Synopsis of the Books of the Bible

Psalms

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Book 3

The sphere of book 3

In the Third Book we get out into a larger sphere than the state of the residue of the Jews in the last days, whether in Jerusalem or driven out; and hence we find much less of the personal circumstances and feelings and associations of the Lord who, in His day, walked among them. The general interests of Israel are in view, and thus Israel's history is entered into. The whole national position is before us, still distinguishing a true-hearted residue. Remark here that, save one, we have no psalms of David in this book. Asaph, sons of Korah, Ethan, are the professed authors; I know of no reason to reject the alleged authorship. It is still the state of Israel in the last days: only that the general facts are spoken of in reference to the whole nation, not the particular details of the Jewish remnant, and of Christ as taking a place among them. It is much more Israel and general principles; there is more reference to their past history and God's dealings with them.

Book 1

The divisions of the first book — Psalm 1 to 41

The first book may be in general thus divided into distinct parts. The first eight psalms form a whole, an introductory whole to the entire collection of Psalms. This series may be subdivided into the first two, which, in a more particular manner, lay the basis of all that is taught or expressed in Psalms 3-7, and, finally, Psalm 8. The character of these I shall enter on immediately. At present I proceed with the order of the book. Psalms 9, 10 form the basis of the psalms which follow to the end of 15. They give, not the great principles which are at the foundation of all Israel's latter-day history, but the historical condition of the remnant in the latter day. Psalms 11-15 unfold the various thoughts and feelings which that condition, and the circumstances in which the pious remnant find themselves, give rise to. Psalms 16-24 present to us Messiah formally entering into the circumstances of the pious remnant, the testimonies of God, the sufferings of Messiah, and the final manifestation of His glory when He is owned as Jehovah on His return. The remnant are found in this series as in Psalms 17, 20, and 23; but the main subject spoken of in them, with the exception of Psalm 19, which gives the testimony of creation and the law, is Messiah. Psalms 25-39 present to us the various feelings of the remnant under these circumstances. The whole book closes and is complete with the true source of the Messiah's intervention in the counsels and plans of God, the place He took in humiliation, and the blessing which belonged to him who could with divine intelligence discern and enter into His humbled condition, and that of the righteous remnant who were associated with Him (for so indeed they were, and this is what the Psalms especially bring out).

The beauty and excellency of Messiah's moral character

It is extremely important that, on the one hand, some psalms should personally bring before us the Messiah; but it is also important that the moral traits which form the beauty and excellency of His

character in God's sight, and the attractive object which God delights to bless, should be brought before us also, that, on the one hand, we may delight in them, and, on the other, the indissoluble moral connection between Christ and the remnant may be brought into view. This connection of moral character and its display in Christ is very distinctly brought before us in the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount. There blessing is pronounced on those who exhibit certain moral traits and qualities. These characterise the remnant; yet, if they be carefully looked into, they will be found to be morally a description of Christ Himself. Hence it is that we find Him and the remnant so mixed up together in many psalms, while some, as I have said, present distinctively the great foundation of blessing in Himself. We may apprehend also thus the difference of the associations of Christ with the remnant of Israel and those of the assembly with Him. Those of the assembly begin when redemption is accomplished, and Christ is already exalted on high. By the Spirit sent down from heaven the saints are united to Christ there; and their experiences as Christians flow from their position as united to Christ consequent on accomplished redemption, and then in conflict with the world.

The Lord's associations with the remnant different from those with Christians

Previous to the knowledge of redemption, and for that very reason, saints may now pass through experiences analogous to, and in principle the same as, those of the Psalms, and find, in consequence, great comfort from them; but their own place, as Christians, is in union with Christ.* The Lord's associations with the remnant are different. They pass through their trials before the knowledge of redemption or its application in power to them. Their experiences are not the fruit of union with Christ. Christ has trod the same path, in grace towards them; not that they were united to Him, for He was alone; but He was afflicted in their affliction and oppression by the world. Death was before Him; the fruits of the penal government of God on them, manifested in the state in which Israel then was, He has entered into in grace, as we have seen. Suffering under wicked Israel, and oppressing Gentiles, as the remnant will in that day, He thus, by His Spirit prophetically, associates Himself with them in all their sorrows, and gives a voice by His Spirit to them on their way up to the discovery of redemption. {*Hence it is too that in the Romans we find experiences, because the soul is brought through the process which brings it into liberty; while in the Ephesians we find no experiences, because man is seen first dead in sins; and then united to Christ exalted to God's right hand. The Epistle to the Philippians gives us, almost exclusively, proper christian experience. Union belongs to the assembly's position alone, and is by the baptism of the Holy Ghost. By one Spirit we are all baptised into one body. He that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit. Union in scripture is not attributed simply to life. (Compare John 14:20.)}

This makes the tone and purport of the Psalms very plain. The "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" was on the cross when atoning work, the fruit of grace, was going on. Judgment on Israel was then suspended, and the Holy Ghost blessedly took this cry up by the mouth of Peter in Acts 3:17, where the return of Jesus to them (as the children of the prophets, and the people in whom the blessing of the nations was to be) was proposed on their repentance. This grace was then of no effect; but in the last days all the fruit of that cross and that cry on earth will be made good on earth, when they have

repented and looked on Him whom they have pierced. But this demand (as its final accomplishment will be also) was founded on atoning work, accomplished with God alone, which was based on grace and will bring grace; and not in connection with His sufferings from men, which bring judgment on men, His adversaries.

The call for judgment not found in the gospels

The Psalms constantly present to us this consequence of the wickedness of men against Christ, and the wish of the remnant that it may arrive. Such a wish will never be found expressed by Christ in the Gospels. He pronounces prophetic woes on others for hindering those that were entering in; but this is love to these souls. No call for judgment is found. In the Psalms, on the other hand, no such passage as "Father forgive them" is found; though the fruit of grace, after His own deliverance from the horns of the unicorns, is most strikingly unfolded. The gospel was the good news of the visitation of the world and of Israel in love by the Son of God. The incarnation was Christ entering alone into this path of love towards all. God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself. Nought else was, nought else could be, revealed and unfolded then. It was what He was personally in the world. But the remnant of God's people are to go through these sorrows. The only possible means of their deliverance was the destruction of their enemies. We shall go up from the midst of our sorrows to meet the Lord in the air; we have no need to wish our enemies destroyed in order to our deliverance; we have in the gospel to do with grace, with a heavenly Christ that is not passing through sorrows, and with glory.

The remnant call for the righteous execution of judgment in government

The remnant of Israel therefore call for this execution of judgment on their enemies. They have to do, not with that heavenly, sovereign, abounding grace which gives us a place with Christ clean out of the world (not of it, as He was not of it who was loved before the world was founded), but with the government of this world. Objects, no doubt, of grace themselves (and of mere grace, for they have rejected the promises in Christ presented to them in the truth of God, and have been concluded in unbelief that they might be the objects of mercy), still, they are the nation in whom the government of this world centres and in respect of whom it is displayed. Hence they await judgment, and the display of the righteous exercise of that government, and the cutting off of the oppressor and the wicked. Hence Christ (who has entered into, and will in spirit enter into, their sorrows, but was Himself cut off instead of seeing His enemies cut off, accomplishing a better and more glorious work) did not then ask for the world, but for those that were His, and that they might be with Him where He was. John 17 marks the formal contrast of the two systems. He would not call down fire from heaven would not execute righteous judgment. It is intimated indeed in the Sermon on the Mount that He was in the way with Israel (as in John, that the world had not known Him). Still, the christian path is to do well, suffer for it, and take it patiently, as He did.

Hence, while passing through the sufferings, He could only prophetically be associated with the desires and aspirations after judgment which will have their righteous place when the time of public divine government of this world and judgment is come. Hence already in Psalm 2 this is the place we find Him set in. All the psalms are constructed in view of that. Thus the remnant in suffering, calling for

judgment, reach back to Him who, though He never sought judgment for Himself, did suffer and will seek judgment for them and execute it — Himself the centre of that centre of earthly government divine. He is seen by the prophetic Spirit in the same circumstances, and the cry for judgment is heard. But it will be found that, wherever this is the case, as we have remarked, the remnant, other men, are found besides the Lord Himself.

The importance of seeing the position and thoughts of the remnant; Christ associated with them in grace

In principle, any suffering Jew might so speak; only, as Christ suffered above all, the terms used in the Psalms, where the demands for vengeance occur, sometimes rise up to circumstances which have been literally true in Him in His sorrow on earth. But the point of departure of the feeling, and of the whole of what is said, is any godly Jew whatever in the last days. Into that Christ has entered. The proper or exclusive personal application to Himself is only true when it is proved by the circumstances and the terms of the passage. The point of moral departure is always the remnant and their state. He is merely associated with them in the mind of the prophetic Spirit; though, as to the facts, He entered into deeper sorrow than they all. Hence the immense importance of first of all seeing the position and necessary thoughts of the remnant in the Psalms.

Christ is merely associated with them and their position in grace; though He must be the centre, and pre-eminent, wherever He is found. There is no possibility of understanding the Psalms at all otherwise. All interpretation is false which does not take this principle or truth as its point of departure. When we get into a prophetic and governmental order, even in the New Testament, we at once find the same demands of vengeance. It is judgment, and not grace. The souls under the altar in the Revelation desire that their blood may be avenged; and the holy apostles and prophets are called to rejoice over the destruction of Babylon.

This important principle then is to be laid down, that, in every psalm in which the godly remnant can have a part, that is, where the Person of Christ is not the direct subject (we have seen there are some, as Psalm 2 and Psalm 102, and others, which speak personally of Christ), the whole is not to be applied to Christ, nor the psalm itself, in general, primarily. It belongs to the condition of the remnant, and speaks of it; and the principle of God's dealings with them through Christ is often given as the great example of the sorrow of the suffering godly. And hence, in the circumstances it refers to, it may rise up to such as literally depict those through which Christ has passed, so as to show the way in which Christ has entered into their circumstances. This last may be evidently the most important part of the psalm. But this does not change the principle. There may be psalms where the remnant are introduced collaterally as objects of blessing in result, but where a particular part may be evidently applicable to Christ, who only procures that result.

Christ entirely alone in suffering in Psalm 22

Psalm 22 has a distinct and peculiar character, because there Christ, while speaking of sufferings common in kind, though not in degree, to Him and the remnant, yet, as in them already, passes into that

in which He was entirely alone. Indeed, the bringing these out in contrast is the very subject of the psalm. The godly have been, the remnant will be, in suffering. But the godly were delivered when they cried, so will the remnant; but Christ, perfect in the fullest sorrow, was not. So that Christ is really alone here; though, in order to show the contrast of this suffering with others in which saints could be, and had been, this last character of suffering is mentioned. The fact already mentioned (that, in the psalms expressive of the godly man's suffering from men, there is always the call for vengeance on the part of the speaker, and that in Christ's life — as the Gospels give it to us, that is, according to truth as personally come into the world, and standing as a witness alone in the world — He never does so, but the contrary when on the cross, and in His life-time forbids it, reproaching the disciples with not knowing what manner of spirit they were of) evidently has the most important influence on our judgment, how far and in what way we find the living historical Christ in the Psalms as a direct object.

To turn now to details.

The principle running through book 1

The attentive reader will remark that, in the order of which I have spoken of the psalms of the first book, a principle I have referred to is fully exemplified: that is, that standard psalms with some great principle or fact come first, and then a series expressive of the thoughts and feelings of the remnant produced by these. Thus Psalms 1, 2 are followed by Psalms 3-7, which depict the state of things as felt by the Psalmist connected with Psalms 1, 2, Christ being rejected (closing with the result in Psalm 8);* then Psalms 9, 10, the state of facts in the latter days; Psalms 11-15, the various feelings of the remnant connected with them. Next, Psalms 16-24 Christ and the whole testimony of God, and Christ on the cross or atonement, having been set before us, the feelings consequent on this are depicted from Psalms 25-39. Sins are acknowledged for the first time in Psalm 25. Trials and deliverance had been spoken of before; but sins could not be confessed but in view of, and as building on, the foundation of atonement, when God really taught. So it will be indeed historically with Israel in the last days; though that is not entered on here. {* Psalm 8, while it is the great result, is a mighty change in the position of Christ according to the counsels of God, which forms the basis of all that follows. It is referred to in John 1, in contrast with what Nathanael says, which refers to Psalm 2. It is found in Luke 9 and parallel passages, and quoted in Ephesians 1, 1 Corinthians 15, and unfolded in Hebrews 2. In the close also of John's Gospel, we have the three characters noticed on which these psalms are founded. God vindicates in testimony His rejected Son. He raises Lazarus, and the Son of God is glorified thereby. He rides into Jerusalem as king of Israel. Then the Greeks come up, and He says, The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified; but thus, to take this place in God's purpose, He must suffer and die. In John 13 consequently He begins His heavenly place. Psalms 1, 2 are in fact an introduction to the whole book. For His glory as Son of man, though prophesied of here when entered into is another sphere of glory. Still He is owned as such, as He ever called Himself such down here.}

The first two psalms: the law and Christ

I will now pursue in detail what the Lord may graciously afford me on the psalms of the first book. I have already said that the first two psalms lay the ground of the whole collection. They show the moral

character and position of the remnant; and the counsels of God as to Christ — King in Zion; the law and Christ, the two great grounds of God's dealing with Israel. Psalm 1 is the description of the godly remnant, and the blessing that accompanies their godliness according to the government of God. This blessing, save in the heart-comfort and peacefulness of an upright mind, has never been accomplished; but it is given in the same manner as the portion of the meek when Christ presents the kingdom (Matt. 5). They shall inherit the earth; but the kingdom was not, has not yet been, set up in power.* (This is the subject of Psalm 2). Hence the Lord in Matthew speaks of suffering for righteousness sake. The kingdom of heaven is the portion of those who do; and if suffering for His name's sake, then heaven itself comes in, and their reward there is great. {* But they are viewed as in the last days with the judgment at hand.} {** Peter makes the same distinction, 1 Peter 3:14; 4:14.}

Book 4

The contents and connection of the first four books of the psalms

The fourth Book is not so markedly separated from the third, as the preceding three from one another; and specially the third from the first two, because the third, while prophetically announcing the blessing, describes a state of things which leaves the expectation of divine interference to bring in the blessing in full play. The first had given the great principles of the position of the Jewish remnant in connection with the history of Christ; in the second, they are viewed as outside Jerusalem; the third turns to the condition of Israel as a nation restored to their land, but not yet in the full blessing of Jehovah; the fourth, as I have said, completes this by the coming of Messiah. This connects the nation and Christ, as well as the nation and Jehovah. Thus the book is introduced with the nation's connection with Jehovah, looking to His returning and finally blessing them, that His beauty may be upon them. The second psalm of the book shows Christ's connection with the nation as man in this world; the third psalm (Ps. 92) gives, in prophetic celebration, the great result, into the whole establishment of which the Psalm 93 to Psalm 100 enter; then some deeply interesting details as to Christ (Psalm 101, Psalm 102); while the general result, as displaying Jehovah's ways, is treated in the praises of Psalm 103, Psalm 104, as to Israel and the earth; Jehovah's dealings from the beginning, and Israel's ways, on the contrary, with Him, in Psalm 105, Psalm 106, which close the book.

Book 5

The viewpoint of the fifth book

In the fifth Book the people are looked at as brought back, and a general survey of God's ways taken, with a kind of divine commentary on it all, ending, as all His ways surely will, in praise.

Introduction

The character of the book of Psalms

The Book of Psalms has evidently a peculiar character. It is not the history of God's people, or of God's ways with them, nor is it the inculcation of positive doctrines or duties, nor the formal prophetic announcement of coming events. Many important events, doubtless, are alluded to in them, and they are immediately connected with various prophetic revelations (as, indeed, with precepts and all the other parts of the divine word to which I have just referred); but none of these form the true character of the book itself. The subjects too, of which the various parts of scripture I refer to treat, necessarily find their place in the thoughts expressed in the Psalms. But the Psalms do not directly treat of them.

The Psalms as the expression of the hearts of God's people and the work of the Spirit

The Psalms are almost all the expression of the sentiments produced in the hearts of God's people by the events (or I should speak more correctly if I said, prepared for them in the events), through which they pass, and indeed express the feelings, not only of the people of God, but often, as is known, those of the Lord Himself. They are the expression of the part the Spirit of God takes, as working in their hearts, in the sorrows and exercises of the saints. The Spirit works in connection with all the trials through which they pass, and the human infirmity which appears in those trials; in the midst of which it gives thoughts of faith and truth which are a provision for them in all that happens. We find in them consequently the hopes, fears, distress, confidence in God, which respectively fill the minds of the saints — sometimes the part which the Lord Himself takes personally in them, and that, occasionally, exclusive of all but Himself, the place which He has held that He might so sympathise with them. Hence a maturer spiritual judgment is required to judge rightly of the true bearing and application of the Psalms than for other parts of scripture; because we must be able to understand what dispensationally gives rise to them, and judge of the true place before God of those whose souls' wants are expressed in them; and this is so much the more difficult as the circumstances, state, and relationship with God, of the people whose feelings they express are not those in which we find ourselves. The piety they breathe is edifying for every time; the confidence they often express in God in the midst of trial has cheered the heart of many a tried servant of God in his own. This feeling is carefully to be preserved and cherished; yet it is for that very reason so much the more important that our spiritual judgment should recognise the position to which the sentiments contained in the Psalms refer, and which gives form to the piety which is found in them. Without doing this, the full power of redemption and the force of the gospel of the grace of God is lost for our own souls; and many expressions which have shocked the christian mind, unobservant of their true bearing and application, remain obscure and even unintelligible.

The heart that places itself in the position described in the Psalms returns back to experiences which belong to a legal state, and to one under discipline for failure and trial in that state, and to the hopes of an earthly people. A legal and, for a Christian, unbelieving state is sanctioned in the mind: we rest content in a spiritual state short of the knowledge of redemption; and while we think to retain the Psalms for ourselves, we keep ourselves in a state of soul in which we are deprived of the intelligence of their true use and our own privileges, and become incapable of the real understanding of, and true delight in, the Psalms themselves; and, what is more we miss the blessed and deeply instructive

apprehension of the tender and gracious sympathies of Christ in their true and divinely given application. The appropriating spirit of selfishness does not learn Christ as He is, as He is revealed, and the loss is really great. There are comforts and ministrations of grace for a soul under the law in the Psalms, because they apply to those under the law (and souls in that state have been relieved by them); but to use them in order to remain in this state, and to apply them prominently to ourselves, is, I repeat, to misapply the Psalms themselves, lose the power of what is given to us in them, and deprive ourselves of the true spiritual position in which the gospel sets us. The difference is simple and evident. Relationship with the Father is not, cannot be introduced in them, and we live out of that if we live in them, though obedience and confiding dependence be ever our right path.

The meaning and object of the Spirit of God in the psalms

I purpose in this study of the Psalms to examine the book as a whole, and each of the Psalms, so as to give a general idea of it. The most profitable manner of doing this (though the character of the Book of Psalms renders it more difficult here) will be, as I have attempted in the books we have already considered — to give the meaning and object of the Spirit of God, leaving the expression of the precious piety which it contains to the heart that alone is capable of estimating it, namely, one that feeds on Jesus through the grace of the Spirit of God.

The Psalms, and the workings of the Spirit of God expressed in them, belong properly in their application and true force to the circumstances of Judah and Israel, and are altogether founded on Israel's hopes and fears: and, I add, to the circumstances of Judah and Israel in the last days, though as to the moral state of things those last days began with the rejection of Christ. The piety and confidence in God with which they are filled find an echo, no doubt, in every believing heart, but this exercise, as expressed here, is in the midst of Israel. This judgment, of which the truth is evidently demonstrated by the reading of the Psalms themselves, is sanctioned by the Apostle Paul. He says, after citing the Psalms, "Now we know that whatsoever things the law says, it says to them who are under the law" (Rom. 3:19).

Their primary character: the remnant and Christ Himself

The Psalms then concern Judah and Israel, and the position in which those who belong to Judah and Israel are found. Their primary character is the expression of the working of the Spirit of Christ as to, or in, the remnant of the Jews* (or of Israel) in the last days. He enters into all their sorrows, giving expression to their confessions, their confidence of faith, their hopes, fears, thankfulness for deliverances obtained — in a word, to every exercise of their hearts in the circumstances in which they find themselves in the last days; so as to afford them the leading, the sanction, and the sympathy of the Spirit of Christ, and utterance to the working of that Spirit in them and even in Christ Himself. In addition to this, the Psalms present to us the place which Christ Himself when on earth took among them, in order to their having part in His sympathies, and to make their deliverance possible, and their confidence in God righteous, though they had sinned against Him. They do not as the Epistles, reason on the efficacy of His work; but in the Psalms which apply to Him, present His feeling in accomplishing it. They intimate to us also the place He took in heaven on His rejection, and ultimately

on the throne of the kingdom, but, save His present exaltation (which is only mentioned as a fact necessary to introduce, and to give the full character to Israel's ultimate deliverance), all that is revealed of the Lord in this His connection with Israel is expressed, not in narration but in the utterance of His own feelings in regard to the place He is in, as is the case with the remnant themselves. This feature it is which gives its peculiar character and interest to the Psalms. {*This so distinctly characterises the Psalms that there are very few indeed even of those which are prophetic of Christ, where the remnant is not found. In the second book they are not, because that element is distinctly presented as the primary subject in the first: the connection being moral through His entering into their sorrows in grace, this is easily understood. And it is necessary to remember this, to account for various passages in which they come in, though partly applicable to, or used by; Christ. See pp. 46, 47, 48, 50, and 51. [Book 1 introduction]}

Christ entering into the full depths of suffering with and for His people

They teach us thus that Christ entered into the full depths of suffering which made Him the vessel of sympathising grace with those who had to pass through them — and that as seeing and pleading with God in respect of them. In the path of His own humiliation, He got the tongue of the learned to know how to speak a word in season to him that was weary. They were sinners, could claim no exemption, count on no favour which could deliver and restore. They must, if He had not suffered for them, have taken the actual sufferings they had to undergo in connection with the guilt which left them in them without favour. But this was not God's thought; He was minded to deliver them, and Christ steps in in grace. He takes the guilt of those that should be delivered. That was vicarious suffering as a substitute. And He places Himself in the path of perfect obedience and love in the sorrow through which they had to pass. As obedient, He entered into that sorrow so as to draw down, through the atonement, the efficacy of God's delivering favour on those who should be in it, and be the pledge, in virtue of all this, of their deliverance out of it as standing thus for them, the sustainer of their hope in it, so that they should not fail.

Trial to bring the sense of guilt in a broken law and a rejected and crucified Messiah

Still, they must pass through sorrow, according to the righteous ways of God, in respect of their folly and wickedness, and to purify them inwardly from it. Into all this sorrow Christ entered, as He also bore their sins, to be a spring of life and sustainer of faith to them in it, when the hand of oppression should be heavy without, and the sense of guilt terrible within and hence no sense of favour, but that One who had assured to them and could convey this favour had taken up their cause with God, and passed through it for them. The full efficacy indeed of His work in their deliverance, in that one Man's dying for the nation, will not be known by them till they look on Him whom they have pierced. They are purposely left (and especially the remnant, because of their integrity; for the rest will join the idolatrous Gentiles for peace' sake) in the depth of trial, which, as ways of God in government, brings them through grace to the sense of their guilt in a broken law and a rejected and crucified Messiah, that they may truly know what each of them is, and bow before an offended Jehovah in integrity of heart, and

say, "Blessed be he that comes in the name of Jehovah."

The psalms under law and under grace

But, though the deliverance and a better salvation be not to come till then, still, in virtue of the work wrought to effect it, Christ can sustain and lead on their souls to it; and that is just what is done in these Psalms. These are His language to, or rather in, their souls when they are in the trouble — sometimes the record of how He has learned it. Hence too, souls yet under the law find such personal comfort under them. Let not any soul, let me remark in passing, suppose that deep heart interest in these sorrows of Christ is lost by passing from under the law to be under grace. There is immense gain. The difference is this — instead of using them merely selfishly (though surely rightly) for my own wants and sorrows, I, when under grace, enter in adoring contemplation and joyful love into all Christ's sorrows, in the deeper competency given by His Spirit dwelling in me. I go back now in peace, as He is on high, and I trace with divinely given interest and understanding (whatever my measure) all the sorrows through which He passed when here, tracing this "path of life" in love to us across a world of sin and woe, glorifying God in it, through death itself, to the righteous glory in which He now is. Christ comforted His disciples in John 14, though not indeed as under law, but He says at the close, "If ye loved me, ye would rejoice because I said, I go to the Father." Under law the Psalms may comfort us in profitable distress; under grace we enjoy them as loving Christ and with divine intelligence.

The distinction between Christ and the remnant

But to return. The great foundation which had to be laid to make sympathy possible was, that Christ did not escape where the remnant of Israel will,* because He must suffer the full penalty of the guilt and evil, or He could not righteously and for God's glory deliver them. Thus Christ must pass personally fully through the sorrow as He did in spirit; and besides that, make atonement for the guilt. He passed through it, save in atonement work, near to God; and makes all the grace and favour of God towards Him, all that He found God to be for Him in sorrow, available, through the atonement, to those who should come to be in it, that they might thus have all the mind of God towards them in grace in that case to use when they found themselves in it, even though in darkness. If it be said, How can they when they have not yet learned that God is for them in the atonement? These Psalms, entering into every detail, are precisely the means of their doing so according to Isaiah 50, as already referred to. In truth, many Christians are in this state. They cling to promise, feel their sins, are comforted by hope, see the goodness of God, use the Psalms as suiting them, and do not know redemption nor peace. {*It is in the point of death that the sufferings of Christ, whether for righteousness' sake, and that which He underwent to be able to sympathise with them when they suffer under the government of God, on the one hand, or atonement on the other — the latter prefigured in the burnt and sin-offering (compare Heb. 9), the former the expression and testing of perfectness in the meat-offering — meet. Christ suffered onward up to death. Then He also made atonement for sin. Some of the remnant may suffer unto death, as faithful under the trials of this government; but then, like Christ, they will obtain a better resurrection Of course, the atoning part is exclusively His.}

The Psalms, then, belong properly to Israel,* and in Israel to the godly remnant. This is the first general principle, which the word itself establishes for us, as we have seen stated by Paul — What they say, they say to those under the law. {* I here use Israel as contrasted with the Assembly and Gentiles. We shall see Judah distinguished from Israel when we enter into details.}

The faithful remnant distinguished from the rest of the nation

In examining the Psalms themselves, we shall find other elements of this judgment, which are very clear and positive. The Psalms distinguish (Psalm 73) and commence by distinguishing (Psalm 1) the man who is faithful and godly, according to the law, from the rest of the nation. "The ungodly are not so," nor shall they "stand in the congregation of the righteous." Indeed, Isaiah teaches the same truth doctrinally just as strongly.* Their characteristic subject is the true believing remnant, the righteous in Israel (Psalm 16:3 and many others). It is, therefore, the portion and hope of Israel which are in view in them. In Psalm 1 this is definitely and distinctly presented. But it is the hope of a remnant, whose portion is from the commencement distinguished in the most marked way from that of the wicked. {*Compare Isa. 48:22; Isa. 57:21.}

The Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of prophecy, speaking in the psalms

Again, it is evident (and it is the second general principle I would notice), that it is the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of prophecy, which speaks. That is to say, it is the Spirit of Christ interesting Himself in the condition of the faithful remnant of Israel. This Spirit speaks of things to come as if they were present, as is always the case with the prophets. But this does not make it the less true that it is a spirit of prophecy which speaks of the future, and which in this respect often resumes its natural character. But if the Spirit of Christ is interested in the remnant of Israel, Christ's own sufferings must be announced, which were the complete proof of that interest, and without which it would have been unavailing. And we find, in fact, the most touching expressions of the sufferings of Christ, not historically, but just as He felt then, expressed as by His own lips at the moment He endured them.* It is always the Spirit (cp. 1 Peter 1:11) of Christ that speaks, as taking part Himself in the affliction and grief of His people, whether it is by His Spirit in them or Himself for them, as the sole means in presence of the just judgment of God, of delivering a beloved though guilty people. Hence we see the beautiful fitness of the language of the Psalms in a point I shall touch upon farther on. In the Psalms which speak properly of atonement Christ is alone, and thus His work is secured. In those which speak of sufferings not atoning in their nature, even though they go on up to death, parts may be found personally applicable to Christ, because He did personally and individually go through them, but in other parts of the same Psalms the saints also are brought in because they will have a share in them, and thus His personal sufferings are presented to us, but His sympathy too is secured. {*Hence the intimacy of feeling and peculiar interest of the Psalms. They are the beating of the heart of Him, the history of whose circumstances, the embodying of whose life, in relationship with God and man, whose external presentation, in a word, and all God's ways in respect of it, are found in the rest of scripture.}

Earthly deliverance sought; sins felt and confessed

Another principle connects itself with this, which gives the third great characteristic of the Psalms. The sins of the people would morally hinder the remnant's having confidence in God in their distress. Yet God alone can deliver them, and to Him they must look in integrity of heart.

We find both these points brought out: the distresses are laid before God, seeking for deliverance; and integrity is pleaded and the sins confessed at the very same time. Christ, having come into their sorrows, as we have seen, and made atonement, can lead them in spite of their sins and about their sins, to God. They do not indeed know at first perhaps the full forgiveness, but they go in the sense of grace as led by Christ's Spirit, (and how many souls are practically in this state!)* in expressions provided in these very Psalms, to the God of deliverances, confessing their sins also. They "take with them words and return to the Lord" (Hosea 14:2). Forgiveness also is presented to them. The Spirit of Christ being livingly in them (that is, as a principle of life), and fixing the purpose of their heart, they can, through confessing their sin, plead unfeignedly their integrity and fidelity to God. But the thought of mercy everywhere precedes that of righteousness as their ground of hope. In substance, all this is true of every renewed soul who has not yet found liberty, the liberty obtained by known redemption. The Psalms, unless certain praises at the close of the book and the end of some others, are never the expression of this liberty: and even when the expression of it is found, it is that of earthly deliverance or forgiveness. {*The state of the prodigal till he met his Father — the state of every soul, where the God who is light and love has been revealed in Christ; but redemption-work, and acceptance in Him are not known — there is confidence, but not peace.}

The psalms the expression of the Spirit of Christ in a Jewish remnant or in Christ as suffering for them

In sum, then, the Psalms are the expression of the Spirit of Christ, either in the Jewish remnant (or in that of all Israel), or in His own Person as suffering for them, in view of the counsels of God with respect to His elect earthly people. And since these counsels are to be accomplished more particularly in the latter days, it is the expression of the Spirit of Christ in this remnant in the midst of the events which will take place in those days, when God begins to deal again with His earthly people. The moral sufferings connected with those events have been more or less verified in the history of Christ on the earth; and whether in His life, or, yet more, in His death, He is linked with the interests and with the fate of this remnant. In Christ's history, at the time of His baptism by John, He already identified Himself with those that formed this remnant; not with the impenitent multitude of Israel, but with the first movement of the Spirit of God in these "excellent of the earth," which led them to recognise the truth of God in the mouth of John, and to submit to it. Now it is in this remnant that the promises made to Israel will be accomplished; so that, while only a remnant, their affections and hopes are those of the nation. On the cross, Jesus remained the only true faithful one before God in Israel — the personal foundation of the whole remnant that was to be delivered, as well as the accomplisher of that work on which their deliverance could be founded.

The threefold sufferings of Christ during life and on the cross

There are some further general observations on a point to which I have already alluded, which, while in a great measure they are drawn from the Psalms themselves, yet, through the light the Gospels also cast on it, may aid us in seeing the spirit of the whole book, and entering into the purport of many psalms in detail. I mean the sufferings of Christ. We have seen in general already that the book brings before us the remnant, its sorrows, hopes, and deliverance, and Christ's association with them in all these. He has entered into their sorrows, will be their deliverer, and has wrought the atonement which lays the foundation of their deliverance, as it does of the deliverance of any living soul — but He died for that nation. Of course His own perfection shines out in this; but here we are to look for its connection with Israel and the earth, though His personal exaltation to heaven be mentioned, from which their final deliverance flows. We are not, however, to look for the mystery of the assembly, which at this time was hid in God, nor for Christ viewed in His associations with the assembly. The Psalms furnish most exquisitely all the earthly experiences of Christ and His people which the Spirit of Christ would bring before us. We must look to the New Testament (as in Philippians, for example, and elsewhere) to find the heavenly ones of those He has redeemed.

Now Christ passed through every kind of moral suffering the human heart can go through, was tempted in all points like as we are, sin apart. Nor can anything be more fruitful in its place (for it must not be too long dwelt on in itself, and entirely separated from the divine side of His character, or it becomes profitless or hurtful, because really fleshly sentiment), than to have the heart engaged in contemplating the sorrows of the blessed Redeemer. Never were any like His. But the Psalms will bring them before us, and I refrain from entering on them here. In these introductory remarks, I can only shortly refer to the principles on which, and the positions in which, He suffered. There are, I think, three. He suffered from man for righteousness and love, for the testimony He bore in that which was good, in which He bore testimony to and revealed, God: He suffered from God for sin. These two distinct characters of suffering are very simple and plain to every believer's mind. The third kind of suffering supposes somewhat more attention to scripture. It is said of Jehovah's ways with Israel, "In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them." This was (as to the last part, yet will be) most especially fulfilled in Christ, Jehovah come as man in the midst of Israel. But the sufferings of Israel, at least of the remnant of the Jewish portion of the people, take a peculiar character at the close. They are under the oppression of Gentile power, in the midst of utter iniquity in Israel, yet are characterised by integrity of heart (indeed, this is what makes them the remnant), but conscious of, for that very reason, and suffering under, the present general consequences of sin under the government of God and the power of Satan and death. The deliverance which frees them from it not being yet come, the weight of these things is on their spirits. Into this sorrow Christ has also fully entered.

Sufferings from man and from God

During His whole life, up even to death itself, He suffered from man for righteousness' sake (see, in connection with this Psalm 11 and others). Besides this, on the cross He suffered for sin, drank the cup of wrath for sin, the cup His Father had given Him to drink. But besides these two kinds of suffering He bore in His soul, at the close of His life (we may say from after the paschal supper), all the distress and affliction under which the Jews will come through the government of God — not condemnation, but

still the consequence of sin. No doubt He had anticipated, and, so far felt it, as in John 12 the coming cross; but now He entered into it. It was, as to the point we are now on, as He said, apostate Israel's hour then and the power of darkness. But He was still looking to His Father in the sense of faithfulness. Nor was He yet forsaken of God. He could still look to man's watching with Him. What could watching do when divine wrath was upon Him? But the distinctive character of these kinds of suffering is clearly seen if we, as taught of God, weigh the psalms which speak of them respectively. Thus we shall see that, when He suffers from man, He looks, as speaking by His Spirit in and for Israel, for vengeance on man. Others too are then often seen to suffer with Him. When He suffers from God, He is wholly alone, and the consequences are unmingled blessing and grace. As to suffering from man, we can have the privilege of so suffering, having the fellowship of His sufferings. In suffering from God as under wrath, He did so that we might never have the least drop whatever of that cup; it would have been our everlasting ruin. In the sufferings He underwent under Satan's power, and darkness, and death, when not yet actually drinking the cup of wrath, besides what was due to the majesty of God in view of this (see Heb. 2:10), He suffered to sympathise with the Jews in their afflictions, which they come into through their integrity and yet in their sins. Every awakened soul under the law will find comfort in this. All these sufferings are entered into in the Psalms as to Christ and as to Israel. But the Jews passed into utter ruin, and loss of all the promises (save sovereign grace), and the remnant into their place of trial and sorrow as such, by the rejection of Messiah.

On the cross

It is to be remembered that, though all three principles of suffering are essentially different, and all very clear and important in their character, at the close of Christ's life all coalesced and united in the sorrows of His last hours — save that I doubt not, in coming out of Gethsemane, the pressure of Satan's power on His spirit had been gone through and was over, but on the cross He suffered from man for righteousness, and from God for sin only. I am persuaded that this last, when fully on His soul, was too deep to leave it possible for the other or anything else to be much felt.

Having made these general observations, which appeared to me necessary to understand the book, we will now examine, with the Lord's help, its contents; and may He indeed guide both myself and my reader in doing it! If it does depict Christ's sufferings and His interest in His people on earth, it behoves us to search into it reverently, yet with child-like confidence, and to wait — as indeed we ever should — upon His teaching, that we may be led and taught in our search. That which speaks of what He felt should be touched with confiding love, but with holy reverence.

The five books of the psalms

It is generally known that the Psalms are divided into five books, the first of which ends with Psalm 41; the second, with Psalm 72; the third, with Psalm 89; the fourth, with Psalm 106; and the fifth, with Psalm 150. Each of these books is distinguished, I doubt not, by an especial subject. Our examination of the Psalms contained in each will give the fullest insight into the character of the several books; but it may be well to give here a general notion of their contents.

The first book: the state of the Jewish remnant in Jerusalem

The subject of the first book is the state of the Jewish remnant before they have been driven out of Jerusalem, and hence of Christ Himself in connection with this remnant. We have more indeed of the personal history of Christ in the first than in all the rest. This will be readily understood, as He was thus going in and out with the remnant, while yet associated with Jerusalem. I use Jewish here in contradistinction with Israel or the whole nation.

The second book: the remnant cast out of Jerusalem

In the second book, the remnant are viewed as cast out of Jerusalem (Christ, of course, taking this place with them and giving its true place of hope to the remnant in this condition) The introduction of Christ, however, restores them, in the view of prophecy, to their position in relationship with Jehovah as a people before God (Psalm 45, Psalm 46). Previously, when cast out, they speak of God (Elohim) rather than Jehovah, for they have lost covenant blessings; but by this they learn to know Him much better. I doubt not, the history of Christ's life afforded occasion to His entering into the practical personal sense of this condition of the people, though, of course, less historically His place in general. In Psalm 51 the remnant own the nation's (more precisely the Jews') guilt in rejecting Him.* {*I think it will be found that the first two books are somewhat distinguishable from the last three. The first two are more Christ personally among the Jews; the last three, more national and historical. And so Psalm 72, the last part of the first two books, closes with the Solomon reign.}

The third book: national deliverance and restoration of Israel

In the third book we have the deliverance and restoration of Israel as a nation, and God's ways towards them as such (Jerusalem, at the close, being the centre of His blessing and government). The dreadful effect of their being under the law, and the centring of all mercies in Christ are brought out in Psalm 88 and Psalm 89, closing with the cry for the accomplishing of the latter. Electing grace in royalty for deliverance, when all was lost, is presented in Psalm 87.

The fourth book: Jehovah the dwelling-place of Israel

In the fourth, we have Jehovah at all times the dwelling place of Israel. Israel is delivered by the coming of Jehovah. It may, in its main contents, be characterised as the bringing in the Only-begotten into the world. Jehovah having been always Israel's dwelling-place, they look for His deliverance. For this the Abrahamic and millennial names of God, Almighty and Most High, are introduced. And where is He to be found? Messiah says, "I seek them in Jehovah, the God of Israel." There He is indeed found. Thus there will be judgment on the wicked, and the righteous delivered. The full divine nature of Messiah, once cut off, is brought in to lay the ground for His having a part in the latter-day blessings, though once cut off. He is the unchangeable living Jehovah, the Creator. Then comes blessing on Israel, creation, judgment of the heathen, that Israel might enjoy the promises. But it is the same mercy which has so often spared them.

The fifth book: God's ways rehearsed, closing with triumphant praise

The last book is more general, a kind of moral on all, the close being triumphant praise.

Having spoken of the details of their restoration, through difficulties and dangers, and God's title to the whole land, the wickedness of the antichristian tool of the enemy, the exaltation of Messiah to Jehovah's right hand till His enemies are made His footstool, and the earthly people made willing in the day of His power — we have then a rehearsal of God's ways, a commentary on the whole condition of Israel and what they have passed through, and the principles on which they stand before God, the law being written in their hearts. Then the closing praises.

The order of the psalms, the stamp of the hand of the Spirit of God

As this rapid sketch will have shown (and the details I shall now enter on will show more clearly still), there is far more order in the Psalms than is generally supposed by those who take them up as each an isolated ode to serve as the expression of individual piety. They are not connected, it is true, in one continuous discourse or history, as other parts of scripture may be; but they express in a regular and orderly way distinct parts of the same subject; that is, as we have seen, the state of the remnant of the Jews or Israel in the latter day, their feelings, and Messiah's association with them. These topics are treated in the most orderly way. The Spirit of God, who has superintended the structure, as He has inspired the contents of the whole scripture, has stamped the unequivocal traces of His hand on this especial part of it. Who collected these divine songs, the work of diverse authors, and written at different epochs, I do not pretend to say. This the learning of divines may discuss; but the result cannot, I think, leave a doubt on the mind of any one who enters into their purport as to whose power wrought in it.

I have already noticed generally the subject of each of the five books. The distinction of subject I found in them had led me to divide the whole Book of Psalms in the same way, before my attention had been drawn to the well-known fact of its being so divided in the Hebrew Bible. But this principle of order is carried out also in the details of each of the books. This order in the first book, and the contents of the psalms which compose it, are now to occupy us. It is, perhaps, the most complete in the general and characteristic view it gives of the subjects treated of in the Psalms, and so far the most interesting. The others naturally pursue more the details which carry out the general idea thus given.

The principle running through the book

It will be remarked that the following principle runs through it, and indeed, more or less, the others when it is applicable:— some great truth or historical fact is brought forward as to Christ or the remnant, or both, and then a series of psalms follows, expressing the feelings and sentiments of the remnant in connection with that truth or fact.

Book 2

The contents of book 2 — psalms 42 to 72

In the second book, the remnant is viewed as outside Jerusalem, and the city as given up to wickedness. This is seen throughout it. The covenant connection of the Jews with Jehovah is lost, but God is trusted. When Messiah comes in, all is changed. We have further, more distinctly, the exaltation of Christ on high as the means of their deliverance, and His rejection and sorrow when down here. It closes with the millennial reign of Messiah in peace under the figure of Solomon. The spirit of the godly man is tested by these circumstances. And, as all hope of finding good in the people is given up, the soul of the believing remnant is more entirely looking to God Himself and attached to Him. It is with this that the book opens.

Psalm 1

The godly remnant on the earth

In Psalm 1, however, we have simply the godly remnant on the earth. I say remnant, for the subject of the psalm is spoken of as characterised by individual faithfulness. The ungodly, sinners, and scornful, are around him. The law is his delight. He is a godly Jew, keeping apart from the ungodly, and is blessed, and prospers. Such is the principle of the psalm. But to make it good the earthly judgment must come in. There the ungodly shall not stand, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous — then left free from the pressure of those who cared not for God. the psalm gives us the general character of the godly man, and the result under the judicial government of God.

The righteous and the wicked; the judgment of God

Another element is then brought in. Jehovah knows the way of the righteous — the way of the ungodly shall perish. It is a judgment on one side, and a moral approbation before that judgment come on the other, which is connected with the covenant-relationship of Jehovah with Israel. We have seen that Christ was on earth this godly man, and took His place among the faithful remnant, these excellent of the earth was perfect in that place. So far this psalm takes Him in; but that is not yet directly spoken of. Its subject is the character of the godly, and the result under the government of God, Jehovah, in the midst of His people. It is not yet suffering because of this. That is a circumstance which will come out in its time. It is the character of the godly man in presence of the wicked, and the result measured by the abiding principles of God's government. Jehovah knows the righteous — others shall positively perish. Psalm 1 is the moral character of the remnant, their position in the midst of the ungodly, and the general government of God, and the connection of Jehovah and the righteous.

Besides this, remark that the psalm places both in presence of a proximate judgment, by which the wicked are driven away like chaff, and the righteous form the congregation; that is, it refers definitely to the remnant in the last days. The principles of this psalm, the character of the persons spoken of in it, and their position, are clear enough, and important as laying one great part of the basis of the whole superstructure of the Psalms — God's government, and the trials of the remnant which seemed to deny

the government here spoken of, which is only to be made good in judgment when the mystery of God shall be finished. We are on the ground of Israel's place and of God's government according to the law, but the righteous distinguished from the wicked, and blessing, not the portion of all Israel as a whole, but of the righteous who will form the congregation when judgment is executed. Blessing is on the righteous, but these shall be the people when the ungodly shall be driven away as chaff. It is just the doctrine of the end of Isaiah (see Isa. 48:22; Isa. 57:20; Isa. 65; Isa. 66). Only in the last passage the judgment reaches the nations also.

A godly remnant of the people, delighting in the law, and the judgment of God, resulting in the congregation of the righteous, according to the true character of Jehovah, the wicked being driven away — such are the first truths presented to us, the moral government of God on the earth made good by judgment in Israel.* Hence the last days are clearly in view. {*More specifically in the Jews. The remnant of the Jews are spared and pass through the tribulation when two-thirds are cut off in the land (Zech. 13). The judgment of the ten tribes is outside the land, and the rebels do not enter into it (Ezek. 20). Israel is the general term of promise as applied to the nation.}

Psalm 2

Messiah: God's counsels concerning His anointed

The next great element of the condition of Israel and the government of God, is Messiah — the counsels of God concerning His Anointed. Here the heathen are brought in, and form the principal subject of the psalm; and again we find ourselves in the last days, when Christ's rights will be made good against the kings of the earth and all opposers. But Israel is again here the centre and sphere of the accomplishment of these counsels of God. The Anointed is to be King in Zion. The adversaries are the great ones of the nations, the evil reaching alas! to the heads of Israel who, as we shall find, "shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes" — "an ungodly nation" (Psalm 43) and as Peter also himself has taught us in applying this psalm.

The nation's presumptious resistance brings ruin

I have said that the counsels of God as to Messiah are the element here introduced to us of the ways of God treated of in the Psalms. But the psalm opens with the rising up of the nations to cast off His authority, and Jehovah's who establishes it, the apostate Jews, as we have seen, being engaged in this great rising alas! against God. The nations rage, the peoples imagine a vain thing — the kings of the earth, and the rulers would break the bands of Jehovah and His Anointed together. But this rising only brings in wrath and displeasure, against which all resistance will be vain. He that sits in the heavens shall laugh, Adonai* has them in derision; Jehovah, in spite of all, has set His King upon His holy hill of Zion. Such is the sure counsel of God made good by His power. Man's presumption in resistance only brings his ruin. {*The Lord, but not the word LORD which represents generally Jehovah in the English version; but that which gives the Lord as an official relative title.}

Christ born into the earth, owned Son of God by Jehovah

But more is then brought out. This King, who is He? Jehovah has said to Him, "Thou art my Son: this day have I begotten thee." It is One who — begotten on what can be called "to-day," that is, begotten in time — is owned Son by Jehovah. It is not then here the blessed and most precious truth of eternal sonship with the Father, though it is not to be dissociated from it, as if it could be without it, but One who — the Anointed Man, and that holy thing born into this world with the title, by His birth there also, of Son of God — is owned such of Jehovah. Thus, Paul tells us, this raising up Jesus (not raising up again) is the accomplishing the promises made to the fathers, quoting the psalm in confirmation. He quotes another passage for His resurrection and incorruptibility. Thus we have Christ born into the earth, owned Son of God by Jehovah.

The King, yet to reign in Zion, is now rejected

But large counsels flow from this title. He has only to ask of Jehovah, and the heathen are given Him for His inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession. He will rule them with a rod of iron and break them in pieces like a potter's vessel — break with resistless power, ruling in judgment all that impiously and impotently rise up against His throne. But this execution of judgment is not yet accomplished. The psalm itself invites the kings and judges to submission and humbly owning the Son, lest they perish if His wrath be kindled but a little. He is Himself to be trusted; and who can claim this but Jehovah?

This summons to the kings of the earth is founded, remark, on the establishing the title of Christ to royal judgment and power on the earth. But is Christ set King in Zion? He was cast out of it and hung upon the cross for better blessing and higher glory, even that He had with the Father before the world was, yet cast out of Zion, to which He presented Himself as king. And as to the heathen and the earthly inheritance, He has not yet asked for it; when He does, in the Father's time, He will surely give it, and so His foes be His footstool. He declares (John 17) that He did not ask about it, but about those given Him out of it. The kings of the earth reign on, many bearing His name to be found yet in rebellion when He shall take to Him His great power, and the nations be angry, and His wrath come. No rod of iron has yet touched them — the potter's vessel, broken as nothing, is not now their image. The Lord is not yet awakened to despise it. They reign by God's authority. But there is no king yet in Zion. Christ has been rejected. Meanwhile we know He is Adonai in the heavens.

The great elements of the latter-day history in psalms 1, 2

We have now the great elements of latter-day history, a Jewish remnant awaiting judgment, the wicked being still there, the heathen raging against Jehovah and His Anointed, He that sits in heaven laughing at their profitless rage, Jehovah setting Christ surely king in Zion, yea, upon His asking, giving Him all the nations for His inheritance (the submission of all to be enforced by resistless judgment). No sorrows here, not even as to the remnant in Psalm 1; but the counsels and decrees of God, and power such as none can resist. In a certain sense the kings of the earth did stand up and the rulers take counsel together, and — as to earthly power and scenes — succeeded. Christ was rejected and did not resist.

The great principles as to the place of the remnant unfolded in psalms 3-7

Where then is the remnant viewed in the Jewish scene of this world's history? What place have they? The great principles on which they stand are unfolded in the Psalms 3-7. It will be easily seen now how the first two psalms form the basis of the whole book, though the great body of its contents are the consequences of their non-fulfilment in the time to which those contents apply. Indeed in this the structure of the book resembles that of a great multitude of psalms — the thesis stated in the first or few first verses, and then the circumstances, often quite the opposite, through which the saint passes to arrive at what is expressed at the beginning of the psalm. The five following psalms then unfold to us, in general and in principle, the condition of the remnant and the thoughts and feelings produced by the Spirit of Christ in them, in the state of things consequent in Israel upon His personal rejection. The circumstances in which they find themselves are not historically alluded to till Psalms 9 and 10. Hence these psalms give the working of the Spirit of Christ in them in the suited moral fruits, so as to display the state of the godly remnant, the holy seed that is in Judah when all is ruined. The principles of their state, the elements of feeling unfolded in it, are brought before us. There is not the strong expression which flows from the pressure of circumstances; but each moral phase is exhibited, the different feelings to be produced by the Spirit of Christ in relationship to God.

Psalm 3

Surrounded by enemies, the godly man of the last days rests in peace

The first, Psalm 3, gives the condition in general in contrast with Psalm 2, and the support and confidence of faith in it. The troublers of the godly man are multiplied, haughty, and triumphing over him as having no help in God; but Jehovah is his shield. He lies down in peace, and by faith sees his enemies smitten and their power destroyed. Salvation belongs to Jehovah, and His blessing is upon His people. Here again, remark, we find the latter days; and, though surrounded by his enemies, the godly man rests in peace and prophetically sees their destruction, and blessing on Israel. It expresses confidence in God in the midst of hostile numbers, and without resource. Christ has surely entered fully into this; but the place of the psalm is in the latter days, after proof of the non accomplishment of Psalm 2, at His first presenting Himself as Messiah to Israel.

Psalm 4

Righteousness appealed to by the godly

Psalm 4 differs in this respect from Psalm 3, of which we shall see other examples, that it is not simple confidence, but appeals to righteousness against the sons of men, who turn all the glory that belongs to the people of Jehovah, and especially to their king, into shame; but Jehovah has chosen the godly. The light of Jehovah's countenance is his resource. In Psalm 3:4, and Psalm 4:1, the experienced mercy of Jehovah is referred to.

Psalm 5

The cry of the godly: God's character appealed to

In Psalm 5 the cry of the godly is presented, and the character of God, as necessarily responding to that of the godly, is appealed to as necessitating His hearing him and judging the wicked. If the godly love godliness, surely Jehovah does; if the godly abhor wickedness, surely He does. It answers to the "righteous Father" of the Lord in John 17: only there the answer was heaven; here, earth — the necessary consequence of the difference of Christ's position on earth and that of the remnant.

Psalm 6

The fear of Jehovah's deserved displeasure, and expectancy of mercy

In Psalm 6 the remnant take another ground. They are oppressed, their soul vexed, the extremity of distress presses on their spirit, and their conscience not being cleared gives the fear that Jehovah might be against them in anger, and they look that Jehovah should not rebuke them in anger nor chasten in hot displeasure, which they had as a nation deserved but which the redeemed heart deprecates. But they look to be saved through mercy and saved from death, and call on the wicked to depart, for Jehovah has heard.

Psalm 7

Appeal against persecutors: Jehovah judges His people

Psalm 7 appeals to Jehovah, on the ground of the righteous and more than righteous dealing of the godly with their enemies, that Jehovah may arise and awake to the judgment He has commanded, and that thus, by the deliverance of the remnant by judgment, the congregation of the various nations of the earth would compass Him about. He would then judge the peoples, thus distinctly bringing out the future judgment. Another point is brought out here. The Lord judges the righteous man. If a man turn not, but go on in his wickedness, His wrath will follow him.

The two principles connecting Christ on earth with the remnant

In all this we have the Spirit of Christ as it associates itself with the Jewish remnant, and in certain respects Christ Himself called to mind; that is, as passing through the circumstances which enabled Him to enter into theirs with truth (for we have seen that the effect on His soul personally was never what it is in the remnant). It is not His history, but His sympathy with them. There are two principles which connect Christ on earth and the remnant in the latter days: He takes them in grace into His place as on earth,* and He enters into theirs. As to the nature and principles of their life, the righteous have the sentiments of the Spirit of Christ as it would work in their state. Their appeals are the expression of

this. And God allows their claims (though they have not clear intelligence respecting this), furnishing in the Psalms expressions to them. It is a need and a desire too which the life that is in them legitimates to His heart who can take account of the ground Christ has laid for blessing, which makes Him righteous in forbearance, though the righteousness, as to the Jews, be not yet manifested. Their knowledge of what Jehovah is as respects integrity and oppression — what He has ever been — makes them look for a deliverance which seems impossible. {*See Matthew 17:24-27, already when here below. This may seem in a measure anticipation: still, He revealed the Father's name to them. Leviticus 9:22-24 strikingly shows this. The acceptance of the sacrifice by God was not manifested till Moses and Aaron had come out after going in (v. 24) Christ as priest and king. Then the people worship, but Aaron blessed from the offering before. We know by the Holy Ghost come out that the offering has been accepted, while the priest is yet within the veil. And hence the full value of divine righteousness.}

The expectation of faith

There is another expression to note here — "how long?" It expresses the expectation of faith. God cannot reject His people for ever: how long will He deal with them as if He did, and take no notice of oppression? Hence in one place He says, There is none that knoweth how long. As a whole, then, these psalms are a general exhibition of the state of the remnant of the Jews before God in the latter day, and the principles on which their souls stand as godly — not as yet the strong outpouring of their feelings under the trial of circumstances. Is Christ then absent from them all? Surely not, or the Psalms were not here. Christ entered in sympathy into their condition, forms the faith of their hearts in it by His Spirit, is thus fully found in their low estate in the best way. His own personal feelings when on earth they do not express,* though He has learnt by His own sorrows in like circumstances blessed truth! to have a word in season for him that is weary. {*I do not mean by this that none of the psalms do. We know this is not so, as Psalm 22 notably shows; nor that no sentence is found in psalms which are not wholly of Him which does express feelings He had. I have referred to several in the course of these notes and stated the principle of their application already; but I here speak of the psalms I am treating of (Psalms 3-7).}

Psalm 8

The Son of Man set over all the works of God's hands

We have now come to Psalm 8 which closes this unfolding of the condition of the remnant, and the counsels of God as to the rejected Anointed of Jehovah. What is said is still by the mouth of the now delivered remnant. "O Jehovah, our Lord!" In vain have the heathen risen up against Him! "How excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens." It is not now a king in Zion — though surely that will be true; but a glory set above the heavens. It is not now merely the people of the great King blessed; but wherever the children of men dwell, Jehovah's name, Israel's Lord, is great. Is it now as setting the Christ on His holy hill of Zion? No, it is in setting the Son of man, not merely over the children of men, but over everything His hand has created in all places of His dominion. He is set over all the works of His hand; none are excepted. He only is excepted who put all things under Him. And who is this Son of man? It is one made a little lower than the angels for the

suffering of death, crowned now with glory and honour, and set (which Hebrews 2, shows us is not yet accomplished) over all the works of God's hands.* He could not be rejected as Christ (even if that title was afterwards to be made good by Him who laughs from heaven at the impotent rage of the kings of the earth) without His having a yet more glorious place destined to Him in the counsels of God — the being gloriously crowned in heaven, and set over all things. Son of God and (Son of David) King in Zion was His title on earth. {*The littleness of man compared with the creation on high, gives occasion to the revelation of God's counsels in man. Compare John 1:49-51.}

The wider glory of the Son of Man consequent on His rejection

But His first rejection in this character throws Him out into this wider glory He had faithfully acquired too, what belonged by divine committal to the Son of man. Hence we see in the Gospels the Lord charging His disciples to say no more that He was the Christ (for He was now virtually rejected by Israel), because the Son of man must suffer and be rejected, delivered to the Gentiles, die, and rise again (Luke 9). This was grace to Israel therefore; but to man, to man in Christ. Still Israel's Lord, Jehovah, was thus excellent in all the earth. This is that with which the psalm closes, as the proper result in the mouth of the remnant, though it was brought about by, and dependent on, a much higher glory. God, in the presence of the rage and ill-will of His enemies, and to silence the oppressors and the pride of the enemy, and of the relentless pitiless persecutors of His saints and people, has chosen the weakest things of the earth to perfect praise.

We have had an example of this — a little anticipative example of this — in the reception of the rejected Christ riding into Jerusalem. It shall be fully accomplished in the last day. Then He had witness given to Him, as Son of God in raising Lazarus, as Son of David in thus riding into Jerusalem, as Son of man when the Greeks came up. But then He must die to have this last glory (John 11, John 12). In the last days all shall not thus fail on earth. It shall be accomplished in power. Meanwhile He is crowned with glory and honour in a better place. The psalm has an elevated and enlarged energy, as is suited to the great deliverance celebrated. Creation makes man so little in himself. What is he when we consider this vast and shining universe? But glance at Christ, and you see all its glories grow dim before the excellency of Him under whose feet all is put. Yea, they are lighted up again by that glory. Man is indeed great and above all in Him, the Son of man set over all things.

It is not the place here to enlarge on the use of this psalm in the New Testament; but it makes its use and import very clear. In 1 Corinthians 15 we see that it is accomplished in resurrection. In Hebrews 2 we see that the subjection of all things is in the world to come — that they are not yet put under Christ's feet, but that He is crowned already with glory and honour. Ephesians 1 shows that the church is united to Him in this place of glory, but that does not at all enter into the scope of the psalm. It was part of the mystery hid from ages and generations.

Review of the introductory psalms — 1-8

Before passing on, I would briefly review the ground we have gone over in these introductory psalms. First, the remnant in the latter day is set before us; then the counsels of God as to Messiah, but the kings

of the earth and the rulers setting themselves against Jehovah, and His Anointed. Yet He will be set king in Zion. Then Psalm 3 to Psalm 7 present the great principles on which the remnant will have to walk under the circumstances in which they find themselves, Christ being rejected. They do not afford us the deep expressions of feeling which the extent of distress brings out, but only the sentiments produced by grace in their position, so far as they are needed to give a voice to the feeling of grace and faith in it: Psalm 3 to Psalm 5 confidence; Psalms 6, 7, bowing of heart under distress; Psalm 3, simple confidence; Psalm 4, appeal to the God of righteousness, and the path of the righteous marked out; Psalm 5, he cries to Jehovah, because He discerns between the evil and the good, and the wicked thus must be removed, and Jehovah bless the righteous that trust in Him; Psalm 6, mercy is appealed to, as, distressed in spirit, he entreats Jehovah not to rebuke him in anger, and Jehovah has heard him in his distress to save him from death; Psalm 7, he appeals against his persecutors, contrasting their conduct and his own towards them, but Jehovah judges His people.

The future value of the psalms to the remnant; the difference between them and Christ in evil

These are the great elements of relationship between Jehovah and the remnant of His people in that day. How precious it will be for the remnant to have their faith sustained and given words to, above their fears, by these gracious witnesses of the Spirit of Christ, to guide them, and justify their best hopes, and calm their justest fears! It is not difficult, I think, to understand why Christ could not personally have the feelings and desires here expressed, and yet animate by His Spirit prophetically these same desires in the remnant, and enter into all their circumstances in sympathy. He came from heaven, and never lost the spirit that breathed there, though He was in the circumstances which earth brought upon Him; but that spirit is love. He was above evil in the power of love, and the consciousness of divine feelings which the Son of man who is in heaven would have, though He passed through every sorrow which the Son of man on earth could be subject to. He went through all the distress that sin and man's relentless enmity and the insensibility even of His disciples* could bring upon Him; but, while only the more sensible of it and feeling it the more deeply because He was perfect, He was above all the evil in love in the personal perfection of good. The remnant will not be so. They will be sustained of God, yet not only in the midst of evil, but under it, pressed by it, by the sense of guilt, by fear of wrath — not merely the deep sense of wrath, but a personally sifting dread of it. There is no deliverance for them without the destruction of their enemies; and they desire it. These are Jehovah's enemies too, and their desire is right (see Psalm 6:5, 7, 10). {*Not once did they understand what He said to them.}

This Christ, as we have said, did not. He was above all this enmity in heavenly love and through known communion with His Father, whose will He had peacefully to do in known approval: until, in the end, He entered into that dark valley, where, for our sakes and Israel's, He was indeed to meet wrath, but there His converse was with God. As to His human enemies, He only says, "If ye seek me, let these go their way," and all were prostrate before Him, and it is His to tell them in peace, "This is your hour and the power of darkness." Hence Himself, love divine, passing through every sorrow that Israel or we may have to pass through, He did so personally in love. All was felt, but He was above the evil in love to men, being in perfect communion with heaven and its loving favour. In this He is a pattern for

Christians, not for Israel. But He really went through all that the remnant can ever go through, yet was free enough from any power over Him to feel for others in it. This He does perfectly, and prophetically inspires the expressions of faith to those who, not knowing yet heavenly love and deliverance, are pressed under it; and gives utterance, by the prophetic Spirit towards God (as the Spirit would in such), to the sense of their oppression of heart which circumstances give occasion to, when divine favour and deliverance are not known.

The perfect sympathy of Christ

No one can enter into another's sorrows under this oppression so well as one who knows the cause of it, and what that produces in respect of relationship with God, but is not in it. Christ has been in all their affliction, and felt it, but not felt, as to others, what those who are under it, and necessarily and rightly occupied with themselves, feel. He felt for His oppressors with heavenly love. His sympathy, being perfect, has, by the prophetic Spirit, entered into all the remnant's circumstances and feelings, and given divinely-furnished expression to them. The heart may rise up and say, It is an easy thing to give it by the prophetic Spirit if He is not really in it. I answer, He was in every part of the affliction to the full, and infinitely more than the remnant ever will be, having suffered, withal, that which they never will because He has. But does His having a better feeling in that into which He entered hinder His having perfect sympathy with them? It enables Him to have it, as regards all the distress, which came from Satan, and from God when it was not merely a question of feeling for those from whom the distress came, when He was suffering Himself He went through all in the same way (only much more deeply) than they; and, as to a part and the deepest part of it, took on Himself what they never will have.

When the remnant are in the same sorrows, not knowing divine favour, He will minister to them, and through these psalms, all the feelings which God can look upon with approbation and listen to. He will conduct their souls through them. How often in trial when we hardly dare to express what we feel (for fear of offending God, in the uncertainties of a cloudy faith) does a text which utters our sorrows in a way which, being in the word, must be right, assuage the heart and give confidence in looking up to God! So will it be then.

Psalms 9 and 10

The circumstances of the remnant in the last days under oppression

In Psalm 9 and Psalm 10 we enter historically on the circumstances of the remnant in the last days in the land. The great principles having been laid down (the remnant — Messiah — trial in the midst of Israel through His rejection — a path He had learnt in person — glory in the Son of man), we get in these a preface as regards the circumstances, a laying of them down, that the scene of the exercises, the state of things which gives rise to these, and the deliverance wrought by the judgment of God, may be plainly before us.

We may remark here, in confirmation of previously expressed judgments, that the righteous man, Messiah, according to the counsels of God, but rejected (with the consequent sorrows of the remnant

into which He thus enters), and in result glorified as Son of man, and set over all the works of God's hands, having been brought before us in the first eight psalms, we find ourselves at once (when entering on the historical detail of circumstances) in the last days, the righteous remnant being under the oppression of the wicked and the heathen. Messiah, in Spirit, in the oppressed remnant, owns the righteousness of Jehovah, in judgment, sitting on the throne judging right.

The righteousness of God established in a heavenly way

Remark the great difference here, in passing, between the celebration of the righteousness of God, sitting in the throne, judging right, and vindicating the righteous man from the oppressor, and Christ on the cross, who was not vindicated on the earth, but declares Himself forsaken of God (His enemies, outwardly, having all their will against Him), and then righteousness being established in a heavenly way, God's righteousness in setting Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places. "Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more." As regards this righteousness, He was taken completely out of the world, so that the disciples — as in flesh, as was the case with the Jews — saw Him no more. He had glorified God, and was glorified in God, as God has been in Him. The righteousness which judged the oppressor, though executed by God who alone is really righteous and has power, had its sphere and measure in earthly government, and in discerning the righteous and the wicked among men, the oppressed and the oppressor. It was connected with the righteous government of God. The clear apprehension of this difference is a key to the whole frame of thought in the Psalms.

Various hebrew words translated (people)

Another point, it may be useful to remark, is this. In the English translation several words are translated people: Am* in the singular, people, or Ammi my people (Israel): Goim* heathens or nations, that is, those outside, who are in contrast with Israel as the people of God. Israel is so designated to mark its guilt, Psalm 43:1. Leummim the peoples and nations in general on the earth, the various races of mankind; Ammim* peoples in the plural, I think the nations viewed in connection with Israel restored and taken into relationship with Jehovah. {*Psalm 3:6. Psalm 3:8 (here "thy people," the same practically). *Psalm 2:8. The Hebrew references are to the verses in Hebrew. Psalm 7:7. *Psalm 7:8.}

Jehovah, the most high, a refuge, delivering by judgment

To turn now to the psalms before us: Psalm 9 presents to us Jehovah, the Most High (the names of God which connect themselves with the Jews, and the millennial accomplishment of the promises made to Abraham), delivering the people by judgment from the oppression of the heathen, and destroying the wicked. The delivered Jew celebrates this goodness which has maintained the right and cause of the righteous. The Spirit of Christ speaks fully in this, as having taken up their interests. It is really His right. If the Jew has any, it is through Him. If they say it, He has put the words in their mouth. Indeed, if Christ had not entered into their sorrow, and given them these words, they could not have said, My right.

Let us consider this (as to circumstances) first leading psalm with somewhat more detail. The humble and oppressed one praises God with his whole heart, under the double name of Jehovah and Most High.* The turning back of his enemies is not merely a human victory. They fall and perish before the presence of Jehovah Elohim. But this was to maintain the right and cause of the godly one — really the right and cause of Christ, who had thus thrown Himself into their portion in gracious sympathy. In verse 6 a very important principle is brought out for faith at all times, then to be verified in fact. The efforts of the enemy here are for time. He can destroy, if God allow, present prosperity. The Lord endures for ever. We have only to do His will by the way. He has always His way at the end. That will which we do by the way, perhaps in sorrow and suffering then, will surely reign at the end of the way. Destructions were now to come to a perpetual end — the cities and their memory had been destroyed. Jehovah endures for ever. {*These names are not without importance. One is the abiding name of God in Israel, His memorial for ever; the other, the millennial name of God introduced by the judgments spoken of in the psalm. Compare Psalm 91 and Genesis 14:19-20.}

We have heard of the patience of Job — that was by the way; we have seen the end of the Lord — that is the ground for faith. It walks with Him who certainly has the end at His command. He shall endure for ever — has prepared His throne for judgment. He will judge the world universal in righteousness, and minister judgment to the peoples in uprightness. This was the public character of Jehovah. But there was a private part of His character, so to speak, the making of which however also public, is the great subject of the psalm; and indeed with that first public one, the great subject of all the psalms. Both are known only to faith, but are celebrated beforehand. This second part is this: Jehovah is a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. The result is confidence in Jehovah at all times on the part of those who know His name. The intervention of Jehovah in that day in favour of those that seek Him will make good this name everywhere.

Praise to Him who dwells in Zion for His mercy and judgment

Another point is brought out also. Jehovah dwells in Zion as thus revealing Himself. His doings, what He does for the display of His name through judgment in favour of the remnant, are to be declared among the peoples* — another word than that often used, and signifying, I apprehend, the peoples that He owns — that they may be able thus to trust in Him. He is returned thus to Zion at the close. Verses 13, 14, are the cry of the remnant, and on the ground of mercy, that their hearts may praise Jehovah in Zion, as well as because of His judgments; verse 15 celebrates the judgment; and the moral, so to speak, is told in verse 16. Jehovah is known by the judgment which He executes. The way in which this psalm serves as a preface for understanding the scope of the book, and its application to the last days, is evident. Once seized, it largely helps in the intelligence of the whole book. In verse 17 the wicked, be they who they may, Jew as well as Gentile, and indeed particularly the Jew, and all the nations who forget God,* are shown to be rejected and judged, and to have their place in hades by judgment. And in this God remembers the needy, for the destruction of the wicked is their deliverance. Hence for this, for Jehovah to arise, is the cry of the remnant. This feature explains certain expressions in the psalms to which I have before alluded — the demand for judgment. Compare the characters of the judged ones in Romans 1, 2. Only there the wrath is from heaven, not governmental on earth from Zion; and a greater

moral development will be found, as was to be expected, and not the external judgment of nations.** * Ammim, v. 11. Leummim, v. 8. Here in the plural. The difference is sometimes important, because, as Paul says, there is that wicked one. *Had not liked to retain God in their knowledge. **In Revelation 4 are found the characters of the seraphim as well as of the cherubim, as prefacing, I believe, the judgments there, as characterised as being according to the holy nature of God as well as governmental. It is true the application of Isaiah 6, where alone the seraphim are found, is to a governmental judgment, because grace preserved a remnant. But the incompatibility of Jehovah and uncleanness — with man in himself — is what the prophet sees.}

The state of things in the last days till Jehovah arises to judgment

The body of Psalm 10 depicts the state of things in the last days, until Jehovah arises to judgment, and more especially the character of the wicked, for he is known by his character, and is especially to be found in the Jew. Compare Isaiah 40-48 and Isaiah 49-58: in the one passage, the question being particularly idolatry and Babylon; in the second, the rejection of Messiah (the two capital sins which bring the Jews to judgment — Jehovah, and His Anointed). The wicked in his pride acts upon that which is seen; as the righteous by faith on the character of Jehovah, faith in Him. The wicked boasts himself in his heart's desire, and blesses him (counts him happy, that is) whom Jehovah abhors. He pursues his plans without conscience, seeking to destroy the humble by craft, and reckons that God has forgotten him. How well Christ could help them here! The humble cry under the oppression. Why does Jehovah stand afar off, and hide Himself in the time of trouble?

They were far indeed from being where Christ was, yet the shadow, so to speak, of that sorrow was passing over them, but they could hope in God. So in verse 12. They call upon God to lift up His hand — not forget the humble: why should the wicked contemn God? Jehovah has seen it and will requite; the poor committed himself to Him. Verse 16 to the end celebrates Jehovah's coming in in reply, and its results. Jehovah is King for ever; the heathen are perished out of His land. There is the public judgment; now the secret of the Lord. Jehovah has heard the desire of the humble. He prepared their heart, and then hearkened; and that hearing will be in judging, in being Judge for the fatherless and the oppressed, so that the man of the earth, he who had his strength and hope there, should no more oppress.

The heathen and the wicked characterised in psalms 9 and 10

One or two remarks are required on both psalms. There are two parties, and in a certain sense three, besides the poor humbled remnant who wait upon God: the heathen (Goim), strangers to Israel, who oppress them, enemies of God; and the wicked, then more especially among the Jews, as we have seen. I have said three, because the wicked are spoken of in a double way. In general, indeed exclusively so in Psalm 10 and each time it is used in Psalm 9, except verse 17, it is in the singular. In verse 17 it is plural, to show that all of them will be cast down into sheol. In the singular it is, I judge, characteristic; yet I doubt not, there will be one special wicked one, The Lawless One, 2 Thess. 2:8; the Antichrist, but known here certainly by his character, not by a distinct prophecy of his person. The lawlessness is manifested, but not The Lawless One, and it is not confined to one. The analogy of this, with the circumstances in which Christ was in His rejection on earth, is very plain, as is the case with all the

forms of wickedness. The very Trinity is imitated in mischief in the Apocalypse. There is the city of corruption, as the bride of Christ; and so on.

Up to this, save as the Messiah of God's counsels was brought out in Psalm 2, the righteous man was given characteristically, and here it was necessary to characterise the whole party opposed to Jehovah and His Christ, though one may be the concentrated expression of this character. The remnant were to judge by this character morally. Next, remark, these wicked ones are judged with the heathen; they all come together under the same judgment. The wicked shall be turned into "sheol," and all the heathen who forget God. So verse 5: "Thou hast rebuked the heathen, thou hast destroyed the wicked." Psalm 9 is, as we have seen, the general view of Jehovah's intervention in judgment. In Psalm 10 we have particularly the position of the sorrow and trial of the remnant within. Hence we find the wicked (man), not the heathen until on the execution of judgment they are found too to have perished out of Jehovah's land, so as to identify the judgment with the general statements of Psalm 9. How completely this all answers to the history we have of the latter days, I need not say.

Psalm 11

What the righteous are to do when evil is dominant

What the righteous remnant are to do when the power of evil is thus dominant in Emmanuel's land, Psalm 11 treats of. Psalms 11-15, as I have already remarked, give the thoughts and feelings of the remnant at that time (that is, consequent on the state of things spoken of in Psalms 9, 10). I will now trace the outline of these five psalms. Psalm 11 presents to us the righteous repelling the idea of quailing, as void of resource, before the godless wickedness of those who fear not God. He trusts in Jehovah. Still the wicked, with all will, seek the destruction of those who are true of heart. And if all human resource fails — all that was a ground on which hope could be built for the earth, what was the righteous to do? Jehovah is as stable as ever. He is in His holy temple — has His place on earth, which faith owns, let it be ever so desolate; and His throne is in heaven: no evil can enter there, and it rules over all.

But there is more than this. If He abide in sure repose, because Almighty and far above all evil, in heaven, He looks on the earth — He governs it, for this, not the assembly's heavenly portion, is our subject here and indeed in all the Old Testament. His eyes behold, His eyelids try, the children of men. This is a most solemn and consoling truth for those in trial. But the ways of God in government are still further revealed. The Lord tries the righteous: so the history of Job, a picture of what happens to Israel, teaches us. The present state of things is not in any way a revelation of the government of God. Faith knows God has the upper hand, and that all things work together for good to those that love Him; but immediate government, so that the present state of things should show the result of God's estimate of good and evil here below, is not in exercise. If it were so, no evil could be allowed. The righteous would flourish, and all he does prosper. But it is not so. The assembly, meanwhile, has her portion out of the world, has her place of abode where Christ has gone to prepare her one. She suffers with Him and will reign with Him. But as to all His saints, He tries them; as to the wicked, whom He abhors, upon them He will rain judgment, snares, and fire and brimstone; for the righteous Jehovah loves

righteousness, His countenance beholds the upright. Here is the clear ground for faith then, when the remnant are in trial. God beholds He tries the righteous, and will in due time execute judgment. It involves this: the righteous Jehovah loves righteousness.

Psalm 12

Evil presented to the Lord whose words are sure

Such is the general basis of the godly man's confidence and walk; but they are not insensible to the evil, but can present it to the Lord. This is the subject of Psalm 12, "Help, Jehovah, for the godly man ceases." Jehovah will cut off the proud and deceitful lips. It is the character of the wicked. He knows no check, no bridle to his will — says, Who is lord over us? But it is just for his oppression of the poor that Jehovah arises. God's word, on which these had relied, and which promised help as the necessary witness of Jehovah's character to which they looked, is a sure and well-tried word. It will bear infallibly its promised fruit. There is nothing deceitful in it. Jehovah will keep His poor from the generation of the wicked. But the wicked have full scope when the worthless are exalted on high.

Psalm 13

Apparently forgotten, the righteous is heard, and sings to Jehovah

In Psalm 13 the righteous is reduced to the lowest point of distress as far as evil from men goes. It is as if God had entirely and definitely forgotten him. His enemy was exalted over him, and he taking counsel in his heart; but then he cries — looks to Jehovah to hear lest he should perish on the one hand, and his enemy on the other have to say he had prevailed. But he is heard, and sings to Jehovah, in whose mercy he had trusted, and who deals bountifully with him at last.

Psalm 14

The climax of evil is reached; salvation looked for out of Zion

In Psalm 14 the evil has reached its climax in God's sight. What is ever true of flesh is now brought up under God's eye at the time when He is going to judge. Man rises up in pride before Him: yea, He judges because flesh does so. He looks down to see if any understand or seek Him amongst men; but there are none. A remnant indeed wrought in by grace, whom He already owns as His people (v. 4), are there, and these the wicked eat up as they would bread — they do not call on Jehovah. It is man's full-blown pride and wickedness; but all is soon changed: God is in the congregation of the righteous. Fear falls upon the proud, who but a while ago were scorning the poor for trusting Jehovah. The seventh verse shows us that all this is anticipative and prophetic, and where and how it will be accomplished. It is the desire of the godly one according to the intelligence of faith. He looks for it, note, out of Zion, not content till Jehovah establishes praise there. The people, too, remark, are seen as

in captivity.

Psalm 15

The reward of uprightness of heart in the path of law

Then comes the inquiry — who is the person that will have a share in the blessings of that holy hill, when the Lord shall have established the seat of His righteous power in Zion?

Psalm 15 gives the answer — he in whom is uprightness of heart in the path of the law. Remark here, that while the godly (when all is utterly dark, and wickedness has entirely the upper hand, and the foundations of human earthly hope, even in the things that belong to God on the earth, are destroyed, and wickedness is in the place of righteousness) look above and see God's throne immutable in heaven, and thus all in heaven and earth brought into connection; yet, as to the point they look to, it is Jehovah in His holy temple and deliverance coming out of Zion; and so it will (see Isaiah 66: 6). The immutable throne in heaven will establish in sure power the long desolate throne upon the earth. Jehovah will be in His temple, but will reign in the Person of Christ in Zion. This is Jewish deliverance and according to just Jewish hopes.

Full relationship with Jehovah enjoyed in trial

There is one important general remark to make here — the sense of full relationship with Jehovah is enjoyed. Whatever the trial, whatever the condition of the remnant, the wickedness of the people, the oppression of the Gentiles in the land, the faith of the remnant contemplates its relationship with Jehovah. And hence Jehovah is viewed as in His holy temple, though there is as yet no manifestation of His power. We have not, therefore, the remnant as yet entirely cast out, nor is the power of Antichrist here contemplated as manifested. When he sets up his power, there will be open apostasy, and the faithful will be driven out. But the wicked and the Gentile, as such, in the land, are contemplated. We learn clearly from this psalm (Ps. 11) that the wicked is characteristic. It is plural, except verse 5 where it is in contrast with the righteous.

The scope of Psalms 11-15 — the remnant among the nations, looking on in faith to deliverance out of Zion

These psalms, passing over the driving out from Jerusalem, go on in hope to another scene — the deliverance wrought by Jehovah when He is indeed returned to Jerusalem; not the destruction of Antichrist by the Lord coming from heaven, but the driving out of the Gentile oppressors by Jehovah established in Zion. Hence all Israel is brought in (Psalm 14:7). And their salvation comes out of Zion. Hence these psalms, as far as they refer to Christ, look at the time in which He walked on earth before His final rejection. They do not, save Psalm 2 and Psalm 8, directly refer to Him, but to the remnant. But in His public path on earth, He did, from His baptism by John Baptist, associate Himself graciously with them; as at the close He tasted in grace their final sorrows in the close of their history. These

psalms present to us the state of the remnant while still having their place among the nations who have not yet openly broken, in apostasy, with Jehovah, but whose wickedness is in fact showing itself, and ripening to its highest pitch. And they pass over, in faith, to the time when Jehovah, seated in Zion, delivers His people, casting all the Gentiles out of His land, all Israel being restored from their captivity. The whole latter-day scene, except the last half-week of Antichrist's power, is before us. Jehovah is still in His place, as publicly owned. It was just thus in the Lord's days. In Psalm 14:5, Elohim is spoken of, because it is not relationship which is there in question, but God Himself in His nature and character. Not man, or anything human, or even Satan's power, was there; but God was in the generation of the righteous.

Psalm 16

Christ formally takes His place in dependence among the remnant on earth

With Psalm 16 we begin a very important series of psalms — those in which the connection of Christ Himself with the remnant is brought before us by the divine Spirit. In Psalm 16, Christ takes formally His place among the remnant. It is quoted by the apostle Peter to prove His resurrection, and the principle of it is referred to in the epistle to the Hebrews to show His participation in human nature.* After examining many critical authorities, I adhere to the English translation of the second verse. The third leaves the sense obscure, from not changing the preposition. "But to the saints" answers to "said unto the Lord," not to "extends not to thee." He says to the Lord, "My goodness … to the saints, … in them is all my delight." Thus this psalm has a most important and deeply interesting place. It is Christ taking His place in grace amongst the poor remnant of Israel — of the servant to tread the path of life which none as in flesh had found in this world, and that leading through death to beyond it, where there was fulness of joy. He takes the place of dependence, of trust, not of divine equality. And He who says He does not, must have had title to do so, or need not have said it. He was taking another place. He takes the place of servant, and calls Jehovah His Lord. Nor was this all. He takes a place, however alone He might be in perfection and perfect in doing it, with the saints on earth. And this He does, not merely as a fact, but with the fullest affection. His delight is in them. He joys to call them the excellent of the earth. {*The quotation in Hebrews 2 is literally from the LXX of Isaiah 8.}

Note further, it is not with the heavenly saints He associates Himself, nor are those of whom He speaks here united to Him in heaven, but He associated with them. Some may go to heaven by that path of life of which He has Himself left the track, but His association with them, and theirs with Him, is under the title of the excellent of the earth.

We may further remark, that the whole psalm breathes this spirit, and takes this place, of dependence, so precious for the poor remnant. It is not, Destroy this temple and I will raise it up in three days — that was taking a divine place. His body was a temple; He raised it up Himself. Here He leans as man on Jehovah — in both perfect. " Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, nor wilt thou suffer thy Holy One to see corruption." Let us now consider the contents of this psalm in more detailed order. We have already noticed the first verses; but the principles are of the last importance, as presenting Christ taking this place, so that I return to them.

Messiah taking the place of a man with God

Messiah looks as man to God to preserve Him. He takes the place of man. It is not merely a Jew already there calling on Jehovah, but a man with God. He puts His trust in Him. The principle of trust Paul alleges in Hebrews 2 as a witness that Messiah was the true man. Next, He takes the place of a servant. He says to Jehovah — for now He takes His place before Him — "Thou art my Adon, my Lord." This is a definite and distinct place. He moreover takes His place, not in divine goodness towards others, but before God in a man's place. My goodness, He says, extends not to thee. Thus He said to the young man who came to Him, "Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is God." But though in truth alone, looked at in His relationship to man, for all were sinners, He takes His place with the remnant, the excellent of the earth. This He did historically, when He went to the baptism of John Baptist, with those whom the Spirit led to God in the holy path of repentance. They went first there. He associates Himself with them in grace. Still, we look on to the full result in the last days even here. He will not hear of any God but Jehovah. The sorrows of those who did should be multiplied. Jehovah Himself was His portion, and He maintained Him in the sure enjoyment of that which He was to enjoy in the purpose of God, and pleasant was the place where the lines had fallen to Him. It was Jehovah's inheritance on the earth that was His portion, and this is specially in Israel. Such was His portion; but then there was His path first. Here He blesses Jehovah too. His counsel was always His guide. He walked by it. The secret of Jehovah was with Him to guide Him; and away from men, when all was brought into the silence of His heart and its inmost feelings, His own inmost thoughts were light and guidance. It is ever so when we are in communion with God; for, though in the heart (such thoughts are always His light in it, the fruit, and the moral fruit, of the working of His Spirit) there was the positive direction and guidance of Jehovah, and those inward apprehensions of His soul, the result of divine work in it.

The perfection of Christ as a man

In Christ of course this was perfect. It is well, while judging of all by the word, not to neglect this working of the soul, as moved and taught of God. The mind of the Spirit in moral discernment, is found in it. Besides this guidance, there was positive purpose of heart. He had set Jehovah always before Him. This only direction did He follow, and because of His being near, and at His right hand, He would not be moved. It was not self-dependence, but trust in Jehovah. This was indeed the path of life, though as yet unmanifested in visible power (compare Rom. 1:4).

Hence He would rejoice through all, and pass through death with unclouded hope; His flesh should rest in it; as a man He did not fear it. Jehovah, whom He trusted, would not leave His soul in hades, nor suffer His Holy One to see corruption. Soul and body, though going respectively to the place of departed spirits and the place of corruption, would not be left in the one or see the other. Jehovah would show Him the path of life through, but beyond, death. How blessedly He did so! It led up to brighter joys than Israel's blessing, among whom He had come to sojourn. There indeed the excellent of the earth could not follow Him (John 13:33, 36; John 21:19). He must first dry up the waters of Jordan for them, and make it the path for them also where He was gone. For that path, since it led through death, must lead, if it was indeed the path of life, to what was beyond it — the presence of Him, in whose

presence there is fulness of joy and at whose right hand are pleasures for evermore.

Resurrection, the blessed issue and result of the Lord's path here

Such is the blessed issue and result of the Lord's path across this world, where He took His place among the saints, and trod, in confidence on Jehovah (into whose hands He committed His spirit), the path which, if He took us up, must lead through death, and then found the path again in resurrection, and so as man up to Him with whom is fulness of joy. The Spirit of holiness marked the life of the Son of God all through. He was declared to be such, with power, by resurrection; but, being man, passed up into the presence of God. The holy confiding life found its perfect joy there. He is (blessed be God, and the name of that blessed One who has trod this path!) our forerunner.* {*Compare as to a special aspect of this, John 12:23-24; and the Lord's consequent place, in chapters 11, 12, 13, as we have seen, had given testimony to His place according to Psalm 2. See note on Psalm 8.}

Christ's position in the midst of Israel; the difference between Israel's associations with Christ and those of the assembly

Let us dwell for a moment on the connection of this with other scriptures, partially referred to. It is of importance, as showing Christ's position in the midst of Israel, and the difference of their associations with Him, from those of the saints of the assembly. And besides that, we get the divinely perfect feelings of Christ Himself in this position: He is in association with the saints in Israel; only He voluntarily takes it (that is, that into which they are called out in witness of their return to God). We see (Heb. 2:13) that this association is with those that are sanctified. He makes one company with that pious remnant manifested thus for God. He is not ashamed to call them brethren, having taken up their cause and consequently become man, become flesh and blood, because the children whom God had given Him partook of it.

We see that He really became man, but to identify Himself with the interests, and to secure the blessing of the saints,* of the remnant, of the children whom God was bringing to glory, and who are distinguished from the mass of Israel, to whom they were to be a sign (see Isa. 8:18). In this passage the condition of this remnant and the expectation of better days are considered. Leaving aside the assembly which is not the subject of prophecy, the passage passes, as we often see, from Christ's personal connection with the saints in Israel to this position and portion of these saints in the last days. This is with sufficient distinctness given us in this passage of Isaiah to help us much in understanding the way in which the Spirit of God does pass from the previous history of the saints in Israel over to the last days, leaving out the assembly altogether. Christ, in spirit, contemplates these only — His connection, that is, with the remnant of Israel, and so far with the nation, and thus passes over the whole history of the assembly, to Himself again in the same connection with the nation in the last days. {*Thus, becoming man, and through glorifying God in His work as man, He has also title under God's gift over all flesh.}

"Bind up the testimony," He says (Isaiah 8:16-17), "seal the law among my disciples, and I will wait* upon Jehovah, who hides his face from the house of Israel, and will look for him." This was when He

had become the rejected sanctuary and the stumbling-stone. {*This is the passage quoted in Hebrews 2 "I will put my trust in him."}

It continues to the final glory, when Israel shall possess Him as the Son born to them (Isaiah 9:6-7). If we do not abstract the assembly, it is impossible to understand the prophecies of the Old Testament. The assembly has her heavenly portion, but Christ can consider His relationship with His earthly people separately.

Trust alone in Jehovah ending in the highest joy — the presence of God

To return to Psalm 16, the reader will remark the reference to idolatry (one of God's great controversies with Israel) in the fourth verse. From Matthew 12:43-45, and Isaiah 65 we learn that the Jews will fall into idolatry in the latter days. Jehovah alone is acknowledged by the prophetic Spirit of Christ. It is after this is all done away that He will rejoice, in the days that are to come, in the portion which Jehovah has given Him with the excellent of the earth. The certainty of this hope is connected with the resurrection (which is a necessary condition to its fulfilment, and which the favour of Jehovah secures to His Anointed) in all the virtue of that power which will not suffer His Holy One to see corruption. Hence the apostle refers to the sure mercies of David; that is, to the accomplishment of all God's promises to Israel, as a proof that Christ was to rise from the dead now no more to return to corruption. Nothing can be more beautiful (if it be not His death) than the expression of the Lord's feelings given us in this psalm — the expression by Himself of the place He has taken, and that with the saints. Jehovah is His own portion. How truly was it so! What other had He? Yet His delight was in the saints. Do we not see it in His disciples? With the first step of spiritual life in the remnant, shown in their going to John's baptism of repentance, He identifies Himself who surely had no need of repentance. So, as a faithful man, an Israelite, He sets Jehovah always before Him. So, even in death, He rests, in confidence, on Him for resurrection, that path of life through, and in spite of, death (and which He has opened for us), and there Jehovah, God, His Father's presence, is (He knows) the fulness of joy; at His right hand pleasures for evermore. This is the highest proper joy of the mind and Spirit of Christ; not glory, but the presence of God.

Psalm 17

An appeal to Jehovah's judgment; God's vindication

The key to Psalm 16 was in the words, "In thee do I put my trust"; to Psalm 17, "Hear the right." In Psalm 16 we have seen the blessed path and working of that spirit of confidence. It is, though the same spirit works in the remnant, essentially applicable to Christ Himself in Person. Psalm 17 doubtless applies to Him also, but not so entirely so. It is on somewhat lower ground, though one on which the Spirit of God speaks. We see distinctly that it contemplates others, though not without Christ, in verse 11. "They have now compassed us in our steps." Still, Christ is found here: without Him none really could say to purpose, Hear the right. It is an appeal to the judgment of Jehovah, God, coming forth to vindicate the righteousness of Him that cries to Him. The godly remnant will be, in the main, delivered

from their deadly enemies. Jehovah will arise and disappoint them.

Still, some will fall, even of the wise (Dan. 11:35) — Christ Himself, the perfect One, though for more glorious reasons, still in sympathy with His people, did. Hence the righteousness goes higher up than the present deliverance by God's government of the godly remnant on earth, to a result true of Christ, and a comfort for the faith of all those who may fall under the oppression of the enemy. "I will behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake up after thy likeness." This is fully true of Christ, who is before His Father in righteousness, and is the very image of the invisible God — He in whom He is displayed in glory. But He traces the path He trod as the righteous One on earth, in the midst of evil, and where He underwent the temptations of the enemy. First, there was perfect integrity of heart, and that in the most secret thoughts of it. There was purpose not to transgress. In obedience the words of God's lips guided Him; and thus the paths of the destroyer were never an instant entered on; the words of God's lips never lead there. This the Lord showed in His temptation in the wilderness. In the paths of Jehovah He looked to Him to hold up His goings. This is a part of righteousness in man — dependence. He called on God, sure that He would hear Him. This is the confidence we have. Such was His path.

Perfectness of moral character giving nearness of confidence and sense of preciousness to Jehovah

He applies it then as the ground of looking for the intervention of God's power to protect Him — as He does those that trust in Him - from the wicked that oppressed Him. Prosperous and lifted up as they were, Jehovah was His refuge when He did not yet interfere. But He looked to His openly doing so. Remark that the perfectness of moral character gives nearness of confidence and sense of preciousness to Jehovah. Even in us God would have this. We are of more value than many sparrows — the very hairs of our head counted. Here it is perfect, and He looks to be kept as the apple of the eye — that which is most preciously guarded by him whose it is.

Prosperous oppressors; death and another world

After all, these prosperous oppressors were but the hand of Jehovah — men of this world, who got all heart could desire from the outward providence of God. But what a lesson among Jews, whose legal portion was blessing in basket and store and children! (Compare the parables of Dives and Lazarus, and of the unjust steward). Here then the breach with this world, and a place in glory in the next, are fully contemplated. Jehovah's face in righteousness, and likeness to Him when thus woke up into another world, were well worth the portion of the men of this world. But here, mark, death and another world are contemplated, though deliverance is also (the remnant being more distinctly brought in). It is the same as we have seen in Matthew 5, where also both are contemplated. We have thus, in this first book, the Jews at the end of days, but in circumstances analogous to what Christ's life was, that is, moving as godly ones in the midst of the wicked people.

Psalm 18

Christ the centre of Israel's deliverances

Psalm 18 presents to us the connection of Christ, and particularly of His (not atoning suffering — that is found in Psalm 22, but His) entering into the sorrows of death, with the whole history of Israel. It is the connection of the deliverance of Israel and the final judgment executed in their behalf on the earth with the title Christ had to that intervention. No doubt the atonement was absolutely necessary to this, but it is not on that side that His sufferings are looked at here. God delights in Him and answers Him according to His uprightness, and delivers the afflicted remnant, into whose sorrows He has entered, with Him. Christ is the centre, in a word, of the deliverances of Israel - the cause of their deliverance from Egypt, and of their complete and final redemption by power in the latter day, and then their personal Deliverer too. He is dependent on Jehovah, is heard, and His sorrows are before us; but at the close He works in the power of Jehovah the deliverance of His people, and then is the full witness of God's mercy (chesed) to His Anointed David and His seed for evermore. Mercy here is not simply such as we would speak of to sinners, but favour and grace shown and enjoyed, so as even to be used for piety in man. It is particularly celebrated in Psalm 89, where, from these mercies centring all in Him, the term is applied to Christ in person. He is the chasid (v. 19). Hence the blessings conferred on Israel at the close (and indeed on all who enjoy them) are called by the same word "the sure mercies of David," confirmed by an everlasting covenant, and indeed, as the apostle shows us, secured by the resurrection of Christ, making their connection with His sorrows of death in this psalm very plain.

Psalm 18 an illustration of the then present and the future application of prophecy

This psalm presents us also with a direct scriptural proof and illustration of a most essentially important principle as to the nature of all the psalms, giving a key to their general character and form. We know from the book of Samuel that the occasion of this psalm was the celebration of David's deliverances from the hand of Saul and of all his enemies. But it is evident that the language of the psalm in no way stops short at any events in the life of David, or that in its main purport the Spirit of God contemplates even what happened to that already anointed sufferer, who was the occasion of the psalm. The Spirit of God takes up the circumstance which has present personal interest for him whom He uses as prophet merely, as the occasion to bring out the larger and wider scene of which Christ alone can be the centre, giving a meaning to the whole, in respect of which the more immediate circumstance only forms a partial, though perhaps a most interesting, link in the chain which leads up to the full display of God and His ways in the great result. So it was with all the prophets, only here more personally predictive. Sennacherib's invasion, for example, is the occasion of bringing on the scene the Assyrian of the latter days. Thus prophecies had an application of the deepest interest at the time and became the instrument of the present government of God, but were also the revelation of those ultimate events on the earth in the same peoples and nations in which the government of God would be fully and finally displayed. They are of no private interpretation. See 2 Peter 1:20. They formed part of the great scheme of divine government.

The psalms as the Spirit's provision for future days, or prophecy relating to Christ

In the Psalms the writer and immediate occasion sometimes almost wholly disappear, are never the main object, but are not to be lost sight of in the expressions used as the utterance of personal feeling, and which are not the revelation of objective facts. In the latter case the circumstances of the writer have little application. The Psalms necessarily bring in the speaker more, though believers find that the Holy Ghost used the speaker's feeling to provide for the hearts of others, yet commanded and wrought in them, and led the writer by His power far beyond anything that the occasion would have suggested to his own mind. The feeling, in its nature suited to the event which might give rise to the psalm, was only the occasion of the Holy Ghost taking the writer up to provide a divine record to guide feelings in future days, or to reveal those of Christ as taking up the cause of His people. They may be those of the speaker too, as in simple piety was often the case; but in all cases it was the Spirit's provision for future days, or a prophecy relating to Christ Himself and the part He takes in those dealings of God with Israel, and going on, looking at the book as a whole, to the full and undisguised celebration of the results.

Deliverance already accomplished by Jehovah

The psalm, as we have said, takes in the whole history of Israel, and speaks as in the time when deliverance from the pressure of hostile power is already accomplished. But it celebrates especially Jehovah Himself the Deliverer, and still declares the speaker's dependence on Him. This is the thesis of the psalm. It then, as is the usual form of the Psalms, goes through all the circumstances which lead the soul up to what is celebrated in the first verse or verses. Christ is seen, the sorrows of death compassing Him and floods of ungodly men besetting Him, the sorrows of hades upon Him and the cords of death about His soul. I have no doubt the letter of this was the expression of what David had felt, as indeed verse 50 shows. Still, as I have said, this was merely the occasion. The substance of it applies to Christ. He passes in His mind, as in Gethsemane, through the sorrows of death. This is the groundwork laid for all the rest.

Dependence and entreaty, and the results

The next point is dependence and entreaty. In His distress He calls upon Jehovah and cries to His God. He hears Him as in the midst of Israel, His cry comes before Him. Now comes the results. Christ but represented Israel here, for we have nothing to do with the assembly here. From verse 7-16 we have the deliverance of Israel from Egypt by the mighty acts of Jehovah. But these were not all Israel's difficulties. The power of his enemies was to be annulled, who were stronger than he as regards flesh. This also was accomplished, and he was brought into a wealthy place.

The righteousness in which God delighted

But this introduces another principle — the righteousness in which God delighted; and which, while found absolutely and perfectly only in Christ as a living man, yet characterises the remnant of Israel in

whose hearts the delight in God's law is written. This principle is brought out from the latter part of verses 19-26. Christ is the foundation of this, but it is as entering into the condition and sorrows of His people. He is the Israel in spirit; and hence, while all the value of His perfectness is before God for them, the perfectness of that One whose whole life, as identified with the remnant, was well-pleasing to Him, yet we must take the place and state of the remnant, as of David himself. For, though Christ entered into this place of the remnant in His own perfectness, to give the value of that perfectness to them before God, as agreeable in His sight, yet the state of those to whom it was to be applied is that which is substantially before us in the psalm. Hence we find, "I kept myself from mine iniquity."

This is most important in judging of the literal use of the Psalms. Christ could have said, "from iniquity"; but personally, "from mine iniquity," He could not. But the Spirit of godliness (of Christ) in the remnant thus working guards them from following the flesh. They own, that if Israel goes astray (and so they did all but universally in principle), this wickedness was theirs, in themselves; but they were kept from it. Now this is truth in the inward parts — just what God wants. It is the government of God which we have here distinctly brought out in its unchangeable principle (v. 25, 26). Now Christ, having taken up their cause, as associated with them, with these "excellent of the earth," all the value of what awakened God's delight in Him, and which, by grace, animated them, was their place of acceptance before God, though the atonement was the final ground of it. But in their case this integrity and divine inward nature were shown in keeping themselves from their natural course. But there was another part of this government, tender care of the afflicted ones, saving them and bringing down all man's pride (v. 27). In darkness there would be light. To the righteous there arises light in the darkness.

The coming in of Christ in power on the remnant's behalf

Now another scene dawns on us — the coming in of power in their behalf. And, as Christ had taken the sorrow at the beginning, and then we had the remnant in their own condition, yet Christ not separated from them in the way of interest and association (for it is not union here, that is the assembly's portion), so here He must take the power in Person too; just as in Mark He was engaged in the sowing and engaged in the harvest, all the intermediate time going on without His personal intervention or seeming care, though the crop was always His. God's word had stood good all through, and Jehovah Himself was a buckler to those that trusted in Him. But now He gives strength and victory to His anointed for Israel from verse 29 to the end. Doubtless the language is that of David, but it is substantially the introduction of the kingdom of Christ.

Resistless victory; introduction of what is millennial

A very few remarks will suffice to give the details, this general character of the latter part of the psalm being seized. The general strain is resistless victory. But in verse 43 there are particulars to be noted. Three classes of persons are here introduced: the people — He is delivered from their strivings; the heathen — He is made their head; then a people, not before known with which He had not been in relation as in Israel, shall serve Him. That is, Messiah delivered from the strivings and revoltings of ungodly Jews; made the head of the heathen; and then a people hitherto strangers should serve Him — become now a people to Him. Submission will be immediate, so evident is His glory and power now.

And even where there is no sincerity, or at least no proof of it, they will at once serve, bowing down to Him. This is the introduction of what is millennial. Here Jehovah is again recognised.

We return, so to speak, to the original thesis of the psalm, having arrived with Israel, or the Jews at least, across all the difficulties of the way. I do not see the Antichrist here. The only word which might seem to speak of him is in verse 48 — the man of violence; but I apprehend it is an enemy from without. Hence he praises among the heathen. The destruction of Antichrist would make him praise among the Jews. Here, it is to be remarked, though clothed with strength by God, Christ is seen as the dependent man, and on earth, whether suffering or victorious. We find Him (as we may have seen from the study of the details in verses 4-6, at the beginning of the psalm) in His sorrow and trial; and though David be partly in the scene, yet substantially Messiah again from verse 32. Between the two, it is Israel, first delivered as a nation, then in sorrow and calamity. Then the principles of God's government are stated, and the deliverance comes in. It is very interesting to see, after the Person of Messiah has been introduced, and His association with the godly remnant shown, the whole public history of Israel dependent from first to last on His interest in them, His having entered into their sorrows, afflicted in all their afflictions.

Psalm 19

The testimonies given to the world and to Israel: creation and the law

We now come (it is just the same order of thought in John 17) to the testimonies given in the world or to Israel. Psalm 19 gives us two: the creation, particularly that in the heavens, which is above man and has not been corrupted by him (this a testimony to God as such). Then the law (v. 7). This is the law of Jehovah. Here, in lowliness, the godly Jew takes two views of sin. First, he cannot tell his: so much lies hidden from him. Here he desires to be cleansed. Secondly, presumptuous sins: from these he desires to be kept. Thus he would be kept from any falling away from Jehovah.

Psalm 20

The faithful witness; association with Him as suffering

In Psalm 20 we have, in the midst of sorrows and evil come in as regards the two preceding testimonies, the faithful witness, the living witness Himself. He is seen in the day of His distress, for He is come down into the midst of an ungodly people. The remnant is prophetically designated by the fact that they in heart enter into His distress, assured that Jehovah will hear His Anointed.

Conscience then characterises the remnant, truth in the inward parts in presence of the law, and taking that law spiritually; interest of heart in Messiah, when He is the despised and rejected of men. Still we are in Israel, and the help is sought from the God of Israel, and still as dwelling amongst them, having His sanctuary there.

In Psalm 16 the Lord identified Himself with the remnant. Here they associate themselves in heart with Him thus suffering, and in His conflict here, though they may see as but the outside of it, yet be assured of His acceptance with Jehovah. They look for His offerings to be accepted, the desire of His heart and His counsels to be fulfilled, all His petitions accomplished. Their joy is in the full deliverance of this blessed but dependent One. In verse 6 we have the assurance of faith as to it, that from heaven itself Jehovah has heard, the mighty are fallen, the poor of the flock are raised up and maintained before Him.

Messiah invoked as King — the mystery of the manifestation of Christ in flesh

In verse 9 Messiah takes another place. While Jehovah had delivered Him as the dependent One in the day of His distress, the remnant now look to His hearing them when they call. Jehovah is still looked to as the Saviour, but Messiah the king is invoked. They now know that the Anointed is exalted. No part of scripture opens out the Person of Christ as the Psalms do, unless the first two chapters of Hebrews, which quote and serve as a key to them: here Messiah connected with the remnant in the dependent One, but exalted too as the king to be invoked of Israel. A little farther on we shall find that He is Jehovah Himself. I see no reason to alter the text according to the Septuagint, followed by others, such as the Latin. The Targum, and Syriac, and all Jewish interpretations, read as it is read in English. The other reading is, "Jehovah save the king" — "hear us," etc. Already in Psalm 21 Jehovah and the king are associated in judgment, as indeed we have seen they were already in Psalm 2. It is the very main point of instruction in the Psalms the mystery of the manifestation of Christ in flesh.

Psalm 21

The divine answer to the cry of the suffering Messiah

In Psalm 21 we get the full answer to Psalm 20 and its desires, in the exaltation of Christ, throwing its light back on the true character of that psalm. The king rejoices in Jehovah's strength and exults in deliverance through it. What this is is then unfolded. The faithful longing of the remnant was that Jehovah would grant the suffering Messiah according to His own heart, that He would fulfil His petitions. Now in the exaltation of Christ they can say — the Spirit says for them — Thou, Jehovah, hast given Him His heart's desire, and not withholden the request of His lips. Nay, He was met by Jehovah's free and willing love towards Him, with the blessing of goodness, and was gloriously crowned by Him. But what had really passed and been done is more minutely revealed. He had asked life of Jehovah (compare Heb. 5). He gave it Him, but it was length of days for ever and ever, the abiding eternal life of the risen glorified man. That was the answer to the cry of the suffering Messiah when death was before Him. And this is clearly seen in what follows. His glory is great in this deliverance by Jehovah's delight. He was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father. Jehovah has laid honour and majesty upon Him. He has made Him most blessed for ever and glad with Jehovah's countenance. Such was the suffering Messiah's deliverance, the divine answer to His cry, His being glorified as the suffering man. It is not the wrath of God which He is here viewed as undergoing; on the

contrary, help is looked for from Jehovah when He is brought low. We have already seen the result of this — judgment on His enemies. Man's enmity and devices are seen. Man's judgment follows. The king's right hand finds out all His enemies. Jehovah shall swallow them up. It is not His atoning sufferings which are seen here, but the mischievous devices of men. Hence His sufferings do not bring peace, but judgment.We have here, then, Christ suffering and crying to Jehovah; Christ exalted as man, crowned with glory and honour; Christ executing judgment on His enemies. In the three psalms we have the witness of creation, the witness of law, and the Messiah's (the Faithful and True Witness) sufferings and exaltation — the true final witness of the righteous ways of God. This must be a revelation of all importance to the remnant in the latter day for suffering or for assured deliverance. Christ has suffered as man from men and for faithfulness; and judgment on man will be the consequence; meanwhile He is exalted on high. But He has suffered for sin from God. The facts connected with this last suffering are unfolded to us in Psalm 22 with its results also.

Psalm 22

The atoning sufferings of Christ

Here the sufferings of Christ have another and deeper character. We have before us that great work which is the foundation of all the blessing developed in the other psalms, and of every blessing and eternal glory, making the interest He takes in the saints possible, because it makes it righteous, and the very way of glorifying God. This psalm, as it has been already observed to be a common principle of their structure, gives us the theme in verse 1. Christ had suffered from man — from men alike heartless and violent: dogs had compassed Him, fat bulls of Bashan closed Him in. But if the measure of this was extreme, and felt more and otherwise than ordinary sufferings from men because it was wholly unrighteous and for Jehovah's sake, for whose name He suffered reproach; yet others had in some measure borne the suffering of violence and reproach from heartless men too, and for Jehovah's sake. If He in grace was the leader and finisher of faith, others through grace had trodden — it was their granted privilege, but His willing grace — some steps of that divinely marked-out path. But they trusted in Jehovah and they were delivered. Jehovah never left or forsook them. He had promised He would not. They knew in their consciences that He had never failed in one good or gracious thing He had promised.

A new, unrepeatable scene — the righteous One forsaken of God

But here was a suffering out of the reach of promise, yea, which was to lay the ground of its righteous accomplishment. It was a new scene, which none had been ever like, nor ever will be, in the history of eternity; which stands alone, The Righteous One forsaken of God. It cannot be repeated a second time; it would have lost its character and the repetition destroy or deny the witness of the first — God perfectly glorified, morally glorified, about evil; He has not been, if it has to be repeated. It is once for all, complete and perfect. The nature of God has been made good in testimony, morally, in the universe. How should that be repeated? I say again, if it had to be, neither had done it; but it is done. The divine glory is perfectly, eternally, made good. But for this in respect of good and evil — that righteousness

and grace, or love, where feebleness and evil are, should be made good — all that God is against evil must be verified and made good. Against whom? Who should endure it? Against the sinner it were everlasting misery, nor was love then displayed; what God is, not manifested. But the Lord gives Himself for this; — He who was able to bear it, and, in the lowest humiliation of those He took up, to accomplish it in their nature, He bears in His soul all that God is against evil. Tremendous moment!

Righteousness and judgment as felt by Christ the submissive One

It is this alone which makes us in any way apprehend what righteousness and judgment are. This is what is shown to us here. It is shown in the utterance of Christ, showing the fact and His sense of it. What it was in its depths no human heart can fathom. It is the fact which is given here, but as felt by Him. Yet we see the consciously righteous One, but the perfectly submissive One; the sense of His own nothingness as to His position, of the certain and immutable perfectness of Jehovah. He is righteous; He can say, "why?" — submissive: "yet thou continuest holy"; no working of will, calling God's ways into question; the clear and perfect state thus, which sees God's perfectness, come what will. For it was the one righteous One who had glorified God in all His ways, an exception from all God's ways in righteous grace with such. He is forsaken, cries, and is not heard. He is a worm and no man. But this could not last for ever, no more than He could be holden of death, having perfectly glorified God in going to the close of trial and awaiting His time. He who was the very delight of Jehovah all through could not be heard till all was accomplished; though more gloriously, and deservedly more gloriously, Jehovah's delight than any living righteousness, though ever so perfect, could claim to be. In that living righteousness He had glorified God about good, perfect in His obedience as man, and perfect in manifesting His Father's name of grace, declaring what God was, cost what it might. The reproaches of those that reproached God fell on Him. But now He glorified God in the place of evil as made sin. This, as we have seen, stands alone. " Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again." There in the place of sin before God, that is, as made sin, yet in that wherein obedience was absolute and perfect in entire self-devotedness to God — the contrary of sin — where God's righteousness found a motive for love, yet where it was made good in forsaking Him; there the foundation was laid of everlasting righteousness and everlasting blessing; there God perfectly glorified, the foundation laid for the accomplishment of all His counsels in glory.* {*The more we study the cross, the more we shall see that every question of good and evil was brought to an issue, and the immutable basis laid for perfect blessing according to what God is in righteousness and grace and majesty too, for the new heavens and new earth, wherein dwells righteousness. We come by the blessed testimony that it meets all our wants; but in contemplating it at peace, we see man in absolute sin, hating and rejecting God in grace and goodness; Satan's full power — the disciples fled in fear, and all the world else in his power against Christ; man in absolute goodness loving the Father and obedient, glorifying God in the very place of sin where it was needed, and at all cost; we see God in perfect righteousness against sin as nowhere else, and perfect love to the sinner. Innocence was conditional blessing. This is completed in perfectness, and its value can never change. It is everlasting righteousness. Hence the blessing of the new heavens and new earth is immutable. We have had an innocent Eden; a sinful world; and shall have, besides the reign of righteousness, new heavens and a new earth wherein dwells righteousness.}

God glorified; Christ heard

Then, when the work is complete, the moral work of glorifying God, He is heard from the horns of the unicorn. Man and all around was hidden, by a darkened heaven, from view, when all of God, and of the power, and powerlessness, of evil as against the sovereign goodness and righteousness of God, was brought to this divine issue, and God glorified about it. And all is between the soul of Him who is an offering for sin and the righteous Jehovah. And it was closed. He was perfect, had secured the glory of God, had glorified Him when He could not be heard, and was heard and it was finished. He goes down indeed into the grave, that trusty and irrefutable witness that all was closed of this great question of which death was the appointed witness, but only to rise without one element wanting that the work of propitiation and of glorifying God in respect of sin was completed, and the victory over every and the last enemy fully won. He was heard. Who could call it in question who knew that He was risen? And now what remained? Not sin; it was as regards the work to be accomplished for that purpose wholly and for ever put away as in God's sight though not in full result yet, but perfectly for those who had a part with Him.* Wrath for such? The cup had been drunk. Judgment against the sin, or of the sinner for it, where faith is? He had undergone it. The power of death upon the soul? It was overcome. Of Satan who wielded it? It was destroyed. But there was the full light of the Father's countenance and love, the delight of God in divine righteousness, and for us. Into this relationship Jesus now entered as established there in righteousness on the ground of what He had accomplished to glorify His Father; not merely in the everlasting delight which God had in His Person. Hence it was immutable for those who had a part with Him in this place, and for eternal blessedness in the new heavens and the new earth. The place was won for sinners in the putting away of their sin, and founded on the righteousness of God Himself. Into the full blessedness of this name (that is, true relationship with God revealed according to it) He now entered as man. {* And this is known by the Holy Ghost sent down when He had ascended on high. The new heavens and new earth wherein dwells righteousness will be the full result, while it is the manifestation of the just ground of unbelieving man's final condemnation. Christ in His lifetime uses naturally the term Father; on the cross, at the close of the hours of darkness, "my God, my God" (in dying, Father, and so before in Gethsemane); after His resurrection, Father and God: one, in His personal relationship and the Father's delight; the other; in divine righteousness, bringing us into it.}

The declaration of the Father's name to His brethren after His resurrection

But He had His brethren — those at least, with whom He associated Himself and whom He had at heart first of all after His Father's glory. He was entered into this cloudless place of delight. What remained for His heart was to declare the name which expressed it, and to know which was the being brought into it, to His brethren. "I will declare thy name unto my brethren." And this most precious witness of His love was exactly what He did after His resurrection: "Go, tell my brethren, I ascend to my Father and your Father, my God and your God." Remark, He was heard from the horns of the unicorn. It was on the completing the work, or His subjection of soul to death as divine judgment, that He was heard. When the obedience unto death was complete, hearing became righteous and necessary. The resurrection was the proof to man. But He could say, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit," and deliver it up to Him, and assure the thief he should be that day with Him in paradise.

Judgment executed and passed, followed by wide, outspread blessing on earth

I have already remarked an infinitely important characteristic of this psalm, so opposed to those which speak of Christ's suffering from man: I mean that all is grace — no word of judgment. Who was to be judged, when God had been the One to inflict the suffering — the hiding of whose face rather was the suffering — and the men who had a part in it, believing, had their sins put away by it? It was as to them the judgment, and the judgment executed and passed. Hence what follows is the wide out-spreading of wave beyond wave of blessing and nought else. We may remark, however, that the blessing here is all on earth: so much does the Lord confine Himself to Israel and the Jews in the Psalms. And though we have seen His own resurrection, and we shall see His ascension brought in, and the path of life thus opened up to faith into the presence of God Himself, yet the heavenly place for the saints is not unfolded. We know well that the truths on which the blessing is based carry us farther; but the psalm does not speak of them.

The widening circles of blessing and praise

"In the midst of the congregation will I sing to thee." The remnant then gathered is the first circle gathered into the place of praise; then millennial blessing — all Israel. Those that fear Jehovah are to praise Him. Men fear Jehovah, and only fear; but this work makes those that fear praise. Those that feared Jehovah in that day and suffered might take courage, for Christ was their warrant for deliverance and confidence (and could be, having made atonement), but for positive deliverance also; for Jehovah had not turned a deaf ear to the affliction of the afflicted, nor hid His face from him. When He cried, Jehovah heard. He had been for a time there: that had only wrought atonement. And now, heard when that was accomplished, He could assure others of deliverance also. The meek of the earth should now eat and be satisfied, and be at peace. But the blessing would not limit itself to Israel. All the ends of the world would remember themselves, and turn to Jehovah, and worship before Him; for the kingdom will then be Jehovah's. All should bow before Him. Nor was it confined to that generation: to the people that should be born those should declare that Jehovah had done this.

The wonderful work of Christ in Psalm 22 as to the outward, the expiatory sufferings on the cross

I cannot, in explaining the Psalms, meditate on the wonderful work on which this psalm is founded. I say founded, because the psalm speaks directly of the feelings of Christ under it, rather than of the work itself. I can only desire that this constant and exhaustless theme of the saint may have all the power on my reader's soul, as upon my own, that poor, but renewed, human beings, even by the power of the Holy Ghost, can be capable of. Our comfort as to peace is that God (as indeed His love gave it) estimates it fully; and, while He has glorified Jesus, has Himself accepted that work for our peace. My part here is to unfold, as well as I can, the structure of the psalm itself.

As to the outward sufferings the reader will remark how deep they were. But Christ alone, of all the righteous, must undergo forsaking of God; and, having often declared His confidence in, and intimacy with Jehovah, and taught His disciples to trust in Him, as ever hearing prayer, has publicly now to proclaim that He is not heard, but forsaken. What a tale it tells of what that hour was! But what is important is, as has been already remarked, that His sufferings from man bring judgment on His enemies; His forsaking of God, being expiatory, is a bearing of the judgment, and all that flows from it is unmingled grace. This work being expiatory, once He is heard from the horns of the unicorns, all is grace. A stream of grace flows out for the remnant, then for Israel, for the world, for the generation to come — all from the sure and divinely perfect work of atonement in the death of Christ. In the work, in the suffering, He was alone. Once that was finished, He takes His place in the congregation with which He surrounds Himself. Remark how perfect must Christ's knowledge of, and consequent joy be in, the name of God and Father, into the enjoyment of which He entered as man, consequent upon having put away sin, and the delight of God in Him and His work: all that God was against Him then, for Him, according to the virtue of this work, now. How well He must know what the deliverance out of His sufferings on the cross into this light is! Now this is the source of His praise. Such must be the character of ours, founded on the blessed certainty of being come out of the place of sin, death, and judgment, into the perfectness of divine favour. All that is not thus in the spirit of it is out of tune with Him who leads our praises.

Psalms 23 and 24

Confidence in Jehovah and practical righteousness

Psalm 23, and Psalm 24 go in a certain sense by themselves, giving the perfect confidence in the Shepherd, Jehovah, founded on the experience of what He is in all circumstances; and, secondly, the character of those who would have a part with Jacob. The two principles we have seen brought out as to Christ in Psalm 16, and Psalm 17 (and shown in many others); confidence in the faithfulness of Jehovah, and the practical righteousness which characterises those who will stand in Jehovah's holy place in the time of His millennial glory. But Jehovah Himself takes His place there as King of glory. This gives us the divine side in all its perfectness, of the principle of the path and the result in glory — glory on earth both as to the remnant, Christ, and Jehovah — with the blessed witness that on one side He took a place and part with the remnant in their divinely-given path, and on the other with Jehovah, for He was really a man, but really Jehovah; the daysman that laid his hand upon both.

What Jehovah is, in all circumstances — past, present, future

But we must examine them a little more closely. The comfort of Psalm 23 is not in what Jehovah gives, but in Himself. He does — it is the natural fruit of His grace at all times and will be the result — make us to lie down in green pastures, and lead us beside the waters of peace: pleasant food where there can be no drought, security in enjoying it, and guidance in divine refreshings in peace. Such is the portion given by His shepherd care; but still it is Himself as that which gives confidence and takes away care. Evil is come in: we have to feel it — we in ourselves, Christ in all that was around Him; so that He

could be full of sorrow and troubled — we alas! more than that. The Good Shepherd (and Christ is such for us) restores the soul, and leads us in paths of righteousness for His name's sake. The blessing depends on what He is, not on what we have got. I have blessing indeed, and learn it in green pastures; but, if troubled or gone astray, He restores. And not only sorrow and evil had come in with sin, but death too. Then He comes and leads me through it and comforts me. But there are enemies to meet. I have a table spread, on which I feast in their very presence. And how comforting this is to the Christian also! Hence, as it is Jehovah Himself, and not our circumstances, the soul has to depend on, it can say "Thou anointest my head with oil: my cup runs over." When I have contemplated all the pains and difficulties of the way, I have Jehovah Himself more distinctly as the blessing. Hence I can count on it for ever, for He changes not. Experienced in the past, in all the effects of the power of the enemy, and knowing what He Himself has been for me in them, I can reckon on it in the future and at all times. The end of the Lord's dealings will be our dwelling with Him for ever. The blessing thus, though less apparent, is much deeper and more personal, at the close; and, as we have said, the soul rests on Jehovah known in all circumstances, not in the blessing it was natural to Him to give.

An exercised soul thus has in result a far deeper blessing than an outwardly blessed one. So the result for Israel — still more for us — is more than the green pastures, in which originally Jehovah set him. It is the deep knowledge in a tried heart of the faithfulness of Jehovah: and thus, according to the blessing of His own nature, the rest will be His rest. The green pastures were suited to sheep; but the anointed head, and the cup running over, and the house of Jehovah for ever, were what suited Him who dwelt there. Such is the result, for the remnant, of trusting Jehovah, when the green pastures are for the time, at any rate, lost. Such will follow the Lamb. For us Christ is the Shepherd. We suffer with Him, and we have yet better blessing. The Shepherd's care is there meanwhile under another form.

What grace produced in the remnant

Psalm 24 gives, as we have seen, the other part of the condition of the remnant as to the good that is working in them — what grace produced in them. Jehovah was the Shepherd by the way. At the end the earth and the fulness of it are His — the world and those who dwell therein. Heaven does not here directly enter into the scene on the road, nor at the end of it; but Jehovah has a special place, a hill more especially His own, in the earth. Who shall ascend into it? We then get their character — clean hands, a pure heart. No idol-following heart, no false oath with his neighbour. Such shall be blessed. That is the generation, the real character of those who seek Jacob; for in Jacob is God's seat. They seek Jacob as the blessed people of Jehovah; but, if such ascend into the holy hill, and enter into the holy place, the crowning blessing is that Jehovah Himself enters in at the unfolded gates to dwell there. The victorious Lord Jehovah of hosts enters in. It is Christ Himself who took the place of His sheep to go before them, and has the place of Jehovah, as that which is His by right, and in which He is owned when the fulness of blessing comes in and is revealed.

This closes the development of Christ's place in connection with the remnant, first formally entered upon in Psalm 16. We have now to go through the position of the remnant on a new ground and a different footing.

Psalm 25

The whole case of the remnant laid before Jehovah

Christ has been introduced, not indeed yet in glory, but associating Himself with the remnant, and suffering even unto death for them. Hence their whole case can be prophetically gone into. And here for the first time we meet the confession of sins. It is not merely position — that we had from Psalms 3-7; nor the sense of circumstances which Psalms 11-15 gave, founded on Psalm 9, and Psalm 10; but the whole case of the remnant, as they will feel, entered into. The first word characterises them: "Unto thee, O Jehovah, will I lift up my soul." The godly man expresses his trust in his God, and prays that he may not be ashamed, but that those may that are wilfully wicked. The remnant are distinguished thus in verse 3. There is the desire to be shown Jehovah's ways, to be taught in His truth, for He was the God of their salvation: they always waited on Him.

Confession; mercy hoped for in Jehovah's name

Next, verse 6, he casts himself on what God is in mercy, as He had shown Himself, and pleads that He may not remember Israel's past sins, but himself according to His mercy. He knows Jehovah, that He is good and upright, and will therefore teach sinners in the way. His dealing with them is according to His own nature and character where He works in grace, goodness, and uprightness. This is an all-important point. Next, we get the present character of the remnant: they are the meek of the earth; these Jehovah would guide in judgment. All Jehovah's ways were mercy towards such; and faithfulness to promises and righteousness infallibly marked them. In it we have the fullest confession by the godly man of his own sin, not merely the former sins of Israel. He looks only for mercy, his iniquity is so great, and founds his hope on Jehovah's name. This is exceedingly beautiful. Jehovah's name, as revealed in Israel, had in the previous verses of this psalm been fully entered into; His ways of mercy and truth in Israel. The answer to this cry, in the effectual work of Christ, though testified of in the prophets, and forming in God's sight the ground-work of all, is not, I apprehend, at this time known by the godly remnant, nor till they look on Him whom they have pierced; but they have the ways of God, His promises, and the abundant declarations and invitations, yea, pleadings, of Jehovah in the prophets, that if their sins had been as scarlet, they should be as white as snow. All this revelation was Jehovah's name to them; and to this they look, something in the state, though not exactly, of the poor woman in the city that was a sinner before she received the Lord's answer of peace.

In verses 12-14 we get the prophetic answer of the Spirit in hope; in verses 15-21, the meek one. He lays his whole case before Jehovah. The great result and true application is seen in the last verse. This psalm lays the whole case of the remnant before Jehovah in the expression to Him of a heart attracted and taught by grace. It is a very full and distinct expression of their place and pleadings before Him, and according to what He is. Some very definite points are brought out: — the confession of Israel's past sins, the confession of his own by him who speaks. Mercy is looked to as the only resource. Yet from so gracious a God they can count on His teaching sinners. But these sinners are the meek of the earth who are to inherit it. Integrity of heart characterises them, and they trust in and wait for Jehovah.

Compare with this the incomparable picture of the remnant in the beginning of Luke. The psalm is both beautiful and very fully characteristic.

Psalm 26

The pleading of integrity; redemption and mercy sought

Psalm 26 is especially the pleading of integrity and trust in Jehovah. Having trusted Him, the godly would surely not slide. He invites Jehovah to search his inmost heart, as Peter did even though fallen. Here, still the goodness of Jehovah was his first motive. Then the separation of the godly from the ungodly body of the nation is fully brought out and taken as a plea that they might not have their souls gathered with the ungodly. Still, though integrity was pleaded, redemption is sought, and mercy. The end would be blessing. Their foot stood in an even place. They would, in the full assembly, bless Jehovah. This is substantially the entire separation of the godly from the nation, and the former becoming the congregation of God.

Scope of Psalms 25 and 26

Thus in these two psalms we have the confession of sins and the pleading of integrity, both marking the real renewal of mind. Though the possibility of government in forgiveness and mercy is founded on the atonement which has been presented in Psalm 22, and is owned fully in Isaiah 53 by Israel subsequent to the period of these psalms; yet the aspect in which all is viewed by the remnant in these two psalms is the known character and government of Jehovah in Israel; and the feelings of a renewed heart are expressed in reference to that government — to Jehovah's ways. His name is the key to their thoughts, and awakens their best and truest affections. It is the faith of a godly Israelite in the last days. The moral state of the remnant is especially brought out in all this part, and more especially their own with Jehovah, circumstances comparatively little; though the enemies without and the transgressors around form necessarily the occasion of those feelings in respect of deliverance and redemption. The heart of the godly one has the key to all Israel's history and Jehovah's dealings with them, because grace is looked to, and sin confessed. This it is that ever gives understanding. And so it is here. Jehovah's ways have been — are — perfect. He is called upon to remember His own mercies, and not the early sins of His people. The enemies of His people are presented to Him. The hope of forgiveness is founded on Jehovah's name (it is, as we have seen, connected with His government; they have not yet looked on Christ, and understood atonement); the faithful looks to be guided in the way, and Jehovah's faithfulness to him is reckoned on. His sins, sorrows, and enemies are all presented to Him with an open heart. Covenant mercies can be seen, looked to, because Jehovah is, in truth by an upright confessing sinner.

Psalm 27

The believer's confidence; the ground of hope in distress

In Psalm 27 we have two distinct parts, and, I apprehend, then in the last two verses the result for the mind of the saint as taught of God. The first part, verses 1-6, is the confidence of the believer, and that absolutely, whatever enemies there were. In the second part, 7-12, we find the cry of distress. In the former, singleness of eye lays the ground of confidence; in the second, the call of Jehovah to seek His face. Enemies without or oppressors within (for the remnant of the Jews will find both against them), a host and war arising, awake no fear. Jehovah is the light and salvation of the soul; its only desire, dwelling in the house of Jehovah to see His beauty and inquire in His temple. He had known Him casting confusion on the enemies of the faithful. He sought Him as the desire of his heart. In the time of trouble He would hide him, and the assault of foes would only be the occasion of lifting up his head above them, and then he would offer sacrifices of joy.

From the seventh verse things are otherwise. It is not his state, as thinking of the Lord in faith; distress is there, and he cries. Here he appeals, not to his integrity, but that Jehovah had said, Seek my face. Was He going after that to turn it away? He looks to be guided in a straight path. There is integrity, but he looks to the call of God. Finally, he looks for, and trusts for temporal deliverance in the land of the living; meanwhile he must wait on Jehovah. He would interfere at the right time; He would strengthen the heart meanwhile. It is an additional and instructive picture of the state of the faithful remnant; their abstract confidence and their ground of hope in distress when Jehovah must be waited for.

Psalm 28

The cry of the remnant furnished, and the witness given that Jehovah has heard

The godly Jew pleads, in the time of trouble come on the nation, that he may not be confounded with the wicked. If Jehovah did not appear in his behalf, so much was he in the same distress with them, death would drag him into its jaws. He looks for judgment on the wicked. They slight Jehovah. Jehovah should reward their doings. The psalm furnishes to the remnant not only the cry, but the prophetic witness that Jehovah has heard it. The heart trusts in Jehovah, had found help, and thus joy and praise. Then Messiah is fully joined with the righteous. Jehovah is their strength, He is Messiah's. This once settled, the prophetic desire of the godly, according to the Spirit of Christ, expresses itself that Jehovah should have His people and bless His inheritance (for the faith of covenant blessing and relationship runs through all this part of the Psalms), that He should also feed them and lift them up for ever. Deliverance, blessing, feeding, and unaltered exaltation, such are the fruits looked for of Jehovah's coming in in power.

The scope of and connection between psalms 25, 26, 27 and 28

In Psalms 25, 26 we have seen the great moral principles of trust in Jehovah (even when confessing sins) and integrity In these last we have more the personal sense of condition, and way or ground of relationship with God, beautifully shown in the first part of Psalm 27 in the one desire of the heart; and in the second part, in the touching plea, You taught me to seek Thy face; my heart, in those times of

divine instructions, said, I will seek it: Lord, will you turn it away now that I am in trouble, when You taught me to seek and trust it? The truth is the same, but in the first part it is the one moral desire of the heart; in the last, the exhortation of God to do it becomes a resource to the soul. Jehovah Himself is their refuge, and has taught them to look for it.

In Psalm 28 the pressure of evil is more felt, and coming judgment and the separation of the remnant looked for. This separation characterises the whole testimony of God connected with the coming of Messiah, a circumstance which will aid us in seeing the unity of the remnant in the mind of God. Not only was it prophetically announced, as in Isaiah 65, but John the Baptist characterises the coming of Messiah by it, their being children of Abraham being of no avail (Matt. 3:9); as indeed it spiritually took place: only that He being rejected and not yet coming in power, they were then added as "the saved," Acts 2:47, to the assembly. For that, however, Peter takes it up (Acts 2:40). The Lord Himself receives them as His sheep (John 10). Paul rests his argument in Romans 11 upon it too.

Psalm 29

Encouragement for the faithful in the presence of the mighty One

Psalm 29 summons the mighty to hear the mightier voice of Jehovah, to own Him and worship before Him according to the holy order of His house, celebrating the power of His voice in universal creation; but there is a place of intelligent worship where His glory is understood — His temple where men are to come. But this Jehovah is above the haughty raging of the surges of created strength; He sits King for ever above and in spite of all. And He, this mighty Jehovah, will give strength to His people and bless them with peace. It is a positive encouragement for the faithful; not their complaint or appeal, but a testimony for them to encourage their hearts in presence of the mighty. He that cares for them is mightier than they.

Psalm 30

The contrast between trust in prosperity and in God Himself; a living people blessed on earth

In Psalm 30 we have the contrast between trust in prosperity — even in that given of God — and in God Himself. He has come in and lifted up the poor, and not left him to his foes. His favour is life. If angry, it is but for a little moment, and for the good of His saints: the favour is for ever. In the morning it is light, if heaviness endure for a night. He may let them down as to the grave's mouth, but only to show His power in infallible deliverance. He, the godly man, Israel themselves, as a people, had trusted in given prosperity. Now, in the depth of adversity, he has found Jehovah in deliverance. The power of evil overcome is better than good we may lose. It is security, and in the blessing and arms of Jehovah for us; for He is the deliverer. We see plainly here that it is a living people to be blessed on earth (v. 3, 9). And though there may be analogous mercies in all times, for there is a government of God as regards Christians, to apply it to the saints now would be a dangerous mistake. It speaks of temporal

deliverance for peace in this world (compare Isaiah 64:7-8). No mountain, even if we own it to be made strong by Jehovah, is like Jehovah Himself, even if I am at the pit's mouth. It is my mountain for my heart when I think of it.

Psalm 31

The complaint and confidence of the remnant

Psalm 31 is a proof how Jesus could use devout and holy expressions of a psalm, and indeed pass through all in spirit, without its having a literal application to Him. Here is found the expression He used, "Into thy hand I commit my spirit," which was in the fullest sense true. But the psalm continues, "For thou hast redeemed me, O Jehovah God of truth." — He added Father. Yet I doubt not that His spirit had got into the comfort of divine delight again. Still the words, "thou hast redeemed me," cannot apply.* So the whole complaint of the psalm is, besides David, the complaint and confidence of the remnant — connecting the two principles, trust and righteousness, and looking for guidance for Jehovah's name's sake, and deliverance when surrounded by enemies. The godly man had called on Jehovah. His name was in question. On His goodness, laid up for them that trusted in Him, he counted; and this in the midst of a life spent in sighing. Distress pressed upon him, and drank up his strength. Yet, tried for faithfulness, friends and acquaintances fled from him. Such will be the condition of the remnant. How truly Christ entered into it, I need not say. But the time of deliverance, and of all that in any time the saint should be under and pass through, were in God's hand — not the enemy's, though he might rage. And in the adversities Jehovah knew his soul, for he walks in the knowledge of covenant-relationship. The presence of Jehovah was a tabernacle and a hiding-place. In the pressure of his spirit, the godly thought himself cast off; but when he cried, Jehovah heard. In all the rage around (v. 13, 14) he cried to Jehovah as his God. The result he now celebrates, and encourages the saints in the last two verses, and all that hope in Jehovah. Whatever sorrows they are in, Jehovah helps the faithful and judges the proud. {*The only possible sense it could have as to Him was the deliverance of His soul at that moment as a fact, from the curse He bore for us, in which He had perfectly glorified God as to our sins, and as made sin for us. But the Lord does not use it. But though He had as a fact yet to die, its bitterness and sting were past.}

Psalm 31 the expression of the Spirit of Christ, though His own relationship as Son was different

This, in a certain sense, closes and sums up the experimental expression by the Spirit of the state of the remnant, and fully unfolds it. In the psalm that follows, forgiveness in grace is spoken of. Then there is a clearer apprehension and more objective confidence and judgment of all around, till we come to Psalm 38, and Psalm 39, which have a peculiar character of their own. Of course, deliverance is not yet come; but the sentiment expressed is become more that of favour in light than confidence out of the depths. How fully this Psalm 31 is the expression of the Spirit of Christ must be obvious to every divinely-taught reader. Yet His own relationship was different. He was Son, and commends His spirit

to His Father in death, not to Jehovah to save Him from it; and, as we have seen in the preface, prays for His enemies who crucified Him, instead of demanding vengeance upon them. This demand of His Spirit in the remnant is according to His mind in that day. In Him personally it must have been otherwise; for He came in grace, and was giving His life a ransom for Israel and for many. Hence He passed through all in perfection with His Father in Gethsemane, and gives Himself up then, as being His will, to death. Yet, as to the sorrow and trial, He went through all. And the prophetic Spirit in the Psalms expresses in the denunciatory words what will certainly be accomplished as the consequence of the wicked enmity of the Jews and heathens too at the close; and will become living demands in the mouth of the remnant, whose only and necessary deliverance these judgments will be.

Christ did ask life, and it was given in resurrection and glory, as Psalm 21 shows; but not, as we know, in His being spared here. The path of life led for Him through death in the accomplishment of redemption, though He could not be holden of it. Thus in spirit He entered into all their affliction. The literal application in the writer's mind was to his own feelings; the prophetical is to the godly remnant in the latter day. The word translated "iniquity," in verse 10, should, I doubt not, be "distress." But the fulness of the various motives and feelings brought together in this psalm require a further brief notice. I have already remarked how the two grounds, so frequently found, of the appeal of the saint's trust in God, and righteousness as the motive and ground of it, are both brought together here. The name's sake of Jehovah is also added here. In verses 3-6 we have His utter rejection of the followers of idolatrous vanities. In verse 7 Jehovah's goodness is recognised as mercy. He has known the soul of the believer in adversities — a sweet thought, how dark soever all may have been. And deliverance was granted (v. 9, 10) He pleads his extreme present distress. The first eight verses are a kind of preface of general principles; now it is the pressure of his present state. He was a reproach to enemies, specially to neighbours — a fear to his acquaintance; so mean, despised, and yet hated and rejected, was he. It is the portion of a divine character, of God Himself, to be both. Man neglects a despised person; but he never does God, or what is of Him.* They will bring Him low if He puts Himself low, or those that are His; but will fear and hate Him too. He is forgotten, yet slandered, and the active enemy plotting against his life. Thus verses 9-13 give the condition the Spirit of Christ, or Christ Himself, holds in the world. {*What thief would, if hung, revile another thief hung by his side? But the condemned thief did so to Christ.}

It is a most striking picture in verse 14. He trusts in Jehovah. All that is to befall him is, after all, in His hand. Another motive now is pleaded. He has called on Jehovah. It is the lying lips which should be put to silence (v. 18). Confidence in goodness laid up for them is there, and the hiding in God's presence for the time of evil (v. 20). Verse 21 celebrates the faithfulness of Jehovah. Verses 23, 24, encourage the saints by it. Thus, with the extremest distress, all the pleas of the faithful are beautifully brought together here. All these past psalms have been the feelings of Israel under the pressure of distress, and sought deliverance from it. And this Israel will do.

Psalm 32

Forgiveness of sins follows confession and leads to true blessing

Now (Psalm 32) we have what he wants still more — the forgiveness of sins. The pressure of affliction turns him to God's law, but to the consciousness of having broken it. Righteousness in that sense he could not plead: forgiveness was his need, and that Jehovah should not impute the iniquity he had, and was brought to acknowledge. Long he had striven against this; but Jehovah gave him no rest. But he confesses sin, and guile is gone from his heart: impossible till then. We are hiding iniquity in it. Forgiveness in grace draws the godly man to God. In the water-floods they do not come nigh him. Jehovah is the hiding-place of the soul — preserves, blesses, guides. Only they are warned to be intelligent through obedience, and not to be without understanding, so that God must guide by providential power.

Remark here that while forgiveness is celebrated (and the remnant will deeply need it), yet the great distinctive truth which separates them from the mass of the people is kept up distinctly - trust, righteousness, and integrity of heart. To the wicked there are sorrows.

In principle, such a psalm, blessed be God, has the widest application. For the remnant it is prophetic, to induce truth in the inward parts, and encourage them by goodness to that confession of sin in which alone God can bless, as is ever the case. For forgiveness and no guile go together. They will only know full acceptance when they look upon Him whom they have pierced, who comes as Jehovah to deliver. But let us lay to heart the great principle of this psalm. Full absolute forgiveness, the not imputing sin at all, is what takes guile from the heart. Else we flee from God, excuse, palliate, if we dare not justify. Where full pardon is before us, we have courage to be true in heart. Who will not declare all his debts when their discharge by another is the only thing in question? who not tell his malady for a certain cure? Grace brings truth into the heart brought to confess its transgressions. He finds all the burden of his sins gone. The humble and godly are encouraged to draw near to a God thus known. "There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mightest be feared." The psalm will encourage the remnant thus to true confession. When possessed, they will enter into full blessing. We thus see how it is a prophetic preparation and school for them, drawing out before them what will not all be accomplished when they are thus brought to look to Jehovah, but which they thus know will be. Hence these psalms speak of Jehovah's character, as it has been proved with the inspired composers; in principle, often in letter, with Christ, in order to draw out the confidence of the Jews in the day of distress, and to comfort every uneasy soul. Thus the celebration of complete deliverance is mixed with the cry for it, because it is prophetic and has had fulfilments.

Psalm 33 has its just place after the forgiveness of the people. Before we pass on to these psalms, remark how the guilelessness of heart produced by complete forgiveness leads to that intimacy with God which gives us to be guided by His eye. We have His mind with Himself, and that in the perfectness of His own nature in which He reveals it. Forgiveness leads to full blessing.

Psalm 33

The full result of deliverance celebrated

In Psalm 33 the full result of deliverance is celebrated. The upright are called on to rejoice. Jehovah's character, His word and works, are made manifest, and the earth is now full of His goodness. He is the glorious Creator; the earth is to fear Him; all man's devices and counsels come to nothing before Him; His counsel stands. Blessed the nation whose God is Jehovah, the people He has chosen for His inheritance. It is Jehovah who has looked down on men and disposed of all; but His eye is on them that fear Him and hope in His mercy. Thus the great result of the intervention of Jehovah is brought before the faith of the remnant, chanted as if all were come. The last three verses show the confidence this produces in them.

Psalm 34

Assurance of God's government enabling faith to bless at all times

The sure government of God enables faith to bless at all times. He has proved His faithfulness to them that were in distress. The psalmist, Christ in spirit, calls on the remnant to praise, for Jehovah has manifested His deliverance in his case. The eyes of Jehovah are over the righteous, and His ear open to their prayers; His face set against them that do evil, and to cut them off from the earth (v. 17-19). The broken heart, the afflicted and the contrite, to such Jehovah is nigh. The righteous must look for suffering while man has his day, but Jehovah delivers him. While evil slays the wicked, Jehovah redeems the soul of His servant, and none that trust Him shall be desolate. It is the full assurance of the government of Jehovah in favour of the humble in heart. This enables to bless, not only when they are blessed (that is not faith), but at all times, for they are heard, preserved, redeemed, when they are in trouble. Christ is the great example of this. I doubt that He speaks personally, though He does in spirit in the beginning. The faith of the remnant takes His case up as an encouragement in verse 6. Verse 20 was accomplished also literally in Him. It is the secret of faith alone, the test of it, to bless at all times. Peter applies this psalm to the constant principles of the government of God. This is the first psalm in which we have found the interlocutory character, which sometimes occurs (as in Psalms 91, 145), though doubtless the psalmist's experience, who again speaks in verse 11. Yet, I apprehend, it is Christ in spirit who opens out God's ways in this psalm. "O magnify with me." "I sought Jehovah." It is the fullest encouragement to the humble righteous.

Psalm 35

An urgent appeal for Jehovah's judgment

Psalm 35 is an urgent appeal for the judgment of Jehovah against relentless and insidious persecutors who seek after the soul of the righteous. Insult, craft, violence, all were used against him. They pretended to have found him out. Deliverance is sought that Jehovah may be praised in the great congregation, that is, the full assembly of restored Israel. In verses 13, 14, we see the grace in which the godly (Christ Himself) dealt with these enemies. Though generally true of the godly, Christ specially comes in here in spirit.

Psalm 36

Warning as to the wicked

We have a needed warning as to the wicked, particularly the enemies of righteousness, the instruments of Satan's power. There is no conscience to be expected; nothing that will stop them in their evil plans. The power and goodness of Jehovah are the sure refuge of those that trust in Him. In result the wicked are cast down.

Psalm 37

Waiting on Jehovah

In this interesting psalm the great point pressed on the remnant, a lesson for every soul, is waiting on Jehovah, and not having the spirit disturbed by evil; they will soon be cut down like grass. They are not to fret themselves, but trust in Jehovah and do good; to delight in Him — they will have their desires; to commit their way to Him — He will justify them; to rest in Him and wait patiently for Him — Jehovah will soon interfere, the wicked doers be cut off, and the meek inherit the land. The other character of the remnant is also largely unfolded — the righteous man - from verse 12 onward. Jehovah does not forsake His saints: they are preserved. The righteous shall inherit the land. The final word is, Wait on Jehovah and keep His way. The righteous suffer, but are not forsaken; the ungodly are in great prosperity, and soon their place knows them no more. How this, as to the righteous, points to the deep character of the suffering One who was forsaken, though the perfection of righteousness! This psalm also helps to show the connection between the disciples and this remnant (see Matt. 5:5) - yet, to show the difference; the Son was there. They could suffer for His name: this brought in heaven (Matt. 5:12). He could reveal the Father, which He does, in that discourse. The light goes out to the world, as well as being the salt of the earth. Details of grace also are brought in, of which the latter-day remnant know nothing, because of this revelation of the Father, who acts in grace. Still, de facto, it is the same remnant.

Psalm 38

The godly man under God's chastening

Psalm 38 and Psalm 39 have, as I have said, a distinct and peculiar character. The deliverance has been sought and looked for by the upright, and forgiveness of sins granted for blessing. But in these psalms the governmental rebuking for sins lies on the remnant; there is the sense of why they suffer from the divine hand. In Psalm 6 the chastening in anger was deprecated as a part of the sorrow that might belong to their position; but here they are under full chastening for sin: the rod has reached the flock outwardly, their soul inwardly. When I say they, it is individual, but still the remnant. Friends shrank from such a case; enemies, without compassion, plot against his life. Still he is before Jehovah, and all

his desire and groaning. He is true in heart with God, and owns Him — is silent with man. The sorrows are, for his soul, Jehovah's; and to Jehovah he turns. This is all right (see v. 13-16). He will bow under it. His enemies are busy and strong. But though Jehovah smites, he trusts Him; because the smiting is owned by the humble soul to be righteous. But he can look to deliverance from his enemies. They were glad he slipped and rejoiced over him. But he declares and owns his sin: no excuse — no hiding in his soul from God. His cry is to Him for speedy help.

It is a beautiful psalm as to the state of soul; for the Spirit provides for every case — the failure of the upright, which may call down severe chastening, and cause joy to the wicked. But he accepts the punishment of his iniquity, and places himself openly before God, owning his sin, but looking to Him against the wicked. However sad such a case may be, nothing more shows truth before God and confidence in Him. How confess one's sin, and look for help from God, when one has been unfaithful, He dishonoured, and the enemy triumphing in it? No excuse, no attempt to hide — none: he owns all, and casts himself on God. The picture of the remnant would not have been complete without this, nor the gracious instruction for every soul at every time.

Christ's perfect sympathy in chastening

The question then arises, How far does the Spirit of Christ enter into it? Fully, I believe; though of course He never could have been personally there. No doubt it arose from some deep chastening of the writer — a chastening which was openly manifested. Such cases may in the full extent arise among the remnant. The principle is of universal application. Christ of course could have nothing to be chastened for; but, having the full bearing of sin before Him, and meeting in His path all the sorrow which will beset the people, He can enter, though the green tree, into the judgment which will come upon the dry.* He could not say what is said here, but He can perfectly sympathise with those who have to say it. He has provided the words which will express it by His Spirit in their hearts. Had He not suffered the full anger for these very iniquities which press on their consciences, and from which in its full extent as wrath they escape, it would not have been merely needed chastening in which they plead with Jehovah. Hence He can more than feel it when it has that character. And in all the sorrow of the circumstances He has borne the largest part. {*Although the dry tree be in the full sense lifeless Israel, yet, as the remnant, so long rejecters of Jesus being the Messiah, are mixed up with the nation, they go through the sorrows in heart and spirit which come upon the nation, though not its final judgment from God. For them Christ had done that; He died for the nation. But all short of that they go through, and feel in bitter sorrow and anguish, in some sort, more than before the judgment comes, because they feel the sin that is bringing it. Hence it was that Christ, who did know the cause and looked forward to the judgment which He did go through (undergoing the oppression without apparent deliverance, for His hour was come to be reckoned with the transgressors), could enter fully into their case. Though He entered into it in love, yet the righteousness which threatened Israel was before Him.}

Psalm 39

Vanity finding its level; God trusted in

In Psalm 39, the godly man is still under the stroke of God; but there is more the sense of the emptiness of all flesh under the hand of God than disgrace and shame and fear. He bows before God rather than let his spirit rise and speak foolishly with his tongue. He might have retorted — been fretted to do evil; but, restraint, when under the hand of God, was his fitting place. It is ever so. He refrains even from good; and sorrow is stirred up in him. In beautiful language he shows this. At last his heart bursts forth; but it is to present to God the nothingness of which the sense was thus matured. He desires to know his days. How little he is! He sees all is vanity; but he sees his own transgression and sin in the presence of One whose rebuke consumes the beauty of man as a moth. To Jehovah he looks for deliverance. His stroke is what he cares for. He trusts Him not to make him the reproach of the foolish. There is great beauty in vanity finding its level in self-annihilation, and then God trusted in to deliver from the pride of men. He has to say to our transgressions.

Here the moral history of the remnant closes, as in connection on covenant ground with Jehovah (that is, as employing His name, as connected with Him). Hence we have much of Christ personally in the psalms of this first book. His taking the place in which He should be associated with them, according to the counsels of God, is stated in the next psalm. The understanding of this place is then shown to be the really blessed one.

Psalm 40

Complete deliverance through Christ

In Psalm 40 then Christ is seen, not only in His passage through the sorrows which beset His way, if He took up the cause of the disobedient and guilty people of His love — sorrows which gave Him the tongue of the learned, and enabled Him to enter into those of the tried and spared ones in the latter days, and give a voice to their cry suited to their condition before God; but primarily the deliverance in which, having waited on Jehovah in these sorrows, Jehovah's faithfulness was proved, so that He came out from them for the encouragement of many, and then the blessed key to His whole history in His having undertaken to do the will of Jehovah, the whole Jewish system under the law being thus closed and set aside. He has been perfectly faithful to Jehovah in the face of the whole congregation of Israel, yet is in the deepest sorrow and trial. So the psalm closes, and it is important it should, because the thesis of it is complete deliverance. Hence the application of this very deliverance to the sorrows of Christ, which were analogous to that of the remnant, is most precious for the remnant when they are in them.

Christ's perfect faithfulness and willing obedience in connection with the remnant

But this principle is brought out in a very distinct way in the psalm, and makes it one of the most remarkable in this wonderful book. It brings out the connection of Christ with Israel in the remnant in the most striking way possible — lays it down as a foundation for the whole teaching of the Psalms, though the circumstances are altered after Psalm 41. That Christ is personally spoken of in it, I need

hardly say, as the apostle quotes it as His words, undertaking that blessed work by which figures and symbols were set aside, and which has perfected, as he tells us, the believer for ever. "Lo, I come" is the word of the Son's free offering of Himself to accomplish the whole will of God in His work here below according to the everlasting counsels of the Godhead. It is the blessed Lord's undertaking the work. His work was to obey; but He in perfect free voluntariness offers Himself for it in the delight of willingly undertaken obedience. In the great congregation of Israel, in pursuing His service to Jehovah, He had not shrunk (whatever reception He met with) from preaching righteousness — had not refrained His lips. He had been faithful to His service at all cost; and it was Jehovah He thus proclaimed. His righteousness, His faithfulness, His salvation, His lovingkindness, and His truth, He had not refrained from declaring before the whole body of Israel. Such had been His service.

Innumerable evils encompassing the faithful One

Then, all changes with this faithful One; for innumerable evils have compassed Him about. He looks for Jehovah's lovingkindness and truth, to whom He had been faithful. Nor is it all that evils had compassed Him, that men sought after His soul to destroy it. "Mine iniquities have taken hold on me." He says, "so that I am not able to look up." Of course, with Christ they were those of others — of all the redeemed, and also particularly of Israel viewed as a nation. In this state He desires that those that seek Jehovah may be able to praise, to say continually, Let Jehovah be magnified; and that the others may be ashamed and confounded. He separates the godly remnant who seek Jehovah from those who, when He is faithfully and lovingly presented, are enemies to Him who manifests His name. Thus Christ closes His experience in this world, poor and needy, yet assured that Jehovah thinks upon Him.

He is not forsaken in what is presented here, but comes into that place, through a life of faithfulness, in which He was to undergo that dreadful moment. It is the cry when, so to speak, He confesses the sins before the victim is consumed or slain. He is in the deep sorrow of the position crying to Jehovah, not in the wrath shown in the time of His not being heard. The psalm depicts not that wrath, but the faithfulness of Christ in waiting for Jehovah when in the sorrow, rather than seek ease, or have twelve legions of angels, or drink the stupefying myrrh, or shrink back from suffering the will of God any more than He did from facing man when He preached it. He waited patiently for Jehovah; and He inclined unto Him and heard His cry. This was His perfection: no outlet from obedience sought, no shrinking, no turning back or aside. He waited for Jehovah's time in the path of perfect obedience, and it came. The time, as said of Joseph, came that His cause was known; it is not said here how or when. The object of the Spirit here was to show to the tried ones that One had gone before them in the path of sorrow and had been heard. We can say that it was fully in resurrection; but even on the cross the dark hour was passed, and with a loud voice He could commend His own spirit to His Father, and His mother to His beloved disciple.

But these are details history has given us, not prophecy; they would not have been available for the remnant. They want to know that they will be heard when waiting patiently for Jehovah. If killed, the answer will be for them in resurrection; if not, to have Israel's place in blessing, I doubt not with the Lamb on Mount Zion, as having gone through (however feebly or infirmly) like trials and sorrows in faithfulness to Jehovah in the great congregation. Do their iniquities alarm them? they are not left out.

They do not yet know atonement, but they know that One, who could say, "Mine iniquities have taken hold of me," waited patiently, was heard and delivered. They wait, trusting the mercy of Jehovah, though peace be not yet known. Their iniquities have taken hold of them, so that they feel: how can they hope Jehovah will deliver them? There is forgiveness with Him, that He may be feared. And the psalm assures them that One in like depths has been set free. When they look upon Him, they will judge their sins in the light of His having borne them and they will find peace; but the foundation of peace is laid in hope for them here. A heart failing under iniquities, laying hold of it, can look for deliverance. It has been found (and however obscure their light, and it will be), the ground of hope is laid. Compare Isaiah 50:10, 11, which describes this very state, consequent, as to the remnant, on Christ's being justified and helped.

The new song

But this is not all. Messiah puts Himself in this association with them. "He has put a new song in my mouth, praise unto our God: many shall see it and fear, and shall trust in Jehovah." Blessed is the man that makes Jehovah his trust and does not trust outward prosperity nor apostatise to lying vanities. So in verse 5, to us ward. That is, in verse 1, we have Christ, who has waited on Jehovah, and been heard, and brought up out of a horrible pit and miry clay. I doubt not that David's heart sung it: still it is surely Christ in prophetic purpose. But then Christ identifies Himself (though, as we have seen, distinguishing the remnant) with Israel. Praise, He says, unto our God. The effect of this is that many see it, fear, and trust in Jehovah. It acts on the remnant in the latter day, and leads them to trust in Jehovah. They can trust for deliverance too; many will. His preaching righteousness to the great congregation gathered a little flock. His deliverance as the suffering One will be blessed to many. Who has begotten me all these? says Zion in that day. This may take in the ten tribes too; still, as a principle, a multitude will be there. It was not so at Christ's first coming. He was to be a despised and rejected One in His own history and trial.

Christ's coming as a man to do God's will; His consequent suffering

Verse 5. These are the thoughts of Jehovah in blessing. This leads to the great thought, the centre and groundwork of it all — Christ coming to do Jehovah's will. Now, we can comment, or, still better, the Spirit of God has commented for us, on the value of His doing Jehovah's will. Here we have much more the faithfulness of Christ in doing it, His being overwhelmed with iniquities taking hold of Him in His own spirit, as we see in Gethsemane, but deliverance. We must remember that the confession of sins over the head of the sacrifice was not the slaying, or casting into the fire, of the victim. So Christ's acknowledging thus, or confessing the iniquities with which He was charging Himself as His, was not His enduring the wrath, nor His being cut off out of the land of the living. Dreadful indeed it must have been to Him, as we see in the Gospels, and He saw all that was coming upon Him by reason of it; still it was essentially different — confessing the sins and bearing the wrath due to them. His confession of sins His people must (I will not say imitate, but) take up in the knowledge that those He confessed were their own; and may, till grace is fully known, do it with dreadful anguish and apprehension of the wrath to come. It is this which particularly, besides outward trials, constitutes the analogy between the Jewish

remnant and the Lord. The wrath endured in atonement, we know, He endured that we never might.

The eternal counsels of God

In this psalm then we see Christ, according to the eternal counsels of God, come to do God's will in human nature, taking His place in the midst of the great congregation of Israel, suffering most deeply in consequence, getting into the horrible pit, but His trust is firm in Jehovah. He waited patiently for Him, and He is brought up, and a new song put into His mouth. The first three verses state the great fact: Jehovah heard and delivered out of the horrible pit. It is a lesson for all the remnant. How blessed is the man who trusts Jehovah, and does not look at the appearance of persons to turn aside after vanity! Then we get the course of events. Wonderful have been Jehovah's counsels. Christ comes to do His will as a man, delights to do it, declares Jehovah's righteousness before all. This brings Him into the greatest distress. Evils come upon Him unnumbered, and, besides that, His iniquities (those of His people) come upon Him; but patience has its perfect work, and He is perfect and complete in all the will of God; and, as the psalm shows at the beginning, He is delivered, as we well know. But, as already said, the psalm recites His faithfulness especially. Hence we see Him up to the close of the trial still under it. What He asks for is that the ungodly, being found His enemies, may be set aside; but that the poor of the flock may be able to praise, rejoice, and be glad in Jehovah.

Christ's patience in trial

It is beautiful to see His perfect patience in the trial, that the whole will of God may be accomplished, and seeking the joy and full blessing of the poor remnant; yet Himself taking the place of complete dependence on Jehovah, and praying for His coming in as God. Obedience and dependence are the two characteristics of the acting of the divine life in man towards God. It may be remarked here that the testimony in the congregation is closed when the innumerable evils come upon Him. The preface of the psalm speaks of the horrible pit when He is out of it, and we know whereunto He was obedient; but His death is not spoken of here. In the body of the psalm we have, as come to do God's will, His faithfulness in life as witness, and the evils that came upon Him at the close when He had to meet the burden of the iniquity of His people. The fourth verse applies to the remnant the result of Christ's faithfulness for instruction and encouragement.

"Digged ears"

A few words on the expression, "opened my ears." The word is not the same as in Exodus 21. There it is attaching the ear with an awl to the door post; the man thus became a servant for ever. Nor is it the same as in Isaiah 50, where it has the signification of being so completely a servant to His Master's will that He received His commands morning by morning. Here it is "digged ears" that is, took the place of a servant). But this He did, as may be seen in Philippians 2, by becoming a man. Hence the Spirit accepts the interpretation of the LXX — "a body hast thou prepared me." Compare John 13 (which answers in point of time to Exodus 21); Luke 12:37, and 1 Corinthians 15:28.

Psalm 41

The blessedness of Him who understands and enters into the position of the poor of the flock

Psalm 41 shows the blessedness of the man who understands this position of the poor of the flock and enters into it (compare Matt. 5:3; Luke 6:20). It is spoken in the person of one of the suffering remnant — doubtless with the psalmist's own experience. It is one of the psalms in which Christ takes up an expression to show how, in the close of His life, when He entered into their sorrows, He tasted fully their bitterness. Still the poor man is upheld in his integrity, and set before Jehovah's face. The apparent triumph of the wicked is short.

This closes the book. It is the experience, as a whole, of the remnant before they are driven out, or at the least of those who are not so. And the covenant name of Jehovah is used. Hence, the place of Christ is entered into, so far as He came and set Himself amongst the poor of the flock upon earth, and led the life of sorrow and integrity in the midst of evil. Of this last psalm He is not the subject, as verse 4 shows.

The subject of the first book

We have seen an introduction in the first eight psalms, in which the whole scene is brought before us in its principles and result in the purpose of God; then in Psalms 9, 10, the actual historical circumstances of the Jews in the latter day. Thus, as to historical facts, their state forms the groundwork and subject of the whole book; while the way in which Christ could enter into their sorrows, and they be encouraged by His example, is fully introduced. His whole life amidst the nation is passed in review; but particularly the close, when, after declaring God's righteousness in the great congregation, He passed into the deep sufferings of the last hours of His passage on earth, going on to His being forsaken of God. Yet it was for Him — surely for us, blessed be God — the path of life.

The peculiar interest of psalm 40

Psalm 40 has this peculiar interest, that it gives us, not merely the history of Christ, His faithfulness, but His freely offering Himself to accomplish all that the Father's counsels required of Him; and then shows Him waiting in obedience till Jehovah was pleased to come in. And then He has the new song to sing. Of this intervention of God the resurrection was the grand witness; through which, as we have seen in Psalm 22, He has awakened, or rather created, it in so many other hearts. As is common, the first three verses give the thesis — the rest all that led up to this: only here it is traced from His first offering Himself to do it.

Additional remarks as to psalm 41

The reader will remark in Psalm 41 what we have noticed as characterising the remnant — the acknowledgment of sin (v. 4), and the declaration of integrity (v. 12). We have Christ using it as to Himself, showing, though the psalm be not of Him, how He took the place to which the spirit of the whole applies. The proud and wicked could despise and trample upon the meek and lowly, and perhaps chastened, remnant. Here it is more the false and treacherous spirit of those whom he ought to have been able to trust. Blessedness is with those who understand, the meek and lowly ones who are chastened, for they understand the Lord's ways; the meek one himself looks to the Lord when His hand is upon him. The point of the psalm is the blessedness of those who understand and enter into the position of those with whom Jehovah is dealing. This place, Christ fully took, though not chastened with sickness.

Psalms 42, 43

The cry of the heart after God Himself

The godly man had been going with the multitude to the house of God, but that is all over. He is driven away, and his cry is from Jordan — the land of the Hermonites, and the hill Mizar. All God's waves are gone over him. It was terrible to see an enemy in possession of the sanctuary, and the true one of Jehovah cast out and His name blasphemed. The heathen, as stated in Joel, had come in in power, and taunted those who had trusted in Jehovah's faithfulness with the cry, "Where is thy God?" (Joel 2:17). It was, of course, a dreadful trial (so with Christ upon the cross; and with Him yet more, for He declared He was forsaken); so that what God was to them by faith was put to the test. This faith is what this psalm now expresses. The heart of the godly pants after God. It was not merely for His blessings; they were gone. The preciousness of what He Himself was, was only so much the more vividly brought out. The main distress was the cry "Where is thy God?" But if the saint is not in Jerusalem, God is the confidence of the saint. Faith says, "I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance." The heart too can appeal to Him (v. 9), and, under the pressure of the repeated taunt, hope in God Himself, and He will be the health of the countenance of him that trusts in Him. The reader will remark that in verse 5 it is the help of God's countenance: in verse 11 He becomes the health of the countenance of him that trusts in Him. This making God Himself to become everything by the deprivation of all blessings, and the exercise of faith in it casting the soul entirely on God Himself, is very precious.

The enemy — Gentile, ungodly Jew, and the wicked

The enemy in Psalm 42 is the outward enemy and oppressor — the Gentile. Though in circumstances, of course, and not in the depths of atonement, it is interesting to see the analogy in verse 3 with what the Lord said upon the cross. Psalm 43 is a supplementary psalm to the former: only that here the ungodly nation, the Jews, are before us, and the deceitful and unjust man, the wicked one; though the Gentile oppressor be yet there (v. 2). We know they will both be there in that day. From the Jewish nation being now in the scene, the return to the holy hill and tabernacle and altar of God are more before the mind of the remnant. Verses 3, 4 form the groundwork of the book.

Psalm 44

The nation cast off and scattered

Psalm 44 gives a full and vivid picture of the state of the nation, as in the conscience of the remnant. They had heard with their ears. Faith rested in the memorial of all the old mighty deliverances wrought by God, and how He had put them in possession of the land by His power, not theirs (v. 1-8). In verses 9-16 their present state is recounted. They are cast off and scattered. The enemy and avenger is among them; they scattered among the heathen sold of God for no price (v. 17-22). Yet they have, in no wise, swerved from their integrity. On the contrary, it is for His sake they are killed all the day long, and counted as sheep for the slaughter. (Note, the moment Messiah was rejected, this began in principle: compare Rom. 8:36). Verses 23-26 contain the appeal to God to wake up to redeem them for His mercies' sake. Why should He forget them for ever? We have still God, not Jehovah, in this psalm; for they are outside.

Psalm 45

The coming in of Messiah in glory and judgment

Psalm 45 introduces Messiah, and, as we shall see, changes everything. I know not, interesting and full of bright energy as the psalm is, that I have much to note upon it, by reason of its force being so very plain. It will be remarked that it is Messiah in judgment and taking the throne. He had already proved that He loved righteousness and hated iniquity — was fit to govern. He is saluted as God. Yet His disciples (the remnant) are called His fellows (compare Zech. 13:7, where He is seen in His humiliation and smitten, but owned to be Jehovah's fellow). I apprehend the queen is Jerusalem. Tyre and others own her with presents. She is gloriously received into the chambers of the king himself. This, I apprehend, is the force of within. She is in the closest relationship with the king. The virgins her companions are, I suppose, the cities of Judah. The glory of Israel is no longer now their fathers. The presence of Messiah (the fulfiller of promise) has eclipsed the depositaries of promise of old. Instead of fathers, they have children to be made princes in all lands. The coming in of Messiah in glory and judgment, brings in the full triumph and glory, amongst the nations, of Jerusalem and the Jewish people. The psalm is full of Messiah, and exclusively, yet as man, and God is only alluded to as his God. But Messiah is God. Psalm 46.

Psalm 46

God of Israel with the spared remnant: the result

The remnant, now that Messiah has appeared in glory, can celebrate what God is in favour of His people, and with the special knowledge acquired through what He has been for them in trouble. There may be yet an assault: indeed according to prophecy I believe there will be. But as the whole effect of

Messiah's coming in blessing was celebrated in Psalm 45, so here the great result in divine government. The spared remnant have Jehovah with them as the God of Israel (v. 7). For here Jehovah is again introduced as a present thing. Here it is specially (and suitably, after what we have been studying, needs not to be said) as refuge and deliverance. Earth, mountains, and waters may tremble, or swell and roar: His people need not fear. God is with them. Nor is this all. He has His city on the earth, where He who is the Most High dwells, and has His tabernacles gladdened by that river which, everywhere in these descriptions, is the sign of blessing; as in the heavenly Jerusalem, and in the earthly in Ezekiel nay, - in paradise, and in figures, in the believer, and in the assembly, who calls to the water of life him who thirsts. But even then the river is there. God is there — the sure and best of answers to the taunting demand "Where is thy God?" She shall not be moved, but helped right early.

Verse 6 gives in magnificent abruptness the great result. All is decided. Then they say, "Jehovah Sabaoth is with us." The God of the whole people is the refuge of this feeble remnant (v. 8, 9), they summon the earth to see what the works of Jehovah are, what is come of the impotent rage and violence of men; for He will be exalted among the heathen and exalted in the earth. The place of faith is to be still and wait on Him and know that He is God, as the remnant of Jacob will with joy — that Jehovah of hosts, the God of Jacob, is with them.

Psalm 47

Jehovah a great king over all the earth

Psalm 47 only pursues this deliverance to its bright results for Israel according to God's glory in the earth. Jehovah is now a great King over all the earth (compare Zech. 14). He subdues the nations under Israel and Himself chooses their inheritance. This is triumphantly celebrated from verses 5-9, and the association of the princes of the peoples now owning God, with the people of the God of Abraham. He is specially Israel's (the remnant's) King, but if He is, He is King of all the earth. In these verses God Himself is celebrated, but He is the God of Israel. It is the celebration of the earthly part of the millennial glory of God: Israel owned in the delivered remnant being the centre. I apprehend verse 9 should be "have joined themselves to the people."

Psalm 48

Israel's God in Zion, the praise of the whole earth

Psalm 48 completes this series. Jehovah is fully established as Israel's God in Zion, now the praise of the whole earth, the city of the great King, and in whose palaces God is well known as a refuge. The kings were assembled; they found another sort of power there than they thought of, marvelled, were troubled, and hasted away. The power of the sea was broken by the east wind, and Jehovah's hand manifested there too. The psalm beautifully refers to the beginning of Psalm 44, where they had said in their distress, We have heard with our ears … the mighty works of the fathers' days. Now they say, As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of Jehovah Sabaoth, the city of our God. They do not now

say, as in Psalm 42, "I had gone with the multitude," but now cry to thee from Jordan; but in sweet and unendangered peace, "we have thought of thy lovingkindness, O God, in the midst of thy temple." God's name they had trusted, but now His praise was according to it. He had come in in power. It was so to the ends of the earth. He calls on Mount Zion to rejoice because of these judgments, with the joyful assurance that this God is their God for ever and ever; their life long will He guide and bless them. It is an earthly blessing, and death, the last enemy, is not destroyed (v. 11-14).

Psalm 49

All that is exalted in man is nothing

Psalm 49 is a moral conclusion for all, founded on these judgments of God. Wealth, elevation, all that is exalted in man, is nothing. Man expects to endure, gives his own name to his lands, blesses himself, is praised by posterity, and spoken well of as prudent and wise, seeing he has done well to himself. They are laid in sheol like sheep. The hope of the man of the world does not last; he leaves the world he was great in; his reputation, which lives, is nought for him, deception for others. Satan's power is for this life; there is no deceiving after it. Man in honour without understanding is like the beasts that perish, but the righteous remnant trusts in God: his soul is redeemed from the power of the grave. God shall accept him. The preservation on earth, or heavenly blessing is left somewhat vague here. The immediate hope would be of preserving life; but it would meet those that might be slain with the fullest and securest hope. It is even so in Luke 21:19, "gain your souls," and in Matthew 24:13. The ambiguity is preserved there too designedly.

Psalm 50

God's judgment of the people

In Psalm 50 we enter on new ground — God's judgment of the people. Jehovah the mighty God summons the whole earth; as in Psalm 51 we have their confession of killing Christ.

The introduction of Psalm 50 is magnificent, but requires little comment, God shining out of Zion the perfection of beauty. Only remark that the first two verses are the thesis; from verse 3 is the bringing it about. But heaven is called in to stand by, a witness of righteousness, and the earth; but the judgment is the special judgment of the people. In verses 5, 6, He takes up and accepts and gathers the remnant, His "godly ones," who have now entered into covenant with Him by sacrifice. It is in view, I apprehend, of their seeing Christ whom they had pierced, that these words are uttered. The heavens (though in result God be seated in Zion) bring in their display of the righteousness of God; distinct in itself, note, from His judgment. This is general. It is not in itself the judgment of God. I doubt not, He shines forth in glory therein, but in a particular manner. We can say it is the glorified saints who display this, of course with Christ Himself; yea, so fully that they shall judge the earth. It is not judgment through secondary causes: God is now judge Himself - hence gathers His saints too. In verse 7 the people are judged. God does not want sacrifice, He wants righteousness. He will not have wickedness, nor, now, the wicked

among His people. So we read in the very same way in Isaiah 48 and Isaiah 57. Man fancies God is such as he himself is; but all shall be set in order before Him. This is God's judgment.

Psalm 51

The full confession of the true remnant as to Christ's death

Psalm 51 is the true remnant's confession. They have fully entered into the mind of God (see v. 16). There is true and complete humiliation for sin before God, yet confidence in Him. He is looked to to cleanse and deliver, with the true faith of God's people. The whole sin of the heart and nature is acknowledged, and the dreadful crime of Christ's death owned (v. 14). The humiliation is accepted, but with the sense of God's cleansing being perfect. He creates too a clean heart. He prays that that Spirit (which Haggai declares abode with them after all their faults, and in spite of the Babylonish captivity), might not be taken from him, nor he lose the sense of the presence of his God. Persons have found difficulty in this verse; I see not any. No good could have been wrought by the Old Testament saints without the Holy Ghost: withdrawn from them, all their joy and comfort ceased and gave place to darkness. This he prays might not be. There cannot for a moment be a doubt that the Spirit wrought in the Old Testament saints. The question is, whether He was present in the same manner, and dwelling in them, in virtue of Christ's work and glory, uniting them to a risen Head in heaven. This, of course, could not be. The work was not yet wrought, the glory not yet entered into by the man Jesus. The New Testament is clear on this point. He was not; but He must have wrought in and with the saints. He acts in everything good; the agent in all divine action in the creature, as in the creation He moved on the face of the waters, but specially in the hearts of men for any good that is there, and to be the source of joy and strength to the saints. So in the prophets and others.

An intelligent saint now could not say what is said in this psalm (v. 11); he knows God will not take His Spirit from him. He might indeed perhaps in anguish say it, and with a true heart, and be heard; but not intelligently. This repentance of Israel, as so constantly taught in scripture (see Acts 3), is the path to Zion's blessing there. Will God accept their offerings? In these two psalms we have the separative judgment in Israel connected with wickedness, sin against Jehovah — a judgment which is real deliverance for the remnant; and now (when He has appeared) the full confession, and that even of having shed the blood of the Saviour.

Psalms 50, 51 as giving the circumstantial setting of what follows

These two psalms complete the setting, as to circumstances, of the whole scene before us, which forms the groundwork of this book. The series of psalms now commences (as we have seen in other instances), to supply and unfold the expressions of feeling for the remnant under these circumstances. It will be found, accordingly, that it is not so much trial by being in the midst of evil, as from seeing it dominant and prevailing in the place even that belonged to Jehovah. Hence in general, they are addressed to God and the Most High, the God of promise — not to Jehovah, the God of present covenant blessings, for they are out of the place of them. When otherwise, I purpose noticing it in its

place. After all this is gone through up to the full inshining of hope, the position of Christ exalted on high, and once suffering in Israel as that in virtue of which He could help and deliver them, is brought out. This (with the application of it to the remnant and the employment of David's last appeal in his sorrow, as now fatigued with years, to Israel's own state at the end) ushers in the millennial reign of Christ under the figure of Solomon.

Psalm 52

Faith in regard to the power of the wicked man

In Psalm 52 we find faith as regards the power of the wicked man, who was in presence of the godly. The goodness of God endured. God would destroy the proud and deceitful man, while the righteous would abide. It reminds of Shebna — not enemies from without nor even the beast, but within among themselves — the Antichrist of power.

Psalm 53

The wicked in general

In Psalm 53 we have the wicked in general, the whole mass of the people, all, save where grace had come in. It is the same as Psalm 14, but does not speak of Jehovah, but of God, for the remnant are no longer in the place of covenant relation. Hence here it is not God is in the generation of the righteous, but the utter ruin of those encamped against them — the public judgment of the external enemies. Those who are in great fear are the ungodly Jews (see Isaiah 33:14; Isaiah 8:12; and Isaiah 10:24). In Psalm 14 they despised the poor who trusted in Jehovah. There they were outwardly together. This is not so now. God has put His enemies to shame — not the proud ungodly the poor of the flock. The desire of the full salvation of Israel out of Zion as a centre, not merely God's deliverance by judgment from enemies without, is then expressed. The power which comes from heaven and destroys the faithless oppressor, is a distinct thing from the establishment of the result of covenant power in Zion according to promise.

Psalm 54

The cry to God to deliver

Psalm 54 is the cry to God to deliver according to the value of His name, the subject of trust. The double character of the enemies is spoken of — strangers, enemies from without; and oppressors, the proud within, who hunt for the life of the poor. When deliverance comes, then the name of Jehovah is introduced (v. 6, 7). The name of God is the revelation of what He is. This is what is trusted. Jehovah's name, that of their covenant God, will be praised when they get back into the place of association with Him.

Psalm 55

Wickedness in Jerusalem

Psalm 55 is a distressing picture of wickedness in Jerusalem. The speaker is outside, but has experienced this wickedness in the treachery of his dearest friends. His resource is in God: Jehovah will save. He is looking back, I judge, at all that he had experienced in Jerusalem. Wickedness went about her walls. Wickedness, deceit, and guile were in her midst, nor departed from her streets. He would fain have fled from it all. The enemy was without, the wicked within; but they charged the godly with wickedness, and utterly hated them; but worst of all was the heartless treachery of those within, those with whom the godly had gone in company to the house of God. Still his trust was in God, for where else should he seek help?

Psalm 56

The word of God a sure trusting place

Psalm 56 expresses the sense of the bitter and relentless enmity of the wicked, but the tears of the godly are put in God's bottle. God is owned as the Most High, the title of promise but not of covenant (that of covenant is Jehovah); and here the remnant are cast out. But the word of God is a sure trusting place. It carries the truth of God as its basis to the soul, and contains all the expression of His goodness, and ways, and faithfulness, and interest also in His people. Hence there is no fear of man. The soul of the godly was delivered from death; he had escaped and fled, and now he looks to God that his feet may be kept, that he may walk before God in the light of the living. As the expression of the tried heart driven out, but so escaped, it has a most clear and distinct place.

Psalm 57

Confidence in God: full and heavenly deliverance looked for

Psalm 57 looks more at the evil and the feet being kept, leaning on the word. This psalm, while crying to God in the same spirit and circumstances, and under the same title, is more the expression of confidence in God as a refuge. His wings are a covert till the evil be overpast, and full deliverance is looked for by His gloriously putting an end to the trial. God will send from heaven and deliver. Hence the end of the psalm is more triumphant than that of Psalm 56. He will praise among the peoples and various tribes of the earth, for God's mercy and truth are great. God's publicly exalting Himself above heaven and over all the earth is looked for. No help was on earth, none to be looked for; but this cast more entirely on God, and thus brought out a fuller confidence in His safeguard, and in the final display of power in deliverance. So it ever is. God would send from heaven. How this directs the remnant upwards, and links them with a heavenly deliverance. Then Jehovah is praised.

Psalm 58

Judgment the only and promised deliverance for the remnant

All righteousness was silent in Israel. The wicked were such and nought else. The godly man looks for judgment on them, for, let favour be shown to them, they will not learn uprightness. In the land of uprightness will they deal unjustly (Isaiah 26:9-10). They cannot, says David of the same, be taken with hand; one must be fenced with iron to touch them (2 Sam. 23). Hence the godly looked for judgment — the only possible means, by God's own testimony, of removing the evil; for patience had been fully exercised towards them, but when even God's hand was lifted up they would not see. And the vengeance of deliverance would come, and men would say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous; doubtless there is a God that judges in the earth (see Isaiah 26:9). This is the meaning of these terrible judgments: they establish the government and righteous judgment of God in the earth. Grace has taken us out of the world; we are not of it, as Christ was not of it. Christ will, as to our deliverance, even from suffering, come and take us out of the evil, so that we have in no way need to seek the destruction of our enemies. But for the persecuted remnant, it is the only and promised deliverance; and not only that — it establishes God's government of the earth.

Psalm 59

External enemies: the might of human power judged

Psalm 59 gives more the external enemies. The same wickedness is found there, but the might of human power with it. But they also must be judged, that wickedness may be set aside. Nor was it the sin of Israel against them that brought the heathen on them (however God might chasten them for sin against Him, so that He was justified). The suffering remnant look therefore for the intervention of Jehovah to judge them. And Jehovah shall judge all the heathen. They are not destroyed, but scattered, yet practically, as power, consumed; and many, as we know, slain.

This psalm speaks of no restoration of blessing. It is judgment, and judgment going on and not yet finished. And this judgment of the proud and wicked enemies will go on. Though rising up in rage to a head of wickedness, they will be sore smitten and consumed. All the heathen are concerned in it, but I apprehend that it is especially the apostate power animated of Satan - partially the king of Daniel 8 perhaps. It will be remarked here that, the moment it is in contrast with the heathen, the name of Jehovah is introduced. The personal address is still under the name of God, for the people are still outside (see v. 3, 5, 8 for Jehovah, and 1, 9, 10, 17 for the personal address). Note, the result is, that God rules in Jacob unto the ends of the earth. Verses 14, 15 are, I apprehend, a challenge. Let the heathen be as hungry dogs about the city, the believer will sing of Jehovah's power. It is at the close of the tribulation.

The connection between Israel and Messiah shown by David

This psalm presents another phase of the connection of Israel and Messiah, and shows how David became the fitted instrument whom God had attuned to tell Messiah's and the remnant's sufferings. "Slay them not, lest my people forget."* Now, this is not the language of the king, as such, but of Jehovah. The only case where "my people" is used is 2 Samuel 22:44, or Psalm 18: 43, where Christ is the speaker. But when Christ is born, He is called Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins. Now Jesus was the personal verifying of that which was said of Jehovah. In all their affliction He was afflicted, as in Isaiah 63. It is Jehovah who gets the tongue of the learned (Isaiah 50). So that "my people," where not directly of Jehovah which is frequent, is Christ entering into the sorrows of Israel, but in the love of Jehovah to them — no doubt as man (or how could He have actually suffered?) but still in the sympathies of Jehovah — yet, and because He is Jehovah, perfectly entering into them. It is thus He wept over Jerusalem, saying, "How often would I have gathered thy children together!" But that was Jehovah Hence, though He can say "we," because He graciously takes a place among the children, yet, in saying "we," it brings in all His own value and excellency into the cry. "I" and "me" may often take up the case of an individual of the remnant; but in case of such an expression as "my people," we clearly get One who stands in another position — not merely David. He says (like Moses) to Jehovah, "thy people" ever, and that is all right, but One who, in whatever sorrow, could say, as Jehovah, when spoken of by the Spirit, "my people," and enter into their griefs with divine sympathy, and a righteous call for divine judgment. I apprehend that, though the enemies are the heathen, yet their complete intimacy and affinity with the wicked among the Jewish people is clearly intimated here. The same thing is found in Isaiah 66. They are all melted into one system and state of wickedness. {*If the title be right, David was not yet king de facto, and the Spirit of Christ in him spoke anticipatively of the title of the anointed one; but evidently in view of another epoch. Note too here all Israel is in view of the desires of faith, though no deliverance even of the Jews be yet accomplished.}

Psalm 60

The remnant's acceptance of punishment: their hope

In Psalm 60 the remnant acknowledge God's having cast them off. Their only hope is, that He will turn to them again. This is exactly the point of Israel's righteousness as a nation: no going for help elsewhere — no spirit of rebellion. They accept the punishment of their iniquity. Still God had put His ensign among the faithful in Israel. He was their Jehovah-nissi. They now look to Him. The end of the psalm is God asserting His title to the land of promise. Victory will be to Israel through Him.

Psalm 61

The cry of depression but a known God trusted

The main point of all these psalms is trust in God when all is against the godly One. The more all circumstances are adverse, the more God is trusted in; but Christ shines through all as taking the dependent godly one's place. Many of the psalms of this book were, it is very likely, composed when

David was driven out through Absalom.

This confidence in God which calls Him to hear is expressed in Psalm 61. It is not an appeal of the godly man against enemies, but the sinking of his heart as cast out; but, when at the end of the earth and his spirit overwhelmed, he cries to God and looks for a rock higher than himself from this flood. Thus his confidence was restored. It was a known God whom he thus trusted, whatever his then sorrows. In verse 5 he applies it to present certainty of having been heard. The vows he had sent up Godward had reached His ear above; full blessings would rest upon him, and in those blessings he would perform them. Verse 6, doubtless, as to the occasion of it, was David, but it looks, I apprehend, clearly to a greater than he, and the abiding life into which He entered as man; and though the godly remnant be thus driven out and their spirit overwhelmed within them, yet the fact that the King had been so would be a cheer and a security to their hearts: His song would become theirs, His having sung it a relief to them when they might have sunk in despondency. Though the being driven out is the occasion and is felt, the psalm does not refer to wickedness, but to nature, the human heart being overwhelmed.

Psalm 62

The confidence and encouragement of trust

In Psalm 62 confidence is more expressed. It is not looking from an overwhelmed heart, but a free looking up, so that one is not overwhelmed. His soul waits on God, has none else indeed, but does not desire any other. There is a "how long? as well as a waiting. God will certainly come in at the right time, and then it will be known to whom power belongs. The psalm is spoken individually and may be in the mouth of any one of the godly remnant. How long would they imagine mischief against a man? What was their object? Why have him thus in hatred, and by falsehood seek to root him out of his place — the place of God's blessing, in which He had placed the godly in Israel? But this, I doubt not, has special application to Christ as the One who was indeed in this place, and against whom all their malice was directed to cast Him down from His excellency. He invites also the people (Jewish) to trust in God, to pour out their hearts before Him, and, putting Himself with them in this place, says, not only, "my refuge is in God," but He is "a refuge for us." In saying "my" He shows that He had it; but these maschilim (the wise) shall instruct the many and turn to righteousness many of them.* Above all did that truly understanding One do so. They were not to trust in the great and violent ones of the earth. Power belongs to God, and with Him is mercy. They may trust in Him as a God of righteousness, and walk uprightly and not be turned aside by the prosperity of the wicked; for the Lord (Adonai) will reward every man according to his works. It is the desire to cast down the poor of the flock (because the wicked after all have the consciousness that the excellency of God is with them, and specially with Christ), which draws out this psalm, which expresses the faith of the saint, and the warning to the people to trust God and not the mighty. They are exalted in the earth; but true elevation from God is with Christ, and those who thus walk, who fear God and obey the voice of His servant. {*Compare Daniel 12:3 and Isaiah 53:11; not "justify many," but turn to righteousness, and bear, etc.}

Psalm 63

Desire after God Himself: praise even in the wilderness

If Psalm 61 has been the cry of depression, Psalm 62 the confidence and encouragement of trust in God, Psalm 63 is the longing of the soul, still as cast out and far from the sanctuary (so we can speak of heaven, for we have seen the power and glory there by faith); but having, by faith in the loving-kindness itself, praise as its portion even in the wilderness, marrow and fatness to feed upon. It is a beautiful psalm in this respect; for it knows God; praise is thus begotten in the soul and for all times. There are two points: first, a most sweet word — because God's loving-kindness is better than life, his lips praise God, though life in the wilderness be sorrow; secondly, because He has been his help, therefore he will rejoice in His protection. Verse 8 describes the practical result — his soul followed hard after God, and God's right hand upheld him. There was the longing to see the power and the glory as he had seen it; the present satisfying of the soul as with marrow and fatness, and that in the silent watches of the night, when all outward excitement was hushed and the soul left to itself. Those that sought the soul of the righteous to destroy it should go down into hades, but the king shall rejoice in God. Those that own His name should glory, but the false ones who departed from Him should be put to shame. It is again the king, and applies to Christ in a higher sense than to the remnant. For Him it was the desire to see the glory from which He was descended; for the Jew it was in the temple; for us, a Christ who has been revealed by faith to us, who have seen the glory and sanctuary into which He is entered.

There is a difference between Psalm 84 and this psalm: that is the desire to revisit the sanctuary of God; this, desire after God Himself. There the tabernacles of Jehovah, a covenant God, are amiable; here God Himself is a delight when there are no tabernacles to go to.* {*For Christ and for the new man, the world is a desert, without anything in it to refresh the soul. But divine favour being better than life, we can praise while we live; our soul is satisfied as with marrow and fatness. The saint is not in the sanctuary, but has seen God in it. His desire is after God Himself. Christ could literally say this. "He has seen the Father": we have seen Him in Him.}

Psalm 64

God's sudden judgment of the wicked and its result

Psalm 64 chiefly speaks of the unceasing crafty hatred of the enemy and cries to God: God will shoot at them suddenly. The result of this judgment will be that all shall fear and declare the work of God, for they shall wisely consider of His doing. Then (for judgment is now come) the righteous shall be glad in Jehovah, for His covenant name is now taken, the judgment having removed the power of evil. The upright in heart glory. Thus judgment introduces the millennium.

Psalm 65

Confidence in what the blesser of the earth will do

In Psalms 65-67 we have the bright side, the bright and joyful confidence of the saint who is conscious of being heard, and who, though not yet in the blessing, counts upon it; whereas up to this it has been the sense of the power of evil, or the cry to God and waiting upon Him. Still in Psalm 65 the door of praise is not yet opened. Praise is silent in Zion; still it surely would not be silent, the vow now made would be performed. There God was the hearer of prayer if praise was yet silent, and all flesh would come to Him. But confidence is very bright here. As to the actual state of the people and the remnant (indeed, the remnant alone enter into their case) iniquities prevailed against them. Still confidence is unshaken, God would purge them away. Blessed the man that Elohim chose (for all was grace) and made to dwell in His courts. They would be satisfied with the goodness of His house. The thing was sure and gave satisfying joy. In verse 5 we have the judgment in favour of the remnant by which the blessing would be introduced — terrible things in righteousness. God is the blesser of the earth in every place. The end of the psalm is the celebration of the earth's blessings, when God comes in in judgment in favour of His people. At the door of Zion, as yet eating the fruit of their sins outside, the plea of the remnant is, that as yet praise was silent in Zion, but it was ready; God had only to bring in the judgment and deliverance, and it would wake up; and Elohim would do this, He who was the one blesser and orderer of the whole earth.

Psalm 66

The celebration of God's intervention in righteousness

Psalm 66 celebrates this intervention in righteousness. Men are called to see God's works, but (v. 6) it is the very same God who once delivered Israel before out of Egypt. Verse 8 calls upon the nations brought into connection with God, to bless the God of the remnant, that is, of Israel. They had been brought through every kind of sorrow and oppression, to prove and try them as silver, but now they would go before Him and praise Him. They had cried, been righteous, were heard, and found mercy; their prayer was not turned away, nor God's mercy from them. Thus after the sorrows (seen clearly now as the way and hand of God with them), to the righteous there is arisen up light in the darkness. They can pay the vows uttered in their distress, and tell to others the blessed and sure deliverance of the Lord who cares for the righteous, and has indeed heard their cry. But it is a deliverance by terrible acts of righteousness on God's part, the display of His intervention in judgment in the government of this world. We see, as indeed in so many other psalms, how it is in the Jewish remnant, though not a sparrow falls to the ground without Him, that God displays His government of this world; as it is in them, which is the subject of the next psalm, that the blessing of the world takes place.

Psalm 67

The repentant Jew the way of blessing for the world

Psalm 67 closes this short series by looking for the blessing of the remnant, not only as the righteous and merciful answer to their cry, but as the way of spreading the knowledge of God's ways to all

nations. "God be merciful to us, that thy way may be known upon earth." Thus all the peoples will praise God, and the earth be judged and governed righteously. The earth will yield her increase, God's blessing will be upon it, and He will, as the own God of the godly remnant that have trusted in Him, bless them. The result is summed up in the last verse — "God shall bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall fear him." For the repentant Jew is the way of blessing, life from the dead for the world.

Psalm 68

God at the head of His people in majesty

Psalm 68 follows on these psalms, being the celebration of the introduction of Israel into the position spoken of in them. Still it has a complete and individual character of its own. It begins with the formula employed when the camp broke up in the wilderness under the guidance of God, the pillar rising up and going before them. So it is now. God takes this place at the head of His people. It is thus introduced suddenly with great majesty. Let God arise — so His enemies are scattered before Him: as wax before the fire, the wicked perish at His presence. The righteous may be glad and rejoice before God, yea, exceedingly rejoice. He shall appear to the shame of the mighty wicked, and the righteous poor will be glorified. Thus the purport of this psalm is most clear. But the character of Him who thus interferes is further most beautifully unfolded. He is a father of the fatherless, a judge of widows. He makes the solitary to dwell in families, the rebellious in a dry land. Judgment is the true and gracious deliverance of the blessed God. And now His people can celebrate this goodness.

History is then recapitulated (v. 7). Such was He when He brought forth Israel from Egypt. At Sinai the earth shook at His presence. But He refreshed the heritage of His weary people, when He had prepared of His goodness for the poor. But now present facts told that tale still more to their hearts. Adonai's word went forth. The glad tidings were chanted by Israel's daughters in a great company (v. 11). Kings fled apace. What a sudden and complete deliverance it was! The quietest home-stayer divided the spoil, for it was the Lord's doing. Then Israel came out in all her beauty, though they had been lying in poverty and wretchedness.* In all the pretensions and striving of the nations, this is God's will. God challenges these pretensions of human power; "Why leap ye, ye high hills?" — the seats of human power. Zion was God's hill, He would make it His perpetual abode. For the sake of His remnant He scattered the kings. In the midst of them He would dwell. But whence all this deliverance? The Lord had ascended on high, received gifts as man and for men; yea, even for rebellious Israel, who was now in question, that Jehovah might dwell among them. {*The force of the word is much disputed; its sense, I suppose, is evident. It is used for the stables of sheep or cattle.}

Praise for the full restoration of Israel's blessing and glory: its source

This brings out praises to the God of their salvation; for their God was the God of salvation. Oh! how could Christ witness that? But they were still mortal men down here. The deliverance was earthly and temporal, though of saints. But He would be their guide always, even unto death. But He would destroy the wicked. What was really the occasion of all this burst of joy (of which the heart was too full to tell

quietly the occasion) is now however drawn out; yet the exultation still casts its light and joy over it. Israel was set up again in power; her enemies destroyed; the beauty of her temple-order restored. The tribes would come up, the kings bring presents. God had commanded strength, and they look to His strengthening what is wrought. The subjection of every enemy or mighty one follows. Princes would come out of Egypt, and Ethiopia stretch out her hands to God. The kingdoms of the earth are all called upon then to sing praises to Adonai. Strength is to be ascribed to God; but His excellency, that in which He is exalted, is over Israel, and, in the clouds of His dwelling-place is power, His strength watches over His people. It is the full restoration of Israel's blessing and glory, and indeed much more than restoration; and this consequent upon the exaltation of the Lord to receive gifts as man.

The Lordship of Christ

But, while it is the intervention of God in the power of judgment, for the blessing of the remnant and putting down human power and every haughtiness of man's will — "God's arising" before His earthly people and His enemies fleeing — there are some points in it, which are brought out by this, which it is well to notice. First, the use of Adonai. His name Jah is introduced (v. 4 and 18), but it is always Adonai as spoken of. It is not the covenant name of relationship, though Jah recall it, but power in exercise, Lordship — divine Lordship — but still Lordship. It is what Thomas owned when he saw the Lord, it would seem; not, tell my brethren "I ascend unto my Father and your Father, " etc. It is God; but as the Lord manifested here in power as Psalm 2:4; only there He is not redescended. Hence here we have His ascension as a past fact. It is not that God gives, but He who is Adonai has gone up and received gifts as, and in respect of, man. In His Adam (last Adam) character He has received them, having led the enemy captive (Acts 2:33-36); here clearly the ascended man, though much more, and as head having received the gifts "in Man" — the human head of glory — He shed forth the gifts (Acts 2, Eph. 4). But though as, and for, and in, man, yet there was also a special object added, yea, even for the rebellious, that Jah Elohim might dwell among them. Here the remnant, the Israel of our psalm, comes in. Hence the apostle does not quote it, but stops half-way at His receiving them for man.

In the following psalms we find the humiliation of this blessed One. What a contrast! Yet how far indeed from being less glorious or of feebler interest in the eyes of us who have learned and know who He is.

Psalm 69

The godly in deepest distress

The state of soul of which this most important psalm is the expression demands the utmost attention and patient inquiry. We have all along seen the remnant of Israel before us, or Christ associated with that remnant. It is the case here. He who speaks is doubtless, first of all, David; but evidently a greater than he. The state described is this: — He is in the deepest distress, sinking in deep mire, has to weigh before God the foolishness and sins which have been the occasion of it. He is in the midst of numerous and mighty enemies, who are such without a cause. Whatever sins may be dealt with, personally He has

been faithful. The zeal even of God's house has eaten Him up, and He is suffering reproach for the God of Israel's sake. Hence He prays that this may not be a stumbling-block to others, seeing that One so faithful to God should find such distress and trouble. Yet He is not forsaken of God. On the contrary His prayer is to Jehovah in an acceptable time. He looks to be heard in the multitude of God's mercies and the truth of His salvation. His complaint is of His enemies; yet He sees Himself smitten of God, and among those whom He has wounded. His desire is for vengeance against men; it is not the testimony of grace.

If we look at the godly man in the remnant of Israel, all this answers perfectly. He acknowledges his sins — all the sins of his nation. Yet he suffers reproach and causeless enmity for the name of the God of Israel: and the more faithful he is, the more he suffers it. Faith yet makes him know that he prays in an acceptable time (we have seen this to be the character of the last psalms) to the God of Israel. Yet he is in the deepest distress. His eyes fail while waiting for God. His care for the good of Israel, his submission to injury, only makes him their scorn. He looks for the destruction of his adversaries and persecutors, for whom no mercy is of avail (they will it not); assured that Jehovah hears the poor and despises not His prisoners. All creation is to praise Him, for God will save Zion and build the cities of Judah, that they may dwell therein and have it in possession. The seed also of His servants shall inherit it; and they that love His name shall dwell therein. All this is exactly and precisely the position and feeling of the godly remnant — the maschilim.

Christ's personal sufferings as a man from men

But in verse 21, and indeed, though of more general application, in verse 9, we have what has been literally fulfilled in Christ. The use of verse 22 in the epistle to the Romans leads us to the same conclusion; and many other verses, though applicable to others, have their fullest application to Christ. Yet He is not speaking as forsaken of God at all. Yet, though His life is referred to, His sufferings on the cross, as we have seen, are reached in the description given of them; yet there is no trace of grace and mercy flowing from them. They are man's part in them, not God's forsaking; and judgment on man sought, not righteous grace announced. Yet withal trespasses are confessed before God, and the persecutions are of One whom God has smitten. Hence, I cannot but see in this psalm, after His righteous life, in consequence of which He suffered reproach (and which He rehearses as regards the great principles which had governed it), Christ entering in heart and spirit into the sorrow and distress of Israel, into which, as to God's government, they had brought themselves; yet not the forsaking or the rejecting that was Christ's alone as bearing and expiating sin. Still, they are smitten of God and wounded by Him; and into this Christ could enter, because He (in the highest and fullest sense, though it be not the general subject of this psalm in general) was smitten of God. The subject is the persecution by the Jews, but the persecuted One was smitten of God, and felt how terrible was the wickedness that taunted and reproached Him who had taken that bitter cup, which we too had filled by our sins. Christ was smitten of God upon the cross, and felt the reproach and dishonour then cast upon Him.

As regards the trespasses recalled to mind in verse 5,* I apprehend they are in connection with the government of God as to Israel; and that, though the fact of smiting is referred to, its expiatory power is not at all treated of in this psalm. Only judgment is sought for; that is not the fruit of expiation (compare

Psalm 22). But it gives to us, for that very reason, a fuller apprehension of all the personal sufferings of Christ at that time; not that which stands wholly and entirely alone — His atoning and expiatory work. Were this only revealed, it is so immensely great, it would have eclipsed His personal sufferings as a man, as such, gone through at that time; and this it is, blessed be God, which we have in this psalm — what accompanied the great act of the smiting of God. {*Further, as already remarked, in no case is the assumption of sins or their confession, on the head of the victim, the act of expiation. It is the assumption of that which had to be expiated.}

Psalm 70

The Spirit's desire in connection with Christ's sufferings from man

Psalm 70 embodies the desire of the Spirit of Christ in connection with His sufferings from man, (but expresses itself, as in the remnant in that day); that His enemies may be confounded - those that say, Aha, aha, as they did when He was on the cross; that those that seek Jehovah may rejoice, and be glad and rejoice, and those who look for His deliverance say, Let God be magnified - that is, enjoy that deliverance. For this, He, as on earth, is content to be poor and needy, and nothing else, to the end. Still He trusts in Jehovah; He is His help and deliverer. He is assured He will come. He asks He may not tarry. Any saint of the remnant could say it doubtless; but it is a summing up of the principle on which the Spirit of Christ speaks in them, and of His personal association with their sorrows, and thus in principle furnishes a key. It will be remarked that from Psalm 69:13 the covenant name of Jehovah is introduced.

Psalm 71

God's ways with Israel; appeal to His faithful care

Psalm 71, founded, I suppose, as much of this book, upon the flight of David on the rebellion of Absalom, presents, I apprehend, the sum of all God's ways with Israel from the commencement of their history, and the display of His faithful care, with the appeal not now to leave them at the last. Christ, I doubt not, in spirit enters into it (see v. 11) as in every case, but it cannot personally apply to Him. The close of His life witnessed exactly similar trials, only faultless and deeper ones; but its application is to the old age of Israel, who will be brought up as from the depths of the earth through the faithful grace of the Holy One of Israel.

Psalm 72

The reign of peace and royal blessing; its source and securer

Psalm 72 introduces us, not to David in suffering and conflict, but to the full reign of peace and royal blessing. It is the Son of David we have here, the source and securer of millennial blessings. I know not

that this psalm requires much explanation by reason of its clearness. It is the king to whom God gives His judgments, and who is at the same time the king's Son, the Son of David, in His reign of righteousness and peace, as Solomon or Melchisedec. His kingdom has the full extent of promise, but all kings fall down before Him. Blessings of every kind accompany this reign of righteousness. The expression "prayer shall be made continually for him" shows simply, that the blessings enjoyed through Him raise the desire and request for His glory and continuance in power. While literally spoken of Solomon, I think it would point out Christ reigning as a true man upon earth. Verse 17 shows, I think, it is not uncertainty of duration, but the effects of His rule on the hearts of all that are under it. There will be a prince of the house of David in Jerusalem, I suppose: still this, I think, looks beyond him.

The contents of book 2

This closes the Book. We have seen in it the godly ones cast out; their distress and confidence in this position; this ending in the certainty and confidence of restoration; and then Messiah's deliverance and exaltation and previous humiliation — the glorious and yet humbled person being thus brought out — and then the human royal rule established in Israel. This ends the dealings with the remnant in the land, looked at as apart from the rest.

Psalm 73

Perplexity at the prosperity of the wicked; the solution of the problem

This the first psalm of it shows. Truly God is good to Israel, to such as are of a true heart: but the saint was perplexed at the prosperity of the wicked, and his feet almost gone. The prosperous ungodly are then described; the body of the people join them, and the Most High is scorned; whereas the godly is continually chastened, he had cleansed his hands then in vain. But in speaking thus he would offend against the generation of God's children. Man pondering on it, it was too painful. In the sanctuary of God, where His mind was revealed, all became plain. As a dream when one awakes, so all their pretensions would disappear when once God awoke. The godly man complains of his want of divine sense in these thoughts and feelings. Still, after all he was ever before God, and God's right hand upheld him; guided by His counsel in that time of darkness, when the glory shall have been revealed, he will be received (read "after the glory, thou wilt receive me": compare Zech. 2:8). The result is blessed. He has none in heaven but the Lord, none on earth whom he desires beside Him: such is the effect of trial. But his flesh and heart fail: that is nature. It must be so, but God is the strength of his heart and his portion for ever. The last two verses declare the result — those far from Jehovah, and apostates, perish; but it is good for the godly to draw near to God. He has put his trust in Him when He did not show Himself, that he might declare all His works when deliverance came; for those blessed without trial afterwards will not learn this knowledge of God.

Psalm 74

The desolation of the sanctuary; God's faithfulness

Psalm 74 complains of the hostile desolation of the sanctuary, when rebuilt in the land. God's enemies, as faith here calls them, roar in the congregations. Man's ensigns, not God's, are the signs of power. All public Jewish worship was laid low. Not only this - what might have been a comfort in such a time fails. There are no signs from God to meet it, no prophets, none that know how long (know, that is, by the teaching of God, when He will come in in power). Still there is here faith that God will not forsake His people, and that word, How long? if there be no answer as to it, turns into a cry. It cannot be for ever. God's faithfulness is trusted in. Heretofore He had smitten Egypt and delivered His people through a divided sea. All power in creation was His. The enemy had reproached the name of Jehovah. Israel is still held to be, in the remnant, as God's turtledove. He is entreated to have respect to the covenant, for the dark places of the earth (or land) are full of the habitations of cruelty. The oppressed, the poor, the needy, are, as ever, presented to the eye and heart of God. We have them ever come before us as those of whom God thinks, in whom Christ delighted in the land. And so it is even as to the spirit we have to be of. He calls on God to arise and plead His own cause. The tumult of those who rose up against Him daily increased. While looked at as the poor and oppressed, it is remarkable how faith identifies the interests of the godly remnant and of God, and pleads their cause with Him. It is spoken of as from without. God is addressed: only God is reminded that His name in Israel has been blasphemed. This name recalls (v. 19, 20) the covenant relationship with, and tender love of Jehovah towards, His people.

Psalm 75

Praise for wondrous works already wrought

In Psalm 75 Messiah is introduced speaking, though the psalm commences with the remnant giving thanks to God for wondrous works already wrought. Then judgments of God introduce Messiah to the kingdom. He receives the congregation of Israel; then upright judgment will be executed. The earth is dissolved in guilt and confusion. Messiah upholds its pillars. In the following verses He warns the wicked and despisers of God not to exalt themselves, for God is the Judge; He puts up and puts down. The wicked should drink the cup of judgment to the dregs; but the despised Messiah would exalt the God of Jacob and cut off the horns of the wicked; the horn of the righteous would be exalted.

Psalm 76

The unexpected judgment of kings by the unlooked-for Judge

Psalm 76 is extremely simple in its application to the judgment of the kings, who come up against Jerusalem in their pride, and find, unlooked for, the Lord Himself there (compare Micah 4:11-13 and Zech. 12:2; Zech. 14:3-4). The judgment of God is rehearsed, and God is now celebrated as having His dwelling-place in Zion. He is the God of Jacob and known in Judah: His judgment was heard from heaven. The long-despised Zion is more glorious than the mountains of prey, the high places of human

violence. The earth feared, and was still, when God arose to judgment, and to help all the meek upon the earth.

Psalm 77

Spiritual deliverance and restored confidence

In Psalm 77 we have spiritual deliverance and restored confidence. He cried with his voice to God, and God gave ear to him. To cry with the voice is more than to have a wish. A cry is the expression of weakness, dependence, recourse had to God, the reference of the soul to God, even of uprightness of heart. In the day of trouble, it was not merely complaint, irritation, anger; but "I sought the Lord," Adonai, not Jehovah. His first thought was whether the Lord would cast off for ever (v. 7-9); for here he, as often remarked in the Psalms, is going through the process which led to the statements of the first verses.* In verse 10 he judges himself in the thought, and remembered those years in which the power of Jehovah, the covenant God of Israel, the Most High of the fathers, was displayed (compare the remark, verse 5). The way of God is always and necessarily according to His own most blessed and holy nature, and understood in the secret place in which He makes known His thoughts to those in communion with Him. His way is according to that place, in which He judges His people according to His present relationship with them. (Hence the place of the interpreter, one among a thousand). The ways of God are the application of the divine principles of His holy nature, owned as placing Himself in relationship with His people, according to which principles that relationship must be maintained. That is His sanctuary. There is where He is approached. Thence He deals with His people, not merely in outward guidance, but as making good in His majesty the principles of His nature (so far as revealed) in the hidden man of the heart. He deals in the holy place of His nature and majesty with us in the truth of our state — our real, moral, inward state. He does not deviate from these ways, nor compromise the majesty they make good. But they (though according to His nature) are carried out in a revealed relationship. They make good His nature and majesty in it, but never infringe it. Man in relationship with Him must suit himself to it, must walk in his inward state with Him in it; but God, if He deals according to it, purifies him for it, shows the evil, hides pride from man in order to bless him, but makes good His own majesty. Hence the heart in the evil turns back to that which formed the relationship in redemption (v. 14-18). {*This, if noticed, makes many psalms easy to understand, which would otherwise be difficult; because sorrow and distress follow after the confidence, but it is really what the spirit passed through in reaching it. This supposes, of course, truth in the inward parts, conversion.}

God's ways — in the sanctuary and in the sea

Israel or the godly remnant is not in the enjoyment here of covenant blessings, but, when distressed, looks back by faith to a time which recalls the power of Him who cannot change. The comfort of the soul is, that God's way is in the sanctuary, according to the nature and ways of God Himself, so far as He is revealed. If I look out to judge as man, His way is in the sea — I cannot trace it; His footsteps are not known, for who can follow out Him who disposes of all things with a thought? We do know God's

own nature and character in relation to us by faith, and can reckon on it, as to all He does, as faithful and unchangeable; but we cannot know and judge His ways in themselves. Hence the unbeliever is discontented and will blame God; the believer is happy, because he has the key to all, in what the God is whom he knows, and on whose ordering of all things he can count. It must be according to what God is. He does not order all things contrary to what He is; but He is for us and therefore orders all things for us — makes all things work together for good. He leads His people like sheep. In Psalm 73 the tried one learned the end of his outward enemies, who prospered while he was chastened. Here he learns the ways of God with himself.

But this psalm is practically both interesting and instructive. The soul away from the enjoyment of divine blessing, is awakened by grace to cry to God, the sense of the loss of these blessings pressing upon it. He seeks the Lord, and this presses the trouble, as it ever does, on him; he feels where he is, his soul refused comfort; but the thought of God is a source of trouble, for if faith is awakened, conscience is too, which mingled with the loss of blessing, and the spirit overwhelmed; his soul is kept in wakeful consciousness of where he is. He thinks of bright days of old when the "candle of the Lord shone upon" him. Had God given him up, forgotten to be gracious and shut up His loving-kindness in displeasure? Can he think that God has given him up, and he one of His people! This brought God Himself into his mind. How could it be all over with him? It was his own infirmity; and he turns back to the years of the right hand of the Most High. He remembers Jehovah's works. In reaching Jehovah with his own humbled spirit, he reached One who was for His people ever and who had wrought for them and redeemed them of old. He, their God, became the source of his thoughts, not his own state towards Him. Then His being their God made it so dreadful. Then he can think and judge rightly of His ways too. They are in the sea not to be tracked by man's foot, but in the sanctuary always according to His nature and character, and accomplishing His purposes in good.

Psalm 78

Israel's conduct; God's sovereign mercy and grace

In Psalm 78 the conduct of Israel is discussed by wisdom, historically as regards the whole people, but with very important principles brought out. There was not only a redemption of old, to which faith recurred, but a testimony given, and a law to guide Israel's ways, that they should make them known to their children. But the fathers had been a stubborn and rebellious generation. Now, the law and the testimony were given that the children might not be like their fathers; but they were, and their history is here brought out. God, therefore, chastened them; there was direct open government in respect of their ways. For all this they sinned still. At the moment of chastisement they turned to Him. Nevertheless they did but flatter Him with their mouth, their heart was not right with Him, nor they stedfast in His covenant. But He showed compassion, also forgave, remembered they were but flesh. Yet after Egyptian signs they forgat Him; brought into the land, they turned to idolatry. When God heard this, He was wroth and greatly abhorred Israel. On the ground of this government, under law and testimony and compassionate mercy, Israel was wholly given up, the tabernacle forsaken, the ark delivered into captivity and the enemies' hand. The people also were delivered over to judgment. But Jehovah's love

to His people in grace was not weakened, and the sorrow they were brought into called out that love. He awoke, as one out of sleep, and smote His enemies, and put them to a perpetual shame. But now He had interfered in grace in His own proper love to His people. It was not governmental blessing on condition of obedience, but the interference of grace, when disobedience had, on the principle of government, brought in complete judgment, in spite of compassion and mercy. Sovereign mercy now had its place. Old blessings had put Joseph as natural heir; he had the rich and double portion. God chose Judah. He chose Zion. This gave it its importance. It is the place of love in grace, when all had failed under law, even with the fullest compassionate patience. He built His sanctuary. That is not directly presented as the subject of electing goodness, but He chose David when in the humblest condition, who then fed His people.

In this most beautiful psalm we have the most important principles possible. Viewing Israel as established on the ground of government in Sinai, on law mixed with compassion, Israel had entirely failed, was abhorred, cast off. A total breach had been made; the ark of the covenant, the link between Israel and God, the place of propitiation, and His throne, given up to the enemy. But God, whose sovereign love to His people had come in in power to deliver, had chosen Judah, Zion, David, and set up a link in grace, and by deliverance after failure. Faith can go back to God's works in redemption, but not to man's conduct under law. Psalm 78 is the converse of Psalm 77. Yet in Israel all this is declared to produce that which grace will effect in the last day — that value for the law in the heart which will make them teach it to their children (compare Gen. 18:17-19; see Exodus 34). Mercy put Israel again under the condition of obedience. Here power delivers, after they have failed even under this, and judgment is come, God acting according to His mind of love. Pure law they never were under in fact; the tables never came into the camp (compare 2 Cor. 3). Moses' face shone only when he had seen God, when he went up the second time accepted in grace; but for Israel, this was putting them back under law. It is grace, and law brought in after it, which is death and condemnation. This is impossible with substitution; but this place, of course, Moses could not take. "Peradventure I shall make an atonement for your souls." "Blot me out, I pray you." No, was the answer; the soul that sins, it will I blot out. This was law and (as we see here, and as is definitely stated in 2 Corinthians 3) ruin.

Psalm 79

The inroad of the heathen; Israel's standing outside blessing

Psalm 79 refers, in the plainest terms, to the inroad of the heathen, especially the northern army (Joel 2 refers to a second attack, in which the cry of the psalm is answered; Isaiah speaks of both), who had laid waste Jerusalem and the temple, and shed the blood of the servants of Jehovah. There is the owning of former sins, and mercy looked to — tender mercies. The plea is the plea called for in Joel 2, and referred to in previous psalms (Ps. 42 and Ps. 43), "why should the heathen say Where is their God?" and it demands that He may be known by the avenging the blood of His servants. Thus His people and the sheep of His pasture would give Him thanks for ever. Jehovah's anger is seen, and so far there is faith to say — How long? That is, though covenant mercies are not enjoyed by the remnant (yea, quite the contrary), yet faith looks to them, and sees Jehovah angry with His people; hence if such, and He

thus in relationship with them, He cannot give them up. It is only "How long?" Yet the direct cry is to God, even here, not Jehovah. Israel is not restored to his covenant place. There he will be in known covenant relationship, and then in grace, nor will this ever be lost sight of. Here they were not, but cast out on their failure under a conditional covenant, and though faith in promises sustained them, the new covenant was not entered into; they stood outside blessing, looking backward and forward, having nothing now. This is never the Christian's state. In applying it to himself he makes himself a Jew. For while Christ is hidden on high as to them, the Holy Ghost is come down to us while He is there, and we know that He is accepted and glorified as having stood for us, and that we are in Him.

Psalm 80

Israel's national historic circumstances

In Psalm 80 it is remarkable how we are upon the ground of Israel here, their past or future historical associations, not Christ (though all depends on Him, of course) or the godly Jew in the midst of the apostate assembly. We may have Jerusalem taken, confederacies, ancient deliverances of Israel, in a word, national history or prophecy concerning national circumstances; but all is external, not trials within so that Christ should come personally on the scene, save when He receives the congregation, though the godly in Israel are distinguished. Jehovah also is not referred to, save prospectively, when they enter into the new covenant, until the judgment of the last confederacy, which makes Jehovah known as Most High over all the earth. These psalms do not, I apprehend, exclude the Jews — they are part of Israel; and then in Judah, Jehovah will be revealed: only all Israel, including Joseph, is historically brought in — the nation. In this psalm God is addressed as the Shepherd of Israel, who leads Joseph like a flock, and dwells between the cherubim. This is, again, historic Israel. It is not God calling from heaven, nor coming. He is seen by faith only when He is there, having taken His place in Israel.

The urgency of faith: power laid upon the Son of man

The psalm is a remarkable one. It sees God in Israel — His throne of right there, and looks to His shining forth, stirring up His strength to help them; but still, as in Israel of old in the desert, Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh were immediately next the ark behind the tabernacle, and the sanctuary went immediately before them on the march of the camp (Num. 10) This was Jehovah, God of hosts. Faith looks for His presence in power with His people as it was then. The touching inquiry is, How long — the urgency of faith — wilt thou be angry against the prayer of thy people? This is also viewed in faith. The vine brought out of Egypt was laid waste; its hedge (as, indeed, Isaiah had threatened them) was broken down. Tears were the drink of Jehovah's people. They beseech God to look down from heaven and visit the vine, the vineyard, and the branch made strong for God Himself — David's family, I suppose. Still it was God's rebuke; but further, it looks that the divine hand of power should be upon the man of that power — the Son of man whom God had made strong for Himself. We can understand from this, and not merely from Daniel 7 (which merely gives a peculiar place to the Son of man), why the Lord gives Himself habitually the title of Son of man. He is the One, then, indeed rejected, but upon

whom God's right hand is to be in power. To this the Lord refers, Luke 22:69 (only reading "henceforth" for "hereafter"). Come down in grace, His mission there was closed; from that hour they would only know Him in exalted judicial power. It gives large importance to the name, and taking in Psalm 8 brings the deliverance of the remnant of Israel into the wide scope of His power; for as Son of man He takes manhood up in His own Person according to the counsels of God, only is over all the works of God's hand. He is Lord of all, but as such, and in virtue of His own work for them, effectuates this deliverance of the remnant of Israel. Thus the people of Jehovah would be kept. Such is the cry of this psalm — the coming in of power from Jehovah, the God of Israel — power laid upon the Son of man. The cry is occasioned by the great distress in Israel; still Jehovah is looked for, and faith sets Him in Israel. When He thus visited them, they would not go back from Him; when He quickens them out of the dust, they will call on His name (compare Psalm 2, Messiah).

The humiliation and exultation of the Son of man

Verses 3, 7, 19 give the theme of desire: still outward deliverance is looked for. Verse 17 demands special attention in the point of view already noticed, as showing what was in the Lord's mind when presenting the immense anomaly that this Son of man should suffer. Psalm 8, of course, gives the key, in the purposes of God, as to both humiliation and exaltation, and man's place. It was this humiliation the Lord pressed upon His disciples. Now they look for the display of divine power in Him. The assembly, and its union with Christ, and adoption individually known, are the only things I am aware of not revealed in the Old Testament; all as to Christ was. Perhaps we may add His present position as priest. Neither of these is mentioned in the titles given to Christ in the first chapter of John's Gospel, nor His being the Christ.

Psalm 81

The restoration of all Israel; God's love and unconditional grace

Psalm 81, while celebrating in figure the restoration of Israel, again returns to historical ground, specially introducing Joseph, who represents the ten tribes (see Ezek. 37:16). Otherwise Judah, the Jews, might have claimed everything. But in the restoration (although there are special events connected with the Jews, and it was amongst them that Jesus was conversant, entering especially into their circumstances in the latter day, producing the association, so profoundly interesting, which we have been studying in the first two books) yet it is evident that in the full purposes of God the stick of Joseph must have its place and become one in the Son of man's hand, and as all Israel. Now the new moon was the symbol of the reappearance of Israel in the sun's light, hailed with joy by the people and connected with redemption in the thought of faith (see v. 5 of the psalm). Then Israel called in trouble, and God delivered him; but then another important principle comes in. God answered them when in trouble; but He proved them also. They tempted God then, doubting His care and power. He was putting them to the test by difficulties, which seemed to say there was want of care or power; and they said, Is Jehovah among us! But Jehovah answered in grace (Ex. 17). This, I apprehend, is the case referred to. But even in the second Meribah — called so because Israel strove again with Jehovah,

when Moses (Num. 20) spake unadvisedly with his lips and was shut out from Canaan (for, from Sinai on, they were under legal though gracious government) — Jehovah was sanctified in giving them water in a grace which was above even Moses' failure. Still, while grace and faithfulness to His promises to His people were found in the government of God (Exodus 34:6-7), they were put to the test legally on the very terms of that mercy. It was a testing government though a merciful one, and so indeed in some sense is the divine government. God puts this test to them — if faithful to God, no strange god among them (He was Jehovah their God, which brought them out of the land of Egypt), blessing was prepared. They had only to open their mouth wide, and He would fill it. But Israel would not hearken, and they were given up to their own hearts' lusts. Still we see God's yearning love over them and the delight He would have had in blessing them and putting aside all their enemies, His righteous government would have been manifested in them (compare Matt. 23:37; Luke 19:42). Oh that they had hearkened! Thus we get the ground of Israel's ruin. They were placed as redeemed from Egypt under the test of obedience and fidelity to God. They had failed. Still they would appear again, to reflect the light of Jehovah's countenance. Thus love of Jehovah for the people breaks out even in their failure.

A very important principle for every soul is brought before us here. Redemption, with conditional blessing after it, only ends in the loss of the blessing, just as creation did. It is the same thing or worse. It depends on us to secure the blessing; and now as fallen beings (instead of innocent and free ones), grace alone can keep us, and so it will be with Israel. The gracious and tender character and thoughts of God towards His people come out most beautifully in this psalm. The passages I have referred to in the Gospels show the same tenderness, but, further, that Jesus is this very Jehovah.

Psalm 82

God assuming government into His own hands

We find God assuming the government into His own hands. He had set up authority in the earth and especially in Israel. Directed by His word in judgment and armed with His authority, the judges in Israel had borne the name of God (Elohim). But none would understand or deal righteously. All the foundations of the earth were out of course. All magistrates had received power and authority of God — the Jewish, His word also; but even these would not know or understand. They were men, and would die like men, and fall like one of the uncircumcised princes of this world. God who had given the authority judged among the gods — He must have righteousness. This judgment the Spirit of prophecy then calls for in the understanding one. "Arise, O God, judge the earth: for thou shalt inherit all nations."

Psalm 83

The last confederacy of the nations: judgment to be executed that Jehovah's name be known

Psalm 83 requires only to call attention to its subject. It is the last confederacy of the nations surrounding Canaan, with Assur helping them. At the close of the psalm, though the cry be to God as such (for Israel is not yet established in covenant blessing), Jehovah's name is brought in. Judgment is to be executed, that the rebellious nations may seek Jehovah's name. It is not, know the Father, nor, know there is a God; but, know Jehovah. When His judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness. Men will know that He whose name alone is Jehovah (He who is, and was, and is to come) is the Most High over all the earth; that is, Jehovah (the one true God), the God of Israel, is the One above all, the One supreme over the earth. It is in this name He takes possession of the earth, as Melchisedec pronounces the blessing in the name of the Most High, possessor of heaven and earth. And Nebuchadnezzar, the humbled head of the Gentiles, praises and blesses the Most High. It is His millennial name in which He takes to Him His great power and reigns, and the true Melchisedec is priest upon His throne, and the counsel of peace between both. This establishes prophetically Jehovah, the God of Israel, supreme in the earth. His people, now restored to relationship, look for a full blessing and the name of Jehovah is again used. Up to this, save as looking back or looking forward, the cry of the people is addressed to God, the people not being in possession of covenant blessings.

Psalm 84

Jehovah's courts and the way there

Psalm 84 contemplates the blessedness of going up to the courts of Jehovah, yet, in the figurative allusion to the road thither, refers to the path of tears which His people have had to tread towards their blessings. Thus it has a full moral force, and is instructive for Christians as for Jews. In Psalm 63 the people cast out were longing for God Himself, and found, in spite of all, even in the dry and thirsty land, marrow and fatness in Him. In this psalm it is the joys of His house that occupy their soul, as entering into the enjoyment of covenant blessings. Not but that the living God is longed for; but it is in His courts. "Blessed are they that dwell in thy house; they will be still praising thee." Brought in there, such is the blessing. They will have nought to do but praise. This is the first great theme of blessing. It is blessing, perfect and complete in its nature. It is at the end.

But there is the way. "Blessed is he whose strength is in Jehovah" — in whose heart are the known ways that lead to the house. This characterises the state of soul — their strength in Jehovah their heart in the ways that lead to Him. This path of blessing is through trial; for hence is the need of strength. And the way is loved and taken, whatever it may be, that leads to Him. They pass through the vale of tears — it becomes a well to them; for by these things men live, and in all these things is the life of the spirit. Besides, from on high the rain fills the pools in that thirsty land. They use their strength, no doubt. It is put to the test; but they renew it — go from strength to strength, till all appear before God in Zion. They are a praying people. Dependence is exercised in confidence in grace.

Jehovah's anointed, now the link between Him and His people

The covenant name here is again introduced — Jehovah of hosts — God of Jacob. He is His people's shield: they seek that He should look upon His anointed. This was now the link between Jehovah and His people, not the law they had broken. They appear before God in Zion. But that is the place of royal deliverance in grace. Nor can the interests of the people and the anointed be now separated. The blessing rested on Him, and on them because of Him. The heart's interest in the kind of blessing is then sweetly and strongly expressed, and the sum of what Jehovah is, which makes it such, is declared from the heart. He is light, protection, gives grace and glory, and withholds no good thing from them who walk uprightly. The thought of what Jehovah is makes him resume all in one conscious word. "O Jehovah of hosts, blessed is the man that trusts in thee."

The way opened to Zion; royal deliverance in grace

It is a most beautiful returning celebration of Jehovah their covenant God with their heart, when the way, though through sorrow, is now opened to them into His known presence. Psalm 63 was joy in God in the desert, when they had nothing else — the real character of one enhancing the depth and sweetness of the blessing of the other. This is joy in Him when brought, or going up, to the enjoyment of Him in the midst of what surrounds His presence. The following psalm takes up the blessing of the land, and delivered people. In those that follow after we shall find Christ Himself, as far as connected with the people, still with a view to the covenant relation subsisting between Jehovah and His people.

Psalm 85

The need of Jehovah's blessing; restoring work

I have long hesitated, in reading Psalm 85, whether the first part referred to external deliverance and the grace shown in it, and the following to the causing the people to enter into the enjoyment of it by the restoration of their own souls; or, as we have seen is often the case, the statement of the great result as the theme of the psalm, and then going through the sorrows of the remnant and divine workings which led to this result. There will be a restoring work in the souls of the people after their outward deliverance. Nor do I now speak of this psalm with very great certainty on this point. On the whole, I am disposed to think that they look for their enjoyment of divine favour in it, as between themselves and God, when delivered from all their enemies, and shown to be forgiven by that deliverance. Thus the first three verses lay this ground, that God has been favourable to His land, and brought back the captivity of Jacob. This was the great public truth. But in verse 4 the restored people have need of other blessing in the reality of their own relationship with God. "Turn us, O God of our salvation." Jehovah was the God of their salvation; but they needed His blessing in the midst of the land. They would that His people should rejoice in Him. How true this is often of the soul which knows forgiveness! It looks for Jehovah's mercy and salvation, being thus restored to Him, and listens to know what Elohim Jehovah will speak; for they reckon on mercy. He will speak peace to His people — their public character — and to His saints the remnant who are to enjoy it. Faith has then the certainty in every way that His salvation is nigh them that fear Him, that the glory of Jehovah may dwell in the land.

Mercy and truth, righteousness and peace, the divine principles of establishment of blessing

The last verses celebrate, in remarkable terms, the divine principles on which their blessings are then established. God's mercy and truth had now met. His promises, always true, had now been fulfilled by mercy. It is to be remarked that in the psalms mercy always precedes righteousness and truth. For Israel had forfeited all title to promise in rejecting the Lord — had come under full guilt — had no righteousness on which to lean — had been concluded in unbelief, that they also might be objects of mere mercy. But then through Christ's work these promises would now be fulfilled, and mercy and truth met. But more than this. Jehovah was their righteousness, through grace; and hence that righteousness was peace for them; and that which in judgment would have been their ruin, was in grace their peace — righteousness and peace kissed each other. I need hardly say how true these great principles are for any sinner for yet better and heavenly blessings; here they are applied to earthly ones. Truth shall spring out of the earth (that is, the full fruit and effect of God's truth and faithfulness shall be manifest in blessings, full blessings, on the earth). But it was not by a righteousness that man had wrought legally here below. Righteousness looked down from heaven. It was God's righteousness, Jehovah their righteousness. But this made it stable. Jehovah gives that which is good, and the land is blessed. Righteousness traces the path of blessing for Jehovah and Himself in the land — His own no doubt. Still His rule shall be so characterised. "A king shall reign in righteousness" — no more oppression. Justice is no longer fallen in the streets, as Isaiah 59:14 speaks; judgment is returned to it, and the government has this character. "And the fruit of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever." This last, indeed, is practical; but it is the result of righteousness having looked down from heaven, yea, of its being established on the earth (compare Ps. 72:1-7, where this state is described).

Psalm 86

The pious appeal of the returned remnant in the land

This psalm is the meek yet confiding and confident appeal of a soul conscious of its godly feelings towards Jehovah and looking to the results of relationship with Him. We have had Jehovah since Psalm 84, which is founded on these covenant relationships in which the remnant feel themselves to be, though awaiting full blessing in the land. Still it is yet in distress, for the people are not revived nor set in their covenant blessings in the land. Holy (v. 2) is pious or gracious (chasid, not kodesh, holy). The three requests of the psalm are, "Bow down thine ear and hear me" (v. 1). The gracious attention of Jehovah is called for to give ear to the prayer of the suppliant; then to attend to the voice of his supplication (v. 6); that is, he looks for his request being granted; thirdly, to be taught in the way of truth (v. 11). Jehovah's mercies in the terrible conflict of the remnant are then owned; but he who thus cried, still looked for His interference in his behalf, that they that hate him may be ashamed, because Jehovah has helped and comforted him. How the state of the remnant, like Job, brings out the great conflict between the power of Satan and divine deliverance, but in which, however low he may be brought, the godly soul owns the source of all to be Jehovah, though his feet may well nigh slip in

seeing the prosperity of the ungodly! It is not a psalm of complaint nor bitterness of soul, but of one who is yet poor and needy, but has tasted the comfort of Jehovah's goodness.

It is to be remarked that, save the cases noticed, Lord is Adonai, not Jehovah. This is not the same as Jehovah, that is, the covenant name of God with Israel in eternal faithfulness — here Adonai, one who has taken power and is in the relationship of lordship to those who call. Hence in fact we own Christ to be in this place — "our Lord Jesus Christ"; and so it will be for Jews, though, till they see Him, they will not own Him fully thus. This Adonai is Elohim. Death and human power were before the thoughts of the godly, but the comfort of a known Jehovah as a support. They had found deliverance, but it was not complete in blessing. The psalm is essentially the pious appeal to Jehovah of the returned. remnant of Israel in the land; but in the main its spirit is that into which Christ fully entered, but it is not directly applicable to Him.

Psalm 87

Zion as founded on God

Psalm 87 views Zion as founded of God, a city which has foundations. Men had cities, and boasted of them; but God had a city He founded in the holy mountains. Even here it was not Joseph or the richness of nature; God was its riches, its place the holy mountains, what was consecrated to Himself. In the power of the Spirit the godly is not ashamed of it (glorious things are spoken of it), nay, not in the presence of all the earth's seats of boasting. Egypt and Babylon in vain vaunted themselves; Philistia, Tyre, and Ethiopia, who had all had their day. The godly could talk of them without fear of comparison. It was accounted the birthplace of the man of God; the birthplace of the beloved ones of Jehovah. The Highest established her. When Jehovah made the registry of the people, He reckoned this man as born there. Joy and the celebration of His praise was found there, and all the fresh springs of Jehovah. I have little doubt that "this man" refers to Christ. Zion boasts of her heroes. The word translated "man" (v. 5), refers to great men, not the poor and miserable. They are the children of the once desolate (compare Isa. 49:21-22).

Psalm 88

God's just wrath as to a broken law

Psalm 88 puts the remnant under the deep and dreadful sense of a broken law, and God's fierce wrath, which, in justice comes upon those who have done so. It is not now outward sorrows or oppression of enemies, but that which is far, far deeper between the soul and God. And though the judgments of God have brought him into lowliness, (and so it ever is morally with the soul when thus visited of God, for what can man then do, if he would help?) yet this was only a part of the trouble, viewing it as a full expression of God's wrath; but death and wrath are the true burden of the psalm — God's terrors on the soul. Nor is there, as a present thing, any comfort, or a prospect of deliverance as from human oppression however dark for faith. The psalm closes in distress; its dealings are wholly with God; and

so God must be known, till grace is known. Israel under law must come under a sense of divine wrath for a broken law; it is right it should. But remark further, it is still a God with whom they are in relationship. They have been delivered, brought back into the land, nearer to God, and hence into the sense of what their deserved position is in respect of this relationship. This is much to be observed, and observed for ourselves too; for a God of salvation may be really known in a general way, and truly, without the conscience being searched out, and divine wrath known in, and removed from, the conscience. "O Jehovah, God of my salvation!" is the address of this psalm. This gives it its weight and true character, and makes it much more terrible. The full blessing of liberty in grace may not be known, but the relationship with the God of salvation — He Himself — the consciousness of having to say to Him is sufficiently known to make the privation of His favour and the sense of His wrath dreadful beyond all the one dreadful thing.

With the Jews, under the law, circumstances and government may more enter into this case, because their relationship with Jehovah is connected with them. Still Jehovah's fierce wrath is the great and terrible burden; and this terror of the Almighty, or more accurately, of Jehovah, drinking up the spirit, is the subject of this psalm — the sense the remnant will have of wrath, under a broken law, in that day. Sorrow had visited them before. They had been afflicted and ready to die from youth; for such indeed had been their portion as cast off but now restored, and so far brought into connection with Jehovah, the God of their salvation, they must feel the depths of their moral position between Himself and them alone - the wrath of Jehovah that was due to them. The real recovery, the righteous bringing into blessing, could not be without this. Not that, indeed, the wrath would abide on them. Hence there is faith, hope, though no comfort, in the psalm; for it is when mercy has been shown and known, that this distress comes on them; when they have entered on the relationship by that mercy that its value, as has been said, may be felt; just like Job already blest, and then made to know himself — what man was, as between him and Jehovah, when the question of acceptance, of righteousness, was raised. The wrath will not abide upon them because the true cup of it has been drunk by Christ; but they must enter into the understanding of it, as under law, for they had been under law, and pretended to righteousness under it — at least, that question was not solved for them. How truly Christ entered into this in the closing epoch of His life, I need not say. It is the great fact of His history.

It is to be remarked that, even as to the direct subject of the psalm, the terrors have not been always on the sufferer. Afflicted and ready to die he had been;* such had been his life; but now he felt his soul cast off, and lover and friend even, whom he previously had had, put far from him by the hand of God. So, indeed, it was with Christ. His disciples could not then continue with Him in His temptations. He bore witness to them, that till then they had; but now, sifted as wheat, desertion or denial was the part of the best of them. Such was our Saviour's portion: only that, unspared and then undelivered, He indeed drank the cup which shall make the remnant escape the death they are fearing. It may press upon them as a lesson to know righteousness and deliverance, but the cup of wrath they will not drink. They are heard and set free on the earth. This psalm then is wrath under law; the next, mercy and favour in Christ, but as yet resting in promise. Actual deliverance is in the next book, by the full bringing in of Jehovah-Messiah for the world, and Israel's sabbath. {*Some, as Venema, translate, "because of my casting away or down" instead of "from my youth." Rosenmueller gives both. Compare Ps. 129.}

Psalm 89

The subject of the third book: the restored people in the land, but attacked, destroyed and the temple ruined

We have seen that Psalm 88 puts Israel in the presence of Jehovah (when guilty of having been unfaithful to Him), under the judgment of Jehovah, with the sense of wrath, yet in faith in Jehovah Himself — a place Christ most especially took, though of course for others, in particular for Israel, but not for that nation only. Psalm 89 takes the other side of Jehovah's relationship with Israel; not the nation's, Israel's, which was under law, but Jehovah's promises to David. It is not, remark here, guilt which is brought forward — surely in both cases it was the ground of the state spoken of — but wrath, instead of salvation. For Jehovah had been Israel's Saviour, and so faith viewed Him still; yet instead of the fulfilment of promise, as made to David, there was desertion of him. There is no trace of confession of sin. Psalm 88 is complaint of death and wrath; and this (89), when mercy was to be built up for ever, shows the covenant made void and the crown profaned. Isaiah (Isa. 40-58) pleads against Israel to convict them of guilt: first, against Jehovah, by having idols; secondly, by rejecting Christ (Isa. 40-48, Isa. 49-58). But here the plaint is Israel's against Jehovah Himself, not unholily, I apprehend, as blame, but as an appeal to Himself on the ground of what He had been for Israel. Jehovah is establishing these relationships here, as indeed we have seen. Israel is Israel, and in the land (Psalm 85). The heathen are there — all is not restored; the last confederacy is in view, but it is against Israel. God is standing in the congregation of the mighty, judging among the gods (Ps. 82). Jehovah has been Himself recalling His former mercies (Ps. 81:10-16). The ark is remembered, and God as the dweller between the cherubim, as once in the wilderness (Psalm 80). In a word, the whole book is the condition of a restored people in the land, but attacked, destroyed; the temple which exists again ruined and broken down (Ps. 74-76, 79). Not a mere Jewish remnant complaining of antichristian wickedness within, with which they were associated externally, or which had cast them out; but Israel the nation (represented by the remnant) with enemies who destroy what is dear to them, with encouraging prophecies of the result, having instruction as to sovereign grace in David when they had failed in their own faithfulness as a nation (Psalm 78, Psalm 79), which looks to God (Elohim) as such in contrast with man — to the Most High, but returns to Jehovah (as His own out of Egypt) with prayer, and demand that His hand might be on the Son of man, the branch* made so strong for Himself (Psalm 80). The whole book, in a word, is Israel taking the ground of being a people, and actually in the land, and with a temple, entering into the relationship by faith, but subject to the destructive inroads of hostile powers — the Assyrian and allies, to whom indeed, because of success, the people return (Ps. 73:10; for Isa. 10:5-23 is not yet fulfilled. Compare Isa. 18, particularly Isa. 18:5-7). {*Compare the connection and remarkable contrast with John 15.}

Now these two last psalms of the book present the whole pressure of this state of things on the spirit of the faithful. Instead of a blessed people, it is loneliness under wrath. Yet Jehovah is the God of their salvation. The throne cast down and profaned, though immutable promises in mercy, not to be set aside by faults, had been given to David. The result is in the next book, in the manifestation of Jehovah, the bringing in the Only-begotten into the world. In all this book we are on prophetic ground with Israel;

not the special condition in which the Jewish remnant will be with Antichrist, because they rejected Christ — their sorrows therefore coming much more fully out when that condition is treated of. This, we have seen, is in the first and second books. Hence, in the following books we get to the recognition of Jehovah having been their dwelling-place in all generations. It is their history which ends by the appearing of Jehovah-Messiah in glory.

Details of psalm 89; the sure mercies of David; Jehovah's faithfulness

A few words now on Psalm 89 in detail. Its subject is the mercies of Jehovah (His graciousness, chasdee, towards Israel), and their unchangeableness — the sure mercies. There was faith to say, "for ever," for it was grace. This gave the appeal, elsewhere noticed. How long should it be otherwise, and even apparently for ever? Jehovah was faithful. For he had said in faith, Mercy, manifested goodness, shall be built up for ever, and faithfulness was established where nothing could reach it. And so it will be, Satan being cast down. It is the very description of the millennium. He then recites the covenant originally made with David, which is the expression of mercy, and that to which Jehovah was to be faithful, the sure mercies of David. He turns then, and continues his praises of Jehovah (v. 5-18), recalling the ancient deliverance from Egypt, and looking to the praise necessarily flowing from what He was, and the blessedness of the people that know the joyful sound. In His name they would rejoice all the day, in His (for we are in grace here) righteousness be exalted. He was the glory of their strength; and in His favour their horn will be exalted.

Such was the blessedness of association with Jehovah in favour. But this blessing was in the faithful mercy to David. And where was this? (v. 18). Jehovah, the Holy One (kodesh) of Israel, is their King. But, then, He had spoken of, not a kodesh, but a chasid, in whom all the chasdee (the same word in the plural as chesed, mercy), all the mercies, were to be concentrated, and to whom the unchangeable faithfulness was to be shown — the sure mercies of David. Read " of thy holy One" (chasid) in verse 19. Here he returns to the covenant made with David, showing it never to be altered (v. 34-37). But all was different. But there was faith, founded on this promise, to say, How long, Jehovah? If He hides for ever, and His wrath burns like fire, what is man to abide it, and not go down into death? (v. 48).

The former loving-kindness to David is appealed to, as in the person of David himself, but, I doubt not from verse 50, applicable to all the faithful. Still, the Spirit of Christ falls in here, as He did with the wrath, to take the whole reality of the burden. He of course in that day will suffer nothing. But He has anticipated that day of suffering, that His Spirit might speak as with His voice in His people; for the reproach of the mighty ones and apostates in that day will reproach the footsteps of God's anointed. And if the faithful walk in them, they will share the reproach from the enemies of Jehovah. Such is their then position — walking in His footsteps, looking for Israelitish covenant blessings, feeling wrath, yet in faith, but looking to God's promise in mercy to David (which was already pure grace, for the ark of the covenant was gone, and Israel Ichabod), and yet waiting for the answer. This is in the following book. We are here, as I have said, in prophetic times, in Isaiah's scenes with the Assyrian and a devastated temple. The wicked are there: people flock with them in prosperity. If we are in Daniel, it is Dan. 8, not Dan. 7. The beast and the Antichrist are not on the scene, but the land, guilty Israel, promises — not the question of a rejected Christ. This psalm closes the third Book.

Psalm 90

The nation's faith in Jehovah; desire for His return in deliverance and blessing

The first psalm (Ps. 90) of the book places the people — that is, the godly believing part of it — on the ground of faith in Jehovah, and expresses the desire of deliverance and blessing from His hand. First, the godly Israelite owns Jehovah to have been the dwelling-place of Israel for all generations, their shelter and their home; next, He was the everlasting God before the world was, and turned and returned man in a moment, as seemed to Him good: time was no time to Him. Now Israel was consumed by His anger. But this was not all. Though His power was absolute, its use was not arbitrary. It was true and holy moral government; and unfeigned confession is made, not merely of open faults, but of that holy government of God which sets secret sins in the light of His countenance (for so, blessed be God, He does). Their days were passed in this wrath. They look that the pride of their heart may be so broken, their feeble mortality remembered, that the self-sufficiency, so natural to our heart, might be done away with, and that heart applied to wisdom — the fear of God. This putting of man in his place and God in His, connected with faith, as Israel's in Jehovah, is full of instruction as to the moral position suited for the remnant in that day — in its principle ever true. Thus Jehovah is looked to to return for deliverance, with the word of faith — how long? and, as regards His servants, that His work might appear, as the affliction came from Him; and that the beauty of Jehovah their God might be upon them, and their work established by Him. It is the true faith of relationship, but of relationship with the supreme God in His holy government upon earth. But, if so, Jehovah is the God of Israel.

Psalm 91

Messiah with Israel in the place of trust: the channel for blessing on earth

We have now (Psalm 91) another most important principle introduced; Messiah's taking His place with Israel, the place of trust in Jehovah, so as to afford the channel for the full blessing of the people. Three names of Elohim (God) come before us in this psalm: one that by which He was in relationship with Abraham, the Almighty; another which Abraham through the testimony of Melchisedec may have known prophetically, the millennial title of Elohim when He takes His full title over the earth (compare Gen. 14:18-20), the Most High. Both, as all the names of God, have their proper meaning: one complete power; the other absolute supremacy. The question then arises, Who is the God who has this place? Who is this supreme God over all to the earth? Who shall find His secret place to dwell in? He who has found this shall be completely protected by almighty power. Messiah (Jesus) says, I will take the God of Israel as that place, Jehovah. In verses 3-8 we have the answer. Doubtless it is true of every godly Israelite, and they are in view, but led by the Spirit of Jesus, the one perfect faithful One who took this place indeed.

In verse 9 I apprehend Israel speaks (that is, the Spirit personifying Israel addressing Messiah): "Because thou hast taken Jehovah, which is my refuge, … as thy habitation," almighty power shall

guard thee. This continues to verse 13. In verse 14 Jehovah Himself speaks of Him as the One who has set His love upon Him. The form of the psalm is striking. The Spirit of God proposes the problem. He who finds the secret place of the supreme God (of the millennium) will have all the full blessing of Abraham's God, the Almighty. Messiah says, I take Jehovah the God of Israel. Then the answer; so it was and He (v. 3-8) would enjoy the fruit of it. In verse 9 Israel speaks and declares by the Spirit He would have the blessings. In verse 14 Jehovah sets His seal on all this, and the solver of the great riddle of God will find the full blessing of Jehovah, on whom He had set His love, whose name He had known — even Jehovah the God of Israel. It is a very interesting psalm in this way. But we have to remark that all is viewed on earth, the character of God in all respects. How Christ, as a present thing, relinquished the title to deliverance flowing from this, for perfect obedience, trusting His Father absolutely, belongs to deeper views of the purposes of God and of the paths of the blessed One Himself. Satan would have just used this to take Him out of the path of obedience, and into that of distrust and His own will: blessed be God, in vain, as we know. The sure mercies of David were to be in an obedient and risen One — this point is treated in a psalm of unexampled beauty farther on — and thus deeper blessings and higher glories brought out. But He who went in that perfect path of submission, has not the less made good all the fruit of all that is here, for those who shall walk after Him in the place of this trust in Jehovah upon earth. This principle we see indeed, in various forms, all through the Psalms. Indeed the atonement of Christ was needed, which implied His resigning personally this blessing, in order that others might walk in that path in which He could personally walk, of course, without it. Psalm 21 gives a divine revelation as to the way in which the promise of life was fulfilled to the Lord.

Psalm 92

The celebration of God's answer to faith in His power

Psalm 92 takes up these names of God, Jehovah and Most High; only it is no longer a secret place, known only to fidelity and faith. Almighty power secured blessing and answers faith; verses 7, 8 explain how. What is celebrated is not the disciplinary exercise of faith, but the answer to it, showing that Jehovah (v. 15) is upright, and that there is no unrighteousness in Him. Psalm 90, Psalm 91, and Psalm 92 go together as an introduction to the great theme that follows, Jehovah reigns. Already power had been displayed; and the full result in the judgment of all enemies and abiding blessing is looked for now, not merely as hope, but as founded on the manifested intervention of God. It is spoken in the place which Messiah had taken in the previous psalm, identified there in spirit with Israel in the latter days, Israel restored by divine power, but not yet in the full peaceful enjoyment of divine blessing, just as we have seen in Book 3. Messiah takes therefore the lead in praises, and looks to His horn being exalted with honour (compare Ps. 75:10). But Jehovah's thoughts are deeper. He sees far, even the end from the beginning, and accomplishes all His purposes and His word. This is what faith has to remember.

Psalm 93

Jehovah reigns; the summary of the whole history of God and man in government

Psalm 93 states the grand and blessed results. Jehovah reigns. Ever indeed was His throne established, but the floods had lifted up their voice. The waves of ungodly men had risen up high. Jehovah on high was mightier. Two other great principles complete this short but remarkable summary of the whole history of God and man in government. Jehovah's testimonies are very sure. Faith could count upon them, come what would; but, further, another great truth came out as to the character of God. There could be no peace to the wicked. Holiness became His house. But I apprehend this last phrase describes the comely holiness of God's house for the now lasting period for which the earth was established.

Psalm 94

The cry of the remnant to Jehovah as the God of vengeance

We have now the details of the coming in of the Only begotten into the world to establish the glory and divine order in the world, introduced by the cry of the remnant in Israel.

Psalm 94 gives us this cry, which is at the same time the expression of the fullest intelligence of their position, of the dealings of God, of the position of the wicked, and the result about to be produced, and, as all the psalms in this book, founded on known relationship with Jehovah. We have seen that Psalm 91 is Christ's taking this place with the people, that full blessing may come on them as thus associated with Him. Psalm 94 addresses itself to Jehovah as the God of vengeance, and demands that He should show Himself — lift Himself up as Judge of the earth and give a reward to the proud. The "how long" is made pressing and urgent. The conduct and impiety of the wicked is stated. Verses 4-11 address the unbelieving Israelites on the folly of this. Verses 12-15 give a most instructive explanation of the ways of Jehovah Blessed is the man whom Jehovah chastens and teaches out of His law. This is the position of the suffering remnant, to give him quiet from the days of evil until the pit be digged for the ungodly.

No doubt, as indeed is expressed in the Psalms, the godly had sometimes well-nigh forgotten this (Ps. 73), not always (Ps. 27:5); but faith does not, and this is the true meaning of the remnant's sorrows — of ours too under our Father. The heart in the midst of evil has to say to God, not only in submission, but as a cup given of Jehovah (of our Father). Hence the distraction and distress felt in meeting man's will in our will without resource is gone; and God, the will being subdued (the great hindrance), teaches the submissive heart, which is in a true position before Him.* For faith it was withal a settled thing that Jehovah would never cast off His people But judgment would return to righteousness, and the upright in heart would follow it. This is the great and all-important principle of the change which takes place in these psalms. Judgment, long separated from righteousness, now returns to it. Judgment was in Pilate, righteousness in Christ. There the opposition was perfect — more or less everywhere else. Suffering for righteousness' sake and divine righteousness established in the heavens may be, and assuredly is, a yet better portion. It is Christ's as man, now glorified, but it is not the maintenance of righteousness on the earth. This will now be effectually maintained. But who shall be found to make it good? Who will take up the cause of the godly one, or stand up for the remnant against the mighty workers of iniquity? If

Jehovah had not, their souls had soon gone down to silence. How true this was (as to men) of Christ, how fully He can enter into this, I need hardly say. Even when the remnant feared falling, Jehovah helped them. And in the overwhelming of thought, where all the power of evil was, Jehovah's comforts delighted his soul. In verse 20 a most remarkable appeal is made. Were the throne of iniquity and Jehovah's throne about to join together? If not, the days of the throne of iniquity were numbered. That wickedness was there, was now patent. But Jehovah, the defence of the godly, the Judge of the wicked, whose iniquity He would bring on themselves — Jehovah would cut them off. Thus the fullest review, as I have said, of the whole position and of Jehovah's ways is remarkably given to us in this psalm. {*Christ, however deeply feeling what was before Him, was just the opposite of this struggling of will, being perfect in subjection (John 12 and Gethsemane). Peter would have resisted, but Christ took the cup as His Father's will.}

The introduction of the coming in of the only-begotten into the world

From Psalms 95 to 100 we have the progress of the introduction of the Only-begotten into the world most distinctly brought out; but here, all through, seen as Jehovah coming from heaven in judgment, and at length taking His place between the cherubim, and calling up the world to worship Him there. It puts the setting up of Israel in blessing by power, in contrast with their old failure when first delivered.

Psalm 95

The summons to Israel, the remnant, in the closing day

Psalm 95 summons Israel to come with joyful songs and thanksgiving before Jehovah (verses 3, 4 describing His excellency above the gods and as Creator). But Jehovah is Israel's Maker, his God also; and now they may look for rest even after so long time and continued failure. Till power comes in to judgment, while it is called to-day — for in that great to-morrow no evil and no rebellious will be allowed — they are called upon not to harden their hearts as of old in the wilderness, when God sware that they should not enter into His rest. But now, after all, grace says To-day, and invites to come before His presence who is the rock of their salvation. 158

Psalm 96

The summons to the Gentiles; Jehovah comes to judge

Psalm 96 summons all the earth to come in, in the spirit of the everlasting gospel. They are to own Jehovah; the gods of the nations are mere vanity. Psalm 95 invites as of the company — "Come, let us sing." Now it is said to those who are afar off, Sing unto Jehovah, and His glory is to be declared among the nations. Jehovah is Creator (v. 5). His excellency is then spoken of, but He is known in the sanctuary in Israel on the earth (v. 7, 8). They are again summoned to own Him there, to worship Him according to the order of His house on the earth, for Jehovah reigns and the world is established, and

Jehovah will judge the peoples righteously. This introduces a summons to a chorus of celebration of all this created world to rejoice before Jehovah, who comes to judge the world with righteousness and His people with truth; for Israel had the place of promise and the revelation of His ways.

Psalm 97

The coming itself celebrated

In Psalm 97 the coming itself is celebrated; Jehovah has taken to Him His great power and His reign. The earth and the multitude of isles are to rejoice. Clouds and darkness are round about Him, for it is the revelation of His judgments in power, not of Himself. Righteousness and judgment ever characterise His throne. The fire of judgment goes before Him and consumes His enemies. Jehovah, the Lord of the whole earth, comes forth out of His place. The heavens (for on earth there is none) in power declare His righteousness. The peoples see His glory. The effect of the judgment is then stated. Idol worship is confounded before Him, and all power and authority, from angels downwards, are now to own Him. But another fact comes out — this was joy and deliverance to Zion. The judgment of evil was her deliverance, for it was the glorious exaltation of Jehovah, her God.* In verses 10-12 we see the blessed objects of the deliverance — the godly remnant. Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart. It is a very complete statement of the character of the Lord's coming to earth. {*This in Isaiah 30:32, where the grounded staff, that is the decreed rod, was to pass, it was with tabrets and harps.}

Psalm 98

The result of the coming celebrated by Israel on earth

Psalm 98 is the result celebrated by Israel on earth. Jehovah has made known His salvation, and remembered His mercy and truth towards Israel. All the land (or earth) is summoned to celebrate Jehovah as king. The heavens are not summoned here, as in Psalm 96. They are already filled with His glory, and the angels have been called to worship; but the sea and its fulness, and the world and its inhabitants are to rejoice before Jehovah, who comes to judge the earth and the whole world.

Psalm 99

Jehovah reigning as King upon earth; the two hinges of God's ways

Psalm 99, though simple in its character, embraces some important principles. Jehovah now reigns, not only in making manifest heavenly power, but in the establishment of that power as king upon the earth. He now sits between the cherubim as heretofore in Israel. He is great in Zion and high above all peoples. I have no doubt this word people (ammim), generally translated "people" in the Authorised Version, which confounds it with Israel, is used, not as goim (Psalm 98:2 and often) in opposition with

Israel and the knowledge of Jehovah, but for nations not Israel, but brought into relationship with Israel, and so with Jehovah Himself. Israel is called goi (Psalm 43) when judged and rejected. Further, the King (Messiah, but still Jehovah) loves judgment, and establishes equity, executing judgment and righteousness in Jacob. Thus Jehovah, the God of Jacob, was to be exalted, and in Jerusalem.

But another touching and important principle is then brought out: Israel had utterly failed, cast off Jehovah, rejected Messiah, was judged and cast off. But Jehovah had never given up His faithfulness and grace. Hence the Spirit turns back here to recognise the saints under the old covenant who had, through grace, been faithful (the remnant was always acknowledged; in one aspect we are it still, all children of Jerusalem the desolate, and waiting under discipline and government, only a Father's). Moses and Aaron among His priests, Samuel among those who called on His name, the true prophets with no office, whatever their measure — these called on Jehovah, and He heard them. The relationship of faith was there. Jehovah answered them, but governed His people, taking vengeance of their inventions. So, at the end, whosoever shall call on the name of Jehovah shall be saved; but how surely are their inventions punished! These are the two hinges of all God's ways - grace and the ear of goodness to the cry of the meek and needy, and government as holy and true. So with us: only we have a Father's government (still God's) after salvation and adoption. Thus new-born Israel is identified with the faithful Israel of old. The child of Ruth and Boaz is a son born to Naomi. Mara is known no more.

Psalm 100

The summons to universal worship in gladness and praise

Psalm 100 is the summons to universal worship of Jehovah with gladness and praise. Jehovah is good. Verse 5 gives in principle the great truth so often laid down as Israel's hope — His mercy endures for ever — which gave them too to say, How long? "All ye lands" is free as a translation; it is rather "all the land" (of Israel) or "all the earth." The claim of Israel to be His people and the sheep of His pasture seems to extend it to the earth. It is, however, to me very doubtful if it is not simply "all the land of Israel." This closes the remarkable series picturing the coming of Jehovah (Christ) to establish righteousness and judgment in the earth and His throne in Israel.

Psalm 101

The principles of the King's government

Psalm 101 states the principles on which the King will govern His house and the land when He takes the kingdom in the name of Jehovah.

Summary of psalms 93 to 101

Psalm 93 is the thesis, Jehovah reigns: the rage of men, the supreme authority of Jehovah, the holiness that becomes His house. Psalm 94 begins the series with the cry of the remnant when iniquity is still on

the throne. Psalm 95 Israel (the remnant) summoned in the closing day. Psalm 96 the Gentiles called, Jehovah coming to judge the earth. Psalm 97 Jehovah is on His way. Psalm 98 He has executed judgment on the earth and remembered Israel. Psalm 99 He has taken His throne on earth in Zion. Psalm 100 Israel is there as His people; but it is a call to worship Jehovah. Still a house of prayer for all the earth: for Israel, mercy, for they had sinned; truth, for God had promised, and, as said elsewhere, they had now met together. Psalm 101 when the earthly throne is taken up, it is mercy and judgment.

Psalm 102

Christ rejected and cast off, yet Creator of heaven and earth

Psalm 102 is one of the most, perhaps the most, remarkable of all the psalms, and presents Christ in a way divinely admirable. Verse 10 gives the occasion of the cry with which the psalm begins. Christ is fully looked at as man chosen out of the people and exalted to be Messiah, and now, instead of taking the kingdom, He is rejected and cast off.* The time is the immediate approach of the cross, but was, we know, perhaps often, anticipated in thought, as John 12. He looks to Jehovah, who cast down Him whom He had called to the place of Messiah, but who now meets indignation and wrath. We are far, here, beyond looking at sufferings as coming from man. They did, and were felt, but men are not before Him in judgment; nor is it His expiatory work, though that which wrought it is here if we take it in its full effect on the cross — the indignation and wrath. It is Himself — His own being cut off as man. He is in trouble; His heart smitten like a pelican of the wilderness and an owl of the desert; His days as a shadow that declines, withered like grass. Such was Messiah, to whom all the promises were. Jehovah endured for ever. His promises were certain. He would arise, and have mercy on Zion, and the set time was come. {*Note, there is no bringing in of 'me' in connection with indignation and wrath, as in Psalm 22, though Christ realises it in spirit. But personally He is lifted up and cast down. It is a key which opens up much in the psalms.}

The whole scene, from Christ on earth to the remnant in the last days, is one. When Zion was restored, the heathen would fear the name of Jehovah. Jehovah will appear, and, when He builds up Zion, hear and answer the poor remnant, and thus declare His name in Zion, and His praise in Jerusalem, when all nations would be gathered together there. But where was Messiah then? His strength had been weakened in His journey, His days shortened. He had cried to Him able to deliver, to save from death. Was Zion to be restored and no Messiah — He weakened and cut off? Then comes the wondrous and glorious answer: He was Himself the creator of the heavens and the earth. He was ever the same. His years would not fail when the created universe was rolled up like a garment. The children of His servants would continue and their seed be established before Him. The Christ, the despised and rejected Jesus, is Jehovah the Creator. The Jehovah we have heard of coming, is the Christ that came. The Ancient of days comes, and Christ is He, though Son of man. This contrast of the extreme humiliation and isolation of Christ, and His divine nature, is incomparably striking.

But it is Christ's personal sense of rejection, and that in connection with the remnant, not His bearing the judgment of sin in His soul for men. Look at the difference of the consequences in Psalm 22, though that perfect work was needed for "the nation," too, or their deliverance could not have taken place.

Psalm 103

Summary of psalms 103 to 106

Psalms 103-106 give us the results — and the covenant — in grace and in responsibility, of Israel's history. Psalm 103 is the voice of Messiah in Israel in praise according to God's dealing with them; Psalm 104, the same in creation; Psalm 105, God's ways in grace, from Abraham up to the giving of the land (now to be possessed in peace); Psalm 106, the acknowledgment of Israel's ways from first to last, but owning Jehovah's mercy, and looking for it, for it endures for ever. Grace and favour are the one foundation on which hope can be built leading to obedience. This closes the book.

Messiah's voice in Israel in praise

Psalms 103, 104 call for a few observations on the details. No doubt the Spirit of Christ leads these praises, for His praise shall be of Jehovah in the great congregation; but it is in the name of all Israel the psalm is spoken. They have forgiveness and mercy through the tender compassions and mercy of Jehovah. As for man, he is as grass; and the people had been as grass and withered (Isa. 40). But the mercy of Jehovah is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him, the obedient ones. Thus all is ascribed to goodness, yet faithfulness, from the very nature and name of Jehovah; but to the obedient ones, the godly remnant. Now Jehovah owned them with loving-kindness and tender mercies. All their sins were utterly removed from them. Jehovah's throne was prepared in the heavens — the only possible means of securing blessing. And now His kingdom ruled over all. It was not only His title, but established in fact. It is Israel's praise, consequent on the intervention of Jehovah, of which the previous psalms have spoken. Matthew 9:1-6 marks Jesus out as the Jehovah who now at the close healed all Israel (v. 3). The more intimately we know scripture, the more simple and distinct is the truth that, though Son of man, Christ is the Jehovah of the Old Testament.

Psalm 104

Messiah's voice in creation in praise

Psalm 104, which celebrates Jehovah as Creator requires very few remarks. It will be noticed that it is occupied almost entirely with the earth. He is clothed with the glory of the heavens, which is described in most beautiful language; but the earth is the subject. It is looked at as existing as the abode of men, as it is, but all depended on Jehovah's sovereign will. It is not the earth which is celebrated, but Jehovah, the Creator of it. It is not paradise, but this earth, as we see it in man's hand. But the psalm looks to sinners being consumed out of it, and the wicked being no more. This gives the psalm, evidently, a peculiar character, and connects it with the introduction of the first-begotten into the world.

Psalm 105

God's ways in grace, from Abraham to the beginning of the land

Psalm 105 offers thanksgiving to Jehovah, and calls on the seed of Abraham and Jacob to remember Him and glory in His name. Verses 7, 8 give the occasion. He is Jehovah, their God. His judgments are in all the earth. And He has remembered His covenant for ever. It was to be permanent. It was commanded to a thousand generations. He had now remembered it. The psalm then recites how God had cared for the fathers, and judged Egypt for the deliverance of His people; and, in spite of bondage, there was not a feeble person among their tribes. "He remembered his holy promise, and Abraham his servant,* and he brought forth his people with joy and his chosen with gladness, and gave them the lands of the heathen, that they might observe his statutes and keep his laws." All their subsequent failure is not touched on. For now again (v. 8) He had remembered His covenant with Abraham and had delivered His people by judgments; for it is the accomplishment of promise. And the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. The following psalm will tell us Israel's ways, but only so to bring out His mercy and never-failing goodness; for this is the theme. {*The difference of a reference to the promises to Abraham, and those to Moses, the blessings of which depended on the faithfulness of the people, is a marked feature in all the renewals of mercy to the people and the faith that referred to one or the other.}

Psalm 106

Israel's acknowledgment of their ways but owning and looking for Jehovah's enduring mercy

"Hallelujah. Give thanks to Jehovah, for it is good (or He is good). His mercy endures for ever." This last we have often seen - the expression of this unfailing faithful mercy of Jehovah, which secures Israel. It then recites the character of those that are blessed; and personally looks, as in the mouth of a godly Israelite at the close, to be remembered with the favour Jehovah shows His people — desiring withal to see the good of Jehovah's chosen, and rejoice in the gladness of His nation and glory with His inheritance. It is the expression of genuine piety, which then turns to confess the sinfulness of the people — not they have sinned, though that is owned, as showing how Jehovah's mercy has endured; but "we have sinned with our fathers." It is the practical piety which proves, in its own confession, enduring mercy. It then goes through all the history of Israel with this view; and at the close shows that, in spite of all, Jehovah, remembering His covenant, thought on their affliction, and caused them to be pitied of the heathen, among whom they were. For this mercy he now looks, that they may triumph in the praise of Jehovah. This closes the fourth Book.

All Israel spoken of in the third and fourth books

It will be remarked that, as we had seen in the third, the fourth also speaks of all Israel, and, though the humiliation of Christ is brought out and His eternal divinity contrasted with it in a remarkable way, yet it does not enter into Jewish circumstances particularly, nor the association of Christ with them, though His Spirit be in it all. In Psalm 104 [94?] Antichrist is presented to us, but it is for his destruction by the coming in of Messiah the King, as Jehovah the Judge.

Psalm 107

The celebration of God's mercy and goodness shown in temporal things

Psalm 107 is a kind of heading or introduction to all this. It celebrates the enduring of God's mercy for ever — that blessed formula of faith — in the unchanging goodness of Jehovah in all ages from the display of grace in David's time. It is restored Israel's part especially to chant it. The psalm celebrates the two parts of that deliverance in which the mercy has been shown. They are redeemed from the hand of the enemy; they are gathered back from east, west, north, and south. This is the double character of the restoration of Israel — deliverance in the land, and the gathering from amongst the heathen on every side. But the proper theme of the psalm is the goodness of Jehovah. The various circumstances of deliverance of every kind (and that as an answer to the cry of distress of man who has brought himself low by his folly) are gone through, with the desire that men would praise Jehovah for His goodness, His wonderful works for the children of men. Israel is he in whom it may be fully learnt. It goes on to their chastisement in the land after their return, but adds the complete ruin of the pride of men as the result. He pours contempt on princes, and sets the poor on high from affliction, giving him families like a flock. The great result of God's government is then shown: the righteous rejoice; all iniquity has its mouth stopped. Whoso is wise and will consider these ways of God will understand the lovingkindness of Jehovah. It is to be remarked how entirely the goodness of God, here rehearsed, is shown in temporal things. It does not for that cease to be His goodness and to have its sweetness, but it gives very clearly the character of the ground on which these teachings go.

Psalm 108

Praise for deliverance; full security in the land waited for

Psalm 108 is a psalm of a peculiar character, being composed of the ends of two others, the earlier and the latter parts of which, the cry of deep distress, and the answer to the cry in faith and hope, have been here put together. The former part of this, the end of Psalm 57, expresses the fixed assurance of the godly heart, who can now give praise and will praise among the peoples (ammin), united now in relation with Israel and in the various races of people. But all the results of God's favour are not yet produced, and the same faith, taking up Psalm 60, leaving out the cry of distress, celebrates the going out of Him whose mercy is above the heavens, to bring into subjection all those who are yet in possession of different parts of the territory of Israel.

It may be remarked here that the general character of this, as indeed of the previous book, as far as regards the position of Israel, is that of the people being restored by God to the land and delivered, but not free yet from attack, nor in possession of all the promised land; so that there is thanksgiving and praise, for God has interfered, and the state of Israel is changed; but there remains the need of help and securing against enemies yet undestroyed, and the full blessing of God in peace. A very few psalms at the end are of unmingled praise, and only praise called for. This state of deliverance, and yet full security waited for, is expressed at the end of Psalm 107; as to final deliverance, the fact only is stated.

The connection of the two parts of this psalm is not without interest. The first part praises Jehovah for what He is as known to the heart in faith; but God in contrast with man. His mercy is great above the heavens and His truth reaches to the clouds, mercy being as ever first as the root of all. The second part begins with looking for Jehovah to rise up as God above the heavens and His glory above all the earth. He is to take His place and vindicate His name as God, that His beloved may be delivered. Verse 7 brings out the answer of God, taking up in detail all Israel's rights as His. Thus Jehovah has war with the nations possessing their land, but it is in Israel, and through God they will do valiantly. Hence here it is God, not Jehovah, because it is not the covenant relation, but what He, who is so, is in contrast with man whose help is vain.

Psalm 109

The individual and general application of the psalms

It is certain that this psalm applies to Judas; but we shall see, in reading it, that we cannot apply all of it exclusively to him. And this is a help to us, to understand the way in which the psalms are written. There is the general condition of the saints in the latter day, and that even in a way which cannot apply to Christ personally at all, as Psalm 118:10-11 — passages of general application to the righteous, and others which may be, and some with prophetical purpose and exactitude, applied to Christ, and the circumstances in which He was. All this has to be before the mind, and divine teaching sought. I have said that the application of the psalm was not exclusively to Judas. The greater part of it is in the plural number. Up to verse 5 from the outset, the enmity of the wicked, of the band of Jews hostile to Christ, and hostile to the godly remnant, is spoken of. Judas was a special instance of this wicked hatred against Christ. But I have no doubt of the general application of even this part, and that the judgments called for are general, and no prophetic revelation that Judas had wife and children or anything of the sort. Verse 20 makes indeed the generalisation of the application of these deprecations certain. So we can have no doubt that the blessed Lord stood in this sorrow, but I have none the less, that it is merely as taking in grace the place of the remnant, and that the psalm applies to the remnant, who go through similar sorrows. Verses 30, 31 show it. Still it is most certain Christ entered fully into it — and this is of the deepest interest to us — nay, that His being in it gave it its true character.

Psalm 110

David's Lord at Jehovah's right hand; promise and prophecy

Psalm 110, though of the very highest interest, is in application so simple that it needs but brief comment. The despised and poor man, hated for his love, is David's Lord, and called to sit at the right hand of Jehovah. It is of deep interest to see how in Isaiah 6 Adonai is Jehovah of hosts in the fullest sense, and in this psalm, being David's Son, sits at the right hand of Jehovah, and strikes through kings in the day of His wrath. Compare Psalm 2. All the truth, in regard to the assembly of association with Him on high is passed over, and the psalm passes from the session of Christ at God's right hand to the

sending the rod of His strength out of Zion. This shows how entirely all is Jewish in these psalms. Note, further, it is the answer to His rejection on earth. It is not His coming from heaven to destroy Antichrist. What is in view is His having already taken possession of Zion, and the rod of His strength goes out thence. This answers to the whole position of this book, where we have seen the Jews restored, but the dominion of Israel or of Christ in Zion not yet made good. But the people are now willing (Amminadib) in the day of His power (see Cant. 6:12). Alas! how different in the day of His humiliation! That was depicted in Psalm 109. But this is the morning of a new day, in which we have not fathers, but the children of grace. Then we have the certain oath of Jehovah for Christ sitting thus a priest on His throne on earth. This is promise and prophecy. The day too of His wrath is looked forward to. Adonai, who is at Jehovah's right hand, has a coming day of wrath — one already noticed, when His enemies are made His footstool. While sitting at the right hand of Jehovah, it is not so. It is then the time of mercy, the accepted time. Christ has been heard and exalted, and His work amongst men is the result of His atonement in grace. Now the time of wrath is come, in which the judgment written will be executed. I suppose in verse 6 it is "the head over a great country" — the head of power in the earth, not Antichrist, nor even the beast. These are destroyed on His coming from heaven. Self-exalting man is brought low. Christ, who in humble dependence on His Father took the refreshment given Him according to God's will on the way, shall have His head high exalted in the earth. These psalms give the groundwork of the whole scene. What now follows is a review of the circumstances, and indeed from of old, and such as are to come, with reflections (so to speak) on them, and praise as to the result.

Psalm 111

Praise for Jehovah's works

Psalms 111-113 go together as a hallelujah in reference to Jehovah's ways with Israel in their deliverance. First, Psalm 111, the works of Jehovah, glorious in themselves, He has made to be remembered by His mighty intervention in righteousness; yet showing Him full of compassion, mindful of His covenant also. He has shown His people the power of His works, to give them the heritage of the heathen: moreover, His works last. The occasion of the praise, a knowledge of His name, is that He has sent redemption to His people. Jehovah being such, the fear of Him is the beginning of wisdom. This gives good understanding in our walk. Faith knows this. The Lord's appearing in judgment will indeed prove it to the world.

Psalm 112

Blessing and deliverance for those in Israel who fear Jehovah

Psalm 112, on the other hand, gives the character of those who fear Jehovah, and the blessing that comes upon such when the government of God is made good. This shows how impossible it is to apply these psalms to the position of the saints now, though the exercise of faith and piety may be often in the spring of it the same. Still then, it is the deliverance of Israel which brings out Jehovah's name (v. 9,

10).

Psalm 113

Widespread universal praise

Psalm 113 is more general and full universal praise, but on the same occasion. It is from this time forth for evermore. It is now wide spread over all the earth; but He is Israel's God who dwells on high, yet looks down so low, but to exalt those He loves, to set them with the princes of His people, and fill the hopeless with joy in their habitation.

Psalm 114

Israel's ancient and present deliverance by the same Jehovah

Psalm 114 is of the highest style of poetry, but is important to us as directly connecting the ancient deliverance of Israel out of Egypt with the present deliverance of the people, and seeing the same Jehovah in both calling the earth to tremble at the presence of Jehovah. It was right in those days. At Jacob's deliverance then, the sea fled and Jordan was driven back. What was this? Was it affright before the presence of man? The earth was now to tremble before Him who appeared for the deliverance of His people then, and for their sakes turned the sea into dry land, and the flint stone into a springing well.

Psalm 115

The true and full ground of this deliverance

Psalm 115 gives the true and full ground of this deliverance as seen in the heart of faith. It is not that they, but that Jehovah may be praised, specially in His mercy, and then His faithfulness to promise. The godly one, that is, the Spirit, then refers to that cry which was the bitter grief spoken of in Joel, and referred to in Psalm 42, and Psalm 43. Why should the heathen say, Where is now their God? So in the same spirit Moses — "the Egyptians shall hear of it, and what wilt thou do to thy great name?" What a blessed boldness of faith! This character of sorrow shows, how it was on the cross and in those last sorrows that Christ came into this character of sorrow. For the Jews practically said this to Him then, but never could have done so before. The believing Israelite's answer is, Our God is in heaven.

He then contrasts Him with idols. And Israel, the house of Aaron, and all that fear Jehovah, are called to trust Him. This last would open the door to all Gentiles who sought Jacob's face. It then recites, what we have seen to be the ground these psalms go on, that He had been mindful of, and would bless them; yea, increase them more and more, them and their children. They were the blessed of Jehovah, the maker of heaven and earth. Heaven was His, the earth had He given to men. This marks how distinctly

the earthly blessing is the scene before us, for He has not given us the earth, but the cross in it; and heaven, and what is there, as our own things. We seek the things which are above, not the things which are on the earth. So, in even almost a stronger manner, the dead do not praise Jehovah; but we (says the Spirit in them) will praise from this, the time of their final deliverance, for evermore. We say "to depart and to be with Christ is far better."

Psalm 116

Love and praise drawn out by deliverance at the very point of death

Psalm 116 celebrates this deliverance when they were at the very point of death. Jehovah had heard them, and they would walk before the Lord in the land of the living. In this view it is a continual recital of the gracious mercy of Jehovah: they were brought low and He helped them. It drew out their love to Him. Such was Jehovah's character. He preserves the simple. The soul so sorely tried could return to its rest. The death of His saints was precious in His sight; and now, before all His people, in the courts of Jehovah's house, in the midst of Jerusalem, he would pay the vows made in his distress when he called on Jehovah. He would offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving. The quotation of the apostle shows how these psalms can be used as containing holy principles of life for every saint. In spite of suffering and trial, trust in Jehovah opened the mouth of the believer. The passage does not apply to Paul, nor did he say in his haste that all men were liars, though there be something like it in "all seek their own;" but the general and important principle the apostle can adopt. The word, translated "haste," is not haste in the sense of moral defect, hastiness, but in distress — rather sudden distress or alarm from the pressure of circumstances, and hence hasting away.

Psalm 117

The other nations called to praise Jehovah

Psalm 117 is the calling the other nations and peoples to come and praise Jehovah, who will be now King over all the earth. They join and are brought happily into this relationship, Jehovah being made known to them by His ways with Israel. Merciful kindness is here, as ever, first; and truth enduring for ever, which no failure has made to fail. This, as the last, is a hallelujah.

Psalm 118

Praise and thanksgiving founded on enduring mercy

Psalm 118 is also, though not formally so, rendering praise and thanksgiving as promised, connected with, or rather founded on, the known formula — His mercy endures for ever. The same that in Psalm 115 were called to trust in Jehovah are now called to praise Him. From verse 5 the Holy Spirit speaks in the person of delivered Israel, and speaks of this faithfulness of Jehovah, and now, He being on their

side, man need not be feared; Jehovah is better than man, Jehovah better than princes. Verses 10-18 unfold the circumstances and dealings through which Israel has passed. All nations had compassed them; in Jehovah's name he would destroy them. They are quenched as fire. Verse 13, the enemy had thrust sore at them that they might fall; Jehovah helped them. The result in rejoicing and joy is chanted in verses 14-17. Another aspect of their trial is given in verse 18. It was withal Jehovah's chastening, and He had chastened them sore, but not given them over to death, which was the power of the enemy for them. Thus we have the full character of trial, as we have seen it even in Job: instruments, men, even all nations; next, the enemy by them, and acting on the spirit, thrusting sore at the soul; but behind it, and before it too, is God chastening, but not giving over. This is full of instruction for us in many circumstances we pass through, where all these elements are found in what we are passing through.

Israel now owns the once-despised and rejected Messiah

Now the gates of righteousness are open before Israel. The turning to this at once, as the result of trial, is beautiful: he will go in and praise Jehovah. It is withal the gate of Jehovah, and the righteous enter into it. Israel there will praise, for Jehovah has heard him and become his salvation; but further and deeper truth comes out here. There is no restoration of Israel without Messiah, and Israel now owns Him once despised. "The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner. This is Jehovah's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes." We see, in the expression "our eyes," who is the real speaker, and, though the voice had been one, who they are that now take part in the psalm of praise. This is the day Jehovah has made; it is His day, the blessing of His people in connection with Messiah, and His people rejoice in it. And now they cry, Hosanna to the Son of David, the Jehovah of Israel; and say, Blessed be he that comes in His name. This gives us the witness from the Lord's own teaching, who it is that speaks in the psalms, and to what time it applies; for the house was left desolate, and they were not to see Him again till they said, Blessed be he that comes. So that it is Israel, that is, the remnant, who speak, and in the day of their repentance, under grace, when they are to see Messiah again. They bless Him that comes out of the house of Jehovah. Jehovah is the God of strength, He has given Israel light; and now worship and sacrifice are offered to Him that has delivered and blessed. Now they say, Thou art my God, and praise and exalt Him.

The psalm closes with the well-known verse of Israel's thankful praise: "Give thanks to Jehovah, for he is good, for his mercy endures for ever," with which it had commenced. Thus the spiritual apprehension of God's dealings, the coming to worship Jehovah in righteousness, and the owning the despised and rejected Messiah, are all unfolded in connection with the deliverance and blessing of Israel, and the full manifestation of Jehovah's nature and character. Various verses of this psalm are quoted at the close of the Saviour's trials; no psalm indeed so often, as connecting Him with the sorrows of, and promises to, Israel.

Psalm 119

The law written in the heart

Psalm 119 is in general the law written in the heart. This gives it an important place in the series of psalms. It is found distinctly connected too with Israel's sorrows in the last days and their previous departure from God. The different divisions of the psalm show, I think, each a different phase of the exercises of heart connected with the law being written on it, though the general principle runs of course through it. I will very briefly notice the main bearing of each.

The blessedness of the walk with God

The first part presents to us naturally the great general principle. It is the third general "Blessed is the man" — the return of the soul in trial and distress to the great truth of Psalm 1, where the effect is seen under the immediate government of God. Psalm 32 gives the blessedness of forgiveness; this, of the walk with God on the return of the wanderer in spite of all difficulties and contempt. We have indeed another special blessing at the end of the first book, where Christ is so fully brought in. In the last psalm of that book he is pronounced blessed who understands His position, be it in Himself or in those who walk in His footsteps; for the first psalm supposed blessedness under the government of God, making good all His will towards the just, and the reverse seemed to be true. In fact, as we know, to man's eye this wholly failed (bringing in a heavenly and divine righteousness and redemption). Hence true blessedness was shown in discerning, in understanding, the position in which that true blessed One was as rejected by men — that true poor man — taking Himself practically the place He describes as blessed, as we have seen in the sermon on the mount, while the great truth of the law in the heart is laid down. Yet the circumstances also come out in this first part "forsake me not utterly."

Cleansing by the word

Secondly the word associates with God. Not only is one blessed who keeps it, but it is cleansing: the desire of the heart is positively fixed on it (see the connection of Jehovah and His word, v. 10, 11).

Divine mercy in trial connected with the law in the heart

In the third part we find very distinctly the leaning on divine mercy in trial, connected with the law in the heart. The godly Israelite looks to Jehovah's bountiful dealing, but with a view to hearty obedience (v. 17). Verse 19 shows his state; verse 21, as we have seen in all this book, Jehovah's intervention, already known in deliverance, though not in complete blessing; verses 22, 23, the contempt the poor remnant undergo. Jehovah's law had been his delight and comfort under it.

Inward trial; divine relief according to the word

In the fourth part the trial is more inward. His soul is cleaving to the dust, but he looks to divine relief according to the word. His desire looks to the effect of that living water from God. He has been open before God — has declared his own ways: so it ever is. He desires all way of evil to be removed by God from him. He has held fast by the word — looks that God should not put him to shame. But he is looking for enlargement of heart, that he may run freely in God's ways. Such is the sure effect when

under the discipline of God. A soul who has found delight in His will and holiness is yet looking to run in liberty. Though in the heart, the word here referred to is more of an outwardly expressed will, like Zacharias and Elizabeth, a beautiful moral expression of the remnant. With the Christian it will be more absolute and inward, more holiness than testimonies (though it may begin by them perhaps), whether in his first divine calling or under discipline. It is for him walking in the light as God is in the light — not the "ordinances and commandments of Jehovah." Yet it is in principle essentially the same. To apply this psalm directly is to lower the divine standard of thought for the saint now. But the nature of the moral exercise may be most instructively used; just as subjection and confidence in trial is always right, though the forms of it in the Jew are wholly below the Christian's (compare with this Philippians, where we have christian experience).

Divine guidance, teaching, courage and comfort — all from the word

The fifth part looks for divine guidance and teaching in the ways and law of God; the sixth, for manifest mercies in that path, that he may have courage before adversaries and hold fast the law of God. In the seventh, having been quickened by the word, he reckons on it, for God had caused him to trust it as His; so that now he leans on all its assurances. In troubles, when there was no outward cheering of nature, it sustained his heart. This brings him to the eighth. Jehovah was thus his portion. He had sought Him, judged himself, turned his feet to Jehovah's testimonies. He reckoned on Him, and would thank Him in the secret watches of the night, when his heart was left to itself. He was the companion of those that feared Jehovah. This brightens up his thoughts, and he sees His power in mercy around. This is a beautiful picture of the working of the heart.

God's will sought

The ninth brings out the circumstances of the psalm. In the comfort of the last part he can look with God's eye and mind at these circumstances. These are much before our view (that is, feelings about them) in this part of the psalm. Jehovah has already dealt well with him according to His word, and he looks for divine teaching to understand the mind of God well. He had been under discipline: but before this he had gone astray, but now had got into the spirit and path of obedience. He sees the proud lying against him, and their heart fat as grease (no link in state or obedience with Jehovah); and sees how good it was to have been afflicted, that he might learn Jehovah's statutes. Nothing marks more the setting right of the soul than this — the turning to Jehovah's will — "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" — and counting all good that leads to this, and gives God's will as authority, and morally its place in the heart.

The creature's hope in the Creator's word

The tenth part has two main thoughts. Jehovah is his Creator — has formed him. He looks to Him to guide His own poor creature as a faithful Creator. Those that fear Jehovah will be glad when they see Him, because they hope in His word. Secondly, he knows that thus in very faithfulness He has caused him to be afflicted, and now looks for mercies to come unto him, and the proud to be ashamed, and that

those that fear Jehovah may turn to him. All this is linked with soundness in Jehovah's statutes.

The cry for deliverance because of walking in Jehovah's precepts

In the eleventh the cry becomes more urgent. He is under the pressure of trial, his soul fainting for deliverance — looking for Jehovah to execute judgment, for he is walking in Jehovah's precepts. And the proud persecute him wrongfully — they heed not Jehovah nor His law.

The abiding faithfulness of God

But, twelfth, creation is a witness to the abiding faithfulness of God; His word is settled in heaven, where nothing can reach or shake it. But for Jehovah's law, which sustained his heart, he had perished in the pressure of affliction. In truth, how precious to have the word in such a world! We have more than commandments. But we can say, I have seen an end of all perfection. Another and more confident thought grows up out of all this exercise — "I am thine."

The psalmist's delight in the guidance, comfort, sustenance, and value of the word

In the thirteenth he expresses his own internal delight in Jehovah's law, and its effect in spiritual intelligence.

In the fourteenth it guides his path. Afflicted and oppressed, he looks for comfort to Him whose judgments he has taken as his path in spite of enemies and their snares.

The fifteenth gives the horror of vain thoughts, and looking to God as his hiding-place, with his rejection of evildoers. He looks to Jehovah to uphold him, that he may not be ashamed in his hope; and looks with solemn trembling on the sure judgment of the wicked.

In the sixteenth he presses more earnestly the interference of Jehovah in deliverance. The way in which the wicked have made void Jehovah's law only makes him cling the closer to it. It was time for Jehovah to work.

The effects of strong attachment to Jehovah's law and testimonies

The following parts all bring out the effects of his strong attachment to Jehovah's law and testimonies, its value in every aspect for his heart; the trial he was in still in this path of righteousness; and how he would walk in Jehovah's ways when set free; his grief at transgressors. He looks for teaching, quickening, keeping; and recalls the everlasting character of God's testimonies; so that he held fast, though oppressed by the wicked.

Israel's moral state in the last days

The last part is more general as a closing one, though in the same spirit. It sums up, so to speak, the whole. It desires that the cry of the oppressed delighter in the law may come up before Jehovah; asks for understanding according to His word — for deliverance according to it; and assures praise when taught His statutes. His tongue will speak of His word. He has the sense of their righteousness — looks for the hand of Jehovah to help, because he has chosen His precepts. Jehovah's salvation has been longed for (man not trusted in). Jehovah's law has been his delight, not his own will, nor the prosperous man's ways. He looks for life, that he may praise, and that Jehovah's judgment may help him; for the power of death and evil was before him. He owns finally his having gone astray, and looks for Jehovah as the Shepherd of Israel to seek him, for he has not forgotten His commandments. Such is the moral state of Israel in the last days when (in their land, I apprehend) the law is written in their heart, but full deliverance and final blessing are not come. The psalm is, in fact, the moral development of the hearts of those that fear God in the circumstances prophetically brought out in Psalm 118.

Psalm 120

The songs of degrees; the godly in the land with Gog's power not yet destroyed

We now come, Psalms 120-134, to the songs of degrees, which depict, I doubt not, the outward circumstances of the same period, when Israel is in the land, but the power of Gog not yet destroyed. The first of this series begins with the statement of the cry sent up by the godly in his distress to Jehovah who heard. The special charge here is deceit and falsehood. Judgment should come on it. But it is against the godly himself, not the violence and oppression done to Jerusalem, or the apostate oppression of the people. His woe is to dwell in Mesech, and among the tents of Kedar. Wrong is in their hearts; and, when the godly spoke of peace, they prepared for battle. It does not seem to me to be the oppression of Antichrist, or the beast at Jerusalem, but to apply to those who in the land found themselves where the last hostile power which had pretended to favour them,* and had led many to apostatise for quietness and prosperity, now showed himself as only a deceitful oppressor. {*I do not refer here to Daniel 9 but to Daniel 8.}

Psalm 121

Jehovah the Creator and keeper

In Psalm 121 Jehovah is assuredly declared to be his protection. He who never slumbers nor sleeps — He will not suffer his foot to be moved. The general intention is plain. I am not quite sure what is the force of verse 1, unless to identify Jehovah, the Creator of heaven and earth, with the hill of Zion,* and the city of the great King. However this may be, Jehovah (as the great security) is the subject of the psalm. This is very distinct, and His name reiterated for the purpose. He is referred to in the double character, Creator of heaven and earth, and the Keeper of Israel, especially of the godly: Jehovah would preserve him in all circumstances and for ever. {*A hill is used as a symbol of exalted strength, a high

hill as the hill of Bashan. This is the Lord's hill.}

Psalm 122

Jerusalem and the house of the Lord

Psalm 122 celebrates Jerusalem. The saint is glad to go there. The tribes go there; the thrones of judgment, of the house of David, are there. His brethren and companions and the house of Jehovah, the God of Israel, their God, made his heart cling to it. It is a restoring of the associations with Jerusalem, recalling the old and establishing the new ones.

Psalm 123

Israel's sorrows and resource

The series then returns (Psalm 123) to their sorrows and resource. Blessing is not fully come; but Jehovah is looked to in the heavens, but as the God of Israel; the remnant say "our God" now. But they are filled yet with the contempt of those that are at ease and of the proud.

Psalm 124

Escape by Jehovah's intervention

The power of the enemy had been just now (Psalm 124) fully displayed against them — the godly in the land who trusted in Jehovah. But they had escaped, but only by Jehovah being on their side, or they had been utterly swallowed up, by the last power of the enemy, I apprehend, when the apostate beast and Antichrist were gone from the scene.

Psalm 125

Enduring protection for those who trust Jehovah

The position of those who trust in Jehovah is celebrated, in virtue of this intervention of Jehovah, who would now protect them for ever, and they abide for ever. Peace would be on Israel. Those that turned to their crooked ways — Jehovah would lead them forth with the open evildoers in judgment. The rod of wickedness would not rest upon the lot of the righteous. There would be an exclusion of the rod of wickedness (what represented the wicked as a tribe), separation from its mischief, that the righteous might not go astray. All this, I apprehend, refers to the last inroad of the final power of Gog, or the last condition of the Assyrian, perhaps to Daniel 8 (only that that gives its whole character, not merely its final one); also to the final king of the north, who comes in after the wilful king in Daniel 11.

Psalm 126

Zion the centre of full unlooked-for glory

The heart of the godly now finds its centre in Zion, when deliverance has been learnt; for so it will be (compare Isaiah 29: 4,7). How low she was brought, according to Psalm 124! (Isaiah 29: 4. Compare Isaiah 17:12-14, and other passages). It was a dream — so full, so unlooked-for, the joy. The very heathen now owned Jehovah's hand. But the godly look for the full blessing, and the captivity to be turned again in the fulness of possessed blessing. Still God had manifested Himself; and to the faithful, who had taken up His testimony in sorrow, and when it was shame and reproach, it was now a harvest of joy. So it ever is; for full joy only comes through sorrow: for the testimony of God is in a world of evil.

Psalm 127

Full blessing on earth Jehovah's gift

These full blessings thus sought, the building the house, the keeping the city, the desired abundance of children, are all (Psalm 127) Jehovah's doing and gift, or man labours and watches in vain. The blessing is distinctly Jewish.

Psalm 128

Present temporal blessing God's gift out of Zion

A numerous progeny are distinctly God's gift: happy the man that has his quiver full of them (Psalm 128). The blessings spoken of are declared to be the portion of whoever fears Jehovah. It is present temporal blessing — blessings out of Zion; and, the desire of the godly's heart, Jerusalem in prosperity all their days. Although the direct object be the remnant, the godly Gentile, so fearing Jehovah, owning Israel's God, would, as a principle, enjoy the blessing, and rejoice with His people.

Psalm 129

Recurring with joy to past sorrows and trials

Psalm 129 recurs now with joy to the sorrows and trials through which the children of Zion have gone. But Jehovah is righteous, and has cut asunder the cords of the wicked. The haters of Zion (for Zion is here always the central thought) are withered, without resource, and without being desired.

Psalm 130

The effect of the sense of sin and of mercy

Psalm 130 takes up another subject, of the place of which we have found clear traces before — the sins of Israel as between the people and God. It is not, however, now merely legal distress. Confidence in Jehovah characterises it, though accompanied by depth of distress and humiliation. This is the effect of the connection of the sense of sin and of mercy in the soul. Mere legal distress is more selfish in its terror, though admirable for destroying confidence in self and throwing on mercy; conviction with the sense of mercy is more the sense of wronging the God of goodness. It is a deeper work after all. Here there is forgiveness with Jehovah that He might be feared, and the soul waits on Jehovah, though it has cried out of the depths. There is desire, grace being looked to, as well as waiting for Jehovah, verse 6. The groundwork is stated in verse 7, while verse 8 shows confidence in the full results. Verse 4 is the upright acknowledgment of where the need came from, grace meeting that need; verse 7, that which can be reckoned on in Jehovah; verse 8, the full counting on it for Israel, that is, redemption, not from troubles, but from iniquities.

Psalm 131

Self-confidence gone, unwavering trust left

Psalm 131 briefly states the humble absence of all self-confidence, that so he has walked. Israel is now to trust in Jehovah and for ever.

Psalm 132

The ark in Zion; Jehovah's promises fulfilled

Psalm 132 is, in some respects, a very interesting psalm. It is the restoration of the ark of the covenant to its resting-place, and the promises of Jehovah, in answer to the supplication of His servant. It is founded on David's bringing the ark up to Zion. This, as we have seen in the historical books, has a very important place. It was grace acting by power when Israel had so completely failed that the bond of the people with God, so far as it was founded on the people's responsibility, was wholly broken, and the ark gone into captivity, and Ichabod written on all.* But now, in a fuller and more lasting sense, a habitation was found for the mighty God of Jacob, where the godly would worship low before His footstool. The fruit of David's body, the Messiah of Jehovah, was to sit on His throne, and that for evermore. Jehovah was entering into His rest — He and the ark of His strength. Before (Num. 10:35-36), if He arose it was to scatter His enemies, and then He returned to the many thousands of Israel. But now, and this is what characterises the psalm, the enemies were scattered, and Jehovah arose to take His rest in Israel. The sovereign election of God is seen, verse 13; and, then, it will be remarked, that the promise, in answer to the supplication, goes each time beyond the request (compare verses 14-15 with 8; 16 with 9; 17-18 with 10). This is of the highest interest as showing the grace of the Lord, and how His love surpasses all the hopes of His people, His interest in them. {*The three principles of government had been brought out in Israel. First, direct responsibility to God under priesthood. That

had failed under Eli, and that was Ichabod. It was over with Israel on the ground of their own responsibility. Then God intervened by a prophet. That He could still do; it was a sovereign act. But that failed; so did royalty as set up by the people. Then we have royalty as power in grace, as it will be in Christ, and the lost ark brought back. This is what we have in this psalm.}

Psalm 133

Israel dwelling together in unity

The people are now dwelling together in unity. It is as the anointing of Aaron, which, poured on the head, gave the odours of divine favour on all, as the abundant dew of the lofty hills, but which brought, however high its source, its refreshing power where God had ordained blessing and life for evermore.* I see no need to seek for any mountain of a like name near Hermon, but the contrary. {*This is one of the two places where life for evermore, life eternal, is spoken of in the Old Testament; the other is Daniel 12; both as accomplished in the time of blessing to come. In the New Testament, I need not say, it is fully revealed in Christ, and he that believes in Him has everlasting life.}

Psalm 134

Jehovah's servants called to bless the blesser

Psalm 134 closes the series by calling on the servants of Jehovah to bless Him. Night and day should furnish praise to Him, and in the holy place holy hands be lifted up to bless. Jehovah was there, His servants there to praise Him. Jehovah, who made heaven and earth, blessed now (not simply from heaven, but) out of Zion. It is the place of blessing Jehovah, and Jehovah blessing. I should be disposed to count the last verse rather the voice of Christ as the Son of David, something in the character of Melchisedec, who said, Blessed be the most high God, and blessed be Abraham of the most high God, only specially in connection with Jehovah (as Zech. 6:13) blessing the godly remnant out of Zion. The last verse is a kind of answer to the call of the preceding ones; the Spirit of Christ in the remnant calls on Jehovah's servants to bless Him, and they from Him bless the godly one.

Psalm 135

Hallelujah; the call to celebrate Jehovah as almighty and as now dwelling in Jerusalem

Psalms 135 and 136 celebrate Jehovah, who has delivered Israel and now dwells in Jerusalem, and give thanks to Him whose mercy has endured for ever — the Creator of all things in goodness who first delivered them, and remembered them to redeem them when brought low.

Psalm 135 is a very characteristic Psalm, giving a remarkable key to the interpretation of the book, and linking it with the early statements of Jehovah as to His relationship to Israel, so as to bind together their history in one whole. The subject is Hallelujah - praise the name of Jehovah. He is good: it is pleasant to do it; for He has chosen Jacob and Israel for His peculiar treasure. He is then (v. 6) celebrated as the Almighty God, doing what He pleased, daily disposing of creation; then as He who executed judgment on the oppressors of Israel, and freed them, and drove out the heathen and gave them their land. Now comes His name in connection with Israel and in contrast with idols; and the two passages, in one of which He first took up Israel for ever under the name of Jehovah, and, in the other, prophetically announced their deliverance when they should have wholly and utterly failed, are cited from Exodus 3:15, Deuteronomy 32:36. The first takes the name of the Lord God of their fathers, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, when He sends Moses to deliver them, and declares this is His name for ever, His memorial to all generations, and then promises deliverance and bringing into the land; then He takes the name of Jehovah. The second is in the prophetic song of Moses, when he has drawn out to them their picture as apostate, their spot not the spot of God's children, when they forsook God who made them, and provoked Him to jealousy with strange gods, and Jehovah hid His face from them, and, but for the fear of man's pride, had made the remembrance of them to cease from among men. Then, when they should be helpless and hopeless in themselves, Jehovah would judge His people, and repent Himself concerning His servants, execute judgments on the heathen, and then make them rejoice with His people. So that these two verses give the first deliverance and purpose of God, and the judgment and ways of God in the last days, to which the psalms have brought us. Thus they give a clear key to the application of the psalms themselves. Then we have (v. 15-18) the present judgment of the idols spoken of in Deuteronomy 32, and to which they had fallen away. The psalm closes with the summons to those already generally specified — the divers parts of Israel and all that fear Jehovah — to bless Jehovah; the house of Israel, of Aaron, of Levi, and all that fear Jehovah; and this now out of Zion, even Jehovah, of whom now they could say that He dwelt in Jerusalem.

Psalm 136

The answer to the summons

Psalm 136 may be considered as the answer to this summons. It is characterised by the formulary, as often noticed, the expression of Jehovah's unchanging goodness to Israel in spite of all: "His mercy endures for ever." It celebrates Him as Creator, God of gods, the Deliverer of Israel, who had led them through the wilderness, as Him who by power slaying mighty kings had given them the inheritance of the land; and who, finally, remembering them in their low estate, had redeemed them from it, and now supplied every living thing with food, the God of heaven. This, in a certain sense, closes the historical psalms.

Sorrows; Jehovah's ways; millennial praises

We have then a kind of supplementary series: first, of their characteristic sorrows and Jehovah's ways in the latter days, and then of millennial praises. These sorrows are from Psalm 137 to Psalm 144 — the

latter, however, being the expectation of deliverance and blessing. Psalm 139 also has a peculiar character, as will be at once seen.

Psalm 137

Remembrance of Zion in their past captivity

Psalm 137 refers, and alone does — to give the full history of Israel's sorrows — to Babylon, which has only a mystic fulfilment in the latter days, but has its importance, because at that time was the closing of the period of the divine presence in Jerusalem, and the setting up of the power of the Gentiles. But faith could not content itself in a strange land nor sing the Lord's songs there; for they were not a heavenly people — hence they turn to Jerusalem, which faith never forgets. Babylon is to be destroyed and her judgment is desired; Edom's enmity not forgotten. The object of the psalm is to bring out their attachment to Zion in their captivity; there was no separation of heart from it in the strange land.

Psalm 138

The ground of faith — God's word

Psalm 138 gives the ground of faith — God's word; and now the godly turns to own it in worship; and when that word reaches the kings of the earth, they shall turn and praise Jehovah and sing in His ways. Nor is His truth all. Though so high, He has respect to the lowly; He revives, protects, and perfects all that concerns the believing righteous. "His mercy endures for ever."

Psalm 139

Man's heart searched out: God's omniscience, omnipresence and omnipotence

Psalm 139 shows the complete exercise of heart that belongs to God's ways. Though the faithfulness of God perfects all His purposed blessing, not a thought escapes God. There is, morally speaking, no staying in His presence; but there is no getting out of His presence, nor where He sees not, though conscience might be glad to flee. But this brings in another aspect. He knows all, because also He has formed all. This connects us with the taking perfect notice of us in goodness. He cares for us, watches over every member that is formed, as He knows our every thought; if He does, He has His own too, and these are precious to us. This is just the change and working of faith. It begins necessarily by conscience under God's eye; for it brings us into His presence, and then gets at God's thoughts, who has formed us for Himself, and then unfolded boundless spheres of His own blessing and ways. God watches over him in the silence of sleep: waking, therefore, he finds himself with God.

But, further, this connection with God is a perfect breaking with the wicked: God will slay them. And he calls on them to depart from him. Therefore he looks at the wicked with horror, because of what they are to God — for himself, that he may be searched throughout, that no wickedness may remain in him. This psalm goes far in the relationship of man's spirit with God, though it looks to the external judgment of the wicked and uses language which becomes verified in the assembly figuratively, and which is so also in the resurrection. The great direct point in it is the full searching out of man's heart, as it will be then, as it must be ever. But this searching, when we are under our own responsibility, is, Whither shall I flee from Him? But when we are God's workmanship (that is, when grace and power have come in), God's thoughts become precious to us, and we can ask to be searched, known, and tried — the more the better, that, emptied of self, we may be able to enjoy God. Then also we look for leading. The will is broken, as the thoughts are judged, and our desire is to be led of God. We see at the same time the character of the psalm connects it with the latter day. "Surely thou wilt slay the wicked." It looks for judgment, and has hatred and horror of the haters of God.

Psalms 140-143

A restored Israel, still in conflict and distress

The five following psalms go over ground which we have trodden over in detail: only they apply to a restored Israel, still in conflict, and not fully blessed.

Encompassed by the proud, deliverance looked for from the evil and violent

Psalm 140 looks for deliverance from the evil and violent man. Israel is in connection with Jehovah, but compassed about by the proud.

The desire of the godly that his words and thoughts be kept

Psalm 141. Having learnt the government of Jehovah, the godly looks for his words and thoughts to be kept of Jehovah, that Jehovah may bless him. Smiting he will accept as discipline. He looks for acceptance for his prayers. And even in the judgment coming upon the proud (Israel, I apprehend), he looks to it as breaking them down so as to hear His word. It is such a psalm as David might have penned when pursued by Saul. He looks for judgment on the wicked, but that calamities may arrest some.

Jehovah alone looked to as a refuge

Psalm 142 looks to Jehovah alone as a refuge.

The cry for mercy and goodness

Psalm 143 cries specially for mercy and goodness, that in the midst of the persecution of the enemy, and the pressure on the godly, Jehovah would not enter into judgment with him, but show His lovingkindness. As the servant of Jehovah, he begs to be taught and guided. Thus these psalms are all of one in deep distress; but they look, in relationship with Jehovah (not cast out, and knowing Him only as God), for the cutting off of the enemies.

Psalm 144

Jehovah blessed as the source of strength

Psalm 144 blesses Jehovah as the source of strength. Its plea for the destruction of the enemies is, What is man? Why should Jehovah make account* of such a worm, and delay bringing in blessing by thus lingering in judgment? Deliverance is thus looked for, for the full true final blessing of Israel. Happy the people in such a case: happy the people who have Jehovah for their God! Directly, the psalm applies to David himself, who is named in it, and owns God, as subduing his (David's) people under him, as the source of royal power. I do not see that it brings in any personally in the latter day. Did it so, it would be "the prince"; for there will be a human house of David on the earth. But it is the bringing in of the people into that state of subjection under Christ, when they will be willing in the day of His power, when in the day of Jezreel they will appoint themselves one head, when the day will be great, when Jehovah will utterly scatter the power of the enemies of Israel, give them a new song, and bless them. Messiah will surely be their head; but it is prophetically spoken of by David in person. The true Beloved will be their sure head. {*Compare Psalm 8, grace's view of it, and Job's impatience (Job 7:17-18) against discipline, God's taking notice of men's ways in government.}

Psalm 145

Christ in the midst of Israel leading and awakening Jehovah's praises

Psalm 145 goes on in thought into the millennium, after the distress is over, and the full deliverance can be celebrated. It is Christ in spirit — perhaps even in person — as in the midst of Israel, leading the praises of Jehovah, and awakening them amongst men. Hence, though only expressing purpose, it is a dialogue in its character. First, he expresses his own purpose of praising Jehovah, and for ever and ever. One generation should do it to another. "I will speak." One sees his heart is full of praise, and he speaks of it (v. 5). "And men shall speak of the might of Jehovah's terrible acts. And I will declare thy greatness. They shall speak of the memory of thy great goodness, and shall sing of thy righteousness." Then he breaks off most beautifully to speak of the goodness: for still out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. All Jehovah's works shall praise Him. The saints bless Him. Their subject shall be the glory of Jehovah's kingdom and His power, to make known to the mass of mankind His acts, and the glorious majesty of His kingdom, and that an everlasting one. Then in verses 14-20 His character is spoken of. Verse 21 returns to the purpose of heart of the leader of praise. It is as man Christ speaks here — "my God." Jehovah is looked at as King. In general, the outward acts and greatness are more in

the mouth of the rest — what Jehovah is in the leader's, though he does celebrate His wondrous works. Still the greatness and excellency and majesty of Jehovah are that which we see his heart full of, as verses 3, 5, 8-10; and so, in general, His gracious ways and character (v. 14-19). It is to be remarked that there is the leader who speaks in the psalm, the saints (the Jewish remnant), and the world in general, the sons of Adam. It is of the highest interest in this way; because we have Messiah fulfilling the word, "My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation." And how full in heart He is of His praises! Jehovah's kingdom is set up; the Messiah in the midst of Israel first, then the preserved saints, and then, through their leading, all the world join in His praises, for His greatness, goodness, and wonderful works.

Psalm 146

The introduction to full final praises

Psalm 146 introduces the full final praises: the first, the outpouring of the heart in praise to Him as the God of Jacob, celebrating what He is, and the comfort of trusting Him, the Creator, the Helper of the oppressed, the Comforter of the lowly, the Lover of the righteous, who turns the way of the wicked upside down. He shall reign for ever, even Zion's God to all generations. The character of this praise, after what we have gone through, is most simple.

Psalm 147

The saints' song of praise to tell what Jehovah is

In Psalm 147 the saints take their place now in Jerusalem and Zion to say what He is. He is their God; He builds up Jerusalem and gathers together the outcasts of Israel, healing the broken in heart and binding up their wounds. In verses 4, 5 His greatness is celebrated and His goodness and judgment; in verses 7-9, His goodness in blessing the earth; in verses 1, His pleasure, not in animal strength, but in them that fear Him. In verse 12, the song of praise returns to celebrate His ways towards Jerusalem again; in verses 15-18, His dealings with the seasons in power; in verses 19, 20, His showing His word and judgments to Jacob as He had not done to any nation. They might have seen the creative and providential power of Jacob's God, but His mind and laws were His people's.

Psalm 148

The call to heaven and earth to take their part in the great Hallelujah

Psalm 148 calls first on heaven, and all in it, to take their part in the great Hallelujah, and praise Jehovah who had created and sustains them in their place; and then on the earth, with all in it, to join in praising Him whose name alone is excellent, and His glory above the earth and heaven, but who exalts the horn of His people, the praise of His saints (the godly ones we have seen throughout, but who now

are fully Israel), a people near to Him. The great Creator whom heaven and earth must praise is the God of Israel, and Israel His people.

Psalm 149

The call to Israel to praise and the reasons

Psalm 149 calls upon Israel to praise. The creation and Israel we have seen all through to be co-ordinate (the new creation and the assembly), and to form the sphere of the Psalms. Still it is now in the congregation of the saints. Israel's relationship is double: Jehovah has formed him for His praise; He is King in Zion. The reasons of praise are then given. Jehovah takes pleasure in His people; but we learn who have this place. He beautifies the meek with salvation. Then he can say, Let the saints be joyful in glory; but if the high praises of God are in their mouths, the sword of earthly judgment and vengeance is in their hands to execute it on the nations and peoples, to bind the mighty ones who had once oppressed them. It was the judgment written. Such honour have all His saints. The persons here in view are thus evident, as is their position: the meek in Israel now delivered, and the Lord Jesus, King in Zion, execute judgment on those who had oppressed them. Such is indeed, as said, the judgment written, and confirms the view I have taken of the last two books: only now it is complete in its statements. The millennium itself is not described. The Psalms are the introduction to it, and by their connection of Christ, as seen in the Gospels, and the remnant of Israel, with the last days, throw the greatest light on the Gospels themselves.

Psalm 150

The general closing summons to everything that has breath to praise Him

Psalm 150 is a general closing summons to praise Jehovah — only, remark, it is now freely in His sanctuary, as well as in the firmament of His power — in His sanctuary, with all the various instruments of the temple — praise for His mighty acts, praise for His own excellent greatness: everything that has breath is called to praise Him. It is a loud and chorus-like termination, full of power and energy, suited to the Jewish state and temple service.

Here we close this most interesting and instructive study, as to which I could hope only to give the outline of general principles, which might enable the reader to use the book; not its varied and beautiful contents in detail — this would have required volumes, both on the prophetic connection of its contents, and on the exercises and feelings of faith, so far as we can apply them to saints now.