he sometimes looks in their face, as we see in Mary's case. She could not see Christ distinctly, but thought him to be the gardener. There is a kind of concealment awhile in heavenly wisdom, yet notwithstanding, God is with his children always, and they know it by faith though not by feeling always...Therefore, it was an ignorant question of them to ask, *Where is thy God?* It showed that they were ignorant of the passages of God's dealing with his children, as indeed none are greater atheists than your scoffers. *Where is thy God?* as if God had been only a God of observation, to be observed outwardly in all his passages towards his children; whereas, as I said, he is a God hiding himself oftentimes; and he shows himself in contrary conditions most of all, most comfortably. His work is by

contraries. But these carnal men were ignorant of the mysteries of religion, and the mysteries of divine providence towards God's children. Therefore, their question savours of their disposition, *Where is now thy God? Richard Sibbes.*

Ver. 10. *Where is thy God?* It is the deriding question which persecutors put to the saints in the time of their trials and troubles, *Ubi Deus?* "Where is now your God?" But they may return a bold and confident answer, *Hic Deus*, "Our God is here, "our God is nigh unto us, our God is round about us, our God is in the midst of us, our God has given us his promise "that he will never leave us nor forsake us." Hebrews 13:5. In every trouble, in every danger, in every death, the Lord will be sure to keep us company. God will bear his children company, not only whilst they are in a delightful paradise, but also when they are in a howling wilderness. Hosea 2:14. When a company of poor Christians were going into banishment, one standing by to see them pass along said, that it was a very sad condition that those poor people were in, to be thus hurried from the society of men, and to be made companions of the beasts of the fields. True, said another, it were a sad condition indeed, if they were carried to a place where they should not find their God; but let them be of good cheer, for God goes along with them, and will exhibit the comforts of his presence whithersoever they go, his presence is infinite, and filleth all places. The Rabbins put *Makom*, which signifies *place*, among the names of God; Bythner brings them in expounding that text Esther 4:14, thus: "Deliverance shall arise from another place, "that is, from God. Now, they called God *place*, because he is in every place, filling heaven and earth with his presence. *Thomas Brooks.*

Ver. 10. Forest flies, small as they are, drive the noble war horse mad; therefore David says, *As with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me; while they say daily unto me, Where is thy God? Frederick William Robertson, 1851.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 10. The most grievous of taunts.

PSALM 42:11

EXPOSITION

Ver. 11. *Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me?* In the rehearsal of his sorrow, he finds after all no sufficient ground for being disquieted. Looked in the face, his fears were not so overwhelming as they seemed when shrouded in obscurity.

Hope thou in God. Let the anchor still keep its hold. God is faithful, God is love, therefore there is room and reason for hope. *Who is the health of my countenance, and my God.* This is the same hopeful expression as that contained in verse five, but the addition of *and my God* shows that the writer was growing in confidence, and was able defiantly to reply to the question, "Where is thy God?" Here, even here, he is, ready to deliver me. I am not ashamed to own him amid your sneers and taunts, for he will rescue me out of your hands. Thus faith closes the struggle, a victor in fact by anticipation, and in heart by firm reliance. The saddest countenance shall yet be made to shine, if there be a taking of God at his word and an expectation of his salvation.

*"For yet I know I shall him praise
Who graciously to me,
The health is of my countenance,
Yea, mine own God is he."*

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 11. Imitate here the example of David, instead of yielding to a vague grief: cite your soul; *enquire* of it the particular cause of your sorrow: different remedies will be requisite according to the different sources of your distress; and be careful that you trifle not with God, and your comfort, and your salvation, while you enquire of your soul,

Why art thou cast down, O my soul? Be impartial, there is another and more solemn judgment to succeed: be persevering, like the psalmist, return, again and again to the investigation: be prayerful; self love, or the delusion of your heart, may otherwise deceive you. Pray then to God, to "search you, and see if there be any wicked way in you." *Henry Kollock, D.D., in "Sermons,"* etc. 1822.

Ver. 11. *Hope.* Hope is like the sun, which, as we journey towards it, casts the shadow of our burden behind us. *Samuel Smiles, L.L.D.*

Ver. 11. *God...is the health of my countenance.* The health of David's countenance was not in his countenance, but *in his God*, and this makes his faith silence his fears, and so peremptorily resolve upon it, that there is a time coming (how near so ever he now lies to the grave's mouth) when he *shall yet praise him*. The health and life of thy grace lie both of them, not in thy grace, saith faith, but *in God*, who is *thy God*, therefore I shall yet live and praise him. I do not wonder that the weak Christian is melancholy and sad, when he sees his sickly face in any other glass than this. *William Gurnall.*

Ver. 11. *The health of my countenance.* The countenance is often a true index to the mind. In the present awakening in religion, nothing is more remarkable than the sad or joyous looks of those whom God has spiritually exercised. It is easy who are sad, and who happy. There is nothing new in this; the psalmist says, "My soul is cast down within me." Therefore had he a dejected countenance; but said he, "Send thy light and thy truth; let them lead me; then will I go unto God, my exceeding joy...And he shall be *the health of my countenance.*" In his sorrow, the face of Jesus was marred more than any man's, and his visage more than the sons of men. The martyr Stephen was so filled with the sight of Jesus, that in the midst of his persecutors, with death in prospect, he had a face which "shone as the face of an angel." My friend, how is it with thee? Is thy countenance sad? or doth it shine with the joy of the Lord, telling the true tale of thy life and lot? *J. Denham Smith. 1860.*

Ver. 11. Hast thou seen the sun shine forth in February, and the sky blue, and the hedgerows bursting into bud, and the primrose peeping beneath the bank, and the birds singing in the bushes? Thou hast thought that spring was already come in its beauty and sweet odours. But a few days, and the clouds returned, and the atmosphere was chilled, and the birds were mute, and snow was on the ground, and thou hast said that spring would never come. And thus sometimes the young convert finds his fears removed, and the comforts of the gospel shed abroad in his heart, and praise and thanksgiving, and a new song put in his mouth. And he deems unadvisedly that his troubles are past for ever. But awhile, and his doubts return, and his comforts die away, and his light is taken from him, and his spirit is overwhelmed, and he is fain to conclude that salvation and all its blessings

are not for him. But the spring, though late, shall break at last. *Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me?* H. G. Salter's "Book of Illustrations," 1840.

Ver. 11. His arguments and motives hereunto are impregnated with very great sense and strength; and urged upon himself as the just rate thereof. *Hope thou in God.* For he is 1. *God.* 2. *Thy God.* 3. *The health of thy countenance,* and 4. *One whom thou shalt* (certainly and for ever) *praise as such.* And 5. *Do it yet,* as lamentable and hopeless as thy case appears at present through seeming difficulties or unlikelihoods. God and ourselves well understood, deeply considered, and skilfully urged and improved, give gracious hearts the best encouragements and supports under the severest accidents of time. And they will very strangely animate our hopes in God under our sorest troubles and dejections. David had (1) confidence in God; and (2) reasons for it; and (3) skill and a heart to urge them. When he reviewed himself, he saw that his soul was gracious; and so he knew God valued it. It was bent for praising God; and so he knew that he should have an opportunity and cause to do it, through some signal favours from him. He had an interest in God; and he would neither lose it nor neglect it, and he had great experience of God's former mercies, and he would not forget them. And when he thinks on God, then praises must be thought on too, and everything relating to it, and all the divine perfections, within the circumference of his knowledge, must have their fresh remembrances and powerful sense revived upon his own heart. *Matthew Sylvester (1636-1708), in "Morning Exercises."*

Ver. 11. The soul, when once greatly disturbed, is often not soon calmed, on account of infirmities and remaining corruptions. *Henry March.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 11. *My God.*

1. It's a word of *interest*—*My God*, as in covenant with him.
2. A word of *compliance*—*My God*, as submitting to him.
3. A word of *affection*—*My God*, as taking delight, and rejoicing in him. *T. Horton.*

Ver. 11. A catechism, a consolation, a commendation.

Ver. 11.

1. David's *experience* of God. *He is the health*, or *help of my countenance*.
2. His *relation* to God, and *interest* in him—*And my God*. T. Horton.

PSALM 43

PSALM 43:1

Subject. On account of the similarity of the structure of this Psalm to that of Psalm forty-two, it has been supposed to be a fragment wrongly separated from the preceding song; but it is always dangerous to allow these theories of error in Holy Scripture, and in this instance it would be very difficult to show just cause for such an admission. Why should the Psalm have been broken? Its similarity would have secured its unity had it ever been part and parcel of the forty-second. Is it not far more likely that some in their fancied wisdom united them wrongly in the few MSS in which they are found as one? We believe the fact is that the style of the poetry was pleasant to the writer, and therefore in after life he wrote this supplemental hymn after the same manner. As an appendix it needed no title. David complains of his enemies, and asks the privilege of communion with God as his surest deliverance from them.

Division. The psalmist cried to God in prayer, Psalm 43:1-3. Promises praise in the anticipation of an answer, Psalm 43:4, and chides himself for his despondency, Psalm 43:5.

EXPOSITION

Ver. 1. *Judge me, O God.* Others are unable to understand my motives, and unwilling to give me a just verdict. My heart is clear as to intent and therefore I bring my case before thee, content that thou wilt impartially weigh my character, and right my wrongs. If thou wilt judge, thy acceptance of my conduct will be enough for me; I can laugh at human misrepresentation if my conscience knows that thou art on my side; thou art the only one I care for; and besides, thy verdict will not sleep, but thou wilt see practical justice done to thy slandered servant.

And plead my cause against an ungodly nation. One such advocate as the Lord will more than suffice to answer a nation of brawling accusers. When people are ungodly, no wonder that they are unjust; those who are not true to God himself cannot be expected to deal rightly with his people. Hating

the King they will not love his subjects. Popular opinion weighs with many, but divine opinion is far more weighty with the gracious few. One good word from God outweighs ten thousand railing speeches of men. He bears a brazen shield before him whose reliance in all things is upon his God; the arrows of calumny fall harmlessly from such a buckler.

O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man. Deceit and injustice are boon companions: he who fawns will not fear to slander. From two such devils none can deliver us but God. His wisdom can outwit the craft of the vilest serpent, and his power can over match the most raging lion. Whether this was Doeg or Ahithophel is small matter, such double distilled villains are plentiful, and the only way of dealing with them is to refer the matter to the righteous Judge of all; if we try to fight them with their own weapons, we shall suffer more serious injury from ourselves than from them. O child of God, leave these thine enemies in better hands, remembering that vengeance belongeth not to thee, but to thy Lord. Turn to him in prayer, crying, "O deliver me, "and ere long you shall publish abroad the remembrance of his salvation.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Whole Psalm. This Psalm is evidently a continuation or supplement to the preceding. In some MSS of Kenicott and de Rossi's, they are united, and make one Psalm. *George Phillips, B.D.*

Ver. 1. *Judge me, O God, and plead my cause,* etc. Believers may appeal to God's justice, and plead God's righteousness.

1. Touching suffering wrongs of men.

2. Touching sin in relation to God's wrath.

1. Touching suffering wrongs of men, believers may appeal upon these three grounds:

1. The injustice that men do to believers, is as well against *God's just nature*, as against the believers' ease. So their appeals to God are agreeable to God's enmity against injustice; therefore, his enmity concurs with their appeals. Romans 1:18.

2. Justice in men is according to God's nature, as well as for the believer's welfare, and, therefore, the disposition and inclination of

God's nature concurs with their prayers for deliverance. Psalm 11:7
 Luke 23:6-7.

3. Such wrong God who do wrong his people 2 Chronicles 15:11
 Zechariah 2:8 Acts 9:4-5; so that in deliverance God vindicates himself
 as well as the believers.

2. Touching sin in relation to God's wrath, a true believer may plead God's
 justice or righteousness on these three grounds:

1. Christ our Advocate or Attorney so pleads. John 17:24, etc. Now,
 the client may plead the same as the advocate, seeing it is in relation to
 the same party and the same issue.

2. Christ hath satisfied God's justice, so that on Christ was laid all the
 sins of all believers. He was "wounded" for them. Now, God cannot in
 justice punish twice; therefore, seeing Christ was wounded, believers
 must be healed. Isaiah 53:1-12.

3. Believers have God's righteousness imputed to them 2 Corinthians
 5:1-21; therefore, God must deal with believers as he will deal with his
 own righteousness.

Useful is this doctrine two ways.

1. For terror to the enemies of believers. How many prevailing cries to the
 justice of God are against such enemies?

1. Their own sins cry.

2. Believers injuries cry.

3. Believer's prayers cry.

4. Christ's intercession cries over against their prayers and desires
 Revelation 6:9, compared with Revelation 8:3.

2. The second use is for comfort to believers, that as God's mercy is for
 them, so his justice to deliver them, not only from *men*, but from *sin*; and
 in and through Christ they may humbly plead justice as against sinners, so
 against sin; not only against the guilt but against the power, that seeing
 Christ died, sin should not live. *Condensed from Nathanael Homes, 1652.*

Ver. 1. *Ungodly...deceitful...unjust.* There are *ungodly* men who, being
 destitute of religious principle, will not scruple to injure us, when they can
 thereby gratify their passions or advance their worldly interests. There are
deceitful men who will put on the garb of friendship, and acquire our

confidence and esteem, and then treacherously cheat us out of our property, or our reputation, or our peace. There are *unjust* men, who by fraud or by violence, would rob us of our dearest rights and most valuable possessions, and not only reduce our powers and opportunities of doing good, but even diminish our means of comfortable subsistence. And there are *oppressors*, who taking advantage of our weakness or dependence, and trampling alike on the maxims of equity and humanity, may exact from us unreasonable services, impose upon us heavy burdens and cruel restraints, and ply us with insults, and harassments, and deprivations, from which we can make no escape, and for which we can find no redress. *Andrew Thomson, D.D., in "Lectures on Portions of the Psalms."* 1826.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 1. We apply to God—

1. As our *Judge*: *Judge me.*
2. As our *Advocate*: *Plead my cause.*
3. As our *Deliverer*: *O deliver me.*

Ver. 1. Popular opinion outweighed by divine approbation.

Ver. 1. How the Lord pleads the cause of his people.

Ver. 1. Deceit and injustice twin vipers; their origin, their character, their folly, their end.

Ver. 1-2,4-5. *Five mys:*

1. My cause—"plead it."
2. My strength—"thou art."
3. My joy—God is.
4. My soul—"why disquieted."
5. My God.

WORKS UPON THE FORTY-THIRD PSALM

"Soul cordials against Sore Discomforts: in a Commentary or Explanations and Applications of the whole Forty-third Psalm, " pp. 312-562 of *"The Works of Dr. Nathanael Homes, "*1652 (folio).

In "*Sabbaths at Home.*" by HENRY MARCH, there is an exposition of this Psalm. See "*Treasury of David*, "Vol. II, Page 323.

PSALM 43:2

EXPOSITION

Ver. 2. *For.* Here is argument, which is the very sinew of prayer. If we reasoned more with the Lord we should have more victories in supplication.

Thou art the God of my strength. All my strength belongs to thee—I will not, therefore, use it on my own behalf against my personal foes. All my strength comes from thee, I therefore seek help from thee, who art able to bestow it. All my strength is in thee, I leave therefore this task of combating my foes entirely in thy hands. Faith which leaves such things alone is wise faith. Note the assurance of David, *thou art*, not I hope and trust so, but I know it is so; we shall find confidence to be our consolation.

Why dost thou cast me off? Why am I treated as if thou didst loathe me? Am I become an offence unto thee? There are many reasons why the Lord might cast us off, but no reason shall prevail to make him do so. He hath not cast off his people, though he for awhile treats them as cast offs. Learn from this question that it is well to enquire into dark providences, but we must enquire of God, not of our own fears. He who is the author of a mysterious trial can best expound it to us.

*"Blind unbelief is sure to err,
And scan his work in vain;
God is his own interpreter,
And he will make it plain."*

Why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? Why do I wander hither and thither like a restless spirit? Why wear I the weeds of sorrow on my body, and the lines of grief on my face? Oppression makes a wise man mad; why, Lord, am I called to endure so much of it for so long a time? Here again is a useful question, addressed to the right quarter. The answer will often be because we are saints, and must be made like our Head, and because such sorrow is chastening to the spirit, and yieldeth comfortable fruit. We are not to cross question the Lord in peevishness,

but we may ask of him in humility; God help us to observe the distinction so as not to sin through stress of sorrow.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 2. *Thou art the God of my strength.* The godly man hath from God a threefold strength, namely, natural, providential, and spiritual.

1. *Natural*, Acts 17:28. This is twofold: of body, of mind. Of robustness, hardness, and agility of body; of wit, invention, and valour of mind. Now, these donations of corporal and mental natural endowments are God's gifts. Psalm 18:34,39 ...

2. *Providential* strength, which is threefold:

1. God's donation of strengthening mercies. (1.) Corporal: wine to make glad, and bread to strengthen. Psalm 104:15. (2.) Mental, common gifts; as Paul had a singular gift of language and single life; Apollos of elocution, argument, power of convincing.

2. Providential strength is God's making way for his people to act and put forth their strength. Psalm 78:50.

3. Providential strength is God's concurrence with our lawful human acting. Psalm 18:29.

3. The third sort of power is *spiritual*: God is the godly man's spiritual power. 1 John 2:14: "I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, " namely, with spiritual strength, for it follows, "The word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one." This is the main strength of a godly man; as that text hints, namely, young men are naturally strong, but St. John takes no notice of that, but commends them for their spiritual strength. This spiritual strength is from the word of the Spirit, and from the Spirit of the word, that is, from the Spirit accompanying the word.

1. From *the word of the Spirit*, the word of God. Psalm 119:50: "This is my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me." To be "*quickened*", *"i.e.,* enlivened, is to be full of vigour and spirit and to act mightily, and to "*comfort*" is, as the word signifies, to make strong; for when a man is most cheerful with sobriety, he is most strong. St. John in that place fore quoted, saith the young men to whom he wrote were strong

because the word of God abode in them. For Proverbs 12:25 "whereas sorrow in the heart of man maketh it stoop" —makes it sickly, weak, drooping—"a good word maketh it glad, "cheerful, strong, vigorous. And so if the word of a wise friend, how much more the word of God, with its many strengthening promises? Psalm 20:2 119:28. The word of God is the very mind and will of God, and power of God, and with the word God created the world, therefore, he that receives this word must needs receive a great deal of strength. Romans 1:16.

Ver. 2. *The Spirit of the word*, the Holy Spirit that useth to accompany the word to them that receive it. By his Spirit God is in a believer 1 Corinthians 6:9 Ephesians 2:1-22; and this is the spirit of strength and power. Ephesians 3:16 2 Timothy 1:7. As a powerful, active soul makes a vigorous body, so the Spirit in the soul makes the soul powerful and strong, being the soul of the soul of a believer. We read more than once or twice in the Scriptures, that when believers did any eminent act, it is said, *the Spirit of the Lord came upon them, and they did* so and so, *i.e.*, the Spirit of God in them did them put forth its power to make them act powerfully. *Condensed from Nathanael Homes.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 1-2,4-5. *Five mys:*

1. My cause—"plead it."
2. My strength—"thou art."
3. My joy—God is.
4. My soul—"why disquieted."
5. My God.

Ver. 2. *The God of my strength.* From whom it is derived, to whom it is dedicated, in whom it resides, by whom it shall be perfected.

Ver. 2 (*first clause*).

1. From thee it comes.
2. By thee it is sustained.
3. To thee it is dedicated.
4. By thee it will be perfected.

5. By thee it will be rewarded.

Ver. 2. (*second clause*).

1. *The nature of apparent forsaking.* Painful, protracted, perplexing.

2. *The cause of it.* Secret sin to be laid bare, past sin chastised, graces tried, faith ultimately strengthened, etc.

3. *The best conduct under it.* Appeal to God, confess, submit, pray, trust, etc.

Ver. 2. (*last clauses*). The two "whys." The questions themselves; the spirit in which they may be asked. The answers which may be given.

PSALM 43:3

EXPOSITION

Ver. 3. *O send out thy light and thy truth.* The joy of thy presence and the faithfulness of thy heart; let both of these be manifest to me. Reveal my true character by thy light, and reward me according to thy truthful promise. As the sun darts forth his beams, so does the Lord send forth his favour and his faithfulness towards all his people; and as all nature rejoices in the sunshine, even so the saints triumph in the manifestation of the love and fidelity of their God, which, like the golden sunbeam, lights up even the darkest surroundings with delightful splendour. *Let them lead me.* Be these my star to guide me to my rest. Be these my Alpine guides to conduct me over mountains and precipices to the abodes of grace.

Let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles. First in thy mercy bring me to thine earthly courts, and end my weary exile, and then in due time admit me to thy celestial palace above. We seek not light to sin by, nor truth to be exalted by it, but that they may become our practical guides to the nearest communion with God: only such light and truth as are sent us from God will do this, common light is not strong enough to show the road to heaven, nor will mere moral or physical truths assist to the holy hill; but the light of the Holy Spirit, and the truth as it is in Jesus, these are elevating, sanctifying, perfecting; and hence their virtue in leading us to the glorious presence of God. It is beautiful to observe how David's longing to

be away from the oppression of man always leads him to sigh more intensely for communion with God.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 3. *O send out thy light and thy truth.* Possibly there may be an allusion to the Urim and Thummim, as the symbol of light and truth. *J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Ver. 3. *Light and truth.* Delightful and all comprehensive words. Thy contain all the salvation and all the desire of a believing, confiding soul. But it is only when thus combined—separated they are no longer a ground of trust and joy. For what would favour avail without faithfulness? It would be no more than the uncertain friendship of men, who smile today and reproach tomorrow; who make large promises, but do not perform them. Even the *light* which angels and glorified spirits enjoy in heaven would be insufficient to banish all fear and to fill them with satisfaction, were it not for their confidence in the *truth* of God. How much more, then, must this be the case with erring, sinful, mortals on earth? When the humble spirit is bowed down under a sense of its utter unworthiness and innumerable weaknesses and defilements, its negligences, follies, and wanderings, what should save from despair but the confidence that he who has been merciful will also be faithful; that God is truth as well as light; that he hath said, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee; "that he *"cannot* lie, "and that, therefore, "his mercy endureth for ever?" On the other hand, *truth* without *light*, faithfulness without grace, would be only the dreadful execution of terrible but just denunciations on the transgressors of the holy law. "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Adam ate, and in that day became the subject of sin and death. This was *truth* executing judgment. But *light* arose around the darkness; beams of mercy tempered the heavy cloud. The promise of the Great Deliverer was given; then faithfulness was enlisted on the side of grace, and became engaged for its bestowment; "mercy and truth met together; righteousness and peace kissed each other." Since then, all humble and trusting souls have beheld them united, and have made their union the ground of their confidence and joy. *Henry March.*

Ver. 3. *Thy tabernacles.* There were two tabernacles, one at Zion, where the ark stood, and another at Gibeon. 1 Chronicles 16:37,39. It is not to this fact that the psalmist alludes, however, but to the circumstance, in all

probability of the different parts of the tabernacle. There was, first the holiest of all, then the sanctuary, and then the tabernacle of the convocation. Hebrews 9:1-8. *John Morison.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 3. *O send out thy light and thy truth.*

1. What is truth?
2. How truth is to be diffused.
3. Why it should be diffused.
4. Who must be the main agent of it. *Varied from Dr. Bogue. 1800.*

Ver. 3. The blessings desired; the guidance sought; the end longed for.

Ver. 3. Under what influence we should resort to divine worship.

PSALM 43:4

EXPOSITION

Ver. 4. *Then will I go unto the altar of God.* If David might but be favoured with such a deliverance as would permit his return, it would not be his own house or heritage which would be his first resort, but to the altar of God his willing feet should conduct him. His whole heart would go as sacrifice to the altar, he himself counting it his greatest happiness to be permitted to lie as a burnt offering wholly dedicated to the Lord. With what exultation should believers draw near unto Christ, who is the antitype of the altar! clearer light should give greater intensity of desire.

Unto God my exceeding joy. It was not the altar as such that the psalmist cared for, he was no believer in the heathenism of ritualism: his soul desired spiritual fellowship, fellowship with God himself in very deed. What are all the rites of worship unless the Lord be in them; what, indeed, but empty shells and dry husks? Note the holy rapture with which David regards his Lord! He is not his *joy* alone, but his *exceeding joy*; not the fountain of joy, the giver of joy, or the maintainer of joy, but that joy itself. The margin hath it, "The gladness of my joy, "*i.e.*, the soul, the essence, the

very bowels of my joy. To draw near to God, who is such a joy to us, may well be the object of our hungering and thirsting.

Yea, upon the harp will I praise thee. His best music for his best love. When God fills us with joy we ought ever to pour it out at his feet in praise, and all the skill and talent we have should be laid under contribution to increase the divine revenue of glory.

O God, my God. How he dwells upon the name which he loves so well! He already harps on it as though his harp music had begun. What sweeter sounds can music know than these four words? To have God in possession, and to know it by faith, is the heart's heaven—a fulness of bliss lies therein.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 4. *Then will I go unto the altar of God.* Let us remember that the approach to God in the holy place is by means of the altar, whence eternally ascendeth the fragrance and the preciousness of the one whole, perfect burnt offering, and where for ever and ever the divine holiness resteth and feedeth with its pure fire with infinite satisfaction, with inconceivable delight. Oh, what a holy, a divine, a wondrous place is this *altar of God!* That altar now means all the value and everlasting efficacy of the one offering of Christ unto God for us; and it is in the full power and blessedness thereof that we draw nigh to God. To this point, to this unspeakably blessed position, the light and the truth of God will attract the child of God. Toward this altar all the rays of the light of divine favour and grace, and of divine truth and holiness, have from eternity converged; and from this point they shine forth toward and upon the soul and heart of the poor, far off penitent, attracting him to that altar where he may meet his God. Let us then come to the altar of God; let us enter the cloud of holy incense that filleth the tabernacle of the Most High; let us realise how perfectly God is satisfied with that which Christ has done, with his obedience in dying to meet the claims of divine justice on the sinner, and to complete the perfect surrender of himself as our *exceeding joy*, even the gladness of our joy, the heart, essence, substance, and reality of our joy. *John Offord, 1868.*

Ver. 4. *Then will I go unto the altar of God.* He would with cheerfulness run and offer up the sacrifice of thanksgiving to his gracious deliverer; he would take his own soul as the burnt offering, and kindle and burn it up

with the fire of a vigorous love and raised affections terminating upon God, the flames whereof should ascend to him alone...*Unto God my exceeding joy*, or, as the Hebrew is more exactly translated, *unto God the gladness of his joy* — that which gave a relish to every other comfort, which was the soul and life of his pleasures, and could only make them real and lasting; it was God who raised his joy to fulness of satisfaction and contentment.
William Dunlop.

Ver. 4. *Then will I go...unto God.* The expression of *going to God* implies SUBMISSION and FRIENDSHIP

1. *Submission.* I will go and pay my homage to him, as my Sovereign; I will go and hear what he says; I will go and receive his orders.
2. *Friendship.* I will go and consult him, and converse with him as a friend; and be thankful that, in such a troublesome and ensnaring world, I have such a friend to advise with.

1. I will go and tell him my *griefs*; how greatly I am distressed with some particular disorder in my body, or with some disturbance in my family, or with some disappointment in my worldly circumstances, or (which is worse than all of them together) with a sad darkness in my soul.

2. I will go and tell him my *joys*, for even in this vale of tears "my heart is" sometimes "glad, and my glory rejoiceth."

3. I will go and tell him of my *sins*. He knows them, indeed, already, but he shall hear them from *me*.

4. I will go and tell him my *fears*; how greatly I am distressed at times, when I perceive this or the other corruption so strong, which I thought had received its death wound... how I tremble when I have by my folly provoked the Lord to leave me, for fear he will never return again, etc.

5. I will go and tell him my *hopes*, for some hope I have amidst all my discouragements...I will go and tell him all this; I will unburden and unburden my whole heart to him; and if my *necessities* did not drive me to him, I should go to him from inclination. *Condensed from Samuel Lavington.*

Ver. 4. *Unto God.* Believers are not satisfied in the use of religious duties, unless they arrive at God himself in those duties. We speak not here of that arrival at God himself which is by and after all duties, to a beatific vision of

God in glory, but we speak of that arrival at God himself which is to be had *in* duties, while we are in the exercise of duties; namely, to attain to God's special presence in them, in an actual communion, communication and conversing with God, so that we are spiritually sensible he is with us therein. I say God's *special* presence and actual communion, to distinguish it from that ordinary habitual presence and communion of God's being with a believer at all times. John 14:16. *Nathanael Homes.*

Ver. 4. *My exceeding joy.* The psalmist might well call God his *exceeding* joy, for it infinitely exceeds all other joy in its nature, degree, and duration. *Samuel Lavington.*

Ver. 4. *My exceeding joy.* As faith acquires more strength, we come to think of God and address him in more endearing terms. *J. P. Lange.*

Ver. 4. *Exceeding joy.* This can be said of no other joy. All other beauties have their boundaries, all other glories have their glooms. This is that illimitable sea, *God. E. Paxton Hood.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 1-2,4-5. *Five mys:*

1. My cause—"plead it."
2. My strength—"thou art."
3. My joy—God is.
4. My soul—"why disquieted."
5. My God.

Ver. 4.

1. The good man's duty—expressed by *going to God.*
2. His *blessedness* —expressed by *rejoicing in God.* *Samuel Lavington.*

Ver. 4. (first clause). When? *Then.* Where? *Altar of God.* Who? *I.* Why? *My exceeding joy.*

Ver. 4. (second clause). It is God alone who can be an exceeding joy to his creatures. *W. Dunlop's Sermons.*

Ver. 4. The joy of joy. The soul of soul joy.

Ver. 4. The great object of public worship, its bliss, and the praise resulting from attaining it.

Ver. 4.

1. *The medium of joy*, the altar of God, or God in Christ Jesus.
2. *The springs of joy*, or the attributes of God— mercy, justice, power, holiness, as seen in the atonement.
3. *The value of joy*, as comfort, strength, etc.

Ver. 4. *God my exceeding joy.* A most rich and precious title.

Ver. 4. (*last clause*). Possession, praise, resolution.

PSALM 43:5

EXPOSITION

Ver. 5. *Why art thou cast down, O my soul?* If God be thine, why this dejection? If he uplifts thee, why art thou so near the ground? The dew of love is falling, O withering heart, revive.

And why art thou disquieted within me? What cause is there to break the repose of thy heart? Wherefore indulge unreasonable sorrows, which benefit no one, fret thyself, and dishonour thy God? Why overburden thyself with forebodings? *Hope in God*, or *wait for God*. There is need of patience, but there is ground for hope. The Lord cannot but avenge his own elect. The heavenly Father will not stand by and see his children trampled on for ever; as surely as the sun is in the heavens, light must arise for the people of God, though for awhile they may walk in darkness. Why, then, should we not be encouraged, and lift up our head with comfortable hope?

For I shall yet praise him. Times of complaint will soon end, and seasons of praise will begin. Come, my heart, look out of the window, borrow the telescopic glass, forecast a little, and sweeten thy chamber with sprigs of the sweet herb of hope.

Who is the health of my countenance, and my God. My God will clear the furrows from my brow, and the tear marks from my cheek; therefore will I lift up my head and smile in the face of the storm. The Psalm has a blessed

ending, such as we would fain imitate when death puts an end to our mortal existence.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 5. *Why art thou cast down, O my soul.* He comes to his former remedy; he had stilled his grief once before with the same meditation and upbraiding of his own soul, and chiding himself; but he comes to it here as a *probatum est*, as a tried remedy; he takes up his soul very short,

Why art thou so cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? You see how David's passions here are interlaced with comforts, and his comforts with passions, till at last he gets the victory of his own heart. Beloved, neither sin nor grief for sin, are stilled and quieted at the first. You have some short spirited Christians, if all be not quiet at the first, all is lost with them; but it is not so with a true Christian soul, with the best soul living. It was not so with David when he was in distemper; he checks himself, the distemper was not yet stilled; he checks himself again, then the distemper breaks out again; he checks himself again, and all little enough to bring his soul to a holy, blessed, quiet, temper, to that blessed tranquillity and rest that the soul should be in before it can enjoy its own happiness, and enjoy sweet communion with God. As you see in physic, perhaps one purge will not carry away the peccant humour, then a second must be added; perhaps that will not do it, then there must be a third; so when the soul hath been once checked, perhaps it will not do, we must fall to it again, go to God again. And then it may be there will be breaking out of the grief and malady again; we must to it again, and never give over, that is the right temper of a Christian. *Richard Sibbes.*

Ver. 5. *Hope in God.* The more terrible the storm, the more necessary is the anchor. Hebrews 6:19. *William S. Plumer.*

Ver. 5. *Hope in God.* The complete and perfect state of God's children here is not in *re*, but in *spe*: as Christ's kingdom is not of this world, so is not our hope. The worldling's motto is, "a bird in the hand." Give me today, say they, and take tomorrow whoso will. But the word of believers is, *spero meliora* —my hopes are better than my present possessions. *Elnathan Parr.*

Ver. 5. The varied conflicts of the soul afford occasion for the exercise of the graces, and thus, through the divine wisdom and goodness, are made the means of eventual good. *Henry March.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 1-2,4-5. *Five mys:*

1. My cause—"plead it."
2. My strength—"thou art."
3. My joy—God is.
4. My soul—"why disquieted."
5. My God.

Ver. 5. Discouragement's recovery. *R. Sibbes Sermons.*

Ver. 5. *I shall yet praise him.* I, even I; shall, sooner or later, most assuredly; *yet*, despite troubles, foes, devils; *praise* with gratitude, confidence, exultation; *him* above all other helpers, though now afflicting me.

Ver. 5. *Health of my countenance*, removing that which mars it— sin, shame, fear, care, sorrow, weakness, etc.

PSALM 44

PSALM 44:1

Title. To the Chief Musician for the sons of Korah, Maschil. The title is similar to the forty-second, and although this is no proof that it is by the same author it makes it highly probable. No other writer should be sought for to father any of the Psalms when David will suffice, and therefore we are loathe to ascribe this sacred song to any but the great psalmist, yet as we hardly know any period of his life which it would fairly describe, we feel compelled to look elsewhere. Some Israelitish patriot fallen on evil times, sings in mingled faith and sorrow, his country's ancient glory and her present griefs, her traditions of former favour and her experience of pressing ills. By Christians it can best be understood if put into the mouth of the church when persecution is peculiarly severe. The last verses remind us of Milton's famous lines on the massacre of the Protestants among the mountains of Piedmont.

The song before us is fitted for the voices of the saved by grace, the sons of Korah, and is to them and to all others full of teaching, hence the title Maschil.

Division. From Psalm 44:1-3, the Lord's mighty works for Israel are rehearsed, and in remembrance of them faith in the Lord is expressed Psalm 44:4-8. Then the notes of complaint are heard Psalm 44:9-16, the fidelity of the people to their God is aroused, Psalm 44:17-22, and the Lord is entreated to interpose, Psalm 44:23-26.

EXPOSITION

Ver. 1. *We have heard with our ears, O God.* Thy mighty acts have been the subjects of common conversation; not alone in books have we read thy famous deeds, but in the ordinary talk of the people we have heard of them. Among the godly Israelites the biography of their nation was preserved by oral tradition, with great diligence and accuracy. This mode of preserving and transmitting history has its disadvantages, but it certainly produces a more vivid impression on the mind than any other; to hear with

the ears affects us more sensitively than to read with the eyes; we ought to note this, and seize every possible opportunity of telling abroad the gospel of our Lord Jesus *viva voce*, since this is the most telling mode of communication. The expression, "heard with our ears," may denote the pleasure with which they listened, the intensity of their interest, the personality of their hearing, and the lively remembrance they had of the romantic and soul stirring narrative. Too many have ears but hear not; happy are they who, having ears, have learned to hear.

Our fathers have told us. They could not have had better informants. Schoolmasters are well enough, but godly fathers are, both by the order of nature and grace, the best instructors of their sons, nor can they delegate the sacred duty. It is to be feared that many children of professors could plead very little before God of what their fathers have told them. When fathers are tongue tied religiously with their offspring, need they wonder if their children's hearts remain sin tied? Just as in all free nations men delight to gather around the hearth, and tell the deeds of valour of their sires "in the brave days of old," so the people of God under the old dispensation made their families cheerful around the table, be rehearsing the wondrous doings of the Lord their God. Religious conversation need not be dull, and indeed it could not be if, as in this case, it dealt more with facts and less with opinions.

What work thou didst in their days, in the times of old. They began with what their own eyes had witnessed, and then passed on to what were the traditions of their youth. Note that the main point of the history transmitted from father to son was the work of God; this is the core of history, and therefore no man can write history aright who is a stranger to the Lord's work. It is delightful to see the footprints of the Lord on the sea of changing events, to behold him riding on the whirlwind of war, pestilence, and famine, and above all to see his unchanging care for his chosen people. Those who are taught to see God in history have learned a good lesson from their fathers, and no son of believing parents should be left in ignorance of so holy an art. A nation tutored as Israel was in a history so marvellous as their own, always had an available argument in pleading with God for aid in trouble, since he who never changes gives in every deed of grace a pledge of mercy yet to come. The traditions of our past experience are powerful pleas for present help.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Whole Psalm. On a survey of this Psalm, it would seem not to admit of a doubt that the speakers are of the race of Israel; and yet expositors for the most part have found much difficulty in so understanding it, in this—the natural sense—so as even to be compelled to abandon it, owing to the impossibility of fixing on any period in the history of that people which would furnish an occasion for it, and verify its language. Thus, it cannot be referred to the times of the Babylonish captivity; for to this it is objected, and with reason; first, that Psalm 44:11 4:14 represent the speakers as "scattered among the nations, "and "a byword among the peoples, "whereas their exile was then confined to one country; and, secondly, that in Psalm 44:17-21 there is an assertion of faithful adherence to the worship of the true God, which he is called to witness as acquitting the sufferers of having brought the evil on themselves, while that captivity was a punishment of the nation for their apostasy, and especially for the grievous sin of idolatry. And the same objections lie to interpreting it with reference to the times of Antiochus Epiphanes and the Maccabees; beside that, the history of the canon of Scripture is decisive against assigning so late a date to any of the Psalms. Still less can the times of David be looked to for the occasion, since, though religion was then pure, there was, on the other hand, no dispersion of the nation nor any calamity such as to warrant the lamentation, "Thou hast cast us off, and put us to shame. ...Thou hast given us like sheep appointed for meat, "etc. Whence it appeared that there was no alternative but to consider the Psalm as exclusively the language of the Christian church, and, in her primitive days, as the period at once of her greatest purity and suffering. *William de Burgh.*

Whole Psalm. S. Ambrose observes, that in former Psalms we have seen a prophecy of Christ's passion, resurrection, and ascension and of the coming of the Holy Ghost, and that here we are taught that we ourselves must be ready to struggle and suffer, in order that these things may profit us. Human will must work together with divine grace. *Christopher Wordsworth.*

Ver. 1. *We have heard with our ears*, i.e., we have both heard and heeded it with utmost attention and affection. It is not a *pleonasmus*, but an *emphasis* that is here used. *John Trapp.*

Ver. 1. *Our fathers have told us.* Hear this, saith Basil, ye fathers that neglect to teach your children such things as may work his fear and love in

them, and faith to rely upon and seek to him in all times of danger. They made their mouths, as it were, books, wherein the mighty deeds of the Lord might be read to his praise, and to the drawing of their children's hearts unto him. *John Mayer.*

Ver. 1. *What work thou didst.* Why only *work* in the singular, when such innumerable deliverances had been wrought by him, from the passage of the Red Sea to the destruction of the hundred and eighty-five thousand in the camp of the Assyrians? Because all these were but types of that one great work, that one stretching forth of the Lord's hand, when Satan was vanquished, death destroyed, and the kingdom of heaven opened to all believers. *Ambrose.*

Ver. 1. *What work thou didst.* While the songs of other nations sing of the heroism of their ancestors, the songs of Israel celebrate the works of *God.* *Augustus F. Tholuck.*

Ver. 1. Three necessary requirements for learning well:

1. Intention and attention in him who hears, *we have heard with our ears.*
2. Authority in him that teaches, *our fathers have told us.*
3. Love between the teacher and the taught, "*our fathers.*" *Hugo (Cardinal), quoted in Neale's Commentary.*

Ver 1-2,4-8. Children are their parent's heirs; it were unnatural for a father before he dies to bury up his treasure in the earth, where his children should not find or enjoy it; now the mercies of God are not the least part of his treasure, nor the least of his children's inheritance, being both helps to their faith, matter for their praise, and spurs to their obedience.

Our fathers have told us, what work thou didst in their days, how thou didst drive out the heathen, etc. Psalm 44:1-2; from this they ground their confidence; Psalm 44:4: *Thou art my King, O God: command deliverances for Jacob;* and excite their thankfulness, Psalm 44:8 *In God we boast all the day long, and praise thy name for ever.* Indeed, as children are their parent's heirs, so they become in justice liable to pay their parents' debts; now the great debt which the saint at death stands charged with, is that which he owes to God for his mercies, and, therefore it is but reason he

should tie his posterity to the patent thereof. Thus mayest thou be praising God in heaven and earth at the same time. *William Gurnall*.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 1. The encouraging traditions of church history. The days of yore.

Ver. 1. The parent's duty, and the children's privilege.

Ver. 1. Family conversation, the most profitable subject for it.

Ver. 1. The true glory of the good old times.

PSALM 44:2

EXPOSITION

Ver. 2. *How thou didst drive out the heathen with thy hand.* The destruction of the Canaanites from the promised land is the work here brought to remembrance. A people numerous, warlike, gigantic and courageous, firmly established and strongly fortified, were driven out by a far feebler nation, because the Lord was against them in the fight. It is clear from Scripture that God sent a plague (so that the land ate up the inhabitants thereof), and also a visitation of hornets against the Canaanites, and by other means dispirited them, so that the easy victories of Joshua were but the results of God's having worked beforehand against the idolatrous nation.

And plantedst them. The tribes of Israel were planted in the places formerly occupied by the heathen. Hivites and Jebusites were chased from their cities to make room for Ephraim and Judah. The Great Wonder worker tore up by the roots the oaks of Bashan, that he might plant instead thereof his own chosen "vineyard of red wine."

How thou didst afflict the people. With judgments and plagues the condemned nations were harassed, by fire and sword they were hunted to the death, till they were all expelled, and the enemies of Israel were banished far away.

And cast them out. This most probably refers to Israel and should be read, "caused them to increase." He who troubled his enemies smiled on his

friends; he meted out vengeance to the ungodly nations, but he reserved of his mercy for the chosen tribes. How fair is mercy when she stands by the side of justice! Bright beams the star of grace amid the night of wrath! It is a solemn thought that the greatness of divine love has its counterpart in the greatness of his indignation. The weight of mercy bestowed on Israel is balanced by the tremendous vengeance which swept the thousands of Amorites and Hittites down to hell with the edge of the sword. Hell is as deep as heaven is high, and the flame of Tophet is as everlasting as the blaze of the celestial glory. God's might, as shown in deeds both of mercy and justice, should be called to mind in troublous times as a stay to our fainting faith.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 2.

*"Thou with thine hand hast driven out heathen,
And hast planted them;
The nations thou hast broken down,
But them thou hast engrafted."*

The two clauses of this verse stand in regular contrast. The first has the figure of rooting out one kind of tree, and planting another, as the Canaanites were rooted out of Palestine, and Israel was planted in their stead. (Compare Psalm 80:8). The second figure is that of cutting off bad branches, and engrafting others in their place, in the same root, which is Palestine again. *Benjamin Weiss.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 2. The contrast; or, the dealings of God with saints and sinners.

PSALM 44:3

EXPOSITION

Ver. 3. *For they got not the land in possession by their own sword.* Behold how the Lord alone was exalted in bringing his people to the land which floweth with milk and honey! He, in his distinguishing grace, had put a difference between Canaan and Israel, and therefore, by his own effectual

power, he wrought *for* his chosen and *against* their adversaries. The tribes fought for their allotments, but their success was wholly due to the Lord who wrought with them. The warriors of Israel were not inactive, but their valour was secondary to that mysterious, divine working by which Jericho's walls fell down, and the hearts of the heathen failed them for fear. The efforts of all the men at arms were employed, but as these would have been futile without divine succour, all the honour is ascribed unto the Lord. The passage may be viewed as a beautiful parable of the work of salvation; men are not saved without prayer, repentance, etc., but none of those save a man, salvation is altogether of the Lord. Canaan was not conquered without the armies of Israel, but equally true is it that it was not conquered by them; the Lord was the conqueror, and the people were but instruments in his hands.

Neither did their own arm save them. They could not ascribe their memorable victories to themselves; he who made sun and moon stand still for them was worthy of all their praise. A negative is put both upon their weapons and themselves as if to show us how ready men are to ascribe success to second causes.

But thy right hand, and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance. The divine *hand* actively fought for them, the divine *arm* powerfully sustained them with more than human energy, and the divine *smile* inspired them with dauntless courage. Who could not win with such triple help, though earth, death, and hell should rise in war against him? What mattered the tallness of the sons of Anak, or the terror of their chariots of iron, they were as nothing when Jehovah arose for the avenging of Israel.

Because thou hadst a favour unto them. Here is the fountain from whence every stream of mercy flows. The Lord's delight in his people, his peculiar affection, his distinguishing regard—this is the mainspring which moves every wheel of a gracious providence. Israel was a chosen nation, hence their victories and the scattering of their foes; believers are an elect people, hence their spiritual blessings and conquests. There was nothing in the people themselves to secure them success, the Lord's favour alone did it, and it is ever so in our case, our hope of final glory must not rest on anything in ourselves, but on the free and sovereign favour of the Lord of Hosts.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 3. *They got not the land in possession by their own sword.* The Lord's part in a work is best seen when man's part, and all that he as an instrument hath done, or could have done in it, is declared null; being considered as separate from God who moved the instruments, and did work by them what he pleased. *David Dickson.*

Ver. 3. *Because thou hadst a favour unto them.* Free grace was the fundamental cause of all their felicity. God loved them because he loved them. Deuteronomy 7:7. He chose them of his love, and then loved them for his choice. *John Trapp.*

Ver. 3. God's love to Israel was free, unmerited, and amazing, and he gave them a land for which they did not labour, and cities which they built not, and vineyards and oliveyards which they planted not. Joshua 24:13. In some cases neither sword nor bow were used, but hornets were the instruments of conquest. Joshua 24:12. Since the fall of Adam all good things in the lot of any mere man are undeserved kindnesses. *William S. Plumer.*

Ver. 3. *(last clause).* The prophet does not suppose any worthiness in the person of Abraham, nor imagine any desert in his posterity, on account of which God dealt so bountifully with them; but ascribes the whole through the good pleasure of God...Nor does the psalmist here treat of the general benevolence of God, which extends to the whole human race: but he discourses of the difference which exists between the elect and the rest of the world, and the cause of this difference is here referred to the mere good pleasure of God. *John Calvin.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 3. Free grace exalted.

1. In putting a negative upon human power.
2. In manifestations of divine energy.
3. In its secret source, *Because thou hadst a favour unto them.*

Ver. 3.

1. The creature laid low.
2. The Lord exalted.

3. Discriminating grace revealed.

Ver. 3. (*last clause*). The eternal well spring of all mercy.

PSALM 44:4

EXPOSITION

Ver. 4. *Thou art my King, O God.* Knowing right well thy power and grace my heart is glad to own thee for her sovereign prince. Who among the mighty are so illustrious as thou art? To whom, then, should I yield my homage or turn for aid? God of my fathers in the olden time, thou art my soul's monarch and liege Lord.

Command deliverances for Jacob. To whom should a people look but to their king? he it is who, by virtue of his office, fights their battles for them. In the case of our King, how easy it is for him to scatter all our foes! O Lord, the King of kings, with what ease canst thou rescue thy people; a word of thine can do it, give but the command and thy persecuted people shall be free. Jacob's long life was crowded with trials and deliverances, and his descendants are here called by his name, as if to typify the similarity of their experience to that of their great forefather. He who would win the blessings of Israel must share the sorrows of Jacob. This verse contains a personal declaration and an intercessory prayer; those can pray best who make most sure of their personal interest in God, and those who have the fullest assurance that the Lord is their God should be the foremost to plead for the rest of the tried family of the faithful.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 4. *My King;* apparently with a personal application to himself, the poet individually claiming his own place in the covenant between God and his people. *J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Ver. 4. *Thou art my king, O God; command deliverances for Jacob.* If there were no creature, no instrument in the world to help, yet would you not be at a loss in time of need, for he that is on the throne could do it alone. He can do all that ever you need, without any means or instruments. His bare word is sufficient, all sufficient, for it, whatever it be, how great, how difficult, how impossible soever it seems. Such a power there is even

in the word of the great King. There needs no more to deliver you, to deliver his people anywhere, how deep soever plunged, but only the *command* of him that sits on the throne. If the gospel, the interests of Christ, in these parts of the world, and the dear concerns of our souls, and the souls of posterity, were all as dry bones, in a more forlorn and hopeless condition than they are, he could make all live with a word. He that is our King, that sits upon the throne, can command life into that which seems as far from living as a dry bone. While he keeps the throne, it is a senseless heart that fails through distrust of his power, even when all visible power and help fail. *David Clarkson.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 4.

1. Divine royalty acknowledged.
2. Royal interposition entreated.
3. Divine covenant hinted at, *Jacob*; or, the loyal subject seeking royal aid for the royal seed.

Ver. 4. Personal allegiance and pleading intercession.

Ver. 4. *My King.* This intends—

1. My Ruler.
2. My Honour.
3. My Leader.
4. My Defender.

Ver. 4. The deliverances of Jacob, illustrated by his eventful life.

PSALM 44:5

EXPOSITION

Ver. 5. *Through thee will we push down our enemies.* The fight was very close, bows were of no avail, and swords failed to be of service, it came to daggers drawing, and hand to hand wrestling, pushing and tugging. Jacob's God was renewing in the seed of Jacob their father's wrestling. And how

fared it with faith then? Could she stand foot to foot with her foe and hold her own? Yea, verily, she came forth victorious from the encounter, for she is great at a close push, and overthrows all her adversaries, the Lord being her helper.

Through thy name will we tread them under that rise up against us. The Lord's name served instead of weapons, and enabled those who used it to leap on their foes and crush them with jubilant valour. In union and communion with God, saints work wonders; if God be for us, who can be against us? Mark well that all the conquests of these believers are said to be "through thee, ""through thy name:" never let us forget this, lest going a warfare at our own charges, we fail most ignominiously. Let us not, however, fall into the equally dangerous sin of distrust, for the Lord can make the weakest of us equal to any emergency. Though today we are timid and defenceless as sheep, he can by his power make us strong as the firstling of his bullock, and cause us to push as with the horns of unicorns, until those who rose up against us shall be so crushed and battered as never to rise again. Those who of themselves can scarcely keep their feet, but like little babes totter and fall, are by divine assistance made to overthrow their foes, and set their feet upon their necks. Read Christian's fight with Apollyon, and see how

*"The man so bravely played the man
He made the fiend to fly."*

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 5. *Through thee will we push down our enemies:*, literally, "We will toss them in the air with our horn; "a metaphor taken from an ox or bull tossing the dogs into the air which attack him. *Adam Clarke.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 5. Our enemies, in what ways we push them down, by what strength, and in what spirit.

Ver. 5. Our enemies, their activity, the closeness of their approach, the certainty of their overthrow, the secret of our strength.

PSALM 44:6

EXPOSITION

Ver. 6. *For I will not trust in my bow, neither shall my sword save me.*

Thy people Israel, under thy guidance, shouldered out the heathen, and gained their land, not by skill of weapons or prowess of arms, but by thy power alone; therefore will we renounce for ever all reliance upon outward confidences, of which other men make such boast, and we will cast ourselves upon the omnipotence of our God. Bows having been newly introduced by king Saul, were regarded as very formidable weapons in the early history of Israel, but they are here laid aside together with the all conquering sword, in order that there may be room for faith in the living God. This verse, in the first person singular, may serve as the confession of faith of every believer renouncing his own righteousness and strength, and looking alone to the Lord Jesus. O for grace to stand to this self renunciation, for alas! our proud nature is all too apt to fix its trust on the puffed up and supposititious power of the creature. Arm of flesh, how dare I trust thee? How dare I bring upon myself the curse of those who rely upon man?

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 6. *I will not trust in my bow, neither shall my sword save me.* By *bow* and *sword*, he meaneth all manner of weapons and warlike instruments whatsoever; and by "*saving*," he meaneth delivering from dangers, speaking under the person of one (because all the faithful are but one body), in the name of all the rest. *Thomas Wilcocks.*

Ver. 6. *I will not trust in my bow*, etc. I will not trust in *my own* sword or bow, but in the *sword* of the Divine Warrior, and in the *bow* of the Divine Archer, whose arrows are sharp in the heart of his enemies as described in the next Psalm 45:3-5, which is connected by that imagery with this Psalm, as well as by its inner meaning. *Christopher Wordsworth.*

Ver. 6. The less confidence we have in ourselves or in anything beside God, the more evidence have we of the sincerity of our faith in God. *David Dickson.*

Ver. 6-7. The two verses correspond exactly to Psalm 44:3. As there, in reference to the past, the salvation was ascribed wholly to God, so here in reference to the future. *E. W. Hengstenberg.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 6. Relinquishment of outward trusts. *My bow* may miss its aim, may be broken, may be snatched away. *My sword* may snap, or grow blunt, or slip from my hold. We may not trust in our abilities, our experience, our shrewdness, our wealth, etc.

Ver. 6. Self renunciation—the duty of saint and sinner.

PSALM 44:7

EXPOSITION

Ver. 7. *But thou hast saved us from our enemies.* In ages past all our rescues have been due to thee, O God. Never hast thou failed us. Out of every danger thou has brought us.

And hast put them to shame that hated us. With the back of thy saving hand thou hast given them a cuff which has made them hide their faces; thou hast defeated them in such a manner as to make them ashamed of themselves to be overthrown by such puny adversaries as they thought the Israelites to be. The double action of God in blessing his people and confounding his enemies is evermore to be observed; Pharaoh is drowned, while Israel passes through the sea; Amalek is smitten, while the tribes rejoice; the heathen are chased from their abodes, while the sons of Jacob rest beneath their vine and fig tree.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 6-7. The two verses correspond exactly to Psalm 44:3. As there, in reference to the past, the salvation was ascribed wholly to God, so here is reference to the future. *E. W. Hengstenberg.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 7. Accomplished salvation. How never achieved, *But*. By whom wrought, *thou*. When performed, *hast*. For whom, *us*. To what extent, *from our enemies*.

Ver. 7. Salvation completed, hell confounded, Christ exalted.

PSALM 44:8

EXPOSITION

Ver. 8. *In God we boast all the day long*. We have abundant reason for doing so while we recount his mighty acts. What blessed boasting is this! it is the only sort of boasting that is bearable. All other manna bred worms and stank except that which was laid up before the Lord, and all other boasting is loathsome save this glorying in the Lord, which is laudable and pleasing.

And praise thy name for ever. Praise should be perpetual. If there were no new acts of love, yet ought the Lord to be praised for what he has done for his people. High let the song be lifted up as we bring to remembrance the eternal love which chose us, predestinated us to be sons, redeemed us with a price, and then enriched us with all the fulness of God.

Selah. A pause comes in fitly here, when we are about to descend from the highest to the lowest key. No longer are we to hear Miriam's timbrel, but rather Rachel's weeping.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 8. Praise, its continuance—how to make it continual, how to manifest it perpetually, influence of its continuance, and reasons to compel us to abide in it.

PSALM 44:9

EXPOSITION

Ver. 9. *But thou hast cast off, and put us to shame.* Here the patriot bard begins to contrast the past glories of the nation's history with its present sadness and distress; which he does not ascribe to the death of some human champion, or to the accidents of war, but solely and alone to the withdrawal of Israel's God. It seemed to the mourner that Jehovah had grown weary of his people and put them away in abhorrence, as men lay aside leprous garments, loathing the sight of them. To show his displeasure he had made his people to be ridiculed by the heathen, whose easy victories over their largest armies covered Israel with disgrace. Alas! for a church and people when the Lord in the active energy of his Spirit withdraws from them, they want no greater shame or sorrow. He will not cast away his people finally and totally, but many a church has been left to defeat and disgrace on account of sin, and therefore all churches should be exceedingly watchful lest the like should happen to themselves. Poverty and distress bring no shame on a people, but the Lord's absence takes from a church everything which can exalt and ennoble.

And goest not forth with our armies. If the Lord be not the leader, of what avail are strong battalions? Vain are the combined efforts of the most zealous workers if God's arm be not revealed. May none of us in our churches have to mourn over the ministry, the Sabbath school, the missionary work, the visiting, the street preaching, left to be carried out without the divine aid. If our great ally will not go with us our defeat is inevitable.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 9. A lament for the declension of the church.

Ver. 9. In what sense God casts off his people, and why.

Ver. 9. (*last clause*). The greatest of all calamities for our churches.

PSALM 44:10

EXPOSITION

Ver. 10. *Thou makest us to turn back from the enemy.* The humiliating consciousness that the Lord has left them soon makes men cowards. Flight closes the fight of those who have not the Lord in the van.

And they which hate us spoil for themselves. After defeat and retreat, comes spoliation. The poor, vanquished nation paid a terrible penalty for being overcome; plunder and murder desolated the conquered land, and the invaders loaded themselves with every precious thing which they could carry away. In spiritual experience we know what it is to be despoiled by our enemies; doubts and fears rob us of our comforts, and terrible forebodings spoil us of our hopes; and all because the Lord, for wise purposes, sees fit to leave us to ourselves. Alas! for the deserted soul; no calamity can equal the sorrow of being left of God, though it be but for a small moment.

PSALM 44:11

EXPOSITION

Ver. 11. *Thou hast given us like sheep appointed for meat.* As sheep are slaughtered for food, so were the people slain in flocks, with ease, and frequency. Not with dignity of sacrifice, but with the cruelty of the shambles, were they put to death. God appeared to give them up like sheep allotted to the butcher, to abandon them as the hireling abandons the flock to wolves. The complaint is bitterly eloquent.

And hast scattered us among the heathen. Many were carried into captivity, far off from the public worship of the temple of God, to pine as exiles among idolaters. All this is ascribed to the Lord, as being allowed by him, and even appointed by his decree. It is well to trace the hand of God in our sorrows, for it is surely there.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 11. *Like sheep appointed for meat.* This very strongly and strikingly intimates the extent of the persecution and slaughter to which they were exposed; there being no creature in the world of which such vast numbers are constantly slaughtered as of sheep for the subsistence of man. The constancy of such slaughter is also mentioned in Psalm 44:22 as illustrating the continual oppression to which the Hebrews were subject. *Kitto's Pictorial Bible.*

Ver. 11. *Like sheep appointed for meat,* and not reserved for breeding or for wool. *Arthur Jackson.*

PSALM 44:12

EXPOSITION

Ver. 12. *Thou sellest thy people for nought.* As men sell merchandise to any one who cares to have it, so the Lord seemed to hand over his people to any nation who might choose to make war upon them. Meanwhile no good result was perceptible from all the miseries of Israel; so far as the psalmist could discover, the Lord's name received no honour from the sorrows of his people; they were given away to their foes as if they were so little valued as not to be worth the ordinary price of slaves, and the Lord did not care to gain by them so long as they did but suffer. The woe expressed in this line is as vinegar mingled with gall: the expression is worthy of the weeping prophet.

And dost not increase thy wealth by their price. If Jehovah had been glorified by all this wretchedness it could have been borne patiently, but it was the reverse; the Lord's name had, through the nation's calamities, been despised by the insulting heathen, who counted the overthrow of Israel to be the defeat of Jehovah himself. It always lightens a believer's trouble when he can see that God's great name will be honoured thereby, but it is a grievous aggravation of misery when we appear to be tortured in vain. For our comfort let us rest satisfied that in reality the Lord is glorified, and when no revenue of glory is manifestly rendered to him, he none the less accomplishes his own secret purposes, of which the grand result will be

revealed in due time. We do not suffer for nought, nor are our griefs without result.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 12. *Thou sellest thy people for nought, and dost not increase thy wealth by their price.* The sense is: Thou hast given thy people unto the power of their enemies without trouble, without causing the victory even to be clearly bought, as one who parts with a good for any price, which he despises and hates, desiring merely to get rid of it. *E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Ver. 12. *Thou sellest thy people for nought,* etc. Referring to the siege of Jerusalem by Titus, Eusebius says: "Many were sold for a small price; there were many to be sold, but few to buy."

Ver. 12. *And dost not increase thy wealth by their price.* Thou hast not advanced thy honour and service thereby; for thy enemies do not serve thee more and better than thy people, nor yet so much. *Matthew Pool.*

Ver. 12. *(last clause).* *Takest no money for them;* literally, *enhances not the price of them,* as a seller usually does to the buyer. *Daniel Creswell.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 12. The human and divine estimate of the results of persecution.

Ver. 12. In answer to this complaint.

1. God's people lose nothing eventually by their privations.
2. The wicked gain nothing by their triumphs.
3. God loses none of his glory in his dealings with either. *George Rogers.*

PSALM 44:13

EXPOSITION

Ver. 13. *Thou makest us a reproach to our neighbours.* Scorn is always an intensely bitter ingredient in the cup of the oppressed. The taunts and jeers of the victors pain the vanquished almost as much as their swords and

spears. It was a mystery indeed that God should suffer his royal nation, his peculiar people, to be taunted by all who dwelt near them.

A scorn and a derision to them that are round about us. The down trodden people had become a common jest; "as base as Israel" cried the cruel tongue of the tyrant: so ordinary had the scorn become that the neighbouring nations, though perhaps equally oppressed, borrowed the language of the conquerors, and joined in the common mockery. To be a derision to both strong and weak, superiors, equals, and inferiors, is hard to bear. The tooth of scoffing bites to the bone. The psalmist sets forth the brutality of the enemy in many words, in order to move the pity of the Lord, to whose just anger he traced all the sorrows of his people: he used the very best of arguments, for the sufferings of his chosen touch the heart of God far more readily than any other reasonings. Blessed be his name, our great Advocate above knows how to avail himself of this powerful plea, and if we are at this hour enduring reproach for truth's sake, he will urge it before the eternal throne; and shall not God avenge his own elect? A father will not long endure to see his children despitefully entreated; he may put up with it for a little, but his love will speedily arouse his anger, and then it will fare ill with the persecutor and reviler.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 13. Trial of cruel mockings; our conduct under them, comfort in them, and crown from them.

PSALM 44:14

EXPOSITION

Ver. 14. *Thou makest us a byword among the heathen, a shaking of the head among the people.* The lamentation is here repeated. They had sunk so low that none did them reverence, but universally and publicly they were treated as infamous and despicable. Those who reviled others dragged in Israel's name by the way as a garnish to their insults, and if perchance they saw one of the seed of Jacob in the street they used lewd gestures to annoy him. Those whose heads were emptiest wagged them at the separated people. They were the common butts of every fool's arrow. Such has been the lot of the righteous in ages past, such is their portion in a measure now,

such may be yet again their heritage in the worst sense. The world knows not its nobility, it has no eye for true excellence: it found a cross for the Master, and cannot be expected to award crowns to his disciples.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 14. *Thou makest us a byword*; literally, *for a similitude*, (*l vm*) stands here, as in the original passage Deuteronomy 28:37, in the common signification, *similitude*. The misery of Israel is so great, that people would figuratively call a miserable man a Jew, just as liars were called Cretans; wretched slaves, Sardians. So far as the people from being now "blessed of the Lord" in whom according to the promise, all the heathen are to be blessed. *E. W. Hengstenberg*.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 14. Unholy proverbs or godless bywords.

PSALM 44:15

EXPOSITION

Ver. 15. *My confusion is continually before me*. The poet makes himself the representative of his nation, and declares his own constant distress of soul. He is a man of ill blood who is unconcerned for the sorrows of the church of which he is a member, or the nation of which he is a citizen; the better the heart the greater its sympathy.

And the shame of my face hath covered me. One constant blush, like a crimson mantle, covered him both before God and man; he felt before God that the divine desertion was well deserved, and before man, that he and his people were despicable indeed now that heavenly help was gone. It is well for a nation when there still exist in it men who lay to heart its sin and shame. God will have pity on his chastened ones, and it is a pledge thereof when he sends us choice ministers, men of tenderness, who make the people's case their own.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 15. *My confusion in continually before me.* When the visible church is visited with sad calamities, the true members thereof are partakers of the trouble, and sorrow, and shame of that condition. *David Dickson.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 15. Confessions of a penitent.

PSALM 44:16

EXPOSITION

Ver. 16. *For the voice of him that reproacheth and blasphemeth.* It seems that from mocking the people of God, the adversaries advanced to reviling God himself, they proceeded from persecution to the sin which is next of kin, namely blasphemy.

By reason of the enemy and avenger. The enemy boasted of avenging the defeats of their forefathers; they took revenge for the ancient victories of Israel, by insulting over the now fallen people. Here was a sad plight for a nation to be placed in, but it was by no means a hopeless case, for the Lord who brought all this evil upon them could with equal ease release them from it. So long as Israel looked alone to her God, and not to her own arm, no foe could retain her beneath his foot; she *must* arise, for God was on her side.

PSALM 44:17

EXPOSITION

Ver. 17. *All this is come upon us; yet have we not forgotten thee.* Here the psalmist urges that Israel had not turned away from her allegiance to Jehovah. When in the midst of many griefs we can still cling to God in loving obedience, it must be well with us. True fidelity can endure rough usage. Those who follow God for what they get, will leave him when

persecution is stirred up, but not so the sincere believer; he will not forget his God, even though the worst come to the worst.

Neither have we dealt falsely in thy covenant. No idol was set up, the ordained worship was not relinquished, God was still nationally acknowledged, and therefore the psalmist is more earnest that the Lord should interpose. This and the succeeding verses are suitable for the lips of martyrs, indeed the entire psalm might be called the martyr's complaint. Not for sin but for righteousness did the saints suffer, not for falsehood but for truth, not for forsaking the Lord, but for following hard after him. Sufferings of such a sort may be very terrible, but they are exceedingly honourable, and the comforts of the Lord shall sustain those who are accounted worthy to suffer for Christ's sake.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 17. Eusebius, narrating the cruelties inflicted upon the *Christians* by the Eastern tyrant, Maximinus, says: "He prevailed against all sorts of people, the Christians only excepted, who contemned death and despised his tyranny. The men endured burning, beheading, crucifying, ravenous devouring of beasts, drowning in the sea, maiming and broiling of the members, goring and digging out of the eyes, mangling of the whole body; moreover, famine and imprisonment: to be short, they suffered every kind of torment for the service of God rather than they would leave the worship of God, and embrace the adoration of idols. Women also, not inferior to men through the power of the word of God, put on a manly courage, whereof some suffered the torments with men, some attained unto the like masteries of virtue." *From "The Ecclesiastical History of Eusebius Pamphilus."*

Ver. 17. *Yet have we not forgotten thee, neither have we dealt falsely in thy covenant.* Although we cannot excuse ourselves from many other sins for which thou hast justly punished us, yet this we must say for ourselves, that through thy grace we have kept ourselves from apostasy and idolatry, notwithstanding all the examples and provocations, rewards proposed and promised, or punishments threatened to induce us thereunto; which we hope thou wilt graciously consider, and not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able to bear. *Matthew Poole.*

Ver. 17. If any of you would abide by Jesus Christ in this storm, try how ye have covenanted with him, and how ye have closed the bargain with

him, and upon what terms. But I trow there are many of you in this age that are like young wanton folk, that run fast together and marry, but never take any account of how they will keep house, but presently go to poverty and beggary. I trow it falls out so with many of you that are professors in this generation. Ye take up your religion, and ye wot not how, and ye cannot give an account how ye came by it. I will tell you, sirs; ye will abide no longer by Christ than till a storm blow, and then ye will quit him and deny his cause. Ye have need to take heed to this, for it will ruin your souls in the end of the day. But I shall tell you, sirs, the right way of covenanting with God. It is when Christ and the believer meet. Our Lord gives him his laws, statutes, and commands, and he charges him not to quit a hoof of them. No; though he should be torn into a thousand pieces; and the right covenanter says, Amen. *Alexander Peden's Sermon*, 1682.

Ver. 17-19. Neither the persecuting hand of men, nor the chastising hand of God, relaxed ancient singular saints. Believers resemble the *moon*, which emerges from her eclipse by keeping her motion, and ceases not to shine because the dogs bark at her. Shall we cease to be professors because others will not cease to be persecutors? *William Secker*.

Ver. 17-19. The church having reported her great troubles, speaks it as an argument of much sincerity towards God, and strength of grace received from him:

All this has come upon us (that is, all these common calamities and afflictions), *yet have we not forgotten thee, neither have we dealt falsely in thy covenant. Our heart is not turned back, neither have our steps declined from thy way;* as if she had said, These afflictions have been strong temptations upon us to cause us to decline from thy ways, but through grace we have kept our ground and remained constant in thy covenant, yea, *though thou hast sore broken us in the place of dragons, and covered us with the shadow of death.* As many, yea, most of the saints have improved under the cross, so there have been some, who either through their present unbelief, or forgetfulness of "the exhortation which" (as the apostle saith, Hebrews 12:5); "speaketh unto them as unto children, " have had their faintings or declinings under it. *Joseph Caryl*.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 17. The trial, truth, and triumph of the godly.

Ver. 17. The faithful soul holding fast his integrity.

Ver. 17. What it is to be false to our covenant with God.

PSALM 44:18

EXPOSITION

Ver. 18. *Our heart is not turned back, neither have our steps declined from thy way.* Heart and life were agreed, and both were true to the Lord's way. Neither within nor without had the godly sufferers offended; they were not absolutely perfect, but they were sincerely free from all wilful transgression. It was a healthy sign for the nation that her prophet poet could testify to her uprightness before God, both in heart and act; far oftener the case would have worn quite another colour, for the tribes were all too apt to set up other gods and forsake the rock of their salvation.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 18. *Our heart is not turned back.* Serious piety has become a ludicrous subject with which the wanton wits of this atheistical world sport themselves; but behold the wisdom and goodness of God, exhibiting to the world undeniable testimonies of the truth of religion as often as the sincere professors thereof are brought to the test by afflictions from the hand of God, or persecutions from the hands of men. Lo! "here is the faith and patience of the saints; " here is their courage, meekness, and self denial, shining as gold in the fire. They have the real proofs of it before their eyes. Instead of casting them into hell, and convincing them by eternal fire, he is pleased to cast his own people into the fire of affliction, that they who scoff at them may be convinced at an easier and cheaper rate. It is no new thing to see the enemies of religion brought over to embrace it by the constancy and faithfulness of the saints in their trials and sufferings for it. God grant that the atheism of this present generation do not occasion a more fiery trial to the people of God in it than they have yet suffered. *John Flavel.*

Ver. 18. *our heart.* The word (בבֶּלֶת) or Greek καρδία, that is rendered *heart*, both in the Old and New Testament, doth signify the understanding, the mind, will, affections, conscience, the whole soul.

Our heart is not turned back. Our understandings and minds are the same as they were in a summer's day, though now we be in a winter's storm; though now we be afflicted, tossed, broken, and persecuted, yet notwithstanding, *our heart is not turned back*, our mind, will, affections, and conscience, our whole soul, is the same now as before. *Thomas Brooks.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 18. (*first clause*). When we may be sure that our heart has not apostatised.

Ver. 18.

1. The position of the heart in religion—it comes first.
2. The position of the outer moral life in religion—it follows the heart.
3. Necessity of the agreement of the two.
4. The need that both should be faithful to God.

Ver. 18. Connection between the heart and the life, both in constancy and apostasy.

Ver. 18. God's delight in the progress of the upright. *Thomas Brooks.*

Upright hearts will hold on in the ways of God, and in the ways of well doing, notwithstanding all afflictions, troubles, and discouragements, they meet withal. *Thomas Brooks.*

Ver. 18. *Thy ways.* The ways of God are—

- (1) *righteous* ways;
- (2) *blessed* ways;
- (3) *soul refreshing* ways;
- (4) *transcendent* ways—ways that transcend all other ways;
- (5) *soul strengthening* ways; and
- (6) sometimes *afflicted, perplexed, and persecuted* ways. *Thomas Brooks.*

PSALM 44:19

EXPOSITION

Ver. 19. *Though thou hast sore broken us in the place of dragons.* Though utterly crushed and rendered desolate and driven as it were to associate with creatures such as jackals, owls, serpents, which haunt deserted ruins, yet Israel remained faithful. To be true to a smiting God, even when the blows lay our joys in ruinous heaps, is to be such as the Lord delighteth in. Better to be broken by God than from God. Better to be in the place of dragons than of deceivers.

And covered us with the shadow of death. The language is very strong. The nation is described as completely enveloped in the dense darkness of despair and death, covered up as though confined in hopelessness. Yet the claim is made that they still remained mindful of their God, and a glorious plea it is. Better death than false of faith. Those who are true to God shall never find him false to them.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 19. *Thou hast sore broken us in the place of dragons,* etc. Where men, comparable to dragons for their poison and cruelty, dwell, particularly in Rome, and the Roman jurisdiction, both Pagan and Papal, the seat of Satan the great red dragon, and of his wretched brood and offspring, the beast, to whom he has given his power; where the saints and followers of Christ have been sorely afflicted and persecuted, and yet have held fast the name of Christ, and not denied his faith. See Revelation 2:13 12:3. The wilderness is the habitation of dragons; and this is the name of the place where the church is said to be in the times of the Papacy, and where she is fed and preserved for a time, and times, and half time. Revelation 12:6,14.

And covered us with the shadow of death. As the former phrase denotes the cruelty of the enemies of Christ's church and people, this their dismal afflictions and forlorn state and condition; and may have some respect to the darkness of Popery, when it was at the height, and the church of Christ was covered with it, there being very little appearances and breakings forth of gospel light anywhere. *John Gill.*

Ver. 19. *Dragons.* The word rendered *dragons* —(מִיָּגוֹן), *tannim* —means either a great fish, a sea monster, a serpent, a dragon, or a crocodile. It may also mean a jackal, a fox, or a wolf. Deuteronomy Wette renders it here *jackals*. The *idea* in the passage is essentially the same, whichever interpretation of the word is adopted. The "*place of dragons*" would denote the place where such monsters are found, or where they had their abode; that is to say, in desolate places, wastes, deserts, old ruins, depopulated towns. *Albert Barnes.*

PSALM 44:20

EXPOSITION

Ver. 20. An appeal is now made to the omniscience of God; he is himself called in to bear witness that Israel had not set up another God.

If we have forgotten the name of our God. This would be the first step in apostasy; men first forget the true, and then adore the false.

Or stretched out our hands to a strange god. Stretching out the hands was the symbol of adoration or of entreaty in prayer; this they had not offered to any of the idols of the heathens.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 20. *Stretched out our hands to a strange god.* The *stretching out the hand* towards an object of devotion, or an holy place, was an ancient usage among the Jews and heathens both, and it *continues* in the East at this time, which continuance I do not remember to have seen remarked. That this attitude in prayer has *continued* among the Eastern people, appears by the following passage from Pitts, in his account of the religion and manners of the Mohammedans. Speaking of the Algerians throwing wax candles and pots of oil overboard, as a present to some marabbot (or Mohammedan saint), Pitt goes on, and says, "When this is done, they all together *hold up their hands*, begging the marabbot's blessing, and a prosperous voyage." In the same page he tells us, "the marabbots have generally a little neat room built over their graves, resembling in figure their mosques or churches, which is very nicely cleaned, and well looked after." And in the succeeding page he tells us, "Many people there are who will scarce pass by any of

them without *lifting up* their hand, and saying some short prayer." In like manner, he tells us, that at quitting the *Beat*, or holy house at Mecca, to which they make devout pilgrimages, "*they hold up their hands towards the Beat*, making earnest petitions." *Harmer's "Observations."*

PSALM 44:21

EXPOSITION

Ver. 21. *Shall not God search this out?* Could such idolatry be concealed from him? Would he not with holy indignation have detected unfaithfulness to itself, even had it been hidden in the heart and unrevealed in the life?

For he knoweth the secrets of the heart. He is acquainted with the inner workings of the mind, and therefore this could not have escaped him. Not the heart only which is secret, but the secrets of the heart, which are secrets of the most secret thing, are as open to God as a book to a reader. The reasoning is that the Lord himself knew the people to be sincerely his followers, and therefore was not visiting them for sin; hence, then, affliction evidently came from quite another cause.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 21. *Shall not God search this out?* etc. Are there such variety of trials appointed to examine the sincerity of men's graces? How great a vanity, then, is hypocrisy! and to how little purpose do men endeavour to conceal and hide it! We say, murder will out; and we may as confidently affirm, hypocrisy will out. When Rebekah had laid the plot to disguise her son Jacob, and by personating his brother to get the blessing, Jacob thus objects against it: "My father peradventure will feel me, and I shall seem to him as a deceiver, and I shall bring a curse upon me and not a blessing." As if he should say, But what if my father detect the cheat? How, then, shall I look him in the face? How shall I escape a curse? After the same manner every upright soul scares itself from the way of hypocrisy. If I dissemble, and pretend to be what I am not, my Father will find me out. There is no darkness nor shadow of death that can conceal the hypocrite; but out it will come at last, let him use all the art he can to hide it...If men's works be not good, it is impossible they should be hid long. A gilded piece of brass may

pass from hand to hand a little while, but the touchstone will discover the base metal; and if that does not, the fire will. *John Flavel.*

Ver. 21. A godly man dares not sin secretly. He knows that God sees in secret. As God cannot be deceived by our subtlety, so he cannot be excluded by our secrecy. *Thomas Watson.*

Ver. 21. In time of persecution for religion, nothing can counterbalance the terrors and allurements of the persecutors, and make a man steadfast in the cause of God, save the fear of God, and love to God settled in the heart; for the reason of the saint's steadfastness in this Psalm, is because God would have searched out their sin if they had done otherwise, *for he knoweth the secrets of the heart.* *David Dickson.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 21. Can he not? Will he not?

Ver. 21. A question and an assertion.

PSALM 44:22

EXPOSITION

Ver. 22. *Yea*, i.e., assuredly, certainly, *for thy sake*, not for our offences, but for obeying thee; the trials of these suppliants came upon them because they were loyal to their God.

Are we killed all the day long. Persecution never ceased to hound them to the death, they had no respite and found no door of escape; and all in God's behalf, because they would not forsake their covenant God and King.

We are counted as sheep for the slaughter; as if we were only meant to be killed, and made on purpose to be victims; as if it were as easy and as innocent a thing to slay us as to slaughter sheep. In this and following verses we clearly hear the martyr's cry. From Piedmont and Smithfield, from St. Bartholomew's massacre and the dragoonades of Claverhouse, this appeal goes up to heaven, while the souls under the altar continue their solemn cry for vengeance. Not long shall the church plead in this fashion, her shame shall be recompensed, her triumph shall dawn.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 22. *Yea, for thy sake are we killed all the day long*, etc. Leonard Schoener left, amongst other papers, the following admonition, to comfort all who were suffering for Christ's name: —

"We pray thee, O eternal God, to bow down thy gracious ear. Lord of Sabaoth, thou Lord of hosts, hear our complaint, for great affliction and persecution have prevailed. Pride has entered thine inheritance, and many supposed to be Christians, have united themselves therewith, and have thus brought in the abomination of desolation. They waste and destroy the Christian sanctuary. They have trodden the same under foot, and the abomination of desolation is worshipped as God. They have troubled thy holy city, thrown down thy holy altar, and slain her servants when they could lay their hands upon them. And now that we as a little flock are left, they have driven us into all thy lands with contempt and reproach. We are scattered as sheep having no shepherd. We have been compelled to forsake house and home. We are as night ravens which abide in the rocks; our chambers are in holes and crags. They watch for us as fowls that fly in the air. We wander in the woods, they hunt us with dogs. They lead us away, seized and bound, as lambs that open not their mouths. They cry out against us as seditious persons and heretics. We are brought like sheep to the slaughter. Many sit oppressed, and in bonds which even decay their bodies. Some have sunk under their sufferings, and died without fault. Here is the patience of the saints in the earth. We must be tried by suffering here. The faithful have they hanged on trees, strangled, hewn in pieces, secretly and openly drowned. Not only men, but likewise women, and maidens have borne witness to the truth, that Jesus Christ is the truth, the only way to eternal life. The world still rages, and rests not; it raves as if mad. They invent lies against us. They cease not their fires and murders. They make the world too narrow for us. O Lord, how long wilt thou be silent? How long wilt thou not judge the blood of thy saints? Let it come up before thy throne. How precious in thine eyes is the blood of thy holy ones! Therefore have we comfort in all our need, a refuge in thee alone, and in none besides; but neither comfort, nor rest, nor peace on this earth. But he who hopeth in thee shall never be confounded. O Lord, there is no sorrow so great that can separate us from thee; therefore, without ceasing we call upon thee, through Christ thy Son our Lord, whom thou of thy free grace hast given us for our comfort. He hath prepared and made known to us the straight path, and the way to eternal life. Everlasting glory and

triumph, honour and praise, be given unto thee, both now and to eternity, and let thy righteousness remain for ever. Let all the people bless thy holy name, through Christ the righteous Judge, who cometh to judge the whole world. Amen." *From "A Martyrology of the Churches of Christ, commonly called Baptists. Edited by E. B. Underhill, " 1850.*

Ver. 22. *For thy sake are we killed.* It is mercy to us, that when God might punish us for our sins, he doth make our correction honourable, and our troubles to be for a good cause. *For thy sake,* etc. *David Dickson.*

Ver. 22. *For thy sake.* This passage is cited by St. Paul, Romans 8:36, apparently from the LXX, in illustration of the fact that the church of God has in all ages been a persecuted church. But there is this remarkable difference between the tone of the psalmist and the tone of the apostle: the former cannot understand the chastening, and complains that God's heavy hand has been laid without cause upon his people; the latter can rejoice in persecutions also, and exclaim, "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us." *J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Ver. 22. *Killed.* The word here used is not from (l fq), but from (grh), which means *to strangle*: this is the rendering given in "Lange's Bibelwerk."

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 22.

1. Innocence in the midst of suffering, *sheep.*
2. Honour in the midst of shame, *for thy sake.* *G. Rogers.*

PSALM 44:23

EXPOSITION

Ver. 23. *Awake, why sleepest thou, O Lord.* God sleepeth not, but the psalmist puts it so, as if on no other theory he could explain the divine inaction. He would fain see the great Judge ending oppression and giving peace to the holy, therefore does he cry "Awake; "he cannot understand why the reign of tyranny and the oppression of virtue are permitted, and

therefore he enquires "Why sleepest thou?" *Arise*. This is all thou needest to do, one move of thine will save us.

Cast us not off for ever. Long enough hast thou deserted us; the terrible effects of thine absence are destroying us; end thou our calamities, and let thine anger be appeased. In persecuting times men are apt to cry, Where is the God of Israel? At the thought of what the saints have endured from their haughty enemies, we join our voices in the great martyr cry and sing with the bard of Paradise: —

*"Avenge, O Lord, thy slaughtered saints, whose bones
Lie scattered on the Alpine mountains cold;
Even those who kept thy truth so pure of old,
When all our fathers worshipped stocks and stones,
Forget not: in thy book record their groans
Who were thy sheep."*

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 23. *Awake, why sleepest thou, O Lord?* and Psalm 121:4, "*Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.*" If God at no time sleep, why doth the church call on him so often to awake? If he must be awakened from sleep, why doth the psalmist say he never sleeps? Are not these places contradictory?

ANSWER: It is one thing what the afflicted church cries in the heat of her sufferings, another thing what the Spirit of truth speaks for the comfort of the saints. It is ordinary for the best of saints and martyrs, during the storm, to go to God as Peter did to Christ at sea (sleeping in the stern of the ship), with such importunity in prayer as if the Lord were no more sensible of their agony than Jonah was of the mariners' misery, ready to perish in the turbulent ocean, and he cried out, What meanest thou, O sleeper? Arise! Saints are so familiar with God in prayer, as if they were at his bedside.

THE SOUL'S APPLICATION. —O thou never slumbering Watchman of the house of Israel, carest not thou that we perish? Awake, awake! put on strength, gird thyself, O thou arm of God! I know thou art up, but what am I the better except thou help me up? I know thou sleepest not as man doth, but what advantage hath my soul by that, except thou show thyself, that I may know thou art waking? Oh, it is I that am asleep! You seem to sleep only to awaken me. O that I could watch with thee one hour, as you bid

me; I should soon perceive that thy vigilance over me for ever. *William Streat in "The Dividing of the Hoof."* 1654.

Ver. 23. *Awake, why sleepest thou, O Lord?* etc. The weakness of our faith is open to the temptation of supposing that God regards not the situation of his people in the world; and the Spirit, who knows our infirmities, provides a petition suited to this trial, which expresses at the same time an expectation that God will arise to claim his people as his own. *W. Wilson.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 23. The cry of a church in sad circumstances. The complaint of a deserted soul.

PSALM 44:24

EXPOSITION

Ver. 24. *Wherefore hidest thou thy face, and forgettest our affliction and our oppression?* Not petulantly, but piteously and inquiringly, we may question the Lord when his dealings are mysterious. We are permitted to order our case with arguments, and plead the right before the face of the august Majesty. Why, Lord, dost thou become oblivious of thy children's woes? This question is far more easily asked than answered; it is hard, indeed, in the midst of persecution to see the reason why we are left to suffer so severely.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 24. Reasons for the withdrawal of divine comfort.

PSALM 44:25

EXPOSITION

Ver. 25. *For our soul is bowed down to the dust.* Our heart is low as low can be, as low as the dust beneath the soles of men's feet. When the heart sinks, the man is down indeed. Heart sorrow is the very heart of sorrow.

Our belly cleaveth unto the earth. The man is prone upon the earth, and he is not only down, but fastened down on the earth and glued to it. It is misery, indeed, when the heart cannot escape from itself, is shut up in its own dejection, and bound with the cords of despondency. God's saints may be thus abject, they may be not only in the dust, but on the dunghill with Job and Lazarus, but their day cometh, and their tide will turn, and they shall have a brave summer after their bitter winter.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 25. *For our soul is bowed down to the dust: our belly cleaveth unto the earth.* We are as to body and soul, smitten and thrown down, glued as it were to the ground, so that we cannot raise ourselves up. *E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Ver. 25. *For our soul is bowed down to the dust,* etc. The speech is metaphorical, expressing the depth of their misery, or the greatness of their sorrow and humiliation.

1. The depth of their misery, with the allusion to the case of a man overcome in battle, or mortally wounded, and tumbling in the dust, or to a man dead and laid in the earth; as, "Thou hast brought me into the dust of death." Psalm 22:15. Sure we are, the expression imports the extremity of distress and danger, either as a man dead or near death.
2. The greatness of their sorrow and humiliation; and so the allusion is taken from a man prostrate and grovelling on the ground, which was their posture of humbling themselves before the Lord, or when any great calamity befell them. As when Herod Agrippa died, they put on sackcloth and lay upon the earth weeping. *Thomas Manton.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 25. The great need, the great prayer, the great plea.

PSALM 44:26

EXPOSITION

Ver. 26. *Arise for our help.* A short, but sweet and comprehensive prayer, much to the point, clear, simple, urgent, as all prayers should be. *And redeem us for thy mercies' sake.* Here is the final plea. The favour is redemption, the plea is mercy; and this, too, in the case of faithful sufferers who had not forgotten their God. Mercy is always a safe plea, and never will any man find a better.

*"Were I a martyr at the stake.
I would plead my Saviour's name,
Intreat a pardon for his sake,
And urge no other claim."*

Here ends this memorable Psalm, but in heaven its power ends not, but brings down deliverance for the tried people of God.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 26. A fit prayer for souls under conviction, for saints under trial or persecution, and for the church under oppression or decay.

PSALM 45

PSALM 45:1

Title. The many titles of this Psalm mark its royalty, its deep and solemn import, and the delight the writer had in it. To the Chief Musician upon Shoshannim. The most probable translation of this word is upon the lilies, and it is either a poetical title given to this noblest of songs after the Oriental manner, or it may relate to the tune to which it was set, or to the instrument which was meant to accompany it. We incline to the first theory, and if it be the true one, it is easy to see the fitness of borrowing a name for so beautiful, so pure, so choice, so matchless a poem from the golden lilies, whose bright array outshone the glory of Solomon. For the sons of Korah. Special singers are appointed for so divine a hymn. King Jesus deserves to be praised not with random, ranting ravings, but with the sweetest and most skilful music of the best trained choristers. The purest hearts in the spiritual temple are the most harmonious songsters in the ears of God; acceptable song is not a matter so much of tuneful voices as of sanctified affections, but in no case should we sing of Jesus with unprepared hearts. Maschil, an instructive ode, not an idle lay, or a romancing ballad, but a Psalm of holy teaching, didactic and doctrinal. This proves that it is to be spiritually understood. Blessed are the people who know the meaning of its joyful sound. A Song of loves. Not a carnal sentimental love song, but a celestial canticle of everlasting love fit for the tongues and ears of angels.

Subject. Some here see Solomon and Pharaoh's daughter only— they are short sighted; others see both Solomon and Christ—they are cross eyed; well focused spiritual eyes see here Jesus only, or if Solomon be present at all, it must be like those hazy shadows of by passers which cross the face of the camera, and therefore are dimly traceable upon a photographic landscape. "The King, "the God whose throne is for ever and ever, is no mere mortal and his everlasting dominion is not bounded by Lebanon and Egypt's river. This is no wedding song of earthly nuptials, but an Epithalamium for the Heavenly Bridegroom and his elect spouse.

Division. Psalm 45:1 is an announcement of intention, a preface to the song; Psalm 45:3 adores the matchless beauty of Messiah; and from Psalm 45:3-9, he is addressed in admiring ascriptions of praise. Psalm 45:10-12 are spoken to the bride. The church is further spoken of in Psalm 45:13-15, and the Psalm closes with another address to the King, foretelling his eternal fame, Psalm 45:16-17.

EXPOSITION

Ver. 1. *My heart.* There is no writing like that dictated by the heart. Heartless hymns are insults to heaven.

Is inditing a good matter. A good heart will only be content with good thoughts. Where the fountain is good good streams will flow forth. The learned tell us that the word may be read overflows, or as others, boils or bubbles up, denoting the warmth of the writer's love, the fulness of his heart, and the consequent richness and glow of his utterance, as though it were the ebullition of his inmost soul, when most full of affection. We have here no single cold expression; the writer is not one who frigidly studies the elegancies and proprieties of poetry, his stanzas are the natural outburst of his soul, comparable to the boiling jets of the geysers of Hecla. As the corn offered in sacrifice was parched in the pan, so is this tribute of love hot with sincere devotion. It is a sad thing when the heart is cold with a good matter, and worse when it is warm with a bad matter, but incomparably well when a warm heart and a good matter meet together. O that we may often offer to God an acceptable *minchah*, a sweet oblation fresh from the pan of hearts warmed with gratitude and admiration.

I speak of the things which I have made touching the King. This song has "the King" for its only subject, and for the King's honour alone was it composed, well might its writer call it a good matter. The psalmist did not write carelessly; he calls his poem his works, or things which he had made. We are not to offer to the Lord that which costs us nothing. Good material deserves good workmanship. We should well digest in our heart's affections and our mind's meditations any discourse or poem in which we speak of one so great and glorious as our Royal Lord. As our version reads it, the psalmist wrote experimentally things which he had made his own, and personally tasted and handled concerning the King.

My tongue is the pen of a ready writer, not so much for rapidity, for there the tongue always has the preference, but for exactness, elaboration,

deliberation, and skilfulness of expression. Seldom are the excited utterances of the mouth equal in real weight and accuracy to the *verba scripta* of a thoughtful accomplished penman; but here the writer, though filled with enthusiasm, speaks as correctly as a practised writer; his utterances therefore are no ephemeral sentences, but such as fall from men who sit down calmly to write for eternity. It is not always that the best of men are in such a key, and when they are they should not restrain the gush of their hallowed feelings. Such a condition of heart in a gifted mind creates that auspicious hour in which poetry pours forth her tuneful numbers to enrich the service of song in the house of the Lord.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Title. "*Upon Shoshannim*, "or upon *lilies*. It will be remembered that lilies were an emblem of purity and loveliness, and were introduced as such in the building of Solomon's temple (see 1 Kings 7:19,22,26 2 Chronicles 4:5); and the church is compared in the Canticles to a "lily among thorns." So 2:2. The Psalms which bear this title, "upon lilies, "are the present, the sixty-ninth, and the eightieth (compare Psalm 60:1-12); and all these contain prophecies of Christ and his church. The sixtieth is a parallel to the forty-fourth, and represents her supplicating appeal to God, and Christ's victories. The sixty-ninth displays the victories gained by Christ through suffering. The eightieth is also parallel to the forty-fourth and sixtieth, a plaintive lament of the church in distress and a supplicating cry for deliverance. All these three Psalms are (if we may venture to use this expression) like the voice of the "lily among thorns." That there is, therefore, some reference here to the spiritual meaning of the word (*ryv*), or *lilies*, in this title, seems at least to be probable. *Christopher Wordsworth*.

Title. We think that *Shoshannim* signifies an instrument of six strings, or a song of rejoicing. *Augustin Calmet*, 1672-1757.

Kitto, on the other hand, says that the word is so clearly *lilies*, that he is disinclined to go out of the way to bring in the Hebrew word for six.

Title. "*To the chief musician upon Shoshannim*." Some would have it that instruments whereon were many engravings of lilies, which are six leaved flowers, are here meant. And, indeed, some interpreters, because of that derivation of the word, do thus translate it, *upon Shoshannim*, that is, *upon*

lilies; and that either in reference to their wedding garlands, that were made much of lilies, or as intending by these lilies Christ and his church. *Arthur Jackson.*

Title. "*A song.*" The word (*ryv*), *shir*, the meaning of which (*song*), is unquestioned, is prefixed to many of the Psalms, three times simply and thirteen times in connection with *Mizmor*. There is no mark of peculiarity in their composition. The meaning of the word seems to be discriminated from *Mizmor*, as signifying a thing to be sung, with reference to its poetical structure. *John Jebb.*

Whole Psalm. The Psalter, which sets forth so much truth respecting the person and work of Christ—truth more precious than gold and sweeter than the honeycomb—is not silent respecting the bond subsisting between him and his people, THE MYSTICAL UNION BETWEEN CHRIST AND THE CHURCH. When a prince sets his affections on a woman of lowly rank, and takes her home to be his wife, the two are so united that her debts become his, his wealth and honours become hers. Now, that there is formed between Christ and the church, between Christ and every soul that will consent to receive him, a connection, of which the most intimate of all natural relations is the analogue and type, we have already found to be not only taught in the Psalms, but to be implied in the very structure of many of them. He takes his people's sins upon him, and they receive the right to become the sons of God: the One Spirit of God wherewith he was baptised without measure, dwells in them according to the measure of the grace that is given them. I will only add further, that this union, besides being implied on so many places, is expressly set forth in one most glorious Psalm—the Nuptial Song of Christ and the Church—which has for its peculiar theme the home bringing of Christ's elect, that they may be joined to him in a union that shall survive the everlasting hills. *William Binnie, D.D.*

Ver. 1. *My heart is inditing a good matter*, and then *My tongue shall be like the pen of a ready writer*. Oh, then I shall go merrily on in his service, when I have matter prepared in my heart. And, indeed, as the mariner sees further new stars the further he sails, he loseth sight of the old ones and discovers new; so the growing Christian, the further he sails in religion he discovers new wants, new Scriptures affect him, new trials afflict him, new business he finds with God, and forgetting those things that are behind, he reacheth after those things that are before, and so finds every day new

business with the Lord his God; and he that's busy trifles not; the more business the less distractions. *Richard Steele.*

Ver. 1. *My heart is inditing a good matter.* (vj r) (*rakhash*); *boils or bubbles up*; denotes the language of the heart full and ready for utterance. *Victorinus Bythner.*

Ver. 1. *My heart is inditing a good matter.* Here you have the work of the Spirit of prophecy. By his operation the good "matter" is engendered in the psalmist's bosom, and now his heart is heaving and labouring under the load. It is just beginning to throw it up, like water from a fountain, that it may flow off in the channel of the tongue. Here, therefore, you have some insight given you of the manner of the operation of the Spirit in the heart of man. The psalmist says his heart is doing what the spirit is doing in his heart. The heart does it, indeed, but it is the Spirit's working. The psalmist took all the interest and pleasure in his subject that he could have done, if the Spirit had had nothing to do with it; for when the Spirit works, he works not only by the heart, but in the heart; he seizes upon all its affections, every fibre of it is bent to his will. *George Harpur, in "Christ in the Psalms," 1862.*

Ver. 1. *Good matter*, the good spell, or *gospel*. *Christopher Wordsworth.*

Ver. 1. A similitude taken from the *mincah*, or *meat offering* in the law, which was dressed in the frying pan Leviticus 7:9, and there boiled in oil, being made of fine flour unleavened, mingled with oil Leviticus 2:5, and afterwards was presented to the Lord by the priest, verse 8. Here the matter of this Psalm is as the *mincah* or oblation, which with the oil, the grace of the Spirit, was boiled and prepared in the prophet's heart, and now presented. *Henry Ainsworth.*

Ver. 1. It is reported of Origen, saith Erasmus, that he was ever earnest, but most of all when he discoursed of Christ. Of Johannes Mollias, a Bononian, it is said, that whenever he spake of Jesus Christ, his eyes dropped, for he was fraught with a mighty fervency of God's Holy Spirit; and like the Baptist, he was first a burning (boiling or bubbling), and then a shining light. *John Trapp.*

Ver. 1. *Touching the king.* It does not all concern the king immediately, for much of it concerns the queen, and about one half of it is directly addressed to her. But it relates to him inasmuch as it relates to his family. Christ ever

identifies himself with his people; so that, whatever is done to them, is done to himself. Their interests are his. *George Harpur.*

Ver. 1. *My tongue* shall be like the pen of one that takes minutes or writes shorthand: for I shall speak very briefly, and not in words at length, or so as to be understood in a literal sense, but in figures and emblems. *From "Holy David and his old English Translators cleared," 1706. (Anon.)*

Ver. 1. *The pen.* We call the prophets the *penmen* of Scripture, whereas they were but the *pen*.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 1. In the preface, the prophet commends the subject he is to treat of, signifying,

1. That it is *a good matter*—good as speaking of the Son of God, who is the *chief good*.
2. *Good for us*; for upon the marriage of Christ to his church depends our good. *Bishop Nicholson.*

Ver. 1. Character read by heart writing.

1. The true lover of Christ is sincere—*my heart*?
2. He is a man of emotion.
3. A man of holy meditation.
4. A man of experience—*things I have made*.
5. A man who bears witness for his Lord.

Ver. 1. Three things requisite for Christian teaching:

1. That the matter be good; and concerning the best of all subjects, *touching the King*.
2. That the language be fluent like the pen, etc.
 1. Partly from nature.
 2. Partly from cultivation.
 3. Partly from the Spirit of God.
3. That the heart be absorbed in it—*My heart is inditing*. *G. R.*

WORKS UPON THE FORTY-FIFTH PSALM

Exposition of Psalm XLV, in the works of JOHN BOYS, Dean of Canterbury. 1638. Folio edition, pages 920-931.

The Mystery of the Marriage Song, and Mutual Spiritual Embraces between Christ and his Spouse, opened as an Exposition with practical notes and observations on the whole Forty-fifth Psalm. By W. TROUGHTON, Minister of the Gospel. 1656.

In "*Christ set forth in all types, figures, and obscure places of the Scripture*, by RICHARD COORE, 1683, "there is an Exposition of this Psalm.

A Treatise of Solomon's Marriage; or, a Congratulation for the happie and hopeful Marriage betweene the most illustrious and Noble Prince, Fredericke the V. Count Palatine of Rhine...and the most gracious and excellent Princisse, the Lady Elizabeth, sole daughter unto the high and mighty Prince James, by the grace of God, King of Great Britain, France, and Ireland. Joyfully solemnized on the 14th day of February, 1612...(On Psalm 45:10-16. By ANDREW WILLET.)

The Bride Royall; or, the Spirituall Marriage betweene Christ and his Church. Delivered by way of congratulation upon the happy and hopeful marriage betweene the two incomparable Princes, the Palegrave, and the Ladie Elizabeth. In a sermon...By GEORGE WEBBE. 1613...(On Psalm 45:13-15)

Psalm XLV applied to Messiah's First Advent, and Psalm XLV applied to Messiah's Second Advent, in pages 242-341, of *The Anointed Saviour set forth as the Principal Object of Saving Faith*. By the Rev. DAVID PITCAIRN. 1846.

Five Discourses on *Christ in the Psalms*. An Exposition of the second, forty-fifth and hundred and tenth Psalms. In a series of Discourses. By the Rev. GEORGE HARPUR, B.A. London: Wertheim, Macintosh, and Hunt. 1862.

PSALM 45:2

EXPOSITION

Ver. 2. *Thou.* As though the King himself had suddenly appeared before him, the psalmist lost in admiration of his person, turns from his preface to address his Lord. A loving heart has the power to realise its object. The eyes of a true heart see more than the eyes of the head. Moreover, Jesus reveals himself when we are pouring forth our affections towards him. It is usually the case that when we are ready Christ appears. If our heart is warm it is an index that the sun is shining, and when we enjoy his heat we shall soon behold his light.

Thou art fairer than the children of men. In person, but especially in mind and character, the King of saints is peerless in beauty. The Hebrew word is doubled, "Beautiful, beautiful art thou." Jesus is so emphatically lovely that words must be doubled, strained, yea, exhausted before he can be described. Among the children of men many have through grace been lovely in character, yet they have each had a flaw; but in Jesus we behold every feature of a perfect character in harmonious proportion. He is lovely everywhere, and from every point of view, but never more so than when we view him in conjugal union with his church; then love gives a ravishing flush of glory to his loveliness.

Grace is poured into thy lips. Beauty and eloquence make a man majestic when they are united; they both dwell in perfection in the all fair, all eloquent Lord Jesus. Grace of person and grace of speech reach their highest point in him. Grace has in the most copious manner been poured upon Christ, for it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell, and now grace is in superabundance, poured forth from his lips to cheer and enrich his people. The testimony, the promises, the invitations, the consolations of our King pour forth from him in such volumes of meaning that we cannot but contrast those cataracts of grace with the speech of Moses which did but drop as the rain, and distil as the dew. Whoever in personal communion with the Wellbeloved has listened to his voice will feel that "never man spake like this man." Well did the bride say of him, "his lips are like lilies dropping sweet smelling myrrh." One word from himself dissolved the heart of Saul of Tarsus, and turned him into an apostle, another word raised up John the Divine when fainting in the Isle of

Patmos. Oftentimes a sentence from his lips has turned our own midnight into morning, our winter into spring.

Therefore God hath blessed thee for ever. Calvin reads it, *Because God hath blessed thee for ever.* Christ is blessed of God, blessed for ever, and this is to us one great reason for his beauty, and the source of the gracious words which proceed out of his lips. The rare endowments of the man Christ Jesus are given him of the Father, that by them his people may be blessed with all spiritual blessings in union with himself. But if we take our own translation, we read that the Father has blessed the Mediator as a reward for all his gracious labours; and right well does he deserve the recompense. Whom God blesses we should bless, and the more so because all his blessedness is communicated to us.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 2. *Thou art fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into thy lips.* Thus he begins to set forth his beauty, wherein is the delightfulness of any person; so is it with the soul when God hath made known to man his own filthiness and uncomeliness through sin, and that only by Jesus sin is taken away; oh, how beautiful is this face, the first sight of him! Secondly,

Full of grace are thy lips: here is the second commendation; which is, when Jesus hath opened his lips to us, from them he pours out grace into our soul, when he makes known the Father to us, and speaks peace to all that are far off and near; when he calls, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you:" and all this is because God hath blessed him for ever; we are assured he comes from God, and that he and his works are eternal, and therefore all his grace poured out upon us shall remain with us, and make us blessed for ever; for he is the Word of God, and he speaks the mind of God, for he speaks nothing but what he hath heard from the Father; and when he speaks to our souls with his Word, the Spirit is given, a certain testimony to our soul that we are the sons of God, and a pledge of our inheritance; for the Spirit and the Word cannot be separated. *Richard Coore, in "Christ set forth."*

Ver. 2. *Thou art fairer than the children of men,* etc. Nothing can be more beautiful than this abrupt way of discourse. The prophet sets out with a professed design to speak of the king. But as if in the moment he had so intended, the glorious *Person* of whom he was going to speak appeared to his view, he instantly leaves every other consideration to speak to him

himself. And what a rapturous address he makes! He first describes the glories, the beauties, the astonishing loveliness, of his *person*. Though to a carnal eye there was no beauty to desire him, his visage was marred more than any man's, and his form more than the sons on men, yet to an eye truly enlightened, he is the king in his beauty, fairer, as the glorious *Mediator*, the Head, the Bridegroom of his Church and people, than all the children of men. And, in the Father's view, so greatly beloved, so truly glorious, that *grace was poured into his lips*. Reader, observe the expression; not simply grace put into his heart, for the holiness and purity of his person, but poured into his lips, that, like the honey, it might drop upon his people, and be for ever communicated to all his redeemed, in an endless perpetuity of all suited blessings here, and glory hereafter. *Robert Hawker, D.D.*

Ver. 2. *Thou art fairer than the children of men.* Are you for *beauty*? That takes with most: for this none like Christ. For beauty and comeliness he infinitely surpasses both men and angels. We read of Moses, that he was exceeding fair; and of David, that he was ruddy, and of a beautiful countenance; and Josephus reports of the one of them, that all that saw him were amazed at and enamoured of his beauty. Oh, but what was their beauty to Christ's? Were their beauty, and with theirs the beauty of men and angels put together, it would all be nothing to the beauty of Christ; not so much as the light of a farthing candle is to the light of the sun at noonday. *Edward Pearse in "The Best Match."* 1673.

Ver. 2. *Thou art fairer*, etc. Fair he was

(1) in his *conception*, conceived in purity, and a fair angel brought the news. Fair

(2) in his *nativity*: *wraioz* is the word in the Septuagint, *tempustivus*, in time, that is, all things are beautiful in their time, Ecclesiastes 3:11. And in the fulness of time it was that he was born, and a fair star pointed to him. Fair

(3) in his *childhood*; he grew up in grace and favour, Luke 2:52. The doctors were much taken with him. Fair

(4) in his *manhood*; had he not been so, says S. Jerome, had there not been something admirable in his countenance and presence, some heavenly beauty, the apostles and the whole world (as the Pharisees themselves confess) would not so suddenly have gone after him. Fair

(5) in his *transfiguration*, white as the light, or as the snow, his face glittering as the sun Matthew 17:2, even to the ravishing the very soul of S. Peter, that "he knew not what he said, "could let his eyes dwell upon that face for ever, and never come down the mount again. Fair

(6) in his *passion*. *Nihil indecorum*, no uncomeliness, in his nakedness; his very wounds, and the bloody prints of the whips and scourges drew an *ecce* from the mouth of Pilate: "Behold, the man!" the sweetness of his countenance and carriage in the midst of filth and spittle, whips and buffets. His very comeliness upon the cross, and his giving up the ghost, made the centurion cry out, he "*was the Son of God*:" there appeared so sweet a majesty, so heavenly a lustre in him through that very darkness that encompassed him. Fair

(7) in his *resurrection*; so subtle a beauty, that mortal eyes, even the eyes of his own disciples, were not able to see or apprehend it, but when he veiled it from them. Fair

(8) in his *ascension*; made his disciples stand gazing after him so long (as if they never could look long enough upon him), till an angel is sent from heaven to rebuke them, to look home, Acts 1:2. *Mark Frank*.

Ver. 2. O fair sun, and fair moon, and fair stars, and fair flowers, and fair roses, and fair lilies; but O ten thousand thousand times fairer Lord Jesus! Alas! I have wronged him in making the comparison this way. O black sun and moon! but O fair Lord Jesus! O black flowers, and black lilies, and roses! but O fair, fair, ever fair, Lord Jesus! O black heaven! but O fair Christ! O black angels! but O surpassingly fair Lord Jesus! *Samuel Rutherford*.

Ver. 2. In one Christ we may contemplate and must confess all the beauty and loveliness both of heaven and earth; the beauty of heaven is God, the beauty of earth is man; the beauty of heaven and earth together is this God man. *Edward Hyde, D.D., 1658*.

Ver. 2. Thou. "I have a passion, "observed Count Zinzendorf in one of his discourses to the congregation at Herrnhut, "and it is He —He only."

Ver. 2. Thou art fairer. Hebrew, thou art *double fairer*; the Hebrew word is doubled, *ad corroborandum*, saith Kimchi. *John Trapp*.

Ver. 2. *Grace is poured into thy lips.* This is said as if this grace were a gift, and not something inherent in our Lord himself. And is not this exactly what we learn from the histories of the evangelists? Before Jesus went forth to the work of his public mission, the Holy Ghost descended from heaven like a dove, and lit upon him. The Spirit who imparts all its graces to the church of Christ, imparted his graces to Christ himself. Not that the Son of God needed the anointing of the Spirit of God, but he suffered it to be so that he might be in all things like his brethren. If he was to be their example, he must show them wherein their great strength lay. They see in him the fruits of the Holy Ghost who is promised to themselves. All that Christ ever did as the Head and Representative of his people, he did by that very Spirit which is still resident in his church. *George Harpur.*

Ver. 2. *Grace is poured into thy lips. Full of grace are thy lips.* Full of grace for the *matter*, and full of grace for the *manner*.

I. For the *matter*, he delivered acceptable doctrine: "The law was given by Moses, but grace came by Jesus Christ." John 1:17. Moses had harsh and hard words in his law; "Cursed is he that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them; "but Christ on the contrary speaks better things, the first words in his first sermon are, "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 5:3. He cometh unto his people, *cum verbo gratiae, cum osculo gratae*, saith Augustine: his lips are *full of grace*, that is, pouring out gracious words abundantly. Matthew 11:28 John 3:16 Luke 4:18. "His lips are like lilies dropping down myrrh" Song of Solomon 5:13; all that heard him wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth, Luke 4:22.

II. For the *manner*, he taught not as the scribes; he spake so sweetly that the very catch poll officers, astonished at his words, gave this testimony, "Never man spake like this man," John 7:46. He spake so graciously that the apostles forsook all things and followed him; at his call Andrew left his nets straightway, James and John their father without tarrying, Matthew from the receipt of custom, Zacchaeus from the like worldly course came hastily to receive him joyfully. Mark 10:28 Matthew 4:20-21 9:9 Luke 19:6. Nay, beloved, he was so powerful an orator, that the very winds and waves obeyed his word, Mark 4:39. It is reported in Holy Writ that all princes and people were desirous of hearing Solomon's eloquence; the Queen of Sheba wondering at the same, cried out, "Happy are these thy

servants which stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom, "1 Kings 10:8. Solomon is type here, but Christ is the truth; and this sheweth evidently that Christ is not a tyrant, but a mild prince, persuading obedience plausibly, not compelling his people violently; his sayings are his *sceptre* and his sword: his piercing exhortations are, as it were, his *sharp arrows* by which his followers are subdued unto him.

To conclude this argument, his fair words (as the Scripture speaks) "are as an honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the bones" Proverbs 16:24: "an honeycomb, "and what more toothsome? "sweetness to the soul and health to the bones; "and what, I pray, more wholesome? The good man's soul is Christ's own spouse, to which he speaks a great many ways graciously; sometimes correcting, and what stronger argument of love? for "whom he loveth he chasteneth" Hebrews 12:6; sometimes instructing, and his gospel is able to make "the man of God perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" 2 Timothy 3:17; sometimes wooing in amorous terms, as in his love song everywhere: "my beloved, ""my sister, ""my spouse, " "the fairest among women, ""my love, ""my dove." etc.; sometimes promising, and that both the blessings of this life present. Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: etc., Isaiah 41:10, and of that life which is to come. John 17:21,24. But Christ's excellent intercession every day to God the Father, appearing in the court of heaven, and as an advocate pleading for us, is yet fuller of grace; for if Caleb easily granted his daughter's request, and bestowed on her "the springs above and the springs beneath" Jud 1:15, how shall Almighty God (whose mercies are above all his works) deny the suits of such a Son in whom he is well pleased? *John Boys*.

Ver. 2. *Grace is poured into thy lips.* The former clause noted his inward perfections; and this signifies his ability and readiness to communicate them to others. *Matthew Poole*.

Ver. 2. (*second clause*). Never were there such words of love and sweetness spoken by any man as by him: never was there such a loving and tender heart as the heart of Jesus Christ:

Grace was poured into his lips. Certainly never were there such words of love, sweetness, and tenderness spoken here upon this earth as those last words of his which were uttered a little before his sufferings, and are recorded in the 13th, 14th, 15th, 16th and 17th chapters of John. Read over all the books of love and friendship that were ever written by any of

the sons of men, they do all come far short of these melting strains of love that are there expressed. So sweet and amiable was the conversation of Jesus Christ, that it is reported of the apostle Peter in the Ecclesiastical History, that after Christ's ascension he wept so abundantly, that he was always seen wiping his face from the tears; and being asked why he wept so, he answered, He could not choose but weep as often as he thought of that most sweet conversation of Jesus Christ. *John Row.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 2. In what respects Jesus is fairer than the best of men.

Ver. 2. Jesus—his person, his gospel, his fulness of blessing.

Ver. 2.

1. We may and ought to praise Christ. Angels do, God does, Scripture does, Old Testament saints and New, so should we. It is the work of heaven begun on earth.

2. For what should we praise him?

1. For his beauty. Is wisdom beauty? Is righteousness? Is love? Is meekness? All are found in him supremely—

*"All human beauties, all divine,
In our Redeemer meet and shine."*

2. For his grace. Grace of God treasured up in him.

3. For his blessedness—of God and for ever. *G.R.*

Ver. 2-5. In these verses the Lord Jesus is presented,

1. As most amiable in himself.

2. As the great favourite of heaven.

3. As victorious over his enemies. *Matthew Henry.*

PSALM 45:3

EXPOSITION

Ver. 3. *Gird thy sword upon thy thigh.* Loving spirits jealous of the Redeemer's glory long to see him putting forth his power to vindicate his own most holy cause. Why should the sword of the Spirit lie still, like a weapon hung up in an armoury; it is sharp and strong, both for cutting and piercing: O that the divine power of Jesus were put forth to use against error. The words before us represent our great King as urged to arm himself for battle, by placing his sword where it is ready for use. Christ is the true champion of the church, others are but underlings who must borrow strength from him; the single arm of Immanuel is the sole hope of the faithful. Our prayer should be that of this verse. There is at this moment an apparent suspension of our Lord's former power, we must by importunate prayer call him to the conflict, for like the Greeks without Achilles we are soon overcome by our enemies, and we are but dead men if Jesus be not in our midst.

O most mighty. A title well deserved, and not given from empty courtesy like the serenities, excellencies and highnesses of our fellow mortals—titles, which are but sops for vain glory. Jesus is the truest of heroes. Hero worship in his case alone is commendable. He is mighty to save, mighty in love.

With thy glory and thy majesty. Let thy sword both win thee renown and dominion, or as it may mean, gird on with thy sword thy robes which indicate thy royal splendour. Love delights to see the Beloved arrayed as becometh his excellency; she weeps as she sees him in the garments of humiliation, she rejoices to behold him in the vestments of his exaltation. Our precious Christ can never be made too much of. Heaven itself is but just good enough for him. All the pomp that angels and archangels, and thrones, and dominions, and principalities, and powers can pour at his feet is too little for him. Only his own essential glory is such as fully answers to the desire of his people, who can never enough extol him.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 3. *Gird thy sword upon thy thigh.* The sword, according to ancient custom was hung in a belt put round the shoulders, and reaching down to the thigh. It was suspended on the back part of the thigh, almost to the ground, but was not girded upon it; the horseman's sword was fixed on the saddle by a girth. When David, in spirit invites the Redeemer of the church to gird his sword upon his thigh, and the spouse says of the valiant of Israel, "every man hath his sword upon his thigh because of fear in the night" So 3:8, they do not mean that the weapon was literally bound upon their thigh, but hung in the girdle on the back part of it; for this was the mode in which, by the universal testimony of ancient writers, the infantry wore their swords. It is still the practice in the East to wear swords in this manner, for Chardin informs us, that "the Eastern people wear their swords hanging down at length; and the Turks wear their swords on horseback, and on their thigh." But in his poetical invitation to the Redeemer, to gird his sword upon his thigh, David manifestly points to some special occasion of solemn and official character; and a clear light is thrown upon his meaning by a custom to this day observed in the East. "When a Persian or an Ottoman prince *ascends the throne*, "says Mr. Morier, "he girds on his sabre. Mohammed Jaffer, for example, was proclaimed by the Khan, governor *pro tempore*, till the arrival of his brother, and was invested in this dignity by the *girding of a sword upon his thigh*, and honour which he accepted with a reluctance perhaps not wholly feigned." — "This ceremony," says Dr. Davey, giving an account of an Eastern coronation, "remained to be performed before the prince could be considered completely king—it was that of choosing a new name, and putting on the regal sword. The prince went in great state to the temple, where he presented offerings, and then, the sword having been girded on his thigh, the priest presented a pot of sandal powder, in which the prince, who *may now be called* king, dipped his fingers." From these anecdotes, it is evident girding a sword on the thigh is part of the ceremony of royal inauguration; and that when the psalmist addresses the Messiah, he refers to his receiving the honours and powers of the Lord of all. *G. Paxton's Illustrations of Scripture.*

Ver. 3. *Thy sword.* The word of God is compared to such a weapon, for the apostle informs us that it is quick, or living, and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and laying open the thoughts

and intents of the heart. It must be observed, however, that this description of the word of God is applicable to it only when Christ girds it on, and employs it as his sword. Of what use is a sword, even though it be the sword of Goliath, while it lies still in its scabbard, or is grasped by the powerless hand of an infant? In those circumstances it can neither conquer nor defend, however well suited it might be to do both in the hand of a warrior. It is the same with the sword of the Spirit. While it lies still in its scabbard, or is wielded only by the infantile hand of Christ's ministers, it is a powerless and useless weapon; a weapon at which the weakest sinner can laugh, and against which he can defend himself with the utmost ease. But not so when he who is the Most Mighty girds it on. Then it becomes a weapon of tremendous power, a weapon resistless as the bolt of heaven. "Is not my word like a fire, and a hammer, saith the Lord, which breaketh the rock in pieces?" It is indeed, for what can be more efficacious and irresistible than a weapon sharper than a two edged sword, wielded by the arm of omnipotence? What must his sword be whose glance is lightning? Armed with this weapon, the Captain of our salvation cuts his way to the sinner with infinite ease, though surrounded by rocks and mountains, scatters his strongholds and refuges of lies, and with a mighty blow cleaves asunder his heart of adamant, and lays him prostrate and trembling at his feet. Since such are the effects of this weapon in the hand of Christ, it is with the utmost propriety that the psalmist begins by requesting him *to gird it on*, and not suffer it to be inactive in its scabbard, or powerless in the feeble grasp of his ministers. *Edward Payson.*

Ver. 3. *O most mighty.* Christ is almighty, and so able to make good all that he speaketh, and to make his word of precept, promise, and threatening effectual unto the errand for which it is sent. *David Dickson.*

Ver. 3-4. We may reflect with pleasure on the glorious cause in which Christ is engaged, and the holy war which he carries on, and in which he shall prosper. It is the cause of truth, of meekness, and righteousness. His gospel, his sword, which is the word of God, tends to rectify our errors by truth; to control our passions by that meekness which it promotes, and to regulate our lives by the laws of righteousness which it inculcates. Let us rejoice that this sacred cause has hitherto prospered, and shall prosper. *Job Orton, 1717-1783.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 2-5. In these verses the Lord Jesus is presented,

1. As most amiable in himself.
2. As the great favourite of heaven.
3. As victorious over his enemies. *Matthew Henry.*

Ver. 3. The captain's presence desired by the soldier. It is our honour, our delight, our safety, our strength, our victory, our reward.

Ver. 3-5. Messiah's victory predicted and desired. *E. Payson's Sermon.*

PSALM 45:4

EXPOSITION

Ver. 4. *And in thy majesty ride prosperously.* The hero monarch armed and apparelled is now entreated to ascend his triumphal car. Would to God that our Immanuel would come forth in the chariot of love to conquer our spiritual foes and seize by power the souls whom he has bought with blood.

Because of truth and meekness and righteousness. These words may be rendered, *ride forth upon truth and meekness and righteousness.* —Three noble chargers to draw the war chariot of the gospel. In the sense of our translation it is a most potent argument to urge with our Lord that the cause of the true, the humble, and the good, calls for his advocacy. Truth will be ridiculed, meekness will be oppressed, and righteousness slain, unless the God, the Man in whom these precious things are incarnated, shall arise for their vindication. Our earnest petition ought ever to be that Jesus would lay his almighty arm to the work of grace lest the good cause languish and wickedness prevail.

And thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things. Foreseeing the result of divine working, the psalmist prophesies that the uplifted arm of Messiah will reveal to the King's own eyes the terrible overthrow of his foes. Jesus needs no guide but his own right hand, no teacher but his own might; may he instruct us all in what he can perform, by achieving it speedily before our gladdened eyes.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 4. *And in thy majesty ride prosperously*, etc. The wheels of Christ's chariot, whereupon he rideth when he goeth to conquer and subdue new converts to his kingdom, are *majesty*, *truth*, *meekness*, *righteousness*, manifested in the preaching of his gospel; *majesty*, when the stately magnificence of his person and offices is declared; *truth*, when the certainty of all that he teacheth in Scripture is known; *meekness*, when his grace and mercy is offered to rebels; and *righteousness*, when justification by faith in his name is clearly set forth. Christ goeth no voyage in vain, he cometh not short of his intent and purpose, but doth the work for which he cometh, preaching the gospel; *in his majesty, truth, meekness, and righteousness, he rideth prosperously. David Dickson.*

Ver. 4. *Ride prosperously, because of truth, and meekness, and righteousness.* The literal translation would be, "Ride on the word of truth, and the meekness of righteousness, "and so the Syriac has it. If this rendering be adopted, the meaning will then be, that the great object of Christ's gospel was to vindicate the cause of truth and righteousness in the world. Christ is said to ride on the word of truth, because the knowledge of the truth depends on the word—it is by the word that truth is made known. He is said to ride on the meekness or humility of righteousness, because meekness or humility is its distinguishing characteristic. The former relates to what man is to believe, the latter to how he is to live. *George Harpur.*

Ver. 4. *Thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things.* This expression seems only used to imply, either that by his power he should be enabled to do terrible things, because teaching enables men to do what they are taught, or that by his almighty power he should experimentally see what great and terrible things should be done by him. *Arthur Jackson.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 2-5. In these verses the Lord Jesus is presented,

1. As most amiable in himself.
2. As the great favourite of heaven.
3. As victorious over his enemies. *Matthew Henry.*

Ver. 3-5. Messiah's victory predicted and desired. *E. Payson's Sermon.*

PSALM 45:5

EXPOSITION

Ver. 5. *Thine arrows.* Our King is master of all weapons: he can strike those who are near and those afar off with equal force.

Are sharp. Nothing that Jesus does is ill done, he uses no blunted shafts, no pointless darts. *In the heart of the King's enemies.* Our Captain aims at men's hearts rather than their heads, and he hits them too; point blank are his shots, and they enter deep into the vital part of man's nature. Whether for love or vengeance, Christ never misses aim, and when his arrows stick, they cause a smart not soon forgotten, a wound which only he can heal. Jesus' arrows of conviction are sharp in the quiver of his word, and sharp when on the bow of his ministers, but they are most known to be so when they find a way into careless hearts. They are *his* arrows, he made them, he shoots them. He makes them sharp, and he makes them enter the heart. May none of us ever fall under the darts of his judgment, for none kill so surely as they.

Whereby the people fall under thee. On either side the slain of the Lord are many when Jesus leads on the war. Nations tremble and turn to him when he shoots abroad his truth. Under his power and presence, men are stricken down as though pricked in the heart. There is no standing against the Son of God when his bow of might is in his hands. Terrible will be that hour when his bow shall be made quite naked, and bolts of devouring fire shall be hurled upon his adversaries: then shall princes fall and nations perish.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 5. *Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the King's enemies.* In a still bolder metaphor the arrows which are discharged from the bow of Christ are the preachers of the gospel, especially the apostles and evangelists. "*His sagittis*," says S. Jerome, "*totus orbis vulneratus et captus est.*" Paul, the apostle, was an arrow of the Lord, discharged from his bow from Jerusalem to Illyricum, and from Illyricum to Spain, flying from east to west, and subduing Christ's enemies beneath his feet. *Christopher Wordsworth.*

Ver. 5. While beseeching the Redeemer to ride forth prosperously, and predicting his success, he seems suddenly to have seen his prayers answered and his predictions fulfilled. He saw his all conquering Prince gird on his resistless sword, array himself in glory and majesty, ascend the chariot of his gospel, display the banner of his cross, and ride forth, as on the wings of the wind, while the tremendous voice of a herald proclaimed before him: "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, "exalt the valleys, and level the hills; make the crooked ways straight, and the rough places plain; for, behold, the Lord God comes; he comes with a strong hand, his reward is with him, and his work before him. From the bright and fiery cloud which enveloped his chariot, and concealed it from mortal eyes, he saw sharp arrows of conviction shot forth on every side, deeply wounding the obdurate hearts of sinners, and prostrating them in crowds around his path, while his right hand extended raised them again, and healed the wounds which his arrows had made; and his omnipotent voice spoke peace to their despairing souls, and bade them follow in his train, and witness and share in his triumph. From the same bright cloud he saw the vengeful lightnings flashing thick and dreadful, to blast and consume everything that opposed his progress; he saw sin, and death, and hell, with all its legions, baffled, defeated, and flying in trembling consternation before him; he saw them overtaken, bound, and chained to his triumphant chariot wheels; while enraptured voices were heard from heaven exclaiming, "Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of God, and the power of his Christ." Such was the scene which seems to have burst upon the ravished sight of the entranced prophet. Transported with the view, he exclaims, *Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the King's enemies; whereby the people fall under thee.* Edward Payson.

Ver. 5. *The king's enemies*, is not simply an expression for "Thy enemies, "as some think, but rather implies that Christ's kingship is the ground of their enmity; just as in the second Psalm their cry was, "Let us break their bands asunder." George Harpur.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 2-5. In these verses the Lord Jesus is presented,

1. As most amiable in himself.
2. As the great favourite of heaven.
3. As victorious over his enemies. *Matthew Henry.*

Ver. 3-5. Messiah's victory predicted and desired. *E. Payson's Sermon.*

Ver. 5.

1. Arrows of judicial wrath are sharp.
2. Arrows of providential goodness are sharper still.
3. Arrows of subduing grace are sharpest of all. The quiver of the Almighty is full of these arrows. *G.R.*

Ver. 5. Arrows—what they are; whose they are; whom they strike; where they strike; what they do; and what follows.

PSALM 45:6

EXPOSITION

Ver. 6. *Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.* To whom can this be spoken but our Lord? The psalmist cannot restrain his adoration. His enlightened eye sees in the royal Husband of the church, God, God to be adored, God reigning, God reigning everlastingly. Blessed sight! Blind are the eyes that cannot see God in Christ Jesus! We never appreciate the tender condescension of our King in becoming one flesh with his church, and placing her at his right hand, until we have fully rejoiced in his essential glory and deity. What a mercy for us that our Saviour is God, for who but a God could execute the work of salvation? What a glad thing it is that he reigns on a throne which will never pass away, for we need both sovereign grace and eternal love to secure our happiness. Could Jesus cease to reign we should cease to be blessed, and were he not God, and therefore eternal, this must be the case. No throne can endure for ever, but that on which God himself sitteth.

The sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre. He is the lawful monarch of all things that be. His rule is founded in right, its law is right, its result is right. Our King is no usurper and no oppressor. Even when he shall break his enemies with a rod of iron, he will do no man wrong; his vengeance and his grace are both in conformity with justice. Hence we trust him without suspicion; he cannot err; no affliction is too severe, for he sends it; no judgment too harsh, for he ordains it. O blessed hands of Jesus! the

reigning power is safe with you. All the just rejoice in the government of the King who reigns in righteousness.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 6. *Thy throne, O God.* The original word is, probably vocative, both in the Greek and in the Hebrew; and is so taken by modern Unitarians, who seek their refuge by explaining away θεός. Henry Alford, D.D., on Hebrews 1:8.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 6. The God, the King, his throne, its duration, his sceptre. Let us worship, obey, trust, acquiesce, rejoice.

Ver. 6-7. Empire, Eternity, Equity, Establishment, Exultation.

PSALM 45:7

EXPOSITION

Ver. 7. *Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness.* Christ Jesus is not neutral in the great contest between right and wrong: as warmly as he loves the one he abhors the other. What qualifications for a sovereign! what grounds of confidence for a people! The whole of our Lord's life on earth proved the truth of these words; his death to put away sin and bring in the reign of righteousness, sealed the fact beyond all question; his providence by which he rules from his mediatorial throne, when rightly understood, reveals the same; and his final assize will proclaim it before all worlds. We should imitate him both in his love and hate; they are both needful to complete a righteous character.

Therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. Jesus as Mediator owned God as his God, to whom, being found in fashion as a man, he became obedient. On account of our Lord's perfect life he is now rewarded with superior joy. Others there are to whom grace has given a sacred fellowship with him, but by their universal consent and his own merit, he is prince among them, the gladdest of all because the cause of all their gladness. At Oriental feasts oil was poured on

the heads of distinguished and very welcome guests; God himself anoints the man Christ Jesus, as he sits at the heavenly feasts, anoints him as a reward for his work, with higher and fuller joy than any else can know; thus is the Son of man honoured and rewarded for all his pains. Observe the indisputable testimony to Messiah's Deity in verse six, and to his manhood in the present verse. Of whom could this be written but of Jesus of Nazareth? Our Christ is our Elohim. Jesus is God with us.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 7. *Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness.* Many a one loves righteousness, but would not be its champion; such a love is not Christ's love. Many a one hates iniquity, not for its own sake, but for the sake of its consequences; such a hate is not Christ's hate. To be like Christ we must love righteousness as he loved, and hate wickedness as he hated. To love and hate as he loves and hates is to be perfect as he is perfect. The perfection of this love and hate is moral perfection. *George Harpur.*

Ver. 7. *Therefore.* Observe how usual it is to impute Christ's exaltation to his merits. God blessed him for ever, as in the second verse of this Psalm (if such be the sense of that verse), *because* he was fairer than the children of men, and grace was poured into his lips. And so the apostle. God highly exalted him, and gave him a name above every name, *because* he had humbled himself, and became obedient unto death. And here God anointed him with the oil of gladness above his fellows, *because* he loved righteousness and hated iniquity. *George Harpur.*

Ver. 7. *Therefore.* He says not, "Wherefore he anointed thee in order to thy being God, or King, or Son, or Word; "for so he was before, and is for ever, as has been shown; but rather, "Since thou art God and King, therefore thou wast anointed, since none but thou couldst unite man to the Holy Ghost, thou the image of the Father, in which we were made in the beginning: for thine is even the Spirit." *Athanasius.*

Ver. 7. *Therefore God, thy God.* God was the God of Christ in covenant, that he might be our God in covenant; for in his transactions, whole Christ, Head and members, are to be considered Galatians 3:16 1 Corinthians 12:12, the covenant being first transacted with the Head (who is given for a covenant to us, Isaiah 42:6), and then with the members, with him in reference to us and for us. As God did not fail our surety, but supported him in his great conflict, when out of the depths he called unto him; so

neither will he fail us in time of need. Hebrews 4:16 13:5-6. *William Troughton.*

Ver. 7. *Therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows;* i.e., enriched and filled thee in a singular manner with the fulness of the Spirit, whereby thou art consecrated to thy office; and by reason whereof you out shine and excellest all the saints who are thy *fellows*, or copartners in these graces. So that in these words you have two parts, namely, first, *the saint's dignity*; and, secondly, *Christ's preeminence*. First. *The saint's dignity*, which consists in this, that they are Christ's *fellows*. The Hebrew word (*Ēyrbēne*) is very full and copious, and is translated consorts, companions, copartners, partakers; or as ours reads it, *fellows*; i.e., such as are partakers with him in the anointing of the Spirit, who do in their measure receive the same Spirit, every Christian being appointed, *modo sibi proportionato*, with the same grace and dignified with the same titles. 1 John 2:27 Revelation 1:6. Christ and the saints are in common one with another. Doth the Spirit of holiness dwell in him? So he doth in them too. Is Christ King and Priest? Why, so are they, too, by the grace of union with him. He hath made us kings and priests to God and his Father. This is the saints' dignity, to be Christ's fellows, consorts, or copartners; so that look whatever grace or excellency is in Christ, it is not impropriated to himself, but they do share with him; for indeed he was filled with the fulness of the Spirit for their sakes and use. As the sun is filled with light not to shine to itself, but to others, so is Christ with grace; and therefore some translate the text not *prae consortibus*, above thy fellows, but *propter consortes*, for thy fellows; (Rivetus), making Christ the first receptacle of all grace, who first and immediately is filled from the fountain of the Godhead, but it is for his people who receive and derive from him according to their proportion. This is a great truth; and the dignity of the saints lies chiefly in the partnership with Christ, though our translation, *above thy fellows*, suits best both with the importance of the word and scope of the place. Secondly. But then, whatever *dignity* is ascribed herein to the saints, there is, and still must be, a *preeminence* acknowledged and ascribed to Christ: if they are anointed with the spirit of grace, much more abundantly is Christ: *God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.* *John Flavel.*

Ver. 7. *Oil of gladness.* For sweet smelling oils were also used to beautify the face upon occasions of feasting and mirth. Psalm 23:5 104:15 Isaiah

61:3. And likewise this oil of consecration and infusion of the gifts of the Holy Ghost hath been the cause and foundation of Christ's human nature's obtaining of the everlasting joys and glory. Philippians 2:9 Hebrews 12:2. *John Diodati.*

Ver. 7. Behold, O ye Arians, and acknowledge even hence the truth. The psalmist speaks of us all as *fellows* or *partakers* of the Lord, but were he one of things which come out of nothing, and of things generate, he himself had been one of those who partake. But since he hymned him as the eternal God, saying, *Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever*, and has declared that all other things partake of him, what conclusion must we draw, but that he is distinct from generated things, and he only the Father's veritable Word, Radiance, and Wisdom, which all things generate partake, being sanctified by him in Spirit? And, therefore, he is here *anointed*, not that he may become God, for he was so even before; nor that he may become king, for he has the kingdom eternally, existing as God's image, as the sacred oracle shows; but in our behalf is this written, as before. For the Israelitish kings, upon their being anointed, then became kings, not being so before, as David, as Ezekias, as Josias, and the rest; but the Saviour, on the contrary, being God, and ever ruling in the Father's kingdom, and being himself the dispenser of the Holy Ghost, nevertheless is here said to be anointed, that, as before, being said as man to be anointed with the Spirit, he might provide for us more, not only exaltation and resurrection, but the indwelling and intimacy of the Spirit...And when he received the Spirit, we it was who, by him were made recipients of it. And, moreover, for this reason, not as Aaron, or David, or the rest, was he anointed with oil, but in another way, above all his fellows, *with the oil of gladness*, which he himself interprets to be the Spirit, saying by the prophet, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me; "as also the apostle has said, "How God anointed him with the Holy Ghost." *Athanasius.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 6-7. Empire, Eternity, Equity, Establishment, Exultation.

Ver. 7. *Thou hatest wickedness.* He hated it when it assailed him in his temptation, hated it in others, denounced it, died to slay it, will come to condemn it.

Ver. 7. Christ's love and hate.

PSALM 45:8

EXPOSITION

Ver. 8. *All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia.* The divine anointing causes fragrance to distil from the robes of the Mighty Hero. He is delightful to every sense, to the eyes most fair, to the ear most gracious, to the spiritual nostril most sweet. The excellences of Jesus are all most precious, comparable to the rarest spices; they are most varied, and to be likened not to myrrh alone, but to all the perfumes blended in due proportion. The Father always finds a pleasure in him, in him he is well pleased; and all regenerated spirits rejoice in him, for he is made of God unto us, "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." Note that not only is Jesus most sweet, but even his garments are so; everything that he has to do with is perfumed by his person. *All* his garments are thus fragrant; not some of them, but all; we delight as much in his purple of dominion as in the white of his priesthood, his mantle as our prophet is as dear to us as his seamless coat as our friend. All his dress is fragrant with all sweetness. To attempt to spiritualise each spice here mentioned would be unprofitable, the evident sense is that all sweetnesses meet in Jesus, and are poured forth wherever he is present.

Out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad. The abode of Jesus now is imperial in splendour, ivory and gold but faintly image his royal seat; there is he made glad in the presence of the Father, and in the company of his saints. Oh, to behold him with his perfumed garments on! The very smell of him from afar ravishes our spirit, what must it be to be on the other side of the pearl gate, within the palace of ivory, amid those halls of Zion, "conjubilant with song, "where is the throne of David, and the abiding presence of the Prince! To think of his gladness, to know that *he* is full of joy, gives gladness at this moment to our souls. We poor exiles can sing in our banishment since our King, our Wellbeloved, has come to his throne.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 8. *All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad.* Although there is considerable obscurity overhanging these words, still the general idea of a

supereminent fulness of anointing is quite apparent, combined, however, with the other idea that the anointing oil or ointment os of *the most exquisite quality*. Myrrh, and aloes, and cassia were celebrated for their peculiar fragrance, on which account they were used in compounding the choicest unguents. Myrrh and cassia are mentioned in Exodus 30:23-24, as two of the spices of which the holy anointing oil was made up. All its ingredients were considered sacred. The Israelites were forbidden to pour it upon man's flesh, or to attempt any imitation of it in their own perfumes. Ivory was in early times, as it still is, rare and costly, and it was highly esteemed as a material for household decoration, on which the finest workmanship and the most princely expenditures were displayed. In palaces of ivory, therefore, it was to be expected that, in correspondence with the magnificence of their structure and the costliness of their furniture, the ointment employed for anointing would be of the richest perfume, and in the greatest profusion. According to our version of the Psalm, the divine Saviour is thus represented as being anointed with oil of the very best kind, even oil taken from the ivory palaces; and also as receiving it in no ordinary measure. His anointing was not confined to a few ceremonial drops poured upon the head, but so abundant is it said to have been, that *all* his garments *smelled* of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia. Bishop Horsley has proposed a change in the translation, by which means the idea of abundance is connected, not with the fragrance arising from the anointing, but with the anointing itself, which is a different and far more important thing. "Thy garments are all myrrh, aloes, and cassia, excelling the palaces of ivory, excelling those which delight thee." This translation, which is strictly literal as well as poetical, is at the same time comparatively free from obscurity, and it visibly sets forth, under the most expressive imagery, the surpassing measure of that anointing which was conferred on our Lord above all his fellows. His garments are supposed not merely to have been all richly perfumed, or even thoroughly saturated with the oil of gladness, but to have consisted of the very articles which entered into the composition of the most precious and odoriferous unguent:

Thy garments are all myrrh, aloes, and cassia. This is figurative language, but nothing could more emphatically exhibit how truly "the Spirit rested on Jesus, and abode with him" in all the plenitude of his heavenly gifts. That heavenly anointing constituted, as it were, his very dress, "excelling" in the quantity or measure of the anointing "the palaces of ivory; "because their furniture, however highly scented, were not made of aromatic materials.

The strength of the perfumes would evaporate, the fragrance would soon diminish; but permanent as well as plentiful fragrance is secured to him whose "garments are all myrrh, aloes, and cassia." It is added, in the way of parallelism, "excelling those which delight in thee, "or those which make thee glad. To say that the persons here alluded to are the occupiers of the ivory palaces, might perhaps be objected to as fanciful; but palaces are the abodes of kings; and anointed kings wither literally, or typically, or spiritually, are the fellows of the Lord's Anointed One; and it does seem manifest that, as his anointing causes joy and gladness to all the parties concerned in it, so likewise there is an anointing of those who are honoured to be his fellows which causes joy and gladness to him. The persons who are in the one verse spoken of as giving delight to Christ, there is no reason to regard as any other than the persons spoken of in the former verse as his "*fellows*." And if this is the case, then we have a comparison drawn betwixt the one and the other in the matter of their anointing, and to that of Christ a decided superiority is ascribed. *David Pitcairn*, in "*The Anointed Saviour*," 1846.

Ver. 8. *All thy garments smell of myrrh*, etc. These things are true in Jesus; by his garments is meant his righteousness; for it is written, He clothed himself with righteousness and zeal. And here the translator hath put in *smell*, which rather should have been *are*, for "*his garments are of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia*," that is, truly purging, cleansing, and making sound; for his righteousness, which is the righteousness of faith, maketh sound hearted Christians; whereas, man's righteousness, which is the righteousness of works, maketh filthy hypocrites. And by "*ivory palaces*," is meant the true faith and fear of God; for ivory is solid and white, and palaces are king's houses; and by Christ we are made kings, and our dwelling is in faith and fear of God; and this is the gladness and joy of our Lord Jesus, that he brings many sons and daughters unto God. *Richard Coore*, 1683.

Ver. 8. *Out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad.* Commentators have been more perplexed in explaining these words than any other part of the Psalm. Not to detain you with the various expositions that have been proposed, I will give you what I conceive to be the meaning of the passage. The word rendered *whereby*, is also the name of a region in Arabia Felix, namely, Minnaea, which, according to the geographer Strabo, "abounded in myrrh and frankincense." Now, it is singular that, according to the historian, Diodorus Siculus, "the inhabitants of Arabia Felix had

sumptuous houses, adorned with *ivory* and precious stones." Putting these two things together, therefore, namely, that this region abounded in myrrh and frankincense, and that its inhabitants adorned their houses with ivory, we may, I conceive, find a clue to the psalmist's meaning. If we substitute "Minnaea" for "whereby," the passage will run thus—

*"Myrrh, aloes, and cassia, are all thy garments.
From ivory palaces of Minnaea they have made thee glad."*

You recollect in the verse just going before, the oil with which Christ was said to be anointed, is called the oil of "*gladness*." Accordingly, he is here said to be made *glad* (it is the same word in both places in the Hebrew), by the spices of which that oil is composed. These spices are said to have been brought out of the most spicy region of the land of spices, and it is implied that they are the best spices of that spicy region.

Out of the ivory palaces, says the psalmist; not only houses, but palaces—the mansions of the great, where the best spices would naturally be kept—out of these have come the myrrh, aloes, and cassia, that have composed the oil of gladness whereby thou art made glad. God anointed Christ, when he set him on his everlasting throne, with the oil of gladness; and this anointing was so profuse, his garments were so overspread with it, that they seemed to be nothing but myrrh, aloes, and cassia. The spices, moreover, of which the anointing oil was composed, were the best of their kind, brought, as they were, from the ivory palaces of Minnaea. Such appears to be the psalmist's meaning; and when thus understood, the passage becomes most beautifully expressive of the *excellency* and *unmeasured supply* of the gifts and graces of that Spirit with which Christ was anointed by his Father. *George Harpur*.

Ver. 8. *The ivory palaces. The ivory courts.* Probably so called from the great quantity of ivory used in ornamenting and inlaying them; as the emperor Nero's palace, mentioned by Suetonius, was named, "aurea," or "golden," because "*lita auro*," "overlaid with gold." This method of ornamenting or inlaying rooms was very ancient among the Greeks. Homer in the fourth book of the *Odyssey*, seems to mention it, as employed in Menelaus's palace at Lacedaemon; and that the Romans sometimes ornamented their apartments in like manner, seems evident from Horace and Ovid. So in modern times, the winter apartment of the fair Fatima at Constantinople, has been described by an eye witness as "wainscotted with inlaid work of mother of pearl, *ivory of different colours*, and olive wood."

Ivory is likewise employed at Aleppo, as Dr. Russell informs us, in the decoration of some of the more expensive apartments. *Richard Mant.*

Ver. 8. *Ivory palaces.* Either edifices 1 Kings 22:39 So 7:14, or ivory coffers, and wardrobes, whence those garments were taken, and are kept. *Westminster Assembly's Annotations.*

Ver. 8. *Whereby they have made thee glad.* The best sense of the phrase—*from which they rejoice thee*—is had by making *they* refer to the *king's daughters* mentioned in the next verse. *William S. Plumer.*

Ver. 8. Gesenius and Delitzsch consider (yGm) an abbreviated form of the plural (pyNim) Psalm 105:4, "strings, "or "stringed instruments, "and would render thus: —"*Thee glad out of the ivory palaces stringed instruments have made.*" *Dalman Hapstone.* (With this rendering Ewald and Lange agree.) *J. L. K.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 8. Christ's garments—his offices, his two natures, his ordinances, his honours, all are full of fragrance.

Ver. 8. *Whereby they have made thee glad.* We make Jesus glad by our love, our praise, our service, our gifts, our holiness, our fellowship with him.

Ver. 8.

1. The odour of his garments, not of blood and battle, but of sweet perfume.
2. The splendour of his palaces—ivory for rareness, purity, durability, etc.
3. The source of his delight.
 1. Himself, the sweet odour of his own graces.
 2. His people, the savour of those who are saved.
 3. His enemies, "even in them that perish."
 4. All holy happy creatures who unite to make him glad. *G.R.*

PSALM 45:9

EXPOSITION

Ver. 9. *King's daughters were among thy honourable women.* Our Lord's courts lack not for courtiers, and those the fairest and noblest. Virgin souls are maids of honour to the court, the true lilies of heaven. The lowly and pure in heart are esteemed by the Lord Jesus as his most familiar friends, their place in his palace is not among the menials but near the throne. The day will come when those who are "king's daughters" literally will count it their greatest honour to serve the church, and, meanwhile every believing sister is spiritually a King's daughter, a member of the royal family of heaven.

Upon thy right hand, in the place of love, honour, and power, *did stand the queen in gold of Ophir:* the church shares her Lord's honour and happiness, he sets her in the place of dignity, he clothes her with the best of the best. Gold is the richest of metals, and Ophir gold the purest known. Jesus bestows nothing inferior or of secondary value upon his beloved church. In imparted and imputed righteousness the church is divinely arrayed. Happy those who are members of a church so honoured, so beloved; unhappy those who persecute the beloved people, for as a husband will not endure that his wife should be insulted or maltreated, so neither will the heavenly Husband; he will speedily avenge his own elect. Mark, then, the solemn pomp of the verses we have read. The King is seen with rapture, he girds himself as a warrior, robes himself as a monarch, mounts his chariot, darts his arrows, and conquers his foes. Then he ascends his throne with his sceptre in his hand, fills the palace hall with perfume brought from his secret chambers, his retinue stand around him, and, fairest of all, his bride is at his right hand, with daughters of subject princes as her attendants. Faith is no stranger to this sight, and every time she looks she adores, she loves, she rejoices, she expects.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 9. *King's daughters.* Albeit the Catholic church consisting of true converts or real saints be but the one and only true spouse of Christ, yet particular visible churches consisting of saints by calling, by obligation, by profession, and common estimation, their own or others, are many. The

true church consisting of true converts (whose praise is of God, to whom only they are certainly known, and not of men), being but one, is compared to the *queen*; but the particular, whose collections and consociations are known to men, being many, are compared to *ladies of honour* who serve the queen. *David Dickson*.

Ver. 9. *The queen*. It is written of Matilda, the empress, that she was the daughter of a king, the mother of a king, and the wife of a king.

*Ortu magna, viro major, sed maxima prole,
Hic jacet Henrici filia, nupta, parens.*

So David intimates in this hymn, that the church is the daughter of a King, at the 13th verse, "The king's daughter is all glorious within; "and the mother of a king, at the 16th verse, "Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth; "and the wife of a king, in this verse, *Upon thy right hand did stand the queen*, as being (I speak in the language of Canaan), spiritually the wedded and bedded wife to the king of glory. *John Boys*.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 9-10.

1. The connections of the Bridegroom are to be remembered, those of the Bride to be forgotten.

PSALM 45:10

EXPOSITION

Ver. 10. *Hearken, O daughter, and consider*. Ever is this the great duty of the church. Faith cometh by hearing, and confirmation by consideration. No precept can be more worthy of the attention of those who are honoured to be espoused to Christ that that which follows.

And incline thine ear. Lean forward so that no syllable may be unheard. The whole faculties of the mind should be bent upon receiving holy teaching. *Forget also thine own people, and thy father's house.* To renounce the world is not easy, but it must be done by all who are affianced to the Great King, for a divided heart he cannot endure; it would

be misery to the beloved one as well as dishonour to her Lord. Evil acquaintances, and even those who are but neutral, must be forsaken, they can confer no benefits, they must inflict injury. The house of our nativity is the house of sin—we were shapen in iniquity; the carnal mind is enmity against God, we must come forth of the house of fallen nature, for it is built in the City of Destruction. Not that natural ties are broken by grace, but ties of the sinful nature, bonds of graceless affinity. We have much to forget as well as to learn, and the unlearning is so difficult that only diligent hearing, and considering, and bending of the whole soul to it, can accomplish the work; and even these would be too feeble did not divine grace assist. Yet why should we remember the Egypt from which we came out? Are the leeks and the garlic, and the onions anything, when the iron bondage, and the slavish tasks, and the death dealing Pharaoh of hell are remembered? We part with folly for wisdom; with bubbles for eternal joys; with deceit for truth; with misery for bliss; with idols for the living God. O that Christians were more mindful of the divine precept here recorded; but, alas! worldliness abounds; the church is defiled; and the glory of the Great King is veiled. Only when the whole church leads the separated life will the full splendour and power of Christianity shine forth upon the world.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 10. *Forget also thine own people, and thy father's house.* Three *alls* I expect you to part with, saith Christ.

1. All your sinful lusts, all the ways of the old Adam, our Father's house. Ever since Adam's apostasy, God and man have parted houses. Ever since, our Father's house is a house of ill manners, a house of sin and wickedness.

2. All your worldly advantages. "If any man come unto me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." He that hath all these must be ready to part with all; they are joined not disjunctively but copulatively.

3. All self, self will, self righteousness, self sufficiencies, self confidence, and self seekings. *Lewis Stuckley.*

Ver. 10. *Forget also thine own people, and thy father's house.* If you see a bee leave a fair flower and stick upon another, you may conclude that she

finds most honey dew in that flower she most sticks upon: so here God's people would never leave so many fair flowers in the world's garden, had they not some other in which they find most sweetness. Christ hath his garden, into which he brings his beloved, and there she finds other manner of flowers than any the world hath, in which there is sweetness of a higher nature, even the honey dew of the choice mercy and goodness and blessing of God himself: if God's people do leave the full breasts of the world, it is because they have found the breasts of consolation from which they have sucked other manner of sweetness than the breast of the world can afford. *Jeremiah Burroughs, in "Moses, his self denial."* 1649.

Ver. 10. *Forget.* If thou be on the mountain, have no love to look back to Sodom. If thou be in the ark, fly not back to the world, as the raven did. If thou be set on Canaan, forget the flesh pots of Egypt. If marching against Midian, forget stooping to the waters of Harod. Judges 7:1-25. If on the house top, forget that is below thee. Mark 13:15. If thy hand be put to the plough, forget that is behind thee. Luke 9:62. Themistocles desired rather to learn the art of forgetfulness than of memory. Philosophy is an art of remembering, divinity includes in it an art of forgetting. The first lesson that Socrates taught his scholars was, Remember; for he thought that knowledge was nothing else but a calling to remembrance of those things the mind knew ere it knew the body. But the first lesson that Christ teacheth his scholars is, *Forget: Forget thine own people;* "Repent" Matthew 4:17; first, "eschew evil," 1 Peter 3:11. *Thomas Adams.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 9-10.

1. The connections of the Bridegroom are to be remembered, those of the Bride to be forgotten.

Ver. 10. "Christ the best husband: or, an earnest invitation to young women to come and see Christ." *George Whitefield's "Sermon, Preached to a Society of Young Women, in Fetter Lane."*

PSALM 45:11

EXPOSITION

Ver. 11. *So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty.* Wholehearted love is the duty and bliss of the marriage state in every case, but especially so in this lofty mystic marriage. The church must forsake all others and cleave to Jesus only, or she will not please him nor enjoy the full manifestation of his love. What less can he ask, what less may she dare propose than to be wholly his? Jesus sees a beauty in his church, a beauty which he delights in most when it is not marred by worldliness. He has always been most near and precious to his saints when they have cheerfully taken up his cross and followed him without the camp. His Spirit is grieved when they mingle themselves among the people and learn their ways. No great and lasting revival of religion can be granted us till the professed lovers of Jesus prove their affection by coming out from an ungodly world, being separated, and touching not the unclean thing.

For he is thy Lord; and worship thou him. He has royal rights still; his condescending grace does not lessen but rather enforce his authority. Our Saviour is also our Ruler. The husband is the head of the wife; the love he bears her does not lessen but strengthen her obligation to obey. The church must reverence Jesus, and bow before him in prostrate adoration; his tender union with her gives her liberty, but not license; it frees her from all other burdens, but places his easy yoke upon her neck. Who would wish it to be otherwise? The service of God is heaven in heaven, and perfectly carried out it is heaven upon earth. Jesus, thou art he whom thy church praises in her unceasing songs, and adores in her perpetual service. Teach us to be wholly thine. Bear with us, and work by thy Spirit in us till thy will is done by us on earth as it is in heaven.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 11. *So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty.* This is a most sweet promise. For the Holy Spirit knoweth that this monster, Monk, sticks fast in our heart—that we want to be pure and without spot before God. Thus, under Popery, all my temptation was this. I used to say, 'that I would willingly go to the sacrament if I were but worthy.' Thus we seek, naturally, a purity in ourselves; and we examine our whole life and want to

find a purity in ourselves, that we might have no need of grace, but might be pronounced righteous upon the grounds of our own merit...Thou wilt certainly never become righteous by thyself and thine own works...The Holy Spirit saith, therefore, I will give thee wholesome counsel; and if thou wilt hear me, thou shalt become a virgin all fair. For, if thou wouldst be beautiful in the sight of God, so that all thy works should please him, and he should say, "Thy prayer pleaseth me; all that thou sayest, doest, and thinkest, pleaseth me!" proceed thou thus: "hear, see, and incline thine ear; "and thou shalt thus become all fair. When thou hast heard, hast seen, hast forgotten all thine own righteousness, all the law, all traditions, and all that monkery, and hast believed, then art thou fair; not in thine own beauty, but in the beauty of the King who has adorned thee with his Word; because he has brought unto thee thereby his righteousness, his holiness, truth, and fortitude, and all the gifts of the Holy Spirit...The Holy Spirit uses the most exalted language.

So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty: that is, thou wilt by this faith prevail upon him to do whatever thou desirest: so that, as one urged by the power of love, he will spontaneously follow thee, abide with thee, and take up his abode with thee. For wherever God has given his Word, there he does not leave his work which he has begun in thee; but he brings upon thee first the temptations of the world, the devil, and the flesh; that by them he may work upon thee. These are his embraces whereby he embraces his spouse through impatience of love...The sum of the whole therefore, is this: That our beauty does not consist in our own virtues, now even in the gifts which we have received from God, by which we put forth virtues, and do all those things which pertain unto the life of the law; but in this—our apprehending Christ and believing in him. Then it is that we are truly beautiful: and it is this beauty alone that Christ looks upon, and upon no other. *Martin Luther.*

Ver. 11. In this Psalm Christ is set forth in all his royalty and majesty; yet he is said *greatly to desire or delight in the beauty* of his queen, that is, the graces of the saints; and that not with an ordinary delight, but he "*greatly* desires; "his desire is increased as her beauty is. For that is there brought in as a motive unto her to be more holy and conformed unto him, "to incline her ear, and forsake her father's house."

So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty. Christ hath a beauty that pleaseth him as well as we have, though of another kind; and, therefore,

ceaseth not till he hath got out every spot and wrinkle out of his spouse's face, as the apostle speaks Ephesians 5:27, "so as to present her glorious unto himself, "that it, delightful and pleasing in his eyes. *Thomas Goodwin.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 11. *So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty.* Christ delighting in the Beauty of the Righteous. *Martin Luther.* (Select Works, by H. Cole. I. 281.)

PSALM 45:12

EXPOSITION

Ver. 12. *And the daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift.* When the church abounds in holiness, she shall know no lack of homage from the surrounding people. Her glory shall then impress and attract the heathen around, till they also unite in doing honour to her Lord. The power of missions abroad lies at home: a holy church will be a powerful church. Nor shall there be lack of treasure in her coffers when grace is in her heart; the free gifts of a willing people shall enable the workers for God to carry on their sacred enterprise without stint. Commerce shall send in its revenue to endow, not with forced levies and imperial taxes, but with willing gifts the church of the Great King.

Even the rich among the people shall intreat thy favour. Not by pandering to their follies, but by testifying against their sins, shall the wealthy be one to the faith of Jesus. They shall come not to favour the church but to beg for her favour. She shall not be the hireling of the great, but as a queen shall she dispense her favours to the suppliant throng of the rich among the people. We go about to beg for Christ like beggars for alms, and many who should know better will make compromises and become reticent of unpopular truth to please the great ones of the earth; not so will the true bride of Christ degrade herself, when her sanctification is more deep and more visible; then will the hearts of men grow liberal, and offerings from afar, abundant and continual, shall be presented at the throne of the Pacific Prince.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 12. *And the daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift.* The daughters of Tyre are the daughters of the Gentiles, the part standing for the whole. Tyre, a city bordering on this country where the prophecy was delivered, typified the nations that were to believe in Christ. Thence came that Canaanitish woman, who was at first called *a dog*; for that ye may know that she was from thence, the gospel speaks thus Matthew 15:21-28, "Jesus departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, "with all the rest that is related there. She who at first, at the house of her "father, "and among her "own people, "was but *a dog*, who by coming to, and crying after that "King, "was made beautiful by believing in him, what did she obtain to hear? "*O woman, great is thy faith. The King has greatly desired thy beauty.* Augustine.

Ver. 12. *With a gift.* Those who sold their property, came with presents to entreat the face of this "queen, "and "laid what they brought at the apostle's feet." Warm then was love in the church. Augustine.

Ver. 12. *The rich.* They are, indeed, rich in grace, whose graces are not hindered by riches, whose souls prosper when their bodies prosper, as the apostle John speaks in his third Epistle; or, who, as it is prophesied in the verse, being full of worldly blessings, are yet hungry and eager in their pursuit after Christ.

The daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift; even the rich among the people shall intreat thy favour, saith the psalmist; that is, either the favour of Christ himself, or the favour of the church, by reason of that spiritual excellence and inward glory which she hath received from Christ. Now, to see the rich bring their gifts, and, which is the thing chiefly aimed at here, giving up themselves to Christ, this is a rare sight, and a remarkable work of grace. Joseph Caryl.

PSALM 45:13

EXPOSITION

Ver. 13. *The king's daughter is all glorious within.* Within her secret chambers her glory is great. Though unseen of men her Lord sees her, and commends her. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." Or the passage may be understood as meaning within herself—her beauty is not outward only or mainly; the choicest of her charms are to be found in her heart, her secret character, her inward desires. Truth and wisdom in the hidden parts are what the Lord regards; mere skin deep beauty is nothing in his eyes. The church is of royal extraction, of imperial dignity, for she is a king's daughter; and she has been purified and renewed in nature; for she is glorious within. Note the word *all*. The Bridegroom was said to have all his garments perfumed, and now the bride in *all* glorious within—entireness and completeness are great points. There is no mixture of ill savour in Jesus, nor shall there be alloy of unholiness in his people, his church shall be presented without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing.

Her clothing is of wrought gold. Best material and best workmanship. How laboriously did our Lord work out the precious material of his righteousness into a vesture for his people! no embroidery of golden threads can equal that masterpiece of holy art. Such clothing becomes on so honoured by relationship to the Great King. The Lord looks to it that nothing shall be wanting to the glory and beauty of his bride.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 13. *The king's daughter is all glorious within,* etc. When the children of God recollect their glorious and heavenly pedigree, they endeavour to excel others, both in the beautiful disposition of soul and manner of life.

The king's daughter, that is, the daughter of the heavenly Father, who is also the bride of the king's Son; every believing soul *is all glorious*, adorned with a holiness not only glorious to herself, but also to the Father and the Bridegroom, and is the beginning of a heavenly glory; and that chiefly *within*, not only when she appears abroad, and presents herself to the view of men, but also when she sits in the inner bed chamber in the secret exercises of religion, in which she in private pleases the Father and

the Bridegroom, who having a regard to the inward man, she above all endeavours to keep that pure and chaste. Her clothing is of *gold*; in comparison of which whatever excellency natural men were even possessed of, is but a shining vanity; nay, it was *wrought* gold, curiously beautified with various resemblances, which represents the perfections of God himself; and of different colours, on account of the different yet harmoniously corresponding graces of the Holy Spirit; or of needlework of the Phrygian embroiderers, or rather the work of the cunning workman, mentioned in Song of Solomon 7:1. Nor is the spouse only beautiful within, but also without; "holding forth the word of life," Philippians 2:16, she practises charity, glorifies Christ, edifies her neighbour, and in this manner she is brought unto the king, worthy to be presented to him. This is the only way by which we are to endeavour to obtain familiarity with him, and the sweetest intercourse of the most chaste love, both on earth and in heaven. *Hermann Witsius*. 1636-1708.

Ver. 13. *The king's daughter is all glorious within.* The meaning is, either

- (1.) that her chief glory consisted in this, that she was admitted to such a familiar privacy with the king; or,
- (2.) that when she sat in the inmost rooms of the king's palace, she was there in her greatest glory, because those rooms were most gorgeously set forth with all kinds of bravery and glorious furniture; or,
- (3.) that she used to be gloriously attired, not only when she went abroad in public, but also when she stayed within, as being indeed adorned (which may be implied) only for the delight of the king, and not that others might gaze upon her; or,
- (4.) —which I like best—that the inward virtues and endowments of her mind were her greatest ornament and glory. *Arthur Jackson*.

Ver. 13. *All glorious within.* Saints must shine by the comeliness of Christ, as a gracious husband labours to change his spouse into his own image and likeness by kindnesses, precepts, and example, that he may take the more delight in her person; so does our spiritual Solomon change the hue of his Egyptian queen to deem of things and persons as her Lord and husband judges, and frames her spirit to delight in doing his will and pleasure, and take the highest solace in obedience, to enjoy a heavenly freedom, mixed with amiable and joyful reverence. He roots out of her heart all changeable

affections and worldly fancies, and hankering longings after the fond fashions of Shechem, and all carnal inclinations to the daughters of Canaan's lineage, and all the beggardly humours of the besotted world, and to pass by with a holy scorn all the pitiful pageantry of this perishing and fading life, and rise to a mean estimate of the baubles and trifles that enchant a carnal heart. At length she arrives to a noble and generous judgment, counting all but dung and dross that she may win Christ. As her prince of life was crucified by the world for her redemption, so she begins to be crucified to it in token of conformity to him, and at length becomes *all glorious within*. Samuel Lee, in "*The Triumph of Mercy*." 1676.

Ver. 13. *Within*. The ark was pitched within by the same pitch with which it was pitched withal; such is the sincere man, within and without alike, inside and outside, all one. Yea, he is rather better than he shows, as the *king's daughter*, whose *outside* might sometimes be *sackcloth*, yet was *all glorious within, and her inward garments of wrought gold*. Or as the temple, outwardly nothing but wood and stone to be seen, inwardly all rich and beautiful, especially the *sanctum sanctorum* (when the veil was drawn) was all gold. The very floor, as well as the roof, was overlaid with gold. 1 Kings 6:30. John Sheffield.

Ver. 13. *Her clothing is of wrought gold*. Some read it *purled* works, or closures of *gold*, *enamelled* gold, such as precious *stones* were set in, which were exceeding *splendid* and glorious; such were the *clothes* of service in the tabernacle, and the garments and robes of the *high priest*, which shadowed forth Christ's *righteousness*. Exodus 28:11-14 Exodus 39:1-6. William Troughton.

Ver. 13. About this time, Father Lamentations Combe was called to preach on some public occasion. The new doctrine, as it was termed, was not altogether a secret. Public curiosity had become excited. He choose for his text the passage in Psalm 45:13,

The king's daughter is all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold. By the king he understood *Christ*; by the king's daughter, *the church*. His doctrine was, whatever might be true in regard to men's original depravity, that those who are truly given to Christ, and are in full harmony with him, are delivered from it: that is to say, are *all glorious within*. Like Christ, they love God with a love free from selfishness, with *pure* love. Like Christ, they are come to do the will of the Father. Christ is formed in them. They not only have faith in Christ, and faith in God through Christ, but, as

the result of this faith, they have Christ's disposition. They are now in a situation to say of themselves individually, in the language of the apostle Paul, "I live, and yet not I, *but Christ liveth in me.*" He did not maintain that all Christians are necessarily the subjects of this advanced state of Christian experience, but endeavoured to show that this is a *possible* state; that, however intense human depravity may be, the grace of God has power to overcome it; that the example of Christ, the full and rich promises, and even the commands, give encouragement to effort, and confidence in ultimate victory. *From the "Life, Religious Opinions and Experience of Madame de la Mothe Guyon."*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 13-15.

1. The Bride's *new name* — "The king's daughter." She is the king's daughter for two reasons.
 1. She is *born* of God; and
 2. She is *espoused* to the Son of God.
2. The Bride's *character* — "All glorious within."
 1. Because *Christ reigns on the throne of her heart.*
 2. Because *she is the temple of the Holy Ghost.*
3. The Bride's *raiment* — "wrought gold, " "needlework:" this is the *righteousness of Christ*; in other words,
 1. His *perfect obedience.*
 2. His *atoning death.*
4. The Bride's *companion* — "Virgins that follow her."
5. The Bride's *home going* — "She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework...With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought: they shall enter into the king's palace."
 1. *She shall see the king in his beauty.*
 2. *There will be an open declaration of his love to her before all worlds. Duncan Macgregor, M.A.*

PSALM 45:14

EXPOSITION

Ver. 14. *She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework.* The day comes when the celestial marriage shall be openly celebrated, and these words describe the nuptial procession wherein the queen is brought to her royal Husband attended by her handmaidens. In the latter-day glory, and in the consummation of all things, the glory of the bride, the Lamb's wife, shall be seen by all the universe with admiration. While she was within doors, and her saints hidden ones, the church was glorious; what will be her splendour when she shall appear in the likeness of her Lord in the day of his manifestation? The finest embroidery is but a faint image of the perfection of the church when sanctified by the Spirit. This verse tells us of the ultimate rest of the church—the King's own bosom; of the way she comes to it, she is *brought* by the power of sovereign grace; of the time when this is done—in the future, *she shall be*, it does not yet appear; of the state in which she shall come—clad in richest array, and attended by brightest spirits.

The virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee.

Those who love and serve the church for her Lord's sake shall share in her bliss "in that day." In one sense they are a part of the church, but for the sake of the imagery they are represented as maids of honour; and, though the figure may seem incongruous, they are represented as brought to the King with the same loving familiarity as the bride, because the true servants of the church are of the church, and partake in all her happiness. Note that those who are admitted to everlasting communion with Christ, are pure in heart—*virgins*, pure in company—*her companions*, pure in walk—*that follow her*. Let none hope to be brought into heaven at last who are not purified now.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 14. *The virgins, her companions that follow her, shall be brought unto thee.* The highest and most excellent Christian cannot say, *I have no need* of thee: the queen will not be without any of her true *companions*. As it is in the body *natural*, so it is in the church of Christ, or body *mystical*; all the members being fitly joined together and compacted by that which

every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh *increase* of the body to the edifying of itself in *love*.
Ephesians 4:16 Col 2:19. *William Troughton.*

Ver. 14. *The virgins her companions that follow her.* These are members of the church, but the figure of a bridal train is employed to sustain the allegory. What bright train the Royal Bride will have as she goes forth to meet the Bridegroom! King's daughters will be there, for every crowned head on earth shall one day bow at the foot of the cross. The daughter of Tyre shall be there—Tyre, the ancient emporium of the nations—to show that the merchandise of the world shall be holiness from the Lord. The kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Jews and Gentiles will be there—representatives from all peoples, and tongues, and nations. They are *virgins*. They keep themselves unspotted from the world. They are weaned from its idols; they dread its contaminations. Their first care is to preserve the whiteness of their souls by daily washing in the blood of the Lamb...They *follow* the royal Bride. They keep by her side in storm and sunshine. They follow her in the regeneration. They follow her in the search after her Beloved. Song of Solomon 3:2-3. They follow her to the green pastures and the still waters. They follow her without the camp bearing his reproach. Like Ruth, they leave father and mother to follow her. Ruth 1:16. Like Caleb, they follow the Lord fully. When a crisis comes, and the question, "Who is on the Lord's side?" involves heavy issues, and hollow hearted professors fly away like swallows before the storm, they follow her. When persecution comes, and Christ's faithful witnesses have to prophesy clothed in sackcloth, and perhaps to pass through a baptism of blood to the crown, they follow her: like Peden, when—the bloodhounds of persecution in full chase after him, and the lone moor his home—he thought of Richard Cameron gone to glory, and sighed "Oh, to be with Richie!" *Duncan Macgregor, M.A., in "The Shepherd of Israel; or, Illustrations of the Inner Life," 1869.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 14.

1. The presentation of the church to Christ.

1. When souls are first brought to him—"I have espoused you as," etc.

2. When they come before him at death.

3. When the perfected church is presented to him— "That he might present it, "etc.
2. The manner of presentation—
 1. "In raiment, "etc., such as he himself wrought out.
 2. With all her followers.
 - (a) Their purity—"virgins."
 - (b) their fellowship—"companions."
 - (c) Their succession—"that follow thee, "from one age to another until they are complete. *G.R.*

PSALM 45:15

EXPOSITION

Ver. 15. *With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought.* Joy becomes a marriage feast. What joy will that be which will be seen at the feasts of paradise when all the redeemed shall be brought home! Gladness in the saints themselves, and rejoicing from the angels shall make the halls of the New Jerusalem ring again with shoutings.

They shall enter into the King's palace. Their peaceful abodes shall be where Jesus the King reigns in state for ever. They shall not be shut out but shut in. Rights of free entrance into the holiest of all shall be accorded them. Brought by grace, they shall enter into glory. If there was joy in the bringing, what in the entering? What in the abiding? The glorified are not field labourers in the plains of heaven, but sons who dwell at home, princes of the blood, resident in the royal palace. Happy hour when we shall enjoy all this and forget the sorrows of time in the triumph of eternity.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 15. *With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought.* No marriage was ever consummated with that triumphal solemnity as the marriage of Christ and believers shall be in heaven. Among the Jews the marriage house was called *bethillulah* —the house of praise; there was joy on all hands, but not like the joy that will be in heaven when believers, the spouse of Christ, shall be brought thither. *God the Father* will rejoice to behold

the blessed accomplishment and consummation of that glorious design and project of his love. *Jesus Christ the Bridegroom* will rejoice to see the travail of his soul, the blessed birth and issue of all his bitter pangs and agonies. Isaiah 53:11. *The Holy Spirit* will rejoice to see the complement and perfection of that sanctifying design which was committed to his hand 2 Corinthians 5:5; to see those souls, whom he once found as rough stones, now to shine as the bright polished stones of the spiritual temple. *Angels* will rejoice; great was the joy when the foundation of this design was laid, in the incarnation of Christ Luke 2:13; great, therefore, must their joy be when the top stone is set up with shouting, crying, Grace, grace. *The saints* themselves shall rejoice unspeakably, when they shall enter into the king's palace, and be for ever with the Lord. 1 Thessalonians 4:17. Indeed, there will be joy on all hands, except among the devils and damned, who shall gnash their teeth with envy, at the everlasting advancement and glory of believers. *John Flavel*.

Ver. 15. *They shall be brought.* Reader! do not fail to observe the manner of expression, the church is *brought*, she doth not *come* of herself. No, she must be convinced, converted, made willing. No one can come to Christ, except the Father, who hath sent Christ, draw him. John 6:44. *Robert Hawker, D.D.*

Ver. 15. *They shall enter into the king's palace.* There are two rich palaces mentioned in this Psalm: the one an ivory palace Psalm 45:8, whereby is signified the assemblies of the saints, and ordinances of divine worship, in which the Lord manifests himself graciously. Here the presence of the Lord is sweet and amiable. Song of Solomon 1:8 Psalm 84:2. The other "palace" is mentioned in this fifteenth verse, and it is a palace of glory, a palace more bright and splendid than the finest gold glorious mansions. John 14:2. *William Troughton*.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

PSALM 45:16

EXPOSITION

Ver. 16. *Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children.* The ancient saints who stood as fathers in the service of the Great King have all passed away;

but a spiritual seed is found to fill their places. The veterans depart, but volunteers fill up the vacant places. The line of grace never becomes extinct. As long as time shall last, the true apostolical succession will be maintained.

Whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth. Servants of Christ are kings. Where a man has preached successfully, and evangelised a tribe or nation, he gets to himself more than regal honours, and his name is like the name of the great men that be upon the earth. Jesus is the king maker. Ambition of the noblest kind shall win her desire in the army of Christ; immortal crowns are distributed to his faithful soldiers. The whole earth shall yet be subdued for Christ, and honoured are they, who shall, through grace, have a share in the conquest—these shall reign with Christ at his coming.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 16. *Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children.* O church of God, think not thyself abandoned then, because thou seest not Peter, nor seest Paul—seest not those through whom thou wast born. Out of thine own offspring has a body of "fathers" been raised up to thee. *Augustine.*

Ver. 16. *Thy children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth.* The new connexion is glorious to the King. Many were his glorious and royal ancestors down to Jesse, but now there are born to him, the Eternal King, sons as the dew from the womb of the morning Psalm 110:3, who shall, as princes, occupy the thrones of the world. So our Lord promised to his disciples, "Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." Matthew 19:28. And Paul says, "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?" 1 Corinthians 6:2. *Augustus F. Tholuck.*

Ver. 16. *Princes in all the earth.* Others are but princes in their own dominion, but he will make you princes in all lands...Such a kingdom you shall have, if you will come into Christ, you shall have the liberty of kings, the abundance and plenty of kings, the power of kings, the victory of kings, and the glory of kings. *John Preston.*

PSALM 45:17

EXPOSITION

Ver. 17. *I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations.*

Jehovah by the prophet's mouth promises to the Prince of Peace eternal fame as well as a continuous progeny. His name is his fame, his character, his person; these are dear to his people now—they never can forget them; and it shall be so as long as men exist. Names renowned in one generation have been unknown to the next era, but the laurels of Jesus shall ever be fresh, his renown ever new. God will see to this; his providence and his grace shall make it so. The fame of Messiah is not left to human guardianship; the Eternal guarantees it, and his promise never fails. All down the ages the memories of Gethsemane and Calvary shall glow with inextinguishable light; nor shall the lapse of time, the smoke of error, or the malice of hell be able to dim the glory of the Redeemer's fame.

Therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever. They shall confess thee to be what thou art, and shall render to thee in perpetuity the homage due. Praise is due from every heart to him who loved us, and redeemed us by his blood; this praise will never be fully paid, but will be ever a standing and growing debt. His daily benefits enlarge our obligations, let them increase the number of our songs. Age to age reveals more of his love, let every year swell the volume of the music of earth and heaven, and let thunders of song roll up in full diapason to the throne of him that liveth, and was dead, and is alive for evermore, and hath the keys of hell and of death.

*"Let him be crowned with majesty
Who bowed his head to death,
And be his honours sounded high
By all things that have breath."*

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 17. *Therefore shall the people praise thee.* Christ's espousing unto himself a church, and gathering more and more from age to age by his word and Spirit unto it, his converting souls and bringing them into the fellowship of his family, and giving unto them princely minds and affections, wherever they live, is a large matter of growing and everlasting

glory unto his majesty; for in regard of this point, and what is said before in this Psalm, he addeth as the close of all, *Therefore shall the people praise thee.* David Dickson.

Ver. 17. In the Hebrew text, which is here quoted, there is a particle added to the word *ever*, which in that case intends a proper everlastingness, without any period or end at all, and thereupon translated *for ever and ever.* William Gouge, D.D., on Hebrews 1:8.

Ver. 17. (*last clause*): —

*"When morning gilds the skies,
My heart awakening cries;
May Jesus Christ be praised."*

*"When sleep her balm denies,
My silent spirit sighs;
May Jesus Christ be praised."*

*"In heaven's eternal bliss,
The loveliest strain is this;
May Jesus Christ be praised."*

*"To God the Word on high.
The hosts of angels cry;
May Jesus Christ be praised."*

*"Let mortals too, upraise
Their voice in hymns of praise;
May Jesus Christ be praised."*

*"Let earth's wide circle round,
In joyful notes resound;
May Jesus Christ be praised."*

*"Let air, and sea, and sky,
From depths to height reply;
May Jesus Christ be praised."*

*"Be this while life is mine,
My canticles divine;
May Jesus Christ be praised."*

*"Be this the eternal song
Through all the ages on;
May Jesus Christ be praised."*

Translated by Edward Caswall, in "Poems." 1861.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 17.

1. Christ is the Father's delight. "*I* will make, "etc.
2. He is the church's theme—his name shall be remembered; and
3. He is heaven's glory, "Shall praise thee, "etc. *G.R.*

PSALM 46

PSALM 46:1

Title. To the Chief Musician. He who could sing other Psalms so well was fitly entrusted with this noble ode. Trifles may be left to commoner songsters, but the most skilful musician in Israel must be charged with the due performance of this song, with the most harmonious voices and choicest music. For the Sons of Korah. One alone cannot fulfil the praise, there must be picked choristers under him, whose joyful privilege it shall be to celebrate the service of song in the house of the Lord. As to why the sons of Korah were selected, see our remarks at the head of Psalm 42. It may be well to add that they were a division of the Levites who took their turn in serving at the temple. All the works of holy service ought not to be monopolised by one order of talent, each company of believers should in due course enjoy the privilege. None ought to be without a share in the service of God.

A Song upon Alamoth. Which may denote that the music was to be pitched high for the treble or soprano voices of the Hebrew virgins. They went forth in their dances to sing the praises of David when he smote the Philistine, it was meet that they should make merry and be glad when the victories of Jehovah became their theme. We need to praise God upon virgin hearts, with souls chaste towards his fear, with lively and exalted expressions, and happy strains. Or the word Alamoth may refer to shrill sounding instruments, as in 1 Chronicles 15:20, where we read that Zechariah, and Eliab, and Benaiah were to praise the Lord "with psalteries on Alamoth." We are not always, in a slovenly manner, to fall into one key, but with intelligence are to modulate our praises and make them fittingly expressive of the occasion and the joy it creates in our souls. These old musical terms cannot be interpreted with certainty, but they are still useful because they show that care and skill should be used in our sacred music.

Subject. Happen what may, the Lord's people are happy and secure, this is the doctrine of the Psalm, and it might, to help our memories, be called THE SONG OF HOLY CONFIDENCE, were it not that from the great

reformer's love to this soul-stirring hymn it will probably be best remembered as LUTHER'S PSALM.

Division. It is divided by inspired authority into three parts, each of which ends with Selah.

EXPOSITION

Ver. 1. *God is our refuge and strength.* Not our armies, or our fortresses. Israel's boast is in Jehovah, the only living and true God. Others vaunt their impregnable castles, placed on inaccessible rocks, and secured with gates of iron, but God is a far better refuge from distress than all these: and when the time comes to carry the war into the enemy's territories, the Lord stands his people in better stead than all the valour of legions or the boasted strength of chariot and horse. Soldiers of the cross, remember this, and count yourselves safe, and make yourselves strong in God. Forget not the personal possessive word *our*; make sure each one of your portion in God, that you may say, "He is *my* refuge and strength." Neither forget the fact that God is our refuge just now, in the immediate present, as truly as when David penned the word. God alone is our all in all. All other refuges are refuges of lies, all other strength is weakness, for power belongeth unto God: but as God is all sufficient, our defence and might are equal to all emergencies.

A very present help in trouble, or *in distress he has so been found*, he has been tried and proved by his people. He never withdraws himself from his afflicted. He is their help, truly, effectually, constantly; he is present or near them, close at their side and ready for their succour, and this is emphasized by the word *very* in our version, he is more present than friend or relative can be, yea, more nearly present than even the trouble itself. To all this comfortable truth is added the consideration that his assistance comes at the needed time. He is not as the swallows that leave us in the winter; he is a friend in need and a friend indeed. When it is very dark with us, let brave spirits say, "Come, let us sing the forty-sixth Psalm."

*"A fortress firm, and steadfast rock,
Is God in time of danger;
A shield and sword in every shock,
From foe well known or stranger."*

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Title. The LXX referring to the notion of the theme (μὴ []), *occultavit*, render it ὑπὲρ τῶν κρυφίων, *for the hidden*; and the Latin, *pro arcanis*; and the rest of the ancient interpreters take the same course; the Chaldee referring it to *Coreh*, and those that were *hidden*, i.e., *swallowed up*, by the earth with him, whilst these *sons of Coreh* escaped; as if the mention of the *sons of Coreh* in the title, by whom this song was to be sung, referred the whole Psalm to that story. Accordingly, verse 2, when the Hebrew reads, "*Though the earth be removed*," the paraphrase is, "*When our fathers were changed from the earth.*" *Henry Hammond.*

Title. The title is peculiar, "*Upon Alamothe*," suggesting "*a choir of virgins*," as if this virgin choir were selected to sing a Psalm that tells of perils and fears and alarms abounding, in order to show that even the feeble virgins may in that day sing without dread, because of "*The Mighty One*" on their side. *Andrew A. Bonar.*

Title. — "*Upon Alamothe.*" (To be sung) *en soprano.* *Armand de Mestral*, quoted by *Perowne.*

Whole Psalm. We sing this Psalm to the praise of God, because God is with us, and powerfully and miraculously preserves and defends his church and his word, against all fanatical spirits, against the gates of hell, against the implacable hatred of the devil, and against all the assaults of the world, the flesh and sin. *Martin Luther.*

Whole Psalm. Luther and his companions, with all their bold readiness for danger and death in the cause of truth, had times when their feelings were akin to those of a divine singer, who said, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul?" But in such hours the unflinching Reformer would cheerily say to his friend Melancthon, "Come, Philip, let us sing the forty-sixth Psalm; and they could sing it in Luther's own characteristic version": —

*A sure stronghold our God is He,
A timely shield and weapon;
Our help he will be, and set us free
From every ill can happen.*

*And were the world with devils filled,
All eager to devour us,
Our souls to fear shall little yield,
They cannot overpower us.*

S. W. Christophers, in "Hymn Writers and their Hymns, "1866

Ver. 1. *God is our refuge and strength*, etc. It begins abruptly, but nobly; ye may trust in whom and in what ye please; but GOD (ELOHIM) *is our refuge and strength*.

A very present help. A help found to be very powerful and effectual in straits and difficulties. The words are very emphatic: (daθ]axm]i twθxb] hrz[]), *ezrah betsaroθ nimtsa meod*, "He is found an exceeding, or superlative, help in difficulties." Such we have found him, and therefore celebrate his praise. *Adam Clarke*.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 1. The song of faith in troublous times.

1. *Our refuge*. Our only, impregnable, accessible, delightful place of retreat is our God.
2. *Our strength*. Our all sufficient, unconquerable, honourable, and emboldening strength is our God.
3. *Our help*. Ever near, sympathising, faithful, real, and potent is our God.

Ver. 1. *A very present help in trouble*. Religion never so valuable as in seasons of trouble, sickness, and death. God is present helping us to bear trouble, to improve it, and to survive it. Present by gracious communications and sweet manifestations; present most when he seems absent, restraining, overruling, and sanctifying trouble. Trust and wait. *James Smith*.

PSALM 46:2

EXPOSITION

Ver. 2. *Therefore.* How fond the psalmist is of therefore! his poetry is no poetic rapture without reason, it is as logical as a mathematical demonstration. The next words are a necessary inference from these.

Will not we fear. With God on our side, how irrational would fear be! Where he is all power is, and all love, why therefore should we quail?

Though the earth be removed, though the basis of all visible things should be so convulsed as to be entirely changed.

And though the mountains be carried into the middle of the sea; though the firmest of created objects should fall to headlong ruin, and be submerged in utter destruction. The two phrases set forth the most terrible commotions within the range of imagination, and include the overthrow of dynasties, the destruction of nations, the ruin of families, the persecutions of the church, the reign of heresy, and whatever else may at any time try the faith of believers. Let the worst come to the worst, the child of God should never give way to mistrust; since God remaineth faithful there can be no danger to his cause or people. When the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the heavens and the earth shall pass away in the last general conflagration, we shall serenely behold "the wreck of matter, and the crash of worlds, "for even then our refuge shall preserve us from all evil, our strength shall prepare us for all good.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 2. *Though the earth be removed.* John Wesley preached in Hyde park, on the occasion of the earthquake felt in London, March 8, 1750, and repeated these words. Charles Wesley composed Hymn 67, Wesley's Collection, the following lines of which illustrate this verse: —

*How happy then are we,
Who build, O Lord, on thee!
What can our foundation shock?
Though the shattered earth remove,
Stands our city on a rock,
On the rock of heavenly love.*

Ver. 2-3. The earth thrown into a state of wild confusion, the mountains hurled into the mighty deep, the sea tossed into a tempest, and the everlasting hills drifting on its foaming billows, are the vivid images by which the divine judgments on wicked and persecuting nations are described in the language of the prophets. *John Morison.*

Ver. 2-3,5. Palestine was frequently subject to earthquakes, as might have been expected from its physical character and situation; and it is a remarkable circumstance, that although all other parts of the land seem to have been occasionally the scene of those terrible convulsions, the capital was almost wholly free from them. Mount Moriah, or the hill of vision, was so called from its towering height, which made it a conspicuous object in the distance. It stands in the centre of a group of hills, which surround it in the form of an amphitheatre, and it was chiefly to this position, under the special blessing of God, that it stood firm and immovable amid the frequent earthquakes that agitated and ravaged the Holy Land. *Paxton's Illustrations of Scripture.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 2. The reasons, advantages, and glory of holy courage.

Ver. 2-3.

1. The great and many causes for fear.
 1. What might come—mountains, waters, etc., persecution, pestilence, etc.
 2. What must come—afflictions, death, judgment.
2. The great and one cause for not fearing. Fearlessness under such circumstances should be well grounded. God himself is our refuge, and we confiding in him are fearless. *G. Rogers.*

PSALM 46:3

EXPOSITION

Ver. 3. *Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled.* When all things are excited to fury, and reveal their utmost power to disturb, faith smiles serenely. She is not afraid of noise, nor even of real force, she knows that

the Lord stilleth the raging of the sea, and holdeth the waves in the hollow of his hand.

Though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Alps and Andes may tremble, but faith rests on a firmer basis, and is not to be moved by swelling seas. Evil may ferment, wrath may boil, and pride may foam, but the brave heart of holy confidence trembles not. Great men who are like mountains may quake for fear in times of great calamity, but the man whose trust is in God needs never to be dismayed.

Selah. In the midst of such a hurly burly the music may well come to a pause, both to give the singers breath, and ourselves time for meditation. We are in no hurry, but can sit us down and wait while earth dissolves, and mountains rock, and oceans roar. Ours is not the headlong rashness which passes for courage, we can calmly confront the danger, and meditate upon terror, dwelling on its separate items and united forces. The pause is not an exclamation of dismay, but merely a rest in music; we do not suspend our song in alarm, but tune our harps again with deliberation amidst the tumult of the storm. It were well if all of us could say, *Selah*, under tempestuous trials, but alas! too often we speak in our haste, lay our trembling hands bewildered among the strings, strike the lyre with a rude crash, and mar the melody of our life song.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 3. *Selah.* See "Treasury of David," Vol. I., pages 25, 29, 346, 382; and Vol. II., pages 249-252.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 2-3.

1. The great and many causes for fear.
 1. What might come—mountains, waters, etc., persecution, pestilence, etc.
 2. What must come—afflictions, death, judgment.
2. The great and one cause for not fearing. Fearlessness under such circumstances should be well grounded. God himself is our refuge, and we confiding in him are fearless. *G. Rogers.*

PSALM 46:4

EXPOSITION

Ver. 4. *There is a river.* Divine grace like a smoothly flowing, fertilising, full, and never failing river, yields refreshment and consolation to believers. This is the river of the water of life, of which the church above as well as the church below partakes evermore. It is no boisterous ocean, but a placid stream, it is not stayed in its course by earthquakes or crumbling mountains, it follows its serene course without disturbance. Happy are they who know from their own experience that there is such a river of God.

The streams whereof in their various influences, for they are many, *shall make glad the city of God*, by assuring the citizens that Zion's Lord will unfailingly supply all their needs. The streams are not transient like Cherith, nor muddy like the Nile, nor furious like Kishon, nor treacherous like Job's deceitful brooks, neither are their waters "naught" like those of Jericho, they are clear, cool, fresh, abundant, and gladdening. The great fear of an Eastern city in time of war was lest the water supply should be cut off during a siege; if that were secured the city could hold out against attacks for an indefinite period. In this verse, Jerusalem, which represents the church of God, is described as well supplied with water, to set forth the fact that in seasons of trial all sufficient grace will be given to enable us to endure unto the end. The church is like a well ordered city, surrounded with mighty walls of truth and justice, garrisoned by omnipotence, fairly built and adorned by infinite wisdom: its burgesses the saints enjoy high privileges; they trade with far off lands, they live in the smile of the King; and as a great river is the very making and mainstay of a town, so is the broad river of everlasting love, and grace their joy and bliss. The church is peculiarly the *City of God*, of his designing, building, election, purchasing and indwelling. It is dedicated to his praise, and glorified by his presence.

The holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High. This was the peculiar glory of Jerusalem, that the Lord within her walls had a place where he peculiarly revealed himself, and this is the choice privilege of the saints, concerning which we may cry with wonder, "Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?" To be a temple for the Holy Ghost is the delightful portion of each saint, to be the living temple for the Lord our God is also the high honour of the church in her corporate

capacity. Our God is here called by a worthy title, indicating his power, majesty, sublimity, and excellency; and it is worthy of note that under this character he dwells in the church. We have not a great God in nature, and a little God in grace; no, the church contains as clear and convincing a revelation of God as the works of nature, and even more amazing in the excellent glory which shines between the cherubim overshadowing that mercy seat which is the centre and gathering place of the people of the living God. To have the Most High dwelling within her members, is to make the church on earth like the church in heaven.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 4. *There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God.* What is the *river* that makes glad the city of God? I answer, God himself is the river, as in the following verse, "*God is in the midst of her.*"

1. God the *Father* is the river: "For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." Jeremiah 2:13.

2. God the *Son* is the river, the fountain of salvation: "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness." Zechariah 13:1.

3. God the *Spirit* is the river: "He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be a well of water springing up into everlasting life." John 7:38 4:14. What are the *streams* of this river? Answer—the *perfections* of God, the *fulness* of Christ, the *operations* of the Spirit, and these running in the *channel* of the *covenant of promise*. *Ralph Erskine.*

Ver. 4. *There is a river,* etc. This is that flood which Ezekiel beheld in vision, the waters that came down from the right side of the house, and rising first to the ankles—then as the prophet passed onward, to the knees—then to the loins—became afterwards a river that he could not pass over; for the waters were risen, waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed over. Shall we see in this, with the angelic doctor, the river of grace which burst forth from Mount Calvary? streams branching off hither and thither, the *pelagim* of the Hebrew—"to satisfy the desolate and waste ground, and to cause the bud of the tender herb to spring forth." Job 38:1-

41. O "fountain of gardens, ""well of living waters, " "streams from Lebanon, "how do you, the "nether springs" of this world, bring to us something of the everlasting loveliness and peace of those "upper springs, "by which the beautiful flock now feed and lie down, none making them afraid! Or with S. Ambrose and S. Bernard, understand the verse of the "river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb." And then the rivers of that flood shall indeed *make glad the city of God*, the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, where is the tree of life, that beareth twelve manner of fruits, and yieldeth her fruit every month; that country and that river of which the old liturgies say, "They who rest in the bosom of Abraham are in the tabernacle of joy and rest, in the dwellings of light, in the world of pleasure, in the church of the true Jerusalem, where there is no place for affliction, nor way of sadness, where there are no wars with the flesh, and no resistance to temptation, where sin is forgotten, and past danger is only remembered as a present pleasure." *Thomas Aquinas, Ambrose, and Bernard, in Neale's Commentary.*

Ver. 4. *There is a river.* The river of God that flows from his throne. No enemy can cut off this stream from the church of Christ. Observe the reference to Isaiah 36:2 37:25, compared with 2 Chronicles 32:2-4. These gently flowing, but full streams, are contrasted with the roaring waves of the sea. *T. C. Barth.*

Ver. 4. *There is a river,* etc. The allusion is either to the river Kidron, which ran by Jerusalem, or to the waters of Shiloah, which by different courses and branches ran through the city of Jerusalem, and supplied the several parts of it with water, to the joy and comfort of its inhabitants. But the words are to be understood in a figurative sense, as applicable to gospel times; and this river either designs the gospel, the streams of which are its doctrines, which are living waters, that went out from Jerusalem, and which publish glad tidings of great joy to all sensible sinners; or the Spirit and his graces, which are compared to a well and rivers of living water, in the exercises of which the saints have much joy and peace; or else the Lord himself, who is the place of broad rivers and streams to his people, and is both their refreshment and protection; or rather his everlasting love to them is here intended. *John Gill.*

Ver. 4. Compared with the waterless deserts around, Judaea and Jerusalem were well watered, and drought pressed more severely on the besiegers

than the besieged. The allusion here is to the well known rill and pool of Siloam. So in Isaiah 8:6, the blessing of God's protection is represented by the waters of Shiloah, which go softly. *From "The psalms Chronologically arranged. By Four Friends, " 1867.*

Ver. 4. *The city.* The church of God is like a city,

1. Because a city is a place of *security*.
2. A place of *society*: what one wants another supplies; they have mutual fellowship.
3. A place of *unity*, that people may therein live in peace and concord.
4. A place of *trade* and *traffic*. Here is the market of free grace: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, "etc. Here is the *pearl of great price* exposed for sale.
5. A place of *freedom* and *liberty*, freedom from the guilt of sin, wrath of God, curse of the law, present evil world, bondage to Satan, etc., etc.
6. A place of *order* and *regularity*; it hath its constitutions and ordinances.
7. A place of *rest*, and commodious to live in, and thus it is opposed to the wilderness.
8. A place of *privileges*.
9. A place of *pomp* and *splendour*; there is the king, the court, the throne.
10. A place of *pleasure* and *beauty*; Psalm 48:2. *Ralph Erskine.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 4. Glad tidings in sad times; or, the city of God in the times of trouble and confusion, watered with the river of consolation. *Ralph Erskine.*

Ver. 4. What can this *river* be but that blessed covenant to which David himself repaired in the time of trouble? ...And what are *the streams* of this river, but the outgoings and effects of this divine constitution?

1. The blood of Jesus.

2. The influences of the Holy Spirit.
3. The doctrines and promises of the gospel.
4. The ordinances of religion.
5. All the means of grace. *W. Jay.*

Ver. 4. *Make glad the city of God.* There are four ways in which the streams of a river would gladden the citizens.

1. The first regards *prospect*.
2. The second regards *traffic*.
3. The third regards *fertility*.
4. The fourth regards *supply*. *W. Jay.*

Ver. 4. *City of God.* The church may be called "the city *of God*" because,

1. He dwells in it (see Psalm 44:5).
2. He *founded* it and *built* it.
3. It derives all *privileges* and *immunities* from him.
4. He is the chief Ruler or Governor there.
5. It is his property.
6. He draws the *rent* of it. *Ralph Erskine.*

Ver. 4-5. To the church, Joy, Establishment, Deliverance.

PSALM 46:5

EXPOSITION

Ver. 5. *God is in the midst of her.* His help is therefore sure and near. Is she besieged, then he is himself besieged within her, and we may be certain that he will break forth upon his adversaries. How near is the Lord to the distresses of his saints, since he sojourns in their midst! Let us take heed that we do not grieve him; let us have such respect to him as Moses had when he felt the sand of Horeb's desert to be holy, and put off his shoes from off his feet when the Lord spake from the burning bush.

She shall not be moved. How can she be moved unless her enemies move her Lord also? His presence renders all hope of capturing and demolishing

the city utterly ridiculous. The Lord is in the vessel, and she cannot, therefore, be wrecked.

God shall help her. Within her he will furnish rich supplies, and outside her walls he will lay her foes in heaps like the armies of Sennacherib, when the angel went forth and smote them. *And that right early.* As soon as the first ray of light proclaims the coming day, at the turning of the morning God's right arm shall be outstretched for his people. The Lord is up betimes. We are slow to meet him, but he is never tardy in helping us. Impatience complains of divine delays, but in very deed the Lord is not slack concerning his promise. Man's haste is often folly, but God's apparent delays are ever wise; and when rightly viewed, are no delays at all. Today the bands of evil may environ the church of God, and threaten her with destruction; but ere long they shall pass away like the foam on the waters, and the noise of their tumult shall be silent in the grave. The darkest hour of the night is just before the turning of the morning; and then, even then, shall the Lord appear as the great ally of his church.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 5. *God is in the midst of her.* It is the real presence of Christ, and the supernatural power of his Spirit, which makes the church mighty to the conquest of souls. The church spreads because her

God is in the midst of her. When at any time she has forgotten her dependence on the invisible intercession of her Head, and the gracious energy of his Spirit, she has found herself shorn of the locks of her great strength, and has become the laughing stock of the Philistines. *William Binnie, D.D.*

Ver. 5. *God is in the midst of her,* etc. The enemies of the church may toss her as waves, but they shall not split her as rocks. She may be dipped in water as a *feather*, but shall not sink therein as *lead*. He that is a well of water within her to keep her from fainting, will also prove a wall of fire about her to preserve her from falling. *Tried* she may be, but *destroyed* she cannot be. Her foundation is the Rock of Ages, and her defence the everlasting Arms. It is only such fabrics as are bottomed upon the *sand*, that are overthrown by the *wind*. The adversaries of God's people will push at them as far as their horns will go, but when they have scoured them by persecution, as tarnished vessels, then God will throw such wisps into the fire. *William Secker.*

Ver. 5. When the Papists were in their ruff, and Melancthon began sometimes to fear lest the infant Reformation should be stifled in the birth, Luther was wont to comfort him with these words: "*Si nos ruemus, ruet Christus und, scilicet ille regnator mundi, esto ruat, malo ego cum Christo rures, quam cum Caesare stare*"; "that is, If we perish, Christ must fall too (he is in the midst of us), and if it must be so, be it so; I had rather perish with Christ, that great Ruler of the world, than prosper with Caesar. *John Collings.*

Ver. 5. *And that right early.* Therefore, notice that all the great deliverances wrought in Holy Scripture, were wrought *so early*, as to have been brought to pass in the middle of the night. So Gideon, with his pitchers and lamps against the Midianites; so Saul, when he went forth against Nahash, the Ammonite; so Joshua, when he went up to succour Gibeon; so Samson, when he carried off in triumph the gates of Gaza; so also the associate kings, under the guidance of Elisha, in their expedition against the Moabites, when they, according to God's command, filled the wilderness with ditches, and then beheld their enemies drawn to their destruction, by the reflection of the rising sun upon the water. *Michael Ayguan.*

Ver. 5. *Right early.* Rather, with the margin, *when the morning appeareth.* The restoration of the Jews will be one of the first things at the season of the second advent. It will be accomplished in the very dawning of that day, "when the Sun of Righteousness will rise with healing on his wings." *Samuel Horsley.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 4-5. To the church, Joy, Establishment, Deliverance.

PSALM 46:6

EXPOSITION

Ver. 6. *The heathen raged.* The nations were in a furious uproar, they gathered against the city of the Lord like wolves ravenous for their prey; they foamed, and roared, and swelled like a tempestuous sea. *The kingdoms were moved.* A general confusion seized upon society; the fierce

invaders convulsed their own dominions by draining the population to urge on the war, and they desolated other territories by their devastating march to Jerusalem. Crowns fell from royal heads, ancient thrones rocked like trees driven of the tempest, powerful empires fell like pines uprooted by the blast: everything was in disorder, and dismay seized on all who knew not the Lord.

He uttered his voice, the earth melted. With no other instrumentality than a word the Lord ruled the storm. He gave forth a voice and stout hearts were dissolved, proud armies were annihilated, conquering powers were enfeebled. At first the confusion appeared to be worse confounded, when the element of divine power came into view; the very earth seemed turned to wax, the most solid and substantial of human things melted like the fat of rams upon the altar; but anon peace followed, the rage of man subsided, hearts capable of repentance relented, and the implacable were silenced. How mighty is a word from God! How mighty the Incarnate Word. O that such a word would come from the excellent glory even now to melt all hearts in love to Jesus, and to end for ever all the persecutions, wars, and rebellions of men!

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 6. What man did and what God did.

PSALM 46:7

EXPOSITION

Ver. 7. *The Lord of hosts is with us.* This is the reason for all Zion's security, and for the overthrow of her foes. The Lord rules the angels, the stars, the elements, and all the hosts of heaven; and the heaven of heavens are under his sway. The armies of men though they know it not are made to subserve his will. This Generalissimo of the forces of the land, and the Lord High Admiral of the seas, is on our side—our august ally; woe unto those who fight against him, for they shall fly like smoke before the wind when he gives the word to scatter them.

The God of Jacob is our refuge, Immanuel is Jehovah of Hosts, and Jacob's God is our high place of defence. When this glad verse is sung to

music worthy of such a jubilate, well may the singers pause and the players wait awhile to tune their instruments again; here, therefore, fitly stands that solemn, stately, peaceful note of rest, SELAH.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 7. *The Lord of hosts is with us.* There be three sorts of God's special presence, all which may be justly accounted the church's privilege. First, his *glorious* presence, or his presence testified by eminent glory, and the residence thereof. Thus God is said to be in heaven differentially, so as he is not anywhere else; and heaven is therefore called his throne or dwelling place 1 Kings 8:39; as a king is nowhere so majestically as upon his throne, or in his chair of state; and this is so great a privilege of the church as that she comes not to enjoy it, unless she be triumphant in heaven, and therefore is not the presence here intended. Secondly, his *gracious* presence, or his presence testified by tokens of his grace and favour toward a people, whether visible as in the temple where he chose to place his name, and wherein above all places he would be worshipped, in which respect he is said to dwell between the cherubim 2 Samuel 6:2; or spiritual tokens of his grace, as assistance and acceptance in the duties of his worship, together with enjoyment and benefit of his ordinances. Thus he is present with his church and people in times of the gospel: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Matthew 18:20. This kind of presence is a privilege of the church militant, that he will be with her in holy and spiritual administrations and ordinances; yet this is not the presence principally intended here. Thirdly, the *providential* presence, or his presence testified by acts of special providence, wherein the power, wisdom or any other of God's attributes are eminently put forth, either by way of assistance or defence fro a people. Thus the Lord was present with Israel in the wilderness by the pillar of fore and of a cloud Exodus 13:21; "And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light." And as this presence was intended for a guide, so was it also for a defence to his people against their enemies, and at which their enemies the Egyptians were troubled. Exodus 15:20. By this kind of presence the Lord is with his church militant, in reference to her external regiment, and more especially in her warfare, standing up for her and with her against her enemies; and this is the church's privilege in these words,

The Lord of hosts is with us. John Strickland, B.D. (1601-1670), in a Sermon, entitled, "Immanuel, "1644.

Ver. 7. *The God of Jacob.* If any shall ask me, Why then the God of Jacob more than the God of Isaac? Though it might suffice that the Spirit of God is pleased so to speak, yet Mr. Calvin gives this reason, the covenant of grace was more solemnly made and publicly ratified with Abraham and Jacob, than it was with Isaac, and therefore when he will be looked upon as a God in covenant with his people, he holds forth himself more frequently by the name of the God of Abraham, and the God of Jacob, than of the God of Isaac; albeit sometimes he is pleased to take upon him that style also. *John Strickland.*

Ver. 7. *Our refuge.* Our refuge, or stronghold, where the church, as a ship in quiet haven, may anchor and ride safe; or it may be a metaphor from the dens or burrows, where weaponless creatures find shelter, when they are hunted and pursued by their enemies, as Proverbs 30:26, "*The conies are but a feeble folk, yet make they their houses in the rocks.*" They are safe in the rock if they can get thither, though never so weak in themselves. So the church, though pursued by bloody enemies, and though weak in herself, if yet she get under the wing of the God of Jacob, she may be fearless, for she is safe there. *He is our refuge.* It were to undervalue God, if we should fear the creatures, when he is with us. Antigonus, when he overheard his soldiers reckoning how many their enemies were, he steps in unto them suddenly, demanding, "And how many do you reckon me for?" *John Strickland.*

PSALM 46:8

EXPOSITION

Ver. 8. *Come, behold the works of the Lord.* The joyful citizens of Jerusalem are invited to go forth and view the remains of their enemies, that they may mark the prowess of Jehovah and the spoil which his right hand hath won for his people. It were well if we also carefully noted the providential dealings of our covenant God, and were quick to perceive his hand in the battles of his church. Whenever we read history it should be with this verse sounding in our ears. We should read the newspaper in the same spirit, to see how the Head of the Church rules the nations for his

people's good, as Joseph governed Egypt for the sake of Israel. *What desolations he hath made in the earth.* The destroyers he destroys, the desolators he desolates. How forcible is the verse at this date! The ruined cities of Assyria, Babylon, Petra, Bashan, Canaan, are our instructors, and in tables of stone record the doings of the Lord. In every place where his cause and crown have been disregarded ruin has surely followed: sin has been a blight on nations, and left their palaces to lie in heaps. In the days of the writer of this Psalm, there had probably occurred some memorable interpositions of God against his Israel's foes; and as he saw their overthrow, he called on his fellow citizens to come forth and attentively consider the terrible things in righteousness which had been wrought on their behalf. Dismantled castles and ruined abbeys in our own land stand as memorials of the Lord's victories over oppression and superstition. May there soon be more of such desolations.

*"Ye gloomy piles, ye tombs of living men,
Ye sepulchres of womanhood, or worse;
Ye refuges of lies, soon may ye fall,
And amid your ruins may the owl, and bat,
And dragon find congenial resting place."*

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 8. *Come, behold the works of the Lord.* *Venito, videto.* God looks that his works should be well observed, and especially when he hath wrought any great deliverance for his people. Of all things, he cannot abide to be forgotten. *John Trapp.*

Ver. 8. *What desolations he hath made in the earth.* We are here first invited to a tragical sight. We are carried into the *camera di morte*, to see the ghastly visage of deaths and desolations all the world over; than which nothing can be more horrible and dreadful. You are called out to see piles of dead carcasses; to see whole basketfuls of heads, as was presented to Jehu: a woeful spectacle, but a necessary one. *See, therefore, what desolation the Lord hath wrought in all the earth.* Desolations by wars: how many fields have been drenched with blood, and composted with carcasses; how many millions of men have been cut off in all ages by the edge of the sword! Desolations by famine; wherein men have been forced to make their bodies one another's sepulchres, and mothers to devour their children of a span long. Desolations by plagues and pestilence; which have swept away, as our story tells us, eight hundred thousand in one city.

Desolations by inundations of waters; which have covered the faces of many regions, and rinsed the earth of her unclean inhabitants. Desolations by earthquakes, which have swallowed up whole cities; and those great and populous. Desolations wrought by the hand of his angels; as in Egypt; in the tents of the Assyrians, one hundred and eighty five thousand in one night; in the camp of Israel, in David's pestilence. Desolations wrought by the hand of men, in battles and massacres. Desolations by wild beasts; as in the colonies of Ashur planted in Samaria. Desolations by the swarms of obnoxious and noisome creatures; as in Egypt, and since in Africa: "He spoke the word, and the grasshoppers came, and caterpillars innumerable," Psalm 105:34. In so much as, in the consulship of M. Fulvius Flaccus, after the bloody wars of Africa, followed infinite numbers of locusts; which, after devouring of all herbs and fruit, were, by a sudden wind, hoised into the African sea: infection followed upon their putrefaction, and thereupon a general mortality: in number, four score thousand died: upon the sea coast betwixt Carthage and Utica, above two hundred thousand. Desolations every way, and by what variety of means soever; yet all wrought by the divine hand; *What desolations he hath wrought.* Whoever be the instrument, he is the Author. *Joseph Hall (Bishop.)*

Ver. 8. Doth not God make great desolations, when he makes that man that counted himself a most religious man, to confess himself not sufficient for one good thought? As it was with Paul, does he not make wars to cease when he turns the heart of a persecutor, earnestly to seek peace with God and man, yea, with his very enemies? Doth he not break the bow and all weapons of war asunder, and that in all the earth, when he proclaims peace to all that are far off and near, professor and profane, Jews and Gentiles? *Richard Coore.*

Ver. 8-10. *Come, behold the works of the Lord.* What works? ruining works. *What desolations he hath made in the earth.* God made strange work in the world at that time. Those countries which before were as the garden of God, became like a desolate wilderness: who was able to bear this with patience? Yet the Spirit of God saith in the next words, it must be patiently borne. When God lets men strive and war with one another to a common confusion, yet no man may strive with God about it: and the reason given why no man may, is only this (which is indeed all the reason in the world), *He is God.* So it follows in the Psalm;

Be still, and know that I am God; as if the Lord had said, Not a word, do not strive nor reply; whatever you see, hold your peace; know that I, being God, give no account of any of my matters. *Joseph Caryl.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 8. *Behold the works of the Lord.*

1. *They are worth beholding*, for they are like himself; well becoming his infinite power, wisdom, justice,
2. *Our eyes were given us for this very purpose* —not for the beholding of vanity, not for the ensnaring or wounding of the soul; but for the use and honour of the Creator.
3. *The Lord delights to have his works beheld*; he knows their excellency and perfection, and that the more they are seen and noted the more honour will accrue to the Maker of them.
4. *None but we can do it*; there is great reason then that we should carefully *behold*, etc.
5. *This shall be of great benefit to ourselves.* *Bishop Hall.*

Ver. 8. The desolations of the Lord, the consolation of his saints.

I. A declaration of what has happened.

II. A promise of what shall be achieved. *Spurgeon's Sermons, No. 190.*

PSALM 46:9

EXPOSITION

Ver. 9. *He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth.* His voice quiets the tumult of war, and calls for the silence of peace. However remote and barbarous the tribe, he awes the people into rest. He crushes the great powers till they cannot provoke strife again; he gives his people profound repose.

He breaketh the bow, the sender of swift winged death he renders useless. *And cutteth the spear in sunder* —the lance of the mighty man he shivers. *He burneth the chariot in the fire* —the proud war chariot with its death

dealing scythes he commits to the flames. All sorts of weapons he piles heaps on heaps, and utterly destroys them. So was it in Judea in the days of yore, so shall it be in all lands in eras yet to come. Blessed deed of the Prince of Peace! when shall it be literally performed? Already the spiritual foes of his people are despoiled of their power to destroy; but when shall the universal victory of peace be celebrated, and instruments of wholesale murder be consigned to ignominious destruction? How glorious will the ultimate victory of Jesus be in the day of his appearing, when every enemy shall lick the dust!

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 8-10. *Come, behold the works of the Lord. See Psalms on "Psalm 46:8"* for further information.

Ver. 9. He that destroyeth all the instruments of war doth surely make peace; and that he *maketh war to cease*, doth certainly make peace begin. Peace is made two ways; first, by taking up the differences and reconciling the spirits of men; secondly, by breaking the power and taking away all provisions of war from men. The Lord maketh peace by both these ways, or by either of them. *Joseph Caryl.*

Ver. 9. *He breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire.* When the Romans had, in their way of speaking, given peace to a nation, by extirpating the greatest part of the miserable inhabitants, they collected the arms of the vanquished, and setting them on fire, reduced them to ashes. A medal, struck by Vespasian, the Roman emperor, on finishing his wars in Italy, and other parts of the world, represents the goddess of peace holding an olive branch in one hand, and with a lighted torch in the other, setting fire to a heap of armour. The custom is thus alluded to by Virgil: —

*"O mihi praeteritos referat si Jupiter annos!
Qualis eram, cum primam Praeneste sub ipsa
Stravi, scutorumque incendi victor acervos."
An, lib. 3 v. 1. 560.*

"O that Jupiter would restore to me the years that are past! Such as I was, when under Praeneste itself, I routed the foremost rank of the enemy, and victorious set fire to heaps of armour."

The same practice, by the command of Jehovah, prevailed among the Jews; the first instance of it occurs in the book of Jos 11:6. It is also celebrated in the songs of Zion, as the attendant of peace, and the proof of its continuance "He maketh war to cease, "etc. *Paxton's Illustrations of Scripture*.

Ver. 9. *He burneth the chariot in the fire.* By degrees, the chariot came to be one of the recognised forces in war, and we find it mentioned throughout the books of Scriptures, not only in its literal sense, but as a metaphor which every one could understand. In the Psalms, for example, are several allusions to the war chariot.

He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire. Psalm 46:9. Again: "At thy rebuke, O God of Jacob, both the chariot and horse are cast into a deep sleep, " Psalm 76:6. And: "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the Lord our God." Psalm 20:7. Now, the force of these passages cannot be properly appreciated unless we realise to ourselves the dread in which the war chariot was held by the foot soldiers. Even calvary were much feared; but the chariots were objects of almost superstitious fear, and the rushing sound of their wheels, the noise of the horses' hoofs, and the shaking of the ground as the "prancing horses and jumping chariots" Na 3:2, thundered along, are repeatedly mentioned. *J. G. Wood*.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 9. The Great Peacemaker, or the principle of the gospel our only hope, for the total abolition of war.

PSALM 46:10

EXPOSITION

Ver. 10. *Be still, and know that I am God.* Hold off your hands, ye enemies! Sit down and wait in patience, ye believers! Acknowledge that Jehovah is God, ye who feel the terrors of his wrath! Adore him, and him only, ye who partake in the protection of his grace. Since none can worthily proclaim his nature, let "expressive silence muse his praise." The

boasts of the ungodly and the timorous forebodings of the saints should certainly be hushed by a sight of what the Lord has done in past ages.

I will be exalted among the heathen. They forget God, they worship idols, but Jehovah will yet be honoured by them. Reader, the prospects of missions are bright, bright as the promises of God. Let no man's heart fail him; the solemn declarations of this verse must be fulfilled.

I will be exalted in the earth, among all people, whatever may have been their wickedness or their degradation. Either by terror or love God will subdue all hearts to himself. The whole round earth shall yet reflect the light of his majesty. All the more because of the sin, and obstinacy, and pride of man shall God be glorified when grace reigns unto eternal life in all corners of the world.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 8-10. *Come, behold the works of the Lord. See Psalms on "Psalm 46:8"* for further information.

Ver. 10. *Be still, and know that I am God.* The great works of God, wherein his sovereignty appeared, had been described in the foregoing verses. In the awful desolations that he made, and by delivering his people by terrible things, he showed his greatness and dominion. Herein he manifested his power and sovereignty, and so commands all *to be still, and know that he is God.* For says he,

I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth. In the words may be observed,

1. A duty described, to be still before God, and under the dispensations of his providence; which implies that we must be still as to *words*; not speaking against the sovereign dispensations of Providence, or complaining of them; not darkening counsel by words without knowledge, or justifying ourselves and speaking great swelling words of vanity. We must be still as to *actions* and outward behaviour, so as not to oppose God in his dispensations; and as *to the inward frame of our hearts*, cultivating a calm and quiet submission of soul to the sovereign pleasure of God, whatever it may be.

2. We may observe the ground of this duty, namely, *the divinity of God.* His being God is a sufficient reason why we should be *still* before him, in

no wise murmuring, or objecting, or opposing, but calmly and humbly submitting to him.

3. How we must fulfil this duty of being still before God, namely, with a sense of his divinity, as seeing the ground of this duty, in that we *know* him to be God. Our submission is to be such as becomes rational creatures. God doth not require us to submit contrary to reason, but to submit as seeing the reason and ground of submission. Hence, the bare consideration *that God is God* may well be sufficient to still all objections and oppositions against the divine sovereign dispensations. *Jonathan Edwards*.

Ver. 10. *Be still, and know that I am God.* This text of Scripture forbids quarrelling and murmuring against God. Now let me apply as I go along. There are very few, and these very well circumstanced, that find themselves in no hazard of quarrelling with God. I think almost that if angels were on earth, they would be in hazard of it. I will assure you, there are none that have corruption, but they have need to be afraid of this. But many give way to this quarrelling, and consider not the hazard thereof. Beware of it, for it is a dreadful thing to quarrel with God: who may say unto him, "What doest thou?" It is a good account of Aaron, that when God made fire to destroy his sons, he held his peace. Let us then, while we bear the yoke, "sit alone and keep silence, and put our mouths in the dust, if so be there may be hope." Lamentations 3:28-29. Ye know, the murmuring of the children of Israel cost them very dear. *Be still*, that is, beware of murmuring against me, saith the Lord. God gives not an account of his matters to any; because there may be many things ye cannot see through; and therefore ye may think it better to have wanted them, and much more, for the credit of God and the church. I say, God gives not an account of his matters to any. Beware, then, of drawing rash conclusions. *Richard Cameron's Sermon, preached July 18th, 1680, three days before he was killed at Airmoss.*

Ver. 10. *Be still and know that I am God.* Faith gives the soul a view of the Great God. It teacheth the soul to set his almightiness against sin's magnitude, and his infinitude against sin's multitude; and so quenches the temptation. The reason why the presumptuous sinner fears so little, and the despairing soul so much, is for want of knowing God as great; therefore, to cure them both, the serious consideration of God, under this notion, is propounded:

Be still, and know that I am God; as if he had said, Know, O ye wicked, that I am God, who can avenge myself when I please upon you, and cease to provoke me by your sins to your own confusion; and again, know, ye trembling souls, that I am God; and therefore able to pardon the greatest sins, and cease to dishonour me by your unbelieving thoughts of me.

William Gurnall.

Ver. 10. *Be still, and know that I am the Lord.* Not everyone is a fit scholar for God's school, but such as are purified according to the purification of the sanctuary. Carnal men are drowned in fleshly and worldly cares, and neither purged nor lifted up to receive the light of God, or else indisposed by prejudice or passion, that they cannot learn at all. We will never savingly know him, till our souls be free of these indispositions. Among all the elements the earth is fitted to receive seed of the sower; if he cast it into the fire, it burneth; if in the air, it withereth; if in the waters, it rots, the instability of that body is for producing monsters, because it closes not straitly the seeds of fishes. Spirits of a fiery temper, or light in inconstancy, or moving as waters, are not for God's lessons, but such as in *stayed humility* do rest under his hand. If waters be mixed with clay in their substance, or their surface be troubled with wind, they can neither receive nor render any image; such unstable spirits in the school of God lose their time and endanger themselves. *William Struther.*

Ver. 10. *Be still, and know,* etc. As you must come and *see* Psalm 46:8, so come and *hear* what the Lord saith to those enemies of yours. *John Trapp.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 10. *Be still, and know that I am God.* The sole consideration that God is God, sufficient to still all objections to his sovereignty. *Jonathan Edwards.*

Ver. 10. *I am God.*

1. In that he is God, he is an absolutely and infinitely *perfect* being.
2. As he is God, he is so *great*, that he is infinitely above all comprehension.
3. As he is God, all things are his *own*.
4. In that he is God, he is *worthy* to be sovereign over all things.

5. In that he is God, he *will* be sovereign, and *will* act as such.

6. In that he is God, he is able to *avenge* himself on those who oppose his sovereignty. *Jonathan Edwards*.

PSALM 46:11

EXPOSITION

Ver. 11. *The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.* It was meet to sing this twice over. It is a truth of which no believer wearies, it is a fact too often forgotten, it is a precious privilege which cannot be too often considered. Reader, is the Lord on thy side? Is Emmanuel, God with us, thy Redeemer? Is there a covenant between thee and God as between God and Jacob? If so, thrice happy art thou. Show thy joy in holy song, and in times of trouble play the man by still making music for thy God. SELAH. Here as before, lift up the heart. Rest in contemplation after praise. Still keep the soul in tune. It is easier to sing a hymn of praise than to continue in the spirit of praise, but let it be our aim to maintain the uprising devotion of our grateful hearts, and so end our song as if we intended it to be continued.

*SELAH bids the music rest.
Pause in silence soft and blest;
SELAH bids uplift the strain,
Harps and voices tune again;
SELAH ends the vocal praise,
Still your hearts to God upraise.*

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 11. *The Lord of hosts is with us.* On Tuesday Mr. Wesley could with difficulty be understood, though he often attempted to speak. At last, with all the strength he had, he cried out, "The best of all is, God is with us." Again, raising his hand, and waving it in triumph, he exclaimed with thrilling effect, "The best of all is, God is with us." These words seem to express the leading feature of his whole life, God had been with him from early childhood; his providence had guided him through all the devious wanderings of human life; and now, when he was entering the "valley of the shadow of death," the same hand sustained him. *From "Wesley and his*

Coadjutors. By Rev. W. C. Larrabee, A.M. Edited by Rev. B. F. Tefft, D.D. Cincinnati. 1851."

PSALM 47

PSALM 47:1

Title. To the Chief Musician. Many songs were dedicated to this leader of the chorus, but he was not overloaded thereby. God's service is such delight that it cannot weary us; and that choicest part of it, the singing of his praises, is so pleasurable that we cannot have too much of it. Doubtless, the chief musician, as he was commissioned with so many sacred songs, felt that the more the merrier. A Psalm for the Sons of Korah. We cannot agree with those who think that the sons of Korah were the authors of these Psalms; they have all the indications of David's authorship that one could expect to see. Our ear has grown accustomed to the ring of David's compositions, and we are morally certain that we hear it in this Psalm. Every expert would detect here the autography of the Son of Jesse, or we are greatly mistaken. The Sons of Korah sang these Psalms, but we believe they did not write them. Fit singers were they whose origin reminded them of sin, whose existence was a proof of sovereign grace, and whose name has a close connection with the name of Calvary.

Subject. Whether the immediate subject of this Psalm be the carrying up of the ark from the house of Obedom to Mount Zion, or the celebration of some memorable victory, it would be hard to decide. As even the doctors differ, who should dogmatise? But it is very clear that both the present sovereignty of Jehovah, and the final victories of our Lord, are here fitly hymned, while his ascension, as the prophecy of them, is sweetly gloried in.

Division. In so short a Psalm, there is no need of any other division than that indicated by the musical pause at the end of Psalm 47:4.

EXPOSITION

Ver. 1. *O clap your hands.* The most natural and most enthusiastic tokens of exultation are to be used in view of the victories of the Lord, and his universal reign. Our joy in God may be demonstrative, and yet he will not censure it.

All ye people. The joy is to extend to all nations; Israel may lead the van, but all the Gentiles are to follow in the march of triumph, for they have an equal share in that kingdom where there is neither Greek nor Jew, but Christ is all and in all. Even now if they did but know it, it is the best hope of all nations that Jehovah ruleth over them. If they cannot all speak the same tongue, the symbolic language of the hands they can all use. All people will be ruled by the Lord in the latter days, and all will exult in that rule; were they wise they would submit to it now, and rejoice to do so; yea, they would clap their hands in rapture at the thought.

Shout, let your voices keep tune with your hands. *Unto God*, let him have all the honours of the day, and let them be loud, joyous, universal, and undivided. *With the voice of triumph*, with happy sounds, consonant with such splendid victories, so great a King, so excellent a rule, and such happy subjects. Many are human languages, and yet the nations may triumph as with one voice. Faith's view of God's government is full of transport. The prospect of the universal reign of the Prince of Peace is enough to make the tongue of the dumb sing; what will the reality be? Well might the poet of the seasons bid mountains and valleys raise their joyous hymn—

*"For the GREAT SHEPHERD reigns,
And his unsuffering kingdom yet will come."*

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Whole Psalm. Some have applied this Psalm to Christ's ascension; but it speaks of his Second Coming. The Mighty One is seated peacefully on his throne. We are referred back to Psalm 45:1-17. *Andrew A. Bonar.*

Ver. 1. *O clap your hands, all ye people; shout unto God with the voice of triumph.* This should be done,

1. Cheerfully, *Clap your hands*, for this is a sign of inward joy, Nahum 3:19.
2. Universally: "O clap you hands, *all ye people.*"
3. Vocally: *Shout unto God with the voice of triumph.*
4. Frequently: "*Sing praises to God, sing praises: sing praises unto our King, sing praises*", Psalm 47:6; and again "*sing praises*", Psalm 47:7. It cannot be done too frequently.

5. Knowingly and discreetly: "Sing ye praises *with understanding*;" "know the reason why ye are to praise him. *Adam Clarke*.

Ver. 1. *O clap your hands*, etc. Such expressions of pious and devout affection as to some may seem indecent and imprudent, yet ought not to be hastily censured and condemned, much less ridiculed; because if they come from an upright heart, God will accept the strength of the affection, and excuse the weakness of the expressions of it. *Matthew Henry*.

Ver. 1. *O clap your hands*. The *voice of melody* is not so much to be uttered with the tongue, as with the hands; that it, it is our deeds not our words, by which God is here to be praised. Even as it was in him whose pattern we are to follow: "Jesus began both to do and to teach." *J. M. Neale*.

Ver. 1. *All ye people*. *Peoples*, in the plural. Here it is used to call both Jews and Gentiles—all nations. *William S. Plumer*.

Ver. 1. *Shout unto God*. *Jubilate Deo*: in God, and concerning God, and in honour of God. He does not excite them to carnal joy. *Martin Geier*.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 1. Unusual and enthusiastic expressions of joy when justifiable and even desirable.

Ver. 1-4. Joy the true spirit of worship.

1. Joy in God's character.
2. In his reign.
3. In the triumphs of his gospel.
4. In his favour to his saints.

WORKS UPON THE FORTY-SEVENTH PSALM

In the Works of JOHN BOYS, 1626, folio, pp. 931-937, there is an Exposition of this Psalm.

PSALM 47:2

EXPOSITION

Ver. 2. *For the Lord*, or JEHOVAH, the self existent and only God; *Most high*, most great in power, lofty in dominion, eminent in wisdom, elevated in glory. *Is terrible*, none can resist his power or stand before his vengeance; yet as these terrors are wielded on the behalf of his subjects, they are fit reasons for rejoicing. Omnipotence, which is terrible to crush, is almighty to protect. At a grand review of the troops of a great prince, all his loyal subjects are filled with triumph, because their liege lord is so able to defend his own, and so much dreaded by his foes.

He is a great King over all the earth. Not over Judea only, but even to the utmost isles his reign extends. Our God is no local deity, no petty ruler of a tribe; in infinite majesty he rules the mightiest realm as absolute arbiter of destiny, sole monarch of all lands, King of kings, and Lord of lords. Not a hamlet or an islet is excluded from his dominion. How glorious will that era be when this is seen and known of all; when in the person of Jesus all flesh shall behold the glory of the Lord!

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 2. *For the Lord most high is terrible; he is a great king over all the earth.* The church celebrates the ascension of Christ, because then he was "highly exalted; "then he became *terrible* to his enemies, all power in heaven and earth being committed to him; and then he began to display the excellent majesty of his universal kingdom, to which he was then inaugurated, being crowned "King of kings, and Lord of lords." *George Horne.*

Ver. 2. *The Lord most high is terrible.* Christ is *terrible*, that is, fearful, or meet to be feared, not of his children only for their good, but of the wicked also for their punishment; *terrible* to the devil, as being stronger than he, casting out the prince of darkness by the finger of God. Luke 11:22 John 12:31. And therefore so soon as an unclean spirit saw Jesus, he cried out, "What have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us?" Mark 1:24; or as other devils, Matthew 8:29, "Art thou come hither to torment us before the time?" for the devils in believing tremble.

Terrible to hypocrites, and other impious agents of the devil, as having his fan in his hand to make clean his floor, and to gather his wheat into his garner, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire. Matthew 3:12. Or Christ is *excelsus in potentia, terribilis in justitia*; high in power, and fearful in justice; high in exalting the good, and terrible in humbling the bad. *John Boys*.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 1-4. Joy the true spirit of worship.

1. Joy in God's character.
2. In his reign.
3. In the triumphs of his gospel.
4. In his favour to his saints.

Ver. 2. The terrors of the Lord viewed by faith as a subject of joy.

Ver. 2. (*second clause*). The universal reign of Christ as it is and is to be.

PSALM 47:3

EXPOSITION

Ver. 3. *He*, with whom is infinite power, *shall subdue the people under us*. The battle is not ours but the Lord's. He will take his own time, but he will certainly achieve victory for his church. Truth and righteousness shall through grace climb to the ascendant. We wage no doubtful warfare. Hearts the most rebellious, and wills the most stubborn, shall submit to all conquering grace. All the Lord's people, whether Jews or Gentiles, may clap their hands at this, for God's victory will be theirs; but surely apostles, prophets, ministers, and those who suffer and labour the most, may take the largest share in the joy. Idolatry, infidelity, superstition, we shall yet tread upon, as men tread down the stones of the street.

And the nations under our feet. The church of God shall be the greatest of monarchies, her victory shall be signal and decisive. Christ shall take to himself his great power and reign, and all the tribes of men shall own at once his glory and the glory of his people in him. How changed will be the position of affairs in coming ages! The people of God have been under the

feet of men in long and cruel persecutions, and in daily contempt; but God will reverse the position, and the best in character shall be first in honour.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 3. *He shall subdue the people under us, and the nations under our feet.* The consequence of our Lord's ascension was the going forth of the all subduing Word, under the influence and direction of which, the convinced and converted nations renounced their idols and their lusts, and bowed their willing necks to the yoke of Jesus. This is that great conquest, fore showed by the victories of Joshua, David, and all the faithful heroes of old time, and foretold in language borrowed from their history. *George Horne.*

Ver. 3. *He shall subdue the people under us,* etc., or *he shall lead like sheep; or bring unto to fold;* as divers render the word, by comparing Isaiah 5:17 Micah 2:12. He seems to speak of such a subjugation of them, as was for the good of the people subdued, because this is matter of rejoicing to them, verse 1; which is true both of these people whom David subdued, who thereby had opportunities, obligations, and encouragements to own and worship the true God, which was the only way to their true and lasting happiness; and especially of those Gentiles who were subdued to Christ by the preaching of the gospel. The Gentile converts were in some sort brought under the Jews, because they were subjected to Christ and to his apostles, and to the primitive church, which were Jews. *Matthew Poole.*

Ver. 3. *And the nations under our feet.* By this manner of speech is meant, that the Gentiles should be *scholars*, and the Jews *schoolmasters*, as it were to them; for *to sit under the feet*, or *at the feet*, is used in Scripture for being a scholar, or learning, as Acts 22:3. *Thomas Wilcocks.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 1-4. Joy the true spirit of worship.

1. Joy in God's character.
2. In his reign.
3. In the triumphs of his gospel.
4. In his favour to his saints.

Ver. 3. The hope of victory to the church. What shall be subdued? By whose instrumentality? *Us*. By whose power? *He*. When shall it be accomplished? What is the token of it? The ascension, Psalm 47:5.

Ver. 3.

1. The final triumph of the saints. All enemies subdued under them in earth and hell, within and without.

1. Gradually.

2. Completely.

2. The power by which it is accomplished. *He shall*, etc.

1. Not without means.

2. Not by means only.

3. But by appointed means made potent by divine energy. *G. R.*

PSALM 47:4

EXPOSITION

Ver. 4. While as yet we see not all things put under him, we are glad to put ourselves and our fortunes at his disposal.

He shall choose our inheritance for us. We feel his reign to be so gracious that we even now ask to be in the fullest degree the subjects of it. We submit our will, our choice, our desire, wholly to him. Our heritage here and hereafter we leave to him, let him do with us as seemeth him good.

The excellency of Jacob whom he loved. He gave his ancient people their portion, he will give us ours, and we ask nothing better; this is the most spiritual and real manner of clapping our hands because of his sovereignty, namely, to leave all our affairs in his hands, for then our hands are empty of all care for self, and free to be used in his honour. He was the boast and glory of Israel, he is and shall be ours. He loved his people and became their greatest glory; he loves us, and he shall be our exceeding joy. As for the latter days, we ask nothing better than to stand in our appointed lot, for if we have but a portion in our Lord Jesus, it is enough for our largest desires. Our beauty, our boast, our best treasure, lies in having such a God

to trust in, such a God to love us. *Selah*. Yes, pause, ye faithful songsters. Here is abundant room for holy meditation—

*"Muse awhile, obedient thought,
Lo, the theme's with rapture fraught;
See thy King, whose realm extends
Even to earth's remotest ends.
Gladly shall the nations own
Him their God and Lord alone;*

*Clap their hands with holy mirth,
Hail him MONARCH OF THE EARTH.
Come, my soul, before him bow,
Gladdest of his subjects thou;*

*Leave thy portion to his choice,
In his sovereign will rejoice,
This thy purest, deepest bliss,
He is thine and thou art his."*

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 4. *He shall choose.* Futures are variously rendered; and accordingly the vulgar Latin, Syriac, and Arabic, render this word, *He hath chosen*. *Matthew Poole*.

Ver. 4. *He shall choose our inheritance for us.* It is reported of a woman who, being sick, was asked whether she was willing to live or die; she answered, "Which God pleases." But, said one, if God should refer it to you, which would you choose? "Truly," replied she, "I would refer it to him again." Thus that man obtains his will of God, whose will is subjected to God. We are not to be troubled that we have no more *from* God, but we are to be troubled that we do no more *for* God. Christians, if the Lord be well pleased with your persons, should not you be well pleased with your conditions? There is more reason that you should be pleased with them, than that he should be pleased with you. Believers should be like sheep, which change their pastures at the will of the shepherd; or like vessels in a house, which stand to be filled or emptied at the pleasure of their owner. He that sails upon the sea of this world in his own bottom, will sink at last into a bottomless ocean. Never were any their own carvers, but they were sure to cut their own fingers. *William Secker*.

Ver. 4. *He shall choose our inheritance for us*, means that he who knows what is better for us than ourselves, *hath chosen*, that is, hath appointed, and that of his own good will and mercy towards us, *our inheritance*; not only things meet for this life, as lands, and houses, and possessions, etc., but even all other things concerning the hope of a better life, to wit, a kingdom that cannot be shaken, an everlasting habitation, and inheritance which is immortal and undefiled, and fadeth not away, reserved for us in heaven. *John Boys.*

Ver. 4. *The excellency (or glory) of Jacob, whom he loved*; that is, even all those excellent things that he gave and promised to Jacob, wherein he might glory and rejoice. The faithful mean, that they had as great, both abundance and assurance of God's grace and goodness, as ever Jacob had. *Thomas Wilcocks.*

Ver. 4. It may be thou art godly and poor. It is well; but canst thou tell whether, if thou wert not poor, thou wouldst be godly? Surely God knows us better than we ourselves do, and therefore can best fit the estate to the person. *Giles Fletcher.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 1-4. Joy the true spirit of worship.

1. Joy in God's character.
2. In his reign.
3. In the triumphs of his gospel.
4. In his favour to his saints.

Ver. 4. This comprehends time and eternity. It is a matter of fact, of holy acquiescence, of desire, of thankfulness.

Ver. 4.

1. God is willing to choose our inheritance for us in time and eternity.
2. His choice is better than ours—*the excellency of Jacob*.
3. He will leave us to the consequences of our own choice.
4. He will help us in obtaining that which he chooses for us. *G. R.*

PSALM 47:5

EXPOSITION

Ver. 5. *God is gone up with a shout.* Faith hears the people already shouting. The command of the first verse is here regarded as a fact. The fight is over, the conqueror ascends to his triumphant chariot, and rides up to the gates of the city which is made resplendent with the joy of his return. The words are fully applicable to the ascension of the Redeemer. We doubt not that angels and glorified spirits welcomed him with acclamations. He came not without song, shall we imagine that he returned in silence?

The Lord with the sound of a trumpet. Jesus is Jehovah. The joyful strain of the trumpet betokens the splendour of his triumph. It was meet to welcome one returning from the wars with martial music. Fresh from Bozrah, with his garments all red from the winepress, he ascended, leading captivity captive, and well might the clarion ring out the tidings of Immanuel's victorious return.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 5. *God is gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet.* It is worthy (as Origen suggests) that this mention of the *shout*, and the *voice* of the *trumpet*, serves to connect together past and future events in the history of the church and of the world, and carry our thoughts forward to Christ's coming to judgment. *Christopher Wordsworth.*

Ver. 5. Thou hast great cause, O my soul, to praise him, and to rejoice before him, especially if thou considerest that Christ ascended not for himself, but also for thee: it is God in our nature that is gone up to heaven: whatever God acted on the person of Christ, that he did as in thy behalf, and he means to act the very same on thee. Christ as a public person ascended up to heaven; thy interest is in this very ascension of Jesus Christ; and therefore dost thou consider thy Head as soaring up? O let every member praise his name; let thy tongue (called thy *glory*), glory in this, and trumpet out his praise, that in respect of thy duty it may be verified: "Christ is *gone up with a shout, the Lord with a sound of a trumpet.*" *Isaac Ambrose.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 5. The ascension. Its publicity, solemnity, triumph, joy. Who went up. Where he went up. To what he went up. For what purpose. With what result.

PSALM 47:6

EXPOSITION

Ver. 6. *Sing praises.* What jubilation is here, when five times over the whole earth is called upon to sing *to God!* He is worthy, he is Creator, he is goodness itself. *Sing praises*, keep on with the glad work. Never let the music pause. He never ceases to be good, let us never cease to be grateful. Strange that we should need so much urging to attend to so heavenly an exercise.

Sing praises unto our King. Let him have all our praise; no one ought to have even a particle of it. Jesus shall have it all. Let his sovereignty be the fount of gladness. It is a sublime attribute, but full of bliss to the faithful. Let our homage be paid not in groans but songs. He asks not slaves to grace his throne; he is no despot; singing is fit homage for a monarch so blessed and gracious. Let all hearts that own his sceptre sing and sing on for ever, for there is everlasting reason for thanksgiving while we dwell under the shadow of such a throne.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 6. The importance of holy song. The repetition rebukes our slackness, and implies that earnestness, frequency, delight, and universality should characterise the praises offered.

PSALM 47:7

EXPOSITION

Ver. 7. *For God is the King of all the earth.* The Jews of our Saviour's time resented this truth, but had their hearts been right they would have

rejoiced in it. They would have kept their God to themselves, and not even have allowed the Gentile dogs to eat the crumbs from under his table. Alas! how selfishness turns honey into wormwood. Jehovah is not the God of the Jews only, all the nations of the earth are, through the Messiah, yet to own him Lord. Meanwhile his providential throne governs all events beneath the sky.

Sing praises with understanding. Sing a didactic Psalm. Sound doctrine praises God. Even under the economy of types and ceremonies, it is clear that the Lord had regard to the spirituality of worship, and would be praised thoughtfully, intelligently, and with deep appreciation of the reason for song. It is to be feared from the slovenly way in which some make a noise in singing, that they fancy any sound will do. On the other hand, from the great attention paid by some to the mere music, we feel sadly sure that the sense has no effect upon them. Is it not a sin to be tickling men's ears with sounds when we profess to be adoring the Lord? What has a sensuous delight in organs, anthems, etc., to do with devotion? Do not men mistake physical effects for spiritual impulses? Do they not often offer to God strains far more calculated for human amusement than for divine acceptance? An understanding enlightened of the Holy Spirit is then and then only fully capable of offering worthy praise.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 7. *For God is the King of all the earth:* as if he had said, "our King, said I? it is too little; he is King *of all the earth.*" *John Trapp.*

Ver. 7. *Sing ye praises with understanding.* How may we make melody in our hearts to God in singing of Psalms? We must sing *with understanding.* We must not be guided by the *time*, but the *words* of the Psalm; we must mind the matter more than the music, and consider what we sing, as well as how we sing; the tune may affect the fancy, but it is the matter affects the heart, and that God principally eyes. The psalmist advises us in this particular, and so doth the apostle 1 Corinthians 14:15. Otherwise this sweet duty would be more the work of a chorister than of a Christian, and we should be more delighted in an anthem of the musician's making, than in a Psalm of the Spirit's making. A. Lapele observes that in the text, 1 Corinthians 14:15, the word *understanding* is *maschil*, (*l yk sm*), profound judgment: we must sing *wisely*, if we will sing gratefully; we must relish what we sing. In a word, we must sing as we must pray; now the most

rude petitioner will *understand* what he prays. 1 Corinthians 14:15. If we do not understand what we sing, it argues carelessness of spirit, or hardness of heart; and this makes the service impertinent. Upon this the worthy Davenant cries out, "Adieu to the bellowing of the Papists, who sing in an unknown tongue." God will not understand us in that service which we understand not ourselves. One of the first pieces of the creation was *light*, and this must break out in every duty. *John Wells*(—1676), in "*Morning Exercises*."

Ver. 7. *Sing ye praises with understanding, sing an instructive song.* Let *sense* and *sound* go together. Let your *hearts* and *heads* go with your *voices*. *Understand* what you *sing*, and *feel* what you *understand*. *Adam Clarke*.

Ver. 7. *Sing ye praises with understanding;* because in the full light of the new dispensation, the darkness of the patriarchal ages, the seeing as through a glass of the Levitical law, are turned into the vision of full and very reality. *Hugo Victorinus*.

Ver. 7. *Sing ye praises with understanding.* Mark this, thou who daily readeest the Psalms, and yet does not understand them. *Simon de Muis*.

Ver. 7. *With understanding.* If they had sung *with understanding*, they had not adored stones. When a man sensible sang to a stone insensible, did he sing "*with understanding*"? But now, brethren, we see not with our eyes whom we adore, and yet correctly we adore. Much more is God commended to us, that with our eyes see him not. *Augustine*.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 7. (*last clause*). The psalmody of the instructed, and instruction by psalmody; praise should be both the fruit and the vehicle of teaching.

PSALM 47:8

EXPOSITION

Ver. 8. Now at this moment, over the most debased idolaters, God holds a secret rule; here is work for faith. How we ought to long for the day when this truth shall be changed in its aspect, and the rule now unrecognised

shall be delighted in! The great truth that *God reigneth* in providence is the guarantee that in a gracious gospel sense his promises shall be fulfilled, and his kingdom shall come.

He sitteth upon the throne of his holiness. Unmoved he occupies an undisputed throne, whose decrees, acts, and commands are holiness itself. What other throne is like this? Never was it stained with injustice, or defiled with sin. Neither is he who sits upon it dismayed, or in a dilemma. He sits in serenity, for he knows his own power, and sees that his purposes will not miscarry. Here is reason enough for holy song.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 8. (*last clause*). Divine sovereignty always connected with holiness.

Ver. 8.

1. God has a throne of holiness, for which he is to be feared by all men.
2. A throne of grace, for which he is to be loved by his redeemed.
3. A throne of glory, for which he is to be praised by his whole creation.

PSALM 47:9

EXPOSITION

Ver. 9. *The princes of the people are gathered together.* The prophetic eye of the psalmist sees the willing subjects of the great King assembled to celebrate his glory. Not only the poor and the men of low estate are there, but nobles bow their willing necks to his sway. "All kings shall bow down before him." No people shall be unrepresented; their great men shall be good men, their royal ones regenerate ones. How august will be the parliament where the Lord Jesus shall open the court, and princes shall rise up to do him honour!

Even the people of the God of Abraham. That same God, who was known only to here and there a patriarch like the father of the faithful, shall be adored by a seed as many as the stars of heaven. The covenant promise shall be fulfilled, "In thee and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." Shiloh shall come, and "to him shall the gathering of the people

be." Babel's dispersion shall be obliterated by the gathering arm of the Great Shepherd King.

For the shields of the earth belong unto God. The insignia of pomp, the emblems of rank, the weapons of war, all must pay loyal homage to the King of all. Right honourables must honour Jesus, and majesties must own him to be far more majestic. Those who are earth's protectors, the shields of the commonwealth, derive their might from him, and are his. All principalities and powers must be subject unto Jehovah and his Christ, for

He is greatly exalted. In nature, in power, in character, in glory, there is none to compare with him. Oh, glorious vision of a coming era! Make haste, ye wheels of time! Meanwhile, ye saints, "Be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 9. *The princes of the people are gathered together.* I note from hence, 1. That it is not impossible for great men to be good men; for the heads of a country to be members of Christ; and for princes as well as the people to serve the God of Abraham. It is said by the prophet, "upon my peace came great bitterness; ""a thousand fell on the left hand, but ten thousand at the right hand" Psalm 91:7: ten perish in their prosperity, for one that falleth in adversity. *Homo victus in paradiso, victum in stercore:* Adam in the garden of pleasure was overcome by the subtil serpent, whereas Job on the dunghill of misery was more than a conqueror. Woodmen say that deer are more circumspect in fat pastures; so the godly fear most in a rich estate: *nihil timendum video* (saith one), *timeo tamen.* (Seneca.) It is a sweet prayer of our church in the Litany, "Good Lord, deliver us in all time of our wealth, "insinuating that our minds are not so wanton as in abundance: yet, as you see, such is Christ's unspeakable goodness towards all sort of men, in preventing them even with the riches of his mercy, that not only the mean people, but also the mighty princes among the heathen are joined unto the church of the God of Abraham. *John Boys.*

Ver. 9. *Gathered together.* Christ's gathering of the saints together unto him will be at his second coming, his coming to judgment, the general and final judgment. "Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord

Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him." 2 Thessalonians 2:1. *James Scott* (—1773), in "*A Collection of Sermons*, "1774.

Ver. 9. *The people of the God of Abraham.* First, touching *the God of Abraham*, it is Christ, whose day Abraham desired to see, and in seeing whereof he did so much rejoice John 8:1-59; that is, not only the day of his birth, which he saw, as we learn by the oath which he caused his servant to take Genesis 24:1-67 but also the day of his passion, which he saw long ago, and rejoiced in seeing it, when he said to his son Isaac in the mount, "The Lord will provide a sacrifice." Genesis 22:8. Secondly,

The people of the God of Abraham, are his children and posterity: not only that they are the seed of Abraham, coming out of his loins, and are "*the children of the flesh*" Romans 9:9; but "*the children of the promise*"; "for if they that come out of Abraham's loins were only his children, then the Hagarins, the Turks, and Ishmaelites should be the people of God; "*But in Isaac shall thy seed be called.*" They that lay hold of the promise by faith, "They that are of the faith, are the children of Abraham" Galatians 3:7, that have the same spirit of faith that Abraham had. As the apostle saith Romans 2:28, "He is not a Jew that is one outwardly, but a Jew inwardly is the true Jew." They that worship the Messias by believing in him with the faith of Abraham, they are Abraham's children, and *the people of Abraham's God*, which thing John Baptist affirms Matthew 3:1-17, "God can of stones raise up children unto Abraham." So the Gentiles, which worshipped stones, and therefore were "*like unto them*" Psalm 115:1-18, were notwithstanding raised up to be children to Abraham. *Lancelot Andrewes*.

Ver. 9. *The shields of the earth belong unto God.* There we have the rulers of the earth set forth by a double relation; the one *upward*, they are *scuta Deo*, they belong to God; the other *downward*, they are *scuta terae*, "*the shields of the earth*"; "and both these noting two things, their *dignity* and their *duty*. They belong to God, it is their honour that he hath sealed them: they belong to God, it is their duty to be subject to him. They are *shields of the earth*, it is their honour that they are above others: they are *the shields of the earth*, it is their duty to protect others. *Edward Reynolds* (Bishop).

Ver. 9. *The shields of the earth are God's*, is understood by many as spoken of princes. I admit that this metaphor is of frequent occurrence in Scripture, nor does this sense seem to be unsuitable to the scope of the

passage...Yet the sense will be more simple if we explain the words thus: That, as it is God alone who defends and preserves the world, the high and supreme majesty which is sufficient for so exalted and difficult a work as the preservation of the world, is justly looked upon with admiration. The sacred writer expressly uses the word *shields* in the plural number, for, considering the various and almost innumerable dangers which unceasingly threaten every part of the world, the providence of God must necessarily interpose in many ways, and make use, as it were, of many bucklers. *John Calvin.*

Ver. 9. *The shields of the earth.* Magistrates are said to *bear the sword*, not to be swords; and they are said *to be shields*, not to bear shields; and all this to show that protection and preservation are more essential and intrinsic to their office than destruction and punishment are. *Joseph Caryl.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 9.

1. A shield is a *merciful* weapon, none more so.
2. A shield is a *venturous* weapon, a kind of surety, which bears the blows and receives the injuries which were intended for another.
3. A shield is a *strong* weapon, to repel the darts of wickedness and break them in pieces.
4. A shield is an honourable weapon, none more: taking away of shields was a sign of victory; preserving them a sign of glory.
5. Remember, a shield must ever *have an eye to guide it* —you the shields, the law the eye. *Bishop Reynolds.*

PSALM 48

PSALM 48:1

Title. A Song and Psalm for the Sons of Korah. A song for joyfulness and a Psalm for reverence. Alas! every song is not a Psalm, for poets are not all heaven born, and every Psalm is not a song, for in coming before God we have to utter mournful confessions as well as exulting praises. The Sons of Korah were happy in having so large a selection of song; the worship where such a variety of music was used could not become monotonous, but must have given widest scope for all the sacred passions of gracious souls.

Subject and Division. It would be idle dogmatically to attribute this song to any one event of Jewish history. Its author and date are unknown. It records the withdrawal of certain confederate kings from Jerusalem, their courage failing them before striking a blow. The mention of the ships of Tarshish may allow us to conjecture that the Psalm was written in connection with the overthrow of Ammon, Moab, and Edom in the reign of Jehoshaphat; and if the reader will turn to 2 Chronicles 20, and note especially 2 Chronicles 20:19,25,36, he will probably accept the suggestion. Psalm 48:1-3, are in honour of the Lord and the city dedicated to his worship. From Psalm 48:4-8 the song records the confusion of Zion's foes, ascribing all the praise to God; Psalm 48:9-11 extolling Zion, and avowing Jehovah to be her God for evermore.

EXPOSITION

Ver. 1. *Great is the Lord.* How great Jehovah is essentially none can conceive; but we can all see that he is great in the deliverance of his people, great in their esteem who are delivered, and great in the hearts of those enemies whom he scatters by their own fears. Instead of the mad cry of Ephesus, "Great is Diana, "we bear the reasonable, demonstrable, self evident testimony, "Great is Jehovah." There is none great in the church but the Lord. Jesus is "the *great* Shepherd, "he is "a Saviour, and a great one, "our great God and Saviour, our great High Priest; his Father has

divided him a portion with the great, and his name shall be great unto the ends of the earth.

And greatly to be praised. According to his nature should his worship be; it cannot be too constant, too laudatory, too earnest, too reverential, too sublime.

In the city of our God. He is great there, and should be greatly praised there. If all the world beside renounced Jehovah's worship, the chosen people in his favoured city should continue to adore him, for in their midst and on their behalf his glorious power has been so manifestly revealed. In the church the Lord is to be extolled though all the nations rage against him. Jerusalem was the peculiar abode of the God of Israel, the seat of the theocratic government, and the centre of prescribed worship, and even thus is the church the place of divine manifestation.

In the mountain of his holiness. Where his holy temple, his holy priests, and his holy sacrifices might continually be seen. Zion was a mount, and as it was the most renowned part of the city, it is mentioned as a synonym for the city itself. The church of God is a mount for elevation and for conspicuousness, and it should be adorned with holiness, her sons being partakers of the holiness of God. Only by holy men can the Lord be fittingly praised, and they should be incessantly occupied with his worship.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Title. *A Song and Psalm.* Wherein both voice and instrument were used; the voice began first and the instrument after: and where the inscription is a Psalm and Song, there likely the instrument began and the voice followed.
John Richardson.

Whole Psalm. According to Dr. Lightfoot, the constant and ordinary Psalm for the second day of the week was the forty-eighth.

Ver. 1. *Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God,* etc. The prophet, being about to praise a certain edifice, commences by praising the architect, and says that in the holy city the wonderful skill and wisdom of God, who built it, is truly displayed.

Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised; and so he is, whether we look at his essence, his power, his wisdom, his justice, or his mercy, for all are infinite, everlasting, and incomprehensible; and thus, so much is God

greatly to be praised, that all the angels, all men, even all his own works would not suffice thereto; but of all things revealed, there is no one thing can give us a greater idea of his greatness, or for which we should praise and thank him more, than the establishment of his church; and therefore, the prophet adds, *in the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness*; that is to say, the greatness of God, and for which he deserves so much praise, is conspicuous in the foundation and construction of his church. *Robert Bellarmine (Cardinal).*

Ver. 1. *Great is the Lord.* Greater, Job 33:12. Greatest of all, Psalm 95:3. Greatness itself, Psalm 145:3. A degree he is above the superlative. *John Trapp.*

Ver. 1. *Mountain of his holiness.* The religion in it holy, the people in it a holy people. *William Nicholson.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

All the suggestions under this Psalm except those otherwise designated, are by our beloved friend, Rev. George Rogers, Tutor of the Pastor's College.

Ver. 1.

1. What the church is to God.

- 1.** His "*city*:" not a lawless rabble, but a well organised community.
- 2.** A mountain of holiness, for the display of justifying righteousness, of sanctifying grace.

2. What God is to the church.

- 1.** Its inhabitant. It is *his* city, his mountain. There he is great. There was no room for the whole of God in Paradise, there is no room for him in his law, no room for him in the heaven of angels: in the church only is there room for all his perfections, for a triune Jehovah. Great everywhere, he is peculiarly great here.
- 2.** The object of its praises. As he is greatest here, so are his praises, and through the universe on this account.

PSALM 48:2

EXPOSITION

Ver. 2. *Beautiful for situation.* Jerusalem was so naturally, she was styled the Queen of the East; the church is so spiritually, being placed near God's heart, within the mountain of his power, upon the hills of his faithfulness, in the centre of providential operations. The elevation of the church is her beauty. The more she is above the world the fairer she is.

The joy of the whole earth is Mount Zion. Jerusalem was the world's star; whatever light lingered on earth was borrowed from the oracles preserved by Israel. An ardent Israelite would esteem the holy city as the eye of the nations, the most precious pearl of all lands. Certainly the church of God, though despised of men, is the true joy and hope of the world.

On the sides of the north, the city of the great King. Either meaning that Jerusalem was in the northern extremity of Judah, or it may denote that part of the city that lay to the north of Mount Zion. It was the glory of Jerusalem to be God's city, the place of his regal dwelling, and it is the joy of the church that God is in her midst. The great God is the great King of the church, and for her sake he rules all the nations. The people among whom the Lord deigns to dwell are privileged above all others; the lines have fallen unto them in pleasant places, and they have a goodly heritage. We who dwell in Great Britain in the sides of the north, have this for our chief glory, that the Lord is known in our land, and the abode of his love is among us.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 2. *Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King.* What is there, or was there, about Zion to justify the high eulogium of David? The situation is indeed eminently adapted to be the platform of a magnificent citadel. Rising high above the deep valley of Gihon and Hinnom, on the west and south, and the scarcely less deep one of the Cheesemongers on the east, it could only be assailed from the northwest; and then *on the sides of the north* it was magnificently beautiful, and fortified by walls, towers, and bulwarks, the wonder and terror of the nations: "*For the kings were*

assembled, they passed by together. They saw it, and so they marvelled; they were troubled, and hasted away." At the thought of it the royal psalmist again bursts forth in triumph: "*Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generation following.*" Alas! her towers have long since fallen to the ground, her bulwarks have been overthrown, her palaces have crumbled to dust, and we who now walk about Zion can tell no other story than this to the generation following. There is another Zion, however, whose towers are still more glorious, and shall never be overthrown. "*God is known in her palaces for a refuge.*" And "*this God is our God for ever and ever.*" How often is this name synonymous with the church of the living God! and no other spot but one can divide with it the affection of his people—no other name but one can awaken such joyful hopes in the Christian's heart. The temporal Zion is now in the dust, but the true Zion is rising and shaking herself from it, and putting on her beautiful garments to welcome her King when he comes to reign over the whole earth. *W. M. Thompson, D.D.*

Ver. 2. When I stood that morning on the brow of Olivet, and looked down on the city, crowning those battlemented heights, encircled by those deep and dark ravines, I involuntarily exclaimed, *Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King.* And as I gazed, the red rays of the rising sun shed a halo round the top of the castle of David; then they tipped with gold each tapering minaret, and gilded each dome of mosque and church, and at length, bathed in one flood of ruddy light the terraced roofs of the city, and the grass and foliage, the cupolas, pavements, and colossal walls of the Haram. No human being could be disappointed who first saw Jerusalem from Olivet. *J. L. Porter.*

Ver. 2. (*first clause*). *Beautiful in climate*, that is, Mount Zion is situated in a fair and lovely climate. This is the view taken by Montanus and Ainsworth. Bate and Parkhurst read, "*Beautiful in extension, i.e., in the prospect which it extends to the eye.*" *Editorial Note to Calvin in loc.*

Ver. 2. *Beautiful for situation.* This earth is, by sin, covered with deformity, and therefore justly might that spot of ground, which was thus beautified with holiness, be called *the joy of the whole earth*, i.e., what the whole earth had reason to rejoice in, because God would thus in very deed dwell with man upon the earth. *Matthew Henry.*

Ver. 2. *Beautiful for situation.*

—*Fair Jerusalem*

*The holy city, lifted high her towers,
And higher yet the glorious temple reared
Her pile, far off appearing like a mount
Of alabaster, topped with golden spires.*

John Milton in "Paradise Regained."

Ver. 2. *On the sides of the north.* Jerusalem, that is the upper and best part of it, was built on the north side of Mount Zion. *Hadrian Reland*, 1676-1718.

Ver. 2. Jerusalem lay to the north of Sion, and this circumstance is mentioned as a proof of Mount Zion's greatest security, for it was almost inaccessible on any other side except the north, and there is was defended by Jerusalem, which was very strong. *Samuel Burder*.

Ver. 2. *The great King.* God is named the *great King* in opposition to the kings in Psalm 48:4. *E. W. Hengstenberg*.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 2.

1. *Was the ancient Zion beautiful for situation?* So is the New Testament church founded upon a rock, upon eternal purpose and grace.
2. *Was it the joy of the whole earth?* So the New Testament church will become.
3. *Was it the special joy of the tribes of Israel* that were almost entirely to the north of Jerusalem? So the church is to the saints.
4. *Was it a royal as well as a holy city?* So is the church. "Yet I have set, "etc.

PSALM 48:3

EXPOSITION

Ver. 3. *God is known in her palaces for a refuge.* We worship no unknown God. We know him as our refuge in distress, we delight in him as such, and run to him in every time of need. We know nothing else as our refuge. Though we are made kings, and our houses are palaces, yet we have no confidence in ourselves, but trust in the Lord Protector, whose well known power is our bulwark.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 3.

1. God is a refuge in his church. The church is a city of refuge, but the refuge is not in its church, but its God.

1. For sinners from wrath.

2. For saints from trials and fears.

2. God is there known as such, known to thousands, not known as such elsewhere. "They that know thy name, "etc.

PSALM 48:4

EXPOSITION

Ver. 4. *The kings were assembled, they passed by together.* They came and they went. No sooner together than scattered. They came one way and fled twenty ways. Boastful the gathering hosts with their royal leaders, despairing the fugitive bands with their astonished captains. They came like foam on the angry sea, like foam they melted away. This was so remarkable that the psalmist puts in a note of exclamation, *Lo!* What! have they so suddenly fled! Even thus shall the haters of the church vanish from the field. Papists, Ritualists, Arians, Sceptics, they shall each have their day, and shall pass on to the limbo of forgetfulness.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 4. They were many and powerful: kings and a plurality of them. They were confederate kings.

The kings were assembled. Forces united are the more powerful. But all the endeavours of these confederate kings came to nothing. *They passed by together* — together they came, and together they vanished. *William Nicholson.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 4-7.

1. The opposition of worldly powers to the church. "The kings, "etc.
2. The manner in which they are subdued—by their own fears; conscience has persecuted those who have persecuted the church of God. They who have seized the ark of God have been glad to return it with an offering.
3. The completeness of their overthrow, As a fleet of ships of Tarshish, dispersed, broken, and engulfed by the east wind.

PSALM 48:5

EXPOSITION

Ver. 5. *They saw it, and so they marvelled.* They came, they saw, but they did not conquer. There was no *veni, vidi, vici* for them. No sooner did they perceive that the Lord was in the Holy City, than they took to their heels. Before the Lord came to blows with them, they were faint hearted, and beat a retreat.

They were troubled and hasted away. The troublers were troubled. Their haste in coming was nothing to their hurry in going. Panic seized them, horses were not fleet enough; they would have borrowed the wings of the wind. They fled ignominiously, like children in a fright. Glory be to God, it shall be even thus with the foes of his church; when the Lord cometh to our help, our enemies shall be as nothing. Could they foresee their ignominious defeat, they would not advance to the attack.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 5-6. The potentates of the world saw the miracles of the apostles, the courage and constancy of the martyrs, and the daily increase of the church, notwithstanding all their persecutions; they beheld with astonishment the rapid progress of the faith through the Roman empire; they called upon their gods, but their gods could not help themselves; idolatry expired at the foot of the victorious cross. *George Horne.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 4-7.

1. The opposition of worldly powers to the church. "The kings, "etc.
2. The manner in which they are subdued—by their own fears; conscience has persecuted those who have persecuted the church of God. They who have seized the ark of God have been glad to return it with an offering.
3. The completeness of their overthrow, As a fleet of ships of Tarshish, dispersed, broken, and engulfed by the east wind.

PSALM 48:6

EXPOSITION

Ver. 6. *Fear took hold upon them there.* They were in Giant Despair's grip. Where they hoped to triumph, there they quivered with dismay. They did not take the city, but fear took hold on them.

And pain, as of a woman in travail. They were as much overcome as a woman whose fright causes premature delivery; or, as full of pain as a poor mother in her pangs—a strong expression, commonly employed by Orientals to set forth the extremity of anguish. When the Lord arises for the help of his church, the proudest of his foes shall be as trembling women, and their dismay shall be but the beginning of eternal defeat.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 6. *Fear took hold upon them there, and pain, as of a woman in travail.* Nothing is more unaccountable than panic. No man, no body of men can adequately guard against such terror. He who made the ears can easily make them to tingle. He who holds the winds in his fist, can easily make them whisper alarm, or roar dismay. This is specially to be expected when men so act as to have their own conscience against them. Job 15:21. But God can at any time so forsake men as that they shall be unmanned, and play the fool exceedingly. Leviticus 26:36. Men have fought bravely several battles, and then played the coward. *William S. Plumer.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 4-7.

1. The opposition of worldly powers to the church. "The kings, "etc.
2. The manner in which they are subdued—by their own fears; conscience has persecuted those who have persecuted the church of God. They who have seized the ark of God have been glad to return it with an offering.
3. The completeness of their overthrow, As a fleet of ships of Tarshish, dispersed, broken, and engulfed by the east wind.

PSALM 48:7

EXPOSITION

Ver. 7. *Thou breakest the ships of Tarshish with an east wind.* As easily as vessels are driven to shipwreck, dost thou overturn the most powerful adversaries; or it may mean the strength of some nations lies in their ships, whose wooden walls are soon broken; but our strength is in our God, and therefore, it fails not; or there may be another meaning, though thou art our defence, yet thou takest vengeance on our inventions, and while thou dost preserve us, yet our ships, our comforts, our earthly ambitions, are taken from us that we may look alone to thee. God is seen at sea, but he is equally present on land. Speculative heresies, pretending to bring us wealth from afar, are constantly assailing the church, but the breath of the Lord soon drives them to destruction. The church too often relies on the wisdom

of men, and these human helps are soon shipwrecked; yet the church itself is safe beneath the care of her God and King.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 7. *Thou breakest the ships of Tarshish with an east wind.* It is only by her Lord that the church gained "the true riches; "when she enters into traffick with the world, she takes the means of the world for her resources; and when she trusts in her wealth, in her political power, in earthly cunning, to make merchandise, the instruments she adopts come to nothing in her hands, and leave her helpless and poor. *From "A Plain Commentary on the Book of Psalms (The Prayer Book Version), chiefly founded on the Fathers, "1859.*

Ver. 7. *With an east wind,* which, in Judea, is a very violent and destructive wind. Kennicot renders the verse thus,

As the east wind dasheth in pieces the ships of Tarshish; founding his conjecture upon the similarity in form of two Hebrew letters, signifying the one *in*, and the other *as*. *Daniel Cresswell.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 4-7.

1. The opposition of worldly powers to the church. "The kings, "etc.
2. The manner in which they are subdued—by their own fears; conscience has persecuted those who have persecuted the church of God. They who have seized the ark of God have been glad to return it with an offering.
3. The completeness of their overthrow, As a fleet of ships of Tarshish, dispersed, broken, and engulfed by the east wind.

PSALM 48:8

EXPOSITION

Ver. 8. *As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the Lord of hosts, in the city of our God.* Our father's stories are reproduced before our very eyes. We heard the promise, and we have seen the fulfilment. The records

of Zion, wonderful as they are, are proved to be truthful, because present facts are in perfect harmony therewith. Note how the Lord is first spoken of as *Lord of hosts*, a name of power and sovereignty, and then as *our God*, a name of covenant relation and condescension. No wonder that since the Lord bears both titles, we find him dealing with us after the precedents of his lovingkindness, and the faithfulness of his promises.

God will establish it for ever. The true church can never be disestablished. That which kings establish can last for time only, that which God establishes endures to all eternity. *Selah.* Here is a fit place to pause, viewing the past with admiration, and the future with confidence.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 8.

1. God has ever been to his people what he now is; the same *heard* as *seen*.
2. He is now what he ever has been: the same *seen* as *heard*.
3. He will ever be what he now is. "Will establish it for ever."

PSALM 48:9

EXPOSITION

Ver. 9. *We have thought.* Holy men are thoughtful men; they do not suffer God's wonders to pass before their eyes and melt into forgetfulness, but they meditate deeply upon them.

Of thy lovingkindness, O God. What a delightful subject! Devout minds never tire of so divine a theme. It is well to think of past lovingkindness in times of trial, and equally profitable to remember it in seasons of prosperity. Grateful memories sweeten sorrows and sober joys.

In the midst of thy temple. Fit place for so devout a meditation. Where God is most seen he is best loved. The assembled saints constitute a living temple, and our deepest musings when so gathered together should have regard to the lovingkindness of the Lord, exhibited in the varied experiences of each of the living stones. Memories of mercy should be associated with continuance of praise. Hard by the table of show bread

commemorating his bounty, should stand the altar of incense denoting our praise.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 9. *We have thought.* The Hebrew (μWD) and (μsD) and (hsD) belong all to the same signification, of *quiet, rest, silence, patient expecting, thinking, considering*, and must be determined to any of these senses by the context. And here that of *expecting* or *patient waiting*, with *affiance* in him, and without all *distrust* or *repining* at his *delays*, seems to be most proper for it. For coming to the sanctuary to pray for mercy, it is most agreeable to say *we wait for it there*, as in the place where he hath promised to afford it, in return to *prayers*. *Henry Hammond.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 9.

1. What are the lovingkindnesses of God? Pity to the wretched, pardon to the penitent, help to the prayerful, comfort to the afflicted, etc.
2. Where are they to be found? "In the midst of," etc.
 1. Here they are revealed.
 2. Here they are dispensed.
 3. Here they are sought.
 4. Here they are enjoyed.

PSALM 48:10

EXPOSITION

Ver. 10. *According to thy name, O God, so is thy praise unto the ends of the earth.* Great fame is due to his great name. The glory of Jehovah's exploits overleaps the boundaries of earth; angels behold with wonder, and from every star delighted intelligences proclaim his fame beyond the ends of the earth. What if men are silent, yet the woods, and seas, and mountains, with all their countless tribes, and all the unseen spirits that walk them, are full of the divine praise. As in a shell we listen to the

murmurs of the sea, so in the convolutions of creation we hear the praises of God.

Thy right hand is full of righteousness. Thy sceptre and thy sword, thy government and thy vengeance, are altogether just. Thy hand is never empty, but full of energy, of bounty, and of equity. Neither saint nor sinner shall find the Lord to be an empty handed God; he will in both cases deal out righteousness to the full: to the one, through Jesus, he will be just to forgive, to the other just to condemn.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 10. As the name of God, so his praises are—

1. Supreme.
2. Unqualified.
3. Universal.
4. Everlasting.

Ver. 10. *Thy right hand*, etc.

1. The justice of omnipotence.
2. Omnipotence controlled by justice.
3. The omnipotence of justice.

PSALM 48:11

EXPOSITION

Ver. 11. *Let mount Zion rejoice.* As the first of the cities of Judah, and the main object of the enemies' attack, let her lead the song.

Let the daughters of Judah be glad, let the smaller towns join the chorus, for they join in the common victory. Let the women, who fare worst in the havoc of war, be among the gladdest of the glad, now that the spoilers have fled. All the church, and each individual member, should rejoice in the Lord, and magnify his name.

Because of thy judgments. The righteous acts of the Lord are legitimate subjects for joyful praise. However it may appear on earth, yet in heaven

the eternal ruin of the wicked will be the theme of adoring song. Revelation 19:1,3: "Alleluia; salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God. For true and righteous are his judgments; for he hath judged the great whore which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. And again they said, Alleluia, and her smoke rose up for ever and ever." Justice which to our poor optics now seems severe, will then be perceived to be perfectly consistent with God's name of love, and to be one of the brightest jewels of his crown.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 11.

1. The subjects of his peoples' joy. Not mercies merely, but judgments
2. Reasons:
 1. Because they are holy—needful to the purity of moral government
 2. Just—needful to vindicate law.
 3. Good—needful for the greatest amount of good.

PSALM 48:12

EXPOSITION

Ver. 12. *Walk about Zion;* often beat her bounds, even as Israel marched around Jericho. With leisurely and careful inspection survey her.

And go round about her. Encircle her again and again with loving perambulations. We cannot too frequently or too deeply consider the origin, privileges, history, security, and glory of the church. Some subjects deserve but a passing thought; this is worthy of the most patient consideration. *Tell the towers thereof.* See if any of them have crumbled, or have been demolished. Is the church of God what she was in doctrine, in strength and in beauty? Her foes counted her towers in envy first, and then in terror, let us count them with sacred exultation. The city of Lucerne, encircled by its ancient walls, adorned with a succession of towers, is a visible illustration of this figure; and as we have gone around it, and paused

at each picturesque tower, we have realised the loving lingering inspection which the metaphor implies.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 12-13. In a spiritual sense *the towers* and *bulwarks* of Sion are those doctrines of the true faith, which are the strength and glory of the church, which are to be maintained in their soundness and stability against the assaults of heretical teachers, so that they may be transmitted unimpaired to following generations. *Origen and Theodoret, quoted by Wordsworth.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 12.

1. What is to be understood by the preservation and protection of the church?
2. What is meant by searching into, and considering of, these causes and means of the church's preservation?
3. What are those causes and means of the church's preservation, those towers and bulwarks which will not fail?
4. What reason is there why we should thus search into and consider these causes of the church's preservation and protection?
5. What is the testimony which we have to give concerning this matter to the ensuing generation? *John Owen's Sermon.*

PSALM 48:13

EXPOSITION

Ver. 13. *Mark ye well her bulwarks.* Consider most attentively how strong are her ramparts, how safely her inhabitants are entrenched behind successive lines of defence. The security of the people of God is not a doctrine to be kept in the background, it may be safely taught, and frequently pondered; only to base hearts will that glorious truth prove harmful; the sons of perdition make a stumbling stone even of the Lord Jesus himself, it is little wonder that they pervert the truth of God

concerning the final perseverance of the saints. We are not to turn away from inspecting Zion's ramparts, because idlers skulk behind them.

Consider her palaces. Examine with care the fair dwellings of the city. Let the royal promises which afford quiet resting places for believers be attentively inspected. See how sound are the defences, and how fair are the pleasaunces of "that ancient citie, "of which you are citizens. A man should be best acquainted with his own home; and the church is our dear and blest abode. Would to God professors were more considerate of the condition of the church; so far from telling the towers, some of them scarcely know what or where they are; they are too busy counting their money, and considering their ledgers. Freehold and copyhold, and leasehold, men measure to an inch, but heaven hold and grace hold are too often taken at peradventure, and neglected in sheer heedlessness.

That ye may tell it to the generation following. An excellent reason for studious observation. We have received and we must transmit. We must be students that we may be teachers. The debt we owe to the past we must endeavour to repay by handing down the truth to the future.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 12-13. *See Psalms on "Psalm 48:13"* for further information.

Ver. 13. *Mark ye well her bulwarks.* Margin as in the Hebrew, "Set your heart to her bulwarks." That is, pay close attention to them; make the investigation with care, not as one does whose heart is not in the thing, and who does it negligently. The word rendered *bulwarks*, (**l yx**), *khail* — means properly, a host or army, and then a fortification or entrenchment, especially the *ditch* or *trench*, with the low wall or breastwork which surrounds it. 2 Samuel 20:15 Isaiah 26:1. (*Gesenius, Lex.*) — *Albert Barnes.*

Ver. 13. *Mark ye well:* set your heart, mind earnestly, set your affections on. *Henry Ainsworth.*

Ver. 13. *Her bulwarks.*

1. The designation and constitution of Jesus Christ to be King of the church, King of Zion, is the great bulwark of Zion.

2. The second bulwark of Zion is the promises of God, which are innumerable.
3. The watchful providence of God over the church.
4. Another bulwark is God's special presence. God is in a special manner present in his church.
5. The last bulwark unto which all others may be reduced, is the covenant of God: "For this God is our God." *John Owen*.

PSALM 48:14

EXPOSITION

Ver. 14. *For this God is our God for ever and ever.* A good reason for preserving a record of all that he has wrought. Israel will not change her God so as to wish to forget, nor will the Lord change so as to make the past mere history. He will be the covenant God of his people world without end. There is no other God, we wish for no other, we would have no other even if there were. There are some who are so ready to comfort the wicked, that for the sake of ending their punishment they weaken the force of language, and make *for ever and ever* mean but a time; nevertheless, despite their interpretations we exult in the hope of an eternity of bliss, and to us "everlasting," and "for ever and ever" mean what they say.

He will be our guide even unto death. Throughout life, and to our dying couch, he will graciously conduct us, and even after death he will lead us to the living fountains of waters. We look to him for resurrection and eternal life. This consolation is clearly derivable from what has gone before; hitherto our foes have been scattered, and our bulwarks have defied attack, for God has been in our midst, therefore all possible assaults in the future shall be equally futile.

*"The church has all her foes defied
And laughed to scorn their rage;
Even thus for aye she shall abide
Secure from age to age."*

Farewell, fear. Come hither, gratitude and faith, and sing right joyously.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 14. *This God is our God for ever and ever.* What a portion then is that of the believer! The landlord cannot say of his fields, these are mine for ever and ever. The king cannot say of his crown, this is mine for ever and ever. These possessions shall soon change masters; these possessors shall soon mingle with the dust, and even the graves they shall occupy may not long be theirs; but it is the singular, the supreme happiness of every Christian to say, or have a right to say, "This glorious God with all his divine perfections is my God, for ever and ever, and even death itself shall not separate me from his love." *George Burder.*

Ver. 14. *This God is our God.* The people of God are sometime represented as so taken with this apprehension of their peculiar relation to God, that they cannot be content to know, but they proclaim it; nor was it enough the present age should know, but they must have it told the following generation: "Let Mount Zion rejoice, " etc. Mark, "That ye may tell the generation following,

"For this is our God. See their ostentation of him! This God; *q.d.*, Behold what a God have we! view him well, and take notice how glorious a God he is. And as they glory in the greatness of the God to whom they were related, so they do in the eternity of the relation. "This God is our God *for ever and ever.*" *John Howe.*

Ver. 14. God is not only a satisfying portion, filling every crevice of thy soul with the light of joy and comfort; and a sanctifying portion, elevating thy soul to its primitive and original perfection; and a universal portion; not health, or wealth, or friends, or honours, or liberty, or life, or house, or wife, or child, or pardon, or peace, or grace, or glory, or earth, or heaven, but all these, and infinitely more, but also he is an eternal portion. This God would be thy God *for ever and ever.* Oh, sweet word *ever!* thou art the crown of the saints' crown, and the glory of their glory. Their portion is so full that they desire no more; they enjoy variety and plenty of delights above what they are able to ask or think, and want nothing but to have it fixed. May they but possess it in peace without interruption or cessation, they will trample all kingdoms of the earth as dirt under their feet; and lo! thou art the welcome dove to bring this olive branch in thy mouth.

This God is our God for ever and ever. All the arithmetical figures of days, and months, and years, and ages, are nothing to this infinite cipher *ever*,

which, though it stand for nothing in the vulgar account, yet contains all our millions; yea, our millions and millions of millions are less than drops in this ocean *ever*. *George Swinnock*.

Ver. 14. Some expositors have strangely found a difficulty in the last verse, deeming such a profession of personal faith as inappropriate termination for a national song. Even Dr. Delitzsch, a wise and devout interpreter, shares in this notion; going, indeed, so far as to throw out the surmise, that some word must have been lost from the Hebrew text. To me it seems that the verse, as it stands, is admirably in harmony with the song, and is its crowning beauty. When the Lord does great things for church or nation, he means that all the faithful, however humble their station, should take courage from it, should repose in him fresh confidence, and cling to him with a firmer hope, and say, *This God shall be our God for ever; he will guide us even unto death*. *William Binnie*.

Ver. 14. *Unto death*, or as some explain it, *at death*, i.e., he will save us from it; others, *over death*, beyond it. But the most obvious explanation, and the one most agreeable to usage, is that which makes the phrase mean even to the end of life, or as long as we live. The idea of a future state, though not expressed, is not excluded. *J. A. Alexander*.

Ver. 14. (*last clause*). The last clause is much misunderstood. It is not, "Our guide *unto death*," for the words are, (𐤔𐤍𐤁𐤀 [𐤀𐤋𐤁𐤁𐤂𐤅𐤁]), "shall lead us *over death*." Surely it means, "It is he who leads *over death to resurrection*"—over Jordan to Canaan. The (Heb.) is used in Leviticus 15:25, for "*beyond*," "in regard to time, and is not this the sense here? "*Beyond the time of death*"? Till death is to us over? Till we have *stood upon the grace of death*? Yes; he it is who leads us on to this last victory; he swallows up death in victory, and leads us to *trample on death*. And so viewed, we easily discern the beautiful link of thought that joins this Psalm to that which follows. Such is the celebration of *The Mighty One become the glory of Jerusalem*. *Andrew A. Bonar*.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 14. (*first clause*). This is the language of a *proprietary* in God:

1. Of an *assured* proprietary—"This God is *our* God."
2. Of a *permanent* proprietary—*for ever and ever*.

3. Of an *exulting* proprietary. *W. Jay*.

Ver. 14.

1. The language of discrimination. *This* God. *This* God in Christ, in the church.
2. The language of Faith—*our* God.
3. Of Hope—*For ever and ever*.
4. Of Resignation—*He will be our guide*, etc.

PSALM 49

PSALM 49:1

Title. To the Chief Musician, a Psalm for the sons of Korah. This is precisely the same as on former occasions, and no remark is needed.

Division. The poet musician sings, to the accompaniment of his harp, the despicable character of those who trust in their wealth, and so he consoles the oppressed believer. The first four verses are a preface; from Psalm 49:5-12 all fear of great oppressors is removed by the remembrance of their end and their folly; Psalm 49:13 contains an expression of wonder at the perpetuity of folly; Psalm 49:14-15 contrast the ungodly and the righteous in their future; and from Psalm 49:16-20 the lesson from the whole is given in an admonitory form. Note the chorus in Psalm 49:2,20, and also the two Selahs.

EXPOSITION

Ver. 1-4. In these four verses the poet prophet calls universal humanity to listen to his didactic hymn.

Ver. 1. *Hear this, all ye people.* All men are concerned in the subject, it is *of* them, and therefore *to* them that the psalmist would speak. It is not a topic which men delight to consider, and therefore he who would instruct them must press them to give ear. Where, as in this case, the theme claims to be wisdom and understanding, attention is very properly demanded; and when the style combines the sententiousness of the proverb with the sweetness of poesy, interest is readily excited.

Give ear, all ye inhabitants of the world. "He that hath ears to hear let him hear." Men dwelling in all climes are equally concerned in the subject, for the laws of providence are the same in all lands. It is wise for each one to feel I am a man, and therefore everything which concerns mortals has a personal interest to me. We must all appear before the judgment seat, and therefore we all should give earnest heed to holy admonition which may help us to prepare for that dread event. He who refuses to receive

instruction by the ear, will not be able to escape receiving destruction by it when the Judge shall say, "Depart, ye cursed."

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Whole Psalm. Strange it is that two Psalms so near together, as this and the forty-fifth should, and should alone imitate, or be the forerunners of, two works of David's son; this—Ecclesiastes, the former—the Canticles. *J. M. Neale.*

PSALM 49:2

EXPOSITION

Ver. 2. *Both low and high, rich and poor, together.* Sons of great men, and children of mean men, men of large estate, and ye who pine in poverty, ye are all bidden to hear the inspired minstrel as he touches his harp to a mournful but instructive lay. The low will be encouraged, the high will be warned, the rich will be sobered, the poor consoled, there will be a useful lesson for each if they are willing to learn it. Our preaching ought to have a voice for all classes, and all should have an ear for it. To suit our word to the rich alone is wicked sycophancy, and to aim only at pleasing the poor is to act the part of a demagogue. Truth may be so spoken as to command the ear of all, and wise men seek to learn that acceptable style. Rich and poor must soon meet together in the grave, they may well be content to meet together now. In the congregation of the dead all differences of rank will be obliterated, they ought not now to be obstructions to united instructions.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 2. In this Psalm David, as it were, summons and divides mankind. In the first verse he summons: "*Hear this, all ye people; give ear, all ye inhabitants of the world.*" In the second verse he divides:

Both low and high, rich and poor, together. The word in the Hebrew for *high* is (vyaiynB), *bene ish, sons of Ish*, and the word for *low* is (µda; ynB) *bene Adam, sons of Adam*. If we should translate the text directly, according to the letter, the words must run, *sons of men and sons of men;*

for, sons of *Adam* and sons of *Ish* are both translated *sons of men*. Yet when they are set together in a way of opposition, the one signifieth *low* and the other *high*; and so our translators render it according to the sense, not sons of men and sons of men, but *low* and *high*. Junius translates to this sense, though in more words, as well they who are born of mean men, as they who are born of the honourable. *Joseph Caryl*.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 2.

1. The common needs of rich and poor men.
2. The common privileges of rich and poor saints.
3. Their common service.
4. Their common heaven.

PSALM 49:3

EXPOSITION

Ver. 3. *My mouth shall speak of wisdom.* Inspired and therefore lifted beyond himself, the prophet is not praising his own attainments, but extolling the divine Spirit which spoke in him. He knew that the Spirit of truth and wisdom spoke through him. He who is not sure that his matter is good has no right to ask a hearing.

And the meditation of my heart shall be of understanding. The same Spirit who made the ancient seers eloquent, also made them thoughtful. The help of the Holy Ghost was never meant to supersede the use of our own mental powers. The Holy Spirit does not make us speak as Balaam's ass, which merely uttered sounds, but never meditated; but he first leads us to consider and reflect, and then he gives us the tongue of fire to speak with power.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 3. The deep things of God are intended,

1. To exercise our minds to understand them.

2. To try our faith by believing them—"incline" implies a submissive mind.
3. To excite our joy as we grasp them—"upon the harp."
4. To employ our faculties in explaining them to others.

PSALM 49:4

EXPOSITION

Ver. 4. *I will incline mine ear to a parable.* He who would have others hear, begins by hearing himself. As the minstrel leans his ear to his harp, so must the preacher give his whole soul to his ministry. The truth came to the psalmist as a parable, and he endeavoured to unriddle it for popular use; he would not leave the truth in obscurity, but he listened to its voice till he so well understood it as to be able to interpret and translate it into the common language of the multitude. Still of necessity it would remain a problem, and a dark saying to the unenlightened many, but this would not be the songster's fault, for, saith he,

I will open my dark saying upon the harp. The writer was no mystic, delighting in deep and cloudy things, yet he was not afraid of the most profound topics; he tried to open the treasures of darkness, and to uplift pearls from the deep. To win attention he cast his proverbial philosophy into the form of song, and tuned his harp to the solemn tone of his subject. Let us gather round the minstrel of the King of kings, and hear the Psalm which first was led by the chief musician, as the chorus of the sons of Korah lifted up their voices in the temple.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 4. *I will incline mine ear to a parable*, i.e., I will diligently attend, that I may not sing anything ungracefully; a metaphor taken from musicians who bring their ear close to the harp, that they may ascertain the harmony of the sound. *Victorinus Bythner.*

PSALM 49:5

EXPOSITION

Ver. 5. *Wherefore should I fear in the days of evil, when the iniquity of my heels shall compass me about?* The man of God looks calmly forward to dark times when those evils which have dogged his heels shall gain a temporary advantage over him. Iniquitous men, here called in the abstract *iniquity*, lie in wait for the righteous, as serpents that aim at the heels of travellers: the iniquity of our heels is that evil which aims to trip us up or impede us. It was an old prophecy that the serpent should wound the heel of the woman's seed, and the enemy of our souls is diligent to fulfil that premonition. In some dreary part of our road it may be that evil will wax stronger and bolder, and gaining upon us will openly assail us; those who followed at our heels like a pack of wolves, may perhaps overtake us, and compass us about. What then? Shall we yield to cowardice? Shall we be a prey to their teeth? God forbid. Nay, we will not even fear, for what are these foes? What indeed, but mortal men who shall perish and pass away? There can be no real ground of alarm to the faithful. Their enemies are too insignificant to be worthy of one thrill of fear. Doth not the Lord say to us, "I, even I, am he that comforteth thee; who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass?"

Scholars have given other renderings of this verse, but we prefer to keep to the authorised version when we can, and in this case we find in it precisely the same meaning which those would give to it who translate *my heels*, by the words "*my supplanters*."

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 5. *Wherefore should I fear in the days of evil, when the iniquity of my heels shall compass me about?* Those that are full of years are approaching the nearer to their happiness. They have finished their voyage, and now are in sight of the haven. Nature's provision is spent, her stock is exhausted, and now the good man doth not so much descend as fall into the grave, and from thence he rises to heaven and eternal bliss. And shall he be disturbed at this? shall he be afraid to be made happy? If I mistake not, this is the meaning of the psalmist's words. They are generally interpreted

concerning *his ways* in general, but they seem to me to refer particularly to the calamity which his old age was incident to: for *the days of evil* are old age, and are so called by the wise man Ecclesiastes 12:1; and as the *heel* is the extreme part of the body, so it is here applied to the last part of man's life, his declining age; and *iniquity* (as the word is sometimes used among the Hebrews) signifies here penal evil, and denotes the infirmities and decays of the concluding part of a man's life. So that the true meaning of the psalmist's words is this—I will not now in my last days be dejected with fear and trouble of mind, for I am coming towards my happiness, my declining years shall deliver me up to death, and that shall consign me to everlasting life. This certainly is matter of joy rather than of fear. For this reason I account my last days to be the most eligible part of my whole life. *John Edwards, D.D. (1637-1716), in "The Theologia Reformata."*

Ver. 5. *Wherefore should I fear in the days of evil, when the iniquity of my heels shall compass me about?* That is, when my sins or failings in what I have done, come to my remembrance, or are chastened upon me. Every man's heels hath some iniquity: as we shall have some dirt cleaving to our heels while we walk in a dirty world, so there is some dirt, some defilement, upon all our actions, which we may call, *the iniquity of our heel.* *Joseph Caryl.*

Ver. 5. *When the iniquity of my heels shall compass me about?* With Bishop Lowth, the celebrated Michaelis, Bishop Hare, and a host of other critics, I decidedly incline to the idea, that (ybqē), rendered "my heels" is to be regarded as the present participle of the verb (bqē), *to supplant, to act deceitfully, to deceive, to hold one by the heel*, etc., etc. If this be correct, then the proper translation will be: —

*Wherefore should I fear in the days of adversity,
The iniquity of my supplanters who surround me?*

The Syriac and Arabic read, as does also Dr. Kennicott: —

*Why should I fear in the evil day,
When the iniquity of my enemies compasses me about?*

John Morison.

Ver. 5-9.

*Why should I fear the evil hour,
When ruthless foes in ambush lie,
Who revel in their pride of power,
And on their hoarded wealth rely?*

*A brother's ransom who can pay,
Or alter God's eternal doom?
What hand can wrest from death his prey,
Its banquet from the rotten tomb?*

From "The Psalter, or Psalms of David, in English verse. By a member of the University of Cambridge." (Benjamin Hall Kennedy, D.D.) 1860.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER**Ver. 5.**

1. The effects of our sin remain.
 1. In ourselves.
 2. In others.
2. In a time of conviction they *compass us about*: better to do so in this life, than to haunt us as ghosts for ever.
3. When they are pardoned we have nothing to fear. *G.R.*

PSALM 49:6**EXPOSITION**

Ver. 6. What if the good man's foes be among the great ones of the earth! yet he need not fear them.

They that trust in their wealth. Poor fools, to be content with such a rotten confidence. When we set our rock in contrast with theirs, it would be folly to be afraid of them. Even though they are loud in their brags, we can afford to smile. What if they glory *and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches?* yet while we glory in our God we are not dismayed by their proud threatenings. Great strength, position, and estate, make wicked men very lofty in their own esteem, and tyrannical towards others; but the heir

of heaven is not overawed by their dignity, nor cowed by their haughtiness. He sees the small value of riches, and the helplessness of their owners in the hour of death, and therefore he is not so mean as to be afraid of an ephemera, a moth, a bubble.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

From "The Psalter, or Psalms of David, in English verse. By a Member of the University of Cambridge." (Benjamin Hall Kennedy, D.D.) 1860.

Ver. 6. *They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches.* Here we have the rich man trusting and boasting; surely this is a very confident trusting which issues itself into boasting! That man is ascended to the highest step of faith in God, who makes his boast of God; such faith have they in fine gold who boast in it. *Joseph Caryl.*

Ver. 6. *They that trust in their wealth.* "THE COVETOUS MAN'S SOLILOQUY." Believe me, the times are hard and dangerous; charity is grown cold, and friends uncomfortable; an empty purse is full of sorrow, and hollow bags make a heavy heart. Poverty is a civil pestilence, which frights away both friends and kindred, and leaves us to a "Lord, have mercy upon us." It is a sickness very catching and infectious, and more commonly abhorred than cured. The best antidote against it is Angelica and providence, and the best cordial is *aurum potabile*. Gold taking fasting is an approved sovereign. Debts are ill humours, and turn at last to dangerous obstructions. Lending is mere consumption of the radical humour, which, if consumed, brings a patient to nothing. Let others trust to courtiers' promises, to friends' performances, to princes' favours; give me a toy called gold, give me a thing called money. O blessed Mammon, how extremely sweet is thy all commanding presence to my thriving soul! In banishment thou art my dear companion; in captivity thou art my precious ransom; in trouble and vexation thou art my dainty rest; in sickness thou art my health; in grief my only joy; in all extremity my only trust. Virtue must veil to thee; nay, grace itself, not relished with thy sweetness, would even displease the righteous palates of the sons of men. Come, then, my soul, advise, contrive, project; go, compass sea and land; leave no exploit untried, no path untrod, no time unspent; afford thine eyes no sleep, thy head no rest; neglect thy ravenous belly, unclothe thy back; deceive, betray, swear, and forswear, to compass such a friend. If thou be base in birth, it will make

thee honourable; if weak in power, it will make thee formidable. Are thy friends few? It will make them numerous. Is thy cause bad? It will gain thee advocates. True, wisdom is an excellent help, in case it bend this way; and learning is a genteel ornament, if not too chargeable; yet, by your leave, they are but estates for the term of life: but everlasting gold, if well advantaged, will not only bless thy days, but thy surviving children from generation to generation. Come, come, let others fill their brains with dear bought wit, turn their pence into expensive charity, and store their bosoms with unprofitable piety; let them lose all to save their imaginary consciences, and beggar themselves at home to be thought honest abroad: fill thou thy bags and barns, and lay up for many years, and take thy rest. *Francis Quarles, in "The Covetous Man's Care."*

Ver. 6. The form of money agreeth well with the condition of it; for it is stamped round, because it is so apt to run from a man. Fire, thieves, waters, and infinite causes there are of consuming riches, and impoverishing their possessors, though they have even millions and mountains of gold; but suppose that contrary to their nature they stay by a man, yet cannot *he* stay by them, but must leave them in spite of his teeth, as the psalmist saith Psalm 49:17, "The rich man shall take away nothing when he dieth, neither shall his pomp follow after him." Thus death makes a violent divorce between the rich man and his goods, when it is said unto him, "Thou fool, this night shall they take away thy soul." The rich man sleeps (saith Job very elegantly), and when he openeth his eyes there is nothing. It fares with a rich man at his death, as it doth with a sleeping man when he wakes out of his dream. A man that dreams of the finding or fruition of some rich bounty is wonderful glad, yet when he awaketh he findeth nothing, but seeth it was only a dream, and he is sorry; so the rich man seemed in the time of his life, to have somewhat, but in the days of his death all vanisheth like the idea of a dream, and it vexes him. *J. D., in "The Threefold Resolution," 1608.*

Ver. 6. Who knocks more boldly at heaven gate to be let in than they whom Christ will reject as workers of iniquity? Oh, what delusion is this! Caligula never made himself more ridiculous than when he would be honoured as a God, while he lived more like a devil. Before you would have others take you for Christians, for God's sake prove yourselves men and not beasts, as you do by your brutish lives. Talk not of your hopes of salvation so long as the marks of damnation are seen upon your flagitious lives. If the way to heaven were thus easy, I promise you the saints in all

ages have been much overseen, to take so great pains in mortifying their lusts, in denying to satisfy their sensual appetite. To what purpose did they make so much waste of their sweat in their zealous serving God? and of their tears that they could serve him no better, if they might have gone to heaven as these men hope to do? That friar was far more sound in his judgment in this point, who, preaching at Rome one Lent, when some cardinals and many other great ones were present, began his sermon thus abruptly and ironically, Saint Peter was a fool, Saint Paul was a fool, and all the primitive Christians were fools; for they thought the way to heaven was by prayers and tears, watchings and fastings, severities of mortification, and denying the pomp and glory of this world; whereas you here in Rome spend your time in balls and masks, live in pomp and pride, lust and luxury, and yet count yourselves good Christians, and hope to be saved; but at last you will prove the fools, and they will be found to have been the wise men. *William Gurnall's Funeral Sermon for Lady Mary Vere*, 1671.

Ver. 6-10. David speaks of some *that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches*. Rich men can do great things, but here is a thing that they cannot do:

None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him. From what cannot a rich man redeem his brother? It is true of spiritual redemption; yea, that is furthest out of the rich man's reach, money will not do it: "We are not redeemed with corrupt things, such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of the Son of God." 1 Peter 1:18-19. But the psalmist speaks of a lower redemption, to which all the riches of man cannot reach:

None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him: for the redemption of their soul (that is, of their person from the grave), *is precious, and it ceaseth for ever*. And that he speaks of their redemption from the grave, is more clearly expressed in Psalm 49:9: *That he should still live for ever, and not see corruption*. Jesus Christ did not redeem us that we should live for ever, and not see corruption. It was the privilege of Jesus Christ the Redeemer not to see corruption; but Jesus Christ hath not redeemed us that we should not see corruption. He hath redeemed us that we should live for ever in heaven, but he hath not redeemed us from corruption, that we should live for ever on earth, or not see corruption in the grave; for, as it is said in Psalm 49:10 of the Psalm,

we see *that wise men die, likewise the fool and the brutish person perish, and leave their wealth to others*; as if he had said, Neither the one nor the other sort of men could make this use or improvement of their wealth, to deliver themselves from going to the grave, for if they could they would have laid all out on that purchase; but they could not do it, therefore, *they leave their wealth to others*. *Joseph Caryl*.

PSALM 49:7

EXPOSITION

Ver. 7. *None of them can by any means redeem his brother*. With all their riches, the whole of them put together could not rescue a comrade from the chill grasp of death. They boast of what they will do with us, let them see to themselves. Let them weigh their gold in the scales of death, and see how much they can buy therewith from the worm and the grave. The poor are their equals in this respect; let them love their friend ever so dearly, they cannot *give to God a ransom for him*. A king's ransom would be of no avail, a Monte Rosa of rubies, an America of silver, a world of gold, a sun of diamonds, would all be utterly contemned. O ye boasters, think not to terrify us with your worthless wealth, go ye and intimidate death before ye threaten men in whom is immortality and life.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 7. *None of them can by any means redeem his brother*, etc. Some animals devoted to God could be redeemed at a price, but no price could be assigned to the ransom of a soul. That such a ransom was to be provided, the faith of the church had always anticipated: "He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities." Psalm 130:8. *W. Wilson, D.D.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 7.

1. *Implied*. The soul needs redeeming.
2. *Denied*. Wealth, power, learning, none can redeem.
3. *Supplied* —a ransom by Jesus.

4. *Applied* —by the Spirit to our actual deliverance.

PSALM 49:8

EXPOSITION

Ver. 8. *For the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever.* Too great is the price, the purchase is hopeless. For ever must the attempt to redeem a soul with money remain a failure. Death comes and wealth cannot bribe him; hell follows and no golden key can unlock its dungeon. Vain, then, are your threatenings, ye possessors of the yellow clay; your childish toys are despised by men who estimate the value of possessions by the shekel of the sanctuary.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 8. *For the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever.* In this judgment tears will not prevail, prayers will not be heard, promises will not be admitted, repentance will be too late, and as for riches, honourable titles, sceptres, and diadems, these will profit much less, and the inquisition shall be so curious and diligent, that not one light thought, not one idle word (not repented of in thy life past) shall be forgotten, for truth itself hath said, not in jest, but in earnest, of every idle word which men have spoken, they shall give an account in the day of judgment. Oh, how many which now sin with great delight, yea, even with greediness (as if we served a god of wood or of stone which seeth nothing nor can do nothing) will be then astonished, ashamed, and silent. Then shall the days of thy mirth be ended, and thou shalt be overwhelmed with everlasting darkness, and instead of thy pleasures thou shalt have everlasting torments. *Thomas Tymme.*

Ver. 8. *For it cost more to redeem their souls: so that he must let that alone forever.* *Prayer book Version.*

Ver. 8. *It ceaseth for ever.* That is, wealth for ever comes short of the power necessary to accomplish this. It has always been insufficient; it always *will* be. There is no hope that it *ever* will be sufficient, that by any increase in the amount, or by any change in the conditions of the bargain, property or riches can avail for this. The whole matter is perfectly *hopeless*

as to the power of wealth is saving one human being from the grave. It must always *fail* in saving a man from death. The word rendered *ceaseth* —(**l dx**), *khadal*, means *to leave off, to desist, to fail*. Genesis 11:8 Exodus 9:34 Isaiah 2:22. *Albert Barnes*.

PSALM 49:9

EXPOSITION

Ver. 9. No price could secure for any man *that he should still live for ever, and not see corruption*. Mad are men now after gold, what would they be if it could buy the elixir of immortality? Gold is lavished out of the bag to cheat the worm of the poor body by embalming it, or enshrining it in a coffin of lead, but it is a miserable business, a very burlesque and comedy. As for the soul, it is too subtle a thing to be detained when it hears the divine command to soar through tracks unknown. Never, therefore, will we fear those base nibblers at our heels, whose boasted treasure proves to be so powerless to save.

PSALM 49:10

EXPOSITION

Ver. 10. *For he seeth that wise men die*. Every one sees this. The proud persecuting rich man cannot help seeing it. He cannot shut his eyes to the fact that wiser men than he are dying, and that he also, with all his craft, must die.

Likewise the fool and the brutish person perish. Folly has no immunity from death. Off goes the jester's cap, as well as the student's gown. Jollity cannot laugh off the dying hour; death who visits the university, does not spare the tavern. Thoughtlessness and brutishness meet their end as surely as much care and wasting study. In fact, while the truly wise, so far as this world is concerned, *die*, the fool has a worse lot, for he *perishes*, is blotted out of remembrance, bewailed by none, remembered no more.

And leave their wealth to others. Not a farthing can they carry with them. Whether heirs male of their own body, lawfully begotten, inherit their estates, or they remain unclaimed, it matters not, their hoardings are no longer theirs; friends may quarrel over their property, or strangers divide it as spoil, they cannot interfere. Ye boasters, hold ye your own, before ye dream of despoiling the sons of the living God. Keep shoes to your own feet in death's dark pilgrimage, ere ye seek to bite our heels.

PSALM 49:11

EXPOSITION

Ver. 11. *Their inward thought is, their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling places to all generations.* He is very foolish who is more a fool in his inmost thought than he dare to be in his speech. Such rotten fruit, rotten at the core, are worldlings. Down deep in their hearts, though they dare not say so, they fancy that earthly goods are real and enduring. Foolish dreamers! The frequent dilapidation of their castles and manor houses should teach them better, but still they cherish the delusion. They cannot tell the mirage from the true streams of water; they fancy rainbows to be stable, and clouds to be the everlasting hills.

They call their lands after their own names. Common enough is this practice. His grounds are made to bear the groundling's name, he might as well write it on the water. Men have even called countries by their own names, but what are they the better for the idle compliment, even if men perpetuate their nomenclature?

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 11. *Their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue for ever.* This is the interpretation of our actions, when we do not make God our portion, but trust in the abundance of our riches; this is our *inward thought*, the saying of our heart, Ye are my god. We do in effect say, Thou art my confidence, my hope, and my joy, and will stand by me when all things cease and fail, and wilt not suffer me to want, or to be wrong, as long as you last: these are the secret speeches of our hearts. Christians! many may (orator like), declaim against the vanity of the creature, and speak as basely of money as others do, and say, We know it is but a little

refined earth; but their hearts close with it, they are loathe to part with it for God's sake, or upon God's declared will. As he that speaketh good words of God, is not said to trust in God; so speaking bad words of worldly riches doth not exempt us from trusting them. There is a difference between declaiming as an orator, and acting like a Christian. *Thomas Manton.*

Ver. 11. *Their inward thought.* If *good* thoughts be thy *deep* thoughts, if, as we say, the best be at the bottom, thy thoughts are then right, and thou art righteous; for as the deep thoughts of worldlings are worldly thoughts, and the deep thoughts of wicked men are wicked thoughts, so the deep thoughts of good men are good thoughts. It is a notable observation of the Holy Ghost's concerning worldly men, that *their inward thought is that their houses shall continue for ever*, etc. Why? is there any thought that is not an *inward* thought? No, but the meaning is, though they have some floating thoughts of their mortality, and the vanity and transitoriness of all worldly things, swimming, as it were, on the top; yet they do not suffer such thoughts *to sink into their hearts*, or to go to the bottom; but the thoughts that lodge there are such as his, who is said by our Saviour to have thought within himself, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." Luke 12:19. Note the phrase, "he thought within himself." There are other kinds of thoughts that sometimes knock at the door of the worldling's heart, nay, sometimes look in at his windows, as Paul's sermon began to press in upon Felix his heart, and to set him trembling; but there are other *thoughts within*, which if they cannot keep good thoughts quite out, they will keep them off from making any due or deep impression upon the heart. Now, these thoughts that nestle themselves as it were at the very heart roots, to keep others out from reaching thither, these *deep thoughts* are they which the Scriptures call the *inward thoughts*, according to that of the psalmist Psalm 64:6, "The inward thought of every one of them and the heart, is deep." *Faithful Teat in "Right Thoughts the Righteous man's Evidence," 1666.*

Ver. 11. *They call their lands after their own names.* God makes fools of them, for how few have you that go beyond the third generation? How few houses have you that the child or the grandchild can say, "This was my grandfather's and my great grandfather's"? How few houses have you that those that are now in them can say, "My ancestor dwelt here, and these were his lands"? Go over a whole country, few can say so. Men when they build, together with building in the earth they build castles in the air; they

have conceits. Now I build for my child, and for my child's child. God crosses them. Either they have no posterity, or by a thousand things that fall out in the world, it falls out otherwise. The time is short, and the fashion of this world passeth away; that is, the buildings pass away, the owning passeth away, all things here pass away; and, therefore, buy as if you possessed not, buy, so as we neglect not the best possession in heaven, and so possess these things, as being not possessed and commanded of them. *Richard Sibbes.*

Ver. 11. Mr. A was a wealthy farmer in Massachusetts, about sixty years of age, and it had been his ruling, and almost only passion in life to acquire property. His neighbour B owned a small farm, which came too near the centre of A's extended domain, was quite a blot in his prospect, destroyed the regularity of his lands, and on the whole it was really necessary, in his opinion, that he should add it to his other property. B became embarrassed, and was sued; judgments were obtained, and executions issued. A now thought he should obtain the land, but one execution after another was arranged, and finally the debt was paid off without selling the land. When A heard of the payment of the last execution, which put an end to his hopes of obtaining the land, he exclaimed, "Well, B is an old man, and cannot live long, and when he dies I can buy the lot." B was fifty-eight, A was sixty! Reader, do you ever expect to die? *K. Arvine's Cyclopaedia of Moral and Religious Anecdotes.*

Ver. 11. I have purchased, saith one, such lands, and I have got so good a title to them, that certainly they will remain mine and my heirs for ever; never considering how all things here below are subject to ebbings and flowings, to turns and vicissitudes every day. *Joseph Caryl.*

Ver. 11. The fleeting nature of all earthly possessions is well illustrated in the life of William Beckford, and the unenduring character of gorgeous fabrics in the ruin of his famous Babel, Fonthill Abbey. Byron sang of Beckford's palace in Spain, in language most applicable to Fonthill:

*"There, too, thou Vathek! England's wealthiest son—
Once formed thy Paradise, as not aware
When wanton wealth her mightiest deeds hath done,
Meek Peace voluptuous lures was ever wont to shun.
Here didst thou dwell; here schemes of pleasure plan,*

*Beneath yon mountain's ever beauteous brow.
But now, as if a thing unblessed by man,
Thy fairy dwelling is as lone as thou!
Here giant weeds a passage scarce allow,*

*To halls deserted, portals gaping wide;
Fresh lessons to the thinking bosom, how
Vain are the pleasures on earth supplied,
Swept into wrecks anon by Time's ungentle tide!" C. H. S.*

Ver. 11-12. *"They call their GROUNDS after their names. But the GROUNDLING, in the midst of splendour, endureth not."* In Psalm 49:11, we have (**twōda**), "grounds." In Psalm 49:12, it is (**μδα**), "groundling," with a designed iteration and play upon the word; for want of an attention to which the passage has not been fully understood. *John Mason Good.*

PSALM 49:12

EXPOSITION

Ver. 12. *Nevertheless man being in honour abideth not.* He is but a lodger for the hour, and does not stay a night: even when he dwells in marble halls his notice to quit is written out. Eminence is evermore in imminence of peril. The hero of the hour lasts but for an hour. Sceptres fall from the paralysed hands which once grasped them, and coronets slip away from skulls when the life is departed.

He is like the beasts that perish. He is not like the sheep which are preserved of the Great Shepherd, but like the hunted beast which is doomed to die. He lives a brutish life and dies a brutish death. Wallowing in riches, surfeited with pleasure, he is fatted for the slaughter, and dies like the ox in the shambles. Alas! that so noble a creature should use his life so unworthily, and end it so disgracefully. So far as this world is concerned, wherein does the death of many men differ from the death of a dog? They go down—

*"To the vile dust from whence they sprung,
Unwept, unhonoured, and unsung."*

What room is there, then, for fear to the godly when such natural brute beasts assail them? Should they not in patience possess their souls?

We make a break here, because this stanza appears to be the refrain of the song, and as such is repeated in Psalm 49:20.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 12. *Man being in honour abideth not.* The Rabbins read it thus: "Adam being in honour, *lodged not one night.*" The Hebrew word for *abide* signifies "to stay or lodge all night." Adam, then, it seems, did not take up one night's lodging in Paradise. *Thomas Watson's Body of Divinity.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 12. (*last clause*). Wherein the ungodly are like beasts, and wherein different.

Ver. 12. Here is a twofold thwarting or crossing of the purposes of the ungodly worldling.

1. The first is, *he shall not be that which he ever wished to be*: he shall not continue in honour.
2. The other is this, *he shall be that which he never desired to be*: he shall be like the beasts that die. He shall miss of that which he sought for, and he shall have that which he looked not for. *S. Hieron.*

PSALM 49:13

EXPOSITION

Ver. 13. Their vain confidences are not casual aberrations from the path of wisdom, but *their way*, their usual and regular course; their whole life is regulated by such principles. Their life path is essential *folly*. They are fools ingrain. From first to last brutishness is their characteristic, grovelling stupidity the leading trait of their conduct.

Yet their posterity approve their sayings. Those who follow them in descent follow them in folly, quote their worldly maxims, and accept their mad career as the most prudent mode of life. Why do they not see by their father's failure their father's folly? No, the race transmits its weakness. Grace is not hereditary, but sordid worldliness goes from generation to generation. The race of fools never dies out. No need of missionaries to

teach men to be earthworms, they crawl naturally to the dust. *Selah.* Well may the minstrel pause, and bid us muse upon the deep seated madness of the sons of Adam. Take occasion, reader, to reflect upon thine own.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 13. *This their way is their folly: yet their posterity approve their sayings.* Master Baxter speaks very well of this in his "Saints Everlasting Rest," which is a very choice book. The gentry teach their children to follow pleasure, and the commonalty their children to follow profit, and young ones are ready to follow old ones.

This their way is their folly. The very heathens condemn this, and yet Christians mind it not. Crates the philosopher said, that if possible he might, he would willingly mount to the highest place of the city, and there cry aloud in this manner, "What mean you, my masters, and whither run you headlong? carking and caring all that ever you can, to gather goods and make riches as you do, whiles in the meantime you make little or no reckoning at all of your children, unto whom you are to leave all your riches? Do not most care more for the wealth of their children's outward man, than for the health of their inward man?" *J. Votier's Survey of Effectual Calling*, 1652.

Ver. 13. *This their way is their folly.* The folly of man seldom appears more than in being very busy about nothing, in making a great cry where there is little wool; like that empty fellow that showed himself to Alexander—having spent much time, and taken much pains at it beforehand—and boasted that he could throw a pea through a little hole, expecting a great reward; but the king gave him only a bushel of peas, for a recompense suitable to his diligent negligence, or his busy idleness. Things that are vain and empty are unworthy of our care and industry. The man that by hard labour and hazard of his life did climb up to the top of the steeple to set an egg on end, was deservedly the object of pity and laughter. We shall think him little better than mad that should make as great a fire for the roasting of an egg as for the roasting of an ox. *George Swinnock*.

Ver. 13. *Their folly: yet their posterity approve.* Dr. Leifchild, in his "Remarkable Facts," records the following incident, of a person of property, who had been accustomed regularly to attend his ministry, but who had always manifested a covetous disposition: "I was sent for to offer

to him the consolation of religion as he lay upon his dying bed. What was my surprise, after having conversed and prayed with him, to find that he was unwilling to take my hand, muttering that he knew that he had not done what was right in reference to the support and furtherance of religion, but intended to amend in that respect. He then requested me to say what I thought would become of him. How could I reply, but by exhorting him to repent, and relinquishing all further thoughts of a worldly nature, to betake himself to the sacrifice and mediation of the Son of God for pardon, safety, and salvation in that world which he was to all appearance soon about to enter. He gazed at me with a look of disappointment. Upon a hint being given me to inquire into his thought at that moment, I questioned him very pointedly, and to my astonishment and horror, he reluctantly disclosed to me the fact that while thus seemingly about to breathe his last, his hands were under the bed clothes grasping the keys of his cabinet and treasures, lest they should be taken from him! Soon after he departed this life, and there was, alas! reason to fear that, together with his property, he had transmitted somewhat of his fatal passion to those who survived him. It was distressing to me to reflect that a hearer of mine should quit this world with his fingers stiffened in death around the keys of his treasures. How strong, how terrible, was the ruling passion in the death of this man!"

Ver. 13. *Selah.* See "Treasury of David, "Vol. I, pp. 25, 29, 346, 382; and Vol. II., pp. 249-252.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 13.

1. In secular things men imitate the *wisdom* of others.
2. In spiritual things they imitate *their folly*. *G. R.*

PSALM 49:14

EXPOSITION

Ver. 14. *Like sheep they are laid in the grave.* As dumb driven cattle, they are hurried to their doom, and are penned in within the gates of destruction. As sheep that go whither they are driven, and follow their leader without thought, so these men who have chosen to make this world

their all, are urged on by their passions, till they find themselves at their journey's end, that end the depths of Hades. Or if we keep to our own translation, we have the idea of their dying peaceably, and being buried in quiet, only that they may wake up to be ashamed at the last great day.

Death shall feed on them. Death like a grim shepherd leads them on, and conducts them to the place of their eternal pasturage, where all is barrenness and misery. The righteous are led by the Good Shepherd, but the ungodly have death for their shepherd, and he drives them onward to hell. As the power of death rules them in this world, for they have not passed from death unto life, so the terrors of death shall devour them in the world to come. As grim giants, in old stories, are said to feed on men whom they entice to their caves, so death, the monster, feeds on the flesh and blood of the mighty.

The upright shall have dominion over them in the morning. The poor saints were once the tail, but at the day break they shall be the head. Sinners rule till night fall; their honours wither in the evening, and in the morning they find their position utterly reversed. The sweetest reflection to the upright is that "the morning" here intended begins an endless, changeless, day. What a vexation of spirit to the proud worldling, when the Judge of all the earth holds his morning session, to see the man whom he despised, exalted high in heaven, while he himself is cast away!

And their beauty shall consume in the grave from their dwelling. Whatever of glory the ungodly had shall disappear in the tomb. Form and comeliness shall vanish from them, the worm shall make sad havoc of all their beauty. Even their last dwelling place, the grave, shall not be able to protect the relics committed to it; their bodies shall dissolve, no trace shall remain of all their strong limbs and lofty heads, no vestige of remaining beauty shall be discoverable. The beauty of the righteous is not yet revealed, it waits its manifestations; but all the beauty the wicked will ever have is in full bloom in this life; it will wither, fade, decay, rot, and utterly pass away. Who, then, would envy or fear the proud sinner?

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 14. *Like sheep they are laid in the grave; death shall feed on them; and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning; and their beauty shall consume in the grave from their dwelling,* or as we put in the margin, *The grave being an habitation to every one of them, shall*

consume their beauty. Some may object, Is not this true of godly men too? are not they thus handled by death and the grave? doth not death feed on them? and doth not the grave consume their beauty? I answer, Though it doth, yet it hath not to feed upon, nor consume them, as it feeds upon and consumes wicked men. For the psalmist speaks here of death as it were triumphing over the wicked, whereas the godly triumph over death. For, first, he saith, The wicked are *laid in the grave like sheep*: they lived like *wolves* or *lions*, but they are laid in the grave like *sheep*. If it be asked, Why *like sheep*? I answer, not for the innocency of their lives, but for their impotency in death; as if it had been said, when once death took them in hand to lay them in the grave, they could make no more resistance than a sheep can against a lion or a wolf. And when death hath thus laid them in the grave, then secondly, saith the psalmist,

Death shall feed on them, as a lion doth upon a sheep, or any wild beast upon his prey, which is a further degree of death's triumph over the wicked. And, thirdly, *Their beauty shall consume in the grave*, that is, all their bodily and natural beauty (and this is all the beauty which they have) shall consume in the grave, whereas the godly have a beauty (and they count it their only beauty) which the grave cannot consume, and that is the beauty of their graces, the beauty of holiness, the spiritual beauty of the inner man, yea, and the spiritual beauty of their outward holy actings shall not consume in the grave; for, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them." Revelation 19:13. *Joseph Caryl.*

Ver. 14. *Death shall feed on them*: rather, *Death shall be their shepherd.* (Sept.) At the end of the foregoing Psalm, the psalmist had said in the name of his people, that, "God is our God, for ever and ever; he will lead us as a shepherd over death," and here he takes up the same pastoral figure, and contrasts with their case the case of the proud and prosperous worldly men, who trust in their earthly riches and power. *They will not* be led in safety, under the pastoral care of God, *over death*. No; *death* itself will be *their Shepherd*, and the grave will be their sheepfold; where they will be laid together like sheep in a pen. As Augustine says, "Death is the shepherd of the infidel. Life (*i.e.*, Christ) is the Shepherd of the faithful." "*In inferno sunt oves quibus pastor Mors est; in caelo sunt oves quibus pastor Vita est.*" And so Keble

*Even as a flock arrayed are they
For the dark grave; Death guides their way,
Death is their Shepherd now.
Christopher Wordsworth.*

Ver. 14. *In the morning*, that is, saith Dathe, in the *time of judgment*. He thinks there is here an allusion to the usual time of holding courts of justice, which was in the morning. See Psalm 73:14 101:8 Jeremiah 21:12. *Editorial note to Calvin in loc.*

Ver. 14. *Their beauty shall consume in the grave*, And now if we do but consider a little of the tombs and sepulchres of princes and noblemen, whose glory and majesty we have seen when they lived here on earth, and do behold the horrible forms and shapes which they now have, shall we not cry out as men amazed, Is this that glory? Is this that highness and excellency? Whither now are the degrees of their waiting servants gone? Where are their ornaments and jewels? Where is their pomp, their delicacy and niceness? All these things are vanished away like the smoke, and there is now nothing left but dust, horror, and stink. The soul being dissolved, there lieth upon the ground not a human body, but a dead carcase without life, without sense, without strength, and so fearful to look upon, that the sight thereof may hardly be endures. To be sure, it is a little better (as touching the substance) than the body of a horse, or a dog, which lieth dead in the fields, and all that pass by stop their noses and make haste away, that they be not annoyed with the sight and stink thereof. Such is man's body now become; yea, and though it were the body of a monarch, emperor, or a king. Where is that majesty, that excellency, that authority which he had aforetime when all men trembled to behold it, and might not come in presence thereof without all reverence and obeisance? what are all those things become? were they a dream or shadow? After those things the funeral is prepared, the which is all that men can carry with them, of all their riches and kingdom, and this also they should not have, if in their lifetime they did not appoint it for their dignity and honour. For the prophet David saith truly Psalm 49:16, "*Be not thou afraid though one be made rich, or, if the glory of his house be increased; for when he dieth he shall carry nothing away with him, neither shall his pomp follow him.*" *Thomas Tymme.*

Ver. 14. When we look to a charnel-house, and take a view of the grave, what amazing and dismal scenes present themselves! How many great and important images appear! Distracting horrors strike our imagination, and

hideous sounds of diseases, destruction, and death, with all their woeful and black train, terrify us. Ah! the melancholy confused heap of the ruins of mankind, what a terrible carnage is made of the human race! and what a solemn and awful theatre of mortality, covered with the disordered remains of our fellow creatures, presents itself to our minds! There lie the bones of a proud monarch, who fancied himself a little god, mingled with the ashes of his poorest subjects! Death seized him in the height of his vanity, he was just returning from a conquest, and his haughty mind was swelled with his power and greatness, when one of these fatal arrows pierced his heart, and at once finished all his perishing thoughts and contrivances, then the dream of glory vanished, and all his empire was confined to the grave. Look how pale that victorious general appears, how dead, and cold, and lifeless these arms that were once accustomed to war; see if you can discern any difference betwixt his dust and that of the most despicable slave. Yonder, a numerous army, once fierce and resolute, whose conquests were rapid as lightning, and made all the nations to shake for fear of them, are now so weak that they lie a prey, exposed to the meanest animals, the loathsome worms, who crawl in triumph over them, and insult their decayed ruins. There is a body that was so much doted on, and solicitously cared for, and the beauty and shape whereof were so foolishly admired, now noisome and rotten, nothing but vermin are now fond of it, so affecting a change hath death made upon it. Look, next to this, upon the inglorious ashes of a rich, covetous wretch, whose soul was glued to this world, and hugged itself in its treasures; with what mighty throes and convulsions did death tear him from this earth! How did his hands cling to his gold! with what vehement desires did he fasten on his silver, all of them weak and fruitless! Look now if riches saved him in that day, if you can perceive any of his useless treasures lying beside him in the grave, or if the glory of his house have descended after him! Yonder, an ambitious statesman, his rotten bones are scarce to be discerned: how did he applaud his artful schemes! how securely did he think them laid, and flattered himself with the hopes of an established greatness! but death stepped in, blew them all up at once; this grave is the whole result of his counsels. And lo, there, what horrid and suffocating stink ascends from these many hellish sacrifices of lust and impurity, who wasted their strength in debauch, and carried down with them nothing but the shame of beastly pleasures to the grave. But there is no end to the corpses, nor can we survey this terrible field of death's conquests. *William Dunlop.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 14.

1. In proportion to the prosperity of the ungodly here, will be their misery hereafter: as sheep from the fat pasture led to the slaughterhouse.
2. In proportion to the luxury here, will be their corruption hereafter—*Death shall feed on them*: they have become well fed for death to feed on them.
3. In proportion to their dignity here, will be their degradation hereafter—*The upright shall have*, etc. Oh, what a contrast between the rich man and Lazarus then!
4. In proportion to their beauty here, will be their deformity hereafter. "Art thou become like one of us?" *G. R.*

Ver. 14. Sheep, how far they image the wicked.

Ver. 14. *In the morning.* See the various Biblical prophecies of what will happen "in the morning."

PSALM 49:15

EXPOSITION

Ver. 15. *But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave.* Forth from that temporary resting place we shall come in due time, quickened by divine energy. Like our risen Head we cannot be holden by the bands of the grave; redemption has emancipated us from the slavery of death. No redemption could man find in riches, but God has found it in the blood of his dear Son. Our Elder Brother has given to God a ransom, and we are the redeemed of the Lord: because of this redemption by price we shall assuredly be redeemed by power out of the hand of the last enemy.

For he shall receive me. He shall take me out of the tomb, take me up to heaven. If it is not said of me as of Enoch, "He was not, for God took him," yet shall I reach the same glorious state. My spirit God will receive, and my body shall sleep in Jesus till, being raised in his image, it shall also be received into glory. How infinitely superior is such a hope to anything

which our oppressors can boast! Here is something which will bear meditation, and therefore again let us pause, at the bidding of the musician, who inserts a *Selah*.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 15. (*last clause*). *For he shall take me*. This short half verse is, as Bottcher remarks, the more weighty, from its very shortness. The same expression occurs again, Psalm 73:24, "Thou shalt take me," the original of both being Genesis 5:24, where it is used of the translation of Enoch, "He was not, for God *took* him." *J. J. Stewart Perowne*.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 15.

1. *Return* to the dust I shall.
2. *Redeem* from the dust he will.
3. *Receive* into heaven he will.
4. *Rejoice* for ever I shall.

PSALM 49:16

EXPOSITION

Ver. 16. In these last verses the psalmist becomes a preacher, and gives admonitory lessons which he has himself gathered from experience.

Be not thou afraid when one is made rich. Let it not give thee any concern to see the godless prosper. Raise no questions as to divine justice; suffer no foreboding to cloud thy mind. Temporal prosperity is too small a matter to be worth fretting about; let the dogs have their bones, and the swine their draff.

When the glory of his house is increased. Though the sinner and his family are in great esteem, and stand exceedingly high, never mind; all things will be righted in due time. Only those whose judgment is worthless will esteem men the more because their lands are broader; those who are highly

estimated for such unreasonable reasons will find their level ere long, when truth and righteousness come to the fore.

PSALM 49:17

EXPOSITION

Ver. 17. *For when he dieth he shall carry nothing away.* He has but a leasehold of his acres, and death ends his tenure. Through the river of death man must pass naked. Not a rag of all his raiment, not a coin of all his treasure, not a joy of all his honour, can the dying worldling carry with him. Why then fret ourselves about so fleeting a prosperity?

His glory shall not descend after him. As he goes down, down, down for ever, none of his honours or possessions will follow him. Patents of nobility are invalid in the sepulchre. His worship, his honour, his lordship, and his grace, will alike find their titles ridiculous in the tomb. Hell knows no aristocracy. Your dainty and delicate sinners shall find that eternal burnings have no respect for their affectations and refinements.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 17. *For when he dieth he shall carry nothing away.* The form of money agrees well with the condition of it; it is stamped round, because it is so apt to run away. Could we be rich so long as we live, yet that were uncertain enough for life itself is but a dream, a shadow, but a dream of a shadow. (Augustine.) Rich men are but like hailstones; they make a noise in the world, as the other rattle on the tiles of a house; down they fall, lie still, and melt away. So that if riches could stay by a man, yet he cannot stay by them. Spite of his teeth, *he shall carry away nothing when he dies.* Life and goods are both in a vessel, both cast away at once; yea, of the two, life hath the more likelihood of continuance. Let it fly never so fast away, riches have eagles' wings, and will outfly it. There be thieves in the highways, that will take our moneys and spare our lives. In our penal laws, there be not so many ways to forfeit our lives as our goods. Rich Job lived to see himself poor to a proverb. How many in this city reputed rich, yet have broken for thousands! There are innumerable ways to be poor; a fire, a thief, a false servant, suretyship, trusting of bad customers, an unfaithful factor, a pirate, an unskilful pilot, hath brought rich men to poverty. One

gale of wind is able to make merchants rich or beggars. Man's life is like the banks of a river, his temporal estate is the stream: time will moulder away the banks, but the stream stays not for that, it glides away continually. Life is the tree, riches are the fruit, or rather the leaves; the leaves will fall, the fruit is plucked, and yet the tree stands. Some write of the pine tree, that if the bark be pulled off, it lasts long; being on it rots. If the worldling's bark were stripped off, he might perhaps live the longer, there is great hope he would live the better. *Thomas Adams.*

Ver. 17. *He shall carry nothing away.* It is with us in this world, as it was in the Jewish fields and vineyards: *pluck and eat* they might what they would while they were there; but they might not pocket or put up ought to carry with them. Deuteronomy 23:24. *Thomas Gataker.*

Ver. 17. *He shall carry nothing away.* "He hath swallowed down riches, and he shall vomit them up again: God shall cast them out of his belly." Job 20:15.

Ver. 17. *Descend.* Death takes the sinner by the throat, and "hauls him down stairs to the grave." The indulgence in any sinful propensity has this downward, deathly tendency. Every lust, whether for riches or honours, for gambling, wine or women, leads the deluded wretched votary step by step to the chambers of death. There is no hope in the dread prospect; trouble and anguish possess the spirit. Hast thou escaped, O my soul, from the net of the infernal fowler? Never forget that it is as a brand *snatched* from the burning. Oh, to grace how great a debtor! *George Offor's note in "The Works of John Bunyan."*

Ver. 17. —

You will carry none of your riches, fool, to the waters of Acheron.
You will be ferried over quite naked in the infernal boat.
Propertius.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 17. The loaded and unloaded sinner.

PSALM 49:18

EXPOSITION

Ver. 18. *Though while he lived he blessed his soul.* He pronounced himself happy. He had his good things in this life. His chief end and aim were to bless himself. He was charmed with the adulation of flatterers.

Men will praise thee, when thou doest well to thyself. The generality of men worship success, however it may be gained. The colour of the winning horse is no matter; it is the winner, and that is enough. "Take care of Number One, "is the world's proverbial philosophy, and he who gives good heed to it is "a clever fellow, ""a fine man of business, ""a shrewd common sense tradesman, ""a man with his head put on the right way." Get money, and you will be "respectable, ""a substantial man, "and your house will be "an eminent firm in the city, "or "one of the best county families." To do good wins fame in heaven, but to do good *to yourself* is the prudent thing among men of the world. Yet not a whisper of worldly congratulation can follow the departing millionaire; they say he died worth a mint of money, but what charm has that fact to the dull cold ear of death? The banker rots as fast as the shoeblack, and the peer becomes as putrid as the pauper. Alas! poor wealth, thou art but the rainbow colouring of the bubble, the tint which yellows the morning mist, but adds not substance to it.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 18. How foolish is it to account thyself a better man than another, only because thy dunghill is a little bigger than his! These things are not at all to be reckoned into the value and worth of a man; they are all without thee, and concern thee no more than fine clothes do the health or strength of the body. It is wealth, indeed, that makes all the noise and bustle in the world, and challengeth all the respect and honour to itself; and the ignorant vulgar, whose eyes are dazzled with pomp and bravery, pay it with a stupid and astonished reverence. Yet know, that it is but thy silks and velvet, thy lands, or thy retinue and servants, they venerate, not thee: and if thou thinkest otherwise, thou art as justly ridiculous as that ass in the apologue, that grew very gravely proud, and took state, when the people fell prostrate before him, adoring, not him, but to the idol he carried. *Ezekiel Hopkins.*

PSALM 49:19

EXPOSITION

Ver. 19. *He shall go to the generation of his fathers.* Where the former generations lie, the present shall also slumber. The sires beckon to their sons to come to the same land of forgetfulness. Mortal fathers beget not immortal children. As our ancestors have departed, so also must we.

They shall never see light. To this upper region the dead worldling shall never return again to possess his estates, and enjoy his dignities. Among the dead he must lie in the thick darkness, where no joy or hope can come to him. Of all his treasures there remains not enough to furnish him one poor candle; the blaze of his glory is out for ever, and not a spark remains to cheer him. How then can we look with fear or envy upon a wretch doomed to such unhappiness?

PSALM 49:20

EXPOSITION

Ver. 20. The song ends with the refrain, *Man that is in honour, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish.* Understanding differences men from animals, but if they will not follow the highest wisdom, and like beasts find their all in this life, then their end shall be as mean and dishonourable as that of beasts slain in the chase, or killed in the shambles. From the loftiest elevation of worldly honour to the uttermost depths of death is but a step. Saddest of all is the reflection, that though men are like beasts in all the degradation of perishing, yet not in the rest which animal perishing secures, for, alas! it is written, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment." So ends the minstrel's lay. Comforting as the theme is to the righteous, it is full of warning to the worldly. Hear ye it, O ye rich and poor. Give ear to it, ye nations of the earth.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 20. *Like the beasts that perish.* My lords, it is no wonder at all, if men that affect beastly pleasures, and dote upon perishing honours, become *like*

the beasts that perish. It is no miracle if he that lives like a beast dies like a beast. Take a man that hath lived like the fool in the gospel, and tell me, what hath this man done for his immortal soul more than a beast doth for its perishing soul? Soul, soul, cease from care, eat, drink, and take thine ease; this is the constant ditty of most men in honour: they have studied clothes and victuals, titles and offices, ways of gain and pleasure. Am I not yet at highest? They have, it may be, studied the black art of flattery and treachery; they understand the humour of the times, the compliances and dependences of this and other statesman, the projects of divers princes abroad, and the main design here at home. Is this all? Why, then be it known unto you, that the men of this strain have made no better provision for their precious souls, than if they had the soul, the vanishing soul of a beast within them; and certainly, if we were to judge of the substance of men's souls by their unworthy and sensual conversation, we might easily fall into that heresy, that dangerous dream of some who conceive that their souls are mortal. *Francis Cheynell, in a Sermon entitled, "The Man of Honour, "... preached before the Lords of Parliament, 1645.*

Ver. 20. *Like the beasts that perish.* Sin is both *formaliter* and *effective* vile. As it is so in itself, so it has made man vile. No creature so debased as man, being in this respect become viler than any creature. There is no such depravation in the nature of any creature, except in the diabolical nature. No creature ever razed God's image out of its nature, but only man. There is no aversions to the will of God, no inclination to what offends him, in any creature on earth but man. Man, then, who was once the glory of the creation, is become the vilest of all creatures, for that is vilest which is most contrary to the infinite glory, but so is our nature, "Man being in honour, abideth not, "is now *like the beast that perish;* nay, worse than they, if the greatest evil can make him worse. Man was made a little lower than the angels, crowned with glory, advanced to be lord and governor of all the works of his hands; and all creatures in this world were put under his feet. Psalm 8:5-6. But by this natural corruption he that was but a little lower than the angels is now something below the beasts. He was to have dominion, but is made baser than those over whom he rules. They were put under his feet, but now he is as low as they. This is the sad issue of natural corruption. *David Clarkson.*

Ver. 20. *Like the beasts.* Man is so much a beast, that he cannot know himself to be one till God teach him. And we never learn to be men till we have learned that we were beasts...It is not said he is like this or that beast,

but *he is like the beasts that perish*. Take any beast, or all beasts, the worst of beasts, he is the picture of them all, and he daily exemplifies the vilest of their qualities in his own. *Joseph Caryl*.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 20.

1. Men of spiritual understanding without worldly honour are higher than the angels of God in heaven.
2. Men in worldly honour without the true wisdom are worse than the beasts that perish. *G. R.*

PSALM 50

PSALM 50:1

Title. A Psalm of Asaph. This is the first of the Psalms of Asaph, but whether the production of that eminent musician, or merely dedicated to him, we cannot tell. The titles of twelve Psalms bear his name, but it could not in all of them be meant to ascribe their authorship to him, for several of these Psalms are of too late a date to have been composed by the same writer as the others. There was an Asaph in David's time, who was one of David's chief musicians, and his family appear to have continued long after in their hereditary office of temple musicians. An Asaph is mentioned as a recorder or secretary in the days of Hezekiah 2 Kings 18:18, and another was keeper of the royal forests under Artaxerxes. That Asaph did most certainly write some of the Psalms is clear from 2 Chronicles 29:30, where it is recorded that the Levites were commanded to "sing praises unto the Lord with the words of David, and of Asaph the seer," but that other Asaphic Psalms were not of his composition, but were only committed to his care as a musician, is equally certain from 1 Chronicles 16:7, where David is said to have delivered a Psalm into the hand of Asaph and his brethren. It matters little to us whether he wrote or sang, for poet and musician are near akin, and if one composes words and another sets them to music, they rejoice together before the Lord.

Division. The Lord is represented as summoning the whole earth to hear his declaration, Psalm 50:1-6; he then declares the nature of the worship which he accepts, Psalm 50:7-15, accuses the ungodly of breaches of the precepts of the second table, Psalm 50:16-21, and closes the court with a word of threatening, Psalm 50:22, and a direction of grace, Psalm 50:23.

EXPOSITION

Ver. 1. *The mighty God, even the Lord.* El, Elohim, Jehovah, three glorious names for the God of Israel. To render the address the more impressive, these august titles are mentioned, just as in royal decrees the names and dignities of monarchs are placed in the forefront. Here the true God is described as Almighty, as the only and perfect object of adoration

and as the self-existent One. *Hath spoken, and called the earth from the rising of the sun until the going down thereof.* The dominion of Jehovah extends over the whole earth, and therefore to all mankind is his decree directed. The east and the west are bidden to hear the God who makes his sun to rise on every quarter of the globe. Shall the summons of the great King be despised? Will we dare provoke him to anger by slighting his call?

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Whole Psalm. The exordium or beginning of this Psalm is the most grand and striking that can possibly be imagined—the speaker GOD, the audience an assembled world! We cannot compare or assimilate the scene here presented to us with any human resemblance; nor do I imagine that earth will ever behold such a day till that hour when the trumpet of the archangel shall sound and shall gather all the nations of the earth from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other; when the dead, small and great, shall stand before God, and the sea shall give up the dead which are in it, and death and hell shall deliver up the dead that are in them. *Barton Bouchier.*

Ver. 1. *El, Elohim, Jehovah has spoken!* So reads the Hebrew. *Andrew A. Bonar.*

Ver. 1. (*first clause*). Some have observed that these three names, *El, Elohim, Jehovah*, here mentioned, have three very distinct accents set to them, and which being joined to a verb singular (**dBP**), *hath spoken*, contains the mystery of the trinity of Persons in the unity of the divine Essence. *John Gill.*

Ver. 1. *And called the earth*, etc., i.e., *all the inhabitants of the earth* he has commanded to come as witnesses and spectators of the judgment. *Simon de Muis.*

Ver. 1-5. —

*No more shall atheists mock his long delay;
His vengeance sleeps no more; behold the day!
Behold! —the Judge descends; his guards are nigh,
Tempests and fire attend him down the sky.*

*When God appears, all nature shall adore him.
While sinners tremble, saints rejoice before him.
Heaven, earth and hell, draw near; let all things come,
To hear my justice, and the sinner's doom;*

*But gather first my saints (the Judge commands),
Bring them, ye angels, from their distant lands.
When Christ returns, wake every cheerful passion,
And shout, ye saints; he comes for your salvation.*

Isaac Watts.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 1. It unspeakably concerns *all* men to know what God has spoken. *W. S. Plumer.*

Ver. 1.

1. Who has spoken? The Mighty, not men or angels, but God himself.
2. To whom has he spoken? To all nations—all ranks— all characters. This calls for,
 1. Reverence—it is the voice of God.
 2. Hope—because he condescends to speak to rebels.
3. Where has he spoken?
 1. In creation.
 2. In providence.
 3. In his word. *G. R.*

Ver. 1-6.

1. The court called in the name of the King of kings.
2. The judgment set, and the judge taking his seat; Psalm 50:2-3.
3. The parties summoned; Psalm 50:8.
4. The issue of this solemn trial foretold; Psalm 50:6. *Matthew Henry.*

Ver. 1-15.

1. God's call to man.
2. Man's call to God.

WORKS UPON THE FIFTIETH PSALM

In the old quarto edition (1634) of *"Mr. Paul Bayne's Commentary on Colossians, "among the "divers places of Scripture briefly explained, "there is an exposition of Psalm 50:21-23, of this Psalm, entitled, "The Terror of God displayed against carnal security."*

PSALM 50:2

EXPOSITION

Ver. 2. *Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined.* The Lord is represented not only as speaking to the earth, but as coming forth to reveal the glory of his presence to an assembled universe. God of old dwelt in Zion among his chosen people, but here the beams of his splendour are described as shining forth upon all nations. The sun was spoken of in the first verse, but here is a far brighter sun. The majesty of God is most conspicuous among his own elect, but is not confined to them; the church is not a dark lantern, but a candlestick. God shines not only in Zion, but out of her. She is made perfect in beauty by his indwelling, and that beauty is seen by all observers when the Lord shines forth from her.

Observe how with trumpet voice and flaming ensign the infinite Jehovah summons the heavens and the earth to hearken to his word.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 2. *Out of Zion, the perfection of God's beauty hath shined; or, God has caused the perfection of beauty to shine out of Zion.* Martin Geier.

Ver. 2. *God hath shined.* Like the sun in his strength, sometimes for the comfort of his people, as Psalm 80:1; sometimes for the terror of evil doers, as Psalm 94:1, and here. But evermore God is terrible out of his holy places. Psalm 68:35 89:7. John Trapp.

Ver. 2. *God hath shined.* The proper meaning of ([py]) is to scatter rays from afar, and from a lofty place, and to glitter. *It is a word of a grand sound,* says Ch. Schultens, *which is always used of a magnificent and flashing light ...It is apparently used of the splendid symbol of God's presence, as in Deuteronomy 34:2, where he is said to scatter beams from*

Mount Paran. From which it is manifest that it may refer to the pillar of cloud and fire, the seat of the Divine Majesty conspicuous on Mount Sinai, or on the tabernacle, or the loftiest part of the temple. *Hermann Venema*.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 1-6.

1. The court called in the name of the King of kings.
2. The judgment set, and the judge taking his seat.
3. The parties summoned; Psalm 50:8.
4. The issue of this solemn trial foretold; Psalm 50:6. *Matthew Henry*.

Ver. 1-15.

1. God's call to man.
2. Man's call to God.

Ver. 2.

1. The internal beauty of Zion.
 1. *Positive* beauty of wisdom—holiness—love.
 2. *Comparative* with the beauty of Paradise and the heaven of angels.
 3. *Superlative* —all the perfections of God combined.
2. Its external glory. Out of it God hath shined.
 1. On this world.
 2. On gracious souls.
 3. On angels who desire to look, etc.
 4. On the universe. "All the creatures heard I, "etc.

PSALM 50:3

EXPOSITION

Ver. 3. *Our God shall come.* The psalmist speaks of himself and his brethren as standing in immediate anticipation of the appearing of the Lord upon the scene. "He comes, "they say, "our covenant God is coming; "they

can hear his voice from afar, and perceive the splendour of his attending train. Even thus should we await the long promised appearing of the Lord from heaven.

And shall not keep silence. He comes to speak, to plead with his people, to accuse and judge the ungodly. He has been silent long in patience, but soon he will speak with power. What a moment of awe when the Omnipotent is expected to reveal himself! What will be the reverent joy and solemn expectation when the poetic scene of this Psalm becomes in the last great day an actual reality!

A fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him. Flame and hurricane are frequently described as the attendants of the divine appearance. "Our God is a consuming fire." "At the brightness that was before him his thick clouds passed, hailstones and coals of fire." Psalm 18:12. "He rode upon a cherub, and did fly; yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind." "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God." 2 Thessalonians 1:7-8. Fire is the emblem of justice in action, and the tempest is a token of his overwhelming power. Who will not listen in solemn silence when such is the tribunal from which the judge pleads with heaven and earth?

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 3. *Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence.* He kept silence that he might be judged, he will not keep silence when he begins to judge. It would not have been said,

He shall come manifestly, unless at first he had come concealed; nor, *He shall not keep silence*, had he not at first kept silence. How did he keep silence? Ask Isaiah: "He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth." Isaiah 53:7. But he shall come manifestly, and shall not keep silence. How manifestly?

A fire shall go before him, and round about him a mighty tempest. That tempest is to carry wholly away the chaff from the floor which is now in threshing; that fire, to consume what the tempest carries off. Now, however, he is silent; silent in judgment, but not in precept. For if Christ is silent, what mean these gospels? What the voices of the apostles? the

canticles of the Psalms? the lofty utterances of the prophets? Truly in all these Christ is not silent. Howbeit he is silent for he present in not taking vengeance, not in not warning. But he will come in surpassing brightness to take vengeance, and will be seen of all, even of those who believe not on him; but now, forasmuch as although present he was not concealed, it behoved him to be despised: for unless he had been despised he would not have been crucified; if not crucified he would not have shed his blood, the price with which he redeemed us. But in order that he might give a price for us, he was crucified; that he might be crucified he was despised; that he might be despised, he appeared in humble guise. *Augustine.*

Ver. 3. (*first clause*). The future in the first clause may be rendered *he is coming*, as if the sound of his voice and the light of his glory had preceded his actual appearance. The imagery is borrowed from the giving of the law at Sinai. *J. A. Alexander.*

Ver. 3. (*first clause*). *May our God come!* (Version of Junius and Tremellius.) A prayer for the hastening of his advent, as in the Apocalypse, 22:20. *Poole's Synopsis.*

Ver. 3. *A fire shall devour before him.* As he gave his law in fire, so in fire shall he require it. *John Trapp.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 1-6.

1. The court called in the name of the King of kings.
2. The judgment set, and the judge taking his seat.
3. The parties summoned; Psalm 50:8.
4. The issue of this solemn trial foretold; Psalm 50:6. *Matthew Henry.*

Ver. 1-15.

1. God's call to man.
2. Man's call to God.

PSALM 50:4

EXPOSITION

Ver. 4. *He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth.* Angels and men, the upper and the lower worlds, are called to witness the solemn scene. The whole creation shall stand in court to testify to the solemnity and the truth of the divine pleading. Both earth beneath and heaven above shall unite in condemning sin; the guilty shall have no appeal, though all are summoned that they may appeal if they dare. Both angels and men have seen the guilt of mankind and the goodness of the Lord, they shall therefore confess the justice of the divine utterance, and say "Amen" to the sentence of the supreme Judge. Alas, ye despisers! What will ye do and to whom will ye fly?

That he may judge his people. Judgment begins at the house of God. The trial of the visible people of God will be a most awful ceremonial. He will thoroughly purge his floor. He will discern between his nominal and his real people, and that in open court, the whole universe looking on. My soul, when this actually takes place, how will it fare with thee? Canst thou endure the day of his coming?

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 4. *He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth.* That these dumb creatures may be as so many speaking evidences against an unworthy people, and witness of God's righteous dealings against them. See Deuteronomy 32:1 Isaiah 1:2 Mic 6:2. The Chaldee thus paraphrases: *He will call the high angels from above; and the just of the earth from beneath.* John Trapp.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 1-6.

1. The court called in the name of the King of kings.
2. The judgment set, and the judge taking his seat.
3. The parties summoned; Psalm 50:8.
4. The issue of this solemn trial foretold; Psalm 50:6. *Matthew Henry.*

Ver. 1-15.

1. God's call to man.
2. Man's call to God.

Ver. 4.

1. What God will do for his people. He will judge them.
 1. Deliver.
 2. Defend.
 3. Uphold.
2. The means at his disposal for this purpose. "He shall call, "etc. — Heaven and earth are subservient to him for the good of his church. *G.*
R.

Ver. 4. The judgment of the visible church. It will be by God himself, public, searching—with fire and wind, exact, final.

PSALM 50:5

EXPOSITION

Ver. 5. *Gather my saints together unto me.* Go, ye swift winged messengers, and separate the precious from the vile. Gather out the wheat of the heavenly garner. Let the long scattered, but elect people, known by my separating grace to be my sanctified ones, be now assembled in one place. All are not saints who seem to be so—a severance must be made; therefore let all who profess to be saints be gathered before my throne of judgment, and let them hear the word which will search and try the whole, that the false may be convicted and the true revealed.

Those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice; this is the grand test, and yet some have dared to imitate it. The covenant was ratified by the slaying of victims, the cutting and dividing of offerings; this the righteous have done by accepting with true faith the great propitiatory sacrifice, and this the pretenders have done in merely outward form. Let them be gathered before the throne for trial and testing, and as many as have really ratified the covenant by faith in the Lord Jesus shall be attested before all worlds as the objects of distinguishing grace, while formalists

shall learn that outward sacrifices are all in vain. Oh, solemn assize, how does my soul bow in awe at the prospect thereof!

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 5. *Gather*, etc. To whom are these words addressed? Many suppose to the angels, as the ministers of God's will; but it is unnecessary to make the expression more definite than it is in the Psalm. *J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Ver. 5. *My saints*, the objects of my mercy, those whom I have called and specially distinguished. The term is here descriptive of a relation, not of an intrinsic quality. *J. A. Alexander.*

Ver. 5. *Gather my saints together unto me.* There is a double or twofold gathering to Christ. There is a gathering unto Christ by faith, a gathering within the bond of the covenant, a gathering into the family of God, a gathering unto the root of Jesse, standing up for an ensign of the people. "In that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek; and his rest shall be glorious." Isaiah 11:10. This is the main end of the gospel, the great work of ministers, the gathering of sinners unto Christ. But then there is a gathering at the general judgment; and this is the fathering that is here spoken of. This gathering is consequential to the other. Christ will gather none to him at the last day but those that are gathered to him by faith here; he will give orders to gather together unto him all these, and none but these, that have taken hold of his covenant...

I would speak of Christ's owning and acknowledging the saints at his second coming. His owning and acknowledging them is imported in his giving these orders:

Gather my saints together unto me. ... Now upon this head I mention the things following: —

1. Saintship will be the only mark of distinction in that day. There are many marks of distinction now; but these will all cease, and this only will remain.
2. Saintship will then be Christ's badge of honour. Beware of mocking at saintship, or sanctity, holiness and purity; for it is Christ's badge of honour, the garments with which his followers are clothed, and will be the only badge of honour at the great day.

3. Christ will forget and mistake none of the saints. Many of the saints are forgotten here, it is forgotten that such persons were in the world, but Christ will forget and mistake none of them at the great day; he will give forth a list of all his saints, and give orders to gather them all unto him.

4. He will confess, own, and acknowledge them before his Father, and his holy angels. Matthew 10:32 Luke 12:8 Revelation 3:5. They are to go to my Father's house, and they are to go thither in my name, in my right, and at my back; and so it is necessary I should own and acknowledge them before my Father. But what need is there for his owning them before the angels? *Answer.* They are to be the angel's companions, and so it is necessary he should own them before the angels. This will be like a testimonial for them unto the angels. Lastly. The evidences of his right to and propriety in them, will then be made to appear. Malachi 3:17: "And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels." It is too late for persons to become his then; so the meaning is, they shall evidently appear to be mine. *James Scot, 1773.*

Ver. 5. *Gather my saints together unto me.* Our text may be considered as the commission given by the great Judge to his angels—those ministering spirits who do his will, hearkening to the voice of his power. The language of the text is in accordance with that which was uttered by our Lord when, alluding to the coming of the Son of Man, he says, "And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." But previous to this final, this *general* gathering together of his saints to judgment, Jehovah gathers them together in various ways, in various places, and by various means, both of providence and of grace. Previous to his being seated on a throne of judgment, we behold him sitting on a throne of mercy, and we hear him saying,

Gather my saints together unto me. These words lead us to notice—I. The characters described, *My saints*. II. The command issued, *Gather my saints together unto me.*

I. THE CHARACTERS HERE DESCRIBED—*my saints*, we are to understand *my holy ones*—those who have been sanctified and set apart by God. None of us possess this character by *nature*. We are born sinners,

and there is no difference; but by divine *grace* we experience a change of nature, and consequently a change of name. The title of saint is frequently given to the people of God in derision. "Such an one," says a man of the world, "is one of your saints." But, my brethren, no higher honour can be conferred upon us than to be denominated saints, if we truly deserve that character; but in what way do we become saints? We become saints—

1. *By divine choice.* The saints are the objects of everlasting love; their names are written in the Lamb's book of life; and it is worthy of remark that wherever the people of God are spoken of in sacred Scripture, as the objects of that everlasting love, it is in connection with their *personal sanctification*. Observe, they are not chosen because they *are* saints, nor because it is foreseen that they *will* be so, but they are chosen *to be* saints; sanctification is the effect and the only evidence of election. We become saints—

2. *By a divine change which is the necessary consequence of this election.* An inward, spiritual, supernatural, universal change is effected in the saints by the power of the Holy Ghost. Thus they are renewed in the spirit of their minds, and made partakers of a divine nature...Remember, then, this important truth, that Christians are called by the gospel to be saints; that you are Christians, not so much by your *orthodoxy* as by your *holiness*; that you are saints no further than as you are holy in all manner of conversation.

3. *The people of God furnish an evidence of being saints by their godly conduct.* "By their fruits," not by their feelings; not by their lips, not by their general profession, but, "by their fruits shall ye know them."

4. The character of the saints is evidenced *by divine consecration*. The people of God are called holy inasmuch as they are dedicated to God. It is the duty and the privilege of saints to consecrate themselves to the service of God. Even a heathen philosopher could say, "I *lend* myself to the *world*, but I *give* myself to the *gods*. But we possess more light and knowledge, and are therefore laid under greater obligation than was Seneca."

II. THE COMMAND ISSUED. *Gather my saints together unto me.*

Jehovah gathers his saints to himself in various ways.

1. *He gathers them to himself in their conversion.* The commission given by Christ to his ministers is, "Go ye forth into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature," or in other words, *Gather my saints together unto me.* The gospel is to be preached to *sinners* in order that they may become *saints*.

2. *Saints are gathered together by God in public worship ...*

3. *He gathers his saints together to himself in times of danger.* When storms appear to be gathering around them, he is desirous to screen them from the blast. He say to them, in the language of Isaiah, "Come, my people, and enter into thy chamber—the chamber of my perfections and my promises—enter into thy chamber and shut the doors about thee, and hide thyself until the calamity is overpast."

4. *God gathers his saints together in the service of his church.* Thus Christ collected his apostles together to give them their apostolic commission to go and teach all nations. At the period of the Reformation, the great Head of the church raised up Luther and Calvin, together with other eminent reformers, in order that they might light up a flame in Europe, yea, throughout the world, that the breath of popery should never be able to blow out.

5. *God gathers his saints together in death, and at the resurrection.* "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." This is the commission which death is habitually receiving—"Go, death, and gather such and such of my saints unto me." As the gardener enters the garden, and plucks up the full blown flower and the ripened fruit, so Jesus Christ enters the garden of his church and gathers his saints to himself; for he says, "Father, I will that all they whom thou hast given me may be with me, where I am, and behold my glory." *Condensed from J. Sibree's "Sermon preached at the reopening of Surrey Chapel, August 29th, 1830."*

Ver. 5. (*second clause*). *Made*, or *ratifying a covenant*; literally, *cutting*, striking, perhaps in allusion to the practice of slaying and dividing victims as a religious rite, accompanying solemn compacts. (See Genesis 15:10-18.) The same usage may be referred to in the following words, *over sacrifice*, i.e., standing over it: or *on sacrifice*, i.e., founding the engagement on a previous appeal to God. There is probably allusion to the great covenant transaction recorded in Exodus 24:4-8. This reference to sacrifice shows clearly that what follows was not intended to discredit or

repudiate that essential symbol of the typical or ceremonial system. *J. A. Alexander.*

Ver. 5. *Made a covenant with me.* Formerly soldiers used to take an oath not to flinch from their colours, but faithfully to cleave to their leaders; thus they called *sacramentum militare*, a military oath; such an oath lies upon every Christian. It is so essential to the being of a saint, that they are described by this,

Gather together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me. We are not Christians till we have subscribed this covenant, and that without any reservation. When we take upon us the profession of Christ's name, we enlist ourselves in his muster roll, and by it do promise that we will live and die with him in opposition to all his enemies ...He will not entertain us till we resign up ourselves freely to his disposal, that there may be no disputing with his commands afterwards, but, as one under his authority, go and come at his word. *William Gurnall.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 1-6.

1. The court called in the name of the King of kings.
2. The judgment set, and the judge taking his seat.
3. The parties summoned; Psalm 50:8.
4. The issue of this solemn trial foretold; Psalm 50:6. *Matthew Henry.*

Ver. 1-15.

1. God's call to man.
2. Man's call to God.

Ver. 5. The great family gathering.

1. Who are gathered.
2. How they are gathered.
3. To whom.
4. When they are gathered.

Ver. 5. (*last clause*).

1. The covenant.

2. The sacrifice which ratifies it.
3. How we may be said to make it.

PSALM 50:6

EXPOSITION

Ver. 6. *And the heavens shall declare his righteousness.* Celestial intelligences and the spirits of just men made perfect, shall magnify the infallible judgment of the divine tribunal. Now they doubtless wonder at the hypocrisy of men; then they shall equally marvel at the exactness of the severance between the true and the false.

For God is judge himself. This is the reason for the correctness of the judgment. Priests of old, and churches of later times, were readily deceived, but not so the all discerning Lord. No deputy judge sits on the great white throne; the injured Lord of all himself weighs the evidence and allots the vengeance or reward. The scene in the Psalm is a grand poetical conception, but it is also an inspired prophecy of that day which shall burn as an oven, when the Lord shall discern between him that feareth and him that feareth him not. *Selah.* Here we may well pause in reverent prostration, in deep searching of heart, in humble prayer, and in awe struck expectation.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 6. *The heavens shall declare his righteousness.* It is the manner of Scripture to commit the teaching of that which it desires should be most noticeable and important to *the heavens and the earth*: for *the heavens* are seen by all, and their light discovers all things. Here it speaks of *the heavens*, not *the earth*, because these are everlasting, but not the earth. *Geier and Muis, in Poole's Synopsis.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 6. (*last clause*). Then slander will not pervert the sentence, undue severity will not embitter it, partiality will not excuse, falsehood will not deceive, justice will surely be done.

PSALM 50:7

EXPOSITION

Ver. 7-15. The address which follows is directed to the professed people of God. It is clearly, in the first place, meant for Israel; but is equally applicable to the visible church of God in every age. It declares the futility of external worship when spiritual faith is absent, and the mere outward ceremonial is rested in.

Ver. 7. *Hear, O my people, and I will speak.* Because Jehovah speaks and they are avowedly his own people, they are bound to give earnest heed. "Let me speak," saith the great I AM. The heavens and earth are but listeners, the Lord is about both to testify and to judge.

O Israel, and I will testify against thee. Their covenant name is mentioned to give point to the address; it was a double evil that the chosen nation should become so carnal, so unspiritual, so false, so heartless to their God. God himself, whose eyes sleep not, who is not misled by rumour, but sees for himself, enters on the scene as witness against his favoured nation. Alas! for us when God, even our fathers' God, testifies to the hypocrisy of the visible church.

I am God, even thy God. He had taken them to be his peculiar people above all other nations, and they had in the most solemn manner avowed that he was their God. Hence the special reason for calling them to account. The law began with, "I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt," and now the session of their judgment opens with the same reminder of their singular position, privilege, and responsibility. It is not only that Jehovah is God, but *thy* God, O Israel; this is that makes thee so amenable to his searching reproofs.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 1-15.

1. God's call to man.
2. Man's call to God.

Ver. 7. Sins of God's people specially against God, and only known to God. A searching subject.

PSALM 50:8

EXPOSITION

Ver. 8. *I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices or thy burnt offerings, to have been ever before me.* Though they had not failed in maintaining his outward worship, or even if they had, he was not about to call them to account for this: a more weighty matter was now under consideration. They thought the daily sacrifices and the abounding burnt offerings to be everything: he counted them nothing if the inner sacrifice of heart devotion had been neglected. What was greatest with them was least with God. It is even so today. Sacraments (so called) and sacred rites are them main concern with unconverted but religious men, but with the Most High the spiritual worship which they forget is the sole matter. Let the external be maintained by all means, according to the divine command, but if the secret and spiritual be not in them, they are a vain oblation, a dead ritual, and even an abomination before the Lord.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 8. *I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices;* i.e., for thy neglect of them, but for thy resting in them, sticking in the bark, bringing me the bare shell without the kernel, not referring to the right end and use, but satisfying thyself in the work done. *John Trapp.*

Ver. 8. *I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices or thy burnt offerings continually before me.* Those words *to have been*, which our translators supply, may be left out, and the sense remain perfect: or if those words be continued, then the negative particle *not*, is to be reassumed out of the first part of the verse, and the whole read thus,

I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices, or thy burnt offerings not to have been continually before me. That is, I will not charge thee with a neglect of outward duty or worship, the inward or spiritual (of which he speaks, Psalm 50:14), being that which is most pleasing unto me. *Joseph Caryl.*

Ver. 8-9. It is the very remonstrance which our Lord himself makes against the Pharisees of his days, for laying so much stress on the outward observance of their own traditions, the washing of pots and cups and other such like things; the paying of tithes of anise and mint and cummin; the

ostentatious fulfilment of all ceremonious observances in the eyes of men, the exalting the shadow to the exclusion of the substance. And have we not seen the like in our own days, even to the very vestment of the minister, the obeisance of the knee, and the posture of the body? as if the material church were all in all, and God were not Spirit, that demanded of those that worshipped him that they should worship him in spirit and in truth; as if the gold and ornaments of the temple were far beyond the hidden man of the heart in that which is incorruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. *Barton Bouchier.*

PSALM 50:9

EXPOSITION

Ver. 9. *I will take no bullock out of thy house.* Foolishly they dreamed that bullocks with horns and hoofs could please the Lord, when indeed he sought for hearts and souls. Impiously they fancied that Jehovah needed these supplies, and that if they fed his altar with their fat beasts, he would be content. What he intended for their instruction, they made their confidence. They remembered not that "to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."

Nor he goats out of thy folds. He mentions these lesser victims as if to rouse their common sense to see that the great Creator could find not satisfaction in mere animal offerings. If he needed these, he would not appeal to their scanty stalls and folds; in fact, he here refuses to take so much as one, if they brought them under the false and dishonouring view, that they were in themselves pleasing to him. This shows that the sacrifices of the law were symbolical of higher and spiritual things, and were not pleasing to God except under their typical aspect. The believing worshipper looking beyond the outward was accepted, the unspiritual who had no respect to their meaning was wasting his substance, and blaspheming the God of heaven.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 8-9. It is the very remonstrance which our Lord himself makes against the Pharisees of his days, for laying so much stress on the outward observance of their own traditions, the washing of pots and cups and other

such like things; the paying of tithes of anise and mint and cummin; the ostentatious fulfilment of all ceremonious observances in the eyes of men, the exalting the shadow to the exclusion of the substance. And have we not seen the like in our own days, even to the very vestment of the minister, the obeisance of the knee, and the posture of the body? as if the material church were all in all, and God were not Spirit, that demanded of those that worshipped him that they should worship him in spirit and in truth; as if the gold and ornaments of the temple were far beyond the hidden man of the heart in that which is incorruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. *Barton Bouchier.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 1-15.

1. God's call to man.
2. Man's call to God.

PSALM 50:10

EXPOSITION

Ver. 10. *For every beast of the forest is mine.* How could they imagine that the Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth, had need of beasts, when all the countless hordes that find shelter in a thousand forests and wildernesses belong to him?

And the cattle upon a thousand hills. Not alone the wild beasts, but also the tamer creatures are all his own. Even if God cared for these things, he could supply himself. Their cattle were not, after all, their own, but were still the great Creator's property, why then should he be beholden to them. From Dan to Beersheba, from Nebaioth to Lebanon, there fed not a beast which was not marked with the name of the great Shepherd; why, then, should he crave oblations of Israel? What a slight is here put even upon sacrifices of divine appointment when wrongly viewed as in themselves pleasing to God! And all this to be so expressly stated under the law! How much more is this clear under the gospel, when it is so much more plainly revealed, that "God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him

in spirit and in truth"? Ye Ritualists, ye Sacramentarians, ye modern Pharisees, what say ye to this?

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 10. *"For to me (belongs) every beast of the forest, the cattle in hills of a thousand."* This last idiomatic phrase may either mean a thousand hills, or hills where the cattle rove by thousands, with probable allusion to the hilly grounds of Bashan beyond Jordan. According to etymology, the noun in the first clause means an *animal*, and that in the second *beasts* or *brutes* in general. But when placed in antithesis, the first denotes a wild beast, and the second domesticated animals or cattle. Both words were necessary to express God's sovereign propriety in the whole animal creation. Thus understood, the verse assigns a reason for the negative assertion in the one before it. Even if God could stand in need of animal oblations, for his own sake, or for their sake, he would not be under the necessity of coming to man for them, since the whole animal creation is his property and perfectly at his disposal. *J. A. Alexander.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 1-15.

1. God's call to man.
2. Man's call to God.

PSALM 50:11

EXPOSITION

Ver. 11. *I know all the fowls of the mountain.* All the winged creatures are under my inspection and near my hand; what then can be the value of your pairs of turtledoves, and your two young pigeons? The great Lord not only feeds all his creatures, but is well acquainted with each one; how wondrous is this knowledge!

And the wild beasts of the fields are mine. The whole population moving over the plain belongs to me; why then should I seek you beeves and rams? In me all things live and move; how mad are you to suppose that I desire

your living things! A spiritual God demands other life than that which is seen in animals; he looks for spiritual sacrifice; for the love, the trust, the praise, the life of your hearts.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 11-12. We show our scorn of God's sufficiency, by secret thoughts of meriting from him by any religious act, as though God could be indebted to us, and obliged by us. As though our devotions could bring a blessedness to God more than he essentially hath; when indeed "our goodness extends not to him." Psalm 16:2. Our services to God are rather services to ourselves, and bring a happiness to us, not to God. This secret opinion of merit (though disputed among the Papists, yet) is natural to man; and this secret self pleasing, when we have performed any duty, and upon that account expect some fair compensation from God, as having been profitable to him; God intimates this: "The wild beasts of the field are mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee; for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof." He implies, that they wronged his infinite fulness, by thinking that he stood in need of their sacrifices and services, and that he was beholden to them for their adoration of him. All merit implies a moral or natural insufficiency in the person of whom we merit, and our doing something for him, which he could not, or at least so well do for himself. It is implied in our murmuring at God's dealing with us as a course of cross providences, wherein men think they have deserved better at the hands of God by their service, than to be cast aside and degraded by him. In our prosperity we are apt to have secret thoughts that our enjoyments were the debts God owes us, rather than gifts freely bestowed upon us. Hence it is that men are more unwilling to part with their righteousness than with their sins, and are apt to challenge salvation as a due, rather than beg it as an act of grace. *Stephen Charnock.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 1-15.

1. God's call to man.
2. Man's call to God.

PSALM 50:12

EXPOSITION

Ver. 12. *If I were hungry, I would not tell thee.* Strange conception, a hungry God! Yet if such an absurd ideal could be truth, and if the Lord hungered for meat, he would not ask it of men. He could provide for himself out of his own possessions; he would not turn suppliant to his own creatures. Even under the grossest ideal of God, faith in outward ceremonies is ridiculous. Do men fancy that the Lord needs banners, and music, and incense, and fine linen? If he did, the stars would emblazon his standard, the winds and the waves become his orchestra, ten thousand times ten thousand flowers would breathe forth perfume, the snow should be his alb, the rainbow his girdle, the clouds of light his mantle. O fools and slow of heart, ye worship ye know not what!

For the world is mine, and the fulness thereof. What can he need who is owner of all things and able to create as he wills? Thus overwhelmingly does the Lord pour forth his arguments upon formalists.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 12. *If I were hungry*, etc. Pagan sacrifices were considered as feasts of the gods. *Daniel Cresswell.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 1-15.

1. God's call to man.
2. Man's call to God.

PSALM 50:13

EXPOSITION

Ver. 13. *Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats?* Are you so infatuated as to think this? Is the great I AM subject to corporeal wants, and are they to be thus grossly satisfied? Heathens thought thus of their

idols, but dare ye think thus of the God who made the heavens and the earth? Can ye have fallen so low as to think thus of me, O Israel? What vivid reasoning is here! How the fire flashes dart into the idiot faces of trusters in outward forms! Ye dupes of Rome, can ye read this and be unmoved? The expostulation is indignant; the questions utterly confound; the conclusion is inevitable; heart worship only can be acceptable with the true God. It is inconceivable that outward things can gratify him, except so far as through them our faith and love express themselves.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 13. *Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats?* That is, did I want anything I would not tell thee; but hast thou indeed such gross notions of me, as to imagine that I have appointed and required the blood and flesh of animals for their own sake and not with some design? Dost thou think I am pleased with these, when they are offered without faith, love, and gratitude? Nay, offer the sacrifice of praise, etc. Render to me a spiritual and reasonable service, performing thy engagements, and then thou wilt find me a very present help in trouble. *B. Boothroyd.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 1-15.

1. God's call to man.
2. Man's call to God.

Ver. 13-15. What sacrifices are not, and what are acceptable with God.

PSALM 50:14

EXPOSITION

Ver. 14. *Offer unto God thanksgiving.* No longer look at your sacrifices as in themselves gifts pleasing to me, but present them as the tributes of your gratitude; it is then that I will accept them, but not while your poor souls have no love and no thankfulness to offer me. The sacrifices, as considered in themselves, are contemned, but the internal emotions of love consequent upon a remembrance of divine goodness, are commended as the substance,

meaning, and soul of sacrifice. Even when the legal ceremonials were not abolished, this was true, and when they came to an end, this truth was more than ever made manifest. Not for want of bullocks on the altar was Israel blamed, but for want of thankful adoration before the Lord. She excelled in the visible, but in the inward grace, which is the one thing needful, she sadly failed. Too many in these days are in the same condemnation.

And pay thy vows unto the most High. Let the sacrifice be really presented to the God who seeth the heart, pay to him the love you promised, the service you covenanted to render, the loyalty of heart you have vowed to maintain. O for grace to do this! O that we may be graciously enabled to love God, and live up to our profession! To be, indeed, the servants of the Lord, the lovers of Jesus, this is our main concern. What avails our baptism, to what end our gatherings at the Lord's table, to what purpose our solemn assemblies, if we have not the fear of the Lord, and vital godliness reigning within our bosoms?

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 1-15.

1. God's call to man.
2. Man's call to God.

Ver. 1-15. What sacrifices are not, and what are acceptable with God.

PSALM 50:15

EXPOSITION

Ver. 15. *And call upon me in the day of trouble.* Oh blessed verse! Is this then true sacrifice? Is it an offering to ask an alms of heaven? It is even so. The King himself so regards it. For herein is faith manifested, herein is love proved, for in the hour of peril we fly to those we love. It seems a small thing to pray to God when we are distressed, yet is it a more acceptable worship than the mere heartless presentation of bullocks and he goats. This is a voice from the throne, and how full of mercy it is! It is very tempestuous round about Jehovah, and yet what soft drops of mercy's rain

drop from the bosom of the storm! Who would not offer such sacrifices? Troubled one, haste to present it now! Who shall say that Old Testament saints did not know the gospel? Its very spirit and essence breathes like frankincense all around this holy Psalm. *I will deliver thee.* The reality of thy sacrifice of prayer shall be seen in its answer. Whether the smoke of burning bulls be sweet to me or no, certainly thy humble prayer shall be, and I will prove it so by my gracious reply to thy supplication. This promise is very large, and may refer both to temporal and eternal deliverances; faith can turn it every way, like the sword of the cherubim. *And thou shalt glorify me.* Thy prayer will honour me, and thy grateful perception of my answering mercy will also glorify me. The goats and bullocks would prove a failure, but the true sacrifice never could. The calves of the stall might be a vain oblation, but not the calves of sincere lips.

Thus we see what is true ritual. Here we read inspired rubrics. Spiritual worship is the great, the essential matter; all else without it is rather provoking than pleasing to God. As helps to the soul, outward offerings were precious, but when men went not beyond them, even their hallowed things were profaned in the view of heaven.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 15. *Call upon me*, etc. Prayer is like the ring which Queen Elizabeth gave to the Earl of Essex, bidding him if he were in any distress send that ring to her, and she would help him. God commandeth his people if they be in any perplexity to send this ring to him: *Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.* George Swinnock.

Ver. 15. *Call upon me in the day of trouble*, etc. Who will scrape to a keeper for a piece of venison who may have free access to the master of the game to ask and have? Hanker not after other helpers, rely on him only, fully trusting him in the use of such means as he prescribes and affords. God is jealous, will have no co-rival, nor allow thee (in this case) two strings to thy bow. He who worketh all in all must be unto thee all in all; of, through, and to whom are all things, to him be all praise for ever. Romans 11:36. George Gipps, in "A Sermon preached (before God, and from him) to the Honourable House of Commons, 1645."

Ver. 15. *Call upon me in the day of trouble*, etc. The Lord hath promised his children supply of all good things, yet they must use the means of

impetration; by prayer. He feed the young ravens when they call upon him. Psalm 147:9. He feeds the young ravens, but first they call upon him. God withholdeth from them that ask not, lest he should give to them that desire not. (Augustine.) David was confident that by God's power he should spring over a wall; yet not without putting his own strength and agility to it. Those things we pray for, we must work for. (Augustine.) The carter in Isidore, when his cart was overthrown, would needs have his god Hercules come down from heaven, to help him up with it; but whilst he forbore to set his own shoulder to it, his cart lay still. Abraham was as rich as any of our aldermen, David as valiant as any of our gentlemen, Solomon as wise as any of our deepest naturians, Susanna as fair as any of our painted pieces. Yet none of them thought that their riches, valour, policy, beauty, or excellent parts could save them; but they stirred the sparks of grace, and bestirred themselves in pious work. And this is our means, if our meaning be to be saved. *Thomas Adams.*

Ver. 15. *I will deliver thee:* properly, *I will draw forth with my own mighty hand,* and plant thee in liberty and prosperity. *Hermann Venema.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 1-15.

1. God's call to man.
2. Man's call to God.

Ver. 13-15. What sacrifices are not, and what are acceptable with God.

Ver. 15.

1. The occasion—"trouble."
2. The command—"call upon me."
3. The promise—"I will deliver thee."
4. The design—"Thou shalt, "etc. *G. R.*

Ver. 15. *Thou shalt glorify me.* This we do by praying, and by praising when prayer is heard; as also by confidence in his promises, submission to his chastisements, concern for his honour, attachment to his cause, affection to his people, and by continual obedience to his commands.

Ver. 15.

1. A special invitation as to person and time.
2. Special promise to those accepting it.
3. Special duty involved when the promise is fulfilled.

PSALM 50:16**EXPOSITION**

Ver. 16-21. Here the Lord turns to the manifestly wicked among his people; and such there were even in the highest places of his sanctuary. If moral formalists had been rebuked, how much more these immoral pretenders to fellowship with heaven? If the lack of heart spoiled the worship of the more decent and virtuous, how much more would violations of the law, committed with a high hand, corrupt the sacrifices of the wicked?

Ver. 16. *But unto the wicked God saith.* To the breakers of the second table he now addresses himself; he had previously spoken to the neglectors of the first.

What hast thou to do to declare my statutes? You violate openly my moral law, and yet are great sticklers for my ceremonial commands! What have you to do with them? What interest can you have in them? Do you dare to teach my law to others, and profane it yourselves? What impudence, what blasphemy is this! Even if you claim to be sons of Levi, what of that? Your wickedness disqualifies you, disinherits you, puts you out of the succession. It should silence you, and would if my people were as spiritual as I would have them, for they would refuse to hear you, and to pay you the portion of temporal things which is due to my true servants. You count up your holy days, you contend for rituals, you fight for externals, and yet the weightier matters of the law ye despise! Ye blind guides, ye strain out gnats and swallow camels; your hypocrisy is written on your foreheads and manifest to all.

Or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth. Ye talk of being in covenant with me, and yet trample my holiness beneath you feet as swine trample upon pearls; think ye that I can brook this? Your mouths are full of

lying and slander, and yet ye mouth my words as if they were fit morsels for such as you! How horrible and evil it is, that to this day we see men explaining doctrines who despise precepts! They make grace a coverlet for sin, and even judge themselves to be sound in the faith, while they are rotten in life. We need the grace of the doctrines as much as the doctrines of grace, and without it an apostle is but a Judas, and a fair spoken professor is an arrant enemy of the cross of Christ.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 16. *Unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes?* etc. "As snow in summer, and as rain in harvest, so honour is not seemly for a fool." Is it not? No wonder then that divine wisdom requires us ourselves to put off the old man (as snakes put off their skins) before we take on us the most honourable office of reproving sin; a duty which above any other brings praise to God, and profit to men; insomuch that God hath not a more honourable work that I know of to set us about. And what think you? Are greasy scullions fit to stand before kings? Are dirty kennel rakers fit to be plenipotentiaries or ambassadors? Are unclean beasts fit to be made lord almoners, and sent to bestow the king's favours? Are swine fit to cast pearl, and the very richest pearl of God's royal word? No man dreams it; consequently none can believe himself qualified or commissioned to be a reprover of sin "till he is washed, till he is sanctified, till he is justified in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the Spirit of our God." A lunatick beggar in Athens would not believe but that all the ships in the harbour were his. His mistake exceeded not theirs, who persuade themselves that this richer office is theirs, before they are "alive from the dead," and "born of the Spirit," before they are returned to God or to themselves. The Duke of Alva is said to have complained that `his king sent him in fetters to fight for him; "because without his pardon given him, and while he was a prisoner, he employed him in war. But the Supreme King is a more merciful one, and orders our charity to begin at home; making it our first duty to break off our sins; and then when we have put off these our shackles, go to fight his battles. *Daniel Burgess (1645—1712-13) in "The Golden Sufferers."*

Ver. 16. *The wicked.* By whom are meant, not openly profane sinners; but men under a profession of religion, and indeed who were teachers of others, as appears from the following expostulations with them: the Scribes, Pharisees, and doctors among the Jews, are designed, and so

Kimchi interprets it of their wise men, who learnt and taught the law, but did not act according to it. *John Gill*.

Ver. 16. *What hast thou to do to declare my statutes?* etc. All the medieval writers teach us, even from the Mosaic law, concerning the leper, how the writer of this Psalm only put in words what those statutes expressed in fact. For so it is written: "The leper in whom the plague is, ...he shall put a covering upon his upper lip." As they all, following Origen, say: Let them who are themselves of polluted lips, take good heed not to teach others. Or, to take it in the opposite way, see how Isaiah would not speak to his people, because he was a man of polluted lips, and he dwelt among a people of polluted lips, till they had been touched with the living coal from the altar; and by that, as by a sacrament of the Old Testament, a sentence of absolution had been pronounced upon them. *J. M. Neale*.

Ver. 16. (*second clause*). Emphasis is laid on the phrase, *to declare God's statutes*, which both denotes such an accurate knowledge of them as one may obtain by *numbering* them, and a diligent and public review of them. Properly speaking the word is derived from the Arabic, and signifies *to reckon in dust*, for the ancients were accustomed to calculate in *dust* finely sprinkled over tablets of the Abacus. *Hermann Venema*.

Ver. 16. *But unto the wicked God saith, What has thou to do...to take my covenant into thy mouth?* For whom is the covenant made but for the wicked? If men were not wicked or sinful what needed there a covenant of grace? The covenant is for the wicked, and the covenant brings grace enough to pardon those who are most wicked; why, then, doth the Lord say to the wicked,

What hast thou to do to take my covenant unto thy mouth? Observe what follows, and his meaning is expounded: *Seeing thou hatest to be reformed*. As if God had said, You wicked man, who protects you sin, and holds it close, refusing to return and hating to reform; what hast thou to do to meddle with my covenant? Lay off thy defiled hands. He that is resolved to hold his sin takes hold of the covenant in vain, or rather he lets it go, while he seems to hold it. Woe unto them who sue for mercy while they neglect duty. *Joseph Caryl*.

Ver. 16. When a minister does not do what he teaches, this makes him a vile person; nay, this makes him ridiculous, like Lucian's apothecary, who had medicines in his shop to cure the cough, and told others that he had

them, and yet was troubled with it himself. With what a forehead canst thou stand in a pulpit and publish the laws of God, and undertake the charge of souls, that when thine own nakedness appears, when thy tongue is of a larger size than thy hands, thy ministry is divided against itself, thy courses give thy doctrine the lie; thou sayest that men must be holy, and thy deeds do declare thy mouth's hypocrisy; thou doest more mischief than a hundred others. *William Fenner.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 16-17.

1. The prohibition given.

1. The prohibited *things* — "declare my statutes." "Take my covenant, "etc. (1.) Preaching. (2.) Teaching, as in Sunday schools. (3.) Praying. (4.) Attending ordinances.

2. Prohibited *persons*. Wicked preachers, etc., while they continue in wickedness.

2. The reason assigned; Psalm 50:17.

1. No self application of the truth.

2. Inward hatred of it.

3. Outward rejection. *G. R.*

PSALM 50:17

EXPOSITION

Ver. 17. *Seeing thou hatest instruction.* Profane professors are often too wise to learn, too besotted with conceit to be taught of God. What a monstrosity that men should declare those statutes which with their hearts they do not know, and which in their lives they openly disavow! Woe unto the men who hate the instruction which they take upon themselves to give.

And castest my words behind thee. Despising them, throwing them away as worthless, putting them out of sight as obnoxious. Many boasters of the law did this practically; and in these last days there are pickers and choosers of God's words who cannot endure the practical part of Scripture;

they are disgusted at duty, they abhor responsibility, they disembowel texts of their plain meanings, they wrest the Scriptures to their own destruction. It is an ill sign when a man dares not look a Scripture in the face, and an evidence of brazen impudence when he tries to make it mean something less condemnatory of his sins, and endeavours to prove it to be less sweeping in its demands. How powerful is the argument that such men have no right to take the covenant of God into their mouths, seeing that its spirit does not regulate their lives!

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 17. *And castest my words behind thee.* *Thou castest away contemptuously*, with disgust and detestation, as idols are cast out of a city; or as Moses indignantly dashed to the earth the tables of the law. *Martin Geier.*

Ver. 17. *My words:* apparently the ten commandments, accustomed to be called the *ten words*, by which God is often said to have made his covenant with Israel. *Hermann Venema.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 16-17.

1. The prohibition given.

1. The prohibited *things* — "declare my statutes." "Take my covenant, "etc. **(1.)** Preaching. **(2.)** Teaching, as in Sunday schools. **(3.)** Praying. **(4.)** Attending ordinances.

2. Prohibited *persons*. Wicked preachers, etc., while they continue in wickedness.

2. The reason assigned; Psalm 50:17.

1. No self application of the truth.

2. Inward hatred of it.

3. Outward rejection. *G. R.*

Ver. 17.

1. *The fatal sign.*

1. Hating to be taught.

2. Hating what is taught.

2. *What it indicates.*

1. Pride.

2. Contempt of God.

3. Indifference to truth.

4. Atheism at heart.

5. Deadness of conscience.

3. *What it leads to.* See Psalm 50:22.

Ver. 17-18. Rejection of salutary instruction leads sooner or later to open transgression. Instances, reasons, inferential warnings.

PSALM 50:18

EXPOSITION

Ver. 18. *When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentedst with him.* Moral honesty cannot be absent where true grace is present. Those who excuse others in trickery are guilty themselves; those who use others to do unjust actions for them are doubly so. If a man be ever so religious, if his own actions do not rebuke dishonesty, he is an accomplice with thieves. If we can acquiesce in anything which is not upright, we are not upright ourselves, and our religion is a lie.

And hast been partaker with adulterers. One by one the moral precepts are thus broken by the sinners in Zion. Under the cloak of piety, unclean livers conceal themselves. We may do this by smiling at unchaste jests, listening to indelicate expressions, and conniving at licentious behaviour in our presence; and if we thus act, how dare we preach, or lead public prayer, or wear the Christian name? See how the Lord lays righteousness to the plummet. How plainly all this declares that without holiness no man shall see the Lord! No amount of ceremonial or theological accuracy can cover dishonesty and fornication: these filthy things must be either purged from us by the blood of Jesus, or they will kindle a fire in God's anger which will burn even to the lowest hell.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 18. *When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentedst with him;* or *didst run with him.* This was literally true of the Scribes and Pharisees; they devoured widow's houses, and robbed them of their substance, under a pretext of long prayers; they consented to the deeds of Barabbas, a robber, when they preferred him to Jesus Christ; and they joined with the thieves on the cross in reviling him; and, in a spiritual sense, they stole away the word of the Lord, every man from his neighbour; took away the key of knowledge from the people, and put false glosses upon the sacred writings. *John Gill.*

Ver. 18. *Thou consentedst with him; became his accomplice.* *Sunetreces.* LXX, *i.e.*, you helped him to carry off his booty and to make his escape. *Samuel Horsley.*

Ver. 18. *Thou consentedst with him.* Or, thou runnest along with him. *Hast been partaker with;* namely, thou art his companion; a term taken from commerce of merchants, or from banquets made after the ancient manner, to which divers did contribute, and had their shares therein. *John Diodati.*

Ver. 18. (*last clause*). To give entertainment to them we know to be dissolute, is to communicate with their sins. *Thomas Adams.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 17-18.

Rejection of salutary instruction leads sooner or later to open transgression. Instances, reasons, inferential warnings.

PSALM 50:19

EXPOSITION

Ver. 19. *Thou givest thy mouth to evil.* Sins against the ninth commandment are here mentioned. The man who surrenders himself to the habit of slander is a vile hypocrite if he associates himself with the people of God. A man's health is readily judged by his tongue. A foul mouth, a foul heart. Some slander almost as often as they breathe, and yet are great

upholders of the church, and great sticklers for holiness. To what depths will not they go in evil, who delight in spreading it with their tongues?

And thy tongue frameth deceit. This is a more deliberate sort of slander, where the man dexterously elaborates false witness, and concocts methods of defamation. There is an ingenuity of calumny in some men, and, alas! even in some who are thought to be followers of the Lord Jesus. They manufacture falsehoods, weave them in their loom, hammer them on their anvil, and then retail their wares in every company. Are these accepted with God? Though they bring their wealth to the altar, and speak eloquently of truth and of salvation, have they any favour with God? We should blaspheme the holy God if we were to think so. They are corrupt in his sight, a stench in his nostrils. He will cast all liars into hell. Let them preach, and pray, and sacrifice as they will; till they become truthful, the God of truth loathes them utterly.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 19. *Thou givest thy mouth to evil*, etc. *Thou givest.* Hebrew, *thou sendest forth*; to wit, free; for the word is used of men dismissing their wives or their servants, whom they left to their freedom. Thou hast an unbridled tongue, and castest off all restraints of God's law, and of thine own conscience, and givest thy tongue liberty to speak what you please, though it be offensive and dishonourable to God, and injurious to thy neighbour, or to thy own soul; which is justly produced as an evidence of their hypocrisy. *To evil*, either to sinful or mischievous speeches. *Frameth deceit*, i.e., uttereth lies or fair words, wherewith to circumvent those who deal with them. *Matthew Poole*.

Ver. 19. The ninth commandment is now added to the other two, as being habitually violated by the person here addressed. *J. A. Alexander*.

PSALM 50:20

EXPOSITION

Ver. 20. *Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother.* He sits down to it, makes it his meat, studies it, resolves upon it, becomes a master of

defamation, occupies the chair of calumny. His nearest friend is not safe, his dearest relative escapes not.

Thou slanderest thine own mother's son. He ought to love him best, but he has an ill word for him. The son of one's own mother was to the Oriental a very tender relation; but the wretched slanderer knows no claims of kindred. He stabs his brother in the dark, and aims a blow at him who came forth of the same womb; yet he wraps himself in the robe of hypocrisy, and dreams that he is a favourite of heaven, an accepted worshipper of the Lord. Are such monsters to be met with nowadays? Alas! they pollute our churches still, and are roots of bitterness, spots on our solemn feasts, wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever. Perhaps some such may read these lines, but they will probably read them in vain; their eyes are too dim to see their own condition, their hearts are waxen gross, their ears are dull of hearing; they are given up to a strong delusion to believe a lie, that they may be damned.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 20. *Thou sittest and speakest*, etc. A man may both speak and do evil while he sits still and doth nothing; an idle posture may serve the turn for such work as that. *Joseph Caryl*.

Ver. 20. *Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother*, etc. When you are sitting still, and have nothing else to do, you are ever injuring your neighbour with your slanderous speech. Your table talk is abuse of your nearest friends. *Samuel Horsley*.

Ver. 20. *Thine own mother's son.* To understand the force of this expression, it is necessary to bear in mind that polygamy was allowed amongst the Israelites. Those who were born to the same father were all brethren, but a yet more intimate relationship subsisted between those who had the same mother, as well as the same father. *French and Skinner*.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 20-21.

1. Man speaking and God silent.
2. God speaking and man silent.

PSALM 50:21

EXPOSITION

Ver. 21. *These things hast thou done, and I kept silence.* No swift judgment overthrew the sinner—long suffering reigned; no thunder was heard in threatening, and no bolt of fire was hurled in execution.

Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself. The inference drawn from the Lord's patience was infamous; the respited culprit thought his judge to be one of the same order as himself. He offered sacrifice, and deemed it accepted; he continued in sin, and remained unpunished, and therefore he rudely said, "Why need believe these crazy prophets? God cares not how we live so long as we pay our tithes. Little does he consider how we get the plunder, so long as we bring a bullock to his altar." What will not men imagine of the Lord? At one time they liken the glory of Israel to a calf, and anon unto their brutish selves.

But I will reprove thee. At last I will break silence and let them know my mind. *And set them in order before thine eyes.* I will marshall thy sins in battle array. I will make thee see them, I will put them down item by item, classified and arranged. Thou shalt know that if silent awhile, I was never blind or deaf. I will make thee perceive what thou hast tried to deny. I will leave the seat of mercy for the throne of judgment, and there I will let thee see how great the difference between thee and me.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 21. *These things hast thou done, and I kept silence.* Neither sleep nor slumber, nor connivance, nor neglect of anything can be incident to God. Because he doth not execute present judgment and visible destruction upon sinners, therefore blasphemy presumptuously infers—will God trouble himself about such petty matters? So they imagined of their imaginary Jupiter. *Non vacat exiguis rebus adesse Jovem.* What a narrow and finite apprehension this is of God! He that causes and produces every action—shall he not be present at every action? What can we do without him, that cannot move but in him? He that taketh notice of sparrows, and numbers the seeds which the very ploughman thrusts in the ground, can any action of man escape his knowledge, or slip from his contemplation? He may

seem to wink at things, but never shuts his eyes. He doth not always manifest a reprehensive knowledge, yet he always retains an apprehensive knowledge. Though David smote not Shimei cursing, yet he heard Shimei cursing. As judges often determine to hear, but do not hear to determine; so though God does not see to like, ye he likes to see. *Thomas Adams.*

Ver. 21. *Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself.*

Such is the blindness and corruption of our nature, that we have very deformed and misshapen thoughts of him, till with the eye of faith we see his face in the glass of the word; and therefore Mr. Perkins affirms, that all men who ever came of Adam (Christ alone excepted) are by nature atheists; because at the same time that they acknowledge God, they deny his power, presence, and justice, and allow him to be only what pleaseth themselves. Indeed, it is natural for every man to desire to accommodate his lusts with a conception of God as may be most favourable to and suit best with them. God charges some for this:

Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself. Sinners do with God as the Ethiopians do with angels, whom they picture with black faces that they may be like themselves. *William Gurnall.*

Ver. 21. *Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself.* This men do when they plead for sins as little, as venial, as that which is below God to take notice of; because they themselves think it so, therefore God must think it so too. Man, with a giant like pride, would climb into the throne of the Almighty, and establish a contradiction to the will of God by making his own will, and not God's, the square and rule of his actions. This principle commenced and took date in Paradise, where Adam would not depend upon the will of God revealed to him, but upon himself and his own will, and thereby makes himself as God. *Stephen Charnock.*

Ver. 21. *I will set them in order before thine eyes.* This is to be understood *more militari*, when sins shall be set in rank and file, in bloody array against thy soul; or *more forensi*, when they shall be set in order as so many indictments for thy rebellion and treason. *Stephen Charnock.*

Ver. 21. *And set them in order before thine eyes:* as if he should say, Thou thoughtest all thy sins were scattered and dispersed; that there was not a sin to be found; that they should never be rallied and brought together; but I assure thee I will make an army of those sins, a complete army of them, I will set them in rank and file before thine eyes; and see how thou canst

behold, much less contend with, such an host as they. Take heed therefore you do not levy war against your own souls; that's the worst of all civil or intestine wars. If an army of divine terrors be so fearful, what will an army of black, hellish sins be? when God shall bring whole regiments of sins against you—here a regiment of oaths, there a regiment of lies, there a third of false dealings, here a troop of filthy actions, and there a legion of unclean or profane thoughts, all at once fighting against thy life and everlasting peace. *Joseph Caryl.*

Ver. 21. Atheists do mock at those Scriptures which tell us that we shall give account of all our deeds; but God shall make them find the truth of it in that day of their reckoning. It is as easy for him to make their forgetful minds remember as to create the minds in them. When he applies his register to their forgetful spirits they shall see all their forgotten sins. When the printer presseth clean paper upon his oiled irons, it receiveth the print of every letter: so when God shall stamp their minds with his register, they shall see all their former sins in a view. The hand was ever writing against Belshazzar, as he was ever sinning, though he saw it not till the cup was filled: so is it to the wicked; their sins are numbered, and themselves weighed, and see not till they be divided by a fearful waking. *William Struther.*

Ver. 21. (*last clause*). *God setteth his sins in order before his eyes.* *Imprimis*, the sin of his conception. *Item*, the sins of his childhood. *Item*, of his youth. *Item*, of his man's estate, etc. Or, *Imprimis*, sins against the first table. *Item*, sins against the second; so many of ignorance, so many of knowledge, so many of presumption, severally sorted by themselves. He committed sins confusedly, huddling them up in heaps; but God *sets them in order*, and methodizes them to his hands. *Thomas Fuller.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 20-21.

1. Man speaking and God silent.
2. God speaking and man silent.

Ver. 21.

1. God leaves men for a time to themselves.
2. They judge of God on this account by themselves.

3. He will in due time reveal their whole selves to themselves. "I will reprove," etc. *G. R.*

Ver. 21,23. Note the alternative; a life rightly ordered now, or sins set in order hereafter.

PSALM 50:22

EXPOSITION

Ver. 22. *Now* or *oh!* it is a word of entreaty, for the Lord is loath even to let the most ungodly run on to destruction.

Consider this; take these truths to heart, ye who trust in ceremonies and ye who live in vice, for both of you sin in that *ye forget God*. Bethink you how unaccepted you are, and turn unto the Lord. See how you have mocked the eternal, and repent of your iniquities.

Lest I tear you in pieces, as the lion rends his prey, *and there be none to deliver,* no Saviour, no refuge, no hope. Ye reject the Mediator: beware, for ye will sorely need one in the day of wrath, and none will be near to plead for you. How terrible, how complete, how painful, how humiliating, will be the destruction of the wicked! God uses no soft words, or velvet metaphors, nor may his servants do so when they speak of the wrath to come. O reader, consider this.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 22. *Now consider this, ye that forget God,* etc. What is less than a grain of sand? Yet when it comes to be multiplied, what is heavier than the sands of the sea? A little sum multiplied rises high; so a little sin unrepented of will damn us, as one leak in the ship, if it be not well looked to, will drown us. "Little sins" as the world calls them, but great sins against the majesty of God Almighty, whose majesty, against which they are committed, doth accent and enhance them, if not repented of, will damn. One would think it no great matter *to forget God*, yet it has *a heavy doom* attending on it. The non improvement of talents, the non exercise of grace, the world looks upon as a small thing; yet we read of him who *hid* his talent in the earth—he had not spent it, only not trading it is sentenced.
Thomas Watson.

Ver. 22. *Lest I tear you in pieces.* This is a metamorphic expression, taken from the strength and irresistible fury of a lion, from which the interference of the shepherd can supply no protection, or defence, for his flock. *William Walford.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 22.

1. The accusation—"Ye that forget God, "his omniscience, his power, his justice, his goodness, his mercy, his word, his great salvation.
2. The admonition—"Consider this, "rouse yourselves from your forgetfulness into serious reflection.
3. The condemnation—"Lest, "etc.
 1. The awfulness. "Tear, "as a lion or eagle its prey —tear body and soul.
 2. Its irresistibility—"None to deliver." *G. R.*

PSALM 50:23

EXPOSITION

Ver. 23. *Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me.* Praise is the best sacrifice; true, hearty, gracious thanksgiving from a renewed mind. Not the lowing of bullocks bound to the altar, but the songs of redeemed men are the music which the ear of Jehovah delights in. Sacrifice your loving gratitude, and God is honoured thereby.

And to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God. Holy living is a choice evidence of salvation. He who submits his whole way to divine guidance, and is careful to honour God in his life, brings an offering which the Lord accepts through his dear Son; and such a one shall be more and more instructed, and made experimentally to know the Lord's salvation. He needs salvation, for the best ordering of the life cannot save us, but *that salvation* he shall have. Not to ceremonies, not to unpurified lips, is the blessing promised, but to grateful hearts and holy lives.

O Lord, give us to stand in the judgment with those who have worshipped thee aright and have seen thy salvation.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 23. *Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me.* Thanksgiving is a God exalting work. Though nothing can add the least cubit to God's essential glory, yet praise exalts him in the eyes of others. Praise is a setting forth of God's honour, a lifting up of his name, a displaying the trophy of his goodness, a proclaiming his excellency, a spreading his renown, a breaking open the box of ointment, whereby the sweet savour and perfume of God's name is sent abroad into the world.

To him that ordereth his conversation aright. Though the main work of religion lies within, yet "our light must so shine, "that others may behold it; the foundation of sincerity is in the heart, yet its beautiful front piece appears in the conversation. The saints are called "jewels, "because they cast a sparkling lustre in the eyes of others. An upright Christian is like Solomon's temple, gold within and without: sincerity is a holy leaven, which if it be in the *heart* will work itself into the life, and make it swell and rise as high as heaven. Philippians 3:20. *Thomas Watson.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 21,23. Note the alternative; a life rightly ordered now, or sins set in order hereafter.

Ver. 23.

1. Salvation is the work of God.
2. The evidence of salvation is holiness of heart and life.
3. The effect of that evidence is praise.
4. The tendency of that praise is to glorify God. God is not glorified by the doubts, and fears, and murmurings of his people, but by their praise. *G. R.*

Ver. 23. (*last clause*). The true order of life.

1. That first which is first.
2. That most which is most.
3. That ever which is ever.
4. That all which is all.

PSALM 51

PSALM 51:1

Title. To the Chief Musician. Therefore not written for private meditation only, but for the public service of song. Suitable for the loneliness of individual penitence, this matchless Psalm is equally well adapted for an assembly of the poor in spirit. A Psalm of David. It is a marvel, but nevertheless a fact, that writers have been found to deny David's authorship of this Psalm, but their objections are frivolous, the Psalm is David like all over. It would be far easier to imitate Milton, Shakespeare, or Tennyson, than David. His style is altogether sui generis, and it is as easily distinguished as the touch of Raffaele or the colouring of Rubens. "When Nathan the prophet came unto him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba." When the divine message had aroused his dormant conscience and made him see the greatness of his guilt, he wrote this Psalm. He had forgotten his psalmody while he was indulging his flesh, but he returned to his harp when his spiritual nature was awakened, and he poured out his song to the accompaniment of sighs and tears. The great sin of David is not to be excused, but it is well to remember that his case has an exceptional collection of specialities in it. He was a man of very strong passions, a soldier, and an Oriental monarch having despotic power; no other king of his time would have felt any compunction for having acted as he did, and hence there were not around him those restraints of custom and association which, when broken through, render the offence the more monstrous. He never hints at any form of extenuation, nor do we mention these facts in order to apologize for his sin, which was detestable to the last degree; but for the warning of others, that they reflect that the licentiousness in themselves at this day might have even a graver guilt in it than in the erring King of Israel. When we remember his sin, let us dwell most upon his penitence, and upon the long series of chastisements which rendered the after part of his life such a mournful history.

Divisions. It will be simplest to note in the first twelve verses the penitent's confessions and plea for pardon, and then in the last seven his anticipatory gratitude, and the way in which he resolves to display it.

EXPOSITION

Ver. 1. *Have mercy upon me, O God.* He appeals at once to the mercy of God, even before he mentions his sin. The sight of mercy is good for eyes that are sore with penitential weeping. Pardon of sin must ever be an act of pure mercy, and therefore to that attribute the awakened sinner flies. "*According to thy lovingkindness.*" Act, O Lord, like thyself; give mercy like thy mercy. Show mercy such as is congruous with thy grace.

*"Great God, thy nature hath no bound:
So let thy pardoning love be found."*

What a choice word is that of our English version, a rare compound of precious things: love and kindness sweetly blended in one--
"lovingkindness."

According unto the multitude of thy tender mercies. Let thy most loving compassions come to me, and make thou thy pardons such as these would suggest. Reveal all thy gentlest attributes in my case, not only in their essence but in their abundance. Numberless have been thine acts of goodness, and vast is thy grace; let me be the object of thine infinite mercy, and repeat it all in me. Make my one case an epitome of all thy tender mercies. By every deed of grace to others I feel encouraged, and I pray thee let me add another and a yet greater one, in my own person, to the long list of thy compassions.

Blot out my transgressions. My revolts, my excesses, are all recorded against me; but, Lord, erase the lines. Draw thy pen through the register. Obliterate the record, though now it seems engraven in the rock for ever; many strokes of thy mercy may be needed, to cut out the deep inscription, but then thou has a multitude of mercies, and therefore, I beseech thee, erase my sins.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Title. "*After he had gone in to Bathsheba.*" This was the devil's nest egg that caused many sins to be laid, one to, and upon another. See the woeful chain of David's lust, 2 Samuel 11:1-27 12:1-31. *John Trapp.*

Title. "*When Nathan the prophet came unto him as he (i.e., David) had come unto Bathsheba.*" The significant repetition of the phrase *came unto*, is lost in the English and most other versions. "*As*" is not a mere particle of

time, simple equivalent to *when*, but suggests the idea of analogy, proportion, and retaliation. *J. A. Alexander.*

Whole Psalm. This Psalm is the brightest gem in the whole book, and contains instruction so large, and doctrine so precious, that the tongue of angels could not do justice to the full development. *Victorinus Strigelius, 1524-1569.*

Whole Psalm. This Psalm is often and fitly called THE SINNER'S GUIDE. In some of its versions it often helps the returning sinner. Athanasius recommends to some Christians, to whom he was writing, to repeat it when they awake at night. All evangelical churches are familiar with it. Luther says, "There is no other Psalm which is oftener sung or prayed in the church." This is the first Psalm in which we have the word *Spirit* used in application to the Holy Ghost. *William S. Plumer.*

Whole Psalm. I cannot doubt the prophetic bearing of this Psalm upon the nation of Israel. In the latter day they shall consider their ways: repentance and self loathing will be the result. Blood guiltiness heavier than that of David has to be removed from that nation. They will become the teachers of the Gentiles, when first the iniquity of their own transgressions has been purged away. *Arthur Pridham.*

Whole psalm. This is the most deeply affecting of all the Psalms, and I am sure the one most applicable to me. It seems to have been the effusion of a soul smarting under the sense of a recent and great transgression. My God, whether recent or not, give me to feel the enormity of my manifold offences, and remember not against me the sins of my youth. What a mine of rich matter and expression for prayer! Wash, cleanse me, O Lord, and let my sin and my sinfulness be ever before me. Let me feel it chiefly as sin against thee, that my sin may be of the godly sort. Give me to feel the virulence of my native corruption, purge me from it thoroughly, and put truth into my inward parts, that mine may be a real turning from sin unto the Saviour. Create me anew, O God. Withdraw not thy Spirit. Cause me to rejoice in a present salvation. Deliver me, O God, from the blood guiltiness of having offended any of thy little ones; and so open my lips that I may speak of the wondrous things thou hast done for my soul! May I offer up spiritual sacrifices; and oh! let not any delinquencies of mine bring a scandal upon thy church; but do thou so purify and build her up, that even her external services, freed from all taint of corruption or hypocrisy, may be well pleasing in thy sight. *Thomas Chalmers.*

Ver. 1. *Have mercy upon me, O God.* I tremble and blush to mention my name, for my former familiarities with thee only make me more confounded at being recognized by thee after my guilt. I therefore say not, "Lord, remember David, "as on a happier occasion; nor as propitiating thee, I used to say, to thy "servant, "or, "to the son of thy handmaid." I suggest nothing that should recall my former relation to thee, and so enhance my wickedness. Ask not, then, Lord, who I am, but only forgive me who confess my sin, condemn my fault, and beseech thy pity.

Have mercy upon me, O God. I dare not say *my* God, for that were presumption. I have lost thee by sin, I have alienated myself from thee by following the enemy, and therefore am unclean. I dare not approach thee, but standing afar off and lifting up my voice with great devotion and contrition of heart, I cry and say, *Have mercy upon me, O God.* From "A Commentary on the Seven Penitential Psalms, chiefly from ancient sources." By the Right Rev. A. P. Forbes, Bishop of Brechin, 1857.

Ver. 1. *Have mercy.* The Hebrew word here translated *have mercy*, signifieth without cause or desert; Psalm 35:19 69:4 Ezekiel 14:23; and freely, without paying any price, Exodus 21:11. And it is made use of in Leviticus 6:8, where Noah is said to have found *grace* in the eyes of the Lord, that is, special favour, such as the Lord beareth to his chosen in Christ Jesus. Charles D. Coetlogon, A.M., in "The Portraiture of the Christian Penitent, "1775.

Ver. 1. *Mercy, lovingkindness, tender mercies.* I cannot but observe here, the gradation in the sense of the three words made use of, to express the divine compassion, and the propriety of the order in which they are placed, which would be regarded as a real excellence and beauty in any classical writer. The first (𐤆𐤍𐤁𐤀), denotes that kind of affection which is expressed by moaning over any object that we love and pity--that οτοργή, natural affection and tenderness, which even brute creatures discover to their young ones, by the several noises which they respectively make over them; and particularly the shrill noise of the camel, by which it testifies its love to its foal. The second, (𐤅𐤴𐤱𐤁𐤊), denotes a strong proneness, a ready, large, and liberal disposition to goodness and compassion powerfully prompting to all instances of kindness and bounty; flowing as freely and plentifully as milk into the breasts, or as waters from a perpetual fountain. This denotes a higher degree of goodness than the former. The third, (𐤅𐤢𐤍𐤁𐤁), denotes what the Greeks express by οπλαγχνίζεσθαι; that most tender pity which

we signify by the moving of the heart and bowels, which argues the highest degree of compassion of which human nature is susceptible. And how reviving is the belief and consideration of these abundant and tender compassions of God to one in David's circumstances, whose mind laboured under the burden of the most heinous complicated guilt, and the fear of the divine displeasure and vengeance! *Samuel Chandler.*

Ver. 1. *According to the multitude.* Men are greatly terrified at the multitude of their sins, but here is a comfort--our God hath multitude of mercies. If our sins be in number as the hairs of our head, God's mercies are as the stars of heaven; and as he is an infinite God, so his mercies are infinite; yea, so far are his mercies above our sins, as he himself is above us poor sinners. By this the Psalmist seeketh for multitude of mercies, he would show how deeply he was wounded with his manifold sins, that one seemed a hundred. Thus it is with us, so long as we are under Satan's guiding, a thousand seem but one; but if we betake ourselves to God's service, one will seem a thousand. *Archibald Symson.*

Ver. 1. *Tender mercies,* or, according to Zanchy in his treatise upon the attributes of God, such a kind of affection as parents feel when they see their children in any extremity. 1 Kings 3:26. *Charles D. Coetlogon.*

Ver. 1. *Blot out my transgressions.* (hxm), *mecheh, wipe out.* There is reference here to an *indictment*: the Psalmist knows what it contains; he pleads guilty, but begs that the writing may be *defaced*; that a proper fluid may be applied to the parchment, *to discharge the ink*, that no record of it may ever appear against him: and this only the *mercy, lovingkindness, and tender compassions*, of the Lord can do. *Adam Clarke.*

Ver. 1. *Blot out my transgressions.* What the psalmist alludes to is not, as Mr. Leclerc imagines, *debts entered into a book*, and so blotted out of it when forgiven; but the wiping or cleansing of a dish, so as nothing afterwards remains in it. The meaning of the petition is, that God would entirely and absolutely forgive him, so as that no part of the guilt he had contracted might remain, and the punishment of it might be wholly removed. *Samuel Chandler.*

Ver. 1. *Blot out,* or, as it is used in Exodus 17:14, *utterly extirpate*, so as that there shall not be any remembrance of them forever. Isaiah 43:25 44:22. *Charles de Coetlogon.*

Ver. 1. *MY transgressions.* Conscience, when it is healthy, ever speaks thus: "*MY transgressions.*" It is not the guilt of them that tempted you: they have theirs; but each as a separate agent, has his own degree of guilt. Yours is your own: the violation of your own and not another's sense of duty; solitary, awful, unshared, adhering to you alone of all the spirits of the universe. *Frederick William Robertson.*

Ver. 1,5. *Transgressions...iniquity...sin.*

1. It is *transgressions*, ([vp]), *pesha*, rebellion.
2. It is *iniquity*, (ʾwQ), *avon*, crooked dealing.
3. It is *sin*, (j aMj), *chattath*, error and wandering. *Adam Clarke.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

The Psalm is upon its surface so full of suggestions for sermons that I have not attempted to offer any of my own, but have merely inserted a selection from Mr. G. Rogers and others.

Ver. 1.

I. The Prayer.

1. For mercy, not justice. Mercy is the sinner's attribute--as much a part of the divine nature as justice. The possibility of sin is implied in its existence. The actual commission of sin is implied in its display.
2. For pardon, not pity merely, but forgiveness.

II. The plea.

1. For the pardon of great sins on account of great mercies, and lovingkindness.
2. Many sins on account of multitude of mercies.
3. Hell deserving sins on account of tender mercies. We who have sinned are human, he who pardons is divine.

*"Great God, thy nature hath no bound,
So let thy pardoning love be found."*

WORKS UPON THE FIFTY-FIRST PSALM

Exposition of the Fifty-first Psalm, by MARTIN LUTHER, in "Select works of Martin Luther, translated by REV. HENRY COLE." Vol. I., pp. 51-197.

"An Exposition upon the 51 Psalm, "in *"Certain Godly and learned Expositions upon divers parts of Scripture*. As they were preached and afterwards more briefly penned by that worthy man of God, Maister GEORGE ESTEY...Late preacher of the word of God in St. Edmund's Burie." 1603. (4to.)

"David's Penitential Psalm opened: in thirtie severall Lectures thereon. By SAM. HIERON. 1617." (4to.)

"Good News from Canaan; or, An Exposition on the 51 Psalm, "in *"The Workes of Mr. William Cowper*, late Bishop of Galloway." 1629. (Folio.)

"David's Repentance; or, A plaine and familiar Exposition of the LI. Psalm: first preached, and now published for the benefit of God's church. Wherein euery faithful Christian may set before his eyes the Patterne of vnfeigned Repentance, whereby we may take heed of the falling into sin again. The eighth edition, newly revised and profitably amplified by the author, SAMVEL SMITH, preacher of the word of God at Prittlewell in Essex...1630." (12mo.)

"A Godly and Fruitful Exposition of the Fifty-one Psalm, the fifth of the Penitential, "in ARCHIBALD SYMSON'S *"Sacred Septenarie*." 1638.

"Meditations and Disquisitions upon the 51 Psalm of David, "in *"Meditations and Disquisitions upon the seven Psalms of David, commonly called the Penitential Psalmes*." By SIR RICHARD BAKER, Knight. 1639.

"CLII. Lectures upon Psalm LI. Preached at Ashby Delazovch, in Leicester Shire. By the late faithful, and worthy Minister of Jesus Christ, Mr. ARTHUR HILDERSAM. 1642." (Folio.)

"An Exposition of the one-and-fiftieth Psalm, "in pp. 51-239, of *"Sermons with some religious and divine Meditations*. By the Right Reverend Father

in God, ARTHVRE LAKE, late Lord Bishop of Bath and Wells." 1639. (Folio.)

"David's Broken Heart; or, an Exposition upon the whole Fifty-one Psalm. By that Reverend divine Doctor SAMUEL PAGE, late Pastour of Deptford Stroud, in Kent...1646." (4to.)

Exposition of Psalm LI., in "Chandler's Life of David." Vol. 2 pg 254-273.

*"The Portraiture of the Christian Penitent: attempted in a course of Sermons upon Psalm LI ...*By the Rev. CHA. DE COETLOGON, A.M. 1775."

"Lectures on the Fifty-first Psalm, delivered in the Parish Church of St. James', Bristol. By the Rev. THOMAS T. BIDDULPH, A.M. 1835."

"The Penitent's Prayer: a Practical Exposition of the Fifty-first Psalm. By the Rev. THOMAS ALEXANDER, M.A., Chelsea."

PSALM 51:2

EXPOSITION

Ver. 2. *Wash me thoroughly.* It is not enough to blot out the sin; his person is defiled, and he fain would be purified. He would have God himself cleanse him, for none but he could do it effectually. The washing must be thorough, it must be repeated, therefore he cries, "Multiply to wash me." The dye is in itself immovable, and I, the sinner, have lain long in it, till the crimson is ingrained; but, Lord, wash, and wash, and wash again, till the last stain is gone, and not a trace of my defilement is left. The hypocrite is content if his garments be washed, but the true suppliant cries, "wash *me*." The careless soul is content with a nominal cleansing, but the truly awakened conscience desires a real and practical washing, and that of a most complete and efficient kind.

Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity. It is viewed as one great pollution, polluting the entire nature, and as all his own; as if nothing were so much his own as his sin. The one sin against Bathsheba, served to show the psalmist the whole mountain of his iniquity, of which that foul deed was but one falling stone. He desires to be rid of the whole mass of his

filthiness, which though once so little observed, had then become a hideous and haunting terror to his mind. *And cleanse me from my sin.* This is a more general expression; as if the psalmist said, "Lord, if washing will not do, try some other process; if water avails not, let fire, let anything be tried, so that I may but be purified. Rid me of my sin by some means, by any means, by every means, only do purify me completely, and leave no guilt upon my soul." It is not the punishment he cries out against, but the sin. Many a murderer is more alarmed at the gallows than at the murder which brought him to it. The thief loves the plunder, though he fears the prison. Not so David: he is sick of sin as sin; his loudest outcries are against the evil of his transgression, and not against the painful consequences of it. When we deal seriously with our sin, God will deal gently with us. When we hate what the Lord hates, he will soon make an end of it, to our joy and peace.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 2. *Wash me.* David prays that the Lord would *wash* him; therefore sin defiles, and he was made foul and filthy by his sin; and to wash him much, and to rinse and bathe him, to show that sin had exceedingly defiled him and stained him both in soul and body, and made him loathsome, and therefore he desireth to be washed, and cleansed, and purged from the pollution of sin. Hence we may learn what a vile, filthy and miserable thing sin is in the sight of God: it stains a man's body, it stains a man's soul, it makes him more vile than the vilest creature that lives: no toad is so vile and loathsome in the sight of man, as a sinner, stained and defiled with sin, is in the sight of God, till he be cleansed and washed from it in the blood of Christ. *Samuel Smith.*

Ver. 2. *Wash me,* etc. (MbK) is peculiarly applied to the washing and cleansing of garments, as fullers wash and cleanse their cloths. 2 Kings 18:7 Exodus 19:10 Leviticus 17:15. *Samuel Chandler.*

Ver. 2. *Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity.* No other washing will do but *lava tu*, wash thou; so foul as it will need his washing *thoroughly*. *Samuel Page, in "David's Broken Heart," 1646.*

Ver. 2. *Was me thoroughly.* Hebrew *multiply to wash me*; by which phrase he implies the greatness of his guilt, and the insufficiency of all legal

washings, and the absolute necessity of some other and better thing to wash him, even of God's grace, and the blood of Christ. *Matthew Poole*.

Ver. 2. *Wash me...cleanse me.* But why should David speak so superfluously? use two words when one would serve? For if we be cleansed, what matter is it whether it be by washing or no? Yet David had great reason for using both words; for he requires not that God would cleanse him by miracle, but by the ordinary way of cleansing, and this was washing; he names therefore washing as the means, and cleansing as the end: he names washing as the work a doing, and cleansing as the work done; he names washing as considering the agent, and cleansing as applying it to the patient; and indeed, as in the figure of the law there was not, so in the verity of the gospel there is not any ordinary means of cleansing, but only by washing; and therefore out of Christ our Saviour's side there flowed water and blood. *Sir Richard Baker*.

Ver. 2. *Cleanse me from my sin.* Observe, it is from the guilt, and not from the punishment, that he thus asked deliverance. That the sword should never depart from his house; that the sin, begun, not only secretly even in its full accomplishment, but far more secretly in the recesses of David's heart, should be punished before all Israel and before the sun; that the child so dear to David should be made one great punishment of his offence; these things, so far as this Psalm is concerned, might, or might not be. It is of the offence against God; of the defiling, although it were not then so expressly declared, God's temple by impurity, that David speaks. *Ambrose, in J. M. Neale's Commentary*.

Ver. 2. *Sin.* The original word signifies to miss an aim, as an archer does who shoots short of his mark, beyond, or beside it. It is also used for treading aside, or tripping, in the act of walking. In a spiritual sense it denotes deviation from a rule, whether by omission or commission. *Thomas T. Biddulph, A.M., in Lectures on the Fifty-first Psalm, 1835*.

Ver. 2. Sin is filthy to think of, filthy to speak of, filthy to hear of, filthy to do; in a word, there is nothing in it but vileness. *Archibald Symson*.

PSALM 51:3

EXPOSITION

Ver. 3. *For I acknowledge my transgressions.* Here he sees the plurality and immense number of his sins, and makes open declaration of them. He seems to say, I make a full confession of them. Not that this is my plea in seeking forgiveness, but it is a clear evidence that I need mercy, and am utterly unable to look to any other quarter for help. My pleading guilty has barred me from any appeal against the sentence of justice: O Lord, I must cast myself on thy mercy, refuse me not, I pray thee. Thou hast made me willing to confess. O follow up this work of grace with a full and free remission!

And my sin is ever before me. My sin as a whole is never out of my mind; it continually oppresses my spirit. I lay it before thee because it is ever before me: Lord, put it away both from thee and me. To an awakened conscience, pain on account of sin is not transient and occasional, but intense and permanent, and this is no sign of divine wrath, but rather a sure preface of abounding favour.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 3. *For I acknowledge my transgressions,* etc. To acknowledge our transgressions, there's confession; and *to have our sin ever before us,* there's conviction and contrition. To acknowledge our transgressions, I say, is to confess our sins; to call them to mind, to bring them back to our remembrance what we can; to own them with shame, and to declare them with sorrow; to reckon them up one by one, to give in a particular account of them, as far as our memory will serve, and to spread them before the Lord, as Hezekiah did Rabshakah's letter, and in a humble sense of our own vileness to implore his goodness, that he would multiply his mercies over us, as we have multiplied our transgressions against him, in their free and full forgiveness of them all. *To have our sin ever before us,* is thoroughly to be convinced of it, to be continually troubled in mind about it, to be truly humbled under the sense of it, and to be possessed of those dreads and terrors of conscience which may never let us rest or enjoy any quiet within our own breast till we have reconciled ourselves to a gracious God for it. *Adam Littleton.*

Ver. 3. *I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me.* There cannot be *agnitio* if there be not *cognitio peccati*, and acknowledging, unless there precede a knowledge of sin. David puts them together. If our sins be not before us, how can we set them before God? And therefore, to the right exercise of this duty, there is required a previous examination of our hearts, inspection into our lives, that we may be enabled to see our sins. He that hath not yet asked himself that question, *Quid feci?* What have I done? can never make the confession, *si feci*, thus and thus have I done; and in this respect I would, thought not require, yet advise it as a pious and prudent practice, and that which I doubt not but many Christians have found benefit by, to keep a constant daily catalogue, as of mercies received, so of sins committed. *Nathaneal Hardy.*

Ver. 3. *I, my, my.* David did not think it sufficient to acknowledge that the whole human race were sinners; but as if he stood alone in the world, and was the only offender in it, he says, "I acknowledge *my* transgressions; and *my* sin is ever before me." *Charles de Coetlogon.*

Ver. 3. *MY sin.* David owneth his sin, and confesseth it his own. Here is our natural wealth: what can we call our own but sin? Our food and raiment, the necessities of life, are borrowings. We came hungry and naked into the world, we brought none of these with us, and we deserved none of them here. Our sin came with us, as David after confesseth. We have right of inheritance in sin, taking it by tradition and transmission from our parents: we have right of possession. So Job: "Thou makest me to possess the sins of my youth." *Samuel Page.*

Ver. 3. *My SIN.* It is sin, as sin, not its punishment here, not hereafter, not simply any of its evil consequences; but sin, the sin against God, the daring impiety of my breaking the good and holy law of this living, loving God. *Thomas Alexander, D.D., in "The Penitent's Prayer," 1861.*

Ver. 3. *Ever before me.* Sorrow for sin exceeds sorrow for suffering, in the continuance and durableness thereof: the other, like a landlord, quickly come, quickly gone; this is a continual dropping or running river, keeping a constant stream. *My sins*, saith David, *are ever before me*; so also is the sorrow for sin in the soul of a child of God, morning, evening, day, night, when sick, when sound, fasting, at home, abroad, ever within him. This grief begins at his conversion, continues all his life, ends only at his death. *Thomas Fuller.*

Ver. 3. *Before me.* *Coram populo*, before the people; shame to him: *coram ecclesia*, before the church; grief to them: *coram inimicis*, before the enemies; joy to them: *coram Deo*, before God; anger against him: *coram Nathane*, before Nathan; a chiding. But if any hope of repentance and amendment, it is *peccatum meum coram me*, my sin before me. Here is the distress of a sinner, he never discerneth how unhappy he is, till his sin is before him. *Samuel Page.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 3.

1. Confession. "I acknowledge, "etc.
2. Humiliation, not a mere confession with the lips, but ever before me--in its guilt--defilement-- consequences in this life and hereafter.

Ver. 3-4,11-12,17.

1. Scripture estimate of sin.
 1. Personal accountability--*My sin.*
 2. Estimated as hateful to God--*Against thee*, etc.
 3. Sin estimated as separation from God.
2. Spiritual restoration. First step--Sacrifice of a broken spirit. Last step--Spirit of liberty. *Thy free spirit. F. W. Robertson.*

PSALM 51:4

EXPOSITION

Ver. 4. *Against thee, thee only have I sinned.* The virus of sin lies in its opposition to God: the psalmist's sense of sin towards others rather tended to increase the force of this feeling of sin against God. All his wrong doing centred, culminated, and came to a climax, at the foot of the divine throne. To injure our fellow men is sin, mainly because in so doing we violate the law of God. The penitent's heart was so filled with a sense of the wrong done to the Lord himself, that all other confession was swallowed up in a broken hearted acknowledgment of offence against him.

And done this evil in thy sight. To commit treason in the very court of the king and before his eye is impudence indeed: David felt that his sin was committed in all its filthiness while Jehovah himself looked on. None but a child of God cares for the eye of God, but where there is grace in the soul it reflects a fearful guilt upon every evil act, when we remember that the God whom we offend was present when the trespass was committed.

That thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest. He could not present any argument against divine justice, if it proceeded at once to condemn him and punish him for his crime. His own confession, and the judge's own witness of the whole transaction, places the transgression beyond all question or debate; the iniquity was indisputably committed, and was unquestionably a foul wrong, and therefore the course of justice was clear and beyond all controversy.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 4. *Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight.* This verse is differently expounded by different persons, and it has ever been considered, that this one little point is the greatest difficulty that is met with in the whole Psalm. Although, therefore, I leave it to others to go according to their own interpretations, yet I have a good hope that I shall be enabled to give the true and genuine meaning of the text. This, then, I would first of all advise the reader to do--to bear in mind that which I observed at the beginning of the Psalm, that David is here speaking in the person of all the saints, and not in his own person only, not in his own person as an adulterer. Although I do not say it might not be, that it was this fall which, as a medium, brought him under the knowledge of himself and of his whole human nature, and made him think thus: "Behold! I, so holy a king, who have with so much pious devotedness observed the law and the worship of God, have been so tempted and overcome by the inbred evil and sin of my flesh, that I have murdered an innocent man, and have for adulterous purposes taken away his wife! And is not this an evident proof that my nature is more deeply infected and corrupted by sin than ever I thought it was? I who was yesterday chaste am today an adulterer! I who yesterday had hands innocent of blood, am today a man of blood guiltiness!" And it might be that in this way he derived the feeling sense of his entire sinfulness, from his fall into adultery and murder, and from thence drew his conclusion--that neither the tree nor the fruit of human nature were good, but that the whole was so deformed and lost by sin, that

there was nothing sound left in the whole of nature. This I would have the reader bear in mind, first of all, if he desire to have the pure meaning of this passage. In the next place, the grammatical construction is to be explained, which seems to be somewhat obscure. For what the translator has rendered by the *preterperfect*, ought to be the *present*:

Against thee only do I sin; that is, I know that before thee I am nothing but a sinner; or, before thee I do nothing but evil continual; that is, my whole life is evil and depraved on account of sin. I cannot boast before thee of merit or of righteousness, but am evil altogether, and in thy sight this is my character--I do evil. I have sinned, I do sin, and shall sin to the end of the chapter. *Martin Luther*.

Ver. 4. *Against thee, thee only, have I sinned*. Is there not matter here to make us at a stand? For, to say, "Against thee have I sinned, "is most just and fit; but to say, *Against THEE ONLY I have sinned*, seems something hard. It had perhaps been a fit speech in the mouth of our first parent Adam; he might justly have said to God,

Against thee only have I sinned, who never sinned against any other; but for us to say it, who commit sins daily against our neighbours, and especially for David to say it, who had committed two notorious sins against his neighbour and faithful friend Uriah, what more unfit speech could possibly be devised? But is it not that these actions of David were great wrongs indeed, and enormous iniquities against Uriah; but can we properly say they were *sins* against Uriah? For what is sin, but a transgression of God's law? And how then can sin be committed against any but against him only whose law we transgress? Or is it, that it may justly be said,

Against thee only have I sinned, because against others perhaps in a base *tenure*, yet only against God in *capite*? Or is it, that David might justly say to God, "Against the only have I sinned; "because from others he might appeal, as being a king and having no superior; but no appealing from God, as being King of kings and supreme Lord over all? Or is it that we may justly say,

Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, seeing that Christ hath taken and still takes all our sins upon him; and every sin we commit is as a new burden laid upon his back and upon his back only? Or is it, lastly, that I may justly say,

Against thee, the only, have I sinned, because in thy sight only I have done it? For from others I could hide it, and did conceal it? But what can be hidden from the All-seeing eye? And yet if this had been the worst, that I had sinned only against thee, though this had been bad enough, and infinitely too much, yet it might perhaps have admitted reconciliation; but to do this evil *in thy sight*, as if I should say, I would do it though thou stand thyself and look on, and as if in defiance; what sin so formidable? what sin can be thought of so unpardonable? A sin of infirmity may admit apology; a sin of ignorance may find out excuse; but a sin of defiance can find no defence. *Sir Richard Baker.*

Ver. 4. *Against thee, thee only, have I sinned.* There is a godly sorrow which leads a man to life; and this sorrow is wrought in a man by the Spirit of God, and in the heart of the godly; that he mourns for sin because it has displeased God, who is so dear and so sweet a Father to him. And suppose he had neither a heaven to lose, nor a hell to gain, yet he is sad and sorrowful in heart because he has grieved God. *John Welch, 1576-1622.*

Ver. 4. *Have I sinned.* *Me, me, adsum, qui feci:* Here, here am I that did it. I whom thou tookest from following the ewes great with lambs, whose sheep hook thou hast changed for a sceptre, whose sheep for thine own people Israel, upon whose head thou hast set a crown of pure gold. I whom thou didst lately invest in the full monarchy of thy people; to whom thou gavest the possession of Jerusalem from the Jebusites; I who settled peace, religion, and courts of justice in Jerusalem, that thou mightest be served and honoured, and I would fain have built thee an house there; *Ego*, I, to whom God committed the trust of government to rule others, the trust of judgment to punish others, as king over his inheritance. I, to whom God committed the care of others' souls to guide them by his word, to direct them by good counsel, to allure them by his gracious promises, to terrify them by his threatenings, as the Lord's holy prophet. I, who both ways as king and prophet should have been an example of holiness and righteousness to all Israel. Nathan said, *Tu es homo*, thou art the man, in just accusation, and now David saith, *Ego sum homo*, I am the man, in humble confession. *Samuel Page.*

Ver. 4. *I have done this evil.* We may find this in experience, that there be many who will not stick at a general speech that they be sinners, and yet will scarcely be known of one special evil to account for. If you fall with them into the several commandments, they will be ready to discover a

conceit that there is scarce one that they are faulty in. In the first commandment they acknowledge no God but one; in the second, they do not worship images; in the third, they swear as little as any, and never but for the truth; in the fourth, they keep their church on Sundays as well as most; in the second table, there is neither treason, nor murder, nor theft, nor whoredom, nor the like gross sin, but concerning it they are ready to protest their innocency. He that shall hear them in particular, I do not see how he shall believe them in the general, when they say they be sinners; for when you arraign them at the several commandments they are ready to plead *not guilty* to them all. So long as men are thus without sense and apprehension of particulars, there is no hope of bringing them ever unto good. Happy is he that is pricked to the heart with the feeling of *this evil*. The truth of repentance for that one, will bring him to a thorough repentance for his whole estate. *This one evil* thoroughly understood, brought David on his knees, brake his heart, melted his soul, made him cry for pardon, beg for purging, and importune the Lord for a free spirit to establish him. *Samuel Hieron, in "David's Penitential Psalm opened, "1617.*

Ver. 4. *In thy sight.* David was so bent upon his sin, as that the majesty and presence of God did not awe him at all: this is a great aggravation of sin, and which makes it to be so much the more heinous. For a thief to steal in the very sight of the judge, is the highest piece of impudence that may be; and thus it is for any man to offend in the sight of God and not to be moved with it. *Thomas Horton.*

Ver. 4. *That thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.* But hath not David a defence for it here, and that a very just one? For, in saying, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, *that thou mightest be justified in thy saying,* " doth he not speak as though he had sinned to do God a pleasure? therefore sinned that God might be justified? And what can be more said for justifying of God? But far is it from David to have any such meaning; his words import not a lessening but an aggravating of his sin, as spoken rather thus: Because a judge may justly be taxed of injustice if he lay a greater punishment upon an offender than the offence deserves; therefore to clear thee, O God, from all possibility of erring in this kind, I acknowledge my sins to be so heinous, my offences so grievous, that thou canst never be unmerciful in punishing though thy punishment should be never so unmerciful. For how can a judge pass the bounds of equity where the delinquent hath passed all bounds of iniquity?

and what error can there be in thy being severe when the greatness of my fault is a justification of severity? That thou canst not lay so heavy a doom upon me, which I have not deserved? Thou canst not pronounce so hard a sentence against me, which I am not worthy of. If thou judge me to torture, it is but mildness; if to die the death, it is but my due; if to die everlastingly, I cannot say it were unjust. *Sir Richard Baker.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 3-4,11-12,17.

1. Scripture estimate of sin.

1. Personal accountability--*My sin.*

2. Estimated as hateful to God--*Against thee*, etc.

3. Sin estimated as separation from God.

2. Spiritual restoration. First step--Sacrifice of a broken spirit. Last step--Spirit of liberty. *Thy free spirit. F. W. Robertson.*

Ver. 4.

1. The person--*I.*

2. The commission--*done.*

3. The trespass--*evil.*

4. The particularity--*this.*

5. The daring of it--*in thy sight. Samuel Page.*

Ver. 4. *Against thee.*

1. Thee, an *holy* God--a God of pure eyes, and that cannot endure to behold iniquity.

2. Thee, a *just* God--who will *punish* sin.

3. Thee, an *Almighty* God.

4. Thee, a *gracious* God. *T. Horton.*

Ver. 4.

1. Self condemnation.

1. For the greatness of sin. Not against self merely, or fellow men, but God. This includes all guilt, for all is against him.

2. Its effrontery, "in thy sight."
2. Divine justification.
 1. In the permission of sin.
 2. In its punishment.
 3. In its forgiveness. God must be justified when he justifies the ungodly.

PSALM 51:5

EXPOSITION

Ver. 5. *Behold, I was shapen in iniquity.* He is thunderstruck at the discovery of his inbred sin, and proceeds to set it forth. This was not intended to justify himself, but it rather meant to complete the confession. It is as if he said, not only have I sinned this once, but I am in my very nature a sinner. The fountain of my life is polluted as well as its streams. My birth tendencies are out of the square of equity; I naturally lean to forbidden things. Mine is a constitutional disease, rendering my very person obnoxious to thy wrath.

And in sin did my mother conceive me. He goes back to the earliest moment of his being, not to traduce his mother, but to acknowledge the deep tap roots of his sin. It is a wicked wresting of Scripture to deny that original sin and natural depravity are here taught. Surely men who cavil at this doctrine have need to be taught of the Holy Spirit what be the first principles of the faith. David's mother was the Lord's handmaid, he was born in chaste wedlock, of a good father, and he was himself, "the man after God's own heart; "and yet his nature was as fallen as that of any other son of Adam, and there only needed the occasion for the manifesting of that sad fact. In our shaping we were put out of shape, and when we were conceived our nature conceived sin. Alas, for poor humanity! Those who will may cry it up, but he is most blessed who in his own soul has learned to lament his lost estate.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 1,5. *Transgressions...iniquity...sin.*

1. It is *transgressions*, ([vp]), *pesha*, rebellion.
2. It is *iniquity*, (ʿwQ), *avon*, crooked dealing.
3. It is *sin*, (j aMj), *chattath*, error and wandering. *Adam Clarke*.

Ver. 5. *Behold, I was shapen in iniquity*, etc. He said not, "Behold, this evil have I done," but, *Behold, I was conceived in sin*, etc. He says not, "Behold, I, David, "a king, that have received such and such mercies from God, who would have given me more (as God told him), who had that entire communion with him, and graces from him, I, even I, have done this evil. No; he keeps it in till he came to this, and then his heart could hold no longer:

Oh, behold I was conceived in sin. His debasement was at his *auge* here. And to whom is it he utters this *behold*? What, to men? No; his meaning is not to call on men, *q.d.*, O ye sons of men, behold! That is but his secondary aim, arising out of his having penned it, and delivered it unto the church; but when he uttered it, it was to God, or rather afore God, and yet not as calling on God to behold, for that needed not. David had elsewhere said, "God looked down," etc., "and beheld the sons of men," when speaking of this very corruption. He therefore knew God beheld it sufficiently; but he utters it afore God, or, as spoken of himself between God and himself, thereby to express his own astonishment and amazement at the sight and conviction of this corruption, and at the sight of what a monster he saw himself to be in the sight of God in respect of this sin. It was a *behold* of astonishment at himself, as before the great and holy God; and therefore it was he seconds and follows it with another *behold* made unto God: "*Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts.*" And it is as if he had said in both, Oh, how am I in every way overwhelmed, whilst with one eye cast on myself I see how infinitely corrupt I am in the very constitution of my nature; and with the other eye I behold and consider what an infinite holy God thou art in thy nature and being, and what an holiness it is which thou requirest. I am utterly overwhelmed in the intuition of both these, and able to behold no more, nor look up unto thee, O holy God! *Thomas Goodwin*.

Ver. 5. *Behold, I was shapen in iniquity*, etc. We are not to suppose that David here reflects upon his parents as the medium of transmitting to him the elements of moral evil; and that by the introduction of the doctrine of original sin he intended to extenuate the enormity of his own crimes. On

the contrary, we are to regard him as afflicting himself by the humbling consideration that his very nature was fallen, that his transgressions flowed from a heart naturally at enmity with God; that he was not a sinner by accident, but by a depravity of purpose extending to the innermost desires and purposes of the soul; and that there was "a law in his members, warring against the law of his mind, and bringing him into captivity to the law of sin and death" Romans 7:23; and that he was one of a race of guilty beings, none of whom could plead an exemption from an evil heart of unbelief, ready at all times to depart from the living God. Till we see sin in the fountain of the heart, we shall never truly mourn over it in the life and conversation. *John Morison.*

Ver. 5. *Behold, I was shapen in iniquity.* He is not low enough down yet, he must come lower. It is not enough for him to confess that the water is filthy at the pool; he goes back to the source, and confesses that the whole river is polluted up to its head. The source is unclean; the very spring wells forth foul waters. *Thomas Alexander.*

Ver. 5. *I was shapen in iniquity.* I shall not easily be persuaded to think that parents who are sinners themselves and too much under the influence of bad affections and passions, will be very likely to produce children without transmitting to them some of those disorders and corruptions of nature with which they themselves are infected. And if this be a difficulty, I would beg leave to observe that it is a difficulty which affects natural as well as revealed religion. Since we must take human nature as it is, and if it be really in a state of disorder and corruption, and cannot be otherwise, considering the common law of its production, the difficulty must have been as ancient as the first man that was born; and therefore can be no objection against the truth of revelation, but it must be equally so against natural religion, which must equally allow the thing, if it be in reality a fact, with revelation itself. *Samuel Chandler.*

Ver. 5. Infants are no innocents, being born with original sin, the first sheet wherein they are wrapped is woven of sin, shame, blood, and filth. Ezekiel 16:4, etc. They are said to sin as they were in the loins of Adam, just as Levi is said to pay tithes to Melchizedek, even in the loins of his forefather Abraham Hebrews 7:9-10; otherwise infants would not die, for death is the wages of sin Romans 6:23; and the reign of death is procured by the reign of sin, which hath reigned over all mankind except Christ. All are sinners, infected with the guilt and filth of sin; the rot (according to the vulgar

saying) over runs the whole flock. Hence David reflects upon original sin as the cause of all his actual, saying, *Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.* Thus man's malady bebind betimes, even in our conception; this subtle serpent sowed his tares very early, so that we are all "born in sin." John 9:34. *Christopher Ness's "Divine Legacy,"* "1700.

Ver. 5. Notwithstanding all that Grotius and others have said to the contrary, I believe David to speak here of what is commonly called *original sin*; the propensity to evil which every man brings into the world with him, and which is the fruitful source whence all transgression proceeds. *Adam Clarke.*

PSALM 51:6

EXPOSITION

Ver. 6. *Behold.* Here is the great matter for consideration. God desires not merely outward virtue, but inward purity, and the penitent's sense of sin is greatly deepened as with astonishment he discovers this truth, and how far he is from satisfying the divine demand. The second "Behold" is fitly set over against the first; how great the gulf which yawns between them! *Thou desirest truth in the inward parts.* Reality, sincerity, true holiness, heart fidelity, these are the demands of God. He cares not for the pretence of purity, he looks to the mind, heart, and soul. Always has the Holy One of Israel estimated men by their inner nature, and not by their outward professions; to him the inward is as visible as the outward, and he rightly judges that the essential character of an action lies in the motive of him who works it.

And in the hidden parts thou shalt make me to know wisdom. The penitent feels that God is teaching him truth concerning his nature, which he had not before perceived. The love of the heart, the mystery of its fall, and the way of its purification--this hidden wisdom we must all attain; and it is a great blessing to be able to believe that the Lord will "make us to know it." No one can teach our innermost nature but the Lord, but he can instruct us to profit. The Holy Spirit can write the law on our heart, and that is the sum of practical wisdom. He can put the fear of the Lord within, and that is the beginning of wisdom. He can reveal Christ in us, and he is essential

wisdom. Such poor, foolish, disarranged souls as ours, shall yet be ordered aright, and truth and wisdom shall reign within us.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 6. *Behold.* Before he entereth on any of the parts of the verse he useth the particle of admiration, *Behold*; which he never useth but in some remarkable manner, thereby the more to raise us up to the contemplation of such great matters to be told. *Archibald Symson.*

Ver. 6. *Thou desirest truth in the inward parts.* Thou lovest *truth*, not shadows or images, but realities; thou lovest truth *in the inward parts*, inside truth, a true heart, a pure conscience: he is a Christian who is one inwardly. Romans 2:29. *John Bull.*

Ver. 6. *Truth in the inward parts.* A great French pear is called *le bon hretien*, the good Christian, because they say it is never rotten at the core. *George Swinnock.*

Ver. 6. *In the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom.* Piscator, in his annotations on this Psalm, puts this sense upon it, that David should bless God for having made him to know this special wisdom in this hidden thing or matter, and had brought the knowledge thereof home, as a point of saving wisdom, to the hidden man of his heart, so as to see fully and clearly this native corruption as the cause of all sin, and on that account to cause him to lay it to heart. *Thomas Goodwin.*

Ver. 6. *In the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom.* It is one thing to be wise headed and wise tongued, and another to be wise hearted, and therefore in Scripture nothing more ordinary than to set forth wisdom that is true indeed by the heart. God himself is said *to be wise of heart*. Foolish creatures are like Ephraim, "a silly dove without heart." They may have *head* enough, notion enough, *flashing light*, appearing to others enough, but they are without a heart; they have not the great work there, a *new head* and an *old heart*, a *full head* and an *empty heart*, a *light and burning profession*, and a dark, dead, and cold heart; he that takes up in such a condition is a fool and an errant fool. *John Murcot, 1657.*

Ver. 6. *And in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom.* Some read it, "In the hidden part thou *hadst* made me to know wisdom; "that thou hadst done it, but I have fallen from my high state, marred thy

handiwork. "By one plunge into lust I have fallen and fouled myself."
Arthur Jackson.

Ver. 6. The copulative particle which connects the two clauses, implies the correspondence between the revelation of the divine will on the one part and the desire and prayer of the penitent heart on the other. *Thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom.* "What I want thou hast promised to give." Repentance and faith are the gifts of God, and the awakened mind is conscious that they are so. *Thomas T. Biddulph.*

Ver. 6-8. The right conviction of sin comprehends its being acknowledged not only in our *works*, but also in our entire *being*. *Agustus F. Tholuck.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 6. See T. Goodwin's Treatise, entitled, "An Unregenerate Man's Guiltiness before God, in respect of Sin and Punishment." Book 9 cap. 1-2. (Nichol's edition, Vol. X., p. 324 *et seq.*)

PSALM 51:7

EXPOSITION

Ver. 7. *Purge me with hyssop.* Sprinkle the atoning blood upon me with the appointed means. Give me the reality which legal ceremonies symbolise. Nothing but blood can take away my blood stains, nothing but the strongest purification can avail to cleanse me. Let the sin offering purge my sin. Let him who was appointed to atone, execute his sacred office on me; for none can need it more than I. The passage may be read as the voice of faith as well as a prayer, and so it runs--"Thou wilt purge me with hyssop, *and I shall be clean.*" Foul as I am, there is such power in the divine propitiation, that my sin shall vanish quite away. Like the leper upon whom the priest has performed the cleansing rites, I shall again be admitted into the assembly of thy people and allowed to share in the privileges of the true Israel; while in thy sight also, through Jesus my Lord, I shall be accepted.

Wash me. Let it not merely be in type that I am clean, but by a real spiritual purification, which shall remove the pollution of my nature. Let the sanctifying as well as the pardoning process be perfected in me. Save me from the evils which my sin has created and nourished in me.

And I shall be whiter than snow. None but thyself can whiten me, but thou canst in grace outdo nature itself in its purest state. Snow soon gathers smoke and dust, it melts and disappears; thou canst give me an enduring purity. Though snow is white below as well as on the outer surface, thou canst work the like inward purity in me, and make me so clean that only an hyperbole can set forth my immaculate condition. Lord, do this; my faith believes thou wilt, and well she knows thou canst. Scarcely does Holy Scripture contain a verse more full of faith than this. Considering the nature of the sin, and the deep sense the psalmist had of it, it is a glorious faith to be able to see in the blood sufficient, nay, all sufficient merit entirely to purge it away. Considering also the deep natural inbred corruption which David saw and experienced within, it is a miracle of faith that he could rejoice in the hope of perfect purity in his inward parts. Yet, be it added, the faith is no more than the word warrants, than the blood of atonement encourages, than the promise of God deserves. O that some reader may take heart, even now while smarting under sin, to do the Lord the honour to rely thus confidently on the finished sacrifice of Calvary and the infinite mercy there revealed.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 6-8. The right conviction of sin comprehends its being acknowledged not only in our *works*, but also in our entire *being*. *Agustus F. Tholuck.*

Ver. 7. *Purge me with hyssop.* Do I well to prescribe to God with what he shall purge me, as though I knew all God's medicines as well as himself and which is worse, I to prescribe and he to administer? But excuse me, O my soul, it is not I that prescribe it to God, it is God that prescribes it to me; for hyssop is his own receipt, and one of the ingredients prescribed by himself to make the water of separation for curing the leprosy...I must confess I was glad at heart when I first heard hyssop spoken of; to think I should be purged so gently, and with a thing that may so easily be had, for hyssop grows in every garden; and then I thought I might go fetch it thence and purge myself, but now I perceive this is not the hyssop of which Solomon writ when he writ from the cedar to the hyssop; but this hyssop is

rather the herb grace, which never grew in garden but in that of Paradise, and which none can fetch thence unless God himself deliver it. The truth is, this hyssop was sometimes a cedar; the highest of all trees because the lowest of all shrubs, only to be made this hyssop for us: for Christ indeed is the true hyssop, and his blood the juice of hyssop that only can purge away my sins. *Sir Richard Baker.*

Ver. 7. *Purge me with hyssop.* (𐤆𐤍𐤁𐤌𐤕𐤕 T) Properly, *expiate my sin* with hyssop. The Psalmist alludes to the purification from the leprosy Leviticus 14:52, or from the touch of a dead body Numbers 19:19, both of which were to be done by the sprinkling of water and other things with hyssop. *Samuel Chandler.*

Ver. 7. *Hyssop.* The *lasaf* or *asaf*, the caper plant, the bright green creeper which climbs out of the fissures of the rocks in the Sinaitic valleys, has been identified on grounds of great probability with the "hyssop" or *ezob* of Scripture; and thus explains whence came the green branches used, even in the desert, for sprinkling the water over the tents of the Israelites. *Arthur Penrhyn Stanley, in "Sinai and Palestine."* 1864.

Ver. 7. *Hyssop.* Between twenty and thirty different plants have been proposed, but no one of them comes so near the above requirements as the caper plant (*Capparis spinosa*). It grows "out of the wall; " its stalks supply both bunch and rod admirably fitted for the ends indicated; and it has ever been esteemed in the East as possessing cleansing properties. *John Duns, D.D., in "Biblica; Natural Science."*

Ver. 7. *Hyssop.* What a pity that Solomon's botany is lost, in which he spoke of trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon to the hyssop that springeth out of the wall! The cedar we know, but what is the *hyssop* of the royal botanist? Mr. B---, French consul of this city (Sidon), and an enthusiastic botanist, exhibited to me two varieties of hyssop; one, called *zatar* by the Arabs, having the fragrance of thyme, with a hot, pungent taste, and long, slender stems. A bunch of these would answer very well for sprinkling the paschal and sacrificial blood on the lintel and posts of the doors, and over the persons and houses cleansed from the leprosy. Mr. B---, however, thinks that a very small green plant, like a moss which covers old walls in damp places, is the *hyssop* of Solomon. This I doubt. The other kind also springs out of walls, those of the garden especially, and was

much more likely to attract the attention of the royal student. *W. M. Thomson, D.D., in "The Land and the Book."*

Ver. 7. The paraphrase of this verse in the *Chaldee* is: "Thou wilt sprinkle me like the priest, which sprinkleth the unclean with the purifying waters, with hyssop, with the ashes of an heifer, and I shall be clean." *John Morison.*

Ver. 7. *I shall be whiter than snow.* But how is this possible? All the dyers on earth cannot dye a red into a white; and how, then, is it possible that my sins which are as red as scarlet should ever be made as white as snow? Indeed such retrogradation is no work of human art; it must be only his doing who brought the sun ten degrees back in the dial of Ahaz: for God hath a nitre of grace that can bring not only the redness of scarlet sins, but even the blackness of deadly sins, into its native purity and whiteness again. But say it be possible, yet what need is there of so great a whiteness, as to be "*whiter than snow*"? seeing snow is not as *paries dealbatus*, a painted wall, white without and foul within; but it is white, *intus et in cute*, within and without, throughout and all over; and what eye so curious but such a whiteness may content? Yet such a whiteness will not serve, for I may be as white as snow and yet a leper still; as it is said of Gehazi that "he went from Elisha a leper as white as snow:" it must be therefore *whiter than snow*. And such a whiteness it is that God's washing works upon us, makes within us; for no snow is so white in the eyes of men as a soul cleansed from sin is in the sight of God. And yet, a whiter whiteness than this too; for being purged from sin we shall, *induere stolam album*, put on the whiter robe; and this is a whiteness as much whiter than snow as angelical whiteness is more than elemental. *Sir Richard Baker.*

Ver. 7. In the Hebrew language there are two words to express the different kinds of washing, and they are always used with the strictest propriety; the one, to signify that kind of washing which *pervades the substance* of the thing washed, and cleanses it thoroughly; and the other to express that kind of washing which only *cleanses the surface* of a substance which the water cannot penetrate. The former is applied to the washing of clothes; the latter is used for washing some part of the body. By a beautiful and strong metaphor, David uses the former word in this and in Psalm 51:2: "*Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin; wash me and I shall be whiter than snow.*" So in Jeremiah 4:14, the same word is applied to the heart. *Richard Mant.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 7. Here is,

1. Faith in the act of an atonement for sin. "I shall be clean."
2. Faith in the method of its application. "Purge me, "etc. Sprinkled as the blood of sacrifices.
3. Faith in its efficacy. "I shall be whiter, "etc.

PSALM 51:8

EXPOSITION

Ver. 8. *Make me to hear joy and gladness.* He prays about his sorrow late in the Psalm; he began at once with his sin; he asks to hear pardon, and then to hear joy. He seeks comfort at the right time and from the right source. His ear has become heavy with sinning, and so he prays, "Make me to hear." No voice could revive his dead joys but that which quickeneth the dead. Pardon from God would give him double joy--"joy and gladness." No stinted bliss awaits the forgiven one; he shall not only *have* a double blooming joy, but he shall *hear* it; it shall sing with exultation. Some joy is felt but not heard, for it contends with fears; but the joy of pardon has a voice louder than the voice of sin. God's voice speaking peace is the sweetest music an ear can hear.

That the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice. He was like a poor wretch whose bones are crushed, crushed by no ordinary means, but by omnipotence itself. He groaned under no mere flesh wounds; his firmest and yet most tender powers were "broken in pieces all asunder; "his manhood had become a dislocated, mangled, quivering sensibility. Yet if he who crushed would cure, every wound would become a new mouth for song, every bone quivering before with agony would become equally sensible of intense delight. The figure is bold, and so is the supplicant. He is requesting a great thing; he seeks joy for a sinful heart, music for crushed bones. Preposterous prayer anywhere but at the throne of God!

Preposterous there most of all but for the cross where Jehovah Jesus bore our sins in his own body on the tree. A penitent need not ask to be an hired servant, or settle down in despairing content with perpetual mourning; he may ask for gladness and he shall have it; for if when prodigals return the

father is glad, and the neighbours and friends rejoice and are merry with music and dancing, what need can there be that the restored one himself should be wretched?

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 6-8. The right conviction of sin comprehends its being acknowledged not only in our *works*, but also in our entire *being*. *Agustus F. Tholuck.*

Ver. 8. *Make me to hear joy and gladness.* This is the exceeding great love of the Lord toward his children, that he hath not only provided a sure salvation for them through the remission of their sins in Christ Jesus, but also seals up in their heart the testimony thereof by his Holy Spirit of adoption, that for their present consolation, lest they should be swallowed up of heaviness through continual temptations. Though he speak not to all his children as he did to Daniel, by an angel, "O man, greatly beloved of God," nor as he did to the blessed Virgin Mary, "Hail, Mary, freely beloved," yet doth he witness the same to the hearts of his children by an inward testimony: when they hear it they are alive; when they want it they are but dead; their souls refuse all other comforts whatsoever. *William Cowper.*

Ver. 8. *Make me to hear joy and gladness.* As a Christian is the most sorrowful man in the world, so there is none more glad than he. For the cause of his joy is greatest. In respect his misery was greatest, his delivery greatest, therefore his joy greatest. From hell and death is he freed, to life in heaven is he brought...The person from whom he seeketh this joy is God: *Make me to hear*, saith he; whereby he would teach us that this joy cometh only from God; it is he who is the fountain of joy and all pleasure, for "all good things come from above." Natural joys proceed from a natural and fleshly fountain; spiritual joys spring only from God: so he who seeketh those joys beneath seeketh hot water under cold ice. *Archibald Symson.*

Ver. 8. *Make me to hear joy and gladness.* Another reference to the expiation of the leper, whose ear was to be touched with the blood of the trespass offering and the oil, as well as thumb and toe, to show that his faculties were now prepared for the service of God; so David prays that his ears may be sanctified to the hearing of joy and gladness; this an unsanctified heart can never receive. *W. Wilson.*

Ver. 8. *The bones which thou hast broken.* God, in favour to his children, doth afflict them for sin; and the very phrase of breaking his bones, though it express extremity of misery and pain, yet it hath hope in it, for broken bones by a cunning hand may be set again and return to their former use and strength; so that a conscience distressed for sins is not out of hope; yet upon that hope no wise man will adventure upon sin, saying, though I am wounded, yet I may be healed again; though I am broken, I may be repaired; for let him consider—

1. Who breaks his bones--*Thou*; he that made us our bones and put them in their several places, and tied them together with ligaments, and covered them with flesh; he that keepeth all our bones from breaking; it must be a great matter that must move him to break the bones of any of us. The God of all consolation, that comforteth us in all our distresses, when he cometh to distress us, this makes affliction weigh heavy...

2. The pain of the affliction expressed so feelingly in the breaking of bones, which, as is said, is the anguish of the soul for sin, and fear of the consuming fire of God's wrath, and the tempest, as Job calls it, of anger.

3. The pain of setting these bones again: for, though bones dislocated may be put in joint, and though bones broken may be set again, yet this is not done without pain and great extremity to the patient. Repentance setteth all our broken, pained bones; it recovers the soul from the anguish thereof; but he that once feels the smart of a true repentance, will say, the pleasures of sin, which are but for a season, are as hard a bargain as ever he made, and as dear bought; they cost tears, which are *sanguis vulnerati cordis*, the blood of a wounded heart; they cost sighs and groans which cannot be expressed; they cost watching, fasting, taming of the body to bring it in subjection, even to the crucifying of the flesh with the lusts thereof. Therefore, let no man adventure his bones in hope of setting them again.
Samuel Page.

Ver. 8. *That the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice.* The displeasure which God expressed against the sins he had been guilty of, and the deep sense he had of the aggravated nature of them, filled him with those pains and agonies of mind, as that he compares them to that exquisite torture he must have felt had all his bones been crushed, for the original word (**tyKD**), signifies more than broken, namely, being entirely mashed; and he compares the joy that God's declaring himself fully reconciled to

him would produce in his mind, to that inconceivable pleasure, which would arise from the instantaneous restoring and healing those bones, after they had been thus broken and crushed to pieces. *Samuel Chandler.*

PSALM 51:9

EXPOSITION

Ver. 9. *Hide thy face from my sins.* Do not look at them; be at pains not to see them. They thrust themselves in the way; but, Lord, refuse to behold them, lest if thou consider them, thine anger burn, and I die.

Blot out all mine iniquities. He repeats the prayer of the first verse with the enlargement of it by the word "all." All repetitions are not "vain repetitions." Souls in agony have no space to find variety of language: pain has to content itself with monotonies. David's face was ashamed with looking on his sin, and no diverting thoughts could remove it from his memory; but he prays the Lord to do with his sin what he himself cannot. If God hide not his face from our sin, he must hide it forever from us; and if he blot not out our sins, he must blot our names out of his book of life.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 9. *Hide thy face from my sins.* The verb (**r t k**) properly signifies *to veil*, or hide with a veil. *Samuel Chandler.*

Ver. 9. *Hide thy face from my sins.* He said in the third verse, that his sin was always in his sight; and now he prays that God would put it out of his sight. This is a very good order. If we hold our sins in our eyes to pursue them, God will cast them behind his back to pardon them: if we remember them and repent, he will forget them and forgive: otherwise, *peccatum unde homo non advertit Deus: et si advertit, animadvertit* --the sin from which man turns not, God looks to it; and if he look to it, sure he will punish it. *William Cowper.*

Ver. 9. *All mine iniquities.* See how one sin calleth to mind many thousands, which though they lie asleep a long time, like a sleeping debt, yet we know not how soon they may be reckoned for. Make sure of a general pardon, and take heed of adding new sins to the old. *John Trapp.*

PSALM 51:10

EXPOSITION

Ver. 10. *Create.* What! has sin so destroyed us, that the Creator must be called in again? What ruin then doth evil work among mankind! *Create in me.* I, in my outward fabric, still exist; but I am empty, desert, void. Come, then, and let thy power be seen in a new creation within my old fallen self. Thou didst make a man in the world at first; Lord, make a new man in me!

A clean heart. In the seventh verse he asked to be clean; now he seeks a heart suitable to that cleanliness; but he does not say, "Make my old heart clean; " he is too experienced in the hopelessness of the old nature. He would have the old man buried as a dead thing, and a new creation brought in to fill its place. None but God can create either a new heart or a new earth. Salvation is a marvellous display of supreme power; the work *in* us as much as that *for* us is wholly of Omnipotence. The affections must be rectified first, or all our nature will go amiss. The heart is the rudder of the soul, and till the Lord take it in hand we steer in a false and foul way. O Lord, thou who didst once make me, be pleased to new make me, and in my most secret parts renew me.

Renew a right spirit within me. It was there once, Lord, put it there again. The law on my heart has become like an inscription hard to read: new write it, gracious Maker. Remove the evil as I have entreated thee; but, O replace it with good, lest into my swept, empty, and garnished heart, from which the devil has gone out for a while, seven other spirits more wicked than the first should enter and dwell. The two sentences make a complete prayer. *Create* what is not there at all; *renew* that which is there, but in a sadly feeble state.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 10. *Create in me a clean heart, O God.* O you that created the first heaven and the first earth of nothing! O you that will create the *new heaven* and the *new earth* (wherein dwells righteousness), when sin had made the creature worse than nothing! O you that creates the *new creature*, the new man, fit to be an inhabitant of the new world, of the new Jerusalem! O thou

that hast said, "Behold, I make all things new:" *create* thou in me, even in me, *a clean heart; and renew a right spirit within me.* *Matthew Lawrence.*

Ver. 10. *Create in me a clean heart, O God,* etc. David prayeth the Lord *to create him a new heart*, not to correct his old heart, but to create him a new heart; showing that his heart was like an old garment, so rotten and tattered that he could make no good of it by patching or piecing, but even must cut it off, and take a new. Therefore Paul saith, "Cast off the old man; not pick him and wash him till he be clean, but cast him off and begin anew, as David did. Will ye know what this renewing is? It is the repairing of the image of God, until we be like Adam when he dwelt in Paradise. As there is a whole old man, so there must be a whole new man. The old man must change with the new man, wisdom for wisdom, love for love, fear for fear; his worldly wisdom for heavenly wisdom, his carnal love for spiritual love, his servile fear for Christian fear, his idle thoughts for sanctified works. *Henry Smith.*

Ver. 10. *Create in me a clean heart.* *Creating*, to speak properly, is to make of nought, and is here used improperly. The prophet speaketh according to his own feeling and present judgement of himself, as though he had lost all, and had no goodness in himself. No doubt the prophet's heart was in part clean, though not so much as he desired. These things thus opened, here cometh a question first to be answered. *Quest.* Whether David could have lost the cleanness of heart, having once had it? *Ans.* No. The gifts and calling of God, that is (as I take it), the gifts of effectual calling, are such as God never repenteth of or taketh away. Faith, hope, and charity are abiding gifts, as sure as the election of God, which is unchangeable. Indeed, the children of God, if we only considered them in themselves with their enemies, might fall away, but being founded upon the unchangeable nature of God, and immutability of his counsel, they cannot, the gates of hell shall not prevail against them, the elect cannot be deceived or plucked out of Christ's hands. Nay, certain it is that David did not actually leave his former cleanness. For sure it is, his heart smiting him (as here it did), so doing before in less matters, it was not wholly void of cleanness. And again, it could not pray for cleanness if it were not somewhat clean. This is most sure, that by grievous sins much filthiness cometh to the soul, as by a boisterous wind a tree may lose his leaves and some branches, so as that the party sinning may be brought into as great passions almost as if he had lost all, but the desire of grace is an infallible certainty of some grace of that kind. The prophet therefore desireth not a

clean heart because he had it not in any sort, but because he could not so well perceive it in himself, and take such comfort in it as he had done before, and for that he desired it a great deal more than now he had it. So learned, so rich men, think themselves not learned, not rich, in respect of that which they do desire, and when the sun is up, the moon seemeth to have no light. *George Estey, in "Certain Godly and Learned Expositions, "1603.*

Ver. 10. *Create in me a clean heart, O God,* etc. This "creation" is from nothing. David uses the same word of our creation which Moses uses of "the creation of the heaven and the earth." Our creation "in Jesus Christ" is no mere strengthening of our powers, no mere aiding of our natural weakness by the might of the grace of God, it is not a mere amendment, improvement of our moral habits; it is a creation out of nothing, of that which we had not before. There was nothing in us whereof to make it. We were decayed, corrupt, dead in trespasses and sins. What is dead becometh not alive, except by the infusion of what it had not. What is corrupt receiveth not soundness, save by passing away itself and being replaced by a new production. "The old man" passeth not into the new man, but is "put off." It is not the basis of the new life, but a hindrance to it. It must be "put off" and the new man "put on, "created in Christ Jesus. *E. B. Pusey, D.D., 1853.*

Ver. 10. (*first clause*). He used the word *creat* (Heb. *Bara*), a word only used of the work of God, and showing that the change in him could be wrought only by God. *Christopher Wordsworth.*

Ver. 10. *A clean heart.* The priest was required to make a strict examination of the skin of the leper before he could pronounce him clean; David prays God to make his heart clean. *W. Wilson.*

Ver. 10. *A right spirit.* *A steadfast spirit, i.e., a mind steady in following the path of duty. French and Skinner.*

Ver. 10-12. Who was to do this work? Not *himself*; God alone. Therefore, he prays: "O God, create--O lord, renew; uphold by thy Spirit." *Adam Clarke.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 10.

1. The change to be effected.
 1. A clean heart.
 2. A right spirit.
1. The power by which it is accomplished.
 1. A creative power, such as created the world at first.
 2. A renewing power, such as continually renews the face of the earth.
3. The acquirement of these blessings. The prayer, "Create, "etc.

PSALM 51:11

EXPOSITION

Ver. 11. *Cast me not away from thy presence.* Throw me not away as worthless; banish me not, like Cain, from thy face and favour. Permit me to sit among those who share thy love, though I only be suffered to keep the door. I deserve to be forever denied admission to thy courts; but, O good Lord, permit me still the privilege which is dear as life itself to me.

Take not thy Holy Spirit from me. Withdraw not his comforts, counsels, assistances, quickenings, else I am indeed as a dead man. Do not leave me as thou didst Saul, when neither by Urim, nor by prophet, nor by dream, thou wouldst answer him. Thy Spirit is my wisdom, leave me not to my folly; he is my strength, O desert me not to my own weakness. Drive me not away from thee, neither do thou go away from me. Keep up the union between us, which is my only hope of salvation. It will be a great wonder if so pure a spirit deigns to stay in so base a heart as mine; but then, Lord, it is all wonder together, therefore do this, for thy mercy's sake, I earnestly entreat thee.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 10-12. Who was to do this work? Not *himself*; God alone. Therefore, he prays: "O God, create--O lord, renew; uphold by thy Spirit." *Adam Clarke*.

Ver. 11. *Cast me not away from thy presence.* David lamented before that sin had slain him, and made him like a dead man, wanting a heart or quickening spirit; and now he fears lest, as the dead are abhorred by the living, so the Lord should cast him as a dead and abominable thing out of his presence. Whereof we learn this is one of the just punishments of sin; it procures the casting out of a man from the face of God; and it may let us see how dear bought are the pleasures of sin when a man to enjoy the face of the creature deprives himself of the comfortable face of the Creator; as David here, for the carnal love of the face of Bathsheba, puts himself in danger to be cast out forever from the presence of the Lord his God. If a man could remember this in all Satan's temptations, what it is that the deceiver offers, and what it is again that he seeks, he would be loath to buy the perishing pleasures of sin upon such a price as Satan selleth them, but would answer him as the apostle did Simon Magus, "Thy money, with thyself, go into perdition; "thy gain, thy glory, thy pleasure, and whatever thou wouldst give me to offend the Lord my God, go with thyself into perdition, for what canst thou offer me comparable to that which thou wouldst steal from me? But how is it that he prays,

Cast me not out from thy presence? May a man be cast any way from it? Saith he not himself, "What way can I flee from thy presence?" This is soon answered by distinguishing his twofold presence--one in mercy, wherewith he refresheth and comforteth his own, and this without intermission they enjoy who are in heaven; another, in wrath, whereby he terrifies and torments without intermission the damned in hell. As to them who are upon the earth, certain it is he is displeased with many, who, because they see not his angry face, regard it not, borne out with temporal recreations of the creature, which will fail them; and there are many, again, to whom he looks as a loving father in Christ, and yet they see not his merciful face by reason of many interjected veils; but to them who once have felt the sweetness of his favourable face it is death to want it. *William Cowper*.

Ver. 11. *Cast me not away from thy presence.* Like the leper who is banished from society till cleansed, or as Saul was rejected from being king, because he obeyed not the word of the Lord. 1 Samuel 15:23. David

could not but feel that his transgression would have deserved a similar rejection. *W. Wilson.*

Ver. 11. *Cast me not away.* Lord, though I, alas! have cast thee from me, yet cast me not away: hide not thy face from me, although I so often have refused to look at thee; leave me not without help, to perish in my sins, though I have aforetime left thee. *Fra Thomé de Jesu.*

Ver. 11. *Take not thy Holy Spirit from me.* The words of this verse imply that the Spirit had not altogether been taken away from him, however much his gifts had been temporarily obscured...Upon one point he had fallen into a deadly lethargy, but he was not "given over to a reprobate mind; "and it is scarcely conceivable that the rebuke of Nathan the prophet should have operated so easily and suddenly in arousing him had there been no latent spark of godliness still remaining...The truth on which we are now insisting is an important one, as many learned men have been inconsiderately drawn into the opinion that the elect, by falling into mortal sin, may lose the Spirit altogether, and be alienated from God. The contrary is clearly declared by Peter, who tells us that the word by which we are born again is an incorruptible seed 1 Peter 1:23; and John is equally explicit in informing us that the elect are preserved from falling away altogether. 1 John 3:9. However much they may appear for a time to have been cast off by God, it is afterwards seen that grace must have been alive in their breasts even during that interval when it seemed to be extinct. Nor is there any force in the objection that David speaks as if he feared that he might be deprived of the Spirit. It is natural that the saints, when they have fallen into sin, and have thus done what they could to expel the grace of God, should feel an anxiety upon this point; but it is their duty to hold fast the truth, that grace is the incorruptible seed of God, which never can perish in any heart where it has been deposited. This is the spirit displayed by David. Reflecting upon his offence, he is agitated with fears, and yet rests in the persuasion that, being a child of God, he would not be deprived of what, indeed, he had justly forfeited. *John Calvin.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 3-4,11-12,17.

1. Scripture estimate of sin.

1. Personal accountability--*My sin.*

2. Estimated as hateful to God--*Against thee*, etc.

3. Sin estimated as separation from God.

2. Spiritual restoration. First step--Sacrifice of a broken spirit. Last step--Spirit of liberty. *Thy free spirit*. F. W. Robertson.

Ver. 11. (*first clause*). I am not cast away, and would be thankful. I deserve to be cast away, and ought to be penitential. I am afraid of being cast away, and must be prayerful. "Cast me not away."

1. From thy *protecting* presence into *danger*.

2. From thy *loving* presence into *wrath*.

3. From thy *joyous* presence into *distress*.

4. From thy *affluent* presence into *destitution*.

5. From thy *gracious* presence into *despair*. Sin hurries us away from God; grace hastens us into his embrace: the former severs, and the latter unites, God and the soul. W. Jackson.

Ver. 11.

1. There is often much comfort in much grief. "Cast me not, "etc. A consciousness of still having the divine presence, and a dread of losing it, prompts the prayer.

2. There is often much faith in much fear. "Take not, " etc. Faith in the spirit works within him while he fears.

PSALM 51:12

EXPOSITION

Ver. 12. *Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation*. Salvation he had known, and had known it as the Lord's own; he had also felt the joy which arises from being saved in the Lord, but he had lost it for a while, and therefore he longed for its restoration. None but God can give back this joy; he can do it; we may ask it; he will do it for his own glory and our benefit. This joy comes not first, but follows pardon and purity: in such order it is safe, in any other it is vain presumption or idiotic delirium.

And uphold me with thy free Spirit. Conscious of weakness, mindful of having so lately fallen, he seeks to be kept on his feet by power superior to his own. That royal Spirit, whose holiness is true dignity, is able to make us walk as kings and priests, in all the uprightness of holiness; and he will do so if we seek his gracious upholding. Such influences will not enslave but emancipate us; for holiness is liberty, and the Holy Spirit is a free Spirit. In the roughest and most treacherous ways we are safe with such a Keeper; in the best paths we stumble if left to ourselves. The praying for joy and upholding go well together; it is all over with joy if the foot is not kept; and, on the other hand, joy is a very upholding thing, and greatly aids holiness; meanwhile, the free, noble, royal Spirit is at the bottom of both.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 12. *Restore.* It is no small comfort to a man that hath lost his receipt for a debt paid when he remembers that the man he deals with is a good and just man, though his discharge is not presently to be found. That God whom thou hast to deal with is very gracious; what thou hast lost he is ready to restore (the evidence of thy grace I mean). David begged this, and obtained it. Yea, saith faith, if it were true what thou fearest, that thy grace was never true, there is mercy enough in God's heart to pardon all thy former hypocrisy if thou comest in the sincerity of thy heart; and so faith persuades the soul by an act of adventure to cast itself upon God in Christ. Wilt not thou, saith faith, expect to find as much mercy at God's hands, as thou canst look for at a man's? It is not beyond the line of created mercy to forgive many unkindnesses, much falseness and unfaithfulness, upon an humble, sincere acknowledgment of the same. The world is not so bad but it abounds with parents who can do thus much for their children, and masters for their servants; and is that hard for God to do which is so easy in his creature? Thus faith vindicates God's name. And so long as we have not lost sight of God's merciful heart, our head will be kept above water, though we want the evidence of our own grace. *William Gurnall.*

Ver. 12. *Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation,* etc. How can God restore that which he took not away? For, can I charge God with the taking away the joy of his salvation from me? O gracious God, I charge not thee with taking it, but myself with losing it; and such is the miserable condition of us poor wretches, that if thou shouldest restore no more to us than what thou takest from us, we should quickly be at a fault in our estates, and our ruin would be as sudden as inevitable. But what am I so

earnest for restoring? for what good will restoring do me? and how shall I more keep it being restored, than I kept it before being enjoyed? and if I so enjoy it, as still to fear to lose it, what joy can there be in such enjoying? O therefore, not restore it only, but *establish me with thy free spirit*; that as by thy restoring I may enjoy it entirely, so by thy establishing I may enjoy it securely. *Sir Richard Baker.*

Ver. 12. *Uphold me.* I am tempted to think that I am now an established Christian, that I have overcome this or that lust so long that I have got into the habit of the opposite grace, so that there is no fear; I may venture very near the temptation, nearer than other men. This is a lie of Satan. I might as well speak of gunpowder getting by habit a power of resisting fire, so as not to catch the spark. As long as powder is wet it resists the spark, but when it becomes dry it is ready to explode at the first touch. As long as the Spirit dwells in my heart, he deadens me to sin, so that if lawfully called through temptation I may reckon upon God carrying me through. But when the Spirit leaves me, I am like dry gunpowder. Oh, for a sense of this! *Robert Murray Macheyne.*

Ver. 12. *Uphold ne with thy free spirit.* A loving mother chooses a fitting place, and a fitting time, to let her little child fall; it is learning to walk, it is getting over confident, it may come to a dangerous place, and if possessed of all this confidence, may fall and destroy itself. So she permits it to fall at such a place, and in such a way as that it may be hurt, wholesomely hurt, but not dangerously so. It has now lost its confidence, and clings all the more fondly and trustingly to the strong hand that is able to hold up all its goings. So this David, this little child of the great God, has fallen; it is a sore fall, all his bones are broken, but it has been a precious and a profitable lesson to him; he has no confidence any longer in himself, his trust is not now in an arm of flesh. "Uphold me with thy free spirit." *Thomas Alexander.*

Ver. 12. (*last clause*). *Let a free spirit sustain me*; that is, let me not be enslaved, as I have been, by my sinful passions. *Henry Dimock, M.A., 1791.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 3-4,11-12,17.

1. Scripture estimate of sin.

1. Personal accountability--*My sin*.
2. Estimated as hateful to God--*Against thee*, etc.
3. Sin estimated as separation from God.

2. Spiritual restoration. First step--Sacrifice of a broken spirit. Last step--Spirit of liberty. *Thy free spirit*. F. W. Robertson.

Ver. 12-13. A threefold desire.

1. To be *happy* --"Restore, "etc.
2. To be *consistent* --"Uphold, "etc.
3. To be *useful* --"Then will I teach, "etc. W. Jackson.

PSALM 51:13

EXPOSITION

Ver. 13. *Then will I teach transgressors thy ways*. It was his fixed resolve to be a teacher of others; and assuredly none instruct others so well as those who have been experimentally taught of God themselves. Reclaimed poachers make the best gamekeepers. Huntingdon's degree of S.S., or Sinner Saved, is more needful for a soul winning evangelist than either M.A. or D.D. The pardoned sinner's matter will be good, for he has been taught in the school of experience, and his manner will be telling, for he will speak sympathetically, as one who has felt what he declares. The audience the psalmist would choose is memorable--he would instruct transgressors like himself; others might despise them, but, "a fellow feeling makes us wondrous kind." If unworthy to edify saints, he would creep in along with the sinners, and humbly tell them of divine love. The mercy of God to one is an illustration of his usual procedure, so that our own case helps us to understand his "ways, "or his general modes of action: perhaps, too, David under that term refers to the preceptive part of the word of God, which, having broken, and having suffered thereby, he felt that he could vindicate and urge upon the reverence of other offenders.

And sinners shall be converted unto thee. My fall shall be the restoration of others. Thou wilt bless my pathetic testimony to the recovery of many who, like myself, have turned aside unto crooked ways. Doubtless this Psalm and the whole story of David, have produced for many ages the

most salutary results in the conversion of transgressors, and so evil has been overruled for good.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 13. *Then will I teach transgressors thy ways*, etc. We see our duty craves that when we have received mercy from God for ourselves, we should make vantage of it for the edification of others. Every talent received from God should be put to profit, but specially the talent of mercy; as it is greatest, so the Lord requires greater fruit of it, for his own glory, and for the edification of our brethren. Seeing we are vessels of mercy, should not the scent and sweet odour of mercy go from us to others? This duty Christ craved from Peter: "And thou, when thou art converted, confirm thy brethren." And this duty, as David here promises, so we may read how he did perform it: "Come unto me, all ye that fear God, and I will tell you what he hath done for my soul." The property of a Christian is, *fides per delectionem efficax*, faith worked by love. What availeth it to pretend faith toward God, where there is no love toward thy neighbour? and wherein can thy love be declared more than in this, to draw thy neighbour to the participation of that same merit whereunto God hath called thee? By the law a man was bound to bring home his neighbour's wandering beast if he had met with it before; how much more, then, to turn again his neighbour himself when he wanders from the Lord his God? If two men walking on the way should both fall into one pit, and the one being relieved out of it should go his way and forget his neighbour, might it not justly be called a barbarous and inhuman cruelty? We have all fallen into one and the same mire of iniquity; since the Lord hath put out his merciful hand to draw us out of this prison of sin, shall we refuse to put out our hand to see if possibly we may draw up our brethren with us? *William Cowper (Bishop).*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 12-13. A threefold desire.

1. To be *happy* -- "Restore, "etc.
2. To be *consistent* -- "Uphold, "etc.
3. To be *useful* -- "Then will I teach, "etc. *W. Jackson.*

Ver. 13.

1. It is not our duty to seek the conversion of others until we are converted ourselves.
2. The greater enjoyment we have in the ways of God, the more faithfully and earnestly we shall make them known to others.
3. The more faithfully and earnestly we make them known to others the more they will be influenced by them.

PSALM 51:14**EXPOSITION**

Ver. 14. *Deliver me from bloodguiltiness.* He had been the means of the death of Uriah, the Hittite, a faithful and attached follower, and he now confesses that fact. Besides, his sin of adultery was a capital offence, and he puts himself down as one worthy to die the death. Honest penitents do not fetch a compass and confess their sins in an elegant periphrasis, but they come to the point, call a spade a spade, and make a clean breast of all. What other course is rational in dealing with the Omniscient?

O God, thou God of my salvation. He had not ventured to come so near before. It had been, *O God*, up till now, but here he cries, *Thou God of my salvation*. Faith grows by the exercise of prayer. He confesses sin more plainly in this verse than before, and yet he deals with God more confidently: growing upward and downward at the same time are perfectly consistent. None but the King can remit the death penalty, it is therefore a joy to faith that God is King, and that he is the author and finisher of our salvation.

And my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness. One would rather have expected him to say, I will sing of thy mercy; but David can see the divine way of justification, that righteousness of God which Paul afterwards spoke of by which the ungodly are justified, and he vows to sing, yea, and to sing lustily of that righteous way of mercy. After all, it is the righteousness of divine mercy which is its greatest wonder. Note how David would preach in the last verse, and now here he would sing. We can never do too much for the Lord to whom we owe more than all. If we could be preacher, precentor, doorkeeper, pew opener, foot washer, and all

in one, all would be too little to show forth all our gratitude. A great sinner pardoned makes a great singer. Sin has a loud voice, and so should our thankfulness have. We shall not sing our own praises if we be saved, but our theme will be the Lord our righteousness, in whose merits we stand righteously accepted.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 14. (*first clause*). *Deliver me from bloods*. The term *bloods* in Hebrew may denote any capital crime; and in my opinion he is here to be considered as alluding to the sentence of death, to which he felt himself to be obnoxious, and from which he requests deliverance. *John Calvin*.

Ver. 14. (*first clause*). The Chaldee reads, *Deliver me from the judgment of murder*.

Ver. 14. *O God, thou God of my salvation. O God*, is a good invocation, for he heareth prayers. Yet to distinguish him from all false gods he is so particular as to single him from all other: *Thou God*. And to magnify him, and to reenforce his petition, he calleth him *Deum salutis*, "*the God of my salvation*," which expresses him able to deliver him; for it is his nature, and his love, and his glory, to be a preserver of men. And to bring home this joy and comfort into his own heart, he addeth, *salutis meae*, "*of my salvation*." So it is *oratio fervens*, and the apostle telleth us that such a prayer prevaieth much with God. For God may be a Saviour and a deliverer, and yet we may escape his saving hand, his right hand may skip us. We can have no comfort in the favours of God, except we can apply them at home; rather we may "think on God and be troubled." *Samuel Page*.

Ver. 14. *And my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness*. Hierom, Basil, Euthymius, and other ancient doctors observe that natural corruptions and actual sins are the very rampiers which stop the free passage of song Psalm 51:15. So David doth himself expound himself:

Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God: and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness. His lack of thankfulness did cry, his adultery cry, his murder cry unto the Lord for revenge; but alas! himself was mute, till God in exceeding great mercy did stop the mouths of his clamorous adversaries, and gave him leave to speak. *John Boys*.

Ver. 14. *Aloud.* This for God, for himself, for the church.

1. *For God,* that his honour may be proclaimed, therefore they borrowed the voice of still and loud instruments...

2. *For himself.* Having received such a benefit, he cannot contain himself, this new wine of spiritual joy which filleth his vessel must have a vent. All passions are loud. Anger chides loud, sorrow cries loud, fear shrieks loud, and joy sings loud. So he expresses the vehemency of his affection; for to whom much is forgiven, they love much.

3. *For others.* Iron sharpens iron--examples of zeal and devotion affect much, and therefore solemn and public assemblies do generally tender the best service to God, because one provoketh another. *Samuel Page.*

PSALM 51:15

EXPOSITION

Ver. 15. *O Lord, open thou my lips.* He is so afraid of himself that he commits his whole being to the divine care, and fears to speak till the Lord unstops his shame silenced mouth. How marvellously the Lord can open our lips, and what divine things can we poor simpletons pour forth under his inspiration! This prayer of a penitent is a golden petition for a preacher, Lord, I offer it for myself and my brethren. But it may stand in good stead any one whose shame for sin makes him stammer in his prayers, and when it is fully answered, the tongue of the dumb begins to sing.

And my mouth shall shew forth thy praise. If God opens the mouth he is sure to have the fruit of it. According to the porter at the gate is the nature of that which comes out of a man's lips; when vanity, anger, falsehood, or lust unbar the door, the foulest villainies troop out; but if the Holy Spirit opens the wicket, then grace, mercy, peace, and all the graces come forth in tuneful dances, like the daughters of Israel when they met David returning with the Philistine's head.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 15. *O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise.* As man is a little world in the great, so the tongue is a great world

in the little. *Nihil habet medium; aut grande malum est, aut grande bonum.* (Jerome.) It has no mean; it is either a great evil, or a great good. If good (as Eunapius said of that famous rhetorician) *a walking library*, a whole university of edifying knowledge; but if bad (as St. James doth tell us, Jas 3:6), *"a world of wickedness."* No better dish for God's public service, when it is we; seasoned; again, none worse, when ill handled. So that if we desire to be doorkeepers in God's house, let us entreat God first to be a doorkeeper in our house, that he would shut the wicket of our mouth against unsavoury speeches, and open the door of our lips, *that our mouth may shew forth his praise.* This was David's prayer, and ought to be thy practice, wherein observe three points especially: who, *the Lord*; what, *open my lips*; why, *that my mouth shall shew forth thy praise.* For the first--man of himself cannot untie the strings of his own stammering tongue, but it is God only which opened "a door of utterance." Colossians 4:3. When we have a good thought, it is (as the school doth speak) *gratia infusa*; when a good word, *gratia effusa*; when a good work, *gratia diffusa*. Man is a lock, the Spirit of God has a key, "which openeth and no man shutteth;" again, "shutteth and no man openeth." Revelation 3:7. He did open the heart of Lydia to conceive well, the ears of the prophet to hear well, the eyes of Elisha servant to see well, and here the lips of David to speak well. Acts 16:1-40 Isaiah 50:1-11 2 Kings 6:1-33. And therefore, whereas in the former verse he might seem too peremptory, saying,

My tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness; he doth, as it were, correct himself by this later edition and second speech: O Lord, I find myself most unable to sing or say, but *open thou my lips*, and touch thou my tongue, and then I am sure *my mouth shall shew forth thy praise.* *John Boys.*

Ver. 15. *O Lord, open thou my lips*, etc. Again he seems to have the case of the leper before his mind, with the upper lip covered, and only crying unclean, unclean; and he prays as a spiritual leper to be enabled, with freedom and fulness, to publish abroad the praise of his God. *W. Wilson.*

Ver. 15. (*first clause*). He prays that *his lips may be opened*; in other words, that God would afford him matter of praise. The meaning, usually attached to the expression is, that God would so direct his tongue by the Spirit as to fit him for singing his praises. But though it is true that God must supply us with words, and that if he do not, we cannot fail to be silent in his praise, David seems rather to intimate that his mouth must be shut

until God called him to the exercise of thanksgiving by extending pardon.
John Calvin.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 15.

1. Confession. His lips are sealed on account--
 1. Of his fall--and well they might be.
 2. Of natural timidity.
 3. Of want of zeal.
2. Petition, "Open thou, "etc. Not my understanding merely and heart, but "lips."
3. Resolution. Then he would speak freely in God's praise.

Ver. 15.

1. When God does not open our lips we had better keep them closed.
2. When he does open them we ought not to close them.
3. When he opens them it is not to speak in our own praise, and seldom in praise of others, but always in his own praise.
4. We should use this prayer whenever we are about to speak in his name. "O Lord, open, "etc.

PSALM 51:16

EXPOSITION

Ver. 16. *For thou desirest not sacrifice.* This was the subject of the last Psalm. The psalmist was so illuminated as to see far beyond the symbolic ritual; his eye of faith gazed with delight upon the actual atonement. *Else would I give it.* He would have been glad enough to present tens of thousands of victims if these would have met the case. Indeed, anything which the Lord prescribed he would cheerfully have rendered. We are ready to give up all we have if we may but be cleared of our sins; and when sin is pardoned our joyful gratitude is prepared for any sacrifice.

Thou delightest not in burnt offering. He knew that no form of burnt sacrifice was a satisfactory propitiation. His deep soul need made him look from the type to the antitype, from the external rite to the inward grace.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 16. *For thou desirest not sacrifice;* etc. There may be another reason why David here affirms that God would not accept of a sacrifice, nor be pleased with a burnt offering. No particular sacrifices were appointed by the law of Moses to expiate the guilt of murder and adultery. The person who had perpetrated these crimes was, according to the divine law, to be punished with death. David therefore may be understood as declaring, that it was utterly vain for him to think of resorting to sacrifices and burnt offerings with a view to the expiation of his guilt; that his criminality was of such a character, that the ceremonial law made no provision for his deliverance from the doom which his deeds of horror deserved; and that the only sacrifices which would avail were those mentioned in the succeeding verse, *"The sacrifice of a broken heart."* John Calvin.

Ver. 16. *Else would I give it thee.* And good reason it is, that we who lie daily at the beautiful gate of the temple begging alms of him, and receiving from his open hand, who openeth his hand, and filleth with his plenty every living thing, should not think much to return to him such offerings of our goods as his law requireth. Samuel Page.

Ver. 16-17. And now I was thinking what were fit *to offer to God* for all his lovingkindness he has showed me; and I thought upon *sacrifices*, for they have sometimes been pleasing to him, and he hath oftentimes smelt a sweet odour from them; but I considered that sacrifices were but shadows of things to come, are not now in that grace they have been; for *old things are past, and new are now come*; the shadows are gone, the substances are come in place. The bullocks that are to be sacrificed now are our hearts; it were easier for me to give him bullocks for sacrifice, than to give him my heart. But why should I offer him that he care not for? my heart, I know, he cares for; and if it be broken, and offered up by penitence and contrition, it is the only sacrifice that now he delights in. But can we think God to be so indifferent that he will accept of a broken heart? Is a thing that is broken good for anything? Can we drink in a broken glass? Or can we lean upon a broken staff? But though other things may be the worse for breaking, yet a heart is never at the best till it be broken; for till it be

broken we cannot see what is in it; till it be broken, it cannot send forth its sweetest odour; and therefore, though God loves a whole heart in affection, yet he loves a broken heart in sacrifice. And no marvel, indeed, seeing it is himself that breaks it; for as nothing but goat's blood can break the adamant, so nothing but the blood of our scapegoat, Jesus Christ, is able to break our adamantine hearts. Therefore, accept, O God, my broken heart, which I offer thee with a whole heart; seeing thou canst neither except against it for being whole, which is broken in sacrifice, nor except against it for being broken, which is whole in affection. *Sir Richard Baker.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 16-17.

1. Men would gladly do something towards their own salvation if they could. "Thou desirest not, "etc., else would I give it.
2. All that they can do is not of the least avail. All the ceremonial observances of Jewish or Gentile churches could not procure pardon for the least transgression of the moral law.
3. The only offering of man which God will not despise is a broken and a contrite heart.
4. All other requirement for his salvation God himself will provide.

PSALM 51:17

EXPOSITION

Ver. 17. *The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit.* All sacrifices are presented to thee in one, by the man whose broken heart presents the Saviour's merit to thee. When the heart mourns for sin, thou art better pleased than when the bullock bleeds beneath the axe. "A broken heart" is an expression implying deep sorrow, embittering the very life; it carries in it the idea of all but killing anguish in that region which is so vital as to be the very source of life. So excellent is a spirit humbled and mourning for sin, that it is not only a sacrifice, but it has a plurality of excellences, and is preeminently God's *sacrifices*. *A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.* A heart crushed is a fragrant heart. Men condemn those who are contemptible in their own eyes, but the Lord seeth not as man

seeth. He despises what men esteem, and values that which they despise. Never yet has God spurned a lowly, weeping penitent, and never will he while God is love, and while Jesus is called the man who receiveth sinners. Bullocks and rams he desires not, but contrite hearts he seeks after; yea, but one of them is better to him than all the varied offerings of the old Jewish sanctuary.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 17. *The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart*, etc. When speaking of *thankfulness*, we might have expected him to say, "a joyful heart, or a thankful heart, " but instead of that he says, "a contrite heart." For the joy of forgiveness does not banish sorrow and contrition for sin: this will still continue. And the deeper the sense of sin, and the truer the sorrow for it, the more heartfelt also will be the thankfulness for pardon and reconciliation. The tender, humble, broken heart, is therefore the best thank offering. *J. J. Stewart Perowne*.

Ver. 17. It may be observed that the second word, (hKdî) which we render *contrite*, denotes the being bruised and broken to pieces, as a thing is bruised in a mortar (See Numbers 11:8), and therefore, in a moral sense, signifies such a weight of sorrow as must wholly crush the mind without some powerful and seasonable relief. *Samuel Chandler*.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 3-4,11-12,17.

1. Scripture estimate of sin.

1. Personal accountability--*My sin*.

2. Estimated as hateful to God--*Against thee*, etc.

3. Sin estimated as separation from God.

2. Spiritual restoration. First step--Sacrifice of a broken spirit. Last step--Spirit of liberty. *Thy free spirit*. *F. W. Robertson*.

PSALM 51:18

EXPOSITION

Ver. 18. *Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion.* Let blessings according to thy wont be poured upon thy holy hill and chosen city. Zion was David's favourite spot, whereon he had hoped to erect a temple. The ruling passion is so strong on him, that when he has discharged his conscience he must have a word for Zion. He felt he had hindered the project of honouring the Lord there as he desired, but he prayed God still to let the place of his ark be glorious, and to establish his worship and his worshipping people.

Build thou the walls of Jerusalem. This had been one of David's schemes, to wall in the holy city, and he desires to see it completed; but we believe he had a more spiritual meaning, and prayed for the prosperity of the Lord's cause and people. He had done mischief by his sin, and had, as it were, pulled down her walls; he, therefore, implores the Lord to undo the evil, and establish his church. God can make his cause to prosper, and in answer to prayer he will do so. Without his building we labour in vain; therefore are we the more instant and constant in prayer. There is surely no grace in us if we do not feel for the church of God, and take a lasting interest in its welfare.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 18. *In thy good pleasure.* Whatever we seek must ever be sought under this restriction, *Thy good pleasure.* Build thou, but do it in thine own wise time, in thine own good way. Build thou the walls of separation that divide the church from the world; let them be *in* it, not *of* it; keep them from its evil. Build thou the walls that bind, that unite thy people into one city, under one polity, that they all may be one. Build thou, and raze thou; raze all the inner walls that divide thy people from thy people; hasten that day when, as there is but one Shepherd, so shall there be but one sheepfold. *Thomas Alexander.*

Ver. 18-19. Some few learned Jewish interpreters, while they assign the Psalm to the occasion mentioned in the title, conjecture that the 18th and 19th verses were added by some Jewish bard, in the time of the Babylonish captivity. This opinion is also held by Venema, Green, Street, French and

Skinner. There does not, however, seem to be any sufficient ground for referring the poem, either in whole or part, to that period. Neither the walls of Jerusalem, nor the buildings of Zion, as the royal palace and the magnificent structure of the temple, which we know David had already contemplated for the worship of God (2 Samuel 7:1, etc.), were completed during his reign. This was only effected under the reign of his son Solomon. 1 Kings 3:1.

The prayer, then, in the 18th verse might have a particular reference to the completion of these buildings, and especially to the rearing of the temple, in which sacrifices of unprecedented magnitude were to be offered. David's fears might easily suggest to him that his crimes might prevent the building of the temple, which God had promised should be erected. 2 Samuel 7:13. "The king forgets not," observes Bishop Horne, "to ask mercy for his people as well as for himself; that so neither his own nor their sins might prevent either the building and flourishing of the earthly Jerusalem, or, what was of infinitely greater importance, the promised blessing of Messiah, who was to descend from him, and to rear the walls of the New Jerusalem." *James Anderson's Note to Calvin, in loc.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 18.

1. For whom is the prayer offered--for the church or Zion?
 1. Next to our own welfare we should seek the welfare of Zion.
 2. All should seek it by prayer.
2. For what is the prayer offered?
 1. The kind of good, not worldly or ecclesiastical, but spiritual.
 2. The measure of good. "In thy good pleasure." Thine own love to it, and what thou hast already done for it.
 3. The continuance of good. "Build," etc. Its doctrines, graces, zeal.

PSALM 51:19

EXPOSITION

Ver. 19. In those days of joyful prosperity thy saints shall present in great abundance the richest and holiest thank offerings to thee, and thou shalt be pleased to accept them. A saved soul expects to see its prayers answered in a revived church, and then is assured that God will be greatly glorified. Though we bring no more sacrifices for sin, yet as priests unto God our solemn praises and votive gifts are thank offerings acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. We bring not the Lord our least things--our doves and pigeons; but we present him with our best possessions--our bullocks. We are glad that in this present time we are able to fulfil in person the declaration of this verse: we also, forecasting the future, wait for days of the divine presence, when the church of God, with unspeakable joy, shall offer gifts upon the altar of God, which will far eclipse anything beheld in these less enthusiastic days. Hasten it, O Lord.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 19.

1. When we are accepted of God our offerings are accepted. "Then, etc.
2. We should then make the richest offerings in our power, our time, talents, influence, etc.
 1. Holy obedience.
 2. Self sacrifices, not half offerings, but whole "burnt offerings; "not lambs merely, but "bullocks."
 3. Zeal for divine ordinances. "Upon thine altar."
3. God will take pleasure in such services. "Then shalt thou be pleased."
 1. Because from his own redeemed.
 2. Because given in the name of the Redeemer. With such sacrifices God is well pleased.

PSALM 52

PSALM 52:1

Title. *To the Chief Musician.* Even short Psalms, if they record but one instance of the goodness of the Lord, and rebuke but briefly the pride of man, are worthy of our best minstrelsy. When we see that each Psalm is dedicated to "the chief musician," it should make us value our psalmody, and forbid us to praise the Lord carelessly. *Maschil.* An Instructive. Even the malice of a Doeg may furnish instruction to a David. *A Psalm of David.* He was the prime object of Doeg's doggish hatred, and therefore the most fitting person to draw from the incident the lesson concealed within it. *When Doeg the Edomite came and told Saul, and saith unto him, David is come to the house of Ahimelech.* By this deceitful tale bearing, he procured the death of all the priests at Nob: though it had been a crime to have succoured David as a rebel, they were not in their intent and knowledge guilty of the fault. David felt much the villany of this arch enemy, and here he denounces him in vigorous terms; it may be also that he has Saul in his eye.

Division. We shall follow the sacred pauses marked by the Selahs of the poet.

EXPOSITION

Ver. 1. *Why boasteth thyself in mischief, O mighty man?* Doeg had small matter for boasting in having procured the slaughter of a band of defenceless priests. A mighty man indeed to kill men who never touched a sword! He ought to have been ashamed of his cowardice. He had no room for exultation! Honourable titles are but irony where the wearer is mean and cruel. If David alluded to Saul, he meant by these words pityingly to say, "How can one by nature fitted for nobler deeds, descend to so low a level as to find a theme for boasting in a slaughter so heartless and mischievous?"

The goodness of God endureth continually. A beautiful contrast. The tyrant's fury cannot dry up the perennial stream of divine mercy. If priests

be slain their Master lives. If Doeg for awhile triumphs the Lord will outlive him, and right the wrongs which he has done. This ought to modify the proud exultations of the wicked, for after all, while the Lord liveth, iniquity has little cause to exalt itself.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Title. That *Maschil* means a sacred composition, is evident from Psalm 47:7, where the passage which we render, "Sing ye praises with understanding, "is literally, "Sing ye a *Maschil*, "or song of instruction. This word occurs as a title in thirteen places; and six times is prefixed to compositions of David's. In several instances it occurs in consecutive Psalms; *i.e.*, in the 42nd (of which the 43rd is the sequel), the 44th and 45th, the 52nd, 53rd, 54th, and 55th, the 88th and 89th. A circumstance which favours the notion that the term was one peculiarly used by some particular editor or collector of a certain portion of the Psalter. *John Jebb.*

Ver. 1. (first clause). *Why doth he glory in malice that is mighty?* that is, he that in malice is mighty, why doth he glory? There is need that a man be mighty, but in goodness, not in malice. Is it any great thing to glory in malice? To build a house belong to few men, any ignorant man you please can pull down. To sow wheat, to dress the crop, to wait until it ripen, and in that fruit on which one has laboured to rejoice, doth belong to few men: with one spark any man you please can burn all the crop...

What art thou about to do, O, mighty man, what are thou about to do, boasting thyself much? Thou art about to kill a man: this thing also a scorpion, this also a fever, this also a poisonous fungus can do. To this is thy mightiness reduced, that it be made equal to a poisonous fungus! *Augustine.*

Ver. 1. By *mischief* is understood not simply what evil he had done, but the prosperity which he now enjoyed, obtained through mischief; as is clear both from the word *boasting* and from the seventh verse...Formerly he was the chief of Saul's shepherds 1 Samuel 21:8, but by that wicked destruction of the priests of God by Saul, and the execution of the cruel sentence, he obtained the chief place near to the king 1 Samuel 22:9. *Hermann Venema.*

Ver. 1. *O mighty man.* These words may be added by way of irony, as if he had said, A great deal of valour and prowess you have shown in slaying a company of unarmed men, the priests of the Lord, yea, women and

children, no way able to resist you or else to imply the ground of his vain boasting, to wit, either his present greatness, as being a man in great place, and of great power with Saul; or the great preferments he expected from Saul. *Arthur Jackson.*

Ver. 1. *The goodness of God endureth continually.* He contrasts the *goodness* of God with the wealth and might of Doeg, and the foundation of his own confidence as widely different from that of Doeg, his own placed upon the goodness of God, enduring for ever and showing itself effectual. It is as if he had said, The *goodness* of God to which I trust, is most powerful and the same throughout all time, and in it I shall at all times most surely rejoice that *goodness* of God, since now it sustains me, so it will exalt me in its own good time; it therefore *is*, and *will be above me*. ...

Not without emphasis does he say the goodness *! a of the strong God*, a contrast to Doeg the *hero*, and the ruinous foundation of his fortune. *Hermann Venema.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 1. The confidence of faith.

1. *The circumstances were distressing.*

- 1.** David was misjudged.
- 2.** David exiled.
- 3.** A bad man in power.
- 4.** God's priests slain.

2. *The consolation was abiding.*

- 1.** There is a God.
- 2.** He is good.
- 3.** His goodness continues.
- 4.** Good will therefore overcome.

3. *The rejoinder was triumphant. Why boasteth thou?*

- 1.** The mischief did not touch the main point.
- 2.** It would be overruled.
- 3.** It would recoil.

4. It would expose the perpetrators to scorn.

WORK UPON THE FIFTY-SECOND PSALM

CHANDLER'S *"Life of David,"* contains an Exposition of this Psalm. Vol. 1., pp. 140-143.

PSALM 52:2

EXPOSITION

Ver. 2. *Thy tongue deviseth mischiefs.* Thou speakest with an ulterior design. The information given was for Saul's assistance apparently, but in very deed in his heart the Edomite hated the priests of the God of Jacob. It is a mark of deep depravity, when the evil spoken is craftily intended to promote a yet greater evil.

Like a sharp razor, working deceitfully. David represents the false tongue as being effectual for mischief, like a razor which, unawares to the person operated on, is making him bald; so softly and deftly do Oriental barbers perform their work. Or he may mean that as with a razor a man's throat may be cut very speedily, under the pretence of shaving him, even thus keenly, basely, but effectually Doeg destroyed the band of the priests. Whetted by malice, and guided by craft, he did his cruel work with accursed thoroughness.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 2. *Thy tongue deviseth mischiefs, like a sharp razor, working deceitfully.* Thus our version. But I do not very well understand the propriety of *the tongue's devising mischief*, and devising it *like a sharp razor*. But we may easily avoid this harsh comparison by rendering the words: *You contrive mischiefs with thy tongue, as with a sharp razor, O thou dealer in deceit: i.e., you contrive with thy smooth and flattering tongue to wound the reputation and character of others, as though thou wast cutting their throats with a smooth razor. Samuel Chandler.*

Ver. 2. *Like a sharp razor,* that instead of shaving the hair lances the flesh; or missing the beard cutteth the throat. *John Trapp.*

Ver. 2. The smooth adroit manner of executing a wicked device neither hides not abates its wickedness. Murder with *a sharp razor* is as wicked as murder with a meat axe or bludgeon. A lie very ingeniously framed and rehearsed in an oily manner, is as great a sin, and in the end will be seen to be as great a folly as the most bungling attempt at deception. *William S. Plumer.*

PSALM 52:3

EXPOSITION

Ver. 3. *Thou lovest evil more than good.* He loved not good at all. If both had been equally profitable and pleasant, he would have preferred evil.

And lying rather than to speak righteousness. He was more at home at lying than at truth. He spake not the truth except by accident, but he delighted heartily in falsehood.

SELAH. Let us pause and look at the proud blustering liar. Doeg is gone, but other dogs bark at the Lord's people. Saul's cattle master is buried, but the devil still has his drovers, who fain would hurry the saints like sheep to the slaughter.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 3. *Thou lovest evil more than good.* --*Thou hast loved evil,* he says, *more than good,* not by simply preferring it, but by substituting it; so that in the stead of good he hath done evil, and that from the inmost love of his soul, bent upon evil; wherefore he does not say that he *admitted*, but *loved* evil, not *moral* only, but *physical*, for the destruction of his neighbours; so *to have loved* it, that he willed nothing but *evil*, being averse to all good. *Hermann Venema.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 3. In what cases men clearly love evil more than good.

PSALM 52:4

EXPOSITION

Ver. 4. *Thou lovest.* Thou hast a taste, a gusto for evil language. *All devouring words.* There are words that, like boa constrictors, swallow men whole, or like lions, rend men to pieces; these words evil minds are fond of. Their oratory is evermore furious and bloody. That which will most readily provoke the lowest passions they are sure to employ, and they think such pandering to the madness of the wicked to be eloquence of a high order.

O thou deceitful tongue. Men can manage to say a great many furious things, and yet cover all over with the pretext of justice. They claim that they are jealous for the right, but the truth is they are determined to put down truth and holiness, and craftily go about it under this transparent pretence.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 4. *Thou lovest all devouring words, O thou deceitful tongue.* He was all tongue; a man of words; and these the most deceitful and injurious. *Adam Clarke.*

PSALM 52:5

EXPOSITION

Ver. 5. *God shall likewise destroy thee for ever.* Fain would the persecutor destroy the church, and therefore God shall destroy him, pull down his house, pluck up his roots, and make an end of him.

He shall take thee away. God shall extinguish his coal and sweep him away like the ashes of the hearth; he would have quenched the truth, and God shall quench him.

And pluck thee out of thy dwelling place, like a plant torn from the place where it grew, or a captive dragged from his home. Ahimelech and his

brother priests were cut off from their abode, and so should those be who compassed and contrived their murder.

And root thee out of the land of the living. The persecutor shall be eradicated, stubbed up by the root, cut up root and branch. He sought the death of others and death shall fall upon him. He troubled the land of the living, and he shall be banished to that land where the wicked cease from troubling. Those who will not "let live" have no right to "live." God will turn the tables on malicious men, and mete to them a portion with their own measure. "SELAH." Pause again, and behold the divine justice proving itself more than a match for human sin.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 5. *God shall destroy thee forever*, etc. There are four words the psalmist makes us of to denote the utter vengeance that awaited this deceitful and bloody wretch, all of them having a very strong meaning. The first, **ĒThy** from **xtn**; signifies *to pull down*, and break utterly into pieces; as when an altar is demolished. (Jud 6:30 8:9.) The second, **ĒThy** from the root **htj**; which signifies *to twist* anything, or *pluck it up by twisting it round*, as trees are sometimes twisted up. The third, **Ēhšy** from **j sn**, which properly signifies *utterly to sweep away anything like dust or chaff*; and the expression **l haṯĒhšy** means not *sweep thee away from thy tent*, but *sweep thee away, that thou mayest be no longer a tent*; thyself, thy family, thy fortune, shall be wholly and entirely swept away, and dissipated forever; to which the fourth word, **Ēvṯy** answers, *eradicabit te*, he shall root thee out *from the land of the living*. It is impossible words can express a more entire and absolute destruction. *Samuel Chandler.*

Ver. 5. *God shall likewise destroy thee forever.* Here are *quot verba tot tonotrua*, so many words, so many thunderclaps. As thou hast destroyed the Lord's priests, and their whole city, razing and harassing it; so God will demolish and destroy thee utterly, as an house pulled down to the ground, so that one stone is not left upon another (Leviticus 14:45); so shall God pull down Doeg from that high preferment, which he by sycophancy hath got at court. *John Trapp.*

Ver. 5. Wonderful is the force of the verbs in the original, which convey to us the four ideas of *laying prostrate*, *dissolving as by fire*, *sweeping away*

as with a besom, and totally extirpating root and branch, as a tree is eradicated from the spot on which it grew. If a farther comment be wanted, it may be found in the history of David's enemies, and the crucifiers of the son of David; but the passage will be fully and finally explained by the destruction of the world of the ungodly at the last day. George Horne.

Ver. 5. The poet accumulates dire and heavy words, and mingles various metaphors that he might paint the picture of this man's destruction in more lively colours. Three metaphors appear to be joined together, the first taken from a *building*, the second from a *tent*, the third from a *tree*, if attention is given to the force and common acceptance of the words.
Hermann Venema.

Ver. 5. *He shall take thee away;* or, *seize thee*, as coals are taken with the tongs. *J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

PSALM 52:6

EXPOSITION

Ver. 6. *The righteous* --the object of the tyrant's hatred-- shall outlive his enmity, and *also shall see*, before his own face, the end of the ungodly oppressor. God permits Mordecai to see Haman hanging on the gallows. David had brought to him the tokens of Saul's death on Gilboa. *And fear.* Holy awe shall sober the mind of the good man; he shall reverently adore the God of providence.

And shall laugh at him. If not with righteous joy, yet with solemn contempt. Schemes so far reaching all baffled, plans so deep, so politic, all thwarted. Mephistopheles outwitted, the old serpent taken in his own subtlety. This is a good theme for that deep seated laughter which is more akin to solemnity than merriment.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 6. *The righteous also shall see*, etc. That is, to use the apt words of Gejerus, "*This shall not be a secret judgment, or known only to a few, but common fame shall spread abroad throughout the kingdom, or city, the notable punishments of the ungodly. The righteous also shall not pass by*

*such an event with indifference, but with earnest eyes shall contemplate it, "etc. I add, and hence shall they take joy, and turn it to their own use, to the greater fearing of God... **The righteous**, upon whose destruction the ungodly man was intent, shall survive and spend their lives safe in the favour of God; **they shall see** with attentive mind, they shall consider; nor, as worldlings are accustomed, shall they pass it by without reflection or improvement, they shall see and **fear**, namely, God the just judge; and instructed in his judgment by this instance, they shall be the more careful to abstain from all designs and crimes of this kind. *Hermann Venema.**

Ver. 6. *And shall laugh at him; or, over him* --over the wicked man thus cast down--*they shall laugh.* Such exultation, to our modern sensibilities, seems shocking, because we can hardly conceive of it, apart from the gratification of personal vindictiveness. But there is such a thing as a righteous hatred, as a righteous scorn. There is such a thing as a shout of righteous joy at the downfall of the tyrant and the oppressor, at the triumph of righteousness and truth over wrong and falsehood. *J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

PSALM 52:7

EXPOSITION

Ver. 7. Lo. Look ye here, and read the epitaph of a mighty man, who lorded it proudly during his little hour, and set his heel upon the necks of the Lord's chosen.

This is the man that made not God his strength. Behold the man! The great vainglorious man. He found a fortress, but not in God; he gloried in his might, but not in the Almighty. Where is he now? How has it fared with him in the hour of his need? Behold his ruin, and be instructed.

But trusted in the abundance of his riches, and strengthened himself in his wickedness. The substance he had gathered, and the mischiefs he had wrought, were his boast and glory. Wealth and wickedness are dreadful companions; when combined they make a monster. When the devil is master of money bags, he is a devil indeed. Beelzebub and Mammon together heat the furnace seven times hotter for the child of God, but in the end that shall work out their own destruction. Wherever we see today a

man great in sin and substance, we shall do well to anticipate his end, and view this verse as the divine *in memoriam*.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 7. *Lo, this is the man that made not God his strength.* David having showed (Psalm 52:5-6) the wicked man, by the righteous judgment of God rooted out of the land of the living, shows us in the next verse, the righteous man at once fearing and laughing at this sight, as also pointing at him saying,

Lo, this is the man that made not God his strength. The words are a divine but cutting sarcasm. The original is *geber*, which signifieth a strong, valiant man: as we say in English, Lo, this is the brave and gallant man you wot of! But who was this for a man? He was one, saith he, that *trusted in the abundance of his riches*. Oh! It is hard to abound in riches and not to trust in them. Hence that caution (Psalm 62:10): *If riches increase, set not your heart upon them*. Now, what is the setting the heart upon riches but our rejoicing and trusting in them? And because the heart of man is so easily persuaded into this sinful trust upon riches, therefore the apostle is urgent with Timothy to persuade all rich men--not only mere worldly rich men, but godly rich men--against it; yea, he urges Timothy to persuade rich men against two sins, which are worse than all the poverty in the world, yet the usual attendants of riches--pride and confidence: *Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded*. 1 Timothy 6:17. *Joseph Caryl*.

Ver. 7-8. Perhaps some of you have been long professors, and yet come to little growth in love to God, humility, heavenly mindedness, mortification; and it is worth the digging to see what lies at the root of your profession, whether there be not a legal principle that hath too much influenced you. Have you not thought to carry all with God from your duties and services, and too much laid up your hopes in your own actings? Alas! this is as so much dead earth, which must be thrown out, and gospel principles laid in the room thereof. Try but this course, and try whether the spring of thy grace will not come on apace. David gives an account how he came to stand and flourish when some that were rich and mighty, on a sudden withered and came to nothing.

Lo, saith he, this is the man that made not God his strength; but trusted in the abundance of his riches. But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God: I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever. While others trust in

the riches of their own righteousness and services, and make not Christ their strength, do thou renounce all, and trust in the mercy of God in Christ, and thou shalt be like a green olive when they fade and wither.
William Gurnall.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 7-8. The worldling like an uprooted tree, the believer a vigorous well planted olive.

PSALM 52:8

EXPOSITION

Ver. 8. *But I*, hunted and persecuted though I am, *am like a green olive tree*. I am not plucked up or destroyed, but am like a flourishing olive, which out of the rock draws oil, and amid the drought still lives and grows. *In the house of God*. He was one of the divine family, and could not be expelled from it; his place was near his God, and there was he safe and happy, despite all the machinations of his foes. He was bearing fruit, and would continue to do so when all his proud enemies were withered like branches lopped from the tree.

I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever. Eternal mercy is my present confidence. David knew God's mercy to be eternal and perpetual, and in that he trusted. What a rock to build on! What a fortress to fly to!

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 8. (*first clause*):

*"But I am olive charged with fruit
 In fertile soil that grows."*

This appears to express of the Hebrew words, which our translators render, *like a green olive tree*, but which in reality have no reference to the colour, but to the flourishing, vigorous, and thriving state of the plant; just as Homer gives it the epithet of "luxuriant," and "flourishing;" and Ovid that of "ever flourishing." The fact is, the colour of the leaves of this tree is not a bright lively green; but a dark, disagreeable, or yellowish one.

Scheuchzer describes the leaves, as "*superne coloris atrovirentis, vel in viridi flavescentis*." An English traveller, writing from Italy, thus expresses his disappointment about the olive tree: --"The fields, and indeed the whole face of Tuscany, are in a manner covered with olive trees; but the olive tree does not answer the character I have conceived of it. The royal psalmist and some of the sacred writers, speak with rapture of the `green olive tree, 'so that I expected a beautiful green; and I confess to you, I was wretchedly disappointed to find its hue resembling that of our hedges when they are covered with dust." I have heard other travellers express the same feeling of disappointment. "The true way of solving the difficulty, "as Harmer properly remarks, "is to consider the word translated `green, 'not as descriptive of colour, but of some other property; youthfulness, vigour, prosperity, or the like." *Richard Mant*.

Ver. 8. *Green olive tree in the house of God.* Several expositors fancifully imagine that olive trees grow in certain of the courts of the Tabernacle; but the notion must not be endured, it would have been too near an approach to the groves of the heathen to have been tolerated, at least in David's time. The text should surely be read with some discretion; the poet does not refer to olive trees in God's house, but compares *himself in the house of God* to an olive tree. This reminds us of the passage, "Thy children like olive plants around thy table, "where some whose imaginations have been more lively than their judgments, have seen a table surrounded, not with children, but with olive plants. Whoever, in the realms of common sense, ever heard of olive plants round a table? If, as Thrupp supposes, Nob was situated upon the Mount of Olives, we can, without any conjecture, see a reason for the present reference to a flourishing olive tree. *C. H. S.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 7-8. The worldling like an uprooted tree, the believer a vigorous well planted olive.

Ver. 8. The believer's character, position, confidence, and continuance.

PSALM 52:9

EXPOSITION

Ver. 9. *I will praise thee for ever.* Like thy mercy shall my thankfulness be. While others boast in their riches I will boast in my God; and when their glorying is silenced for ever in the tomb, my song shall continue to proclaim the lovingkindness of Jehovah.

Because thou hast done it. Thou hast vindicated the righteous, and punished the wicked. God's memorable acts of providence, both to saints and sinners, deserve, and must have our gratitude. David views his prayer as already answered, the promise of God as already fulfilled, and therefore at once lifts up the sacred Psalm.

And I will wait on thy name. God shall still be the psalmist's hope; he will not in future look elsewhere. He whose name has been so gloriously made known in truth and righteousness, is justly chosen as our expectation for years to come.

For it is good before thy saints. Before or among the saints David intended to wait, feeling it to be good both for him and them to look to the Lord alone, and wait for the manifestation of his character in due season. Men must not too much fluster us; our strength is to sit still. Let the mighty ones boast, we will wait on the Lord; and if their haste brings them present honour, our patience will have its turn by and by, and bring us the honour which excelleth.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 9. He compares himself

(1) With an *olive tree*, a tree a ways green, lasting long and fruitful, whose fruit is most useful and grateful: so he paints his future state as joyful, glorious, lasting, and useful and pleasing to men: plainly a reference is made to the *royal* and *prophetic* office, in both of which he represents himself as an *olive tree*, by supplying others with *oil* through his rule and instruction:

(2) With *the olive* growing luxuriantly, and abounding in spreading bough, and so, spacious and large...

(3) But why does he add *in the house of God*? That he might indicate, unless I am deceived:

(a) That he should possess a dwelling in that place where the *house of God* was, whence he was now exiled through the calumnies of Doeg and the attacks of Saul stirred up thereby:

(b) That he should perform distinguished service to the house of God, by adorning it, and by restoring religion, now neglected, and practising it with zeal:

(c) That he should derive from God and his favour, whose that house was, all his prosperity:

(d) That he, like a son of God, should rejoice in familiarity with him, and should become heir to his possessions and promises. *Hermann Venema.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 9. The double duty, and the double reason: the single heart and its single object.

Ver. 9. What God has done, what we will do, and why.

PSALM 53

PSALM 53:1

PREFACE.

This volume completes one half of my labour upon this priceless book, and my humble prayer is that I may be spared to conclude the other portion. So uncertain is human life, and so often have men's best designs remained unfinished, that I will press on with all diligence, lest, perhaps, the lamp of life should go out ere the writer has seen by its light the word FINIS at the conclusion of the last verse.

This volume has cost more labour than any other, because upon the larger proportion of the Psalms contained in it no great writers have expatiated at length. Some six or seven of them are specially notable, and have, therefore, been expounded and preached upon on all hands, but the rest remain almost untrodden ground in sacred literature, hence the gathering of extracts has required a wider range of reading and far more laborious research. Where one author writes upon a portion of Scripture, all write, while other passages remain almost untouched. This has driven me very much more to the Latin authors, and in them to a vein of exposition very little worked in these days. The neglect of these voluminous expositors is, however, not very censurable, for as a rule the authors are rather heavy than weighty. "Art is long and life is short", hence I found myself unequal to the unaided accomplishment of my task, and I have had to call in the aid of my excellent friend Mr. Gracey, the accomplished classical tutor of "the Pastors' College", to assist me in the work of winnowing the enormous heaps of Latin comments. Huge folios, full of dreary word spinning, yield here and there a few goodly grains, and these, I trust, will be valuable enough to my readers to repay my coadjutor and myself for our pains. For the selection of extracts I alone am responsible, for the accuracy of the translations we are jointly accountable. The reader will note that not without much expense of money, as well as toil, he has here furnished to his hand the pith of Venema, Leviticus Blanc, Lorinus, Gerhohus, Musculus, Martin Geier, Mollerus, and Simon de Muis; with occasional

notes from Vitringa, Jansenius, Savonarola, Vatablus, Turrecremata, Marloratus, Palanterius, Theodore, and others, as they were judged worthy of insertion. I can truly say that I have never flinched from a difficulty, or spared exertion in order to make the work as complete as it lay in my power to render it, either by my own endeavours or the help of others. My faithful amanuensis, Mr. Keys, has been spared to me, and has been a continual visitor at the British Museum, Lambeth Palace, Dr. Williams' Museum, and Sion College; and many have been the courtesies which, despite differences of creed, I have received in his person from those who are in authority in those treasures of literature; for all which I would now record my hearty thanks.

No object has been before me but that of serving the church and glorifying God by doing this work right thoroughly. I cannot hope to be remunerated pecuniarily; if only the bare outlay be met I shall be well content, the rest is an offering to the best of Masters, whose word is meat and drink to those who study it. The enjoyment of the work is more than sufficient reward, and the hope of helping my brethren in their biblical studies is very sweet to me.

The late increase of wages to printers, and the rise both in paper and binding, may compel an advance in the very low price charged for these volumes hitherto, but this shall not be made unless it becomes absolutely necessary to screen me from loss. As a larger sale will secure a return of my outlay, the matter is mainly in the hands of the public. Volume 1 being now in the third edition, and the second edition of Volume 2 being upon the press, I am led to hope that the present volume will also meet with a large and rapid sale; and if so, the old price may suffice to cover the outlay.

My venerable friend, Mr. George Rogers, has furnished me with many hints for the notes to village preachers, and it is hoped that this portion of the work has been so improved that it will not be the least useful part of it. Testimonies received lead to the belief that in the two former volumes numerous students have found help in that department.

There is no need to multiply words in this preface, but it is incumbent upon me to bless the Lord for help given, help daily and hourly sought while I have been occupied in this service; and it is also on my heart to ask a favourable mention of my volumes among their friends from those who kindly appreciate them. C.H. Spurgeon.

Clapham, March, 1872.

Title. *To the Chief Musician.* If the leader of the choir is privileged to sing the jubilates of divine grace, he must not disdain to chant the miseries of human depravity. This is the second time he has had the same Psalm entrusted to him (*see Psalm 14.*), and he must, therefore, be the more careful in singing it. *Upon Mahalath.* Here the tune is chosen for the musician, probably some mournfully solemn air; or perhaps a musical instrument is here indicated, and the master of the choir is requested to make it the prominent instrument in the orchestra; at any rate, this is a direction not found in the former copy of the Psalm, and seems to call for greater care. The word "*Mahalath*" appears to signify, in some forms of it, "disease," and truly this Psalm is *THE SONG OF MAN'S DISEASE*-- the mortal, hereditary taint of sin. *Maschil.* This is a second additional note not found in Psalm 14, indicating that double attention is to be given to this most instructive song. *A Psalm of David.* It is not a copy of the fourteenth Psalm, emended and revised by a foreign hand; it is another edition by the same author, emphasised in certain parts, and rewritten for another purpose.

Subject. The evil nature of man is here brought before our view a second time, in almost the same inspired words. All repetitions are not vain repetitions. We are slow to learn, and need line upon line. David after a long life, found men no better than they were in his youth. Holy Writ never repeats itself needlessly, there is good cause for the second copy of this Psalm; let us read it with more profound attention than before. If our age has advanced from fourteen to fifty-three, we shall find the doctrine of this Psalm more evident than in our youth.

The reader is requested to peruse Psalm 14, "Treasury of David," Vol. 1.

EXPOSITION

Ver. 1. *The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.* And this he does because he is a fool. Being a fool he speaks according to his nature; being a great fool he meddles with a great subject, and comes to a wild conclusion. The atheist is, morally as well as mentally, a fool, a fool in the heart as well as in the head; a fool in morals as well as in philosophy. With the denial of God as a starting point, we may well conclude that the fool's progress is a rapid, riotous, raving, ruinous one. He who begins at impiety is ready for anything.

No God, being interpreted, means no law, no order, no restraint to lust, no limit to passion. Who but a fool would be of this mind? What a Bedlam, or rather what an Aceldama, would the world become if such lawless principles came to be universal! He who heartily entertains an irreligious spirit, and follows it out to its legitimate issues is a son of Belial, dangerous to the commonwealth, irrational, and despicable. Every natural man is, more or less a denier of God. Practical atheism is the religion of the race.

Corrupt are they. They are rotten. It is idle to compliment them as sincere doubters, and amiable thinkers--they are putrid. There is too much dainty dealing nowadays with atheism; it is not a harmless error, it is an offensive, putrid sin, and righteous men should look upon it in that light. All men being more or less atheistic in spirit, are also in that degree corrupt; their heart is foul, their moral nature is decayed.

And have done abominable iniquity. Bad principles soon lead to bad lives. One does not find virtue promoted by the example of your Voltaires and Tom Paines. Those who talk so abominably as to deny their Maker will act abominably when it serves their turn. It is the abounding denial and forgetfulness of God among men which is the source of the unrighteousness and crime which we see around us. If all men are not outwardly vicious it is to be accounted for by the power of other and better principles, but left to itself the "No God" spirit so universal in mankind would produce nothing but the most loathsome actions.

There is none that doeth good. The one typical fool is reproduced in the whole race; without a single exception men have forgotten the right way. This accusation twice made in the Psalm, and repeated a third time by the inspired apostle Paul, is an indictment most solemn and sweeping, but he who makes it cannot err, he knows what is in man; neither will he lay more to man's charge than he can prove.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Whole Psalm. Probably the two Psalms *refer to different periods*; the fourteenth to the earlier portion of the world, or of Jewish history; the fifty-third to a later, perhaps a still future time. Jehovah, through Christ, is frequently said to turn to the world to see what its condition is, and always with the same result. "All flesh had corrupted its way" in the days of Noah, and, "when the Son of Man cometh" again, it is intimated that he will scarcely "find faith on the earth." The two Psalms also *apply to different*

persons. The former refers to the enemies of God, who tremble when his presence is made known; *they are in great fear*, because vengeance is about to be inflicted on them for their sins. Here the Supreme Being is called Jehovah. In the fifty-third Psalm the interests of God's people are principally kept in view. The ungodly are regarded as plotting against the righteous, and it is in this relation their case is considered. The fear that was just and reasonable in the fourteenth Psalm, because it concerned the unrighteous under a sense of impending judgment, is said to be unfounded in the fifty-third, because God was in the midst of his people, *scattering the bones of their enemies*, and showing himself, not as Jehovah, but as the Elohim of his redeemed children. The fourteenth Psalm contemplates judgment; the fifty-third deliverance; and thus, though seemingly alike, a different lesson is conveyed in each. The Psalm, then, descriptive of the universal and continuous corruption of man's nature, very properly occupies an introductory place in a series intended to represent the enemies of Messiah, who oppose his church during his absence, and who are to attempt to resist his power when he comes again. Before entering upon an examination of the character of these opponents, this Psalm teaches that, until changed by grace, all are gone astray; "there is none righteous, no, not one," and that for all there is but one remedy, *the Deliverer coming out of Zion, who shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.* R. H. Ryland, M.A., in *"The Psalms restored to Messiah,"* 1853.

Whole Psalm. The state of earth ought to be deeply felt by us. The world lying in wickedness should occupy much of our thoughts. The enormous guilt, the inconceivable pollution, the ineffably provoking Atheism of this fallen province of God's dominion, might be a theme for our ceaseless meditation and mourning. To impress it the more on us, therefore, the Psalm repeats what has been already sung in Psalm 14. It is the same Psalm, with only a few words varied; it is "line upon line, precept upon precept; "the harp's most melancholy, most dismal notes again sounded in our ear. Not that the Lord would detain us always, or disproportionately long, amid scenes of sadness; for elsewhere he repeats in like manner that most triumphant melody, Psalm 40:6-12 108:6-13; but it is good to return now and then to the open field on which we all were found, cast out in loathsome degradation. Andrew A. Bonar, in *"Christ and his Church in the Book of Psalms,"* 1859.

Whole Psalm. A second edition of the fourteenth Psalm, with variations more or less important, in each verse. That either of these compositions is

an incorrect copy of the other is highly improbable, because two such copies of the same Psalm would not have been retained in the collection, and because the variations are too uniform, consistent, and significant, to be the work of chance or mere traditional corruption. That the changes were deliberately made by a later writer is improbable, because such a liberty would hardly have been taken with a Psalm of David, and because the latter form, in that case, would either have been excluded from the Psalter or substituted for the first form, or immediately connected with it. The only satisfactory hypothesis is, that the original author afterwards rewrote it, with such modifications as were necessary to bring out certain points distinctly, but without any intention to supersede the use of the original composition, which therefore still retains its place in the collection. Thus supposition is confirmed by the titles, which ascribe both Psalms to David... As a general fact, it may be stated, that the variations in the Psalm before us are such as render the expression stronger, bolder, and in one or two cases more obscure and difficult. *J. A. Alexander, 1850.*

Whole Psalm. This Psalm is a variation of Psalm 14. In each of these two Psalms the *name* of God occurs seven times. In Psalm 14, it is three times *Elohim*, and four times *Jehovah*; in the present Psalm it is seven times *Elohim*. *Christopher Wordsworth, 1868.*

Whole Psalm. God, in this Psalm, "speaketh twice, "for this is the same almost verbatim with the fourteenth Psalm. The scope of it is to convince us of our sins, to set us blushing, and to set us trembling because of them: there is need of "line upon line" to this purpose. God, by the psalmist, here shows--

I. The *fact* of sin. God is a witness to it. He looks down from heaven and sees all the sinfulness of men's hearts and lives. All this is open and naked before him.

II. The *fault* of sin. It is iniquity (Psalm 53:1,4); it is an unrighteous thing; it is that in which there is no good (Psalm 53:1,3); it is going back from God (Psalm 53:3).

III. The *fountain* of sin. How comes it that men are so bad? Surely, it is because there is no fear of God before their eyes; they say in their hearts, *there is no God* at all to call us to account, none that we need to stand in awe of. Men's bad practices flow from their bad principles.

IV. The *folly* of sin. He is a *fool* (in the account of God, whose judgment we are sure is right) who harbours such corrupt thoughts. The "workers of iniquity, "whatever they pretend to, "have no knowledge; "they may truly be said to know nothing that do not know God. Psalm 53:4.

V. The *filthiness* of sin. Sinners are "corrupt" (Psalm 53:1); their nature is vitiated and spoiled; their iniquity is "abominable; "it is odious to the holy God, and renders them so; whereas, otherwise he "hates nothing that he has made." What neatness soever proud sinners pretend to, it is certain that wickedness is the greatest nastiness in the world.

VI. The *fruit* of sin. See to what a degree of barbarity it brings men at last! See their cruelty to their brethren! They "eat them up as they eat bread." As if they had not only become beasts, but beasts of prey. See their contempt of God at the same time--they have not called upon him, but scorn to be beholden to him.

VII. The *fear and shame* that attends sin (Psalm 53:5). "There were they in great fear" who had made God their enemy; their own guilty consciences frightened them and filled them with horror. This enables the virgin, the daughter of Zion, to put them to shame and expose them, "because God hath despised them"

VIII. The *faith* of the saints, and their hope and power touching this great evil (Psalm 53:6). There will come a Saviour, a great salvation, a salvation from sin. O that it might be hastened! for it will bring in glorious and joyful times. There were those in Old Testament times that looked and hoped, that prayed and waited for this redemption. Such salvations were often wrought, and all typical of the everlasting triumphs of the glorious church. *Condensed from Matthew Henry, 1662-1714.*

Ver. 1. *The fool hath said in his heart*, etc. It is in his heart he says this; this is the secret desire of every unconverted bosom. If the breast of God were within the reach of men, it would be stabbed a million of times in one moment. When God was manifest in the flesh, he was altogether lovely; he did no sin; he went about continually doing good: and yet they took him and hung him on a tree; they mocked him and spat upon him. And this is the way men would do with God again. Learn--First. The fearful depravity of your heart. I venture to say there is not an unconverted man present, who has the most distant idea of the monstrous wickedness that is now

within his breast. Stop till you are in hell, and it will break out unrestrained. But still let me tell you what it is--you have a heart that would kill God if you could. If the bosom of God were nor within your reach, and one blow would rid the universe of God, you have a heart fit to do the deed. Second. The amazing love of Christ-- "While we were enemies, Christ died for us." *Robert Murray Macheyne, 1813-1843.*

Ver. 1. *There is no God.* *ˆyae* is properly a noun, and means nonentity, or nonexistence: "nothing of God, "or "no such thing as God." It cannot be explained as a wish--"No God!" *i.e.*, O that there were no God! --because *ˆyae* in usage always includes the substantive verb, and denies the existence, or at least the presence, of the person or thing to which it is prefixed. This is also clear from the use of the same word in the last clause, where its sense is unambiguous. *J. A. Alexander on Psalm XIV.*

Ver. 1. *There is no God.* Thus denying the agency of Providence, for the word *Elohim*, here translated *God*, means *judge* (compare Exodus 22:28), and has reference not to the *essence*, but to the *providence* of the Deity. *Daniel Cresswell, 1776-1844.*

Ver. 1. It is to be noted that Scripture saith, *The fool hath said in his heart*, and not *"thought in his heart*; "that is to say, he doth not so fully think it in judgment, as he hath a good will to be of that belief; for seeing that it makes not for him that there should be a God, he doth seek by all means accordingly to persuade and resolve himself, and studies to affirm, prove, and verify it to himself as some theme or position, all which labour, notwithstanding that sparkle of our creation light, whereby men acknowledge a Deity, burneth still within; and in vain doth he strive utterly to alienate it or put it out, so that it is out of the corruption of his heart and will, and not out of the natural apprehension of his brain and conceit, that he doth set down his opinion, as the comical poet saith, "Then came my mind to be of my opinion, "as if himself and his mind had been two diverse things; therefore, the atheist hath rather said, and held it in his heart, than thought or believed in his heart that there is no God. *Francis Bacon (1560-1626), in "Thoughts on Holy Scripture".*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

See the hints on Psalm 14.

Ver. 1. The fool's inside and outside.

Ver. 1.

I. The folly of atheism. He who says there is no God is a fool.

1. No reason for the assertion.

2. All reason against it.

II. The seat of atheism is the heart; it is a moral unbelief not an intellectual, the language of the will not of the understanding

III. Cause of atheism.

1. Loving evil.

2. Hating good. *G. R.*

PSALM 53:2

EXPOSITION

Ver. 2. *God looked down from heaven upon the children of men.* He did so in ages past, and he has continued his steadfast gaze from his all surveying observatory.

To see if there were any that did understand, that did seek God. Had there been one understanding man, one true lover of his God, the divine eye would have discovered him. Those pure heathens and admirable savages that men talk so much of, do not appear to have been visible to the eye of Omniscience, the fact being that they live nowhere but in the realm of fiction. The Lord did not look for great grace, but only for sincerity and right desire, but these he found not. He saw all nations, and all men in all nations, and all hearts in all men, and all motions of all hearts, but he saw neither a clear head nor a clean heart among them all. Where God's eyes see no favourable sign we may rest assured there is none.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 2. *That did seek God.* Although all things are full of God, yet is he to be sought for of godly men, by reason of the darkness which compasseth our minds through original sin. For both the flesh, and the senses, and

earthly affections do hinder us from knowing of him, yea, though he be present. *Peter Martyr*, 1500-1562.

Ver. 2-3. Their sin is described in gradation. They do *not understand*, because a true knowledge of things divine forms the basis of proper conduct towards God; they do *not ask for God*, because they only care for him whose clear and sure insight apprehends him as their highest possession; they are *gone aside*, because he who cares not for him is sure to get estranged from him, and to deviate from his paths; and they are *altogether become filthy* (i.e., worthless), because man's proper strength and fitness for virtue must well from the fountain of communion with God. *Agustus F. Tholuck*.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 2.

I. God has not left the world to itself.

II. He takes particular notice of all that is in it.

III. The only thing he values in it is the knowledge of himself. *G. R.*

PSALM 53:3

EXPOSITION

Ver. 3. *Every one of them is gone back.* The whole mass of manhood, all of it, is gone back. In the fourteenth Psalm it was said to turn aside, which was bad enough, but here it is described as running in a diametrically opposite direction. The life of unregenerate manhood is in direct defiance of the law of God, not merely apart from it but opposed to it.

They are altogether become filthy. The whole lump is soured with an evil leaven, fouled with an all pervading pollution, made rank with general putrefaction. Thus, in God's sight, our atheistic nature is not the pardoned thing that we think it to be. Errors as to God are not the mild diseases which some account them, they are abominable evils. Fair is the world to blind eyes, but to the all seeing Jehovah it is otherwise.

There is none that doeth good, no, not one. How could there be, when the whole mass was leavened with so evil a leaven? This puts an end to the fictions of the innocent savage, the lone patriarch, "the Indian whose untutored mind, "etc. Pope's verse--

*"Father of all, in every age;
In every clime adored,
By saint, by savage, or by sage,
Jehovah, Jove, or Lord, "*

evaporates in smoke. The fallen race of man, left to its own energy, has not produced a single lover of God or doer of holiness, nor will it ever do so. Grace must interpose, or not one specimen of humanity will be found to follow after the good and true. This is God's verdict after looking down upon the race. Who shall gainsay it?

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 3. *They are altogether become filthy.* Wj l an;neelachu. They are become *sour and rancid*; a metaphor taken from milk that has fermented and turned sour, rancid, and worthless. *Adam Clarke*, 1760-1832.

Ver. 3. (*second clause*). The word Wj l an; rendered *they are become filthy*, might be read, *they have become rotten or putrid*. *John Morison*, 1829.

Ver. 3. (*last clause*). Evil men are not only guilty of sins of commission, having done abominable iniquity, but they are guilty of many sins of omission. In fact, they have never done one holy act. They may be moral, decent, amiable, they may belong to the church; but *there is none that doeth good, no, not one*. *William S. Plumer*.

PSALM 53:4

EXPOSITION

Ver. 4. *Have the workers of iniquity no knowledge?* They have no wisdom, certainly, but even so common a thing as knowledge might have restrained them. Can they not see that there is a God? that sin is an evil thing? that persecution recoils upon a man's own head? Are they such utter

fools as not to know that they are their own enemies, and are ruining themselves?

Who eat up my people as they eat bread. Do they not see that such food will be hard to digest, and will bring on them a horrible vomit when God deals with them in justice? Can they imagine that the Lord will allow them to devour his people with impunity? They must be insane indeed.

They have not called upon God. They carry on their cruel enterprises against the saints, and use every means but that which is essential to success in every case, namely, the invocation of God. In this respect persecutors are rather more consistent than Pharisees who devoured widow's houses, and prayed too. The natural man, like Ishmael, loves not the spiritual seed, is very jealous of it, and would fain destroy it, because it is beloved of God; yet the natural man does not seek after the like favour from God. The carnal mind envies those who obtain mercy, and yet it will not seek mercy itself. It plays the dog in the manger. Sinners will out of a malicious jealousy devour those who pray, but yet they will not pray themselves.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 4. *Have the workers of iniquity no knowledge?* Conscience is a means to curb and restrain, control and rebuke corrupt nature, and the swelling forms of it. It is not there as a native inhabitant, but as a garrison planted in a rebellious town by the great Governor of the world, to keep the rebellion of the inhabitants within compass, who else would break forth into present confusion. David, speaking of the corruption of man by nature, after this question, Whether there be not some knowledge to discover their evil doings to them? yes, says he,

Have they no knowledge, who eat up my people as bread Yes; and therefore (Psalm 53:5) *They are often in fear,* God having placed this there to overcome them with fear; and by that to restrain them from many outrages against God's people, whom in their desires, and sometimes practice, they eat up as bread Therefore this knowledge is put in as a bridle to corrupt nature, as a hook was put into Sennacherib's nostrils (Isaiah 37:29) to rule and tame men, and overcome them with fear. If they had no knowledge they would eat up one another, and the church, as bread; but there is their fear, says he, that is, thence it comes to pass they are kept in awe *Thomas Goodwin, 1600-1679.*

Ver. 4. *Who eat up my people as they eat bread* C'est, n'en font non plus de conscience, que de manger un morceau de pain. (That is, they have no more scruple in doing this than in eating a morsel of bread.) *French Margin.*

Ver. 4. *My people.* David may call the serious *his people*, because of his regard for them, and because they were his supporters and friends. They adhered to him in all his afflictions. ("Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God, " Ru 1:16.) *Benjamin Boothroyd, 1836.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 4. How far knowledge is and is not a restraint upon ungodliness.

Ver. 4. It is a sin not to call upon God.

I. What is it to call upon God? Three things required in it.

1. A drawing near to him.
2. A speaking to him. 1 Samuel 1:12-13.
3. A praying to him.

II. How should we call upon God?

1. Reverently, considering
 - (1) God's holiness and greatness;
 - (2) our own sin and weakness. Genesis 18:27.
2. Understandingly. 1 Corinthians 14:15.
 - (1) Of what we ask.
 - (2) Of whom we ask it.
3. Submissively.
4. Believingly. Mark 11:24 James 1:6.
5. Sincerely. James 4:3.
6. Constantly.
 - (1) So as to be always in a praying frame.
 - (2) So as to take all occasions of pouring forth our souls in prayer to God.
 - (3) So as to let no day slip without prayer.

III. How it appears to be a sin not to call upon God.

1. He hath commanded it. Isaiah 55:6 1 Timothy 2:8.
2. Because praying is one of the principal parts of worship we owe to God.

IV. Who are guilty of this sin?

1. All who pray to any one else but God.
2. All who neglect either public, private, or family prayer.
3. All who pray, but not aright. *William Beveridge* (1636-1708), in "*Thesaurus Theologicus*."

PSALM 53:5

EXPOSITION

Ver. 5. *There were they in great fear, where no fear was.* David sees the end of the ungodly, and the ultimate triumph of the spiritual seed. The rebellious march in fury against the gracious, but suddenly they are seized with a causeless panic. The once fearless boasters tremble like the leaves of the aspen, frightened at their own shadows. In this sentence and this verse, this Psalm differs much from the fourteenth. It is evidently expressive of a higher state of realisation in the poet, he emphasises the truth by stronger expressions. Without cause the wicked are alarmed. He who denies God is at bottom a coward, and in his infidelity he is like the boy in the churchyard who "whistles to keep his courage up."

For God hath scattered the bones of him that encampeth against thee. When the wicked see the destruction of their fellows they may well quail. Mighty were the hosts which besieged Zion, but they were defeated, and their unburied carcasses proved the prowess of the God whose being they dared to deny.

Thou hast put them to shame, because God hath despised them. God's people may well look with derision upon their enemies since they are the objects of divine contempt. They scoff at us, but we may with far greater reason laugh them to scorn, because the Lord our God considers them as less than nothing and vanity.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 5. *There were they in great fear, where no fear was.* There is a fond and superstitious fear, when men are afraid of their shadows, as Pisander was afraid of meeting his own soul; and Antenor would never go forth of the doors, but either in a coach closed upon all sides, or with a target borne over his head, fearing, I guess, lest the sky should fall down upon it, according to that in the Psalm, *They fear where no fear is.* John King, 1559-1621.

Ver. 5. *There were they in great fear, where no fear was.* Behold how fearful a hell a wounded conscience is! For why is Cain afraid to be killed, seeing there is none living to perform it, but his father and mother, and perhaps some women children, which the Scripture nameth not? It is God's just judgment, that they that will not fear the Lord who is only to be feared, should stand in fear of them who are justly no cause of fear. He that lately feared not to kill his brother, is now made a terror to himself. Hereby also we may consider what is the repentance of the wicked; they see perhaps the fault together with the punishment, but they admit the fault and lament the punishment. Nicholas Gibbens, 1602.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 5.

I. What persecutors are to themselves-their own tormentors, full even of groundless fears.

II. What they are to one another-though in concert here, their bones are scattered hereafter.

III. What they are to those whom they persecute-made ashamed before them.

IV. What they are to God-a contempt and derision. *G. R.*

PSALM 53:6

EXPOSITION

Ver. 6. *Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion.* Would God the final battle were well over. When will the Lord avenge his own elect? When will the long oppression of the saints come to its close, and glory crown their heads? The word *salvation* is in the plural, to show its greatness.

When God bringeth back the captivity of his people, Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad. Inasmuch as the yoke has been heavy, and the bondage cruel, the liberty will be happy, and the triumph joyous. The second advent and the restoration of Israel are our hope and expectation. We have attempted to throw into rhyme the last two verses of this Psalm:

*The foes of Zion quake for fright,
Where no fear was they quail;
For well they know that sword of might
Which cuts through coats of mail.*

*The Lord of old defiled their shields,
And all their spears he scorned;
Their bones lay scattered over the fields,
Unburied and unmourned.*

*Let Zion's foes be filled with shame;
Her sons are blessed of God;
Though scoffers now despise their name,
The Lord shall break the rod.*

*Oh! would our God to Zion turn,
God with salvation clad;
Then Judah's harps should music learn,
And Israel be glad.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 6.

I. There is salvation for Israel.

II. That salvation is in Zion.

III. Their salvation remains there when they are banished from it.

IV. Their joy becomes greater when they return. *G. R.*

PSALM 54

PSALM 54:1

Title. *To the Chief Musician on Neginoth.* The music was to be that of stringed instruments. Variety is to be studied in our tunes, and in all other matters relating to sacred song. Monotony is often the death of congregational praise. Providence is varied, and so should our recording songs be. *Maschil.* We are to learn and to teach by what we sing. Edification must not be divorced from psalmody. *A Psalm of David.* David's productions were as plentiful as they are profitable. His varied life was for our benefit, for from it we derive these hymns, which at this hour are as fresh and as precious as when he wrote them. *When the Ziphims came and said to Saul, Doth not David hide himself with us?* To curry favour with Saul they were guilty of gross inhospitality. What cared they what innocent blood was shed so that they earned the graceless monarch's smile! David came quietly among them, hoping for a little rest in his many flights, but they deserted him in his solitary abode, and betrayed him. He turns to God in prayer, and so strong was his faith that he soon sang himself into delightful serenity.

Divisions. From Psalm 54:1-3, where the Selah makes a pause for us, the psalmist pleads with God, and then in the rest of the song, laying aside all doubt, he chants a hymn of joyful triumph. The vigour of faith is the death of anxiety, and the birth of security.

EXPOSITION

Ver. 1. *Save me, O God.* Thou art my Saviour; all around me are my foes and their eager helpers. No shelter is permitted me. Every land rejects me and denies me rest. But thou, O God, wilt give me refuge, and deliver me from all my enemies.

By thy name, by thy great and glorious nature. Employ all thine attributes for me. Let every one of the perfections which are blended in thy divine name work for me. Is not thine honour pledged for my defence?

And judge me by thy strength. Render justice to me, for none else will or can. Thou canst give me efficient justice, and right my wrongs by thine omnipotence. We dare not appeal to God in a bad cause, but when we know that we can fearlessly carry our cause before his justice we may well commit it to his power.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Title. From the inscription, learn,

1. Particular straits and particular deliveries should be particularly remarked: as David here remembereth the danger he was in by the treachery of the *Ziphims*.
2. Mighty men will find readily more friends in an evil cause, than the godly do find in a good cause: as Saul has the *Ziphims* to offer their service to his cruelly, when David was in straits.
3. The wicked are very hearty to do an ill turn, and glad to find occasion of it. "*Doth not David, "saith they, "hide himself with us?"*" as if this had been good and blessed news. *David Dickson (1583-1662), in "A Brief Explication upon the Psalms."*

Whole Psalm. The church has taken a clear view in appointing this as one of the Psalms in commemoration of the passion of Jesus. It is seen with greatest effect as a simple prophecy of Christ. Read thus, it is very plain and intelligible; requiring little more than the first idea to exhibit a perfect correspondence with the life and feelings of the Messiah. *William Hill Tucker, in "The Psalms... with Notes, "1840.*

Whole Psalm. In the first three verses, David being sought for by his enemies, prays against them. That was his course, he always began his conflict with God, contending and wrestling with him for a blessing and assistance. He durst not lift up his hands even against the enemies of God (yet what durst not David do?) till he had first lifted them up in humble supplication to the Lord his strength. "Who taught his hands to war, and his fingers to fight." Psalm 144:1. This being done, his courage breaks out like lightning, he doubts not of slaying his thousands and ten thousands. So in the fourth and fifth verses, he becomes his own prophet, promising himself victory. For who can resist him who hath Omnipotence for his second? Or how can any enemy maintain a fight against that captain who hath beforehand defeated and broken their forces by his prayers? assured

his conquest before he puts on his armour? Then in the last verses, David concludes where he began, thankfully acknowledgeth God's goodness in his deliverance, and the dissipation of his enemies, obliging himself to a return of dutiful affectionate service, in consideration of so great mercies received. *J. Dolben, in a Thanksgiving Sermon, 1665.*

Whole Psalm. Blessed Redeemer! give me grace to eye thee, and to call to my recollection thine exercises amidst the false friends and open foes, which in the days of thy flesh surrounded thee. Lord! help me so to consider thee, who didst endure such a contradiction of sinners against thyself, that I may not be weary and faint in mind. And while the Ziphims of the present hour harass and distress me, and would deliver my soul up into the hand of the enemy: oh! for grace to be looking unto thee, and deriving strength from thee, that I may discover thy gracious hand delivering me out of all my troubles, and making me more than conqueror in thy strength, and in the power of thy might. *Robert Hawker, D.D., 1753-1827.*

Ver. 1. *Save me, O God.* As David was at this time placed beyond the reach of human assistance, he must be understood as praying to be saved by the *name and the power of God*, in an emphatic sense, or by these in contradistinction to the usual means of deliverance. Though all help must ultimately come from God, there are ordinary methods by which he generally extends it. When these fail, and every earthly stay is removed, he must then take the work into his own hands. It was such a situation that David here fled to the saints' last asylum, and sought to be saved by a miracle of divine power. *John Calvin.*

Ver. 1. *Judge me by thy strength*, or power, *i.e.*, determine, decide my cause by thy mighty power. Saul, in the cause between him and David, was resolved to end it by force only, and to arbitrate in no other way than by a javelin, a sword, or his forces. The psalmist well knew that Saul, in this respect, would be too hard for him; and therefore applies for protection and justice to one whose power he knew was infinitely superior to his adversaries, and who, he was assured, could and would defend him. *Samuel Chandler (1693-1766), in "A Critical History of the Life of David."*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 1. In the deliverance of the saints the honour and power of God are concerned.

I. Their failure would dishonour both.

II. Their salvation glorifies both.

III. Both are immutable, therefore we have a sure plea at all times.

WORK UPON THE FIFTY-FOURTH PSALM

In CHANDLER'S *"Life of David,"* pp. 152-4, there is an Exposition of this Psalm.

PSALM 54:2

EXPOSITION

Ver. 2. *Hear my prayer, O God.* This has ever been the defence of saints. As long as God hath an open ear we cannot be shut up in trouble. All other weapons may be useless, but all prayer is evermore available. No enemy can spike this gun.

Give ear to the words of my mouth. Vocal prayer helps the supplicant, and we keep our minds more fully awake when we can use our tongues as well as our hearts. But what is prayer if God hear not? It is all one whether we babble nonsense or plead arguments if our God grant us not a hearing. When his case had become dangerous, David could not afford to pray out of mere custom, he must succeed in his pleadings, or become the prey of his adversary.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 2. (*second clause*). Let *the words of my mouth* with which I have defended my cause, be pleasing and acceptable to thee. For in this way can *prayers* and *words of the mouth* be correctly distinguished, unless any one should wish simply to understand by them *prayers uttered by the mouth*;

but, as I have said, the phrase is more emphatic. *Hermann Venema*, 1697-1787.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 2. Our main concern in prayer.

I. What is meant by God's hearing prayer.

II. How we may know that he has done so.

III. What is to be done when this is doubtful.

IV. What is due to him when the hearing is given.

PSALM 54:3

EXPOSITION

Ver. 3. *For strangers are risen up against me.* Those who had no cause for ill will had gone against him; persons to whom he could have given no offence, for they were strangers to him. They were aliens to his God also, and should these be allowed to worry and destroy him. A child may well complain to his father when strangers come in to molest him. What right have they to interfere? Let them leave off meddling and mind their own concerns.

And oppressors seek after my soul. Saul, that persecuting tyrant, had stamped his own image on many more. Kings generally coin their own likeness. He led the way, and others followed seeking David's soul, his blood, his life, his very existence. Cruel and intense were they in their malice, they would utterly crush the good man; no half measure would content them.

They have not set God before them. They had no more regard for right and justice than if they knew no God, or cared for none. Had they regarded God they would not have betrayed the innocent to be hunted down like a poor harmless stag. David felt that atheism lay at the bottom of the enmity which pursued him. Good men are hated for God's sake, and this is a good plea for them to urge in prayer.

Selah. As if he said, "Enough of this, let us pause." He is out of breath with indignation. A sense of wrong bids him suspend the music awhile. It may also be observed, that more pauses would, as a rule, improve our devotions: we are usually too much in a hurry: a little more holy meditation would make our words more suitable and our emotions more fervent.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 3. *Strangers:* aliens to his truth, men who from unbelief have estranged themselves from all lot and portion in his covenants --oppress and persecute. *William Hill Tucker.*

Ver. 3. (*first clause*). The Chaldee interpreter reads, *proud men*, instead of *strangers*, a reading which also is found in eight of Kennicott's Codices. So also Psalm 86:14. *William Walford, in "The Book of Psalms. A New Translation, " etc., 1837.*

Ver. 3. (*first clause*). There is a great mistake made by rendering the word *prz* (*zarim*) *strangers*. The Ziphites surely were Israelites, and not strangers. The fact is this, that word is taken from *hrz* (*zarah*) the primary meaning of which is "to scatter, "to "disperse, "also "to sift, "as grain. Hence it signifies, likewise figuratively, to sift a matter, to investigate, to search out, to trace out. So here, David complains of the new and dangerous enemies he had got in the Ziphites, who became Saul's spies. When he pleads, therefore, for deliverance, saying, "Save me, O God, " etc., he describes the danger he was in: *For spies have risen against me.* *Benjamin Weiss, in "New Translation, Exposition, and Chronological Arrangement of the Psalms, "1858.*

Ver. 3. *Oppressors seek after my soul;* i.e., my life at least; my soul also they would destroy, if it lay in their power, as the Papists delivered up John Huss to the devil. *John Trapp, 1611-1662.*

Ver. 3. *Selah.* See "Treasury of David", Vol. 1, pp. 25,29,346,382; and Vol. 2, pp. 249-252.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 3. Strange trials.

I. They are not altogether strange.

1. Not so to God
2. Not so in the history of the church.
3. Not so to the provisions of grace wherein they are anticipated.

II. Wherein they are strange.

1. They reveal God anew.
2. Endear forgotten promises.
3. Train unused graces.
4. Being new praises, etc.

Ver. 3. (*last clause*). The root of sin: if they remembered his authority they dared not, if they tasted his love they would not, if they were conformed to his nature they could not.

PSALM 54:4

EXPOSITION

Ver. 4. *Behold, God is mine helper.* He saw enemies everywhere, and now to his joy as he looks upon the band of his defenders he sees one whose aid is better than all the help of men; he is overwhelmed with joy at recognizing his divine champion, and cries,

Behold. And is not this a theme for pious exultation in all time, that the great God protects us, his own people: what matters the number or violence of our foes when HE uplifts the shield of his omnipotence to guard us, and the sword of his power to aid us? Little care we for the defiance of the foe while we have the defence of God.

The Lord is with them that uphold my soul. The reigning Lord, the great Adonai is in the camp of my defenders. Here was a greater champion than any of the three mighties, or than all the valiant men who chose David for their captain. The psalmist was very confident, he felt so thoroughly that his heart was on the Lord's side that he was sure God was on *his* side. He asked in the first verse for deliverance, and here he returns thanks for upholding: while we are seeking one mercy which we have not, we must not be unmindful of another which we have. It is a great mercy to have some friends left us, but a greater mercy still to see the Lord among them,

for like so many cyphers our friends stand for nothing till the Lord sets himself as a great unit in the front of them.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 4. *Behold*, says he, I produce a certain fact, well known, demonstrated by a new proof, and worthy of all attention; for the particle *behold*, contains this breadth of meaning. *Hermann Venema*.

Ver. 4. Christ sees with the utmost clearness, that God will be his *own helper*, and of them--the disciples and believers-- *that uphold his soul*. In the same moment, does he foresee the destruction of his enemies. He views, in thought, the armies of Titus, the fall of the Jewish nation, and the dispersion of the remnant. He beholds the avenging hand of God, stretched in fury over the destroyers. *William Hill Tucker*.

Ver. 4. (*second clause*). Such as take part with the persecuted saints, God will take part with them! *The Lord is with them that uphold my soul*. *David Dickson*.

Ver. 4-5. He is assured of help to himself and to his friends, and of vengeance to his enemies. Whence learn,

1. Fervent prayer hath readily a swift answer, and sometimes wonderfully swift, even before a man have ended speech, as here David findeth in experience. *Behold*, saith he, *God is my helper*.
2. The sight of faith is very clear and piercing through all clouds when God holds forth the light of his Spirit unto it, it can demonstrate God present in an instant; ready to help in greatest straits: *Behold, God is my helper*.
3. There is more joy in God's felt presence than grief in felt trouble; for, *Behold, God is mine helper*, was more comfortable to David than his friends' unkindness, and strangers' malice was grievous. *David Dickson*.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 4. A theme for wonder.

1. At his unmerited grace, that he should side with *me*.
2. At his gracious power, for who can resist him?
3. At his practical help, for he has upheld my soul.

PSALM 54:5

EXPOSITION

Ver. 5. *He shall reward evil unto mine enemies.* They worked for evil, and they shall have their wages. It cannot be that malice should go unavenged. It were cruelty to the good to be lenient to their persecutors. It is appointed, and so it must ever be, that those who shoot upward the arrows of malice shall find them fall upon themselves. The recoil of their own gun has often killed oppressors.

Cut them off in thy truth. Not in ferocious revenge is this spoken, but as an Amen to the sure sentence of the just Judge. Let the veracity of thy threatenings be placed beyond dispute, the decree is right and just, let it be fulfilled. It is not a private desire, but the solemn utterance of a military man, a grossly injured man, a public leader destined to be a monarch, and a man well trained in the school of Moses, whose law ordains eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 5. *Cut them off.* He desires that God would destroy them with a *death dealing blow*, which is the force the word **tmx**; contains; its primitive sense is *to be silent, to keep silence*, whence it is transferred to a stroke penetrating deeply and striking fatally, such as is called a *silent* blow, opposed to a *sounding* one, which is wont to rebound and not pierce deeply. *Hermann Venema.*

PSALM 54:6

EXPOSITION

Ver. 6. *I will freely sacrifice unto thee.* Spontaneously will I bring my freewill offerings. So certain is he of deliverance that he offers a vow by anticipation. His overflowing gratitude would load the altars of God with victims cheerfully presented. The more we receive, the more we ought to render. The spontaneousness of our gifts is a great element in their acceptance; the Lord loveth a cheerful giver.

I will praise thy name, O Lord. As if no amount of sacrifice could express his joyful feelings, he resolves to be much in vocal thanksgiving. The name which he invoked in prayer (Psalm 54:1), he will now magnify in praise. Note how roundly he brings it out:

O Jehovah. This is ever the grand name of the revealed God of Israel, a name which awakens the most sublime sentiments, and so nourishes the most acceptable praise. None can praise the Lord so well as those who have tried and proved the preciousness of his name in seasons of adversity. The psalmist adds,

for it is good, and surely we may read this with a double nominative, God's name is good, and so is his praise. It is of great use to our souls to be much in praise; we are never so holy or so happy as when our adoration of God abounds. Praise is good in itself, good to us, and good to all around us. If David's enemies are described in Psalm 54:3 as not setting God before them, he here declares that he is of a different mind from them, for he resolves to have the Lord in perpetual remembrance in his sacrifices and praises.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 6. *I will freely sacrifice unto thee.* He would *sacrifice freely*: by which he does not allude to the circumstance, that sacrifices of thanksgiving were at the option of worshippers, but to the alacrity and cheerfulness with which he would pay his vow when he had escaped his present dangers. *John Calvin.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 6. We should sacrifice voluntarily, liberally, joyfully, continuously, with pure motive.

Ver. 6. The goodness of praising the good name.

PSALM 54:7

EXPOSITION

Ver. 7. *For he hath delivered me out of all trouble.* Up to that time deliverance had come, and for that danger also he felt that rescue was near. David lived a life of dangers and hair breadth escapes, yet he was always safe. In the retrospect of his very many deliverances he feels that he must praise God, and looking upon the mercy which he sought as though it were already received, he sang this song over it--

*"And a new song is in my mouth,
To long loved music set,
Glory to thee for all the grace
I have not tasted yet."*

Out of all trouble our covenant God is pledged to bring us, and therefore even now let us uplift the note of triumph unto Jehovah, the faithful preserver of them that put their trust in him. Thus far have we proved his promise good; he changes not, and therefore in all the unknown future he will be equally our guardian and defence, "showing himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him."

And mine eye hath seen his desire upon mine enemies. He knew that yet he should look on his haughty foes, gazing down on them in triumph as now they looked on him in contempt. He desired this as a matter of justice, and not of personal pique. His righteous soul exulted because he knew that unprovoked and gratuitous malice would meet with a righteous punishment. Could we keep out of our hearts all personal enmity as fully as the psalmist did in this Psalm, we might yet equally feel with him a sacred acquiescence and delight in that divine justice which will save the righteous and overthrow the malicious. In closing, let us trust that if we are friendless as this man of God, we may resort in prayer as he did, exercise the like faith, and find ourselves ere long singing the same joyous hymn of praise.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 7. *Mine eye hath seen his desire upon mine enemies.* Or, *mine eye hath looked upon mine enemies*; that is, he was able to meet them without terror. *Samuel Davidson, D.D., 1852.*

Ver. 7. The reader will note that the words *his desire* are supplied by our translators, and are not in the original text. *C. H. S.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 7. (*first clause*). The exclamation of the newly pardoned penitent, the cry of the delivered saint, the song of the ripe Christian, the shout of the glorified believer.

PSALM 55

PSALM 55:1

Title. *To the Chief Musician on Neginoth.* Another song to be accompanied by stringed instruments. The strain is at one time mournful, and at another softly sweet. It needed the chief musician's best care to see that the music was expressive of the sentiment. *Maschil.* It is not a mere personal hymn, there is teaching in it for us all, and where our Lord shines through David, his personal type, there is a great deep of meaning. *Of David.* The man of many conditions, much tried, and much favoured, persecuted but delivered and exalted, was from experience enabled to write such precious verses in which he sets forth not only the sorrows of common pilgrims, but of the Lord of the way himself.

Subject. It would be idle to fix a time, and find an occasion for this Psalm with any dogmatism. It reads like a song of the time of Absalom and Ahithophel. It was after David had enjoyed peaceful worship (Psalm 55:14), when he was or had just been a dweller in a city (Psalm 55:9-11), and when he remembered his former roamings in the wilderness. Altogether it seems to us to relate to that mournful era when the King was betrayed by his trusted counsellor. The spiritual eye ever and anon sees the Son of David and Judas, and the chief priests appearing and disappearing upon the glowing canvas of the Psalm.

Division. From Psalm 55:1-8, the suppliant spreads his case in general before his God; in Psalm 55:9-11, he portrays his enemies; in Psalm 55:12-14, he mentions one special traitor, and cries for vengeance, or foretells it in Psalm 55:15. From Psalm 55:16-19 he consoles himself by prayer and faith; in Psalm 55:20-21 he again mentions the deceitful covenant breaker, and closes with a cheering exhortation to the saints (Psalm 55:22), and a denunciation of destruction upon the wicked and deceitful (Psalm 55:22).

EXPOSITION

Ver. 1. *Give ear to my prayer, O God.* The fact is so commonly before us, otherwise we should be surprised to observe how universally and

constantly the saints resort to prayer in seasons of distress. From the Great Elder Brother down to the very least of the divine family, all of them delight in prayer. They run as naturally to the mercyseat in time of trouble as the little chickens to the hen in the hour of danger. But note well that it is never the bare act of prayer which satisfies the godly, they crave an audience with heaven, and an answer from the throne, and nothing less will content them.

Hide not thyself from my supplication. Do not stop thine ear, or restrain thy hand. When a man saw his neighbour in distress, and deliberately passed him by, he was said to hide himself from him; and the psalmist begs that the Lord would not so treat him. In that dread hour when Jesus bore our sins upon the tree, his Father did hide himself, and this was the most dreadful part of all the Son of David's agony. Well may each of us deprecate such a calamity as that God should refuse to hear our cries.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS

Title. *Maschil*. This is often prefixed to those Psalms in which David speaks of himself as being chastened by God, inasmuch as the end of chastisement is instruction. *Simon de Muis*, 1587-1644.

Whole Psalm. A prayer of the Man Christ in his humiliation, despised and rejected of men, when he was made sin for his people, that they might be made the righteousness of God in him, when he was about to suffer their punishment, pay their debt, and discharge their ransom. Utter depravity of the inhabitants of Jerusalem; betrayal of Messiah by one of the twelve whom he had ordained to the apostolical office, and who was Messiah's constant attendant in all his ministerial circuits. Premature and punitive death of the traitor Judas, and of others banded together to crucify the Lord of glory. *John Noble Coleman, M.A., in "A Revision of the authorised English Version of the Book of Psalms," 1863.*

Ver. 1. In the first clause he uses the word **ytLpTj** that he might indicate that he merely sought justice from God as a Judge; but in the second he implores the *favour of God*, that if perchance the prayer for *justice* be less becoming to himself as a sinner, God may not deny his grace. *Hermann Venema*.

Ver. 1. *Hide not thyself from my supplication.* A figure taken from the conduct of a king who debars an offender from seeing his face (2 Samuel

14:24), or from an enemy, who conceals himself from the ox, etc.; that is, pretends not to see it, and goes away, leaving it (see Deuteronomy 22:1,3,4 Isaiah 58:7); or, from a false friend, or an unkind person, who, foreseeing that he may be entreated by a miserable and needy man, will not let himself be seen, but seeks to make his escape. *Martin Geier*, 1614-1681.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 1. (*second clause*).

I. An evil to be dreaded: *Hide not thyself*, etc.

1. By long delay in an urgent case.
2. In the sinner's case by refusing to hear altogether.

II. Causes which may produce it.

1. In the man.
2. In the prayer itself.
3. In the manner of the prayer.

III. Evils which will follow a list which the preacher can readily think of.

IV. Remedies for the evil. There is none of it should continue; but heart searching, repentance, importunity, pleading the name of Jesus, etc., will lead to its removal.

WORK UPON THE FIFTY-FIFTH PSALM

In CHANDLER'S *"Life of David*, "Vol. 2., pp. 305-315, there is an Exposition of this Psalm.

PSALM 55:2

EXPOSITION

Ver. 2. *Attend unto me, and hear me.* This is the third time he prays the same prayer. He is in earnest, in deep and bitter earnest. If his God do not hear, he feels that all is over with him. He begs for his God to be a listener and an answerer.

I mourn in my complaint, and make a noise. He gives a loose to his sorrows, permits his mind to rehearse her griefs, and to pour them out in such language as suggests itself at the time, whether it be coherent or not. What a comfort that we may be thus familiar with our God! We may not complain *of* him, but we may complain *to* him. Our rambling thoughts when we are distracted with grief we may bring before him, and that too in utterances rather to be called *a noise* than language. He will attend so carefully that he will understand us, and he will often fulfil desires which we ourselves could not have expressed in intelligible words. "Groanings that cannot be uttered, "are often prayers which cannot be refused. Our Lord himself used strong crying and tears, and was heard in that he feared.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 2. *I mourn.* As one cast down with sorrow, making a doleful noise. *Henry Ainsworth, 1662.*

Ver. 2. *I mourn,* etc. A mourning supplicant shall neither lose his prayers nor his tears; for, *I mourn,* is brought for a reason of his hope that God shall attend and hear him. *David Dickson.*

Ver. 2. *I mourn in my complaint.* The literal translation of these words is, *I will suffer to wander in my thinking; i.e.,* I will let my mind wander, or my thoughts rove as they will. *J. A Alexander.*

Ver. 2. *In my complaint.* Saints have their complaints on account of their sins and corruptions, their barrenness and unfruitfulness, and the decay of vital religion in them, and because of the low estate of Zion, the declining state of the interest of Christ, and the little success of his gospel; and they mourn, in these complaints, over their own sins, and the sins of others, professors and profane, and under afflictions temporal and spiritual, both their own and the church's. Christ also in the days of his flesh, had his complaints of the perverseness and faithlessness of the generation of men among whom he lived; of the frowardness, pride, and contentions of his disciples; of the reproaches, insult, and injuries of his enemies; and of the dereliction of his God and Father; and he often mourned on account of one or other of these things, being a man of sorrows and acquainted with griefs. *John Gill.*

Ver. 2. *In my complaint.* The word here employed commonly means discourse, meditation. It here occurs in the sense of *complaint*, as in Job

7:13 9:27 21:4 23:2 Psalm 142:2 1 Samuel 1:16. It is not used, however, to denote complaint in the sense of fault finding, complaining, accusing, or the idea that we have been dealt with unjustly. This is not the meaning in this place or in the Scriptures generally. It is the language of a *troubled*, not of an *injured* spirit. *Albert Barnes*, 1868.

Ver. 2. In confession, when the soul melts into a holy shame and sorrow for the sins he spreads before the Lord, he feels a holy smart and pain within, and doth not act a tragical part with a comical heart. Chrysostom saith, "To paint tears is worse than to paint the face." Here is true fervency,

I mourn in my complaint and make a noise. There may be fire in the pan when there is none in the piece; a loud wind but no rain with it. David made a noise with his voice, and mourned in his spirit. *William Gurnall*, 1617-1679.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 2. The Great Hearer.

I. What address shall we present to him?

II. What sort of attention do we desire?

III. How shall we secure it?

IV. What is the reflex duty on our part? To attend and hear him.

Ver. 2. (*second clause*). Allowable complaining.

I. Not *of* God but *to* God.

II. Mainly of ourselves.

III. Of the world as against God and right.

IV. Ever with holy grief, and not selfish vexation.

PSALM 55:3

EXPOSITION

Ver. 3. *Because of the voice of the enemy.* The enemy was vocal and voluble enough, and found a voice where his godly victim had nothing better than a "noise." Slander is seldom short of expression, it prates and prattles evermore. Neither David, nor our Lord, nor any of the saints were allowed to escape the attacks of venomous tongues, and this evil was in every case the cause of acute anguish.

Because of the oppression of the wicked: the unjust pressed and oppressed the righteous; like an intolerable burden they crushed them down, and brought them to their knees before the Lord. This is a thrice told story, and to the end of time it will be true; he that is born after the flesh will persecute him that is born after the Spirit. The great seed of the woman suffered from a bruised heel.

For they cast iniquity upon me, they black me with their soot bags, throw the dust of their lying over me, cast the vitriol of their calumny over me. They endeavour to trip me up, and if I do not fall they say I do.

And in wrath they hate me. With a hearty ill will they detested the holy man. It was no sleeping animosity, but a moral rancour which reigned in their bosoms. The reader needs not that we show how applicable this is to our Lord.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 3. *Because of the voice of the enemy,* there is their railing; *because of the oppression of the wicked,* there is their violent robbing him of his estate; *they cast iniquity upon me,* there are their slanderous traducings of him, and charging him with faults falsely; *in wrath they hate me,* there is their cruel seeking to kill. *David Dickson.*

Ver. 3. *For they cast iniquity upon me.* They tumble it on me, as men do stones or anything else upon their besiegers, to endamage them; so did these sin, shame, anything, upon innocent David, to make him odious. *John Trapp.*

PSALM 55:4

EXPOSITION

Ver. 4. *My heart is sore pained within me.* His spirit writhed in agony, like a poor worm; he was mentally as much in pain as a woman in travail physically. His inmost soul was touched; and a wounded spirit who can bear? If this were written when David was attacked by his own favourite son, and ignominiously driven from his capital, he had reason enough for using these expressions.

And the terrors of death are fallen upon me. Mortal fears seized him, he felt like one suddenly surrounded with the glooms of the shadow of death, upon whom the eternal night suddenly descends. Within and without he was afflicted, and his chief terror seemed to come from above, for he uses the expression, "Fallen upon me." He gave himself up for lost. He felt that he was as good as dead. The inmost centre of his nature was moved with dismay. Think of our Lord in the garden, with his "soul exceeding sorrowful even unto death, " and you have a parallel to the griefs of the psalmist. Perchance, dear reader, if as yet thou hast not trodden this gloomy way, thou wilt do soon; then be sure to mark the footprints of thy Lord in this miry part of the road.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 4. *Is sore pained*, or, *trembled with pain*, The word usually meaneth such *pains as a woman feels in her travail.* Henry Ainsworth.

Ver. 4. *The terrors of death are fallen upon me. My heart*, said the afflicted psalmist, *is sore pained within me:* and though I am repeatedly assured of my interest in the divine love and favour, yet now *the terrors of death are fallen upon me.* The case of David is so far from being peculiar to himself, that it portrays, in the most striking colours, a state of mind to which many of the most exemplary Christians are frequently, if not constantly subject. Many, whose hopes are placed on the right foundation, even Christ Jesus, and whose conduct is uniform and consistent, are yet harassed almost continually by the tormenting fears of death... It will be an interesting and useful enquiry to examine into the real causes of a fear,

which cultivates melancholy and despondency on the one hand and destroys our happiness on the other. To effect this design I shall consider,

I. The various causes of the fear of death.

II. The arguments calculated to remove it. There are few, indeed, so hardened in the slavery of vice, or so utterly regardless of every admonition, as to consider the awful period of dissolution without some emotions of terror and dismay. There is something so peculiarly awful in the idea of a change hitherto unknown, and of a state hitherto untried, that the most hardy veterans have owned its tremendous aspects.

One of the first causes of the fear of death is *conscious guilt*. The most hardened are conscious of many things which they may not readily confess; and the most self righteous is conscious of many crimes which he artfully studies to conceal. Whilst the Christian is looking only to his own habits and temper, he may and will be always wretched; but if he looks to the great Surety, Christ Jesus, his gloomy prospect will soon be turned to joy. An *attachment to this world* is also a (second) cause of the fear of death. A principal of self preservation is also a (third) cause of the fear of death. That our bodies, which are pampered by pride and nourished by indulgence, should be consigned to the silent grave, and become even the food of worms, is a humbling reflection to the boasted dignity of man. Besides, nature revolts at the idea of its own dissolution; hence a desire of preserving life, evidently implanted in us. The devil is also (fourthly) often permitted to terrify the consciences of men, and thereby increase at least the fear of death. Unbelief is also a (fifth) cause of the fear of death. Were our faith more frequently in exercise, we should be enabled to look beyond the dreary mansions of the grave with a hope full of immortality. Our fears of death may be often caused by looking for that perfection in ourselves, which we shall never easily discover.

Consider the arguments calculated to remove the fear of death. It may be necessary to premise that the consolations of religion belong only to real Christians; for the wicked have just reason to dread the approach of death. But to such as are humbled under a sense of their own unworthiness, and who have fled to Christ for pardon and salvation, they have no cause to apprehend either the pain or the consequences of death; because first, the sting of death is taken away. Secondly, because death is no longer an enemy but a friend. Instead of threatening us with misery, it invites us to

happiness. Thirdly, the safety of our state is founded on the oath, the purpose, and the promises of God. A fourth argument calculated to remove the fear of death, is the consideration of the benefits resulting from it. The benefits which believers receive from Christ at the resurrection also, is a fifth argument calculated to remove the fear of death. *Condensed from a Sermon by John Grove, M.A., F.A.S., 1802.*

Ver. 4-5, In the version of the Psalter used in the Prayer book, this verse stands with a more homely and expressive simplicity, "My heart is disquieted within me, and the fear of death is fallen upon me. Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and an horrible dread hath overwhelmed me." The fear of death is upon all flesh. It is no sign of manhood to be without it. To overcome it in the way of duty is courage; to meet death with patience is faith; but not to fear it is either a gift of special grace, or a dangerous insensibility. No doubt great saints have been able to say, "I have a desire to depart." And many have rushed to martyrdom as to the love and bosom of their Lord; but for the rest, the multitude of his flock, who are neither wilful sinners nor to be numbered among the saints, the thought of death is a thought of fear. We see that, on the first feeling of their having so much as set foot in the path leading to the grave, even good men feel "the terror of death, ""a horrible dread, "which makes every pulse to beat with a hurried and vehement speed. Their whole nature, both in body and in soul, trembles to its very centre; and their heart is "disquieted, ""sore pained, "within them. Let us see what are the causes or reasons of this "fear of death." The first must needs be a consciousness of personal sinfulness. A sense of unfitness to meet God, our unreadiness to die, a multitude of personal faults, evil tempers, thoughts, and inclinations; the recollection of innumerable sins, of great omissions and lukewarmness in all religious duties, the little love or gratitude we have to God, and the great imperfections of our repentance; all these make us tremble at the thought of going to give up our account. We feel as if it were impossible we could be saved. Shame, fear, and a "horrible dread" fall upon us. *Henry Edward Manning, M.A., 1850.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 4. The terrors of death. See Sermon by *Grove* in the Notes.

PSALM 55:5

EXPOSITION

Ver. 5. *Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me.* Like house breakers these robbers were entering his soul. Like one who feels a fainting fit coming over him, so the oppressed suppliant was falling into a state of terror. His fear was so great as to make him tremble. He did not know what would happen next, or how soon the worst should come. The sly, mysterious whisperings of slander often cause a noble mind more fear than open antagonism; we can be brave against an open foe, but cowardly, plotting conspiracies bewilder and distract us.

And horror hath overwhelmed me. He was as one enveloped in a darkness that might be felt. As Jonah went down into the sea, so did David appear to go down into deeps of horror. He was unmanned, confounded, brought into a hideous state of suspense and mortal apprehension.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 5. *Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me.* In this pitiful condition of mind, learn, that it is not a thing inconsistent with godliness to be much moved with fear in time of danger; natural affections are not taken away in conversion, but sanctified and moderated. *David Dickson.*

Ver. 5. *Fearfulness.* How natural is this description! He is *in distress*, he *mourns*, *makes a noise*, *sobs and sighs*, his *heart is wounded*, he expects nothing but *death*; this produces *fear*, this produces *tremor*, which terminates in that *deep apprehension* of *approaching* and *inevitable ruin* that *overwhelms* him with *horror*. No man ever described a wounded heart like David. *Adam Clarke.*

PSALM 55:6

EXPOSITION

Ver. 6. *And I said, Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest.* If he could not resist as an eagle, he would escape as

a dove. Swiftly, and unobserved, on strong, untiring pinions would he h
away from the abodes of slander and wickedness. His love of peace made
him sigh for an escape from the scene of strife.

*"O for a lodge in some vast wilderness,
Some boundless contiguity of shade,
Where rumour of oppression and deceit
Might never reach me more."*

We are all too apt to utter this vain desire, for vain it is; no wings of doves or eagles could bear us away from the sorrows of a trembling heart. Inward grief knows nothing of place. Moreover, it is cowardly to shun the battle which God would have us fight. We had better face the danger, for we have no armour for our backs. He had need of a swifter conveyance than doves' pinions who would outfly slander; he may be at rest who does not fly, but commends his case to his God. Even the dove of old found no rest till she returned to her ark, and we amid all our sorrow may find rest in Jesus. We need not depart; all will be well if we trust in him.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 6. *And I said, Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest.* Wherever the psalmist cast his eye, the inscription was vanity and vexation. A deluge of sin and misery covered the world, so that like Noah's dove he could find no rest for the sole of his foot below, therefore does he direct his course toward heaven, and say, *Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest;* but rest is not a denizen of this world, nothing but the heaven of heavens is at rest, and here does he fix only. *Thomas Sharp (1630-1693), in "Divine Comforts."*

Ver. 6. *Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest.* King David, though for innocency not only a *dove*, but the phoenix of doves, and so a notable type of Christ, upon whom the Holy Ghost descended in the shape of a dove, yet was his whole life nothing else but *bellum sine induciis*, a perpetual persecution without intermission. Such was also the portion of Christ the Lord of David; and such to the world's end will ever be the lot of those that are the heritage of Christ. My text imports no less; which, taken *historically*, is the voice of David pursued by his enemies; *prophetically*, the voice of Christ at his passion; *mystically*, the voice of that mystical dove, the innocent soul, surrounded and environed with the snares of death; even *generalis quoendam querela*

(saith Pellican), a general complaint of the malice of the wicked persecuting the righteous. For (alas that it should be! yet so it is) --

*"Non rete accipitri tenditur, neque milvio,
Qui male facinunt nobis; illis qui nil faciunt tenditur."
Terence.*

"The net is not pitched for ravenous birds, as are the hawk and the kite; but for poor harmless birds, that never meditate mischief." And

"Dat veniam corvis, vexat censura columbas."

"The dove shall surely be shot at, when the carrion crow shall go shot free." *Juvenal.*

It will then be no news unto you, that here the faithful soul, the spouse, the dove of Christ, when trouble and heaviness take hold upon her, and the floods of Belial compass her about, *Tanquam avis e cave liberari cupit* as St. Austin speaks of the cloistered monks in his time), "Desireth like a bird to be loosed out of her cage." Or, that as Jonas (by interpretation *a dove*, after three days' and three nights' imprisonment in the whale's belly, could not but long after his enlargement. So the dove like soul of man, when not three, but many days, and months, and years, she hath been imprisoned in the body, hath a longing desire to be enlarged, and to fly unto God that made her; and so *mourning* like a dove in devout *supplication*, and *mounting* like a dove in divine *speculation*, breaks forth into these sad elegies: "Oh that I had wings!" and "Alas, that I have not wings! Woe is me that I am constrained to dwell with Mesech, and to have mine habitation among the tents of Kedar. Like as the hart desires the water brook, so longeth my soul to be with thee, O God. I desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ. Who will give me wings?" etc. Which is as if the poor distressed soul, pathetically bemoaning her forlorn estate of pilgrimage, should thus more plentifully enlarge herself. "My spouse is already ascended higher than the winds, than the clouds, than the highest heavens, and I, poor soul, as a husbandless widow, as a tutorless orphan, as a comfortless exile, am left desolate and disconsolate in this valley of tears; none to care for me, none to comfort me, till I have regained him whom I love, and in whom I live. Nay (which worse is), this mine own familiar friend, this nearest and dearest companion of mine, *my body*, is even a burden unto me. The weight of it, and oft the sins that hang so fast on it, doth so clog and shackle me, so glue and nail me to the earth, that I cannot

raise or rear up myself towards heaven. Or let him therefore descend to relieve me, being *fila, sponsa, soror*, his daughter, and spouse, and sister; or let him give me wings wherewith I may ascend to him, under the shadow of whose wings I shall surely rest in safety." Psalm 16:4. "I must confess it was the very bitterness of extremity that first compelled me to love him, though of himself no less lovely than love itself. It was the sharp sauce of affliction that gave edge to mine affections, and sharpened mine appetite to that 'sweet meat that endureth to everlasting life.' But now, having had some little foretaste of him, I am even in an holy ecstasy, so ravished, so transported with a fervent desire of him and of his presence, that *ubi sum, ibi non sum; ubi non sum, ibi animus est*:" "where I am, there I am not; and where I am not, there am I." For, *anima est ubi amat, non ubi animat*: (Erasmus). "The soul is where it loveth, not where it liveth." Now sigh I not so much for the present dangers, I would decline, as because of my absent love, whom I most desire. *Who will give me wings?* etc. In the scanning of which verse, ye will observe with me,

(a). The *efficient* or *author* of these wings --God. *Who will give me?* Who? that it, who but *God*?

(b) The *matter* of the wish--*wings*. "Who will give me wings?"

(c) The *form* of those wings--*dove like*. *Who will give me wings like unto a dove?*

(d) The *end mediate*--*flying*. *Then would I fly away*.

(e) The *end ultimate*--*resting*. *And be at rest*.

(1) "Who will give me?" There's *Christian humility*.

(2) "Who will give me wings?" There's *prudent celerity*.

(3) "Wings like unto a dove." There's *innocent simplicity*.

(4) "Then would I fly away." There's *devout sublimity*.

(5) "And be at rest." There's *permanent security*.

John Rawlinson, in "*The Dove like Soule. A Sermon preached before the Prince's Highness at Whitehall, "Feb. 19, 1618.*

Ver. 6. *Oh that I had wings*, etc. Some of the most astounding sermons ever delivered have been preached on this text, which was a very favourite

one with the old divines. They ransacked Pliny and Aldrovandus for the most outrageous fables about doves, their eyes, their livers, their crops, and even their dung, and then went on to find emblems of Christians in every fact and fable. Griffith Williams, at considerable length, enlarges upon the fact that David did not desire wings like a grasshopper to hop from flower to flower, as those hasty souls who leap in religion, but do not run with perseverance; nor like an ostrich which keeps to the earth, though it be a bird, as hypocrites do who never mount towards heavenly things; nor like an eagle, or a peacock, or a beetle, or a crow, or a kite, or a bat; and after that he has shown in many ways the similarity between the godly and doves, he refers us to Hugo Cardinalis, and others, for more. We do not think it would be to edification to load these pages with such eccentricities and conceits. This one single sentence, from Bishop Patrick is worth them all, "He rather wished than hoped to escape." He saw no way of escape except by some improbable or impossible means. *C. H. S.*

Ver. 6. When the Gauls had tasted the wine of Italy, they asked where the grapes grew, and would never be quiet till they came there. Thus may you cry, *Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest.* A believer is willing to lose the world for the enjoyment of grace; and he is willing to leave the world for the fruition of glory. *William Secker.*

Ver. 6. *Wings like a dove.* The pigeon, or dove, is one of the swiftest of birds. *The Religious Tract Society's "Book of Psalms, with Preface and Explanatory Notes."*

Ver. 6. An old writer tells us that it would have been more honourable for him to have asked for the strength of an ox to bear his trials, than for the wings of a dove to flee from them. *William Jay, 1769-1853.*

Ver. 6. *Dove.* The reference is to the turtle dove, I suppose. Their low, sad complaint may be heard all day long at certain seasons in the olive groves, and in the solitary and shady valleys among these mountains; I have, however, been more affected by it in the vast orchards round Damascus than anywhere else--so subdued, so very sorrowful among the trees, where the air sighs softly, and little rills roll their melting murmurs down the flowery aisles. These birds can never be tamed. Confined in a cage they droop, and like Cowper, sigh for

"A lodge in some vast wilderness--some boundless contiguity of shade."

and no sooner are they set at liberty than they flee, as a bird, to their mountain. Psalm 11:1. David refers to their habits in this respect when his heart was sore pained within him: *Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest. Lo, then would I wander far off, and remain in the wilderness.* And there you will meet these timid birds far away from the haunts of cruel hunters, of whose society they are peculiarly suspicious. W. M. Thomson, in *"The Land and the Book,"* 1859.

Ver. 6. *Oh that I had wings, etc. --*

*At first her mother earth she holdeth dear,
And doth embrace the world and worldly things;
She flies close by the ground, and hovers there,
And mounts not up with her celestial wings.*

*Yet under heaven she cannot light on ought
That with heavenly nature doth agree;
She cannot rest, she cannot fix her thought,
She cannot in this world contented be:*

*Then as a bee which among weeds doth fall,
Which seem sweet flowers, with lustre fresh and gay
She lights on that, and this, and tasteth all,
But pleased with none, doth rise and soar away;*

*So when the Soul finds here no true content;
And like Noah's dove, can no sure footing take,
She doth return from whence she first was sent,
And flies to him that first her wings did make.*

Sir John Davies, 1569-1626.

PSALM 55:7

EXPOSITION

Ver. 7. *Lo, then would I wander far off.* Yet when David was far off, he sighed to be once more near Jerusalem; thus, in our ill estate we ever think the past to be better than the present. We shall be called to fly far enough

away, and perchance we shall be loath to go; we need not indulge vain notions of premature escape from earth.

And remain in the wilderness. He found it none such a dear abode when there, yet resolves now to make it his permanent abode. Had he been condemned to receive his wish he would ere long have felt like Selkirk, in the poet's verse--

*"O solitude, where are the charms
That sages have found in thy face?
Better dwell in the midst of alarms
Than reign in this horrible place."*

Our Lord, while free from all idle wishes, found much strength in solitude, and loved the mountain's brow at midnight, and the quiet shade of the olives of Gethsemane. It is better practically to use retirement than pathetically to sigh for it. Yet it is natural, when all men do us wrong, to wish to separate ourselves from their society; nature, however, must yield to grace, and we must endure the contradiction of sinners against ourselves, and not be weary and faint in our minds.

Selah. After such a flight well may the mind rest. When we are going too fast, and giving way too freely to regrets, it is well to cry, "halt, "and pause awhile, till more sober thoughts return.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 7. *Lo, then would I wander far off,* etc. A passage in the "Octavia" of Seneca has been referred to as being parallel to this of David. It is in the answer of Octavia to the Chorus, act 5., ver. 914-923.

*My woes who enough can bewail?
O what notes can my sorrows express?
Sweet Philomel's self even would fail
To respond with her plaintive distress.*

*O had I her wings, I would fly
To where sorrows I never should feel more,
Upborne on her plumes through the sky,
Regions far from mankind would explore.*

*In a grove where sad silence should reign,
On a spray would I seat me alone;
In shrill lamentations complain.*

And in wailings would pour forth my moan. *J. B. Clarke (From Adam Clarke, in loc.)*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 7. Solitude.

I. Its fancied benefits.

II. Its sore temptations.

III. Its occasional benefits.

IV. Its sweet solaces.

PSALM 55:8

EXPOSITION

Ver. 8. *I would hasten my escape.* He tried to pause but could not, like a horse which when pulled up slips on a little because of the speed at which he was going. David declares that he would not waste a moment, or stay to bid adieu to his friends, but up and away at once, for fear he should be too late, and because he could bear the clamour of his foes no longer.

From the windy storm and tempest. A storm was brewing, and, like a dove, he would outfly it and reach a calmer region. Swifter than the storm cloud would he fly, to avoid the deluge of rain, and the flash of the lightning. Alas! poor soul, no such wings are thine, as yet thou must tarry here and feel the tempest; but be of good cheer, thou shalt stretch thy wings ere long for a bolder flight, heaven shall receive thee, and there thy sorrows shall have a finis of felicity among the birds of paradise.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 8. *I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest.* There was a windy storm and tempest without, and which is worse, a tumult and combustion within in his thoughts. A man may escape from external confusions, but how shall he fly from himself? If he be out of the reach of all the blood suckers on earth, and all the furies in hell, yet be

dogged and haunted with his own turbulent, ungovernable cogitations, he needs no other tormentors. This holy man was thus doubly distressed, a storm abroad and an earthquake at home rendered his condition most dolorous; but for both he hath *en mega* he goes not about with the foxes of this world to relieve himself with subtle stratagems and wiles, by carnal shifts and policies, a vanity tosses to and from by them that seek death. No, his one great refuge is to get aloft, to ascend to God. *Thomas Sharp.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 8. Too hasty a flight from trial.

1. Would show rebellion against God.
2. Would manifest cowardly want of faith.
3. Would involve loss of useful experience.
4. Would land us in other and worse trials.
5. Would prevent our glorifying God.
6. Would mar our conformity to Christ and fellowship with his people.
7. Would lessen the value of heaven.

PSALM 55:9

EXPOSITION

Ver. 9. *Destroy, O Lord.* Put mine enemies to the rout. Let them be devoured by the sword, since they have unsheathed it against me. How could we expect the exiled monarch to offer any other prayer than this against the rebellious bands of Absalom, and the crafty devices of Ahithophel?

Divide their tongues. Make another Babel in their debates and councils of war. Set them at cross purposes. Divide the pack that the hunted one may escape. The divisions of error are the hope of truth.

For I have seen violence and strife in the city. The rabble and their leaders were plotting and planning, raging and contending against their king, running wild with a thousand mad projects: anarchy had fermented among them, and the king hoped that now it might come to pass that the very

lawlessness which had exiled him would create weakness among his foes. Revolution devours its own children. They who are strong through violence, will sooner or later find that their strength is their death. Absalom and Ahithophel may raise the mob, but they cannot so easily rule it, nor so readily settle their own policy as to remain firm friends. The prayer of David was heard, the rebels were soon divided in their councils; Ahithophel went his way to be hanged with a rope, and Absalom to be hanged without one.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 9. *Destroy, O Lord, and divide their tongues.* In the first place, their tongues were truly destroyed and they themselves divided, when the testimony of the two false witnesses agreed not so together. Then secondly, by the contradictory account of the soldiers that kept watch at the sepulchre. *Michael Ayguan (1416) in J. M. Neal's Commentary, 1860.*

Ver. 9. *Divide their tongues:* i.e., cause them to give conflicting opinions. *French and Skinner, 1842*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 9. (*first clause*). The Babel of heresies. *Essential*, for truth is one. *Inevitable*, for the motives of heretics clash. *Providential*, for so they weaken each other. *Judicial*, for so they torment each other.

PSALM 55:10

EXPOSITION

Ver. 10. *Day and night they go about it upon the walls thereof.* The city, the holy city had become a den of wickedness; conspirators met in the dark, and talked in little knots in the streets even in broad daylight. Meanwhile the country was being roused to revolt, and the traitors without threatened to environ the city, and act in concert with the rebels within. No doubt there was a smothered fire of insurrection which Absalom kindled and fanned, which David perceived with alarm some time before he left Jerusalem; and when he quitted the city it broke out into an open flame.

Mischief also and sorrow are in the midst of it. Unhappy capital to be thus beset by foes, left by her monarch, and filled with all those elements of turbulence which breed evil and trouble. Unhappy king to be thus compelled to see the mischief which he could not avert laying waste the city which he loved so well. There was another King whose many tears watered the rebellious city, and who said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!"

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 10. *Mischief also and sorrow are in the midst of it.* The city, as Abenezra observes, was like a circle; violence and strife were as a line round about it, and mischief and sorrow the centre of it; and these two commonly go together: where mischief is, sorrow soon follows. *John Gill.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 10. (*first clause*). The activity of evil.

Ver. 10. (*second clause*). The diabolical twins, or cause and effect.

PSALM 55:11

EXPOSITION

Ver. 11. *Wickedness is in the midst thereof.* The very heart of the city was base. In her places of authority crime went hand in hand with calamity. All the wilder and more wicked elements were uppermost; the *canaille* were commanders; the scum floated uppermost; justice was at a discount; the population was utterly demoralized; prosperity had vanished and order with it.

Deceit and guile depart not from her streets. In all the places of concourse crafty tongues were busy persuading the people with cozening phrases. Crafty demagogues led the people by the nose. Their good king was defamed in all ways, and when they saw *him* go away, they fell to reviling the governors of their own choosing. The forum was the fortress of fraud, the congress was the convention of cunning. Alas, poor Jerusalem, to be

thus the victim of sin and shame! Virtue reviled and vice regnant! Her solemn assemblies broken up, her priests fled, her king banished, and troops of reckless villains parading her streets, sunning themselves on her walls, and vomiting their blasphemies in her sacred shrines. Here was cause enough for the sorrow which so plaintively utters itself in these verses.

PSALM 55:12

EXPOSITION

Ver. 12. The reader will do well to observe how accurately the psalmist described his own Psalm when he said, "I mourn in my complaint, "or rather "give loose to my thoughts, "for he proceeds from one point of his sorrow to another, wandering on like one in a maze, making few pauses, and giving no distinct intimations that he is changing the subject. Now from the turbulent city his mind turns to the false hearted councillor.

For is was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it. It was not an open foe, but a pretended friend; he went over to the other camp and tried to prove the reality of his treachery by calumniating his old friend. None are such real enemies as false friends. Reproaches from those who have been intimate with us, and trusted by us, cut us to the quick; and they are usually so well acquainted with our peculiar weaknesses that they know how to touch us where we are most sensitive, and to speak so as to do us most damage. The slanders of an avowed antagonist are seldom so mean and dastardly as those of a traitor, and the absence of the elements of ingratitude and treachery renders them less hard to bear. We can bear from Shimei what we cannot endure from Ahithophel.

Neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; then I would have hid myself from him. We can find a hiding place from open foes, but who can escape from treachery? If our enemies proudly boast over us we nerve our souls for resistance, but when those who pretended to love us leer at us with contempt, whither shall we go? Our blessed Lord had to endure at its worst the deceit and faithlessness of a favoured disciple; let us not marvel when we are called to tread the road which is marked by his pierced feet.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 12. *Then I could have borne it.* It is remarkable that the Lord, who endured the other unspeakable sorrows and agonies of his passion in perfect and marvellous silence, allowed his grief at this one alone to escape him, bewailing himself to his disciples that one of them should betray him, and addressing that one, when he was taken, in these words of reproach-- "Judas, betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?" *Frau Thome de Jesu*, 1582.

Ver. 12. *Then I would have hid myself from him.* It is generally easy to get out of the way of an avowed enemy, but how can one be on his guard against a treacherous friend? A. R. Fausset, in "A Commentary, Critical, Experimental, and Practical," 1866.

PSALM 55:13

EXPOSITION

Ver. 13. *But it was thou.* He sees him. The poetic fury is upon him, he sees the traitor as though he stood before him in flesh and blood. He singles him out, he points his finger at him, he challenges him to his face.

But thou. Et tu, Brute. And thou, Ahithophel, art thou here? Judas, betrayest *thou* the Son of Man?

A man mine equal. Treated by me as one of my own rank, never looked upon as an inferior, but as a trusted friend.

My guide, a counsellor so sage that I trusted thine advice and found it prudent to do so.

And mine acquaintance, with whom I was on most intimate terms, who knew me even as I knew him by mutual disclosures of heart. No stranger occasionally conversed with, but a near and dear friend admitted to my secret fellowship. It was fiendish treason for such a one to prove false hearted. There was no excuse for such villainy. Judas stood very much in this relation to our Lord, he was treated as an equal, trusted as treasurer, and in that capacity often consulted with. He knew the place where the Master was wont to spend his solitude; in fact, he knew all the Master's

movements, and yet he betrayed him to his remorseless adversaries. How justly might the Lord have pointed at him and said,

But thou; but his gentler spirit warned the son of perdition in the mildest manner, and had not Iscariot been tenfold a child of hell he would have relinquished his detestable purpose.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 13. *A man mine equal.* The LXX here not badly, *isoque* (of equal soul), Jerome, *unanimus mens* (of one mind). *Hermann Venema.*

PSALM 55:14

EXPOSITION

Ver. 14. *We took sweet counsel together.* It was not merely the counsel which men take together in public or upon common themes, their fellowship had been tender and confidential. The traitor had been treated lovingly, and trusted much. Solace, mutual and cheering, had grown out of their intimate communings. There were secrets between them of no common kind. Soul had been in converse with soul, at least on David's part. However feigned might have been the affection of the treacherous one, the betrayed friend had not dealt with him coldly, or guarded his utterance before him. Shame on the wretch who could belie such fellowship, and betray such confidence!

And walked unto the house of God in company. Religion had rendered their intercourse sacred, they had mingled their worship, and communed on heavenly themes. If ever any bonds ought to be held inviolable, religious connections should be. There is a measure of impiety, of a detestable sort, in the deceit which debases the union of men who make profession of godliness. Shall the very altar of God be defiled with hypocrisy? Shall the gatherings of the temple be polluted by the presence of treachery? All this was true of Ahithophel, and in a measure of Judas. His union with the Lord was on the score of faith, they were joined in the holiest of enterprises, he had been sent on the most gracious of errands. His cooperation with Jesus to serve his own abominable ends stamped him as the firstborn of hell. Better had it been for him had he never been born. Let all deceitful

professors be warned by his doom, for like Ahithophel he went to his own place by his own hand, and retains a horrible preeminence in the calendar of notorious crime. Here was one source of heart break for the Redeemer, and it is shared in by his followers. Of the serpent's brood some vipers still remain, who will sting the hand that cherished them, and sell for silver those who raised them to the position which rendered it possible for them to be so abominably treacherous.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 14. *We took sweet counsel.* From **qtm**; *to be sweet*, and the ordinary notion of **dw** for *secret*, the phrase **dyw qyTm** will literally be read, *we made our secret sweet*. And so it may be an elegance, to signify the pleasure of his friendship, or of communicating secrets to him. *Henry Hammond.*

Ver. 14. The first clause speaks of private intimacy, the next of association in public acts, and especially in the great festivals and processions of the temple. *J. J. Stewart Perowne, 1864.*

Ver. 14. *In company.* In the end of the verse **vgrB** may be rendered *with a noise*: and so the Chaldee seems to have taken it, which reads *with haste*; and to that agree the Jewish doctors, who tell us men are to go in *haste* and with *speed* to the *synagogue*, but return thence very *leisurely*. *Henry Hammond.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 14. The social companionships which grow out of religion.

1. They are on a good foundation.
2. They yield profit--*counsel*.
3. They yield pleasure--*sweet*.
4. They lead to enthusiasm--*walked in company*.
5. They ought to be sacredly maintained.
6. But they need to be carefully watched.

PSALM 55:15

EXPOSITION

Ver. 15. Not thus would Jesus pray, but the rough soldier David so poured out the anguish of his spirit, under treachery and malice seldom equalled and altogether unprovoked. The soldier, as such, desires the overthrow of his foes, for this very end he fights; and viewed as a matter of law and justice, David was right in his wish; he was waging a just, defensive war against men utterly regardless of truth and justice. Read the words as a warrior's imprecation.

Let death seize upon them. Traitors such as these deserve to die, there is no living with them, earth is polluted by their tread; if spies are shot, much more these sneaking villains.

Let them go down quick into hell. While in the vigour of life into *sheol* let them sink, let them suddenly exchange the enjoyment of the quick or living for the sepulchre of the dead. There is, however, no need to read this verse as an imprecation, it is rather a confident expectation or prophecy: God would, he was sure, desolate them, and cast them out of the land of the living into the regions of the dead.

For wickedness is in their dwellings, and among them. They are too bad to be spared, for their houses are dens of infamy, and their hearts fountains of mischief. They are a pest to the commonwealth, a moral plague, a spiritual pestilence, to be stamped out by the laws of men and the providence of God. Both Ahithophel and Judas soon ended their own lives; Absalom was hanged in the oak, and the rebels perished in the wood in great numbers. There is justice in the universe, love itself demands it; pity to rebels against God, as such, is no virtue--we pray for them as creatures, we abhor them as enemies of God. We need in these days far more to guard against the disguised iniquity which sympathises with evil, and counts punishment to be cruelty, than against the harshness of a former age. We have steered so far from Scylla that Charybdis is absorbing us.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 15. *Let death seize upon them, and let them go down quick into hell.* The last part and end of sinners' lives is worst with them. They have in their

lives been busily trading in the world, buying and selling, and getting gain and ruffling it in the world, but meanwhile by their sins they run deep in debt with God, and for want of interest in Christ to be their surety at death (it may be on the sudden) it comes to that of the psalmist,

Let death seize upon them, and let them go down quick into hell. Death seizes on them unawares, as a sergeant or pursuivant, casts them into prison, which is expressed by their going down quick into hell (as it is said Numbers 16:32-33), that Korah and his company did. *Anthony Tuckney, 1599-1670.*

Ver. 15. *Let death seize upon them* by divine warrant, and let them go quick into hell; let them be dead and buried, and damned in a moment; for wickedness is wherever they are, it is in the midst of them. The souls of impenitent sinners go down quick, or alive, into hell; for they have a perfect sense of their miseries, and shall therefore live still, that they may be still miserable. This prayer is a prophecy of the utter, the final, the everlasting ruin of all those who, whether secretly or openly, oppose and rebel against the Lord's Messiah. *Matthew Henry.*

Ver. 15. *Quick*, that is *alive*, like Korah, Dathan and Abiram. From "*The Psalms chronologically arranged, By Four Friends,* " 1867.

Ver. 15. Throughout this series of Psalms, there appears to be a peculiar penalty attached to each class of transgressions, or, each variety of opposition against God meets a suitable end. The ungodly, that is, the irreligious and indifferent, lay up for themselves an evil recompense when the wrath of God shall be revealed (Psalm 54:5): but an instant punishment falls upon false and treacherous professors; as Paul denounced "anathema" against any who perverted the gospel of Christ in the churches of Galatia; so in this Psalm, *Let death seize upon them, and let them go down quick into hell*, announces the awful judgment of Jehovah, as once it was shown upon Dathan and Abiram; a punishment that will by its suddenness and notoriety at the same time expose the guilt, and make manifest the displeasure of the Almighty against it. *R. H. Ryland, in "The Psalms restored to Messiah,* "1853.

PSALM 55:16

EXPOSITION

Ver. 16. *As for me, I will call upon God.* The psalmist would not endeavour to meet the plots of his adversaries by counterplots, or imitate their incessant violence, but in direct opposition to their godless behaviour would continually resort to his God. Thus Jesus did, and it has been the wisdom of all believers to do the same. As this exemplifies the contrast of their character, so it will foretell the contrast of their end--the righteous shall ascend to their God, the wicked shall sink to ruin.

And the Lord shall save me. Jehovah will fulfil my desire, and glorify himself in my deliverance. The psalmist is quite sure. He knows that he will pray, and is equally clear that he will be heard. The covenant name is the pledge of the covenant promise.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 16. The contrast.

- I.** A child of God will not wrong others as they do him.
- II.** He will call upon God as they do not.
- III.** God will hear him as he does not the wicked.
- IV.** God will deal with him at last otherwise than with them.

PSALM 55:17

EXPOSITION

Ver. 17. *Evening and morning, and at noon, will I pray.* Often but none too often. Seasons of great need call for frequent seasons of devotion. The three periods chosen are most fitting; to begin, continue, and end the day with God is supreme wisdom. Where time has naturally set up a boundary, there let us set up an altar stone. The psalmist means that he will always pray; he will run a line of prayer right along the day, and track the sun with

his petitions. Day and night he saw his enemies busy (Psalm 55:10), and therefore he would meet their activity by continuous prayer.

And cry aloud. He would give a tongue to his complaint; he would be very earnest in his pleas with heaven. Some cry aloud who never say a word. It is the bell of the heart that rings loudest in heaven. Some read it, "I will nurse and murmur; "deep heart thoughts should be attended with inarticulate but vehement utterances of grief. Blessed be God, moaning is translatable in heaven. A father's heart reads a child's heart.

And he shall hear my voice. He is confident that he will prevail; he makes no question that he would be heard, he speaks as if already he were answered. When our window is opened towards heaven, the windows of heaven are open to us. Have but a pleading heart and God will have a plenteous hand.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 17. *Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray.* This was the custom of the pious Hebrews. See Daniel 6:10. The Hebrews began their day in the *evening*, and hence David mentions the *evening first*. The rabbins say, men should pray three times each day because the day changes three times. This was observed in the primitive church; but the times in different places were various. The old Psalter gives this a curious turn: "At *even* I sall tell his louing (*praise*) what the Christ was on the Crosse; and at *morn* I sall schew his louing, what tim he ros fra dede. And sua he sall here my voice at *midday*, that is sitand at the right hand of his fader, wheder he stegh (ascended) at midday." *Adam Clarke*.

Ver. 17. *Evening and morning,* etc. The three principle parts of the day are mentioned, not as marking special times set apart for prayer, but as a poetical expression for "the whole day, ""at all times, ""without ceasing." *J. J. Stewart Perowne*.

Ver. 17. If our poor, frail bodies need refreshment from food three times a day, who, that knows his own weakness, will say that we need not as frequent refreshment for our poor frail spirits? *William S. Plumer*, 1867.

Ver. 17. I can no more believe him to be frequent and spiritual in ejaculatory prayer, who neglects the season of solemn prayer, than I can

believe that he keeps every day in the week a Sabbath, who neglects to keep that one which God hath appointed. *William Gurnall*, 1617-1679.

Ver. 17. There is no limited time in the court of heaven for hearing petitions. It is not like the court of earthly princes, for there is a free access any day of the week, any hour of the day, or the night, any minute of the hour. As the lawyer saith of the king, for having his due, *Nullum tempus occurrit regi*: so may I say of the godly, for making his prayers and granting his requests, *Nullum tempus occurrit fidelibus*, no time unseasonable, so the heart be seasoned with faith; no *non term* in God's court of requests. He keeps continually open house for all comers and goers; and indeed, most for comers, then goers. His eyes are always open to behold our tears; his ears are always open to hear our groans; his heart also and his bowels are always open, and never shut up so fast, but they will yearn and turn within him, if our misery be never so little. For as we have not an High Priest to pray by "that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; "so neither have we a God to pray to, that shall see us in distress, and hear us call and cry, and never be moved. *Zachary Bogan* (1625-1659), in "*Meditations of the Mirth of a Christian Life*."

Ver. 17. *And cry aloud.* The word here employed properly means to murmur; to make a humming sound; to sigh; to growl; to groan. Here the language means that he would give utterance to his deep feelings in appropriate tones--whether words, sighs, or groans. *Albert Barnes*.

Ver. 17. *And he shall hear.* And what will this loud cry obtain? A hearing without doubt, so he assures himself, *He shall hear me*. Not that God hears any prayers whether he will or no (as men sometimes do that upon importunity which they have no mind to), but he hath no will, no mind not to hear such prayers, the prayers of those who cry aloud to him. *Joseph Caryl*, 1602-1673.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 17.

1. David will pray fervently; *I will pray and cry aloud.*
2. He will pray frequently; every day, and three times a day, evening, and morning, and at noon. *Matthew Henry*.

PSALM 55:18

EXPOSITION

Ver. 18. *He hath delivered my soul in peace from the battle that was against me.* The deliverance has come. Joab has routed the rebels. The Lord has justified the cause of his anointed. Faith sees as well as foresees; to her foresight is sight. He is not only safe but serene, *delivered in peace* - peace in his inmost soul.

For there were many with me; many contending against me. Or it may be that he thankfully acknowledges that the Lord raised him up unexpected allies, fetched him succour when he most needed it, and made the friendless monarch once more the head of a great army. The Lord can soon change our condition, and he often does so when our prayers become fervent. The crisis of life is usually the secret place of wrestling. Jabbok makes Jacob a prevailing prince. He who stripped us of all friends to make us see himself in their absence, can give them back again in greater numbers that we may see him more joyfully in the fact of their presence.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 18. *He hath delivered my soul in peace from the battle.* In the midst of war the Lord can keep a man as safe as in the time of peace, and in extreme perils preserve him from danger. He that depends upon God in the time of trouble, albeit he had an host against him, yet hath he more with him when God is with him, than can be against him. *David Dickson.*

Ver. 18. *For.* The *for* implies the reason why God interposed to deliver him; namely, because of the general principle that God ministers relief when his people come to an extremity. *A. R. Fausset.*

Ver. 18. *There were many with me.* This is doubtful whether it be meant of *foes* or *friends*. If of *foes*, it may be resolved thus: *for with many* (with a great multitude) *they were fighters with me.* If of *friends*, it may be understood of God's *angels*, that *in a great number were with him*, pitching camp for his aid (Psalm 34:7); as Elisha said, "Many more are with us than with them." 2 Kings 6:16-17. The Chaldee explains it, "For in many afflictions his word was for my help." *Henry Ainsworth.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 18. Our battles, our almost rout, our helper, our deliverances, our praise.

PSALM 55:19

EXPOSITION

Ver. 19. *God shall hear, and afflict them.* They make a noise as well as I, and God will hear them. The voice of slander, malice, and pride, is not alone heard by those whom it grieves, it reaches to heaven, it penetrates the divine ear, it demands vengeance, and shall have it. God hears and delivers his people, he hears and destroys the wicked. Their cruel jests, their base falsehoods, their cowardly insults, their daring blasphemies are heard, and shall be repaid to them by the eternal judge.

Even he that abideth of old. He sits in eternity, enthroned judge for evermore; all the prayers of saints and profanities of sinners are before his judgment seat, and he will see that justice is done.

Selah. The singer pauses, overwhelmed with awe in the presence of the everlasting God.

Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God. His own reverential feeling causes him to remember the daring godlessness of the wicked; he feels that his trials have driven him to his God, and he declares that their uninterrupted prosperity was the cause of their living in such neglect of the Most High. It is a very manifest fact that long continued ease and pleasure are sure to produce the worst influences upon graceless men: though troubles do not convert them, yet the absence of them makes their corrupt nature more readily develop itself. Stagnant water becomes putrid. Summer heat breeds noxious insects. He who is without trouble is often without God. It is a forcible proof of human depravity that man turns the mercy of God into nutriment for sin: the Lord save us from this.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 19. *Even he that abideth of old.* The deeds by which God had already showed himself from of old as the righteous King and Judge, the

judgments, for example, upon the wicked in the land of Shinar (Psalm 55:9), the company of Korah (Psalm 55:9,18), the cities of the plain (Psalm 55:15), pledge his still ready interposition. He who had already so long held the throne, must now also show himself as King and Judge; he cannot now, at so late a period, be another. *E. W. Hengstenberg*, 1845.

Ver. 19. *Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God.* That is, there is no new thing among them, no extraordinary providential turns, no judiciary changes, their prosperity keeps a settled course, and because they find all things going on in the old course of providence, therefore they go on in their old course of sinfulness, *they fear not God*; intimating, that as such *changes* always should, so usually they do, awaken fear; and that, if the Lord would but change, and toss, and tumble them about, by various troublesome dispensations, surely they would fear him. *Joseph Caryl*.

Ver. 19. *Because they have no changes*, etc. Or, *with whom also there be no changes, yet they fear not God*. If *changes* be referred to their temporal estates and welfare, as Job 10:17 (it is the same word there as here, *twkyl* x), "changes and war are against me:" then, according to the first translation, *because* etc., a reason is given of their perseverance in wickedness, and contempt of God; to wit, their constant and uninterrupted worldly prosperity. Or, according to the second,

With whom there are no changes, yet, etc.; it is a great aggravation of their impenitency, that notwithstanding so much goodness vouchsafed unto them, they should continue so unthankful as to requite so ill, or so stupid and insensible as not to acknowledge the author. But if *changes* be referred, as by many, to the soul, then the meaning is--that through long use and continuance of sinning, they are, through God's just judgment, become altogether obdurate and inflexible; and therefore, no wonder if nothing work upon them to their conversion. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin?" etc. Jeremiah 13:23. But this *changes* might also have another meaning. The Grecians used to say, *streptai esylwn*, that the minds or hearts of good men are changeable; their meaning is, that good men are merciful. *Quos quisque est major, magis est placabilis ira: et faciles motus mens generosa capit*, as the Latin proverb expresses it. He may therefore say, that they show by their cruel unmercifulness, that they have no fear or sense of God at all; else they would fear him, of whose mercy themselves stood in so much need, and consider that they whom they so fiercely

persecute are his creatures as well as they. *Westminster Assembly's Annotations.*

Ver. 19. *They have no changes*, etc. Who are they who have no changes? Apparently those whom God is said to humble or chastise. And what is the meaning of the word, *changes* as here used? Many understand it of a moral change; "who are without change of heart or reformation." But the word never occurs in this sense. It means, properly, "*a change*" in the sense of *succession*; as of garments, of troops relieving guard, servants leaving work, and the like. Hence it would rather mean in a moral sense: "They who have no cessation in their course (by being relieved guard, for instance), who always continue, and persevere in their evil life." Calvin and others understand it of *change of fortune*, i.e., "who are always prosperous; "but this again is not supported by usage. *J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Ver. 19. *They fear not God.* The fear required here, is to fear him as God, and as God presented in this name, *Elohim*; which though it be a name primarily rooted in power and strength (for *El* is Deus fortis, The powerful God; and as there is no love without fear, so there is no fear without power), yet properly it signifies his judgment, and order, and providence, and dispensations and government of his creatures. It is that name which goes through all God's whole work of the creation, and disposition of all creatures in the first of Genesis: in all that he is called by no other name than this, the name God; not by Jehovah, to present an infinite majesty; nor by Adonai, to present an absolute power; nor by Tzebaoth, to present a force, or conquest; but only the name of God, his name of government. All ends in this; to fear God is to adhere to him, in his way, as he hath dispensed and notified himself to us; , that is, as God is manifested in Christ, in the Scriptures, and applied to us out of those Scriptures, by the church: not to rest in nature without God, nor in God without Christ. *John Donne*, 1573-1631.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 19. The eternal government of God a threat to the ungodly.

Ver. 19. (*second part*). Prosperity creating atheism. This involves--

1. Ingratitude--they ought to be the more devout.
2. Impudence--they think themselves as God.

3. Forgetfulness--they forget that changes will come.
4. Ignorance--they know not that unbroken prosperity is often for awhile the portion of the accursed.
5. Insanity--for there is no reason in their conduct.
6. Rottenness--preparing them to be cast away for ever.

PSALM 55:20

EXPOSITION

Ver. 20. The psalmist cannot forget the traitor's conduct, and returns again to consider it.

He hath put forth his hands against such as be at peace with him. He smites those to whom he had given the hand of friendship, he breaks the bonds of alliance, he is perfidious to those who dwell at ease because of his friendly profession.

He hath broken his covenant. The most solemn league he has profaned, he is regardless of oaths and promises.

PSALM 55:21

EXPOSITION

Ver. 21. *The words of his mouth were smoother than butter.* He lauded and larded the man he hoped to devour. He buttered him with flattery and then battered him with malice. Beware of a man who has too much honey on his tongue; a trap is to be suspected where the bait is so tempting. Soft, smooth, oily words are most plentiful where truth and sincerity are most scarce.

But war was in his heart. He brought forth butter in a lordly dish, but he had a tent pin ready for the temples of his guest. When heart and lip so widely differ, the man is a monster, and those whom he assails are afflicted indeed.

His words were softer than oil. Nothing could be more unctuous and fluent, there were no objectionable syllables, no jars or discords, his words were as yielding as the best juice of the olive;

yet were they drawn swords, rapiers unsheathed, weapons brandished for the fray. Ah! base wretch, to be cajoling your victim while intending to devour him! entrapping him as if he were but a beast of prey; surely, such art thou thyself.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 21. *The words of his mouth were smoother than butter,* etc. Of this complexion are the cant of hypocrites, the charity of bigots and fanatics, the benevolence of atheists, the professions of the world, the allurements of the flesh, and the temptations of Satan, when he thinks proper to appear in the character of an angel of light. *George Horne, 1730-1792.*

Ver. 21. *Butter.* The Eastern butter is by no means like the solid substance, which is known by that name in these colder climates; but is liquid and flowing as appears from different passages in Scripture, particularly Job 29:6 20:17; and as is confirmed by the accounts of modern travellers; so that in fact it more resembles "cream," which Vitringa says is the genuine sense of the word here used. *Richard Mant, 1776-1849.*

Ver. 21. To avoid all difficulties, the readiest expedient is to receive the Septuagint rendering of ⲱⲓⲗ ⲓ ⲛⲉⲙⲉⲣⲓⲥⲱⲛⲁⲛ, *they were, or are divided*, viz., the *members* of the wicked man there spoken of, they are at great distance one from the other; ⲱⲓⲗ ⲁⲃⲣⲓⲛ, *butter their mouth, or their mouth is butter*, ⲱⲃⲓ ⲁⲃⲣⲓⲛ and *war their heart, or their heart is war*; and this seems to be the fairest rendering of it. *Henry Hammond, 1605-1660.*

Ver. 21. A feigned friend is much like a crocodile who, when he smiles, poisons; and when he weepeth, devoureth; or the hyaena, having the voice of a man and the mind of a wolf, speaking like a friend and devouring like a fiend; or the flattering sirens that sweetly sing the sailor's wreck; or the fowler's pipe that pleasantly playeth the bird's death; or the bee, who carrieth honey in her mouth and a sting in her tail; or the box tree, whose leaves are always green, but the seeds poison. So his countenance is friendly and his words pleasant, but his intent dangerous, and his deeds unwholesome.

*His fetch is to flatter, to catch what he can;
His purpose obtained, a fig for his man. L. Wright, 1616.*

Ver. 21. *The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart: his words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords.*

Well, when I came to the justice again, there was Mr. Foster, of Bedford, who coming out of another room, and seeing me by the light of the candle, for it was dark night when I came thither, he said unto me, "Who is there? John Bunyan?" with much seeming affection, as if he would have leaped in my neck and kissed me, (A right Judas.), which made me somewhat wonder that such a man as he, with whom I had so little acquaintance, and, besides, that had ever been a close opposer of the ways of God, should carry himself so full of love to me, but afterwards when I saw what he did, it caused me to remember those sayings,

Their tongues were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords, and again, "Beware of men," etc. When I had answered him that, blessed be God, I was well, he said, "What is the occasion of your being here?" or to that purpose. To whom I answered that I was at a meeting of people a little way off, intending to speak a word of exhortation to them; but the justice hearing thereof (said I) was pleased to send his warrant to fetch me before him, etc.

*John Bunyan. In relation to J.B.'s imprisonment: written by himself.
Offor's edit., Vol. I. p. 52.*

Ver. 21. (*first clause*). --

*Smooth are his words, his voice as honey sweet,
Yet war was in his heart, and dark deceit. Moschus (B.C. 250.)*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 21. The hypocrite's mouth.

1. It has many words.
2. They are only from his mouth.
3. They are very smooth.
4. They conceal rather than reveal his purpose.
5. They are cutting and killing.
6. They will kill himself.

PSALM 55:22

EXPOSITION

Ver. 22. *Thy burden*, or what thy God lays upon thee, lay thou it

upon the Lord. His wisdom casts it on thee, it is thy wisdom to cast it on him. He cast thy lot for thee, cast thy lot on him. He gives thee thy portion of suffering, accept it with cheerful resignation, and then take it back to him by thine assured confidence.

He shall sustain thee. Thy bread shall be given thee, thy waters shall be sure. Abundant nourishment shall fit thee to bear all thy labours and trials. As thy days so shall thy strength be.

He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved. He may move like the boughs of a tree in the tempest, but he shall never be moved like a tree torn up by the roots. He stands firm who stands in God. Many would destroy the saints, but God has not suffered it, and never will. Like pillars, the godly stand immoveable, to the glory of the Great Architect.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 22. *Cast thy burden upon the Lord*, etc. The remedy which the Psalm suggests, and, perhaps, the only resource in a difficulty of the kind, where the enemies of true religion are fighting under the semblance of friendship, is announced in an oracular voice from God: "Cast thy care upon Jehovah, for he will sustain thee; he will not suffer the just one to be tossed about for ever." *R. H. Ryland.*

Ver. 22. *Cast thy burden upon the Lord*, etc. The best way to ease thyself is to lay thy load upon God; he will take it up and also carry thee. There is many a man would be willing to go of himself if another would but carry his burden for him; but if you throw your burden upon God he will not only carry that, but will also carry you. He cares not how much weight a Christian layeth on his back; a true Israelite may ease himself, and best please his God at once. God delights not to see tears in thine eyes, or paleness in thy countenance; thy groans and sighs make no music in his ears. He had rather that thou wouldst free thyself of thy burden by casting it upon him, that he might rejoice in thy joy and comfort. Now, true

confidence in God, and resting upon God, will both free thee of thy burden and also bring in the strength of God to sustain and bear thee up from falling. Wouldst thou, therefore, own God as thy strength, and fetch strength from God to thy soul? rest upon God, roll thyself upon him, and that

1. In time of greatest weakness.
2. In time of greatest service.
3. In times of greatest trials. *Samuel Blackerby*, 1674.

Ver. 22. *Cast thy burden* upon him in the same way that the ship in a storm casts her burden on the anchor, which anchor holds on to its sure fixing place. And to my mind, that is the more beautiful sense of the two--a sense which once entered into, may be followed out in these glorious verses: --

And I see the good ship riding, all in a perilous road; The low reef booming on her lee; the swell of ocean poured Sea after sea, from stem to stern; the mainmast by the board; The bulwarks down; the rudder gone; the boats stove by the chains. But courage still, brave mariners, the ANCHOR yet remains: And he will flinch--no, never an inch--until ye pitch sky high; Then he moves his head, as if he said, "Fear nought; for here am I!" *J. M. Neale's Commentary*.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 22. (*first clause*). Here we see the believer has--

1. A *burden* to try him.
2. A *duty* to engage him, "Cast thy burden, "etc.
3. A *promise* to encourage him, "He shall sustain, "etc. *Ebenezer Temple*, 1850.

Ver. 22. (*last clause*). Who are the righteous? What is meant by their being moved? Whose permission is needful to accomplish it? Will he give it? "Never." Why not?

PSALM 55:23

EXPOSITION

Ver. 23. For the ungodly a sure, terrible, and fatal overthrow is appointed. Climb as they may, *the pit* yawns for them, God himself will cause them to descend into it, and *destruction* there shall be their portion.

Bloody and deceitful men, with double iniquity of cruelty and craft upon them,

shall not live out half their days; they shall be cut off in their quarrels, or being disappointed in their artifices, vexation shall end them. They were in heart murderers of others, and they became in reality self murderers. Doubt not that virtue lengthens life, and that vice tends to shorten it.

But I will trust in thee. A very wise, practical conclusion. We can have no better ground of confidence. The Lord is all, and more than all that faith can need as the foundation of peaceful dependence. Lord, increase our faith evermore.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 23. *Shalt bring them down.* Indicating a violent death, like that of the slain ox, which is said to *descend*, when it falls under the stroke. The *pit of putrefaction* is meant, in which the corpse decays, nor does it here merely denote the sepulchre, but the ignominious condition of a corpse cast forth, as when it is thrown into a pit. *Hermann Venema.*

Ver. 23. *Bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days.* A wicked man never lives out half his days; for either he is cut off before he hath lived half the course of nature, or he is cut off before he hath lived a quarter of the course of his desires; either he lives not half so long as he would; and therefore let him die when he will, his death is full of terror, trouble, and confusion, because he dies out of season. He never kept time or season with God, and surely God will not keep or regard his time or season. *Joseph Caryl.*

Ver. 23. *Half their days.* In the Jewish account threescore years was the age of a man, and death at any time before that was looked upon as untimely, and deemed and styled *trd* excision, of which they made thirty-

six degrees; so that *not to live out half one's days*, is in their style *to die before thirty years old*. *Henry Hammond*.

Ver. 23. (*second clause*). The more sins we do commit, the more we hasten our own death; because as the wise man saith, "The fear of the Lord prolongeth days, but the years of the wicked shall be shortened" (Proverbs 10:27); and the prophet David saith, *Bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days*; for sin is an epitomiser or shortener of everything: it consumes our wealth, it confines our liberty, it impeaches our health, and it abbreviates our life, and brings us speedily unto our grave. *Griffith Williams*, 1636.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 23. (*last clause*). The grand "I WILL." Sum up the Psalm. --

I. When I pray, Psalm 55:1-3.

II. When I faint, Psalm 55:4-7.

III. When I am sore beset, Psalm 55:9-11.

IV. When I am betrayed, Psalm 55:12-14, 20-21.

V. When others perish, Psalm 55:15.

VI. After I am delivered, Psalm 55:18.

VII. In every condition, Psalm 55:22.

PSALM 56

PSALM 56:1

TITLE. *To the Chief Musician.* That mighty minstrel by degrees acquired a noble repertoire of hallowed songs, and set them all to music. *Upon Jonathelemrechokim* --this was probably the title of the tune, as we should say Old Hundred, or Sicilian Mariners. Perhaps the title may however belong to the Psalm, and if so it is instructive, for it has been translated "the silent dove in distant places." We have here the songs of God's servant, who rejoices once more to return from banishment, and to leave those dangerous places where he was compelled to hold his peace even from good. There is such deep spiritual knowledge in this Psalm that we might say of it, "Blessed art thou David Barjonas, for flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee." When David plays the Jonah he is not like the prophet of that name; in David the love of the dove predominates, but in Jonah its moaning and complaining are most notable. Michtam of David. This is the second golden Psalm, we had the first in Psalm 16, to which this Psalm has a great likeness, especially in its close, for it ends in the joyful presence. A golden mystery, the gracious secret of the life of faith is in both these Psalms most sweetly unveiled, and a pillar is set up because of God's truth. *When the Philistines took him in Gath.* He was like a dove in strangers' hands, and on his escape he records his gratitude.

DIVISIONS. In Psalm 56:1-2, he pours out his complaint; in Psalm 56:3-4 he declares his confidence in God; in Psalm 56:5-6 he returns to his complaining, but pleads in earnest hope in Psalm 56:7-9, and sings a grateful song from Psalm 56:10 to the close.

EXPOSITION

Ver. 1. *Be merciful unto me, O God.* In my deep distress my soul turns to thee, my God. Man has no mercy on me, therefore double thy mercy to me. If thy justice has let loose my enemies, let thy mercy shorten their chain. It is sweet to see how the tender dove like spirit of the psalmist flies to the most tender attribute for succour in the hour of peril.

For man would swallow me up. He is but thy creature, a mere man, yet like a monster he is eager for blood, he pants, he gapes for me; he would not merely wound me, or feed on my substance, but he would fain swallow me altogether, and so make an end of me. The open mouths of sinners when they rage against us should open our mouths in prayer. We may plead the cruelty of men as a reason for the divine interposition--a father is soon aroused when his children are shamefully entreated.

He fighting daily oppresses me. He gives me no interval--he fights daily. He is successful in his unrighteous war--he oppresses me, he crushes me, he presses me sore. David has his eye on the leader of his foes, and lays his complaint against him in the right place. If we may thus plead against man, much more against that great enemy of souls, the devil. We ask the Lord to forgive us our trespasses, which is another way of saying, "Be merciful to me, O God, "and then we may say, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one." The more violent the attack of Satan the stronger our plea for deliverance.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Title. The words *Jonathelemrechokim* may be rendered, *concerning the mute dove among them that are afar off, or in far places.* John Gill.

Title. *Michtam.* See also Explanatory Notes on Psalm 16, in the "Treasury of David, "Vol. 1, pp., 222-223.

Ver. 1. *Be merciful.* This is the second of the Psalms beginning with the miserere; the fifty-first being the first of them. C. H. S.

Ver. 1. *Be merciful unto me, O God.* This is to me the one source of all my expectations, the one fountain of all promises: *Miserere mei, Deus, miserere mei.* Bernard, 1091-1157.

Ver. 1. *Be merciful.* His first wrestling in prayer is with the check of his conscience, whether for his daily sins, or in particular for casting himself in such apparent danger, as to have ventured without probable security, to seek shelter among the enemies of the people of God, whose blood he himself had shed abundantly; for this rashness or other sins he begs mercy. David Dickson.

Ver. 1. *Man.* He uses the indefinite term *man* in this verse, though in the next he speaks of having many enemies, the more forcibly to express the

truth, that the whole world was combined against him, that he experienced no humanity amongst men, and stood in the last necessity of divine help.
John Calvin.

Ver. 1. *Would swallow me up. Soop me up* (as the Hebrew word soundeth); make but one draught of me, or suck me in as a whirlpool, swallow me up as a ravenous wild beast. *John Trapp.*

Ver. 1. *He fighting daily.* There is no morning on which we can arise and go forth into the world, and say, "No enemy will come out against me today." There is no night in which we can retire from that world, and think to find safety in the solitude of our own chambers, and say, "No evil can enter here." *Barton Bouchier, in "Manna in the Heart," 1855.*

Ver. 1-2. The same words are applicable to the situation and circumstances of David, pursued by his enemies; of Christ, persecuted by the Jews; of the church, afflicted in the world; and of the soul, encompassed by enemies, against whom she is forced to wage perpetual war. *George Horne.*

WORK UPON THE FIFTY-SIXTH PSALM

In CHANDLER'S *"Life of David,"* Vol. 1., pp. 104-7, there is an Exposition of this Psalm.

PSALM 56:2

EXPOSITION

Ver. 2. *Mine enemies would daily swallow me up.* Their appetite for blood never fails them. With them there is no truce or armistice. They are many, but one mind animates them. Nothing I can do can make them relent. Unless they can quite devour me they will never be content. The ogres of nursery tales exist in reality in the enemies of the church, who would crush the bones of the godly, and make a mouthful of them if they could.

For they be many that fight against me. Sinners are gregarious creatures. Persecutors hunt in packs. These wolves of the church seldom come down upon us singly. The number of our foes is a powerful plea for the interposition of the one Defender of the faithful, who is mightier than all

their bands. These foes of the gracious are also keen eyed, and ever on the watch, hence the margin calls them "observers."

O thou most High. Thus he invokes against the lofty ones of the earth the aid of one who is higher than the highest. Some translate the words differently, and think that the writer means that his foes assailed him from the high places in which pride and power had placed them. Saul, his great foe, attacked him from his throne with all the force which his high position placed at his disposal: our comfort in such a case is near to hand, for God will help us from a higher place than our proudest foes can occupy. The greatness of God as the Most High is a fertile source of consolation to weak saints oppressed by mighty enemies.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 2. *O thou most High.* The Hebrew is not that rendered *Most High* in Psalm 7:17; nor in our version is it ever rendered *Most High* in any other place, although found in the Hebrew Bible more than *fifty* times. There are but two other places where it is applied, as an epithet, to God; Psalm 92:8; Mic 6:6. It is commonly rendered, *from above*, *on high*, *high places*, *high*; once *loftily*, Psalm 73:8... The probable meaning is, they "fight against me from the high places of authority, both in Jerusalem and in Gath," *q.d.*, mine enemies are in power. *William S. Plumer's "Studies in the Book of Psalms,"* "1867.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 2-3.

I. *Fears are common to all men*, at one time or another.

II. *Improper and inefficacious means* of removing fear are often resorted to.

III. There is here suggested *a true and effectual method* of removing fear. *Robert Morrison (1782-1834), in "A Parting Memorial."*

PSALM 56:3

EXPOSITION

Ver. 3. *What time I am afraid.* David was no braggart, he does not claim never to be afraid, and he was no brutish Stoic free from fear because of the lack of tenderness. David's intelligence deprived him of the stupid heedlessness of ignorance, he saw the imminence of his peril, and was afraid. We are men, and therefore liable to overthrow; we are feeble, and therefore unable to prevent it; we are sinful men, and therefore deserving it, and for all these reasons we are afraid. But the condition of the psalmist's mind was complex-- he feared, but that fear did not fill the whole area of his mind, for he adds,

I will trust in thee. It is possible, then, for fear and faith to occupy the mind at the same moment. We are strange beings, and our experience in the divine life is stranger still. We are often in a twilight, where light and darkness are both present, and it is hard to tell which predominates. It is a blessed fear which drives us to trust. Unregenerate fear drives from God, gracious fear drives to him. If I fear man I have only to trust God, and I have the best antidote. To trust when there is no cause for fear, is but the name of faith, but to be reliant upon God when occasions for alarm are abundant and pressing, is the conquering faith of God's elect. Though the verse is in the form of a resolve, it became a fact in David's life, let us make it so in ours. Whether the fear arise from without or within, from past, present, or future, from temporals, or spirituals, from men or devils, let us maintain faith, and we shall soon recover courage.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 3. *What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee.* There is nothing like faith to help at a pinch; faith dissolves doubts as the sun drives away the mists. And that you may not be put out, know that your time for believing is always. There are times when some graces may be out of use, but there is no time wherein faith can be said to be so. Wherefore faith must be always in exercise. Faith is the eye, is the mouth, is the hand, and one of these is of use all the day long. Faith is to see, to receive, to work, or to eat; and a Christian should be seeing or receiving, or working, or feeding all day long. Let it rain, let it blow, let it thunder, let it lighten, a Christian

must still believe. "At what time, "said the good man, "I am afraid, I will trust in thee." *John Bunyan*.

Ver. 3. *What time I am afraid*, etc. A divine spark may live in a smoke of doubts without a speedy rising into flame. When grace is at the bottom of doubting, there will be reliance on Christ and lively petitions to him. Peter's faith staggers when he began to sink, but he casts a look and sends forth a cry to his Saviour, acknowledging his sufficiency; Matthew 14:30, "Lord, save me." Sometimes those doubtings strengthen our trust and make us take hold faster on God. Psalm 56:3.

What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee. This was a fear of himself or others, rather than a jealousy of God. Had he had unworthy suspicions of him, he would not have trusted him; he would not have run for remedy to the object of his fear. The waverings where faith is, are like the tossings of a ship fast at anchor (still there is a relying upon God), not like a boat carried by the waves of the sea to be dashed against a rock. If the heart stay on Christ in the midst of those doubtings, it is not an evil heart of unbelief. Such doubtings consist with the indwelling of the Spirit, who is in the heart, to perform the office of a Comforter against such fears and to expel those thick fumes of nature. *Stephen Charnock*.

Ver. 3. *What time I am afraid*, etc. I know not what to do, but I will try my old way, it is good for me to draw near still; I will do so still, as I used to do; I will cast myself down upon the free grace of Christ in the promises; I will lay the weight of my sinking spirit there, I will renew my hold, life, expectation there; this is my old path, I will never be turned or beaten out here. This Christian in his strength may challenge all the gates of hell. This was David's course (Psalm 71:5), "Thou art my trust from my youth, "etc. Thence was it that he could say,

What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee: his shield and sword was always in his hand, therefore he could make use of it when fear and inward trouble offered themselves. *Afraid!* alas, who is not? but what course will you take then? Even what course you used to take, *i.e.*, believe; use faith always; and have it now. *Elias Pledger*(-1676), in "*Morning Exercises*."

Ver. 3. *What time*, etc. Literally, *What day*. As "Man *daily* oppresseth me" (Psalm 56:1), so "Every *day*, when I am afraid, I trust in thee." A. R. *Fausset*.

Ver. 3. It is a good maxim with which to go into a world of danger; a good maxim to go to sea with; a good maxim in a storm; a good maxim when in danger on the land; a good maxim when we are sick; a good maxim when we think of death and the judgment--*What time I am afraid, I WILL TRUST IN THEE.* Albert Barnes.

Ver. 3. *I will trust in thee.* Faith and fear stand together; and so fear and love. John Richardson, -1654.

Ver. 3-4. Sometimes faith comes from prayer in triumph, and cries, *Victoria*. It gives such a being and existence to the mercy prayed for in the Christian's soul, before any likelihood of it appears to sense and reason, that the Christian can silence all his troubled thoughts with the expectation of its coming. So Hannah prayed, "and was no more sad." 1 Samuel 1:18. Yea, it will make the Christian disburse his praises for the mercy long before it is received. Thus high faith wrought in David. *At what time I am afraid, I will trust in thee*, and in the next words, *In God I will praise his word*; that is, he would praise God for his promise before there was any performance of it in him, when it had no existence but in God's faithfulness and David's faith. This holy man had such a piercing eye of faith, that he could see the promise when he was at the lowest ebb of misery, so certain and unquestionable in the power and truth of God, that he could then praise God as if the promised mercy had been actually fulfilled to him. William Gurnall.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 2-3.

I. *Fears are common to all men*, at one time or another.

II. *Improper and inefficacious means* of removing fear are often resorted to.

III. There is here suggested *a true and effectual method* of removing fear.

Robert Morrison (1782-1834), in "A Parting Memorial."

Ver. 3. *What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee.* Whensoever we are afraid of any evil, we are still to put our trust in God.

I. What is it to put our trust in God?

1. To keep our hearts from desponding or sinking down under any fears.
2. To comfort ourselves in God.
3. To expect deliverance from him.

II. What is there in God we ought to put our trust in?

1. In his promises.
2. In his properties. His power, wisdom, justice, mercy, all sufficiency.

III. Why should we in all our fears put our trust in God?

1. Because there is none else can secure us from our fears. Whereas,
2. There are no fears but God can secure us from them, either by removing the thing feared, or by subduing the fear of the thing. *Bishop Beveridge.*

Ver. 3.

- I. There is fear without trust.
- II. There is trust without fear.
- III. There is fear and trust united. *G. R.*

PSALM 56:4

EXPOSITION

Ver. 4. *In God I will praise his word.* Faith brings forth praise. He who can trust will soon sing. God's promise, when fulfilled, is a noble subject for praise, and even before fulfilment it should be the theme of song. It is in or through God that we are able to praise. We praise as well as pray in the Spirit. Or we may read it--in extolling the Lord one of the main points for thanksgiving is his revealed will in the Scriptures, and the fidelity with which he keeps his word of promise.

In God I have put my trust. Altogether and alone should we stay ourselves on God. What was a gracious resolve in the former verse, is here asserted as already done.

I will not fear what flesh can do unto me. Faith exercised, fear is banished, and holy triumph ensues, so that the soul asks, "What can flesh do unto me?" What indeed? He can do me no real injury; all his malice shall be overruled for my good. Man is flesh, flesh is grass--Lord, in thy name I defy its utmost wrath. There were two verses of complaint, and here are two of confidence; it is well to weigh out a sufficient quantity of the sweet to counteract the sour.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 4. *In God I will praise his word.* Or, praise him for his word; for the whole Scripture that was then in being. *John Gill.*

Ver. 4. The best hold that faith can have of God, is to take him by *his word*, however his dispensation seems to be; this will give satisfaction at length; for

In God I will praise his word, is as much as to say, albeit he withhold comfort and deliverance from me, so that I cannot find what I would, yet let me have *his word*, and I will give him the glory of all his attributes. *David Dickson.*

Ver. 4. *I will not fear what flesh can do unto me.* Fear not man, he is but flesh. Thou needest not, thou oughtest not to fear. Thou needest not. What, not such a great man; not such a number of men, who have the keys of all the prisons at their girdle; who can kill or save alive? No, not these; only look they be thy enemies for righteousness sake. Take heed thou makest not the least child thine enemy, by offering wrong to him; God will right the wicked even upon the saint. If he offends he shall find no shelter under God's wing for his sin. This made Jerome complain that the Christian sin made the arms of those barbarous nations which invaded Christendom victorious: *Nostris peccatis fortes sunt barbari*. But if man's wrath find thee on God's way, and his fury take fire at thy holiness, thou needest not fear though thy life be the prey he hunts for. Flesh can only wound flesh; he may kill thee, but not hurt thee. Why shouldest thou fear to be stripped of that which thou hast resigned already to Christ? It is the first lesson you learn, if a Christian, to deny thyself, take up thy cross, and follow thy

Master; so that the enemy comes too late; thou hast no life to lose, because thou hast given it already to Christ; nor can man take away that without God's leave; all thou hast is insured; and though God hath not promised thee immunity from suffering in this kind, yet he hath undertaken to bear the loss, yea, to pay thee a hundredfold, and thou shalt not stay for it till another world. Again, thou oughtest not to fear flesh. Our Saviour (Matthew 10) thrice, in the compass of six verses, commands us not to fear man: if thy heart quail at him, how wilt thou behave thyself in the last against Satan, whose little finger is heavier than man's loins? The Romans had *arma proelusoria*, weapons rebated or cudgels, which they were tried at before they came to the sharp. If thou canst not bear a bruise in thy flesh from man's cudgels and blunt weapons, what wilt thou do when thou shalt have Satan's sword in thy side? God counts himself reproached when his children fear a sorry man; therefore we are bid sanctify the Lord, not to fear their fear. *William Gurnall*.

Ver. 4. *I will not fear*, etc. Eusebius tells us of a notable speech that Ignatius used when he was in his enemies' hands, not long before he was to suffer, which argued a raised spirit to a wonderful height above the world, and above himself. "I care," says he, "for nothing visible or invisible, that I might get Christ. Let fire, the cross, the letting out of beasts upon me, breaking of my bones, the tearing of my members, the grinding of my whole body, and the torments of the devils come upon me, so be it I may get Christ." *From Jeremiah Burroughs' "Moses his Self denial," 1649.*

Ver. 4. *What flesh can do*, etc. It is according to the phrase of Scripture, when it would speak contemptibly of man and show him to be the lowest creature, to call him "flesh," to set forth the weakness that man is subject to. *John Arrowsmith, 1600-1660.*

Ver. 4. *(last clause).* *Fear of man* --grim idol, bloody mouthed; many souls has he devoured and trampled down into hell! His eyes are full of hatred to Christ's disciples. Scoffs and jeers lurk in his eye. The laugh of the scorner growls in his throat. Cast down this idol. This keeps some of you from secret prayer, from worshipping God in your family, from going to lay your case before ministers, from openly confessing Christ. You that have felt God's love and Spirit, dash this idol to pieces. "Who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die?" "Fear not, thou worm Jacob." "What have I to do any more with idols?" *Robert Murray Macheyne, 1813-1843.*

Ver. 4. Faith groweth valiant in fight; albeit it began like a coward, and staggered in the first conflict, yet it groweth stout, incontinent, and pulls its adversaries under foot: *In God I have put my trust; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me.* David Dickson.

PSALM 56:5

EXPOSITION

Ver. 5. *Every day they wrest my words.* This is a common mode of warfare among the ungodly. They put our language on the rack, they extort meanings from it which it cannot be made fairly to contain. Thus our Saviour's prophecy concerning the temple of his body, and countless accusations against his servants, were founded on wilful perversions. They who do this every day become great adepts in the art. A wolf can always find in a lamb's discourse a reason for eating him. Prayers are blasphemies if you choose to read them the wrong way upwards.

All their thoughts are against me for evil. No mixture of good will tone down their malice. Whether they viewed him as a king, a psalmist, a man, a father, a warrior, a sufferer, it was all the same, they saw through coloured glass, and could not think a generous thought towards him. Even those actions of his which were an undoubted blessing to the commonwealth, they endeavoured to undervalue. Oh, foul spring, from which never a drop of pure water can come!

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 5. *Every day they wrest my words;* or, they put my words to pain and grief, or, they painfully and grievously wrest my words. David's enemies took up what he spake, and put a new shape upon it; and this they did so vexingly, that they are said to *wrest* his words; a thing is vexed when it is wrested or wrought out of the form it before had. The same metaphor the apostle Peter useth in reference to doctrine, speaking of the Epistles of Paul, in which "are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable *wrest*, "or put upon the rack; they painfully form his words, and represent them in a meaning which he never intended. 2 Peter 3:16. What is spoken may be right, both in the matter and intendment of the speaker, yet another wrests, forms and fashions it in his own mould,

and makes it bear a sense which the speaker never dreamed of. *Joseph Caryl*.

Ver. 5. *Every day they wrest my words*, etc. Mr. Jewel, the Bishop of Salisbury, who, according to his life, died most godly and patiently, at the point of death used the versicle of the Hymn, "Te Deum, ""O Lord, in thee have I trusted, let me never be confounded, " whereupon, suppressing the rest, they published that the principle champion of the heretics, in his very last words, cried he was confounded. *Lord Bacon's "Bible Thoughts."*

Ver. 5. *They wrest my words*. Whatever Christ said in justification of himself was twisted to a meaning injurious to him. So it is still in the world, self justification by words answers but little purpose with ungodly men. *W. Wilson, D.D., 1860.*

PSALM 56:6

EXPOSITION

Ver. 6. *They gather themselves together*. Firebrands burn the fiercer for being pushed together. They are afraid to meet the good man till their numbers place terrible odds against him. Come out, ye cowards, man to man, and fight the old hero! No, ye wait till ye are assembled like thieves in bands, and even then ye waylay the man. There in nothing brave about you.

They hide themselves. In ambuscade they wait their opportunity. Men of malice are men of cowardice. He who dares not meet his man on the king's highway, writes himself down a villain. Constantly are the reputations of good men assailed with deep laid schemes, and diabolical plots, in which the anonymous enemies stab in the dark.

They mark my steps, as hunters mark the trail of their game, and so track them. Malicious men are frequently very sharp sighted to detect the failings, or supposed failings, of the righteous. Spies and *mouchards* are not all in the pay of earthly governments, some of them will have wages to take in red hot coin from one who himself is more subtle than all the beasts of the field.

When they wait for my soul. Nothing less than his life would content them, only his present and eternal ruin could altogether glut them. The good man

is no fool, he sees that he has enemies, and that they are many and crafty; he sees also his own danger, and then he shows his wisdom by spreading the whole case before the Lord, and putting himself under divine protection.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 6. *They mark my steps.* Go whither I will, they are at my heels. *William Nicholson(-1671), in "David's Harp Strung and Tuned."*

PSALM 56:7

EXPOSITION

Ver. 7. *Shall they escape by iniquity?* Will such wickedness as this stand them in good stead? Can it be that this conduct shall enable them to avoid the sentence of earthly punishment? They slander the good man to screen themselves--will this avail them? They have cunningly managed hitherto, but will there not be an end to their games?

In thine anger cast down the people, O God. Trip them up in their tricks. Hurl them from the Tarpeian rock. A persecuted man finds a friend even in an angry God, how much more in the God of love! When men seek to cast us down, it is but natural and not at all unlawful to pray that they may be disabled from the accomplishment of their infamous designs. What God often does we may safely ask him to do.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 7.

I. From iniquity there is an escape.

II. By iniquity there is no escape. The mercy of God secures the one. The justice of God prevents the other. *G. R.*

PSALM 56:8

EXPOSITION

Ver. 8. *Thou tellest my wanderings.* Every step which the fugitive had taken when pursued by his enemies, was not only observed but thought worthy of counting and recording. We perhaps are so confused after a long course of trouble, that we hardly know where we have or where we have not been; but the omniscient and considerate Father of our spirits remembers all in detail; for he has counted them over as men count their gold, for even the trial of our faith is precious in his sight.

Put thou my tears into thy bottle. His sorrows were so many that there would need a great wineskin to hold them all. There is no allusion to the little complimentary lachrymators for fashionable and fanciful Romans, it is a more robust metaphor by far; such floods of tears had David wept that a leathern bottle would scarce hold them. He trusts that the Lord will be so considerate of his tears as to store them up as men do the juice of the vine, and he hopes that the place of storage will be a special one--*thy bottle*, not *a* bottle.

Are they not in thy book? Yes, they are recorded there, but let not only the record but the grief itself be present to thee. Look on my griefs as real things, for these move the heart more than a mere account, however exact. How condescending is the Lord! How exact his knowledge of us! How generous his estimation! How tender his regard!

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 8. *Put thou my tears into thy bottle.* Among other things in the collection of Mr. Abbott, of Cairo, he had a lachrymatory, or tear bottle, which had been found in a tomb at Thebes. This interested me very much. The custom in old times was, when a person was ill or in great distress, for his friends to go to see him, and take with them a tear bottle. Then, as the tears rolled down the cheeks of the sufferer, they were caught in these bottles, sealed up, and preserved as a memorial of the event. This is what David referred to in Psalm 56:8.

Put thou my tears into thy bottle. But it implies much more than at first suggests itself, and much more than I can attempt to write. For instance, it

is as if David had said, "Visit me, and behold my tears; ("O visit me with thy salvation!") for without such *visit* there could be no bottling of his tears. "Thou tellest my wanderings; O visit me, and behold my anguish; put my tears into thy bottle, "for "they have been my meat day and night." Psalm 42:3. "Keep them before thee, by way of remembrance, and when thou seest the bottle, O think of him whose tears it contains. Are they not in thy book?" That is, God's book of remembrance, that was written for those "who thought upon his name" (Mal 3:16), just as the kings of old used to keep a book of chronicles of important events. See Es 6:1-11. *John Gadsby*, 1860.

(We insert this to show what has been said by others; but we do not think there is the slightest allusion to this piece of *Roman* etiquette in this text. *C. H. S.*)

Ver. 8. *My tear*: the singular used collectively. *In thy bottle*: as if one should say, take care of my tears, as of a kind of wine that is very costly, and very pleasant to thee; or, that hereafter you may measure out to me just that quantity of joys: a metaphor from the keeper of a vineyard, who receives into his vessel the drops of the grapes pressed out by the winepress of affliction. The word *ῥῑνω* (*iter*) (leather or skin bottle) denotes the manner in which they preserved their wine. (1 Samuel 16:20; Jos 9:4,13), and milk also (Jud 4:19). *Martin Geier*.

Ver. 8. *Put thou my tears into thy bottle*. What a sweet thought is suggested here of God's remembrance of his people's affliction! It is an interesting figure of speech, of *bottling their tears*. But the sense is, they are remembered. And woe will be to the man that offends one of God's little ones on his account. What are now bottles of tears, will be poured out in the end as so many vials of wrath. But reader! think how the tears of Jesus have been treasured up when shedding for the sins of his people. *Robert Hawker*, 1753-1827.

Ver. 8. *Put thou my tears into thy bottle*. It is the witty observation of one, that God is said in Scripture to have a bag and a bottle, a *bag* for our sins, and a *bottle* for our tears; and that we should help to fill this, as we have that. There is an allusion here in the original that cannot be Anglicized. *John Trapp*.

Ver. 8. *Are they not in thy book?* While we remain in this vale of misery, God keeps all our tears in a bottle; so precious is the water that is distilled

from penitent eyes; and because he will be sure not to fail, he notes how many drops there be in his register. It was a precious ointment wherewith the woman in the Pharisee's house (it is thought Mary Magdalene) anointed the feet of Christ; but her *tears*, wherewith she washed them, were more worth than her spikenard. *Abraham Wright, in "A Practical Commentary or Exposition upon the Book of Psalms, "1661.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 8. Here are--

- I.** Manifold mercies, to reclaim from wanderings.
- II.** Tender mercies, putting tears in a bottle.
- III.** Covenant mercies, "Are they not, "etc. *G. R.*

PSALM 56:9

EXPOSITION

Ver. 9. *When I cry unto thee, then shall mine enemies turn back.* So soon as I pray they shall fly. So surely as I cry they shall be put to the rout.

*"So swift is prayer to reach the sky,
So kind is God to me."*

The machinery of prayer is not always visible, but it is most efficient. God inclines us to pray, we cry in anguish of heart, he hears, he acts, the enemy is turned back. What irresistible artillery is this which wins the battle as soon as its report is heard! What a God is this who harkens to the cry of his children, and in a moment delivers them from the mightiest adversaries!

This I know. This is one of the believer's certainties, his axioms, his infallible, indisputable verities.

For God is for me. This, we know, and we know, therefore, that none can be against us who are worth a moment's fear. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Who will restrain prayer when it is so potent? Who will seek any other ally than God, who is instantly present so soon as we give the ordained signal, by which we testify both our need and our confidence?

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 9. *When I cry.* The cry of faith and prayer to God is more dreadful to our spiritual foes than the war whoop of the Indian is to his surprised brother savages. *Adam Clarke.*

Ver. 9. (*first clause*). It was somewhat that when David prayed he was saved from his enemies. "I will call on the Lord: so shall I be saved from mine enemies" (2 Samuel 22:4); there is the *defensive* power of prayer; but it is more that it puts enemies to the foil.

When I cry unto thee, then shall mine enemies turn back and be put to flight; there is the *offensive* power of prayer. In David's tower there was an armoury, *thalpijoth*, a place to hang swords with two edges, swords with two mouths (Song of Solomon 4:4); a defensive and an offensive edge. Both edges must be used by such as seek safety. Prayer is a sword with two edges. "Put up thy sword into his place," says Christ to Peter: "for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." Matthew 22:52. But he that takes not this sword may happen to perish by the sword; and the drawing of this sword may save a man from perishing by the sword. Mark that last reason that our Saviour adds why Peter should put up his sword: "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?" (Matthew 22:53). As if he had said, If it were my mind to confound these mine enemies that now set upon me, I should not need thy sword to do it. I could pray to my Father, and could presently by prayer bring such forces into the field as should rout and scatter all mine enemies; hereby implying, that if he would, he could do his enemies more damage and mischief by his prayers against them than by the sword and all instruments of war. Prayer is *twelve legions* strong, yea, twelve legions of angels strong against enemies. *Jeremiah Dyke (1620), in the Righteous Man's Tower.*

Ver. 9. *This I know.* Faith goeth upon solid grounds, and is not a fallible conjecture, but a sure knowledge. *David Dickson.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 9.

I. God is on the side of his people.

II. He is known to be on their side.

III. In answer to prayer he appears on their side.

IV. When he appears enemies flee.

Or--

I. The fact, God is for me.

II. The knowledge of that fact--*This I know.*

III. The use of that knowledge--*When I cry*, etc.

IV. The consequence of that use--*Mine enemies turn back.* G. R.

PSALM 56:10

EXPOSITION

Ver. 10. *In God will I praise his word.* Now comes the thanksgiving. He is a wretch who, having obtained help, forgets to return a grateful acknowledgment. The least we can do is to praise him from whom we receive such distinguished favours. Does David here mean "by God's grace I will praise him"? If so, he shows us that all our emotions towards God must be in God, produced by him and presented as such. Or does he mean, "that which in God is most the object of my praise is his word, and the faithfulness with which he keeps it"? If so, we see how attached our hearts should be to the sure word of promise, and especially to *him* who is the WORD incarnate. The Lord is to be praised under every aspect, and in all his attributes and acts, but certain mercies peculiarly draw out our admiration towards special portions of the great whole. That praise which is never special in its direction cannot be very thoughtful, and it is to be feared cannot be very acceptable.

In the Lord will I praise his word. He delights to dwell on his praise, he therefore repeats his song. The change by which he brings in the glorious name of Jehovah is doubtless meant to indicate that under every aspect he delights in his God and in his word.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 10. *In God will I praise his word: in the Lord will I praise his word.*

The first word, *Elohim*, is a name belonging to God as a judge, the second word, *Jehovah*, is a name of mercy. I will praise God whether he deal with me in a way of justice or in a way of mercy, when he hath thunder in his voice, as well as when he hath honey under his tongue. Oh, how should we praise God, and pleasure ourselves by such a frame! *Stephen Charnock*.

Ver. 10. (*first clause*). By the assistance of God I shall be enabled to praise him for the performance of his promises. *Symon Patrick*, 1626-1707.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 10.

I. "I will praise God *for* his word."

II. *In* his word, as he is there revealed.

III. By his word. "Thou hast put a song, "etc.

PSALM 56:11

EXPOSITION

Ver. 11. *In God have I put my trust.* This and the former verse are evidently the chorus of the Psalm. We cannot be too careful of our faith, or see too sedulously that it is grounded on the Lord alone.

I will not be afraid what man can do unto me. Faith has banished fear. He views his foes in their most forcible character, calling them not *flesh*, but indicating them as *man*, yet he dreads them not; though the whole race were his enemies he would not be afraid now that his trust is stayed on God. He is not afraid of what they threaten to do, for much of that they cannot do; and even what is in their power, what they *can do*, he defies with holy daring. He speaks for the future, "I will not, "for he is sure that the security of the present will suffice for days to come.

PSALM 56:12

EXPOSITION

Ver. 12. *Thy vows are upon me, O God.* Vows made in his trouble he does not lightly forget, nor should we. We voluntarily made them, let us cheerfully keep them. All professed Christians are men under vows, but especially those who in hours of dire distress have rededicated themselves unto the Lord.

I will render praises unto thee. With heart, and voice, and gift, we should cheerfully extol the God of our salvation. The practice of making solemn vows in times of trouble is to be commended, when it is followed by the far less common custom of fulfilling them when the trouble is over.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 12. *Thy vows are upon me, O God.* Whoever is conversant with the Psalms of David, will find him frequently making *vows*, and careful in paying them. When these words dropped from him he was just delivered out of a pressing danger among the Philistines, with whom he took shelter from the rage of King Saul, who unweariedly pursued him; but he soon found that the remembrance of his past achievements to their damage was still so fresh amongst them, and they so exasperated thereupon, that his life was in constant danger. In his distress he flies to God, his wonted refuge, and sends up earnest addresses to him, *vowing* if he would open a way for his deliverance out of these new straits, he would show his grateful sense of so signal a mercy, by the exactness and accuracy of his future obedience. God hears and succours him; and he thereupon grateful looks back, endeavours to renew the sense of his former obligation to his great Deliverer, and to stir up himself by suitable returns, and so cries out,

Thy vows are upon me, O God; as if he should say, I resolve, O Lord, not to forget what was transacted while I was under my fears. Thou hast heard my cries, and I own myself firmly bound by my *vows*. I was serious and in earnest when I made them, and I will endeavour to show that I was so by my care to perform them.

Thy vows, O God, made indeed on my part, but justly to be exacted on thine, are upon me, they do in reality hold me fast, and I desire not to be

released. I am sensible I deserve to be stigmatised for a perfidious wretch if I ever forget them. This temper of holy David with reference to the *vows* he made on this occasion, should be ours with reference to all the sacred *vows* we any way come under. All Christians, as such, are necessarily under *vows* to the blessed God: and particular circumstances may make it expedient for us to come under special engagements to him. But wherever they are such as that they may justly be denominated *vows of God, i.e.*, are such as his word will warrant; we should make holy David, as speaking in this text, our pattern, and set ourselves to imitate him, in seriously owning their binding force, and endeavouring to answer and pay them. *Edmund Calamy, in "A Practical Discourse Concerning Vows, "1704.*

Ver. 12. *Thy vows are upon me, O God.* A well composed *vow* will make thee more circumspect and wary in the general course of thy life. Such an influence it hath, as doth more directly work on one particular part, yet is not terminated to that particular only. Thus it was with David. These *vows* were made when he was in danger of his life, as it seemeth from Psalm 56:13; for when God heard him, he delivered his soul from death: for this he vowed praises in particular, and he will render them. But, withal he takes himself to be hereby engaged to a more exact and circumspect walk before God in all duties: so he expresses himself in the latter part of Psalm 56:13. *Henry Hurst (1629-1696), in "The Morning Exercise at Cripplegate, "1661.*

Ver. 12-13. *Thy vows are upon me, O God.* Passively, vows made to God, not by God; or the obligations of those vows and prayers which I have made and upon which I have received answers. Sacrifices of thanksgiving were called vows, as having been vowed to God upon the want, and to be paid upon the receipt, of mercy. Leviticus 1:1, "If the sacrifice that is offered be a vow." Thy vows are upon me; the fruit of my vows, so that I stand indebted to God for the return of praise.

Thou hast delivered. He understands some great danger wherein he had sunk had not God stood by him, and from a greater mercy, the deliverance of his soul from death, argues for a less, the keeping his feet from falling.

That I may walk before God in the light of the living. By light of the living is meant life, which is called being enlightened with the "light of the living." Job 33:30. Sometimes eternal life in heaven. John 8:12, "He that follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." "To walk before God." To walk obediently in the sight of God; with a respect to his

presence; a walking unto all well pleasing. This is the last argument in the Psalm whereon he builds his strongest plea, as if he knew not what to urge if this should fail him; as if he should have said, Lord, I have had experience of thy wisdom in contriving, thy power in effecting, thy mercy in bestowing deliverance upon me, thy goodness in answering my vows and prayers. "Thou hast delivered from death, "a danger as great and unavoidable as death itself. O Lord, art not thou the same as thou wert? Art not thou still as wise to design, and as gracious to confer further mercy? Wilt thou not as certainly also deliver my feet from falling? The one contains his experience, the other the inference or conclusion he draws from it. Mercies received are in a special manner to be remembered. Mercies received are encouragements to ask, and strong grounds to hope for the mercies we want. *Stephen Charnock*.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 12. Here is--

I. Past dedication.

II. Present consecration.

III. Future glorification. *G. R.*

Ver. 12-13. You have here--

1. The commemoration of former mercies: *Thou hast delivered.*
2. The confidence of future: *Wilt not thou.*
3. The end of all: *To walk before God in the light of the living.* *Stephen Charnock.*

PSALM 56:13

EXPOSITION

Ver. 13. *For thou hast delivered my soul from death.* His enemies were defeated in their attempts upon his life, and therefore he vowed to devote his life to God.

Wilt not thou deliver my feet from falling? One mercy is a plea for another, for indeed it may happen that the second is the necessary complement of the first. It little boots that we live, if we are made to fall in character by the thrusts of our enemies. As lief not be, as live to be bereft of honour, and fallen prostrate before my enemies.

That I may walk before God in the light of the living, enjoying the favour and presence of God, and finding the joy and brightness of life therein. Walking at liberty, in holy service, in sacred communion, in constant progress in holiness, enjoying the smile of heaven--this I seek after. Here is the loftiest reach of a good man's ambition, to dwell with God, to walk in righteousness before him, to rejoice in his presence, and in the light and glory which it yields. Thus in this short Psalm, we have climbed from the ravenous jaws of the enemy into the light of Jehovah's presence, a path which only faith can tread.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 12-13. *Thy vows are upon me, O God. See Psalms on "Psalm 56:12"* for further information.

Ver. 13. *From falling*, or, as more literally translated, from a *thrust*, or a *push*, by which one is caused to fall. *O. Prescott Hiller.*

Ver. 13 (*last clause*). *To walk in the presence of God* is partly under his eyes, his guidance and care, partly in particular, where God is wont to be *present*, where he is *worshipped* by his people and scatters his blessings, opposed to his present state by which he was removed from the place of his worship and presence. Conf. 1 Samuel 26:19, etc. Lastly, *to walk in the light of the living* denotes in general to live amongst *those who live in the light*, or who enjoy the *light*, as it is said elsewhere, *in the land of the living* --Psalm 27:13 Isaiah 38:11 53:8; Ezekiel 32:32; Psalm 142:6 -- opposed to the *dead* or *the region of the dead*, who dwell in *darkness*. But in particular it signifies to live in a *safe* and *prosperous* state, whose well known emblem is *light*. *Hermann Venema.*

Ver. 13 (*last clause*). We cannot restrict this phrase to the light of mortal life; David's vows bound him to walk in the *light of spiritual life*, and also in the *light of eternal life*, of which by faith he was a partaker. And most commentators have applied this verse to the *light of glory* in the world to

come, as the real and final object of the believer's conversation here on earth. *W. Wilson, D.D.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 12-13. You have here--

1. The commemoration of former mercies: *Thou hast delivered.*
2. The confidence of future: *Wilt not thou.*
3. The end of all: *To walk before God in the light of the living.* *Stephen Charnock.*

Ver. 13.

- I. The language of Gratitude--*Thou hast*, etc.
- II. Of Faith--*Wilt not thou*, etc.
- III. Of Hope--*That I may walk*, etc. *G. R.*

PSALM 57

PSALM 57:1

TITLE. *To the Chief Musician.* So glad a song as this becomes ere it closes, should be in the keeping of the most skilled of all the temple minstrels. *Altaschith*, i.e., *DESTROY NOT*. This petition is a very sententious prayer, as full as it is brief, and well worthy to be the motto for a sacred song. David had said, "destroy not," in reference to Saul, when he had him in his power, and now he takes pleasure in employing the same words in supplication to God. We may infer from the spirit of the Lord's prayer, that the Lord will spare us as we spare our foes. There are four of these "*Destroy not*" Psalms, namely, the 57th, 58th, 59th, and 75th. In all of them there is a distinct declaration of the destruction of the wicked and the preservation of the righteous, and they all have probably a reference to the overthrow of the Jews, on account of their persecution of the great Son of David: they will endure heavy chastisement, but concerning them it is written in the divine decree, "Destroy them not." *Michtam of David*. For quality this Psalm is called golden, or a secret, and it well deserves the name. We may read the words and yet not know the secret joy of David, which he has locked up in his golden casket. *When he fled from Saul in the cave*. This is a song from the bowels of the earth, and, like Jonah's prayer from the bottom of the sea, it has a taste of the place. The poet is in the shadow of the cave at first, but he comes to the cavern's mouth at last, and sings in the sweet fresh air, with his eye on the heavens, watching joyously the clouds floating therein.

DIVISIONS. We have here prayer, Psalm 57:1-6, and praise, Psalm 57:7-11. The hunted one takes a long breath of prayer, and when he is fully inspired, he breathes out his soul in jubilant song.

EXPOSITION

Ver. 1. *Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me.* Urgent need suggests the repetition of the cry, for thus intense urgency of desire is expressed. If 'he gives twice who gives quickly, 'so he who would receive quickly must ask twice. For mercy the psalmist pleads at first, and he feels

he cannot improve upon his plea, and therefore returns to it. God is the God of mercy, and the Father of mercies, it is most fit therefore that in distress he should seek mercy from him in whom it dwells.

For my soul trusteth in thee. Faith urges her suit right well. How can the Lord be unmerciful to a trustful soul? Our faith does not deserve mercy, but it always wins it from the sovereign grace of God when it is sincere, as in this case where *the soul* of the man believed. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness."

Yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge. Not in the cave alone would he hide, but in the cleft of the Rock of ages. As the little birds find ample shelter beneath the parental wing, even so would the fugitive place himself beneath the secure protection of the divine power. The emblem is delightfully familiar and suggestive. May we all experimentally know its meaning. When we cannot see the sunshine of God's face, it is blessed to cower down beneath the shadow of his wings.

Until these calamities be overpast. Evil will pass away, and the eternal wings will abide over us till then. Blessed be God, our calamities are matters of time, but our safety is a matter of eternity. When we are under the divine shadow, the passing over of trouble cannot harm us; the hawk flies across the sky, but this is no evil to the chicks when they are safely nestling beneath the hen.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Title. This Psalm was composed, as the title notes, by David prayer wise, when he hid himself from Saul in the cave, and is inscribed with a double title, *Altaschith, Michtam of David*. *Altaschith* refers to the scope, and *Michtam* to the dignity of the subject matter. The former signifies *destroy not*, or, let there be no slaughter; and may either refer to Saul, concerning whom he gave charge to his servants not to destroy him; or rather it hath reference to God, to whom in this great exigence he poured out his soul in this pathetic ejaculation; *Altaschith*, destroy not. The latter title, *Michtam*, signifies a golden ornament, and so is suited to the choice and excellent matter of the Psalm, which much more deserves such a title than Pythagoras' golden verses did. *John Flavel (1627-1692), in "Divine Conduct, or the Mystery of Providence."*

Title. A Psalm composed *when David fled from Saul in the cave*, which is referred to in Psalm 143, and which, because it is without any other distinction called "the cave," is probably that celebrated cave where David with his six hundred followers lay concealed when Saul entered and David cut off the skirt of his robe. The king, accompanied by three thousand followers, chased him to the loftiest alpine heights--"to the sheepcotes," "where the cattle were driven in the hottest summer months only--to hunt him in every hiding place. There was a cave, in the darkened cool of which David and his men were hid. Such caves in Palestine and the East are frequently enlarged by human hands, and so capacious that they accommodate thousands of people. This song of complaint was written during the hours of suspense which David spent there, to wait until the calamity was overpast (Psalm 57:2); in which he only gradually gains a stout heart (Psalm 57:8). His life was really suspended by a hair, if Saul or any of his attendants had espied him! *Agustus F. Tholuck.*

Title. The cave. There appear good grounds for the local tradition which fixes the cave on the borders of the Dead Sea, although there is no certainty with regard to the particular cave pointed out. The cave so designated is at a point to which David was far more likely to summon his parents, whom he intended to take from Bethlehem in to Moab, than to any place in the western plains... It is an immense natural cavern, the mouth of which can be approached only on foot along the side of the cliff. Irby and Mangles, who visited it without being aware that it was the reputed Cave of Adullam, state that it "runs in by a long, winding, narrow passage, with small chambers or cavities on either side. We soon came to a large chamber with natural arches of great height; from this last there were numerous passages, leading in all directions, occasionally joined by others at right angles, and forming a perfect labyrinth, which our guides assured us had never been perfectly explored--the people being afraid of losing themselves. The passages are generally four feet high by three feet wide, and were all on a level with each other." ...It seems probable that David as a native of Bethlehem, must have been well acquainted with this remarkable spot, and had probably often availed himself of its shelter, when out with his father's flocks. It would, therefore, naturally occur to him as a place of refuge when he fled from Gath. *John Kitto (1804-1854), in "A Cyclopaedia of Biblical Literature."*

Whole Psalm. Mystically this hymn may be construed of Christ, who was in the days of his flesh assaulted by the tyranny both of spiritual and

temporal enemies. His temporal enemies, Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and people of Israel, furiously raged and took counsel together against him. The chief priests and princes were, saith Hierome, like *lions*, and the people like the *whelps of lions*, all of them in a readiness to devour his soul. The rulers *laid a net for his feet* in their captious interrogatories, asking (Matthew 22:17), "Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not?" and (John 8:5) whether the woman taken in the very act of adultery should be stoned to death or no. The people were "*set on fire*", "when as they raged against him, and *their teeth and tongues were spears and swords* in crying, "Crucify him, crucify him." His spiritual enemies also sought to *swallow him up*; his *soul was among lions* all the days of his life, at the hour of his death especially. The devil in tempting and troubling him, had *laid a snare for his feet*; and death, in *digging a pit* for him, had thought to *devour* him. As David was in death, so Christ the Son of David was in the *grave*. *John Boys*, 1571-1625.

Ver. 1. *Be merciful unto me, O God*, etc. This excellent Psalm was composed by David when there was enough to discompose the best man in the world. The repetition notes both the extremity of the danger, and the ardency of the supplicant. *Mercy! Mercy! Nothing but mercy*, and that exerting itself in any extraordinary way, can now save him from ruin. The arguments he pleads for obtaining mercy in this distress are very considerable.

1. He pleads his reliance upon God as an argument to move mercy. *My soul trusteth in thee*, etc. This his trust and dependence upon God, though it be not argumentative in respect of the dignity of the *act*; yet it is so in respect both of the nature of the *object*, a compassionate God who will not expose any that take shelter under his wings, and in respect of the *promise*, whereby protection is assured to them that fly to him for sanctuary. Isaiah 26:3.

2. He pleads former experiences of his help in past distresses, as an argument encouraging hope under the present strait (Psalm 57:2). *John Flavel*.

Ver. 1. *Be merciful unto me*. According to the weight of the burden that grieveth us, is the cry that comes from us. How do poor condemned prisoners cry to their judges, "Have pity upon us, have pity upon us!" David, in the day of his calamities doubles his prayer for mercy: *Be*

merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me: for my soul trusteth in thee, etc.,

Until these calamities be overpast. It was not a single calamity, but a multitude of calamities which compassed David, and therefore he compasseth the Lord about with petitions. His spirit being up in prayer, like a bell that rings out, he strikes on both sides, *Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me.* Joseph Caryl.

Ver. 1. *Be merciful unto me.* The first clause contains the prayer itself in a very forcible word *ygnx*, properly, "Show thy most tender affection to me, "such as animals, with a humming sound, show to their young. *Hermann Venema.*

Ver. 1. *For my soul trusteth in thee.* The best reason with God, who "taketh pleasure in those that hope in his mercy." Psalm 147:11. *Poole's Synopsis.*

Ver. 1. *Soul.* His *soul* trusted in God; and this is a form of expression the force of which is not to be overlooked; for it implies that the trust which he exercised proceeded from his very innermost affection--that it was of no volatile character, but deeply and strongly rooted. He declares the same truth in figurative terms, when he adds his persuasion that God would cover him with the shadow of his wings. *John Calvin.*

Ver. 1. *In the shadow of thy wings I will trust;* properly, I will seek for protection. The very delightful figure here employed, is taken from the chicken lying safely hid under the mother's wings; at the same time it seems to have reference to the wings of the cherubim, by which the mercyseat was covered. *Simon de Muis, 1587-1644.*

Ver. 1. *The shadow of thy wings.* Compare Psalm 17:8 61:4; and Matthew 23:37; and the Apocalyptic imagery, describing the church fleeing from the dragon in the wilderness; and "to her are given the two wings of the great eagle, "and she is delivered from the dragon, who desires to *swallow her up.* See Revelation 12:6,15-16. *Christopher Wordsworth, 1868.*

Ver. 1. *Until these calamities be overpast.* He compares his afflictions and calamity to a storm that cometh and goeth; as it is not always fair weather with us in this life, so not always foul. Athanasius said of Julian furiously raging against the Lord's Anointed, "*Nubecula est, cito transibit,* "he is a little cloud; he will soon pass away. Man is born to labour and dolour, to

travail and trouble; to labour in his actions, to dolour in his passions; and so, "Great are the troubles of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of all." If we put our trust in him and cast all our care upon him, he will in his good time bring it to pass, that all our afflictions shall overpass. He will either take them from us or us from them, and then we shall assuredly know that the troubles of this life present are not worthy of the glory which in the life to come shall be showed unto us. For as the globe of the earth, which improperly for his show of bigness we term the world, and is, after the mathematician's account, many thousand miles in compass; yet, being compared unto the greatness of the starry sky's circumference, is but a centre or little prick: so the travail and affliction of this life temporal, in respect of the joys eternal in the world to come, bear not any proportion, but are to be reputed in comparison a very nothing, as a dark cloud that cometh and goeth in a moment. *John Boys.*

Ver. 1-3. *In the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast*, etc. As if he had said, Lord, I am already in the cave and in the holds, and in the shadow of it, but yet for all that I think not myself safe indeed, till I have made my refuge in the shadow of thy wings: that is therefore the course I resolve and build upon. It was wisely done of him: and mark what course he takes to do it, Psalm 57:2, *I will cry unto God most high*, I will by prayer put myself under the shadow of God's wings: and mark what success should follow, Psalm 57:3, *He shall send from heaven, and save me from the reproach of him that would swallow me up. God shall send forth his mercy and his truth.* When we send prayers up to heaven, God will send help down from heaven. But yet David *prays* to God, as well as *trusts* in God. And unless we pray as well as trust, our trust will fail us, for we must trust to God for that we pray for. *Jeremiah Dyke, 1620.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 1. (*first clause*). *Repetition in prayer.*

1. Its dangers. May degenerate into "vain repetitions." Carried to excess painfully suggests the idea, God is unwilling.
2. Its uses. Eases the soul like tears. Manifests intense emotion. Enables those of less mental activity to join in the general supplication.
R. A. Griffin.

Ver. 1. Here are--

I. Calamities.

1. War.
2. Pestilence
3. Privations.
4. Sin, greatest of all.
5. Death.
6. Curse of a broken law.

II. Here is a refuge from these calamities.

1. In God.
2. Specially in the mercy of God.

III. There is flying to that refuge.

1. By faith; *My soul trusteth in thee; Under the shadow*, etc.
2. By prayer; "*Be*," etc.

IV. Here is continuance both in faith and prayer; *until, etc.* G. R.

Ver. 1,4,6-7. Note the varying condition of the same heart, at the same time. *My soul trusteth in thee... My soul is among lions... My soul is bowed down... My heart is fixed.*

WORKS UPON THE FIFTY-SEVENTH PSALM

The Works of JOHN BOYS, D.D., "Deane of Canterburie," 1629, folio, pp. 834-40, contains an Exposition of Psalm 57.

In CHANDLER'S *"Life of David,"* Vol. 1., pp. 176-9, there is an Exposition of this Psalm.

PSALM 57:2**EXPOSITION**

Ver. 2. *I will cry.* He is quite safe, but yet he prays, for faith is never dumb. We pray because we believe. We exercise by faith the spirit of adoption whereby we cry. He says not I do cry, or I have cried, but I will cry, and

indeed, this resolution may stand with all of us until we pass through the gates of pearl; for while we are here below we shall still have need to cry.

Unto God most high. --Prayers are for God only; the greatness and sublimity of his person and character suggest and encourage prayer; however high our enemies, our heavenly Friend is higher, for he is *Most high*, and he can readily send from the height of his power the succour which we need.

Unto God that performeth all things for me. He has cogent reason for praying, for he sees God performing. The believer waits and God works. The Lord has undertaken for us, and he will not draw back, he will go through with his covenant engagements. Our translators have very properly inserted the words, "all things," for there is a blank in the Hebrew, as if it were a *carte blanche*, and you might write therein that the Lord would finish anything and everything which he has begun. Whatsoever the Lord takes in hand he will accomplish; hence past mercies are guarantees for the future, and admirable reasons for continuing to cry unto him.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 1-3. *In the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast,* etc. As if he had said, Lord, I am already in the cave and in the holds, and in the shadow of it, but yet for all that I think not myself safe indeed, till I have made my refuge in the shadow of thy wings: that is therefore the course I resolve and build upon. It was wisely done of him: and mark what course he takes to do it, Psalm 57:2, *I will cry unto God most high*, I will by prayer put myself under the shadow of God's wings: and mark what success should follow, Psalm 57:3, *He shall send from heaven, and save me from the reproach of him that would swallow me up. God shall send forth his mercy and his truth.* When we send prayers up to heaven, God will send help down from heaven. But yet David *prays* to God, as well as *trusts* in God. And unless we pray as well as trust, our trust will fail us, for we must trust to God for that we pray for.
Jeremiah Dyke, 1620.

Ver. 2. *Unto God that performeth all things for me.* God's favours already received are a pledge that he will complete his work of love "*upon I ~~an~~ me.*" The beginning is the earnest of the completion. His *word* is a guarantee for the *performance* of "all things" that I need. (Compare Psalm 57:3 56:4 1

Samuel 2:9 3:12 1 Samuel 23:17 24:21 Psalm 128:8 Job 10:3,8 14:15
 Philippians 1:6 Isaiah 26:12). A. R. Fausset.

Ver. 2. *God that performeth all things for me.* Hebrew, *that performeth* (or *perfecteth*, or *finisheth*, as this word is rendered, Psalm 138:8; i.e., will certainly perform or finish), *for*, or *towards*, or *concerning me*. He doth not express what he performeth, or perfecteth, or fulfilleth, but leaveth it to be understood, as being easy to be understood. *He performeth* or *perfecteth*, to wit, all that he hath promised; engages himself to perform what he hath begun to do, or what is yet to be performed; it being usual in the Hebrew language to understand a verbal noun after the verb. He implies that God is not like men, who make large promises, but either through inability, or carelessness, or unfaithfulness, do not perform them, but will certainly be as good as his word. *Matthew Poole*, 1624-1679.

Ver. 2. (*last clause*). The word which we translate *performeth* comes from a root that signifies both to *perfect* and to *desist* or *cease*. For when a business is performed or perfected, the agent then ceases and desists from working: he puts to the last hand when he finishes the work. To such a happy issue the Lord hath brought all his doubtful and difficult matters before; and this gives him encouragement that he will still be gracious, and perfect that which concerneth him now, as he speaks, Psalm 138:8, "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me." The Septuagint renders it by *ton euergetm sonta me*, who *profits* or *benefits* me. And it is a certain truth, that all the results and issues of providence are profitable and beneficial to the saints. But the supplement in our translation well conveys the importance of the place; "who performeth *all things*"; and it involves the most strict and proper notion of providence, which is nothing else but the performance of God's gracious purposes and promises to his people." And therefore Vatablus and Muis supply and fill up the room with the conciseness of the original leaves, with *quae promisit: I will cry unto God most high*; unto God that performeth *the things which he hath promised*. Payment is the performance of promises. Grace makes the promise, and providence the payment. Piscator fills it with *benignitatem et misericordiam suam*; "unto God that performeth *his kindness and mercy*." But still it supposes the mercy performed to be contained in the promise, and much more so in the providential performance of it to us. *John Flavel*.

Ver. 2. (*last clause*). David even then when he fled from Saul in the cave he looks upon God as having *performed all things for him*. The word is, he

hath *perfected all things*; and it is observable that David uses the same expression of praising God here when he was in the cave, hiding himself to save his life, as he did when he triumphed over his enemies--Psalm 6 and Psalm 108. *Jeremiah Burroughs*, 1599-1646.

Ver. 2. (*last clause*). The Targum curiously paraphrases this clause: "Who ordered the spider that wrought the web, on my account, at the mouth of the cave; "applying a later historical fact, which, however, may have had its prototype in David's history. *Andrew A. Bonar*, in "*Christ and his Church in the Book of Psalms*," 1859.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 2. Prayer to the performing God. He performs all his promises, all my salvation, all my preservation, all needed between here and heaven. Here he reveals his omnipotence, his grace, his faithfulness, his immutability; and we are bound to show our faith, patience, joy, and gratitude.

Ver. 2. Strange reasons.

I. The psalmist in the depth of distress, cries to God, because he is most high in glory. Surely this thought might well paralyse him with the fear of divine inaccessibility, but the soul quickened with suffering, sees through and beyond the metaphor, rejoices in the truth, "Though the Lord be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly."

II. He cries to God for help, because God *is* performing all things for him. Why urge him then? Prayer is the music to which "the mighty man of war" goes forth to battle. *R. A. G.*

PSALM 57:3

EXPOSITION

Ver. 3. *He shall send from heaven.* If there be no fit instruments on earth, heaven shall yield up its legions of angels for the succour of the saints. We may in times of great straits expect mercies of a remarkable kind; like the Israelites in the wilderness, we shall have our bread hot from heaven, new every morning; and for the overthrow of our enemies God shall open his celestial batteries, and put them to utter confusion. Wherever the battle is

more fierce than ordinary, there shall come succours from headquarters, for the Commander in chief sees all.

And save me from the reproach of him that would swallow me up. He will be in time, not only to rescue his servants from being swallowed up, but even from being reproached. Not only shall they escape the flames, but not even the smell of fire shall pass upon them. O dog of hell, I am not only delivered from thy bite, but even from thy bark. Our foes shall not have the power to sneer at us, their cruel jests and taunting gibes shall be ended by the message from heaven, which shall for ever save us.

Selah. Such mercy may well make us pause to meditate and give thanks. Rest, singer, for God has given thee rest!

God shall send forth his mercy and his truth. He asked for mercy, and truth came with it. Thus evermore doth God give us more than we ask or think. His attributes, like angels on the wing, are ever ready to come to the rescue of his chosen.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 1-3. *In the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast,* etc. As if he had said, Lord, I am already in the cave and in the holds, and in the shadow of it, but yet for all that I think not myself safe indeed, till I have made my refuge in the shadow of thy wings: that is therefore the course I resolve and build upon. It was wisely done of him: and mark what course he takes to do it, Psalm 57:2, *I will cry unto God most high,* I will by prayer put myself under the shadow of God's wings: and mark what success should follow, Psalm 57:3, *He shall send from heaven, and save me from the reproach of him that would swallow me up. God shall send forth his mercy and his truth.* When we send prayers up to heaven, God will send help down from heaven. But yet David *prays* to God, as well as *trusts* in God. And unless we pray as well as trust, our trust will fail us, for we must trust to God for that we pray for. *Jeremiah Dyke, 1620.*

Ver. 3. *Him that would swallow me up.* If I were to take you to my house, and say that I had an exquisite fat man, and wished you to join me in eating him, your indignation could be restrained by nothing. You would pronounce me to be crazy. There is not in New York a man so mean that he would not put down a man who should propose to have a banquet off

from a fellow man, cutting steaks out of him, and eating them. And that is nothing but feasting on the human body, while they will all sit down, and take a man's soul, and look for the tender loins, and invite their neighbours in to partake of the little titbits. They will take a man's honour and name, and broil them over the coals of their indignation, and fill the whole room with the aroma thereof, and give their neighbour a piece, and watch him, and wink as he tastes it. You all eat men up... You eat the souls, the finest elements of men. You are more than glad if you can whisper a word that is derogatory to a neighbour, or his wife, or his daughter... The morsel is too exquisite to be lost. Here is the soul of a person, here is a person's hope for this world and the world to come, and you have it on your fork, and you cannot refrain from tasting it, and give it to some one else to taste. You are cannibals, eating men's honour and name and rejoicing in it--and that, too, when you do not always know that the things charged against them are true; when in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred the probabilities are that they are not true. *Henry Ward Beecher, 1870.*

Ver. 3. *God shall send forth his mercy and his truth*, viz., to save me. That is to say, God, to manifest his mercy, and vindicate the truth of his promises, will save me. The reader will observe, that mercy and truth are here poetically represented as ministers of God, standing in his presence, ready to execute his pleasure, and employed by him in the salvation of his people. *Samuel Chandler.*

Ver. 3. *His mercy and his truth.* He need not send down angels, he need send but *mercy and truth* down, which elsewhere it is said he prepares in the heavens. Psalm 61:7. He prepares commissions for them, and sends them down with them for execution. *Thomas Goodwin.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 3. The saints comfort in adversity.

I. All contingencies are provided for: *He shall* (or will) *send*.

II. The highest resources are available: *from heaven*.

III. The worst foes will be overcome in the end: *him that would swallow me up*.

IV. By the holiest means: *mercy and truth*. R. A. G.

Ver. 3. The celestial messengers. What they are. The certainty of their being sent. Their efficient operation. The grateful receiver.

Ver. 3. (*last clause*). The harmony of the divine attributes in salvation. Mercy founded on truth, truth vindicating mercy. Mercy without injustice, justice honoured in mercy.

PSALM 57:4

EXPOSITION

Ver. 4. *My soul is among lions.* He was a very Daniel. Howled at, hunted, wounded, but not slain. His place was in itself one of extreme peril, and yet faith made him feel himself secure, so that he could lie down. The cave may have reminded him of a lion's den, and Saul and his band shouting and yelling in their disappointment at missing him, were the lions; yet beneath the divine shelter he finds himself safe.

And I lie even among them that are set on fire. Perhaps Saul and his band kindled a fire in the cavern while they halted in it, and David was thus reminded of the fiercer fire of their hate which burned within their hearts. Like the bush in Horeb, the believer is often in the midst of flames, but never consumed. It is a mighty triumph of faith when we can lie down even among firebrands and find rest, because God is our defence.

Even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword. Malicious men carry a whole armoury in their mouths; they have not harmless mouths, whose teeth grind their own food as in a mill, but their jaws are as mischievous as if every tooth were a javelin or an arrow. They have no molars, all their teeth are canines, and their nature is canine, leonine, wolfish, devilish. As for that busy member the tongue, in the case of the malicious, it is a two edged, keen, cutting, killing sword. The tongue, which is here compared to a sword, has the adjective *sharp* added to it, which is not used in reference to the teeth, which are compared to spears, as if to show that if men were actually to tear us with their teeth, like wild beasts, they could not thereby wound us so severely as they can do with their tongues. No weapon is so terrible as a tongue sharpened on the devil's grindstone; yet even this we need not fear,

for "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper, and every tongue that riseth against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn."

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 4. *My soul is among lions.* This may also be construed of the church, and that both in respect of her spiritual enemies and temporal. As for her ghostly foes, the devil is a *roaring lion* (1 Peter 5:8), and our sins are the *whelps of lions*, ready to devour us. And concerning outward enemies, the church in this world is like Daniel in the lion's den, or as "the sucking child playing upon the hole of the asp." Isaiah 11:8. She hath here no visible power or outward help to fly to for succour, all her trust is in the Lord, and "under the shadow of his wings is her refuge, till this evil is overpast."... And surely, beloved, if the church had not any other enemies, but only these monstrous Antichrists of Rome, yet she might truly complain with our prophet here,

My soul is among lions. Eleven popes had that name, whereof all, excepting two or three, were roaring lions in their Bulls, and ravening lions in seeking after their prey. *Leo* the tenth so pilled (Pill--peel, to pillage, plunder, strip) and polled (Poll, used synonymously with peel) the goodly nations of Germany with his unpardonable pardons and merciless indulgences, as that his insupportable cruelty gave the first occasion of the Reformation of religion in that country. *John Boys.*

Ver. 4. (*first clause*). Mudge translates literally, *I lie with my soul amidst lionesses.* This agrees with the opinion of Bochart, who thinks that the animals here intended are lionesses, properly, when giving suck to their young, a time when they are peculiarly fierce and dangerous, "nor need we wonder," he observes, "that the lioness is reckoned among the fiercest lions; for the lioness equals, or even exceeds, the lion in strength and fierceness; "and this he proves from the testimonies of ancient writers. *James Anderson's Note to Calvin in loc, 1846.*

Ver. 4. *And I lie even among them that are set on fire.* The whole pith lies in the word *hbkyþ*; *I will recline*, which denotes a tranquil and secure condition of body and mind, like a man *reclining* and sleeping, as Psalm 3:5; *I laid me down and slept, I awaked*; and lived composedly; Psalm 4:9; *I will both lay me down in peace*, etc. *Hermann Venema.*

Ver. 4. The horrors of a lion's den, the burning of a fiery furnace, and the cruel onset of war, are the striking images by which David here describes the peril and wretchedness of his present condition. *John Morison.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 1,4,6-7. Note the varying condition of the same heart, at the same time. *My soul trusteth in thee... My soul is among lions... My soul is bowed down... My heart is fixed.*

Ver. 4. *My soul is among lions.* How came I there? If for God's sake, then I may remember--

1. So was my Lord in the wilderness.
2. The lions are chained.
3. Their howling is all they can do.
4. I shall come out of their den alive, unhurt, honoured.
5. The Lion of Judah is with me.
6. I shall soon be among the angels.

PSALM 57:5

EXPOSITION

Ver. 5. *Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens.* This is the chorus of the Psalm. Before he has quite concluded his prayer the good man interjects a verse of praise; and glorious praise too, seeing it comes from the lion's den and from amid the coals of fire. Higher than the heavens is the Most High, and so high ought our praises to rise. Above even the power of cherubim and seraphim to express it, the glory of God is revealed and is to be acknowledged by us.

Let thy glory be above all the earth. As above, so below, let thy praises, O thou great Jehovah, be universally proclaimed. As the air surrounds all nature, so let thy praises gird the earth with a zone of song.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 5.

I. The end which God has in view, both in heaven and earth, in a sinful and in sinless worlds--his own glory.

II. Our duty to acquiesce in that end: *Be thou*, etc. --Not self, not men, not angels--*Be thou exalted*, etc. In this we should acquiesce--

1. Actively, by seeking that end.
2. Passively, by submission to his will. *G. R.*

PSALM 57:6

EXPOSITION

Ver. 6. *They have prepared a net for my steps.* The enemies of the godly spare no pains, but go about their wicked work with the coolest deliberation. As for each sort of fish, or bird, or beast, a fitting net is needed, so do the ungodly suit their net to their victim's circumstances and character with a careful craftiness of malice. Whatever David might do, and whichever way he might turn, his enemies were ready to entrap him in some way or other.

My soul is bowed down. He was held down like a bird in a trap; his enemies took care to leave him no chance of comfort.

They have digged a pit before me, into the midst whereof they are fallen themselves. He likens the design of his persecutors to pits, which were commonly dug by hunters to entrap their prey; these were made in the usual path of the victim, and in this case David says, *before me*, i.e., in my ordinary way. He rejoices because these devices had recoiled upon themselves. Saul hunted David, but David caught him more than once and might have slain him on the spot. Evil is a stream which one day flows back to its source.

Selah. We may sit down at the pit's mouth and view with wonder the just retaliations of providence.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 6. *Net.* Not having fire arms, the ancients were much more skilful than the moderns in the use of snares, nets, and pits for capturing wild animals. A large class of Biblical figures and allusions necessarily presuppose this state of things. *W. M. Thomson.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 1,4,6-7. Note the varying condition of the same heart, at the same time. *My soul trusteth in thee... My soul is among lions... My soul is bowed down... My heart is fixed.*

Ver. 6. (*first clause*).

I. Who are they?

1. Those who lead us into sin.
2. Who argue from worldly philosophy.
3. Who proclaim priestly and sacramental superstition.
4. Who decoy us from the church of God.
5. Who teach Antinomian doctrine.

II. How shall we escape them?

1. Keep out of their way.
2. Keep to God's way.
3. Trust daily in the Lord.

Ver. 6. *My soul is bowed down.*

I. *The prostration.*

1. Caused by enemies, weakness, fear, pain.
2. Deep, agonizing, self revealing.
3. Common to the Head and the members.

II. The consolation.

1. Bowed down, but not condemned.
2. Hoping in the promise.
3. Trusting in God.
4. Expecting a blessing from the trial.

PSALM 57:7

EXPOSITION

Ver. 7. *My heart is fixed.* One would have thought he would have said, "My heart is fluttered; "but no, he is calm, firm, happy, resolute, established. When the central axle is secure, the whole wheel is right. If our great bower anchor holds, the ship cannot drive.

O God, my heart is fixed. I am resolved to trust thee, to serve thee, and to praise thee. Twice does he declare this to the glory of God who thus comforts the souls of his servants. Reader, it is surely well with thee, if thy once roving heart is now firmly fixed upon God and the proclamation of his glory.

I will sing and give praise. Vocally and instrumentally will I celebrate thy worship. With lip and with heart will I ascribe honour to thee. Satan shall not stop me, nor Saul, nor the Philistines, I will make Adullam ring with music, and all the caverns thereof echo with joyous song. Believer, make a firm decree that your soul in all seasons shall magnify the Lord.

*"Sing, though sense and carnal reason
Fain would stop the joyful song:
Sing, and count it highest treason
For a saint to hold his tongue."*

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 7. *My heart is fixed, O God,* etc. The psalmist knowing that it is the order and work of God, first to prepare the heart for communion, and then to incline his own ear to hear his people, and to entertain communion with them in ordinances, he doth observe this order, and follow it with a practice suitable to it in his daily address to God, that is thus, wheresoever he doth find his heart put into a fitted and prepared frame for communion with God, he doth not let it die again, and go out of frame by a slothful neglect of such a disposition of heart. No, but he immediately sets himself to duty, to worship God, and to the acts of his worship, in his ordinances, as he expresses himself in Psalm 57:7; viz., thus—*yBl i ^wOn; ^yj l a, yBl i ^wOn; Nachon libbi Elohim, nachon libbi* (there is the first; he finds his heart fitted and prepared for communion with God): "My heart, "saith he,

"is fitted or prepared" (for the word $\text{w}^{\text{b}}\text{On}$; *nachon* is the passive conjugation *niphal*, signifying, he is fitted or prepared, from the root ZK , *chun*, he fitted or prepared, in the active; and so it is rather to be rendered prepared or fitted, then "fixed," thus yBi i *libbi*, my heart; $\text{w}^{\text{b}}\text{On}$; *nachon*, is fitted or prepared), "O God, my heart is fitted or prepared" for communion with thee. Well, what follows? He presently sets himself upon that great duty and ordinance of communion with God, in the praising of his name and singing forth those praises, as in the words immediately following in the same verse, thus: *My heart is prepared, O God, my heart is prepared*; therefore, $\text{hrM}^{\text{a}}\text{ay}$, *ashidah va-azamerah*, "I will sing and give praise." William Strong, in "Communion with God," 1656.

Ver. 7. *My heart is fixed, O God*, etc. Fitness for duty lies in the orderly temper of body and mind, making a man willing to undertake, and able to finish his work with comfortable satisfaction. If either the body or mind be distempered, a man is unfit for such an undertaking; both must be in a suitable frame, like a well tuned instrument, else there will be no melody: hence when David prepared himself for praises and worship, he tells us *his heart was ready and fixed*, and then, his *tongue* was ready also (Psalm 45:1), so was his hand with psaltery and harp; all these were awakened into a suitable posture. That a man is or hath been in a fit order for service may be concluded from

- (1.) His alacrity to undertake a duty.
- (2.) His activity in the prosecution.
- (3.) His satisfaction afterward.

Right grounds and principles in these things being still presupposed.
Richard Gilpin (1625-1699, 1700), in "Daemonologia Sacra."

Ver. 7. *I will sing.* It should alarm the wicked that they are contending with a people who sing and shout on the battle field. Yea, they never sing louder than when most distressed and afflicted. Whether saints conquer or are conquered they still sing on. Blessed be God for that. Let sinners tremble at contending with men of a spirit so heavenly. *William S. Plumer.*

Ver. 7. Sincerity makes the Christian sing, when he hath nothing to his supper. David was in none of the best case when in the cave, yet we never find him merrier: his heart makes sweeter music than ever his harp did.
William Gurnall.

Ver. 7-8. That worship that is performed with a sleepy, drowsy body, is a weak worship, but the psalmist here makes the awakening of the body to be the fruit and effect of the preparation of the heart; *Awake up, my glory; awake, psaltery and harp: I myself will awake early.* Why so? My heart is prepared. The heart prepared and thereby awaked, will awake the body. To worship God therefore without a prepared heart, is to worship him with a drowsy body, because with a drowsy heart, and therefore weakly. *John Angier, in "An Help to Better Hearts, for Better Times," 1647.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 1,4,6-7. Note the varying condition of the same heart, at the same time. *My soul trusteth in thee... My soul is among lions. My soul is bowed down... My heart is fixed.*

Ver. 7. (first clause). It is implied that the *heart* is the main thing required in all acts of devotion; nothing is done to purpose in religion further than it is done with the heart. The heart must be *fixed*; fixed *for* the duty, fitted and put in frame for it; fixed *in* the duty by a close application; *attending on the Lord* without distraction. *Matthew Henry.*

Ver. 7.

I. What is fixed? the heart, not the mind merely, but the will, the conscience, the affections, which draw the mind after them: *My heart is fixed* -- found an anchorage, a resting place, not therefore at the mercy of every gale, etc.

II. The objects upon which it is fixed.

1. Upon God.
2. Upon his word
3. Upon his salvation.
4. Upon heaven.

III. The fixedness of the heart upon these objects, denotes--

1. Singleness of aim.
2. Uniformity of action.
3. Perseverance to the end. *G. R.*

Ver 7-9.

1. He that will be thankful must treasure up in his heart and memory the courtesy that is done him; so had David done, and therefore he mentions *his heart*; and to make it more emphatic, he names it again, *My heart*.
2. After he remembers it, he must be affected with it, and resolve upon it; so doth David: *My heart is ready*, or else, *My heart is fixed*; confirmed I am in it to be thankful, and I cannot be altered.
3. It is not enough that a man carry about with him a thankful heart he must *anunciare*, tell it abroad, and make it known publicly what God hath done for him; yea, and do it joyfully too: *I will*, saith David, *sing and give praise*.
4. He must use all means he can to make it known-- "*tongue*, "*psaltery*, "and "*harp*, "all are little enough. Whence, by an apostrophe, David turns to these. *Awake, my glory*: i.e., *Tongue*, *awake*; *lute and harp*, *awake*; *I myself will awake*.
5. He must not do it in a sleepy manner, but with intention and earnestness of spirit: "*Awake, awake, I will awake*."
6. He must take the first opportunity to do it, and not hang off and delay it. *I will awake early*.
7. He must do it in such a place, and such an assembly as may most redound to God's honour: *I will praise thee, O Lord, among the people*; *I will sing unto thee among the nations*. William Nicholson.

PSALM 57:8

EXPOSITION

Ver. 8. *Awake up, my glory*. Let the noblest powers of my nature bestir themselves: the intellect which conceives thought, the tongue which expresses it, and the inspired imagination which beautifies it --let all be on the alert now that the hour for praise has come.

Awake, psaltery and harp. Let all the music with which I am familiar be well attuned for the hallowed service of praise.

I myself will awake early. I will awake the dawn with my joyous notes. No sleepy verses and weary notes shall be heard from me; I will thoroughly arouse myself for this high employ. When we are at our best we fall short of the Lord's deserts, let us, therefore, make sure that what we bring him is our best, and, if marred with infirmity, at least let it not be deteriorated by indolence. Three times the psalmist calls upon himself to awake. Do we need so much arousing, and for such work? Then let us not spare it, for the engagement is too honourable, too needful to be left undone or ill done for want of arousing ourselves.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 8. *Awake up, my glory; awake, psalter and harp: I myself will awake early.* We must prevent God by early praise as well as prayer: "The God of my mercy shall prevent me," sings David; and every child of David must prevent God again with his songs. Jehoshaphat delighted God with instruments of music before his deliverance. Faith must tune an *epinikion*, a psalm of victory, before the triumph. Praise is the ingenious mother of future mercies; as the Virgin Mary sang at Hebron before the birth of her son at Bethlehem. Oh, heavenly contention between mercy and duty! *Samuel Lee*, 1625-1691.

Ver. 8. *Awake up, my glory*, etc. We must sing *with excited grace*. Not only with grace habitual, but with excited and actual: the musical instrument delights not but when it is played upon. In this duty we must follow Paul's advice to Timothy (2 Timothy 1:6), *anazwpurein*, stir up the grace that is in us, and cry out as David,

Awake love, awake delight. Psalm 57:8. The clock must be wound up before it can guide our time; the bird pleaseth not in her nest, but in her notes; the chimes only make music when they are going. Let us therefore beg the Spirit to blow upon our garden, that the spices thereof may flow out, when we set upon this joyous service. God loves active grace in duty, that the soul should be ready trimmed when it presents itself to Christ in any worship. *John Wells*, in "*Morning Exercises*," 1674.

Ver. 8. *I will awake early.* Literally, 'I will awake the dawn.' a bold figure of poetry, as if the writer had said, --The morning shall not awake me to praise; but in my songs I will anticipate the dawn. *R. T. Society's Notes*.

Ver. 8. It will answer our purpose to take notice, first, of the *terms* David uses, and then, secondly, press the *exhortation*. Of the terms he uses:

1. My *glory*. That is my *soul* (say some) because the spirit of a man is the glory of a man, whereby he is dignified and raised so much above the *brutes*, as to be but a "little lower than the angels, "nay, to be akin to God himself, "the Father of spirits." My *musical skill*, say others, the glory of the artist above the unskilful; and that wherein David had the glory of excelling, as Jubal had of the first invention. My *tongue*, say others; for this is also the glory of a man above the dumb creatures, and the glory of a wise man above a fool. And as the tongue is the glory of a man, so the glory of the tongue is to glorify God. Praise is the glory of all other uses to which the tongue is employed; and the tongue is, in the body, that "temple of the Holy Ghost, "what the silver trumpet was in the temple of Solomon; to sound the high praises of God, and express the raised affections of our souls.

2. *Awake, psaltery and harp*. The one for a psalm, the other for a spiritual song or hymn; that is to say, all my musical instruments and skill I will employ in and consecrate to the glory of him who "puts new songs into my mouth." He first teaches my fingers to fight, and then to play the *epinikion*, or song of triumph. Sound, then, my psaltery and harp, emulous of those that are around the throne above; your melody can soften my cares, lay my fears, and turn my *cave* into a *choir*. As to these instruments in the worship of God, they were doubtless allowed to David, and to the church in his time. They were agreeable to the state of that church and people, who were led very much by their senses; and whose infant and less discerning condition made it needful for the natural man to have something to fasten upon and be entertained with in the worship of God and to sweeten and take off from the labour and burden of that service. But as the gospel worship and appointments are a more spiritual, pleasant, and reasonable service, and need them less, so in the gospel institution we find no footsteps of them; and we know who first brought them into the church, as well as who first brought them into the world. It is not my business here to dispute this matter; and he must at any time do it but indifferently, whose inclination is against him all the while, and whose genius tempts him to wish himself solidly confuted in all he can advance. But since I find these instruments in my text, and since the sound of such texts as these is made use of to turn the public worship so frequently into concerts of music, I shall leave them with this remark: that to let them alone, especially in

public worship, though one thought them tolerable, has a much better grace with it than to declare them "sorely displeasing to God, and that they filthily defile his holy house and place of prayer."

3. *I myself will awake early.* And without this, all the rest have been an empty sound; there would have been no melody to the Lord, whatsoever good music he might have made to himself. He would not put God off with a sacrifice of mere air. He summons the attendance of all his powers. Himself is the offering; and his music plays to the sacrifice, as it goes up in holy affections and spiritual joys; and unless these accompany the song, the mere breath of an organ, or the trembling of the strings of an harp is as good devotion and less offensive to God. Consider the *nature and excellency of the duty*. Singing psalms is a compound of several other duties. It contains prayer to a very great advantage: the stretch of the voice does humour and lead on the earnest reaching of the mind after the desired blessing. It is the very element and breath of praise; and the apostle tells us that "teaching and admonishing one another" is performed in singing "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." For when we sing of *judgment*, it is awakening to sinners; and when we sing of *mercy*, it is comforting to all. Meditation cannot have a better help. The solemn movement of the time gives room for the mind to compass the full sense of the matter, and to impress it deep; and while the tongue is making the *pause*, the heart may make the *elevation*. In short, it gives an accent to all duty; it is the music of all other ordinances; it is adapted and suited to all circumstances; as appears from the psalms composed upon all occasions and subjects, doctrinal, prophetic, oratory, and historical; of praise and prayer, of grief and joy, in the penitential and complaining, in the triumphal and rejoicing; as if singing of psalms could stand for everything, and, like the manna in the wilderness, gives a taste of all the other food we enjoy in the house of God.

Benjamin Grosvenor, D.D. (1675-1758), in "An Exhortation to the Duty of Singing, " Eastcheap Lectures, 1810.

Ver. 8. The *psaltery* was a stringed instrument, usually with twelve strings, and played with the fingers. The *harp* or lyre was a stringed instrument, usually consisting of ten strings. Josephus says that it was struck or played with a key. It appears, however, that it was sometimes played with the fingers. *Albert Barnes.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 8. *I myself will awake early.* I will sleep lightly, for I am in an enemy's country; I will ask God to arouse me; I will set the alarm of watchfulness; I will hear the cock of providential warning; the light of the Sun shall arouse me; the activities of the church, the trumpet of my foes, and the bell of duty shall combine to awaken me.

PSALM 57:9

EXPOSITION

Ver. 9. *I will praise thee, O Lord, among the people.* Gentiles shall hear my praise. Here is an instance of the way in which the truly devout evangelic spirit overleaps the boundaries which bigotry sets up. The ordinary Jew would never wish the Gentile dogs to hear Jehovah's name, except to tremble at it; but this grace taught psalmist has a missionary spirit, and would spread the praise and fame of his God.

I will sing unto thee among the nations. However far off they may be, I would make them hear of thee through my glad psalmody.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 9. *I will praise thee, O Lord, among the people.* The Spirit of God who indited this scripture, made his penman know that the Gentiles should have the use of his Psalms. *David Dickson.*

Ver. 9. *The people--the nations.* The Hebrew church was neither called nor qualified to be a missionary society, but it never ceased to desire and hope for the conversion of the nations. This is seen in those passages in which the psalmists betray a consciousness that they shall one day have all the world for auditors. How boldly does David exclaim,

I will sing unto thee among the nations. In the same spirit, a later psalmist summons the church to lift up her voice, so that all the nations may hear her recital of the Lord's mighty acts:

O give thanks unto the Lord; call upon his name: make known his deeds among the people. Psalm 105:1. The full import of this class of texts is

often hidden from the English reader by the circumstance that our translators have hardly ever used the word *people* in its plural form. Twice in the Revelation they venture to write *peoples*; everywhere else the singular form has to do duty for both numbers; so that in not a few passages the sense is greatly obscured to those who have no access either to the original or to other versions. In the Psalms, in particular, the mention of the Gentiles is more frequent than the English reader is made aware of. It is to be observed, moreover, that in addition to this strain of indirect prediction, the conversion of the world is articulately celebrated in many glorious Psalms. Indeed, so numerous are these, and so generally distributed over the centuries between David and Ezra, that it would seem that at no time during the long history of inspired Psalmody, did the Spirit cease to indite new songs in which the children of Zion might give utterance to their world embracing hopes. *William Binnie, D.D., in "The Psalms: their History, Teachings, and Use," 1870.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 7-9. *See Psalms on "Psalm 57:7"* for further information.

Ver. 9. Who? *I.* What? *Will praise.* Whom? *Thee, O Lord.* Where? *Among the people.* Why?

Ver. 9. Public profession.

I. A necessity.

II. A privilege.

III. A duty. *R. A. G.*

PSALM 57:10

EXPOSITION

Ver. 10. *For thy mercy is great unto the heavens.* Right up from man's lowliness to heaven's loftiness mercy reaches. Imagination fails to guess the height of heaven, and even thus the riches of mercy exceed our highest thoughts. The psalmist, as he sits at the cave's mouth and looks up to the firmament, rejoices that God's goodness is more vast and more sublime than even the vaulted skies.

And thy truth unto the clouds. Upon the cloud he sets the seal of his truth, the rainbow, which ratifies his covenant; in the cloud he hides his rain and snow, which prove his truth by bringing to us seedtime and harvest, cold and heat. Creation is great, but the Creator greater far. Heaven cannot contain him; above clouds and stars his goodness far exceeds.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 10-11. A hard and ungrateful heart beholds even in prosperity only isolated drops of divine grace; but a grateful one like David's, though chased by persecutors, and striking the harp in the gloom of a cave, looks upon the mercy and faithfulness of God as a mighty ocean, waving and heaving from the earth to the clouds, and from the clouds to the earth again. *Agustus F. Tholuck.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 10. The mercy of God reaches to the heavens.

I. As a throne. God is exalted in our eyes by his mercy.

II. As a ladder. By mercy we ascend from earth to heaven.

III. As a rainbow. Present and past mercies argue exemption for the saints from the wrath of heaven.

IV. As a mountain. Its base is on the earth though its summit is lost in clouds. The influence of the cross towers to the heaven of heavens. Who can tell the glory of the summit of this mountain, whose *base* is refulgent with glory! *R. A. G.*

Ver. 10. The amazing greatness of mercy.

I. It is not said merely that it is high as heaven, but great unto the heavens. It is *high* as the heavens, overtopping the greatest sin, and highest thought of man.

II. It is *wide* as the far reaching sky, compassing men of all ages, countries, classes, etc.

III. It is *deep*. Everything of God is proportionate; this, therefore, is deep in abiding foundation, and infinite wisdom.

PSALM 57:11

EXPOSITION

Ver. 11. *Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens.* A grand chorus. Take it up, ye angels and ye spirits made perfect, and join in it, ye sons of men below, as ye say,

Let thy glory be above all the earth. The prophet in the previous verse spoke of mercy "unto the heavens, "but here his song flies "above the heavens; "praise rises higher, and knows no bound

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 11. *Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens,* etc. Greater words of prayer than these never came from human lips. Heaven and earth have as they imply, a mutually interwoven history, and the blessed, glorious end of this is in the sunrise of the Divine glory over both. *Franz Delitzsch*, 1869.

PSALM 58

PSALM 58:1

To the Chief Musician. Although David had his own case in his mind's eye, yet he wrote not as a private person, but as an inspired prophet, and therefore his song is presented, for public and perpetual use, to the appointed guardian of the Temple psalmody. *Altaschith.* The wicked are here judged and condemned, but over the godly the sacred "*Destroy not*" is solemnly pronounced. *Michtam of David.* This is the fourth of the Psalms of the Golden Secret, and the second of the "Destroy not." These names if they serve for nothing else may be useful to aid the memory. Men give names to their horses, jewels, and other valuables, and these names are meant not so much to describe as to distinguish them, and in some cases to set forth the owner's high esteem of his treasure; after the same fashion the Oriental poet gave a title to the song he loved, and so aided his memory, and expressed his estimation of the strain. We are not always to look for a meaning in these superscriptions, but to treat them as we would the titles of poems, or the names of tunes.

DIVISION. The ungodly enemy is accused, Psalm 58:1-5; judgment is sought from the judge, Psalm 58:6-8; and seen in prophetic vision as already executed, Psalm 58:9-11.

EXPOSITION

Ver. 1. *Do ye indeed speak righteousness, O congregation?* The enemies of David were a numerous and united band, and because they so unanimously condemned the persecuted one, they were apt to take it for granted that their verdict was a right one. "What everybody says must be true," is a lying proverb based upon the presumption which comes of large combinations. Have we not all agreed to hound the man to the death, and who dare hint that so many great ones can be mistaken? Yet the persecuted one lays the axe at the root by requiring his judges to answer the question whether or not they were acting according to justice. It were well if men would sometimes pause, and candidly consider this. Some of those who surrounded Saul were rather passive than active persecutors; they held

their tongues when the object of royal hate was slandered; in the original, this first sentence appears to be addressed to them, and they are asked to justify their silence. Silence gives consent. He who refrains from defending the right is himself an accomplice in the wrong.

Do ye judge uprightly, O ye sons of men? Ye too are only men though dressed in a little brief authority. Your office for men, and your relation to men both bind you to rectitude; but have ye remembered this? Have ye not put aside all truth when ye have condemned the godly, and united in seeking the overthrow of the innocent? Yet in doing this be not too sure of success, or ye are only the "sons of men," and there is a God who can and will reverse your verdicts.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Title. The proper meaning of the root of *Michtam* is *to engrave*, or *to stamp a metal*. It therefore, in strictness, means, *an engraving or sculpture*. Hence in the Septuagint, it is translated *sthlografia*, an inscription on a column. I would venture to offer a conjecture in perfect harmony with this view. It appears by the titles of four out of these six Psalms, that they were composed by David while flying and hiding from the persecutions of Saul. What, then, should hinder us from imagining that they were inscribed on the rocks and on the sides of the caves which so often formed his place of refuge? This view would accord with the strict etymological meaning of the word, and explain the rendering of the Septuagint. *John Jebb*, in "*A Literal Translation of the Book of Psalms*," 1846.

(See also Explanatory Notes on Psalms 6 and 56. "Treasury of David", Vol. 1., pp. 222-23; Vol. 3, p. 40.)

Whole Psalm. Kimchi says this Psalm was written on account of Abner, and the rest of Saul's princes, who judged David as a rebel against the government, and said it was for Saul to pursue after him to slay him; for if they had restrained him, Saul would not have pursued after him; and indeed they seem to be wicked judges who are addressed in this Psalm; *do not destroy*. Arama says, it declares the wickedness of Saul's judges. *John Gill*.

Ver. 1. *Are ye dumb* (when) *ye* (should) *speak righteousness* (and) *judge equitably, sons of men?* The first words are exceedingly obscure. One of them **ml a**, not expressed in the English, and the ancient versions, means

dumbness, as in Psalm 61:1, and seems to be here used as a strong expression for *entirely speechless*. In what respect they were thus dumb, is indicated by the verb which follows, but the connection can be made clear in English only by a circumlocution. The interrogation, *are ye indeed*, expresses wonder, as at something scarcely credible. Can it be so? Is it possible? are you really silent, you, whose very office is to speak for God, and against the sins of men? *Joseph Addison Alexander*.

Ver. 1. *O congregation, O band, or company*. The Hebrew *alem*, which hath the signification of *binding as a sheaf or bundle*, seemeth here to be a company that are combined or confederate. *Henry Ainsworth*.

PSALM 58:2

EXPOSITION

Ver. 2. *Yea, in heart ye work wickedness*. Down deep in your very souls ye hold a rehearsal of the injustice ye intend to practise, and when your opportunity arrives, ye wreak vengeance with a gusto; your hearts are in your wicked work, and your hands are therefore ready enough. Those very men who sat as judges, and pretended to so much indignation at the faults imputed to their victim, were in their hearts perpetrating all manner of evil.

Ye weigh the violence of your hands in the earth. They were deliberate sinners, cold, calculating villains. As righteous judges ponder the law, balance the evidence, and weigh the case, so the malicious dispense injustice with malice aforethought in cold blood. Note in this verse that the men described sinned with heart and hand; privately in their heart, publicly in the earth; they worked and they weighed--they were active, and yet deliberate. See what a generation saints have to deal with! Such were the foes of our Lord, a generation of vipers, an evil and adulterous generation; they sought to kill him because he was righteousness itself, yet they masked their hatred to his goodness by charging him with sin.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 2. *In heart ye work wickedness*, etc. The psalmist doth not say, they had wickedness in their heart, but that they did work it there: the heart is a shop within, an underground shop; there they did closely contrive, forge,

and hammer out their wicked purposes, and fit them into actions; yea, *they weighed the violence of their hands in the earth*. That's an allusion to merchants, who buy and sell by weight; they weigh their commodity to an ounce; they do not give it out in gross, but by exact weight. This saith the psalmist, *they weigh the violence of their hands*; they do not oppress grossly, but with a kind of exactness and skill, they sit down and consider what and how much violence they may use in such a case, or how much such a person may endure, or such a season may bear. They are wiser than to do all at once, or all to one, lest they spoil all. They *weigh* what they do, though what they do be so bad that it will hold no weight when God comes to weigh it. Nor do they arrive at this skill presently, but after they have, as it were, served an apprenticeship at it; and they bind themselves to the trade very early; for as it follows at the third verse of the Psalm,

The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies, that is, they are estranged both by nature and by early practice; they lose no time, they go to it young, even "as soon as they are born," as soon as they are fit for any use, or to do any thing, they are using and setting themselves to do wickedly. *Joseph Caryl*.

Ver. 2. The word **twDwQ** *wickedness* properly signifies the *inclinations of scales*, when the scale weighs down to one side; then it is transferred to respect of persons, to injustice and iniquity, especially in public tribunals and decisions, as in Psalm 82:2, *How long will ye judge I w[i]by an unjust inclination of the scales?* *Hermann Venema*.

Ver. 2. The principles of the wicked are even worse than their practices: premeditated violence is doubly guilty. *George Rogers*.

PSALM 58:3

EXPOSITION

Ver. 3. *The wicked are estranged from the womb*. It is small wonder that some men persecute the righteous seed of the woman, since all of them are of the serpent's brood, and enmity is set between them. No sooner born than alienated from God--what a condition to be found in! Do we so early leave the right track? Do we at the same moment begin to be men and commence to be sinners?

They go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies. Every observer may see how very soon infants act lies. Before they can speak they practise little deceptive arts. This is especially the case in those who grow up to be adept in slander, they begin their evil trade early, and there is no marvel that they become adept in it. He who starts early in the morning will go far before night. To be untruthful is one of the surest proofs of a fallen state, and since falsehood is universal, so also is human depravity.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 3. *The wicked are estranged from the womb,* etc. How early men do sin! How late they do repent! *As soon as they are born* "they go astray, "but if left to themselves they will not return till they die; they will never return. Children can neither go nor speak as soon as born, but as soon as born they can "go astray" and "speak lies; "that is, their first speaking is lying, and their first going is straying; yea, when they cannot go naturally, they can go astray morally or metaphorically: the first step they are able to take is a step out of the way. *Joseph Caryl.*

Ver. 3. *They go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies.* Of all sins, no sin can call Satan father like to lying. All the corruption that is in us came from Satan, but yet this sin of forging and lying is from the devil more than any; tastes of the devil more than any. Hence every man is a liar (Romans 3:4), and so every man is every sinner else; but in a special manner every man is a liar; for that the very first depravation of our nature came in by lying, and our nature doth taste much still of this old block to be given to lying, the devil also breathing into us a strong breath to stir us up to lying. Hence *no sooner do we speak but we lie.* As we are in body, subject to all diseases, but yet, some to one sickness rather than to another: so in the soul, all are apt enough to all sin, and some rather to one vice than to another; but all are much inclined to lying. A liar then is as like the devil as ever he can look: as unlike to God as ever he can be. *Richard Capel, 1586-1656, in "Tentations, their Nature, Danger, Cure."*

Ver. 3. The figure of the wicked going astray as soon as they are born, seems to be taken from the disposition and power of a young serpent soon after its birth. The youngest serpent can convey poison to anything which it bites; and the suffering in all cases is great, though the bite is seldom fatal. Place a stick near the reptile whose age does not amount to many days, and he will immediately snap at it. The offspring of the tiger and of the alligator

are equally fierce in their earliest habits. *Joseph Roberts, in "Oriental Illustrations of the Sacred Scriptures," 1844.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 3.

I. The natural effects of original sin are seen in early suffering and death.

II. Its moral effects are seen in the early commission of actual sin.

III. Early depravity is evinced in the conscious guilt of telling lies. *G. R.*

Ver. 3. (*first clause*). The inner pandemonium, or the calendar of the heart's crime.

PSALM 58:4

EXPOSITION

Ver. 4. *Their poison is like the poison of a serpent.* Is man also a poisonous reptile? Yes, and his venom is even as that of a serpent. The viper has but death for the body in his fangs; but unregenerate man carries poison under his tongue, destructive to the nobler nature.

They are like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear. While speaking of serpents the psalmist remembers that many of them have been conquered by the charmer's art, but men such as he had to deal with no art could tame or restrain; therefore, he likens them to a serpent less susceptible than others to the charmer's music, and says that they refused to hear reason, even as the adder shuts her ear to those incantations which fascinate other reptiles. Man, in his natural corruption, appears to have all the ill points of a serpent without its excellences. O sin, what hast thou done!

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 4. *Poison.* There is such a thing as poison; but where to be found? *Ubicunque fuerit, in homine quis quaereret?* Wheresoever it is, in man who would look for it? God made man's body of the dust; he mingled no poison with it. He inspires his soul from heaven; he breathes no poison

with it. He feeds him with bread; he conveys no poison with it. *Unde venenum?* Whence is the poison? Matthew 13:27 --"Didst not thou, O Lord, sow good seed in thy field?" *Unde zizaniae* --"From whence then hath it tares?" Whence? *Hoc fecit inimicus* --"The enemy hath done this." We may perceive the devil in it. That great serpent, the red dragon, hath poured into wicked hearts this poison. His own poison, *malitiam*, wickedness. *Cum infundit peccatum, infundit venenum* --"When he pours in sin he pours in poison." Sin is poison. Original depravity is called corruption; actual poison. The violence and virulence of this venomous quality comes not at first. *Nemo fit repente pessimus* --No man becomes worst at the first dash. We are born corrupt, we have made ourselves poisonous. There be three degrees, as it were so many ages, in sin. *First* --secret sin; an ulcer lying in the bones, but skinned over with hypocrisy. *Secondly* --open sin, bursting forth into manifest villany. The former is corruption, the second is eruption. *Thirdly* --frequented and confirmed sin, and that is rank poison, envenoming soul and body. *Thomas Adams, 1614.*

Ver. 4. Adder. Hebrew **ntb** *pethen*, the Egyptian cobra (*Naja hage*), one of the venomous *Colubrine Snakes* (*Colubri*). This is one of the so called hooded snakes, with which serpent charmers chiefly deal. The Spectacled Snake proper (*Naja tripudians*) is a closely related species. The well known Cobra di Capello is another. They are all noted for their deadly bite. The hollow fangs communicate with a poison gland, which being pressed in the act of biting, sends a few drops into the puncture. The venom quickly acts on the whole system, and death soon ensues. *John Duns, D.D., in "Biblical Natural Science, "1868.*

Ver. 4. The deaf adder. Certain it is, says a modern writer upon the Psalms, that the common adder or viper here in England, the bite of which too, by the way, is very venomous, if it is not wholly *deaf*, has the sense of hearing very imperfectly. This is evident from the danger there is of treading upon these animals, unless you happen to see them; for if they do not see you, and you do not disturb them, they never endeavour to avoid you, which when they are disturbed and do see you, they are very solicitous of doing. Allowing, then, that there is a species of these noxious animals, which either not having the sense of hearing at all, or having it only in a low degree, may very well be said to be deaf; this may help to explain the present poetical passage of the psalmist. He very elegantly compares the pernicious and destructive practices of wicked men to the venom of a serpent; and his mentioning this species of animals, seems to

have brought to his mind another property of at least one sort of them, in which they likewise resembled perverse and obstinate sinners, who are deaf to all advice, utterly irreclaimable, and not to be persuaded. This the adder resembled, which is a very venomous animal, and moreover is deaf, or very near it. And perhaps his saying that *she stoppeth her ear*, may be no more than a poetical expression for deafness; just as the *mole*, which in common speech is said to be *blind*, might in a poetical phrase, be said to shut her eyes; as in fact she does when you expose her to the light. The next clause, *Which refuseth to hear*, etc., is another poetical expression for the same thing. *Samuel Burder, in "The Scripture Expositor," 1810.*

Ver. 4. *The deaf adder.* Several of the serpent tribe are believed to be either quite deaf, or very dull of hearing. Perhaps that which is called the *puddeyan*, the "beaver serpent," is more so than any other. I have frequently come close up to these reptiles; but they did not make any effort to move out of the way. They lurk in the path, and the victim on whom they pounce will expire within a few minutes after he is bitten. *Joseph Roberts.*

Ver. 4. *The deaf adder.* The *adder*, or *asp*, is the *haje naja*, or *cobra* of Egypt, according to Cuvier. The hearing of all the serpent tribes is imperfect, as all are destitute of a tympanic cavity, and of external openings to the ear. The *deaf adder* is not a particular species. The point of the rebuke is, the *pathen*, or "adder," here in question, *could* hear in some degree but *would* not; just as the unrighteous judges, or persecutors, of David could hear with their outward ears such appeals as he makes in Psalm 58:1-2, but would not. The charmer usually could charm the serpent by shrill sounds, either of his voice or of the flute, the serpent's comparative deafness rendering it the more amenable to those sounds which it could hear. But exceptional cases occurred of a *deaf adder* which was *deaf* only in the sense that it refused to hear, or to be acted on. Also Jeremiah 8:17; compare Ecclesiastes 10:11. *A. R. Fausset.*

Ver. 4. *The deaf adder that stoppeth her ear.* With respect to what is said of the animal's stopping its ears, it is not necessary to have recourse to the supposition of its actually doing so, which by some persons has been stated, but it is sufficient to know, that whilst some serpents are operated upon in the manner above described, others are partly or altogether insensible to the incantation. *Richard Mant.*

Ver. 4. (*second clause*). This clause admits of a different construction, *like the deaf adder he stops his ear*, which some interpreters prefer, because an adder cannot stop its ears, and need not stop them if naturally deaf, whereas it is by stopping his, the wicked man becomes like a deaf adder. *J. A. Alexander.*

Ver. 4-5. Experienced and skilful as the serpent charmers are, however, they do not invariably escape with impunity. Fatal terminations to these exhibitions of the psyllid art now and then occur; for there are still to be found "*deaf adders, which will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely.*"... Roberts mentions the instance of a man who came to a gentleman's house to exhibit tame snakes, and on being told that a cobra, or hooded snake, was in a cage in the house, was asked if he could charm it; on his replying in the affirmative, the serpent was released from the cage, and no doubt, in a state of high irritation. The man began his incantation, and repeated his charms; but the snake darted at him, fastened upon his arm, and before night he was a corpse. *Philip Henry Gosse, in "The Romance of Natural History," 1861.*

Ver. 4-5. One day a rattlesnake entered our encampment. Among us was a Canadian who could play the flute, and who, to divert us, marched against the serpent with his new species of weapon. On the approach of his enemy, the haughty reptile curls himself into a spiral line, flattens his head, inflates his cheeks, contracts his lips, displays his envenomed fangs and his bold throat; his tongue flows like two flames of fire; his eyes are burning coals; his body swollen with rage, rises and falls like the bellows of a forge; his dilated skin assumes a dull and scaly appearance; and his tail, whence proceeds the death announcing sound, vibrates with such rapidity as to resemble a light vapour. The Canadian begins to play upon his flute --the serpent starts with surprise, and draws back his head. In proportion as he is struck with the magic notes, his eyes lose their fierceness; the oscillations of his tail become slower and the sounds which it makes become weaker, and gradually die away. Less perpendicular upon their spiral line, the rings of the charmed serpent are by degrees expanded, and sink one after another on the ground in concentric circles. The shades of azure, green, white, and gold recover their brightness on his quivering skin, and slightly turning his head, he remains motionless, in the attitude of attention and pleasure. At this moment the Canadian advances a few steps, producing from his flute sweet and simple notes. The serpent, inclining his variegated neck, opens a passage with the head through the high grass, and begins to creep after the

musician; stopping when he stops, and beginning to follow him again as soon as he advances forward. In this manner he was led out of the camp, attended by a great number of spectators, both savages and Europeans, who could scarcely believe their eyes, which had witnessed this effect of harmony. *Francois Aguste, Viscount de Chateaubriand, 1768-1848.*

Ver. 4-5. The serpent, when she begins to feel the charmer, clappeth one ear presently to the ground, and stoppeth the other ear with her tail, although by hearkening to the charmer, as some observe, she would be provoked to spit out her poison, and renew her age. (This is a specimen of the old fashioned *un-natural* history. No one will be misled by it. *C. H. S.*) So hot is man upon his harlot sin, that he is deaf to all that would counsel him to the contrary; he stops his ear, hardens his heart, stiffens his neck against the thunders of the law, the still voice of the gospel, the motions of the Spirit, and the convictions of his own conscience. When sin calls, they run through thick and thin for haste; when the world commands, how readily do they hearken, how quickly do they hear, how faithfully do they obey! but when the blessed God cries to them, charges them by his unquestionable authority, beseeches them for their own unchangeable felicity, they, like statues of men, rather than living creatures, stand still and stir not at all. Other things move swiftly to their centres; stones fall tumbling downward, sparks fly apace upward, coneys run with speed to their burrows, rivers with violence to the ocean, and yet silly man hangs off from his Maker, that neither entreaties nor threatenings, nor the word, nor the works of God, nor the hope of heaven, nor fear of hell, can quicken or hasten him to his happiness. Who would imagine that a reasonable soul should act so much against sense and reason? *George Swinnock, 1627-1673.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 4. (*first clause*). A generation of serpents. *T. Adams's Sermon.*

Ver. 4. Sin as a poison. Poisons may be attractive in colour and taste, slow or rapid in action, painful in effect, withering, soporific or maddening. In all cases deadly.

PSALM 58:5

EXPOSITION

Ver. 5. *Which will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely.* Ungodly men are not to be won to right by arguments the most logical, or appeals the most pathetic. Try all your arts, ye preachers of the word! Lay yourselves out to meet the prejudices and tastes of sinners, and ye shall yet have to cry, "Who hath believed our report?" It is not in your music, but in the sinner's ear that the cause of failure lies, and it is only the power of God that can remove it.

*"You can call spirits from the vast deep,
But will they come when you do call for them?"*

No, we call and call, and call in vain, till the arm of the Lord is revealed. This is at once the sinner's guilt and danger. He ought to hear but will not, and because he will not hear, he cannot escape the damnation of hell.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 5. *Will not hearken.* The Lord hath some of his elect ones whom he seeth walking in bypaths and crooked ways: the Lord giveth a commission to his servants, the ministers, and saith, Go invite and call yon soul to come to me, and say, Return, O Shulamite; but the soul stirs not: the Lord sends and calls again: yet with the deaf adder, he hearkeneth not to the voice of the enchanter: well, saith the Lord, "If you will not come; I will fetch you"; if fair means will not do, foul means must; then he hisses for the fly and the bee of affliction, and calls forth armies of trouble, and gives them commission to seize upon, and to lay siege to such a man or woman, and saith, Ply them with your cannon shot, till you make them yield, give up the keys and strike the sail; he sends sickness to their bodies, a consumption to their estate, death to their friends, shame to their reputation, a fire to their house, and the like, and bids them prey and spoil, till they see and acknowledge the hand of the Lord lifted up. *J. Votier's "Survey of Effectual Calling,"* 1652.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 5. The serpent charmer.

- I.** He charms with moral persuasion, promise, threatening, etc.
- II.** He charms wisely, earnestly, affectionately, argumentively.
- III.** He charms in vain; the will is averse. Hence the need of divine grace and of the gospel.

PSALM 58:6

EXPOSITION

Ver. 6. *Break their teeth, O God, in their mouth.* If they have no capacity for good, at least deprive them of their ability for evil. Treat them as the snake charmers do their serpents, extract their fangs, break their teeth. The Lord can do this, and he will. He will not suffer the malice of the wicked to triumph, he will deal them such a blow as shall disable them from mischief.

Break out the great teeth of the young lions, O Lord. As if one brute creature had not enough of evil in it to complete the emblem of ungodly nature, another specimen of *ferae naturae* is fetched in. For fierce cruelty the wicked are likened to young lions, monsters in the prime of their vigour, and the fury of their lustiness; and it is asked that their grinders may be smashed in, broken off, or dashed out, that the creatures may henceforth be harmless. One can well understand how the banished son of Jesse, while poisoned by the venomous slander of his foes, and worried by their cruel power, should appeal to heaven for a speedy and complete riddance from his enemies.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 6. *Break their teeth,* destroy the fangs of these serpents, in which *their poison* is contained. This will amount to the same meaning as above. Save me from the *adders*, the sly and poisonous slanderers: save me also from the *lions* --the tyrannical and bloodthirsty men. *Adam Clarke.*

Ver. 6. *Great teeth.* תַּנִּינִים *tninim*, according to Michaelis and Gesenius, are the *eye teeth*, which in lions are sharp and terrible. *George Phillips, B.D., in "The Psalms in Hebrew: With a Commentary," 1846.*

Ver. 6-9. David's enemies were strong and fierce as young lions: he therefore prayed that *their teeth might be broken*, even their strongest teeth, their *grinders*, with which they were ready to devour him; that so they might be disabled from doing mischief. They overwhelmed him like an inundation: but he desired it might prove a land flood, which is soon wasted. They were about to shoot at him: but he would have their bows, or their arrows, to be shivered to pieces, and become like straw, and do no execution, and he prayed that they might waste insensibly as the snail, which leaves its substance all along its track; and that they might come to nothing, like an abortion. He also predicted, that their prosperous rage (which resembled the crackling of thorns under a pot), would soon be extinct, and produce no effect; while the Lord in his wrath would hurry them into speedy destruction; as a furious whirlwind drives a living man down a precipice, or into a dreadful pit. *Thomas Scott, 1747-1821.*

PSALM 58:7

EXPOSITION

Ver. 7. *Let them melt away as waters which run continually.* Like mountain torrents dried up by the summer heats let them disappear; or like running streams whose waters are swiftly gone, so let them pass away; or like water spilt which none can find again, so let them vanish out of existence. Begone, ye foul streams, the sooner ye are forgotten the better for the universe.

When he bendeth his bow to shoot his arrows, let them be as cut in pieces. When the Lord goes forth to war, let his judgments so tell upon these persecutors that they may be utterly cut in pieces as a mark shattered by many shafts. Or perhaps the meaning is, when the ungodly man marches to the conflict, let his arrows and his bow drop into fragments, the string cut, the bow snapped, the arrows headless, the points blunted; so that the boastful warrior may not have wherewithal to hurt the object of his enmity. In either sense the prayer of the Psalm has often become fact, and will be again fulfilled as often as need arises.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 7. (*first clause*). Perowne renders this clause, *Let them melt away, as water (which) runneth apace*, and says that the reference is to "water running away, and so wasted and lost."

Ver. 7. (*first clause*). In desert parts of Africa it has afforded much joy to fall in with a brook of water, especially when running in the direction of the journey, expecting it would provide a valuable companion. Perhaps before it accompanied us two miles it became invisible by sinking into the sand; but two miles farther along it would reappear, and raise hopes of its continuance: but after running a few hundred yards, would sink finally into the sand, no more again to rise. *John Campbell*, 1766-1840.

PSALM 58:8

EXPOSITION

Ver. 8. *As a snail which melteth, let every one of them pass away.* As the snail makes its own way by its slime, and so dissolves as it goes, or as its shell is often found empty, as though the inhabitant had melted away, so shall the malicious eat out their own strength while they proceed upon their malevolent designs, and shall themselves disappear. To destroy himself by envy and chagrin is the portion of the ill disposed.

Like the untimely birth of a woman, that they may not see the sun. Solemn is this curse, but how surely does it fall on many graceless wretches! They are as if they had never been. Their character is shapeless, hideous, revolting. They are fitter to be hidden away in an unknown grave than to be reckoned among men. Their life comes never to ripeness, their aims are abortive, their only achievement is to have brought misery to others, and horror to themselves. Such men as Herod, Judas, Alva, Bonner, had it not been better for them if they had never been born? Better for the mothers who bore them? Better for the lands they cursed? Better for the earth in which their putrid carcasses are hidden from the sun? Every unregenerate man is an abortion. He misses the true form of God made manhood; he corrupts in the darkness of sin; he never sees or shall see the light of God in purity, in heaven.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 8. *As a snail which melteth away as it goeth*, literally, *which goeth in melting* (or slime), the noun being in the accusative as describing the nature of the action, and the allusion being to the slimy trail which the snail leaves behind it, so that *it seems* to waste away. Evidently this is nothing more than a poetical hyperbole, and need not be explained, therefore, as a popular error or a mistake in natural history.

J. J. Stewart Perowne, B.D., in "The Book of Psalms; a New Translation, with Introduction and Notes," 1864.

Ver. 8. *As a snail which melteth*, etc. This is a very remarkable and not very intelligible passage. The Jewish Bible renders the passage in a way which explains the idea which evidently prevailed at the time the Psalms were composed: "As a snail let him melt as he passeth on." The ancients had an idea that the slimy track made by a snail as it crawled along was subtracted from the substance of its body, and that in consequence the farther it crept the smaller it became until at last it wasted entirely away. The commentators on the Talmud took this view of the case. The Hebrew word, **לִּי בַיְשָׁבִיל** *shablul*, which undoubtedly does signify a snail of some kind, is thus explained: --"The Shablul is a creeping thing; when it comes out of its shell, saliva pours from itself until it becomes liquid, and so dies." Other explanations of this passage have been offered, but there is no doubt that the view taken by these commentators is the correct one, and that the psalmist, when he wrote the terrible series of denunciations in which the passage occurs, had in his mind the popular belief regarding the gradual wasting away of the snail as it "passeth on." It is needless to say that no particular species of snail is mentioned, and almost as needless to state that in Palestine there are many species of snails, to any or all of which these words are equally applicable. *J. G. Wood, in "Bible Animals."* 1869.

Ver. 8. *The untimely birth of a woman.* The wicked are all, so speak, human abortions; they are and for ever remain defective beings, who have not accomplished the great purpose of their existence. Heaven is the one end for which man is created, and he who falls short of it does not attain the purpose of his being; he is an eternal abortion. *O. Prescott Hiller.*

Ver. 8. (*second clause*). David when he curseth the plots of wicked men, that though they have conceived mischief, and though they have gone with it a long time, and are ready to bring it forth, yet saith he, *Let them be* (that

is, let their counsels and designs be) like the untimely birth of a woman, that they may not see the *sun*: that is, let them be dashed and blasted, let them never bring forth their poisonous brood to the hurt and trouble of the world. *Joseph Caryl*.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 8. The snail like course of ungodly men. Their sin destroys their property, health, time, influence, life.

PSALM 58:9

EXPOSITION

Ver. 9. *Before your pots can feel the thorns.* So sudden is the overthrow of the wicked, so great a failure is their life, that they never see joy. Their pot is put upon the hook to prepare a feast of joy, and the fuel is placed beneath, but before the thorns are lit, before any heat can be brought to bear upon the pot, yea, even as soon as the fuel has touched the cooking vessel, a storm comes and sweeps all away; the pot is overturned, the fuel is scattered far and wide. Perhaps the figure may suppose the thorns, which are the fuel, to be kindled, and then the flame is so rapid that before any heat can be produced the fire is out, the meat remains raw, the man is disappointed, his work is altogether a failure.

He shall take them away as with a whirlwind. Cook, fire, pot, meat and all, disappear at once, whirled away to destruction.

Both living, and in his wrath. In the very midst of the man's life, and in the fury of his rage against the righteous, the persecutor is overwhelmed with a tornado, his designs are baffled, his contrivances defeated, and himself destroyed. The passage is difficult, but this is probably its meaning, and a very terrible one it is. The malicious wretch puts on his great seething pot, he gathers his fuel, he means to play the cannibal with the godly; but he reckons without his host, or rather without the Lord of hosts, and the unexpected tempest removes all trace of him, and his fire, and his feast, and that in a moment.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 9. (*first clause*). *Before your cooking vessels*, etc. It would puzzle Oedipus himself to make any tolerable sense of the English translation of this verse. It refers to the usage of travellers in the East, who when journeying through the deserts, make a hasty blaze with the thorns which they collect, some green and full of sap, others dry and withered, for the purpose of dressing their food; in which circumstances, violent storms of wind not infrequently arise, which sweep away their fuel and entire apparatus, before the vessels which they use become warm by the heat. An expressive and graphical image of the overwhelming ruin of wicked men. *William Walford*, 1837.

Ver. 9. *Before your pots feel the bramble*. By this proverbial expression the psalmist describes the sudden eruption of the divine wrath; sudden and violent as the ascension of the dry bramble underneath the housewife's pot. The brightness of the flame which this material furnishes, the height to which it mounts in an instant, the fury with which it seems to rage on all sides of the vessel, give force, and even sublimity to the image, though taken from one of the commonest occurrences of the lower life--a cottager's wife boiling her pot! The sense, then, will be: "Before your pots feel the bramble, he shall sweep them away in whirlwind and hurricane." *Samuel Horsley*, 1733-1806.

Ver. 9. In all the book of God I do not remember any sentence so variously and differently translated as this verse... This variety of translations ariseth chiefly from the original Hebrew word **twOysisiroth**, which in the Hebrew tongue signifies, first, *pots* or *cauldrons*, wherein flesh is sod, as Exodus 16:3 38:3 Ezekiel 11:11. Secondly, *thorns*, and *pricks* of thorns and briers, as Isaiah 34:13 Hosea 2:8. Thirdly, because the pricks of the great bramble are very sharp and hooked, this word is used to signify fishhooks. Amos 4:2. In all our English Bibles of the old, new, and Geneva translation, and some Latin Bibles, this word is taken to signify pots or cauldrons; but the Septuagint, Hierome, vulgar Latin, Austine, Pagnine, Tremellius, and all others that I have seen, take this word in the second sense, for the sharp pricks of thorns and brambles. Here, certainly, this word signifies the sharp pricks of the great dog bramble, which here in the Hebrew text is **dfa**; *atad*, and is used (Judges 9:14-15) in Jotham's parable to signify the bramble, which being made king of the trees, kindled a fire, which devoured the cedars of Lebanon. Now this bramble in the body, and every

branch of it, is beset with sharp hooked pricks, some of which are green and have life and moisture in them, and though they be sharp, yet they are not so stiff and strong as to make any deep wound in a man's flesh. Others are greater, more hooked, and hardened by drying and parching with the vehement heat of the sun; and they strike to the quick, and hold fast, or tear where they catch hold of man's skin or flesh. The first are here called **dj a**, living or green; the other are called, **^wwø**, dried, or parched and hardened; and the prophetic psalmist affirms that "God who judgeth in the earth, will take away and destroy as with a tempestuous whirlwind, every one of them, as well the green as the dry, "as Tremellius out of the original doth most truly translate the word... The whole text runs thus: "Before they feel your thorns or pricks, O ye bramble, he will take away every one as with a whirlwind, as well the green as the dry."

Before they, that is, the righteous whom ye hate and persecute; *do feel*, that is, have a full sense and understanding of your thorns or pricks, that is, of the sharpness, fury, and mischief which is in the heart and hand of all and every one among you; for every one in your band and congregation is a grievous thorn and sharp prick of the cursed bramble, sharply set and bent to do mischief in malice and fury to the people and church of God. "He that is God who judgeth in the earth" (as it is expressed in the eleventh verse, in the last words) "will take away as with a whirlwind" (that is, scatter and destroy tempestuously), "every one, as well the living and green as the dry and hardened." That is, of every sort banded together, as well the green headed and young persecutors, sharp set, but not so strong to hurt, as the old and dry who are hardened in malice by long custom, and in power and policy are strong to do mischief. *George Walker, in a Fast Sermon before the House of Commons, 1644.*

PSALM 58:10

EXPOSITION

Ver. 10. *The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance.* He will have no hand in meting out, neither will he rejoice in the spirit of revenge, but his righteous soul shall acquiesce in the judgments of God, and he shall rejoice to see justice triumphant. There is nothing in Scripture of that sympathy with God's enemies which modern traitors are so fond of

parading as the finest species of benevolence. We shall at the last say, "Amen, "to the condemnation of the wicked, and feel no disposition to question the ways of God with the impenitent. Remember how John, the loving disciple, puts it. "And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God: for true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever."

He shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked. He shall triumph over them, they shall be so utterly vanquished that their overthrow shall be final and fatal, and his deliverance complete and crowning. The damnation of sinners shall not mar the happiness of saints.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 10. *The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance.* When the just man seeth the vengeance and rejoiceth, it is not of malice, but of benevolence, either hoping that the wicked may by punishment be amended, or loving God's justice above men's persons, not being displeased with the punishment of the wicked, because it proceedeth from the Lord, nor desiring that the wicked may be acquitted from penalty because the deserve in justice to be punished. *Nicholas Gibbens.*

Ver. 10. *The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance.* Not that he shall be glad of the vengeance purely as it is a hurt, or a suffering to the creature, but the righteous shall be glad when he seeth the vengeance of God, as it is a fulfilling of the threatening of God against the sin of man, and so evidence of his own holiness. Psalm 59:9-10. *Joseph Caryl.*

Ver. 10. *He shall; wash his feet,* etc. That is, he gets comfort and encouragement by seeing the Lord avenge his cause against his adversaries. *Joseph Caryl.*

Ver. 10. *He shall wash his feet in the blood,* etc. As the victorious survivor of a conflict, walking over the battle field, might be said to do. *R. T. Society's Notes.*

Ver. 10. When angels execute God's judgments upon sinners, the saints see much in it; they see matter of fear and praise; of fear, in that God's power, wrath, and hatred are manifested in them against sin and sinners; of praise, in that themselves are delivered and justice performed. When the wicked are taken away by a divine stroke, by the hand of justice, and God hath the glory of his justice, *the righteous rejoice at it*: but is that all? No, *he washes his feet in the blood of the wicked*; that is, by this judgment he fears and reforms. It is a metaphor taken from the practice of those parts where they went barefoot, or with sandals, and so contracted much filth, and used to wash and cleanse their feet when they came in; so here, the godly seeing the hand of God upon the wicked, fears, and judges himself for his sins, purges his conscience and affections, and stands now in awe of that God who hath stricken the wicked for those sins which he himself in part is guilty of. Waldus, a man of note in Lyons, seeing one struck dead in his presence, he washed his hands in his blood; for presently he gave alms to the poor, instructed his family in the true knowledge of God, and exhorted all that came unto him to repentance and holiness of life. *William Greenhill, 1691-1777.*

Ver. 10. No doubt, at the sight of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboim destroyed, angels saw cause to rejoice and sing, "Hallelujah." Wickedness was swept away; earth was lightened of a burden; justice, the justice of God, was highly exalted; love to his other creatures was displayed in freeing them from the neighbourhood of hellish contaminations. On the same principles (entering, however, yet deeper into the mind of the Father, and sympathising to the full in his justice), the Lord Jesus himself, and each one of his members shall cry, "Hallelujah, "over Antichrist's ruined hosts. Revelation 19:3. *The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance: he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked.* He shall be refreshed at the end of his journey (John 13:5 Luke 7:44 Genesis 18:4), he shall wipe off all the dust of the way, and end its weariness by entering into that strange, that divine joy over sin destroyed, justice honoured, the law magnified, vengeance taken for the insult done to Godhead, the triumph of the Holy One over the unholy. It is not merely *the time when* the joy begins--it is also the occasion and cause of that day's rapturous delight. *Andrew A. Bonar.*

Ver. 10. A broad and vital distinction is to be made between *desire for the gratification of personal vengeance*, and zeal for the vindication of *the glory of God*. "The glory of God" includes necessarily the real good of the

offender and the well being of society. Desire for *retaliation* is alway wrong; desire for *retribution* may be in the highest degree praiseworthy. For personal motives only can I desire retaliation upon the wrong doer; but for motives most disinterested and noble I may desire retribution. R. A. Bertram, in "*The Imprecatory Psalms*," 1867.

PSALM 58:11

EXPOSITION

Ver. 11. *So that a man shall say.* Every man however ignorant shall be compelled to say,

Verily, in very deed, assuredly,

there is a reward for the righteous. If nothing else be true this is. The godly are not after all forsaken and given over to their enemies; the wicked are not to have the best of it, truth and goodness are recompensed in the long run.

Verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth. All men shall be forced by the sight of the final judgment to see that there is a God, and that he is the righteous ruler of the universe. Two things will come out clearly after all--there is a God and there is a reward for the righteous. Time will remove doubts, solve difficulties, and reveal secrets; meanwhile faith's foreseeing eye discerns the truth even now, and is glad thereat.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 11. *So that a man shall say, Verily*, etc. This shall be said not by *a man*, nor by any particular man, but by men in general, by man as opposed to God. The particle translated, *verily* really means *only*, and denotes that this and nothing else is true. J. A. Alexander.

Ver. 11. *So that*, etc. There is something worth noting from the connexion of this verse with the context, and is implied in the first word, *so that*, which joins this verse with the former parts of this Psalm, and shows this to be an illation from them. What? did God so suddenly, "as with a whirlwind," overthrow those wicked judges who lorded it over his people? did he make those "lions" melt like snails? did he confirm the joints of his people,

which were little before, trembling and smiting on against another, as if they had been so many forlorn wretches exposed and cast forth, and no eye to pity them; as if they had been floating with Moses upon the sea in a basket of bulrushes, without any pilot to guide them, and even ready to cry out with the disciple, "Master, carest not that we perish?" Did he then command a calm, and bring them to the haven where they would be? did he turn their howling like dragons and chattering like cranes, under the whips and saws of tyrannical taskmasters, into a song of joy and triumph? did he dismantle himself of that cloud wherein for a time he had so enveloped himself, that he seemed not to behold the pressures of his people? did he, I say, then step in to his people's rescue, by breaking their yokes as in the day of Midian, and kissing them with kisses of his mouth?

So that a man shall say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous: verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth. Observe: Though the passages of God's providence may seem so rugged and uncouth, as if they were destructive to his church, and likely to put out the eye of his own glory; yet our God will so dispose of them in the close, that they shall have an advantageous tendency, to the setting forth of his honour and our good. *John Hinckley, 1657.*

Ver. 11. Some of the judgments of God are a shallow, or a ford, over which a lamb may wade; every child may read the meaning of them; and *a man* --any ordinary man--*may say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous: verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth.* *Joseph Caryl.*

Ver. 11. This judging here does not refer to the judgment to come, at the last day, when there shall be a general convention of quick and dead before the Lord's dreadful tribunal; though so, it is most true *affore tempus*, that there will be a time when God will ride his circuit here in a solemn manner, *so that a man shall say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous: verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth;* but that is not the scope of this place. It is in the present tense, *o krinwn, that now judgeth, or is now judging* the earth and the inhabitants thereof; and therefore it must be understood of a judgment on this side, the judgment of the great day; and so God judges the earth, or in the earth, three manner of ways. First, by a providential ordering and wise disposal of all the affairs of all creatures. Secondly, in relieving the oppressed, and pleading the cause of the innocent. Thirdly, in overthrowing and plaguing the wicked doers. *John Hinckley.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 11. Remarkable cases of divine judgments and their results.

PSALM 59

PSALM 59:1

To the Chief Musician. Strange that the painful events in David's life should end in enriching the repertoire of the national minstrelsy. Out of a sour, ungenerous soil spring up the honey bearing flowers of psalmody. Had he never been cruelly hunted by Saul, Israel and the church of God in after ages would have missed this song. The music of the sanctuary is in no small degree indebted to the trials of the saints. Affliction is the tuner of the harps of sanctified songsters. *Altaschith.* Another "destroy not" Psalm. Whom God preserves Satan cannot destroy. The Lord can even preserve the lives of his prophets by the very ravens that would naturally pick out their eyes. David always found a friend to help him when his case was peculiarly dangerous, and that friend was in his enemy's household; in this instance it was Michal, Saul's daughter, as on former occasions it had been Jonathan, Saul's son. *Michtam of David.* This is the Fifth of the Golden Secrets of David: God's chosen people have many such. *When Saul sent, and they watched the house to kill him.* Great efforts were made to carry the Psalms away to other authors and seasons than those assigned in the headings, it being the fashion just now to prove one's learning by disagreeing with all who have gone before. Perhaps in a few years the old titles will be as much revered as they are now rejected. There are spasms in these matters, and in many other things among the would be "intellectuals" of the schools. We are not anxious to show our readiness at conjecture, and therefore are content with reading this Psalm in the light of the circumstances here mentioned; it does not seem unsuitable to any verse, and in some the words are very appropriate to the specified occasion.

DIVISIONS. In Psalm 59:1-2 he prays, in Psalm 59:3-4 he complains of his woes, and again in Psalm 59:5 he prays. Here he inserts a *Selah*, and ends one portion of his song. In Psalm 59:6-7 he renews his complaint, in Psalm 59:8-10 declares his confidence in God, and in Psalm 59:11-13 lifts up his heart in prayer; closing another part of his Psalm with *Selah*. Then

he prays again in Psalm 59:14-15, and afterwards betakes himself to singing.

EXPOSITION

Ver. 1. *Deliver me from mine enemies, O my God.* They were all round the house with the warrant of authority, and a force equal to the carrying of it out. He was to be taken dead or alive, well or ill, and carried to the slaughter. No prowess could avail him to break the cordon of armed men, neither could any eloquence stay the hand of his bloody persecutor. He was taken like a bird in a net, and no friend was near to set him free. Unlike the famous starling, he did not cry, "I cannot get out," but his faith uttered quite another note. Unbelief would have suggested that prayer was a waste of breath, but not so thought the good man, for he makes it his sole resort. He cries for deliverance and leaves ways and means with his God.

Defend me from them that rise up against me. Saul was a king, and therefore sat in high places, and used all his authority to crush David; the persecuted one therefore beseeches the Lord to set him on high also, only in another sense. He asks to be lifted up, as into a lofty tower, beyond the reach of his adversary. Note how he sets the title, *My God*, over against the word, *mine enemies*. This is the right method of effectually catching and quenching the fiery darts of the enemy upon the shield of faith. God is our God, and therefore deliverance and defence are ours.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

This Psalm has in its stern contents something no doubt strange to our ears. But never let us omit to distinguish from each other the times and diverse economies, and to place ourselves as far as possible, in sympathy with the experience of a heart which burned for nothing more than for the glorifying of God in this world. Everything that tended to obscure the theocratic relation of God to his people, called up in the soul of David the most vehement passion. The scornful oppression with which Saul and his venal satellites visited him, the man of God, could not but have, upon the eyes of all, the appearance as if Jehovah were no longer Lord in his own land, who inexorably adhered to his laws and rights. Treason, falsehood, and every kind of evil then prevailed unchecked. What wonder, that as formerly Moses in the wilderness was provoked against the stiff necked people, so also David, whom the awful holiness of God had already made

to tremble, should feel his spirit stirred against the ungodly who surrounded him, and should say, with Job, "My bowels boiled within me." *Frederick William Krummacher, D.D., in "David, the King of Israel," 1867.*

Ver. 1. *O my God.* There are two pleas which the psalmist makes use of; one was, that God was *his God*, Psalm 59:1; the other was the *power* and *strength* of his *enemies*. It is a blessed thing to have the covenant to fly to in all times of straits and troubles; there is always an anchor hold of hope there. *My God*, is such a plea as infinitely over balances all other things. He has engaged himself to do his people good; and it is time for him to work when the enemy exalts himself. The church's enemies are never so near destruction as when they think they have nothing to do, but take and divide the spoil. We may plead God's promise and the enemies' power too; both are a ground of hope to a believer in Jesus. *John Hill (1711-1746), in "Sermons on Several Occasions."*

Ver. 1. *That rise up against me.* He insists upon the strength and violence of his enemies, with the view of exciting his mind to greater fervour in the duty of prayer. These he describes as *rising up* against him, in which expression he alludes, not simple to the audacity or fierceness of their assaults, but to the eminent superiority of power which they possessed; and yet he asks that he may be lifted up on high, as it were, above the reach of this over swelling inundation. *John Calvin.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 1. (*first clause*). Deliver me from temptation, uphold me in temptation, cleanse me from the result of temptation. The world, the flesh, the devil, and chiefly sin, these are our enemies. We cannot escape them of ourselves, but the Lord by providence and grace can rescue us.

WORK UPON THE FIFTY-NINTH PSALM

In CHANDLER'S *"Life of David,"* Vol. 1., pp. 85-89, there is an Exposition of this Psalm.

PSALM 59:2

EXPOSITION

Ver. 2. *Deliver me from the workers of iniquity.* Saul was treating him very unjustly, and besides that was pursuing a tyrannical and unrighteous course towards others, therefore David the more vehemently appeals against him. Evil men were in the ascendant at court, and were the ready tools of the tyrant, against these also he prays. Bad men in a bad cause may be pleaded against without question. When a habitation is beset by thieves, the good man of the house rings the alarm bell; and in these verses we may hear it ring out loudly, "*deliver me, ""defend me, ""deliver me, ""save me.*" Saul had more cause to fear than David had, for the invincible weapon of prayer was being used against him, and heaven was being aroused to give him battle.

And save me from bloody men. As David remembers how often Saul had sought to assassinate him, he knows what he has to expect from that quarter and from the king's creatures and minions who were watching for him. David represents his enemy in his true colours before God; the bloodthirstiness of the foe is a fit reason for the interposition of the righteous God, for the Lord abhors all those who delight in blood.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 2. (*first clause*). From being tempted by their promises, cowed by their threats, corrupted by their teaching, influenced by their example, injured by their slander, hindered in usefulness by their opposition.

PSALM 59:3

EXPOSITION

Ver. 3. *For, lo, they lie in wait for my soul.* They were in ambuscade for the good man's life. He knew their design and cried to God to be rescued from it. Like wild beasts they crouched, and waited to make the fatal spring; but their victim used effectual means to baffle them, for he laid the matter before the Lord. While the enemy lies waiting in the posture of a

beast, we wait before God in the posture of prayer, for God waits to be gracious to us and terrible towards our foes.

The mighty are gathered against me. None of them were absent from the muster when a saint was to be murdered. They were too fond of such sport to be away. The men at arms who ought to have been fighting their country's battles, are instead thereof hunting a quiet citizen; the gigantic monarch is spending all his strength to slay a faithful follower.

Not for my transgression, not for my sin, O Lord. He appeals to Jehovah that he had done no ill. His only fault was, that he was too valiant and too gracious, and was, besides, the chosen of the Lord, therefore the envious king could not rest till he had washed his hands in the blood of his too popular rival. We shall always find it to be a great thing to be innocent; if it does not carry our cause before an earthly tribunal, it will ever prove the best of arguments in the court of conscience, and a standing consolation when we are under persecution. Note the repetition of his declaration of integrity. David is sure of his innocence. He dares repeat the plea.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 3. (*first clause*). On the expression, *they lie in wait for my soul*, compare 1 Samuel 19:11, "And Michal, David's wife, told him, saying, If thou save not thy life *soul* tonight, tomorrow thou shalt be slain;" and Psalm 7:2,5. *E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Ver. 3. *The mighty are gathered against me*, is rendered by Chandler, *The mighty are turned aside to lay snares against me.*

Ver. 3. *The mighty are gathered against me.* As if he would say, "But I am weak, be thou, however, my strength, and vindicate my innocence." *Arnd.*

Ver. 3-4. He pleads his own innocence, not as to God, but as to his persecutors. Note,

1. The innocence of the godly will not secure them from the malignity of the wicked. Those that are harmless like doves, yet for Christ's sake are hated of all men, as if they were noxious like serpents, and obnoxious accordingly.
2. Though our innocence will not secure us from troubles, yet it will greatly support and comfort us under our troubles. The testimony of our conscience for us, that we have behaved ourselves well toward

those that have behaved themselves ill towards us, will be very much our rejoicing in the day of evil. If we are conscious to ourselves of our innocence, we may with humble confidence appeal to God, and beg of him to plead our injured cause which he will do in due time. *Matthew Henry*.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 3. (*first clause*). The subtleties of Satan. Watches for places, times, states, and ways in which to assail us. Errors in doctrine, practice, spirit, set forth to entrap us. "Ye are not ignorant of his devices." Or, the diabolical ambush, discovered by watchfulness, and defeated by faith.

PSALM 59:4

EXPOSITION

Ver. 4. *They run and prepare themselves without my fault.* They are all alive and active, they are swift to shed blood. They prepare and use their best tactics; they besiege me in my house, and lay their ambuscades as for some notable enemy. They come up fully armed to the attack, and assail me with all the vigour and skill of a host about to storm a castle; and all for no cause, but out of gratuitous malice. So quick are they to obey their cruel master, that they never stay to consider whether their errand is a good one or not; they run at once, and buckle on their harness as they run. To be thus gratuitously attacked is a great grief. To a brave man the danger causes little distress of mind compared with the injustice to which he is subjected. It was a cruel and crying shame that such a hero as David should be hounded down as if he were a monster, and beset in his house like a wild beast in its den.

Awake to help me, and behold. When others go to sleep, keep thou watch, O God. Put forth thy might. Arouse thee from thy inaction. Only look at thy servant's sad condition and thy hand will be sure to deliver me. We see how thorough was the psalmist's faith in the mercy of his Lord, for he is satisfied that if the Lord do but look on his case it will move his active compassion.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 4. *They run*, as armed warriors rushing to the assault (Psalm 18:29). The Hebrew for "prepare themselves," (Heb.) means also "they *establish* themselves; "they make firm their footing, like forces assaulting a city. Job 30:14. *A. R. Fausset.*

Ver. 4. *They run and prepare.* The zeal and diligence of the wicked in the cause of unrighteousness might well reprove the languor and tardiness of saints in the work of faith and labour of love. In the church of God nothing is the source of more mischief than the want of true zeal and liveliness. It is only when "many run to and fro" that "knowledge shall be increased." *William S. Plumer.*

Ver. 4. *Without fault.* As it respected Saul, he was a faithful subject and an obedient son-in-law. *Benjamin Boothroyd.*

Ver. 4. *Awake to help me*, literally, *Awake to meet me.* In time of temptation the Lord seems to be absent from us, and not to observe our distress--to be, as it were, as Jesus, in the storm, is described as having been "asleep in the hinder part of the ship." Mark 4:38. But it is only an appearance; the Lord neither slumbers nor sleeps (Psalm 121:4); he is always ready to come to our help when we call upon him. *O. Prescott Hiller.*

Ver. 4. *And behold.* The expression is one which savours at once of faith and of the infirmity of the flesh. In speaking of God, as if his eyes had been hitherto shut to the wrongs which he had suffered, and needed now for the first time to be opened for the discovery of them, he expresses himself according to the weakness of our human apprehension. On the other hand, in calling upon God *to behold* his cause, he shows his faith by virtually acknowledging that nothing was hid from his providential cognisance. *John Calvin.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 4. The activity of the evil a rebuke for the good.

I. Their activity, *run.*

II. Unanimity--*they run.*

III. Their care--*prepare themselves.*

IV. Their readiness--*without my fault.*

PSALM 59:5

EXPOSITION

Ver. 5. *Thou*, thyself, work for me personally, for the case needs thine interposition.

Therefore, because I am unjustly assailed, and cannot help myself.

O Lord, ever living, *God of Hosts*, able to rescue me; *the God of Israel*, pledged by covenant to redeem thine oppressed servant;

awake to visit all the heathen, arouse thy holy mind, bestow thy sacred energies, punish the heathen among thine Israel, the false hearted who say they are Jews and are not, but do lie. And when thou art about the business, let all the nations of thine enemies, and all the heathenish people at home and abroad know that thou art upon circuit, judging and punishing. It is the mark of a thoughtful prayer that the titles which are in it applied to God are appropriate, and are, as it were, congruous to the matter, and fitted to add force to the argument. Shall Jehovah endure to see his people oppressed? Shall the God of hosts permit his enemies to exult over his servant? Shall the faithful God of a chosen people leave his chosen to perish? The name of God is, even in a literal sense, a fortress and high tower for all his people. What a forceful petition is contained in the words, "*awake to visit*"! Actively punish, in wisdom judge, with force chastise.

Be not merciful to any wicked transgressors. Be merciful to them as men, but not as transgressors; if they continue hardened in their sin, do not wink at their oppression. To wink at sin in transgressors will be to leave the righteous under their power, therefore do not pass by their offences but deal out the due reward. The psalmist feels that the overthrow of oppression which was so needful for himself must be equally desirable for multitudes of the godly placed in like positions, and therefore he prays for the whole company of the faithful, and against the entire confraternity of traitors.

Selah. With such a subject before us we may well pause. Who would not sit still and consider, when vengeance is being meted out to all the enemies of God? How wrong is that state of mind which hates to hear of the punishment of the wicked!

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 5. *O Lord God of hosts, the God of Israel.* In time of straits we should set our eyes most upon those styles of God which most serve to strengthen our faith, especially such as hold forth his power and goodwill to employ his power for us. *David Dickson.*

Ver. 5. *Lord God of hosts.* YAHVEH, Elohim, Tsebaoth; as in Psalm 80:4,19 84:8. Compare 2 Samuel 5:10 1 Kings 19:10,14 Psalm 89:8. *From "The Psalms translated from the Hebrew, with Notes chiefly exegetical."* By William Kay, D.D., 1871.

Ver. 5. *Lord God of hosts.* Some have thought this equivalent to God of battles; the true force of the epithet, however, is, "Sovereign of the stars, material hosts of heaven, and of the angels their inhabitants." A. A. Hodge, in *"Outlines of Theology,"* 1866.

Ver. 5.

1. *God of hosts*, and therefore *able*;
2. *God of Israel*, and therefore willing. Andrew A. Bonar.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 5. *O Lord God of hosts, the God of Israel.* This title furnishes an admirable topic.

PSALM 59:6

EXPOSITION

Ver. 6. *They return at evening.* Like wild beasts that roam at night, they come forth to do mischief. If foiled in the light, they seek the more congenial darkness in which to accomplish their designs. They mean to break into the house in the dead of night.

They make a noise like a dog, and go round about the city. Howling with hunger for their prey, they sneak round and round the walls, prowling with stealthy footstep, and barking in unamiable concert. David compares his foes to Eastern dogs, unowned, loathsome, degraded, lean, and hungry, and he represents them as howling with disappointment, because they cannot find the food they seek. Saul's watchmen and the cruel king himself must have raved and raged fiercely when they found the image and the pillow of goat's hair in the bed instead of David. Vain were their watchings, the victim had been delivered, and that by the daughter of the man who desired his blood. Go, ye dogs, to your kennels and gnaw your bones, for this good man is not meat for your jaws.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 6. *At evening.* The *evening* expresses the time of calamity and want, and alludes to the wild beasts which are wont in the *evening* to go forth in quest of prey. *Hermann Venema.*

Ver. 6. *They make a noise like a dog.* The noise I heard then I shall never forget. To say that if all the sheep dogs in going to Smithfield on a market day, had been kept on the constant bark and pitted against the yelping curs upon all the carts in London, they could have given any idea of the canine uproar that now first astonished me, would be to make the feeblest of images. The whole city rang with one vast riot. Down below me, at Tophane; over about Stamboul; far away at Scutari; the whole sixty thousand dogs that are said to overrun Constantinople, appeared engaged in the most active extermination of each other, without a moment's cessation. The yelping, howling, barking, growling, and snarling, were all merged into one uniform and continuous even sound, as the noise of frogs becomes, when heard at a distance. For hours there was no lull. I went to sleep and woke again, and still, with my windows open, I heard the same tumult going on; nor was it until daybreak that anything like tranquillity was restored. *Albert Smith, in "A Month at Constantinople," 1850.*

Ver. 6. In bringing their secret plans to bear, they are represented as hungry dogs, prowling about the city in the darkness for prey; ranging, each one with his own object, but in one common cause. To take in the full force of this metaphor it must be remembered that in Eastern cities formerly, as at the present day, it was the custom to cast out all the refuse of food--bones, offal, etc. --into the streets, which was consumed chiefly

by dogs, great numbers of which were kept, as it would seem, for that particular purpose. With this idea in mind, the metaphor has great propriety in its application to Christ's enemies.

*"Every evening they return
They howl like dogs,
And surround the city."*

William Hill Tucker.

Ver. 6-7. This is a continued metaphor, which must be well observed, of a famished and rabid dog, unable to satisfy either its hunger or thirst; and describes men, howling formerly like dogs, pursuing, seizing all good things for themselves, and devouring; but now destitute of all things, unable to quench their cupidity, despised, miserable, and desperate wanderers. Such did Saul and his messengers sent against David in Najoth Rama show themselves to be, and give the prelude to their coming misery. *Hermann Venema.*

Ver. 6-7.

1. They are diligent about it, *They return at evening.*
2. *Mad*, and set to do it, *They make a noise like a dog*, and threaten boldly.
3. Unwearied and obdurate in their purpose: *They go round about the city.*
4. Impudent, and brag what they will do to me: *Behold, they belch out with their mouth.*
5. And their words are bloody: *Swords are in their lips.* *Adam Clarke.*

PSALM 59:7

EXPOSITION

Ver. 7. *Behold they belch out with their mouth.* The noisy creatures are so remarkable in their way, that attention is called to them with a *behold*. *Ecce homines*, might we not say, *Ecce canes!* Their malicious speech gushes from them as from a bubbling fountain. The wicked are voluble in slander; their vocabulary of abuse is copious, and as detestable as it is

abundant. What torrents of wrathful imprecation will they pour on the godly! They need no prompters, their feelings force for themselves their own vent, and fashion their own expressions.

Swords are in their lips. They speak daggers. Their words pierce like rapiers, and cleave like cutlasses. As the cushion of a lions's paw conceals his claw, so their soft ruby lips contain bloody words.

For who, say they, doth hear? They are free from all restraint, they fear no God in heaven, and the government on earth is with them. When men have none to call them to account, there is no accounting for what they will do. He who neither fears God nor regards man sets out on errands of oppression with gusto, and uses language concerning it of the most atrociously cruel sort. David must have been in a singular plight when he could hear the foul talk and hideous braggings of Saul's black guards around the house. After the style in which a Cavalier would have cursed a Puritan, or Claverhouse a Coventanter, the Saulites swore at the upstarts whom the king's majesty had sent them to arrest. David called them dogs, and no doubt a pretty pack they were, a cursed cursing company of curs. When they said, "Who doth hear?" God was listening, and this David knew, and therefore took courage.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 7. *Behold, they belch out with their mouth,* etc. Bark like dogs, so Aben Ezra; or, *bubble out*, as a fountain bubbles out with water; so they cast out their wickedness in great abundance (see Jeremiah 6:7); the phrase denotes the abundance of evil things and wicked speeches that come out of their mouths, which showed the naughtiness of their hearts; so David's enemies blustered and threatened what they would do to him could they find him; and Christ's enemies poured out their wicked charges of blasphemy and sedition against him in great plenty, and without proof.
John Gill.

PSALM 59:8

EXPOSITION

Ver. 8. *But thou, O Lord, shalt laugh at them.* He speaks to God, as to one who is close at hand. He points to the liars in wait and speaks to God about them. They are laughing at me, and longing for my destruction, but thou hast the laugh of them seeing thou hast determined to send them away without their victim, and made fools of by Michal. The greatest, cleverest, and most malicious of the enemies of the church are only objects of ridicule to the Lord; their attempts are utterly futile, they need give no concern to our faith.

Thou shalt have all the heathen in derision. As if David had said --What are these fellows who lie in ambush! And what is the king their master, if God be on my side? If not only these but all the heathen nations were besetting the house, yet Jehovah would readily enough disappoint them and deliver them. In the end of all things it will be seen how utterly contemptible and despicable are all the enemies of the cause and kingdom of God. He is a brave man who sees this today when the enemy is in great power, and while the church is often as one shut up and besieged in his house.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 8. God sees and smiles, he looks and laughs at these giants; he sits in heaven far above their reach; neither doth he much trouble himself about the matter; no more should we, but trust in him, and know that there is a counsel in heaven, that will dash the mould of all contrary counsels upon the earth, as the stone cut out of the mountain did the four great monarchies. Daniel 2:34. And therefore though the wicked, in the pride of his heart, doth persecute the poor; though they belch out with their mouth, and seek to double murder the innocent, by detraction and by deadly practice, yet God both hears and jeers at their madness, and will bring all their purposes to nought with little ado; nay, the very cruelty of his enemies will move God to make haste. The saints fare the better for the insolence and outrages of their enemies, whose ruin is thereby accelerated; and somewhat God will do the sooner for his people, lest the enemy exalt himself. Psalm 140:8. *Abraham Wright.*

Ver. 8. (*last clause*). In the close of the verse, mention is made of *all nations*, to intimate, that though they might equal the whole world in numbers, they would prove a mere mockery with all their influence and resources. Or the words may be read--*EVEN AS thou hast all the nations in derision*. One thing is obvious, that David ridicules the vain boasting of his enemies, who thought no undertaking too great to be accomplished by their numbers. *John Calvin*.

Ver. 8-9.

*8 But thou, Lord, laugh at them;
You deride all the heathen.*

*9 His strength! Toward thee will I keep watch,
For God is my high fort. William Kay.*

PSALM 59:9

EXPOSITION

Ver. 9. *Because of his strength will I wait upon thee.* Is my persecutor strong? Then, my God, for this very reason I will turn myself to thee, and leave my matters in thy hand. It is a wise thing to find in the greatness of our difficulties a reason for casting ourselves on the Lord.

*"And when it seems no chance nor change
From grief can set me free,
Hope finds its strength in helplessness,
And, patient, waits on thee."*

For God is my defence, my high place, my fortress, the place of my resort in the time of my danger. If the foe be too strong for me to cope with him, I will retreat into my castle, where he cannot reach me.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 8-9.

*8 But thou, Lord, laugh at them;
You deride all the heathen.*

*9 His strength! Toward thee will I keep watch,
For God is my high fort. William Kay.*

Ver. 9. *Because of his strength will I wait upon thee.* Those seem to come nearest the meaning of the psalmist, who construe the words as one continuous sentence, *I will put in trust his strength with thee*, meaning that however intemperately Saul might boast of his strength, he would rest satisfied in the assurance that there was a secret divine providence restraining his actions. We must learn to view all men as subordinated in this manner, and to conceive of their strength and their enterprises as depending upon the sovereign will of God. In my opinion, the following version is the best--*His strength is with thee, I will wait.* The words are parallel with those in the end of the Psalm, where there can be no doubt that the nominative case is employed, *My strength is with thee, I will sing.* John Calvin.

Ver. 9. (*first clause*). *His strength* is great, humanly viewed; but to the eye of faith what is it! LXX, *to kratōz moi* (--uzzi); and so most ancient versions. (The contrast is given in Psalm 59:16-17.) William Kay.

Ver. 9. *Will I wait upon thee*, literally, *I will keep watch to thee*, alluding to the title, "When Saul sent, and they watched the house to kill him." David sets *watching before God*, against their *watching to kill* him. A. R. Fausset.

Ver. 9. How weak soever the believer finds himself, and how powerful soever he perceives his enemy to be, it is all one to him, he hath no more to do but to put faith on work, and to wait till God works. *Because of his (that is, the enemy's) strength, I will wait upon thee*, saith he to the Lord, *for God is my defence.* David Dickson.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 9. The greatness of difficulty a reason for prayer and faith.

PSALM 59:10

EXPOSITION

Ver. 10. *The God of my mercy shall prevent me.* God who is the giver and fountain of all the undeserved goodness I have received, will go before me and lead my way as I march onward. He will meet me in my time of need. Not alone shall I have to confront my foes, but he whose goodness I have long tried and proved will gently clear my way, and be my faithful protector. How frequently have we met with preventing mercy--the supply prepared before the need occurred, the refuge built before the danger arose. Far ahead into the future the foreseeing grace of heaven has projected itself, and forestalled every difficulty.

God shall let me see my desire upon mine enemies. Observe that the words, *my desire*, are not in the original. From the Hebrew we are taught that David expected to see his enemies without fear. God will enable his servant to gaze steadily upon the foe without trepidation; he shall be calm, and self possessed, in the hour of peril; and ere long he shall look down on the same foes discomfited, overthrown, destroyed. When Jehovah leads the way victory follows at his heels. See God, and you need not fear to see your enemies. Thus the hunted David, besieged in his own house by traitors, looks only to God, and exults over his enemies.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 10. *The God of my mercy shall prevent me.* Oh, how the saints sing of the love of Christ! Oh, how they sing that this love was not moved by worthiness, and it disdains all hire and price, but loves us because he loves us! Deuteronomy 7:8. O sing of his wonderful love, and of the *prevention* of this love of Christ: *The God of my mercy shall prevent me.* How,

1. It prevents thy love to him. 1 John 4:19. *We love God, because he first loved us.*
2. It prevents our sins, as in Paul's case. Acts 4:3: *And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven.*
3. It prevents our calamities. Psalm 79:8; *Let thy tender mercies speedily prevent us.* And,

4. It prevents our endeavours. *The God of my mercy shall prevent me.* John Spalding, in "Synaxis Sacra, "1703.

Ver. 10. (*first clause*). The psalmist was sure of mercy upon these grounds, he knew he was safe, because God was his God, and the God of his mercy: *The God of my mercy shall prevent me.* Some read it, *hath prevented me*; others, *doth prevent me*; and others, as in my text, *shall prevent me*. Each of these senses is exceedingly sweet and full. Take it in the first sense, *hath prevented me*; and it implies thus much, that the psalmist never was in any difficulty, temptation, or fear, but God was beforehand with him; having always the mercy ready which he stood in need of; and had given it in due season, and that when he least expected it, and it may be was least prepared for it. Take it in the second sense, *doth prevent*, it argues the psalmist's ground of confidence when all present appearances were gone; as if he had said, "God is of one mind, his thoughts are thoughts of peace, and not of evil; he may vary his providence, but his heart is the same as ever; why should I fear, why should I not hope and rejoice? for my God is a tried God, he is working for me even now. He prevents my fears, and he will prevent my falling." Take the words as they lie in my text, and it comes to the same thing. "God sees all my enemies' designs, and he is ready for them; my prayer is heard, and sure I am deliverance will come, though I know not the time of it." My design, under the Spirit's influence, is to look into my own heart and yours, and show you what wonders of providence and grace God, as *the God of our mercy*, has caused to pass before us. In discoursing on these words, I shall enquire,

I. In what sense, or in what respects, God is *the God of our mercy*.

II. How, as the God of our mercy, he doth prevent us.

III. Apply.

I am to enquire in what respects God is said to be *the God of his people's mercy*, and it seems to include in it these three things.

1. That all the mercy which is in God's nature, is for his saints. It is a great word that (1 Peter 5:10), *the God of all grace*. God has in him all sorts of grace for his saints. He hath pardoning, quickening, strengthening, comforting, and preserving grace. His mercy is rich mercy, abundant mercy, inexhaustible mercy, sure mercy. A man's

riches are his glory; God glories in his mercy; it is his delight, he rests in it; and so may we, because there is an infinite inconceivable fulness of it in *him*. "With thee is the fountain of life." God distributes and parcels out this mercy, that we may conceive of it the better; hence he is called by the apostle, *The Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort*. 2 Corinthians 1:3. God is not called the author of our mercies, but the *Father* of them; to show how freely they come from him; they are his bowels; he is pleased with them, as the father is with his own child; dwell on the name, it is a sweet one, the *Father of mercies*. In my text, David grasps all this mercy, lays hold of it as his own mercy: *The God of my mercy shall prevent me*. That is one sense.

2. It supposes, farther, that there is a portion of mercy laid by, in the purpose of God, for every saint; a portion of mercy which he may call *his own*. This some understand to be Christ's meaning to Paul (2 Corinthians 12:9): *My grace is sufficient for thee*; i.e., that grace which I have allotted for thee thou wilt find sufficient. I knew what thou wouldst need in my eternal counsels; I have made provision beforehand; I have taken care thou shouldst have enough.

3. The words suppose, farther, that God has taken it upon him as his charge, to keep this portion of his mercy for his people. Whatever it be, soul, it is in trust for thee with him. Every saint may apply to God, as the God of every mercy which he needs. *Condensed from John Hill's Sermon*.

Ver. 10. *God shall let me see my desire upon mine enemies*. The words, *my desire*, are not in the original, and would be better omitted. The sense is--God will enable me to look down calmly upon my enemies. So Christ looked upon his murderers. So Stephen was enabled to do when they "gnashed upon him with their teeth." "All that sat in the council looking steadfastly upon him saw his face as it had been the face of an angel." Acts 6:15. *Christopher Wordsworth*.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 10. (*first clause*). The divine forwardness to bless.

PSALM 59:11

EXPOSITION

Ver. 11. *Slay them not, lest my people forget.* It argues great faith on David's part, that even while his house was surrounded by his enemies he is yet so fully sure of their overthrow, and so completely realises it in his own mind, that he puts in a detailed petition that they may not be too soon or too fully exterminated. God's victory over the craft and cruelty of the wicked is so easy and so glorious that it seems a pity to end the conflict too soon. To sweep away the plotters all at once were to end the great drama of retribution too abruptly. Nay, let the righteous be buffeted a little longer, and let the boasting oppressor puff and brag through his little hour, it will help to keep Israel in mind of the Lord's justice, and make the brave party who side with God's champion accustomed to divine interpositions. It were a pity for good men to be without detractors, seeing that virtue shines the brighter for the foil of slander. Enemies help to keep the Lord's servants awake. A lively, vexatious devil is less to be dreaded than a sleepy, forgetful spirit which is given to slumber.

Scatter them by thy power. Blow them to and fro, like chaff in the wind. Let the enemy live as a vagabond race. Make Cains of them. Let them be living monuments of divine power, advertisements of heaven's truth. To the fullest extent let divine justice be illustrated in them.

And bring them down. Like rotten fruit from a tree. From the seats of power which they disgrace, and the positions of influence which they pollute, let them be hurled into humiliation. This was a righteous wish, and if it be untempered by the gentleness of Jesus, we must remember that it is a soldier's prayer, and the wish of one who was smarting under injustice and malice of no ordinary kind.

O Lord, our shield. David felt himself to be the representative of the religious party in Israel, and therefore he says, *our shield*, speaking in the name of all those who make Jehovah their defence. We are in good company when we hide beneath the buckler of the Eternal; meanwhile he who is the shield of his people is the scatterer of their enemies.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 11. *Slay them not*, that they may be a whetstone to others' faith--as the Spartans (mentioned in Plutarch's Apothegms) refused to allow the destruction of a neighbouring city which had often called forth their armies, saying, "Destroy not the whetstone of our young men." *Andrew A. Bonar.*

Ver. 11. *Slay them not:* --

*"Live loathed and long
You smiling, smooth, detested parasites."
W. Shakespeare.*

Ver. 11. The enemies must serve for monuments of the divine righteousness, not less in the abiding wretchedness of their race than by their own sudden destruction. Parallel to this verse, and to Psalm 59:6,14, is the curse which David utters upon Joab, in 2 Samuel 3:29: "Let there not fail from the house of Joab one that hath an issue, or that is a leper, or that leaneth on a staff, or that falleth on the sword, or that *lacketh bread*;" then the threatening of a man of God to Eli, in 1 Samuel 3:36, where, after announcing the violent death of the evildoers themselves, corresponding to 1 Samuel 3:13 here, it is said: "And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left in thine house shall come and crouch to him (the new high priest) for a piece of silver and a morsel of bread, and shall say, Put me, I pray thee, into one of the priests offices, that I may eat a piece of bread." Christian expositors have all along drawn attention to the fact, that the substance of our verse, as that also of verses, 6, 14, has gone into fulfilment on the Jews. "They have been scattered into all lands, and must go and stand before the eyes of all Christians, as a living witness that they have crucified the true Messiah and Saviour of the world. So that if you see a Jew, think on this word." (Arndt.) *E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Ver. 11. *Slay them not*; namely, suddenly. *Scatter them*. It should seem that he hath a relation to Cain's punishment, whom God would not have killed, but would have him to be a wanderer all the days of his life for a spectacle, and an example of his judgments. Genesis 4:12. Others translate it, *shake them* namely, their degree of honour and glory. *John Diodati*, 1576-1649.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 11. The continuance of our enemies a salutary ordinance of God for the prevention of an evil to which we are very liable.

PSALM 59:12

EXPOSITION

Ver. 12. *For the sin of their mouth and the words of their lips let them even be taken in their pride.* Such dreadful language of atheism and insolence deserves a fit return. As they hope to take their victims, so let them be taken themselves, entangled in their own net, arrested in the midst of their boastful security. Sins of the lips are real sins, and punishable sins. Men must not think because their hatred gets no further than railing and blasphemy that therefore they shall be excused. He who takes the will for the deed, will take the word for the deed and deal with men accordingly. Wretches who are persecutors in talk, burners and stabbers with the tongue, shall have a reckoning for their would be transgressions. Pride though it show not itself in clothes, but only in speech, is a sin; and persecuting pride, though it pile no faggots at Smithfield, but only revile with its lips, shall have to answer for it among the unholy crew of inquisitors.

And for cursing and lying which they speak. Sins, like hounds, often hunt in couples. He who is not ashamed to curse before God, will be sure to lie unto men. Every swearer is a liar. Persecution leads on to perjury. They lie and swear to it. They curse and give a lying reason for their hate. This shall not go unnoticed of the Lord, but shall bring down its recompense. How often has it happened that while haughty speeches have been fresh in the mouths of the wicked they have been overtaken by avenging providence, and made to see their mischief recoil upon themselves!

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 12. *For the sin of their mouth and the words of their lips, etc.* Albeit the persecutors do not accomplish their purpose against the righteous; yet their pride, their brags, their lies, their slanders, their curses against the

godly, are a sufficient ditty for damnation and wrath to come upon them.
David Dickson.

Ver. 12. *The words of their lips.* The phrase, *word of the lips*, is often used for empty loquacity and boasting; the opposite of a word that is solid and founded on fact, as in 2 Kings 18:20. "Thou speakest, but it is only a *word of the lips*." Proverbs 14:23. "In all labour there is profit: but the *word of the lips* tendeth only to penury." *Hermann Venema.*

PSALM 59:13

EXPOSITION

Ver. 13. *Consume them in wrath.* As if he had changed his mind and would have them brought to a speedy end, or if spared would have them exist as ruins, he cries, *consume them*, and he redoubles his cry, *consume them*; nay, he gives a triple note,

that they may not be. Revilers of God whose mouths pour forth such filth as David was on this occasion obliged to hear, are not to be tolerated by a holy soul; indignation must flame forth, and cry to God against them. When men curse the age and the place in which they live, common humanity leads the righteous to desire that they may be removed. If they could be reformed it would be infinitely better; but if they cannot, if they must and will continue to be like mad dogs in a city, then let them cease to be. Who can desire to see such a generation perpetuated?

And let them know; i.e., let all the nations know,

that God ruleth in Jacob unto the ends of the earth. He whose government is universal fixes his headquarters among his chosen people, and there in special he punishes sin. So David would have all men see. Let even the most remote nations know that the great moral Governor has power to destroy ungodliness, and does not wink at iniquity in any, at any time, or in any place. When sin is manifestly punished it is a valuable lesson to all mankind. The overthrow of a Napoleon is a homily for all monarchs, the death of a Tom Paine a warning to all infidels, the siege of Paris a sermon to all cities.

Selah. Good cause there is for this rest, when a theme so wide and important is introduced. Solemn subjects ought not to be hurried over; nor should the condition of the heart while contemplating themes so high be a matter of indifference. Reader, bethink thee. Sit thou awhile and consider the ways of God with men.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 13. *Consume them*, emphatically, *consume them in wrath, that they may not be*; which at first sight seems contrary to his first desire, *Slay them not*; but it is not so, for he speaks not of their life, as if he would have them so consumed, that they should not remain alive; but he desires only a consumption of their power, royalty, command, etc. And so these words are a farther explication of his second desire, *Bring them down*. He would have them so brought down and consumed in their strength, dignity, command, wealth, riches, that made them proud, that they never be able any more to oppose God, hurt his people, trample upon religion and his church; he would have them live. *William Nicholson.*

Ver. 13. *Consume them.* I hear of sad doings in Poland, of villages burnt down, of peaceable men deported to Siberia by hundreds, of woman flogged; and when I look away to that Warsaw market place where a woman, nearly naked, is being publicly beaten, and when I see cruel Mouravieff smile as the blood jets forth from the scourged shoulders, I will not deny that I feel very much tempted to say, "Happy man, whose bullet in fair flight should empty that saddle!" Am I bloodthirsty in this? Am I vindictive? Do you condemn me for this feeling? *R. A. Bertram.*

Ver. 13. *That they may not be.* By the word *wmg yaw*, *that they may not be*, may be understood either a vile and wretched state in general, or even total destruction. The *former* must indeed here be admitted, as is plain from the context, yet not to the exclusion of the *latter* sense; since a miserable condition, such as in a disease, issues in destruction at length. *Not to be* is evidently by no means rarely taken for to be *nobody*, to be wretched, afflicted, despised. Compare Jeremiah 31:15. *Hermann Venema.*

Ver. 13. *Selah.* Though God be in all his words *Yea* and *Amen*, yet in setting this seal of *Selah* to this doctrine, he hath testified his will that he would have all these things the better understood and the deeper imprinted; that if the wicked go on to persecute the godly, *Selah*, assuredly God will

have them in derision; *Selah*, assuredly God shall shiver their bones, shake their best actions, and discover their impurity; *Selah*, assuredly God's hand shall be heavy upon them, and they shall not discern it to be his hand till they are consumed. *Selah*, assuredly, verily, amen, this is a faithful, an infallible truth; as the Lord liveth it shall be so. *Abraham Wright*.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 13 (*last clause*). God as the God of the church, his government as such, known in all human history.

PSALM 59:14

EXPOSITION

Ver. 14. Here verse six is repeated, as if the songster defied his foes and revelled in the thought of their futile search, their malice, their disappointment, their rage, their defeated vigilance, their wasted energy. He laughs to think that all the city would know how they were deceived, and all Israel would ring with the story of the image and the goats' hair in the bed. Nothing was more a subject of Oriental merriment than a case in which the crafty are deceived, and nothing more makes a man the object of derision than to be outwitted by a woman, as in this instance Saul and his base minions were by Michal. The warrior poet hears in fancy the howl of rage in the council of his foes when they found their victim clean escaped from their hands.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 14. *Dog*. Is it the influence of Christianity extending its law of kindness to the lower animals, or something in the nature of northern dogs and northern men which makes dogs among us Anglo Saxons, and all the associations connected with them, so entirely different from what they are in the East? Imagine the effigy of an Oriental saint reposing with its feet on a dog, like that of William the Silent, the heroic Prince of Orange, on the faithful spaniel which rescued his life in the night attack of the Spanish troops, and like so many a sculptured knight of medieval times! The very presence of such an image would, in Oriental eyes, be the greatest desecration an enemy could inflict on a sacred edifice. And in the Bible

how exceedingly contemptuous, and how inapplicable to English dogs, are the terms employed in describing canine habits. "They grin like a dog, and go about the city, and grudge if they be not satisfied; " "Without are dogs." What possible resemblance is there between such a description and the grave dignity of a Newfoundland; the sagacious, acute expression of a terrier; the wistful, almost human eyes of our house spaniels? But here at Tyre, as in most Eastern towns, the familiar words came to us with all their true and forcible meaning. The wolfish, hungry, masterless dogs which "go about the cities (of Alexandria, for instance), gathering in packs like jackals, prowling about for offal, and grudging if they be not satisfied; "or the famished outcasts, like our dogs at Tyre, prowling "outside" the city. To these we may apply the highly unfavourable definitions of Scripture, which every Englishman and Englishwoman must indignantly disclaim on behalf of the loyal, faithful, patient creatures who watch beside our homes like sentinels, and guard our flocks like shepherds, and welcome us with ecstatic joy when we come home again, and sometimes will even die rather than desert a master's grave. *From "Wanderings over Bible Lands and Seas," 1862.*

Ver. 14. Those that repent of their sins when they are in trouble, *mourn like doves*; those whose hearts are hardened when they are in trouble, *make a noise like dogs.* *Matthew Henry.*

PSALM 59:15

EXPOSITION

Ver. 16. *Let them wander up and down for meat.* Like dogs that have missed the expected carcass, let them go up and down dissatisfied, snapping at one another, and too disappointed to be quiet and take the matter easily.

And grudge if they be not satisfied. Let them act like those who cannot believe that they have lost their prey: like a herd of Oriental dogs, unhoused, unkennelled, let them prowl about seeking a prey which they shall never find. Thus the menial followers of Saul paraded the city in vain hope of satisfying their malice and their master. "Surely," say they, "we shall have him yet. We cannot endure to miss him. Perhaps he is in yonder corner, or concealed in such a hiding place. We must have him. We grudge

him his life. Our lust for his blood is hot, nor can we be persuaded but that we shall light upon him." See the restlessness of wicked men; this will increase as their enmity to God increases, and in hell it will be their infinite torment. What is the state of the lost, but the condition of an ambitious camp of rebels, who have espoused a hopeless cause, and will not give it up, but are impelled by their raging passions to rave on against the cause of God, of truth, and of his people.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 16. *Let them wander up and down*, etc. A beggarly and indigent, and so an unsatisfied and wearisome condition, shall be their lot; the greatest worldly plague that can fall on any--large appetites and no possessions or acquires to satisfy them. *Henry Hammond*.

Ver. 16. *And grudge if they be not satisfied*. A contented man, if he has not what he would have, yet doth not grudge, doth not quarrel with providence, nor fret within himself; but those whose God is their belly, if that be not filled and its appetites gratified, fall out both with God and themselves. It is not poverty, but discontent that makes a man unhappy. *Matthew Henry*.

Ver. 16. The hunger of a dog is deservedly their plague, of whom a resemblance of that unclean animal's disposition hath been the sin. Reader, be it thy care to avoid such sins, and cultivate a spirit of lively devotion; that, instead of receiving thy portion where there is weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth, thou mayest sing to the God of thy mercy for ever. *Benjamin Boothroyd*.

PSALM 59:16

EXPOSITION

Ver. 16. *But I will sing of thy power*. The wicked howl, but I sing and will sing. Their power is weakness, but thine is omnipotence; I see them vanquished and thy power victorious, and for ever and ever will I sing of thee.

Yea, I will sing aloud of thy mercy in the morning. When those lovers of darkness find their game is up, and their midnight howlings die away, then will I lift up my voice on high and praise the lovingkindness of God without fear of being disturbed. What a blessed morning will soon break for the righteous, and what a song will be theirs! Sons of the morning, ye may sigh tonight, but joy will come on the wings of the rising sun. Tune your harps even now, for the signal to commence the eternal music will soon be given; the morning cometh and your sun shall go no more down for ever.

For thou hast been my defence. The song is for God alone, and it is one which none can sing but those who have experienced the lovingkindness of their God. Looking back upon a past all full of mercy, the saints will bless the Lord with their whole hearts, and triumph in him as the high place of their security.

And refuge in the day of my trouble. The greater our present trials the louder will our future songs be, and the more intense our joyful gratitude. Had we no day of trouble, where were our season of retrospective thanksgiving? David's besetment by Saul's bloodhounds creates an opportunity for divine interposition and so for triumphant praise.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 16. We must not pass by the contrast with the wretched condition of the wicked, which is indicated by the pronoun *hMhethy*, in Psalm 59:15, an *ynay*, but *I*, which are in exact antithesis; also the "*evening*," mentioned above, and the "*morning*," now occurring for the times of trouble and happiness, and the *dog like noise* of the wicked, and the *singing* with joyful sound of David, to pass by other particulars, likewise give to the diverse states additional difference. *Hermann Venema.*

Ver. 16. *Cantabo* and *exaltabo*, *I will sing*, and *I will sing aloud*. Here is *singing* only of God's power; but there is *singing aloud* of his mercy; as if his mercy were more exaltable than his power, and *that* reached the very heavens; *this* unto the clouds. Psalm 26:5. *From Humphrey Sydenham's Sermon, entitled, "The Well toned Cymball, "1637.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 16. The heavenly chorister.

- I.** His song is sweet in contrast with the revilings of others--*but I.*
- II.** It treats of subjects which terrify others—*thy power.*
- III.** It grows louder on tender themes--*thy mercy.*
- IV.** It has its choice seasons--*in the morning.*
- V.** It is tuned by experience--*for thou hast.*
- VI.** It is all to God's glory--*thy power, thy mercy, thou hast.*

PSALM 59:17

EXPOSITION

Ver. 17. *Unto thee, O my strength, will I sing.* What transport is here! What a monopolising of all his emotions for the one object of praising God! Strength has been overcome by strength; not by the hero's own prowess, but by the might of God alone. See how the singer girds himself with the almightiness of God, and calls it all his own by faith. Sweet is the music of experience, but it is all for God; there is not even a stray note for man, for self, or for human helpers.

For God is my defence, and the God of my mercy. With full assurance he claims possession of the Infinite as his protection and security. He sees God in all, and all his own. Mercy rises before him, undisturbed and manifold, for he feels he is undeserving, and security is with him, undisturbed and impregnable, for he knows that he is safe in divine keeping. Oh, choice song! My soul would sing it now in defiance of all the dogs of hell. Away, away, ye adversaries of my soul, the God of my mercy will keep ye all at bay--

*"Nor shall the infernal lion rend
Whom he designs to keep."*

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 17. *Unto thee, O my strength, will I sing.* Formerly he had said that the strength of his enemy was with God, and now he asserts the same thing of his own. The expression, however, which admits of two meanings, he elegantly applies to himself in a different sense. God has the strength of the wicked in his hands, to curb and to restrain it, and to show that any power

of which they boast is vain and fallacious. His own people, on the other hand, he supports and secures against the possibility of falling, by supplies of strength from himself. *John Calvin.*

Ver. 17. *Unto thee, O my strength.* In opposition to *the enemy's strength*, Psalm 59:9. *Thy power*, or *strength* -- the Hebrew word is the same (Psalm 59:16) -- is *my strength*. There is an elegant play on similar sounds in the Hebrew for *I will wait upon thee*, *hrmvāh*; (Psalm 59:9), and "I will sing," *hrMāa*. *A. R. Faussett.*

Ver. 17. (*first clause*). As on account of *Saul's strength* my watching was directed to thee; so now, no account of *thy strength* vouchsafed to me, my singing of praises also shall be directed to thee alone. *Martin Geier.*

Ver. 17. *Strength--Mercy.* He joins these two attributes, "*strength*" and "*mercy*", very well; for take away *strength* from him, and he cannot; remove mercy, and he will not, protect; both must go together in any one that will defend; *power*, that he can, *mercy*, that he will; otherwise it is but in vain to hope for help from him David found God to be both, and for both he extols him. *William Nicholson.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 17.

I. *A doctrine* --God is his people's strength.

II. *An appropriation* --"my strength."

III. *A resolution.* The song of gratitude for the past, faith for the present, hope for the future, of bliss for eternity.

PSALM 60

PSALM 60:1

TITLE. Here is a lengthy title, but it helps us much to expound the Psalm. *To the Chief Musician upon Shushaneduth*, or the Lily of Testimony. The forty-fifth was on the lilies, and represented the kingly warrior in his beauty going forth to war; here we see him dividing the spoil and bearing testimony to the glory of God. Tunes have strange names apparently, but this results from the fact that we do not know what was in the composer's mind, else they might seem to be touchingly appropriate; perhaps the music or the musical instruments have more to do with this title than the Psalm itself. Yet in war songs, roses and lilies are often mentioned, and one remembers Macaulay's Song of the Huguenots, though perhaps we err in mentioning so carnal a verse--

*"Now by the lips of those ye love, fair gentlemen of France,
Charge for the golden lilies now, upon them with the lance."*

Michtam of David, to teach. David obeyed the precept to teach the children of Israel; he recorded the Lord's mighty acts that they might be rehearsed in the ears of generations to come. Golden secrets are to be told on the house tops; these things were not done in a corner and ought not to be buried in silence. We ought gladly to learn what inspiration so beautifully teaches. *When he strove with Aramnaharaim and with Aramzobah.* The combined Aramean tribes sought to overcome Israel, but were signally defeated. *When Joab returned.* He had been engaged in another region, and the enemies of Israel took advantage of his absence, but on his return with Abishai the fortunes of war were changed. *And smote of Edom in the valley of salt twelve thousand.* More than this appear to have fallen according to 1 Chronicles 18:12, but this commemorates one memorable part of the conflict. Terrible must have been the battle, but decisive indeed were the results, and the power of the enemy was utterly broken. Well did the Lord deserve a song from his servant.

DIVISIONS. Properly the song may be said to consist of three parts: the complaining verses, Psalm 60:1-3; the happy, Psalm 60:4-8; the prayerful, Psalm 60:9-12. We have divided it as the sense appeared to change.

EXPOSITION

Ver. 1. Before the days of Saul, Israel had been brought very low; during his government it had suffered from internal strife, and his reign was closed by an overwhelming disaster at Gibeon. David found himself the possessor of a tottering throne, troubled with the double evil of factions at home, and invasion from abroad. He traced at once the evil to its true source, and began at the fountainhead. His were the politics of piety, which after all are the wisest and most profound. He knew that the displeasure of the Lord had brought calamity upon the nation, and to the removal of that displeasure he set himself by earnest prayer.

O God, thou hast cast us off. Thou hast treated us as foul and offensive things, to be put away; as mean and beggarly persons, to be shunned with contempt; as useless dead boughs, to be torn away from the tree, which they disfigure. To be cast off by God is the worst calamity that can befall a man or a people; but the worst form of it is when the person is not aware of it and is indifferent to it. When the divine desertion causes mourning and repentance, it will be but partial and temporary. When a cast off soul sighs for its God it is indeed not cast off at all.

Thou has scattered us. David clearly sees the fruits of the divine anger, he traces the flight of Israel's warriors, the breaking of her power, the division in her body politic, to the hand of God. Whoever might be the secondary agent of these disasters, he beholds the Lord's hand as the prime moving cause, and pleads with the Lord concerning the matter. Israel was like a city with a breach made in its wall, because her God was wroth with her. These first two verses, with their depressing confession, must be regarded as greatly enhancing the power of the faith which in the after verses rejoices in better days, through the Lord's gracious return unto his people.

Thou hast been displeased. This is the secret of our miseries. Had we pleased thee, thou wouldst have pleased us; but as we have walked contrary to thee, thou hast walked contrary to us.

O turn thyself to us again. Forgive the sin and smile once more. Turn us to thee, turn thou to us. Aforetime thy face was towards thy people, be

pleased to look on us again with thy favour and grace. Some read it, "Thou wilt turn to us again, "and it makes but slight difference which way we take it, for a true hearted prayer brings a blessing so soon that it is no presumption to consider it already obtained. There was more need for God to turn to his people than for Judah's troops to be brave, or Joab and the commanders wise. God with us is better than strong battalions; God displeased is more terrible than all the Edomites that ever marched into the valley of salt, or all the devils that ever opposed the church. If the Lord turn to us, what care we for Aramnaharaim or Aramzobah, or death, or hell? but if he withdraw his presence we tremble at the fall of a leaf.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Title. There are some difficulties attendant upon the title of this Psalm, when it is compared with the contents. We naturally expect after such as inscription, joy, congratulation, and praise for victory; but the psalmist breaks out into lamentations and bitter complaints: his strains are, however, changed, when he has proceeded as far as verse three, where he begins to feel confidence, and to employ the language of exultation and triumph. The best means of removing this discrepancy seems to be by remarking, that this Psalm was written after some of the battles of which mention is made in the title, but that the author does not restrict himself to those events without taking a wider range, so as to embrace the afflictive conditions both of Israel and Judah during the latter part of Saul's life, and the former years of David's reign. In the concluding years of Saul, the Philistines obtained a superiority over him, and finally destroyed him with his army. Subsequently to these events the whole land was in a very disturbed and agitated condition, arising out of the contentions between the partisans of Saul's family, and those who were attached to David. The nations which inhabited the regions adjacent to the land of Canaan were at all times inimical to the Jews, and seized every opportunity of attacking and injuring them. But when David had succeeded in uniting the whole nation under his authority, he proceeded to avenge the injuries and insults that had been inflicted upon his countrymen by the Philistines, Edomites, Moabites, and Syrians; and God was pleased to give him signal success in his undertakings. He appears, therefore, to have combined all these transactions, and made them the subject of this Psalm. *William Walford.*

Title. Shushaneduth. *The lilies of the testimony* -- means, that this Psalm has for its chief subject something very lovely and cheering in the law;

namely, the words of promise quoted in the beginning of verse six, according to which the land of Canaan belonged to the Israelites, upon which is thus established the confidence expressed in Psalm 60:6-8, with respect to their right of property over the land, and their possession of it. This promise, not to cite many other passages, which occur in the Five Books of Moses, and even so early as the patriarchs, is contained in Genesis 49, and Deuteronomy 33. It is evident of what value and importance this promise was, and particularly the remembrance of it at this time. *T. C. Barth's "Bible Manual," 1865.*

Title. The only other *eduth* or "*testimony*" in the Psalter, Psalm 80, makes mention by name of the tribes of Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh, and is a witness against those tribes for forsaking the Shepherd of Israel who had brought them up out of the land of Egypt. *Joseph Francis Thrupp, M.A., in "An Introduction to the Study and Use of the Psalms," 1860.*

Title. *Aramnaharaim.* The name *Aram* corresponds to *Syria* in its widest and vaguest sense, and is joined with other names to designate particular parts of that large country. It even includes Mesopotamia, which is a term of physical rather than political geography, and denotes the space between the Tigris and Euphrates, corresponding to *Aram Naharaim*, or *Syria of the Two Rivers*, in the verse before us. The king of this country was tributary to the king of *Aram Zobah*, as appears from the account of David's second Aramean war (2 Samuel 10:16,19). *Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Title. *When he strove with Aramnaharaim and with Aramzobah.* An insult offered to David's ambassadors by Hanun, king of the Ammonites, led to a serious war. Hanun obtained mercenaries from Syria to reinforce his army, Joab and Abishai his brother, David's generals, gave them battle. Joab, opposed to the Syrians, gained the first success, and the Ammonites, seeing their allies routed, took to flight into their town. But this defeat provoked a great coalition, embracing all the people between the Jordan and the Euphrates. David, however, fearlessly marched against them at the head of his army; he vanquished all his enemies, and made himself master of the small Aramaean kingdoms of Damascus, Zobah, and Hamath, and subjugated the Eastern Idumaeans, who met their final defeat in the Valley of Salt. *Francois Lenormant and E. Chevallier, in "A Manual of the Ancient History of the East," 1869.*

Title. Joab returned and smote of Edom in the valley of salt twelve thousand, compared with 2 Samuel 8:13, "David gat him a name when he returned from smiting of the Syrians in the valley of salt, being eighteen thousand men, "and 1 Chronicles 18:12, where this very service was performed by *Abishai*. Answer. It is one thing to attribute the victory for the honour of the king that was the cause. But the mentioning of these chief generals, by whom the service was performed, is another. David, under God, must have the honour of the work, for the increase of his name, being set for the typing out of Christ, who must have all the glory of the day, whatever conquest he gets by instruments of that service here, who likewise are typed out in David's worthies, of whom Joab and Abishai were chief. By these he obtained that great victory over Hadadezer. In returning from which service Joab found his brother Abishai engaged *in the valley of salt* against eighteen thousand Edomites or Syrians (all one), whose valour the Almighty looked on, as he attributes the whole slaughter to him, because first attempting it. Joab, it seems, took this in his return from the former slaughter, and fell in for the assistance of his brother Abishai (for that was their usual course: though they divided their armies, they did not divide their hearts). But if the enemies were too strong, one would help the other. 1 Chronicles 19:12. And of this eighteen thousand attributed to David and Abishai before, Joab slew twelve thousand of them; the memory of which service is here embalmed with a Psalm; first showing the extremes they were in, doubtful at first they should not get the victory. Secondly, applying it to the kingdom of Christ. Lastly, ascribing all the honour of the conquest to God; saying, through God this valiant service was done; it was he that trod down our enemies; and will do (last verse). *William Streat, in "The Dividing of the Hoof, "1654.*

Title. The Valley of Salt. The ridge of Usdum exhibits more distinctly its peculiar formation; *the main body of the mountain being a solid mass of rock salt...* We could at first hardly believe our eyes, until we had several times approached the precipices, and broken off pieces to satisfy ourselves, both by the touch and taste. The salt, where thus exposed, is everywhere more or less furrowed by the rains. As we advanced, large lumps and masses broken off from above, lay like rocks along the shore, or were fallen down as *debris*. The very stones beneath our feet were wholly salt... The position of this mountain at the south end of the sea, enables us also to ascertain the place of *The Valley of Salt* mentioned in Scripture, where the Hebrews under David, and again under Amaziah, gained decisive victories

over Edom. This valley could have been no other than the Ghor south of the Dead Sea, adjacent to the mountain of salt; it separates indeed the ancient territories of Judah and Edom. *Edward Robinson's "Biblical Researches in Palestine, "1867.*

Title. The historic record mentions *eighteen thousand* slain, and here but *twelve thousand*. The greater of course includes the less. The discrepancy may be explained by supposing that the title contains the numbers slain by one division of the army, or that the *twelve thousand* were slain in the battle, and the residue in the flight. Or an error may have crept into the text. Every scholar admits that there is sometimes serious difficulty in settling the numbers of the Old Testament. In this place Calvin has *two and twenty thousand*, the common version *twelve thousand*, while the original is *two ten thousand*, which taken in one way would mean *twenty thousand*, i.e., *two tens of thousands*. Hammond refers the number slain to different battles, and so avoids the difficulty. *William S. Plumer.*

Ver. 1. *O God, thou hast cast us off.* The word here used means properly to be foul, rancid, offensive; and then, to treat anything *as if* it were foul or rancid; to repel, to spurn, to cast away. It is strong language, meaning that God had seemed to treat them as if they were loathsome or offensive to him. *Albert Barnes.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 1.

1. Prayer of a church in low condition.

I. Complaint.

1. Left of God's Spirit.
2. Scattered.

II. *Cause.* Something displeasing to God. Neglect or actual sin; a subject for self examination.

III. *Cure.* The Lord's return to us and ours to him. In our version it is a prayer; in the Septuagint an expression of faith--"Thou wilt return."

PSALM 60:2

EXPOSITION

Ver. 2. *Thou hast made the earth to tremble.* Things were as unsettled as though the solid earth had been made to quake; nothing was stable; the priests had been murdered by Saul, the worst men had been put in office, the military power had been broken by the Philistines, and the civil authority had grown despicable through insurrections and intestine contests.

Thou hast broken it. As the earth cracks, and opens itself in rifts during violent earthquakes, so was the kingdom rent with strife and calamity.

Heal the breaches thereof. As a house in time of earthquake is shaken, and the walls begin to crack, and gape with threatening fissures, so was it with the kingdom.

For it shaketh. It tottered to a fall; if not soon propped up and repaired it would come down in complete ruin. So far gone was Israel, that only God's interposition could preserve it from utter destruction. How often have we seen churches in this condition, and how suitable is the prayer before us, in which the extremity of the need is used as an argument for help. The like may be said of our personal religion, it is sometimes so tried, that like a house shaken by earthquake it is ready to come down with a crash, and none but the Lord himself can repair its breaches, and save us from utter destruction.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 2. *Heal the breaches thereof; for it shaketh.* They pray that this may be done with the utmost speed, because there was a danger in delay, for the kingdom was already pressed down with a heavy calamity, and on the brink of ruin, which is signified by the word **h j m** whose origin is in a very strong and tremulous inclination to one side, properly from the application of a *lever*, and is applied to those who are leaning so far to one side that they are just on the point of falling; figuratively, therefore, it expresses a *most perilous condition*, in which one is on the edge of destruction.

Hermann Venema.

Ver. 2. *Heal the breaches thereof.* Even Israel is subject to *breaches*. So it was with the literal typical Israel, David's kingdom; so it may be with spiritual mystical Israel, the kingdom of Christ, the church of God upon earth. There are *breaches* from *without*, and *breaches* from *within*. I will invert the order. From *without*, by open *persecution*; from *within*, by intestine and homebred *divisions*. Of both these the church of God in all ages hath had sufficient experience. Look we upon the *primitive* times, during the infancy of the church, however the *soundest* and most entire church that ever was, yet how was it *broken*! Broken, as by foreign persecutions, so by homebred divisions. Both these ways was the church during the apostles' time broken, distressed by enemies from without who persecuted it. *John Brinsley (1600-1665), in "The Healing of Israel's Breaches."*

Ver. 2. *It shaketh.* That is, presaging nothing but *ruin* and *downfall*, unless it be speedily underpropped, and *the breaches thereof* made up and *healed*. Thus did David look upon Israel's disease, and hereupon it was that he was so deeply affected with it, so earnestly desiring the cure of it. The reference, as interpreters conceive, is to those *homebred divisions*, those civil wars betwixt the two houses of Saul and David, after the death of Saul: then did the "*earth*", "the land, that land of Israel (as the Chaldee explains it), *quake and tremble*, being *broken, riven* (as the word in the original signifieth): even as the earth sometimes by earthquakes is riven, and torn asunder with prodigious chasms, openings, or gapings: so was that kingdom divided in those civil commotions, the nobles and commons taking parts and siding, some with David, some with Ishbosheth. *John Brinsley.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 2. The perturbation, the prayer, the plea. *G. R.*

PSALM 60:3

EXPOSITION

Ver. 3. *Thou hast showed thy people hard things.* Hardships had been heaped upon them, and the psalmist traces these rigorous providences to their fountainhead. Nothing had happened by chance, but all had come by

divine design and with a purpose, yet for all that things had gone hard with Israel. The psalmist claims that they were still the Lord's own people, though in the first verse he had said, "thou hast cast us off." The language of complaint is usually confused, and faith in time of trouble ere long contradicts the desponding statements of the flesh.

Thou hast made us to drink the wine of astonishment. Our afflictions have made us like men drunken with some potent and bitter wine; we are in amazement, confusion, delirium; our steps reel, and we stagger as those about to fall. The great physician gives his patients potent potions to purge out their abounding and deep seated diseases. Astonishing evils bring with them astonishing results. The grapes of the vineyard of sin produce a wine which fills the most hardened with anguish when justice compels them to quaff the cup. There is a fire water of anguish of soul which even to the righteous makes a cup of trembling, which causes them to be exceeding sorrowful almost unto death. When grief becomes so habitual as to be our drink, and to take the place of our joys, becoming our only wine, then are we in an evil case indeed.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 3. *Thou hast showed thy people hard things.* God will be sure to plough his own ground, whatsoever becometh of the waste; and to weed his own garden, though the rest of the world should be let alone to grow wild. *John Trapp.*

Ver. 3. *Thou hast given us to drink infatuation, or bewilderment, as men drink wine.* So Hupfeld explains the constructions, referring to Psalm 80:5, "Thou hast made them feed upon weeping like bread; "1 Kings 22:27, "Feed him with affliction as bread, and with affliction as water" **xj Le** **μνm**; Isaiah 30:20. But the apposition is capable of being explained in another way, for the second noun may in fact be a predicate further defining the first: "Thou hast given us wine to drink which is (not wine, but) bewilderment." *J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Ver. 3. *The wine of astonishment.* "Intoxicating wine." Hebrew, "Wine of staggering, "that is, which causeth staggering, or, in other words, intoxicating. Some render, "wine of stupor, "or stupefying. Symmachus, "wine of agitation, "and this sense I have adopted which is also that of the Syriac. *Benjamin Boothroyd.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 3. That God does afflict his people severely, and that he has good reason for the same.

Ver. 3. *The wine of astonishment.* A purgative, a tonic. Astonishing sin followed by astonishing chastisements, discoveries of corruption, of the spirituality of the law, of the terrors of divine wrath, and by astonishing depressions, temptations, and conflicts.

PSALM 60:4

EXPOSITION

Ver. 4. Here the strain takes a turn. The Lord has called back to himself his servants, and commissioned them for his service, presenting them with a standard to be used in his wars.

Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee. Their afflictions had led them to exhibit holy fear, and then being fitted for the Lord's favour, he gave them an ensign, which would be both a rallying point for their hosts, a proof that he had sent them to fight, and a guarantee of victory. The bravest men are usually intrusted with the banner, and it is certain that those who fear God must have less fear of man than any others. The Lord has given us the standard of the gospel, let us live to uphold it, and if needful die to defend it. Our right to contend for God, and our reason for expecting success, are found in the fact that the faith has been once committed to the saints, and that by the Lord himself.

That it may be displayed because of the truth. Banners are for the breeze, the sun, the battle. Israel might well come forth boldly, for a sacred standard was borne aloft before them. To publish the gospel is a sacred duty, to be ashamed of it a deadly sin. The truth of God was involved in the triumph of David's armies, he had promised them victory; and so in the proclamation of the gospel we need feel no hesitancy, for as surely as God is true he will give success to his own word. For the truth's sake, and because the true God is on our side, let us in these modern days of warfare emulate the warriors of Israel, and unfurl our banners to the breeze with confident joy. Dark signs of present or coming ill must not dishearten us; if

the Lord had meant to destroy us he would not have given us the gospel; the very fact that he has revealed himself in Christ Jesus involves the certainty of victory. *Magna est veritas et praevallebit.*

*Hard things thou hast upon us laid,
And made us drink most bitter wine;
But still thy banner we have displayed,
And borne aloft thy truth divine.*

*Our courage fails not, though the night
No earthly lamp avails to break,
For thou wilt soon arise in might,
And of our captors captives make.*

Selah. There is so much in the fact of a banner being given to the hosts of Israel, so much of hope, of duty, of comfort, that a pause is fitly introduced. The sense justifies it, and the more joyful strain of the music necessitates it.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 4. *Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee.* Perhaps the delivery of a *banner* was anciently esteemed an obligation to protect, and that the psalmist might consider it in this light, when, upon a victory over the Syrians and Edomites, after the public affairs of Israel had been in a bad state, he says, *Thou hast shewed thy people hard things*, etc. *Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee.* Though thou didst for a time give up thine Israel into the hands of their enemies, thou hast now given them an assurance of thy having received them under thy protection. *Thomas Harmer (1715-1788), in "Observations on Divers Passages of Scripture."*

Ver. 4. *Thou hast given a banner*, etc. Thou hast given us by the recent victory, after our prostrate condition, a banner of triumph to *lift up* (so the Hebrew), because of thy faithfulness to thy promise. *Truth* here answers to God's *holiness* (Psalm 60:6). So long as soldiers see their banner *uplifted*, they flock round it with confidence. But when it is prostrate their spirits and hopes fall. The *banner* is a pledge of safety, and a rallying point to those who fight under it. *A. R. Faussett.*

Ver. 4. *Thou hast given a banner*, etc. The psalmist compares the *salvation* which the Lord bestows upon his people to a highly excellent *banner*, which serves as a signal, to one lying prostrate in his misery, to

rise up, with an allusion perhaps to Numbers 21:8. "And the Lord said to Moses, Make thee a serpent, and set it upon a *standard pole*; and it happened that every one who was bitten, and looked at it, lived." At any rate, that passage in which the serpent is a symbol of the healing power of God, may serve to illustrate the passage before us. Compare *heal its breaches*. E. W. Hengstenberg.

Ver. 4. *A banner*, which is a sign or instrument: --

1. Of union. This people, who were lately divided and under several banners, thou hast now gathered together and united under one banner; to wit, under my government.
2. Of battle. Thou hast given us an army and power to oppose our enemies. We had our banner to set against theirs.
3. Of triumph. We have not lost our banner but gained theirs, and brought it away in triumph. Compare Psalm 20:5. *Matthew Poole*.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 4. The banner of the gospel.

- I. Why a banner? A rallying point, meant to fight under, etc.
- II. By whom given. *Thou*.
- III. To whom. *To them that fear thee*.
- IV. What is to be done with it. *To be displayed*.
- V. For what cause. *Because of the truth*. Truth promotes truth.

PSALM 60:5

EXPOSITION

Ver. 5. *That thy beloved may be delivered*. David was the Lord's beloved, his name signifies "dear, or beloved," and there was in Israel a remnant according to the election of grace, who were the beloved of the Lord; for their sakes the Lord wrought great marvels, and he had an eye to them in all his mighty acts. God's beloved are the inner seed, for whose sake he

preserves the entire nation, which acts as a husk to the vital part. This is the main design of providence, *That thy beloved may be delivered*; if it were not for their sakes he would neither give a banner nor send victory to it.

Save with thy right hand, and hear me. Save at once, before the prayer is over; the case is desperate unless there be immediate salvation. Tarry not, O Lord, till I have done pleading: save first and hear afterwards. The salvation must be a right royal and eminent one, such as only the omnipotent hand of God linked with his dexterous wisdom can achieve. Urgent distress puts men upon pressing and bold petitions such as this. We may by faith ask for and expect that our extremity will be God's opportunity; special and memorable deliverances will be wrought out when dire calamities appear to be imminent. Here is one suppliant for many, even as in the case of our Lord's intercession for his saints. He, the Lord's David, pleads for the rest of the beloved, beloved and accepted in him the Chief Beloved; he seeks salvation as though it were for himself, but his eye is ever upon all those who are one with him in the Father's love. When divine interposition is necessary for the rescue of the elect it must occur, for the first and greatest necessity of providence is the honour of God, and the salvation of his chosen. This is fixed fate, the centre of the immutable decree, the inmost thought of the unchangeable Jehovah.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 5. The deliverance of the elect needs a saving God, a mighty God (*right hand*), and a prayer hearing God.

Ver. 5. (*last clause*). *Save... and hear.* The remarkable order of these words suggests that--

1. In the purpose of God.
2. In the first works of grace.
3. Often under trial.
4. And specially in fierce temptations, Gods saving precedes man's praying.

PSALM 60:6

EXPOSITION

Ver. 6. *God hath spoken in his holiness.* Faith is never happier than when it can fall back upon the promise of God. She sets this over against all discouraging circumstances; let outward providences say what they will, the voice of a faithful God drowns every sound of tear. God had promised Israel victory, and David the kingdom; the holiness of God secured the fulfilment of his own covenant, and therefore the king spake confidently. The goodly land had been secured to the tribes by the promise made to Abraham, and that divine grant was an abundantly sufficient warrant for the belief that Israel's arms would be successful in battle. Believer make good use of this, and banish doubts while promises remain.

I will rejoice, or "I will triumph." Faith regards the promise not as fiction but fact, and therefore drinks in joy from it, and grasps victory by it. "God hath spoken; I will rejoice:" here is a fit motto for every soldier of the cross.

I will divide Shechem. As a victor David would allot the conquered territory to those to whom God had given it by lot. Shechem was an important portion of the country, which as yet had not yielded to his government; but he saw that by Jehovah's help it would be, and indeed was all his own. Faith divides the spoil, she is sure of what God has promised, and enters at once into possession.

And mete out the valley of Succoth. As the east so the west of Jordan should be allotted to the proper persons. Enemies should be expelled, and the landmarks of peaceful ownership set up. Where Jacob had pitched his tent, there his rightful heirs should till the soil. When God has spoken, his divine *shall*, our *I will*, becomes no idle boast, but the fit echo of the Lord's decree. Believer, up and take possession of covenant mercies. *Divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth.* Let not Canaanitish doubts and legalisms keep thee out of the inheritance of grace. Live up to thy privileges, take the good which God provides thee.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 6. *God hath spoken in his holiness.* That is, by Samuel he hath promised, as he is an holy God, and true of his word, that I should be king of all Israel, and now he hath performed it. (2 Samuel 5.) Yet Calvin speaks of it as not yet performed; but the course of the history makes it plain that David was now king over the parts of which he here speaketh. *I will divide Shechem*, as subjects to me as Joshua having the land under him, divided it amongst his people: so David being king over all the parts of the land, divides to his followers such portions as belonged unto them by inheritance, from which happily some of them had been expelled by the time of Ishbosheth his reign; or some families in the time of those wars might be utterly wasted away, and so the king having free power to dispose of their lands, might give them amongst his men, and take part to himself. *John Mayer.*

Ver. 6. *God hath spoken in his holiness.* That is, he hath given out his word from heaven, the habitation of his holiness and of his glory; or, he hath spoken it certainly, there is nothing but holiness in his word (and that is the strength of words). David having received this word stands assured, that as Shechem and Succoth, Gilead and Manasseh, Ephraim and Judah would willingly submit to him and yield obedience; so, also, that Moab, Edom, and Philistia, who were his professed enemies, should be subdued to him. He expected to conquer and triumph over them, to put them to the basest offices, as his vassals, because God had decreed and spoken it in his holiness. God hath spoken the word, saith he, therefore it shall be done, yea, it is done; and therefore David cried, *All's mine, Gilead in mine, Manasseh is mine, Moab and Edom are mine*, as soon as God had spoken the word. *Joseph Caryl.*

Ver. 6. *I will divide Shechem.* It is as much as if he should say, I will not look to have my share measured out by others, but I will divide it, and measure myself, and will be the right owner and possessor thereof. *Thomas Wilcocks.*

Ver. 6. *I will divide Shechem*, etc. Of *Shechem* and the *Valley of Succoth*, or *booths*, so called from Jacob's making *booths*, and *feeding his cattle* there. (See Genesis 33:17-18.) By these are meant Samaria; and *David's dividing* or *meting* them out, is a phrase to express his *dominion* over them, in being part of the *regal* power to *distribute* his province into cities and regions, and place judges and magistrates over them. To these the

addition of *Gilead* (which contained the whole region of *Bashan*, etc., on the *other side of Jordan*), and then the mention of *Manasseh* and *Ephraim*, are designed, as by so many parts, to denote the kingdom of Israel, or the ten tribes; and their being *his*, and *the strength of his head*, notes him to be the *Lord* over them, and to make use of their strength in his wars, for the defending or enlarging his dominions. And then *Judah* *yqqlwDm* *is my lawgiver*; as it refers to Jacob's prophecy of the *sceptre and lawgiver not departing from Judah*, denoting that to be the *royal tribe*; so by it is signified the *kingdom of Judah* (under which *Benjamin* is comprehended), that David is possessed of that also. *Henry Hammond*.

Ver. 6. *Succoth*. If the preceding views are correct, we may rest in the result, that the present Sâkût represents the name and site of the ancient Succoth...We passed obliquely along the northern slope of the same broad swell, where the ground was covered only by a thick crop of thistles. On our right was a region of lower ground to which we gradually descended; full of grass, wild oats, and thistles, with an occasional thornbush. The soil was like that of an Ohio bottom. The grass, intermingled with tall daisies, and the wild oats reached to the horses backs; while the thistles sometimes overtopped the rider's heads. All was now dry; and in some places it was difficult to make our way through the exuberant growth. At last we came to the cause of this fertility, a fine brook winding along the bottom. We crossed it, and passed up again obliquely over another like swell, covered as before only with thistles. Here was an ancient oil vat, very large and of a single stone; it was evidently brought hither, and indicates the former growth of the olive in these parts. We struck the same stream again at its source, called Ain el Beida, a large and fine fountain, surrounded with gardens of cucumbers, and watering an extensive tract. We were here on the edge of the higher portion of the Ghôr, where low ridges and swells project out from the foot of the western mountains, and form a rolling plain or plateau, which is well watered, arable and very extensively cultivated for wheat. The tract further east, which we had now crossed, may be said to extend to the high bank of the lower Jordan valley. It is less elevated, is more generally level, though crossed by low swells between the water courses, and has little tillage. The inhabitants of Tûbâs are divided into three hostile parties; and they carry their divisions into their agriculture in the Ghôr. One party sows at Ain el Beida, where we now were; another around Ain Makhûz, more in the north; and the third at Ridghah, Sâkût, and further south. The people of Teyâsâr also sow on the south of Mâlih;

the water of which is used for irrigation. The whole tract north of Wady Mâlih was said to be farmed from the government by one of the Sheiks of the Jenâr family, who live at Jeba and in its neighbourhood. By him it is again let to the different villages. *Robinson's "Biblical Researches in Palestine."*

Ver. 6-7. The chief and principal places where the seditious party had their residence and abode, were those which the psalmist mentions in the sixth and seventh verses, namely, *Shechem*, a city in the tribe of Ephraim; *Succoth*, a city in the tribe of Gad; *Gilead* and *Manasseh*, the utmost borders of the land of Canaan beyond Jordan. These were some of the chief places, which sided with Ishbosheth whilst he lived, as you may see, 2 Samuel 2; and, as it seemeth, they still cleaved to the house of Saul after he was dead, not acknowledging David for their king. *John Brinsley.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 6. God's holy promise, ground for present joy, and for boldly taking possession of the promised good.

PSALM 60:7

EXPOSITION

Ver. 7. *Gilead is mine, and Manasseh is mine.* He claims the whole land on account of the promise. Two other great divisions of the country he mentions, evidently delighting to survey the goodly land which the Lord had given him. All things are ours, whether things present or things to come; no mean portion belongs to the believer, and let him not think meanly of it. No enemy shall withhold from true faith what God has given her, for grace makes her mighty to wrest it from the foe. Life is mine, death is mine, for Christ is mine.

Ephraim also is the strength of mine head. All the military power of the valiant tribe was at the command of David, and he praises God for it. God will bow to the accomplishment of his purposes all the valour of men; the church may cry, "the prowess of armies is mine," God will overrule all their achievements for the progress of his cause.

Judah is my lawgiver. There the civil power was concentrated: the king being of that tribe sent forth his laws out of her midst. We know no lawgiver, but the King who came out of Judah. To all the claims of Rome, Or Oxford, or the councils of men, we pay no attention; we are free from all other ecclesiastical rule, but that of Christ: but we yield joyful obedience to him: *Judah is my lawgiver.* Amid distractions it is a great thing to have good and sound legislation, it was a balm for Israel's wounds, it is our joy in the Church of Christ.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 7. *Gilead is mine and Manasseh is mine.* That is to say, I will possess myself of them and rule over them; not as a *conqueror* over *slaves*, but as a lord over *subjects*, as a father over children, owning and acknowledging them as *mine*. They are my inheritance, and shall be my people, my subjects. *John Brinsley.*

Ver. 7. *Ephraim also is the strength of mine head.* The strong and warlike tribe of Ephraim being to the state what the helmet is to the warriors in battle; or, perhaps the allusion is to Deuteronomy 33:17: "His glory is like the firstling of his bullock, and his horns are like the horns of unicorns: with them he shall push the nations." *J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Ver. 7. *Judah is (or shall be) my lawgiver,* i.e., all his subjects should be brought under one *Head*, one governor, who should give them laws, according to which they should be ordered or governed, which power and authority belonged to the tribe of *Judah*, according to that prophecy of Jacob (Genesis 49:10), to which the psalmist here alludes. No way, no means to bring the people unto unity, to bring them into one *body*, but by bringing them under on *head*, one *law giver*, by whose laws they may be regulated and governed. Now in the church, and in matters of religion, this one *Head* is *Christ*, even that *Lion of the tribe of Judah*, as he is called (Revelation 5:5). He is the *Law giver* of his church, and let him so be. This will be found one, aye, and the only means to breed an holy and religious unity, and bring home straying, wandering sheep. *John Brinsley.*

Ver. 7. No government could stand which was not resident in Judah. *John Calvin.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 7. *Gilead is mine, and Manasseh is mine.* How, and in what respect this world is the Christian's.

Ver. 7. *Judah is my lawgiver.* The believer owning no law but that which comes from Christ.

PSALM 60:8

EXPOSITION

Ver. 8. Having looked at home with satisfaction, the hero king now looks abroad with exultation.

Moab, so injurious to me in former years, *is my washpot*. The basin into which the water falls when it is poured from an ewer upon my feet. A mere pot to hold the dirty water after my feet have been washed in it. Once she defiled Israel, according to the counsel of Balaam, the son of Beor; but she shall no longer be able to perpetrate such baseness; she shall be a washpot for those whom she sought to pollute. The wicked as we see in them the evil, the fruit, and the punishment of sin, shall help on the purification of the saints. This is contrary to their will, and to the nature of things, but faith finds honey in the lion, and a washpot in filthy Moab. David treats his foes as but insignificant and inconsiderable; a whole nation he counts but as a footbath for his kingdom.

Over Edom will I cast out my shoe. As a man when bathing throws his shoes on one side, so would he obtain his dominion over haughty Esau's descendants as easily as a man casts a shoe. Perhaps he would throw his shoe as nowadays men throw their glove, as a challenge to them to dare dispute his sway. He did not need draw a sword to smite his now crippled and utterly despondent adversary, for if he dared revolt he would only need to throw his slipper at him, and he would tremble. Easily are we victors when Omnipotence leads the way. The day shall come when the church shall with equal ease subdue China and Ethiopia to the sceptre of the Son of David. Every believer also may by faith triumph over all difficulties, and reign with him who hath made us kings and priests. "They overcame

through the blood of the Lamb, "shall yet be said of all who rest in the power of Jesus.

Philistia, triumph thou because of me. Be so subdued as to rejoice in my victories over my other foes. Or does he mean, I who smote thy champion have at length so subdued thee that thou shalt never be able to rejoice over Israel again; but if thou must needs triumph it must be with me, and not against me; or rather is it a taunting defiance, a piece of irony? O proud Philistia, where are thy vaunts? Where now thy haughty looks, and promised conquests? Thus dare we defy the last enemy, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" So utterly hopeless is the cause of hell when the Lord comes forth to the battle, that even the weakest daughter of Zion may shake her head at the enemy, and laugh him to scorn. O the glorifying of faith! There is not a grain of vain glory in it, but yet her holy boastings none can hinder. When the Lord speaks the promise, we will not be slow to rejoice and glory in it.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Ver. 8. *Moab is my washpot.* Implying that Moab should be reduced to slavery, it being the business of a slave to present the hand washing basin to his master. With the Greeks, *πλύνειν τινά*, to wash down any one, was a slang term, signifying to ridicule, abuse, or beat; hence we have the word *washpot* applied to the subject of such treatment. "You do not appear to be in your right senses, who make a washpot of me in the presence of many men." *Aristophanes. Thomas S. Millington, in "The Testimony of the Heathen to the Truths of Holy Writ, "1863.*

Ver. 8. (*second clause*). When, keeping in view the idea of washing the feet, a person throws his shoes, which he has taken off, to any one to be taken away or to be cleaned-- *Ēyl ihi* with *l [* and also with *l a*; 1 Kings 19:19, is "*to throw to any one*" -- the individual to whom it belongs to perform such an office must be a slave of the lowest kind. *E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Ver. 8. *Over Edom will I cast out my shoe*, which notes either contempt of them, as if he had said, O look upon them as worthy only to scrape and make clean my shoes. Or secondly, conquest over them --I will walk through Edom and subdue it. *Joseph Caryl.*

Ver. 8. *Over Edom will I cast out my shoe.* By extension, immission, or projection of the shoe, either upon the necks of people, or over their countries, is meant nothing else but to overcome, subdue, bring under power, possess, and subject to vileness such men and such countries. The very vulgar acceptation of the word *possession*, in the grammatical sense, imports as much; for the etymology of *possessio* is no more but *pedum positio*. This manner of speaking hath also allusion to the positive law recorded in Deuteronomy 25:6-10; for the letter of the law is, that is the kinsman would not marry the brother's widow and raise up seed unto his brother; the widow loosing his shoe, and spitting in his face, he lost the claim and interest of such possessions as belonged to the woman in right of her husband. And the house of such a man was called *domus discalceati*, that is to say, "The house of him that hath his shoe loosed." The practice also of this law we find recorded in the book of Ruth, in the case of Elimelech's land, between Boaz and the kinsman, about the widow Ruth, who had her interest by right of her husband in the said land. Moreover, the frequent use of this phrase meeting us very often in the book of God, makes this to be the meaning of the words, as clear as the day. This king elsewhere singing his trophies, saith, "They are fallen under my feet." "Caleb the son of Jephunneh; he shall see it, and to him will I give the land that he hath trodden upon." But the people must "not meddle with Mount Seir; for God would not give them thereof so much as a foot's breadth; "yet ever the place whereon the soles of their feet should tread, from the wilderness of Lebanon and from the river Euphrates unto the utmost sea, should be theirs. Psalm 18:38 Deuteronomy 1:36 2:5. *William Loe, in "A Sermon before the King at Theobalds, "entitled, "The King's Shoe, made and ordained to trample on, and to tread down enemies, "1623.*

Ver. 8. *Over Edom will I cast out my shoe.* Turnus, having slain Palias, --

"Bestrode the corpse, and pressed it with his foot."

Virgil.

Ver. 8. Of the Philistines he says, *Over Philistia it is mine to boast*; for so I would translate, and not, as is usual, *Philistia, triumph thou over me*, which does not yield a consistent meaning. *Hermann Venema.*

Ver. 8. (*last clause*). Let not our adversaries triumph over our *breaches*. "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy." Or, if they will, let them triumph: *Triumph thou, O Philistia, because of me, or over me. John Brinsley.*

Ver. 8-10. Moab in the East, Edom in the South, and Philistia in the West (the North is not mentioned, because the banner of David had already been victorious there.) *Augustus F. Tholuck.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 8. *Moab is my washpot.* How we may make sinners subservient to our sanctification. We are warned by their sin, and punishment, etc. See "Surgeon's Sermons, "No. 983, "Moab is my washpot."

PSALM 60:9

EXPOSITION

Ver. 9. As yet the interior fortresses of Edom had not been subdued. Their invading bands had been slain in the valley of salt, and David intended to push his conquests even to Petra the city of the rock, deemed to be impregnable.

Who will bring me into the strong city? It was all but inaccessible, and hence the question of David. When we have achieved great success it must be a stimulus to greater efforts, but it must not become a reason for self confidence. We must look to the strong for strength as much at the close of a campaign as at its beginning.

Who will lead me into Edom? High up among the stars stood the city of stone, but God could lead his servant up to it. No heights of grace are too elevated for us, the Lord being our leader, but we must beware of high things attempted in self reliance. EXCELSIOR is well enough as a cry, but we must look to the highest of all for guidance. Joab could not bring David into Edom. The veterans of the valley of salt could not force the passage, yet was it to be attempted, and David looked to the Lord for help. Heathen nations are yet to be subdued. The city of the seven hills must yet hear the gospel. Who will give the church the power to accomplish this? The answer is not far to seek.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 8-10. Moab in the East, Edom in the South, and Philistia in the West (the North is not mentioned, because the banner of David had already been victorious there.) *Augustus F. Tholuck.*

Ver. 9. *Who will lead me into Edom?* The entrance to Petra is by a narrow gorge, lined by lofty precipices, formed by the channel of a rivulet. This defile is nearly two miles in length. At some places the overhanging rocks approach so near to each other that only two horsemen can proceed abreast. *Dr. Tweedie, in "Ruined Cities of the East," 1859.*

Ver. 9. The believer, when he promises to himself great things, must neither be senseless of the difficulties of opposition which he is to meet with, nor of his own inability to overcome difficulties; but being sensible of both, must look to God for assistance and furniture to overcome; for when David considered the strength of the fenced royal cities of the enemy, he saith, *Who will bring me into the strong city? who will lead me into Edom? Wilt not thou, O God?* *David Dickson.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 9. The soul winner's question.

I. The object of attack; the strong city of man's heart, barricaded by depravity, ignorance, prejudice, custom, etc.

II. Our main design. To penetrate, to reach the citadel for Jesus.

III. Our great enquiry. Eloquence, learning, wit, none of these can force the gate, but there is One who can.

PSALM 60:10

EXPOSITION

Ver. 10. *Wilt not thou, O God, which hadst cast us off?* Yes, the chastising God is our only hope. He loves us still. For a small moment doth he forsake, but with great mercy does he gather his people. Strong to smite, he is also strong to save. He who proved to us our need of him by showing

us what poor creatures we are without him, will now reveal the glory of his help by conducting great enterprises to a noble issue.

And thou, O God, which didst not go out with our armies? The self same God art thou, and to thee faith cleaves. Though thou slay us, we will trust in thee, and look for thy merciful help.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 8-10. Moab in the East, Edom in the South, and Philistia in the West (the North is not mentioned, because the banner of David had already been victorious there.) *Augustus F. Tholuck.*

PSALM 60:11

EXPOSITION

Ver. 11. *Give us help from trouble.* Help us to overcome the disasters of civil strife and foreign invasion; save us from further incursions from without and division within. Do thou, O Lord, work this deliverance,

for vain is the help of man. We have painfully learned the utter impotence of armies, kings, and nations without thine help. Our banners trailed in the mire have proven our weakness without thee, but yonder standard borne aloft before us shall witness to our valour now that thou hast come to our rescue. How sweetly will this verse suit the tried people of God as a frequent ejaculation. We know how true it is.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 11. *For vain is the help of man.* As they had lately experimented in *Saul*, a king of their own choosing, but not able to save them from those proud Philistines. *John Trapp.*

Ver. 11. So long as sight and reason find footing in matters, there is no place for faith and hope; the abundance of human helps puts not grace to proof, but the strength of faith is in the absence of them all. A man is stronger when he goeth on his feet alone, than when he standeth by a grip in his infancy, or leaneth on a staff in his old age: the two feet of faith and

hope serve us best when we are fixed on the Rock of Sion alone. *William Struther.*

PSALM 60:12

EXPOSITION

Ver. 12. *Through God we shall do valiantly.* From God all power proceeds, and all we do well is done by divine operation; but still we, as soldiers of the great king, are to fight, and to fight valiantly too. Divine working is not an argument for human inaction, but rather is it the best excitement for courageous effort. Helped in the past, we shall also be helped in the future, and being assured of this we resolve to play the man.

For he it is that shall tread down our enemies. From him shall the might proceed, to him shall the honour be given. Like straw on the threshing floor beneath the feet of the oxen shall we tread upon our abject foes, but it shall rather be *his* foot which presses them down than ours; his hand shall go out against them so as to put them down and keep them in subjection. In the case of Christians there is much encouragement for a resolve similar to that of the first clause.

We shall do valiantly, we will not be ashamed of our colours, afraid of our foes, or fearful of our cause. The Lord is with us, omnipotence sustains us, and we will not hesitate, we dare not be cowards. O that our King, the true David, were come to claim the earth, for the kingdom is the Lord's, and he is the governor among the nations.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Ver. 12. *Through God we shall do,* etc. In war these two must be joined, and indeed in all actions: HE, *we*; *God* and *man*.

1. "We shall do valiantly, "for God helps not remiss, or cowardly, or negligent men.
2. And yet, that being done, the work is *his*: "He shall tread down; "the blow and the overthrow are not to be attributed to *us*, but to *him*.
Adam Clarke.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 12. Divine operation a reason for human activity.