

A

COMMENTARY

ON THE

BOOK OF PSALMS.

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VOL. II.

A  
COMMENTARY  
ON THE  
BOOK OF PSALMS;

IN WHICH  
THEIR LITERAL OR HISTORICAL SENSE, AS THEY RELATE TO KING DAVID  
AND THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL, IS ILLUSTRATED ;  
AND THEIR APPLICATION TO MESSIAH, TO THE CHURCH, AND TO INDIVI-  
DUALS AS MEMBERS THEREOF, IS POINTED OUT ;  
WITH A VIEW TO RENDER THE USE OF THE PSALTER PLEASING AND  
PROFITABLE TO ALL ORDERS AND DEGREES OF CHRISTIANS.

BY  
GEORGE, LORD BISHOP OF NORWICH,

AND PRESIDENT OF MAGDALEN COLLEGE, OXFORD.

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All things must be fulfilled which were written in the Psalms concerning me.

*Luke xxiv. 41.*

I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.

*1 Cor. xiv. 15.*

They sing the song of Moses, and the song of the Lamb.

*Rev. xv. 3.*

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FIFTEENTH DAY.—MORNING PRAYER.

PSALM LXXV.

ARGUMENT.

The Prophet, 1. gives thanks, with the church, to God for the manifestation of his NAME, and the wonders of salvation wrought thereby. 2. He declares his resolution of executing judgement and justice in his kingdom, which, 3. had been in disorder and confusion ; 4, 5. he rebukes the wicked ; 6—8. reminds them of the power, providence, counsels, and judgements of God ; 9, 10. he concludes with repeating his resolution to praise God, to break the power of wickedness, and to establish righteousness.

VER. 1. *Unto thee, O God, do we give thanks, unto thee do we give thanks : for that thy name is near, thy wondrous works declare.*

The church offers up her repeated praises to God for deliverance ; she acknowledges the presence of

his NAME in the midst of her, which had been evidenced by the “wonderful works” wrought for her salvation. Upon whatever occasion these words were originally endited, the Christian church now celebrates in them that great deliverance which, by so many miracles of mercy and power, hath been accomplished for her through Messiah, who is in Scripture frequently styled, “the NAME of Jehovah.” See Isa. xxx. 27.

*2. When I shall receive the congregation, I will judge uprightly.*

The first verse was spoken by many persons; “unto thee, O God, do we give thanks;” here the speaker is one, and that one is plainly a ruler, who promises, that when he shall have “received the congregation,” or, as some render it, “when he shall have gotten an appointed, or fit time, or season,” that is, when he shall be established in power and authority, at a fit time and place, he will “judge uprightly,” and introduce a thorough reformation into a kingdom, which, as we shall find by the following verse, stood greatly in need of it. From these circumstances it should seem most probable, that David is speaking of his advancement to the throne of Israel, and the intended rectitude of his administration, when he should be settled thereon. What David did in Israel, was done in the church universal, by him who sat upon the throne of David, when he “received,” for his inheritance, the great “congregation” of the Gentiles, and the earth was full of the “righteousness” of Jehovah.

*3. The earth, or, the land, and all the inhabitants*

*thereof, are, or, were, dissolved: I bear up the pillars of it.*

Civil distractions, and the continual irruptions of foreign enemies, had thrown the Israelitish affairs into confusion, and “dissolved” the frame of government; until, by the re-establishment of royal authority, countenance and support were again given to all the subordinate magistrates; who are, in their respective stations, the “pillars” of a community. Such was the universal corruption and dissolution of manners both among Jews and Gentiles, when Messias, entering upon his regal office, reformed the world, raised the glorious fabric of the church, and made his apostles and their successors the “pillars” of his spiritual kingdom. Let men support religion, and God will support them.

*4. I said unto the fools, Deal not foolishly; and to the wicked, Lift not up the horn: 5. Lift not up your horn on high; speak not with a stiff neck.*

“Where the word of a king is, there is power.” The Prophet addresses himself to the opposers of his government, and the disturbers of Israel: he urges the “folly” of exalting themselves against their prince; and exhorts them, for their own sakes, to humility and obedience. Is not this the very message which the ministers of Christ have received from their King, and are commanded to deliver to the world?

*6. For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south; 7. But God is the judge; he putteth down one, and setteth up another.*

The opposition, mentioned in the preceding verse, was called “folly.” In these verses it is proved to be such; as being an opposition, in effect, to the counsels of heaven; for, not by worldly power or craft, but by the designation and providence of God himself, the supreme judge of princes, and disposer of kingdoms, was the house of Saul “put down,” and the house of David “set up.” And are not, then, the enemies of the Son of God in arms against the Father; who, according to the promises going before concerning him, hath highly exalted him; hath committed all power and judgement to him; and hath put all things under his feet? Yea, and the hour is coming, when he shall put down all rule, and all authority, and power, and the Lord Jesus alone shall be exalted in that day. What will then be the portion of his impenitent adversaries, the next verse will inform us.

8. *For in the hand of the Lord there is a cup, and the wine is red; it is full of mixture; and he poureth out of the same: but the dregs thereof all the wicked of the earth shall wring them out, and drink them.*

As the choicest of heavenly blessings are frequently in Scripture represented by the salutary effects of wine, a cup of which the master of the family is supposed to hold in his hand, ready to distribute due portions of it to those around him; so from the noxious and intoxicating qualities of that liquor, when drunk strong, and in too large a quantity, is borrowed a most tremendous image of the wrath and indignation of Almighty God. Calamity and sorrow,

fear and trembling, infatuation and despair, the evils of the present life, and of that which is to come, are the bitter ingredients which compose this most horrible cup of mixture. It is entirely in the hand and disposal of God, who, through every age, has been pouring out, and administering of its contents, more or less, in proportion to the sins of men. But much of the strength and power of the liquor still remains behind, until the day of final vengeance. It will be then exhausted, even to the dregs, by unrepenting rebels; when "burning coals, fire, and brimstone," and eternal "tempest," shall be "the portion of their cup." Ps. xi. 6.

9. *But I will declare for ever; I will sing praises to the God of Jacob.*

These dispensations of mercy and judgement the Prophet resolves to "declare" to the world for ever, by thus "singing" the works and the "praises" of God, in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs. And while we now sing them, we declare our resolution to be the same with his.

10. *All the horns of the wicked also will I cut off; but the horns of the righteous shall be exalted.*

He determines likewise, as every good governor should do, to exert the authority with which he was intrusted; to break the power of triumphant wickedness, and to exalt that righteousness which exalteth a nation; hereby rendering himself a fit image of Him, who hath since done away transgression, and brought in everlasting righteousness, who will one day turn the wicked into hell, and exalt his faithful servants to reign with him in heaven. Already he

reigns in them upon earth ; causing “ all carnal affections to die in them, and all things belonging to “ the Spirit to live and grow in them.”

## PSALM LXXVI.

### ARGUMENT.

It is obvious, at first sight, to any one who reads this Psalm, that it was composed, as a thanksgiving hymn, on account of some great deliverance, wrought for his people, by the immediate hand of God. The miraculous destruction of the Assyrian army by the angel, in the days of king Hezekiah, is generally pitched upon, as the subject of it, and affirmed to be so by the ancient Greek inscription prefixed to it in the LXX version. The Prophet, 1, 2. declares the glory which God hath gotten him in Israel ; 3—6. describes the circumstances of the deliverance, with, 7. a reflection thereupon ; 8—10. he mentions the effects it had produced among the nations, and, 11, 12. those which it ought to produce in Israelitish hearts. The ideas are to be transferred to the salvation of the church universal, by the destruction of sin and Satan, and the overthrow of the persecuting powers.

*1. In Judah is God known ; his name is great in Israel. 2. In Salem also is his tabernacle, and his dwelling place in Sion.*



On occasion of some great deliverance, the Prophet speaks in transport concerning that presence and protection of God, which the highly favoured Judah once enjoyed. She enjoyed them while she continued faithful, and really was what she professed to be. But, on account of her infidelity, and rejection of her Messiah, an alteration of circumstances has taken place. They are no longer Jews, who are such outwardly; nor is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh; but they are Jews, who believe in the Son of God; and they are of the circumcision, who are cleansed by him from all filthiness of flesh and spirit. The Gentile Christian church hath succeeded to the privileges of the Israelitish. In her now, "God is known" by the Gospel; and "his Name is great" in her, by reason of all the mighty wonders which he hath wrought for her: she is the true, "Salem," or city of peace; she is the true "Sion," the spiritual, holy, and beloved hill; and in her is the "tabernacle" and "dwelling place" of God her Saviour, by the Spirit.

3. *There brake he the arrows of the bow, the shield, and the sword, and the battle.*

When God appeared in the defence of his ancient people, the weapons of their enemies were at once blunted and broken, and all the formidable apparatus of war became, in a moment, utterly useless. Such was the event, when the holy Jesus entered the lists against our spiritual adversaries, "for" us; and such ever will be the event, when he engages them "in" us.

4. *Thou art more glorious and excellent than the mountains of prey.*

This may be a beautiful apostrophe to mount Sion (mentioned ver. 2), as appearing infinitely more glorious and excellent, through the favour and protection of her God, than the arm of flesh and the instruments of war could render the kingdoms of the earth, which set themselves against her ; and which, for their tyranny, and cruelty, and the ravages committed by them, are likened to those mountains, where beasts of prey, with similar dispositions, rove, and roar, and devour. The powers of the world “ make war with the Lamb, whose station is upon mount Sion ;” but “ the Lamb shall overcome them, for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings ;” and they that are with him are called, and chosen, “ and faithful.” Rev. xiv. 1. xvii. 14.

5. *The stout-hearted are spoiled, they have slept their sleep : and none of the men of might have found their hands.* 6. *At thy rebuke, O God of Jacob, both the chariot, or, rider, and horse, are cast into a dead sleep.*

It must be acknowledged, that these two verses seem in a very particular manner to point at the miraculous destruction of Sennacherib’s army, when the “ stout-hearted,” who doubted not of taking and spoiling the holy city, were themselves suddenly “ spoiled” of strength and life ; they “ slept their sleep, and found not their hands ;” they awaked not again to the use of their powers and faculties ; a rebuking blast was sent from the God of Jacob, under which

the flower of Assyria withered in the space of a night, and in the morning was no more ;” the horse and “ his rider were cast into a dead sleep ;” they slept the sleep of death. How, in a moment, “ were the “ mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished !” How astonishing the downfall of the tyrant ! How complete the triumph of the daughter of Sion ! Such will be the destruction of the world ; such the salvation of the people of God.

7. *Thou, even thou, art to be feared ; and who may stand in thy sight, when once thou art angry ?*

Why are the miraculous exertions of omnipotence recorded in the book of life, but to suggest to us this reflection, that God, and God only, is the proper object of our fear ; since neither the wisdom of the wise, nor the power of the mighty, no, not the world itself, can stand a single moment before him, “ when “ once he is angry ?” Yet we continue to dread any frowns but those of Heaven ; and one poor, vain, sinful man shall, through a course of sixty or seventy years, incessantly and undauntedly tempt and provoke Him who destroyed 185,000 in a night. What is this, but madness ?

8. *Thou didst cause judgement to be heard from heaven ; the earth feared, and was still ;* 9. *When God arose to judgement, to save all the meek of the earth, or, the afflicted of the land.*

A destruction so far exceeding human power, was evidently the sentence of God’s judgement, audibly pronounced from the eternal throne ; and it was heard by all the earth with an awful silence, as when he speaks to attentive nature in thunder. Such was

the effect which this interposition in behalf of his people produced among the surviving Assyrians, and the neighbouring nations. Let us carry our thoughts on to the sensations which will be felt in the hearts of men, at that hour when the last trump shall sound in the heavens, and the earth shall shake from her foundations ; when God shall arise to execute judgement on the adversaries of his church ; and to save, with an everlasting salvation, all the meek and afflicted of the earth.

10. *Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee : the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.*

The wrath of man, and of Satan himself, against the church, turns, in the end, to the praise and glory of God, who represses it when at its height ; and at all times appoints those bounds which it cannot pass, any more than the raging waves of the ocean can overflow their appointed barrier of sand.

11. *Vow and pay unto the Lord your God ; let all that are round about him bring presents unto him that ought to be feared.* 12. *He shall cut off, or, restrain, the spirit of princes ; he is terrible to the kings of the earth.*

If such should have been the gratitude and devotion of Israelites, for a temporary deliverance from the fury of an earthly tyrant : how much higher ought that of Christians to rise, for eternal redemption from the great oppressor ! How ought they to “ vow and pay their vows unto the Lord their God ; to bring presents,” to offer all they have, and all they are, to him who is so greatly “ to be feared,” so highly to be loved ; to him who “ re-

“ strains” the fury of evil angels, as well as “ the spirit of princes ;” and is “ terrible” to the powers of darkness, no less than to “ the kings of the earth !”

## PSALM LXXVII.

### ARGUMENT.

As the foregoing Psalm was evidently composed when the church had obtained deliverance from her enemies, this seems no less plainly to have been written at a time when she was in captivity under them. It contains, 1—4. a complaint of sufferings ; and, 5—20. a description at large of the struggle between distrust and faith ; which latter prevails, by having recourse to the consideration of ancient mercies ; particularly, that of redemption from Egypt. The Psalm is admirably calculated for the use and consolation of any church, or soul, when in affliction and distress.

1. *I cried unto God with my voice, even unto God with my voice ; and he gave ear unto me.*

Uneasiness in the heart will utter itself by the “ voice ;” and when the pain is intense, the “ cry” will be loud. Only let it take a right direction, and ascend to heaven ; let the application be made to “ God,” who will both “ hear” and help ; not to the world, which will not do one, and cannot do the

other. The cries of the Son of God alone were heard; for his own sake; the cries of all other men are heard for his sake.

2. *In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord : my sore ran in the night, and ceased not ; Heb. my hand was stretched out in the night, and ceased not, or, without intermission ; my soul refused to be comforted.*

To a soul deeply sensible of the world's vanity, and the misery of sin, every day is a "day of trouble," and the whole time of her pilgrimage is a long, dark, and wearisome "night," during which she seeks after her beloved by prayer; and, for the sake of him, and those future joys which she expects in his presence, the pleasures of sense are put away from her, and she "refuses to be comforted" by such comforters. An Israelite cannot enjoy himself in Babylon; a Christian cannot find perfect satisfaction in the world: a return to Jerusalem will employ the thoughts of both.

3. *I remembered God, and was troubled; I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed; or, I remembered God, and made a noise, i. e. in prayer to him; I meditated, and my spirit was obscured, or, darkened, through grief and affliction.*

This is a fine description of what passes in an afflicted and dejected mind. Between the remembrance of God and his former mercies, and the meditation on a seeming desertion under present calamities, the affections are variously agitated, and the prayers disturbed, like the tumultuous waves of a troubled

sea ; while the fair light from above is intercepted, and the face of heaven overwhelmed with clouds and darkness.

*4. Thou holdest mine eyes waking : I am so troubled that I cannot speak.*

Through grief and anxiety it is, that the eyes are made to keep all the watches of the night, and wait in vain for sleep to relieve them from duty, until the dawning of the morning. To a night so spent, may a season of captivity or persecution be compared. Thus the ancient church looked for the first advent of Christ ; and thus doth the church which now is expect his second ; prolonging her vigils, even unto the dawning of that morning, which is at once to put a period to darkness and to sorrow. In the mean time, she giveth herself to meditation and prayer.

*5. I have considered the days of old, the years of ancient times. 6. I call to remembrance my song in the night : I commune with mine own heart ; and my spirit maketh diligent search.*

Recollection of former mercies is the proper antidote against a temptation to despair, in the day of calamity. And as in the divine dispensations, which are always uniform and like themselves, whatever has happened happens again, when the circumstances are similar ; the experience of “ ancient times ” is to be called in to our aid, and duly consulted. Nay, we may perhaps “ remember ” the time, when we ourselves were led to compose and utter a “ song ” of joy and triumph, on occasion of signal mercies